

THE OLDEST KRAKÓW:
FROM A STRONGHOLD OF THE VISTULANS TO A CITY OF POLES
(FROM THE NINTH TO MID-THIRTEENTH CENTURY)

The article comprehensively describes the history of Kraków from the earliest times to its chartering under German law in 1257. On the basis of recent archaeological and historical research it discusses the problems outlined in the monumental synthesis of the history of Kraków by Professor Jerzy Wyrozumski *Kraków do schyłku wieków średnich* (Kraków to the end of the Middle Ages, *Dzieje Krakowa* [History of Kraków], vol. 1, Kraków 1992).

After a brief presentation of the history of the stronghold in the pre-Slavic period, the author focused on its role and significance in the so-called Vistulan state (ninth century). Around 989 Kraków became part of the so-called Gniezno state and the residence of Prince Bolesław I the Brave, later King of Poland (1024), assumed the status of the capital city and was counted among the “main seats of the kingdom” (*sedes regni principales*). Already at that time the early urban complex included the fortified Wawel Hill and the so-called Okół (settlement around the stronghold walls). After the death of Duke Bolesław III Crooked Mouth (d. 1138), the Kraków stronghold was designated as the residence of the Grand Duke (*princeps*), the oldest

representative of the ruling dynasty (*senior*). He played this role almost until the beginning of the 13th century.

Due to the contacts with Great Moravia and then Bohemia, Christianity appeared in this area earlier than in other domains of the Piast dynasty. It is possible that Kraków belonged to the dioceses that were part of the metropolises of the Empire – Salzburg, and then (ca. 973) Mainz. From 1000, it was the residence of Bishop Poppon, one of the suffragans of the Gniezno metropolis.

The author presents biographies of the ruling princes and bishops. He focuses on the architecture of (especially religious) buildings of the Wawel Castle and Okół, as well as on the wider complex of the early city. He presents Kraków as an important centre of Latin culture (libraries, schools, parishes). The concluding parts concern the process of the formation of the municipality (*Gemeinde*) under German law. The author also draws attention to the advancement of Kraków in the religious geography of Poland due to the canonisation of Bishop Stanislaus (1253) and the creation of a sanctuary and pilgrimage site at his grave in the Wawel Cathedral (1254).