

Transmission and Reception of European Emblematic Patterns in the Decoration of Cistercian Abbeys in Poland

Emblematics developed a special system of signs-symbols, based on commonly known and established concepts, which were expressed by means of the same or slightly modified artistic imagery. Theoreticians, but also practitioners of the genre believed that it deserved to be called science rather than art. In reality, however, it is difficult to find more variety than can be observed in emblematic works. The emblematics produced in the monastic environment was, moreover, a remarkable combination of tradition and innovation at the iconographic and intellectual level, documenting the changes taking place in the mentality and spirituality of successive generations.

When visiting Cistercian abbeys in Lubiąż, Land, Pelplin, Wąchock, Sulejów, Rudy, Toruń, Gościkowo-Paradyż or Henryków you can see intriguing polychromy or beautifully decorated stalls. The portrayals consisting of an image and a motto are emblems which, in the idea of the classic of this genre, Renaissance master Andreas Alciatus, were to combine fine art and the art of the word, probably in order to speak more strongly than each of these elements appearing separately. Indeed, in his theoretical studies, the emblematic form was conceived as a three-part portrayal (inscription-picture-subscription), however, the application of this theory to the decoration of sacred objects was usually limited to the first two elements. Although these works of art in the above-mentioned monastic complexes still delight, inspire and carry numerous mysteries, we do not find any comprehensive study of them in the literature. This project will make it possible to bridge this gap.

Hence, its main objective is to analyse and interpret emblematic decoration programmes in Cistercian abbeys based on emblematic books and compendia created in Europe from the 16th to 18th century. Emblem studies will take into account realisations from the territory of the present-day Poland, thanks to which examples related to the Republic of Poland will be presented in a broader cultural context, important in the field of *emblem studies*.

The next aim is to indicate the patterns of emblematic decoration. The sources concerning the abbeys in question have partly been destroyed and partly are scattered in diocesan and national archives and abroad, and it is difficult to find records in the chronicles e.g. concerning the maker of a given work and his workshop. The present research was conceived as a reconstruction of emblem programmes, taking into account the foundations of the works, their authors and the graphic patterns in the emblem books.

The programme also addresses issues of reception and reception. The placement of emblematic decoration in sacred space was never accidental. Emblems were supposed to have not only decorative but also didactic functions. The creator of an emblematic programme knew very well what content he wanted to convey through it and to whom it was dedicated, which was often evidenced by the place where it was placed (choir, chapterhouse, stalls). An additional objective is to determine the function of emblematic programmes in the period of their creation and in modern times.

The project will result in the preparation of a comprehensive English-language publication devoted to the emblematic programmes found in Cistercian abbeys located within the contemporary borders of Poland. Based on the emblem books, the meaning of each emblem will be discussed and then a comprehensive interpretation of the programmes found in each abbey will be presented. The publication will allow for an innovative presentation of the Cistercian culture and spirituality in close connection with church and monastery decoration, as well as filling a gap in the conducted research on the Cistercian heritage and enriching the Polish studies on applied emblems. A catalogue of emblems from Cistercian abbeys will also be created (in Polish, English and German), which will be placed on an internet platform and can serve as a tool for historians, art historians, cultural, literary and theological experts. Once the project has been completed, the catalogue can be expanded to include emblematic programmes found in other religious congregations and diocesan churches. The project will therefore be useful in recognising the phenomenon of emblems used in the Republic of Poland and in today's Poland.