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Two formerly Dominican Gothic figures in St. James's church in Toruń and their votive offerings. Contribution to the research on the permanence of the functions of religious images after monastery suppressions

Summary

The article discusses the phenomenon of transplanting the tradition of the cult of images and likenesses from monastic interiors onto new sites as exemplified by the fortunes of two Gothic sculptures which decorated the church of St. Nicholas in Toruń beginning from the Middle Ages: the Black Crucifix (ca 1400) and the Madonna of the Rosary (ca 1500). Both effigies were transferred to St. James's church in the New Town of Toruń following the dissolution of Toruń-based Dominicans in 1831.

The Black Crucifix, formerly adorned with natural accessories (a wig, a textile perisionium), most probably already in the Middle Ages enjoyed the status of a "benevolent" figure, sanctioned by Episcopal indulgences. Its fame grew after it survived a collapse of the church in 1622, and became involved in the strategy of the town's recatholicisation conducted by Dominicans at the time. In the 18th century, the sculpture was reported to be located in an altar in the cloister of the monastery. It was decorated with silver additions and accompanied by silver votive offerings. The origin of the donors of these gifts suggests a local range of the cult (Chełmno, Dobrzyń, and Kujawy regions). A large number of silver plaquettes had been lost before the dissolution of the monastery, and those who survived (33) were handed over – together with the crucifix – to St. James's church (currently the altar of the Holy Cross). The newly-endowed gifts, mentioned by Fr Jakub Fankidejski in 1880, confirm the dissemination of the belief in the "benevolence" of the artifact from the Dominican church to the New Town's parish church. It did not die out later on either: numerous minor votive offerings continued to accompany the sculpture. Their number reached 70 by the 1980's. Unfortunately, only 3 plaquettes, moved subsequently to the Rosary altar, are extant today.

A Gothic sculpture of the Holy Mother of the Rosary – of the *Regina Coeli* type – from the Dominican church was connected with the altar of the Confraternity of the Rosary. It was an enclosed space of the fraternity's worship. In the 18th century it was decorated with attributes and silver gowns (stolen around 1950). Its oldest votive plaquettes date back to the second half of the 17th century, although most offerings, recorded in inventories, are objects of the Marian service. After the altar became transferred to St. James's church, it continued to be looked after by the Confraternity of the Rosary. The statue did not have the status of a "benevolent" figure, and the number of its offerings at the new location did not increase; 17 items survived from the collection of the Dominican plaquettes. The worship of each of the effigies, both at the Dominican church and at the new site, were of different nature, and the development of their cult took separate paths.