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**THE PUBLIC DIMENSION OF RELIGION
IN THE PIAST MONARCHY
DURING THE CHRISTIANISATION PERIOD**

Let us begin with referring to three sources. The first one comes from the *Chronicle* by Thietmar of Merseburg. The bishop of Merseburg in his description of Boleslav the Brave mentions, among other things, the harshness of the punishment which he applied to those guilty of adultery and in breach of the ban on meat consumption during Lent. Further below in his work Thietmar adds that when Boleslav had committed a sin he ordered the canons to be presented to him in order to find out how his sin should be atoned for, and next he did penance according to the guidelines included in the canons.¹

The two other sources regard the mission of Saint Adalbert to Prussia. We learn from the *Life* of the saint by John Canaparius that the pagans, having heard the missionary's words, who had lectured to them on the reasons of his visit, allegedly said:

Both we and this whole country ... are subjected to the same law and one way of life. You, however, who have a different and unknown law, if you do not leave tonight, you shall be beheaded tomorrow.²

These events were described in a slightly different way by Bruno of Querfurt. According to his account, the pagans who then gathered allegedly spoke to Adalbert with these words:

¹ *Thietmari Merseburgensis episcopi Chronicon*, ed. Robert Holtzmann, in MGH, SS rer. Germ., n. s., ix (Berlin, 1935) (hereafter: Thietmar), VIII, 2, p. 494.

² *S. Adalberti Pragensis episcopi et martyris Vita prior*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* (hereafter: MPH), s.n., iv, 1 (Warsaw, 1962), 28, p. 43: 'Nobis et toto huic regno ... communis lex imperat et unus ordo uiuendi. Vos vero, qui estis alterius et ignotę legis, nisi hac nocte discedatis, in crastinum decapitabimini.'

Because of such people ... our land will not yield us crops, trees will not bear fruit, young animals will cease to be born, the old ones will die. Leave, leave our borders! If you do not walk away as soon as possible, you shall meet a miserable death through torture.³

It is widely assumed that Boleslav the Brave's brutality and his concern, shown by him in a specific way, that the Ten Commandments should be obeyed by his subjects, could have found their justification in a traditional, still pre-Christian way of thinking. It would have resulted from the conviction based on an old, still pagan tradition of the communal character of the worship, imposing the obligation to participate in it on all the members of the community. Failure to fulfil this obligation undermined the effectiveness of the performed rituals and carried the danger of being exposed to the anger of sacred powers. In this situation the ruler – responsible for the well-being of his subjects – could feel obliged to take even the most brutal actions aiming to persuade them to respect the cult regulations which guaranteed the favour of the *sacrum*. Boleslav's stance on his own sins and his eagerness to do due penance could be assessed similarly. The transgressions of the ruler posed a threat, to the extent even bigger than the sins committed by his subjects, of exposing the whole community under his rule to the wrath of sacred powers. Simultaneously, there was an exceptional threat of serious consequences – which is, after all, also mentioned by Thietmar in his description of the customs present in the Piast state – to the ruler himself, who as a man of royal standing was particularly obliged to make sure that the right conditions were provided for the cult practice.

The above quoted accounts of the lives of St Adalbert seem to contain confirmation of the belief that Boleslav the Brave's actions against those guilty of breaking Church laws were inspired by his notions deeply rooted in the traditional, pre-Christian way of perceiving the world and the character of the relations linking an individual and a community with sacred powers. They reveal a similar, if one can say this, mental landscape. We discover in the decisions and words

³ S. *Adalberti Pragensis episcopi et martyris vita altera auctore Brunone Querfurtensi*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, in MPH, s.n., iv, 2 (Warsaw, 1969), 25, p. 32: 'Propter tales ... homines terra nostra non dabit fructum, arbores non parturiunt, noua non nascuntur animalia, uetera moriuntur. Exeuntes exite de finibus nostris; si cicius non retro pedem ponitis, crudelibus penis afflicti mala morte peribitis.'

ascribed by them to the pagan Prussians some similar notions about the communal character of their religion, and threats which can be posed to its followers by the activity of St Adalbert, who was trying to replace pagan rituals with new, Christian celebrations. The range of these threats is, indeed, terribly wide – they carry the danger of the destruction of the whole world to which the whole community, affected by St Adalbert's actions, belonged. The person behind this danger should leave their territory as quickly as possible, otherwise he would have to be punished.

In support of the view that actions taken by Boleslav the Brave in order to make sure that his subjects obey God's law were incorporated into a traditional pre-Christian system of ideas one can refer to another passage from Thietmar's *Chronicle*, this time devoted to a different Central European monarch, namely the ruler of Hungary, Géza. Géza, as Thietmar claims, was a cruel ruler, responsible for the deaths of a number of people. However, after his own baptism he expiated his old guilt by dealing mercilessly with his obstructive subjects and applying force to make them accept the new religion. Writing this peculiar praise of Géza, Thietmar did not forget to add, however, that at the same time the ruler himself did not abandon the practice of making offerings to different idols and, being reproached for this by the bishop, answered that he was powerful and rich enough to be able to afford this as well.⁴ At this stage one can also refer to the account written in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, which describes the events that allegedly happened in Kiev in 983. Duke Vladimir of Kiev, after his return from a military expedition against the Yatvingians, decided together 'with his people' – as the author of the chronicle says – to offer to gods a human sacrifice in gratitude for their victory. By drawing lots the son of a certain Christian Varangian, who lived in Kiev, was selected for the offering. The father, of course, refused to give away the son and make an offering of him. As a consequence, both of them – the father and son – were killed by the outraged pagans.⁵ The community could not afford to refuse their gods to make an offering of their own choice. The presence of a Christian Varangian could be tolerated as long as he did not interfere with ritual offerings. However, by refusing to make an offering of his

⁴ Thietmar, VIII, 4, pp. 496–8.

⁵ *Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. Dmitrii S. Likhachev (Moscow, 1950), 58–9.

own son, he exposed the community to the possible wrath of gods. Therefore, he had to be punished accordingly.

Our comparison between the actions taken by Boleslav the Brave or Géza and the conduct of the pagan Prussians or the pagan warriors of (the then pagan) duke of Kiev, Vladimir, must be cautious. We still should remain extremely wary when we try to indicate, on the basis of these foundations, certain, let us call them, traditional, pre-Christian elements in their way of perceiving their own obligations towards the *sacrum*. It has to be remembered that the descriptions of the possible mechanisms of thinking among the pagan Prussians were presented by Christian writers. Indeed, we possess enough various sources which convince us that, as a matter of fact, it was community cults in the pagan tradition – whether it was Germanic, or Slavic – that played a huge role, where all the community members had to participate. Failure to carry out rituals, or their improper celebration, posed a threat of the intervention of sacred powers, which affected not only the perpetrator but also the whole community.⁶ In this respect there is little doubt that the quoted accounts told us the truth. However, what is noteworthy is how easy it is for the authors to describe the spiritual world of pagans. One has an impression that this is not the world – with reference to some fundamental patterns of thinking – completely alien or incomprehensible to them. One can assume that they may even have shared, to a certain degree, the conviction, ascribed by them to the pagan Prussians, that appropriately performed religious rituals are of crucial importance for providing protection for the community from sacred powers. This protection not only guaranteed its well-being, but, as a matter of fact – as it is suggested by the list of misfortunes threatening the Prussians in consequence of St Adalbert's activity – was a key factor determining its future survival. The concern about the proper celebration of the cult and the conviction about its common character, in terms of the responsibility for it, the possibility of receiving support from the *sacrum*, but also, in the case of breaking the rules of the cult, exposing everybody to punishment, were not only shared – as one can assume – by the pagan Prussians or the Polans. In the early Middle Ages they also determined, to the same degree, the way the world was perceived by Christians. In this respect – as it seems – the difference between

⁶ See Karol Modzelewski, *Barbarzyńska Europa* (Warsaw, 2004), 456 ff.

Christianity and pagan beliefs was not fundamental. In both cases the key role was played by the public cult. Its proper performance was to guarantee well-being and protection of sacred powers.

The Christianity of the early Middle Ages was first of all a public religion, a religion where – let us repeat this – the public cult played a key role. Obeying God’s commandments meant, first of all, the proper celebration of rituals. It was the ruler, supported in his efforts by bishops, who was supposed to supervise the adherence to respective religious customs by the faithful. Charlemagne’s *Admonitio generalis* and the whole great work of the *correctio* undertaken by the Carolingians reformers also stemmed from this conviction about some special duties of the ruler: providing the right conditions for performing worship and his responsibility to God for the sins committed by his subjects.⁷ The punishment he received was, of course, of eschatological nature. God’s wrath could, however, be explicitly exposed in worldly matters. The rulers who did not properly fulfil their obligation to supervise the adherence to God’s commandments, could be punished by God accordingly: by diseases, poor harvest, or military defeats.⁸ The pagan Prussians – as we remember – were also supposed to expect a similar punishment for Saint Adalbert’s violation of their rules.

The idea of the unity of the political and religious order, expressed, perhaps the most clearly, in the concept of the *ecclesia gentium*, undoubtedly found its most complete representation in the Carolingian period. However, it had found its strong justification in an already long tradition of the early medieval Christianity.⁹ The tendency to reach a religious unity in the sphere of the public cult is noticeable as early as in the Christian Roman Empire towards the end of the fourth

⁷ *Admonitio generalis*, ed. Alfred Boretius, in MGH, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, i (Hanover, 1883), no. 22; see Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789–895* (London, 1977); Wojciech Fałkowski, ‘Admonitio generalis Karola Wielkiego – zapowiedź tworzenia państwa idealnego’, in Wojciech Iwańczak and Stefan K. Kuczyński (eds.), *Ludzie, Kościół, wierzenia. Studia z dziejów kultury i Europy Środkowej (średniowiecze – wczesna epoka nowożytna)* (Warsaw, 2001), 419–28.

⁸ See Rob Meens, ‘Politics, Mirrors of Princes and the Bible: Sin, Kings and the Well-being of the Realm’, *Early Medieval Europe*, vii (1998), 345–57.

⁹ See recently Bruno Dumézil, *Les racines chrétiennes de l’Europe. Conversion et liberté dans les royaumes barbares, V^e–VIII^e siècle* (Paris, 2005).

century. Thus, the peoples under the influence of the Empire accepted Christianity. In 376 the Roman authorities allowed the Visigoths to settle in the territory of the Empire on condition that they accepted the religion dominating in Rome.¹⁰ Also, the unification of the public cult in the barbarian successor kingdoms which were built after the fall of the Roman Empire constituted one of most important factors of maintaining the unity of a monarchy and shaping its identity. It is enough to refer to the decision of the Fourth Council of Toledo in 633 that stated that one ecclesiastical custom should be held by those who are ‘contained in one faith and kingdom’.¹¹ The same reasoning was expressed in 664 by the Anglo-Saxon King Oswiu of Northumbria when he took a decision at the Synod of Whitby to make uniform the rituals performed in his kingdom and introduce one date of celebrating Easter.¹² Similar actions were also undertaken a number of times by the Merovingian kings in the sixth and seventh centuries.¹³ Analogous convictions were also expressed by the rulers of the post-Carolingian successor monarchies, also including the Ottonians.¹⁴

It seems that such categories can also be applied to the actions taken by Boleslav the Brave against those guilty of breaking God’s commandments, or by Géza against his subjects reluctant to accept Christianity which he was introducing. It cannot be ruled out that a recent local pagan tradition left a certain impression on them.

¹⁰ Peter J. Heather, ‘The Crossing of Danube and the Gothic Conversion’, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 27 (1986), 289–315.

¹¹ *Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos*, ed. José Vives (Barcelona, 1932), Toledo, IV, 2, p. 188: ‘Unus igitur ordo orandi atque psallendi a nobis per omnem Hispaniam atque Galliam conservetur, unus modus in missarum solemnitatibus, unus in vespertinis matutinisque officiis, nec diversa sit ultra in nobis ecclesiastica consuetudo qui una fide continemur et regno’; see Rachel Stocking, ‘Aventius, Martianus and Isidore: Provincial Councils in Seventh-Century Spain’, *Early Medieval Europe*, vi (1997), 169–88. See also the resolutions of the Synod of Braga of 586 incorporated after the annexation of the kingdom of the Suebians into the collection of the Visigoth Laws, in *Concilios visigóticos*, Braga, I, p. 70.

¹² Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), iii. 25, pp. 294–309; see D.P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 2000), 86 ff.

¹³ Dumézil, *Les racines chrétiennes*, 223–43.

¹⁴ Roman Michałowski, ‘The Nine-Week Lent in Boleslaus the Brave’s Poland: A Study of the First Piasts’ Religious Policy’, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 89 (2004), 5–50.

However, one can assume that those actions were fully incorporated into the model, which was still present at the turn of the millenium, of the early medieval, public Christianity, which had, first of all, the nature of the common cult which required, in order to gain God's favour, the participation – under the leadership of the ruler and his bishops – of all the members of the community.

The process of Christianisation in the Piast monarchy should be examined, first of all – in my opinion – from the perspective of the deep social and political transformations which accompanied the formation of the Piast state. This traditional approach still remains, as it seems, illuminating. The introduction of a new religion was to facilitate, in the first place, consolidating the polity which was being built by the Piasts, breaking old, tribal divisions, describing anew the identity of its community, and defining the position of the Piast monarchs there. Surely, this does not indicate that Boleslav the Brave was merely politically pragmatic in his decisions. Probably, as Thietmar's account devoted to his directives seems to suggest, he was deeply concerned about the salvation of his subjects. By imposing on them a period, longer than it was required by the canon law, of practising Lenten mortification, Boleslav the Brave may have been convinced that he would be able to win a special God's favour for himself and his monarchy.¹⁵ Simultaneously, his directives served to build the political identity of his subjects and to shape the sense of their separation from others.¹⁶ Similar categories can be applied to the legislation adopted by other Central European rulers of this period – the Bohemian Břetislav I, or the Hungarian Stephen I, who also tended to enforce in the public life of the monarchies they built, new rules in conformity with a new, Christian order.¹⁷

With reference to the early Middle Ages, the concept of religious culture seems to be identical with the concept of political culture, and political reality seems to intermingle with religious reality.

¹⁵ Zbigniew Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics: Writing the History of a Dynastic Conflict in Medieval Poland* (Leiden and Boston, 2008), 117–19.

¹⁶ See Michałowski, 'The Nine-Week Lent', 5–39.

¹⁷ *Sancti Stephani Decretorum libri II*, ed. György Györffy, in *idem, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft der Ungarn um die Jahrtausendwende* (Vienna, Cologne and Graz, 1983), 263–78; see also *idem, King Saint Stephen of Hungary*, transl. Peter Doherty (New York, 1994); *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum*, ed. Berthold Bretholz, in *MGH, SS rer. Germ., n.s., ii* (Berlin, 1923), II, 4, pp. 85–90.

In this context it is also worthwhile taking into consideration the transformations which in the sacred topography of the Piast monarchy were brought by the adoption of Christianity. Pagan religion was, first of all, the religion, if it can be said, of open 'natural' space. Cult practice was concentrated in holy groves, around the springs, streams, hills, or knolls which were known to possess special sacred powers.¹⁸ Access to them was not, as a matter of fact, limited by top-down decisions and the community members could freely visit the places of worship which were situated there. The acceptance of Christianity meant a significant change in this respect. Christianity was also, of course, deeply planted in space. However, within the Piast monarchy at the turn of the eleventh century as well as other Central-European early medieval polities, the sacred space of Christianity was primarily associated with the space of rulers' strongholds – it was the space of the centres of power. The process of introducing a new religion either in Poland or in Bohemia or in Hungary was accompanied by the process of erecting churches, founded naturally in major administrative centres of the monarchy. One can refer to the examples of Duke Vaclav of Bohemia, or his brother and murderer, Boleslav I,¹⁹ or King Stephen I of Hungary,²⁰ whose concern was to raise new Christian churches in their strongholds. A similar practice can be observed as regards the monarchy of the first Piasts, who attached great importance to their foundation work. Most certainly, these undertakings were, first of all, based on their desire to provide the right conditions for worshipping God and, by the same token, for winning God's favour and receiving a chance for salvation.²¹ It cannot remain unnoticed, however, that such efforts brought about a fundamental shift in the arrangement of sacred places. They were moved from the areas 'under the community control' into the areas under the exclusive control of the ruler. From then on, it was not the community but the ruler and his priests who were in control of

¹⁸ See e.g. Leszek P. Słupecki, 'Sanktuaria w świecie natury u Słowian i Germanów', in Sławomir Moździoch (ed.), *Człowiek, sacrum, środowisko. Miejsce kultury we wczesnym średniowieczu* (Wrocław, 2000), 39–46.

¹⁹ Dušan Třeštík, *Počátky Přemyslovců. Vstup Čechů do dějin (530–935)* (Prague, 1997), 352–3, 437–8.

²⁰ Györffy, *King Saint Stephen*.

²¹ Roman Michałowski, *Princeps fundator. Studium z dziejów kultury politycznej w Polsce X–XIII wieku* (Warsaw, 1989).

the access to sacred places, which could be used to strengthen and legitimise their power.

This process of the monarch's specific monopolisation of access to holy places could adopt different forms. It did not always mean giving up old, pagan, 'public' places of cult and creating new, Christian ones, within the centres of monarch's power. In some cases, as in the case of actions taken by the first Christian ruler of Bohemia, Bořivoj, we observe a specific seizure by the duke of an old, common place of cult and the assumption of his exclusive supremacy over it. It is widely held that Bořivoj ordered a church to be erected where tribal gatherings had been held and religious rituals had been performed, and next he ordered a stronghold, later Prague, to be built there.²² At the end of the day, however, the result was the same – the control over the places of cult was taken over from the community to the monarch. As it is proved by tradition written in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, such actions could have been taken already by pagan rulers to produce similar results. For we learn from the account of the *Chronicle* that Duke Vladimir of Kiev, after murdering his brother and taking over absolute power in Rus', ordered the statues of pagan deities to be placed in front of his ducal seat in Kiev and offerings to be made to them on the hill where today, as the chronicler adds, St Vasil's Orthodox church is located.²³ Irrespective of some doubts that can be raised by this account, it seems highly important that (as was the chronicler's conviction), political power was naturally related to the supervision over the places of cult. Gaining political power also necessitated the subordination of places associated with performing religious rituals, or, in short, gaining control over the holiness of those places. Much also weighs in favour of the fact that the rulers of Central European monarchies on the threshold of Christianity were fully aware of the existence of such relations and could take advantage of them to strengthen their power.

Drawing a new map of sacred places was accompanied by a fundamental reconstruction of the ideological foundations of the Piasts' power. Mieszko I's decision to put his polity under Saint Peter's protection, or the Western emporia, erected by the first Piasts in their churches with astonishing consistency, which became the centres of

²² Třeštík, *Počátky Přemyslovců*, 338–47.

²³ *Povest' vremennykh let*, 56.

cult oriented around them, as well as the concern about the subjects' obedience to God's commandments, or the establishing of fraternal relations with the biggest German monasteries – all this leaves no room for doubt that the Piast rulers intended to inscribe their authority within a new, Christian order of their monarchy.²⁴

At Boleslav the Brave's court, as one can assume on the basis of the account by Thietmar, the concepts placing the ruling monarch within the sacred sphere, which were developed in Germany, were fully accepted and, what is more, applied. In any case the Polish ruler did not hesitate to reach for ritual practices which served to manifest them and found in them their own justification. For this is the way one should probably interpret the already cited information by Thietmar on penances performed by Boleslav, in which one can observe the reference to penitential practices of the contemporary German monarchs.²⁵ Most probably, a similar meaning can be applied to Boleslav's ceremonial entry into Meissen in 1002²⁶ – also described by Thietmar – let alone his triumphal entry into Kiev in 1018.²⁷ These obviously echoed the *adventus regis* ritual, the ceremony which in an exceptionally clear way showed a special kind of values associated with the power of a Christian monarch.²⁸

Finally, the action undertaken by the first Piast rulers aiming at investing their authority with the full Christian character culminated in the coronations of Boleslav the Brave and his son, Mieszko II, in 1025, which allowed them to appear as God's anointed. The first Piast

²⁴ Michałowski, *Princeps fundator*, 85–145.

²⁵ See e.g. Lothar Bornscheuer, *Miseriae regum. Untersuchungen zum Krisen- und Todesgedanken in den herrschaftstheologischen Vorstellungen der ottonisch-salischen Zeit* (Berlin, 1968), 131 ff.; Stephan Waldhoff, 'Der Kaiser in den Krise? Zum Verständnis von Thietmar IV, 48', *Deutsches Archiv*, 54 (1998), 23–54; David A. Warner, 'Henry II at Magdeburg: Kingship, Ritual and the Cult of Saints', *Early Medieval Europe*, iii (1994), 135–66.

²⁶ Thietmar, V, 9, p. 231.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, VIII, 32, p. 530.

²⁸ See e.g. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, 'The King's Advent and the Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina', *The Art Bulletin*, xxvi (1944), 207–31; Winfried Dotzauer, 'Die Ankunft des Herrschers: Die fürstliche Einzug in die Stadt (bis zum Ende des alten Reichs)', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, lv (1973), 245–88; Peter Willmes, *Der Herrscher-Adventus' im Kloster des Frühmittelalters* (Munich, 1976); Pierre Dufraigne, *Adventus Augusti, adventus Christi. Recherche sur l'exploitation idéologique et littéraire d'un cérémonial dans l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris, 1994).

coronations left little evidence in the sources.²⁹ More light on the range of meanings combined by the Piasts with the rite of the royal anointment seems to be shed by the circumstances of the coronation of Boleslav II the Bold in 1076, and the fact of carrying it out on Christmas Day in particular.³⁰ The decision to incorporate the spectacle of Boleslav's royal anointment into the celebrations of the Nativity of the Lord testifies to the perfect understanding by the Piast court of the profound symbolic meanings relating to the ceremony of the royal anointment. It also points to the Piasts' wish to place their own rulership within the complex of ideas about the sacred character of the monarchic authority and to demonstrate unequivocally the position to be held by the ruler, privileged by his royal dignity, in the secular and ecclesiastical order.³¹

Does this mean, however, that the first Piasts abandoned the attempts to refer to other, traditional, and pre-Christian political ideas, which are echoed in the dynastic legend of the Piasts conveyed by Gallus Anonymous' *Chronicle*, in order to legitimise their power?³² In the seventh century the Merovingians, undoubtedly Christianised, were not disturbed by the fact of placing among their ancestors a sea beast which allegedly produced Merovech, the founder of the dynasty.³³

²⁹ *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Georg H. Pertz, in MGH, *Scriptores*, iii (Hanover, 1839), 90; *Annales Magdeburgenses*, ed. Georg H. Pertz, in MGH, *Scriptores*, xvi (Hanover, 1859), 170.

³⁰ *Lamperti monaci Hersfeldensis Opera*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, in MGH, SS rer. Germ. (Hanover, 1894), 284–5.

³¹ Zbigniew Dalewski, "Vivat princeps in eternum!" Sacrality of Ducal Power in Poland in the Earlier Middle Ages', in Aziz al-Azmeh and János M. Bak (eds.), *Monotheistic Kingship: The Medieval Variants* (Budapest, 2004), 215–30.

³² See Roman Michałowski, *Christianisation of Political Culture in Poland in the 10th and Early 11th Century*, in Halina Manikowska and Jaroslav Pánek (eds.), *Political Culture in Central Europe (10th–20th Century)*, i: *Middle Ages and Early Modern Era* (Prague, 2005), 42 ff.

³³ *Chronicarum quae dicitur Fredegari Scholastici libri IV cum continuationes*, ed. Bruno Krusch, in MGH, SS rer. Merov., ii (Hanover, 1888), III, 9, p. 95; see Alexander C. Murray, "Post vocantur Merohingii": Fredegar, Merovech and Sacral Kingship', in *idem* (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1998), 121–52; cf. Ian N. Wood, 'Deconstructing the Merovingian family', in Richard Corradini, Max Diesenberger and Helmut Reimitz, *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (The Transformation of the Roman World, 12, Leiden and Boston, 2003), 149–71.

Also, until the end of the dynasty, that is by the middle of the eighth century – if the Carolingian sources can be regarded as credible – the Merovingian rulers were distinguished by long hair that had never been cut, from which they allegedly drew their magic power.³⁴ Furthermore, Anglo-Saxon Christian rulers did not mind putting deities or mythical heroes among their ancestors.³⁵ Bohemian rulers saw nothing wrong in the inaugural ceremony in Prague held on a stone throne which came from the pagan period.³⁶ Insufficient sources do not give us too many opportunities to verify the thesis that the first Piasts fully and intentionally rejected the ideas which legitimised their monarchic aspirations in the extra-Christian symbolic system, and made a new attempt to determine the ideological foundations of their authority only until after the crisis of the 1030s.

However, we should be aware, without entering into the discussion on this issue, of one problem. Regardless of whether, and if so, to what extent the first Piasts referred to extra-Christian strands of the dynastic tradition written down by Gallus in the early twelfth century, it is difficult not to notice that the attempt they made to fully inscribe the authority they possessed within Christian categories did not end as a complete success. The end of the first kingdom, and later also the collapse of the royal rule of Boleslav the Bold prove explicitly that, irrespectively of the external conditions which did not favour royal aspirations of the Piasts, the idea of the royal authority that came from God's anointment was not particularly popular in eleventh-century Poland. In consequence, the Piasts were made to abandon their claims to appear as the God's anointed and to take actions which aimed to

³⁴ *Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. Georg Waitz, in MGH, SS rer. Germ., xxv (Hanover, 1911), I, p. 3; see Max Diesenberger, 'Hair, sacrality and symbolic capital in the Frankish kingdoms', in Corradini, Diesenberger and Reimitz, *The Construction of Communities*, 173 ff.

³⁵ David N. Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', in Peter H. Sawyer and Ian N. Wood (eds.), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), 72–104.

³⁶ Roderich Schmidt, 'Die Einsetzung der böhmischen Herzöge auf den Thron zu Prag', in Helmut Beumann and Werner Schröder (eds.), *Aspekte der Nationenbildung im Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1978), 438–63; Michał Kulecki, 'Ceremonial intronizacyjny Przemyślidów w X–XIII wieku', *Przegląd Historyczny*, lxxv, 3 (1984), 441–50; Dušan Třeštík and Anežka Merhautová, 'Die böhmischen Insignien und der steinerne Thron', in Alfried Wieczorek and Hans-Martin Hinz (eds.), *Europa Mitte um 1000. Beiträge zur Geschichte, Kunst und Archäologie*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 2000), ii, 904–6.

reevaluate the ideological premises that determined their imperious qualifications and find them a new justification.

These are precisely the aspirations which can be related, it seems, to the concept of being chosen by God, elaborated by Gallus Anonymous in his story of the origins of the Piast dynasty.³⁷ In the model of the rights of the Piasts which he suggested, there was no need to have recourse to the idea of the royal anointment in order to legitimise their authority. In the case of the Piast dynasty, a single act of God's intervention, that appointed to the throne its first representative Siemowit, sufficiently defined, once and forever, its monarchic prerogatives, and introduced the Piasts, marked with God's choice, into the rights of Christian monarchs who ruled at God's will. Referring to the idea of being chosen by God, the Piasts could therefore overcome the ideological crisis which had been caused by the fall of the previous model of mutual relations between them and the Christian *sacrum*, and find a new justification for their authority within the Christian system of values.³⁸

transl. Robert Bubczyk

³⁷ *Galli Anonymi Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. Karol Maleczyński, in MPH, s.n., ii (Cracow, 1952), I, 1–4, pp. 9–14, for the English translation, see *Gesta principum Polonorum. The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, transl. Paul W. Knoll and Frank Schaer (Central European Medieval Texts, 3, Budapest and New York, 2003), 16–28. See also Jacek Banaszkiewicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu. Studium porównawcze nad wczesnośredniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi* (Warsaw, 1986); Czesław Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski. Studium z historiozofii i hermeneutyki symboli dziejopisarstwa średniowiecznego* (Lublin, 1990).

³⁸ Dalewski, “Vivat princeps”.