The recording of the family tradition of the Piasts by Gallus Anonymous closed a certain stage in its functioning, but did not signify the end of its development. Unfortunately we have almost no contemporary evidence of this process. This is why later sources such as the Lives of the “Apostle of Pomerania” St Otto of Bamberg have an exceptional significance.¹ We shall leave aside the stories of the hagiographer about the relations between Bishop Otto and Bolesław in the course of the Pomeranian mission.² They are based on the narratives of the monks accompanying the bishop and are a witness to the traditions connected with the bishop and his entourage. The description of the stay of the future bishop in the court of Władysław Herman has the characteristics of a story which arose in the milieu of the bishop, maybe based on his own words.³ Of interest in our discussions are the parts of the story which concern the arrival of Bishop Otto to Gniezno in 1124 and the depiction of the deeds of Bolesław before the beginnings of Otto’s


³ For more on this topic, see the monograph P. Wiszewski, Domus Bolezlai, pp. 351–357.
mission in Pomerania. These stories most probably were created under the influence of narratives which functioned in the court of Bolesław Wrymouth at the moment of the arrival of the bishop and his entourage in Poland. Due to them we have a chance to penetrate the nature of the tradition of the ruling family a couple of decades after Gallus wrote his “Chronicles”.

1. Duke Bolesław and Christ’s Church

Ebo of the Bamberg monastery on the Michelsberg describing Bishop Otto’s arrival in Gniezno and the greeting he was given by the Polish ruler presented a brief characterisation of the latter with reference to his earlier deeds:4 “this duke had a great respect for Christ’s Church, he was a friend [“amator”—P.W.] of the poor and very pious comforter of the impoverished, worthy of everybody’s love with regard to his humility and mercifulness, more used to good deeds for the community of believers and the saints than the building of castles.”5 This portrait of Bolesław can be regarded as a handy stereotype of a pious ruler constructed from conventional elements. In another part of his work, Ebo castigates the behaviour of those clergymen who in contrast to Otto “build towns and castles instead of churches and hospitals”.6 Even if the author was using comfortable schematic formulations, did Bolesław and his entourage have any influence on the creation of such a picture of the ruler? In other words, did such a picture reflect the tradition of the dynasty functioning in Poland, or is it merely a reflection of the facility with which Ebo could create a rhetorical vision of the royal host of the Saint?

In examining this question, of key significance is the description of the scene of the greeting of Otto by Bolesław at the gates of Gniezno in 1124 which accompanies this characterisation of the Polish ruler mentioned in the introduction to this work. It is completely exceptional. The duke went out to meet Otto barefoot, and together with him, the clergy and inhabitants of the stronghold. He also ordered that his sons who were not yet weaned be brought to the bishop so

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