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THE TRADITION OF „HERB” (*ZIELE*) IN ŚLĘZANY (CZĘSTOCHOWA REGION)

(Summary)

The Częstochowa Region is an eclectic region with respect to culture. The cult of St. Mary, connected with the shrine on Jasna Góra, affects the cultural specificity of the region. It also affects the customs and tradition. Studies conducted by the author in the region of Częstochowa have confirmed the hypothesis about the existence of the „folk type culture”. One of its manifestations is the custom of „herb elevation” practiced in the village of Ślężany. Although very interesting, the custom is little known. It is based in the folk religious tradition, however it can be related to the cult of St. Mary.

Every year, on August 14, on the eve of the Mother of God of Herbs celebrations, the inhabitants of the village gather in the afternoon at a designated place. Together, they put up a spruce pole, several metres high. Atop the pole there is a special wooden structure with field crops – the so-called „herb”. The height of the pole and the abundance of the „herb” are indications that the harvest was very good. It is an expression of gratitude and a tribute paid to the Mother of God. This article not only describes the „herb” tradition in the cultural context of the region, but also interprets and describes the transformations of this custom.

Key words: Częstochowa region, folk type culture, folk religious tradition, the cult of St. Mary, the Mother of God of Herbs celebrations