

Marzanna Customs in Poland

In the northeast of Poland, during the early spring, a figure representing death was braided from sheaves of grain or straw into the shape of a human, and was thrown into a river or pond. This was called the drowning of Marzanna.

The drowning of Death in effigy was done with the understanding that Death would not visit the village that year. It was also believed to purify the village and protect the inhabitants from sickness and plague.

After drowning the figure, the girls returned to the village with a *gaik*, a long green branch or small tree decorated with ribbons, feathers, and colored egg shells. They made a walking tour of the village. The girls visited various homes with their gaily decorated trees and received eggs in return which they decorated during Holy Week.

From: Polish Customs, Traditions, & Folklore by Sophie Hodorowicz Knab. Hippocrene Books, New York, NY c. 1993 pg 84-88.



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