
The Archaeology of Bohemia under the Reign of the Přemyslid Dynasty

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This month, the entrance hall of the main building of the Faculty of the Arts has been host to the exhibition "The Archaeology of Bohemia under the Reign of the Přemyslid Dynasty." The exhibition, running from October 10 to November 5, presents a research project organised by the Department of Archaeology of the Faculty of the Arts, and led by Professor Jan Klápště. A number of students of the Department of Archaeology are also involved in the research for the project, along with other several other institutions, including the Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences; the Institute for Archaeological Monument Care in North-Western Bohemia; the Faculty of Sciences of Charles University in Prague; the Masaryk University in Brno; and the Czech University of Life Sciences.

The project, funded for the years 2010-2014 by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, has five key areas of investigation: the structure of medieval village settlements; non-agricultural production in village environments; the structure of early medieval fortified settlements; settlement around the oldest sacral architecture in rural environments; and systems of communication in early medieval centres. Research into these topics took place at a number of different locations across Central Bohemia.

Řečany nad Labem, the site of a lone stone church standing on a hill close to the river Labe, was an important site for an investigation into the relationship between the location of sacral buildings and rural settlements. During the 12th century, Romanesque style stone churches began to appear around rural villages, and it can be assumed that these churches were constructed near to the seats of the local nobility and rural settlements. The stone church at Řečany nad Labem was consecrated by the Bishop of Prague in 1165, and is one of the oldest churches in Bohemia founded by someone other than the Duke of Bohemia or a member of the Church.

Researchers also examined fortified settlements constructed in the 9th and 10th centuries, the period in which the Czech state was formed. Prague Castle and Vyšehrad are two of the most well-known and important fortified settlements from this time. From 2011-2013, students involved in the project undertook extensive research into other fortifications at Praha-Královice and Kouřim.

An investigation into non-agricultural production in rural settlements occurred in the villages of Spindelbach and Suchomasty. Suchomasty was assumed to be the site of a bell maker, after fragments of bronze and a small bronze bell were discovered. However, the bell maker's workshop in this area has yet to be discovered.

Spindelbach, located in Krušné Hory, a mountainous area near the Czech-German border, is the highest located medieval village known to Czech archaeology. The first records of it appeared in 1356 but by 1481, records mention it as being deserted. Researchers are attempting to confirm that non-agricultural production, connected to the mining of metals in the Krušné Hory region, supported the village.

Another deserted village investigated by the researchers was Hol, located in the area of Prague's Klánovice Forest. It is likely that villagers of Hol worked to quarry sandstone e.g. for the building of St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. However, the village had a short existence: by 1437, just 100 years after its first mention in 1346, the village was recorded as being deserted. Researchers have proposed that the soil in the area was too poor for effective agricultural production.

Research into the systems of communication between early medieval centres took place near the site of the Ostrov monastery, located on an island of the Vltava river. A series of connecting roads were discovered near the monastery, in the forest on the left bank of the Vltava. As the monastery was destroyed during the Hussite Wars in 1420, researchers are sure these roads are of medieval origin.

While the overall research project is still ongoing, this exhibition provides an interesting insight into the current findings of the researchers, and how this new information could help expand our understanding of the medieval period, about which much still remains unknown.



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