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Karol Adamiecki and the Historiographical Paradox of the Origin of Management*

Zarys treści: Artykuł jest przyczynkiem do uprawiania historiografii organizacji rozumianej jako wykorzystywanie intelektualnych narzędzi historii historiografii przy krytycznym badaniu przeszłości organizacyjnej. Szczegółowy problem wyznacza dyskusja propozycji, sformułowanej przez autora już wcześniej, by historyczny paradoks związany z rolą Karola Adamieckiego w narodzinach zarządzania uznawać za paradoks historiograficzny.

The content outline: This article is a contribution to studies in the organizational historiography, a discipline tasked with studying the organizational past by using intellectual tools of the history of historiography. The article discusses in detail the proposal to treat the historical paradox regarding Karol Adamiecki's role in the inception of management studies as a historiographical paradox.

Słowa kluczowe: Karol Adamiecki, historiografia organizacji, paradoks historiograficzny

Keywords: Karol Adamiecki, organizational historiography, historiographical paradox

This paper provides an example of using historical approach in management. I propose to use the concept of “organizational reminding” as an intellectual tool with which to analyse the issue under discussion. In line with the definition suggested a few years ago, “organizational reminding” is considered to encompass (1) practices that aim to minimize single-loop forgetting and (2) values that pertain to what Monika Kostera identified as double-loop forgetting.

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It is worth recalling that Kostera, one of the exponents of humanistic management, proposed, along with Sylwia Ciuk,¹ to apply the metaphor of the mythical Lethe River² to contemporary business, thus identifying an archetypical antinomy of learning through organizational forgetting. According to these scholars the organizational memory loss occurs at two levels, bearing analogy to learning processes.

- single-loop forgetting that consists in oblivion of practices,
- double-loop forgetting that concerns organizations losing memory of their underlying values.

Double-loop forgetting, i.e. the process of “forgetting that things are forgotten” deprives organization members of the sense of identity.³ Double-loop forgetting occurs not only in companies or institutions. It appears also in contemporary management sciences, taking on the form of programmatic ahistoricism.⁴

In keeping with the antinomic approach to organizational remembering/forgetting developed by Kostera and Ciuk, I propose to consider the functional significance⁵ of questions which, while inspired by yesterday’s problems, are used in confronting challenges that various organizations face today and may face in the future. These questions, originating in critically interpreted organizational traditions, relate to both practices, i.e. minimizing single-loop forgetting, and values, i.e. coping with double-loop forgetting.

Yet, this concerns the approach to both remembering and forgetting as dynamic phenomena, as processes rather than states. From this perspective, it is more justifiable to speak not of ‘memory’ but of ‘organizational remembering’. As a type of social remembering, also known as collective remembering, it constitutes a dynamic process of representing the past. “Organizational forgetting” and “organizational recalling” are obviously of the same nature.

A scholar who does not work in the USA and studies the history of such a heavily “Americanized” field as management may be tempted to argue, thus falling into certain provincialism, that “we faced the same situation, but earlier”. Only that in the case of Poland and the history of management, such a statement is justified.

One of the most prominent experts on the history of organizational thought, Daniel A. Wren, in the first edition of *The Evolution of Management Thought*,⁶

¹ S. Ciuk, M. Kostera, “Drinking from the Waters of Lethe. A Tale of Organizational Oblivion,” *Management Learning* 2010, no. 41, pp. 187–204.

² It is, of course, a river in Hades the waters of which were believed to induce oblivion.

³ Ciuk, Kostera, “Drinking from the Waters of Lethe.” I would like to wholeheartedly thank Monika Kostera for sending me this text.

⁴ I further discussed ahistoricism of contemporary management in T. Ochowski, *Tradycje przedsiębiorczości w Polsce i jako źródło kapitału kulturowego organizacji*, Warszawa, 2013, chiefly giving an account of Western scholars’ views of this topic.

⁵ This is the functional significance of these questions for research into organizational remembering but, above all, for management practice.

⁶ D.A. Wren, *The Evolution of Management Thought*, New York, 1972.

described an episode bearing all the hallmarks of a historical paradox. In the 1920s, when Americans set out to introduce the “productivity movement” to Europe, the main diagnostic tool they brought with them was the Gantt chart. The chart in question was of course one developed by Taylor’s collaborator, Henry L. Gantt (1861–1919).⁷ Devised during World War I, it supported work planning and coordination and was considered the first example of the operationalization of “scientific management” for diagnostic and management purposes. It is still commonly used today, especially in project management.⁸ The leading advocate of this tool and, generally, the productivity movement in Europe was Gantt’s younger collaborator, Wallace Clark.

Wren (1972) noted that the European “productivity movement”, underpinned by the Gantt chart popularized by Wallace Clark, was treated as an idea exported from the USA in spite of the fact that the form of it was first elaborated by the Polish engineer Karol Adamiecki (1866–1933). The case of Adamiecki, Wren remarked, resembled that of Henri Fayol, the founding father of management studies in France. Wren’s opinions were based on the findings by his colleague, John Mee,⁹ who in the early 1960s noted that ‘Adamiecki’s schedule’ – a tool for diagnosing employee productivity – was designed earlier than the analogous solution popularized in the world precisely as Henry Gantt’s chart.¹⁰

Wren concluded: ‘In brief, scientific management caught the fancy of Europe and translation flowed in that direction, but not vice versa. Taylor overshadowed Fayol, and Gantt was accepted before Adamiecki; the industrial climate in Europe was ready for the ideas of scientific management but it took other times to bring recognition to Europe’s own sons.’¹¹

Based in part on my own studies, but especially on those of Wren and Alojzy Czech, the distinguished student of Adamiecki’s life and work, it seems necessary to modify the last sentence of that conclusion.¹² Clark, who often visited interwar Poland and advised Polish enterprises, after meeting Adamiecki, had much respect

⁷ D.A. Wren, A.G. Bedeian, *The Evolution of Management Thought*, 7th ed., Hoboken, 2018.

⁸ T. Ochowski, M. Radowska, “Między rozumieniem a manipulacją. Zarys intelektualnej historii nieprostych związków psychologii z biznesem,” in: B. Rożnowski, P. Fortuna, *Psychologia biznesu*, Warszawa (in print).

⁹ J.F. Mee, “Pioneers of Management,” *Advanced Management – Office Executive* 1962 (October), pp. 26–29.

¹⁰ Adamiecki began work on the schedule in 1896. Seven years later, he first presented his tool to the public while delivering a speech at the Technical Society in Ekaterinoslav; see A. Czech, *Karol Adamiecki – polski współtwórca nauki organizacji i zarządzania (biografia i dokonania)*, Katowice, 2009, p. 105.

¹¹ Wren, *The Evolution*, p. 181. Interestingly, the latest edition of *The Evolution of Management Thought* of 2018, which Wren prepared together with Arthur G. Bedeian, is devoid of this conclusion.

¹² D.A. Wren, “Implementing the Gantt Chart in Europe and Britain. The Contributions of Wallace Clark,” *Journal of Management History* 21, 2015, no. 3, pp. 309–332; Czech, *Karol Adamiecki*; Ochowski, “Dwa warszawskie adresy.”

both for his work and for the work of the community he had built. The research into the Polish interwar press allowed me to add significant details to the knowledge of the relations between Clark and Adamiecki, of which Czech and Wren previously gave their account.¹³ Thus, the process whereby the aforementioned paradox unfolded could be initially investigated.

After the May coup (1926), modern management, supported by both the authorities and private entrepreneurs, was applied throughout Poland. At the same time, it gained a new advocate. In July 1926, Gantt's former collaborator and the prominent representative of the young generation of American Taylorists, Henry Wallace Clark paid his first visit to Poland. He came in an official capacity as a member of the so-called Edwin Walter Kemmerer Mission set up in connection with the Polish government's efforts to obtain a stabilization loan (which was finally granted to Poland). This matter, although discussed in Polish economic history textbooks, remains completely forgotten in the context of Polish management history. As Czech stresses (2018), Kemmerer was called a "currency healer". He first arrived in Poland in late December 1925 and then, for the second time, soon after Józef Piłsudski's May coup, which testifies to the fact that the country's international economic policy continued unchanged despite the radical change in its government. During the second, several-month-long visit, the American economist was accompanied by a group of experts one of whom was Clark. Acting as an expert on the organization and administration of state-owned enterprises and scientific work organization, he visited a number of Polish state-owned enterprises and made various recommendations. Clark admiringly pointed to the advancement of management education in Poland¹⁴ – a fact for which he gave credit to Adamiecki, whom he had then met, most presumably, for the first time.

At the end of August 1926 the American expert presented a brief account of his first impressions from Poland to a journalist from *Kurjer Warszawski*. The newspaper reported Clark as saying that "due to the lack of adequate propaganda on the part of Poland, a large part of the population in America still considers Poland as a small province of the former Russian Empire that became independent after the World War". Clark contrasted this stereotype with his own experience. "I now have the opportunity to find out," he said, "that the Polish State is a coherent and homogeneous organism exhibiting a young and joyful quest for life in every field".¹⁵

Clark paid his second visit to Poland already in 1927. His position was now different from what it had been before, when he was just one of the participants of the American delegation made up mainly of economists. This time he came at the personal invitation as a modern management specialist. He held foreign

¹³ Czech, *Karol Adamiecki*; Wren, "Implementing."

¹⁴ Wren, "Implementing."

¹⁵ "Opinia o Polsce członka misji prof. Kemmerera," *Kurjer Warszawski*, August 20, 1926, p. 4.

membership of the Polish Institute of Scientific Organization, which was conferred on him by the General Meeting of the Institute on 20 June 1927.

Until 1939 Clark paid several more visits to Poland. Till the end of his life, he also maintained good relations with Adamiecki and, after the latter's death, with his students.

In October 1930, at the invitation of the Institute of Scientific Organization, another significant representative of management thought and practice, Lyndall Fownes Urwick (1891–1983), came to Poland. He was primarily known for his attempts to synthesise the ideas of Taylor and Fayol.

At that time, Urwick served as Director of the International Management Institute, which during its brief (1927–1934) yet very intensive operation was an important centre coordinating the promotion of modern management in Europe.¹⁶

Urwick, like Clark before, was surprised to discover that the modern management movement was already in progress in Poland, led, as the British specialist was quick to realize, by Karol Adamiecki who, sharing equal credit with Taylor for founding the field of studies under discussion, continued to work on the American pioneer's ideas. Thanks to Adamiecki, Poland, already in the inter-war period, joined the small group of countries that, like the US, distinguished themselves by "a complete installation of Scientific Management".¹⁷ At Urwick's request, the Warsaw-based factory "Lilpop, Rau and Loewenstein" modernized by Clark became – as one of only a few European companies – the subject of a model case study to be used by management practitioners in Europe.¹⁸ It is worth stressing that during the first decades of the twentieth century Adamiecki acted as a consultant to the factory.

Most importantly, however, Adamiecki, who started developing his concepts under Russian rule, not only pioneered the tool. The version of "scientific management" he developed was a clear alternative to Taylorism (although it was not treated as such even by the author himself).

Particularly important in this context is the psychological dimension of Adamiecki's thought. It has recently received a flâneurie-like¹⁹ interpretation

¹⁶ Czech, Karol Adamiecki.

¹⁷ *The Instalation of Scientific Management in The Railway Car Plant of Messrs. Lilpop, Rau & Loewenstein, Warsaw, Poland*, ed. M. von Haan, Geneva, 1933 (International Management Institute Unpublished Report, archive material of the Harvard Library), p. 2.

¹⁸ The text referenced here is *The Instalation of Scientific Management*. I wholeheartedly thank Professor James Hoops of Babson College (USA) for establishing that the typescript of the International Management Institute's report on "Lilpop" is in the archives of two academic libraries in the world and for obtaining a copy of this material for me from the Harvard Library's archive, and I express my gratitude to Dr. Muhammad Kamran Khan for bringing me this report at a Harvard conference.

¹⁹ I mean the method of dealing with the text to which Maria Radowska and I took the liberty of referring as flâneurie-like, using the phrase from the articles J. Kociatkiewicz, M. Kostera,

from Jerzy Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera according to whom Adamiecki considered emotions and intuition to play a significant role in the elaborating of what he believed to be a multidimensional scientific management. He emphasized that the often underestimated “laws of spiritual harmony cannot be reduced to mathematical functions” Instead, they should be based on clearly formulated principles “with the aims of the highest good of the working man and the whole of humanity”.²⁰

Worth noting is also the significant extent to which Taylor’s and Adamiecki’s approaches differed from each other in semantic terms. Although both scholars aimed to improve management processes, Adamiecki used the word “harmonization” in a bidirectional (covering the situation of both the company and employees) psychological sense as opposed to Taylor’s single-track “optimization” taking into account only the interests of management and owners.²¹

To put it in modern terms, the version of management elaborated by Adamiecki was much more sustainable than that elaborated by Taylor²². He explicitly placed the psychological factor – which he called human or spiritual – at the heart of management issues. He also pointed out limitations it imposed on management quantification: “Raising the issue of work harmonization in this paper, I tried to pay specific attention solely to economic, purely material, moments. I pointed to two types of harmony, namely harmony in the organism structure, i.e. selection, and harmony in action. These two types of harmony apply to all factors of collective work, that is machines, devices and people. Yet, there is a third type of harmony that only concerns the human factor and that, unfortunately, cannot be expressed in charts that facilitate harmonization; this is spiritual harmony that should unite all human individuals cooperating within one collective organism such as each and every manufacturing plant”.²³

“Textual flâneurie. Writing Management with Walter Benjamin,” *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 19, 2019, no. 4, pp. 163–178; M. Kostera, J. Kociatkiewicz, M. Zawadzki, “In Search of a Dérive. For Alternative Media Narratives of Management and Organization,” *Zarządzanie Mediami* 7, 2019, no. 2, pp. 1–16. It consists in the reader of a given text behaving like a passerby who is metaphorically intoxicated by the “crowd of the city” and embarks on an endless journey of discovering new meanings that are, though, consistent with the spirit of the text, often following unobvious pathways, see also Ochowski, Radowska, “Między rozumieniem a manipulacją.”

²⁰ K. Adamiecki, “Harmonizacja jako jedna z głównych podstaw organizacji naukowej,” part 1, *Przegląd Techniczny* 49, 1924, p. 595, translation after: Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, “Textual flâneurie,” p. 171.

²¹ *Zarządzanie, organizacje i organizowanie – przegląd perspektyw teoretycznych*, ed. K. Klincewicz, Warszawa, 2016.

²² Cf. e.g. Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, “Textual flâneurie.”

²³ K. Adamiecki, “Harmonizacja jako jedna z głównych podstaw organizacji naukowej,” part 3, *Przegląd Techniczny* 53, 1924, pp. 594–595, in: *Twórcy naukowych podstaw organizacji. Wybór pism*, ed. J. Kurnal, Warszawa, 1972, p. 423.

Returning to Clark's works, it is worth emphasizing that his first visit to Poland (with Kemmerer's Mission), along with the awareness of the needs of the Polish economy to which he was brought in its course, "inspired" this colleague of Gantt's, as Czech²⁴ aptly states, to establish a branch of the consulting company Wallace Clark & Co. at 8, Rue de Jean Goujon (Eighth District) in Paris. The primary goal of the office set up in 1927 was to promote and implement Taylorism in state-owned and private enterprises in European countries. A similar branch was opened in London.

From today's perspective, Clark's office is considered by management historians to be an important manifestation of the first stage of "exporting" Taylor's ideas and the productivity movement to Europe. Thus, Poland made a significant contribution to these processes.

There is thus the Polish strand in the two intertwined parts of which the history of management consists and on which there exists a vast body of literature: the history of consulting and the history of the "Americanization" of the European economy (later also the world economy).²⁵ Although it is now forgotten, it was not marginal to the story of which it was part.

According to a correspondent of *Kurjer Warszawski* of 17 March 1928, Clark, who was in Paris at that time, discussed this topic during an interview for the Paris edition of *Chicago Tribune* as follows: "As it turns out from this conversation, engineer Clark has already introduced the American work system in five large industrial institutions in Poland, pointing out that his activities are understood in our country if only because the President of the Republic of Poland is an outstanding engineer himself". And subsequently: "The activity of engineer Clark in Poland attracted so much interest of French industrial circles that the French Syndicate of Mechanical Industries (*Syndicat des Industries Mecaniques de France*) invited him to deliver a speech about the organization of industrial plants in America".²⁶

Finally, until 1939, Gantt's student provided consultation services to at least 14 business operators in France, 6–11²⁷ in Poland, 5 in Great Britain (including

²⁴ Czech, Karol Adamiecki.

²⁵ Besides Wren's works that I have cited extensively, see e.g. H.G. Ströter, *Americanization of the European Economy. A Current Survey of American Economic Influence in Europe Since the 1800s*, New York, 2005; F.W. Taylor, *A Critical Evolution in Business and Management*, eds. J.C. Wood, M.C. Wood, London, 2002; M. Kipping, "American Consulting Companies in Western Europe, 1920 to 1990. Products, Reputation and Relationships," *The Business History Review* 2, 1990, pp. 1990–2200; Ch.D. Wrege, R.G. Greenwood, S. Hata, "The International Management Institute and Political Opposition to Its Efforts in Europe, 1925–1934," *Business and Economic History* 16, 1986, pp. 249–264.

²⁶ "Amerykanizacja przemysłu. Ze świata", *Kurjer Warszawski*, March 17, 1928, p. 7.

²⁷ The discrepancy between the numbers of operators benefitting from consultation in Poland results from the difference in publications on this subject. Wren talks about 6 operators. According to Lutosławski's information and in line with the context described by Wren, 5 more should be

Scotland²⁸), 3 each in Germany and Switzerland, 2 each in Italy, Romania and Turkey, and 1 each in Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. He also unsuccessfully attempted to inculcate Gantt's method in the Soviet Union, where he paid a week-long study visit.²⁹ According to Lutosławski,³⁰ Clark also worked in Czechoslovakia. In Poland and Turkey, the American adviser received state award.³¹

It is worth adding that the "Turkish option" mentioned among others was also connected with Poland. Clark conducted consulting activities in Turkey in cooperation with a Pole, Adam Kucharzewski (Czech...). As Stanisław M. Komorowski³² even claims that this American expert established his Warsaw-based office in co-partnership with Polish management experts, namely Kucharzewski and Bortnowski, "which office then undertook the reorganization of a number of enterprises, including in Turkey". Given its nature introducing a completely new aspect to the characteristics of professional work of both Clark and his Polish "agents", this information particularly requires further verification. Undoubtedly, however, it proves that interwar Poland had the opportunity to become a "co-exporter" of modern management. When one bears in mind the differences between the concepts of Adamiecki and Taylor, it is evident that Poland could also export the version of management knowledge and practice that anticipated today's trends in sustainable humanistic management.

The country with a fairly weak economic development (also compared to neighbouring Czechoslovakia) turned out to be a leader of modern management (despite the lack of institutional support for this field from the government, as was the case in Czechoslovakia³³).

I propose to consider this statement as a hypothesis for further research. I am referring here to a "hypothesis" as typically construed by the humanities, as an "alleged fact"³⁴ with no connotations with randomization or statistical operations.

I find support for the formulation and research verification of the aforementioned hypothesis in the latest article by Daniel A. Wren of 2015, which is extensively cited in this text. According to that American nestor of historians of management

added to Wren's list. On the other hand, Wren also lists operators not mentioned by Lutosławski; cf. Wren, "Implementing."; Z. Lutosławski, *Przykład organizacji zakładu przemysłowego*, part 1–2, Kraków–Poznań–Warszawa, 1946–1947. For other countries, I only have information from Wren's article of 2015.

²⁸ Wren whose list I use, separated Britain (4 operators benefitting from Clark's consultation) and Scotland (1 operator).

²⁹ Wren, "Implementing."

³⁰ Lutosławski, *Przykład organizacji*.

³¹ Wren, "Implementing."

³² S.M. Komorowski, "O Lilpopie i lilpopiakach 1918–1944," in: *Inżynierowie polscy w XIX i XX wieku*, vol. 2: *Technika i przemysł*, eds. B. Orłowski, J. Piłatowicz, Warszawa, 1994, pp. 232–276.

³³ Czech, Karol Adamiecki.

³⁴ A. Wierzbicki, *Poczet historyków polskich*, Poznań, 2014, p. 68.

thought, our country at the time of Clark's consulting activity witnessed so many attempted applications of Gantt charts that, in order to place them correctly in the history of management thought, it is necessary to understand "to understand more deeply the role of scientific management in Poland" (in the interwar period – a note by T.O.)³⁵

That this cognitive postulate appeared only three years ago and was formulated by a US researcher deserves a separate reflection. An analysis of the reasons for this would go far beyond the scope of this article.

In any case, Wren's historic paradox related to Adamiecki's activities and the productivity movement promoted by Clark also, and perhaps above all, appears to be a historiographical paradox. This is because the point is not that Adamiecki's importance was unknown to his contemporaries but, first and foremost, that it was forgotten by the next generations, including researchers of the past.

Even Wren has forgotten his previous statement. In the last edition of *The Evolution of Management Thought* (7th ed., Hoboken, 2018, with Arthur G. Bedeian as co-author) one can read only the following remarks about Adamiecki: "In 1896, the Russian-educated Polish Engineer, Karol Adamiecki, developed a form of graphical analysis known as 'harmonogram' to solve production bottlenecks. Harmonograms enabled simultaneously charting several complicated operations, and thus, promoting their systematic arrangement. Adamiecki's harmonograms had elements of Henry L. Gantt's charts, but were also similar to a Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) workflow network. Harmonograms were used in some Polish and Russian rolling mills, but their wide-spread adoption was hindered by the socio-political ideology of Russia's anticapitalistic Communist Regime"³⁶

A significant challenge for representatives of management sciences and business history in Poland is to comprehensively address the "terra incognita" of the history of interwar management practice in our country.

If a scholar interested in management or a reflective practitioner (a representative of humanistic management, as defined by *Humanistic Management Network*,³⁷ possess specific cognitive competences to achieve this goal) researches the past, all while complying with the principles relating to tools and techniques applicable to historiography, then – most broadly speaking – the scholar practices organizational history. When she/he critically interprets historical works or other stories devoted to the "past times", making use of the cognitive apparatus of history of historiography, to identify content that is crucial for organizing, then

³⁵ Wren, "Implementing," p. 321.

³⁶ Wren, Bedeian, *The Evolution*, p. 194. It should be noted that the last sentence of this quote is historically incorrect.

³⁷ See: <http://humanisticmanagement.network/> (24.11.2019).

she/he enters the field of organizational historiography.³⁸ It is this cognitive activity that I encourage theoreticians and practitioners of humanistic management to undertake.

Translated by Agata Ostrowska

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³⁸ History of historiography – in this article is treated traditionally, as branch of studies about the past, which critically reflects on researching, writing and teaching (including also promotional activities) history. In Poland, the contemporary version of history of historiography was initiated by the works of Marian Henryk Serejski and Andrzej Feliks Grabski. Today, the community of historians of historiography associated with Andrzej Wierzbicki (Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Editorial Board of the "Klio Polska" periodical) has intently incorporated also organizational issues into the scope of its interests for several years. According to the terminology suggested by Monika Kostera, based on scholarly practices of Western authors, organizational historiography means using the cognitive apparatus of history of historiography both for research purposes to cater for the needs of management, as well as in order to enrich the reading of publications on the past (and various other stories about it) by a reflective manager-humanist who thereby seeks inspiration for his/her own practice. The possibility of sensibly practising organizational historiography beyond the paradigm of humanistic management is open for further discussion.

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Karol Adamiecki and the Historiographical Paradox of the Origin of Management

This article is an example of using the historical approach in management. In his analysis the author introduces the concept of "organizational reminding". It is meant to encompass practices that aim to minimize single loop forgetting and values that pertain to what Monika Kostera identified as a double loop forgetting. Popularized by Wallace Clark, the chart was used as the foundation on which the development of the 'productivity movement' in Europe was based. The role the chart played was indirectly suggested in 1972 by Daniel A. Wren. In Europe, the movement was treated as originating from the US in spite of the fact that in Poland Karol Adamiecki was involved in developing a similar management tool. The Polish engineer improved Taylor's effectiveness strategy by supplementing it with the concept of harmonization. Adamiecki's study offered a chance of elaborating a more sustainable management program than that put forward by Taylor and his followers. Based on the research into the Polish press from the first decades of the twentieth century, the author shows that the historical paradox dealt with in the article was of a historiographical nature. Researchers have forgotten the role Adamiecki and those with whom he worked played in the development of management ideas in Europe.

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