

Downfall of the Rokštejn castle in 1467

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Abstract: *The Rokštejn castle has played an important role in the political history of the Bohemian-Moravian border during the Middle Ages. From its humble beginnings as a seat of local noble family, from which the castle bears its name, through the Margravian phase, during which the castle was rebuilt and gained its two-palaced schema, to the Waldstein ownership, which later meant its demise, as the Waldstein family's political orientation became one of the precursors for a larger military conflict which became known as the Bohemian-Hungarian War (1468–1478). The evolution of the castle from the half of the 13th century to the 1467 is reflected here to assess the military strength of the castle and the possibilities of its inhabitants/defenders during the last siege of the castle in 1467.*

Key words: Castle – siege – Middle Ages – military equipment – pre-Bohemian–Hungarian War (1468–1478)

The history of the Rokštejn castle – political reasons for the siege

The Rokštejn castle is located in the historical border area of the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Margraviate of Moravia (modern day Czech Republic; Fig. 1). From the end of the 12th century this borderland was colonized, and new political and economic structures developed in this previously forested region. New noble families come into the light of written records, along with their manors and lordships. The studied region historically belonged originally to many owners, but soon their different economies and administration were unified under the rule of the Rutenštejn family during the 13th century. With the Waldstein family, the size of the lordship increased, as the Waldsteins were systematically buying and exchanging estates to create a compact lordship. During this period, it became known as the Brtnice Lordship, after the Rokštejn castle had been besieged and destroyed in 1467, and consequently abandoned, the seat of power moved to the close-by market town of Brtnice. The year 1467 is not the first time the castle was besieged and destroyed, it was during winter of 1306/1307 still under the Rutenštejn family ownership, but the castle had been rebuilt and used for another 160 years. The main players in the demise of the Rokštejn castle are the members of the Waldstein Family from Brtnice, who opposed politically to the royal town of Jihlava. As the Waldsteins first formed bandit groups, and after the burning of Jan Hus professed the Hussite faith, and the town of Jihlava was on the Catholic side. This created a tension which culminated in destruction of the castle when the citizens of the Jihlava town besieged the Hussitic castle.

The House of Waldstein originates from an old Bohemian lineage of the Markvartic dynasty. The first representative of this noble house in Moravia was Hynek of Waldstein who obtained the lordship of Brtnice and at the end of 14th century. The relationship between Waldsteins and the Jihlavians was never a steady one, leaning towards animosity, rather than partnership. As mentioned above, under Hynek of Waldstein and then his sons Jindřich and Zdeněk, were organizing armed groups which robbed and killed throughout the Czech Lands, but mainly remained within southeastern Moravia. This, of course, was not looked upon very fondly from the perspective of the royal town of Jihlava, as is evident from the Execution and Exile Records of Jihlava from 1405–1457 (Hoffmann ed. 2001). The older

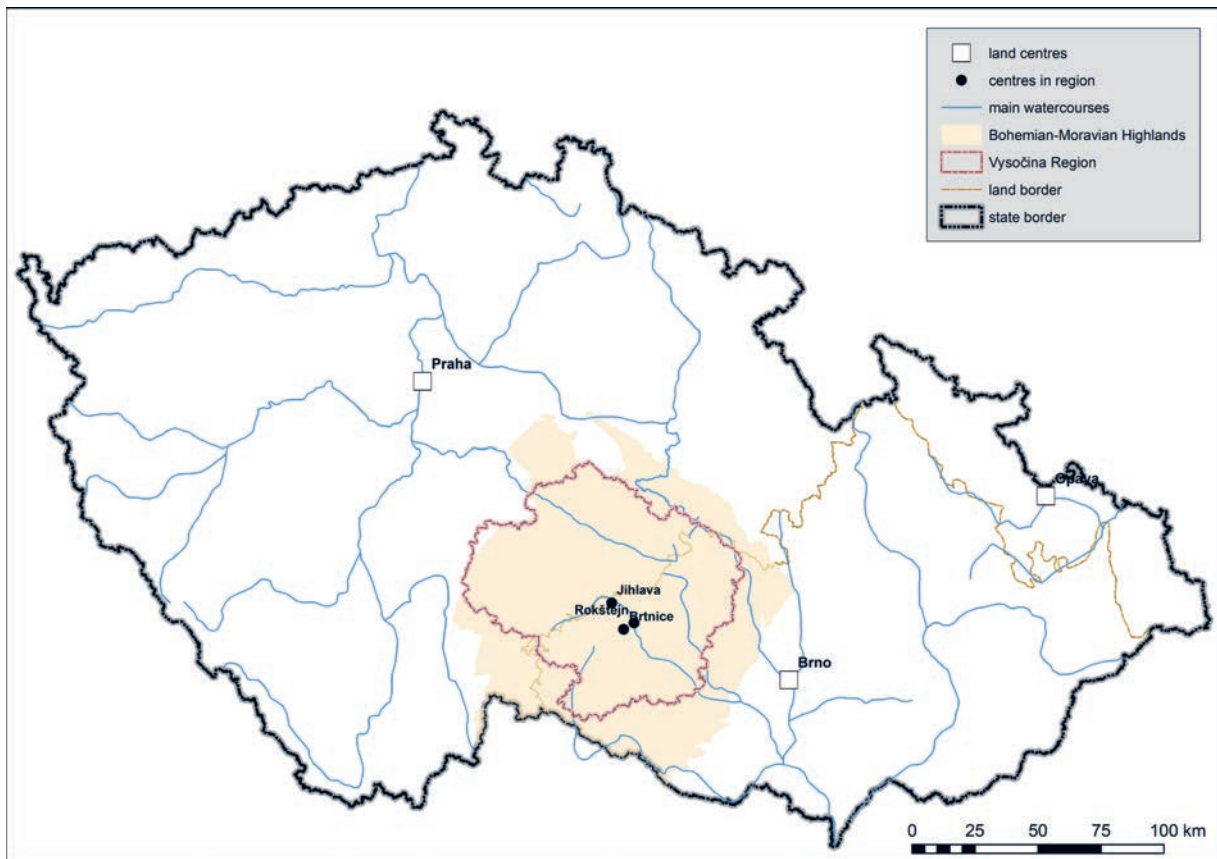


Fig. 1: Location of the Rokštejn castle within the Czech Republic.

son of Hynek, Jindřich, joined his seal to the Bohemian Protest against the condemnation and execution of Jan Hus in 1415. This act cemented the political orientation of the family, until its end in 1623, when the last member of the Waldstein Brtnice Family, Zdeněk IV, died at the Špilberk Prison in Brno, as he, too, stood on the wrong side of history during the Thirty Years' War. Even through marriages, the House of Waldstein and Rokštejn (later Brtnice) became related to other important Moravian noble houses who stood on the Hussite side as well (the House of Pernštejn and the House of Kunštát and Poděbrady), but also on the Catholic side (the House of Pňovice and Sovinec). The relationship with the House of Kunštát and Poděbrady later became useful, as the future king of Bohemia, George of Poděbrady, was part of this noble House, and in 1465 the king sent a letter to the Jihlavians protecting Hynek of Waldstein¹ against a supposedly false testimony (Chlumecký ed. 1856, 32; Hoffman – Křesadlo 1971, 52), and once again on 26th of May 1467, so that the Jihlava's Council would not endorse the enemies of the Waldstein brothers (Hynek and Václav), who stand fast at the King's side (Chlumecký ed. 1856, 33; Hoffman – Křesadlo 1971, 54).

The letter came just a few days before an important turning point in the political situation of the Moravian Land took place. The Zelená Hora League, which stood against the king George, came into an alliance with Moravian towns Olomouc, Brno, Znojmo, and Jihlava. These royal towns mutinied against the king at the beginning of June 1467, and riots in Brno could be an inspiration behind the siege of the Rokštejn castle by the Jihlavians (cf. Čornej – Bártilová 2007, 245). Rokštejn was besieged sometime after the harvest on 1467 (Mazáčková 2017, 762), and the siege itself was just a short-term matter, with a clear goal of fast destruction of the castle, to remind the Waldsteiners of the threat the town

¹ Son of Zdeněk of Waldstein and grandson of the founder of the dynasty, also named Hynek.

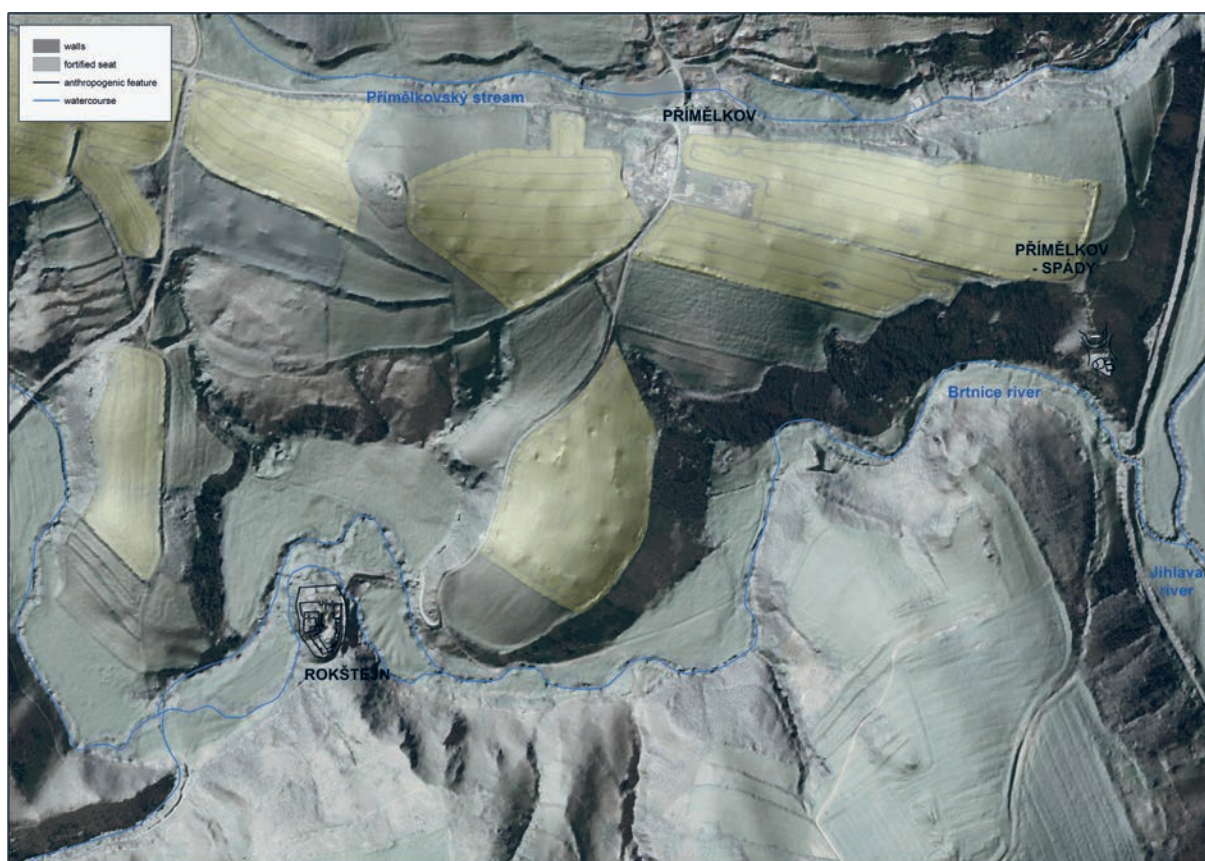


Fig. 2: Position of the Rokštejn castle within the River Brtnice Valley. Another, smaller-scale fortified keep is situated west of the castle, at the mouth of the River Brtnice.

of Jihlava can become. The centre of the Lordship may have been destroyed, yet the family swiftly responded by using their other castle in the market town of Brtnice as their seat and continued to be an important economical and political player, not only in the Central Bohemian-Moravian Highland, but in the Crown Lands of the Bohemian Kingdom, until 1623 when the last member of the Waldstein family died. Again, for being on the wrong side of history, as Zdeněk IV still held the family faith, and after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, was imprisoned at the Špilberk Castle in Brno, where he died. The lordship was given to an Italian nobleman, Rombaldo Collalto et San Salvatore, who held it until 1945.

The castle layout and architecture – history of the archaeological research

The castle is located on a rocky outcrop in the Brtnice River Valley and is relatively hidden in the surrounding landscape. The narrow valley also poses a threat, as it becomes almost canyon-like closer to the river mouth, some 1.2 km from the castle, and the towering valley sides create natural siege positions (Fig. 2; Fig. 3). The castle is built into the rock bed which in itself limited further additions to castle, and even despite of this predicament, the Castle grew into a three-part layout, represented by the Upper Castle, the Lower Castle, and the Northern Outer Bailey (Fig. 4).

The Rokštejn castle has a long history of excavations, the very first one being that of the Countess of Collalto, who in July of 1728 ordered her clerk M. Továra to lead an expedition, in order to retrieve marble tiles. A letter from this clerk is the very first archaeological record of the dig, as it specifies where the excavation took place, and what was found, in this case, what was not, as the marble tiles were not

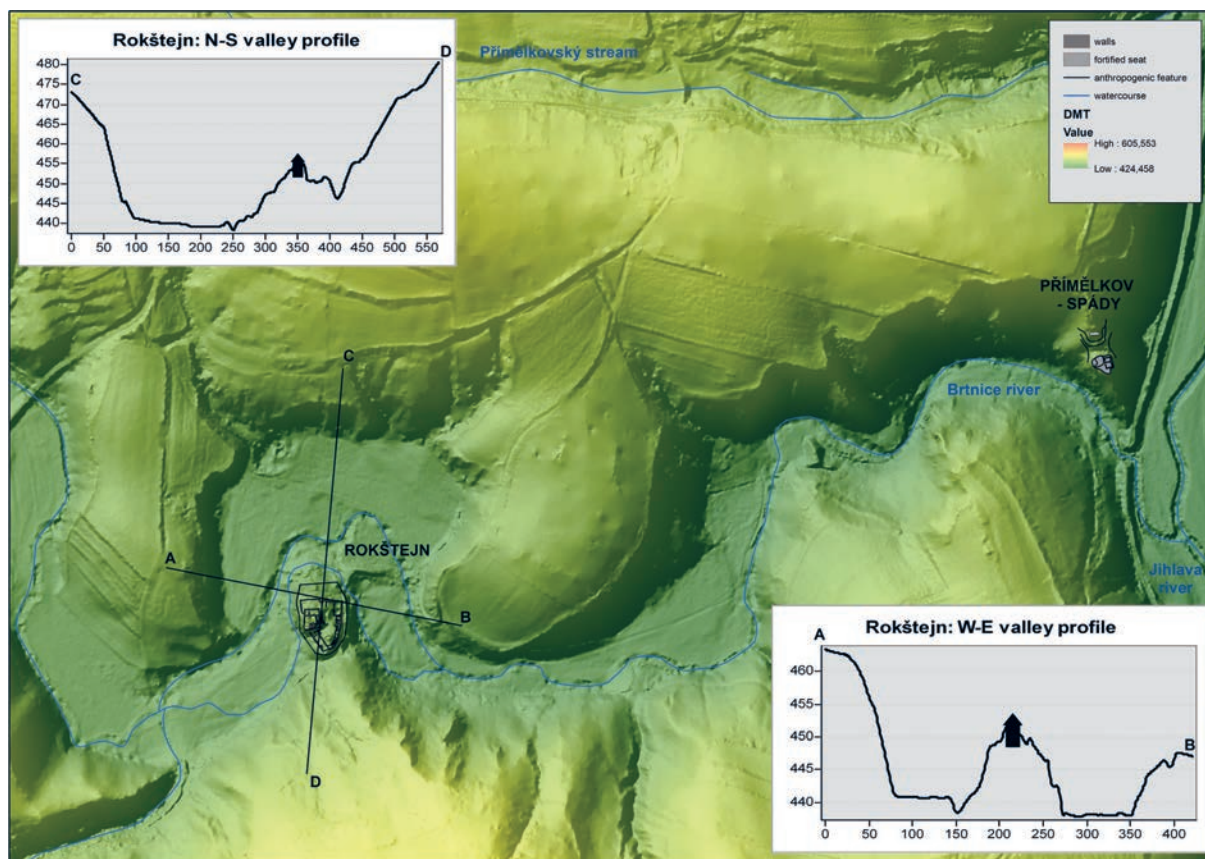


Fig. 3: Elevation of the valley – profiles cutting through the Rokštejn Castle.

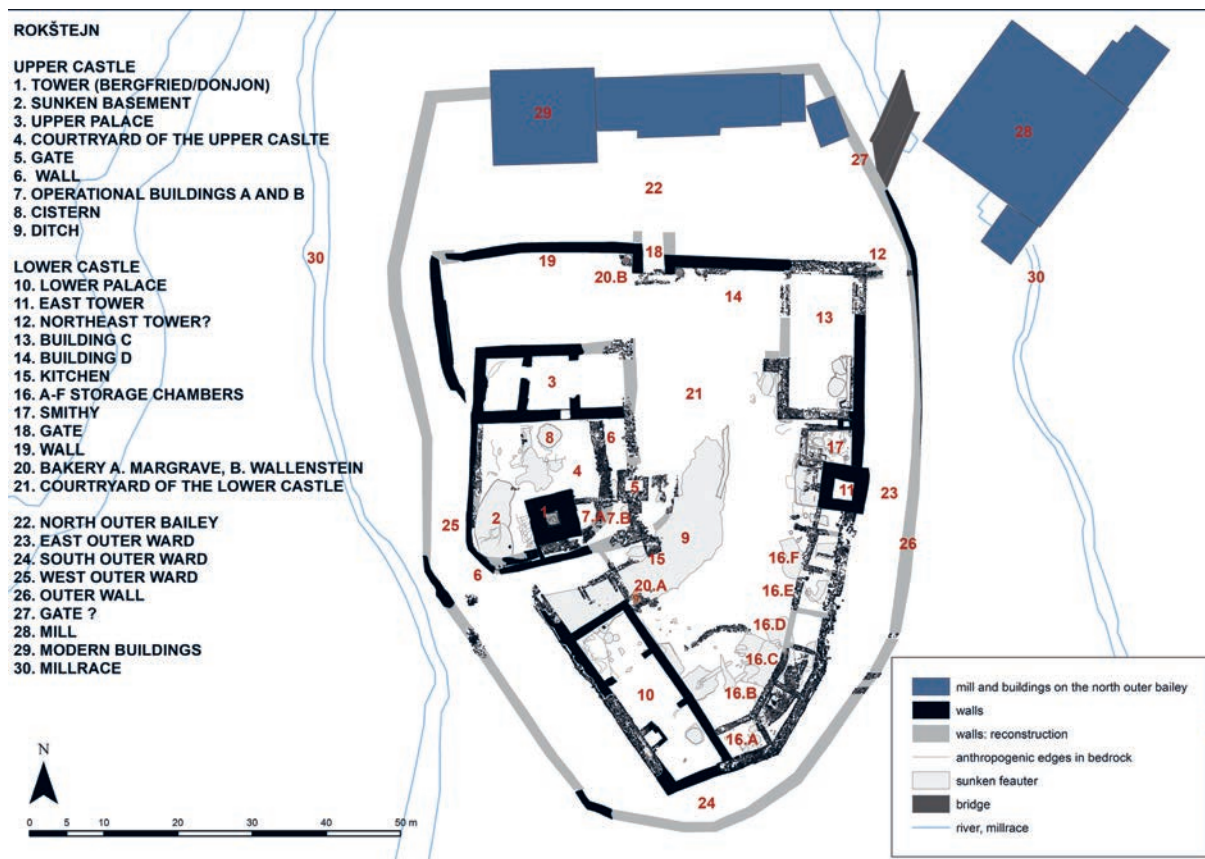


Fig. 4: Schema of the Rokštejn Castle.

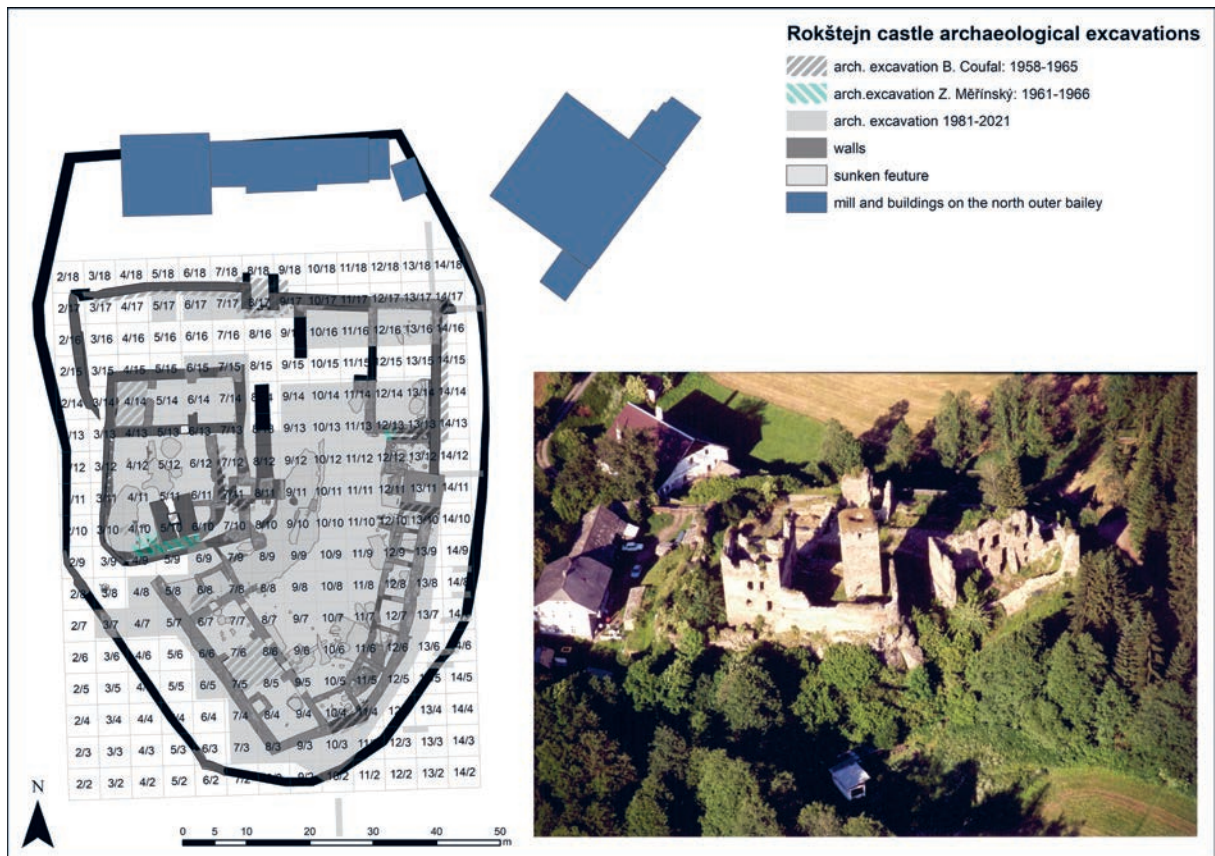


Fig. 5: Schema of the past and contemporary excavations carried out at the Rokštejn castle.

there (Richter 1963, 193–194). The excavation took place at the foot of the Tower of the Upper Castle which is where the oldest phase of the castle was built around the second half of the 13th century. This initial architectural phase, built by the founding family of the Ruthensteins, is represented by the Upper Castle, consisting of a sunken wooden palace-like structure and a subtle polygonal tower, surrounded by a *Mantelmauer* with a gate incorporated into the wall.

The castle's layout is then extended during the second architectural phase when the castle belonged to the Moravian Margrave, John Henry of Luxembourg – the brother of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. During this time, the castle grows and gains its Upper and Lower Palace and the so-called building D². The castle itself is protected only by the Zwinger wall, and the inner walls are formed through a combination of walls of the residential buildings and the *Mantelmauer*. This significantly reduced the defensive capabilities of the castle. The least researched part of the castle is the Outer Bailey, as it is private property of the Coufal Family. During the 1950s and 1960s, B. Coufal³ (Fig. 5) conducted the first archaeological digs at the castle, as his family had lived there from 1906, and they have been using the area of the Outer Bailey ever since. Incidentally, Z. Měřinský⁴ started his exploration of the castle at the Upper Castle tower in 1961, hidden behind the wall, so that B. Coufal could not see him. It was in 1981 when a rescue excavation of the castle began, under the leadership of Z. Měřinský. The dig was initiated by a plan to build a water reservoir that would flood the valley, and the castle

² As its purpose is still to be determined, it was named building D, following another building named C.

³ Bohumil Coufal, born 1907, died 1990, civil engineer.

⁴ Zdeněk Měřinský, born 1948, died 2016, professor of archaeology.

Horizons	Major activity	Approximate dating range
Horizon I	Ruthensteiner phase	1250–1350
Horizon II	Margravia phase	1350–1399
Horizon IIIa1–3	Waldsteiner phase	1399–1467
Horizon IIIb	Destruction horizon	late summer/autumn 1467
Horizon IV	Deterioration phase	1467–1600
Horizon V	Subrecent – tourism – phase	1600–1950
Horizon VI	Amateur excavation of B. Coufal	1950–1965
Horizon VII	Modern excavation	1981–present

Fig. 6: Archaeological horizons of the castle's existence with approximate dating range (these are still not final dates, as the excavation is still ongoing, and new pieces of evidence can alter the absolute dating).

with it. As the plan was becoming less and less a reality, the rescue excavation became a long-term research dig, which continues to this day (and the looming shadow of the reservoir being built has returned in 2019).

Even with modern methods, the Outer Bailey of the castle stays unresearched, for reasons mentioned above. We can only state here the evident utilization of the castle's Zwinger wall as a part of the residential house, and as a parcel for a garden, without any further possibility to shed new light into the archaeology possibly still hidden underneath their house. The entrance to the Lower Castle Bailey, and consequently to the Upper Castle can be reconstructed as originally leading from the Outer Bailey through the northern part of the *Mantelmauer* dividing the inner castle from the Outer Bailey. A simple gate was constructed, yet due to the activities of B. Coufal, we cannot fully reconstruct its original appearance as he rebuilt most of it, but probably it could resemble the original state of the gate. These amateur heritage protection and restoration works fit into the Horizon VI of the castle's stratigraphy (Fig. 6)

Under siege – The archaeological evidence as a silent witness

The still existing parts of the Upper Castle's *Mantelmauer* (Fig. 7) represents a destroyed wall with modern alterations and renewals from the 1960s and the 2000s. The *Mantelmauer* bears quite a few footprints of historical rebuilding. The first phase of the wall had 2m in width, and was built by the first owners, the Ruthensteiners. At the beginning of the 14th century (after 1306/1307) it was dismantled, and the vestiges of it used as a foundation for the second phase of the wall. This *Mantelmauer* had, at least in its southern part, *chemin de ronde* (or a wall-walk) with a battlement (Fig. 8). This defensive arrangement of the wall cannot be found on the western part, facing the valley, and we must presume, it had no active defence. Third phase is then representing the construction works of the second owner, the Moravian Margrave, who, during the second half of the 14th century raised and widened the wall, effectively concealing the older battlement. This phase could possibly have been built during the ownership of the last nobles, the Waldsteiners, at the beginning of the 15th century, who were also heavily modifying the castle's appearance. But as the Waldstein Family added the *Zwinger* wall around the entire castle, the defensive importance of the Upper Castle's *Mantelmauer* was lessened.

The last owners, who saw the castle standing, were the Waldsteiners. They gained the Rokštejn castle into their ownership around the beginning of the 15th century and continued with the construction works on the castle. The active defence was moved to the newly built *Zwinger* wall, which has been preserved to this day only in three segments on western part of the castle (Fig. 9), and a substructure



Fig. 7: The Mantelmauer of the Upper Castle. Left – original state of preservation in the 1960s. Right – contemporary situation after amateur preservation works.

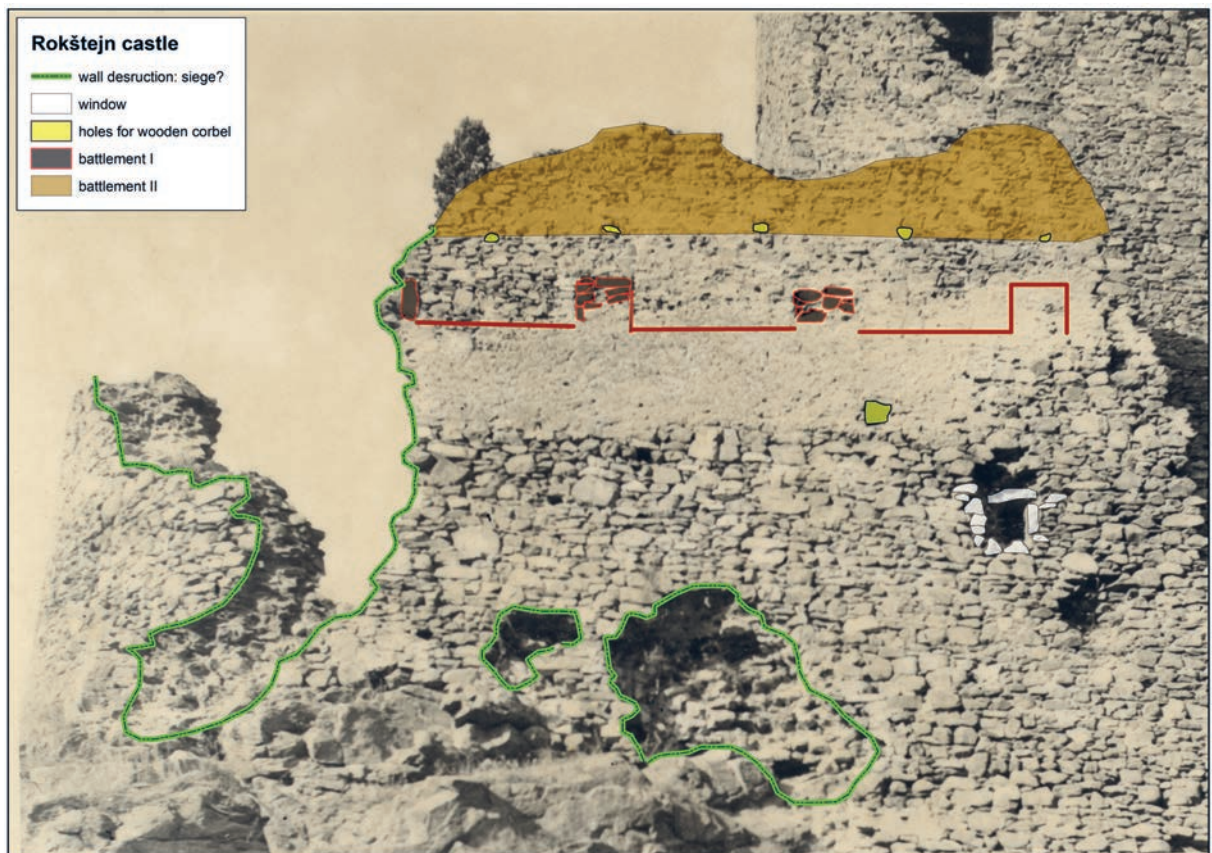


Fig. 8: The evident remains of the Upper Castle's battlement visible on a photo from the 1960s.

was unearthed in square 3/7. The other standing *Zwinger* wall is on the north-eastern part of the castle. The width of the *Zwinger* wall was from 1.3 to 1.6 m and was equipped with a wall-walk and battlement (Fig. 10). During their reign over the Brtnice lordship, the castle also gained its Outer Bailey, divided from the Lower Castle Bailey by the northern *Mantelmauer*. Again, how the Outer Bailey looked like, we do not know.



Fig. 9: Rokštejn, a postcard from 1906, 1a–b: destruction of the Upper Castle's wall, 2a–c: Zwinger wall with a polygonal corner, 3 remains of the Zwinger wall, 4 ditch.

To understand the destruction that was caused by the besiegement of the castle is not an easy task, as the castle was further destroyed by a fire during the siege (if it was intentional, or a coincidence, we do not know). This fact leaves us with a torso of the castle that degraded over time, which makes the effort even harder. An exception is the *Mantelmauer* of the Upper Castle, which bears signs of destruction from the siege positions, as the wall shows signs of impact, and not that of a slow and gradual



Fig. 10: Rokštejn, western Zwinger, Zwinger wall (part 2b on Fig 9) with a wall walk and battlement, see the narrow space between the rock and the wall, and relatively low height above modern terrain of 2,5 m.

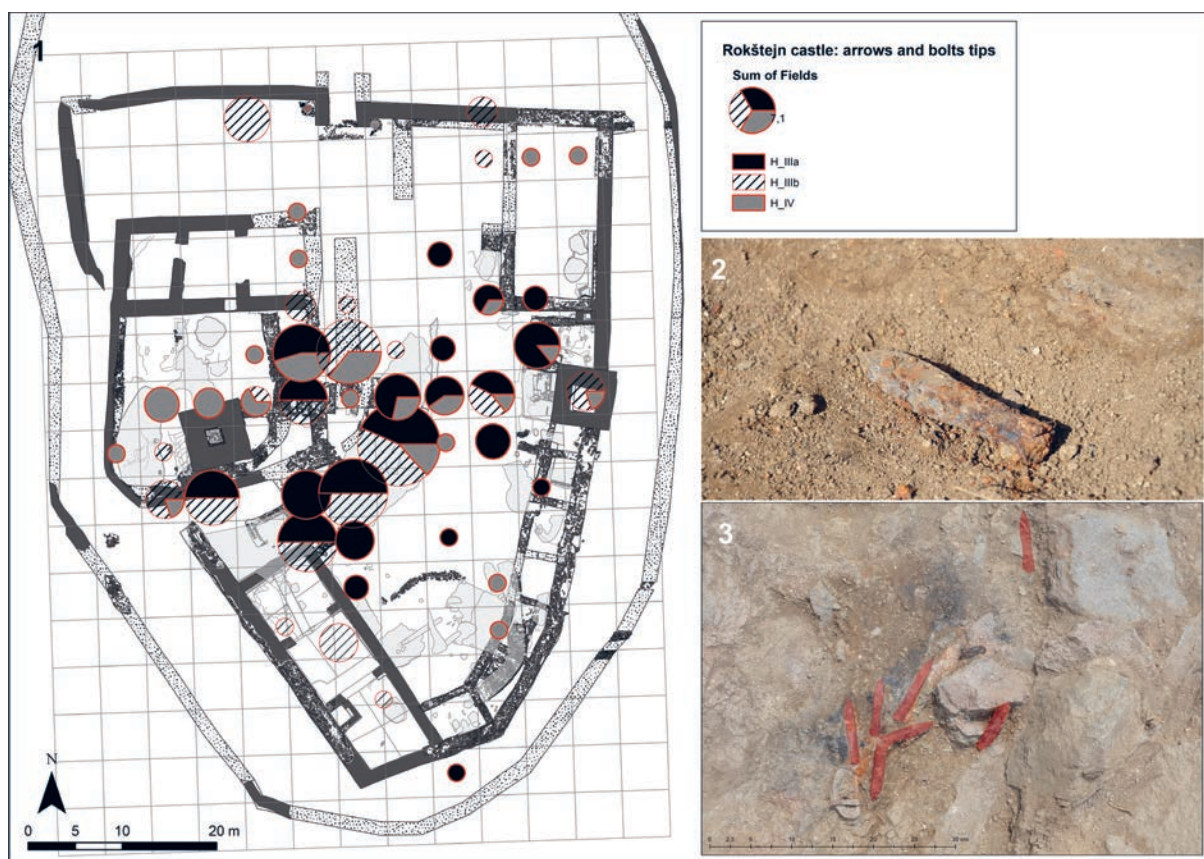


Fig. 11: Rokštejn castle 1. bolts and arrows tips distribution in the horizons III–IV, 2. bolt's tip, the first find of the crossbow quiver, 3. the crossbow quiver with 7 bolts, iron buckle and iron application of the belt or quiver.

destruction (Fig. 7 and Fig. 8). Another change to the castle's architecture is of opposite nature. The gate of the Lower Castle was walled-in, in order to prevent the intruders to get inside the castle, so we can see a change being done by the castle's garrison. By doing so, the defenders lost the possibility of using the *Zwinger* wall with its wall-walk and battlements. Yet, as the *Zwinger* wall was lower in most instances than the siege positions, the battlement became inefficient anyway, and the possibly low numbers of defenders of the castle could do very little against the obvious disadvantages the attackers had, that is the landscape itself.

After the deed was done, the dead were either buried, or this conflict had no casualties, as we do not have any dead bodies from this horizon. What is present though, are the militaria from the final horizons of the castle's existence (i.e., horizon IIIa – cultural layer, horizon IIIb – fire destruction layer, and horizon IV – consecutive destruction due to deterioration; after Mazáčková – Lisá 2016, 80). These can be assorted into two main groups: evidence of ranged weapons (mainly bows, crossbows, and cannons) and finds of armour and weaponry. Horizon IV yielded not only relatively numerous and varied militaria but also horse and rider equipment represented by finds of spurs, horse bit and halter. From defensive armour some fragments of harness, plate armour and a brigandine lamella remained. The use of ranged weapons is documented by an assemblage of arrow- and boltheads and crossbow components, such as table with groove, nut, a stirrup, and a hook fragment. These can be linked to the castle's garrison, along with some of the components from crossbows, and bolt- and arrowheads (either for crossbows or bows, respectively). As majority of the military equipment has been previously published (Mazáčková 2013), only a brief overview will be given here, focusing mainly on newly discovered militaria.



Fig. 12: Rokštejn castle, parts of the crossbow (bone plate with groove 2388, nut 1194, 3516, 2847, stirrup B29, 1153) and crossbowman equipment (spanning hook 1207).

Swords and hunting swords

The only evidence for the presence of a sword comes from a photograph taken by B. Coufal during the 1950s or 1960s. So far, no other swords have been found, yet the castle's inhabitants possessed, in greater abundance, a close relative of a sword, a hunting sword. The pieces from the Rokštejn castle are represented by specimen HA1270, deposited at the Museum of Vysočina in Třebíč, and fragments

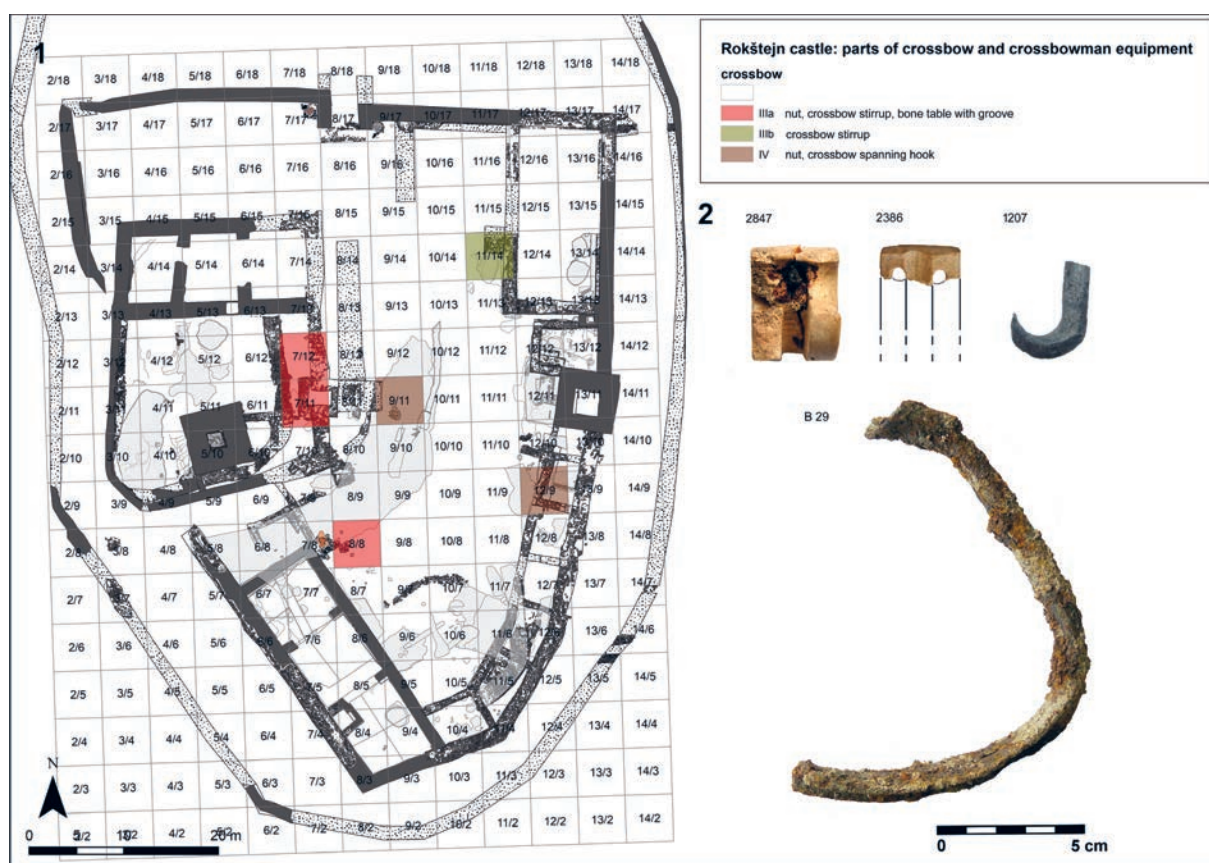


Fig. 13: Rokštejn castle, 1. Crossbow bone or iron parts distribution in the horizons IIIa–IV, 2. parts of crossbow and crossbowman equipment: 2847 nut (nucleus), 2386 bone table with groove, 1207 crossbow spanning hook, B29 stirrup.

of these swords, such as a fragment of a handle (D2850) or a round piece of a one-sided guard decorated with grooves (343/00)⁵.

Bows and crossbows

The evidence for the presence of archers is represented by finds of arrowheads, as bows themselves are not very likely to be preserved in the archaeological context. As such, it is necessary to carefully distinguish between arrowheads for bows and bolts for crossbows. As for the crossbows, or arbalist, these tend to leave a bit more of an archaeological footprint, usually in the form of stirrups, tables with groove, nuts, or triggers. Yet, the most common find is the bolthead, as is the case with bows. The main distinction between these two types is a so-called length/weight index (LWI; after Durdík 1972). Furthermore, the arrow- and boltheads can then be sorted by the attachment method into two groups, one being those with a tang, and the other with a shaft cap. The number of arrow- and boltheads from the final cultural layer before the destruction of the castle, and from the destruction and deterioration layers of the castle is represented, at the moment, by 130 projectiles, from the total number of 176 from the entire castle. From those 130 projectiles, 42 can be assorted to the arrowheads group, and 80 belongs to the crossbow bolts (cf. Mazáčeková 2013a). The rest of 8 projectiles is unidentifiable, as they are not whole specimens. The arrow- and boltheads from the destruction horizon can be considered to had

⁵ The last two fragments are deposited at the research station at Panská Lhota (Department of Archaeology and Museology, Masaryk University).

Inventory No.	Form	Material	Calibre (mm)	Weight (g)	Fragmentary
D9922	Round shot	Fe+	15,5		–
D16891	projectile	stone		1812	X
D19244	projectile	stone	95x95	819	X
2435	projectile	stone	240x230	8900	X

Fig. 14: Cannon projectiles from the Rokštejn castle.

been used in the final clash before the castle was destroyed. This is only accentuated by a story of a lost quiver with seven bolts. The context of the find (Fig. 11.3) suggests that the quiver was lost shortly before the destruction of the north-eastern corner of the Upper Castle's Palace, and thus never retrieved by either the owner, or someone else from the castle's garrison.

When it comes to the crossbows, the research so far has yielded two crossbow stirrups, be it in only fragments (B29, A1153), bone table with groove, three roller releases (or nuts), or a spanning hook (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13).

Cannons and handguns

Another form of firearms is represented by handgun projectiles. From the Rokštejn Castle there is a ferrous spherical projectile (Fig. 15.2).

The evidence for siege engines/cannons, or more precisely the projectiles from these, are found in the destruction horizon of the castle. The majority are made from stone (Fig. 14). Also, only a photograph remained from the excavations of B. Coufal, showing a cracked stone projectile. Unfortunately for us, without any details on archaeological context. The fragmentary nature of the stone projectiles is given by their purpose, to destroy the stone walls of the castle.

The stone projectiles are thus harder to identify in the destruction of the castle, as some destruction layers can reach up to several meters in height. Nevertheless, these projectiles are an undeniable proof for the besiegement of the castle.

Siege positions – the inevitable disadvantage of the castle

The original castle layout provided quite good protection against contemporary siege methods and equipment from the 13th century. As the castle grew bigger, and the time went on, the advantages of having a castle in a valley slowly became disadvantages. Not even a pond flooding the vicinity of the castle did any good, as the enemy came from the hills. No extravagant siege positions had to be constructed, as the landscape and morphology of the terrain offered readily available positions. These then did not need heavy protection in form of palisades or other earthworks, as the castle's defenders did not reach that far with their crossbows anyway. Even though, the low numbers of militaria in and around the siege positions could be due to gravitational forces, and simply flushing the finds down the slopes, yet no discoveries have been made so far. Anthropogenic features of siege positions remained all over the Brtnice River valley. The remnants of these positions are represented by a system composed of one two-step platform and one platform divided by possible recent intrusion in the form of a deep ditch-like incision to the south of the castle. To the west, a single plateau approximately 2 – 3 m wide. And one possible position to the north, but this site is burdened by modern land-use management, as it has been impacted by modern forestry (OP3; Fig. 16).

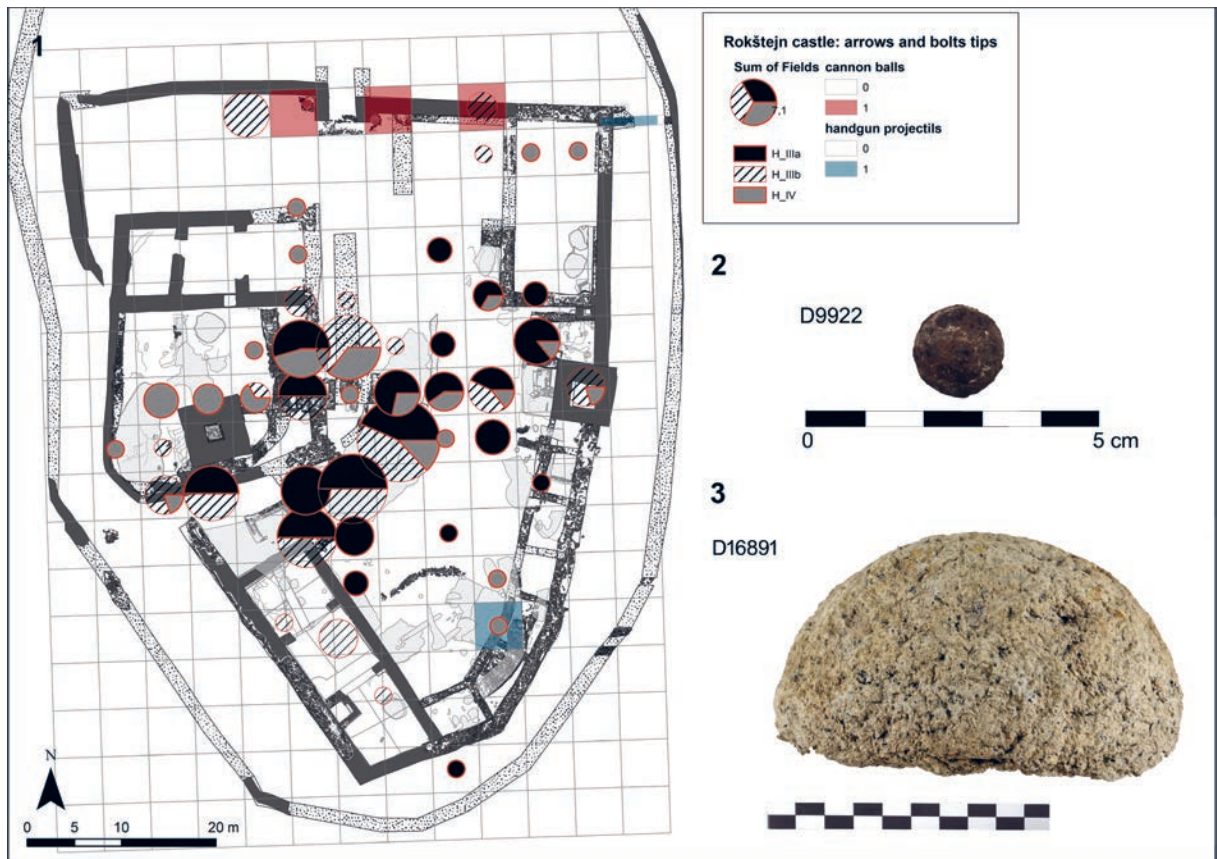


Fig. 15: Rokštejn castle, projectiles of firearms, crossbows and bows in the last horizons of castle existence.

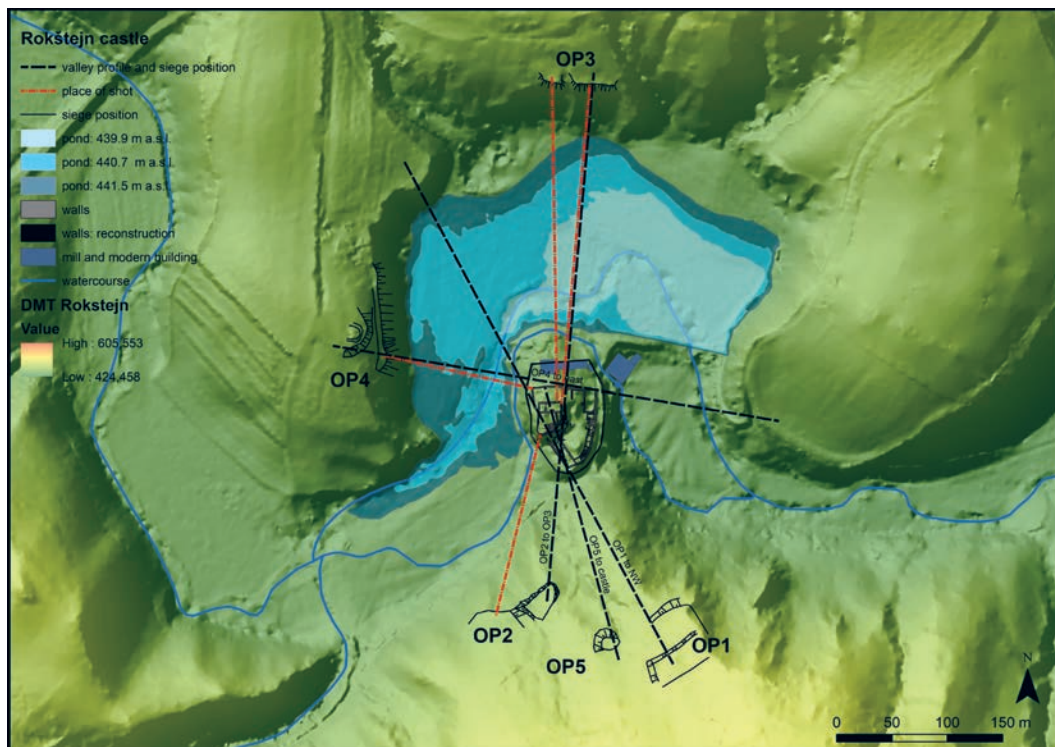


Fig. 16: Siege positions around the Rokštejn castle: OP1 siege position two-level terrace position, in later period used as unusually short fields, OP2 siege position two-parted terrace divided by geological furrow on the same level, OP5 siege position small semicircle terrace position, OP4 siege position two-level, lower narrow terrace position with shot position for a heavy cannon, higher part semicircle terrace, OP3 two parted siege terrace position on anthropogenic edge of natural slope. Valley profiles see Fig. 18.

	Distance from the castle in m	Elevation difference in m from the Upper Castle	Area in m2
OP1 – upper level	180	37/45	1175
OP1 – lower level	150	24/32	975
OP2 – East part	100	15/23	480
OP2 – West part	150	15/23	700
OP3 – east part	248	8/16	350
OP3 – west part	250	8/16	215
OP4 – upper level	160	4/12	435
OP4 – lower level	130	-4/4	510
OP5	150		150

Fig. 17: Rokštejn castle siege positions.

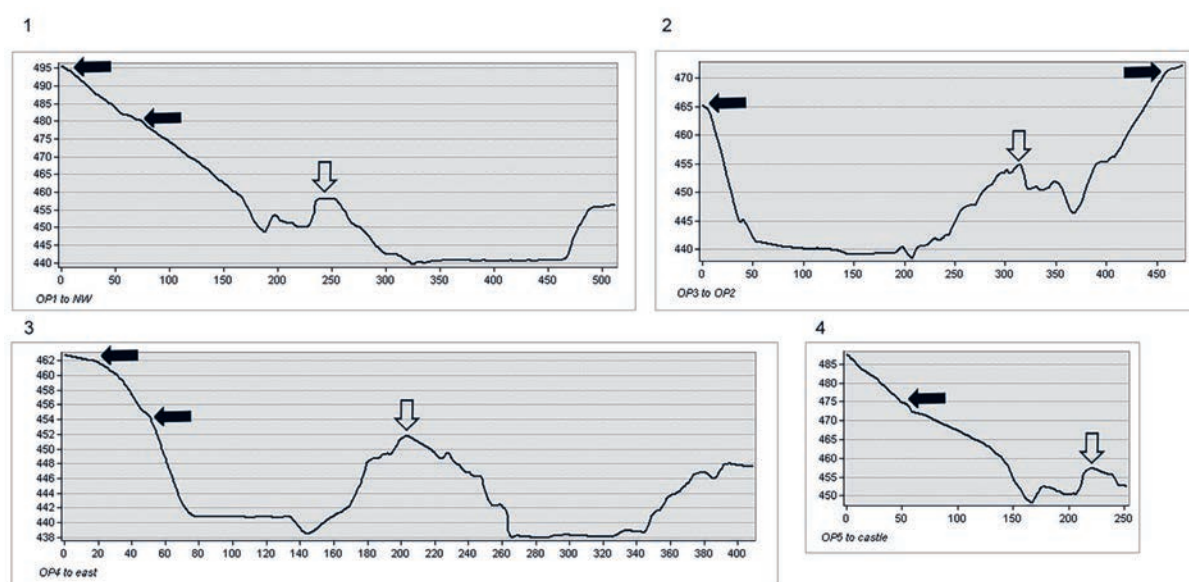


Fig. 18: Valley profiles: siege positions located with black arrows, empty arrow shows the position of the castle; 1. profile from OP1 siege position to NW direction through the upper castle, 2. profile from OP3 siege position to OP 2 siege position through the upper castle, 3. profile from OP4 to the east through the upper castle, 4. profile through OP5 siege position to the upper castle.

The siege positions OP1 and OP2 have been described in more detail elsewhere (Mazáčková 2011; 2013). Newly recognized positions OP3, OP4 and OP5 only accentuate the force by which the castle has been besieged, and more importantly, the intention behind the siege. Enclosing the area around a castle represents standardised behaviour of besiegers as is evident from discovered siege positions from the period of 1460s. Studied sites include Konopiště in central Bohemia (Kypta – Marounek 2020, 11–19) or Vranov nad Dyjí in southern Moravia, near state borders with Austria (Mazáčková et al. 2021; Fig. 19 and Fig. 20). The siege positions have a strongly pronounced embankment with an earthen corner bastion. From the combination of the siege positions' viewsheds around Vranov castle, their military strategic location in the landscape is clearly visible. The siege troops on each position control the space between one another, and the castle as well.

OP3 siege position represents a simple terrace on a steep slope north of the castle. It was separated from the castle by a pond, and thus disabling direct assault against the castle. The terrace is dissected by

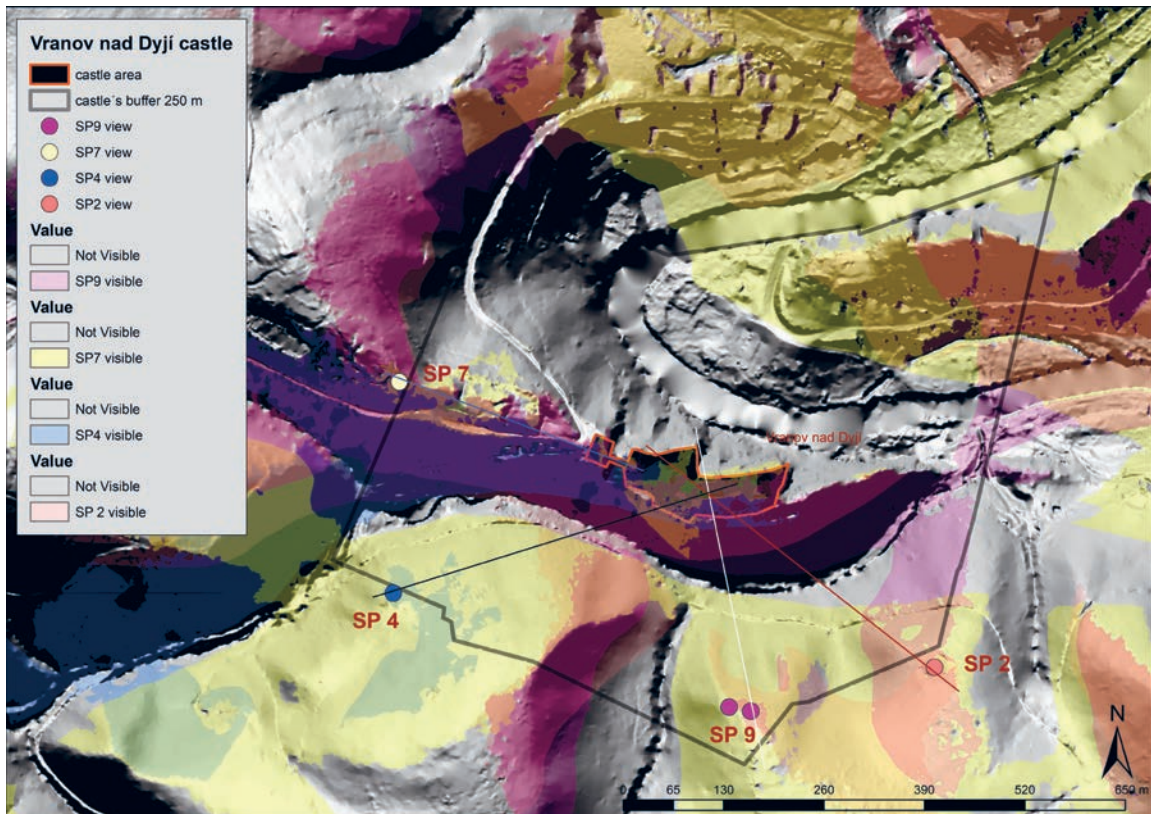


Fig. 19: Vranov nad Dyjí castle, siege position closed the castle perimeter from west to the southeast, probably disappeared the north siege position on the rocky outcrop, viewsheds for the siege position SP7, SP2, SP4 and SP9, and the lines from the viewpoints represents the valley profile on Fig. 20.

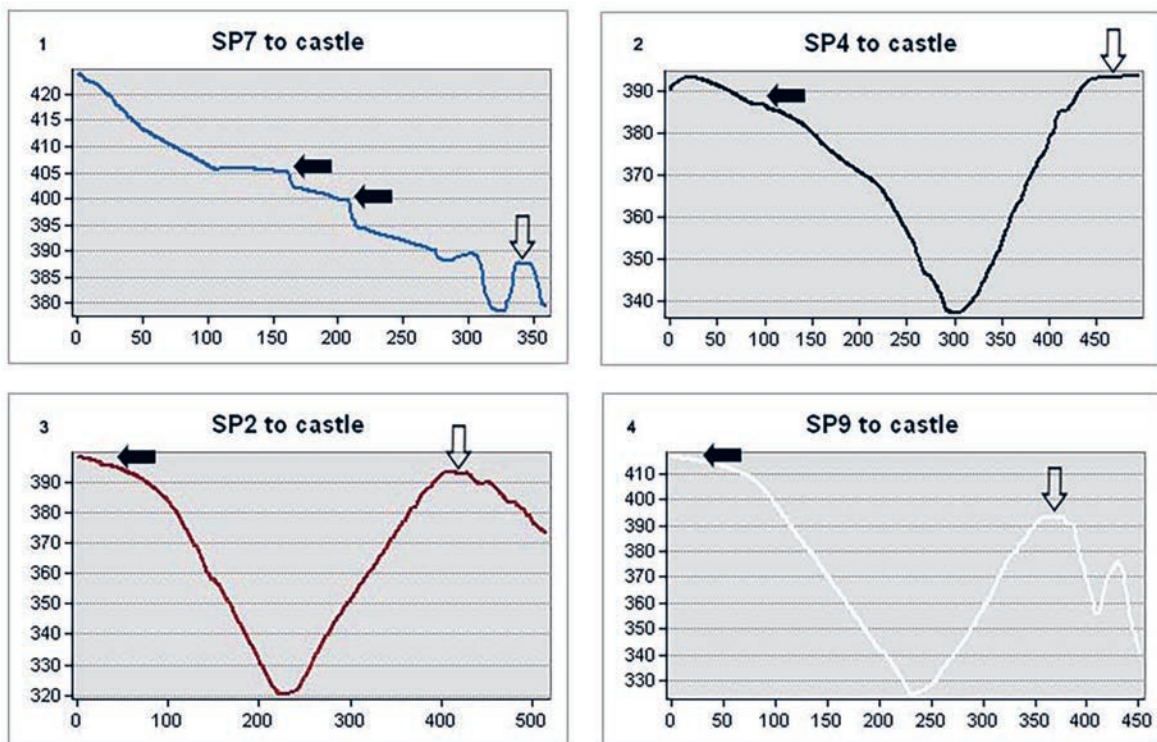


Fig. 20: Vranov nad Dyjí castle, siege position probably from the 2nd half of the 15th century, profile of the valley from the siege position to the castle, SP7 is in the front from the castle gate, SP2, SP4 and SP9 are on the other side of the valley in the shooting perimeter – distance around 250 m, black arrow siege position, empty arrow castle.

geological processes into two parts. The shorter, western, part is 14.6 m long, and the longer, eastern, part of the position is 33.8 m long. With width of 7 to 8 m, the siege position had a lot of handling space for the siege. The earthen frontal bank of the position is quite large, only accentuating the anthropogenic origins of this siege position. As with the other siege positions, it is not noted in any cadastral mapping as being an individual cadastral unit (i.e., field), so it is unlikely the bank was created for agricultural purposes, and in combination with the destruction of the Upper Palace of the castle, which was destroyed at the eastern end, facing the OP3 position, it has the perfect view and space to do so.

Another siege position, the OP4, lies to the north-west of the castle on a sloping promontory above the river Brtnice. This siege position is similar to the previous one, but it is divided into two levels. The upper level is represented by a half-circle terrace. The lower part was then made similarly to the OP3, a simple earthen bank with length of 78 m. This siege position, on the other hand, has a strongly visible rear bank, as it is relatively narrow, only 5 m in width, and cutting into the promontory itself. Also, in the closest part of the position facing the castle, an earthen plateau for a cannon was formed. This siege position could have destroyed the south-western corner of the *Mantelmauer* of the Lower Castle which shows signs of violent destruction, rather than continuous deterioration.

South of the castle, lodged between OP1 and OP2, is situated the OP5. This position has an oval shape and is made from earthen terrace with a diameter of 8 to 11 m. OP5 is divided from OP1 by a wide geological furrow.

The siege not only caused the destruction of the castle, but also, it left its mark on the landscape itself. The siege positions created earthen banks on the slopes of the Brtnice river valley, with OP2 also using stones to strengthen the terrace of the position. These were purposeful and efficient in achieving the goal of fast destruction of the castle, and do not represent a long-term besiegement that would leave more pronounced siege positions. Such demonstration of power resulted in inability of the castle's defenders to call for armed back-up, even though the besieging troops had to travel through the lordship of the Waldsteiners, and thus being an invasive armed force.

Conclusion – the role of archaeology in uncovering the final moments of the castle

The area surrounding the castle, at the time of the invasion was not forested, even though we know of some wooded areas above the Rokštejn castle from records from the 16th century (MZA Brno, fond G 10, inv. č. 638, 49r) the siege positions could not have been built in dense forest, due to visibility. Even the first military survey (undertaken during the 1760s) shows no significant forestation, yet the forestation process of the hills around the castle must have happened soon after, as on the second military survey (1835), all the siege positions, except for the OP3, are situated in forests. This change in land-use is gradual and can be traced back to the destruction of the castle. The agricultural activities connected to the castle's hinterland are also intertwined with *Meierhofs* in surrounding villages⁶. With the downfall of the castle in 1467, the landscape changed with the changing land-use, and again with new owners of the lordship from 1623, the noble house of Collalto.

Visibility is a key element in any successful siege. The control over the area of the river valley the invasive troops had given them the advantage of prohibiting the close-by keep Přímělkov-Spády in helping the Rokštejn's garrison to overturn the invaders (Fig. 21). Also, the distance of individual siege positions to the castle is standard for the studied period (up to around 300 m; Mazáčková 2011, 68). The main advantage was the elevation difference which allowed for close observations within the castle

⁶ With the one in Panská Lhota being possibly destroyed during the siege (MZA Brno, fond G 10, inv. č. 638, 49r).

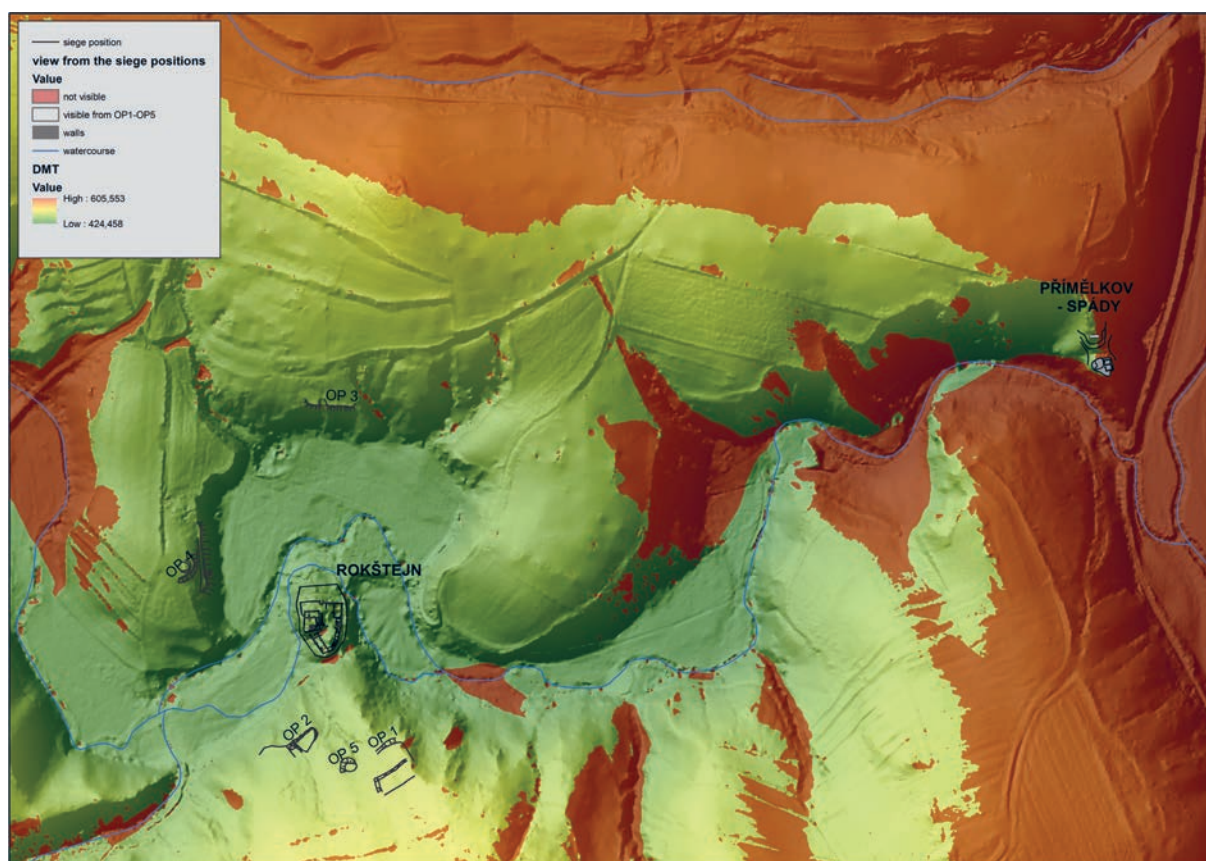


Fig. 21: Rokštejn castle, viewshed from all the siege positions to control the castle's active military perimeter.

(with only the OP4 situated lower than the castle's wall). Along with the reduced active possibilities of defence of the castle pre-destined the castle's demise.

As we lack any written or iconographic sources on the castle's besiegement, an illumination from the second half of the 15th century can be used to illustrate the situation during the siege with crossbowmen, cannons, and animals running around the besieged town (Fig. 22). The way the Rokštejn castle was besieged tells a story of a quick and efficient destruction of an enemy. It was not a case of showing the political and military strength of the attacker, as everything points to an escalation of a long-term feud between two great players, each on either side of the political spectrum. The reactions of the castle's garrison to the siege are visible from architectural changes done to the castle, as described previously, and from osteological material of animals, as they were locked away, so they would not be in the way of the frenzied men, who needed the Lower Castle Bailey free, in order to protect the castle. We have evidence of several animals burning alive in the kennels, stables, and storerooms. Including a cat, a dog, and a cow. Within the Upper Castle itself, B. Coufal unearthed a skeleton of a piglet, if it was a pet or a meal, we can only guess, as there are no further details on this find. As the castle was burning, the information hidden in pottery shards offers some insight into the last moments of the castle itself. Jugs used for storage in the Upper Castle's basement must have been laid on their sides with their neck being propped from the bottom. As the temperature got high enough, the supporting pole left an imprint on the outside in a form of darker grey circle, product of reduction re-firing of the pot. At the same time, the contents of the vessel had been boiling away, until a very viscous residue was left, which left another imprint, this time on the inside. All of this is happening quite fast – before the wooden support burned away, and before the jugs were crushed by the falling Upper Palace. Once the walls crumbled down, the fire moved away, but the heat continued to burn the ceramic vessels buried underneath the rubble, preserving the shadows of the past within it.



Fig. 22: Figure 12: St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 658, p. 60 and p. 61 – (1) Robertus Monachus, History of the first Crusade (illustrated). Retrieved from: <http://www.e-codices.ch/en/csg/0658/61/0>.

As the castle succumbed to an organised coup by the citizens of Jihlava, the owners of the castle quickly relocated to their castle in Brtnice. But the message was received, even the friends of the King are not safe from the politics and interests of the royal town of Jihlava. It also marks the beginning of the end of the Medieval world. Our effort, on the other hand, does not end. The excavation is still an ongoing one, and it can still bring new evidence into the story of the castle and its inhabitants.

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