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# Holidays, traditions and customs on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska

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# Introduction



# INTRODUCTION

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The Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska is full of unique traditions and customs. This intangible heritage, along with the stunning architecture, testifies to its uniqueness. This is what makes wooden houses, churches and Orthodox churches still vibrant, and the past intertwines with the present. The Route is an amazing world of painted cottages, colorful bouquets of flowers, tall palms, straw wreaths, subtle nativity scenes, traditional and ritual dishes as well as extraordinary and unusual characters appearing in carolling groups.

The area of today's Małopolska Voivodship was inhabited and is inhabited by a dozen or so ethnographic groups, national minorities (primarily Jews, Roms, Slovaks) and ethnic groups (Lemkos). In the north there are Cracovians (West and East), in the south a group of the Highlanders of Carpathia (Highlanders of Nowy Sącz, Highlanders of Podhale, Highlanders of Orawa, Highlanders of Babia Góra, Highlanders of Pieniny, Highlanders of Spisz, Highlanders of Zagórze, Highlanders of Żywiec), and among them, so called transitional groups, combining Kraków and highlander features, such as Kliszczacy and Lachy Sądeckie, in the south-eastern part Pogórzanie and Lemkos. Therefore, Małopolska is a unique land, not only with attractive geographical and natural diversity, but also with an unusual wealth of cultural traditions of its past and present inhabitants. It is a world worth exploring, visiting and deeper reflection on the richness of the folk culture of Małopolska.

The uniqueness and enormous value of the Małopolska's cultural heritage is evidenced by the decision to include Kraków's nativity scene craftsmanship on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which took place in 2018! This is the first entry from Poland and a huge distinction.

From the need to preserve and promote these still alive traditions in the Małopolska Tourist Organization, the project „Holidays, traditions and customs on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska” was born. As part of it, the ethnographic studies of folk and holiday customs were carried out. The material was collected based on both an analysis of the literature on the subject (especially items published locally or regionally) and source ma-

terials, as well as during field studies, including interviews with representatives of local communities - questionnaire and free interviews (which dominated) and surveys conducted among residents of 45 towns on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska (Zawoja, Sidzina, Łętownia, Zubrzyca Górna, Krzeczów, Niedzica, Klikuszowa, Sieniawa, Łopuszna, Grojec, Nidek, Osiek, Graboszyce, Poręba Wielka (Oświęcim Commune), Chochółów, Białka Tatrzańska, Witów, Czarna Góra, Raclawice (Jerzmanowice-Przeginia Commune), Ułina Wielka, Skała, Kasina Wielka, Dobczyce, Gruszów, Zalipie, Zawada, Wierzchosławice, Barwałd Dolny, Lanckorona, Marcyporęba, Binarowa, Wilczyska, Gromnik, Jurków (Czchów Commune), Czchów, Lipnica Murowana, Nowy Wiśnicz, Łososina Górna, Bartne, Uście Gorlickie, Mochnaczką Niżna, Piorunka, Tylicz, Wierchomla Wielka, Ptaszkowa). A total of 1350 surveys were collected. Therefore, the work covers many regions inhabited by various regional, ethnic and religious groups. An important element of the publication is to show the customs of the Lemko community, both Orthodox and Greek Catholic.

Films prepared as part of the project are also used to preserve customs which are still active on the Route. 20 films were made (in two versions: the full version and the short), presenting such customs as making Easter palms, carolling, making the nativity scene/adoring the painted Christmas icon, cleaning cottages in Chochółów. Christmas customs were presented from the point of view of three religions (Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Orthodox). Workshops organized as part of the project, conducted among local communities also served as the way to pass the traditions onto the next generations. There were two editions of workshops on, among others: painting floral patterns, which are traditionally used to decorate cottages in Zalipie or making harvest wreaths and bouquets of flowers for the holiday of Our Lady of the Herbs. You can read more about the workshops in the further part of the catalog.

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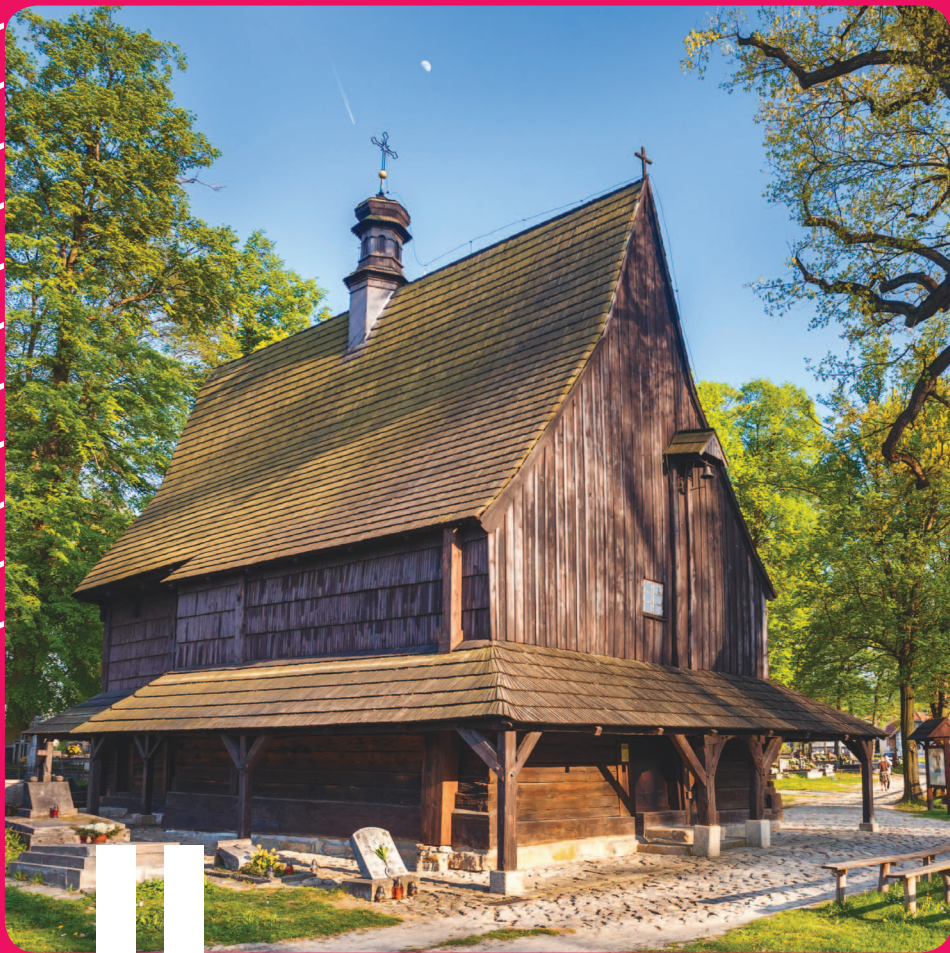
The modern world is rediscovering the values of local and regional communities with their cultural wealth. We hope that this catalog will not only in-

troduce selected cultural traditions of Małopolska, but will encourage you to explore the Wooden Architecture Route as a space full of symbolic, religious, historical, but also magical meanings. It will encourage you to discover and read them. Unfortunately, however, you should be in a hurry, because - as confirmed by the conducted studies - many forms, customs and rituals today are no longer widely cultivated, and function only in the consciousness of the older generation.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who contributed to the preparation of this study, and especially those people and entire families who opened a rich world of tradition for us and let us travel together to the past and present.



# Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska



# WOODEN ARCHITECTURE ROUTE IN MAŁOPOLSKA

II

The Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska comprises over 250 structures. Among them, there are picturesque churches, beautiful Orthodox churches, slender bell towers, Old Polish manors, small-town complexes, wooden villas and open-air museums, belonging to the most valuable monuments of folk material culture. They represent different styles and periods, they are the witnesses of various interesting stories.

## CHURCHES

The wooden churches constitute the most numerous group of the Route structures, among which the oldest are over 500 years old! Medieval temples were initially small four-sided buildings, consisting of a rectangular nave and chancel, but they did not have towers or any extensions (sacristies started to appear after some time, square towers began to be added to the churches from the west from the end of the 16th century). The temples were oriented (chancels directed to the east), and the windows were located only from the south. From the inside, the churches were characterized by rich carpentry details (visible e.g. on the rainbow patterns, window openings and doors). The walls and ceilings were covered with polychrome, usually made using patrons (stencils). With time, figural decorations appeared, forming the so-called *Biblia pauperum* - a graphic presentation of biblical events for the congregation who could not read<sup>1</sup>.



*The inside of St. Michael Archangel's Church in Dębno Podhalańskie - the patron paintings preserved from the 15th /16th century, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

<sup>1</sup> *Szlak Architektury Drewnianej. Małopolska*, Kraków: Agencja Fotograficzna Studio-F Łukasz Olszewski 2010.





*St. Leonard's Church in Lipnica Murowana (from the end of XV century), photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

Over the centuries, the interior of the temples underwent style changes, while the body largely retained its Gothic character. During Baroque, churches were also built following the example of stone temples (two-tower facades, three-nave interiors and baroque decorative elements appeared). A characteristic example thereof is the Church of St. Michael Archangel in Szalowa.



*St. Michael Archangel's Church in Binarowa (dated about 1500, at the beginning it did not have a tower), photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

The most valuable and oldest churches on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska include those entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. These are the temples in Dębno Podhalańskie, Lipnica Murowana, Sękowa and Binarowa.

# ORTHODOX CHURCHES

There are also four wooden Małopolska Orthodox churches (in Owczary, Powroźnik, Brunary Wyżne and Kwiatów) on the UNESCO World Heritage List. They represent the so-called north-west type of the Orthodox church, which is characterized by a tripartite division (chancel, nave and church porch above which the tower rises). The chancel and nave are covered with mansard tented roofs. Just like in the case of towers, they are crowned with spherical helmets<sup>2</sup>.



*St. Paraskevi Greek Catholic Church in Kwiatów, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

Another group include common type Orthodox churches (decadent). They are also tripartite buildings with a characteristic tower, but they are distinguished by gable roofs and flat ceilings in the interior. Examples of this type of construction include churches in Nowica, Bodaki and Męcina Wielka. Orthodox churches built in the early 20th century look different. These are tower-less buildings, consisting of three parts, the largest of which is the nave. The most substantial spherical dome rises above it. This type of Orthodox church is located, among others, in Bartne. In Małopolska, we can also see Orthodox churches inspired by the Hutsul style (in Gładyszów). There are also style-less temples here, similar in appearance to Roman Catholic churches<sup>3</sup>.

A characteristic element of the Orthodox church interior is the iconostasis separating the nave from the chancel.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.



Currently, the Orthodox churches serve the followers of three religions. Sometimes Greek and Roman Catholic services are held in the same temple (e.g. in Bielanka, Owczary).



*The inside of Protection of Our Most Holy Lady Greek Catholic Church in Bielanka*

## BUILDING COMPLEXES AND OTHER STRUCTURES

Not only individual wooden buildings, but entire building complexes have survived to this day in many towns

of Małopolska. In small towns, e.g. Lanckorona, Lipnica Murówna, houses were usually built around the market square and with streets departing from it, in the background there were outbuildings. Typical for rural areas was so-called „łańcuchówka” - a village whose buildings were located along the road running in the valley. Chochółów is the most characteristic example of this type of arrangement. There are also health resort buildings of Krynica-Zdrój and Szcza-



*The Lanckorona wooden buildings, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*



wnica on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska - magnificent villas, often referring to the architecture of Alpine health resort, as well as examples of the „Zakopane style” created in the 1890s by Stanisław Witkiewicz<sup>4</sup>. In villas such as Koliba or Dom pod Jedłami, the artist’s aspiration to use local motifs derived from highlander traditions has been reflected. This is evident both in the architecture of the villa and in the interior design elements, which is shown by specially designed stylish furniture and appliances, tiled stoves, and even door handles or lock inserts. An interesting example of the Zakopane style is also the chapel on Jaszczurówka. When writing about the wooden buildings on the Route, one should mention Zalipie - a village famous for decorating houses with colorful flowers. Interesting monuments of the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska also include manors, mainly of the 17th and 18th centuries.



*Villa Koliba, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

## OPEN-AIR MUSEUMS

The traditions of wooden construction in the region are brought closer to the open-air museums, including the largest one in Małopolska - Sądecki Ethnographic Park, as well as Vistula Ethnographic Park in Wygiełzów, Orava Ethnographic Park in Zubrzyca Górna or Pogórze Village Open-Air Museum in Szymbark. Small museums are also worth visiting, including in Laskowa, Sidzina or Zawoja.



*The Vistula Ethnographic Park in Wygiełzów, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

## OPEN WOODEN ARCHITECTURE ROUTE

The Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska was established in 2001 on the initiative of the Małopolska Voivodship. Since 2008, the Małopolska Tourist Organization manages it on behalf of the Voivodship.

Every year in the summer, several dozen structures of the Route are made available to the public. Tourists are led by guides coming from the local community, who, like no other, know the history of the structure and all the curiosities associated with it and with passion share this knowledge with visitors. Temples entered on the UNESCO list are open to visitors all year round!

The Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska is not only open to tourists and residents, but is also a place of many interesting cultural and educational events. Every year on summer Sundays, concerts are held at successive locations on the Route as part of the Music Enchanted by Wood Festival. There are also other concerts, meetings, workshops, trips and bicycle rallies organized by local institutions and associations.

According to the records kept in 2019, the structures made available as part of the Open Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska were visited by over 500,000 people! The Małopolska Tourist Organization estimates that every year all structures on the Wooden Architecture Route (including open-air museums, museums, manor houses, located on the Route, etc.) are visited by over 1 200 000 tourists!



*Protection of Our Most Holy Lady Greek Catholic Church  
in Owczary, photo by Krystian Kiwacz*

# MUSIC ENCHANTED BY WOOD



Music Enchanted by Wood is an unusual festival that has resounded in the structures of the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska since 2007. Each year begins with Christmas carols and ends with an All Souls' Concert in autumn. However, the main part of the festival is the summer holiday period. During the summer months, as part of the event, you can listen to artists presenting various music genres, styles and vibes. From folk through jazz, improvised and experimental music, poetry set to music, to classical music. The festival schedule permanently includes events where music is combined with dance, and events dedicated to children. The Arthur Rubinstein Philharmonic and the Traveling Festival POLISH COLORS are the partners of the Music Enchanted by Wood Festival.

All events take place in extraordinary spaces - the historic structures of the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska, including in churches and Orthodox churches entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In such an atmosphere the musicians share their skills and talents to make the guests feel special; they sit in a church or an Orthodox church, in a small wooden bench, they raise their heads, look at the several hundred years old polychromies made by wandering painters, at the sculptures, altars, baptismal font, which are placed here for generations. Open-air museums, manor houses, small-town buildings, which are the evidence of old times, are magical places that can also transfer into another dimension, especially during open-air concerts. Admission to concerts is free.



*Music Enchanted by Wood in St. Paraskevi Greek Catholic Church in Kwiatoń, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*



# Eastern Churches



# EASTERN CHURCHES

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The date of the division of the Church and Christianity into two main parts: Western (eventually called Roman Catholic) and Eastern (Orthodox) is assumed to be 1054, when the legate of Pope Leo IX and Patriarch Constantinople Michael Cerularius put a curse on each other. However, the differences that eventually led to this so-called the East West Schism began to draw much earlier. The division of the Roman Empire into a western and an eastern part was initiated in 395 under Emperor Theodosius I. The centuries-long processes that have been going on since then, systematically deepening the political and cultural differences between the two parts of the Christian world - Latin-Roman and Greek-Byzantine - have finally led to a lasting, still existing rupture. What is obvious, over such a long period of time, the differences between the two traditions have become consolidated and deepened, but in spite of this obvious truth, it is necessary to be aware at all times that the fundamental and in fact most important truths of faith remain the same for both these great communities.

Thus both Catholics and Orthodox profess faith in God in the Holy Trinity of the One, with Jesus Christ - God-Man as the founder and head of the Church. The Bible - the Old and New Testaments - is the Scripture of both great branches of Christianity (although there are already some differences in the canon of books considered to be inspired) and there are seven same sacraments recognized (although there are some differences in the way and time of giving them - among others, in the Eastern Church for Confirmation and Holy Communion very young children take part, just after baptism).

Strictly dogmatic differences between Catholicism and Orthodoxy are small, a good example of which is the so-called dispute over *filioque*, which is one of the direct causes of the Schism, and although important from the point of view of theologians, it is not so much important, but even incomprehensible, for the crowds of believers. The „western” interpretation of the passage of credo concerning the origin of the Holy Spirit says that it comes from the Father and the Son (the Latin word *filioque* means „and son”), while in the east it is considered to be only from the Father. Other differences of a dogmatic nature stem mainly from the fact that the Eastern Church recognizes only the teachings of the first seven universal councils (those which took place before Schism 1054), but does not accept the dogmas established at the later councils of the Western Church, among which the most important are the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the dogma of the Pope’s infallibility. It is also a clear dissonance that the Orthodox Church does not recognize Purgatory, treating the Catholic teaching about it as heresy.

The actual differences between the Eastern and Western Churches are reflected much more strongly than in the strictly theological-dogmatic sphere in the very organization of the church as a community but also as an institution, in the definition of ecclesiastical authority and in morality and liturgy. The head of the Roman Catholic Church is the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, considered to be the successor of St. Peter. The Pope’s spiritual (but also administrative) power is almost unlimited,





and the Church itself as an institution is characterized by a very strong and permanent hierarchy. Rome was one of the five cities from the first centuries of Christianity that constituted the seat of the Patriarchates, into which the church back then was divided. The other four cities are Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople and it was the patriarchs of the latter that were almost entirely subordinate to the Eastern Church in the first centuries after the Great Eastern Schism. However, various political turmoil (especially after the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 and their subordination of a large part of Orthodox Europe outside of Russia) led to a situation where one of the characteristic features of the Eastern Church is its autocephaly and thus the autonomy of its individual parts. Today, there are several autocephalous Orthodox communities in the world, i.e. those that are completely self-governing and choose their superiors, not subject to anyone else (the Constantinople's patriarchy has retained only the primacy of honour). There are large communities among them, such as the Russian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia), but also relatively small, limited to small countries, such as the Czech and Slovak Orthodox Church. At present, the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church is also fully autonomous.

A significant difference between the Eastern and Western Churches is also the question of the celibacy of clergy, which is obligatory for every priest in the Roman Catholic Church (although in a form sanctioned only from the 11th-12th century). In the Orthodox Church the situation is different, although the quite common opinion that „Orthodox priests can get married” is a considerable, not entirely true simplification. In fact, celibacy also functions in the Eastern Church, except that it is absolutely obligatory only for monks, and in practice also for bishops - as Orthodox bishops are traditionally chosen from among monks. On the other hand, the lower clergy - priests and deacons - may actually have wives, but only if they are married before they are ordained. If they were ordained while still single, their celibacy also applies, as does that of widowed priests.

However, the sphere in which the differences between the two largest communities of the Christian world are probably the most striking for eyes (and ... for the ears) is liturgical ritual. Each Mass in the Eastern Church has a special, elevated atmosphere and usually lasts much longer than a Roman Catholic service. There are other permanent parts of the Mass in both communities, and singing - very beautiful, polyphonic - plays a special role in the Orthodox liturgy; in fact, most of the Mass is sung, and only a small part of it is spoken. In contrast to the Roman Catholic Mass, in the Orthodox Church, during much of the liturgy the priest celebrating it remains invisible to all the congregation. The Holy Communion is also given in a different way - in the east, it is taken in two forms.

A very clear difference also applies to the number of masses that can be celebrated in a single temple. While in Roman Catholic churches it is normal to have several masses a day (especially on Sundays and public holidays), in Eastern rite temples (churches) there is only one liturgy a day, which must start before noon.

The differences between the western and eastern branches of Christianity are also easily seen in the architecture and accessories of the temples themselves. The most characteristic element of the interior of every Orthodox church, which, in turn, does

not occur in Roman Catholic churches (except for the very common situations, e.g. in the Lemko region, when the building in which Eastern Rite services have been once held is currently used by a Roman Catholic parish) is an iconostasis - covered with icons arranged in a certain order, sometimes a very decorative wall of high artistic value, separating the sanctuary, to which only priests have access, from the nave intended for the congregation.

Both Christian rites use different calendars in the liturgical year. While the Roman Catholic Church adopted the Gregorian calendar reform in 1582 together with the whole western world, the Orthodox Church invariably uses the earlier Julian calendar, which means that the individual holidays in both rites are shifted by about two weeks (e.g. Christmas, which is celebrated on 25th December in the west, in the Eastern Church is 7th January).

As far as the liturgical year itself and the main feasts are concerned, the most important of them in the whole Christian world is the Resurrection Day. Other holidays are also mostly celebrated together in both rituals, although there are also holidays that are characteristic only for each rite separately, and sometimes their species' weight is also different. For example, the baptismal feast (on 6th January and, according to the Julian calendar, on 19th January), also known as the Feast of Jordan, is of particular importance in Eastern rite churches, in addition to the Resurrection holiday mentioned above, as well as Christmas. These three festivals, together with nine others, form a group of so-called „prazdniki”, or „twelve great feasts” of the Eastern Church, presented on a specially dedicated icon belt, which is part of each „canonical” iconostasis.

An extremely important date in the history of religion in the area of the current south-eastern Małopolska (and the entire former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) was 1596. At that time, at the synod held in Brześć (Brest), a significant part of the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church on the territory of the Republic of Poland decided to recognize the Pope's authority and carry out an act of union with the Roman Church. The origin of this so-called the Union of Brest was - as it usually happens - thoroughly political. A few years earlier, in 1589, Moscow became the seat of the patriarchate, which from that time underwent a significant part of the population of the Commonwealth professing Orthodoxy. It was in the vital interest of our country, which at that time was in hostile relations with Russia, that these ties should be broken, or at least strongly weakened. The Union was a very important step towards achieving this goal, and at the same time it established the appearance of a religious mosaic in the lands of Poland and Lithuania for many years. Since then, next to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches (because not all the Orthodox community on the territory of the Republic of Poland accepted the union) there was a Uniate Church, more often (in a certain simplification) called Greek Catholic.

The character of this church can be defined in the shortest terms as follows: the Uniates accepted the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church and recognized the primacy of the Pope - the Bishop of Rome, while remaining committed to their rites and liturgy. Thus, practically all of the above described features of the Orthodox Church in this respect are also characteristic of the Greek Catholic Church, although, of course, here too, the passage of time caused some differences to appear. The influence of the

Western tradition caused, for example, that from a certain moment on, side altars started to appear in Greek Catholic churches, next to the iconostasis, which obviously occupied a central place all the time, an element that never existed in Orthodox churches. However, this does not change the fact that in general the world of customs, rites and liturgy among the Orthodox and individual believers remains very similar to this day, and certainly clearly different from that characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the area of Lemko region, over time, the union was widely accepted and at the beginning of the 20th century practically all Lemkos living in the mountainous areas of Beskid Sądecki and Beskid Niski professed Greek Catholicism. It was not until just before the First World War that some villages, due to the appearance of emissaries of the so-called „all-Russian orientation” in the Lemko region, started to come back to Orthodoxy community. This process continued after Poland regained independence and it is estimated that before 1939 about 30-40 % of the population of the area abandoned the union for Orthodoxy. The reasons were diverse. A lot of representatives of the Greek-Catholic clergy of that time tried to promote Ukrainian patriotism among the locals, convincing them that Lemkos were part of the Ukrainian nation, which was not approved by the local community that was accustomed to their individuality. On the other hand, the prosaic financial issues were also not without significance - richer Orthodox communities were able to offer their congregation lower fees for spiritual services than the people being a part of Uniate...

Regardless of the reasons, it is a fact that at the outbreak of World War II, the area of the present south-eastern extremities of Małopolska Voivodship was a fascinating mixture of cultures and religions. Unfortunately, after the war the situation changed completely. As a result of the Operation „Vistula”, the vast majority of Lemkos from these areas found themselves in the Western and Northern Territories, which made it much more difficult to cultivate native traditions. However, customs, religious rites, elements of folklore and language have survived and they are still cultivated nowadays.

# Holidays, traditions and customs on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska



# IV

# CAROLLING



In the Polish folk tradition, the celebration of Christmas lasts from Christmas Eve to the Epiphany and takes many different forms. It is a time of joy and fun, during which only the necessary farm work in the curtilage and in the homestead should be carried out. It is also an extraordinary time, abundant in many customs, rituals and beliefs of a magical nature, it is a kind of powerful period, based on the experiencing the world of sacrum.

From the day of Christmas Eve, women were finishing their sewing, weaving and spinning work before nightfall, because it was widely believed that starting from this day, during long and dark evenings, there was a possibility that souls of the dead would be present at homes, and as such they could cause a needle prick or a spindle injury. Yarn in traditional folk culture was also seen as a hiding spot of a devil – evil powers, so performing these activities was avoided at dusk, so that the evil forces would not harass the household members throughout the next year.

Christmas was formerly also called *Gody* or *Godnie Święta* („*Godnie Święta*”), hence the phrases - „*na gody*”, „*w godnie święta*”<sup>1</sup>.

The first day of Christmas, according to tradition, is a time of celebration with the family. As confirmed by the study conducted on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska, it is still so in the case of many families today. W. Tetmajer wrote about the first day of Christmas: „one goes only to church, and of course avoids work, except cooking dinner. Nobody goes to anyone without exception, even to the immediate family, and even in this case, if two families are sitting in one house.”<sup>2</sup>.

The second day of Christmas is the day of Stephen the Martyr. Oats and other cereal grains are blessed during the Holy Mass in a Catholic church. After performing the ritual, men used to shower a priest with oats, often including altar servers and a sacristan, in memory of the stoning of St. Stephen. Oats served as an important symbol of a martyr's death of the Apostle. After the service, bachelors waited outside the church to throw it at unmarried maidens. The blessed oats were also used for the first sowing and for the treatment of diseases. It was also used when carolling, sprinkling the household with „happiness and health”. The custom of sprinkling oats is known - as studies show - in all Polish regional groups. For example in Mokra Wieś (near Stary Sącz):

„... until recently, oat fun took place throughout the entire village. - It was sprinkled not only in the church and outside the church, but there were groups walking around from house to house, bringing carols and Christmas wishes for good harvest. Carollers also showered the home dwellers, for which they most often

1 W. Tetmajer, *Gody i Godnie Święta czyli Okres Świąt Bożego Narodzenia w Krakowskim*, Kraków 1898, p. 1.

2 Ibidem, p. 7.



received Christmas treats. Although today, going to neighbors with oats is no longer practised, after the Holy Mass boys pour a whole handful of it into a shirt, of course preferably of young maidens. In the past, almost everyone carried oats in a handkerchief tied in a knot. A blessed handful of it would be taken to a "sąsiek" (a part of the barn where grain was stored) and poured into grain, which was awaiting spring sowing. In spring, before sowing, the farmer had to make a small circle at the beginning of the field, with a cross mark in it. Here, while saying his prayer, he thickly sowed the first seeds that grew in the spring, creating an intensely green cross mark - a sign of death and resurrection, an announcement of a renewing life"<sup>3</sup>.

## CAROLLING

Saint Stephen's Day was the time when carolling started in the form of, as one could call it, a "group" activity, because earlier in most regions the entire cycle of holidays from Christmas Eve to the Epiphany was a period when people would go carolling. Carolling rituals - according to sources - are derived both from medieval religious mysteries and are related to Slavic New Year's carolling (for „New Summer”)<sup>4</sup>. The first source references to the carolling tradition in Poland are from the 16th century. The song „Gospodynjej kolęda” („Housewife's carol”), printed in 1554 in the collection „Rurale ludicium” („Ludycje wieśne...na ten Nowy Rok”, i.e. „Rurale iudicim... for this New Year”), published in Kraków by M. Zajcewicz is regarded as the oldest passage.



*Carollers, the region of Babia Góra, Central Photographic Agency, 1951-1991, Inv. No III/51739/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

Carolling in Małopolska took and takes many different forms, which are characterized by specific attributes, props, behaviors, costumes and forms of expressing one's good wishes. Expression of one's good wishes and the associated ceremonial exchange of gifts are the elements that constitute the essence of carolling. Carollers were to be received befittingly because it was widely believed that their visit would bring happiness and fertility to the household members. When entering the houses, they greeted the hosts loudly, played scenes (often funny), and at the end they wished good luck and fertility, asking for payment. As a holiday gift, called a carol, they usually received food (a piece of sausage, pork fat or holiday delicacies and cakes), and

<sup>3</sup> A. Plata (housewife from Mokra Wieś) as cited in: *Owies świętego Szczepana* (Oats of Saint Stephen), provided electronic access <https://liturgia.wiara.pl/doc/1405536.Owies-swietego-Szczepana>

<sup>4</sup> See: H. Czachowski, A. Kostrzewa-Majoch, H. M. Łopatyńska, *Akwizytorzy szczęścia. O dawnych i współczesnych kolędnicach*, Toruń 2004; *Pastuszkowe Kolędowanie. 20. Ogólnopolskie Spotkania Dziecięcych i Młodzieżowych Grup Kolędniczych*, Nowy Sącz 2017.

sometimes small donations. Today, visiting carollers - according to the inhabitants of the towns on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska - are given thanks in a form of a small sum of money and children are usually treated with cakes and sweets, whereas adult carollers - with holiday dishes and „stronger” drinks.

## FORMS OF CAROLLING

The following are the conventionally distinguished forms of carolling:

- podłazy (i.e. walking from house to house wishing Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to people),
- carolling with animal-like monstrosities: walking with a turoń (i.e. a black, horned animal), goat, ram, bear, horse, stork,
- walking with a (shepherd's, three king's, angel's) star and with a ball,
- walking with a Nativity scene (movable and immovable),
- shepherds: carolling shepherds and Fedors,
- carolling spectacles: Herody, carolling with Dorothy, carolling with the Three Kings, walking with the Paradise,
- carolling on New Year's Day: Draby Noworoczne (New Year's Carollers),
- szczodraki (name derived from traditional baking products with varying contents).

In Małopolska, as well as throughout Poland, those who were going carolling consisted of people of all ages, who were almost exclusively men, ranging from boys to adult men. „It should be mentioned - as S. Węglarz writes - that some types of carolling were rather reserved for specific age groups, for example, older farm workers (bachelors) and adult men were considered to be „proper” carollers, a Turoń was accompanied by teenagers and bachelors, and Szczodraki were mostly young children and teenagers”<sup>5</sup>. Girls were not present in carolling ensembles – according to researchers – until after World War II<sup>6</sup>. Carolling ensembles were very diverse in numbers, consisting of a few to several people. Carolling usually took place in the afternoon or late evening.

There were and have survived a lot of practices in Christmas customs related to the „good start” of the whole year, which were to affect the harvest and prosperity of a homestead. Animals, therefore, played a very important role in carolling. They symbolized life forces, vitality, courage and fertility. These traits were to pass on to people and their curtilage<sup>7</sup>.

## PODŁAZY

In the past, a common form of carolling in Małopolska, especially in the South, was chodzenie na podłaz (lit. creeping), i.e. visiting neighbors and expressing wishes. People who came to their homes were called podłaznicy, and they were thanked for their

5 *Pastuszkowe Kołędowanie ...*, p. 6.

6 See among others: U. Janicka-Krzywda, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Babiogórskich*, U. Janicka-Krzywda (ed.), Kraków 2010.

7 H. M. Łopatyńska, *Formy i różnicowanie regionalne obrzędów kolędniczych*, in: *Akwizytorzy szczęścia...*, p. 23-24.

wishes with a response „aleś mnie sąsiedzie dobrze podlaź!” („you surprised me well, my neighbor”). Entire groups participated in walks during the podłazy, not necessarily consisting of family members, which involved taking at least one podłaźnik (i.e. a person participating in the podłazy) on a further journey from the household whose members received wishes. In this way, the groups comprised of the podłaźnicy became very numerous and very loud. In Podhale, the podłaźnicy sprinkled the hosts and the chamber with oats, imitating sowing, and expressed the following wishes:

*„We wish you good luck and health  
on the day of Jesus' birth,  
and for everything by God created  
to give you fruit and to multiply”<sup>8</sup>.*

Young bachelors were particularly sought after podłaźnicy<sup>9</sup>. A bachelor's visit to the house where a maiden was old enough to be married was often a harbinger of upcoming courtship, especially when the man sat under a podłaźniczka (i.e. a Christmas ornament made of the tip of a fir or pine or a branch of a spruce) and picked an apple or nut from it. At that time, the maiden tried to do her best, showing off her thriftiness and resourcefulness. Podłazy, therefore, combined elements of vegetative magic with matrimonial efforts and its function was to integrate and bond the local community.

According to informers, in the Nowy Sącz Region, participation in the podłazy was still common in the 1960s.

In the case of children, similar to the one of the podłaźnicy, the carollers were called szczodraki (by Lachy and in Pogórze), the Nowy Sącz Highlanders called them nowolecianta (i.e. children of the New Year). Children (boys) in small groups, dressed in various and bizarre clothes, expressed their good wishes and sang Christmas carols, in return they received small baked breads or croissants (rolls) called szczodroki. Carollers would usually commence their orations after entering a house, e.g.:

*„You've baked scodrocki in here, so we heard!  
If you have no scodrocki,  
Bread crumbs will suffice!  
If you have no bread crumbs,  
fat from beneath a tail will suffice, Our Lord Jesus will repay you  
With Saint John”<sup>10</sup>  
or:  
„Szczodraki have been baked here, so we were told.  
Dear lady, generous lady, give us them too!”<sup>11</sup>.*

In the past, in accordance with tradition, szczodraki carolled on New Year's Day and on Christmas Eve or even on the Epiphany.

8 See also: J. Święch, S. Trebunia-Staszal, *Kultura ludowa Polski Południowej (Małopolski), na przykładzie dwóch grup etnograficznych: Górali Podhalańskich i Rzeszowiaków*, Kraków 2008.

9 See: U. Janicka-Krzywda, *Obrzędy doroczne...*, p. 264.

10 M. Brylak-Zaluska, *Święta Bożego Narodzenia na Sądecku*, „Almanach Sądecki”, No. 4(9), Nowy Sącz 1994, p. 12-13.

11 *Pastuszkowe Kolędowanie...*, p. 25.

## WALKING WITH ANIMAL MONSTROSITIES

Walks with animal monstrosities is an extremely colorful and interesting form of carol ritual in Poland, abundant in numerous magical and playful activities. Most often, animals symbolizing strength, health, life energy and fertility, such as a turoń (aurochs), goat, bear, horse, rooster, stork or ram were selected to be the monstrosities.

The most widespread monstrosity of the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska is the Turoń. The custom of carolling with it is derived - as sources say - from the Slavic rite of leading an aurochs in the fields (which in the folk tradition was called the turoń). It was believed then that this strong animal would give its characteristics to crops. In the 15th century, carollers walked a living aurochs on a cord around huts and manors.



*Carollers with a goat, Dwory, Oświęcim County, 1905, author unknown, Inv. No III/5543/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*



*Carolling with turoń, the regional group "Świarni Łojce" from Sadek-Kostrza, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

The mask of the Turoń is described in detail in materials from 20 Polish Meetings of Children and Youth Carolling Ensembles in Podegrodzie:

„The mask of the Turoń (Goat, Ram) was a head of a bovine, goat or sheep with horns and large ears, which was made of wood and coated with sheep, hare or rabbit hide. It was constructed in such a way that the lower or upper jaw remained movable and a caroller could snap it to the beat of the music by pulling a string. A thick beard was fixed under the jaw, to which a small bell was tied. Hedgehog skin was also attached to the mouth of the Turoń. The long tongue in the mouth and the palate were made of red cloth.

Sometimes the head of the Turoń

was decorated with a golden star. The mask was usually fixed at an obtuse angle (approx. 110°) on a wooden pole, called the leg on which the inclined caroller leaned. It was covered with a sheepskin coat which was turned inside out or gray blanket

(sheet, rug) to resemble the figure of an animal. A horse tail was attached to the back. The Turoń usually moved in a half-bent posture, on two hind legs and one „front”. To put it more accurately, it is necessary to add that according to some 19th-century accounts, the caroller inside the Turoń could also hold two sticks in both hands, using them like front legs”<sup>12</sup>.

During the carolling, the Turoń, depending on the region, was accompanied by other characters, e.g. the Old Man/Peasant, the Jew, the Gypsy, the Musician, the Highland Shepherd, the Shepherd or the Gendarme, and in the vicinity of Tarnów even the Turek (Tatar). Although the composition of the group of carollers differed from region to region, the action proceeded more or less in accordance with a similar scenario. After entering the house, the carollers with the Turoń, which was usually introduced by the Old Man or the Jew, greeted their hosts and the Turoń began its show-off and frolics, snapping his mouth, jumping and dancing, trying to take on its horns mostly scared children and girls who were hiding from him. Each of the characters eagerly and with great commitment played the assigned role. For example, the Old Man with a rosary made of wood, swede or chestnuts hung around his neck prayed and shook his bag for donations. The Gypsy read the cards, and the Jew had either a funny dialogue with the person leading the Turoń about a trade or tried to persuade the host to buy the animal. The culmination of the performance was the fall of the exhausted Turoń and bringing it around. The carollers tried to revive it, while doing a lot of fun activities. After these endeavors, the Turoń suddenly regained its vitality and the show somewhat ended. The host and his wife rewarded the monstrosity and the carollers by putting into the Old Man's bag, for example, „buns, a pie or sausage, sometimes also money”. The carollers, leaving, thanked for the gifts received and wished the hosts a lot of happiness and good harvest next year. While departing, and sometimes during the frolics of the Turoń, the carollers in Łącko sang:

*„Where the turoń goes - rye grows.*

*Where it lands its hoof - crops will go up the roof!!*

*Turoń, be so kind and turn around to make the housewife cheerful!*

*Turoń, be so kind and turn around the second time to make the host cheerful!*

*Turoń, be so kind and turn around the third time to make the children cheerfull too!”<sup>13</sup>.*



Carolling with turoń, "Masqueraders with turoń from Mszalnica", photo by Kamil Bańkowski

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> M. Brylak-Zaluska, *Święta Bożego Narodzenia na Sąddecku...*, p. 16.



In Tarnów, on the other hand, when the household members had enough of the frolics of the Turoń, they sung to it:

*„Go, turoń, go home,  
don't bother anyone,  
you were not raised here,  
you will not stay here”<sup>14</sup>.*

It is worth quoting the original text of the scenario for carolling with the Turoń, written on the basis of the word of mouth of the residents of Zawoja by U. Janicka-Krzywda. Walking with the Turoń at the foot of Babia Góra is still cultivated, both by the local carollers and regional ensembles, including „Juzyna”, „Zbójnik” or „Ziemia Suska”.

## CAROLLING WITH THE TUROŃ

„Characters:

the Turoń, the Highland Shepherd, the Gypsy, the Jew, the Shepherds

The carollers enter the room. The Highland Shepherd and the Shepherd lead the Turoń. The Highland Shepherd keeps the Turoń on a trace (i.e. on a chain or rope – a cord), the Turoń jumps, tries to break free. The Shepherds hold palice (i.e. bent canes) to rush the Turoń. They were followed by the Jew and the Gypsy.

### Highland Shepherd:

*O, praised be Jesus Christ  
born from his mother, Virgin Mary!*

### Shepherd No. I:

*Lord Jesus was born,  
went from home to home!  
And we, the sinful lot,  
have arrived to this spot.*

### Shepherd No. II:

*Is it perhaps that you are sleeping?  
May the carollers start their carolling?*

(Christmas carol is being sung)

### Highland Shepherd:

*From winter to winter  
We travel the world  
And this Turoń,  
we drag it with us along!*

<sup>14</sup> O. Kolberg, *Dzieła Wszystkie*, vol. 48 *Tarnowskie-Rzeszowskie*, Wrocław-Poznań 1967, p. 67.

**Shepherd No. I:**

*Where the Turoń lays its eye  
Rye will grow there!*

**Highland Shepherd:**

*Where the Turoń's dung drops  
There'll be lots of oat crops!*

**Shepherd No. II:**

*Where the Turoń moos,  
The crops should go loose!*

**Highland Shepherd:**

*Where the Turoń stops,  
sheep will end their hops!  
Where the Turoń smells  
the growth never ends*

**Jew:**

*Hey, honourable men,  
who let their ram graze!  
What is this creature?  
Hey, hey, I've never seen such features!  
Is it a hunter or a goat?  
What beast is held by this cord?  
I would like to buy it, no later,  
so I can make from it some leather!*

**Highland Shepherd:** (threatens the Jew with the shepherd's axe)

*Ah, you Jew, infidel!  
Is that why you need this creature of God? Well!  
The coat is what you wish!  
What a swell idea you brandish!*

**Jew:**

*Hey, why so angry, why so mad,  
It makes Ike feel so sad!  
A purchase of this creature is at stake!  
I've never said from what the coat I shall make!*

**Highland Shepherd:**

*How will you pay me, Jew?  
Were the Turoń the last of your coins few?*

**Jew:**

*Oy vey! I would not be able to pay?  
I would say nay to pay?  
Four zwanzigers I'll pay  
And the Turoń with me shall stay!*

**Shepherd No. I:** (with outrage to the Jew)

*You maggot! You bad lot!*

*One hundred thalers and it's yours, bought!*

**Jew:** (examines the Turoń, it tries to hit him with its horns)

*Oy vey! 100 thalers!*

*For such an animal!*

*Oy vey! I hope it gets you on its horns!*

(The Jew examines the Turoń, opens its mouth, grabs its horns, looks at its legs, the Turoń kicks, attacks with horns. The Jew waves his arms and speaks to the Highland Shepherd)

**Jew:**

*Its eyes are red!*

*It is enraged!*

*Hey, it might even drop dead!*

**Highland Shepherd:** (shows Turoń to the Jew, recommends it to him)

*Look, Jew, from its front to its back,*

*Is that too much to you?*

**Jew:** (looks inside the mouth of the Turoń)

*Hey, it has no teeth!*

*(walks to the back of the Turoń, pinches his nose, makes a wry face, shouts)*

*Yuck, it stinks!*

**Shepherd No. II:** (forces the Jew back)

*It ate a lot, that's why it farts!*

**Jew:** (looks for udders, wants to milk the Turoń, it kicks and bucks)

*Hey, maybe it can be milked?*

(the Turoń kicks the Jew and it jumps away)

**Jew:**

*Oy vey! It jumps! It does not stay!*

**Highland Shepherd:** (laughing)

*You mite-covered Shylock!*

*Have you ever seen a nanny with bollocks?*

**Jew:**

*Hey, what locks?*

*Who sells them?*

*I give a heller for each!*

**Shepherd No. I:** (laughing)

*Oh Jew, my Jew!*

*It's a bull, not a locksmith!*

*Look closer! (turns the Turoń)*

*What beautiful hide it has!*

**Jew:** (examines the Turoń, counts)

*Horns for Ike to be made into pipe,*

*Hide for Moe for a jacket, perfect type,  
Fat and balls*

*For matzah for Saltzia!*

(happy with calculations, turns to the Highland Shepherd)

*10 zwanzigers I'll pay*

*And the Turoń with me shall stay!*

(the Shepherd pulls the Turoń by a cord, shepherds chase away the Jew with their palice, the Jew tries to defend himself)

### **Highland Shepherd:**

*Come, dear Turoń, after us follow!*

*No Jew will take you, I will not allow!*

**Gypsy:** (approaches the Highland Shepherd)

*Gentlemen, gentlemen,*

*what trade are you brewing?*

*Are you heading to the market?*

### **Highland Shepherd:**

*From winter to winter,*

*We travel the world*

*Where the Turoń lands its hoof,*

*crops will go up the roof!*

*Where the Turoń hops*

*Wheat for sure pops*

*Where the Turoń takes a tinkle,*

*Your turnip will start to twinkle!*

**Gypsy:** (examines the Turoń from all sides)

*Foh! No ram, no sheep,*

(looks under the tail of the Turoń)

*No goat, no cow!*

(turns to the Highland Shepherd)

*Where do you keep this thing?*

### **Highland Shepherd:**

*In a pen, in a barn,*

*I don't spin you a yarn!*

### **Gypsy:**

*I need to take one good look*

*to make sure you're not a crook!*

(he examines the Turoń carefully, it jumps, tries to hit the Gypsy with its horns, finally it breaks free from the Highland Shepherd's grip, runs away between the spectators.

The Highland Shepherd catches it and brings it to the Gypsy)

### **Highland Shepherd:**

*Silence, you beast!*

**Gypsy:** (walks around the Turoń, examines it)

*No teeth, big snout!*

*Has horns, no doubt!*



(looks underneath the belly of the Turoñ)

*It has no udder! And nothing other!*

*How does it live in this world?*

**Highland Shepherd:** (speaks gently to the Turoñ)

*Dance, Turoñ, just like a foal!*

*I will make you a pea bowl!*

**Gypsy:** (laughing)

*It does not look well,*

*Go, Turoñ, to hell!*

**Highland Shepherd:**

*Hop, Turoñ, hop up high!*

**Gypsy:**

*Fly up to the sky!*

(the Turoñ runs, jumps, falls to the ground)

**Highland Shepherd:** (leaning over the Turoñ, lamenting)

*It's dead!, They've killed him!, Hunted it down!*

(all carollers lean over the Turoñ, shake it, try to revive it)

**Shepherd No. I:** (pulls the Highland Shepherd by the sleeve)

*Shepherd of the Highlands! Come!*

*The beast needs saving!*

*Till it lives, be caring!*

**Highland Shepherd:** (examines the Turoñ, opens its mouth, raises its legs, etc.)

*Not overfed! Not limp!*

**Shepherd No. II:** (leans over the Turoñ, peers into its mouth)

*Its tongue is a tad white!*

**Highland Shepherd:**

*We need to do something,*

*start with the reviving!*

(he speaks to the shepherd)

*You hold it, I will cure it!*

(he breathes into the snout of the Turoñ, performs a massage)

**Gypsy:** (observes the Turoñ)

*Oh, this looks bad! It stopped breathing!*

**Shepherd No. I:** (leans over the Turoñ)

*So the Turoñ is dead!*

**Jew:** (strokes his beard with satisfaction)

*Hey! I was not a silly man!*

*I did not buy this bull then!*

**Highland Shepherd:** (makes threats against the Jew, the shepherds aid him)

*You put a spell on it!*

*You want your throat slit!*

**Gypsy:** (takes out a bottle)  
*I have here the best drink of them all!*

**Highland Shepherd:** (takes the bottle from the Gypsy, sniffs, tastes)  
*Strong booze!*

(he pours the drink to the snout of the Turoń, which is held by the shepherds; it slowly begins to move)

**Shepherd No. II:**  
*It moves already! It's alive!*

**Highland Shepherd:**  
*What a happy day it is!*

**Shepherd No. I:** (pulls the Turoń by the cord)  
*Come, Turoń, let's move on!*  
*We won't stay here, we're gone!*

**Jew:**  
*Where are you going?*

**Highland Shepherd:**  
*To the crib, where the birth of the Child happened,*  
*And made the world with joy illuminated!*

**Shepherd No. II:**  
*What the angels have seen,*  
*they told us, their listeners keen.*  
*And now listen to the story old,*  
*and the song we now sing, behold!*

(the carollers sing a carol)  
*Hooray, hooray, let us sing,*  
*Glory to our Lord we shall bring!*  
*Our host will be certainly merry,*  
*For he took us in, carollers happy we*  
*Hey, Christmas carol, hey!"<sup>15</sup>*

The Turoń, as well as all the carollers, had to be let in, because they brought not only good news, but also happiness, health and prosperity to the household members – the hosts – through the ritualized sequences of the activities. Near Zawoja, the following saying was preserved „ka turoniek chodzi, tam się chlebuś rodzi” (i.e. „Where the Turoń goes, that's where bread grows”)<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> From the collection belonging to S. Kubasiak (Sucha Beskidzka).

<sup>16</sup> A woman, resident of Zawoja.

## WALKING WITH A STAR

A typical Christian attribute of Christmas has become a carolling star, also called a shepherd's, three kings' or angel's star (the region of Tarnów). It is a direct reference to the symbolism of the Bethlehem star that appeared above the crib on the night of the birth of Infant Jesus. The literature and source materials provide several methods for making the carolling star, but a common element is a simple rotating mechanism that allows the star to move. The traditional construction material should be wood, willow twigs (e.g. tied in hoops), cardboard, paper, tissue paper, sometimes also straw. Some were glazed in the centre, with a Nativity scene or figures of saints inside, and some stars were illuminated.



*Carollers with a star from Sucha Beskidzka, photo: arch. of the Town Museum in Sucha Beskidzka*

At present, children and young people dressed as the Shepherds or the Three Kings walk with the star. They start carolling, as they used to, under the windows or doors of a house, singing carols, and then, according to tradition, they ask the members of the household for permission to continue carolling, e.g.:

*„Is it perhaps that you are sleeping? May the carollers start their carolling?*

*May be praised*

*Jesus Christ Born*

*Jesus Christ and Maria*

*may not miss your home, so is our wish*

*We wish you the best of luck, health for this Christmas*

*So that you may be merry, joyful, as angels in heaven*

*We came here carolling*

*To end your sorrowing*

*Whether we end it or not*

*Carolling is still sought*

*Hey, carol, hey”.*

In the vicinity of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska - according to records - formerly three boys walked with the star (personifying the figures of the Three Kings) in costumes resembling the liturgical vestments of bishops.

Sometimes the carollers with the star were accompanied by the Turoń or figures from the nativity plays (the Death, the Devil, the Angel). According to ethnographers, in the entire Western Beskids there was an archaic form of carolling that preceded the star. It was walking with a ball – „with the world”.

Nowadays this form of carolling can be seen only at carolling ensemble competitions.

Walking with the star is not only alive in the minds of the oldest generation of the inhabitants of Małopolska, but is one of the few forms of carolling that occurs in almost all parts of Małopolska to this day.

## FEDORS

An interesting, specific and probably the oldest form of carolling in Podhale are Fedors. It is an ensemble of peculiar characters: shepherds, the Old Man and the Angel, playing funny scenes. They are distinguished by their characteristic headgear, made of red cardboard. They are also girded with wide cardboard straps<sup>17</sup>.



*Carolling with a star, carolling group "With a star" from Mszalnica, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

This is how Fedors were described by a longtime director of the Tatra Museum, J. Zborowski, more than 100 years ago:

„It was the occupation of teenage boys or older youth. They went from one house to another, collecting donations after their performance and finding – as tradition assures – willing viewers everywhere. The more hilarious the humorous scenes with the old man were, the better fun the audience had, the better brand the ensembles had. (...) Sometimes one or two ensembles could be met in one evening”<sup>18</sup>.

According to the source materials, this form was known in the nineteenth century in southern Poland, for example near Limanowa or Grybów<sup>19</sup>.

## CAROLLING SPECTACLES

A separate, interesting and one of the most extensive in its form examples of carolling are so-called carolling spectacles. They are based on biblical scenes, primarily related to the birth of Jesus, and are derived from medieval mysteries.

Herody is the most famous spectacle, especially in mountainous areas, similar to the nativity plays. The content of the spectacle, based on a fragment of the Gospel describing the slaughter of the innocents and the death of King Herod the Great

<sup>17</sup> According to the available materials: <https://dzieje.pl/dziedzictwo-kulturowe/na-podhalu-po-koledzie-chodza-juhasi-z-dziadem>

<sup>18</sup> J. Zborowski, *Szopka Zakopiańska*, in: *Pisma Zakopiańskie*, vol. 1-2, Kraków 1972.

<sup>19</sup> *Pastuszkowe Koledowanie...*, s. 15.





Shepherds, regional group "Pnioki" from Sadek-Kostrza,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

(Mt 2:16-19), was expanded to include folk motifs. The characters appearing in the spectacles and the additional folk motifs differed in individual regions of Małopolska, e.g. in the Kamienica valley there was a figure of a witch and a gravedigger. Herody were especially popular in the entire region inhabited by the Nowy Sącz Highlanders, where they are called „a live Nativity scene”.

„Walking with the Star” is an extremely interesting spectacle in the vicinity of Łącko, which is a kind of combination of Herody and Nativity scene with carolling with the star. „The play involved - as M. Kroh writes - the characters, such as Mother of God, St. Joseph and an angel, who held a star”<sup>20</sup>.

In order to show how extensive and extended Herody were with new motifs, we present the full script of the performance below.

## WALKING WITH HERODY

### „CHARACTERS:

**KING HEROD.** (Attire: a vestment, a beard, a sceptre, a bent, Old Testament mitre).

**POLICEMAN.** (A red cap and pants, a sabre at the side, a basior -i.e. a whip - in hand).

**ANGEL.** (A boy or a girl in white, with wings and a crown).

**HIGHLANDER.** (Gray hair, a highlander’s hat with a red ribbon, a gunia - i.e. a woolen coat, a bag, tight pants, kierz - i.e. shoes made from calf leather, a walking stick, girded with a powróśło - i.e. a straw rope).

**JEW.** (Jewish gaberdine, a beard, icki (side curls), face painted black, round Jewish hat lined with fur, sack with bones on the back, under his arm a large, old and torn book).

The POLICEMAN enters the room, the rest of the people stay in the hallway.

**POLICEMAN:** *In front of the blessed altar of this place*

<sup>20</sup> M. Kroh, *Zwyczaj i obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Sądeckich od Kamienicy, Łącka i Jazowska*, K. Ceklarz, M. Kroh (ed.), Kraków 2016, p. 379.

*Your presence with a new story I shall grace:  
A pure virgin gave birth to Christ.  
King Herod seeks to get him sliced,  
He vows to kill!  
he stamps his foot and says loudly: Blaze of glory!*

The rest of the people come in and stand in a row, the JEW is at the door.

**The POLICEMAN walks around the room. The HIGHLANDER, constantly jumping, says:**

*Praised be the Lord, praised  
Old hat, bag is blazed.  
Where can I find that lady,  
whose cheeks are so full of glee?  
Maybe she, noblewoman, would marry me?  
Near Babia Góra I was born, with nobility gifted,  
I came to buy leather for my kierzce needed,  
so that maides will love me. –  
I ventured to Kraków  
to buy cloth for uniforms  
Not long, not short, in straight forms.  
So I went to tailors house,  
It was a breakfast time,  
Sitting at the table with grouse  
splitting one egg in grime.  
My nice tailors, make me a zhupan,  
Not short, not long, but in line, so to say, with rump mine,  
(formerly „with a... mine”).  
And I might stay here till my recruiters arrival,  
so that I can continue marching with them.*

**A POLICEMAN comes up to him, beats him with a basior and says:**

*- Hold it right there, foolish highlander; are you a stranger?*

**HIGHLANDER:** *I, dear sir, am no stranger,  
three days and nights I have dwelled here, no earlier!  
But you, sir, must be a stranger,  
For you think outside of Kraków is danger.  
Outside of Kraków, people walk with red knots,  
Dressed as highlanders, as you can see yourself!*

**POLICEMAN:** *Hold it right there, foolish highlander!  
Remember how outside of Kraków people were slain,  
Their lives lost in vain.*

**HIGHLANDER:** *I, dear sir, have gotten old, my beautiful hair white, as you can see  
(presents his hair), but I have not seen nor heard, anyone being chopped, slain, lost  
in vain. How rich my father was?! One hundred sheep and two hundred rams and  
a goat. What kind of goat, you ask?! The kind of goat that gave milk from six udders!  
We had so much milk and cream, we had bath three or four times a day!*

**POLICEMAN:** *Hold it right there, foolish highlander! Why are you praising your father  
like a great lord? I can see through your bluff, last year he borrowed from me some  
snuff.*

**The HIGHLANDER shows a wooden ceiling beam:**

- Oh, my dear sir, you will be on this beam hang, for you have insulted my father's honour!

**POLICEMAN:** I have not scarred your fathers honour, as the entire world knows he's a beggar.

**The HIGHLANDER nudges him with his cane and jumps in front of him:**

- And you don't remember these sheep which to my father belonged, which were grazing in the clearing and at which we whistled (whistle)?

**POLICEMAN:** *Hey, you foolish highlander, you'll walk out with your puppy-dog eyes, when the head of this city and the whole bunch will come!*

**HIGHLANDER:** *Your words mean nought! I fear not your lord or your lot for three armies I have fought! (stamping his foot) Turkish men stood three miles away fearing me, such a man, hey. What a bang, what shot from my cannon (shows), my captain praised me like a baron. He wanted to make me a general so that everyone would have rule over me, but I would not agree to it.*

The JEW at that moment lowers himself to the ground and lies on a sack.

**HIGHLANDER:** *But let's sleep, dear shepherds, for goodness sake ; in an hour or so it we will see the dawn break.*

The HIGHLANDER lies on the Jew and they all fall asleep.

**The ANGEL comes and calls:** *Gloria, Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

**The HIGHLANDER sits, nudges the Jew and says:**

- *Move, you maggot from abroad, cause if I find my stick, I will make your soul sick.*

They fall asleep.

**ANGEL:** *Gloria, etc.*

**The JEW sits:** *Hey, shall we eat? – Asleep. –*

**ANGEL:** *Gloria etc.*

**HIGHLANDER:** *Dear angel, where to go? What's the way? We don't know.*

**ANGEL:** *Travel through the mountains, woods many, Lord will be your company!*

**The HIGHLANDER nudges the JEW:**

- *Move away, Jew, because you smell of garlic, onions and somehow of carrot!*

**The JEW nudges the HIGHLANDER:**

- *You highland beast, al I hear from you are insults!*

The JEW and the HIGHLANDER stand up. The Highlander stands next to Herod, and the Jew by the door. –

**HEROD says:**

- *I am a giant of the whole nation, I have four parts of the world, the moon, the sun and all elements under my rule. – Servant!*

**POLICEMAN:** *Hier! salutes.*

**HEROD:** *I command you to bring the rabbi!*

POLICEMAN strikes the Jew with a whip; the JEW winces and says: *Ow, ow, to which the policeman responds: Thou, thou!*

**JEW:** *What for? What for?*

**POLICEMAN:** *King Herod needs you!*

**JEW:** *Nay, I won't walk to him up such terrible mountains, from March mountains*

*through Babia Góra, from Babia Góra through Jesionowa Mountain, a wolf will chase me, I will fall down, I will lose a leg, I will not appear before King Herod!*

**The POLICEMAN speaks to Herod:**

*- The rabbi doesn't want to appear before King Herod!*

**HEROD: Patrol!**

The POLICEMAN strikes the Jew with a whip:

*- Zwanzig Patrol, you must appear before king Herod!*

**The JEW, while limping when walking, says:**

*- I was prepared, I waited, no one came for me, except when King Herod needed me.*

He appears before the king, takes off his hat and says:

*- Good day!*

**KING:** *Good day! Jew, Rabbi, how are things going in the borderlands?*

**JEW:** *Things are going as they're going: Christ is ,bout to be born!*

**KING:** *Where?*

**JEW:** *In Bethlehem city.*

**The KING says to the POLICEMAN:**

*- You must go to Bethlehem, slaughter all the children, even my son is a villain!*

**JEW:** *Oy vey! Nay, don't be afraid of him, my king, lest mothers cry to him for their little children!*

**KING:** *No!*

**JEW:** *Do you want to know what my bible says on you?*

*Let him be, King Herod, fear him not!*

*I must pray to God fervently, King needs some wisdom urgently.* – The Jew takes the sack off his shoulder, puts it on the ground, takes the book, opens it and says: *There's no Polish text in here, everything's in German!* – He prays, nods and finally cries: *I've got it!* – He stands before the king with the book and reads: *The Fifth Commandment: Do not kill, in this world there will be no blood spill!* – His finger hits king's nose: *Kik nes!* And runs away from Herod.

**The POLICEMAN follows him, grabs him and begins a conversation:**

*Where are you from, Jew?*

*From Kraków*

*What is your occupation?*

*I play a guitar.*

*Then play, Jew!*

*It's Shabbat, good sir!*

*Hit the Jew with sticks!*

*What for, good sir?*

*Use those sticks on the Jew!*

**THE JEW DANCES AND SINGS:**

*Rahchyom, chyahchyom, beem bom bom!*

*I will play as you desire.*

*Sun's not high, Shabbat's nigh,*

*My way home is not dire.*

*Dear my Shabbat, please forgive*

*When they hit, you must give,*

*Stotski, stotski*

*Before lord Potocki.*

*Otherwise:*

*Where are you from, Jew?*

*From Greater Poland.*



*What is your occupation?*

*Have you got snuff?*

*Where?*

*Sniff it!*

*Policeman hits him: Sniff it!*

*Policeman hits him: Sniff it!*

*To avoid his hit!*

The JEW sniffs the snuff, sneezes twice, and walks to the door.

**POLICEMAN:** *Oh my dear, powerful God, how the world is turning wrong,  
Some have had enough of everything, others live in poverty!*

**The JEW jumps:**

*- Nay, why are you not trying to make it your own, hit the stupid, make it to your feet  
thrown.*

**The POLICEMAN unsheathes his saber:**

*- Look at it closely, you mischievous Jew, how sharp is my knife!*

**JEW:** *Nay, that is not a knife, it is more of a scythe, a knife to cut through soldiers!  
The Jew jumps away and says: Hey, what would you like it with? With a pint of beer,  
or a pint of vodka?*

**The POLICEMAN hits him with his basior:**

*- You mischievous Jew, I am not asking about this, just give cloth for uniforms, be-  
cause if not, I will be looking for some leather for my horse!*

**JEW:** *For short Schpenzer I will sell as much cloth as one ell!*

**The POLICEMAN beats with his basior:**

*- We don't wear Schepnzer. So little cloth is not enough. We need more for trousers.*

**The JEW, with a sack on his back, dances and sings:**

*And I will sell it to you an ell of cloth that is too red,  
Because I love Polish military people, don't be misled.*

The JEW goes to the corner and murmurs: Polish army has good people, all of them  
thieves!

**HIGHLANDER:** *I've got one more thing to tell, I will tell you about the Bethlehem  
crib. Near this city, where sheep grazed, I was guarding hay, and here, ( shows with  
hands) before my eyes, light from heaven shines. And all was well, except for one  
fact, the jew with the policeman wanted each other whacked.*

The HIGHLANDER nudges the Jew with a stick and the Jew whacks him with the sack.

**JEW :** *oy vey, oy vey! Bully policeman tells me to sniff the snuff,  
Which I have none. You could give me some money to get one!*

The JEW walks towards the listeners and collects donations.

Thanks for carolling"<sup>21</sup>.

Unfortunately, in Małopolska – as studies show – other forms of carolling spectac-

<sup>21</sup> S. Gonet, *Widowiska w czasie świąt Bożego Narodzenia*, „Lud” Organ Towarzystwa Ludycznego we Lwowie under the chief editor Antoni Kalina PhD, vol. IX, book 1, Lwów 1903 (Wielkopolska Biblioteka Cyfrowa).

les are very rare today. In the vicinity of Zawoja, Juszczyń, Maków Podhalański and Dobczyce, “Walking with the Paradise” and “Walking with Dorothy” are still supported, mainly by regional schools and ensembles. It should be added that in the past these forms were quite common in the vicinity of Sucha Beskidzka and Zawoja.

“Walking with the Paradise” is a folk treatment of the biblical story of the fall of the first parents, Adam and Eve. “Walking with Dorothy” is a staging of the martyrdom of Saint Dorothy, formerly also popular in the vicinity of Babia Góra. The performance features St. Dorothy - a Christian and martyr, Theophile - a pagan, later Christian, saint and martyr, and Fabricius - actually Sapricius. Father Skarga in “Żywoty Świętych (The Lives of the Saints from the Old and New Testaments). Volume II. 6th February” wrote: “In Cappadocia, the city of Caesarea, there was a young lady named Dorothy. During her days on the earth, a staroste named Sapricius arrived to Caesarea to persecute Christians, and Saint Dorothy, whose fame was great, was ordered to be captured first for being of the Christian faith.... When she was dragged from the authority house, the writer and secretary of the staroste, named Theophile, while ridiculing the young lady, said to her: Bride of Christ, send me apples and roses from the paradise of your beloved; - to which she responded: I will do it indeed. - Then, when she came to the place where beheading was performed, she asked the executioner to wait a little, so she could pray to the Lord; and once she finished her prayer, there was a boy underneath, who had three apples in a basket and held three roses, and St. Dorothy said to him: “Bring it to Theophile, and say: this is what you asked for from the paradise garden of my Lord; - and with this she bowed her head underneath the sword and she was beheaded”<sup>22</sup>.

Below is the script for “Walking with Dorothy”.

## WALKING WITH DOROTHY

“Below are the characters of the performance:

**FABRICIUS**, dressed royally with a crown on his head and a sceptre in his hand.

**DOROTHY**, dressed in white, with a crown on her head.

**THEOPHILE**, a knight, dressed in red pants, has a paper helmet on his head and a sword by his side.

**KNIGHT** at service, dressed like Theophile.

**EXECUTIONER**, dressed in red.

**ANGEL**, (girl in white with wings).

**DEVIL**, black with horns and a tail, has chains in his hand.

Everyone but the devil appears in the room. - The devil remains outside the door.

**CHOIR:**

<sup>22</sup> As cited in: S. Gonet, *Widowiska w czasie świąt Bożego Narodzenia...*

1. *Here comes dear Saint Dorothy  
whose pious life is praiseworthy,  
through the royal court she treads,  
To meet with the king she now heads.*
2. *My dear, you wish to be mine,  
The entire world is thine-  
And if your desire is wrong,  
I will cease your life not long.*
3. *I have never been a queen,  
I don't want as one be seen,  
My heart was taken earlier,  
with Jesus it is merrier.*
4. *Hearing that, King felt anger,  
Locked her in prison chamber –  
And went to war unconcerned.  
Seven years later, returned.*
5. *Open now the prison door;  
Is Dorothy's life no more?  
Oy, she lives, dear king, she lives,  
with no food nor drink survives.*

**KING:** *Knights!* (Accent on the third syllable from the end)

**KNIGHT:** *What is your order, my king?*

**KING:** *Bring Dorothy to me, bring!*

**The KNIGHT turns to Dorothy and says:**

*Miss Dorothy, you are to appear before king Fabricius!*

DOROTHY faces the king

**KING:** *My dear miss, please, quicken this,  
Why is sent you is clear,  
Sufficient is your thought mere:  
How I want you to be mine,  
The entire world is thine;  
And if your desire is wrong,  
I will cease your life not long.*

**DOROTHY** sings:

*Ah, what hardships this age brought,  
Silver gold I wish for not,  
Heavy is this wreath I wear  
Joy and health, all is but nought.  
She says: I have never been a queen, I don't want as one be seen,  
Because there's already one, little Jesus, he has won!*

**KING:** *Knights!*

**KNIGHT:** *As the graciousness wishes!*

**KING:** *Bring the executioner!*

**The KNIGHT** appears before the executioner.

*Master, master!* – (every time he says this word, he stamps his foot hard).

**EXECUTIONER:** *What order brings you to me?* (he stamps his foot when uttering "what").

**KNIGHT:** *You are to appear before king Fabricius!*

**The EXECUTIONER** appears before the king and says:

*My king, my king! Why was the knight sent for me? (or: My lord, my lord!)*

**KING:** *Executioner, to your ears I announce this, there's no time to miss,*

*Take Dorothy to Lazarus' followers,*

*Calm my heart, make it so I may not hear of it again.*

**The EXECUTIONER to Dorothy:**

*Come with me, maid of honour,*

*who's King's sole discomfort spawner,*

*This sword will serve you alone,*

*Christ will help*

*And we will watch in awe.*

During this speech the executioner stands on Dorothy's one side and the knight on the other side, they take their swords from their sheaths and cross them above Dorothy's head.

**DOROTHY**, standing before the king, sings:

*Ah, how sad is Dorothy,*

*I raise my plea to you, God,*

*When I walk away with them,*

*Lazarus' hostage I'll be.*

DOROTHY leaves with the knight and the executioner. The knight and the executioner hide their swords

**The EXECUTIONER walks around the room and says:**

*We've tortured Dorothy, troubled her, left her half dead, and she seemed to be anointed with a balm, because she strongly believed in Christ.*

**KING:** *Knights!*

**KNIGHT:** *What is your order, my king?*

**KING:** *Bring Dorothy to me, bring!*

**The KNIGHT to Dorothy:** *Miss Dorothy, you are to appear before king Fabricius!*

**DOROTHY** stands before the king and sings: *Ah, what hardships this age brought, etc.*

then she says: *I have never been a queen, etc.*

**KING:** *Knights!*

**KNIGHT:** *What is your order, my king?*

**KING:** *The executioner, bring!!*

**The KNIGHT, standing before the executioner:**

*Master! master! (stamping).*

**EXECUTIONER :** *What order brings you to me? (stamping).*

**KNIGHT:** *You are to appear before king Fabricius!*

**The EXECUTIONER appears before the king:**

*My king, my king! Why was the knight sent for me?*



**KING:** *Executioner, to your ears I announce this, there's no time to miss:  
Raise your swords above Dorothy's head and cut it off, so I don't hear about her again!*

**The executioner to Dorothy:**

*Come with me, maid of honour,  
who's King's sole discomfort spawner,  
This sword will serve you alone,  
Christ will help  
And we will watch in awe!*

The EXECUTIONER and the knight cross their swords above Dorothy.

**DOROTHY kneels and sings:**

*Ah, how sad is Dorothy,  
I raise my plea to you, God,  
For my executioner beheads me,  
The Blessed Virgin, stand by me.*

**DOROTHY addressing the executioner:**

*Cut it, deathsman, as you must, saints are here for my soul just!*

**The EXECUTIONER touches Dorothy's neck with the sword and says:**

*Cut right through this damsel's neck,  
till you leave in wood a peck.  
Hops just like a young pumpkin, this cut leaves me with a grin,  
I've just started and I have to end now.*

**The EXECUTIONER speaks to the king:**

*Here, king, you have the head of your maid of honour that you may recognise.*

**The ANGEL to Theophile, who has looked at all this until now, cries in a melodious voice:**

*Theophile, Theophile!*

**THEOPHILE:** *Who's calling me so delightfully?*

**ANGEL:** *Here I am, an angel, sent from Miss Dorothy, who sends you a basket of roses so that you do not serve the king, but the faithful Christians.*

**THEOPHILE takes roses from the angel and says:**

*I will go to the king and tell him!*

He goes to the king, on the way he gives the basket of roses back to the angel and says:

*My king, my king! I will not serve the king, but the faithful Christians!*

**KING:** *Ha, ha! So you all want to be Christians? Knights!*

**KNIGHT:** *What is your order, my king?*

**KING:** *The executioner, bring!!*

**The KNIGHT speaks to the executioner:**

*Master, master! (stamping).*

**EXECUTIONER:** *What order brings you to me? (stamping).*

**KNIGHT:** *You are to appear before king Fabricius!*

**The EXECUTIONER appears before the king:**

*My king, my king! Why was the knight sent for me?*

**KING :** *Executioner, to your ears I announce this, there's no time to miss,  
Raise your swords above Theophile's head, so I don't hear about him again!*

The KNIGHT with the executioner cross their swords above Theophile.

**The EXECUTIONER to Theophile:**

*Come with me, man of honour,  
who's King's sole discomfort spawner,  
This sword will serve you alone,  
Christ will help –  
And we will watch in awe.*

**THEOPHILE kneels and sings like Dorothy:**

*Ah, how sad is Theophile,  
I raise my plea to you, God:  
For my executioner beheads me,  
The Blessed Virgin, stand by me!*

**THEOPHILE addressing the executioner:**

*Cut it, deathsman, as you must, saints are here for my soul just!*

**The EXECUTIONER touches Theophile's neck with the sword and speaks in similar manner as when beheading Dorothy:** *Cut right through this poor man's neck, after which he speaks to the king: Here, king, you have the head of your man of honour that you may recognise.*

The door opens, the devil walks in and calls:  
*Thud, thuuud!*

**KING:** *What is this noise?*

**The DEVIL approaches the king:**

*The last hour of your life, your highness!*

**KING:** *Demon, don't take me, I'll give you a golden belt!*

**DEVIL:** *Where is it?*

**The KING points to his chest:**

*I've got it here!*

**The DEVIL jumps back, turns around and, pointing at his rump, says mockingly:**

*Here it is!*

**KING:** *Demon, don't take me, I'll give you gold, enough silver!*

**DEMON:** *I have enough gold and silver, I just want to take you, your highness. I have wagons, on which I carry old monkeys, donkeys, witches, devils, and the king will ride on them into hell too:*

*Thud, thu u ud! - He grabs the king's sleeve and flees to the door.*

The end of the show. Next, donations are collected from the listeners. Finally, thanks are given at the end of carolling:

*The carolling now ends, we thank thee, happiness and health may for you be-  
We wish you a merry and blessed life"<sup>23</sup>.*

23 S. Gonet, *Widowiska w czasie świąt Bożego Narodzenia...*

The Christmas period usually ended with the carolling of the Three Kings. It took various forms. Boys were dressed in white clothes with sashes, and on their heads they wore paper crowns, wrapped in golden foil. Usually one of them had a face painted black. They sang songs about the Three Kings, went around, knocking with a staff, thus signalling the journey of the Wise Men from the east. Their repertoire was combined with a more or less developed motif of Herod<sup>24</sup>.

## DRABY NOWOROCZNE (NEW YEAR'S CAROLLERS)

New Year's Carollers are original carollers of New Year's Day in the region of Lachy Sądeckie and Pogórzanie. This type of group consisted of at least three men in disguises mainly made of straw and wearing pointed hats. They wore tall rods wrapped in straw. They expressed versed New Year's Day wishes, circling the visited room and tapping the rhythm with rods, and one of them, called the Old Man, mocked others and amused the household members with their behavior and hilarious lines, e.g.:

*"We wish you good luck and health for this chilly day.*

*All the maidens in Kobylanka have already turned gray.*

*A visit of the crookbacked Jew ended with wagon chock-full,  
he took them to Warsaw.*

*Warsaw people were surprised, such ladies left them entranced!*

*Toruń, that's where he travelled, and away he must've roamed,  
and his wagon cleaned"*<sup>25</sup>.



"Droby" (New Year's Draby) from Lipnica Wielka,  
photo by Kamil Bańkowski



New Year's Draby, Szymbark, 1970s,  
photo by Stanisław Wierzbicki

24 B. Rosiek, *Zwyczaj i obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura Ludowa Górali Żywieckich*, K. Ceklarz, B. Rosiek (ed.), Kraków 2018, p. 454.

25 M. Brylak-Zaluska, *Święta Bożego Narodzenia na Sądecczyźnie...*, p. 16.

# LEMKOS' CAROLLING

Carolling in Lemko culture, as in Polish regional groups, takes various forms and fulfils both religious, magical, ludic and integrating functions. In traditional Lemko culture a carolling-like rite was already present in the period before Christmas. Men (mainly bachelors) dressed in costumes went in groups to visit girls as part of the so-called "Wyczerki" (in Wysowa called "Filipiłki"). "Wyczerki" were everyday (from Monday to Friday) meetings of girls and women who jointly spun flax, hemp or wool. They were organized throughout five weeks before Christmas, i.e. almost the entire fast. These meetings created an opportunity for various games (ludic activities) and social contacts. Men dressed up in costumes made primarily with straw, sheepskin coats and old rags. The Jew and the Gypsy appeared in the groups of people wearing costumes too. Most researchers emphasise that the behavior associated with "Wyczerki" did not contain Christian elements, certainly some of them had a magical function, such as "breaking bars of a spinning wheel seat." This was probably related to the perception of this period as a time of transition in which the traditional order was disturbed<sup>26</sup>.

The proper carolling was started by little boys in the morning, i.e. around 3-4, on Christmas day. They were called "połaznyky"<sup>27</sup>. They went expressing wishes and singing carols to receive in return specially baked breads, also called "połaznyky".

"A połaznyk who entered a room – as R. Reinfuss writes – said:

*Christ was born*

*We wish you wheat, rye, barley crops.*

*Girls received the following wishes:*

*We wish you white lily blossom*

*We wish you that this year brings you joy.*

*whereas a young couple would hear:*

*Congratulations, congratulations, may the chimney pop*

*May you hear your little son's hop*"<sup>28</sup>.

In the past, after a "połaznyk" got gifts, he was asked to bring water from the stream. It was poured into a container and then small money (coins) were thrown into it. All household members washed themselves in this water, which was supposed to ensure health, success and money in the upcoming year.

According to the inhabitants of Gładyszów, breads are still baked for children (because girls also participate) who come to express their wishes. Nowadays, they also receive cash contributions. Apart from children, home owners went carolling in the evenings, singing Christmas carols and playful songs, to which they sometimes even danced.

<sup>26</sup> See: D. Blin - Olbert, *Rok obrzędowy u Łemków*, in: *Łemkowie w historii i kulturze Karpat*, part 2, J. Czajkowski (ed.), p. 335.

<sup>27</sup> See: R. Reinfuss, *Śladami Łemków*, Warszawa 1990, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> R. Reinfuss, *Śladami Łemków...*, p. 52-53.



*Carol show (Herody, Three Kings) - carol group from Pętna, Małastów and Ropica Górna, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

Christmas in the Greek Catholic church last three days: the first day “according to folk interpretation, was dedicated to Jesus, the second to Mary, the third to Stephen or Szczepan”<sup>29</sup>. Currently, the Lemkos, apart from attending the service at a church, spend Christmas day with their families relaxing and singing Christmas carols<sup>30</sup>.

Carolling started by połaznyky, according to the Lemko tradition, lasts until Jordan Day.

During the interwar period of the 20th century, under the influence of Polish traditions - according to researchers - new forms of carolling began to emerge in the Lemkos community: walking with a star, walking with a Nativity scene (with puppets) or Herody (sometimes with a mare)<sup>31</sup>. This is confirmed by the description contained in the monthly magazine “Greko – Katolik” from 1934: “In the evening, carollers – with a Nativity scene and a star walk from house to house”<sup>32</sup>. These forms were quickly adopted and became permanent customs associated with the Christmas period. They are cultivated to this day. On New Year’s Day, houses should also be visited by carollers, who are supposed to sprinkle oats on their hosts.

The carollers were respected - as the residents of Gładyszów say - because they not only brought good news, but also luck to the owners of houses. That is why they were awaiting them and they were welcomed with joy. The carollers visited all houses except for those, where there was a deceased person.

29 D. Blin - Olbert, *Rok obrzędowy u Łemków...*, p. 345.

30 Based on an interview: A man, resident of Gładyszów (Greek Catholic); A woman, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.

31 See: D. Blin - Olbert, *Rok obrzędowy u Łemków...*

32 *Boże Narodzenia u Łemków*, (author A. R.), „Greko – Katolik. Czasopismo miesięczne dla grecko – katolickich Polaków”, March 1934, No. 1, p. 2.



Christmas and the transition from old to new year experienced afterwards had a rich cultural setting. The kinship of the Christmas rites of neighboring nations stems from the recognition of the world of shared values. It is made up of Christian essence: reconciliation, peace, hope for salvation, as well as of general and cultural essence: fertility, wealth, beauty and health, success in life. This way of understanding the holiday aided in easing and even suspending social, ethnic or confessional boundaries and assimilating ritual practices arising in a foreign environment<sup>33</sup>. The calendar difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars was used for joint celebration. It involved visiting each other, approaching houses from the side with windows, expressing wishes, singing addressed to house owners and household members, performances in costumes, accepting treats and money<sup>34</sup>.



*The Lemko carollers knock the door - a carol group from Pętna, Małastów and Ropica Górna in Zagroda Maziarska in Łosie, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

Rites consisting of activities and words were ambiguous in nature. Through symbols, carol ensembles conveyed religious truths, norms and values defining human behavior, integrated neighbourhood or village groups and were the basis of their interaction<sup>35</sup>. Some carol rituals were more secular (e.g., processions with a goat, singing of the *szczodrówki*), including even matrimonial, and others more religious (e.g. nativity plays, walking with a Nativity scene [vertep], with a star, Three Kings [Tri Carij])<sup>36</sup>. Most of the time, however, Christmas time performances included secular, magical, religious and ludic elements (e.g. mysteries, called “dialogues”, Herody, processions with a horse, *szczodraki*, *połaznicy*)<sup>37</sup>.

33 See: J. Bartmiński, M. Lesiów, *Kolędy na pograniczu polsko-ukraińskim*, in: *Chrześcijański wschód a kultura polska*, R. Łużny (ed.), Lublin 1989, p. 249.

34 J. Bartmiński, *Szczodry wieczór - szczedry wieczir. Kolędy krasiczyńskie jako zjawisko kultury pogranicza polsko-ukraińskiego*, in: *Polska - Ukraina. 1000 lat sąsiedztwa*, vol. 1 *Studia z dziejów chrześcijaństwa na pograniczu etnicznym*, S. Stępień (ed.), Przemyśl 1990, p. 272.

35 J. Nowak, *Zespoły kolędnicze z kozą i z koniem na tomaszowskim pograniczu polsko-ukraińskim*, „*Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*”, vol. 7, I. Bukowska-Floreńska (ed.), Katowice 2003, p. 217-230.

36 Ibidem.

37 A. Fischer (Rusini. Zarys etnografii Rusi, Lwów 1928, p. 117-118), when mentioning groups of carollers, notes that in the case of the Ruthenians: “During these holidays, the boys walk around the village with a star, a Nativity scene, Herod and a vertep with dolls, and very often with a goat.”

# NATIVITY PLAYS



The nativity play (in Polish: *jasełka*) is more or less complex Christmas performance, modeled on medieval mysteries. Its name comes from the old Polish word „*jasło*”, meaning manger. J. Kitowicz explained this in „*Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III*” („Description of customs during the reign of August III”):

„The Gospel tells us that Christ, born in a barn, was laid in *praesepe*. In Polish, *praesepe* means „crib”. A „manger,” on the other hand, is a partitioned part beneath the crib, where they put straw to serve as bedding for the horses. They don’t have cribs in barns where cows are kept, and the mangers are made of wood and they put straw and chopped hay in them. The person who first thought up the kind of manger, that I shall describe below, must have believed that a crib and a manger were two different words for the same thing, and the same as Latin *praesepe*, and for that reason he gave the name „manger” to his figurines and the other playthings that he used to depict the birth of the Christ.”<sup>1</sup>.

Saint Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Order are widely recognized to be the inventors of the nativity play, although studies indicate that this type of religious spectacles were already known in Europe. It was through the Franciscans had introduced the nativity play in Poland, probably at the turn of the fourteenth century.

It is worth quoting the description of the nativity play of the already mentioned J. Kitowicz:

„The nativity plays I am talking about here were small and mobile, and they were set up in the corner of the church, or sometimes they occupied the entire altar both high and low and along the sides, except for one unoccupied stretch leaving enough room for conducting the Holy Mass. In the center, there was a *crèche* on four posts with a thatched roof about a cubit square in size. Under the *crèche*, there would be the crib, sometimes a cradle, about a quarter of a cubit in length. In either one, a likeness of the Lord Jesus, made of wax or papier maché, or sometimes of stuffed cham- ois or linen would be placed, wrapped in waddling made of strips of cloth. On one side next to the crib, there would be an ox and an ass stationed, made of the same material as the effigy of the Lord Jesus, whether cast or modeled, kneeling down and keeping the Baby Jesus warm with their breath. On the other side, Mary and Joseph would be standing bent over next to the cradle in an attitude of loving admiration.”<sup>2</sup>.

At first, therefore, the figures found in the nativity play were immobile, and the form itself resembled today’s Nativity scenes. Over time, the elements were set in motion, and some years later, people began placing figurines of secular people inside them<sup>3</sup>. In the eighteenth century, Polish bishops, due to the appearance of secular motifs, including often ludic scenes and figures, banned display of such nativity play in churches.

1 J. Kitowicz, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III*, Poznań 1840, p. 41.

2 Ibidem.

3 J. Cierniak, *Szopka krakowska*, Warszawa 1926, p. 13.

From then on, only Nativity scenes with immovable figures were allowed in a church building.

As a result of the ban, the nativity play was transformed into portable forms of (theatrical) performances both in cities and in villages, and their stagings increased in frequency on the streets, in squares, at taverns and houses.

The following is the description of the nativity play written by J. Konopka in 1840:

„The custom of showing the nativity play (puppets) illustrating the birth of the Lord Christ, is one of the main rituals of our people. At first, it came out of the monastery walls and found an immortal shelter through the hands of organists among people. This might have been the beginnings of dramatic art in our country. The nativity play might have been the origins of the dialogues, for which, instead of the carved figurines, studios with distinctive speech were used.



*Nativity play in Sucha Beskidzka, 1980s, photo: arch. of the Town Museum in Sucha Beskidzka*

Today there are two types of the Nativity scene, one urban and the other rural. In a town, dressed-up dolls for nativity play talk with their mouths through the author or declamator hidden in the back; in a village, they were usually mute (sometimes, however, accompanied with music and songs) prancing around in front of Jesus laid in hay; an ass with an ox stand by the crib, and Joseph with a gray beard and Mary receive homage from the passing dancers.

The thick Polonus (i.e. old-fashioned Polish person) first

emerges from the tower on the side, the hempen mustache tangles into an old karabela (i.e. a type of Polish sabre); an earnest companion in a coif, a reminder of better times, she strides towards him, and after a mutual bow, having danced a Polish dance, they make way to a swarthy Ukrainian who, after amusing the audience with his squat dance, amusing the viewers, jumps vigorously with his sudarynia (i.e. madame); skimpy German in tight leather and fat German lady, they barely showed up when suddenly the boisterous Kopieniak from Proszowice enters and waves his thick cane, makes the crowds of viewers move away; as it is easy to get one's nose protruding in curiosity flicked; a small but bulky Krakowiak (from Skalmierz and Wiślica) appears behind him; a dark blue karazyja (typical clothing worn in Kraków) padded with circles, a long, forged belt, high boots and a red cap with a peacock feather, to the right ear askew, a gnarled stick in his hand, constitute his clothing and defense. Sending home his Kathy, he grabs the shoulders of Kopieniak, who made mischievous tricks to him during his dance; a bloody and ungracious fight in the face of a newborn Guest, a strangely devoted lad with a half-silly face scatters (...)

Similar characters appear in a Nativity scene in a city, but with the addition of the Highlander, the Ulan, the Hussar, the Magyar, etc. Boys sing carols (sometimes accompanied by a violin) near a Nativity scene in a village, while in a city each figurine speaks and sings separately, and music coming from violins, basses and a drum accompanies the entire exhibition. A Nativity scene is shown from St. Stephen's Day till the day of the Virgin Mary of the Blessed Thunder Candle (2nd February)<sup>4</sup>.

The nativity play was, and still is, often referred to as a Nativity scene or a Bethlehem Nativity (as a reference to the Bethlehem stable). J. Cierniak suggests a way to distinguish these concepts by calling a Nativity scene a theatre with figurines (church - fixed and folk - mobile), and the nativity play - a theatre with living people<sup>5</sup>. This distinction also occurs today in the common understanding of the nativity play and the nativity scene.



*The nativity play canon includes the scenes: "The Shepherds", "Herod" and "The Crib" (nativity play by the regional group "Mali Wyrchowianie" from Bukowina Tatrzańska), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

The most famous work, which is even a determinant for today's performances, is the nativity play by L. Rydel entitled „Betlejem polskie” („Polish Bethlehem”), the world premiere of which took place in 1904. The work combines Old Polish Christmas dialogues with carols and elements of patriotic content. The canon also includes: „Szopka krakowska” („Kraków Nativity scene”) from 1926 by J. Cierniak and „Pastorałka - Misterium o Bożym Narodzeniu” („Pastorale - Mystery of Christmas”) by L. Schiller created in 1931.

4 As cited in: O. Kolberg, *Krakowskie*, part I, Kraków 1871, p. 197-198.

5 J. Cierniak, *Szopka krakowska...*, p. 11.



## NATIVITY PLAY IS ENRICHED WITH ELEMENTS OF LOCAL TRADITION - SINGING, DANCING, MUSIC, COSTUMES



*Nativity play by the regional group "Mali Wyrchowianie" from Bukowina Tatrzańska, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*Nativity play performed by students from grades IV-VI of the Primary School in Gładyszów, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



The nativity play usually consists of three scenes: „The Shepherds”, „Herod” and „The Crib”. These elements are enriched with scenes in which there are secular and historical characters (especially from the history of Poland, including the most recent) and biblical motifs. In the years when Poland was deprived of freedom, the Nativity scenes included very important patriotic content, which upheld the national spirit and shaped patriotic feelings. They also maintained and enabled the survival of the mother tongue. Christmas mysteries did not disappear even in the years of Stalinism, despite the express ban on their display.



*Lemko nativity play also includes the figures of shepherds, Herod, the Three Kings, devils and angels (Nativity play performed by students from grades VII-VIII of the Primary School in Gładyszów), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

Nowadays - according to studies - the nativity play is not a common form of Christmas celebration, but they are still present in the rituals and religiosity of the inhabitants of Małopolska. This is primarily due to schools where they are an important element of maintaining tradition and are still eagerly displayed to a wider audience. Cultural facilities (urban and rural cultural centers or local museums) also play an important role, as they quite often organize local and regional competitions, as well as priests involved in displaying the nativity play in churches, firehouses and parish houses.

In the Lemko tradition, the nativity play is called „vertep”. This name is more widely used on the Polish-Ukrainian-Slovak borderland. In the Lemkos' nativity play there are also such characters like shepherds, Herod, the Three Kings, devils and angels<sup>6</sup>.

Since 2009, the largest street nativity play in the world has been organized in Poland - the Procession of the Three Kings.

<sup>6</sup> A woman, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox); A man, resident of Grybów (Greek Catholic), 2019.



*Children carolling with a Nativity scene,  
photo by Bernadeta Ryt*

In most regions, especially in southern Małopolska, the tradition of walking with a Nativity scene is still alive. Currently, this is the main way of carolling for children, singing carols and expressing wishes. This form rarely involves extensive scenes or rhymed monologues.

The origin of the Nativity scene is associated with the beginning of Christianity, and the development and popularization is undoubtedly associated with St. Francis of Assisi and his first Nativity scene (live Nativity scene) built in the village of Greccio near the city of Rieti in 1223<sup>1</sup>. Mobile puppet theatres also had an impact on the shape of the Nativity scene. The concept of the „Nativity scene” is associated with the concept of the

„nativity plays” and sometimes these two forms are treated as synonyms<sup>2</sup>. Both the Nativity scene and the nativity plays are a kind of theatrical performances. An important distinction is given by J. Cierniak: „For the sake of simplicity and language facilitation, we shall continue to use the names in such a distinction as it is done in the case of the people of Kraków: we shall call the church fixed or folk mobile theatre with figurines (puppets, „miracles”) a Nativity scene, whereas the theatre of living people, nativity plays”<sup>3</sup>. This distinction also occurs today in the common understanding of the „nativity plays” and the „nativity scene”.



*A so-called "Bethlehem Nativity", Jędrzej Wowro,  
Gorzeń Dolny, 1920s, from the collection of  
Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

- 1 Some researchers consider a stone crib to be the first Nativity scene, which was made by Arnolfo di Cambio in 1291 in the Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore (*Basilica of Saint Mary Major*) in Rome.
- 2 See among others: A. Zadrożyńska, *Powtarzać czas początku*, part I *O świętowaniu dorocznych świąt w Polsce*, Warszawa 1985; *Pastuszkowe Kolędowanie*. 20. *Ogólnopolskie Spotkania Dziecięcych i Młodzieżowych Grup Kolędniczych*, Nowy Sącz 2017.
- 3 J. Cierniak, *Szopka krakowska*, Warszawa 1926, p. 11.

The Nativity scene in Małopolska comes in two varieties: with immovable figures, the so-called „Bethlehem Nativity”, and with puppets. Interestingly, the puppet Nativity scene - as ethnographers say - is found only in Poland. In this kind of the Nativity scene there are also movable puppets (moved by a human hand) next to immovable figures, which can be used to play scenes both about the birth of the Christ and genre scenes. Sometimes the puppet Nativity scenes were „silent”, „that is, the characters depicted did not speak any lines of dialogue with the voice of a puppeteer who only moved them”<sup>4</sup>. In the beginning, figurines related to the scenes of Jesus’ birth were the dominant ones, but over time, secular figu-



*Puppet Nativity scene, Marcin Waśniowski, Zabierzów Bocheński, 1918, from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*Carollers with a Nativity scene, Dobra, Limanowa County, photo by L. Węgrzynowicz, before 1939, Inv. No III/4321/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

rines representing different classes, professional groups and even historical figures began to appear more and more often.

In the villages near Kraków, the Nativity scenes were quite simple, in Kraków they had more elaborate and impressive shapes - more details are provided later.

The Nativity scenes, including those with puppets, which were also known in the vicinity of Zawoja, „were made of wood, the puppets dressed in clothes and rags”<sup>5</sup>.

4 *Pastuszkowe Kolędowanie. 20. Ogólnopolskie Spotkania Dziecięcych i Młodzieżowych Grup Kolędniczych*, Nowy Sącz 2017, p. 27.

5 U. Janicka-Krzywda, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Babiogórskich*, U. Janicka-Krzywda (ed.), Kraków 2010, p. 270.

The Pieniny Highlanders living in Grywałd also walked with the Nativity scene and performed the nativity plays. Carollers were making efforts to „come to every home, sang Christmas carols and wished the household members prosperity in the upcoming New Year”<sup>6</sup>.

In the case of the Kliszczacy, a popular carolling ensemble was called „pastuszki” (i.e. shepherds), whose basic prop was also the Nativity scene. It was made of „wood or cardboard, decorated with colored paper or aluminium foil, which is popularly called złotko” and resembled a stable or a church (with a tower)<sup>7</sup>.

The puppet Nativity scene is very popular among the Nowy Sącz Highlanders too, which is referred to as the dead Nativity scene in the western part of the area. The Nativity scene made of wood had the shape of a church with three or two towers, in the central part there were figures of Mary, Saint Joseph and the Child. The Nativity scene was also made up of an expanded set of puppets - figurines made of wood, painted or dressed using scraps of fabric. These figurines were called giergielaki .

Sometimes the carolling groups with the Nativity scene were accompanied by a band.

## KRAKÓW NATIVITY SCENE

The tradition of creating the Nativity scenes was present in all regions/areas of the Republic, they also exist in many countries in the world (including Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Peru, Mexico). The most famous Nativity scene in Poland is the Kraków Nativity scene, which was initiated by bricklayers living in Kraków and in its vicinity. Looking for an additional source of income during the winter, they began to produce both the static Nativity scenes for sale and the portable Nativity scenes in the form of a puppet theatre. The idea of the portable Nativity scenes with which one could walk from house to house and perform the nativity plays was particularly good. The most beautiful Nativity scenes - according to experts - were created in Krowodrza, and the most famous Nativity scene troupe was Michał Ezenekier's ensemble. At the end of the 19th century, he was the one who built a Nativity scene,



*Nativity scene actors with puppets, photo: Photographic Agency "Światowid", 1936, arch. of the Museum of Kraków*

6 A. Grochal, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Pienińskich*, K. Ceklarz, U. Janicka-Krzywda (ed.), Kraków 2014, p. 433.

7 As cited in: A. Grochal, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Kliszczackich*, J. Ceklarz, J. Masłowiec (ed.), Kraków 2015, and on the basis of own research.



which set the canon of the Kraków Nativity scene in force lasting to this day. This Nativity scene is kept in the collections of the Ethnographic Museum in Kraków, being one of the most valuable exhibits of the Nativity scene art.

Below is Karol Rafał Estreicher's description of the Nativity scene as written in his book entitled „Nie od razu Kraków zbudowano” („Kraków was not built in a day”):

„(...) It was a building the height of which filled a door frame. Its colors were the first thing that catches one's eye, its shape came second. Its colors were beaming out of it first, then its architecture evoked one's awe: red, green, purple, blue and yellow tones, black and brown, bronze, silver and gold made up this orgy of colors, they were vivid like fire and similarly attractive. Two towers were rising ahead, St. Mary's towers obviously, only with richer ornaments, crowned with soaring crowns placed on tented roofs. Between them, right in the middle, a great dome of gold, as befits every dome since Sigismund's times (...)”<sup>8</sup>.



Kraków puppet Nativity scene, Michał Ezenekier, Kraków-Krowodrza, 1890s, from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Nativity scenes referring to the Nativity scene of Michał Ezenekier, called the mother of the Nativity scenes, photo: Photographic Agency "Światowid", 1935/1936, arch. of the Museum of Kraków

<sup>8</sup> K. R. Estreicher, *Nie od razu Kraków zbudowano*, Warszawa 1957.



It was during this period that the architectural features were developed which clearly distinguish the Nativity scenes made in Kraków from different ones.

The ones made in Kraków were modeled on local buildings, especially on churches. Basing on the architecture of Kraków is the most important element of the Kraków Nativity scene.

The heyday of the Kraków Nativity scene was halted by World War I, in particular by the Austrian authorities prohibiting carolling with the Nativity scene.

During the interwar period, attempts were made to restore the Nativity scene traditions, including the initiative of L. Strojek, which resulted in construction of a special stage at the Museum of Industry for performances in the form of the Nativity scene modeled after Ezenekier's Nativity scene. However, it was only after Jerzy Dobrzycki (head of the Municipal Art Propaganda Office, and



*The Nativity scene makers in front of the seat of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków at ul. Św. Jana 12, Zdzisław Dudzik on the left, photo by Henryk Hermanowicz, 1961, arch. of the Museum of Kraków*



*Kraków Nativity Scenes Competition on the Main Square in Kraków, photo by Henryk Hermanowicz, 1960s, arch. of the Museum of Kraków*

after World War II, the long-time director of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków) organized the First Contest for the most beautiful Kraków Nativity scene in 1937 that the Kraków Nativity scene was revived and developed.

As many as 86 works were submitted to the first contest „made by artists mainly from Kraków's districts: Krowodrza, Grzegórzki and Podgórze, but residents from outside Kraków, especially in large numbers from nearby villages, were also actively involved in this event”<sup>9</sup>. This contest is continued

<sup>9</sup> M. Kwiecińska, *Szopkarstwo krakowskie w procesach kształtowania dziedzictwa miasta*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Etnograficzne” 2017, vol. 45, book 3, p. 337. See also: „Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny” 1937, No. 352.

to this day. It did not take place only during World War II. With the continuation of the contest after 1945, a new type of Kraków Nativity scene was created - the contest Nativity scene. Focus was starting to be primarily placed on improving the architectural and decorative values of the Nativity scene. Still figurines, which have been set in motion since the 1960s, began to dominate.



*Figures made by Anna and Rozalia Malik,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

According to the canon, the Kraków Nativity Scene is a symmetrical building inspired by the motifs of the Kraków architecture with an odd number of towers (3, 5, or 7) and two or three floors, containing clear elements of Christmas tradition. The most common motifs are: the towers of St. Mary's Church, the dome of the Sigismund's Chapel in Wawel, the town hall tower, and historic Kraków churches. We can also see ogival windows, colorful stained glass, Renaissance attics of the Cloth Hall, and today also elements of 19th/20th-century architectural styles, e.g. Art Nouveau.

Figurines in the Kraków Nativity scenes can be divided into several categories:

- associated with the nativity plays, belonging to the so-called carolling ensembles,
- belonging to regional groups (in national costumes),
- related to Kraków legends and stories,
- related to the history of Kraków and Poland,
- inspired by the world of politics,
- connected with the everyday life of Kraków.

To this day, every year on the first Thursday of December, the artists bring their works to the Main Square in Kraków and place them on the steps of the Monument of Adam Mickiewicz. Then, in a colorful procession, they stand in front of the stage, where the Nativity scenes are presented. Winners in each category are announced on Sunday, and all entries submitted for the contest can then be viewed at the Kraków Museum. The museum has been gathering the Nativity scenes since 1945. Currently, it has the world's richest collection of the Kraków Nativity scenes<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Szopki krakowskie, <https://www.muzeumkrakowa.pl/zbiory/szopki-krakowskie>



*Kraków Nativity Scenes Competition on the Main Square in Kraków, 2018, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

The well-known and talented Native scene constructors who created extraordinary

works after 1945 are worth mentioning: Franciszek Tarnowski, Zdzisław Dudzik, Antoni Wojciechowski, Antoni Ruta, Stefan Mitka, Jan Jędraszczyk, Władysław Turski, Waław Morys, Ferdynand Solowski, Władysław Wiatr, Stanisław Guńkiewicz, Tadeusz Ruta, Witold Głuch, Stanisław Paczyński, Zygmunt Grabarski, Bronisław Pięćnik, Tadeusz Gillert, Ferdynand Sadowski, Roman Sochacki, Maciej Moszew, Jan Kirs, Marian Dłużniewski, Antoni Wolek, Kazimierz Stopiński, Włodzimierz Malik, Ryszard Kijak, Włodzimierz Łeszyk, Jan Malik, Kazimierz Wiatr, Tadeusz Żmirek, Leszek Zarzycki, Andrzej Morański, Andrzej Nowicki, Zbigniew Gillert, Stanisław Malik, Wiesław Barczewski, Andrzej Borucki, Lucyna Szopa, Paweł Nawala, Dariusz Czyż, Piotr Michalczyk, Marek Głuch, Marzena Krawczyk, Przemysław Kwieciński and Katarzyna Racka.



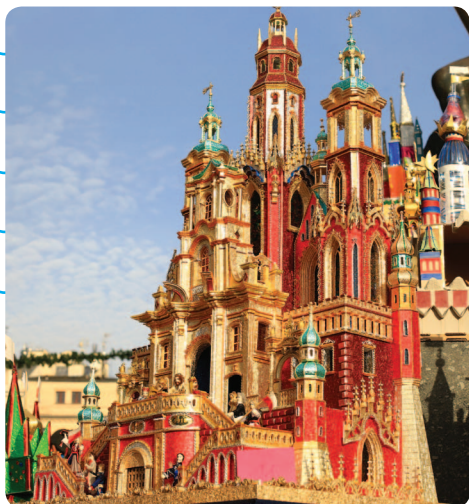
*Zdzisław Dudzik, a Nativity scene maker with his son during the construction of the Nativity scene, photo by Henryk Hermanowicz, 1959-1961, arch. of the Museum of Kraków*

In 2018, the Kraków Nativity scenes were entered on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as the first entry from Poland<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> See: *Szopkarstwo krakowskie*, <http://www.unesco.pl/kultura/dziedzictwo-kulturowe/dziedzictwo-niematerialne/listy-dziedzictwa-niematerialnego/europa-i-ameryka-polnocna/polska/>



# EXAMPLES OF THE CONTEMPORARY KRAKÓW NATIVITY SCENES



*Renata and Edward Markowscy, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*Wiesław Barczewski, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*Filip Fotomajczyk, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



Zbigniew Madej, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Dariusz Czyż, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Stanisław Malik, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

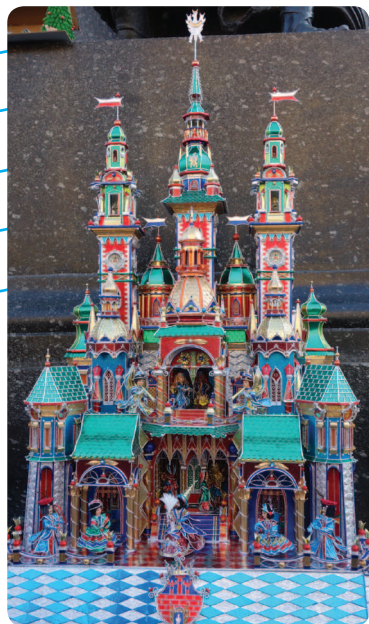




Maciej Moszew, photo by Kamil Bańkowski



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Leszek Zarzycki, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



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# ADORATION OF THE CHRISTMAS ICON

In Catholic churches, at Christmas, the Nativity scenes are set up, which show the followers the evangelical scene of the Christ's birth. Whereas, in an Orthodox church, the Nativity icon is displayed in the church, in front of which the followers bow their heads and kiss it. The Orthodox church does not know the tradition of figurative representation of figures, i.e. sculptures. However, the cult and theology of icons are highly developed. According to Eastern tradition, icons are a continuation of revelation. One should not only look at them, but above all, worship them and read their symbolism. Each of the twelve major Orthodox holidays has its own icon.

## ICON

According to Eastern tradition, the first icon was painted by St. Luke on the tabletop of the Nazarene table, depicting the Mother of God with the Infant Jesus. The word icon comes from the Greek noun *eikon*, 'image', 'portrait'. In the history of art, the icon is a well-defined sacred image, related to the tradition of the Christian East, made on board with an encaustic technique according to the adopted pattern<sup>1</sup>. The term icon is associated with the concept of "iconography", which in its etymological sense means painting an icon and in this sense the term functions in Eastern Christianity (in the Western sense iconography is a field of art dealing with the study of the content of a work of art)<sup>2</sup>. Painting an icon is a sacred activity, preceded by prayer and fasting.



*Icon of Christ Pantokrator from the former iconostasis of the St. Paraskevi Greek Catholic Church in Kwiatoń, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

In the Orthodox tradition, an icon accompanies a follower from his/her birth to death. It is given during baptism, marriage, and at the moment of death it is put into the hands of the dying person, it also accompanies a person on a journey. As Elżbieta Smykowska writes, "...In Orthodox Church, the icon is neither a devotional image nor a decorative element of temples and services. An icon is a sacred image that reveals a spiritual, supernatural, transformed world, i.e. deified, permeated by the grace of God, the Spirit of God through visual means and language of symbols"<sup>3</sup>. The essence of the cult of the icon is the fact of the incarnation - the icon is a reflection

1 M. Janocha, *Ikony w Polsce*, Warszawa: Arkady 2008, p. 7.

2 Ibidem.

3 E. Smykowska, *Zwyczaj i obrzędy prawosławne. Mały słownik*, Warszawa: Verbiem 2008.



*Our Lady with the Child Jesus from the St. Dymitr Greek Catholic Church in Szczawnik,  
photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

of the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ, which is a visible image of the invisible God. The invisible God accepted a human body in the person of his Son, becoming a visible man.

The cult of the icon was defined by the Council of Nicaea in 787 in connection with iconoclasm (a movement against the cult of icons in the 8th-9th century), and confirmed the council of Constantinople in 843.

## HOME ICONS

There are icons in each Orthodox house. They are placed in a special place called the “beautiful corner” or “holy corner”. This is the sphere of home Sacrum. According to tradition, it is located in the right-side corner of the room, it must always be facing east or south-east. East is the symbol of Jesus Christ, who in the Orthodox hymnography is referred to as the Sun of Truth, because he revealed the coming of the Kingdom of God, illuminating the darkness of evil and sin. The opposite is the west - a symbol of death, evil, darkness, the abyss. An icon in an Orthodox house gives a sense of holiness, security and closeness to the Creator.

There may be several icons in the “sacred corner”, but three are mandatory: icon of the Saviour (Spas), icon of the Mother of God and icon of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker. Candles or oil lamps are lit in front of the icons, morning and evening prayers are performed, eyes are always directed towards them. A spiritual bond is established with the icons. Before leaving the house, the Orthodox adherents bow and say goodbye, and when they come back, they repeat these gestures as greeting.

In the Orthodox tradition, it was important to have an ancestral icon (of baptism, patron, wedding) passed down from generation to generation, which was blessed on these occasions. The icon's surroundings were also venerated, people always sat in front of it, removed their hats, and acted with due respect.

In folk tradition, on Trinity Sunday or on Palm Sunday, birch twigs or palms were inserted behind the icons. Until now, there is a custom of decorating the icons with colorful flowers cut out of paper, white tablecloths or (very sporadically) colored towels, whose ends hung low. It is related to the appearance of the first icon (Spas on the veil). The icons were not allowed to be thrown away, they had to be burned.



## ICONS IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

The icons are closely related to liturgical life. They express very important theological contents through color, symbols and artistic means. In the Orthodox or Greek Catholic church, the cult of icons is of great importance, which consists in praying and bowing down in front of them, kissing them, lighting candles, incensing, processional celebrations during festivals and celebrating Akathistas, i.e. liturgical hymns devoted to the Christ, the Mother of God and the Saints, consisting of 24 parts. Each church has an iconostasis, a partition with icons which separates the chancel from the nave. The icons are placed in the so-called rows (in Church-Slavonic: jarusy). Their arrangement is fixed, horizontal and strictly defined. The classic iconostasis consists of five rows. The lowest is the so-called local row. There are double-winged royal doors and deacon's doors in it, which are single-winged side doors (North and South doors). This row includes the most revered local icons and the icon of the patron of the church or parish holiday in whose honour the temple was built. The icon of the patron of the church always hangs to the right of the royal doors, and the icon of the particularly worshipped saint - to the left of them. The second row includes icons representing the great festivals and hence its name - the festival row. In the Orthodox tradition, the so-called holiday icons show the essence and spiritual-theological content of a given event. The third row is Deesis (in Greek: "begging"). There is an icon of the Christ sitting on the throne, on his right side there is the Mother of God, and on his left - John the Baptist, who interceded for people before him. The fourth row is the prophet row (icons of the Old Testament prophets who predicted the coming of the Messiah). The fifth one is the forefather row (icons of the Old Testament patriarchs, from Adam to Moses). The iconostasis is crowned with a cross. Both the iconostasis and the entire church space filled with the icons is a picture of "heaven on earth", a biblical paradise, embracing man and the entire cosmos, as well as a border and at the same time unity between what is visible and what is invisible. Throughout the year, the icons corresponding to the festivals or saints worshipped on a given day are laid during services on the analogions (lectern) in the middle



*Icon of St. Michael the Archangel displayed for adoration in the Orthodox church in Wysowa-Zdrój, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*



of the church in front of the iconostasis. Entering the church, the followers make the sign of the cross, kiss the icon, light a candle. The most worshipped icons include miraculous icons related to their place of worship. According to folk Orthodox tradition, miraculous icons are those that have manifested themselves, i.e. they were found in a strange way by simple, pious people in secluded, inaccessible places, e.g. in the woods, on the mountain, by the river, in some old abandoned house. At the place of their revelation, a spring usually sprouted, which had miraculous properties<sup>4</sup>.



*Iconostasis in the Protection of Our Most Holy Lady Greek Catholic Church in Owczary, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

## NATIVITY ICON

The icon of the Nativity of the Christ, displayed in the evening and on Christmas night for adoration, helps the followers to read the theological message of Christmas. The central figure of the icon is the Mother of God, next to whom the infant Jesus lies in a stone grave, wrapped tightly in swaddling clothes, resembling a shroud. This symbolic representation defines the purpose for which the Christ came into the world (to redeem humanity through his death and resurrection).

In the Orthodox Church, the preparation time for Christmas is much longer than in the Roman Catholic Church. It starts on 15 November and ends on 31 December. The last two Sundays of Advent are the moment of recalling the main figures from the Old Testament - from Adam to St. Joseph. On 26 December, Mary's Divine Motherhood is celebrated, whereas the week after Christmas St. Joseph's Day is commemorated. Christmas is celebrated together with the arrival of the Three Kings and the Baptism of the Lord. They form the great Epiphany - the Revelation of Jesus.

In the Orthodox Church, in order to fully experience the miracle of each holiday, harmony is needed, which is created by the architecture of the temple, reading iconic symbols, singing, liturgy, candle light and the smell of incense. The Nativity icon is based on the texts of the evangelists Luke and Matthew, the apocryphal gospels

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

and some of the texts of the book of the prophet Isaiah, who announces the time of the arrival of the Messiah - a time of peace and reconciliation of the entire cosmos.

## NATIVITY ICONOGRAPHY CANON

The current iconographic version of the Nativity in the Orthodox Church finally developed in the 6th century in Palestine. This icon usually presents as many as a dozen or so figures, it is an excellent example of displaying several events in one portrayal through Byzantine iconography.

The icon with extensive symbolism according to the canon has the following elements: a star, an ox, a donkey, a manger, Mary with a child, a bath of a child, St. Joseph, shepherds, journey of the Magi, angels and characteristic surroundings – background of the icon.

There are Mary and Jesus in the central point. Mary has purple robes, a symbol of the dignity of Mother of the King, her left hand is uncovered – it is a gesture of meditation. The Infant Jesus is lying next to Mary. Located in a manger resembling a grave, wrapped in swaddling clothes, he looks more like a dead man than a newborn. The way the Christ is presented

refers to his death. The dark cave is the entrance to the bowels of the earth, where, according to the apocrypha, Mary would go down after giving birth and stay there three days, just like Jonah. The cave is a reference to the symbol of the gates of hell.

There are figures of angels and people who came to worship God around Mary and Jesus. There are the Three Magi from the East and shepherds among them. In the bottom corner of the icon, two women prepare Jesus for a bath. This motif is based on apocryphal messages mentioning midwives brought to the Mother of God. There is St. Joseph in the left corner, talking to a shepherd. Above the cave (which symbolizes the bosom of the earth), there is the Bethlehem star, and its light falls directly on Mary and Jesus, which means the grace that God sent to people along with the birth of his Son.

Next to the manger, there are animals, as confirmed by the prophet Isaiah 1:3: "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's manger". The horse is in the place



*Nativity of the Christ (the icon), author unknown, South-western Rus – former Ruthenian Voivodeship, the half of the 16th century, in the collection of The National Museum in Krakow, photo by Paweł Czernicki*

of a traditional donkey, which is unknown in the Slavic countries. The rays of the star fall upon Jesus' head. According to the apocrypha, the cave to which the Holy Family took refuge was covered by a luminous cloud, which upon their arrival rose – a reference to the Meeting Tent, which in the desert was repeatedly covered with a thick cloud.

Joseph's drama is the second scene. In the icon, he is slightly away from Mary and the Child to emphasize the virgin conception of the Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit. St. Joseph sits on a rock, clad in a golden cloak and is tempted against the mystery of the Incarnation. The scene of Jesus' bath, which is before him, is distorted by a devil pretending to be a shepherd: a wolf in sheep's clothing. The devil wants to plant doubts in the heart of Jesus' guardian: look, the one who is born in a human way and requires human protection, could not be conceived with the participation of the Holy Spirit, because he is a child like any other. Pointing to a dry stick, Satan wants to tell Joseph: just as a dry stick cannot bear fruit, so you, old Joseph, will not be able to father a son and the Virgin will not conceive him. Joseph is victorious over tempting Satan. He is victorious over the temptations that would distract him from serving the Saviour. The expression of victory is a golden robe, similar in color to a halo, and a cloak in the color of the skin of the shepherd - tempter on which Joseph sits: temptations have been overcome – "przysiadł" (i.e. "sat upon"), his faith flashes like a golden cloak. A beautiful bush grows between the figures of this scene – "A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him" (Isaiah 11:1-2). A shoot of David's lineage confirms and strengthens Joseph's faith.

There are three angels to the left of the icon who processionaly adore the Child. Folding their hands, covered by sleeves, they recognize the Newborn's royal dignity in him (this is a typical gesture for servants at the imperial court), giving their hands to his service. They represent the angelic choirs that worship the Supreme Lord, always ready to serve.

A separate scene is formed by the Eastern Magi. They represent the entirety of human life: old age, maturity and youth. They come from afar, led by the star. The colors of their cloaks refer to the gifts to the Newborn God. The old man in purple robe brings gold, thus recognizing Jesus' supreme reign. The man in his prime, clad in gold, brings incense, highlighting the deity of Jesus. The young man with no beard in red clothing brings myrrh, foretelling the Christ's passion and his mocked reign. Referring to the Passion of the Christ, the Magi also represent women going to the tomb after the Resurrection.

Another group of angels are herald angels. These angels carry out God's orders in order to accomplish a specific mission. One of them announces to shepherds the coming of the Messiah, the other two stare at the star with three rays that leads the galloping Wise Men. Perhaps they are the star leading the Magi or they are the angels that look after the Magi, like Archangel Raphael looked after Tobias. It is worth emphasizing that both groups of angels are composed of three characters to reflect the togetherness of the Trinity and its unity. The shepherds' vigil scene is depicted with two figures on the right side of the cave. The shepherds, watching over their flock, look at the angel heralding Jesus' birth. Their heads are uncovered, faces are turned towards the angel, their robes are tied, in two colors - red and green (this is a special expression of love and devotion), shod. All of this is the proof of the openness of the heart and readiness to find and meet the Newborn. The icon shows two

men, because the testimony of at least two people is reliable (therefore, there are two soldiers at the tomb of Jesus, and two angels in the Ascension icon).

The scene showing the bathing of the Infant Jesus is derived exclusively from the Byzantine tradition and has an exact meaning: The word that became flesh needs the same attention and care as any newborn baby. Jesus' bath is meant to convince us of the true human nature of the Christ. According to apocryphal records, after giving birth, the Infant was washed – bathed. The figure of Jesus appears beyond the great halo - it is a symbol of his descent - kenosis - He becomes one of us. God is handed over to a man, he accepts the fragility of our lives. Attending Salome and Maia are clothed in sleeveless tunics – an expression of service. The color of their robes is the same as that of shepherds: green and red – an expression of special service and love. These two women are now doing under Mary's loving eye what the Mother of God was doing a few months earlier to Elizabeth after the birth of John the Baptist. The bathing vessel is golden and refers directly to the baptism of Jesus in Jordan, as well as to the very sacrament of baptism, death and resurrection in Jesus – immersion in him. Jesus sanctifies the water – gives it a divine dimension – gold means the world of God. In this way, the icon contains the scene of Nativity, Revelation and Baptism of Jesus.

Another scene is the Messianic mountain with two peaks. This mountain is the Christ, who has two natures. The mountain becomes a new creation. Covered by greenery and grazing animals, which represents the admiration of God's earthly coming expressed by his creation. The Creator comes to his creation. God's light enlightens all the figures who remain still in amazement. Saint Joseph and Salome - two symmetrically seated figures - are called to special testimony by proclaiming the coming of Jesus, a testimony in the everyday life - Joseph by working as a carpenter, Salome as Mary's helper in the care of her Son, which she does right after birth by bathing him. The manger – the tomb of the Christ – is conquered by the cross. The Christ overcomes darkness and makes the whole world shine with his light.

The icon has two centers: theological – the center of the Infant's halo, and anthropological – the womb of Mary. They are placed in one line of the star's rays. In this way, we can discover another mystery of faith present in the icon – the Incarnation. The cloud is a symbol of the Father – it is a reference to the Old Testament and God's presence in the cloud. The Father, through the Holy Spirit, who is symbolized with the star in the icon, sends the Son who incarnates in the womb of the Virgin. Mary's womb becomes the center of the world, just as it is the center of the icon. The mystery of the incarnation depends, therefore, on the eternal togetherness of the Trinity and Mary's consent. In some icons the Holy Spirit takes the place of the star, thus the trinity of the icon becomes even more evident.

## THE NATIVITY ICON IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN HAŃCZOWA

The Nativity icon located in the Orthodox Church of Protection of Our Most Holy Lady in Hańczowa, which is a valuable object of the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska, is distinguished by a very rich symbolism.

The Orthodox church is a type of West Lemko Orthodox church (18th/19th century) and it was a Greek Catholic church until Operation "Vistula" in 1947. Currently it be-



longs to the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church (of the same dedication).

In the center of the icon the Infant Jesus is shown, lying in a manger, against the background of the cave and the reclining figure of Mary, resting on a purple bed. Mary is clothed in purple maphorion, symbolizing her dignity and role in the mystery of the incarnation. Her figure is monumental. With her left arm she holds Jesus and with her right hand she points to him. Mary does not look at the Child. Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes reminiscent of funeral straps, and the place where he lies reminds us of a grave rather than a manger. Against the darkness of the cave, symbolizing, among others, death, the Saviour makes himself known as the Light that brings salvation. All creation will participate in this salvation, which is referenced, among others, by the presence of an ox and an ass, even though since the 4th century the Church Fathers also saw in these animals the image



*Protection of Our Most Holy Lady  
Orthodox Church in Hańczowa,  
photo by Kamil Bańkowski*



*Christmas Icon in the Orthodox church in Hańczowa, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

St. Joseph, a bit distant, lost in thoughts, bowing his head. His posture is an expression of doubt. The icon, through its symbolism, makes reference to life, death and resurrection. Seven angels surround Mary and the Infant. The mystery of the Nativity

of Jews (ox) and pagans (asses). There is the Bethlehem star above, the ray of which divided into three beams signifies the participation of the Holy Trinity in the mystery of the Nativity. At the bottom of the icon we see



*Adoration of the Christmas icon during  
the Christmas liturgy celebrated at the  
Orthodox church in Hańczowa, photo: arch.  
Małopolska Tourist Organization*



is the reconciliation of two worlds. God became man so that man would be deified. We see this interpenetration of the divine and human world in the icon: angels are next to people. Above the two groups of angels, in the middle of the upper part of the icon, there is a fragment of a circle from which one ray emerges towards the cave of the Nativity. This is a sign of God's presence.

## THE NATIVITY ICON IN THE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ŁOSIE

In the Greek Catholic church in Łosie there is a very beautiful representation of the Nativity icon. This small depiction tells the story of the Saviour's birth. The Infant Jesus, tightly wrapped in swaddling clothes, is presented in the center of the icon in a miniaturized scale. He lies on the surface of a manger resembling a grave. This is called prefiguration, i.e. presenting a foretold future event in the depicted event – death and burial of the Christ in a tomb. On the left side next to Jesus, there is the Mother of God lying, and on the right, worried St. Joseph, who points his left hand to the Infant. His head is turned towards the Wise Men, he looks in disbelief at what happened. There are three figures standing next to St. Joseph - Magi from the East, who came to worship the Saviour. They are interpreted as a symbol of pagans paying tribute to him. A foreshadowing also appears in this case. The figures of the Three Wise Men are the announcement of three Mary heading to the tomb to anoint the body of the Christ.

The Mother of God is dressed in red robes, symbolizing her Divine Motherhood and emphasizing her royal dignity while highlighting her humanity. The clothes of Joseph and the Magi are red and green - the green color signifies the perfect harmony of God's being. A golden nimbus surrounds their heads. Gold in iconography is used every time a reference is made to God's strength, God's grace and God's glory.



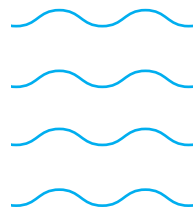
*Christmas Icon in the Greek Catholic church in Łosie, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*The Greek Catholic Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Birth in Łosie, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

The animals - an ox and an ass- lean over the Child. The ox – an animal used for sacrifice – is a symbol of the Christ's sacrifice, the ass foreshadows escape to Egypt and entry to Jerusalem. The scene takes place in front of the Bethlehem cave, above which the star shines. According to St. John Chrysostom, the star pointing the way is not an ordinary star, but an angel who, like a star, emanated light and led the Magi to Bethlehem. It spreads its glow from the blue spheres that are imagined in the highest parts of the icon. Two worlds were joined in common glory: heaven and earth.

# COVERING THE ALTAR DURING LENT (LENTEN CURTAINS)



In the tradition of the Catholic Church just before the fifth Sunday of Lent, crosses and paintings are hidden in temples and chapels. This custom originates from the Middle Ages, probably from the tradition of covering the altar with curtains, which were symbolically torn apart when reading the Passion of the Lord with the words: "And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38).

One of the most famous Lenten curtains in the world is the Great Zittau Lenten Veil<sup>1</sup>, dated 1472, exhibited in Germany in the Church of the Holy Cross in Zittau<sup>2</sup>. In Europe, 30 such fasting cloths were selected (so-called vela quadragesimalia), of course more modest in form than the previously mentioned Great Veil. They are worldwide considered as unique by art historians and researchers of the subject. All the more it is necessary to appreciate the fact that an additional seven canvases recognized as curtains, shawls or Lenten veils have been preserved in three wooden churches located on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska, in Nowy Targ District and Wadowice District (the eighth is located in Jasienica Rosielna<sup>3</sup>, Subcarpathian Voivodship, Brzozów District). The greatest number of curtains, as many as four, is located in the Church of Saint John the Baptist in Orawka, one - located near Orawka, in the Church of the Holy Trinity and St. Anthony the Abbot in Łopuszna, and two - in the Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Tłuczań, in the vicinity of Wadowice.



*Church of the Holy Trinity and St. Anthony the Abbot  
in Łopuszna, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

A beautiful passion tradition associated with covering the altar with curtains dur-

- 1 The Zittau veil was offered to the Church of St. John by the merchant Jacob Gurtler. The linen canvas is 8.20 m long and 6.80 m wide. It consists of six strips sewn together before painting. 90 paintings depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments were created using tempera paints, <https://zittau.de/de/tourismus-kultur-freizeit/sehenswertes/die-zittauer-fastent%c3%bccher>
- 2 The Great Veil has been displayed once again in the Church of the Holy Cross in Zittau since 1995.
- 3 In Jasienica Rosielna, there is additionally the only known such decoration of the Tomb of the Lord.



Lenten curtain "The Way to Calvary" located in the church in Łopuszna, photo by Kamil Bańkowski



Lenten curtain "Flagellation of the Christ" located in the church in Łopuszna, photo by G. K. Głazik

ing Lent<sup>4</sup> is cultivated to this day in the Church of John the Baptist in Orawka and in the other two churches, although in the case of Łopuszna the canvas is displayed all year round (as in Jasienica Rosielna). That was also the case in the church in Tłuczań (currently the curtains are subjected to conservation).



St. John the Baptist Church in Orawka, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

The church in Orawka, built in the mid-17th century, is the oldest and only wooden church in Upper Orava that has survived to this day. The outstanding artistic values of the temple are visible both in architecture and in the exceptionally rich, complete and homogeneous interior furnishings, which have retained their original Baroque character to this day. The existence of four unique curtains painted using tempera technique<sup>5</sup> emphasizes the great cultural value of the building. The oldest and largest veil is from 1676. It is "Pietà beneath the Cross"<sup>6</sup>.

4 Lent time consists of two parts, the first of which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Passion Sunday, referred to as Black Sunday, the second, or "Time of Passion", is the last two weeks before Easter.

5 Tempera is a painting technique that uses the oldest type of emulsion paint, made by combining dyes with egg yolk, resin or oil. The most valuable and most frequently used emulsifier for homemade tempera is the egg yolk – it allows tremendous freedom in choosing the ratio of fat and water phases, and actually (as a natural emulsion) it is itself a full-fledged medium. Due to the unique ability of the components of the egg yolk to create durable, waterproof bindings, paintings made with egg tempera are particularly resistant to the passage of time. The disadvantage of this type of binder is that it needs to be applied quickly - after a few days of rubbing it breaks down and ceases to be suitable for use.

6 The date "1676", which is probably the time of its creation by an unknown author, has remained untouched on the fabric.



The other three, dated to the beginning of the 19th century, depict, as in the case of the oldest, scenes from the New Testament: "Flagellation of the Christ", "Penitent Mary Magdalene" and "Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows". In the church in Orawka, the curtains are exhibited only once a year: from the eve of the fifth Sunday of Lent to Palm Sunday. Considering the dating of the oldest curtain, it can be assumed that this custom in the church in Orawka could have been cultivated at the turn of the 17th century.



*The interior of the church in Orawka. Altars covered with Lenten curtains, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

## HISTORY

The tradition of covering the chancel with canvas was widespread in the Middle Ages. It had symbolic significance and was associated with Lent, mortification of the body and mind in anticipation of the resurrection of the Christ. An argument for covering the cross was also its rich ornamentation, which should not have focused the attention of the followers during the reflection of the Passion. In addition, in the early Middle Ages, crucified Jesus was portrayed as the victorious King in a crown and pontifical royal robes. Before Easter, the symbols of his victory were veiled to accompany him even more intensely in his humiliation, passion and death. The manner in which services were held was also important - this veil separated the priest from the followers who, hearing the formula of the Holy Mass, did not see his silhouette clearly, only his shadow. This affected the mortification of the spirit, which was accompanied by mortification of the body by strict fast. Originally, the curtains had a simple form and a unified, usually white or purple, color. It was only with time that biblical representations of the Passion began to be painted on them for contemplation and teaching purposes. The curtains took the form of painted tapestries. They were used to cover a painting in the altarpiece for forty days. The curtains were decorated with whole representations of the Passion of the Lord or sometimes only the attributes of it, such as: a hammer and nails, dice, a bird, a crown of thorns, a spade with a sponge, a titulus crucis with INRI, the veil of St. Veronica and the robe of Jesus Christ. It was sometimes a kind of Biblia pauperum – simplified representations of biblical events in graphic form for the followers who could not read.



# DIVISION

According to German researchers (including Rainer Sörries and Volker Dudeck as well as, with some reservation, Gabriela Mohler) Lenten curtains are divided into six types, depending on the arrangement of paintings:

- chequered type - the fabric is divided into equal parts, and each field has a separate biblical scene,
- central field type - a large central scene in the center of the fabric, and around it biblical representations in a much smaller format,
- Arma Christi type - large central stage in the middle of the fabric and representation of the tools of the Passion of the Lord,
- central scene type - one image in the center of the fabric, and painted scenes of the Passion on the sides, e.g. in oval fields,
- single scene type - single image,
- Calvary type (the hill of Golgotha) - it was often the decoration of the tomb of God, although it was exhibited on Ash Wednesday.



*"Pietà beneath the cross", photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

A different division was proposed by Mrs. Lucyna Borczuch, who distinguishes two basic types:

**"chequered"** - the fabric divided into equal parts with a scene from the Bible painted on each of them,

**"central scene"** - the fabric with one scene or with the main scene and additional smaller paintings. One type can be divided into subtypes depending on the convention, style and format of the representation.

## LENTEN CURTAINS IN ORAWKA



*"Pietà beneath the cross", photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

### "PIETÀ BENEATH THE CROSS"

The largest of the curtains - measuring almost 5 x 4 m - represents the type of "central scene" curtains, of Arma Christi subtype. Only eight similar veils have survived in the world! The curtain is from 1676 and covers the altarpiece of the main altar.

The canvas depicts the Mother of God in a radiant halo. Mary gently tilts her head to the right, looking at her martyred Son. Jesus, clad in the perizoma,

partly leans on Mary, his left hand rests on her knees. We see them under the cross in the shape of the letter T with a plate from which we can only read the inscription INRI today. There are two angels next to it with symbols of the Passion of the Lord. The angel on the left touches the pole with the rod attached to it (symbols of flagellation), and on the pole stands a crowing rooster, reminding of the denial of St. Peter. The angel on the right holds a ladder crowned with a crown of thorns. Other attributes of the Passion are: a glove of the high priest's servant, nails as well as a spade and a spear leaned against the cross. The composition is complemented by two flying angels. The veil also contains Bible verses, including Jeremiah's prophecies, which in modern translation read: "O daughter of My people, dress yourselves in sackcloth and roll in ashes. Mourn with bitter wailing, as you would for an only son".



*Symbols of the Passion on the curtain "Pietà under the cross", photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

Hanna Pieńkowska, PhD., who was the first to describe the Orawka veils, writes about the above-mentioned curtain as follows: "The expression of the veil is primarily caused by the depth of the black background of the composition – not painted, but entirely colored black canvas. All characters and Arma Christi come out of the background with their bright silhouettes created with excellent colors of pink, green, gray and blue, with a noble design and good proportions. The mastery of the brush and a high sense of color are evident in better preserved fragments of the canvas, such as the silhouette of a crowing rooster, whose feathers lightly marked by the touch of a brush shimmer with colors, and the realism is eye-catching"<sup>7</sup>.



*"Flagellation of the Christ", photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*"Flagellation of the Christ", photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

<sup>7</sup> As cited in: L. Borczuch, *Kurtyny – opony wielkopostne*, <http://orawka-kosciol.pl/2014/03/zaslony-opony-wielkopostne/>

## "FLAGELLATION OF THE CHRIST"

The 4 x 3.5 m curtain shows Jesus in a radiant halo. He is clad only in the perizoma, there are bloody traces of strokes. The martyred Christ stands by the pole. There are Pilate's two soldiers next to him, waving their rods over him. The picture was created on the basis of a woodcut from Albrecht Dürer's series entitled "Small Passion".

The curtain is a "central scene" type of veil, of single image subtype. Usually it obscured the Crucifixion Group on a rainbow beam, and since 2013 it has been hung interchangeably with "Pietà beneath the Cross" on the main altar.

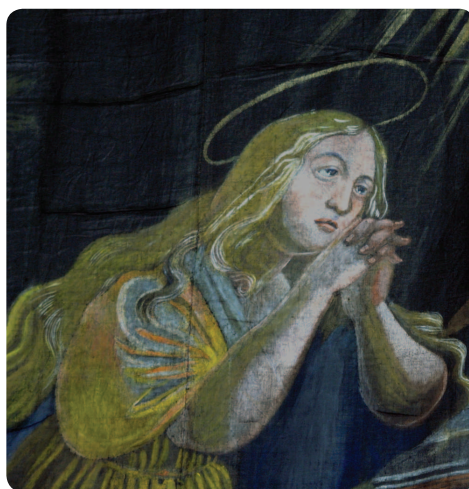
## "PENITENT MARY MAGDALENE"

On the canvas, almost 3.5 x 2 m in size, Mary Magdalene is painted kneeling, leaning her elbows on the rock, with her hands folded in a gesture of prayer. She is portrayed as a young woman with loose long hair, wearing a long dress and a blue cloak that rests around her legs. Mary Magdalene's gaze is directed above the open book. There is a silver-colored round lid for storing oils or embalming corpses next to the rock. In the distance, a tilted cross can be seen with rays coming from the sky.

The curtain is of "central scene" type, of single image subtype. It is usually used to cover the altarpiece of the right side altar.



"Penitent Mary Magdalene", photo: arch.  
Małopolska Tourist Organization



"Penitent Mary Magdalene", photo: arch.  
Małopolska Tourist Organization



## "OUR LADY OF THE SEVEN SORROWS"



"Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows", photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

A curtain measuring 3 x 2 m shows the Mother of God in a radiant halo as a bare-foot, slim woman dressed in a simple dress, tightened at the waist, with a draped cloak at the back, visible partly on the sides. Seven swords are embedded in her chest, three visible on the left are related to the suffering during the childhood of Jesus (the prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt and the loss of her son in a temple), and four on the right - in the period of the Passion

of the Lord (meeting on the Way of the Cross, death and crucifixion of the Christ, descent from the cross and burial in the tomb). The figure is visible among the rocks. Mary looks down with a worried face.

The curtain is of "central scene" type, of single image subtype. It covers the altarpiece of the left side altar.

In the 90s of the 20th century, in the temple in Orawka, the main altar was covered with the curtain "Flagellation of the Christ". The others were not used due to their poor technical condition. Fortunately, at the beginning of the 21st century studies related to fabric conservation were carried out. They consisted in cleaning the structure of a given canvas with prepared plant reagents and supplementing significant defects in each area using tempera. A 'double' was made by sewing a preserved layer onto a thin linen canvas, so as to strengthen the structure of the curtain.

The curtains in Orawka can be viewed every year from the so-called Black Sunday Eve<sup>8</sup> to Palm Sunday. In order to preserve the condition of the oldest one, it is displayed every two years<sup>9</sup>.



"Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows", photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

8 The 5th Sunday of Lent was in the folk tradition the day of struggle between winter and spring, battle of life and death. Hence the other name of the day – Deadly Sunday. On Black Sunday, all images of Christ on the cross are obscured in a Catholic church.

9 The text was based on: [www.parafiaorawka.pl/zwiedzanie](http://www.parafiaorawka.pl/zwiedzanie) oraz [www.orawka-kosciol.pl](http://www.orawka-kosciol.pl), L. Borczuch.



# MAKING EASTER PALMS

Palm Sunday, also known as April or Willow Sunday, opens Holy Week in Christian tradition<sup>1</sup>. The holiday commemorates the triumphal entry of the Christ into Jerusalem, when, according to the Gospel message, during a crowded, joyful greeting, people waved with green palm twigs held in their hands. To commemorate this event, very solemn processions around the churches are organized on Palm Sunday. They were already held in Jerusalem in the 4th century. A hundred years later they began to be organized in the Western Church. The rite of blessing green branches, i.e. Easter palms, was introduced into the liturgy in the 11th century. They are a symbol of the martyrdom and triumph of the resurrected Jesus Christ and the immortality of the soul. On Palm Sunday, Holy Masses in Roman Catholic churches begin with the rite of blessing palms and processions. After the service, there is often a competition for the tallest or most beautifully made palm.

In all cultural regions of Małopolska, a traditional palm should be prepared by hand as a plant composition, and the selection of plants as well as decorations is related to the folk culture of the region. The Easter palm (its components), as everywhere else, included attributed symbols, such as health, fertility, vitality, protection against lightning and bad powers, which resulted in common use of the palms in various magical treatments<sup>2</sup>.

The blessed palms brought from the church were put behind a holy image or a part of the bunch was nailed above the front door. The palm remained there throughout the year and protected the inhabitants from bad spells and fire. To this day, in the Nowy Sącz and Rzeszów regions, near Tarnów, Wieliczka and Bochnia, on Holy Thursday, the palms are used to make crosses and sprinkles for blessing the fields<sup>3</sup>.



*On the way to the church on Palm Sunday, Pcim, 1965, photo by Z. Szewczyk, Inv. No III/88725/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

1 A. Zadrożyńska, *Powtarzać czas początku, part I O świętowaniu dorocznych świąt w Polsce*, Warszawa 1985, p. 97.

2 M. Oleszkiewicz, *Rabczańska palma Wielkanocna*, <https://etnomuzeum.eu/zbiory/palma-wielkanocna>

3 <https://www.polskatradycja.pl/folklor/swieta/wiosenne/33-niedziela-palmowa.html>



*Crosses made of blessed palms protect and ensure good crops, Byszyce, Wieliczka County, 1993, photo by J. Kubiena, Inv. No III/80694/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

In individual regions of Małopolska, palm trees still retained their traditional appearance and technique of production, despite the popularization of the so-called Vilnius palm. This palm, originating from the Vilnius region, is the most common form of palm in Poland today. It is made of dried, natural and dyed grasses, flowers and herbs. Grain ears are also used for decorations, and the characteristic top is made of grasses (traditionally 11 species of grass), quite often dyed in different colours. Despite the availability of the Vilnius palms and “purchasable” palms (created for the needs of customers, sometimes only in a manner referencing regional or local traditions), the traditional palms, characteristic in a given region, have been preserved and are still being prepared throughout Małopolska.

## REGIONAL CUSTOMS

In Lachowice and in the vicinity of Stryżawa, the traditional Easter palm should be made of “kocianki” (local name for willow) and yew, which is now rarely used, and decorated with ribbons made of colorful tissue paper and textiles<sup>4</sup>. It should be more spreading than compact, which is probably associated with the so-called “palma babska” (i.e. ladies’ palm), which can be found in areas inhabited by the Żywiec Highlanders<sup>5</sup>.

In nearby Zawoja, the palm also has the shape of a bunch (up to 1 metre tall) made of willow twigs with catkins with the addition of yew, juniper, and sometimes cherry twigs. It is decorated with periwinkle, myrtle, and currently boxwood and ribbons<sup>6</sup>.

4 See also: A. Peć, *Zachowania religijne i magiczne w obrzędowości wiosennej mieszkańców Stryżawy w Beskidzie Żywieckim*, in: *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*, vol. 3 *Religijność ludowa na pograniczu kulturowym i etnicznym*, I. Bukowska-Floreńska (ed.), Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego 1999.

5 The so-called “bachelors’ palms” and “ladies’ palms” are known in the region of Żywiec. The “bachelors’ palms” are slender, tall palms built on one stem, while the “ladies’ palms” are spreading palms made of catkins, reminiscent of a bouquet (based on materials from the Easter palm competitions in Gilowice and own research).

6 U. Janicka-Krzywda, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Babiogórskich*, U. Janicka-Krzywda (ed.), Kraków 2010.

In Zawoja, Sucha Beskidzka and nearby towns (more broadly in Podbabiogórze), the palms are additionally decorated with colorful flowers made of tissue paper. The blessed palms have, according to still relevant beliefs, magical properties. They protect against storms and hail as well as ensure good animal husbandry and crops<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, they are still stored “in a visible place”. Studies show that there are still houses where the palms are burned during thunderstorms or hailstorms. At the beginning of the 1990s, at some farms, the cattle that was driven out for the first time was symbolically struck with the palm “so that it does not get hurt with horns and grazes”<sup>8</sup>, and we can still hear from the inhabitants that pieces of palm were added to blessed herbs, which were used to incense sick people and cattle. Catkins (“kocianki” or “kocanki”) from blessed palms were swallowed immediately after coming out of the church to avoid throat pain (this procedure was also repeated later among patients complaining about sore throat)<sup>9</sup>.

One of the best documented Easter palms in Małopolska is the Rabka palm. It is here, in Rabka-Zdrój, where the oldest Easter palm competition in Poland takes place, which was organized for the first time in 1958. The Rabka palm is a long palm, made of bent willow twigs and colorfully decorated with both green plants (spruce and pine branches) and tissue paper ornaments (colorful flowers and ribbons), as well as paper (bows)<sup>10</sup>.

In other regions, at least one stick in the palm was from a hazel tree - in addition to a number of symbolic and magical meanings, it also gave practical benefits - because it is rigid, it kept the palm in vertical position. There are no hazel branches in the Rabka palm, and its lack affects the flexibility of the palms. An important characteristic feature of the Rabka palm, apart from the lack of hazel branches, is that it is wrapped in about 2/3 of its length with colorful paper bows.



Easter palms from Rabka-Zdrój, photo by Natalia Klęsk

7 W. Maj, *Materiały etnograficzne z Sidziny*, Muzeum Etnograficzne im. Seweryna Udzieli w Krakowie.

8 A. Peć, *Zachowania religijne i magiczne...*, p. 54, and own studies conducted in this area since 1998. See also: *Dziedzictwo kulturowe Podbabiogórze. Tradycje i folklor*, J. Kociotek (ed.), Sucha Beskidzka 2012.

9 Based on research conducted among Rural Housewives' Clubs as part of the District Easter Dish and Palm Competition in Bieńkówka in 2019, see also: D. Tylkowa, *Medycyna ludowa w kulturze wsi Karpat Polskich*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Lódź 1989.

10 Based on literature and interview: a woman, resident of Rabka-Zdrój (Roman Catholic), 2019.



*Easter palm competition in Rabka-Zdrój, 1965, photo by J. Sierosławski, arch. of Władysław Orkan Museum in Rabka-Zdrój*

This is confirmed by ethnographic sources, as well as the oldest palm from Rabka, preserved in the collections of the Museum of Ethnography in Kraków<sup>11</sup>.

How lively the tradition of the palms is in the vicinity of Rabka is evidenced by the number of bunches submitted annually to the competition<sup>12</sup>. During the 61st Easter Palm Competition organized by the Władysław Orkan Museum in 2019, as many as 137 palms have been rated! Within minutes of the jury meeting one may read: "During the assessment of the palms, depending on the category, the use of traditional materials (willow twigs, pine, spruce and juniper branches, grain, etc.), decorative technique (flowers and ribbons made of tissue paper, bows made of paper), aesthetically pleasing design, and an innovative view on

tradition was incorporated. By applying the above criteria the jury strongly rejects the palms with decorative details made of synthetic materials, e.g. flowers made of plastic or foil"<sup>13</sup>. The magical and healing properties of the Easter palms were also known in the vicinity of Rabka, or more widely among the Zagórze Highlanders (especially in the vicinity of Mszana Dolna). It was believed that the palm protected against lightning, therefore its branches were placed in the house behind holy paintings.

The most famous Easter palm competition is Józef Piotrowski's Palm and Craft Competition in Lipnica Murowana, which has also been organized since 1958 and is only half an hour younger than the one in Rabka. The competition for the tallest palm is an extraordinary spectacle taking place in the square, which every year attracts crowds of tourists and fans of folk culture, and is accompanied by: Easter fair, performances of regional bands, workshops on creating palms, visiting monuments and concerts. An important element of the Competition is not only the creation of a traditional, long palm, but also its erection by the strength of human muscles using only ropes and stabilising poles, without any cranes and lifts. The palms presented

11 Three long willow branches were tied with string, the top of the palm was crowned with a bunch of blooming reed, the bottom is wrapped in a leather strap, probably in a whip used to drive cattle. The upper half of the palm was decorated with colourful, paper bows arranged closely next to each other around the willow twigs. Long textile ribbons were tied at the top – two white and two red. The palm was created in Ponice, and apparently it was from there (and from Rdzawka) that the most beautiful copies came from. It was made in the family of Wiesław Bydłoń.

12 See: official website of the W. Orkan Museum in Rabka-Zdrój: <http://muzeum-orkana.pl>

13 Minutes of the jury meeting in relation to the 61st Easter Palm Competition organized by the Władysław Orkan Museum in Rabka-Zdrój on 14 April 2019.



in Lipnica Murowana are the longest Easter palms in Małopolska. In 2019, another palm length record was set. It measured an astounding 37.78 m.

The Easter Palms in Lipnica are slender palms - they must fit in hands, "they are made of carefully laid rods and tied with twigs at distances measuring 20/30 cm depending on the height of the palm. At the top, a palm bunch made of common reed is tied and decorated with colorful ribbons and spring catkins.



*Palm Sunday in Lipnica Murowana, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

The height of the palm was dictated by the size of the homestead and its wealth. The home owner who did not make a palm to be blessed later on Palm Sunday was not sure whether he would live in happiness during the year. These palm trees were supposed to protect, among others, from illness and disease<sup>14</sup>. Thus, the belief that the palm had a miraculous power was also present in this area.



*Lipnica palms are made of carefully arranged wicker rods, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

The Easter palm in Podhale, called "bazicka", is not as tall as in Lipnica Murowana. In accordance with the tradition - according to sources - it should be made of willow twigs covered with catkins and tied with flax. Currently, it is decorated with branches of coniferous trees, less often with myrtle, flowers made of colorful tissue paper and ribbons<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Description of the palms from Lipnica Murowana is available on the official website of the Lipnica Murowana Commune Office: <http://www.lipnicamurowana.pl/kultura/imprezy-kulturalne/77.html>

<sup>15</sup> Based on Easter palm competitions in Bukowina Tatrzańska and Kościelisko.

The Easter palm in Podhale, as in the entire curve of the Polish Carpathians, not only has religious symbolism, but also has magical meanings. The catkins from the sacred palm, along with a piece of bread or oat cake, called *moskol*, were put under the furrow during the first plowing as well as thrown into stored grain to ensure fertility. Studies show that the pussy willow twigs removed from the palms were inserted in fields and sometimes in gardens. The palm also had a magical function in pastoral culture. It was wrapped in linen ropes, which were then twisted to form whips for shepherds, believing that the animals herded with



*As in many other regions of Małopolska, Lipnica palms are decorated with paper flowers, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*Easter palm from Lipnica Murowana, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

Highlanders - also takes the form of a pole of various lengths, which the highlanders decorated with willow and boxwood branches as well as wove colorful ribbons or stripes made of tissue paper: white and red symbolizing national colors, blue - referring to Mother of God, yellow - so-called papal, green - indicating life awakening in spring, purple - as a symbol of the Passion of the Christ"<sup>17</sup>.

them "would not go astray during grazing and would not be exposed to spells and diseases". Smoke from burned catkins was used for incensing sheep that set off for grazing in the mountains.

The Highlanders of Nowy Sącz also drove palm branches or crosses made of them into arable fields on Easter Monday. "Small crosses made of the palm - according to M. Kroh - were hung above the doors of houses, stables, granaries, by the barn gates. They protected the houses against lightning, fire, all sorts of misfortunes, fields against hail and thunderstorms"<sup>16</sup>. In the Beskid Sądecki - according to the records - the lower part of the palm was wrapped in a leather or hemp whip for a horse "to protect it from spells".

"The Easter palm in the Pieniny region - we read in the monograph of the Pieniny

<sup>16</sup> M. Kroh, *Zwyczajy i obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Sądeckich od Kamienicy, Łącka i Jazowska*, K. Ceklarz, M. Kroh (ed.), Kraków 2016.

<sup>17</sup> A. Grochal, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Pienińskich*, K. Ceklarz, U. Janicka-Krzywdą (ed.), Kraków 2014, p. 439.

The Kliszczacy Highlanders call the Easter Palm as “bagnięcie”<sup>18</sup>. It is made of hazel, more precisely of branches individually called “lyska”, which are bound with a string, and formerly with wicker. The palm should measure from 2 to 3 meters and only the upper part should be traditionally decorated “with willow twigs with catkins arranged so that they form a plume-like decoration on the top”<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the palm was decorated with long colorful ribbons. Currently – according to studies – the palms are decorated with colorful flowers made of tissue paper and boxwood. An interesting custom in this area, based on beliefs in the magical power of the palm, is nailing crosses made from it over the barn gates. The crosses protected cattle from the bad effects of magic.



*Easter palms of Kliszczacy, photo by Renata Burdyl*

## EASTER PALM IN THE CASE OF THE LEMKOS

Palm Sunday is one of the most important holidays in the Orthodox and Greek Catholic calendar too. The Lemkos began Welykdeń – Holy Week, with Kwitna Nedila (Flower Sunday). At that time, a string of flax was twisted to make a new whip, with which a bahnitku (willow with catkins) was tied, preparing it for blessing<sup>20</sup>.

The palms brought by the Lemkos to the church are much more modest than the palms blessed in Roman Catholic churches. They are made of willow twigs and decorated only with a colorful ribbon and green plants, primarily boxwood. According to studies, the palms made by Greek Catholics do not differ from the palms created in the Orthodox community<sup>21</sup>.

The blessed palm also has magical power in the Lemko culture - it protects houses against fire and evil, as well as people and animals against diseases. That is why it is still believed that the palm burned in the oven will protect the house from lightning. An interesting custom in the case of the Lemkos, is placing the blessed catkins under the first ridgepole of the framework of the newly built house to ensure its luck<sup>22</sup>.

18 The name was given by an informant from Tenczyn, Myślenice District, 84 years old.

19 As cited in: A. Grochal, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Kliszczackich*, J. Ceklarz, J. Masłowiec (ed.), Kraków 2015, and based on own research.

20 A woman, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.

21 based on an interview: a man, resident of Gładyszów (Greek Catholic), a woman, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.

22 See also: R. Reinfuss, *Śladami Łemków*, Warszawa 1990, p. 55.





*Lemko Easter palms are made mainly of willow branches and boxwood, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

The rest was left to incense the sick. During a heavy storm, the palm sticks were burned in the stove to expel the devil from the chimney because it was believed that it would be struck by lightning<sup>23</sup>.

In many houses the blessed palm is still put in behind a picture, and in the past it was nailed at the entrance to the stable so that it not only protected the animals, but so that one could hit the cattle or sheep that were driven out for the first time.



*Lemko Easter palm, decorated with live flowers, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

<sup>23</sup> A woman, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.





*Easter palm from Nowica with a modern element of pond grass, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

According to studies, in almost all regions, the custom of incensing barns and houses with the blessed palm, which only exists in memory of the oldest generation, has disappeared. However, the palm is still believed to possess a magical power, which protects primarily against lightning.

## PALM SUNDAY

When describing Palm Sunday, it is also worth mentioning that there are two specific customs related to this holiday in Małopolska: Pucheroki in villages near Kraków (formerly also in Kraków) and processions with the figure of the Christ on an ass.

## PUCHEROKI

Pucheroki, a custom originating from the past activity of students living in Kraków, collection of donations, was already known in the 7th century. Early in the morning on Palm Sunday, the boys walk from house to house in Bibice, Zielonki, Trojanowice and Tomaszowice dressed in sheepskin coats with fur turned on top, with straw ropes around their waists, with their faces painted black with soot and conical hats made of colorful tissue paper on their heads. Colorful groups of boys ask for small donations (formerly food), in exchange of orations, nursery rhymes as well as funny dialogs and Christmas wishes, e.g.:

*"I'm a small student,  
I've lost my shoes.  
I went to heaven  
for bread, begging.  
I wanted to return home,  
They'd not let me roam.  
Please take me in as your bumpkin,  
Your neighbours' chicken I'll be catching;  
A bumpkin in the fence,  
Will do his work, even tense..."<sup>24</sup>.*

<sup>24</sup> As cited in: <http://naludowo.pl/kultura-ludowa/wiosna-obrzedy-zwyczaje-ludowe/pucheroki-obrzedy-zwyczaje-krakowskie-folk-niedziela-palmowa.html>

Collecting donations by students in these places is continued to this day. The *pucheroki* do not collect donations only outside the church, but they walk from house to house in the city and have cheerful poems prepared for each citizen, recited to the rhythm tapped with canes. The hosts always warmly welcome the students in question, treat them with cake and put a gift in the form of Easter eggs in their baskets. In the last century, girls participated in the processions of the *Pucheroki* along with boys. Young schoolgirls, like their classmates, painted their faces black, put straw hats on their heads, prepared wooden sticks and baskets for the gifts, and then, walking from house to house, they recited Christmas poems<sup>25</sup>.



*Pucheroki (masqueraders covered in soot, dressed in inside out sheepskin coat), Bibice, 1966, Central Photographic Agency/Piotrowski, Inv. No III/5944/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

## THE PROCESSION WITH THE FIGURE OF THE CHRIST

The procession with the figure of the Christ on an ass is an old custom, once called Linden, Oak or Palm Jesus<sup>26</sup>, known in Poland as early as the 15th century<sup>27</sup>.

Mikołaj Rey wrote about this custom:

“On April Sunday, those who did not eat the *bagniątka* (catkins)  
And did not lead the oak Christ to the city, they have already  
Lost their opportunity to receive redemption of their souls”<sup>28</sup>.

The custom is still cultivated in several locations in Małopolska, including Nowy Sącz, Tokarnia, Marcinkowice, Rabka, Biertowice.

The sculpture of the Christ was dressed in expensive robes and covered with a canopy, and after the blessing of the palms in a church, it was carried around the main nave or church cemetery, with singing and playing trumpets, shawls and pipes involved.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.polskatradycja.pl/folklor/swieta/wiosenne/33-niedziela-palmowa.html>

<sup>26</sup> B. Kuczyński, *Funkcja średniowiecznych rzeźb Chrystusa na osle w średniowiecznej liturgii łacińskiej w Polsce*, „Roczniki Teologiczne Warszawsko-Praskie”, 6 (2010), Warszawa 2010, p. 251.

<sup>27</sup> The oldest known information about this tradition dates back to 982-992 and is found in the life of Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg, and the oldest preserved figures – from around 1200. Liturgical texts mentioning “*ymago Salvatoris cum asello*” also constitute evidence in terms of the use of the figures of Christ on a donkey. The custom was cultivated until the end of the 18th century, after which it was banned by church authorities.

<sup>28</sup> As cited in: T. Seweryn, *Tradycje i zwyczaje krakowskie*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Artystyczno-Graficzne 1961.

Festively clad children carried armfuls of catkins and cut spruce branches, shouting: Hosanna to King David! From time to time they threw twigs covered with buds before the Christ who was triumphantly carried, as Calvin Kraiński writes in *Postylla*: “they throw swamp or willow palms before him standing in a circle, when throwing flowers up, our fingers point towards him, and we say: “This is the one who was to arrive for human salvation”.

Every year in the Sąddecki Ethnographic Park there is a procession around the wooden historic Church of St. Peter and Paul, which is led by a figure of the Christ on an ass. It is a replica of a valuable 16th-century monument that has been preserved in the Order of Saint Clare in Stary Sącz. In the procession, the Easter palms are carried, beautifully decorated with flowers and ribbons made of tissue paper.

In Tokarnia near Myślenice, this custom was resurrected in 1968, when the local sculptor, Józef Wrona, made a life-size figure with this representation, modeled on the 16th-century sculpture of the Christ on a palm ass<sup>29</sup>, which is in the collection of the National Museum in Kraków<sup>30</sup>. This sculpture is an unusual dramatic prop, used during the procession led on Palm Sunday to the temple, or symbolic Jerusalem. It depicts the Christ sitting on an ass, who raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing. He holds leather reins in the left hand. He is wearing the cloak of a late medieval ruler. In earlier representations, the Christ was dressed in an antique gown and a tunic.



*The procession with the figure of the Christ on an ass in the Sąddecki Ethnographic Park, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

“....It was customary in Kraków in the 16th century that city councillors carried the “linden Jesus” from the Church of St. Adalbert to the Church of the Virgin Mary, but then the honour was taken away from them by the city’s mobs. After the ceremony of entering Jerusalem, the figure of the Christ was removed, and children were allowed to ride on a wooden ass for fun.

In the near vicinity, behind the city walls, an organist from the Church of St. Florian sat down on a wooden ass and allowed to be carried through the Florian Gate to the Market Square, then circled it and the songs of boys and crowds with the Easter palms could be heard.

29 The sculpture was donated by Michał Radziwiłł to the National Museum in Kraków in 1905. It is located in the Palace of Bishop Erazm Ciołek - NMK Division, in the Gallery of Art of Old Poland. Total height: 224 cm, Christ figure: 146 cm, wheelbase of wagon: 133-138 cm. The sculpture comes from the parish Church of St. Sigismund in Szydłowiec. Author unknown.

30 *Sprawozdanie Dyrekcji Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie za rok 1904*, Kraków: nakładem Muzeum Narodowego 1905, p. 25.





*Easter palms in front of a church, Tokarnia, Myślenice County, 1971, photo by J. Kubiena, Inv. No III/45651/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

In the 18th century, this procession gave various pranksters an opportunity for pranks that were not related to the pious intention of the ceremony. It happened that some people, while walking in the parade, shouted in the tone of *krakowiak*:

*Jesus goes, goes,  
He'll take some sour soup and herring,  
Sausages will be left  
And blessed.*



The authorities of the diocese in Kraków opposed these antics and, by a decree of 10 August 1780, forbade "carrying Jesus around the church on an ass". From then on, entry to Jerusalem was no longer performed in Kraków. However, the ass survived in Kraków to this day. It joined the New Year's Day monstrosities and competes with the Turoń. The sight of the cluster of costume clad people, led by a Jew riding a wooden ass- still belongs to the peculiarities of Kraków<sup>31</sup>.

During the procession, coats were thrown and people were bowing before the pulled figure.

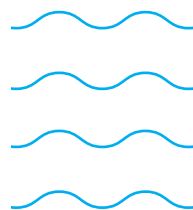


*Easter palms in front of a church on Palm Sunday, Tokarnia, Myślenice County, 1971, Inv. No III/45626/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

At the Seweryn Udziela Museum of Ethnography in Kraków there is a great collection of the Easter palms, collected from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. It consists of about 250 items. The vast majority of the collection are the Vilnius palms, the oldest of which are from 1914. Among the traditional Polish Easter palms in the collection there are those that are both short, easy to pick up, called rods or wands, and those that are long (the longest 4.5 m high), including 10 Easter palms from Rabka and the surrounding area.

31 T. Seweryn, *Tradycje i zwyczaje...*

# PREPARING THE FOOD TO BE BLESSED ON HOLY SATURDAY



Palm Sunday is the beginning of the Holy Week, a special period preparing for the greatest Christian holiday, the Resurrection. It abounds in numerous religious activities and in many folk customs.

Holy Saturday, as the day preceding the feast of the Resurrection, is celebrated by Christians of both Western and Eastern traditions.

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the Roman Catholic Church, Holy Saturday is a day of calmness and waiting for the coming of the Christ. On this day, food is blessed and so are water and fire in accordance with the liturgy. Food products are brought in baskets and usually blessed in churches before noon. The contents of baskets in different regions of Małopolska are still different, although symbolic products dominate everywhere.



*On Holy Saturday the believers bring baskets with food for blessing to the churches (Immaculate Conception church in Spytkowice), photo by Konrad Syga*

# SYMBOLS OF BASIC FOOD BLESSED

**BREAD** – the main kind of food of ancient Jews. In the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread", bread simply means food. In the book of Genesis, God says to Adam banished from paradise: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread" (Genesis 3:19). And Jesus in the Gospel according to Saint John says: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Bread has become a symbol of the Christ's presence and activity in the Church, hence the expression "break the bread" means in the New Testament "to take part in holy communion", that is, "in the Lord's bread"<sup>1</sup>.

**SALT** - is an essential component of organisms. It is abundant in nature. In many cultures, it symbolises friendship and respect. In the Bible, "covenant of salt" is simply a lasting and inseparable relationship<sup>2</sup>.

Salt has preservative properties, which has been transferred to the spiritual realm - it is believed that it also has the power of spiritual purification.

**HORSERADISH** - horseradish root symbolizes strength. It is supposed to bring us good health, improve digestion, protect against stomach, throat and head diseases. The sharp taste and ability to squeeze tears made it a symbol of the bitterness of the Lord's Passion<sup>3</sup>.



One of the basic products in the traditional Easter basket is horseradish, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

**LAMB** - a symbol of gentleness, innocence and sacrifice. It was supposed to ensure that the household had the sympathy of the forces of nature as well as protect against disasters. In the Old Testament writings, a lamb is the most important sacrificial animal. The Israelites marked the door frames of their homes with the blood of a consumed lamb. And in the New Testament, John the Baptist, seeing Jesus, exclaimed to his disciples: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)<sup>4</sup>. On Good Friday, the Christ redeemed people at the price of his own blood. The lamb is the symbol of the triumph of life over death.



The Easter basket must contain the figure of a lamb - a symbol of victory of life over death, photo by Renata Burdyl

1 D. Forstner, *Świat symboliki chrześcijańskiej*, Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX 2001, p. 455.

2 W. Kopaliński, *Opowieści o rzeczach powszednich*, Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia 1988, p. 15.

3 *Symbolika roślin. Heraldyka i symbolika chrześcijańska*, J. Marecki, L. Rotter (ed.), Kraków: WN PAT 2007, p. 82.

4 D. Forstner, *Świat symboliki...*, p. 258.

**EGG** - the ancient symbol of new life, as well as four elements: shell – earth, membrane – air, yolk – fire, egg white – water. The egg is a sign of the beginning of life and rebirth, it means the triumph of life over death. The custom of sharing an egg during the Easter breakfast has survived to this day. It is fraternal and serves to strengthen family ties. In the folk tradition, pets were also touched with blessed eggs to protect them from diseases, and shells were scattered around the house and buried in the corners of the field, which was supposed to ensure harvest.



*In many regions of Małopolska, the Easter basket must not lack ham, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

**CAKE** - babka (Easter cake) or mazurek (shortcrust tart) that are baked at home is an expression of skill. But it is also a symbol of unformed matter transformed into perfect form. Its sweetness is a reward for persevering in mortification during Lent and a sign of the Kingdom of Heaven: "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:9).



*Easter cakes often appear in Easter baskets, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

## REGIONAL CUSTOMS

In Lachowice and Sucha Beskidzka, baskets with food which are to be blessed on Holy Saturday are usually brought to the church by children. Traditionally, they should include: baked lamb figure, eggs, bread, horseradish, salt, sausage and an "okra-wek" - a piece of potato to be planted - it is later placed in the field where the potatoes are planted, so it ensures good harvest<sup>5</sup>.

The Baba Góra Highlanders' holy basket should contain: colored eggs (mainly by using onions), bread, lamb, salt, sausages, sweet dough (usually kołacz - i.e. wheel cake), holy water, formerly also cooked meat and, according to U. Janicka-Krzywdą, small oscypek (i.e. a type of smoked cheese) and dried cow cheese<sup>6</sup>.

5 A. Peć, *Zachowania religijne i magiczne w obrzędowości wiosennej mieszkańców Stryszawy w Beskidzie Żywieckim*, in: *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*, vol. 3 *Religijność ludowa na pograniczach kulturowych i etnicznych*, I. Bukowska-Floreńska (ed.), Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego 1999, and based on research conducted in the area around the Babia Góra Mountain since 1999 (free interviews with representatives of the Rural Housewives' Clubs).

6 See: U. Janicka-Krzywdą, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Babiogórskich*, U. Janicka-Krzywdą (ed.), Kraków 2010; *Dziedzictwo kulturowe Podbabiogórza. Tradycje i folklor*, J. Kociotek (ed.), Sucha Beskidzka 2012.



Until recently, a walk around the house with a blessed basket was practised to ensure prosperity and abundance.

In the case of the Kliszczacy Highlanders, according to tradition, the following items are put in the Easter basket: "eggs, bread, cooked meats (sausage, ham, bacon), horseradish roots, butter, salt, pepper, a potato for planting and a lamb figure baked from dough or made of sugar, decorated with a red ribbon"<sup>7</sup>.

As Tadeusz Wojtanek recalls, "in Zembrzyce, all bread, horseradish, eggs, pancakes, potatoes, trimmings, sausages, some vegetables were put in a large basket, similar to that used for grass. There was no tradition of painting eggs in Zembrzyce. They were dyed only with onions, which resulted in a yellow-brown color or harvested young grain, which, cooked with egg, dyed it green. The blessed eggs were eaten on Easter Sunday. During the Resurrection, which takes place on Saturday evening, and formerly on Sunday morning, water and fire were blessed. Water and scorched pieces of sticks (they had to be made from hazel wood) were taken home.

Holy water was used to remove devils and bogeys. Extraordinary attention was paid to fire. The sticks scorched by the blessed fire were collected and carried to the fields. Every three of them were stuck on each corner of the field then. It was protection against bad harvest"<sup>8</sup>.



*In some areas of Małopolska, the Easter basket must contain a piece of potato to be planted, photo by Konrad Syga*

7 A. Grochal, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Kliszczackich*, J. Ceklarz, J. Masłowiec (ed.), Kraków 2015, p. 349.

8 T. Wojtanek, *Monografia Zembrzyc i Marcówki*, Wyd. Urząd Gminy Zembrzyce 1997, p. 131.

In Podhale, food that was to be blessed brought in baskets, formerly in woolen bags, is called “święcelina” and the basket is “kosołecka”<sup>9</sup>. In the past, the basket was made of juniper roots.

Now it is made of wicker. It is lined with linen cloth and decorated with boxwood, myrtle or blueberry branches<sup>10</sup>. In accordance with tradition, there should be the following items in the basket: lamb figure made of butter, dyed eggs, oscypek, bacon, sausage, moskol pancake (often replaced by bread), salt, horseradish, and potato cuttings. Also in this region, after blessing the food, one had to walk around the entire house with a basket, saying at the same time: “Run away, all misery, away from home, because I’m going my home with święcelina!”<sup>11</sup>.

According to J. Luberda, in the past, in the vicinity of Rabka-Zdrój, the blessed basket - “święncelina”, was not immediately brought into a house, but left “in the entrance hall covered with łoktusa” (i.e. a shawl) until Sunday morning<sup>12</sup>.

An interesting “blessing of the spirit” rite is celebrated in Bukowina Tatrzańska on Holy Saturday, which consists in lighting bracket fungi using church paschal candles. The bracket fungus that was set on fire formed a torch, with which one had to walk around his/her entire property three times while saying prayers, which was supposed to ensure happiness.

A similar rite of “burning the bracket fungi” is still practised in Stryżawa, a village bordering Lachowice. Boys light specially prepared torches (a bracket fungus on a stick) from the blessed fire (from the bonfire in front of the church), then circle the church several times before they go with their torches to their homes to incense them. It is supposed to drive out evil spirits and ensure happiness in the household. In addition, according to one of the residents of Stryżawa, “smoke from burning bracket fungi should be inhaled so that the teeth do not hurt”<sup>13</sup>.



*Easter baskets brought by Szczawnica residents, for blessing, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

9 A woman, resident of Witów (Roman Catholic), 2019.

10 A woman, resident of Witów (Roman Catholic), 2019.

11 Cf. J. Święch, S. Trebunia-Staszek, *Kultura ludowa Polski Południowej (Małopolski), na przykładzie dwóch grup etnograficznych: Górali Podhalańskich i Rzeszowiaków*, Kraków 2008.

12 As cited in: <https://historiarabki.blogspot.com/2012/02/zwyczaje-i-obrzedy-wielkanocne-na.html>

13 A woman, resident of Stryżawa (Roman Catholic), 1999; A woman, resident of Stryżawa (Roman Catholic), 2019.

In the case of the Highlanders of Nowy Sącz, according to source materials, the baskets should contain the following food products: bread, eggs, sausages, pork fat, bacon, butter, salt, horseradish, vinegar, sheep's cheese, wheel cakes, lamb figure made from dough, matches to light a fire in the stove and in some places potatoes.

Many beliefs and magical activities were also associated with sacred foods in the case of the Pieniny Highlanders. Until recently, according to source materials and studies, it was believed that scabs on cow udders could be cured by covering them in butter, and "rubbing their eyes with horseradish during Easter breakfast would protect them against diseases, especially against troublesome sty"<sup>14</sup>.

## ORTHODOX AND GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

Orthodox followers and Greek Catholics celebrate Easter often at a different time than the followers of the Roman Catholic Church. This is due to a different way of calculating the date, the difference can be up to five weeks.

Easter in the Eastern Rite is *Woskresienije Christowo*, that is, the Resurrection of the Lord or simply *Pascha*. It is the merriest of holidays. It is preceded by a rigorous fast that lasts 40 days. During the fast, Orthodox and Greek Catholic followers do not consume meat, dairy products, fish and white bread.

On Holy Saturday a midnight service is given in a church, the so-called *połunoszcznica* (i.e. the Midnight Office), which is the beginning of the celebration of Easter. Then, during a solemn procession, the church is circled three times. It is a way of going out to meet the Saviour, a symbol of moving the stone at the entrance to the tomb of the risen Christ. Finally, the clergyman approaches the closed door of the temple and announces: "*Christos Woskresie*" (the Christ is Risen), to which the crowd responds: "*Woistinu Woskresie*" (Truly He is Risen). The Holy Mass ends with anointing with holy oil the people gathered. *Artos*, large wheat bread, is also blessed at that time and distributed to the followers next Sunday - the Sunday of St. Thomas, which ends the Easter Week and is referred to as *Antipascha Sunday*<sup>15</sup>. After the evening service on Holy Saturday, food is also blessed. According to a resident of Gładyszów, the act of blessing takes place "between Saturday and Sunday, rather after midnight"<sup>16</sup>. Traditionally, the baskets with food should be blessed in front of the church because it was believed that it was not allowed to bring meat to the temple on that day<sup>17</sup>. This is still relevant in many places, e.g. in Bodaki and Hańczowa<sup>18</sup>.

14 A. Grochal, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Pienińskich*, K. Ceklarz, U. Janicka-Krzywda (ed.), Kraków 2014.

15 See: Orthodox calendar, published in an electronic format [http://www.liturgia.cerkiew.pl/pages/kalendarium\\_2018.pdf](http://www.liturgia.cerkiew.pl/pages/kalendarium_2018.pdf)

16 A woman, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.

17 A man, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.

18 A woman, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.

EPITAPHIOS (Greek: Epitaphion) means shroud, canvas. This is not an icon in the narrow sense, but a canvas, fabric or painted image that depicts the body of the Christ in the tomb. The inscription on the border is a reference to a fragment of the troparion of St. John of Damascus from the Good Friday Vespers: "The dignified Joseph, having removed your body from the tree, he wrapped you in a clean shroud (Russian: płaszczennia) and, after anointing you with new fragrances, laid you in a new tomb". On Good Friday, the Epitaphios is ceremonially displayed in the middle of the church for worship. It serves a similar purpose as the Tomb of the Christ in the Catholic Church<sup>19</sup>. The liturgy is celebrated on the Epitaphios throughout the paschal period. At night, between Saturday and Easter Sunday, during the resurrection, the Epitaphios is carried around the temple, then through the holy doors to the chancel and laid on the altar. It stays there for forty days, until the Feast of Ascension.



*The Epitaphios displayed for adoration in the Ascension of Our Lord Greek Catholic Church in Gładyszów, photo by Anna Wirchnińska*

The Lemkos have their eggs, bread, sausage, bacon, horseradish, salt, vinegar, baked cheese and loaves of paska, i.e. traditional wheat bread in the shape of a wheel, blessed<sup>20</sup>. The loaves of paska were prepared by women on Holy Thursday. There was an interesting custom associated with baking them, which R. Rein-fuss describes as follows: "women jumped up so that it would grow better, but sometimes, when they were too eager, the loaf could not



*The traditional Easter basket of Lemkos must contain, among others, bread, sausage, cheese, horseradish, salt, ham..., photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

<sup>19</sup> M. Janocha, *Ikony w Polsce*, Warszawa: Arkady 2008, p. 74.

<sup>20</sup> According to the informers and the literature on the subject, the paska was also baked using rye flour.





Traditional Lemkos' Easter basket, photo: arch.  
Małopolska Tourist Organization

be removed from the oven and the opening had to be enlarged to bring it out"<sup>21</sup>. After blessing the paska, it was shared during the Easter breakfast, and in the past it was eaten in many homes throughout the holidays. The blessed paska has extraordinary healing and magical properties, which is why three heels (pieces) were usually cut off and stored at home. These heels cured stomachaches and headaches, and were burned in the oven to repel a storm.

A man used to carry the paska, and quite often loaves of paska, to be blessed, usually in a linen cloth (in a wrapped canvas), and a woman carried a basket with food.

Eggs, an ancient symbol of fertility and continuity of a reviving life are of special significance among the blessed food products. In the traditional basket, in addition to eggs not dyed or dyed in one color (most often by using plum root, onion shells and green rye if there was some already), patterned Easter eggs that were prepared for the holidays were also placed. Painting Easter eggs is still an important tradition among the Lemkos and, in accordance with it, they should be prepared, just like the paska, on Holy Thursday. D. Blin-Olbert provides an interesting legend associated with Easter eggs and kraszanki (i.e. dyed eggs), which is alive in the Lemko community: "(...) when the Christ was nailed to the cross, blood dripped from his wounds and solidified resulting in small red eggs (the kraszanki); the Mother of God standing under the cross poured tears into them and turned them into Easter eggs. Martha collected them and the Mother of God gave them to children as a souvenir and a warning so that they would live in harmony with each other"<sup>22</sup>. This legend is probably associated with the custom of women giving children eggs in front of the church.

Easter eggs are made using the wax-batik technique. Using a pointed stick, a pattern made of hot wax is applied to the cleaned egg shell. After applying the pattern, the egg is dyed, formerly by using natural dyes. Traditional colors include: green, purple, red, yellow<sup>23</sup>. The udders of cows were washed with water used when boiling eggs to be blessed, which was supposed to serve as protection against witches trying to steal their milk.

<sup>21</sup> R. Reinfuss, *Śladami Łemków*, Warszawa 1990, p. 56, widening the opening of the stove was also referenced by the informers during field research (2019).

<sup>22</sup> See: D. Blin-Olbert, *Rok obrzędowy u Łemków*, in: *Łemkowie w historii i kulturze Karpat, part 2*, J. Czajkowski (ed.), s. 339.

<sup>23</sup> Based on an interview with Jan Dziubyna, who runs a workshop on painting Easter eggs in the style of the Lemkos, the Lemko Educational Farm in Gładyszów.

There is an interesting custom connected to Easter eggs consisting in throwing blessed eggs through the house so that they do not break. Broken eggs should be carefully collected, although, according to a resident of Gładyszów, “we are still able to throw an egg on the grass in such a way that it stays intact”<sup>24</sup>.

In the basket brought for blessing, there must also be a candle that is lit just before blessing and which traditionally should burn to the end. It is a symbol of man and the Christ who made a fatal sacrifice.



*In the Eastern tradition, a candle is also brought for blessing, photo by Anna Wirchniańska*

After blessing the food products, in accordance with tradition, one had to walk around one's house three times with the blessed food to protect it “from evil”.

## EASTER EGG

An inseparable element of the Easter basket are eggs. For centuries they have been an important element of rituals. As a symbol of reviving life, they appear in many cosmogonic myths of various cultures of the world. When used in healing and cleansing magic, they release vital forces.

The custom of decorating eggs has been known since ancient times. The oldest Easter eggs found in Poland come from the late 10th century. They were located on the Ostrówek island in Opole in the place of the Slavic stronghold. They were decorated with a primitive pattern applied using melted wax and colored with a natural ochre dye.



*In Małopolska, there are different ways to decorate Easter eggs (in the photo, Easter eggs made by Anna Przepióra), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

<sup>24</sup> A man, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.



*Decorating Easter eggs at Hanna Krzysiakówna, Chochółów, Nowy Targ County, 1960, Central Photographic Agency/Olszewski, Inv. No III/36603/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

According to folk beliefs, decorating the eggs had a magical dimension. They were supposed to ensure the continuity of the world. Rich symbolism was hidden in the type of decoration. Geometric motifs were a sign of infinity, while solar motifs – of rebirth and eternity. Colors: red and white were associated with worshipping household guardian spirits, and black and white – spirits of the earth. In the 12th century, the Church forbade eating and dyeing eggs during Easter, because they played an important role in various pre-Christian rites.

Soon, however, painted eggs

settled in the new religion as an important element of Easter celebration. Wincenty Kadłubek in his 13th century chronicles mentioned the custom of painting eggs in Poland. At that time, Catholic faith did not change the beliefs of the population about the quasi-magical properties of Easter eggs. From the folk culture in which the egg played the role of a talisman against evil or a whisperer of good, a symbol of health and life, love and fertility, the custom of blessing Easter eggs has grown. Still, as in pagan times, eggs were thought to protect against evil and spells. Therefore, egg shells were buried under the houses being built. In turn, during Easter, eggs were thrown into plowed fields, which was to guarantee good harvest.

To this day, Easter eggs are - along with bread, cured meat and horseradish - the main element of the food to be blessed, i.e. victuals that the followers bring to the church on Holy Saturday - the day preceding the Resurrection so that they can be blessed. They are eaten later during the Easter breakfast, and feasters share them, expressing good wishes to each other. In both the Catholic and Orthodoxy Faith, the egg is associated with the Resurrection of the Christ and means hope for eternal life. The dominant color used when decorating eggs has become red – a symbol of victory and joy.

In Kraków, during World War I, a strict ban on painting Easter eggs was issued as a response to “wasting food”<sup>25</sup>. The ban itself was not surprising, but the surprise was that it was forgotten... for 93 years. The Kraków magistrate repealed it on 21 March 2008<sup>26</sup>!

<sup>25</sup> Imperial decree of 20 April 1854, No. 96.

<sup>26</sup> The president of the city Kraków Jacek Majchrowski in a special “Reskrypt w sprawie barwienia jaj wielkanocnych” (“Rescript on dyeing Easter eggs”) issued in Kraków on 21 March 2008 revoked the ban on painting eggs.





*In the past, onion husk stock was most commonly used for coloring eggs, photo by Renata Burdyl*



*The batik method involves applying a wax pattern to an egg, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

In the vicinity of Kraków, making Easter eggs was not popular. According to the reports from the turn of the 19th century, kraszanki, i.e. eggs decorated using only one color, were the ones that were usually made. Onion skin decoction was used to make the egg shells turn dark brown. Other colors were also obtained thanks to organic components: light green Easter eggs were the result of a decoction obtained from barley shoots, blue - from cornflower petals, yellow - from apple bark or tansy seeds, black - from the bark of alder and oak or walnut shells. Eggs were not boiled, only soaked for a suitable time. Easter eggs in Małopolska were decorated with simple patterns, flowers, twigs, circles, created from the composition of simple lines, dots or circles.

Nowadays, Easter eggs are an obligatory element of Easter. Their creators use different techniques. One of the most popular is drawing with wax, i.e. batik. It involves drawing a pattern with wax and then dipping the egg in the dye. This is how the first layer is created. Then subsequent, darker ones are made. Finally, the wax is removed, revealing a colorful pattern. Scraping of a colored egg shell with a sharp tool is often used to make an ornament. Decorating Easter eggs is a difficult art that requires patience and skill. It was an activity performed by young girls because the elderly dealt with other holiday preparations at that time. Men also

made Easter eggs. The egg served as a gift. It was given to relatives and people who were to be respected according to the criteria at the time. It was also an element of courtship.

The largest collection of Easter eggs in Poland - about 9,000 - is kept at the Seweryn Udziela Museum of Ethnography in Kraków. They come from different periods and regions of our country, some are over a hundred years old.





Eggs were formerly colored in natural dyes, e.g. onion, oak bark, walnut shell, nowadays they are most often colored in food dyes, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

The oldest Easter egg in the museum's collection was created in the Orthodox order of women in what is now Ukraine in 1880. It is called the Monastic Easter egg. It is an example of the so-called *woszczanka* (i.e. wax-covered egg). The egg shell was entirely covered with warm wax, on which various decorative elements made of metallic foil, wire or beads were then applied. Monastic eggs were hung on threads near the holy pictures.

It is worth mentioning that one of the longest-running ethnographic competitions for "Folk Easter Egg and Ritual Art associated with the Easter period" is a competition organized by the District Museum in Tarnów and the Małopolska Culture Center Sokół in Nowy Sącz. It has been taking place for 30 years.



After dyeing the eggs, you can leave the wax or scratch it to get a white pattern (in the photo the eggs made by Anna Duć), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



You can also apply another wax pattern and dye the egg once again to get a multi-colored Easter egg (in the photo: Easter eggs made by Bogusława Smereczniak), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

Competitions are also organized in many places where baskets or even entire Easter tables are assessed.



One of the popular techniques for decorating Easter eggs in Małopolska is scraping the pattern on a colored shell (the photo shows Easter eggs made by Małgorzata Wierzbicka), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

Blessing food is still one of the most important customs of Holy Week on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska. Food in baskets is an important element of regional traditions and constitute an evidence that folk traditions are still present in the lives of the inhabitants of Małopolska.



Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków has the largest collection of Easter eggs in Poland, photo by Kamil Bańkowski



*Competition for "The most beautiful, traditional Orava Easter basket" organized by the Orava Ethnographic Park in Zubrzyca Górna, photo by Konrad Syga*



# HOUSE DECORATING IN ZALIPIE



Every year, Zali pie “blooms” around the Feast of Corpus Christi. The houses are decorated with traditional floral patterns. One can see them both on wooden cottages and on brick buildings, as well as inside the houses. Flowers also serve as decorations of barns, stables, wells, fences...

## HISTORY

It all began over 100 years ago, when girls decorated the walls of kurna chata (i.e. cottage without a chimney) stained with smoke stains with white spots, so-called “packi”. When bread stoves with a chimney were introduced, the spots began to change into more and more fancy shapes, and over time they turned into floral motifs<sup>1</sup>. First, simple colorful single or grouped floral designs began to be introduced, and then they developed into the complex forms known today. The flowers were distinguished by fairly long stems (“oguny”) and a round or heart-esque shape.

The tradition of painting houses was present in two main centers of Powi śle Dąbrowskie. The first one - Zali pie area - included Zali pie, Ćwików, Pilcza and Wola Źelichowska, the second one was comprised of Borusowa, Hubienice and other villages.

The region in which inhabitants, mainly women, decorate the interiors of the houses with decorative tapestry (Polish: makatka) or paintings applied directly to the walls was first described by Władysław Hickel, a citizen of Kraków, in the 1906 issue of the magazine “Lud”, in the article entitled “Malowanki ludowe na Powi ślu Dąbrowskim” (“Folk paintings in Powi śle Dąbrowskie”)<sup>2</sup>. The author of the article for the first time saw such a colorful tapestry at his servant’s house, a resident of Zali pie. Władysław Hickel decided to see the Powi śle region. During his journey, he collected a rich collection of paintings on paper, which he gave to the National Museum and the Museum of Industry in Kraków. Currently, this collection is the property of the Seweryn Udziela Museum of Ethnography in Kraków and is the oldest documentation of interior decorations of Powi śle from this period.



An example of Zali pian house decoration – the home of Andrzej Dymon (Zali pie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

1 A. E. Stawska, *Polska księga tradycji. Święta, obrzędy, obyczaje*, Videograf 2012, p. 147.

2 W. Hickel, *Malowanki ludowe na Powi ślu Dąbrowskim*, „Lud”, vol. 12, 1906, p. 113-121.



This is what Kazimierz Witkiewicz wrote while citing Hickel: "They already paint it on paper, directly on the wall, decorating whatever is in the house, namely: a wooden ceiling, a cupboard, windows, window shutters, (a board used for covering the opening in the baking oven), a "kaflowiec" (oven heated with heat from the English stove), and even plates, although if it is necessary to use them, the paint must be washed off them. The paint is bought by girls in Dąbrowa or Tarnów in the form of powder, which they mix with milk or varnish, and instead of a brush they usually use a birch stick soaked and shredded with a hammer at one end. Such a brush is obviously a very ineffective tool; it is even more stranger considering more than one of them can wield it with great skill. Paint mixed in the right amount of milk can be used well and does not crumble too much. As far as I could find out, such painting activity began to develop only a few years ago. In the past, people were content, and even now they still are, with rarely seen cut-outs. They say that one of the first painters was Curyłówna, daughter of the house owner in Zalipie. Her motivation for grabbing the brush was to paint the church; it sounds likely, and the use of milk for mixing the paint must have been noticed when a professional painter was working. The paintings or, as the folk call them, "flowers" are painted by girls and young married women, usually together, first, by drawing ("marking") a pattern with a pencil. They hang their finished paintings in a row under the pictures, between them or on the shelves". Witkiewicz adds: "While discussing the aesthetic side of the paintings, the author mentions that in his collection consisting of several hundred pieces, he encountered a frieze of 20 teeth, and none of them unlike the other, although the whole did not lose on it. It should be mentioned here that the real advantage of folk art is all the variety of decorations in a uniform form and that the entirety of it actually only gains and does not lose. The folk do not like to repeat themselves and this is the reason for this freedom in casting flowers, leaves of various shapes and character. It is a very difficult problem for a painter, which in folk art is solved with ease, and which many outstanding decorators may envy"<sup>3</sup>.

Initially, only natural ingredients and materials were used when painting. The first primitive brushes were made of millet straw. The brush was also often made of a birch or willow stick smashed at the end with a hammer, and for painting smaller designs – a brush made of horse hair, from the mane or tail of the animal, wound on the stick. Grain ears, e.g. millet, rye and some grasses, were also used for decorating. The range of colors was very limited at that time. Initially, only two colors were used: white – obtained from lime mixed with cow's milk and eggs, which, due to its durability, was also used for whitening the outer walls of houses, and black, obta-



An example of Zalipian house decoration – Maria Słonka (Kuzie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

<sup>3</sup> K. Witkiewicz, *Malowanki ludowe z okolicy Dąbrowy Tarnowskiej*, „Rzeczy Piękne”, Yr IV 1924 r. book 1, p. 25-26.

ined from soot collected from the chimney, which was buried for several days under the smoke canopy so that it could soften. To decorate the house from the outside, the housewives painted dirty foundations of the houses in a dark color, and then covered the entire surface with white "packi" of lime.

In Hickel's time, i.e. at the beginning of the 20th century, as Aleksandra Jackowska writes in the article entitled "Poglądy Zalipianek na sztukę" ("Views of women living in Zalipie on art"), "stamps were also used during painting. They were cut with a knife in fresh fodder beet or potato, and the paint was applied with a finger or by dipping a stencil in it. The stamps were used to make prints, geometric patterns and floral motifs. They were often used to print individual flowers and leaves, to which stems and other elements were later painted. In order to facilitate work, "patrons" or templates with cut out contours of patterns were also used. They were made of wrapping paper, carton or cardboard"<sup>4</sup>.

Over time, the tone and color of the paintings began to change. New colors were introduced: brown, obtained from clay mixed with charcoal and lime, and blue (gray), obtained by mixing ultramarine with lime dissolved in milk.

During the interwar period, several researchers were interested in the paintings created in Powiśle Dąbrowskie. In 1924 Kazimierz Witkiewicz wrote about them<sup>5</sup>. A few years later, Eugeniusz Frankowski, in the album "Malowanki" ("Paintings"), (1928)<sup>6</sup> conducted an analysis of the style of the paintings from Wola Żelichowska collected by Władysław Hickel, paying attention to the motif, composition and very good grouping of colored surfaces. In his description of style he drew attention to the application of the principles of symmetry, the use of color contrasts and complementary colors. He distinguished four groups of paintings.



An example of Zalipian house decoration  
- a vase with flowers - the home of Andrzej  
Dymon (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska  
Tourist Organization

These were:

- a vase with flowers,
- a painting with shark teeth pattern (double triangle) filled with flowers,
- a circular arrangement (floral motif surrounded by a garland of circles, flowers, hearts),
- a strip ornament with floral motifs.

<sup>4</sup> A. Jackowska, *Poglądy Zalipianek na sztukę*, „Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty” 1983, vol. 37, book 1-2, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> K. Witkiewicz, *Malowanki ludowe z okolicy Dąbrowy...*

<sup>6</sup> E. Frankowski, *Malowanki*, in: *Sztuka Ludu Polskiego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Gebethner i Wolff 1928.

Frankowski claimed that the people of Powiśle were endowed with innate artistic intuition. Another description of the paintings was also provided by Tadeusz Seweryn in "Polskie malarstwo ludowe" ("Polish folk paintings") (1937)<sup>7</sup>.

When powder paints of a much wider range of colors appeared on the market in the 1940s, the girls living in Zalipie began to develop their painting technique, using more and more sophisticated patterns. They were dominated by floral motifs and various types of swirls, taking the form of unique ornaments. Initially, the interiors of the houses were decorated, usually the areas



*An example of Zalipian house decoration - wreaths under the windows and around the entrance - Lucyna Łata (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*An example of Zalipian house decoration - wreaths under the pictures of saints - Joanna Krok (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

around the windows and the holy paintings hung on the walls, but gradually the paintings began to cover even more surface of the house, the entire walls, stoves and ceilings. In their artistry, female painters expanded their field of activity by painting on the external surfaces of houses, and later on farm buildings.

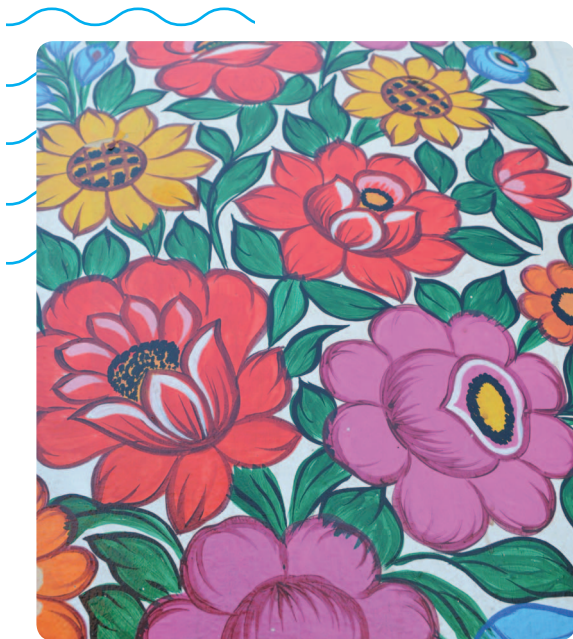
The women living in Zalipie perfected their painting skills, constantly searching for new tech-

niques and inspiration. They observed the technique of painting as well as mixing paints and dyes of an artist painting the church in nearby Gręboszów. The reputation of Zalipie reached its apogee in the post-war years, when folk art began to be exhibited on many official occasions. The female painters living in Zalipie quickly and with great momentum returned to the traditions passed on to them by their grandmothers and mothers.



*An example of Zalipian house decoration - painted bread oven and kitchen utensils - Wanda Racia (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

<sup>7</sup> T. Seweryn, *Polskie Malarstwo Ludowe*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Muzeum Etnograficznego w Krakowie nr 10 1937.



*An example of Zalipian house decoration - the home of Józef Curyło (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

became another important decorative element. The female painters applied colorful ornaments and larger or smaller flower bouquets on them. Painted kitchen utensils added more charm to the interiors.

These paintings, however, were not very durable, because powdered paints mixed with milk, still used in the 70s, often under the influence of weather conditions and steam in houses faded and chipped off. At the end of the 70s they were replaced with poster paints and tempera. The possibility of using brushes instead of wooden primitive tools increased the comfort of work and durability of decorations<sup>8</sup>. Interestingly, when painting, instead of using different shades of the same color, full colors are used, flowers usually have a brown border and the leaves are black. It is also worth mentioning that in Zalipie there are not only painted cottages, but also colorful paper decorations, so-called spiders, with beautiful fancy form.

## FELICJA CURYŁOWA

Zalipie's post-war fame is associated with the name of Felicja Curyłowa (1903-1974) – a talented painter, thanks to whom the village became an artistic center of the region, and the female painters living in Zalipie became a “national good” – they painted, among others, a room for children on the ship “Batory” as well as many commercial and representative premises in Warszawa, Kraków and other Polish cities.

<sup>8</sup> J. Plata, Zalipie, <http://dommalarek.pl/zalipie/>



The great authority of Curyłowa and her influence on the organization of annual regional art competitions contributed to the creation of the legend of Zalipie as the most important painted village of the region.

The following female painters of Zalipie, who, apart from a skilled hand, had a lush imagination and creative taste should be mentioned: Rozalia Ciepiela, Rozalia Dymon, Katarzyna Sierak, Felicja Mosio, Stefania Łączyńska, Maria Owca, Honorata Tarka, Bronisława Boduch, Janina Plata.

Currently, Felicja Curyłowa's Farmstead in Zalipie operates as a division of the District Museum in Tarnów. In 1978, four years after the death of the famous resident of Zalipie, Cepelia (Central Organisation of Folk Arts and Industries) bought the entire curtilage together with the plot, and six months later handed them over to the museum in Tarnów. It was decided that the farmstead, i.e. a residential building, a stable and a barn, arranged on the plan of the letter U, should be preserved where they stood when Felicja Curyłowa was alive.



*Stefania Łączyńska's cottage in the homestead of Felicja Curyłowa in Zalipie, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

In 1981, to diversify the museum, the adjacent field was moved from another part of Zalipie, the so-called chata biedniacka (English: poor cottage). From 2018, there is also a richly decorated cottage of a Zalipian painter and poet - Stefania Łączyńska. The museum's curator is the granddaughter of Felicja Curyłowa, who lives in the opposite house - Mrs. Wanda Racia. Her grandmother taught her how to paint. Today she not only guides visitors around the curtilage, but also renews the exterior paintings every year before the Feast of Corpus Christi.

In the museum in Zalipie, only the barn remains intact with the paintings of Mrs. Felicja. Whereas, the wooden, painted in yellow, constructed via formwork cottage was decorated with an ornament consisting of small, blue flowers, and so it is today. When inside, we can admire the entrance hall painted with lime and soot. This is the first work of Mrs. Felicja from 1913; when she painted it, she was only ten years old! On the left side of the entrance hall there is a white room with a painted ceiling, on which flowers were faithfully recreated a few years ago under the supervision of a conservator. This was necessary because the floor beams were attacked by bark beetles and death watch beetles. During the renovation, all the original paintings were removed and then recreated based on the preserved iconography and photographs. Mrs. Wanda Racia, who has the greatest knowledge on the style of her grandmother, faced this difficult task.



*Felicja Curyłowa's House, currently including neighboring buildings forming a branch of the District Museum in Tarnów, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

In addition to paintings in the white room, we can also see, among others, an eagle made of spruce scales, hand embroidered Zalipian outfit and chromolithographs with images of saints and decorated with colored cut-outs. On the right side of the hall there is a black room with a beautifully painted bread oven, as well as tiles from Włocławek and regional ceramics. On the walls one can admire the long carpet painted in flowers, and the handmade parchment window curtains. The entire house is full of Mrs. Felicja's

work, it is decorated with paper cut-outs and tissue paper flowers. Paintings made by local artists are presented in the stable converted into an exhibition and workshop room. An impressive exhibition of old agricultural equipment was created in the barn.

Felicja Curyłowa in the memoirs of professor Roman Reinfuss<sup>9</sup>, published in *Polska Sztuka Ludowa* in 1974:

"It is difficult to imagine Zalipie without Felicja Curyłowa. She was an integral part of it, like painted houses or willows along the roads. For many years she was a spring that moved the village, a loudspeaker that praised the beauty of painted Zalipie and increased the number of enthusiastic supporters.

Everyone who visited Zalipie or wanted to arrange something with Zalipian painters had to visit Curyłowa's hospitable home. In the commemorative book, which she meticulously kept, one may find the signatures of state dignitaries, intellectuals representing various fields of art, including foreigners from almost all over the world. Buses full of young people came down to her and she tirelessly showed them around the village.

Who was Curyłowa? She considered herself primarily a folk artist — a painter. During her more than 50 years of creative work, her activity was so strongly associated with the multi-colored painting that in the end Curyłowa considered herself to be the first to introduce polychrome into Zalipian paintings. This was

<sup>9</sup> Roman Reinfuss (born on 27 May 1910 in Przeworsk, died on 26 September 1998 in Krzywaczka) - an ethnographer, expert on Polish folk art and Carpathian ethnography. In 1944–1946 a professor at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, from 1946–1949 a professor at the University of Wrocław, and in 1946–1980 the head of the Folk Art Studio at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

not consistent with reality, because we know that there were fully developed and multicolor Zalipian paintings at the end of the last century, a few years before Curyłowa's birth. (She was born in 1903). It is certain, however, that Felicja Wojtyto — (which was her maiden name) had been painting and embroidering from an early age, practising her artistic activity with great talent. In the middle of the interwar period, Tadeusz Seweryn purchased the paintings and embroidery from her, which today are a valuable collection of the Museum of Ethnography in Kraków. In 1939, Felicja Curyłowa, along with Rozalia Zaród and Maria Janeczek, painted the Zalipian chamber in the Museum of the Kraków Land in Kraków, which does not exist any more because it was destroyed by an occupant.

Fond of her art, Curyłowa did not stop her painting activity during the war. She belonged to a small handful of women to whom we owe that floral wall painting in Zalipie survived the turmoil of the war. However, it was only in the Polish People's Republic that Curyłowa's rich personality found freedom for action. Over the past thirty years, Curyłowa — a painter whose education was limited to literacy, has changed into a devoted social activist. She was the direct organizer of all wall painting competitions taking place in Zalipie. She united Zalipian painters in an association called "Wieś tworząca" ("Creative village"). Although it was not approved by any authorities, it had its own seal and president in the person of Curyłowa, who knew how to strive and fight for the interests of painters. Under her leadership, they went beyond the fences in Zalipie, painting their flowers in Lublin at the 10th anniversary exhibition (industrial plant pavilion), in Warszawa's Old Town (ceiling in Desa store), on the ship "Batory" (children's playroom). The management of the Institute of Industrial Design communicated with her when she invited Zalipian painters to work in teams designing patterns for the textile industry and painting faience in Włocławek.

During her stay in Włocławek, Curyłowa made dozens of ceramic tiles, decorated with hand-painted flowers. She decorated the tombstone of her mother and her own tomb, which she prepared several years before her death. Once, when I asked her where such an unusual idea came from, she replied: "Look, Professor, I wanted to make these patterns, so that this art would remain with a person after death". This statement, taken from the cassette recording, is the best evidence of what Curyłowa's artistic work meant to her.

In Zalipie, Curyłowa played a difficult role as an intermediary between painters and the wide world. The District and Voivodship Department of Culture as well as Cepelia conducted their actions here with her participation and help. Thanks to her active participation, the red and black embroidery characteristic of Powiśle Dąbrowskie was reactivated. She was the organizer of all the works done by Zalipian painters outside her village. There have been many such works in the last 20 years.

Curyłowa's social activity was not limited to aiding in material problems of painters. As the president of the association "Wieś tworząca" she was able to acquire electricity supply for Zalipie many years earlier than planned. As a councillor of the territory, and later also a district councillor, she significantly contributed to the construction of roads in Zalipie, which in the past were sinking in mud, and to the necessary land reclamation in these wetlands.

In connection with her social and artistic activities, she received a lot of different awards and decorations, of which it is necessary to mention the Silver, and later the Golden Cross of Merit.

Curyłowa devoted the last years of her life to the efforts to build the “House of Painters” in Zalipie. It is planned to be an originally conceived rural culture center, in which there will be a room for both workshops for local painters, as well as a spectacle hall, a meeting room, a few hotel rooms and a gastronomic point for tourists.

She has already negotiated the location and building site as well as the architectural design of the building. Unfortunately, she was not able to see the commencement of the construction or even the moment of laying the cornerstone. During the last year, when the bedridden painter was visited by representatives of the voivodship and the district, she was constantly sending her attention to the matter of building the “House of Painters”, which concerned her mind more than the hopeless state of her health. Because Curyłowa never preferred her personal matters over the matters of painters and her native village.

She died in Zalipie on 4 May. Death was no surprise to her. She prepared herself for it calmly and methodically, as it is fit for a good hostess. So she divided her family's property, farmstead, house, field and livestock among her family members; she entrusted her 14-year-old granddaughter Wanda Wojtyto, who is a promising excellent painter, with a responsibility to care and preserve the paintings.

She also issued detailed funeral ordinances. How she should be dressed in a casket, where the casket is to be placed so that acquaintances and friends could say goodbye to her. It turned out on this occasion that she had previously prepared her photograph, made on oval porcelain, which after the funeral should be embedded in the wall of the tomb.

If she could have seen her funeral (6 May), she would have been very pleased and proud of it. There were several priests and school children coming in pairs, and three voluntary fire brigades from Zalipie and nearby villages. They came with red water wagons that were ahead of the procession and said goodbye at every bend of the road with a long roar of sirens.

A large crowd gathered. Apart from the locals, there were many friends of the deceased who came “from around the world” either officially as representatives of the authorities (Ministry of Culture and Arts, voivodship, district), or privately. Fire banners embroidered by women of Zalipie leaned over the tomb, and the local teacher in his speech recalled the services of the deceased.

There were so many wreaths and flowers that neither the tomb nor painted tiles could be seen from underneath, which Curyłowa once painted in Włocławek years ago with a view to the day of her funeral<sup>10</sup>.

10 The text of the memoirs comes from “Polska Sztuka Ludowa” XXVIII, No. 4-7, 1974, p. 252-253.



# “PAINTED COTTAGE” (“MALOWANA CHATA”) COMPETITION

After ethnographic studies, headed by Roman Reinfuss, PhD, in 1948 the first competition for painted houses and paper paintings delivered to the Dom Ludowy (Folk's House) in Podlipie was organized. Because women living in Zalipie were the most numerous group that took part in the competition, in 1965 the competition was moved to Zalipie and it is held as such today. The life of Zalipie revolves around culture and a beautifully painted tradition. As part of the annual competition entitled “Painted Cottage”, organized by the District Museum in Tarnów and the House of Painters in Zalipie, which takes place at a strictly defined time, i.e. on Friday, Saturday and Sunday after the Feast of Corpus Christi, the farmsteads are painted again while maintaining selected elements of old paintings, and the visiting judges assesses and awards cash prizes for artistic impressions, work input, innovation, originality and a reference to tradition. Painted cottage competitions have already become a long-standing tradition and showcase of the entire region. Their main goal is to maintain and develop the tradition of decorating houses and farm buildings with characteristic floral motifs. It is worth mentioning that this is the longest running folk art competition in Poland. Approx. 100 people take part in it every year! They are often multi-generational families: grandmothers, mothers and grandchildren.



An example of Zalipian house decoration - Janina Kruk (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



An example of Zalipian house decoration - Joanna Krok (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



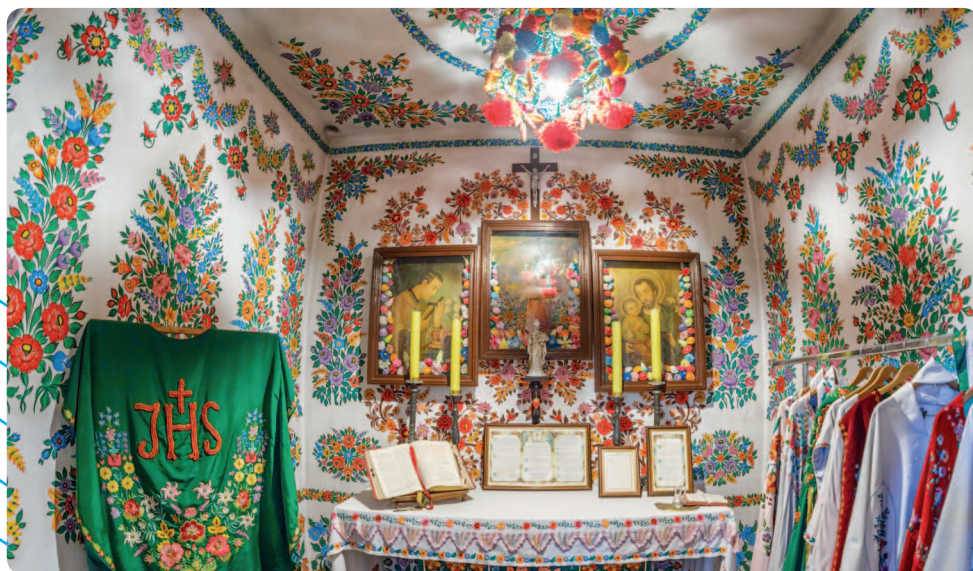
Barbara Rachmaciej, the painter, at work (Kuzie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



## HOUSE OF PAINTERS (DOM MALAREK)

At the House of Painters, which is the headquarters of the Communal Cultural Center, there is a team of employees headed by director Wanda Chlastawa, who makes sure that the traditions of Zalipian paintings are not lost, and that Zalipie is known, appreciated and that it attracts tourists. Local folk artists made sure that the impressive building located in the central part of the painted village is adopted to its character as well as delighted both tourists and residents with the beauty of floral motifs. Among the art ideas of the center related to promoting Zalipian art, there is the outstanding painting of the parish Church of St. Joseph in Zalipie created by the painters of Zalipie. The gray and sad temple has become a place where one can not only pray, but also admire the beautifully composed motifs referring to the local tradition. It is especially worth noting that there is the chapel of St. Blase, decorated not only with paintings, but also flowers made of tissue paper. The altar (a chest painted by Felicja Curyłowa) was covered with a tablecloth embroidered in Zalipian flower patterns. One can also see vestments with floral motifs in the chapel.

Both Felicja Curyłowa's Farmstead and the House of Painters in their educational and artistic offer have been successfully organizing workshops for children and teenagers for many years, celebrating decorative traditions of Zalipie.



*St. Blase chapel in the church in Zalipie, painted by local painters, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

Today, there is an impressive variety of designs in Zalipie. It is worth looking at them closely - one can easily notice that each of the painters has their own style and favorite motifs, and her works, in terms of bouquets, the appearance of flowers and colors, stand out from other compositions. It is also worth mentioning that the tradition of painting buildings is not limited only to Zalipie. Painted buildings can be seen in Podlipie, Niwki, Kuzie, Ćwików, Pilcza Żelichowska, Świebodzin, Dąbrówka Gorzycka, Zapasternicze and Kłyż. The tradition is still passed down from generation to generation. Some of the young girls living in Zalipie and in its vicinity eagerly paint floral designs. Today, more and more men also paint.



*Flower painting workshop at the House of Painters in Zalipie, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

## EXAMPLES OF DECORATIVE ART IN ZALIPIE



*Martyna Krok (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*





Agnieszka Dąbroś (Niwki), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Martyna Krok (Zalipie), photo by Kamil Bańkowski



Maria Chlastawa, Magdalena Bochenek, Bogusława Miś (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Danuta Dymon (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Joanna Krok (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Joanna Krok (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization





Wanda Racia (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Dorota Szczygieł (Niwki), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Zofia Janeczek, Klaudia Janeczek (Niwki), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Maria Słonka (Kuzie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Maria Słonka (Kuzie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Alina Kiepus (Kłyż), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization





Halina Lelek (Niwki), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Janina Rusiecka (Niwki), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Maria Światłowska (Zalipie), photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

# COTTAGE CLEANING IN CHOCHOŁÓW

Spring-cleaning in Chochołów is slightly different from those in other towns of Małopolska Voivodship. Not only the interiors of the houses are cleaned here, they are also cleaned from the outside. Every year before the day of Corpus Christi, women brush the wooden walls with grey soap and water.

## CHOCHOŁÓW

Chochołów is a small village with about 1300 inhabitants, located in the Black Dunajec Valley. The place, called the “Treasure of Podhale”, is known for its historic buildings. There are over a hundred wooden residential houses, forming a unique historic area. The oldest, central part of Chochołów, was built based on the so-called linear village plan. Situated on both sides of the main road connecting the Black Dunajec with Zakopane, the wooden wide-fronted buildings are set up with gable walls towards the road. They are distinguished by their preservation both in shape and design of the original old style of the Podhale region. The buildings include a wide range of facilities with barns, cowsheds, granaries and even wells. The farm buildings are located at the rear of the plots. The cottages are distinguished by a rich decorative design with studded door and wood carved cross beam design. The tops of the shingle roofs are covered with abutments, jerkin heads and fancy roof ridge decorations, typical for Podhale. Certainly, one hundred and eight cottages, including some farmhouses, are included in the register of monuments of the Małopolska Voivodship as an example of the world's unique traditional wooden construction and carpentry art. To this day, they provide material and spiritual evidence of the history of the region. It is worth noting at this point that the record includes the entire village with buildings, streets, paths and sidewalks layout, being a protected urban and architectural reserve under the UNESCO patronage. The architecture of buildings



*Traditional buildings in Chochołów, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

of Chochółów is distinguished by a characteristic log frame structure. The debar-ked bales were cut in half creating the flat logs, from which the log wall structure was made. The bales arranged in a square were joined in the corners, i.e. angles, for the so-called woodworking joints, and the soaring two-slope roofs of rafter construction were covered with chipped shingles.

## COTTAGE CLEANING

The houses in Chochółów still look like new, because their residents take special care of them. The goal of every housekeeper is to keep the house properly clean, especially since during the time of Corpus Christi day a procession goes through the village. This is one of the most important reasons why housekeepers brush their houses, which has become a glorious tradition of the village, distinguishing the whole Podhale not only within the region, but also in the world. This tradition has both an aesthetic and religious value.



*Corpus Christi procession in Chochółów, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*

The farmer women clean the exterior of buildings with warm water and grey soap (sometimes washing powder) mixed in it, in a 1:5 ratio. They do not use any bleach. They use brushes with hard, mostly nylon bristles to scrub. In the past, they used the so-called 'gaździcówka', a brush made of goose feathers.

Cottage cleaning is an activity that requires a lot of strength and precision. Wooden bales, which are not impregnated with any chemical agent, are distinguished by their natural porous structure. The joints of the bales along their entire length are sealed by means of strings and braids made of wood wool. Filling with cotton grass, moss, i.e. traditional methods of filling gaps, was originally done with the use of moss growing on wetlands of Chochółów, and later spruce wood chips. When cleaning cottages, women take care not to damage the moss filling. This would cause moisture to enter inside, resulting in destruction of wood and consequently of the entire house.





*Chochołów cottages are cleaned with warm water and gray soap dissolved in it, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*The houses cleaned every year retain the natural light color of the wood, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

Therefore, the cleaning activity is carried out very quickly and the cleaned part is immediately rinsed with cold water and wiped off with a dry towel, so that the walls cleaned in this way do not absorb too much water. The process of cleaning the house sometimes takes up to few days. The effect is the characteristic light color of the wood. This natural, regular maintenance protects the cottages from pests and algae.

Cottage cleaning is a traditionally feminine activity, always performed when the weather is good, often accompanied by men who set up scaffolding and carry the water for women. Usually this activity is performed by the residents of the house themselves, but if they do not have the strength to do so, they can employ cleaners, so-called *myjocki*.

In two-storey buildings, the ground floor is usually washed, so you can see a slight color difference at different heights.

The tradition of brushing wooden houses, especially those built in the last twenty years, has also been adopted in other localities of Podhale, although it is no longer a collective action, but an individual one, related to the conservation of wooden flat logs, which in this way preserve their natural beauty, like Chochołów cottages.

## OPINION OF THE CONSERVATOR

In the opinion of Mrs Joanna Hogno-Jachymiak from the Office of Monuments Protection of Małopolska Voivodship, Nowy Targ Branch, "The tradition of cottage cleaning has probably been retained in Chochołów as a relic of a more widespread tradition, as compact, wooden buildings have been preserved here. Cleaning in a very good way protected buildings against woodworms (common house borer, house longhorn beetle) and increased fire resistance of buildings. Originally, wooden cottages were cleaned with a mixture of charcoal,



which gave an alkaline reaction that protected the wood from attack by woodworms. Later, when grey soap was already available in the countryside, it was used to clean the flat logs. The grease was treated with sodium or potassium bases and sodium or potassium stearate was obtained. This gave the wood its characteristic whitish color, while increasing its fire resistance. However, there are cases where the preventive effect of this treatment is forgotten and bleaching agents are used, often with an acidic reaction, which is not always beneficial for the wood. It also happens that Fobos, a fire protection agent, is also used for cleaning”.



*The building of the former school in Chochołów, nowadays there is a library, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

## BAFIA COTTAGE

Chochołów was known for its dyeing as well as carving and making musical instruments. Also, stonecutters and potters worked here. Embroidery and braids were made. Traces of these rural “industries” can be found mainly among ethnographic collections and in the historical tradition of individual houses.

In the oldest historic cottage No. 75, built in 1798 (rebuilt in 1889), once belonging to a wealthy farmer, Jan Bafia, in 1978 the Chochołów Uprising Museum was opened, which is a branch of the Tatra Museum in Zakopane.

The museum exhibition resembles a significant episode in the history of Chochołów in 1846, called “poruseństwo”, i.e. the uprising, of Chochołów.



*Bafia cottage - Chochołowskie Uprising Museum, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*Chapel adorning the Bafia cottage - Chochółowskie Uprising Museum,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

The Bafia cottage, typical of the Podhale region, i.e. made of flat logs with log frame structure, has a vestibule, a “black” room, a “white” room, a compartment, and an attic storeroom above the compartment. The interior design combines the history of the uprising with an ethnographic exhibition showing the life of a highlander family in the mid-19th century. In the “black” room, where the everyday life activities of the family were carried out, the equipment necessary for household work was placed. The “white” room, called “paradna” (showy) room, has a festive character. We can see decorative equipment inside it such as furniture, stools, beds, paintings painted on glass and ceramic products. There are boards that make up the historical part of the exhibition inside all rooms of the historic house: a cartouche with a Chochółów calendar and weapons used by the insurgents. The texts, images of documents and engravings show the old traditions of Chochółów. Seweryn Goszczyński, a poet and conspirator associated with the Tetmajer family from Łopuszna, also has his place in the exhibition. The exhibition presents the course of the Kraków Revolution of 1846 along with preparations for the Chochółów Uprising, profiles of its leaders, documents, a list of participants and an epilogue of “poruseństwo” i.e. the repressions of the invader. The exhibition closes with a demonstration of writing - both scientific, as well as poetry and prose - in which the Chochółów Uprising was reflected, as well as contemporary folk sculpture and paintings on glass presenting Uprising themes. The Chochółów Uprising, although it was only an episode, still lives in the consciousness of the residents of the village.

The “poruseństwo” is connected with the legend, still alive in the local tradition, of the shrine of St. John of Nepomuk, located at the entrance to Chochółów from the side of the Black Dunajec. The Saint is said to have stood with “his back turned towards the Dunajec river” with regret that the people living by the river together with the Austrian army came to suppress the independence rush of the Chochółów residents.

## CHAŁUPA Z JEDNEJ JEDLI (COTTAGE FROM ONE FIR)

An interesting monument is also “Chałupa z jednej jedli” (No. 24), built in 1864 by its founder Andrzej Kois. It is a typical example of Podhale architecture, especially because of the technical and carpentry solution typical for Chochołów homesteads. The building has outstanding historical and ethnographic values. It is a wide-front cottage, with a single row of rooms, with log walls, with a living area and utility facilities placed together as one space<sup>1</sup>. According to local tradition, the house was built from one fir trunk, cut down on the Ostrysz, a hill nearby Chochołów. The logs are impressive in size, their width reaches 70 cm, which means that the log construction is only four tie beams. The skids are facing the oval side outwards. The building was erected on a rectangular plan, on a stone, on a base that is almost invisible from under the foundation. The joints were filled with moss.



*Chałupa z jednej jedli (cottage from one fir),  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

Only the hallway with the room has survived to this day. In the front wall there are two three-winged, three-parted windows, the doors with a semi-circular pattern were reinforced with small angle ties. In the room below the wooden ceiling one can see a cross beam, decorated with rosette patterns, dated 1864. In the corner of the room there is a brick kitchen stove, painted white and beige. To the eastern wall of the chamber, a farming section, a threshing floor and a stable were added. According to the archival photography, the building was left without the farming section in 1960.

## OTHER STRUCTURES

The Błaszyński homestead (No. 4) is also interesting, as well as the “organistówka” (residence for parish’s workers), traditionally associated with the figure of Jan Kanty Andrusikiewicz. It is also worth to mention the private Regional House of Chochołów sculptor, Jan Zięder, with a beautifully furnished interior in Podhale region design, with a centrally located hallway, separating the former white room from the black one, connected with the compartment.

<sup>1</sup> H. Pieńkowska, *Drogami skalnej ziemi - podtatrzarska włóczęga krajoznawcza*, Wydawnictwo Literackie 1956, p. 68-69.

In October 2018, the Centre of Natural Heritage - Peatland Museum was opened in the village. It is located in a historic wooden building from the late 18th and early 19th century.

A valuable monument of religious architecture in Chochółów is the parish church of St. Jack - made of bricks, erected in the years 1853-1866 in the neo-Gothic style, according to Feliks Księżarski's design. The church was erected in the place of the previous, wooden church from the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The beautiful tradition of wooden construction in the Podhale region is still alive and continues to this day. The village is considered to be an important center of folklore, with popular wood and metal decoration, as well as glass painting and embroidery. Since 2017, Chochółów has hosted the International Carpenter's Fair and Roofers' Fair, which promote the old style of wooden folk architecture and modern architectural solutions in this area.



# MAKING HARVEST WREATHS

The harvest festival, formerly referred to as *wieniec* (wreath) or *okrężne*, is the celebration of the year-long effort of farmers and villagers<sup>1</sup>. The harvest festival in Małopolska and other regions of the country takes place at the end of August or the beginning of September, although it is customary for the harvest to end before the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary if the weather is good. It was commonly said that on the “Day of the Assumption the harvest ends”.

## HISTORY

In Poland, the harvest festival has been celebrated since the 16th century. The landlords arranged it for the harvesters as a reward for their work. The celebrations did not lack archaic elements, derived from old Slavic rituals. Researchers of folk culture: Oskar Kolberg, Zygmunt Gloger, as well as well-known writers and authors, such as Ignacy Krasicki and Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, saw traces of the Slavic holiday, originally associated with the cult of trees and plants, falling on the autumn equinox on September 23. People thanked the gods for the harvest, asking for the harvest for the following year. Traces of archaic vegetation and agricultural rituals have been preserved in the harvest festival ritual, related to, among others, the last bunch, tuft or strip of unharvested grain left in the field. Uncut ears were called quail or beard in particular regions of Poland, and popularly goat in Małopolska. They were believed to have an extraordinary power to maintain the continuity of the plants' vegetation.



*On the way to the harvest festival, 1980s, photo by Stanisław Wierzbicki*



*Children with a harvest festival wreath, 1980s, photo by Stanisław Wierzbicki*

<sup>1</sup> See: A. Zadrożyńska, *Powtarzać czas początku, part I O świętowaniu dorocznych świąt w Polsce*, Warszawa 1985.



*An inseparable attribute of a harvest wreath is bread baked from new grain, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*The traditional harvest festival wreath had to contain the undisturbed ears of grains of all cultivated grains, e.g. rye, wheat, barley and oats, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

## REGIONAL HABITS

The inseparable attribute of the harvest festival was a wreath with bread baked from new grain to ensure fertility and wealth for the people.

The wreath was popularly called harvest. Traditional wreath-making was a female activity. Usually the best women reapers wove it. The wreaths took different shapes and sizes depending on the region, and sometimes of the town itself. Sometimes the wreaths were only ears cut off from the field, decorated with ribbons or decorated with wild flowers. The traditional harvest festival wreath had to include undisturbed ears from all cultivated cereals, e.g. rye, wheat, barley and oats. Also, rowan berries, apples, vegetables and flowers were added as decorations. With time, the wreaths began to take on more and more complex forms, decorated with flowers and ribbons of decorative tissue paper. In Małopolska, traditional harvest wreaths are greeted on wooden or wicker rims, giving them the shape of a so-called Hungarian crown or a flat circle with concentric circles or empty inside (depending on the region). There were also harvest wreaths called straight wreaths (wove for the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs on 15 August) in the shape of bunches composed of ears of cereals, combined with herbs and flowers, in which vegetables were also put on a stick: potatoes, carrots, poppy heads and fruits - apples. Such arrangements were also decorated with colorful ribbons, nuts wrapped in golden paper and tissue paper flowers.

Old harvest habits are described by J. Chociszewski in "Małowniczy opis Polski" ("Vivid description of Poland"):

"The most wonderful is the wieniec (i.e. harvest festival), that is okrężne, in Kraków and Sandomierz. When the harvest is about to end, the girls not only weave a wreath of wheat and other grain, but also add apples, nuts, flowers, ribbons and other shiny items. In the area around Kraków, the wreath takes the form of a crown with 4 or more arches, i.e. braids that rise upwards, decorated at the top with a small wreath.



*Making a traditional harvest wreath (Jan Skórka, Lucyna Skórka, Beata Frysztak from Poręba Radlna),  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*Traditional harvest wreath in the shape of a crown, made by a wreath group from Poręba Radlna. This wreath took first place in the category of traditional wreaths during the Harvest Festival of the Małopolska Voivodship in Zakliczyn in 2019 and represented Małopolska at the Presidential Harvest Festival in Spała, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

The girl who was the first to reap and pillage, called the leader, puts this corn crown on her head and goes forward to the church, where she lays a wreath on the altar. After the service, the leader puts a wreath on her head again and takes it to the mayor, where it is placed and covered on a special table. When it was known from the outdoor that landlords are waiting, the whole group gathers and, amidst the sounds of music and joyful singing, walks solemnly and a maiden with a wreath walks in the lead. In some areas, a rooster who ate the grain or fluttered his wings was gently tied on top of the wreath. There is an heir and an heiress with children and relatives waiting outside. One of the oldest villagers of the group speaks to people tenderly, then the landlord and lady receive a wreath,





Today's wreaths refer to the crown wreath that the leader used to wear on her head, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

which they usually hang in the hallway, where it hangs for a whole year until the next harvest”<sup>2</sup>.

After passing the wreath, as J. Chociszewski writes, there was a great event in which everyone participated.

In the past, in the case of the Babia Góra Highlanders, the harvest ending ceremony was called *hołdnos* or *hałdamas*. Its symbol was a modest wreath or sheaf decorated with ribbons and wild flowers. The traditional form of the wreath in the vicinity of Zawoja is also a small crown, formerly mainly made of oat - a cereal that has ripened the latest. However, the oldest form in this region is a wreath of cereals and herbs placed on wooden rakes<sup>3</sup>.

*Hołdymas* is the name of the harvest festival in Podhale. The word more broadly means the end of field work. For thirty-two years now, on the first Sunday of September, the Podhale Harvest Festival has been held in Ludźmierz, combined with the indulgence feast in celebration of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Mother of God of the Harvest, which is attended annually by representations of highlanders with wreaths from all over Podhale, Spisz and Orawa.

2 J. Chociszewski, *Małowniczy opis Polski czyli geografia ojczystego kraju z mapką i licznymi rycinami*, Warszawa 1890, p. 116.

3 See: U. Janicka-Krzywda, *Obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Babiogórskich*, U. Janicka-Krzywda (ed.), Kraków 2010.





Harvest wreath typical for the Babia Góra Highlanders, photo by Piotr Pochopień



A procession of harvest wreaths at the wooden church of the Apostles Saint Peter and Paul in Lachowice, photo by Renata Burdyl

In the vicinity of Krzeczów, Łętownia or Tenczyn (as well as in other villages inhabited by the Kliszczacy Highlanders), after mowing the grain, the girls wove a small oat wreath in the shape of a loaf of bread. They decorated it with ribbons and flowers (poppies, camomile) and carried it to the householders, where they nailed it or hung it over the house's front door<sup>4</sup>.



A wreath from Tenczyn in the shape of a circle, made of oats, photo by Barbara Woźniak

<sup>4</sup> Monografia Powiatu Myślenickiego, vol. II Kultura ludowa, developed by M. Brelewska-Polowa, p. 280.

This beautiful custom is recalled by Łucja Druzgała from the Regional Team Toporzenie from Tenczyn:

"The harvest is the crowning of a farmer's hardship. The place for the grain and the barns had to be prepared so that the new harvest could be put there. You had to stick well and sharpen the scythes and sickles so they could reap the grain well. During the interwar period, grain in Tenczyn, Krzeczów or Łętownia was cut with a scythe and a sickle. Every ear that was left in the field was gathered so that nothing was wasted. People had great respect for bread and it was common to say that when a slice of bread falls, one needs to pick it up and kiss it. They worked from dawn to dusk, they were cutting with their sickles grain by grain, and the fields seemed not to end, it was a tedious work. During the harvest, the neighbor's help was very valuable, and such help the word "God bless you" was usually a way of thanking. At the end of the harvest, the richer hosts allowed the wreath to be woven; for this purpose, a few oat patches were always left (because the wreath was only woven from oats in our area), not always very rich and usually left in the field near the forest. After an earlier agreement, the maids would enter the field, asking the farmer for permission to weave the wreath. Each of the harvesters (this is how the women reapers were called) occupied their part of the field for harvesting. Before the grain was harvested, they made the sign of the cross and started to work. When women and maids were harvesting, they joked, talked about who had a boyfriend, whether he was pretty, whether he was ugly, whether he was rich or poor, when they were at the market square and what they bought. At noon they sang "Angelus" together, they ate lunch brought by the hostess. During this work, from time to time one could hear "God bless", from shepherds chasing cattle and sheep out to the pasture, as well as from others who went to work in the field. They were also singing chants when they were harvesting:

*Jesus Christ  
be praised  
May our wrath make people dazed.*

When the grain was harvested, girls began to weave one wreath together. The shape of the wreath was round. Its frame was either a string, or some easily bent branch (lyska) They sang:

*We have made a wreath  
in the forest in a clearing  
and one to whom it was promised  
shall be the one receiving*

*We have asked a nightingale  
sitting on a branch  
to help us and carry  
our wreath*

*The bird burst out with laughter  
so much the branch sways after  
and its voice echoes in the forest  
that he'll help carry the wreath.*

When the weaving was over, the women would choose one maiden and give her a wreath to carry. They always went in a group so that the wreath was always inside. In front of the girls, there was always a girl or a woman in a pinafore under which she had herbs to confuse the boys, so that it would not be known which one of the women had a real wreath. The girls would go with the wreath from time to time and sing chants they had arranged while they were harvesting and weaving the wreath.

*Oh, wreath made of oats  
with a ribbon wrapped flair  
be strong, be strong  
do not to fall somewhere.*

*We have made a wreath  
for little Józsuś  
and in return he will  
give us vodka in a wooden bucket*

*Before he comes here  
before he comes  
his vodka will spill out  
from the wooden bucket*

*Oh, our God,  
although it is cold  
please save it  
from any thief*

*Oh, you thief  
go to sleep, go to sleep  
cause I will not let you  
take my wreath away.*

It was the girls' duty to protect the wreath from the boys who often waited in the bushes and who tried to take it away from them at any price.

*Our hostess, please come out  
and stand by the plum tree  
so you could  
take the wreath from us with glee*

After bringing the wreath to the host's house, they announced that they had brought it and handed it over to the housekeeper with the words:

*we have made a wreath  
of oats, not wheat  
it will look beautifully  
in this new guest room*

*And you, our hostess  
put the nail in the wall  
and hang on it  
this wreath made of oats.*

After taking the wreath, the host hung it in an honourable place, in the room, i.e. a guest room, and the host offered everything according to the saying: my home is your home, there were yeast cake and, of course, honey vodka. Music was played and loud fun continued until dawn. It was a sign that the harvest was over in this house. Carrying such a simple wreath was always accompanied by joy and singing.

*Our dear host  
The harvest is over  
Take from us this wreath  
we have made ourselves*

*We will hang it for you  
In the hall above the door  
And may God give you  
a good harvest as your reward*

*We will leave the wreath  
But it is not for free  
You must treat us to  
a throat remedy*

*Then, just after work  
Once the harvest ends  
The host treated us to  
A whole barrel of beer"<sup>5</sup>.*



Harvest festival in Piwniczna, photo by Kamil Bańkowski

5 A. Kiełbus, *Tak się żyło w Trzebuni między wojnami*, in: *Trzebunianie...o sobie. Życie, ludzie, kultura, historia*, Pcim 2004, p. 132.



In Dziekanowice near Kraków three kinds of wreath were made: one was given to the church, the other, made of wheat, was given to the housekeeper and the third, made of oats, to the host.

In the case of the Nowy Sącz Highlanders, traditional wreaths took various shapes - in the case of the White Highlanders - from a bundle decorated with tissue paper flowers and ribbons to the shape of a flat circle in the form of concentric circles made of grain and flowers, decorated with ribbons<sup>6</sup>. The Black Highlanders thanked for their gifts on September 8th, on the feast of Our Lady of the Seeds, weaving wreaths<sup>7</sup>.

An interesting custom existed in Stróża near Myślenice, where before the outbreak of World War II the so-called "potato wreath" was made. It was made of blackthorn, on the spikes of which potatoes were stuck. Such compositions were decorated with flowers and ribbons<sup>8</sup>.

The harvest festival in all regions of Małopolska was on the one hand a time of thanks, full of symbolic and magical behaviors and attributes, and on the other hand a time of fun and feasting. An important part of them were songs (chants), which were both lyrical stories and songs (sometimes created while waiting), which in a satirical, and quite often bawdy way described the surrounding world. It is essential that the sung songs include the character of the host, the landlord, and sometimes his family.

And so the following was sung in Zawoja and its surroundings:

*To the crossroads, reapers, to the crossroads  
Our leader is already waiting there for us.  
Cut, my little reaper,  
With your tiny hands, you were left behind.  
Although I'm behind, I will not cry now,  
As the crying would cause a headache.  
Cut, my little reaper,  
not much is left, and the evening comes.  
Reap, girls, do not mind the boys,  
you will take your boys when you cut rye.*

*Please, our landholder, give us more freedom  
Do not let your people work like horses.  
So the landholder leaves us free, leaves us free  
and he feels pity for us, for us.  
Oh, our falcon, fly away,*

6 M. Kroh, *Zwyczaje i obrzędy doroczne*, in: *Kultura ludowa Górali Sądeckich od Kamienicy, Łącka i Jazowska*, K. Ceklarz, M. Kroh (ed.), Kraków 2016.

7 See: W. Łomnicka-Dulak, *Czarni Górale z Piwnicznej w piśmiennictwie i wspomnieniach*, „Almanach Muszyny”, 15th Jubilee Annual, 2005.

8 *Monografia Powiatu Myślenickiego...*, p. 282.

*Or we won't go to the field, to the field.*

*Oh, the birds are flying, in the sky, in the sky,  
And we're working hard for bread, for bread.*

*Stay, stay here our little skylark,*

*We make wreath today.*

*The sun has gone down, the summer is gone,  
Scythes and sickles have cut, and the rakes have raked,  
all that grew in the field.*

*If anything has grown,  
Even this golden oat, on  
the stony ground  
we will survive.*

*The men who cut oats on the field  
Little by little, each blade, each ear  
Left some to make a wreath.*

*The women who raked oats on the field,  
Gathered little by little, each blade, each ear  
And made a wreath from it.*

*They walked and walked and cut oats  
The girl cut it, by day, in the sunlight,  
In the sunlight.*

*Hey, our landholder's gate is so wide,  
When we come to him, it opens on its own.  
And our landholder steps on oaken floor,  
He welcomes his guests who came in crowds.  
And our landholder has a festive coat,  
Whereas his neighbours' coat is torn.  
There are no seeds, only empty pods,  
Our landholder has shoes that are new.  
Oh, we cut as many bundles as stars in the sky,  
We cut up to the road, now we will have a meal.*

*We all sang a little bit today,  
Please forgive our errors that left you offended.  
This summer gave us the richest crops,  
What was earlier on the field, now we keep in the shed.  
We are here today to sing and dance,  
So the landholders should treat us to something good*

*John from the hill, Wojtek from behind the creek,  
You have cut and brought grain, now your eyes are sparkling.  
Oh, your eyes are sparkling, the harvest feast is rich,  
God, give us a full basket and let us take some to the bag  
In the Zawoja land, in Brzyska, there is a stoned stubble,  
And so the father's moccasins are the best present  
Oh, father's moccasins and embroidered trousers,  
Treat us in return, to some tasty vodka.*

*Our dearest lady, do not hide from us  
Cause we see you through the window glass.  
Through the window glass, through the door glass*

*Our dearest lady, do not hide from us.  
Do not hide from us, as we did not hide,  
We have brought all grain to put it the barns.  
We carried it slowly so as not to pour it out,  
So that the granary was full of grain.  
We finished our work, the harvest is over  
Please give us now a full barrel of beer.  
Full barrel of beer and also some mead  
Give it to us in the garden now.*

*(Dańczyk Józef 1918  
Zawoja – Przysłop 1974)*



*Harvest wreath, Sanka, Chrzanów County, 1927, author unknown, Inv. No III/4892/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

In Skomielna Czarna, among others, the following was sung:

*We have cut oats  
We have made a wreath  
We only haven't had  
a beer yet.*

In Wiśniowa, the harvest festival song determined the shape of the wreath, which was given to the landlady for luck.

*We have made a wreath  
It is round, it is round  
To bring our hostess  
good luck, good luck*

In the case of the White Highlanders (from Łącko and Kamienica), when the last field was cut, two harvesters went down from the field and made a wreath of grain called

ograbek, which they decorated with ribbons and tissue paper flowers made earlier in the house. Carrying a wreath made, they sang:

*Get up, wreath, get up, you've been laying down enough,  
your feet are bound, how then will you go.  
See outside, landholder, in a white festive pants,  
We carry the wreath wrapped with red ribbons  
Our hostess' coffee boiled over,  
since she stared at us through the window.  
We walk, we walk from the hill near the stream,  
We carry the wreath for our young hostess.*

The beautiful tradition of making harvest wreaths is a difficult field of creativity, requiring patience, proper preparation and knowledge of tradition. In the villages of Małopolska it is still alive and handed down from generation to generation, although over the years it has evolved, taking on new, sometimes fancy forms, often differing from traditional ones. In modern designs, for example, wood is replaced by metal rods (rims), often welded in order to be able to hold the weight of fancy compositions. At present, the most common harvest wreaths are made by the Association of Country Women.



Harvest festivities are usually accompanied by competitions for the most beautiful wreath. According to studies, the category of contemporary wreath often appears in these competitions. This type of wreaths take very different shapes and forms, sometimes even sculptures



Harvest Festival of the Małopolska Voivodship in Zakliczyn, 2019,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization





Modern wreath from Gruszów,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



Modern wreath from Sieciechowice (this wreath took first place in the category of modern wreaths during the Harvest Festival of the Małopolska Voivodship in Zakliczyn in 2019, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization)

(e.g. angels, John Paul II, harvesters, historical and legendary figures), complex constructions with hay wagon and even tractors, genre scenes also appear. New materials and ways of joining elements are also being introduced.

The ethnographic literature devoted to the Lemkos mention harvest rituals very rarely, which is probably connected with strongly rooted pastoral traditions. Originally, the most important occupation among the Lemkos was husbandry. Soil cultivation began to develop along with settling in the “lower and middle slope areas”<sup>9</sup>. Before the scythe appeared, the grain was cut by women only with hooks. An interesting harvesting custom is described by M. Kawa: “When the sheaves are brought to the barn, the host or his son must walk around throwing fine sand where the grain is to be laid. This is to protect them from rodents”<sup>10</sup>.

9 R. Reinfuss, *Śladami Łemków*, Warszawa 1990, p. 28.

10 M. Kawa, *Reprezentacyjny zespół artystyczny Łemków w Polsce „Łemkowyna”*. Rys Historyczny, master's thesis written under the guidance of prof. dr L. Mazepa, Cieszyn 1996, p. 29 (author's archive).

According to studies and literature, the harvest festival and the custom of weaving harvest wreaths associated with the festival is not part of the traditional culture of the Lemkos, both Orthodox and Greek-Catholic. Participation in the harvest festival was accepted from the Polish population and is associated with the celebration of usually municipal or district harvest festivals.

To conclude the reflections on harvest festival traditions, we should also mention the so-called Reymont Harvest Festival in Wierzchosławice. In 1925 Wincenty Witos invited farmers from all over Poland to Wierzchosławice near Tarnów, as well as the Nobel Prize winner Władysław Reymont. The celebrations took place on 15 and 16 August in a large field in Wierzchosławice forest and became an important folk and patriotic event. Since 1980, the so-called Reymont Harvest Festival has been organized every five years to commemorate this event.

In many municipalities of Małopolska the harvest festival is a permanent element of the calendar of local holidays and celebrations, and one of their most important elements is the harvest festival wreath competitions.

# MAKING BUNCHES OF FLOWERS FOR THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF THE HERBS

The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which falls on 15 August, in Polish folk tradition is called the Feast of Our Lady of the Herbs or Our Lady of the Herbs. This holiday was celebrated in Palestine and Syria at the beginning of the 6th century as the end of the earthly life of the Mother of God and was called the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Feast of the Assumption was introduced to the liturgy of the Eastern churches in the 6th century and the Western churches in the 7th century, but only recently, in 1950, Pope Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which said that it took place in three phases: dormition, assumption into heaven with soul and body and coronation in heaven.



*Bas-relief depicting the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Saint Philip and Jacob Church in Sękowa, photo by Kamil Bańkowski*



The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was not described in the Holy Scriptures, and we only learn about this event from apocrypha - texts related to the Bible, but not included in it. One of them is the book created in the 4th century under various titles: *Transitus* (Passage) or *Liber de dormitione Beatae Mariae Virginis* (Book on the Dormitory of Blessed Virgin Mary). It became very popular, and later accepted as the truth, especially because it was used in the homilies of, among others, St. John of Damascus and St. Germanus of Constantinople<sup>1</sup>. The conviction that the passage to Heaven of the Mother of Jesus could not lead through the gate of death was also proclaimed by St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great, St. Bridget or St. Bernard of Siena. Paintings for the apocrypha of the Virgin Mary were introduced in Europe by Giotto di Bondone in the church of St. Francis in Assisi and in the Scrovegni chapel in Padua<sup>2</sup>.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is known in Polish folk culture as the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs, Flowers or Rye. This ceremony in the Catholic Church falls on August 15, that is, during the period of greatest flowering of herbs, flowers, fruit and cereals. The Mother of God was and is in the folk tradition the patron of this abundance as the one who gave birth to the most perfect ripe fruit - Jesus Christ: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:42).



Traditional herbal bouquets, Raclawice (Jerzmanowice-Przegonia commune),  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

1 Ks. W. Smoleń, *Uroczystość Wniebowzięcia Najświętszej Marii Panny (15 VIII)*, w: *Ilustracje święt kościelnych w polskiej sztuce*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL-u 1987, s. 237.

2 Ibidem, p. 238.

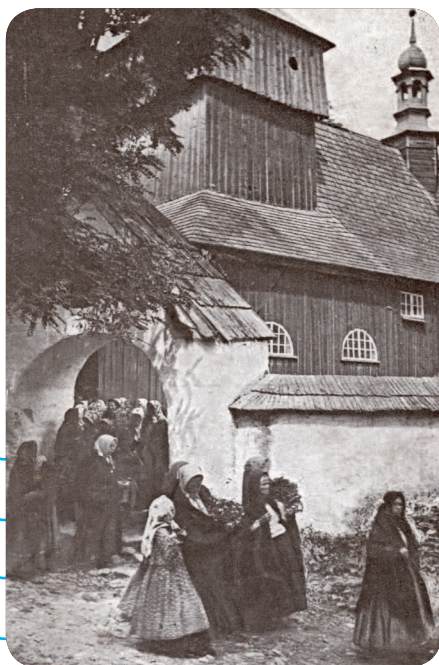


# HERBAL BUNCHES

The beginnings of blessing herbs on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary date back to the 10th century.

Zygmunt Gloger writes about this custom:

"August 15 is the day of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the oldest of all feasts in honour of the Mother of God, since it dates back to the first centuries of Christianity and is always solemnly celebrated. With this church celebration, which in the past had various names, such as Death, Rest, Dormition and finally the Assumption, the ancient custom in our country is connected, involving blessing field herbs, which village girls, having collected the previous day, bring to the churches to be blessed by the priest in front of the great altar. So, after the octave of Corpus Christi, this is the second day of the year for the blessing the herbs and field flowers"<sup>3</sup>.



*The Feast of Our Lady of the Herbs, Dobra, Limanowa County, author unknown, Inv. No III/5097/F, Photo from the collection of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków*

Oskar Kolberg also described the tradition on the example of the Kraków Region:

"On the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady of the Herbs (15 August), each housekeeper brings to the church sheaves of garden and field (meadow) herbs then flourishing: poppy, peony, sage, thyme, tansy, dill, caraway, millet, sorrel, hypericum, marron, henbane, southernwood, rosemary, mint, melissa, larger flowers e.g. georgia, bells, etc. used for cattle, believing honestly that the priest's blessing increases their healing and conservative power. When the crowd of housewives with those bunches gathers, the priest goes out before the service to the church cemetery, where the women kneel down, holding each of their bunches, and after praying and sprinkling the herbs with holy water, he returns to the church. These herbs are kept in the joists, on the window, behind the paintings, etc. Some of them are later, if necessary, thrown into boiling water which, when cooled or after adding cold water, together with wheat bran or barley, may be drunk by the cattle for several days, namely by the cows after they have been calved"<sup>4</sup>.

And today, all herbs and flowers on the Wooden Architecture Route are still being blessed.

3 Z. Gloger, *Rok Polski w Życiu, Tradycji i Pieśni*, Warszawa 1900, s. 323-324.

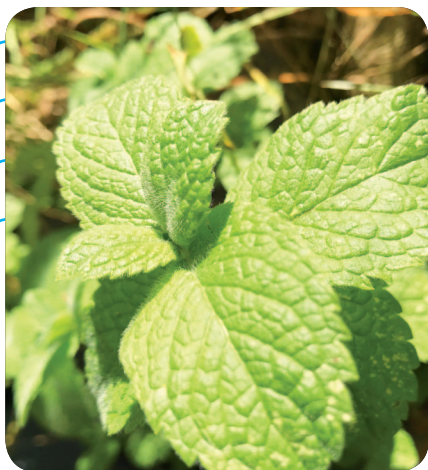
4 O. Kolberg, *Krakowskie*, cz. I, Wrocław-Poznań 1962, s. 309-310.

## COMPOSITION OF THE BUNCHES

The feast of August 15 was also celebrated in the past as the day of Our Lady of the Harvest Festival, thus grain, fruits and vegetables were also brought to be blessed. It was a way of thanking Mary for looking after the crop and watching over the hard work on the land. Plants have been and are still blessed most often in the form of bunches or wreaths. Their composition depended on the region, the plants grown and occurring in the area. According to the sources, the basis was made up of four components: herbs, cereals, fruits and vegetables, although there were probably various modifications and limitations, such as the lack of fodder plants in bunches. Some sources say that the bunch should contain from 7 to 77 different herbs and plants, which can probably be associated with the symbolism of number 7 in the Old Testament.

The bunch of the Babia Góra Highlanders was composed of “plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum*), common mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*), cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), garlic (*Allium*), St. John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), lovage (*Levisticum officinale*), poppy (*Papaver rhoas*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), larch (*Larix europea*), marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), sage (*Salvia officinalis*), sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), sometimes gentian (*Gentiana lutea*); and even vegetables like onions, carrots or dill”<sup>5</sup>.

In the case of the Kliszczacy Highlanders, the bunches are quite often placed on a cabbage leaf. On the other hand, in the Nowy Sącz Highlanders’ bunch, or “herbs”, there should be “grain - a few culms with an ear of each kind (wheat, oats, rye and others), a cabbage leaf, a beet leaf, potato leaves, flowering peas, poppy, various herbs: St. John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum* L.), pigweed (*Chenopodium album*



Mint, photo by Barbara Woźniak



Marigold, photo by Barbara Woźniak

5 U. Janicka-Krzywda, *Obrzędy doroczne*, w: *Kultura ludowa Górali Babiogórskich*, U. Janicka-Krzywda (red.), Kraków 2010, s. 290.

L.), thyme, mint, melissa, wormwood, rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), tansy, tree or shrub twigs: elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L.), linden (*Tilia europaea* L.)<sup>6</sup>. Apples stuck on a stick, and even pears and plums are also often added.

According to the studies carried out, grain also appears in the bunches in Barwałd Dolny, Marcyporęba and Grojec. One of the inhabitants of Lanckorona says that the 'boxwood, carrot, apple, fern flowers' should be placed in the wreath<sup>7</sup>.

The names of many herbs are associated with the Holy Family and the figures of various saints. In the dialect of folklore, mugwort is called literally a God's tree or holy herb, St. John's wort is called a cross herb, the bell of the Virgin Mary or the herb of St. John. Most plant names are associated with the person of Our Lady, e.g. fringed willowherb (*Epilobium adenocaulon*) is Our Lady's herb, marsh gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) is Our Lady's dress or sleeves, great mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) is Our Lady's braids.

The prepared bunches were sometimes, according to the Franciscans, "tied with a linden bast - the linden has always been associated with the Virgin Mary, because it was in this tree that Mary appeared most often"<sup>8</sup>.

## CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

The eve of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was an important ritual in the traditional folk culture of Małopolska. The women were not allowed to work in the field on that day, and for breaking this ban there was a penalty of being strangled by snakes<sup>9</sup>.

Preparation of the bunch from the herbs was carried out according to strict rules and was a typical female activity in all regions under study.

A beautiful and still cultivated in traditional communities custom of preparing such a bunch together with its application was described by Mrs. Łucja Druzgała from Toporzanie Team from Tenczyn: "Summer has come, and with it days of hard work on the field. All the efforts that man has made to secure his harvest have been rewarded, the land has yielded. And at that time, man appealed to the supernatural forces, trusting his affairs to the Mother of God, the Protectress of humans' daily life. On the day of Our Lady of the Herbs - August 15 - herbs were blessed. Previously, they were collected by women in the forests, on meadows, in the copper fields, near the house and in the gardens. When they walked and picked them, every blade of grass cried out: Come and take me. No rowan berry was worn for the blessings, because Judas hung himself on the rowan tree. The collected herbs were tied in small bundles, in which, in the center, there was an apple put on a stick. The herbs were left to dry, e.g. on

6 M. Kroh, *Zwyczaj i obrzędy doroczne*, w: *Kultura ludowa Górali Sądeckich od Kamienicy, Łącka i Jazowska*, K. Ceklarz i M. Kroh (red.), Kraków 2016.

7 A woman, resident of Lanckorona (Roman Catholic), 2019.

8 As cited in: <https://www.franciszkanie.pl/artykuly/matka-boza-zielna>

9 U. Janicka-Krzywda, *Obrzędy doroczne...*, s. 290.

the half above the door, on hives or in an apple tree, then taken to the attic and used to make a brew or to fumigate people and animals for medicinal purposes (which was done in Tenczyn, Krzeczów or Łętownia on the first Friday of the month). An infusion of herbs was given to cows after calving (the cows after calving were allowed to have boiled swedes). During the construction of the house, blessed herbs were laid in the first corner. In Tenczyn, before the first ploughing, horses were fumigated three times with seven types of herbs, and then the burnt herbs were laid under the first field strip. Also, before the carter started, he had to make a sign of the cross in front of the horses with a whip to protect them from the evil spell. Before every field work, one had to cross oneself"<sup>10</sup>.



*A herbal bouquet typical for Krzeczów, Tenczyn, Łętownia, Lachowice, Zawoja, photo by Barbara Woźniak*

The collection of herbs alone was probably accompanied by various beliefs, and one of them is described by B. Tępką: "When women collect herbs for blessing on the day of Our Lady of the Herbs and one takes away herbs from the other, or also in the church when they hold them for blessing, they believe that she has taken away milk and butter from the cows, thus they also have suspicion of such a woman, and they consider her a witch"<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> based on an interview, Tenczyn 2019.

<sup>11</sup> B. Tępką, *Materiały etnograficzne z Sidziny, pow. Sucha (opowiadania, obrzędy Bożego Narodzenia, przesady)*, rkps. Mnp., end of 20th century, sheet: 4, Archives of Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków, inv. No. I/294 (from the collections of Eugeniusz Janota and Bronisław Gustowicz).





*A herbal bouquet, Sucha Beskidzka 2008, photo by Anna Spyrzyńska*

Blessed herbs - as it is still believed today - have a healing and even magical power. They were commonly used in folk medicine, therefore, as written by D. Tylkowa, it is important to "collect herbs dry, not wetted by rain<sup>12</sup>." A decoction of blessed herbs and plants was given to humans and animals. It was widely believed that blessed bunches prevented all evil forces, protected the house from storms and gales. That is why they were carefully stored throughout the year, they were, among others, hung on the walls, under the ceiling, or put behind the sacred paintings. They have been used to decorate houses and animals in all mountain regions. And so the Highlanders of Nowy Sącz fumigated their cattle "in case of sickness, after calving, against the magic, at the first grazing and when storm was coming, when it was far away, because when it was close, it would not help any more. But you have to believe it.<sup>13</sup>" The Kliszczak Highlanders still respect the custom of sticking a bunch right after coming from the church into a cabbage bed. The words are spoken: "grow you little cabbage heads for the Blessed Virgin.<sup>14</sup>" In houses where no cabbage is planted, a bunch is left in places where vegetables or strawberries are grown.

It is also an interesting custom to place herbs in the first corners during the construction of houses, on the so called "landings", to protect the residents from misfortune<sup>15</sup>. In the past, herbs from bunches were also placed in the cradle of a newborn baby to protect it from evil, and in the coffin of the deceased person.

<sup>12</sup> D. Tylkowa, *Medycyna ludowa w kulturze wsi Karpat Polskich*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź 1989, s. 49.

<sup>13</sup> M. Kroh, *Zwyczaj i obrzędy doroczne...*, s. 404.

<sup>14</sup> As cited in: A. Grochal, *Obrzędy doroczne*, w: *Kultura ludowa Górali Kliszczackich*, J. Ceklarz, J. Maślowiec (red.), Kraków 2015, and on the basis of own research.

<sup>15</sup> *Monografia powiatu myślenickiego*, t. II *Kultura ludowa*, s. 280.

Grains from the ears of the blessed bunch were added to the cereal to be sown in order to ensure the harvest and protect the crops from damage caused by storm and hail.

The herbs blessed were not to be destroyed under any circumstances. The dried bunches had to be burned before blessing of the next ones, because the blessed things could not be thrown out.

In Małopolska, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is the most celebrated in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, where the crowds of pilgrims have their bunches blessed, with marigolds, poppies, cornflowers, thyme, mint, wormwood, wheat, rye, barley and oats. Harvest wreaths are also blessed on this day. The service of Our Lady's Dormition, called "funeral", takes place every year in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska with thousands of pilgrims. The assists, orchestras and pilgrims in folk costumes from the whole region wander in a colorful procession on the so-called "paths of Our Lady". According to tradition, young bachelors and maids carry a coffin with the statue of the Dormition of Mary to the church of the Sepulchre of Our Lady, more than 3 km away, where the procession usually ends. The final element of the service is a procession with the statue of Assumed Virgin Mary on Rajski Square, in front of the Calvary Basilica.



*Participants of the workshop of making bouquets for the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs, organized by the Małopolska Tourist Organisation in Raclawice, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

There is another period in the Polish folklore tradition when flowers and herbs are blessed. It is the octave of Corpus Christi. The wreaths blessed are also believed to have an extraordinary power. They have been, and occasionally still are used, to treat various human (throat, teeth) and cattle diseases. In one of the families on the border of Stryżawa and Lachowice a custom is still cultivated, which in a way combines all the blessed things described here (water, decorative palm, wreath) in religious rituals. This custom consists in putting under the first strip of the plowed field where the grain is to be sown (formerly usually oats), a part of the wreath blessed in the octave of Corpus Christi, a part of the palm and the so-called “seedlings” (it is made on Christmas Eve: “a baked bread is taken, into which the wafer is put, everything is tied with straw and put under the Christmas tree”) and water is poured under this first field strip<sup>16</sup>.

The current form of the bunches is very different from that blessed before World War II. At this point, attention should also be paid to the importance attributed to the bunches currently created in comparison with those recorded as early as in the 19th century literature. Nowadays, they are only symbolic in nature to a large extent. Nevertheless, the blessing of the herbs is one of the most alive of all the traditions studied in the spring-summer annual cycle. Nowadays, more and more often, competitions for the most beautiful herbal bunch as well as workshops for arranging such bunches are organized. An interesting initiative is, for example, the “Miraculous Power of Bunches”, an event organized by the Heritage Institute in Kraków and in the Podstolice region. Its most important part is a competition for the most beautiful herbal bunch. In 2019, as many as 158 bunches were presented in the capital of Małopolska alone! One could also participate in workshops, not only on the topic of making the bunches, but also, among others, creating herbaria.

## EASTERN ORTHODOX AND GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the Eastern Church, the feast of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary completes the cycle of twelve great celebrations, each of which expresses a different truth about the divine plan for the salvation of humanity. According to the Julian calendar, it is celebrated on August 28. It ends the Orthodox liturgical year, which begins on September 1. Orthodox believers prepare for the holiday by a harsh fast called “uspienski” which lasts for two weeks. Then they celebrate on one day before Christmas and eight days after Christmas.

According to the tradition of the Eastern Church, after the Ascension of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit, the apostles preached the Gospel in various parts of the world. Mary also moved a lot, but her longest journey was in Jerusalem on Mount Sinai. It was there that Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and announced her passing away from the earth. When the day of death came, Mary, surrounded by the apostles, saw the Christ come to take her to heaven. She was then to say, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden (Luke 1:46-48).

<sup>16</sup> A woman, resident of Stryżawa (Roman Catholic), 2019.





*Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, workshop of painter (painters) of the icons of the iconostasis of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Polana (near Dobromil), the second half of the 16th century, in the collection of The National Museum in Krakow, photo: Photographic Archive of the National Museum in Krakow*

The Christ took her soul and together they went to heaven. The body of the Mother of God was placed in the tomb at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Three days later, the Apostle Thomas, who did not manage to see her before she died, came to Mary's tomb. He entered the tomb, but there was no body in it, because Mary was resurrected and taken to heaven. The Catholic Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Orthodox Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, although they speak of the same event, describe it in a different way. In the Catholic Church it is said that Our Lady was taken to heaven together with her soul and body, but dogma does not determine whether the Assumption happened after her death or that she did not die. However, the Orthodox Church clearly indicates that Mary died first (dormition), then rose from the dead and finally was taken to heaven. In the theological context, the Dormition of the Mother of God is a universal message for every Christian.

Death does not end human life, but is a rest, a dream, followed by an awakening to new life. The theological aspect of this holiday is beautifully reflected in iconography.



*Tansy, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



*Goldenrod, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



The theological and symbolic icon of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary (which, however, does not represent the very taking of Our Lady to Heaven) presents Mary lying in an open tomb. The apostles stand next to it, and Mary and Jesus stand above the shroud, who speaks: “because the Mother gave me a physical body, now I give her eternal life.” He holds a little girl on his shoulder who symbolizes Mary’s rebirth in eternity.

According to the Eastern tradition, on the day of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, the bunches of the given year’s herbs, cereals and flowers are blessed. As in the folk tradition of Catholics, the bunches consist mainly of plants used to treat people and animals, and are decorated with garden flowers. The most often blessed plants are: rye, oats, wheat and even flax, herbs and medicinal plants: mugwort, wormwood, St. John’s wort, mint, tansy, goldenrod, yarrow<sup>17</sup>, and garden flowers such as: China aster, marigold and dahlia.

Also, among the Lemkos, blessed bunches are believed to have healing and magical power. For this reason, they are also kept all year round, and, according to an inhabitant of Gładyszów, “in the past they were put in behind sacred images (icons)”<sup>18</sup>. A decoction of blessed herbs and plants - identical to the rituals of all highlander groups in the Małopolska region - was drunk by both humans and animals. The Lemkos also put wreaths of dried blessed bunches under the heads of the deceased from their closest family.



*A dried herbal bouquet, photo by Barbara Woźniak*

<sup>17</sup> A woman, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.

<sup>18</sup> A man, resident of Gładyszów (Orthodox), 2019.

## VOCABULARY:

**FLOWERS** - from antiquity through all cultures and religions they symbolized spring, it was a symbol of fragility of all things, youth, beginning, growth and initiation. In the Holy Bible, flowers are an image of the transience of all earthly things and the shortness of human life: "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it(...) but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:6-8).

**GRAINS** - come from the Middle East and Central Asia. They are the finest product of the fields, because they have enormous nutritional values and are the basis of food for millions of people on earth. After many treatments, they become the daily bread. We pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread!" Grains of cereal are a symbol of life, but also of death and resurrection, for the grain, in order to yield a crop, it must die, just as the Christ, in order to carry out the plan of salvation, had to die on the cross. In Christian culture, cereal is therefore a symbol of the Eucharist.

For centuries, grain has been a symbol of abundance and prosperity in many cultures. The ears full of grains that pharaoh dreamt of were the announcement of seven years of harvest. In his teaching, Jesus also used the symbolism of the grain, which meant "God's Word". The farmland is also a symbol of the world, the seeds are the sons of the Kingdom of God, and the weeds are the sons of the Adversary. In the ancient art, harvest, decorations from ears or sheaves symbolized summer in cycles of seasons.

Wheat and barley are the most famous grains found in the Bible.

**WHEAT (triticum)** - a valuable food plant, thanks to its universality, which satisfies the life needs of all creatures. It symbolizes the Christ himself, for the bread we eat every day is made from wheat. In the Gospel of St. John, we read: "I am the bread of life (...) This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." (J 6, 24-50). The very growth of the grain of wheat symbolized the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground (...) For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. (Mark 4:26-28).

**BARLEY (hordeum vulgare)** - it was probably the earliest cereal cultivated by man. It was the basis for feeding the Israelites. In the Holy Land it was valued much more than wheat, it was the food of the poor in particular. It symbolized the Old Testament, but also temporal things, managing them, as well as it was a sign of bodily life.

**SOUTHERNWOOD (Artemisia abrotanum)** - the Polish name of the plant (literally: God's tree) is associated with the fact that the Slavs considered it as "church herb". Since ancient times, magical properties have been assigned to it and



*Southernwood, photo by Barbara Woźniak*

it has been used to create special wreaths and incense, which also had a function of deterring insects. St. Hildegard mentions southernwood as one of the most effective medicinal plants.

Southernwood is a subshrub with dill-like leaves with a strongly spicy smell and bitter taste.

Used in folk medicine: supporting digestion, stimulating appetite, strengthening the body, strengthening the nervous system, anti-inflammatory, anti-fungal and with diuretic effects.

**APPLE (malus)** - the fruit of the apple tree, wrongly (by mistake in translation) known mainly as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Genesis. Since the Middle Ages the apple has been regarded as a symbol of the Christ and His moral- held in the mouth of the snake symbolizes the fall of the first human parents and original sin, while in the hand of the Child Jesus is the forerunner of salvation.

In the non-biblical tradition, mainly due to its spherical shape, the apple symbolized eternity without beginning and end, a round globe, a kingdom on earth, power over the world (the monarchy apple with a cross), the crown and scepter were royal insignia. The horizontally cut apple shows pouches, arranged in the shape of a pentagram, a sign of knowledge and initiation, thanks to which in many traditions (including Celtic) it was the fruit of magic, revelation and knowledge. It also symbolized immortality, eternal youth or late old age. In Greek mythology it was a symbol of sexual love and fertility, but also of a conflict (the apple of discord - a golden fruit with the inscription "for the most beautiful", thrown by the goddess Eris during the wedding of Thetis and Peleus, became the cause of a disagreement between Athena, Aphro-

dite and Hera). According to Roman mythology, the first apple tree was to be created by the goddess of the earth, Gaia, the apple tree gave the golden fruit of immortality. Also the apple symbolized eternal life and the afterlife for Romans, and thus the end of life on earth, hence the expression “ab ovo usque ad mala” - from the egg (beginning of life) to apple (end of life). Red apples in Roman culture were primarily a symbol of Venus, the goddess of love and desire.

In the folk tradition the apple symbolized health, life, fertility, love, longevity and immortality, productivity and wealth. And as a symbol of the latter, having love and erotic connotations, the apples were donated during wedding rituals.

Used in folk medicine: as an aperient, for relieving liver pain, intestinal disorders and digestion difficulties.

**GUELDERROSE (*Viburnum*)** - in the Slavs, guelderrose is considered untouchable and sacred, it is associated with the symbolism of the sun. In all folk beliefs, although it symbolizes youth, modesty and virginity, it is associated with suffering and sadness. It was believed that when a girl dies before the wedding, she turns into a guelderrose. Red fruits, resembling drops of blood, were associated with people's birth and life - thus, the guelderrose became a symbol of immortality. It connected two worlds - life and death, therefore it was considered an effective means of protection against demons and was planted at the borders of the property, among others, in the Lemkivshchyna region and other south-eastern regions of Poland. Guelderrose appears in the works of Juliusz Słowacki, usually as a motif meaning a young girl. It is mentioned five times in “Balladyna” and also appears in the poem “Beniowski”.

**WATER ELDER** - is a shrub that grows up to about 3 m in height. The bark of its young shoots is green, the older shoots are brown or even reddish-brown. The fruits are spherical, bright red drupes with one flat stone inside.

Used in folk medicine: bark as a relief for painful menstruation, fruit for colds, gastric and duodenal ulcers and haemorrhoids, and flowers for painful spasms of the intestines and as an expectorant. The root decoction was supposed to treat seizures, hysteria, asthma and insomnia. Fruits grated with sugar lowered high pressure, and frozen fruits were a nutritious feed additive.

**COMMON BEAN (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.)** - it has been known to people from the earliest times (it was cultivated around 7000 BC) as a basic source of plant proteins, giving strength and energy to struggle with the hardships of life. In Poland at the end of the 16th century beans were grown as an ornamental plant in monastery gardens, and only in the 17th century as a vegetable. In addition to bean seeds, the bean is also useful as a valuable animal feed. Beans symbolize new life, immortality, wandering of souls. It is mentioned in the Bible (2 Sm 17:27-29) as food of David.

Used in folk medicine: powder from dried and ground pods was sprinkled on fresh wounds, burns, eczemas to speed up the healing process, bean pods and extracts were used as a cure against diabetes, in kidney and urinary diseases, hypertension, urarthritis and chronic gout.



**PEA (Pisum)** - a leguminous plant, whose nutritional and health properties have been appreciated for thousands of years. It was known in ancient times in India, Egypt and Rome. Peas are a good source of protein and provide carbohydrates as well as fiber to improve digestion. It symbolizes prosperity. Like every seed, it is also a symbol of beginning, new possibilities, hope, potential, creativity.

**CARROT (Daucus carota)** - edible root. It was already cultivated in ancient Greece and Rome. The Germans and Slavs knew it. It appeared in Poland at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century. Due to its phallic shape, it was considered an aphrodisiac in ancient times. During the time of Elizabeth I in England, carrot top was a cheaper substitute for feathers to decorate dresses and hats.

Used in folk medicine: it regulates the work of the digestive tract, improves sight, regulates blood pressure, has a diuretic effect, affects the appearance of hair and nails.

# Workshops on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska



V

# WORKSHOPS ON THE WOODEN ARCHITECTURE ROUTE IN MAŁOPOLSKA

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Nowadays, the customs cultivated on the Wooden Architecture Route in the Małopolska region are more and more often giving way to modern technology and a modern lifestyle. To be preserved, they must be passed on to future generations. With a view to preserving the existing traditions, the Małopolska Tourist Organization, as part of the project “Holidays, traditions and customs on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska”, organized 10 editions of workshops, during which young and older persons learned how to paint flower patterns, learned the secrets of weaving harvest wreaths, painted Easter eggs and played the role of carollers. The holiday traditions were shown from the point of view of three religions - Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic and Orthodox. The workshops were conducted by representatives of particular religious rites who shared not only their skills, but also the customs and stories passed on by the older generations that still exist in their families. We hope that at least some of the workshop participants have become interested in local culture, whose cultivation can bring a lot of joy and satisfaction.

As part of the project “Holidays, traditions and customs on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska”, two editions of workshops were held, each concerning the following topics:

- making Easter palms,
- preparing Easter basket of food eaten for Easter Sunday breakfast,
- painting floral designs that the cottages in Zalipie are traditionally decorated with,
- making harvest wreaths and bunches for the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs,
- carolling.

## EASTER PALMS,

### Lipnica Murowana

Easter palm weaving workshops were organized in cooperation with the Primary School and the St. Andrew Parish in Lipnica Murowana. They were attended not only by students and teachers from Lipnica, but also from nearby towns (Bochnia, Kamińska Mała, Królówka, Wojakowa and Rajbrot).

The place was chosen not by accident, the tradition of making Easter palms is still alive in Lipnica Murowana, and the palms are exceptionally rich, even though they are made exclusively using traditional materials and methods. On the market square in Lipnica, surrounded by beautiful wooden buildings, crowds of residents and tourists gather on Palm Sunday. Everyone wants to see the Easter palm reaching the sky (the highest one was 37 meters 78 centimeters!).



Easter palms workshops, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization





Easter palms workshops, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization

The same, although much shorter Lipnica's palm could be made by any of the workshop participants. But apart from the traditions typical of the Roman Catholic rite, they also learned about the Lemkos' customs - Orthodox and Greek Catholic, related to Palm Sunday and Easter. Representatives of both rituals shared interesting information, including their holiday traditions and the language of the Lemkos. Under their supervision, bundles of catkin and green twigs were formed. All handmade palms are taken home by the workshop participants.

## EASTER BASKET,

### Wygiełzów, Szymbark

What should be included in the basket brought to be blessed? This could be found out during the workshops that took place in the Vistula Ethnographic Park in Wygiełzów and the open-air museum of the Pogórze Village in Szymbark. In addition to the traditions known to the participants of the workshops from family homes, they also had the opportunity to learn about the Lemkos' customs and how the traditional basket brought to the Orthodox church differs from that one that is blessed in the church. Both of them must include eggs, colored and decorated with different techniques. One of the oldest is batik, i.e. drawing with melted wax on the egg shell to obtain an Easter egg with intricately crafted white patterns on a colored background after coloring the shell and rubbing the wax. Another interesting way is to scratch out the patterns on a colored shell. And these are the techniques that workshop participants learned. They were very popular and revealed many artistic talents.



*Workshops on preparing the food to be blessed on Holy Saturday,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



Workshops on preparing the food to be blessed on Holy Saturday,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization





Workshops on preparing the food to be blessed on Holy Saturday,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



# PAINTING FLORAL PATTERNS WHICH TRADITIONALLY DECORATE COTTAGES IN ZALIPIE

Zalipie is famous for decorating buildings with colorful flower patterns. Every year before Corpus Christi, women paint the outer walls of houses, barns, cowsheds, wells, fences... They also decorate the interiors of buildings with colorful flowers. Workshop participants learned an interesting history of the custom and tried to paint under the supervision of Zalipie painters. Each of them decorated a wooden board or a ceramic bell by himself/herself. They could also try their "real" painting by decorating the well.



*Workshops on painting floral patterns which traditionally decorate cottages in Zalipie, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*





Workshops on painting floral patterns which traditionally decorate cottages in Zalipie,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization





*Workshops on painting floral patterns which traditionally decorate cottages in Zalipie, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

## CAROLLING,

### Rozdziele, Ropa

In the south of Małopolska, carolling takes various forms, and carols are sung not only in Polish but also in the language of the Lemkos. The participants of the workshops organized by the Małopolska Tourist Organization in Rozdziele in Lipinki Commune and in Ropa had the opportunity to learn about this diversity.

Children and young people brought up in various traditions listened to the stories about Christmas Eve customs of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic religions and the Lemkos' carolling traditions. They played the roles of carollers, singing carols of the Lemos and giving their best wishes to the hosts. Each of the participants of the workshop also made a caroller mask or hat themselves, and additionally learned how to create so-called worlds from wafers, which in the homes of Roman Catholics were traditionally hung above the Christmas table under a so called spider or a branch hanged on the ceiling.



Carolling workshops, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization





*Carolling workshops, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



## MAKING HARVEST WREATHS,

### Sobolów

The participants of the workshop organized in Sobolów learned how to make a traditional harvest wreath. They learned, for example, from which cereals a wreath is woven and what it is decorated with. They could see how grain ears are tied and how time-consuming it is. They also learned about the traditions related to weaving the wreaths. They created interesting flowers themselves, which can be used to decorate the wreath. They used and learned about various grains.



*Harvest wreaths workshops, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*



Harvest wreaths workshops, photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization



# MAKING BUNCHES FOR THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF THE HERBS,

## Raławice

On August 15, the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs, the bunches of flowers, herbs, cereals, vegetables and fruits are blessed in churches. What plants should be included in the bunch and what medicinal properties each of them has could be learned at a workshop organized by MOT in Raławice. They were attended by younger and older residents of the region, who also shared their knowledge and the customs associated with the blessing of bunches. Each of the ladies taking part in the workshop made a beautiful bunch, which she took home with her.



*Workshops on making bunches of flowers for the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*





*Workshops on making bunches of flowers for the feast of Our Lady of the Herbs,  
photo: arch. Małopolska Tourist Organization*

# Afterword



VI

An invaluable value for any regional or local community is its cultural heritage. Customs, rituals, practices, norms of behavior and beliefs have important social functions, especially in strengthening the sense of belonging to a community, as well as shaping interpersonal relationships. They accompany at important moments in life, provide feelings and experiences in both individual and community dimensions. They confirm our “roots” and continuity of tradition, allow us to connect the past with the present. In traditional culture, the rhythm of human life was determined by annual and family customs. The first one in Poland has been created “on a pagan background, which was superimposed on Christian beliefs and rituals, influenced by historical events and elements borrowed from neighbors”<sup>1</sup>.

It would be interesting, for sure, to make a comprehensive discussion of the ritual year in Małopolska, however, only some holidays and related customs and rituals were selected. The collected material and description shows that annual holidays still set the rhythm of life in local communities on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska. They allow you to shape a sense of belonging and awareness of cultural difference, and also ethnic identity in the case of Lemkos. A lot of traditional values, unique forms and behaviors have survived in the annual celebrations. One can still notice magic behaviors, especially those intended to ensure fate’s favor, protect against misfortunes or associated with folk/traditional medicine. It is characteristic that belief in their effectiveness is related to the use of “characteristics” dedicated to religious rituals during these practices (implementing them in the Christian sacrament). Unfortunately, the magical behaviors and practices associated with the calendar of agricultural works more and more often disappear, which proves that land and breeding is no longer a fundamental and determining value in these communities. Comparing the collected material with the descriptions contained in ethnographic or historical literature, it should be noted that annual rituals and customs have undergone numerous changes and transformations, quite often losing their original meaning and functions (e.g. in carolling traditions or Easter customs). A lot of traditional behaviors have lost their symbolic and magical functions to the benefit of folk functions, which at the same time make them attractive and they are still preserved.

Unfortunately, many of the traditional behaviors and rituals - as surveys have shown above all - disappear or are no longer cultivated. A lot of them are unified and commercialized. For example, the vast majority of respondents describe the Easter palm, but less than half are able to name the habits associated with it and even less of them can name their functions.

That is why it is so important to collect materials among the older and oldest generation of inhabitants, coming from families from generations connected with a given town or region, who constitute an endless repository of knowledge of native history and tradition. We hope that this publication will not only allow the readers to get to know a part of intangible cultural heritage on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska, but will also encourage them to collect descriptions of old, often forgotten and no longer practised customs, rituals, practices and family traditions. It will become an important position in regional education.

1 J. Kamocki, J. Kubiena, *Polski rok obrzędowy*, Kraków 2008, p. 12.



# Glossary



VII



**Culture:** a term used in anthropology (ethnology, ethnography) and social sciences in a much broader sense than in colloquial language. The Ethnological Dictionary defines the term as such: "a term that defines all the products of a social person, structured in a distinct aspect of the social life of both the human species as a whole and individual societies, ethnic and local groups, strata and classes of society in their historically diverse and changing (cultural change) dependence on the environment"<sup>2</sup>. This means that culture is the man's own learned and socially sanctioned ways of acting and behaving, as well as all the effects of these actions. The sphere of culture includes patterns of conduct established in a given community, behavior norms, habits, customs, ideas about the world and nature, indications, ideas, concepts, language, beliefs, skills. Culture is conventional and contractual. Man is both a creator of culture and is shaped by it, he is both a carrier and a creative recipient. Culture is a supra-individual and social phenomenon, it exists thanks to communal life. It is dynamic, i.e. it changes more slowly or faster in time and space. In classical ethnographic terms, culture is divided into: material culture (it includes all utility objects produced by man, as well as the ability to produce them), spiritual culture (religion, art, mythology, philosophy, science, ideology, ideas about the world), social culture (norms, patterns of conduct, laws, principles, social order, social positional arrangement). In terms of the sociology of culture, the division is as follows: culture of being (that is, material culture, that is, products, activities and skills of instrumental character connected with the production of goods), social culture (patterns of social interaction, that is, social relations, role systems, class relations, etc.), symbolic culture (that is, spiritual, immaterial culture, which includes, as in the previous division, those elements of culture in which one can see the excess of symbolic functions over instrumental ones).

**Cultural tradition:** these are all cultural goods that are heritage of the past, transferred in time and space, taken over and valued. Each generation makes a specific selection of the elements of heritage, changing the assessment of its individual elements. For only those elements are passed on which are distinguished and for various reasons worthy of acceptance.

**Traditional culture:** a model of culture in which tradition is mainly given orally (i.e. without the help of writing, specialized institutions or mass media). Traditional cultures are divided into classical (primary communities) and peasant (especially in Europe). The main features of the traditional culture are: strong colonization of the settlement, combined with low spatial mobility, agricultural activities based on a low level of production forces, economic self-sufficiency, patriarchal family system, cult of tradition, social transmission through oral transmission and practical demonstrations, anonymity of all products and their creators, power of local authorities, significant role of magic and religion, strong social network and sense of community,

1 Developed on the basis of the Dictionary prepared by G. Odoj, A. Peć, *Edukacja regionalna - Dziedzictwo kulturowe w regionie. Pojęcia podstawowe. Materiały warsztatowe*, 2004. See also: G. Odoj, *Lokalność jako ojczyzna - w kręgu pojęć podstawowych*, in: *Dziedzictwo kulturowe Ziemi Suskiej i Podbabiogórza. Materiały z konferencji - Ochrona lokalnej i regionalnej tożsamości kulturowej a edukacja regionalna (z okazji 600-lecia Suchoj Beskidzkiej)*, R. Lisowski, A. Peć, M. Peć (ed.), Kraków 2005 and G. Odoj, *Dziedzictwo kulturowe jako kluczowe pojęcie edukacji regionalnej. Rozważania terminologiczne*, in: *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*, vol. 12 *Dziedzictwo kulturowe „nadbagażem” codzienności?*, H. Rusek, K. Czerwińska, K. Marcol (ed.), Katowice 2012, p. 38-48.

2 *Słownik etnologiczny. Terminy ogólne*, Z. Staszczak (ed.), Warszawa - Poznań 1987, p. 187.

aversion or even fear of any changes. Nowadays, the so-called traditional culture no longer constitutes an integral whole, although some of its elements (among others, in the form of cultural relics) still function.

**Cultural region:** the term for a territory due to the distinctive features of the culture specific to the population is permanently resident. This population is a so-called regional group, characterized by a formed regional identity and being a carrier of specific regional tradition. The cultural region is significantly influenced by historical conditions, socio-economic changes, political and administrative divisions.

**Regionalism:** a socio-cultural movement, often of an institutional nature, aimed at preserving and consolidating a set of specific features of a given area's culture, its renewal and promotion. These activities also aim to strengthen the sense of belonging to the region and the group living there. Regional education has a link to regionalism, the aim of which is, among other things, to give young people a sense of their own regional identity and regional patriotism.

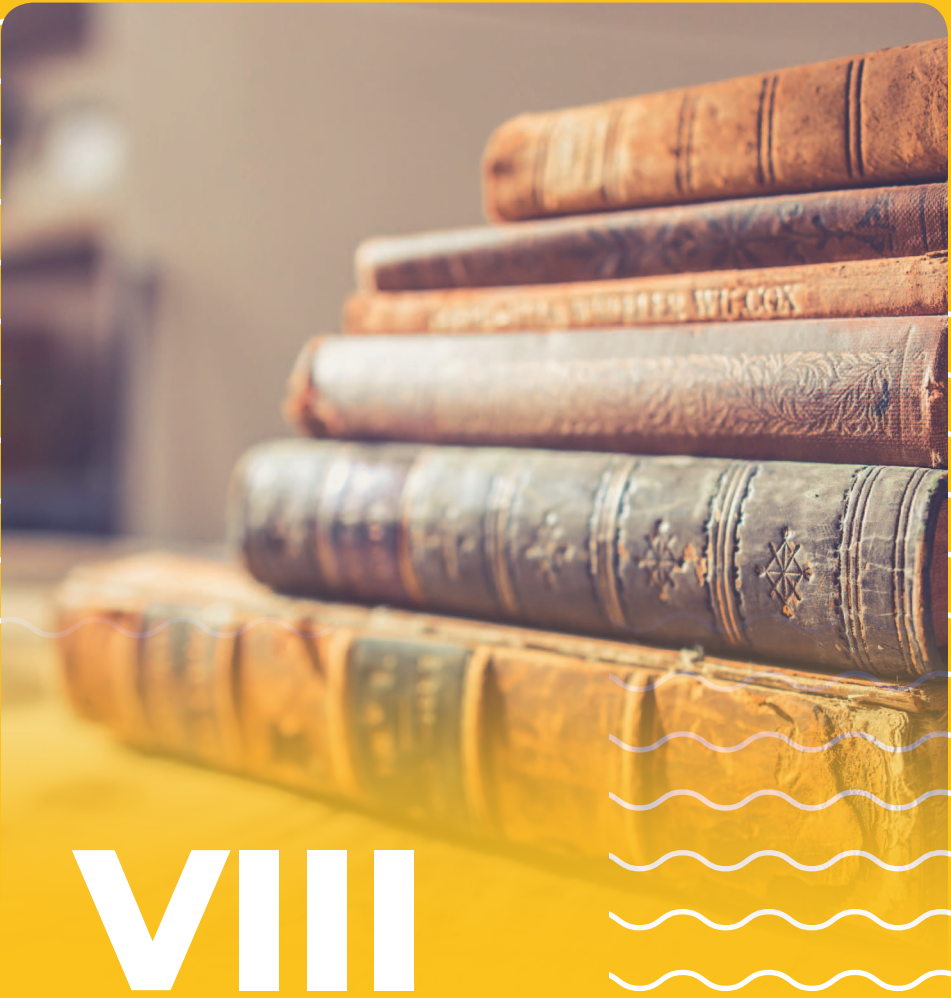
**Folklore:** in the broadest, common sense, it is a synonym of all traditional folk art, referring both to folk oral literature (fables, myths, legends, fairy tales, proverbs) and to music, art, crafts, customs, rituals (symbolic-artistic field of folk culture).

**Practice:** a form of behavior commonly accepted in a given community supported by tradition. The practice, creating a set of norms and conventions, usually regulates those spheres of social life that remain outside the codified legal system. Violation of a practice is usually met with disapproval and negative sanctions from the group (e.g. slander, ridicule, social boycott). Thus, the practice is an element of social control. A set of practices that exist in a given society forms its mores.

**Custom:** an established form of individual or collective behavior in certain social situations. Custom, like practices, is determined by the traditions of the group. In contrast to the latter, however, it is relatively rarely subject to social sanction. To a large extent, it has the character of a thoughtless, repetitive imitation of other members of the community and owes its persistence to the conviction that this is what should be done in a particular situation, and not otherwise. A characteristic classification of customs has developed: family and annual. In addition, other customs can be distinguished: social, professional, occasional, legal, domestic, religious, as well as those that are not related to a specific date or important event, but to a circumstance that may occur every day.

**Rite:** a set of symbolic activities carried out in a strictly defined, orderly manner and accompanying religious or secular ceremonies. The rite is practised publicly and collectively. It is characterized by a peculiar structure and dramaturgy based on a traditional scenario, which determines certain functions for individual units. The rite is an important element of cultural heritage. In ethnography, as in the case of custom, there are two cycles of rituals: annual and family. We can also talk about initiation rites, affirmative rituals or transition rites.

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More information about the project and the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska can be found at:

[www.drewniana.malopolska.pl](http://www.drewniana.malopolska.pl)



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