

poems, he wrote “their weakness lies in remaining in the circle of banal pictures and conventional vocabulary; however, they are quite amazing as an ideological expression, and at the same time they have about them a poetic tone which reflects to a great extent Brémond’s ideas³, and which, in fact, constitutes their true poetic quality”.⁴

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translated by the author

Notes

- 1 *Karol Szymanowski — Pisma*, edited by Teresa Chylińska, Kraków: PWM, 1989, vol. 1 & 2
- 2 Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Książka moich wspomnień [The Book of My Remembrances]*, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1975, p. 264
- 3 Henri Brémond (1865–1933), French theoretician, critic, literary historian; he associated poetry with intuition and religious experience. Brémond claimed that the essence of poetry is an unknown, mysterious and unifying reality, and that each poem owes its poetic character to the presence and emanation of the transforming and unifying mystery, which he called “pure poetry”. Furthermore, according to Brémond, poetry emanates an elusive but overwhelming charm independently of the sense of the whole work; the nature of poetry surpasses discursive forms and is not reducible to rational consciousness (see note in *Karol Szymanowski — Pisma [Writings]*, edited by Teresa Chylińska, Kraków: PWM, 1989, vol. 2, p. 333).
- 4 Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Książka moich wspomnień [The Book of My Remembrances]*, op. cit., p. 265

9.3 On the Diffusion of Traditional Music Cultures in Warmia and Mazury

An essay-review of *Warmia i Mazury*, a five-volume collection of regional folk music consisting of:

- (i) Calendar and Wedding Songs
- (ii) Ballads and Social Life Songs
- (iii) Courting and Love Songs
- (iv) Family and Dance Songs
- (v) Religious and Popular Songs

Warmia i Mazury is the third part in the series *Polska Piesń i Muzyka Ludowa. Źródła i materiały [Polish Songs and Folk Music. Source materials]*. Editor-in-Chief: Ludwik Bielawski; Editor of song lyrics and descriptions of customs and rituals — Barbara Krzyżaniak; Editor of musical material

— Aleksander Pawlak; Co-editor Jarosław Lisakowski⁵, Warszawa: IS PAN 2002.

The publication by the Institute of Arts of the Polish Academy of Sciences of the five-volume collection of folk material entitled *Warmia i Mazury*⁶ must be regarded as an event of great significance in Polish humanistic sciences. In fact, it would be hard to find an ethnomusicological work of similar importance anywhere in the world. This monumental opus is the culmination of decades of research by a team of scholars under the leadership of Ludwik Bielawski (Barbara Krzyżaniak was responsible for the descriptions of customs and rituals and for the editing of the lyrics of the songs, and the musical material was edited by Aleksander Pawlak, now deceased, who collaborated with Jarosław Lisakowski). It is a model of modern, critical and comprehensive documentation of folk music from a particular ethnographic-historical region. The region in question is unusual for two reasons: firstly, because of its position on the borderline between various ethnic and national groups, languages, religious faiths and traditions; secondly, because in reality it no longer exists. The documentation concerns a musical culture created by people who, for the most part, had to leave their homeland behind; their place was taken by people displaced from other regions of pre-war and post-war Poland. In his Introduction, Ludwik Bielawski refers to this region as the Atlantis of the North. Communities which for centuries had preserved their distinctive identity in spite of the powerful pressure of alien cultures, finally disintegrated. The area of Warmia and Mazury was homeland to diverse communities which became differentiated in modern times, mainly under the influence of the Reformation; their cultures were shaped at a time of change, often turbulent, affecting such fundamental aspects of culture as religious faith (Lutheran Masuria), language (German mainly in towns and manorial estates), custom and national identity.

Warmia i Mazury demonstrate the complexity, and the paradoxes, of borderland cultures, as well as the simple truths about their coexistence: at times peaceful, when the differences of religion, language and tradition did not destroy respect for and a sense of solidarity with one's neighbours; at other times hostile, when politics entered into people's lives and set them against

the “aliens”. While the differences of faith, language and tradition (coming from different national cultures: Polish, German and Lithuanian) were important, so were the attitudes which the communities adopted towards each other, which allowed them to coexist in spite of these differences. For years, generations of Mazurians learned the Protestant faith and Polish language (and local customs) from consecutive editions of the “Mazurian hymn book” (its official title was “The Newly Edited Prussian Hymn Book”⁷), which accompanied them from the cradle to the grave. However, Polish speaking teachers, folklorists and social activists did not always approve of being linked to Poland. For example, Marcin Gerst, a noted folklorist and a propagator of the Polish language, was in favour of the Mazurians attaching themselves to the Prussian monarchy, for religious reasons. On the other hand, many outstanding Protestant pastors, such as Michał Pogorzelski in the eighteenth century, or Gustaw Gizewiusz and Herman Pełka in the nineteenth, all highly knowledgeable about local customs, advocated the nurture of Polish identity. Their manuscript records of folklore are among the most valuable documents of nineteenth-century Mazurian culture.

In the nineteenth century there was close cooperation between Polish and German scholars, such as Oskar Kolberg, Jan Karol Sembrzycki and Wojciech Kętrzyński or A. Preuss⁸, Max Toeppen and Herman Frischbier (a friend of Sembrzycki). This led to an exchange of collected folk material, as well as ideas, which were always formulated on the basis of sound evidence, and with respect for the Mazurians and their culture. The cooperation also resulted in the translation of a number of articles (from German into Polish and vice versa), as well as Polish songs and descriptions of rituals. This began to change towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the intensification of Prussia’s anti-Polish policy, which changed people’s attitudes and destroyed collaborative and impartial research. For example, the hostile attitude of the German musicologist, Joseph Müller-Blattau, led him to falsely interpret the collection of Mazurian songs, *Masurische Volkslieder*, published in 1934, as typically German. In fact, these songs were germanized versions of 55 Polish songs, familiar throughout Mazury and in some cases throughout Poland (such as *Kapła się Kasia w morzu*, *Z tamtej strony jeziora* or *Zielona rutka*).

In their original form they had typical mazurka rhythms, which were adapted to the demands of the German language. The lyrics, translated into German, were adapted to the modified melodies, which in turn were notated with an anacrusis and constant accentuation (instead of the variable accentuation, typical of the Polish metro-rhythmic structure; cf. Karl Becker's notation).

Warmia i Mazury present an unusual record of what might seem to be a frozen image of the music of the communities inhabiting north-eastern Poland (former East Prussia). In reality, however, it is a deeply moving, dynamic and dramatic story, whose complex, entangled and often extremely turbulent course takes place against the background of beautiful forests, lakes and fields. This is reflected in both the songs themselves and the commentaries and footnotes to the original sources. It is therefore important to view this documentation (the oldest sources reach back to the eighteenth century, the most recent ones — the end of the nineteen-eighties) from a historical perspective, placing the development and evolution of the musical culture of Warmia and Mazury in the context of historical events. Of equal importance is the ethnographic perspective, accentuating the cultural and social context of the songs. And, finally, the purely musical perspective is needed to demonstrate how the cultural context and the violent history of Warmia and Mazury are reflected in the genres, structures, forms and styles of the songs. Much can be learned from the dissemination of the various musical themes and lyrics. The work reviewed here enables one to consider all these questions: it provides a full, critical edition of the collected musical, ethnographic and historical sources, together with commentaries to the songs and the informants' stories. The songs are organised in a clear and logical manner and their lyrics and melodies are presented using modern graphic methods, both of which facilitate the task of analysis.

The various volumes of *Warmia i Mazury* include important material, ranging from the rare and extremely valuable manuscripts recording songs, folk literature and customs and dating from as far back as the eighteenth century (documents of great ethnographic-historical significance), to the material collected during the systematic field studies from 1950–1958⁹, which constitutes the core of the book. Credit for the latter must go to the team of researchers

from Olsztyn, who carried out this work as part of the Folklore Collection Project and who extended their studies beyond 1954 (the official end of the Project) owing to the determination of Władysław Gębik, the leader of the team (his main co-workers were Janina Gliszczyńska and Jan Lubomirski). Their efforts resulted in a collection of nearly six thousand by now priceless recordings of songs and stories by native Mazurian and Warmian informants, and almost as many recordings of the folklore of other ethnic groups who were settled in this region after the Second World War and who came from as far away as the Vilnius, Lvov and Volhyn areas, from Belarus and from Bieszczady (Lemka)¹⁰. Today, after the last desperate wave of migrations by the Protestant Mazurs to Germany in the 1970s, the present population of the former East Prussia is an unusually complex and highly telling mixture of dialects, cultures, faiths and traditions.

It seems that the uniqueness of this monumental, perfectly carried out documentation lies in what could be summed up as the issue (at times hard to interpret) of cultural identity of the native inhabitants of Warmia and Mazury, expressed through their melodies, lyrics, dialects and customs. What are the components which make up this continually evolving, internally differentiated (e.g. through faith: basically Catholic Warmia and Protestant Mazury), yet clearly discernible sense of identity and cultural distinctiveness of Warmia and Mazury?

The unique complexity of the musical culture of Warmia and Mazury needs to be approached initially from the historical perspective. Its deepest layer, truly dramatic and almost undetectable, lies in the cultural tradition of the Baltic Prussians, who were subjected to overwhelming pressure, mainly from the Teutonic Order, even as early as the late Middle Ages. Intense germanization of the Prussian population (including the Warmians) was overlaid by migrations from Mazovia which began in the late Middle Ages. These two factors form the main foundation of the documented culture (the Lithuanian element played a lesser part here). However, as has already been mentioned, this foundation became greatly diversified over the course of time. The evolution of traditional culture, normally very gradual, here, in Warmia and Mazury, underwent periods of violent acceleration, mainly in response to the

Reformation and the historical shifts in the national status of the two regions. Periods when the influence of politics came into play had the most negative effect on the culture. The policy of “repolonising” the former East Prussia, introduced after the Second World War, led to the destruction of local traditions and radical changes in the composition of the population now inhabiting Warmia and Mazury. It is doubtful whether a new, cohesive traditional culture could crystallise from the present ethnic mixture (following the desperate flight of many native inhabitants to Germany¹¹ and the migrations from the north-eastern, central and southern Poland), especially now, in a period of an expanding mass culture.

The material in the five volumes of *Warmia i Mazury* is arranged so as to enable the reader to consider simultaneously both the music and the lyrics (which makes it different from the previous publication on Kujawy). This makes it easier to perceive the songs as musical-textual wholes, in line with the Kolbergian tradition. As in the works of that great folklorist, here too the repertory relating to customs and ritual is given a great deal of attention (Volume 1), indicating the connection between the songs and the cultural context and the annual and familial ceremonies (represented by the wedding ceremony). This context provides us with a panoramic picture full of diverse themes, representing the culture of the region, and at the same time providing a commentary on the landscape, the flora (cereals, herbs, flowers and trees typical for the region) and the fauna (bear, horse, stork, heron, all play important symbolic parts in the winter and spring songs and ceremonies), the climate and the occupations of the Warmians and the Mazurians. The ethnographic perspective on the annual and wedding repertory helps not only to explain the specific meanings and functions of the ritual chants, but also their differentiation in terms of genre and style (the age and function of a song). A number of the songs are relics of a distant past, which can make their critical interpretation difficult (the original connection between particular chants and rituals may be doubtful and hard to verify). At the same time, this leads us to examine the songs’ meanings, where symbols and metaphors of the songs, the accessories and the whole rituals play a fundamental part (the volumes of *Słownik stereotypów i symboli ludowych* [*The Dictionary of Stereotypes and*

Folk Symbols] 1996, 1999, edited under the direction of Jerzy Bartmiński, which are being published currently, should be of great assistance in this).

Further volumes bring a truly comprehensive variety of material: volume 2 — *Ballads and Social Life Songs* (including songs of itinerant singers, soldiers' songs, and songs relating to historical, social and occupational themes); volume 3 — *Courting and Love Songs*; volume 4 — *Family and Dance Songs* (comprising generally known, family and children's songs, jocular songs and dance ditties, dances and social games); volume 5 — *Religious and Popular Songs* (including the famous Christmas Matins, a unique record of Mazurian Christmas musical tradition with Catholic roots; also hymns, carols, Marian songs, songs to do with saints and pilgrimages, occasional and popular songs and instrumental pieces). Songs accompanied people in almost every situation in life, and this shaped their content, function and form. Volumes 2–5 take lesser account of the cultural and situational context of the performance (apart from work songs or lullabies), concentrating on presenting the songs in accordance with their formal genre and functional and stylistic features. Such a comprehensive collection allows one to observe above all the musical differentiation of particular groups of songs. The tremendous differentiation within such simple forms manifests itself through various principles of tonal organisation (from repetitive formulae consisting of a few notes to elaborate periods with functional tonality) and metrorhythmicity (from expression through organic sentences, through ametric formulae, to the repeatability of dance formulae). This is linked to stylistic differentiation in performance (tempo, articulation, rubato etc.). Presenting the songs in this way encourages the reader to trace the relationship between the genres and functions of the chants and their musical structure and forms of expression.

This unprecedented review of songs¹² also reveals issues which are usually ignored — issues which may be controversial, but have great significance. They concern the variability of the sensitivity and artistic taste of folk singers, which may be related to the different functions of the songs. Side by side with true musical masterpieces (frequent among songs relating to rituals, as well as ballads or dance songs) one finds quite a few songs with banal melodies and trivial lyrics. There are also a number of songs which were probably

composed “in the folk spirit”, with greater or lesser skill, and which were typical particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The issue of the evolution of values concerns not only the beauty of the melodies and the poetry of the songs. It also concerns the values held by the communities of Warmians and Mazurians, such as hard work, generosity or solidarity. Many informants emphasise the fact that these were the values held in high regard in the old days, they were what shaped the life of the communities, their image of the world, their customs and their art. Of significance is, for instance, the view which regards nature as sacred, typical for the ritual songs, particularly the older and the most interesting ones.

Equally fascinating are the issues of changes of denomination, or rather the adaptation of the new, Protestant faith to the traditional religious mentality of the Mazurians, which the songs reflect in their own particular way. Of particular interest here is the appearance of the “written” tradition alongside the oral one (Lutheran culture was distinguished by its cult of the Scriptures), and, more specifically, the influence of hymn books on the folk repertory and the manner of performing traditional folk songs¹³. Another area of great interest is the influence of German not only on the everyday language of the Warmians and Mazurians, but also — through contacts with the German culture — on folk customs. Thus, the substitution of the traditional term for the chief groomsman, “proszek”, by “placmistrz” was linked to abandoning the custom of inviting guests to a wedding directly and personally. These invitations originally took the form of splendid orations, addressed by the “proszek” to each invitee. This ancient custom was replaced by that of sending written invitations — “bilety” — in the interwar period (could this also be a reflection of the cult of the Scriptures?) Other linguistic changes are also worth investigating: for instance, the substitution of “brutka” for the Polish word for the bride (“panna młoda”) might have a number of consequences, also those affecting wedding songs. All these interdependencies (language — melody — custom — culture) are not easy to trace, and their relationships are at times very indirect. However, one can also observe direct and obvious influences (such as abandoning direct invitations or replacing traditional folk

ensembles of fiddle, double bass and/or clarinet, accordion and small drum, by brass bands, a favourite element of Prussian culture), which would effect clearly observable changes in the musical arrangements at weddings and the musical sensibility of the people. Of course the relationship between artistic and what might be called universal values is not simple, nor is it easy to investigate. But it is interesting nonetheless, and perhaps may be the key element in maintaining traditional cultures. When values such as those mentioned above (generosity or solidarity) became obsolete, the traditional culture began to die, becoming similar to the pop and mass culture.

The series *Polska..* has been referred to as the “New Kolberg” (Prof. Jerzy Bartminski described it as such in his review of *Kaszuby*). Is this right? The answer seems to be: yes. The approach to the recorded musical culture is Kolbergian in its broad view of songs in the context of culture and the natural world (although Kolberg may have the edge in this respect), in following the principle of faithful recording, and in making the documentation as comprehensive as possible (Kolberg used to record all forms, paramusical ones as well, and both authentic folk songs and those sung at manor houses and in cities). The desire to preserve the song “as it came from the mouth of the people”, in its “pristine simplicity”, even with “deviations”, is also a Kolbergian trait.

But this is definitely a **new** Kolberg, supplemented by detailed information about the performers and even their portraits, giving precise musical and textual transcriptions (phonetic record of dialect), and even taking into account performance variants of particular verses of songs. The structuring of the material in terms of content-function and culture-context, apparently close to that of Kolberg, has the hallmarks of twentieth-century knowledge and the technical capabilities of modern folklorists (sound and film recordings). And in one aspect, the reader is aware of having truly entered the twenty-first century.

The aspect referred to is the unique index of melodies — a digital, synoptic record of the melics of all the songs reduced to the “sol modus” (g1 is the central note of the melodies — it might be called their common tonal denominator), with numbering and division into groups and with textual incipits of the songs.

The index shows the differences between the groups and the relationships within many groups of songs, at times virtually melodic types. It is not only a new feature of the series, providing an irreplaceable guide to the material; it is also a highly promising proposal for structuring song material in general. One can surmise that this will provide the starting point for a separate catalogue of folk melodies, initiating a new stage of research and comparative studies. This stage will make use of modern graphics and the exceptional skills of the team of ethnomusicologists and dialectologists led by Prof. Ludwik Bielawski. Their work is characterised by the highest degree of professionalism in the areas of phonetic recording of dialect, musical transcription and electronic encoding and recording of melodies, and the best proof of this is provided by the publication reviewed here.

Katarzyna Dadak-Kozicka

Notes

- 5 Monika Gruchmanowa and Edmund Kownacki acted as dialect consultants; Krystyna Lesień-Plachecka was responsible for language verification. Computerized typesetting of texts — Arleta Nawrocka-Wysocka, computerized typesetting of music — Ewa Dahlig, Arleta Nawrocka, Zbigniew Przerembski.
- 6 The two previous collections in this series were *Kujawy* (two volumes, 1974–5) and *Kaszuby* (three volumes, 1997–98). The Editor-in-Chief of the series, and co-author of *Kaszuby*, Ludwik Bielawski, received a number of awards, among them the Pomeranian Association’s award (“The Amber Snuffbox”), the Polish Composers’ Union award, and the Oskar Kolberg Award, in recognition of this work.
- 7 The first editions of “The Newly Edited Prussian Hymn Book” were published in 1741; by the end of the century it had run to eighteen editions (according to the bibliography by Władysław Chojnacki, which revises the data provided by Sukertowa-Biedrawina), thus demonstrating that this “musical bible” must have been in great demand (Arleta Nawrocka-Wysocka, *Śpiewy protestanckie na Mazurach. Tradycja ustna i pisana* [*Protestant Singing in Mazury Land. Oral and Written Tradition*], Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki PAN 2002).
- 8 His article published in *Preussische Provinzial-Blätter* (later *Altpreussische Monatsschrift*) in 1935 discusses the distinct folk cultures of three ethnic groups: German, Polish and Lithuanian, quoting several Polish songs (with German translations). Preuss notes that many folk songs may withstand comparison with the great works of “haute musique”; he also refers to the instrumentation of folk ensembles and to the hospitality of the Mazurians, adding that he owes this information to the provost of Drygały near Pisz.
- 9 These were extended and supplemented by field studies carried out by researchers

from the Arts Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Poznań as recently as the 1980s.

- 10 This was the result of deportations carried out in 1947 as a result of the “Vistula Campaign”, tragic in its consequences.
- 11 After the Second World War the Mazurians, who were identified with the Germans, suffered much persecution. On the other hand, they were often regarded as aliens by the Germans; sometimes homesickness brought them back to Mazury (see Ewa Laskowska’s study of neighbours and relatives in the Szczytno area; Master’s thesis *Folklor Mazurów Ewangelickich. . .* [*Folklore of Evangelical Mazurians. . .*]; for a fuller discussion see Andrzej Sakson’s *Mazurzy — społeczność pogranicza* [*The Mazurians — a Borderline People*], Poznań 1990
- 12 Previous collections have always consisted of selections from the whole folk repertory of a region.
- 13 These issues are the subject of Arleta Nawrocka-Wysocka’s doctoral thesis *Śpiewy protestanckie. . .* [*Protestant Singing in Mazury Land. . .*], op. cit. The author received the Rev. Prof. H. Feicht Award from the Polish Composers’ Union for this work.