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## The Golden Lane in the light of the archaeological and historic evidence

### ANNOTATION

According to recent research the historic and the archaeological evidence of the Golden Lane at Prague Castle complement each other rather than overlap. Archaeology documented in the Lane mainly concerns its earlier building development including the period prior Rudolf II. The social aspect of the inhabitants could not be inferred from the archaeological artefacts since the waste material was deposited outside the Lane, most probably in the Jelení (Deer) Ditch. The multi-layered street, as indicated by the pottery evaluation, was formed from other parts of the Prague Castle. The documentary evidence and the plans mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries allow following the development of still standing buildings as well as the demolished structures; they provide considerable detail concerning property relations and building modifications, and illustrate the social status of the inhabitants of the Lane.

### SUMMARY

The Golden Lane is situated in the area of the late medieval Zwinger in the northeast corner of the Prague Castle, delimited by two battery towers: Daliborka on the east and Bílá (White) Tower on the west end of Prague Castle. The entrance into the Lane lies between the No. 11 and 30. Geomorphologically the Lane lies on the northern edge of the castle promontory, which slowly slopes down towards Opyš in the east and drops vertically down to the ravine of the Brusnice stream in the Jelení ditch on the north. The presumed line of the promontory ridge runs in the southern neighbourhood of the Lane.

The Golden Lane originated on Vladislaus' of Jagellon order by the construction of the late Gothic line of the Zwinger wall after 1483. The newly formed space of the Zwinger soon became used for residential purposes. Vast building modifications were pursued in 1591–94, including the construction of the defensive corridor on the top of the rampart between the Bílá Tower and Daliborka. Rudolph II allowed with a rescript from the 16th September 1597 to build small houses for 24 castle guards. 16 houses are recorded to the year 1599 in the Zwinger, from which 10 or 11 were situated in the current Golden Lane. Today's appearance of the Lane is the result of the development after 1864, when all annexes on its south side, built through centuries were demolished. In 1952 the houses were expropriated and subsequently radically reconstructed and transformed to a museum exposition. The latest reconstruction instigated a rescue archaeological excavation from May to October 2010.

Quite limited iconographic evidence includes plans from the mid-18th century – a plan of Prague Castle and Hradčany from 1748–1754 (Fig. 3a), a plan from around 1750 (Fig. 3b), a 1785 plan by architect A. Haffenecker (Fig. 4). Langweil's model of Prague from 1826–1837 captured the state before the alterations in 1860s and plans from 1856 and 1862 are preserved along with earlier plans of houses (No. 16 and 21).

Apart from a small trench by I. Borkovský in 1943 (Fig. 6) the complete reconstruction of the Golden Lane in 2010 was the only archaeologically documented action within the studied area (Fig. 7). This rescue excavation concerned the interiors of all houses, with the exception of clearly destroyed areas. The building activities on the southern side of the lane reached only to the sub-base layers of the street; earlier contexts remained preserved.

Analysis of the ceramics from the rescue excavation were undertaken; but the full chronological range of material from individual houses was not possible since most of the earlier archaeological contexts were destroyed during the building alterations in the 1950s. The preferred location for depositing waste by the inhabitants of the Golden Lane was the Jelení ditch.

Most of the pottery finds represent the common Prague products from the second half of the 15th to the first half of the 17th century (Fig. 9). The pottery assemblage contains a minimum of five fragments of Asian porcelain – four fragments of Ming dynasty or early Čching and one fragment of gilt porcelain painted in red-blue, belonging to the Imari range (Fig. 10). Also oven tiles are represented by late medieval vessel types with square mouth and very

shallow shapes with inner green glaze, as well as oven tiles with relief decoration on the front radiating surface, unglazed or with monochromatic or polychromatic glaze (Fig. 11).

The pottery analysis indicate that the lower part of the stratigraphy in the current entry into the lane may be connected with the building activities of the Jagellon period and with the modifications of the northern fortification of the east part of the Prague Castle (Fig. 12). Frequent finds of high medieval and late hillfort period pottery in secondary positions indicate alterations of the fortifications combined with several large soil displacements.

The Golden Lane represents a clearly delimited space, probably not intended for residential purposes in the original project. The size of the rampart curves ( $4 \times 2,2$  m) offered emergency and modest housing. The aim to enlarge the houses can be observed from their earliest existence. The simplest way of enlarging the living space was temporary ownership of two houses, recorded by the written evidence. Also adding a porch to the house front was very common. Despite repeated bans the interior of the houses often reduced the thickness of the Zwinger wall. The living area could also be enlarged by a new storey or a cellar. Also a way of expansion was encroachment into the defensive corridor above the houses. Written evidence also indicates the temporary demolitions of the houses.

From the 17th to the 19th century the Golden Lane was a relatively lively urban organism, with frequent alterations and renovations of the houses due to the frequent fluctuation of owners. Each owner attempted to utilize and enlarge the living space to the maximum by building a cellar, new storey, porch, extension, or by claiming the public space on the southern side of the street for building an extension or an outhouse. The constructions on the southern side could not be properly archaeologically traced due to the limited extent of the excavation, and the provisional character of the structures (usually timber features without foundations). Archaeological excavation revealed the foundation of the risalit of Purkrabství with a stone extension belonging to the No. 14. Two buildings stand beyond this schema: No. 28 – Bílá Tower (1586–1797 dungeon) and No. 29 adjacent to it, used in 1683 either as an apartment of the steward or a guardhouse. After the abolishment of the dungeon, the units of No. 28 were rented as tenements. The number of the houses remained almost unchanged since 1620 (altogether 16 + house No. 29 on the opposite side), with temporary variations.

The Golden Lane was mainly occupied by people working for the Prague Castle. The original inhabitants were the guards (24). The most frequent occupation of the owners, mentioned by fragmentary written evidence, are the guards, or more specific – archer of the castle governor or archer by the gates of the Prague Castle. Other occupations relate to the management of Prague Castle – [gatekeeper](#), [announcer](#) of the castle tower, [personal servant](#) of his Majesty Emperor, supervisor of the Court building office, [bandleader](#) at St. Vitus, bellman at St. Vitus, [steward](#) of the Bílá Tower; the governor or the deputy governor of the Prague Castle and the notary belonged to the richer owners of houses in the Lane. The lands prosecutor was probably the highest status among the owners of the houses. If the owner died without inheritors, the house devolved to the castle government, which subsequently sold it. Specific house owners were persons connected with the church. After their death the houses were inherited by the church. In some cases the houses were subsequently sold to secular owners. Only house No. 19 remained in the ownership of St. Vitus chapter from 1757 to the present day.

According to recent research the historic and archaeological evidence of the Golden Lane at Prague Castle complement each other rather than overlap. Archaeology in the Lane documented its earlier development including the period prior Rudolf II. The documentary evidence and the plans allow following the development of still standing buildings as well as demolished structures to the present. They illustrate the social status of the house owners of the Lane, which could not be reconstructed from the archaeological artefacts since the waste material was deposited outside the Lane, most probably in Jelení Ditch. The material of the layers in the lane comes probably from other parts of the Prague Castle.

**Fig. 1.** View of the Černá (Black) Tower and Prague Castle across the Jelení Ditch. Photograph of the east part of the Zwinger fortification, the Golden Lane is behind the rampart between Daliborka (**bottom left**) and Bílá Tower (**right**). The upper row of windows belongs to the defensive corridor; the bottom windows belong to the houses of the north front of the lane. Vintage photo by František Fridrich, around 1870 (The City of Prague Museum, sign. H 010 237).

**Fig. 2.** The Golden Lane by Daliborka (hereinafter Golden Lane) with house numbering – a section of the property register map (edited by J. Matiašek, 2018).

**Fig. 3.** Reconstruction drawing of the Golden Lane: **a** – current state of the upper part of the Zwinger wall without the houses; **b** – current state with the houses; **c** – reconstructed state after the Rudolf II alteration and before the house development; **d** – reconstructed state prior the Rudolf II alteration (the reconstruction drawing by P. Chotěbor edited by J. Matiašek, 2012).

**Fig. 4.** Archival maps of the Golden Lane: **a** – section of a perspective plan of Prague Castle dated 1748–1754

(copied from VILÍMKOVÁ/POKORNÝ 1985; **b** – section of a ground plan of Prague Castle with the state around the mid-18th century (copied from VANČURA 1976, Fig. 78; edited by J. Matiašek, 2012).

**Fig. 5.** Anton Haffenecker, proposal of the rampart reinforcement by the Golden Lane from 1785. The groundplan of the Golden Lane at the bottom of the plan including the former houses behind St. Georg's monastery to the east from the Bílá Tower (APH SMP, inv. nr. 126/4).

**Fig. 6.** Prague 1-Castle, Golden Lane. Daily life in the Golden Lane on a photograph from the early 20th century (unknown author, APH, Collection of photographs of the Planning dept. of Prague Castle, inv. nr. 878).

**Fig. 7.** Prague 1-Castle, Golden Lane. Photograph from March 1940, taken for the 2nd anniversary of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia by photographer Antonín Gubčevský. The Golden Lane shortly before the research excavation by Ivan Borkovský in 1943 (A. Gubčevský, 1940, APH, Collection of photographs of the Planning dept. of Prague Castle, inv. nr. 2245).

**Fig. 8.** Prague 1-Castle, Golden Lane, excavation by The Prague Archaeological Institute. The extent of the excavation in 2010 projected onto the plan from 1862 (APH SPS, inv. nr. 126/6) with the cadastre map – **red lines** (compiled by J. Matiašek, 2017).

**Fig. 9.** Prague 1-Castle, Golden Lane. Photograph from February 1943 of house No. 23 with the staircase leading into the defensive corridor and the trench archeologically documented by Ivan Borkovský in front of the entrance to the staircase (A. Gubčevský, 1943, APH, Collection of photographs of the Planning dept. of Prague Castle, inv. nr. 822).

**Fig. 10.** Prague 1-Castle, Golden Lane, excavation by The Prague Archaeological Institute. Range of the early post medieval pottery finds from the street stratigraphy of the Golden Lane: **1** – acn. 2865+2979; **2** – acn. 2260; **3** – acn. 2358; **4** – acn. 2599; **5** – acn. 2544; **6** – acn. 2119; **7** – acn. 1484; **8** – acn. 1956. **3** – stratigraphy prior Rudolf II period (Fig. 13: 1); **1, 2, 6** – stratigraphy of Rudolf II period (Fig. 13: 2); **4, 5, 7, 8** – later stratigraphy. **1, 3** – saucepan on three feet; **2, 7** – jug; **4, 5** – measuring jug; **6** – pot (photo G. Blažková, 2012).

**Fig. 11.** Prague 1-Castle, Golden Lane, excavation by The Prague Archaeological Institute. Range of the Asian porcelain finds from the street stratigraphy of the Golden Lane: **1** – acn. 1111; **2** – acn. 215. **1** – stratigraphy of Rudolf II period (Fig. 13: 2); **2** – later stratigraphy (photo J. Matiašek, 2012).

**Fig. 12.** Prague 1-Castle, Golden Lane, excavation by The Prague Archaeological Institute. Range of the oven tiles from the street stratigraphy of the Golden Lane: **1** – acn. 2160; **2** – acn. 2476; **3** – acn. 415+417+422; **4** – acn. 2732. **4** – stratigraphy of Rudolf II period (Fig. 13: 2); **1–3** – later stratigraphy. **1, 2** – bowl shaped oven tile; **3, 4** – chamber oven tile with embossed front side (photo G. Blažková, 2012).

**Fig. 13.** Prague 1-Castle, Golden Lane. North section under the front façade of the house No. 23 in the Golden Lane. **1** – stratigraphy prior the Rudolf II alterations; **2** – stratigraphy of the Rudolf II alterations with later intrusion; **3** – above ground wall of No. 23; **4** – ramparts and foundation walls below the present day street surface (drawing J. Matiašek, 2017).

**Tab. 1.** Houses in the Golden Lane and their extensions – current state (compiled by J. Matiašek, 2012).

*Translated by Linda and Patrick Foster*