



POLAND - Pajaki - Spider of Straw

Traditionally, Advent is an important season in the Polish year, with special church services, known as Roraty, being held every morning at 6am. The four Sundays of Advent are said to represent the 4,000 years of waiting for Christ.

Special tasks carried out during Advent are the baking of the Christmas piernik or honey cake, and the making of Christmas decorations. Pierniki are made in a great variety of shapes, including hearts, animals and St Nicholas figures.

Traditional decorations include the pajaki = spiders, which are handmade mobiles, stars and decorated egg shells. Pajaki are traditional decorations, rather lots of bomblets, colourful paper chains and lots of electric lights.

Beautifully lit Christmas trees are placed in all public arenas, outside churches and in homes. Traditionally the trees are decorated with shiny apples, gift walnuts, beautifully wrapped chocolate shapes and many home-made decorations and candles. On the top of the tree is a star or a glittering top piece. In many homes, sparklers are hung on the branches of the trees giving it a magical air. Sometimes the trees are left standing until February 2nd, the feast day of St Mary of the Candle of Lightning.

During Advent, the Gwiadorze or star carriers, used to begin wandering through the towns and villages and this would continue until Epiphany. Some of the Gwiadorze sang carols, others recited verses or put on Szopi or puppet show, or herody or nativity scenes. The last two customs are developments from traditional manger scenes or Jaselka or crib. Star carriers are called carol singers. They sing carols. "put on Szopi" - you rather meant "perform Szopke". It is a scene when Christ is born, and three kings come to the manger. "Herody" - you mean Herod's performance. The story, about evil king Herod, who was forseen to loose his power from a child, so he ordered to kill all the children.

