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## ATTITUDES OF ELITES TOWARDS THE TRANSLATION OF HOLY RELICS UNTIL THE END OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

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**Abstract:** This paper presents the connections between the early medieval Polish elites and the translations of saint's relics in Poland up to the end of the twelfth century. The groups identified as responsible for these translations are rulers, clergy and nobles. The term 'translation' is understood here as any deliberate transfer of relics. The paper begins with an analysis of the first documented translation – the transfer of the remains of St Adalbert to Gniezno – and concludes with a presentation of the translation of the relics of St Stanislaus and St Florian.

**Keywords:** translatio, Saints, early Piast monarchy, relics, elites

The translation of saints' relics in early Piast Poland has repeatedly attracted scholarly attention.<sup>1</sup> Numerous studies have researched these events, focusing primarily on their immediate political, religious, or devotional

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<sup>1</sup> R. Michałowski, 'Translacja Pięciu Braci Polskich do Gniezna. Przyczynek do dziejów kultu relikwii w Polsce wczesnośredniowiecznej', in *Peregrinationes. Pielgrzymki w kulturze dawnej Europy*, ed. by H. Manikowska, H. Zaremska, Warsaw 1995, 173–84; M. Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu. Relikwie w kulturze religijnej na ziemiach polskich w średniowieczu*, Warsaw 2008; K. Wyszynska, 'Translacja relikwii św. Wojciecha z Gniezna do Pragi', in *Historiografia dobry rozbięcia dzielnicowego w Polsce. Materiały z konferencji, Poznań 31 marca 2022 r.*, ed. by B. Jabłoński, K. Maik et al., Poznań 2023, 159–85; G. Pac, 'Ad propagandum catholicae religionis cultum. Translacje relikwii i chrystianizacja Europy Środkowej do końca XII wieku', in *Christianizace v dlouhém trvání: 10.–15. století v Českém a Polském království*, ed. by K. Bracha, M. Nodl et al., Prague

consequences. However, no work to date has presented all of these translations collectively – not as isolated acts, but as manifestations of the idea of *imitatio regni*<sup>2</sup> by both senior clergy and lords. Only Krzysztof Skwierczyński, in his study of churches founded by lords, has noted certain analogies with the attitudes adopted by their rulers.<sup>3</sup> Yet *imitatio regni* is not limited to foundation activities alone. It also encompasses actions related to other royal prerogatives, among which active participation in practices associated with the cult of relics is one of the most significant.

By examining the initiators of the translation of relics in Poland until the end of the twelfth century, one can discern certain consistent elements not only in the course of these acts themselves, but above all in the unchanging motivations of their initiators. These included rulers, senior clergy, and lords; however, in two cases of particular interest, it is difficult to attribute the initiative for such a transfer of holy remains to representatives of only one of these groups. The primary corpus of sources for investigating this issue consists of hagiographic texts, chronicles, and annals. A distinctive feature of the first category is their didactic function, which tends to dominate, although they also contain biographical and historical information. Often such information is embedded within a literary convention characteristic of the time in which a given work was written.<sup>4</sup> In accounts describing the translation of relics, the saint is portrayed as an active participant in the event. He could prevent the transfer of his relics by punishing those

2024, 227–64; P. J. Geary, *Furta sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, Princeton 1978; M. Papasidero, *Translatio sanctitatis*, Florence 2019.

<sup>2</sup> R. Michałowski, *Princeps fundator. Studium z dziejów kultury politycznej w Polsce X–XIII wieku*, Warsaw 1993, 110–12. *Imitatio regni* denotes a range of deliberate actions and performative practices undertaken by the nobility as a means of emulating the royal elite. These manifestations of imitation encompass not only the establishment of ecclesiastical foundations but also various ceremonial and devotional activities, including participation in rites associated with the veneration of relics.

<sup>3</sup> K. Skwierczyński, 'Fundacje możnowładcze w Polsce XI i XII wieku. Możliwość ich fundacji jako problem badawczy', in *Animarum cultura. Studia nad kulturą religijną na ziemiach polskich w średniowieczu*, ed. by H. Manikowska, W. Brojer, Warsaw 2008, 63–93.

<sup>4</sup> M. Michalski, *Kobiety i świętość w żywotach trzynastowiecznych księżnych polskich*, Poznań 2004, 31–33.

who acted against his will.<sup>5</sup> By recognizing the individual elements of the hagiographic topos and understanding the primary motivations of the author composing such a narrative, we are able to extract from these sources not only valuable information about a saint's life and deeds, but above all to grasp a saint's ideological significance for a given community. Even more importantly, however, we gain access to the symbolic justifications behind the actions of individuals responsible for the translation of relics.

Other narrative sources – particularly chronicles – are also important for this study. Although their primary purpose was not to present the cult of specific saints, they provide substantial information about activities related to the veneration of relics and, importantly, identify the figures who initiated these acts, as well as situate them within a broader historical context. The *Gesta principum Polonorum*<sup>6</sup> constitutes the oldest extant chronicle of Poland, composed in Latin in the early twelfth century. It offers a detailed account of the deeds of Polish rulers, especially Bolesław III Wrymouth, at whose initiative the work was created. While the chronicle addresses both political and religious matters, its author – whose identity remains uncertain – is generally regarded as a cleric from Western Europe with a profound understanding of Polish affairs. His work not only records historical events but also reflects the ideological and cultural values of early medieval Poland.<sup>7</sup> Vincentius of Cracow (Wincenty Kadłubek), bishop of Cracow, composed the *Chronica Polonorum* in the early thirteenth century. The work is explicitly didactic and rhetorical, intended for a learned audience. The chronicle combines direct narration with dialogic exchanges, and contains numerous references to the Bible and classical literature. Vincentius not only presents the history of Poland from legendary times up to his own contemporary period, but also emphasizes moral instruction,

<sup>5</sup> According to the narrative in the Chronicle of the Czechs by Cosmas of Prague, St Adalbert initially refused to allow his relics to be transferred to Gniezno. He then punished the Czechs who had tried to remove the relics by force and had broken the altar. They were immediately paralyzed until prayers were offered and repentance was shown. *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Bohemorum*. *Cosmas of Prague, The Chronicle of the Czechs*, ed. by J. M. Bak, P. Rychterová, Central European Medieval Texts, 10, Budapest – New York, 2020, 159–69.

<sup>6</sup> Formerly attributed to the so-called Gallus Anonymous. See footnote below.

<sup>7</sup> *Gesta Principum Polonorum. The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, trans. P. W. Knoll, F. Schaer, Central European Medieval Texts, 3, Budapest – New York 2003.

the virtues of rulers, and the importance of the Piast dynasty within a broader European and universal historical context.<sup>8</sup>

Foreign chronicles also inform us about events in Poland, in particular the *Chronica Bohemorum*,<sup>9</sup> the *Chronicle of Thietmar*,<sup>10</sup> and the *Chronicle of Ademar of Chabannes*.<sup>11</sup> The first of them was written by the Prague canon Cosmas. The *Chronica Bohemorum* was composed between 1110 and 1125, and a substantial part of its second book is devoted to Polish matters. In it, the author describes the course of Duke Břetislav I's invasion of Poland in 1039 and the transfer of St Adalbert's relics to Prague.<sup>12</sup> The *Chronicle of Thietmar*, written by the bishop of Merseburg, provides us with detailed information about the course of the Congress in Gniezno in 1000. It was then that a metropolis dependent on the Pope was established in Poland, and Otto III was presented with the relics of St Adalbert. One source often underestimated by Polish scholars is the *Chronicle of Ademar of Chabannes*,<sup>13</sup> which mentions the fate of one of the earliest cults in Poland, namely that of St Bruno and his companions. Another group of sources consists of chronicles that, despite typically being sparse in detail, prove valuable as comparative material and often help fill chronological gaps found in other sources. However, in the case of the translation of St Vincent's relics, the entry in the *Magdeburg Chronicle* remains the sole source offering a detailed account of the transfer and reception of these relics.<sup>14</sup>

Probably the first Polish duke to recognize the cult of saints as an extremely important instrument for consolidating royal power was Bolesław I the Brave (992–1025). It seems that no subsequent Polish ruler could match him either in the number of acts initiated in connection

<sup>8</sup> *Writing History in Medieval Poland: Bishop Vincentius of Cracow and the Chronica Polonorum*, ed. by D. von Güttner-Sporzyński, Turnhout 2017.

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Thietmari Merseburgensis episcopi Chronicon*, ed. by R. Holtzmann, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum. Nova Series, Berlin 1935.

<sup>11</sup> *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*, ed. by P. Bourgain, R. Landes et al., Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 129, Turnhout 1999.

<sup>12</sup> K. Wyszynska, 'Translacja relikwii św. Wojciecha z Gniezna do Pragi', 159–85.

<sup>13</sup> D. F. Callahan, *Jerusalem and the Cross in the Life and Writings of Ademar of Chabannes*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 181, Leiden – Boston 2016; R. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History. Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034*, Harvard Historical Studies, 117, Cambridge MA – London 1995.

<sup>14</sup> *Annales Magdeburgenses*, ed. by G. H. Pertz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores, Hannover 1859, XVI, 187.

with the cult of saints' relics or in the depth of his understanding of the political and religious significance of transferring and collecting holy remains. Bolesław's first activity in this field was, of course, the translation of St Adalbert's relics to Gniezno. The acquisition of the entire body of the missionary, who died preaching the Word of God to the Prussians and was a friend of the emperor, drew the attention of the European elites of the time towards Poland. One only needs to look at how rapidly the cult of St Adalbert (also known as Wojciech) spread at the beginning of the eleventh century in Europe. From the *Dedicatio ecclesiae S. Petri Babenbergensis* of 6 May 1012, it is known that his relics were kept in the right-hand part of the eastern altar of St Peter's Cathedral in Bamberg.<sup>15</sup> Churches dedicated to St Adalbert were built in Liège, Aachen, Reichenau, Pereio (Sant'Alberto, north of Ravenna), Esztergom, and Rome.<sup>16</sup> The foundation of St Adalbert's Church in Rome by Emperor Otto III in 998 or 999 is of particular importance.

The transfer of the relics of St Adalbert to Gniezno prompted Otto III to visit Gniezno in the year 1000. One of the key events of the Congress of Gniezno was the solemn *translatio* of St Adalbert's relics, during which the emperor himself transferred the remains to an altar he had founded. Otto III's actions conformed to a ritual tradition observed earlier not only by the Carolingians but also by later rulers of the empire.<sup>17</sup> Roman Michałowski has drawn an analogy between this ritual and the translation of the remains of St Januarius from Rome to Reichenau by Emperor Lothair I (840–855) in 838. Walafrid Strabo, in his poem describing this translation, notes that the emperor personally carried the martyr's body, having first divested himself of all symbols of secular power.<sup>18</sup> According to the *Chronicle of Thietmar* and the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, Otto III went barefoot to the cathedral, which Michałowski interprets as a voluntary act of self-denial; furthermore, the emperor was said to have been in tears while asking Adalbert for

<sup>15</sup> E. Dąbrowska, 'Pierwotne miejsce przechowywania relikwii św. Wojciecha we wczesnym średniowieczu', in *Tropami Świętego Wojciecha*, ed. by Z. Kurnatowska, Poznań 1999, 152.

<sup>16</sup> T. Dunin-Wąsowicz, 'Ślady kultu świętego Wojciecha w Europie Zachodniej około 1000 roku', in *Tropami świętego Wojciecha*, 221–23.

<sup>17</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 279.

<sup>18</sup> R. Michałowski, *Zjazd gnieźnieński. Religijne przesłanki powstania arcybiskupstwa gnieźnieńskiego*, Wrocław 2005, 136–39.

his intercession.<sup>19</sup> The purpose of these actions was to secure the saint's favour – for himself and his entire realm.<sup>20</sup> It is also worth noting that Bolesław the Brave hosted a foreign ruler in his country who became the main celebrant of the act of transferring the relics.<sup>21</sup> Bolesław then gave the emperor the most precious gift he could offer, an arm of St Adalbert. This relic was especially valuable, as the arm is one of the most important relics of a saint, second only to his head and the entire body. In return, the emperor gave the Polish ruler a copy of St Maurice's lance, a fragment of which included a nail from the Cross. This exchange of gifts was, of course, intended to strengthen their alliance and friendship between them.<sup>22</sup>

Ademar of Chabannes is the only chronicler who reports Otto III's return journey to Aachen, in which Bolesław I the Brave is also said to have participated.<sup>23</sup> The credibility and early origin of the relevant interpolation in this chronicle were first supported by Stanisław Kętrzyński;<sup>24</sup> however, some Polish historians have not taken Ademar's account into consideration in studies of the earliest history of Poland. The chronicle's narrative depicts Otto III transferring the bones of Charlemagne immediately after his visit to Poland and his meeting with Bolesław in Gniezno.<sup>25</sup> The narrative contains several elements characteristic of hagiographic topoi: the initiator of the discovery of the burial place was Charlemagne himself, who revealed the location during a dream vision. The grave was found after three days of fasting, and furthermore, the emperor's body, despite almost 200 years having passed, was said to be remarkably well preserved. According to Ademar, Otto III also

<sup>19</sup> P. Nagy, *Le Don des larmes au Moyen Âge. Un instrument en quête d'institution (V<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Paris 2000.

<sup>20</sup> R. Michałowski, 'Depozycja ciała św. Wojciecha w roku 1000. Przyczynek do dziejów zjazdu gnieźnieńskiego', in *Świat pogranicza*, ed. by M. Nagielski, A. Rachuba et al., Warsaw 2003, 54.

<sup>21</sup> Michałowski, 'Depozycja ciała', 55.

<sup>22</sup> Michałowski, 'Przyjaźń i dar w społeczeństwie karolińskim w świetle translacji relikwii. Część druga – analiza i interpretacja', *Studia Źródłoznawcze*, 29 (1985), 9–65.

<sup>23</sup> M. Sosnowski, 'Bolesław Chrobry i Karol Wielki – legitymizacja między kultem a imitacją', *Historia Slavorum Occidentis*, 2.11 (2016), 122–48.

<sup>24</sup> D. A. Sikorski, 'Kronika Ademara z Chabannes – odzyskane źródło dla najwcześniejszych dziejów Polski', *Studia Źródłoznawcze. Commentationes*, 40 (2002), 218–19.

<sup>25</sup> *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*, III, 31, 153.

bestowed upon Bolesław the Brave the throne of Charlemagne. This element should probably be interpreted as an attempt to illustrate the beginnings of the cult of the emperor, who was not yet canonized at the time.

The far-reaching plans of Bolesław the Brave regarding the construction of St Adalbert's sanctuary in Gniezno, which would collect the relics of other martyrs, may be deduced from Thietmar's account. He reports that the bodies of Bruno of Querfurt and his companions, who were killed during a mission to the pagan Prussians, immediately attracted the interest of the Polish prince, who wished to ransom them.<sup>26</sup> Ademar, on the other hand, only states that the martyrs' bodies were laid to rest in an unspecified monastery.<sup>27</sup>

The fate of St Bruno's relics is reported by Peter Damian in his *Vita beati Romualdi*<sup>28</sup> and by Wipert, the author of *Historia de predicatione episcopi Brunonis*.<sup>29</sup> Wipert was said to be the sole surviving companion of Bruno of Querfurt, who provided an account of the mission to the Prussians. Neither author provides information about the person responsible for the translation of the relics or the exact place of their burial.<sup>30</sup> Bolesław the Brave might have intended to establish a centre for keeping the relics of St Adalbert, Radzim Gaudentius, Bruno and his companions, as well as the Five Polish Brother Martyrs. According to the account of the annalist Bruno, the initiator of the translation of the Five Polish Brother Martyrs can be identified as Bishop Unger (d. 1012, a Polish bishop residing in Poznań, independent of Gniezno). Peter Damiani presents a somewhat different version of this matter, which will be discussed below. Unger is said to have gone to the hermitage immediately after the murder of the Polish Brother Martyrs to arrange their solemn burial. The bishop commissioned wooden coffins to be made. It should be noted that burial in a coffin was a considerable

<sup>26</sup> *Thietmari Merseburgensis episcopi Chronicon*, ed. by R. Holtzmann, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum. Nova Series, Berlin 1935, IX, 293–94.

<sup>27</sup> *Ademari Cabannensis chronicon*, III, 31, 153.

<sup>28</sup> *Vita beati Romualdi*, ed. by G. Tabacco, Rome 1957.

<sup>29</sup> Sosnowski, 'Anonimowa *Passio s. Adalperti martiris* (BHL 40) oraz Wiperta *Historia de predicatione episcopi Brunonis* (BHL 1471b) – komentarz, edycja, przekład', *Rocznik Biblioteki Narodowej*, 43 (2012), 56–70.

<sup>30</sup> Sosnowski, 'Anonimowa *Passio s. Adalperti martiris*', 72; *Vita beati Romualdi*, ed. by G. Tabacco, Rome 1957, 64.



distinction at that time; even abbots were often buried without coffins in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>31</sup> He also ordered a large tomb to be dug inside the church.<sup>32</sup> In the presence of numerous clergymen, he was to celebrate a solemn Mass and escort the coffins to the church.<sup>33</sup> The arrangement of the martyrs is surprising, as their bodies were to be laid to rest in such a way as to form a cross. The coffins containing the bodies of Benedict and John were placed on an east-west axis, while the remains of Isaac and Matthew were laid to rest on the sides.<sup>34</sup> This was justified as follows: the hermits from St Romuald's circle were to be role models for Polish novices; while Christian (Krystyn), who did not show sufficient humility during the attack, was to be buried outside the temple. Bruno of Querfurt claimed that initially Christian was not buried with the other hermits because, in the face of danger, he had defended himself with a piece of wood; the author supported this argument with a passage from the Book of Deuteronomy.<sup>35</sup> However, during the reconstruction work on the church,<sup>36</sup> Christian's body was found. His body had not decomposed and did not produce a stink of body decomposition. Immediately after the body was found, a down-pour began, which made it impossible to continue working on the monastery grounds. It was a sign from the saint, who wanted everyone to abandon their current tasks and focus on him. Then the monks, who were worthy of touching the relics with their hands,<sup>37</sup> carried his body to the church to rest with the other brothers; his remains were placed in the same row where the Italian hermits rested.

<sup>31</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 196; E. Dąbrowska, 'Średniowieczny ceremonial pogrzebowy wyższego duchowieństwa polskiego. Studium archeologiczno-historyczne', in *Groby, relikwie i insygnia. Studia z dziejów mentalności średniowiecznej*, ed. by E. Dąbrowska, Warsaw 2008, 13–38.

<sup>32</sup> *Brunonis vita quinque fratrum*, ed. by R. Kade, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores, XV, Hannover 1888, 13, 733.

<sup>33</sup> *Brunonis vita quinque fratrum*, 13, 733.

<sup>34</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 196.

<sup>35</sup> Deuteronomy 22:10; *Brunonis vita quinque fratrum*, 13, 733: *Non iungas bovem cum asino, hoc est: sapientem cum stulto*.

<sup>36</sup> A. Labudda, *Liturgia pogrzebu w Polsce do wydania Rytuału Piotrkowskiego (1631). Studium historyczno-liturgiczne*, Warsaw 2014, 102.

<sup>37</sup> *Brunonis vita quinque fratrum*, 13, 733.



In *Vita beati Romualdi* (written in 1041<sup>38</sup>) Unger's involvement in the efforts to transfer the bodies of the Five Brothers is not mentioned, even though he devoted the entire chapter to the martyrs (No. 28). According to Damiani, Bolesław the Brave quickly learned of the murder of the hermits and ordered a search for their killers. He then ordered the miscreants to be put in chains and taken to the martyrs' grave.<sup>39</sup> The holy hermits acted similarly to St Adalbert, who freed a man condemned to death in the presence of the Polish ruler. From the chronicle of Cosmas of Prague, composed between 1110 and 1125, it can be concluded that even before Duke Břetislav I of Bohemia invaded Poland in 1039, the relics of the Five Brothers had been transferred to Gniezno.<sup>40</sup> When describing the arrival of Adalbert's relics (referred to as *corpus*) in Prague, the chronicler added that the remains of the Polish Brothers Martyrs were also carried (this time Cosmas used the term *reliquiae*).<sup>41</sup> Over the course of several years, Bolesław the Brave not only brought the relics of St Adalbert to the country, but also began promoting two collective cults. Although Cosmas does not say so explicitly, it was certainly Bolesław the Brave who initiated the bringing of the Five Brothers Martyrs to Gniezno, as he wanted to raise the prestige of Gniezno. This would be analogous to the foundation of Otto III in Rome, which was mentioned earlier, when the relics of St Adalbert were placed alongside the remains of other great saints, including St Bartholomew. Bolesław the Brave may have been inspired by the emperor's activities, creating a kind of "sanctuary" in Gniezno, where, as on the Tiber Island, the most important treasure was the body of St Adalbert.<sup>42</sup> The aforementioned transfer of St Adalbert's relics to Prague in the 1040s took place in the cooperation of the Bohemian Duke Břetislav and Bishop Severus of

<sup>38</sup> Skwierczyński, 'Where and When did *The Life of Blessed Romuald* originate?', *Revue Mabillon*, 96 (2024), 225–31.

<sup>39</sup> *Vita beati Romualdi*, ed. by G. Tabacco, Rome 1957, 64: *Rex autem quid de eis faceret habita consideratione deliberans, hoc postremo decrevit, ut nequamquam eos, sicut merebantur, occidi preciperet, sed ferreis catenis vinctos ad sepulchra martirum destinaret, quatinus aut ibi usque ab obitum in vinculis miserabiliter viverent aut, si sanctis martiribus aliter videretur, ipsi eos sua misericordia liberarent.*

<sup>40</sup> *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Bohemorum*, 169.

<sup>41</sup> Michałowski, 'Translacja Pięciu Braci', 175.

<sup>42</sup> Michałowski, 'Translacja Pięciu Braci', 183–48; P. Kubín, 'Die Bemühungen Otto III. um die Einsetzung eines Reichskultes für den Prager Bischof Adalbert', in *Böhmen und seine Nachbarn in der Přemyslidenzeit*, ed. by I. Hlaváček, A. Patschowsky, Vorträge und Forschungen, 74, Ostfildern 2011, 317–40.

Prague.<sup>43</sup> It was not initiated by Poles, but this transfer triggered further acts related to the cult of St Adalbert's relics, namely the solemn *inventio* of 1127 and the funding by Bolesław the Wrymouth of a silver coffin for Adalbert's relics, which, despite the invasion of the Bohemians, were to remain in the cathedral in Gniezno.<sup>44</sup>

Until the mid-twelfth century, there is no evidence (apart from the actions of Bishop Unger, who performed the solemn burial of the Five Brother Martyrs) of the elite participating in acts related to the cult of saints.<sup>45</sup> This changed with the activities of the feudal lord Piotr Włostowic. Piotr Włostowic was a prominent Polish noble and palatine under Duke Bolesław III Wrymouth (circa 1080–1153), exercised significant political influence and sponsored several ecclesiastical foundations. He met Conrad III (circa 1093–1152), a German king, in Magdeburg on Christmas Day 1144,<sup>46</sup> when he was to receive the relics of St Vincent, which arrived in Wrocław in June 1145.<sup>47</sup>

In the *Magdeburg Annals*, we find several motifs present in the description of the liturgical translation. We know where these remains came from and who donated them; the inhabitants of Magdeburg were to express their grief at the loss of the relics of their patron saint,<sup>48</sup> and their reception in Wrocław was nothing less than a solemn ingress (*adventus*), which fell on 6 June – the feast day of St Vincent of Bevacqua.<sup>49</sup> This date indicates that the journey must have been carefully planned, and that Włostowic and his entourage must have been familiar with the rite of translation.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Wyszynska, *Translacja relikwii św. Wojciecha*, 159–85.

<sup>44</sup> M. Sitek, 'Retrospekcja i aktualizacja – "manewry" wokół głowy św. Wojciecha u schyłku XV wieku', in *Historyzm, tradycjonalizm, archaizacja. Studia z dziejów świadomości historycznej w średniowieczu i okresie nowożytnym*, ed. by M. Walczak, Cracow 2015, 153–76.

<sup>45</sup> J. Pysiak, K. Skwierczyński, 'Struggles for Episcopal Legitimation during the Gregorian Reform in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Norway and Poland', in *Legitimation of the Elites in High Medieval Poland and Norway: Comparative Studies*, ed. by W. Jezierski, H. J. Orning et al., Turnhout 2025, 357–84.

<sup>46</sup> *Annales Magdeburgenses*, 187.

<sup>47</sup> *Annales Magdeburgenses*, 187.

<sup>48</sup> Papasidero, *Translatio sanctitatis*, 79–88.

<sup>49</sup> H. Manikowska, 'Princeps fundator w przedlokacyjnym Wrocławiu. Od Piotra Włostowica do Henryka Brodatego', in *Fundacje i fundatorzy w średniowieczu i epoce nowożytnej*, ed. by E. Opaliński, T. Wiślicz, Warsaw 2000, 46–47.

<sup>50</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 327–28.

The bringing of the relics had political and propaganda implications; Włostowic welcomed the new patron saint together with the *primates terrae*, and on this occasion he also released prisoners. This was intended to manifest not only the power of the magnate, but also, indirectly, the favour of the saint, who had agreed to the transfer and performed miracles.<sup>51</sup> Maria Starnawska claims that the new patron was also to be the first of the witnesses to see the effects of the powerful feudal lord's (*comes*) independence.<sup>52</sup> Since Włostowic took some action to demonstrate his power after the ceremonial reception of the relics of St Vincent, in ideological terms, the new patron not only agreed to this action, but also gave the *comes* his support; only special individuals could enjoy such support. It seems that Włostowic resorted to the instruments used so far by rulers and church hierarchs to emphasize his political ambitions, aimed at creating his own dominion.

The actual purpose of Włostowic's visit to Magdeburg has still not been fully explained by historians. Three main theories have emerged: some (K. Maleczyński, J. Wenta) saw it as a diplomatic mission in the interests of Władysław II the Exile (related to Conrad III), while others (K. Myśliński, J. Łowmiański) saw things quite differently. According to these scholars, Włostowic was supposed to have been a representative of the junior lords who were in opposition to the high duke; while Plezia considered Włostowic to be the power behind the throne seeking to ensure internal peace.<sup>53</sup> Regardless of which of the above theses is true, it can be said that at a time of internal conflicts and feuds between the princes after the death of Bolesław the Wrymouth, Włostowic still retained an extremely strong position, and everyone took his opinion into account. He managed to use his visit to Magdeburg to strengthen not only his political position, but also his ideological stance.

The acquisition of St Vincent's relics by Włostowic was such an important event that it was cultivated in the memory of the community and treated as a special stage in the functioning of the Benedictine Abbey of St Vincent in Ołbin. This is evidenced, for example, by the development of the cult of St Vincent, manifested in the establishment of an indulgence

<sup>51</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 530.

<sup>52</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 530.

<sup>53</sup> J. Bieniak, 'Polska elita polityczna XII w. (Część III B. Arbitrzy książąt – trudne początki)', in *Spółczesność Polski średniowiecznej. Zbiór studiów*, ed. by S. Kuczyński, Warsaw 1996, VII, 13.

for attendance at the exposition of his relics.<sup>54</sup> *Carmen Mauri*<sup>55</sup> written in hexameter verse (currently considered lost, it was written between 1153 and 1163<sup>56</sup>) is a testimony to the memory of the founder, which may also indicate certain ideas of making the founder a saint too.<sup>57</sup> Apart from the duties that the monks had towards the founder and his family, through prayers for the founder's soul, he received a "guarantee" of salvation, as it were. Piotr Włostowic was convinced of his dignity and the significance of his position, the reasons for which can be found in his origins – he was related to the Rurikids, the ruling dynasty of medieval Rus.<sup>58</sup> A significant part of the Włostowic family was involved in the foundation's activities; an interesting phenomenon, concerning, it is worth noting, only his family, is the placement of tympana depicting the act of foundation on newly founded churches.<sup>59</sup>

Maria Starnawska, analyzing the above-mentioned activity of Włostowic's attitude after bringing the relics to Wrocław, concluded that Włostowic's goal was to build his own territorial power,<sup>60</sup> with the relics serving as its foundation. There seems to be no other evidence to suggest that Włostowic had such far-reaching ambitions; his founding activities might better be attributed to the *imitatio regni* trend, and his main goal was most likely to compete with other powerful figures.

In 1162, Piotr Włostowic's son-in-law, Jaksa of Miechów, set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.<sup>61</sup> During his second stay in the Holy Land, he made contact with the patriarch of Jerusalem, Aymar, nicknamed Monachus ('the Monk').<sup>62</sup> Jaksa then undertook to bring the Order of

<sup>54</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 539.

<sup>55</sup> R. Gansiniec, 'Tragedia Petri Comitiss', *Pamiętnik Literacki: Czasopismo Kwartalne Poświęcone Historii i Krytyce Literatury Polskiej*, 43.1–2 (1952), 98–139.

<sup>56</sup> W. Wojtowicz, 'Tzw. *Carmen Mauri*', in *Przeszłość w kulturze średniowiecznej Polski*, ed. by J. Banaszkiewicz, A. Dąbrówka, P. Węcowski, Warsaw 2018, I, 105–25.

<sup>57</sup> Manikowska, 'Princeps fundator', 49.

<sup>58</sup> Michałowski, 'Princeps fundator', 111.

<sup>59</sup> Michałowski, *Princeps fundator*, 112.

<sup>60</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 529–30.

<sup>61</sup> J. Rajman, 'Pielgrzym i fundator. Fundacje kościelne i pochodzenie księcia Jaksy', *Nasza Przeszłość*, 82 (1994), 6–8; Bieniak, *Polska elita polityczna XII w.*, 67–107; pilgrimage – *Rocznik kapitułny krakowski*, ed. by A. Bielowski, Monumenta Poloniae Historica, II, Lviv 1872, 798. *Rocznik miechowski*, ed. by A. Bielowski, Monumenta Poloniae Historica, II, Lviv 1872, 882.

<sup>62</sup> M. Gładysz, *Zapomniani krzyżowcy. Polska wobec ruchu krucjatowego w XII–XIII wieku*, Warsaw 2002, 106–07.

the Holy Sepulchre to Miechów (Lesser Poland) and to found a church and monastery in the village.<sup>63</sup> The Order of the Holy Sepulchre was the custodian of the most important Christian relics.<sup>64</sup> Jaksa was to bring soil from places associated with the life and work of Jesus. One account, written quite late, in the sixteenth century by Samuel Nakielski, a canon of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre who recorded the history of the order, states that Jaksa brought four sacks of soil from Jerusalem.<sup>65</sup> However, it can be assumed that this account was rather the result of combining a legend about this event with the devotional practices of the time. Jaksa's foundation of the Monastery of the Holy Sepulchre in Miechów was undoubtedly the most important of all, and he made it his mausoleum; he was buried in the crypt of the church together with his wife.<sup>66</sup> It is worth noting that donations to the monastery from princely authorities were limited, with the primary benefactors being knightly clans: initially, Jaksa's circle, followed by the family of Piotr Włostowic.<sup>67</sup> Piotr Włostowic, one of the most powerful Polish magnates, did not limit his activities to funding religious buildings. His actions show that he was well aware of his extremely strong position in the state, but the scale of his activities shows that he may have had ambitions to match not only other magnates, but perhaps also to equal members of the ruling dynasty. His mission to Magdeburg ended up with Conrad III giving him the relics of St Vincent of Bevagna, a popular saint. What is more, the *Magdeburg Annals* show that he or his closest associates knew perfectly well how a translation of relics should proceed. The ceremonial arrival of the relics in Wrocław can be seen not only as an "ordinary" ingress, during which a new community has the opportunity to make first contact with its new patron, but also as a deliberate manifestation of the magnate's power. The translation, which was carried out by his son-in-law Jaksa, was rather a purely technical transfer

<sup>63</sup> Rajman, *Pielgrzym i fundator*, 6–7.

<sup>64</sup> S. Nakielski, *Miechovia sive promptuarium antiquitatum Monasterii Miechoviensis*, Cracow 1634, 81.

<sup>65</sup> Rajman, 'Kościoły bożogrobców w Małopolsce. Z badań nad patrociniami i relikwiami (XII–XVI w.)', *Folia Historica Cracoviensia*, 21 (2015), 48.

<sup>66</sup> F. Mróz, 'Oddziaływanie religijne i kulturowe sanktuarium bożogrobców w Miechowie w latach 1163–1819', in *Rola klasztorów w procesie kształtowania się państwowości krajów słowiańskich*, ed. by W. Stępnia-Minczewska, Z. Kijas, Cracow 2002, 159.

<sup>67</sup> Starnawska, *Między Jerozolimą a Łukowem. Zakony krzyżowe na ziemiach polskich w średniowieczu*, Warsaw 1999, 74–75.

of the relics necessary for the consecration of the church. However, these relics contributed to the promotion of the idea of crusades and pilgrimages in Poland at that time, and the foundation in Miechów was also supported by members of the ruling family.

The relics were transferred again thanks to Bishop Werner of Płock.<sup>68</sup> Bolesław the Curly sent him to Aachen with a message for Frederick Barbarossa.<sup>69</sup> During his visit, Werner not only managed to defuse the growing conflict, but also to win the favour of the local clergy.<sup>70</sup> During his mission, he was to be presented with relics by the emperor: *A quo diu repulsus, tandem interventu principum in gratiam est receptus, legationeque ad votum peracta, cum reliquiis sancti Heinrici aliisque donis ab imperatore perceptis rediit* ['For a long time he was rebuffed, but at length, following the princes' intervention, he was received graciously and after the legation was completed as desired, he returned home with relics of St Henry and other gifts he had received from the emperor'].<sup>71</sup> The phrase *aliisque donis* may indicate that Werner received not only the relics of St Henry, but also those of St Sigismund. During his return journey on the border between Poland and the Elbe region, St Henry appeared to the bishop.<sup>72</sup> The next day brought another intervention by the saint: there was no building material other than wood in that area, but unexpectedly, the bishop found a sufficient amount of stones, which were also shaped in such a way that they could be used to build an altar. Werner dedicated his small wooden church not only to the sainted emperor, but also to St Sigismund.

In the opinion of Czesław Deptuła, Werner's mission related to the transfer of elements of Staufien imperial ideology to the early Piast monarchy, which was to be imposed by introducing a new cult to Polish lands. Perhaps the bishop was simply forced to accept the relics of

<sup>68</sup> Cz. Deptuła, 'Werner', in *Hagiografia Polska. Słownik bio-bibliograficzny*, ed. by R. Gustaw, Poznań 1972, II, 513–21; Deptuła, 'Niektóre aspekty stosunków Polski z cesarstwem w wieku XII', in *Polska w Europie. Studia historyczne*, ed. by H. Zins, Lublin 1968, 35–92.

<sup>69</sup> A. Pleszczyński, *Przekazy niemieckie o Polsce i jej mieszkańcach w okresie panowania Piastów*, Lublin 2016, 149.

<sup>70</sup> Deptuła, 'Werner', 516.

<sup>71</sup> *Ex aliis miraculis S. Heinrici*, ed. by G. H. Pertz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores, IV, Hannover 1841, 815.

<sup>72</sup> *Ex aliis miraculis S. Heinrici*, 815.



St Henry.<sup>73</sup> As we know, the cult of St Henry did not take root in Poland; the only evidence of its presence, apart from the source discussed, is the celebration of Henry's memory in Gniezno, Cracow and Wrocław on 14 July. In Płock, this feast day fell on 26 August, which was probably a commemoration of the day of the translation of the relics.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps Werner deliberately left all of Henry's relics in a fragile wooden church on the border between the two countries so that he would not have to place them in the cathedral in Płock.

Finally, we shall examine translations of relics where it is difficult to identify a single initiator of the transfer. Two of the three editions of the *Translation of St Florian* recognize Bishop Gedko of Cracow and Duke Casimir the Just as the initiators of the relics' transfer, one of them claiming that both were the founders of the church in honour of St Florian in Cracow's Kleparz district.<sup>75</sup> In the fifteenth century *Annals* by Jan Długosz Casimir the Just is pointed out as the driving force behind the acquisition of the relics.<sup>76</sup> The bishop of Cracow's motivation for bringing the new relics seem obvious: it was believed that a saint resting in the centre of the country was able to protect it all, and the possession of important relics also helped to attract pilgrims.<sup>77</sup>

The rivalry between Mieszko III the Old (1173–77 and 1190/91 and 1194) and Casimir II the Just (1177–1194) was not without significance for the events described – the translation of St Florian's relics and the subsequent canonisation of St Stanislaus were intended as a response to the intensified promotion of the cult of St Adalbert by Mieszko and his entourage, which manifested itself, among other things, in the commissioning of the Gniezno Cathedral Doors.<sup>78</sup> In Casimir II's plans, St Florian was probably to be a saint equal in importance to the Apostle of the Prussians (as evidenced, for example, by the fact that 4 May was to be a *festum fori* – public feast day), and his transfer to Cracow,

<sup>73</sup> Deptuła, 'Werner', 516.

<sup>74</sup> Deptuła, 'Kościół płocki w XII wieku', *Studia Płockie*, 3 (1975), 82–83.

<sup>75</sup> J. Dobosz, *Działalność fundacyjna Kazimierza Sprawiedliwego*, Poznań 1995, 88.

<sup>76</sup> Jan Długosz, *Roczniki, czyli kroniki sławnego Królestwa Polskiego*, V–VI: 1140–1240, ed. by Z. Kozłowska-Budkowa, D. Turkowska et al., Warsaw 2009, VI, 170.

<sup>77</sup> K. Dobrowolski, *Dzieje kultu św. Florjana w Polsce do połowy XVI wieku*, *Rozprawy Historyczne Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego*, 2.2, Warsaw 1923, 20.

<sup>78</sup> Skwierczyński, *Recepcja idei gregoriańskich w Polsce do początku XIII wieku*, Wrocław 2005, 241.



and thus the acquisition of his favour and protection, could have been a symbolic act of legitimising Casimir's authority.

The last translation in the period covered by our research is the transfer of the body of St Stanislaus. *Rocznik krótki* is the only one to date it to 1088.<sup>79</sup> There can be no question of the translation of St Stanislaus just a decade after his murder in 1079, if only because at that time his death was not considered martyrdom – both the anonymous author of the *Deeds of the Princes of the Poles* and the chronicler, Master Wincenty (Wincenty Kadłubek, 1150–1223) pay close attention to the fact that Bolesław II the Generous' departure from Poland in 1079 was caused by many other political mistakes made during his reign (1058–1079).<sup>80</sup> Some researchers place the translation of St Stanislaus of Szczepanów in the second half of the twelfth century, and confirmation of this thesis can be found in the chronicle of Master Wincenty Kadłubek. As we know, this work is written in the form of a dialogue between Bishop Mateusz of Cracow and Archbishop Jan of Gniezno.<sup>81</sup> In chapter XX of book II, Master Wincenty presented his view of how Stanislaus died, then smoothly moved on to what happened to his body, which had been cut into small pieces:

*E quatuor namque mundi partibus advolare visae sunt aquilae, quae sublimius locum passionis circinando, vultures alisque sanguipetas alites a contactu martyris abigerent.*<sup>82</sup> [Next he adds:] *Hac vero miraculi alacritate animati ac zelo devotionis quidam patrum accensi, sparsas membrorum minutias colligere gestiunt. Pedetentim accedunt, corpus integerrimum, etiam sine cicatricum notamine reperiunt, tollunt, asportant, apud minorem s. Michaelis basilicam, divis conditum aromatibus recondunt. Unde usque ad translationis diem, cuius causam ipse non ignoras, iugis dictarum splendor lampadum non desiit.*<sup>83</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *Rocznik krótki*, ed. by A. Bielowski, Monumenta Poloniae Historica, II, Lviv 1872, 796.

<sup>80</sup> Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 200–14.

<sup>81</sup> M. Plezia, 'Tradycja rękopiśmienna Kroniki Kadłubka', in *Ars Historica. Prace z dziejów powszechnych i Polski*, ed. by W. Wolarski, Poznań 1976, 379–91.

<sup>82</sup> Mistrz Wincenty Kadłubek, *Kronika polska*, trans. by B. Kürbis, Wrocław 2003, II, 20, 76; *Magistri Vincentii Chronicon Polonorum*, ed. by A. Bielowski, Monumenta Poloniae Historica, II, Lviv 1872, 2, XX, 297.

<sup>83</sup> *Magistri Vincentii Chronicon Polonorum*, 297.

(For eagles were seen to fly in from the four parts of the world and, encircling the place of the (bishop's) suffering from a greater height, with their wings these drove off the vultures and bloodthirsty birds from contact with the Martyr [...] Enthused indeed with this joy over the miracle and burning with zealous devotion, certain fathers make gestures to collect up the small dispersed parts of the limbs. Gradually they proceed and find the most complete body without even a trace of its wounds. This they take up and carry to the Lesser Basilica of St Michael and bury it preserved with wondrous spices. Thenceforth until the day of its translation, of the reason for which you will not be unaware, the everlasting brightness of the said torches did not fail.)

The first fragment proves the condition in which the body of the holy bishop was preserved – at that time, people were forced to adjust to the actions of the tyrannical ruler – a tyrant who sentenced St Stanislaus to be dismembered, but when the tomb was opened, it turned out that there were no traces of dismemberment on the remains, so a legend was created about the miraculous healing of the body of the new patron saint. From the next paragraph, we can conclude that one of the interlocutors, or perhaps both, was the “cause” of the transfer of the martyr from the Skalka Church to Cracow Cathedral.<sup>84</sup>

Let us move on to the political and religious circumstances surrounding the transfer of St Stanislaus' body at the end of the twelfth century. Promoting the cult of a bishop who opposed the king and sealed his exile from the country was definitely not in the interest of the dynasty; this would have confirmed that a ruler from the Piast dynasty could pursue inappropriate policies and opened the door for any potential “traitor” to interfere in the government. The situation changed only with the death of Bolesław the Wrymouth and the gradual decline of strong supreme power, accompanied by a simultaneous increase in the independence of the clergy. However, Cracow still remained subordinate to the metropolitan city of Gniezno.<sup>85</sup> The Polish clergy wanted to turn the decline of strong secular power to their advantage, increasingly asserting their position; this is evidenced, for example,

<sup>84</sup> Plezia, *Dookoła sprawy świętego Stanisława. Studium źródłoznawcze*, Cracow 2003, 72.

<sup>85</sup> Skwierczyński, *Recepcja idei gregoriańskich*, 238; M. Walczak, *Alter Christus. Studia nad obrazowaniem świętości w sztuce średniowiecznej na przykładzie św. Tomasza Becketa*, Cracow 2001.

by the excommunication of Senior Duke Władysław II the Exile by the archbishop of Gniezno, Jakub of Żnin in 1146, which caused the duke to flee Poland. Despite the fact that Pope Eugene III sent Cardinal Guido as his legate to lift the excommunication, the Polish clergy continued to support the junior princes. Given such a state of affairs, the translation of the relics of a bishop, who opposed a tyrant and was put to death for it, could symbolise that the legitimate ruler is not always right.<sup>86</sup>

The translation of relics, a strictly religious act expressing a rich ideological programme, was primarily a tool in the hands of political and clerical elites in the Middle Ages. The same attitude towards the transfer of holy bodies was also adopted by the early Piast monarchy at the end of the tenth century. The first translation, which can be traced back to the transfer of the body of St Adalbert-Wojciech, martyred by Prussians during his mission to convert these pagans, became a landmark event for the Piast state. Relics given as gifts were a perfect manifestation of the desire to establish or maintain an alliance with partners. Ademar of Chabannes' account, which mentions Bolesław the Brave's presence at the opening of Charlemagne's tomb in Aachen and the gift of Charlemagne's throne on this occasion, indicates the high respect that the young emperor had for the Polish duke.

The fact that clergy were also aware that the approval of a particular cult could bring far-reaching and decidedly positive consequences is evidenced by Bishop Unger's role in initiating the cult of the Five Polish Brother Martyrs. He arrived at their hermitage a few days after the hermits had been murdered in order to conduct a solemn funeral, which – as described above – clearly laid the groundwork for further steps toward establishing the cult. Likewise, Alexander of Malonne, the bishop of Płock, who was well aware of the potential benefits of promoting a cult, attempted to turn Płock into a pilgrimage centre. This was intended to bring the city not only prestige but also financial gain – which is understandable given the ongoing reconstruction of Płock Cathedral after its devastation by the Pomeranians during the raid of 1126–1127.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Plezia, *Dookoła sprawy świętego Stanisława*, 73.

<sup>87</sup> Skwierczyński, 'The Beginnings of the Cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Poland in the Light of the Płock Accounts of Miracles from 1148', *Studi Medievali*, 53.1 (2012), 117–62.

To conclude, initially the translation of relics mostly helped rulers to strengthen and manifest their power. This is testified by the attitude of Bolesław the Brave, whose far-reaching plan was to create a “sanctuary” in Gniezno in honour of St Adalbert, parallel to the ones Otto III had established in Rome and Aachen. In most of the translations analysed above, senior clergy played a key role as their main goal was to strengthen their own position. Bishop of Gedko of Cracow, who brought important relics to his diocese, thus challenging the metropolitan See of Gniezno, bears witness to such a strategy. The only Polish lord who before the end of the twelfth century practised *imitatio regni* to full extent, both by means of foundations and the translation of relics was Piotr Włostowic.

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