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‘EVERYDAY LIFE’ IN THE WORKS OF MARIA BOGUCKA

Abstract

The article discusses the use of the category of ‘everyday life’ in historical works by Maria Bogucka as well as her theoretical contributions on the subject. Her pioneering role in adapting the mode of popular writing advanced by the French cycle *Histoire de la vie quotidienne* to Polish historiography in the 1960s established a high-quality standard on Polish scholars by combining original research into economic and social history with references to the history of material culture and mentalities. A quarter of a century after the publication of her exemplary study entitled *Życie codzienne w Gdańsku: wiek XVI–XVII* [Everyday Life in Gdańsk: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, 1967], Bogucka involved herself in contemporary debates within the international community of historians over the German *Alltagsgeschichte*, perceiving it as a methodological framework for innovative research and an opportunity to expand the theoretical side of cultural history. Though she would not produce another ‘history of everyday life’ – in a refreshed perspective and with more robust theoretical foundations – her studies into old Polish customs betray an inspiration with the German research current of *Alltagsgeschichte*, which blossomed in the early 1990s.

Keywords: Maria Bogucka, everyday life, *Alltagsgeschichte*, custom, historiography

When in 1960, the Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy [National Publishing Institute, PIW] inaugurated a series of popular titles on ‘Everyday Life’ – inspired by the French publisher Hachette – it chose to incorporate original works from Polish authors apart from publishing translations of foreign titles.¹ Polish historians were well-prepared to meet the challenge. Addressed to a broad range of readers, the

¹ Tomasz Szarota, ‘Życie codzienne – temat badawczy czy tylko popularyzacja? Na marginesie serii wydawniczych Hachette i PIW-u’, *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, xlv, 3 (1996), 239–45.

account of “objective conditions of human existence” in various periods and historical contexts rested on a reliable foundation of economic history, established several decades before by Franciszek Bujak’s school that pioneered it on a global scale.² After the Second World War, this research current received a strong endorsement from the dominant Marxist model of historiography. Many renowned historians who matured as academics in the 1950s – especially those connected to the seminar taught by Marian Małowist at the Institute of History of the University of Warsaw – devoted their earliest scholarly works to a relatively orthodox strand of economic history.³ Soon, research into the history of material culture developed in Poland, combining inspirations drawn from the history of economy and technology with archaeology. The model of books about ‘everyday life’ opened the possibility of applying the knowledge thus acquired in a manner then thought ‘lightweight’ and certainly less ideologically orthodox – that is, by way of elements of the history of culture and custom. Unsurprisingly, then, PIW’s popular series ‘Everyday Life’ went on to include titles from the most outstanding scholars of the day: Ryszard Kiersnowski, Irena Turnau, Bronisław Geremek, and Maria Bogucka.

The popular nature of the titles comprising the series made it possible to not only abandon methodological dogmatism but also engage in formal experimentation with an eye to the literary quality of the work. The authors were compelled to seek examples that ‘spoke to the imagination’ of the reader and to reflect on the impact of major historical processes on the lives of ordinary individuals. Such is also the perspective adopted by Maria Bogucka in her volume on everyday life in Gdańsk in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, published in 1967.⁴ By that time, Bogucka had already earned recognition as an expert in late-medieval and early-modern Gdańsk. The doctoral dissertation she defended in 1955 discussed the textile industry in the city from the mid-fourteenth to seventeenth century. In 1962, her habilitation

² See Anita Krystyna Shelton, *The Democratic Idea in Polish History and Historiography: Franciszek Bujak (1875–1953)* (Boulder, CO, 1989).

³ Tomasz Siewierski, *Marian Małowist i krąg jego uczniów. Z dziejów historiografii gospodarczej w Polsce* (Warszawa, 2016); Jacek Kochanowicz and Anna Sosnowska, ‘Economic History of Pre-industrial Poland. An Obsolete Subject?’, in Francesco Ammannati (ed.), *Dove Va la Storia Economica?: Metodi e Prospettive, Secc. XIII–VIII* (Firenze, 2011), 153–72.

⁴ Maria Bogucka, *Życie codzienne w Gdańsku: wiek XVI–XVII* (Warszawa, 1967).

book came out under the title *Gdańsk jako ośrodek produkcyjny w XIV–XVII wieku* [Gdańsk as a Production Centre, Fourteenth to Seventeenth Century], and she immediately set about preparing another 'serious' monograph concerned with international trade in the city in the early seventeenth century.⁵ Thus, her knowledge of the material culture of Gdańsk and its inhabitants in the early modern period was undeniably substantial. Yet, while working on a volume on those people's 'everyday lives', she found herself tackling other questions, such as housing conditions, access to food, hygiene, clothes and fashion, ways of working and conditions of work. She also devoted attention to family structures, child-rearing and education, festivities and rituals, pastimes, attitudes to illnesses and death or criminality. This catalogue is relatively typical of contemporary works from the 'Everyday Life' series written in Poland. It is, one could well add, extremely broad, extending into both material conditions of existence and social structures and mentalities. As Bogucka would write almost thirty years later,

Is 'everyday life' indeed 'everything', as was stated by H[enri] Lefebvre? Certainly not, although its scope is really vast, encompassing e.g. the whole of material culture, family life, the areas of work and leisure, the world of individual and group notions and ideas. This does not, however, relieve us from the duty to seek a definition that could designate this subject of research more precisely.⁶

This Bogucka's first contact with the 'everyday life' category did not yet involve any in-depth methodological considerations. However, one should bear in mind that the idea of engaging in this type of research in an academic – rather than merely popular – context is unlikely to have come to anyone's mind in the mid-1960s. According to Derek Schilling, it was only with the French crisis of 1968 that humanists began to rethink their approach to the quotidian.⁷ Henri Lefebvre's *Everyday Life in the Modern World* only saw print a year after Bogucka's

⁵ *Ead.*, *Gdańsk jako ośrodek produkcyjny w XIV–XVII wieku* (Warszawa, 1962).

⁶ *Ead.*, 'Controversies about "Everyday Life": Profile of Research and Definition', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 85 (2002), 14; the Polish original saw print in 1996 as 'Życie codzienne – spory wokół profilu badań i definicji', *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, xlv, 3 (1996), 247–53.

⁷ Derek Schilling, 'Everyday Life and the Challenge to History in Postwar France: Braudel, Lefebvre, Certeau', *Diacritics*, xxxiii, 1 (2003), 23–40.

Everyday Life in Gdańsk, and the first volume of Fernand Braudel's *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th c.* (devoted to *The Structures of Everyday Life*) and *The Practice of Everyday Life* by Michel de Certeau would not come out until a decade later.⁸ If historical research was being conducted into questions addressed by the volumes published in PIW's 'Everyday Life' series, this took place within the history of material culture – both in Poland and in France, where this current of historical work exhibited its greatest vitality.

Thus, writing the volume on everyday life in Gdańsk challenged Maria Bogucka not so much as a scholar but as a writer. In her capacity as editor-in-chief of the popular-scientific magazine "Mówią Wieki", which she had established in 1958, Bogucka gained an opportunity to learn to write about history in a manner that a non-specialist reader would find attractive while also meeting the exacting demands of scholarly reliability. It is a notable fact that she was virtually tasked with defining the profile of the Polish side of the 'Everyday Life' series, given that her book was only the second to see print within it, and the first by a Polish scholar.

Bogucka used the topography and architecture of early-modern Gdańsk as a framework for her description of everyday life in the city. Thus, different aspects of the burghers' lives are accessed through the doors of the city hall, the Artus Court, or a townhouse. Descriptions of merchant stores and craftsmen's workshops help explore the subject of labour and earnings in the city. Similar use is made of descriptions of suburban gardens and the banks of the Motława River. The text is generously seasoned with quotations from civic chronicles, travellers' accounts, literary works, and court records. Information on the political and economic history of the city is enhanced with historical anecdotes, examples of particular events, and stories about individuals (who, though specifically named, are entirely insignificant from the perspective of the so-called historical process). While the study is organised around a set of topics, knowledge about them is not contained in discreet sections, inducing the reader to consume the text 'from cover to cover', like a novel where each subplot follows from the other and combines into an enthralling story. The volume was supplied

⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne* (Paris, 1968); Fernand Braudel, *Les structures du quotidien: le possible et l'impossible* (Paris, 1979); Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, i: *Arts de faire* (Paris, 1980).

with several dozen black-and-white photographs and reproductions of graphics from the period, which, however, were not intertwined with the text, but placed in separate inserts, to illustrate and 'beautify' the book following the contemporary practice of popular academic publications. The same rules account for the radical curtailment of the scholarly apparatus, cut down to well below the required minimum, which adversely affected the usefulness of the work for historians – although, admittedly, they were not the projected audience of the study.

Over a decade later, in 1980, in a wholly changed global context of historical reflections on 'everyday life', Maria Bogucka's study was published in the German Democratic Republic as *Das alte Danzig. Alltagsleben vom 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, translated by Eduard Merian (1925–2017) – the Polish Studies scholar based in Leipzig who was born in Burgthal, a German colony near Gródek Jagielloński (today's Halychany near Horodok in Ukraine) – with a foreword by a historian from Rostock Johannes Kalisch (1928–2002).⁹ The book's second German edition, published in West Germany by C.H. Beck of Munich in 1987, proved to be more influential. This edition took form of the album, featuring a significantly expanded list of illustrations, including colour images.¹⁰

Thus, two decades after its debut in Polish, *Everyday Life in Gdańsk* entered international waters, making it into the footnotes of works devoted, for the most part, to the cultural history of early modern Germany. Perhaps the sole review of this edition came from medieval historian D. Henry Dieterich from Michigan and was thoroughly negative.¹¹ Dieterich wrote that "The text itself ... is a portrait rather than an analysis of everyday life in Danzig during the early modern period, aimed at the educated general reader rather than the scholar". He said that the book "resembles a coffee-table book more than a work of scholarship" akin to "a tourist guide to Danzig in its days of glory".¹² In particular, the reviewer expressed disappointment at the absence in the work of a detailed discussion of the religious lives of Gdańsk

⁹ Maria Bogucka, *Das alte Danzig. Alltagsleben vom 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1980).

¹⁰ *Ead.*, *Das alte Danzig. Alltagsleben vom 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (München, 1987²).

¹¹ D. Henry Dieterich, [Review], 'Maria Bogucka, "Das alte Danzig: Alltagsleben vom 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert"', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xx, 2 (1989), 343.

¹² *Ibid.*

Protestants in the context of (what he presumed to be) the Polish Catholic state of which the city was a part.

While the review brings up valid points, one would do well to ponder the degree of gullibility required to overlook the absence of scholarly apparatus from Bogucka's book or the conscious adaptation of the perspective of a popular French series that had been in print for a half-century by that time. If there is a strand of historical writing against which the contribution of *Everyday Life in Gdańsk* should be assessed, it would seemingly be that. When viewed in this context, the book appears as a highly successful, pioneering effort to adapt a popular format developed within French historiography into Polish realities. It had set a kind of standard for Polish works in the 'Everyday Life' series, which – in contrast to what many of the titles in Hachette's counterpart exhibit – did not accept fiction and personal documents as the only source, requiring reliance on archives and studies in social and economic history, research into material culture and the history of art, and spatial and archaeological analyses. Applied to the titles in the 'Everyday Life' series, this approach helped secure substantial scholarly recognition for works by Maria Bogucka and her followers. In terms of narrative form, too, Bogucka's study proved a success and met the requirements of the readers; as much is suggested by the fact that it was republished in Poland thirty years after the first edition.¹³

In terms of Maria Bogucka's development as a writer, *Everyday Life in Gdańsk* became a watershed event, ushering in her gradual withdrawal from the strict confines of economic history toward the history of early modern culture, which consumed increasing amounts of her attention, eventually achieving a practical dominance in her output during the 1980s. At first, she continued to work in style defined in *Everyday Life in Gdańsk* – such was the origin of the volume entitled *Ziemia i czasy Kopernika* (which also appeared in English as *Nicholas Copernicus: The Country and Times*), published to commemorate the upcoming 500th anniversary of the birth of the famous astronomer – but she did not return to the category of 'everyday life'.¹⁴ Apparently, framing that category in contemporary historiography, both in Poland and

¹³ Maria Bogucka, *Życie w dawnym Gdańsku: wiek XVI–XVII* (Warszawa, 1997).

¹⁴ *Ead.*, *Ziemia i czasy Kopernika* (Wrocław, 1972); *Nicholas Copernicus: The Country and Times*, transl. Leon Szwajcer (Wrocław, 1973).

worldwide, made her perceive it as too stifling for productive study. Instead, she became involved in research into the history of material culture, taking part in the production of the *opus magnum* of this brand of scholarship, *Historia kultury materialnej Polski w zarysie* [History of the Material Culture of Poland: An Outline], as well as analyses of social histories of cities and burghers, which yielded a monumental study in 1986, written with Henryk Samsonowicz.¹⁵

Yet, Bogucka did not lose sight of questions of a culture of the everyday. To engage with it in a scholarly, professional manner, however, she approached it through the category of 'custom', taking her cue from Jan Stanisław Bystroń (1892–1964). Bystroń was an ethnologist who expanded his studies on folklore into written sources from the pre-partition era of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, resulting in the two-volume *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce* [The History of Customs in Old Poland], published in 1932–4.¹⁶ The study significantly influenced Polish historians and ethnologists and is still published and read today.¹⁷ By using the category of custom, Bystroń was able to compose a kind of historical anthropology *avant la lettre* of the society of the Commonwealth from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Unsurprisingly, this perspective appealed to scholars in the 1980s more forcefully than the somewhat constraining and ostensibly non-academic style of 'history of everyday life'. A similar direction – of research into customs – had already been pursued by other historians of the early modern period from Bogucka's age cohort: Janusz Tazbir (1927–2016) and Zbigniew Kuchowicz (1927–91).¹⁸ Her contribution to that current of thought consisted primarily in the inspirations drawn from historical anthropology and the history of material culture in the vein of the *Annales* School, as well as in a feminist perspective.

¹⁵ *Ead.*, 'Transport i wymiana', in Antonina Keckowa and Danuta Molenda (eds), *Historia kultury materialnej Polski w zarysie*, iii: *Od XVI do połowy XVIII w.* (Wrocław, 1978), 324–48; Maria Bogucka and Henryk Samsonowicz, *Dzieje miast i mieszczaństwa w Polsce przedrozbiorowej* (Wrocław, 1986).

¹⁶ Jan S. Bystroń, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce. Wiek XVI–XVII*, i–ii (Warszawa, 1932–4).

¹⁷ See Adam Pomieciński, 'Etnologia nieoczywista. Śladami Jana Stanisława Bystronia sto lat później', *Etnografia Polska*, lxiii, 1–2 (2019), 77–94.

¹⁸ Janusz Tazbir, *Świat panów Pasków* (Warszawa, 1986); *id.*, *Kultura polskiego baroku* (Warszawa, 1986); Zbigniew Kuchowicz, *Obyczaje staropolskie XVII–XVIII wieku* (Łódź, 1975); *id.*, *Człowiek polskiego baroku* (Łódź, 1992).

Bogucka's interest in the history of custom bore fruit in the shape of the book *Staropolskie obyczaje w XVI–XVII wieku* [Old Polish Customs in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries], published in 1994.¹⁹ The work collected and synthesised the scattered and contributory studies the author had produced over the span of more than a decade. Its chapters discuss, in sequence: the temporal and spatial confines of the formation of customs; the influence of structures and social bonds; rites of passage associated with births, weddings, and deaths; patriarchalism and family structures; gestural communication; living conditions, clothes, and hygiene; nutrition along with customs relating to feasting and sexual life; conditions of labour and entertainment; attitudes toward the law and criminality; and religiousness and sexuality. Thus, the catalogue of problems addressed in the work is broad enough to produce another book for the 'Everyday Life' series. However, such was not the intention of either the author or the publisher – the very same PIW that established the series in question. Though written in an accessible manner and with a constrained scholarly apparatus, this was without a shadow of a doubt conceived as a scholarly work in a style that typified Bogucka's late works, effacing the boundary between the academic and the popular. At the same time, one clearly discerns references to 'anthropologising' studies by Western historians that reached beyond the limits of the history of everyday life in its traditional understanding. It is not always about foreign inspiration; Bogucka's research into some of the questions often plotted a course parallel to analogous studies pursued by historiographers worldwide and, in some cases, actually broke new ground – as in her historical analysis of gestures.²⁰

As soon as *Old Polish Customs* reached the bookstores, however, Bogucka returned to the 'everyday life' category. It was on her initiative that the Commission of History of Culture of the Committee of Historical Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Institute of History at Polish Academy of Sciences organised the conference

¹⁹ Maria Bogucka, *Staropolskie obyczaje w XVI–XVII wieku* (Warszawa, 1994).

²⁰ *Ead.*, 'Le geste dans la vie de la noblesse polonaise aux XVI^e–XVIII^e siècles', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 45 (1982), 49–66; *ead.*, 'Gesture, Ritual, and Social Order in Sixteenth- to Eighteenth-Century Poland', in Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (eds), *A Cultural History of Gesture. From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1991), 190–209.

'Życie codzienne – nowy kierunek badań w ramach historii kultury' [Everyday Life: A New Current of Research into History of Culture] in 1995. The very framing of the title of that symposium attracts attention, describing as it does 'everyday life', a category that had been applied for a number of decades and to which Polish scholars and readers alike had grown accustomed, as a 'new current of research'. To understand Bogucka's purpose in this choice of words, one must take into account the supra-national, European scientific context within which she had always placed her own thought.

It was at the turn of the 1980s that the international community of historians began to gain awareness of the fact that in the shadow of the *Historikerstreit*, which had dominated debates about history in West Germany in that period, a highly productive and promising research method had taken shape, known as *Alltagsgeschichte* – meaning exactly 'history of everyday life'. Foremost among its proponents in the country were Alf Lüdtke and Hans Medick, who wanted to study the historical experience of 'common' people from the past in the context of major social and political events, with the idea of 'everyday' serving as a means to allow the historian an entry into an 'internal perspective' of the object of study. *Alltagsgeschichte* can thus be treated as part of a general tendency of writing a 'history from below', one that had grown within Western historiographies since the mid-1970s, developing into the Italian microhistory, the French historical anthropology, or the Anglo-Saxon new social history.

The first English-language analyses of *Alltagsgeschichte* saw print in 1989 and 1990 and were produced by Geoff Eley, David F. Crew, and Carola Lipp.²¹ They stressed the political aspect of the current, connected as it was with the West German Left, and especially the application of its methodology to the study of individuals and communities living in a totalitarian state, a means for engaging in the then-heated public debate over the history of Nazi Germany. According

²¹ Geoff Eley, 'Labor History, Social History, "Alltagsgeschichte": Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday – a New Direction for German Social History?', *Journal of Modern History*, lxi, 2 (1989), 297–343; David F. Crew, 'Alltagsgeschichte: A New Social History "From below"?'', *Central European History*, xxii, 3/4 (1989), 394–407; Carola Lipp, 'Writing History as Political Culture: Social History Versus "Alltagsgeschichte" – A German Debate', *Storia della Storiografia*, 17 (1990), 61–94.

to Alf Lüdtke, “Investigations of the ways in which ‘most people’ managed somehow to ‘get by’ during the era of German fascism have been explosive in their impact, especially because they have tended to reveal the degree to which the preponderant majority of Nazi *Volksgenossen* were in fact themselves perpetrators or accomplices”.²² In other words, *Alltagsgeschichte* was expected to address political phenomena while concentrating on the subjective aspect of human existence within social interactions, a radical departure from the traditional history of everyday life, devoted as it had been to objective conditions of existence in terms of material culture and social structures.²³ In France, the conclusion was immediately reached that the two historiographic currents must be made linguistically distinguishable, a concern that informed the choice of translation for the term contained in the title of a collection of essays edited by Lüdtke – *Alltagsgeschichte* – rendered in French as *histoire du quotidien*, rather than the standard *histoire de la vie quotidienne*.²⁴ No such distinction was ever created in English – there, the term ‘history of everyday life’ is used in both cases and wherever the need arises to clarify that the German research current is being spoken of, the German name for it is borrowed directly.

The debates sparked by *Alltagsgeschichte* in Germany and then in Western Europe were certainly no secret to Bogucka, as evidenced by her instant reaction in the shape of a conference whose title described ‘everyday life’ as a ‘new current of research into the history of culture’ already in autumn 1995. The current was indeed new and contentious. In 1992, it had become the subject of heated discussions during a convention of German historians in Hannover, proceedings from it being published some two years later; by 1996, a Polish translation appeared as the inaugural volume of the series ‘Klio w Niemczech’ [Clio in Germany] through the efforts of the German Historical Institute

²² Alf Lüdtke, ‘Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?’, in Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, 1995), 5.

²³ See Mathieu Lepetit, ‘Un regard sur l’historiographie allemande: les mondes de l’*Alltagsgeschichte*’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, xlv, 2 (1998), 476.

²⁴ Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *Histoire du quotidien* (Paris, 1994). A similar distinction could be deployed in Polish, as “historia codzienności” and “historia życia codziennego”, but these terms are readily confused, even in specialist publications; see e.g. Marta Zawodna-Stephan (ed.), *Życie codzienne (w) Archiwum* (Poznań, 2019).

in Warsaw [Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau].²⁵ By 1994, a volume edited by Lüdtke came out in French, presenting the findings of *Alltagsgeschichte* in Germany up to that point.²⁶ The following year saw the appearance of an English edition.²⁷ In other words, then, what Bogucka engaged in was an effort to place Polish scholars in the eye of a storm raging through international capitals of historiography.

The conference 'Everyday Life: A New Current of Research into History of Culture' took place on 29 September 1995, in Warsaw, with papers presented by Bogucka along with Tomasz Szarota, Elżbieta Kowecka, Andrzej Pośpiech, Witold Molik, Magdalena Mrugalska-Banaszak, and Edmund Kizik. Most of the papers were subsequently published in the third issue of the following year's "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej" [Quarterly of the History of Material Culture]. Bogucka's presentation, 'Controversies about "Everyday Life": Profile of Research and Definition', was devised to introduce the topic for the entire session.²⁸ Characteristically, the author practically ignored the whole tradition of writing in the spirit of the Hachette series on the 'history of everyday life', despite her own involvement in it. There is not even a single mention of the contribution of the history of material culture in the vein of the *Annales* School to research into the every day, nor of Braudel himself, whose *Structures of Everyday Life* had appeared in English just over a decade before. Instead, Bogucka focused on a summary and characteristics of internal debates in Germany concerning *Alltagsgeschichte*, reaching back as far as the turn of the 1970s. Although she quotes the critics of the movement, it seems to have appealed to her for the most part because of its exceptional value as a source of inspiration for various currents of research. As she put it herself,

"Everyday life" is both the question of the conditions of life, conditions and methods of work, consumption in all its aspects (clothing, furniture, housing, food, etc.), the history of the family, the situation of women and children, of old people, of the sick, the whole sphere of sexual life and reproduction,

²⁵ Winfried Schulze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte, Alltagsgeschichte, Mikro-Historie. Eine Diskussion* (Göttingen, 1994); id. (ed.), *Historia społeczna. Historia codzienności. Mikrohistoria*, transl. Andrzej Kopacki (Warszawa, 1996).

²⁶ Lüdtke, *Histoire du quotidien*.

²⁷ Id. (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life*.

²⁸ Bogucka, 'Controversies about "Everyday Life"'.

the crucial moments of life such as birth, marriage, death and funeral, the size and way of using leisure, the world of customs, beliefs and views, finally mentality as a whole. One must say that precisely this direction of research has opened wide perspectives in all the above-mentioned areas.²⁹

When this list of research questions is set against the table of contents of Bogucka's *Old Polish Customs*, published in 1994, a significant similarity of themes can be observed. One can also find it in another plaudit from the author, when she recounts how the history of everyday life introduced previously unused sources into scholarly currency, even though she had already made substantial use of them a long time before.

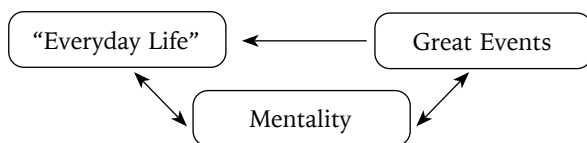
Where German ideas about the history of everyday life proved the most inspiring for Bogucka's approach to her field of work was in their demand for theoretical analyses of the everyday. "Kein Alltag ohne Theorie" [No everyday without theory], quotes the author, specifying that "the study of 'everyday life' should not be conducted as collecting anecdotes, as a 'tale telling', devoid of deeper meaning, as a plain description of the relics of the past". In this, as she called it, "widely expanding ... flow of the river of everyday life", she believed one must seek the rules and laws that bind it.³⁰

However, in her theoretical contribution, Bogucka posed a question from another level of meta-reflection, namely concerning the place of 'everyday life' in the historical process. In her answer, she claimed that it shapes the historical process to the same degree as 'major events' do. Though she noted that those events have a direct, often very significant impact on 'everyday life', she also asserted that it is, in essence, highly resistant to radical change. Meanwhile, 'everyday life' can reciprocally affect significant events, if indirectly – by way of the mentality that it shapes. Bogucka illustrated her model with a diagram that bears reproducing, given that she had only resorted to graphs, charts, and other forms of visualisation extremely rarely in her texts following her abandonment of economic history; thus, the very fact that she used one here serves as a marker of a conscious declaration concerning her choice of poetics of historical writing.³¹

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

³¹ See Philippe Carrard, *Poetics of the New History. French Historical Discourse from Braudel to Chartier* (Baltimore–London, 1992).



1. The place of “everyday life” in the historical process: the visualisation of model approach. Source: Maria Bogucka, ‘Controversies about “Everyday Life”: Profile of Research and Definition’, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 85 (2002), 15.

Did Bogucka really intend to transplant German *Alltagsgeschichte* to Polish historiography? It would certainly enhance the perspective of Polish historians on social history under totalitarian regimes, especially the communist, in the same way as it broadened the views of West German scholars on the German society under Nazi rule. One could hardly expect a similar effect in French or Anglo-Saxon historiographies, which, despite theoretical interest, soon grew accustomed to *Alltagsgeschichte* as a peculiarity of historiographies that must deal with the baggage of totalitarianism. It would make a lot of sense for Polish historiography to follow the German example; during the 1990s, however, a heroic and martyrological narrative of the times of the ‘people’s republic’ gained prominence instead. It was not until the new millennium that works began to appear bearing a resemblance to those published within the German current, though not erected on the same methodological basis; these came from the likes of Dariusz Jarosz, Barbara Klich-Kluczevska, and Błażej Brzostek.

Still, Bogucka never returned to the category of ‘everyday life’ in her own work again, despite the portentous promise of her theoretical introduction. Even the new edition of her then-classic *Everyday Life in Gdańsk*, prepared to mark the city’s millennium celebrations in 1997, came out under a changed title: *Życ w dawnym Gdańsku* [To Live in Old Gdańsk]. As it happened, the format of the title *Życie codzienne w...* [Everyday Life in...] had been copyrighted in Poland by PIW. Being an author who most cherished communicating with readers through books rather than journal articles, Bogucka was loath to cede the right to define the boundaries of the history of everyday life to PIW editors. Besides, she does not seem to have been willing to engage in wide-ranging studies of a microhistorical nature, the kind that laid the foundations for the most successful titles within *Alltagsgeschichte*.

However, a heightened interest in the renewed history of the quotidian is relatively apparent in a book Bogucka published in English in 1996, merely a year after the Warsaw conference on everyday life. Entitled *The Lost World of the 'Sarmatians': Custom as the Regulator of Polish Social Life in Early Modern Times*, the work saw print in the publishing house of the Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Sciences.³² The choice of the publisher and the language of publication indicates that the book was not aimed at a broad range of readers but rather at fellow historians, especially those who did not speak Polish. In its essential components, it is a translation of a reworked version of *Old Polish Customs*, published two years before. Alterations served primarily the expansion of the thesis, which had only been suggested in the Polish book – that Norbert Elias' theory of civilisation cannot be applied directly to the conditions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the early modern period. Bogucka does not dispute the very concept of the process but rather Elias' description of the means by which it was implemented in early modern societies. Due to the weakness of the Polish-Lithuanian state, she does not ascribe the primary role in promoting civilisation to state coercion, but rather to custom as a means of regulating structures of everyday life in the Commonwealth. This thesis can certainly be taken as an attempt to apply a theoretical and synthetic scope to analyses of various aspects of everyday life which comprise the work, in accordance with the slogan *kein Alltag ohne Theorie*. However, the theoretical framework provided in the English edition still remains underdeveloped and is easily missed while reading subsequent descriptive chapters – a fact that disoriented some of the reviewers sufficiently enough to suggest that Bogucka was abandoning Elias' theory wholesale.³³ Among the many, occasionally quite extensive, reviews of the book,³⁴ only the brief account by Robert Frost engaged in a substantial polemic

³² Maria Bogucka, *The Lost World of the 'Sarmatians'. Custom as the Regulator of Polish Social Life in Early Modern Times* (Warszawa, 1996).

³³ See Gottfried Schramm, [Review], 'Maria Bogucka, *The Lost World of the 'Sarmatians'. Custom as the Regulator of Polish Social Life in Early Modern Times*, Warsaw 1996', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, cv, 1 (1998) 139–40; and the author's response: Maria Bogucka, 'Odpowiedź Profesorowi Gottfriedowi Schrammowi', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, cvi, 1 (1999), 57.

³⁴ Andrzej Wyrobisz, 'A New Approach to the History of Customs', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 74 (1996), 161–72.

with Bogucka's main thesis, pointing out the similarly regulative role of informal mechanisms in Western societies – an observation that considerably weakened the author's claims concerning the peculiar conditions of the Commonwealth. "Perhaps Poland was not so different after all," concludes Frost, evoking a potentially quite engaging discussion, which, however, was never to take place.³⁵

The Lost World of the "Sarmatians" might be seen as Bogucka's final attempt at dealing with questions historians ascribed to the category of 'everyday life'.³⁶ In fact, one might call it her second book on everyday life after the one on Gdańsk from 1967, illustrating decades of Bogucka's development as researcher and writer and the influence of the international historical community on her ideas. While the book maintains some connection to the theoretical framing of *Alltagsgeschichte*, in practice, one would at most call it a case of positive inspiration. In its essence, the book advances an original interpretation of the subject and research methods that evades any attempts at bringing it down to any specific historiographic current. Thus, aside from her contribution to the theory and practice of writing the history of everyday life in Poland, one would also do well to highlight the role these themes played in the formation of Maria Bogucka's research interests, methods, and style of historical writing, providing an impulse and further inspiration for a transition from economic history strictly defined to a very personal and multi-layered approach which Bogucka herself took to calling the history of culture.

transl. Antoni Górny

³⁵ Robert I. Frost, [Review], 'Maria Bogucka, *The Lost World of the 'Sarmatians'. Custom as the Regulator of Polish Social Life in Early Modern Times*', *English Historical Review*, cxiii, 454 (1998), 1288–9.

³⁶ One should add, though, that over a decade later, a new Polish edition of the book came out where the author made use of the substance of the text that comprises *The Lost World of the 'Sarmatians'* while updating it with references to newer studies. There is also a subtle alteration to the way the stress is laid in the introduction (and title), this time placing laws on an even footing with custom; see Maria Bogucka, *Między obyczajem a prawem: kultura sarmatyzmu w Polsce XVI–XVIII wieku* (Warszawa, 2013).

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