

## GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM: DANGERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOLK CULTURE (A POLISH PERSPECTIVE)

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As part of the great project of integrating Europe at the dawn of the twenty-first century, modern Poland, undergoing a process of systemic (political) transformation, will be the topic of my musings on folk culture. In Polish ethnographic, ethnological and folklore research this sort of culture is identified with the non-scholarly "minor tradition" of peasant culture inherited from the Common Slavic epoch and subsequently developed within the Polish ethnos. It is considered the main trend of Old Polish ethnic culture (Burszta, 1974: 19). It was created, functioned, and developed only in its regional variants. Thus it existed outside the scholarly "major tradition," linked in past centuries with the culture of the ruling strata, and currently with the culture of intellectual elites, the so-called high culture, which constitutes the nucleus of national culture. I will look at the present state of this "minor tradition" through the prism of two key concepts of contemporary culture, i.e., globalization and localism (regionalism). Therefore I will draw attention to the overall tendencies shaping Polish folk culture (in its symbolic and material aspects), under conditions of globalization which is perceived as the main element of regional and national identification. Thus these regularities will affect all regions of Poland, although we must naturally be aware of the differences among individual regions (e.g., the different regionalisms of the areas of Lublin, Silesia, Podhale, Kashubia, Great Poland, etc.). These differences have their source in historical, economic, and political conditions; they result from historical, geographical and ideological factors.

The concept of globalization (from Latin *globus*, signifying the Earth as a sphere) is very firmly inscribed in the reality of contemporary Poland, as its scope covers not only economics and technology, but also culture, which is of particular interest to us. It is one of the processes which is leading the peoples of the world to be included in one world community – the global community, and thence functioning definitions of the specific nature of this phenomenon: "global village," cultural "McDonaldisation" and "Hamburgerisation," the contemporary "Tower of Babel" (Wnuk-Lipiński, 2004: 77; Nadolska-Styczyńska, 2005). This is generally felt to mean unification: actually, a sense of danger that a great many

varied cultures will be fused into one homogenized pulp and that traditional ethnic cultures will be slowly leveled in favor of "marketing McWorld" (Barber 2002: 245-262).

Thus researchers into this problem are asking themselves the following question: does globalization as a fundamental "profound change" really have to mean an irreversible break with the past? For globalization, through the opening of all borders, also denotes two simultaneous processes: the formation of new cultural contacts and the flow of non-material values – norms and patterns of conduct favoring changes of traditional patterns and artistic canons from the point of view of folklore and folk art; and the simultaneous withdrawal of minor communities in their own localisms, with a strong desire to maintain a regional identity. A counterweight to globalization may be observed in the social activities related to protecting the cultural heritage in its national, regional, and local aspects. The UNESCO General Assembly pointed to that area of social activism as early as 1989, when it proclaimed its "Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore." It draws attention to the identification of traditional folk culture through the collection of its products; protecting and conserving collected materials; its popularization and dissemination in various countries; and lastly, the education of the whole world community portraying the global values of folklore for the development of the individual, for the harmonious and amicable coexistence of all the countries of the world (Recommendation on the Safeguarding... 1989).

And indeed, it is chiefly Polish museums that are taking such actions, as well as open-air museums and other institutions for cultural dissemination and documentation, which preserve cultural heritage encompassing various products of human spiritual and material activities: in the area of visual arts, folklore, folk architecture, as well as manmade landscapes; here we are speaking of the process of creating a cultural space encompassing the whole sphere of practical actions, closely linked to home management (regions grouped according to culture and landscape). The Museum of Ethnography in Warsaw provides an excellent example of this type of institution. It offers cultural and educational programs which fit into the overall formula: TRADITION-DIVERSITY-TOLERATION, and museum lectures for school pupils and students since 1990. The themes covered include the following: "From grain to bread," "Polish folk art," "From clay to pot," "Polish ethnographic regions." The Museum of Ethnography also organizes visual art workshops, contests, concerts including different types of folk music (since 2001), village fairs linked to do traditional rural festivities, as well as the series "World folk cultures" (Orlewicz, 2005: 188-194).

However, the Lublin Village Open-Air Museum is a good example of the specific, detailed activities of open-air museums as scientific research and educational institutions. It offers annual "rendezvous with the past" under the slogan of traditions, ceremonies and demonstrations. Here are e.g. some of the traditions, customs and crafts of the Lublin area and events organized by the Lublin Village Open-Air Museum for 2007: bidding farewell to winter and welcoming spring;

walking with the "spring festival" (gaik) and sinking Marzanna ceremonies; Palm Sunday (ceremonial visual arts and festival nourishment); the program "With Dew and Scythe – Haymaking Time in the Open-Air Museum"; blessing of the fields; St. John's Eve at the open-air museum; harvest time at the open-air museum; harvest and bread festival at the open-air museum; demonstration of workers picking potatoes in the fields; cabbage shredding for winter - folk customs relating to cabbage; Santa Claus at the open-air museum (website). Thus it is thanks to the ethnographic parks that "are immortalized" monuments of former rural material culture and folk art, viewed as "relics" of civilization, as evidence of the archaic nature of former peasant culture – the "treasure-troves" of earlier generations.

Concern for folk culture is included in the program of activities of the pan-Polish organization, the first of its kind in Europe, founded in Lublin in 1968 and called *Stowarzyszenie Twórców Ludowych* (The Society of Folk Artists); its sister organization – *Stowarzyszenie Polskich Twórców Ludowych w Ameryce Północnej* (The Society of Polish Folk Artists in North America) – emerged in Chicago in 2000 among Poles in the Diaspora. Its most important goals are as follows: the cultivation of regional traditions, preservation, documentation and popularization, as well as the promotion of Polish folk art and folklore, in addition to essential professional scientific support for folk artists. The Society, in accordance with its statutory requirements, as well as with UNESCO recommendations enclosed in the "Recommendation..." cited earlier, organizes various activities: regional and national contests, exhibitions of folk art, folklore festivals, fairs of all sizes, open-air shows, workshops in creativity, scholarly sessions and seminars, and poetry readings, holding its own Folk Art Gallery, as well as extensive publishing operations (Głowacz – Gauda, 2004: 3).

The durable values of the spiritual and material culture of the regional and local communities have been created within regions defined by culture and landscape through a long-lasting historical process. We know that this cultural heritage transmits intellectual, moral, social, religious and aesthetic values, and the latter have never functioned autonomously in the field of folk culture. As Dorota Simonides, a well-known Silesian folklorist, rightly observes, what is involved here is not superficial folkloristic images, but what is most profound in regional culture, the system of those values which are most important in life (Simonides, 2000). Let us add, those which determine our being (who we are) and our both individual and collective identity.

The Maastricht Treaty (1991) also pointed to the idea that the richness of European culture consists in its diversity, which should be preserved and developed. Full integration, not just economic or political integration, is possible if the rights of all cultures are recognized as equal (Chełmińska 1994: 29-34). The article 151 of the Amsterdam Treaty states: "The Community contributes to the flourishing of the cultures of the member-states by respecting their national and regional diversity, while simultaneously bringing their common cultural heritage into relief" (Dokumenty europejskie, 1999).

It is not only threats that the globalization processes currently underway in Poland pose to national, regional and local identities. These globalization processes have also a positive significance – they lead to the consolidation of local communities and the strengthening of the role of regionalism. It may be stated plainly that the more globalization the stronger are the defense mechanisms, and therefore the stronger the endeavors to maintain identity. It is precisely under such circumstances that individual Polish regions are trying to maintain (and to display) their cultural individuality, exhibit elements which distinguish them from other regions of Poland (regional designs, emblems), during, e.g., festivals, festivities, fairs, etc. It is the very globalizing reality that creates a new approach to regional traditions. They become attractive from the point of view of marketing. The commercialization of culture linked to up-to-date marketing can effectively promote the image of every region (Ciechocińska, 1994: 81). Nevertheless, it should be noted that this tendency did not appear in Poland along with globalization, but much earlier, in regions with particular tourist assets and a highly developed awareness of the cultural values of the “minor fatherland.” At the earliest, in the early XX century, Polish Tatra highlanders possessed this awareness of the assets of their own culture and the need for its intergenerational transmission for its own community as well as for others – as a tourist attraction. This also saw the birth of Polish regionalism among the Zakopane highlanders (1904) (Wnuk – Kudasik, 1993). Its development in other parts of Poland, as a socioeconomic and cultural movement, came in full after the Second World War, i.e., after 1945. That movement’s program concerns the protection of cultural relics of the respective area, and also endeavors to update life and culture, thereby initiating the coexistence of the older folk culture and newly-emerging products of local and regional creativity (cultural activation).

This consumer-based character of folklore (verbal, musical, dance, ceremonial) and folk art is denoted as folklorism. This concept signifies the deliberate applications in particular situations in the ongoing life of selected “minor tradition” essences and forms, either those taken straight from the ground and transferred into situations distinct from the authentic (natural) ones, or those drawn from folkloristic documentation and reconstructed in situations adapted for this purpose (Burszta, 1985: 299-300; Leščák, 1992: 5-13). Thus folk culture products extracted from their authentic environment change their traditional functions: everyday, religious, etc., into functions of cognition and amusement, and become a part of popular (mass) culture. Let us recall that folklore is always a “natural” part of a “living” culture, and is connected to the life of a definite social stratum, and reflects its living conditions. It is simply a part of this life, both in everyday life and on holidays.

Thus folklorism becomes a style of modern culture in its regional variants, and a fixture in the field of mass culture: it is based on “quotations” from folk culture. It is the institutional, and not spontaneous, transmission of the essence of culture. By both those who impersonate-transmit this culture and its consumers these are regarded as the “quotations” of tradition. Folklorism is a manifestation of repre-

sentational culture, it is a show in both the literal and metaphorical senses, in the final analysis it is the alteration of cultural social engineering (Sulima, 1992: 183). The very awareness of the transmission technique of the substance of culture turns out to be crucial, along with forms of organization, situation and cultural events planning, their direction and not spontaneity. As a result of the translocation, most frequently from a rural environment to an urban stage, we may observe a number of changes of authentic folklore considered the "main sins of folklorism" by the Czech folklorist Oldřich Sirovátka (*Lubelska rozmowa o folklorystyce*, 1987: 80-81). They include: the formalization and institutionalization of stage performance - passivity instead of activity, uniformity instead of variation; the subordination of the participants of the performance to the artistic display of the managers (the huge role played by choreographers, instructors and artistic program directors); the use of compressed time frames in stage adaptations by comparison to authentic forms, through the intentional assortment of folkloristic elements and their inclusion in the scenic repertoire in accordance with the principles of scenic art and the type of audience (festival, ludic, recreational-vacational), and here the commercial nature of the show, adulation of the tastes of the mass consumer. However, the skill in commercializing traditions and cultural heritage is important in marketing a regional identity (Ciechocińska, 1994: 81). The inevitable temporal compression in relation to the actual time frame of the folkloristic situations appears most clearly in ceremonial shows with dances, e.g., those shown eagerly at wedding celebrations lasting as long as several days according to traditional Polish customs on stage are given an hour's presentation, indicating only the key elements of the ceremonial scenario, and certain types of dance do not express their primary ceremonial symbolism.

The problem of ethnographic truth appears in stage presentations (the minimum staging and transformations required from the perspective of consumers and researchers), and also in folk art objects (various degrees of folklorism are distinguished depending on the degree of closeness/distance to/from authentic folk material). This problem of ethnographic truth often remains just a "devout wish" of ethnographers and folklorists. Moreover, the phenomenon of so-called second-degree folklorisation is given a voice. It consists in the "improvement of folklore" by experts in traditional rural culture, i.e., by folklorists, ethnographers, choreographers, and cultural and educational figures. As Teresa Smolińska puts it, previously stylized vanishing customs and ceremonies, former costumes, dances, folk art and other phenomena of the former rural lifestyle have been in recent years subjected by specialists to a further stylization, one even more precise, for here it is the laws of the stage and a perfectionist attention to detail and a desire to restore primary functions that are decisive (Smolińska, 1995: 146). Nevertheless folklorism indisputably assures the presence of older forms in the living culture, in a form adapted to modern times. Thereby it is a form of intergenerational transmission, not just regionally and locally but also on the national level.

That idea accompanies the assumptions in programs of the yearly organized festivals, e.g., the folk bands and singers festival in Kazimierz on Vistula (Lublin

region). Since it came into being (1967) its aim has been, the organizers assure us, to preserve and document the traditions of the authentic repertoire, and the style of folk performance and singing, as well as the popularization of these traditions in society” (Regulamin festiwalu..., 1994: 1). Moreover, in the regulations of this festival we read that due to the loss of certain forms of folklore, soloists and groups of singers are encouraged to take into consideration for their repertoires Christmas and Easter ritual songs, as well as songs relating to ceremonies, weddings, funerals, Midsummer, reaping, harvest, as well as lullabies, pastorals, and ballads (Regulamin festiwalu... 1994: 3). Moreover, the specific nature of this festival is the principle of presenting, through its performers, exclusively authentic folklore, not subject to stylization processes. The majority of such festivals in Poland, however, admit both authentic presentations of folklore and artistically transformed, reconstructed, and stylized folklore. The distribution of performers for all the above categories is typical of the festival of mountain areas folklore organized since 1964 as part of *Tatrzańska Jesień* (Tatra Autumn). The *Tatrzańska Jesień* is a series of attractive artistic shows for visitors to this region, prolonging the tourist season in the Tatras, and thus it has a strong commercial significance.

It is thus a firmly established fact that folklorism has activated culturally certain regional and local community circles, and is a factor in current celebrations, and strengthens the feelings of regional, local and national identities. However, as predicted by ethnologists who believe that the logic of folklorism is strengthened by modern political and ideological practice, the folklore of individual ethnographic regions will become primarily, little by little, a token of national folklore, an expression of external, conventionalized folk patriotism (Burszta, 1989: 163).

In citing the phenomenon of folklorism I have drawn attention to one of the ways in which, with the greatest scope, the heritage of rural culture functions in Polish global culture. Other layers of this heritage encompass (Adamowski, 2004: 67-69): archaic components with the traits of “fossils” (elements completely dead today, their meanings not understood by the representatives of this culture, e.g., essences and objects related to pre-Christian cults – solar, lunar, aquatic, agrarian, etc.) and archaic components of the open-air museum type (still remembered by the oldest generation and presented only on request, e.g., by collectors of folklore), obsolete elements – the range of their use is limited and their structure is often simplified, e.g. contemporary folk weaving, conducted in only a few regions of Poland, or pottery, which, according to ethnographers, is one of the so-called dying trades (Ginące zawody... 1995). The modernized tradition (the traditional element brought up to date and adapted to current conditions and circumstances) is another layer of contemporary Polish folk culture. Ceremonial fine art in the function of folkloristic souvenirs or products of the smithy, once mainly utilitarian, but currently artistic, may be indicated as examples. Currently, beside the continuation of traditional forms and contents, totally new components are also perceptible, e.g., in contemporary folk painting and sculpture, and not just there. We can observe folk artists taking up non-traditional, secular themes, e.g., folk sculpture: the themes related to old and new rural work and life; historical ones – figures of

national heroes, kings, and leaders; but also the expansion of traditional sacral themes (previously only figures from the Christian pantheon) with current relevance, e.g., the cult, currently very powerful, not just in the collective awareness of Polish society but also in that of contemporary folk artists, of the Polish Pope John Paul II, the martyred priest Jerzy Popiełuszko, etc. (Artyści polscy... 1996; Twórcy ludowi... 2004: 1). There are also attempts at experimentation, e.g., in the field of glass painting in *Podhale* region: the introduction of movement into formerly static patterns and references to legends, customs, and games (Zdzisław Walczak); linking this painting to the experiences of medieval illuminations (Zofia Frotecka); inspirations from Eastern Art, German romanticism, and mansion painting (Adam Słowiński) (Jackowski, 1997).

Nevertheless, it may be considered whether the approaching materialization of daily life and the secularization as an effect of globalization can cause spirituality to become an anti-value also in modern Poland, and reason, faith in progress and civilization will be the most correct way of perceiving reality? Will the problem of "withering" of tradition, evident among the highly industrialized peoples of Europe, with the past as a determinant of current and future life, continue, and will the rate of intergenerational transmission approach zero? Will the still current traditional awareness, and therefore the possibility of replicating selected essences of culture, and maintaining continuity and local, regional and national identities, be exclusively replaced in the future by awareness of tradition, keeping at a distance the meanings of these traditional essences, and snapping the bonds of group internal solidarity, etc? In Polish history in situations where the national way of life was threatened, loyalty to the traditional values inscribed in folklore has made it possible to maintain cultural identity (at least in Silesia and Kashubia). Certainly this peculiar self-preservation instinct will not weaken in the future either, in spite of the expansion of globalization processes, especially in areas where regionalist movements have already their own long tradition. We may observe that the clash with a secularized Europe or with other religious systems in the continuously uniting Old Continent (including, e.g., Protestantism, Islam) and separate patterns of folkways trigger off not just unification processes but also the natural defense mechanisms which conserve the virtues of the native culture, which is confirmed by already existing examples of multi-ethnic societies.

In the circumstances of the contemporary integration processes in Europe the musings of Giuseppe Cocchiara, an outstanding Italian folklorist and author of a history of folklore in Europe (*Storia del folklore in Europa*, 1952; translated as *The History of Folklore in Europe*, Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), are especially valuable and extraordinarily topical. As far back as the 1950's he wrote: "the very concept of Europe, especially the new concept of Europe, is empty and dead, unless it is filled with those cultural and ethical essences in the creation of which folklore has also taken an active role. Folklore induced scholars to think in German, French, or Russian, or what we still would wish, but has taught them at the same time [...] 'to think in European'" (Cocchiara, 1971: 300). This folklorist has also authored another valuable thought, on the

nature of the signpost, strongly topical: "it is precisely in the field of folklore that the idea is being implemented that all people should live in harmony with others, as the voice of their own people calls them to, but at the same time they should study their own individuality, which, albeit the most crucial factor in historical musings, should not fence them in" (Cocchiara, 1971: 300).

In conclusion I would like to cite an extract from the statement, of universal significance, by an American Indian leader, quoted in Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*: "In the beginning God gave all peoples a clay goblet each, so that they could drink the water of life from it. They all immersed their goblets in the water, but the goblets varied among themselves. Our goblet is smashed. Our goblet is no more [this refers to Indian culture on the American continent]" (Benedict, 1999: 88-89). It was later significantly commented upon by Antonina Kłoskowska, a Polish researcher of culture, to relate it to the cultural reality of contemporary Poland. We can treat it as a special message: "We can wish ourselves [...], for the goblet of our culture not to be smashed during the approaching epoch; so that we can maintain the configuration of our common culture, even if the future is promising us new configurations and forms [...]. So that we can maintain our own configuration, through which we can share our national culture; so that our goblet is never totally smashed, even if we are inclined to further supplement it with other essences and new substances, developing with the passing of time and the influence of other, related cultures. Continually maintaining something specially ours and handed down from our collective past" (Kłoskowska, 1999: 52).

Translated by Robert A. Orr

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## STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł stanowi próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie: czy globalizacja jako zasadnicza „głęboka zmiana“ rzeczywiście w odniesieniu do rzeczywistości polskiej prowadzi do „rozmycia kulturowego“ i oznacza nieodwracalny rozbrat z przeszłością. Przywołany materiał dokumentacyjny

odwołuje do dwóch typów zagadnień. Pierwsze z nich dotyczy zinstytucjonalizowanych działań o charakterze ochronnym (muzea etnograficzne, skanseny, stowarzyszenia, festiwale itp.), postrzeganych w świetle dokumentów UNESCO i traktatów Unii Europejskiej oraz ideologii regionalizmu polskiego, z podkreśleniem roli polskiego regionalizmu jako najistotniejszego czynnika antyglobalizacyjnego.

Natomiast drugi poziom refleksji dotyczy współczesnych form istnienia „tradycji małej” (kultury typu ludowego). Obejmują one zarówno składniki archaiczne (o cechach „skamielin”; typu skansenowego), jak i elementy przestarzałe oraz tradycję zmodernizowaną (składniki nowe i eksperymenty artystyczne). Pojęciem nadrzędnym w tym aspekcie jest folkloryzm – znak konsumpcyjnego charakteru dziedzictwa kultury ludowej w obszarze globalizującej się kultury polskiej. Przez folkloryzm rozumiemy m. in. „cytaty tradycji”, przejawy kultury prezentacyjnej, odmianę socjotechniki kulturowej. Pochodną tego zjawiska jest problem: komercjalizacja kultury a „prawda etnograficzna”, wynikający z różnych stopni zbliżenia/oddalenia do/od ludowego autentyku.