

The project will focus on the relationship of the Romanesque architecture in Poland (11th-13th centuries) with the reforms of the Church carried out at that time. The most important thesis of this project assumes that actions undertaken in the Catholic Church aimed at institutional renewal, taking on a primarily monastic character, influenced the architectural forms of church buildings, meeting new needs: liturgical (pertaining to the users of the buildings) or ideological ones (pertaining to the founders and initiators of the reforms). I will define such architecture as the so-called reformed architecture. As the reforms mainly concerned monastic communities, monastic architecture (of Benedictines, Premonstatensians, Canons Regular) will be an essential area of study, although it does not exhaust the discussed group of buildings, which also includes cathedrals and collegiate churches.

The primary research objective will therefore be a multifaceted analysis of buildings of this time in Poland against the background of the groups of „reformed architecture” in Western Europe, as distinguished in the literature to date (Hirsaugian architecture, Cluniac architecture, etc.). The project will focus on the architecture of 19 Romanesque churches in Poland built in the 11th-13th centuries (Benedictine churches and connected: Tyniec, Mogilno, Lubin, Ołbin, Święty Krzyż, Płock, and St. Gereon’s Church on Wawel Hill in Cracow; Premonstratensians churches: Ołbin, Strzelno; churches of the Canons Regular: Czerwińsk, Trzemeszno, Piasek in Wrocław; cathedrals: Poznań, Gniezno, Kraków, Wrocław, Płock; collegiate churches: Opatów, Tum pod Łęczycą, Kruszwica). In the analysis PI will focus on the problem of typology (architectural form of the church) and style (architectural detail, sculpture).

The basic method of research will be a comparative formal and stylistic analysis, leading to the identification of the genesis of individual architectural arrangements. The specific character of the research’s subject (works of architecture that are almost a thousand years old, repeatedly transformed and destroyed, often preserved as relics or even “negative” traces of foundations) necessitates an interdisciplinary approach. In addition to the methods of art history, it will be necessary to utilize archaeological methods (especially stratigraphic research), as well as the purely historical analysis (criticism of historical sources). Such an interdisciplinary approach (already advocated at the end of the 20th century) will minimize the risk of failure of the planned research and protect from coming up with conclusions that cannot withstand criticism undertaken from the perspective of different disciplines.

The described above phenomenon has not been researched in relation to architecture in Poland. Defining the relationship between Church reforms and Romanesque sacral architecture in Poland will deepen our understanding of its pan-European context and significance. The project will also define this issue in relation to the buildings constructed in the so-called “Younger Europe” (i.e. early Piast, Přemyslid, and Arpad states, that is, Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary, respectively). My planned research will also broaden the understanding of the historical significance of internal reformatory movements in the universal Church in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.

The innovativeness of the project thus lies primarily in the introduction of an innovative point of reference – the impact of the reforms of the Church – into the study of an already classic issue (early medieval church architecture in Poland, already analysed since the mid-19th century), in order to determine its hitherto overlooked artistic character, social impact and historical significance. This, in turn, will broaden our understanding of the Church reforms themselves, which were not limited solely to spiritual and political matters, for they also had a multifaceted impact on culture and the arts, including architecture in particular. The planned research will therefore be relevant not only for art historians but also for archaeologists and historians of various specialties.