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Intangible cultural heritage in practice Between appreciation and appropriation¹

*Praktykowanie niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego
Między docenianiem a przywłaszczaniem*

Introduction

Cultural heritage constitutes an imperative for many practices of a more or less formalised nature. These activities currently have a global dimension, and in being a part of this trend, Poland is no exception. Activities carried out by institutions of local, regional, state or, finally, international scope – including, in particular, those initiated by UNESCO – mobilise many communities. Efforts to ensure the reliable implementation of the directives contained in the programmes on the protection and promotion of cultural heritage development are the responsibility of numerous entities, and the management of cultural assets is a key factor determining the success of the activities undertaken (Kobyliński 2020). The analysis of the practices carried out in this field has prompted numerous milieus, including the academia, to revise their previous

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ways of thinking about cultural heritage and its practice and to initiate critical studies on heritage and its role in contemporary culture (Dziadowiec-Greganić 2020: 41–73).

Raised in the current discourse on the role of cultural heritage is a number of important issues that require deep reflection and consideration on how to fulfil this potential. Fundamental among these issues pertain to the perception of cultural heritage as a process; one constructed in a continuous cycle of selecting and valuing those of its resources that meet the needs of stakeholders (Ashworth 2015). This is precisely the position I adopt as central to the present reflections.

Another aspect relates to the fact that cultural heritage has an intangible dimension, even though it may manifest itself in the form of material artefacts, and its nature is dynamic, temporal, which fact affects the difficulty of identifying and “capturing” it and consequently requires different cultural resource management practices than the ones applied hitherto (Smith 2006; 2016).

A further important factor that is worthy of attention in cultural heritage activities is the now widespread commodification of cultural assets. Responsible for this commodification is the market economy, which is perceived as one of the greatest threats to the survival of cultural heritage. The fact that cultural heritage is given a commercial dimension results in many consequences, chief among which is the transformation and codification of cultural content so as to reduce it to a commodity with an exchange value. These practices can most easily be captured in the field of tourism (Mikos von Rohrscheidt 2021). The commercial nature of activities that exploit cultural heritage results in the manipulation of its qualities desired by the public, especially the labelling of cultural heritage with characteristics such as “originality” or “authenticity”. Seeking sources of income in cultural heritage can lead to hyperactivity in the invention, and commodification, of its content, which translates into the processes of constant searching for, inventing, and ultimately “producing” its resources. This has been pointed out by Gregory Ashworth: “As heritage is a demand-derived set of contemporary uses constructed as required then the resources of which it is composed have no limits other than the limits of the human creative imagination. There can be no question of resource shortage or depletion: the resource is ubiquitous and can be created according to the demand for it” (Ashworth 2012: 283). This process refers to actions taken by stakeholders directed at their own needs, as well as to practices that aim to disseminate cultural heritage beyond the native environment. These activities often involve the above-mentioned commodification of content, the standardisation of content, and the elimination of the original context in which cultural heritage existed in favour of new requirements. At the same time, the exploitation of cultural heritage in global circulation often results in alienation processes in the native environment, and limited access makes it a scarce commodity. This may provoke deliberation on the need to protect one’s own cultural resources and to limit outsiders’ access to them, to which issue I will return to later in the text.

In view of the above ascertainments, it should be assumed that special attention in the study of the contemporary role of cultural heritage should be directed towards the initiators of activities centring on this heritage. Therefore, the aim of this text is to analyse the issues related to its practice in the context of the position of stakeholders in this process. The analysis focuses on selected aspects concerning the nomination of cultural heritage bearers and the bearers' attitude to the cultural heritage at their disposal and to the tasks that result from the role they assumed. Concurrently, the analysis of the source materials provokes the questions whether there exists a line between appreciating one's own or other communities' heritage and appropriating it, and whether there exists someone who draws such a line.

These theoretical considerations are referred to selected examples of handicraft and craft skills that are used in activities aimed at the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. The lively activity concerning the dissemination and promotion of these skills is largely linked to the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the establishment of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In a broader perspective, the article sheds light on issues pertaining to cultural heritage management and the empowerment of the local community in the related processes.

The source material used in the implementation of the adopted objective consisted of (a) existing material in the form of literature on the subject and excerpts from the application for entry on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of embroidery traditions from Gorzeń Wielki, and (b) material elicited in 2023 during field research conducted among the bearers of cultural heritage of Cieszyn Silesia and course members at the Cieszyn School of Crafts. This material was collected using ethnographic tools: interview and participant observation.

Who does heritage belong to and who has the right to administer its resources? Extracts from theoretical considerations

One of the key dilemmas that arises in the practice of heritage is the answer to the question of who can/should use/practise heritage, i.e. use and modify it to suit their own needs – needs which are, as indicated earlier, diverse. Attempting to resolve these issues seems important from the perspective of participation in activities that make use of cultural heritage, because the practice of cultural heritage takes place on many levels and participation in activities is not always accompanied by reflection on what constitutes the object of these activities, even though, as put by Krzysztof Pomian, "there is no heritage without the consciousness of heritage" (Pomian 2010: 38).²

² All citations from non-English-language sources have been translated solely for the purpose of the present article.

As noted by Zbigniew Kobyliński, the answer to the above questions “from the point of view of the theory and practice of heritage resource management, is extremely difficult to give. There is no unanimity in this regard among the authors concerned, and the multiplicity and intensity of the conflicts arising around this issue testify to its complexity” (Kobyliński 2011:28). This is confirmed by the concepts on the ownership of cultural heritage as gathered by Sherry Hutt, which include the following theoretical positions:

- the moralist stance: cultural heritage should be the property of its creators and their heirs;
- the internationalist stance: heritage is the property of all mankind;
- the nationalist stance: heritage should belong to the nation and its highest value is determined by its place of origin;
- the primacy-of-law theory: ownership of heritage is determined by the state of the law and the principle of respecting legal property rights;
- the primacy-of-science theory, which proclaims the right to knowledge, and therefore to conduct scholarly research that is made available to all humanity;
- the primacy-of-market theory, which is based on the principles of the free market and the resulting free trade (Hutt 2004).

This wealth of proposals makes Zbigniew Kobyliński put forward his own solution. Having taken a fundamental assumption that none of the above positions is sufficiently valid, he considers as expedient “the theory of common ownership, the consequence of which is the principle of free access to the value of cultural heritage” (Kobyliński 2011: 29). Of course, this option does not solve the problems, and often conflicts, generated by the use of cultural heritage, because heritage always belongs to someone. In the face of global networks and dependencies, there will be communities that have a strong attachment to their own cultural heritage as an emblem of identity, and any use of it outside the community, or without its consent, will raise a sense of threat to the community’s cohesion and a fear of its assets being lost.

The regulation of intellectual property rights is also still problematic, especially in the context of intangible heritage, which was created in the process of intra-generational cultural transmission and in the process of anonymity of its specific creators. An additional obstacle in this regard appears to be the difficulty of enforcing these legal regulations, which would have to be carried out by the community to which the cultural heritage belongs. This, in turn, generates the need for a leader to emerge to represent the interests of the heritage bearers, and often also for a financial outlay associated with the legal procedure for claiming ownership. In the face of such challenges, many communities remain vulnerable, despite attempts at providing them with legislative safeguards being carried out both at the state level and internationally, including in legislation being drafted by UNESCO or ICOMOS (Kobyliński 2011: 29–27).

The above conclusions confirm that the issue of the role of heritage bearers should be at the centre of the heritage discourse. In addition, according to the dominant trend in recent years, delineated principally by the 2003 UNESCO Conventions for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the primary condition in any activity undertaken around heritage is the empowerment of local communities. The bearers' participatory and dialogical involvement in heritage preservation activities becomes fundamental, and the spontaneous, "bottom-up" initiative at the community or individual level, represented by the sphere of NGOs and private actors, assumes (or should assume) a leading role. And this is often the case, as confirmed by research (Czerwińska 2016: 41–52).

The genuineness of the actions initiated is determined by the people's direct involvement based on emotional relationships connected to and identifying with a particular manifestation of heritage. The amount of creative and organisational work that has to be put into the practice of cultural heritage, including into the acquisition of financial resources for the projects undertaken, leads to the conclusion that this heritage represents a significant value for the bearer community and its integrity. The contact that occurs between cultural heritage and its bearers is direct, and the bonds with the legacy of generations are based not only on knowledge of one's own heritage but also, indeed to a greater extent, on an emotional attitude towards this heritage. On the basis of these emotions arise a need to know and also – often as a result – a desire to share the knowledge gained with others and to disseminate it in the wider world. Antonina Kłoskowska calls this category the "primordial arrangement of culture", in which the transmissibility of cultural content is based on direct relations between members of a given community, which are informal and based on the unity of experience. Kłoskowska attributes an extremely important role to this arrangement: "The social importance of symbolic culture, which arises and is put into practice in small, permanent primary groups and social circles, remains incomparably more momentous because of the scope and character of this culture" (Kłoskowska 1983: 324).

At the same time, and this is worth remembering, the practising of a heritage may also be a source of threat to the communities' sense of identity; it may cause certain animosities, or even conflicts, to arise. This is because the heritage is "reached for" by both its bearers, to whom it belongs, and by "foreign" subjects, ones from outside the community. For the latter, this heritage becomes a source of inspiration and a potential for action, it appears as a reservoir of elements whose provenance is formed in a particular place, i.e. the local environment, but the right to use it expands and goes beyond its borders, becoming a national or, more broadly, a universal asset. The situations in question arise especially in the context of the process of transforming heritage into a commercial product or a tourist service. These situations give rise to disputes concerning the changes introduced in content and/or form, as well as referring to the "uprooting" of cultural heritage from its indigenous context and its use in

a different way than originally. These phenomena are, not infrequently, accompanied by a shift from cultural appreciation to cultural appropriation (Grzybczyk 2021: 23–64).

Natural questions that arise in the context of the above observations are as follows: Who is a bearer of heritage and what rights/obligations result from this position? Can solely a person who is a member of a given community by birth become a bearer of heritage – or does anyone who accepts a given heritage resource as his or her own, and who identifies with it, become its bearer?³ Does not an emotional relationship with, and appreciation of, a heritage resource, which often becomes an imperative for action, have more power in the process of nominating bearers? And finally, can bearers appropriate/limit access to heritage resources; do they have the right to do so?

What is behind the theory? Materials from fieldwork

The questions I have posed correlate with the many initiatives that are being carried out in the field of heritage conservation. The already mentioned 2003 UNESCO Convention has had a great influence on initiating such actions. The status of this document causes a desire to participate in activities that popularise and support the vitality of selected expressions of cultural heritage, especially through the inclusion of its resources in the prestigious National List of Intangible Heritage, which is the first step to apply for inclusion in the world list. The fact of being listed is so momentous that it influences the continuing trend of viewing cultural heritage as an important element in shaping community identity, both at the local and national level. Cultural heritage is therefore an important source of inspiration and is used in educational and cultural activities, as well as by the commercial market of goods and services.

The identification of heritage resources at the level of local culture ensures their vitality and can stimulate activities that support their further dissemination, especially in their native environment. Such activities include the process of place branding; the brand is then used on many levels, including activities related to business, education and entertainment. It is not surprising, therefore, that efforts to apply for national listing attract intense interest among the many stakeholder groups that are obliged to proceed with the application.⁴ These activities require the local community to mobilise,

3 These are the questions that have been with me since the public consultations conducted parallel to the efforts to have the Upper Silesian coal miners' 'St Barbara celebrations (Barbórka) entered into the National List of Intangible Heritage, which took place at the Guido Coal Mine in Zabrze in 2018. At the time, I was having a discussion with Professor Wojciech Świątkiewicz, an eminent Silesian sociologist, as to whether, being Silesians, we had the right to feel that we were the bearers of these traditions. After all, each of us, although not a miner, had miners in the family or in close neighbourhood, and in a natural way the cultural heritage of those bearers was part of our everyday life.

4 The growing number of entries in the National List of Intangible Heritage attests to the popularity of such actions; as per 8 Dec. 2023, the List contained 85 objects. Acquired from: <http://niematerialne.nid.pl/niematerialne-dziedzictwo-kulturowe/krajowa-lista-niematerialnego-dziedzictwa-kulturowego/>.

a leader to be selected as the contact person for the application, public consultations to be conducted, the application to be prepared, and the measures to ensure the viability of the given heritage resource in the future to be adopted. Meeting the obligatory requirements may generate numerous difficulties connected with carrying out the formal tasks, but it may also raise problematic issues regarding who has the right to decide to apply for listing and who will decide the future fate of the heritage if it is listed. This process, obviously, takes place with the participation of the bearer community and on the basis of public consultation; but someone has to initiate and supervise the necessary actions. The appointment of a leader and his/her commitment and personal attitude towards heritage are the binding factors for the whole process.

The above topics emerged in, among others, the application for the inclusion of Dobrzeń embroidery in the National List of Intangible Heritage that was submitted to me for an opinion. The application was presented to the Council for Intangible Cultural Heritage, which decided to additionally use expert opinions in making its decision.

The embroidery submitted for inclusion in the National List is an example of a skill that constitutes a part of the cultural heritage of Dobrzeń Wielki, a village located in Opole Silesia. This embroidery was once associated with clothing decoration, but in later decades, under the influence of civilisational changes, it became independent and functions as a manifestation of native handicraft. According to the initiator of the application, these traditions are firmly rooted among the bearer community and the current efforts to preserve their vitality constitute an important factor in the local community's identification. These considerations argued in favour of granting the application. At the same time, however, some concerns arose that needed to be taken into account.

The main objection referred to the name of the heritage element as formulated in the application. Embroidery made in Dobrzeń belongs to embroidery traditions known from the Opole district and, more broadly, from the Opole Land. It uses techniques and motifs common to the region. It is difficult to identify its specific features which would allow it to be singled out – and neither did the bearers identified them aptly in the application, as at some points they referred to the wider heritage of the region: the Opole Land or even Upper Silesia, and elsewhere they restricted its presence to the heritage of the place, i.e. Dobrzeń Wielki. The embroidery traditions referred to in the application as *dobrzeńskie*, that is originating from, or belonging to, Dobrzeń Wielki, have not developed original ideological and formal solutions that would allow them to be singled out among the group of embroideries present in the region. For example, one of the motifs present in it is a rose in intense violet, blue or orange colours, typical to, and highlighted as original for, the Opole Land. This was the most serious shortcoming of the submitted application, one that undermined its validity.

On the basis of specialist literature on the subject and the artefacts preserved in museums, it is difficult to uphold the notion of the Dobrzeń embroidery being a distinctive type. The application points to embroideries on bonnets that are in the collection

of the Opole Museum as the main source of heritage continued by the local community. The surviving data indicate that these bonnets indeed came from Dobrzeń; this does not mean, however, that they were made in this very village and not elsewhere. They may as well have found their way to Dobrzeń because the women who owned them had migrated there. Let it be recalled that we are talking about single artefacts in a museum collection. Embroidery traditions that are currently being creatively continued in the village are admirable, but they do not constitute a sufficient argument to limit their occurrence to one place. Such a conclusion constitutes, at least in part, an appropriation of the heritage of areas where this handicraft continues and is used in many different animation activities in the region. The recent project "Design and Patterns of the Regions" related to the Opole embroidery, carried out by the St. Anne's Land Association together with Cieszyn Castle in 2022, is worth mentioning here as an example. This project involved, among others, a series of workshops for women folk artists and the creation of a pattern book on Opole embroidery. It is worth mentioning that Dobrzeń embroidery was not specified in this document.

On the basis of the above facts, it should be assumed that the handicraft skills under discussion constitute a part of the embroidery traditions of the Opole Land, with particular reference to the Opole district. This means that, in this case, it would have been appropriate for the application to be submitted by a wider range of bearers from other localities in the Opole Land. However, this did not happen, and by the decision of the Council for Intangible Cultural Heritage, the "Embroidery traditions in Dobrzeń Wielki" were entered on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2023.

The establishment of the School of Crafts project run by Cieszyn Castle in 2023, as well as participation in its courses, were also accompanied by debates. For ten months (from March to December), in six separate studios, the School's students acquired skills in the crafts of wool processing, bookbinding, gunsmithing, wickerwork, woodcarving and Koniaków lace making. Alongside the acquisition of skills related to specific crafts, classes were held to support the process of developing local crafts, exploring new forms of using them and business modules (e.g. on running one's own business or building a brand – <https://zamekcieszyn.pl/pl/arttykul/projekt-cieszynska-szkola-rzemiosl-1299>). The Castle website reads: "The Cieszyn School of Crafts was established to protect the craft tradition of our region and to pass it on to the next generation". In striving towards this noble goal, the organisers of the School faced numerous challenges, including the question of who would be the beneficiaries of the School. In fact, this question concerned the positions of both the experts – the teachers, and the students.⁵ Guided by a number of factors, the organisers decided on open recruitment, which attracted 260 persons from all over Poland and even from

⁵ Due to the main theme adopted in the text, I focus only on those aspects of School's operation that are related to the issue addressed herein.

abroad. Interest in participating in the School exceeded the expectations, so in addition to the thirty persons selected as full participants, an additional twenty-five were admitted as freelance participants. Among the School's students there were residents of Cieszyn Silesia, i.e. potential bearers of the local cultural heritage, as well as persons from outside the region who for various reasons wanted to acquire craft skills.

Equally problematic was the issue of selecting studios and masters open to the process of teaching and sharing their craft with students, i.e. members of the next generation. This was because not all craftspeople approved of the idea of teaching, and thus passing on locally-formed handicraft skills, to pupils who did not come from Cieszyn Silesia. One local cultural animator, an embroideress, puts it this way:

Only a few women embroider in our place now, but I don't support this idea of revealing our ways to outsiders. Why should they need that? They copy [our work] later and we get nothing out of it. And now, recently, it has become popular again to use white bonnets [in wedding ceremonies], and they are decorated with our embroidery. We must create conditions to teach our women and children, leave [this craft] to them, and not let it go out into the world. The idea of such a school is good, but it should be addressed to our community, here in Istebna, Jaworzynka or Koniaków. And not in Cieszyn, where [this craft] has never been [practised].

In the end, a studio for Beskidy Mountains cross-stitch embroidery was not opened, but a master of another local handicraft, the Koniaków lace making, was recruited from the area. The task was undertaken by Mariola Wojtas, who describes her participation in the project as follows:

I heard about the School on the radio, and my first thought then was: I would like to be there; I felt that this was it. That it would be done well from A to Z. When I got the call from the Castle offering me the opportunity to take part, I immediately agreed. Somewhere inside me I had the thought that this was it. And it was, and I run a lot of workshops, and I always have to prepare individually, because I never know who is going to come and whether some person would not have [taken part] already. And I am very demanding and I think the basics have to be well mastered if you want to make lace. Any lace.

The enthusiasm that accompanied the opening of the School was not shared by everyone. The leader of the lace-making community, Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut, who heads the Koniaków Lace Centre in Koniaków, did not agree to participate in the project. As her main counter-arguments, she cited the need to support local lace-makers and their own initiatives, and the need to solve local, ongoing problems arising from the implementation of her activities. This is what she says about the School:

I believe that lace should be supported here, locally. We have almost 700 women lace-makers and this is a rarity. Nowhere in the region is handicraft so vibrant and

initiatives need to be taken for these women, not for other people. If we had just a few women lace-makers and lace-making was a dying craft, then it would be a different thing. We would be looking for people who wanted to learn. Then we would have to do everything to preserve the traditions. Additionally, and I think this is unfair, participants in the School get business support and our lace-makers do not. And such reinforcement should be directed at them. (...) I have nothing against popularising lace outside the region, though. People know of us, but not everywhere. So all in all, it is good that lace has found its way to the School. There is enough work for us, and everyone will find a place. (...) I too run workshops at the Centre, for people who come to Koniaków from all over.

An entry on the Koniaków Lace Centre website, enthusiastically advertising the School and the lace-making studio, is a confirmation of this standpoint (<https://centrumkorkonikoniakowskiej.pl/szkola-rzemiosl/>).

An idea buttressing the stance adopted by the leader of the lace-makers was to create a brand of a location from which lace originated. Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut initiated this venture by filing an application with the Patent Office for a geographical indication of the making of Koniaków lace (<https://eprofil.pue.uprp.gov.pl/public/registry/view/G.0006>), with Cieszyn Silesia designated as the place of its occurrence. This is the first industrial designation in Poland to be granted to intangible cultural heritage, and this is what the person responsible for the achievement says about her venture:

I want to promote lace and at the same time to protect it wisely, prudently. Our tradition needs to be safeguarded. And counterfeiting is a real threat if one wants to take a product to European or world markets. That is why I put forward this idea. Now no one will be able to use the name or our designs except us. (...) Initially, I wanted to name only Koniaków as the location point for the tradition, but many women function within the region, for either they have married into other villages or learnt from someone who used to live here. (...) this is an extremely important moment for our tradition, because I want to go out into the world with lace, and such a strategy has to be well thought out to make the most of the potential of lace. I will be able to represent not only Koniaków lace, and [the village of] Koniaków, but also Poland.⁶

This action aroused mixed feelings among the lace-makers themselves; some of them expressed full approval for the protection of tradition and their own interests, while others saw it as an attempt to appropriate traditions shaped and passed down through generations, a kind of attack on a shared asset:

I would like to know by what right she has patented the lace and what this really means. Lace is made by a number of people, is the patent supposed to protect only those who make it for the Centre? Because that cannot be the case. What is needed now is

⁶ See in more detail on the Facebook profile Koronki Koniakowskie [Koniaków Lace]: <http://www.facebook.com/stela.stamtela>.

information on what this means. Because if the lace is supposed to be only for Konia-ków, then no one can run workshops, not even at the Centre.

Similarly perplexed were the students of the School of Crafts, who, according to the patent designation, have no right to commercially use the skills they acquired there. Restrictions that have been introduced trigger reflection on heritage property rights among other project participants as well, and the lack of unanimity on the issue reinforces the view that this dilemma may perhaps not be resolved at all.

A completely different message concerning the ownership of cultural heritage is conveyed by the Serfenta Association, which focuses its activities on basketry and wickerwork⁷ and conducts a workshop dedicated to these skills at the School of Crafts. The master basket-weavers, Paulina Adamska, Łucja Cieślar and Katarzyna Kowalska, believe that cultural heritage achieved by generations of craftspeople belongs to the subsequent generations, because it has been developed as a community skill and each successive group of its inheritors co-creates this process and conveys the expertise onward. Łucja Cieślar puts it this way:

I am strongly conscious of the generational chain in the transmission of the craft of basketry. I believe in it very much. And when I think that the oldest basket is 10,000 years old and someone passed that skill on to someone, and this person passed it on to someone else, and again to someone else... and now we are weaving [a basket] here at Serfenta and passing the skill on to others, it moves me deeply. And I feel that we are in a cultural chain of heritage transmission, so to speak.

And Katarzyna Kowalska adds:

In the modern world everything merges together; when travelling all over the world, I learn how basket-weaving is done in various places, what materials they use. One must be aware of what is made, and where, and how, and must respect this. If I use this in my work, [use] those techniques in other solutions, I do not take them away from anyone, but pass them on.

Other students at the School share similar reflections. This is the view expressed by Roman Lalicki, one of the students at the Gunsmithing Studio:

Craftsmanship is a process, a constant evolution. Our master makes *cieszynka* guns, but he too does it differently than in the past. He uses modern tools, but [the gun] still remains a tradition of this school and a product of human hands. And the question that arises here is how much of a *cieszynka* is there in a *cieszynka*? As long as

⁷ See in more on the Serfenta Association website: <http://serfenta.pl/basketry-shop-baskets-bags-and-woven-beautiful-products/>.

[its making] involves creative work based on the traditions of the craft, it doesn't matter where or who does it. What matters is the tradition, and the tradition evolves, every new maker always does something his own way, otherwise he would not be a creator. (...) I am learning and developing, improving. And if I exhibit and maybe sell my *cieszynka* guns outside Cieszyn, in the Euro-Zone, I will show the Cieszyn tradition to the world, and only then can it survive. (...) and even if someone, for example, tries to make a *cieszynka* in France, so what? This is not competition, this will be good, because he will continue this tradition and promote it.

As can be seen from the above statements, the ownership of cultural heritage or the right to decide on its use in action depends on a number of factors. Crucial is, first and foremost, the way in which cultural heritage and the limits of its ownership (which may be limited to a local, regional or ethnic community, a nation or a state) are perceived. A stance that may also emerge is that cultural heritage belongs to everyone, in which case no boundaries exist and heritage becomes the property of humanity. After all, concludes Łucja Cieślak from the Serfenta Association, this is what must happen if the crafts are to survive and the continuity of heritage is to be preserved:

Crafts must [find] a new way. This does not mean that the old ways of maintaining craftsmanship are bad, but a craft must adopt a new form, must go beyond the open-air-museum formula of an exhibit that is merely viewed. Otherwise, it will die, it will not interest anyone. (...) Each of the participants in the School sees something different in craftsmanship, and [what they see] are those new ways of craftsmanship. I believe in experiencing a craft, we teach [the students] the skills, and what they will do with them is precisely that new way.

Of utmost importance here is the way in which the process of transmitting, creating and participating in heritage is approached as a communal activity, connecting not only groups of people in synchronic terms, but also the numerous generations participating in this process in a diachronic perspective. A conclusion to these considerations – and a petition with which it would be difficult not to agree – is provided by Zbigniew Kobyliński, who adopts the position that

cultural heritage must be public property in the sense that everyone should have equal access to the spiritual values that this heritage contains. However, this does not necessarily mean the expropriation of the private owners of the individual objects that make up cultural heritage. Indeed, from the point of view of the idea of free access, it is not important who owns the substance of an object in the legal sense, as long as the exercise of this property right does not infringe on the public interest. However, it is thus also clear that the individual property rights of cultural heritage objects must be limited: the use of these objects must take into account the principle of public ownership of their intangible values (Kobyliński 2011: 38).

At the same time, and this must be emphasised following Kobyliński, it is important to remember that when something belongs to everyone, this is not tantamount to unlimited free access to heritage resources. It happens, after all, that the absence of defined and designated bearers of cultural heritage is perceived as this heritage being “ownerless” (Carman 2005: 120–121). This, consequently, gives rise to the supposition that anyone can freely reach for this heritage and have it at their disposal. In this process, to paraphrase the statements of many participants in the School of Crafts, it is important to respect the past, to approach cultural heritage (in their case – the crafts) and the work of predecessors with humility and openness, but also to explore this heritage creatively and thus to develop it. These conclusions seem to reach far beyond craftsmanship and touch on the very essence of what it is to be human.

Conclusion

Practising cultural heritage is a dynamic process, dependent on the origin and social position of the group or person, but also the political and historical situation (Lubaś 2008: 15). This means that the activities carried out in this field provide an opportunity to implement the protection of one’s own cultural resources and to disseminate them, but at the same time allow for the realisation of objectives that are not always in line with the accepted assumptions of doctrinal documents dedicated to heritage. Cultural heritage itself is the object of discourse and creation, participated in by social actors. In the process of constructing heritage, what is considered important and meaningful for the identity of the group is adopted, whereas anything that does not conform to the self-portrait of the group at a given time is rejected. The instrumentalisation of cultural heritage in this respect amounts to the reinforcement of the content and the forms of its resources as much as to the perpetuation of inequalities, including the domination of the majority group or the imbalanced development of privileged spheres, when stakeholders exploit their position in the name of vested interests. In this process, the boundary between the appreciation and the appropriation/exploitation of cultural heritage is precarious and mutable.

Cultural heritage is not private property, nor the property of any other group nominated as bearers in the process of its practice. Following the oft-quoted Zbigniew Kobyliński, I argue that it constitutes

a res usus publicum or, in other words, a *res communis usus* – public property, i.e. common property in the broadest sense of the word. This is because no one should be excluded from the chance of “consuming” cultural goods, and the consumption of these goods by one person should not exclude the possibility of the same goods being “consumed” by other people (Kobyliński 2011: 36).

The implication of wide access to cultural heritage, however, does not absolve anyone, especially its bearers, from the need to manage its resources with respect for the past and in recognition of human values. Nowadays, when cultural heritage has become an essential element of cultural policy, every citizen is a heritage stakeholder and thus is responsible for its practice. An additional task falls on institutional agencies, who should not so much control this process as support it substantively and financially. Only then can the strategic goals of documenting, disseminating and promoting cultural heritage, undertaken “bottom-up” by local communities, be successfully attained. This is because although cultural heritage is always individual, the process of shaping and using it makes it collective. Also, only then can the cumulative aims of the community be reached through heritage. During the process of its inheriting, heritage is communitised (Ashworth 2015: 108).

Managing cultural heritage is an extremely difficult task, since although it may constitute an opportunity to break down barriers in the public consciousness and may trigger a demand for new interpretations of themes removed from public discourse by ideological decisions, it may also result in the revival of contentious, conflict-breeding sentiments. This means that cultural heritage management strategy, while dealing with the past, should be seen in terms of designing the future. In this case, pertinent activities should be accompanied by a reflection related to the importance of the tasks undertaken. These activities are a bridge, so to speak, between what has been and what will come, and their result translates into the formation of future generations. It is impossible not to see such activities as a very special mission, one accompanied by a sense of shared responsibility for shaping the future.

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Summary

This text deals with selected issues related to the use of cultural heritage undertaken from the position of stakeholders. Theoretical considerations are based on selected examples of craft skills used in safeguarding intangible heritage. The lively activity of dissemination and promotion of these skills is largely linked to the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the consequent creation of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In particular, the text analyses aspects of the nomination process of heritage bearers and the outcomes of such a role. More broadly, the article highlights issues related to the boundary between cultural heritage appreciation and appropriation, as well as heritage management and community empowerment.

Keywords: cultural heritage, heritage appropriation, heritage management, craft skills

Streszczenie

Niniejszy tekst dotyczy wybranych zagadnień związanych z praktykowaniem dziedzictwa kulturowego. Rozważania teoretyczne odnoszą się do egzemplifikacji wybranych przykładów umiejętności rzemieślniczych i rękodzielniczych, które są wykorzystywane w działaniach na rzecz zachowania niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego. Ożywiona aktywność upowszechniania i promowania tych umiejętności wiąże się w znacznym stopniu z implementacją Konwencji UNESCO z 2003 r. w sprawie ochrony niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego oraz wynikającej z niej Krajowej listy niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego. W tekście analizie poddano głównie aspekty dotyczące procesu nominowania depozytariuszy dziedzictwa kulturowego i tego, co wynika z takiej roli. W szerszej perspektywie, artykuł rzuca światło na zagadnienia związane z granicą między docenieniem a zawłaszczaniem dziedzictwa kulturowego oraz z zarządzaniem dziedzictwem i podmiotowością społeczności lokalnej.

Słowa kluczowe: dziedzictwo kulturowe, zawłaszczanie dziedzictwa, zarządzanie dziedzictwem, rzemiosło i rękodzieło

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