

Petr Uličný

The Magic of the View : Wenceslas IV's castle in Zderaz in Prague

ANNOTATION

The castle in Zderaz, built on the banks of the Vltava River in the New Town of Prague at the turn of the 15th century, one of the residences of King Wenceslas IV (r. 1378–1419), is depicted on many historical views of Prague. Newly identified drawing by the Dutch painter Roelandt Savery from around 1610 provides a detailed idea of this otherwise completely vanished castle. This drawing, together with already known vedute, enables to reconstruct the formation process of the castle, with a large residential tower in the earlier core, reminiscent of the East Bohemian castle of Kost. King Wenceslas added short wings to this core, probably following the style of French royal residences, allowing views towards the river and the garden. This characteristic feature of the castle and the viewing aspect can be assigned among phenomena of castles built by Wenceslas IV, such as the limitation of fortification elements and the arbitrary play with the structural details of the vaults.

SUMMARY

King Wenceslas IV (r. 1378–1419) resided in Prague not only at Prague Castle but also in palaces or castles in the city. In addition to the Králův dvůr at the Powder Gate in the Old Town, it was a small castle in a place called Zderaz, which was built on the right bank of the Vltava River in the New Town of Prague in the 1390s. After 1627, the castle was rebuilt into a convent of the Discalced Augustinians, and in 1809, it was converted into the Prison of St. Wenceslas. In the 1890s, the last remnants of the castle were removed during the construction of new residential buildings.

Due to its exposed location, the castle and later the convent was captured in most of the city's views, starting with Hartmann Schedel's *Liber chronicarum* (1493) and followed by Jan Kozel and Michael Peterle (1562), Jan Willenberg (1601), Aegidius Sadeler (1606), Wenceslas Hollar (1636) and Folpert van Ouden-Allen (1679). Although these views and the 1809 plans of the former convent drawn by the builder Josef Zobel seem to give a good idea of the castle's appearance, different reconstructions of its layout have been suggested (Lorenc 1966; Lorenc 1973, 147, 150–154; Durdík 1986, 30–34; Durdík 1997b, 136–138; Záruba 2014, 259–264). The newly identified detailed view of the castle, drawn by the Dutch artist Roelandt Savery c. 1610, housed in the British Museum in London, and his painting of a fantastic landscape with ruins of 1613, give new impetus to this discussion.

These two works provide a significant contribution to understanding the unusual architecture of the castle, which reveals an effort to build a comfortable residence with a minimum of fortification elements, with great emphasis on the view of the visually rich Prague basin and the garden extending north of the castle.

Moreover, Zobel's plans reveal an earlier castle core that probably belonged to Duke John of Görlitz, Wenceslas' younger brother, who died in 1396. The earlier castle probably consisted of a large residential tower in the southwest corner and a palace to the north, resembling the castle of Kost in East Bohemia. In the 1390s, King Wenceslas added a western palace with three small wings, similar to the one that was attached to the Old Royal Palace at Prague Castle from the southeast in the 1380s.

In pre-Hussite Prague, gardens were a regular part of the life of monastic communities and high-ranking clerics, but also of burghers, as evidenced by a list of courtyards, vineyards, and gardens from 1421–1423 (Höfler 1865, 300–304; AČ 28, 679–681). Zderaz Castle probably had a direct connection with the adjacent garden and this idea may have been inspired by the archbishop's palace located near the river next to the Charles Bridge in Prague's Lesser Town as well as by the Cité Palace in Paris, in whose residential part overlooking the garden stayed Wenceslas and Charles IV in 1378 (Šmahel 2006).

French models undoubtedly inspired Zderaz, as they did later the Albrechtsburg in Meissen, where the same trend from medieval castles to castles with an emphasis on the idea of the view dominated. However, while the Albrechtsburg was directly followed by Renaissance architecture in Central Europe, Wenceslas IV's Zderaz Castle

in Prague, almost a century earlier, became an isolated realization due to the subsequent Hussite Wars.

Fig. 1. Roelandt Savery, around 1610: Zderaz Castle in Prague. Pen drawing on paper, 152 × 185 mm. Hitherto described as "view of a ruined castle on a rocky mound "and" Perhaps a castle in the Tyrol" (© The Trustees of the British Museum, London, Prints and Drawings, inv. no. 1946,0713.1014; available at <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1946-0713-1014>).

Fig. 2. Position of the Augustinian convent (**in black**) on the site of the Zderaz castle on the current cadastral map of Prague.

Fig. 3. Josef Jüttner, 1816: *Plan der könig. Hauptstadt PRAG trigonometrisch & topographisch aufgenommen von den Oberlieut. Joseph Jüttner [...] angefangen im Jahre 1811 und geendet 1816*. Manuscript from the Kolowrat family archive in OkA in Rychnov nad Kněžnou (Roubík/Kuchař/Hlavsa 1976). The former Augustinian Convent and castle in Zderaz is marked **in red**.

Fig. 4. Josef Zobel, 1809: Plan for the prison rebuilt from the former Convent of St. Wenceslas in New Town in Prague. Ground floor, scale 1 : 144 (NA SMP, sign. A-VI-6/5). The plan preserved the imprint of the layout of the castle in Zderaz. Legend: **1** – south-west wing, **2** – north wall of the former large residential tower of the castle, **3** – escarpment, apparently in the places of the north-west wing, **4** – well, **5, 6** – gardens, **7, 8** – enclosure walls of the garden, **9** – former hospital, **10** – enclosure wall, **11** – former tower (?), **12** – garden.

Fig. 5. Josef Zobel, 1809: Plan for the prison rebuilt from the former Convent of St. Wenceslas in New Town in Prague. Ground floor, scale 1 : 144 (NA SMP, sign. A-VI-6/7). Formerly, the castle in Zderaz. Legend: **1** – southwestern wing, **2** – northern wall of the former large residential tower of the castle, **3** – escarpment, apparently in the places of the northwestern wing, **4, 5** – medieval cellars of the northern wing, **6** – Baroque cellar, **7** – south wall of the former large residential tower of the castle, **8** – convent cellars, extending from the previous castle layout, **9** – cellar, perhaps under the former tower, **10** – probably a medieval wall, **11** – Baroque latrines.

Fig. 6. Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff: Praga. Detail of the castle in Zderaz, view from the south, on the oldest known view of Prague from the Schedel's Chronicle (*Liber Chronicarum*) published in Nuremberg in 1493 (Schedel 1493, CCXXIXv, CCXXXr).

Fig. 7. Jan Kozel (Joannes Caper) / Michael Peterle from Annaberk, 1562: PRAGA BOHEMIAE METROPOLIS ACCVRATISSIME EXPRESSA 1.5.6.2. Woodcut (black and white reprint from 1904; NPÚ GnŘ, collection of plans, file no. PPOP 994-5-4558). Detail of the castle in Zderaz, view from the west. Legend: **1** – Church of St. Wenceslas, **2** – large residential tower, **3** – west wing, **4** – south-west wing, **5** – north-west wing, **6** – bailey tower, **7** – garden wall.

Fig. 8. Jan Willenberg, 1601: Eigentliche Abkontraffactur der Königlichen Hauptstadt Prag in Böhaimb. Detail of the castle in Zderaz, view from the south. Woodcut, 136 × 579 mm, published in the fifth book of the *Diadochus* (Paprocký 1602, V, 5–6; The City of Prague Museum, inv. no. H 027 739).

Fig. 9. Philip van den Bossche (drawing) / Johannes Wechter (engraver) / Aegidius Sadeler (publisher), 1606: PRAGA. Large View of the City of Prague by Sadeler. Copper engraving, etching, part 7 (© Prague City Archives, Graphics Collection, Vedute fund, sign. G 18). Detail: the castle in Zderaz, view from the west. Legend: **1** – large residential tower, **2** – south-west wing, **3** – west wing, **4** – north-west wing, **5** – northern projection of the west wing, **6** – garden wall, **7–8** – bailey towers, **9** – wall running to the Pučka spring, **10** – bell tower.

Fig. 10. Václav Hollar, 1636: PRAGA BOHEMIAE METROPOLIS. A great view of Prague from the Petřín Hill slope. Detail with the Augustinian Convent – the former castle in Zderaz, view from the west. Pen drawing on paper, coloured, 121 × 560 mm (National Gallery in Prague, Collection of Graphics and Drawings, inv. no. K 33360).

Fig. 11. Folpert van Ouden-Allen, 1679: Prague. Detail of the Augustinian Convent – the former castle in Zderaz – from the panorama of Prague seen from the west. Line drawing, the right third, 495 × 607 mm (© Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien, Kartensammlung und Globenmuseum, Wien, sign. ALB Vues 11383; KAR0514411).

Fig. 12. Anonymous, 1643: St. Wenceslas in the clouds. Detail with the church of St. Wenceslas and the Augustinian Convent – a former castle in Zderaz, view from the southeast. Copper engraving (National Museum, Prague, inv. no. 116.579).

Fig. 13. Roelandt Savery, around 1610: Zderaz Castle in Prague. Pen drawing on paper, 152 × 185 mm (© The Trustees of the British Museum, London, Prints and Drawings, inv. no. 1946,0713.1014). **A** – castle; legend: **1** – large residential tower, **2** – south-west wing, **3** – west wing, **4** – north-west wing, **5** – northern projection of the west wing, **6, 8** – bailey wall, **7** – bailey tower, **9** – southern castle wall. **B** – detail of the oriel windows on the first floor of

the large tower.

Fig. 14. Roelandt Savery, 1613: Mountainous landscape with agricultural works around a castle (Berglandschap met landbouwactiviteiten rond een burcht). Oil on wooden panel, 175 × 270 mm, signed R. SAVERY /1613 (private collection of Kunsthandel K. & V. Waterman, Amsterdam, 1986). Available at <<https://rkd.nl/explore/images/239034>> [vid. 2023-06-30].

Fig. 15. Prague, castle in Zderaz. Reconstruction of the groundplan in the time of Wenceslas IV. Legend: **1** – Church of St. Wenceslas, **2** – presumed entrance, **3** – courtyard, **4** – north wing, **5** – extension, **6** – residential tower, **7** – west wing, **8** – south-west wing, **9** – north-west wing, **10** – north projection of the west wing, **11** – bailey, **12** – garden, **13** – tower, **14** – house, **15** – moat, **16** – site of the tower, **17** – wall facing the Pučka spring. The assumed castle of Duke John of Görlitz is marked in **gray** (drawing by P. Uličný, 2022).

Fig. 16. Kost, castle. **A** – View from the southeast (photo P. Uličný, 2023). **B** – groundplan according to Dobroslava Menclová, edited by Tomáš Durdík (1999, 274, fig. 579; cf. Menclová 1972, I, 396). Legend: **1** – masonry from the first half of the 14th century, **2** – masonry from the last third of the 14th century, **3** – masonry from the turn of the 16th century, **4** – masonry from the mid-16th century, **5, 6** – later Renaissance masonry, **7** – masonry from the period after the Thirty Years' War.

Fig. 17. Prague, castle in Zderaz. Reconstruction of the 1st and 2nd floors of the castle. Legend: **1** – residential tower, **2** – south-west wing, **3** – west wing, **4** – north-west wing, **5** – northern projection of the west wing (drawing by P. Uličný, 2022).

Fig. 18. **A** – Johann Heinrich Dinebier (?), mid-18th century: View of the Žebrák and Točnick castles (Prague Castle Archive, Old Plan Collection, inv. no. 208/2). **B** – Žebrák, castle. Plaster border of the palace windows from the time of Wenceslas IV (photo by P. Uličný, 2017).

Fig. 19. Fruit harvest in a garden on the illumination of the Bible of Wenceslas IV, Prague, late 14th century, painting on parchment (ÖNB 2759, fol. 119r).

Fig. 20. Prague, the former archbishop's palace in Malá Strana. Reconstruction of its position and groundplan in the archaeological context as of 2009. **Black** Romanesque brick constructions of the bishop's court, surveyed during the demolition in 1928, groundplan according to Čarek 1947, 345; parts of the rampart in **deep brown**, hypothetical parts of the rampart in **ocher**, still standing Gothic entrance gate to the bishop's court from the 14th century in **orange** (copied from Čiháková 2009, fig. 33 on p. 23).

Fig. 21. Václav Vladivoj Tomek, 1892: Map of Prague in 1419 (copied from Tomek 1892c). Detail of the archbishop's court in Malá Strana – hatched.

Fig. 22. Jan Kozel (Joannes Caper) / Michael Peterle from Annaberg, 1562: PRAGA BOHEMIAE METROPOLIS ACCVRATISSIME EXPRESSA 1.5.6.2. Woodcut (black and white new print from 1904; NPÚ GnŘ, collection of plans, file no. PPOP 994-5-4558). Detail with the area of the former archbishop's court and garden. Legend: **1** – the entrance tower of Bishop Jan IV from Dražice, **2** – former palace.

Fig. 23. Anonymous: *Einfahl des Passawischen Krigvolcks, in die kleine Statt Prag. Anno M.DC.XI. den 15. Februarij* (Invasion of the Passau Troops in Malá Strana on February 15, 1611). Copperplate, 241 × 284 mm, published by Abraham Hogenberg (?), workshop, Cologne, 1611–1613 (Rijksmuseum, from album Serie 10: Nederlandse en Buitenlandse Gebeurtenissen, 1587–1612, RP-P-OB-78.785-357). Detail of the area of the former archbishop's court and garden. Legend: **1** – the entrance tower of Bishop Jan IV from Dražice, **2** – former palace.

Fig. 24. Joseph Sebastian Klauber / Johann Baptista Klauber, after 1740: Convent of the Discalced Augustinians with the Church of St. Wenceslas in the New Town of Prague. Copper engraving, detail (private collection, Prague, first published in Řepa 2013, 139).

Fig. 25. Franz Leonard Herget / Karl Lutz / Johannes Oppelt, shortly before 1791: *Grundris der Kay. König. HauptStadt Prag im Königreich Böhmen unter [...] Leopold des II.* Detail of the former Augustinian Convent in Zderaz. Coloured manuscript, variant B (Kačina), 1 584 × 1 237 mm, scale 1 : 3456 (National Museum in Prague, Department of Castle Libraries; taken from Hrstková/Pokorný 1991).

Fig. 26. Joseph Daniel Huber, 1769: Orthographic Plan of Prague in oblique perspective (*Wahre Laage Der Königlichen Haupt und Residentz Statt Prag*). Line drawing, 2 230 × 2 360 mm. Detail of the Augustinian Convent in Zderaz – former castle (original: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien, sign. K II 92; copy: National Heritage Institute, General Directorate, collection of plans, ev. no. PPOP-996-5-714).

Fig. 27. Paul, Jean and Herman de Limbourg, 1412–1416, and successors, 1440 or 1485/1486: *Les Très Riches*

Heures du duc de Berry (The Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry), June. Illumination on parchment, 225 × 136 mm. Detail of the Palais de la Cité in Paris, seen from the west (Chantilly, Musée Condé, Bibliothèque, Ms. 65, fol. 6v).

Fig. 28. Meissen, castle area with Albrechtsburg. **A** – view from the northeast (photo P. Uličný, 2021); **B** – groundplan (copied from Dehio 1996, 557). Legend: **1** – Albrechtsburg, **2** – cathedral, **3** – courthouse, **4** – Fronveste, **5** – provostship, **6** – gate with tower, **7** – granary, **8** – connecting hall.

Fig. 29. Paris, Palais de la Cité, Royal Palace, Logis du Roi (photo by Paul Blondel, c. 1870, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des estampes et de la photographie, copied from Albrecht 1986, Tafeln, Nr. 65).

Fig. 30. Prague Castle, Old Royal Palace, groundplan of the 1st floor. Reconstruction of the state at the time of Wenceslas IV (copied from Záruba 2014, fig. 63 on p. 102).

Fig. 31. Roelandt Savery, around 1610: View of Prague from the Bruska Gate, detail (Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, inv. no. KKSgb5208, <<https://open.smk.dk/en/artwork/image/KKSgb5208?q=KKSgb5208&page=0>>).

Translation by Linda Foster and Petr Uličný