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***Z historii rzemiosła na Śląsku Opolskim [From the History of Craftsmanship in Opole Silesia]*, ed. Wanda Musiałik, Opole: Izba Rzemieślnicza, Wydawnictwo MS, 2017, 399 pp.**

The history of craftsmanship in Opole Silesia is not widely known, because there are only a few studies on the history of this form of professional activity, which were created in the 1960s and 1970s¹. There are equally few studies of crafts concerning other historical Polish lands². Therefore, it was a reasonable decision to make an effort to elaborate a study of the development of craftsmanship in the Opole region from the time of its emergence in the 13th century until the present day. This task was carried out by a research team created under the scientific direction of Wanda Musiałik, which prepared a collective monograph titled *Z historii rzemiosła na Śląsku Opolskim*.

The project involved a group of six authors, four of whom have dealt with its subject matter segment, undertaking to present the history of craftsmanship until 2016. While two authors have prepared for print individual memoirs of 20 crafts-women and craftsmen, reflecting the conditions under which the crafts functioned

¹ See Władysław Dziwulski, *Rzemiosło na Opolszczyźnie w XIV–XVIII w.*, [in:] *Księga Rzemiosła Opolszczyzny*, ed. Jerzy Bałaban, Opole 1967; Jan Kwak, *Nauka rzemiosła w miastach księstwa opolsko-raciborskiego od XVI do połowy XVIII wieku*, Opole 1973 (*Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Opolu*); Michał Lis, *Odbudowa podstaw gospodarki Śląska Opolskiego na przykładzie przemysłu*, Opole 1978.

² Tadeusz Mańkowski, *Polskie tkaniny i hafty XVI–XVIII w.*, Wrocław 1954; Marian Szczepaniak, *Przemysł i rzemiosło wiejskie w Wielkopolsce w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku*, Poznań 1971; *Z dziejów rzemiosła warszawskiego*, eds. Barbara Grochulska, Witold Pruss, Warszawa 1983.

in Opole Silesia after World War II. In the elaboration of the history of craftsmanship, two boundary dates were adopted: 1945 and 1989. The first date is motivated by the change in the area's belonging to Poland, while the second date was considered to be borderline, due to the definitive collapse of the remnants of the communist system and the start of political and economic reforms in Poland. The narrative covering the history has been divided into 4 separate parts. The situation of Opole's crafts in German times was presented by Dorota Kurpiers, who in Part I covered "The Craft Work Regulations from the Oldest Times to the Beginning of the 20th Century". Then the conditions of the functioning of craft production in the People's Republic of Poland were presented by Wanda Musialik in Part II, titled: "Craftsmanship in Opole in 1945–1989". Each of them focused on the discussion of three fundamental problems: the organisation of craftsmanship and its legal regulations, the foundations of its social functioning and development, and issues related to the preparation of a new generation of manufacturers in the craft professions. The same construction of the internal narrative was adopted in Part III by Anna Jasińska-Biliczak, who presented "Craftsmanship in 1989–2016". The narrative of Part IV, in which Grażyna Dębicka-Ozorkiewicz presented the problems of organisation and functioning of crafts in connection with "The Economic Self-Government of Crafts at the Chamber of Crafts in Opole", was closed in the same period of time.

Referring to the content presented in particular parts of the monograph, it is worth noting that Kurpiers focused on showing the origins of handicraft in Opole Silesia during the Early Middle Ages, in the era of the Piast dynasty. She drew attention to its structures and internal corporate mechanisms, which depended on internal regulations created within individual cities and guilds who were standardizing their functioning. She also pointed to the hierarchy character of the system, relating both to the position of a particular guild in the city and to the issue of individual guild affiliation (membership). This resulted in dependencies and obligations between the master and the guild as well as his relationship with the apprentice and journeyman. The author also took into account the transformations that were taking place in the organisation of guilds and standards of craft production, as a result of changes in the state affiliation of the Opole region, in connection with the new patents issued by the enlightened rulers of Austria and then Prussia and the Reich. Similar issues were also referred to in their studies by Stefan Popiołek and Władysław Dziwulski, however, Kurpiers presents these issues in

a slightly broader perspective, using both older studies by German authors such as Franciszek Idzikowski³, and more recent studies by Klaus W. Richter, Bernhard W. Scholz and Dieter Veldtrup⁴.

In Part II, referring to the functioning of craftsmanship in Opole in 1945–1989, Musialik, on the basis of a broad archival query, precisely characterized the post-war political and social reality and the adaptation problems of crafts in the following years. She stated that initially the transformation and development of the organisational structures of Opole's craftsmen was dictated by their administrative affiliation to the Silesian-Dąbrowa Voivodeship, and then to the Opole Voivodeship, which was established in 1950. The then situation of craftsmanship was affected by the scale of destruction of the Opole region, caused by warfare and post-war looting by the newly arrived population. Musialik also takes into account the political obstacles to the normalisation of the position of craftsmen, such as the national verification of the local population and the discriminatory treatment of native craftsmen, equating them systematically to the situation of the German population. In the following years, at the time of the Stalinisation of the system, the professional stabilisation of craftsmanship was limited, as everywhere in Poland, by the top-down control of economic life by Party and State authorities. According to ideological assumptions, focused on the class role of the proletariat, the status of craftsmen as an emanation of the small bourgeoisie was devalued. The political principles of the fight against this social and professional group were implemented, as the author has shown, through the tax system, and the subordination of vocational education to the needs of state enterprises brought about the regress of the guild education system, as the acquired professional knowledge was reduced to the level of a worker. Musialik documented her study thoroughly, mainly with the outcome of the analysis of the documents available in the State Archives in Opole and in the internal archives of the local Chamber of Crafts, which has had at its disposal the post-war personnel files, and examination files of examination commissions: for journeymen and masters since 1951.

The third part of the monograph concerns craftsmanship in 1989–2016, in which Jasińska-Biliczak, referring to the previously adopted arrangement of the

³ Franciszek Idzikowski, *Geschichte der Stadt Oppeln*, Oppeln 1863.

⁴ Bernhard W. Scholz, *Das geistliche Fürstentum Neisse: eine ländliche Elite unter der Herrschaft des Bischofs (1300–1650)*, Köln–Weimar 2011; Dieter Veldtrup, *Prosopographische Studien zur Geschichte Oppelns*, Berlin 1995; Klaus Richter, *Die Wirkungsgeschichte des deutschen Kartellrechts vor 1914: eine rechtshistorisch-analytische Untersuchung*, Tübingen 2007.

study, discusses legal issues of the functioning of craftsmanship, its organisational development and vocational education of craftsmen. In the first place, the author pointed out the internal evolution of the attitude towards craftsmanship after the political changes in 1989, however, it was only the membership of Poland in the European Union and the adaptation requirements to its legislation that brought about significant changes in craftsmanship. As a result of the adaptation to European legislation, the term “craftsman” has disappeared from economic statistics due to the application to craftsmen’s enterprises of a unified category of enterprises divided into small, medium-sized and large. It is therefore now difficult to determine what percentage of those who earn their living are engaged in craft trades. The problem is not solved by the data from craftsmen’s guilds, because after the abolition of the obligation to belong to these associations, they only include a part of entrepreneurs connected with the craftsmanship tradition. The profile of professions and crafts – acquired and performed by individual entrepreneurs has also changed in connection with “the development of services and opportunities offered by information and communication technologies” (p. 157). It is worth noting that Jasińska-Biliczak’s text has been covered by her own findings from scientific research she carried out⁵. She takes into account the development of the economy, the mechanisms and instruments operating in the local area, and provides them with the conclusions of an analysis of laws and ministerial regulations, reports from craft organisations, and also interpellations of Members of Parliament.

The fourth and last substantive part of the monograph, written by Dębicka-Ozorkiewicz, concerns the functioning of the economic self-government of crafts after 1989, discussed on the basis of an analysis of the organisational structure and operating directions of the Chamber of Crafts in Opole. Presenting the circumstances of its establishment in the Polish post-war reality and the current evolution of its tasks, the author drew attention to the internal organisational changes imposed in 1990–1991. Their symptom was the phenomenon of a kind of organisational crisis due to the fact that “the new economic order, decentralising the management of the economy, has lost sight of the specificity of craftsmanship,

⁵ Anna Jasińska-Biliczak, *Instrumenty wspierające sektor małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw na poziomie lokalnym*, [in:] *Gospodarka lokalna w teorii i praktyce*, eds. Ryszard Brol, Andrzej Sztando, Andrzej Raszkowski, Wrocław 2014, pp. 54–64; *eadem*, *Problem samozatrudnienia – rola i miejsce mikroprzedsiębiorstw w gospodarce lokalnej*, “Barometr Regionalny. Analizy i prognozy”, 2015; *eadem*, *Endogeniczne uwarunkowania rozwoju innowacyjnego sektora małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw w regionie – ujęcie teoretyczne i praktyczne*, Warszawa 2017.

its production, service and educational capacities” (p. 200). For this reason, she has devoted much space to the legal position of the Chamber of Crafts, the formation of its personal composition and the new range of activities after 1989, including its role in vocational training. The author has already explored a similar issue, which has been highlighted in this part of monograph⁶.

The last Part V of the reviewed work has a special and timeless value, as it consists of “Memoirs of Craftsmen”, most of them prepared by Maria Kalczyńska and Roman Śmietański. They consist of 20 stories of people creating the post-war history of Opole’s craftsmanship, presenting the “oral history” of witnesses and participants of the events presented in the Parts II and III of the study. They are closed by the bibliography and the annex containing a list of the personal composition of the statutory bodies of the Chamber of Crafts in Opole, from the start of their activities in July 1951 to 2017. The reviewed work is an interdisciplinary one, bringing together specialists of various scientific specialities. History is represented by Kurpiers and Musialik, economics by Jasińska-Biliczak and Dębicka-Ozorkiewicz, social sciences by Śmietański, bibliology by Kalczyńska. The authors were recruited from among the employees of the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Opole University of Technology and the Chamber of Crafts in Opole, whose President Tadeusz Staruch was the initiator of the study. The interdisciplinarity of the authors’ team made it possible to present the beginnings and functioning of Opole’s craftsmanship over the past seven centuries in a coherent and critical manner. The reviewed collective work may be a good example of scholarly work focused on the history of local professional groups.

⁶ Grażyna Dębicka, *Rzemieślnicza edukacja zawodowa partnerem rynku pracy Na przykładzie województwa opolskiego*, [in:] *Edukacja w społeczeństwie ryzyka*, vol. 2, Poznań 2007, pp. 35–42.