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DOI: 10.15290/dhmgz.03.2025.17

## Jan Długosz jako nauczyciel św. Kazimierza jako młodego księcia: metafizyczne znaczenie dynastii Jagiellonów dla polsko-litewskiego dziedzictwa

### **Jan Długosz as the Teacher of St. Kazimierz as a Young Prince: The Metaphysical Meaning of the Jagiellonian Dynasty for the Polish-Lithuanian Legacy**

**STRESZCZENIE:** Artykuł omawia rozwój chrystianizmu na Litwie i sposób, w jaki zostało to opisane przez historyka Jana Długosza, nauczyciela księcia Kazimierza Jagiellończyka, który został świętym katolickim oraz jego braci. Ponadto, aby odpowiedzieć na pytanie: co to znaczy być wielkim pedagogiem? wykorzystano alegorię jaskini z siódmej księgi *Republiki* Platona. Platon uważał, że edukacja nie polega na przekazywaniu informacji uczniom, ale na pomaganiu im w formułowaniu sposobu, w jaki patrzą na świat. Długosz, jako pedagog przyszłego świętego, nie tylko dzielił się z uczniami faktami na temat dziadka Władysława Jagiełły i innych postaci historycznych, ale pomagał im także kształtować poglądy. Aby rozplątać węzły religijności na Litwie, w niniejszym artykule podjęto refleksję nad metafizycznym znaczeniem dynastii Jagiellonów, do której należeli polscy królowie i wielcy książęta litewscy oraz Święty Kazimierz. Niektórzy byli dobrymi przywódcami politycznymi. Symbol Świętego Kazimierza z krzyżykiem w prawej ręce i lilią w lewej ręce w ujęciu metafizycznym oznacza syntezę polskiego chrześcijaństwa i litewskiego pogaństwa, czyli bliskości natury.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** chrześcijaństwo, chrzest Litwy, krzyż, lilie, świętość natury

**ABSTRACT:** This article discusses the Christianisation of Lithuania and how it was represented by the historian Jan Długosz, the teacher of Prince Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, who became a Catholic saint, and his brothers. Furthermore, the allegory of the cave in the seventh book of Plato's Republic is utilised to answer the following question: What does it mean to be a great pedagogue? Plato thought that education was not about giving information to students but about helping them formulate the way they look at the world. As a pedagogue of a future saint, Długosz not only shared facts about his students' grandfather, the King Władysław Jagiełło, and other historical figures but also helped them form their sight. To try to untangle the knot of Lithuanian religiosity, this article reflects on the metaphysical meaning of the Jagellonian dynasty, which included Polish kings and Grand Dukes of Lithuania, some of whom were good political leaders, and Saint Kazimierz. Furthermore, the metaphysical meaning of the symbolic representation of St. Kazimierz with a crucifix in his right hand and a lily in his left hand is understood as a synthesis of the Polish Christianity and the Lithuanian pagan virtue of nearness to nature.

**KEYWORDS:** Christianity, baptism of Lithuania, cross, flowers of lily, sanctity of nature

Poland adopted Christianity in 966, while the full Christianisation of Lithuania occurred four centuries later. The baptism of Lithuania in 1387 was not only a spiritual endeavour but also a political attempt and choice. Samogitia was baptised in 1413. By adopting the version of Christianity in Rome, Lithuania became part of the Christian civilisation in Latin Europe. In the Middle Ages, the Roman pope was the most important political leader in Latin Europe. To be legitimate rulers, the kings of European states needed the pope to recognise their political status and power. We can only guess what would have happened if Lithuania had adopted the version of Christianity in Byzantium and become part of the Eastern Greek Christianity. We can say for sure that it was later swallowed by Russia. The Union of Krewa [układ w Krewie] with the Kingdom of Poland saved Lithuania and it made a Western Catholic country. It also led to close ties with Poland, hindered the Russification of Lithuania and enabled the Latinisation of the country.

The histories and cultures of Lithuania and Poland as Christian countries differ. For example, Lithuania first knew of Christianity

due to the Teutonic Knights, who devastated the land in the name of Christianisation. Even in the 20th century, Lithuanians were not very comfortable as Christians, and the pagan part of the Lithuanian identity was expressed in folk songs and legends. In contrast, the Polish national identity is openly Catholic, and Poles do not feel conflicted about having a Christian identity, as Lithuanians sometimes do.

Regarding music, Krzysztof Penderecki, the great Polish composer of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, was openly Christian, and, like the work of Johann Sebastian Bach and other European composers, Christian themes made Penderecki's work culturally intersubjective. This means that other Christian nations can recognise the Christian structures in Penderecki's music. In fact, his music is played in concert halls in various countries and in Hollywood movies. Meanwhile, the greatest Lithuanian composer of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Bronius Kutavičius, wrote the Last Pagan Rite, a musical oratory with lyrics by Sigitas Geda, the great Lithuanian poet. This work, which is highly regarded in Lithuania, reflects aspects of the country's pagan past and is rooted in its folklore. It manifests Lithuania's ethnic uniqueness and the religiosity of nature, but it is not intersubjective because it does not contain the Christian structures found in the music of other European nations.

This article aims to untangle the knot of Lithuanian religiosity by reflecting on the metaphysical meaning of the Jagellonian dynasty, which included Polish kings and Grand Dukes of Lithuania, some of whom were good political leaders, as well as Saint Kazimierz Jagiellończyk. This article attempts to defend the risky hypothesis that the Jagiellonian dynasty represented a synthesis of the Polish Christianity and the Lithuanian pagan virtue of nearness to nature. This synthesis is symbolised in the images of Saint Kazimierz in which he is holding a cross in his right hand and a lily in his left hand.

Another thread of this knot is Jan Długosz, a great Polish historian who wrote in Latin and taught Saint Kazimierz (when he was a young prince) as well as his brothers. Długosz helped Prince Kazimierz to shape his soul and his way of looking at the world by teaching him facts about Polish and Lithuanian history. In this context, this article draws on Plato's Republic to answer the following question: What does it mean to be a good pedagogue?

## Christianisation of Lithuania by Jagiełło and Vytautas

Jagiełło grew up observing the pagan faith of his father, Algirdas, the grand duke of Lithuania. On August 14, 1385, Jagiełło, who was then the grand duke of Lithuania, entered into the aforementioned Union of Kreva with Poland. In 1386, at the age of 34, he was baptised in Kraków, taking the name Władysław, and he married Jadwiga of Poland and became the king of Poland. When Jagiełło became the king, he established the Jagellonian dynasty, which was unique because it represented a merger of Christian and Pagan traditions. It was also a significant step in the Christianisation of Lithuania. Historians have said that he was a good king.

In 1387, King Jagiełło and his cousin Vytautas (Witold), a national hero of Lithuania, baptised the Lithuanian nation. Długosz<sup>1</sup> described the baptism as follows:

Since Władysław, the king of Poland, at the conclusion of the treaty with the Polish kingdom and Queen Jadwiga, [was] obliged by oath to turn the Lithuanian people and the country from idolatry and pagan superstition to the worship of the one true God and to the confession of the Catholic faith, and since the king, more than all the other aspirations of his soul, burned with the desire to spread the Catholic faith, he went to Lithuania to baptise it.

During the ceremony, the temple of Perun, which was the religious centre of the Lithuanian paganism, was demolished. The temple had been located in Vilnius (Wilno) near Gediminas' castle on the left bank of the Neris River and beneath a sacred grove of oak trees. In the same year, Jagiełło built a brick Christian cathedral where the temple had stood. This cathedral, which has been reconstructed several times over the centuries, and is still standing today. Długosz<sup>2</sup> described the destruction of the temple as follows:

The king also ordered to destroy the temple and the altar on which the sacrifices were slain; moreover, he ordered the groves in the forests, which were considered sacred, to be cut down and their fences broken down; and the water snakes and creepers, which were in every house as

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<sup>1</sup> J. Długosz, *Griunvalskaya bitva*, Moscow–Leningrad 1962, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 10.

the household gods, to be killed and destroyed. Thus, barbarians only weeping and wailing saw off the overthrow and death of their false gods and deities, not daring to grumble at the command of the king.

The statue of Perun, which was a pagan idol, was knocked down and destroyed. In its place, a cross was erected as the emblem of the redemption of Lithuania in Christ. The sacred fire that burned in the temple was swept from the altar by the Catholic clergy and extinguished. Długosz<sup>3</sup> described this as follows:

The sacred fire, which they regarded as eternal and which was kept alive by the priests who put up firewood day and night, was honoured by the barbarians as eternal and preserved in Wilno, the chief city and capital of the people, where the priest, called in their language "znicz", kept it safe and nourished it by diligently putting firewood (and also gave answers to the prayers which asked the deity about the future course of things, as if receiving them from the god). King Wladyslaw ordered it to be extinguished before the eyes of the barbarians.

In addition, armed guards crushed the images of crawling sacred snakes and serpents, "in which, according to the belief of the pagans, the gods invisibly reside". On the purified altar, the clergy placed an image of Our Lady (of Mary). Queen Jadwiga, gazing at the face of the Saviour, held a chalice, which she gave to Jędrzej Wasili Jastrzębiec, also known as Andrzej Wasilko and Andrzej Polak, the first bishop of Vilnius of the newly created diocese by Jagiełło. He was also a monk of the Rule of St. Francis and an eloquent preacher. Furthermore, he had previously worked in the Christian missions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and learned the basics of the Lithuanian language there. Lithuanian historian Edvardas Gudavičius<sup>4</sup> shared the following details about Jagiełło:

The historical tradition handed down by the generation that lived at the time of his death attributes to Jogaila the translation of the prayer "Our Father" into Lithuanian from Polish. This saying should be seen only as an effort to translate it, but it also shows Jogaila's concern for spreading the rudiments of faith.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> E. Gudavičius, *Lietuvos istorija. Nuo seniausių laikų iki 1569 metų*, Vilnius 1999, p. 167.

The Teutonic order did not recognise the baptism of Lithuania and claimed that it was superficial and demonstrative. The Lithuanians were hostile towards the spreading of the Christian faith by the order because the Teutonic knights were devastating the country in the name of Christianity. According to Gudavičius<sup>5</sup>, “Lithuanians did not consider the Polish and Czech clergymen to be the bearers of the German faith, since they spoke a language similar to the Russians they knew, who were also subjects of their ruler”.

Długosz<sup>6</sup> wrote the following description of the effects of the baptism of Lithuania:

When the idols were broken and destroyed and the Lithuanians became convinced of the falsity of their gods and realised that they had been victims of deception up to that time, all [of] the Lithuanian tribe and people agreed, renouncing their ancient delusion, to accept the Christian faith willingly and with obedient devotion.

A few days later, after the Lithuanians had been taught the basics of the true faith – the Lord’s Prayer and the creed – by the Polish priests and the priests of King Jagiełło (for he knew the language of the tribe and people more readily agreed with him), they were revived by the holy water of baptism. At the same time, the common people were given new shirts and pants made of cloth brought from Poland. Thus, through the shrewd mercy and generosity of King Jagiełło, the dark and poorly clothed people, who until then had been content with linen garments, began to flock from all regions in droves to be baptised and to receive woollen clothes. Since baptising each believer separately would have required a great deal of labour, the whole multitude of Lithuanians of both sexes flocking for baptism was divided by order of the king into squads and wedges after their sufficient sprinkling<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, pp. 167-168.

<sup>6</sup> J. Długosz, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, pp. 10-11.

## What does it mean to be a great pedagogue? The Case of Jan Długosz

As the teacher of the royal family, Długosz likely told Prince Kazimierz and his brothers stories of their grandfather, King Jagiełło, emphasising his piety as an example of the way of life they should pursue. Długosz also recognised that Jagiełło and Vytautas spoke Lithuanian. These stories would have affected how Prince Kazimierz viewed the world and prepared him to become a Catholic saint.

This fact leads to the following question: What does it mean to be a great pedagogue? This question can be answered by exploring Plato's Republic, which is concerned with the process of the social and political education of good citizens in a just state. In the beginning of the seventh book, Plato stated that the primary state of humans is prison. Plato imagined prisoners living in an underground cave with an entrance to the outside world at the far end. According to Plato, the prisoners had been living there since childhood with their legs and necks tied up in a way that kept them in one place and only allowed them to look straight ahead without turning their heads. There was firelight behind them and a road along the slope between the fire and the prisoners. Besides the road, there was a low wall, which served as a partition between them and their audience. Above the wall, the prisoners showed tricks. On the other side of the wall, people carried all sorts of artefacts. Plato said that the prisoners were us. Since the prisoners were forced to spend their lives without moving their heads, they saw only the shadows of things. Thus, the shadows constituted their only reality.

Plato argued that education is not about giving information or facts but about guiding students to see the world correctly so that they can discover the facts for themselves. Therefore, a philosopher must break free of the chains of the prison, leave the cave and see the world in the sunshine. Once he or she knows the truth about the things outside the cave, he or she must return to the cave to educate the other prisoners, teaching them to redirect their sight from opinions and guide them towards the truth. The process by which the philosopher-teacher builds the capacity of students to turn their sight towards the truth, which is known as *paideia*, is captured in the following passage from the Republic:

... education is not what that professions of certain men assert it to be. They presumably assert that they put into the soul knowledge that isn't in it, as though they were putting sight into blind eyes.

Yes, he said, "they do indeed assert that.

But the present argument, on the other hand", I said, "indicates that this power is in the soul of each, and that the instrument with which each learns – just as an eye is not able to turn toward the light from the dark without the whole body – must be turned around from that which is *coming into being* together with the whole soul until it is able to ensure looking at that which *is* and the brightest part of that which *is*. And we affirm that this is the good, don't we?

Yes.

There would, therefore, I said, "be an art of this turning around, concerned with the way in which this power can most easily and efficiently be turned around, not an art of producing sight in it. Rather, this art takes as [a] given that sight is there, but not rightly turned nor looking at what it ought to look at, and accomplishes this object<sup>8</sup>.

According to Plato, when disciples correctly see the truths of the world, they can unroll the truthful knowledge of reality by themselves. Therefore, just giving information is a shallow interpretation of the concept of education. However, if students have the wrong way of seeing the world, they will acquire incorrect information by themselves. The problem of education lies in the way in which the seeing of the world is turned from opinion towards the truth. Using an eye metaphor, Plato said that when the eye is looking in the wrong direction, i.e. towards opinion, it sees shadows. An educator turns the eye from opinion and shadows towards the truths of the world. The procedure that turns the mind towards these truths is *paideia*. Plato said that philosophers acquire *paideia* through long studies of mathematics, which raises reason from empirical multiples to abstract ideas. To have *paideia* is to be capable of correctly judging the things of sciences, art, politics and love.

In this context, Długosz's main tasks were to share historical facts and promote the Christian way of looking at the world. Values, which determine one's vision of the world, come before facts, and they give shape to the facts. Similarly, Plato described the idea of goodness

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<sup>8</sup> Plato, *The republic of Plato*, New York 1991, p. 518 b-d.

as the limit of the perceptible world. In the allegory of the cave, when a philosopher goes outside the cave, he or she sees the real world, the limits of which form the values, i.e. the idea of goodness. Inside the frames formed by the idea of goodness, it is possible to know the facts. However, to perceive them before them goes the optics of seeing the world, which is constituted by the idea of goodness. The frames of the picture of the world constitute axiology, which is defined by the values held by a philosopher. Długosz's system of values was based on the Christian faith.

In this sense, philosophical activity is closely tied to pedagogy, as philosophers help students develop the right perspective on the world. Długosz did not simply impart historical facts but guided his students so that they could see the world correctly. Around 1475, in Krakow, humanist Filippo Buonaccorsi or Kalimach taught rhetoric to Prince Kazimierz, who later became an excellent orator.

The word humanism comes from the Latin word *humanitas*, which is a translation of the Greek word *paideia*. Humanism is the dissemination of this educational idea through different languages and cultures, and it stems from the practice of *paideia* in the philosophical schools of ancient Greece. Humanism views the world through the lens of Roman and Renaissance thought, which is a reflection of Greek educational practices. Długosz supported the hypothesis that the Lithuanian nation descended from the Romans. Prince Kazimierz's way of seeing the world was influenced by this mixture of different ideas.

### **A cross in the right hand and a lily in the left hand**

St. Kazimierz was born in the Wawel Castle in 1458. He was the second son of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, who was the son of King Władysław Jagiełło. Thus, St. Kazimierz was the grandson of King Jagiełło. Władysław III, the first son of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk was crowned the king of Bohemia in 1471 and the king of Hungary in 1490. The fifth son, Zygmunt I Stary, became the king of Poland and the grand duke of Lithuania in 1506 after the death of his brother, king Aleksander I Jagiellończyk. His son, Zygmunt II August, was the last king of Poland from the Jagellonian dynasty. Thus, this dynasty ruled for four generations.

Kazimierz Jagiellończyk ordered that his sons, including Prince Kazimierz, should be raised modestly as simple people without royal prosperity or luxury. When the prince was 13 years old, his father had him lead a military trip to claim the Hungarian throne. Unfortunately, the military campaign was a failure, and the prince witnessed many cruelties, including riots, robberies and acts of violence. These scenes shocked him and likely influenced his late devotion to prayer and God. Turning to religion in times of difficulty and crisis was typical among the people of that epoch. In 1483, Prince Kazimierz contracted tuberculosis and died on March 4th at the age of 25. He was later canonised as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. St. Kazimierz is revered as a patron of Lithuania. In fact, the city of Vilnius hosts St. Kazimierz's fair (Kaziuko mugė) every year on the day of his death.

The Chapel of St. Kazimierz is located in the Vilnius Cathedral of St. Stanisław and St. Władysław. The chapel was planned, built and decorated by Matteo Castello and by his nephew Constante Tencalla, and it holds St. Kazimierz's body and relics. The statue of St. Kazimierz in the chapel shows him holding a cross in his right hand and a lily in his left hand, symbolising chastity and nature.

Throughout the European history, numerous peoples and countries have used lilies in artwork, flags and coats of arms. European royal families have used lilies to represent a variety of things, including Christianity, the monarchy, defence and womanly virtue. Although the lily is most often associated with the French culture and the old French monarchy, it was also the symbol of King Jagiełło and St. Kazimierz. On his sarcophagus in the Wawel Cathedral, King Jagiełło is represented by a crown decorated with lilies. In addition, in the representation of the adoration of the three kings (or magi) in the Gothic altar in the Świętokrzyska Chapel in the Wawel Cathedral, there is a cryptoportrait of King Jagiełło holding a crown decorated with lilies in his hands to pay respect to the holy baby Jesus. There is no doubt that the lilies in the crown of King Jagiełło and the hand of St. Kazimierz are royal symbols.

To fully explore how the image of St. Kazimierz symbolised the aforementioned hypothesis that the Jagiellonian dynasty represented a synthesis of the Polish Christianity and the Lithuanian pagan virtue of nearness to nature, we shifted our focus from the royal aspect of this symbol to its expression of nature. Specifically, we explored the

association between the lily in the left hand of St. Kazimierz and the symbol of flowers in Jesus's sermon on the mount in the New Testament. This sermon is described in the following Bible passage:

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet, I tell you that not even Solomon, in all his splendour, was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own<sup>9</sup>.

Jesus speaks about not worrying in life, about trusting Providence and living fully in the presence. In other words, a Christian needs to live like a flower in the field. Jesus teaches people to focus on the present moment and to be spontaneous. They should not make projections about the future or worry about whether they have enough material resources to live. According to Jesus, humans do not need to be pragmatic business subjects looking for profit in life. They need to live by the grace of God, who will feed and dress humans as He feeds and dresses the flowers in the field.

The symbolisation and representation of the statue in the Chapel of St. Kazimierz represent the riddle of all the Lithuanian Christianity. It is not just a royal symbol, since St. Kazimierz did not hold any positions of power as a prince. It is also not just a Christian symbol of chastity, purity and faith, since his grandfather, King Jagiełło, was born a pagan. Since Lithuanian paganism worshipped nature, the lily in St. Kazimierz's left hand also symbolises his nearness to nature and the sanctification of nature by God. Furthermore, this iconographic representation of St. Kazimierz shows that the beauty of nature in Lithuanian Christianity is a sign of God, and it symbolises the unique Lithuanian views of nature and the sanctity of nature as God's creation.

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew 6: 28-35, *The holy Bible*, Large print edition, Thomas Nelson, 2017.

By blending Christian and Lithuanian pagan elements, this statue symbolises the fusion of these traditions in the Jagiellonian dynasty. Christian philosophers, such as St. Bonaventure, spoke of the traces of God in the universe, emphasising that the beauty of nature reflects these traces. As a Christian saint, Kazimierz symbolises the sanctity of flowers as traces of God, in which shines the sanctity of God. We can see traces of God in nature, particularly in blooming flowers. Thus, elements of the Lithuanian paganism have been incorporated into Christian traditions. For example, flowers and nature are venerated in the Lithuanian Christianity. On August 15th, the day of the Assumption of Mary, the Lithuanian Catholic Church celebrates the herbal festival of žolinė. In this context, nature, of course, is not God but the work or creation of God, in which we see the traits of God.

## Conclusion

St. Kazimierz is a remarkable historical personality because he is not only a member of the Jagiellonian dynasty but also a Catholic saint and the Christian patron of Lithuania. His grandfather, King Jagiełło, was born a pagan and later became a pious Christian king of Poland. Therefore, St. Kazimierz was a third-generation Christian on his paternal grandfather's side. The Jagiellonian dynasty blended the Polish Christianity with the paganism of Lithuanians, who were the last European pagans and worshipers of nature. The feeling of nearness to nature is alive in contemporary Lithuania and expressed in 20th and 21st centuries Lithuanian music and literature by classical writers, such as Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius and Juozas-Tomas Vaižgantas, and the poet Sigitas Geda.

We would like to recognise that the pagan roots of St. Kazimierz were not obstacles to his Christian sanctity; instead, they stimulated his Christian piety. In symbolic representations of St. Kazimierz, the lily in his left hand symbolises the beauty of nature, which reflects the traces of God in the universe that He created. In some way, it also resembles the Lithuanian pagan roots of St. Kazimierz. The holy cross depicting the crucifixion in his right hand represents his Polish Catholic side.