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*Pilgrim cults in the Latin and Uniate dioceses of Chełm in the 16th-18th centuries in the light of the books of miracles*

In the post-Trident period (16th-18th centuries), there were many Marian sanctuaries in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The territorial scope of this dissertation covers the extent of two administrative units – Roman Catholic Diocese of Chełm and Uniate Eparchy of Chełm. The dissertation presents eight sanctuaries located in Chełm, Krasnobród, Krystynopol, Sokal, Tartaków, Tomaszów, Werchrata i Zamość. As historical sources to present the topic were used books of miracles – collections of accounts of extraordinary graces experienced by pilgrims.

The first chapter of the dissertation concerns of the creation and development of the sanctuaries. The beginnings of each place of worship were related to the founding miracle (apparition), which was described in the etiological legend. Subsequently, priests and benefactors undertook the construction of the church and brought the order (e.g. Bernardines, Dominicans, Trinitarians) to take care of the holy place. Documentation related to favors was collected in sanctuaries. The creation of the books of miracles was influenced by the bishop's commissions appointed to approve the cult. Originally handwritten texts were published in print to serve the purpose of promoting cults more widely. The final shape of the works was the responsibility of the editors, mainly well-educated clergymen (e.g. Bishop Jakub Susza, Father Jacek Majewski, Father Ignacy Orłowski, Father Antoni Jezierski).

The second chapter of the dissertation presents statistical data on pilgrimages. The temporal range makes it possible to link the intensification of pilgrimages with events from the history of individual sanctuaries. Information about the origin of pilgrims provides knowledge about the spatial impact of sanctuaries, which was influenced by: the settlement network, the road system in the vicinity of the sanctuary, and especially the competition between pilgrim centers. The social structure shows the involvement of all social classes (nobility, clergy, burghers, peasants) in pilgrimage cults.

The subject of the third chapter is typology of disasters and miracles described in the books. Pilgrims have reported resurrections, healings, and solutions to problems related to injuries, possession, accidents, war dangers, captivity, fires, thefts and animal diseases. In this way, books of miracle provide information about the health condition of the society.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation concerns of attitudes of pilgrims. The sources described the reactions of believers to illness and expected death and showed unreliability of medicine. They provide information about cult practices undertaken by believers (Holy Mass, cross-lying, litanies, water from "miraculous springs", exorcisms and blessings). The healed believers made pilgrimages to the sanctuary, where they received the sacraments, gave their testimony, usually in the presence of witnesses, and signed the special book, which was supposed to perpetuate the grace received. In gratitude for the favors received, the pilgrims offered votive offerings (silver and gold plaques, cash donations or crutches).

The fifth chapter of the dissertation presents the image of sacrum in books of miracles. Some of the believers had deep contact with the supernatural world through visions, dreams, voices from heaven, others observed bloody tears appearing in miraculous images. The Blessed Virgin Mary depicted in these images was referred to by many titles that were recorded in the books of miracles (Mother of God, Virgin, Queen, Mother of Mercy, Mother of divine grace). Believers attributed to Mary the work of miracles, subjecting her images to deep sacralization, and sometimes anthropomorphization.