

The project aims at reconsidering the political relations between the Piast monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire in the early and high Middle Ages. The research on that topic has a long tradition going back to the early 19th century. It was, however, carried out on the margins of studies concerning various aspects or events in the history of medieval Poland and has not resulted in any more extensive works presenting Polish-German relations in a broader time framework. The project is going to fulfil that gap and present Polish-German relations between the mid-10th century and the late 12th century.

To date, research on relations between the Piast monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire has analysed them mainly in terms of constitutional history in its conventional sense, with main emphasis placed on indicating legal norms designed to regulate them and put in a strictly defined framework. In that regard, the decisive role is assigned to feudal law, perceived as the basic legal principle supposed to define not just the rules of the functioning of the social and political order of medieval polities but also the ways of shaping political relations in the 'international' arena. As a result, discussions on the relations of the Piast monarchy and the Empire used to focus primarily on the existence or lack of feudal dependence of Polish rulers from German ones. The essence of the Polish-German relations between the 10th and 12th centuries was supposed to be defined by, on the one hand, renewed, with various intensity, attempts of German rulers to impose their feudal overlordship on Piast rulers and, on the other hand, efforts of the latter seeking to retain their country's independence.

The proposed project offers a fundamental revision of the static image of Polish-German relations. The performance of that task is motivated by the results of research developing in medieval studies over recent decades concerning the understanding of the notion of a state in the early and high Middle Ages, the development of feudal law or the importance of symbolic communication in public life back then, particularly ritual activities. Those results have questioned the truth value of a number of basic premises, seen as obvious and unquestionable, on which studies on relations of the Piast monarchy and the Empire have been based thus far. They suggest a need to move away from the traditional approach, thus far dominant in research on the relations of the Piast monarchy with the Empire, presenting them from the point of view of constitutional history as legal constructs. They prove there is a need to take up again studies on the subject, leading to placing it in a much broader context taking much more into consideration the complicated and dynamic nature of the political reality of the 10th-12th centuries. The so defined project premises require referring to comparative studies. In the research to date, the comparative perspective has been taken into to a very limited extent. In that respect, too, the proposed project aims at a major change of the approach taking into consideration political relations linking the Empire with its other neighbours and other 'international' relations. As a result, the project offers an entirely new way of looking at the political relations of the Piast monarchy with the Empire between the second half of the 10th and the end of the 12th century, presented against a broad comparative backdrop, taking into account a complex context of various forms of shaping political relations as well as ritualised behaviours manifesting them, which constituted medieval reality.