

NATIVE FAITH (NOT) ONLY FOR MEN: GENDERING EXTREME RIGHT-WING SLAVIC NEOPAGANISM IN POLAND

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In this article I look at gender (Moore 1999) in the practice of the everyday life of the Polish right-wing milieu¹. I do not cover the right-wing in Poland in its totality, which comprises various groups of (libertarian) conservative, Christian democratic, monarchist and nationalist orientations, I do not even deal with the Catholic majority. Instead I concentrate on the right-wing of Slavic Neopaganism, also known as the Native Faith, or just under the Polish name *rodzimonierstwo*². Certainly, Slavic Neopaganism in Poland (hereafter called Neopaganism) is a marginal movement (measured both in number and political power), but it is not invisible or without symbolical significance within Polish society. After all, what comes into play here is the cultivation of national heritage on the one hand, and

1 This is a revised and extended version of an article that appeared in the Polish language as: “Rodzima Wiara (nie) tylko dla mężczyzn. O upłciowieniu prawicowego neopogaństwa słowiańskiego w Polsce.” *Zeszyty Etnologii Wrocławskiej (Wrocław Ethnology Papers)*, No. 1 (20), 2014: 113–133 (http://zew.info.pl/files/1-14_Filip.pdf). After this article had reached its present form I read the paper by Kaarina Aitamurto (2013) who discusses some ideas presented here in the Russian context. Despite the general consensus of opinion, for at least one point I find it hard to agree with Aitamurto (cf. 2013: 29).

2 As everywhere in the world there are several Neopagan streams present in Poland. Nevertheless Slavic Neopaganism is the dominant path over all others, which are usually seen by Native-Faith believers as “imported” (Witulski 2013) and discredited as “New Age”. Such an ethnocentrism (anti-eclecticism) of Neopaganism is a quite popular (but not exclusive) feature in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (Aitamurto, Simpson 2013a; and specially Simpson and Filip 2013 for analysis of local appellation). The author of the English-speaking papers on Slavic Neopaganism in Poland is primarily Scott Simpson (2000, 2012, 2013), whereas Gajda (2013) and Strutyński (2013) discuss the development of the movement and its ideological foundations. The literature in Polish is quite extensive and it will be referred to when needed.

danger for Catholicism and/or danger of chauvinism on the other (Antosik 2008, 2009).

Indeed, the Neopagans may be not numerous, yet the movement is very diversified. And the very distinction between the right and left wing plays a crucial role, even if it is expressed with different idioms: the political vs. the religious; the nationalist vs. the non-nationalist (Filip 2011)³. This division could be seized on simply in terms of the doctrinal differences between the two oldest Neopagan “religious denominations” (*związki wyznaniowe*) recognized by the Polish state: the conservative, nationalist and pantheist Rodzima Wiara (RW, “Native Faith”), and the much more liberal, “patriotic” (indifferent to race or nationality) and monist Rodzimy Kościół Polski (RKP, “Native Polish Church”) (Pelka 1999).⁴ However, the reality is more complex. Whereas RKP stands alone as the only formal organization on the left wing, RW is only one among many Neopagan organizations on the right which are or were active, such as two small publishing companies: Wydawnictwo Toporzel (“Axeagle Publishing House”) and now non-existent Wydawnictwo Folk (“Folk Publishing House”) issuing zine *Odala* since 1995, the now retired political party Unia Społeczno-Narodowa (USN, “Social-National Union”), and metapolitical Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Tradycji i Kultury “Niklot” (SnRTiK, “Association on Behalf of Tradition and Culture ‘Niklot’”) which grew out of zine *Tryglaw* issued since 1997⁵. What ties them together is the ideological heritage of the anti-Christian Ruch Nacjonalistów Polskich – Zadruga (“Polish Nationalist Movement – Zadruga”), established before the outbreak of World War II by Jan Stachniuk⁶. The *idée fixe* of this movement was the glorification of Pagan heroism (the power of creation) and collectivism (in the form of nationalism) and, in consequence, condemnation of Christian humility and individualism,

3 This division resembles the situation in Russia, where one finds “a less politicized folklorist wing and a highly politicized national-patriotic wing” (Shnirelman 2013: 63, see also Aitamurto 2006, 2007).

4 RKP was registered in 1995, and RW in 1996 under the name *Zrzeszenie Rodzimej Wiary* (“Association of Native Faith”) which was later changed in 2000.

5 For more details see: Szczepański (2008), Simpson (2000), Zimniak-Halajko (2005) and Strutyński (2008a).

6 The negative assessment of Christianity performed by Stachniuk relates primarily to Catholicism, as Stachniuk quite clearly sympathized with other forms of Christianity, especially Protestantism. Probably a significant fact is that unlike in Anglo-Saxon countries dominated by Protestant denominations, in Poland Neopaganism develops in the environment hegemonized by Roman Catholicism. Thus, this is an analogous situation to the one of south-west Europe and Ireland. Regarding the term *zadruga*: it refers to the strongly mythologized concept of a rural South Slavic form of familial organization (Todorova 1989, Vittorelli 2002), which was additionally reinterpreted by Stachniuk.

seen as being responsible for the failure and decline of the Polish nation and its *Volksgeist*⁷.

Although RW is not the only Post-Zadrugan organization, but it is a key one. This is not because of its formal status as a religious denomination, but instead due to its function as an organizational framework for several smaller groups, and as an ideological resource. The influence of RW may not continue, since many such small groups have left the association sooner or later. However, in the years immediately following its registration in 1996, its impact was beyond dispute. Their “Creed of the Lechites”⁸ has been accepted by many smaller groups as their own; the same is true of their cultivation of the legacy of Zadrugan thought. Nonetheless, despite this uniting tendency, under the umbrella of RW at the turn of the twenty-first century one could find a whole range of groups: from the extreme right to the moderate right, and with the formal stance of RW being definitely middle-of-the-road⁹. The conflict between the opposite poles of this continuum was at its peak in 2001, when an extreme party, profoundly engaged in politics and the modernization of Paganism through Zadrugism, officially accused the moderates, who had distanced themselves from both extremes and were devoted to tradition, of being a “silly folkloristic circle” (Hodur 2001)¹⁰. The informal group *Krakowscy Rodzimowiercy* (“Native Faith adherents of Krakow”), which has been studied for many years by Simpson (2013: 117), is built on this folkloristic circle (with at least one former leading RKP member). In a sense, they have occupied a position in the centre of the Neopagan movement; that is, between the left and the Post-Zadrugan right. Ironically, the same could be said about some of those who originally represented the accuser’s party yet later left RW. Seeking an alternative they formed in 2006 and then registered in 2009 a new religious denomination *Zachodniosłowiański Związek Wyznaniowy ‘Słowiańska Wiara’* (ZZW SW, “The West Slavic Religious Denomination ‘Slavic Faith’”). Their organization is today the third key organization within the movement, clearly occupying a position in the centre¹¹.

7 Zadrugan thought has broader overviews in English (Simpson 2000: 75–80, Strużyński 2013) and German (Potrzebowski 1982; (HDH) 1990–1991).

8 Lechites is mythological name for Poles.

9 The similar position is or was occupied by Post-Zadrugan organizations autonomous of RW, such as *Toporzel*, *USN* and *Niklot*.

10 This conflict also had a geographical dimension by opposing the north of Poland (Western Pomerania region) to the south (Lesser Poland region). Hodur is a nickname of Mateusz Piskorski from Szczecin, the co-founder of *Wydawnictwo Folk*, co-editor of *Odala*, and deputy head of *Niklot*.

11 To make the picture full I should mention the fourth religious denomination, called *Polski Kościół Słowiański* (“Polish Slavic Church”) and registered in 1995. Even so, its public activity has been limited to the very fact of registration.

In my paper I discuss two extreme rightist organizations, which at first joined RW but later distanced themselves from it (to different extents), and which are treated by the contemporary leader of RW (Staszko Potrzebowski) with some reservation, especially on the official level¹². I should clarify that between Zakon Zadrugi 'Północny Wilk' (ZZPW, "The Order of Zadruga 'Northern Wolf'") and Zakon Krwi Aryjskiej (ZKA, "The Order of Aryan Blood") there were not only close ideological connections but also personal ones. And despite all of these connections – or perhaps because of them – these two organizations differed on the issue of gender relations, in particular in the attitude towards women. I should emphasize, however, that my interest in gender is not limited to the study of women, as is too often the case, but equally applies to the study of men.

The subject of my attention is not reactions to the category of gender, or to phenomena which this category connotes in the eyes of the right-wing in Poland¹³, such as: excessive sexualisation of children and adolescents, sexual deviations, family breakdown, or denying the naturalness of sex¹⁴. The subject of my attention is actions which are based on gender, and thus performed in practice (in a more or less conscious way): the attitudes of men and women towards representatives of the same or the opposite sex. Thus, I do not treat gender as a construct of common-sense thinking or a discourse element which is subjected to reflection, but as a thought object of science (cf. Schuetz 1953). Gender is, thus, for me a construct, so to speak, imposed on the behaviours and ideas through which identities/gender roles are built.

Ultimately, the primary goal of my article is to demonstrate that, contrary to the views of the Neopagan right-wing (and right wing circles in general), gender is not 'an ideology', a new, strange, artificial creation (cf. Kościańska 2014), but has long been an ordinary part of their lives. The secondary purpose of this article is to provide an ethnographic description of the selected Neopagan groups and, at the same time, to attempt to diagnose their impact on the development of Neopaganism.

12 Potrzebowski is one of signatories of the recent declaration of the European Congress of Ethnic Religions, which stated recently: "We object to the use of the term "pagan" by extremist political groups of any kind, as it reflects negatively on our reputation" (ECER 2014). However, as I will demonstrate it later, his attitude to extreme rightist organizations is definitely not hostile.

13 The ethnographic interview conducted specifically for this article assured me finally that this claim also applies to the Neopagan right-wing. The term 'gender' aroused negative emotions in my informants, and therefore the problem issue of the article, with the concept of gender as dominant, required further clarification from me.

14 It is therefore the phenomena of sexual awareness, non-heteronormative behaviours, the cultural formation of a family, and sexual (orientation) identity.

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ZZPW (active 1997–2008), operating mainly in Western Pomerania (with their centre in Koszalin), located in the northern part of Poland, was one of many groups incorporating the principles of a clearly articulated Pagan National Socialism¹⁵ wide-spread in the contemporary world, or, in other words, Aryan Paganism or racist Paganism (Shnirelman 1998, 2013; Kaplan and Weinberg 1998; Gardell 2003; Goodrick-Clarke 2003). To speak about the movement in its totality in terms of Neo-Nazism would be an over-simplification. The themes of white racism and anti-Semitism are more general (and much older) than Nazi ideology. Therefore, not all groups constituting the Neopagan faction of the white supremacist movement appeal to NS *per se*¹⁶. Some of them may not even speak explicitly about racism, a general recent trend (Blaut 1992, Stolcke 1995). This applies to some of the moderate Post-Zadrugan groups in Poland, such as RW and Niklot, but clearly not to extreme Post-Zadrugan groups, such as ZZPW.

Nevertheless, even when some groups draw on some elements of the ideology of the Third Reich, they may also seek inspiration in scientific racism, Nietzschean philosophy, Theosophy, the *völkisch* movement, and integral traditionalism, that is, many of the same doctrines which influenced Nazism (Halban 1936, 1946; Goodrick-Clarck 1985; Haack 1981). Thus, what connects Nazi ideology with contemporary ideologies is not necessarily a parental relationship, but it could be described as a sibling relationship. We can also find openly anti-German National Socialism¹⁷. And that is exactly the case of ZZPW, even though the roots of this group are a different story.

15 Nazism combined both Christian and Pagan values, whereas the present NS movement seems to follow the rule of purifying this ideology of its syncretic elements and therefore that results in two streams, namely the Christian (or pseudo-Christian) and the Pagan (openly anti-Christian). In contemporary Poland groups of Christian NS orientation are completely absent, making way for Pagan NS groups (Grott 2007: 275–310).

16 The same applies to the Christian faction of white supremacy. In contemporary Poland there may be no Christian NS, nevertheless other forms of Christian racism are quite common (Pankowski 2010).

17 Pagan NS is an international, world movement (the concept of race calls for a supra-national perspective after all), nevertheless Germanic paganisms clearly dominate its forms. For some organizations operating in Poland a philo-German(ic) or, alternatively, a pan-European perspective is not a cause for concern. Under the influence of pre-WW II Polish variants of National Socialism and/or Zadrugism a number of organizations enriched the ideas of the supremacy of the Aryan race with the Polish, and thus the Slavic, nationalist element. The first move in this philo-Slavic direction might be seen in the zine *Blyskawica*, a few years before the creation of RW. The triple typology of NS organizations in contemporary Poland (philo-Slavic, philo-German and European) was developed by Grott (2007: 278 ff.).

Indeed, the origins of this group can be traced back to the clearly neo-Nazi (Skinhead) organization Thule, formed in 1995, which was active for a year, issuing the zine *Żelazny Krzyż* (“Iron Cross”). From its ruins in the second half of 1996 another philo-German organization, Othala, was founded. It existed for only half a year, and yet managed to produce the zine *Jesteśmy* (“We Are”). In the middle of 1997, some ex-Othala Skinheads met philo-Slavic Black Metal artists from the band Gontyna Kry (a name that they claim means “Temple of Blood”), and were inspired by their attitude, which was the catalyst for ZZPW to be born¹⁸. In the official press organ of ZZPW, entitled *Securius*¹⁹, philo-German(ic) elements were absent. To be more precise, there were elements associated with forms of Germanic Paganisms, such as runes, but there was no glorification of them²⁰. However, in *Securius* we could also find a Polish translation of “The Arts of Civilizations: Aryan Culture and the Importance of Honour, Curiosity and Conquest” by David Myatt (1997), the former leader of the British National Socialist Movement and a great admirer of Hitler, and yet one finds no references to Nazism there, only the culturalist essentials of Myatt’s National Socialism²¹ (cf. Grott 2007: 285–286). Other signs of inspiration and connection with the Euro-American radical right are the abbreviations ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government), and Fourteen Words (“We must secure the existence of our

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- 18 A cooperation between Skinheads and Metals was not so common at that time, yet today “Eastern Europe has one of the most vibrant, fanatic and racist black metal scenes in the world. Poland has a fairly rich tradition of extreme metal (...) as well as a flourishing racist and far-right movement (...). Black metal in Eastern Europe has taken on a fanatic, genocidal tone that is reminiscent of the bombastic proclamations of the early Norwegian scene, but with decidedly neo-Nazi overtones. (...) With the exception of Burzum, Poland’s Graveland are [sic] perhaps the most revered NSBM band in the world” (Olson 2011: 145). A frontman of Graveland, that is Rob Darken, who is “considered to be one of the instigators of (...) a controversial Pagan ideology that also frequently promotes racial separatism and anti-Semitism” (Larkin 2006), since the very beginning was a prominent member of RW.
- 19 Calling *Securius* a zine or *samiżdat* would be correct only with regard to the first two issues. Subsequent issues were more and more advanced concerning editorship, graphics, and quality of paper. The last two of all six issues (no. 1/1997, no. 2/1997, no. 3/1998, no. 4/1999?, no. 5/2000?, no. 6/2001?) were printed on A-4 format, art paper, with covers in full colour, having respectively almost 70 and 80 pages. The first four issues were also reissued in one volume in 2000 (after printing issue no. 5).
- 20 Due to these Germanic references Grott (2007: 285–289) sees the officially anti-Germanic policy of ZZPW as inconsistent and not fitting clearly in his typology. This is not a surprise, since pure types exists only in theory, meanings ascribed to forms are more significant than forms themselves (and their formal roots), and finally ZZPW ideology (as every ideology) evolved.
- 21 The same cannot be said about his *National-Socialism: Principles and Ideals* (Myatt 1996), which was translated into Polish by Piskorski.

people and a future for White Children”), a slogan coined by David Lane, the leader of The Order operating in the United States (cf. Strutyński 2008b: 76–78). However, ZZPW applied them to the Polish cause²². The most straightforward proclamation of the anti-German(ic) stance of the ZZPW could without any doubt be found in the penultimate issue of *Securinus*:

As the Order of Zadruga “Northern Wolf”, as racial patriots, Pagan Aryo-Slavs, we cannot stand idly against the anti-Polish and anti-Slavic battle [ongoing] in the West. This particularly concerns the Germans and their revisionist yarns (...). We are Polish, Slavic National Socialists, [and] although we are often accused of Hitlerism and philo-Germanness, in reality we are one of the most anti-Germanic organizations in Poland. We live in Pomerania, so called recovered territories, that after hundreds years of foreign occupation was returned to the people who grew there. (Redakcja 2000?)

The radical ideological change from a philo-German(ic) to an anti-German attitude was not the only ideological change we could see on the pages of *Securinus*. A processual analysis of its content reveals how the typical white supremacist theme of race (as a supra-national category) gave way to the theme of the nation. The appeal for the protection of the purity of the White [sic] race – understood in terms of spirit and blood, not the flesh or skin – gave the title for the zine. However, subsequent articles and issues concentrated much more on national differences than on “racial brotherhood”, and Stachniuk’s influence could be seen here²³. The next theme developed was a religious one, arguing for the Jewish essence of Christianity and the dependence of faith on race and nation, and calling for a Native (i.e. Polish) Faith. Therefore, the initial Aryan/Semitic racial opposition developed into a series of national-religious oppositions: Polish/Jewish, Pagan/Christian, and cultural/anti-cultural.

These three themes are common for all philo-Slavic NS in Poland, and were the basis for the syntheses of Pagan NS in Poland (Strutyński 2005; Grott 2007: 275–310). Members of ZZPW called their doctrine Polish NS, and for heuristic purposes the name could be applied to describe the outlook of other extreme right Neopagan groups in the country. What constitutes the *differentia specifica* of the ZZPW doctrine was certainly the theme of elitism, perceived as a determinant of quality and race, which was wrongly projected by Strutyński (2005) on the

22 It must be assumed that the ideas that originated in the English-speaking world reached Poland mainly due to the operating sections of the British organizations Blood and Honor, The Order of the Jarls of Bælder or The Black Order. Here they were translated into Polish and distributed as separate zine publications or in the form of articles and overviews inside of various zines. Varg Vikernes’ publications came to Poland in the same way.

23 To some extent the non-racial focus was also proved by dealing with historical Slavic cultures on a super-national level.

whole of Pagan NS in Poland. The command to “activate the mechanisms of social selection” could be read as a more sophisticated version of spiritual racism and eugenics. The theme of geopolitics in ZZPW ideology was also popular among other groups operating in Western Pomerania, giving evidence of the ideological influence of right-wing Slavic Neopaganism from Russia.²⁴ After the last issue of *Securius* and before starting my fieldwork, ties between ZZPW and RW became weak.²⁵

I must admit that when I started participant observation among ZZPW the issue of sex/gender did not interest me at all; for a long time I was not aware of it. It was impossible not to notice that the group was made up of men only, but the wider implications of this ethnographic fact remained invisible to me. Thus the masculine nature of ZZPW had for me a strictly practical or descriptive meaning, equal to that of the characteristics of the group, such as small (number of members 15–40, average 20), regional (area of operation – mainly Western Pomerania), peer (age range 17–33 years during eleven years of operation; most of the members born around 1980), etc. Also, the strategy of political conspiracy conducted by the group seemed to me much more important than an exclusive membership criteria, because, after all, what Jew or Catholic would want to belong to an organization depreciating the race, nationality and/or faith of a candidate? Thus, if the importance of nationality, race and religion in everyday life and in ZZPW ideology was obvious and crucial in my research, the issue of the relationship between the sexes remained for me invisible and irrelevant. It was not until four years after starting to interact with the group that I came across the concept of intersectionality (Johnson 2005; Acker 2000)²⁶, and then I realized the importance of the simple fact that ZZPW members were all men. After all, the close cooperation with the Wolves, consisting in the assimilation with the group and by the group (without formal belonging to it), was possible only because the anthropologist was a man. If my national-racial identity (Pole-Aryan)

24 In the articles published in *Securius* on geopolitics there were no direct references to the texts of Pavel Tulaev (or Aleksandr Dugin), but there was information about a stay of representatives of several Polish organizations in Moscow in 2000 and about the meeting, among others, with Tulaev (“Północny Wilk” 2001?). On the other hand, Tulaev visited Poland, and earlier was interviewed, and published a short article in *Odala* (MaT 1999; Redakcja *Nasledie Predkow* 1999). The result of these contacts was several articles that discussed the Neopagan movement in Poland in the pages of the magazine *Ateney* (2001) edited, among others, by Tulaev.

25 More details on the history, image, ideology, political and metapolitical (ritual) activities or everyday life of ZZPW were presented elsewhere (Strutyński 2005, 2008a: 72–74, 2008b; Filip 2006: 40–64, 2008: 114–119, 2009, 2011; Grott 2007: 285–289).

26 Although I recognize the value of this trend of feminist thought, which affected my research in a creative way, from the time perspective I cannot help feeling the secondary nature of this concept in relation to anthropological research (cf. Ardener 1975), rather ignored by the intersectionality theorists.

allowed any cooperation with the group, it was my sex, gender and psycho-sexual orientation that determined the quality of this cooperation²⁷. If I had been a woman, I would not have had the right to participate in certain rituals or had access to certain information. Being an effeminate, transsexual or homosexual man would have made the research definitely impossible. My, or rather our identity regarding sex, gender and psycho-sexuality was one of the conditions for the success of this field research.

Thus, the hermeticism of a group was not based only on its strategic invisibility (difficulty in accessing it physically) and exclusivity of national-racial membership criteria, but also the restrictions imposed on the identity set: sex, gender and psycho-sexual orientation, which by ZZPW members was reduced in truth to the sex only. In fact, sex – to follow group's logic – was one of the principles that organized the group and governed its functioning. Only men formed the group, only they took an active part in the life of the organization: they planned, discussed and performed. The masculinity of the organization was shown by its combat aesthetics of symbols and clothes, by the physical strength of the group members, bluntness of language, and a predatory attitude towards the world. Being a Pole and an Aryan seemed to count for nothing if a person was a woman.

Although in the organizations' documents, namely the Statute, Code of Conduct, and the Criminal Code, there was no clear definition of membership on the grounds of sex, the formality of the language used, the contents of documents (the paramilitary character of the group and appropriate aesthetics, structure of power, criminal sanctions, reference to the subculture of football fans or permanent presence of the idea of conflict) and some wording ('Brotherhood', 'member' in the masculine, the recognition of the relationship to 'white woman-representative of another nation') clearly suggested the masculine character of the group²⁸. ZZPW members were obliged to adhere to the principle of 'Brotherhood' formalized in the Code of Conduct, which should be understood as mutual

27 According to the concept of intersectionality, other aspects of my social-cultural identity should be mentioned, such as age and religion, which played their role in the process of accepting me by the group. For the purposes of this article, however, I do not allow myself to devote more attention to them.

28 In the documents I have there only one exception to this rule, when it is said that 'a partner [in the masculine] should not represent a lower genetic value' (Code of Conduct, point 8). This provision does not appear to be wrong, yet to my knowledge the group never allowed women to join. The most likely explanation for this provision would therefore be such that the term 'partner' is here in a generic sense in view of the function, not sex. Alternatively, what I cannot rule out is that this injunction applied to the partners of women affiliated to an organization or who were relatives or friends of the organization's members (sisters, cousins, possibly friends). I know that to some extent the organization performed supervision of the sexual/emotional life of its members.

assistance in the activities of the organization. The Penal Code was adapted to the male sex of the potential offender.

The authors of all the articles in *Securius* were men. The addressees of the texts were also men. It is not surprising, therefore, that the main focus of the articles was the Aryan-male. His role as a warrior-conqueror was clearly defined, whereas the role of women was not mentioned at all (Paganism was the ‘Faith of the Fathers’, never Mothers or even mothers; ‘Brotherhood’, never ‘S/sisterhood’ was always used). Thus, only by deduction, by looking at concepts such as: ‘children’, ‘natural growth’, ‘eugenics’, ‘blood’, ‘race’, ‘ancestors’, can one determine the woman’s role as a mother.

Women did not have the right to belong to the organization. However, women partners of some members of the group, and female ideological friends of the organization²⁹ clearly accompanied the life of ZZPW³⁰. They knew the members of the organization well, were aware of the basic rules of the group, and knew and shared the worldview of the men, or at least approved of it³¹. However, they were not initiated into the details concerning ‘organization issues’. During the yearly rituals³² they were involved in the preparation of ordinances and in their implementation, usually performing (not counting their participation in the

29 Ideological female friends were already current or former partners of the individual members of the group. As for the inverse relationship, the status of an ideological female friend was not a prerequisite for achieving the status of a girl-friend (I know of two cases of a relationship with a Catholic woman, and there were probably a few more during these eleven years of the group’s existence).

30 At the time when I was conducting my fieldwork three women quite regularly participated in festivals and other kinds of meetings, and two women quite irregularly. Two others, much younger, appeared in the course of the research, although their position was marginal.

31 It seems that if in religious matters there was a divergence of views (in the case of Catholic female partners), then in the cases of „political“ issues (racism, anti-Semitism, nationalism) there was a greater consensus. I cannot say, however, whether common views in this regard were the condition for establishing a closer relationship, or whether it was simply the result of the ideological impact of the men. Perhaps these possibilities are not mutually exclusive, since we look for partners that are similar to us, thus making them even more similar to us; at least according to Bourdieu (1987: 6).

32 There is no space here for ethnography of ritual life of ZZPW (but see Filip 2008: 116–118, 2009: 52–53). All members of the group celebrated the changes of the seasons. Neopagans in Poland celebrate *Jare Gody* (“Spirited Mating”) in March, *Noc Kupały* (“Kupala Night”) in June, *Plony* (“Yields”) in September, and *Szczerodre Gody* (“Generous Mating”) in December, as well as *Dziady* (“Forefathers’ Eve”) at the turn of November (not surprisingly parallels with other Slavic Neopaganisms are common). However, the Wolves did not pay much attention to the *Plony* ceremony, but celebrated *Jedenasty* (“The Eleventh”), i.e. Independence Day on November 11

parade of Nov. 11) auxiliary roles of priestesses, who distributed among the gathered people: mead, *kolacz* (a festive pastry), and other food (such as eggs), made minor offerings, or set wreaths adrift in a lake. But they never led the ceremony. Women had the right to participate in most rituals celebrated by ZZPW³³. However, participation in *Szezęodre Gody* and *Lupercalia* was restricted only to formal and informal members of the organization, and therefore to men only³⁴. The principles of group organization, expressed in practice in a wide range of activities involving men only, imply recognition of the difference in the rights and position of men and women, discriminating against the latter. The principles of ZZPW imposed on the women the necessity to submit to them and agree to the marginal, occasional nature of their presence in the life of the group.

The social position and role of women was perceived by the group in the way, which is traditional for the Western, patriarchal world. Thus their representation of the relations between women and men did not differ actually from images characteristic of the monotheistic religions criticized by Wolves and Neopagans in general. This, of course, means that the group's imaginary of sex/gender roles perfectly fits into the well-known dichotomies of nature/culture (Ortner 1972), domestic/public (Rosaldo 1974), and reproduction/production (Harris and Young, 1981). The first and rather late mention of women in the pages of *Securius* not only affirmed this difference, but also justified it:

Our Gods are symbols of ethics, Jungian archetypes of Animus and Anima. These archetypes are in the four areas of *Smietomit* [the four-faced god of Pagan Slavs], the areas of struggle and creation for a man, and for a woman the areas of home, land and its fertility. I believe that the fulfilment of this mission is a sacred duty (Afield 1999?, 5).

Although this quote does not suggest that the difference is an inequality between men and women, such a view can be deduced from a number of articles that appeared in *Securius* later, and which I will discuss later in the text. I would

with great enthusiasm. *Lupercalia*, celebrated in February, belonged to a separate category of ceremonies, constituting the rite of initiation of new ZZPW members.

33 *Jare Gody*, *Dziady*, and *Jedenasty* were feasts of an open nature, which means that the rite could be attended by loosely-affiliated ZZPW supporters (men and women). Regardless of their sex, the guests were mere spectators, never actors, not counting the ritual toast, which was obligatory for all the gathered. *Kupala* was, on the other hand, a feast intended only for ZZPW members and their relatives (including women, without which it was difficult to imagine the celebration of a love feast).

34 I did not get consent for participation in celebrating *Lupercalia*. I obtained it only for *Szezęodre Gody*. The joint celebration in December, which exceeded the rules of participation, demonstrates the conviviality of the group with an anthropologist, but a refusal in the case of the February ritual shows the boundaries of intimacy.

like to emphasize that such guidance was primarily provided by a wider analysis of a group discourse. As part of their socio-logics, the difference between men and women was most fully reflected in the dichotomy of active/passive, as the idea of *aktywność* (“activity”)³⁵ constituted an *idée fixe* of the ideology of the group and was expressed in various ways in such words as ‘move(ment)’, ‘action’, ‘creation’ and *twórczość* (“creativity”, one of many neologisms coined by Stachniuk), ‘culture’. For Wolves, only men were active; women did not act in the movement, and thus did not create culture.

Świaszczysław Afield, the chief ideologist of the group and its informal leader, was probably the best example of such a perception and treatment of women. He was the one who mainly contributed to the fact that ZZPW was known for promoting the conservative perspective on relationships between sexes, based on the subordination of women, which could be expressed metaphorically by: ‘A woman is not allowed to speak!’ His relationship with Ania, his partner and later wife (married in a Neopagan rite), expressed such an approach.

Although these views seemed to be dominant, and the need to preserve the masculine nature of the organization was uncontested, that does not mean that every man in the organization fully shared the views of Świaszczysław, nor that the women of the organization’s environment accepted the position assigned to them. Thus, for example, Witosław, my main informant, was an advocate of partnership relations between a man and a woman. Monika, with whom he remained in a relationship during my fieldwork, had a strong character and boldly expressed her own views. Their everyday life was based on the equality of both parties, and yet, as should be obvious, this did not apply to the activities of the organization. Monika, nonetheless, enjoyed considerable prestige among the members of ZZPW and among the women associated with the group.

A clear and unequivocal voice postulating equality or, to be precise, ‘union’ of women and men appeared in *Securius* thanks to Komes Kurhan (2000?a), a member of ZZPW excluded from the organization long before I started to cooperate with it (for reasons unrelated to the issue of gender). According to him, in pre-Christian times the relationships between men and women were characterized by balance, and their reproductive activities in the domestic sphere and productive activities in the public sphere complemented each other. These relations were supposed to be based on ‘the rights and values learned from the natural order of nature’, and therefore were to be received by instinct. In his opinion, it was

35 The concept of *aktywność* in the Polish language is used in slightly different contexts in relation to the English language and the notion of ‘activity’. As noted by an American woman anthropologist conducting fieldwork in Poland: “This drive for *aktywność* cannot be fully understood without understanding its opposition to illness and debility. In other words, *aktywność* emerges as an unquestioned moral good” (Robbins 2013, 88). Although this statement comes from an article on aging, it perfectly captures the beliefs of the group. The opposite of *aktywność* is stagnation, vegetation, fall, and, as Stachniuk called it, *mspakultura* (“counterculture”).

Christianity – contrary to the proclaimed thesis about ‘absolute equality’ – which set a man and a woman against each other, where a ‘man with the burden of a dogma distorting his ego, and the whole biblical farce, had a primary role’. Kurhan argued that while ‘Men in their rationality have long before rejected and forgotten the ancient values coming from native custom and belief’, women practiced Paganism much longer – veiled in witchcraft, which the Christian churches fought against. The reason for this difference lay again in Nature: the knowledge of midwives, herbalists and fortune-tellers was to be ‘hidden in the depths of a woman’s “psyche”’.

Kurhan anxiously looked at communist and capitalist projects based, in his opinion, on ignoring the differences between the sexes, or on ‘sex wars’ (women on tractors, the superfluity of men), which confuse women and fool men. According to him, these projects would result in a decrease in the birth rate, thus threatening to destroy the nation. For this reason, he was a supporter of a ‘balance in the existence of men and women’, ‘mutual respect’, and natural complementation³⁶. It should be emphasized, however, that the balance postulated by romantic words implied a certain need in women, which could be provided only by a man: ‘They need to feel our care, our attention, our respect. Only then will they find their natural thread of existence, only then will they accept themselves, their femininity’.

A harbinger of these considerations seems to be another article by Kurhan (2000?b), published in earlier pages of the issue and devoted to the mystique of ‘Earth Mother’, which was set against the Fatherland and Patrimony. This was the first time that the feminine element got a more specific meaning in the nationalist ideology of ZZPW (‘The people and the Earth connected forever!’). It seems that while the Nation was the subject of reasonable protection and care, then ‘Earth Mother (...) nourishes, (...) protects, (...) receives on “the altar of her womb” our work effort and our remains’ and the tie with it is more emotional, almost mystical. In Kurhan’s considerations there was no mention about the role of a woman, but this article seems to be a subsoil for later considerations. Thanks to that, Nature, identified so far with ferocity and war, obtained another face: agriculture and fertility³⁷.

36 The article was decorated with a graphic depicting the fruits of oak and linden blossoms, connected/separated by an incomplete infinity symbol, arranged from the leaves of linden and oak. The graphic was signed by a monostich: ‘Female element - linden, Male element - oak – forever intertwined’. This metaphor was used many years later in the Creed of the Slavic Faith, where the relevant paragraph reads as follows: ‘Slavic Faith is an Oak and Linden braided together, it’s Family, it’s Union’. With the collapse of ZZPW, several people engaged in the formation of ZZW SW. Considering that Kurhan was not among them, he does not seem to be the author of that monostich.

37 The subject of this article constituted the development of the issues related to land ownership and the ‘national ecology’.

NATIVE FAITH NOT ONLY FOR MEN

I would like to enrich my reflections on the functioning of gender in extreme right-wing Neopagan circles in Poland with the perspective of the ZKA (active 2000-2003) and subsequent organizations: Zakon Swargi (ZS, “The Order of Svarga”) (2003-2006) and Nacjonalistyczne Stowarzyszenie ‘Zadruga’ (NS Zadruga, “The Nationalist Association ‘Zadruga’) (2006–), all of which operated (or still operate) in Lower Silesia (with their centre in Wrocław), and have been concentrated around the person of Dariusz Petryk³⁸. ZKA had similar roots and history to ZZPW, since it can be traced back to the Skinhead and thus philo-German Aryjski Front Przetrwania (“The Aryan Survival Front”), operating from the early 1990s (cf. Marszewski and Michalak 2005). After its collapse in the late 1990s Polski Związek Narodowo-Socjalistyczny ‘Wiara Krwi’ (“The Polish National-Socialist Union ‘Faith of Blood’”) emerged, which issued a similarly profiled zine, *Wiara Krwi*. Here, as in many others zines, the attitude to Nazi-Germany was a vassal one, and, what follows, present-day Germany was seen as a vital partner (Grott 2007: 293).

This situation clearly changed within ZKA, founded soon after Darek’s joining RW in 1999. This group issued the zine *Zakon Krwi: Pismo Świadomości Aryjskiej* (“Order of Blood: Aryan Consciousness Magazine”)³⁹, which represented a much more pan-European perspective, treating of Norman conquests, the Austria of Jörg Haider, the history and culture of the Celts and the religion of Western Slavs. It also dealt in a way with the Silesian question (for its local importance), yet the Polish national element was lacking. Forming the Aryan “front” was the message, and the leading notions were blood and race (no. 1). Later the zine, instead of presenting Pagan religions and cultures, focused on a critique of

38 Of the above-mentioned organizations, only the NS Zadruga did not limit the scope of its activities to Lower Silesia, but at an early stage of its existence it created a number of branches throughout Poland, and even beyond its borders (in Lusatia in Germany and in the United Kingdom). An important field of activity of the group and its subsidiaries was the Internet, where numerous richly illustrated blogs were kept, and on the YouTube channel there was video footage documenting important activities of the organization and promoting its ideology. Such a strategy constituted a clear change in relation to the more underground activity of the previous organizations, and for this reason the majority of ZS members did not want at the beginning to engage in the activities of the NS Zadruga. Ultimately, however, almost 300 people were active in the ranks of this group (according to its leader). However, when the activity of NS Zadruga became the subject of interest in the media and the public prosecutor’s office (as extreme nationalist and racist), most of the branches suspended their activity (Antosik 2008: 133–136, 2009: 109–112; Gajda 2009).

39 Only two issues of the zine were published: no. 1/2001 and no. 2/2002?. I have both issues in my collection.

Christianity, presented the doctrine of evolutionism and, what is of greatest importance here, introduced Zadrugan themes (no. 2).

Darek admits that the appearance of Zadrugism within the ideology of ZKA at the end of 2001 or beginning of 2002 were precisely due to relationship established with ZZPW, which visited Silesia⁴⁰. In addition, the ZKA leader himself aspired to join ZZPW, where for a short time (from one month to two) he was subjected to a trial period. Certain ideological differences, however, turn out to be too significant for a merger, or at least close cooperation between the organizations: ZZPW alleged ZKA ‘pan-Germanism’ and ‘pan-Aryanism’, whereas ZKA accused ZZPW of ‘pan-Slavic chauvinism’. Members of both groups that I talked to strongly agreed that the crux of the matter involved the opposite hierarchies of values: if, for ZZPW in the first place at this time was already a nation, then a super-nation, and at the end a race (the localizing, national perspective), then the sense of identity of ZKA was based on the reverse order: first they were Aryans, then Slavs, and at the very end Poles (the globalizing, racial perspective). Considering the certain evolution of thought which took place in ZZPW ideology, where the nation replaced the race as the guiding value, I think it would be accurate to say that from the perspective of its members, ZKA appeared as a ‘backward’ organization ideologically. My aim in saying that is not to assess the ideology of one organization or the other, but to notice the mechanism of making identity boundaries through the denial of coevalness, known to anthropologists both from their theoretical work (Fabian 1983), as well as from empirical studies (Gow 2007). In any case, contact with ZZPW led to the transformation of ZKA into ZS, followed by the establishment of the NS Zadruga. But even in this latter organization the racial theme has prevailed over nationalism (Gajda 2009: 81) or, at least, pan-European idea is as much important there as philo-Slavism.⁴¹

Although the above-mentioned ideological differences are a very important source of information about ZKA and about the subsequent organization, enabling us to capture the specifics of the circles centred around Darek, the crucial point here for understanding the group’s identity is the fact of a different view of the relationship between men and women, in relation to ZZPW. While

40 This date is confirmed by the analysis of available printed materials. In general terms, Zadrugan thought was known to ZKA members a bit earlier. Nevertheless, the nomenclature was still a novelty in 2002. This is evidenced by a misspelling of one of the basic terms occurring in Zadrugan discourse (*polakkatolik* instead of *polakatolik* (“Catholic-Pole”) and its unusual collocation (*psuedo polakkatolik*) found in the ZKA’s zine (“Editorial” 2002?). In the same issue there appeared for the first time a reprint of the article by Stachniuk (2002?), which was preceded by the proclamation of ‘the Zadrugan idea’.

41 My analysis focuses on question how racist ideas and philo-German attitude got enriched with nationalism and philo-Slavic Zadrugism. Gajda (2009) takes the opposite perspective.

in ZZPW women were excluded from the formal activities of the organization, in ZKA women were full members⁴². Additionally, within ZKA, during most of the time of the existence of this organization, a ZKA Female Section operated, called *Bogini Wojny* (BW, “The Goddess of War”), and its leader was Iwona, later Darek’s wife (marriage in the Neopagan rite)⁴³.

Iwona acknowledged that the formation of the women’s section within the ZKA was an act of ‘rebellion’ against the discriminatory beliefs of Świaszczysław about the position of women and their treatment. I am not convinced whether the establishment of BW was actually a reaction to the principles of ZZPW – if so, then the section would have had to be created in 2001 at the earliest (after establishing contact with ZZPW), while both Darek and Iwona argued that BW was already established in 2000, and the same year a zine *Bogini Wojny: Kwartalnik świadomości aryjskich kobiet* (“*The Goddess of War: A Quarterly of the Consciousness of Aryan Women*”) was published. This state of affairs would undermine the sequence of cause and effect postulated by Iwona, but the materials collected do not allow for its verification⁴⁴. Anyway, it seems to me quite obvious that the activity of this feminizing⁴⁵ section gained additional ideological justification due to contact with the radically masculinising ZZPW. There is also no doubt that the concept and the way of organization of BW constituted structural opposition

42 According to my knowledge, ZKA did not have formal rules of membership as strict as ZZPW. Belonging to ZZPW was the result of a lengthy process of testing the value of a candidate („a trial period“), which usually took about a year, and in some cases several years. The final act of inclusion into the group was to have the honour to participate in the celebration of *Lupercalia*, which had the nature of a ritual initiation. In its course, the person initiated performed scarification, and adopted a new name. In the case of ZKA, belonging to the organization was much more voluntary and immediate.

43 Darek and Iwona got married in Brzeg Dolny in Lower Silesia in 2004, during the celebration of *Noc Kupały*, in which I participated, along with some members of ZZPW. This trip was extremely fruitful, enabling me to establish contacts not only with ZS and with a little ZZPW branch operating in Greater Poland, but also with other people from Neopagan circles.

44 I have only one copy of the magazine *Bogini Wojny* 2001, no. 2 (2), whose title and numbering actually suggests that no. 1 (1) would have had to be published the same year. Perhaps obtaining this issue of the magazine would allow for more precise (direct or indirect) determination of the date of the creation of the zine and section itself; unfortunately, even the author herself does not have it. According to my informants, three numbers were published (30 copies each); number 4 was prepared but not published.

45 By the use of the epithet ‘feminizing’ I refer to the ideas and actions affirming in a colloquial way women’s power, i.e. the attitude of emancipation. I refrain from using the term ‘feministic’ to emphasize the lack of references to feminist thought present in the social sciences and humanities.

to, or a mirror view of ZZPW. This thesis is, of course, true only with respect to the general principles of the organization of both communities, because in BW – or rather in ZKA, where BW was a section – there was a lack of discourse, and discriminatory practices towards the opposite sex.

Although the addressees of the nine objectives of this organization, published in *Bogini Wojny*, were only women, in a more or less indirect way men were also mentioned (twice, points 4 & 5):

1. The Goddess of War is an organization associating women aware of their Aryan origin. Jewish, Asian and Negro women will be never members of our organization because of their belonging to the lower races.
2. The Goddess of War accepts every girl who is at least 16 and who wants to develop consciously in the movement, which is Pagan National-Socialism.
3. The Goddess of War strives to improve the character of the Polish nation by the physical and spiritual self-development of the woman. A strong and healthy woman is a strong and healthy family, and thereby a society of full value.
4. The Goddess of War aims at the education of a young woman for the role she fulfils in a society as a mother and giver of life, who knows her value as a human being equal to men.
5. The Goddess of War will teach the modern woman to fight for herself. She is to be 'a warrior in a skirt', guarding her race, nation, family, her own honour and dignity. Only a brave woman deserves glory and the memory of future generations.
6. The Goddess of War will care about the full education of a woman. Only the woman having some knowledge and worldly wisdom can feel completely appreciated. Then she is able to raise her children to be wise, brave and Aryan Poles.
7. The Goddess of War forbids a woman to be joined in marriage with Jews, Asians or Negros. By mixing their blood with our blood we destroy the Race and Nation created by our ancestors, and we restrain our development, contributing to the slow degradation or even the absolute death of future Aryan generations.
8. The Goddess of War propagates and professes Pagan National-Socialism. Paganism and NS are two inseparable and mutually supporting movements. United, they are a force that nothing and no-one is able to overcome (Iwona 2001).

In each case men were not undervalued, but on the contrary their status was the subject of desire. In both cases, the overall objective was teaching women to be like men ('a warrior in a skirt'), and by this adding to the measure of women's self-esteem so that they were equal to them. The language of this document was

less formal than the language of the Statute of ZZPW. Frequent references to the issues of reproduction could be seen ('family', 'children', 'mother', 'marriage'), and presenting a woman as a 'mother and giver of life', which fit perfectly into the image of the roles of men and women promoted by ZZPW members. Thus, there was a far-reaching consensus between ZZPW and BW or ZKA as to the view of the division of gender roles. The subject of disagreement was only the significance of this division: from the perspective of ZZPW, and certainly from the perspective of its 'traditional' faction, it meant inequality, but from the perspective of BW and some 'progressive' members of ZZPW, it meant equality.

It results from the analysis of printed materials issued by the ZKA that the authors of the articles were representatives of both sexes. The zine *Zakon Krwi* was edited by Darek, and most of the texts in it were written by men (mainly Darek), but there were also two articles written by Iwona. The first of them was a presentation of the history and culture of the Celts; the second proved the theory of evolution. On the other hand, in the aforementioned zine *Bogini Wojny*, edited by Iwona – if I may make such a generalization based on a single issue of the zine – mostly she was the author of the articles, although she was supported by articles written by men. The materials collected allow me to state that in both these magazines Iwona was the only woman to publish articles. It should be noted, however, that *Bogini Wojny* preceded the publication of *Zakon Krwi*.

When it comes to the subject matter of the articles edited by Iwona, it seems to be focused on two issues. The first one was the promotion of the knowledge of the Celtic culture, known for assigning the high social position to women, and women's themes in mythology and history. The second one was a critique of Christianity⁴⁶ from the feminizing position, and an apology of pre-Christian religions, in which the female element played an important role. When ZKA transformed into ZS and a new zine *Swarga* was created⁴⁷, Iwona published in it articles with eugenic and feminizing subjects. The main message of the latter was the added measure of women's self-esteem and the belief that 'we (women) can do!'

Thus, there was cooperation between the sexes at the level of publishing, and each sex occupied the same position. The same is true in other areas. Discussion meetings held by men were open to women; women also organized their own meetings, and although most men did not take part in them, those willing (usually Darek) had this right. Women took an active part in ceremonies, demonstrations and trips. When ZS was already functioning, Iwona organized and conducted twice the Święto Żywii ("Żywia Day") on May 1 (2005 and 2006), in honour of the goddess of life. This feast was attended by men, who were numerically the

46 Before Iwona became a Neopagan, as a teenager she was a deeply religious Catholic. Thus, she took the polemic with Christian thought from a particular perspective.

47 Two issues of the magazine were published: no. 1/2004? and no. 2/2005?. I have both issues in my collection.

dominant side. Nevertheless, they remained only passive participants in the rite. Women were allowed to speak, and hold banners and torches, and also give out apples, which are features distinguishing this feast from others. The fact of introducing the feast into the ritual calendar of ZS was evidence of this project's significance. The same, and much more, can be said about the participation of Potrzebowski every time in it, since his presence there was also an expression of friendly relations with Petryks (continuing till now)⁴⁸.

BW initially gathered six, and later ten women, which was roughly from 20 to approx. 35% of the members of ZKA, which had approx. thirty persons, and thus the number of women was proportionately large. In the whole country there were about twenty BW followers, among whom the magazine was distributed: in Western Pomerania, in Greater Poland (where the little branch of ZZPW operated), and in the south of the country (in Upper Silesia and Lesser Poland). The idea of a female organization met with great interest from women who were part of Neopagan movement in Poland, which also applied to women from the circles of ZZPW.

The activity of BW came to an end along with the transformation of ZS into NS Zadruga in 2006. Although the activity of the section faded, the ideas that were the foundation of the section were present in the lives of members of the NS Zadruga. This is evidenced not only by the family which the section leader, Iwona, started with Darek – and which was also one of the reasons for the suspension of the operation of the section – but also constant work on the promotion of the idea of a female warrior, which Darek has performed in lieu of Iwona. I refer here to his ongoing cooperation with the band Horytnica, playing patriotic rock metal, which resulted in Darek writing several lyrics, e.g. *Emilia Plater*, dedicated to a female captain of the Polish army during the November Uprising (1830–1831). Darek is also the author of an unpublished poem entitled *Bogini Wojny* (in my collection).

CONCLUSIONS

Making a distinction between Western and Central-and-Eastern Neopaganism, it is almost impossible to escape from the division of nations into two types: *demos*, political community, and *ethnos*, cultural community (Lepsius 1986, Sériot 1994, Habermas 2001)⁴⁹. Even if this is an oversimplification or a simple way to falling into the trap of stereotyping (Aitamurto, Simpson 2013b: 2–3; cf. Aitamurto 2006), I cannot ignore the fact that in the West and in Central and Eastern

48 Potrzebowski and Petryks live in the same city, that is Wrocław.

49 This basic dichotomy follows the famous and strongly criticized division of nationalism into 'civic Western' and 'ethnic Eastern' types, coined by Hans Kohn (1944).

Europe Neopagan movements tend to take different forms, which is not without a significance for gender relations.

And thus in the West, at least in the English-speaking world, Neopaganism takes the form especially (but not exclusively) of transethnic movements, i.e. those whose foundations are various ‘magical’ practices (Wicca, Druidry, Neoshamanism, Magick). That branch of Neopaganism inclines to the left, and relations between the sexes are usually based on the principle of equality, with a clear presence of feminist themes. In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, where the dominant form seems to be different varieties of ethnic Neopaganism or Native Faith (Wienc 1997, Aitamurto and Simpson 2013a), which tends to lean politically to the right – and certainly this is the case of Poland – the usual model of relations between the sexes is based instead on the principle of equity (Simpson 2000: 144–145). It seems that this state of affairs is related to the kinship between ethnic Neopaganism and (extreme) nationalism⁵⁰. As many researchers have aptly noted, ethnic and nationalist projects focused on the control of female sexuality, and this means differentiating the positions between the sexes (Ortner, 1978; Kandiyoti, 1991). Although in the case of ethnic Neopaganism, in view of a strong sexualisation of femininity, it is difficult to talk about the glorification of virginity or chastity, the effect is, however, the same: a woman is defined by motherhood, and her status, especially in public life, is low.

ZZPW, as an organization taking inequality between the sexes for granted and assigning women a subordinate status, was a relatively typical organization within the right-wing Neopaganism in Poland. What was unique in ZZPW was the sexualisation of nationality/race and religion, which was a simple consequence of the adoption of the membership principle: for men only⁵¹. Contrary to the claims of ZZPW members, the lower status of women was not inborn; it was not a fact of “nature”, but a social/cultural issue. The passivity of women associated (or not) with the organization was not a consequence of feminine nature, but resulted directly from the ideological principles and group organization. Social rules established by men for men and women, in fact, limited the rights and activity of women to a minimum, which in return justified the ideological

50 Actually, any form of ethnic Neopaganism or Native Faith – which as its goal chooses to re-construct religion and ethno-national culture – is a form of nationalism. However, due to the fact that in Central and Eastern Europe this category is charged with negative connotations, many Neopagans in Poland deny all their relations with nationalism, and particularly with its extreme forms. Only the Neopagan right-wing defines itself as nationalist. Moreover it should be noted that ethnic Neopaganism was born at the same historical moment, at the turn of the 19th century, as nationalism (Gellner 1983, Anderson 1983, Hroch 1985, Hobsbawm 1990).

51 By saying this I am far for arguing that values determine praxis. I instead agree with the opinion that ‘both the influence and the fate of cultural meanings depend on the strategies of action they support’ (Swidler 1986: 284). With this short formula I simply try to give concrete form to the above-mentioned ‘sexualization’.

assumption of the passivity of women. ZZPW's structure, although built on many levels, was also based on sex relationships, which made it a gendered institution (Acker, 1992).

ZKA, on the other hand, where membership was not regulated by sex, gender and psycho-sexual identity, and whose female and male members proclaimed the existence of equality between the sexes, seemed to be a distinctive organization compared to other Neopagan groups, not only in Poland but also in Central and Eastern Europe in general⁵². This claim is particularly true when we consider the very fact of the creation of a separate female section of BW, which in itself was also an example of a gendered institution.

This diversification of vision, that is, socio-cultural interpretations of the relationship between the sexes, is proof of the argument that Neopagans not only have sex, but also gender. Of course, the claim of having gender is merely a simplification, as gender is not a thing to have once and for all. Gender is more a process, something that is performed, that is practiced in action. This is proved by the approach to sex of ZKA and BW in particular, which was alternative to ZZPW. Many ideological and practical activities, in which the basis is a different understanding of femininity and sex relations, expressed in a protest against the exclusion of women and the lack of consent to the masculinisation of national-racial and religious identity, is nothing but constructing gender.

That ideological discussion within ZZPW, expressed in the demands of equalizing women with men, proves that the position of sex is not fixed and natural, but variable and created socially/culturally. While the difference between the roles of men and women was indisputable for all participants of a dispute – and this view was also shared by male and female members of ZKA – the significance of this difference was debatable. These two different views on the position of women, visible in the pages of *Securius* and in the every-day life behaviour of ZZPW members, are proof of the presence of gender in the life of this group.

While in most of the first decade of the 21st century gender equality was still a certain non-assignable feature of Neopaganism in Poland, and BW activities must be recognized as unique, nowadays the process of Neopagan women's emancipation and the trend toward equality can be clearly seen. If, until recently, it was difficult to imagine a woman conducting rites on equal principles with men (not counting BW), now it is not unusual. In ZZW SW, from the very inception of this religious organization one of the persons performing the duties of *żerca* ("Pagan priest") is Żywia, who at the beginning of 2014 released her debut album *Słowiańska Wiara* ("Slavic Faith"), promoted by the song "Wilcza

52 The only woman I know who gained wider fame in the Neopagan environment (locally and abroad) is Halyna 'Zoreslava' Lozko from Ukraine, Supreme *Volkehvynia* ("Pagan Priestess") of Ukraine-Rus (cf. Ivakhiv 2005, 22; Lesiv 2013, 51 ff., 72 ff.). In professional life Lozko is an ethnologist (cf. Łozko 1997), and in private life the wife of Potrzebowski.

Pani” (“Lady Wolf”). In Watra (“The Bonfire”), which separated from ZZW SW at the turn of 2009, the status of *żerca*, or rather *żerczyni* (“Pagan priestess”), belongs, inter alia, to Impudencja. In the Nadwarciański Krag Rodzimowierczy (“The Warta Native Faith Circle”), which began its operations in 2011, one of the persons conducting the rites is Hagath. If the two former organizations lean to the moderate right, then members of the latter are of ambiguous political orientation (yet all of them occupy the very centre of the Neopagan movement in Poland). Finally, on the left-wing, that is in RKP, Lesza has exercised the function of *żerca* for many years. As far as I know, none of the above-mentioned women ever worked in BW, but we cannot overstate the importance of the pioneering activities of the women’s section of ZKA in equalizing the rights of both sexes. This claim is all the more reasonable because at least some of these priestesses had the opportunity to get to know Iwona, and were presumably familiar (better or worse) with BW activities.

In the end, as an ethnographer, I should point out that the arguments in favour of the equality of both sexes, or simply the affirmation of women’s power on Slavic Neopaganism ground in Poland originate – probably not directly and exclusively – from two controversial anthropological works, which are classics today. In Kurhan’s theses one can easily notice inspirations originating from Murray’s work (1921), while Iwona’s reflections on a prehistoric fertility cult were influenced by the works of Bachofen (1967).

SUMMARY

The paper is focusing on the question of gender in extreme right-wing Slavic Neopaganism in Poland. My aim is to explore the position(s) of women within this movement. I investigate the rival views of the male-female relationship – subordination and partnership – by comparing two groups related on ideological and personal level, and yet organized according opposing principles. The example of Zakon Zadругi “Północny Wilk” exercising the principle “only for men”, and Zakon Krwi Aryjskiej (with a female section Bogini Wojny) exercising the principle “not only for men”, allow me to follow some changes occurring within Neopagan movement in Poland.

KEYWORDS

gender, men’s studies, women’s studies, Neopaganism, National Socialism, Native Faith, Zadruka, Poland

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