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Peripheries of influence: international and disciplinary intersections in early 20th century British anthropology

It is common to speak of 'national traditions' in anthropology even if we acknowledge, as Regna Darnell has, that 'these traditions refuse to stay in their separate boxes' [1]. To look at the reasons for this resistance, I propose to examine some aspects of the Polish-born, British-educated anthropologist Maria Czaplicka's career, in the decades prior to British Anthropology gaining a firm foothold in universities. This was a time when the international and interdisciplinary networks afforded a great deal of fluidity and flexibility in the practice of anthropology. As an emerging and small discipline, anthropology in the UK at the start of 20th century was in many ways shaped by students like Czaplicka. Examining international networks that she was enmeshed in thus throws light on how anthropology was practiced and developed. The style of her work, as well as its presentation among geographical and folklore circles, is indicative of the ways in which anthropology was entangled in these traditions. Furthermore, the centrality of

learned societies and museums reveals the importance of sociability, personal and professional networks and collecting desires across continents on setting anthropology's path. In this talk I will focus on the practicalities of *doing* anthropology rather than the intellectual developments although the two are of course intimately related. I will first give an overview of Czaplicka's background and anthropological training, then discuss the role of the International Congress of Americanists on Czaplicka's career and Siberian expedition and finally, her involvement with geographical circles to delineate the international and disciplinary intersections in her career.

Maria Czaplicka was born in 1884 in Warsaw into a family of impoverished Polish nobility for whom education was of foremost importance. She had a disjointed education, as it was difficult for girls' to receive schooling that would prepare them for higher education [2]. However in 1910 she became the first woman to win the Mianowski scholarship, which allowed her to continue studies in London. Her anthropological training in the UK started with Seligman and Westermarck's lectures at London School of Economics and was followed by the Oxford Diploma in Anthropology. Intellectually she was linked to the German human-geography tradition of Ratzel via her Polish mentor Waclaw Nalkowski, which is perhaps one of the reasons that Oxford's holistic conception of anthropology appealed to her. After all, John Linton Myres, one of the men responsible for the establishment of the course had been appointed the Chair of Historical Geography at Liverpool University in 1907 [3].

After completing the Diploma course under Robert Ranulph Marett's tutelage, Czaplicka was encouraged by him to take up the study of Siberia, which resulted in the book *Aboriginal Siberia* and an expedition to the Yenisei valley in 1914. Throughout her career, Czaplicka was following the research of her Russian colleagues and had personal contacts with people such as Lev Shternberg, Vladimir Jochelson and Vera Haruzina in Russia, and Bronislaw Pilsudski in Poland. Franz Boas was a central figure in facilitating Czaplicka's interactions with American institutions while George Byron Gordon from the University of Pennsylvania Museum became a major stakeholder in her expedition due to funding one of it's members, Henry Usher Hall. Following her lectureship in Ethnology at Oxford during the war, Czaplicka sought to find employment in Poland [1], which proved difficult due to her gender and qualifications, and the USA, which despite some promise, did not materialise. In May 1921, after lecturing at Bristol for a year, Czaplicka committed suicide.

Czaplicka was one of the first Diploma students at Oxford starting the course in 1911, some 3 years after Wilson Wallis, whose article inspired the title of this talk. The students on the Diploma were an international mix with nearly two thirds of those enrolled on the course in the first 5 years not British. Many, such as Wilson Wallis (American), Diamond Jenness (New Zealand) and Marius Barbeau (Canadian) were Rhodes scholars. There were also representatives from the continent – for example Maria Czaplicka and a Czech student, Anna Fischer. Many British students had foreign connections from overseas studies and some, such as Robert Sutherland Rattray and

[1] I am grateful to Grazyna Kubica for this information

Osbert Guy Stanhope Crawford were born in the colonies [4]. Oxford was not exceptional in its internationalism. At the London School of Economics Westermarck and Seligman's students included Finns Gunnar Landtman and Rafael Karsten and, of course, Polish-born Bronislaw Malinowski. Since first undergraduates in anthropology in the UK did not emerge until 1921 after the establishment of a BA course in Cambridge [5], we may suggest that the previous education and international influences of this first generation of academically trained anthropologists had some effect on their views and subsequent work. However, more importantly, early fieldworkers were entering into networks of collaboration and exchange in their respective fields. For example, Myres arranged for Freire-Marreco to make acquaintance with Alice Fletcher, a leading figure in the founding of the Santa Fe school, which became Freire-Marreco's field base [6]. Freire-Marreco also introduced *Notes and Queries* to her American colleagues[2] and became a collaborator with Wilfred William Robbins and John Peabody Harrington [7]. Diamond Jenness, after his first expedition to Papua New Guinea, received an offer from Edward Sapir, 'Barbeau's chief' [8] to join Stefansson's expedition to Arctic Canada and then followed in Sapir's footsteps to become the Chief of Anthropology at the National Museum of Canada [9].

The atmosphere of collaboration and working on the cause of anthropology among a small community meant that students were taking on teaching roles early and continued to work closely with their mentors after their studies. For example, of the first Diploma cohort, Freire-Marreco gave a

[2] In March 1913, Freire-Marreco wrote to Myres 'Notes and Queries is most useful to me – its chief fault is, that Mr Owen of the Field Museum, who is collecting at Second Mesa, likes it so much that he borrows it all the time' [6].

series of lectures on the Pueblo Indians in 1912, while Francis Knowles taught Physical Anthropology from 1909 to 1912 [4]. Czaplicka's contemporary, Dudley Buxton was appointed Demonstrator in Physical Anthropology in 1913, a year after he attained the Diploma, and Arthur Hocart who had several years' worth of fieldwork experience, delivered a lecture course and served as deputy Reader in Psychology during his studies [4]. Finally, Czaplicka became Oxford's ethnology lecturer in the year after her return from the field. As teachers, they quite literally advanced the subject, but this first generation of trained anthropologists also continued to feed back to their home institution after moving abroad. For example, Diamond Jenness sent Marett his whole Arctic Expedition report in 1915 despite having no formal connection to Oxford at that point [10] and Winifred Hoernlé, arguably the most internationally prepared anthropology student of her time who studied in South Africa, Cambridge, Germany as well as at Sorbonne under Durkheim, regularly corresponded with Haddon and was a close collaborator to Radcliffe Brown after moving back to South Africa[11, 12][3]. It is thus perhaps better to think of these early students as collaborators and partners engaged into the anthropological project rather than mere disciples of the leading men.

I do not wish to understate the role of the key figures in British Anthropology, but rather draw attention to their role as brokers and mentors who connected their disciples into the academic networks that made anthropological work possible. Academic communities and particularly those

[3] After fieldwork in South Africa in 1912 and 1913, Hoernlé also spent five years as an academic wife in Harvard during which she kept abreast of developments in anthropology. She returned to South Africa in 1920 and was appointed lecturer at University of Witwaterstand in 1923 [11] [12]

of anthropology were small and comprised of elite members of the society resulting in an ease and fluidity of interaction between its members. People such as Haddon, Rivers, Myres, Marett and Balfour were influential across disciplines, evidenced in their activities in learned societies such as the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), Folklore Society and the British Association of Advancement of Sciences (BAAS) and participation in congresses and meetings. In such contexts they were able to promote the 'science of man' and meet their counterparts from abroad while their international reputation allowed them to forge opportunities for their students. It is noteworthy that personal references were a prerequisite for acceptance in societies such as RGS and the RAI whose fellowship was a form of symbolic capital and opened doors for funding and training possibilities as well as opportunities to socialise with other fellows.

The importance of sociability in pursuing academic goals can be explored in the case of 1912 International Congress of Americanists held in London, which was a pivotal point in Maria Czaplicka's career. It was there that Marett met Lev Shternberg and Vladimir Jochelson alongside Franz Boas and suggested that Czaplicka should work on a book that would enable her English-speaking colleagues to learn about indigenous communities in the Russian North. The Congress delegation was invited to visit Oxford on Monday June 3rd 1912 where they enjoyed a programme of library and museum visits, honorary degrees were conferred upon Alfred Percival Maudsley and Franz Boas and a garden party was arranged at Somerville College [13]. It is evident that Czaplicka met some members of this party as

on the 5th of June she sent Lev Shternberg a postcard to London inviting him to the OU Anthropological Society lecture at Oxford [14].

Following the 1912 meeting, Marett wrote to Somerville College principal, Emily Penrose, saying that Shternberg and Jochelson are anxious ‘that their own work and that of their fellow-anthropologists should be given greater publicity through the medium of some widely spoken tongue’ and that ‘Miss Czaplicka, as familiar with Polish, Russian and English, might profitably devote herself to a synthesis of recent Russian work on the tribes of the far North’ [15]. This proposal was apparently received with enthusiasm and Shternberg and Jochleson ‘undertook to supply her with the fullest information as to literary sources’ [15]. Czaplicka’s research and collaboration with Russian colleagues resulted in Aboriginal Siberia [16], which also included 13 photographs from Peter the Great Museum and 3 from Bronislaw Pilsudski’s collection[4]. The research for the book led to plans for original fieldwork in Siberia facilitated by the contacts made in 1912.

Czaplicka’s international relationships intensified during preparations for fieldwork and in the field. She continued to exchange letters with both Jochelson and Shternberg after the publication of Aboriginal Siberia and Shternberg assisted Czaplicka with the choice of field site as well as practicalities of securing letters of introduction and answered questions about buying tickets and provisions for her expedition [14]. Moreover, owing to Henry Usher Hall’s participation in the expedition, it became known as an undertaking between the Oxford Committee for Anthropology and the

[4] Czaplicka also requested photographs from Franz Boas [17], which were sent to Oxford by Clark Wissler [22], however these did not get published.

University of Philadelphia Museum. Marett had a central role in suggesting and facilitating an arrangement with the museum, but it was its director, George Gordon Byron's, desires to enhance his museum that secured the funding [18]. Czaplicka and Hall took advantage of this aspiration by promising representative collections of objects and photographs[5]. Indeed, when, after several months, no decision had been reached, Czaplicka suggested to Gordon that Aleš Hrdlička from the Smithsonian might buy Hall's expedition photographs instead [20]. Museum collecting was an integral part of anthropology at this stage and anthropologists were reliant on financial support from museums. Thus both in terms of practice and output, anthropology at this stage was situated in the international world of museums which were actively exchanging objects both directly with other museums but also through fieldworkers and other mediators.

After the expedition, Shternberg became instrumental in keeping Czaplicka up to date with developments in Siberian anthropology sending her books and subscribing her to journals. In return Czaplicka promised to write about Shternberg's work in English journals or even do translations. In June 1916 Czaplicka wrote to Shternberg saying that she intends to publish twice a year a report on the original work in anthropology and ethnology by Slavic scholars, however due to the length of Word War I and the outbreak of Russian Civil War, these plans did not come to fruition. Aboriginal Siberia remains the most important contribution that Czaplicka made in introducing Siberian scholarship to English-speaking audiences. Indeed, in the

[5] In his first reply to the funding request, Gordon suggests to Hall that 'What we should especially want would be complete collections to illustrate the arts and industries, the social, religious and household life of the different tribes which you would encounter' [16]

introduction of the 1964 English edition of *Peoples of Siberia,* it is remarked to be the most recent overview of Siberian indigenous people since *Aboriginal Siberia* [21]. However, plans revealed in Czaplicka's letters suggest the potential for greater interchange between Slavic and Western scholarship.

Her publications reflected her geographical background and the practices of Russian scholars who mostly worked via local branches of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society although her contact with local ethnographers in Siberia was limited[6]. In her popular book, *My Siberian Year,* and in many of her public lectures she spoke of Siberian economic needs, the possibility of a northern sea route and about its potential autonomy along the lines of Canada – prevalent issues discussed among Siberian intelligentsia at the time. She also fostered a relationship with the Royal Geographical Society whose fellow she became in 1916. Through a meeting with then president Douglas Freshfield and Arthur Hinks, the secretary of RGS and editor of the Geographical Journal, a proposal was made for her to give a lecture on Siberia. After some discussion, Czaplicka was invited to be a discussant on Colonel Harold Swayne's lecture on Siberia in 1917, while she spoke on Poland in April 1919. The possibility of RGS funding her research was also discussed around this time, as on 17 June 1918 RGS president, Thomas Holdich wrote to Czaplicka

> I am glad to hear that you will be able to undertake the scientific mission to Russia, which has been suggested. The Royal Geographical Society of London has many friends in Russia, and we are deeply indebted to Russian

[6] This was mainly due to the fact that her stopover in Krasnoyarsk was very brief on the way to the field and during her return trip in 1915, the local museum director Tugarinov was away on a trip to Europe and many local ethnographers and geographers were away on fieldwork

> Geographers for much valuable information in the past. I trust that in the present unsettled conditions which prevail in that country no obstacle will be placed in your way, and that we shall receive from you in due time the report of your ethnographical and geographical studies which you have undertaken for our Society.

I have not yet found other evidence of this plan, however, Czaplicka became firmly placed in the structures of geographical circles when, in 1920, she was awarded the Murichson Grant by the RGS – a significant achievement for a woman.

A further indication of the way her work was aligned with geographical concerns can be found in plans that were fostered with institutions in the USA. In 1919 she was seeking Franz Boas's help to relocate and establish her academic career there, a proposal that was accompanied by supporting letters from the leading scientists in the UK (G. Murray, R.R. Marett, J.G. Frazer, Arthur Keith, Arthur Thomson, Henry Balfour and A.C. Haddon) [22]. In May 1919, Marett also wrote to President Osborne at AMNH

> I have asked Sir William Osler[7] to write to you on behalf of my friend and pupil Miss Marie Czaplicka, so that you may, if you see fit, use your influence with Mr Huntingdon[8] to finance an expedition to the Obi valley

Mirroring 1913, when he wrote to George Byron Gordon to garner support for Mr Hall of Czaplicka's expedition.[9] Marett again used his influence and status in the academic community to find support for his student in the USA. Nothing

[7] Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, was on the reception committee of the Oxford visit for International Congress of Americanists
[8] Huntington was a railroad Magnate and former American Geographical Society president
[9] Balfour's also made some somewhat lacklustre inquiries for funding from the RGS in 1914 for Czaplicka's planned expedition companion, Arthur Whyte [20]

much came of this prospect either, although suggestions were made for approaching Geographical Society directly and for possibility of work on the Jesup report. Czaplicka made further inquiries for expedition support to Clark Wissler of the AMNH in late 1920 [23].

Czaplicka was actively seeking to move to the USA and in particular to work under Boas. The latter sought positions for her at Barnard College but his efforts were fruitless. There were obvious correspondences between Czaplicka and Boas's approach and research interests. Both were influenced by a Ratzelian tradition of geography albeit Boas's background was more rounded and more heavily influenced by the likes of Ritter and Humboldt[10] and were invested in Arctic research. Overthrowing the myth created by Boas and his students about his conversion to anthropology in the field, recent scholarship [25-27] suggests he became an anthropologist by adapting to disciplinary boundaries at Clark University where he later 'redefined the scope of anthropology to correspond to his own interests' [26]. It is not just Czaplicka's intellectual disposition, which lead to links with geographical societies and encouraged her ambition to move to the USA. As a woman of modest means, she relied on institutional funding to carry out any work, and as a woman, it was infinitely more difficult for her to gain that funding. Thus, support was sought from where it could be found and the RGS was better situated to provide financial aid. Likewise, the emerging philanthropic backing of human sciences and museums in the USA made it an attractive option for new anthropologists.

[10] Incidentally, Ritter and Humboldt are also cited as forefathers of Russian geography in an article by Potanin in 1913 [24]

Maria Czaplicka was a uniquely positioned amidst early 20th century anthropologist in the UK. Her intellectual background, gender, reliance on anthropological career for financial means and her field site situate her at the hear of interdisciplinary intersections in British Anthropology. International links and cooperation were a significant part of the growing discipline of anthropology in the early 20th century. Much like the academic elite today, scholars then enjoyed travelling and corresponding with colleagues from abroad. In a small and embryonic discipline, practical counsel, methods and theories from around the world and across disciplines significantly influenced the development of anthropology. As Wilson Wallis suggested in his 1957 article ‘it is misleading to think of British Anthropology as a 'breed apart' in the first decades of the 20th century [28]. The cooperation within national boundaries was of course more intense and fast-paced thus yielding greater unity of thought, but I believe university-specific conditions and the particular relationship with field sites are the sites in which to seek the emergence of differences in the ways in which anthropology was conceived of and practiced.

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