

## Summary

The main theme of the book is the place held by women – the wives and daughters of Polish rulers in the Piast dynasty. Its chronological boundaries are defined by the women who appear in the thesis – the first of whom is Dobrawa, who came to the court of Mieszko I in 965, the last – Salome, Boleslaw III Wrymouth's wife, who died in 1144; the daughters of the latter couple appear in the thesis only briefly.

The book is the first scientific monograph which addresses holistically issues associated with women in the Piast dynasty. In previous mediaeval studies they appeared rather incidentally, and were not of principal interest to historians. This situation is in striking contrast with the achievements of Western mediaeval studies of the past 30 years, during which careful attention has been devoted to gender issues and the place of women in mediaeval society, and especially to the role of queens. These studies have resulted in numerous publications, which represent a major inspiration and reference point for this study.

The author uses a comparative method to analyse the already well studied early period of the Piast dynasty and refers to an abundant European source material. Although this method certainly requires precautions, in the case of research on the early Middle Ages in Poland, it turns out to be an exceptionally effective research procedure which allows us to deepen our knowledge, especially in light of the poverty of source material. It is particularly relevant in the study of women of ruling circles, as the understanding of the social roles of women was relatively similar in various European courts. This was due to the mobility of women who entered their spouses' houses with imbued standards of conduct, which they then promoted.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first is dedicated to the figures of the Piast wives in the oldest Polish historical narrative, *Gesta Principum Polonorum* by the so-called Gallus Anonymus and mainly concerns the expectations connected with the social role of the wife of the ruler. Gallus' text is analysed in conjunction with other narrative sources of the early and high Middle Ages. The object of the study is to show the special role in the narrative of *Gesta* played by three women, the only ones mentioned by name in the text, Rzepka, Dobrawa and Judith of Bohemia, as well as

to describe the female characters of the work in general. These include: Dobrawa, who fits well into the *topos* of the evangelising wife; and the first wife of Wladyslaw I Herman, Judith of Bohemia, who carries out the duty of caring for the poor and prisoners, and is compared by the anonymous author of *Gesta* to the biblical Judith – an important figure in medieval queenship ideology. Also considered is an un-named wife of Boleslaw I the Brave, who fits into the pattern of a queen as mediator between the ruler and his subjects, well-known from historiographic and hagiographic texts. Finally, there are brief suggestions by Gallus Anonymous about Judith of Swabia, second wife of Wladyslaw I Herman, which are read as a reference to the anti-model of an evil, plotting and adulterous queen. The purpose of the analysis of rulers' wives in *Gesta* is not to reconstruct historical facts and the actual course of events, so much as to show that in the text the anonymous author referred to values and social mechanisms which he knew well and with which the reader or listener was also acquainted, at least to some extent.

While the author uses *Gesta* to study the behaviour patterns of women and the way they are described, the three subsequent chapters of the thesis are devoted to answering the question of the actual fulfilling of duties by women within the Piast dynasty. The common denominator here is the religious culture of the Piasts and the role which women played in the devotional activities of the ruling family. These considerations are analysed in the section on the participation of women in foundations and donations to a variety of religious institutions. A late tradition, known from a fourteenth-century source, concerning the participation of Dobrawa in the foundation of the church of the Virgin Mary at Ostrów Tumski in Poznan, is considered. This tradition is also compared with a similar late tradition which concerned the foundation of the church in Solina by the Croatian Queen Helena. Next, the author analyses the role of Queen Richeza, granddaughter of Emperor Otto II and wife of Mieszko II, in bringing the cult of St. Nicholas to Poland and the Piast dynasty. As the cult was originally strictly connected with the Ottonian dynasty, this observation is accompanied by a reflection on certain Ottonian elements of religious culture absorbed by the Piast tradition and on the other hand on the role of women in the spreading of the cult of the saints. The third section concerns foundations by Wladyslaw I Herman's two wives, Judith of Bohemia and Judith of Swabia. The fourth section is about similar acts of Salome, Boleslaw III Wrymouth's wife. Here, special attention is devoted to a woman's mediation in the forming of a relation between her husband's family and her own native religious centre, with which she has family connections (in the case of Salome this was Zwiefalten Abbey).

Finally, the last section concerns the place of books in both donations and in the personal devotion of women – a phenomenon well noted in Western Europe, but also noticeable in the Piast dynasty, such as in the supplying of Gertrude, daughter of Mieszko II and Richeza, with a Psalter when she was married and left the Piast court.

The third chapter is devoted to the role of women in the building and maintaining of liturgical memory. The analysis of a wide reference material shows that, on the one hand in the early Middle Ages in Europe the concern for the *memoria* of the dead was considered an important duty of the women of the court and aristocratic circles, on the other hand the material allows us to specify the mechanisms behind this phenomenon. A Western European comparison, in turn, allows us to analyse the problem of the involvement of Piast dynasty women in the liturgical memory of the dynasty and above all, the background helps to explain the situations in which Piast daughters or widows do not show any interest in commemorating the dynasty seemingly in spite of their obligation. To some extent, this phenomenon is explained by the different levels of involvement of women in the *memoria* of their husband's family and the one from which they came themselves. The key element, however, seems to be the issue of property and inheritance of goods given as gifts to the Church and the belief predominant in the Middle Ages that property transferred to ecclesiastical institutions would serve the salvation of those souls from whom the goods came. This observation helps to explain the lack of involvement in *memoria* of two Piast widows, Richeza and Judith of Swabia, who returned to Germany after the death of their husbands. A separate section is devoted to a polemic with the suggestion that one of the characters in *Necrologium Zwifaltense* is the wife of Boleslaw II the Bold, which recently appeared in Polish mediaeval studies.

The next part of the work addresses the problem of the presence of a nunnery in early Piast Poland. Certain sources, have been re-examined to bring us closer to answering the question of whether such a monastery existed, especially *The Chronicle* by Thietmar of Merseburg, until now not fully taken advantage of for this purpose. Above all, the issue of nunneries in Poland is examined against the background of the intensive development of female monasticism in the newly baptised countries such as the kingdoms of England and Saxony, where the involvement of elites in such foundations was an important element of religious culture in the first generations which had adopted the new faith. An analysis of this phenomenon in Poland as well as Bohemia and Hungary shows that in the period immediately after baptism, it appeared in Central Europe only briefly. It seems that the key to this short-term adoption of the female convent in Poland or Bohemia

was therefore an imitation of Western, especially German models by the rulers of newly baptised countries. The chapter ends with a discussion of the functioning of the female convent during the early Piast period in Zwierzyniec in Krakow.

The last part of the work is devoted to the problem of women's links with the Piast naming tradition: it is both a question of the naming of women, as well as the impact of the tradition from which women originated on the naming of newborn children in the dynasty. It is noticeable that many of the Piast daughters changed their names at the time of marriage, while that custom, common in the early and high Middle Ages, did not apply to the wives of the Piast dynasty. This tells us a lot about the Piast's own self-awareness, and about the perception of the Piast dynasty by families which associated with it. On the other hand, the selection of names for Piast children was dominated by a patrilineal trend, as in the case of other lineages of early medieval Western Europe, so there was a relatively small impact of the mothers' tradition on the names of the children. When her tradition did influence the choice of name – in the case of the Piasts we can identify a few such cases – it is significant and reflects the need to emphasise the connection with the prestige of the mother's native family.

To summarize the findings of the thesis, we must begin by saying that the Piast women did not differ substantially from other well-born women of their times when it came to the nature of their activities. Theirs were primarily religious activities, namely related to the Church, prayers for family members and for remembering them and charitable activities. These were all closely associated with the proper fulfilment of women's social roles. When it comes to women's participation in devotional foundations, it is not easy to precisely assess the scale of the phenomenon and compare it with similar male activities. Still, as we know so little about this kind of activity in the Piast period, these few examples of Piast wives' involvement in foundations allow us to draw the conclusion that women's participation in this realm was quite significant.

The similarity of activities of Piast women to those which defined the functions of the wives and daughters of foreign dynasties resulted from the functioning of a system of standards at the Piast court, which included the cultural idea, present in the realm of Latin Christianity, of the role of woman ruler, and saw the role of women in general as being involved in mainly the religious sphere. As far as the custom of naming is concerned, here belonging to the Indo-European realm was most decisive, and made the Piast naming system similar to that of other early medieval countries (although there were differences, e.g. between the system known in the

Piast dynasty and the one which operated among dynasties in Scandinavia and Kievan Rus'). The frequency with which Piast daughters changed their names after marriage, compared with how rarely Piast wives did so, must lead to the conclusion that the native dynasty had a weak position in relation to its marriage partners. Finally, the short-term appearance of the Western model of a dynastic female convent, based on imitation only, reminds us that although since their baptism, the Piast dynasty participated in the culture of Western Christendom, the dynasty was a complete newcomer and their country remained the periphery of the Western circle for at least the next two hundred years.