

## I. THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE POLISH ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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### A CENTENARY OF THE POLISH ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

"Save and preserve what can and should exist in spite of the progress of education and civilization. Save for science and do not let sink into oblivion what must disappear and soon will disappear".

Antoni Kalina

It is not easy to present the centennial history of the Society in a few pages. After all, such a presentation should be done against a wider background, in order to adequately evaluate the role which the Society has played in Polish science and culture. Hoping to address this issue at another time, I will now try to sketch the Society's history. Readers interested in various aspects of the Society's activity will find numerous articles and reports in "Lud"<sup>1</sup>. More important publications have been listed in the bibliography.

Polish interest in traditional, especially rural culture, gained momentum in the 19th century. Let us mention Łukasz Gołębiowski, Wacław Zaleski, Kazimierz W. Wójcicki, Żegota Pauli and, particularly, Oskar Kolberg, to name but a few. In 1873, the Academy of Sciences was opened in Cracow with the Anthropological Commission as one of its departments<sup>2</sup>. Several excellent journals were put out, including "Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Krajowej" (from 1877) and "Wisła" (from 1887). For a long time, however, there was no association grouping people interested in ethnography.

#### **Establishment and First Years of the Ethnological Society**

The idea to establish an Ethnological Society was put forward by Seweryn Udziela, a school inspector (1891). After a few unsuccessful attempts, a group assembled by Antoni Kalina, a Slavist and professor of Jan Kazimierz

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<sup>1</sup> *Bibliografia zawartości "Ludu" za lata 1895-1985* [Bibliography of publications in "Lud" 1895-1985] prepared by G. E. Karpińska and M. Niewiadomska is an excellent guide to the first 69 volumes of this periodical.

<sup>2</sup> In 1874 the chairmanship of the Ethnological Section was entrusted to Oskar Kolberg.

University, and including Jan Karłowicz, editor of "Wisła", a linguist and ethnographer from Warsaw, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, a linguist, then a professor of Jagiellonian University, Dr. Henryk Biegeleisen and Mikołaj Rybowski, principle of people's schools, Dr. Iwan Franko, editor of "Žitje i Slovo" and Stefan Ramułt, a civil servant, met on 9 February 1895 in the Town Hall in Lvov. The first General Assembly of the Society, attended by 64 members.

Antoni Kalina, the first president, wrote in 1895: "The aim of the Society is to skillfully investigate the Polish, Ruthenian and neighbouring peoples and to disseminate information about them in the Society's own organ, in paintings which present or describe these peoples, and, eventually, to establish a library and a museum which will house everything that pertains to the life of the people or helps us to learn about its properties".

Further on, Antoni Kalina wrote: "With the help of its members, the Society will systematically and skillfully collect ethnographic materials. Special emphasis will be put on the characteristic features of folk life which have not been given any consideration in ethnographic works published to date or which have been given only scant consideration (e.g. beliefs, folk medicine, melodies of folk songs, the construction and interior design of houses, their ornamentation, costumes and clothes, etc.). To help collect ethnographic materials, the Society will prepare a detailed questionnaire which will be sent out to its members".

In the foreword to the first folio of "Lud" (April 1895), Antoni Kalina emphasized that "ethnographic boundaries, Polish colonies in Ruthenia and Ruthenian colonies in Poland, as well as territorial distribution of dialects, would be the focus of the Society's programme". In addition to these scholarly aims, Kalina also formulated social aims which were compatible with positivist slogans: "Today, when such concepts as the people, its education, and the improvement of its material existence are common, we should start building from scratch, and by building from scratch I mean learning about the people, its life and character. If we do not do this, our work for the people will be ineffective because if it is not based on the description of its properties it will not benefit the people in the way we would like it to do" (Kalina, 1895, p. 3). Kalina also promised that branches of the Society would be established in different towns.

This was a very ambitious plan and, perhaps even unrealistic. Nearly everything was lacking: money, authors (the first chair of ethnology was opened as late as 1910, and only for a short time) and understanding in the society. For the time being, however, optimism and enthusiasm prevailed. Following energetic recruitment, the number of members grew considerably – at the end of 1895 there were 194 of them, among them professors (19) and students (11) of Jan Kazimierz and Jagiellonian Universities, teachers and

principals of public schools (41) and musical societies (7), district school inspectors (5), priests (11), and writers (8). The members of the Society also included employees of the Ossoliński National Institution (4) with its director, Wojciech Kętrzyński and Wilhelm Bruchnalski, the future Chairman of the Society.

In its beginnings, when there were no ethnographic museums, chairs of ethnography and ethnology or people's universities, the Society attracted those for whom the problems of traditional culture were very close. This included people from different groups of Galicia, mainly teachers. Branches of the Society were established very quickly — in Buczacz (1897 — founded by Ludwik Młynek), Wieliczka (1898 — Seweryn Udziela), Cracow (1898 — Jan Świątek), Tatarów (1899 — Józef Schneider), Tarnów (1899 — Ludwik Młynek), Chrzanów (1900 — Bronisław Gustawicz), Podgórze n. Cracow (1902 — Seweryn Udziela)<sup>3</sup>.

Antoni Kalina's decade as the Society first chairman was most significant (Kłodnicki, 1995b). During this period a number of research papers, scholarly and popular articles were published. During the chairmanship of Józef Kallenbach (1905-1910) and Adam A. Kryński (1910-1914) the Society was less active. A turning point in the Society's history was in the year 1910 when Adam Fischer became secretary of the Society and member of the editorial board of "Lud"<sup>4</sup>.

### The Second Phase (1910-1945)

For Adam Fischer, a Romanist by education, ethnography was a hobby. When he became secretary and member of the editorial board, and later editor-in-chief of "Lud", he proved to be an excellent organizer. As Helena Kapeluś wrote (1982, p. 348), "He took over most editorial duties, saw to it that all the articles were carefully proof-read, arranged for credits to be granted by printing houses, selected authors, expanded foreign relations, cared for the development of the library, in a word, started a new era in the history of the Society which survived the turmoil of the First World War and lasted till the end of the interwar period". The chairmen of the Ethnological Society at the time, Professor Adam A. Kryński (1910-1914), Professor Wilhelm Bruchnalski (1917-1926) and Professor Jan Czekanowski (1926-1946), approved of Fischer's work as he relieved them of a number of difficult tasks.

<sup>3</sup> The branches in Podgórze and Cracow were the last to be closed.

<sup>4</sup> Olga Gajkova (1967, p. 18) thinks that the first period ended with the outbreak of the First World War. Helena Kapeluś (1982, pp. 348-349) is of a similar opinion. She stresses the changes taking place in the Ethnological Society from 1910 onwards but considers the First World War to be the turning point.

During this period in its history, the Society severed its ties with the Board and members. Adam Fischer had many duties at Jan Kazimierz University and at the Society, and unlike Kalina, he was more interested in the Society's research and publication than its social work agenda. A growing discrepancy between academics and amateur ethnographers was also felt. Consequently, "Lud" could no longer serve as a bridge between these communities (Kapeluś, 1982, p. 349). The Society established close relations between the Polish Ethnological Society for professionalists, organized in Warsaw in October 1921 and chaired by Professor Jan Czekanowski (then a deputy chairman of the Ethnological Society) and "Lud"<sup>5</sup>. Soon, however, the Polish Ethnological Society in Warsaw reached an impasse.

The relations of the Society and the Department of Ethnology at Jan Kazimierz University however proved to be more durable. Till the outbreak of the Second World War employees of the Department were the core of the Society's Board, wrote most articles for "Lud" and later for "Prace Etnograficzne" (the first volume of the series appeared in 1934). The Second World War stopped the activity of the Society — most of its members were either killed by the Nazis or emigrated from Poland. Adam Fischer died in Lvov in 1943.

It is typical of societies that persons who preside over them bring their influence upon them. There is no doubt that Adam Fischer was the *spiritus movens* of the Ethnological Society. When he died, the second stage in the history of the Society ended. The task of reviving the Society after the Second World War was entrusted to Professor Jan Czekanowski, an eminent Polish ethnologist and physical anthropologist, known all over the world, who was deputy chairman and from 1926 chairman of the Society.

### The Third Period (1945-1965)

The initiative to reestablish the Society was born soon after the war ended. Professors Jan Czekanowski and Jan Mydlarski and Doctor Józef Gajek convened the first meeting in Lublin on 12 October 1945. The 21st General Assembly was held on 22 November 1945. The Assembly decided to continue publication of "Lud", "Prace Etnograficzne" and prepare and publish *Polski Atlas Etnograficzny* [Polish Ethnographic Atlas].

At the 22nd General Assembly (Lublin, 24-25 January 1947) the name of the Society was changed to the "Polish Ethnological Society" (Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze). The new name reflected the transformation of the Society from a provincial to a nationwide organization. Branches of the Society

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<sup>5</sup> However, "volume XXI was a turning point. "Lud" assumed the character of a specialized ethnological journal, also carrying articles bordering on anthropological sciences" (Gajek, 1946, p. 11).

were established in many towns, and a number of research initiatives were undertaken (in order to provide materials for the *Polski Atlas Etnograficzny* [Polish Ethnographic Atlas], and later to furnish materials for territorial monographs). New journals and editorial series were put out. The first book in the series "Prace Etnologiczne" was published in 1947. Two years later, in 1949, the first folios of *Atlas Polskich Strojów Ludowych* [An Atlas of Polish Folk Costumes] were published. First publications in the series "Archiwum Etnograficzne" appeared in 1951. The same year witnessed the resumption of the series "Prace i Materiały Etnograficzne" (originally called "Prace Etnograficzne"). The first issue of a bimonthly "Literatura Ludowa" appeared in 1957. A new series, "Biblioteka Popularno-Naukowa", was started in 1958, and "Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne" in 1959. In 1960 the editorial board of *Dzieła wszystkie Oskara Kolberga* [Oskar Kolberg's Collected Works] was appointed. Publication of "Lud", one of the oldest ethnographic journals in Europe, has been continued to date. In the post-war history of the Society, the journal edited by Professor Józef Gajek, Adam Fischer's disciple, was the most significant Polish publication in the field of ethnography, ethnology and folklore.

The Polish Ethnological Society performs some functions which in many countries are performed by ethnographic (ethnological) institutes: in addition to the publication of many books and journals, and the organizing of national (and even international) conferences, it has represented Polish ethnography and ethnology, both in Poland and abroad at conferences organized by the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences and at many Slavic conferences. The Polish Ethnological Society also organizes many extensive field investigations and surveys to furnish materials for *Polski Atlas Etnograficzny* and regional monographs. In July 1953 this latter work was taken over by the Organizing Committee of the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences (the Institute was established on 19 November 1953).

During the chairmanship of Professor Kazimierz Moszyński (1945-1953), the seat of the Society's Main Board was moved from Lublin to Poznań (1 January 1952) and then to Wrocław (the turn of 1953). When Moszyński resigned, Józef Gajek took over as chairman for one term of office (1953-1956). Later, between 1956 and 1961, the chairmanship of the Society was in the hands of Professor Tadeusz Seweryn.

In the third period of its history, the Society was practically headed by Józef Gajek. As before, Professor Jan Czekanowski proved to be an inspiration for the Society. He was also chairman of the Society towards the end of the third period (1961-1964). The third stage ended when Jan Czekanowski died (1965) and Józef Gajek left the Society in 1965.

### **The Fourth Period (1965-1991)**

In the years after 1965 a number of initiatives started earlier were continued, particularly the editorial activity. Owing to highly positive assessment of the Society's work in the third period, the Polish Academy of Sciences decided to continue to finance the statutory and editorial activities. However, decreasing subsidies and growing problems with paper were a serious obstacle to that activity. Nevertheless, in the period in question a new edition of Oskar Kolberg's works was published, several volumes based on manuscripts were printed (mainly edited by Józef Burszta). Publication of "Lud" was continued. After Professor J. Gajek's resignation Professor J. Burszta became the journal's editor-in-chief; after his death in 1987, Professor Z. Jasiewicz took over these duties. Professor Czesław Hernas resumed publication of "Literatura Ludowa" ["Folk Literature"] which Professor Julian Krzyżanowski had formerly edited.

From 1964 to 1967 the Polish Ethnological Society was chaired by Professor Bolesław Olszewicz and later by Professor Zawistowicz-Adamska (1967-1976). Professor Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska became chairperson of the Society in 1976 (formerly secretary general). In 1980 her duties were taken over by Professor Franciszek Wokroj. Dr. Anna Kowalska-Lewicka became chairperson in 1982 and Dr. Janina Hajduk-Nijakowska in 1989. However, Dr. Hajduk-Nijakowska was chairperson only for a year. Professor Zygmunt Kłodnicki was elected chairman in 1990 and has served in this capacity till today.

In the period in question an Ethnographic Documentation and Information Centre was established in Łódź (1968), where a number of bibliographies of Polish ethnography, ethnology and folklore were prepared. The Centre cooperated with the most important international bibliographies. The negative feature of the period in question was a gradual stagnation of branches. On the other hand, the Society continued all its publication series.

### **The Fifth Period (After 1991)**

The recent years witnessed serious changes. At the beginning of 1992 the Polish Academy of Sciences stopped subsidizing the Polish Ethnological Society. The Society has been supported by the Scientific Research Committee which has provided funds for libraries, archives, Ethnographic Documentation and Information Centre and the Editorial Board of Oskar Kolberg's Complete Works. Publications of the Polish Ethnological Society have also been heavily subsidized by the Committee. Considerable support has been given by the Ministry of Culture and Arts. The Committee of Ethnological Sciences, Polish Academy of Sciences, became co-editor of "Lud" and "Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne", which has helped the Society enormously.

Among new initiatives of the Polish Ethnological Society mention should

be made of the series "Biblioteka Zesłańca" (first issue in 1991) and *Komentarze do Polskiego Atlasu Etnograficznego* (first issue in 1993).

The idea of "small motherlands" and regions, and the preservation of monuments of traditional culture, popular in many countries all over the world, has also become very popular in Poland. The Polish Ethnological Society has joined the work of a few commissions at the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Culture and Arts. In 1994 it took part in the 5th Congress of Regional Culture Societies. The time has come when the Society can achieve the dreams of its forerunners: to influence the education of generations sensitive to their cultural heritage. Perhaps this will prove to be a chance and a challenge for members of the Society in its second centenary.

### **The Polish Ethnological Society on the Eve of Jubilee Celebrations**

The Society has about 1100 members who belong to 20 branches located in Bytom, Cracow, Gdańsk, Kalisz, Kolbuszowa, Koszalin, Lublin, Łańcut, Łódź, Mszana Dolna, Opoczno, Opole, Poznań, Szczecin, Toruń, Warsaw, Wrocław, Zakopane, Zamość and Zielona Góra.

The members of the Main Board elected at the 68th General Assembly held in Szamotuły (September 1992) include: Professor Zygmunt Kłodnicki, chairman, Dr. Anna Kowalska-Lewicka and Roman Tubaja, deputy chairpersons, Dr. Magdalena Rostworowska, secretary general, Elżbieta Berendt, deputy secretary general, Zbigniew Toroński, treasurer, Dr. Janusz Bohdanowicz, deputy treasurer, Teresa Lasowa, member.

While it would be very desirable to present here the members of the Society who have contributed most to its development, such a list would be too long. Besides, with the wartime loss of records and documents we would never be certain whether we have not omitted a name or two.

In conclusion let us repeat Antoni Kalina's words who, like nobody else, had the right to say "we did our best to work for the cause which we thought important and useful".

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