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FOLKLORE ENSEMBLES - A FORM OF CULTURAL ACTIVITY  
OF RURAL POPULATION

The paper is a summing-up of researches and conclusions concerning problems connected with folklore ensembles. A folklore ensemble is understood here to be a group of people, who in a stage form, more or less perfect, perform folk dances, songs, and music. For the purposes of analysis there have been selected a few most essential problems connected with existence of these ensembles:

- 1) cultural activity in rural areas as seen through the folklore movement;
- 2) mutual interactions between the ensemble and the village;
- 3) integrating and disintegrating factors affecting the ensemble;
- 4) members of the ensemble, including:
  - characteristic socio-demographic features,
  - social, political, and cultural involvement,
  - motives underlying interest in folk culture - work in the folklore ensemble,
  - most important elements in operation and functioning of such ensembles, problems of cultural movement in the village in the light of folklore activity analysis.

The above enumeration of work stages represents also the basic scheme of this paper.

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The researches were carried out in Central Poland on the area of the former Łódź Province. There were collected over two hundred questionnaires from members of ensembles, and next there were conducted over 80 interviews with members of three rural folklore ensembles in villages of Lipce Reymontowskie, Lubochnia, and Makolice. Selection of these ensembles was prompted among others by the fact that they function in villages (not in small towns), their members are inhabitants of villages. In villages selected for our analysis the ensembles are the only form of organized cultural activity. They differ from one another in institutions patronizing the ensembles - Lipce ensemble operates in the Village House of Culture and is subordinated to the Provincial House of Culture, at Lubochnia the ensemble is linked with the local voluntary fire brigade, the ensemble from Makolice is mainly connected on one hand - with the parish, and on the other - with the local Circle of Rural Housewives. It should be also mentioned here that the last mentioned ensemble is sponsored by the Dairy Co-operative, and the District Co-operative "Peasant Self-Assistance". Number and variety of patrons account for different status of ensembles, different levels of financing them, differentiated possibilities of making rehearsals and giving performances.

From among the three ensembles, analyzed in a detailed manner, only the Lipce ensemble was set up before the World War Two - in the twenties. Reactivated after the Second World War, it is today the oldest ensemble operating in the area under survey. The Lubochnia ensemble was created in the 60's on the initiative of the chief of the local voluntary fire brigade and thanks to his support it has been operating till today. At Makolice the initiative to establish the folklore ensemble came from women actively involved in works of the local Circle of Rural Housewives, and from the present manager of the ensemble - organist in the local church.

The three ensembles have different conditions of work. The worst are at Makolice lacking a House of Culture and hence all rehearsals are carried in the school building. These produces some difficulties since the school rents it unwillingly due to a need of cleaning the building after rehearsals, opening and shutting the hall in the off-duty hours for the administrative

personnel of the school. The best accommodation and financial position are enjoyed by the ensemble at Lubochnia. It has at its disposal a big rehearsal and performance hall (in a building belonging to the Voluntary Fire Brigade), and is also subsidized (costumes, travel) from the VFB funds.

The closest links between the ensemble and its village exist at Lipce where in almost sixty-year history of the ensemble many inhabitants of the village participated in its works. This ensemble is also the best advertisement of the village in which in the interwar years lived and worked (working as a signalman) W. Reymont - the Nobel prize winner. In his monumental novel "Chłopi" (Peasants) he described the village of Lipce. On the basis of this novel - or more precisely its fragment describing the hero's (Boryna) wedding ceremony - there was created a performance "Boryna's Wedding" which in its pretty much original form has been performed up to the present day.

At Makolice, the local village inhabitants participate in the ensemble, however, due to lack of possibilities of showing its performance in the mother village the ensemble is less known in it. It, nonetheless, makes the biggest use of local repertoire collected by members of the Rural Housewives Circle.

The ensemble at Lubochnia is less linked with its own area as regards its repertoire. Its members include not only inhabitants of this but also nearby villages; its repertoire does not correspond fully to traditional repertoire but utilizes materials provided by its instructor, and also those currently composed (music and texts) by members of the ensemble.

Generally speaking these three ensembles are known in their villages, although their ties with these villages are different, which - on one hand - reflects the accommodation facilities available, and - on the other hand - the relationship between the presented repertoire and the local traditions. Similarly institutional ties of these ensembles sometimes limit their contact (as an ensemble) with their mother village.

Integrating and disintegrating factors may be divided into three groups:

### 1. Economic-accomodation factors

These include primarily availability of permanent and properly equipped rehearsal hall, which enables regular work of the ensemble during rehearsals. It is highly desirable that this hall could be used for performances as well thus affording an opportunity for village inhabitants to see a performance. There must also be provided a storage room for costumes and proper facilities for their maintenance (in the Lipce ensemble its members store their costumes in their houses using suitcases especially bought for this purpose). Financing of the ensembles is carried out along two lines. First, patrons, who purchase the most expensive costumes, cover travel costs, and provide accommodation. Secondly - own incomes of performers - fees for performances, prizes won during reviews and festivals. The latter ones possess rather symbolic value for the ensemble (being quite insufficient in relation to costs and needs), while on the other hand not each institution which would like to invite an ensemble to give a performance possesses proper resources.

### 2. Socio-personal factors

The ensemble's manager is most important for this group of factors. An active manager, such as the one e.g. at Lubochnia, can overcome economic difficulties simultaneously securing frequent shows for the ensemble and thus consolidate it. Personal features of the fire brigade chief at Lubochnia account for the fact that young people willingly attend rehearsals and are disciplined. This problem looks different at Lipce where lack of "strong hand" causes a gradual disintegration of the ensemble. At the same time unchanging repertoire of the Lipce ensemble produces fatigue and boredom by repetition of the same spectacle. Survival of the ensemble is only possible thanks to the possibility it offers for social activities - regular rehearsals wind up often with an informal party for members of the ensemble. On the other hand, there is missing artistic, financial, and organizational assistance on the part of the Provin-

cial House of Culture. This assistance although theoretically present is largely insufficient. The crisis of this ensemble may be of temporary nature since there was recently established children's group from which future performers will be recruited.

### 3. Organizational factors

In the Polish cultural life there is absent a consistent, well prepared organizational programme especially as regards initiatives coming from villages. Depending upon the patronizing institution, ensembles are representatives of particular sectors of the economy and social life which produces a situation in which they sometimes miss direct confrontation with other ensembles. Such confrontation might provide a platform for comparison of their artistic level and richness of their repertoires. In a big number of festivals and competitions there are lacking strictly outlined participation criteria and this produces very big disproportions in the artistic level of performances. Another problem typical for majority of these shows is actual absence of specialist supervision of - ethnographers, ethnomusicologists, choreographers, and folklorists, and even if it exists they have no possibilities for intervention in case of irregularities observed during performances. It may be generally stated that ensembles function irregularly, they become more active during reviews, festivals, and prospects of travel abroad. These performances and trips abroad are made in most cases in summer which makes it often difficult to gather the full cast since members of ensembles have most work to do on their farms at this time.

Members of the ensembles possess some socio-demographic features in common.

At Lipce the ensemble groups people belonging to different age brackets, starting with the youngest member of the team - a young boy - whose role in the performance is very insignificant to end with people in the retiring age, who have been co-operating with the ensemble since the very beginning. A very characteristic feature of most people participating in the ensemble is that they belong to biprofessional category of peasant-work-

ers. Work in the shift-system causes that not always all members of the ensemble can participate in rehearsals and performances. All the analyzed ensembles are characterized with almost complete absence of people in the active period of married life, and if there are any these will be people whose children have grown up and do not require constant care. Similarly the moment of contracting marriage means for prevailing majority of performers breaking away from the ensemble and although many declare their readiness to return to the ensemble in future - this never happens.

In the Makolice ensemble there are also performing representatives of different age groups, still for their most part these are young people who have not got married yet. At Lubochnia, besides several persons (the manager, the soloist, and members of folk band) the ensemble groups young people, who notably are simultaneously grouped in the youth fire brigade (this promotes better internal discipline of this group). Apart from these activities, the young people from Lubochnia actively participate in work of youth organization, while boys play in the local soccer club of the Folk Sports Teams. As it was already mentioned, at Makolice members of the ensemble are grouped from among active members of the local Circle of Rural Housewives. A similar situation can be observed at Lipce where members of the ensemble participate in youth organizations, sports teams while grown up women are members of the local Circle of Rural Housewives. Thus it should be underlined here that members of the ensembles are grouped mostly from among active people both in cultural and socio-political field. They also have many interests, pursue hobbies, are interested in literature, and even some of them write poems and songs.

Work for the folklore ensemble is one out of many additional jobs for its members. Almost all of them share a view that they have joined the ensemble because they are interested in folk culture. They are also great lovers of dance and singing. There may, however, be distinguished several more general reasons which exert a decisive influence on existence of the ensemble itself and on willingness of people to join it.

The ensemble at Lipce has a fifty-year history. It was established at the initiative of the local school director and its

teachers who decided to prove in this way ties linking the village with W. Reymont - a great novelist. This initiative was strongly supported by the then social and political folk activists. The first performance of the ensemble changed into a folk manifestation with over three thousand spectators. An initiative to reactivate the ensemble was made soon after the Second World War so that the village could continue to be known and liked (nota bene, after the war there was added another word to the name of the village to commemorate the novelist's stay there - thus the full name today is Lipce Reymontowskie). The same people continued to perform in the ensemble and were gradually attracting members of their families to co-operate with the ensemble.

At Lubochnia the main factor accounting for stable, several-year long activity of the ensemble is continuous activity of the ensemble's manager. As a chief of the Voluntary Fire Brigade he encouraged young men from voluntary fire teams to join the ensemble and that is why the ensemble was formed.

Similarly at Makolice the initiator of the ensemble was the organist and active members of the Circle of Rural Housewives, who wanted to do something in the previously poorly active village. Among others they wanted to gain access to the outside world for this socially isolated village.

Besides the above mentioned factors of primary importance in our analysis seem to be the following motives of joining the ensemble:

1. Possibility of travel, getting to know other people, towns etc. As it was discovered many persons obtained the first possibility of leaving their own village only through activity in the ensemble. This factor consolidates personal links with the ensemble. Since possibilities to travel increase along with improvement of the artistic level of the ensemble its members strive to change its repertoire as well as improve the artistic level of their productions.

2. Organized forms of social contacts. The ensemble provides an opportunity for its members to meet each week at rehearsals, during joint trips etc. This allows to consolidate strong social ties being revealed in common interests shared by members, parties etc. These contacts often produce more permanent forms of

friendship or marriage. And thus e.g. at Lipce Reymontowskie, women playing the role of the bride so much improve their reputation for attractiveness in the eyes of village inhabitants that there must be continuously trained new young women for this role (so far there have been about 20 brides and only two bride-grooms starring in the performance).

3. Opportunity for gaining artistic experience. It was said above that members of the ensemble are grouped from among active people. They also have great artistic aspirations wishing to improve their art all the time. It can be said that they love singing and dancing and their work in the ensemble gives them a chance to cultivate this passion. It also affords an opportunity for presentation and improvement of their stage skills, which is stressed in their statements. Being a member of a folk ensemble means being ranked among artists which increases the performer's value in his own opinion and in opinion of others. And although this has not been explicitly expressed by respondents their answers imply motivation of this type.

A very important factor in joining an ensemble is the first moment of creating its image. One of the questions concerned the person and circumstances which prompted the decision of joining the ensemble. In most cases these were friends or relatives. And accordingly at Lipce these are for the most part members of one's own family, and in next order colleagues, friends. Many people not belonging to any ensemble would also underline the family-like character of the Lipce ensemble. At Makolice the already formed group of women from the Circle of Rural Housewives selected additionally their close relatives - especially men (researches conducted over a wider area show that there are fewer men than women in ensembles and they are less willing to participate in such activity). Similarly at Lubochnia an earlier formed group of firemen was next encouraged by their chief to rehearse. The same man was attending village dancing parties only to induce the best dancers to co-operate. The case of Lubochnia proves that strong position and character of the fire chief - ensemble manager exert a powerful influence on aggregation of the ensemble's members, on opportunity of appearing on the stage, and finally on the repertoire (the fire chief composes himself texts of many folk songs for various occasions).

Generalizing a bit it should be stressed that since there are absent from Polish villages uniform and influential cultural institutions this role can be taken over by any prominent individual grouping around himself many others (and that for many activity forms not necessarily of cultural profile). Thus while making provisions for further development of Polish culture there should be taken into account these self-made animators of different life spheres exerting a powerful influence on village inhabitants. In analysis of reasons for disintegration of ensembles besides objective factors such as performance halls, costumes, budget, personality of the ensemble's manager is most important as a factor consolidating the ensemble through his activity and personality, and a person able to overcome objective difficulties.

Finally we should show the wider background of cultural activity of rural population. The point is that these ensembles, recruited from rural inhabitants, in most cases present their production at different kinds of reviews, competitions, festivals, or ceremonies. Thus, firstly, they do not perform for their own local audience. During such events there is very poor artistic supervision of programmes. The organization committees of such shows do not pay too much attention to critical opinions of specialists. Similar situation can be observed within ensembles themselves where the manager or the instructor enjoy the highest authority (these functions are often performed by members of bigger, the so-called representative ensembles, who obtain instruction rights). And accordingly although invitation of specialists increases the reputation of a given artistic event their opinions and recommendations are quickly forgotten.

Most of such shows in Poland are free for spectators, that is to say they are held in amphitheatres, sports stadiums where no entrance fee is charged. And it happens that no one so far has made a sociological analysis of the category of spectators and their reasons for choosing such spectacles. There have neither been analyzed reasons of popularity of these spectacles as well as radio and TV broadcasts devoted to folklore in this era of mass culture (programmes, which on one hand popularize folk culture, while on the other hand through presence of tape recorders in the village promote unification of models to be imitated

on the scale of the whole country). These and other similar problems are an object of present and future studies of the author and his colleagues from the Chair of Ethnography at University of Łódź.

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#### LOS CONJUNTOS FOLKLÓRICOS COMO LA FORMA DE LA ACTIVIDAD CULTURAL DE LA POBLACIÓN DEL CAMPO

En la ponencia se abordan los problemas del funcionamiento de los conjuntos folklóricos en el centro de Polonia. Se investigó ante todo el funcionamiento de los conjuntos en el campo, examinando a la vez algunos aspectos de la motivación de participación en el conjunto y sus condicionales sociales y culturales.

Se constató, que los conjuntos a pesar de tener las instituciones de patrocinio no están vinculados estrechamente a su lugar de origen - la aldea y sus afueras. En el repertorio se aprovechan los materiales propagados por las instituciones centrales y las publicaciones impresas, sin utilizar los conjuntos los elementos del folklore local que todavía se han conservado. Para su propia aldea el conjunto es una institución "exterior" que da conciertos esporádicamente para un auditorio limitado, que se compone de los hombres de las organizaciones sociales y políticas o de los miembros de las instituciones de patrocinio. La mayoría de las presentaciones tiene lugar fuera de la aldea de origen: en las reuniones solemnes, festivales, certámenes, concursos.

Los miembros de los conjuntos también demuestran actividad en otras organizaciones y formas de la vida social, cultural y política. Su actividad en el conjunto explican por la afición a la tradición local, lo que está en contradicción con el repertorio examinado. Un otro motivo de la participación en el conjunto es la actividad en general que permite establecer diversos contactos, conocer nuevas personas, pasar tiempo libre de un modo organizado. Los miembros de los conjuntos subrayan también que las salidas frecuentes les dan posibilidades de conocer nuevos lugares, ciudades y hombres.

Al término de la ponencia se puede constatar, que el conjunto es una forma para pasar tiempo libre, que no siempre está vinculada a su propia

aldeas. Teniendo en cuenta el movimiento folklórico polaco e internacional se puede decir que los conjuntos folklóricos no son sólo una forma de afirmación de las tradiciones, sino constituyen una forma específica de la actividad cultural.

Марцин Пётровски

ФОЛЬКЛОРИСТИЧЕСКИЕ КОЛЛЕКТИВЫ КАК ФОРМА КУЛЬТУРНОЙ  
АКТИВНОСТИ СЕЛЬСКОГО НАСЕЛЕНИЯ

В докладе рассматривается проблематика функционирования фолклористических коллективов в Центральной Польше. Исследовались, в первую очередь, деятельность сельских коллективов и, в некоторой степени, аспекты мотивировки принадлежности к коллективу и ее социально-культурная обусловленность.

Установлено, что коллективы, независимо от того кто шефствует над ними, лишь в некоторой степени связаны со своей родной средой, т.е. с деревней и окрестностями. Следует подчеркнуть, что художественный репертуар коллективов опирается в большей степени на центральные печатанные материалы, чем на существующие до сих пор элементы фольклора. На практике эти коллективы нельзя считать местными, так как круг зрителей ограничен в численном отношении, коллективы выступают лишь время от времени перед деятелями общественных и политических организаций или дают представления в пользу шефствующей организации. В настоящее время они по большей части выступают вне своей родной деревни на торжественных заседаниях, фестивалях, просмотрах, конкурсах.

Члены коллективов активно участвуют как в деятельности своего коллектива, так и в других организациях и формах общественной культурной и политической жизни. На основе высказываний членов художественных коллективов можно сказать, что их деятельность стимулирует интерес к местным традициям, но что, в свою очередь, не соответствует результатам исследований, так как репертуар коллективов лишь в небольшой степени связан с традициями данной местности. Другой стимул участия в деятельности коллектива - это возможность устанавливать товарищеские связи, знакомиться с но-

nymi ludźmi, organizowano проводить свободное время, посещать новые местности и города.

В заключение следует подчеркнуть, что участие в коллективе дает возможность бывать в обществе и проявить свои художественные способности, по большей части вне своей деревни. На фоне общепольского и международного фольклористического движения можно сказать, что фольклористические сельские коллективы являются формой утверждения традиций деревни и специфической формой культурной активности.

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#### ZESPOŁY FOLKORYSTYCZNE JAKO FORMA AKTYWNOŚCI KULTURALNEJ LUDNOŚCI WSI

W artykule podejmuje się problematykę funkcjonowania zespołów folklorystycznych w centralnej Polsce. Badania dotyczyły głównie działania zespołów na wsi, a także pewnych aspektów motywacji uczestnictwa w zespole i jej społeczno-kulturowych uwarunkowań.

Stwierdzono, że zespoły, bez względu na instytucje patronujące, nie są silnie związane ze swoim macierzystym środowiskiem – wsią i okolicą. Po pierwsze repertuarowo – jak wykazano, korzysta się w pracy z zespołem w dużej mierze z materiałów rozprowadzanych centralnie, publikacji drukowanych, nie zaś z miejscowych, występujących jeszcze elementów folkloru. Praktycznie dla własnej wsi zespół jest instytucją zewnętrzną – nie daje przedstawień, tylko sporadycznie występuje dla ograniczonego audytorium – działaczy organizacji społecznych i politycznych bądź członków insytuacji patronującej. Większość występów ma obecnie miejsce poza terenem macierzystej wsi, na akademiach, festiwalach, przeglądach, konkursach.

– Członkowie zespołów to ludzie aktywni społecznie nie tylko w zespole, lecz także w innych organizacjach i formach życia społecznego, kulturalnego i politycznego. Swą aktywność w zespole motywują przede wszystkim zainteresowaniem dla miejscowej tradycji, co stoi w pewnej sprzeczności z przebadanym repertuarem, często mało związanym z terenem. Innym motywem uczestnictwa w pracy zespołu jest w ogóle aktywność – dająca możliwość kontaktów towarzyskich, poznania nowych osób, spędzenia wolnego

czasu w sposób zorganizowany. Członkowie zespołów podkreślają także, że częste wyjazdy dają możliwość poznania nowych terenów, miast, ludzi.

W zakończeniu można stwierdzić, że zespół jest formą towarzyskiego i artystycznego spędzania czasu wolnego, nie zawsze związaną z własną wsią. Na tle ogólnopolskiego i międzynarodowego ruchu folklorystycznego można powiedzieć, że zespoły folklorystyczne we wsiach są dla ich mieszkańców, poza formą afirmacji tradycji wsi, specyficzną formą aktywności kulturalnej.