

THE RULE OF THE HOUSE OF PIAST IN GNIEZNO

Aleksander Gieysztor (†)

In the final decade of the 10th century, after the Bohemians had been ousted, (under the walls of the Wrocław cathedral, recently a pre-roman church has been discovered which belongs to the 10th century and is seen as a proof of Silesia's Christianization by the Czechs) the Piast lordship in Gniezno (Gnesen) enjoyed favourable circumstances which lasted into the second third of the 11th century. Around the year 1000, the terms *Polonia* and *Polani* came into use (for the earlier period, the territory under Piast rule is covered by names such as *Lestkovices*, *Gnesen state*, *Slavonia*), and at about the same time, after Slavnikid example, a coin showing Bolesław and the legend *Princeps Poloniae* was minted. During the first third of the 11th century, Bolesław attempted to establish a minor empire in this part of Europe, in a similar way to that which was tried in the north-western part a little later by Knut the Great, King of Denmark, Norway and England: together with Silesia, Little Poland made up the greatly expanded nucleus of a larger territory which comprised, among other parts, Pomerania. Bolesław extended his rule also on Prague, Lusatia and Meissen, Moravia, and Kiev. Most of these territories did only belong to his lordship for a brief period, however. Bishop Adalbert, missionary ordered there by Emperor Otto III, was welcomed by Bolesław Chrobry in 997 and escorted to the *Prużen* tribe. His martyrdom earned him a great deal of respect at the Polish court and the first initiative to give the patronage of churches to Adalbert obviously came from the Duke of Poland. The Emperor's pilgrimage to Adalbert's grave at Gnesen in the year 1000 and the establishment there of an archbishopric comprising the bishoprics of Kraków (Krakau), Wrocław (Breslau), Kołobrzeg (Kolberg), and Poznań (Posen) were the principal milestones for the ecclesiastical organisation in Poland.