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From Catholicism to Protestantism and Back. Biblical Motifs in Brno Stove Tile Production in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period

Abstract

The oldest Brno stove tiles with relief decoration come from Špilberk Castle, the residence of the Margraves of Moravia from the House of Luxembourg since the beginning of the second half of the fourteenth century. Analogous finds are also known from the suburbium, i.e., from the area of the royal town of Brno, where we can most likely also situate the pottery workshop in which they were made. For the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Early Modern Period, we already have demonstrable evidence of stove tile production directly in the inner urban area, namely in two archaeologically examined workshops near the fortification walls. Both of them feature period-specific decorative motifs, which draw inspiration, either directly or in the form of symbolism, from the Old and New Testaments. Identical or slightly modified reliefs are found in other locations, especially in the Czech lands, including several castles (e.g., Lipnice, Lichnice, Potštejn, Cvilín, Landštejn, and others).

Keywords: stove tiles, biblical motifs, Middle Ages, early modern period, Brno

Słowa kluczowe: kafle piecowe, motywy biblijne, średniowiecze, wczesna nowożytność, Brno

Introduction

The comfort of living in medieval castles was indirectly influenced by climatic conditions, which in our latitudes take the form of a temperate climate, in which warm summers alternate with cold winters. Longer-term changes in climatic conditions during the period under study followed four distinct stages, in which longer, colder phases alternated with shorter, more favorable intervals.¹ However, the changes were not of such a nature that they could eliminate

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the need for winter heating of living rooms. The unfavorable conditions of cold seasons, influenced by the current weather, prompted the search for a suitable form of heating for mostly stone-built residential interiors. A dramatic change in high-medieval housing culture was brought about by tiled stoves, whose relief decoration was not purely ornamental, and the choice of themes in the Middle Ages and the early modern period was not random. Individual motifs were combined into a semantic whole, most often communicating the moral lessons of the time in visual form. The main role in this decoration was played by the dominant Christian symbolism in various forms, accompanied by heraldic reliefs, which are to a lesser extent complemented by additional themes. However, the choice of themes and their artistic rendering were also influenced by current fashion trends, social status, and the economic potential of the person who commissioned the stove.

The study focuses on biblical motifs identified in the relief decoration of stove tiles obtained during archaeological research conducted at Špilberk Castle in Brno. In relevant cases, it also mentions a wider range of Christian motifs. On the basis of analogous finds, it attempts to identify contact sites with evidence of identical tile production from the second half of the fourteenth century to the second half of the sixteenth century. The assemblage of finds from Špilberk contains almost eight hundred fragments and torsos of tiles registered in the archaeological collection of the Brno City Museum. The set was analyzed using a standard method including typology, morphology, and material composition. For the purpose of this study, its evaluation in terms of relief decoration and dating is crucial.

Špilberk Stove Tile Reliefs with Biblical Themes

On the example of preserved medieval and early modern stove tiles from the manorial castle of Špilberk (Brno, Czech Republic), we can observe changes in the relief decoration of the dominant piece of interior equipment both in terms of the social status of the commissioner of the stove and in terms of the popularity of various themes in changing historical contexts. At the beginning of the production and installation of relief tile stoves in the second half of the fourteenth century, the castle was owned by members of the state elite, the Margraves of Moravia from the ruling House of Luxembourg, who also resided there. Špilberk lost this residential function with the extinction of the Luxembourg secundogeniture (1411), but it remained in manorial possession until 1560, when Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor, sold it to the Moravian Estates. The town of Brno bought the castle from the Estates immediately afterward and entrusted its supervision to the town officials. Until then, it had been alternately administered by the royal burgraves and the pledge holders

¹ Little Ice Age 1195–1465; Little Climatic Optimum 1466–1618; Little Ice Age 1619–1897; Present Climatic Optimum; See J. Svoboda, Z. Vašků, V. Čílek, *Velká kniha o klimatu země Koruny české*, Regia, Praha 2003, pp. 130–406.

from the ranks of the higher and lower nobility, for whom the castle and its estates were primarily of economic, not residential, importance. The castle interiors were destroyed by a large fire in 1578. During the liquidation of its consequences, the remains of the then heating devices were buried under layers of waste in the areas of the northern and partly also southern castle *Zwinger* (outer ward). From there, an extensive set of fragments and torsos of stove tiles (more than six hundred pieces) from numerous heating devices from the 14th–16th centuries were recovered during archaeological research conducted as part of the reconstruction of the castle that began in the 1980s. Their number cannot be determined from the fragmentary material. According to the reconstructed motifs and technological traces, it can only be estimated that they come from at least ten stoves. Fragments of stove tiles from the 16th–17th centuries also come from excavation trenches laid out in the moat in front of the eastern wing of the castle. Špilberk began to be refurnished only after the confiscation in 1621, when it returned to manorial property.²

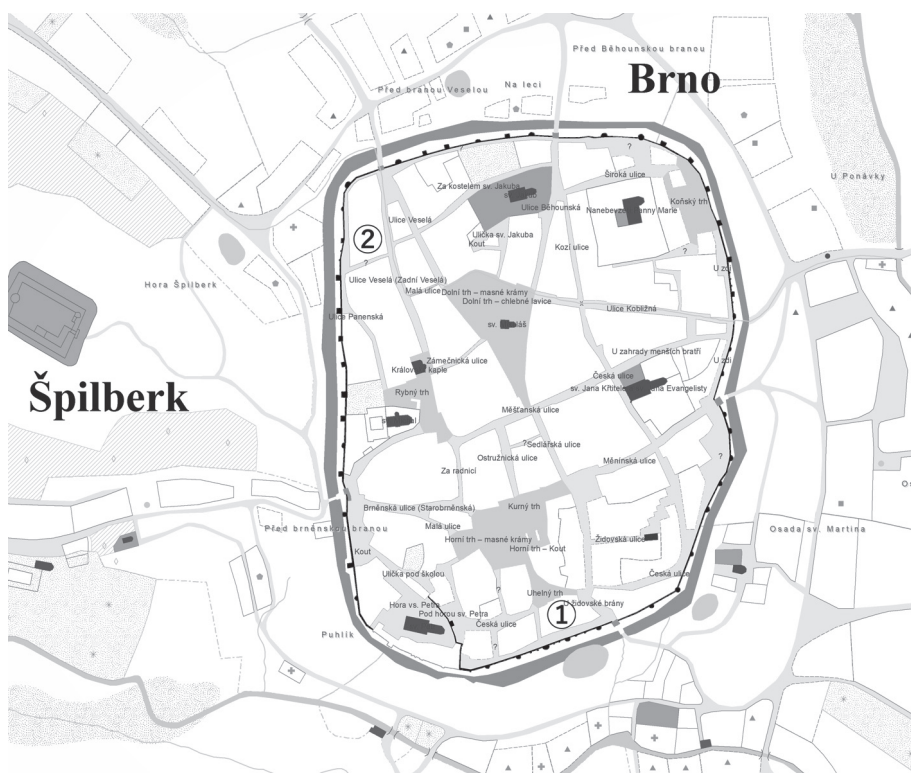


Fig. 1. Brno, topographic reconstruction of the situation in the fourteenth century according to O. Vičar (*Místopis Brna v polovici 14. století, "Brno v minulosti a dnes"* 1965, vol. VII, p. 251), indicating the location of archaeologically evidenced workshops that produced tiles (1, 2)

² H. Jordánková, I. Loskotová, *Špilberská kachlová kamna a jejich stovebníci*, "Archaeologia historica" 2002, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 564–582.

In the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the royal town of Brno became a natural local center for the production of stove tiles. The craftsmen in Brno supplied tiles not only to burgher households but also for heating Špilberk castle. Of the many presumed pottery workshops, archaeological research has so far documented two that were demonstrably engaged in the production of tiles. Both were surprisingly located within the inner urban area (Fig. 1).³ They were probably active during the last quarter of the fifteenth century, with activity extending into the early sixteenth century. The oldest relief-decorated tiles from Brno, known mainly from archaeological finds from Špilberk Castle, also came from Brno workshops that have not yet been precisely located.⁴

The concept of the Špilberk stoves from the second half of the fourteenth century included heraldic decoration and symbolism drawn from biblical narratives and moral principles. The Resurrection of Jesus is represented by a lion bending protectively over its cub (Fig. 2.1). An interpretation of this scene is offered by the *Physiologus*, according to which lion cubs are born dead and their parents then breathe life into them.⁵ The figure of the mythical griffin, a winged lion with an eagle's head and pointed ears (Fig. 2.2, 3), is also associated with Jesus Christ. These mythical rulers of the earthly and heavenly animal realms symbolize Christ's dual nature – human and divine – embodied in the griffin.⁶ In Romanesque art, the griffin is also depicted as a conqueror of creatures such as a lion, snake, or basilisk.⁷ The last-mentioned creature, a rooster with a snake's tail (Fig. 2.4) appears on another tile relief from Špilberk, where it is shown confronting a griffin. The basilisk is the embodiment of evil and sin, but also a symbol of Christ's victory over death and the devil.⁸ Within the ideological concept of the stove, the preserved reliefs thus celebrated Christ and his deeds described in the New Testament.

The patrons commissioning the construction of at least two stoves, one simpler and unglazed and the other more spectacular, glazed in green, brown, and yellow, were the Margraves of Moravia from the House of Luxembourg, most likely the younger brother of Charles IV, John Henry, the younger brother of

³ V. Nekuda, *Nálezy středověkých hrnčářských pecí na Moravě*, "Časopis Moravského muzea – vědy společenské" 1963, vol. 48, no. 1–2, pp. 71–77; L. Sedláčková, A. Zúbek, *Hrnčířství v archeologických pramenech*, [in:] *Zdroje a šíření vybraných komodit keramické produkce vrcholného a pozdního středověku/ Sources and distribution of selected high and late mediaeval pottery products*, ed. Irena Loskotová, Masarykova univerzita, Brno 2021, pp. 393–403, <https://dx.doi.org/10.5817/CZ.MUNI.M210-9920-2021> (access: 12.3.2026).

⁴ I. Loskotová, *Špilberská kamna doby lucemburské*, "Brno v minulosti a dnes" 2000, vol. 14, no.1, pp. 37–64; H. Jordánková, I. Loskotová, *Špilberská kachlová kamna...*, pp. 555–559.

⁵ J. Royt, H. Šedinová, *Slovník symbolů. Kosmos, příroda a člověk v křesťanské ikonografii*, Mladá fronta, Praha 1998, p. 147.

⁶ Ch. Wetzel, *Das große Lexikon der Symbole*, Primus Verlag, Darmstadt 2008, p. 130.

⁷ E. Hollerbach, G. Jászai, *Greif*, [in:] *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie 2, Allgemeine Ikonographie F–K*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum et al., Verlag Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau 1968, pp. 202–204.

⁸ Ch. Wetzel, *Das große Lexikon...*, p. 34; L. Wehrhahn-Stauch, *Basilisk*, [in:] *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie 1, Allgemeine Ikonographie A–E*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum et al., Verlag Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau 1968, pp. 251–253.

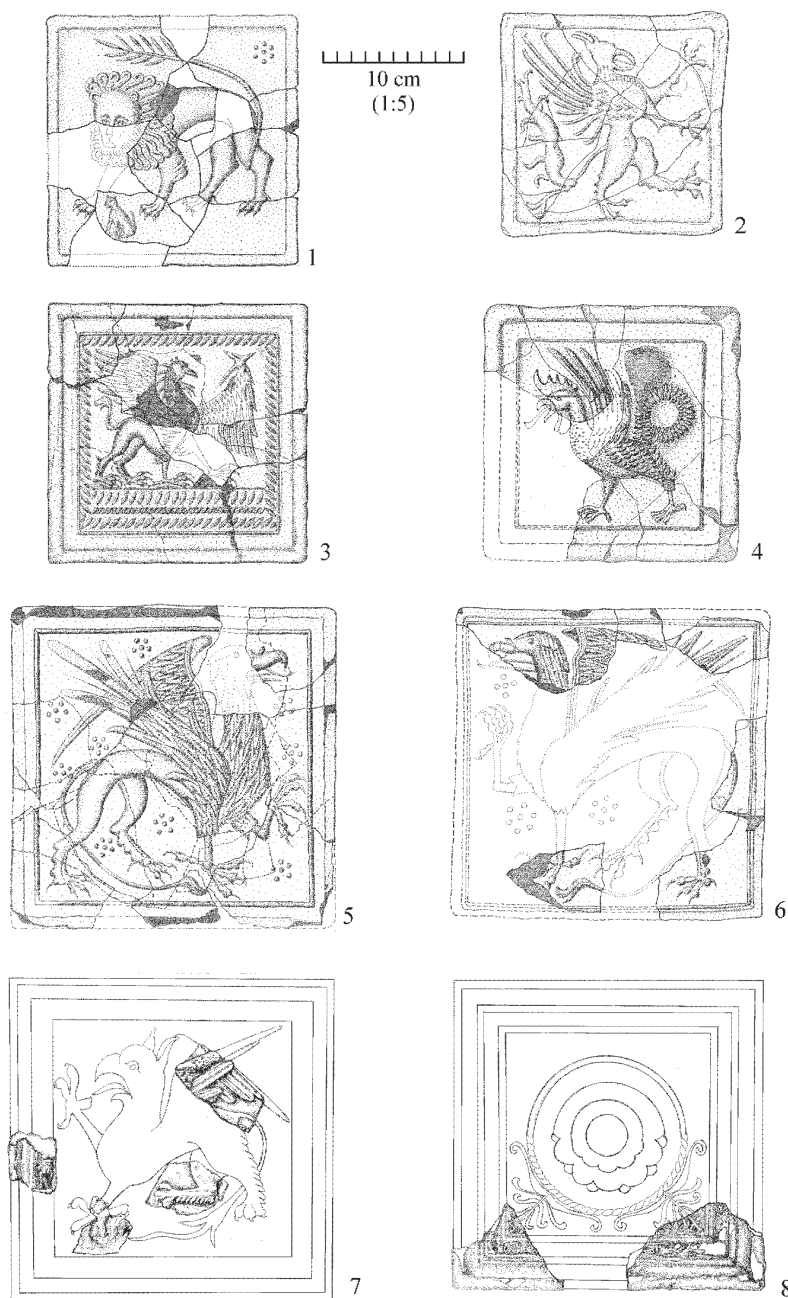


Fig. 2. Brno, Špilberk, stove tiles, second half of the fourteenth century: 1. lion – symbolism of the Resurrection; 2, 3. griffin – symbolism of Christ's human and divine nature; 4. basilisk – symbolism of Christ's victory over evil; first quarter of the fifteenth century: 5, 6. griffin; second half of the fifteenth century: 7. griffin; 8. rosette – symbolism of the Virgin Mary. Drawings by Augustin Štrof, figure by Soňa Plchová

Charles IV, who began to transform Špilberk into a residential castle after the mid-fourteenth century.⁹ The griffin, this time depicted in a paired but non-antagonistic composition, also made its way into the Špilberk tiled stoves from the first quarter of the fifteenth century (Fig. 2.5, 6) and in a new artistic rendition was incorporated into the concept of the so-called knight's stoves in the second half of the fifteenth century (Fig. 2.7). In addition, Marian symbolism appears on the stoves in the form of a slightly stylized dog rose (Fig. 2.8).¹⁰ Stoves with these griffins were also related to the residential character of the castle. The older stove, in a purely unglazed form, is connected by the heraldry on other specimens of this collection with Sigismund of Luxembourg.¹¹ The younger, so-called knight's stove, which appears at Špilberk in a white-engobed finish, has its origins in a workshop producing tiles for the royal palace in Buda, Hungary, from which their production spread to the Czech lands, and examples of these tiles are found mainly at important castles, including Špilberk. Thanks to their heraldic decoration, the Hungarian researcher Imre Holl associated them with Ladislaus the Posthumous, for whose palace such stove tiles were likely produced between 1455 and 1457. However, this early dating of the emergence of this tile collection has not been fully accepted in broader European scholarship.¹² It is therefore possible to consider a later installation of this stove in the Brno castle as well, perhaps during the administration of the castle by one of the captains of Matthias Corvinus in the 1470s or 1480s. Part of the Brno tax paid to the monarch was used for the maintenance of the castle and its garrison,¹³ and the castle maintained close supply connections with craftsmen from Brno.

The new generation of stoves at Špilberk most likely originated in Brno in the last third of the fifteenth century, probably between 1480 and 1500. The dominant decorative motif is a New Testament scene of the Adoration of the Magi, divided into six relief panels. They depict, in addition to the main figures, the Virgin Mary bending in prayer over the manger, and the Three Magi bringing gifts to the newborn King, as well as the stable at Bethlehem with an ox and a donkey, and Saint Joseph preparing food over an open fire (Fig. 3.1–6).

This group is chronologically preceded by a pair of reliefs with the Archangel Gabriel announcing to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive through

⁹ I. Loskotová, *Otopná zařízení, kachle a jejich ikonografie*, [in:] *Dějiny Brna 2. Středověké město*, ed. Libor Jan, Statutární město Brno, Archiv města Brna, Brno, 2013, p. 334.

¹⁰ J. Royt, H. Šedinová, *Slovník symbolů...*, pp. 90–91; H. Jordánková, I. Loskotová, *Špilberská kachlová kamna...*, pp. 559–560.

¹¹ It is a coat of arms with a quartered shield bearing the emblems of Upper and Lower Hungary, encircled by the tail of a dragon seated on the upper edge of the shield. It refers to the Order of the Dragon, founded by Sigismund of Luxembourg. I. Loskotová, *Špilberská kamna...*, pp. 48–49.

¹² For a summary of this issue, see I. Feld, *Holl Imre szerepe a magyarországi és a nemzetközi kályhacsempé-kutatásban*, [in:] *Szívmelengető középkor. Kályhák és kályhacsempék a középkori Magyarországon, 14–16. század*, Budapesti Történeti Múzeum és a szerzők, Budapest 2018, pp. 16–17.

¹³ H. Jordánková, I. Loskotová, *Špilberská kachlová kamna...*, pp. 577–578.



Fig. 3. Stove tiles from the Adoration series, last third of the fifteenth century: 1–6. Adoration: Saint Joseph, the Bethlehem stable, the birth of Jesus Christ, and the Three Magi/Kings with gifts. Drawings by Augustin Štřof, figure by Soňa Plchová

the Holy Spirit (Fig. 4.1, 2) and concludes with the Assumpta (Fig. 4.3). The collection is complemented by at least three different depictions of armigers, both on foot (Fig. 4.4) and mounted, evoking the idea of a heavenly army, with which Saint Wenceslas is often associated in the Czech tradition (Fig. 4.5). The whole series is united by a uniform Late Gothic architectural frame of the

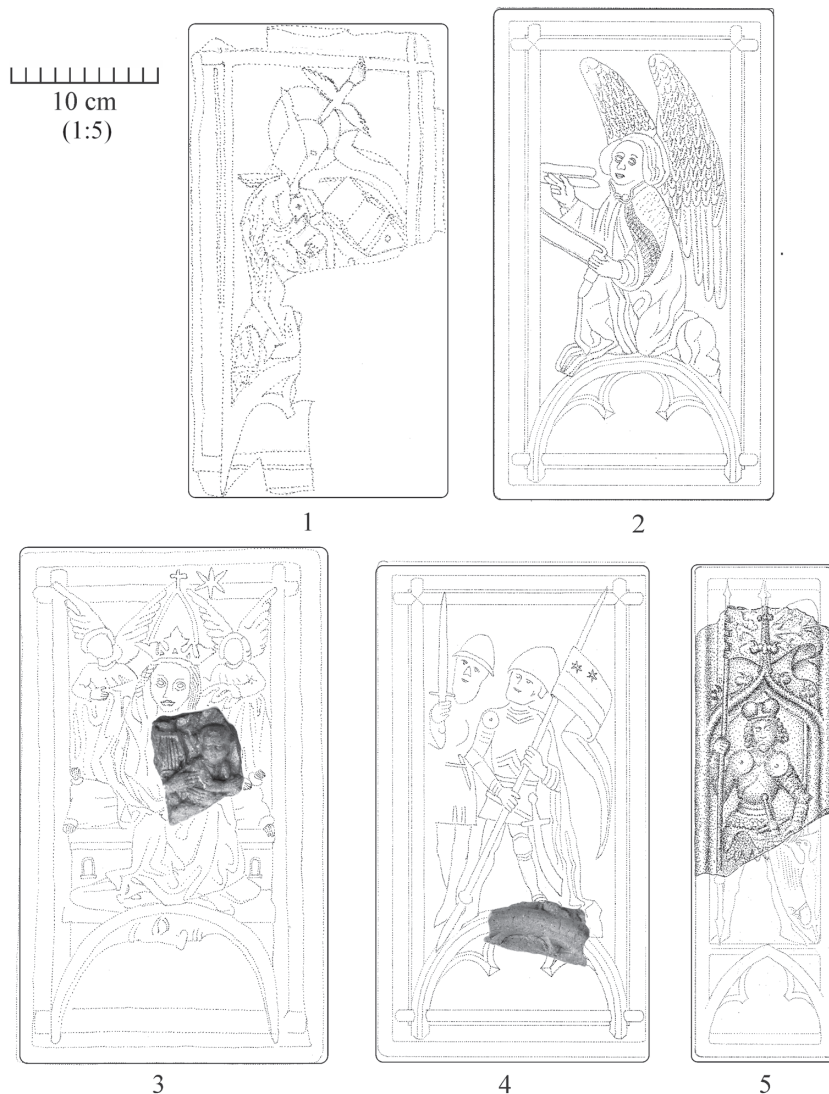


Fig. 4. Stove tiles from the Adoration series, last third of the fifteenth century: 1, 2. Annunciation to the Virgin Mary; 3. Assumpta (a fragment from Špilberk is inserted into the drawing); 4. armigers (a fragment from Špilberk is inserted into the drawing); 5. Saint Wenceslas. Drawings by Augustin Štrof, photo by the author, figure by Soňa Plchová

figures placed on a two-cusped arch. This rule is broken only by the inverted crescent moon under the throne of the Assumpta. The fragments and torsos of tiles of this series, without traces of having been used in a stove, come from one of the above-mentioned Brno pottery workshops. The same assemblage of finds also includes unique torsos of two molds for the production of tiles of this series. Among the at least fourteen motifs at Špilberk that have been

completely or partially documented so far,¹⁴ fragments from a relief representing the Virgin Mary seated on the throne (Assumpta) and from a specimen depicting a pair of armigers on foot were found.

One of the other allegorical depictions of Christ, a running deer accentuated by the symbolism of the Holy Trinity in the form of a flowering plant (Fig. 5.1), which was relatively frequent in late medieval tile production, can be dated to the end of the fifteenth century. The first manifestations of the Renaissance combined with the older Gothic artistic style are represented by a pair of stove tiles depicting, in circular medallions, Adam and Eve at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Fig. 5.2) and a pelican feeding its young with its own blood (Fig. 5.3), a traditional symbol of Christ's sacrificial death for the redemption of humankind and of the Resurrection.¹⁵

Around the mid-sixteenth century, a stove was built at Špilberk whose artistic concept is associated with the Reformation. This stove, featuring fictional portraits of twelve biblical heroes, inspired by illustrations by the Nuremberg painter and engraver Georg Pencz that accompanied the celebratory verses by the German poet Hans Sachs, became very popular in Brno. In European tile production, the figures are typically placed in a Renaissance arch, but the Brno craftsman, following the graphic models, placed them under the architrave. Although only fragments of the side pillars of this stove have been preserved at Špilberk¹⁶ (Fig. 5.4), we know of a rich collection of nine of the twelve Old Testament heroes from Brno,¹⁷ so the installation of such a stove in the castle can be assumed. However, we do not know who commissioned it, and therefore we are not sure whether the motivation lay in religious affiliation or simply in an appreciation of the fashionable style of the period.

However, a connection between the Protestant milieu and the Anabaptist tile production can be identified in the non-figural motif of intertwining hearts beneath an arcade (Fig. 5.5), which also appear in repeating, so-called mosaic or "wallpaper" patterns (Fig. 5.6).¹⁸ Tiles almost identical to the Špilberk finds, but executed in a luxurious faience technique, were produced by the Anabaptist workshop in Ostrožská Nová Ves near Uherské Hradiště. The workshop operated there from the 1570s under the protection of the owners of the Uher-ský Ostroh estate, the Lords of Kunovice, who adhered to the Brethren faith. The village ceased to exist in early 1621, when it was burned to the ground

¹⁴ For the most up-to-date summary, including micropetrographic analysis, see I. Loskotová, M. Hložek, M. Tymonová, *Klanění mudrců/ Adoration of the Magi*, [in:] *Zdroje a šíření vybraných komodit keramické produkce vrcholného a pozdního středověku/ Sources and distribution of selected high and late medieval pottery products*, ed. Irena Loskotová, Masarykova univerzita, Brno 2021, pp. 97–177, <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/144378> (access: 14.3.2026).

¹⁵ H. Jordánková, I. Loskotová, *Špilberská kachlová kamna...*, pp. 560, 568; J. Royt, H. Šedinová, *Slovník symbolů...*, p. 131; Ch. Wetzel, *Das große Lexikon...*, p. 234; B. Riese, *Seemanns Lexikon der Ikonografie, Religiöse und profane Bildmotive*, E. A. Seemann Verlag, Leipzig 2007, p. 324.

¹⁶ I. Loskotová, *Brněnské kachle se starozákonními hrdiny*, "Archaeologia historica" 2012, vol. 37, no. 2, p. 676.

¹⁷ Ibidem, pp. 663–678.

¹⁸ H. Jordánková, I. Loskotová, *Špilberská kachlová kamna...*, pp. 563, 569.

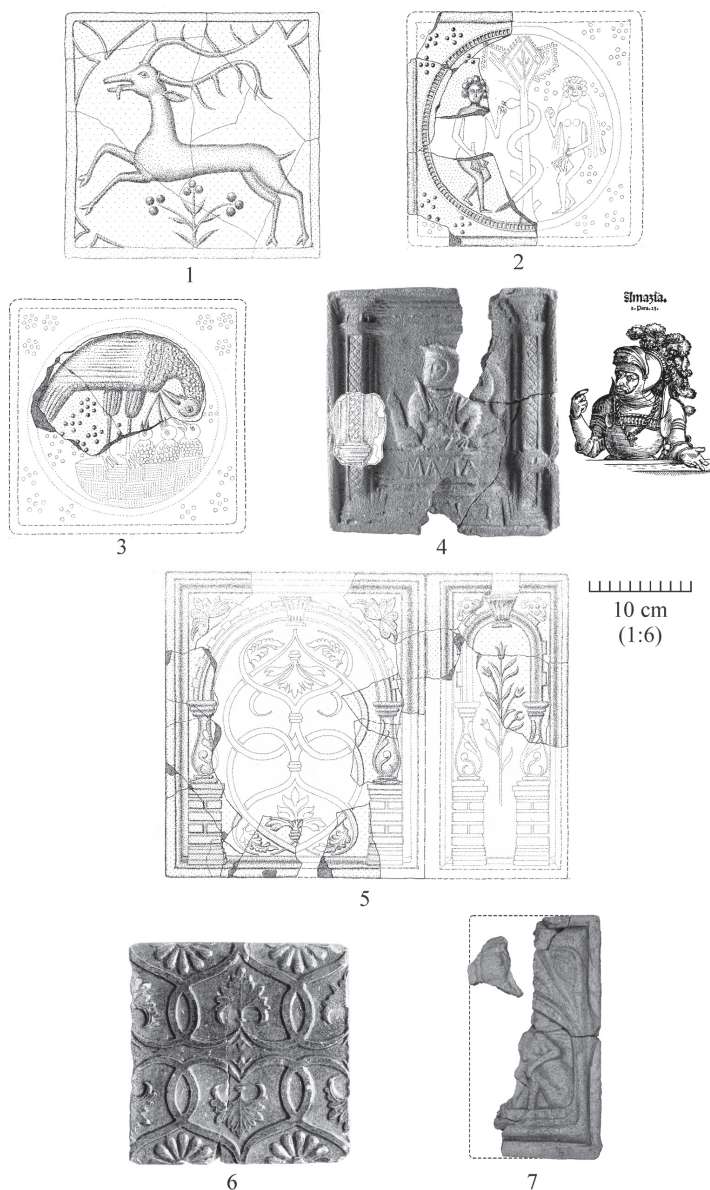


Fig. 5. Brno, Špilberk, stove tiles from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (1–3) and the second half of the sixteenth century (4–7): 1. deer – an allegory of Christ; 2. Adam and Eve at the Tree of Knowledge; 3. pelican feeding its young with its own blood – an allegory of Christ; 4. fragment of a tile from Špilberk inserted into the torso of a tile from Brno with a relief of the fictitious biblical hero Amaziah (Amazia), according to an illustration by Georg Pencz; 5. a pair of intertwining hearts in an arcade; 6. mosaic/wallpaper pattern with a motif of intertwining hearts; 7. torso and fragment of a relief depicting probably Susanna in the Bath from the Old Testament's/apocryphal. Drawings by Augustin Štrof, photo 5–7 Martin Košťál, the others by the author, figure by Soňa Plchová

by the Hungarian army in the aftermath of the Battle of White Mountain.¹⁹ Anabaptist vegetal patterns were also frequently imitated by local potters, including those in Brno. An original, green-glazed stove produced in the Anabaptist workshop in Dambořice²⁰ is also documented in Brno, although not at Špilberk.

During the second half of the sixteenth century, allegories returned to stove decoration in a new concept, including the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love, framed by richly decorated Late Renaissance architecture. However, they were apparently not included in the design of the Špilberk stoves, probably because of their higher cost.²¹ At that time, the castle was already administered by the town of Brno, and the stoves used to heat the castle interiors thus approached the simpler standard typical of burgher households. This is evident from the unglazed torso of a relief with a naked female figure seated in the corner of a vaulted interior, which comes from archaeological excavations in the Brno suburban district of Jircháře.²² In the assemblage of finds from Špilberk Castle, only a fragment of the upper right corner of such a tile has been preserved (Fig. 5.7). The scene is generally interpreted as referring to Old Testament stories or the Apocrypha, whose central motif is a bathing female figure, but this identification remains hypothetical. The most likely identification is Susanna, who was falsely accused of adultery by two Jewish elders.²³ According to a similarly conceived scene on a tile from Prague Castle, another possible interpretation is Uriah's wife Bathsheba, who was seduced by King David.²⁴

Analogous Tile Reliefs

Analogies to Špilberk stove tiles can be found mainly in material from the royal town located below the castle hill, that is, Brno. The second most frequent finds come from Bohemian and Moravian castles (Table 1). These are parallels produced using the same molds as the Špilberk specimens. In the case of different

¹⁹ J. Pajer, *Studie o novokřtěncích*, Etnos, Strážnice 2006, pp.107–108, 114–116.

²⁰ P. Holub, H. Jordánková, I. Loskotová, *Early Modern period Brno stove tiles with a (mosaic) tapestry pattern*, [in:] *Studies in Post-Medieval Archaeology* 3, Archaia Praha o.p.s, Praha 2009, p. 286.

²¹ From the archaeological excavations on Veselá Street in Brno, an almost completely reconstructed corner-panel stove tile depicting the allegory of Faith is known (L. Sedláčková, *Alegorie Víry*, Zápisník, Archaia Brno z. ú., https://www.archaiabrno.org/home_cs/?acc=zapisnec&blog_id=780&blog_date=2017-02-13 (access: 7.12.2025)). The high quality of the workmanship is evident in every detail of the relief, including the figures of kneeling angels, Old Testament prophets, and Faith herself, as well as in the architectural framing of the scene. The author of the mold must undoubtedly have been a professional, and the cost of its production would in turn have increased the final price of the luxury tile.

²² I would like to thank Archaia Brno, z. ú. for granting permission to publish the fragment from excavation A60/2013 Brno, Koliště/Vlhká.

²³ The Book of Daniel in Old Testament, chapter 13.

²⁴ J. Žegklitz, *Grafické a další předlohy motivů na kachlích z českého prostředí. Renesanční kachle jako prostředek šíření idejí a kultury doby reformace*, "Archeologické rozhledy" 2012, vol. LXIV, p. 271.

artistic renderings of the same motifs, it is not possible to prove a connection between the workshops. The micropetrographic analyses that were conducted demonstrated local production in all cases except Boleradice (about 35 km from Brno), which suggests either transport of positive relief models used for making moulds, or the direct transport of finished molds.

Table 1. Špilberk – analogous reliefs at Bohemian and Moravian castles

Tiles – Špilberk	Other sites
The second half of the fourteenth century	Orlík u Humpolce
The first quarter of the fifteenth century	Boleradice
The second half of the fifteenth century	Orlík u Humpolce
	Lichnice
	Lipnice nad Sázavou
	Landštejn
	Jindřichův Hradec
	Helfštýn
	Cornštejn
The last third of the fifteenth century	Lichnice
	Lipnice nad Sázavou
	Landštejn
	Javorník
	Potštejn
	Velké Meziříčí
	Nový hrádek u Lukova

Popular fashionable motifs in tile production were initially probably spread through relief models, from which it was then possible to produce any number of negative forms in local workshops. The reason for moving finished high-quality molds to another workshop may have been the declining relevance of the reliefs, which is usually linked to the development of fashion trends or to a change in the original commissioner of the conceptual program of the stove. Given the transport possibilities of the time, finished tiles were transported only over shorter distances, which is also documented in written sources for the early modern period. Stoves for aristocratic residences were thus produced by pottery workshops in nearby towns. Last but not least, so-called pirate copies were created in local workshops by taking impressions from available originals. Products from such molds can be easily detected thanks to the shrinkage of the resulting relief during drying and firing of ceramic goods.

An overview of finds analogous to the above-mentioned Špilberk reliefs shows differences in the craftsmanship of the tiles depending on the social status and economic potential of the commissioner of the stove. The stoves for

the Margrave of Moravia from the House of Luxembourg were probably made for several castle rooms in both the standard unglazed variant and the luxurious multi-colored glazed design. Analogous finds from Orlík near Humpolec survive only in an unglazed form. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the opposite was true. The tiles from the so-called knight's stove and from the Adoration series at Špilberk, at that time when the castle was administered alternately by pledge holders and the ruler's captains, appear only in a simpler and less expensive unglazed variant. But for the residential castles of important noble families – Lipnice nad Sázavou, Lichnice, and Landštejn – these stoves were made in a green-glazed design of the highest quality of the time. Some residential interiors in the town of Brno also surpassed Špilberk with stoves of the same high quality. In the case of sixteenth century stoves, we no longer record analogous finds from castle grounds due to changes in priorities concerning domestic comfort. During this period, Špilberk was administered by the town of Brno and afterwards, after the Battle of White Mountain in 1621, it returned to seigneurial ownership solely in as a fortress. Similarly, aristocratic residences moved from castles to manor houses. The heating of Špilberk Castle therefore remained in line with commonly available tile goods represented mainly by local imitations of Anabaptist tiles, which in their ordinary ceramic design copied the luxurious majolica products of the Moravian originals intended for aristocratic residences.

Evaluation

The workshops in Brno supplied the castle with tiles, which they also offered to local aristocratic and burgher households and, more exceptionally, to customers beyond the limits of the urban economic sphere. An analysis of the assemblage of tiles from Špilberk Castle, in which more than two hundred relief types can be distinguished, shows a slight predominance of preserved religious motifs over the heraldic ones (Table 2).

Table 2. Špilberk – relief motifs (%)

Relief motifs	%	Religious Relief motifs	%
Religious	28	Biblical	10
Heraldic	23	Symbolism	60
Ornamental	46	Saints	23
Uncategorized	3	Protestant	7
Total	100	Total	100

A closer view reveals that the relief decoration on the medieval and early modern stove tiles presents biblical motifs in a symbolic form that was standard for the period and therefore fully comprehensible across the social spectrum

and was also used in the decoration of contemporary church interiors. During the fifteenth century, this repertoire was gradually extended to include more realistically conceived biblical scenes and figures. Among the most frequently depicted scenes were those associated with the birth and martyrdom of Christ from the New Testament, and figures of Old Testament prophets. The latter also appear in motifs that have been associated with Reformation influences. However, they played only an episodic role in the composition of the Špilberk stoves. The nearly equal representation of ornamental motifs, both vegetal and geometric, reflects the fashionable wave of more affordable mosaic/wallpaper patterns of the early modern period, produced in Brno under the influence of high-quality Anabaptist goods from the South Moravian region. However, unlike some Brno palaces, Špilberk was supplied with only local, albeit well-crafted, imitations. The highest-quality Špilberk stoves may be regarded as the oldest ones, built by the Margraves of Moravia from the House of Luxembourg to heat their residence in the second half of the fourteenth century. They were produced in both an unglazed version and a luxurious multicolored glazed version, and their ideological concept combines heraldic motifs with Christological symbolism.

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