

Magdalena Zowczak

Professor Magdalena Zowczak



Head of Theory and Study of Contemporary Cultural Practices Unit (from 2016; Head of Ethnology of Poland and Europe Unit 2003-2016)

Useful links

[Publications in PBN](#) [1]

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[Area of interest](#)

anthropology of religion, the Apocrypha, prayer, sacrifice, contemporary religious expression and its connections to identity in various milieus and social groups

[Biography](#)

The most significant place in my scientific work has been occupied by ethnographic research. My research endeavours belong to the anthropology of religion field, however I formulated them in relation to concrete phenomena of broadly understood religious culture in the changing social and political life. I have been conducting team-research on these topics from the late 1980s, combining it with didactic work at the Ethnology Department, and later the Ethnology and Anthropology Institute of Warsaw University. In the 1980s, during the breakthrough related to the "Solidarity" movement, I worked on the popular perceptions of power and authority as well as their relationship with folk religiosity. I published my PhD dissertation (1986) as a monograph entitled *Bohater wsi. Mit i*

stereotypy (eng.: *The Village Hero. The Myth and Stereotypes*, Wiedza o kulturze, Wrocław 1991). I presented my research results at many conferences and seminars, including an international ethnology seminar "Héros nationaux: constructions et deconstructions", organized by Mission du patrimoine ethnologique at the French Ministry of Culture (1995-96; I published *Un héros de l'ombre: le père Jerzy Popiełuszko* [in:] *La fabrique des héros*, Ed. P. Centlivres, D. Fabre, F. Zonabend, Ed. de la Maison de science de l'homme, Paris 1999, p. 203-210).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union I continued research on religious culture on the borderlands of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, in western Ukraine, concentrating on the significance of religious tradition for the local communities, and in particular the Polish diasporas. I also took part in prof. [Lech Mróz](#) [3]'es research grants focused on the questions of ethnicity conducted in Lithuania (1990-1992) and Belarus (1996-1997). The topics of my research included folk apocrypha, which I interpret as practices of identity negotiation as well as a sphere of common knowledge. Apocrypha as an expression of the "domesticated" religion in my understanding belong not only to the area of biblical narratives contaminated by the local community's experiences and memory, but also to the sphere of "embodied" religion, or rituals and gestures as well as religious imagination observed through artistic and iconographic representations (I presented my understanding of apocrypha in *The Apocryphal Text as a Trial of Faith* [in:] *Between Tradition and Postmodernity. Polish Ethnography at the Turn of Millenium*, ed. by L. Mróz, Z. Sokolewicz, DiG Press, Warsaw 2003: 9-24). I also organised research visits to central Ukraine (Podillya, 1999-2001). Studies based on materials collected during every two-year cycle were published in collected volumes as well as scientific journals. My habilitation book *Biblia ludowa. Interpretacje wątków biblijnych w kulturze wsi* (eng.: *The Folk Bible. Interpretation of the Biblical Themes in the Rural Culture*, Foundation for Polish Science Monographs, FUNNA Publishing, 2000) crowned my work on folk apocrypha. The publication received the Clio I grade award in 2001; the second edition of the book was published by Toruń University Publishing, Toruń, 2013. Currently I am negotiating the publication of its English version entitled *The Folk Bible in Central-Eastern Europe* with Walter de Gruyter Publishing.

We published two volumes of articles on religious culture: *Podole i Wołyń. Szkice etnograficzne* (eng.: Podillya and Volhynia. Ethnographic Sketches, ed. by ? Smyski, M. Zowczak DiG Publishing, Warszawa, 2003) and *W cieniu drzewa wiar. Studia nad kulturą religijną na pograniczu „Slaviae Orthodoxae”* (eng.: In the Shadow of the Tree of Religions. Studies in Religious Culture at the „Slaviae Orthodoxae” Borderlands, ed. by M. Zowczak, DiG Publishing, Warszawa 2009). The results of our research on religious culture, including "The Folk Bible" were presented at international conferences and symposia, including "Slavic etiological tales and legends in the European Space" (Paris IV-Sorbonne UFR D'Etudes Slaves, 2012), "The Oral and the Written in Slavic and Jewish Culture" (Moscow Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization "SEFER", Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2012), and published in conference materials.

In 2006-2009 I organised ethnographic research on the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands as part of my grant "Ukraine – memory, identity, subjectivity" (funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education). The research focused on the social aspects of communication and exchange as well as cultural barriers to it at the new border of the EU with Ukraine. Members of the Ethnology Institute of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences took part in this research. We published a collective monograph entitled *Na pograniczu <nowej Europy>. Polsko-ukraińskie sąsiedztwo* (eng.: At the Borderland of <New Europe>. Polish-Ukrainian Neighbourhood, ed. by M. Zowczak, DiG Publishing, Warszawa 2010). A fragment of it was published as an article *Anthropology, History and the Ukrainian Issue: about the Tactics of the Borderland* [in:] *Middle Grounds, Ambiguous Frontiers and Intercultural Spaces*, ed. by A. Posern-Zieliński, L. Mróz, Committee of the Ethnological Sciences. Academy of Sciences. Oskar Kolberg Institute, Poznań 2014: 215-249. I referred to the research results in my lecture on the invitation of Institut für Slavistik, Universität Leipzig, in 2011 for the participants of the programme "Pathways of law in ethno-religiously mixed societies: Resources of experience in Poland-Lithuania and its successor states", implemented within the Emma Noether programme of German Research Foundation.

In 2015 I published a monograph based on studies in religious culture conducted in 2003-2014 entitled *Religijność na pograniczu. Eseje apokryficzne* (eng.: Religiosity at Borderlands. Apocryphal Essays, DiG Publishing). Some of the essays continue selected topics from the "Folk Bible" in a synthetic way, other focus on the current phenomena of religious life. (One of the essays was published as "Collective religious experience and contemporary cultural practices. The Week of Vigil (1-8 April, 2005)" in: *Exploring Home, Neighbouring and Distant Cultures*, ed. by L. Mróz and A. Posern-Zieliński, DiG Publishing, Warsaw 2008: 23-40.

<http://nauka-polska.pl/dhtml/raporty/ludzieNauki?rtype=opis&objectId=56490&lang=pl> [4]

Selected publications

- Catholic Religious Minorities in the Times of Transformation. Comparative Studies of Religious Culture in Poland and Ukraine, "European Studies in Theology, Philosophy and History of Religions" vol. 21, Peter Lang GmbH, Berlin 2019.
- *Religijno?? na pograniczach. Eseje apokryficzne*, (eng.: Religiosity at Borderlands. Apocryphal Essays, DiG Publishing, 2015).
- *Anthropology, History and the Ukrainian Issue: about the Tactics of the Borderland* [in:] *Middle Grounds, Ambiguous Frontiers and Intercultural Spaces*, ed. by A. Posern-Zieli?ski, L. Mróz, Committee of the Ethnological Sciences. Academy of Sciences. Oskar Kolberg Institute, Pozna? 2014: 215-249.
- *Na pograniczu <nowej Europy>. Polsko-ukrai?skie s?siedztwo* (eng.: At the Borderland of <New Europe>. Polish-Ukrainian Neighbourhood, ed. by M. Zowczak, DiG Publishing, Warszawa 2010).
- *W cieniu drzewa wiar. Studia nad kultur? religijn? na pograniczach „Slaviae Orthodoxae”* (eng.: In the Shadow of the Tree of Religions. Studies in Religious Culture at the „Slaviae Orthodoxae” Borderlands, ed. by M. Zowczak, DiG Publishing, Warszawa 2009).
- "Collective religious experience and contemporary cultural practices. The Week of Vigil (1-8 April, 2005)" in: *Exploring Home, Neighbouring and Distant Cultures*, ed. by L. Mróz and A. Posern-Zieli?ski, DiG Publishing, Warsaw 2008: 23-40.
- *The Apocryphal Text as a Trial of Faith* [in:] *Between Tradition and Postmodernity. Polish Ethnography at the Turn of Millenium*, ed. by L. Mróz, Z. Sokolewicz, DiG Press, Warsaw 2003: 9-24).
- *Podole i Wo?y?. Szkice etnograficzne* (eng.: Podillya and Volhynia. Ethnographic Sketches, ed. by ?. Smyrski, M. Zowczak DiG Publishing, Warszawa, 2003).
- *Biblia ludowa. Interpretacje w?tków biblijnych w kulturze wsi* (eng.: The Folk Bible. Interpretation of the Biblical Themes in the Rural Culture, Foundation for Polish Science Monographs, FUNNA Publishing, 2000). The publication received the Clio I grade award in 2001; the second edition of the book was published by Toru? University Publishing, Toru?, 2013.
- *Un héros de l'ombre: le père Jerzy Popie?uszko* [in:] *La fabrique des héros*, Ed. P. Centlivres, D. Fabre, F. Zonabend, Ed. de la Maison de science de l' homme, Paris 1999, p. 203-210).
- *Bohater wsi. Mit i stereotypy* (eng.: *The Village Hero. The Myth and Stereotypes*, Wiedza o kulturze, Wroc?aw 1991).

Full list of publications is available at [PBN Bibliography \(ID: 3930863\)](#) [1].

Research projects

1. Project Reference Number: 2011/03/B/HS3/00341 National Center for Culture

Duties: main contractor: dr hab. [Magdalena Zowczak](#) [5]

Title: "Religious culture in relation to social changes. A comparative study of local communities (Poland-Ukraine)". cooperation with Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University

Time: 09. 08. 2012 – 08.12. 2016

Location: Poland/Ukraine

Conference: "Comparative study of religious culture in Central and Eastern Europe", University of Warsaw, 18.03.2016

2. Project Reference Number: 252362

Program UE FP-7 PEOPLE

Marie Curie (International Outgoing Fellowship for Career Development)

Duties: Main contractor: dr hab. [Magdalena Zowczak](#) [5] (Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology University of Warsaw) and Prof. Michael Herzfeld (University of Harvard).

Contractor: dr [Agnieszka Ko?cia?ska](#) [6]

Title: Biomedicalizing Gender. The Globalization of Sexual Science and the Redefinition of Gender Roles in Poland.

Acronym: BIOMEDGEN

Location: University of Harvard, USA

- stay of dr [Agnieszka Kościńska](#) [6] at University of Harvard
- lecture by dr A. Kościńska delivered at University of Harvard, participation in conferences organised by American anthropological societies

3. Project Reference Number: N N109 224536, Ministry of Science and High Education

Duties: Main contractor: dr hab. [Magdalena Zowczak](#) [5] (Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology University of Warsaw)

Realised by: Ms Kamila Baraniecka (MA)

Title: Misteria Młki Pańskiej w Polsce. Studium współczesnej kultury religijnej

Type of project: tutorial

Time: 2009-2011

Location: Poland

- results – doctoral thesis

4. Project Reference Number: 1H01H 01130 Ministry of Science and High Education;

Duties: Main contractor: dr hab. [Magdalena Zowczak](#) [5] (Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology University of Warsaw)

Title: „Ukraina - pamięć, tożsamość, podmiotowość” (Ukraine - Memory, Identity, Subjectivity for fieldwork on Polish-Ukrainian borderland; cooperation with Ivan Franko University, Lviv and National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine)

Time: 07.06.2006-06.06.2009

Location: Poland/Ukraine

Organization of the Polish-Ukrainian conference: Antropologia pogranicza. Polsko-ukraińskie siedztwo (Anthropology of the Borderland. Polish- Ukrainian Neighborhood), IEiAK, University of Warsaw

- Book edited by M. Zowczak „Na pograniczu <nowej Europy>. Polsko-ukraińskie siedztwo.”, DiG, Warsaw 2010, p. 11-30. (Anthropology of borderland. Research project and its realization [in:] On the Borderland of <New Europe>. Polish-Ukrainian Neighbourhood). ISBN 978-83-7181-650-5

5. Project Reference Number: N N109 176334

Duties: Main Contractor: dr hab. [Magdalena Zowczak](#) [5] (Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology University of Warsaw)

Title: "Religious Syncretism and Anti- syncretism in context of the coexistence of Muslims and Orthodox Christians in the West Rhodope Mountains",

Time: 2008-2009

Location: Poland/Bulgaria

Type of project: tutorial

realized by [Magdalena Lubańska](#) [7], MA

results - doctoral thesis

Other Projects:

(funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, no reference number)

2005-2006 Bulgaria, University of Warsaw, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, participation in mgr. M. Lubańska research project „The coexistence of Muslims and Orthodox Christians in the Rhodope Mountains”, districts: Kyustondil, Goce Delchev

2005, Ukraine, University of Warsaw, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, fieldwork with the laboratory team of mgr. M. Lubańska (supervisor) – Zolkva, Lviv district

2004-2009 Bulgaria, University of Warsaw, St. Kliment Ochrydzki University in Sofia, fieldwork in the team of St. Kliment Ochrydzki University researchers as a part of bilateral contract between universities, districts: Kjustendil, Dupnica

2008-2011, Poland, University of Warsaw, "Religious culture and contemporary symbolic expression", fieldwork in South East Poland

Additional information about research projects conducted on the Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian borderland

1/ The executor of the project funded by State Committee for Scientific Research 10870 91-01 Polacy dawnych kresów północno-wschodnich (Polish people in Eastern Borderland, director: prof. [Lech Mróz](#) [3], 1991- 1994.

Publications:

1991 Kultura religijna polskiej wsi na Litwie. Raport z badań prowadzonych w rejonie wileńskim w lipcu 1990 roku,

„Przeł?d Wschodni” , t. 1, z. 3, s. 527-555.

1992 Dlaczego Cygan kradnie? Przyczyny zró?nicowania ludzi wed?ug biblii ludowej, „Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty”, R. XLVI, nr 2, s. 33-38

1993a Zag?ada ?wiatów. Mi?dzy mitologi? lokaln? a Bibli?, „Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty”, R. XLVII, nr 3-4, s. 96-106.

1993b Dlaczego „apokryfy?”, „Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty”, R. XLVII, nr 3-4, s. 94- 95.

1994 Sybilla kontra Salomon. Z symboliki m?dro?ci w tradycji ludowej, „Literatura Ludowa”, R. XXXVIII, nr 4-6, s. 75-108.

2/ The executor of the project funded by State Committee for Scientific Research 1H01G08712 Kultura i to?samo?? mieszka?ców dawnych polskich Kresów wschodnich (Culture and identity of the inhabitants of former Polish Eastern borderland), director: Prof. dr hab. [Lech Mróz](#) [3], 1997-1999.

Publications:

1998a Modlitwa ludowa, „Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty”, R. LII, nr 1, s. 33-42.

1998b Bras?awszczyzna, bia?oruska prowincja. Szkice z kultury symbolicznej, „Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty”, R. LII, nr 1, s. 26-27.

Data collected during 1978-1999 in Poland, Lithuania and Belarus were used in writing the book published as a part of the serie „Monographs” of Foundation for Polish Science:

2000 Biblia ludowa. Interpretacje w?tków biblijnych w kulturze wsi, Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, Monografie FNP. Seria Humanistyczna, Wydawnictwo Funna, Wroc?aw, 526 s. (praca habilitacyjna) – the book is currently translated into English for deGruyter Publishing House and digitalized by the publishing house of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toru? (works founded by Foundation for Polish Science).

Conferences and visiting lectures

2016 Lecture: “Religijno?? ludowa a kultura popularna, czyli o walce postu z karnawa?em” [“Folk religiosity and popular culture: the fight between lent and carnival”], Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAU), Kraków

2016 Lecture: “The synthesis of time and fate: the Pensive Christ and the Pietà in folk religiosity”, Center for Regional Studies and Analyses, Sophia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

2016 Lecture: “Adam i Ewa w apokryfach i biblii ludowej” [“Adam and Eve in Apocrypha and in the Folk Bible”], Regional Museum in Siedlce.

2011 lecture for Emmy Noether Research Group (project “Pathways of law in ethno-religiously mixed societies: Resources of experience in Poland-Lithuania and its successor states” (Leipzig University Institute for Slavic Studies), Germany.

05-06.2009 Lecture "Ukraine: Memory, Identity, Subjectivity. Realisation of the Project on Polish-Ukrainian Borderland", Royal Anthropological Institute, Great Britain.

2009 Organization of the Polish-Ukrainian conference: Antropologia pogranicza. Polsko-ukrai?skie s?siedztwo (Anthropology of the Borderland. Polish- Ukrainian Neighborhood), IEiAK, University of Warsaw, Poland.

2008 Lecture Folk Bible of the Polish – Ukrainian borderland, St Clement of Ohrid University, Faculty of History, Sofia, Bulgaria.

2006 Conference "History and the road", 12th annual Pontic Readings, Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", Varna, Bulgaria, paper: Return of Judas. In search of identity.

2006 Conference „Biblia Slavorum Apocryphorum. Vetus Testamentum”, Department of South Slavonic Studies, University of Lodz; paper: Dwa Przymierza w religijno?ci ludowej. Kontaminacje (Two Covenants in Folk Piety: Contaminations), Poland.

2006 "Pogranicza Bia?orusi - historia, kultura, j?zyk" ("The Borderlands of Belarus – history, culture, language"), Tow. Naukowe Warszawskie, O?rodek Bada? nad Tradycj? Antyczn? UW i Inst. Slawistyki PAN, context-paper to Iryna Alunina (Minsk): “??? ? ? ? ? ? , ? ?????? ?????? ? ?????” – ?????????? ?????????? ?????????? ?????????? ??????????, Poland.

2005 Conference “Religious experience” organized by Tadeusz Doktor from Institute for Applied Social Sciences, Warsaw University, paper: Collective religious experience and contemporary cultural practices. The Week of the Vigil, Poland.

2005 Symposium Polish Ethnology and the East Studies. Theories and contexts, Komisja do Bada? Wschodu Komitetu Nauk Etnologicznych PAN i IEiAK UW (Warsaw University): co-organization and participation, paper: The “Eastern” resarch of religious culture

1995-1996 Participation in seminar Héros nationaux: constructions et deconstructions, organized by Mission du patrimoine ethnologique, Minister de la Culture et Francophonie, Papers: 1995, Héros, sacré, pouvoir. Essais de definition; 1995, Exemple polonaise: le héros et la „Solidarité”; 1996, La religion comme recours identitaire lors de crises nationales.

Work experience:

2003-2010 professor, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw (IEiAK UW): Courses taught: graduate seminars; seminars: Typology of Religious Experience; Anthropology of the Border; lectures: Theories of Culture; Folk Bible, Popular Bible (for Polish students);

1987-2002 assistant prof. IEiAK UW. Courses taught: graduate seminar (from 2001); seminar Techniques of Ethnographical Description; lectures: Introduction to Ethnology; Folk Bible - Piety and Identity; Europe of the Borderland – Symbols of Identity; Ethnographic workshop with fieldwork: Folk Apocrypha; Religious Culture of Local Communities; fieldwork in Lithuania, Belorussia and Ukraine;

1985-1986 librarian, UW; 1980-1984 doctoral student, Faculty of History, University of Warsaw, part-time teaching assistant in ethnography Dep. of Ethnol.; 1979–1980 trainee, Department of Ethnography, Warsaw University.

Awards and Scholarships

2016 Medal 200-lecia Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego [Medal for the 200th anniversary of the University of Warsaw]

2001, 2004, 2005, 2008 University of Warsaw Annual Rector Scholarship;

2001 degree Clio Prize (Faculty of History, University of Warsaw) for the book „Biblia ludowa. Interpretacje w?tków biblijnych w kulturze ludowej” [Folk Bible. Interpretations of the Biblical Motifs in the Peasant Culture], Wrocław 2000;

2000 University of Warsaw Annual Rector Scholarship;

1989, 1993, 1995, 1996 University of Warsaw Annual Rector’s prizes for scholarly achievements.

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Links

[1] https://pbn.nauka.gov.pl/sedno-webapp/persons/3930863/Hanna_Magdalena_Zowczak

[2] https://usosweb.uw.edu.pl/kontroler.php?_action=katalog2/osoby/pokazOsobe&os_id=45232

[3] <https://www.etnologia.uw.edu.pl/instytut/ludzie/pracownicy/lech-mroz>

[4] <http://nauka-polska.pl/dhtml/raporty/ludzieNauki?rtype=opis&objectId=56490&lang=pl>

[5] <https://www.etnologia.uw.edu.pl/instytut/ludzie/pracownicy/magdalena-zowczak>

[6] <https://www.etnologia.uw.edu.pl/instytut/ludzie/pracownicy/agnieszka-koscianska>

[7] <https://www.etnologia.uw.edu.pl/instytut/ludzie/pracownicy/magdalena-lubanska>