Cetkov Field School: Czech Republic, 2016

Prof.dr. James Symonds
dhr. dr. M.F.P. (Menno) Dijkstra
University of Amsterdam
ACASA Archaeology
BG1 Turfdraagsterpad 9
1012 XT Amsterdam
Cetkov Field School: Czech Republic, 2016

Introduction ................................................................................................................................................. 3
Historical Background: The Czech Lands during the Thirty Years’ War .............................................. 4
Previous Archaeological Research: The Thirty Years’ War in Bohemia ................................................ 5
Archaeologies of Rural Conflict and Village Abandonment in Bohemia ............................................. 7
A Regional Perspective: The Thirty Years’ War in the Rokycany region .............................................. 9
The Archaeology of Three Villages: Bukov, Cetkov, and Rovný ............................................................. 10
Cetkov Field School, 2016 ......................................................................................................................... 16
Aims and Objectives ................................................................................................................................. 16
Excavation Methodology ......................................................................................................................... 17
Total Station Survey .................................................................................................................................. 17
Excavation Recording ............................................................................................................................... 17
Finds Processing, Storage, and Deposition ............................................................................................... 18
Scientific Samples: Processing and Deposition ....................................................................................... 18
Re-statement of Excavated Areas ............................................................................................................ 18
Plan of Cetkov showing features and areas where work will be undertaken in 2016 ......................... 19
References ..................................................................................................................................................... 20
Introduction

The Cetkov Field School in July 2016 will be the first season of a three year programme of collaborative archaeological research between the University of Amsterdam, and the University of West Bohemia. The project is funded by the two universities, and by a research grant from the Czech Science Foundation. The Cetkov project is co-directed by Prof.dr. James Symonds, of the University of Amsterdam and doc. PhDr. Pavel Vařeka, of the University of West Bohemia. The site of Cetkov is located in woodland in the Rokycany region of West Bohemia, between the two small towns of Zbiroh and Radnice. We are grateful to the Duke Jerome Colloredo-Mansfeld for permission to carry out fieldwork in his estate.
Historical Background: The Czech Lands during the Thirty Years´ War

The Thirty Years´ War (1618-1648) started and finished in Bohemia. The notorious ‘defenestration’ of the Habsburg governors from the windows of Prague castle on the 23rd of May 1618 initiated a Protestant rebellion against the Austrian Emperor and the Bohemian King Mathias which became the first phase of the Thirty Years´ War, the Czech War.

Military campaigns dragged on for many months taking place both in the Czech lands and in neighbouring Austria, until the Habsburgs, who received substantial support from their Roman Catholic allies, gained the upper hand against the more isolated Czech Protestants.

Bohemia escaped any direct involvement in the war for the rest of the 1620s, with a few exceptions. In 1631 – 1632, an army from Saxony invaded Bohemia and gained control of a large part of the country, including Prague. This war episode enabled some Czech emigrant lords to return to Bohemia and to reclaim their lost estates, however, attempts to provoke new uprisings, even in the form of a peasant rebellion were not successful. The suppressed and exhausted Czech population had to face intensive military activities in the final phases of the Thirty Years´ War in the late 1630s and 1640s when Bohemia once again became one of the most important European theatres of war.

A prolonged series of campaigns by the Swedish army (1639 – 1643, 1645, 1647 – 1648) resulted in several important battles being fought in Czech territory, with much violence against civilians, but
also epidemics, such as the plague, which brought a sense of unending misery to the population of the region. In the last year of the war, in 1648, when the peace negotiations were almost completed, the Swedish army was operating intensively in Bohemia under the command of generals Königsmarck and Wittenberg and the town of Prague was besieged. On the 24th of October, when the peace agreements were signed in Wittenberg, Swedish troops made a final desperate attempt to break through the walls of the Prague Old Town. The final armistice in Bohemia was agreed one month later, on the 29th of November 1648, the act taking place symbolically between the two fighting sides in the middle of the Prague Charles Bridge.

Swedish troops were nevertheless slow to leave the devastated country and some garrisons remained, waiting to be been paid off, until the summer of 1650 (Čornejová, Kaše, Mikulec, Vlnas 2008: 9-157; Polišenský 1960).

Historical research has exposed the extent of devastation of the Czech lands during the Thirty Years War. The prolonged conflict led to a significant decline in population in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown; however, the estimations of the extent of deserted settlements vary in different parts of the country. Bohemia and Moravia had c.2,650 000 inhabitants in 1618, and it is generally accepted that the Czech lands as a whole lost about 30% of their population during the war (Čornejová, Kaše, Mikulec, Vlnas 2008).

**Previous Archaeological Research: The Thirty Years’ War in Bohemia**

In common with archaeological research into the Thirty Years’ War in other parts of Europe, such as Germany, the most prominent branch of Thirty Years’ War studies in the Czech Republic concerns
itself with the survey and archaeological excavation of former battlefield sites, such as the Battle of Třebel, as shown below (Matoušek, Procházka, and Šimek 2008).

In contrast to the often rather localized evidence recovered by battlefield archaeology, the impacts of the war and related disturbances on rural settlements are arguably more complex and wide-ranging and demonstrate that devastation and disruption was not limited to places of conventional warfare such as battles, or sieges of fortified places. As with more recent wars in the 20th and 21st centuries, the Thirty Years’ War affected the entire landscape, especially those parts that were close to the communication routes used by marching armies.

The most typical form of non-combat conflict is represented by everyday contact between soldiers and local populations. This was more often than not characterized by looting and pillage, and was in many ways an intentional part of the strategy of the enemy army as it was otherwise difficult or impossible to provision a large fighting force along with camp followers with food and other necessary goods at a time when military logistical support was absent.
Another kind of threat to local populations involved the issuing of so called ‘security’ charges by occupying garrisons (‘Salva guardia’) and the sending of ‘fire-letters’ (‘Brandbriefe’) which demanded the payment of money to avoid the burning of a settlement. Requests for the payment of such bribes added to the financial pressure which was placed upon non-combatants as additional ‘war taxes’ were also levied by the sovereign upon his realm during times of war. The situation in Bohemia was worsened by the ongoing process of re-catholicization; the placing of large military garrisons in strongly Protestant regions, together with an instruction that the local population should provide supplies for these forces, proved to be an effective way of changing the beliefs of even the most stubborn local peasants (Matějek 1994).

All of the above activities are well documented in written records, but we might wonder whether such fleeting acts of theft and or aggression left any material traces in the afflicted rural settlements? And if they did, is it possible to recover traces of the harrying of the countryside by means of archaeological techniques? The abandonment of individual farmsteads and or whole villages is one of the characteristic impacts of early modern warfare, but may be either a direct or indirect consequence, depending upon local circumstances. Depopulation and abandonment may have been caused by direct contact with marauding armies, or by famine, epidemics, or an inability to pay all kinds of war contributions, which may also have caused the local community to abandon their homes and to relocate to less exposed parts of the country, especially hilly regions, such as central Bohemia (Haasová-Jelíňková 1952:20).

Archaeologies of Rural Conflict and Village Abandonment in Bohemia

Direct evidence of conflict in the rural environment may be demonstrated by the presence of extensive burnt horizons in excavated sites. In Bohemia several examples of farmsteads and villages which were attacked and looted by enemy soldiers are known from documentary sources, and some of these have revealed corresponding evidence of sudden abandonment and destruction by fire when they have been subjected to archaeological investigations. Destruction horizons capture a moment in time and such important archaeological examples of ‘stopped life’ not only provide evidence of specific historic events, but also about the conditions of everyday life and the living standards of peasants during the war. Of course the main problem lies in identifying stratigraphic units which correspond to historic events which may or may not be also be reflected in documentary evidence.
Several excavations which have been undertaken in villages of a medieval origin in Bohemia have revealed burnt horizons from the period of the Thirty Years’ War (see below).

Archaeology therefore has the ability to document the partial or total destruction of rural settlements and their re-establishment process in the late 17th century and to recognize the material impact – in the form of physical destruction – which the war had on the rural world. In the south Bohemian village of Srlín in the District of Písek, for example, the analysis of written sources has revealed that the size and structure of the village was transformed following reconstruction work in the second half of the 17th century, after the Thirty Years’ War. Only two of nine originally farmsteads survived the war. New farms were established but these ignored the spatial configuration of the older settlement units.

Excavations have also verified the documentary evidence for wartime destruction by revealing the burnt debris of a house dated to the Thirty Years’ War which preceded, but had no relationship to a later house which had been constructed on the site in the 18th century (Dohnal –Vařeka 1998). The burnt remains of the three compartment house consisted of a living room provided with a renaissance style tiled-stove, a central entrance room with a ‘black kitchen’ and a storage room were excavated in a Prague suburb that was originally part of the historical village of Vysočiny. This settlement was re-established after the Thirty Years’ War; however the new farmsteads once again lacked any form of spatial continuity with the earlier structures (unpublished research by P. Vařeka).
Great potential exists for the archaeological investigation of villages which were deserted during the Thirty Years’ War and were not subsequently re-established. In many cases these localities were overgrown by forests after their abandonment and offer ideal research conditions as woodland sites can preserve the surface remains of rural settlements (farmsteads, houses, cellars, wells etc.) as well as their hinterland (field systems, roads or non-agriculture production remains).

The first, and in many ways pioneering archaeological research into villages deserted during the Thirty Years’ War was undertaken by in the early 1970s by Z. Smetánka and J. Richterová. The remains of Německá Lhota (c. 25 km to the west of Prague) were topographically surveyed, and one farmstead was excavated. Fieldwork was complemented with documentary research and an analysis of preserved lists of the damage caused by soldiers (Richterová 1981; 1982). Such an approach, which compares archaeological and written sources in order to study the impact of war on peasants’ everyday life and the circumstances of village desertion in this period was later developed for studies of the early-17th century deserted villages in central and western Bohemia (Vařeka 2009; 2010).

A Regional Perspective: The Thirty Years’ War in the Rokycany region

The hilly region of Rokycany, with an area of 576 km² (see picture, below), joins the Plzen basin from the south – east. In the early-17th century the region was divided into several feudal estates, the largest one belonging to the Bohemian Crown, with its centre at Zbiroh. The settlement pattern included 84 villages, 1 royal town (Rokycany), and 5 small country towns.
Villages in the Rokycany region were generally small and usually contained less than 20 farmsteads. Documentary analysis of the 1654 Tax Register, and the Zbiroh Urbary from 1652 (Zbiroh Urbary: State Archive Prague) show an extensive depopulation and a reduction in the number of settlement as a consequence of the war. In the middle of the 17th century 7 deserted villages were registered (8 %) and the majority of the extant settlements contained several ruined and abandoned farmsteads (54 % of all villages comprised less than 50% of ruined farms; 15 % had more than 50% of the farmsteads counted as ruins). Only a few villages survived the war with no demonstrable reduction in their size (23 %).

The most drastic impact of the war, however, was on the ecclesiastical infrastructure. In this case, the parish structure was devastated and the 18 pre-war churches were reduced to only 3 functioning parish churches, two of which were situated in towns, and one in a village.

The spatial distribution of the affected settlements in the Rokycany region shows a concentration of deserted villages and settlements, with more than half of the abandoned farms lying close to the important road that connected Prague, and Pilsen to Nuremberg and southern Germany. It would seem that incoming armies created a corridor of destruction that was c.10 km wide as they passed along this highway, scouring the countryside on either side for food, resources, and booty. In contrast, villages which were further away from the road, and the corridor or destruction, such as those in the Brdy highlands, or even further away in the northern and western parts of the region, were for the most part left entirely intact, and show no evidence for extensive destruction, or the abandonment of a large number of house plots.

The Archaeology of Three Villages: Bukov, Cetkov, and Rovný

At the micro-scale level of individual sites, the specific impacts of war events on rural communities affected by the passing through of enemy armies has been analysed by means of archaeological field survey and targeted excavation. Previous archaeological research by Pavel Vařeka, of the University of West Bohemia has investigated three villages (Bukov, Cetkov and Rovný) that were destroyed and abandoned during the Thirty Years’ War in the Rokycany region. These sites were initially studied by means of non-destructive surveys, such as topographic surveys of surface features, surface collections from woodland soil exposures, metal detector surveys of the topsoil, geophysical survey, and Airborne Laser Scanning (LiDAR). In each village one house plot was also tested by trial excavation. A programme of targeted environmental archaeology has also been undertaken, with
carbonised macro-plant remains being recovered from excavated burnt contexts and pollen profiles taken from the wet sediments in village ponds and cisterns. In addition to this the evidence from written sources, mainly urbaria and land registers have been closely examined for each of these sites.

All three of these villages were founded in the 14th century as a result of medieval expansion into the forested, unsettled highlands. They were deserted in the 15th century during the Hussite wars and were re-established in the 16th century; however, none of them reached their original size. According to documentary evidence these small rural villages were comprised of 2 (Bukov), 4 (Rovný) and 8 (Cetkov) farms before the Thirty Years’ War. One water mill is mentioned in Rovný, and one of the houses in Cetkov served as a pub.

Historical sources record that peasants had to pay cash rent depending on the extent of their fields up to 20 ha (for a rent of 40 – 270 silver grossi), natural rent (hens, eggs and wax) and were also obliged to provide the Lord of the manor with manorial labour for between 2.5 – 7.5 days a year (information from the Zbiroh Urbary). The remains of all three villages have been very well preserved as earthworks providing detailed information on their general plan and structure, including the number and position of the individual farms, which correspond with the documentary evidence.

The two farmsteads in Bukov had a regular form, with 2 parallel wings of buildings set on terraces on the slope (individual house plots measured c. 25m – c. 28m x c. 45m – c.50 m). Four farmsteads of with an irregular structure (house plots c.40m x c.50m – c.60m) had been built in a row at Rovný, situated above a stream with four artificially created ponds. The well-preserved remains of a water mill provided with mill race were located c. 500 m to the east of the village.

Cetkov was a horseshoe-shaped village with individual farms of irregular plans situated around a stream. In all cases the cores of farms were represented by traditional Czech vernacular three compartment houses built on terraces which measured c. 7m – c. 11m x c. 16m – c. 28 m. The houses were gable oriented, with the living rooms in the front part, a central corridor in the middle, and a storage room at the rear. The other farm buildings surveyed comprised granaries and byres. In some farms small reservoirs had been constructed, linked to water managements systems. Gardens were situated behind farmsteads and the remains of field systems were traced using LiDAR data adjacent to individual farms.
The interventions which examined one house in Bukov and another in Rovný revealed information concerning their construction, the equipment held within houses, and the manner of their desertion. The intervention in Bukov, by James Symonds (below) sampled part of the storage room of the house and demonstrated that the house had been abandoned peacefully, and had very likely been dismantled. Debris from the demolition produced only small heavily abraded pottery shards and some stove tiles fragments which may indicate the presence of this developed form of Renaissance heating equipment in the living room.

Excavations in Rovný, in contrast, revealed significant burnt horizons in the trial trench, suggesting that the house had been destroyed by fire. In this instance the trial trench sampled the living room uncovering part of the big stone oven which was situated in the corner. Large fragments of broken cooking pots and table vessels were retrieved, indicating that they had been broken and quickly buried within the dwelling.
The burnt destruction layers mainly consisted of the burnt daub that had been used as plaster covering the log walls and ceiling. Evidence was also recovered of corner timbering; the burning of a house built of logs of up to c. 0.4 m in diameter meant that the negative profile of some timbers had been protected against the fire by the thick clay plaster. The image below shows a section excavated across a house cellar at Rovný by Prof. Pavel Vařeka.

A metal detector survey of the whole farm produced about 400 metal items including parts of building construction (hinges, nails, etc.), as well as agricultural and other equipment from the farm, a late-16th coin (Strasburg bishopric) and a lead bullet of likely military origin.

Small scale excavations have also been carried out in Cetkov, where one house plot was sampled. The most interesting find relating to the period of the Thirty Years War from this village was a large pit which contained the debris of a burnt house (see image, below).
Stove tile fragments and pieces of glass disks from windows indicate that this house had been glazed and had a modern-style living room provided with prestige renaissance stove.

Numerous other artefacts were recovered, including predominantly unglazed, but also painted and glazed kitchen and table ceramic wares, glass vessels, and some iron items.

Czech students from the University of West Bohemia will continue to work on this pit feature at Cetkov during the 2016 field school.
Documentary evidence for the three villages exists in a series of letters which sent by the Emperor’s Governor of the Zbiroh estate, Jan Kolenec of Kolno, in 1641, stating conditions within the dominion. The letter have been preserved in the State Archive in Prague; more local sources of evidence were regrettably destroyed when the local archive in Zbiroh fell victim to fire in 1634, during a raid by the Swedish army.

Kolenec reported that the villages of Bukov, Cetkov and Rovný, along with many others, had been burnt down and deserted during the Bohemian Revolt in 1618 – 1620, during the passing of enemy troops. This documentary evidence provides a chronological and contextual frame, and corresponds with the results of the archaeological excavations at Rovný. Further attacks on property will have occurred in the Rokycany region and closer to Prague between 1634-1648.

Pollen samples from a small pond in the abandoned village of Cetkov also show vegetational changes related to the desertion of the village. It can be seen from the pollen diagram (below) that fields becoming overgrown and there is a succession of the forest following the destruction of the village in the 17th century.
Cetkov Field School, 2016

Aims and Objectives

In July 2016 the University of Amsterdam field school will work in Area 2 (see Cetkov plan, below). Our aim is to strip and record the remains of a well-preserved three compartment block house (Czech: Komorový dům). An example of a surviving 16th century three-compartment block house is shown below.

Our objectives in the 2016 field season are:

- to establish the date of construction and life history of the block house
- to determine if any structural modifications were made to the blockhouse in different periods of use
- to recover artefactual and ecofactual evidence from the blockhouse to investigate how space was used in the blockhouse (human:animal/male:female/public-private, etc)
- to find evidence of how specific gendered activities or routines were accommodated within the blockhouse
- to gather artefactual information to shed light on the household economy and craft activities and to investigate how the household interacted with local and regional trading networks
- to gather ecofactual evidence, including flora and fauna, to determine the diet of the inhabitants, and in particular how food was acquired, prepared, and consumed, and if any changes in the ratio of wild and domesticated foodstuffs can be seen over time
- to explore attitudes to waste and determine if refuse disposal practices changed over time
- to investigate evidence of beliefs, as may be represented by the presence of religious artefacts, or placed or modified artefacts/deposits derived from folk beliefs and customs
- to locate artefactual evidence of status, and displays of individual or collective identities
- to determine whether the blockhouse shows signs of deliberate destruction by an aggressor
**Excavation Methodology**

We will carry out an open-area excavation. The precise dimensions of the excavation will be determined following a pre-excavation topographical survey of the site, which will be undertaken in June 2016, by colleagues from the University of West Bohemia. The size of the excavated area will also be determined by the ground conditions in July 2016, as parts of the area are lowlying and subject to water-logging. It may be anticipated that the open area will have dimensions of 12m x 30m. Additional smaller trenches may also be opened to examine features within the compound or yard areas if time and labour allow.

**Total Station Survey**

The site of Cetkcv has been surveyed by archaeologists from the University of West Bohemia. We will use this survey during our field work. The University of West Bohemia will make a trained surveyor and a total station available during our field season. This will allow the blockhouse and any other features revealed by excavation to be digitally recorded in detail.

**Excavation Recording**

The open area excavation and any additional trenches will be carried out in accordance with established stratigraphic principles (Barker 1977). The open area will be covered by a co-ordinated grid. All measurements will be taken within this grid, and all finds will be plotted with it.

We will use a single-context recording system based on the procedures outlined in the *Archaeological Site Manual* that was developed by the Museum of London Archaeological Service (Museum of London, 1994).

Excavation will proceed stratigraphically by examining the distribution and superimposition of layers and material, and removing the most recent layers first. Layers will be investigated and removed by hand, using tools ranging in size from picks and shovels to 4” pointing trowels and dental picks. All deposits, fills, cuts, and structures will be given a unique four digit context number, commencing at 2000 for the topsoil and forest root matter.

A series of proforma recording sheets will be filled in for each cut or fill, describing soil type, inclusions, other characteristics, as well as its stratigraphic relationship to other layers and features. Additional site recording, including planning and photography will take place throughout the
excavation. Plans (of horizontal surfaces) will be drawn at a scale of 1:20 and sections (of vertical surfaces) will be drawn at a scale of 1:10. Digital photographs will be taken of all contexts, as well as views during working, and will be recorded in a site photographic register.

**Finds Processing, Storage, and Deposition**

All finds will bagged appropriately and numbered by context. If time and facilities allow, a start may be made on washing and sorting finds during the field season. If this proves to be logistically too difficult then all finds will be processed by Czech students after the field season in the laboratories of the University of West Bohemia, in Plzen.

All finds will remain in the Czech Republic, unless specialist conservation work of metal or other finds of a delicate nature is required in the Department of Conservation at the University of Amsterdam. Appropriate protocols will be followed if it is necessary to transport finds temporarily to the Netherlands. It is anticipated that all finds, along with the project archive will eventually be deposited in the Czech Republic, in the Západočeské muzeum v Plzni.

**Scientific Samples: Processing and Deposition**

Samples will be taken to recover environmental evidence, industrial residues, and if appropriate scientific dating. A system of wet sieving will be established during the excavation, either at Cetkov, or at nearby Rovný, depending on the supply of water, to bulk process soil samples for carbonised seed remains by means of flotation. Other soil samples may be taken for phosphate analysis. Advice on sample techniques will be given by specialists from the University of West Bohemia, Charles University, in Prague, and other Czech research institutions. Samples will remain in the Czech Republic and will be deposited or discarded using appropriate guidelines and protocols.

**Re-statement of Excavated Areas**

Time will be allowed within the 4 week excavation season for the open area and any other trenches to be backfilled and made safe. Backfilling will be undertaken by the University of Amsterdam project team, and will be by hand. The excavated area will be re-instated as close as possible to how it appeared prior to the commencement of archaeological excavation.
Plan of Cetkov showing features and areas where work will be undertaken in 2016

Obr. 8: Cetkov. Rozdělení objektů podle předpokládané funkce; 1 - domy; 2 - hospodářské stavby; 3 - míliře; 4 - rybníky; 5 - studny; 6 - těžební objekty; 7 - úvozy; 8 - podmáčená plocha

Fig. 8: Cetkov. Functional classification of features; 1 - houses; 2 - other farm buildings; 3 - charcoal pile; 4 - ponds; 5 - wells; 6 - mining remains; 7 - hollowed track; 8 - wet area
References


Matoušek, V. & Blažková, T. 2012: The image and reality of battlefields from the Thirty Year’s War. A preliminary report on a project for the systematic study of engravings of the battlefield from the Thirty Year’s War in the territory of the Czech Republic. Post - Medieval Archaeology 4: 269-288.


