

Articles

Arkadiusz Wagner, The Gothic bookcase from the Library of the Parish of Rößel.

This article presents one of the most valuable and at the same time least investigated historical monuments of Gothic cabinet making in present day Poland: it is a bookcase fashioned for the book collection of the Parish of Rößel (Polish: Reszel) in 1471. The article deals with the history of this piece of furniture, beginning with the date of its making during the time of the first canonical book collections in the second half of the 15th century. It then relates how it was taken apart and was thought to be lost as its elements were widely scattered after World War II. Then, in 2012, parts were recovered in different places in the church and were re-joined again. The article describes the present structure of the bookcase including the attempt to reconstruct its original form and appearance. Special attention is directed to the rich relief carvings on the wood trims of the furniture front. All this is discussed with respect to European and, in particular, to Prussian cabinet making. The findings suggest that the bookcase can be seen as a synthesis between the late Gothic carpentry of Northern Europe and that of the Alpine region. Additionally, its decoration is very similar to that of the Gothic choir stalls of Guttstadt (Polish: Dobre Miasto). In its entirety, this bookcase is an outstanding piece of furniture among the listed historical monuments of our time.

Jacek Wijaczka, The Jewish Population in the Ducal (Brandenburgian) Dukedom of Prussia in the Early Modern Period.

The Jewish population in the Duchy and Kingdom of Prussia in the Early Modern Period has rarely been the subject of research, as the number of members in the congregations was relatively small as compared to those in East Central Europe, and only in Königsberg (Kaliningrad) a cultural center had developed. It was mainly for this reason that German and Polish research has dealt with this topic only marginally. The article therefore reviews the existing sources and written records and German and Polish literature anew. It points out quite clearly that the temporary residence of Jews for economic and other reasons (wars, diseases, migration) and contacts between the professional classes of Prussia and the Jewish communities beyond the border in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth played a far greater role than as yet known.

In a second step, the article analyzes the development of the congregation of Kaliningrad Königsberg after 1680 and its development into a regional centre in the 18th century. The community developed dynamically on account of the ascent of Kaliningrad Königsberg to a centre of economy, the growth of trade along the river Memel and the support of the community through privileges granted by the dukes or kings. In spite of the fact that permanent residence was forbidden for Jews and that the communities were of limited importance, Jewish people played a significant role in the Duchy, or, respectively, in the Kingdom of Prussia. They should, therefore, not be left out in the analysis of the religious and cultural circumstances of the time.

Andrzej Kopiczko, Polish and German Traditions in the Church Life of Warmia before 1945.

In the time before the first Polish Partition there are hardly any genuine German or pure Polish traditions. It was not before Warmia was integrated into Prussia that a dichotomy of liturgy became apparent, but it was no cause of conflict. Even after 1772 there are hardly any grave differences between Polish and German traditions until 1945. Differences were most notable in the worship of Saints and in paraliturgical services. However, the obvious and self-evident difference was the use of language – either the Polish or the German dialect of Warmian – in the Polish and German parts of Warmia. German as well as Polish Warmian traditions, still observed before 1945, were completely lost in the People's Republic of Poland as a result of a change in the population structure.

Hanna Teschner, The Development of the Relationship of the Warmia Family (Ermlandfamilie) to Poland and Warmia (1965–2005).

The Ermland people form only a small section of the population within the Catholic church of Germany. In contrast to other church groups or initiatives, who try to improve the German-Polish dialogue, the relationship of the Ermlanders to Poland is marked by certain peculiarities. The Catholic Ermlanders from a region in former East Prussia feel connected to the Catholic Polish people, who have their home there today. The relationship of the displaced Ermlanders to Poland, their view of the neighbouring people and their attitude towards them have greatly changed following the correspondence of German and Polish bishops from 1965 to the election of the German Pope in 2005. The article on hand is based on self-evidence of Ermlanders, as mirrored, in particular, in their newsletter, the Ermland letters.

Initially, the Ermlanders adopted a policy of wait and see in the German-Polish dialogue. Up to 1972, when Ermland became a Polish diocese, the interest in Poland was mainly linked to questions of Heimatpolitik (home politics). The political turning point in 1989/1990 meant a decisive change. From 1991 German-Polish contacts increased. These contacts among clerics mainly concerned those Germans who had stayed in Ermland. Matters of concern among the German minority were sorted out, questions of services and ecclesiastical and social life were settled. Similarly, the Ermländisches Landvolk (Ermland country folk) tried to improve conditions for Ermland farmers of German origin. The German-Polish relationships among the Gemeinschaft Junges Ermland (the Community of Young Ermland) differs greatly from that of other groups. This youth group was not so much interested in educational goals, but rather in contacts and meetings. The contacts between German and Polish young people are of an exceptional quality. Their services are held in both languages. It is a unique feature that in the Ermland family Polish group members are integrated into the structure and organization of the group. The special commitment of individual people helped greatly in developing the contacts to Poland in all groups of the Ermland family.