#### **ARTYKUŁY**

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# ROLE OF THE TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF WARMIA IN TEACHING RELIGION AT SCHOOL

Summary: Bringing back the Warmian traditions and care for the cultural heritage contributes to cultivating and propagating regional awareness among the contemporary citizens of Warmia. The purpose of the article entitled "Role of the traditions and cultural heritage of Warmia in teaching religion at school" is to present the results of the research, to which the textbooks used to teach religion in the Warmian Archdiocese were subjected. The conclusions based on the analysis indicate the role of the tradition and cultural heritage of Warmia in teaching religion at school. Moreover, some suggestions were made concerning subsequent editions of the textbooks used in Warmia. While editing the text, methods of analysis and synthesis were used.

Keywords: tradition, cultural heritage, Warmia, teaching religion.

#### Introduction

Apart from the unique natural environment and extremely beautiful landscapes, the values of Warmia include its history with many traditions and diverse cultural heritage. Being a part of Poland from 1466 to the first partition in the tragic year 1772, Warmia enjoyed political autonomy with the Prince-Bishop of Warmia. Despite this painful experience, its residents nurtured their lost bonds with Poland, feeling strongly about the loss of their autonomy, independence and distinctness. It was not until 173 years after the fall of the First Republic (I Rzeczpospolita) that Warmia was again incorporated into Poland as part of the political outcome of World War II. An influx of people from various regions of pre-war Poland started in 1945, and it created the base for the new multi-national and multi-cultural community.

In effect, part of the Warmian traditions disappeared. Despite this, given the rich cultural heritage of Warmia and its role in building the future of this land, attempts are made to discover, recall and pass on the traditions of Warmia. This

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is done at thematic lessons in schools, at scientific symposia, in published books, at exhibitions, in programmes and in films.

The aim of this paper is to show the role of the tradition and cultural heritage of Warmia, present in the teaching of religion at schools. This was achieved by means of an analysis of student textbooks (further: PU with identification of the school and class) and methodology guides (further: PM with identification of the school and class) used in teaching religion in primary and secondary schools, published by Wydawnictwo Katechetyczne Sp. z o.o., Warsaw.<sup>2</sup>

The literature does not provide a clear definition of "tradition". This study adopts the definition of the term provided by *Słownik Języka Polskiego* – rules of conduct, customs, opinions, information passed from one generation to the next. Passing on these rules and customs to the next generations (Szymczak, 1995, p. 482). It is difficult to provide a clear definition of the concept of cultural heritage as it depends on how culture is defined. Understood broadly, heritage is understood to denote material and spiritual creations and patterns of behaviours. According to UNESCO, cultural heritage covers an increasingly broad scope and is divided into material heritage, which comprises non-moveable (including World Heritage) and moveable objects and non-material heritage, passed on mainly orally and as tradition (Polish Committee ds. UNESCO, 2022).

# **Holiday traditions**

Remembering the holiday traditions of the old Warmia and the customs associated with major holidays helps to develop respect among students for traditions, allowing them to be more involved in experiencing the events of the liturgical year. Pupils in the first form of primary school learn about the traditions associated with advent and Christmas. They learn that an advent wreath used to be prepared at each house in Warmia, and it was then suspended under the ceiling in the main chamber. Subsequently, a candle was placed and lit on it each Sunday of the advent. Currently, this tradition is preserved only in churches. When discussing the advent traditions, the teacher explains that Christmas in Warmia was called "gody" or "godne święta". There were stacks of straw in houses, adorned with Christmas tree twigs. "Wigilia" [Christmas Eve] was called "Wilija". It was a day when a solemn supper was had, but a Christmas wafer ["opłatek"] was not shared in Warmia. Christmas Eve evening was the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Among the publications on the traditions and cultural heritage of Warmia, the following are worth mentioning: Achremczyk, 2011; Chłosta, 2009; Cyfus, 2014; Szyfer, 1996; Lewandowska, 2017.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Student's textbooks and methodological manuals intended for teaching religion in schools in the Archdiocese of Warmia (Poland) were analysed. The list of textbooks is available in the bibliography.

time when servants<sup>3</sup> went around with a szemel<sup>4</sup>. The oldest servant played the role of Santa Claus, asked the children to say the Lord's Prayer and gave them presents (PU SP1, v. 1, p. 64–65). Between Christmas and the Epiphany, evening meetings were organised, called "twelves". They provided an opportunity for family meetings, singing carols and listening to stories (PM SP1, p. 141–143).

Students in the same class learn about the Warmian traditions associated with Holy Week and Easter. Due to the lent on Good Friday, a fire was not lit in houses, adults ate nothing, and only "children were given a slice of bread" (PU SP1, v. 2, p. 56). On the Holy Saturday morning, priests, after saying the prayer, lit "stacks", i.e. sacred fire, from which the faithful lit pieces of wood to take them home, burning. Housewives used them to light a fire in the kitchen stove. Large vats with water were placed in front of the church, from which the faithful drew water and filled their cans. In the evening, farmers sprinkled their houses and farmsteads with that water. The textbook authors pointed out that blessing food was not customary at the time. On Easter Sunday, the faithful used to go to church with an orchestra, singing. After the Easter Sunday mass, the traditional Easter breakfast was eaten. On Easter Monday there was no śmigus-dyngus in Warmia. Instead, boys struck girls lightly with juniper twigs. Relatives and friends were also visited (PM SP1, p. 223–225).

# **Historical figures**

Students learn about eminent historical figures associated with Warmia, who contributed to the development of the cultural heritage and to propagating the faith and the tradition of Warmia. Such figures include Rev. Robert Bilitewski (1859–1935), the community life organiser and the national activist in Warmia (PU SP7, p. 205–207); St. Andrzej Bobola (1591–1657) – one of the saint patrons of Poland, a student and lecturer at the Braniewo Collegium Hosianum (PU SP4, p. 132); Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius (1504–1579), the Bishop of Warmia, an eminent theologian and humanist (PU SP8, p. 175, 305; PU SP6, p. 198); Wilhelm Killing (1847–1923) – one of the greatest 19th-century mathematicians, Chairman of the Braniewo Municipal Council (PU SP4, p. 132); Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) – a famous astronomer, the canon of the Chapter of Warmia, who spent most of his life in Warmia (PU SP6, p. 196–197); Ignacy Krasicki (1735–1801), the Bishop of Warmia, an eminent writer and poet, the author of excellent satires and fables (PU SP6, p. 198, PU LO3, p. 394); Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–1464), an eminent humanist,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Servants were called Warmian carolers (PM SP1, p. 141).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Szemel is a rider on a wooden horse puppet (PM SP1, p. 141).

poet, who was to become pope (PU SP6, p. 196–197); blessed Regina Protmann (1552–1613), born in Braniewo, who established the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Catherine (PU SP4, p. 132; PU SP6, p. 202–204); sister Barbara Samulowska (1865–1950), a girl who had a revelation of Mary in Gietrzwałd, headmistress of the Seminary of the Sisters of Mercy in Guatemala (PU SP5, p. 212); Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901–1981), the primate of Poland, imprisoned in Stoczek Warmiński (PU SP6, p. 199–201). Moreover, students in secondary schools learn about the lives of martyrs of Warmia and victims of communism and Nazism.

### Historic places

Places which played an important role in the history of Warmia are an important part of the cultural heritage of the land. These include towns and villages of Warmia, including the famous Gate of Warmia [Wrota Warmii] in the village of Baldy. There are 12 towns in Warmia, all of them established during the period of its colonisation and all of them enjoying town privileges since the Middle Ages. During a lesson on religion, students learn about Braniewo, which is the oldest town in Warmia (town privileges since 1254) (PM SP4, p. 202–204; PM SP6, p. 376; PU SP8, p. 176), as well as five other towns: Lidzbark Warmiński (1308) (PM SP6, p. 372–375), Frombork (1310) (PM SP7, p. 320–322; PU SP7, p. 208-210), Orneta (1313) (PU SP6, p. 197), Dobre Miasto (1329) (PU SP8, p. 307) and Olsztyn (1353) (PU SP8, p. 304; PU SP8, p. 307). Before towns, rural settlements were established as compact built-up areas. Wooden buildings dominated in Warmian villages before the 19th century, to be replaced later with one-storey ones built of red brick, sometimes with a habitable attic. The rural landscape of Warmia cannot be complete without sacral objects: churches, chapels, cemeteries, roadside shrines and crosses. The textbooks provide a more detailed description of individual villages as events are mentioned that took place in them, e.g. Gietrzwałd (PM SP2, p. 276–279; PU SP2, v. 2, p. 70–71), Głotowo (PU SP3, p. 188-191), Klebark Wielki (PU SP7, p. 306), Stoczek Klasztorny (PU SP6, p. 199–201), Święta Lipka (PM SP4, p. 198–201), Woryty (PU SP2, p. 17).

Pupils in form five of the primary school learn about the Gate to Warmia in Bałdy. This is a fragment of the old Royal Tract where newly appointed bishops of Warmia were welcomed on their way to their see in Lidzbark Warmiński to take over their office. The entrance to the Bishop's Tract symbolises the border of Warmia. There are boulders commemorating the bishops of Warmia. The tradition of welcoming newly appointed bishops of Warmia has now been

restored (PU SP5, p. 208–209; PM SP6, p. 197–198; PU SP4, p. 13–131). Archbishop Józef Górzyński, the fifty-first Bishop of Warmia, was welcomed in Bałdy in 2016.

#### Sanctuaries, churches and roadside shrines in Warmia

Unique red-brick sanctuaries and churches are parts of the cultural heritage of Warmia. These places are signs of the region's identity, its Catholicism as a symbol of the historical and spiritual distinctiveness of Warmia and its native population. Pupils in the second form of primary school learn about Marian sanctuaries in Warmia. They find out about what distinguishes a sanctuary from other churches. They are taught about the history and the current state of the sanctuaries in Gietrzwałd and Święta Lipka. They learn about the deep sense of visiting sanctuaries and how one should behave in them (PM SP2, p. 276–279; PU SP2, v. 2, p. 70–71). In lessons on religion in form three, they familiarise themselves with the history of the eucharistic miracles in Głotowo, and the sanctuary built there, which still exists. They are taught about the Calvary built at the sanctuary, which copies the Stations of the Cross on the Golgotha (PM SP3, p. 310-312; PU SP3, p. 188-191). The sanctuary in Gietrzwałd is again discussed in the same form. Pupils will be provided with detailed descriptions of the Marian revelations and the role of the children who took part in them. Subsequently, the authors stress that one hundred and forty years after the revelations, children in Warmia who have received the first Holy Communion go on a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Gietrzwałd to thank the Holy Virgin for the help in receiving the sacrament of Eucharist, like Justyna Szafryńska and Barbara Samulowska did before them (PM SP3, p. 313-316; PU SP3, p. 192–195).

The first churches in Warmia were built in the Gothic style. They were rather small, with no turrets, with the presbyterian wall always facing the east. Since brick belfries were usually added several years later, many rural churches in Warmia still have "provisional" wooden belfries. However, there are churches with impressive architectural solutions. During lessons on religion, pupils are provided with detailed information on the St. Catherine of Alexandria's Minor Basilica and the Holy Cross Sanctuary in Braniewo, the Assumption of Mary's Archcathedral Basilica in Frombork (14th century) (PU SP7, p. 208–211); The Holy Saviour and All Saints' Basilica in Dobre Miasto (14th century) (PU SP8, p. 307–308); Visitation of Mary's Basilica in Święta Lipka (17th century) (PU SP8, p. 314) and St. James' Co-Cathedral in Olsztyn (14th century) (PU SP7, p. 311).

There are many old roadside shrines in Warmia, which testify to the faith of the population of the land and which are the symbol of the culture and fidelity to tradition. Their function is evangelisational, they encourage people to pray, and they remind everyone that God wants to be present among us. There are about one thousand roadside shrines in Warmia. The oldest of them are in Dobrag (built in 1601) and in Barczewo (built in 1607) (PU SP8, p. 312–317).

## Conclusions and postulates

Bringing back the Warmian traditions and the care for the cultural heritage are of great importance in cultivating and propagating regional awareness among the contemporary population of Warmia. Among the tasks set before lessons of religion is to help to shape the community, which will nurture and develop the cultural heritage and tradition of the Catholic faith professed for centuries. It is particularly important in the era of globalisation because the point is to provide local communities with an opportunity to feel their cultural value, to help them to seek models in their own culture, and to encourage them to preserve religious traditions, which help to discover and enliven the true faith.

The analysis of religion textbooks in the Archdiocese of Warmia shows that they present the tradition and the cultural heritage of Warmia.

Owing to the traditions associated with festivities, students learn not only about the Warmian traditions of individual holidays but are also introduced to the religious dimension of celebrations, which helps them to understand the sense and meaning of the redemptive events and shows their importance. Explaining to students the importance of community and family celebrations is also an important element of the lessons. One should appreciate the fact that the subjects associated with the Christmas and Easter traditions have been developed and adapted to the age of first-form pupils. However, it is postulated that the subject matter should be expanded in future editions of the textbooks and that the traditions associated with celebrating other Christian holidays should be presented. Issues associated with celebrating the major holidays should also be discussed in older forms, both in primary and secondary schools, not only to recall but also to highlight the deeper meanings, which help to build conscious faith and to teach respect for tradition and experience of previous generations.

Owing to the content of the textbooks, students learn about eminent historical figures associated with Warmia, who contributed to the development of the cultural heritage and to propagating the faith and the tradition of Warmia. One should note and appreciate that the textbooks provide extensive information

on multiple personages, but it is difficult to understand why certain people, important to the region, have been left out. It is postulated that subsequent editions should contain at least the life descriptions of the bishops of Warmia: Jan Dantyszek, Marcin Kromer; the Polish composer Feliks Nowowiejski; national activists: Rev. Wacław Osiński, Seweryn Pieniężny; the poets Andrzej Samulowski and Maria Zientara-Malewska and the writer Alojzy Śliwa.

Places which played an important role in the history of Warmia are an important part of the cultural heritage of the land. The textbook authors mentioned six out of the twelve Warmian towns. It is postulated that the next textbook editions should refer to the other towns (Pieniężno, Reszel, Jeziorany, Barczewo, Bisztynek, Biskupiec), which also had their share in the history of Warmia and which are places with unique architecture and ancient temples.

The cultural heritage landscape of Warmia includes sanctuaries, and ancient churches, which testify to the region's identity, Catholicism and the spiritual distinctiveness of the land and its population. During lessons on religion, pupils have an opportunity to learn about the major sanctuaries of Warmia and about several of its churches. It is noteworthy that the places are presented in an attractive manner, and their descriptions encourage one to visit them. However, the question arises as to why all the major places of worship worth visiting were not mentioned. Although this can be understood for the temples, of which there are several hundred in Warmia, and not all of them can be described, it is a pity that not all of the sanctuaries were mentioned. Therefore, it is postulated that the sanctuaries which have been left out, e.g. in Bisztynek, Chwalęcin, Olsztyn, Korsze, Tłokowo, Bartoszyce, should be added in subsequent textbook editions.

It is noteworthy that the elements of tradition and cultural heritage present in the textbooks correlate with school education. One should indicate a reference to social education – broadening the knowledge of the region where the student lives; to linguistic education – learning some regional words, e.g. "wilija", "szemel", "kuch"; musical education – learning to sing regional songs; linguistic education – enriching one's vocabulary with regional words, such as "wilija", "szemel", "kuch", "stos". While appreciating the importance of the teaching of religion in correlation with school education in the propagation of the regional traditions and the cultural heritage of Warmia, one should point out that these measures are focused mainly on the primary school stage. However, the number of these issues in secondary schools is noticeably smaller. Therefore, it is postulated that the next edition of the textbooks on Warmia should contain more issues with direct reference to the regional traditions and the cultural heritage of Warmia.

The history of the "Holy Warmia" started in 1525, when the last war between Poland and the Teutonic Order ended with the Prussian Homage. The

historically shaped Warmia, the culturally, ethnographically and mainly religiously distinct region, "ended" in 1945. In the minds of the current population of the region, the concept of the "Holy Warmia" has faded away, especially because the role of the Church and the Catholic religion was passed over during the period of the Polish People's Republic for ideological reasons. "Holy Warmia", as the term used to describe the historical space referring to the Catholic tradition, appeared again in the public sphere on 6 June 1991, when Pope John Paul II used this phrase at the end of the Mass celebrated in Olsztyn. Finally, it should be pointed out that the issues associated with developing respect for the tradition and cultural heritage of Warmia were not included in the textbooks until 2017. One can suppose that these issues will be expanded in subsequent textbook editions, and owing to these measures, the concept of "Holy Warmia" will no longer be strange to the young generations of the Warmian population, who will not only understand it but also respect the tradition and the cultural heritage of Warmia.

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# Znaczenie tradycji i dziedzictwa kulturowego Warmii w szkolnym nauczaniu religii

**Streszczenie:** Przypominanie warmińskich tradycji i troska o dziedzictwo kulturowe przyczyniają się do kultywowania i rozszerzania świadomości regionalnej współczesnych mieszkańców Warmii. Celem artykułu jest prezentacja wyników badań, którym poddano podręczniki służące do nauczania

religii w archidiecezji warmińskiej. Na podstawie przeprowadzonej analizy sformułowano wnioski, które wskazują na znaczenie tradycji i dziedzictwa kulturowego Warmii w szkolnym nauczaniu religii, a także postawiono postulaty dotyczące kolejnych edycji wydawniczych warmińskich podręczników. W badaniach posłużono się metodami analizy i syntezy.

Slowa kluczowe: tradycja, dziedzictwo kulturowe, Warmia, nauczanie religii.

#### List of shortcuts

LO – Secondary school

PM – Methodical manual

PU - Student handbook

SP - Primary school