

ANTHROPOLOGY AND HISTORY

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‘Without historians and the history they write, figure out, break down, and put back together again (history, all of it – of countries, continents, the world) we would not have a gateway for searching the everyday and the exotic, for order and chaos, for reality and dreams, so intricately realised by entire generations of people. Today, only faded traces of it remain, faint tracks on the paths and the wilderness of culture. Historians document them, we search for undisclosed explanations, sometimes perhaps too complicated, at other times very simple. Every look at history or culture, distant or recent, brings accounts in which the countless threads and questions swirl, perhaps too often without answers,’

wrote Professor Anna Zadrożyńska in *Targowisko różności*; the symposium dedicated to her memory that celebrates the 80th anniversary of ethnology at the University of Warsaw.¹ During the conference, we struggled with the relation between ethnology, socio-cultural anthropology, and history. The links between these disciplines go back to the 19th century. The evolutionistic humanities of that time reconstructed the history of mankind. Descriptions of primitive peoples were to further the understanding of the past of European culture, which was most fully expressed by James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. Ethnologists who did not directly identify themselves with evolutionism, such as Jan Stanisław Bystroń, also often oscillated between the disciplines. Gradually, however, ethnology and anthropology became independent from history, and sometimes

¹ The symposium took place on 26 September, 2014. The programme of the conference can be found on the website of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Warsaw: <http://www.etnologia.uw.edu.pl/aktualnosci/sesja-naukowa-z-okazji-80-lat-etnologii-na-uw> (accessed on 29 November, 2015).

rebelled against it. Bronisław Malinowski spoke decisively against Frazer's method, even though it was *The Golden Bough* that attracted him towards anthropology. The same thing happened across Poland. Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkretz-Jędrzejewiczowa, the founder of the Warsaw Chair of Ethnography, wrote, 'I am not after the historical truth, hidden in legend. »The truth«, as a historical fact, is only of secondary interest to me. What is most important is the drive to find those seeds from which »the myth« of St. Cecilia sprouted, even if they had nothing at all to do with real life. For an untruth of the real world sometimes becomes in the human imagination a truth of much stronger force than any irrefutable and obvious truths.'²

However, despite such anti-historical approaches, anthropology's interest in history continued. In Great Britain, historical studies were taken up, although in a manner completely different from Frazer, by Malinowski's student, Edward Evans-Pritchard. In Poland, as Zofia Sokolewicz shows in her article published in this volume of *Anthropology of History Yearbook*, in the 1950^s there was a lively debate among ethnographers concerning the history of material culture. Anthropologists, ethnologists, and ethnographers collected pieces of oral history, reconstructed the history of things, and looked into the archives. At the same time, historians more and more frequently showed interest in anthropology. Gradually, they opened up to searching for the voices absent from mainstream narratives; the voices of those groups which used to be the subject of interest of anthropologists, such as peasants.³ In the second half of the 20th century, the goal was different than it used to be in the times of evolutionism. The point was no longer to prove the superiority of European civilisation, but to show the sources of stereotypes, omissions, and mechanisms of (e.g. colonial) power, and to evoke memories of the excluded.⁴

In recent years, we have observed anthropologists and ethnologists developing closer relations with history. Whereas in English-speaking countries socio-cultural anthropology was and usually still is classified as a social science, in Poland,

² C. Baudouin de Courtenay Ehrenkretz, *Święta Cecylia (przyczynek do genezy apokryfów)*, Lwów 1922. Quoted after *Łańcuch tradycji: teksty wybrane. Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkretz-Jędrzejewiczowa*, wybór L. Mróz, A. Zadrożyńska, Warszawa 2005, pp. 27–28.

³ See e.g. D. Chakrabarty, *Prowincjonalizacja Europy myśl postkolonialna i różnica historyczna*, trans. D. Kołodziejczyk, Dorota, T. Dobrogoszcz, E. Domańska, Poznań 2011; T. Wiślicz, *Upodobanie małżeństwo i związki nieformalne na wsi polskiej XVII–XVIII wieku*, Wrocław 2012.

⁴ See e.g. A.L. Stoler, *Żeby imperium było przyzwoite. Polityka rasy i moralności w dwudziestowiecznych kulturach kolonialnych*, trans. M. Petryk, (in:) *Antropologia seksualności. Teoria, etnografia, zastosowanie*, ed. A. Kościańska, Warszawa, pp. 56–94.

as well as our whole region, it has traditionally belonged to the humanities and placed in history departments, and its genesis should be looked for in ethnography, as an auxiliary science of history. This presence in the history department was uncomfortable for many anthropologists in Central Europe. Centres for social anthropology were established in departments of sociology or social science. Today, however, the presence in historical departments, which is the case of our Institute, takes on a new meaning. The relations between the disciplines are different now. Ethnology is no longer an 'auxiliary science'; it takes with both hands from the historical 'gateway' described by Anna Zadrożyńska, and for many historians it is a source of theoretical inspiration and a bridge between description and theory.

The latest volume of *Anthropology of History Yearbook* presents contemporary anthropological and historical reflections of scholars mainly from Warsaw (but also of representatives from other institutions), who writes about the private archives discovered during their ethnographical studies (Agnieszka Halemba, *An archive found in a garage*); who depose archives and the importance of documents (Tomasz Rakowski, *Oral history and ethnographical sources as 'certain knowledge'...*) and reflect on the significance of this process (Piotr Filipkowski, *Oral history as actual history...*); who gives an account of visiting an archive and emphasise its importance in the process of interpreting ethnographic data (Agnieszka Kościańska, *History as necessary knowledge...*); who explores memory (Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk, *On ambivalence and the processes of structurisation of memory...*) and heritage (Hubert Wierciński, *A city which does not exist?...*); who discovers communities which allegedly do not exist (Mariusz Filip, *Why do the Slovicians not want to talk?...*); who retells the history of 'marginal' territories (Małgorzata Owczarska, *Time, space and alternative methods of expressing historicity...*); who follows the history of anthropology and its struggles with history (Zofia Sokolewicz, *Ethnography/ethnology/anthropology and historical sciences...*), as well as the lives of its early founders (Anna Wiczorkiewicz, *A man with two suitcases*). In doing so, they show the fruits of eighty years of theoretical and empirical work carried out by the ethnologists and anthropologists at the University of Warsaw, and how they build new relations between the two disciplines, of history and its former auxiliary science; between the categories which form them: memory, narration, oral and official history; and finally between those who are able to speak and those whose voices are barely audible.