



Benedictine Abbey in Senieji Trakai – Specifics of Functioning

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Abstract. The Benedictine Abbey in Senieji Trakai is one of the oldest monastic foundations in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, established as early as the beginning of the 15th century. For hundreds of years it has preserved the characteristics typical of St Benedict's spirituality (contemplative life, asceticism, *officium divinum*), but had to adapt to local requirements. The most important issue was the running of the parish. Hence the development of pastoral ministry, preaching, the widespread administration of the sacraments, the promotion of devotion to the Virgin Mary and the running of the Confraternity of the Holy Scapular. Despite periodic difficulties, it maintained an adequate spiritual and intellectual level, but also fostered religious culture and had an educational role in the immediate environment.

Keywords: *Benedictines, monasticism, church history, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Senieji Trakai.*

Anotacija. Senųjų Trakų benediktinų abatija yra vienas seniausių vienuolynų Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje, įkurtas dar XV a. pradžioje. Šimtus metų abatija saugojo šv. Benedikto dvasingumui būdingus bruožus (kontempliatyvų gyvenimą, asketizmą, dieviškąją tarnystę), tačiau turėjo prisitaikyti prie vietos sąlygų. Didžiausiu iššūkiu tapo parapijos valdymas, dėl kurio vystėsi pastoracinė tarnystė ir pamokslavimas, plačiai paplito sakramentų teikimas, buvo skatintas pamaldumas Švč. Mergelei Marijai, veikė Škaplieriaus

brolija. Nepaisant pasitaikiusių sunkumų, abatija išlaikė tinkamą dvasinį ir intelektualinį lygį, taip pat puoselėjo religinę kultūrą ir atliko šviečiamąjį vaidmenį.

Esminiai žodžiai: *benediktinai, vienuolystė, Lietuvos Didžiojo Kunigaikštystė, Senieji Trakai.*

Obsculta, o fili, praecepta magistri, et inclina aurem cordis tui

The Benedictine Abbey of Senieji Trakai, one of the oldest monastic foundations in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, has a rich historiography. This ranges from archaeology, church history, cultural and art history or law.¹ The history of the Benedictines in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania has been accurately reconstructed in the works of the Viktoras Gidžiūnas² or Tadeusz M. Trajdos³ and Marian Kanior.⁴

Among the abbeys of Benedictine monks, the first in the Lithuanian lands, founded in Senieji Trakai, located in the oldest part of the historical city, played a special role in its time.⁵ The abbey played a very important role in its time, both political and religious. For many years, the abbey in Senieji Trakai was the only monastic institution in the

¹ For example: KUNCEVIČIUS, A. *The development of the castles of Trakai in the 13th to 15th centuries. Castella maris Baltici 3–4*. Turku, Tartu, Malbork, 2004, p. 99–102; FEDIAJEVAS, O. Religiniai medaliai iš Trakų Šv. Mergelės Marijos Apsilankymo bažnyčios archeologinių tyrinėjimų 2008–2011 metais. *Numizmatika*, 2012, t. 9–12, p. 171–194; LISAUSKAITĖ, B. *Tyrimai Senuosiuose Trakuose. Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje*. 2021, 2020, p. 455–457; SVETIKAS, Eugenijus. Senųjų Trakų benediktinų veiklos pėdsakai Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės christianizacijoje XV–XVI a. pradžioje: šv. Kotrynos Aleksandrietės kulto atributas – segės su rato simboliu. *Lituanistica*, 2007, Nr. 3, p. 13–28; VAIŠVILAITĖ, Irena. Trakų Dievo Motinos atvaizdo karūnavimo 1718 metais istorinis ir kulto kontekstas. *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 2018, t. 90, p. 103–113; STANKEVIČ, Adam. Bajorijos teisinės kultūros bruožai: Trakų vaivadijos bajorai ir jų teismai XVIII a. antrojoje pusėje. *Valdžia, luomas, individas Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje: XIII–XVIII a. istorijos slinktys*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2022, p. 259–303; JOVAIŠA, Liudas. Trakų parapija ir jos šventovė XV–XVIII amžiuje. *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 2018, t. 90, p. 71–101.

² GIDŽIŪNAS, Viktoras. Šv. Benedikto regulos vienuoliai Lietuvoje. *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos Metraštis*, 1985, t. 6, p. 1–188.

³ TRAJDOS, Tadeusz M. Fundacja opactwa benedyktynów w Starych Trokach. *Analecta Cracoviensia*, 1987, t. 19, p. 245–54. TRAJDOS, Tadeusz M. Z dziejów opactwa benedyktynów w Starych Trokach (XV – połowa XVII w.). *Przegląd Historyczny*, 2009, t. 100, z. 2, p. 253–286; Idem. Benedyktyni w Starych Trokach (XV – połowa XVII w.). *Lituan-Slavica Posnaniensia*, 2007, t. 12, p. 203–249.

⁴ KANIOR, Marian. *Polska Kongregacja benedyktyńska Świętego Krzyża 1709–1864*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2000; KANIOR, Marian. *Dzieje opactwa benedyktyńskiego w Starych Trokach. Stromata historica in honorem Romani Mariae Zawadzki. Studia historyczne ofiarowane Romanowi Marii Zawadzkiemu w 70. rocznicę urodzin*. Ed. J. Urban. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PAT, 2006, p. 873–909; KANIOR, Marian. *Dzieje opactwa benedyktyńskiego w Starych Trokach (1405–1844). Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 17–44.

⁵ K[OROTYŃSKI], Wincenty. *Troki Stare i Nowe. Encyklopedia Powszechna*. Ed. S. Orgelbrand. Warszawa: Orgelbrand, 1867, p. 570; BALIULIS, Algirdas; MIKULIONIS, Stanislovas; MIŠKINIS, Algimantas. *Trakų miestas ir pilys: istorija ir architektūra*. Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991, p. 10–12.

Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was not until the second half of the 17th century that another abbey was founded here, which had a significant influence on the formation of the specific model of Benedictine abbeys. After the Council of Trent, the diocese of Vilnius became the site of numerous monastic foundations, especially of monks, and Vilnius itself became one of the most important centres of monastic life in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁶ This also applies to the Benedictines and Benedictine nuns. The medieval foundation in Senieji Trakai was joined by abbeys in: Nyasvizh, Vilnius, Horodyszche (Гарадзішча), Kaunas, Minsk, Orsha, Kražiai, and Smolensk.⁷

The explosion of post-Tridentine vocations meant that not only did the number of monastery foundations increase, but also their social structure changed. Subsequent Benedictine foundations in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania are already established on this wave and are characterised by an influx of many candidates to the order and an opening up to the bourgeoisie, hitherto absent from monastic recruitment. Changes in mentality also lead to an evolution of spirituality, which is based more on intellectual formation.⁸ In the lands of the Kingdom of Poland, convents based on the rule of St Augustine were most often established, but it is worth noting that in Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the end of the 18th century, for example, female Benedictine and Franciscan monasteries predominated. The number of Benedictine nunneries in the Lithuanian lands in the 17th–18th centuries also had an impact on the responsibilities of the male abbeys of the Rule of St Benedict, which supported them in terms of spiritual care.

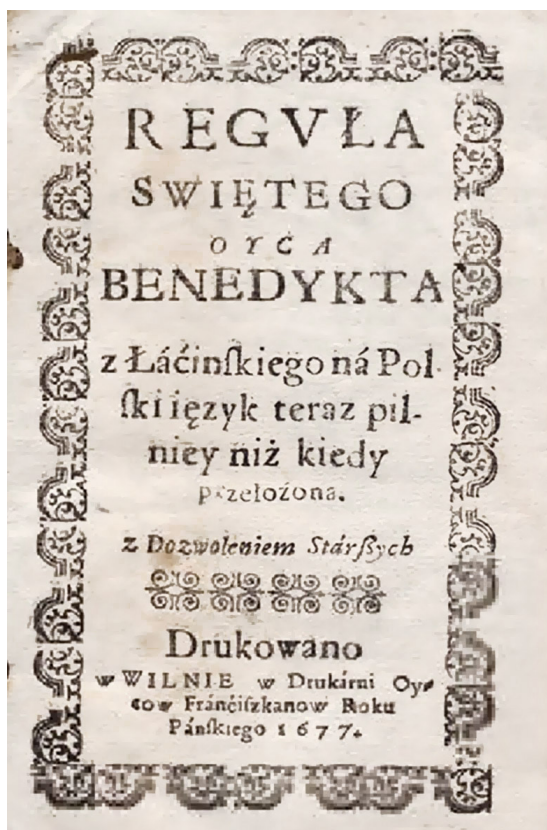
The Abbey and Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Benedict in Senieji Trakai existed stably until the mid-17th century, when it was joined by abbeys in Horodyszche near Pinsk and in Nyasvizh.⁹ An attempt at its renewal in the 18th century, and the establishment of a Benedictine congregation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the early 19th century, was sealed by its suppression in 1844. However, for many centuries, Senieji Trakai Abbey was one of the most important of the monastic institutions, developing internal studies, funding separate prebends, running a parish (very unique), being an active cultural centre and maintaining active relations with its social environment.

⁶ LITAK, Stanisław. *Kościół łaciński w Rzeczypospolitej około 1772 roku. Struktury administracyjne*. Lublin, 1996, p. 90–92; LITAK, Stanisław. *Atlas Kościoła łacińskiego w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów w XVIII wieku*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo: KUL, 2006, p. 404, 421–422; KRAHEL, Tadeusz. *Kościół katolicki na Litwie na przełomie XV i XVI w. Analecta Cracoviensia*, 1984, t. 16, p. 46; MISIUS, Kazys; ŠINKUNAS, Romualdas. *Lietuvos katalikų bažnyčios*. Žinynas, Vilnius: Pradai, 1993, p. 568.

⁷ LITAK, Stanisław. *Atlas Kościoła łacińskiego w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów w XVIII wieku*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo: KUL, 2006, p. 421–422; LITAK, Stanisław. *Kościół łaciński w Rzeczypospolitej około 1772 roku*. Lublin, 1996, p. 492–493, 531–532; BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. *Zakony żeńskie w Polsce w epoce nowożytnej*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010, p. 113, 116–119.

⁸ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. *Zakony żeńskie w Polsce w epoce nowożytnej*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010, p. 25–28.

⁹ KŁOCZOWSKI, Jerzy. *Zakony na ziemiach polskich w wiekach średnich. Kościół w Polsce*. Kraków: Instytut Wydawniczy ZNAK, 1966, t. 1, p. 375–582.



1 illus. *Regula świętego oycy Benedykta: z łacińskiego na polski język teraz pilniey niż kiedy przelożona. Wilno: w drukarni oycow Franciszkanow, 1677*

The tradition of the establishment of Benedictine abbeys in Europe was based on the creation, in accordance with the recommendations of St Benedict, of independent abbeys of “schools of divine service”.¹⁰ The principles of community life elaborated by St Benedict of Nursia shaped not only the so-called “monastic era”, so important for Europe, but also the basis of the reformed abbeys, but which referred to the patron of the order,¹¹

Sources preserved to this day provide insight into the foundations of the spiritual and intellectual formation of the monks of Senieji Trakai.¹² They read mainly

¹⁰ *The Rule of St. Benedict: Latin & English*. Tr. L. Dysigner. Trabuco: Source Books, 1996.

¹¹ PIETRZKIEWICZ, Iwona. *Kultura książki w zakonach męskich Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego XV–XVIII wieku*. Kraków: Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie, 2019, p. 96–98.

¹² 1797 Regestr spisanych Xiąg w Bibliotece klasztorney W. W. XX. Benedyktynow Staro Trock[ich] nayduiących się w Roku 1797. Ianuar[i] 15 sporządzony. *Archive of the Benedictine Abbey in Lubin* (later in text – AKBL), [no signature]; 1799 [Inwentarz kościoła i klasztoru OO. Beneyktynow w Starych Trokach, sporządzony 10 V 1799 r.]. *Vilnius University Library* (later in text – VUB), f. 57, ap. Tj 53, b. 1122; 1804, 1807 Opisanie Kościoła Staro-Trockiego razem i Klasztoru XX. Benedyktynow w powiecie Trockim,

commentaries on Scripture, which were essential for pastoral work. These were mostly the works of Jesuits and Carmelites, such as Joao da Sylveira (writing under the influence of Juan de Maldonado, according to tradition a lecturer at the Vilnius Academy) or Cornelius a Lapide, Francisco Ruiz de Montoya (a preserved provenience entry by Stanisław Szczygielski), Jacques Tirinus and Benedictine authors such as Antoin Augustin Calmet. Biblical studies and dogmatic theology were the basis of the monks' studies in Senieji Trakai. They read the writings of Thomas Aquinas and the works of the proponents of Thomism, especially in adaptations by the Dominicans (Jean Baptiste Gonet) and the Jesuits (Martin van der Beeck). It is noteworthy that the Vilnius Academy developed systematic philosophical and theological studies, and that the monks of Senieji Trakai were in their direct circle of influence. The spiritual tradition of the Benedictines meant that they had in their library the writings of John Cassian, who systematised the principles of asceticism and monastic life. From the texts of the Church Fathers, texts by: St Gregory the Great, St Augustine of Hippo, St Ambrose and Athanasius the Great. The necessary resource for each abbey was supplemented by the *Rule of S. Benedicti*,¹³ *Benedictine Constitutions*, *Thesaurus in Divi Benedicti regulam*, *Catechismus monasticus*, *Calendarium benedictinum* and *Aquila polono-benedictina*, *Pharus Benedictina* of Stanisław Szczygielski. These texts also functioned in numerous copies made by the Benedictines of the Lithuanian abbeys. The collections included numerous historical and legal studies by Stanisław Szczygielski and Benedictine historians such as Jean Mabillon.

The group of typically Benedictine literature was supplemented by *Officia propria S. Benedicti*, *Bullarium Cassiense* and *Menologium Benedictinum Sanctorum* Gabrieli Bucelinus (Jacob Butzlin). It is worth mentioning that an adaptation of the rule was also prepared for the female Benedictine abbeys, taking into account, on the one hand, the need for reform after the Council of Trent and, on the other hand, the specific functioning of abbeys in Lithuania. In the end, Vilnius Bishop Eustachy Wołłowicz (1572–1630) prepared a version for the female abbeys in his diocese that was more in

z specyfikacją wszystkich sprzętów tak kościelnych iako i klasztornych oraz wszelkiej Budowli y murow znaydujących się w R. 1804m Julii 23 dnia, do następney Wizyty sporządzone; Inwentarz Kościoła i Klasztoru Staro-Trockiego, w pow. Trockim Guberni Wileńskiej, z opisaniem [...] Sprzętów Kościelnych i Klasztornych, oraz wszelkiej Budowli i murow znaydujących się R. 1807 [...] sporządzony. AKBL, [no signature]; PIETRZKIEWICZ, Iwona. *Benedyktyni w Starych Trokach i ich księgozbiór. Klasztory mnisze na wschodnich terenach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej od XVI do początków XX wieku*. Ed. J. Gwóźdź, R. Witkowski, A.M. Wyrwa. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje, 2014, p. 389–424.

¹³ *Regula świętego oycy Benedykta: z łacińskiego na polski język teraz pilniey niż kiedy przełożona*. Wilno: w drukarni oycow Franciszkanow, 1677 [„Wielebnym w Bogu Oycom Braciy y Siostrom Zakonnym, pod Regułą S.O. Benedykta żyjącym X. Stanisław Szczygielski Opat Trocki... wszego dobra życzy“]; *Regula Świętego oycy Benedykta*. Wilno: w Drukarni JKM Akademickiej Soc. Jesu, 1756.

line with the original text of the rule, thus confirming a certain distinctiveness of the abbeys in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.¹⁴

Constituenda est ergo nobis dominici schola servitii

At the beginning of the 15th century, the Benedictine Abbey of Senieji Trakai joined the Benedictine foundations in the Tyniec, Mogilno, Lubin, Plock, Święty Krzyż, and Sieciechów. The stable situation of the Benedictines under the direction of the eminent abbot Mściśław (1386–1410) allowed for the involvement of the abbey of Tyniec in the organisation of a new institution in the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.¹⁵ Benedictine monks were settled here by Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas the Great, who gave them the buildings of the old castle of Grand Dukes Gediminas and Kęstutis.¹⁶ Stanisław Szczygielski (1616–1686), Abbot of Senieji Trakai and historian of the Order, wrote: “Trocensis Abbatia, in Lituania, Diaecesis Vilmensis, ab illustri Principe Lituaniae, Alexandro Witoldo In arce patria pervetusta, dicta Troki, Anno 1410. pro nostris Tynecensibus erecta, [et] dotata”¹⁷ and granted the Order a permanent fund.¹⁸ Vytautas recognised the usefulness of the Benedictines in the area, and such a plan was also supported by Bishop Piotr Wysz of Kraków (1354–1414), a supporter of the Christianisation of Lithuania.¹⁹

¹⁴ KAMUNTAVIČIENĖ, Vaida. Šv. Benedikto regulos adaptacija Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės benediktinių vienuolynuose. *Logos*, 2014, Nr. 79, p. 123–136.

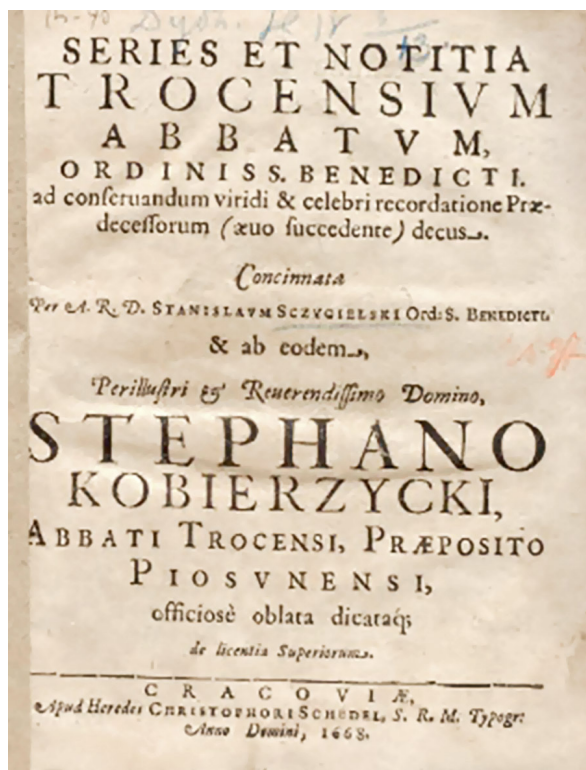
¹⁵ SZCZANIECKI, Paweł. Katalog opatów tynieckich. *Nasza Przyszłość*, 1978, t. 49, p. 80–81.

¹⁶ WIJUK-KOJAŁOWICZ, Wojciech. *Miscellanea rerum ad statum ecclesiasticum in Magno Lithuaniae Ducatu pertinentia*. Vilnae: w Drukarni JKM Akademickiej Soc. Jesu, 1650, p. 104.

¹⁷ SZCZYGIELSKI, Stanisław. *Series et notitiae Trocensium Abbatum Ordinis S. Benedicti [...]*. Cracoviae: Schedel, 1668, l. A3; SZCZYGIELSKI, Stanisław. *Aquila polono-bendictina in qua beatorum et illustrium virorum elogia, caenobiorum ac rerum memorabilium synopsis, exordia quouq[ue] et progressus ordinis D. P. Benedicti per Poloniam et eius scerpti subiecta Provincias breviter describuntur*. Cracoviae: Caesari, 1663, l. 117; SZCZYGIELSKI, Stanisław. *Tinecia seu historia monasterii Tynecensis. Ordinis S. Benedicti primariae inter Polonica caenobia venerationis*. Cracoviae: ex offic. Schedeliana, 1668, p. 83–84, 252–253.

¹⁸ KANIOR, Marian. Benedyktyni w diecezji krakowskiej. *Analecta Cracoviensia*, 1994, t. 26, p. 328–329; KVIKLYS, Bronius. *Lietuvos bažnyčios*. Chicago 1983, t. 5; *Vilniaus arkivyskupija: Vilniaus provincijos*, Chicago: Amerikos lietuvių bibliotekos leidykla, 1983, p. 337; JANONIENĖ, Ruta. *Senujų Trakų bažnyčios įranga ir benediktiniškojo paveldo likimas. Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 181–202.

¹⁹ TRAJDOS, Tadeusz M. Fundacja opactwa benediktynów w Starych Trokach. *Analecta Cracoviensia*, 1987, t. 19, p. 255; TRAJDOS, Tadeusz M. Benedyktyni w Starych Trokach (XV – połowa XVII w.). *Lituanio-Slavica Posnaniensia*, 2007, t. 12, p. 246.



2 illus. Szczygielski, Stanisław, *Series et notitiae Trocensium Abbatum Ordinis S. Benedicti* [...]. Cracoviae: Schedel, 1668

The Benedictine abbey in Senieji Trakai was founded in 1405, which date, according to the testimony of the abbey historian Stanisław Szczygielski, is recorded on a stone tablet still preserved in the church in the 17th century.²⁰ The foundation document of the abbey has not survived, the date of foundation of the abbey “in antiquo Trokii” “noviter erecti et fundati” is confirmed only by a copy of the bull of Pope Innocent VII of 27 July 1405.²¹ Tadeusz M. Trajdos analysed the doubts accumulated in the monastic historiography and inclined to date the foundation to the beginning of 1405.²² “Privileges of the Benedictine fund of Senieji Trakai original on parchments in the number of 5 through the mediation of Canon Herburt took to himself by the [noble] medico Wilczynski and sent to Poznan by [the late Count] Raczynski for a facsimile of his own

²⁰ SZCZYGIELSKI, Stanisław. *Series et notitiae Trocensium Abbatum Ordinis S. Benedicti* [...]. Cracoviae: Schedel, 1668, l. A3, D13v; SZCZYGIELSKI, Stanisław. *Series et notitia Trocensium abbatum Ordinis S. Benedicti. Litvano-Slavica Posnaniensia*, 2003, [t.] 9, p. 301–329.

²¹ *Bullarium Poloniae*. T. 3: 1378–1417. Ed. I. Sułkowska-Kuraś, S. Kuraś. Romae-Lublino: *Ecole Francais de Rome*, PAN, KUL, Nr. 1045.

²² TRAJDOS, Tadeusz M. Fundacja opactwa benedyktynów w Starych Trokach. *Analecta Cracoviensia*, 1987, t. 19, p. 248; TRAJDOS, Tadeusz M. Z dziejów opactwa benedyktynów w Starych Trokach (XV – połowa XVII w.). *Przegląd Historyczny*, 2009, t. 100, z. 2, p. 259.

royal signatures and not yet returned”, as noted around the middle of the 19th century by Eustachy Tyszkiewicz (1814–1873).²³

In 1415 there was a confirmation of the foundation and the granting of the estate.²⁴ The grant to the abbey endowment included an area with two gardens, a plot near the manor house, a village on the Waka River, the village of Oborowo, Lake Korwejkó and perpetual income.²⁵ Thanks to the efforts of the Abbot Bernard of Wieliczka (1508–1530), confessor and advisor to Sigismund I, the King completed and approved the endowment in 1517, and in 1558 the endowment was also confirmed by Sigismund II Augustus.²⁶ The church was given the invocation of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Benedict and was erected immediately after its foundation; its canonical erection in 1405 was mentioned on the occasion of the church’s consecration in 1577. It was connected with the reconstruction and repair of the church and Benedictine abbey carried out by Abbot Feliks Służewski (1551–1580).²⁷ The abbot Tomasz Pawłowski (c. 1597–1617) made a special contribution to its expansion.²⁸ Until the Russian invasion, the church was Gothic, having undergone two reconstructions: a Renaissance and a Baroque style. The destruction of the church and abbey buildings had already been influenced by the Moscow invasion in 1655.²⁹ The Benedictines were forced to move their services to the chapel in the cemetery, only to be ruined by a fire in 1757:

Abbot Dydziński had the [former church] completely demolished around 1790, and only a wooden chapel was temporarily built nearby, which still exists today.

Indeed, the temple built under Abbot Dydziński was modest. In a visitation carried out shortly after the construction, we read:

Church [...] of Carved Wood [...], covered [with wood], from the end of the second over the Presbytery a small tower also [with wood] clad.

²³ [c. 1840] [E. Tyszkiewicz] *Historia rzymsko-katolickich klasztorów w diecezji wileńskiej*. Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences [later in text – LMAVB], f. 18, ap. 187, l. 41v.

²⁴ SZCZYGIELSKI, Stanisław. *Series et notitiae Trocensium Abbatum Ordinis S. Benedicti [...]*. Cracoviae: Schedel, 1668, l. A3v–A4; TRAJDOS, Tadeusz. Z dziejów opactwa benedyktynów w Starych Trokach (XV – połowa XVII w.). *Przegląd Historyczny*, 2009, t. 100, z. 2, p. 264–265.

²⁵ KANIOR, Marian. *Dzieje opactwa benedyktyńskiego w Starych Trokach (1405–1844)*. *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 26; OCHMAŃSKI, Jerzy. *Biskupstwo wileńskie w średniowieczu. Ustrój i uposażenie*. Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 1972, p. 100.

²⁶ SZCZYGIELSKI, Stanisław. *Series et notitiae Trocensium Abbatum Ordinis S. Benedicti [...]*. Cracoviae: Schedel, 1668, l. B3–B3v; TRAJDOS, Tadeusz. Z dziejów opactwa benedyktynów w Starych Trokach (XV – połowa XVII w.). *Przegląd Historyczny*, 2009, t. 100, z. 2, p. 269.

²⁷ TRAJDOS, Tadeusz. Z dziejów opactwa benedyktynów w Starych Trokach (XV – połowa XVII w.). *Przegląd Historyczny*, 2009, t. 100, z. 2, p. 262.

²⁸ SZCZYGIELSKI, Stanisław. *Series et notitiae Trocensium Abbatum Ordinis S. Benedicti [...]*. Cracoviae: Schedel, 1668, l. C–Cv.

²⁹ GIDŽIŪNAS, Viktoras. Šv. Benedikto regulos vienuoliai Lietuvoje. *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos Metraštis*, 1985, t. 6, p. 29.

The church had three altars, two vestries, two confessionals, a pulpit and a choir, “on it an organ for seven voices”.³⁰ The abbey itself was described as a “brick building large enough”. However, the work was not yet complete, as the passage to the sacristy was still under construction. The abbot’s cells were located on the first floor of the abbey. The abbey’s endowment also changed over time.

The Benedictines in Senieji Trakai were given a manor house at Pivašiūnai (Piwożuny, Pioszuny) bequeathed to them by the Kaunas County Assessor Jan Kłocki in 1634.³¹ In time, a separate rectory was organised here.³² A prebend dependent on the abbey also existed in the Pašaltuonys (Poszoltunium) in Samogitia from 1755 onwards from the foundations of the minor nobility of Andrzej Jasiński and Anzelm Szymkiewicz.³³

In the 1650s a parish was established, looked after by Benedictine monks,³⁴ although religious customs did not generally provide for such obligations.³⁵ The running of the parish forced the Benedictines to conform more closely to the decrees of the Vilnius bishops and the resolutions of the diocesan synods with regard to pastoral care. This included the running of a hospital for the poor and sick, and the parish nursery. The running of the parish school posed considerable difficulties for the Benedictines even at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The visitations of the early 19th century read:

The monastery in in Senieji Trakai has no school in its parishes but one for orphans, and maintains one for those children who [...] serve in the monastery; the monks

³⁰ 1799 [Inwentarz kościoła i klasztoru OO. Benedyktynów w Starych Trokach, sporządzony 10 V 1799 r.]. *VUB*, f. 57, ap. 753, b. 1122, l. 1, 2–3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, l. 2; 1849 Kronika kościoła parafialnego Pioszuńskiego, 1849 r. *VUB*, f. 4, ap. A 2833; 1818 [Akty wizyty zakonów diecezji wileńskiej 1818 r.], Wizyta Klasztoru Staro-Trockiego XX Benedyktynów Guberni Wileńskiej Powiatu Trockiego, dekanatu Trockiego z Roku 1818. *Lithuanian State Historical Archives* (later in text – *LVIA*), f. 694, ap. 1, b. 4014, l. 130v; 1724 [Materiały dotyczące starotrockiego klasztoru benedyktynów, Guściany, 1724]. *LVIA*, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 4385; 1827 Do Administratora Dyecezyi Wileńskiej [...] Wincentego Mikuckiego od Opata Staro-Trockiego benedyktyńskiego Klasztoru Xiędza Celestyna Soroki Raport 1827 [...]. *LVIA*, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 777; KANIOR, Marian. Dzieje opactwa benedyktyńskiego w Starych Trokach (1405–1844). *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 30–31.

³² 1818 [Akty wizyty zakonów diecezji wileńskiej 1818 r.]. Wizyta Klasztoru Staro-Trockiego XX Benedyktynów Guberni Wileńskiej Powiatu Trockiego, dekanatu Trockiego z Roku 1818. *LVIA*, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 4014, l. 131; 1830 Wizyta Kościoła Parafialnego Pioszunskiego w Gubernii Wileńskiej, Powiecie i Dekanacie Trockim przez назначенного Wizytatora z rządu Dyecezałnego Wileńskiego za Rok 1830. Odprawiona i we czterech Exemplarzach opisana. *LVIA*, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 3776.

³³ KANIOR, Marian. Dzieje opactwa benedyktyńskiego w Starych Trokach (1405–1844). *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 27.

³⁴ *Synodus Dioecesis Vilnensis*. Vilnae, 1744, p. 86–87; TRAJDOS, Tadeusz. Z dziejów opactwa benedyktynów w Starych Trokach..., p. 280–281.

³⁵ SZCZANIECKI, Paweł. Święty Benedykt. Poznań: W drodze, 1983, p. 75–76, 96, 100.

*give them lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic – there are seven such pupils in the abbey and the church [...].*³⁶

At the end of its existence, the institution numbered between a dozen and twenty people.³⁷ The abbey, at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, included several manors and a “a manor house [...] made of wood built behind Rūdninkai Gate” in Vilnius.³⁸ However, the report to the consistory reads:

*the fund of the said monastery is so slender that the most important needs of the abbey can be met from it.*³⁹

In 1709 the abbey, together with its prebendaries, became part of the Polish Benedictine Congregation of the Holy Cross. After the establishment of the congregation, the abbey, despite some independence of the abbey, remained in foundation dependence on Tyniec. The election of the local abbot was presided over by the president of the congregation and the abbot of Tyniec, and each elector, such as Benedykt Fałęcki in 1766, swore to preserve the material and jurisdictional dependence on the abbey in Tyniec. It was not until 1783 that the chapter decided that Senieji Trakai would be subject only to the president of the congregation.⁴⁰

Within the abbey itself, the situation was quite tense due to the conflict between the monks and Abbot Ludwik Celestyn Dydziński, a doctor of law and Scripture,⁴¹ the last superior elected by Tyniec. He did not have a good reputation in the abbey, and the local monks accused him of leasing the abbey property to his own relatives.⁴² However, surviving printed documents show that he tried to retain ownership of the abbey by attempting to recover things belonging to him.⁴³

³⁶ 1818 [Akty wizyty zakonów diecezji wileńskiej 1818 r.]. Wizyta Klasztoru Staro-Trockiego XX Benedyktynów Guberni Wileńskiej Powiatu Trockiego, dekanatu Trockiego z Roku 1818. LVIA, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 4014, l. 129.

³⁷ 1799 [Inwentarz kościoła i klasztoru OO. Benedyktynów w Starych Trokach, sporządzony 10 V 1799 r.]. VUB, f. 57, ap. Tj 53, b. 1122, l. 14–14v; 1818 [Akty wizyty zakonów diecezji wileńskiej 1818 r.]. Wizyta Klasztoru Staro-Trockiego XX Benedyktynów Guberni Wileńskiej Powiatu Trockiego, dekanatu Trockiego z Roku 1818. LVIA, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 4014, l. 131; 1832 [Spis zakonników klasztoru trockiego, 1832]. LVIA, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 692; 1833 [Formularzowy spis księży trockiego klasztoru zakonu benedyktynów, 1833]. LVIA, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 666.

³⁸ 1818 [Akty wizyty zakonów diecezji wileńskiej 1818 r.]. Wizyta Klasztoru Staro-Trockiego XX Benedyktynów Guberni Wileńskiej Powiatu Trockiego, dekanatu Trockiego z Roku 1818. LVIA, f. 694, ap. 1, b. 4014, l. 128.

³⁹ 1820 [Raport benedyktynów starotrockich do konsystorza, 1820]. LMAVB, f. 43, ap. 18499.

⁴⁰ KANIOR, Marian. *Polska Kongregacja benedyktyńska*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2000, p. 92–93.

⁴¹ 1849 [Ego Ludovicus Caelestinus Dydziński Abbas..., zaprzysiężenie]. LMAVB, f. 43, ap. 18491.

⁴² [c. 1850] [List L.C. Dydzińskiego do biskupa wileńskiego I.J. Massalskiego]. LMAVB, f. 43, ap. 18492; KANIOR, Marian. *Polska Kongregacja benedyktyńska*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2000, p. 87.

⁴³ DYDZIŃSKI, Ludwik C., *Produkt w sprawie [...] Ludwika Celestyna [...] Dydzińskiego Opat Staro-Trockiego y wszystkich X.X. Benedyktynów tegoż klasztoru z J.W.W. Ogińskim Wojewodą Trockim, Granowskim*

Omnia fac cum consilio et postfactum non paeniteberis

As mentioned, the abbey flourished until the Russian invasion in 1655. Quite early on, the monks established a parish, which was confirmed by the Bishop of Vilnius, Benedykt Woyna (?–1615, previously parish priest in Trakai). *Cura animarum* was not typical of monastic orders, but in Senieji Trakai there was an emphasis on pastoral care and preaching, administering the sacraments, preaching and receiving confessions. The Benedictines, as in Tyniec, cared for Marian devotion. They developed a cult of the image of the Mother of God with the Child. This caused natural rivalry with the parish in “New” Trakai,⁴⁴ where the image of the Mother of God was venerated.

In this context, they also established a confraternity. Of those associated with the cult of Mary, they chose the Confraternity of the Holy Scapular, a confraternity established by the Carmelites, and mainly organised by them. It should be recalled that the Scapular devotion is, next to the rosary, one of the oldest and most popular Marian devotions, and originated in the Middle Ages in the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. Its origins are linked to the withdrawal of the Carmelites from Palestine and the search for a new place in Europe.⁴⁵ It is significant that the development of confraternities for laymen with religious and social purposes in the lands of the former of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was initiated by the Benedictines. The first confraternity of this type was organised in Lubin.

From the middle of the 13th century, their number increased, with the most intensive activity taking place in the 16th–17th centuries. The Council of Trent placed them under the jurisdiction of the Holy See and diocesan bishops.

The Benedictines in Senieji Trakai established the confraternity in 1686, which was confirmed by Bishop Aleksander Kotwicz of Vilnius (1622–1686). The foundation act provided for cooperation with the Carmelite monasteries in Vilnius. The protection of the fraternity by the Bishopric of Vilnius, but also by Benedykt Żuchorski (Zuchorski, 1620–1700) Bishop of Samogitia, was emphasised. It was the abbots (Jan Zdrowski, Benedykt Fałęcki, Jan Kanty Jakiel, and Ludwik C. Dydziński) who appointed the guardian of the fraternity (promotor), and it was Benedykt Zuchorski who became

*Sekretarzem W. Koronnym, Xiążęciem Gedroiciem, Biskupem Żmudzkiem, Oskierką kanonikiem Wileńskim, tudzież z W.W. Dabrowskim Podwojewódzkiem Smoleńskim, Kozielem pisarzem grodzkim wileńskim i z magistratem Trockim, [Wilno: s. n., after 1783]; Sprawa J.W.J. Xiędza Gozdawy Dydzińskiego Opata Starotrockiego Klasztoru i Wszystkich Xięży tak Starotrockich iako też i Poszołtuńskich Benedyktynów z W.W. Micewiczem Pisarzem ziemskim Xtwa Żmudz. i z Jasińskim, [Wilno: s. n., after 1785]; DYDZIŃSKI, Ludwik C.; CZAPRAKCI, Leon; MOŁĘTOWSKI, Veremundus. *Regimen generale Congregationis Benedictinae sub titulo Inventionis S. Crucis [...] celebratum [...] per rescriptum S. Delegationis Apostolicae eodem anno confirmatum [...]*. [s. l.: s. n.], 1797.*

⁴⁴ The name „New” Trakai was used to distinguish the diocesan centre from the abbey in Senieji Trakai.

⁴⁵ FLAGA, Jerzy. *Bractwa religijne w Rzeczypospolitej w XVII i XVIII wieku*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL; SPILLER, Piotr; ZAŃ-OGRABEK, Genowefa. *Arcybractwo szkaplerza Świętego przy Kościele Karmelitów w Krakowie na Piasku*. Kraków: Zakon OO. Karmelitów, 2001.

the first promotor. The activities of the confraternity at the abbey are documented in a book produced on the occasion of its foundation.

In it we find the act of foundation, the statutes of the fraternity, a list of members, and the functions performed. It was certainly used until the end of the establishment (last entry 1846). However, other typical fraternity documents, such as privileges, revenue and expenditure books or visitations, have not been found. The terms of office of the guardians of the fraternity varied, and in the later period the function was often entrusted to the master of novices. In the seventeenth century, the personalities of those admitted to the fraternity were documented in detail; over time, information on position or functions held was neglected. Among the first members of the fraternity we find Cyprian Paweł Brzostowski, Voivode of Trakai, Konstancja Komorowska, Helena Woyninka (daughter of the castellan of Novogrudok) and others. Benedykt Feliks Towiański (Tadeusz Benedykt Feliks Towiański OFMConv, 1719–1782), later auxiliary bishop of Vilnius, also appears. We can clearly see well-known personalities connected with Benedictine foundations, Vilnius burghers, but also clergymen. With time, however, we see a reduction in momentum, and the members of the fraternity are mainly parishioners of the abbey. Several hundred people belonged to the fraternity, of different social backgrounds, coming from different centres (although Vilnius and Trakai predominated), with different social positions.

The structure of the fraternity and its activities changed with the abbey. The apparent influence and capacity of the abbey in the 17th century is evidenced by contacts among the magnates and nobility, church dignitaries and urban elites. They were active as founders, supported the abbey with grants, but were also keen to make use of the friars' privileges: not only indulgences, but also the right to a magnificent funeral in a special setting. From the mid-18th century onwards, participation in the religious life of the abbey by the highest levels of society would diminish. However, the fraternity did not cease to function – it spread to the lower levels of society, especially rural society.

The abbey was brought to ruin by a fire in the mid-18th century. In 1840, Eustachy Tyszkiewicz wrote:

The Benedictine monastery still exists and [...] the abbot has his abode (residence) there, there are other monks who remember a part of the castle and the gate decorated with the crowns of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. The church built from Kęstutis baths was demolished by the penultimate Abbot in order to build a new one, circumstances prevented him from doing so, and he was forced to travel to Saint Petersburg on clerical business, where he pontifically celebrated and buried the corpse of the late King Stanislaus Augustus [...]

The thought of building a church there to help his health disappeared and services were held in a wooden church built at the time.

Four years later (1844), the abbey was cancelled and the monks were moved to Horodyshe and Nyasvizh. It should be mentioned that the fraternities were firmly rooted in the piety of the Baroque era. Confraternities were among the most characteristic expressions of this religious sensibility, for which participation in worship was an important factor in identifying with a particular community, alongside state and family affiliation. The existence of the confraternities strengthened the sense of identity, not least through their use of distinctive signs (flags) and their possession of privileges granted by the Holy See (indulgences). They took care of the chapel or altar, thus consolidating links with a particular church and its staff.

The Benedictines in Senieji Trakai confirm a typical model of religiosity of the Baroque period – the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its significance in Trakai was highly visible and strongly influenced the immediate environment. The Confraternity served as a mediating element between the parishioners, the implementation of charitable works, religious vocations, the training of candidates for the clerical state. Through the provision of social care, it responded to the spiritual needs of local communities, and perhaps it was also a tool for diagnosing religious life in the hands of the fathers of the order.

Ut ab ipsius numquam magisterio discedentes, in eius doctrinam usque ad mortem in monasterio perseverantes

The fundamental expression of Benedictine monastic spirituality, as well as that of the Cistercians and Canons Regular, was the liturgy. A special role in formation was played by *lectio divina*, understood as living the Word, based above all on Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, commentaries, and lives and texts of the masters of the spiritual life. Alongside spiritual development, the acquisition of knowledge was most important. Stanisław Szczygielski professor of theology in Tyniec, provost in Tuchów, abbot of Senieji Trakai, and above all author of a number of historical and religious works⁴⁶ he reminded his confreres: “Item quod non solum studio literarum Sacrarum, sed etiam studio literarum saecularum laudabiter vacare possint Religiosi [...]”, “ut

⁴⁶ *Illibatae Deiparae Virginis Tuchoviensis mirabilia operum symbola [...]*. Cracoviae: in officina viduae et haeredum Francisci Cesarij, 1661; *Calendarium Benedictinum [...]*. Cracoviae: Off. Schaedeliana, 1663; *Aquila Polono-Benedictina [...]*; *Novus Proteus, Jesus salvator Mundi [...]*. Vilnae: Apud Albertvm Siekielowic, 1664; *Demonstratio catholica ad omnes orthodoxae fidei controversias [...]*. Cracoviae: apud haeredes et successores Lucae Kupisz, 1665; *Adorea Mariana seu usitatum ecclesiae canticum Salve Regina*. Vilnae: Typis Acad. Soc. Iesv, 1676; *Tinecia seu Historia Monasteri Tinecensis [...]*; *Series et notitiae Trocensium Abbatum [...]*; *Liber Penticus de comendatariis Regularium prelati [...]*. Vilnae: apud Francisc., 1681; *O życiu i cnotach ś. Benedykta Opata wielu zakonów [...]*. Vilnae: w Typografey Soc. Iesv, 1683; *De Abbatiis a Seren. Regibus Poloniae Praelatis [...]*, [s. l.; s. a.]; *Responsio ad Ill. Rev. D. Andr. Olszowski Culmensis Episcopi*, [s. l.; s. a.]; *Catechismus monasticus, sive Reg. S. Bededicti*. Cracoviae: [s. n.], 1713.

utilitati docendo". He considered the guidance of Thomas à Kempis, who wrote in his work *Disciplina Claustralium*:

*Tria sunt omni Religiosi necessaria, sine quibus non potest stare in bonae vita. Haec sunt, Oratio, Lectio [et] Operatio.*⁴⁷

Both the constitutions and the decrees of the general chapters paid attention to these issues. For it was incumbent on the superiors to create suitable conditions for the monks to study.

The content of the book collection of Senieji Trakai abbey is generally quite typical of monastic book collections, including those of the Benedictines. Only the book collection from the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries can be accurately assessed, which at that time was evidently schematic, focused on the theological directions characteristic of Benedictines and a certain formative narrowness, concentrated on the contemplative life, asceticism, *officium divinum* and activities subordinated to it; thus also oriented towards pastoral work in the parish. The Benedictines' interests were shaped by several fundamental factors related to parish activities and monastic education, in which a kind of obligatory model was to be a properly prepared *vir bonus dicendi peritus*. Hence the library was rich in works on dogmatic and moral theology, biblical studies, ascetics, but also practical theology, confessions, classical rhetoric and homiletics. Benedictine abbeys, because of their *stabilitas loci*, also presented a certain stability of life. It was important for the functioning of the community itself, as well as the nature of the relationship with the local lay community. The abbeys, while remaining centres of missionary and pastoral work, propagated Christian doctrine and were centres for the assimilation of new ideas. The realisation of this vocation was expressed both in the organisation of monastic studies, in their own work, in the spread of liturgical worship and in the accumulation of book collections. The community of the Senieji Trakai abbey, pursuing the demanding ideal of *religio monastica*, maintained an appropriate spiritual and intellectual level over the centuries, but also fostered religious culture and had an educational role in its community.

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Senujų Trakų benediktinų abatijos veiklos ypatumai

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Santrauka

Romos katalikų vienuolių ordinai labai anksti įsitraukė į Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės christianizaciją. Vienas anksčiausiai įsteigtų vienuolynų buvo Senujų Trakų benediktinų abatija, įkurta XV a. pradžioje kaip Tynieco abatijos netoli Krokuvos atšaka. Abatijos globėjas buvo Lietuvos didysis kunigaikštis Vytautas. Viešpaties Apreiškimui Švč. Mergelei Marijai ir šv. Benediktui skirta benediktinų abatija laikėsi ordino įkūrėjo regulai įprastų principų. Vienuoliai rūpinosi liturgija ir pamaldžiu skaitymu, tačiau taip pat turėjo atlikti misionieriškas ir pastoracines pareigas. To reikalavo LDK evangelizacijos poreikiai. Nors vienuolių valdoma parapija yra retenybė, Senujų Trakų benediktinai šimtus metų plėtojo pastoracinę tarnystę. Jie užsiėmė pamokslavimu, sakramentų teikimu ir naujų bažnyčių statyba ordinui priklausančiose valdose. Išskirtiniu abatijos bruožu tapo Švč. Mergelės Marijos kulto (Dievo Motinos su Kūdikiu paveikslas) puoselėjimas. Benediktinai jį nuosekliai plėtojo, nors Dievo Motinos paveikslo garbinimu buvo žinomi ir Trakai. Benediktinams nebūdingu pastoracinio darbo elementu tapo ir Škaplieriaus brolija veikla. Įprastai karmelitų tradicijai būdinga brolija parapijoje veikė iki pat jos uždarymo. Priešingai nei parapijų centruose veikė vienuolynai, abatija neturėjo mokyklos arba ligoninės. Abatija išlaikė tinkamą dvasinį ir intelektualinį lygį. Ji neabejotinai siūlė išskirtinę ir prie aplinkos poreikių pritaikytą veiklos bei darbo formą, tačiau liko ištikima benediktiniškam dvasingumui.

Gauta / Received 2025 02 24
Priimta / Accepted 2025 05 21