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The tomb of Christ and its Prague protectors. From the topography of the monastery of the canons regular of the Holy Sepulchre in Zderaz

ANNOTATION

The Monastery of the Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre in Zderaz in Prague with the church of St. Peter, founded around 1190, was so badly damaged during the Hussite wars that it almost disappeared from the city's topography. Rich written sources and several surviving relics allow for an attempt to reconstruct its structural development and its pre-Hussite appearance with the choir consecrated to the Holy Sepulchre, which was apparently located in the western part of the church. The specificity of the monastery as part of Prague shows the use of the liturgy inspired by the operation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

SUMMARY

The Monastery of the Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre in Zderaz in Prague, was one of Prague's oldest monasteries. At the same time, however, due to its destruction in 1420 it is one of the least preserved and thus the least known about. The Order originated in Jerusalem, where after the conquest of the city by the Crusaders in 1099, the Duke of Lorraine, Godfrey of Bouillon, appointed a chapter of canons at the church of the Holy Sepulchre whose purpose was to protect and worship the Holy Sepulchre. This was transformed into a regulated order by the Patriarch Arnulf of Chocques in 1114 and governed by the Canons Regular. Soon afterwards the order began to spread to Europe, where it gained favor as well as richly endowed houses, one of the more significant of which was the monastery founded in Miechów near Krakow in 1163. Its layout, with the convent located on the northwest corner of the monastery church, evidently influenced such a similar arrangement in Prague.

Due to relatively rich surviving written sources, several of the Zderaz monastery's construction campaigns can be explored. The monastery was founded around 1190 at the church of St. Peter by the members of the North Bohemian Hrabišic family, the brothers Kojata and Všebor. Kojata bequeathed his considerable fortune before his death to the monastery in 1227, as did Všebor sometime before 1238, when the two church altars were consecrated. The establishment of the altars was probably related to the construction realized through Všebor's bequest, probably carried out earlier and finally drawn up in 1238. From 1256 there are dated documents conferring numerous indulgences for the benefit of the monastery; the income from these indulgences was associated with further construction which culminated in 1276 with the consecration of the new chorus together with the altar under the name of the Holy Sepulchre and St. John the Baptist. Relics of the Holy Cross and the Holy Sepulchre were placed into the altar of the choir, which in 1270 was referred to as a costly work. Given that the church had been dedicated to St. Peter, the dedication of the new choir to the Holy Sepulchre may be interpreted as for a new choir, on the west side. According to Baroque historians, the sacristy and a fragment of the presbytery from the church still stood in 1715, in the vicinity of the cloister which lay to the west of the church, which supports the presumption of the western orientation of the choir. A western orientation and the dedication to the Holy Sepulchre, the only one in medieval Bohemia, would have reflected the Order's focus on homage to the location proving the resurrection of Christ. In the 1390's, the church was apparently repaired from damage that occurred around 1278 or 1286. This may be the period of origin for stone fragments found in the Baroque church which was demolished in 1904–1905. Around 1361, the monastery cloister was rebuilt, inside which the chapel of Corpus Christi was located. The chapel was mentioned in 1391, when a stonemason named Henzlin was referred to as a witness and who might have participated in the construction of some part of the monastery. Another event relating to the monastery church, which in 1410 was mentioned as "*decrepit with age*", was probably completed in 1415, when the altar of Corpus Christi and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, founded in the year 1408, was moved to the newly built part of the church. Since the brotherhood caring for the construction of the chapel of Corpus Christi on Karlovo náměstí had a close relationship with the Zderaz monastery, in which the decision was made in 1382 to build that chapel, it is not impossible that the reconstruction of the monastery church took place with the participation of the builder of the chapel, consecrated sometime before 1408. From the entire complex, today a part of the northern wing of the cloister is preserved, incorporated into the dwelling house No. 275/II as three very narrow arcade arches. Research in 1954–1955 revealed brackets of former groin vaults which have parallels in the adjacent Benedictine monastery

Na Slovanech which was built at the same time. A noteworthy detail of the vaulting were dividing ribs of semi-circular profile, perhaps as an imitation of an older model from the c. 1238 construction campaign. Until 1905, a part of the adjacent eastern wing of the cloister and a great portal from the 14th century still existed, the latter now preserved only in fragments, facing northwards from the cloister, perhaps towards the former church. A closer comparison with the preserved church of the women's branch of the order in Světec near Bílina does not provide unequivocal results, neither does an analysis of the alleged medieval appearance of the Zderaz church published in 1797.

The community followed the liturgy, introduced in the early 12th century directly at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, as illustrated by a manuscript dating from around 1385, preserved in the University Library in Wrocław (I Q 175). The manuscript belonged to a monastery in Silesian Nysa which was subordinated to Zderaz before the Hussite wars and to where the Prague community took recourse, which is how the manuscript got to Poland. The calendar of the manuscript, containing many feast days of the Bohemian patron saints, was written sometime around 1385 and was used in Bohemia even in the 90's, when newly announced feast days were added. The manuscript is the latest known version of a number of similar liturgical books compiled after the fall of Jerusalem (1187) in Acre and during the 13th and 14th centuries in Europe for the monasteries of Canons of the Holy Sepulchre. These religious houses followed the liturgy preserving the situation of Jerusalem during the Crusades in detail, as demonstrated by the rubrics determining how to carry out the celebrations of Palm Sunday and the Easter festivities, including the play of the Visit to the Tomb (*Visitatio Sepulchri*) in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, counting with a visit to Calvary. This play, staged at Zderaz apparently in the western choir, thus extends the list of known performances played in medieval Prague (St. George, St. Vitus, Knights of St. John Monastery). The significance of the finding that the manuscript was used in Prague also lies in the fact that it was apparently this unusual Jerusalem liturgy which inspired the Emperor Charles IV to found the Benedictine monastery, following the old Slavonic liturgy, in the very vicinity of the Zderaz monastery, supplemented later by the monastery of the Milan Benedictines, which followed the (also unusual) Ambrosian liturgy.

Fig. 1. Prague-New Town, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre (božehrobci) Na Zderaze. Reconstruction of the layout at the beginning of the 19th century. Medieval relics which are preserved, documented, and presumed with more accuracy are marked in red. 1 – part of the northern arm of the medieval cloister; 2 – northeast area of the cloister and northern portal; 3 – part of the eastern branch of the medieval cloister; 4 – chapel with altar of St. Jude Thaddeus; 5 – remnants of the west wall of the north wing of the convent; 6 – site with cellar of medieval origin; 7 – church of Ss. Peter and Paul; 8 – sacristy; 9 – chapel of the Holy Sepulchre; 269 – provostry; 307 – south wing of the convent. Dashed lines represent the reconstructed course of medieval structures. Base: combination of Jüttner's plan (1816) and stable cadastre (1842) (drawing by the author).

Fig. 2. J. D. Huber 1769: Orthographic plan of Prague in cavalier perspective – section: view onto the premises of the former Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre monastery Na Zderaze. The block between Charles Square and the streets Na Zderaze and Na Zbořenci is drawn from the southeast; the church of St. Peter and surroundings from the southwest. Josef Daniel Huber, *Wahre Laage Der Königlichen Haupt und Residentz statt Prag*, 1769. Original: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

Fig. 3. J. Jüttner 1816: Map of Prague – section: premises of the former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze. Josef Jüttner: *Grundriß der königlichen Hauptstadt Prag*, Prague, 1816.

Fig 4. The "Imperial imprint" of the stable cadastre 1842 – section: the premises of the former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze in Prague's New Town.

Fig. 5. Franz Heger 1804: The plan for rebuilding the northern part of the cloister of the former monastery Na Zderaze on part of house No. 275/II.

Fig. 6. Prague, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze. Documentation of findings of cloister arcades in house No. 275/II in 1954–1955 (taken from Piša 1957).

Fig. 7. Prague, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze. Visible remnants of the westernmost preserved arcades of the northern part of the cloister.

Fig. 8. Prague, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze. Revealed brackets of cloister arcade in house No. 275/II in 1954–1955 (taken from Piša 1957).

Fig. 9. Prague, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze. Keystone, likely from the eastern arm of the cloister, demolished in 1904–1905. Stored: National Museum in Prague.

Fig. 10. Prague, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze. Keystone, likely from the eastern arm of the cloister, demolished in 1904–1905. Stored: National Museum in Prague.

Fig. 11. Prague, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze. Fragment of portal in the former northeast corner of the cloister with visible remnants of the springing of the vaulting. View from the southeast.

Fig. 12. Prague, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze. Fragments of window jamb, perhaps from the choir of the Holy Sepulchre and St. John the Baptist, consecrated in 1276, found while demolishing the Baroque church of ss. Peter and Paul in 1904–1905. Stored: National Museum in Prague.

Fig. 13. Miechów near Krakow, former monastery of Canons of the Holy Sepulchre. Schematic plan view of the monastery premises from 1835 (taken from Affek 1999, fig. 10).

Fig. 14. Prague, former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre on Zderaze. Foundation stone found in the presbytery of the Baroque church of Ss. Peter and Paul during its demolition in 1904–1905. Stored: National Museum in Prague.

Fig. 15. Prague-Old Town, Liliová No. 211/I, former monastery of the Knights Templar. Plan of discovered parts of the rotunda of St. Lawrence; A – before the arrival of the order, and B – after modifications done in the 2nd quarter of the 13th century (taken from Borkovský 1959, 42).

Fig. 16. Světec, church of St. James the Greater. Ground floor of the church of the former monastery of the Canonesses Regular of the Holy Sepulchre. Reconstruction of the state from the middle 15th century. Black and gray – Late Romanesque (gray northwestern added chapel), red – Early Gothic (southwest added chapel), pink – High Gothic, brown – Baroque construction (taken from Hlavenka/Sýkora/Velímský 2008, 284-285).

Fig. 17. Supposed appearance of the monastery church of St. Peter of the former monastery of Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre Na Zderaze in Prague's New Town (taken from Schaller 1797, Tab. 2).

Translated by Bryce Belcher and Petr Uličný