

ARCHITECTURE AND HUNTING IN CZECH REPUBLIC

Starting from 12th century, a lot of hunting castles and palaces were built in Czech lands. A hunting castle of great importance was Kralův Dvůr, built by Václav I in 13th century and used by Charles IV and Václav IV as well. Near Kralův Dvůr the first bohemian pheasantry was constructed. Among famous hunting castles we find Křivoklát, Hlavačov, Jenčov, Jívno, Tyřov, Myšenec, Loket nad Ohří, Nižbor, Žebrák, Točnick, Břeclav, Buchlov, Cvilín u Krnova, Roštejn u Telče, Nový Hrad u Blanska. The golden era of hunting castles ended during the Hussite wars. A great part of medieval hunting castles was destroyed and today only ruins remain. Beside being one of the largest castles that have maintained their original aspect until today, Křivoklát is one of the oldest and most important castles belonging to Czech princes and kings.



Křivoklát Castle

The history of its construction starts in the 12th century. During the reign of Přemysl Otakar II., a large, monumental royal castle was built to be later rebuilt by king Václav IV and then generously

enlarged by king Vladislav of Jagellon. The castle of Křivoklát was seriously damaged by fire several times. It became a most feared prison and its importance sank rapidly. First during the 19th century Romantic epoque (under rule of the Fürstenberg family that owned the castle until 1929) the castle was reconstructed - and saved. During the Renaissance age, aristocracy began to build sumptuous hunting palaces surrounded by fenced game reserves. Two of these reserves encircled Stromovka´s palace and the summery residence of Hvězda in Prague.



Stromovká Palace

During the reign of Rudolph II, Stromovka´s palace covered the function of hunting castle just like the castles of Benátky nad Jizerou and Brandýs nad Labem. Among the Renaissance hunting palaces, Židlochovice, Jevišovice and Milotice assumed a remarkable importance as well as the hunting chateau in the area of Lednice and Valtice. The Židlochovice chateau is one of the best preserved hunting chateau in Europe: its origins date back to the 14th century, when records mentioned a water stronghold built on the so-called amber trade path connecting the Mediterranean with the Baltic coasts. Over the centuries, the stronghold gained gradually more

splendor under the possession of the Žerotín, the Waldstein noble families. A radical transformation occurred under the reign of the count of Sitzendorf (1696 – 1743), who also markedly influenced the game-keeping development of the Židlochovice manor: the castle served not only as hunting venue but also as a place of social and political gatherings. The current form of a hunting chateau (in Classicism style) was most notably influenced by the archduke Fridrich who was the chateau owner from 1895 to 1918. During this period, Židlochovice housed grandiose small-game hunts and the chateau's interior became adorned with trophies coming from hunting grounds all over the Austro-Hungarian-Monarchy. Since 1918, the Židlochovice chateau alongside the adjoining park, have been in possession of the Czech Republic. In the 1920s and 1930s T.G. Masaryk, president of the then Czechoslovak Republic, paid several visits to the chateau.



Židlochovice Castle

The adjoining park was established in the early 18th century and was gradually transformed into an English-style landscape garden. It covers an area of 22 hectares and is open to public all year

round. A great number of hunting palaces and chateau were built during the Baroque age: Libosad u Jičína, Humprecht u Sobotky, Nový Ples u Jaroměře, Roztěž u Kutné Hory, Letohrádek in Stromovka in Prague, Hořín u Mělníka, Karlova Koruna in Chlumeck nad Cidlinou, Ohrada near to Hluboká nad Vltavou, Veltrusy, Jemčina close to Jindřichův Hradec or Kozel in Plzeň area.



Konopiště Castle

In the 18th and 19th centuries some hunting chateaus of smaller dimensions were built: however, besides some exceptions, they are not conserved in good conditions. Among the most important there are Kačina in the area of Kutná Hora, Klášterec nad Ohří, Helvíkovice close to Žamberk, Klokočka pod Bezdězem. Located in the surroundings of Lysá nad Labem, where the bird shooting was carried out, Bon Repos detains an important position among the hunting palaces.. The hunting constructions were accompanied by the modifications of the surrounding lands and were decorated by famous carvers like M.B. Braun and F.M. Brokoff. and the inner rooms were decorated with paintings - of course, the main subject consisted in hunting scenes - realized by famous artists like

K. Škréta or V. Hollar, J. Navrátil, T. Kosárek, K. Purkyně and J. Mařák. At the beginning of the XIX century, in the Romanticism period, Czech aristocracy built some palaces aimed at hosting important guests also hunting guests: Hluboká nad Vltavou, Žehušice, Vraž u Písku, Záluží close to Kašperské Hory, Žofín in Benešov and Černý les in Benešov area (Konopiště). The Konopiště Castle was originally founded as a gothic fortress guarding the nearby town of Benešov. Founded at the end of the 13th century by Tobias of Benešov, it was built at the beginning of the 14th century, following the model of french castles called "castels". The first touch to a medieval structure of the castle was made in the 15th century by Jiří (George) of Sternberk and was followed by Hodejovsky family in the 17th century, who converted the castle into a renaissance mansion. However, the most significant alteration took place in the 18th when members of the Vrtba family rebuilt the castle into a baroque residence. The archduke František (Franz) Ferdinand d'Este, a successor to the Austro-Hungarian throne, whose assassination in Sarajevo, in 1914, became a pretext of the the World War I was by far the most important and famous owner of the Konopiste Castle . The nobleman bought the Konopiste domain in 1887 from the Lobkowitz family and converted it into a magnificent seat of a Heir. The Chambers were richly decorated with the collections inherited from the Modena's archdukes of d'Este and several hunting trophies hanging on the walls as silent witnesses of Franz Ferdinand's hunting passion.