JAN DŁUGOSZ AND THE FIRST SEVEN PARISH CHURCHES IN LITHUANIA

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ABSTRACT  This paper is part of a more comprehensive study intended as a renewed interpretation of the account given by the Polish chronicler, Jan Długosz (1415–1480) about the conversion of Lithuania in 1387. For the moment it offers a critical approach to one seemingly unproblematic statement advanced and upheld by Polish and Lithuanian historians alike, a statement according to which Jogaila, the king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania, established the first seven churches in Lithuania in 1387. This study is conducted on two tracks. First it shows that the documentary evidence for the churches in question (Ukmergė, Maišiagala, Nemenčinė, Medininkai, Krėva, Oboltsy and Haina) is scanty to the point that it does not allow us simply to believe that all the churches were established in one and the same year. Secondly, this article tries to interpret this piece of information supplied by Długosz in the light of a number of other accounts of the first steps in building the ecclesiastical organization of particular countries. It becomes clear that the number seven is a conventional number which has been evoked quite frequently in similar situations by other medieval bookmen and also by Długosz himself (e. g. while describing the conversion of Poland in 966). The final argument of the article calls for renewed attempts to gain a better understanding of the first decades of established Catholic organization in Lithuania, based on the extant source material rather than conventional clichés that were quite widespread in the chronicles of the Middle Ages.

Casting a glance into the field of contemporary historical writing

The epoch-making significance of the Lithuanian conversion to Latin Christianity in 1387 was obvious to contemporaries and posterity alike. Among the writers of subsequent centuries a place of prime has long been given to Jan Długosz. This chronicler provides the

1 The preparation of this article was supported by the Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation (2007–2008) in the framework of the project ‘Reconsideration of Lithuania’s Conversion to Christianity: a Critical Evaluation and Systematization of the Sources of Becoming European and the Role of Historiography’.
first exhaustive account of the Lithuanian conversion in his famous *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*. The skillful and impressive treatment by Jan Długosz of vast historiographical and documentary evidence contributed to the fact that up to this date the view of how the Lithuanians accepted the Christian faith bears the stamp impressed on it by the writer in question. It is not unusual to see that historians tend to use the Długossian narrative as the groundwork on which they try to trace back how the conversion actually took place at the end of the fourteenth century. Such a way of conducting historical research was adapted, at least in part, thanks to understanding that Długosz had reliable sources at hand when he set out to write about the conversion. It goes without saying that such a view is not altogether misplaced and it is equally true that we will never be able to dispense with Długosz, nor is that necessary or desirable after all. What is necessary is to try to know what the workshop of Długosz was in the widest sense of the word. It must already be said that the basis provided by Długosz is not so solid as it may appear at first sight. As will be demonstrated in what follows, Długosz is a rather more evasive and slippery author than is sometimes supposed to be the case at least in those quarters of historical scholarship where questions of Lithuanian history have been tackled. We are going to analyse one historiographical ‘fact’ in order to illustrate these introductory remarks.

It is quite usual to find in late-medieval historical writing the claim that in 1387 the Polish king (1386–1434) and Lithuanian grand duke, Jogaila, while converting Lithuanians to the Christian faith, not only established the cathedral church in Vilnius, but also built the first seven churches in Lithuania in such localities as Ukmergė, Maišiagala, Nemenčinė, Medininkai (in eastern Lithuania), Krėva, Oboltsy and Haina (in what is now Belarus). According to Długosz, these parish churches were established in necessary and convenient places. It seems safe to assume that Długosz put down this infor-

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2 Cf. Z. Ivinskis, ‘Lietuvos krikšto problema’ in: Z. Ivinskis, *Rinktiniai raštai*, t. 4: *Krikščionybė Lietuvoje* (Rome, 1987), p. 84.

3 Joannis Dlugossii, *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae, liber decimus* (1370–1405), ed. D. Turkowska (Warsaw, 1985), p. 163: ‘Fundat insuper septem parochiales ecclesias in locis oportunis et necessariis, videlicet in Volkmaria, Misyohola, Nýemczani, Mýedniki, Crewa, Obolceze et Haýna, item prebendam sancti Martini in castro Vilnensi alciori’.
formation in 1459–1463, i.e. 72–76 years after the events described. An absolute majority of Polish and Lithuanian historians, including the author of these lines too, used to accept this information at face value. The most recent synthesis of the early history of Lithuania even visualized this idea by means of a map on which one can see place names highlighted as ‘churches built in 1387’. It is also true, that one can find some exceptions and nuances in this scholarly consensus. In 1914 Jan Fijałek could dispense with dealing with this question in his comprehensive study devoted to the Christianization of Lithuania by Poland, much the same as Tadeusz Krahel could avoid this tricky topic in his sketches on the history of the (Arch-) bishopric of Vilnius in 1987. Nuances in the degree of acceptance of the theory of the first seven parish churches can also be helpfully exemplified by recourse to a Lithuanian scholar, Mečislovas Jučas, who in one of his earlier works cited this information as a matter of fact, while in his most recent book, devoted to the rise of parish network in Lithuania, he adopted a more circumspect position by attributing this information to Długosz and the modern Polish historian Jerzy Ochmański, thus making his own position not so clear-cut as was previously the case. However, in either case differences in style or emphasis do not amount to rethinking of once accepted idea. The mention of Jerzy Ochmański is by no means accidental, since

4 Cf. W. Semkowicz-Zarembina, Powstanie i dzieje autografu Annalium Jana Długosza (=Rozprawy Wydziału Historyczno-Filozoficznego, Seria II, vol. XLVII, no. 1) (Cracow, 1952), pp. 13, 35.
5 Cf. K. Hartleb, ‘Dla pomnożenia chwały Bożej’: Jagiellówe i Jadwigi fundacje i darowizny na rzecz Kościoła w Koronie i Litwie’, Nasza Prześlóst, 1 (1946), p. 8–9; Z. Ivinskiis, ‘Lietuvos krikšto problema’, Aidai, nr. 8 (1966), p. 365; V. Gidžiūnas, ‘Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje’, Lietuvių Enciklopedija (Boston, 1968), t. 15, p. 133; Z. Ivinskiis, Lietuvos istorija iki Vytauto Didžiojo mirties (Rome, 1978 (reprint, Vilnius, 1991), p. 15; M. Jučas, Krikščionių keliai į Lietuvą. Etapai ir problemas (Vilnius, 2000), p. 63; P. Rabikauskas, Krikščioniško Lietuva. Istorija, hagiografija, šaltiniotyra, ed. L. Jovaiša (Vilnius, 2002), pp. 49, 58, 62; Krikščionių Lietuvoje istorija, ed. V. Ališauskas, D. Baronas, R. Černius, L. Jovaiša, M. Paknys, E. Raila, A. Streikus, P. Subačius (Vilnius, 2006), pp. 49, 61, 67.
6 A. Bumbaulskas, Senosios Lietuvos istorija 1009–1795 (Vilnius, 2005), p. 137.
7 J. Fijałek, ‘Uchrześcijanienie Litwy przez Polskę i zachowanie w niej języka ludu’, Polska i Litwa w dziejowym stosunku (Warsaw, 1914), pp. 39–333.
8 T. Krahel, ‘Zarys dziejów (archi)diecezji wileńskiej’, Studia Teologiczne, 5–6 (1987–1988), pp. 7–72.
9 Cf. M. Jučas, Lietuvos parapijos XV–XVIII a. (Vilnius, 2007), p. 42; idem, Krikščionių keliai į Lietuvą. Etapai ir problemas (Vilnius, 2000), p. 63.
this scholar conducted an in-depth analysis of the Długosz account in so impressive a way that another Polish expert in Lithuanian church history, Gregorz Błaszczyk, regarded it as excellent (znakomita in Polish). So now we can rather safely assert that even nowadays this scholarly consensus prevails up to the point that Długosz is trusted almost literally, where the first seven parish churches in Lithuania are concerned. In a nutshell this position may be encapsulated in the words of G. Błaszczyk: ‘It is universally accepted that the Polish king established seven parish churches during his progress across Lithuania in the following centres: Ukmergė, Maišiagala, Medininkai...’ and so on. It must also be admitted with all sincerity, that the same has been true with regard to the author of these lines too, who naively, it may already be said so, believed in the reliability of Jan Długosz on this point. However, all this was bound to change when more exacting procedures of historical criticism have come to be applied to this piece of medieval information.

There is no attempt in this paper to track back all the way how and when this information came to be trusted and gained almost unquestioned rights of citizenship in historical texts. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that already in the first half of the twentieth century some scholars maintained a necessary critical distance from this information. Besides the already mentioned Fr Fijałek, another example of this sort can be provided by Heinrich F. Schmid, who viewed the Długosz account suspiciously and did not rely on it while dealing with the establishment and the growing of parish network within the confines of the bishopric of Vilnius. However, as all of us know, historians are expected to adduce new knowledge and this was bound to happen in some works of later date, which introduced the image of seven churches to historical writing as a matter of

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10 G. Błaszczyk, Chrzest Litwy (Poznań, 2006), p. 27. See below, n. 16.

11 Ibid.

12 Krikščionybės Lietuvoje istorija, p. 49.

13 It may be noted in passing that the first parish churches (in Haina, Nemenčinė, Maišiagala, Medininkai, Krėva, Oboltsy, Lida, Ukmergė, Oshmiana and Bistryčia) as founded by Jogaila were enumerated indiscriminately by J. Kurczewski, Biskupstwo Wileńskie od jego założenia aż do dni obecnych, zawierające dzieje i prace biskupów i duchowienstwa diecezji Wileńskiej, oraz wykaz kościołów, klasztorów, szkół i zakładów dobroczynnych i społecznych (Vilnius, 1912), pp. 22, 176.

14 H.F. Schmid, Die rechtlichen Grundlagen der Pfarrorganisation auf westslavischem Boden und ihre Entwicklung während des Mittelalters (Weimar, 1938), p. 704.
fact. It seems that the first scholars who enveloped this medieval tenet in contemporary scholarly speech were such prominent specialists in the field as already mentioned J. Fijałek and Władysław Semkowicz. This was done in the pages of their prominent source edition of diocesan records as early as 1932. According to these scholars, Długosz must have based his account about the first seven churches in Lithuania on no-longer extant foundation charters. It comes somewhat as a surprise that these scholars assigned even a rather exact date of issue – namely, February 17–22, 1387 – to this evidence, although no convincing arguments were adduced to prove the very existence of such a document. After this was done, there followed a rather long period of time when this question was suspended and awaited renewed attempts at historical scrutiny. The first scholar who really addressed with issue with full vigour of historical criticism was Jerzy Ochmański. Dealing with the establishment and the following build-up of the structures of the bishopric of Vilnius, this scholar could not but face the problem of the first parish churches with all its burdensome weight.

Our acquaintance with the analysis conducted by Ochmański has left us with the impression that his frequently and in principle well-based arguments are not followed by equally convincing conclusions. At the same time it is not difficult to note that initially this scholar was predisposed favourably towards the information supplied by Długosz and repeated by later historians. This becomes evident when we see that from the very start Ochmański viewed this evidence in the light of ‘historical record’ (zapiska historyczna in Polish). This ‘historical record’ about the first seven parish churches in Lithuania is supposed to be no mere ‘historical relic’, since it was produced by a man, Jan Długosz, whose living memory reached as far back as the last years of Jogaila’s rule. This consideration was strong enough to allow the author to evolve his ideas further, which tend precociously to look like conclusions: Jogaila must have established

15 Kodeks Dyplomatyczny Katedry i Diecezji Wileńskiej [KDKDW], I, ed. J. Fijałek, W. Semkowicz (Cracow, 1932–1948), no. 4, p. 10. The idea that no-longer extant foundation charters existed was also repeated in: Rozbiór krytyczny Annuarium Poloniae Jana Długosza z lat 1385–1444, ed. J. Dąbrowski (Wrocław etc., 1961), vol. 1, p. 17.
16 J. Ochmański, Biskupstwo Wileńskie w Średniowieczu: ustrój i uposażenie (Poznań, 1972), pp. 55–59.
17 Ibid.
the parish churches in Ukmergė, Maišiagala, Nemenčinė and so on... Ochmański had almost no doubt that all these churches should be dated to the time of Jogaila. But even at this point, Ochmański, as a true scholar, did not feel satisfied and moved on further in his analysis. He assigned himself a task to establish whether Długosz correctly transmitted the information about the parishes founded by Jogaila, whether it was Jogaila who founded all these parishes and whether all this really took place in 1387. To establish the truth Ochmański made recourse to documentary evidence.

The documentary evidence from all these parishes proved to be very scanty indeed. There is no contemporary mention of all the churches in question except for the one in Obolotsy. There existed the foundation charter of this church to the date as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. This church is generally assumed to be one of the first to have been founded in Lithuania. The documentary evidence from some other parish churches comes from a slightly later time. The church in Medininkai is first mentioned as having been built ‘recently’ in a text of 1391, when it was subordinated to the church in Bistryčia, which belonged to the Austin Penitential Canons Regular (= Ordo Canonicorum Regularium S. Mariae de Metro de Urbe de Peonitentia Beatorum Martyrum). The words ‘nuper erecte’ may equally well apply either to 1387 or to some years later. The latter case seems to deserve more credibility since visitations of this church conducted in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries did not know of any document from 1387 or any tradition referring to 1387, but treat the above-mentioned document of

18 Ibid., pp. 55–56.
19 Cf. ibid., pp. 55–56 and 59–60. Also see S. K. Olezak, ‘Fundacje kościołów parafialnych w diecezji wileńskiej do końca XVII stulecia’, Chrzest Litwy: genese, przebieg, konsekwencje, ed. M. T. Zahajkiewicza (Lublin, 1990), p. 93.
20 It is published in: KDKDW, no. 9, pp. 17–19 (1 June 1387).
21 Ibid., no. 9, p. 19: ‘sane speciali zelo devotionis accensi ecclesiam nostrae novae fundationis in Obolce, quae etiam prior institutione omnibus ecclesiis in terra Litvaniae fundatis fore dinoscitur’.
22 Ibid., no. 19, p. 33: ‘ecclesiae parochiali in Myednyki nuper erecte pro dote et fundatione eiusdem mediam pullam dictam pulstawne mellis in Vroney...’ (2 April 1391).
23 It seems that there existed in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania a tradition referring the establishment of at least some churches to the year 1387 as is perhaps best exemplified by the counterfeit foundation charter of the parish church of Lida. See ibid., no. 8, pp. 15–17. This charter was corroborated by King Sigismund III Vasa in Warsaw in on 7 July 1616 (See Privilegiae seu fundationes ecclesiarum
1391 as a foundation charter. The first indirect evidence attesting to the existence of the church in Maišiagala comes down to us from 1397. The evidence of the church in Nemenčinė comes from the same date. These foundations are rather early and they do not seem to disprove the Długossian theory of the first seven churches in unequivocal terms. Worse is the case with the rest of the above mentioned churches. The evidence for the existence of the churches in Krėva and Ukmergė in the times of Jogaila are very shaky indeed and their existence in his days was deduced by Ochmański and others only on the basis of probability. The church in Krėva was first mentioned in 1468, when a widow Anne and her son George endowed an altar dedicated to their patron saints, Anne and George, in the parish church of Krėva. The first documentary evidence of the existence of the church in Ukmergė comes from as late a date as 1492. The church of Haina is the latest one, whose existence is testified by documentary evidence. Even Ochmański opined that the church in Haina could not be dated to 1387, because in the document of 1397 it was mentioned along the other grand ducal estates from which tithes were paid to the Vilnius cathedral church

Dioecesis Vilnensis, f. 26r–26v., Vilnius, LMAB, F43–204. Another Copia fundationis parochiae Lidensis of 1649 is to be found in Warsaw, AGAD, Archiwum Radziwiłłów (AR), Dział VIII, sygn. 186. Nothing similar exists with regard to the church of Medininkai. We also do not know of any early-modern tradition of sixteenth-eighteenth centuries which would have referred to the churches, say, in Ukmergė, Krewo or Haina as founded by Jogaila. This is one of a number of proofs indicating that the tradition about the first seven parish churches, which forms the subject-mater of this article, has long been confined to the chronicle of Jan Długosz and was modified only in modern times as a scholarly theory by professional historians who uncritically adopted the medieval story in spite of their avowed allegiance to positivist methods of historical criticism.

24 Biblioteka Jagiellońska (Cracow), Manuscript Department: BJ 624111 III, f. 5: ‘Literae confirmantes fundationem miednicensis a serenissimis regibus scilicet Vladislao, Sigismundo et Michaele concessae…‘ (19 May 1693). Vilnius, Lietuvos valstybinis istorijos archyvas: F694-1-3381, f. 202: ‘Miednicensis praepositura a rege Ladislao Jagiello Anno 1391 fundata ut extant literae fundationis et incorporationis in charta pargamanea de data Oszmiana octava Pachae‘ (21 April 1773).

25 KDKDW, no. 28, p. 47 among the witnesses to the charter of 9 May 1397 issued by Bishop Andrew of Vilnius (1388–1398) there is a mention of Maišiagala parish priest Nicholas.

26 Ibid., no. 29, p. 49 (9 May 1397)

27 Ibid., no. 255 pp. 293–294 (24 June 1468).

28 Ibid., no. 393, p. 453 (1492). There is a mention of a curate in Ukmergė named Stanislaus.
and this, according to the same scholar, disproves the existence of a church in Haina prior to 1397. Ochiński knew that the earliest documentary evidence about the church in Haina dates to 1498, that is to a time when Długosz had already ended his earthly life. It is true, however, that another Polish historian, Stanisław K. Olczak is not so sceptical with regard to the possibility of the church in Haina having been founded already in 1387, because in his opinion the paying of a tithe from the grand-ducal estate of Haina to the cathedral church of Vilnius is not enough to prove the non-existence of a parish church in the said locality. This scholar also adhered to the opinion that Długosz could have based his knowledge on some no-longer extant document which must have enumerated the parish churches founded by Jogaila. In our opinion, at least part of all this argumentation contains too much guesswork and rests on the premises which in their turn must first be proven. The problem is that no one has ever seen this supposed document and even the most recent work devoted specially to documents used by Długosz in his chronicle did not find any trace of it.

In our opinion the very meagreness of documentary evidence about the said parish churches should have rung an alarm bell regarding the premise about the reliability of the account of Długosz. However, this was not the case and Ochiński drew the rather surprising conclusion that: ‘now we can assert, that the tradition of Jan Długosz is largely reliable and the 1387 enumeration of the seven Jagiellonian churches is authentic’. Such a statement should provoke a number of objections, because, as we have already said, only the church in Oboltsy actually had a known foundation charter dated to 1387 about whose existence there can be no doubt, and because all other contemporary evidence is lacking or comes from later or much later date.

29 Ochiński, Biskupstwo Wileńskie, p. 57; KDKDW, no. 28 p. 47.
30 Ochiński, Biskupstwo Wileńskie, p. 57; KDKDW, no. 527: ‘Presentibus ibidem honorabilibus et generosis viris dominis Joanne de Throky thesaurario nostro et curato in Hayno…’ (6 March 1498).
31 Olczak, ‘Fundacje kościołów parafialnych’, pp. 92–93.
32 Cf. A. Nalewajek, Dokument w Rocznikach Jana Długosza (Lublin, 2006), p. 220.
33 Ochiński, Biskupstwo Wileńskie, p. 59.
There is no need here to trace in detail how Ochmański came to grips with other historical problems related to the early establishment of ecclesiastical organisations in Lithuania. All in all he does not seem to have made a critical revision of his views on this question in his later years.\(^\text{34}\) Despite his keen observations there are some utterances expressed which later scholarship has accepted as a matter of fact. In this regard suffice it to say that, for example, his idea about the supposed missionary progress of Jogaila across Lithuania in 1387 received much credit and gained a wide currency among professional as well as amateurish historians. It has been suggested that the very direction of this trip can be deduced from the list of the seven churches, a list which points towards the east.\(^\text{35}\) This idea is repeated constantly despite Jogaila’s itinerary, as reconstructed by Antoni Gąsiorowski. This scholar did not trust Długosz’s account and supplied well-based evidence showing that upon his arrival in Lithuania late in 1386, Jogaila met the New Year of 1387 in Vilnius, he was in Merkinė in March, hunted in April, returned in Vilnius in June and from there moved to Lida and at the very beginning of July reached Lublin.\(^\text{36}\) A question of why Jogaila founded the first churches, say, in Haina and Oboltsy and not in such prominent Lithuanian localities as Trakai or Kaunas, has also exercised historians. Various answers have been given: some scholars were of opinion that the passing over of important Lithuanian towns can be taken as an argument showing that ‘the churches must have already been established there at some earlier date’.\(^\text{37}\) Other scholars noticed that these seven churches were established on the territory of the duchies of Vilnius or Vitebsk alone and this would not have occurred by chance because these territorial units were those over

\(^{34}\) See e.g. J. Ochmański, ‘Powstanie, rozwój i kryzys sieci parafialnej w diecezji Wileńskiej od chrystianizacji Litwy w roku 1387 do przełomu XVI–XVII wieku’ Roczniki Humanistyczne, 38, no. 2 (1990), pp. 23–28.

\(^{35}\) Ochmański, Biskupstwo Wileńskie, p. 59. In my opinion, the reading of this source in such a manner is one of a number of indications showing a semi-conscious sense of mission on the part of some Polish historians who feel obliged to pay reverence to and identify themselves with Poland’s mission civilisatrice to the East even at the expense of presenting medieval realities as far as it could be done in the present state of research.

\(^{36}\) A. Gąsiorowski, Itinerarium króla Władysława Jagielly 1386–1434 (Warsaw, 1972), pp. 29–30.

\(^{37}\) Ivinskis, ‘Lietuvos krikšto problema’, p. 84.
which Jogaila wielded direct rule.\textsuperscript{38} All these instances show how much influence can be exerted even on critically minded historians by a medieval piece of information when its true nature escapes a scholar’s attention due to insufficient heed being paid to contextual evidence. As we shall see, Długosz’s account cannot provide any positive or negative arguments regarding the existence of the churches in the towns of Trakai or Kaunas, for example, nor does it seem to have some special relationship to the territorial structure of Lithuania of the time.

We have already noticed the internal discrepancy in the thesis as it was advanced by Ochmański, a discrepancy that has not been removed even by a more recent revision from Olczak. Therefore we maintain that all attempts to treat the Długosz account at face value must be viewed very cautiously. It must be said that the caution of this kind has already been demonstrated by the modern editors of the \textit{Annals}, who did not fail to notice, that with the exception of the prominent Lithuanian chronicler Maciej Stryjkowski, who in this regard followed closely in the footsteps of Długosz, nobody else makes this claim.\textsuperscript{39} However disputable the Długosz account may appear, no scholar, as far as we know, has ever tried to explain what message Długosz was trying to convey when he talked about the first seven parish churches in Lithuania. We must emphasize that we are not going to advance anything more than a working hypothesis, an attempt to understand Jan Długosz in his own terms, without any claims to find the final truth and without subscribing to the cult of ‘fact’ as it had been practised by historians in sway to positivist scholarship. We are certain that other scholars may well propose a better approach and provide deeper insights.

The topos of seven churches in Christian literature There is no need to say that the number seven is often met with in Christian literary sources and bears a significant symbolic charge. We know of the seven virtues and seven mortal sins, seven sacraments, a book with seven seals, seven angels and seven kings, to give but a few examples, all this is a current feature from the very beginnings of Christian writing. All in all, number seven stands a symbol for perfection and universality.

\textsuperscript{38} Cf. E. Gudavičius, \textit{Lietuvos istorija}, vol. 1: \textit{Nuo seniausių laikų iki 1569 metų} (Vilnius, 1999), p. 166.

\textsuperscript{39} Dlugossii, \textit{Annales, liber decimus}, p. 344.
It seems that the Book of Revelation provides the earliest example of seven churches (Rev. 1.4–3.22), a book that is full of other examples of ‘sevenfold’ phenomena. All these examples received attention from a number of later exegetes, who paved the way for the diffusion of this motif in Christian writings and imagination. The Revelation of St John was addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor, and this number was later meant to signify the Church Universal.\textsuperscript{40} We may suppose that this symbolic meaning of the seven churches could not have been unknown to Długosz, who was a man with some theological background. It is not beyond the probable to imagine that this apocalyptic symbol could be significant to this chronicler as he set to write about the conversion of the last pagans of Europe.

The topos of the seven churches is to be found in a number of legendary, historiographical and hagiographical works. The legend of St Thomas tells us that he converted a multitude of Indian brahmins and set up the first seven churches in India.\textsuperscript{41} The same motif recurs in the works that are less apocryphic in their nature. In our opinion, the legends surrounding Emperor Constantine the Great (306–337) may have served as an important source of inspiration for the then diffusion of this topos, next to the Book of Revelation. The Liber Pontificalis (5–6 centuries A.D.) contains a Roman legend about the setting up of the seven basilicas in Rome by Constantine the Great.\textsuperscript{42} Modern scholars have largely confirmed the veracity of this legend, despite the fact that a number of the foundations by Constantius II (337–361) were attributed by posterity to his father. Most of the said basilicas were founded during the pontificate of Pope Silvester I (314–335).\textsuperscript{43} They were erected in the ecclesiastical districts of Rome whose administration had lain in the hands of deacons

\textsuperscript{40} For the actual circumstances of the writing of the Book of Revelation by John see: C.J. Hemer, \textit{The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting} (Sheffield, 1986).

\textsuperscript{41} S.H. Moffet, \textit{A History of Christianity in Asia}, vol. 1: \textit{Beginnings to 1500} (San Francisco, 1992), p. 34.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Le Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction et commentaire}, ed. L. Duchesne (Paris, 1955), p. 172 (Lateran Basilica), 176 (St Peter’s Basilica), 178 (St Paul’s Basilica), 179 (Holy Cross Basilica \textit{in palatio Sessoriano}), 180 (St Agnes’ Basilica), 181 (St Lawrence’s Basilica), 182 (Ss Marcellinus and Peter the Exorcist).

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. C. Pietri, \textit{Roma Christiana. Recherches sur l’Eglise de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III} (311–440) (Rome, 1976), vol. 1, p. 8.
from the first centuries of Christianity. The main function of these officials was to collect alms and distribute them to the needy and afflicted. It looks likely that such social support system started to be organised by Pope Fabian (236–250) in the middle of the third century.\textsuperscript{44} There is evidence showing the liturgical significance of these districts already in the times of Pope Simplicius (468–483) at the end of the fifth century.\textsuperscript{45} In later centuries these basilicas were accorded patriarchal status and played a significant role in the assembly of liturgical celebrations and processions in Rome.\textsuperscript{46} Given the fact that the fame of Constantine the Great was ever bright in the later centuries, we may suppose that his way of establishing church organisation, – even if it was later applied to him by grateful posterity, – served as a paradigmatic model for other rulers to follow or for their panegyrists to show them to have followed it. Archbishop Theophylact of Ohrid in his \textit{vita} of his predecessor, St Clement, said with regard to the first Christian khan of Bulgaria, Boris–Michael (852–889), that he built the first seven churches in Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{47} Referring to the Cyrillo-Methodian mission Christian, the author of the \textit{Vita et passio sancti Wenceslai et sancte Ludmile ave eius}, noticed that Archbishop Methodius had seven suffragan bishops under his rule.\textsuperscript{48} Late and very far from trustworthy legend depicts the apostle-like Vladimir of Rus’ as having established the first seven bishoprics in Rus’.\textsuperscript{49} The \textit{Annales Hildesheimenses} provide the same tenet in their description of the Gniezno meeting of 1000 between Emperor Otto III (996–1002) and the Polish ruler,

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p. 134.  
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p. 650.  
\textsuperscript{46} H. Geertman, \textit{Hic fecit basilicam. Studi sul Liber Pontificalis e gli edifici ecclesiastici di Roma da Silvestro a Silverio} (Leuven, 2004), pp. 17–24.  
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca}, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, undated), vol. 126, col. 1229–1230.  
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Legenda Christiani. Vita et passio sancti Wenceslai et sancte Ludmile ave eius}, Chapter 1: ‘Ipse autem beatus Quirillus inibi persistens monachicumque habitum suscipientis, diem clausit extremum, relinquens supra memoratiss in partibus fratrem suum nomine Metudium, virum strennuum omnique decoratum sanctitae. Qui et postquam multos Christi domini manipulos in horreo congregarat, ab ipso principc, qui partibus in illis tunc dominabatur et imperabat universe terre ceu magnificus imperator, statuitur summus pontifex, habens sub se septem eiusdem sanctitatis pontifices.’ (in: http://www.sendme.cz/trestik/kristianedice.htm [accessed on 20.01.2008]).  
\textsuperscript{49} A.P. Vlasto, \textit{The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom} (Cambridge, 1970), p. 263.
Boleslaw the Brave (992–1025). It is known that in the course of this meeting a Polish ecclesiastical province with five bishoprics was established. The *Annales Hildesheimenses* tell us that the dispositions were made concerning the seven bishoprics. It is true that there is a discussion between Johannes Fried and Gerard Labuda regarding the veracity of the account of this source, which is enigmatic in some regards. Both scholars, despite their rather different treatment of the ‘event’ in Gniezno in 1000, seem to view the news about the seven bishoprics as quite a reliable piece of information. Labuda thinks that the the number seven is to be taken seriously as the decisions at Gniezno really affected the five Polish bishoprics plus two in Bohemia (Prague) and Moravia (Olomouc). At the same time, this scholar doubts the claim in *Annales Hildesheimenses* that Otto III had originally planned to establish a metropolitan church for all Slavdom in Prague. Be that as it may, in our opinion there is no adequate consideration given to the symbolic nature of the tenet of the seven churches. This digression must be kept in mind to show that number seven may correspond to actual reality, but very often it corresponds to virtual reality.

Legendary, hagiographic and historiographic sources are not the only ones in which one can find the familiar tenet. Pope Clement V, while enumerating the atrocities perpetrated by the knights of the Teutonic Order, had recourse to a very similar cliché by remarking that the seven diocesan Churches of the Metropolitan Church of Riga had been totally destroyed and the other seven were reduced to miserable existence by the said knights. Another instance can be provided by some later case. Having conquered Red Rus’, the Polish king, Casimir III the Great (1333–1370), informed the Pope in 1349 that there was a possibility for establishing seven vast dioceses and a metropolitan see in this land. In this case the talk

50 *Annales Hildesheimenses, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. 3, ed. G.H. Pertz (Hanover, 1839), p. 92.
51 J. Fried, *Otton III i Bolesław Chrobry. Miniatura dedykacyjna z Ewangeliarza z Akwizgranu, zjazd gnieźnieński a królestwa polskie i węgierskie. Analiza ikonograficzna i wnioski historyczne* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 94–97.
52 G. Labuda, ‘Aspekty polityczne i kościelne tzw. zjazdy gnieźnieńskiego w roku 1000’, *Ziemie Polskie w X wieku i ich znaczenie w kształtowaniu się nowej mapy Europy*, ed. H. Samsonowicz (Cracow, 2000) pp. 27–28.
53 *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, I, ed. A. Theiner (Rome, 1860), no. 204, p. 119 (19 June 1310).
54 Ibid., no. 702, p. 532 (This information is repeated in the bull of Pope Clement VI issued on 14 March 1351, and addressed to the Polish clergy).
concerned the establishment of the new ecclesiastical province in Rus’ian lands. This was an aim which received much attention from Casimir the Great in his pursuit of Eastern policy. It is not our intention to follow in detail what the difference between these plans and their implementation was. Suffice it to say that the Długosz account about the first seven churches in Lithuania has meaningful precursors. In either case the talk concerns the inception of church organisation in a particular country. It is necessary and even indispensable to note that Długosz exploited the same motif when he described the establishment of Polish ecclesiastical province in the times of Mieszko I (ca. 960–992). Under the year 966 he recorded that Mieszko I established two metropolitan sees at Gniezno and Kraków and seven bishoprics. In our case it is not essential that this news was not precise, the essential thing is that Długosz made use of the already well-known topos. While trying to understand Długosz better, it is worth drawing attention to the context in which the *Annales* were composed. Upon finishing his chronicle, Jan Długosz entrusted his favourite work to be kept and continued by professors of the Jagiellonian University. One of the predecessors of these professors, Mikołaj Kozłowski, was an expert on Jogaila, like Jan Długosz himself. In his obituary speech pronounced before the Fathers of the Council of Basel on occasion of the recent death of Jogaila, Kozłowski extolled him for his efforts in converting the Lithuanians to Christian faith and compared him with King Solomon, to the disadvantage of the latter, of course. While King Solomon built only one temple, that of Jerusalem, King Jogaila surpassed him considerably in having built one metropolitan church and at least seven diocesan churches. When we compare these dithyrambs with the rather dry account of Jan Długosz we gain impression that the latter author simply cut Jogaila down to size, which, in the eyes of Jan Długosz, he deserved. Długosz could not fail to grasp that Jogaila’s contemporaries were inclined to regard him as the New Constantine: already the king of the Romans, Sigismund of Luxembourg flatteringly compared the deeds of Jogaila in bringing

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55 W. Abraham, *Powstanie organizacyi Kościoła Łacińskiego na Rusi* (Lwów, 1904), pp. 230–231.
56 Długossii, *Annales, liber primus, liber secundus*, ed. D. Turkowska (Warsaw, 1964), p. 179.
57 *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2 (1382–1445), ed. A. Lewicki [*Monumenta Medii Aevi Historica*, vol. 12] (Cracow, 1891), p. 327.
the Żemaitians to the Catholic fold to those of Emperor Constantine in making Rome a Christian Empire. 58 He could not fail to understand that Pope Urban VI by applying to Jogaila the epithet of ‘the most Christian ruler’ in his bull of March 12, 1388, did touch upon the Constantinian theme. 59 For in the Middle Ages it was usually enough for a ruler to be converted to Christianity to become a New Constantine. 60 At the same time we must remember that Długosz did not like Jogaila and his House and was happy to find and insert denigrating evidence whenever he thought fit, 61 but even he could not cast out of hand all ‘Solomonic’ or ‘Constantinian’ features as he met them on the way of his digressions. It is possible to think that he did well to depict Jogaila as a miniature of Constantine the Great in which direct identity is blurred and thus some guesswork on the part of a modern historian is inevitable.

By now it has already become quite clear that in his depiction of the Lithuanian conversion, Długosz made recourse to the universally known tenet of the seven churches. To illustrate this tenet with particular place names, Długosz, in all probability, made use of some verbal source, which could provide him with some knowledge of the churches that had already been there in his own days. It is highly improbable that Długosz was eager to be precise chronologically in their enumeration, nor does he seem to have felt any need of consulting documentary evidence, foundation charters and so on, since these were to be found in a place too far from Cracow and even outside Poland. Numerical and chronological precision was not his chief concern when some kind of ideological message was at stake. When we call to mind prolific theories and playful digressions about the supposed apostolic journey undertaken by Jogaila and chartered out by Jan Długosz, one must suspect that a number of historians have forgotten the rule that medieval chroniclers did not compose their works to suit the needs of later scholarship, and in this regard Jan Długosz is no exception to the rule. As far as we
know, among Polish and Lithuanian historians only the art historian Janina Kalinowska devoted sufficient attention to the symbolism of the seven churches.62 The question of what Jogaila did in 1387 was touched upon by her only in passing, as it did not constitute the central theme of her research, and she seems to have supposed that Jogaila did consciously establish the first seven churches in 1387.63 We must admit that this theory is very tantalising indeed and we are ready to subscribe to it, if and when documentary evidence could be brought to light. Thus far, in the absence of compelling arguments in favour of this theory, we are disposed to say that this theory is too fine to be true. Our above enumerated arguments do not allow us to believe that Jogaila followed a prescribed scheme of action in 1387 and it looks very likely that Długosz invented this ideological programme, or rather, tenet long after Jogaila was dead. Reliable sources allow us to suppose that the establishment of churches started in Lithuania in 1387 and it evolved as a continuous undertaking, which took place for centuries to come.

**After solving (at least, partly) the riddle posed by Długosz** When we arrive at the conclusion that Długosz’s account of the first seven churches in Lithuania has no solid factual basis, then other late-medieval sources, no matter how scanty they are today, increase in their relative importance. In this regard the well-known mandates by Jogaila of 1389 to his local administrators of grand-ducal property must be treated more seriously.64 The Polish king and Lithuanian grand duke ordered his local governors to provide everything necessary to the bishop and his priests in whatever of their districts a church had already been built or would be constructed in the future. These mandates demonstrate that the first bishop of Vilnius, Andrzej Jastrzębiec OFM, must have played a significant role in setting up the first Christian communities in Lithuania. It is to be assumed that the first Christian communities must have been founded in the most populous towns or settlements, but where and when, with the exception of Obolstsy, Medininkai and Bistryčia and some others, we do not know exactly because of the lack of necessary evidence. We may also admit that in some localities provisional churches could have been built within a few years of the Lithuanian conversion.

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62 J. Kalinowska, ‘Mysterium septiformis ecclesiae’, *Analecta Cracoviensia*, 23 (1991), pp. 307–324.

63 Ibid., p. 314.

64 *KDKDW*, no. 15, pp. 28–29 (1 Jan. 1389) and no. 16, pp. 29–30 (1 Jan. 1389).
The knights of the Teutonic Order were accused at the Council of Constance of having burned down the churches of neophytes in Lithuania during their raids which did not subside after 1387. In their turn the knights tried to clear themselves of such accusations by saying that such churches were hard to distinguish from the homesteads of boyars and Orthodox churches. It looks likely that such an excuse may contain a substance of truth, as it is really hard to imagine that Lithuanians could have afforded to build lavish churches in the early decades of Christian Lithuania. Local communities had to make ends meet with what they had at hand. This precarious situation was bound to change only after the battle of Grunwald (1410) had been won and peaceful conditions in ethnic Lithuanian territory came to be the order of the day.

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JONAS DLUGOŠAS IR PIRMOSIOS SEPTYNIOS PARAPINĖS BAŽNYČIOS LIETUVOJE
Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama lenkų kronikininko Jono Dlugošo (1415–1480) pateikiamą žiną apie pirmąsias septynias parapines bažnyčias Lietuvoje. Rašydamas apie lietuvių krikštą 1387 m., šis kronikininkas nurodė, kad tais pačiais metais Lenkijos karalius ir Lietuvos didysis kunigaikštis Jogaila pastatė pirmąsias parapines bažnyčias Ukmergėje, Maišiagaloje, Nemenčinėje, Medininkuose (Rytų Lietuvoje), Krėvoje, Obolcuose ir Ainoje. Dauguma tiek Lenkijos, tiek Lietuvos istorikų, tyrusių Katalikų bažnyčios Lietuvoje įsikūrimo pradinį etapą, laikė šią žinią patikimu ir net autentišku. Šiame straipsnyje parodoma, kad dokumentiniai šaltiniai neleidžia tokios informacijos priimtų už gryną pinigų. Pasitelkus daug pavyzdžių, nušviečiančių bažnytinės organizacijos kūrimą kituose kraštuose, nustatyta, kad Jonas Dlugošas pasinaudojo gana plačiai paplitusiu motyvu, kurio nereikia suprasti paraidžiui kaip tam tikros konkretaus veiksmo (ar veiksmų, atliktų
1387 m.) konstatacijos. Septynių bažnyčių motyvą reikia traktuoti kaip simbolinę išraiškos priemonę, kuria pasakoma, kad Katalikų bažnyčia įsikūrė konkrečiame krašte, mūsų atveju – Lietuvoje. Septynių bažnyčių motyvas, pirmą kartą krikščioniškoje raščioje paširodęs *Apreiškime Jonui*, Viduramžių rašytojams tapo vienu iš daugelio sektinų pavyzdžių (*toposu*). Mūsų nuomone, tas faktas, kad Jogailos amžininkai ji lygino su Romos imperatoriumi Konstantinu Didžiuoju, galėjo būti palanki aplinkybė, kuri galėjo paskatinti ir Joną Dlugošą pasitelkti minėtą septynių bažnyčių motyvą. Straipsnio pabaigoje pabrėžiama, kad aiškinantis Katalikų bažnyčios kūrimosi pradžią Lietuvoje, reikėtų remtis autentiškais vienalaikiais šaltiniais, kurių pagrindu parapinių bažnyčių steigimosi procesas išryškėja kaip spontaniškas ir tęstinis. Manome, kad pirmųjų bažnyčių fundatoriai turėjo vadovautis pirmiausia sielovados reikmėmis naujai christianizuojamame krašte, bet ne „gražia“ teorija, kurią sukūrė Jonas Dlugošas.