

Summary

ROMUALD KACZMAREK (University of Wrocław) / The Hedwigan theme in the paintings of Michael Willmann. Tradition and implications

Michael Willmann, working since 1660 as a painter at the Cistercian abbey in Lubiaz/Leubus, had to struggle many times with compositions depicting St. Hedwig. The only iconographic help came from late medieval picture cycles depicting events in the life of the Holy Duchess from the 13th century, also the patroness of Silesia, closely connected with the Cistercian nuns in Trzebnica/Trebnitz during her lifetime. Willmann undoubtedly drew on them, just as he was inspired by her medieval *Vita* and the still vivid cult of Hedwig. Almost at the beginning of his Silesian career, he created a cycle of 20 paintings for the saint's burial chapel in Trzebnica. Among them was the scene of Hedwig's Blessing by the Crucified Christ, a key scene in later Hedwigan iconography, whose composition Willmann himself modified later. Another basic iconographic type newly formulated by the painter was the presentation of Hedwig *en pied*. The prototypical composition, but significantly modified by him, was a monumental altar painting from 1653 in Hedwig's burial chapel. The paintings of Hedwig from Willmann's workshop were mainly sent to the Cistercian churches in Silesia (Trzebnica, Lubiaz, Krzeszow/Grussau, Bardo/Wartha, Jemielnica/Himmelwitz) and Bohemia (Plasy), but also to the Wrocław Premonstratensians. Therefore, it is obvious that the Cistercians as the ordering party emphasised in the iconography the connections of Hedwig with their order, and Willmann introduced elements of monastic dress to her princely attire. However, the most unusual and unique iconography is the painting in the church in Bardo – St. Hedwig's Christmas Meditation with a Vision of the Time of Jesus' Birth. This scene does not appear in the medieval *Vita*. The legend, however, is recorded in the works of Martin Florian Rimpler and Augustin Sartorius, Willmann's contemporaries, which describe the practices of the time related to the figure of Jesus in a cradle from the mid 17th century, kept by the Cistercian nuns of Trzebnica. The subject of Hedwig was taken up by Willmann about 30 times in total during his nearly half-century-long activity in Silesia, in the form of narrative cycles, altar paintings and prints, laying the foundations for her iconography in the 18th and 19th centuries.