

## INTRODUCTION



*Polonia coepit habere episcopum* (“Poland started to have a bishop”) – these words were written under the year 968 by a Czech chronicler. The related records in Polish chronicles have a slightly different tone: *Jordanus primus episcopus in Polonia ordinatus est* (“Jordan, the first Polish bishop, has been appointed”). These records are the oldest testimony to these developments. Therefore, the year of 968 (counted somewhat differently than today – from Christmas), marks the beginning of church organization in Poland. Its origin, coinciding with the arrival of the first bishop, was an extremely important event. In the late 10<sup>th</sup> century, Poland was incorporated into the family of European countries and nations. It was not Poland per se; foreign observers were not even sure what to call this land, resorting to *ad hoc* names coined with reference to the ruler or the main god. The dominion did not have established borders; they were drawn up as far as the Piast squads marched. However, the Piast dynasty had already stepped onto Europe’s political arena and secured a position there, albeit not without problems or difficulties. Its representatives forged relations with neighbouring and remoter powers, predominantly the German Empire, stepping from the Warta river forests into the brave new world. The adoption of Christianity was a prerequisite for acceptance in this world. Back in the early Middle Ages, Christianity was the major determinant of European civilization and cultural community, even if the term was not commonly used. The first baptised Piast was Prince Mieszko and the accepted date of the event is 966.

Many countries in central and northern Europe followed suit. As a cultural entity, the Old Continent had reached the border along the Elbe established back in Charlemagne’s times, to undergo a dramatic expansion in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequent Slavic tribes entered the circle of Christian European civilization together with the formerly dangerous invaders, Hungarians and the “northern peoples”, Scandinavian Normans. Some did it of their own volition, others were more or less forced to do so. In gener-

al, accession was a choice of civilisational option. The general contours of the map of Europe in the late 10<sup>th</sup> and the early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries were similar to contemporary ones.

The recently celebrated anniversary of 1050 years of Mieszko I's baptism was closely followed by the entire society. While this year's anniversary of the establishment of the first bishopric has been overshadowed by the earlier jubilee, it is equally important. A bishopric – the first step in building up a wider church organization – was a prerequisite for the successful Christianisation of the country. It was a long-term process, taking years, if not centuries. It is assumed that Christianisation was complete only when pastoral services encompassed the entire population; this required an extensive network of parishes and did not happen earlier than the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Since the church organization had to be built from the top, the establishment of bishoprics in Poland was imperative. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the first bishopric was established in Poznan. The appointment of the first bishop, Jordan, marks the beginning of the Christianizing mission, a fact as important as Mieszko's baptism.

This collection of studies is dedicated to this momentous event. The origins of the Polish and Poznan Church have long been subjects of intense academic studies. As is the case with such early times when not many records have survived, the research results are hardly ever unambiguous. The growing number of agreed facts gives an idea, but the image is sometimes unstable and not always distinct. Hence this collection of studies of the beginning of the bishopric. They have been written by the leading experts in the field, who often present the results of their own research, available in a wider context in many other publications. The idea behind the collected studies is to gradually narrow the perspective. Our intention was to first demonstrate the broader background of the Christianisation of Central Europe, followed by the scene of the events, i.e. Poland and the city of Poznan during the reign of Mieszko I. Against this background, we have presented the establishment of the bishopric, the circumstances and the individuals involved: Princess Doubravka of Bohemia (whose role cannot be overrated), the first bishops (Jordan and Unger) and their successors. Attention also had to be paid to the tangible testimony of these events, i.e. the cathedral, the relic of St Peter's sword stored in Poznan – a mysterious object, unique by European standards, and forgotten. The establishment and solidification of the bishopric was not a single act, but a decades' long process with inevitable slumps. The establishment period ended in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, symbolically wrapped up by the reforms introduced by Gilles de Paris, a papal legate and Bishop of Tusculum who in 1123/24 organised the Polish dioceses; they survived without greater changes for the following 700 years.

We have not been able to say everything. We have not been able to explain everything. Historians still do not agree on many issues, and the published texts are a good reflection of this situation. For this reason, the picture they present is not always cohesive or unambiguous. The texts do, however, always demonstrate the latest status of the research and disputes, sum up the discussion on the subject and the results. The studies are targeted at all people interested in the subject and the times, including

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readers from abroad. They are most in need of this publication provided in English, and presenting the latest developments in the academic discussion.

By publishing this book, we want to commemorate the first bishops; all of them, including Jordan, who “worked very hard” in the Lord’s Vineyard in a far-off country, together with the rulers who supported them and the anonymous audiences, as well as anyone who studied and propagated the history of Poznan Church over the centuries. The group of historians is large and diverse; it includes Jan Długosz (†1480), a great medieval chronicler, distinguished regional historians like Józef Łukaszewicz (1797–1873) and priest Stanisław Kozierowski (1874–1949) as well as the invaluable priest Józef Nowacki (1895–1964), author of the monumental *History of the Poznan archdiocese*, an illustrious medievalist Gerard Labuda (1916–2010) who devoted his entire academic life to research into the origins of Poland and, last but not least, Gerhard Sappok (1908–1944), a German researcher and author of the first monograph on the establishment of the bishopric. We dedicated this volume to all of them.

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