
The Knights of the Cross with the Red Star and the Renewal of Ecclesiastical Property in the Pre-White Mountain Age

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On 26 March 1566, Antonín Brus of Mohelnice, the Archbishop of Prague, wrote to the Council of the Old Town of Prague, asking the council to stop the construction of a wall that it had begun outside the door of the hospital of the Order of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star (*Špitál a klášter řádu křížovníků s červenou hvězdou*), henceforth to be referred to as the Knights of the Cross (i.e. *Křížovníků*).¹ The hospital, affiliated cloister, and Church of St. Francis were located on the banks of the Vltava river to the right of the bridge, as one looks across the bridge from the Old City towards the Small Side. In his letter, the Archbishop stated that the land on which the wall was being built belonged to the hospital. A day later, Pavel Kapr, the mayor of the Old Town, and Lord Draždice, a member of the town council, wrote back to the Archbishop stating that, before submitting a complaint, the Archbishop should personally inspect the site. At two o'clock that afternoon the Archbishop arrived at the hospital and cloister complex accompanied by one of his assistants, as well as Lords Kapr and Draždice, a royal underchamberlain, and some others. Lords Kapr and Draždice announced to the group that, “the Old Town was well aware that the building site did not belong to the community but to the hospital. The wall was being constructed not to cause trouble, but because the open property by the bridge was out of the way and all sorts of troubles were caused by people passing by; so the city wanted to close it off, though not with boards as it was earlier, but with a wall in an effort to beautify the city.”² After hearing this, the Archbishop gave his permission for the wall to be completed under the condition that no harm came to the cloister. The matter was settled, at least for the moment. However, about forty years later, in 1608, the dispute over the wall broke out again, this time involving complaints about a shop that was attached to or located near the wall, which had been approved or used by the Office of the Bridge (*Úřad mostu*), an authority of the Old Town Council entrusted with the administration and upkeep of this structure.³ This time the dispute involved numerous exchanges over a two-year period, which resurfaced then again in 1611.⁴

¹ “Nedorozumění mezi špitálem Křížovníkův a Staropražskými o novou zeď, kterou ti Pražané od dveří téhož špitála až k mostu na gruntech jeho stavěti začali,” in *Základy starého místopisu Pražského (1437-1620)* ed. Josef Teige, (Praha, 1915) 2,1:342-3.

² *Loc. cit.*

³ “Psaní činěná od J. Mti Kn. P. Arcibiskupa, též o zeď, kteráž se dělí od špitála nahoru až k mostu pražském, též také o krámeč podle dotčené zdi postaveného (!) nížeji zapsaná stojí” (1608) in Teige, *Základy starého místopisu Pražského* 343-44.

⁴ “Vejpis psaní od pp. Purkmistra a pánův p. Arcibiskupu Pražskému učiněného (1609); “Vejpis odpovědi od J. Mti Kn. P. Arcibiskupa” (1609); “Relací od nás starších mistrův poctivého řemesla a pořádku zednického a kamenického v St. M. Pr. Strany spatření klenutí před špitálem i pod špitálem u mostu” (1609); “Od J. Miti p. Arcibiskupa Pražského psaní učiněno strany dveří u špitálu” (1611) in Teige, *Základy starého místopisu Pražského* 343-45

What was this all about? Essentially, this is an example, which could be from any time and place, of a dispute between neighbours who flex their muscles over ownership or control over a driveway, a strip of trees, or, in this case, a wall built in an empty field between their properties. There is, however, a specific historical context that explains why this particular dispute took place at this particular time. Beginning in the 1560s, the Knights of the Cross were one of a number of ecclesiastical institutions in Prague that were involved in disputes with the Councils of the New and Old Towns of Prague over building projects. These building projects were part of a general reorganization of these institutions that involved not just the renovation of their physical structures, but also the reassertion of their earlier privileges and property rights, which had been seized or lost during the Hussite Revolution.⁵

In most of the cases, the dispute arose when the ecclesiastical institutions instituted a project which the town council objected to on the grounds that it infringed on the economic welfare of the community or its jurisdiction. For example, in 1570, the Dominicans at the Cloister of St. Agnes, the former Franciscan and Clarissine cloister, got involved in a dispute with the Old Town about the lease and sale of individual plots of land on the site of the former men's cloister, and the founding of a brewery and glassworks on the river bank, which was mediated by a commission which included the Archbishop.⁶ In 1572, a jurisdictional dispute arose between the New Town and a settlement around the former Cloister of Our Lady of the Snows, which Archbishop Brus would be instrumental in establishing twenty-years later.⁷ The main difference between the dispute of the Knights of the Cross with the Old Town and disputes involving other ecclesiastical institutions from the period is that the archbishops of Prague who initiated or represented the complaint of the Knights of the Cross were also the Grand Masters of the Order.

In my paper from the last symposium on the archbishops of Prague, I raised the question whether the connection of the archbishops to the Knights of the Cross

⁵ On the fate of ecclesiastical properties during the Hussite Revolution see *Husitská revoluce* 4:54-72; and John M. Klassen, "Ownership of Church Patronage and the Czech Nobility's Support for Hussitism," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 55 (1975) 36-49. The renewal of ecclesiastical institutions in the late sixteenth century is discussed in passing by Václav Vladivoj Tomek, Zikmund Winter and Ferdinand Hrejsa; and as a topic of specialized scope for few institutions: František Cigánek, "Postranní právo sv. Jiří na Hradčanech v XVI. a v první polovině XVII. století," Diplomová práce, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy v Praze, 1957; Jiří Hloch, "Postranní právo Panny Marie pod řetězem-konec mostu (1547-1669)," *Pražský sborník vlastivědný* (1962) 97-114; Milada Svobodová-Ladová, "Urbanistický vývoj maltézské jurisdikce," *Pražský sborník historický* 3 (1966) 72-85; and more recently Pavel Kůrka, "Kostel starožitný v smrdutých místech a blatech ležící. Kostel farnost a záduší svatého Valentina na Starém Městě pražském v raném novověku," Diplomová práce, Ústav českých dějin, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy v Praze, 2002. The first study to highlight the importance of extra-territorial law in a political-historical context is Milada Svobodová-Ladová, "Zvláštní místní práva v Praze," *Pražský sborník historický* 8 (1973) 95-179. See also Zofia Kulewska-Topolska, "Ze studiow nad zagadnieniem duchownych postrannich práv v Pradze," *Czasopismo prawnohistoryczne* 16, 2 (1964).

⁶ Helena Soukupová, *Anežský klášter v Praze* (Prague, 1989) 213-37.

⁷ Vladimír Waage, "Městský pozemkový majetek a postranní právo kláštera Marie Sněžné," diplomová práce, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 1978; Zdeněk Kristen, "Snahy o uvedení Karmelitánů do Prahy," *Sborník J.B. Nováka*, zvláštní otisk ze sborníku k 60. narozeninám (Prague, n.d.). On the dispute see: Státní ústřední archiv, Řadový archiv Františkánů Praha, inv. Číslo 2585, karta 111.

played a role in archbishops' activities in Roman Catholic Renewal.⁸ In this essay I explore that connection further and, in doing so, examine some ways of better understanding the nature and significance of ecclesiastical property renewal in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and the role of ecclesiastical property renewal in Roman Catholic Renewal, while attempting to avoid the prejudices offered by confessional histories.⁹

First, I will treat the foundation and early history of the Order, and describe the Order's experiences during the period of Charles IV and the Hussite Revolution, drawing on pertinent information from the major histories of the Order by P. V. Bělohávek, who himself was a member of the Knights of the Cross;¹⁰ and older ecclesiastical topographies of Prague.¹¹ Although the primary concern of this essay is the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the history of earlier periods provides an important context for understanding continuities and innovations, and any possible influence that the Archbishop's connection with the Knights of the Cross had on his activities in ecclesiastical property renewal. Then I will consider the fate of this order, the hospital, church and cloister in the post-Hussite period, drawing on discussions of Bělohávek and information on proclamations and disputes involving the hospital and cloister in the collection edited by Josef Teige.¹²

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The origins of the Knights of the Cross go back to the foundation in the early thirteenth century of a hospital brotherhood by the Přemyslid princess Agnes, assisted by her mother Konstancie. Originally planning to found a Cistercian convent in Prague, Konstancie bought the Church of St. Peter on Poříčí from the Order of German Knights and the settlements and villages that lay along the right bank of Vltava beyond the walls of the Old Town, which extended from the Vyšehrad in the south to the bend of the river in the north; including Rybník, Hloupetín, Borotice, Humenec, Hnídosice, Zupanovice and Dražtice.¹³ In 1233 Konstancie changed her mind and instead founded a Cistercian cloister in Moravia, leaving the land in Prague for a hospital dedicated to the work of St. Francis. Since the new land had not yet been entirely paid for, the hospital was located instead in 1234 at St. Castalus (*Haštal*), not far from the Franciscan and Clarissan Monastery founded

⁸ Palmitessa, "The Archbishops of Prague in the Urban Struggles of the Confessional Age," BRRP 4 (2002) 272-73

⁹ On Roman Catholic Renewal and its place in Bohemian history see František Kafka & Anna Skýbová, *Husitský epilog na koncilu tridentském a původní koncepce habsburské rekatolizace Čech: Počátky obnoveného pražského arcibiskupství* (Prague, 1969); R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700* (Oxford, 1979) esp. 195-234; Jaroslav Pánek, *Stavovská opozice a její zápas s Habsburky 1547-1577. K politické krizi feudální třídy v předbělohorském českém státě* (Prague, 1982), esp. 5-15; Winfried Eberhard, "Entwicklungsphasen und Probleme der Gegenreformation und katholischen Erneuerung in Böhmen," *Römische Quartalheft für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 84 (1989) 235-57; Jiří Mikulec, "Pobělohorská rekatolizace - téma stále problematické," *Český časopis historický* 96 (1998) 824-30.

¹⁰ P. V. Bělohávek, *Dějiny českých křižovníků s červenou hvězdou* (Praha, 1930); Bělohávek, ed., *Kniha památní na sedmisetleté založení českých křižovníků s červenou hvězdou (1233-1933)* (Praha, 1933).

¹¹ Such as František Ekert, *Posvátná místa královského města Prahy*, I (Praha, 1883) 329-48.

¹² Teige, *Základy starého místopisu Pražského* 329-46.

¹³ Vilém Lorenc, *Nové město pražské* (Praha, 1973) 34.

and administered by her daughter. Although the hospital was founded in the same tradition as the Franciscan and Clarissan monasteries, they were to be independent of one another. At first, the brothers who ran the hospital did not follow any established rule, but in 1234 the hospital brotherhood adopted the Rule of the Canons of St Augustine, which allowed its leader to be elected from among the brothers. In 1238, Aněžka who wanted to keep the stricter order of St. Clare gave up all rights to the hospital and its estates. In 1252, the Order was granted the sign of the Cross with a red star and a cap and soon after was recognized as a military hospital order, allowing its members to bear arms. Unlike the other hospital orders in Prague, the Knights of the Cross were the only native Bohemian order.¹⁴ (Besides the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star, the other two military orders in Prague at the time bearing the sign of a cross were the Jerusalem Knights of the Cross, which had the sign of a cross on a boat, and the Knights with the red heart.¹⁵)

On 26 May 1252 the foundation was laid for the building of the new “Hospital Alongside the Prague Bridge with the Church of the Holy Spirit.” The original church dedicated to St. Francis was a simple Gothic structure with its main structure lying on an east-west axis. [See figure #1.] It had three choirs with vaulted ceilings decorated in a criss-crossed, ribbed pattern. The main choir was higher and longer than the side ones and led to the presbytery. Although it had three choirs, the church functioned as a two-choir structure, as the northern choir was separated from the main one by a wall and was used as a sacristy on the main floor and choir on the second. The cloister and hospital buildings were situated around three unequal courts.¹⁶ [See figure #2.]

In moving to the new site, the order took on, in addition to its properties outside of the town, a choice property in the centre of the town, right near the bridge, as well as the ownership of the church of St. Valentine located nearby.¹⁷ This was one of the largest accumulations of land in the Prague basin. In addition, King Wenceslaus I granted the order all rents and tolls received from the bridge, which were to be used for its upkeep, along with money from vineyards in Prague and in surrounding areas associated with the Office of the Bridge. The Order also began to receive large gifts and estates from Prague burghers and others.¹⁸ These donations, together with its other properties, made it one of the richest ecclesiastical institutions in Prague.

With the founding of the New Town in the mid-fourteenth century, the Knights of the Cross lost a significant amount of land, which became part of the new commune. These losses included most of its properties on the right bank of Vltava. In compensation, Charles IV gave the order two parish churches – the Churches of St. Stephen’s-at-the-Pond (*Na rybníčku*) and St. Henry’s (*Jindřich*) – and some additional plots in the countryside. In 1378, almost the entire hospital and cloister

¹⁴ Ekert, *Posvátná místa* 329-30.

¹⁵ Vojtěch Sádlo, *Kostel sv. Františka u Křížovníků v Praze* (Praha, 1941) 2.

¹⁶ Sádlo, *Kostel sv. Františka u Křížovníků v Praze* 2-4. See also Dobroslav and Jarmila Líbalovi, “Středověký kostel Křížovníků s červenou hvězdou v Praze,” *Zprávy památkové péče* 6 (1942) 68-71; and K. Guth, “Objevení středověkých částí v klášteře Křížovnickém,” *Za starou Prahu* I, 5 (1910) 43-44.

¹⁷ Ekert, *Posvátná místa* 331-32. On St. Valentine’s Church see Kůrka, “Kostel starožitný.”

¹⁸ Ekert, *Posvátná místa* 332.

complex burned down, with the exception of a brewery and a cowshed. In the fire a number of the poor and sick died and the cloister's royal privileges were destroyed.¹⁹ Afterwards, Grand Master Zdeněk built the complex anew.²⁰ On the eve of the Hussite Revolution, the hospital and cloister complex was one of the richest of Prague's seven largest cloisters.²¹

During the Hussite Revolution the hospital and cloister complex sustained some damage, though not as much as some other institutions.²² The most significant setback, however, was the loss of human capital. Most of the brothers were forced to flee the city; many took refuge in the order's hospitals and monasteries in the few areas of Bohemia that did not come under Hussite control – such as in northwest Bohemia. Despite the losses, however, the complex did not become abandoned. In 1419, Mikuláš Čapský became Grand Master, placed there, according to the sources, by “the people” or the commune.²³

The description of the Order's fate during the Hussite Revolution is one area of the Order's history that has been strongly shaped by confessional perspectives. Václav Bělohávek stated that no contemporary documentation exists which would explain why the hospital and cloister were not damaged during the Revolution, but conjectures that perhaps some of the Praguers saw the cloister as urban property, or perhaps thanks were due to Mikuláš Čapský who had friends in the city – the very friends who placed him into the office of Grand Master. Bělohávek also describes some documentation from the seventeenth century, based on older records, which reports that the Utraquist mob came up to St. Clement's – the church that existed on the site of the later Jesuit cloister - and remained for some time, killing (apparently clergy) before approaching the hospital and cloister. Observing the “bloody theatre” that was taking place, the Grand Master of the Knights of the Cross came out to speak with the Utraquists, convincing them to halt by promising that if they left the hospital and monastery alone, communion in two kinds would be celebrated there. Bělohávek goes on to state that this is supported by another report from 1610, also based on earlier sources, that people at that scene confessed their sins and were given communion in two kinds by the Knights of the Cross, a practice which continued until the administration of Archbishop Jan Lohelius in the early seventeenth century. Until then the practice did not disturb anyone and there was no action taken against it.²⁴

In 1426, Čapský left the hospital and cloister in Prague and went to Cheb, along with other brothers who sought refuge there and in other places. According to Bělohávek, a few brothers remained to care for the sick and the poor. But after the move to Cheb, the Grand Masters did not have much influence on the convent, though officially remained in leadership.²⁵ The management of the Order's property in Prague came into the hands of the Old Town who placed an administrator there, as they did in many other places.²⁶ In 1428, the administrator Jan Krynyk took on

¹⁹ Bělohávek, *Dějiny českých křižovníků* 65.

²⁰ Ekert, *Posvátná místa* 334-5.

²¹ Bělohávek, *Dějiny českých křižovníků* 68.

²² Ekert writes that the cloister was destroyed; Ekert, *Posvátná místa* 335.

²³ Bělohávek, *Dějiny českých křižovníků* 70.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 71.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 74.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 71-72.

the name of *magister hospitalis*, a title like other communal officers holding similar positions. In the 1430s, a dispute developed between Krzynyk and the Grand Master Erazim (or Erasmus), who resided in Cheb, which came before Bishop Konrad of Olomouc, the administrator of the Prague archdiocese. The dispute was settled in 1434, with each party agreeing to recognize the other's authority – Erasmus as Grand Master and Krzynyk as *magister hospitalis* – and to work together. In 1446, Erasmus returned to Prague and, for a while, assumed ownership rights to the property.²⁷ But after Jiří of Poděbrady ascended the throne (in 1458), Erasmus left Prague again and King Jiří installed another burgher, Precha z Budějic, as administrator of the convent. When Vladislav Jagellon became King of Bohemia in 1471, Erasmus returned to Prague a second time and remained in the cloister until his death.

According to Bělohlávek, earlier secondary literature – I believe he is referring here to Protestant literature – was sceptical of the motivations of these “lay brothers”, but he notes that it is important to recognize that the brothers courageously held on to the hospital monastery in the midst of foreign territory.²⁸ And, according to Bělohlávek, they succeeded – thanks to a near miracle – in keeping the cloister alive; a fact which can be demonstrated by records testifying to the work of artisans in the cloister, supplying iron and clothes for the brothers and the sick.²⁹

One can identify in Bělohlávek a determined effort to present a picture of continuity in the Roman Catholic tradition. However, one could conjecture that for all intents and purposes the monastery was lost (that is, as a Roman Catholic religious institution). Does the existence of a few old clerics demonstrate a continuing Roman Catholic tradition? The dispute between the *magister hospitalis* and the Grand Master is interesting, but the fact that the Bishop of Olomouc, acting as Roman Catholic administrator, brokered an agreement does not mean that it was recognized by the *magister* or the Old Town. One could imagine that from the points of view of the Old Town and the Utraquists, the hospital and cloister were a *záduší*, a form of ecclesiastical organization characterized by local parish- or community-based administration of the church's funds and property, which was prevalent in the post-Utraquist period.³⁰ Bělohlávek never uses this term. Krzynyk was *magister hospitalis*, an urban official, though not a lay brother; terms which Bělohlávek does use in referring to other roles within the Order.

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While finding continuity of tradition and distinctiveness of the Order of the Knights of the Cross are problematic during the period of the early fifteenth century, these matters become clearer when one considers the developments of the late fifteenth century. In 1454 Ondřej Pesmet was elected Grand Master. Although he was in office only five years, he was the first in a line of grand masters who sought to strengthen the order. He received the confirmation of privileges and freedoms from King Ladislav Jagellon, which earlier monarchs had granted the order and which were lost during the Hussite Revolution. Pesmet's successor, Mikuláš

²⁷ *Ibid.* 76.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 75-76.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 76.

³⁰ Blanka Zilynská, “Záduší,” *Facta Probant Homines. Sborník příspěvků k životnímu jubileu Prof. Dr. Zdeňky Hledíkové* eds. Ivan Hlaváček & Jan Hrdina (Praha, 1998) 535-48; Kůrka, “Kostel starožitný,” 12ff.

Puchner received from King Vladislav in 1474 not only confirmation of the earlier privileges and freedoms, but also the right to buy back former properties and estates of the order.³¹ Puchner's immediate successor, Matěj of Štěbsko, was the first grand master to begin buying back properties, some which he did at the very beginning of his administration. In time, he requested and received from King Vladislav a loan in the amount of 400 Czech groschen, over a period of three years, which was to be used to buy back larger numbers of property. He also received from King Vladislav a mandate against the sale of former clerical properties to the laity.³²

The end of the fifteenth century also marked the beginning of a transformation of the brotherhood back into a religious order and the strengthening of the figure of Grand Master as spiritual leader. In 1492, two years after being elected Grand Master, Matěj of Štěbsko, celebrated his ordination as a priest by celebrating mass in the Church of the Holy Spirit, and took on a new title, *prior generalis*, which future leaders of the order held in addition to that of Grand Master. Matěj of Štěbsko's immediate successor, Václav of Hradešín, began his office with a solemn mass celebrated on 21 September 1510, which was attended by the Roman Catholic administrator, other church and estate officials, and councillors of the Old Town.³³

In 1526, Václav of Hradešín began a renewal of the hospital and cloister complex. The renewal efforts included the creation of a separate courtyard and buildings, directly opposite of what would become the entrance of the future Jesuit church of St. Saviour, through the construction of two additional walls.³⁴ [See the upper-right portion of figure 2.] With the increasing purchase of properties and renovation of the mother convent came increasing self-confidence, which led to a conflict between the Order and the Royal Chamber over the tax to fight the war with the Turks. In 1533, Václav of Hradešín protested strongly against the tax and refused to pay it, and was imprisoned for a while at Prague Castle. Two years later, however, the Grand Master was asked to serve on a committee to advise King Ferdinand on the renovation of St. Vitus' Cathedral. Other members of the committee included the Provost of the Prague Capital, and the Master of the Johannite Cloister.

Early in his administration, in 1524, a case had been brought against Václav of Hradešín in the court of the Old Town.³⁵ The administrator and customs' officer of the bridge authority, along with a few others, testified that a certain "Roztocký's daughter," identified once as Markéta, frequently visited Václav at the hospital and cloister, and always left with bread and other groceries (and sometimes also received clean clothes and cash). Markéta was one of a number of "loose women" (*frejírky*), who Václav invited into his private quarters, entertaining them with fine wine and food, and "carousing" (*hodují, dobrou vůli mají*) and sleeping with them (*lehá s nim*). Otherwise he complained that there was not enough food and drink for the poor. We can understand this case, on one level, as a typical example of anti-

³¹ Bělohlávek, *Dějiny českých křižovníků* 89.

³² *Ibid.* 90.

³³ *Ibid.* 91.

³⁴ Sádlo, *Kostel sv. Františka u Křižovníků v Praze* 3.

³⁵ "Svědění proti Václavovi z Radešína, mistru špitálu od mostu," in Teige, *Základy starého místopisu Pražského* 40-41.

clerical sentiment, common throughout late medieval and early modern Europe.³⁶ However, the main issue here is not Václav's affairs with loose women, but the misuse of communal funds intended for the poor, an issue of particular interest within the context of relations between ecclesiastical and secular institutions in sixteenth-century Prague. After Václav of Hradešín's death in 1552, a major dispute arose concerning whether he had a right, as a member of the clergy, to leave a will. According to Zikmund Winter, while Roman Catholic priests did not have full disposition over their property, members of a military order did, such as the Order of the Knights of the Cross. In 1558, a decision was reached that permitted him to bequeath large parts of his estate without officially stating that he had a right to leave a will.³⁷ In any event, the dispute illustrates the return of the Order as both an economic and religious force.

Václav of Hradešín's successor as Grand Master was Antonín Brus. Born in Mohelnice, a town in Moravia that belonged to the Bishop of Olomouc, Brus came to Prague during his youth to continue his schooling and later entered the Order of the Knights of the Cross, and he was ordained a priest in 1540. In 1542, he went back to Moravia to preach to soldiers on the Turkish front and three years later went to run the Order's cloister in Cheb. In 1552, he was named Grand Master. When the War with the Turks again broke out, King Ferdinand sent Brus to Vienna as preacher to the imperial troops. In 1558, he was named Bishop of Vienna and in 1561 Archbishop of Prague. Four days after he celebrated his first mass as Archbishop, he left for Italy to serve as one of two leading representatives of the Holy Roman Emperor at the Council of Trent. Brus returned to Prague to assume his duties as archbishop, among them mediating disputes between ecclesiastical institutions, individual burghers, and urban authorities, such as the protracted disputes over the wall, which were described at the beginning of this essay. In 1555, Brus hosted Peter Caninius, who had come to Prague to look for a site to establish the first Jesuit College in Bohemia. During his stay, Caninius stayed in quarters in the cloister of the Knights of the Cross. The Jesuits ultimately chose the spot at the foot of the bridge, adjacent to the hospital and cloister complex of the Knights of the Cross.

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After having reviewed the major developments, status and condition of the hospital and cloister from its founding into the sixteenth century, I would like to return to examine the question of possible influence that the connection between the newly-installed archbishops and the Knights of the Cross had on activities of the archbishops in Roman Catholic renewal in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

First, it should be noted that the renewal of the archbishopric in 1561, over one hundred and forty years after the last archbishop had sided with the Utraquist cause, was closely linked to the issue of ecclesiastical property renewal, and there is a subtle but direct connection to the Knights of the Cross. When the issue of the renewal of the archbishopric was first seriously discussed in 1548, King Ferdinand promised the Bohemian estates that the Prague Capital would not seek the restitution of ecclesiastical property – a promise which it did not keep – and in 1561

³⁶ Heiko A. Oberman & Peter A. Dykema eds., *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 1993).

³⁷ Bělohlávek, *Dějiny českých křižovníků* 94.

when plans were already under way for its renewal, Ferdinand promised that the income of the archbishop would come from royal funds. When Ferdinand approached Brus for his expert opinion on the renewal of the archbishopric, Brus demonstrated his knowledge of local affairs and practical approach, telling the King that the issue was as much political as it was religious and that the King should remove the slightest doubt that the renewal would come from royal money rather than the restitution of property. The official announcement of the renewal of the archbishopric in September 1562 gave the archbishop an income of 3,000 Czech groschen from royal coffers to be paid in quarterly instalments, and a house on Castle Hill to be used as his residence. But it was clear to everyone that this would not be enough. So, the King granted Brus and his successors income from the estates of the Knights of the Cross in addition.³⁸ This choice might seem strange since Brus was already Grand Master of the Order, but it underscores the key role that the order played in the renewal: without the extra income provided by the Order, the archbishopric could not have been sustained. In addition to all of Brus's other qualifications, being Grand Master of the Knights of the Cross was crucial as it was to Brus's successor, Martin Medek.

It is also noteworthy that throughout the time that Brus served as preacher to the imperial troops, Bishop of Vienna, Archbishop of Prague, and special imperial ambassador, he remained Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of the Cross. Bělohlávek states that Brus stayed in close contact with the inner circle of his Order, and throughout his career he was informed by the duties and traditions of the Order. According to Bělohlávek, each generation of the Knights of the Cross and each grand master strove to leave the Order better off, especially on the material side – and was successful in so doing. It is difficult to find specific instances of how Brus's and his immediate successors' connections to the Order influenced their activities as Archbishops. However, one wonders, if part of the motive for the archbishops' participation in initiating (or mediating) some disputes involving ecclesiastical institutions and urban authorities was strengthening the financial profile and political status of his own Order. This desire would not complemented other motives for the renewal of the Church as a whole. It is important to remember that the Cloister of St. Agnes was closely associated with the Knights of the Cross as a sister institution: the Church and Cloister of Our Lady of the Snows was located on lands traditionally belonging to the Order as a major landowner in the city. In any event, although direct evidence connecting the activities of the archbishops to the Knights of the Cross is difficult to find, one can perhaps identify a common principle which guided both the activities of the order and the archbishops; namely, that by caring for the material interests of ecclesiastical institutions, one created a better environment for the church (i.e. Roman Catholic Church) overall.

* * *

In summarizing the importance of the Order of the Knights of the Cross, Václav Bělohlávek states: "The Order of the Cross which for practical reasons gave communion in two kinds, which wanted to be the only native order, served as an intermediary, a line of connection, across the gap of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, between the universal church and the Czech nation."³⁹ Bělohlavek goes

³⁸ Kafka and Skýbová, *Husitský epilog* 46.

³⁹ Bělohlávek, *Dějiny českých křižovníků* 78.

on to make a short, but revealing statement, linking religious and ethnic/national issues: “It is noteworthy that it was exactly a member of this order who saved the entire Utraquist Czech nation from German Protestantism and who saved the chalice for its church.”⁴⁰

Allow me to propose a more differentiated, less ideological assessment and summary. The Knights of the Cross held a special place in the religious and political landscape of the Prague cities. As the only native order, one of the largest landowners in the cities, and administrator of the bridge for the first one-hundred years of its existence, the early history of the Knights of the Cross were intimately connected to the history of other ecclesiastical institutions, the Bohemian crown, and the Prague towns. Despite the Order’s losses during the period from 1350 to 1450 – which included large amounts of land during the founding of the New Town, and the huge decline in human capital, as well as the de facto transfer of its control and administration to the Old Town during the Hussite Revolution – there remained some continuities; not as a Roman Catholic spiritual institution, but as a urban institution with a long tradition of distinctive privileges and immunities and land accumulation. These traditions were transmitted through the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries by the interplay between the Grand Masters in Cheb, a few brothers were remained in the convent, and the *magister hospitalis*. In the half century before Brus came to power, an important renewal had already taken place, in which the hospital was able to buy back some of its property and return to its spiritual duties. In doing so, it created the material, economic and administrative foundations for a broader Roman Catholic renewal that came later on.

* * *

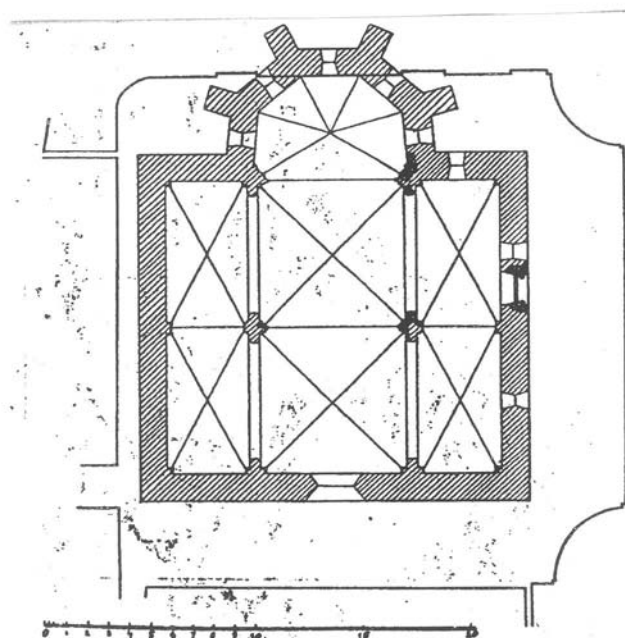
What can historians learn from the case of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star? I will conclude with a few broader statements, which follow from the discussion above. First, to highlight the importance and continuities of the role of the Knights of the Cross is *not* to adopt or support a Roman Catholic theological perspective of Roman Catholic renewal – that is, the view that successive generations of Roman Catholic clergy fought for renewal. The Knights of the Cross were a successful order, but the path of the Order and the path of Roman Catholic renewal in general were neither linear nor inevitable. Second, as we continue to uncover and correct earlier confessional prejudices concerning the fate of Utraquism and the Bohemian Brethren, placing these groups back into their proper place as major forces in the historical development of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Bohemia, we will need to make changes in our views concerning the roles of Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism.⁴¹ Such a re-examination will result in a reassessment, not a removal of these groups from history, and an underscoring of the multi-confessional character of Prague and other Bohemian communities.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 78-9.

⁴¹ On the re-evaluation of Utraquism and the Bohemian Brethren I am referring to contributions in BRRP, 1-4 (Prague, 1996-2002); Jan Blahoslav Lášek, ed., *Jan Hus mezi epochami, národy a konfesemi*, [Sborník z mezinárodního symposia, konaného 22.-26. září 1993 v Bayreuthu, SRN] (Praha, 1995); and Zdeněk David, *Finding the Middle Way. The Utraquists’ Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther* (Washington, D.C. & Baltimore, 2003).

⁴² The importance of the multi-confessional nature of Bohemia in the Pre-White Mountain Age is noted by Josef Válka in “Předbělohorská kultura a společnost (Poznámky k interpretaci a hodnocení),” *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 16, 32 (1986) 5-25.

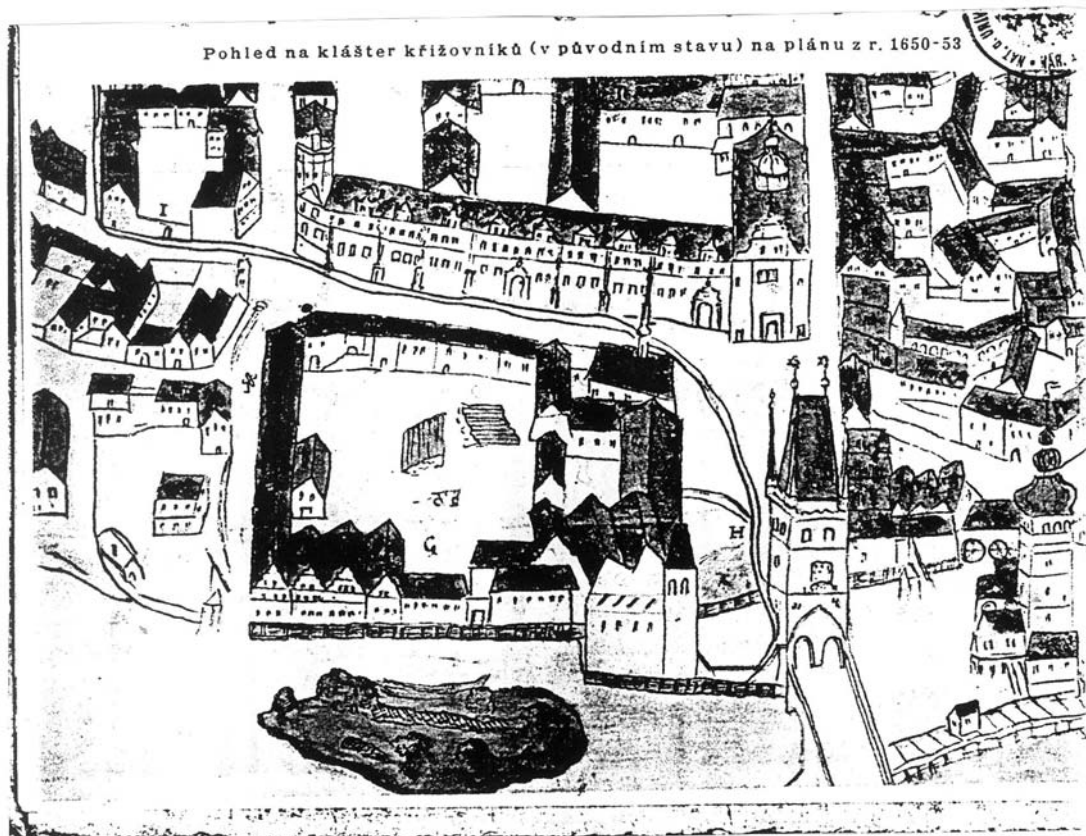
Figure 1: Church of St. Francis, Prague Old Town



Praha I., kostel sv. Františka; rekonstrukce gotického kostela. Zachované zbytky označeny mřížkovaně, silné čáry značí obvodové zdivo nynějšího chrámu.
Zprávy pam. péče. Ing. arch. J. Líbalová.

Source: Dobroslav a Jarmila Líbalovi, "Středověký kostel Křižovníků s červenou hvězdou v Praze," *Zprávy památkové péče* 6 (1942) 68.

Figure 2: Cloister of the Knights of the Cross (Křížovníků), ca. 1650-53



Source: Vojtěch Sádlo, *Kostel Sv. Františka u Křížovníků v Praze* (Praha, 1941) 8.