



BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY – ON ADVANTAGES OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN VILLAGES OF FORMER RECOVERED TERRITORIES

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the research of interdisciplinary team of scientists who, apart from inspecting dugouts, trenches and batteries, search for older evidences of cultural and natural heritage of Zgorzelecki Forest. This article attempts also to make the readers familiar with the issue of relocation and migration after the World War II to the territory of the so-called Recovered Territories. It allows to see the bigger picture of human stories, and also allows to answer the question about the state of local identities, their quality, the sense of responsibility for matters not concerning one's own interest and contemporary relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

Editor in chief of *Archeologia Żywa*, a popular science magazine, dr Paweł Konczewski, in his letter to his readers points to the fact that archaeology more and more often deals in research of not so long gone past. He also believes, that "holistic approach to the past requires wide cooperation of archaeology with humanities, social and natural sciences" [Konczewski 2017: 1]. An example may be the research of interdisciplinary team of scientists who, apart from inspecting dugouts, trenches and batteries, search for older evidences of cultural and natural heritage of Zgorzelecki Forest. The research concerning the abandoned Toporów (Tormersdorf) village dates back to the year 2007, when at the initiative of Paweł Zawadzki (then archaeology student) living in Bielawa Dolna the search for graves from Napoleonic Wars began. During subsequent seasons, the researchers were able to define the directions of village development and learn about the material culture of its inhabitants, for example, thanks

to the unique set of Sorbian ceramics [Biel 2017: 81]. In the following years, the specialist from the fields of archaeobotany, anthropology and paleozoology joined the research team. At the end of the last research season (April 2017) sociologists informally also joined the team. Their observations constitute minor (yet important, in my view) contribution to the knowledge about the contemporary social spirit of the researched villages. This article attempts also to make the readers familiar with the issue of relocation and migration after the World War II to the territory of the so-called Recovered Territories. It is an important issue, as it allows us to see the bigger picture of human stories, and also allows us to answer the question about the state of local identities, their quality, the sense of responsibility for matters not concerning one's own interest and contemporary relationships. The subject matter of the research is, in general, historic memory the carriers of which are the people currently inhabiting villages of former Recovered Territories.

ATTEMPT OF RECONSTRUCTING THE SETTLEMENT HISTORY

Bielawa Dolna is a village in Lower Silesian voivodeship in Zgorzelec County in Pieńsk commune, located in a historical region of Upper Lusatia. The advantage of Upper Lusatia located in the South-Western part of Poland is its geographic setting that for centuries has been a "bridge" between the regions of Central Europe. This region has been inhabited by Sorbs, Germans and Poles for centuries. The most important changes to the settlement can be observed in the period of the newest, post-war history. Traces of settlement in Lusatia were left by Celtic tribes, that later were forced out by East Germanic tribes, and later occupied by Slavic tribes known as Polabian Slavs. Their descendants are modern Sorbs.¹ Lusatians (as this is the name for Sorbs) for more than 1,000 years not only maintained and developed their culture, but even when faced with intensive germanisation after the end of World War I were close to gain their independence. On the basis of Law of Nations, they wanted to be separated from Germany and thus create their own Lusatian nation. But even then, and after World War II Lusatians were not able to gain territorial independence, and it is assumed that the Sorbian language is spoken by barely 20,000 persons.²

Numerous territorial disputes were also a characteristic of this region. It was a real melting pot of cultures, ideas and material products of culture. Research teams composed of humanists and scientists reconstruct the settlement history of this area. They started numerous research activities such as surface survey, research of archival maps and photos, air prospection, geo-physical research, excavations, geological research, osteological research of human remains, morphological research of bones, anthropology-archaeology research and morphological research of remains of old fauna [Konczewski et al. 2016: 147-153]. The authors named the research results "the curse of abundance" as in the course of one season only it was possible to locate hamlets and farms surrounding the village, discover traces of non-agricultural activity, find evidence of Middle Age and Early Modern settlement. It was also possible to determine the character of the graveyard. What is more, the communication routes around the village were also reconstructed [Ibid. 170]. It is also important to note

¹ <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%81u%C5%BCyce> dated 17/05/2017

² <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbo%C5%82u%C5%BCyzanie> dated 17/05/2017

that documents and drafts analysis collected or drawn up by the inhabitants was also of use during site investigation. Such a document can for example be a hand-drawn map of Tormersdorf village from 1992 made by the pre-war inhabitant named Heinz Grabig. Thanks to this source, it was possible to locate the old tavern [Ibid. 168]. In addition, anthropological research was of importance, as it provided new information of former life of the inhabitants, which – according to the researches – was not an easy one. From the discovered remains it is evident, that the forest dwellers often suffered from serious injuries and fell to fatal diseases, such as tuberculosis [Biel 2017: 83]. The results of interdisciplinary research prove not only how extensively this area was utilized by the dormer settlers. They are also evidence that identification and collection of information from modern inhabitants can quite often bring us closer to new discoveries and crucial facts, both for sociologists investigating the issues of regional identity and archaeologists wanting to solve the cultural image puzzle of villages and the region.

IDENTITY ON POST-EMIGRATION TERRITORY

As all that is left after Tormersdorf are overgrown foundations, interviews were carried out among inhabitants of Bielawa Dolna – a village located a few kilometres away. As Czesław Osękowski explains: “Former German territories handed over to Poland during Potsdam Conference constituted one third of the Polish territory within the new borders. They were of economic, as well as political, military and social importance. They also balanced the loss of 46 percent of pre-war territory of Poland handed over to USSR” [Osękowski 2017]. For approximately 8.5 million people it was a time – to put it lightly – of difficult decisions. Half of them decided to flee to the west. For some it was a forced evacuation, for others an escape before the Red Army. Nevertheless, majority of them left their homes never to return to them. Still, nearly 2.5 million Germans remained in Silesia, 1 million of them in West Pomerania, 550 thousand in East Prussia, 350 thousand in Lubusz Land and 200 thousand on the territory of the former Free City of Danzig [Ibid.]. As Osękowski further explains, once the front line was crossed, many migrants returned to their former homes, which increased the number of Germans in certain villages, but it never came close to the threshold from before the war. In border regions, characterised by their multinational structure, which remained in Poland the so-called verification period began to ensure “without a doubt” who is who. In other words – who is German and who is Polish. It was the Polish Army that decided to resolve the population issue even before the Potsdam Conference. In June and July of 1945, Germans were banished to the western bank of Oder and Lusatian Neisse. According to Osekowski, it was a joint decision of Polish and Soviet authorities, and the process was not regulated by any international law. German migrants were very often controlled and robbed of their possessions [Ibid.].

The fact that once the Germans were displaced, in the poviats along the Oder and Lusatian Neisse former soldiers were resettled is also important for my research. The goal of this plan was to prepare the locals to eventual threat from the Germany. " In June 1945, 12 border districts were defined to be the place for military settlement. These districts were: Kamień Pomorski – Wolin, Gryfino, Chojna, Sulęcín, Rzepin, Krosno Odrzańskie, Gubin, Żary, Żagań, Zgorzelec, Lubań and Lwówek Śląski.

In 1948, demilitarized soldiers and their families constituted 30 percent of all the Poles inhabiting these districts. Such high a percentage of military settlers in indicated districts was of huge importance for local social relations. For many years after, many towns on the Polish-German border retained their semi-military nature (for example Górzyn, district Krosno Odrzańskie, Miodnica, district Żary, Glisno, district Sulęcín, Chlebowo, district Gubin)” [Ibid.]. According to Osekowski, in the three years since war ended on the so-called Recovered Territories “approximately 170 thousand families of demilitarised soldiers settled, constituting to over 530 thousand people. This amounted to around 12 percent of Polish settlers inhabiting this region” [Ibid.].

What is also crucial for my research is who these new settlers were, where they came from and on what rules they settled, especially in villages. Osekowski claims that migrants can be divided at least into four categories: migrants from USSR, migrants from the former territory of Poland, repatriates (Polish citizens returning home after forced resettlement during the war to other countries) and re-migrants (people who lived outside Polish borders before the war started). According to the historian, the largest group of people that settled on the Recovered Territories was composed of migrants from central Poland as well as migrants and repatriates from USSR [Ibid.]. Many of the new settlers were also soldiers recently discharged, and their settling close to the new borders was of strategic nature. It was first and foremost about eventual time needed for mobilisation in case of eventual aggression on the part of Germany. However, not everyone was aware who their neighbours actually were.

The war ended not only for those on the front, and what they saw when reclaiming subsequent parts of Poland left no doubt that they would never give it back. No doubt or no hope. The civilians, on the other hand, could have different views when taking over homes, or even whole farmsteads, after the Germans. They could not be sure if their owners would ever be back. New place to live was not only about resettlement. It was also about changing ones whole life standard. Sometimes resettling was moving to completely furnished and well-equipped homes and farmsteads, which gave an impression as if the Germans living there left their homes only to go shopping and could be back any minute. Many migrants treated this new place as spoils of war and without any second thoughts adjusted their new homes for their own needs, according to the traditions and culture they were raised in. Without any emotions they destroyed furniture, fine porcelain, they burned German books. Of course, it did not apply to everyone and one cannot say that this was a rule. Maybe it was not a lack of sensitivity to the cultural heritage, but rather a symbolic takeover of new property – it is difficult to be sure today. As it turned out later, those who managed to keep some books or other valuable items, such as pianos, were forced to give them back – the new people's government took care of that (but that is another subject altogether). Despite the difference in the quality of homes and equipment, many migrants, especially those coming from the former Polish territories beyond the river Bug, hoped to come back to their patrimony. In fact, they did not and when settling in their new homes they could not be sure if this is the last stop on their migrant journey.

What is interesting, I think, is the fact that many contemporary inhabitants are interested not only in the material and cultural heritage of this land that is now their home, but also in its history. Many interesting facts can be found in leaflets and on websites promoting the villages on the Recovered Territories. Not only the local

government but also researches such as Waldemar Bena, the author of many scientific and popular science publications on history and nature of the Upper Lusatia (and quite recently also a farmer) take care about the accuracy and content of the information. He is the source of the history of post-war Bielawa Dolna, a village that after 1945 was temporarily called Biała Dolna, after the German name Wendisch Biela or Windischen Bele. In the early years of the village development, its inhabitants dealt with honey harvesting, fishing and metallurgy. At the beginning of 19th century, a mill and a lumber mill were build there and in the fourth decade of the 19th century Bielawa Dolna was inhabited by 20 craftsmen and 9 merchants [Bena 2012: 217]. It is worth noting some of the most important events in the history of the village such as the stay of Napoleonic marshal Victor in May 1813 and the arrival on the 10 April of the troops of Polish Second Army [Bena 2012: 218]. Embankments and fragments of field fortifications can be seen even today as they stretch along the banks of Lusatian Neisse.

According to the data collected and sorted by Bena, the development of the village progressed in the following way:

The year 1695 - 460 inhabitants (114 farmsteads);

The year 1816 - 540 inhabitants (113 farmsteads);

The year 1840 - 719 inhabitants (110 farmsteads);

The year 1861 - 935 inhabitants (177 farmsteads);

The year 1926 - 1113 inhabitants;

The year 1941 - 1237 inhabitants;

The year 1946 (May) - 88 inhabitants (59 Germans and 29 Poles);

The year 2011 - 298 inhabitants [Bena 2012: 218].

The above data shows how drastically the structure of the village changed after World War II. Even till today the number of inhabitants did not rise. Village somehow survived and did not share the fate of other similar ones, such as the already mentioned Tormersdorf village. I write "somehow" as the community is made of people, whose historic memory about a given place shapes the cultural character of local identity. Does Bielawa Dolna have a new identity today or is still in between longing for former patrimony and the echo of German order? Perhaps, if the clash of cultures had not happened, as it had been the case of pre-war Gdańsk, were there was a mixture of people from different civilisations, we could have been discussing assimilation difficulties, cultural differences and occurring conflicts. Potential conflicts were to be neutralised by planned relocation of migrants. This programme was the responsibility of Scientific Council for Recovered Territories that planned in great detail who, from where and to where was to be resettled, taking into consideration also the climate and the shape of the land. To be more precise, it was to make the change as "painless" as possible [Biuletyn IPN 2005: 18]. Unfortunately, this plan was never implemented. The haste played a major role. Meanwhile, new settlers coming from the bordering territories had one goal only: first to move into a house before it will be demolished to help rebuild the capital city and then to survive. More often it was poverty that united them than origins

and traditions that divided them. Therefore, it was important to form new bonds that will allow to help to rebuild a sense of control over one's life that was not an easy task at the border territories. What is the most important, according to Osękowski, is the fact that "for a vast majority of Poles these former German lands were a tremendous opportunity. People came here from overcrowded villages of Kielce, Warsaw, Łódź or Rzeszów voivodeships. Here there was a chance to find a farmstead, a good land and stability" [Biuletyn IPN 2005: 18]. Yes. It was a chance but also a huge challenge of adaptation. Stanisław Jankowiak claims that "for many, these new things that they found there were so far from what they thought they should be that they felt uneasy in their new home" [Biuletyn IPN 2005: 20]. If we add the cultural landscape soaked up with German order then indeed the cultural shock may be immense. German churches, graveyards, mills, plants, railway bridges, characteristic farms with huge barns and cowshed as well as fields organised till the horizon – all of these differed from the memories of tiny whitewashed houses, backward infrastructure and primitive agriculture. Some of them adapted quickly to their new place, other disassembled what they found to give the region a new character. It must have been even more disturbing for families that – resettled to German homes – found out that their owners had not left them yet. It is difficult to imagine but this is what had happened. Germans lived together with Poles under one roof, even in the same room [Ibid. 22].

People's government attempted, without success, to prove that Recovered Territories were Polish, Piast or at least Slavic in their roots. Regionalism, ethnic origins, the history of being attached to one's land were of no importance. One had to define oneself as Polish or German. It was then difficult for these ethnic groups that members felt neither Polish nor German. They were (as it was illustrated among others in Konopielka) from here. Those "from here" included Kosznajdrzy people from the regions of Tuchola and Chojnice, who were also Catholics, Olendrzy from Żuławy Masurians and Wamiaks from former Eastern Prussia. It marked the beginning of a period, when "people had to prove that they were Polish – with their language, tradition, surname, religion" [Ibid. 24].

SETTLEMENT ON RECOVERED TERRITORIES

Recovered Territories is a conventional name defining the territory of former Free City of Danzig as well as western and northern land of modern Poland that, pursuant to the decisions of Postdam Conference, were to be under Polish administration after the end of World War II. This term became popular in Polish People's Republic period, and the status of this land and its borders was normalized in 1950 in Zgorzelec and then later in 1970 with West Germany authorities and in 1990 when the authorities of Third Polish Republic signed the treaty recognising the Polish-German border on Oder and Lusatian Neisse.³ However, borders are not only lines on maps but also the lives of people from whom these lands were taken only to be returned later, lives of people who had to flee and were resettled, lives of people for whom it was to be a temporary change that marked the beginning of a new life. The border lands were always involved with tension between

³ https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziemie_Odzyskane dated 18/05/2017

the bordering countries, but according to Stanisław Jankowiak, after the World War I there was not so much hatred towards the Germans as it was the case after World War II [Biuletyn IPN 2005: 5]. Moreover, since in the first months after the capitulation of Nazi Germany it was not sure where the borders would lie, people did not know whether to return to their homes or move in to the new ones. Germans from East Prussia were fleeing from the Soviet front in panic not knowing how far and where to go. As it was noted by Czesław Osękowski, Germans inhabiting the western territories anticipated that the new border will run with the Oder and thus did not move far to return to their homes once the front passes.⁴ [Biuletyn IPN 2005: 12]. Włodzimierz Suleja adds, that back then it was a classic “wild wild west” characterised by rapes, looting and robbery [Ibid: 13] as well as dismantling and devastation of everything that the Soviets were not able to take.

Settlement was not in its entirety chaotic. Not everyone could move in into any house left by a German family, however, in many places in Poland that was the common practice. Osękowski and Suleja explain that the western border (more than 100 of width) was to be inhabited in majority by servicemen. It was to be the so-called safety border [Biuletyn IPN 2005: 14]. Jankowiak sums up the population issues by explaining that “during the war, we suffered enormous losses in people, not only those 6,060,000 of killed citizens. Take into account that in 1939, Poland was inhabited by 35 million people. Population census from 14 February 1946 mentions 24 million people, all minorities included, also Germans. Therefore, by calculating it is evident that we lost not 6 million but 11 million of citizens, one third of the state population. The lands being the subject of our paper were inhabited by approximately 8.5 million before the war. We were not able to fill in this gap as there were no people. Some Poles living in recent Eastern Territories left there as they were forced to stay by the Soviets. Therefore, there was none to inhabit the Western Territories. Crops were lost, there were no people to work. The assumption seemed to be good. We move people from Polish territories beyond the river Bug at the same time we expulse the Germans. People switch places... [Ibid. 15]. It was, however, only theory, according to which people were to profit from what others planted before. Not everywhere the infrastructure was devastated. German farmsteads in Western Pomerania were left in perfect condition together with equipment and even inventory. Unfortunately, some of these grand farmsteads were transformed into State Agricultural Farms [Ibid. 18].

Countryside does not offer such vast possibilities of social advancement as the city, where there were more employment possibilities in public administration institutions or at the universities. An example can be Wrocław, chosen particularly by Lviv inhabitants [Ibid.: 25]. There, the society was more varied, as not only professors but also pickpockets moved there. Therefore, there was a complete representation of social classes. Countryside not only provided more scarce opportunities but also greater uncertainty towards German territorial and pecuniary claims. I assume than when deciding to choose the countryside, people back then had to be guided by courage, but I suppose they did not have much choice either.

⁴ As it was noted by one of my interlocutors: “A German woman when leaving her home near Wrocław told my grandmother to keep an eye on everything... And she never came back”.

INSTEAD OF A SUMMARY

In April 2017 students of research club of WSB University together with their tutor participated in works of an archaeology team led by dr Paweł Kończewski. They did not participate in the very works themselves, meaning in the excavations. They, however, had the opportunity to observe them at work, learn history and make use of their knowledge of the environment and get acquainted with the local leaders. Several days of field research with the use of voice recorder and a camera resulted in several dozens of hours of recordings with 5 persons, that – in my view – maybe not completely but sufficiently, at this stage, satisfied my scientific curiosity. First of all, a discussion with a young inhabitant of Bielawa Dolna who as a local leader engaged in the development of his village proves that Bielawa is a place not only to live in but also a place one can develop. At the crossroads of several generations emerged an attachment to a location. It was indicated also by other interlocutors who have been living in the village since the day they were born. Thanks to them it is known what happened to former buildings on the foundations of which today grows a forest. The majority of brick from the uninhabited houses was taken to central Poland, most probably to be used in the reconstruction of Warsaw. We stroll in the forest, stumbling on doorsteps, stove tiles and fragments of brick walls. The discussions bring back memories on former friends, parents, siblings and everyday life of this border village.⁵ Interlocutors, being also guides, point to places where larger buildings used to stand, often valuable due to their architecture or sacral nature. Unfortunately, a majority of them was demolished and the materials were used to strengthen and regulate the banks of Lusatian Neisse. It is then difficult today to stroll down its banks knowing that under one's feet the foundations of churches or manor houses can be found. This, however, is a great reason to get the archaeologists interested in this issue. This time it was us who learned from them, but hopefully next time they will be using information having source in our sociologist findings.

To conclude, one must pay attention to the consequence of the presence of researchers – both archaeologists and sociologists. The former, due to their neutrality and non-invasive existence won such recognition among the local people that despite many-months breaks in between their research they were finding at the excavations sites items left by anonymous people. These are not only pieces of excavated or found ceramics, but also metal crosses (Photo. 1). The latter, when writing down the elements of biographies of the inhabitants, contribute to their sense of importance and interest and give them the possibility to assess in retrospection what was good and what was bad. Together, we discuss the essence of the social spirit of a place and almost always the discussion is concluded as follows: “Actually, I do not know why I stayed here. This is a place where I create and I never wanted to leave although I had the possibility. I think it is simply my place.”

⁵ Large fragments and transcriptions of interviews will be published in a monograph in preparation, focused on the research on the identity of the post-migration community.

Photo 1 A cross brought by an anonymous finder to the former graveyard.



Source: Photo Ilona Pretkiel

Photo 2 Friends and informal leaders – artist sculptor Mieczysław Grabuńczyk and Mr Edward, inheritor of the inactive mill.



Source: Photo Tomasz Marcysiak

Photo 3 Research authors – archaeologist dr Paweł Konczewski (on the right) and sociologist dr Tomasz Marcysiak standing in the location of the former bridge connecting Toporów (Tormersdorf) with the western bank of Lusatian Neisse.



Source: Photo Ilona Pretkiel

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