

# An Enigmatic Epitaph of a German Hospitaller Knight

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## Abstract

*An epitaph to Ulrich von Rambschwang held at the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich originally sited in the Deutschhauskirche in Würzburg has been said to represent a commander of the Order of Saint John of Malta who fought against the Turks in Malta. The epitaph details are reviewed in the light of other contemporary tomb epitaph depictions of knights of the Order.*

**Keywords:** *Germany, Hospitaller Order, Ulrich von Rambschwang, epitaph*

## Introduction

By the mid-sixteenth century, the Ottoman influence expansion in the eastern Mediterranean and the Maghreb coast was threatening the western Christian world. During the period 1550-1565, the Ottoman forces started hammering the approach on the western Mediterranean wrestling isolated outposts such as the fortresses at Tripoli (1551), and Djerba (1560) on the shores of the North African littoral. The smaller Pelagic islands – Lampedusa (1553) and Pantelleria (1553) – had been overrun by the Barbary forces and were respectively left uninhabited or had fallen under Ottoman rule. Stradling the straits between the Christian island of Sicily and the North African littoral was the Maltese archipelago that since 1532 had been placed under the administrative rule of the Order of Saint John. An attack on the main island Malta in 1551 failed and the attacking forces led by Dragut had to content themselves with laying waste to the sister island Gozo taking all the inhabitants into slavery. By 1563, it became apparent to the western world that the Ottoman forces were building up for an attack on the remaining outposts. In Malta, the Order of St John led by grand master Jean de la Valette made its preparations for the defence of the island. In February 1565, a citation was issued summoning all the brethren and knights of the Order to Malta to assist in the defence. In January and March 1565, commissions for recruiting foreign troops were issued. A number of soldier adventurers from all over Europe made their way to protect Christendom from this new threat. In March 1565, the Turkish armada set sail from Istanbul down the Aegean to Navarino before its final leg to Malta reaching the island on the 18 May. The long-expected threat had arrived. The near 7000 strong defender force was facing a superior force numbering about 25 000 seasoned fighters.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen C. Schembri, *The Great Siege – Knights vs Turks mdlxv* (Malta: Gutenberg Press, 2005). The strength of the forces on both sides are variously described by the different chroniclers.

An epitaph held at the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich is labelled as originally representing Ulrich von Rambschwang who is described as being a commander of the Order of Saint John of Malta from Würzburg who ‘in 1562 [*sic*] fought against the Turks in Malta’. This epitaph is presently sited on the staircase between the ground floor lobby and the first floor.<sup>2</sup> The epitaph was transferred to the Munich Bayerisches Nationalmuseum from the Deutschhauskirche in Würzburg. Certain details of the epitaph contrast with other epitaphs belonging to other contemporary Hospitaller knights.<sup>3</sup>

### The epitaph

The epitaph [inventory number R 2359], carved from sandstone, coloured marble and slate, depicts a standing knight wearing typically 16<sup>th</sup> century full plate armour and holding a two-edged single-handed broadsword. The helmet placed on the ledge behind the knight is a 16<sup>th</sup> century closed armet helmet. His undervest is decorated by a neck ruff typical of the period fashion. The armour worn by the knight is decorated with fluting and some decorative etching; however, the main decoration is the depiction of a simple greenish, black-coloured cross embossed through the whole height and width of the breast plate. A turbaned Turkish soldier, possibly a Sipahi soldier, lies at the knight’s feet suggesting that the knight had victoriously fought against the Ottomans during his life. The epitaph is surmounted by a marble inscription in Fraktur / fractura [vide infra] that reads:

*Er breidet auss die Ehr seines Ordens. / Er legt ein pantzer an wie ein heldt, und / zohe den harnisch an in den streiten, und / mit seinem schwerdt beschirmet er die seinen / und ihre lager. i(n). malta . z<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Vor dem Abschluss der Treppe das aus dreierlei Steinarten gearbeitete Denkmal des ambschwang, Comthurs des Johanniter - Ordens in Würzburg, welcher 1562 in Malta gegen die Türken kämpfte; ein Türke liegt zu seinen Füßen’ – Führer durch das Königlich bayerische nationalmuseum in München. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (Munich: Akademische Buchdruckerei F. Straub, 1894), 67; ‘das Denkmal des Johanniter-Komturs Ulrich von Rambschwang, der 1562 gegen die Türken kämpfte’ – Führer durch das Bayerische Nationalmuseum in München. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (München: Verlag des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums, 1908), 17.

<sup>3</sup> The present museum label reads: ‘Epitaph des Johanniterkomturs Ulrich von Rambschwang (hest. 1601) Würzburg, um 1601 – Aus der Deutschhauskirch, Würzburg – Sandstein, Buntmarmor, teilweise gefaßt und vergoldet, Schiefer. Ulrich von Rambschwang, den das Brustkreuz als Johanniterritter ausweist, wird in seinem Epitaph als Sieger über die Türken präsentiert. Wie die mit Bibelversen ausgeschmückte Inschrift oben – ein Pendant am unteren Sockel ist heute nicht mehr erhalten – verzeichnet, war er 1565 bei der erfolgreichen Abwehr der Belagerung Maltsa durch die Osmanen beteiligt. Karl V hatte die strategisch günstig gelegene Insel 1530 dem Johanniterorden mit dem Auftrag ihrer Verteidigung übergeben. Inv. Mr. R 2359 Erworben vor 1868 ‘

<sup>4</sup> I thank Prof. Ioan Albu, “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, for transliterating and translating the inscription. For further considerations on medieval and early modern scripts see: Ioan Albu, “Epigraphic Scripts from Romanesque to Early Renaissance in Medieval and Pre-modern Transylvania,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «G.Barițiu»*. Series *Historica*, Supplement 1 (2015), 91-117.

Translation:

*He spreads the honor of his Order, he puts on an armor like a hero and wears his arms in battles, and with his sword he protects his men and their camp in Malta.*

The epitaph is topped by the coat-of-arms associated with the von Ramschwag family depicting two lions passant facing to the right. This coat-of-arms is identical to that depicted for the family on the epitaph of Epitaph of Joachim of Sirgenstein (†1588) in the parish church in Amtzell in Upper Swabia.<sup>5</sup> There apparently was a counterpart inscription at the base of the epitaph that is no longer preserved. However, a plate with the copied inscription dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century exhibited next to the epitaph, today extant as a photograph, is purported to have read:

*Hie[r] liegt begraben der wohlerwürdig edel und gestreng herr: Ullrich von Rambschwang skt. Johannes Ordens Ritter Bolley der Markbrandenburg und Comenthur alhie, welcher, (nachdem er Anno 1565 der geuerlichen Tirchen Belagerung zu Malta nit allein beygewohnt, sondern auch dem haus : Würzburg in die 33 Jahr lang viel vorgestanden) endlich Anno 1601 den 25ten May zwischen 3 u. 4 in Gott christlich verschieden, dem Gott gnädig sey Amen.*

Translation:

*Here lies the benevolently noble and strict lord: Ullrich von Rambschwang knight of the Order of Saint John Bailiff and Commander of Markbrandenburg, who (after surviving the 1565 Turkish Siege of Malta served the Order in Würzburg for 33 years) died on the 25th of May Anno 1601 between 3 and 4 a Christian death in the grace of God Amen.*

The language used and style of the inscription strongly suggests that it dates to around 1600.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wappen der Herren von Ramsschwag, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herren\\_von\\_Ramschwag](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herren_von_Ramschwag)

<sup>6</sup> Jens Ludwig Burk - Deputy Director-General & Senior Conservator Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich. In correspondence, email dated 6 November 2019.



Epitaph with detail of surmounted marble inscription and coat-of-arms

### Ulrich von Rambschwang

The Munich epitaph is therefore attributed to belong to Ulrich von Rambschwang [or Ramschwag † Würzburg 25.v.1601] who is presumed to have been a knight of St John and Count/Commander of Würzburg, and who is said to have participated in the 1565 siege of Malta. A German contingent is recorded as having participated in the defence of Malta during the siege. Their assigned battle post was the area of the bastion behind the hospital *Sacra Infermeria* facing the Grand Harbour entrance. The German contingent was led by Fra Konrad von Schwalbach who had been assigned the leadership replacing the Grand Bailiff Fra Georg von Hohenheim who was absent from the Island. The original German contingent was made up of fourteen knights, of whom eight were killed or missing in action. These were joined by further compatriots who arrived with the Piccolo and Gran Soccorso in July and September respectively. After the siege was lifted, a

further German contingent led by the Grand Bailiff Fra Georg von Hohenheim arrived in Malta. This was made up of a number of German knights of the Order and gentlemen adventurers. The threat to the Christian world did attract a number of other German soldier adventurers. However, the German post was insufficiently provisioned and had to be supplemented by troops from other nationalities.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Original German contingent at start of Siege**

Fra Konrad von Schwalbach – captain	Survived
Fra Walther von Heussenstam	Survived
Fra Ulrich von Kamswag	Survived
Fra Heinrich von Metternich	Survived
Fra Sebastian von Schoeneck	Survived
Fra Simon Laskon – Polish servant-at-arms	Survived
Fra Walther Hans von Heuneck	Killed in action – St Elmo fortress
Fra Johann von Hassemburg	Killed in action – St Elmo fortress
Fra Florian Stezel von Otmüt	Killed in action – St Elmo fortress
Fra Tuerch von Duellen	Killed in action – St Elmo fortress
Fra Telman von Eyssembach	Killed in action – St Elmo fortress
Fra Georg von Hassemburg	Killed in action – Birgu fortress
Fra Hieronymus von Reuk	Killed in action – Birgu fortress
Fra N. von Retz	Missing in action

#### **German knights arriving with the Piccolo Soccorso**

• Baron Fra Georg von Bes	• Killed in action – San Michele fortress
• Fra Girolamo Rechurch	
• Hieronymus Ruch – mercenary	• Killed in action
• Matthies Ulderich Schwarz – mercenary	

#### **German soldiers arriving with the Gran Soccorso**

- Sebastian von Pantoutz – mercenary
- Hieronymus von und zu Eliz
- Girolamo Eelt

#### **List of German knights and some mercenaries participating directly in the 1565 Siege**

Ulrich von Rambschwang [or Ramschwag] does not appear in the list of knights or soldiers present in Malta during the 1565 siege as given by Francisco Balbi di Correggio [\*1505 †1589] who served as an arquebusier with the Spanish contingent during the Siege of Malta.<sup>8</sup> He is also not mentioned in the subsequent account

<sup>7</sup> E.R. Leopardi, “Germans in Malta in the years 1565-69,” *Melita Historica* 4 (2), (1965), 117-127.

<sup>8</sup> Francisco Balbi de Correggio. La verdadera relacion de todo lo q[ue] este año de M.D.LXV. ha sucedido en la Isla de Malta, dende antes que la armada del gran turco Soliman llegasse sobre ella, hasta la llegada del socorro postrero del poderosissimo y catholico Rey de España don Phelipe

given by the Order's historian Giacomo Bosio [\*1544 †1627].<sup>9</sup> Ulrich von Ramschwang [or Ramschwag] does not feature in the lists of members of the Order of St John published by Rene de Vertot in 1772<sup>10</sup> and Mouis de la Roque in 1891.<sup>11</sup> However, German-origin names were often notoriously misspelt; and it is very possible that the recorded Fra Ulrich von Kamswag who is known to have survived the siege was the same person as Ulrich von Ramschwang.<sup>12</sup> The lists published by Rene de Vertot and Mouis de la Roque, however, do not record Ulrich von Kamswag as having been admitted a member of the Order in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ulrich von Ramschwag has however been listed as one of the commanders of Würzburg during the period 1570-1601. He was specifically mentioned in the *Libri conciliorum* archives of the Order.<sup>13</sup> He was recalled to Malta in 1591. The Grand Priory of Germany of the Order of St John, with its seat at Heitersheim in Upper Germany, had a presence in region of Franconia. One of the eight bailiwicks of the Order – the Ballei Franconia was responsible for six commanderies including one in Würzburg founded in 1192.<sup>14</sup>

The family coat-of-arms surmounting the epitaph in the Munich Bayerisches Nationalmuseum depicts two lions passant facing to the right and is identical to that depicted for the von Ramschwag [or von Ramschwang] family.<sup>15</sup> This family of the low nobility is first documented in 1176 as testamentary to the Bishop of Constance. The Prince-Bishopric of Constance was a small ecclesiastical principality of the Holy Roman Empire from the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century until its secularisation in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In his dual capacity as prince and as bishop, the prince-bishop was also in charge of the considerably larger Roman Catholic Diocese of Konstanz that belonged to the ecclesiastical province of Mainz in

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nuestro señor segu[n]do deste nombre / recogida por Francisco Balbi de Correggio en todo el sitio Soldado / impresa en Alcalá de Henares en casa de Juan de Villanueva. Año 1567 [available at <https://books.google.be/books?id=PTDZg18DLZsC&>]

<sup>9</sup> Iacomo Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della sacra religione et illustrissima militia di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano di Iacomo Bosio parte prima*, (Vatican City, Rome, 1594), 658-667, 711-712.

<sup>10</sup> Rene de Vertot, *Historire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem appellés depuis Chevaliers de Malthe* (Paris: Durand Neveu, 1772), vol. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Mouis de la Roque, *Catalogue des Chevaliers de Malte, appelés successivement Chevaliers de l'Ordre Militaire et Hospitalier de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem, de Rhodes & de Malte, 1099-1890* (Paris: Desaide, 1891).

<sup>12</sup> This observation was made by Dr. Jens Ludwig Burk – Deputy Director-General & Senior Conservator of the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich.

<sup>13</sup> *Fr. Ulricus de Rams Vuap Commendatarius de Verspurch citetur in Conventu intra tres menses ut sustineat onus Albergiae Alemaniae et sequestrentur fructus dictae commendae pro manutentione dictae Albergiae. 7.XI.1585 (f. 265v)*. See: J. Mizzi, *Catalogue of the Records of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the National Library of Malta. Vol. II, Part 5, Archives 94-96* (Malta, University Press, 1979), 1001-1002.

<sup>14</sup> Felix Mussik, *The development of the hospitaller commandery of St Oswald in Würzburg from 1200-1805*, Thesis Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in History, Faculty of Arts, University of Malta, 2013

<sup>15</sup> Wappen der Herren von Ramsschwag, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herren\\_von\\_Ramschwag](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herren_von_Ramschwag).

Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany. Centred in their castle Alt-Ramswag in the eastern part of the municipality H äggenschwil in the area of the Swiss canton of St. Gallen, the family served the Abbot of St. Gallen and later the Habsburgs. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century the family moved increasingly to the Vorarlberg area in west Austria using the castle Gutenberg near Balzers in southern Liechtenstein as their home.<sup>16</sup> However, Ulrich von Ramschwag himself must have had a close relationship with the Franconia Region since the epitaph dedicated to him was originally sited in Deutschhauskirche at Würzburg.



**von Ramschwag family coat-of-arms on epitaph of Joachim of Sirgenstein**

### **The cross decoration on the Munich effigy**

The assumption that von Ramschwag was a member of the Order of Saint John of Malta who participated in the 1565 siege of Malta is made on the basis of the now missing lower inscription. However, the depiction of a simple greenish black cross depicted on the beast plate of the epitaph stands in contrast to other standard tombs epitaphs belonging to Hospitaller knights of the period.

By the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the Order of St John had regularly adopted the wearing of a white eight-pointed triangular cross as their insignia. This was proudly worn both on their black habit and their armour. The white simple cross was only worn on a red surcoat. The dress code of the Order of St John stated: ‘Thus the knights hospitallers, acquitting themselves truly of both these sorts of duties, are to wear on their clothes a cross with eight points. .... It is becoming our profession, that all the brothers of the hospital be obliged to wear a black robe or mantle with a white cross. .... We enact likewise, that in the exercise of arms they wear over their clothes a red subveste or military cassock, with the white cross strait’.<sup>17</sup>

Epitaphs belonging to fourteenth century knights of the Order of Saint John in Rhodes showed the individual wearing what appears to be a monkish habit and a cape sporting an elongated eight-pointed Bolsini cross on the left side. This is

<sup>16</sup> Martin Leonhard. Von Ramschwag. In: *Dizionario storico della Svizzera (DSS)*. Accademia svizzera di scienze umane e sociali (Bern, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> The Old and New Statutes of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem translated from the edition of Borgoforte, A.D. M,DC,LXXVI. In: Rene de Vertot, *The History of the Knights of Malta*, vol. 2 (London: F. Strahan, 1728).

clearly exemplified by the tombstone effigy of grand master Pierre de Corneillan (1353-1355) now held at the Musée de Cluny in Paris. A similar fragmented tombstone effigy dated to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century is held in the Archaeological Museum housed in the old Hospital of the Order in Rhodes. This depicts a knight of the Order apparently wearing monkish clothes and a mantle with an equal-armed eight-pointed cross on the left side. The knights were expelled from Rhodes in 1522.



**Tombstone of Pierre de Corneillan,  
Musée de Cluny, Paris**



**Tombstone of unnamed knight,  
Archaeological Museum, Rhodes**

Later 16<sup>th</sup> century tombstone effigies clearly show the knight wearing late 16<sup>th</sup> century-type armour with an eight-pointed cross clearly depicted on the breast plate. Such as example is the tombstone effigy of Jain Bautista Ruiz de Vergara Alava y Esquivel which can now be viewed at the Museum of the Order of St John in Clerkenwell, London but was originally sited in the Cathedral at Valladolid, Spain. Jain Ruiz de Vergara was admitted a member of the Order of St John in 1553 and may have participated in the 1565 Great Siege of Malta. His year of death is not



known, but his death occurred after 1574.<sup>18</sup> Similarly effigies showing an eight-pointed cross on the breast plate armour are to be found in the crypt of St John Conventual Church in Valletta, Malta [e.g. the bust effigy of grandmaster Luís Mendes de Vasconcellos †1623].



**Tombstone of Knight of St. John Jain Ruiz de Vergara  
Museum of the Order of St John, London**

© Museum of the Order of St John, London: with permission<sup>19</sup>

The practice of depicting the eight-pointed cross on armour is evidenced by two late 16<sup>th</sup> century breastplate specimens held by the Order's Armory in Malta, though these were not so flamboyantly depicted.<sup>20</sup> The eight-pointed cross on armour is also depicted on period portrait engravings. Other than the tomb effigy of Ulrich von Rambschwang, there are no known examples of tomb effigies of knights of St John wearing armour sporting a simple dark black cross. The simple white cross insignia as defined by the statutes of the Order was worn on a red sopravest. This is clearly depicted on the tomb epitaph of grandmaster Fra Jean de la Valette at St. John's Conventual Church in Malta and on the contemporary frescoes illustrating the 1565 siege of Malta in the Grandmaster Palace. These depictions show the grandmaster wearing a sopravest over his armour. A distinct change in emphasis can be noted on the 16<sup>th</sup> century effigies as contrasted to the tombstones from Rhodes where knights were depicted as monks. Depictions after the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century showed the knights dressed as warriors emphasizing the change in the

<sup>18</sup> Marjorie Trusted, "A work by Esteban Jordan: An effigy of a Spanish knight of the Order of St John," *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología* 53 (1987), 351-359.

<sup>19</sup> <http://museumstjohn.org.uk/our-story/history-of-the-order/>

<sup>20</sup> Stephen C. Schembri, *Armory of the knights. A study of the Palace Armory its collection & the military storehouses of the Hospitaller Knights of the Order of St John* (Malta: Missea Books, 2003).

perception of the Order's role in the Christian world with increasing emphasis being given to the military facet rather than the previous monkish character.



**Tomb epitaph of Grandmaster Jean de la Valette with simple cross on sopravest  
St John Conventual Church, Malta**



**Wearing armour depicting  
eight-pointed cross  
Portrait of De La Valette  
by Donato Bertelli, Venice  
(1565)**



**De La Valette and knights shown wearing red  
sopravest with simple white cross  
15<sup>th</sup> century fresco by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio,  
Grandmaster Palace, Malta**

The Ulrich von Rambschwang epitaph is distinct by showing a discerningly different dark coloured simple cross. Dark coloured crosses were the distinguished insignia of two different Crusader Orders, both of which had by the 16<sup>th</sup> century established a presence in the Holy Roman Empire – the Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem and the Teutonic Order both had adopted, as their insignia, the wearing of a simple cross similar in form to that depicted on the Munich epitaph. The colour chosen by the Teutonic Order was black; the Order of St. Lazarus chose green.

The fourteenth-century statutes of the Order of St Lazarus prescribed that the 'Order's gowns shall take the following form: the monk's habits, which are riding habits, should be made of camel hair or other warming material and should be non-secular; at the front, there should be a green cross, the width of an outstretched hand, with a link along one side and a slightly shorter bar that passes above. However, on the uniform jackets and on the shields, a larger cross has to be worn by brothers fighting in battle in the Holy Land; also, on the banner, there is a large cross'.<sup>21</sup> These insignia were clearly depicted on 14<sup>th</sup> century tomb effigies originally housed in the mother house at Boigny in France.<sup>22</sup> Here, too, the grandmasters are depicted as wearing monkish attire without any indication of their military facet. By the mid-sixteenth century, the Commanderies of the Order of St. Lazarus loyal to the French grandmagistry were subject to political machinations aimed towards attempts of allowing the Order's properties in France to be appropriated by the Order of St. John. This resulted in the Order being managed in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by a series of grandmasters who were themselves members of the Order of St. John and who introduced a green-on-white eight-pointed cross insignia to the Order. The newly adopted eight-pointed cross, was introduced probably during the grandmastership of Jean de Levis, a knight of the Order of St John admitted in 1532.<sup>23</sup> The use of the eight-pointed cross was reinforced during the 1578 Chapter General led by Françoise Salviati, also a member of the Order of St John admitted in 1544: 'Look upon this eight-pointed green Cross which we wear on our habits and which we carry. The green signifies the hope of salvation through the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it must be imprinted into our hearts without blemish or stain. The eight points signify the eight Beatitudes, which must be within us at all times: in matters of spirit be submissive, live righteously without malice, be humble, repent thy sins, love justice, be merciful, be truthful, and endure persecution for a just cause. I order thee to wear this cross on your clothing, habits, and tunics and to place it on your left side where thy heart is so that thou mayest defend it with thy right and remember never to

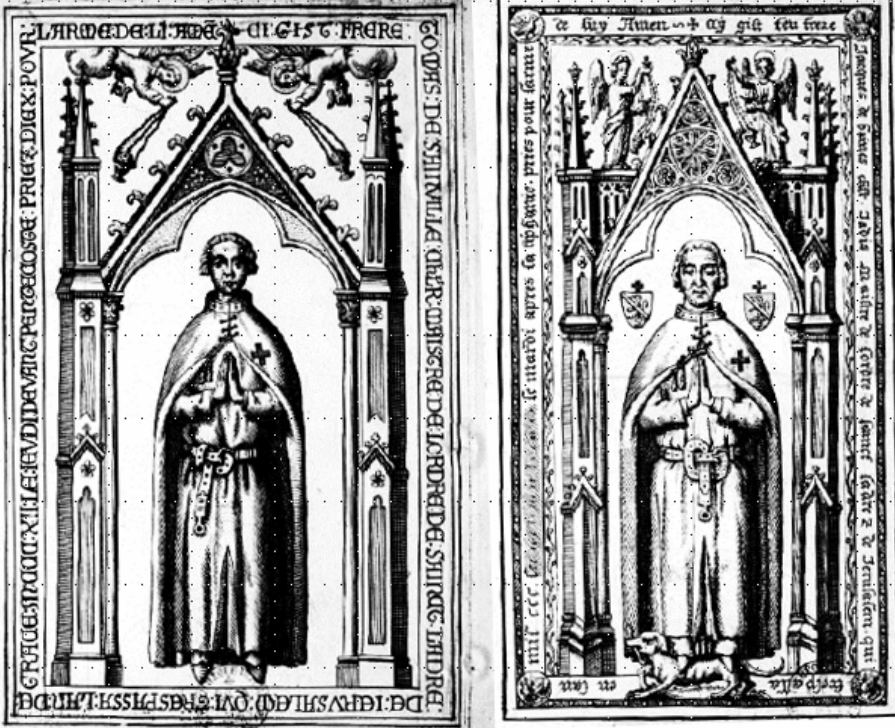
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<sup>21</sup> Siegfred von Schlatt. *Dei Regein des Heiligen Orderns S. Lazari*. Ms. 1314/1331, Seedorf Monastery. Transcribed in: G. Morel, *Die ältesten statuten für dei Lazaritenkloster Seedorf, im Gfenn, und in Slatte*, *Der Geschichtsfreund: Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins der fünf Orte Luzern, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden ob und nid dem Wald und Zug*, (1847) 4, 119-158. Translated into English by Elizabeth Cox.

<sup>22</sup> *Tombeaux de Thomas de Sainville, Jean de Paris et Jacques de Baine, maîtres de l'Ordre de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem* (gravures). In: *Recueil de mémoires et documents concernant divers Ordres français ou étrangers. Recueil de pièces, extraits, mémoires et documents concernant les Ordres de Saint-Lazare et du Mont-Carmel*. I. Ms. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Clairambault, 1316.

<sup>23</sup> *Essai Critique sur l'Histoire des Ordres Royaux, Hospitaliers et Militaires de Saint Lazare de Jérusalem et de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel* (Brussels, 1775), 138.

abandon it. Receive therefore this Order in the name of the Holy Trinity.’<sup>24</sup> No sixteenth century tomb effigies belonging to Lazarite knights have been identified.<sup>25</sup>



Tombstone effigies of 14<sup>th</sup> century masters Thomas de Sainville and Jacques de Basnes

The 1264 dress code of the Teutonic knights stated: ‘The brother knights shall wear white mantles as a sign of knighthood, but their other garments shall not differ from those of the other brethren. We decree that each brother wear a black cross on mantle, cappen and armour surcoats to show outwardly that he is a special member

<sup>24</sup> J.J. Algrant y Canete, Jean de Beaugourdon, *Armorial de l'Ordre Militaire et Hospitalier de Saint Lazare de Jerusalem - Armorial de la Orden Militar y Hospitalaria de San Lazaro de Jerusalem - Armorial of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem* (Holland: H.A. van den Akker, 1983), 384.

<sup>25</sup> A tomb epitaph drawing and description belonging to the English Lazarite knight Sir Thomas Leigh (†1545) is too unclear to establish details but was certainly also depicted as wearing plated armour with a sopravest. Reference: H. Ellis. *The history and antiquities of the parish of St Leonard Shoreditch and liberty of Norton Dolgate in the suburbs of London* (London: J. Nichols, 1798), 53-54, pl. IV.

of this Order.<sup>26</sup> These insignia were clearly depicted on sculpted forms such as the shield at the foot of the tomb effigy of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Teutonic master Landgrave Konrad of Thuringia and on the breast plate of Teutonic Grandmaster Wolfgang Schutzbar (GM: 1543-1566) in a 17<sup>th</sup> century etching. In common with pre-16<sup>th</sup> century tomb effigy depictions of knights of the other Crusader Orders, the epitaph of Grandmaster Konrad of Thuringia depicts him wearing monkish attire. A monkish habit is also worn in the epitaphs dedicated to Teutonic knights Jakob Egloffstein (†1416) and Jost von Venninger (†1454).<sup>27</sup>



**Tomb effigy of grandmaster Konrad of Thuringia showing black cross on white insignia on shield, Saint Elizabeth Church, Marburg**



**17<sup>th</sup> century etching of Teutonic Grandmaster Wolfgang Schutzbar (GM: 1543-1566) depicted wearing armour with superimposed Teutonic cross**

### **Deutschhauskirche in Würzburg**

The Munich epitaph was transferred to the Munich Bayerisches Nationalmuseum from the Deutschhauskirche in Würzburg in the region of

<sup>26</sup> The Rule and Statutes of the Teutonic Order. In: The Order of the Teutonic Knights of St. Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem. The Chivalric Teutonic Order of St Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem, 2001-2019, <http://www.imperialteutonicorder.com/id186.html>

<sup>27</sup> Steen Clemmensen, "Personal heraldry in the Teutonic Order. Coat of Arms," *The Journal of the Heraldry Society* 1 (235) (2018), 195-217.

Franconia in northern Bavaria, Germany. This Gothic Church dedicated to Mary and Elizabeth of Thuringia was built during the period 1260-1320 to serve as a church for the Teutonic Order. The convent building and the basement of the tower were rebuilt in the Baroque style in 1694 according to designs by Antonio Petrini.<sup>28</sup>

Würzburg was very quickly exposed to the Reformation movement but, despite peasant revolts which devastated the diocese, retained the Catholic faith well through the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In April 1518, the Augustinian monk Martin Luther spent the night in the Augustinian Monastery and had an audience with Prince-Bishop Lorenz von Bibra [episcopate: 1495-1519] who appears to have inclined to the Lutheran doctrine. His successor Konrad von Thungen [episcopate: 1519-1540] however sought to the utmost of his ability to prevent the entrance of the new doctrines despite the peasant revolts. Melchior von Zobel [episcopate: 1544-1558] sought to preserve the diocese to the Catholic Faith by instituting reforms, but the cathedral chapter blocked his efforts. Frederick von Wirsberg [episcopate: 1558-1573] brought the Jesuits to Würzburg and gave them charge of the seminary for boys and a boarding-school which he had established. His successor, Julius Echter von Meselbrunn [episcopate: 1573-1617] gave the diocese took on fresh life establishing the university and the Julius Hospital.<sup>29</sup>



**16<sup>th</sup> century view of the Deutschhauskirche, Fries Chronicle 1574<sup>30</sup>**

The Teutonic Order was generally adversely affected by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation and counter-Reformation movements, and the regional wars

<sup>28</sup>Deutschhauskirche. In: Würzburg Wiki, Würzburg, 2019. <https://wuerzburgwiki.de/wiki/Deutschhauskirche>. A historical document in the interior of the church describes the history of the church. The document also shows old pictures of the church, a German knight, the "beautiful gate" and a floor plan.

<sup>29</sup>Joseph Lins & Karl Hoeber. Diocese of Würzburg. In: *Catholic Encyclopedia – An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 15, eds. Charles G. Herbermann, Edward A Pace, Thomas J. Shahan (New York: Encyclopaedia Press, 1913).

<sup>30</sup>Lorenz Fries. Chronicle of the bishops of Würzburg, 1574, [https://wuerzburgwiki.de/wiki/Datei:Deutschhauskirche\\_Fries-Chronik\\_1574.jpg](https://wuerzburgwiki.de/wiki/Datei:Deutschhauskirche_Fries-Chronik_1574.jpg)

particularly the 1519–1521 Polish–Teutonic War and the 1524–1525 German Peasants' War, and the 1558–1583 Livonian War. These conflicts reduced the Order's territorial holdings significantly with the confiscation of its properties in the region. It did however manage to retain holdings in the remaining properties in the Holy Roman Empire, including commanderies falling under the administrative management of the Bailiwick of Franconia headed by a Landkomtur responsible directly to the Grand Master, whose seat was in Bad Mergentheim Castle near Würzburg having transferred the official seat from Königsberg in 1527. The various commanderies were themselves administered by a commander (Komtur). After the 1555 Peace of Augsburg in 1555, membership in the Order was open to Protestants changing it to a tri-denominational organization embracing Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed bailiwicks.<sup>31</sup>

### Conclusion

The epitaph of Ulrich von Rambschwang currently held in the Munich Bayerisches Nationalmuseum has long been accepted to depict a knight of the Order of St John. The form and colouration of the cross depicted on the breast plate contrasts with this attribution. The members of the Order of St John had long adopted the white triangular eight-pointed cross as their insignia. The Teutonic Order active in Franconia during the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Order of St. Lazarus, still active in Catholic areas in the Holy Roman and Hapsburg Empires, had retained the simple cross insignia. This suggests that the sculptor of the von Rambschwang effigy may have placed a Teutonic cross on the breast plate in accordance to what was more familiar for the region.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century depiction of effigies belonging to knights of Crusader Orders showing the individuals in armour contrasts to the earlier depictions of similar knights shown wearing monkish attire. This reflects the change in the *raison d'être* of these Orders moving from a principally monastic hospitaller role to placing more emphasis on military duties.<sup>32</sup> These simple design effigies were to quickly give rise to the later elaborate flamboyant Baroque-style tomb effigies exemplified throughout St John Conventual Church in Valletta.

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<sup>31</sup> Teutonic Order of the German Knights of St Mary. In: *The Order of the Teutonic Knights of St. Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem. The Chivalric Teutonic Order of St Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem*, 2001–2019, <http://www.imperialteutonicorder.com/id48.html>

<sup>32</sup> Charles Savona-Ventura, "The Baroque influence on the uniform used by the Chivalric Orders as exemplified by the Order of Saint Lazarus in France," *Journal of Baroque Studies* 1(2) (2017), 41–50.