

## **THE KRUTYNIA RIVER IN THE HISTORY OF MASURIA (POLAND)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Krutynia River is hailed as one of the most delightful waterways in Europe. It travels through the Mrągowskie Lakeland, the Mrągowska Plain and the Great Masurian Lake District, among the enchanting forests of the Piska Wilderness. It stretches across 99 km and has a drainage basin covering an area of 638 km<sup>2</sup>. In terms of hydrology, the Krutynia River rises in the lands surrounding Lake Warpuńskie. Across its entire length, it takes up various names as it flows through the lakes fed by other watercourses (Słomka 2012, p. 651). German and Polish literature contains no direct references to the role of the Krutynia River in the life of any community or nation. The issue also remains unaddressed in the most recent monographs on East Prussia (Kossert 2005) and Warmia and Masuria (Achremczyk 2011–2012). The river is famous mainly for its kayak trail of nationwide renown, which has become the subject of numerous guidebooks.

The river trail starts at the village of Zyndaki, situated between Lake Warpuńskie and Lake Zyndackie and ends in Ruciane-Nida at Lake Nidzkie, extending for approximately 110 km. The kayak trail – the most popular trail in the province of Warmia and Masuria and one of the best-known in Poland – is chiefly noted for its natural qualities. Local history remains unknown to most visitors. Tourists coming to the region to find vestiges of its past are a rare sight and hardly anybody paddles down the Krutynia trail to study the history and the culture of the people who used to inhabit these lands.

This paper is based on Polish academic and touristic literature, printed historical reports, as well as my first-hand observations made while kayaking down the Krutynia River in the summers of 2016 and 2020. Personal field research allowed me to confront theoretical information with the surrounding reality. After my first tour, I published two papers to promote the historical, literary, geographical

and touristic values of the Krutynia trail (Lewandowska 2018, pp. 95–108; Lewandowska 2019, pp. 101–132). Despite this, nobody has yet ventured to present the role of the river in the life of the local communities and the geopolitical situation of the region.

## **2. THE ROLE OF THE KRUTYNIA RIVER IN PREHISTORY AND OLD PRUSSIA (UNTIL 1226)**

Although the prehistorical inhabitants of the region have left traces of their presence, most of the evidence remains hidden from the public eye. Archaeological artefacts from the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages have all been unearthed in the region of the Krutynia River. However, upon scientific examination, they have been reburied in the ground. Records of the archaeological excavations are preserved in academic literature, but contemporary inhabitants cannot point to their locations on site. The discoveries in the discussed region were made in several spots. For instance, in the area of Ruciane-Nida, the excavations conducted in 1906 revealed an archaeological treasure consisting of a small bronze axe, a knife and fragments of a large necklace (Hoffmann 2000, p. 144). Stone and flint tools were found in Babięta, Sorkwity and Warpuny, and prehistorical ceramics were found in the area of Zgon (Ziemlińska-Odojowa 1975, p. 49).

The majority of the artefacts were retrieved from cemeteries. In prehistorical times, the dead were disposed in flat graves (cemeteries in Machary, Babięta, Sorkwity, Mojtyny) or under burial mounds (cemeteries in Warpuny, Zyndaki, Jędrychowo, Mojtyny). The most prominent discoveries were made in Babięta and the nearby Machary, where around 600 cremation graves dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD were found. Precious artefacts included horse skeletons, bits of ceramics, clay utensils, bronze buckles, parts of horse harness, spearheads, spurs, a knife, scissors, a razor, a decorative pin and bronze Roman coins dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD (Ziemlińska-Odojowa 1975, pp. 57–59; Karczewski 2011, pp. 386–388). Both towns were situated in proximity to the amber trail. It is possible that the locals participated in trading between the Sambia Peninsula and the Roman Empire.

Of the times preceding the invention of writing, the most thoroughly studied period is that of Old Prussia (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2000). The very name of the Krutynia River is derived from the Old Prussian word *krutin* which meant “meandering” (Bobrowicz, Kopyś, Trzemielewski 2015, p. 19). The section between the waterfront inns in Ukta and Nowy Most is called the “Little Amazon” because of its manifold bends. In the Middle Ages, the riverside was populated by Galindians who founded their settlements and forts on the uplands near the river and the lakes (Nowakowski 1995). These inaccessible sites had

natural defences bolstered with palisaded ramparts. Nowadays, we are witnessing a renewed interest in the cultural heritage of Old Prussia, as best exemplified by an unconventional hostel erected upon an old Prussian hillfort in the town of Iznota. The ingenious owner draws inspiration from the beliefs and the culture of Old Prussia. The facility, styled after an Old Prussian settlement, spreads across multiple buildings and boasts large-scale timber sculptures, demon-infested dungeons, a ritual stone circle and an amber room. Attractions include the re-enactments of ancient Galindian customs (Mierzwa 2018, pp. 255–260). The mighty trees, tenebrous forests, and treacherous lakes and rivers are all frequent themes in local folk stories and motifs in the tales and legends alluding to the times of Old Prussia and were immortalised by German and Polish writers alike (Łapo 2008).

### **3. THE KRUTYNIA RIVER IN THE ERA OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER AND THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1226–1772)**

Starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the lands occupied by Old Prussians gradually fell into the hands of the Teutonic Order. The local population was assimilated or killed in protracted wars. The Teutonic Knights developed the newly acquired territories by building upon the former Prussian hillforts. Case in point: the villages of Sorkwity and Zyndaki, founded on the well-known forts along the Krutynia River. The incorporation of villages was financed by Grand Masters such as Winrich von Kniprode (Pizuński 2000, pp. 82–87). The communication between Teutonic authorities and the local population was mediated by the Prussians themselves – the experts on the local geography and mentality. From day one, a new village would be laid out on a linear or circular plan. Typical linear villages include Borowe and Dłużec. Borowe stretches for 1 km along the west bank of the Grabówka Stream and Lake Dłużec. The same lake borders the linear village of Dłużec, which extends for 1.5 km along the shoreline. Teutonic Knights exploited the river and the lakes to expedite transport and fishing, as fish was a common dietary staple.

Upon the Old Prussian hillforts, Teutonic Knights erected castles, which they later transformed into hunting manors. This was the fate of the village of Spychowo (formerly Pupy) at Lake Spychowskie. In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, Spychowo boasted a hunting castle, one of the prime and more attractive buildings of this type in the entire Duchy of Prussia. It was in this residence that Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern found shelter as he fled to Masuria in fear of the plague in 1548–1549 (Kujawski 2012, p. 122). The stories of his hunts held from Spychów survived until World War II. The village of Krutyń, which relied for its survival on the forests, the river, fishing and tourism for many centuries, shares a similar history

(*Ibidem*, pp. 220–255). It was established around the year 1500 as a hunting settlement. Friedrich von Wettin of Meissen, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights and the Duke of Saxony, erected a small castle there which he used as a hunting base (Pizuński 2000, pp. 142–147). In 1527, Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern relocated to the castle for the duration of the plague sweeping across Prussia. The elector of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia, George William, sojourned in Krutyn in the 1620s and organised great hunts in the local wilderness.

Successive electors of Brandenburgs, simultaneously serving as dukes in Prussia, strived to strengthen their realm by expanding their autonomy from Prussian states. To that end, they would arrange the so-called Schatulle (“coffer”) settlements (in localities such as Zgon, Krzyże, Wejsuny, Guzianka, Kamień, Wygryny), characteristic in that all the profits were transferred directly to the duke’s coffers. Many of these settlements were established as glassworks or wood tar factories – small businesses which required an abundance of water and wood. Their original purpose echoes in some of the toponyms, still unchanged. For instance, a hamlet located at around 5 km from Lake Dłużec bears the name of Szklarnia (“glassworks”). The glass factory which operated there in 1650 brought about clearings of the local forests. It is in the devastated forest areas that the village itself was founded (Leyding 1975, p. 198). Another glass factory functioned in the village of Ukta, established in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The facility reportedly shut down in 1766, but the worker’s settlement called Krutyńska Szklarnia (“glassworks of Krutynia”) has survived (*Ibidem*, pp. 212–213).

The river and the lakes provided people with necessary nourishment, as well as a means of transport. Fishing was the occupation of Prussian and Polish peasants alike. They provisioned the churches, and then the ducal manor, Prussian aristocracy, but also their own households. Larger vessels for lake travel were built by craftsmen specialising in carpentry (Ossowski 2010, p. 149), whereas smaller watercrafts were the handiwork of the peasants themselves, who treated boatbuilding as an add job.

#### **4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE KRUTYNIA RIVER FOR MASURIANS AND GERMANS IN PRUSSIA (1772–1918)**

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, southern East Prussia came to be called Masuria, and its residents – Masurians. They were Evangelicals who spoke a Polish dialect (Sakson 1990). The remains of their activity include antique huts and village cemeteries (for instance, in Gałkowo, Krutyń, Mojtyny, Nowa Ukta, Onufryjewo, Ukta, Rosocha, Wejsuny, Iznota, Kamień, Zgon). The modern-day Masurian Landscape Park, traversed by the Krutynia River, used to have the highest settlement density in the region, hence its large number of cemeteries.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the emergence of the multicultural society of East Prussia. Apart from the native Germans and the scarce Polish minority, the population encompassed a large number of locals – the Masurians (typically Masurian villages include Piecki, Zgon, Krutyń, Ukta). There was also an influx of the Old Believers (for instance, to Wojnowo, Kadzidłowo, Gałkowo, Piaski, Onufryjewo) and Jews (Mikołajki).

The largest group of Masurian residents were peasants, who heavily depended on the fruits of the forests and the waters (the lakes and the Krutynia River) for their sustenance. The sparse manors were inhabited by Prussian aristocracy. Notable families included the Mirbachs, lords of Sorkwity and the nearby hunting manor in Jedrychowo (Jackiewicz-Garniec, Garniec 1999, pp. 126–131). The estate of Sorkwity, comprising a palace and surrounding park, flourished for several hundred years. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a vineyard was planted at the peninsula of Lake Lampackie along the Krutynia trail, which initiated the local production of wine. Sorkwity was famous for the hunts which attracted eminent figures from the world of politics and the government, as the owner of the estate collaborated closely with Otto von Bismarck, Chancellor of the German Reich. The palace was erected in the years 1850–1856 as a red-brick creation in the English Gothic Revival style with characteristic pinnacles. In August 1914, the site found itself at the frontline and went up in flames. It was burned with all of its entire furnishing and collections by the Russians stationed in the area for several days on the eve of their debacle in the Battle of Tannenberg (Orłowicz 1991, p. 137). After World War I, the palace was reconstructed.

The unification of Germany in 1871 sparked a period of significant economic ebullience marked by the introduction of the railway, as well as water transport and nautical tourism on the Great Masurian Lakes (Ruciane-Nida, Mikołajki). Books on the history of sailing in Warmia and Masuria contain many mentions of ships traversing the lakes and canals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but little is said of the place or manner of assembling these vessels. For instance, the Pisz Chronicle reports that in the year 1814, an enterprising merchant named Meyer sailed with multiple boats from Pisz to Ryn. Later on, he proceeded to build other vessels – both roofed and roofless (Toeppen 1998, pp. 367–368). Nautical tourism commenced after 1891 with the establishment of the Masurian Steam Navigation Company in Giżycko. A year later, the Company registered a modern steamboat (the Löwentin) which could carry 190 passengers on its two roofless decks and in the cabins. Further years brought the launches of new passenger ships and navigation companies and associations also began to operate in Węgorzewo, Pisz and Mikołajki (Wawrzyński 2014, p. 144). In this way, tourism on the Krutynia River was integrated into the nautical network of the Great Masurian Lakes.

Water transport could not function without the hydro-technical facilities which empowered people to combine local lakes and rivers into a single shipping lane.

When paddling down the Krutynia River, one encounters the lock at Lake Zyzdrój Mały. The “Lalka” lock, as it is called, is out of order, so the kayaks need to be portaged. At Ruciane, the operational “Guzianka” lock allows users to traverse the 2-metre level difference between Lake Bełdany and Lake Guzianka Mała, which leads to Lakes Guzianka Wielka and Nidzkie further south. The locks form part of the entire system of lakes and canals which constitute the trail of the Great Masurian Lakes. The construction of the trail – considered a novel hydrological project in its time – was initiated by Prussia after the victory in the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763). The years 1764–1765 marked the construction of five canals, 6.7 km long in total, which connected the lakes of Mamry, Niegocińskie and Tały. As a result, a single shipping lane was established from Pisz to Węgorzewo. Some sources say that the wooden lock at Guzianka was in place as early as in 1775, during the reign of Frederick the Great. With the passage of time, the canals clogged with silt. Once they were dredged in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, transport could recommence (*Ibidem*, p. 143). The modern-day lock dates back to 1879 and the reign of Emperor William I. Initially, the chamber was of wooden construction, which 20 years later was replaced with brick-and-stone (*Ibidem*, p. 350). A new object – “Guzianka II” – was commissioned in May 2020.

Water fuelled the energy industry as well (case in point: water mills). Today, the operating facilities include small power plants in Babięta and Zielony Lasek. The latter was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a large timber-framed water mill made of red brick. A few years ago it was transformed into a hydroelectric power plant. The mills were constructed in many towns of the region. For instance, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ukta had two mills, a sawmill, a match factory and a postal station. The end of the century brought the advent of the rail. Thus, Ukta was a large village of significance for economy and transport (Leyding 1975, pp. 212–213). Meanwhile, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a melioration mill made of steel was erected in Zgon at Lake Mokre. It was listed in the national register of historical monuments in 1980 and reconstructed with European Union funds in 2011 (Mierzwa 2018, p. 20). Industrial and rail facilities are the silent witnesses of the economic heritage of this soil.

Another sector highly dependent on the local forests and waters was the wood industry. The sawmill structures preserved in Ruciane-Nida are an industrial monument exceptional on the regional scale. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were the property of the entrepreneur Richard Anders, hailed in his era as the East Prussian king of wood. He leased his first sawmill in Spychowo, on the bank of the Krutynia. Then, he brought prosperity to the facility in Ruciane-Nida, one of the most technologically advanced sawmills in Germany. Nowadays, his descendants continue to run the wood company, upholding the family tradition (Liżewska 2008, pp. 45–57). Another eminent and still operational industrial monument of the region is the seed husking mill, also created by R. Anders. The

facility was erected in the years 1890–1892 for the needs of the forest inspectorates of the Piska Wilderness. Originally the largest facility of its type in the territory of East Prussia, it was used to extract seeds from the cones of spruces, firs, pines and larches. Its historical assembly line was modernised in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and remains in use (Czyżyk, Fonder 2011).

In the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, southern East Prussia became the arena of increased fortification efforts. The build-up to World War I commenced at the end of the previous century. The sites of the Krutynia River include two locations of concentrated artillery bunkers. The first one, situated near Spychowo, is a part of the Forest Position Szczytno, the historical fortified defence line of the former East Prussia which extended from Szczytno to Ruciane. The trail encompasses the most characteristic defence structures of the position, mounted in the years 1901–1944. The accompanying information boards contain descriptions of the bunkers and sketched representations of their hypothetical appearance during the war (author's field research, 2020).

Other defensive structures may be observed at Ruciane-Guzianka, the resistance point located the furthest south in the entire position of the Masurian Lakes. The line of fortifications cuts through the Great Masurian Lakes from Giżycko in the north to Ruciane in the south. The ramparts were designed to block the expected swift advance of the Russian cavalry, which could seize the crucial bridge crossings and passages between lakes. Three interesting concrete towers with machine gun positions have survived until today (Bzowski 2016, p. 23), including the tower bunker built in 1900 and shaped after a medieval bastille. This area formed part of the fortifications dubbed the Great Line of Masurian Lakes, designed to defend East Prussia against the Russian invasion during World War I. Apart from the Boyen Fortress in Giżycko, the area was the largest defensive complex of the Great Line, constructed to protect rail and water transport. The main fortifications were erected next to the rail bridge and along the roads to Guzianka Lock and Pisz. They included three bunkers armed with machine guns and five infantry resistance points reinforced with earthworks and a bunker. Currently, the bunker remains open for visitors throughout the summer season. The accompanying exhibition shows information boards, models of the equipment, armaments, and clothing. The site remains in the care of the Nad Nidzkim Association (author's field research, 2016).

Furthermore, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the growth of the stone-based construction industry which flourished until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The river trail runs along the rock and boulder deposits in the village of Rosocha, the oldest geological site of the region. The entire region of Masurian Lake District features a multitude of concentrated and isolated boulders left after the last Baltic glaciation (around 13,000 BC). The boulder deposits near Rosocha and Wojnowo are the product of a terminal moraine up to twenty metres high and composed of large

rock blocks and gravel. The deposit near Rosocha covers the surface of 4 ha strewn with around 3,000 boulders measuring 2–5 m in circumference, usually moss-grown and sheltered in the ground. They were integrated into the foundations and walls of buildings, bridges or churches, transformed into tombstones at the cemeteries and exploited for the construction of roads and railway embankments. The local population regarded the boulders as free construction material. Today, they are a distinctive element of the Warmian and Masurian landscape, not only in its natural, but also its cultural dimension (Klimek, Szczepański 2010).

## **5. THE KRUTYNIA RIVER ON THE TRAIL OF THE GREAT MASURIAN LAKES IN GERMANY AND POLAND (AFTER 1918)**

In the interwar period, life in the Krutynia basin was anything but rushed. People followed the rhythm of nature and withdrew from politics, which only occasionally insinuated itself into their lives. Undisputedly, the most eminent figure of the era was Max Pruss, a zeppelin pilot born in the village of Zgon. Starting in 1934, he commanded the Graf Zeppelin on its numerous flights across the Atlantic and the record-breaking trip around the world. In 1936, he took over the command of the Hindenburg, a zeppelin used on transatlantic routes to South America. Captain M. Pruss commanded the Hindenburg during the disaster in Lakehurst (New Jersey, USA) in 1937. Later on, he was involved for many years in the design of new zeppelin types and lobbied for the restoration of their high status in aviation. The tradition of the zeppelins and the memory of the airship captain lived on in the name of the Zeppelin Restaurant located at the heart of the village. Unfortunately, the new owner not only changed the name but also disposed of all information on the topic, together with the photographs of the zeppelins and Pruss himself (author's field research, 2016 and 2020).

In the era of national socialism, a new brick-built facility was erected in Krutyń for the needs of the social welfare programme of the party (Kujawski 2012, p. 222). Women from the Mrągowski District would be sent here for three-week healing retreats to produce healthy German children of the Aryan race. Today, the building houses a waterfront inn of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society (PTTK).

Simultaneously, as the Germans flocked to the Great Masurian Lakes and the Krutynia River, tourism flourished. The village of Krutyń was a popular holiday spot. Attractions included a relaxing cruise on a punt propelled by pushing against the riverbed with a long pole. The local name of the punt (*psychówka*) and the activity itself have survived in the area (Bobrowicz, Kopyś, Trzemielewski 2015, p. 19). Many houses and hostels of the interwar period were left intact, just like in the nearby village of Ukta. However, the largest tourist town on the river trail



was Rudczany (present-day Ruciane-Nida). The modern town was established in 1965, upon the unification of the two smaller settlements of Ruciane and Nida. In the interwar period, the place was a popular holiday retreat, visited by 10 thousand tourists annually (Orłowicz 1991, p. 125; Kujawski 2012, pp. 366–428). Rudczany owed its popularity to the development of inland shipping connections across the Great Masurian Lakes.

The interwar period yielded also the first tourist guidebooks which found a link between scenic views and nationalist ideals. Instead of a bald description of trekking routes and historical monuments, the new guides contained literary narratives on the magical corners in the region. The descriptions alluded to the German roots, customs and their ancient and modern glory reflected in the natural and cultural landscape (Traba 2007, p. 220). These passages extolled the world of Masuria and Masurians that resembled more of a myth than reality and inflated the role of the river and the lakes beyond all measure.

The region was explored by Polish sightseers as well. One of them was the geographer Mieczysław Orłowicz. His “Illustrated Guide of Prussian Masuria and Warmia” (*Ilustrowany przewodnik po Mazurach Pruskich i Warmii*) was published in Lviv in 1923. Re-released in 1991, it remains a fountain of knowledge on the region (Orłowicz 1991). Orłowicz reported on the trails of the Masurian Lakes (using water transport) and the area of Ruciane – Ukta, Wojnowo, Krutyń, and Piecki (using rail transport from Rudczany to Mrągowo). The area was also toured by Melchior Wańkiewicz – an author, a journalist, and a reporter, and a feature writer, who sailed the Masurian lakes in June 1935. The journey bore fruit in the reportage entitled “Na tropach Smętka” (*On the Trail of Smętek*) aimed to portray the life of the Polish population in Prussia (Wańkiewicz 1974).

The end of World War II brought about a drastic change in the national make-up of the whole territory of the former East Prussia. Germans and Masurians, who used to dominate the area, gave way to Poles and Ukrainians. New settlers needed to learn how to sustain themselves with the resources of the river and nearby lakes. They made an attempt to rapidly reactivate fishing in the areas which then formed the Olsztyńskie Province, which required the expertise of the original inhabitants. Apart from the invigoration of fishing and tourism, their greatest accomplishment was the creation of the Masurian Landscape Park (1977) with its head office in Krutyń. Information boards placed near the village present the borders of the park, its natural monuments and tourist routes. A nearby Masurian barn dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century houses the Centre for Environmental and Cultural Education. The facility features rooms such as the Chamber of Nature and the Memorial Chamber of the writer Karol Małłek. The latter presents a collection of mementoes, souvenirs and documents related to the writer’s life, as well as the original furniture from his house. Additionally, the visitors may admire old photos of the village and the Krutynia River (Kruszelnicki, Kruszelnicka 2014, pp. 66–68).

Melchior Wańkowicz is still celebrated in Masuria for his promotion of the region during the Partitions. To rekindle his memory, a blue walking route called Melchior Wańkowicz's Trail was charted from Sorkwity to Zgon. The writer's name also features on the waterfront inn of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society (PTTK) in Krutyń. Water sports fans will also remember the name of Stanisław Bielikowicz, found by the waterfront inn of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society (PTTK) in Sorkwity. Other writers and poets who lived in the region and extolled the Krutynia River and its surrounding areas include Karol Małłek, Igor Neverly, Ernst Wiechert, Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński. All of them have their memorial sites near the Krutynia and the local lakes.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

Over the centuries, the Krutynia River has continued to play a vital role in the lives of the local peoples. From prehistory to modern times, its natural defences have provided locations for new settlements. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it became a strategic site for military defence. It has been instrumental in the development of the fishing, transport, and tourism industries. To this day, its natural and environmental values remain intact.

The appeal of this area is corroborated in the reports of the visits of three kings – of Poland, Prussia and Spain. Near the Guzianka–Wygryny road, at the side of the Beldany Lake, there is a concentration of ancient oaks. The woodlet is referred to as the royal oaks, in memory of Polish king Władysław IV Vasa who camped at the site in 1639. Another ruler who sojourned in the area was the Prussian king Frederick William IV. On 18 June 1854, he stayed encamped in a tent during his travels across the Masurian lakes. The route of the steamboat “Masovia” led from Ryn through Mikołajki to Giżycko at Lake Śniardwy (Kujawski 2012, p. 346). The last king was Juan Carlos I, who arrived at the invitation of President Aleksander Kwaśniewski in 2004 and stayed for a few days at a hotel in Ruciane-Nida (Mierzwa 2018, p. 27).

The kayak trail is thoroughly described in both Internet sources and various tourist guidebooks. Unfortunately, the available materials tend to focus on its natural and scenic values. Ideally, these narratives should be supplemented with contents on local history and culture, which not only enrich the tourist offer, but also attract new types of visitors (for instance, those afraid of the water). To achieve these goals, it is indispensable to promote the biking and the walking trails which allow the tourists to explore the Krutynia River on land and observe its beauty from selected spots (such as waterfront inns). A recommended drivable road running through the villages scattered along the trail is also a must.

Furthermore, selected villages along the trail should hold recurring open-air events, festivals, shows, historical re-enactments, theme games and plays, photography and painting exhibitions. This sort of activity is required as a manifestation of the living tradition and the continuous allure of the trail. Information on the events should be provided in promotional brochures available to tourists and residents alike. A prime example of an open-air event is the annual festival “Jurand Returns to Spychów” (*Powrót Juranda do Spychowa*), referring to the mythical character from the novel “The Knights of the Cross” by Henryk Sienkiewicz. The festival has given the village of Spychów a theme, further exploited in the gate styled after an old hillfort (located at the turn to the amphitheatre), the sculpture of Jurand soaring over the escarpment, and the names of streets referring to other characters from the novel (author’s field research, 2016). Similar attractions could be envisaged for the villages of Krutyń, Zgon and Ruciane-Nida.

The role of the Krutynia has remained largely unchanged over the centuries. For the locals, regardless of their nationality and creed, it provided sustenance and a way of transport. For the visiting tourists and artists, mainly writers, it was a source of inspiration and a stimulus for reflection. Even despite the population changes and the eradication of the Prussian architecture after World War II, the approach to the natural landscape including the Krutynia has remained virtually the same. Unfortunately, the relevant research to date concerns the Masurian landscape in its entirety, without a closer focus on the river itself (Majewska 2020, pp. 77–94).

For academic and comparative purposes, it would be interesting to see the significance of the Krutynia River in the life of local communities as analysed by a German researcher. Such a project could reveal if the river played the same role in the memory of the German residents and tourists. As early as in 1900, Albert Zweck in his work *Masuren* lauded Krutynia as number one “amongst the most beautiful spots in the province” (Mierzwa 2018, p. 80). His encomium gives a reason to presume that all the local nations shared the same appreciation for the beauty of the river and found similar ways of its exploitation. Nowadays, the Krutynia River deserves to be promoted not only on the regional scale but across Poland and around Europe as one of the most delightful rivers on the continent.

## REFERENCES

- Achremczyk S., 2010–2011, *Historia Warmii i Mazur*, Vol. 1–2, Olsztyn.
- Bobrowicz A., Kopyś K., Trzemielewski R., 2015, *Szlak Krutyni. Kajakiem, rowerem, pieszo. Przewodnik turystyczny*, Kraków.

- Bzowski K., 2016, *Szlak Fortyfikacji Mazurskich*, Olsztyn.
- Czyżyk P., Fonder W., 2011, *The historic seed extractory in the Maskuliński Forest District in Ruciane Nida*, Ruciane-Nida.
- Hoffmann M.J., 2000, *Kultura i osadnictwo południowo-wschodniej strefy nadbałtyckiej w I tysiącleciu p.n.e.*, Olsztyn.
- Jackiewicz-Garniec M., Garniec M., 1999, *Palace i dwory dawnych Prus Wschodnich. Dobra utracone czy ocalone*, Olsztyn.
- Karczewski M., 2011, *Archeologia środowiska zachodniobałtyjskiego kręgu kulturowego na pojezierzach*, Poznań–Białystok.
- Klimek R., Szczepański S. (eds.), 2010, *Kamienie w historii, kulturze i religii*, Olsztyn.
- Kossert A., 2005, *Ostpreussen. Geschichte und Mythos*, München.
- Kruszelnicki J., Kruszelnicka A., 2014, *Mazurski Park Krajobrazowy. Przewodnik ilustrowany*, Krutyń.
- Kujawski W., 2012, *Krutynia. Szlak wodny*, Olsztyn.
- Lewandowska I., 2018, *Kulturowy szlak Krutyni – ujęcie historyczno-literackie*, „Masovia”, Vol. 15.
- Lewandowska I., 2019, *Kulturowy szlak Krutyni – ujęcie geograficzno-turystyczne*, „Masovia”, Vol. 16.
- Leyding G., 1975, *Dzieje wsi*, [in:] Wakar A. (ed.), *Mragowo. Z dziejów miasta i powiatu*, Olsztyn.
- Liżewska I., 2008, *Richard Anders – przedsiębiorca i fabrykant w Szczytnie*, „Rocznik Mazurski” Vol. 12.
- Łapo J.M., 2008, *Ludowa wizja przeszłości Mazur. Stanowiska archeologiczne i miejsca o znaczeniu historycznym na dawnym pograniczu galindzko-jaćwieskim w świadomości Mazurów (XVI w. – I połowa XX w.)*, Olsztyn.
- Majewska A., 2020, *Mitologizacja przestrzeni zamieszkiwania. Wymiana ludności na terytorium byłych Prus Wschodnich a percepcja i przekształcenia krajobrazu Warmii, Mazur i Powiśla*, „Przegląd Geopolityczny”, Vol. 31.
- Mierzwa W. (ed.), 2018, *Księga Puszczy Piskiej*, Dąbrówno.
- Nowakowski W., 1995, *Od Galindai do Galinditae. Z badań nad pradziejami bałtyjskiego ludu z Pojezierza Mazurskiego*, Warszawa.
- Okulicz-Kozaryn Ł., 2000, *Dzieje Prusów*, Wrocław.
- Orłowicz M., 1991, *Ilustrowany przewodnik po Mazurach Pruskich i Warmii*, Olsztyn.
- Ossowski W., 2010, *Przemiany w skutnictwie rzeczonym w Polsce. Studium archeologiczne*, Gdańsk.
- Pizuński P., 2000, *Poczet wielkich mistrzów krzyżackich*, Skarszewy.
- Sakson A., 1990, *Mazury – społeczność pogranicza*, Poznań.
- Słomka T. (ed.), 2012, *Katalog obiektów geoturystycznych w obrębie pomników i rezerwatów przyrody nieożywionej. The catalogue of geotourist sites in nature reserves and monument*, Kraków.

- 
- Toeppen M., 1998, *Historia Mazur. Przyczynek do dziejów krainy i kultury pruskiej*, Olsztyn.
- Traba R., 2007, „*Wschodniopruskość*”. *Tożsamość regionalna i narodowa w kulturze politycznej Niemiec*, Olsztyn.
- Wańkiewicz M., 1974, *Na tropach Smętka*, Warszawa.
- Wawrzyński C., 2014, *Osiem wieków wschodniopruskiej żeglugi, kanałów i dróg wodnych*, Olsztyn.
- Ziemlińska-Odojowa W., 1975, *Starożytność i wczesne średniowiecze*, [in:] Wakar A., (ed.), *Mragowo. Z dziejów miasta i powiatu*, Olsztyn.