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## Romanesque church of St. Clement and the arrival of Dominicans to Prague Old Town in the light of the most recent discoveries

### ANNOTATION

The discovery of Romanesque construction in the basement of the south wing of Prague Klementinum prompted discussion on the earliest buildings on this site where the church of St. Clement should have been situated according to a mention in so called Dalimil's chronicle. Also one of the most important ecclesiastical institutions of its period was to be found on this site in the High Medieval Ages. The article also summarises written evidence up to the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century concerning the settling of the Order of brothers Preachers in Prague.

### SUMMARY

Rescue excavation of Clementinum (Klementinum) in the Old Town of Prague was undertaken in 2012–2015 (Fig. 1: 1). The trenches were situated in the south and west part of this former Jesuit college. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> to the mid–16<sup>th</sup> century this was the site of a significant Dominican convent, evidence of which was found during the excavation (Fig. 6). At the same time a brief survey was undertaken of part of the buildings at the most southern wing of the college (Fig. 3: 1), which identified an unknown wall built of ashlar in the east–west direction, undoubtedly of medieval origin (Fig. 8, 9, 13: 1). This wall is situated in the most southern cellar of the north–south orientated south wing of Klementinum, which lies between The Student and The Main courtyard below the current sacristy of the St. Salvator's church (Fig. 4, 5).

The medieval wall is part of the south wall of a staircase (Fig. 7), joined to the south wall of the cellar. At least two or three medieval building phases can be identified in this wall (Fig. 9, 13). The earliest part of the wall covers approximately eleven layers of marlstone (Fig. 9: 1; 13: 1). The height of the layers fluctuates between 11 and 17 cm. The joints between the ashlar blocks have been undercut (Fig. 10, 11). Two openings were identified within the wall – a niche, either for depositing or a window (Fig. 9: 2), and probably a fragment of a doorway portal, respectively fragment of a threshold (Fig. 9: 3; 10, 12). Orientation of the wall, corresponding with the slightly curved street front of the adjacent Karlova Street (Fig. 6: 1), is different to the known medieval constructions of the convent and its Gothic church. In the second building phase, connected with the adaptation of the earliest ashlar wall, less carefully worked ashlar blocks have been used (Fig. 9: 17; 13: 17) similar to those known from the earliest horizon of the convent buildings, from the north wing (refectory) and the east wing with the chapter hall. Blocking of the doorway and rebuilding of the earlier wall phase at its west end probably belong to this second phase. The orientation of the wall face of the second phase is different to the first ashlar wall and corresponds with the orientation of the revealed earliest monastic buildings of the Dominican convent, constructed from the 1230s to the early 1240s. Hypothetically the third (late?) medieval building phase covers the core of the south wall of the cellar with a portal (Fig. 14), which was joined to the west end of the ashlar wall fragment of the second phase. The direction of this "latest" part of the wall also corresponds with the orientation of the medieval convent buildings. The cellar itself was newly built in the Baroque period.

There is sporadic written evidence of the Dominicans being settled after their arrival to Prague in 1226 at the church of St. Clement at Poříčí and then moved to the church of the same dedication at the Judith Bridge, which is the site of today's Clementinum (Fig. 2: 1). Probably within the 1230s, when the town fortification has been built and other monastic communities moved into the space of the Old Town, the brothers Preachers commenced to build a regularly planned cloister, finished latest in the mid – 1240s. There is written evidence of the convent standing in the second half of the 1240s. During the excavation in 2012–2015 its north wing was revealed with a refectory and a part of the east wing with the chapter hall (Fig. 6: 3). It is not rare that the Dominicans have been introduced to an existing earlier sanctuary, as in Brno, Olomouc or Litoměřice in the Czech Republic, or several sites in Poland where the order probably came from to The Bohemian Land. Hypothetically the find of the earliest part of the revealed ashlar wall could be interpreted as the remains of the Romanesque church of St. Clement. Joining of the east wing of the convent in an angle to this earlier architecture suggests an earlier, most probably sacral building

situated in this space before the building of the convent. However due to the fragmentary state of the wall, its interpretation as the remains of an unknown profane object or part of the convent cannot be excluded.

**Fig. 1.** Prague 1-Old Town, Romanesque churches in the 1st third of the 13th century (after Dragoun 1998, 50; Dragoun 2002 modified and added). **1** – church of St. Clement; **2** – church of St. John Baptiste Na Zábřadli; **3** – rotund of The Holy Cross; **4** – church of St. Valentine; **5** – church of St. Lawrence; **6** – church of St. Andrew (exact localisation uncertain); **7** – church of St. Philip and St. James; **8** – church of St. Stephan in the Wall (exact localisation uncertain); **9** – church of St. Martin in the Wall; **10** – church of St. Aegidius; **11** – church of St. Michael; **12** – church of St. Gall; **13** – church of St. Lienard; **14** – church of Virgin Mary Na louži; **15** – church of St. Martin the Minor (Romanesque dating hypothetical); **16** – church of Our Lady before Týn; **17** – church of St. Benedictus; **18** – church of St. Castulus; **19** – synagogue (exact localisation uncertain). Green line – border of the lower terrace step above the river floodplain; brown line – fortification of the Old Town. (Map based on the Evidence of properties Map, compiled and historic features depicted by S. Babušková, 2015.)

**Fig. 2.** Prague agglomeration in the mid-13th century with the town fortification. **1** – Dominican convent at St. Clement „by the heel of the bridge“ (next to the Karlova Street in The Old Town of Prague); **2** – church of St. Clement at Poříčí (today's Klimentská Street). (Map based on the Evidence of properties Map, compiled and historic features depicted by S. Babušková, 2015.)

**Fig. 3.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I and 190/I. Klementinum complex, former Jesuit college with a medieval Dominican convent in its south part. All archaeological trenches realised within the complex depicted in red and dark grey. **1** – excavation in 2003; **2** – excavation in 1970; **3** – trenches for rain drainage system in 2012 (drawing J. Hlavatý, 2015).

**Fig. 4.** Prague 1-Old Town, southwest part of Klementinum, basement situation. Legend: **1** – newly surveyed cellar with documented ashlar wall within the staircase (surveyed by J. Hlavatý in 2014); **2** – crypt under the church of St. Salvator; **3** – cellars under the south wing of the Baroque college (drawing J. Hlavatý, 2015).

**Fig. 5.** Prague 1-Old Town, Klementinum, cellar with a staircase to the east from the chancel of St. Salvator's church. View from the northwest onto the south wall of the cellar. Documented ashlar constructions are situated in the south wall of the staircase (photo J. Havrda, 2014).

**Fig. 6.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. Plan of the Dominican convent with the constructions revealed in 2013–2014 (Havrda/Kovář/ Žďárská 2014) and with the hypothetical site of the pre-convent Romanesque church of St. Clement. Plan was compiled from the revealed remains with the use of transformed and modified Müller's plan of Klementinum, which depicted the complex just before the arrival of the Jesuits. Legend: **1** – revealed Romanesque wall; **2** – hypothetical site of the pre-convent Romanesque church of St. Clement; **3** – archaeologically revealed constructions belonging to the earliest building phase of the convent; **4** – reconstruction of the convent buildings based on the Müller's plan; **5** – convent complex including the cemetery on the west and gardens on the east; **6** – preserved chancel of the Gothic presbytery of the convent church; **7** – skeletal remains connected with the convent (drawing J. Hlavatý, 2015).

**Fig. 7.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. Cellar to the east from the church of St. Salvator. General view onto the south wall of the staircase (photo J. Havrda, 2014).

**Fig. 8.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. Cellar to the east from the church of St. Salvator. View onto the south wall of the staircase. Ashlar masonry (photo J. Havrda, 2014).

**Fig. 9.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. Detailed view onto the south wall of the staircase to the east from the church of St. Salvator. Legend: **1** – fragment of a Romanesque wall built of marlstone ashlar (A) with remains of the surface rendering (undercut joint); **2** – moulding of a niche within the ashlar wall; **3** – fragment of a portal threshold (?) within the Romanesque wall; **4** – evidence of abrasion of the threshold; **5** – ashlar blocking (B) of the portal (?); **6** – infill of the portal frame groove (H); **7** – negative after the frame of the portal in the entrance into the cellar; **8** – brick and stone blocking of a niche (G); **9** – brick blocking with coarse white mortar; **10** – walling mainly of bricks in the base of the vault of today's branch of a staircase into the cellar (H); **11** – blocking connected with today's entrance into the cellar; **12** – bricks forming "a socket"; **13** – chiselled off moulding (F); **14** – brick filling; **15** – socket cut into the existing wall; **16** – interphase between different mortars; **17** – walling from irregular ashlar with evidence of fire (C); **18** – walling from roughly chiselled ashlar (D); **19** – base of the vault of today's staircase space; **20–21** – secondary used earlier building material (a mouldings); **22** – brick and stone walling (analysis M. Kovář, rekonstruktion surface heights J. Havrda, photogrammetry and drawing J. Hlavatý, 2015).

**Fig. 10.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. View onto the south wall of the staircase. On the detail well visible blocking of an aperture (?) through the ashlar wall (see Fig. 7: 5), on the right a negative of a portal frame of a Post-medieval staircase into the cellar (photo J. Hlavatý, 2014).

**Fig. 11.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. View onto the south wall of the staircase. Fragment of the original surface rendering represented by the undercut joint (photo J. Hlavatý, 2014).

**Fig. 12.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. View onto the south wall of the staircase; a) detail of a threshold fragment (?) with clear evidence of abrasion (see Fig. 7: 3, 4; photo J. Hlavatý, 2014).

**Fig. 13.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. General view onto the south wall of the staircase and the cellar to the east from the church of St. Salvator. Above the photogrammetric picture, below the drawing with interpretation. Legend: **1–22** – see description of **Fig. 9**; **23** – walling from rough marlstone (E); **24** – foundation trench of the south wall; **25** – massive infill of stone and brick (E); **26** – base of brick vault; **27** – vertical technological joint; **28** – infill of “a construction aperture” for setting in the portal post; **29–32** – secondary used Gothic architectural mouldings; **33** – stone and brick infill of the portal (H); **34** – sandstone fragment; **35** – walling with distinctive yellow mortar; **36** – part of the earlier phase of the wall (?) made of brick (70 mm thick); **37** – recent alteration (H); **38** – face of the wall made of brick (260 × ? × 70 mm); **39** – base of the brick vault turning into the face of the wall; **40** – posts of (late) medieval portal (E). Unclassified walling has not been depicted in colour. Position features in the rings depict walling, numbers in squares represent secondary used masonry and a fragment of a threshold (?) within the ashlar wall (analysis M. Kovář, photogrammetry and drawing J. Hlavatý, 2015).

**Fig. 14.** Prague 1-Old Town, Křižovnická Street no. 1040/I. Cellar to the east from the church of St. Salvator. View onto the west part of the south wall with a post medieval portal (photo J. Havrda, 2014).

*Translated by Linda and Patrick Foster*