

# Summaries

## Precarious Lives on Both Sides of the San. Memories of the Last Generation of Witnesses to the Second World War and the Postwar Period

Edited by Magdalena Lubańska

*Magdalena Lubańska*

### **The Anthropology of War and the Postwar Period in a Grassroots Perspective. Introduction**

The introductory chapter discusses the background and methodology of the ethnographic fieldwork research conducted by the authors of this volume under the supervision of its editor. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews mostly with the members of Ukrainian-Polish families, who escaped resettlement to the so-called Recovered Territories in 1944–1947.

Drawing on the anthropological literature on the specificity of cultural borderlands as well as memory and trauma studies, Lubańska clarifies why the authors avoid ethnocentric perspective in their analyses. Instead, inspired by Judith Butler's reflections on precarious lives, the researchers sought to recognize the emic points of views on what determined belonging to the protected 'we', and what caused someone's life to be considered less valuable.

Focusing on situational analysis, Lubańska points out that the picture of the war and the postwar period that emerges from the interviewees' accounts differs significantly from the content imposed by the historical policy aimed at creating national myths and overseeing what should be remembered, and how. Black-and-white, teleologically structured historical narratives are replaced by dramatic, axiologically complex human stories. The witnesses' memory of past events continues to amaze us and, although it deprives us of landmarks, it also invalidates petrified forms of interpreting the past.

**Keywords:** precarious life, borderlands, (post)war, (post)memory, violence, ethnographic fieldwork

*Zuzanna Newbery*

### **'I can still see it before my eyes...' – Childhood Witnessing of (Post)War Events**

The text focuses on the childhood aspect of the memories of people who grew up during World War II and the postwar period in Subcarpathian villages. Already during my first interviews with the oldest inhabitants of Subcarpathia, it was impossible to ignore the fact that, for most of the interviewees, recollections of the war were childhood memories. The specific perspective of these witnesses, marked by the memory of a child, was for a long time ignored, and the leading voices in the narrative about the war were the elders who had participated in wartime events as adults. Undoubtedly, however, reminiscences of a childhood in the shadow of an armed conflict still linger in the minds of people living in the villages of the Subcarpathian region, and their generation is now the only one able to recount that period from their own experience. The last witnesses are passing away, so listening to them, recording their recollections and analysing these particular narratives are matters of 'urgent anthropology'. The topic of childhood memory is therefore particularly important and evokes a number of cognitively interesting issues.

The article explores how interviewees remember and evaluate their childhood experiences. It discusses the issue of childhood witnessing, focusing on the memories of individuals who, as children, witnessed difficult events such as violence and murders. On the basis of ethnographic interviews conducted in the areas of Manasterz, Nielepkowice, Zapałów, Surmaczówka, Czerc, Dobra and Pełkiń, the text analyses the statements of witnesses, the content appearing in their narratives and the bodily practices accompanying them. It reflects on the categories that fit the description of a child witness and discusses the phenomenon of 'upbringing to silence', which seems to be a characteristic strategy of upbringing applied during the war and the post-war period in the villages of the Subcarpathian region.

**Keywords:** memory, childhood memory, war, postwar period, witnessing, child witness, upbringing

*Paweł Godziuk*

### **Lagier. Memories of Neighbouring a Genocide**

This chapter delves into the memories of people who lived in the vicinity of both the Nazi camp for Soviet prisoners of war (Stalag 327) in Wólka Pełkińska and the Niechciałka Forest – the location of the mass graves of the camp's victims and the site of executions of local Jews and Romani that German soldiers carried out there as part of Operation Reinhardt in 1942–1943. The main research material consists of ethnographic interviews with the oldest residents of Wólka Pełkińska, Wola Buchowska and Jagiełła, which I conducted

in 2019 and 2020, as well as witness interview protocols sourced from the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), together with photographs and reports on the inspection of the area, drawn up in May 1948 by the Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation. By employing a multifaceted analytical lens drawing from cultural memory studies, anthropology of violence, and genocide studies, this study sheds light on the local collective memory surrounding the still inadequately documented World War II atrocities, notably the systematic extermination of Soviet prisoners of war. Emphasizing the nuanced experiences and ambiguous positions of bystanders residing in proximity to the genocide, the chapter raises pertinent questions regarding the role of cultural frames of recognition in precipitating specific acts of mass violence. Consequently, based on witnesses' memories, the text offers an anticipatory understanding of mass violence in relation to its cultural conditions.

**Keywords:** Soviet prisoners of war, Nazi POW camp, Holocaust, Porajmos, cultural memory, anthropology of violence, genocide studies, necropolitics, bystander, Wólka Pełkińska, Stalag 327

*Zuzanna Deptuła*

### **Neighbourhood, Relations of Reciprocity and Community Boundaries in the Second World War and Postwar Period as Exemplified by the Manasterz Village**

The subject of this article is the memory of neighbourly relations in the village of Manasterz during World War II and the postwar period. The anthropological analysis is aimed at identifying various factors influencing the dynamics of these relations. In-depth ethnographic interviews conducted in a small area among local residents helped to understand what neighbourhood means to my interlocutors and how they perceive it. I was primarily interested in how the changing relations of the authorities, nationality and the accompanying socio-political context influenced neighbourly relations. By analyzing the collected material and the reflections of the interviewees themselves related to the issue that interests me, I try to find turning points in the discussed relationships.

**Keywords:** neighbourhood, memory of neighbourhood relations, ethnic and religious affiliation, borderland

*Zofia Broła*

### **Religious Life of Bi-Ritual Communities in the Memories of the Inhabitants of Jarosław and Przeworsk Districts**

The subject of this article is the memory of religious life in bi-ritual communities. Its basis is ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2019–2020 in the

districts of Jarosław and Przeworsk. This area was ethnically diverse before 1947. The oldest residents of this region of Poland still recall in their accounts the religious life as being shared between Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic churches. Participation in religious practices other than those associated with formal rite affiliation was determined primarily by neighbourhood and family ties, but also by the greater availability of Greek Catholic churches. This indicates the ambiguity of the links between ethnic identity, rite affiliation and the role of participation in religious ceremonies. This ambiguity is the main focus of my interest. I am interested in whether interviewees remember religious practices as distinctly Greek or Roman Catholic or as transcending rigid ritual divisions, and also how these practices are perceived today, how my interviewees talk about them, and what factors influence how the memory of the borderland is created.

The memories of religious life in the 1930s and 1940s presented in the article are recalled by interviewees in the context of the inter-ethnic borderland neighbourhood and the events of World War II and the postwar period. My interlocutors mention particularly often the double celebration of religious holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, which was cited as an example of good neighbourly relations. This also testifies to the dual religious competencies characteristic of borderlands, and the existence of a strategy of coexistence. However, the ambiguity of the relationship between ethnic identity, formal religious affiliation and the role of participation in religious practices is most clearly seen in the recollections of the attendance of those described as Poles and Roman Catholics in Sunday services at the Greek Catholic church. During the fieldwork, these categories and their interrelationships seemed, on the one hand, very ambiguous, while on the other hand, their present-day emic understanding made them somewhat related.

The article is an anthropological attempt to clarify the complexity of the described phenomena, which is related not only to the complicated social relations in the borderland; it also aims to describe them from today's perspective. In addition to the key categories of memory and borderland in interpreting the field material, it is important to look at interreligious relations in a diachronic perspective. The religious life and neighbourly relations in the borderland described by the interviewees had their origins in the centuries-old processes of shaping borderland interethnic or interreligious relations. Historical processes also affect how my interviewees' memories are formed.

**Keywords:** Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics, Subcarpathia, religious life, memory, rite, World War II, borderland

*Iga Kondraciuk*

### **Anthropological Insight into Narratives of Women's War and Postwar Experience in Rural Subcarpathia**

The article aims to present a picture of women's experiences from the time of World War II and the postwar period in rural Subcarpathia. The work illustrates the diversity of these experiences. On the one hand, it describes some representative phenomena, on the other hand, it strongly emphasizes individual voices. The focus is primarily on the lives of women from poor peasant families. The text gives the floor to the voices of individuals, and outlines fragments of the image of social conditions of the war and postwar times directly related to women's lives. The themes covered are violence, fear, family life, farm work, sexuality, health and hygiene, analyzed on the basis of ethnographic research conducted in the districts of Jarosław and Przeworsk in 2019–2020, and the source of the presented knowledge is the memory of my interlocutors.

**Keywords:** memory, women's history, herstory, oral history, World War II, postwar period, Supcarpathia

*Piotr Przybysz*

### **'Just such night people'. The Activity of the Partisans and Its Repercussions in the Memory of Surmaczówka and Zapałów Residents**

This article is an attempt to anthropologically analyze the memories of the activities of partisan groups in the Jarosław District in the postwar period. I am primarily interested in the perspective of ordinary people and their childhood memories of life in the shadow of the activities of partisans and the Polish Army (WP). Using evoked sources – ethnographic interviews conducted with residents of Surmaczówka and Zapałów, and found sources – documents from the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), I seek to understand the situation in which the residents of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland found themselves in 1944–1947. I try to describe and explain the social conditions of the activities of partisans and the Polish Army (WP) and the relationship between these forces and the local population. At the same time, I consider the broader socio-cultural context specific to the postwar period, in which I am helped by the latest works of historians dealing with this poorly studied period of Polish history.

**Keywords:** partisans, army, fear, Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), memory, death, war, postwar period

*Olga Załęska*

**'Well, let it be so – well, now I am Polish, but I was Ukrainian'.  
Anthropological Contexts of National Identity Formation in the  
Subcarpathia during the People's Republic of Poland**

This article discusses the mid-20th century changes that caused the once unstable identity of the mixed (Polish and Ukrainian) population born in the Subcarpathia before World War II to bifurcate, then solidify, and unify. Special emphasis is placed on the significance of the authorities of People's Republic of Poland (PRL) in this process, who through their actions – political, social, and educational – led to profound social transformations. The article highlights the crucial role of the class aspect in the process of nationalization.

Before World War II, nationality in the rural areas of today's Jarosław and Przeworsk Districts was strongly linked to affiliation with the Greek Catholic or Roman Catholic Church. It had a more performative than essential character, and with little effort, it could be changed. The low attachment of rural residents to "Polishness" or "Ukrainianness" was closely related to their socio-economic situation. The lives of peasants in Poland before World War II were filled with work, so identity issues took a back seat. Most importantly, educational institutions – places of effective national indoctrination – operated poorly. There were too few schools, with short education cycles, and peasant children often skipped lessons due to the need to work.

With the outbreak of World War II, and especially during the partisan activities, national identity began to gain importance. To avoid death, peasants had to start clearly defining their nationality. However, in the article, I argue that the threat from nationalist combatants was not crucial for the formation of stable national identities. I find the actions – both coercive and persuasive – taken by the authorities of the PRL after 1947 to have been more important. The first was the implementation of Akcja "Wisła" (Operation Vistula), as a result of which individuals recognized as Ukrainians were deported to the north-west Poland while those identified as Poles remained in Subcarpathia. This forced people who managed to avoid resettlement to adopt a clearly Polish identity. Those resettled, contrary to the intentions of the Communist Party (PZPR) leadership, consolidated and became more Ukrainian. Another action of the regime was the establishment of a functioning system of universal education and the improvement of living standards. Once peasant children started receiving primary education, and then mostly technical education, a nationality policy through schooling became possible. The improvement in the standard of living of the peasantry made them open to national ideas.

**Keywords:** social class, national identity, Subcarpathia, Polonization, Polish-Ukrainian relations

Igor Fedorowicz

### **The Church Remembered. Imaginaries of Heritage and Identity among the Leżachów Community Members**

This work refers to the narratives found among members of the community of Leżachów, a village located in the Przeworsk District in south-eastern Poland, concerning their local identities and their perception of the importance of commemorating and preserving their experiences of both the Polish-Ukrainian and the Roman Catholic-Greek Catholic frontier. Data on different notions and imaginaries were collected through fieldwork: participant observation and individual and group interviews. Local discourse concerning ethnic boundaries between the inhabitants of Subcarpathia and different claims regarding their national identity (for example, Polish, Ukrainian or perhaps mixed) are viewed through the stories of the survivors of the Second World War and the postwar period – or their descendants. The main focus of the study was on the current renovation of the previous Greek Catholic Church of St. Nikita (and now the Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) in Leżachów, and how the overall local politics of managing public spaces – including secular ones – have impacted the community. The case of the Leżachów church serves as an example of how an ethnically-differentiated community inhabiting a liminal space of Polish-Ukrainian frontier views itself, and its place in Poland, a country (supposedly) uniform in terms of nationality and ethnicity of its people.

**Keywords:** Leżachów, Subcarpathia, heritage, identity, community, commemoration, Greek Catholic Church, Poland, Ukraine, Ruthenians, frontier, ethnic boundaries

Mikołaj Jan Witkowski

### **‘The land is one’. An Anthropological Study of the Processes that Form the Idioms of the Village Cemetery in Leżachów**

The text is a look at the village cemetery in Leżachów (Jarosław District, Subcarpathian Voivodeship) from the perspective of the Braudelien long, medium and short terms. The aim, however, is not to reconstruct its history, but to show – in these overlapping temporal planes – the shifting roles that the cemetery has played in the life of the Leżachów community. The author considers the cemetery as ‘a multi-temporal field in which the past has accumulated’. Using Holbraad and Pedersen’s method (*Thinking Through Things*), he traces the relationship between the matter that makes up the cemetery and the meanings that are given to that place. He reveals a fundamental shift in thinking and performing what a grave and a cemetery is, which took place in the second half of the 20th century. At that time, earthen graves (*mogily*) surrounded by spontaneously growing plants were replaced by gravestones,

set in a fully human-controlled 'pure' space. He also presents the subtle and often non-obvious (or even contradictory) links between these transformations and the events of the war and the postwar period, recorded in collective memory as the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. On a theoretical level, this article is a voice in the debate between today's very expansive ontologies of 'relational non-dualism' and the receding old approaches of 'Cartesian dualism'. The author's aim is to identify the planes on which this opposition becomes troublesome and to propose a formula within which the coexistence of both perspectives seems possible and cognitively advantageous.

**Keywords:** cemetery, Leżachów, ontological turn, borderland, Polish-Ukrainian conflict