

ANNOTATION

Renaissance appearance of Mělník chateau

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The appearance of Mělník chateau has been developed for centuries. We cannot tell it is a typical Renaissance building structure but the most significant reconstruction took place in a Renaissance era. At that time, its horizontal projection was L-shaped.

A person in possession, at those times, Zdislav Berka z Dubé had merit in most extensive treatments of the chateau in mid-1600. He invested considerable amount of money into building-up of the northern arcade wing-wall and a sgraffito decoration of the courtyard. Building treatments got under way in 1542 when Berka acquired the chateau and its finalization is assumed to have come between 1554-1555, also according to extant bills and engraven style found in sgraffito decoration. Sgraffito decoration came into existence in connection with a new build-up of the northern wing-wall and a staircase tower, and it also dates back to the same period. Mělník's sgraffito was considered as the oldest dated sgraffito decoration for a long time. However, we know about older examples of dated sgraffitos nowadays which cannot change the fact that Mělník's arcades, including its decoration, still belong to one of the oldest.

The structure of Mělník's arcades are not to be found anywhere in the Czech republic. However, scriptural sources available do not indicate either the name of their architect or a buider. And yet, as a possible inspiratory source, just on the basis of formal resemblance and its datation, chateau Kaceřov appears to be put into consideration. But neither Kaceřov will reveal its architect. According to high quality of its lay-out, most research scientists tend to think it had to be a work of art of a skilled Italian master. Smelting works operating in Kaceřov was also of an Italian origin, as proved from scriptural records. In comparison, against masterful arcades of Kaceřov chateau, Mělník's arcades seem to be rather rustic and their ordering is combined with obvious Saxon influence. Although we have several assumptions about an architect or a buider it is still uncertain to name their demiurge. Solution to this dilemma would require deeper investigation of not just Mělník or Kaceřov chateau but also many other chateaus from Mělník outskirts.

We can find three different types of sgraffito decoration on Mělník chateau. Regardless on their theme they are divided into firstly, sgraffito covering arcades and staircase tower originated to the same period, secondly, sgraffito bossage of the westerly wing-wall, and finally, sgraffito discovered in the interior. Greyed sgraffito bossage of hipped-pyramidal style devise us to the chateau Kaceřov, whose plaster was covered by the same type of bossage differing only in size of its quoins. Another question arise from the sgraffitos found in the interior which originally decorated southern part of the westerly wing facade. After joining the southern wing, they turned into an interior decoration at the end of 17th century. Unshaded skewed-pyramidal bossage on the westerly wing-wall is dated into the last quarter of 16th century, an era in which the chateau was already owned by Jiří Popel z Lobkowicz.

The architecture and sgraffito decoration of Mělník chateau still ask many pending questions. Their answers would call for thorough research of existing problems in broader context. It still remains a question whether it is possible to find a satisfactory answer at present.

Key words:

renaissance, Mělník chateau, Zdislav Berka z Dubé, arcade, sgraffito

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