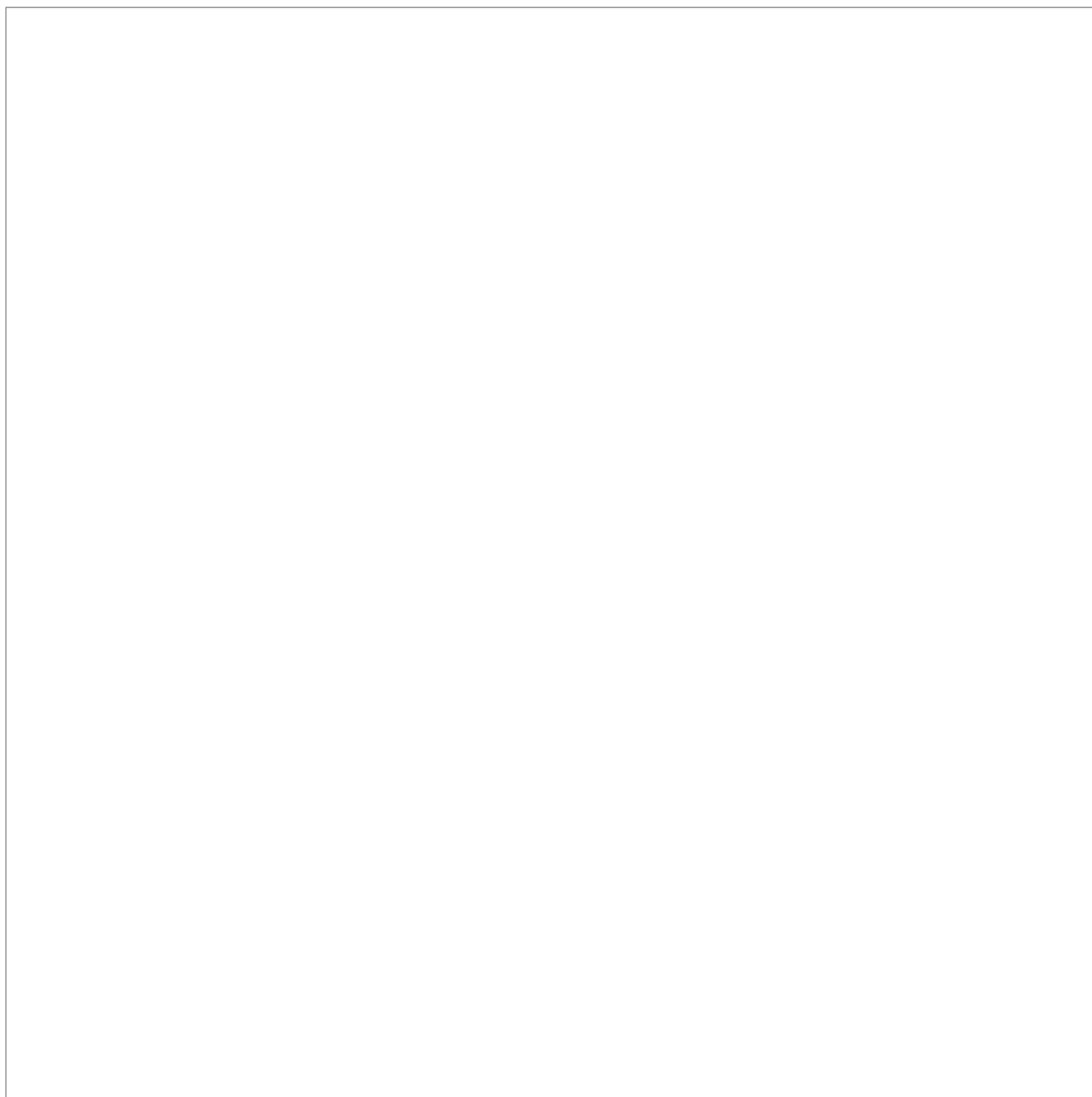


Costume “Easter Monday Dziad” by Piotr Opach



- Author Piotr Opach
- Date of production 1938
- Place of creation Dobroniów, Janowice gromada (administrative unit meaning “group”), Jodłownik Commune, district of Limanowa, Poland
- Dimensions height: 225 cm
- ID no. 7971/mek
- Museum [The Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków](#)
- Subjects [clothing](#), [rural areas](#), [entertainment](#)
- Technique [weaving](#), [hand sewing](#)
- Material [wood](#), [paper](#), [fabric](#), [canvas](#), [mutton leather with fur](#), [wire](#), [rye straw](#)
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- Digitalisation RDW MIC, Małopolska's Virtual Museums project
- Tags [strój](#), [tradycja](#), [sztuka ludowa](#), [Wielkanoc](#), [obrzędy](#), [wieś](#), [3D](#), [kostium](#), [© wszystkie prawa zastrzeżone](#)

Easter Monday *Dziad* (*dziad śmiguśny*, *dziad śmigustny* or *stomiak*), a costume for a boy or a young man walking on Easter Monday from home to home as part of the *śmigus dyngus* tradition in Małopolska, in villages around Limanowa.

The wooden frame, a dummy imitating a standing person. The arms, legs and trunk are wrapped in plaits of hay, strictly adhering to the jacket and trousers and making up the costume of this character. The large buttons made of sticks and hay loops serve as a fastening. He is wearing a conical hay cap ending with seven hay plaits and adorned with strips of colourful paper. His face is tightly concealed by a mask cut out of sheepskin with the black fur out. The hands made of hay hold a wicker basket for gifts and a wooden stick.

The whole figure was made by Piotr Opach of the village of Dobroniów, Janowice *gromada*, Jodłownik Commune, Limanowa District, in 1938, when it was also incorporated into a permanent exhibition at the Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków along with a female figure of *Babka* (... a male figure always being referred to as *Chtop* or *stomiak* [a straw man], and the female one as *Babka*). One could tell the difference between a *Babka* and a *Chtop* by the white colour of the sheepskin mask, the handkerchief and tow plaits attached, as well as the straw skirt and corset with *kaletkas* (serration ending the corset), easily discernible among the straw plaits. This extraordinary couple of *Dziady*, a part of the Ethnographic Museum's permanent exhibition, has always stirred visitors' interest and curiosity.

Dziady śmigustne, or *Dziady śmigusztne*, or *dziady słomiane*, *stomiaki* [a straw man], *śmiguśnioki*, as they are referred to in ethnographic sources, could be seen at night and in the early morning from Sunday to Easter Monday in the late 19th century and the 1st half of the 20th century, not only in Dobroniów, but also Dobra, in the area of Szczyrzyc, Jodłownik, Wiśniowa and Wierzbanowa.

Mysterious, entirely covered, wrapped in straw plaits, tall (due to the high hats) and masked figures would walk around the village mostly in pairs or alone. During their march they aimed not to meet each other as encounters often ended up with arguments or even fights due to competition issues. One could easily get scared on seeing at their own house the monsters with shaggy masks and holes for the eyes and lips, glowing with the red hem. They would never say anything but utter strange sounds: a murmured or gobbled "u-u-u-u". Hosts gladly greeted them and, if there were no children at home, they let them inside. *Dziady* had to be careful not to be identified or doused with water by household members, marriageable women making greatest efforts to pour their water. This practice took place in the night and on the morning of Easter Monday, also known as *śmigus dyngus*. Sources mention the custom of water dousing taking place on this occasion as a part of the rite, though they differ in details. Either hosts doused *Dziady* or *Dziady* doused household members, often all parties dousing each other. *Stomiaks* performed a kind of dance with each other and, upon leaving, they were given the so-called *śmiguszt* – usually eggs put in the baskets that they always carried with them. The wandering from house to house ended at dawn, in the morning when the villagers left for church mass.

Nowadays, on Easter Monday, the custom of *Dziady śmiguśtne* can still be observed in a few villages in the Limanowa District, yet *stomiaks* have been replaced by masqueraders dressed in textile costumes and plastic masks. No wonder, after all, it is hard to get rye straw, let alone long blades of rye straw suitable for weaving. Today rye is mown with machines and what is left of the straw is shreds compressed into cubes or cylinders. In Dobra, *Dziady* act up on Easter Monday in the centre of the village, where they prey for pedestrians, girls in particular, to douse them with a hose or bucket. They stop cars for the same purpose, and, given a gift, they put a bundle of straw or straw plaits behind the windscreen wiper for "good fortune." In the 2nd half of the 20th century, *Dziady* had less and less straw in their costumes, they only had a few bunches of straw stuck in a few places. Nevertheless, the custom carried on. Recently, thanks to the "Śmiguśniok of the Year" competition, organised since 2008 by the Community Centre in Dobra and the Dobrzański Region Culture Society, we could see increasingly better costumes that included more and more straw.

In Dobra, legend has been told that centuries ago, when the Tatars invaded Poland, in the morning of Easter Monday, people escaping Tatar captivity came to the village. Stripped of clothes and dressed in rags, they wrapped themselves with straw. They could not say a word as Tatars had cut their tongues out. Villagers hosted them, gave them clothes and food. This event was commemorated by naming the village Dobra [Polish: *good*]. It is not known when the legend started. It appears only in the context of the *Dziady* custom, though it is nowhere to be found in studies on the village history. These studies provide a

version of linguists, according to which the name originates from "good water" or *debra*, a steep slope covered with a forest, a stream flowing at its foot. This legend has appeared in sources and studies on the custom of *Dziady śmiguśne* as a local folk tale only since the 1970s. This custom is not mentioned in texts published in *Orli lot* in the 1920s by Leopold Węgrzynowicz (1881–1960), a teacher, an accomplished folk culture researcher and an expert on Dobra.

It is also worth mentioning that *Dziady śmigustne* had many counterparts throughout the region of Małopolska, i.e. boys running from house to house *po śmiguście* on Easter Monday. These included weirdly dressed trick-or-treating boys in Wola Rzędzińska (in the area of Tarnów) in the late 19th century and *chłop* and *baba* or boys called *Dziady* walking from house to house in Rzeszotary in the Wieliczka District, as noted in 1901 by Seweryn Udziela. This category of ritual characters appearing on Easter Monday also includes *Siuda Baba*, known in the area of Wieliczka.

All of those characters are spring counterparts to winter carollers, whose goal is to give wishes in a ritual way, i.e. a strongly symbolic form. It is evidenced by the fact that participants include only boys or young unmarried men. Their daily neighbourhood identity is concealed behind a costume and a mask. Their identity must not be uncovered since they act as intermediaries positioned at the edge between the real and extrasensory worlds, providing them with the capability of mediating between those worlds and thus making wishes come true. They are referred to as *Dziady*, meaning both "old beggars" and "old people," people from the fringes of the village community or the border between life and death. The material used to make the costume, i.e. straw, often used in ritual accessories, carries rich symbolism of good harvest, fertility, and, consequently, affluence and success. Sheepskin arranged with its furry side on the outside, applied in the mask in this case, occurs equally often with similar symbolism. An inextricable attribute of those characters, the lack of articulate sounds, justified with the Tatar legend, was probably meant to reinforce their foreignness, and thus the power of the rite, which also involved hosts' providing *stomiaks* with *śmigust*, i.e. eggs, in exchange for wishes. This exchange was necessary for the wishes to come true.

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