



O pierwszym Bolesławie, którego zwano Sławnym lub Chrobrym - Tekst angielski

Thus the first duke of Poland, Mieszko¹, attained the grace of baptism through his faithful wife²; and it shall suffice for his fame and glory [to say] that during his time and through him the divine Light visited the Polish kingdom. For of this blessed lady he begat the famed Bolesław who, after his death, virtuously ruled the kingdom and through the grace of God attained such virtue and power that he – so to speak – gilded all of Poland with his righteousness. For who shall manage to properly relate his virtuous deeds and the battles he fought against the local nations, let alone transmit [them] in writing? Was it not he who subjugated Moravia and Bohemia and, having seized the princely throne in Prague³, entrusted it to his deputies? Was it not he who several times defeated the Hungarians in battle and seized control of all their territory all the way to the Danube? He brought the unruly Saxons to heel with such force that in the middle of their land iron stakes were driven into the Saale river to mark the boundary of Poland⁴. Is it even necessary to provide a detailed list of his victories and triumphs over unbelievers, when it is known that he trampled them with his feet? For it was he who either ground down Selentia, Pomerania and Prussia when they clung to their pagan beliefs or, if converted, strengthened their faith so that many churches and bishoprics were founded there with the consent of the pope, or rather the pope [established them] through his intermediary. It was also he who, when St Wojciech⁵ came to him, having suffered much abuse during his long journey and [previously] at the hands of his own rebellious Bohemian people – received him with great reverence and faithfully followed his teaching and instructions. When the holy martyr, burning with the fire of love and the desire to preach the [Christian] faith, saw that the faith had already spread to some degree in Poland and the holy Church had grown in strength, he went to Prussia without fear and there, through martyrdom, completed his profession. Later Bolesław ransomed his body for the equivalent of its weight in gold from the Prussians and laid it to rest [it] with due honours at the metropolitan see in Gniezno.

¹ Mieszko I (ca 930-992) – the first historic ruler of Poland from the Piast dynasty, ruling from ca 960 until his death. He united the historic Polish lands and started the Christianization of the country, introducing church organization (a missionary bishopric in 968). The capital of Mieszko's state was in Gniezno.

² Dobrawa / Dąbrówka (d. 977) – daughter of the Bohemian duke Boleslaus I the Cruel, mother of Polish king Bolesław the Brave and probably also of Świętosława, queen of Denmark and Sweden.

³ Bolesław the Brave, descended from the Bohemian Přemyslid dynasty via his mother, seized Prague in 1003 but had to withdraw from it after a year.

⁴ In 1002, after Bolesław the Brave had temporarily seized control of Meissen.

⁵ St Wojciech (Adalbert) – bishop of Prague, later a Benedictine monk, from the Bohemian Slavník family. At the behest of Bolesław he embarked on a mission to Poland and Prussia, and was murdered by the Prussians on 23 April 997.



We also deem it worthy of transmission that during his time Emperor Otto the Redhead¹ came to the [tomb] of St Wojciech for prayer and reconciliation, and also to meet the famed Bolesław, as one can read in more detail in the book about the saint's martyrdom. Bolesław received him with such honours and magnificence as befitted a king, a Roman emperor and a distinguished guest. For he prepared astonishing marvels for the arrival of the emperor; first he arranged various knightly regiments and dignitaries like choirs on a vast plain, each regiment standing separately and distinguished by its own colour of attire. [But] it was not a [cheap] assembly of tawdry decorations, but the most costly things to be found under the sun. For under Bolesław each knight and courtly lady used not linen or woollen robes but coats made of expensive fabrics, while leather, even if extremely precious or new, was not worn at his court without [a lining of] costly fabric and golden tassels. For during his time gold was as common among everyone as silver is [today]; silver, meanwhile, was as cheap as hay. Beholding his glory, power and wealth, the Roman emperor called out in admiration: "By the crown of my empire! What I see is greater than the stories I have heard!" And advised by his nobles, he added in front of everyone: "It is not fitting for such a great man to be called a duke or count as if he was a dignitary, but [it behoves] to proudly raise him to the royal throne and crown him". And taking his imperial diadem off, he placed it on Bolesław's head as [a token] of alliance and friendship, and as a triumphal banner he gave him a nail from the Lord's cross and the lance of St Maurice², in exchange for which Bolesław offered him the shoulder of St Wojciech. And they united in such love that day that the emperor named him a brother and a cooperator of the empire and called him a friend and ally of the Roman people. Moreover, he conferred on him and his successors the empire's power to [grant] church titles in the Polish kingdom or in other, barbarian, countries already conquered or to be conquered by him [in the future]. The provisions of this pact were [then] confirmed by Pope Sylvester³ through a privilege of the holy Roman Church.

¹ Otto III (980-1002), king of Germany since 983 and Holy Roman emperor since 996; of the Saxon Liudolfing dynasty; son of Otto II and of the Byzantine princess Teophano. His pilgrimage to the tomb of St Wojciech in Gniezno, described in Gallus's chronicle, took place in 1000.

² The Lance of St Maurice – according to tradition, the spear of a Roman legionary from the third century, whose spearhead contains what is allegedly a nail from the Cross of Christ. It was a ceremonial weapon of Holy Roman emperors. Bolesław the Brave received a copy of the spear. The original is preserved in Germany to this day.

³ Sylvester II (Gerbert of Aurillac, d. 1003), pope in 999-1003.



Thus, having been so gloriously raised to kingship by the emperor, Bolesław exercised his innate generosity by arranging truly royal and imperial banquets during the three days of his consecration and changing all the vessels and utensils every day, each time replacing them with different and more costly ones. For once the feasting had come to an end, he had his cupbearers¹ and stewards² collect from the tables all the golden and silver vessels – as there were no wooden ones – that is bowls, cups, plates, goblets and horns, and offered them to the emperor to honour him, rather than as tribute [from] a duke. He ordered his chamberlains³ to collect the spread out covers, curtains, rugs, carpets, napkins, towels and whatever had been used to set the tables, and take it all into the emperor's chamber. Moreover, he offered [him] many other gifts, namely golden and silver vessels of different making and coats of different colours, accessories never seen before and precious stones; and he gave so much of it that the emperor considered these gifts a miracle. Meanwhile he [also] showered [the emperor's] dukes with so many gifts that from sympathizers they turned into his greatest friends. But who can count how many and what kind of gifts he gave to the superiors, since not even a single servant from the large retinue went away empty handed. The emperor, merry and laden with gifts, returned home, while Bolesław, raised to kingship, renewed his old wrath against his enemies. Translated © by Jerzy Giebułtowski

¹ Cupbearer (Pol. cześnik, Lat. pincerna) – butler, court official charged with looking after the ruler's cellar (i.e. wine and spirits).

² Steward (Pol. stolnik, Lat. dapifer) – court official charged with looking after the ruler's table (i.e. food).

³ Chamberlain (Pol. komornik, Lat. camerarius) – in early Piast Poland, a courtier at the ducal (or royal) court.