



Towards a new archival science. Anthropologising the archive and the archival materials

Wojciech Piasek

Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu / Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland)
piasek@umk.pl, ORCID 0000-0002-5997-5844

ABSTRACT

The article puts forward a proposal of new archival science – anthropologised archival science. The new archival science is discussed in the context of changes in the understanding of archives as the practice of collecting, storing and providing access to archival collections. The modern understanding of the archives has been grounded in the naturalistic approach to thinking about the world and people. The key factor shaping the naturalistic understanding of archives was the socio-cultural context, specifically the emergence of nation states and bureaucracy. In the 19th century, the archive, just like other elements of bureaucracy, came to be understood as free from context, discussion, ideology, or in a broader sense, culture. The 20th century has changed but little in such an approach to archival science. Only slight adjustments were made. The proposal for a new archival science goes beyond these adjustments. It is a shift towards its cultural understanding, on the grounds of anthropological understanding of culture.

KEYWORDS

new archival science, anthropologised archival science, cultural anthropology, archive and archival materials, 19th and 20th centuries

W stronę nowej archiwistyki. Antropologizowanie archiwum i archiwaliów

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule przedstawiono propozycję nowej archiwistyki – archiwistyki zantropologizowanej. Dyskusję nad nią zapoczątkowano pod wpływem zmian zachodzących w postrzeganiu archiwum jako instytucji zajmującej się gromadzeniem, przechowywaniem i udostępnianiem zbiorów archiwalnych. Współczesne znaczenie terminu archiwum oparto na naturalistycznym myśleniu o świecie i człowieku. Kluczowym czynnikiem go kształtującym był kontekst społeczno-kulturowy, a konkretnie powstawanie państw narodowych i rozwój biurokracji. W XIX w. archiwum, podobnie jak inne organy biurokracji, zaczęto postrzegać jako wolne od kontekstu, dyskusji, ideologii, szerzej – kultury. Wiek XX niewiele w tym rozumieniu archiwistyki zmienił. Pojawiły się jedynie niewielkie korekty. Propozycja nowej archiwistyki wykracza poza nie. Jest to zwrot w kierunku jej kulturowego pojmowania na gruncie antropologicznego rozumienia kultury.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

nowa archiwistyka, archiwistyka zantropologizowana, antropologia kulturowa, archiwum i archiwalia, XIX i XX wiek

The archives and archival materials collected therein have become an important topic in contemporary reflection on the humanities. Interest taken in them has become so significant that they have come to see their own “archival turn”, chief patrons of which are considered to be such philosophers as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida¹. Therefore, it may sound paradoxical to say that the archives, i.e. an institution engaged in collecting, storing, and compiling archival collections, as well as making them available, are absent from reflections concerning contemporary humanities. Such a statement is supported by the fact that in contemporary reflection on humanities the archives are treated “instrumentally”. They serve as a metaphor for capturing some of the issues that plague contemporary humanities. They are used to express issues currently considered important, but are not an object of interest in themselves. Archives are a synonym for memory, power, or serve as an “argument” in the discussion focusing on the status of historiography and the images of the past that they epistemologically create². It is worth emphasizing right away that it is not my intention to subject this reflection to criticism. It is related to the one I propose in my article and constitutes an introduction to it. Yet, I would like to emphasise that this reflection is different in nature to the one I am offering in this article.

My article presents the reader with an empirical archive, i.e. the cultural practice of gathering and preserving archival collections and making them available. Here, the archive is not an excuse for reflections on memory or oblivion, power or the construction of the past. My deliberations are rooted in the field of archival science and the problems it poses – a scientific discipline that deals with the study of archives and archival materials. The aim is to offer a new understanding of archival reflection on the archives and archival materials.

There is a consensus among the archivists that the modern archives and scholarly archival reflection date back to the 19th century. Studies explicitly show that the 19th century was marked by outstanding scholarly results in archival science. Coming from the modest output of 18th-century theorists, archival

¹ M. Foucault, *Archaeology of knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, London–New York 2002 [M. Foucault, *Archeologia wiedzy*, trans. A. Siemek, Warszawa 1977]; J. Derrida, *Archive fever. A freudian impression*, trans. E. Prenowitz, Chicago–London 1998 [J. Derrida, *Gorączka archiwum. Impresja freudowska*, trans. J. Momro, Warszawa 2016].

² M. Foucault, *Archaeology*; J. Derrida, *Archive fever...*; P. Ricoeur, *Memory, history, forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey, D. Pellauer, Chicago 2004 [P. Ricoeur, *Pamięć, historia, zapomnienie*, trans. J. Margański, Kraków 2006]; A. Assmann, *Cultural memory and western civilization. Functions, media, archives*, New York 2011.

science has managed to establish a theoretical and methodological foundation that remains largely relevant today. The basis for these advances was the formation of modern archives – separate institutions that fulfil highly developed functions: collecting, storing and processing archival records and making them available for administrative and scholarly purposes³.

Subsequent decades are considered to be a period when the archival reflection developed during 19th century was merely refined.

It is well known that the 19th century was an age of dispute over the identity of human sciences. As a result, ideas in the humanities were formulated depending on how unique the object of cognition was – and it was not so much the world of things, as in the case of natural sciences, but rather the world of spiritual experiences. The uniqueness of the object determined the uniqueness of scientific methods used in the humanities. Archivists did not participate in this dispute. According to Samuel Muller, Johan A. Feith and Robert Fruin, authors of the 1898 “bible of archivists”, an archive is an organism that grows, takes shape, and undergoes change according to established rules. The rules for this natural entity cannot be determined by the archivist. He can only study the organism and determine the natural principles on which it was formed⁴.

The understanding of archives and archival science has been grounded in naturalistic thinking about the human world. Central to this, I believe, was the socio-cultural context in which the archives and scholarly reflection on them were born, and more precisely – how it was conceptualized at the time. Perhaps if the understanding of the archives had been developed through critical discussion, it would not have persisted to this day. And the fact that this occurred through “objective observation” of reality made it appear as something obvious, a piece of the so-called common sense that is difficult to argue with.

Before I propose a new understanding of archival reflection on the archives and archival materials, let me begin by pointing out not only the fundamental error made in comprehending them, which is to view them from a naturalistic perspective, but also to question the obviousness of the basis of this belief.

The 19th century is a time when modern archives and modern nations are formed. We find the understanding of this phenomenon at that time in

³ B. Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka. Przedmiot, zakres, podział (studia nad problemem)*, Warszawa 1972, p. 28.

⁴ S. Muller, J.A. Feith, R. Fruin, *Manual for the arrangement and description of archives*, New York 1940.

the thought of Max Weber. For him, as for others of the time, the nation was a political category both in a general sense – a power-based community, and in a specific sense – an autonomous community institutionalized within a sovereign, territorial state organism⁵. Weber wrote “The nation is a community of sentiments which adequately expresses itself in its own state; hence the nation constitutes a community which under normal conditions strives for the formation of its own state”⁶.

Let us now look at how the institutions of the state, whose creation is synonymous with the formation of the nation, were perceived in the 19th century, and what influenced the understanding of the archive. This is perfectly evident Weber’s concept of authority structures. In a modern state we have legal power and the rule of law, whose purest manifestation is bureaucracy. The basic units of bureaucracy are bodies “organised according to a hierarchy, with their rules, functions, written documents, and means of coercion”⁷. The main features of the ideal type bureaucracy and its organs are, according to Weber, as follows:

1. Continuous organization of official functions (bodies) committed to observe the rules.
2. Each authority has a specific scope of competences, which means a range of duties and powers to perform various functions and permissible means of coercion.
3. The bodies are organized in a hierarchical manner;
4. The rules that govern the way in which the bodies act may be technical rules, which requires expert training of those employed in bureaucracy⁸.

In such an understanding, developed in the 19th century, the archive is defined by being a state institution – an organ of bureaucracy. Let us note in passing that an archive is an organ of bureaucracy with a very specific function. Besides being organized along the lines of every other bureaucratic body that Weber writes about, its function is to collect and store documents produced by other authorities and make them available for administrative purposes.

The 19th century is also the time when archives become academic institutions that conduct independent historical research or otherwise work in support of historical scholarship. In order to shed light on this aspect of understanding

⁵ A.D. Smith, *The cultural foundations of nations. Hierarchy, covenant and republic*, Oxford 2008, pp. 25–26 [*Kulturowe podstawy narodów. Hierarchia, przymierze i republika*, trans. W. Usakiewicz, Kraków 2009].

⁶ A.D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations...*, pp. 25–26.

⁷ G. Ritzer, *Sociological theory*, New York 2010, p. 130 [*Klasyczna teoria socjologiczna*, trans. H. Jankowska, Poznań 2004].

⁸ G. Ritzer, *Sociological theory*, pp. 130–131.

of the archives, let us return to the understanding of the nation and the state prevalent at that time, and add the understanding of history as it was then. This time, let us refer to the German philosopher Georg W. Hegel. According to him, history begins with the creation of the state. According to him, historical reality is political reality, transformation of statehood, political and legal systems. The emergence of the state is in consequence synonymous with the emergence of historical reflection⁹.

The archive seamlessly combines, or at least did at the time, the function of a bureaucratic organ, collecting the documents the bureaucracy produces, essential to the smooth functioning of the state, with the function of a “repository” of documents used for the reflection on the past of this state.

To sum up the previous considerations: in the context of conceptualizing the phenomenon of formation of national states that took place in the 19th century; and the identification of the nation with the state, the state with a form of legal rule, rule with a bureaucratic organization, and history with the state, the archive is defined by being a state institution – an organ of bureaucracy, organized according to the bureaucratic model, collecting documents necessary for the functioning of the state and for writing its history.

Before we completely expose the cultural beliefs underlying the 19th century understanding of the archive, and thus question the obviousness of its naturalistic underpinnings, let us stay with bureaucracy for a moment. In Weber’s work, the concept of bureaucracy does not refer to the state apparatus alone. It also includes rational organization of any human activity. Its application to various aspects of the state is determined by the fact that it is based on the most important among the types of rationality that Weber distinguishes – formal rationality. This type of rationality involves calculating ends and means with reference to universally applicable, impersonal (objective) rules, laws, and regulations. Commentators of the German sociologist’s work distinguish a number of features of this rationality, presented below. By not referring to texts from the “era”, we transcend the context of the 19th century, but we also gain insight into the evolution of this understanding:

1. Formally rational structures and institutions emphasize calculability, i.e. things that can be counted or represented in numerical form.
2. They attach particular importance to efficiency – determining the best means that lead to

⁹ T. Kroński, *Hegel*, Warszawa 1966, pp. 22–67.

achieving a particular goal. 3. It is very important to ensure predictability – the idea is that everything should happen in the same way, regardless of place or time. 4. The formally rational system gradually eliminates technology based on human labour, eventually replacing it with non-human technology. Such technologies (e.g. computerized systems) are considered to be more calculable, efficient, and predictable than those based on human labour. 5. Formally rational systems seek to gain control over various kinds of unknowns, especially those posed by people who work in or are served by these systems¹⁰.

The archive as an organ of bureaucracy, therefore, has not only its organizational and formal features, but this organization is based on bureaucratic formal rationality. Under such a way of thinking, the archive exists in a space of bare facts, the above-mentioned impersonal, i.e. objective rules, laws, and regulations derived from “what the world is like” and the mechanisms that govern it. There is no room for re-evaluating and assigning meanings, for subjective interpretations, for feelings, for everything that culture is made up of.

The self-evident understanding of the archive outlined above translates into scholarly reflections on archives. For archival science, the archives and archival materials represent a space that is free from context, discussion, ideology, and culture in a broader sense; they are a passive organ of state administration and history in itself. Consequently, the problems addressed are technological in nature and are being considered in that technological context. The desirable features of the proposed solutions and manner of their implementation are those which ensure highest possible utilisation of human and material resources, speed, consistency, unambiguity. The degree of dehumanization determines the sophistication of the proposed solutions.

At the beginning of my remarks I pointed out that in the 20th century the understanding of the archives born in the previous century was revised. One such revision was, or is, a change in the spirit of scientifically oriented human sciences which viewed the archive as concerned with collecting, compiling and preserving information, and making it available. In line with the general trend of modernist times, a systemic and functional thinking about the archive emerged from the spirit of natural science, modelled on the relationship between organisms, groups of organisms, species and their environment. The broader context for this revision involved the general changes in post-war culture and

¹⁰ G. Ritzer, *Sociological theory*, p. 139.

theories about reorganizing socio-political life, such as proclaimed replacement of previous forms of organization of society by the rule of technocracy and the primacy of people endowed with special scientific knowledge of economic, sociological and psychological research (technocrats)¹¹.

One could protest against such an image of archival science or point to its collapse, e.g. by referring to the reflection on ethics in archives. Do they really violate the belief adopted from the bureaucracy that the bureaucracy is axiologically neutral? In my opinion, they do not. The effect of archival activity has not ceased to be seen as external to its performer – the archivist – and to the autotelic functioning of the institution – the archive. Technocratic accountability, for which only efficiency and effectiveness of actions matter, still takes place of moral responsibility. It is only supported by values that are supposed to reinforce these natural effects¹².

Dariusz Magier's recent proposal of *archivosophy* in Poland is similar in nature. Although he emphasizes the importance of reflection on culture, which we do not find in the earlier revision, from my point of view it does not actually change anything. One may infer from Magier's remarks that the revision is a response to the gap that appeared between archival science and the cultural context in which it came to function in Poland in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The gap through which post-modern culture seeps into archival science is the scientific function of the archive. A changing history, with new expectations for archives, is putting pressure on archival science. The latter, in turn, in order to satisfy these expectations, begins to notice and take into account the importance of culture.

Magier's understanding of archives remains essentially the same; it is still a "typical bureaucratic system". The archive is an organ of bureaucracy, but it is conceptualized in the fashion of scientistically oriented human sciences. We could reiterate that under this way of thinking, the archive still exists in a space of bare facts, impersonal (objective) rules, where there is no room for all the things that make up culture. Re-evaluations, assigning meanings, subjective

¹¹ Cf. T. Cook, *What is past is prologue. A history of archival ideas since 1898, and the future paradigm shift*, <http://www.mybestdocs.com/cook-t-pastprologue-ar43fnl.htm>, accessed 20 February 2019.

¹² ICA. Code of Ethics, https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/ICA_1996-09-06_code%20of%20ethics_PL.pdf, accessed 28 August 2023. In the 20th and 21st centuries, technocratic thinking about archives also determines the type of education for archivists. It focuses on producing technical experts, people acting like specialists – specialists without spirit, romantics without heart – as bureaucrats were characterized by Weber.

interpretations, feelings – these are all beyond it. In order to operate smoothly, the archive, as a purely bureaucratic system, must take into account that there is “something beyond the biologicality of the «human beast»”, to quote the author of the concept of *archivosophy*¹³.

The hard bureaucratic core, in its “modern” form, redefined at one point by reference to scientifically oriented human sciences, remains unchanged. The *archivosophy* proposed by Magier and its cultural reflection stand, as it were, alongside archival science.

The arsenal of archival science – he continues – has traditionally encompassed archival theory, archival methodology, and archival studies. Each of these fields has a well-defined scope, and no change seems warranted in this regard. However, the opening of archives to the entirety of human culture and living environment [...] raises the need for science that would turn its interests in this direction. My proposal is to try to define a new science that falls under the term “archival science” to the three branches of archival science that are known and have been previously mentioned, and to add a fourth one – *archivosophy*¹⁴.

Elsewhere, he states that *archivosophy*, with the addition of a cultural perspective, goes beyond the research scope of archival theory, and defines it as a science detached from current archival problems and issues that fire the minds of archivists¹⁵.

In my opinion, archival science does not need any more revisions because, as I have pointed out, they do not result in any consistent breakthroughs against the naturalistic understanding of the archive and archival science formed back in the 19th century. What is needed now is simply a “new archival science” that, firstly, would once and for all reject the naturalistic thinking about archives and archival materials, and secondly, would present a coherent concept of archival science as a scholarly reflection on archives and archival materials approached from a cultural perspective.

When looking at the proposals formulated within the field of Polish archival science, I see the potential for building such a new archival science in, for

¹³ D. Magier, *Czas archiwizacji*, [in:] *Teoria archiwalna. Wczoraj – dziś i jutro*, Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne, vol. 2, ed. W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, Toruń 2011, p. 19. Elsewhere we read: “the archive as an information centre, or a repository of information, is a typical bureaucratic system that has to react to every signal from the environment, otherwise more and more of its elements will be dysfunctional, or work increasingly worse”. *Ibidem*, p. 15.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

example, the cultural studies approach proposed by Waldemar Chorążyczewski, who focuses on the relationship between man and archive and archival materials, as well as Agnieszka Rosa's proposal to anthropologise archival science. They treat archives as a cultural phenomenon, demand human presence in the archive, denaturalize the archive and archival materials. Thus, they propose not so much a revision of approach but rather a shift towards their cultural understanding. Unfortunately, it seems to me that having taken this crucial step, they did not choose to consistently follow it up, i.e. to redefine the subject matter, scope, and division of archival science in the context of their cultural character.

Chorążyczewski places his cultural studies approach to the archives within the framework of the proposals of integral archival science and refers to it as the anthropology of archives. He builds his views by taking into account the proposal of archivosophy, which, by the way, is his own interpretation of his idea of treating the archive as a "cultural phenomenon"¹⁶. For an archivosophist, according to Chorążyczewski, "the archive is a cultural phenomenon. He is fascinated by such issues as: the realization of the need to remember through the creation of archives, the archive as a carrier of memory, access to archives as a degree of democratization of the political system, destruction of archival materials as erasure of memory. He sees the theoretical principles of archival science as products of their time and place, so he sets them in a cultural context"¹⁷. This reflection, in his view, should be anthropological rather than philosophical.

Where exactly does Chorążyczewski place the anthropology of the archive within the structure of integral archival science? It would be part of one of its aspects, which he refers to as pure archival science, and contrasts it with an aspect called applied archival science. Let us emphasize that this division is not based on presence or absence of theoretical reflection, but rather refers to dealing with problems from different levels. The anthropology of archives, together with the theory of archival science, would jointly constitute a reflection from the level of meta-archival science. Chorążyczewski writes:

"[...] archivosophy is thus something more than just theory of archival science as taught by Bohdan Ryszewski, by which he meant a branch of science studies, a discipline external to archival science, meta-archival science, which defined its subject, division, scope and research methods. Certainly, archivosophy is related

¹⁶ W. Chorążyczewski, *Archiwista – teoretyk? Archiwozof? Archiwistyka?*, „Problemy Archiwistyki” 2009, issue 13, pp. 11–16.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

to the scientific theory of archival science, to meta-archival science, provided that a cultural perspective is added (...) ¹⁸.

This addition means complementing the reflections made within the framework of scientific studies. In Chorążyczewski's approach, the anthropology of archives is not a "non-archival" reflection, which is supposed to deal with the hitherto unnoticed area of the archive's "life" and its "presence" in social and cultural life. Within the framework of integral archival science, it constitutes an aspect of it and harbours the reflection for its own sake. Chorążyczewski has brought the issues of culture to the centre of archival science, which he sees as integral archival science.

This would seem to be a slight modification of Magier's concept of archivosophy. Here, too, archivosophy is "beside" – in this case, "beside" applied archival science. Unlike Magier's proposal, however, it represents an aspect of integral archival science. This change is actually very significant. As I have mentioned before, this is Chorążyczewski's way to denaturalize the archive and archival materials. Whether he sees and draws all the resulting conclusions is another matter. If we were to accept his theoretical reflection, we must conclude that his cultural vision of the archive and archival materials stops at halfway point. Cultural perspective is extended to the archival theory only partially. Most significantly, however, while adding anthropology of archival science, he left its object, scope, and division in its previous non-cultural context. For him, their nature is not cultural.

If Chorążyczewski, rather than adding a new aspect to the theory of the archive, placed it in its entirety within the framework of cultural reflection, the matter would have been clear. Otherwise, the archive is a cultural phenomenon, but the object of archival science is not, just as the scope and division of archival science do not address cultural issues. As a consequence, archival theory, archival methodology, and archival studies do not address cultural phenomena. Thus, reflection within their framework, which is part of integral archival science and should, in my view, refer to culture, does not do that. It is difficult to determine its nature, but it is certainly not cultural. Chorążyczewski writes in very general terms:

An archivist should be an archivosopher, but not only that – he or she should describe archival reality, analyse the efficiency of archival activities, build models that could potentially serve to improve these activities. Thus, he not only reflects

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 10.

on the archival reality, but also shapes this reality by proposing specific solutions. His models are waiting to be implemented. He combines the practice of archival science as an applied science and archival science as a pure science. He sees archival science as an integral whole¹⁹.

The project of integral archival science should, in my opinion, evolve towards a firm definition of the cultural status of the subject matter, scope, and problems of archival science. As proposed by Chorążyczewski, integration is only formal in nature. It is joined by a reflection, which, as he points out, refers to: “a relationship between humans and society, and archives and archival materials”²⁰. Meanwhile, elsewhere he aptly notes that integral archival science “records” the findings of its various aspects in order to fuse them “into a single system of knowledge”²¹. I believe this can only be guaranteed by seeing the archive and archival materials together. Otherwise, it is difficult to justify that reflection coming from the level of pure archival science should be used in any way for applied archival science (and it should, because otherwise what would be its point?). After all, practical reflection is captured in a different way – I’m not sure how, but certainly not culturally. Only the unified understanding of the subject in cultural terms would “force” not only its application, but above all, the aforementioned fusion into a single system of knowledge.

Referring to Chorążyczewski’s reflection and his idea of integral archival science, Rosa proposes anthropologisation of archival science. This project is similar to Chorążyczewski’s proposal also in that the author postulates that cultural reflection should be a part of integral archival science, that it should be related to pure archival science. By anthropologising, she means the need to realize “why archivists act the way they do and not in any other way”²². Elsewhere we read: “anthropologising archival science thus equals humanizing it”²³. According to Rosa, when looking from the side, it can prove to be “very invigorating, [...] the results of the observation may find some application – stimulate reflection [...]”²⁴.

In my view, the weakness of this approach, as in case of Chorążyczewski’s ideas, is in the failure to take the subsequent step. The author took the first

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 14.

²⁰ W. Chorążyczewski, *O archiwistykę integralną*, „Klio” 2003, no. 3, p. 151.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 157.

²² A. Rosa, *Archiwa między historią i pamięcią. Antropologizowanie archiwistyki*, „Archiwa – Kancelarie – Zbiory” 2008, vol. 2, p. 10.

²³ Ibidem, p. 10.

²⁴ Ibidem.

step of recognising the archive as an institution of the humanities rather than of nature, but, like Chorążyczewski, she stopped halfway because she did not see all the implications that follow. Again, archival science in its theoretical and practical aspects remains outside the world of culture. Rosa's reasoning is similar – it is not entirely clear what the nature of archival science is supposed to be. In any case, the researcher emphasizes that this is an area where the findings of anthropologised pure archival science may or may not be used.

At this point, it would be worthwhile to take a closer look at how the notion of culture is understood on the grounds of cultural anthropology, to which both Chorążyczewski and Rosa refer. In terms of anthropology, culture is a way of life; it is global and holistic in nature. It cannot be narrowed down to any one area of human activity. Culture encompasses all types of human activity, constituting a contextual, systemic, and particularistic whole, which consists of the rules that organize it and the phenomena manifested within it²⁵. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that apart from the issues that are archival *sensu stricto*, there are phenomena that are archival *sensu largo*, and to limit the perception of the archive as a cultural phenomenon to those only. Culture encompasses the entirety of human activity. Phenomena regarded as archival *sensu stricto* are as much cultural as archival phenomena *sensu largo*.

I believe that the proposals by Chorążyczewski and Rosa, cited as examples of the ferment rising in discussions within archival science community, which denaturalise the classical understanding of the archive, lead irrevocably towards the “new archival science”. The entity that is going to determine the issues taken up by the “new archival science”, consolidated through relationship with cultural anthropology and anthropological understanding of culture, will continue to be the archive, performing its historically shaped functions, and archival materials within the scope of functions performed with regard to them by the archives²⁶. We can still consistently consider that the aforementioned tasks include collecting, preserving and compiling archival materials, as well as making them available. One reservation should be made, namely that for the “new archival science” its subject is cultural in nature. The cultural take on the subject of archival science effectively means giving it a new status. This entails considering the issues addressed thus far in their entirety as pertaining to culture and the way it functions.

²⁵ W.J. Burszta, *Wymiary antropologicznego poznania kultury*, Poznań 1992.

²⁶ B. Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka...*, pp. 68–70.

The new archival science, anthropologised – which is to mean founded on culture understood anthropologically, would combine, as per Chorążyczewski's proposal, pure archival science, i.e. the theory of archival science as a meta-cultural reflection on its subject, scope and branches, with applied archival science, in which archival theory would be a cultural theory of collecting, storing, compiling archival materials and making them available. In addition, archival science conceived in this way would analyse archival cultural practices, not just as one aspect of culture in itself, but would establish connections between them and the practices present in the entire culture.

The face of the new archival science may be shaped by the notion of culture in its various theoretical versions, borrowed from cultural anthropology and placed in the centre of its analytical language²⁷. I am personally interested in those that focus on the individual²⁸. As for the issues related to the status of archival science as a discipline of knowledge, as the study of archives and archival materials in a cultural context, I would see it as moving in a world of culture in which a human being says "I". There is no room here to describe "the fate of the scientific puzzle", as Rafał Nahirny named the problem of human individuality in anthropology – the relationship between "culture and the individual"²⁹. Let us note, however, the influence of Clifford Geertz in grappling with this puzzle and his opening the way for the deliberations, in anthropology as well as in history, over human individuality. The analysis of Geertz' interpretive anthropology leads him to the following conclusions: "By considering individual action, the relationship between the individual and culture, or field research as a confrontation with life, he [Geertz – W.P.] reached the limits of the anthropological knowledge paradigm of the time. In doing so, however, he opened the door for historians to study the ambiguity of action and the individuality of man"³⁰.

²⁷ A. Barnardt, *History and theory in anthropology*, Cambridge 2000 [A. Barnardt, *Antropologia. Zarys teorii i historii*, trans. S. Szymański]; A. Kuper, *The anthropologists' account*, Harvard University Press 2000 [A. Kuper, *Kultura, Model antropologiczny*, trans. I. Kołbon, Kraków 2005].

²⁸ W. Piasek, *Anthropologising history. A historiographic and methodological case study of Witold Kula*, Toruń 2018; idem, *The ethnography of historiography developed in the Polish People's Republic. A historiographic and methodological case study of Karol Górski*, Toruń 2021.

²⁹ R. Nahirny, *Losy naukowej łamigłówki. Clifford Geertz, mikrohistorie i podmiotowość*, Wrocław 2011, p. 10.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 83.

Of course, the reaction of both anthropologists and archivists to the new archival science may be sceptical. In their introduction to Mieke Bal's book *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities. A rough guide* Wojciech Burszta and Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska wrote: "the concept of «culture» travels today in an almost unbridled way and beyond any disciplinary control"³¹. Referring to Bal's idea of "travelling concepts" and to linguistics, the attitude of potential sceptical anthropologists and archivists can be described as a matter of "conceptual purism". Let us bear in mind that linguists understand purism as a position taken on linguistic matters that focuses on variously understood purity of language, including vocabulary.

Anthropological purists might point out, for example, that the concept of culture which defines archival reflection is far removed from the one they believe cultural anthropology should and does use. They may also consider the references to be vague, not so much anthropological as, for example, humanistic in general. Referring to Bal, the author of the idea of travelling concepts, we can respond that concepts travel "between disciplines, individual scholars [...] they are never unambiguous and understood canonically, but always fluid in their meaning, and their value and richness of meanings sometimes differ fundamentally"³². Furthermore, when applied to different "objects of study" they enter into "new constellations which are sometimes unexpected at first glance"³³.

Apart from the trivial statement that archival science has always been concerned with the individual, archival purists may also claim that anthropologised archival science is not archival science, because, as we know, since the 19th century, when its scientific and disciplinary shape was forged, it has only ever been improving. Its conceptual foundation is well known and defined. Any changes that may occur are additions resulting from evolutionary improvement, not breakaways and emergence of new archival sciences³⁴.

³¹ W.J. Burszta, A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Poza akademickimi podziałami. Wędrowanie z Mieke Bal*, [in:] M. Bal, *Wędrujące pojęcia w naukach humanistycznych. Krótki przewodnik*, trans. M. Bucholc, Warszawa 2012, p. 20.

³² W.J. Burszta, A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Poza akademickimi podziałami...*, p. 19.

³³ *Ibidem* p. 18.

³⁴ W. Piasek, „Archiwistyka – jedna czy wiele dyscyplin naukowych? Uwagi z perspektywy nowej archiwistyki”, [in:] *Pogranicza archiwistyki*, Toruńskie konfrontacje archiwalne, vol. 6, ed. W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, Toruń 2019, pp. 25–32.

The proposal for a new archival science may raise doubts. It is certain, however, that if the problems and phenomena identified and described today by archival practitioners and theoreticians are to be fully diagnosed, and appropriate actions taken in the field of archival science, a cultural reflection is required.

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