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NÁMĚSTÍ REPUBLIKY (REPUBLIC SQUARE) IN PRAGUE

INTRODUCTION

The face of the extensive area on the right bank of the Vltava River to the south and east of Prague's Old Town (Staré Město pražské) began undergoing fundamental and rapid transformation from the mid-14th century. In 1348, the ruler Charles IV founded the grandly conceived New Town in Prague (Nové Město pražské), which had three main market areas – Koňský Trh (the Horse Market, now Wenceslas Square), Dobytčí Trh (the Cattle Market, now

Charles Square), and Senný Trh (the Hay Market, now Senovážné Square). However, in addition to these main squares, other open areas of less importance, and above all of a different character, also emerged or continued to develop. One such place was the area that later became known as Republic Square (Náměstí Republiky) in the northern part of New Town in Prague (fig. 1:1).

BASIC INFORMATION ON THE EXCAVATION

In 2003–2006, an extensive archaeological excavation was conducted in the area of the former military barracks of Jiří z Poděbrad on Náměstí Republiky in Prague (fig. 1:2, 3). The actual site excavation was preceded by test trenching to determine the necessary duration and financial costs of the research (Juřina 1998; Ernée et al. 2002). The partly built-up area located between the streets of Na Poříčí, Truhlářská, and Náměstí Republiky, covering a total area of 1.5 ha, was for reasons of time and expertise divided up between four archaeological institutions (Havrdá et al. 2004–2005; Juřina et al. 2006). The uniform approach applied in the excavation, the standardisation of documentation and recording methods in the field and of the subsequent basic process-

ing of data (which should be completed by the end of 2009), and the close cooperation between all the institutions, served to guarantee the possibility of more detailed processing and publication of the findings from the excavation in the future (Juřina a kol. 2007). The excavation area was divided into a grid of 4×4 m square trenches oriented along the southern boundary of the excavated site. The squares were excavated using the chessboard method and the entire excavation site was gradually dug down to the level of the geological subsoil, including all the sunken sites. All the situations uncovered in the site probes were documented using photogrammetric methods, and all the profiles were documented in drawings.

THE HISTORY OF THE LOCALITY

Náměstí Republiky is a considerably open space around 1 ha in an area set on a north-south axis and located in the northern part of Nové Město bordering with Staré Město. A network of old long-distance routes significantly contributed to the formation of

the future square, which came into being 'de iure' only over the course of the post-medieval period. These routes mostly ran from the east into the centre of the settlement on Prague's right riverbank – the future Staré Město and its main square (Staro-

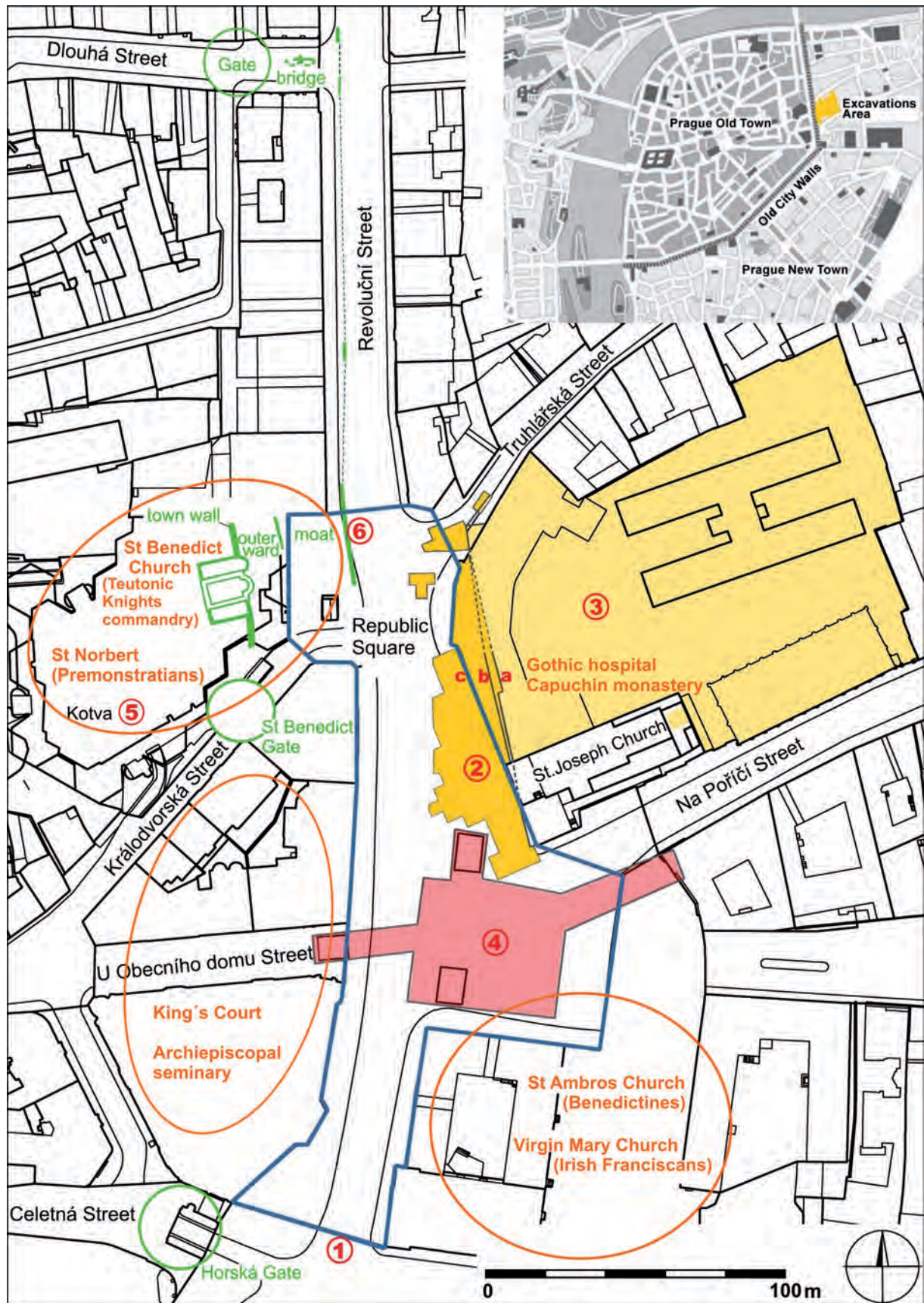


Fig. 1. Plan of Republic Square: 1 – boundary of present-day square; 2 – excavations area; 3 – excavations area of contemporary and historical public space; 4 – area destroyed during the construction of metro station; 5 – excavations area in 1971; 6 – uncovered remains of Old-Town fortification system; a – frontage line of a medieval development; b – frontage line of baroque development; c – frontage line of 19th century barracks

městské náměstí) – traversing the Vltava River at the point of the main ford in Prague, in an area now called Štvanice. At the northern tip of the area of the future Nové Město, the route followed the geomorphology of the terrain and divide into multiple paths, and ultimately the future streets Soukenická, Truhlářská and Na Poříčí probably became the permanent forms of these routes (Kibic 1969). Over the course of the 12th century, a continual belt of development gradually took place here, connecting the centre of the future Staré Město to the area of the above-mentioned ford. This area encompassed settlements around the Church of St Benedict and the Church of St Clement, and a settlement around the Basilica of St Peter on Poříčí District.

A dramatic change occurred under the rule of King Wenceslas I. Over the course of the 1230s and the 1240s, the fortifications of Prague's Staré Město were built. The territory of a local Romanesque settlement that until that time had been an integral complex, was divided by the belt of the fortifications, and after that development on either side of the town moat followed a different course (Dragoun 2002). Within the safety of the town walls a commandry of the Teutonic Knights was built near the Church of St Benedict and the church itself was extended and embedded in the Old-Town fortification walls. In the area of Náměstí Republiky (that is, in the security zone outside the town walls), there was a substantial decline in all construction activity. Standing buildings were pulled down and with one exception this area remained unsettled on for the next century, until Nové Město was founded in the mid-14th century. However, it was during this period that the greatest amount of activity can be recorded in the area of the square itself, which for the first time became a lively public space. It was possible to enter Staré Město through eight main gates, three of which were located in the vicinity of what became Náměstí Republiky. Horská Gate (at the opening of Celetná Street) was located on the square's southern edge, St Benedict Gate (on Králodvorská Street) was located directly on its western edge, and somewhat further to the north there was a gate at the opening of Dlouhá Street. This busy junction thus continued to form the route connecting the town behind the walls with ongo-

ing settlement east of Staré Město outside the defensive zone of the town walls.

After Nové Město was founded by Charles IV in 1348, the land in this area was parcelled up and stone buildings were built, probably in the period from the 1370s, using a basic module system of 12-metre-wide allotments (Samojská 2007). On the northwest edge of the square a relatively large Gothic hospital and its Virgin Mary Chapel were founded in 1350 and in the southwest corner the Benedictine monastery and the Church of St Ambrose were founded. At the end of the 1370s, Wenceslas IV began building his residence – King's Court – in Staré Město in the immediate vicinity of the square. King's Court was created out of the extensive transformation of an older residence and even incorporated in its structure part of the old town fortifications. In 1383, the King moved his royal court from Prague Castle to this location, where it remained for a full century. This move was of course reflected in the value of the surrounding land all around Náměstí Republiky, and written sources provide evidence of the profound transformation of social topography in this area.

The built-up area around Náměstí Republiky was also profoundly transformed during the Baroque period, when it came to form a kind of 'spiritual centre'. Over time, four new monasteries and an archiepiscopal seminary were built at this location. During the Thirty Years' War a Capuchin monastery and the Church of St Joseph (still standing there today) were founded on the site of a defunct hospital. Almost directly opposite, the Premonstratensians obtained the old Church of St Benedict and next to it built Norbertina, their large seminary building (the older church was later replaced by the new building of St Norbert Church). The archiepiscopal seminary obtained its seat on the grounds of the former King's Court, and opposite it, roughly on the site of the defunct Benedictine monastery, the new building of the Irish Franciscans and the Church of the Virgin Mary were founded. Finally, not far from King's Court on Celetná Street, the Bernardinum was founded – the Cistercian college and seminary, and St Bernard Chapel. Following the reforms introduced by Joseph II at the end of the 18th century, all these large sites ceased to exist; some of them were torn down and some were left for use by the army.

THE FIELD SITUATION

An extensive, open-area archaeological excavation was conducted in the north-eastern part of the current square, covering an area equal to around 9%

of the total excavation area (1470 m²), which in turn is equal to 15% of the total area of Náměstí Republiky. When the historical public space that is con-

cealed beneath the floors of the interiors of the standing buildings is included, then the total excavated area was equal to 1990 m² (fig. 1:2). The central and largest part of the square (3000 m²) was destroyed during the construction of the metro system in the 1980s, without any archaeological documentation (fig. 1:4). Along the perimeter of the square, several small archaeological trenches were dug out in connection with repairs to the utility mains. A large excavation took place in 1971 on the site where the department store Kotva stands today (on the north-western edge of the square, fig. 1:5) covering an area of approximately 0.7 ha, but that excavation was conducted under very difficult conditions, and findings have thus far only been published in the form of several preliminary reports (Martinec 1977; Olmerová 1982; Hanáková, Stloukal 1988; Ječný, Olmerová 1992).

A compact triangular section formed the largest excavated area (1280 m²), and it also yielded the greatest amount of interesting information. In this section, the current surface of the square was measured at a level of 192.8–195 m above sea level (MASL), and it sloped from the south to the north (across a section of 120 m the level of the terrain falls by 2.2 m). The surface of contemporary square had a total thickness of 1 m and was made out of

slab, concrete and loose material foundation. This dramatic modification of the entire surface area of the site during the 20th century is what most likely destroyed part of the historical top layer dating to the late mediaeval and early modern periods. Other forms of recent interference in the excavated site mainly relate to the digging of trenches for the underground utility mains (the water, gas, and sewer systems) and the concrete foundations for street lamps. Despite these interferences, the site still represented a very well preserved and integral historical public space with an approximately 1.5-metre thick strata dating to the high middle ages (fig. 2).

The surface of our excavation was situated on 'Maniny terrace', that is, the main valley terrace of the Vltava River that forms the geological bed of a large part of Staré Město and Nové Město. The sand-gravel diluvium of this terrace originated in the late Ice Age, during the Late Pleistocene epoch – the Würm glacial stage (Zavřel 2006). During the Holocene epoch, brown to grey-brown soil horizons, with a maximum thickness of 0.15–0.5 m, formed gradually on the surface of the sand-gravel terrace with clay-sand cover. The originally unsettled terrain sloped slightly from the south (192.4 MASL) to the north (189.4 MASL). The surface of the soil horizon formed the lowest walking level on which settlement activity was recorded.

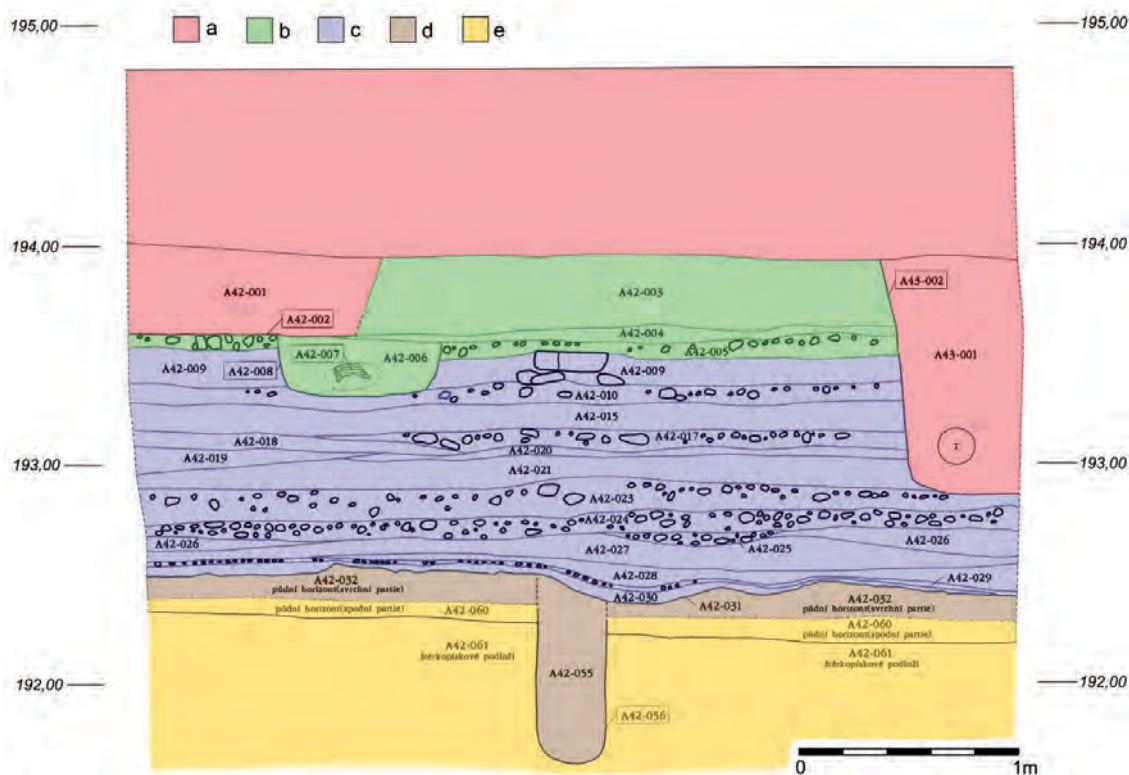


Fig. 2. Example of the strata typical for the area of the square: a – 19th–20th centuries; b – 16th–18th centuries; c – 2nd half of the 13th–1st half of the 14th century; d – 2nd half of the 12th–1st half of the 13th century; e – subsoil

PRE-URBAN SETTLEMENT

The oldest settlement activity detected at this site dates to the 2nd half of the 12th century. In that period, the site was an integral part of a large, densely settled zone that formed a continuous link between the area of future Staré Město and Petráská čtvrť (St Peter District, to the east of the excavation site). Wholly similar situations and traces of activities are recorded on the site where the square is today and in the rest of the excavated site on the premises of the former military barracks. It may be possible to break down this stage of settlement (from the 2nd half of the 12th century to the 1st third of the 13th century) into several more specific time horizons, but this will certainly not be possible in the case of all the situations uncovered. This place became a hub of artisanal and settlement activities. On the level of the soil horizon, hundreds of holes, pits and other remains were detected – from post and column holes to a range of pits connected with the use of heat-based technology. Activities were mainly concentrated in the central and northern parts of the main excavation site on the square. Along the southern edge of the site, only a pair of ditches on a southwest-

northeast axis was detected. The excavation uncovered the southernmost of the two ditches, at a length of 14.4 m, with a maximum width of 2.4–3.7 m, and with a depth of 1.6 m. Around 2 m north of this ditch a smaller ditch was documented that had a total detected length of 10.5 m, a width of around 1.6 m, and a depth of 0.8 m. These ditches were not natural water channels, they were most likely some form of the boundary located around yard-like area, but it is not possible to establish a connection between them and any of the particular situations uncovered. The largest category of remains was traditionally that of post and column holes, and in several spots it was possible to detect clear lines 4–8 m in length that represented the fence divisions on the site. A large share of the situations uncovered were traces of artisanal activities connected with heat-based technology: heating furnaces, kilns and fireplaces (fig. 3). Among the most interesting finds was a structure interpreted as having been a pit used for the casting of bells. The pit was long, 4.4 m in length, with a maximum width of 1.8 m and a depth of 1.2 m. In the centre of the pit there was a heating channel made



Fig. 3. Remains of heat-based technology structures: a-b – heating furnaces; c – kiln; d – fireplace – after removal of clay surface

up of two rows of diabase stones with a clay O-ring set on top. Fill of this pit was made up of clayey sand-gravel with bits of fired clay, pieces of cinders, and small fragments of non-ferrous metals (Vyšohlíd 2007; in print). An accumulation of heating furnaces was also uncovered at two spots, each of which had a superposition of 4–5 objects of an oval layout 1.2–2.2 m in length and 0.75–1.1 m in width. The fill of the tub-shaped structures with burnt walls, sunk to a maximum depth of 0.4 m into the soil horizon, contained numerous pieces of diabase stones and river pebbles that had been exposed to very high heat, and there was also a large amount of cinders and ash. These simple structures, the original appearance of which is still unclear, tend to be associated with ferrous metallurgy (Havrdá et al. 2001; Podliska, Zavřel 2006). Support for this connection can also be found in one of the nearby pits, which was filled with slag (circa 3 kg). More pieces of diabases, minettes, and river pebbles showing traces of heat were found in many of the layers covering these remains. These layers showed evidence of disturbance and destruction of many other pits at the time they became defunct. Eight other individual, and usually smaller, heating furnaces were also found. Another category was made up of the remains of some light wooden right-angled structures that were found in three cases. These were fragments of the foundation furrows for wooden beams, suggesting the existence here of cribwork buildings. The only fully surviving ground plan was 3.5×3.7 m in size (an area of

13 m²) with a foundation trough 0.1–0.15 m in width. In the northeast corner of this structure, a fireplace was uncovered, which was made up of small stones covered with a layer of burnt clay. Similar fireplaces were also found in other uncovered remains of the foundation furrows. These structures can be interpreted as probably having been light wooden sheds or buildings likely used as facilities for local artisans. Evidence of artisanal activity was of course not the only evidence of the oldest pre-urban activity found. A younger horizon in this oldest stage was made up of the remains of sunken timber-framed and stone houses, both of which were also found in the surface area of the future square. What is probably a fragment of the cellar of a timber-framed house set on a northwest-southeast axis was detected along the western edge of the excavation, its minimum dimensions being 8 m in length and 5 m in width, and having a depth of approx. 2 m. At the foot of this trench, several large column holes were recorded, suggesting the existence of a building that was made out of thick perpendicular logs or beams. A very interesting finding was the heavy concentration of mortar and hewn blocks of plaener stone in the fill, which suggest perhaps a combined structure that, like one of the buildings on the site of the former military barracks, where a 15×8 m timber-framed house was uncovered with a stone entrance made out of hewn blocks of plaener stone. This brings us to another find in the area of the square: the remains of a building representative of Prague Romanesque



Fig. 4. Remains of Romanesque palace (2nd half of the 12th century)

stone architecture, walled with carefully hewn blocks of plaener stone. This expansive palatial character house with large two-part cellar space on a north-south axis (and an internal ground plan of 19 m × 5.5 m) was originally divided up by groin vaults set on sandstone columns (fig. 4). The unique character of this structure is also evident from the fragment of a cesspit uncovered along the north wall of the palace (a square ground plan with an inside edge 1.8 m in length and a maximum preserved height of 4.4 m), where there were finds of glass and leaded window rods (Juřina 2006). The second, smaller, stone building was uncovered on the actual site of the former military barracks, as was the third building, in which the only walled element was the entrance (Dragoun 2008).

The second stage of pre-urban activity forms a relatively short but distinctive period, which is connected with the desertion of local settlement and the construction of the fortifications of Staré Město. The 2nd third of the 13th century marked the start of the biggest construction activity in early Gothic Prague, which clearly laid out the boundaries of Staré Město in Prague. What this meant for the area our excavation is set in is that all the wooden and stone buildings was torn down as far as at least 170 m from the town moat. This process was especially evident in the case of the Romanesque palace, which bore clear signs of a controlled demolition with designs of re-using the palace's building materials. A unique find from this turning-point period was a fragment of

a large lime kiln uncovered in the area of the square. This stone construction, 6.5 × 6.5 m in size (the inner area of the kiln was 35 m²), was walled with quartzite stones (fig. 5). The eastern wall originally comprised three brick arches of openings of heating channels set on the north and south perimeter walling and on two quartzite pillars. Beneath one arch that was not destroyed, when the kiln was deserted, a stock of grey limestone was preserved (the raw material for producing lime). Its location just a very short distance from the edge of the moat, its imposing size, and the short period it was in operation for, support the justified hypothesis that this production facility was used for the construction of the adjacent section of the town fortifications. The structure of the Old-Town fortifications was uncovered mainly during the documentation of the cable collector chutes and the ramps into the underground parking on the northern edge of the square and on Revoluční Street. A fragment of a Gothic bridge that ran across the moat and which was walled with plaener stone was uncovered at the opening of Dlouhá Street. In structure and size, it is similar to another bridge uncovered during the construction of the vestibule for the metro station at Můstek. The course of the counter-escarpment edge of the fortification moat was identified along a 185-metre section. The steep walls of the moat here were walled mainly using roughly riven slate combined with quartz rock, just as in other examined sections of the Old-Town walls. Owing to these data and information from an



Fig. 5. Fragment of a kiln used to produce lime that was uncovered on the square

earlier excavation in 1971, it was possible to determine that the width of the moat at this place was 21 m across (Ječný 1978). If we add on the 12-metre outer ward, the total width of the fortification in the area of Náměstí Republiky was 35 m (fig. 1:6).

During the third stage of pre-urban activity in the area of the square was when the public space took shape. The low intensity of settlement – which is evident from the fact that in the remains from the excavation site there are almost no buildings of any kind or any other structures (with one exception, mentioned below) up until the founding of Nové Město – is in sharp contrast with the relatively thick strata, around 1.5 m, that then formed at this location over the course of approximately a century (from the 2nd half of the 13th to the 1st half of the 14th century) and covered all the older situations. The start of this stage was marked by a levelling out of depressions in the terrain. Larger sunken situations, such as the timber-framed building and the lime kiln, were filled in all at once with a large amount of sand-gravel, probably mined from the fortification moat. In the southern part (in the direction of Na Poříčí Street) and in the eastern part of the square, a stone-pitching level formed along a northwest-southeast axis with a minimum width of approx. 12 m (its highest level – 193.9 MASL). The individual stone-pitching layers around 0.05–0.3 m thick were formed out of a mixture of sand and clay, also containing a considerable amount of small river pebbles, often with fragments of plaener, quartzite, bricks, and exceptionally even large bones of hoofed mammals mixed in. Evidence of the busy activity in this area is provided by the worn-out wagon tracks and by frequent finds of what can be described as ‘lost items’ (which will be discussed below). The stone-pitching leading westward gradually tapered out and the western half of the site was formed by sandy clay and a large amount of anthropogenic organic waste (strips of wood, skin, and bone fragments). These spots were like soggy local depressions in the terrain and used as places where waste accumulated, dumped from the artisan workshops (mostly carpenters, joiners, but also butchers and tanners) operating inside the walls or which moved here during the wall cleanup. At this same time, there also emerged a small channel, 38 m in length, 2 m in width and 1 m deep, which was found on the eastern edge of the site (descending

towards the north) running in a north-south direction. An exception to the entirely uniform method of surface stone-pitching was found in an area (52 m²) along the western edge of the historical public space – the compact surface in this area was made up of large blocks of slate and slate gravel up to 0.3 m thick. The reason for the specific surfacing of the terrain in this area remains unclear, but it predated the stone buildings that were built here after Nové Město was founded.

The stock of founded artefacts from the site of the square includes not just the above-mentioned organic waste, such as strips of wood, skin, and numerous bones, but also a rich inventory of metal artefacts. The main iron artefacts were horseshoes, bits, and spurs (in one case a cart-wheel fitting), which suggests that there was a great deal of horse traffic in the area of the public space. When the distribution of the horseshoes (circa 180 pieces) is plotted on the entire area of the excavation grid, we find that 56% of these finds (100 pieces) are concentrated in merely 13% of the excavated area of the public space. This percentage is even greater if we exclude finds from the rest of the excavation site that do not date to the period between the 2nd half of the 13th century and the 1st half of the 14th century focused on here. Another example of finds typical for a public space is ‘lost items’ – that is, objects lost by people as they passed through the area. These include small artefacts, such as clothing appliqués made of non-ferrous metal, iron keys, small knives, but also personal seals (2 pieces), small coins, scale weights, clasps and small bells (fig. 6). This inventory of artefacts also includes small ceramic statues (small horses and human figures). A special category consists of artefacts made out of bone and intended for games (fig. 7). Almost 70 astragals, playing dices, and game stones were found in the total excavation site. Even in this case the objects are notably concentrated in the area of the public space. A full 54% of the artefacts (37 pieces) were thus concentrated within just 13% of the excavated site (Čechura, Vyšohlíd 2008). This provides us with a picture of a space with horses and people moving hectically about and where people also stopped a while – for games and to exchange information. Finds of a few coins (fewer than 20 pieces) and scale weights (3 pieces) may indicate the presence of a peripheral and less important (occasional) market.

THE FOUNDATION OF NOVÉ MĚSTO IN PRAGUE

The architects of Charles IV respected the large triangular shape of the public space (that would even-

tually become Náměstí Republiky) when they were laying out the basic network of streets in this part



Fig. 6. A selection of artefacts: a-o – non-ferrous metal artefacts; p-y – iron artefacts

of the emerging Nové Město. This fact is supported by the above-mentioned strip of stone-pitching road with clear traces of worn-out wagon tracks running in a northwest-southeast direction, which the newly laid-out street line then followed (fig. 1:a). However,

it must be noted that the new allotments were not laid out on 'greenfields' even here. A major discovery was an early Gothic stone building at the point where Náměstí Republiky meets Na Poříčí Street, which was later incorporated into the street front of

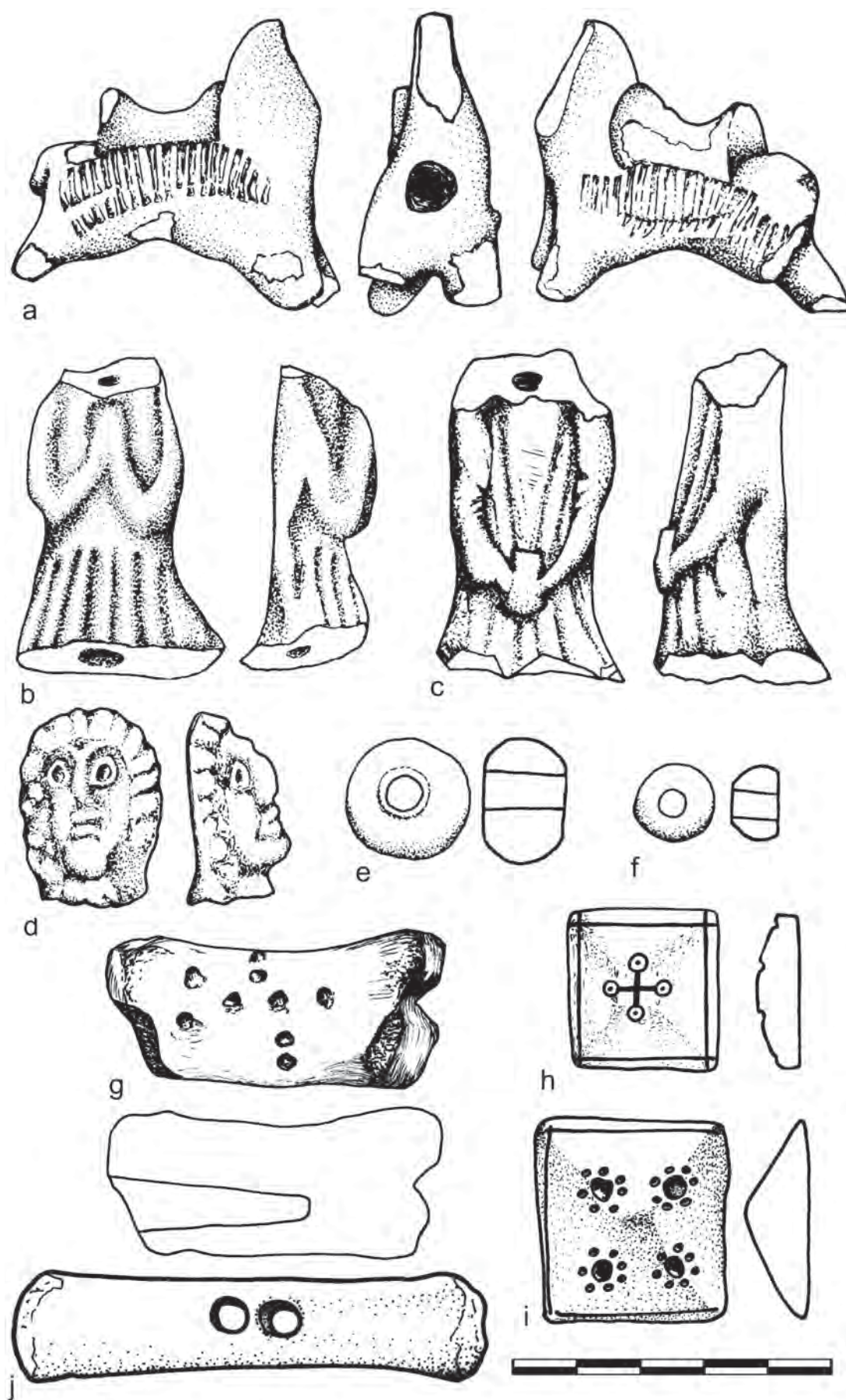


Fig. 7. A selection of artefacts: a–f – ceramic artefacts; g–j – bone artefacts

the emerging block of buildings in Nové Město. The stratigraphic context shows that the building must have originated before the end of the 13th century. This indicates a fundamental change in the approach to the security rules that applied in the area immediately adjacent to the town fortifications. While when the fortifications were built and all the Romanesque buildings standing in this area had to be torn down, around fifty years later these strict rules evidently no longer applied, and (although it represents an exception) just 50 m away from the moat, a new stone building was erected. This fact confirms information in written sources that a Gothic hospital founded here in 1350 emerged in the site of an older residence. The strata and the structures in the area of the square that date to the period after the

founding of Nové Město were traced only in small fragments and mainly so in the southern part of the excavated site. The dating of these strata and perhaps also the lower parts of several pits is complicated by the fact that they were part of the uppermost layers that were affected most by the later (recent) disruptions and trenches. It might be possible to date some of them to the 15th century or perhaps the start of the 16th century, but generally it is not believed that there was any significant rise in the terrain in this period (Kašpar 2004). It remains a question as to how much the surface layers from the late mediaeval and early modern periods were destroyed in connection with modern repaving of the square over the course of the 20th century.

THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

A major change in this part of Náměstí Republiky came with the construction of the Capuchin monastery in the 2nd third of the 17th century. This led not just to the demolition of most of the older Renaissance buildings, but also to a shift in the street front towards the square by 1–3 m, while retaining the direction of the street line (fig. 1:b). The only exception was the façade of the newly built Church of St Joseph. One of the few distinctive records of activity in the area of the square for this period is

a wooden conduit, an 11-metre fragment of which was found approx. 0.3 m below the surface on which the archaeological excavation began (fig. 8). The conduit was made up of considerably decayed bored logs connected by iron conduit bushings. It was cylindrical in shape with a low rib, with a diameter of 125 mm, and a height of 60–80 mm. Four pieces of these conduit bushings were found (only one in situ) and it was possible to reconstruct course of conduit for a length of around 50 m, even though it had been



Fig. 8. Remains of an early modern wooden water main connected by iron conduit bushings.

destroyed by trenches from the later sewer systems. This water main was undoubtedly connected to one of the two water towers in Nové Město. For this part of town, that would have been the Novomlýnská Water Tower, which still stands today not far from the Vltava riverbank, 400 m north of Náměstí Republiky. The wooden water tower is first mentioned in writing in 1484. Following repeated renovations, the now stone tower acquired its current appearance after the mid-17th century (Novotný 2008). The course of the mains in this area is confirmed in plans for the water-main system in the records of the New Town authority dating to 1728 and 1774. Unfortunately, in this case the archaeological dating is very complicated and can fall within a relatively long time frame (16th–18th centuries). In Prague, wooden water mains have been detected at numerous locations, and their identification was aided mainly by documentation in a site on Wenceslas Square, where wooden bored legs of 2–4 m in length were uncovered, connected by iron conduit bushings with a diameter of 56–152 mm, and with a height of 55–86 mm. The remains were dated to between the 15th and 17th centuries (Huml 1975). It is generally believed

that these water distribution systems were placed at a depth of around 1 m. This fact is supported not just by arguments of practical logic (freezing depth), but also by some written records (Šíroky 2000, p. 366). The trenches dug for the water mains on Náměstí Republiky were just 0.3 m below the level of the highest preserved historical terrain. This fact may support the possibility suggested above that the historical strata was lowered during surfacing work on the square during the 19th and 20th centuries. Small fragments of paving from polished quarried stone mixed with river pabbles set on a bed of sand were uncovered in just two cases. The paving was found in the immediate vicinity of the street front (along the western edge of the historical public space) and was dated to the 16th century.

Another major change in the face of this part of the square came with the construction of the new military barracks buildings during the 19th century. In 1853, the main barracks building was completed, which now forms the façade onto the square. The construction of this building reduced the size of the historical public space by 400 m² and considerably altered the line of the eastern street front (fig. 1:c).

CONCLUSION

Full processing of findings of the excavation on Náměstí Republiky has not yet been completed, but the preliminary informations presented here offer a very interesting exploration of this unusual public space. Náměstí Republiky initially formed an integral part of the pre-urban settlement area, but was cut off with the construction of the Old-Town fortifications, the line of which was determined by the ruler without much regard to the intensity of settle-

ment activity at this location at that time. After the brief, but intensive, period of wall construction, this area established itself as an unofficial, but very busy public space in front of St Benedict Gate. The setting and layout of the grid of streets in Nové Město fully respected the function of this area and the public space that eventually acquired the 'title' of a square has continued to function up to the present time.

Translated by Zuzana Maritzová

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