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**INTRODUCTION.
THE LIFE AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITY
OF PROFESSOR MARIA BOGUCKA (1929–2020)**

The passing of two celebrated Polish historians – and close friends – Maria Bogucka (27 October 2020)¹ and Henryk Samsonowicz (28 May 2021)² can be seen as a symbolic end to what was an era where great post-war scholarly figures shaped the development of Polish historiography; a generation of outstanding historians of the Middle Ages and the early modern era, born in the interwar years; who came to maturity in the years of the Second World War. And to their company, we must also add: Tadeusz Lalik (1929–2000), Antoni Mączak (1928–2003), Emanuel Rostworowski (1923–89), Stanisław Salmonowicz (1931–2022), Janusz Tazbir (1927–2016), Jerzy Topolski (1928–98), Andrzej Wyrobisz (1931–2018), Andrzej Wyczański (1924–2008), Benedykt Zientara (1928–83); and from among the female historians, we may list Brygida Kürbis (1921–2001), Anna Sucheni-Grabowska (1920–2012) and Irena Turnau (1925–2008).³

¹ Posthumous tributes and recollections: Edmund Kizik, 'Profesor Maria Bogucka (1929–2020)', *Studia Historica Gedanensia*, 11 (2020), 343–6; Andrzej Karpiński, 'Maria Bogucka (1 June 1929 – 27 October 2020)', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 124 (2021), 319–24; in Polish: *id.*, *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, lxxv (2021), 345–50; *id.*, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, cxxix, 1 (2022), 259–62; Andrzej Klonder, 'Maria Bogucka (1 VI 1929 – 27 X 2020)', *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, lxxix, 1 (2021), 185–7.

² Tomasz Jasiński, 'Profesor Henryk Bogdan Samsonowicz (1930–2021)', *Nauka*, 4 (2021), 173–85. See also, Andrzej Sowa in cooperation with Dorota Truszczak, *Henryk Samsonowicz, świadek epoki. Wywiad rzeka* (Warszawa, 2009).

³ See Tomasz Siewierski, *Marian Małowist i krąg jego uczniów. Z dziejów historiografii gospodarczej w Polsce* (Warszawa, 2016). Andrzej Feliks Grabski presented a very general overview, ignoring a number of environments, scholarly schools and outstanding researchers, *Zarys historii historiografii polskiej* (Poznań, 2000).

I have deliberately made this distinction because, at the time, only a few women managed to achieve such a high scholarly position in a world dominated by men.

These historians' undergraduate and postgraduate years coincided with the first decade of post-war Poland, during the period of Stalinist social realism and the transition to a pseudo-Marxist ideology. The flourishing of this generation dated from the late 1950s to the 1990s – it was a generation that had experienced the atrocities of the Second World War and then endured several decades of living in the oppressive conditions of the People's Republic of Poland, which was politically, economically and ideologically dependent on the Soviet Union. Scientists and scholars could maintain a modicum of independence but only provided that they did not deviate from the political or ideological imperatives of the era. Hence, ambitious scholars often avoided contemporary history, focusing primarily on studies of the Middle Ages, the early modern period and issues relating to socio-economic history, including cultural history. Polish post-war historiography often continued pathways forged in the early twentieth century: including research groupings formed around Franciszek Bujak (1875–1953), Stanisław Hozzowski (1904–87), and Jan Rutkowski (1886–1949).⁴ Like many prominent Eastern European intellectuals and scholars, most Polish scholars had to put up with the humiliatingly low standards of everyday life typical for the Eastern bloc countries. A glimmer of hope for scholars came in the mid-1950s when they could take research trips to the West. However, such trips were strictly overseen by the communist authorities, who could often make arbitrary administrative decisions. For example, the authorities sometimes forced those departing to cooperate with the secret services. In addition, the deepening gap between the standard of living in the developed countries of Western Europe and the People's Republic of Poland, suffering from a chronic shortage of consumer goods, often made such trips a source of frustration and personal humiliation (the zloty, for example, was not an exchangeable currency). At the same time, simply being abroad, not to mention occasional access to foreign scholarships, facilitated both research in Western European libraries and archive collections and the forging of personal research contacts, which paved the way for some participation in international

⁴ Witold Kula, *Problemy i metody historii gospodarczej* (Warszawa, 1983²), 42–52.

scholarly life. Knowing it could be their last trip, Polish scholars were forced to make the most of the opportunity presented to them and engage in research with a high degree of intensity. Apart from creative and actual freedom, such foreign trips also represented a sufficient advantage for Warsaw-based academics over historians from provincial centres, who were often deprived of such opportunities. In recent years, activities, political attitudes, and systemic adaptation among the circles of Polish intellectuals have been the subject of analysis.⁵ Unfortunately, much less attention has been paid to a critical analysis of the research achievements of this era.⁶

Against this background, Maria Bogucka's academic career is exceptional in many respects. Not only because, next to the slightly younger Danuta Molenda (1931–2004), she was one of the few women among the outstanding students of the Warsaw school of Marian Małowist (1909–88),⁷ but also because Bogucka delivered over 1,500 publications, an almost unprecedented number.⁸ These facts, coupled with her broad scope of research and refined writing style, made Bogucka the most recognisable figure of Polish historical science for several decades. From the 1960s, Bogucka was very much an international figure.⁹ At the same time, she never limited herself to following the

⁵ Patryk Pleskot, *Związki polskich humanistów-badaczy z humanistyką francuską w latach 1956–1989* (Warszawa, 2007); Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, *Historiografia i historycy w PRL. Szkice* (Warszawa, 2019); *id.*, *Nauki historyczne w Polsce 1944–1970. Zagadnienia polityczne i organizacyjne* (Warszawa, 2007); Siewierski, *Marian Małowist*.

⁶ For other such analyses, see, Jolanta Wadas, *Stanisław Hoszowski. Uczony i nauczyciel* (Kraków, 2012); and for a discussion about the causes of economic and cultural dualism as proposed by Witold Kula, Marian Małowist, Jerzy Topolski, and Andrzej Wyczański, see Anna Sosnowska, *Explaining Economic Backwardness: Post-1945 Polish Historians on Eastern Europe* (Budapest–New York, 2019).

⁷ Prof. Danuta Molenda (1931–2004), who specialised in research on the history of the mining and processing of metals, also emerged from the school of Małowist.

⁸ Up to 2009, Bogucka could list 1,387 publications. See, *Bibliografia prac profesor Marii Boguckiej za lata 1949–2003*, compiled by Andrzej Karpiński, Edward Opaliński, and Tomasz Wiślicz (Warszawa, 2004); and 'Bibliografia prac profesor Marii Boguckiej za lata 1997–2009', compiled by Andrzej Karpiński, in Andrzej Karpiński, Edward Opaliński, and Tomasz Wiślicz (eds), *Gospodarka, społeczeństwo, kultura w dziejach nowożytnych. Studia ofiarowane Pani Profesor Marii Boguckiej* (Warszawa, 2010), XI–XXVII.

⁹ Apart from Samsonowicz, she would outlive all her peers from the Marian Małowist seminar, maintaining her academic activity almost until the end of her busy life. One of Bogucka's final articles, published after her death, was 'Kobieta na wsi polskiej w XVI–XVIII wieku', *Mówią Wieki*, 1 (2021), 7–11.

ebb and flow of historical debate.¹⁰ Indeed, she did not shy away from making strident statements, which were as controversial as they were sometimes difficult to fathom.

Maria Bogucka was born in Warsaw on 1 June 1929 to the family of a professional officer of the Polish Army, Major Jan Bogucki, and Helena, née Kasprowicz. She spent her childhood in a family environment that nurtured the traditions of the Polish elites who hailed from the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which belonged to the Republic of Poland in the interwar period (today's Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and partly Latvia). In the spring of 1939, due to the threat of war, her father decided to move the family from Warsaw to Grodno [Belorussian: Гродна], a city that was considered safer due to its distance from the German border. However, after 17 September, based on the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, Grodno and the eastern provinces of Poland were attacked and seized by the Red Army, and then, after a “people’s referendum”, incorporated into the Soviet Union. The Polish population (mainly the intelligentsia, state and local government officials, teachers and landowners) were subjected to repressions. In March 1940, Bogucka’s mother, fearing deportation to Siberia or Kazakhstan, fled with her children to the German occupation zone of the General Government, crossing under cover of night the frozen Bug River, marking the dividing line of the then German-Soviet border. Escape from Soviet to German-occupied territory was sadly symbolic of the tragic choices which Polish people had to make in the first period of the Second World War. At least in the early months of the war, the German occupation was considered more civilised and predictable than the Soviet one. With the support of relatives and friends, Helena and her children settled in Warsaw, where Maria would continue her education in the underground education system. As a nurse, she took part in the Warsaw Uprising, participating in battles with the Germans in a city district Praga, which, because of its location on the eastern bank of the Vistula, was captured by the Red Army in mid-September 1944. After the end of the war, the family remained in the devastated city; on obtaining her high school diploma, in 1948,

¹⁰ There was a number of short discursive reviews, such as: ‘Jacek Wijaczka, Procesy o czary w Prusach Książęcych (Brandenburskich)’, *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, lxxviii, 1 (2020), 111–2; ‘Raimo Pulat, Tonnis Liibek, Oma alma mater, it otsimas’, *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, lxi, 2 (2020), 256–7.

Maria Bogucka began to study history at the University of Warsaw, receiving a master's degree in 1951 in the seminar of Marian Małowist. Together with Antoni Mączak, Janusz Tazbir, Andrzej Wyrobisz, Henryk Samsonowicz and Benedykt Zientara, she would pursue her doctorate under the continued supervision of Marian Małowist.

From the end of 1953, Maria Bogucka was employed as an assistant at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences [Polska Akademia Nauk], a newly established state institution that replaced the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences [Polska Akademia Umiejętności]. Despite retiring in 1998, she continued to work there until the age of 75 (2004), combining her duties with lecturing at the Faculty of Polish Philology in Pułtusk Academy of Humanities (1994–2010). Despite Bogucka's non-membership of the communist party and her family background (her father had been a representative of the pre-war 'Sanacja'), Bogucka's academic career would flourish unabated. At the same time, she chose not to become involved with either oppositional or dissident activities, which saw an intensification from the mid-1960s, gradually welcoming certain intellectual and cultural circles. Also, after the political transformation in Poland in 1989, Bogucka steered clear of participation in political life and spawned an administrative career in the newly shaped structures of power, which would lure so many of her fellow historians, including participants from the former doctoral seminar of Małowist (e.g., Bronisław Geremek and Henryk Samsonowicz). Bogucka consistently remained faithful to the call of scholarship. She would also stay true to the idea of popularising historical knowledge, and Bogucka's fervour in this regard was only matched, in part, by her passion for travel.

At the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Bogucka progressed through the successive stages of her scholarly career: doctorate (1955),¹¹ habilitation (1962),¹² associate professorship (1971)¹³ and finally, a full professorship (so-called 'Belvedere professorship')¹⁴

¹¹ Maria Bogucka, *Gdańskie rzemiosło tekstylne od połowy XVI do połowy XVII wieku* (Wrocław, 1956).

¹² *Ead.*, *Gdańsk jako ośrodek produkcyjny w XIV–XVII wieku* (Warszawa, 1962).

¹³ *Ead.*, *Handel zagraniczny Gdańska w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku* (Wrocław, 1970).

¹⁴ A customary term referring to Belvedere Palace in Warsaw, the traditional seat of the President of the Republic of Poland during the interwar period and later in 1989–93; currently used for ceremonial purposes.

in 1981; following which she was also made a member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences.

If the individual stages of Bogucka's long scholarly career were related to Warsaw and to her work at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, then the city to which she devoted the most attention in her research was Gdańsk and its inhabitants in the early modern period, especially from the sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. A historical study of Gdańsk, one of the centres of Royal Prussia, required specific skills and a confrontation with the research undertaken by German historians. Studies on Gdańsk and Royal Prussia by Antoni Mączak and Henryk Samsonowicz enabled Maria Bogucka to engage in a critical discussion with the achievements of German historians. Later, and mainly due to the importance of Gdańsk and Elbląg as supra-regional trade centres, Bogucka would also engage with Dutch, English and French historians. Indeed, Gdańsk was a research area ideal for making intellectual and personal contacts and generating a general presence on the international scholarly map. Due to the relatively limited interest in the history of modern Poland in the circles of Western researchers, the Gdańsk archives offered a platform for conducting comparative studies related to the study of dualism in the socio-economic development of the continent of Europe to include interregional dependencies and the causes of backwardness of Eastern Europe.

In 1952, Maria Bogucka spent several months in Gdańsk, engaging in intensive research on the documentation of the then Voivodeship State Archives in Gdańsk [Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku] and the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences [Biblioteka Gdańska Polskiej Akademii Nauk]. This source-based erudition would accompany her throughout her scholarly career. Aside from her academic achievements, it should be added that since the end of the 1960s, for over four decades, Professor Bogucka would become one of the most active Polish participants in international scholarly life, giving lectures at probably all the most important historical congresses of that time. She was a member of many scholarly associations and was particularly proud of her membership (from 1976) in the International Commission for the History of Towns. Other skills would also come to the fore, particularly her exceptional talent for writing texts that popularised history. In 1957, Bogucka established the popular historical monthly magazine *Mówią Wieki*, a title which

referred to one of her pre-war school textbooks. She would fulfil her role as editor of the magazine until 1976 when she replaced Marian Małowist as the editor of *Acta Poloniae Historica*.

The specificity of work at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, which, as a rule, was limited to research, minimised the number of students who could be supervised there. As a consequence, a separate research community did not develop around Bogucka; albeit she would mentor Andrzej Karpiński (b. 1950), Edward Opaliński (b. 1950) and Tomasz Wiślicz (b. 1969), currently professors associated primarily with the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, who specialised in the social and political histories of early modern Poland. Professor Maria Bogucka did not start a family, devoting all her strength and time to scholarship and publishing. In 2009, she was sorely affected by her late retirement and the folding of her position as editor of *Acta Poloniae Historica*.

Professor Bogucka did not take criticism well, and her opinions, formulated in an often direct manner, deepened her sense of isolation. Her criticism of the school of Prof. Małowist also saw her engaged in a protracted conflict with the historian community of Warsaw.¹⁵ Not being a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences made her feel side-stepped and only deepened her sense of bitterness.

The last years of her life were marred by chronic disease and pain caused by spinal injuries and unsuccessful hip operations. Initially, she moved on crutches, but over time she would remain confined to her

¹⁵ Maria Bogucka, 'Życie z cenzurą', *Czasy Nowożytnie*, v (1998), 167–70. See also her comments on Jerzy Holzer's memoirs: 'Jerzy Holzer, *Historyk w trybach historii. Wspomnienia* (Kraków, 2013)', *Czasy Nowożytnie*, xxvii (2014), 339–44; and, above all, evaluative comments on the scholarly achievements of Marian Małowist and his wife Iza Biezuńska-Małowist: 'Wpływ zwycięstwa kultury masowej i postmodernizmu na uprawianie badań historycznych', in Ewa Domańska, Rafał Stobiecki, and Tomasz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk (eds), *Historia – dziś. Teoretyczne problemy wiedzy o przeszłości* (Kraków, 2014), 187–205. See polemics and critical voices: Adam Manikowski, 'Odpowiedź na tekst Marii Boguckiej: Wpływ zwycięstwa kultury masowej i postmodernizmu na uprawianie badań historycznych', *Przegląd Historyczny*, cv, 4 (2014), 771–5; Włodzimierz Lengauer, 'List do Redakcji', *Przegląd Historyczny*, cv, 3 (2014), 537–9; Adam Ziółkowski *et al.*, 'List do Redakcji', *Przegląd Historyczny*, cv, 4 (2014), 537–8; Rafał Karpiński, Anna Mączakowa, Jan Szemiński, and Andrzej Wyrobisz, 'List do Redakcji', *Przegląd Historyczny*, cv, 4 (2014), 765–9. For an attempt at characterizing the issue, see Michał Tymowski, 'Czy w historiografii polskiej istnieje "szkoła Małowista"?', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, cxxiv, 1 (2017), 79–118.

two-room apartment on the sixth floor of a block of flats dated to the 1960s, an apartment hopelessly cluttered with books, notes and various typescripts. She visited Gdańsk for the last time, accompanied by Henryk Samsonowicz, in the winter of 2007 to collect an honorary doctorate from the University of Gdańsk and also to accept a medal from the city's president, Paweł Adamowicz (27 February 2007). Towards the end of her life, permanently confined to a bed near a landline telephone, she continued to write and edit. The last major scholarly works were the second edition of her synthesis devoted to the history of Poland (2016) and *Mizoginia* [Misogyny], published in 2018, which contained many personal threads.¹⁶ She also wrote short reviews, some of which were published posthumously. Until the end, she remained highly distrustful of the changes brought about by computerisation and digitisation. Faithful to her analogue world, Bogucka continued to write on an old German suitcase typewriter. The typewriter, purchased in Gdańsk, probably in 1952, was distinguished by its characteristic fonts and Polish diacritics. According to Andrzej Karpiński, Bogucka was also planning to write a substantial work devoted to Polish salt mining in the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern era.¹⁷

Maria Bogucka was buried on 6 November 2020 in the Northern Communal Cemetery in Warsaw; due to epidemic restrictions, only a dozen or so people were in attendance. Beyond a scattering of Polish publications, the passing of Professor Maria Bogucka went almost unnoticed by the foreign professional press.¹⁸

Bogucka's body of work exerted a significant influence on the shaping of ideas about the historical past of Poland: it would also shape the directions of research carried out in post-war Polish historiography. The publishing activity of Maria Bogucka aligned itself with several generations of Polish historians. Objectively embracing a pervasive legacy requires a separate endeavour; and would also necessitate a longer time interval, particularly changing paradigms.

¹⁶ Maria Bogucka, *Mizoginia* (Warszawa, 2018).

¹⁷ Karpiński, 'Maria Bogucka', 324.

¹⁸ Edmund Kizik, 'Maria Bogucka (1929–2020)', *Newsletter of the International Commission for the History of Towns*, 42 (2021), 12, online: https://www.historiaurbium.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CIHV_BulletinHef42_2021.pdf [Accessed: 1 Sept. 2022].

But one thing is sure – time will valorise the significance of Maria Bogucka's oeuvre.

In terms of her geographic scope, Maria Bogucka primarily researched issues related to the history of Gdańsk and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as the cultural sphere of the countries of the Baltic and North Sea regions from the end of the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. She was also interested in the history of the Netherlands and England. Relatively late in her career, she would assess the cultural transformations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The material scope of the scholar's historical interests includes several overlapping research issues, such as:

- the organisation of craft production and trade in Gdańsk from the beginning of the fifteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century,
- the social history of towns and the burghers in the early modern period of the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries,
- analyses of the forms of the everyday life and culture of Gdańsk and early modern Poland (such as studies on mentality, customs and cultural and civilisation formations, including Sarmatism),
- the methodology and theory of research on the culture of everyday life,
- biographies of the outstanding rulers of Poland and Europe,
- women's history,
- syntheses of the political history and culture of Poland,
- the popularisation and dissemination of historical knowledge.

These issues were systematised in terms of chronology. Clearly influenced by trips to France and contacts with representatives of the *Annales* School, Bogucka gradually moved towards analysing the structures of everyday life of burghers in the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as researching mentality and culture. In other words, Maria Bogucka endeavoured to move from research on economic issues to the characteristics of the old Polish literary and artistic culture, abandoning analyses of social life or class structures in favour of the history of civilisation. This research scope was so broad that it encompassed historians representing different generations of researchers associated with various Polish research centres. Marcin Grulkowski (Institute

of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences) presents the history of craftsmanship; Edmund Kizik (Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences) focuses on the general role of modern Gdańsk in the work of Bogucka. Sławomir Kościelak (Institute of History at the University of Gdańsk) explores the role of biography, whereas Jacek Wijaczka (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) looks at synthetic aspects of Bogucka's oeuvre. In the final articles, Tomasz Wiślicz (Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences) outlines the practical and theoretical questions of research on everyday life; whereas Agnieszka Jakuboszczak (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) focuses on the issues of women and, more broadly, gender, which dominated the late stages of Bogucka's research output.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts made, finding a researcher who could analyse the reception of Maria Bogucka's works on the international forum, primarily in Germany, possibly in the Netherlands (issues of trade, crafts and everyday life in the circle of Hanseatic cities) was impossible. This shortfall is probably explainable by the change in research paradigms and a departure from basic research on the socio-economic history of the early modern Baltic and North Sea region, and also that generational differences significantly limited Bogucka's circle of readers.

Although Bogucka never wrote school textbooks, she was always eager to popularise history and wrote in an accessible style: many of her works could almost be described as historical fiction. This aspect of her activity, which encompassed being the editor of the magazine *Mówią Wieki*, participating in the TV game show "Wielka Gra" [The Great Game], which was extremely popular in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s, and contributing to numerous broadcasts of Polish Radio and Polish Television, has not been included in this volume. These issues will one day become the subject of separate studies on modern history's role in shaping Poles' historical mentality after the Second World War, especially during the People's Republic of Poland.

Many of the motivations accompanying Maria Bogucka's academic life, as well as the relations prevailing in the milieu of Polish historians in the second half of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, remain unanswered, and the substantive reasons for disputes over her relations with other eminent historians remain unresolvable. Without access to Bogucka's personal notes, her

diaries or journals, the existence of which she mentioned years ago to the author of this introduction, we will not be able to ultimately discern the ideas and impulses which drove Professor Maria Bogucka, who was undoubtedly one of the outstanding historiographers of the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁹

transl. Barry Keane

¹⁹ At the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007, the author enjoyed numerous talks with Prof. Maria Bogucka prior to her receiving the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* of the University of Gdańsk (22 Feb. 2007). Despite the announcements that Bogucka's archive would be presented to the collection of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAU), this conveyance has yet to transpire. I would like to thank Marta Tylka and Łukasz Łukawski from the Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) and PAU in Cracow for providing me with the information on the situation as of 12 September 2022. Seemingly, Maria Bogucka did not leave a will or any other testament. The benefactor of her estate in this situation became the commune of Warsaw, which established contact with the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences regarding her books and archive.