

JOLANTA KOLBUSZEWSKA  
University of Łódź  
ORCID: 0000-0002-8837-7376

## SCHOLARLY CAREERS OF POLISH WOMEN HISTORIANS IN THE ERA OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF POLAND (SELECTED UNIVERSITIES)

### Abstract

This article offers a survey of the careers of 54 Polish female historians who received the *habilitacja* degree in 1945–1989 at seven Polish universities – four of those were founded soon after the Second World War (University of Łódź, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, University of Wrocław, Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin), while three had been established earlier (University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University in Kraków and the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). Analysis of personal files and various biographical materials has led the author to a number of conclusions about female historians' academic careers. The careers reflected the discipline's development, both in terms of the expansion of its field of inquiry, as well its methodological diversity and the conditions in which it operated. Career paths followed by women were not much different from those followed by men. Neither advancement requirements, nor employment policy at the schools of higher learning were discriminatory towards any of the sexes. However, as far as the female career advancement is concerned, there were some differences between the old and new universities: it was easier for women to obtain managerial positions at the latter.

**Key words:** history of historiography, history of science, women in science, academic careers, prosopography, the Polish People's Republic

I.

Political, cultural and social changes that took place in Poland over the course of the previous century had a significant impact on the academic advancements of women. University careers of Polish women were the result of phenomena so numerous that it would be impossible to discuss them all within such a brief overview. However, it might be worthwhile to outline some basic facts. The right to study at higher education institutions (initially only at the philosophical faculties of Galician universities – Jagiellonian and Lviv) was granted to Polish women in 1897. In Poland, first women obtained doctorates (also of history) at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, female students of history had to wait until the late 1920s to become independent scholars and receive *veniam legendi* as a result of *habilitacja* (postdoctoral degree).<sup>1</sup> The first historian to receive *habilitacja* was Helena Polaczkówna (in 1929). By the end of the Second Polish Republic era, independent researchers of history included: Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, Wanda Moszczeńska, Hanna Pohoska (*habilitacja* obtained at the University of Warsaw), Zofia Kozłowska-Budkowa (Jagiellonian University) and Łucja Charewiczowa (the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv).<sup>2</sup> It is symptomatic that the majority of *habilitacja* procedures for female historians were carried out at universities established (or reactivated) in independent Poland, which suffered from staff shortages. Conservative attitudes prevailing at Galician universities, combined with gender stereotyping, resulted in less acceptance of women aspiring to scientific independence. Incidentally, it is worth mentioning that in interwar Poland academic titles did not translate into tenure-track positions at state universities. *Habilitacja* did not guarantee professional stability. Private docents (associate professors), both men and women, who obtained *veniam legendi*, were employed on a contract basis (e.g. Hanna Pohoska at the University of Warsaw), and rarely taught seminars (e.g. Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska at the University of Warsaw and the Free Polish University). Instead, they were obliged to give several hours of free lectures at universities which granted them the right to lecture. In the system of organisation of higher education in force in the Second Republic of Poland (the Humboldt system), a guarantee of employment and possibility of making a living out of scholarship was provided only by a titular professorship (usually associated with heading a department), which none of the female historians obtained at a public university by 1939.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See more extensively in: Jolanta Kolbuszewska, “Polki na uniwersytetach–trudne początki,” *Sensus Historiae* 26, 1 (2017): 35–54.

<sup>2</sup> More extensively in: Jolanta Kolbuszewska, “Wskrzeszenie państwa polskiego a równouprawnienie kobiet w nauce,” *Sensus Historiae* 30, 1 (2018): 119–134; Jolanta Kolbuszewska, “Kobiety w nauce–akademicki awans polskich historyczek wczoraj i dziś,” *Sensus Historiae* 19, 2 (2015): 109–122.

<sup>3</sup> The first full professor in the field of history was Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, appointed on 15 January 1946 by the President of the National Council Bolesław Bierut; see University of Łódź archives, ref. 636, personal files.

The outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent reconstruction of the system of science following the Soviet model, undertaken by the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland, created new conditions for the development of scholarly careers.<sup>4</sup> It is worth considering whether, due to the newly introduced association between academic degrees and titles and the position held, as well as the authorities' declared support for women's emancipatory aspirations, Polish female historians were, in fact, promoted more frequently and faster within the structures of academia. Did their social background, political views and research interests affect the course of their scholarly careers? Finally, was the academic advancement of women unhindered and were scientific circles characterised by less moral conservatism than in the Second Republic?

This study examines female historians who achieved at least academic independence (*habilitacja* or *docent* position) and were employed at History Institutes of seven universities: four established just after the war (University of Łódź, Nicolaus Copernicus University, University of Wrocław (reactivated as a Polish university) and Marie Curie-Skłodowska University), as well as three institutions with longer traditions (University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University and Adam Mickiewicz University).<sup>5</sup> The comparison between newly established universities and those with long-term prestige has served to verify the hypothesis (confirmed in relation to the interwar era) that there were more possibilities of obtaining a position and then moving up the career ladder at universities struggling with staff shortages, established from scratch. Restricting the examined institutions to state universities only (and thus excluding the Catholic University of Lublin, the Polish Academy of Sciences, or Higher Schools of Education) has also been dictated by a desire to draw compare the situation with pre-war conditions.

The article presents the most important findings of prosopographical research on the environment of Polish female historians working independently in the field of scholarship. This community has been subjected to quantitative research (the number of female scholars who obtained at least *habilitacja* or *docent* title in the analysed period, the rate of promotion and the percentage of independent female scholars employed in History Institutes at selected univer-

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<sup>4</sup> There is already an extensive literature on this subject; see John Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Piotr Hübner, *Polityka naukowa w Polsce w latach 1944–1953. Geneza systemu*, vol. 1–2 (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo, 1992); Tadeusz P. Rutkowski, *Nauki historyczne w Polsce 1944–1970. Zagadnienia polityczne i organizacyjne* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007); Rafał Stobiecki, *Historia pod nadzorem. Spory o nowy model historii w Polsce (II połowa lat czterdziestych – początek lat pięćdziesiątych)* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> One of the crucial factors in the selection of universities to be examined was whether it would be possible to make comparisons covering the same period – 1945–1989; for this reason, Universities of Silesia and Gdańsk were excluded from the study, as they were established later.

sities have been established). Reference has also been made to the demographic structure, social background, political views, research interests and scientific achievements of the subjects.<sup>6</sup>

## II

Despite the passage of time and the growing number of women in science, in communist Poland, work in higher education was still seen as a typically male profession. Women (especially those who were mothers) were considered to be less promising academics. A perfect illustration of that is the bitter statement made by Krystyna Śreniowska, who described her situation at the University of Łódź as follows:

[Head – Marian H. Serejski] did not invest in my education, since I was merely a female burdened with two children. He did invest (probably rightly so) in more independent persons, such as Mr Grabski. It was difficult to expect any serious progress from me in academic work, since I was the main provider of means of subsistence, housewife and whatnot.<sup>7</sup>

The post-war university staffing policy took into account factors related to the career to date, achievements of the scholar, his or her position in the academia and – importantly (especially in the Stalinist period) – political views. The gender aspect did not seem to be important, although if it came to a choice between a man and a woman, a university post often went to the former (which was usually determined by greater achievements and a more extensive network of contacts). The necessity to fill vacancies created by the war and the creation of new university centres, however, was a factor favouring the scientific advancement of young scholars, including women.

The proportion of women among the academic staff rose slowly, reaching 30.7% in the early 1970s, 35.1% ten years later and 36.3% by the end of the 1980s. Female professorships, however, were a rare phenomenon for a long time.<sup>8</sup> According to Renata Siemińska's calculations, in 1970–71 women constituted only 8.6% of all professors, ten years later – 11.2%, and in 1989 – 13.2%.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Detailed conclusions from several years of the author's research have been presented in the monograph Jolanta Kolbuszewska, *Kobiety w drodze na naukowy Olimp... Akademicki awans polskich historyczek (schylek XIX wieku po rok 1989)* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2020). An abridged version was published in *Klio Polska* XII (2020): 179–195.

<sup>7</sup> Krystyna Śreniowska, *Moje życie*, ed. by Jolanta Kolbuszewska, Rafał Stobiecki (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2018), 165–166.

<sup>8</sup> See Irena Reszke, *Prestiż społeczny a płeć. Kryteria prestiżu zawodów i osób* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1984), 169.

<sup>9</sup> Between 1970 and 1990, among doctorate holders the proportion of women fluctuated between 27 and 32%. Among *habilitacja* holders it remained at 21%; see Renata

Narrowing the scope of observation to historical sciences, it is worth starting with the number of female scholars of history, who, in 1945–1989, “made their way to scientific independence”. Thus, while in the interwar era Polish academia “had at its disposal” only six female historians with *habilitacja* degrees from four universities, their number reached fifty four during the communist era, at seven selected universities.<sup>10</sup> Comparing the inter-war period with the time-frame 1945–1989, one cannot forget, however, that in the communist Poland the number of universities increased and the number of female students rose. In the 1980s the percentage of female students exceeded the number of male students.<sup>11</sup> After the Second World War, Polish science also had a much larger base of resources and, consequently, a base of distributable posts, within which scientific advancement and an academic career were easier to achieve. Moreover, the eras in question were not of the same length. If we take these factors into account, we find that the increase in the number of female historians work-

Siemińska, “Kariery akademickie i ich kontekst – porównanie międzygeneracyjne,” *Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe* 17, 1 (20011): 47–48.

<sup>10</sup> At the University of Łódź, until 1989 the Institute of History employed 7 female historians with *habilitacja* (excluding Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska), namely: Gryzelda Missalowa (1901–1978), Halina Evert-Kappesowa (1898–1985), Helena Brodowska-Kubicz (1914–2003), Krystyna Śreniowska (1914–2013), Zofia Libiszowska (1918–2000), Barbara Wachowska (1929–2005), Alina Barszczewska-Krupa (1932–2001). At the Nicolaus Copernicus University 4: Jadwiga Lechicka (1898–1965), Irena Janosz-Biskupowa (1925–2011), Maria Jaczynowska (1928–2008), Teresa Gilas (born 1939). At the University of Wrocław also 4: Ewa Maleczyńska (1900–1972), Barbara Szerer (1915–1997), Stefania Ochamn-Staniszevska (born 1940) and Teresa Maria Kulak (born 1941). At the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University 2: Mirosława Zakrzewska-Dubasowa (1913–2011) and Krystyna Wróbel-Lipa (born 1941). At Jagiellonian University 13: in addition to Zofia Kozłowska-Budkowa also: Krystyna Pieradzka (1908–1986), Celina Bobińska-Wolska (1913–1997), Kamilla Mrozowska (1917–2002), Helena Madurowicz-Urbańska (1918–2008), Anna Owsieńska (1923–1981), Renata Dudkova (1927–2015), Irena Waleria Kaniewska (born 1930), Danuta Czerska (1933–2005), Danuta Quirini-Popławska (born 1939), Aleksandra Kasznik-Christian (born 1943), Maria Celina Dzielska (1942–2018), Halina Florkowska-Frančić (born 1944). At the University of Warsaw, there were 18 independent female historians, 3 of whom received their *habilitacja* in the Second Republic of Poland (Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, Hanna Pohoska and Wanda Moszczeńska). After the war they were joined by 15 researchers of history, namely: Jadwiga Karwasińska (1900–1986), Żanna Kormanowa (1900–1988), Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska (1909–1994), Iza Bieżyńska-Małowist (1917–1995), Janina Leskiewiczowa (1917–2012), Maria Turlejska (1918–2004), Barbara Grochulska (1924–2017), Maria Wawrykowa (1925–2006), Anna Żarnowska (1931–2007), Ewa Wipszycka-Bravo (born 1933), Maria Nietyksza (born 1936), Izabela Rusinowa (born 1942), Maria Koczerska (born 1944), Zofia Zielińska (born 1944), Urszula Augustyniak (born 1950). At the Adam Mickiewicz University there were 6 female historians: Brygida Kürbis (1921–2001), Jolanta Dworzaczkowa (1923–2017), Aleksandra Popiół-Szymańska (1924–2010), Jadwiga Krzyżaniakowa (1930–2010), Rosalia Julanna Zabłocka (1931–1993), Maria Kujawska (born 1935).

<sup>11</sup> At some faculties, such as pharmacy or dentistry, the predominance of women was already observed in the 1950s. For comparison, in 1937 female graduates of medical faculties accounted for 25% of the total number of those graduating, in 1957 their proportion exceeded 60%, and in 1973 – 71.1%; see Dorota Jońkiewicz, “Kobiety w naukach medycznych wczoraj i dziś,” *Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe* 38, 2 (2011): 41.

ing independently in science was not so spectacular after all. In addition, many female scholars who obtained their *habilitacja* in the communist Poland did not crown their careers with full professorships. Out of fifty four female historians, only sixteen (32%) had become full professors by 1989.<sup>12</sup>

Having cited the figures, it is worth examining the course of the academic careers of female historians. As far as the rate of advancement is concerned, the following regularities can be observed: the average time required by women to obtain *habilitacja* in history was 13.2 years. The longest wait for scientific independence was experienced by female researchers who obtained their doctorates in the Second Republic – an average of 19.6 years. Their advancement was postponed, among other reasons, by the war. The *habilitacja* process was the fastest for the generation that began their studies just after the war – on average in 10.9 years. In the analysed group, time needed to be promoted to a professor varied between ten and twenty years. These figures varied depending on the generation of female scientists and the place of their work, and did not differ significantly from the rate of promotion of men.

If we take a look at the functions and positions held by female historians in 1945–1989, we can easily notice that the majority of independent female historians held these positions at universities established just after the war. At the University of Łódź all female historians with *habilitacja* were heads of departments or vice-deans/deans of the Faculty of Philosophy and History or deputy directors/directors of the History Institute. The situation was similar at Nicolaus Copernicus University, where three historians were heads of departments, one was director and deputy director of the Institute of History and Archaeology, and one served as a vice-dean and later a dean.<sup>13</sup>

At universities with a longer tradition, the situation was somewhat worse. At Jagiellonian University, out of thirteen historians working independently, only six were heads of departments. Two were deputy directors of the History Institute, and not even one was a dean. At the University of Warsaw, seven out of eighteen historians were heads of departments, one was a vice-dean and one a dean. At Adam Mickiewicz University, out of six historians with *habilitacja*, two were heads of departments, one was deputy director of the History Institute, one was vice-dean and later a dean.<sup>14</sup>

The above list shows that at the newly established universities, the majority of female historians (sometimes 100%) held managerial positions. *Habilitacja* (and *docent* title) naturally opened the way to higher positions in the academic hierarchy. At universities with a longer tradition, larger circles with a limited number of positions increased competition in filling them. It also seems that due

<sup>12</sup> Author's own calculations based on materials collected in the archives of selected universities.

<sup>13</sup> See more extensively in: Jolanta Kolbuszewska, "Akademickie kariery kobiet w PRL-u. Historyczki-samodzielne pracownice nauki w nowopowstałych uniwersytetach," *Sensus Historiae* 24, 3 (2016): 153–172.

<sup>14</sup> The above figures are from the author's calculations based on documents collected in university archives.

to the rank of those universities, political and world-view considerations were more often taken into account when filling important positions.

It would be a truism to state that during the communist era, political attitudes, social background and involvement in the construction of the new system had a significant impact on career development, not only in the field of science. When discussing the question of the background of the heroines of this text, we can see that almost all of them declared that they belonged to the so-called working intelligentsia. This term, however, was rather capacious and did not reflect the actual social composition. On the one hand, it covered petty bourgeois families, on the other, landowning families, and even the financial and cultural elites of the Second Republic or first-generation officials descended from the peasantry. The diversity of environments from which female historians hailed is reflected, for example, in the staff of the Institute of History at the University of Łódź. Among the eight female researchers employed there, former landed gentry was represented by Zofia Libiszowska, daughter of Wojciech Gołuchowski, Voivode of Lviv and senator of the Second Republic of Poland, and Zofia Maria née Baworowska, granddaughter of Agenor Gołuchowski. Halina Evert-Kappesowa was the daughter of Ludwik Evert, a social activist, senator and co-founder of the Trzaska, Evert, Michalski Publishing House, and Pelagia née Pohorecka. Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska's father was the impoverished nobleman Józef Gąsiorowski. Krystyna Śreniowska was the daughter of the judge Kalikst Oppenauer. Barbara Wachowska was born into the family of a seasonal labourer from Wolbórz, while Helena Brodowska-Kubicz came from a peasant family.<sup>15</sup> Most of them (especially those of "higher" birth) hid their real background. Evert-Kappesowa wrote in her personal questionnaires that her father had been a bookseller. Libiszowska only mentioned Wojciech Gołuchowski, who worked in the state administration before the war.<sup>16</sup> Both omitted information about their fathers' political involvement and their senatorial mandates. Gryzelda Missalowa's father was a representative of a Pabianice-based family of factory owners. Perhaps this was the reason why the historian was particularly amenable to communist authorities?

As far as political attitudes are concerned, among the heroines of this article we will identify a group actively involved in "developing an ideological offensive" on the ground of post-war science. In the second half of the 1940s, two women played an important role in the field of history: Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska and Żanna Kormanowa. The former gathered a group of scholars with leftist views (Witold Kula, Anna Rynkowska and Gryzelda Missalowa), who carried out research on economic history in Łódź. Gąsiorowska was involved in many scientific and organisational initiatives. At the University of

<sup>15</sup> See Jolanta Kolbuszewska, "Łódź «ziemią obiecaną» polskich historyczek?," in *Historia i pamięć. Studia i szkice historiograficzne*, ed. by Jolanta Kolbuszewska, Rafał Stobiecki (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016), 92.

<sup>16</sup> See Halina Evert-Kappesowa, "Kwestionariusz osobowy z maja 1950 r.," Akta osobowe, Archiwum Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, ref. 12981; Zofia Libiszowska, "Życiorys z 1950 r.," Akta osobowe, Archiwum UŁ, ref. 12854.



Łódź, she launched a seminar in historical materialism for assistant science workers, as well as a club of Marxist historians. She also had an influence on shaping history curricula and textbooks for this subject. From 1947 onwards, the importance of Żanna Kormanowa gradually grew. She (and Stanisław Arnold) developed a milieu of historians associated with the PPR/ PZPR (workers' parties) in Warsaw.<sup>17</sup> From the late 1940s onwards Celina Bobińska and Ewa Maleczyńska also started to play an important role in historical science. At that time, another scholar involved in institutions that shaped historical reflection was Wanda Moszczeńska. The strong position of women was also evident during the 7th General Congress of Polish Historians in Wrocław, the 1st Congress of Polish Science and the 1st Methodological Conference of Polish Historians in Otwock.<sup>18</sup> female historians championed the reconstruction of the methodological foundations of historiography, took action in journalism and worked on changes in the educational system. Their position (more or less until the mid-1950s) was significant.

Apart from the "reorganisation" of science, female researchers were also involved in the process of "socialist modernisation" of the country. Among the group examined herein, Barbara Szerer, Maria Jacynowska, Anna Żarnowska, Barbara Wachowska, Alina Barszczewska-Krupa, Rozalia Julianna Zabłocka, Mirosława Zakrzewska- Dubasowa or Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska were active in party initiatives. As far as the other side of the barricade is concerned, the opposition circles were supported or associated with, among others, Zofia Kozłowska-Budkowa, Irena Janosz-Biskupowa, Maria Dzielska, Janina Leskiewiczowa, Stefania Ochmann-Staniszevska, Barbara Grochulska, and later also Maria Turlejska and Krystyna Śreniowska.

Did the political involvement of female historians translate into an acceleration of their advancement? The answer to the such a question should be affirmative (especially in relation to the Stalinist period). Activity in the party structures (PPR and then PZPR), organisations and institutions supporting the authorities and their scientific policy, definitely helped one's career.<sup>19</sup> Most women affiliated with the Party were quickly promoted in the structures of science (especially in the 1940s–1950s)<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, female historians associated with the opposition suffered the consequences of their involvement in

<sup>17</sup> For example, in 1950 Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska was hired at the Department of the History of Social Movements at the University of Warsaw, headed by Żanna Kormanowa.

<sup>18</sup> See *Pamiętnik VII Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich we Wrocławiu 19–22 września 1948*, vol. 1: *Referaty* (Warszawa: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, 1948); *Pierwsza Konferencja Metodologiczna Historyków Polskich: przemówienia, referaty, dyskusja*, vol. 1–2 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwa Naukowe, 1953).

<sup>19</sup> Tadeusz P. Rutkowski, "Bojowniczkii ofensywy ideologicznej. O roli kobiet w procesie stalinizacji humanistyki polskiej (1945–1956)," in *Kobiety "na zakręcie" 1933–1989*, ed. by Ewa Chabros, Agnieszka Klarman (Wrocław: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2014), 16.

<sup>20</sup> Celina Bobińska became a titular professor 7 years after receiving her associate professorship. Żanna Kormanowa became associate professor one year after her *habilitacja*, but waited 14 years for her next promotion. Ewa Maleczyńska became associate professor 2 years after her *habilitacja*, and titular professor 16 years later.



the professional field. Irena Janosz-Biskupowa, a student of Karol Górski, did not pass the verification of the so-called “scientific auxiliaries” and was dismissed from the Nicolaus Copernicus University at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s. Zofia Kozłowska-Budkowa was not granted full professorship, most probably due to her contacts with the Kraków catholic curia and Cardinal Karol Wojtyła. Krystyna Śreniowska, associated with the anti-communist opposition from the 1970s, did not become a professor until the end of communism. Barbara Grochulska, an activist in the Solidarity movement, was refused the title of docent for several years unable and was thus unable to start her seminar at the History Institute of the University of Warsaw. On the other hand, the lack of affiliation with the PZPR party did not prevent Brygida Kürbis from becoming a professor.

When analysing academic careers female historians, it is impossible to ignore issues they examined as part of the research. Their studies, like those of their male colleagues, were quite diverse, both in chronological and geographical terms. Among the sub-disciplines studied by women, the history of education and educational system, as well as the didactics of history were of considerable interest. Such specialists included Ewa Maleczyńska, Jadwiga Lechicka, Wanda Moszczeńska (before the war), Kamilla Mrozowska and Maria Kujawska. Female historians also researched issues such as social and economic history (Helena Madurowicz-Urbańska, Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska, Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska), the history of social structures (Janina Leskiewiczowa, Helena Brodowska-Kubicz) and the labour movement (Żanna Kormanowa, Gryzelda Missalowa, Barbara Szerer, Anna Żarnowska and others). They were interested in the history of women (Anna Żarnowska, Kamilla Mrozowska, Maria Dzielska, Iza Biezuńska-Małowist or Maria Nietyksza). Other areas of interest included history of historiography (Krystyna Śreniowska, Wanda Moszczeńska), theory and methodology of history (e.g. Wanda Moszczeńska, Celina Bobińska), auxiliary sciences of history (e.g. Zofia Kozłowska-Budkowa, Maria Koczerska), archival studies (e.g. Irena Janosz-Biskupowa), source criticism (Brygida Kürbis, Zofia Kozłowska-Budkowa) as well as regional history (e.g. Ewa Maleczyńska, Krystyna Wróbel-Lipowa, Barbara Wachowska). Less frequently, they researched political history (e.g. Jadwiga Karwasińska, Teresa Kulak, Stefania Ochmann-Staniszevska, Zofia Zielińska) or history of ideas (e.g. Alina Barszczewska-Krupa). In the People's Republic of Poland, among independent female historians there were no specialists in military history or the history of legal doctrines.

Looking at the chronological preferences, we can see that all ages of history were reflected in the research of female historians. Antiquity was researched by, among others, Ewa Wipszycka-Bravo, Maria Jaczynowska and Iza Biezuńska-Małowist. Medieval era was researched by scholars such as Maria Koczerska, Zofia Kozłowska-Budkowa, Ewa Maleczyńska and Krystyna Pieradzka, among others. Modern history was the field of interest of Urszula Augustyniak, Jolanta Dworzaczkowa, Stefania Ochmann-Staniszevska, while Zofia Zielińska and Jadwiga Lechicka focused on issues concerning the history

of the 18th century and the decline of the First Republic of Poland. General modern history was explored by Zofia Libiszowska and Izabella Rusinowa. As far as the 19th century is concerned, it was the focus of interest of Barbara Grochulska, Teresa Kulak, Alina Barszczewska-Krupa, Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska and many others. The most recent history (political history) did not arouse much interest among women; only Maria Turlejska was interested in this field.

The vast majority of female historians, like their male colleagues, concentrated on Poland's history and issues concerning the its relations with its neighbours. Some of them, however, were not deterred by the difficulties in accessing sources and undertook studies on world's history. The history of Byzantium, ancient Rome, Greece or Egypt was researched by Maria Dzielska, Halina Evert-Kappesowa or Iza Bieżyńska-Małowist. Teresa Gillas examined the history of Cuba, Mirosława Zakrzewska-Dubasowa – the history of Armenia, Aleksandra Kasznik-Christian – the history of Maghreb, Danuta Quirini-Popławska – the history of Italy, Zofia Libiszowska – the history of France and the US, Danuta Czerska – modern history of Russia, and Anna Owsieńska – the political history of Europe in the 19th century.

Most of the representatives of that milieu were highly respected in the scholarly world. Those who took up new issues, blazed trails and set standards for future generations. In the field of methodology, one such scholar was Wanda Moszczeńska; in the history of historiography – Krystyna Śreniowska; in the field of research on the peasant movement – Helena Brodowska-Kubicz. One of the founders of Polish post-war Byzantine studies was Halina Evert-Kappesowa. Studies in socio-economic history and demography were developed by Helena Madurowicz-Urbańska. Research on the intelligentsia was initiated by Jadwiga Leskiewiczowa, while systematic studies on the history of women – by Anna Żarnowska. Their achievements in the field of medieval studies and auxiliary sciences of history, as well as archival studies and source editing were of great importance. Many of them were members of prestigious bodies, commissions and scientific societies, both in Poland and abroad (e.g. D. Quirini-Popławska, A. Kasznik-Christian, I. Bieżyńska-Małowist, M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, Z. Libiszowska and others). Some of them headed research teams (e.g. I. Pietrzak-Pawłowska, H. Brodowska-Kubicz or A. Żarnowska). Many of them trained a significant number of students and successors (H. Madurowicz-Urbańska, J. Krzyżaniakowa, M. Kujawska, A. Żarnowska and others).

### III

In conclusion, it is worth emphasising that despite the assumptions and declarations of the authorities, People's Republic of Poland was not a place where women who decided to pursue a career in academia received any particular support or praise. It seems that from the perspective of the decision makers,

the gender of scholars was not of significant importance. If women met the conditions for promotion and were additionally characterised by their “ideological vigilance”, their scientific careers developed without major obstacles. However, the fact that they usually started their scholarly path later, combined with moral conservatism that still persisted in the world of science, as well as cultural and social barriers meant that female scholars were less likely to make the full cycle of a university career and more likely to drop out of the running for the highest honours and positions.

In the examined period, compared to the inter-war era, it was easier to obtain a university position. Scholars of both sexes, who in the interwar period could not dream of stable employment at the state universities (e.g. due to the “over-supply of intelligentsia”, blocked tenured posts, etc.), can be found after 1945 among employees of both newly established and long-established universities. Among female historians active in the interwar period, Gryzelda Missalowa and Krystyna Śreniowska were employed at universities for the first time. Others, such as Ewa Maleczyńska, Halina Evert-Kappesowa or Jadwiga Lechicka, gained more stable positions than short-lived assistantships. It was somewhat easier for female academics who were just beginning their careers to obtain a position at universities established after the war. Paradoxically, more female historians gained academic independence at universities with longer traditions (mainly the Jagiellonian University and the University of Warsaw), which may have been influenced by the size of the environment and the wealth of research facilities. The reason for the post-war “rush” of female *habilitacja* degrees at the above-mentioned universities was also the fact that many female historians completed their research and they had started in the inter-war period. On the other hand, in the Institutes of History of the newly established universities more women held the posts of heads of departments, directors of institutes or deans.

When considering what the most decisive factor for the scientific success of female historians during the Communist era in Poland was, first we should mention the choice of specialisation and research subject. In the 1940s and 1950s in particular, it was possible to “strike out on one’s own” by undertaking research in the field of social and economic history or the history of the labour movement, which was favoured by the authorities. The advancement of female researchers specialising in those areas (N. Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, Ż. Kormanowa, G. Missalowa and others) was the fastest (not without significance was their political involvement).

Some of the more rare specialisations, such as ancient history (I. Biezuńska-Małowist,<sup>21</sup> M. Jaczynowska, E. Wipszycka-Bravo), history of Byzantium

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<sup>21</sup> Maria Bogucka suggested that the academic position of Iza Biezuńska-Małowist was not necessarily due to her scientific achievements: “she was a cousin of the prominent politician Jakub Berman, which ensured her and her husband a special position.” According to Bogucka, the Małowists fiercely opposed Tadeusz Manteuffel, who spoke out against awarding Iza Biezuńska successive academic degrees without any relevant research achievements; see Maria Bogucka, „Wpływ zwycięstwa kultury masowej i postmodernizmu na uprawianie badań historycznych,” in *Historia – dziś. Teoretyczne problemy wiedzy*

(H. Evert-Kappesowa), history of Algeria (A. Kasznik-Christian), history of Armenia (M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa), history of Central and South America (T. Gillas), history of historiography (K. Śreniowska) or the history of the countryside and peasants (H. Brodowska-Kubicz). It seems that in those rather niche or emerging sub-disciplines, it was somewhat easier (due to the lack of male competition, among other things) to achieve academic independence. On the other hand, female scholars had to face problems of access to sources, foreign literature or methodological difficulties resulting from the need to develop research methods on their own and the lack of mentors. Subsequent generations of women more and more boldly entered research areas hitherto dominated by men: history of political thought (T. Kulak), history of ideas (A. Barszczewska-Krupa) or history of Polish parliamentarism (S. Ochmann-Staniszevska). As far as the common perception of the didactics of history, history of science, education and upbringing as the traditional domain of women is concerned, it is not entirely true. In spite of the actual feminisation of the departments of history of upbringing, science, and history didactics, a real “rush” of women’s *habilitacjas* in that field did not take place until the political transformation.<sup>22</sup> Paradoxically, except for J. Lechicka, K. Mrozowska, R. Dutkowska or M. Kujawska, it was men who are made spectacular careers in that field during the communist era: Jan Hulewicz, Czesław Majorek, Julian Dybiec, Andrzej Meissner or Józef Miąso.

As regards the era in question, it would be difficult to pinpoint any specifically “female” area of research in terms of subject matter or methodology. Nor, on the basis of preserved archival and biographical materials, is it possible to say whether women deliberately chose niche sub-disciplines in order to more easily become independent in them. It seems that this was more often a coincidence, a chance development, the influence of a supervisor, or a job vacancy linked to the need to undertake research in a particular field. The analysis of scientific careers of female historians also shows that they were more preoccupied with administrative duties (functions of secretaries, supervisors of scientific clubs, student traineeships, deputy directors, deans of education, etc.), which could result both from “gender predispositions”, as some would like to believe, and the existing “feudalism” in the academia (which also affected men). Krystyna Śreniowska served as such vassal *auxilium*; she was employed by M.H. Serejski to transcribe texts, search for information related to his interests, etc., which took a lot of time and postponed the completion of her own research plans.<sup>23</sup> Women were less likely to take up high-profile positions, and sometimes gave up competing for posts and honours, did not run for managerial positions, etc.

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*o przeszłości*, ed. by Ewa Domańska, Rafał Stobiecki, Tomasz Wiślicz (Kraków: Universitas, 2014), 202, 349.

<sup>22</sup> One of the reasons for the “prolonged” advancement was also the specific nature of the aforementioned sub-discipline. It was much more difficult to carry out original research in that area and to publish works that met the requirements for *habilitacja*.

<sup>23</sup> Krystyna Śreniowska, *Moje życie* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2018), 162.

Women's political engagement and outlook on life did not stand out in comparison to men's, either. The same holds true for the course of careers and the time needed to reach subsequent levels of scientific advancement. Many female historians were able to complete their doctorates and *habilitacjas* relatively quickly, despite additional family responsibilities.

The success of women in science was undoubtedly impacted by the consistent support of their mentors. Before 1945, female scholars were trained by Szymon Askenazy (whose students included Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska), Marcei Handelsman (who served as the supervisor to Hanna Pohoska, Wanda Moszczeńska, Gryzelda Missalowa and Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska), Adam Szełagowski (supervised Jadwiga Lechicka), Stanisław Zakrzewski (supervised Ewa Maleczyńska and served as one of Krystyna Śreniowska's mentors), Jan Dąbrowski (supervised Krystyna Pieradzka), Jan K. Kochanowski (Jadwiga Karwasińska) or Władysław Smoleński (Żanna Kormanowa). After the Second World War, female scholars received academic support from Stanisław Arnold (supervisor of Barbara Szerer, Janina Leskiewiczowa and Maria Turlejska). One of Ludwik Kolankowski's students was Zofia Libiszowska. The mentor of Irena Janosz-Biskupowa was Karol Górski. Brygida Kürbis carried out research under Kazimierz Tymieniecki's supervision (as did Jadwiga Krzyżaniakowa). Under Władysław Czapliński, Stefania Ochman-Staniszewska prepared her doctoral thesis, while Wojciech Wrzesiński was the supervisor of Teresa Kulakowa. Other scholars who served the supervisors to women included Marian H. Serrejski (Krystyna Śreniowska), Stefan Kieniewicz (Barbara Grochulska), Rafał Gerber (Maria Wawrykowa), Andrzej Zahorski (Izabella Rusinowa), Aleksander Gieysztor (Maria Koczerska), Antoni Mączak (Zofia Zielińska).

It is therefore evident that women's supervisors were mainly men, which is no surprise, given that the vast majority of independent scholars teaching master's and doctoral seminars were male. Nevertheless, female historians also supported one another. The supervisor of Helena Brodowska's doctoral thesis was Helena Radlińska. Gryzelda Missalowa's students included Alina Barszczewska-Krupa and Barbara Wachowska. Celina Bobińska supervised the doctorates of Irena Rychlikowa, Alicja Falniowska, Halina Florkowska-Frančić. She also supported Halina Kozłowska-Sabatowska's *habilitacja*. Iza Biežuńska-Małowist supervised the doctoral thesis of Maria Jaczynowska and Ewa Wipszycka-Bravo, as well as research by Krystyna Stebnicka, Anna Mączakowa, Hanna Geremek. Żanna Kormanowa was the supervisor of the doctoral thesis of Anna Żarnowska and Maria Nietyksza. Mirosława Zakrzewska-Dubasowa supervised Krystyna Wróbel-Lipa. Also Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska supported female scholars (including her long-time assistant Anna Rynkowska).

The course of scholarly careers of Polish female historians in the post-war era was not fundamentally different from that of their male colleagues. It reflected the development of science both in terms of expansion of the research area, methodological diversity, as well as external conditions in which science operated. Neither promotion requirements nor employment policies at univer-

sities discriminated against either gender. However, there were differences between promotion process at old and new universities: it was easier for women to hold management positions at the latter. Cultural gender stereotypes were not eradicated, either. Due to family responsibilities (mainly that of the mother) it was more difficult for women (especially in the early stages of their careers) to devote themselves to scholarly activity. They were less mobile, had to divide their time between professional and domestic duties, but were subject to the same rigours and demands of academic advancement. Contrary to emancipatory rhetoric, there was no policy of support or “levelling the playing field”. Perhaps the lack of such a policy (apart from other factors) contributed to the fact that in the People’s Republic of Poland female scholars were the most determined, resilient and, above all, the best adapted to operate in the still “masculine” world of science.<sup>24</sup> Many female historians had to wait for the title of professor that would crown their long scholarly careers until after the political transformation and the Third Republic of Poland.

Translation Katarzyna Guccio

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<sup>24</sup> In general, the number of female full professors in Polish science until 1989 oscillated around 15–18%.

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