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ETHNOLOGICAL STUDIES OF INDUSTRIAL REGIONS IN POLAND. ITS PAST, PRESENT AND PROSPECTS

Academic interest in the communities evolving around developing industrial centers began in Europe in the 19th century. In Poland it goes to the turn of the 20th century; its main focus has been the situation and living conditions of industrial workers. The forerunner of Polish ethnological studies on labor culture was Stanisław Ciszewski, who described a two-vocational group consisting of farmers and miners living in the vicinity of Sławkowo in the Olkusz district. In addition to general characteristics of some aspects of the material and social culture, he devoted much attention to folklore and beliefs (Ciszewski, 1886 - 1887). Some materials concerning the family and public life of the working class (examples come from the region of Łódź, Warsaw, Żydar-dów, and the Dąbrowskie basin) may be found in a few studies from the beginning of the 20th century. The most interesting is the study written in 1922 by Rev. A. Wójcicki entitled: *Robotnik polski w życiu rodzinnym* [The Polish Worker and Family Life].

At that time, however, the traditions of working class culture were not the subject of research of Polish ethnologists. Studies on working class communities were undertaken by representatives of other academic disciplines mainly concerned with the living conditions of industrial workers or the unemployed, and with their own accounts of their lives. Nonetheless, in that period the first theoretical concepts dealing with the culture of working classes were formulated. For example, in 1938 Stefan Czarnowski pointed out the formation of a new culture whose founders — in his opinion — are characterized by “a sense of justice”, “brotherhood”, “human dignity”, and “substantial thinking..., in categories of material shapes”. He emphasized the existence of an ethos of the working masses, thus trying to defy previous opinions suggesting that technological progress and work automation “were to deprive the proletariat of all propensities to create spiritual values”. Concluding a longer statement, he claims that “facts do not corroborate the above view: the working class culture is being created under our eyes, even in the capitalist system, though in opposition to it. It has the makings of a culture that is both great and full of humanity” (Czarnowski, 1946, pp. 101 - 120).

These views were grounded not only in observations, his own reflections, and publications by the representatives of contemporary leftist philosophical trends, but also in earlier folklore materials most often found in numerous non-professional periodicals. As an example let us mention the legends and tales concerning Silesian mining, published by the Poznań "Warta" and supplied by a collector of Silesian folklore who came from the Wielkopolska region, Skromny (Ligęza, 1972). Similar materials, including descriptions of the first industrial processes in such towns as Tarnowskie Góry, Gliwice, Katowice and others located in the same area were also discovered in the articles of Józef Lompa from the 19th century and published by A. Zieliński only in 1984 (Simonides, 1989, pp. 12, 25).

Data about the life of mining communities in Upper Silesia were contained in the monographs of towns that appeared between the world wars and concerned such towns as Knurów, Krywałd, Chorzów, Tarnowskie Góry, and Świętochłowice. For example, in the monograph of Świętochłowice a contemporary collector of local folklore and at the same time founder of the museum collection, Stanisław Wallis, in a chapter entitled "Sztuka ludowa" ["Folk Art"] provided detailed information about fifteen industrial villages situated in the heart of Upper Silesia. Describing the culture of their inhabitants, working both in the fields and in industry, or only in mining and industry, he pointed the production of ornamented objects of every day use that were made of industrial waste such as tin, wire, iron plates, coal, and other materials.

Studies on the folk culture of Silesia, including also the "folk culture of the working estate", were conducted by German ethnographers since ca. 1919, among others under the supervision of Alfons Perlick (the regions of Bytom, Gliwice, and Opole), director of the Museum in Bytom (Perlick, 1943). This subject was more thoroughly discussed by Mieczysław Gładysz in his study *Stan i potrzeby nauki polskiej o Śląsku* [The Condition and Needs of Polish Research on Silesia] published by the publishing house of the Silesian Institute in Katowice established in 1934. In the 1930s the representatives of contemporary Polish ethnography attempted some field research to collect materials for the Silesian Museum. They did not, however, take up the problem of the forming industrial community, but instead concentrated on accumulating knowledge about the rapidly disappearing peasant culture whose traits were manifestations of Polish regional and national traditions. In the interwar period only some of the collected material was published by a group of scholars including Agnieszka and Tadeusz Dobrowolski, Mieczysław Gładysz, Jerzy Longman, and Longin Malicki. More data about the industrial area of the region appeared only afterwards.

In other regions of Poland even after 1945 the main concern of ethnographers was to collect and document the shrinking resources of the traditional peasant culture as well as to study its transformations. No attention was paid

to the culture of the already functioning communities that developed around industrial centers. While historians were already conducting wide-range studies concerning the "Polish working classes" completely ignoring the question of their culture (T. Łepkowski, S. Kolabiński, I. Pietrzak-Pawłowska, N. Gąsiorowska, and others), ethnologists just began to take note of that research problem. We may assume that the first sign of their concern was the interest in the art of miners, especially in coal and salt sculpture, the results of which were published in "Polska Sztuka Ludowa" ["Polish Folk Art"] between 1949 and 1952.

The changing cultural reality and the postwar revival of social sciences provoked a discussion about the subject and research methods of ethnology. The breakthrough in ethnological studies that set new research goals was the methodological conference held in Cracow, where Kazimierz Dobrowolski delivered the opening address (Dobrowolski, 1958, pp. 76-77). He emphasized the "importance of the history of culture of the working people" of different formations in the national history and a small number of publications devoted to the 19th and 20th century working class culture. Dobrowolski indicated that the phenomenon deserved to become an essential field of ethnological research.

Of great help in studying working class communities were research projects previously undertaken by museum researches and members of the Ethnographic Committee of the Silesian Institute in Katowice and the experience of the research center in Cracow headed by K. Dobrowolski. The above-mentioned research projects were carried out in 1951 by the Department of General Ethnography of the Jagiellonian University and by the Department of Ethnography at the Institute of History of Material Culture at the Academy of Sciences in Cracow. One of the results was a paper by Danuta Dobrowolska *Górnicy salinarni w Wieliczce i ich kultura w latach 1880-1939* [Salt Miners in Wieliczka and Their Culture in 1880-1939] (later extended into a book) in which the author, in accord with Dobrowolski's suggestion, applied an integral and comprehensive approach to the phenomena under investigation. In 1958 in "Etnografia Polska" the same author published an article, quite unusual in the context of earlier ethnological projects, concerning the leisure time of workers from the region of Małopolska.

A similar approach was followed by Edward Pietraszek in his study called *Wiejscy robotnicy kopalń i hut. Dynamika przemian społeczno-kulturowych w sierszańskim ośrodku górniczym w XIX i XX wieku* [Village Workers of the Mines and Steelworks. The Dynamic of Socio-Cultural Transformations in the Siersza Mining Center in the 19th and 20th Centuries] (1966) and his other papers published in a collection "Materiały do historii załóg fabrycznych w Polsce południowej" ["Materials on the History of Factory Workers in Southern Poland"] edited by K. Dobrowolski (1966). These papers focused on

social life and material culture on the one hand, and on the socio-cultural effects of the functioning of factories on the other. The subject of the working class culture “against the collapse of traditional folk culture in the Krakowskie Basin” was discussed by Edward Pietraszek in volume 7 of “Etnografia Polska” in 1964, while the question of socio-cultural consequences of industrialization, in the context of a study on miners from Lubiąż, was dealt with in the same volume by Antoni Stojak.

The above-mentioned interdisciplinary papers combining the perspectives of ethnology, history, and sociology not only opened up a new period in ethnological studies in the Cracow center, but they also set an example of new research needs and possibilities. A wider context of the study of working class culture was highlighted in later articles by E. Pietraszek and D. Dobrowolski.

The earliest studies on working class culture were undertaken in Upper Silesia. The first articles, published in “Polska Sztuka Ludowa” in 1952, concerned the written and musical folklore of miners as well as their art, and were written by Maria Żywirska, Stanisław Wallis, Józef Ligęza, and Mieczysław Gładysz. Later on, the investigation of the culture of the industrial region of Silesia was continued in many other publications, such as a book by Józef Ligęza entitled *Śladami tradycji* [Traces of the Tradition] which discusses not only tales, stories, and Silesian proverbs but also the tradition of mining literature in southern Poland (Ligęza, 1968; 1972). Similar in character were later works of Dorota Simonides about humor, describing the folklore of industrial Silesia, the collections of miners’ songs by Adolf Dygacz, and studies on songs and rituals by Krystyna Turek with the author’s historical and formal ethno-musicological analysis.

After World War II, the members of the Ethnographic Committee of the Silesian Scientific Institute in Katowice launched studies on the traditional culture of miners. The scope of their studies included not only the traditions of the profession (tools, clothing, work organization) and related customs, but also the problems of settlement, ethno-social structure, housing, food, beliefs, art, and folklore. They were conducted both in the housing projects situated by the factories and in the towns and villages where miners and their families were a predominant group. Already in 1964 the results of those studies were published in a collective monograph entitled *Zarys kultury górniczej. Górny Śląsk. Zagłębie Dąbrowskie* [An Outline of Miners’ Culture. Upper Silesia. The Dąbrowskie Basin] (Ligęza, Żywirska, 1964). Prior to this monograph, remarks on the methodology of such studies (Żywirska, 1953, pp. 93-103) were published. According to the intentions of Józef Ligęza and Maria Żywirska, their works provided guidelines for the future comprehensive and detailed research initiatives to be undertaken in Upper Silesia, Łódź, and Warsaw.

In 1965-1966, in the series “Górnośląskie Studia Socjologiczne” [“The Upper-Silesian Sociological Studies”] published by the Silesian Scientific

Institute, two books devoted to the miners' and steelworkers' families by Franciszek Adamczak were issued. They constitute a perfect example of the development of knowledge about social culture of that industrial region and a demonstration of the proximity of research areas of ethnology and the sociology of culture.

Since the 1960s Silesian ethnologists associated with museums, the University of Silesia, the Polish Ethnological Society and the Ethnographic Committee in the Silesian Scientific Institute have been investigating not only the processes of change within the traditional peasant and working class culture (Dubiel, 1968), but also the Silesian culture of industrial communities. Since then the latter has become the main subject of interest of ethnologists affiliated with those institutions. In the wake of their research more and more articles and books concerning, among others, the written and musical folklore, beliefs and rituals, nonprofessional art, and family began to appear. As an example, we should mention *Podania i opowieści z Zagłębia Dąbrowskiego* [Tales and Stories from the Dąbrowskie Basin] by Marianna and Dyonizjusz Czubala published in 1984, and a publication of Marian Gerlich about folk beliefs related to mining and industry which is an interesting anthropological analysis of the relation between "beliefs and everyday life" "beliefs and the question of work" as well as "beliefs and traditional ideology from the perspective of working class family rituals" (Gerlich, 1992).

Another example of a monographic account is a collective work *Górnicy stan* [The Miners], edited by Dorota Simonides, presenting a few selected areas of folklore in their relation to some questions of social culture (family, patterns of behavior, rituals), and to art and beliefs (Simonides, 1988). A broader approach was taken in another study, *Folklor Górnego Śląska* [Folklore of Upper Silesia], edited by the same author, which covered the whole region of Silesia, including the farming Opole district, and contained a number of material on the specific cultural character of Silesia as an industrial region. What is noteworthy, some chapters of the study were devoted to "folk literature" which was able to develop due to the involvement of small businessmen such as printers, "the singing movement" and "people practicing music", all as typical of the Silesian working class settlements as, for example, the amateur theater. In the book both archaic and modern trends are discussed in the context of an overall systemic approach to culture and tradition. Interesting source materials on family rituals in the industrial complex of Katowice were collected by Halina Gerlich and Krystyna Turek. The former conducted her studies in 1975-1976 among the urban population, in particular in Katowice, and her research project encompassed the most crucial moments of human life: *Narodziny, zaślubiny, śmierć* [Birth, Marriage, Death] (Gerlich, 1984). Krystyna Turek, in contrast, was interested only in funeral customs, rituals and singing, and cataloguing the old and modern repertoire of songs

sung in Upper Silesia. She conducted her field and archival studies in 1988-1992 in the area of the Upper-Silesian megalopolis and some towns in the district of Gliwice and Opole. The results of her work, which combined two approaches to research: ethnographic and ethno-musicological (including many notations), were reported in the book *Ludowe zwyczaje, obrzędy i pieśni pogrzebowe na Górnym Śląsku* [Folk Customs, Rituals and Funeral Songs in Upper Silesia] (1993).

Another research problem was the amateur art of workers, in particular of miners, comprising painting, sculpture and other forms of art in which industrial waste and coal had long been used. The research project lasted from 1958 to 1994, involving field studies, interviews with the artists, and the display of their works in competitions and exhibitions organized by centers of culture and museums. The exhibitions were usually documented by catalogues listing the artists and their works. Field studies conducted according to a comprehensive scheme and by means of various complementary research methods yielded a relatively large amount of materials that was later published in museum journals and in "Polska Sztuka Ludowa". The accounts of the art of working class artists usually take the form of a monograph which introduces an artist and provides a formal analysis of his or her works. In such books attention is usually paid to the formal-aesthetic and social values of art deriving from specific socio-economic conditions and backgrounds (Bukowska-Floreńska, 1987a).

Since 1980 research has also been focused on social culture and the internal and external factors that have been inducing changes in the way and style of life, in the system of values, in family life and behavior, and in the specific character of the functioning tradition. Publications in this field synthesize data about the specific character of culture, including the cultural tradition of industrial communities — a term which refers to people who for generations have been living in industrial regions (Kaczko, 1982; Bukowska-Floreńska, 1987b; 1988; 1994a).

Studies on working class communities and their culture have been also conducted in Łódź. Research began as archival studies by members of the Polish Ethnological Society on the migration of villagers to the city. The field studies related to the city of Łódź — a center of textile industry — were a joint enterprise of the Department of Ethnography of the University of Łódź and the Ethnographic Department of the Institute of History of Material Culture in PAN. Also a partner in these studies was the Committee for the Study of Industrial Regions and the Department of Sociology of the University of Łódź. Since 1957 attempts have been undertaken to found an open air museum of the working class houses in the center of Łódź (the museum existed for a couple of years). Most of the collected materials have been published in a periodical "Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne" as well as in other periodicals and collections of articles.

At the onset of their investigations the ethnologists from Łódź concentrated on describing rituals, holiday customs, family and neighborhood life, and folklore. Among the researchers we should mention Andrzej Lipiński, Irena Lechowa, Barbara Matysiak-Polakowa, Piotr Jan Dekowski and Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska. The subject of research conducted in 1963 and 1968 was the free time of industrial workers in Łódź. Hypotheses had been formulated in advance and then the study was carried out in the district of Łódź-Księży Młyn (Lipiński, 1969; Piotrowski, 1970). The Łódź affiliate of the Polish Ethnological Society initiated a competition on the folklore of industrial Łódź, and in cooperation with the Department of Ethnography and the Ethnographic Section of the Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum organized a seminar devoted to the culture of working classes, with a particular emphasis on the Łódź community (March 10-11, 1972). During the seminar achievements of the Łódź department and of other departments were presented. The seminar provided an excellent opportunity to point out further needs in the field and set new directions for the study of industrial communities ("Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne" vol. 15, 1973). The ideas underlying all those studies originally supervised by Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska are now being continued by Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska and her coworkers involved in the studies on the working class culture of Łódź.

Definitive studies on the working class culture of Łódź are the works of B. Kopczyńska-Jaworska published in the monograph of the city of Łódź in vol. 21, 1979 of "Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne" and in a collection entitled *Folklor robotniczej Łodzi* [Folklore of the Working Class of Łódź], 1976. These publications considerably extended the scope of our knowledge about the housing of workers in Łódź, customs of match making and weddings, annual holidays, forms of leisure, and songs sung on many occasions. Studies in the Łódź research center are still being continued.

For almost twenty years studies on working class culture have been also pursued in the largest Mazovian industrial center in Żyrardów. They were started in 1976 by scholars from the Department of Ethnology of the University of Warsaw, interested in customs and fashion as a specific code of communication among the 19th and early 20th c. factory workers of Żyrardów. As a result, knowledge about the organization of every day life, rituals, clothing, interior design, leisure time, and forms of holiday celebration from the end of the 19th c. to 1939 was accumulated (Stawarz, 1986). A summary of the first stage of the studies that ended in 1980 was a collection entitled *Tradycyjna kultura robotnicza Żyrardowa. (Materiały do etnografii miasta)* [Traditional Working-Class Culture of Żyrardów. (Source Materials for the Town's Ethnography)] (Woźniak, 1982). The authors of the collection took into account the records and state of research on working class

culture, as well as materials referring to the origin and structure of the town's community (A. Stawarz), family life (A. Kuczyńska-Skrzypek), rituals (A. Woźniak), and knowledge and religious beliefs of the working class (E. Hulka-Laskowska).

In 1981 the Department of Ethnology of the University of Warsaw discontinued team research in Żyrardów. However, the early studies were a starting point for further and more comprehensive individual inquiries, often conducted in cooperation with the Mazovian Research Center (its branch in Żyrardów) and the Society of the Friends of Żyrardów. A detailed list of publications written on the basis of these studies was made by A. Stawarz (1986), who in this way summed up the ten-year period of studies on Żyrardów. Among those publications of special notice is his work entitled *Żyrardów, narodziny społeczności, 1830-1970* [Żyrardów. The Origin of a Community, 1830-1970] devoted to the relations between social structure and culture (Stawarz, 1985).

The study of the culture of the population of industrial centers has become a legitimate subject of research and publications by Polish ethnologists. Nevertheless, ethnological knowledge in this respect is not yet exhaustive, due to a number of factors:

- a fixed, rigid scope and methodology of studies which stem from the monographic descriptions of traditional peasant culture;
- difficulties faced by ethnologists in making decisions about facts and phenomena that may or should be the subject of their interest in relation to the culture of industrial communities.

In a situation when rural and urban communities are becoming more and more alike, due to the relations of work, kinship, dissemination of technology, and social mobility, the old term "folk" has changed and the culture accessible to "the people" has largely expanded. Nonetheless, the ethnologist still has to work with:

- traditional culture of rural and urban communities, including industrial ones;
- cultural change brought about by innovation;
- traditional ways of thinking and the resulting system of values and behavior;
- parallel functioning of the "old" and "new" traditions.

Museum collectors also face a difficulty in their attempts to study the culture of industrial communities. Therefore, they have started a discussion on what actually should be collected to document not only the distant historical past, but also the present of these communities. This problem was raised during one of the conferences in Łódź by Barbara Bazielich, who tried to define the limits of ethnographic collectorship (Bazielich, 1982, pp. 81-87). This and many other discussions with the participation of historians indicated the need to fully document both the material and non-material culture of the working

class. Still, no approach to modern working class culture has yet been specified, which is due to the fact that the material culture of contemporary workers includes above all standard consumer products that are produced by their users, but they in fact document the achievements of modern technology rather than the culture of their makers. That is why they belong to collections in museums of technology. Only a small number of consumer goods may be considered as artifacts illustrating regional, industrial, and traditional cultures closer to the tradition of local handicraft.

Studies on the culture of professional and working class groups have also provoked interest in a more general approach to the study of industrial communities. The first question under investigation was the term "working class culture" in the context of the "folk culture" (thus far understood predominantly as peasant culture). A novel proposition was put forward by Edward Pietraszek in his article *Kultura ludowa i robotnicza wobec współczesnej problematyki kultury* [Folk and Working Class Culture in the Context of the Contemporary Problematic of Culture] (Pietraszek, 1966). In his study the author referred to a statement made by Jan Stanisław Bystron that folk culture is not a property of estate or social class. In this sense the working class culture, mostly originating from the rural culture, has often been defined as the "culture of working people". E. Pietraszek noticed that in modernized communities studies of material objects are less important than those of behavior. His assumption was actually corroborated by later ethnological studies and publications conducted due to increasing interest in the communities of industrial regions. Just to illustrate the above, I will mention some relevant research projects that were undertaken in this respect.

Cultural aspects of work were studied by Danuta Dobrowolska and Anna Zadrożyńska. With the aim to consider the functions of work, the former focused on the studies of working class (1974).

A. Zadrożyńska (1983) made an attempt at a theoretical explanation of the phenomena of working and leisure time in terms of such concepts as time, space, man, being, and the resulting interrelations. In her analysis she used both materials derived from ethnological field research (villagers-farm workers and Warsaw factory workers) and from literature on the subject.

The socio-cultural functions of tradition in industrial communities and the system of values of Silesian families in these communities were the main concerns for Irena Bukowska-Floreńska (1987b), who based her analysis on many years of studies of industrial regions: the Upper Silesian Industrial Region and the Rybnik Coal District. She treated the traditional peasant and working class culture equally to the modern culture of different social groups originating in the working class. She concluded that multigenerational communities in the industrial regions that share the same roots, history, and that work and live together are able to create a local, relatively homogenous cultural system and system of values. This ability is very important for the

sense of regional social and cultural identity. Moreover, it constitutes a social frame of reference and stimulates certain behaviors and social attitudes, both among individuals and in groups. The tradition of modern industrial communities is also transferred and continued, particularly in terms of behavior and its consequences. The culture of modern industrial communities may, and even should, become a field of ethnological research.

The question of behaviors in the contact situation between one of "us" and one of "them", specifically between the local people and the newcomers, has recently been examined by Eugeniusz Kłosek, who conducted his studies in the Upper Silesian Industrial Region in new housing projects populated by working class people in Świętochłowice and Chorzów (Kłosek, 1993). He analyzed local attitudes and behaviors as well as stereotypes of regional differentiation based on local tradition.

Patterns of behavior in the Silesian working class communities were also the subject of ethnological investigation by Marian Gerlich, who described the everyday behavior of members of workers' families determined by the roles they play, and the rhythm of the day determined by work and tradition (Gerlich, 1992).

An attempt at formulating some preliminary hypotheses in the theory and methodology of the study of folk culture in modern industrial communities relative to the results hitherto obtained in this field has been made by Jerzy Damrosz (1992). Trying to defend the existence of folk culture, Damrosz points out to the need for interdisciplinary studies of the already existing and the future cultural reality. He is repeating a question that has been worrying ethnologists for some time, namely what to study in the field of folk culture, how to study it, and — above all — why? Searching for the answer, the author presents his views on the contemporary and future values functioning in the growing "spatial socio-cultural circles". Damrosz identifies the "spheres of human life" — "the spatial cultural horizon on a local-regional scale" which implies a "private motherland" in contrast to the "ideological motherland".

Having briefly presented a survey of the most important studies and publications which document, on the one hand, the scope of ethnological knowledge about industrial regions in Poland, and on the other, a set of ideas concerning this research field, it is possible to indicate the direction that contemporary ethnological studies should follow. The industrial regions are a unique laboratory for studying many aspects of tradition functioning in a modern community. This is why studies in industrial communities should be also conducted, without, however, neglecting traditional cultures. Empirical and theoretical results of such research will have not only an academic significance, but also some practical impact on social and cultural policies. Moreover, they will be of considerable importance for mutual understanding of people from different groups and regions.

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