

Recenzja: Andrzej Gillmeister, *The Point of View. Tadeusz Zieliński on Ancient Religions*, Akme. Studia Historica: nr 11/2013, Warszawa, 67 pp.

Andrzej Gillmeister's book on Tadeusz Zieliński as a historian of ancient Greek religion was published in 2013 as a part of the series titled "Akme. Studia Historica" published by the Institute of History of the University of Warsaw. Before the book, the author had published an article about Zieliński: *Kontrowersje wokół książki Hellenizm a judaizm Tadeusza Zielińskiego. Polemiki chrześcijańskie*¹ (Controversies around Tadeusz Zieliński's book *Hellenism vs. Judaism. Christian polemics*) (Przegląd Religioznawczy [3] 2011, pp. 275-288). Some other works concerning Tadeusz Zieliński and his scholarly work have recently been published: *Badania nad religiami starożytnymi Tadeusza Zielińskiego i Ryszarda Gansinca*² (Tadeusz Zieliński and Ryszard Gansiniec's research on ancient religions), *Tadeusz Zieliński (1859-1944) i jego interpretacja motywów dionizyjskich w tragedii greckiej*³ (Tadeusz Zieliński (1859-1944) and his interpretation of Dionysian motives in Greek tragedy), *Religia starożytnej Grecji w koncepcji Tadeusza Zielińskiego* (Tadeusz Zieliński's account of ancient Greek religion)⁴ and *Relacje Tadeusza Zielińskiego z rosyjskimi uczonymi w Petersburgu w świetle jego Autobiografii* (Tadeusz Zieliński's relations with Russian scholars in Petersburg in the light of his *Autobiography*)⁵.

The book consists of five parts, preceded by a short introduction (p. 3-5) in which the author explains the reasons behind writing the book. Gillmeister claims that the role of Tadeusz Zieliński in the development of the research on ancient culture and literature is inestimable and his studies on Homer and Cicero have long been considered major achievements of classical philology. It happened so because that Zieliński has published in Polish and his religious studies have not been very popular among the historians of idea and

¹A. Gillmeister, *Kontrowersje wokół książki Hellenizm a judaizm Tadeusza Zielińskiego. Polemiki chrześcijańskie*, „Przegląd Religioznawczy” (3) 2011, 275-88.

²H. Hoffmann, *Badania nad religiami starożytnymi Tadeusza Zielińskiego i Ryszarda Gansinca*, „Biuletyn. Instytut Filozoficzno-Historyczny WSP w Częstochowie” (30) 2002, 185-90.

³H. Hoffmann, *Tadeusz Zieliński (1859-1944) i jego interpretacja motywów dionizyjskich w tragedii greckiej*, „Nomos” (41/42) 2003, 85-95.

⁴R. Nieczyפורowski, *Religia starożytnej Grecji w koncepcji Tadeusza Zielińskiego*, Gdańsk 1998.

⁵Z. Opacki, *Relacje Tadeusza Zielińskiego z rosyjskimi uczonymi w Petersburgu w świetle jego Autobiografii*, in *Studia z dziejów Europy Wschodniej. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Profesorowi Arturowi Kijasowi w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, G. Błaszczyk, P. Kraszewski (eds.), Poznań 2010, 237-53.

historiography. As a result, Zieliński has been forgotten by the scholarly world to a large extent.

In the first part Gillmeister (p. 5-9) briefly relates the basic biographical data of this outstanding scholar. Tadeusz Zieliński was born in 1859. He was educated in Saint Petersburg under the supervision of his father. In 1869 young Tadeusz enrolled in the German Saint Ann's Gymnasium. After passing the exam for a secondary school certificate, Tadeusz was granted a government scholarship, and in October he went to Leipzig to study classical philology. Those months spent at German universities became the foundation of his scholarly approach. The studies in Leipzig ended with a Ph.D. in classical philology granted for the paper about the last period of the Second Punic War. Zieliński completed his education in Munich, Vienna, Rome and Naples, among other places. He returned to Russia in 1882 and a year later he passed an M.A. examination, which in the Russian education system corresponded to the academic degree of doctor. Subsequently he started to lecture at a university in Saint Petersburg. In 1886 Zieliński became an associate professor at Saint Petersburg and took over the department of Greek literature. After Poland regained independence, the University of Warsaw offered Zieliński the position of the head of the Classical Philology department. The offer was accepted eagerly and Tadeusz Zieliński quickly became an unquestioned authority in the world of Polish humanities of the interwar period. Frequent travels abroad and his presentation of Polish scholarship during international conventions made Zieliński one of the most recognizable Polish researchers of the ancient world. In 1935, Zieliński went into retirement, but since he received a degree of the honorary professor at the University of Warsaw he continued lecturing. He died on the 8th of May 1944.

The second part of the book (p. 9-14) briefly discusses Zieliński's most important publications about Greek religion. Gillmeister proves that the six-volume cycle *Religions of the Ancient World* became Tadeusz Zieliński's personal opus magnum, the culminating point of his academic path. It also became the ultimate proof of the synthesis of work and life, always the humanist's pursuit, which he managed to achieve. Gillmeister quotes Plezia's correct opinion about *Religions of the Ancient World*: „Plezia noticed that the second volume is analogical to the third one, just as the fifth one is analogical to the sixth. The volume about Judaism begins in one of the chapters of *Religion of Hellenism*. Ancient Christianity, on the

other hand, was treated as one of the religions of the Roman Empire that deserved a separate study due to the significance of the role it played. Plezia notices that, thanks to that, the antithesis of Judaism and Christianity, typical of Zieliński, gained clarity” (p. 14).

In the next part, numbered as fourth⁶ (p. 14-49), the author summarizes main points concerning Greek religion made by Zieliński in the book *Religion of Ancient Greece*. He writes that:

„I. Scholarly research on the origin of religion, similarly to the scientific research on the origin of life, is destined to be pointlessness from the beginning: ignoramus et ignorabimus.

II. Just like a man with no artistic sense cannot understand ancient art, the one who has no religious feelings will not understand ancient religion.

III. Ignite a bright torch of religious feeling in your heart, but leave a dim oil lamp of denomination at home if you want the temple of ancient religion to show you its wonders.

IV. God reveals himself in beauty, in truth and in goodness; the only perfect religion is the one that takes into account those three revelations in their wholeness.

V. The height of the religious pursuits of mankind is Christianity in its most developed form.

VI. The ancient religion is the true Old Testament of this Christianity”⁷.

The author observes that Tadeusz Zieliński’s understanding of Greek religion differed considerably from the opinions of other researchers.

According to Gillmeister, in Zieliński’s view „a man of normal faith did not fear his gods but loved them”. The definition of Greek religion as the „religion of happiness” and the full identification of „god-fearing” with superstition took on an additional meaning when the religion in question was contrasted with Judaism, portrayed by the Polish scholar as the „religion of fear”. On that grounds Zieliński was criticized by his opponents, Szczepan Szydelski and Rudolf Otto. Szczepan Szydelski published a vast study containing the criticism of all historical and religious views of Tadeusz Zieliński. He protested against contrasting Judaistic „religion of fear” with the Greek „religion of happiness”, claiming that Zieliński confused „god-fearing”, Otto’s numinosum, with ordinary fear and anxiety. At the same time, according to Andrzej Gillmeister, not all researchers opposed Zieliński’s views. Zieliński’s view shows many similarities to the equally emotional vision presented by the

⁶ Number 3 was omitted in this publication.

⁷ Gillmeister, *The Point of View*, 14-5.

German philologist Walter F. Otto; suffice it to recall the role that both scholars attributed to the goddess Demeter. For the Polish scholar, Demeter and her Roman counterpart Ceres were prefigurations of the Christian „Mater Dolorosa”. He dedicated quite a lot of attention to this goddess, also in the context of the Mysteries. Author's *The Point of View* notices that according to Edmund Stein the publication about Hellenism and Judaism made meaningful progress in the research on ancient religions in Polish scholarship, proving Zieliński's great courage, but the author lacked objectivity and the awareness of his own limits. Apart from that, Gillmeister considered the polemics with Zieliński's opinions to be important from the scholarly and social viewpoint. Gillmeister touched on the question asked by Józef Teodorowicz. Already at the outset of his reflections he pointed out the greatest danger resulting from the publication of Zieliński's work, connected with its convergence in time with the growing anti-Semitism in Europe, especially in Germany.

The last part of Gillmeister's considerations is devoted to the presentation of some elements of the vision of Roman religion presented by Tadeusz Zieliński. Being opposed to the picture of the evolution of Roman religion created by Georg Wissowa, Zieliński proposed another depiction of the changes occurring in it. Wissowa divided the history of religion into several stages: primary religion (since the time of the kings), the period of Etruscanisation, then Hellenisation and the final collapse at the decline of the Republic. The most important to him was the first period, which resulted from the cult of genesis popular at that time. To Zieliński, Roman religion included three merging currents: national, Greek and eastern. The currents in question did not unite despite the fact that they had been merging for ages. Roman religion developed in many directions so as to be able to satisfy the needs of its believers and fulfill the function of the religion of the Empire. Zieliński claimed that the two „doctrines” of Hellenic religion were developed in Roman religion and enabled the "psychological" adoption of Christianity.

In the fifth part of book is included the study of the poetics of this work. Gillmeister notes that Tadeusz Zieliński frequently used a technique close to the „peripatetic” dialogue and the use of literary.

In the final part the author summarises his research and concludes: „I'm inclined to believe that the following assessment could easily refer to the whole cycle: the reviewer of the French edition of *Religions of Ancient Greece* called the discussed study a „point of view”.

Religions of the Ancient World are just that, a point of view of one of the last great masters of the golden age of *Altertumwissenschaften*⁸. The work is complemented by detailed bibliographies (pages 57-67), enumerating all works by Tadeusz Zieliński as well as the works about him. Andrzej Gillmeister's book is the first book written in English that deals with Tadeusz Zieliński's writing, thus being able to restore this Polish author to his due place in the pantheon of the major researchers of ancient religions.

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⁸ A. Gillmeister, *The Point of View. Tadeusz Zieliński on Ancient Religions*, p. 56.