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ROMAN TUBAJA (1944–2021)

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17 April 2021, Roman Tubaja, an ethnographer, museum curator, and a long-standing Director of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń named after Maria Znamierowska-Prüffer, passed away. He ranked among this gradually decreasing group of museum curators who bonded their life-long career with one institution only.

Born in Warlubie, Kociewie, on 16 February 1944, he went to primary and secondary schools in Bydgoszcz. Roman Tubaja recalled that his humanist interest, particularly in ancient cultures of the Mediterranean, provided him with a critical stimulus after graduating from secondary school in 1961 to take entrance exams to study Mediterranean archaeology at the Jagiellonian University.¹ However, as the faculty enjoyed high popularity with the youth, he was not admitted. Yet, since Tubaja received a high score in the exams, a proposal was put forth for him to study ethnography at the Philosophy and History Department at the Jagiellonian. This offer eagerly accepted proved to have been a very successful choice, while the years of studying ethnography with time translated into Tubaja's fascination with complex folk culture in Pomerania and with museology. Tubaja was conferred his MA having defended his thesis titled 'Contribution of Museums in Southern Poland to Disseminating Shepherd Culture of the Gorce Mountains and Podhale' written under Prof. Mieczysław Gładysz.²

In 1967, Roman Tubaja was employed at the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, an excellent institution founded and directed by Prof. Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa who introduced innovative forms of documentation and display of folk culture into Polish ethnographic museology.³ The interaction with Professor's exceptional personality shaped Roman Tubaja's views on ethnographic museology and his future activities, which he recalled several years later as follows: *In this Museum (Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, J.Ś.) there was a team of different-branch specialists in which, thanks to her extremely suggestive activity, everyone felt not merely useful, but almost essential... She was particularly focused*

on improving her employees' competences.... Furthermore, Prof. Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa was an academic authority to all the team.... She also had a fascinating personality: cheerful, exceptionally friendly, demanding (more from herself than others)... Additionally, she boasted outstanding tolerance of people representing other than hers world views and values... She undoubtedly was to us, her employees, a moral authority...⁴

It was with the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń that Roman Tubaja bonded all his career, moving up its entire promotion ladder. Having been appointed Head of the Folk Architecture Department in 1970, in 1978, he was promoted to become Deputy Director for Research, while on 1 April 1980, he was assigned to become Director of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, which he remained for almost 30 years until his retirement in 2009.⁵

The organizational output of Roman Tubaja at the Toruń Ethnographic Museum covered running subsequent stages of the extension of the open-air display, storage space for the collection, teaching infrastructure, as well as modernization of the remaining Museum buildings. Thus, when still an assistant at the Department of Folk Culture in 1967–1969, he participated in translocation works of architectural facilities from Kuyavia, Kashubia, and the Tuchola Forest to the Ethnographic Park being created in Toruń. As of 1970, already as the Head of the Department, he continued the works until the first stage of the Park's construction had been completed, with the Park opening to the public in 1974. Subsequently, in 1989–1996, as the Director of the Museum, he worked out the concept of the extension of the Ethnographic Park, and completed the display with the facilities representing rural architecture from the Dobrzyń, Chełmno, and Kociewie Regions. In 1985–1987, Tubaja inspired the construction of an amphitheatre at the Museum. The completion of this project enhanced the Museum's potential for teaching activity.

Parallely, renovation and adaptation works were conducted in two acquired historic granaries in Rابيةńska Street: in

their display stores an extensive collection of folk art and folklore was deposited and scientific studios were placed.

In 1990–1995, Roman Tubaja decided on the extension of the Ethnographic Park at Kaszczorek. Although the programme of this branch of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń was not entirely accomplished, the full display dedicated to water-related activities was opened to the public.⁶ Meanwhile, a part of the assigned and purchased facilities representing architecture of the Lower Vistula Valley, not translocated to Kaszczorek, was finally placed in the next branch of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń: the Olender Ethnographic Park in Wielka Nieszawka.⁷

Furthermore, Roman Tubaja was an outstanding coordinator and supervisor of the renovation of the Museum edifices located at 19 Wały Gen. Sikorskiego. The Multiculturalism – Tolerance – Integration – Modernisation of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń Project was one of the first in Poland financed with European funds in 2005–2007.

The fact that the Museum was involved in such extensive building projects did not affect the collection policy. The latter function was of particular importance to Roman Tubaja. Under his directorship the Toruń Museum increased its collection from 23.000 to 57.000 exhibits.

Despite numerous administrative responsibilities, Tubaja also organized and participated in research. What proved extremely effective were the team stationary research projects conducted by the team of researchers employed by the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń. They covered the following regions: Kashubia, the Tuchola Forest, Kociewie, the Chełmno Region, Kuyavia, Pałuki, and the Lower Vistula Valley, yielding voluminous material on folk structures, agriculture, crafts, folk art, folk medicine, customs, family and annual rites, as well as several thousand museum objects.⁸

Roman Tubaja's academic output contains: conceptual works, almost 40 publications, numerous conference speeches, and several exhibition scenarios. He authored the concept of the open-air museum at Mysłęcinek near Bydgoszcz (Gdansk Pomerania) and the Mogilno open-air museum (Kuyavia, Krajna, and Pałuki). However, neither of the projects has been implemented beyond its design stage.⁹ His third concept and the detailed programme (prepared together with Jan Świąch) are being implemented as the Kuyavia-Dobrzyń Ethnographic Park in Kłóbka.¹⁰

In his published papers, Roman Tubaja tackled the questions related to folk architecture, ethnographic museology, and, in particular, to open-air museology. Innovative texts ranking among the latter category were dedicated to initial displays in open-air museums in Poland¹¹ or to the questions of the reconstruction of cultural landscape in such museums¹²; also the paper categorizing Polish terminology related to open-air museums should be mentioned here.¹³ Furthermore, he was the author of papers delivered at domestic and foreign conferences and of several museum displays.

Last but not least, Roman Tubaja was involved in the works of various advisory bodies, scientific societies, and professional associations. He actively worked e.g., in the open-air section at ICOM Poland; he was also member of the Polish Advisory Committee of the Authorities of Museums and Monument Preservation at the Ministry of Culture and Art dealing with open-air museums. Additionally,



Photo by: A. Zakrzewski

he participated in the works of the team implementing the programme of the Ministry of Culture and Art called 'Preservation and Conservation of Wooden Historic Facilities' and of the Team for Wooden Structures established by the General Conservator of Monuments.

Roman Tubaja was member of the Polish Ethnological Society (PTL), President of the Toruń branch of PTL, and member of PTL's Main Board in Wrocław, Member of the Board of the Museum Association in Poland, founding member of the Association of Open-Air Museums in Poland and its long-standing Secretary of the Board.

As Roman Tubaja boasted extensive professional experience, he was invited to become member of museum councils of numerous institutions, e.g.: Ethnographic Museum in Kielce, Ethnographic Museum in Sierpc, Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, District Museum in Toruń, Museum of Folk Architecture in Olsztynek, Museum – Kashubian Ethnographic Park in Wdzydze Kiszewskie.

Deeply committed to his career, Roman Tubaja became an undisputed authority to museum curators, particularly those associated with open-air institutions. A colourful individual with various inevitable human flaws, he was also an excellent companion, always surrounded by many individuals he unflinchingly attracted. He undoubtedly contributed to the development of ethnographic museology in Poland.

Roman Tubaja's logistic and academic output was certainly appreciated. He received, e.g., the golden 'Guardianship of Heritage' Badge of Merit, 'Meritorious Activist of Culture' Badge, 3rd class award of the Minister of Culture and Art 'For Achievements in Academic, Design and Popularizing Works in Heritage Protection and Museology', Honorary Diploma of the Ministry of Culture and Art 'For Accomplishments in Culture Dissemination', Izydor Gulgowski Medal, Silver Cross of Merit, or the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta.

Abstract: On 17 April 2021, Roman Tubaja, an ethnographer, museum curator, and a long-standing director of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń named after Maria Znamierowska-Prüffer, passed away. Born on 16 February 1944 in Warlubie, Kociewie, he graduated in ethnography from the Jagiellonian University in 1966. As of 1967, he worked at the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń continuing there throughout all his career, and moving up the entire promotion ladder. Having been appointed Head of the Folk Architecture Department in 1970, in 1978, he was promoted to become Deputy Director for Research, while on 1 April

1980, he was assigned to become Director of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, which he remained for almost 30 years until his retirement in 2009. An excellent logistician, during his term of office he consistently extended and modernized the Museum, doubling the volume of the collection; furthermore, he held team stationary ethnographic research in the regions forming Gdansk Pomerania. Roman Tubaja's academic output is made up of almost 40 papers tackling folk architecture as well as history and theory of ethnographic museology, of conceptual works, and of numerous conference speeches. He also authored several museum exhibitions.

Keywords: Roman Tubaja, Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, ethnographic museology, open-air museums, organizational activity, collecting, academic output, theory of museology, consultancy and social activism.

Endnotes

- ¹ Z *Romanem Tubają rozmawia Teresa Lasowa*, in: *Muzea, muzealia, muzealnicy. Ważne rozmowy*, P. Jaskanis (eds.), Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas”, Muzeum Pałaca Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, Kraków-Warszawa 2016, p. 115.
- ² *Ibidem*, p. 115.
- ³ J. Święch, *Muzealium – między kryzysem a potrzebą autentyzmu. Odkrywanie kontekstu*, in: *I Kongres Muzealników Polskich*, Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Warszawa 2015, pp. 69-70.
- ⁴ Z *Romanem Tubają rozmawia...*, p. 118.
- ⁵ E. Tyczyńska, *Roman Tubaja (1944-2021)*, „Biuletyn Stowarzyszenia Muzeów na Wolnym Powietrzu w Polsce” 2021, no 16, p. 213.
- ⁶ R. Tubaja, *Park Etnograficzny w Kaszczorku*, „Biuletyn Stowarzyszenia Muzeów na Wolnym Powietrzu w Polsce” 2003, no 6, pp. 97-106.
- ⁷ E. Tyczyńska, *Olenderski Park Etnograficzny w Wielkiej Nieszawce – założenia i realizacja*, „Muzealnictwo” 2021, no 62, pp. 97-107.
- ⁸ B. Szychowska-Boebel, R. Tubaja, *Zespołowe badania terenowe Muzeum Etnograficznego w Toruniu w latach 1974-1977*, „Rocznik Muzeum Etnograficznego w Toruniu” 1978, t. 1, pp. 197-210.
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- ¹⁰ J. Święch, *Chłopskie budownictwo zagrodowe Kujaw w XIX wieku i pierwszej połowie XX wieku*, Towarzystwo Wydawnicze „Historia Iagellonica”, Kraków 2012, pp. 243-252.
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- ¹² *Idem*, *Wyposażenie wnętrza w muzeum typu skansenowskiego – rekonstrukcja obrazu kulturowego*, „Acta Scansenologica” 1989, t. 5, pp. 161-166.
- ¹³ J. Święch, R. Tubaja, *Nazewnictwo muzeów na wolnym powietrzu w Polsce. Między poprawnością naukową a świadomością potoczną*, „Rocznik Muzeum Wsi Mazowieckiej w Sierpcu” 2012, t. 3, pp. 11-30.

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