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Toruń University Ethnology in Relation to Museology Education¹

To comprehend the connection between Toruń university ethnology and museology, we must trace our steps back many years, to 1924, when Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkretz was appointed as an associate professor, heading the newly established Ethnological Workshop at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. I have recounted this story previously, but I will do it once more. In a sense, metaphorically, of course, it serves as a sort of “foundational myth” for university ethnology in Toruń.

Two elements should be noted here. Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkretz, right from the outset of her field trips, started gathering a comprehensive documentation of the cultural reality around her (to which she, quite rightly – I wish to emphasise this point here – also included the natural environment), encompassing artefacts that would constitute the foundation of the future university museum. She justified this by the attitude of the intelligentsia “and its precursors in past centuries.” This attitude was characterised by the adoption of “a priori speculated brain fictions”, imposing schematic interpretations of cultural reality, as a result of which “people look at things but do not truly see them” (Baudouin

¹ This article is an extended version of the paper presented at the Museum of the Masovian Countryside during the conference *Współczesne problemy zarządzania w muzeach. Edukacja. Dobór wykształconych kadr* (Contemporary Problems of Museum Management. Education. Selection of Trained Staff) organised by the Association of Open-Air Museums in Poland on February 27 – March 1, 2023.

de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutzowa 1933: 82, 83]. She believed that students, before delving into theoretical literature, should first learn to see the role of individual cultural elements while considering broader contexts. This was to be facilitated through exercises in the university museum, during which they were required to independently describe the museum exhibits and seek out these cultural connections, the broad cultural background” [Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutzowa 1933: 82; 1936].

She appointed a second-year student, Maria Znamierowska, as the first head of the emerging ethnographic museum, significantly, as a unit within the USB, with the existing Department of Ethnology. Not a certified ethnologist, nor even a holder of a master’s degree. A novice, considering only ethnology, a student, albeit one who was already 28 years old. At this point, we must once again emphasise two aspects. Firstly, what arguments did the novice, though a “mature” student, have in favour of such a role? Partial studies at multiple universities in various humanities and natural science fields. Active involvement in social life including clandestine patriotic activity and collaboration with Janusz Korczak and Maria Rogowska-Falska. (As Florian Znaniecki wrote, a person who is not socially active cannot be an effective social researcher.) The head of Vilnius university ethnology evidently prioritized cultural and social experience along with broad interdisciplinary education over scientific “racial purity” and paper documentation. The second important element was that Maria Znamierowska was immediately sent on a tour of the ethnographic museums that were important in Europe at the time [Arszyńska, Muzalewska 2002]. All of this had an impact on the attitude of the later founder of Toruń university ethnology, its relationships with museums, and it continues to influence it to this day, as I will try to demonstrate.

The concept developed by both women for the Vilnius museum comprised a “laboratory” section with objects accessible to students, a thematic exhibition section, and an open-air museum. The museum, apart from serving typical popularising and scientific functions, was therefore actively involved in the educational process. In turn, ethnology students were well-prepared for potential future museum work. Thus, the teaching of ethnology and museum work were closely and reciprocally intertwined. The Vilnius museum, in its full form, was never completed due to the outbreak of the Second World War, even though a location for the open-air section had already been chosen [Znamierowska-Prüfferowa 1932; 1934;

Olszewski 2001]. However, what is more important for us is the transfer of the Vilnius concepts to Toruń.

In July 1945, a train carrying a group of scholars from Stefan Batory University arrived in Toruń. (This event was commemorated with an appropriate plaque at the main railway station in the city, highlighting its significance in subsequent history.) They came with the intention of establishing a university here, which the determined Vilnians succeeded in doing despite resistance from the political authorities of the time [Kalembka 1989]. Among these scholars was Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, who promptly set about creating a Department of Ethnography and Ethnology. She began assembling the necessary book collection and, without waiting for official decisions from the authorities of the newly established university, started collecting museum exhibits. She could not imagine university ethnology without a museum. Regrettably, her vision did not gain approval from the authorities of Nicolaus Copernicus University. (Years later, during the celebrations of Professor's ninetieth birthday, Vice-Chancellor Jan Kopcewicz acknowledged that it had been a serious mistake.²) Confronted with such attitude of her superiors, Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa successfully initiated the establishment of the Department of Ethnography at the Municipal Museum in 1946, ultimately leading to the founding of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń in 1959. This museum largely followed the concepts of the Vilnius ethnographic museum, including the so-called demonstrative storeroom primarily designed for educational purposes [Arszyńska, Muzalewska 2002: 326].

Until 1953, when the last master's theses in ethnography were defended (following the political decision to discontinue the course), students relied on the collections curated by Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa at the university and museum collections. It should be emphasised at this point that Prof. Bożena Stelmachowska, who headed the Department from 1946, also had prior museum experience, having worked at the Municipal Museum in Poznań before the war [Karwicka, Armon 2002]. All of this ensured that students received a solid foundation in museology. After the removal of ethnography as a field of study at Nicolaus Copernicus University, the

²The information provided, which is not substantiated by references to written sources, is derived from my own research or events which I witnessed or actively participated in as an employee (1981-1987) and collaborator (to this day) of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń (now, since 1999, Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa Museum), Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and the Vilnius and Vilnius Land Society.

Department's staff offered service courses for other majors, making use of both the university collections and the expanding museum collection. At this point, I cannot help but emphasise the high quality of the collaborative relationship between the museum and the university, which was already developed in Vilnius. The museum in Toruń, managed by Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, was visited not only by students from various faculties at Nicolaus Copernicus University but, as part of the educational process, also by students from leading universities that conducted ethnographic studies at that time, including those from Warsaw and Poznań.³

In 1965, Professor Jadwiga Klimaszewska, who was the head of the Department at the time, after unsuccessful attempts to reinstate ethnographic studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University, initiated the Postgraduate Ethnography Programme – the first and only one to this day. It was intended for graduates from various fields who needed ethnographic knowledge in their professional work. We do not have precise statistical data, but it appears that the vast majority of programme graduates went on to work in ethnographic museums. The programme primarily cooperated (and continues to do so) with the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, the Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc, and occasionally with a few other museum institutions. University lecturers included, almost to the end of her life, Professor Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, a former employee of the Toruń museum, Professor Roderyk Lange, the former director Aleksander Błachowski, and other people with museum experience, including Professor Anna Nadolska-Styczyńska and myself. Additionally, there were always employees from the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń and Robert Piotrowski, a graduate of Ethnological Studies in Toruń, who for many years headed the Ethnographic Department at the Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc.

At this juncture, I must revisit Vilnius briefly. Prof. Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa recalled that she became head of the ethnographic museum when she was just beginning her studies in ethnology. She was appointed because Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutz valued her extensive experience in other disciplines and saw the potential for enriching our field. Thus, she herself was also far from the idea of “racial purity”

³Based on the memories shared with me by Professors Lech Mróz and Aleksander Posern-Zieliński from their student days at the University of Warsaw and Adam Mickiewicz University, as well as the accounts provided by former employees of the Toruń museum.

in ethnology. At the Toruń museum, she employed people from various other disciplines, believing that they would bring a fresh perspective to the work, while guiding them towards the Postgraduate Ethnography Programme. At the same time, I must stress the excellent cooperation between the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń and Nicolaus Copernicus University. The museum agreed to take care of the university's museum exhibits as a deposit, which was quite troublesome for the institution. (I do not need to explain to museum employees the various inconveniences associated with this arrangement.) In 1988, I succeeded in persuading the University to relinquish its ownership rights in favour of the Museum. My main arguments presented to the Vice-Chancellor were that the university collections do not constitute a substantive whole, whereas for the museum, they would complement a larger collection, and that the then-director of the museum, Roman Tubaja, allowed very flexible use of museum collections – both those on display and in storage – for educational purposes with our students. This friendly cooperation was of great significance because, as I mentioned earlier, ethnologists from Nicolaus Copernicus University, during the period when there were no ethnology programmes at the university, conducted classes for other majors, preparing their graduates not only through the Postgraduate Ethnography Programme, but also for potential work in ethnographic museums. In the 1990s, together with Krzysztof Piątkowski, I initiated an anthropological specialisation for history students. Contacts with the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, the Museum of the Mazovian Countryside and the Rev. Krzysztof Kluk Museum of Agriculture in Ciechanowiec were crucial elements in implementing the established programme.

In 1999, after an interruption spanning nearly half a century, we successfully reintroduced daytime studies in ethnology at Nicolaus Copernicus University [Olszewski 2022]. Knowing the positive experiences of our predecessors in interdisciplinary approaches, which resulted in broadening horizons, we attach great importance to inviting students from other majors (e.g. within the framework of Interdepartmental Humanities Studies). Right from the start, we ensured that those responsible for preparing students for potential future careers in museums possessed relevant museum experience, including work in ethnographic museums and the maintenance of ongoing connections with such institutions. That is why all classes related to ethnographic museology were conducted by former experienced

museum professionals – Anna Nadolska-Styczyńska, Robert Piotrowski (a graduate of the Toruń ethnology programme and long-time head of the Ethnographic Department at the Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc), and myself, as well as staff from Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa Ethnographic Museum in Toruń (including Bożena Olszewska, head of the Art and Aesthetics Department, and, until 1989, Aleksander Błachowski).

The curriculum of the full-time degree programme in ethnology – cultural anthropology includes a course in “museology” (during the second year of studies) and “professional anthropology workshops: ethnographic museums in the 21st century/museum in theory and practice” – a seminar in the third year, one of several courses designed to prepare students for potential professional careers. In the latter course, we aim to acquaint students with the realities of work before they make decisions about their future careers. Our students also gain practical experience through summer traineeships, especially in research projects conducted by museums. We have experience collaborating primarily with the museum in Sierpc, but also with the museum in Rypin, Kluki, and several others, including foreign museums. Participation in museum traineeships has not only resulted in the acquisition of experience, but has also led to the publication of several articles in our students’ yearbook *Okolice. Rocznik etnologiczny*. To achieve the goals of these workshops, it is essential to have both lecturers with experience in museum work and active museum professionals collaborating. In this regard, the Toruń museum is our natural partner. Each year, with the permission of the current director, Hubert Czachowski, we benefit from contributions by authors of temporary exhibitions, and we consistently draw on the experiences of Anna Maślak, who introduces students to the realities of open-air museum work, using the example of the section dedicated to the Olêders, as well as Bożena Olszewska, who introduces students to the intricacies of daily work in a traditional ethnographic museum. As far as the form of an open-air museum as specific as a village museum is concerned, our natural base is the Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc, closest to Toruń. Thanks to the exceptional kindness of the museum’s director, our students visit there every year for a full day to gain insights into the operations of this type of museum. They benefit from a custom program tailored to our expectations, developed by Ewa Rutkowska, a graduate of ethnology studies in Toruń.

The end crowns the work. Therefore, it is necessary to inquire about the effects of the relationship between Toruń's university ethnology and ethnographic museology. The departure from the concept of "racial purity", a principle inherited from Vilnius, but also somewhat necessitated by circumstances, led Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa to hire graduates from various fields of study for the ethnographic museum, recognising their intellectual potential and then directing them to the Postgraduate Ethnography Programme (later: Postgraduate Ethnology Programme, currently Postgraduate Studies in Ethnology). Graduates of this programme, like graduates of all the education forms mentioned here, in which ethnologists employed at Nicolaus Copernicus University were involved, are now working in museums across Poland, also in managerial positions, spanning from the Subcarpathia Province to Pomerania. A notable, even symbolic, example in this regard is the Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc, where graduates from the full-time studies in ethnology – cultural anthropology, the Postgraduate Ethnography Programme, and the anthropological specialisation for history students are employed. They all have achieved professional success. I would also like to mention at this point the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Heritage Centre, an institution established by the Marshal of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province only in 2021. Two years ago, Dr Michał Antonowicz, who was supervised by me, found employment there. His first task was to develop a museum associated with the manor house in Nawra, following the original concept of the director, Marek Rubnikowicz. Although it might seem like a typical local historical museum, Michał Antonowicz's initiative, stemming directly from his anthropological education (including museum-related aspects) at our university, has imparted a distinctly anthropological character to both the Nawra manor complex and other activities of the Centre, including those of a museum nature, all without conflicts with his superior and even with his support. It seems that three positive factors played a significant role here: the past collaboration between Marek Rubnikowicz and myself in the former Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, which laid the foundation for interdisciplinary cooperation [cf. Olszewski 2022], my own museum experience, and the much greater experience of Marek Rubnikowicz. Additionally, the ethnology-cultural anthropology programme at UMK, completed by Michał Antonowicz, provided excellent preparation for museum work. For the education of our students, the most important

aspect is that Michał Antonowicz (with the full support of the Centre's director) became involved in the Department's educational activities, helping to expand the perspective of ethnographic museology to encompass issues related to the landed gentry.

This example reflects a lasting trend in museology education, one that has been consistently present in the teaching practices of Toruń's university ethnology from its inception to the present day. Involving graduates from various Toruń ethnology programmes in active participation in the education of subsequent generations of students through guest lectures and providing substantive support during museum visits (scientific excursions, museum traineeships) has always been a priority for successive Department heads, always with the support of the university's deans and authorities.

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Wojciech Olszewski

Toruńska etnologia uniwersytecka wobec kształcenia muzealników

Inicjatorką toruńskiej etnologii uniwersyteckiej i osobą przez wiele lat dominującą w kształtowaniu jej profilu, była prof. Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa. Do Torunia przybyła z Wilna, gdzie muzeum etnograficzne było częścią Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego. Przyniosła tu też ideę prof. Cezarii Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutzowej że doświadczenie muzealne jest bardzo ważne w kształceniu studentów etnologii. Idea ta jest nieprzerwanie obecna w programach studiów oferowanych przez Katedrę Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu. Programy te są realizowane w stałej współpracy z Muzeum Etnograficznym im. Marii Znamierowskiej-Prüfferowej w Toruniu, Muzeum Wsi Mazowieckiej w Sierpcu i kilku innych. Absolwenci toruńskiej uczelni pracują w muzeach etnograficznych w całej Polsce, często na kierowniczych stanowiskach i współpracują z Katedrą w nauczaniu muzealnictwa kolejnych roczników studentów.

Słowa kluczowe: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, etnologia, muzeologia, dydaktyka akademicka, instytucje kultury

Abstract

The initiator of Toruń university ethnology and the person who shaped its profile for many years was Professor Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa. She came to Toruń from Vilnius, where the ethnographic museum was part of Stefan Batory University. She also brought with her the idea of Prof. Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutz, which emphasised the crucial role of museum experience in the education of ethnology students. This idea has been consistently present in the study programmes offered by the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. These programmes are implemented in constant collaboration with Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, the Museum of the Mazovian Countryside in Sierpc, and several other institutions. Graduates of the Toruń university work in ethnographic museums across Poland, often holding managerial positions, and collaborate with the Department in teaching museology to successive generations of students.

Keywords: Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, ethnology, museology, academic teaching, study programs, cultural institutions

