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## Christ in Motion: Portable Objects and Scenographic Environments in the Liturgy of Medieval Bohemia\*

During the 1421 siege of Prague Castle, rebellious residents demonstrated their aversion to the rich furnishings of St Vitus Cathedral in an event described by the chronicler Vavřinec of Březová; at that time, Prague residents:

to make their violence more obvious, displayed an image of Christ mounted on an ass on the crenellation of the church, and by turning his face towards the city of Meissen, they uttered the following blasphemy: ‘If you are Christ, then bless Meissen!’ Then they instantly threw the statue from the crenellation, breaking it into pieces.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Vavřinec z Březové, *Kronika husitská*: ‘[...] *ut eorum plus patens foret vesania, ymaginem Christi asello incidentem in cimboriis exponant ecclesie et versa ad Misnam facie blasphemando dicunt: ‘Tu, si es Christus, benedicas Misnam.’ Et statim trudentes de cimboriis ipsam in pecias confringunt*’ (EMLER 1893: 484). For the corrected Old Bohemian translation, see BLÁHOVÁ



Illustration 1. Christ on an Ass Pulled During the Palm Sunday Celebration. The figure of Christ dates to the eighteenth century, the ass is of an earlier date; condition in 2009. *Muzeum středního Pootaví*, Strakonice. Photograph © Petr Uličný, 2009.

The sacred object was destroyed in this astonishing action; nevertheless, the remarkable tradition of the procession with a statue of Christ on Palm Sundays resumed in the same way after the end of the Hussite Wars. Liturgical books preserved in great numbers describe the events of a ceremony of this sort regularly held in St Vitus Cathedral.<sup>2</sup> They were published at the end of the fifteenth century as imprints in a form that codifies the programme of performance throughout the previous century. Hence, in a breviary published in 1492,<sup>3</sup> it is first recorded that in the Church of St

1979: 224-225. Karel Chytil had already drawn attention to the report in his *O junkerech pražských* (CHYTIL 1903: 36). Those who performed this deed probably used a crane, most likely standing on that 'crenellation', perhaps on the outer gallery with a parapet. Because they let the statue fall in the direction of Meissen, thus facing north-west, this must have been the outer gallery of the no-longer-preserved western part of the cathedral, then still under construction.

2 The St Vitus manuscripts were examined by Hana Vlhová (VLHOVÁ 2000). The structure of Palm Sunday was analysed in detail by Michal Rataj (RATAJ 1999). Jana Maříková-Kubková and David Eben engaged in the study of the liturgy of St Vitus Cathedral (MAŘÍKOVÁ-KUBKOVÁ and EBEN 1999). Other considerations include MACHILEK 1998 and HLEDÍKOVÁ 1995.

3 *Breviarium Pragense*, Nuremberg 1492, fol. 178a-178b. An article about the blessing of the

George (a station church) branches were blessed by a priest and distributed to the gathered congregation.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, a procession led by the archbishop exited and stopped *in loco apto* (in the appropriate place) at which, after chanting by cantors, the full choir and a choir of choristers, two boys brought small veiled crosses as the hymn *Gloria laus* was sung. Description of this practice is followed by a noteworthy rubric: '*Finito hymno postquam pueri appropinquaverunt aselo, qui ducitur in processione cum imagine Salvatoris*' (when the hymn finished, the boys fetched an ass that was led in procession with a statue of the Saviour),<sup>5</sup> as the procession set off to enter through the city gate to the response '*Ingrediente domino*' (announcing Christ's entry into Jerusalem). The events next described are those in front of the cathedral gate where, during oration and chanting before the entrance door, two priests brought saintly relics on a bier to the doorstep and the congregation entered the church with the clergy. Once inside, a priest approached the veiled cross, removed the cover and greeted it by genuflecting with the antiphon: '*Ave rex noster*' (Hail our King), which was repeated by the congregation before the celebration culminated in Holy Mass. According to surviving manuscripts, this ceremony was held in almost the same form during the fourteenth century: National Museum manuscript XVI D 16 records the destination of the procession as Strahov instead of the Monastery of St George and notes that the archbishop did not lead the procession.<sup>6</sup> In the breviary of Friedrich of Wallenstein (circa 1410) the place of the procession is omitted,<sup>7</sup> as it is in National Museum XIV D 8, which contains a processional dating from the late fourteenth century (RATAJ 1999: 26-27). The Würzburg breviary (circa 1384; MACHILEK 1998: 221-222) and the breviary of Hanuš of Kolovraty, Provost of St Vitus (1470) are also comparable.<sup>8</sup>

branches intentionally does not mention the kind of branches used. The problem with acquiring palm or olive branches in central European Prague is obvious. If they were ever brought to Bohemia, they were probably used for a long period of time. Proof of this can be found in an inventory of St Thomas Church in Malá Strana in Prague of 1409, that lists three 'olive palms', one for the priest, the second for the deacon and the third for the subdeacon. '*Item tres palme olive pro sacerdote, diacono et subdiacono, que portantur in processione dominica Palmarum in precessione*' (KADLEC 1985: 372).

4 The breviary chants recorded in the incipit are published in full in *Obsequiale sine Benedictionale secundum Ritum et consuetudinem Pragensis Ecclesie*, Nuremberg 1496, fol. CIIv-CVIv.

5 HLEDÍKOVÁ (1995: 51) surprisingly reads the word *aselo* as *sella* and thus translates this article in that sense that instead of the ass, the bier was carried here with the image of the Saviour.

6 *Knihovna Národního muzea*, XVI D 16, fol. Dii v-D iiiii v.

7 *Národní knihovna ČR*, VI G 6. fol. 234v-235r.

8 *Archiv Pražského hradu*, collection *Archiv Metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta*, sign. P XI, fol. 242r-242v.

A structure similar to that outlined in the 1492 breviary is also to be found in the oldest preserved St Vitus breviary, located in the Czech National Library (XIV A 19). This account dates back to the mid-thirteenth century (STEJSKAL 1990: 62-63) and differs notably in two places: (i) it does not require the bringing of saintly relics to the entrance of the church and (ii) in the rubric dealing with the Palm Sunday ass (when the chanting of the hymn ends and veiled crosses are brought) boys fetch only an ass without a statue of the Saviour (*Et postquam pueri ad propinquaverunt asselo, qui est ducendus in processione*).<sup>9</sup> Thanks to this older wording, one may understand the later, rather oddly structured, rubric and can surmise that the passage about the Saviour's statue was simply added to an older rubric, without the whole sentence being changed – thereby making its new meaning somewhat obscure. The older wording of the rubric accordingly suggests that a living ass was first led towards the Church of St Vitus in Palm Sunday processions, but that this animal was replaced sometime in the fourteenth century by a wooden prop that included a statue of Christ (presumably the same structure as that eventually thrown from the gable of the cathedral by defiant residents in 1421).

It is remarkable that another preserved liturgical book of St Vitus Cathedral dating from the thirteenth century, the so-called *Agenda of Bishop Tobias of Bechyně* (1294), describes Palm Sunday events quite differently to the oldest breviary (XIV A 19).<sup>10</sup> In *Tobias' Agenda*, the blessing of Palm Sunday branches and their distribution to the congregation is described in the same way, but the subsequent procession is only generally directed to the 'church', in which mass is to be held (probably the Church of St George). A rubric instructing the location of a processional station in the proper place, states that this should happen '*in cacumine montis*' (on top of the mount). A very interesting practice is also documented after the hymn *Gloria laus*, for which the rubric communicates the following description: '*Hic iacent se pueri ante aselum*', showing that instead of palm branches being strewn, the practice was for boys to throw themselves on the ground in front of the ass. This practice (which seems unique to Prague) is an interesting analogy of placing garments in front of the ass, which practice is attested to in the Church of Virgin Mary under Chain of the Order of St John (PETR 1990: 43).<sup>11</sup> As in breviary XIV A 19, only a living ass was brought, and the relevant rubric declares

9 Národní knihovna ČR, VI G 6, fol. 126v.

10 Archiv Pražského hradu, collection Archiv Metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta, sign. P III, fol. 63-122 (RATAJ 1999: 22-24).

11 I am indebted to Stanislav Petr for this reference. A similar record exists, for example, in the neighbourhood of Strasbourg (WIEPEN 1903: 22, note 4).



Illustration 2. The Procession on Palm Sunday, Setting Out from St Wenceslas Cathedral in Olomouc.  
*Zemský archiv v Opavě* – department Olomouc, collection *Metropolitní kapitula Olomouc*, CO 89  
 (*Passional of Jan Kalivoda*), 1525, fol. 1a. Photograph © Petr Uličný, 2011.

that the procession came in through the gate of the town or the castle whilst, as it entered, the cantor chanted the response *Ingredeinde Domino*. The term ‘*intraverint portas civitatis vel castri*’ may accordingly indicate a single location for both events (if Prague Castle is to be understood in the older terminology to be *civitas*). Otherwise, the procession would have had to enter the city first (in this case through Malá Strana) and from there progress through the south gate to the Castle grounds. Given that this gate was already walled up in the fourteenth century, this seems unlikely; so the procession had probably to gather somewhere near Strahov (an interpretation of the term ‘on top of the mount’), or on the north forefield of the Castle (at this moment symbolising the Mount of Olives, whence Christ descended into Jerusalem) to set out from there to the west gate of the Castle.

This ordinance is not to be found in most of the liturgical books dating from the fourteenth century; however it is surprisingly preserved in another later book: the *Agenda of the Church of Prague*, first printed in 1496.<sup>12</sup> The rubric added here, usually following the hymn *Gloria laus*, still sounds the same after two hundred years: ‘*Finito hymno ante aselum se iacent pueri*.’<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the *Agenda of the Church of Prague* only lists those chants that may be added if the procession

12 *Obsequiale* 1496, fol. XCIIIr-CXv. The book is described by Antonín Podlaha (PODLAHA 1901: 46ff; 1902: 226ff; 1903: 38ff). On Palm Sunday see PODLAHA 1903: 183-187, 248-252.

13 Antonín Podlaha, who was concerned with this agenda, added that the same rubric is still to be found in the publication of 1585, and connects the boys’ behaviour with the events described by John Hus.



Illustration 3. Christ from the Holy Sepulchre in České Budějovice, around 1360. Front and Side View. *Alšova jihočeská galerie, Hluboká nad Vltavou*. Photograph © Petr Uličný, 2010.

takes longer than expected and, on reaching the church door, the participants find it closed. A manuscript dating back to 1400-1409 is also part of a group of liturgical handbooks with this different agenda, having also the rubric concerning the top of the mount, but failing to mention the use of an ass (RATAJ 1999: 24-25, note 2; *Národní knihovna*, VI Fc 35).

It accordingly seems clear, from many preserved accounts, that by the end of the fifteenth century the rubric of the Church of Prague was no longer the same and that progressive versions contained different layers of alteration to the performance practice of Palm Sunday ritual. One interesting moment of religious staging in this regard is the bringing of relics on the bier, which seems to be a later addition. The practice of bringing veiled crosses at the beginning of the ceremony probably dates from an older age, as it seems that it was just a veiled cross that originally symbolised Christ, and the use of this more conventional object anticipated even the practice of leading an ass. This inference may correspond with the fact that there is no record anywhere as to what actually happened when entering the church with a living ass and, later, with a statue; but instead of this action being documented, the rubric communicates that a cross is greeted and unveiled.

The Cross representing Christ in the Palm Sunday ritual performed by the Bishop's Church of St Wenceslas (Olomouc) began by setting out from the basilica



toward the Church of St Peter (which once stood at what is now Biskupské náměstí (Bishop's Square) in the area formerly below Olomouc Castle). After blessing the palm branches, the procession set out to 'a station in the public space' (*ad locum publice stationis*), where it stopped so that the cross could be adored. Here, the bishop prayed before a crucifix and a senior prelate struck him three times with a 'palm' branch. Subsequently, the bishop and the prelate lifted up the crucifix so that clergy and congregation could bow before it. The procession, with the crucifix carried in the middle, subsequently set off again toward the closed gate of the church, in which Holy Mass was read once the doors had been opened.<sup>14</sup>

A rare visual document has fortunately come down to us presenting this ceremony in a useful documentary form. The title page of a representative passionnal, compiled in 1525 by Jan Kalivoda, depicts Christ's entry into Jerusalem and its lower part recalls the event described in Olomouc (Ill. 2). The illumination in the Kalivoda passionnal depicts two different moments: on the right hand side the procession is seen leaving the Bishop's Church, whereas on the left, we see subsequent adoration of the cross. This object is veiled in a purple chasuble and leans against a step of the baldachin (produced from the hangings in the 'public place' that was probably the open space in front of the Bishop's Church, surrounded by walls and appearing in the background).<sup>15</sup> To bind these two moments together, the illustrator has introduced two participants in the performance: boys, who adore the cross during the outgoing procession (in which two prelates carry the gospel and the reliquary desk in one hand and palm branches in the other). The last outgoing bishop also holds palm branches whilst, at the front, the two boys walk holding more domestic looking boughs. An interesting detail of the adjustment of the crucifix is also provided by an inventory of St Vitus Cathedral (of 1512), which indicates 'a purple vestment that belonged to St Wenceslas and covers the image of the crucifix on Palm Sunday.'<sup>16</sup>

One intriguing moment of the Olomouc ritual (the striking of a clergyman with a branch) was also performed in Prague, although not at St Vitus Cathedral, but in

14 *Zemský archiv Opava* – department Olomouc, collection *Metropolitní kapitula Olomouc*, CO 15, fol. 62a-62b; there is similar other wording in CO 45 from 1466, fol. 43b-45a and CO 50, fol. 59a-59b. Manuscript CO 45 speaks of the 'crucifix' while manuscript CO 15 in principle of the 'cross'. An edition of another, shorter wording of 1486, CO 357, is brought by RATAJ: 33-34 and 52, Note 44.

15 *Zemský archiv Opava* – department Olomouc, collection *Metropolitní kapitula Olomouc*, CO 89, fol. 1a (ČERNÝ 1999: 488-489). I am grateful to Ivo Hlobil for drawing my attention to this illustration.

16 '*Ornatus de purpura, qui fuit scti Wenceslai, quo operitur imago crucifixi in die palmarum*' (PODLAHA and ŠITTLER 1903: XCVII).

the city Church of Virgin Mary under Chain of the Order St John. According to a surviving breviary (R-57, 1389) all of the boys present are gathered here singing the hymn *Gloria laus* in front of an ‘image’ of Christ on an ass. As one group throws branches in front of the animal, the second lays down their garments whilst, simultaneously, one of the prelates reclines in a place prepared in front of the crucifix and one of the elders strikes him with a branch (PETR 1990: 43).<sup>17</sup>

It is hard to say if the Olomouc practice (use of a wooden or live ass) prevailed in the region, given how few of the liturgical books documenting the practices of Easter liturgy have hitherto been studied; but one may assume from the body of evidence outlined above that the different liturgies of the two Czech Bishop’s Churches influenced ecclesiastical practice in the churches of related dioceses (although in several Czech churches it was clearly not the case, as for example in the Monastery of Teplá and the Church of St George at Prague Castle; RATAJ 1999: 29-32, 34-35). Nevertheless, the liturgy of St Vitus did, understandably, have a strong impact in Bohemia and elsewhere in the wider monastic world. This fact is attested to by a fourteenth-century breviary, inspired by the St Vitus rite, found in the Cistercian Monastery of Zlatá Koruna in South Bohemia. This contains elements of and wording similar to the rubrics found in the St Vitus breviaries, including one section considering the choice of a proper place for the procession to pause (which, as in Prague, precedes the rubric concerning the ass and the chanting of the hymn *Gloria laus*). This rubric accordingly communicates the fact that a living ass was led in procession,<sup>18</sup> still reflecting the practice of the Church of Prague during the thirteenth century (at which time the Monastery of Zlatá Koruna was also founded). Another example of the Prague practice is a breviary of the Church of St Peter at Vyšehrad in Prague (made in 1393 at the request of the Canon of Stará Boleslav, Maurice of Záběhlce).<sup>19</sup> The rubrics of this breviary describe Palm Sunday ceremonies that are practically the same as those of St Vitus Cathedral (as represented by the record in the breviary of Friedrich of Wallenstein dating from about 1410, and in the National Museum XIV D 8 processional dating from the

17 This rubric applies to the striking with the branch: ‘*prostrnat se in terram ante crucifixum in loco ad hoc preparato, et unus de fratribus senioribus percutiat eum cum palma.*’ The ritual was also performed in Brno where it is recorded in the St James Church gradual dated to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (POKORNÝ 1991: 65 and 177, note 25).

18 *Národní knihovna ČR*, VI G 4b, fol. 269b: ‘*post quam appropinquaverunt asello et ducentus est in processione.*’

19 *Archiv města Brna*, sign. 34, fol. 158r. With regards to the manuscript see PETR 2008: 31-36. I am grateful to Vladimír Maňas of Masaryk University for drawing my attention to this manuscript collection.





Illustration 4. Crucifix. Christ with Movable Arms to be Placed in the Easter Sepulchre from the Church of St Benedict at Hradčany in Prague; around 1350. Photograph © Petr Uličný, 2011.

end of the fourteenth century). The fact that the St Peter at Vyšehrad manuscript was adjusted in line with contemporary St Vitus breviaries is also attested to by a rubric concerning the ass, written down in its already adjusted form (including the Saviour's statue and omitting the part concerning the bringing out of relics). The pulling along of the wooden statue of Christ mounted on an ass was thus also produced in Prague by the end of the fourteenth century at St Peter at Vyšehrad, and it is possible that it was at this time that the practice was first introduced, together with the St Vitus liturgy.

In spite of this, the practice of pulling what became known as a wooden *Palmesel* was not widespread in Bohemia; certainly not when compared to evidence of the practice in German-speaking lands, where numerous examples are still preserved (WIEPEN 1903; OSTOIA 1956; HAASTRUP 1987; TRIPPS 1996; WENGER 2000; DILLER 2005; JUNG 2006); and use of the *Palmesel* outside Prague seems to have been more common in the frontier regions of Bohemia, bordering German-speaking lands, than it was in the central territories. One example of this borderland practice is to be found in the museum of the West Bohemian town of Strakonice, in the ambulatory of the Church of St Procopius in the local Commandery of the Order



Illustration 5. Crucifix. Christ with Movable Arms to be Placed in the Easter Sepulchre from the Church of St Benedict at Hradčany in Prague; around 1350. A Detail of the Joint Mechanics.  
Photograph © Petr Uličný, 2011.

of St John. Here, a surviving statue (Ill. 1), somewhat unconventionally, consists of two parts: an ass and a Christ that sits atop the animal as a separate object. The two sections of the whole date from different periods (a Baroque-style Christ probably dates back to the early eighteenth century, whereas the ass statue is older and is carved from different material).<sup>20</sup> Despite the aforementioned proximity of the Church of St Procopius to German-speaking lands, it is nevertheless possible that the practice of pulling the *Palmesel* at this site could have been a reflection of Prague ritual. The above-cited breviary of the Church of Our Lady below the Chain (where the practice was also said to have taken place) had in fact been, since the Hussite Wars and therefore up to the 1470s, in the possession of the Strakonice Commandery, from whence it returned to Prague (PETR 1990: 51). If the use of a *Palmesel* was not general practice in the Order of St John, it could have been introduced in Strakonice as a result of use of this breviary. What is also interesting in this case is the character of the Strakonice sculpture (i.e. the fact that it consisted

20 Muzeum středního Pootaví ve Strakonicih, inv. č. C 39 977, the height of the whole is 173 cm (POCHE 1980: 436; PETRÁŇ 1997: 637).

of two parts): the separate figure of Christ in such a configuration may mean that the surviving Baroque element was a replacement for some older statue of Christ (now lost), which was part of the original ensemble. Nevertheless, it is obviously also possible that only an ass was originally used, as at St Vitus Cathedral in Prague; or there is even a third possibility: that a real actor representing Christ could have sat on the wooden ass (which practice might accordingly also be supposed for St Vitus Cathedral – although the rubrics of the preserved breviary of the Order of St John, as well as the rubrics of St Vitus, do not mention this possibility).

Another statue was used in the neighbouring town of Netolice;<sup>21</sup> and is also attested to in the West Bohemian city of Plzeň (Pilsen). In Plzeň, an inventory of the Parish Church of St Bartholomew (dating from the late eighteenth century) records that in the church hall opposite the school (i.e. the north hall) there stood a statue of the Lord Jesus Christ mounted on an ass, which was displayed on Palm Sundays in the church and pulled by boys in a procession. This inventory also adds that contemporary inhabitants had abandoned the practice.<sup>22</sup> The observation is supported by a later inventory (of 1804), which states that the statue was already missing (SEKYRKA and VOLDŘICHOVÁ 1996: 588). There is no testimonial of the medieval origin of the three statues mentioned, although in the case of Plzeň it is nevertheless possible to assume that this element was a ritual introduced by the Canonry of St Vitus Cathedral, which migrated to that city for a period of nine years from 1467 (TOMEK 1893: 66).

Seven days after the Palm Sunday procession had concluded and the *Palmesel* had been brought back to its depository, the following scene was performed early on Easter Monday in the Cathedral of St Vitus: two clerics dressed as women came to the Holy Sepulchre, and the choir, facing East, articulated an antiphon communicating the fact that the cross-dressed performers were in fact Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James,<sup>23</sup> searching the tomb for Christ's dead body. In response to the chanted question of who should roll back for them the stone blocking the grave, an angel, sitting by the grave, asked whom they sought whilst they were crying

21 I am indebted to Blanka Jirsová of the *Muzeum středního Pootaví* in Strakonice for this information.

22 'In Vestibulo Portae versus Scholam est Statua Domini Jesu Xpisti Assello insidentis quae Dominica Palmarum in Ecclesia exhibebatur, et in processione perforum a pueris trahebatur, qui tamen usus per Inhibitionem a Adisco offo factum jam sublatus est' (SEKYRKA and VOLDŘICHOVÁ 1996: 584).

23 The gospels differ in their accounts; but where two women named Mary are indicated, the second is stated to be the mother of James.

so. 'We seek Jesus of Nazareth!' responded the women; to which the angel replied with news awaited by the entire congregation: 'He is not here, whom you seek, go and tell His disciples and Peter that Jesus has risen.' In the following scene, two brothers (dressed in capes and representing the apostles) removed from the grave two pieces of cloth and, turning toward the choir, they sang: 'Behold, O companions, behold: the shroud and head-cloth, and the body is not to be found in the Sepulchre!'; at which news the victorious cry resounded: 'The Lord has risen from the sepulchre' and the shroud and head-cloth were deposited on the church altar. Following this, a priest (probably from this same altar) took a cross into the middle of the church and, turning to the east, sang once more: 'The Lord has risen' before kissing the shroud and giving a sign of peace to the assembled brothers and congregation, before finally turning to the choir.

One finds in many records preserved in liturgical books of the Church of Prague, one essential difference: the location in which the shroud from the Sepulchre was placed. It seems that half the records (which mandate the altar of the Holy Trinity) all date back to the fourteenth century, and accordingly predate the second half (which mandate the altar of the Holy Cross); these date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, it is attested that Tobias, the Canon of the Church of Prague and the Scholar of the Church of Vyšehrad (who died in 1346), founded the altar of the Holy Trinity (PÁTKOVÁ 1997: 10).<sup>25</sup> Additionally, the altar of the Holy Cross is not attested to earlier than 1346 (KLICMAN 1903: 484, No. 520). This altar had a prominent role in the basilica, because it played its role during the order of the coronation of Bohemian kings and queens (as recorded in 1347; CIBULKA 1934: 77, 107-110; CHARLES IV 2000: 90-91). It is not known where the altar of the Holy Cross was placed in the old basilica; but it must have been (as a result of recognised coronation practice) somewhere in the middle of the church, perhaps in front of the east choir. Thus in the Gothic cathedral it stood – but perhaps only temporarily – against the wall of the St Wenceslas Chapel. It was certainly recorded as located there by the chronicler Beneš Krabice of Weitmile, who writes

24 Manuscripts of the Church of St Vitus were edited by Walther Lipphardt (LIPPHARDT 1976). The altar of the Holy Trinity has the plays listed by Lipphardt under numbers 662, 668-671, 676 and 669, the altar of the Holy Cross under numbers 663-665, 666, 672, 673, 677, 678, 678a, 680 and 681. (Manuscripts from the archive of Prague Castle and others have not been edited.) It is noteworthy that a representative breviary (*liber viaticum*) of John of Středa names as a destination of the shroud from the Sepulchre the altar of the Holy Cross (*Knihovna Národního muzea*, XIII A 12, fol. 147v). Similarly also the breviary of the Provost John of Roudnice, *Knihovna Národního muzea*, XIII C 1, fol. 192v.

25 In 1348 it also recalls the altar priest, Herman (TOMEK 1872: 104).



Illustration 6. Crucifix. Christ with Movable Arms to be Placed in the Easter Sepulchre, Boletice near Český Krumlov; around 1450, and as Fixed on the Cross with Outstretched Arms.  
Photograph and photomontage © Petr Uličný, 2010.

that above it, placed in the wall, was the skull of Bishop Andrew (EMLER 1884: 401).<sup>26</sup>

In any case, it appears that both altars were placed close to one another in the Romanesque basilica. In the list of revenues of the 1360s, the altar is described in three ways: (i) as the altar of the Holy Trinity in the old church, (ii) as the altar of the Holy Trinity next to the Sepulchre of St Gaudentius and (iii) as the altar or chapel of the Holy Trinity and St Wenceslas behind the main church entrance.<sup>27</sup> As for the chapel, a record of 1366 explicitly notes that this was already the past,

26 On the Altar of the Holy Cross see Petr Uličný, *Chóry katedrály sv. Víta* (The Choirs of St Vitus Cathedral), forthcoming.

27 *Archiv Pražského hradu*, collection *Knihovna Metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta*, cod. VIII/1. The record from the time after 1363 on fol. 7r reads: ‘*altariste videlicet Hermannus sancte Trinitatis et sancti Wenceslay retro magnum hostium Ecclesie*’, from 1366 on fol. 10v: ‘*Magister Franciscus altariste sancte Trinitatis in Antiqua Ecclesia*’, ‘*minister altare sancte Trinitatis prope sepulchrum sancti Gaudencii*’ and fol. 11r: ‘*altare videlicet capelle sancte Trinitatis et sancti Wenceslay quod fuit retro magnum hostium Ecclesie*’. Similarly for the year 1367 on fol. 21r-21v, where the same record remains, which was no longer a fact.



Illustration 7. Crucifix. Christ with Movable Arms to be Placed in the Easter Sepulchre, Boletice near Český Krumlov; around 1450. A Detail of the Joint Mechanics. *Alšova jihočeská galerie*, Hluboká nad Vltavou. Photograph © Petr Uličný, 2010.

as it logically corresponds to the time at which the construction of St Wenceslas Chapel was completed (i.e. 1367). The chapel itself can thus be identified in the Romanesque basilica by the narrow space between St Wenceslas Chapel and the lobby behind the main entrance,<sup>28</sup> where the altar that concerns us probably also stood. It also seems that the Sepulchre of St Gaudentius was also removed from the demolished eastern crypt and placed here in the chapel. This was evidently only a temporary measure, because the altar and this Sepulchre were then moved to the western part of the basilica due to the construction of the new St Wenceslas Chapel. An inventory of 1415 also lists the altars of St Bernard and Our Lady of the Snows (TOMEK 1872: 246), while the St Gaudentius Sepulchre probably found its place in the western part of the basilica.<sup>29</sup>

The Sepulchre itself must accordingly have been standing somewhere west of the eastern choir, because, when they hear the message from the angel about Christ's Resurrection, the Holy Women turn to the east towards the choir (that is

28 A comprehensive appearance of the basilica with this space is presented by MAŘÍKOVÁ 2008.

29 On the St Gaudentius Sepulchre see Petr Uličný, *Chóry* (note 26), forthcoming.



towards the chanters). All parts of the play, it seems, were accordingly performed somewhere in the middle part of the basilica, where both altars possibly stood and where the congregation was also gathered. Nothing is known about the form of the Sepulchre except what is given by the rubrics.<sup>30</sup> The expression ‘at the Sepulchre’ (*ad sepulchrum*), named as a place where the angel took his seat, also says nothing about its form and size. One may concomitantly suggest that the Sepulchre could have been either portable – like a wooden chest – or temporarily arranged from hanging fabrics and located next to the altar. The rubrics, in fact, in their vagueness, provide an opportunity to give the Sepulchre any kind of character. However, no statue of Christ was placed in it, but merely a symbolic cross. This cross would have been ritually buried on Good Friday and disinterred so that it could be placed on the High Altar just before the beginning of the ceremony *Visitatio sepulchri* outlined above (PETR 1990: 51).

This practice of placing the cross in the Holy Sepulchre (*Depositio crucis*) was quite popular in Bohemia. Apart from evidence of such performance at the Church of St Vitus, it is also documented by the liturgical books in St George Church (Prague Castle; LIPPHARDT 1976: II: No. 387, IV: No. 674, V: No. 802, VI: No. 669-678a), as well as in the Premonstratensian Monastery in Chotěšov (LIPPHARDT 1976: II: No. 381-382), by the Augustinians in Kladsko (LIPPHARDT 1976: II: No. 383) and Roudnice (LIPPHARDT 1976: VI: No. 665), by the Benedictines in Rajhrad (LIPPHARDT 1976: II: No. 390) as well as in the city of Kutná Hora.<sup>31</sup>

A very close analogy to the St Vitus *Visitatio sepulchri* was performed in the Bishop’s City of Passau (whereas at that site both *Depositio* and *Elevatio* differ in their composition from the Prague ritual; LINKE 1989: col. 799). In Passau, a Sepulchre was first prepared and decorated on site following local practice. A cross was placed in it, covered with a shroud and head-cloth and finally with a stone. At Easter, the crucifix (*ymaginem crucifixi*) was then removed during the uttering of the verse ‘The Lord has risen’. During the *Visitatio sepulchri*, after the scene with the angel, Peter and John arrived at the Sepulchre and removed the shroud and

30 The same can be said of the play itself with one exception, and that is an entry from the 1512 inventory listing a silver gilt palm containing part of the palm carried by St John the Evangelist before the burial of the Holy Virgin and ‘which is being brought to the Sepulchre’. ‘*Palma argentea deaurata, in qua includitur porcio de palma, quam s. Johannes ewangelista portavit ante funus virginis Mariae, quando portabatur ad sepulchrum*’ (PODLAHA and ŠITTLER 1903: XXII, entry 47). It is possible that the actor playing the angel that appeared to the Holy Women at the Sepulchre held this object.

31 *Státní okresní archiv Kutná Hora*, collection *Archiv města Kutná Hora*, Missal of Jan Humpolecký from 1486, fol. 91r.

head-cloth from it, 'in which the statue of the Lord was wrapped.'<sup>32</sup> In another version, also dating back to the fourteenth century, it is additionally stated that the Sepulchre should be prepared and decorated under the vault behind the Altar of St Valentine, on which the statue of Christ was then placed after the *Elevatio*.<sup>33</sup> In the first, simpler and perhaps older version, the form and place of the Sepulchre is also rather vaguely described (as it is in Prague), so that in both cases it probably depended on local tradition, as is also mentioned in Passau. This practice apparently lasted until the time before the Sepulchre came to be arranged behind the Altar of St Valentine, under the vault probably bearing his reliquary.

An interesting and, in many ways, similar situation is documented in the Bishop's Church of St Wenceslas in Olomouc. According to the missal of the scribe Stephen, from the early fifteenth century, the cross was also deposited in the Sepulchre on Good Friday as follows: after vespers, the gathered clergy went to fetch the cross, which was brought in procession with banners, candles, holy water and a thurible before the altar of St Apollinaris (called 'in the grilles') and this place was fittingly decorated with hangings. Here, the deposited cross was blessed with incense, sprinkled with holy water and covered with a corporal. Another corporal covered some sort of stone and then a response '*Sepulto domino*' resounded. A light was fixed near the Sepulchre and prebendaries read psalms in pairs continuously, by day and night, until the *Visitatio sepulchri*.<sup>34</sup> The place of burial for the cross was

32 'Et duo, quasi Petrus et Iohannes, current precurratque Iohannes Petro; et veniant ad Monumentum, et auferant lintheamina et sudarium quibus involuta fuit Ymago Domini, et vertentes se ad chorum ostendendo et cantet: [...]' (LIPPARDT 1976: IV: No. 632: pp. 1092-1096). Similarly number 663, pp. 1097-1100, and others.

33 'Deinde Sepulchro preparato et ornato sub testitudine, que est retro aram Sancti Valentini. [...] Et thurificent Ymaginem Crucifixi, sublatamque de sepulchro secum portent super aram Sancti Valentini [...]' (LIPPARDT 1976: IV: No. 634, pp. 1100-1105).

34 *Vědecká knihovna v Olomouci*, M III 6, fol. 59r-59v: 'Finitis vespers, statim officians cum suis ministris vadit et cum clero ad locum, ubi crux erat deposita et ea recepta procedentibus, et vexillis, cereis, aqua benedicta et thuribulo cum incenso defert ante altare sancti Appollinaris in cancello. Eodem loco decenter et solempnibus cortinis ornato, cantibus responsorium: Recessit pastor noster. Responsorium: Iherusalem luge. Responsorium: Ecce quomodo moritur iustus, cum suis versibus. Deinde cruce collocata ab officiante aspergitur et incensatur uno corporali, altero tegitur et apposito lapide. Priori voce submissa cum canitur responsorio: Sepulto domino, cum suo versu et repetitione. Deinde officians subiungit versus: In pace factus est locus eius. Et oratio: Deus qui in filii tui humilitate. Omnibus hiis completis lumen ardens apponitur ad sepulchrum domini. Tunc statim psalteria iuxta sepulchrum domini per prebendarios binos et binos ad hoc ordinatos sub nota ex tono huius anthiphonam: Zelus dominus. Die noctuquem sine intermissione legantur usquem ad visitationem sepulchri ante matutinum dominice

accordingly in front of the altar, where, with the help of curtains, a temporary Holy Sepulchre was created. The altar of St Apollinaris *in cancello* stood in accordance with its name attached to the grille, probably the one that might have been used as a partition between the choir and nave.<sup>35</sup> This is attested to by the wording of a rubric describing the order of Holy Saturday at this site, when the whole clergy had to be gathered together in the choir while the cantors stood ‘in front of the choir by the Sepulchre before the altar.’<sup>36</sup> Hence the Sepulchre would have been seen and adored in the nave by the gathered congregation.

The ritual of *Elevatio* is recorded only in the printed 1486 agenda of the Church of Olomouc, having nevertheless a similar *Depositio* as in the missal of scribe Stephen. The Sepulchre was firstly sprinkled with holy water and then blessed with incense on Easter morning and, during a quiet chant, the cross was then removed and taken to the choir. It was subsequently placed before the altar, where priests came to kiss Christ’s wounds, and others stood in humble observation. Afterwards, two genuflecting priests lifted up the statue of Christ (*imaginem*) and sang out three times: ‘The Lord has risen!’<sup>37</sup> What is surprising about this brief description is that only at the last moment of the account is it made clear that the deposited cross was

*resurrectionis.*’ Similarly also, the missal M III 8, fol. 102r deposited here and *Zemský archiv Opava* – department Olomouc, collection *Metropolitní kapitula Olomouc*, CO 45 from 1466, fol. 115b. The same situation is described in different words by the fourteenth-century missal CO 15, fol. 65a deposited there, which, however, does not mention the place of the deposition as the Altar of St Apollinaris, but only ‘a place of entombment’. Walther Lipphardt, who did not study manuscripts from Olomouc, lists only one missal allegedly of Olomouc origin, deposited today in Budapest. See LIPPHARDT 1976: II: No. 385, p. 524. It is, however, a mistake as the missal came into existence in Bratislava, as is attested by the identical wording of several examples originating from Bratislava, also published by LIPPHARDT 1976: II: No. 476–478, pp. 690–696.

35 The Altar of St Apollinaris is listed in an inventory of the altars of the Church of Olomouc from 1508, however, without its attribute ‘in the grilles’. *Zemský archiv Opava* – department Olomouc, collection *Metropolitní kapitula Olomouc*, CO 60, fol. 45b.

36 *Zemský archiv Opava* – department Olomouc, collection *Metropolitní kapitula Olomouc*, CO 45 from 1466, 119a: ‘*ante chorum circa sepulchrum ante altare*’.

37 *Agenda secundum chorum Olomucensem*, Brno 1486, fol. l viiib–m iiia. Edited by Lipphardt: ‘*Cruce collocata cum reverentia ab Officiante aspergitur etthurificatur substrato uno corporali; alio tegitur apposito lapide. [...] In hac sacra nocte [...] Sacerdotes et clerici conveniant et transeant in Processione ad Sepulchrum [...] Deinde aspergatur etthurificetur. Ferrentes Crucem ad chorum [...] Collocata Cruce ante altare Prelati faciant veniam osculando vestigia vulnerum, quod Ceteri humiliter faciant. Ad Matutinas [...] Post tercium Responsorium Prelatus cum alio Sacerdote positus genibus elevendo Imaginem cantando ter: Christus Dominus resurrexit!*’ (LIPPHARDT 1976: II: No. 385a).

a sizable crucifix. The rubric might accordingly have been amended, in the context of a change to the performed ritual that enhanced this particular dramatisation and scenic visualisation of the liturgy.<sup>38</sup> It is, however, also possible that two elements were used here: (i) a simple cross, and (ii, later) a body taken from a crucifix. The detailed rubrics of manuscript CO 15 from the Olomouc Chapter Library accordingly distinguish two crosses during the adoration: one a silver gilt cross (containing a relic of the Holy Cross); the second a cross bearing a statue of the crucified Christ.<sup>39</sup> These two crosses are also distinguished in the above-mentioned Passau rubrics, where the ‘cross’ is also buried and a ‘statue of the Lord’ elevated. There is nevertheless no direct relation between the Olomouc and Passau agenda (the rubrics and chants in the *Depositio* are completely different); however, it is still possible that the ceremony of deposition and elevation went through a change in Olomouc in the course of the fifteenth century that had already happened in Passau. It must have been a larger statue (perhaps life sized) if it was lifted by two priests and was not placed on the altar but instead deposited in front of it (*ante altare*). What is interesting about the culmination of the ritual is that Christ’s wounds were adored up to Resurrection Day: i.e. that the stage-prop body was placed before the altar as a dead Christ and subsequently lifted up by priests as the Resurrected Saviour.

Augustinian Canons of the Convent Church of All Saints also deposited a statue of the Lord in the Holy Sepulchre in Olomouc. Here, the ceremony is described in monastery statutes recorded by its provost Jan Šťávka, which mandate that on Good Friday the crucifix (*ymaginem crucifixi*) should be laid down on a carpet on the ground, ‘at the foot’ of the choir, and covered with fabric. This place thus represented the Holy Sepulchre. Šťávka in all likelihood expresses his displeasure at this practice in adding that no host should be placed in the Sepulchre. On Easter Morning, before Matins, the statue had to be elevated with prayers and antiphons

38 This practice, as it seems, did not last out the 16<sup>th</sup> century, because according to the 1586 printed agenda only the host was deposited here: *Agenda caerimonialia secundum ritum cathedralis ecclesiae Olomuncensis: ad usum eiusdem dioecesis*, Cracovia, 1586: 123-203.

39 *Zemský archiv Opava* – department Olomouc, collection *Metropolitni kapitula Olomouc*, CO 15, fol. 64b: ‘*crucem primo in qua est lignum sancte crucis [...] et deinde aliam crucem, in qua est ymago crucifixi.*’ The same rubrics even clearly communicate which one from these crosses shall be, through contemplation of Christ’s passion, honoured by the congregation during the adoration: ‘*Interim omnis populus adorent, non crucem sed crucifixum, memoriam faciendo dominice passionis,*’ *Ibidem*. The first named cross is also known in the 1413 church inventory which implies that two of the four pieces of the Holy Cross preserved within it were gifts of Bishop Jindřich Zdík, brought by him straight from Jerusalem. See FLODR 1954: 226-229.

and the priest had to bring the statue of the Resurrected Christ (*resurreccionis ymagine*) near the altar (which implies a different statue to that which had been buried). From the following it is also clear that it was to the High Altar that this second statue was carried, and that it then stood there until Ascension Day, at which point it was elevated by the *hebdomadarius* (the priest selected for that week), blessed by the gathered congregation and finally moved to the sacristy.<sup>40</sup> A note about the place of the Sepulchre at the foot of the altar indicates similarity with the supposed scenic installation in Olomouc Cathedral, in a place accessible to people to whom the choir was otherwise inaccessible. The information indicating the use of two different sculptures for each part of the ritual, providing visualisations of both ‘physical existences’ of Christ is extremely valuable.

The Olomouc practices also resemble the description of a ritual (recorded in 1406 in a text-book of sermons) now in the National Library. Its beginning, the symbolic burial of a cross, is the same as the rubrics of Prague: when a big bell sounded before Matins on Easter morning, the clergy and canons went in procession with candles, thurible and holy water to the Sepulchre. The subsequent ritual was different, however: the Sepulchre was sprinkled and incensed, and prayers followed the chants. Once these had ended, the statue of Christ in the Sepulchre (*ymago sepulchri*) was sprinkled, incensed and elevated, and to quiet chanting of the *Glorie* response, it was moved to the High Altar, in front of which it was laid. Subsequently, the priest kissed the wounds of the crucified Christ and the same prelate began the prayer *Domine labia mea aperies* (Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord).<sup>41</sup>

40 ‘In vigilia pasche cereum prelatus benedicet, si officiaverit, aut cui suum officium committet. Die veneris sanctam ymaginem crucifixi super tapete ponet in terra circa pedem chori peplo coopertam et non sacramentum in sepulcro locabunt. Deinde in nocte sacra ante matutinum levabunt illam ymaginem cum oracionis et antiphonis et resurreccionis ymagine, prelatus recepta, procedet ad altare et dicent vel cantabunt: ‘Regina celi’, et locabitur ymago super altare et statim matutinum incipietur. Diebus rogacionum in ecclesia septem psalmis orabunt, letaniam decantantes totam cum precibus et responsorium, quando post ‘gloria patri’ repetitur: ‘Ascendo ad patrem meum’ ebdomadarius in supperpelliceo elevando ymaginem iuxta maius altare ad populum conversus benedicens ymagine assistentes, reportabit illam ad sacristiam’ (NEUMANN 1917: 536). I am grateful for this reference to Prof. Ivo Hlobil. The medieval structure of the monastery church was rebuilt in the eighteenth century and even this structure, after losing its function in 1784, was pulled down in 1814 (KŠÍR 1970: 113-127).

41 *Národní archiv Praha*, VII D 3, fol. 129b: ‘[...] finitorum orationibus ymago sepulchri aspergatur, turificetur et elevetur cantantes submissa voce. Cum responsorium Gloria vadant ad altare maius et locent ante altare ymaginem. Mox presbyter primam osculetur vulnera crucifixi et prelatus incipiat Domine labia mea aperies.’

From the rubrics and documents listed here it is not completely clear what kind of statue was symbolically buried and subsequently elevated in the churches of Olomouc; however three highly remarkable types of Christ-figure statue are attested to as used for this purpose in medieval Bohemia. The first, by its character the most traditional and customary, was a statue depicting the reclining body of Christ. The second was a sculpture of the crucified body of Christ on a cross (whose arms were fitted with joints, allowing the statue to be taken down from the cross and deposited in the Sepulchre). The third possibility was a version of the *Pietá* with a sculpture of the dead body of Christ in the arms of the mourning Virgin Mary (the body of Christ similarly taken and placed in the Sepulchre). Whilst the latter two were part of the church mobiliary throughout the year, the first one probably laid unused over much of the year in the church depositary.

One such figure is listed in a 1409 inventory of the Augustinian Church of St Thomas at Malá Strana (Prague). An entry '*Item ymago Christi cum vulneribus, que ponuntur in sepulchro in die Parascewen*' (KADLEC 1985: 373), describes a 'statue of Christ with wounds, placed in the Sepulchre on Good Friday'. What this (now sadly non-extant) sculpture looked like is perhaps best shown by a preserved *corpus Christi* from České Budějovice (Ill. 3), possibly from the local Dominican cloister, originating some time around 1370.<sup>42</sup> The body of this sculpture is formed in such a way that its head, formerly with a crown of thorns, must have been laid on a high cushion, which formed part of a Sepulchre (equally no-longer-extant, or only-temporarily arranged). A well-preserved fifteenth century statue, probably coming from Brno, can now be found in the pilgrimage site of Vranov (near Brno; KRÁL 1996: 37).<sup>43</sup> A figure of Christ in this tradition and coming from the Silesian city of Opava is dated to the early sixteenth century (CHAMONIKOLA 1999: 146-147). Nevertheless, these few extant examples still do not provide a clear

42 *Alšova jihočeská galerie*, Hluboká nad Vltavou, inv. no. P-8, length 145 cm (DENKSTEIN and MATOUŠ 1953: 44; RULÍŠEK 1989: 13-14). Rulíšek dates the statue before 1360 (RULÍŠEK 1989: 15).

43 The figure presented in KRÁL 1996: 36 assumed that the statue came from the local Church of St Barbara. I am grateful for this reference to Vladimír Maňas of Masaryk University in Brno. Christ in the Sepulchre, the statue by the Master of the Michle Madonna from the Ursulines Monastery in Brno dated to the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, is also listed (KUTAL 1972: 482, Fig. 2; 490, Fig. 9). Some formal features such as a compassionate facial expression show, however, that it is a statue of the Man of Sorrows. I am grateful for this reference to Ivo Hlobil. A similar case is the statue, discovered in a little village Draženov by Domažlice, also listed as the Christ from the Sepulchre (CHLÍBEC 1996: 771). Despite the different primary purpose, the resemblance of both statues to sculptures of Christ in the Sepulchre, allowed them to also be used for this purpose.





Illustration 8. The *Pietà* with the Removed Figure of Christ Placed in the Easter Sepulchre, Lásenice near Jindřichův Hradec, before the mid-fifteenth century. The National Gallery in Prague.  
Photograph © The National Gallery in Prague, 2011.

picture of any original prevalence of such statues, because none of their places of origin or details of use is certain.

The existence of portable sculptures, portraying the crucified Christ with movable arms, does however show to what extent creative results culminated in the demands for dramatisation in the liturgical rites of Holy Week (TAUBERT and TAUBERT 1969: 79-121; TRIPPS 1996: 121-128; HAMBURGER and SUCKALE 2005: 373, Item 263).<sup>44</sup> The earliest (and at the same time highly remarkable) Czech example from the Church of St Benedict at Hradčany in Prague (Ill. 4-5) was carved some time around 1350 (KUTAL 1953: 115-133; TAUBERT and TAUBERT 1969: 86).<sup>45</sup> Due to the fact that the first mention of this Prague church dates to 1353 (TOMEK 1893: 135), this statue was probably procured for the church at the time of its origin, and is an interesting illustration of the staging of Easter liturgy in medieval Prague. Another expressive sculpture of Christ, dating to circa 1450 or after, fixed

<sup>44</sup> I am indebted to Jan Royt for this reference.

<sup>45</sup> Many thanks to Sister Sára from the Carmel of St Joseph in Prague for her kind permission to take pictures of this statue.



Illustration 9. The *Pietà* of Lásenice near Jindřichův Hradec. The Removed Figure of Christ. The National Gallery in Prague. Reproduction: Zdeněk Wirth (ed.). *Umělecké poklady Čech I*. Praha, 1913.

to a cross with bow-shaped arms, was also found in the small village of Boletice near Český Krumlov (Ill. 6-7).<sup>46</sup> Here, the local, originally Romanesque, Church of St Nicholas was modified at the end of the fifteenth century, at which time the presbytery and sacristy were rebuilt (POCHE 1977: 98-99). If the sculpture was made for this church and not for some other church in nearby Český Krumlov, then it could have been sculpted for the purpose of rebuilding. Even so, the existence of the Boletice crucifix could be a reflection of a similar practices performed in one of the other Český Krumlov churches.

One may also judge from two surviving examples in the Olomouc region that use of this sort of statue could have been influenced by the liturgical performance practice of numerous Olomouc churches. The first example was recently recognised in nearby Litovel, probably coming from St George Chapel, dating to the early sixteenth century and perhaps originally part of the Calvary sculptural group (OTTOVÁ and ZÁPALKOVÁ 2009). In the Gothic Church of St Peter and Paul only a few kilometres away in the village of Medlov there is another similar statue, carved some time towards the end of the fifteenth century. Originally with firmly fixed arms, these limbs were later sawn off at the shoulder joint and re-attached

46 *Alšova jihočeská galerie* in Hluboká nad Vltavou, inv. no. P-217, length 74 cm. TAUBERT and TAUBERT 1969: 82-83 dates it back to about 1390. It is more likely to be of a later date (LAVIČKA 2007: 34-35).

using felt-filled joints that concealed leather-cord reinforcements. This innovation, regretfully and at great loss, removed during the object's most recent restoration, provided the sculpture with greater lifelike dimensions, compared to older-type wooden shoulder joints (HLOBIL 1999: 296-297).<sup>47</sup>

Movable arms might likewise have also held the crucifix deposited in the Sepulchre in John the Baptist Church, Příbyslav. In a document issued on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1366, Zdeněk of Ronov funded mass and services to be conducted at this site by six people. These six were to read psalms in pairs continuously at Easter 'starting from the burial of the crucifix up to its elevation', until the moment when the entire clergy came near the Sepulchre singing the psalm '*Quicumque vult salvus esse*' (Whomsoever will be saved) in order subsequently to elevate the cross.<sup>48</sup> Because the description of this performance clearly mentions '*imagine crucifixi*', a statue of the Crucified Christ must have been used (probably placed in the Sepulchre after being taken down from the cross). It seems surprising that such a small town sustained such a sumptuous scenic background (with six clerics performing the offices); but the apparent extravagance of the ritual is explained by the fact that the city stood on the road between two very closely situated Cistercian monasteries (Pohled and Žďár nad Sázavou), which must have provided the liturgy with a substantial group of regular nuns and monks, and must certainly have inspired Zdeněk of Ronov to fund the performance. This site was possibly the place from whence the practice of the burial of the crucifix in the Easter Sepulchre was derived.

Because only rather brief records originating in medieval Bohemia exist concerning the use of portable sculptures, records from nearby regions can also be highly illustrative. Unmatched in detail in this regard is an account in the ordinariate describing *Depositio* and *Visitatio* at the Benedictine Monastery of Prüfening near Regensburg (circa 1489) (BROOKS 1921: 105-107; YOUNG 1933: 157-161; LIPPHARDT 1976: II: 393-398, No. 311). Here, celebration began with singing

47 I am thankful to Ivo Hlobil for this reference.

48 '*It. in passione Domini singulis annis a tumulatione imagine crucifixi incepto tamdiu usque ad elevationem ipsius [...] 6 personas [...] ad legendum psalterium ordinare debet [...] plebanus [...] Quarum 2 personae nocturnos binos [...] compleant ibique pausando cesset, duoque alii accedentes eosdem nocturnos perficiant a prioribus per lectiones simili cum pausatim relinquendo obittunt, ibi inchoare ulterius cogantur et [...] psalteria [...] sine intermissione die noctuque continuando compleant, in fineque ultimi psalterii plebanus [...] cum tota sua clericali cohorte tumulo appropinquet et hunc psalmus 'Quicumque vult salvus esse' [...] psallat, deinde crux elevatur*' (BOROVÝ 1873: 60, No. 123). This instrument was pointed out by Kateřina Horníčková (HORNÍČKOVÁ 2009: 47).

and the arrival of the abbot and his attendants at the altar of the Holy Cross; before which a spacious and veiled Holy Sepulchre was arranged.<sup>49</sup> Once everyone had genuflected and the cantor had begun singing, the abbot and the person bearing the cross removed Christ's body from the cross in front of the congregation.<sup>50</sup> The abbot then wrapped it in fabric and placed it under the curtain of the Sepulchre. The cross itself, on which a statue of Christ had been hanging,<sup>51</sup> was then taken to its proper place. Afterwards, relics were taken out of a chest behind the altar (where the host was also kept), and a part of the host was also placed in the Sepulchre. Lights were hung around the Sepulchre and the abbot wrapped the statue from the crucifix (*ymago crucifixi*) in fabric and closed the sarcophagus. On Easter Night at eleven o'clock, or a little earlier, the custodian placed in the Sepulchre – that is on the altar of the Holy Cross – another statue representing the Resurrected Christ.<sup>52</sup> Only then did the abbot come to the altar under the curtain, where first he blessed the sarcophagus, then the statue of the crucified Christ with holy water and incense, and afterwards elevated the fabric. Subsequently, the abbot reverently lifted a box with the Eucharist out of the sarcophagus and the chaplain took the Resurrection sculpture and lifted the fabric.<sup>53</sup> The '*Surrexit pastor bonus* [...]' (The Good Shepherd has Risen) next resounded, and everyone moved to the altar of the apostles, the abbot bearing the Eucharist and the chaplain the statue of the Resurrected Christ. Here the statue was left, but the Eucharist was brought back to the reliquary behind the altar. It was from here that the custodian also removed the fabric in which the statue had been wrapped and also the larger curtain itself, spreading it before the altar. The statue of the crucified Christ and the reliquary box were put back in their proper place (*ad locum suum*).

This record gives a clear idea of how the statue was removed from the cross and placed in the Sepulchre as well as where a vacant cross was placed; but it also states that at one moment two sculptures were used, representing the two stages of Christ's journey from the world of the dead back to the world of the living. This practice is also shown in statutes of the Augustinian Cloister in Olomouc (and the

49 '[...] *quod antea a custode loco Dominici sepulchri lintheo magno specialiter ad hoc apto velatum existit*' (BROOKS 1933: 157-161).

50 '[...] *ymaginem crucifixi coram populo de cruce deponunt*' (BROOKS 1933: 157-161). As a statue with movable arms is recognised by TAUBERT and TAUBERT 1969: 92-96.

51 '[...] *crucem vero, in qua dicta ymago pependit*' (BROOKS 1933: 157-161).

52 '[...] *custos ymaginem Dominice resurrectionis ponit in sepulchro domini, id est in altari sancte crucis*' (BROOKS 1933: 157-161).

53 '[...] *et capellanus ymaginem resurrectionis accipit, altera ymagine crucifixi in altaria relicta*' (BROOKS 1933: 157-161).



Illustration 10. A Portable Wooden Holy Sepulchre with the Figure of Christ. The Cistercian Monastery in Wienhausen, around 1290, repaired in 1448. Photograph © Justin Kroesen.

same can be assumed of Olomouc Cathedral). It is also likely that two statues were used this way in St Thomas Monastery in Prague. Following the already-mentioned entry regarding Christ's sculpture, destined for the Sepulchre, the 1409 inventory mentions two statues of the Resurrected Christ placed on the altar, a small one and a big one.<sup>54</sup> One interesting testimony about the arrangement of these kinds of statues is provided by a 1407 inventory of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Hradec Králové, which gives an entry 'with tunic' for the statue of the Resurrected Christ.<sup>55</sup> The statue itself is not mentioned here, so one can only imagine how this robe was intended to augment its realistic appearance.

An interesting detail explaining an ambiguous rubric from Olomouc Cathedral outlines a record of the celebration in Moosburg, south of Regensburg. Here, a host was first wrapped in fabric, and brought on a mobile altar to the place where the cross was adored and where the Sepulchre was created by fittingly encircled

<sup>54</sup> *'Item due ymages resurreccionis, que ponuntur in altari; una est minor, altera maior'* (KADLEC 1985: 373).

<sup>55</sup> *'Item una tunica pro ymagine resurreccionis'* (von BIENENBERG 1780: 241).

fabric. A mobile altar with the host was initially placed on the Sepulchre in which the crucifix was subsequently placed, covered with a shroud and head-cloth. Then a 'stone' (in fact the mobile altar: *lapis, videlicet altare mobile*) was placed under the head (or right side of the crucifix) along with another sanctuary; the Sepulchre was then sealed, sprinkled with holy water, and incensed. On Easter Morning, the ritual began at the altar of the Holy Cross, whence a dean and an elder came closer to the Sepulchre, at which place, after incensing and sprinkling, they elevated the statue of the crucifix (*ymaginem crucifixi*) and brought it before the altar of St John (YOUNG 1933: 140-142; LIPPHARDT 1976: III: 1071-1076, No. 621a). One also finds a similar description in the rubrics of a celebration in Andechs, where the crucifix, after being placed in the Sepulchre, was covered with a stone.<sup>56</sup> In Berlin, a cross was buried in such a way that, after being covered by fabric, two stones were placed in the Sepulchre by the bishop, one near the head and the second by the legs (BROOKS 1921: 103). The abovementioned rubric from Passau Cathedral also contains similar wording. The stone mobile altar in Moosburg, as in the other cases mentioned, thus symbolises the stone used, according to the Gospels, to block the entrance of Jesus' tomb (YOUNG 1933: 142). The same meaning can accordingly be ascribed to use of a stone, covered with fabric, in the burial ritual of Olomouc Cathedral.

The last types of movable sculptures of Christ used to illustrate Easter events are the figures of Christ placed in the arms of the Virgin Mary. These are represented by the *Pietá* of Lásenice (Ill. 8-9), whence it probably found its way from the monastery of the nearby city of Jindřichův Hradec, and was carved some time before the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>57</sup> The Lásenice *Pietá* depicts Mary supporting Christ's dead body with her right hand, whilst, with the other, she lifts Christ's left hand as a sign of his lifeless corpse. Lifting Christ's left hand (contrary to the right, which was held static along his side), resulted in the body being fitted with a joint, so it could be placed in the Sepulchre with both of its arms down. The type of Christ figure represented in the Lásenice *Pietá* connects it to a group also represented by the remarkable *Pietá* of Jihlava. Here, a separately worked Christ's body of puppet-like appearance, a sculpted loincloth and the position of the feet imply that the statue could have been

56 'deinde lapis superponatur' (LIPPHARDT 1976: III: 556).

57 The National Gallery in Prague, no. P 4572, the length of Christ's body is c.80 cm (legs are modern). WIRTH 1913: 4, image 5-6, dates it to a time around 1410 and CHLUMSKÁ 2006: 141 to the third quarter of the fourteenth century. MIKEŠ 2009: 21-30, 87-92, however, associated the statue with the workshop working for the Minorite monastery in Jindřichův Hradec and dates it to the 1540s. I am grateful to Martin Vaněk of the Alšova Jihočeská Galerie in Hluboká for drawing my attention to this article. Zdeněk Wirth also published a photograph of the separate body of Christ.





Illustration 11. The Tomb of Duke Vratislav in the Former Benedictine Church of St George at Prague Castle. Photograph © Petr Uličný, 2010.

used on its own: laid in the Sepulchre or stood upright on the altar (BARTLOVÁ 2007).<sup>58</sup> The figure of Christ in a *Pietà* that originated in Cheb in West Bohemia also presents the Saviour as a separate figure; however its present condition does not make it possible to judge whether there was any intention here to use Christ's body in isolation, or whether the separation of the two elements of the sculpted ensemble was merely a result of construction procedures (ŠEVČÍKOVÁ 1974: 43, Tab. 1-2).

Temporary Holy Sepulchres (in which symbols of Christ in the form of the cross, host, or an entire figure of Christ were placed in Czech churches) probably took diverse forms. The oldest and perhaps most popular were installations of the Sepulchre on a church altar, or next to it, made with the help of decorated fabrics (BONNELL 1916), as was probably the case in Olomouc Cathedral. Wooden transportable Sepulchres were perhaps also in use in the form of a coffin-like chest. These could have come with a roof-like finish (as may be seen on several preserved examples elsewhere in Europe), while one or two of the roofs could have been folded up, and might also have been entirely covered with paintings.<sup>59</sup> One gets an

58 I am indebted to Milena Bartlová for drawing my attention to her articles. See also TRIPPS 1996: 168-169.

59 In Europe there are only a few extant examples of these wooden Sepulchres, in Magerau and Zürich, both in Switzerland, or in Karlsruhe (SCHWARZWEBER 1940: 38-39). Others are in the Cistercian monasteries in Wienhausen, Baar, Lichtenthal and Diseldorf (KROESEN 2000: 63-68). A few of them are also preserved in Denmark (HAASTRUP 1987: 138-146), and also in

idea of the appearance of such Sepulchres in Bohemia by looking at the wooden painted chest still covering the tomb of Duke Vratislav (in St George's Basilica, Prague Castle; Ill. 11).<sup>60</sup> Influenced by reliquary chests, elaborately formed and richly sculpted cases of this sort came into existence in central Europe and examples are found in the Saxon city of Chemnitz, in Vienna, in Salzburg and in the Slovak Monastery of Hronský Beňadik (a specimen now held in Esztergom museum) (HECKMANN-von WEHREN 2003; for Beňadik see HOMOLKA 1972: 393; ENDRÖDI 2003: 716-717).<sup>61</sup> The Sepulchre from Beňadik is crucially equipped with small wheels (an idea obviously taken from the pulling of *Palmesels*). Sadly, no Sepulchre has survived in Bohemia; nevertheless, one is documented in St Barbara's Cathedral in Kutná Hora. In construction accounts for the cathedral there is an entry (of 1464) listing payment of ten grouts to 'Simon for the work on the Sepulchre or Jerusalem',<sup>62</sup> and a year later one grout 'for the rims to make Jerusalem' and another grout 'for carrying the Sepulchre'.<sup>63</sup> Judging from the small amounts, this Sepulchre was not of a rich work of art; it was, however, equipped with wheels, which may explain the need for inserting rims.

A rarity, inspired perhaps by the Bohemian example, was the Holy Sepulchre made by a sculptor of the Bohemian school in the early fifteenth century for the Busmann Chapel in the Franciscan Church of Dresden (MAGIRIUS 2006; FASTENRATH 1996; ULIČNÝ 2008: 221-224; Ill. 12).<sup>64</sup> Even though it was a work in stone, from its non-tectonic composition one can assume that its inspiration came from a wooden Sepulchre, which its creator might have known from pre-Hussite Bohemia. A big rectangular opening was made not only from above but also in front and on the sides of this free-standing 'case' through which one could see Christ's reclining body (and the three Holy Women behind him). The openings of this Sepulchre thus allowed the tomb scene to be seen from all sides, unlike older coffin-like chests, which had only an opening from above. The quasi-transparency of Christ's Sepulchre is a new and

England (SHEINGOR 1987: 42-44, Fig. 27). I would like to thank Justin Kroesen of the University of Groningen for being able to publish his picture of the Sepulchre in Wienhausen (Ill. 10).

60 On the tomb and the chest see KOTRBA 1965.

61 I am indebted to Milena Bartlová for this reference.

62 *Státní okresní archiv Kutná Hora*, collection *Archiv města Kutné Hory, Zádušní účty kostela sv. Barbory*, book no. 758, fol. 60a: 'Šimonovi ot diela hrobu neb Jerusalemu.'

63 *Ibidem*, fol. 62a: 'za vobruče k dělání Jerusalemu [...] od nesení hrobu.'

64 The Dresden Sepulchre is given as an example of the combination with the altar, as illustrated by its form. If it really had this purpose is not entirely clear. The picture shows that the upper desk, as well as the sides, were open along the whole length. This important work was unfortunately destroyed during World War II.



Illustration 12. Bohemian Master: The Holy Sepulchre. Dresden, the Busmannkapelle of the Franciscan church, after 1400. Reproduction: Heinrich Magirius, *Die Busmannkapelle an der Sophienkirche in Dresden – ein Meisterwerk der Zeit um 1400*, Denkmalpflege in Sachsen, 2006.

remarkable idea here, completely contrary to the idea of a fully enclosed Sepulchre. Such a construction did, nevertheless, have a parallel in the then-current phenomenon of relic adoration in transparent ostensories (which had by this period replaced the previously closed reliquaries; MEYER 1950). Just as with the new type of windowed reliquaries, so this Holy Sepulchre helped kneeling and contemplating believers towards a more intensive adoration of Christ's body throughout its ritual burial.

Forty days after the celebration of the Resurrection, on Ascension Day in 1509, the following incident occurred in the Augustinian Church of St Thomas in Malá Strana, Prague:

On Thursday, Ascension Day, when the monks at St Thomas in the monastery in Malá Strana after the singing of Nona, wanted to perform a theatrical scene before the people, by hauling up the image of the Lord Christ inside the church, as an imitation of His Ascension to heaven, suddenly (and I have no doubt by God's will for such blasphemy) the gallery containing a multitude of people broke off and fell on top of others who were under it in the stools; and some of them were squashed to death or injured and crippled; and if they had not got to the stools,

one could fear that hardly anyone could have come out alive.<sup>65</sup>

The same incident is also described by another contemporary in the so called *Old Bohemian Memorials* (*Staré letopisy české*):

In the same year (1509) a sad event occurred on Ascension Day at St Thomas in Malá Strana, after Nona, when many people came to the monastery to see the monks hauling up the image; and when they started (and the devils clowned about), and there was great laughter and joking; so God let it happen that the floor with the royal trumpeters broke off and squashed the multitude of people; and so many people injured their arms, legs and many remained on the railings of the gallery, because only that remained standing and did not collapse. Six or more died as a consequence of this event.<sup>66</sup>

Wenceslas Hájek of Libočany also mentions the disaster in his *Bohemian Chronicle* (1541) – adding that the hauling up of the image of the Lord's Resurrection occurred according to local practice (HÁJEK 1541: CCCCLIIIv; KOLÁR 1981: 665).

The medieval vault of St Thomas Church has not survived and it is therefore not possible to say where exactly this (equally non-extant) statue was hauled up. Probably somewhere in the nave, if there was so many people watching from the west gallery.<sup>67</sup> This raising up of a figure of Christ was, however, one of the popular ecclesiastical performances of medieval Europe (YOUNG 1933: 483-489; LARSON 1959; POCHAT 1978; KRAUSE 1987; TRIPPS 1996: 115-120; JUNG

65 *Chronicon Bartossii, qui dicitur Scriba / Kronika pražská Bartoše písaře*: 'A když bylo ve čtvrtek na den božího vstúpení, když mniši u svatého Tomáše v klášteře na Malé straně po obědích nonu zpívali a divadlo chtěli před lidmi dělati, aby táhli v kostele obraz nahoru ku podobenství vstúpení Krista pána na nebe, tu se v náhle (o tom nepochybuji z božího dopuštění pro takové rouhání) kruchta s množstvím lidí utrhla a obořila na jiné, kteříž sou pod ní byli v stolicích, a některé zmačkala až do smrti a nejmiň do ourazu a do chromoty; a kdyby byli do stolic nepřipadli, strach jest, že by ztěžka kdo odtud zdráv vyšel' (ŠIMÁK 1907: 9).

66 'Téhož léta (1509) příhoda tesklivá stala se na boží vstaupení u S. Tomáše na Malé Straně po obědích, když se sešlo mnoho lidí do kláštera na dívání, že měli mniši obraz táhnouti nahoru; a když počali a čerti kejklevali, i byl smích a žert veliký; i dopustil pán bůh, že podlaha se utrhla dolův s královskými trubači a přikvácila lidu množství; a tak mnozí lidé úraz trpěli na rukau, na nohách a kde se trefilo, a někteří zůstali na zábradlí kruchetním, neb to bylo ostalo a nespadlo. Potom umřelo z těch osob šest nebo více' (PALACKÝ 1829: 306-307).

67 It is not entirely out of the question that one of the above-mentioned statues of the Resurrected Christ, listed in the 1409 inventory, was already used for this purpose. What appears more likely is that one of the two was always chosen (KADLEC 1985: 373).

2006: 68-74). A highly illustrative record relating to the practice is a fourteenth century description from the above-mentioned Moosburg. Here, an image of the Saviour dressed in a humeral, tunic or alb, with a banner in his hand, was placed in a tent to represent Mount Sinai and hauled up through an opening in the vault, as if to heaven (YOUNG 1933: 484-485; HAASTRUP 1987: 151-152; TYDEMAN 2001: 118). In Czech regions, where this celebration is documented as being sporadic,<sup>68</sup> it is possible, apart from the already-mentioned St Thomas Cloister, to identify performances of this sort in the Parish church of St Nicolas in Znojmo. Here, during the construction of the nave vault in the 1450s, a rhombic opening, bordered with tracery, was inserted into the ceiling's second bay in a direction facing away from the triumphal arch. The hole was intended for hauling up the statue of Christ (as is shown in the usual painting of surrounding angels) (KROUPA 1996: 93; KROUPA 1999: 85; VÍTOVSKÝ 1999: 213; Ill. 14). The much greater popularity of this custom in the fifteenth century may be seen in the vaults of newly constructed Bohemian churches, which were, compared to earlier structures, habitually arranged with more sizable openings of this sort. These are frequently placed in the nave, but the occurrence of a greater number of similarly shaped openings in one particular vault refutes the idea of their possible performative use. This is the case of St Barbara's Cathedral in Kutná Hora, where the big round opening in the Benedict Ried Vault might be considered to have been have been instigated for liturgical purposes; yet there are similar little openings at the same level in the aisles, and the marking of the opening in the nave (in the shape of a six-pointed rib star) should be perceived instead as a symbol representing a celestial body in the heavenly sky, which the vault more generally depicts.

The starting point for research into the phenomenon of hauling up statues of Christ at Ascension is the identification of individual statues used for this theatricalised celebration – because many may later have lost the characteristic sign that would have identified them as being connected to this practice: an iron ring, inserted in the top of the head. This is the case with the Resurrected Christ held in the National Gallery, Prague (attributed to the Master of the Doksany Altar; Ill. 13) whose ring was removed during its most recent restoration (Illustration 13).<sup>69</sup> The statue dates to after 1521 and it is worth noticing its slight height (of just 110 cm) in order to get

68 Of some influence definitely was the fact that it was not performed in St Vitus Cathedral. *Breviarium Pragense* (note 3), fol. 218ff.

69 *Národní galerie v Praze*, no. P 193. ŠEVČÍKOVÁ and ŠEVČÍK 1976, No. 9. (Note 90): 328-332, plate 35, still records an iron ring in the top of the head. I am indebted to Milena Bartlová for information about its removal.



Illustration 13. Master of the Doksany Altar, The Resurrected Christ Intended to be Pulled on the Ascension Day Celebration, around 1521. Photograph © *Národní galerie v Praze*, 1930.

an idea of the intimate nature of performances of this religious celebration. As in the case with many ‘portable’ statues of Christ, the most important fact is missing for this statue: its provenance.<sup>70</sup> A similar difficult case is that presented by the statue of a Resurrected Christ from the Cistercian Monastery in Lusatian Ostritz. This is the earliest extant example with a characteristic iron ring still present in the top of the head, dating back as early as to around the mid-fourteenth century, and so the possibility of it originating in Bohemia is noteworthy. It might originally have come from the Cistercian Monastery in Tišnov (near Brno), which in the nineteenth century already belonged to this Lusatian monastery as a secularised complex. This may be attested to by its formal outlines, ascribing the statue to the work of the Master of the Madonna of Michle, or his workshop.<sup>71</sup> Uniquely then, it could be possible to associate this statue with a still-existing performance location, because

70 Still more difficult will be to recognise statues that might have been pulled up in constructions in the form of the Mandorla. See KRAUSE 1987. The opening in the top of the head is also already mentioned for Christ of Boletice. Nevertheless, because there is a similar one in the side of the head, these holes were used probably to fix a halo.

71 The possible Czech origin of the statue and connection with the Master of the Michle Madonna was noted by HLOBIL 1980: 112, whom I thank for drawing my attention to this association. KRAUSE 1987: 324 lists this as the earliest example of this type, as well as being a Bohemian work or strongly influenced by Bohemian art, which also includes a detail of the head with the iron ring. However, TRIPPS 1996: 143, Note 58, associates the statue with the Crucifixion group in Stuttgart.



in the ceiling crossing of the Early Gothic Church of the Tišnov Monastery an extraordinary large round opening is still visible today – with its size potentially pointing to performative liturgical use during Ascension Day celebrations.<sup>72</sup>

The above-described phenomenon of portable sculptures or symbols of Christ (such as the cross and host) originated in Europe. The need to present basic elements of the Christian religion to illiterate believers gave rise (from as early as the tenth century) to the existence of most of the forms of dramatised liturgy that have been examined in this article. The dramatic dialogue *Quem queritis* (taking place between the angel at the Sepulchre and up to three Marys) originated some time before 930 (HARDISON 1965). The earliest record of the liturgical celebration *Visitatio sepulchri* is in the *Regularis concordia*, written by Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester (†987) between 965-975 and adopted from the monastery related to the French Fleury. The first permanent imitation of the Holy Sepulchre in Europe ‘in imitation of the one in Jerusalem’ was probably established by Bishop Conrad (†975) in Constance, Switzerland (JEZLER 1985; MORRIS 2005: 126); at the same time (around 970) an imitation of the topography of Jerusalem, with the Mount of Olives, was created in Bologna, Italy, after the return of St Bononius from the Holy Land (MORRIS 1997). First mention of the ‘*effigies sedentis domini super asinum*’ (statue of Our Lord seated upon an ass) is to be found in the Life of St Ulrich, Bishop of Augsburg (†973).<sup>73</sup> The fact that this form of ritual performed on Palm Sunday might have been of ancient origin is attested to by the earliest preserved examples of the *Palmesel* (dating to around 1200 in Switzerland, Italy and Germany) which all share the same form (TRIPPS 1996: 110). The same source (*The Life of St Ulrich*) also mentions for the first time performance of the *Depositio Hostiae* (YOUNG 1933: 121, 553; HARDISON 1965: 187). At this time, too, the ritual of the burial of the cross (*Depositio Crucis*) first appears in the *Regularis concordia*, beginning with this eloquent prologue:

[...] if anyone should care or think fit to follow in becoming manner certain religious men in a practice worthy to be imitated for the strengthening of the faith of unlearned common persons and neophytes, we have decreed this only: on that

72 Segments of the stone ring of the opening and adjacent ribs seem to be made from one piece, which should support the simultaneous construction of an opening and the vault. I am grateful to Hana Fadingerová of the *Podhorácké Muzeum* in Předklášteří for this information.

73 *The Life of Ulrich* is dated to the years 982-992. Even though the meaning of the term ‘effigies’ is far from clear, TRIPPS 1996: 89-107 argues that it was a sculpture.

part of the altar where there is a space for it shall be a representation as it were of the sepulchre, hung about with a curtain.

In this ceremony, the cross was placed in the Sepulchre and protected by guards until Easter Night when the *Visitatio* was performed (YOUNG 1920: 72-74; HARDISON 1965: 192-193).

All those connected with the first dramatisations and performed visualisations (such as Bishops Conrad, Ulrich, Ethewold and Bononius) were contemporaries. They accordingly probably shared the same conviction, expressed in Bishop Ethewold's words, that theatricality served to bring the principles of Christian liturgy closer to all involved. This conviction towards performance, even beginning as it did with human and animal 'actors', quickly had implications for religious scenography and the use of key stage properties, and these soon gave rise to other manifestations of theatricality: the burial of a figure from the Cross (or from the arms of the Virgin Mary); the creation of evocations of the Holy Sepulchre; or the hauling up of statues of Christ on Ascension Day. However, all such human inventions had their limitations: the transportation of the crucified body of Christ to the Sepulchre and its interment within it were only possible in both cases because they involved depictions of Christ's dead body. Pragmatically, this meant that two different statues were required for the continuous 'staging' of Easter until the final Ascension (as is attested to by records from Prüfening and Olomouc) because the image of the resurrected Christ and of the Christ ascending to heaven had to depict a Christ who had become alive once again. It seems, however, that even this difficulty did not always get in the way of using just one statue (which may have had modified modelled feet for standing, even if depicting a sitting or reclining dead body of Christ, such as the Jihlava *Pietá*). The mechanics of statues were gradually improved when they began regularly to be taken down from the Cross and taken to the Sepulchre, abandoning an older puppet-like form in favour of a more realistic appearance, as illustrated by the Saviour's body from Medlov (near Olomouc).

Despite the fragmentary nature of preserved collections, and the relative sparsity of written records, some idea of the scenographic implications of this unexpectedly diverse world of portable objects (used to illustrate key events that stand at the very core of Christian religion in the Bohemian Middle Ages) has clearly begun now to be seen. Just as there was an idea to contemporise the proof of Christ's victory over death by theatrical staging of the visit to the Sepulchre, presented to a gathered church congregation, so the staging of other events in Holy Week began to take place for the same reason: setting out in procession with an ass or pulling a



Illustration 14. An Opening in the Church Nave for Pulling in the Statue of the Resurrected Christ.  
St Nicolas Church in Znojmo. Reproduction: Kaliopi Chamonikola (ed.). *Od gotiky k renesanci.*  
*Výtvarná kultura Moravy a Slezska 1400-1550 II.* Brno, 1999: 213.

statue of the Saviour on Palm Sunday; placing his crucified body in the Sepulchre on Good Friday (be it symbolic in the form of the cross or host, or the entire figure of a carved Christ); the bodily Resurrection on Easter Monday; and, finally, the airborne spectacle of Ascension Day. The visual appeal and intelligibility of these performances were strong enough to change the cycle of annual rituals established by liturgical practices even in the world of St Vitus Cathedral (at which the original custom of leading an ass was replaced by a wooden statue of Christ). It is possible here that originally a live actor was used to represent Christ sitting on an ass. The ritual probably changed in a similar way at St Wenceslas Cathedral in Olomouc, where the buried cross was perhaps replaced in the course of the fifteenth century by a crucifix, then other carved objects representing a more corporal Saviour.

It is clear that it is only with extended research into liturgical books and other documentary sources that it will be possible to present a full picture of this remarkable and still under-researched phenomenon; what is without question, however, even at the present stage of investigation, is that such displays were both theatrically and scenographically rich interpretations of central religious narratives.

Further expansion and illustration of the subject are necessary. Once such research has been undertaken, it will hopefully be possible to judge more accurately and fully the responses that this dramatisation prompted in Bohemia. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that one can already come across some of the standard anti-theatrical prejudices against such performance – by way of negative responses in the few preserved records addressing such ludic extrapolations of sacred Catholic ritual: the rebelling Prague residents showed no mercy in throwing down the statue of Christ on an ass from the gallery of St Vitus Cathedral; and the burghers of Malá Strana in the early sixteenth century evidently considered the Easter spectacle of St Thomas Monastery a source of entertainment rather than instruction. Such protestations against dramatised liturgy – seen by some as a blasphemy of the true performance of sacred rites – heralded the end of medieval theatricalisations of church rituals, or perhaps their eventual replacement with other practices, brought about during the upcoming era, the Renaissance.

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