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**THE PASSIONAL OF ABBESS CUNEGUND –
PROTAGONISTS, PRODUCTION AND A QUESTION OF IDENTITY**



**Research MPhil Thesis, Department of History of Art,
University of Glasgow**

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ABSTRACT

The Passional of Abbess Cunegund – Protagonists, Production and a Question of Identity

Research MPhil thesis, Department of History of Art,
University of Glasgow
Jennifer S. Vlček Schurr - 2008

This work aims to place the manuscript of the *Passional of Abbess Cunegund*, NKČR XIV. A. 17, 30 x 25 cm, parchment, Prague, 1312-1314, National Library of the Czech Republic, in its religious, social, historical and artistic context. The thesis examines the physical construction of the codex and the dating is discussed. I reflect on the role of this manuscript in its general Benedictine context and as having been commissioned by Cunegund, a patroness who was both Abbess of the Convent of St. George, in Prague, and a royal princess. As abbess she had a clear objective of expanding the scope of the convent library, and to this end she commissioned this manuscript which reflected the new religious attitudes that were sweeping across Europe. The quality of the illustrations of the *Passional* set this codex apart from others that have survived from the convent library, and herald the arrival of Gothic art in Bohemia. Cunegund's personal influence is apparent in the commission, reflecting her upbringing by Poor Clares prior to her political marriage and her eventual return to the Benedictine order. The manuscript's elaborate dedication page illustration on fol. 1v stimulates a consideration within the thesis of the main personages involved in the production of the *Passional*: Abbess Cunegund and the convent sisters, the Dominican Colda who was the author of two sections of the manuscript and Beneš, the scribe. The final chapter of this thesis challenges the assumption that the scribe and artist of the *Passional* were one and the same. Presenting hitherto unobserved evidence, the case is made for two separate masters, scribe and artist, cooperating in the making of the manuscript. Finally, the suggestion is made that the artist may have been primarily a wall painter rather than a manuscript illuminator. This thesis is presented as introductory research, purposefully exploring only the categories expressed in the title, that is the "Protagonists, Production and a Question of Identity", in their religious context, and thus providing an original perspective on the *Passional of Abbess Cunegund*.

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INTRODUCTION

My first encounter with the *Passional of Abbess Cunegund*, NKČR XIV. A. 17, 30 x 25 cm, parchment, Prague, 1312-1314, National Library of the Czech Republic,¹ was in 1981-2, whilst preparing my undergraduate dissertation on the *Image of the Man of Sorrows in Fourteenth century Bohemia*.² The comprehensively illustrated work by Karel Stejskal and Ema Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslovny Kunhuty – Passionalis Abbatissae Cunegundis*,³ had recently been published and I read it with enthusiasm, although concentrating mainly on portions of the text that were relevant to the striking image of the *Man of Sorrows with the Symbols of the Passion*, which appears on fol. 10v of the *Passional*. At that time I did not pause to question some of the received wisdom, nor did I have the opportunity to study the remarkable codex in greater depth. It was not until I was invited to deliver a paper at the ‘Gloss’ postgraduate conference at Glasgow University, in June 2007, prior to starting my MPhil research, that I turned once again to the *Passional*. My chosen subject was the fol. 10v image, and the title of the paper was *The Man of Sorrows and the Symbols of the Passion – Aspects of the Image in the Passional of Abbess Cunegund*.⁴ As I was preparing this paper I quickly became aware that there remained much to be said about the codex, and still more to be uncovered. Stejskal had examined the *Passional* from a cosmological viewpoint; I was, however, more interested in its religious context, which it would have been impossible for Stejskal to consider, even had he so wished, given the political climate in which he was working. I also quickly came to

¹ Hereafter the work will be referred to as the *Passional* without further qualification. Similarly the illustrations contained within the codex will be referred to by their descriptive titles, for example, the *Dedication Illustration*, with no further qualification. Where appropriate Czech names have been anglicised. All translations from Latin included in this paper, and not otherwise referenced, are by my daughter, Emily Schurr. I thank her very much for her time and effort. I would also like to thank Professor Robert Gibbs, of the University of Glasgow, for encouraging me to return to the field of Art Historical research and for supervising me throughout the year of my MPhil (Research). I extend my gratitude to Dr. R. Modráková, of the National Library of the Czech Republic, in Prague, for her kind interest in my research, and for furnishing me with digital images of the illustrations of the *Passional* from which to work. I am also deeply grateful to my husband and children for their continued patience and unfailing support.

² J.Vlček Schurr, Under-graduate thesis, University of Glasgow, 1982, unpublished.

³ K.Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslovny Kunhuty – Passionale Abbatissae Cunegundis*, Odeon, Prague, 1975.

⁴ J.Vlček Schurr, “The Man of Sorrows and the Instruments of the Passion – Aspects of the Image in the Passional of Abbess Cunegund.” (Paper delivered at the Gloss conference, University of Glasgow, June 29th, 2007 – accepted for publication *Visible Exports/Imports: New research on Medieval and Renaissance European Art and Culture*. Edited by Emliy Jane Anderson and Jill Farquhar. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.)

the realisation that there was more to be questioned about the identity of the artist and that it was not enough just to accept Stejskal's opinion that the scribe, Beneš, was also responsible for the execution of the illustrations in the *Passional*. I decided to make the manuscript the object of my MPhil research.

As there is little available in the English canon of Art History on the subject of the *Passional* it might have been tempting just to provide a summary overview of the manuscript. I felt, however, that the manuscript deserved to be considered in much greater depth, and I was aware that the constraints of an MPhil thesis, both in time and word-count, would make a meaningful, comprehensive study of the manuscript of the *Passional* impossible. I decided to select a few themes for close consideration, thus purposefully limiting the field of research. I am aware of the many interesting aspects of the work and its milieu that remain for future study and consideration and hope to be able follow on with further, broader PhD research. This thesis should be viewed as introductory. The themes that I chose to examine are set out in the title of the thesis: "Protagonists, Production and a Question of Identity". The content of this thesis leans towards historical rather than artistic considerations. An initial appreciation of the manuscript's historical context seems to me to be vital, particularly as its commissioner was pre-eminent in religious and social circles of the day, and given that most English speakers will be unfamiliar with the history of the Czech Lands, at least that prior to the flowering of Bohemia under Charles IV in the mid-fourteenth century.

I have also sought to set the codex in its religious context, considering its place within the setting of a Benedictine convent and indicating how the codex may have fitted into the framework of *ora et labora* [pray and work] that lay at the heart of the Benedictine rule. Cunegund's personal history draws together both strands, of history and religion: a royal princess and the abbess of the most ancient religious establishment in the Czech Lands, the Convent of St. George, Hradčany, Prague. I point out how her upbringing in the Convent of the Poor Clares, 'Na Františku', Old Town, Prague, is reflected in the tenor of both the writing and the art of the *Passional*.

The first chapter introduces the manuscript, its content and layout. I set out my reasons for accepting that the date of the first part of the work is 1312, rather than the catalogue listing of the National Library of the Czech Republic as not before 1313. I also argue for 1314 as the date of the second section of the codex. Cunegund was an

avid reader⁵ and was responsible for building up the convent library, many of the books that she provided bear contemporary labels declaring that Cunegund “...comparuit et contulit...”[collected and compiled], or “...fecit scribi et contulit...” [had written and compiled]. The *Passional* has no such label but this chapter describes how the creation of the *Passional* clearly demonstrates that Cunegund indeed “...fecit scribi et contulit...” [had written and compiled]: two sections were commissioned from the Dominican *lector*, Colda, while the two laments, one of the Virgin and the other of Mary Magdalene, and the sermon by Pseudo-Pope Leo were included in the codex, forming a compilation. In the thesis I examine the manner in which these treatises are disposed across the gatherings and of the use of illustrations accompanying the text.

Having looked broadly at the layout and set-up of the codex, the second chapter provides closer scrutiny of the physical form of the *Passional*, presenting a codicological study of the manuscript. When I undertook this, using the excellent digital images that were provided for me by the National Library of the Czech Republic, I had hoped to have the opportunity to confirm my findings by an examination of the original manuscript. The quality of these images enabled remarkably close scrutiny of the codex; however, I am acutely aware that they do not replace a first-hand examination of the original.⁶ This was not possible as direct access to view the codex, one of only three manuscripts which are designated as national treasures, was strictly denied. My observations are as accurate as possible under the given circumstances, although I have drawn attention to those instances where a first-hand inspection of the codex would have been invaluable. The plain binding of the *Passional*, and other works in Cunegund’s library, was presented by Stejskal and Urbánková as evidence for the re-binding of the codices following Cunegund’s death in 1321.⁷ It could be argued that a work of such obvious value to the abbess and the convent would have merited a splendid cover to reflect this. At the close of the chapter the case is made for an alternative explanation.

The first two chapters are concerned largely with the *Passional* as a physical entity and, as the title of the thesis has it, with its *Production*. Chapter three turns to consider the “Protagonists”, here specifically focusing on the patron of the manuscript,

⁵ “...lectionibus fatigata assiduis...”[tired from frequent reading] fol. 31v.

⁶ For these I am especially grateful to PhDr. Renata Modráková, from the National Library of the Czech Republic, and for her kind interest in my research.

⁷ K.Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p.15.

Cunegund. The expression, within the *Passional*, of her dual role as royal princess and abbess of the convent is set out, with particular reference to the impressive *Dedication Illustration* on fol. 1v. Her personal history is inextricably bound up in the history of her nation. The trials and tribulations of her life were experienced through turbulent times, with her father, brother and then nephew at the helm. A period of great national strength, during her early childhood, collapsed into famine and occupation until her brother could gain, with Cunegund's help, the Polish crown, thus reversing the nation's fortunes. He was killed, however, and a year later his son was assassinated, forcing the country into more years of instability until the establishment of the Luxembourgs. Cunegund's personal outlook on life and religion must have been influenced by these political upheavals, together with her own sorrows and sacrifices, and the influences of an adolescence spent under the tutelage of her great aunt, the devout abbess, the Blessed Agnes of the Poor Clares in Prague. Her life consisted of many dualities: as both an exalted member of the royal family and a selfless member of an enclosed order; as a Bride of Christ and secular mother; as a former Franciscan sister and a Benedictine abbess. This appears to be reflected in the text and illustrations of the *Passional*, her most important commission. As Caroline Bynam Walker comments,

“...‘Made by’ in the case of medieval devotional objects often better describes the activity of the patron who commissioned the work than that of the sculptor or illuminator who formed it...”⁸

Chapter four extends the consideration of the *Protagonists* beyond Cunegund herself to the other figures who appear on the *Dedication Illustration*, on fol. 1v: to the sisters of the convent, to Colda, the Dominican lector who was commissioned to write the first and third treatises in the *Passional*, and to Beneš, the scribe and canon of St. George's Basilica. All these protagonists are central to the production of the *Passional*; all are Czech and all have dedicated themselves to religious service, each in a different sphere. This is expressed in the sub-title of the chapter: *nun, friar and canon*. I suggest that the nuns depicted on fol. 1v are the total number of sisters in the convent, shown here with their abbess, and indicating her intent to provide her convent with suitably edifying and illuminating reading matter. St. George's Convent

⁸ C. Bynam Walker, Forward to *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*. Edited by Hamburger, Jeffrey and Susan Marti. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, p. xvii.

was a Benedictine establishment, closely associated with the royal court, having been founded by Cunegund's great great aunt, another Agnes, who was half sister to King Přemysl Otakar I.⁹ It appears that the convent drew its sisters from the ranks of the aristocracy,¹⁰ offering protection to children, such as Eliška who was to become Queen of Bohemia and the mother of the King and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. Within the convent care was also given to "...*matronae*..." [matrons],¹¹ presumably elderly and infirm gentlewomen. This privileged class was well educated and the *Passional*, together with the other books in the convent library, would have had a very specific part to play in the intellectual as well as spiritual life of the nuns. Attention is given to the manner in which the *Passional* would have fitted into their routine of prayer and reading, which was set down in the Rule of Benedict,¹² as the codex fulfils criteria for both of these spiritual activities. It is suggested that the codex had a particular role as Lenten reading material. Cunegund's exposure to the teachings of the Poor Clares manifests itself throughout the work, but particularly in the image of the *Man of Sorrows with the Symbols of the Passion*, on fol. 10v.¹³ This image is designed to channel the thoughts and prayers of the sisters towards the most spiritually intense concentration on the suffering and bleeding of Christ, no doubt with the intention of producing a mystic, religious experience.

"...Not all nuns were mystics, but images allowed nuns of ordinary gifts to participate, if only / by proxy, in the visionary flights of famous nuns...held up as exemplars of piety and devotion..."¹⁴

The illustrations of the *Passional* serve to raise the standard of the work and provide the mystical element that is absent from the writing, which is acknowledged to be somewhat lack lustre.¹⁵ The Dominican lector Colda, although clearly admired as a worthy man and intellectual does not reflect, in the writings of the *Passional*, any of the more advanced mystical philosophical thinking of his contemporary, Master

⁹ See APPENDIX III.

¹⁰ W.W. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy, Vol. I*, Prague, 1855, p. 443

¹¹ *Fragmentum Prebendarum*, as quoted by J.G. Dobner, *Monumenta Historica Bohemiae, Vol. VI*, Prague, 1764 p. 334-368, for example, p. 362

¹² *The Rule of Benedict*, transl. by the monks of Glenstal abbey, 4 Courts Press, Dublin, 1994

¹³ J. Vlček Schurr, op. cit., "The Man of Sorrows and the Instruments of the Passion – Aspects of the Image in the *Passional* of Abbess Cunegund."

¹⁴ J. Hamburger, P. Marx and S. Marti, "The Time of the Orders 1200-1500 – An Introduction", *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*. Edited by Hamburger, Jeffrey and Susan Marti, Columbia University Press, New York 2008, p. 69/70.

¹⁵ P. Spunar, 'Introduction', *Frater Colda ordinis praedicatorum – tractus mystici, mystické traktaty, Fontes Latini Bohemorum, Vol. II*. Edited D. Martínková, Prague, 1997

Eckhart of Hochheim, who had been Dominican Vicar General of the Czech Province from 1306-1311. In the thesis I have summarised what little is known of Colda's personal history, before introducing the scribe and canon of St. George's Basilica, Beneš. I then continue to consider his role as scribe, and aspects of his writing, as evidenced by the *Passional*.

The final chapter, chapter five, focuses attention specifically on the illuminator, addressing the third aspect of the title of the thesis: the question of identity. I challenge the opinion of Karel Stejskal, that Beneš was not only canon and scribe, but also artist, by examining and responding to his criteria.¹⁶ The manuscript of the *Passional* states that Beneš was a canon and a scribe, both time-consuming occupations. I provide evidence that his scribal activities may also have involved the writing up of official documents, and that his writing style has identifiable central European features.¹⁷ I present the argument for two individuals, the scribe and artist, working as a team. Attention is drawn to the fact that by 1300 painting and writing were established as separate professions, and that the normal practice was for scribe and illuminator to cooperate in the creating of a manuscript. The remit of the artist included the provision of initials and these are looked at. A previously unobserved detail supporting the theory of the division of labour is the presence of minute guide letters that appear where the scribe wanted particular capitals to be inserted; a practice recognised as signifying a scribe directing an illuminator.¹⁸ There is further evidence for two separate masters at work on the *Passional*, with the scribe instructing the artist, in the form of practically illegible guide words beside some of the illustrations, and again where a faint catchword appears, and elsewhere leaf-signatures, indicative of the gatherings having been divided up at some point in order to allow each master concurrently to execute his allotted task. The variable quality of the writing throughout the manuscript is commented upon, observing the contrast between the flawless proficiency exhibited in the illustrations and the countless mistakes and corrections in the work of the scribe. Omissions in the rubrics and in the application of red/bloody details to the illustrations, several of which have never previously been

¹⁶ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., 1975, from p. 24.

¹⁷ Stejskal, ibid. p. 24, argues that the script and painting-style is Northern French, and thus evidence of Beneš having studied in western Europe, probably Paris.

¹⁸ J. Holladay, "The Willehalm Master and his colleagues: Collaborative manuscript decoration in early fourteenth century Cologne", *Proceedings of the 4th Conference of the Seminar in the History of the Book to c.1500*. Edited L. Brownrigg, Oxford, July, 1992, California, 1995 p.72 and C.De Hamel, *Medieval Craftsmen – Scribes and Illuminators*, British Museum Press, London, 1992, p.29.

noted, are offered as further evidence for two masters at work on the codex. I have aimed to persuade that the artist of the *Passional* was not Beneš. The illustrator's artistic identity demands much further research and is beyond the scope of this work. It is purposefully not entered into here, beyond the suggestion that he may have been a wall-painter.

Thus far, my study of the *Passional* has been confined to its historical, social and religious context. I have discussed its physical form, and I have given thought to the personages involved in its creation and use. Particular attention has been paid to identifying the artist as a professional in his own right and as a separate individual. Antonín Matějček, the first Czech art historian to write a comprehensive study of the *Passional*, writing in 1921, declared:

“...O iluminátoru *pasionalu* nezvidáme z rukopisu ničeho...”¹⁹ [We discover nothing about the illuminator of the *Passional* from the manuscript.]

On the contrary, I believe that I have shown, by close scrutiny of the manuscript, that the artist was one of two masters who worked independently, but combined their skills to produce the writing and the illustrations for the *Passional* of Abbess Cunegund. Further research into this unique Czech manuscript will certainly yield more.

¹⁹ A. Matějček, *Pasionál abatyše Kunhuty*, Jan Štenic, Prague, 1922, p.9.

CHAPTER ONE

A COLLECTION OF TREATISES AND SERMONS – *Cunegund fecit scribi et contulit*

NKČR XIV. A. 17, the parchment codex of the so-called *Passional of Abbess Cunegund*,²⁰ is one of the most valuable Bohemian Gothic manuscripts. It is housed in the National Library of the Czech Republic, Klementinum, Prague. Dating from 1312,²¹ the manuscript has a clear provenance which links it, not only to the oldest monastic establishment in the Czech Lands, the Benedictine Convent of St. George (Fig.1) founded in c.970 in Hradčany,²² the Prague citadel, but also to the Bohemian dynasty of the Premyslides.²³ It is remarkable that we have so much information about this early manuscript and, perhaps for this very reason, some unanswered questions become all the more tantalising. The *Passional* is of markedly superior craftsmanship, and is the most elaborate of the surviving manuscripts from the fourteenth century collection of codices from the library of St. George's Convent.²⁴ We know where, for whom and, for two sections of the work, when and by whom it was written. Most of these details are to be found on the manuscript's opening pages: fols 1v-2v. The *Dedication Illustration* on fol.1v [Fig.2] depicts the Abbess/Princess Cunegund (1265-1321) as the patroness of the work. Kneeling beside her is the Dominican lector, Colda, the author of two of the sections of the manuscript, and behind him is the scribe, Beneš, a canon of the Basilica of St. George, to which the convent was attached.

It was the historian Jan Gelasius Dobner who, in the eighteenth century, brought this work to the attention of the world, describing part of the manuscript and also offering some transcription in his many-volumed work *Monumenta historica Bohemiae* of 1764-1786.²⁵ He considered that,

²⁰ APPENDIX I.

²¹ Chapter I, p.15, note 36.

²² APPENDIX II.

²³ APPENDIX III.

²⁴ APPENDIX IV.

²⁵ J.G. Dobner, *Monumenta Historica Bohemiae, Vol. VI*, Prague, 1785 p.324-374. Dobner writes in Latin. An introduction is followed by a description of the title page and the full-page illustration on fol. 10 of MS XIV.A.17. The next section of text transcribes prebendary fragments from the convent archives and the dedication on fol. 2r,2v. Dobner follows this with a transcription of the Parabola fol. 3v, sentences from the beginnings and endings of the other sections of the codex, and the epilogue with an eulogy to Cunegund fol.30r-31v.

“... *terciam imagines illius aevi non inelegantes vivis hodie coloribus auroque decoratae obtinent...*”²⁶

[the pictures are not inelegant even now with their lively colours and decorated with gold.]

This somewhat understates the manuscript’s quality.

The Prague codex is not in fact a *passional*. *Passional* books contained the lives of saints and, as with martyrologies, their deaths and martyrdoms: in other words, their passions. They were designed to be used within monasteries, being read throughout the year on the relevant feast days. There are several extant twelfth century examples, such as the three volume *Arnstein Passional*, Harley 2801, parchment, Germany, c. 1170-1180, British Museum.²⁷ This work presents a catalogue of saints and martyrs, illustrating their various sufferings, deaths and martyrdoms within historiated initials. The Prague manuscript, however, which has for many years been labouring under a misnomer, is a compilation of religious treatises by more than one author; a collection of theological essays or sermons designed for education and contemplation, as a guide to religious thought and interpretation. Christ’s Passion is the subject of much of the codex and, as a result, in the seventeenth century it was catalogued in the archives as *Liber de Passionis Domini* [Book of the Lord’s Passion].²⁸ It seems that this archival entry gave rise in later years to the mistaken nomenclature. Dobner, in 1785, does not call the work a *passional*, although two Czech historians, Hanuš and Vocel, who were engaging in a public debate about the work in 1865,²⁹ reference it as such. Colda, on fol.30r, himself described his sections of the work to be “*compilaciones*”

²⁶ Ibid. p.328.

²⁷ See also A. Boekler, *Das Stuttgarter Passionale*, Augsburg, 1923.

²⁸ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslovny Kunhuty*, Odeon, Prague, 1975, p 13- The earliest known reference to the work is in the convent’s archival catalogue written after 1692, NKČR XVII. E. 48, fol. 4v. It states,

“...*Lit: YYYY. Kniha Latinska o Vmuczenij Božim s figurama, B : Gunigundie Dczeržj Krale Ottogara, od Fr : Goldij Ržadu Sho : Dominika Componirowana a Dedicirwana, tež od Benessia Kanownika Klasstera S- : Giržj Sepsana....*”

[Lit: YYYY. A Latin book on the Suffering of the Lord with figures, B : Cunegund daughter of King Otakar, from Fr(ater) Colda of the Order of St. Dominic composed and dedicated, also written by Beneš Canon of the Convent of St. George.]

This seems to have been written on a label on the front cover of the codex. Although now practically illegible, the top of four capital ‘Y’s are still just discernible on the label’s remnants. Urbánková describes how a nineteenth century misreading of this archival description, led to Fr. Goldij [frater Colda] being transformed into Franz Goldius, an error which was corrected by Hanuš, in 1863.

“...*Kniha Latinska o Vmuczenij Božim...*”, as it appears above, was translated in the library archives as “...*Liber de Passionis Domini...*”

²⁹ I.J. Hanuš and J. E. Vocel, ‘Kritické známky’, *Krok I*, Prague, 1865 p.227-242, 297-303.

[compilations]. There is no doubt that *Passional* has a more alluring ring to it than a *Collection of Treatises and Sermons*,³⁰ even though this may more accurately, though less succinctly, describe the contents of the manuscript.

Before discussing the manuscript it is necessary to have an idea of the subjects that are covered and the layout of the quires within the codex.³¹ For the assembly of the gatherings I have relied on Urbánková,³² and to this I have added the distribution of the texts as it helps to demonstrate the periods of production, as the work was gradually put together.³³ The subject matter of the text of the codex falls into very clear sections:

- PART 1: fol.1v Illustrated dedication page
 - fol.2r-2v Dedication and title of first treatise
 - fol.3r Illustration of *Arma Christi*
 - fol.3v Parable of the Invincible Knight
 - fol.4r-5v Fall of Man
 - fol.6r-9r Instruments of the Passion as weapons against evil
 - fol.9r-9v Entreaty not to forget Christ's Passion
 - [9/10 = lost folio, with prayer, preserved in eighteenth century German translation]
 - fol.10r Illustration of Man of Sorrows with Instruments of the Passion
- PART 2: fol.11r-13r Lament of the Virgin Mary (sermon for Good Friday)
 - fol.13r-17v Lament of the Virgin Mary (sermon for Easter Day)
- PART 3: fol.18r-29v Heavenly Abodes
 - fol.30r-31v Eulogy to Cunegund with dating of work
- PART 4: fol.32r-34r "Sermon of Pope Leo on the Lord's Passion"
- PART 5: fol.34v-36r Lament of Mary Magdalene

³⁰ J. Hamburger, *The Rothschild Canticles – Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland c.1300*, Yale University Press, Newhaven and London, 1990, p.159, describes the *Passional* as a *forilegium* (read *florilegium*) [a collection of brief literary works].

³¹ Unfortunately due to the fragile state of the manuscript I have been unable to obtain direct access for first-hand examination. Despite this obvious disadvantage, some interesting details reveal themselves on observing the excellent digital images of the manuscript. I am most grateful to PhDr.R. Modráková, of the National Library of the Czech Republic, for providing me with these.

³² K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslovny Kunhuty – Passionalis Abbatissae Cunegundis*, Odeon, Prague, 1975. p.20.

³³ APPENDIX V.

The miniatures that accompany the text appear in parts one to three only. The *Dedication Illustration*, on fol.1v, is followed, on fol.2v, by a written dedication providing the date and a long title for the first section of the work.³⁴ An analogy is drawn between Christ and the Symbols of his Passion and an invincible knight and his weapons [Fig.3]. This is elucidated by the full-page *Arma Christi* illustration of a shield bearing the Instruments of the Passion, on fol.3r [Fig.4]. The following page provides illustrations for the short parable which describes how Christ, the knight, sets out to rescue his bride, the human soul, who has been tempted away. The subsequent miniatures present the *Creation*, *Temptation* and *Fall of Man*, the *Annunciation*, the *Nativity* and then Christ's redemptive sufferings, starting with his *Circumcision*, representing the first occasion on which he shed blood. The events of Holy Week are then set out individually, ending with the *Crucifixion* and *Resurrection*. The last illustration in this section, fol.10r, is a full page *Man of Sorrows* with Christ set against the Cross and surrounded by the *Symbols of the Passion* [Fig.5]. This was designed as an aid to meditative prayer; to stir up empathy between the viewer and Christ; conjuring deep feelings of sympathy, guilt and awe in the beholder who was presented, not with a resurrected Christ, triumphant over death and crowned in glory, but with a Christ whose humanity is emphasised. This concludes the first, and most important, section of the work.

The second section of the codex, extending from fol.11r-17v, the Lament of the Virgin Mary, continues to raise empathetic feelings; now, no longer with Christ's suffering, but with a mother's grief. It contains probably the two most well-known and expressive images from the codex: Mary lamenting, fol.11r [Fig.6] and the Mystical embrace, fol.16v [Fig.7]. The section closes with the *Coronation of the Virgin*, placed within an architectural frame, and *Christ greeting Joseph of Aramathea*,³⁵ fol.17v [Fig.8]. This is balanced by the composition, *Jesus guiding souls to Heaven* [Fig.9], on the opposite folio which introduces the third section of the manuscript: the Heavenly Abodes, on fol.18r. These two later sections of the codex are painted using denser colour and there is more brown in the pigment used for flesh and hair. The artist completes the series of illustrations with two full page paintings representing the *Dwelling Places of Celestial and Mortal beings in Heaven*, each

³⁴ APPENDIX I provides quick reference to the illustrations as they appear in the codex.

³⁵ This depicts an incident that is not described in the bible but in the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus, see K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op. cit., p.26. A copy of this gospel is to be found in a contemporary surviving codex from the St. George's Convent library, NKČR XIV. E. 10.

surmounted by Christ and the Virgin Mary: fol.20r and 22v respectively (Figs 10 and 11). Formal architectural tiers are divided into arched subsections which house the separate categories of beings. The final two sections of the codex, fol.32r onwards, parts four and five, are unillustrated.

Colda provided dates for both the first and the third treatises. At the end of the opening dedication [Fig. 12], written in red on fol.2v, we read,

“...*Datum Prage Anno domini –/ millesimo Trecentesimo Duo/decimo ...Sexto kalendas Septembris...*”

[Date, in Prague, in the year of our Lord 1312, on the 27th August.]

This date of 1312 for the opening work has been under question since Rynešová suggested that the dedication had been ante-dated and that the scribe, Beneš, had originally written “*Datum Prage anno domini millesimo trecentesimo XIII*”.³⁶ Urbánková accepted this.³⁷ The date 1312, however, appears not only in the dedication and title, on fol.2v, but again within the text on fol.31v. Here Colda writes, in the 1314 section his work, that two years have passed since he composed the first section,

“...*transacto biennio / opusculum laboris triduani destrenio mili/te vestris pulsatus pensionibus composui..*”

[two years having gone by since, driven by your requests, I composed that small work of three days about the strong soldier.]

He goes on to write,

“...*Nunc vestris postulacionibus stimulatus opus / de mansionibus caelestibus quodam brevi/loquio infra biduum compilavi // Illud anno do/mini millesimo trecentesimo duodecimo / sexto kalendas septembris edidi // Istud anno eiusdem domini millesimo trecen/tesimo decimo quarto Benedictionis vero vere / anno XIII feria tertia et quarta infra octa/vas beati Dominici consumavi...*”

[Now, urged by your request, I have put together, in two days, a short work about the Heavenly Abodes. The one, I presented on the 27th August, 1312; the other, occupied the third and fourth days prior to the octave (ie.eight days after the festival) of St. Dominic, in the year 1314, the thirteenth year of your benediction (ie.incumbency.)

³⁶ B. Rynešová, ‘Beneš kanovník svatojirský a ‘Pasionál abatyše Kunhuty’, *Časopis archivní školy III*, 1926 p.13-35.

³⁷ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op. cit. p.15.

Since there are three clear references within the text itself to a date of 1312, it is perhaps surprising that the National Library of the Czech Republic listing gives the earliest date for the work as “not before 1313”.

Very careful scrutiny of the digital image,³⁸ however, has led me to the conclusion that what Rynešova took to be XIII, is rather the central ‘ni’ of “mi/nimus”, which are the first letters on line 10 on the other side of the folio, ie. on fol.2r. The ink appears to have leached through, not only here, but at several other places down the page; such as the first letters of line 13, 16 and 18 on fol.2r, all of which are the letters ‘m’. It seems that the firm downward ductus on the minims has caused the staining through to the next page, and it is interesting to note that on line 15, in the centre of the right hand column, it is the word “minimus”, with its multiple minims, that has once again leached through. The fact that line 10 has been scraped has probably served to make the parchment more translucent and, therefore, the letters more visible. Against the argument for this being XIII is a comparison with that number form as it appears on fol.31r, l.14 where a clear flourish is placed above the number; a detail absent from fol.2v. Until this last section, with its scratchings out and rewritings, the dedication was an exemplary piece of writing, in a well-formed and evenly executed hand, suggesting that the scribe was tiring. I believe that he simply wrote, “*Datum prage Anno domini millesimo Trecentesimo*” and then accidentally skipped on to “*Sexto kalendas Septembris*”, missing out the year altogether. Recognising his error he then scratched this out and rewrote in red letters, on double-spaced lines, the date we see today.

Throughout her term as abbess of the Convent of St. George, Cunegund was at pains to extend the library. The earliest codex in her collection dates from 1303, the year after her instalment.³⁹ Dedicatory sentences, written on the first or second pages of five of the surviving manuscripts, bear witness to this fact. These relate the dates when Cunegund commissioned or acquired them for the convent. Manuscripts were extremely valuable commodities in the Middle Ages, being both expensive to make and to purchase. They also had sacred value, comparable to the other valuable

³⁸ When I embarked on this study I had hoped that my observations could be backed up by a close examination of the manuscript. Since access has been denied due to the fragility of the manuscript, I am unable to offer confirmation of my hypotheses.

³⁹ NKČR XIII. E.14c, works of Sts. Bernard and Bonaventura.

liturgical treasures, such as relics, vestments and *vasa sacra* [liturgical vessels] that were under the care of the sacristan.⁴⁰

Judging from the books that have survived, the *Passional* appears to have been the most valuable manuscript in the library at the time of Cunegund's incumbency. Spreading the period of its composition would have also spread the cost. The lack of illustrations as the work progressed may well reflect a proportional lack of funds. The surviving breviaries, prayer books and collections of religious treatises which Cunegund contributed to the St. George's Convent library, not only enriched the reading matter available to the nuns, but were also a considerable investment, demonstrating the wealth and status of the convent at the turn of the fourteenth century.⁴¹ The manuscripts also reflect Cunegund's religious tastes and preferences, and consequently the influences that would have been transmitted to the nuns in the convent. They were a gift from the abbess to her convent and a means by which she, herself, would be remembered *in perpetuo*, simultaneously seeking heavenly approbation for her actions. These may be the very reasons for the presence of the dated dedications. The earliest of these appears on NKČR XIII. E.14c and reads,

*“Anno dominice incarnationis M.CCC.III. venerabilis domina Chungundis, abbatissa monasterii sancti Georgii in castro Pragensi, magnifici Bohemiæ regis domini Otthakari secundi filia istud volumen....comparuit et contulit ecclesie sancti Georgii, benedictionis sue anno secundo....”*⁴²

[In the year of the Lord's incarnation 1303, the venerable Mistress Cunegund, abbess of the Convent of St. George in the citadel of Prague, daughter of the magnificent Lord Otakar II, king of Bohemia, collected and compiled this volume for the Church of St. George, in the second year of her benediction.]

Other manuscripts, carrying very similar dedications, are dated 1306,⁴³ 1310,⁴⁴ 1312,⁴⁵ 1318,⁴⁶ some replacing “*comparuit et contulit*” [collected and compiled] with “*fecit scribi et contulit*” [commissioned to be written and compiled].

⁴⁰ C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Phaidon, London, 2004, p.32.

⁴¹ APPENDIX IV.

⁴² A. Patera, ‘Staročeská píseň o božím těle ze XIII století’, *Časopis musea království českého*, Prague 1882, p.103.

⁴³ NKČR XIV. D. 13.

⁴⁴ NKČR XII. D. 10.

⁴⁵ NKČR XIV. E. 10.

⁴⁶ NKČR XII. D. 11- K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *op.cit.*, p. 17 note 8, include a further manuscript into this group, despite the fact that it bears no date or title; this is NKČR XII. D. 13.

Cunegund commissioned Brother Colda to write the first treatise. On the *Dedication Illustration*, on fol.1v, Colda is depicted bearing a scroll in his left hand. The rubrics read,

“...*Suscipe dictata de regum semine*⁴⁷ *nata, ad laudem Christi que me dictare fecisti, de sponso plura sub militis apta figura...*”

[Receive these written things, daughter from the seed of kings, which you had me write in praise of Christ, many things about the bridegroom in the fitting guise of a soldier.]

It is very likely that Cunegund, as abbess and commissioner of manuscripts, exercised considerable control over the subject matter. Her library contained, for example, apocryphal gospels⁴⁸ and texts containing graphic accounts of the crucifixion.⁴⁹ *Psalteria de tempore* [Books of Hours] which include the Passion of Christ, Passion plays, liturgy for the feast of Corpus Christi and the Eucharistic prayer known as *Kunhutina modlitba* [Cunegund's Prayer] and a copy of *Meditation of the Life of Christ*, all survive amongst the codices exhibiting strong, personal, religious preferences.⁵⁰ Cunegund's background of education under the Poor Clares is also reflected in the opening parable [Fig.3], on fol.3v, which closely relates to the Song of Solomon.⁵¹ This was a favoured biblical text, the image of the Bride of Christ having obvious significance for nuns.⁵² Even the reference, in the above quotation, to the “bridegroom” demonstrates this. The Song of Solomon is quoted and referred to repeatedly in the surviving letters from St. Clare (1194-1253) to Cunegund's aunt, the Blessed Agnes,⁵³ and would certainly have, therefore, figured predominantly in Cunegund's education at her hands. Her desire to personally commission religious works, mirroring her own taste, is expressed on the labels of the books in her library: Cunegund *fecit scribi* [commissioned to be written]. The two verbs, *fecit scribi*,

⁴⁷ It is worth noting that Dobner, op.cit. p.330, incorrectly records the word as “...sanguine..” [blood] instead of “...semine...” [seed]: a misreading or late eighteenth century prudery?

⁴⁸ NKČR XIV. E. 10 contains the apocryphal gospels of Pseudo Matthew, Pseudo Thomas and Nicodemus.

⁴⁹ See J. Vilikovský, *Pisemnictví českého středověku*, Universum, Prague, 1948 p. 26-28.

Cunegund's library contained two copies of the Prayer of St. Anselm, in which he describes, with a close attention to detail, each moment of Christ's Crucifixion.

⁵⁰ APPENDIX IV.

⁵¹ Often referred to as the Song of Songs, viz. the opening words of Song of Solomon 1:1.

⁵² J. Hamburger and R. Suckale, ‘Between this World and the Next – The Art of Religious Women in the Middle Ages’, *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by J. Hamburger and S. Marti. Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p.85.

⁵³ Chapter 4, p. 69-70. Also C. Stace, *St. Clare of Assisi: Her legend and selected writings*. London: Triangle 2001, p 105-123.

denote a symbiotic relationship between the patroness and the product and as Bynam Walker points out,

“... ‘Made by’ in the case of medieval devotional objects often better describes the activity of the patron who commissioned the work than that of the sculptor or illuminator who formed it...”⁵⁴

The fact that fol.10v was left unpainted and unruled supports the premise that the first section of the work, fol.1–10, was conceived in the first instance as a stand-alone composition. Nowhere in the elaborate introduction on fol.2r-2v is there any suggestion that, at least at the time of its conception, the work was intended as anything other than a single treatise, on a single subject. This subject is announced in the elaborate title, on fol.2v,

“...*Tytulus // Hic est Clipeus, arma et in/signia Invictissimi militis qui / cognominatus est Victor cum / Quinque Vulneribus Fultus lan/cea Decoratus que Corona...*”

[Title: Here is the shield, the weapons and armaments of the Invincible Soldier, whose title is Victor with five wounds, supported by a spear and decorated with a crown.]

This does not, however, exclude the possibility that Cunegund had the intention of adding other, equally independent and complete, items at a later date in order to create a compilation. The extant library of St. George does contain another example of a compilation of treatises and sermons, a gift from Cunegund to her convent, which dates to the same year as the first section of the *Passional*.⁵⁵

Colda compares himself, on fol.31r, to St. Jerome, and Cunegund to St. Paula. He declares her to be the impetus that leads him to write,

“...*Ignose michi Paulam te nomino / quae sanctae Paulae parificaris studio. Illa die / noctuque fletibus poenae cecata crebis orationi/bus invigilans vacabat attentissime studiis / lectionem instigabat ad librorum translatio/nem sanctum jeronimum. Tu longis orati/onibus decursis lectionibus fatigata assiduis / quedam conpingere opuscula me conpettis...*”

[Forgive me that I call you Paula as you are one who is made equal to St. Paula in devotion. During the day and night, punishing herself with tears, she stayed awake in long conversations, and made time for attentive studies in books and instigated a translation of the books, by St. Jerome. You go

⁵⁴ C. Bynam Walker, Forward to *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*. Edited by Hamburger, Jeffrey and Susan Marti. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, p. xvii.

⁵⁵ NKČR XIV.E.10, dated 1312.

through long speeches and, (although you are) tired by frequent reading, you require me to depict some small work.]

Colda writes at the end of the third treatise on fol.31v,

“...*transacto biennuo / opisculum laboris triduanum de strenuo mili/te... composui // Nunc vestris postulacionibus stimulatus opus / de mansionibus caelestibus ...compilavi.*” [two years having passed since I composed that small work of three days toil about a strong soldier. Now, urged by your request, I have put together a work about the Heavenly Abodes.]

This tells us that two years had passed before the abbess persuaded Colda once more to produce another treatise, to add to the first which she had commissioned from him. It appears, from the form of the final codex, that there were, at this point, other literary offerings that she wished to include in her compilation.

This does not mean, however, that the completed first section of the work, the Parable of the Invincible Knight, could not have been used by the nuns in the intervening time. Particularly since the final illustration on fol.10r [Fig.5] provided a useful and powerfully stirring image, and no doubt one which had been one of the main objectives for creating the work in the first place, for use when praying and for calling up sympathetic and empathetic feelings for Christ and his sufferings. This section appears to have been more handled than much of the rest of the work, suggesting that it had been well used.⁵⁶

The first part of the *Passional* consists of a single quire of five bifolia with a separate bifolium at the front. A sexterno was a standard gathering during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Because of Cunegund's obvious personal interest in this commission, it would seem likely that the manuscript was originally presented to her as a complete, independent work, perhaps with the intention of later extending and developing it as a compilation. At this primary stage it would probably have been tacketed together and presented in a plain, limp cover.⁵⁷ Examination of the first and last bifolia of the completed *Passional* is also of interest and shall be considered below.

The first bifolium has been inverted, and the blank sheet that is the companion to the *Dedication Illustration*, on fol.1v, has been brought forward and stuck to the front

⁵⁶ Already in 1785, J.G. Dobner, op. cit., p.332-333 describes the wear from usage visible on fol. 10r. Urbánková endorses this, see K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op. cit. p.15.

⁵⁷ E. Urbánková also believes this to have been the case, K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op. cit. p.15.

board as a pastedown,⁵⁸ in a manner consistent with a formal binding. This, however, separates the bifolium with the dedication illustration from the rest of the quire, leaving a very unusual gathering of five bifolia for the first section. If my proposition is correct then what could now be referred to as fol.0, the pastedown, would have been fol.12 in the original layout of the first section of the work, and the full sexterno would have been completed: six bifolia, twelve leaves.⁵⁹

At the back of the codex, as it is presently bound, is a very rough and ready sheet of unprepared animal skin with several flay holes.⁶⁰ This has been treated to the same fate as the first bifolium and has been folded back upon itself, and one half has been stuck to the back board, creating fol.37. I consider that this bifolium may have been cut from the original covering of the first section of the manuscript, for the first two years of its existence, protecting it as it was used by the nuns.⁶¹ It was common for manuscripts of a single quire thickness to bear a simple cover, or wrapping. The library in Fulda contains several of these limp bindings which, as they were often made of untreated skins, become brittle with age.⁶² Parchment was an expensive commodity and it would be economical to re-use a limp binding as an end sheet at a later date. If fol.37 and the pastedown together originally constituted a simple, temporary cover, this would also account for the notations at the top of fol.37r.

These notations are in a cursive, contemporary hand which, when compared with the actual text of the codex, is persuasively that of Beneš. Indeed the text, visible on fol.37r, has been partially trimmed away, supporting the argument that the sheet was originally larger and never intended or prepared as a bifolium. Both texts that remain at the top of what is now fol.37r are from fol.1v: at the top left is the second half of the text which is within the banner extending from Colda's hand (the trimming has left a line of half letters at the top so that it is clear that originally there was more text), and at the top right is the entire text of the right-hand crowning angel. These sentences may have been written down as they were composed or dictated, ready to copy onto fol.1v, or they may have been acting as a form of title to the work.

⁵⁸ J. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999 p.144. Out of 134 codices studied, 21.4% had a separate first bifolium with the first folio pasted to the front board.

⁵⁹ APPENDIX V and VIb.

⁶⁰ APPENDIX I, fol.37r.

⁶¹ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit. p.15 and 16. suggest that the codex was wrapped in this sheet of parchment as it was being worked on but that the entire codex was never actually completed and given to Cunegund.

⁶² B. Van Regemorter, *Binding Structures in the Middle Ages*, transl. J.Greenhill. Maggs Brothers Ltd., London, 1991, p.139.

Derolez makes the observation that most medieval manuscripts follow what is known as the Rule of Gregory.⁶³ This describes the phenomenon of the hair side of the animal skin facing another hair side, and the flesh side facing a flesh side, throughout a codex, with the recto surface of the first folio of the quire being hair side. This scheme was achieved, quite naturally, by the folding and refolding of the vellum to make the bifolia and it was adhered to if possible. If this is the case in the *Passional* then the fine fol.1v illustration would have been painted on the smooth, whiter inner-surface of the vellum, as would the important full-page illustrations of the *Man of Sorrows*, on fol.10r, and the angelic and mortal *Heavenly Dwelling Places*, illustrated on fol.20r and 22v. The *Arma Christi* on fol.3r, would be the only major illustration to have been painted on the slightly coarser surface of the hair side.⁶⁴

The disposition of the gatherings defines the later part of the codex: fol.11-34. It incorporates the Lament of the Virgin Mary and the treatise of the Heavenly Abodes and the Sermon of Pope Leo. It is most important to note that these works would almost certainly have been written up at the same time as they share bifolia, and therefore must have been planned as a trio.⁶⁵ Since Colda composed the treatise on the Heavenly Abodes in mid-August 1314, it can logically be assumed that it was written up by Beneš in the remaining four months of that year, since it has already been noted that Cunegund was spurring Colda to write. Since she was clearly most eager for the work to progress she would hardly have then allowed it to be left on the shelf to gather dust before its being committed to parchment.

The final section, the Lament of Mary Magdalene, is an extension to the manuscript's theme of the aspects of Christ's Passion, presumably added at Cunegund's behest. It has the appearance of an afterthought, taking the form of a somewhat awkward addition of a single bifolium at the end of the work. I believe that it possibly reflects a miscalculation by Beneš. The quire which starts on fol.29 is unusual in being made up of three bifolia. Had there been four, which is a more expected gathering, as in the preceding two quires (with the exception of fol.12-13 which was added in where there was an omission), there would have been no need

⁶³ A. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books – from the twelfth to the early sixteenth century*, Cambridge, 2006, p.33.

⁶⁴ Once again I have been hampered in confirming my observations by lack of access to the manuscript. Nevertheless, since this scheme was the norm, and it demonstrates that the most complicated of the compositions would have been painted on the best quality surface, I feel this observation warrants inclusion.

⁶⁵ APPENDIX V.

for the extra sheet at the end. Beneš may have planned for four, but erroneously written on three. Such a mistake could have resulted from time-pressure to complete the work. Scribes often had within their remit charge over the page lay-outs,⁶⁶ and it is likely that Beneš was in charge of the design and allocation of text to page throughout the codex.

Like the Sermon of Pope Leo, the Lament of Mary Magdalene is brief, extending over only five written sides. Beneš continued to write on the verso of fol.34 and the extra bifolium was attached, fol.35 and 36. In order to fit the work onto this separate bifolium, the width of the writing space was extended, and thirty lines were provided for the text, rather than twenty eight or twenty nine which is the norm for the codex. Despite this, and the compact script employed incorporating many abbreviations in an attempt at brevity, the writing nevertheless spills over onto the wide margin on fol.35r, and the last two words of the Lament extend below the final line on fol.36r.

Comparison of handwriting indicates that Beneš was rubricator of the text.⁶⁷ He, therefore, would have been responsible for providing the decorated majuscules which announce each new sentence. These are complete to the end of fol.35r, but absent over the last three written sides. This oversight once again suggests that there was some urgency to finish the manuscript. The rubrics are also incomplete in the second part of the codex, being present in the top third only of fol.11v and absent up to fol.13v.⁶⁸ The preceding two quotes⁶⁹ demonstrate Cunegund's impatience to press on with the codex; it is, therefore, unlikely that the codex would have been left untouched for a further seven years, up until her death,⁷⁰ particularly since this was palpably a work that meant a great deal to her personally. The first section carries the date 1312; the third section carries the date 1314 and shares folia with the second and fourth sections, and had already been delayed for two years, and the fifth is a small addition in the same hand and format. It seems reasonable, therefore, to offer 1312

⁶⁶ *The Cambridge Illuminations – Ten Centuries of Book Production in the Medieval West*, , edit. P. Binski and S. Panayotova, Harvey Miller, London, 2005, p.31.

⁶⁷ Chapter 4, p.80, and Chapter 5, p.83-85.

⁶⁸ For further references to scribal errors see Chapter 1, p. 25, Chapter 4, p.80 and Chapter 5, p.85.

⁶⁹ Chapter 1, p.19-20.

⁷⁰ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit. p.16, suggest that the scribe was still working on the codex in 1321, when Cunegund died.

and 1314 as dates for the codex, rather than the “not before 1313 and not after 1321” that is given in the document description in the Czech National Library’s catalogue.⁷¹

It is feasible that Cunegund made use of the artist for as long as was required for the purposes of elucidating the text, as far as funds allowed and as he was available. The first section of the codex is provided with comprehensive illustrations throughout, with the exception of fol.9v where the text does not lend itself to, or require, clarification by the addition of an illustration. The descriptive content of part one of the *Passional*, particularly where the implements of the Passion are itemised in succession, lends itself to illustration. The main object of this section of the work was to stimulate a sympathy with the sufferings of Christ and this is achieved, especially in fol.10r, by a bold visualisation in pictures. It is presented as an important and carefully constructed composition, in both a literary and artistic sense.

The second and third parts of the manuscript use pictures to enhance the impact of the text where necessary, but not on every page. No-one can doubt the power of images such as the *Grieving Virgin* on fol.11r, or the *Mystical Embrace* of Christ and his mother on fol.16v (Figs 6 and 7). The full-page illustrations of the *Heavenly Abodes*, on fol.20r and 22v, fulfil all the illustrative requirements for that subject, thus precluding the need to provide any other pictures for that section. Possibly the Lament of Mary Magdalene remained unillustrated due its being added in haste, as suggested earlier. Apart from this, the codex exhibits no evidence of a scheme unfinished; no sketches or half-completed images. Furthermore the incorporation of the text into the decorative format on fol.18r and fol.22v demonstrates that a prepared scheme has been executed. It may not coincide with a more modern sense of completion, or a desire for a balance of illustrations throughout a text but, from a medieval point of view, the *Passional* miniatures fulfil their function. Even in the first part of the codex, it was not considered amiss to leave the margin unpainted on fol.9v when the text became more abstract and did not suggest a scene that would have been helpful in illustrating the words. Fol.11v, in the second section, is similarly left unadorned. Here, despite the diligent use of leaf signatures,⁷² a mistake was made and a separate bifolium had to be inserted; fol.12 and 13. I note that these leaf signatures, a-h, on fol.11 and 14-20, are unusual in that they are on both sides of the bifolium rather than

⁷¹ J. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary – Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany*, Zone Books, New York, 1998, dates the *Passional* to 1321 (on p.374) and to c.1320 (on p.408) with no qualification.

⁷² Letters placed at the foot of the verso pages to ensure the correct reassembly of a gathering.

on the first half only which, of course, is all that is required. The additional bifolium, 12-13, was unillustrated and this is presumably how the confusion arose as attention was being concentrated on the illustrated portions of the text.⁷³

Considerably more money and attention was lavished on the *Passional* codex than on other works that survive from the library. Not only was there a personal commission for original treatises from an eminent Dominican lector, but also a first-rate artist was brought in, an accomplished scribe was chosen to execute the work and gold leaf was used to illuminate the work. The lines for the first section of the *Passional* were marked up in red, immediately setting it up as a luxury production.⁷⁴ It appears that the scribe used a plummet of soft red lead, rather than red ink. This is demonstrated, for example on fol.8r, by the painting of the right hand figure of the Jew, who is drawing lots. His body extends over the lines and the paint overrides them but does not cause them to smudge. The use of grey lines for the later sections of the manuscript, drawn up in grey plummet leaving a mark similar to that of a pencil, suggests that, already at the outset of their preparation, there was an awareness that these treatises were to be supplementary, and that they were not trying to compete with, or even emulate, the standards achieved by the first part of the codex. Indeed, the later parts of the work seem to have been conceived on the back of the success of the first, but executed with greater speed, less care and enthusiasm, and perhaps less funding. The standard of the paintings remains the same but it is the uneven quality of the script, with its frequent copyist errors and crossings-out, that disappoints, much as an anticipated sequel to a favorite film; the later section of the codex does not quite fulfil expectation.

The *Passional* appears to have been the jewel in the crown of the library of St. George's Convent. Commissioned by Cunegund, it reflects her own personal, religious proclivities and provides a window into her spirituality and personality. The key to the *Passional*'s creation lies in both the titles that were applied to several of the books in her library, although not specifically to the *Passional*: *fecit scribi et contulit* [commissioned to be written and compiled] and *comparuit et contulit* [collected and compiled]. It is my belief that the work was as complete as it was intended to be and that it would have been in use within the convent for several years prior to Cunegund's death in 1321. It seems perfectly plausible that she was not only satisfied

⁷³ Chapter 5, p.87.

⁷⁴ A. Derolez, op. cit.p.35.

with the codex just as it was, but had intended it in this form: the important first section, culminating in the powerful, devotional image of the Suffering Christ as the *Man of Sorrows with the Instruments of the Passion* at its close, supported by the related, but less important, following treatises.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAKING OF THE PASSIONAL -The codex

The *Passional of Abbess Cunegund* is listed in the catalogue of the National Library of the Czech Republic, Prague, as measuring 30 x 25cm.⁷⁵ It is, therefore, the largest of the works in Cunegund's library.⁷⁶ This could be a reflection of the importance attributed to this particular manuscript; however, if it is compared with other works of this period it is not unusual in its size. The *Pontifical of Renaut de Bar* [Fig.13], for example, made in France, Metz or Verdun, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 298, 1303-1316, part of which is separately bound and is in the National Library, Prague, NKČR XXII. C. 120., measures 32 x 24.5cm. It is, therefore, of comparable dimensions to those of the *Passional*. The *Pontifical* was left incomplete and therefore, as will be seen later, serves as a useful guide to the chronology of creating a manuscript.

The *Passional* survives today simply bound between two leather-clad wooden boards [Fig.14 and 15], consistent with a particular form of book binding that was widely employed across Europe from the twelfth to the early fourteenth century, employing a 'short lacing pattern'.⁷⁷ This is in common with the type of binding used in other surviving codices from the time of Cunegund, in St. George's Convent library.⁷⁸ The Prague book-binders of c.1314 used the traditional binding technique of the preceding generations.⁷⁹ The wood used for end boards was usually oak, and was cut on the quarter to avoid warping.⁸⁰ This does, however, give a tendency towards

⁷⁵ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánová, *Pasionál Přemyslovny Kunhuty*, Odeon, Prague, 1975, p.19, concurs with this. A. Matejček, *Pasionál abatyše Kunhuty*, Prague, 1922 p.6, and G. Toissant, *Das Passional der Kunigunde von Böhmen – Bildrhetorik und Spiritualität*, Paderborn, 2003 p.13, however, both state that the codex measures 29.5 x 25 cms. Lack of access to the codex has meant that I have not had the opportunity to measure the manuscript.

⁷⁶ For example: NKČR XII. D.11, – Theological Treatises, from Cunegund's Library, dated 1318, and measuring 29 x 20cms.

⁷⁷ J. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999, p.151, describes a slightly more complex 'long lacing pattern' also used during this period.

⁷⁸ J. Szirmai, op. cit., p.140-169, applies the generic term 'Romanesque' to this style of binding. He provides a fascinating and comprehensive overview of binding techniques on which I have drawn.

⁷⁹ J. Szirmai, op. cit., p.173-4, describes how, from the early fourteenth century, the sewing supports ran over the bevelled edge of the outer-face of the end-boards. He describes this as 'Gothic' binding technique.

⁸⁰ APPENDIX VIa. I am unable to confirm the type of wood used for the *Passional*'s end-boards.

splitting, as is seen at the top of the back board of the *Passional*, a few centimetres in from the opening edge, where the leather has worn away.

It is very likely that the end boards are original to the work;⁸¹ the spine, however, is not.⁸² Presumably the original spine, which would have been integral with the leather of the boards, disintegrated with time and usage and, therefore, was cut away together with approximately 1.5 cm of the leather covering the boards at the spine edge. The spine may have originally ended in endband tabs of the type that corresponds with the lacing pattern used in the end-boards of the *Passional*. Such tabs extended in a semi-circle at the head and foot of the spine and were often lined with decorative fabric. There is no endband sewing remaining, although the pierced holes through which this would have been worked remain visible, lying approximately 1.5 cm in from the edge of the page, at the head and foot of the quires, and are now incorporated in the sewing of the assembled quires of the manuscript. Endband stitching of this period was often worked in alternating different colours of silk or linen thread. The circular sewing holes for the endband sewing are clearly visible in the *Passional*, made either by an awl or by the sewing needle itself. The quires of the *Passional*, however, appear to have been sewn together through short slits in the parchment, made by either a knife or a chisel [see Fig.2]. Both slits and holes were accepted forms of sewing preparation.⁸³

It is likely that the original sewing supports, which ran from board to board and provided the anchor to which the quires were attached, were discarded in the replacing of the spine of the *Passional*. Such sewing supports were made of tawed animal hide known as whitleather. This is not truly leather as it is only treated with alum (potassium aluminium sulphate) and salt, thus maintaining the soft pliability of the hide and also keeping its pale colour. Access behind the present spine might yield information as to the original stitching used for attaching the quires to the sewing supports, as imprints sometimes survive on the folds of the gatherings. This would have been herringbone, straight or packed straight stitching, which would usually have been sewn through a slit in the sewing support. At least some evidence has survived the rigours of time, for the remains of the slips of the sewing supports themselves are partially visible on the front board of the *Passional*, at the spine edge.

⁸¹ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánová, op. cit. p.16.

⁸² See [Fig. 14].

⁸³ J. Szirmai, op. cit. p.143, 23 of a group of thirty one continental manuscripts studied, twenty three had sewing slits.

There are five of them at regular intervals approximately 5cm apart.⁸⁴ Those on the back board are also discernable, but less obviously so. The uppermost support attachment on the front board is the most exposed, and beneath the now deteriorating leather covering the end of a pale strip of whitleather is clearly visible.

Once the gatherings had been stitched onto the sewing supports, the end of each support was threaded through a slit, cut within the thickness of the board, at the spine edge. This led to a short, oblique channel, travelling to the upper surface of the board where a shallow trough was gouged out to receive the slip, and where it was then secured by a flat-headed iron nail or a treenail (a cylindrical, hardwood peg).⁸⁵ These pegs are clearly visible, on the digital image, on the uppermost and middle attachments but, unfortunately, I cannot identify, from images alone, whether they are of wood or metal. This is the 'short lacing path' form of sewing support attachment. The slips do not extend far across the board and do not pierce the wood to travel along the inner surface of the board before being attached, as in a 'long lacing path'. The sewing supports that ran along the head of the quires, anchoring the endband tabs, were probably attached in a similar manner, but to the corners of the board, close to the spine. These attachments are not visible in the photograph and may lie beneath the replacement leather spine, where it extends forwards onto the endboards.

From an examination of the digital images of each folio it is possible to see the pricking marks which the scribe made along the edges of the parchment for the purpose of drawing up the text lines. The general disposition of the prickings suggests that each quire was prepared separately, the holes extending through all folia. The prickings follow the continental convention of being worked solely along the outer, opening edge of the bifolia;⁸⁶ this also indicates that the lines were drawn up with the bifolia spread open. The prickings are visible on all pages, bar fol.10, and are at line width running the full length of the page. At the head and foot of the page there are also holes marking the position of the vertical lines. The proportion of the page allocated to text and illustration varies throughout the codex; the width of the lines, however, appears to be a constant, with one exception, on fol.1v, which will be discussed below.

⁸⁴ See Figs 14 and 15.

⁸⁵ APPENDIX VIc.

⁸⁶ C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated manuscripts*, London, 2004, p.38. Medieval insular manuscripts were pricked on the inner margins as well.

Fol.2 may have been prepared individually and is the only script in the work which is presented in two columns to a page.⁸⁷ Its companion, fol.10, does not share prick marks, indicating that the layout of the first section of the codex was thoroughly thought through prior to execution, for the fol.10r illustration is integral to the text on the now-missing folio.⁸⁸ Interestingly, fol.10r appears to have a guide hole at the foot of the cross to line up the composition. This is also the case at the foot of the shield of the *Arma Christi*, illustrated on fol.3r. Three holes at the top of this page not only provide the guide for the vertical axis of the cross, but also coincide with the vertical lines of the text space on fol.3v. The full-page illustrations, on fol.1v, 3r and 10r, have not been drawn up with lines although a reduced grid has been prepared, on the left of fol.1v, for the rubric titles. These lines do not coincide with the prickings which are beside it. They are approximately three-quarters of the width of lines elsewhere in the work, and the scribe has written on them with double-line spacing. The full-page illustrations on fol.20r and 22v [*Fig. 10 and 11*] show their vertical marking-up lines, and in the latter it is possible to discern where the horizontal lines were drawn in and then scratched out before painting. There is a section of text on either side of the head of fol.22v which explains the need for lines, at least at the head of the page. It is clear that the artist took advantage of the marking up, using the lines as a guide and constructional aid, when setting out his compositions. On fol.14v, for example, each scene is fourteen lines high, and in the illustrations on fol.8v the underside of the horizontal bar of the cross, on both of the crucifixion scenes, is aligned with the writing line, as is the top and bottom of the sepulchre in the third picture of this series. There are numerous examples of this throughout the codex.

When quires were gathered together prior to binding on a sewing frame, they were temporarily held together at the head and foot of the manuscript fold by quire tackets: usually narrow, twisted strips of parchment, which could be removed by the book binder when the quire had been assembled. Occasionally, however, tackets were left *in situ*, either by accident or carelessness. In the fold at the head of fol.31v and 32r, on the level of the first line of script, it appears that one such quire tacket survives, and I do not believe that this has been noted before. This may be another indication of the haste with which the codex was bound. To assist the assembly of the codex, the order

⁸⁷ The short-lined prayers that were on the missing folio (the companion of fol.3) may well have been presented in two columns. See Chapter 2, p.34-35.

⁸⁸ APPENDIX V.

of the quires was marked out by catchwords written at the very base of fol.20v and 28v: “*angelorum fiunt*” and “*am*”, respectively. In addition to these, and the aforementioned leaf signatures,⁸⁹ the *Passional* also has quire marks to guide the assembly of the codex.⁹⁰ These only appear on the last verso of the second and third main gatherings, fol.20v and fol.28v, and take the form of an “i” and “ij” representing Roman numerals I and II. Throughout the *Passional* double ‘i’ is expressed as ‘ij’, both with diacritical marks over the top of each letter, following established practice.⁹¹

Once the quires of the *Passional* had been fixed between the book ends, the parchment was trimmed off flush with the wood using a drawknife. From c.1200 onwards book-binding practices changed and the end-boards came to project slightly beyond the cut edges of the folia.⁹² The *Passional* is, therefore, bound using what was already an old-fashioned technique. Most of the prickings for drawing up the lines have survived the trimming process, suggesting that little was removed. Both the catchwords, however, have been cut in half as the excess parchment was trimmed away. A tiny portion of the filigree decoration on the capital “E” on fol.11r has been sliced away; however the incomplete arch for the rubric title, at the top of the full-page illustration on fol.20r, seems to have been designed as just that, even if a small amount of the top was lost, for the lower line on the right ends well before the top of the page.

The corners of the codex would, most probably, have been originally cut square. This is usual and had obvious advantages, not only when trimming the parchment, but also when covering the boards with leather to give a neat corner finish. The rounding of the corners that is apparent on the *Passional* today is, almost certainly, due to wear. On the inside of the front board, the bottom left corner of the paste-down has been sliced off to reveal the turn-ins of the leather book covering. These are roughly cut back to approximately 4 cm, and glued down, probably with a starch paste, but it is possible to see that the corners were mitred and cut with a single, diagonal cut, the score mark of which remains in the wood on the inside of the front cover.

⁸⁹ Chapter 1, p.24-25.

⁹⁰ APPENDIX V.

⁹¹ A. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books – from the Twelfth to the early Sixteenth century*, Cambridge, 2006, p.90.

⁹² C. De Hamel, *Medieval Craftsmen – Scribes and Illuminators*, British Museum Press, London, 1992, p.67.

Twenty-three of the twenty-nine books which are depicted by the artist in the manuscript illustrations are secured by two strap-clasps.⁹³ In a mid-nineteenth century dialogue between historians, concerning the *Passional*,⁹⁴ Hanuš criticised Vocel for considering the binding to be original but with the metal components torn off, and he himself refers to evidence of pressure on the pages from the original ties of a wrap-around binding. The digital image of the back endboard clearly demonstrates that there are remnants of two strap attachments.⁹⁵ The lower still bears a portion of strap which appears to be a later replacement, being of a darker leather similar to that of the present spine; there is a stain where an upper strap was attached. The original strap attachments would have been covered by the leather book covering. I can see no corresponding fastening attachments on the front cover and, as there is no digitalised image of the end-on view of the codex. I have been unable to ascertain, therefore, whether or not there is a hole in the thickness of the front board to receive a metal pin over which a strap could close, as in early medieval clasps.⁹⁶ It is interesting that the hasp, the moving portion of the fastening, which would have been made of the same leather as the book covering, appears to rise from the back cover of the *Passional*. In the early medieval period, it was more usual for the hasps to run top down.⁹⁷

The simplicity of the binding has been cited as evidence for these books having been bound later in the fourteenth century, following Cunegund's death.⁹⁸ There is no evidence for this assertion, except as a continuation of the idea that the work was left unfinished. The plain, discoloured, grey-brown leather of the *Passional*'s cover is of the type of binding used for other manuscripts in the Convent of St. George, and is comparable with those found in monastic library collections of the period across the whole of Europe.⁹⁹ It is true that their simple appearance is not consistent with the decorative and brightly coloured books carried by the nuns as they are illustrated on fol.1v, nor indeed with the book which Colda hands to the Abbess. It has been

⁹³ J. Szirmai, op. cit. p.167, Out of 110 'Romanesque' bindings studied, 90% had fastenings.

⁹⁴ I.J. Hanuš and J.E. Vocel, 'Kritické známky', *Krok I*, Prague, 1865 p.227-242, 297-303.

⁹⁵ See [Fig.15].

⁹⁶ J. Szirmai, op. cit. p.167 In his study of 110 'Romanesque' bindings, seventeen closed with the 'Carolingian'-type fastening, where the hasp hooks onto a metal peg, inserted into the front board edge.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.131 In a study of 130 'Carolingian binding' before twelfth Century Szirmai comments that the vast majority close upper to lower, and of the few that close lower to upper, one is from Salzburg. There were no Bohemian manuscripts in his study. He does not give the statistics for lower to upper fastening in his 'Romanesque' binding study.

⁹⁸ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p.15.

⁹⁹ C. De Hamel, op.cit., 2004, p.106. A late twelfth century catalogue of the codices in Reading Library, lists nearly 300 volumes. De Hamel assumes that all, bar eight whose bindings are particularly specified, were bound in grey-white leather.

overlooked, however, that it was regular practice at this time to complete a simple, well-finished, primary covering for a codex with an outer cover, or *chemise*, much as we have dust jackets for many hardback books today. Many books were covered with *chemises* of silk, velvet or rich brocade, often embroidered [Fig. 16].¹⁰⁰ These fabrics wear with use and decay with time and it is no surprise that, although once very common, so many of these embroidered covers have vanished without trace. Leather *chemises* had a better chance of surviving the intervening seven hundred years.¹⁰¹ The frequent usage of textile covers is exemplified in the Papal Library Archives, at Avignon, where an inventory of 1369 catalogued some fifty fabric bindings, some described as having been embroidered.¹⁰²

It is well recognised that embroidery was an important occupation for Benedictine nuns, fulfilling the obligation of *Opus Dei* [God's work] in a manner suitable for women of refinement.¹⁰³ It is recorded, as early as the twelfth century, that the nuns in the Convent of St. George were proficient needlewomen. In 1151, Pope Eugene III wrote to the sisters concerning vestments which had been commissioned from them by the Bishop of Olomouc, Jindřich Zdík, the founder of Stráňov Monastery, Prague.¹⁰⁴

“.....*Illa idonea ornamenta, quae per instructas et peritas manus vestras ad altaris ministerium studiosus operari fecit...*”¹⁰⁵ [he had commissioned to be made, with diligent care by your skilled and experienced hands, those appropriate adornments for ministration at the altars].

More pertinent is that Cunegund's niece, Eliška¹⁰⁶ (1292-1330), who was educated with the sisters of St. George's convent between 1305-1310, is recorded as having followed her mother's example in being a proficient needlewoman. When Eliška left the convent to be married, at the age of eighteen in 1310, it is recorded that,

¹⁰⁰ C. De Hamel, op.cit., 1992, p.68-69.

¹⁰¹ J.Szirmai, op. cit. p.165 observes the regular use of over-covers on 'Romanesque' bindings. Of the 110 that he studied, twenty had surviving *chemises*.

¹⁰² Ibid. p.166.

¹⁰³ J. Hamburger et al., *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edit. J. Hamburger and S. Marti, Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p.72.

¹⁰⁴ A. Merhautová, *Románské Umění v Čechách a na Moravě*, Odeon, Prague, 1983, p.175

¹⁰⁵ W.W. Tomek, *Dejepis města Prahy, Vol. I*, Prague, 1855, p.96, note 58.

¹⁰⁶ She was the daughter of King Wenceslas II (1271-1305, ruled 1283-1305) (Cunegund's brother) and Guta, and was later to become the wife of John of Luxembourg and mother of Charles IV. See APPENDIX III.

“...Nejnádhernejší však swatební šat, zářící se zlatem, perlami a drahými kameny ku podivu všechněch, byla sobě Eliška spůsobila sama mnoholetau pilností, zkušena jsauc we vyšívání a děláni přerozmanitého mistrného díla, we kterém oblibowala sobě se swými pannami...”¹⁰⁷

[Most beautiful of all, and to everyone’s amazement, was the wedding dress, glowing with gold, pearls and precious stones, which had been diligently created over many years by Eliška herself and her ladies-in-waiting, who were experienced in, and enjoyed embroidery and the execution of a multitude of masterly crafts.]

We read that Eliška was working on her dress “for many years”. The majority of the embroidery must, therefore, have been undertaken during the five years of her education in the Convent of St. George. If such talents abounded within Cunegund’s convent, it is likely that the nuns would also have dutifully and reverently stitched *chemises* to place over the plain bindings, in order to protect the valuable codices given to them by their abbess and benefactress. Most particularly for such a precious and valued manuscript as the *Passional*.

Fortunately, the *Passional* of Abbess Cunegund avoided the fate of so many illuminated manuscripts Europe-wide that had their illuminations and miniatures cut out when the documents, in their complete form, ceased to carry their original significance. Sadly, many Bohemian manuscripts succumbed to such a fate. Even John Ruskin wrote in his diary of 1854, “Cut up missal in evening – hard work”.¹⁰⁸

Pavel Spunar unaccountably suggests that the beginning of the Lament of the Virgin Mary is absent due to damage to the codex¹⁰⁹ although there is no evidence of any page missing here or indeed of any absence of text. The only page known to be missing from the *Passional* is the companion page to fol.3, thus following on from fol.9v.¹¹⁰ The words,

“*Dec folium ad plura*”
[the tenth folio to more]

are written in an eighteenth century hand at the foot of fol.9v, indicating that a folio has been cut from the work. Very fortunately, the missing text survives, in German translation, in a small manuscript from the convent library: NKČR XIV.E.12, fol.21v-

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 482.

¹⁰⁸ C. De Hamel, ‘Cutting up manuscripts for Pleasure and Profit’, *The Sol M. Malkin Lecture*, 1995, p.14.

¹⁰⁹ P. Spunar’s introduction to *Frater Colda Ordinis Praedicatorum – tractus mystici – Fontes Latini Bohemorum Vol. II*, edit. and transl. D. Martínková, Prague, 1997, p..XXV.

¹¹⁰ APPENDIX V.

24r.¹¹¹ This codex is a translation of the entire *Passional* into German, dating from the turn of the seventeenth/eighteenth century. The, now missing, passages seem to have been written in prose and verse, providing a continuation of the previous text which is subsequently followed by several prayers, including one which itemises the symbols of the Passion and invokes Christ's suffering. This prayer would have faced the image of the *Man of Sorrows with the Symbols of the Passion* on fol.10r.

The illustrations for the *Passional* seem to be complete and very well preserved, despite frailty of age. Perhaps because it was protected within the walls of a nunnery for the first 400 years of its existence it managed to remain unscathed, even through the turbulent period of iconoclasm in the fifteenth century. Although particularly the first section of the *Passional* displays evidence of frequent use, the codex happily appears to have survived in a remarkably complete and undamaged state.

¹¹¹ G. Toissant, *Das Passional der Kunigunde von Böhmen – Bildrhetorik und Spiritualität*, Paderborn, 2003, p.193-196, provides a transcription of the German text, stating that the text would have fitted onto the two sides of missing folio.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTING THE ABBESS-PRINCESS – the historical context

The opening page on fol.1v of the *Passional* of Abbess Cunegund [Fig.2.] presents the reader with the magnificent dedication illustration.¹¹² Central to the composition is the Abbess of the Convent of St. George, Cunegund the eldest child of Přemysl Otakar II (c.1233-d.1278) King of Bohemia (1253-1278).¹¹³ To her right are depictions of Colda, the author of two of the treatises, and the scribe Beneš. The Benedictine sisters of the Convent, who are to be the eventual beneficiaries of the manuscript, are depicted gesturing towards their abbess as though introducing her to the onlooker. We are left in no doubt at all that Cunegund is of central importance, not only to the composition, but also in social standing and religious superiority, and because all was commissioned by her.

The most remarkable feature of this fine illustration is that as much is made of Cunegund's royal standing as of her position as abbess of the Convent of St. George. The importance of the abbess-princess is made immediately obvious by the artist, following the common medieval artistic convention of placing her centrally, dominating the composition, and depicting her proportionally larger than the other protagonists. She is shown enthroned on an ornate seat which is decorated with Gothic architectural detail. She is seated on a roll-shaped cushion that has its iconographical precedents in the very earliest manuscript depictions of both religious and secular thrones: for example, in the illustration of *St. Matthew*, Codex Aureus, Canterbury?, mid-eighth century, Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm, MS.A.135, fol.9v [Fig.17] or of *Charles the Bold*, Psalter, St. Denis?, c.850-69, Bibliothèque Nationale Paris, MS.Lat 1152, fol.3v,[Fig.18]. Similar thrones were also used in representations of Christ and the Virgin, as in the illustration of *Christ receiving Emperor Henry II and his wife*, the abbess' name sake Cunegund, in the Gospel Lectionary of Henry II, Reichenau?, eleventh century, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4452, fol.2r [Fig.19]. In the *Passional* such thrones appear again on fol.20r and 22v where Christ

¹¹² A. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.33, states that from the thirteenth century fol.1r was the preferred position for the display page. Our manuscript therefore appears to be looking back to an earlier tradition.

¹¹³ APPENDIX II.

is depicted with the Virgin Mary. Indeed, on fol.20r the cushion on which Mary is seated, as she is crowned by Christ, has exactly the same decorative design, worked in red, as appears in Cunegund's cushion in the frontispiece illustration where she herself is being crowned.

It was not unusual for medieval rulers to be presented in a similar way to Christ and Mary. They ruled on earth as Christ and Mary ruled in Heaven. On fol.1v of the *Passional* the royal crown is held above Cunegund's head by two angels, indicating the divine right of kings. The placing of the crown also symbolised the act of dedication to the service of Christ. The crown, representing Christ's wounds, was used symbolically, together with the veil, when nuns became 'Brides of Christ'.¹¹⁴ The words of the angel on the left are written, flowing down, parallel to Cunegund's outstretched arm. They read,

“...*Mundum sprevisi regnum terrestre liquisti...*”
[You scorned the world and left the kingdom of the earth.]

I interpret that the “scorning of the world” refers to Cunegund's retiring to the seclusion of a convent but, as this was written nine years before Cunegund's death, the statement that she has “left the kingdom of the earth” is not to be taken literally. When her brother Wenceslas III was killed in 1306, Cunegund then had the senior claim to the throne due to the right of inheritance of the Czech princesses. Had circumstances been different, and had she not become an abbess, she would have been Queen of Bohemia. Besides this she no longer had a husband at her side to become ruler and surely she herself had no appetite for ruling a large and declining kingdom. The angel's words served to demonstrate how the abbess, in joining the convent, had renounced earthly things, including the chance to rule an entire nation, and was already living on a higher plane. The angel to the right, whose words follow the curve of the architectural arch, is shown to say,

“... *Felici dono jam te premiando coronando...*”
[I now bestow on you a blessed crown as a reward.]

¹¹⁴ C. Bynam Walker, 'Forward'. *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by J. Hamburger, and S. Marti Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p.xiii.

The inference here is that not only was her royal status a divine gift, but that she is being rewarded for her earthly sacrifices; receiving a holy crown to replace the crown she would have received as queen.

The artist would certainly have been aware of the sculpted stone tympanum frieze, first quarter thirteenth Century, National Gallery, Prague, [Fig.20],¹¹⁵ where two angels hover above the enthroned Virgin Mary and similarly place a crown upon the Virgin's head. The iconography was well known; however its choice for the frontispiece of the *Passional* may make reference to this frieze.¹¹⁶ It is a dedicatory relief, commemorating the founding of the Benedictine Convent of St. George. Two diminutive abbesses kneel in adoration before the Virgin and Child; to her right, Mlada (c.930-935 – 994), the foundress and the first abbess, who was sister of Boleslav II, Lord of the Czech Lands (967-999), and to her left the abbess Berhta, who re-established the convent, following its destruction by fire in 1142.

Mlada set the precedent for the abbess-princess role in Bohemia, following the example of other abbess-princesses, such as St. Hilda of Whitby, and Werburga of Northumbria, 300 years earlier.¹¹⁷ The side sections of the tympanum portray to the right the kneeling figures of Přemysl King Otakar I, (1197-1230), and to the left his half-sister Agnes (d.1228), who was also abbess of St. George's Convent. Cunegund's position, as sister to the monarch Wenceslas II, and her place as abbess of the Convent of St. George, exactly matched the dual roles of her forebears, Mlada and Agnes, and made the echoing of the relief all the more appropriate. Cunegund was the last of these three abbess-princesses of the Convent of St George.¹¹⁸ To further demonstrate the strong link that existed between the royal household and the Convent, the abbess held the right to crown the Queen of Bohemia, alongside the Bishop, or Archbishop of Prague.¹¹⁹

The image on fol.1v also makes interesting comparison with an illustration of the Virgin and Mary in an earlier manuscript in the convent library. Cunegund must have been extremely familiar with this image and, despite the iconographic type being such

¹¹⁵ The original location of this sculpture, within the conventual buildings and basilica, is unknown. See J. Homolka, 'Sochařství doby posledních přemyslovců', *Umění doby posledních přemyslovců*, Museum of Central Czech Lands, Roztoka u Prahy.

¹¹⁶ K. Stejskal and J. Kropáček, 'Malířství', *Praha středověká*, Panorama, Prague, 1983.

¹¹⁷ C. Brooke, *The Rise and Fall of the Medieval Monastery*, Folio, London, 2006, p. 166.

¹¹⁸ APPENDIX III. The abbess/princesses are highlighted in red, demonstrating the royal link with the Convent of St. George.

¹¹⁹ H. Van Zeller, *Benedictine Nun, her story and aim*. Helicon, Dublin. 1965, p.67. However, see Chapter 3, p.49, note 147.

a common one, the parallels between this and the *Dedication Illustration* are none the less striking. It appears on fol.68v of the *St. George's Psalter*, second half twelfth century, NKČR XIII E 14v [Fig. 21]. The comparison also goes to demonstrate how the artist of the *Passional* has translated a very two-dimensional, 'icon' image into a mature Gothic representation creating a sense of space and form.

Not only is Cunegund shown being crowned, on fol.1v, but in her hand she holds the crozier of her office. Both crown and crozier are gilded. Van Zeller points out that throughout the Rule of St. Benedict, the abbot is variously referred to as father, shepherd, physician, teacher, master and steward; father and shepherd being the most frequent designation, indicative of their leading a household and a flock.¹²⁰ The holding of a crozier expresses this role. This pose is also adopted by Cunegund on her official seal [Fig.22], and here she appears once again as an abbess-princess, depicted seated upon a high-backed, ornate throne, such as those used on the royal seals. Abbess Cunegund's seal makes interesting comparison with the seal of her father King Přemysl Otakar II [Fig.23]. When Cunegund's seal was printed in wax the image produced would have been very similar to the image on the dedication page of the *Passional*; however, on the seal, her right hand is not extended but already holds a book. This is a symbol of her authority as abbess of the convent but also, no doubt, acknowledges her intellect, education and religiosity. It is likely that the artist was aware of the image on the seal, and that it may have been brought to his attention as a suitable model for representing the abbess-princess. The crozier is identical in both images. Urbánková¹²¹ points out that the crozier depicted is that which Wenceslas II gave to his sister¹²² in 1303 and which survives to this day in the collection of the National Museum in Prague, although in a greatly altered form.¹²³ Unfortunately, very little original work remains, bar the inscription, as the entire crozier was reworked and embellished, in 1553, when a statuette of St. George was added.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ H. Van Zeller, *The Holy Rule – Notes on St. Benedict's legislation for Monks*, Steed and Ward, London, 1958, p.35.

¹²¹ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslovný kunhuty - Passionale Abbatissae Cunegundis*, Odeon, Prague, 1975, p.13.

¹²² It was common for family members to give presents to a convent. See J. Hamburger et al., 'The Time of the Orders – An Introduction,' *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by J. Hamburger, and S. Marti Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p. 65.

¹²³ J. Cibulka, *Dějepis výtvarného umění v Čechách, Vol.I, Středověk*, Prague, 1931, p.381-382.

¹²⁴ J. Hanuš, *Krok I*, 1865, 'Kritické poznámky' p.302-303.

Close analogies between holy and secular images should not surprise since all were striving towards their heavenly rewards. In the Middle Ages there was only a fine distinction between the spiritual and secular spheres. It has been remarked on that the fol.1v the image of Cunegund as the central figure in the composition, enthroned beneath an architectural arcade, is directly comparable with that of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven on fol.20r; even to the detail of identical cushions.¹²⁵ We know that *ludi pasce*, Easter mystery plays, were performed at St. George's Basilica,¹²⁶ as they were across the whole of Europe, and that a priest took the part of Christ and members of the convent took on the other roles. Indeed, during the incumbency of Abbess Cunegund the protocol was reformed to allow the abbess to lead the Easter procession, ahead of nuns who were representing Mary Magdalene and the three Marias,¹²⁷ as they made their way to the sepulchre. As devotion to the concept of *Corpus Christi* developed through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the part played by Eastertide rituals gained great significance.¹²⁸ Medieval devotional practice was very visual, as the *Passional* itself exemplifies, and just as the congregation watching the mystery plays were moved by the interaction of characters in a play, so the illustrations visualised the written contents of the codex and allowed a sympathetic relationship to be established between the reader and, for example, the suffering Christ, the mourning Virgin Mary and the sorrowful Mary Magdalene.

The striking illustration on fol.7v [Fig.24] of a nun kneeling imploringly at the foot of the Risen Christ, employing the iconography of *Noli me tangere*, could not be more explicit in illustrating the strong desire of the nuns to come into the closest proximity with their Lord. Stejskal believed the nun to be an illustration of Cunegund;¹²⁹ she is not named, however, in the accompanying rubrics. Any of the sisters reading the codex would be able to imagine themselves to be the kneeling figure. The miniature on fol.7v [Fig.24] departs from standard 'story-telling' to present a highly evocative and individual scene, drawing on Mary Magdalene iconography, even as it appears on fol.14r, as a model for the supplicant nun kneeling before Christ. Very unusually and, to the modern viewer somewhat randomly, the artist includes in the composition the spear that pierced Christ's side. The medieval faithful would have had no difficulty in

¹²⁵ Chapter 3, p.37.

¹²⁶ NKČR VII.G.16 fol.95v-101v, NKČR XII.E.15a fol.69v-74v.

¹²⁷ J. Vilikovský, *Pisemnictví českého středověku, Universum*, Prague 1948 p.100.

¹²⁸ E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars- Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580*, Yale University Press, London, 1992, p.22-37.

¹²⁹ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *op.cit.* p.27.

immediately recognising it as a prized holy relic and the implement that pierced a direct route to Christ's heart. This was the foremost of the five wounds of Christ that were the object of deep veneration. This is an intercessionary image and the nun is appealing to Christ, gazing directly at the gaping wound in his side that gives access to his heart. Colda's accompanying text is most elucidatory,

"Lancea latus aperi voluit ut amota per vulnus / carne hoc cor eius in tus positum aspiceretur"

[He wanted his side to be opened by a spear so that, by this wound, the flesh would be moved away and his heart could be seen within] (fol. 7v, l. 16-17)

The medieval onlooker knew exactly how to interpret and how to respond to such images.¹³⁰

There is no doubt that the miniature, on fol. 7v, must have resonated with Cunegund herself for, in the image, the nun takes on the pose and position traditionally adopted by the figure of Mary Magdalene, who was especially close to Christ and who had received his full forgiveness. Mary Magdalene was held up as a role-model to medieval nuns.¹³¹ It seems that Cunegund personally identified herself with her, for it was on the feast day of Mary Magdalene that Cunegund took her holy orders. The choice of feast day for important occasions was considered portentous.

*"...Abbatissam Gunegundem que recepit habitum monasticum Anno Domini MCCCII die Marie Magdalene..."*¹³²

[the Abbess Cunegund who adopted the habit of the convent in the year of Our Lord 1302 on the day of Mary Magdalene.]

The desire of the medieval reader for direct physical involvement is witnessed on fol. 5r by the besmirched face of Belial, a devil of the underworld, whose face was smeared, presumably as an act of disgust and derision. Stejskal linked this with the damage to the face of Cunegund, on fol. 1v, which he suggested was inflicted for her having set herself proudly in a Marian pose.¹³³ Had this been so one might imagine that the damage to her image would have been considerably greater. This proposition

¹³⁰ J. Hamburger and R. Suckale, 'Between this world and the Next – The Art of Religious women in the Middle Ages', *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by J. Hamburger and S. Marti Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p.96, describes the call to inspect and enter Christ's wounds as becoming a leitmotif of late medieval art.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.95.

¹³² J.G. Dobner, *Monumenta Historica Bohemiae*, Vol. VI, Prague, 1764, p.353.

¹³³ K. Benešová, and K. Stejskal, *King John of Luxembourg (1296-1346) and the Art of his Era*, Prague, 1998, p.272.

does not account for the fact that Cunegund's feet have also been smudged and that there are patches, on both the face and the feet, where moisture has spread the ink. This would be consistent with and suggests that the damage to both these areas, on fol.1v, was caused by devotional kissing, and in the kissing of fingers and placing them upon the image. This is supported by the fact that the figure of Christ, on fol.10r, [Fig.5] shows similar staining over his face and upper body, over his wounds and particularly over his feet. Dobner noted this in 1764, when commenting on the wearing away of writing to the right of the Christ, near the wound in his side,

“...*Intermedia nempe cebis osculis Sanctimonialium deleta sunt...*”¹³⁴
[over time the sacred message has been rubbed out, no doubt by frequent kisses].

The wounds of Christ were kissed and touched in veneration and that the abbess' face and feet were treated with similar reverence allows us to gauge the degree of love, respect and devotion that was accorded to her.

Cunegund appears on fol.1v [Fig.2] as both the revered abbess and also as royal princess. She is depicted seated beneath, and framed by, an ornate architectural canopy, as are Christ and Mary in the illustrations already referred to on fol. 20r and 22v. This artistic device developed from the baldachin, a ceremonial canopy denoting authority and an attribute of elevated personages. It is one of the defining elements of Gothic architecture and was reproduced in the frames of altarpieces, in stained glass windows, in sculpture, in panel and wall painting, in embroidery and in painted manuscripts. Such architectural arches also appear in later sections of the codex: on fol.17v and 18v, and in the full-page illustrations fol.20r and 22v. It is common in medieval altarpieces for individual saints to be represented beneath such arches, within a niche. Thus the form of presentation of Cunegund on fol.1v, by inference, defines the esteem in which she was held. In the *Dedication Illustration* the arch is distinctly Gothic with cusps of foliage, or crockets, decorating the gently curving leading edge of the arch which culminates in a central burst of acanthus. Pinnacles, which are another familiar feature in art and architecture of the period, are set at either side of the arch and are also decorated with crockets. Their front faces have been painted in a mottled fashion, as have the pillars beneath them and the blue base of the structure. This mottling was to emulate marble and was effected by darker dots of

¹³⁴ J.G. Dobner, op. cit., p.332.

colour being placed on a softly coloured background. In the later folia, 8v, 9r and 14r, the artist has illustrated Christ's tomb with a less stylish attempt at marbling, using an unusual trefoil technique, in green and white. This appears again, more subtly, on Mary's death-bed on fol.17r, and it is finally, more convincingly, executed in reds on the platform at Christ's feet on fol.18r. The general impression created on fol.1v is of polychrome, stone architecture. The seat, which serves to raise up the figure of Cunegund, is arcaded and has a complicated moulding below the cushion. This bench sits firmly upon a pink platform, pierced with blue quatrefoils. The only departure from a solid and symmetrical structure is the decorative, green foliage set at the corners of the throne. This is the throne of an abbess, and also the throne of a princess.

Cunegund's position in the royal family was of great political significance and should not be underestimated. The dynastic right of kings over the Bohemian nation had only been established for a century when the *Passional* was written, and it is, therefore, hardly surprising that they were so keen to reinforce Cunegund's royal status, particularly when the integrity of the kingdom had been threatened so severely.¹³⁵ At the very head of the first page, fol.1v, the reader is presented with three heraldic shields. The outer shields link Cunegund with the Bohemian nation, while the central shield declares her allegiance to both the Convent of St. George and to the saint himself, who is also the nation's patron.¹³⁶ Yet again the dual role of princess and abbess is stressed. On the left shield, set against a brilliant red ground, is the rampant Czech lion, with crown and twisted split tail; on the right a spread eagle with flames represents the heraldic emblem of another national patron and an early Bohemian ruler, St. Wenceslas. Significantly, both these heraldic shields also flank the image of the king, Cunegund's father, Otakar II on his royal seal used between 1271 and 1277 [Fig.23]. Despite appearing on the seal and on turn-of-the-century Czech coins, the earliest surviving coloured depiction of the heraldic emblem with the Czech Lion, the symbol of the Kingdom, is that on the frontispiece, fol.1v, of the

¹³⁵ Chapter 3, p.47-48, re. the influence of Rudolf of Habsburg and the rule of Otto of Brandenburg.

¹³⁶ B. Drake Boehm and J. Fajt, eds., *Prague. The Crown of Bohemia. 1347-1437*, Yale University Press, Newhaven and London, 2005, p.160. The humerus (the long bone from the upper part of the arm) of St. George was kept within the Convent treasury, ensconced in a jewel-encrusted *monstrance*, silver gilt, early fourteenth century, now in the treasury of St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague. The relic itself may have been the gift of the Bavarian Duke Arnulf, who was keen to curry favour with Lord Vratislav (d.921), the then ruler of Bohemia. In c.920, Vratislav founded the Basilica of St. George, to which the convent was later attached. See above ref. for a description and photograph of the reliquary *monstrance* of St. George.

Passional.¹³⁷ Here, each shield is labelled using the genitive, therefore ‘the emblem’ is understood:

“...*Boemiae*...*Sancti Georgii*...*Sancti Wenceslai*...”
[of Bohemia...of St. George...of St. Wenceslas.]

The dominant position of the emblems at the top of the page, directly above the throne, once again reinforces the important national standing of Cunegund.

It is no coincidence that Cunegund’s title is placed in the rubric paragraph on the top left hand corner of fol. 1v, where a reader would naturally commence reading any text. Her name appears at the head of the text in decorative capital letters. The letters “C” and “H” of “*CHUNEGUNDIS*” are marked out by the artist by the application of gold leaf. This was partly because these are not only the first letters of what was aspiring to be a luxury codex, but also the first letters of the patroness’ name. These, and the leading initial of the manuscript, the “E” which opens the dedication prologue, are the only gilded letters in the entire codex.

The use of “CH” here is somewhat remarkable as, in the ensuing dedication oration, her name starts with a “C” alone. Close scrutiny I find that, on the frontispiece illustration, a red “C” seems to have been painted originally but was scratched out. Perhaps the “C” was written in error by the scribe who should have left a space for the gilded “CH” to be inserted or perhaps it was altered when it was discovered that the tail of the “C” (compare with the capital “C”s to the right of the page) would have clashed with the tall ascenders of the “b”s in “...*Abbatissa*...” in the line beneath. A gilded “CH” neatly covers the apparent error, is still consistent with medieval Latin, and avoids the disturbance of the line below. It does, however, leave the first “C” sticking out rather uncomfortably beyond the margin. The gilded “CH” gives added weight to the importance of the abbess’ name; they are, of course, also the first two letters of Christus. The following capitals in Cunegund’s name adhere to the Romanesque convention of alternating red and blue. The ensuing rubric declares her to be,

“...*abbatissa monasterii / sancti georgii in castro / pragensi serenissimi / boemiae regis domini / Ottacari secundi / filia*...”

¹³⁷ Z. Fiala, *Předhusitské čechy*, Prague, 1978, p.97.

[Cunegund, the most serene abbess of the monastery of St. George in the citadel of Prague, and the daughter of His Majesty Otakar II the King of Bohemia.]

This unambiguously draws attention to her dual role as abbess and princess, as do the words of the opening dedication, on fol.2r, which describe how the commission was received,

“...*Ex altissimo illustrium / boemiae regum sanguine oriunde dominae Cunegundi excellentissimi domini Otta/cari quodam regis boemiae / filiae monasterii sancti Georgii / in castro pragensi abbatissae or/dinis Benedicti...*”
[from the Lady Cunegund, descended from the highest blood of the renown Kings of Bohemia; daughter of the most excellent Lord Otakar once King of Bohemia; abbess of Saint George’s Convent, of the rule of Benedict.]

To understand why it was that the expression of Cunegund’s royal status at the very opening of the *Passional* was of such great importance, one has to set the codex in its historical context. Until the establishment of the Premyslide dynasty, the Bohemian lands had been controlled by Slavic Lords. Under the rule of one of these, Svatopluk (870-894), Bohemia had been incorporated into the Great Moravian Empire but, with its collapse, there was a shift of political power and gradually Prague, still little more than a small town, came to be established as the centre of a powerful and united nation. From the second half of the eleventh century onwards, Bohemia allied itself to the Frankish Empire, recognising the latter’s dominance, but managing to maintain its own autonomy. The Czech Lords gradually began to exert greater influence in the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, and by 1114 they had aquired the hereditary office of Imperial Cup-bearer, and with it the right to be involved in the election of the Emperor himself.¹³⁸ In 1158 Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa bestowed kingship on Vladislav II (ruled 1140-1172), the second of the Premyslide Lords, in gratitude for his assistance at the Siege of Milan in that same year. The importance of this must not be under-estimated. For the first time in Czech history a king had been established, affirming the right of a single ruler to preside over the other Lords of the nation, and allowing for the possibility of establishing a true hereditary dynasty; that of the Premyslides. Confirmation of the Czech royal title and establishment of the right of the Czech kings to accede in perpetuity to the throne, without the requirement of the approbation of the Emperor, was obtained by Přemysl Otakar I (ruled as king 1198 –

¹³⁸ APPENDIX II.

d.1230) in the ‘Golden Bull’ of 1212.¹³⁹ His grandson was Přemysl Otakar II (ruled 1253-1278) who was Cunegund’s father.

Otakar II was a powerful and ambitious king. Exploiting the political wrangling between the German Emperor and the papacy, he undertook several very successful military campaigns, extending the borders of the Czech Lands into a large portion of what had been the lands of the Hohenstaufen Empire.¹⁴⁰ He was already ruling Austria by 1251, two years before his accession. Otakar II also exerted great authority in Europe, being one of the elite group of seven ‘electors’ of the Holy Roman Emperor. At the time of the imperial election, in 1257, the seven electors consisted of the ruler of the Rhineland, the Margrave of Brandenburg, the Duke of Saxony, the Archbishops of Mainz, Cologne and Trier and Otakar II as the King of Bohemia.¹⁴¹ They represented arguably the most influential leaders of Europe, with the King of Bohemia pre-eminent due to his royal title. The German contingent, however, were deeply angered by Otakar’s supporting the cause of Richard, Duke of Cornwall, brother of King Henry III of England. It was Otakar II who held the casting vote which enabled Richard to become King of the Romans (ie. the German King) (1257-1272), although his claim continued to be contested. Richard rewarded Otakar II’s loyalty by giving him lands to the East of the Rhine which Otakar II had coveted, thus adding to his already substantial kingdom, which by now extended right down to the northern coast of the Adriatic, where he was also accorded the title of captain-general of the Patriarch of Aquileia.¹⁴²

Cunegund herself played a part in the political struggles of the power-hungry royal dynasty of the Premyslides into which she was born. She was Otakar II’s eldest child, daughter of his second wife who was also called Cunegund. Otakar II had divorced his childless first wife. He was desperate that he should have an heir and was granted special dispensation by Richard of Cornwall to allow inheritance through the female line in order that Cunegund should have the right to become heir to the Czech

¹³⁹ It is interesting to note that 1312, the date of the first section of the *Passional*, was the tenth anniversary of Cunegund’s term as abbess at St. George’s Convent and the centenary of the conferring of dynastic rights to the Czech kings. There is a strong history of manuscripts being commissioned to mark such occasions, for example the *Godesalc Evangelistary*, which was commissioned to celebrate Charlemagne’s fourteenth anniversary as King of the Franks and the baptism of his son, Pepin, by Pope Hadrian (see C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Phaidon, London, 2004, p.48).

¹⁴⁰ APPENDIX VII.

¹⁴¹ J. Žemlička, *Století posledních přemyslovců*, Panorama, Prague, 1986, p.127.

¹⁴² APPENDIX VII.

throne.¹⁴³ This right continued even after the birth of her brother Wenceslas II, in 1271, when she was six years old. Times were hard and infant mortality high. The king could not rely on his son's survival and his daughters would also have been given preferential education and upbringing as potential inheritors of the kingdom.

An outline of Cunegund's life provides us with insight into medieval political life and, more importantly some understanding of the trials which the patroness of the *Passional* suffered. In the turmoil of the gaining and loosing of lands she was used as a pawn in her father's, and subsequently her brother's, political intrigues. In 1267, when she was just two years old, Cunegund was betrothed to the twelve year old son of an influential German Lord, in order to secure land interests. With time this liason was no longer required and, in an attempt to improve diplomatic ties with Rudolf of Habsburg who, like Otakar himself, was aspiring to the Imperial throne, Cunegund was betrothed to Rudolf's son, Hartmann. Relations between the fathers did not improve, however, despite this diplomatic gesture, and when, in 1277, Rudolf reneged on a bargain that they had struck, Otakar II placed the then twelve-year-old princess Cunegund into a convent. This move not only prevented the marriage, it also provided the young Cunegund, then second-in-line to the throne, with a safe haven in troubled times. By now Otakar II was being extremely hard-pressed by Rudolf who had been elected King of the Romans in 1273, and who sought to humiliate and punish Otakar II. At the Diet of Regensburg, in 1274, Rudolf had withdrawn all rights of the Premyslides over Austria, and other key states that were to become part of the Habsburg Empire. Finally, Otakar II was killed in 1278, when fighting his arch-enemy, at the Battle of the Moravian Fields.

The convent where Cunegund was placed as a child was that of the newly- founded Poor Clares, attached to the Franciscan Friary *Na Františku* (at St. Francis), in the area of Prague now known as the Old Town (Fig.25). The abbess and foundress was Cunegund's saintly great-aunt Agnes, (1211-d.1282), sister of King Wenceslas I (1205-d.1253). The now fatherless young princess was offered protection by the convent, but slight comfort. During her fourteen year sojourn with the Poor Clares, Cunegund suffered two more great losses; abbess Agnes herself died, in 1282, only to be followed, in 1285, by Cunegund's mother, Queen Cunegund Uherská. The nuns adhered to the rule of St. Francis and lived a very frugal existence. The hardship will

¹⁴³ J. Žemlička, op. cit., p.129.

have been compounded by the fact that the five years following the death of Otakar II, were years of chaos and severe famine under the disinterested and careless rule of Otto of Brandenburg.

Rudolf had carved up the remnants of the Czech Kingdom, taking control over Moravia for himself and leaving Otto to 'rule' over Bohemia until Wenceslas II reached majority and could take over the throne. It was in Rudolf's personal interests to protect Wenceslas II's claim to the Czech throne as the young prince was betrothed to one of Rudolf's daughters. Until Wenceslas II was old enough to claim his inheritance, Rudolf was happy enough to watch Bohemia under misrule and in decline. Otto of Brandenburg, for his part, had five years of exploitation in which to gain as much as he could from the Czech Lands, and there were stories of merciless pillage and destruction. It was only when Wenceslas II took the throne, in 1283, that eventually some stability returned to the kingdom. He turned his attentions, however, to Poland and, in order to create a political alliance with a view to claiming the Polish crown,¹⁴⁴ he had Cunegund brought out of the convent, in 1291, and sent as a bride to Count Boleslav II of Mazovia. Cunegund was twenty-six years old when she was effectively traded by her brother purely for political gain. By the age of thirty-seven, in 1302, she had been married, given birth to three children, divorced with papal approval, and had returned to the sanctuary of a Prague convent. It was not, however, to the Convent of the Poor Clares that she returned, but to the Benedictine Convent of St. George, in Hradčany.

Wenceslas II achieved his aim and became King of Poland in 1300, but died just five years later. His son, Wenceslas III, ruled for just one year before he was assassinated, in 1306. This marked the true end of the Premyslids dynasty. Cunegund had already been abbess of St. George's Convent for three years and, therefore, although hers was the senior claim to the throne, control was passed initially to the husband of Wenceslas III's sister Anna, and then to John of Luxembourg, on his marriage to a younger sister, Eliška. Cunegund had very close ties with this young niece who, as was mentioned in the previous chapter,¹⁴⁵ had been placed in the Convent of St. George in 1305,¹⁴⁶ not as a member of the order, but for her education, following the assassination of the young princess' father. Eliška's mother had died

¹⁴⁴ APPENDIX VI.

¹⁴⁵ Chapter 2, p.33-34.

¹⁴⁶ W.W. Tomek, *Dejepis města Prahy, vol. I*, Prague, 1855, p.466.

when she was five years old and so she was orphaned by the age of only thirteen, a plight with which Cunegund could sympathise as she herself had been orphaned at twenty. Between 1305 and 1310, for these five years, Eliška remained under the protection of the convent and her abbess/aunt, much as Cunegund herself had been under the protection of the Poor Clares and Agnes, her abbess/great aunt. Eliška was eighteen when she left the care of the Convent of St. George to marry the fourteen year old John of Luxembourg, in 1310; a political alliance that also offers a parallel with Cunegund's own experiences. It is even possible that Abbess Cunegund crowned her niece, Eliška, on the 7th, February, 1311.¹⁴⁷ Once she had established her own court in Prague, in close proximity with the Convent of St. George,¹⁴⁸ Eliška continued to maintain contact with Cunegund. And so began the rule of the Luxembourg dynasty which itself was to survive only three generations.

Eliška was not the only recorded child to live amongst the nuns in the Hradčany convent. The diminutive figure to the right of the illustration on fol.1v [Fig.26] merits a rubric title of her own, which reads,

“...*Nonna (p)erchta dominae abbatissae filiae regis gnatta...*”
 [the nun Perchta, daughter of the Mistress Abbess, daughter of the King.]

This sentence, and indeed the identity of the little nun, has been the subject of debate over the years. The initial argument lay with the final word which Dobner transcribed as *gnatta*, an alternative Latin word for daughter, but which Hanuš¹⁴⁹ and later Urbánková¹⁵⁰ read as *gnana*, Latin for dwarf. Urbánková seemed concerned that the figure was illustrated so much smaller than the other nuns and that she was positioned so far away from Cunegund, arguing that this would not have been the case had this nun been of royal descent and the daughter of the abbess. As far as stature is concerned, it has already been established that medieval artists would exaggerate size for a variety of purposes; Cunegund appears far larger than the other protagonists; Colda and Beneš decrease in scale. The size of the little nun may simply represent the youthfulness of a child, perhaps as young as eleven, or in her teens, or that she was

¹⁴⁷ Chapter 3, p.38, note 119. However, W.W. Tomek, op.cit., p.490-491, states that the king and queen were both crowned by Archbishop Peter Mohučský.

¹⁴⁸ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p.16.

¹⁴⁹ I. Hanuš, *Krok I*, Prague, 1865, p.227. Hanuš believed that the title was incorrect and should have properly read *filiae regis filia*, however *gnatta* is a perfectly acceptable alternative word for daughter and makes for a more elegant sentence.

¹⁵⁰ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p. 12.

the most junior member of the convent. Even the Rule of St. Benedict directed the observers to respect a strict, internal hierarchy,

“...ordines suos in monasterio ita conseruent... ut verbis gratia qui secunda hora diei venerit in monasteris iunorem se noverit illius esse qui prima hora venit diei...”

[they shall keep to their ranks in the monastery....thus, for example, a person who came to the monastery at the second hour of the day must know that he is junior to one who came at the first hour.]¹⁵¹

This alone would explain Perchta’s being positioned behind the other members of the house. It is also significant that this rubric title adopts a very similar form to the title given to Cunegund on fol.2r by Colda in his opening dedication,

“...domin^{ae} Cunegundi...domini Ottacari ...regis boemi^{ae} filiae...” [mistress Cunegund, daughter of Lord Otakar, king of Bohemia.]

Dobner’s transcription of the final word of the title as *gnatta* is perfectly credible. The word appears ambiguous because of the lack of clear ascenders for the “t”s. Indeed short ascenders topped with bold triangular strokes are a feature of central European script,¹⁵² and it is common in Gothic script for the minim of the letter “t” to be the same height as the small letters.¹⁵³ There are many other examples of this throughout the text of the *Passional*. Dobner’s transcription of the final word of the title as *gnatta* is, therefore, perfectly acceptable.

The “p” in the child’s title has worn away leaving a letter that looks like ‘i’; however the descender of the “p” remains just discernable against the child’s shoulder. The close proximity of the letters shows that there had been a fusion of the letters “p” and “e”, known as a ‘biting’, as the letter bows are adjacent.¹⁵⁴ The name Perchta is unusual and may represent a form of Berhta which, as has already been mentioned,¹⁵⁵ was the name of the abbess/princess who restored the convent after the 1142 fire. Interestingly, there is a nun of St. George’s Convent called Perchta referred to in 1401,¹⁵⁶ although this is obviously not the same woman.

¹⁵¹ *The Rule of Benedict*, Chapter LXIII. op. cit. p 286-7.

¹⁵² A. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books - from the Twelfth to the early Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge, 2003, p.79. See Chapter 5, p.81-82.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* p.93.

¹⁵⁴ B. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography – Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.130.

¹⁵⁵ Chapter 3, p.38.

¹⁵⁶ W.W. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy*, vol. V, Prague, 1881, p.220.

It is known that Cunegund gave birth to a daughter, Eufrozyna in 1292 (d. 14th May, 1324) and a son Waclaw, c.1293 (d. 23rd May, 1336), whilst being married to Boleslav of Mazovia.¹⁵⁷ This marriage was dissolved with papal assent and by 1302 Cunegund was back in Prague; thus Perchta must have been at least eleven or twelve when the illustration on fol.1v was executed. She is shown in the garb of a sister who has taken her vows; this may suggest that she had already turned fourteen,¹⁵⁸ therefore giving 1298 as a possible date for her birth. According to Urbánková,¹⁵⁹ the Polish genealogist Oswald Balzer made no mention of Perchta in his work of 1895. In the 2005 edition of Balzer, however, Perchta is not only included on the family tree of the Mazovian line, but also referred to in the text.¹⁶⁰ It is perhaps of little surprise that Perchta does not feature in the chronicles and documents of the times for she was, after all, the daughter of a Polish nobleman, who was divorced from her mother. She cannot have seemed a too worthy subject for consideration. It is, however, a touching thought that, towards the end of her difficult life, Cunegund may have had her daughter with her in the Convent of St. George.

Looking back over Cunegund's life, it is small wonder that she turned to the Church and sought solace and refuge in a female, monastic establishment. Even with the sketched outline of the events in her life, that have filtered their way down to us over the centuries, it is clear to see that hers was a dramatic and tragic existence that was directed by the forces of politics. It is not until her return to Prague, and her joining the Convent of St. George, that one feels she had any true control over her own destiny. Even this may have been partly dictated by a need for domestic and emotional support as she passed into old age. The *Passional*, being her personal commission, gives us the deepest insight into her personal, religious attitudes and sympathies. Cunegund died in the convent on the 27th November, 1321, at the age of fifty six.

It can be appreciated that there was nothing contradictory in Cunegund's being both a princess and an abbess. Indeed, the attributes of the one served to enhance those of the other; as Colda himself puts it, on fol.31v,

“...*in persona vestra religiosa humilitas / regali germine decoratur...*”

¹⁵⁷ O. Balzer, *Genealogia Piastów*, Kraków, 2005 p.735-743.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid* p.772.

¹⁵⁹ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *op.cit.*, p.12.

¹⁶⁰ O. Balzer, *op.cit.*, Tablica IX, Linia Mazowowiecka I, p.781.

[in you, your pious humility is adorned by your royal birth.]

This is also expressed on fol.1v where Cunegund's "royal birth" is encapsulated in the crown, borne by angels, poised above her head, while her "humility" is reflected in the abbess' benign and gracious countenance, her simplicity of dress and her gracefully outstretched hand as she commissions a most spiritual text. Colda himself recognises in her these two qualities and specifically draws attention to them. The awe generated not only by her elevated position, but presumably by her very person, in both religious and secular circles, manifests itself in the codex. The tone of the work is deeply respectful and complimentary to its patroness, and to judge, for example, Colda's eulogy on fol.30r-31v, to be no more than sycophantic flattery would be to totally misunderstand the medieval concept of the world. Hierarchy was the framework of medieval society, with God at the head. It was their way of creating order in a chaotic and dangerous world. It is no coincidence that fol.20r and 22v (Figs 10 and 11) present Heaven and the Church Militant, respectively, in such a precise and ordered, tiered system.

"...Everything in its place and a place for everything..."¹⁶¹

The artist could just as readily have adapted his compositions of fol.20r and 22v to represent the royal court, the monastery or the manorial estate. In his frontispiece, by depicting Cunegund so much larger than the other players on the page, the artist is doing no more than Colda does when he heaps praises on his patroness: acknowledging her pre-eminence. Colda and the artist both recognise and acknowledge her to be far above them, both socially and spiritually. This is clearly reflected in Colda's words at the end of his tract on the Celestial Abodes, fol.31v, where he directly addresses Cunegund; abbess and princess.

"...In hoc autem / opusculo nunc in plurali nunc in singulari / vestram personam alloquor non tam ex artis / imperitia quam ex certa scientia ut et singulariter loquens humiliter vestrae praeconium / indicem et ad---- numerum me conver/tens pluaem generositatiseximiae insinuem / dignitatem. Primum respicit conversationem / religionis secundum vero celsitudinem regiae stirpis. Et sic quemadmodum in vir/gine sancta castitati virginitas copulatur / sic in persona vestra religiosa humilitas / regali germine decoratur. Valeat vestrae / ingenuitatis nobilitas in secula seculorum. Amen...."

¹⁶¹ S. Smiles, 'Thrift, ch. 5', *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, O.U.P., London, 1949, p.403.

[In this work, however, I address you now in the plural, now in the singular, not so much from the demands of art as from the certain knowledge that by speaking in the singular I may demonstrate your humility and by changing to the plural I may show the dignity of your generosity. The first considers the intercourse of religion, the second the loftiness of your royal birth. And in the same way that the chaste virgin is associated with sacred virginity, so your royal birth adorns religious humility. May the nobility of your graciousness last through the ages. Amen.]

That this is being discussed here is proof that indeed it has.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE – nun, friar and canon

St. George's Convent was situated within the Prague citadel, Hradčany, high above the River Vltava, on its west bank, and this may well have coloured Cunegund's choice to return to the Benedictine convent rather than to the convent of the Poor Clares. The latter convent, where she had spent fourteen years of her youth from the age of twelve to twenty six, was positioned directly on the east bank of the river, in an area which regularly flooded; the rising waters carrying with them the ever-present risk of disease.¹⁶² It was also situated in the then fast-developing mercantile area of Prague which is now known as *Staré město* (the Old Town). The 1220's and 30's had witnessed a rapid rise in Prague's population and prosperity, following the large influx of Germans in the so-called *Ostsiedlung*. The geographical situation of the Franciscan convent was ideal for the administering role adopted by the Poor Clares whose calling impelled them to be amongst the populace, tending the poor and sick. That convent, however, could offer little by way of protection or privacy for a retiring princess. By contrast, the Convent of St. George not only had historic royal connections, but was also a wealthy foundation that would have afforded considerably greater comforts. Already by the thirteenth century the convent owned all, or the greater part, of 129 villages and a tithe of a further thirty eight villages. They controlled, and therefore received dues from, markets in five major towns and received further taxes from three of them.¹⁶³

Cunegund may also have wished for a more intellectual and contemplative retreat from the world, with an emphasis on prayer and meditation, such as characterised, and was offered by, the Benedictine rule, rather than the more austere life she had experienced in her youth with her great aunt Abbess Agnes in the Convent of the Poor Clares. In becoming abbess of the Benedictine convent, Cunegund was following in the foot-steps of another Aunt Agnes,¹⁶⁴ this time her great-great-aunt who had been

¹⁶² APPENDIX II.

¹⁶³ W.W. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy, Vol.I*, Prague 1855, p. 86.

¹⁶⁴ APPENDIX III, Agnes was the half-sister of King Přemysl Otakar I and appears on the left wing of the tympanum [Fig. 20].

abbess of St. George's Convent until her death, in 1228.¹⁶⁵ It is also very likely that Cunegund wished to be near her relatives in the royal palace, adjacent to St. George's Convent, possibly as much for security as anything else. When she became abbess, in 1302, her brother Wenceslas II was still king.

Benedictine convents were widespread across Germany. The missionary work of the English Benedictine, St. Boniface (c.675-754), and his followers, including nuns from the convent at Wimborne, Dorset, founded in 713, led to the establishment of monasteries throughout Bavaria, Hesse, Thuringia and Westphalia, from the early eighth century until his martyr's death on 5th June, 754.¹⁶⁶ St. Boniface advocated a close adherence to the Rule, and his many letters to nuns offer advice and guidance that was to characterise female monasticism in the Middle Ages. Through the eighth century Benedictine convents became urban establishments and took on a more developed form; physical pursuits being replaced by those of the intellect.¹⁶⁷ This may have been partly due to the fact that it was characteristic of Benedictine convents that many had princesses as their abbesses, for example Matilda, daughter of Otto the Great (d.973), abbess of Quedlinburg, and her namesake and cousin Matilda, Abbess of Essen, who was one of a line of abbess-princesses to preside over that house.¹⁶⁸ Over the following centuries many high-born women across Europe were to seek refuge in Benedictine religious houses where they would be protected and cared for into their old age. These noblewomen brought valuable dowries with them to the convents which they entered, and greatly contributed to the accumulated wealth of these houses.¹⁶⁹ Amongst their number were married women who had been cast aside by their aristocratic husbands for failure to produce a male heir.¹⁷⁰ Marriage and children was no obstacle to taking Holy Orders, as Cunegund herself demonstrates. Families encouraged the enclosure of their womenfolk as the nuns' main task was to pray for the souls of their relatives.¹⁷¹ Two of Cunegund's personal breviaries contain devotions to the Premyslide dynasty.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁵ APPENDIX III.

¹⁶⁶ H. Van Zeller, *Benedictine Nun - her story and aim*, Helicon, Dublin, 1965, p.48-53.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.54.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p.66.

¹⁶⁹ J. Hamburger et al., 'The Time of the Orders 1200-1500', *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by J. Hamburger and S. Marti. Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p.65.

¹⁷⁰ C. Lawrence, *Medieval monasticism*, Longmann, London and New York, 1989, p.217.

¹⁷¹ J. Hamburger, *op.cit.*, p.52.

¹⁷² NKČR XII. D. 9 and NKČR VII. G.17d.

Apart from the villages already mentioned, records show that St. George's Convent came to own considerable estates throughout Bohemia. Cunegund's activities towards the convent's development were not confined solely to extending the scope of its library; she also purchased several villages during her time as abbess, giving them to the convent in return for an annual thanksgiving and prayers for her soul being offered by the community.¹⁷³ A document in the *Fragmentum Praebendarum* belonging to the Convent of St. George, written shortly after Cunegund's death, remembers her fondly as a generous benefactor,

“...ut in memoria est presentium hominum, Domina Gunegundis filia Regis Przemisl predicta ultra ea bona.... sustentacionis vite de bonis regalibus proprie dotis, ac librorum, Sanctuariorum, Tabularum, clenodiorum, sacrarum vestium, ac possessionum copiosa largicione ditavit, custricis, et que servat mensalia, et pluminacias pro infirmis, et sidatur, camerarie officia impinquavit...”

[indeed as people still remember nowadays, Lady Cunegund, daughter of the King Přemysl, bestowed gifts beyond the agreed amount to support their (the sisters') livelihood from the royal gifts of her own dowry, and with large donations of books, reliquaries, pictures (possibly panels), jewels, sacred vestments and goods, along with knives (may also refer to items in the treasury under the care of the *custrix* – sacristan) and things for use at table and feathered beds for the infirm.]¹⁷⁴

Unfortunately, it was the involvement in the concerns of estates and finance, such as those witnessed by the references to payments made within the Prague community in the above-mentioned *Fragmentum praebendarum*, that was to bring about the decline, both morally and actually, of many convents in the late Middle Ages.¹⁷⁵ Cunegund was presiding at the time when just such changes of emphasis were coming about.

Despite Bohemia's geographical position and the historic links with the German Lands, the model for the Benedictine convent in Prague came not from Germany, but from Italy. One of the main protagonists of the Italian Benedictine movement was St. Willibald, brother of St. Winebald who had accompanied St. Boniface on his mission through Germany.¹⁷⁶ There is an important distinction to be made between German and Italian Benedictinism. The latter, the example for St. George's Convent, was an even stricter form of Benedictinism than that found in the German north, advocating an austere, contemplative life led in complete retirement from the world.

¹⁷³ W.W. Tomek, op. cit., p.444.

¹⁷⁴ J.G. Dobner, *Monumenta Historica Bohemiae, Vol.VI*, Prague, 1764, p.355.

¹⁷⁵ H. Van Zeller, op.cit., p.96.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.58.

St. George's Convent was established in 970. Its foundress Mlada who, as has already been mentioned, was sister of Boleslav II,¹⁷⁷ travelled to Rome in 965 with the specific mission to observe the convents there and to seek papal permission to found a female Benedictine house in Prague. Already by the ninth century there were no less than ten Benedictine convents in Rome alone. Mlada's request was granted and the pope bestowed on her the new name of Marie, which appears on the tympanum relief [Fig. 20]. Abbess Marie's new foundation in Prague was attached to the fine, three-aisled Romanesque basilica of St. George [Fig. 27], from which it took its name, and which had been founded by Lord Vratislav (d. 921). Both church and convent buildings survive to this day, though in a much altered state.¹⁷⁸ The two establishments co-existed, functioning separately. The convent directly adjoins the church, however, and the nuns used it as their main place of worship. The founding of St. George's Convent was swiftly followed, in 974, by the founding of the Church of St. Vitus and St. Wenceslas, a stone's throw away from the basilica of St. George. The Czech chronicler Kosmas (c.1045-1125), who was Dean of St. Vitus between 1120-1125, wrote that Boleslav I (ruled 929-967) decreed that,

*“...aby při kostele Svatého Vítu a Svatého Václava mučedníků povstal biskupský stolec při kostele Svatého Jiří mučedníka, aby byl zřízen pod řeholi Svatého Benedikta a pod poslušenstvím dcery naší, abatyše Marie, sbor svatých pannen...”*¹⁷⁹

[a bishop's seat should be established at the Church of the martyrs St. Vitus and St. Wenceslas and at the Church of the martyr St. George a group of holy virgins should follow the Rule of St. Benedict under the direction of our daughter, abbess Marie.]

St. Vitus and St. Wenceslas then became the primary church and was confirmed by the pope as the seat of the Prague bishopric.¹⁸⁰ This church was later to be replaced by the great gothic cathedral masterpiece of Peter Parler (Fig. 28)[and 29].

It is remarkable that the earliest Czech monastic foundation was the Benedictine Convent of St. George and, therefore, an all female establishment. This prominence of women in faith is curiously appropriate since the very first Latin rule, set out by St.

¹⁷⁷ Chapter 3, p.38. APPENDIX III.

¹⁷⁸ A. Merhautova, *Bazilika Svatého Jiří na Pražském hradě*, Akademie, Prague, 1966, p.62. The convent was entirely rebuilt in the seventeenth century.

¹⁷⁹ *Kosmova Kronika Česká*, I c. 44-4.

¹⁸⁰ APPENDIX II.

Jerome (c.347-419/20) in his letter 130, was addressed to women and not to men.¹⁸¹ Indeed, Colda refers to St. Jerome, on fol.31r and 31v, comparing himself with the Church Father, and Cunegund with St. Paula, who encouraged St. Jerome in his writings. The *Regula Sanctimonialis Praescripta*, that provided the rule that was to be followed by the male Augustinian canons, was in fact addressed by St. Augustine, in 423, to the sisters of the community in Hippo.¹⁸² This demonstrates the long-established and important place of the female community in the history of monasticism. St. Benedict of Nursia (c.480-c.547), founder of the Benedictine Order, himself made no reference to nuns; however, the female branch of the order easily overcame this by the simple remedy of swapping the gender when referring to the Rule, and taking the holy virgin Scholastica, sister of St. Benedict, as their patroness.¹⁸³ Even her name indicates the character of the Benedictine nuns' way of life. The Rule of Benedict provided the basis for western monasticism. It was an attempt to draw up rationalised guidelines for a monastic way of life with austerity, but also practicality; understanding and acknowledging human weaknesses, and aiming to overcome them by the implementation of the Rule.

In contrast to the aspirations of the later Dominican Order, there is no specified aim of striving for academic excellence or for the acquisition of learning for its own sake set out in the Benedictine Rule. Reading and religious study, however, is an integral and prescribed part of the way of life. By the dawn of the fourteenth century Benedictine houses were already well established as centres cultivating the intellectual, as well as spiritual, aspects of prayer and worship.¹⁸⁴

It has already been noted that it was a feature of Benedictine convents that the sisters were drawn from the noble classes. They were also well known as places for daughters of the elite classes to receive their education, usually between the ages of seven and fourteen, and sometimes to an amazingly high standard as in the case of Sophie, the daughter of Emperor Otto II, who was taught Common Law by her aunt Abbess Gerberga in the Convent of Gandersheim. Tutors were even brought from

¹⁸¹ H. Van Zeller, op.cit., p.31 St. Jerome gave the following directions to Demetrias: "...In addition to the rules of psalmody and prayer which you must always observe at the 3rd, 6th and 9th hours, at evening, at midnight and at dawn, you must determine how much time you must give to learning and reading of the Scripture. When you have spent the prescribed time in these exercises, kneel down often to pray, as the care of your soul will impel you, and have some wool always at hand, the threads of which you can shape into yarn. By observing such rules as these, you will save yourself and others..."

¹⁸² Ibid., p.31.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.39.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p.54.

Constantinople to educate Sophie in Greek and the Gandersheim Convent library is known to have included copies of Virgil, Lucan, Horace, Ovid, Terence and Plautus.¹⁸⁵ Vincencius, a fourteenth century Prague chronicler and Prague canon, recorded that Vladislav II (d.1174) sent his young daughter Agnes (d.1228),¹⁸⁶ later to be abbess of St. George's Convent, to the Praemonstratensian nuns in Doksany in order that she might be,

*"...literis et latino optime eruditam eloquio, quod maxime domicellarum nobilium exornat decorem...."*¹⁸⁷

[educated in literature and Latin to the highest standard, thus greatly embellishing the splendour of her noble domestic capabilities.]

Cunegund was educated within the Convent of the Poor Clares between the years 1277-1291, her niece Eliška was educated in St. George's Convent from 1305-1310, and we have seen that Cunegund's daughter Perchta appears to have been a sister in the convent from a tender age. There are several other recorded precedents for children not only receiving their education, but also being admitted as members of sisterhoods, at a very young age: the French Queen Matilda dedicated her baby daughter at birth to the abbey of Caen, where the child was raised and later became abbess;¹⁸⁸ in Germany another Matilda and Hathumodia both became abbesses, of Quedlingburg and Gandersheim respectively, at the age of thirteen.¹⁸⁹ Incorporating more than one family member in a convent was not uncommon either, and an interesting contemporary comparison with the Convent of St George in Prague can be found in the Benedictine house in Hefta. This was founded in 1229 by Count Burkhardt von Mansfeld, for his two daughters. They were joined by daughters of other prominent local families and by the time Gertrude von Hackeborn was abbess, between the years 1251 and 1291, the house had grown to number 100 nuns and was renowned for its well-stocked library and as an intellectual centre. Gertrude's sister Mechtild, later to become a saint, came to visit the convent as a child, with her mother, and then refused to leave. Before her death in 1298, she dictated the Book of Special Grace, which was written down by a novice who was to become one of the most important Benedictine writers, St. Gertrude the Great, and she too had entered

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.66.

¹⁸⁶ APPENDIX III.

¹⁸⁷ W.W. Tomek, op. cit., p.96 note 58.

¹⁸⁸ C. Brooke, op. cit., p.167.

¹⁸⁹ H. Van Zeller, op.cit., p.67.

the convent as a child.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, mention is made of the care of children in the Rule of St. Benedict,

“...*Pueris per omnia ab omnibus disciplina conservata. Iuniores igitur priores suos honorent, priores minores suos diligant...*”

[Children are to be kept under discipline in everything by all. Let the young honour their elders, let the elders love their juniors.]¹⁹¹

It is no coincidence that the gathered nuns depicted on fol.1v of the *Passional* [Fig.2] are shown grasping fine, brightly coloured, clasped books indicating, not only their obedience to the Rule, but also their scholarship. The child nun Perchta, shown to the right of the group, would have received her education within the convent, and the *Passional* may well have played its part in this. The illustration on fol.10r [Fig.5] of Christ as the Man of Sorrows with the Instruments of the Passion, labels each of the symbols clearly: possibly an aid to Latin vocabulary as well as an aid to prayer.¹⁹² Aristocratic women were not excluded from education in medieval Europe and all the abbesses of St. George's Convent seem to have been from the highest Czech families and the nuns from the nobility.¹⁹³ The illustration on fol.1v makes the statement that the convent is intellectually engaged. This is how the abbess wishes them to be presented, marking her own role as the patroness of the manuscript.

Of the twenty one books that survive from the early fourteenth century library of St. George's Convent,¹⁹⁴ there are at least six manuscripts, excluding the *Passional*, that are directly associated with Cunegund,¹⁹⁵ and four which are considered to have been

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.104.

¹⁹¹ *The Rule of Benedict*, transl. by the monks of Glenstal abbey, 4 Courts Press, Dublin, 1994, Chapter LXIII, p.285-6.

¹⁹² C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Phaidon, London, 2004, p.178. In the Middle Ages children were taught to read from the Bible and breviaries and, when these became popular, from books of hours. These latter are said to have given rise to the term *primer* as a child's first reading book, having derived from the office of Prime, which appears at the beginning of books of hours.

¹⁹³ W.W. Tomek, op. cit., p.443.

¹⁹⁴ B.Rynešová, 'Beneš kanovník svatojiřský a pasionál abatyše Kunhuty', *Časopis archivní školy*, III, Prague, 1926.

¹⁹⁵ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslovny Kunhuty, Passionale Abbatissae Cunegundis*, Odeon, Prague, 1975 p.17.

NKČR XIII E 14/c – from the year 1303

NKČR XIV D 13 - “ “ “ 1306 }

NKČR XII D 10 - “ “ “ 1310 }

NKČR XIV E 10 - “ “ “ 1312 }

NKČR XII D 11 - “ “ “ 1318 }

NKČR XII D 13 - undated (Urbánková includes this MS, although it bears no identification, as it is so similar to the others in this group).

her personal property.¹⁹⁶ We know that Cunegund herself commissioned two sections of the *Passional* from Colda. This is a clear indication of her own appreciation of the written word. We have evidence that she was an assiduous reader for Colda informs us, on fol.31v, that Cunegund was,

“...*lectionibus fatigata assiduis...*”
[tired from frequent reading].

The books were written in Latin suggesting that this was no impediment to the members of the Prague Benedictine sisterhood whose birthrights afforded them an education that could be extended whilst in the convent.¹⁹⁷ The sisters would have devoted approximately four hours of every day to Divine Office, conducted in Latin. Latin readings accompanied their meals, and another three or four hours of the day was dedicated to alternative reading, for example the psalter, the Bible or, the case in point, the *Passional*; all in Latin. Dom. Cuthbert Butler considered Latin to have been “the vernacular” for Benedictine monks¹⁹⁸ and even if this was not true of all communities, the evidence from Cunegund’s library, and the *Passional* itself, strongly suggests that the Prague nuns at least had an understanding of Latin. Within the Rule, St. Benedict made provision for the ‘brothers’, and here may be substituted ‘sisters’, to improve themselves,

“...*fratribus qui psalterii vel lectionum aliquid indigent, meditationi inserviat...*”

[the brethren who need to do so shall employ the time over the Vigils in going over (rehearsing or learning by heart) the psalter or the readings.]¹⁹⁹

The *Passional* would have been used in a primarily Benedictine context, for the nuns’ central aim was to fulfil *Opus Dei* [the work of God].²⁰⁰ This was seen by St. Benedict as being primarily achieved by the performing of liturgical worship in the Divine Office, but also through the spiritual exercise of reading and prayer expressed

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p.17 note 9: NKČR VII G 17/d
NKČR XII D 8a-b
NKČR XII D 9
NKČR XII D 12

see APPENDIX IV.

¹⁹⁷ Because Latin is seldom taught thoroughly nowadays it has developed a certain mystique, and yet we are not surprised that today most of Europe speaks and writes English proficiently. It is easy to forget that Latin was the *lingua franca* in educated religious and court circles.

¹⁹⁸ C. Butler, *Benedictine Monachism*, Longmans, London, 1924, p.286.

¹⁹⁹ *The Rule of Benedict*, op.cit., Chapter VIII, p.114-116.

²⁰⁰ C. Butler, op.cit., p.29.

by the term *Meditatio*.²⁰¹ The importance given to this *Opus Divinum* is demonstrated by the fact that eleven chapters of the Rule are given over to its detailed description.²⁰² The Benedictines' aim declares,

“...*nostrae servitutis officia persoluamus...*”
[we acquit ourselves of the duties of our subject state.]²⁰³

and

“...*nihil operi Dei praeponatur...*”
[nothing takes precedence over the work of the Lord.]²⁰⁴

Celebration of the Divine Office required all the sisters to come together regularly throughout the day and night with one purpose, into one place, at the appointed time, to perform a single act of worship in unison. This uniform identity of purpose was reinforced by the wearing of the habit and the communal life-style. The attending of services was supported by a balance of prayer, study and physical work to maintain the community.

The *Passional* was not a liturgical book but fulfilled the function of providing a stimulus to thoughtful study and prayer; a paramount requisite of the Rule of Benedict. It is truly remarkable that this set of life rules has, almost unaltered, served Benedictine monks and nuns for almost fifteen centuries and continues so to do. When Cunegund took orders in 1302 there had already been an established pattern for monastic life for almost eight centuries. Although we do not know exactly how the sisters spent their time in the Convent of St. George, the fact that the Rule lays down the way that a religious existence should be conducted provides us at least with a fair idea and some understanding of the *Passional*'s place in the nuns' lives.

If the nuns in the Convent of St. George adhered to the guidance offered by the Rule of Saint Benedict, then their days would have been filled by a regular and routine round of worship, thoughtful prayer and reading, work and sleep. In Benedictine communities the Rule was read aloud, a chapter a day, to the assembled members of the Order, in a room reserved for this purpose and thus carrying the name 'chapter house'. Although little remains today of the original Convent of St.

²⁰¹ See above quotation. C. Butler, op. cit. p.61, defines this as a general term for reading, prayer and the experience of spiritual life, with private prayer as an exercise in personal devotion.

²⁰² C. Butler, op. cit., p.29.

²⁰³ Ibid. Chapter XVI, p.133.

²⁰⁴ Rule of Benedict, Chapter XLIII, as quoted by C.Butler, op. cit., p. 29.

George, following its baroque remodelling at the end of the seventeenth century, excavations in 1904 under Mach suggested, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the medieval convent consisted of four long buildings around a square central courtyard - a monastic cloister. The base of a central pillar was discovered in the most southerly room in the west wing of the cloister.²⁰⁵ This suggested to Mach that this was the site of the chapter house within the earlier conventual buildings.²⁰⁶

As, over the centuries, the Divine Office was elaborated, singing was incorporated and ritual developed so that the amount of time spent within the basilica would have increased. Because of the restrictions of enclosure it is likely that the nuns occupied a nuns' gallery on the south side of the church, connecting directly with the convent. Certainly following the papal edict *Periculoso*, of 1298, which demanded strict enforcement of the enclosure rule,²⁰⁷ if not before, they would have been screened by a curtain that was only withdrawn to allow observance of the raising of the Host. There is evidence that the nuns of St. George's Convent sang at the services, for a rubric note to a hymn within a *Processional* from Cunegund's library reads,

“...*post missam conventus cantet hos tres versus...*”
[after the mass the convent sings this third verse.]²⁰⁸

The services of Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline were to be attended to complete the ecclesiastical canonical hours of worship. From the time they rose at about 2.00 am until they went to bed at about 6.30 pm in the winter months, or later in the summer when they were allowed a rest in the afternoon, their day was punctuated by the tolling of the basilica bell calling them to prayer.

Despite the rigours of church attendance, time was allocated for attending to the daily life of the convent, and specific reading periods were incorporated into the daily pattern.

“...*Otiositas inimica est animae, et ideo ceris temporibus occupari debent fratres in labore manuum certis iterum horis in lectione divine...*”

²⁰⁵ This would be an unusual location since chapter houses were usually to be found in the east wing, adjacent to the east end of the church. See J. Hamburger et.al., ‘The Time of the Orders, 1200-1500 – An Introduction’, *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by J. Hamburger and S. Marti, Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p.46.

²⁰⁶ A. Merhautová, op.cit. p.63.

²⁰⁷ J. Hamburger, op.cit., p.45

²⁰⁸ NKČR XII.E.15a *Processionale, hymnarius*, fol.124v-125v.

[Idleness is bad for the soul and therefore the brethren must be employed at certain times in the work of their hands, and again at other times, also fixed, in reading devoted to God.]²⁰⁹

As far as physical labour was concerned, from early times convents had relied on servants, and other employed staff, to undertake arduous tasks and, unlike their male counterparts, the sisters did not, for example, work in the fields. They did, however, take on duties within the house. A *Diploma*, from the mid-fourteenth century, recorded by Dobner among the *Fragmentum Praebendarum*, lists the nuns' individual areas of responsibility,

“...*Bobunca Priorissa, Agnes Custrix, Ludmila Subpriorissa, Anka Infirmaria, Jutka Ostiaria, Margaretha Puzvicii, Sudka Cameraria, Katharina Stukonis, totusque Conventus Sanctimonialium monasterii Sancti Georgii predicti...et... Domin[a] Elizabeth Abbatiss[a]....*”²¹⁰

[Bobunca the prioress, Agnes the sacristan, Ludmila the subprioress, Anka the nurse, Jutka the gate-keeper, Margaretha the *puzvicii*, Sudka the housekeeper, Katharina the *stukonis*, and all the Holy Convent of the afore mentioned monastery of St. George...and.. Mistress Elizabeth, the abbess.]²¹¹

Eight sisters are named here with the abbess overseeing all. On fol.1v [Fig. 2], the *Dedicatory Illustration* represents the prioress, with the members of the convent to the right of the composition: a serene group of nuns of identical number to those in the above quotation, namely eight, with little Perchta at their side. Two sisters graciously gesture with deference and respect towards their abbess. I consider it likely that fol.1v accurately portrayed the number of nuns within the convent at the time that the *Passional* was written.²¹² The title above the group, following the old-established sequence of alternating red and blue capitals, reads,

“...*Prioris/sa cum con/ventu...*”
[Prioress with the convent.]

²⁰⁹ *The Rule of Benedict*, op. cit., Chapter XLVIII, p.227-228.

²¹⁰ J.G. Dobner, *Monumenta Historica Bohemiae, Vol. VI*, Prague, 1785, p.361.

²¹¹ I have been unable to translate *puzvicii* and *stukonis*. The first word is slavonic, the second appears to derive from Greek. I note that W.W. Tomek, op. cit., p.443, avoids mention of both these occupations.

²¹² C. Stace, *St. Clare of Assisi – Her Legend and selected writings*, Triangle, London, 2001, p.108. When Agnes founded the Convent of the Poor Clares in Prague, in 1234, five nuns were brought from Trento to set an example and to help the new nuns adopt the life of a Poor Clare. The Czech contingent, however, consisted of the Abbess, Agnes, and seven Czech noble women: a group of eight sisters.

The Prioress is obviously one of the gathering, presumably in the bottom row to the left and therefore closest to Cunegund; however there is nothing to distinguish her from her fellow sisters.

Eight may seem a small number of nuns for a convent, but this must be considered in the context of the total population of Prague. It is estimated that, prior to 1230, the inhabitants of Prague numbered around 3500. The Convent of St. George was the only nunnery in Prague during the preceding 260 years. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, thanks to *Ostsiedlung* and the expansion of the area of Prague now known as the Old Town, the total population is estimated to have rapidly grown to between 8000 and 10000.²¹³ At the same time there was a parallel increase in the number of convents, four being founded between 1234 and 1315.²¹⁴ Therefore, although the general population of Prague almost trebled, the number of convents increased four-fold. This reflects the new religious fervour that had gripped Europe and that was finding expression in the religious precepts of the newly founded Dominican and Franciscan brotherhoods and, of course, their sister communities. The Benedictine sisters of the Convent of St. George are not numerous, but the *Fragmentum Praebendarum* also makes several references to “*matronae*” [matrons] who were presumably elderly gentlewomen, or maybe more correctly noblewomen, under the care of the nuns, the convent acting in the capacity of an old people’s home. When one also includes the lay staff and servants there would have been a sizeable community, with each member presumably contributing something to the convent’s smooth running.²¹⁵

Specific time was reserved for practical activities, but the allocated time set aside for reading amounted to a total of approximately three to five hours a day, more time being given on Sundays.²¹⁶ In winter and Lent these fixed reading times would have fallen roughly between 3.30 and 4.00 am, that is between the early morning Vigils and the morning offices of Matins or Lauds, and then again between 5.00 and 9.00

²¹³ E. Poche, *Praha středověká*, Panorama, Prague, 1983, p.17 – introduction by Josef Janáček.

²¹⁴ Z. Fiala, *Předhusitské Čechy*, Svoboda, Prague, 1978 pp. 397-402.

1234 – Poor Clares, ‘u sv. Františka’, Old Town, Prague.

c.1282 – the Penitent sisters of St. Mary Magdalene, Old Town, Prague.

1315 - “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ , ‘u sv. Maří Magdaleny’, Prague.

1294-1296, refounded 1330 – Dominicans, ‘u Újezdě’, Prague.

²¹⁵ C. Brooke, *The Rise and Fall of the Medieval Monastery*, Folio Society, London, 2006, p.180. It is interesting to note that the convent at Lacock Abbey, in 1535-6, had a sisterhood of fifteen nuns who were served by a staff of forty servants.

²¹⁶ C. Butler, *op.cit.*, p.286.

am, being interrupted only by Prime, which was celebrated at sunrise. The last period for reading and reflection may have been following the meal, taken at about 5.00 pm until Compline, at sunset, before retiring to bed.²¹⁷ During Lent a special emphasis was placed on reading,

“...*post refectioem autem vacent lectionibus suis aut psalmis. In quadragesimae vero diebus a mane usque tertia plena vacent lectionibus suis, et usque decima hora plena operentur quod eis iniungitur.*”

[After the meal they shall occupy themselves with their readings of the psalms. In the days of Lent however let them keep at their reading from morning until the close of the third hour and until the close of the tenth hour they shall carry out the work enjoined to them.]²¹⁸

The sentence which follows the above quotation is of particular significance when considering the reasons for the commissioning of the *Passional*:

“...*In quibus diebus quadragesimae accipiant omnes singulos codices de bibliotheca quos per ordinem ex integro legant; qui codices in caput quadragesimae dandi sunt....*”

[In these days of Lent let each receive separate books from the library which they shall read through consecutively from the beginning to end; these books are to be given out at the beginning of Lent.]²¹⁹

This is perhaps an indication of one of the reasons for the *Passional* being so focused on the story of Christ's Passion. It is possible that, in commissioning the manuscript, Cunegund was providing her convent with suitable, edifying, Lenten reading matter that would prepare them, and herself, for Easter. The treatises and sermons in the *Passional* all answer the subject requirements as Easter approaches. Indeed, within it are two sections marked up to be read aloud: fol.11r-13r, where the end of the first reading is marked,

“...*Explicit collatio*²²⁰ *inparasceve....*”
[the reading finishes for Good Friday.]

This is immediately followed by

²¹⁷ It is generally accepted that we cannot have exact timings for the medieval monastic day however I have drawn on the information given by Dom. Cuthbert Butler, Dom. Hubert van Zeller and Christopher Brooke – op.cit..

²¹⁸ *The Rule of Benedict*, op. cit., Chapter XLVIII, p.227-228.

²¹⁹ Ibid. p.227-228.

²²⁰ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p.19, and P.Spunar, in his introduction to *Frater Colda ordinis praedicatorum – tractus mystici – Fontes Rerum bohemosum vol II*, edit. and transl. Dana Martínková, Prague, 1997 p. XXV, have both incorrectly transcribed this with a ‘c’ – “collacio”. ‘c’ and ‘t’ can be indistinguishable in Gothic script.

“...*Incipit collatio in vigilia pasche...*”
[the reading starts for Easter day.]

which extends from fol. 13r-17v.

The library of Cunegund,²²¹ such as it survived, contains works that might be expected to be found in the library of any medieval religious community. Apart from the Bible, there were the liturgical books: psalters, breviaries, antiphonaries etc., together with lives of saints and martyrs, and writings of the Church Fathers. Authors that one might expect to find in a Benedictine convent, such as St. Augustine or Gregory the Great, are apparently absent. Interestingly, however, Cunegund personally introduced the writings of the Platonists, St. Bernard,²²² and Dionysius the Areopagite and his disciples,²²³ into the convent library. These authors produced works of mystical content in tune with the teachings of St. Francis, reflecting the influences of her aunt, Abbess Agnes, and the Poor Clares on Cunegund's religious taste. She also introduced the works of St. Bonaventura who had been the minister general of the Franciscan Order in the lifetime of her Abbess aunt and guardian. Cunegund's library also included apocryphal gospels,²²⁴ together with several apocryphal accounts of Christ's childhood, two copies of the *Prayer of Anselm* (where the author regrets not having been present when the Virgin Mary was sorrowing), several non-liturgical laments and a small volume of the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, the archetypal Franciscan work.²²⁵

Manuscripts were very expensive to produce and, in some respect, must have seemed an extravagance. Cunegund considered the *Passional* a worthy expenditure and an important addition to the convent library, particularly since it was, if not a deluxe volume, certainly of superior quality to any of the surviving manuscripts in the convent's possession. Despite the rapid growth in population at the beginning of the fourteenth century,²²⁶ Prague was by no means the flourishing international, political and artistic centre that it was to become under the rule of Charles IV (1316-1378),

²²¹ APPENDIX IV and J. Viličkovský, *Pisemnictví českého středověku*, Universum, Prague, 1948, p.26-29.

²²² NKČR XIII. E. 14C, the works of Sts. Bernard and Bonaventura, dated 1303, the year after Cunegund joined the Convent of St. George. This is the earliest of the manuscripts gifted by Cunegund to her convent. This, in itself, suggests that it was a work that held significance for her.

²²³ NKČR XIV.E.10, a compilation. The dedication date of this manuscript is 1312; the same year as the dedication of the first section of the *Passional*.

²²⁴ Those of Pseudo-Matthew, Pseudo-Thomas and Nicodemus in NKČR XIV.E.10.

²²⁵ J. Viličkovský, *op.cit.*, p.27.

²²⁶ Chapter 4, p.65.

King of Bohemia (1346-1378) and Holy Roman Emperor (1355-1378). The political scene had been turbulent for many years, with lands gained and lost abroad, the damaging rule of Otto Brandenburg and, just seven years before the dedication of the *Passional*, the assassination of the king. Prior to John of Luxembourg taking the Bohemian throne, there was civil up-rising and bloody battles in Prague itself. It is hard to reconcile today's romantic tourist attraction, Prague's Charles' Bridge, with the bloody siege of the western tower of its predecessor, the Judith Bridge (Fig.30), which took place in the summer of 1310,²²⁷ or the ensuing battle that raged in Hradčany, in front of the castle gates.²²⁸ Even when he was king, much of John of Luxembourg's time was spent levying large taxes from the people of Prague and campaigning abroad. In 1312, the year of the *Passional's* dedication, the corn crop failed and there was a severe famine across the whole land, with many dying of hunger.²²⁹ Perhaps it is remarkable that anything as elaborate as the *Passional* was even commissioned at this time, or was the work born out of suffering, spurring Cunegund to immerse herself, and her sisters, in Christ's suffering, and to produce a fine manuscript to his glory?

The *Passional* must have played an important part in the nuns' devotional activity. The codex may have been for Cunegund's own private scrutiny; however, the inclusion of the sisters on the dedication page leads me to believe that she envisaged it as a tool of faith for her whole community. The theme of Part I of the codex is the parable, explained with reference to the Passion of Christ, which draws a parallel between Christ and an avenging knight, with the Instruments of the Passion being presented as weapons against Evil. That is straightforward enough, but the whole is taken into a different dimension by the illustrations which are provided for the purpose of focusing the reader's attention on each of the individual symbols of Christ's suffering, with the aim of creating an empathic association with the suffering each item inflicted, to an extent that could not have been achieved by simply reading the religious treatise alone. There are two full page illustrations, fol.3r [Fig.4] and 10r [Fig.5], directly stimulating contemplative thought of the most intense kind. The most striking of these is the *Man of Sorrows with the Symbols of the Passion*, on fol.10r,

²²⁷ W.W. Tomek., *Dějepis města Prahy, Vol III*, Prague, 1885, p. 478-479

²²⁸ Supporters of Princess Eliška fought with the hundreds of mercenaries brought in by King Henry of Carinthia (ruled Bohemia 1306, 1307-1310), husband of Eliška's elder sister Anna, who was already sensing a threat to his power. Unrest spread across the city leading to universal civil conflict which caused numerous deaths and the driving out of many German settlers.

²²⁹ W.W. Tomek , *Dějepis města Prahy, Vol.I*, Prague 1881, p.494.

which is clearly designed to channel the nuns' thoughts directly to Christ's suffering. Certain elements of the composition seem to have a special resonance for Cunegund, and a deep significance in relation to the devotion to the mystic body of Christ.²³⁰

Cunegund's own personal history must have shaped this work of immense spirituality.²³¹ For example, the image of the Virgin Mary, on fol. 11r, presents her as a greiving mother; Cunegund herself had been a mother and had been separated from at least two of her children at the time of her divorce and entry into the convent, which must have given her deeper insight into the grief of the Virgin Mary, expressed in the Lament, fol. 11r-17v. It has also been noted that Cunegund had specifically associated herself with Mary Magdalene by her choice of feast day for joining the order and the Convent of St. George.²³² The other Lament contained within the *Passional* is the Lament of Mary Magdalene.

The influences from her time in the Convent of the Poor Clares are reflected throughout the *Passional*. The opening parable pays obvious court to the Song of Solomon and thus mirrors the content of the surviving letters from St. Clare to Cunegund's early mentor, the Blessed Agnes. The image, on fol. 16v of the *Passional*, of Christ embracing the Virgin Mary, which carries 'Bride of Christ' connotations, echoes the words of St. Clare in the earliest surviving letter to Agnes, dated to some time before 11th June, 1234. She writes,

“...you are taking a spouse of more noble lineage, the Lord Jesus Christ... When you love him, you remain chaste; when you touch him, you will become more pure; when you accept him, you are still a virgin... You are already caught in his embrace....”²³³

²³⁰ J. Vlček Schurr, “The Man of Sorrows and the Instruments of the Passion - Aspects of the Image in the *Passional* of Abbess Cunegund,” accepted for publication - *Visible Exports/Imports: New research on Medieval and Renaissance European Art and Culture*. Edited by Emliy Jane Anderson and Jill Farquhar. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle). Cunegund's personal *Breviary*, NKČR VII.G.17d, National Library of the Czech Republic, Prague, contains, on fols 146v-151v, the prayer/hymn known as *Kunhutina modlitba* [Cunegund's prayer]: a profound contemplation on the mysteries of Transubstantiation, indicating that Cunegund had a personal fascination with this idea. The Host, in the form of a Vernicle, and the chalice are prominent exhibited in the illustration on fol. 10r.

²³¹ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslovny Kunhuty*, Odeon, Prague, 1975, p.35-36. Stejskal, in a chapter entitled “Christ's Bride in the *Passional* is the Abbess Cunegund,” goes to the extreme of interpreting each stage of the Parable, as it set out on fol. 3v of the *Passional*, as literally representing episodes in Cunegund's personal life.

²³² Chapter 3, p.41.

²³³ C. Stace, op.cit., p.109-110.

Even more striking is the discovery that elements of both the Colda texts of the *Passional*, that is the first section with the image on fol.10r and the third section on the Heavenly Abodes, feature within one paragraph of Letter II (dated 1234-1239). St. Clare entreats Agnes to,

“...hold fast to Christ. Consider that he became contemptible for your sake and follow him, making yourself contemptible for him in this world. Your spouse is the most comely of the children of men, yet for your salvation he made himself the lowliest of men; he was despised, beaten, scourged many times over his whole body, then suffered the agony of the cross and died. Most noble queen, gaze upon him, consider him, contemplate him in your desire to imitate him. If you suffer with him, you will reign with him; if you grieve with him, you will rejoice with him; if you die with him upon the cross of tribulation you will gain the heavenly mansions in the splendour of the saints, and your name will be written in the Book of Life and be immortal among men...”²³⁴

Cunegund appears to have introduced Franciscan concepts of faith, not only in choice of reading matter, but also in religious expression, such as the focusing of thoughts through contemplative prayer as a route to indentifying with Christ and the Virgin, into the more traditional world of the Benedictine convent, perhaps helping the sisters to join the more spiritual age that had dawned.

Emotional responses to religious thought and prayer were not, however, exclusively the preserve of the new orders, for the Benedictine Rule states,

“...*et si alter vult sibi forte secretius orare, simpliciter intret et oret, non in clamosa voce, sed in lacrimis et intentione cordis...*”

[if at other times he wishes to pray more secretly by himself, let him, in all simplicity, go in and pray, not with a loud voice but with tears and an attentive heart.]²³⁵

Several details point to Part I of the *Passional* not being intended solely for “secret” individual prayer. The most obvious of these is, as I have already noted, the inclusion of members of the community in the *Dedication Illustration*, on fol.1v. They are participants and would have been the beneficiaries also. The size of the manuscript also indicates that it was most probably intended to be viewed by several nuns at a time. Dimensions of 30 x 25 cm would be unusually large for a book of private, personal devotion, at a time when these were becoming smaller and more

²³⁴ Ibid., p.114-115.

²³⁵ *The Rule of Benedict*, op. cit., Chapter LII, p.244.

intimate.²³⁶ A small group of nuns, such as we see illustrated on fol.1v, could have gathered around the *Passional* quite comfortably. Once again St. Benedict provides approval of shared study,

“...*mox surrexerint a cena, sedeant omnes in unum, et legat unus collationes vel vitas patrum aut certe aliud quod aedificet audientes...*”

[as soon as they have risen from supper let them all sit down together, and let one person read the Conferences or the Lives of the Fathers, or indeed something which may edify listeners.]²³⁷

All the parts of the *Passional* would have been suitable for reading aloud. It has already been noted²³⁸ that the Lament of the Virgin Mary was marked out for this use on Good Friday and Easter Day, and was obviously read aloud at least on these occasions.

The nuns at St. George's Convent would have been expected to follow the Rule of Benedict in their worship and their reading; they certainly appear to have conformed in their mode of dress. They are shown in the *Dedication Illustration* [Fig.2] to be all dressed alike, with no concessions being made to the abbess. They adopt the black of the Benedictines, a colour that was instantly recognisable in the Middle Ages as symbolising repentance, and which had been the obligatory colour of the order's habit since a ninth century imperial decree.²³⁹ They appear to be wearing a close fitting, white undergarment which emerges at the wrists: a dispensation for living in colder climes than those of Monte Cassino. The white wimple and forehead band are standard, although it is interesting that the black veil, indicating that vows have been taken, is depicted as being quite short, ending at shoulder-length. Their loose fitting tunics, shown as having wide open cuffs,²⁴⁰ would most probably have been held in at the waist by a strip of black cloth. The tunics were covered over by the scapular: a floor-length, broad strip of cloth running from front to back with a hole for the head to pass through. This was made of identical cloth to that of the tunic and therefore is indistinguishable in the painting. It is clear that these two, flowing items of clothing and the black veil were made of a loosely woven, coarse cloth, and that the artist was

²³⁶ Cunegund's breviary, NKČR VII. G.17d measures 17 x 12 cm.

²³⁷ Ibid., Chapter XLII, p.211-212.

²³⁸ Chapter 4, p.66-67.

²³⁹ B. Harvey, *Monastic Dress in the Middle Ages – Precept and Practice*, William Urry Memorial Trust, London, 1988, p.10.

²⁴⁰ It is interesting that King Henry V of England suggested a maximum allowance of ½ yard of cloth at the cuff for monks, as he felt that they were becoming extravagantly wide. B.Harvey, op.cit., p.13.

at pains to indicate this by employing a cross-hatching painting technique. This would coincide with St. Benedict's enjoinder to use cheap, local cloth and to avoid any revealing of body form. Accounts from the Benedictine abbey of Westminster show that two qualities of black cloth were purchased: a coarser serge and a finer worsted cloth.²⁴¹

It appears that the cloaks worn by Cunegund and her nuns were of a closer weave than the material used for the veils and tunics. They are painted, on fol. 1v, hanging in multiple, free folds that fall over the abbess' knees and over the arms of the nuns. The wash is graded to indicate light and shade and to give form to the garment. The cloak, or *cuculla*, was worn for services and on auspicious occasions, and in St. George's Convent it appears to have taken the form of a sleeveless wrap with a stiff, high collar. I suggest that this is the so-called *pepla crispa*, more commonly referred to as *ransa*, which emulated a garment supposedly worn by Mary Magdalene.²⁴² Nuns in the Middle Ages frequently used Mary Magdalene as their role model.²⁴³ At least on the evidence of fol. 1v, the sisters of St. George's Convent could not be criticised for the extravagances of some later, lapsed prioresses, such as Margaret Fairfax of Nun Monkton Priory, Yorkshire, who was visited on 30th April, 1397, by Thomas Dalby, Archdeacon of Richmond and who reported her for, amongst other misdemeanors, wearing furs and silk veils.²⁴⁴ All the robes of the nuns of St. George's Convent flow right down to sweep the ground and there is only a discreet peeping-out of the abbess' and nuns' pointed, black slippers, once again indicating that Cunegund dressed in exactly the same manner as the rest of her community.

To the left of fol. 1v appears brother Colda's rubric title, written in characters of the same size as those used in Cunegund's title. Her name, however, is presented in gold, red and blue capitals whereas in Colda's title only the leading F of *Frater* is marked out, worked in blue and simply embellished with a red line. This distinguishes him as the next most important figure in the composition, after Cunegund, by virtue of being the author of two major sections of the codex. His physical stature also reflects his relative importance: he is depicted far smaller than the dominant figure of Cunegund,

²⁴¹ Ibid. p.19.

²⁴² J. Hamburger and R. Suckale, 'Between this World and the Next – The Art of Religious Women in the Middle Ages', *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by J. Hamburger and S. Marti. Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p.95.

²⁴³ Ibid. Also see Chapter 3, p.41.

²⁴⁴ *A History of the County of York, Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Priory of Nun Monkton*, Vol. III, edit. W. Page, 1974, p.122.

but considerably larger than the portrayal of Beneš, the scribe. Both Colda and Beneš appear humbly kneeling before their patroness. The legend sets out, for the reader, his role in the production of the codex and where he comes from,

“...*Frater Colda lector de sancto Clemente ordinis fratrum predicatorum egregius dictator huius libri...*”

[Brother Colda, lector from St. Clement of the order of preaching brothers, the distinguished dictator of this book.]

The Dominican order was established in Prague in 1226, then in 1232 the monastic foundation of St. Clement was located on the site of today's Klementinum which is now the home of the National and University Library and therefore, appropriately enough, also the present home of the *Passional*. It was a precept of the Dominican Order to undertake theological study, as well as to preach and convert, and Colda was at pains throughout his treatises to demonstrate his knowledge of religious texts and to back up his comments with references to the Bible and to the Church Fathers. By this means he wished to reflect his education and erudition as well as to authenticate his points. It has been suggested that he may have been Cunegund's personal confessor, a role adopted by Dominicans, and this is quite possible.²⁴⁵ The canons of the Basilica gave religious tuition and spiritual guidance to the sisters in the convent, indeed already by the thirteenth century it was common for canons to exercise jurisdiction over nuns that they supervised.²⁴⁶ Unusually, the canons of St. George's Basilica were directly answerable to the Abbess and not under the direction of a deacon, or other senior prelate²⁴⁷ and, therefore, it is likely that they exerted less control than in other similar establishments. It would, however, have been inappropriate for one of them to have acted as her confessor. This would make Colda a very good candidate. It is equally probable that Colda was chosen to compose this work because he was the most learned Christian scholar in Prague at that time and, as shall be seen below, was already known to the royal court specifically, having been associated with Cunegund's brother, Wenceslas II. What is indisputable is that Colda's teachings would have been close to those which Cunegund had been exposed to in her youth, under the tutelage of her great-aunt in the Convent of the Poor Clares. It is likely that Cunegund would have had a sound, and 'modern' theological education at the hand of

²⁴⁵ P.Spunar, op.cit., p.XX.

²⁴⁶ C. Lawrence, op.cit., p.219.

²⁴⁷ W.W. Tomek, op.cit., p.445.

her great-aunt Agnes since she herself had direct instructions, through her correspondence, from St. Clare, the foundress of the Order. The entire work of the *Passional* reflects the new, empathetic form of prayer with which Cunegund was familiar, but that was not practised in more traditional Benedictine establishments, and would certainly not have been the way of the centuries-old worship in the Convent of St. George. If this was an innovation brought by Cunegund to the Benedictine sisterhood, then Colda's writings and the striking accompanying illustrations must certainly have played their part.

Colda would have felt socially at home amongst the aristocratic members of the Benedictine convent for he was a member of an old and well-established family from Meissen, who also held estates in Bohemia: Colda of Colditz. There is little substantial detail of his life; however, he himself writes on fol.2r/v of the *Passional* of all the "kindnesses" he received,

".....in serenissimi domini / Uvenceslay boemiæ quondam // regis sancte recordationis fratris / vestri palacio perceptorum fateor / quod etiam usque ad mortem exse/qui cupio quicquid a quocumque / ex illius sanguine generoso michi / fuerit imperatum....."

[in the palace of your brother, the most gentle Lord Wenceslas, once King of Bohemia. I admit that I wish to continue to the grave (doing) whatever may be required of me by any person of his noble blood.]

Colda had been a member of Wenceslas II's court, although we do not know in what capacity, and unashamedly solicited a continuing association with the royal line through the late king's sister. He describes himself, on fol.2r, as

"...ordinis predicatorum minimus..."

[the least in the order of the predicants.]

and refers to his *"...orationum..humilium..."* [humble oration] yet, despite this, he is clearly ambitious and is seeking to please the abbess-princess, perhaps with an eye to securing recognition and to furthering his progress. There is a thread of what might appear to be obsequiousness running through both the sections of the work which are of his composing. It would be a mistake, however, to judge this by today's standards for such a style of address was acceptable, even required, until relatively recently.²⁴⁸ It

²⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that Dobner himself, writing as late as 1785, in his *Monumenta Historica Bohemiae, Vol. VI*, Prague, prefaces his work with an elaborate twenty two page dedication and introduction which is both dutiful and flattering to his patron, in which he addresses him, in capital

appears that Colda's link with the royal court was maintained as a letter survives from John of Luxembourg (ruled 1310-d.1346) to Pope Clement V (pope bet. 1305-d.20th April, 1314) in which Colda is described using his family name, presumably in order to stress his nobility which is referred to directly within the text of the letter,

“...Colda de Colditz ordiniis predicatorum lector Pragensis...”
[Colda of Colditz, of the order of predicants, lector in Prague.]²⁴⁹

John of Luxembourg was recommending Colda as a suitable candidate to act as confessor for Czech pilgrims travelling to Rome, proclaiming him to be,

“...počestný a nábožný muž, pocházející ze slechtický kruhů království Českého, vynkající vzdělanosti a počestnosti mravů, čistým životem, náboženskou horlivostí, vybraností v řeči a prozíravostí...”
[an honest and godly man, coming from the noble circles of the Bohemian Kingdom, outstandingly well educated and of honourable morals, pure living, with religious fervour, refined in speech and fore-sight.]²⁵⁰

High praise indeed, and indicative of the king having personal knowledge of Colda. This letter is not dated, but as John of Luxembourg came to the throne in 1310 and Clement V died in 1314, it can be placed between these dates. It appears that, despite another letter of recommendation to the Pope from Bishop John of Dražic, Colda did not take up this post. On the 1st May, 1318 Pope John XXII published a Bull confirming “...Frater Colda...” as inquisitor for the diocese of Olomouc.²⁵¹ The Dominican order had been charged with inquisitorial duties since 1248 with the purpose of ‘encouraging’ people back to the ‘true’ faith. The last mention of Colda is made in a document of Pope John XXII, dated 1st June, 1327,

“...per quondam Colda, fratrem dicti ordinis praedicatorum inquisitorem heretice pravitatis...”
[by the one time Colda, brother of the aforementioned Order of the predicants, inquisitor of the wickedness of heretics.]²⁵²

making it clear that Colda had died sometime before this date.

letters, as “...REVERENDISSIME AC AMPLISSIME DOMINE DOMINE ABBAS...” [the most reverend and best master, master abbot]. Dobner humbly signs himself at the end of the section, in very small print, “...servorum infimus, Gelasius Dobner e Scholis Piis...”[the lowest of servants Gelasius Dobner from the School of Theology].

²⁴⁹ F. Tichý, ‘Frater Colda O.P.’, *Časopis národního muzea* 113, 1939, p.82.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. p.82.

²⁵¹ B. Rynešová, ‘Beneš kanovník Svatojirský a Pasionál abatyšské kunhuty’, *Časopis archivní školy III*, 1926, p.14, note 2.

²⁵² Ibid.

It is generally agreed that Colda's writing in the *Passional* is neither particularly original, nor intellectually or theologically challenging in content. It is the illustrations that lift the work to another level. Colda, as a prominent Dominican lector in Prague, may have had contact with Master Jan Eckhart of Hochheim (c.1260-c.1328), a recognised preacher of mystical theology from the Rhineland School, and the Dominican Vicar General of the Czech Province between 1307 and 1311.²⁵³ Colda's writings, however, are not of a particularly philosophical, or even mystical nature, but rather take the form of a well-rehearsed sermon or lesson²⁵⁴ using the scriptures and drawing on St. Augustine, St. Bernard and Dionysius the Areopagite as supportive evidence. The initial parable, for example, presents the captive virgin as a representation of the human soul; however Colda fails to examine this in any greater depth, reflecting none of Eckhart's teachings of the stages of the soul's progress towards ultimate and complete unity with God. The shape of the *Passional* as it appears with the illustrations is, however, unmistakably 'of its time' and takes the form of an undeniably mystical work, the reader being charged to adopt a deeper, and more emotionally charged, relationship with Christ.

In the illustration on fol.1v [Fig.2], both Brother Colda and Canon Beneš are tonsured with the Roman tonsure of St. Peter to represent the Crown of Thorns and indicating their ecclesiastical status. Colda's tonsure is more severe with his head being shaven above and below the remaining ring of hair, whereas Beneš has only a shaven pate. Colda also appears to be wearing an undergarment that shows at the wrist, no doubt, as for the sisters, in preparation for the cold Czech winters. His garb is typical of a Dominican: a black, hooded *cappa*, or mantle, over a white habit. White was seen to symbolise glory and was worn by other religious orders, such as the Praemonstratensians. Both the white of the Dominican habit and the black of the *cappa* was achieved by using undyed wool, following the guidance set down by St. Augustine.

What a striking contrast is then offered by the figure of Beneš in his rose pink tunic with an intensely blue scapular tied off with a white belt. As he was a secular canon he would have had no strictly dictated code of dress. This was not established until the

²⁵³ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p.23.

²⁵⁴ This impression is confirmed by his addressing his 'audience' within the text of the work as "...*fratres*...", clearly forgetting that it is nuns that he is addressing, eg. fol.30r l.9. There are several other examples of this throughout the work. If he had supplied Beneš with a reworked sermon, rather than a new composition "...*laboris triduan*..."[of three days' toil] fol.31v, then it was careless of him not to alter the chosen form of address before handing it over to the scribe.

end of the Middle Ages.²⁵⁵ His wide cuffs are gathered in at the wrist, possibly by buttons, following the fashions of the day. Pope Clement V passed legislation in 1312, and therefore the same year that the first section of the codex was written, forbidding the use of buttons by religious orders, considering it to be vainglorious.²⁵⁶ Being a cleric, however, Beneš was exempt from such an edict. His secular status may also account for his head being shaven only on the crown, the rest of his hair falling in rows of loose curls. His rubric title, which snakes its way around his figure, reads,

“...*Benessius Canonicus sancti georgii scriptor eiusdem libri...*”
[Beneš canon of St. George is the writer of this book.]

It was quite usual for scribes to be clerics and, therefore, not devoting all their time to their scribal activities. Canons were maintained in the basilica of St. George to administer services. This was an essential requirement, as the nuns themselves were not allowed to officiate at mass.²⁵⁷ The Convent of St. George benefitted from adjoining the great basilica which is recorded as having had 9 canons who not only served at the Divine Offices, but also provided the nuns with education, spiritual guidance and presumably handled their accounts and business affairs.²⁵⁸ The church of St. Vitus, adjacent to St. George's Basilica, had become a bishop's seat in 974, and is recorded as having a *claustrum* [clergy-house] where the canons lived.²⁵⁹ Secular canons were clerics, but they often lived together in a residence, or clergy-house, without having to submit to the restrictions of monastic life. They did not have to share their goods and they received individual incomes – the *praebendae* recorded in the convent archives.²⁶⁰ It is a reference in the *Fragmentum Praebendarum*, transcribed for us by Dobner, that provides us with the only further information that we have about Beneš,

“...*Item prebenda, cujus corpus est in villa Przilep...cui Benessius in eadem successit...*”²⁶¹

²⁵⁵ B. Harvey, op.cit., p.8.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p.12.

²⁵⁷ C. Brooke, op.cit., p.180. The community of nuns at Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, in 1535-6 had four male chaplains to administer for fifteen nuns.

²⁵⁸ W.W. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy, Vol. III*, Prague 1855, p.445.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p.97. The chronicler Vincencius, writing at the same time as the *Passional*, recorded in his *Letopisy české* that the canon house of St. Vitus' Cathedral was burned down by Konrad Moravský, in 1142. On the same occasion the Convent of St. George also suffered severe fire damage.

²⁶⁰ Drawing from these, Tomek presents fascinating details of the canons' life, op. cit., p. 445-446.

²⁶¹ J.G. Dobner, op.cit., p.348.

[The ‘living’, the main part of which is on the estate of Přílepy...so Beneš took over this ‘living’.]

It seems that between 1294 and 1304 Beneš held one of the several livings in parishes that were on estates belonging to the convent. Přílepy lies approximately sixty kilometres to the west of Prague, near the small town of Kněževes, which was also held by the Convent. The extent of the duties expected from the incumbent of a *prebenda* is not, however, recorded. The above quotation from the *Fragmentum Praebendarum* goes on to state,

“...et ipse Benessius manu propria, ea, que sunt in antiquo Graduali nova scripta scripsit...”²⁶²

[and this Beneš himself with his own hand wrote new writings in an old Gradual.]

This strongly suggests that it is indeed the same Beneš, the scribe of the *Passional*, who is being referred to in the document. And so we are brought to a discussion of Beneš, *scriptor*.

That Beneš is named at all in the manuscript is an indication of the value of the work as it was not common practice in the late Middle Ages for scribes, let alone illuminators, to be identified.²⁶³ On fol.1v [Fig.2], Beneš is described as *scriptor* [scribe] in a rubric title that was penned by himself. Comparison of the letter forms indicates that Beneš was also the *rubricator*. This latter role involved not only the writing of the rubric titles to the miniatures, but also the adding of red strokes to the majuscules in the text which indicate the beginnings of sentences.²⁶⁴ Majuscules should not to be confused with initials, despite their occasional elaborate nature, as they were written in the course of writing the rest of the text, using the same pen that was used for the miniscules. They demanded more from the scribe artistically, as they often involved extra hairline strokes and flourishes. A particularly fine example is the letter “N” at the start of Colda’s eulogy to Cunegund on fol.30r. This *littera notabilior*²⁶⁵ is echoed further down the page on l.9. They both exemplify Beneš’s skill as a scribe.

²⁶² Ibid., p.348.

²⁶³ C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, London, 2004, p.37.

²⁶⁴ Chapter 1, p.23, it has been remarked that the rubric strokes on the majuscules are absent on the lower 2/3 of fol.11v – 13v inclusive, and on fol.35v-36v inclusive.

²⁶⁵ A. Derolez, *Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books, from the Twelfth to the early Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.183.

The *Passional* is written in a generally neat, northern gothic *textualis formata*, subgroup *semiquadratus*. Throughout the whole codex, but especially in the first section, the script has a generally pleasing appearance. It is interesting to note, however, that, in the *Passional*, the ascenders of some of the majuscules creep above the top line of the page²⁶⁶ and, more significantly, there are several examples of letters with calligraphic decoration of the ascenders, which extend over the top headline,²⁶⁷ for example the letter “h” on fol.5r. Such extensions are not a feature of *textualis formata*, but of documentary script.²⁶⁸ This may tell us something of Beneš general scribal activity, indicating that he was also involved in the preparation of official and legal documents.

There seems to be no doubt that Beneš was responsible for the writing of the entire work, even though there is a marked discrepancy between the quality of execution of the first and the later sections of the *Passional*. The first section is remarkable for its even, well-formed and compact script. It was probably written over a short period of time, on well-prepared parchment, using a single quill. The differences between the penmanship of the various sections of the later parts of the codex, Parts 2-5, may be put down to the use of less good quality parchment and quills. This can have a great impact on script, and the larger writing on fol.11a, for example, is probably the product of a wider quill.²⁶⁹ There was also the two year hiatus between the writing of the first and later sections of the manuscript to consider.

Beneš makes a large number of copyist’s mistakes throughout the entire text, particularly in the later sections of the work, and even occasionally also in the rubrics.²⁷⁰ The many scribal errors of the c.1314 section of the manuscript are all the more obvious for the frequent and rather untidy crossings-out, and for the more common scratchings-out and rewritings. The comparable handwriting suggests that Beneš was responsible for the inserted words within the text, with omission marks beneath them, suggesting that he added them close to or at the time of writing.²⁷¹

An interesting and enigmatic insertion in the margins of the *Passional* are four manicules: small, feathery, stylised representations of a hand with a pointing finger

²⁶⁶ ‘I’, fol.6v; ‘h’, fol.23v; ‘I’, fol.24v; ‘I’, fol.31r; ‘h’, fol.31v; ‘I’, fol.33r; ‘I’, fol.36v.

²⁶⁷ ‘h’, fol.5v; ‘I’, fol.12v; ‘h’, fol.18v; ‘I’, fol.19v; ‘I’, fol.32r; ‘I’, fol.34r; ‘L’ fol.35r.

²⁶⁸ A. Derolez, op.cit., p.80.

²⁶⁹ C. De Hamel, op.cit., 2004, p.29.

²⁷⁰ For example, fol.17v.

²⁷¹ For example, “..est..” on fol.18v, “..ignorare..” on fol.19r, “..sibi..” on fol.27v, “..-te..” on fol.29r and “..facta..” on fol. 30r.

with which to highlight something note-worthy in the text. Although these are common in medieval manuscripts, I do not believe the *Passional* examples to have been previously discussed. Those, for example, that appear in the *Willehalm Codex*, 1334, Hessische Landesbibliothek, Kassel²⁷² have been identified by Joan Holladay as attributable to the Willehalm Master himself, as the manicules compare directly with the illustrated hand of the king in the miniatures.²⁷³ The *Passional* examples, all four seemingly executed by one person, do not, however, lend themselves to such identification of authorship.

The first and clearest appears on fol.14r [*Fig. 31*], while the others are more hurriedly executed and more leaf-like. That on fol.29r is tucked into the spine of the work at the foot of the text, and on fol.34v another appears mid-way down the text. The most unusual is that on fol.30v, which is actually orientated away from the text. This may be the work of a dominantly right-handed person who was, therefore, only able to execute the sign fluently in one direction or who was unable, or did not feel it necessary, to reverse it. All the manicules are pointing to the right. They do not appear to be highlighting errors and the significance of the symbol in these contexts is unclear. These manicules were purposefully added to the manuscript, but there is nothing to suggest who executed them.

The question of the authorship of the manicules pales into insignificance, however, when set against the enigma, presented by the *Passional*, of the identity of the illuminator.

²⁷² J. Holladay, 'The Willehalm Master and his colleagues: Collaborative manuscript decoration in early fourteenth century Cologne', *Proceedings of the fourth Conference of the Seminar in the History of the Book to c.1500*, edit. L. Brownrigg, Oxford, July, 1992, California, 1995 p.72.

²⁷³ J. Holladay, *op.cit.*, p.73.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ILLUMINATOR - an argument for separate identity

Illuminators were often unnamed and, therefore, it is of little surprise, although considerable disappointment, that the illuminator of the *Passional* remains so.²⁷⁴ The Czech art historian Antonín Matějček wrote in 1922,

“...Od dob Vocelových, jeví se v umělecko-historické literatuře snaha ztotožniti písaře Beneše s malířem, než pro tuto domnětku není důvodů, jež by obstály...”²⁷⁵

[Since the time of Vocol there has been an attempt in art historical literature to consider the scribe Beneš and the artist to be one, even though there are no grounds for this supposition.]

Writing in 1975, Karel Stejskal argued once again that the scribe and artist were one and the same, and then proceeded to refer to Beneš as being, *de facto*, the artist.²⁷⁶ Stejskal essentially based his premise on three ‘facts’: that the style of the illustrations and Beneš’s writing style were both northern French, indicating that he had been trained as an artist and scribe in France;²⁷⁷ that Beneš was described as *scriptor*, which could also mean artist; and that the red highlights to the paintings had been added by Beneš, in his role as *rubricator*, thus identifying him as the illustrator. I shall consider each of these points, re-examining what information we have and, by presenting some new evidence, I shall hope to prove that Beneš was not the artist of the *Passional*, and that there were two separate masters at work on this manuscript, each exercising his own individual skill and profession.

Stejskal quotes Pavel Spunar as having noted similarities between the script of the *Passional* and that of contemporary northern France. Gothic script at this period, however, had many shared features across the whole of Europe, and Stejskal makes

²⁷⁴ J. Hamburger, *The Rothschild Canticles – Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland c.1300*, Yale University Press, Newhaven and London, 1990, p.159, makes a brief reference to the *Passional* and states that several artists were involved in its illustration. This was the view of Hanuš, ‘Kritické poznámky’, *Krok, I*, Prague, 1865, p.235, however by the 1920’s it was accepted that the illustrations were the work of a single artist; a stance that has not been questioned since. See A.Matejček, *Pasionál Abatyše Kunhuty*, Prague, 1922, p.10 and B. Rynešová, ‘Beneš kanovník svatojirský a pasionál abatyše Kunhuty’, *Časopis archivní školy, III*, Prague, 1926, p.21.

²⁷⁵ A. Matejček, op.cit., p.9-10.

²⁷⁶ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslvny Kunhuty – Passionale Abbatissae Cunegundis*, Prague, 1975.

²⁷⁷ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p.24. Stejskal presumes that he was trained in Paris.

no comment of several, interesting, specifically central European features of Beneš's script in the *Passional*. For example, Beneš employs the double-bowed letter-form of 'a', as in this typing font, but with a strong tendency towards closing the upper bows. This is typical of Bohemian, Moravian and Austrian manuscripts from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, in preference to the use of the box, *Kasten*, 'a', which was formed by two vertical strokes divided by a horizontal stroke, and which was favoured by the rest of northern Europe.²⁷⁸ Derolez recognises further indications of central European scribal style: the very strong bifurcations at the top of the ascenders and the relatively small bow beneath the line of the 'g'. In his opinion, the spelling *wlneribus*, for example, that appears in the title on fol.2v, is distinctly German or central European and not French.²⁷⁹

The art of the *Passional* has been compared with that of the French Master Honoré²⁸⁰ who was working in Paris at the beginning of the fourteenth century and who also enjoyed royal patronage. Comparison has also been made between the illustrations of the *Passional* and the *Peterborough Psalter*, Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, MS 9961-62, the *Queen Mary's Psalter*, British Library 2. B.VII, and the *Psalter of Robert de Lisle*, Arundel MS 83(II)²⁸¹ [Fig. 32], thus acknowledging a stylistic link with English contemporary manuscripts. Jan Květ believed the influences to be more East Anglian than French.²⁸² It is beyond the scope of this work to consider a comparison of style, iconography and painting technique; however, suffice it to say that there is no evidence of a clear common French source of inspiration to unite the script and the art of the *Passional* or, therefore, the scribe and the artist.

Beneš's title of *scriptor* does not declare him to be the artist. *Scriptor* translates as scribe, and *pictor* [painter] is the title one would expect to accompany an artist, if he is illustrated at all which is uncommon. Stejskal argued for *scriptor* being applicable to both activities, citing the geometric and technical drawing skills of the artist, which

²⁷⁸ A. Derolez, op.cit., p.86.

²⁷⁹ I am most grateful to Albert Derolez for personally responding to my particular question about the national characteristics displayed by the script of the *Passional*. I very much appreciate his learned opinion.

²⁸⁰ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, *Pasionál Přemyslvny Kunhuty – Passionale abbatissae Cunegundis*, Prague, 1975, p.102.

²⁸¹ Ibid. p.140.

²⁸² J. Květ, *Czechoslovakian Miniatures from Gothic and Romanesque Manuscripts*, New York Graphic Society, Unesco, 1959, p.20 and *Illuminované rukopisy královny Rejčky*, Prague, 1931, p.239.

are no more evident in this work than in many other gothic illuminated manuscripts, as qualification for describing the artist as a scribe. Beyond this, Stejskal's argument for the Latin *scribere* [to write] being interchangeable with the verbs *tingere* [to colour] and *pingere* [to paint] are weakened by his analogies with Czech and Russian which are Slavonic languages and, therefore, unassociated with Latin.²⁸³ The rubrics of the *Dedication Illustration* on fol. 1v, are at pains to describe the name, location and activity of each of the individuals portrayed. Beneš himself wrote his own rubric title, stating himself thus:

“...*Benessius Canonicus sancti georgii scriptor eiusdem libri...*”
[Beneš canon of St. George is the writer of this book.]

His title shows that he was employed as a canon serving in the Basilica of St. George, itself a time-consuming occupation with, as the *Fragmentum Praebendarum* establishes, parish responsibilities as well.²⁸⁴ Apart from his scribal activities producing manuscripts for the Convent, I have also suggested that Beneš may also have had clerical responsibilities that extended to include the writing up of legal and official documents.²⁸⁵ Incidentally, the *Fragmentum Praebendarum* refers to Beneš only as a scribe:

“...*Benessius manu propria novascripta scripsit...*”
[Beneš wrote new writings with his own hand]²⁸⁶

Beneš, also, describes himself, in the rubric title of the frontispiece of the *Passional*, as a scribe.

Many medieval illustrations of scribes depict two inkhorns on the desk, for black and red ink.²⁸⁷ This demonstrates that it was not unusual for the scribe to also provide the rubrics. Since the Convent of St. George had no *scriptorium* and there is no evidence that large quantities of scribal work was being undertaken, it is unsurprising that the scribe of the *Passional* was called upon to perform the tasks of both *scriptor* and *rubricator*, particularly since they both primarily involve writing. Rynešová

²⁸³ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit. p.25.

²⁸⁴ Chapter 4, p.77-79.

²⁸⁵ Chapter 4, p.79.

²⁸⁶ J.G. Dobner, *Monumenta Historica Bohemiae, Vol. VI*, Prague, 1785, op.cit., p.348.

²⁸⁷ C. De Hamel, *Medieval Craftsmen – Scribes and Illuminators*, British Museum Press, London, 1992, p. 33.

recognised Beneš's hand in the book labels discussed in Chapter I,²⁸⁸ and of course there may have been other works penned by Beneš which have not survived. His considerable skill as a scribe was called upon for at least two other works from the St. George's Convent library, identified by Rynešová:²⁸⁹ these are a fine *Processional*, NKČR VII. G. 16, and part of an *Antiphonary*, NKČR VII. G. 46. Stejskal also recognises Beneš as having been the scribe for these works, and he also refers to the Gradual mentioned in the *Praebendae*.²⁹⁰ Neither the *Processional* nor the *Antiphonary* is illustrated.

Finally, Stejskal makes the very interesting observation that the rubrics are written with the same pen and ink as is used to add the outlines to the haloes, and the bloody details to the illustrations.²⁹¹ I believe that, instead of proving that Beneš and the artist are one, it rather demonstrates that, as *rubricator*, he took it upon himself to add the final details in red, once the artist had completed his task. The red is generally applied to the paintings in an unsubtle and sometimes careless manner, for example the bleeding *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, on fol.6r [Fig.33]. This image is a composite with the inclusion of the so-called miraculous rain of blood described in the Agony in the Garden,

“...and in anguish of spirit he prayed the more urgently; and his sweat was like clots of blood falling to the ground....”²⁹²

In this miniature the blood appears as crude commas of red which appear to jostle their way to the ground, in contrast to the quality of the rest of the illustration. The inferior handling of the ink is particularly obvious when it is compared with the refined and controlled work of the filigree around the capital “E” on fol.11r.

An interesting oversight occurs on both illustrations of the seamless robe, fol. 3r and 8r [Fig.34 and 35]. I believe the artist purposefully left tiny areas of bare parchment on the robe in readiness for the addition, by the *rubricator*, of red ink representing spatters of blood, as on all the other items displayed in the *Arma Christi*

²⁸⁸ Chapter 1, p.16-18.

²⁸⁹ B. Rynešová, ‘Beneš kanovník Svatojiřský, a ‘Pasionál abatyše Kunhuty’’, *Časopis archivní školy III*, 1926, p.25.

²⁹⁰ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p.27. Stejskal describes this Gradual as having been at Přilepy; however, the *Fragmentum Praebendarum* does not say that the Gradual itself was in Přilepy. It makes two separate statements: that Beneš held the living, and that he had written in an older Gradual.

²⁹¹ K. Stejskal and E. Urbánková, op.cit., p.25.

²⁹² Luke 22, v.44, *The New English Bible*, Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1970.

on fol. 3r. The artist was presumably concerned that the *minium*, the red ink, might mix with the paint if applied directly over the blue of the robe, thus spoiling the effect. That the red droplets of blood were not added in both instances strongly suggests that they were overlooked by a second individual, in this case the *rubricator* who was, perhaps, unaware of the artist's intentions since it was not usual for the robe to be represented with blood spatters. The splashes of blood are an important element in the composition as the bleeding of Christ, a demonstration of the degree of his suffering and a Eucharistic symbol, is the main theme of the work.

The red outline of God's halo, on fol. 4r [*Fig. 36*], has also been neglected, leaving the artist's underdrawing exposed. Such omissions are compatible with the apparent carelessness that is the frequent hallmark of Beneš's work.²⁹³ There are several examples within the text where Beneš also fell short in executing the rubrications of the majuscules, leaving them without their red embellishments.²⁹⁴ Such absentmindedness stands in contrast with the deft assuredness of the illuminator, whose illustrations are flawless. It would appear that two separate individuals were at work. Having considered the above aspects of Beneš's scribal activity in response to Stejskal's observations, I propose to examine the hypothesis that there were two masters cooperating on the making of the *Passional*: the scribe, Beneš, and the unknown illuminator, artist of the miniatures; each professional exhibiting his own, distinct skill.

By the early fourteenth century it was the norm for writing and painting to be collaborative and complementary, but quite separate skills. Had Beneš been straying from accepted practice it would have been even more likely that attention would have been drawn to this in his title. Parisian tax rolls for the decade around 1300 record approximately forty five illuminators, demonstrating that the secular profession of illuminator was already established.²⁹⁵ Mid-fourteenth century a painters' guild was founded in Prague (1348)²⁹⁶ and, according to the more comprehensive archival records of the latter half of the century, there were, amongst the city householders, ninety eight painters and another ten who declared their occupation specifically as illuminator. There is, however, no reference to the the occupation of scribe amongst

²⁹³ Chapter 1, p.25, Chapter 4, p.79.

²⁹⁴ The rubric strokes have been neglected on the lower half of fol.11v-13v and on fol.35v-36v.

²⁹⁵ C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Phaidon, London, 2004, p.137.

²⁹⁶ W.W. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy, vol. III*, Prague, 1893, p.202.

the 225 recorded professions.²⁹⁷ This may suggest that all scribal work continued to be practised within the monasteries, schools, university and court. There are references to seventeen preparers of parchment, four ink makers and eleven booksellers.

Rynešová found it hard to imagine that it would be possible for two separate individuals to collaborate successfully on a single project such as the *Passional*.²⁹⁸ The present knowledge of the production of medieval manuscripts demonstrates, however, that such collaborations were commonplace across Europe. Numerous unfinished manuscripts, such as the *Pontifical of Renaut de Bar* [Fig. 13], referred to in Chapter 1,²⁹⁹ demonstrate the manner in which scribe and illustrator worked together. The writing of the text usually preceded the painting, with the sketched under-drawing of the art work providing the parameters. It is likely that scribes generally dictated what was required from the artist and, therefore, took responsibility for the page lay-out,³⁰⁰ however, it is impossible to say categorically that it was not achieved by mutual assent. There was obviously a marked degree of cooperation involved in the completion of the task.

There appears to be actual evidence that Beneš directed the artist in the subject matter of the miniatures of the *Passional*. The faint word *linteamina* [linen cloths] appears, now trimmed partially away, at the foot of the page, on fol.15r [Fig. 37]. This is the subject matter for the top illustration on this folio where the word also appears as a rubric descriptive title which would have been added after the completion of the painting. Other, now sadly illegible, cursive, pale ink guide words appear elsewhere in the work: at the foot of fol.2v facing the full page illustration of the *Arma Christi*, to the right of the picture of God creating Eve on fol.4r, at the foot of the tree in the Temptation on fol.4r, and to the left of the first Crucifixion scene on

²⁹⁷ Ibid. vol. II, Prague, 1892, p.383-385, on p.385 Tomek translates *quinternista* as “*písář knih?*” [writer of books?] with a question mark showing himself to be unsure of the correct translation. *Quaterno* described a quire of parchment consisting of four bifolia stitched together but unbound – see C. De Hamel, op.cit., 2004, p.38. From this is derived the English term quarterion. A quintain however, from Medieval Latin *quintana*, -*ena* (see O.E.D) was a board for tilting at, or a dartboard, therefore this profession may have been wholly unrelated to manuscript production.

²⁹⁸ B. Rynešová, op.cit., p.28.

²⁹⁹ Chapter 2, p.27.

³⁰⁰ *The Cambridge Illuminations – Ten Centuries of Book Production in the Medieval West*, edit. P. Binski and S. Panayotova, Harvey Miller, London, 2005, p.31. See also Chapter 1, p.22-23.

fol.8v.³⁰¹ The faint writings in the *Passional*, all occur in the first section of the work only. They were not intended to be visible to the reader and were probably intentionally erased. These faded, illegible markings may all have been instructions for the artist concerning the proposed subject matter of the miniatures to accompany and illustrate the text. Similar appear, for example in the *Willehalm Codex* where, on fol.132r of this work, the scribe wrote a note to the manuscript's illuminator, the Willehalm Master, "...*hi sal man malen...*" [here one should paint].³⁰² Such guide words are found in other contemporary manuscripts and are a common indication of scribes directing artists.

I believe that some of the quires of the *Passional* were divided in order to allow scribe and artist to continue their work concurrently, possibly an expedient to speed production. Towards the middle of the first quire gathering, (1312), at the foot of fol.5v, is a very faint, cursive catchword for the following folio, "*tinuit*" [Fig.38]. Such catchwords were added to ensure that the folia did not get replaced out of order. This would suggest that the gathering had been divided up to allow separate work to be at one and the same time. This catchword is distinctly different from the bold catchwords at the end of a quire which were for the purposes of book binding.³⁰³ It would appear that the later section of the work, (1314), was also divided mid-gathering, but with less success. In an attempt to ensure correct re-assembly, all the illustrated folia for the second gathering, fol. 11-20, are given leaf signatures from a-h at the foot of each page. They omitted to include the unillustrated pages in the lettering, however, and therefore fol. 12-13 had to be inserted as an add-in bifolium.³⁰⁴ Both the catchword and the leaf signatures indicate a distribution of labour, the gatherings of the *Passional* being divided in order to allow scribe and artist each to continue their work separately, yet simultaneously.

Beneš was able to calculate, more or less accurately, the number of words that could be fitted on a page, and was able to manipulate this to a certain extent by line length and by the use of abbreviations. The text layout was established and the illustrations worked in hard-point or plummet thus providing a sketch to complement

³⁰¹ There is possibly a rubric guide word beside the illustration of Christ with a supplicant nun, fol.7v. This is very ambiguous and would need examination of the actual manuscript before a firmer opinion could be formed.

³⁰² Ibid. p.72.

³⁰³ Examples of these appear at the foot of fol. 20v *angelorum fuiunt* and fol. 28v *am*, and were to ensure the correct placement of the gatherings within the codex. See Chapter 2, p.30-31.

³⁰⁴ Chapter 1, p.24-25.

the script. For the most part the layout of the *Passional* is remarkably straight forward. Apart from the full-page illustrations, a column of text is usually flanked by one, two or three elucidatory illustrations; fol.3v is an exception with its ‘cartoon strip’ series of six, small, undivided scenes [Fig.3]. The general disposition of the text on the page does not alter throughout the manuscript, even on those numerous folia that are without accompanying illustrations. The written areas in the first section are consistently wider than in the later sections, where there is considerable variation in the width of the space allocated to the text.

On fol.22v [Fig.11] the artwork and the writing interact on the page, and the scribe and artist must have been working particularly closely. The page was ruled as a writing page and the majority of the ruled lines down the right hand side of the page had to be scratched out, apart from the small section at the top right hand side. The long base line which runs the full width of the page also had to be removed. Extra lines were ruled at the top left hand of the page to provide a symmetry between the two portions of text which read across the top of the page, interrupted by the illustration. It seems, however, not to have gone quite according to plan as the line fillers at the beginnings of the lines on the right hand section cover scratched out mistakes, for example “*hī*”, the last word written at the end of the eighth line of text on the left, is visible beneath the red line filler at the beginning of the following text on the right. More successful are the shared efforts of scribe and artist on fol.17v and 18v (Figs 8 and 9). The former page would have been relatively simple to design as it is the end of the text, and this dictated the area for the illustration of *Christ greeting Joseph of Arimathea*.

The layout on fol.18v is the most complicated in the manuscript, and it appears that the drawing was sketched in first and the lines for the text drawn up around it. As elsewhere in the manuscript³⁰⁵ the artist has made use of the vertical lines drawn following the prickings at the head of the page. The third pinnacle from the left traces these exactly and the block beneath Christ’s feet aligns with this. The right hand margin of the painted frame also follows the right hand ruling. This layout is not as intricate as many contemporary medieval manuscripts, for example by comparison with the unfinished fol.129r of the Fitzwilliam Museum’s *Pontifical of Renaut de Bar*, France, Metz or Verdun, 1303-1316 [Fig.39]. This demonstrates a clear balancing of

³⁰⁵ Chapter 2, p.30.

word and sketch, and the close collaboration of scribe and artist is unquestionable. Such unfinished works provide insight into the working practices of scribe and artist, the gradual building up of the illustrations and the allocation of tasks.³⁰⁶

Once the sketch was provided by the illuminator, it was then defined with ink to create a firm drawing and any gold leaf was then laid. Gilding was specifically the work of the illuminator. When the artist had completed the gilding, colours were applied to the drawings, and then outlining and detailing of the faces etc. were added to complete the illustrations. Beneath the gold adorning the *Passional* can be seen a reddish brown layer; this is probably a simple coloured glue onto which the gold leaf was laid.³⁰⁷ More ornate works used a fine *gesso* base made from plaster, glue, sugar, white lead and reddish clay known as Armenian bole, to create a glowing, raised effect. The gilding is not lavish in the *Passional*: the reserve of haloes, crowns, the abbess' staff on fol.1v, the ring on fol.3v and St. Peter's key on fol.22v. It is noteworthy that no gold is applied to the full-page illustrations of the *Arma Christi*, on fol.3r, or the *Man of Sorrows with the Symbols of the Passion*, on fol.10r, despite this latter illustration being the most significant image in the codex. The ornate extravagance of gilding was, no doubt, considered inappropriate to the subject matter which is so sombre and humble in character.

The only gilded initials are the capitals "CH" of "*CHUNIGUNDIS*" on the dedication page, fol.1v,³⁰⁸ and the opening "E" of the text on fol.2r. This follows the medieval convention of hierarchy of initials, in which both the height and type of initial were a consideration. It was part of the artist's remit to provide the initials.³⁰⁹

The execution of the initials should not be confused with the sometimes very elaborate majuscules, which were the work of the scribe and incorporated in the writing of the text. Beneš would have added the paragraph markings which occur in the second of Colda's tracts, from fol.18r to 31v, presumably at Colda's direct behest. A concerted effort has been made to follow the red/blue sequence; however, there are lapses, for example the two consecutive blues fol.22r, and where extra red paragraph markings have been squeezed in as an afterthought, for example fol.20v, where no less than four extra markings have been added.

³⁰⁶ *The Cambridge Illuminations*, op.cit., p.23-36, provides a clear explanation of the making of a manuscript.

³⁰⁷ Lack of access to the work makes a definitive judgement impossible.

³⁰⁸ Chapter 3, p.44.

³⁰⁹ *The Cambridge Illuminations*, op.cit., p.32.

It was customary for the illuminator of a manuscript to paint the initials,³¹⁰ including gilding both the “CH” of “*CHUNIGUNDIS*” on the dedication page, fol.1v, and the “E” that opens the preface on fol.2r. It was Beneš, however, who was probably responsible for the grammatical error, and subsequent alteration from “*PRIORISSA + CONVENTUS*” (both in the nominative) to “*PRIORISSA CUM CONVENTU*” (nominative and ablative). Where the word “*cum*” now is, was a cross. The letters would have been painted by the artist following the scribe’s instruction. The artist will have been responsible for the initials in the later sections of the manuscript as well, for their forms match those on fol.1v.³¹¹ As the scribe wrote out a text, spaces were left for the initials to be added.

The hierarchy of the initials dictated that the first initial should be the most grand. The *Passional* is comparable to many medieval texts in employing three ranks of initial:³¹² illuminated, filigreed and painted. The gilded “E” of fol.2r takes precedence over all others for being gilded. It is interesting, however, that it only extends over two lines, whereas the painted “H”, an inferior category of initial, which marks the start of the Parabola on fol.3v, extends over three. This is followed, on fol.4r, by a lesser ranking “H” which extends over two lines. Second in rank to the gilded initial is the flourished initial, such as the filigreed “E” which introduces the Lament of the Virgin, and which extends over three lines. There are close similarities to be observed between this flourished “E” on fol.11r, and that on fol.14r of an *Apocalypse*, England, c.1255-1260, Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.16.2 [Fig. 40]. There are many other comparable examples in contemporary English and French manuscripts, such as *Psalterium*,³¹³ England, 1304-1321, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 53, fol.19r [Fig.41] and *Missale*, South France, 1316-1334, Grasse Bibl. mun., MS 3 fol.11r [Fig.42]. These exhibit the same cell-like structures within and around the initial itself and the delicate, plant-like tendrils, twisting at the end of the pen stroke. The filigreed “P” at the beginning of the Heavenly Abodes is of a lesser degree as it extends over two lines. The simpler, painted initials provide the third category of

³¹⁰ Joan Holladay concludes her paper on The Willehalm Codex, op.cit., p.87 with the assertion that the Willehalm Master was responsible for executing all the initials and flourishes, as well as the illustrations, and that this meets with the present knowledge of the working methods of illuminators.

³¹¹ The filigree ‘E’ and ‘P’ on fol.11r and 18r respectively, and the capitals on fol.19v, 24r, 24v, 25r, 26v, 27r, 27v, 28r, 32r, 32v, 33r and 34v.

³¹² A. Derolez, op.cit., p.42.

³¹³ Ibid., pl. 27, dates this manuscript to 1304-1321. *The Cambridge Illuminations*, op.cit., p.312, however gives the date as c.1300-1310 - (The Peterborough Bestiary with the Psalter of Hugh of Stokely from whence this initial comes).

initial; inferior to the more elaborate, flourished initials. The Sermon of Pope Leo and the Lament of Mary Magdalene start with these, extending over two lines, as do those marking the sub-divisions in the text on fol.19v, 32v and 33r. The lowest ranking painted initials are those used to highlight the separate groups of dwellers in the Heavenly Abodes. These only extend over the single space between the headline and the baseline. They occur between fol.24r -28r from fol.18r and are painted in blue or red, which should be alternating, however the rhythm is broken several times.³¹⁴

When considering the finely worked filigree initials of the *Passional* it is interesting to compare them with the single, major decorated initial “M” [Fig. 43], on fol.10v of the 238 page *Processional*, scribed by Beneš, and referred to above.³¹⁵ If, as Stejskal would have it, Beneš was both the artist and scribe of the *Passional*, it might be expected that he would have also executed at least this initial in the *Processional*. The “M”, however, is totally different in style and execution from any of the initials or illustrations of the *Passional* [Fig. 44]. It is a puzzle-work initial painted in bright, densely opaque, blue and red.

It is a previously overlooked and unreported component of the manuscript, however, which provides the most persuasive evidence that there were two masters at work on the *Passional*, and that the scribe was directing the artist. It was normal practice for discreet guide letters to be placed by the scribe to instruct the artist as to which letter to add when completing the initials.³¹⁶ In the *Passional* these are visible in six of the eleven painted initials, between fol.24r – 28r inclusive, in the 1314 section of the work [Fig. 45].³¹⁷ It is likely that all these capitals had been originally marked out for the artist and that, where they are no longer visible, the painted capital itself is obscuring the guide letter. On fol.28r, [Fig.45] “..*U*idendum..” [to be seen], the tail of a miniature “u” can be seen peeping from the left of the “U” where it has been almost totally painted over.³¹⁸ Here, we are provided with another example of a well-known practice of scribes working in cooperation with illuminators. Holladay notes similar instructive letters from scribe to artist, in the *Willehalm Codex*.³¹⁹ In this

³¹⁴ Chapter 5, p.92 note 320.

³¹⁵ Chapter 5, p.84.

³¹⁶ C. De Hamel, op.cit., 1992, p.48, describes this as a standard practice by the scribe before sending the manuscript on to the illuminator to complete. See also *The Cambridge illuminations*, op.cit., p.32.

³¹⁷ Fol.24r-p + a, fol.26v-o, fol.27r-n, fol.27v-o, fol.28r-v.

³¹⁸ The word is in fact *Videndum* [to be seen], however ‘v’ and ‘u’ were not distinguished as separate consonnant and vowel in the medieval period, see A. Derolez, op.cit., p.94.

³¹⁹ J. Holladay, op.cit., p.72.

impressively high quality, but incomplete, manuscript the scribe not only supplies the letter that is required, but also the colour that it is to be painted in, for example on fol.2v “*blaves m*” [blue m] is written in tiny script where the scribe has left space in the text for a capital. It is interesting that the sequence of red and blue initials is also not always consistent throughout this work. In the *Passional* the traditional succession of colours is at least adhered to when two painted initials share a folio; they are never of the same colour.³²⁰ The artist provided all the initials, whether illuminated, decorated or not. The final addition to the work was the rubric headings written, in the *Passional* by Beneš, in minium; the rich, red ink reserved for important elements of the text. The division of labour between scribe and artist thus conformed to medieval artistic practice.

I have presented several arguments for the case of a scribe and an artist collaborating on the *Passional*, in a manner typical of the period, and my final one is perhaps the simplest of all. It has been noted that Beneš’s scribal work, despite its generally satisfactory overall effect, is characterised by the inordinate number of mistakes it contains.³²¹ Contrast this with the confident and flawless execution of the painted scenes in the manuscript. I can detect no corrections in the illustrations and the deftness of the artist is plain to see. This disparity in quality is enough on its own to prevent one from believing that a single master is responsible for both aspects of the work. I submit that Beneš was the scribe alone, and that the illustrations of the *Passional*, which are responsible for transforming the manuscript into a true work of art, are the creation of an independent, secular professional; an unknown artist.

There are no other manuscripts extant that have been painted by this artist. The illustrations for the *Passional* present, however, a developed Gothic style of painting and iconography, executed with remarkable confidence. There is nothing that survives in Bohemian art of the preceding years that suggests any gradual progression towards this style of painting. Earlier Bohemian manuscripts are Romanesque in style, some reflecting Byzantine influences, and several, such as the *Franciscan Bible*, XII. B. 13, parchment, c.1270, Library of the National museum, Prague, exhibiting German *Zachenstil* artistic tendencies. This can be seen, for example, in the illustration of the

³²⁰ Gold E-fol.2r, blue H-fol.2v, blue H-fol.3v, blue H-fol.4r, filigree blue E-fol.11r, filigree red P-fol.18r, blue P-fol.19v, red P + blue A-fol.24r, blue M + red C-fol.24v, blue S-fol.25r, blue O + red P-fol.26v, blue D + red N-fol.27r, red O-fol.27v, blue U-fol.28r, blue S-fol.32r, red H-fol.32v, red O-fol.33r, red C-fol.34v.

³²¹ Chapter 1, p.25, Chapter 4, p.79, Chapter 5, p.84-85.

Virgin and Child, from the *Sedlecký Antiphonary*, NKČR XIII. A. 6, fol.44r, mid-thirteenth century, National Library of the Czech Republic, Prague [Fig. 46].

The artist of the *Passional* is always considered as an illuminator, a painter of miniatures. Certainly, he was well able to execute small illustrations; however, I would argue that the presentation of the *Passional* miniatures is distinguished by its very dissimilarity to contemporary illuminated manuscripts. The artist does not indulge in the decorative features that had already become characteristic of manuscript illustration across western Europe by the end of the thirteenth century, although his talent exhibits the fact that he would have been capable of this had he so wished. There are none of the details so beloved by the medieval illuminators; no historiated initials with ornate and colourful extensions down the edge of the page; no marginal drolleries or grotesques; the scenes are not set against a two-dimensional squared, diapered, or gilded background. The contrast is immediately obvious when the illustrations of the *Passional* are set beside, for example, those of the *Pontifical of Renaut de Bar*, Metz or Verdun, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, MS 298, eg. fol. 72v-73r, [Fig. 13], which itself is elegant and restrained in comparison with the broad, heavily gilded, margin decorations of works such as the *Macclesfield Psalter*, MS 1-2005 fol.115v, East Anglia, c.1330, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Both these works have lively drolleries and grotesques which gambol and cavort across the pages [Fig. 47]. Not so the *Passional*. Occasionally the figures in the miniatures are surrounded by niche-like, gothic architectural canopies, as in the *Dedication Illustration*, on fol.1v; however, this artistic conceit appears in all forms of art of the period. Květ (1931, 243) sees these architectural motifs as evidence for the artist of the *Passional* having been trained in wall painting.³²² I suggest that the *Passional* exhibits other, even more striking, characteristics indicating that this may, indeed, have been the artist's main profession.

The scenes in the *Passional* are not tightly enclosed within their own space, nor do they have the decorative backgrounds usual in manuscripts of this period. Instead, the unadorned scenes of the Prague codex have bare parchment as their backdrop and follow one another in story-telling fashion, sometimes divided by a plain narrow band, in a manner highly reminiscent of contemporary wall paintings. Even the subject matter of the *Passional* echoes the Christological themes, particularly the

³²² J. Květ, *Illuminované rukopisy královny Rejčky*, Prague, 1931, p.243. He does not develop this idea beyond this statement.

Passion and Marian cycles, that were the favoured subject matter of the painting schemes covering medieval church walls throughout Europe. The choice of these themes was a direct reflection of the new attitudes to faith that were growing throughout Europe and finding expression in the cults of the Eucharist and Corpus Christi and the Marian cult, inspired by the desire for a deeper, mystical involvement in religious experience. Direct illustrations of Christ's sufferings made the already extremely familiar stories all the more vivid, and would be expected to evoke an emotional reaction from the onlooker. The schemes were usually divided into tiers, frequently further divided into boxes, and were often designed to be followed as a sequence, relating a story in the same manner as a cartoon strip, just as is seen in the *Passional* illustrations. Even the use of roses as a space filler, on fol. 17v [Fig. 48], is a wall painters' technique.³²³ I believe that this artist's natural skill lay in the planning and execution of narrative cycles, rather than the decorative ornamentation more usually associated with manuscript illumination, and that he could have been primarily a wall painter, called upon to use his obvious artistic ability to illustrate the *Passional*.³²⁴

There are many examples of later Czech art which appear to have been influenced by the *Passional*, for example the *Crucifixion*, paint and gold on canvas transferred from panel, Prague c.1340, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, [Fig. 50].³²⁵ This apparent direct, wider influence is difficult to explain since the manuscript was held within an enclosed female convent's library and would have been virtually inaccessible. This would have been particularly so since Pope Boniface VIII had decreed, in his bull *Periculoso* of 1298, that even stricter enclosure of nuns' convents should be enforced, very severely restricting contact between the nuns and the outside world.³²⁶ If the artist who created the *Passional* images had also been responsible, perhaps principally, for wall painting cycles, however, these would have provided accessible

³²³ This is a common feature in thirteenth century English wall painting schemes, for example [Fig. 49] at the Church of St. Mary, Chalgrove, Oxfordshire (Rosewall 2008).

³²⁴ C. De Hamel, op.cit., 2004, p.105, Flexibility in medieval artistic practice is exemplified by a link between a cycle of wall paintings in the chapter house of a monastery in Signa, Spain, and the art of at least two of the illuminators of the Winchester Bible.

³²⁵ B. Drake Boehm and J. Fajt, eds, *Prague. The Crown of Bohemia. 1347-1437*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2005, p. 132 for illustration and catalogue commentary.

³²⁶ J. Hamburger et al., 'The Time of the Orders 1200-1500', *Crown and Veil – Female Monasticism from the Fifth Century to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by J. Hamburger and S. Marti. Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p.44.

examples for other artists to emulate. This would also explain the apparently strong influence that this artist had on subsequent Bohemian art.

Several Bohemian wall painting series demonstrate apparent influences of the *Passional*, and the contemporary wall paintings in the tiny Church of the Virgin Mary, at Průhonice, is a case in point. Here, there is a strong sense of a reduction and recreation of a large-scale wall painting scheme, executed by a provincial artist. Several elements in the Průhonice wall paintings link with the art of the *Passional*, particularly a *Man of Sorrows with the Instruments of the Passion* [Fig. 51], on the north wall.³²⁷ It is conjecture whether, or where, a prototype wall painting scheme might have existed; however this would provide a credible reason for the widespread influence of this artist's style, imagery and iconography. The Basilica of St. George might be a candidate, but perhaps even more plausible would be the Wenceslas II's palace Chapel of All Saints, consecrated in 1264, but demolished prior to the building of St. Vitus' Cathedral in 1346, and described by a chronicler as being "magnificent far beyond the pryncedoms of his time".³²⁸

It is certainly not unusual for medieval artists to remain unidentified, and the artist of Abbess Cunegund's *Passional* remains so. It is no surprise that he is not included in the *Dedication Illustration*, on fol.1v. Here the reader is presented with a united group of religious, educated Czechs – all part of a Czech spiritual 'family'. The artist of the codex was, in all probability, a professional layman and he would have had no place in this assembly of intellectual, religious Czechs. His presence is most palpably felt, however, through his delicate illustrations. An individual master craftsman, working alongside the scribe Beneš. And so, today, it is the enigmatic painter of the *Passional* who is most appreciated for his fine workmanship in this unique Czech manuscript.

³²⁷ J. Pešina, *Gotická nástěna malba v zemích českých, Vol.I*, Prague, 1958, p.182-190.

³²⁸ K. Stejskal, *European Art in the Fourteenth Century*, Octopus Books, London, 1978, p.20.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- FIG. 1 - THE FORMER BENEDICTINE BASILICA AND CONVENT OF ST. GEORGE, Hradčany, Prague, founded end of tenth century.
- FIG. 25 - THE FORMER FRANCISCAN FRIARY (founded c.1233) AND CONVENT OF THE POOR CLARES (founded 1234) "NA FRANTIŠKU", Old Town, Prague (Chapel of the Virgin, 1338-1345).
- FIG. 28 - ST. VITUS' CATHEDRAL, Prague, the Great Tower and South porch, 1356-99.
- FIG. 30 - WEST TOWER OF JUDITH'S BRIDGE (fore-runner of Charles' Bridge), after 1158, west bank of the River Vltava, Prague.



(Photograph: Schurr, 2006)



(Photograph: Schurr, 2008)

FIG. 1.

THE FORMER
BENEDICTINE BASILICA
AND CONVENT OF
ST. GEORGE, Hradčany,
Prague, founded end of tenth
century.



FIG. 25.

(Photograph: Schurr, 2008)

THE FORMER FRANCISCAN FRIARY (founded c.1233) AND CONVENT OF THE POOR CLARES (founded 1234) "NA FRANTIŠKU", Old Town, Prague (Chapel of the Virgin, 1338-1345).



FIG. 28.

ST. VITUS' CATHEDRAL,
Prague, the Great Tower and
South porch, 1356-99

(Photograph: Schurr, 2008)



FIG. 30.

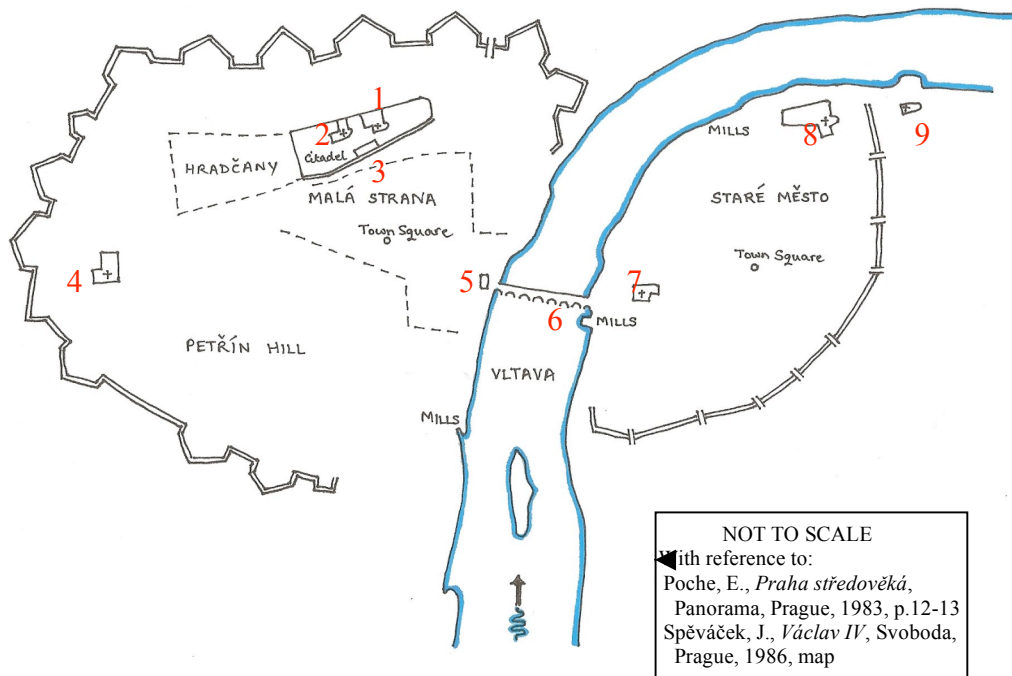
WEST TOWER OF JUDITH'S BRIDGE
(fore-runner of Charles' Bridge),
after 1158, west bank of the River Vltava,
Prague

(Photograph: Schurr, 2008)

APPENDIX I: Illustrations of the Passional of Abbess Cunegund as they appear within the codex

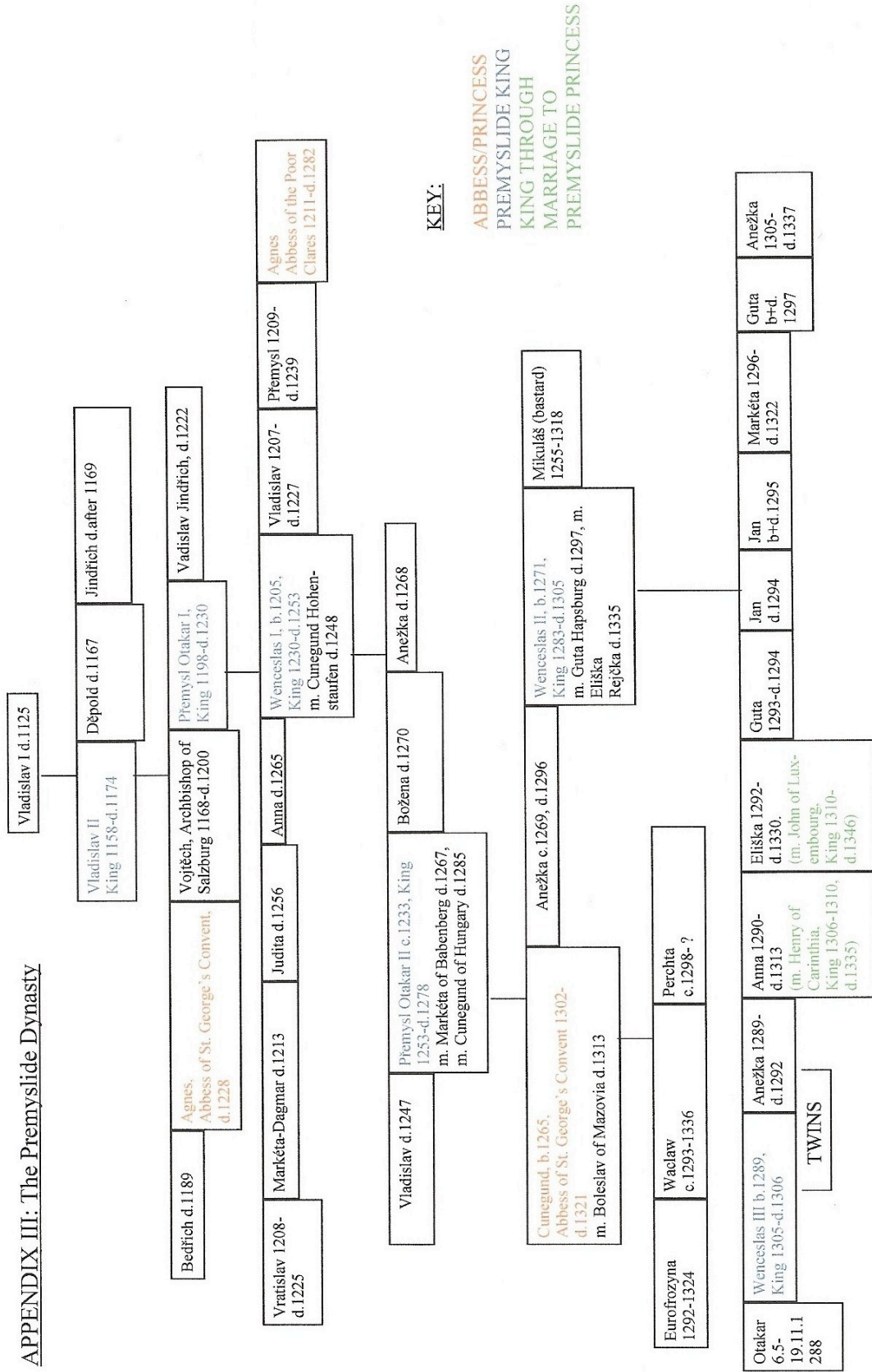
NOTE: Figures have been removed due to copyright restrictions.

APPENDIX II: The Medieval City of Prague



- 1 Basilica and Convent of St. George, founded c.970 (Benedictine)
- 2 Basilica of St. Vitus and St. Wenceslas, and Canonry, founded 974
- 3 Royal Palace of the Premyslides
- 4 Strahov Monastery, founded 1140 (Premonstratensian)
- 5 West Tower of Judith's Bridge, after 1158
- 6 Judith's Bridge, after 1158, fore-runner of Charles' Bridge, 1357
- 7 Friary of St. Clement, founded 1232 after moving from 9.(Dominican)
- 8 Franciscan Friary, and Convent of Poor Clares, founded c.1233 and 1234 respectively
- 9 St. Clement, founded 1226 (Original site of Dominican Friary)

APPENDIX III: The Premyslide Dynasty



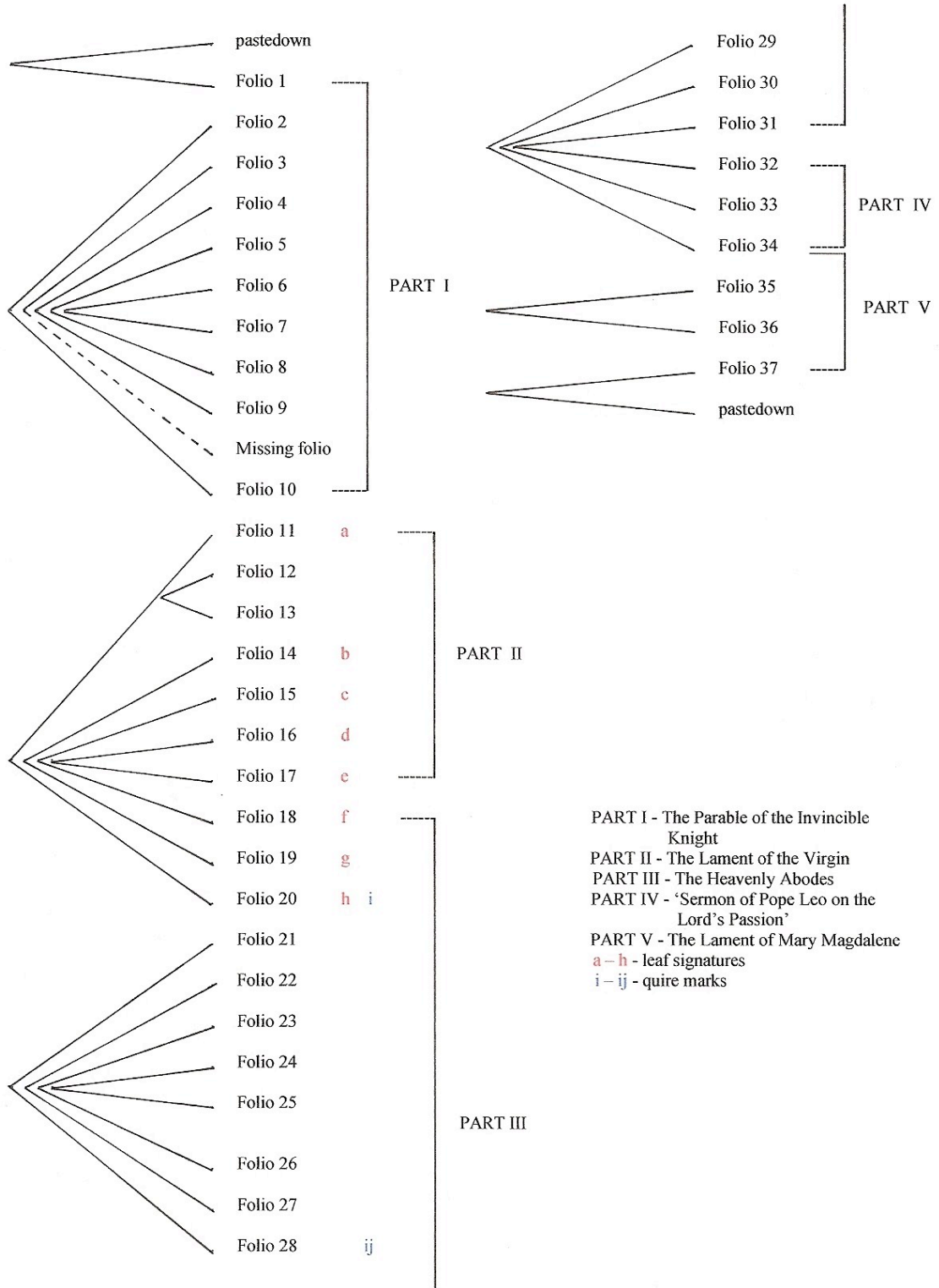
APPENDIX IV: Surviving codices from 14th Century Library of the Convent of St. George during the incumbancy of Abbess Cunegund

- NKČR XIII E 14/c – dated 1303 – gifted by Cunegund
Writings of Sts. Bernard and Bonaventura
- NKČR XIV D 13 - dated 1306 – gifted by Cunegund
Glossed psalter
- NKČR XII D 10 - dated 1310 – gifted by Cunegund
- NKČR XIV E 10 - dated 1312 – gifted by Cunegund
254 pp, 24 x 16.5 cm Collected works: incl. Apocryphal stories and gospels; writings of Dyonisius Areopagite; writings of Church Fathers; Lives and martyrdoms of saints; Sermons
- NK ČR XIV A 17 - 1312-14 Passional of Abbess Cunegund
- NKČR XII D 11 - dated 1318 – gifted by Cunegund
411 pp, 29 x 20 cm Theological treatises
- NKČR XII D 13 - undated
251 pp, 22 x 16 cm
5 treatises incl. life of St. Martial

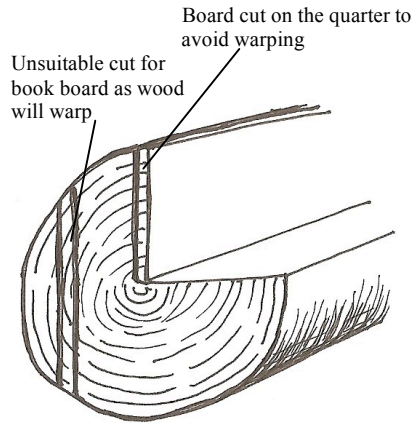
Abbess Cunegund's personal property:

- NKČR VII G 17/d
257 pp, 17 x 12 cm 'Cunegund's Breviary'
19 sections incl. offices, psalms, orations, litanies
- NKČR XII D 8a
256 pp, 24 x 17.5 cm Breviarium de tempore:
12 sections incl. life, Passion and Ressurrection of Christ
- NKČR XII D 8b
258 pp, 24 x 17.5 cm Breviarium pro defunctis:
8 sections incl. psalms, Nativity and Passion of Christ, litanies for Czech saints
- NKČR XII D 9
396 pp, 25 x 17 cm 'Cunegund's Breviary'
12 sections incl. hymns, psalms, orations + calendar of Premyslides
- NKČR XII D 12
245 pp, 24 x 18 cm Psalterium
5 sections incl. apostles, life of Christ, Passion, sanctorale

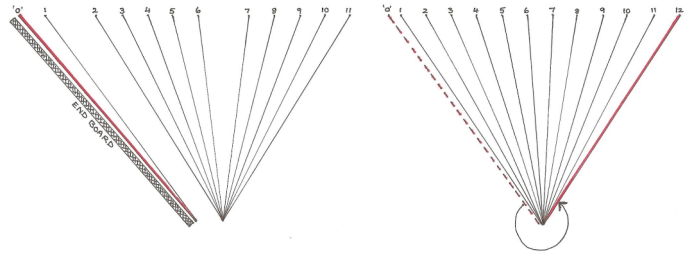
APPENDIX V: Assembly of Codex



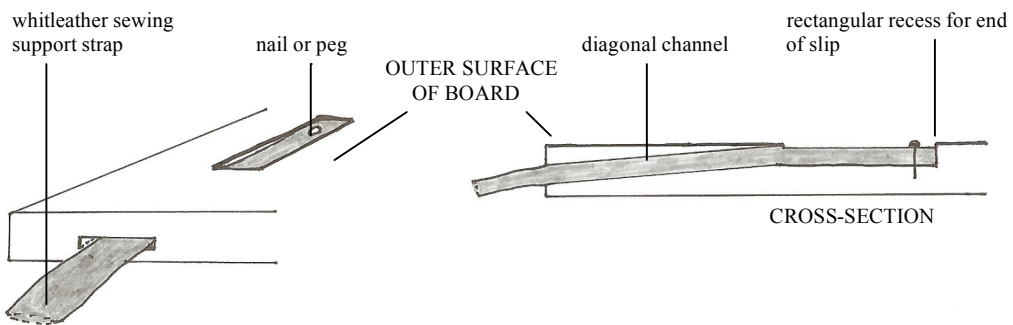
APPENDIX VI



A) – The technique of cutting wood Suitable to be used for book boards



B) – Folio '0' as a pastedown, and as the final folio in a hypothetical sexterno



C) – The technique of attaching the spine slips to the book boards

APPENDIX VII : Kingdoms of the Premyslides



— Extent of Czech Lands under Otakar II (ruled 1233-1278)

— Extent of Czech Lands under Wenceslas II (ruled 1283-1305)

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