

SUMMARY

The book, entitled *Piast Dynasty Foundations of Female Monasteries in Thirteenth-Century Poland: Between the Reception of Foreign Patterns and the Creation of an Original Model*, deals with the period from the 10th to the 13th century, but the main part of the analysis focuses on the 13th century. Although the model of a dynastic female monastery – known and adopted in Western Europe – played an important role in the Ottonian Reich at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries and began to be successfully implanted in the new Christian monarchies of Central Europe in the 11th century, the first Polish rulers do not seem to have shown much interest in the idea of a family nunnery. The situation did not change during the second Piast monarchy – the two princesses who became nuns served God not in Polish dynastic monasteries, where they could have supported their family with prayer and good deeds, but in German convents. It seems surprising that, on the contrary, it was the nobility who in the 12th century founded the first Premonstratensian communities for women, in which the female representatives of their families often found refuge.

The situation changed radically at the beginning of the 13th century, in the first years of the reign of Henry the Bearded in Silesia. The turning point was the establishment of his first dynastic nunnery in Trzebnica. The Cistercian abbey was the inaugural foundation of his reign, a monastery where many princesses from the Piast family lived and studied, a burial place for the family, and a community governed by abbesses belonging to the dynasty. This nunnery became a model for later monastic foundations for women. New monasteries established in the following years occupied an important place in the sacral geography of the Piast rulerships in Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, and Silesia. Among the most important – besides the Cistercian cloisters (Ołobok, Owińska) – were convents of the Poor Clares (Zawichost, Wrocław, Skała, Stary Sącz, Gniezno). The book presents the beginnings of these nunneries by referring primarily to diplomatic sources and hagiography but also the results of research by art historians and archaeologists.

An analysis of the origins of these foundations allows us to discover the original model shaped in 13th-century Poland – on the one hand, rulers followed modern trends in piety, and on the other, referred to the traditional model of the family nunnery, which supported the dynasty and was governed by its members.

Thanks to the presence in the convents of princesses from various regions of the Polish lands, the nunneries also became special centres of cooperation and strengthening of family ties. The formation of this model was largely the result of the new situation and challenges faced by the Piasts in the era of the divided monarchy of the 13th century. The constant support of family foundations by the rulers during the unification and in the following decades, as well as the presence of dynastic representatives in monasteries, show how attractive this model proved to be.