

# On the great role of the open air museums in future. Contacts with the villages from which come respective relics

MARIA ZNAMIEROWSKA-PRÚFFEROWA

The open air museums of the skansen type go back to the last years of the XIXth century, that is one of the reasons why the theoretical foundation of its organization, methods of work, forms of documentation, the conception of its activity and programs have not yet been sufficiently elaborated.

In the bigger museums, the documentation deals almost exclusively with the problems connected with folk architecture.

In many cases there is a great deficiency of material concerning the whole of the life of the country-side from which come the relics of folk building, their furnishings, outfit and implements. It is common in many countries that the buildings are older than their interior furnishings which may illustrate a particular chosen period of time or the stratification of changes, even down to the present time.

The greatest difficulty in Poland often arises from the fact that the open air museums include those buildings whose owners are dead and consequently detailed information about the furnishings, outfit and life of a given family is missing; in other cases a very valuable relic of folk architecture is in a region where the population has changed, as has often happened in many countries since World War II.

Another serious difficulty is that the programs of many magnificent open-air museums are not attractive enough and we know that they ought to give an idea of different aspects of folk culture of particular groups of people.

Many open air museums seem to be dead and the monotony of similar objects which may be seen in different museums of this type is rather depressing.

The aim of the present report is to present and discuss the difficulties connected with the given micromedium, which has to be exhibited in the museum and the problem of the activity of the open air museums with the participation of the countrymen concerned.

Certainly the discussed realization of conceptions will be different with relation to a large open air museum with many farms from a single

cottage left in situ in the country or in a sui generis reserve. It will depend also on many factors as e. g. the specialization of the museum etc.

A small open-air museum (Phot. 1) in Torun is far from a classic model of skansen. It is located next to the basic Ethnographic Museum (Phot. 2—3) on an area of 1,7 ha and is formally connected with it, being in a certain way its extension.

In the basic museum the exhibits from Northern Poland and mostly from the voivodship of Bydgoszcz are shown according to different forms of country economy and taking into account as far as possible, its evolution and typology. There are also exhibited comparative objects of artistic folk craft arranged according to the workshops of several folk artists. In the open air museum the relics of culture of the same, previously mentioned territory, belonging to a certain ethnographic group, are arranged in the farm. As far as it was possible, they came from a family which inhabited the 200-year-old cottage for many generations. It is supplemented with exhibits made in the neighbouring villages. At present the opening of the whole Park is planned for 1973 (Phot. 4—5).

Now there is only one completely arranged farm from the region of Kujawy (Phot. 6) near the river Vistula. Kujawy is the area of research work of the Ethnographic Museum staff in Toruń and especially the village of Rakutowo, from which come the most important relics. Other relics derive from the neighbouring villages.

Kujawy is an old region similar to Great Poland and connected with the region of Mazowsze and Pomerania. The above-mentioned Rakutowo, known in the 14th century (once a royal village), is a typical illustration of the privately owned agricultural and breeding economy.

The village, inhabited by about 520 people, is quite rich. An Agricultural Circle helps supply the village with mechanical implements. Fishing on lakes and canals plays a small role. From the number of about 150 houses there are only about 10 built of wood and 5 houses of clay, the others are built from modern materials.

The old crafts do not exist. About 40 people travel to work in industrial plants in the neighbouring provincial towns.

There is a primary school with 7—8 forms, a library and other cultural institutions. Education ranges from primary, to secondary schools and university.

Since 1957 the country has been electrified, has electric water pumps, bath rooms, washing machines, and an increasing number of TV sets, motor cars and motor bicycles.

As in other countries the village is becoming urbanised. There is a tendency among young people to leave the country for the town. There can be observed changes in family life especially as regards old agricultural sources of income.

Old implements and furniture as well have almost entirely disappea-

red as have the old customs and rituals practised by older people, mostly women.

A cottage from this countryside illustrating the turn of the century is a point of reference from the present time to the past.

That is why there arose for the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń a new problem of special documentation of modern changes in the village, concerning mechanised implements and techniques, and also of the changes in social and cultural life, which require intensive research work and cooperation with the country population in the organization of the open air museum.

Contacts with the country population during the organization of the open air museum may play a manifold social role. It may contribute to a certain tie between them and the museum in sharing the work of reconstruction of the houses, thatching the roofs (Phot. 7), painting the walls (Phot. 8) etc. (Phot. 9). In Toruń the participation in the work of the farmers from the village which supplied the relics has been filmed.

Another role is to collect the relics and arrange the interior of the cottage. In several meetings with local countrymen and especially with the young people information was given about the work and aims of the museum and they were invited to collaborate.

(An open air museum which might present a collision of cultures, such as has taken place in many countries especially after World War II may be very interesting and instructive).

Still another task is to watch over collections, repair them and show the visitors round. This may be done partly by country specialists, who are often excellent informants and story-tellers.

The elaboration of seasonal programs and different activities connected with the participation of local specialists may be also a useful continuation, as well as demonstrations of different forms of work, craft and folk art by local farmers, artists etc. Both old and young may participate.

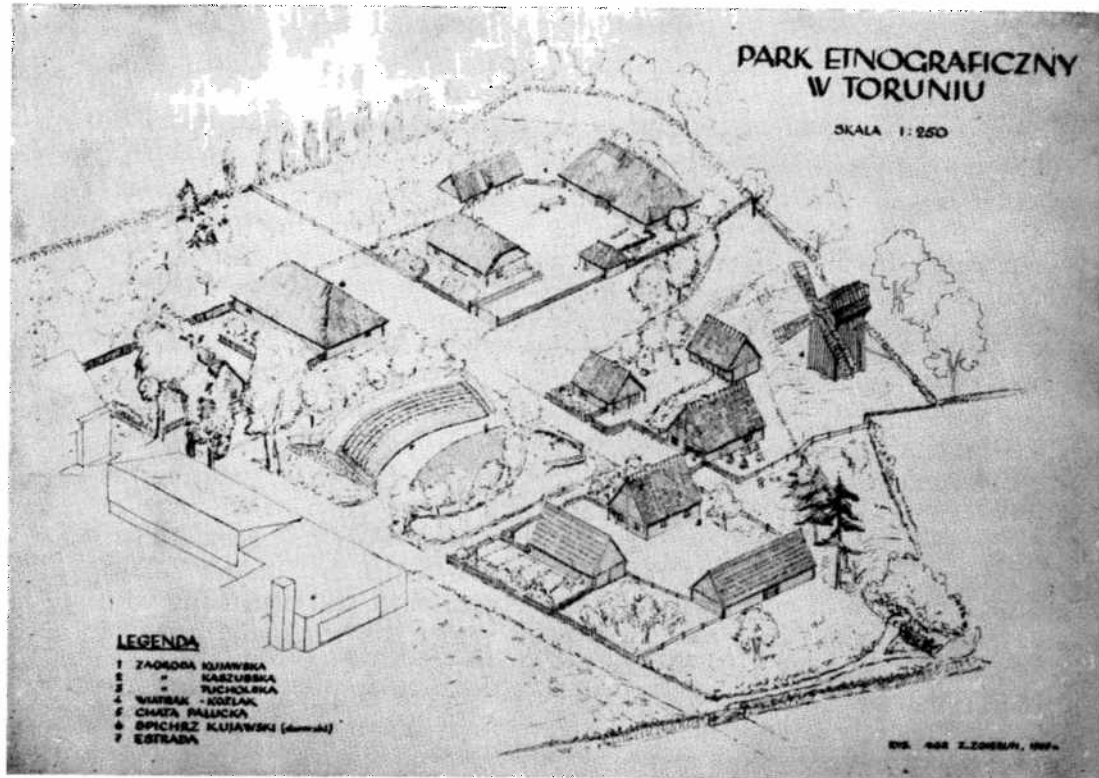
In some open air museums we see a specialization e. g. in agriculture, fishing, winegrowing, crafts or folk art, the making of folk musical instruments etc.

The possibility of observing the work and buying objects of folk art from craftsman is always attractive.

Music and dance ensembles provide another opportunity for collaboration with the village. In many countries as it is well known, attempts are made to preserve authentic folk music with old instruments and folk dances. In this form of art there are extraordinary results.

Choirs which are often based on folk-music are not yet sufficiently taken advantage of in the open air museums.

Local oral folklore, often connected with music is extremely rich in many countries, e. g. Finland, Ireland, Lithuania. In France Sebillot gathered ample material about the life of fishermen, Pittró studied the



1. Ethnographic Park in Toruń (designed for 1973).



2. Ethnographic Museum in Toruń in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. Arsenal.  
3. Ethnographic Museum in Toruń in the adjacent new building.



4. Wind mill from Wojtówka, Aleksandrów distr. voiv. Bydgoszcz (bought for the Ethnographic Park in Toruń).  
5. A cottage from Sucha, distr. Tuchola, voiv. Bydgoszcz (brought to the Ethnographic Park in Toruń).



6. Ethnographic Park in Toruń. A Cuiavian cottage from Rakutowo, Wloclawek distr. voiv. Bydgoszcz.



7. Thatching the roof in the Ethnographic Park in Toruń by a Guiavian roofer.  
8. Traditional painting of the wall in the Ethnographic Park in Toruń by a peasant housewife from Rakutowo village.



9. Traditional ox trampling the clay with straw for a cow-barn in the Ethnographic Park in Toruń.

life of sailors in Sicily; in Poland Oskar Kolberg collected over 60 volumes of folklore a hundred years ago, all of which illustrate a closer union with the village artists.

Folk poetry is not yet known well enough, and since it still exists there is a great possibility of presenting it in the open air museum.

As an example there is a poem by a Polish folk-poet Franciszek Beciński from the Kujawy region. Born in 1897 in a poor country family in his childhood he was a herdsman, then a blacksmith. He is a self-taught poet and some of his poetry may be compared to that of the regional 19th century poets of England.

The old cottage\* )

Well do I know, that neither this day nor tomorrow  
nor at any time forever more,  
will I cross its threshold . . . And oh what sorrow,  
n'er to hear the squeak of old hinge door.

Close above ground reached the old eaves  
always harbouring many a vessel.  
And in the loft, a space above the hall  
my mother's spinning-wheel would fill.

Small was the four-paned window,  
its frame like prison bars . . .  
——— Yet never again did any place  
so open the world to me.

(1936)

Perhaps poetry is not yet enough appreciated by the public, although sensitiveness to this form of art is great in the country, too.

In a small open-air museum in Poland at Bieliny near Kielce, in an authentic cottage left in situ between other houses, a folk poet Maria Cedro-Biskupowa recited her own poetry to silent and moved visitors.

This kind of performance has many possibilities.

In the open-air museum the theater based on folklore-epic, folk-ritual and customs, and also on modern literature connected with it, is waiting for implementation, for writers, scenographers and actors on a much greater scale than takes place now.

The local population may be invited to take part in the performances. There are often dramatic talents among them.

Open-air museums are a place for recitals of poetry. It would be an

\* ) Franciszek Beciński. Liść polnej gruszy. K. P. T. K. Bydgoszcz 1968. Page 47. (A Leaf from a Pear Tree. Translated by Jan Rostworowski).

excellent idea, as it is planned in some museums, to build amphitheatres from which may sound the voice of folk poetry in the form of *Son et Lumiere*.

Plays, entertainments and traditional games as for example traditional horse races or Mongolian wrestling might be shown in the future open-air museums.

Tourism provides another opportunity for protecting and developing the values of a country; it should not only stimulate the activity of the countryside but it should make it more worth while.

The open air museum should fight for its special rights and it ought to impose a barrier against barbaric behaviour towards people, nature and culture.

There should be places for silence and peace, where one can listen and concentrate far from the crowd.

The open air museum has special moral and educational tasks to perform; it is concerned with people from all over the world; it has to reveal the history and the creative spirit of the native country to its population. Hence arises the importance of personal contacts in international relationships.

The big open air museum may or even should be a *sui generis* laboratory and school of the past and present of its own country.

Lectures, seminars, demonstrations, discussions concerning the history of the methods of work, the organization of archives, exhibitions etc. ought to take place there.

Studies for numerous audiences of native and foreign specialists and for groups of emigrants visiting their old mother country and sending their children to get acquainted with the land of their ancestors may be conducted here.

The increasing number of publications and international contacts clearly show the rapid evolution of this form of museum work.

The development of open air museums depends on governments and different scientific societies of all countries aware of the social, economic and moral role of this institution and ready to provide help; it depends no less on the work of dedicated people conscious of their responsibility for the future of their own country and that of world culture.

#### OPEN AIR MUSEUMS IN POLAND

The first presentation of old traditional cottages with its authentic furnishings took place in Poland in 1873—1880 during the great international, industrial and crafts exhibitions.

The first open-air museum existing and still developing is in Wdzydze

Kiszewskie, Kościerzyna distr., Gdańsk voiv., in the region of Kaszuby, organized in 1906 by a teacher, Izydor Gulgowski.

In 1919 dr. S. Szymański set up an authentic mountaineer cottage with its traditional furnishings in Zakopane voiv. Kraków.

In 1927 doc. dr. Adam Chetnik, ethnologist organized an open air museum, still being developed in Nowogród voiv. Białystok, region Kurpie.

At present the following ethnographic open air museums are open in Poland, most of which are still being developed.

Voiv. Białystok

Kurpiowskie Muzeum na Wolnym Powietrzu, Nowogród Lomżyński, Lomża distr. (present area — 3,5 hectares, planned-10—22, at present-12 buildings, planned-40).

Voiv. Bydgoszcz

Muzeum Etnograficzne w Toruniu. Park Etnograficzny, Toruń (present area — 1,7 hectares, at present 10 buildings, in 1973 — 12).

Voiv. Gdańsk

Kaszubski Park Etnograficzny, Wdzydze Kiszewskie, Kościerzyna distr. (present area — 12 hectares, planned — 22). At present — 7 buildings, planned — 42).

Voiv. Kielce

Chata we wsi Bieliny, Kielce distr. (a single cottage).

Voiv. Koszalin

Skansen Słowiński w Klukach. Kluki, Słupsk distr. Muzeum Pomorza Środkowego. Koszalin (present area — 0,51 hectares, planned — 4,27). At present 4 buildings in situ, planned — 10).

Voiv. Kraków

Muzeum Orawskie w Zubrzycy Górnej, Nowy Targ distr. Muzeum Tatrzańskie, Zakopane, present area — 4 hectares, planned — 5. At present — 18 buildings, more planned.

Voiv. Kraków

Sadecki Park Etnograficzny, Nowy Sacz, distr. (area — 21 hectares. At present — 10 buildings, planned — 61).

Voiv. Łódź

Skansen w Lowiczu, Lowicz. Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie (present area — 0,5 hectares, planned 6—8 in another place, at present — 9 buildings, planned — 22).

Voiv. Olsztyn

Muzeum Budownictwa Ludowego. Park Etnograficzny w Olsztynku. Olsztynek, Ostróda distr. (present area — 35 hectares, planned — 38, at present — 18 buildings, planned — 65).

Voiv. Opole

Muzeum Wsi Opolskiej, Opole-Bierkowice (area — 10 hectares, at present 29 buildings, planned — 70).

Voiv. Rzeszów

Park Etnograficzny Muzeum Budownictwa Ludowego w Sanoku. Sanok

(present area — 34 hectares, planned — 40, at present — 19 buildings, planned 80).

There are also several other open-air museums in the more or less advanced stage of organization and also reserves in some parts of villages etc.