

A turn to Fratres Minores. Franciscans in 13th-century Lesser Poland and the patronage of Duke Boleslaus the Chaste

Abstract:

The time around the middle of the thirteenth century was a period of the popularization of the mendicant orders in the whole of Central Europe including Lesser Poland, which was one of the duchies existing after the feudal fragmentation of Poland. The Franciscans in particular, who arrived in Cracow during the apostolic mission led by the Saxon province, were quickly taken under the patronage of Duke Boleslaus the Chaste, who founded a church as his mausoleum in Cracow, although his predecessors were buried in Cracow Cathedral. The duke also founded cloisters in Nowy Korczyn and Zawichost; his sister, Salomea, became the first Polish St. Clara's nun; his wife, Kunegund of Hungary, as a widow established and joined the convent in Stary Sącz. In this way, Franciscans became the most important order, protected by the local ducal family. The same process took place in other Polish provinces and had significant consequences. For instance, in Silesia, the local branch of the Piast dynasty was strongly connected with the Cistercians, but Duke Henry the Pious and his heirs of the Wrocław throne were buried in Franciscan churches. This turn to the Mendicants in the Piast dukes' patronage seems to be much more complex than in, for example, Bohemia. In Lesser Poland, this phenomena is even more visible because of some extraordinary examples, such as the central—Greek cross—plan of the Franciscan church in Cracow or the relocation of the first Clarissan cloister from Zawichost to the isolated site near the former castle of Scala. Comparative analysis of the role of the Franciscan cloisters in Boleslaus the Chaste's patronage and propaganda will be the main subject of the paper.

Keywords: -