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Cultural Conditions of Constructing Hegemonic Masculinity in the Polish Environment of West Prussia in the in the Mid-19th Century

Abstract. The article presents cultural factors contributing to hegemonic masculinity in the Polish community of West Prussia in the mid-19th century. Starting from the perspective of social constructionism, Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity was used in the research process to reveal the dominant discourse of masculinity in the studied milieu. The source base for the research was the Polish journalism of the region in question (predominantly the local press), mainly from the late 1840s and 1850s, less frequently from later periods. The contextual analysis of the research material made it possible to identify five basic, cultural determinants cultivating hegemonic masculinity in the Polish community of West Prussia in the period studied, analysed in detail (in separate parts) in the present article. These determinants include: the dominant narrative on the role of the male in the family, the position of the male in social structure, the role of the insurrectionary and organic work ethos, the influence of professed faith, including the views proclaimed by Catholic moralists, and the resulting beliefs about male sexuality. The research has shown the significant influence of Catholic ethics and national ideas derived from the nobility on the creation of a hegemonic image of masculinity in the Polish community of the studied region. This discourse was explicitly conservative and essentialist in nature. It also played an important role in maintaining and developing Polish identity in the absence of the Polish statehood.

Keywords: masculinity, constructing identity, socialization, Polish environment, West Prussia

Introduction

Nowadays, the issue of masculinity is the subject of various social debates as well as of interest and discussions among representatives of various scientific disciplines, especially the cultural studies popular today. The situation is different when we refer to past epochs when these topics were rarely addressed, and even when they were addressed, the category

of masculinity was generally not used explicitly. How this state of affairs was possible in a male-dominated world is interestingly explained in the *Introduction* to the encyclopaedia dedicated to men and masculinities, co-edited by Michael Kimmel and Amy Aronson, where it is pointed out that:

There are libraries filled with volumes about men. And University course catalogues are overflowing with courses about men. But rarely are these volumes or these courses about men as men – that is, rarely are they also about gender. Instead, they are called ‘history’ or ‘literature’ or ‘political science’. It’s probably fair to say that if the course doesn’t have the word ‘women’ in the title, it’s more than likely about men – except that it’s rare for ‘masculinity’ to be discussed at all¹.

Thanks to Raewyn Connell, in contemporary studies on men, masculinity is increasingly referred to in the plural form. Based on her research, R. Connell argues that there are different masculinities existing simultaneously in every culture and epoch, with one that is dominant and can be called hegemonic². This type of masculinity is also the subject of this research. However, since the understanding of hegemonic masculinity according to R. Connell³, based on power relations (i.e., external hegemony over women and internal hegemony over other masculinities), only partly corresponds to the specificity of my research, below I will not only use the above-mentioned category but also the notion of traditionally understood masculinity. In my opinion, this concept better reflects the cultural background of the constructing of the dominant model of the ideal man in the area I have analysed.

Starting from the perspective of social constructionism⁴, this article focusses on the cultural conditions of structuring traditionally understood masculinity in the mid-19th century on the example of the Polish community of West Prussia.

At this point – especially for the non-Polish reader – it is worth to devote at least a few sentences to the introduction of West Prussia. The region in question (then known under the name of Royal Prussia) was part of the Polish state in the second half of the 18th centu-

¹ *Introduction*, in: *Men and Masculinities A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1: A–J, by M. Kimmel, A. Aronson, Santa Barbara – Denver – Oxford 2004, XV; See K. Kłosiński, *De(re)konstrukcja męskości* [De(re)construction of masculinity], “Teksty drugie” 2015, 2, p. 13.

² R.W. Connell, *A Whole New World: Remaking Masculinity in the Context of the Environmental Movement*, “Gender and Society” 1990, 4, p. 454.

³ R.W. Connell, J.W. Messerschmidt, *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept*, “Gender and Society” 2005, 6, s. 832; Ł. Skoczylas, *Hegemoniczna męskość i dywidenda patriarchy. O społecznej teorii płci kulturowej Raewyn Connell* [Hegemonic masculinity and the dividend of patriarchy. On Raewyn Connell’s social theory of cultural gender], “Refleksje” [Reflections] 2011, 4, p. 12–14.

⁴ The understanding of social constructionism was adopted after P. Berger and T. Luckmann. Among other things, these authors point out that: “Reality is socially defined. But the definitions are always *embodied*, that is, concrete individuals and groups of individuals serve as definers of reality. To understand the state of the socially constructed universe at any given time, or its change over time, one must understand the social organization that permits the definers to do their defining”. P.L. Berger, T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Penguin Books, London 1991, p. 134.

ry. Then, as a result of the partitions of Poland, from 1772 (and in the case of Gdańsk and Toruń since 1793), it became an integral part of Prussia. At different times, West Prussia formed a separate province with a capital in Gdańsk (Danzig). In 1920, the Treaty of Versailles returned most of the region to Poland, and the Free City of Danzig was established on the territory of Danzig itself and the surrounding area. Since 1945, the entire area is located within the borders of Poland and is now known as the Vistula Pomerania.

Since I have highlighted the Polish community as the subject of my research, it is also worth noting the nationality relations that existed in the area under study. According to various estimates, in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the population of West Prussia was dominated by speakers of German. The Polish community was a minority (according to the estimates of various researchers, it represented between 31 and 42% of the total population). The third national group was a small Jewish population (reflecting about 1%)⁵. It is worth noting that due to the multicultural character of West Prussia, the nationality choices of its individual inhabitants were not always unambiguous. Even in the first half of the 19th century, identity was determined more by religion than nationality, i.e., Catholicism was clearly dominant among the Polish population and Protestantism among the German population⁶ (although it should be added that a certain number of Germans also professed Catholicism)⁷. As a result, the views represented by the Polish community were influenced more by the Polish Catholic clergy and representatives of the Polish national movement than by the Prussian administration that was associated with Protestantism. My decision to limit the analysis to the Polish population was therefore guided both by the cultural and religious differences between Germans and Jews and by the influence exerted on the community under study by the Polish intelligentsia (including especially the Polish clergy).

⁵ R. Szymański, *Statystyka ludności polskiej w zaborze pruskim* [The statistics of the Polish population in the Prussian partition], Poznań 1874, p. 10–11; J. Buzek, *Historia polityki narodowościowej rządu pruskiego wobec Polaków: od traktatów wiedeńskich do ustaw wyjątkowych z roku 1908* [History of the national policy of the Prussian Government towards Poles: from the Vienna Treaties to the Emergency Laws of 1908], Lwów – Warszawa 1909, p. 553; J. Borzyszkowski, *Inteligencja polska w Prusach Zachodnich 1848–1920* [Polish intelligentsia in West Prussia 1848–1920], Gdańsk 1986, p. 18; M. Wojciechowski, *Stosunki narodowościowe w Prusach Zachodnich w początkach XX wieku (1900–1920)* [Ethnic relations in West Prussia at the beginning of the 20th century (1900–1920)], in: *Regiony pograniczne Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XVI–XX wieku. Społeczeństwo – gospodarka – polityka* [Border regions of Central and Eastern Europe in the 16th–20th century. Society – economy – politics], eds M. Wojciechowski, R. Schattkowsky, Toruń 1996, p. 72–73.

⁶ Cf. K. Wajda, *Świadomość narodowa chłopów polskich na ziemiach pod panowaniem pruskim: przesłanki integracji narodowej chłopów i jej przebieg (do 1914 r.)* [National awareness of the Polish peasantry under Prussian rule: the prerequisites for national integration of the peasantry and its process (until 1914)], "Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Historia" 1997, 322, p. 141.

⁷ J. Borzyszkowski, *Rodowód społeczny duchowieństwa diecezji chełmińskiej drugiej połowy XIX w.* [Social origins of the clergy of the Chełmno diocese in the second half of the 19th century], in: *Inteligencja polska XIX i XX w.* [Polish intelligentsia of the 19th and 20th centuries], ed. R. Czepulis-Rastenis, Warszawa 1981, p. 138.

Methods and source basis of research

Conducting research on the issue of masculinity in relation to the 19th century poses a certain challenge when we consider that this category was not at the centre of attention of the Polish society at the time, and also when the researcher's area of interest is limited to a relatively small region, perceived on a macro-historical scale as peripheral. This is the case with the aim of the present research, i.e., investigating cultural factors constructing the traditionally understood masculinity in the Polish community in West Prussia in the middle of the 19th century. The realisation of this objective was only possible thanks to a contextual analysis of the Polish journalistic writing of the studied region published in the period in question. In the Polish environment of West Prussia, the position of men in social life, and even more so the subject of masculinity closer to our current considerations, was not the subject of wider analysis. In the area studied, the functions and upbringing of women were given far more prominence as a result of the special role which was attributed to the mother in the process of maintaining and developing Polish culture at a time when Poland was deprived of its own statehood, and because of the emerging process of women's emancipation in Europe. For the 19th-century society of West Prussia, however, the roles and position of men in the family and society were so obvious, unambiguous and unquestionable that they were barely discussed. Yet, due to the fact that the publicists of the time often condemned the vices and shortcomings of the Polish population, we are in possession of source material on the expectations placed not only on women, but also on men, which allows us to formulate conclusions on the image of the model man of the period in question.

The research results presented in this article have been developed based on the method of critical analysis of sources, characteristic for historical-educational research. In this particular case, the Polish journals of West Prussia from the mid-nineteenth century were analysed. All Polish newspapers published in the region at that time were selected to carry it out. However, their journalists very rarely wrote about men as men. Therefore, this publication uses only those press titles that directly and indirectly refer to the role of men in the family and society. Therefore, the conducted research covered the following newspapers from the mid-nineteenth century: "Biedaczek" (Poor guy), "Katolik Diecezyi Chełmińskiej" (Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese), "Nadwiślanin" (Vistula Pomeranian) and "Gospodarz" (Farmer) (supplement to Nadwiślanin). In addition to the above-mentioned press, the journal "Pielgrzym" (Pilgrim) published since 1869 was also used, due to the references to the analysed issues clearly appearing in this newspaper.

Cultural factors conditioning the construction of male identity in the light of an analysis of the Polish West Prussian journalism publications

Preserved publications (mainly press articles) allow for the identification of several fundamental factors constructing male identity in the mid-19th-century West Prussia, to which I would like to devote particular attention in this article, i.e., the dominant narrative

on the role of the male in the family, the place of the male in social structure, the role of insurrectionary and organic work ethos, the influence of professed faith and views proclaimed by Catholic moralists on the role of men in the family and society, as well as beliefs resulting from these views on male sexuality. In addition to these factors, it is also worth mentioning the cultural transmission of attitudes and behaviour patterns, quite often based on traditional customs and habits originating in the nobility and folk culture, as well as the importance of individual family relationships. All the above-mentioned determinants, apart from the last two, which are more or less correlated with each other, constituted the hegemonic ideal of masculinity of Poles in the studied region at that time. At the same time, some of these factors shaped different types of identity (especially the national one).

1. Dominant narrative on the male role in the family

In the 19th-century Polish journalism of West Prussia we are confronted with a uniform picture of the role of men in the family and society, resulting from the discourse of gender polarization dominant in the region in question. This discourse apparently delineated the basic characteristics of masculinity. It was usually promoted by anonymous authors of articles published in the most influential opinion-forming Polish periodicals published in West Prussia⁸. The nature of the views presented by the aforementioned authors was generally imitative, as the idea of gender polarisation appears in the views of many philosophers, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Wilhelm von Humboldt or Joachim Heinrich Campe. This idea was based on the belief that there are natural differences between men and women, who complement each other but they are determined to perform different social roles⁹. The concept of gender polarisation was therefore strictly essentialist.

In the traditional view, the tasks of a man, as a husband and father, primarily included looking after the family's material well-being, providing it with a sense of security and representing it externally¹⁰. Translating these tasks into the language of modern family pedagogy, it can be said that the man was required to perform, above all, the economic, protective and representative functions. As the undisputed "head of the family", he also acted as the main decision-maker. Analysing various press articles from the area of West Prussia, we can confidently conclude that in the studied area men were mainly expected

⁸ *Obyczaje* [Customs], „Nadwiślanin” [Vistula Pomeranian], 91 (25.11.1853), p. 1–2; *Obyczaje* [Customs], „Nadwiślanin” [Vistula Pomeranian], 92 (29.11.1853), p. 1.

⁹ See A. Niewęglowska, *Średnie szkolnictwo żeńskie w Prusach Zachodnich w latach 1815–1914* [Female secondary education in West Prussia 1815–1914], „Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu” 2014, 3, p. 26–27, 43–46, 50–52, 56–60.

¹⁰ A. Chmielewska, *Ojcostwo i rola ojca* [Fatherhood and the role of the father], „Rodzina i Szkoła” 1959, 4, p. 2–3, 13.

to be hard working, thrifty, frugal, sober and honest¹¹. These expectations were a consequence of the difficult economic situation of many Polish families in the 19th century.

The cultural image of the man of West Prussia did not differ much from the model presented both in other Polish lands and in the other provinces of the Prussian state. This state of affairs can be explained by the patriarchal narrative which prevailed throughout Europe and the provincial character of the region in question which, in the 19th century was by no means original in terms of the development of original views on social life. Nevertheless, the dominating discourse of masculinity in West Prussia also had its specific foundations. This is because the concept of gender polarisation played an important role in the process of maintenance and development of the Polish national identity. Specific roles assigned clearly to men and women, based on the traditional division of duties, also had particular patriotic connotations. The model of gender polarisation was therefore part of the process of transmission of the Polish culture. This model not only preserved the existing social and intra-family relations, but also a specifically understood Polishness, which in the absence of Polish statehood was based primarily on the traditional family¹². However, it is essential to note that in the conditions of West Prussia (and not only) this discourse had a “noble” character, i.e., it was strongly associated with the views proclaimed by the Polish national elites, whose individual members, even if they did not have noble lineage, nevertheless adopted the noble (or rather post-noble) culture as their own, superior and most significant culture.

The Polish journalism publications in West Prussia strengthened conservative social relations; moreover, family relations of the time, despite the modernisation of society and the economy, most often still reflected a feudal mentality in which the position of man in the family reflected the role of the monarch in the state¹³. It is worth adding, however, that in the light of Polish publications, this role was definitely not to be despotic in character, but enlightened, based on respect for the subordinate household members such as wife and children. Although a man had the right to physically punish his children – which was in line with the widespread belief that the use of corporal punishment had a generally positive effect on upbringing¹⁴ – moralists of the time strongly condemned the abuse of

¹¹ *Życie pijaka* [Life of a drunkard], „Biedaczek” [Poor guy], 4 (26.01.1849), p. 3–4; *Jeden z obrazków dla pijaków* [Image for the drunkards], „Nadwiślanin” [Vistula Pomeranian], 43 (5.06.1855), p. 3–4; *O drogości a raczej o trudności wyżywienia i przyczynie nędzy wspólnoty* [On the difficulty of alimentation and the cause of the misery of common people], „Nadwiślanin” [Vistula Pomeranian], 76 (28.06.1855), p. 3–4.

¹² *Parę słów o uczeniu dziejów ojczystych jako środka zachowania narodowości* [A few words on teaching the history of homeland as a means of preserving nationality], „Nadwiślanin” [Vistula Pomeranian], 8 (24.03.1852), p. 1–2.

¹³ In a broader context, interesting conclusions were drawn on the exercise of monarchical power by the male in the family by the French researcher Jean Louis Flandrin in his *Historia rodziny* [The History of the Family]. J.L. Flandrin, *Historia rodziny* [The History of the Family], Warszawa 1998, p. 143–146.

¹⁴ P. Śpica, *Przemiany autorytetu ojca w rodzinie polskiej w XX wieku. Interpretacja z perspektywy historyczno-pedagogicznej* [Transformations of the father’s authority in the Polish family in the 20th century. Interpretation from the historical-pedagogical perspective], “Wychowanie w Rodzinie. Family upbringing” 2014, 2, p. 337.

offspring and wife¹⁵. In the Polish lands, as late as the mid-19th century, the image of the strict parent (not only the father) was widely accepted. Excessive leniency and indulgence towards children were perceived as detrimental¹⁶.

What is significant is the coherence of the narratives of the various Polish authors writing texts on social and family issues in the studied region. It resulted from the essentially monolithic structure of the Polish intelligentsia of West Prussia, dominated by the Catholic clergy¹⁷. The dominance of the clergy among the Polish intelligentsia of the region was the result of complicated national relations, but also of the views of the local population. In the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, clergyman was one of the few professions of the intelligentsia that allowed the preservation of Polish identity in a relatively straightforward way. Moreover, the peasant community dominant among the Polish inhabitants of West Prussia saw no need nor had financial means to educate its sons in other professions requiring more than a basic education, namely that of a priest. Meanwhile, candidates for the priesthood were often supported by scholarship assistance.

The views presented by the Catholic clergy strongly influenced the entire Polish movement, including the publishers and editors of the Polish press. It is therefore not surprising that the Polish journalism of West Prussia ignored alternative views on the role of men and it expressed strong criticism of various socialist, revolutionary, emancipatory, etc., movements developing in Western Europe¹⁸, which could contribute to upsetting the established social relations (including family relations) in West Prussia, and thus also lead to a redefinition of the current position and role of men. Meanwhile, the uniform, coherent, conservative “model of masculinity” created by Polish publicists was a serious factor in shaping the local population’s ideas about the place of men in the world and provided the men themselves with concrete guidelines on how to structure their own identity.

2. The place of men in social structure

The coherence of the dominant discourse of traditionally understood masculinity in West Prussia was also rooted in the social structure of the region in question. It was a peripheral, poorly industrialised region, the largest city of which (i. e. Gdańsk) had in the

¹⁵ *O niewstrzeźliwości w picciu gorących napojów* [On the lack of abstinence in drinking hot beverages], “Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 23 (5.06.1850), p. 194.

¹⁶ Cf. A. Bódyrew, *Kara i strach w wychowaniu dzieci w polskich rodzinach w XIX w.* [Punishment and fear in the upbringing of children in Polish families in the 19th century], “Dziecko Krzywdzone. Teoria, badania, praktyka” 2009, 3, p. 32–33.

¹⁷ J. Borzyszkowski, *Rodowód społeczny*, op. cit., p. 134.

¹⁸ *Próbki owoców nowomodnej wolności, postępu i oświaty* [Samples of the fruits of new-fashioned freedom, progress and education], “Pielgrzym” [Pilgrim], 41 (12.10.1871), p. 2–5; *Próbki owoców nowomodnej wolności, postępu i oświaty* [Samples of the fruits of new-fashioned freedom, progress and education], “Pielgrzym” [Pilgrim], 42 (19.10.1871), p. 3–5; *Próbki owoców nowomodnej wolności, postępu i oświaty* [Samples of the fruits of new-fashioned freedom, progress and education], “Pielgrzym” [Pilgrim], 43 (26.10.1871), p. 4–6.

mid-19th century a permanent population of no more than 60,000¹⁹. As I have already mentioned, the Polish population was dominated by peasants living in rural areas who, despite internal stratification, generally held an unequivocally conservative world view. As there was no middle-income or wealthy Polish bourgeoisie in the area under study, the leading role in Polish society during the studied period was played by the nobility. This was a relatively small but influential social layer, with a conservative outlook on male-female relations similar to the one that characterised the peasants.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, belonging to a particular social stratum determined men's professional activity, their functions in the public space, and significantly influenced their mentality. In the rural environment, the more austere farmers, fishermen or forest workers differed in their manners from the representatives of the nobility. While the former were mostly focussed on how to make ends meet and provide for their families through hard work, the latter could devote themselves to politics, the economy, the national cause, etc. Men from the privileged strata stepped into the role of statesmen, "fathers of the nation". Their vocation, or even their national duty, resulting from the ideals of organic work, was to educate the people and try to raise them to a higher economic and cultural level²⁰. Their conviction of their unique role played in the society somehow legitimised the views they proclaimed. In its "noble" version, traditional masculinity was characterised by broadly defined fatherhood, which meant taking moral responsibility for the local community. Polish men, representatives of nobility, were supposed to be guides, leaders, models of the "masculine" virtues. However, in their relations with the representatives of the peasant strata – despite the shared faith and language – a certain distance and distrust was apparent, resulting from the different lifestyle and economic position²¹.

The stratifying context of the structuring of masculine identity was particularly visible in men's attitudes to education. In the mid-19th century, concern for a good intellectual education for boys was a clearly discernible trend among the nobility, which reflected the change that had taken place in the approach of the elite to the upbringing of their offspring. For, at the beginning of the 19th century, "noble" fathers did not yet attach such an important role to the education of their children. Many fathers belittled the education of their sons, claiming that the wealth they would inherit in the future would be far more useful to them than studying. Meanwhile, more or less from the 1840s onwards, a belief in the moral and social value of education and upbringing prevailed among the local nobility²². These views significantly differentiated the men of nobility from those of peasant

¹⁹ A. Romanow, *Obraz demograficzny miasta* [Demographic picture of the city], in: *Historia Gdańska* [History of Gdańsk], vol. 4, part 1: 1815–1920, ed. E. Cieślak, Sopot 1998, p. 18.

²⁰ S. Wierchoślawski, *Orzeł czarny i orzeł biały: problemy modernizacji społeczeństwa polskiego prowincji Prusy Zachodnie w XIX i na początku XX stulecia* [Black eagle and the white eagle: Problems in modernising the Polish society in the province of West Prussia in the 19th and early 20th centuries], Olsztyn 2011, p. 54.

²¹ *Dawniej a teraz* [In the past and now], „Pielgrzym” [Pilgrim], 37 (12.09.1872), p. 6.

²² *O wykształceniu publicznem i domowem ze względu na Prusy Zachodnie* [On public and home education in the context of West Prussia], „Nadwiślanin” [Vistula Pomeranian], 8 (19.02.1851), p. 1–3.

origin, who did not see in academic education any chance of improving their situation, as they usually could not afford to send their children to secondary and higher schools. In addition, peasants often regarded their children's compulsory schooling as a burdensome necessity reducing the number of hands needed to work the land²³.

3. Organic work ethos versus insurrectionary ethos

The “model of masculinity” propagated by the Polish journalists of West Prussia consisted of various components. It was an ideal based both on Catholic morality inscribed in the Polish national context and on elements of Prussian culture, which somewhat differentiated the Polish inhabitants of Prussia from their compatriots from Russia or Austria. In this model, however, we do not find all the features constituting the Prussian mentality (especially Prussian militarism), but only those perceived as valuable from the perspective of shaping and developing the Polish identity. These qualities included above all the values constituting the Prussian work ethos, including industriousness, thrift and frugality, and stemming directly from the German bourgeois mentality and the capitalist mentality²⁴. This ethos, in turn, was one of the factors creating the ideals of organic work and ground-work popular especially among Poles in the Prussian partition starting from the period of the Spring of Nations²⁵. The foundations of these ideals included the above-mentioned characteristics and were a pattern particularly socially desirable in the last decades of the 19th century and in the early 20th century due to the economic struggle between Poles and Germans. These ideals were therefore strongly inscribed in the context of national antagonisms. Nevertheless, the promotion of this peculiarly organic work ethos also involved the creation of a rational masculinity model. Although for West Prussia this was undoubtedly a hegemonic model, the local Polish journalism used to refer also to the opposite ideal, which we can call the sentimental-emotional masculinity. When I write about the sentimental-emotional masculinity, I mean the model based on the insurrectionary ethos, characteristic especially of the Polish nobility of the Russian partition, clearly dominant from the end of the 18th century until the fall of the January Uprising in 1863, but also present in later years, especially at the beginning of the 20th century (in the context of First World War). The model of sentimental-emotional masculinity, contrary to rational masculinity, was based on the insurrectionary ethos and consisted of: a longing for lost independence and the former greatness of the Polish state, a sense of national injustice and pride ex-

²³ Tennstädt. *Über das Landschulwesen in Westpreussen*, “Preussische Provinzial-Blätter” 1833, 9 in: *Pomorze Gdańskie 1807–1850. Wybór źródeł* [Gdańsk Pomerania 1807–1850. A selection of sources], by A. Bukowski, Wrocław 1958, p. 242–244; *O wychowaniu* [On education], „Gospodarz” [Farmer], 4 (23.10.1850), p. 1.

²⁴ D. Łukasiewicz, *Mentalność pruska, mieszczańska, protestancka czy kapitalistyczna? Prusy 1806–1871* [Prussian, bourgeois, Protestant or capitalist mentality? Prussia 1806–1871], „Przegląd Zachodni” 2014, 2, p. 96.

²⁵ S. Wierchosławski, *Orzeł czarny*, op. cit., p. 54–58.

pressed in a kind of moral superiority over the partitioners, and the need to undertake armed struggle for independence. The insurrectionary ethos assumed that

irrespective of previous experience [i.e., defeats – author’s note] [...] the moral duty of a Pole, a duty from which one cannot evade regardless of one or another rational argumentation, is to fight for independence, to shed blood for Poland, if necessary – to give one’s life for it²⁶.

It was therefore a martyrological discourse, showing the defeats suffered in terms of ethical victory. Due to the conditions of West Prussia (including the relatively small number of Polish noblemen in the region and the military might of the Prussian state) in practice this model never found fertile ground for growth. However, it was present in the local press. For example, in the quote from *A Short Excerpt from the Heroic Deeds of Hetman Stefan Czarniecki*, referring to the glory of the Polish army from the times of the First Republic and published by the “Biedaczek” magazine in 1849, it was pointed out that in the past it used to be “more glorious to fall in battle than to flee”. While creating the insurrectionary ethos, specific “masculine” features were pointed out, including bravery, courage, resignation of oneself for the sake of the homeland, soldier’s hardship, honour, and above all trust in God. The possession of the above-mentioned qualities was supposed to inspire pride in the eyes of other people, especially women and relatives. “Happy is the mother who gives birth to such sons”²⁷ – it was written.

Despite the martyrological motifs clearly present in the Polish journalism of West Prussia, the key component of hegemonic masculinity in the studied region remained “masculine” rationalism, which directly resulted in a down-to-earth attitude and anticipation of the far-reaching consequences of decisions and actions, especially in the areas of economics and education. This ideal was also strongly associated with the criticism of all selfishness, iniquity and immoral behaviour. They were opposed with the idea of a “man of character”, i.e., capable of acting properly according to reason and will. As explained on the pages of “Farmer” in 1850:

This truth, acquired by reason, constitutes the scope of man’s duty in social and moral life, and this virtue, which is the realisation of duty by the will, constitutes the man’s character. [...] Where there is [...] a correspondence between duty and will, between conviction and execution, there is the power of character, and the weaker the will in working towards the execution of one’s conviction, the weaker the character²⁸.

²⁶ T. Gąsowski, *Konsekwencje powstań narodowych w XIX wieku dla polskiej tożsamości narodowej* [Consequences of national uprisings in the 19th century for Polish national identity], in: *Polska czyli... Idee wspólnoty politycznej i tożsamości narodowej w polskiej tradycji intelektualnej* [Poland or... Idea of political community and national identity in Polish intellectual tradition], ed. A. Rzegocki, Kraków 2011, p. 55–59.

²⁷ *Mały ustęp z czynów bohaterskich hetmana Stefana Czarnieckiego* [Short excerpt from the heroic deeds of Hetman Stefan Czarniecki], “Biedaczek” [Poor guy], 17 (25.04.1849), p. 1–3.

²⁸ *O narodowości* [On nationality], „Gospodarz” [Farmer], 7 (13.11.1850), p. 1.

4. The influence of faith and the views proclaimed by Catholic moralists on the role of men in the family and society

Irrespective of the place occupied by men in the social structure, the perception of masculinity and the role of the man in the Polish environment of West Prussia was shaped to a large extent by the Roman Catholic religion and more specifically the interpretation of the truths of faith by the Catholic moralists of the time in relation to the family, in particular to the role played by the father. As I have already mentioned, the religious context as a factor constructing male identity was extremely important in the case of the Polish community of West Prussia, as the principles transferred by the Catholic Church were more important to the Poles than the views proclaimed by the Prussian ruling elite perceived as foreign and Protestant. As the parish community was the centre of social life for the local community, the views expressed by the clergy were widely heard, which does not mean, however, that they were accepted by everyone and implemented as an everyday practice.

Interesting light on the role of a man in the family and society is shed by moralistic articles published in the mid-19th century on the pages of "Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej". They referred primarily to the ideal of a good husband and father. In the light of the texts published in "Katolik..." it can be concluded that, in the perspective of authors, a "masculine" man is above all a person characterised by chivalry, a cheerful and lively manner and a "fiery" mind. Moreover, he should possess the qualities required of a model woman, i.e., physical and mental health, strength and firmness, diligence, thrift and resourcefulness in various situations²⁹.

In the light of the common understanding of masculinity, the behaviour of men in the mid-19th century, especially those recruited from the noble class, was guided by the principle of honour. Nevertheless, it was often understood in a different way than the Catholic publicists would have wished. For, the common understanding of honour quite often boiled down to... extravagance and living beyond one's means. This way of thinking was strongly criticised by the clergy, who condemned the mismanagement and profligacy often seen in the Polish environment. According to the editors of "Katolik...", this problem affected the nobility, peasants and craftsmen alike, and in each case it had negative consequences in the form of poverty, marital conflicts, etc.³⁰. However, according to both Catholic and secular moralists, the greatest bane of Polish society was drunkenness, downplayed by many and associated primarily with men, which was seen as a defiance of

²⁹ P. Śpica, *Relacje małżeńskie, seksualność i wychowanie do życia w rodzinie w połowie XIX wieku w świetle wydawanego w Prusach Zachodnich „Katolika Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej”* [Marital relations, sexuality and education for family life in the mid-19th century in the light of 'Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej' published in West Prussia], in: *Rodzina i dziecko w zmieniającym się świecie: perspektywa historyczna i pedagogiczna* [Family and child in a changing world: historical and pedagogical perspectives], eds K. Jakubiak, R. Grzybowski, Toruń 2020, p. 84; *Wychowanie dzieciaków* [Education of children], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno diocese], 9 (29.08.1849), p. 91; M.O., *Oszczędność* [Austerity], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 15 (10.10.1849), p. 141–145; *O rozrzutności* [On profligacy], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 18 (31.10.1849), p. 167–172.

³⁰ Ibidem.

divine destiny, including the conjugal vocation³¹. Excessive consumption of alcohol was a common phenomenon, a kind of “ritual” accompanying various occasions, holidays, funerals, etc. Some people celebrated this “ritual” every Sunday, immediately after the Holy Mass, by heading to the local inn³². While drunkenness was regarded as a typically male trait, “living beyond one’s means” was a fault for which the Catholic moralists condemned the entire Polish community. However, the phenomena cited above were part of a social diagnosis but were excluded from the hegemonic discourse that unequivocally assessed them as resulting from flawed attitudes³³.

As I have already mentioned, despite the fact that Catholic publicists did not use the category of “masculinity” directly, it can be concluded that they most closely linked it with the performance of the functions of husband and father, which on the one hand – in accordance with the model of gender polarisation – included maintaining and ensuring the material existence of the family³⁴, and on the other: faithfulness and fulfilment of the marriage vow, associated with the attitude based on faith, love, respect and the indissolubility of marriage³⁵. According to 19th-century Catholic moralists publishing in West Prussia, masculinity therefore meant above all the maturity to build a lasting marital relationship, maturity in faith (required for the proper religious upbringing of children), taking responsibility for the family, the ability to go beyond the zone of one’s own comfort, to forgive, to endure any inconvenience and to persevere despite various adversities. Despite such an idealistic vision, Catholic publicists also pointed to human imperfection and the need to forgive each other for their mistakes³⁶.

5. Beliefs about male sexuality

The ideal indicated above was also associated with a strict vision of the male sexuality. In the Polish journalism of West Prussia, sexuality was not the subject of extensive analyses. It was tackled mainly by Catholic moralists, who, however, very rarely referred to it,

³¹ See P. Śpica, *Relacje*, op. cit., p. 86; *Stan oplakania godny pijanicy, przez niego samego skreślony* [Deplorable state worthy of a drunkard and described by himself], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 24 (12.12.1849), p. 259–262.

³² See P. Śpica, *Relacje*, op. cit., p. 86; *O potrzebie zaprowadzenia towarzystwa wstrzeźliwości i połączenia onegoż z bractwami religijnymi* [On the need to introduce the abstinence society and combine it with religious confraternities], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 11 (13.03.1850), p. 95.

³³ *Życie nad stan* [Living beyond one’s means], „Pielgrzym” [Pilgrim], 37 (28.03.1878), p. 1.

³⁴ See P. Śpica, *Relacje*, op. cit., p. 87; *O niewstrzeźliwości w picciu gorących napojów* [On the lack of abstinence in drinking hot beverages], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 25 (19.06.1850), p. 216–217.

³⁵ See P. Śpica, *Relacje*, op. cit., p. 87–88; *O niewstrzeźliwości w picciu gorących napojów* [On the lack of abstinence in drinking hot beverages], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 24 (12.06.1850), s. 204.

³⁶ See P. Śpica, *Relacje*, op. cit., p. 97; *Kilka słów o związku małżeńskim* [A few words on marriage], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 26 (26.12.1849), p. 279–283.

and when they did, they wrote about it in a denunciatory way, i.e., in terms of danger, the possibility of committing a sin; their content was most often limited to listing the negative consequences of unwanted and extra-marital pregnancies (mainly affecting women, their families of origin and the children themselves). Hence, more attention was paid to the virtuous conduct of girls than of boys³⁷.

The Polish population of West Prussia at that time was prudish and sexual issues constituted a taboo. The views of local Poles on human sexuality, including male sexuality, were determined by the Catholic ethics. This ethics required men to shun all adultery (also seen as perjury to God), as well as all other external and internal impurities (i.e., “lustful” thoughts, imaginings and desires) and cruelty to their wives. Acting in accordance with the above-mentioned qualities was at the same time identified with paternal care for the upbringing of children. The Catholic moralists thus tried to make men aware of the importance of influencing their offspring by their own example, as well as of the long-term and social (and above all family-related) consequences of the selfish behaviour of some men who focus mainly on satisfying their own needs³⁸.

The Catholic morality dominant in the Polish community of West Prussia forbade men to have any extramarital relations. However, this ethic was not always followed in practice, which is evidenced by the number of pre- and extra-marital pregnancies. It was also forbidden to relieve sexual tension through masturbation, which – according to the views of the Swiss doctor Samuel Tissot, popular in many countries and in West Prussia³⁹ – was supposed to have disastrous consequences for physical and mental health⁴⁰. Male sexuality was to serve mainly procreative purposes. The dominant discourse was thus marked by the idea of a controlled and restrained masculinity.

It is worth mentioning that in the conservative Polish community of West Prussia divorce was considered unacceptable according to the principle: “What God has put together let no man break apart”⁴¹. The subject of homosexuality remained almost completely tabooed, almost never appearing in the Polish journalism of the studied region, and when raised, it was presented in a very laconic way and reduced exclusively to the sin of sodomy, which aroused disgust among Catholic moralists⁴².

³⁷ *O nieczystości* [On impurity], „Katolik Dyecezyi Chełmińskiej” [Catholic of the Chełmno Diocese], 19 (7.11.1849), p. 183–191.

³⁸ P. Śpica, *Relacje*, op. cit., p. 88–89.

³⁹ Cf. S.A. Tissot, *Onanizm, roztrząsanie chorób pochodzących z samogwałtu, przez Pana Tyssota, sławnego doktora po francusku napisany, teraz na polski przelożony* [Onanism, a discussion of the diseases of self-abuse, written in French by Mr Tissot, the famous doctor, now translated into Polish], Warszawa – Lwów 1782.

⁴⁰ *O nieczystości*, op. cit., p. 189–190.

⁴¹ *O niewstrzemięźliwości*, op. cit., p. 23, 195.

⁴² *O nieczystości*, op. cit., p. 190–191.

Conclusion

In the Polish journalism of West Prussia in the middle of the 19th century, men were very rarely written about “as men”, and the category of masculinity, typical for contemporary cultural studies, was not used at all. In contrast, a little more was written about men as husbands and fathers, but with little space devoted to their parenting function. This was because the Polish environment in West Prussia was strongly influenced by the discourse of gender polarisation dominant in the 19th-century Central and Eastern Europe, which proclaimed that men and women had different roles in society, and the tasks of the man in the family were primarily focussed on its material stability, sense of security and external representation. Although a man as such played a decisive role in deciding on the education and future of his children, as well as in administering physical punishments to his offspring, the vast majority of the daily care and upbringing of the youngest members of the family was delegated to the wife-mother. This state of affairs was, by the way, seen as “natural”. The dominant discourse of masculinity in the Polish environment in West Prussia of the mid-19th century was thus clearly in line with essentialist concepts. At the same time, it was a discourse that preserved traditional social relations, and treated secular currents coming over time from Western Europe increasingly strongly as a threat not only to the existing social order, but also to the existence of the Polish nation.

Hegemonic masculinity in the Polish community of West Prussia was constituted by many cultural factors, in particular by the national ideas and Catholic morality. Although it was a post-noble masculinity, it was dominated by a bourgeois and capitalist ethos. It was therefore at the same time a rational masculinity, however not devoid of the sentimental and emotional component characteristic of the noble insurrectionary ethos.

Despite the fact that in the 19th-century West Prussia the position and role of the male in the family and society was clearly defined, determined, among other things, by the patriarchal standards dominant in the European cultural, it must be emphasised that in the practice of family and social life this patriarchalism took on different shades, and in individual cases was only a formal, legal and ideological construction, not fully reflecting the everyday reality. Nevertheless, the traditional understanding of masculinity, typical for the 19th-century West Prussia, was so firmly founded that it was not shaken by the turbulent history of the first half of the 20th century. More pronounced changes in the understanding of the male role in Polish society and the family as a whole (especially in relation to the performance of the function of husband and father) began to take place as late as from the 1970s onwards and have become particularly evident only recently.

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