

BOOK REVIEW AND NOTE

The Church and Cistercians in Medieval Poland. Foundations, Documents, People. By Józef Dobosz. Translated by Agnieszka Tokarczuk. Edited by Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński and Matthew Firth, with the assistance of Magdalena Biniaś-Szkopek and Robert Tomczak. East Central Europe, 476–1795, 2. Turnhout: Brepols, 2023. 347 pp. €95 cloth.

This translated collection of studies by one of Poland's leading medievalists is a welcome contribution to an understanding of the medieval church and also to an appreciation of the Cistercian Order in this region. Anglophone scholarship on medieval Polish ecclesiastical, especially monastic, matters has not been well developed, though there are some exceptions such as the late Jerzy Kłoczowski's work on the Dominicans, the comparative Cistercian studies of Emilia Jamrozik, and Piotr Górecki's many contributions to the history of the Cistercian Henryków abbey in Silesia.

One of the most helpful elements of this volume is Dobosz's well-crafted opening chapter on the church and Christianity in Poland before 1300, specially written for this collection. For those who have little knowledge of early medieval Polish history, it provides an overview of how Christianity was introduced, how organized in the tenth through early thirteenth centuries, and how its relationship to the political rulers of the period changed. An early dependency upon the ducal and eventually royal patrimony was gradually transformed after the death in 1138 of Duke Bolesław III Krzywousty (the Wrymouth), when the previously unified polity was divided between members of the ruling Piast dynasty. As the rulers of these ducal territories sought to enhance their powers within their respective territories, in part through ecclesiastical foundations, they also vied with one another for control of the decentralized Polish state as a whole. Control of the region of Lesser Poland (*Polonia minor*, *Małopolska*) and some related territories was a particular goal, for its possession, including its chief city Cracow, gave its holder the status of senior duke (*princeps*), implicitly the chief claimant to the royal tradition. In these decades, the church, in particular its monastic establishments, was able to negotiate varying degrees of independence from the Piast dukes by trading approval and support for one Piast prince or another in return for rights and privileges it had not previously possessed. On the larger ecclesiastical scene, the Polish church was moving toward the kind of revival previously envisioned by the Gregorian reform movement. Dobosz's coverage of these developments includes discussion of how controversial some of the issues have been in Polish historiography, but his treatment is even handed and a sufficient *vade mecum* to insure readers will be able to follow the more focused treatments of the nineteen chapters that follow.

Dobosz divides his translated studies into the three groups of chapters identified in the sub-title of this book. The first group, devoted to monastic beginnings, focuses initially in its first chapter upon those based on the Augustinian rule (Canons Regular and Premonstratensians, the latter known in Poland as Norbertines) and upon the

Cistercian Order. This chapter is followed by one that concentrates upon the role of Duke Kazimierz II Sprawiedliwy (the Just, 1138–1194, and Duke of Cracow after 1177) as patron and founder, especially of Cistercian abbeys. Kazimierz's career and contributions have long been one of Dobosz's major focuses, and this chapter (originally published in 1994) points the way to his monograph on Kazimierz's foundations (1995) and his fuller biography (2011). Subsequent chapters in this group engage with the foundations and endowments of Cistercian abbeys in Łekno, Jędrzejów, Sulejów, Wąchock, and Owińska, and with the role played by the churches endowed in connection with these abbeys. Overall the picture Dobosz presents in these chapters reveals the strengthening of the monastic economy and the gradual emancipation of these churches and abbeys from ducal patrimonies while, at the same time, these ducal patrons further embedded a system of political rule that was, as Dobosz terms it, a polyarchy rather than the earlier patrimonial order (31).

The seven chapters in the second group of articles deal with close analyses of documents and diplomas that is tied closely to the tradition of source studies which has characterized the larger picture of Polish historiography (though Dobosz notes, p. 171, that diplomatics have necessarily – due in part to the vicissitudes of the Polish political and national past – had a shorter history than in other countries). These chapters thus place special demands upon readers who have limited backgrounds in the close details of this tradition as it pertains to specific ecclesiastical developments, especially with reference to such matters as the origin of chancelleries, the character of individual scriptoria, and the system of legal bases upon which foundation grants were issued (or claimed to have been issued, in the case of forgeries). Fortunately, Dobosz begins this group with a chapter that provides a model overview of the written document in medieval Poland that will help readers from the outside to follow developments that follow in subsequent chapters.

Four chapters devoted to specific individuals form the third group of materials included in Dobosz's collection. The first treats Maur, a shadowy early Cracovian bishop active during the tumultuous years of the reign of Duke Bolesław III. He is important, from Dobosz's standpoint, because he can be seen as contributing to the overall development of the church in Poland, even though little is known about his biography. A second chapter focuses upon Archbishop Janik of Gniezno in the mid-twelfth century and his successors. They were, in Dobosz's eyes, especially important for the way they prepared "the ground for a different Church in Poland, which was internally reforming itself in the Gregorian spirit" (282). The next to last chapter provides an overview of the thirteenth-century abbots at Wąchock, whose full importance in both Polish and larger European ecclesiastical history remains in Dobosz's judgment to be fully appreciated. A final chapter treats the political, cultural, and economic role played by thirteenth-century Cistercians in Lesser Poland, including their eventual support for the reunification of the Polish kingdom under Władysław Łokietek in 1320.

Collectively the items included in this volume effectively reveal the broad and deep contributions Dobosz has made to Polish history in general in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and especially to the status and role of the Cistercians in these developments. They, and we, are well served by his scholarship.

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