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THE IDENTITY DISCOURSE OF THE KASHUBIAN ELITES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2021 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

Dyskurs tożsamościowy elit kaszubskich w kontekście Spisu Powszechnego Ludności i Mieszkań 2021

Streszczenie

Wśród elit kaszubskich toczy się dyskurs tożsamościowy, który ogniskuje się wokół problemu politycznych konsekwencji użycia wobec Kaszubów terminu „naród”, co w sposób szczególny uwidacznia kontekst Spisu Powszechnego Ludności i Mieszkań 2021. Kwestia „narodu kaszubskiego” sięga początków upodmiotowienia się Kaszubów, a więc lat 40. XIX stulecia, i pozostaje żywa w całej historii ruchu kaszubskiego. Była spychana na margines w dziejach Zrzeszenia Kaszubsko-Pomorskiego sięgających 1956 roku, ale po pojawieniu się w 2005 roku *Ustawy o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym* i przyznaniu językowi kaszubskiemu politycznego statusu „języka regionalnego”, a także po zarejestrowaniu w 2011 roku Stowarzyszenia „Kaszëbskô Jednota” okazało się, że rzeczywistym jądrem sporu o status kultury Kaszubów, a tym samym o społeczny status wspólnoty, jest przede wszystkim jej narodowo-kulturowa odrębność.

Słowa kluczowe: Kaszubi, naród, elity, tożsamość

Abstract

There is an identity discourse among the Kashubian elite, which focuses on the problem of the political consequences of the use of the term “nation” towards Kashubians, which is particularly visible in the context of the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. The issue of the “Kashubian nation” goes back to the beginnings of the 40’s of the 18th century and remains alive throughout the history of the Kashubian movement. It was marginalized in the history of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association dating back to 1956, but after the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language appeared in 2005 and the political status of a “regional language” was granted to the Kashubian language and also after registration in 2011 the Kaszëbskô Jednota Association turned out that the real core of the dispute over the status of Kashubian culture, and thus the social status of the community, is primarily its national and cultural distinctiveness.

Key words: Kashubs, nation, elite, identity

Introduction

The aim of this article is to present the ongoing identity discourse among Kashubian elites, which revolves around the problem of the political consequences of the use of the term ‘nation’, which is particularly evident in the context of the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. The question of the ‘Kashubian nation’ itself dates back to the early days of Kashubian empowerment, in the 1840s, and remains alive throughout the history of the Kashubian movement. However, as Adela Kożyczkowska noted, until the arrival of the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language in 2005, this most visible, ‘surface’ layer of the identity dispute was the status of the Kashubian language

and the attitudes of its users towards it.¹ As soon as this normative legal act, i.e. the Act on minorities, came into force and the Kashubian language acquired the political status of a “regional language”,² this “linguistic” aspect stepped aside and the real nucleus of the dispute over the status of Kashubian culture, and thus the social status of the community, its national-cultural distinctiveness became apparent.³

The multiplicity of definitions of a nation, and the fact that many of them are mutually exclusive, results in the fact that it is not the essence of this article to prove the existence or non-existence of a Kashubian nation. I assume that nations are the outcome of a culturally conditioned way of constructing social reality and, are therefore something intentional.⁴ As Wojciech Burszta and Krzysztof Jaskułowski put it: ‘the nation is not something that exists independently of our perception of the world, it is not a thing in the world, but a particular perspective imposed on the world’.⁵ This framing of the issue brings us closer to defining the nation as an ‘imagined community’, to draw on Benedict Anderson’s concept of the nation, which has been most prevalent in recent years.⁶ This author believes that the nation is a creature of a symbolic nature, which does not mean that it does not exist objectively. The nation belongs to the sphere of culture and, for this reason is neither a natural or eternal phenomenon, nor is it the product of ideological manipulation.⁷

¹ A. Koźyczkowska, *Kaszubszczyzna. Pedagogicznie o języku i tożsamości*, Gdańsk 2019, p. 102.

² More on this topic: A. Jabłoński, *Problematyczność pojęcia “język regionalny”. Głos w sprawie polityki języka kaszubskiego*, w: *Mniejszości etniczne i ich pogranicza. Szkice tożsamościowe*, ed. A. Koźyczkowska, M. Szczepska-Pustkowska, Gdańsk 2020, p. 313–325.

³ A. Koźyczkowska, *Kaszubszczyzna*, op. cit., p. 102.

⁴ W. Burszta, K. Jaskułowski, *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne a idea państwa narodowego na początku XXI wieku*, w: *Polityka państwa polskiego wobec mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych*, ed. L. Nijakowski, Warszawa 2005.

⁵ *Ibidem*, s. 15.

⁶ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, transl. S. Amsterdamski, Kraków–Warszawa 1997.

⁷ See: N. Dołowy-Rybińska, *Kaszubski dyskurs narodowościowy – spojrzenie antropologiczne*, “Sprawy Narodowościowe”, New Series, 2013 no. 43, p. 108.

Furthermore, I consciously use the term ‘identity’ to refer to a group, a community, a fellowship. For I accept, following Antonina Kłoskowska, that it is rather inadvisable to use it in reference to an individual, as the word ‘identification’ is more appropriate in relation to him or her.⁸ Thus, following Jolanta Tambor, I will repeat, for the sake of clarity of the terminology adopted in this article, that: “an individual’s identification with a group’s beliefs about national belonging” is “its national identification”, while the term “identity” will refer to the community, as a fellowship.⁹ I have indicated my view at this point for the sake of clarity of the line of thought adopted, as there is no complete consensus among researchers ‘as to whether the properties constituting identity are attributes of individuals or rather of social groups’.¹⁰ It can be repeated, following Marian Golka, at this point: “collective identity is a reflection in consciousness of the existence of social relations, such as dependence, cooperation and common interests”.¹¹ Thus, as Bohdan Jałowicki put it: “the essence of identity is therefore, on the one hand, a sense of bond with one’s own group and, on the other hand, a greater or lesser detachment from other groups”.¹²

In understanding the nature of Kashubian identity, the view of the nature of social bonds proposed by Stanisław Ossowski in his reflections on the homeland and the nation was, and still is, of great importance in Polish discourse, and thus also in that of the dominant elite of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association [KPA].¹³ Following S. Ossowski’s theories, it is assumed that the Kashubians are a ‘regional collectivity’. And three types of such collectivities can be distinguished. One type is when cultural identity is linked to a specific territory, as well as

⁸ A. Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*, Warszawa 2012, p. 104.

⁹ J. Tambor, *Mowa Górnioślzaków oraz ich świadomość językowa i etniczna*, Katowice 2008, p. 16.

¹⁰ See Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa 2005.

¹¹ M. Golka, *Czym bywa tożsamość?*, in: *Kłopoty z tożsamością*, ed. M. Golka, Poznań 2006, p. 22.

¹² B. Jałowicki, *Kwestia regionalna*, in: *Czy Polska będzie państwem regionalnym? Seria: Studia regionalne i lokalne*, nr 42, ed. G. Gorzelak, B. Jałowicki, Warszawa 1993, p. 44.

¹³ See S. Ossowski, *O ojczyźnie i narodzie*, Warszawa 1984.

having an awareness of its own cultural, linguistic and historical distinctiveness, but its members, “do not attempt to ascribe to their collectivity the attributes of a nation”.¹⁴ The second is characterised by – one could say localness – i.e., apart from the regional bond, such a community has no national feeling. Finally, the third type of regional collectivity has a strong sense of separateness, “combined with antagonism towards the state of which the region is a part, with separatist tendencies, with an ideology that also includes political demands”.¹⁵

1. Kashubians in the discourse of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association elite

Based on the theory of S. Ossowski, during the breakthrough of 1989–1990 – which was important for the democratic changes in Poland and important for the Kashubian community, the leaders of KPA presented the position that, the view according to which Kashubians are an ethnic group forming part of the Polish nation should be adopted and promoted. This was supported by the conclusions of the research of a group of sociologists (Marek Latoszek, Brunon Synak, Henryk Galus, Janusz Iskierski, Olgierd Sochacki) published in the work entitled *Kashubians. A sociological monograph*.¹⁶ This view has taken a special place in the work of B. Synak.¹⁷ Based on the method of a questionnaire interview with a group of 458 people drawn in the communes of Sierakowice and Żukowo in 1987–1988, B. Synak came to the conclusion that “this type of community, which the Kashubian population constitutes today” should be called a “regional cultural-ethnic group

¹⁴ S. Ossowski, *Zagadnienia więzi regionalnej i więzi narodowej na Śląsku Opolskim*, in: S. Ossowski, *O ojczyźnie i narodzie*, Warszawa 1984, p. 75.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ M. Latoszek (ed.), *Kaszubi. Monografia socjologiczna*, Rzeszów 1990.

¹⁷ B. Synak, *Obraz społeczności kaszubskiej – wstępne rozeznanie socjologiczne*, in: *Antropologia Kaszub i Pomorza*, vol. 1, ed. J. Borzyszkowski, Gdańsk 1990, p. 145 et seq.; B. Synak, *Subiektywne aspekty tożsamości kulturowo-etnicznej ludności Kaszub*, in: *Kaszubi. Monografia socjologiczna*, ed. M. Latoszek, Rzeszów 1990.

(regional ethnic community)".¹⁸ In order to avoid any misunderstanding, B. Synak pointed out that a "regional ethnic community" is, "clearly distinguished from a national ethnic group. Although the former, under the influence of historical conditions, has developed a consciousness of distinctiveness, it is not, however, a consciousness of distinctiveness as an autonomous territorial-state group, but as a territorial (regional) group whose consciousness is, as Krzysztof Kwaśniewski writes, a specific form of belonging to a national community".¹⁹

In a broader, European context, on the eve of Poland's accession to the European Union and, above all, in connection with parliamentary work on the draft Law on National and Ethnic Minorities, B. Synak – who was president of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association at the time – tried in 2002 to adapt the sociological theory of the 'regional ethnic group' to the legal-political concept of 'ethnic minority'. In the position of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association on the draft Law on National and Ethnic Minorities in the Republic of Poland addressed to Marek Borowski, Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, KPA President B. Synak wrote:

The draft law issued by the Committee on National and Ethnic Minorities to the Marshal of the Sejm, lower chamber of Parliament, of the Republic of Poland in the most part of its provisions is in line with the expectations of our organisation, representing the Kashubian community – one of the most culturally distinct non-national ethnic groups in Poland [...]. We would have preferred (as we have already expressed in our opinions on previous drafts of the law) that, the law spoke of national minorities and ethnic groups (rather than ethnic minorities), as we are one of these. The concept of minority usually includes an element of discrimination by the majority – and this is not the case here. However, this does not constitute a fundamental objection, as the proposed definition of minority in Article 2 also includes in its meaning the type of community (non-national ethnic group) to which we belong.²⁰ We also understand that the provi-

¹⁸ B. Synak, *Subiektywne aspekty tożsamości*, op. cit., p. 190.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 190–191.

²⁰ Article 2 of the 2002 draft *Law on National and Ethnic Minorities* read: "A national or ethnic minority, hereinafter referred to as a 'minority', shall mean a group of citizens of the Republic of Poland with a distinct origin, traditionally

sions of the law must comply with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which in Article 35 speaks of national and ethnic minorities.²¹

In the same year, Mr Synak also addressed a separate letter to the Minister of the Interior and Administration, Krzysztof Janik, reproaching his department for not including Kashubians in its lists of minorities:

The department uses a list of 13 minorities living in the Republic; the Kashubians are not on the list. On the website of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, under the heading, 'Characteristics of national and ethnic minorities in Poland', one can find information indicating that ethnic minorities in our country include the Tatars, Crimean Karaites and Lemkos. Therefore, in order to avoid many misunderstandings in the future, the General Board of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association appeals to the Minister to include the Kashubians in all officially existing censuses or lists of national and ethnic minorities in Poland as an ethnic group. Our ethnic identity remains closely linked to our home territory, and all the political and historical factors, as well as a number of other universal characteristics that distinguish our community, allow us to consider Kashubians as the most representative ethnic group in Poland.²²

Finally, on 10 September 2002, a delegation of the KPA Main Board met with the Parliamentary Committee on National and Ethnic Minorities. The agenda of the meeting contained only one item: "Consideration of the cultural, educational and social situation of the Kashubian

residing within the territory of the Republic of Poland, remaining in a minority in relation to the rest of the citizens, characterised by striving to preserve their language, customs, traditions, culture, religion or national or ethnic consciousness". Printing No. 223, Warsaw 11 January 2002, copy in possession of the author of the article.

²¹ *Position of the KPA on the draft law "On national and ethnic minorities in the Republic of Poland"*, Gdansk, 25.02.02, a/a L. dz. 115/02, copy in possession of the author of the article.

²² Writing dated 20 May 2002, by Bruno Synak, President of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, copy in possession of the author of the article.

minority”.²³ After presenting the condition of the Kashubs, the representatives of the Association briefly stated their expectations: “We want the statutory concept of minorities to include Kashubians”.²⁴ This, however, unleashed a storm among Kashubian elites in the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association and the Kashubian Institute. In the press, such authorities as Tadeusz Bolduan, a publicist from Gdansk, and Andrzej Arendt, a visual artist from Wejherowo, spoke out against the recognition of the Kashubs as an ethnic minority. The titles thundered: “Kashubians are all about money” (Kulisy, 2002, No. 38), “No minority” (Kurier Wejherowski, 2002, No. 38 (489)), “Nazi Poland oppresses Kashubians” (Głos Wybrzeża, 2002, No. 180 (16091)). *Gazeta Wyborcza* was more subdued in its article “Jesmë Kaszëbama” (GW Trójmiasto, 12 September 2002) and *Dziennik Bałtycki*: “because we are the hosts here” (DB, 16 September 2002). As a result of an internal discussion in the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association and a proposal by Zenon Kosiniak-Kamysz, as Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of the Interior and Administration and Chairman of the National Minorities Team in that Ministry, which was expressed in an expert opinion submitted to the Sejm, lower chamber of Parliament, of the Republic of Poland entitled *Proposal for amendments to the draft Law on National and Ethnic Minorities in the Republic of Poland (print 223) aimed at regulating the status of Kashubians*.²⁵

A compromise solution was adopted. The Law on National and Ethnic Minorities was extended to include the category of ‘regional language’, making it clear that the ‘regional language’ is Kashubian, which is subject to legal protection. The Kashubs themselves, on the other hand, are a ‘community speaking a regional language’, but have not been recognised as a minority, with the result that the Republic of Poland takes no

²³ Letter from the Chairwoman of the National and Ethnic Minorities Committee, Genowefa Wiśniowska, to Artur Jabłoński, Vice-President (correctly Vice-President – A.J.) of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, dated 2 September 2002, copy in possession of the author of the article.

²⁴ *Who are the Kashubians? – Introduction to the discussion at the meeting of the Parliamentary Commission on National and Ethnic Minorities*, p. 4, copy of document in possession of the author of the article.

²⁵ Copy of document in possession of the author of the text.

legal responsibility for Kashubian identity, which is neither legally protected nor can cultural development projects be subsidised from the state budget. From the aforementioned expert report containing the proposal of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration to regulate the status of the Kashubians, it follows that, “the condition for counting a Polish citizen as a minority is ethnic self-categorisation” and that, “the Kashubians strive to distinguish themselves primarily in the linguistic dimension” whilst in the cultural dimension, “they are recognised by most folklorists as an ethnic group, [...] and therefore as a group co-forming the Polish nation”. At the same time, the author, or perhaps authors, of the expert report are aware of the “problematic nature of the Kashubian identity”, but nonetheless suggest that “granting ethnic minority status to the Kashubians will be perceived by many of them as a statutory exclusion of their community from the Polish national totality and the imposition of a new type of group identity on them”. At the same time, the only authorities among Kashubians referred to by the author(s) of the expert report are the sociologist B. Synak and the sociologist Cezary Obracht-Prondzyński.

The latter sociologist, years later, wrote about the influence of the elites of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association on the terms by which Kashubians are defined in this way:

Well, it should be emphasised that the scientific community and the Kashubian elite (intelligentsia) are equally responsible for the function of the conceptual map with which the question of who Kashubians are discussed; in fact, it overlaps to some extent. It was they who ultimately developed the term model to describe this community in the 1980s and 1990s. It consists of concepts such as dual identity (Kashubian: ethnic, Polish: national) Kashubian language (ethnolect) – recognising the linguistic status of Kashubian speech and giving it a central position among Kashubian values, ethnic group (ethno-regional), Kashubians as a long-lived community. Just as it is easy to say with them who the Kashubians are (Kashubians, Poles, speech is a language), it is also easy to say who they are not: Germans, an ethnic minority, a nation, an ethnographic group.²⁶

²⁶ C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Kaszubi – naród “niereprezentowany” czy reprezentowany “nie-naród”*, in: *Kulturowa odmienność w działaniu. Kultury i narody bez państwa*, ed. E. Nowicka, Kraków 2009, pp. 70–71.

Cezary Obracht-Prondzyński willingly returns to the theory of S. Osowski and proposes that, with regard to the Kashubians, the typology of regional community proposed by the same author should be modified.²⁷ According to C. Obracht-Prondzyński, president of the Kashubian Institute, a variant of regional collectivity adequate for the Kashubians can be described as follows:

- internal differentiation in terms of identity, but with a dominant positive attitude towards being a member of an ethno-regional community,
- having, nurturing, and developing one's own culture, especially language, distinct from that of the dominant group(s) and neighbouring regional communities,
- the absence of a sense of discrimination and therefore no or low levels of hostility towards the state (this is due to the developed system of self-government and the functioning of the democratic order, which guarantees civic and ethnic empowerment),
- institutional and organisational pluralism.²⁸

Enumerating all those features which, in his opinion, characterise the Kashubians, C. Obracht-Prondzyński points out at the same time that, “the consciousness of creating a community (We – Kashubians), established and based on historical experience, while maintaining local distinctiveness, remains essential and fundamental”.²⁹

2. New situation – after the establishment of the Kaszëbskô Jednota association

At the beginning of 2012, C. Obracht-Prondzyński, as vice-president of the board of the Kashubian Institute, spoke at the conference of the

²⁷ C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Kaszubskie lokalności. Refleksje i postulaty badawcze*, in: *Kaszubskie dziedzictwo kulturowe. Ochrona – trwanie – rozwój*, ed. E. Kocój, C. Obracht-Prondzyński, K. Barańska, M. Kuklik, Kraków 2021, p. 54.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Ibidem.

Kashubian-Pomeranian Association in Wieżyca with a lecture entitled *Association, Quo Vadis?*, which was subsequently printed in three parts in the monthly magazine “Pomerania”.³⁰ In the last part of the text you can read, among other things, about the pluralization of the Kashubian movement, “in every dimension: organizational, ideological, cultural and social”.³¹ The author writes: “today we are moving to a situation where we have a diversity of currents and organisations, that is, we are entering a phase of external pluralism. Consequently, we are entering a phase of different representations”.³² C. Obracht-Prondzyński adds that “into a new quality, into a new period” the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association enters “[after] the establishment of the Kaszëbskô Jednota association”.³³

The organisation called Kaszëbskô Jednota was founded in 2011. According to its statute: “the aim of the Association is to develop the national, civic and cultural awareness of Kashubians, and to protect their language and traditions”.³⁴ Just nine months after the registration of Kaszëbskô Jednota in the National Court Register, the association made its first attempt to change the legal status of Kashubians. The background to the creation of Kashubian Unity was dissatisfaction with the compromise reached in the *Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language of 6 January 2005*. The organisation’s leaders, aware that their activities would not be supported by the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, prepared a joint statement with the Association of People of Silesian Nationality. The demands of both organisations were addressed to the legislative and executive authorities of the Republic of Poland.³⁵ The first paragraph of the prepared letter stated:

³⁰ C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Zrzeszenie, Quo Vadis?*, vol. 1: *W jakim świecie działamy*, “Pomerania”, 2012 no. 4(453); idem, *Zrzeszenie, Quo Vadis?*, vol. 2: *Ruch kaszubsko-pomorski w sieci*, “Pomerania”, 2012 no. 5(454); idem, *Zrzeszenie, Quo Vadis?*, vol. 3: *Kaszubska polityka tożsamościowa*, “Pomerania”, 2012 no. 6(455).

³¹ C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Zrzeszenie, Quo Vadis?*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 11.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ <https://kaszëbsko.com/statut.html> (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

³⁵ <http://slonzoki.org/tag/kaszubi/> (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

We, the Kashubians and Silesians declaring Kashubian and Silesian nationality, guided by our own traditions, historical experience and concern for the future, request that our nations be recognised as ethnic minorities and that, we be granted legal protection under the *Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language* of 6 January 2005 in force in Poland.³⁶

Adela Kożyczkowska, characterising the method of argumentation and postulates of *Kaszëbskô Jednota*, wrote, among other things, that:

[...] in the opinion of members of the *Kaszëbskô Jednota* association, the Minorities Act is a peculiar defeat for Kashubians for two reasons: firstly, the Kashubians lost their status as an ethnic minority, gaining instead the status of a group with a regional language. Secondly, the Act merely protects the regional language and only provides funding for programmes that promote and teach the Kashubian language. Although the Act has regulated the problem of its financing in the area of Kashubian school education and in educational extracurricular activities, and in this sense Kashubians have gained certainty of protection and financial support from the state, however the Act does not protect and finance activities that are related to the protection of identity and cultural heritage.³⁷

Ten years since the establishment of *Kaszëbskô Jednota*, one can already see a phenomenon that I call the ‘*Kaszëbskô Jednota* environment’. They are formed by people who do not belong to the Kashubian nationality association *Kaszëbskô Jednota*, but who share the same ideas. These include, for example, legal entities (foundations and associations), as well as unaffiliated people (Kashubians and non-Kashubians), or even members of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association. All those who declare their Kashubian-national identification or their willingness to work towards the development of the Kashubian identity and national Kashubian identification. It is likely that a large proportion of them are recruited from among the 16,377 people who, in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, declared their first and only

³⁶ Ibidem (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

³⁷ A. Kożyczkowska, *Kaszubszczyzna*, op. cit., pp. 103–104.

as Kashubian nationality.³⁸ Also, a majority are very young people who could not sign themselves up in 2011, but was able to do so in 2021.

3. Discourse with the 2021 Population and Housing Census in the background

Many weeks before 1 April 2021, the date on which the 2021 Population and Housing Census was launched, a campaign was initiated to encourage Kashubians to take part in the census. Two clear narratives are emerging from it: a Polonocentric, and a Kashubocentric one. A. Kożyczkowska is right when she writes:

These are, in the Kashubian public, two systems of knowledge that together present themselves as a confrontational setting of theoretical positions, but no longer just “judging the status of the Kashubian language”, but today also judging or adjudicating the order of the Kashubian world in general. It is about the representation of the Kashubian community. C. Obracht-Prondzyński notes that the “word ‘representation’ is one of the keys to understanding the modern world. ‘We live in a mediated world and representation is one of the most important social mechanisms today’”.³⁹

You can find out what ideological message the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association has adopted in its identity discourse by exploring the *Kashubi.pl* website, reading the monthly magazine *Pomerania*, the posters printed and distributed as part of the promotion of the Kashubian census, listening to *Radio Kaszëbë* and above all, browsing social media on which the KPA is active:

Everyone has the right in the census to answer according to their own feelings. One can freely declare Polish nationality and at the same time belong to an ethnic community, e.g. Kashubian, Kociewian, Borovian or Kraj-

³⁸ <https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2011/nsp-2011-wyniki-wstepne/wyniki-narodowego-spisu-powszechnego-ludnosci-i-mieszkan-2011,3,1.html> (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

³⁹ C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Zrzeszenie, Quo Vadis?*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 11.

niak. One can also answer that one usually speaks Polish and Kashubian at home.

In light of the law and the Regional Language Act, the question of language for Kashubians is particularly relevant [...]

Therefore:

What is your nationality?

Answer: Polish

Do you also feel you belong to another nation or ethnic community?

Answer: yes, Kashubian/Kocievian/Borovian/Krajniak.

What language(s) do you usually speak at home?

Answer: Polish and Kashubian.⁴⁰

The message of the ‘Kaszëbskô Jednota environment’ is more explicit: “Kaszëbskô nôrodnosc, kaszëbskji jãzëk, pòlskji wobëvatelstvò” (Kashubian nationality, Kashubian language, Polish citizenship). Public space was used to disseminate this message (banners, posters, and leaflets – prepared, inter alia, by the Kaszëbsczi Skauce/SCSB association), as well as the website *kaszëbsko.com* and social media,⁴¹ as well as Radio Kaszëbë and the pages of *Dziennik Bałtycki*.⁴²

Leaders of individual communities try to supplement this necessarily laconic message with their media appearances. Most often these are videos made available on the internet or press articles, sometimes statements for radio stations. Łukasz Grzędzicki, vice-president of the KPA, when asked by Radio Kaszëbë, put emphasis on the rather concrete gains of declaring awareness of Kashubian, but did not address the community-national issues: “The regional language gives such benefits that where more than 20 percent of people declare that they speak

⁴⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/events/323009845998771/> (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

⁴¹ <https://www.facebook.com/Kaszëbi/photos/a.220791304686298/3665099970255397> (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

⁴² See A. Jabłoński, *Narodowość kaszubska, język kaszubski, polskie obywatelstwo*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 26.03.2021 no. 71(23/219), p. 12–13.

Kashubian at home, then in those municipalities it will be possible to introduce Kashubian in offices, but this is perhaps more of a symbolic dimension. On the other hand, it also gives another entitlement – to introduce bilingual signs with the names of villages and towns”.⁴³

Jan Wyrowiński, President of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, taking part in a conference organised on 31 March 2021 by the Central Statistical Office, thanked them for raising a number of issues of great interest to the KPA and other organisations “that bring together people from the Kashubian community”, and added:

For us, this census is extremely important. We are trying to make a huge effort to make the inhabitants of Pomorskie Voivodeship, and in particular this specific group, aware [...] I would like to remind you that Pomorskie Voivodeship is the only voivodeship in Poland where a language with regional status, i.e. the Kashubian language, is officially used. We hope that this census, as the mayor of Linia and the mayor of my home town of Brusy have already emphasised here in their speeches, that this issue will appear in the census results in a way that reflects reality. It is about people being able to declare that they belong to the Kashubian community, and that they communicate freely in Kashubian at home.⁴⁴

Łukasz Grzędzicki and Jan Wyrowiński reiterated their arguments in ‘Pomerania’ of April 2021, with J. Wyrowiński adding in this magazine that when he speaks of the Kashubian community, it is an ethnic group, while the declared nationality should be Polish. He added once again how much influence the declaration would have on the Kashubian at present.⁴⁵

A slightly different point of view, another prominent KPA activist, the organisation’s vice-president Eugeniusz Pryczkowski, included in a text published in ‘Dziennik Bałtycki’ of 28 May 2021: “It is worthwhile to support with all our strength individuals, organisations and social

⁴³ http://radiokaszebe.pl/kaszubi-moga-zaznaczyc-swoja-odrebnosc-etniczna/?fbclid=IwAR0aLdpNy1AV4zJR5EUHGhk7MZx3iSvB_Op8nRMedWbrfWDTx-DOjyJwkPP0 (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

⁴⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vUIRL1-jNQ (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

⁴⁵ Cf. J. Wyrowiński, “Pomerania”, June 2012 no. 5(552).

groups encouraging the highlighting of the Kashubian identity in the census. And it is not at all important whether someone wants to emphasise regional, ethnic, or national identity. The important thing is that it is Kashubian!”⁴⁶ Although he too believes that: “regardless of the declarations of various organisations in this regard, Kashubians first and foremost feel a national bond with Polishness”.⁴⁷

What are the attitudes in the Kaszëbskô Jednota community? Mateusz Tites Meyer, vice-chairman of the board of the Kashuby Foundation, aims to find out the truth about the condition of Kashubians. In the online ‘Gazeta Świętojańska’ he wrote: “Personally, I would prefer to know the true picture of reality and, the condition of the language. Saying ‘jo!’ at home instead of ‘tak!’ is not, in my opinion, using the Kashubian language in everyday household contacts, even if Kashubian activists are persuaded to do so”.⁴⁸ M. T. Meyer referred to vivid discussions on Internet forums, in which one of the actions of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association was criticised, according to which, for better statistics, everyone who uses at least the word “jo” (yes) should declare using the language at home, which is quite common in Pomerania, even among non-Kashubians.⁴⁹ He concluded his article with a call to declare the truth: “I therefore urge you to declare your national-ethnic affiliation and, your language in accordance with the truth – with who you feel and in what language you express it on a daily basis”.⁵⁰

Adam Hebel, vice-president of the Kaszëbskô Jednota association, put the message of his organisation this way in an interview with wejherowo.naszemiasto.pl:

We encourage you to declare your Kashubian nationality and, if you use the Kashubian language, to indicate this on the form. The nationality option has

⁴⁶ E. Pryczkowski, *Kaszubskość w spisie, czyli najlepszy wymiar polskiego patriotyzmu*, “Dziennik Bałtycki”, appendix “Rejsy”, 28.05.2021, p. 21.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 20.

⁴⁸ https://gazetaswietojojanska.org/polecane/kaszubi-spiszcie-sie/?fbclid=IwAR35klzCE-ibM3JNTbWeHiaPVLjdy6WLBPC7PRajYr7EDHDd2t_W96ZKfmY (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

⁴⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/kaszebi> (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

⁵⁰ Ibidem (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

been present in the Kashubian movement since its inception, Florian Ceynowa, who was the first to act in this field, clearly stated that we are a separate nation. At the same time, he stressed that we should fight for the independence of Poland, which would be our common home. Later, both before and after 1920, thousands of people declared a separate Kashubian nationality, aware that our heritage is more than just a regional palette. Today it is no different – we have a separate culture, including high culture, language, literature, awareness of our common history, in a word – everything we need to be recognised as a nation. At the same time, it should be emphasised, and this is also clearly stated in the census form, that nationality should not be confused with citizenship. We, the Kashubians, are citizens of the Republic of Poland, and nothing stands in the way of having a separate Kashubian nationality, but at the same time being a good citizen of Poland.⁵¹

Ewa Kownacka from the board of the Ziemia Pucka Association also encouraged on Radio Kaszëbë to participate in the Census, using a rather similar argument, while pointing out that nationality is an individual and subjective characteristic: “I will state that I am a Polish citizen, but of Kashubian nationality. [...] Each of the minorities whether recognised or postulated, like our Kashubian and Silesian, we have the right to express our nationality and I hope that all members of minorities living in Poland will do so”.⁵²

People from Kashubian-nationalist circles are of course aware that in the current legal reality only the linguistic declarations of Kashubs will generally count (Kashubian nationality is not even included in the census questionnaire in the list of choices, it is only when you tick the “other” tab that you can add: Kashubian). This was pointed out by M.T. Meyer:

For Kashubians, however, linguistic declarations are more important, as we are included in the Minorities Act of 2005 as a community speak-

⁵¹ <https://wejherowo.naszemiasto.pl/trwa-spis-powszechny-srodowiska-kaszubskie-zachecaja-do/ar/c1-8217085?fbclid=IwAR2Oi2yjZESkCHFh9UFa3CR3Eb9FXjcgKAwpW08fbUQXaZAvOWHANrF0QUw> (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

⁵² http://radiokaszebe.pl/kaszubi-moga-zaznaczyc-swoja-odrebnosc-etniczna/?fbclid=IwAR0aLdpNy1AV4zJR5EUHGhk7Mzx3iSvB_Op8nRMedWbrfWDTx-DOJyJwkPP0 (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

ing a regional language. For this reason, in official state documents, the number of Kashubs is determined by the number of speakers of Kashubian language (and not by the number of people declaring national-ethnic affiliation).⁵³

The identity narrative of the ‘nationalists’, however, usually manifests the conviction that every declaration is of great importance. The linguistic ones have a more immediate significance, since the amount of financial support for Kashubian-related projects implemented by numerous NGOs depends, among other things, on how many Kashubians declare themselves as Kashubians using their language on a daily basis. Nationality declarations, on the other hand, have a far-reaching significance. Indeed, national, and cultural distinctiveness can have a significant impact on the development directions of the Pomeranian region. These declarations are not without significance for future generations. For many, it is also evidence of a civic attitude, because the ethnic identity of the Kashubs remains in close connection with the Pomeranian land, language, historical and political factors, and a whole range of universal characteristics that distinguish the Kashubian community in Poland, but also among other nations in Europe and around the world.

Summary

In the identity discourse taking place in the context of the 2021 Population and Housing Census, superficially it seems to be about the political subjectivity of Kashubs. Are they to have the status of a ‘community speaking a regional language’ or, the status of an ‘ethnic minority’, which, according to the definition in the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages, means a nation without its own state? Going deeper, however, a broader historical-social-political context can be observed. It addresses the issue of the Kashubian narrative and the representation of the community/fellowship/nation.

⁵³ https://gazetaswietojanska.org/polecane/kaszubi-spiszcie-sie/?fbclid=IwAR35klzCE-ibM3JNTbWeHiaPVLjdy6WLBPC7PRajYr7EDHdd2t_W96ZKfmY (retrieved: 7.04.2021).

C. Obracht-Prondzyński, who this time appears more as an ideologue of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association than as a sociologist, speaking at an intra-organisational conference of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, said that already in 2012, i.e. a few months after the establishment of Kaszëbskô Jednota:

Our Kashubian story has been questioned, and by part of the community [the Kaszëbskô Jednota association was also co-founded by KPA members – A.J.] outrightly rejected, negated. What vision of Kashubian issues we present is no longer accepted on the basis of consensus or the obvious, the established, the legitimate. So today, if we want our ideas, our view of Kashubians to be interpreted as correct, we have to take a number of measures.⁵⁴

The dominant ways of narrating about Kashuby, following A. Kożyczkowska, can be described as polonocentric and kashubocentric.⁵⁵ The researcher argues that “after the split of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, and the formation of Kaszëbskô Jednota, the sole purpose of the modification within the polonocentric discourse will be to provide the authorities with the type of knowledge that will allow them to effectively form the Kashubian identity and position the community more efficiently within the power relations”.⁵⁶ At the same time, after all, this is not a new phenomenon. Antonio Gramsci already wrote about the ideologization of knowledge when he focused on the relations power-intellectuals-society. It is the intellectuals (elites, leaders) recruited by the authorities who reproduce and consolidate knowledge in line with the needs of the authorities, very often using the education system to do so.⁵⁷ To a certain extent, this is also the case of Kashubia, where, in fact, education has been almost ‘captured’ by the Kashubian-Pomer-

⁵⁴ C. Obracht-Prondzyński, *Zrzeszenie, Quo Vadis?*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 11.

⁵⁵ A. Kożyczkowska, *Kaszubszczyzna*, op. cit.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

⁵⁷ Cf. A. Stęplewski, *Czy Atatürk był gejem. Konstruowanie Obcego w tureckich i greckich mediach*, “Dziennikarstwo i Media”, 2020 no. 14: *Dyskurs wykluczenia*, p. 47–48.

anian Association, and a Polish-centric narrative about Kashubia dominates school textbooks.⁵⁸

The image of community today is also shaped by the media, which constitute an undisputed fourth power. Their 'production' depends to a large extent on 'the individual and the knowledge that can be gained about him or her' – as Michel Foucault wrote.⁵⁹ In the socio-political reality of Kashubia, the media seem to be dominated by a Kashubocentric narrative – at least the social media do. They are, after all, the primary source of knowledge for younger generations today.

Polonocentric and Kashubocentric narratives seem to exemplify different Kashubian identity politics. All activities aimed at building the Kashubian imaginary community are of considerable importance for its future shape. What will it be like? It depends on the Kashubians themselves: those who consider calling their group a separate nation incompatible with their self-identification and, those who firmly declare their own national separateness. One more thing is worth noting: until the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language became a normative act in 2005, the most visible layer of the identity dispute within the Kashubian community was the status of the Kashubian language and the attitude of its speakers towards it. Once the Kashubian language acquired the political status of a 'regional language', the real core of the dispute turned out to be the status of Kashubian culture and thus the social status of the community. The dispute among Kashubian elites seems to have entered the polemic phase over the national and cultural distinctiveness of the Kashubian community. The results of the National Population and Housing Census 2021 may significantly strengthen or weaken the arguments of both sides of the discourse.

⁵⁸ A. Kożyczkowska, *Wiedza o przeszłości jako kontekst (de)konstrukcji tożsamości: kaszubska tożsamość zapośredniczona*, "Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Pedagogika", 2017 no. 2(34), p. 35–71.

⁵⁹ M. Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, transl. T. Komendant, Warszawa 1998, p. 189.

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