

IS MILITARY HERITAGE OF WEST POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REGION'S DEVELOPMENT?

Ewelina ŻURAWICZ^{A,B,D,E,F}

*Institute of Geography and Spatial Management, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland
ewelina.zurawicz@uj.edu.pl*

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Abstract:

West Pomeranian Voivodeship, which is one of the most important tourist regions of the country, was developing recreation tourism through many years. However, changes in trends and tourists' needs require adaptation and diversification of the tourist offer. A new characteristic proposal for the region could be military tourism. The aim of this article is to present the diversity of categories of military heritage in the voivodeship and possibility of their touristic usage. Analysis of tourist attractions has been made on the basis of source materials and participant observation. Numerous and varied military heritage of West Pomeranian Voivodeship, after an appropriate adjustment, is likely to become a factor of local development, especially of the less developed areas.

INTRODUCTION

West Pomeranian Voivodeship is one of the most important tourist regions of the country. Attracts thousands of tourists by the possibility of relaxing at the seaside, for years developed mainly that tourism type. However, despite continuous popularity of 3xS holiday type (Sun, Sand and Sea), tourists are more often looking for additional attractions that will provide sensations and excitement in their leisure time. This leads to the need of diversifying the offer of available tourism products in such a way to meet the new needs and demands of tourists.

The best developed and the most popular tourist area of West Pomeranian Voivodeship is the seaside. The second region of higher concentration of tourism are lake districts in the southern part of the region [18]. In both cases seasonality of the tourism is clearly marked - highest during the summer and concentrated in the famous tourist resorts. Currently, development of tourism in the region uses primarily its natural resources. Access to the sea, high level of woodiness, clean environment and many lakes encourage the promotion of agritourism, ecotourism and active time spending. Modernization and expansion of the tourism infrastructure would allow the development of adventure tourism such as horseback riding, hiking, cycling or water tourism. Search for new tourism products is lead primarily to extend the tourist season and the development of smaller towns and rural areas. In recent years, observed tourist trends indicate the decreasing importance of natural resources as an attraction, while the importance of the variety of tourist services is increasing [1, 6].

Currently, the region has to have something special to stand out to other areas in order to draw the attention of tourists [16]. Finding this individual characteristic features is very important both in the creation of new tourism product and its promotion. The opportunity to

create original attractions is the rapid development of various types of cultural tourism. On attractive natural areas, it can be both an interesting complement to the existing offer, as well as a completely separated tourism product [1]. In addition, an increasing rank of cultural tourism as a factor of local and regional development [1, 9] may be the chance to develop not only the largest urban centers, already offering many tourist attractions [1], but also to introduce new areas to the map of tourist destinations. This is particularly advantageous in the case of areas recently under-invested or with high unemployment rate [19]. As the study of behavior of cultural tourists shows, practically all elements of the cultural landscape can be considered as cultural resources and values [5], and ultimately used as cultural attractions.

Among the heritage sites, which in recent years have become the subject of increased interest of tourists, a separate category are the military heritage attractions [17]. Lawin and Stasiak [8] in the context of military attractions distinguish both objects (various types of defensive structures, military museums, monuments commemorating historical events, military graves and cemeteries), location (battles and fights fields, sites associated with prominent commanders) and the events of a military. Tourism of this type is rapidly developing in Europe, while in Poland it can become an important tourist attraction [19]. Among the reasons most frequently mentioned for military tourism are: interest in history and conflicts, own military experience, interest in weapons and military and historical reenactment in military aspects [3]. Military tourist belong to the category of a determined cultural tourist having specific expectations and requirements in relation to offered tourism product [7]. However, this does not change the fact that military attractions can also interest mass tourist being only an incidental culture tourist [10].

West Pomeranian Voivodeship has great potential for developing military tourism. There are numbers of military attractions from all previously identified categories, both objects and military events located on its territory. In addition, in most cases those are located in attractive natural areas. In conjunction with the socio-demographic profile of tourists visiting West Pomeranian Voivodeship, i.e. mainly young people up to 35 years old [18], it gives a great potential of development especially connected with active, specialized tourism. The new tourism products can function both as a supplementary offer of recreational tourism and as separated attractions directed to a new group of visitors. On the other hand, the coordinated development of military tourism can become a factor in the development of less developed areas of the province.

AIM OF THE ARTICLE

This article aims to make a brief review of the categories of military heritage present in West Pomeranian Voivodeship, with particular emphasis on objects created after the Middle Ages. In this work efforts were made to present the variety of military attractions (by categories), what is intended to draw attention to the favorable conditions for the military tourism development in this area. This kind of tourism can function both as a separate tourist product and complement the existing offer, which could have a positive impact on the local development of less developed areas of the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Article is based mainly on scientific publications, tourist guides of West Pomeranian Voivodeship, local media materials and planning documents. Books and articles related to both cultural tourism and its role in regional development and tourism issues in the Polish military were also used. An important source of information about individual objects and

events were websites dedicated to them. The source information author supplemented by a participant observation of most described events.

In this study the query of source materials and websites was used. The collected data were divided into the categories separated by the author based on time of formation of military objects and the type of tourist attraction. Conclusions of military tourism development opportunities in West Pomeranian Voivodeship was based on an analysis of the diversity of military heritage and military attractions in the area.

MILITARY HERITAGE OF WEST POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP

Poland is a country with exceptional resources and diversity of military heritage resulting from the turbulent history [19]. West Pomeranian Voivodeship, due to its strategic geographical location and the deployment of various armies on its territory in consecutive historical periods, is an area particularly dominating in this field. It is possible to find material traces of a military presence in the form of castles, forts, bunkers and fortifications, and even entire garrisons and cities all over the area. There are also numbers of less material military attractions in the form of trails and battlefields or, being developed in recent years, rallies of military fans. Military attractions are summarized in separate categories.

MATERIAL HERITAGE

Military memorabilia of troops stationed in what is now West Pomeranian Voivodeship dates back to the Middle Ages. They can be divided into categories according to its genesis, purpose of objects and their technical specifications.

The oldest military facilities exist for years in the minds of tourists as monuments, so they are not the main topic of this article. Medieval city walls of Sławno and Choszczno, castle in Świdwin, Arsenal in Stargard Szczeciński are just a few examples of the numerous categories of the oldest military structures in this area [13]. However, some of them were being rebuilt for centuries losing their defensive qualities. Underlining their original military function (and the opportunity to observe such changes) can be for some tourists an additional reason for visiting those objects [4]. Proper development of their past defense allows to use even the objects difficult to adapt to for tourism purposes e.g. ruins. An example is Drahim where around the ruins of the castle was founded "medieval village", and in the summer are held knights tournaments, which attract visitors [28]. Revival of the past military relics would catch attention of military tourists.

In the voivodeship there are many military buildings from the nineteenth century, defined as the period of the main strongholds [19], which have been fairly well developed and can serve as a model use of such heritage. Worth mentioning here are Red Barracks in Stargard Szczeciński, Fort of Angel in Świnoujście and well preserved fortified buildings in Kołobrzeg. These are buildings with a distinctive architectural style, attractive not only to tourists. Most of these objects has been redeveloped in different ways and are still used. Particular attention should be paid to the complex of military attractions "Świnoujście - the fortress on the islands". It provides attractions for military fans such as drill in the fort, observation of regiment, combat and historical events (Fig.1.), as well as a number of cultural events (art exhibitions, concerts) intended for a wider audience. The full potential of the old fort has resulted in a distinction for the Best Tourist Product of Polish Tourist Organization in 2005 [20].

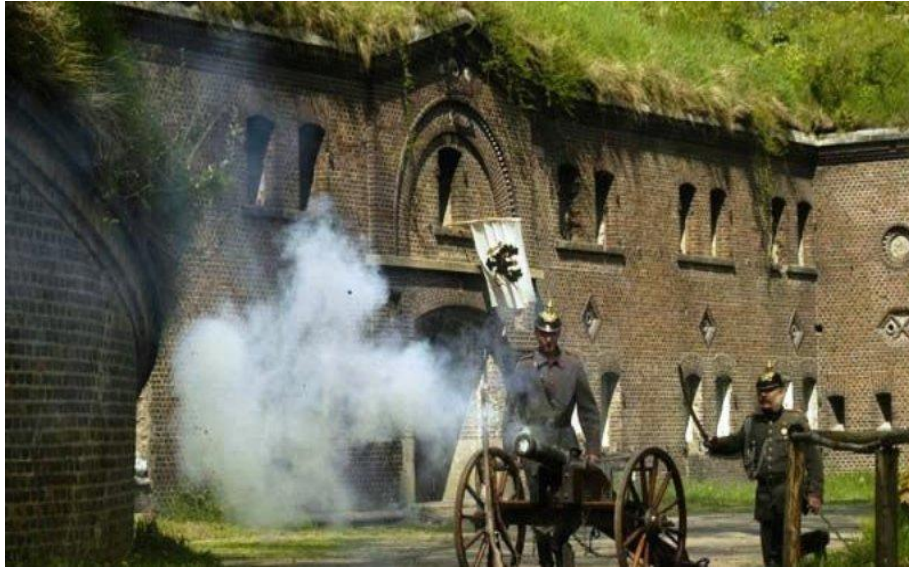


Fig.1. Part of historical reenactment in Fort od Gerhard in Świnoujście
source: www.onet.podroze.pl

In line with European trends, there is an increasing interest in the remains of military fortifications from I and II World War and younger. The youngest military heritage can definitely revive military tourism in the region. Standard association connected with this type of objects are bunkers, such as in Mielno or Darłówek [23]. However, remnants of the twentieth century wars are mainly various types of military objects. Apart from the bunkers are scattered among them objects as lines of fortifications, launchers, shooting galleries, trenches or buildings designed to indirectly serve for defensive purposes. The largest of this type of complex is formed by fortification of Pomeranian Rampart, which consists of both a series of bunkers (eg. Wałcz, Szczecinek, Strzalin), places of shooting and other technical buildings (the dam on Piława intended to help preserve the nature of the river as an obstacle for people and vehicles [13]. The biggest problem in their touristic usage is often poor technical condition. Many of them over the years fell into disrepair due to "hostile metric" and reluctance to preserve such heritage, for example former German [4]. This is changed now and more and more people see the possibility of the use of formerly unwanted souvenirs.

Besides the historical and military values attracting people interested in such topics, post-military objects are also important for education [7] about the history of "Recovered Territories". Another advantage for tourism may be their location. They are located mostly in forested areas and can be used in the development of active tourism based on historical and military background. All types of rallies, popular in recent years quads, paintball or laser battles would have great background for their competitions. Currently, some of the military heritage residues are used for practicing this type of activities, but mainly by the local population and in a disorganized way. Such an example may be abandoned military area around Stargard Szczeciński, which could be a base for tourists looking for thrills or space to pursue their sporting interests. A positive action would be to establish cooperation or interest in these areas by companies, which now offer active tourist for fans of adrenaline in West Pomeranian Voivodeship.

Among the many former military buildings, some will be re-developed, such as the bunkers in Dziwnówek, which will be adapted for the "military town" [27]. Most objects are still waiting for notice of their potential, but there are also examples of very well executed

military tourism attractions. The paradigmatic example of a good tourist development are Underground Tourist Routes in Szczecin realized in the fallout shelter. They offer a route approximating the history of Szczecin during World War II and the Cold War, as well as a special offer for children and adolescents (Fig. 2.). Preparation of this attraction was honored the distinction of the Best Tourist Product POT in 2008 [20]. The atmosphere of the facility is also built by the fact that it is officially an active shelter only temporarily available for visitors [26]. Created offer is addressed both to people who are particularly interested in the history of the city, military themes, and is attractive to many other groups. This shows the wide possibilities of touristic use of such facilities.



Fig.2. Part of Underground Tourist Routes in Szczecin
source: www.schron.szczecin.pl

Another category of objects associated with the military are museums and memorial chambers. In West Pomeranian Voivodeship are several important institutions of such types. The largest institution in the region is Polish Arms Museum in Kołobrzeg presenting a rich collection of exhibits dating from the Middle Ages to modern times. In addition to the exhibition halls, the museum offers outdoor exhibitions of heavy vehicles, artillery, aircraft (Fig. 3.), and even military vessels [25]. Other museums of the region, like the Museum of the Struggle for Pomeranian Wall in Mirosławiec and the Bunker-Museum of V3 Weapons in Międzyzdroje [21], thematic exhibitions also combine with exhibitions in the outdoors, which definitely is more attractive. Most dispersed, small institutions are the Memorial Chambers focusing mostly on selected moments of the history and local events. They function both as separate constructions like Memorial Chamber in Zdbice [24] or under other institutions, e.g. Memorial Chamber in gymnasium in Świdwin and the Memorial Chamber at the 1st Wing of Tactical Flight in Świdwin [11]. This type of facility may definitely become a complementary offer for military tourism, historical education, and points on the thematic routes.



Fig.3. Open-air exhibition of Polish Arms Museum in Kołobrzeg
source: www.muzeum.kolobrzeg.pl

OTHER MILITARY HERITAGE

Military past of the area has left a less tangible heritage. Place of important events, battles and process of battles were symbolically marked by monuments and commemorative plaques. The solution to commemorate and promote this heritage are marked theme trails. The most famous example is the Battles of Pomeranian Wall Trail [13], where is a number of different military facilities and a museum dedicated to those particular military struggles. In the region there are also less known routes, for example Trail of Świdwin's Combat [2], or the National Remembrance Trail [22]. Thematic routes have great potential for the development of local tourism. They attract people interested in history and military topics, they are a great background for historical and regional education, but also for the development of active tourism and sports. The problem is the lack of or poor infrastructure and insufficient promotion, which leads to lack of tourists awareness of the existence of such trails. However, the growing popularity of such solutions provide new initiatives taken in recent years. Voivodeship's leaders plan to create a Baltic Cultural and Tourist Trail of Fortification Fortress [12]. On the other hand, the new initiative of museum in Kołobrzeg, historic vehicles rally along the trail of Poland's Wedding to the Sea Ceremony took up so well that it was also supplemented by analogical March of Wedding (Fig. 4.). Both events combine sport competition with historical education and a spectacle, because groups taking part in them are required to reproduce the uniforms and equipment of Polish military units of World War II [25]. Proper preparation of thematic routes can be an impetus for the development of tourism especially in the less developed areas and rural areas.



Fig.4. Group participating in March of Poland's Wedding to the Sea Ceremony
source: www.kolobrzeg.pl

Souvenirs connecting material symbols with the emotional aspect are, scattered throughout the voivodeship, monuments and plaques commemorating both places of battles, fallen soldiers and civilian victims of war. Such memorabilia can be found in many towns and villages and on routes of battles trails. Important points of similar meaning are military cemeteries. Cantonment of Central Cemetery in Szczecin, with the graves of soldiers of many nationalities, illustrates the complicated history of this region. In addition, several monuments commemorating historical events and their victims, such as National Army Monument are located in this cemetery. Such objects can function both in the case of military tourism, but also dark tourism and complete other forms of tourism.

Very high potential for tourism development pose military events of a historical and military themes, which have a chance of becoming a genuine attractions of the West Pomeranian region. Events particularly attractive and attracting both enthusiasts and ordinary tourists are military-themed events[4]. The rallies of military vehicles were even marked as one of five tourist brand products of West Pomeranian Voivodeship [12], which proves their significant role in the development of tourism in the region. The advantage of the voivodeship is having in its tourist offer the military events with an international scope, for example International Rally of Historic Military Vehicles in Darłowo (Fig. 5.) and International Rally of Military Vehicles in Borne Sulinowo.



Fig.5. International Rally of Historic Military Vehicles in Darłowo
source: www.posejdon-darlowo.pl

These types of events are attractive for foreign tourists, where military tourism has gained popularity earlier than in Poland. Offer of the events is not limited to military vehicles, but it is much more extensive. There are events very widely presenting uniformed services as it is done on Kołobrzeg's Picnic of Military and Uniformed Services. While others focus on one subject as Air Picnic in Świdwin presenting aviation in the region (Fig. 6.)



Fig.6. Air Picnic in Świdwin
źródło: www.zp.pl

Events relating to the past defense, like knight tournaments often held in the original setting e.g. in Drahim castle also have to be mentioned as important attractions. All these events have in common is the fact that they are attractive not only for people interested in a particular subject. Of course, they are attracting mainly military enthusiasts of specific historical period or theme, but their offer may also interest the mass tourist. Visitors have the opportunity to see military equipment, dress up in uniforms, raise the level of their knowledge in the topic and many more. The events are usually accompanied by sports stands, climbing walls, rally of

cars/quads that allow to spend time actively. Most often they are also complemented by gastronomic offer alluding to military standards and regional cuisine. A wide range of stalls at the military events makes them attractive not only for hardcore fans of the military. Those could be interesting for people looking for adrenaline, active recreation, but also families with children, whose are plenty at the Polish seaside at summer, when most of these events take place. We can say that the military events meet the objectives of 3E tourism type (entertainment, education and excitement), because they provide the participants with the historical and technical education combined with entertainment and dose of active leisure.

Former military facility with an unique tourist importance for West Pomeranian Voivodeship is Borne Sulinowo. This town is unique even in the whole country. Borne Sulinowo was founded in the 30s of the twentieth century as an artillery school garrison of Wehrmacht. Military training ground was established around the town and during WWII there were war camps functioning in the town. After the World War II the garrison was taken over by the Red Army and converted into a Soviet military base of the Northern Group of Forces. Officially, the city did not exist in any documentation, on the maps was marked as woodland. It was only in 1993, after Russian army left Poland, Borne Sulinowo returned under Polish jurisdiction. [15] Tourism has become an important branch of the town's development. Borne Sulinowo has all the assets for development of military tourism. The whole material heritage, preserved former military buildings in the town, create a specific "atmosphere" resulting from the unusual history. It is skillfully highlighted by the organization of military events in the region. The biggest is the International Rally of Historic Vehicles. In addition, there are organized attraction based on military heritage and natural beauty of the area prepared for active travelers. All these activities constitute creation of a local brand "Borne Sulinowo-touristic training ground" [14] and best illustrate opportunities presented by skillfully used military heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

Presented variety of categories of military heritage confirms the chances of military tourism development in West Pomeranian Voivodeship. Accumulation of post-military objects in this region is not found in any other area of Poland. Objects' diversity is especially valuable, both in terms of the inception and categories of buildings. Military tourism would enrich the tourist offer of the region, would allow the extension of the tourist season and would introduce to tourists new areas that have not yet been used for tourist purposes. Military tourism, connected with active recreation, marches or rallies, would allow to activate less developed areas of the province, where unemployment rate is often high and every new place of work is valuable.

The richness and diversity of military heritage in West Pomeranian Voivodeship allows to create an extensive range of tourist offer attractive for many groups of tourists. The historically oldest objects can be used as a background for events referring to the medieval army themes e.g. tournaments and reconstruction of the battles. These types of events are often organized by and addressed to fans of this historical period and historical performers, but are also popular among mass tourists. Those are particularly attractive are families with children, for whom such offer is an interesting complement of vacation by the sea or by the lake. Existing events should be kept and that offer should be further developed. Those should be widely promoted, also in West Pomeranian resorts, to reach families spending their holidays there. Along existing thematic routes, e.g. Knights of St. John Route or Cistercian Route, a calendar of chivalric events taking place in the consecutive towns could be constructed.

Nineteenth-century forts of West Pomeranian Voivodeship, while properly adapted for touristic purposes, proved to be one of the best tourism products in the country. Their success can be seen due to professionally executed offer to fans of military topics. To a strictly military offer were added diverse cultural events, which allow to use these facilities by a wide audience. The authorities responsible for the development and promotion of the region should ensure more intensive promotion of these objects, since they are available, prepared for tourists, high quality facilities, accompanied by various events. Their success is an example of the right way of managing military facilities for tourism.

The greatest opportunity for local development through military tourism offer post-military objects from the twentieth century. Complexes of different buildings, technical constructions of fortifications are located on extensive grounds, usually on attractive natural areas, but which are not main destinations in the region. Heritage military of our newest history, besides of the rich material legacy, also offers emotional experiences, which contemporary tourist are searching for. In addition to typical offers of sightseeing, at least two ways of former military objects usage could be proposed. First one is a combination of tourism with a sport and active forms of spending holidays. Different types of marches through the fights routes, car or quads rallies, opportunity of a "military exercises" or conduct a mock battles such as laser/paintball in the original scenery, for enthusiasts of historical and military subjects and for people who appreciate active spending time, would guarantee the emotional thrill. These types of attractions are spread over quite a large area, and thus could function better within supporting their activities enterprises and organizations connected in e.g. common cluster.

The second type of use of, not just the twentieth-century, military heritage is to organize events on the basis of military topics, like various rallies and military picnics. Professionally organized, addressed to a specific recipient, focused on a specific issue or historical period are likely to attract tourists from all across Poland. The proximity to the German border also has a beneficial effect on the location of such events in West Pomeranian Voivodeship, because the military tourism is already popular abroad. In addition to the group of enthusiasts, such events because of their unusual setting, attract mass tourists wishing of new experiences and diversified offer. It's necessary to enhance the impact of military events on the consciousness of the mass tourist, because the enthusiasts of subject usually are well informed and versed in such events. Again, the need of promotion for such touristic offer has to be stressed out. There is a need to communicate to the tourists that West Pomeranian Voivodeship is not only a place of passive recreation by the water, but also the place for sports and active leisure on natural areas with history in the background. Promotion of military heritage in West Pomeranian Voivodeship could be fostered by specially prepared tourist offers for celebrating anniversaries of historical events that took place also in the history of the region like, e.g. forthcoming in 2015 70th anniversary of the end of World War II or the Poland's Wedding to the Sea Ceremony.

Existing good examples of military heritage adaptations should be followed by other places, which are planning to use military heritage to attract tourists. It seems that the key to success is to provide a consistent theme attractions, but at the same time still interesting to a wider audience. These places definitely attract the fans of various forms of military, their enthusiasts, but apart from that they must offer attractions for another groups of tourists, for whom military or historical offer may become complementary to passive recreation. West Pomeranian Voivodeship with its rich and diverse military heritage, through its appropriate management, is able to provide for needs of all tourists spending holidays in the region. In

addition, the original offer has the ability to attract new tourists and distinguish West Pomeranian Voivodeship from other tourist areas. The specificity of a military tourism and diversity of its offer may activate areas less developed and not used to tourists until now. As the example of Borne Sulinowo shows, sensible strategy for military heritage usage could become a driving force for local development, which is particularly valuable in regions with higher unemployment rate. West Pomeranian Voivodeship with its military heritage is able to create a branded tourist product, which would influence development of tourism, and thereby contribute to local development.

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