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arch. Muzeum Budownictwa Ludowego w Olsztynku

Easter was connected with the awakening of nature and with undertaking certain household chores in a farmyard and a cottage. Everyone longed for good, fatty food. People in Warmia were very strict about the Lent period. Meat and dairy products weren't eaten. The only fat allowed was oil, usually flaxseed. There was a strict fast on Wednesdays and Fridays and the only food allowed then was bread. At the end of the Lent people longed for meat.

On Good Friday, boys would run around the village shaking wooden clappers as a sign of the mourning because of Christ's death. On Holy Saturday in Warmia, when the ceremony of blessing water and fire took place in church, the oldest wayside cross in the village was burnt. The charcoal from the burned cross was taken home and carefully stored, as it was commonly believed to cure illnesses, especially pains, which were treated with charcoal compresses.

Before World War II people in Warmia didn't know the idea of blessing the Easter basket. The custom was introduced after the war by settlers from Poland. Before World War II people in Warmia did not prepare any special dishes,

apart from colourful eggs. They were dyed yellow and various shades of brown in onion skins, maroon in beetroot skins and green in rye stalks. They were decorated, not always though, with scratched ornaments. This is an ancient custom dating back to pagan times, when the egg - a symbol of dormant life - was associated with the goddess of the spring.

The most solemn moment during the Easter holiday was Sunday morning. People from Warmia used to go to church at 6 a.m. for the Resurrection Mass.

According to the tradition, on that day they should get up at dawn and watch the rising sun, because they could see a lamb on it. Next they went silent to the running water (a river) and washed their faces. This custom probably dated back to pre-Christian times. It was advisable to wash oneself in the flowing water to ensure health and beauty in the coming year. It was believed that water drawn before sunrise had the power to cure sick eyes. Having returned home, people were supposed to sprinkle with water sleeping household members as well as cows and horses. This custom had a magical power because the cleansing water was used to begin a new vegetation cycle.

On Easter Monday children would search for gifts left by the hare under the bushes in the garden. There was also the custom of smacking the calves with birch twigs or juniper. After the smacking, groups of boys would go around the village to look for those who wanted to avoid the smacking by offering the most beautiful Easter eggs. You could also buy your way out of smacking by treating 'the smackers' with a piece of cake, sausages or even money.

THE SHORT HISTORY OF WARMIA AND MASURIA



Katedra w Fromborku – arch. WMROT

Pagan Prussian tribes which had been living on the territory of present Warmia and Masuria were conquered by **the Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem (so called Teutonic Knights)** in the 13th century.

There were four dioceses created on the former Prussian territory, among others the Warmia diocese. One third of the diocese was handed over to the bishop of Warmia. This territory was called **Warmia**.

The Warmia Chapter was established in 1260. It encompassed one third of Warmia, including: the three cities of Frombork, Pieniężno and Olsztyn along with their surroundings. The chapter consisted of 16 canons. They chose the bishop. After his death before a new bishop was chosen, the chapter took over the power.

Warmia had two feudal sovereigns: the bishop and the chapter. They exercised the secular and spiritual power in Warmia. In contrast to Masuria, Warmia didn't belong directly to the Teutonic state. It had always enjoyed a lot of autonomy despite numerous connections with the Teutonic Knights' state. Therefore we have bishop and chapter castles in Warmia, whereas in Masuria we have Teutonic castles. Warmia became a part of Poland after the Peace of Toruń of 1466.

The remaining part (including Masuria) was the Polish fief under the rule of the Order. As Albert of Prussia dissolved the Teutonic Order in 1525 and created the first Evangelical state in the world, **Warmia became a Catholic enclave surrounded by the Evangelical Duchy of Prussia. Thus we say that Warmia was Catholic, whereas Masuria was Evangelical.**

In 1618, after the death of Albert Frederick, Albert of Prussia's son, the Duchy of Prussia was ruled by electors of Brandenburg. The rise of Brandenburg – Prussia began. **The Duchy of Prussia was the Polish fief till 1657, when it finally gained independence.**

1772 Warmia was annexed by Prussia (the so-called First Partition of Poland). Since then also Evangelical believers could settle in Warmia. The Prussian prince Frederick III Elector of Brandenburg crowned himself the king of Prussia in 1701 in Königsberg. After this coronation he named himself Frederick I of Prussia.

Both Masuria and southern Warmia were inhabited by Polish settlers from Mazovia. **Warmia had belonged to Poland since the 15th century (from 1466 - the Second Peace of Toruń) to 1772 (the First Partition of Poland). It is worth mentioning that Nicolaus Copernicus lived and worked in Warmia when it was in Polish hands, whereas Masuria was just the fief of Poland until 1657.**

Masuria first belonged to the Duchy of Prussia, then from 1701 to the Kingdom of Prussia. The inhabitants of Masuria spoke the Polish dialect, but were Prussian subjects. The name "Masuria" was introduced by the Prussian authorities, German science and journalism in the first half of the 19th century to define the territory inhabited by the Polish-speaking Evangelical population.

Warmia and Masuria was a German territory until the end of World War II. Then the German population fled from the Red Army, was displaced or left their homeland. The area of our province was inhabited by former inhabitants of the Vilnius region, which before World War II belonged to Poland, and afterwards was incorporated into the Soviet Union. Thus many of the inhabitants of our region are their descendants.

In 1945 East Prussia was divided, the northern part fell to the Soviet Union (now Kaliningrad Oblast in Russia and Lithuania) and the southern part to Poland. The

southern part of East Prussia is Warmia and Masuria. The region is now referred to as the Warmia-Masuria Voivodship with its capital in Olsztyn.

