

Archival Practice as Creation of the Self. The Case of Bronisława Kopczyńska- -Jaworska's Personal Research Archive

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My archive is my testament.¹

Constructing the personal archive mainly consists of a selection process followed (although one is not possible without the other) by the act of integrating the materials into a collection to form a specific image of one's achievements, vision of reality, and the twists and turns of fate. The archive, after all, "has both 'façade' and 'underside' in a dual sense, in that it inevitably alludes to what it in-

¹ W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, P. Bewicz, *Manifest albo dekalog twórcy archiwum prywatnego*, "Archiwa – Kancelarie – Zbiory" 4(6)/2013, p. 232.

cludes and leaves out.”² Spending time with such a collection is even more remarkable if you know the person who put it together with their own hands, driven by their own motives. I have been fortunate enough to accumulate this experience as witness, reader, and scholar of the archive of an ethnographer I knew personally. The archives I have in mind are the papers collected and organized by ethnology professor Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska – my mentor.

Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska

Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska was born in Poznań on May 1, 1924, and she passed away on December 29, 2016 in Łódź. She was an accomplished intellectual figure who spent her career at the ethnology department of the University of Łódź. She is remembered today as a scholar of Carpathian pastoral culture, although her interest extended beyond the Polish elements of this region’s culture. She cultivated this field of Polish ethnology, launching her career in the postwar period and conducting research within the country and throughout Europe (particularly in its Southern and Eastern regions). Through her comparative and focused research on smallholder mountain farming, she was also familiar with areas of Western Europe. Her work anticipated Polish scholarship on the anthropology of the city. Through her deep ties to the French intellectual tradition, she harvested material for developing Polish urban anthropology from Francophone theory and ethnology. She ushered Polish ethnology into the twenty-first century via the 1980s by investing in computerization and

² Interview with E. van Alphen and R. Sendyka, *Performatywne archiwa: od efektu instytucji do praktyki myślenia*, “Didaskalia” 127-128/2015, p. 57.

later on, in the digitalization of research. We can therefore think of her as the creative innovator behind the first on-line bibliographic database in Poland on local ethnology, ethnography, cultural anthropology, and adjacent fields.³

Kopczyńska-Jaworska's archive is complex in terms of its content and form. The papers are stored in binders and portfolios of various colors that together measure several meters in length. The same materials are stored in corresponding computer files. The archive is personal, and I would call it domestic as well. It is kept in the scholar's family home, where she worked and collected materials, particularly after her retirement (in the early 1990s) and toward the end of her life (Kopczyńska-Jaworska passed away in the last days of 2016). She hosted work meetings in her home, and the space taken up by the archive is not partitioned in any prominent way. Binders and portfolios are spread out over two rooms. The materials are organized on shelves according to specific criteria and tucked away in cupboards. Most of the papers are collected in the living room, where she also received guests, relaxed, and worked. A portion of her professional library is kept there as well. Her personal library, consisting of literary works such as memoirs, diaries, and biographies, can be found in a separate room. Memoirs were a particularly beloved genre for Kopczyńska-Jaworska – a fact that may shed some light on her specific approach to memory and commemoration, and on the active interest she took in her family background (she embraced the role of family chronicler). The professor's whole social life was fo-

³ See: www.ptl.info.pl/odie – under the tab "Bibliografia Etnografii Polskiej BEP."

cused in the living room, which doubled as her workspace. She was not a scholar of the hermetic type. Many of her projects called for collaboration and conversation. She had a knack for building and leading groups, and it is entirely probable that she grew into this role as a student by observing her mentor, Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska.

Between Private Archive and Social Archive

The scholar's archive consists of documents pertaining to the development of ethnology and its disciplinary history. Jaworska's archive tells a story of our discipline that is detailed, individualized, and personal. At the same time, it is academic: the product of a scholar thoroughly immersed in her field. The archive conveys ethnology through the lens of Kopczyńska-Jaworska's personal reactions and relationships – relations we can reconstruct on the basis of the archive's letters and documentation of her administrative work in academic institutions or assessing the university's various services. The official documents, more private documents, and other sources of a grassroots nature (letters exchanged with ethnologists, letters to family that broach ethnological questions) all seem to situate Kopczyńska-Jaworska's archive in the realm of social archives (albeit with numerous caveats). The Karta Center (Ośrodek Karta) has offered this definition for this kind of archive: "The social archive is the product of deliberate civic activism. Its main mission is to actively organize for the protection of cultural heritage, and its objective is to acquire, safeguard, study, and make available materials belonging to a non-public archival collection."⁴

⁴ See: http://archiwa.org/as_definicja.php (4.23.2017).

If we consider the scholar's grassroots activities and her documents that reflect the history of her field and constitute its legacy, then Jaworska fulfilled certain obligations facing the social archivist, if only to a certain degree. For as it turns out, this archive does diverge from this genre if we hold it to a second, more exhaustive definition of the social archive: "social archives (SA) typically exist within foundations and institutes, be they military organizations, appreciation societies, local groups, or fan groups. They consist of photographs, recollections, reports, and documents of social life. SAs will often intervene in areas bypassed by national archives, salvaging the histories of social life, local events, and the stories of ordinary people. Some of these archives have a long operating history and have amassed sizeable collections, generally by collaborating with national archival services. The majority, however, are local initiatives only known to a close circle of devotees. It is often amateurs or volunteers who take up this work, although many will go on to professionalize their trade."⁵ Significantly, this particular archive includes qualitative data from research Kopczyńska-Jaworska conducted over several decades.

Self-Description, Self-Testimony

Kopczyńska-Jaworska's archive carries out many functions in tandem and has multiple organizational schemas, due to the nature of its contents. The collection's dynamic is governed by life, material circumstances, and personal preference. This leads to the more general question of the

⁵ K. Ziętał, *Wstęp*, [in:] K. Ziętał (ed.), *Archiwistyka społeczna*, Warsaw, b.d., p. 7, http://archiwa.org/as/as_img/uploaded/Archiwa_spoleczne_podrecznik.pdf (4.23.2017).

freedom of choice available to private archivists as they organize a collection and devise its structure.⁶ Archives may well include personal materials belonging to and/or created by someone other than the author of the archive in question, who may have included social materials. The personal archive has a particularly capacious scope, often including egodocuments, which have been defined by Jacob Presser as sources whose authors are also their subjects. These materials often exceed autobiographical sources strictly and literally defined and go beyond autobiography's definition as a literary genre. Typical egodocuments are self-testaments in the form of daybooks, diaries, and letters. The category also includes subtler traces and notes organized by hand, ranging from calendar notes to marginalia in books, cover blurbs, and so on. Egodocuments not only include data generated by the person in question. They can also be descriptions of a person's life that seemed relevant and significant to the archival subject. They may be administrative documents pertaining to major life events or problems, tickets, pamphlets, newsletters, or postcards. These traces are self-descriptions, for the person collecting them describes themselves through them, just as they do through materials consciously styled as memoirs or diaries. These seemingly trivial notes – ephemeral materials stored and organized unconsciously – are by nature *ad hoc*, prompted on site, by the whim of the moment at hand.⁷ Even when they are impersonal or written for mass addressees, the individual gesture lends

⁶ W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, P. Bewicz, *Manifest albo dekalog...*, p. 226.

⁷ S. Roszak, *Ego-documents – some remarks about Polish and European historiographical and methodological experience*, "Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej" 8/2013, pp. 27–42.

these documents the special weight of a personal memento. As these documents are converted into a mnemonic system of memory aids, they become all the more significant for the individual, her experiences, and the events of her life.

The significance and urgency with which paraphernalia of the outside world are drawn into the personal archive (and the range of these materials) is determined by the archiver's creator. The archivist decides what belongs in the personal archive despite being of outside authorship, and why. Organizing documents according to their authorship, origins, and functions therefore seems less relevant than associating them with a new, defined, and personal principle of order established by the archivist. These decisions are determined by guidelines that constitute the "commandments" of the personal archive. These guidelines may include stipulations that sound like: "V. **It is you** who determines the shape of your archive, [...] X. [...] You know [...], papers are **only** a part of the self-testament a friend leaves behind."⁸ (Emphasis I.B.K.).

Organizing the Archive

Kopczyńska-Jaworska's archive is at once archival collection and estate. These two categories – two logics governing the private archive – are affiliated, hybrid products. They are personal egodocuments and simultaneously tied to qualitative research. In the words of the authors of *Manifesto, or: Commandments for the Private Archivist*:

⁸ W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, P. Bewicz, *Manifest albo dekalog...*, pp. 226-227.

“The private archive consists of archival material created by the archive’s owner (the archival estate) and collected by that same person but created by others (the archival collection). [...] The archival collection is a capacious category that may include discrete archival estates traceable back to authors aside from the archive’s owner and creator. [...] The owner also maintains the right to freely structure this portion of her archive, which will in turn become an archival estate of her own creation.”⁹ To be more precise, “an author’s estate [...] occurs naturally. This means that it emerges unconsciously as the product of chance and as document-remnant that at some point, aided its creator’s work and now, no longer of utilitarian value, has been preserved for other [...] reasons. [...] consisting of archival materials created by its author.”¹⁰ Unlike the archival estate, the collection “is artificial, which is to say, it emerges intentionally and not by chance. It is an artifact – the conscious product of its author.”¹¹

Over the course of more than a dozen years of working with this scholar, mainly in her home office (which I visited regularly from the year 2000 onward), I observed her work on the archive. This was a multi-stage process that she originally carried out independently. Parallel to this work was her intensive genealogical research to reconstruct and record her incredibly rich family history. The

⁹ Ibid, p. 229. In the same passage, the authors note that if the personal archival estate includes the collections or estates of other authors, then the archive’s owner has a “moral obligation to preserve the archive as a discrete whole and maintain its internal structure to the extent that a previous structure exists.”

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 228.

¹¹ Ibid.

younger generation of her family was also involved in this work. As far as I am aware, she wrapped up this project after one or two years. In her archival work, too, she managed to reach a satisfying endpoint.

As time passed, Kopczyńska-Jaworska required help to read documents and sort them into their rightful place within the archive's order (sometimes moving contents or refileing them). She needed help to make catalogs, lists, descriptions and labels. To this end, she recruited young ethnology students born in the 1980s and '90s. Kopczyńska-Jaworska's own career was launched in 1946 when, still a student, she took part in field work that was immediately incorporated into the curriculum of the Ethnography Department at the University of Łódź, which was then under the leadership of its first director, Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska. During her retirement, Kopczyńska-Jaworska sought help from among the youngest cohorts of Łódź ethnology students. By working for the professor, these students were able to get to know a "living witness of the past" and pioneer of the twentieth-century history of our discipline. They also gained access to materials documenting this period. Kopczyńska-Jaworska worked on a wide range of research subjects, several of which she remained invested in throughout her life. One such preoccupation was the work of documenting and archiving the discipline's output. She was partially trained for this work through the library science studies she pursued in the underground faculties of wartime Warsaw. Yet despite the subject's appeal for her, bringing her close to knowledge that Zawistowicz-Adams-

ka also shared, Kopczyńska-Jaworska ultimately moved away from library science. She then continued her study of ethnography with great success at the University of Łódź immediately after the war, in 1946, when Zawistowicz founded the Department of Ethnography at the newly established university. With time, the school transformed into a faculty, and today, it operates as an institute. Jaworska therefore belonged to the first graduating cohort of the Łódź school of ethnology.

About twenty years after founding this institution, Zawistowicz-Adamska got a new idea: she wanted to establish a center to document ethnographers working in Poland, both professionally and as amateurs, and collecting material for exhibitions, conferences, or pedagogy. In 1968, she founded the Center for Ethnographic Documentation and Information. It operated (and continues to operate today) as an independent institution affiliated with the Polish Association of Folk Studies (the oldest and largest association for ethnologic study, which was founded in 1894, and is therefore one of the oldest associations in Poland of any kind). Because of the institutional affiliation of its founder and personnel, the Center was (and is) located at the University of Łódź's Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. The Center's broadly defined objective (to document the entire discipline of ethnology and adjacent fields) was gradually reduced to more focused projects. This was due to the personnel's limited capacities and the gradual increase in the number of ethnologists working in Poland as new research and educational centers, muse-

ums, sites, and clubs emerged within the field. It became increasingly difficult to monitor these activities and collect data as it rapidly proliferated and grew diffuse. As of the 1970s, the Center's main function is to maintain a bibliography of Polish ethnology, ethnography, cultural anthropology, and related fields. Since the 1990s, this has been its sole function. All other projects have been concluded. The Center's bibliography was one of the first of its kind in the Polish humanities to be made available online. As an innovator, Jaworska advocated migrating bibliographies of archaic format online and incorporating new data in real time to keep the medium up to date. She reinvented the database and oversaw the digitalization of bibliographies to ensure they would be accessible to all.

Despite the Center's original objectives when Jaworska began work there (she took over as director after Zawistowicz-Adamska's retirement in 1971), a substantial volume of research remained, much of which pertained to research conducted abroad by Polish ethnologists during the socialist period. The Center was relocated four times (including moves within one building) to follow the Institute, which frequently changed offices (the first move occurred in the 1980s and the subsequent three between 2010 and 2016). For each move, Jaworska was responsible for paring down the Center's holdings. Materials that had been digitized but still existed as hard copies at the Center (conference programs, exhibition flyers, and other ephemera) would be discarded, as would unorganized clippings from socialist-era newspapers from recent years to the present day,

waiting their turn to be sorted and classified. Still other materials were sent to the offices of the affiliated association. Working alongside Jaworska to organize the collection, I observed how she related to materials she herself had once collected or those collected on her suggestion for their potential informative value. As time passed and new media came on the scene (in particular, the Internet as a total archive), former assessments lost their merit.

In practice, these materials never became sources (I myself wonder if we can still treat them as a specific informational resource, despite their being filed away into envelopes and waiting to be indexed). As a limited case, however, they do help us grasp Kopczyńska-Jaworska's approach to documentation – toward that which once interested her and seemed valuable. At the other end of the spectrum, we find documents that never lost the scholar's interest or attention. Among these documents are the letters stored in her archive.

Hybrid Academic Epistolography

Considering the addressee and recipient of these letters, Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska, we might feel inclined to endow these documents with a certain “sacral” quality. After all, they are social sources of the history of ethnology. They convey the evolution of research, interests and the style and methods of work at the Center in Łódź. They explain how personnel was organized, how ethnography was defined, and how these scholars' research interests took shape. At the same time, these documents are personal.

Jaworska transcribed her correspondence with Zawistowicz-Adamska by independently typing it on a computer. This is evident from her signature spelling, which I know well from our own online correspondence. Her letters are complete with footnotes. They are organized chronologically (I was given copies several years ago for safekeeping) from the earliest letter (dated August 12, 1946, coinciding with the department's earliest student research trips to Cieszyn Silesia – Adamska's letter to Jaworska requesting a progress report) to the last saved letter (from Jaworska to Adamska) from April 20, 1982. I do not know if their entire correspondence was transcribed – perhaps Jaworska exercised discretion.

The letters are personal. They contain information pertaining to the lives of both women. On the other hand, they are by no means intimate effusions. Facts of daily life (such as health issues) are discussed in terms of their ramifications for the scholars' work. After all, sickness leads to absence or extended sanatorium stays. Zawistowicz-Adamska, in particular, often had to step away from department life and would depend on Kopczyńska-Jaworska for detailed progress reports. The subject of the letters is therefore not health per se, but professional concerns impacted by the women's physical conditions. The letters also include information about vacations, sabbaticals, and changes in the women's families or personal lives, but these details are also brought up to account for or contextualize trips, visits, or anecdotes.

Descriptions of the emotional states usually triggered by such circumstances are scarce. If the correspondence touched on personal or confidential matters, it was only in a mode of “professional intimacy.” One or the other (more often than not Jaworska) would express her fascination with field work, library “finds,” or academic meetings. Descriptions of these professional milestones do veer towards the emotional. The younger of the two scholars was forthright with her mentor and director about what brought her pleasure in this work, what she felt was necessary, and what seemed wrong (or right) in her thinking after meeting or consulting with others.

The correspondence is sincere and even warm: they close the letters with “hugs” or “kisses” and address them “Dear Miss” or “Dear Professor” (if Jaworska was writing) or “Dear Ms. Bronka” (if Zawistowicz was writing). Adamska signed her letters “Kazimiera Zawistowicz” or with the initials “KA,” “Your KA,” or “K. Za-Ad.” Are there traces of a growing familiarity in their rapport over forty years of letters? Yes and no. From the outset, they address one another with real sincerity, as evidenced by the names they use, which are consistent throughout the correspondence. Jaworska almost always signs her letters “Bronka,” with the exception of her student years, when she included her maiden name (“Bronka Kopczyńska”). After marrying, she sometimes (albeit rarely) wrote “Bronka Jaworska” but usually gave only her first name or initials.

Jaworska sent letters to Zawistowicz during several weeks of fieldwork in Slovakia in 1957, while she conducted comparative research on pastoral and smallholder farming. In one such letter, she voices concern for her supervisor, inquiring about her health and expressing hope that Adamska would from time to time think of her “ethnographic daughter.” This moniker, however, is not meant to be self-deprecating or to infantilize their rapport. It is a gesture of compassion and respect. In her letters, Jaworska recounts the stages of her ethnographic journey. The correspondence confirms that the scholar was highly self-aware. In a letter written from Slovakia, Jaworska admits that she only feels that she is in “her proper place” when she follows her Slovakian colleagues into the field. She wonders if she is making the most of her trip and answers her own question in the affirmative (letter from July 30, 1957, sent from Ružomberok). This analytical mode and tone are signature features of Jaworska’s letters to Zawistowicz that remain consistent throughout their correspondence. We discern the same signs in a response to a letter from Adamska written in 1946 and addressed under care of Kopczyńska to a group doing fieldwork. Bronka Kopczyńska, then a young student, signs her response with great zeal and gusto as “field researcher.” In no way was this the braggadocio of a rookie. It does, however, denote a sense of being swept away with the adventure of fieldwork, finally immersed among real people. On the other hand, it reveals Kopczyńska’s analytical instinct. In this same letter, she poses the following question (to herself more so than to Zawistowicz): “If you ask me, it’s

the subject that excites me. The relationship these people have to their huts is so strong. They tell stories of the abolition of land easements in 1853 as if they happened only yesterday. Intuitively, I feel we should support of this way of life. Still, I'm curious... from the perspective of rational, planned agriculture, how would we interpret this same situation?" This letter reveals Kopczyńska's absorption in her work and her ability to discern multiple contexts at once. These letters do not wax sentimental, although they are marked by certain genuine emotions felt by the correspondents, particularly with regard to their work. The distance between them collapsed over time when Jaworska decided to pursue an academic career. Fully immersed in her studies, she became a core member of the academic and university community. She gradually became Zawistowicz's collaborator and assistant and later on, her successor and confidant in professional (and occasionally personal) matters. This diminishing distance between them did not mean that they "let down their guards" or grew truly intimate in their letters. Jaworska was consistently discreet when it came to private matters. She tended to withhold personal judgment and opinion. If she did open up, it would only be in response to the situation at hand. Whenever she felt it was necessary, she would express herself outright.

The letters describing professional matters often touch on issues of their personal rapport with others in the field. The correspondents refer to these people by surname or initials. The anecdotes they exchange are run-of-the-mill office af-

fairs that are commonplace in university or research settings (reports, reviews, publications, and so on). At other times, however, the letters reference anxieties or misunderstandings in their immediate or wider community. They also allude to excellent work situations where all collaborators are in agreement. In a word, these acclaimed specialists and experts in the field were people, too. They judged one another and responded to one another emotionally. I will not try to reproduce this “sensational” or “gossipy” tone, and I will refrain from citing examples here. These motifs simply confirm what I have already suggested: scholarship is not a strictly reflexive activity but a social and political one (using the definition of “politics” endemic to this field). I will wrap up my comments on their correspondence by citing one of Jaworska’s letters to Zawistowicz: “I’ve heard enough of all this gossiping. For the hundredth time, I’ll say it again – mind your own business, or be damned [...]” (letter from September 23 of 1956). For me, this sentence vividly captures the human side of scholarship and scholars.

A consistent trademark of Zawistowicz-Adamska’s writing style is her tendency to inquire about Jaworska’s health, research, work, and daily work. Her most detailed questions pertain to specific projects they or their colleagues were working on. She also brings up (if sparingly) her own home life and welfare, for Jaworska often assisted her in these areas, particularly when Zawistowicz-Adamska would leave town for health reasons. Zawistowicz-Adamska was widowed shortly after the war and lived alone in Łódź, as her extended family lived outside of Warsaw.

She forged close ties with her friends, who often became a kind of second family. This was the case with Jaworska's family and several other colleagues from the Łódź Ethnology Department. Their rapport went beyond the impersonal working relationship of supervisor and subordinate. At the time, the department's team of ethnographers amounted to only a small circle, and there were no substantive student groups. In light of Zawistowicz's personality as director and human, this led to the increased familiarity I have mentioned. Perhaps this familiarity was strongest between Jaworska and Zawistowicz, and Jaworska was the only one to receive such trust and compassion. This would be understandable. After all, no one doles out sympathy to all parties indiscriminately. Respect, however, is another question. It introduces a uniform standard of discipline and courtesy to all social relations.

These letters certainly merit more discussion, particularly with regard to their emotional and analytical lexicon, for they render visible the discourse developed between the two scholars to narrate their own work, their collaborations, and their academic ambitions. It would also be interesting to analyze how their professional self-awareness and work ethic took shape over time, particularly with regard to field work. Kopczyńska-Jaworska jotted down snippets, images, and notes about her work on the fly in her letters to Adamska. It would be interesting to read this content alongside "official" materials rendered objective in the form of Jaworska's published research. Her work on the letters is also documented elsewhere in the archive.

One last theme worth investigating in these and other letters (such as those addressed to her family from the field) is the question of whether Jaworska's particular skills and intellectual approach (assets that visibly mature over the course of her correspondence) are reflected in the ethnography textbook she published.¹² When it came out, the textbook was the only original Polish textbook written by a professional ethnographer and practitioner with decades of experience. The material she drew from included her research conducted abroad, which was extensive, comparative, and case-based. The publications we use today tend to be translations of mainly Anglophone writers (this has been the case since the 1990s). We cannot call this material ethnographic literature in the strict sense of the genre. These are scholarly guidebooks, literary surveys, and textbooks designed for students of social studies broadly construed. They are also relevant for anyone who uses ethnographic methods in their work, even those who may not formally identify as ethnographers.

The collection of letters discussed here form only one-hundredth of Kopczyńska-Jaworska's academic archive. Ernst van Alphen's notion of "performative archives"¹³ – archives understood as process – is relevant here. Van Alphen hit upon a critical property of archives: for him, they are more than institutions tasked with safeguarding sources. They exceed the heritage they docu-

¹² B. Kopczyńska-Jaworska, *Metodyka etnograficznych badań terenowych*, Warsaw, Łódź 1971. With this textbook, the author drew from her 25 years of experience conducting field work, including research conducted in the city. It bears repeating that Kopczyńska-Jaworska had a direct hand in advancing urban anthropology in Poland.

¹³ Interview with E. Van Alphen and R. Sendyka, *Performatywne archiwa...*

ment. Archives not only store and conserve; they reflect and determine how we think. They materialize thought. In this sense, we can describe them in terms of their content and form and on a metalevel as well. This suggests that archives reflect a specific cultural state, although in this case, they reflect the state of a discipline consolidated in the work of one person and her archive. As I have mentioned already, these materials are personal. They are egodocuments that reflect qualitative and social research while embodying other selves and the sources ascribed to them. Kopczyńska-Jaworska's archive reveals how she organized her own thinking as well as the mental approach of the discipline she represented. The result is a particular archival estate-collection accumulated in real time over the course of a career, reflecting course corrections as the author gained new insight with experience.

Translated by Eliza Cushman Rose