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# Transformations of Multi-ethnic Musical Cultures of North-Eastern Poland

J. Katarzyna Dadak-Kozicka

*Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University of Warsaw*

The documentation of nineteenth-century Polish folklore, created by Oskar Kolberg<sup>1</sup>, allows one to sketch a multidimensional picture of the culture of the countryside for almost all regions of Poland. The picture which emerges is characterized by two main features: the organic nature of that culture, and the fundamentality of the beliefs and the worldview shaped through contemplating the order of life. Life flows on a number of levels: the “cosmic” level (the journey of the sun and the moon across the sky, which determine the seasons and the times of day); the earthly level (the concrete, “regional” world of nature, i.e., the climate, the world of plants and animals, present in the symbolism of the rituals, and the world of man); and the supernatural, hidden level which is the source of all life. The two cycles of rituals which encompass the spiritual culture most fully, the yearly and the family cycles, complement each other very closely. They are mainly concerned with life, with what favours life and with what poses a threat to it. As a consequence of this multidimensional vision of life, involving rationality and intuition, senses and feelings, faith and will, art, and particularly ritual art (i.e., drama, which links poetry, music, dance and “stage-setting”), became the most natural way of expressing and transmitting culture. Folklore has been the deciding factor in ensuring the continuity and drawing power of traditional culture, which [now] seems inevitably doomed to extinction. The reason for this is that it no longer plays a part in learning the art of living, which demands effort, growth

and rebirth. Cutting off folklore from its religious-philosophical foundations brings about the extinction of many genres and functions of music, the social ties, a fellow feeling for people and for nature, while emphasizing music's function as a form of entertainment (such as recent dance repertory, which is often banal). In this way, folklore loses much of its artistic and educational (in the sense of encouraging wider development) value.

It is thus worthwhile to ask: is it the case that the traditional spiritual culture of the countryside, based on a synthesis of pagan and Christian beliefs and rituals, is inevitably undergoing gradual extinction under the influence of the fast-developing civilisation of the modern period? Does the impoverishment of rituality have to lead to the impoverishment of folklore? Does the uniqueness and value of regional folklore lie in its antiquity and conservatism, i.e., the archaism of music and rites, or in the truth and artistic originality, a richness of meanings and functions which play a decisive role in establishing the significance of art in the life of a community and each of its members? Can folklore today be a truly living art? If the regeneration of folklore is possible, must it have mainly local, regional character, or should it be national, or supranational? Or, perhaps, as some anthropologists of culture would have it<sup>2</sup>, such questions do not make sense because every culture is equally interesting, valuable and original, in spite of constant change?

The significance of these questions was revealed during the writing of graduate diploma theses by three students from the Warsaw Academy of Music who came from north-eastern Poland: Ewa Laskowska, Dariusz Zimnicki and Anna Kozera<sup>3</sup>. They undertook research into the folklore of their region mainly because they wanted to get to know better the uniqueness and the value of the music and the culture with which they identify<sup>4</sup>. They also wanted to save their native folklore from oblivion and extinction; they all had in common the conviction that those aspects of it which are valuable and original are deeply rooted in history, and that the changes which have taken place in Europe since the Second World War, modern mass culture (and especially popular music) and market forces can constitute a threat to traditional art. Although all these students came from areas of cultural borderline, they had varying perspectives on the issues of the conservatism and distinctiveness of

their native folklore. This reflected the different character of the interaction [of their communities] with the neighbouring cultures and people of different religion, language or national tradition, and was also related to the perception of such interactions either as a threat or as a manifestation of a common tradition. All the students were aware of the multidimensionality of contemporary culture and the diversity of its socio-cultural basis. Each of them also categorized and explained this diversity in a slightly different way.

Ewa Laskowska<sup>5</sup> researched the traditional music of Protestant inhabitants of Mazuria in the area of Szczytno (from the edge of Puszcza Kurpiowska, the Polish-German, Catholic-Protestant boundary). More specifically, she was researching what was preserved of that tradition by the few autochthonous inhabitants, who considered themselves its rightful heirs. Ewa Laskowska, being aware of the richness and complexity of the musical tradition of the Mazurian people, wanted to identify the Polish and German elements responsible for the uniqueness of this cultural tangle, created over centuries by Catholic and Protestant Mazurians living together. Under historical pressures they would at times change religion and language<sup>6</sup>; they would also undergo changes in their awareness of national identity. However, the dominant feature in their outlook was an attachment to their native land and, linked to it, the feeling of solidarity with its life, manifested, for instance, in the fact that the inhabitants of that area, even by the beginning of the twentieth century, regarded themselves first of all as Mazurians (“My great-grandparents and granny felt themselves in their hearts to be Mazurians — neither Germans nor Poles”)<sup>7</sup>. Defining the identity of Protestant Mazurians from the Szczytno area at the beginning of the twenty-first century (mainly through their statements and music-making) did not, however, succeed fully, as the community of people who used to live there had been broken up<sup>8</sup> after the Second World War. Yet these people were heirs to a tradition centuries old, whose complex character is revealed in many ways, as for instance in the prayer written down [in a mixture of Polish and German] in the sixteenth century: “Ottsche nasch genze gyesz nanyebyesyech...”<sup>9</sup>.

Among the respondents (born just after the First World War) the majority regarded themselves as Germans, some as Mazurians; the cherished

songs had German texts. The respondents felt themselves to have been much wronged by recent history, deprived of a regional culture, rich at one time and practically nonexistent today. Decimated over a period of a quarter of a century (death of close relatives during the war and separation from neighbours and families who emigrated to Germany after 1945), they remembered with affection the days when their land was part of East Prussia. Some of them were aware of the fact that their ancestors once used to speak Polish. They were also aware that their tradition before the war was defined mainly through their Protestant religion and through living in a particular region (Mazuria). Clearly, Protestantism strengthened links with the German culture (as did the policy of Germanization by the conquerors; but the so-called “Polish Prussians” living in East Prussia would identify themselves as belonging to the Polish culture). The situation began to change when, in the 1930s, with Hitler’s victory, his movement began to “propagate the Pan-German heritage of these lands, and being Mazurian came to be regarded as a variety of Germanism. At that time multinationalism and multiculturalism in essence ceased to exist”<sup>10</sup>. It seems, however, that not everything had been lost at that time — there still existed a unity of spiritual culture and the folklore of the Mazurians. It was not until the advent of the horrors of the Second World War, which turned people against each other, and the post-war, spontaneous “meting out of justice” (i.e., persecution of those regarded as Germans), together with the anti-German policies of the authorities in the Polish People’s Republic, that the unity of the Mazurians and their traditions finally broke up. The majority identified themselves with Poland and Catholicism. The small number of German-speaking Protestants, treated with hostility, felt themselves alienated; trying to find a place for themselves in Germany, they were at times treated with equal hostility and some returned to Poland. Unfortunately, the sense of unity of the Mazurian people had been destroyed, and with it the previously shared culture and folklore.

The respondents of Ewa Laskowska, including her family, still at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, felt a strong bond with relatives and neighbours who had died during the Second World War. This solidarity with those who had been wronged (both the dead and those who emigrated

to Germany in the '50s and '70s in the twentieth century) was translated into a duty of keeping faith with the pre-war musical tradition. Regarding themselves as heirs of the culture of mainly German-speaking Protestant Mazurs, the respondents preserved mainly that which for them was associated with the pre-war, German lifestyle. (For example, the Protestants from the church in Pasy meet after services conducted in Polish in order to sing songs from their childhood in German; these are their "private meetings", from which strangers are excluded)<sup>11</sup>. Thus a basically cohesive Mazurian tradition, combining a variety of elements (Polish and German, town and country, Catholicism and Lutheranism), had been broken up, and that which has been preserved does not present a pattern of life which appeals to all of the present-day inhabitants of this area. The divergence in perceiving tradition can be observed in young people, who are aware of bonds not only with the relatives who had been scarred by the war, but with their peers, for whom issues of nationality are not of such significance.

Characteristically, the respondents were particularly attached to those elements of the tradition which were associated with "the good old days". Above all, this involved the repertory belonging to the canon of Protestant songs with German texts. The cult of the "Holy Book", characteristic for the Protestant tradition, involved, among other things, preserving with great care the hymn-books and editions of the Bible — texts which the Protestant Mazurs kept by them from the cradle to the grave<sup>12</sup>. Protected from destruction (and later confiscation), the hymn-books have been preserved to this day; in the Szczytno area these are mainly German ones<sup>13</sup>. The repertory they contain is somewhat different from the songs of the so-called "Polish Prussians" — the Polish-speaking Mazurs who preserved Protestant songs recorded in consecutive editions of the so-called "Mazurian Cantionale" or, more accurately, *Nowo wydany Kancyonał Pruski* from 1741, also called "Wasiański's Cantionale"<sup>14</sup>. It manifested features of the Mazurian folk tradition of Polish provenance<sup>15</sup>.

Excepting religious hymns, which at one time accompanied Mazurs throughout life, the respondents also cherished numerous secular songs, of a general nature, mainly on the theme of love. They used to belong to a popular repertory, more town than country. They displayed German features not only in



However, it is not the case that the respondents deliberately chose to condemn themselves to alienation from the Protestant Mazurian culture in all its richness, created over centuries. Of course, the respondents preserve a tradition which is cut down and, in a sense, “mummified”, disconnected from present-day life. But the reason for this is the desire to keep faith with those who were killed and disinherited, and the culture with which — in the opinion of the respondents — they identified most fully. Obviously, the musical tradition of Mazuria did not die out altogether; after the Second World War the region came to be populated by arrivals from various parts of Poland (often exiled from their own native lands) and with time, through combining the remnants of the earlier tradition and new elements, a new whole will be created. However, it is also true that the cohesion of Mazurian culture and traditional art, shaped by the flow of time, has been destroyed, and those elements of it which have been preserved no longer have the power to fully explicate and support life, build community and regenerate the Mazurian people. The flow of ancient tradition native to and created in Mazuria had been interrupted by the cataclysms of war and aggressive policies aimed at dividing the local population into friends and strangers — in other words, foes.

Dariusz Zimnicki<sup>19</sup> investigated the folklore of Lithuanians from the Puński-Sejneński region in the Suwałki Lakes district, i.e., the Polish (Catholic)-Lithuanian boundary. In his work on the Lithuanian folklore in Poland he was searching in particular for original features in musical and textual material, for what has artistic value and at the same time is of interest from the cultural perspective; for what is linked to interesting customs, and for what is rich in meaning and symbolism. Comparing musical and textual analysis of songs with their role in the life of local communities turned out to be particularly significant. Zimnicki observed a distinction between the songs of the older and the younger Lithuanians, as well as between songs preserved spontaneously in families and those nurtured by schools and cultural institutions; this distinction reveals the dependence of repertory and style of performance on the circumstances and motivation of music-making and the functions of the songs.

In the living tradition of Lithuanian songs in the Puński-Sejneński region Zimnicki has distinguished a number of strands with a wide stylistic and functional range: 1 — national-patriotic (historical) songs; 2 — community singing, with emphasis on the joy of communal music-making (involving “active participation in the art without paying attention to its value; (...) “cheerful mood often dictates the choice of repertory”)<sup>20</sup>; 3 — musical performance for the stage (which might be described as folklorism); and 4 — traditional Lithuanian music, sung both for every day and holy day purposes, which in the old days used to be sung during work and during rites. This last strand, nurtured by a small number of older people, expresses “a need, deeply rooted in the soul, foreexpressing their experience in song (...) Their repertory is abundantly rich, full of archaic features, and possesses great artistic value and depth of content”<sup>21</sup>. It is particularly worthy of preservation, not only because of its artistic, but also cultural and social value, fostering deeper knowledge of one’s roots and in this way shaping a deeper, richer consciousness of one’s identity and more permanent bonds between the music-makers (young and old) and their ancestors.

The folk-national strand cultivated by the older generation (e.g., the ensemble “Gimtinė” [Fatherland]) originates from the tradition of religious and patriotic songs, which was particularly strong during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This strand developed mainly in response to the need by the Lithuanians to express their attachment to national tradition when they lost their statehood. Religious and folk music of various regions of the country, having undergone unification and stylization, played a vital part in propagating this sentiment. Among the activists of this movement were two priests, Žemaitis (founder of the Lithuanian church choir in Puńsk in 1898) and Švedas. This strand is reflected in the work of Konstanty Sidor (“the artistic soul of the Gimtinė ensemble”), a singer and composer of songs in the folk style, and in the work of the choir “Dzukija” from Puńsk, which performs its songs in a four-voice harmonic arrangement with accordion accompaniment, with dynamic shading and articulation typical for non-folk, stage-performance singing. These forms of singing are characterised by predominant use of major keys, simplicity of rhythm and symmetry of form, polyphony which makes use

of basic harmonic functions, aided by the harmonic structure of the melody, which emphasizes in cadences the third step of the scale<sup>22</sup>. The texts of the songs at times combine folk motifs with national, religious and didactic ones, which deprives the folk element of its characteristic features (sentimentality and pathos are alien to the folk tradition, while its typical lyricism and humour, at times of the crude variety, are in turn alien to the aesthetics of the national movement). The national character of this form of singing resulted in abandoning the regional specificity of the songs, levelled out their originality and brought it closer to the style of popular songs. The old-fashioned aesthetic and stylistic attitudes, favouring singing in voices (fixed harmonic phrases, particularly dominant-tonic ones) seem to be the reason for the great popularity of this type of singing, particularly among older people.

There is a degree of distinctness in group singing performed on stage (with features of reconstructed folklore). This strand is made up of a repertory meant mainly for entertainment, performed by folk groups which appear on radio programmes, often singing in a number of voices, rarely in dialect. One could also include here the singing of school youth groups ("Salcinelis"), for one, two or three voices, which makes reference only to a certain segment of folk music tradition, mainly the dance rhythms. These songs, often performed a cappella or with the accompaniment of an accordion and sometimes a *kankles*<sup>23</sup>, often served as dance music. Young Lithuanians are particularly fond of these forms of singing.

Of particular interest are the songs of those members of the younger generation who are taught the repertory, style of singing and situation (circumstances) by their parents or relations. Such groups as "Dusnycia" or "Alna" (singing accompanied by violin, drum and accordion, sometimes *kankles*) reach towards the deeper layers of musical tradition. Apart from the more modern, stylized folklore, these groups preserve also old folk monodic chants ("Alna"). They combine the beauty and originality of many modal melodies with naturalness and freedom of performance, which manifests itself in, among other things, a degree of improvisation (particular verses have interesting melodic variations).

The songs discussed so far were, in a sense, of an institutionalized charac-



represents; new elements, such as new songs, have to be incorporated into the organic pattern of local culture, tried and tested over the years.

Folk music-making has always been characterized by the variety of circumstances in which it took place. Unfortunately, in the area investigated by Zimnicki and inhabited mainly by the Lithuanian population, the post-war years saw the gradual extinction of songs other than those accompanying rituals and work<sup>25</sup>. The custom of singing during dances has also disappeared. At one time there would have been singing and musical games — the “rateliai” — while the instrumentalists took their break. Now, more and more frequently, traditional instruments are replaced by electronic ones, and popular music takes the place of folk music. It seems, however, that the resurrection of many musical traditions is gaining ground quite rapidly. The younger generation is interested in getting to know their traditions (rites, customs, amusements) and their cultural significance. (Zimnicki’s reconstruction of Lithuanian wedding ceremonies reveals an uncommon richness of symbolism of their particular stages, from match-making to “poprawiny”[repetition]). This is aided by the fact that many young Lithuanians are sensitive to the originality and the beauty of the melodies and texts of the songs, particularly those deeply rooted in tradition, and the atmosphere of traditional social gatherings, with their truly communal spirit.

Anna Kozera<sup>26</sup>, who investigated the Podlasie folklore on the edge of Puszcza Knyszyńska (Polish-Belarussian, Catholic-Orthodox neighbourhood) concentrated on sketching portraits of selected musicians. Her approach assumes that the best way towards understanding the reasons for the preservation of selected chants, and of the mechanisms governing changes in folklore, is through investigating the role of music in the life of a particular person. Finding the motivation behind music-making may explain not only changes in repertory, but also performance style, musical preferences and music-making situations. Anna Kozera chose two persons from among the folk musicians she got to know — Antoni Szałkowski and Danuta Woroszyło — both from the same region but representing two different attitudes to tradition, whose characteristics are not restricted to that area, i.e. Pogorzałki<sup>27</sup> and its neighbourhood.

Antoni Szałkowski (son of a blacksmith from Nowinka, he came to live in Pogorzalki in the 1950s) represents the type of enthusiast, social activist and manager of the folklore movement. Having been taught by the local organist, he obtained his secondary musical education at a music school in Białystok, and completed a course for leaders of cultural centres, graduating with a diploma as an instructor of amateur artistic groups for, as he described it “first category music”<sup>28</sup>. Szałkowski is active in many areas (director of the Regional Cultural Centre in Pogorzalki, local councillor and leader of local Commission for Culture and Education), but his favourite and most fulfilling role is that of a manager of folk groups (such as “Narwianie”, “Podlasianki”, “Obróbki”, “Dobrzyńki” and instrumental bands such as “Ciołki” or “Siwe orły”) and a musician (accordion, trumpet, keyboard). He was particularly fond of the group “Narwianie”, which he established in 1957 with players from Pogorzalki and the neighbourhood, and in which he played the accordion<sup>29</sup>. Szałkowski prepared his group for numerous appearances at various festivals and public events. He himself prepared the programmes and the repertory, which included his arrangements of folk songs which he had heard from older performers (among others from Danuta Woroszyło) and “ritual scenes”, such as “Wianek przedślubny” [“prenuptial wreath”] or “Kiszenie kapusty” [“pickling the cabbage”].

Szałkowski’s “creative” input into the arrangements of songs and ritual scenes (to which he willingly admitted) makes it very difficult to separate authentic folklore from his adaptations. The selection of programme items and their arrangement were clearly adapted to particular needs: when the requirement was for harvest celebrations, Antoni Szałkowski would prepare a local ritual scene “Królewna - obchodzenie pól” [“The Princess — making the round of the fields”]. And although, according to the Narrator (the main character of the script), “our tradition demands that in the autumn season the Princess must make the round of the fields, often linked to the tradition of the end of the harvest”, Szałkowski knew that in reality this rite took place “some time in May, before corn comes into ear”<sup>30</sup>. The lack of understanding of the symbolism of the ritual and its connectedness to vegetation, of the meaning of customary behaviours and songs, results in a most amazing composition,

a mixture of tradition and the free run of Szałkowski's inventiveness. The fact that local productions often include programmes of this type makes it difficult to identify the folk version of the ritual, with its declamations and chants (the earlier folk version and the later stage version overlap). At the same time, the local people appreciate the efforts made to promote the group, such as arranging for "Narwianie" to appear at regional festivals (and also at the Polish Festival of Folk Ensembles and Singers in Kazimierz, where they received a distinction in 1984), or a trip to Vilnius, where their performance at the University Great Hall in 1985 was remembered for many years. It is probable that the performances of "Narwianie" introduced a degree of dissonance in the locals' perception of the truth and beauty of their own musical tradition and its use in a new form designed for the stage. It is the case that, for many folk musicians, their inner awareness of aesthetic norms has been destabilized, weakening their feeling for the quality and meaning of folklore, the recompense for which has been the applause of the public — the public thus becoming the main consumer, sponsor and verifier of the art being performed. However, some musicians, such as Danuta Woroszyło, a highly regarded folk singer who taught "Narwianie" many songs, had an unshakeable feeling for what is valuable and true; for what is "ours".

The style of arrangements of performances by "Narwianie" was influenced by Szałkowski's experience as trumpeter in the ensemble "Siwe orły" (apart from the trumpet the band included saxophone — Mikołaj Bigulak, accordion — Władysław Andruszkiewicz and percussion — Eugeniusz Popławski; at times they added guitar and keyboard, played by Szałkowski). The band was quite popular at weddings and dances, e.g. the traditional "Farmers' Ball" in Białystok. Unfortunately, since there are no recordings of these performances, it is impossible to get to know the style of this music; one can only roughly imagine it as a combination of folk and disco music. At the beginning of the new century Antoni Szałkowski withdrew from active musical life. It is significant that, when asked by Anna Kozera about his musical activities, he would first of all show his diplomas and prizes; asked about the music, he would reach for the scores and sit down at the keyboard, although the accordion was also to hand.

It probably will not be easy to characterize the work of Antoni Szałkowski as a musician and as an activist; it demands close investigation and separation of his input into “bringing folklore back to life” from the original folk basis of his art, regarded by the locals as their own. Szałkowski would record scores of melodies heard from older performers (it is not certain how faithfully). He would often choose songs of high value both musically and textually, as is evidenced by, for instance, the lyrical song in the rhythm of a mazurka “Idzie wieczór idzie” [“The evening is coming”]<sup>31</sup>, heard from Danuta Woroszyło (who taught Szałkowski the age of the songs), which oscillates between Aeolian and Dorian scales.

Time will reveal the true value of Szałkowski’s work — after years have passed, will that which he considered important and beautiful still be alive? Probably not everything, although one should not disregard the importance of his activities for evaluating transformations in the folklore of those areas in the wider sense (town and country and, for instance, firemen’s bands). It has certainly been Szałkowski’s desire to preserve regional folklore. However, both the extent of his musical talent, and the absence of ethnographic education, compounded by the fact that he was not “a folk musician born and bred”, made it difficult for him at times to recognize the true beauty and wisdom of folklore. He believed that adapting it to the needs and tastes of average listeners would help folk music survive. The fact that his music pleased his listeners confirmed his belief. What is significant, however, is his lack of belief in the educational influence of true folk art, at times difficult and demanding effort in performance, which, at one time, was nurtured by the whole community in ritual situations.

Danuta Woroszyło (like sister Alfreda?\*), described by Anna Kozera as representing the type of musician who sees herself as a continuator of tradition,

is a native of the area being investigated. Her farm is very traditional and not very prosperous (wooden buildings, a well with a shadoof, exceptionally well-kept garden full of flowers). The enormous repertory and love of singing passed to her from her grandmother and her mother, famous for her beautiful singing (a cousin used to play the pedal harmonium, and it was he who taught Danuta Woroszyło the original, long funeral songs). Danuta Woroszyło is a person who lives in the past; she lives in a world which she has preserved in her grateful memory, and which embodies everything which she regards as beautiful and precious: communal work, singing, respect for fellow men, admiration for nature, and belief in God and life everlasting with all those who lived, sang and worked her land before her. For her, singing is closely linked with the life of the earlier community. Above all, it used to accompany work (weaving, chopping cabbage, plucking feathers etc.), but also play (communal singing at evening gatherings and communal dances such as oberek, polka but also tango and “ślopoks” [slow-fox]). Singing also accompanied weddings and funerals (singing funeral songs remembered from youth for Anna Kozera, quietly so as not to “tempt death by singing”, she remarked that they warned against living sinfully and asked for God’s mercy)<sup>32</sup>. For Danuta Woroszyło, shared work and singing are inseparable, as is respect for them. An example of the educational role of songs is provided by the fact that the first song she learned from her mother was “Tam na polu sosna” [“There grows a pine in the field”] (about a girl who was seduced and murdered by foreigners she met at the inn)<sup>33</sup>.

Danuta Woroszyło’s repertory is not only very rich, but varied in genre and style. It contains ballads full of instructions, love songs, songs for the bonfire night, wedding and funeral songs, as well as “bajtałachy”, i.e., frivolous songs demonstrating a humorous and detached attitude to life. The songs represent great musical variety; the majority seems to be cohesive musically and linguistically (with slight influence of Belarussian dialects). Sometimes, however, one encounters interesting adaptations: the frivolous “bajtałach”: “Raz szed sobie chłop drogą nios jajka i cebule” [“Along the road a peasant was walking, carrying onions and eggs”], was sung to the tune of the German carol “O Tannenbaum”<sup>34</sup>; the repertory also contained Russian soldiers’ songs sung

in voices with her sister (Danuta Woroszyło's father used to like them). In this manner the songs of Danuta Woroszyło create an authentic, rich picture of life and culture of the countryside, with a truly communal character, anchored in a particular place and time. The pattern of life and the atmosphere are uniquely reflected in the songs, and the stories attached to them about natural and supernatural events (e.g., the appearance of devils — handsome dark lads - at country dances<sup>35</sup>).

A small number of songs from the repertory of Danuta Woroszyło were used by Antoni Szałkowski. The opinions of Danuta and her sister about their participation in the group "Narwianie" is of interest (both were recruited to join the group by Szałkowski). Both ladies taught their songs to the group, since its members (from a variety of villages) did not know them. They found the "book" repertory taught by Szałkowski alien, and did not like it very much. However, they enjoyed the tours, because in that way they could "get to know the world"<sup>36</sup>.

The statements of Danuta Woroszyło bring us closer to an idealized picture of the life of the people of the Białystok region prior to the Second World War (a time of childhood). In this apparently simple and ordinary life, singing was always present as a way of ordering, deepening and preserving experience, joyful or dramatic, everyday or metaphysical (yearly and funeral songs). Singing was a way of contemplating the mystery of life, the presence of God in nature and in people's life, an easy way of expressing one's feelings (courting, warnings), enhancing life and work, or overcoming difficulties. This picture fits well within the documentation of folklore provided by Kolberg, carried out from the perspective of the life of the countryside (particularly rites and customs) and the artistic and spiritual culture of the region.

Although each of the works presented here is of slightly different character, together they lead to a number of complementary conclusions. It seems that ethnomusicological research in the area of basic issues, such as questions of transformations, or dying out and rebirth of folk culture, and the manifestations and the circumstances of such processes, may well benefit from the concept of a "Golden Age" of folk culture, a period of its full maturity and glory. This would be particularly relevant if this concept is understood as

a model<sup>37</sup> of properly functioning folk culture, deduced from regional documentation (provided by Kolberg and other researchers). This model is characterized by a multidimensional picture of life, which flows on different levels. The picture is composed of an antropomorphic vision of the life of the cosmos, the elements, nature, humanity and the supernatural world, which together constitute a kind of unity, as all these “worlds” interpenetrate in a variety of ways. Hierarchy is important, i.e., the superiority of the religious-philosophical layer, basic to the rituals, to the educational, communal-cultural and social-entertainment layers. Each of these cultural areas has a different time perspective, and this seems to correspond to different social sanctions and the permanence of music. In this approach, the repertory which is the most stable and most resistant to change would be that relating to the rituals (the most unique and difficult), and the repertory most susceptible to change would be the dance, “entertainment” one (stylistically the most recent).

As for the question of the antiquity of true folk culture, and the significance of musical archaism, it seems that the answer is contained within the very concept of tradition. It includes the idea that what is important for tradition is not just directness of transmission and a kind of practicality (tradition concerns mainly customs and models of living<sup>38</sup>), but also being deeply rooted in history. Thus, that which was regarded as one’s own tradition was a model for living which had been shaped and verified by the experience of centuries. It was characterized by being passed on in a manner which encouraged all-round development and maturation in the individual, and cohesion in the community. It was not an accident that ritual art (music, poetry, dance, dress, “stage-sets”) was the main means through which the younger generation assimilated culture from the traditional community. It would therefore be a mistake to separate folklore from the art of living (which seems obvious, as folklore by definition is the wisdom of the people expressed through art). The model of life revealed by Kolberg’s invaluable documentation clearly emphasizes the solidarity of life, the connection between human life and nature (an issue whose importance is underestimated by theorists of tradition) and with the “cosmos” (or a segment of it) and that which is “supranatural”, which is a manifestation of the presence of God (the Absolute) in the world. This

solidarity of life is the result of the ability to observe, contemplate the world and feel at one with it; this seems to be the basis of what might be termed the syncretism of folk cultures, which slowly absorb various elements in order to unite them. Thus everything which divides people, which separates them from nature, and which deprives their culture of the religious-philosophical dimension reaching beyond time and particular groups, favours neither people, nor folklore.

The conclusions sound banal. Such historical and political interventions as wars and driving people out from their communities, and setting people against each other, destroy traditional culture and folklore. Any instrumental use of folklore, even when meant well (such as the national-patriotic movements), is also not beneficial to it, apart from being short-lived. It transforms that which constitutes the religious-philosophical basis of folklore into an ideology which makes use of art. And ideologies tend to breed the opposition of “them” and “us”. The influence of market-forces is similarly short-lived: it turns authentic art created by the shared experience of the community into a product. Music for sale does not express wisdom, the latter often not being easily accessible; music-making for the stage does not translate into the ability to live in a community with all its richness, best reflected by folklore. However, there are many indications that the circumstances which gave birth to folklore (working together on land and celebrating it, ritual as an expression of common beliefs and art) no longer exist. Folklore may perhaps survive as a manifestation of ancient, communal model of life, transmitted through art. In reality it will live on as folklorism, an inspiration for classical music, for popular music (folk music), and for education. That’s no mean feat.

### Notes

- 1 34 volumes of ‘Lud...’ published in Kolberg’s lifetime (during the years 1857–90) and the same number of volumes left in manuscript and being published presently as “Dzieła wszystkie Oskara Kolberga” [“Collected Works of Oskar Kolberg”] (the whole will exceed 80 volumes).
- 2 Sławomira Żerańska-Kominek expresses such views in her work *Muzyka w kulturze. Wprowadzenie do etnomuzykologii* [*Music in Culture. Introduction to Ethnomusicology*], Warszawa 1995, particularly in the chapters devoted to contemporary ethnomusicology.

- 3 All the theses were written under my supervision during 2001–2002; Anna Kozera, who had been living for a number of years in Białystok studied there at the Białystok branch of AMFC.
- 4 In their research the students made use of studies of the folklore of north-eastern Poland published in *Kultura muzyczna mniejszości narodowych w Polsce. Litwini, Białorusini, Ukraińcy* [Musical Culture of National Minorities in Poland. Lithuanians, Belarussians, Ukrainians], Warszawa 1990, edited by Sławomira Żerańska-Kominek.
- 5 *Folklor Mazurów ewangelickich okolic Szczytna. Tradycja i współczesność* [The Folklore of Protestant Inhabitants of Mazuria in the Szczytno Area. Tradition and the Present Day], Warszawa 2001.
- 6 With the coming of the Reformation, German language began to spread in this area; the period of partitions added strength to the Prussian element, so that in 1873 Polish language was removed from schools; under Hitler it was banned altogether.
- 7 E. Laskowska, op. cit., p. 114.
- 8 “The generation of Mazurians who could speak Mazurian dialect has, unfortunately, died out in the area which I investigated”; E. Laskowska, op. cit., p. 114.
- 9 S. Rospond, *Druki mazurskie XVI wieku* [Mazurian Prints from the Sixteenth Century], Olsztyn 1948, p. 19.
- 10 E. Laskowska, op. cit., p. 25.
- 11 E. Laskowska, op. cit., p. 72.
- 12 Authors writing about this subject include Ewa Laskowska and Arleta Nawrocka-Wysocka (*Śpiewy protestanckie na Mazurach*, [Protestant Songs in Mazuria, Warszawa 2002]).
- 13 Such as *Neue Sammlung Alter und Neuer Lieder*, published in Królewiec in 1776, or *Psalmen Davids...* from 1647 (I edition).
- 14 Cf.: A. Nawrocka-Wysocka *Śpiewy protestanckie na Mazurach*, op. cit., p. 17.
- 15 In the area she investigated, Ewa Laskowska did not come across even one “Polish Mazur” — a Protestant who knew Polish before 1939.
- 16 ed. Jena 1987.
- 17 E. Laskowska, op. cit., p. 88.
- 18 She was one of Ewa Laskowska’s most important informants.
- 19 *Tradycyjne śpiewy Litwinów w Polsce* [Traditional Songs of Lithuanians in Poland], Warszawa 2002.
- 20 D. Zimnicki, op. cit., p. 57.
- 21 Ibidem, p. 57.
- 22 The favouring in melodies of the third, fifth and sixth steps of the major scale is also of significance.
- 23 A kind of zither, characteristically Lithuanian folk instrument.
- 24 D. Zimnicki, op. cit., p. 36.
- 25 According to Zimnicki, the custom of singing during various kinds of work has been preserved, although there no longer exists a specific repertory typical for “working songs”; this has been replaced by love songs.
- 26 *Portrety muzyków ludowych z Białostoczczyzny* [Portraits of Folk Musicians from the Białystok Area], Białystok 2002.
- 27 Antoni Szalkowski lived in Pogorzalki, and Danuta Woroszyło in the nearby Kobuzie.
- 28 Anna Kozera, op. cit., p. 38.

- 29 The make-up of the group: two accordion players, Szalkowski and Jan Bójko, violin — Antoni Adamski, double bass — Romuald Popławski, drum — Alicja Symbor and clarinet — Adam Kitlas; apart from the accordion players, all self-taught.
- 30 A. Kozera, op. cit., pp. 45, 46.
- 31 Ibidem, no. 6, p. 71.
- 32 Ibidem, p. 52.
- 33 Ibidem, p. 80.
- 34 Ibidem, p. 68.
- 35 Today — according to Ms Woroszyło — “people are not afraid of the devil but of other people” (A. Kozera, op. cit., p. 55)
- 36 Ibidem, p. 50.
- 37 Mircea Eliade, who investigated the beliefs and spiritual culture of traditional societies, introduced the concept of the “Golden Age” into his discussion of the religious basis of traditional cultures. This concept is a model of the ideal primeval time, when mythical ancestors (representing the supranatural world) created order out of chaos through carrying out model actions — this behaviour being the source of life for humans and for nature (*Traktat o historii religii*, Warszawa 1993, chapter XI).
- 38 Jerzy Szacki ‘Tradycja’ in *Encyklopedia Kultury Polskiej XX wieku*, ed. A. Kłoskowska, Wrocław 1991, pp. 205–218.