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THE BAPTISM OF MIESZKO IN 966:
THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENTIFIC THEORIES
ON THE BASIS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

A b s t r a c t. When Mieszko I went into the water of baptism he opened for the posterity the access not only to the family of the kingdom out of this world, but also to the family of nations of the western culture. His decision started the Polish state. The distance in time and scarce source material cause that the research process is still in progress. The author on the basis of written sources shows how scientific theories considering baptism of Mieszko changed and evolved. Confirmation or falsification of these theories is searched on the basis of archaeological discoveries.

On the basis of the research to date the author presents how the main theories considering formation of Polish state based on the decision of baptism of the ruler himself were changing. After presentation of the Mieszko's state in 966, main hypotheses concerning gene-sis, time and place as well as effects of the baptism of the ruler are pointed out. The theories changed due to the influence of reading sources, political events, comparative research performed through the years and, lately, on the basis of archaeological research and results achieved thanks to the use of the newest research technologies. The baptism of Mieszko was most probably on the territory of Gniezno state in 966 (maybe on Easter Eve). The effects of his decision triggered formation of Christian identity of the Polish state, however, the ruler had probably purposes which were less distant in time, including religious purpose.

Key words: The baptism of Mieszko I, christening Poland, year 966, genesis and effects of baptism of Mieszko, the beginning of Polish state.

In 2016, the 1050th anniversary of the Baptism of Poland was celebrated. The ceremonies, scientific conferences, exhibitions and meetings held confirm that this spectacular event of baptism of Mieszko I testifies not only to our roots, but also to our present. “Those who are not aware of this founda-

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tion will have great difficulty with self-determination and at the same time will experience imbalance. Therefore, it is vital to recall what effect the Poland's Baptism has had on our history, our religious life, on the material and spiritual culture of our nation," said Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, initiating the jubilee year of 1050th anniversary of Poland's baptism in the Church.¹

The main ceremonies took place in Gniezno, Poznań and Ostrow Lednicki on 14-16 April 2016. It was in Greater Poland in the former Gniezno state that Mieszko I immersed himself in the water of baptism, he opened he opened for the posterity the access not only to the family of the kingdom out of this world, but also to the family of nations of the western culture. His decision was the most important decision for the whole country. It became the conventional date of the establishment of a Polish state. The jubilee celebrations had their continuation at Jasna Góra on 3 May 2016, when the Polish nation's vow of the millennium of the Baptism of Poland was renewed, and on 28 July 2016, when Pope Francis visited the Jasna Góra sanctuary during the World Youth Days in Cracow.

Although many words were written about the baptism of Mieszko and the establishment of the Polish state in various periods of our history,² there is no doubt that the cognitive process regarding the baptism of Poland is still not finished. Beyond any doubt, the main cognitive base is research into the sources of the preserved treasures of written culture. The earliest description of the baptism of Mieszko given by Thietmar, a German historian, however, does not contain information about the time and place of baptism.³ Even less information is available from the work *Res gestae saxonicae sive annalium libri tres* written by Widukind of Corvey at the end of the 10th century,⁴ as

¹ See S. Gądecki, *O 1050-lecie Chrztu Polski*, <http://www.stefczyk.info/wiadomosci/polska/abp-gadecki-1050-lecie-chrztu-polski-swiadczy-o-terazniejszosci,15780906890> [the data available on 21.03.2016].

² The literature on the origins and circumstances of baptism by Mieszko I is really huge. There is also no need for a comprehensive reference. In the footsteps of other historians, I recommend a list of literature included in the books: Aleksander Gieysztor, *Geneza państwa polskiego w świetle nowszych badań*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny" 61 (1954), no. 1, pp. 103-136; Henryk Łowmiański, *Początki Polski*, vol. V, Warsaw: National Scientific Publishers PWN, 1973, pp. 340-368) and Gerard Labuda, *Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego*, vol. I, Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 19872, pp. 1-4, 413-417.

³ *The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, translated and annotated by David A. Warner, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, Polish version: *Kronika biskupa merseburskiego Thietmara. Thietmari Merseburgiensis episcopi chronicon*, transl. M.Z. Jedlicki, Poznań 1953; the electronic version is available at www.zrodla.historyczne.prv.pl 2002.

⁴ *Widukindi Res gestae saxonicae*, A. Bauer i R. Rau Publishing House, [in:] *Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit*, vol. VIII, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1971.

well as the *Chronicle of the Slavs* by Helmold,⁵ and the *Chronicle of the Czechs* by Cosmas of Prague (both works come from the second half of the 12th century). This material is widened by the descriptions of the Mieszko state from the mid-10th century given by the so-called Bavarian Geographer of the monastery of St. Emmeram in Regensburg.

The earliest Polish written evidence is the *(Old) Chapter Yearbook of Cracow*, which dates back to the 11th century, even though, today, we use its version edited in the mid-13th century (perhaps the lost *Yearbook of Richeza* written in Gniezno starting from 1013 was a role model for the chronicle of the Cracow Chapter). The chronicler noted a brief information under “966”: “Mesco dux Poloniae baptizatur.” The most crucial moment in the history of Poland is described in such a laconic way.⁶ A similar date was mentioned in the *Old Świętokrzyski Yearbook*, although with a chronological shift of one year, to 967. Other yearbooks: *the Yearbook of Greater Poland*, *the Short Yearbook*, *the Miechów Yearbook* and *the Lesser Poland Compiled Yearbooks*, *the Yearbook of the Poznań Chapter*, and *the Poznań Yearbook I* point to 966.⁷ Although we know little about this act, there is no doubt that it was the most significant event in the history of Poland.⁸

A wide variety of information about the establishment of the Polish state is provided by the account of Gallus Anonymus, a chronicler from the duke’s court living in the first half of the 12th century.⁹ He described the legendary origins of the Polish state, which Jan Długosz developed in the *Annals, or Chronicles of the Famous Kingdom of Poland*, his magnum opus

⁵ *Helmolda kronika słowiańska z XII wieku*, transl. J. Papłowski, Warsaw: K. Kowalewski Printing House, 1862.

⁶ G. Labuda, *Mieszko I*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 2002, p. 93.

⁷ The chronicles were published in collective works of *Monumenta Poloniae Historica. Series nova* (published by A. Bielowski, vol. II, Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe 1961). See also: *Najdawniejsze roczniki krakowskie i kalendarz* [The Oldest of Krakow’s Annals and Calendar], ed. Z. Kozłowska-Budkowa, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica. Series nova*, vol. V, Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe 1978; *Roczniki wielkopolskie* [The Annals of Greater Poland], eds. B. Kürbis, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica. Series nova*, vol. VI, Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe 1962.

⁸ See. S. GADECKI, *Znaczenie chrztu dla naszych dziejów*, “Miesięcznik Kościelny Archidiecezji Poznańskiej” 67(2016), no. 2, p. 67.

⁹ GALLUS ANONYMUS, *Gesta Principum Polonorum. The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles [Polish Chronicle]*, eds. Paul W. Knoll and Frank Schaer, Budapest, 2003, Polish version: *Kronika polska*, transl. R. Grodecki, ed. M. Plezia, Wrocław: Ossolineum Publishing House 19754; Wrocław 19895.

from the mid-15th century.¹⁰ All the source material can not provide comprehensive information on Mieszko's baptismal origins and causes. Given the small amount of sources, we need to refer to archaeological research. Better and better research techniques make it possible to reach in-depth conclusions regarding the Christianisation of the Piast state. The research of Klementyna Żurowska, who for many years was involved in excavations at Ostrów Lednicki,¹¹ and Hanna Kóčka-Krenz, who studied the construction of early-Gothic buildings at Ostrów Tumski in Poznań, turn out to be particularly valuable.¹²

In the occasional article, it is impossible to analyze all the issues related to Mieszko's baptism and its serious consequences. However, on the basis of the research to date, I would like to present how the main theories considering formation of Polish state based on the decision of baptism of the ruler himself were changing. After presentation of the Mieszko's state in 966, I will point out the main hypotheses concerning genesis, time and place, as well as effects of the baptism of the ruler. The theories changed due to the influence of reading sources, political events, comparative research performed through the years, and, lately, on the basis of archaeological research and results achieved thanks to the use of the newest research technologies.

1. THE STATE OF MIESZKO I ON THE EVE OF HIS BAPTISM

It has long been assumed that the origins of Polish statehood are based on two tribes: the Vistulans on both sides of the upper Vistula around Wiślica and the Polans, who at the beginning of the 10th century created a strong or-

¹⁰ *Jana Długosza Roczniki czyli Kroniki sławnego Królestwa Polskiego*, book I-II, ed. J. Dąbrowski, Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1962.

¹¹ Klementyna Żurowska published the results of the research together with her co-workers in the work *U progu chrześcijaństwa w Polsce. Ostrów Lednicki*, ed. K. Żurowska, vol. I-II, Cracow: Gutenberg Publishing House, 1993-1994.

¹² H. KÓČKA-KRENZ, *Badania zespołu pałacowo-sakralnego na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu*, [in:] *Osadnictwo i architektura ziem polskich w dobie Zjazdu Gnieźnieńskiego*, ed. A. Buko, Z. Świechowski, Warsaw: Letter Quality Publishing House, 2000, pp. 69-74; IDEM, *Zespół pałacowo-sakralny na grodzie poznańskim*, [in:] *Polska na przełomie I i II tysiąclecia*, ed. S. Skibiński, Poznań: Art Historians Association, 2001, pp. 287-296; IDEM, *Początki monumentalnej architektury świeckiej na grodzie poznańskim*, [in:] *Początki architektury monumentalnej w Polsce*, ed. T. Janiak, D. Stryniak, Gniezno: Museum of the Origins of the Polish State, 2004, pp. 21-38; *Poznań in the 10th century*, Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 2011; *Archeologiczne świadectwa o najstarszych świątyniach na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu*, "Ecclesia. Studia z dziejów Wielkopolski" 2(2006), pp. 23-38.

ganism on the banks of one of the Warta tributaries linking the river with Lake Gopło, and on the lakes in the area of Poznań, Gniezno and Kruśzwica.¹³ It was believed that the unification process of the Lechites was relatively peaceful. This is denied by archaeological research, which showed the lack of remnants of the early Piast colonies in western Greater Poland. This can be explained by the fact that the Polans were expanding into neighboring areas, perhaps from their ancient abode, which would be Giecz (or Kalisz), by conquest. The new state was governed by a war democracy. The ancestral system of government (councils of elders, and perhaps priests) increasingly gave way to the rule of the duke and his closest collaborators, who were the germ of class divisions. The duke exercised power with the support of his retinue. Ibrahim ibn Yaqub writes that Mieszko had 3 thousand members of the armed forces, and the strength of one of them equaled the strength of ten other.¹⁴ Mieszko was considered to be a descendant of Scandinavian visitors, and more recently, the visitors from the territory of the Great Moravian Empire. Historians point to the Piasts rather as a native dynasty. The names of Mieszko's ancestors: Siemowit, Lestek and Siemomysł, although given by Gallus Anonymus, seem to be authentic.¹⁵ The material power of the duke was based on the system of tributes and services provided by the people possessing the arable land or the conquered working in the servitude settlements. At the beginning of Mieszko's reign, the population of the state of the Polans was about 150,000 residents, and until his death it increased to about 1 million residents.¹⁶

Past historical studies also mention the gradual and quite long period of formation of the Piast dynasty, which was to be started in the middle of the 9th century. Before World War II, it was claimed by Józef Kostrzewski, and later by Kazimierz Żurowski.¹⁷ The research carried out by Zofia Kurnatow-

¹³ See K. KANTAK, *Dzieje Kościoła polskiego*, vol. I: *Wiek X-XI-XII. Początki metropolii polskiej*, Poznań 1912 – reprint: W.L. Babicz, Poznań: Druck Publishing House, 1999, p. 6; H. SAMSONOWICZ, *O ziemiach polskich w IX wieku*, [in:] *Świat pogranicza*, ed. M. Nagielski, A. Rachuba i S. Gorzyński, Warsaw: DiG Publishing House, 2003, pp. 35-43.

¹⁴ *Relacja Ibrahima ibn Jakuba z podróży do krajów słowiańskich przekazie Al-Bekriego*, eds. T. Kowalski, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica. Series nova*, vol. I, Warsaw: Polish Academy of Learning, 1946, p. 50.

¹⁵ Cf. K. OŻÓG, 966. *Chrzest Polski*, Cracow: Biały Kruk Publishing House, 2016, p. 74.

¹⁶ According to K. Katak (See K. Katak, *Dzieje Kościoła polskiego*, p. 12) the country's population was 450,000.

¹⁷ Cf. K. ŻUROWSKI, G. MIKOŁAJCZYK, *Badania archeologiczne na Górze Lecha w 1953 r.*, "Sprawozdania Archeologiczne" 1(1955), pp. 77-90; W. HENSEL, *Budownictwo obronne za czasów pierwszych Piastów. Początki Państwa Polskiego*, [in:] *Księga Tysiąclecia*, part I, ed. K. Tymie-

ska and the dendrochronological method proved that the Piast castle in Gniezno was built around 940. There is no doubt that the cradle of the Piasts is the area of the Greater Poland Upland. Giecz and Moraczewo, perhaps also Poznań, come from the 9th century. Hanna Kóčka-Krenz found that around 900, there were cultural changes taking place as a violent civilization breakthrough.¹⁸ It seems that the turning point in the formation of the Polish state was the consolidation of the community living there due to the threats caused by the outbreak of the great uprising of the Polabian Slavs in 936-940. The continuation of this consolidation was the expansion of the Polans into the neighboring Slav territories, which were led by Siemomysł, Mieszko and Bolesław Chrobry.¹⁹

It is difficult to prove the presence of the Slavonic rite on the land of the Vistulans. One may refer to the text about the duke of the Vistulans, who was baptized by Methodius while being enslaved by the Great Moravian prince. Historians have questioned the veracity of the description, which, as one of the three interleaved texts, applied rather to the prophetic ability of Methodius. Until now, no clear traces of such cult have been found (previously, Wiślica was considered such a place). Also, Długosz's account of the first Cracow bishops (if there is something in it) would concern Nitra rather than the areas of today's Lesser Poland. It is difficult to prove whether the Lechits encountered Christianity a century earlier. It is suggested that the Slavs had some contact with it during the migration of generations. The presence of unknown pilgrims during the old Slavic pagan ceremony known as the "postrzyżyny," during which hair cutting was performed to Siemowit, may be a sign thereof.²⁰ Stanisław Kętrzyński suggests that Mieszko's mother might have been a Christian. Moreover, his sister Adelaide might have been an educated person. Mieszko married a Christian woman, Dobrava, even though he had not yet been baptized.²¹ Leon Koczy maintains the opposite view, claiming that Poland had not been touched by the missionary's foot until 966.²²

niecki, G. Labuda, Poznań: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1962, pp. 174, 180-182; IDEM, *Polska przed tysiącem lat*, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow: Ossolineum Publishing House, 1964, pp. 253-256.

¹⁸ See T. JASIŃSKI, *Początki Polski w nowym świetle*, "Nauka" 4(2007), no. 4, p. 12.

¹⁹ Cf. H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Plemię i państwo*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny" 112(2005), fasc. 3, pp. 5-20.

²⁰ Cf. W. URBAN, *Powody i okoliczności chrztu przez Mieszka I*, "Studia Theologica Varsoviensa" 4(1966), no. 2, pp. 18-20.

²¹ S. KĘTRZYŃSKI, *Polska X-XI w.*, ed. A. Gieysztor, Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1961, pp. 54-55.

²² Cf. L. KOCZY, *Chrzest Polski*, [in:] *Sacrum Poloniae Millenium. Rozprawy, szkice, materiały historyczne*, vol. I, Rome: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 1954, p. 27.

2. POLITICAL (EXTERNAL) REASONS FOR THE BAPTISM OF MIESZKO

For many years there has been a lively discussion on the reasons of Mieszko's decision. It might have been influenced by Dobrava's persuasions or political motives such as the desire to get assistance from the Czechs in the fight against the Veleti, or the German threat and cool calculations of the ruler to avoid invasion. The concept of German threat appeared in 20th-century historiography for obvious reasons, especially after 1945.²³ Gerard Labuda challenged this theory in 1946.²⁴ In his research, he returned to the older concepts of the so-called closer enemy. At that time, Lusatia became a basic region for the East-Franconian state, which campaigned against the Veleti Union threatening their power. The state of the Polans, which campaigned for Pomerania, was also threatened by the Veleti Union. Widukind mentions that the Polans were defeated by the Veleti in 963, and Mieszko's brother (whose name is unknown) died in battle.²⁵ Mieszko's actions resulted in breaking the alliance of the Veleti with the Czechs. The Polans' alliance with the Czechs was concluded with the consent of Emperor Otto I. The new Christian ruler became a "friend to the emperor" (*amicus imperatoris*).²⁶ The alliance was accompanied by Mieszko's marriage with the Czech princess Dobrava and the winning September campaign of 967, after which Mieszko sent the emperor the sword of the killed Wichman, a common enemy of the Polans and the Eastern Franks.²⁷

The concept of Gerard Labuda is actually a re-reference to medieval sources. In his research, he refers to the older theories of historians: Władysław Abraham or Stanisław Zakrzewski.²⁸ Also today, the Polish-

²³ Z. SUŁOWSKI, *Pierwszy Kościół polski*, [in:] *Chrześcijaństwo w Polsce. Zarys przemian 966-1979*, ed. J. Kłoczowski, Lublin: Learned Society of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, 1992, pp. 28-29; W. SAWICKI, *Przyjęcie chrześcijaństwa przez Mieszka I i znaczenie tego faktu dla Polski*, [in:] *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*, ed. B. Kumor i Z. Obertyński, vol. I: *Do roku 1764*, part 1: *Do roku 1506*, Poznań-Warsaw: Pallottinum Publishing House, 1974, p. 22.

²⁴ G. LABUDA, *Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego*, vol. I, Poznań: Academic Bookstore 1946, p. 61-75.

²⁵ *Widukindi Res gestae saxonicae*, p. 197. See also *The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg, Kronika biskupa merseburskiego Thietmara*, pp. 193; the literature on this subject: see footnotes: 67, 136 i 137.

²⁶ When explaining this record, Wojciech Fałkowski notes that the ruler would not only become a friend to the emperor, but also a Christian.

²⁷ G. LABUDA, *Mieszko I*, pp. 88-92; see also Z. SUŁOWSKI, *Chrzest Polski*, ZNKUL 9(1969), no. 1-2, p. 21.

²⁸ W. ABRAHAM, *Organizacja Kościoła w Polsce do połowy XIII w.*, Poznań: Pallottinum Publishing House, 19623, pp. 7-13; S. ZAKRZEWSKI, *Mieszko I jako budowniczy państwa polskiego*, Warsaw: Polska Składnica Pomocy Szkolnych, 1921, pp. 61-68; L. KOCZY, *Chrzest Polski*, p. 24.

Czech alliance, the bonds of friendship between margraves and princes recognizing the emperor's authority (initiated by Mieszko with a tribute relation) and the entry of the duke of the Polans to the group of Christian rulers are pointed out.²⁹ If Mieszko were guided only by political arguments for the benefit of the consolidating state, he would have two options: to base new authority on a pagan religion or on Christianity, the triumphant progress of which was undeniable. Christianity provided Poland with sovereignty and abiding in a circle uniting around the emperor of Europe. It was impossible to conquer Poland which proved its internal independence. The country could even expand if, of course, it did not oppose the interests of the Empire.³⁰ It seems, however, that external factors, although very important, were not priorities, and certainly there were also other factors.³¹

3. THE HYPOTHESIS OF INTERNAL EVOLUTION

In the 9th century, a ruling dynasty was established in Poland, which took over power and stimulated expansion. The Piasts imposed their power on neighboring tribes by means of conquest. Uniting the tribes, they consolidated the young community, based on one religion. In this way, they eliminated various tribal beliefs dividing the Lechites. In the circle of these tribes, the spirits of the ancestors gave way to the deities whose imaginations began to be sculpted only in the first half of the 10th century. The rise of the pantheon of deities can be explained by the influence of the Western world. Each tribe had its own deities and priests.³² It is difficult to imagine how the moral idea of the Slavs combined with the religious idea. Historians point to a kind of ritualism. An important element was offering sacrifices to idols in order to get their favor according to the principle: "do ut des" ("I give that you may give").³³ In major cities, there were places of pagan worship, which archaeological excavations carried by our Slavic neighbours have shown. Aleksander Brückner maintained that there were no such places in Poland.

²⁹ See K. OZÓG, 966. *Chrzest Polski*, pp. 82-88; J. WILDER, *Polskie chrześcijaństwo. 1050 lat historii 966–2016*, Warsaw: Arystoteles Publishing House, 2015, pp. 4-6.

³⁰ K. KANTAK, *Dzieje Kościoła polskiego*, p. 38.

³¹ See A. GÓRECKI, *Początek państwa polskiego i chrzest Mieszka I – u źródeł sporu o "duszę polską"*, "Christianitas" 63-64(2016), pp. 64-66.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³³ Cf. P.E. STEELE, *Nawrócenie i chrzest Mieszka*, Warsaw: Fronda PL, 2005, pp. 25-28.

The holy sites of Slavs, however, were sacred groves, trees, stones and sacred circles made of them.

Perhaps the ruler and his soldiers had images of deities on the war shields, when they went to battle. Mieszko, making sacrifices to the deities, realized that wooden idols were not able to overcome the God of Christians. In archaeological research, no traces of the intermediate process between polytheism and monotheism that took place in Kievan Rus have been found. This may testify to a conscious conversion of the ruler and Christianization of his subjects. This hypothesis is considered the most probable today, and it would be confirmed by archaeological discoveries.

4. PERSONAL DECISION OF THE RULER

Since the mid-19th century, Jacob Burckhardt's post-Enlightenment rule has prevailed in historical research,³⁴ according to which religious decisions were explained by political motivations. Post-war historians consistently denied Polish ruler's possibility of deciding on political matters for internal reasons. There were ridiculous stories written that in the event of a conversion of the ruler, the motives of personal involvement must be less important than in the case of an analogous decision of the man who is responsible only for himself.³⁵ Moreover, it is impossible to assess the scale of the religious and ideological needs of the people of that time and the degree of their satisfaction by pagan beliefs.

It is difficult to agree with such argumentation, when studying old chronicles. It is known, however, that in the Middle Ages people were deeply religious, or at least subjected to rituals, and open to supernatural experience of reality. Here, it is worth to mention Mieszko's blindness and restoration of eyesight, which Gallus Anonymus describes. This is questionable, as it can be some figurative, theological interpretation of events. It seems that the history of the ruling dynasty could be faithfully passed down from generation to generation and after many years written down by the chronicler. Perhaps Mieszko's blindness conveyed some miraculous meaning

³⁴ Jacob Burckhardt was a Swiss historian who in 1853 published a famous monograph entitled *The Age of Constantine the Great*. He denied Constantine's personal decision regarding the embrace of the Catholic faith. See *ibid*, p. 9.

³⁵ Cf. Z. SUŁOWSKI, *Początki Kościoła polskiego*, [in:] *Kościół w Polsce*, ed. J. Kłoczowski, vol. I: *Średniowiecze*, Cracow: Znak Publishing House, 1966, pp. 51-52.

as it began a transformation in an adolescent boy, his parents and noblemen? “This blindness meant that Poland was blind back then, but from now was going to be illuminated by Mieszko and elevated over the neighboring nations.”³⁶

The positivist interpretation of the ruler’s religious behavior did not eliminate the religious reasoning behind baptism. Kamil Kantak writes: “The real conversion of Poland came from Mieszko himself.”³⁷ Mieszko should be considered as the main author of religious conversion of Poland; he was guided by religious and personal motives, followed by political and cultural motives. The role of religious motivation of the ruler was re-emphasized by the American historian Philip Earl Steele who said that “the most probable and reasonable explanation of the baptism of Mieszko was his conversion.”³⁸

5. THE ROLE OF DOBRAVA IN THE PROCESS OF THE CONVERSION OF MIESZKO

An important role in the conversion of Mieszko I was played by his Christian wife Dobrava.³⁹ Cosmas, mentioning her death in 977, wrote: “Since she was a very imprudent woman, when she married the duke of Poland as a woman already advanced in age, she removed the peplum from her head and put on a maiden’s crown, which is the great insanity of woman.”⁴⁰ Thietmar’s opinion was different; he did not, however, deny that: “She sinned willingly for a while, that she might later be good for a long time.” Dobrava was to succumb to the “sweet promises” of her husband and she only ate meat during a Lenten period. Through this act: “She laboured for the sake of her husband’s conversion and was heard by the Creator in his kindness.”⁴¹

³⁶ GALLUS ANONYMUS, *Polish Chronicle*, book I, chapter 4, p. 14.

³⁷ K. KANTAK, *Dzieje Kościoła polskiego*, p. 61; cf. J. WIDAJEWICZ, *Chrzest Polski*, “Życie i Myśl” 2(1951), no. 2, pp. 443-469.

³⁸ P.E. STEELE, *Nawrócenie i chrzest Mieszka*, p. 39.

³⁹ Gallus Anonymus uses the name *Doubrovka*. Thietmar – *Dobrawa* (“the good”), contemporary historians – *Dobrawa*, and less often *Dąbrówka*.

⁴⁰ Cosmas of Prague, *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, transl. with an introduction and notes by Lisa Wolverton, Catholic University of America Press, 2009, p. 77; Polish version: *Kosmasa Kronika Czechów*, transl. M. Wojciechowska, Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1968, p. 149. Cosmas’s hatred should be explained by the fact that Dobrawa was the daughter of the assassin of St. Wenceslas and that she could have something to do with the Slavonic rite hated by Cosmas. In addition, the chronicler represented the Czech *raison d’état*. See *ibid.*, footnote 46, p. 150.

⁴¹ *The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, p.191.

Cosmas's contemporary, Gallus Anonymus provided a completely different description: "she refused to marry him unless he abandoned that wicked custom and promised to become a Christian."⁴² Thietmar's version, more closely related to the life of the ruler, is considered the most likely today. Dobrava's testimony and religious practices (perhaps not always zealous), and clergy that came with her retinue – all this created the atmosphere of the religious conversion of Mieszko.⁴³

Not everyone agreed that Dobrava deserved the nickname "christianissima" that Gallus Anonymus gave her, or the title "her husband's country missionary" that Józef Widajewicz gave her. Following the political trail, they pointed out that the account of the conversion of Mieszko by Dobrava was rather a part of the Church's tradition of conversion through women.⁴⁴ In the opinion of Jan Dąbrowski, the Premyslids more often acted as rivals of the Piasts than their godfathers,⁴⁵ and according to Kamil Kantak: "Only after the decision to join the Church [the ruler] wanted to marry a Christian princess from the Czechia." In his opinion: "Even if Mieszko regarded the alliance with the Czechs as a political interest and even if it was his first motive, he sincerely converted and cared for the conversion of his subjects."⁴⁶

6. TIME AND PLACE OF THE BAPTISM OF MIESZKO

Historians have different opinions on the motives of Mieszko's baptism and the place of baptism. Henryk Łowmiański says that when Mieszko sent messengers to Otto I with an offer of an alliance against the Veleti, he also asked for missionaries. The emperor was to receive the message at Christmas 965 in Cologne and send priests from Leodium, possibly lead by Jordan. After the baptism of Mieszko, Jordan received the episcopal consecration and returned to Poland in 968 as a missionary bishop.⁴⁷ This hypothesis is

⁴² GALLUS ANONYMUS, *Polish Chronicle*, book I, chapter 5, p. 15

⁴³ See J. WIDAJEWICZ, *Chrzest Polski*, pp. 446-456; W. URBAN, *Powody i okoliczności chrztu*, pp. 27-34.

⁴⁴ See J. DOWIAT, *Metryka chrztu Mieszka I i jej geneza*, Warsaw: National Scientific Publishers PWN, 1961, p. 79; H. ŁOWMIAŃSKI, *Początki Polski*, p. 549; cf. A.F. GRABSKI, *Mieszko I*, Warsaw: Ministry of National Defense Publishing House, 1973, p. 93.

⁴⁵ P. BOGDANOWICZ, *Chrzest Polski*, "Nasza Przyszłość" 23(1966), p. 35.

⁴⁶ K. KANTAK, *Dzieje Kościoła polskiego*, p. 62.

⁴⁷ H. ŁOWMIAŃSKI, *Imię chrzestne Mieszka I*, "Slavia Occidentalis" 19(1948), pp. 288-293.

weakened by the fact that *Thietmar's Chronicle* does not mention such an important event in the Empire. Józef Nowacki claims that Jordan – who spoke a language similar to Polish – could have come from Croatia and as a missionary bishop he could have baptized Mieszko in Poznań, while in 968 the diocese in Poznań was erected, directly subordinate to the Holy See.⁴⁸ Jerzy Dowiat argues that Mieszko's wedding took place already in 963 and he soon asked the pope for missionaries. As the situation continued, he was to be baptized on Holy Saturday 966 in Regensburg.⁴⁹ All these hypotheses are now rejected, as is Długosz's description of the baptism of the subjects of Mieszko on Sunday Laetare (March 5) 965.⁵⁰

According to historians, one must again rely on the chronicle of the mid-13th century, which is a key to understanding both the time of and the reason for Mieszko's baptism. 14 April 966 is the most probable date of the baptism of Mieszko. It must be remembered that Mieszko as a catechumen could have been baptized during the Easter Vigil, in accordance with the then prevailing tradition.⁵¹ According to Jerzy Strzelczyk, there is no doubt that Mieszko was baptized in the Gniezno state (*Civitas Schinesghe*), that is, in the historical space of Greater Poland.⁵² However, it remains unknown, in which castle the ceremony would be held, because the traces have been obliterated by the destruction made during the pagan reaction. It seems that each of the places (Poznań, Ostrów Lednicki and Gniezno) has some advantage in the "race to the top."⁵³

According to Michał Kara, Jerzy Strzelczyk and Krzysztof Ożóg, Poznań holds the first position.⁵⁴ For centuries, it has been claimed that the construc-

⁴⁸ J. NOWACKI, *Dzieje archidiecezji poznańskiej*, vol. I: *Kościół katedralny w Poznaniu*, Poznań: St. Adalbert Bookstore and Press, 1959, pp. 10-35.

⁴⁹ J. DOWIAT, *Metryka chrztu Mieszka*, pp. 67-86; see also J. WIDAJEWICZ, *Chrzest Polski*, pp. 443-469.

⁵⁰ Cf. Z. SUŁOWSKI, *Chrzest Polski*, [in:] *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. III, ed. R. Łuszczuk, Lublin 1985, column 374.

⁵¹ Por. P. BOGDANOWICZ, *Chrzest Polski*, pp. 8-9. Andrzej M. Wyrwa also says that the baptism of Mieszko was held during the Easter Vigil, although he admits that the equally probable date may be the vigil of Pentecost (June 2, 966).

⁵² J. STRZELCZYK, *Chrzest Polski – problemy podstawowe i dyskusyjne* (lecture delivered at the annual congress of Church historians), Gniezno 31 March 2016 r.; cf. Z. SUŁOWSKI, *Pierwszy Kościół polski*, pp. 29-30.

⁵³ See the list of the oldest monuments of sacral architecture included in: Dariusz Andrzej Sikorski, *Kościół w Polsce za Mieszka I oraz Bolesława Chrobrego. Rozważania nad granicami poznania historycznego*, Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 2013.

⁵⁴ See K. OŻÓG, 966. *Chrzest Polski*, pp. 102-106, 110; T. JASIŃSKI, *Początki Polski w nowym świetle*, pp. 12-14.

tion of the Poznań cathedral began in 966.⁵⁵ Its traces were discovered by archaeologists Zofia Kurnatowska and Michał Kara, pointing to patterns originating from Western Europe, and perhaps from the Great Moravian state. The fragments of the baptistry found during excavations were to be an argument for Poznań as the place of the baptism of Mieszko. However, Aneta Bukowska and Przemysław Urbańczyk put into question the credibility of the find, suggesting that it would be a mortar mixer. In 1999, Hanna Kóčka-Krenz started archaeological excavations in the area of the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The foundations of the church were found, which revealed the building from before 966.⁵⁶ In dendrochronological studies, the age of cut wood was set at 940. Is it possible to talk about the first temple, which was built on the occasion of Dobrava's arrival in the mansion of Mieszko? Would it be a church erected before his baptism?

Marian Sokołowski wrote about Lednica as an important prince's castle, presenting the foundations of the temple.⁵⁷ Archaeological excavations revealed the enormous scope of the works making the island a fortified castle with stone structures: a ducal palace, a chapel and a baptistry with two baptismal basins. Research conducted by art historians: Klementyna Żurowska and Teresa Rodzińska-Choraży confirmed that the Lednica castle was a huge construction site in 963-965. However, it is currently difficult to say whether this was the preparation of a place worth of a prince for his baptism, or rather a building, which Christian prince had already commissioned for the baptism of the nobility and his subjects.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ After the fire in 1018, the construction of a three-nave basilica, destroyed during the invasion of the Czechs and rebuilt before 1064, began. The cathedral survived until the first half of the 14th century, when the construction of the Gothic cathedral began.

⁵⁶ This research was confirmed in 2012. See H. KÓČKA-KRENZ, *Badania zespołu pałacowo-sakralnego*, pp. 69-74; IDEM, *Zespół pałacowo-sakralny*, pp. 287-296; IDEM, *Początki monumentalnej architektury świeckiej*, pp. 21-38.

⁵⁷ M. SOKOŁOWSKI, *Ruiny na Ostrowie jeziora Lednicy. Studium nad budownictwem w przedchrześcijańskich i pierwszych chrześcijańskich wiekach w Polsce*, "Pamiętnik Akademii Umiejętności w Krakowie" 3(1876), pp. 117-277.

⁵⁸ On the occasion of the 1050th anniversary of the baptism of Mieszko, the Polish Television showed a film directed by Zdzisław Cozac entitled *Korona i Krzyż*. Teresa Rodzińska-Choraży wrote about Lednica as the "highly probable" place of the baptism of Mieszko; cf. IDEM, *Baptysterium*, [in:] *U progu chrześcijaństwa w Polsce*, pp. 15-32; K. ŻUROWSKA, T. RODZIŃSKA-CHORAŻY, *Ostrów Lednicki – czyli dla kogo zagadka?*, 'Kwartalnik Historyczny' 104(1997), no. 2, pp. 89-101; T. RODZIŃSKA-CHORAŻY, *Zespoły rezydencjonalne i kościoły centralne na ziemiach polskich do połowy XII wieku*, Cracow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2009, p. 302. A similar opinion is shared by Przemysław Terlecki, who coordinates the celebrations of the 1050th anniversary of the Baptism of Poland.

In turn, Jan Długosz argued in favor of Gniezno.⁵⁹ Historians used to believe that about 900, the Gniezno castle played the important role of a pagan cult center. These views seemed to confirm archaeological research, based on traditional research methods, which proved that the settlement of the castle complex in Gniezno started in the 8th century. Józef Kostrzewski, a pre-war historian, wrote about this. After the war, Kazimierz Żurowski, dug up to the undisturbed soil on the Lech Hill, as part of the Millennium Program, and based on archaeological material said that the origins of the castle in Gniezno go back to the 8th century.⁶⁰ Zofia Kurnatowska claimed that perhaps the Gniezno castle would be old, but the foundations of the Piast castle should be dated only around 940, and the foundations of the church should be dated prior to 966.⁶¹ Likewise, Przemysław Urbańczyk questioned the concept of Gniezno as the place where Mieszko was baptized.⁶²

Another difficulty is to determine the baptismal name of Mieszko. It was attempted to translate Mieszko as Michał, or even as a diminutive form of the Messiah. Alfons Parczewski's hypothesis on the Iro-Scottish origins of the name Dagobert is today widely rejected.⁶³ According to Henryk Łowmiański, the name Dagobert does not point to any origin from the world of Vikings, but from Leodium, where the saint's cult was very popular. Łowmiański also believes that Mieszko could have obtained the name of Otto I's brother-in-law, and possibly the godfather of Mieszko – Tugumir.⁶⁴ Stanisław Kętrzyński suggests Leodium, saying that Mieszko accepted the name Lambert at his baptism. This name was borne by as many as five descendants of Mieszko until the end of the 11th century, and the cult of the saint was brought to Poland by monks, probably headed by Jordan.

⁵⁹ *Jana Długosza Roczniki*, book II, p. 242.

⁶⁰ K. ŻUROWSKI, *Konstrukcje obronne wczesnośredniowiecznego Gniezna*, "Archeologia Polski" 1(1957), pp. 197-201.

⁶¹ Cf. T. JASIŃSKI, *Początki Polski w nowym świetle*, pp. 12-14.

⁶² Cf. P. URBAŃCZYK, *Czy Gniezno było pierwszą stolicą państwa wczesnopiastowskiego?*, [in:] *Studia nad dawną Polską*, ed. T. Sawicki, vol. II, Gniezno: Muzeum Początków Państwa Polskiego 2009, pp. 17-25; IDEM, *Zjazd Gnieźnieński w polityce imperialnej Ottona III*, [in:] *Trakt cesarski Itawa–Gniezno–Magdeburg*, ed. W. Dzieduszycki, M. Przybył, Poznań: Archaeological Museum in Poznań, 2002, pp. 49-87; IDEM, *Zanim Polska została Polską*, Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, Toruń 2015, pp. 221-243.

⁶³ L. KOCZY, *Chrzest Polski*, p. 43.

⁶⁴ See H. ŁOWMIAŃSKI, *Imię chrzestne Mieszka I*, pp. 288-293; A. POBÓG-LENARTOWICZ, *Imię chrzestne Mieszka I. O próbie nowego spojrzenia na genezę Chrztu Polski*, [in:] *Rola chrystianizacji w kształtowaniu się państwowości polskiej*, ed. B. Cioch, Opole: "Sowa." Polish Historical Society (Branch Office in w Opole), Opole 1996, pp. 9-19.

7. THE PROCESS OF BAPTISM FOR THE POLANS

From the beginning of the 20th century, historians have assumed that the Christianization was carried out by the Czechia through the Empire. The direction of the Christianization of the Polans has been determined basically by the historical concept that provided the information on the place of Mieszko's baptism and the person who baptized Mieszko. Historians only agree on the order of baptism which was as follows: the baptism of Mieszko, the baptism of his closest advisors, and the baptism of his subjects.

Tadeusz Wojciechowski suggests that the Christianization action was held by the monks from New Corvey, and Władysław Abraham points to Fulda.⁶⁵ The Piasts, exercising their power, could be aware of the teaching of the Church about the divine origin of power. Thus, through the empire, and not against it, they initiated contacts with Rome. The protection of the pope was rather religious than political, which motivated the ruler and his subjects to further consolidate the Lechite tribes. The culmination of these efforts was the royal coronation. It is known that Bolesław Chrobry got the support of Emperor Otto III during the Gniezno congress. The mention of the *Hungarian-Polish Chronicle* about the alleged efforts of the Piasts to get the support of Pope Leo VIII (963-965) can be regarded as a trace of the Polish mission to Rome. Obviously, its goal would be to obtain a mission for the Polans, not yet a crown for the still pagan prince. Over the years, the above text has been considered to be more about the activity of Bolesław Chrobry about 1000. However, it may prove the presence of Polish missionaries in Rome, and Poland could have been represented by the Bohemian princess Mlada (sister of Dobrava). As a result, in 968 Jordan was appointed the first bishop of Poland by Pope John XIII (965-972).⁶⁶

Piotr Bogdanowicz goes even further by claiming that Mieszko initiated efforts in Rome, which resulted in sending there a group of missionaries headed by Bishop Unger. Bogdanowicz's argument was based on the conviction that: "the duke of Poland Mieszko I was so important that he had to be baptized by a bishop."⁶⁷ Other hypotheses were rejected, for example Alfons Parczewski's concept that Poland would be Christian (moreover, in the Latin rite) long before the baptism of Mieszko, and the missionaries

⁶⁵ W. ABRAHAM, *Organizacja Kościoła w Polsce*, pp. 17-28; cf. T. WOJCIECHOWSKI, *O rocznikach polskich X-XV w.*, "Pamiętnik Akademii Umiejętności w Krakowie" 4(1880), pp. 207-208.

⁶⁶ Z. SUŁOWSKI, *Chrzest Polski* (Scientific Journals of Catholic University of Lublin), p. 25.

⁶⁷ P. BOGDANOWICZ, *Chrzest Polski*, p. 52.

would be monks from Ireland. His adversaries question as there is no Iro-Scottish word in the liturgy, while there are many Czech words, or words with the same Slavic origin.⁶⁸

8. THE EFFECTS OF BAPTISM

One must agree with the historians' old opinions that the baptism of Poland was understood mainly as the baptism of Mieszko. As Kamil Kantak writes: "It is not known whether, by accepting Christianity, Mieszko was aware of all the importance and consequences of the far-reaching step he had made. Probably one should assume that whoever instructed him about the new faith, bishop Jordan [...] or the Czech priest Bohowid, or Dobrava, instilled in him the conviction that the eternal salvation of the ruler and all his subjects depends on baptism."⁶⁹ Although the religious element eludes scientific assessments, it is beyond any doubt that, according to what has already been noted, the objective and effect of baptism must be considered superior and have been present in the chronicles from the very beginning. Mieszko built Christian temples – of wood and of stone – in major cities. Hence, he started the process of Polish Christianisation.⁷⁰ These churches could not be a manifestation of the divine mandate of the ruler's authority, because he still had to reckon with the nobility. He could, however, guide his subjects in their beliefs to the new religion and its eschatic purposes – eternal life. Having experienced the light of faith, he shared his message. From the middle of the 20th century, the view has been spread that the baptism of Mieszko was also the baptism of Poland.⁷¹ The process of Christianisation of Poland was, however, long-lasting and lasted for at least two centuries. Thietmar wrote that bishop Jordan "laboured much with them, while he diligently invited them by word and deed to the cultivation of the heavenly vineyard."⁷² The process of Christianization was gradual and at first rather peaceful. During the reign of Bolesław Chrobry, it grew in strength, and the neophytes breaking the rules were severely punished. In the 12th century, there were

⁶⁸ K. KANTAK, *Dzieje Kościoła polskiego*, pp. 53-54; cf. A. PARCZEWSKI, *Początki chrześcijaństwa w Polsce i misja irlandzka*, "Roczniki Towarzystwa Nauk Poznańskiego" 29(1902), p. 247.

⁶⁹ K. KANTAK, *Dzieje Kościoła polskiego*, p. 37.

⁷⁰ As showed by Przemysław Urbańczyk in the film *Korona i Krzyż* (dir. Z. Cozac, TVP 2016).

⁷¹ Cf. A. GÓRECKI, *Początek państwa polskiego*, pp. 60-63.

⁷² *Kronika biskupa merseburskiego Thietmara*, pp. 218-219.

still the cremation graves in Poland, which were equipped with weapons, vessels and coins according to a pagan custom.⁷³

Except for religious and social purposes, there was also a political purpose of the issue. Mieszko, being baptized, broke the Czech-Veleti alliance, and then, using the help of the Czechs, defeated Wichman and the Woli-nians, one of the pillars of the Veleti Union. In this way, he warded off the threat from the North-West, which could have turned into a disaster for the new state. The continuation of the alliance with the emperor resulted in obtaining an independent bishopric in 968. This put the Polish state in a completely different position than the Czechia which was subordinated to Germany. Mieszko skillfully used alliances. When the Czechs came into a long-lasting conflict with the Germans and again formed an alliance with the Veleti, Mieszko supported the empress Theophano and her underaged son. Thanks to this alliance, around 990, he mastered Silesia, and probably also Lesser Poland, which ultimately ended the process of building the Polish state.⁷⁴ Mieszko easily established contacts with Christian Europe, and Widukind describes him as a “friend of the emperor.”⁷⁵ It must be admitted that Mieszko was able to overcome all the adverse effects of the relationship with the emperor, deftly entering into alliances with his vassals and consolidating and enlarging the territory of his country at their expense.⁷⁶

According to Zygmunt Sułowski, the religious sanction of the monarch’s power was less important. The possibility of establishing contacts with European countries on an equal footing was of fundamental importance. In addition, the baptism of Mieszko opened the way to the current achievements of Mediterranean culture – ideological, organizational, technical or artistic – for Poland.⁷⁷ In my opinion, this is too far-reaching simplification. It also

⁷³ J. KOSTRZEWSKI, *Wpływ chrześcijaństwa na obyczaje oraz kulturę materialną i duchową w Polsce średniowiecznej*, [in:] *Księga tysiąclecia katolicyzmu w Polsce*, ed. P. Kałwa, Cz. Strzeszewski, vol. III, Lublin: Learned Society of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, 1969, pp. 97-98; cf. W. DZIEWULSKI, *Postępy chrystianizacji i proces likwidacji pogaństwa w Polsce wczesnofeudalnej*, Wrocław: Ossolineum Publishing House, 1964.

⁷⁴ T. JASIŃSKI, *Początki Polski w nowym świetle*, p. 18.

⁷⁵ *Widukindi Res gestae saxonicae*, p. 69.

⁷⁶ L. KOCZY, *Chrzest Polski*, p. 30. In *Korona i Krzyż*, Jerzy Strzelczyk comments on this fact as: “unimaginable political success.” He also points to the sword of St. Peter which is the oldest relic of Christianity in Poland. Similarly, Tomasz Jasiński states that “Mieszko was the most eminent ruler of the nascent Poland. He created Poland.” Cf. *Korona i Krzyż*, Z. Cozac (dir.), TVP 2016.

⁷⁷ Z. SUŁOWSKI, *Początki Kościoła polskiego*, p. 52. His opinion was confirmed by Dariusz Sikorski.

seems that Mieszko could not have anticipated the consequences of baptism for the next generations. "It is highly questionable whether there was anyone who drew Mieszko's attention to the historical turning point which was accepting a new faith," wrote Kamil Kantak.⁷⁸ What counted for his power and state was "here and now", the personal opening of the heart to God and the promise of eternal life that he expected.

CONCLUSION

It is generally accepted today that the baptism of Mieszko, that was performed most probably in 966 on the territory of *Civitas Schinesghe*, was rather the result of the first stage of the Christianisation of Poland than the beginning of the whole process.⁷⁹ So far, there is no spectacular evidence in archaeological finds that could confirm the presence of missionaries or messengers who were described in the chronicles, or at least missionaries in Dobrava's retinue. It is still difficult to say whether Mieszko's decision was influenced by Dobrava's persuasions, political motives, or the desire to get the help of the Czechs in the fight against the Veleti. Reading the sources and studies still does not provide a definite solution. Undoubtedly, we are confronted once again with two important hypotheses, none of which has claim of being the only true one. First, one should once again, following the medieval chronicles, point to Mieszko's personal decision of baptism and its religious motives. Second, Mieszko wanted to join the group of Otto I's allies in accordance with the principle that "the enemy of my enemy is my ally" rather than to protect himself against Ottos' aggression. The decision of Mieszko was of great importance, for it protected Poland from sharing the fate of the neighboring West Slavic tribes. In addition, the adoption of Christianity by Poland caused a profound breakthrough in its history, affecting strongly its customs and material and spiritual culture.⁸⁰ The baptism of Mieszko made it possible for Poland to enter the circle of religious, cultural and political-legal influence of the group of countries associated with Rome, being the Christian community in Europe, and the future legacy of

⁷⁸ K. KANTAK, *Dzieje Kościoła polskiego*, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Cf. M. BANASZAK, *Historia Kościoła katolickiego*, Warsaw Academy of Catholic Theology Press, 1989, pp. 85-86.

⁸⁰ J. KOSTRZEWSKI, *Wpływ chrześcijaństwa*, p. 97.

modern Europe.⁸¹ John Paul II wrote about the baptism of Mieszko: “The event [it] was decisive for the creation of the nation and the formation of its Christian identity. In this sense, the baptism date of Mieszko is a breakthrough date. Poland as a nation came out of its own historical prehistory, and it began to exist historically.”⁸²

Finally, we should provide a commentary on the value of archaeological finds, because: “where the letters are silent, the stones speak.” At the end of the 1960s, Zygmunt Sułowski wrote: “Giving hope to archaeological finds can only be limited to economic and social issues. Political history must be based on written sources.”⁸³ There is still a need to study the sources, which can answer many questions and point to the evolution of thought currents in the subsequent writings of historians. It seems that we still value archaeological discoveries too little. But can we trust them, since science does not stop there? New research techniques will certainly verify many more hypotheses and inspire new ones.

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⁸¹ W. SAWICKI, *Udział Kościoła w organizacji i administracji państwa polskiego do rozbiorów*, [in:] *Księga tysiąclecia katolicyzmu w Polsce*, p. 175.

⁸² JOHN PAUL II, *Pamięć i tożsamość: rozmowy na przełomie tysiącleci*, Cracow: “Znak” Publishing House, 2005, p. 33.

⁸³ Z. SUŁOWSKI, *Chrzest Polski* (Scientific Journals of Catholic University of Lublin), p. 18.

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