

Current State of Knowledge of the Development of Early Modern Ceramics in the Czech Republic

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This study is an overview of the professional interest in archaeology of the modern age in the Czech Republic. Increased interest in the archaeology of the Modern period came after the year 2000. The number of published Early Modern pottery assemblages has increased significantly over the past decade. Recent years have seen a change in the publication strategy of Modern period assemblages. As such, the large Modern period find inventory is forcing archaeology to make a critical selection of assemblages which will subsequently be the subject of detailed processing and evaluation. The most important selection criteria include the complexity of the find situation, the possibility of placing it into the social context or the actual expansion of knowledge of period material culture.

KEYWORDS: Czech Republic, Early Modern period, ceramics, chronology, stove tiles, conference

INTRODUCTION

The first definition of post-medieval – Early Modern period – archaeology in Czech Republic was advanced by Z. Smetánka and J. Žegklitz (1989: 728; Smetánka and Žegklitz 1990: 7), who stated that post-medieval archaeology involved the period between the turn of the 16th century and the end of the 18th century. Based on the study of pottery from Prague, Pavel Vařeka established the transition from late medieval to Early Modern pottery in the period between the turn of the 16th century up to the middle of the 16th century (most recently Vařeka 2013: 8, 9). In general, this was the period marked by the disappearance of late medieval traditions and the emergence of Early Modern innovations. From a historical perspective, this was the

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Renaissance period in Bohemia and Moravia.¹ The widely accepted dividing line between the Early Modern and Modern periods is the mid-17th century, a boundary that was established on the basis of the widespread social changes that occurred in society following the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), the consolidation of Habsburg power and from the perspective of the cultural ascent of the Baroque. Although this is a building style, there is a noticeable change in the taste of the inhabitants and in the objects of common daily use, i.e., the “Baroque-isation” of pottery and glass forms and the method of decoration. The period of 1800–1900, referred to as the Industrial Age typically focuses on monuments associated with the Industrial Revolution. It is characterised by the emergence, and especially the spread, of ceramic materials such as creamware and porcelain and the massive production of stoneware mainly as packaging for mineral water. The Industrial Revolution in general led to an increase in ceramic production. In recent years, the archaeology of the Modern past – contemporary archaeology (Tab. 1) – has developed very successfully with a focus on the research of not only threatened, but often also non-endangered sites (Krajčíc *et al.*, 2017: 374).

Over the past 15 years, several authors have tried to describe and evaluate the development of Modern period archaeology; the earliest summary was compiled by Rudolf Krajčíc (2007). The state of research in the field of Modern period archaeology was evaluated by the author of this study in her dissertation (Blažková 2011: 6–15), which became the foundation of a subsequent publication (Blažková 2013: 183–186) and, simultaneously, inspiration for the study by J. Žegklitz (2013). An updated overview of the state of research of Modern archaeology in the Czech Republic was published in connection with the international *Archaeologia historica* conference. In all these studies, the beginnings and subsequent development of Modern archaeology in the Czech Republic are described in varying degrees of detail,² which can be marked in terms of methodological approach to historical archaeology.³ At the same

¹ Historical research also divides the Modern period into two stages: the term “Early Modern period” is used for the period of 1500–1650, the “Modern period” for 1650–1790/1800 (Petráň *et al.*, 1995: 31). The beginning of the Early Modern period then approximately overlaps with the beginning of the Renaissance (Bůžek *et al.*, 2007: 44).

² The scope of this text is limited by the space available. For this reason, citations are restricted mainly to works published in the last six years and the comprehensive studies containing more extensive bibliographies and which were of fundamental importance for the constitution of the archaeology of the Modern period. These publications can be used to supplement the information and especially the links to earlier publications.

³ Historical archaeology has a quite clear conceptualisation in the United States and Great Britain. Many definitions set different priorities, there is basically agreement that historical archaeology begins with the modern era, or with the European global expansion. Besides this chronological approach, it also incorporates information from written records, pictorial sources, and oral history. Historical archaeology is therefore predicated on this interdisciplinarity between archaeology, the study of written and pictorial sources, oral history, and anthropology (Mehler 2013: 18).

time, it should be mentioned that no study has yet been published that would deal in detail with the integration of Czech post-medieval and modern archaeology into a theoretical framework.⁴

POST-MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY UP UNTIL 2000

Early interest in Modern pottery finds can be connected with the architect Jiří Koula, who studied slipware. In his analysis of Prague finds, Koula showed extraordinary erudition and intuitively formulated working hypotheses (Koula 1917–1919), the validity of which was fully confirmed by later research. His contemporaries dealing with the issue of Modern ceramics were the museologist Kliment Čermák and the archaeologist Emanuel Leminger. The work of the potter and collector Heřman Landsfeld and the ethnographer and archaeologist Karel Černohorský are also important, especially for Moravia. A more broadly conceived interest in the post-medieval period is connected with the post-war development of medieval archaeology. Since the end of the 1960s, there was a gradual increase in published assemblages with a post-medieval theme, though these still could be numbered in the single digits. A key figure of this period was the archaeologist and ethnographer Vladimír Scheufler, who was the first to attempt to establish a border between the spheres of interest of archaeology and ethnography (Scheufler 1972). And yet, he did not use the term “Early Modern pottery”. For Scheufler, the period between 1550 and 1650 was a transitional time between medieval and folk ceramics (Scheufler 1972: 13), or between folk and stylistic/non-folk ceramics. He also closely collaborated with the foreign archaeologists, ethnographers, pottery collectors and potters who, in 1968, founded the *Internationales Hafnerer-Symposium* (IHS), later renamed *Arbeitskreis für Keramikforschung* (AfK),⁵ and whose annual professional meetings he regularly attended, ending in the 1970s. As such, he was often the only representative from Czechoslovakia who had the opportunity to be in personal contact with colleagues and follow current research issues.

The analyses of the find assemblage from Strážnice by Jiří Pajer rank among the most heavily used works on Early Modern ceramics to this day (1982; 1983). Pajer later built on these analyses with his processing of Anabaptist faience from Strachotín (Pajer 2001) and he summarised the activities of Anabaptist potters in south Moravia in later publications (e.g., Pajer 2006; 2007).

⁴ For attempts of conceptualization the origins, academic parameters, and practical fields of activity of historical archaeology in Central Europe, see Mehler 2013, Schreg 2013.

⁵ *Arbeitskreis für Keramikforschung* (AfK) continues to host professional symposia today (Okmhb.de 2021). The 52nd *Internationales Keramik-Symposium* was held in September 2019 in Bad Muskau, Germany. The 53rd annual symposium was cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The *Working Group for the Archaeology of the 16th–19th Century* was established in the mid-1980s (Krajčíc 2007: 58) and the outcome of their efforts was a seminar devoted to Modern period archaeology held in Beroun in 1986; one of the results of this seminar was the publication of presented contributions (Studies 1990). At the same time, the thematically focussed meeting was an impulse for a special publication of Modern period find assemblages (e.g., Frolík *et al.*, 1988). Although the growth in construction activities and the overall change in the social climate in the 1990s marked the end of the working group's activities, this did not mean the complete end of publications of Early Modern pottery assemblages. One of the most important works from this period is the publication of a waste assemblage from the house of the beltmaker Prokop of Tábor (Krajčíc 1998) and the full processing of material from several plots from medieval Most, including the Early Modern parts of the find assemblage (Klápště 2002).

POST-MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY AFTER 2000

Increased interest in the archaeology of the Modern period came after the year 2000, a fact undoubtedly related to the establishment of new departments and institutes of archaeology in several Czech universities (Opava, Plzeň, České Budějovice, Hradec Králové, Pardubice). Apparent at the beginning of this period is an effort to establish post-medieval archaeology as a fully-fledged archaeological discipline. Two basic facts surface in the published works: the first is an attempt to defend the significance of the publication of a given assemblage, while the second is the need to deal with the method of processing typically very large pottery assemblages, which, however, does not always lead to the desired goal (e.g., Marešová 2001). As such, significant space is devoted to the method of description and statistical evaluation of the assemblage (e.g., Dohnal and Koucký 2000; Dohnal *et al.*, 2001; Dohnal and Vařeka 2002). Playing an important role during this period have been studies by the ethnographer Vítězslav Štajnochr (2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) on Modern pottery forms in terms of their functional use.

The number of published Early Modern pottery assemblages has increased significantly over the past decade, with an important role for an understanding of pottery production being played by assemblages from waste pits at Prague Castle (Blažková and Vepřeková 2015; Blažková *et al.*, 2016). A morphological analysis has made it possible to create a chronology of the development of Early Modern pottery in Prague (Blažková 2013; 2018; Blažková and Žegklitz 2016). These assemblages became the basis for the publication of Early Modern assemblages from various parts of the Czech Republic, not only in chronological but also methodological terms. One example is the publication of pottery production from south Bohemia (Čapek and Preusz 2019a). On the other hand, the publication of finds from northeast Bohemia does not deviate from the methodology applied in the first decade of the 21st century (Drnovský 2018).

However, unlike that decade, recent years have seen a change in the publication strategy of Modern period assemblages; these are typically from waste pits that have produced both reconstructable ceramic and glass vessels, the processing of which can expand existing knowledge of everyday material culture. As such, the large Modern period find inventory is forcing archaeology to make a critical selection of assemblages that will subsequently be the subject of detailed processing and evaluation. The most important selection criteria include the complexity of the find situation (Čapek and Militký *et al.*, 2016), the possibility of placing it into the social context (Cymbalak and Matějková 2012; Cymbalak *et al.*, 2019; Čiháková and Müller 2013) or the actual expansion of knowledge of the material culture of the period (e.g., Matějková 2017).⁶

The establishment of post-medieval archaeology has generated several sub-topics that are identical to issues being addressed across Europe, with one of these being the subject of slipware. In the Czech environment, this is mainly painted products from 1550 to 1630 that associated for many years with Beroun.⁷ Under the influence of the written records, certain finds of material culture were connected with Beroun by amateur archaeologist and architect Jan Koula as early as the beginning of the 20th century (Koula 1917–1919, 250–257). Beroun pottery again received attention in the 1980s (Matoušek and Scheufler 1983; Matoušek *et al.*, 1985; Žegklitz and Zavřel 1990). Thanks to new field research, this issue was reopened directly in Beroun (Vyšohlíd 2015a), in Prague (Žegklitz 2015) and, at the same time, in connection with the processing of finds from Prague Castle (Blažková 2019). The Early Modern slipware from Bohemia corresponds to the European standards of this time, both from the perspective of ceramic forms and the method of decoration. It used double firing and not very hard-fired thicker body of red colour as for German *Werraware* (Stephan 1987: 101; 1992; 2012). Pottery forms include common kitchen ceramics and tableware, miniature vessels (toys) and objects primarily serving as decoration, such as bowls on an open-work foot. Beroun ware is similar to the finds of northern Germany style slipware (Gaimster 2006; Witte 2014), from Straubing in Bavaria (Enders 1982: 23, taf. 17/32; 1990: taf. 15–17; 2005: 32, 33, taf. 2.1, 2.2, 7.1), from Saxony (Krabath 2012: 75–79).

In contrast, attention is newly being paid to the continued use of painted decoration in the second half of the 17th century (Matějková 2019). Another Europe-wide subject is the study of pipes, artefacts that have been the focus of the work of Martin Vyšohlíd in the Czech Republic for many years (Vyšohlíd 2011; 2014; 2015b).

The growth of published collections has allowed archaeologists to pay close attention to specific types of ceramic production, including its integration into at least

⁶ That no references are provided to articles that were published in the anthologies of the *Forum Archaeologiae Post-Mediaevalis* conference is intentional (Studies 1990; 2007; 2009; 2012), as these publications are directly thematically focused on the issues of the Early Modern period.

⁷ Beroun is located roughly 40 km southwest of Prague.

the Central European context. These are most often specific ceramic products with a clear use, i.e., distillation ceramics (Blažková *et al.*, 2021), flowerpots (Matějková 2012; 2021) or pottery kilns (Čapek and Preusz 2019b).

STOVES TILES

Stove tiles make up a distinct group of pottery finds; the terminology used to describe them was defined by Zdeněk Smetánka (1968; 1969) and is used to this day. The 1980s and 90s are linked primarily to the work of Zdeněk Hazlbauer (1998), who, working with a wide range of archaeologists and museologists, attempted to map stove tile production from the Gothic period to the Baroque for the entire Czech Republic. Hazlbauer's work became the basis mainly for the processing of vast museum collections.⁸ Not only thanks to their attractive design, the Gothic and Renaissance stove tiles are a popular object of interest for archaeologists, both in museum collections and find assemblages. A detailed study of the design of the front heating wall with relief decoration makes it possible to create a relatively accurate chronological classification of specific tiles, even on the basis of the identification of the prints that served as their model. The scope of some studies goes beyond the prevailing narrow focus on typology or iconography and seeks to emphasise more generally conceived cultural and historical issues (e.g., Žegklitz *et al.*, 2009; Žegklitz 2011; 2012).

A summary of the current state of knowledge of stove tile production, including a high quality publication, was made possible by two thematic exhibitions devoted to tile production from the High Middle Ages to the Modern period. The first exhibition was held at the Regional Museum and Gallery in Most in the first half of 2018 (Šrejberová 2017; 2018). The outcome of the processing of the extensive find inventory from the rescue archaeological excavation on Republic Square in Prague by J. Žegklitz was the exhibition *To Špaček for a Stove*, held by the Museum of the Capital City of Prague and the company Archaia z.ú. from May 2019 to March 2020 (Žegklitz 2019).

ARCHAEOOMETRY

Learning about ceramics from an archaeological perspective on the basis of macroscopic observations has its limits. Efforts have been made in recent years to solve this problem in cooperation with analytical chemists. In the case of selected assemblages, attention has been paid to analyses of the ceramic body, glazes and even the degradation of the

⁸ A comprehensive list of works dealing with the topic of Gothic and Renaissance stove tiles, including publications by Z. Hazlbauer, was most recently presented by J. Žegklitz (2019).

pottery in connection with their deposition and the impacts of the surrounding environment. Today, many analytical methods common in material research are applied: for identifying the chemical and mineralogical composition, these are mainly X-ray methods (XRF, XRD) supplemented with microscopy (optical OM, electron SEM); still others are thermal analyses (DTA, TG, STA), spectroscopy of vibrational spectra (IR, RS) and Raman spectroscopy (e.g., Čapek *et al.*, 2018; Kloužkova *et al.*, 2020).

CONFERENCE

Communication and the sharing of experiences in the discipline are an integral part of professional work. The need for regularly organised personal meetings was the motivation behind the establishment of the *Forum Archaeologiae Post-Mediaevalis* international conference. The initiator and main organiser of this event was J. Žegklitz. A total of five conferences were held biannually starting in 2006, with the last event being held in 2014. Three extensive anthologies of articles reflecting the current state of Early Modern research in Bohemia and beyond were published (Studies 2007; 2009; 2012). In 2016, the 48th *Archaeologia Historica* international conference on medieval archaeology, which was held in České Budějovice, was devoted to the issue of post-medieval archaeology (AH 2017). The need for regular meetings of scholars studying similar subjects led to the organisation of the international conference entitled EUROPA POSTMEDIAEVALIS 2018, Post-Medieval Pottery Between (Its) Borders in Prague in 2018, followed by the publication of the presented articles (EP 2019). Although the second conference in 2020 could not be held due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, an anthology of articles was published in 2021 (EP 2021).

CONCLUSION

More than a century has passed since the publication of Early Modern painted potsherds by J. Koula. Since then, hundreds of Modern ceramic assemblages and contexts have been published and a chronology of individual periods has been established. The increasing number of published assemblages has meant regular corrections in the dating of ceramic production and at the same time it is a prerequisite for larger comparative studies, which will compare ceramic production not only within a specific region, but between them. In cooperation with natural scientists, the range of addressed issues is constantly expanding and creates new topics of research. In general it can be said that Czech archaeology of the Modern period is today a firmly entrenched discipline and an integral part of European research and reflects a modern methodological approach of historical archaeology.

Table 1. Chronology of archaeology of the Modern age in the Czech Republic.

Early Modern Age	1400/1500–1650
Modern Age	1650–1800
Industrial Age	1800–1900
Contermporary Achaeology	after 1900

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