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# MONUMENTAL FOLKLORE. ON THE SPATIAL FIGURES OF THE POLISH PROVINCE

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'province' has a relational character. That means that it cannot be explained without reference to another term, namely 'centre'.<sup>1</sup> The province is a place beyond the centre. This can be understood from two points of view. Firstly, the province can be perceived in a physical sense as a separate geographical area located outside large urban centres, e.g., outside communication, business or industrial centres. Secondly, the province is a mental creation: something beyond the centre of attention and interest, something of less importance. In this article, I am interested in the first apprehension of the term, without entering axiological disputes around the province-centre relationship.

Therefore, the province is the area that surrounds large urban hubs, spilling over around them. If we apply a fairly simple parallel, the province could be seen as a slice of cheese and the hubs as holes: they remain in certain interdependence with the cheese without belonging to it. However, I do not consider this territorial, geographical aspect relevant in itself. It only defines the limits of the subject of my interest. The subject are various types of spatial figures (objects) (e.g., memorials, sculptures, or installations), which are currently being erected in the Polish province, i.e., in the countryside and in small towns. By 'now', I mean objects that were created in the new political and social reality, i.e., after 1989. Therefore, I do not focus on traditional folk sculptures, including religious figures called 'świętki', which were created mainly from the Middle Ages to mid-20th century but have become less popular today. Similarly, I do not consider the monumental forms created in the period of the Polish People's Republic, which illustrated the mechanisation and industrialisation of the Polish province (e.g., Wiesław Adamski's monument to the potato from 1983 in Biesiekierz or a monument to the heater (radiator) from 1978, created by the employees of the Suchedniów Cast Iron Foundry). I do not refer, either, to contemporary spatial forms located in the province, but created by renowned artists included in the pantheon of art (e.g., a monumental chair designed by Tadeusz Kantor and created in 1995 near the Kantor House in Hucisko in the Gdów commune, or Daniel Rycharski's mobile *Monument to the Peasant* created in 2015, an object that 'toured' around Poland, staying in numerous villages and small towns where it was put on public display. In the present work, I focus on monument-like objects (not necessarily monuments as such) of contemporary creation, designed and produced by amateurs, local artists, or specialised companies; objects that stand in the contemporary Polish province. It is for these objects that I use the term monumental folklore.

1 B. Witosz, *Centrum – prowincja, peryferie, marginesy: wędrówka pojęć w świecie dyskursów, znaczeń i aksjologii*, in: *Wędrówka, podróż, migracja: w języku i kulturze*, ed. E. Biłas-Pleszak, J. Przyklenk, A. Rejter, K. Sujkowska-Sobisz, Katowice 2018, p. 13.

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MONUMENTAL FOLKLORE AND GLOCAL CULTURE

The adjective 'monumental' refers to the specific form of these objects (their spatiality and size), thanks to which they can be given a common name of 'monuments'. However, the use of the term folklore requires a broader discussion. It is assumed that the creator of the concept of folklore was William Thomas, who first used it in 1846. Literally, it means 'popular knowledge' (*folk-lore*). Essentially, we can talk about two perspectives for understanding what folklore is and what it is not: a narrow one and a broad one. According to the narrow one, folklore means strictly expressions of folk art 'combining the effects of musical, verbal, mimic, and dance elements'.<sup>2</sup> The broad one includes art, but also other manifestations of widely understood folk culture: taking both the performative form (e.g., customs, rituals) and the oral one (e.g., stories, proverbs). There are also more holistic concepts, e.g., the one represented by Raymond Deloy Jameson<sup>3</sup> who also included religious or philosophical assumptions in the folklore. It is worth noting that all the above (including rituals, philosophy, art) constitute the body of intangible, non-durable culture. However, according to some scholars (e.g., Archer Taylor), the elements of material culture – like sculptures, tools, or clothing – are folklore as well. This study shares the latter standpoint: I understand the spatial figures referred to herein as an element of folklore. The folklore of the modern province.

However, the folklore of the contemporary province is not a manifestation of folk culture in its traditional sense. Along with socio-cultural and technological changes in the 20th century, related in particular to universal access to education, media and means of transport, this culture was subject to modifications. However, it does not seem to be a complete change. The shape of the contemporary province's culture appears to be a kind of hybrid: the result of a combination of what is new – external influences previously alien to this culture – and elements specific to it, testifying to its identity, including the traditional ones, remaining from the more or less remote past. It is a culture that can be called 'glocal',<sup>4</sup> the manifestations of which can be identified in individual examples of monumental folklore.

Before moving on to examples of monumental folklore, however, I would like to clarify two questions. Firstly, what exactly is a glocal culture?

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2 R. Sulima, *Folklor i literatura. Szkice o kulturze i literaturze współczesnej*, Warszawa 1985, p. 7.

3 Quoted from: *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, ed. M. Leach, New York 1949.

4 This concept seldom appears in Polish scientific literature. It can be found, for example, in the work edited by Marta Flisykowska, *Design w kulturze globalnej*, Gdańsk 2015 where, however, it is not defined.

Secondly, can the category of folklore be applied to a culture other than folk culture? ‘Glocal’ is a term for something that is a combination of local and global, something that is the result of the phenomenon of glocalisation. Glocalisation, in turn, means ‘the mutual interaction of globalness and localness occurring in various areas of social life, such as politics, culture, and economics’.<sup>5</sup> The term glocalisation was popularised in science by Ronald Robertson who transferred it, in the mid-1990s, from the domain of economic sciences to sociology.<sup>6</sup> Its first appearance dates back in the 1980s, as the definition of a Japanese strategy for adapting global products distributed on international markets to the requirements of local contractors.<sup>7</sup> The global standard of these goods was modified according to local customers’ expectations. However, it is worth emphasising that glocalisation also concerns the opposite phenomenon – adapting what is local to what is global – as Piotr Piotrowski has shown in relation to museum institutions. He pointed out that museums have a ‘local dimension taking place on the ground of a specific place’, but ‘they are woven into a global network’ as well.<sup>8</sup> Of course, there are many other examples of glocalness. In addition to the aforementioned adaptations of global products to local specificities or entangling of local organisations in a global network, there are also many others to be mentioned, such as combining global and local elements in architectural or design projects,<sup>9</sup> adapting local laws to international solutions, but also the influence of supra-local lifestyle on the attitudes and behaviour of local communities. All these illustrations of glocalness can be seen as a kind of cultural phenomenon, as manifestations of a glocal culture. A glocal culture which can be understood as a combination of a culture with a local dimension, associated with a specific place, and a global culture that does not have any specific place.

In this article, I will be searching for manifestations of glocal culture in the Polish province, looking at examples of monumental folklore. These objects combine elements of the local culture of the Polish province with influences of external global culture. Local, reflecting specific customs, attitudes and behaviours of the Polish province, e.g., folk, ludic

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5 I. Biernacka-Ligęza, *Glokalisierung – byt wyobrażony czy realna potrzeba?* in: *Antynomie polityczności: artykuły, eseje i szkice dedykowane Profesor Barbarze Goli*, ed. K. Minkner, L. Rubisz, Opole, pp. 163–170.

6 E. Rewers, *Transkulturowość czy globalność? Dwa dyskursy o kondycji ponowoczesnej*, ‘ER(R)GO. Teoria–Literatura–Kultura’ 2003, No. 1 (6), pp. 53–65; A.B. Strawińska, *Glokalisierung. Próba kulturowej definicji zjawiska*, ‘Białostockie Archiwum Językowe’ 20: 2020, pp. 285–302.

7 D. Konopka, *Glokalisierung zaufania publicznego jako nowa kategoria socjoekonomiczna*, *Kwartalnik Nauk o Przedsiębiorstwie* 2015, No. 3, pp. 20–29.

8 P. Piotrowski, *Muzeum krytyczne*, Poznań 2011, p. 47.

9 *Design w kulturze globalnej*, Gdańsk 2015.

*Therefore, the province is the area that surrounds large urban hubs, spilling over around them. If we apply a fairly simple parallel, the province could be seen as a slice of cheese and the hubs as holes: they remain in certain interdependence with the cheese without belonging to it. However, I do not consider this territorial, geographical aspect relevant in itself. It only defines the limits of the subject of my interest. The subject are various types of spatial figures (objects) (e.g., memorials, sculptures, or installations), which are currently being erected in the Polish province, i.e., in the countryside and in small towns.*

(entertainment and fun), natural, agrarian, but also traditionalistic and identity-related, including patriotic ones. The global one, which I call, after Roch Sulima<sup>10</sup> and Marcin Napiórkowski,<sup>11</sup> 'the culture of everyday life',<sup>12</sup> maintained by 'standardised supporting regimes', i.e., the same brands, characters, films, musical works, broadcasts, pieces of information and expert advice, operating instructions, and recipes that shape the same social attitudes that standardise people's lifestyle and make this unified mechanism last. This global culture of everyday life reaches out, through the media, to local communities and unifies their way of thinking and behaviour, including creativity. These local and global cultural patterns are manifested on various levels of contemporary monumental folklore: in the themes undertaken, in creative solutions (style, form, and material used), in the function performed by these objects, as well as in the ways and places of their exposure. These figures therefore cross a modern (cosmopolitan-media) and traditional (Polish-provincial) model of life. Today's folklore contains both components.

I asked one more question above: can the category of folklore be applied to a culture other than folk culture? I would like to answer it here. I mentioned earlier that the contemporary Polish province cannot be defined by the concept of folk culture. There is no such culture anymore. Meanwhile, folklore in its traditional understanding was associated precisely with folk culture. However, in anthropology and folklore, the term folklore is also used in relation to contemporary communities. In this sense, we talk about contemporary folklore,<sup>13</sup> which is produced and reproduced not only through direct interpersonal contacts as in the past, but also through media messages. It occurs in various currently existing cultures and subcultures (e.g., sport fans or artistic circles), or in specific environments, such as urban or rural ones.<sup>14</sup> The latter point of view is important here. This work, however, is only about contemporary rural folklore. Small cities, i.e., all areas except for large Polish agglomerations, are also the focus of my interest. Therefore, I use a broader term and talk about the folklore of the Polish province. Of course, as I pointed out at the beginning, I do not have a derogatory attitude towards the term 'province'. On the contrary, I am fascinated by the originality of the monumental (or monumental-like) works in local Poland.

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10 R. Sulima, *Moda na codzienność. Kategoria „codzienności” w kulturze ponowoczesnej*, „Kultura Współczesna” 2001, No. 4, pp. 171–187.

11 M. Napiórkowski, *Kod kapitalizmu*, Warszawa 2019.

12 R. Sulima, *Moda na codzienność*, op. cit., p. 182.

13 J. Burszta, *Folklor*, in: *Słownik etnologiczny. Terminy ogólne*, ed. Z. Staszczak, Warszawa – Poznań 1987.

14 Ibidem..

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF MONUMENTAL FOLKLORE

Before attempting to interpret and understand the characteristics of contemporary spatial objects erected in the Polish province and studying which of these features can be perceived as a manifestation of a glocal culture (combining local and global elements), I would like to present and briefly discuss several examples of such objects first. The choice of this dozen was not accidental. I tried to identify unique, exceptional objects: not only in terms of dimensions, but also the form, place of exposure, circumstances of creation, performed function, and communicated content. Therefore, I did not consider monuments that are commonly found and mutually copied, such as figures standing near car workshops and made of worn-out car parts, gnomes and other garden objects popular in the province, or common welcoming posts located in front of pensions and bars. Instead, I was guided by the originality of the objects, revealing what is 'behind the scenes' of the ingenuity of the Polish province and what, arouses surprise followed by various kinds of extreme sensations among observers: from astonishment to bursts of laughter, from admiration to confusion – where emotionality is much more important than aesthetic rapture. I am aware, of course, that there are more objects of this type than the ones I have described here. However, this dozen or so examples are sufficient to indicate certain characteristic and motives, important from the point of view of the present study. I also conducted an uncomplicated classification of these objects and presented them in the following four categories: human figures, plants, animals, and mythical characters.

It is worth mentioning that the present study is the first research attempt to understand what these objects are. However, there were earlier artistic projects whose authors showed interest in this kind of figures. The first one is an ongoing project in the field of visual arts, conducted by Andrzej Tobis who photographs, inter alia, these types of structures and uses them as illustrations in his work entitled *A-Z. Słownik ilustrowany języka niemieckiego i polskiego*<sup>15</sup> [A-Z. The Illustrated Dictionary of the German and Polish Language]. The other project, a literary one, is Piotr Marecki's book *Polska przydrożna*<sup>16</sup> [Roadside Poland ]; when visiting small Polish towns and talking with locals, the author photographed unusual exhibits he would encounter during his journey.

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15 A. Tobis, *A-Z. Słownik ilustrowany języka niemieckiego i polskiego*, Warszawa 2014.

16 P. Marecki, *Polska przydrożna*, Wołowiec 2020.

Fig. 1 The monument of a 'stickman' reading a book on the roof of the Primary School in Deszczno. Photo owned by: The Municipal Office in Deszczno, Courtesy of the Municipal Office in Deszczno



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## I. MONUMENTAL HUMAN FIGURES

Human figures may take a more or less figurative form. In 2011, on the roof of the primary school building in the town of Deszczno in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, a 6-meter figure of a 'man', also called a *stickman* (from English) was created (Fig. 1). The figure can be called a humanoid, as it is barely a schematic representation of a human figure: it resembles a human being, although it is not one. The monumental figure looks like the ones that can be found in GIFs circulating online, it also resembles figures from road signs. Simplified human images from signs are often equipped with appropriate artifacts (e.g., a shovel) and have a clear message. The case is similar for the figure from Deszczno, holding a book; therefore, it is a symbol of a diligent student. That was, by the way, the idea conceived by the originator of the structure: the mayor of Deszczno, Jacek Wójcicki. The humorous aspect was equally important here. It is not a case of sophisticated humour, but rather its uncomplicated, light, ludic kind. The project was executed by the mayor's cousin, Agata Popiel, and the whole project was created in Janusz Tałuć's Metalwork Studio in Białystok. The stickman is made of polystyrene covered with glass fibre and resin; inside, it has a steel carcass.

Janusz Tałuć's Metalwork Studio in Białystok also made another object with a similar technique. It is a monumental, 8-metre-long, 8 ton statue of the *Demoness* standing in Będzieszyn near Pruszcz Gdański in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. The object can be treated as an advertising mon-



ument, as it is displayed right next to the petrol station and refers to its original name Demon (currently, the station bears the name Avia). Besides, the monument has no thematic connection to the station – its function is most likely to attract the drivers' attention and encourage them to use the station. Pictures of the figure that circulate in social media are a clear manifestation that it does 'attract attention'. Through her attire and elements of armour, as well as a spade she holds in her hand, the statue resembles a character from computer games or fantasy films. Its external appearance could therefore



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Fig. 2 The figure of a DJ in front of the Energy 2000 club in Przytkowice. Photo: from the author's archive.

be the result of the influence of mass culture, inspired by its manifestations. Meanwhile, the Demon (character name and station name) is a reference to local beliefs and folk mythologies.

Two objects that follow also refer to mass culture. First of all, we are talking about the statue of Robert Lewandowski, which is another advertisement of a petrol station located in Czarna Woda near Czersk (Pomeranian Voivodeship). Lewandowski is also made of plastic and arouses the travellers' interest just the same. The other one is a monument of a DJ, standing in front of the 'Energy 2000' club and disco in Przytkowice, Małopolska Voivodeship. The figure of the DJ indicates the extent of change in the contemporary musical culture of the Polish province, where traditional bands have been outcompeted by the modern, western, urban mix culture. The monumental DJ is a figure from the future, as evidenced by the metallic shade of his skin. Associations with the future also provide information about the cultural changes of the local Poland.

Fig. 3, 4 The monument of a strawberry on the premises of the Sadpol Garden Centre in Wierzbica (June 2020). Photo: Katarzyna Turko, Source: blog palaczokropki.pl, Courtesy of Katarzyna Turko



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## II. MONUMENTAL PLANTS

Plant objects are another category of monuments discussed here. The figures to be noticed are: a strawberry, a plum, two statues of mushrooms, a palm tree, and a Christmas tree. The strawberry of several metres (Figures 2 and 3) should be called an installation, as it is an object made of a steel carcass covered with synthetic (most likely) canvas. The Gargantuan strawberry is an advertising figure: it was installed at the Garden Centre 'Sadpol' in Wierzbica village near Serock in the Mazovian Voivodeship. The object is a particular type of promotional tool, as its informational function is less important here. What comes to the fore is the persuasive function where eliciting positive emotional states is a means of influencing the recipients. Currently, the strawberry is no longer standing, but is on its side and is decaying.

A sculpture of a yellow plum, located in Lipowa near Żywiec, plays a similar role. This object is also associated with the cultivation of fruit, specifically the Lipowa 'żniwka' [*harvest plum*] variety; however, it does not advertise any specific farm, but the entire municipality of Lipowa, called the 'capital of the yellow plum'. The figure can therefore be treated as a totem of the local community. The sculpture was unveiled in the centre of Lipowa in 2015, on the occasion of the communal Plum Festival. It is

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Fig. 5 The monument of a mushroom on the premises of the Sieraków Landscape Park. Photo: mos810  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lezczeki\\_monument\\_2001\\_\(2\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lezczeki_monument_2001_(2).jpg) (Creative Commons)

sculpted in linden or poplar wood by local artist Michał Pawlik. The use of wood as a material for the creation of a promotional object should currently be considered as exceptional. It is a different kind of materials are used more frequently; besides, such an approach does not match current environment-friendly trends. However, the wooden figure is a reference to local sculptural traditions.

It is also as specific advertisement of the region and, above all, a sort of ‘magnet’ for tourists, that we should treat the monument of a mushroom (Figure 4) standing in the Sieraków Landscape Park, near the village of Łęczeczki and the Chrzypskie Lake. Besides the connection with the local natural environment, the stone monument has yet another meaning: it refers to contemporary culture and is a symbol of the new millennium; as the inscription on the sculpture reads, it is ‘the first monument on the globe to be unveiled in the third millennium’. The slogan may well reflect reality, as the monument – designed by Jerzy Stasiewski and produced by Zbigniew Wawrzyniak – was ceremonially unveiled one minute after midnight on 1 January 2001.

Another monument of a mushroom stands in Małopolska and is also a record-breaker in its own way. In this case, it is not the moment of erecting the monument that matters: the record was associated with the mushroom to which the monument was dedicated. The structure standing in front of the ‘Oberża pod Grzybem’ [The Mushroom Inn] in Piotrkowice (Tarnów district), is a commemoration of the ‘cauliflower mushroom’ found in Piotrkowice by Henryk Witkiewicz in 1977. The mushroom weighed 15 kilograms and was over a metre in diameter. The specimen received a distinction confirmed by a special entry in the Guinness Book of Records. The monument in front of the restaurant does have a promotional meaning – it is an advertisement – but it can also be interpreted in a broader and more traditional context as it refers to the Polish custom of mushroom picking.

Fig. 7 The structure of an illuminated palm tree in front of the ‘Marco Polo, Alkohole Świata’ shop in Lipno. Photo: Łukasz Klaban, Courtesy of Łukasz Klaban

Fig. 6 The structure of a palm tree (and of a Christmas tree in the background of the photo) in front of the ‘Marco Polo, Alkohole świata’ shop in Lipno. Photo: Łukasz Klaban, Courtesy of Łukasz Klaban

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Fig. 9 A shark on the roof of the building in the Headington district of Oxford, England. Photo: Henry Flower, Source: Wikimedia Commons

Fig. 8 A shark on the roof of the Bryza Bar in Lubniewice. Photo: Marek Potocki, Courtesy of Marek Potocki

The last two objects in this category also need to be assigned an advertising function. The Christmas tree and palm installations (Figures 5 and 6) stand in front of the off-licence shop 'Marco Polo. Alkohole Świata' [Liquors of the World] in the small town of Lipno in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. In 2017, a Christmas tree over 3.5 metres tall was created, followed two years later by a palm tree almost 5 metres tall. The originator of both installations was Łukasz Klaban, the shop owner, who produced them together with his friends: Wiesio (both trees) and Alan (the Christmas tree). The main material of the structure was empty 100-ml vodka bottles (popularly [called] 'baby monkeys'), fastened to previously prepared frameworks with silicone. The palm leaves were mounted with cable ties. Nearly 10,000 bottles were used to make the Christmas tree; for the palm, there were about 4,000 of them. As the author of the project pointed out, the objects should also be perceived in the environmental aspect, related to the re-use of glass packaging. There were also plans to apply for an entry of the structure in the Guinness Book of Records. Łukasz Klaban emphasises that the objects attract the attention of people, not only the inhabitants of Lipno. Interest is aroused not only by the form itself, but also by the coloured LED lighting, which is an integral part of both monumental plants.

### III. MONUMENTAL ANIMALS

There are also monumental likenesses of animals in various places of local Poland. Four objects are particularly interesting due to their form and communicated content: a giraffe, a shark, a gorilla, and a penguin. The giraffe is standing right next to the 'Delikatesy Albo' shop in Rumia in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. This structure, too, should be treated as an advertising object: it attracts the eyes of travellers driving down national road No. 6 and encourages them to shop. What makes the animal stand out is, first of all, its height: it measures 12.6 m. The shop's former website contained the information that, owing to these dimensions, the giraffe was

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entered in the Guinness Book of Records. While this information could not be confirmed, it has spread as a rumour across the Internet and is treated as true. Social media contain many memes about the animal; one of them, for instance, consists of three photos of various monuments and a caption that 'Every city has its own symbol': Świebodzin – the monument to Jesus, Warsaw – the Palace of Culture, and Rumia – the giraffe. Interestingly, the giraffe was made of wicker, woven using a traditional technique on a steel carcass. Originally, the object was illuminated. The animal was created on the initiative of Stanisław Skolimowski, the owner of 'Delikatesy Albo', by Zygmunt Babiarz's Wicker Factory in Oleśnica in Lower Silesia. It appeared in front of the store in Rumia in 2003.

No less interesting is the shark, which pierces the roof of the 'Bryza' Bar in Lubniewice in the Lubuskie Voivodeship (Fig. 7). Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine what the circumstances of the construction were or what material was used for it. We can only guess the promotional function of the object, as well as what it was inspired by. A similar shark (Fig. 8) is located on the roof of a residential building in the Headington district of Oxford, England, and was commissioned by Bill Heine, the owner of the property, in 1986 (in March 2022, the property was entered on the Oxford cultural heritage list). Heine claims his creation was motivated by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster that had taken place in April 1986. In the case of the shark from Lubniewice, the motif was probably different, although one cannot resist the impression that the Polish animal is a copy of its English counterpart, although not in the strict sense.

Another monumental animal-themed advertisement is the gorilla from Mazurowice in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship. In Mazurowice, by national road No. 94 between Wrocław and Legnica, is the 'Słowianka' Inn – and it was precisely in front of it that a plastic statue of a gorilla stood. It was standing upright when – probably in 2021 – it was removed. However, coaxing and luring potential customers driving down the national road was only the most obvious function of the object. The gorilla was not an ordinary one: it was a statue of the gorilla-monster King Kong. Therefore, there is a clear combination of a homey element (the name of the inn: 'Słowianka' [The Slav Girl]) and mass culture (the figure of King Kong). However, it was not just the reference to the American ('King Kong' is an American movie) character, as it could be read on the boards next to the animal. There was also an intention of presenting Merian Caldwell Cooper, the first director of 'King Kong' from 1933, and his connection with Poland. Cooper was not only an artist, but also a pilot who served in the Polish air force during the Polish-Bolshevik war in 1920. Thus, the King Kong statue combined different identities: local and traditional, global and popular.

The last object of this group is the figure (still standing) of a penguin from Doły Biskupie in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (Fig. 9). The 7-metre-tall pen-





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guin made of Styrodur (hardened Styrofoam) was installed by the road near an elementary school in 2017 (or a year earlier) and is a local attraction; it attracts tourists and travel bloggers and provokes an ‘aesthetic shock’, as it can be read on one of the portals.<sup>17</sup> It has a double history. Before its installation in Doły Biskupie, it was most likely an advertising statue as it represents the hero of the cartoon *Surf’s Up* from 2007, a penguin named Cody Maverick.<sup>18</sup> When the statue lost its original purpose, it was purchased by the amateur artist from Doły Biskupie, Jerzy Trojanowski. He repaired it, then painted colourful elements of clothing and put the multicoloured figure, thus prepared, on display. Jerzy Trojanowski’s house in Doły Biskupie is also covered with colourful motifs and lighting. Around the house stand many different figures from fairy tales and legends. This ‘motley’ multi-colourism may seem original in its own way; however, it fits into the aesthetics of traditional folklore and can be found at local fairs to this day.

17 A. Rymarczyk, *No i przestało padać*, ‘Świątokrzyskie Włóczęgi’, <http://swietokrzyskiewloczegi.blogspot.com/2017/09/no-i-przestao-padac.html> [accessed 28 April 2022].

18 K. Turczyńska, *Ciekawe miejsca w Świątokrzyskiem – miejsca mniej popularne na szlakach turystycznych. Znasz je wszystkie?*, ‘Skomplikowane’, <https://skomplikowane.pl/na-trasie/ciekawe-miejsca-w-swietokrzyskiem/> [accessed 28 April 2022].

#### IV. MONUMENTAL MYTHICAL FIGURES

The last group of monuments located in the Polish province are representations of mythical figures, referring to symbolic stories, legends, and memories rooted in social identity and strengthening it at the same time. Two objects are interesting here: Świętowit and the Dragoness. Świętowit (Fig. 10) is located in the village of Boria, in the municipality of Ćmielów, in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. As the name suggests, the object is a representation of Polabian Slavs' most important deity whose

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Fig. 11 The figure of Świętowit in Boria in the Świętokrzyskie Province.  
Photo: Jakub Hatun, Source: *Wikimedia Commons*

characteristic feature is that it has four faces. This can also be seen in the figure of Świętowit of Boria, produced in 2006 by Stanisław Skalski, a local amateur artist. It can be said that Świętowit was created using the recycling method, as all its elements are waste, namely: used metal boilers, old blind strips, and springs obtained from old couches. These elements are attached to a decommissioned power pole. The object is therefore a combination of new (environmentalist) trends with traditional cultural influences (old beliefs). Of course, it should be noted that these traditional influences, however, do not have a local character referred to in this work. They are not a manifestation of the culture of the Polish province, but the culture of old communities inhabiting the areas of Central and Eastern Europe in pre-Christian times. This kind of localness, therefore, goes beyond the province-centre division adopted here. On the other hand, it is worth emphasising that it is not an element of the global culture of everyday life.

Another figure combining tradition with modernity is the dragoness from Baranów Sandomierski. The modernity related to here is not the environment-friendly approach, but a reference to the modernity in which the adult world mixes with the children's world. An example of such a 'mix' are cartoons targeted at both age groups at the same time or elements of adult clothing with prints of characters associated with the world of several-year-olds or teenagers. The figure of the dragoness, produced by PHU Malpol from Nowa Sól, exhibited in 2013 in the vicinity of the late Renaissance castle in Baranów Sandomierski in Podkarpackie Province, fits into the same aesthetics. The inclusion of the dragoness in the list of monumental folklore objects may raise doubts, especially as it resembles an enlarged toy, in addition to being installed in a playground. Therefore, the question may arise whether it is an object like many others in Polish parks and recreation areas for children and families. The intention of erecting the figure was, on the one hand, ludic, on the other, 'serious' and referring to two traditions: the Krakow legend of the Wawel Dragon, as Jacek Hynowski, mayor of Baranów Sandomierski, emphasised,<sup>19</sup> and the local one, related to the local tale of a dragon that lived in the basement of the Baranów castle and fed on court maids. The Dragoness of Baranów Sandomierski should therefore be seen as a unique figure for two reasons: as an element of contemporary culture – a popular attraction for the youngest – and as an element of folklore and tradition.

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19 K. Tajs, *Smok na zakończenie zmian w Baranowie Sandomierskim*, 'Echodnia.eu', <https://echodnia.eu/podkarpackie/smok-na-zakonczenie-zmian-w-baranowie-sandomierskim/ar/8709179> [accessed 28 April 2022].



## MANIFESTATIONS OF GLOCAL CULTURE IN MONUMENTAL FOLKLORE

It can be noted that the presented examples of monumental folklore are a material reflection of the influence of two currents in culture: the global and the local one. They can therefore be perceived as a spatial manifestation of the phenomenon of the glocal culture: a combination of what is global (modern, fashionable, standardised and media-related, i.e., connected with the culture of everyday life) and what is local (vernacular, traditional, homey). These two currents permeate, fuse, mutually reinterpret and mutate.<sup>20</sup> Just like the case is for McDonald's food (e.g., the WieśMac burger as a combination of global and local elements), spatial objects in the Polish province also undergo this process (e.g., an object made of traditional material – wicker – that aspires to be 'global' using

12



47.7 (D, A.) **die Klinge**

47.7 (D, W.) **klinga**

13



190.3 (D, A.) **die Weinbrandflasche**

190.3 (D, W.) **butelka do wódki**

the alleged Guinness record). The contemporary monumental folklore is, therefore, a hybrid of sorts: its shape is influenced by two different currents. Different, but combinable.

The global culture, i.e., the modern culture of everyday life, is visible in monumental folklore in several characteristic aspects. First of all,

<sup>20</sup> A. Dylus, *Globalizacja. Refleksje etyczne*, Wrocław 2005.

in arousing emotional sensations, sometimes even a shock. The literature emphasises that 'design and style, as well as humour and visual surprises are important features of contemporary culture'.<sup>21</sup> It takes a special approach to draw the attention of a contemporary person, immersed in the world of consumption, media and advertising. Such an approach can be seen in activities which apply the principles of the currently popular experience marketing.<sup>22</sup> A particular type of experience can be provoked by objects which are untypical, e.g., oversized (the strawberry), surprising (e.g., the Demoness) or atypically situated (e.g., the stickman on the roof). This unusualness, but often also specific exaggeration visible in the form and manner of exposing the figures discussed here, make them original, unique. Therefore, those figures arouse general interest and become the main motif of memes, online stories, or even a source of inspiration for artists. An example – among others – may be the aforementioned Andrzej Tobis who treats objects of this type as a visual commentary on the entries for his original adaptation of the *Bildwörterbuch Deutsch und Polnisch* dictionary published in 1954. Tobis's version, entitled *A-Z. Słownik ilustrowany języka niemieckiego i polskiego*, features some of the figures analysed here, for example: the Demoness (entry: 'klinga' – blade) and palm (entry: 'butelka do wódki' – vodka bottle) (Fig. 11 and 12).

Emotional sensations are the first dimension of global culture present in the monuments of the Polish province. Second, this culture manifests itself in their infantilism. 'An infantile monument is one that breaks with the seriousness represented by a mature person; one in which the specific elements of children's play, humour and light-heartedness stand out'.<sup>23</sup> The category of infantilism includes the figures of Robert Lewandowski, the dragoness, and the penguin. Third, the global culture of everyday life can be found in the references to the world of advertising, media, and mass culture. Many contemporary objects erected in the Polish province are advertising ones, both those related to the activities of specific companies (e.g., the 'Słowianka' bar with King Kong, the petrol station with the Demoness, the inn with the mushroom monument); they also promote Polish places and regions (e.g., Lipowa and the plum monument). Others refer to the content distributed through the media:

21 B. Hultén, N. Broweus, M. van Dijk, *Marketing sensoryczny*, transl. G. Dąbkowski, Warszawa 2011, p. 36.

22 M. Kostera, *Zarządzanie na rynku doznań*, in: *Nowe kierunki w organizacji i zarządzaniu*, ed. B. Glinka, M. Kostera, Warszawa 2012, pp. 359–375; M. Boguszewicz-Kreft, *Marketing doświadczeń. Jak poruszyć zmysły, zaangażować emocje, zdobyć lojalność klientów*, Warszawa 2013.

23 M. Laberschek, *Znaczenie pomników przedsiębiorstw w przestrzeni społecznej*, 'Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej', 15: 2019, No. 3, p. 156.

sport (Robert Lewandowski), films (King Kong, the penguin), memes (the shark in the roof, the giraffe), travel (the palm and the giraffe), culture of record-breaking (the giraffe, both monuments of mushrooms, the Christmas tree). Fourth, the objects in the Polish province also contain contemporary environment-friendly motifs. We are referring here to the installations representing Świątowit, the palm tree, and the Christmas tree. Fifth, monumental folklore is also associated with modern rituals, e.g., waste segregation (the palm tree made of bottles) or New Year's ceremonies (symbolised by the stone monument of the mushroom). Sixth, some objects in the local Poland are created from sculptural materials typical of the present day, e.g., plastic or waste.

In the monumental folklore objects gathered and described here, we can also notice the manifestations of a different culture: the local (traditional) Polish one. These manifestations are present at several different levels. First, through the appearance of traditional natural motifs (in the monuments of mushrooms, for instance). Second, through the presence of elements of local farming (plum and strawberry). Third, there are references to native rituals, such as Christmas (the Christmas tree), mushroom picking (the monuments of mushrooms), and the celebrative consumption of strong liquors (the Christmas tree and the palm tree made of vodka bottles). Fourth, some objects contain visible signs of attachment to the local heritage. On the one hand, these are objects with the characteristic element of 'Polishness' (the figure of Robert Lewandowski, Dragons, or even King Kong), and of 'Slavicness' (the Świątowit installation) on the other hand. Some of the buildings, besides referring to the native tradition themselves, are also associated with buildings with familiar-sounding names such as both inns (the Piotrkowice mushroom and King Kong from Mazurowice). Fifth, the monuments are made of materials that can be considered traditional: wood (the plum), stone (one of the mushrooms) and wicker (the giraffe). Sixth and finally, some figures have an element of local ludicism (e.g., the penguin).

## SUMMARY

As it results from the above comparison, monumental folklore objects contain features of the culture of everyday life (reflecting the processes of globalisation) and of local culture. The strawberry, for instance, is associated with local plant cultivation, but it is also an advertisement, not unlike the Christmas tree which is a symbol of traditional holidays and, simultaneously, an environmentally-friendly structure. However, it is worth emphasising that the manifestations of both cultures occur to varying degrees in different objects. Some figures are closer to the local culture (the plum), and those where native motifs are virtually invisible (the stickman on the school building) and localness is primarily related to the place where

they were exposed. Therefore, it seems impossible to point out an object that would be a representative of contemporary monumental folklore of the Polish province and an appropriate indicator, a point of reference for the others; one which could be said to contain the perfect proportions of elements of global and local culture.

We can also get the impression that this type of creativity is a certain process, that it is changing, and that globalisation phenomena play an important role in it. Perhaps, under the standardising influence of the media, monumental folklore objects are becoming more and more similar in terms of subject, creative methods, function and manner of exposure on the one hand – while on the other hand, they are less and less related to the identity of the place in which they are located. However, these assumptions cannot be verified without conducting appropriate research. That also means a study on the changes that these objects have undergone over the years, e.g., in the scope of topics tackled, their form, or the materials used.

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### Abstract:

The category of monumental folklore, used in the article, refers to contemporary monumental spatial objects erected in the Polish province. The text presents and describes several objects from that category, classified into four groups: monumental human figures, monumental plants, monumental animals, and monumental mythical figures. An interpretation of these objects was also made, in connection with the type of contemporary provincial culture they manifest. From the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that contemporary monumental folklore objects are a manifestation of glocal culture, being at the same time ‘immersed’ in two types of culture: the local (traditional) one and the global (modern) one.

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### Keywords:

**monumental folklore, monumental objects,  
culture of contemporary province,  
glocalisation, glocal culture**

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