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East-Central European Monasticism: Between East and West?

Emilia Jamroziak

The history of monasticism in the core areas of East-Central Europe, cannot be properly considered without adopting a broader historiographical approach to this part of the continent. The medieval kingdoms and duchies that are the precursors of the modern political entities of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary do not reflect their medieval territories. Medieval Hungary included also Slovakia, Transylvania, Vojvodina, eastern Slavonia, and from the early twelfth century, the Kingdom of Croatia under the personal union of Arpad kings. Early medieval Polish territory included Greater and Lesser Poland, Mazovia, Lower Silesia, and from the mid-twelfth century some overlordship over parts of Pomerania. The territory of the early medieval Bohemia also included Moravia.

In the most basic terms, the European monastic landscape has traditionally been described in terms of core and periphery. According to this interpretative approach, the later formation of ecclesiastical structures in the peripheral part of Europe meant that monasticism in these areas was always merely a copy of the models developed in the core of Western Europe. Jerzy Kłoczowski championed a more sophisticated version of this concept, evoking a 'Younger Europe', which includes the 'new Christian' territories of East-Central Europe and Scandinavia. Many Western European phenomena arrived there after a long delay, and although modelled on the structures and ideas developed in the West, often appeared in a simpler or otherwise altered version. Kłoczowski sees the thirteenth century as the turning point in the occidentalising of the regions of 'new Christendom', and religious communities played a significant role in this process.[1] Jenő Szőcs offers another interpretative model,

[1] Kłoczowski (2003), 72-82.

evoking "Three Europes". Here, East-Central areas comprise what he called a "third Europe," which while distinct, shared some features of the "first" (the West), and the "second Europe" (the Byzantine world). Szőcs's terminology was not intended to evoke value judgments, but rather to provide a more holistic explanation of medieval Europe's economic and political development in order to avoid simplistic dichotomy and to show how this medieval phase shaped the later history of the entire continent. This interpretation also provides an alternative to sharply binary images of "the East" and "the West" -- creating a very distinct region "in between" both -- important in the political context of the formulation of Szőcs's theory. This model can be also used to elucidate aspects of church organisation and of religious culture in East-Central Europe and in the West that are both similar and different, and as such is still valuable.[2]

Unfortunately, despite the existence of these models, in practice, much of the East-Central European scholarship has suffered from an exceptionalism complex -- the notion that the history of this part of Europe is unique and can neither be compared with the West nor explained by the historiographical models developed elsewhere. With few notable exceptions, there is still relatively little research on the monastic and medieval religious history of this part of the continent in the Anglophone world.[3] All of this has tended to prevent wider dialogue. If comparisons are made, the outdated interpretive models are too frequently relegated to the area less known to the author and are thus rather unhelpfully given a new lease on life. Additionally, much of the debate in the region, especially surrounding the early

[2] Jenő Szűcs, *Les trois Europes*, trans. V. Charaire, G. Klaniczay and P. Thureau-Dangin (Paris, 1985). Hungarian edition in 1982.

[3] Notable exceptions include Gábor Klaniczay, József Laszlovszky, Nora Berend, Piotr Górecki and Paul Milliman.

stages of monasticism in the East-Central Europe, has focused on the factual issues -- the dating of specific documents, locations of events and so on -- based on evidence that is so fragmentary that definitive conclusions can never be reached.

The arrival of monasticism into East-Central Europe was an integral part of Christianisation according to the Latin rite in the late tenth and early eleventh century. Bohemian and Hungarian rulers established monasteries at the time of their own conversion, and the first religious houses appeared in Poland somewhat later, following a pattern very similar to that in East Francia and Denmark.[4] In all three cases, however, Christians, including missionary monks, were present long before the first monasteries were founded.[5] Further south, other Slavs -- Bulgarians, Serbs, Croats and Dalmatians -- were either subject to Byzantine influences or the Latin tradition or both, the Croats and Dalmatians since the eighth and ninth century. Although missionaries associated with the monks Cyril and Methodius had already implemented Slavonic observance in Bohemia and Moravia in the ninth century with probable use of Slavonic liturgy, later Latin missions from the Carolingian Empire and Rome subjugated this cultural influence from the Byzantine world.[6] This does not mean, however, that Slavonic influence should be ignored, even though the source-evidence is perilously thin. Moreover, any discussions of the Byzantine or Latin historical roots of East-Central Europe have been deeply politicised since the nineteenth century. Any claims for the particular importance of either Orthodox or Latin influence have also been statements about contemporary political and cultural alliances. Since the second half of the twentieth century, scholars have generally emphasized the Latin identity of Poland, Bohemia and

[4] See the article by Raajimakers in this volume.

[5] Berend, Urbańczyk, and Wiszewski (2013), 349.

[6] Kłoczowski (2003), 36.

Hungary, so that the connections to the Byzantine world are seen now as marginal. Much of the earlier evidence for the importance of eastern influences in Bohemia, Moravia and Poland, introduced by nineteenth-century archaeologists, is now mostly discredited, while more recent scholarship on the Slavonic texts from the region tends to focus on the historical linguistics without making any wider claims. Nevertheless, there is evidence for non-Latin monastic institutions in Bohemia and Hungary, as will be discussed below.

Even before the establishment of the first monasteries in East-Central Europe, the monks there already played an important role. Some of the first bishops and martyrs of the region were missionary monks. Missionary bishop Unger of Poznań (consecrated in 982/3) was a monk who had served as abbot of Memleben, a foundation of Otto II and his wife Theophanu, in Thuringia. The first communities of monks were probably associated in the earliest period with these missionary bishops, assisting them and training priests from within the local community.[7] This is exemplified by Maurice, the first bishop in Hungary to be recruited locally, who was consecrated in 1036 after studying in a monastic school, possibly at Pannonhalma Abbey

The first regular monastic communities were a result of the arrival of foreign missionaries, and increasingly, the participation of local newcomers. Even very radical ideas such as eremitism were successfully planted and soon began to flourish locally.[8] Two monks from Pereum near Ravenna, Benedict and John, arrived in Poland in 1001 and were joined there by three Polish recruits, Isaac, Matthew and cook Christianus. The invitation came from the Polish duke, but the choice of Ravenna as the origin of the first monks is often attributed to the influence of Emperor Otto III who had visited Gniezno the year before. They settled in

[7] See also the article by Raajimakers in this volume.

[8] Miladinov (2008), 18.

a hermitage that Duke Bolesław Chrobry granted to them in a location sometimes identified as Miedzyrzecz (an identification that is much disputed). They were all killed by robbers in November 1003 and subsequently venerated as martyrs.[9] The hagiography of these Five Brothers was written by another monk-missionary, Bruno-Boniface, whose fieldwork included Magyar tribes around the Black Sea, non-Christians in Sweden and finally Poland, where he also wrote the Life of St Vojtěch /Wojciech discussed below. He himself was eventually martyred during his mission to the north-east of Poland.[10]

By the mid-eleventh century, the earliest monasteries in Poland emerged from individual monks or semi-formal groups. Typically, the first monasteries in the region followed the Benedictine Rule *(RB)* and were royal and ducal foundations, routinely established in close proximity to the founders' stronghold. The archaeological evidence, however, is tenuous, best documented in Kraków, where such men might have served in the oldest church of St Gereon. Tyniec Abbey (c. 1044) was founded by Duke Kazimierz the Restorer (1016-1058) and his son Duke Bolesław the Generous (*c.*1042-1081/1082) near the ducal residence in Kraków. The first abbot, Aaron, went on to become bishop of Kraków. Mogilno (c. 1060) and Lubiń (c. 1076), founded by Bolesław the Generous, were similarly positioned.[11] In Bohemia all early Benedictine foundations were established within the Přemyslid dynasty's domain on lands directly controlled by the ruling family and supported by incomes from the monarchs' revenue.[12] Many early monasteries were located on older

[9] Józef Dobosz, *Monarchia i możni wobec Kościoła w Polsce do początku XIII wieku* (Poznań, 2002), 79-84; Miladinov (2008), 94-114

[10] Kłoczowski (2000), 14.

[11] Berend, Urbańczyk, and Wiszewski (2013), 123.

[12] Sommer (1994), 206-211.

strongholds – Ostrov (1000), Hradiště outside Olomous (1070s), Rajhrad (mod-11th c.) and Postoloprty 1110s).[13]

King Stephen I of Hungary founded monasteries following the *RB* in Pécsvárad, Zalavár (on the site of an older stronghold), Bakonybél, Somlóvárhely and Zobor.[14]

The involvment of royal and ducal families in the region was not restricted to the roles of founder and benefactor. Members of the newly Christianised dynasties themselves entered these communities. The Bohemian princess Mlada-Maria, daughter of Boleslav I the Cruel (after 935–967/972), founded the women's monastery of St George in Prague and became its first abbess. Her sister, Dobrava, was the wife of the first Christian ruler of Poland, and their brother, Strahkvas-Christian, was a monk at St Emmeram in Regensburg, an abbey that produced a number of monk-missionaries sent to Slavic lands. The female community St George in Prague became very much a family foundation and in the later centuries continued to be ruled by abbesses from the Přemyslid dynasty.[15]

Such a close connection is inseparable from the key commemorative functions played by these foundations.[16] Their relationships with the founders and their descendants are documented by surviving *libri vitae*, such as that from Lubiń Abbey in western Poland, the

[13] Lisa Wolverton, *Hastening Towards Prague: Power and Society in the Medieval Czech Lands* (Philadelphia, 2001), 32, 116, and 123.

[14] Nora Berend, József Laszlovszky and Béla Zsolt Szakács, "The Kingdom of Hungary," in Berend (2007), 352; Berend, Urbańczyk, and Wiszewski (2013), 107

[15] Kłoczowski (2000), 10; Petr Sommer, Dušan Třeštík and Josef Žemlička, "Bohemia and Moravia," in Berend (2007), 238.

[16] See also the articles by Blennemann and Lyon in this volume.

burial site of several Piast dukes in the twelfth and thirteenth century.[17] The royal and ducal foundations in East-Central Europe thus followed the Ottonian model of a proprietary church in which monasteries served as necropolises for kin and the monks were intercessors for the fate of the benefactors' souls in the afterlife. The monasteries themselves were closely dependent on and controlled by the kin-group from which the founder came.

This close proprietary relationship between monasteries and their patrons was not only present in the early stages of their history, but continued for centuries. This was made manifest in the treating of monasteries as economic assets and their use as regular stop-over points on the itineraries of the monarchs. The latter phenomenon is particularly striking in the relationship of Czech Přemyslid rulers to various monasteries in the thirteenth century. The monasteries of Plasy (Cistercian men), Klaudruby (black monks), Tepla (Premonstratensian men), and Chotešov (Premonstratensian women) were frequently on the itinerary of King Václav I of Bohemia. Moreover, some Cistercian monasteries in Bohemia were located very close to royal hunting reserves -- such was the case for Plasy (already mentioned) and Aula Regis, founded by King Přemysl Otakar II in 1268 on the site of fortified hunting lodge.[18]

By the first decades of the twelfth century, the Piast, Přemyslid and Arpad monarchs were not the only founders and benefactors of monastic institutions. Increasingly, lay

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[17] *Księga Bracka i Nekrolog opactwa Panny Marii w Lubiniu (Liber fraternitatis et Liber mortuorum abbatiae Sanctae Mariae Lubinensis)*, ed. Zdzisław Perzanowski (Warszawa 1976); Zofia Kurnatowska, "Opactwo Benedyktynów Lubiniu i jego rola w życiu kulturalnym i społecznym we wczesnym średniowieczu," *Zeszyty Lubińskie. Numer Specjalny* 6 (1997).

[18] Marcin R. Pauk, "Klasztor jako zaplecze ekonomiczne władzy królewskiej w państwie ostatnich Przemyślidów," in Derwich and Pobóg-Lenartowicz (2005), 227-231.

magnates, male and female, also became involved in this process.[19] By the late eleventh or early twelfth century, Sieciech, who was the count palatine of the Polish Duke Władysław Herman, together with his kin, founded a large male monastery on his estates in Sieciechowo.[20] Piotr Włostowic, count of Silesia, was a prolific founder of churches and monasteries, including an abbey of black monks in Ołbin on the edge of Wrocław, in 1120s (later to become a Premonstratensian house at the behest of its patrons).[21] He was probably supported in his endeavours by his wife, as illustrated by a reference on the tympanum of another regular canons' church in Wrocław-Piasek founded by the family. A stone inscription explains that Maria made the donation together with her son Świętosław.[22] Jaksa, who married Piotr's and Maria's daughter Agafia, founded the Holy Sepulchre monastery in Miechowo for the regular canons of the Holy Sepulchre. The choice of order was not accidental as it was made following Jaksa's pilgrimage in 1162 to the Holy Land, which was recorded in several contemporary chronicles.[23] There is further evidence that in the generation of the grandchildren of Piotr Włostowic and Maria, the tradition of generous benefaction to the family's foundations continued.

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[19] Dobosz, *Monarchia i możni*, 250-51; Sommer, Třeštík, and Žemlička, "Bohemia and Moravia," 247.

[20] Dobosz, *Monarchia i możni*, 260.

[21] Derwich (1998), 194.

[22] Kazimierz Ciechanowski, *Epigrafika romańska i wczesnognogotycka w Polsce* (Wrocław, 1965), 22; Emanuel S. Klinkenberg, *Compressed Meanings: the Donor's Model in Medieval Art to around 1300* (Turnhout, 2009), 191.

[23] Dobosz, *Monarchia i możni*, 371-2.

Similarly, the first male Premonstratensian and Cistercian houses in Bohemia were founded by magnates: Hroznata the Bold was the founder of Teplá (1197) and, upon his return from crusade, Chotěšov (1220-10); Miroslav, "one of the leading men of Bohemia"[24], with support of Bishop Jindřich Zdík of Olomouc, founded Cistercian Sedlec Abbey (1142-3); Osek Abbey (1197-9) was founded by Slavek of the Hrabišice family. In Moravia, Vladislav Jindřich established the Cistercian abbey in Veligrad in the 1140s.[25] It is not an accident that the oldest surviving charter issued by a non-royal layperson in Polish territory recorded a donation to the canons of Czerwińsk (1130-1155).[26]

Premonstratensian canonesses also benefited from this interest in new monasticism and were supported by powerful patrons and benefactors whose female relatives inhabited these communities: in Bohemia, in Louňovice pod Blaníem (1149) and Dolní Kounice (1181), in Moravia, in Nová Říše (1211) and in Poland, in Kraków-Salwator (after 1165, but the chronology is much disputed), Strzelno (1193), Żukowo (1212), and Imbramowice (1223).

As with the princely foundations, some of the relationships between monasteries and the kin-group of the patrons were very long lasting. This can be illustrated by the example of

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[24] *Codex Diplomaticus et Epistolaris Regni Bohemiae*, ed. Gustav Friedrich (Prague, 1907), vol. 1, no 155; Wolverton, *Hastening Towards Prague*, 51.

[25] Sommer, Třeštík and Žemlička, "Bohemia and Moravia," 247; Wolverton, *Hastening Towards Prague*, 47 and 117.

[26] Anna Adamska, "'From Memory to Written Record' in the Periphery of Medieval Latinitas: the Case of Poland in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Charters and the Use of Written Word in Medieval Society*, ed. Karl Heidecker (Turnhout, 2000), 88; *Repertorium polskich dokumentów doby piastowskiej* (Kraków, 1937), no. 56.

the monastery of Zselicszentjakab, founded in 1061 by Otto, count palatine of King Salomon of Hungary. Zselicszentjakab remained under the patronage of his descendants, the Győr kindred, until the fifteenth century. The scale of material support offered by the powerful magnate founders is clearly visible in the size and grandeur of the Romanesque monastic churches in Lébény or Ják. Some founders were also commemorated on the tympana as the Silesian case exemplifies.[27]

The foundations of these magnates were part of a distinct second wave of monastic foundations that came with the emergence of Cistercian houses in East-Central Europe beginning in the 1140s. The spread of these new monasteries manifests the further densification of the monastic network as well as the existence of strong connections to the Church in other parts of Europe. The appearance of Cistercian houses with ties of filiation beyond the region provided also an important new channel of transmission of ideas, knowledge, and manuscripts.[28] The connection of the Přemyslids and the Piasts to the Babenberg family was one of the routes through which inspiration for Cistercian foundations might have travelled. The Babenberg Margrave Leopold III and his wife Sophia founded the Cistercian abbey of Stična (Sittich) in the territory of modern-day Slovenia. The margrave was also behind the foundation of Heiligenkreuz Abbey (1135/6) in Austria, one of the key Cistercian centres in Central Europe. Two of the daughters of Leopold III married Přemyslid and Piast rulers; Agnes was the wife Władysław II the Exiled, Duke of Poland, and Gertrud married Vladislav II, Duke and King of Bohemia. They thus brought with them connections to the growing Cistercian network. In Polish territories, the oldest houses were Jędrzejów (1149) in Little Poland and Łekno (1153) in Greater Poland, which became mother houses at

[27] Engel (2001), 87 and 92.

[28] See the article by Röckelein in this volume.

the centre of large regional networks. Sedlec (1142/45) in Bohemia and Cikádor (1142) in the Kingdom of Hungary became regionally important institutions. Cikádor was a royal foundation of the King Géza II and a daughter house of Heiligenkreuz, but it never established any further daughter houses. The second wave of Cistercian foundations in Hungary was also linked to the influence of the royal court and new direction of cultural influences at the court linked to the marriage of Béla III (1172-1196) to French princesses: Agnes of Antioch and then Margaret, the sister of King Philip Augustus of France.[29]

Cistercian monasteries were attractive to founders, not because of allegedly better economic practices or the technological superiority of their agriculture as traditionally argued in the literature, but because of the cultural capital that the monks brought with them.[30] The nationalist historiography of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century advanced the idea that Cistercians, as proponents of economic and technological changes in the 'backward' East, were also emissaries of a superior German culture. The new wave of economic history in the 1960s-70s readily attributed an economic rationale to the white monks and presented them as proto-capitalist entrepreneurs.[31] The cultural capital attractive to both the local church and the lay elites -- the knowledge that new communities brought with them, manuscripts, skills, new liturgical practices, the designs of their precinct and churches, and ideas about the role of the monks within the church and society -- were crucial for the place that these communities secured in the new host areas.

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[29] Romhányi (1995).

[30] See the article by Berman in this volume.

[31] Jamroziak (2011), and Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe 1090-1500* (London, 2013).

The economic role of Cistercian houses in different localities was undoubtedly significant, but one should be wary of oversimplifications and of projecting the Western Cistercian economic model on these regions. The Cistercians' successful economic endeavours, their estates and granges, often followed much more mixed patterns than white monks' monasteries in Western Europe. For example, Cistercian houses in Bohemia operated a grange system with manorial elements; while lay brothers had a largely managerial role (often with specialization in livestock or in a particular aspect of agriculture such as viniculture), they also supervised various types of labourers, including serfs. Many granges produced both for the market as well as for internal monastic consumption, and storage facilities within the granges held not only the produce of the farms, but taxes paid in kind by the serfs.[32] In Pomerania, Cistercian houses were often very large and powerful landowners economically dominating their neighbours.[33] In sparsely populated areas, including, for example, the frontier between Silesia and the Duchy of Greater Poland, colonization was carried out according to the *ius Tutonicum* -- "German law," used in the areas of migration in East -Central Europe -- which encouraged settlement. But the white monks were far from the only landowners involved in attracting settlers. Only eleven percent of all colonized land was in the hands of Cistercian communities.[34] Among the Cistercian abbeys in Bohemia, only

[32] Kateřina Charvátowa, "Manorial farms of Cistercian abbeys of mediaeval Bohemia," in *Historia i kultura cystersów w dawnej Polsce i ich europejskie związki*, ed. Jerzy Strzelczyk (Poznań, 1987), 127-135.

[33] Krzysztof Guzikowski, *Procesy kolonizacyjne w posiadłościach cystersów z Kołbacza w XII–XIV wieku. Przestrzeń i ludzie* (Szczecin, 2014).

[34] Wyrwa Dobosz, "Działalność gospodarcza cystersów", 206.

Zlatá Koruna Abbey was involved in the large-scale colonization of its estates.[35] Without denying the importance of Cistercians houses in the regional economy, neither their arrival in East-Central Europe nor the support they received from the local elites was linked to their technological and economical skills. It was rather their religious role as intercessors that appealed to their new founders and benefactors.

The Cistercians offered the promise of effective intercession and the opportunity to engage in the highly prestigious act of becoming a founder -- by this stage a well-established phenomenon in East-Central Europe. It was easier to found a reformed community as it required smaller resources than a Benedictine foundation. The large Benedictine foundations already in existence had been part of the landscape for over a century. The Cistercian monasteries emphasised strictness of observance and exclusivity in admitting lay people into monastic spaces thus making their foundations appear to wield special intercessory powers. The founders were also attracted to their trans-European connections, support by the local episcopate, and royal and ducal backing. Of course the white monks offered what the new founders and benefactors wanted from any monastic institutions and developed fruitful relationships with them. Many Cistercian houses in the region also became dynastic necropolises, places of commemoration, and important locations on the monarchs' itineraries. These functions, akin to that of the 'Hauskloster' (a proprietary monastery), and especially the role of family mausoleum, have been associated partly with the tradition passed down from the Babenbergs and the desire, not just for effective intercession for the afterlife, but

[35] Katerina Charvátová, "Mindful of Reality, Faithful to Traditions. Development of Bohemian Possessions of the Cistercian Order from the Twelfth to the Thirteenth Centuries," in *L'espace cistercien*, ed. Léon Pressouyre (Paris, 1994), 181.

also for prayers for effective political and military endeavours.[36] The Cistercian communities in East-Central Europe are the best examples of the adaptability of the Cistercian model to different local environments while retaining the core of their identity: their observance.[37]

Importantly, some Cistercians were also missionaries on the very frontiers of East-Central Europe. They were present along the Baltic from Mecklenburg to Riga, and possibly took part in the missions to Ruthenia to convert the Orthodox population in the 1140s.[38] It seems, however, that the prospective mission of the white monks never moved beyond the planning stages, in which Bernard of Clairvaux and Bishop Matthew of Kraków were involved.[39] Christian (d. 1245), a Cistercian monk from Kołbacz Abbey and later abbot of Oliva Abbey, became a missionary bishop in Prussia. After clashing with the Teutonic Knights over the issue of authority, he ended up imprisoned by pagan Sambians for five

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[36] Jerzy Kłoczowski, "Cystersi w Europe Środkowowschodniej wieków średnich," in Wyrwa and Dobosz (2000), 32-33; Brygida Kürbis, "Cystersi w kulturze polskiego średiowiecza. Trzy świadectwa z XII wieku," in *Historia i kultura cystersów w dawnej Polsce i ich europejskie związki*, ed. Jerzy Strzelczyk (Poznań, 1987), 338.

[37] On relationships between monastic houses and the laity, see the article by Lyon in this volume.

[38] For a discussion of monks as missionaries more broadly, see the articles by Raaijmakers and Ó Clabaigh in this volume.

[39] Teresa Dunin-Wąsowicz, "Kilka uwag o sprawie działalności misyjnej cystersów na Rusi w XII-XIII wieku," in *Społeczeństwo Polski Średniowiecznej*, ed. Stefan Kuczyński, (Warszawa, 1992), vol. 5, 161-173; Jerzy Kłoczowski, "Die Zisterzienser in Klein-Polen und das Problem ihrer Tätigkeit als Missionier und Seelsorger," in *Die Zisterzienser. Ordensleben zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit*, ed. Kaspar Elm *et al.* (Bonn, 1980), 71-78.

years.[40] The presence of the military orders was indeed a distinct feature of the north-eastern edge of the region, in Prussia and the Baltic, and it influenced the growth of monasticism in these regions. The Teutonic Knights, Brothers of the Sword in Livonia and the Order of Dobrzyń, were either invited (as was the case at first with the Teutonic Knights) or established by local religious authorities. Bishop Albert of Riga introduced the Brothers of the Sword in 1202 and Bishop Christian of Oliva, the missionary bishop of Prussia, the Order of Dobrzyń in the 1220s. The military orders were envisaged as defenders of neighbouring Christian territories against pagans and they participated in crusading efforts through the conquest of Prussia and Livonia. By the thirteenth century, they had become an established feature of the regions' political, economic and religious structures, frequently competing with other religious institutions for property and privileges. This competition was detrimental to the attempts of the Cistercian order to establish monasteries in the territory of the Teutonic Knights, while Franciscan and Dominican houses, which did not compete with the Teutonic Knights for the control of the rural economic resources, became a significant feature of Prussian towns and cities along the Baltic coast and further inland.

While female founders and patrons played a significant role in establishing both male and female houses, this phenomenon remains an understudied area of monastic history. Wives of kings, dukes and major aristocrats were often the decisive force behind monastic foundations and were also founders in their own right. This is particularly visible in Silesia, where political fragmentation and intermarriage with dynasties from the Germanic Empire, Bohemia and the Kingdom of Hungary provided a strong network of powerful patronesses and abbesses supporting monasteries both for men and for women across the region. The

[40] Krystyna Zielińska-Melkowska, "Święty Chrystian-Cysters-Misyjny Biskup Prus," *Nasza Przeszłość* 83 (1994): 35-44.

emergence of female mendicant houses in East-Central Europe is also credited to female patrons and their family connections. These foundations are particularly important for understanding the history of female mendicant identities and the development of this type of communities, which lived according to the tenets of absolute poverty, in the context of dynastic foundation and their intercessory and commemorative role for the kin-group.

Prague was at the center of this new web of female mendicant foundations. Agnes, daughter of Ottokar I Přemyslid Bohemia, was a correspondent of Clare of Assisi, a cousin of St Elizabeth of Hungary and a close relative of Hedwig of Silesia, who was a notable founder of the Cistercian monastery of Trzebnica. The foundation of a female community in Prague following the customs of San Damiano, with Agnes as abbess, was an important step in the introduction of female mendicancy to the region;[41] this was followed by further foundations by the Piast princesses across the Polish duchies, by the Přemyslids in Bohemia and the Árpáds in the Kingdom of Hungary. Agnes also established a hospital in Prague, and in the 1240s, the tertiaries based there evolved into a new order: the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star. Through the same family connections, the order spread from Bohemia to Silesia, and the knights were invited into the area between 1241 and 1246 by Agnes's sister, Duchess Anna, the widow of Duke Henry the Pious. The Knights of the Cross with the Red Star benefited from the patronage of other Piast rulers and houses were also established further north in Mazovia and Greater Poland.[42] Anna also funded a Clarissan community in Wrocław. Other relatives of Agnes and Anna established further houses for nuns. Kunegunda, the wife of Bolesław the Chaste, founded a monastery of Poor Clares in Stary

[41] See the article by Andenna in this volume.

[42] Maria Sarnawska, "Nekrolog Krzyżowców z Czerwoną Gwiazdą: źródło do poznania środowska zakonu i jego kontaktów," in Derwich and Pobóg-Lenartowicz (2005), 211-212.

Sącz; Bolesław's sister Salomea established a Clarissan house in Zawichost (later moved to Skała); and Kunegunda's sister Jolenta established a women's monastery in Gniezno.[43] The foundation of fifty women's communities within Piast territory between 1200 and 1300 was also part of a Europe-wide upsurge in female monasticism, but the support that these Clarissan houses received from a group of high-powered women across the region is truly remarkable.[44]

As noted above, mendicant female communities, and especially Clarissan houses, were important in Silesia, the Polish kingdom, Bohemia and the kingdom of Hungary, and not just because of their close connection to royal women. The influence of Franciscan spirituality extended much farther by influencing aristocratic piety. The mendicants were also behind the hagiographical commemoration of many holy women from the Piast, Přemyslid and Arpad dynasties who were founders, patrons and abbesses of female mendicant houses, and they supported the cults of Salomea and Kunegunda (respectively sister and wife of Bolesław the Chaste), Hedwig of Silesia, Anna and her sister of Agnes of Prague, Elizabeth of Hungary, sister of Bela IV, as well as his daughters, Margaret, Kunegunda and Jolanda. In these cults, the tradition of dynastic sainthood was combined with the ideals of apostolic poverty and renunciation showing that these concepts were not seen as contradictory to contemporary audiences. The *vitae* of these women show also how strong the regional monastic tradition had become. Moreover, the East-Central European milieu had produced figures whose cults spread across the continent.[45]

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[43] Kłoczowski (2000), 43.

[44] Kłoczowski (2000), 40.

[45] Karczewski (2012), 22-23 and 26; Hanna Krzyżostaniak, *Trzynastowieczne święte kobiety kręgu franciszkańskiego Polski i Czech* (Poznań, 2014), 250-280; Klaniczay (2002); Kirsty

The Cultural Role of Monasticism

One of the oldest and most important forms of cultural capital that monasticism brought into the region was the cults of saints, first introduced by the missionary monks and visible in the oldest layer of church dedications. The emergence of the first local saints, including the bishop of Prague and martyr St Vojtěch (Wojciech in Polish, also known by the Latinised name Adalbert), was an important step in the process of the formation of regional religious identities. Vojtěch/Wojciech was patron of the developing Polish kingdom under the Piasts. By the early twelfth century he was also venerated as the patron of the diocese of Prague and in Hungary as a mythical missionary who baptised King Stephen I.[46]

These cults were often supported and developed through hagiography, dedications and the commissioning of images by monastic communities. The first Cistercian monastery within the Polish territory, in Jędzejów (c. 1149), was dedicated both to St Vojtěch/Wojciech

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Day, "Constructing Dynastic Franciscan Identities in Bohemia and the Polish Duchies" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2016); *Vita sanctae Salomeae reginae Halicensis auctore Stanislao Franciscano* and *Vita et miracula sanctae Kyngae ducisse Cracoviensis*, ed. Wojciech Ketrzynski, in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* 4 (Lwów, 1884), 770-796 and 662-744; *Vita Sanctae Hedvigis* and *Vita Annae ducisse Silesiae*, ed. A. Semkowicz, in *Monumenta Poloniae Historic*a 4 (Kraków, 1884), 501-655 and 656-661.

[46] Labuda (2000); Bláhová (2006), 85-87; Sommer, Třeštík and Žemlička, "Bohemia and Moravia," 235.

and to the Virgin Mary.[47] The shrines of many regional saints and imported "universal" saints were under the care of monks and nuns. From the thirteenth century on, many monastic churches secured indulgences, just like their western counterparts, further boosting their attractiveness as pilgrimage destinations. The Cistercian nuns of Trzebnica, the guardians of the shrine of their founder St Hedwig, secured sixteen individual letters of indulgence in the second half of the thirteenth century. The Premonstratensian Abbey of St. Vincent in Wrocław, which possessed a large collection of relics, secured as many as twenty-nine such documents.[48] The formation of subsequent layers of local saints' cults was an important part of the process of adaptation of the monastic communities to the regional context. The production of local heroes provided a means of bonding for the religious communities and their environment, and helped to create important places of devotional focus.

In addition to missionary and intercessory work, the new monastic communities played other culturally significant roles that built cultural capital. Monks were frequently employed in the chanceries of Polish, Hungarian and Bohemian rulers.[49] Some of the oldest historical records, such as the annals produced at Břevnov Abbey near Prague in the late tenth century (discussed further below), are products of the monastic milieu. Similarly, the oldest

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[47] *Monasticon Cisterciense Poloniae: Katalog męskich klasztorów cysterskich na ziemiach polskich I dawnej Rzeczpospolitej*, ed. Andrzej Wyrwa, Jerzy Strzelczyk, and Krzysztof Kaczmarek (Poznań, 1999), vol. 2, 90.

[48] Roman Stelmach, "Śląskie dokumenty odpustowe do końca XV wieku," in Derwich and Pobóg-Lenartowicz (2005), 182 and 187.

[49] György Györfy, "Die Anfänge der ungarischen Kanzlei im 11. Jahrhundert,"*Archiv für Diplomatik* 30 (1984): 88-96; Marek Derwich, "Klasztor w państwie -- zarys problematyki badawczej," in Derwich and Pobóg-Lenartowicz (2005), 22.

surviving royal charters from the region were issued for ecclesiastical institutions, especially monasteries, as in the case of the privilege of Hungarian King Stephen I for Pannonhalma Abbey (1001 but surviving in a later interpolation) or Andrew I's charter for Tilhany monastery (1055).[50] Throughout the region, monasteries continued to function as important centres of textual production of all kinds, including religious, literary and legal texts. In the Kingdom of Hungary, many monasteries also served as *loca credibilia* (places of authentication), offering a type of notarial service that was often combined with the secure storage of charters, an activity that gave these monasteries particular prominence. Several houses of black monks (Cluj-Mănăştur, Hronský Beňadik, Pannonhalma, Pécsvárad, Somogyvár, Szekszárd, Zalavár, Zobor), Premonstratensians (Csorna, Jasov, Kláštor pod Znievom, Leles, Šahy), and Knight Hospitallers (Székesfehérvár) were designated as *loca credibilia* within the kingdom, including in Transylvania and Slavonia.[51]

Byzantine influence and the presence of the Slavonic rite in the monastic context is a complex issue. Although the church in East-Central Europe was dominated by Latin culture from the tenth century onward, the monastery of Sázava near Prague continued for a few decades to produce texts in Old Church Slavonic -- a testament not only to the older Christian influences from Byzantium, but also to enduring contacts with Kievan Rus. The abbey was funded by the priest Procopius, later a saint (canonized in 1204 by Innocent III), who was a proponent of the Slavonic liturgy as tool of Christianisation. In 1055, with the intervention of Duke Spytihněv II (1031-1061), the monks were expelled and replaced by a group of German black monks who established the Latin liturgy. Upon his succession, King Vratislav II (*c.*

[50] Engel (2001), 39.

[51] Zsolt Hunyadi, "Administering the Law: Hungary's *Loca Credibilia*," in *Custom and Law in Central Europe*, ed. Martyn Rady (Cambridge, 2003), 30-31.

1033-1092) reinstated the expelled monks and applied, unsuccessfully, to Pope Gregory VII for a permission to perform the Slavonic liturgy in the abbey as a tool of internal mission. Again, however, under the pressure of reformers against non-standard observance, the monks were expelled in 1096 after Vratislav II's death and their place taken by another group from Břevnov Abbey who observed the Latin rites.[52]

The role of intersecting eastern and western influences in religious and monastic culture in Bohemia is preserved, not only textually, but also in some fragments of early medieval material culture. Pectoral crosses, some of which are directly associated with monastic sites, for example, often show both Byzantine and Western stylistic influences.[53] In Hungary, a number of Greek monasteries, including a women's community at Veszprémvölgy founded during the reign of Stephen I, were linked to royal patronage. In the eleventh century, King Andrew I, whose wife was Anastasia, daughter of Grand Prince of Kiev, founded additional monasteries following the Greek rite. These monasteries continued to follow the Orthodox rite until the thirteenth century.[54] Although the Latin rite triumphed in the region, the influence of the Slavonic tradition did not disappear without a trace. The Slavonic *vita* of St Procopius was translated into Latin, probably in the late eleventh century, and his cult was recognised by both Latin and Orthodox churches.

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[52] Wolverton, *Hastening Towards Prague*, 134-135; *Codex Diplomaticus*, no 81.

[53] Kateřina Horníčkova, "Between East and West: Bohemian reliquary pectoral crosses as testimony to religious and cultural exchange," in *Rome, Constantinople and Newly-Converted Europe. Archaeological and Historical Evidence*, ed. M. Salamon *et al.* (Kraków, 2012), 1-15.

[54] Bláhová (2006), 87-88, and 106; Sommer, Třeštík and Žemlička, "Bohemia and Moravia," 250; Berend, Laszlovszky, and Szakács, "The Kingdom of Hungary," 353-4; Berend, Urbańczyk, and Wiszewski (2013), 317-318, and 357.

The vital function of historical writing by religious communities must be considered in the wider context of literacy in East-Central Europe. It is not only the events of 'national history' that were recorded in many of these texts, but a wide range of information that remains crucial for understanding the place of monastic communities in the local context with their often complex ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The beginnings of Bohemian annalistic writing are connected with Břevnov Abbey and the cathedral in Prague.[55] In the 1170s, an anonymous monk of Sázava (by then occupied by black monks) produced a chronicle that combined a foundation narrative, *gesta* of the abbots, extracts from Cosmas of Prague's *Chronicle* (the oldest narrative of Czech history, c. 119-1125), and a history of the abbey until the time of the author. The latter had a clear interest in the wider history of Bohemia and its relationship with the Empire.[56] The oldest narratives of foundations also frequently contain elements of other texts such as charters that are no longer extant in their original form, and as such have traditionally been valued for the evidence they preserve, especially if they 'reveal broader historiographical reference'.[57] They are also excellents sources for undertanding the changing self-image of these monastic communities through time. The foundation narrative of Sázava Abbey, for example, created after the community was Latinised, not only incorporated the process of eradication of the non-standard observances within the narrative of the institutional history, but also preserved traces of older traditions associated with the founder Procopius, and stressed the importance of the patronage of Bohemian rulers.[58] The foundation narrative of Pannonhalma, the oldest house of black

[55] Bláhová (2006), 89.

[56] Bláhová (2006), 107.

[57] Bláhová (2006), 93.

[58] Bláhová (2006), 106.

monks in Hungary, written in the late 1220s, preserves the text of the foundation charter from 1001/2 and emphasises the connection between the community and the Hungarian kings, the founder Géza and his son Stephen I. In fact, the success of King Stephen in crushing a rebellion prior to his coronation was followed by a lavish grant to the abbey as a thanksgiving for its support.[59] This is important evidence both of a bond that continued for generations between the early medieval monasteries in East-Central Europe and their ruler-patrons, and of the role of these communities as repositories of memory and tradition, preserved in written form while also incorporating significant material from oral tradition. There are also types of monastic historical writing that are testimony to the role of male and female communities in their localities and the ways in which it was recorded. The *Liber Fundationis Claustri Sanctae Martiae Virginis* in Henryków (Silesia, founded 1222-1228), created in sections after 1268 and then concluded *c.* 1310, gives a very detailed description of the landholdings of the abbey, stories of difficulties with neighbours, genealogies of local families, and the monastery's legal rights to various properties, all of which are all intertwined with its commemorative functions. The white monks recorded the linguistic and cultural complexities of the region -- Slavonic and Germanic, economic and social changes that affected monastery and its neighbours -- and this text is a vital evidence for the way in which monastic houses functioned as an integral part of local landscape.[60]

Conclusion

[59] László Veszprémy "Legends and Liturgy," in *The Making of Christian Myths* (Copenhagen, 2006), 221.

[60] Górecki (2007); Górecki (2015).

Although the history of monasticism and female mendicancy in East-Central Europe is often relegated to the margins of the European historical narrative, these institutions had a significant influence on the region religiously, culturally, socially and economically. Although they were based on models that arrived from the West, often via the Empire, these forms of monastic life were not simply poor copies of original forms. Traditional monastic communities and then the new orders, Cistercian, and Premonstratensian communities, and then Mendicants, for both men and women, adapted to the economic structures and particular needs of the local context and played a role in internal and external missions. For lay patrons and benefactors, these institutions provided a key site of commemoration and memorialization of kinship. Religious houses were important for reinforcing group identity, promoting the value of written documents, and producing and preserving texts. Founding a monastery was one of the ways in which the first generation of Christian rulers displayed their new identity, and later generations of magnates shared a model of piety typical of their western counterparts. In this part of the world, we see both the enthusiastic adoption of the proprietary church model and Cistercian monks functioning as missionaries. The monasticism of East-Central Europe clearly belonged to the Latin world, yet was well adapted to this particular regional context.