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# COOPERATION AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN THE BESKID BORDERLAND IN MALOPOLSKA AND SILESIA

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The object of this article are behaviours, which a kind of repeating and periodicity are characteristic elements, as well as fixed schemes of procedure. They refer to an everyday life, and are connected with a house-keeping and investment works (building) undertaken within a homestead. Such activities were – and still are to some extend – implemented in cooperation with neighbours, family, becoming a way of life not only economic, but also socialising, social, and sometimes festive. In considering them, including the social exchange theory, the author shows the relationships and dependencies that exist between residents of the community. The forms of mutual assistance and cooperation, selected for this text, are a small fragment of a social life, however, the rules that govern them, especially in the past, had an impact on the whole of social life. The analysed material is derived from the ethnographic fieldwork carried out by the author in the area of the Beskid borderland in Silesia and Malopolska.

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Przedmiotem artykułu są zachowania, które cechuje pewna powtarzalność, periodyczność i które nacechowane są utrwalonymi scenariuszami postępowania. Dotyczą one dnia codziennego, a związane są z prowadzeniem gospodarstwa i pracami inwestycyjnymi (budowlanymi), podejmowanymi w jego ramach. Tego rodzaju działania były – i do pewnego stopnia są nadal – realizowane w kooperacji z sąsiadami, rodziną, stając się formą życia nie tylko gospodarczego, ale również towarzyskiego, społecznego, a niekiedy i świątecznego. Rozpatrując je z uwzględnieniem teorii wymiany, autorka ukazuje powiązania i zależności istniejące pomiędzy mieszkańcami danej społeczności. Wybrane do analizy formy pomocy wzajemnej i współdziałania są małym fragmentem życia społecznego, jednakże reguły nimi rządzące, zwłaszcza w przeszłości, miały wpływ na całość życia społecznego. Analizowany materiał pochodzi z etnograficznych badań terenowych prowadzonych przez autorkę w rejonie beskidzkiego pogranicza Śląska i Małopolski.

K e y w o r d s: social exchange theory, behaviours, cooperation, mutual assistance, Beskid borderland of Malopolska and Silesia

Territorial range of my interest covers the borderland between Polish macro-regions Silesia and Malopolska, especially its part in the Beskid Mountains. According to the present administrative division, it is the area on both sides of the border between districts of Cieszyn and Żywiec.[1]

In this area there are numerous clusters of mountain villages, including Jaworzynka and Kamesznica. They represent larger ethnic groups: the Silesian and Żywiec uplanders (*górale*) respectively. Due to their close proximity, both groups have long retained mutual contacts. The existence of such neighbourhood usually creates a borderland, i.e. the area that absorbs cultural elements from both sides. The formation of neighbourhood is especially clear between different ethnic groups. However, it is not so when different ethnographic groups are involved in the process. While in the first case is usually possible to draw an area of a "cultural mosaic", well visible in the material culture, examining the second case – it may pose certain problems. Certainly, some individuals will be found who, as a result of the inter-group marriage, transfer certain customs, behaviours and lifestyles into the new group. I believe that in such cases the borderland manifests itself mainly in the mentality of communities subjected to the process, possibly only in its subgroups (e.g. in mixed families).

In the field of my interest there are repeatable periodical behaviours, marked by well-established reaction schemes, related to both everyday life and holiday celebrations. They can be classified as „customs". According to Czesław Robotycki, "a custom" is reflected by behaviours:

> "They are everyday behaviours repeated in sequences (following fixed scenarios), feast-days, rituals, a commonplace language style, and the worlds of objective references" (1995, 12). Elsewhere, he adds: "They can convey in a symbolic way information on attitudes of individuals involved in mutual contacts without obligatory elements [...]. Custom rules control by means of rituals everyday and ceremonial behaviours" (Robotycki 1995, 11).

This paper is focused on mutual assistance and cooperation as reflected in everyday life, i.e. in activities related to building and farming. Such behaviours, effectuated in the pasts (and to a certain extent also today) in cooperation with neighbours and family members, have evolved into a form of economic and social life. In the years following the Word War II (in some cases also up to 1980s) they were fortified with rules that could not be broken without a risk to be isolated from the community or – at the best – to be left alone in needs. They are analyzed according to principles of the social exchange theory,[2] that underlines mutual links and interrelations between members of a given community.

[1] The area in question was examined by the author in the years 2000–2005. The research focused on questions related to mutual assistance and cooperation, especially in two large upland villages: Jaworzynka (Cieszyn Silesia) and Kamesznica (the Żywiec Region).

[2] I mean mainly the model of exchange triple obligation presented by M. Mauss (offering – accepting – returning, Latin: *do ut des*) and the rule of symmetry, underlined by B. Malinowski (Mauss 1973; Malinowski 1967; Malinowski 1984).

Behaviours selected for analyses cover only a small part of the social life. Nevertheless, they are governed by rules which influence all aspects of social life, especially in the past. It is remarkable that mutual assistance and cooperation in farming and building works, but also in family events and works, from which the whole community has profits, have been observed both in Kamesznica and Jaworzynka. Such rendered favours were subjected to rules of reciprocity and symmetry.

The types of cooperation, which are the objects of my research (farming/husbandry, building, family celebrations), fully and widely occurred in traditional communities (i.e. prior to World War II). Today, mutual help can be still observed in similar situations. However, in comparison with the past, it is offered on a much more limited scale (due, among other reasons, to mechanisation of farming and household works). Services provided are more often paid for with money. Restrictions in cooperation in farming result from the decrease in agricultural production (especially husbandry) and difficulties in selling the products. The informants from the two villages agree that the recent years can be divided into the period when milk was being bought wholesale from producers, and the period after the closure of this enterprise. Another important factor restricting cooperation and mutual help is the striving for independence, as well as the attitude of not wanting to be indebted to other people, as debts of gratitude should always be paid back. This tendency, articulated by paying for work, is facilitated by incomes coming from non-agricultural sources (among them pensions, disability pensions, welfare, etc.).

There are clear differences in the ways of cooperation and mutual help in the selected villages/regions. The first, very distinctive, is related to a special type of help, known as ***pobaba***, which can be observed in Jaworzynka and the neighbouring Silesian villages of Istebna and Koniaków. It is a collective work, voluntary, and not gratified by money. However, the recipient of *pobaba* provides food and alcohol for all the helpers after the work is completed. Sometimes there would also be a party organised after the work (this was more true in the past). The key element in this type of cooperation is an anticipation of reciprocity, meaning that in the same situation the person in receipt of *pobaba* would help out people who worked for him. This obligation of help is passed on to the next generations. Today only work which is regarded as typically male, like building a house, comes under the scope of *pobaba* help. The informants pointed out that people were asked to help out as *pobaba* only if there was no need for a skilled worker, while physical labour performed at the same time by several people were required.[3] In the neighbouring villages of the Żywiec Region mutual help of this kind is also known, although not specifically named and not differentiated from other

[3] There were mainly tasks related to roof construction, but also to digging foundations. Research has not confirmed the participation of women and girls in these tasks; their role was confined to preparing and serving meals to the workers. In the past, *pobaba* was performed also with regard to flax and wool processing.

forms of mutual help. Whereas the inhabitants of Jaworzynka clearly emphasise the uniqueness and separateness of *pobaba*, in Kamesznica the respondents point out that work based on the rule of reciprocity was true in the past, but currently such work is paid for with money. In contrast, at the time of the research in Jaworzynka, *pobaba* was understood as work without monetary payment, rewarded only in food and alcohol. Moreover, the obligation of returning the favour is passed on to the next generations.

In the highland villages of Cieszyn Silesia, the mutual help/cooperation in situations not coming under the scope of *pobaba* is referred as **a neighbourly help**. The situation is similar in Kamesznica and in neighbouring villages, where activities of that type stem from running the farms. Research indicates that the cooperation occurs mostly between family members and close neighbours. However, it is difficult to demonstrate unequivocally which of the two factors (closeness of kinship or closeness of inhabitancy) is precedent. Such a situation results from their mutual cross-relations. People who are related to each other usually live in close vicinity, and this is dictated by the nature of settlement structure in both regions of interest to us.

Special places related to the settlement are called *dwór* in Jaworzynka and *plac* in Kamesznica. They refer to aggregations of buildings belonging to several farmers. Originally one aggregation was owned by a single farmer. However, over time, such a cluster of buildings was divided amongst the owner's successors. Usually they were named after the original settler, occasionally after an event related to the place (e.g. *Wypłakana*, which means "obtained by weeping"). Father Emanuel Grim describes a *dwór* as "several highland huts, which have shared yard, also called *dworzec*…" (after Zawistowicz-Adamska 1950–1951, 68). Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska defines *dwór* as "the original colonisation unit [...] of the peasant household" (1950–1951, 68).[4] Today's informants from Jaworzynka use interchangeably the terms: *dwór*, *plac*, and *osiedle* (settlement).

A similar type of the settlement unit, can be found in Kamesznica, referred to as *plac* there.[5] The inhabitants of this village stated that most of these places were named after the original settler. Therefore, they were inhabited, especially in the past, by the people related to each other.

Focusing again on the question of mutual help and cooperation, it should be noted that in Jaworzynka this type of reciprocity is related mainly to inhabitants of the same or nearby *dwór*. Until today, help in farming works received from members of the same or neighbouring *dwór* is reciprocated in the same or similar way. In these cases, a monetary payment is not considered. The respondents from Kamesznica state that the rule of reciprocity is true to the same type of work/service, for example "work on

[4] *Cf.* also Dobrowolska 1981, 183; Szromba-Rysowa and Tylkowa 1984, 22.

[5] In the late 1990s, in all villages of the Milówka commune *plac* of specific names were replaced by streets, the names of which were usually not related to *plac* names. Yet the traditional form of the settlement structure is still in use, e.g. by local priests on the occasion on informing inhabitants of Kamesznica about the schedule of cleaning tasks in the church.

foot for work on foot". Other type of services provided, such as use of farm machinery, are usually paid for with money, even if the recipient of this service is a neighbour from the same *plac*. In both researched villages, help offered to members of the family always has a form of reciprocity.

Some of the researchers (*cf.* footnote 4) of the highland villages of Cieszyn Silesia emphasised the existence of developed forms of cooperation, sanctioned by the common law, within the above-mentioned *dwór*. At the end of the 19th century, Maria Wysłouchowa wrote: "[...] the inhabitants of each *dwór* have forests and pastures in common use, they regard the land on which their buildings are situated as a common possession, and they collectively undertake more difficult endeavours, as well as improvements within the farm (after: Zawistowicz-Adamska 1950–1951, 69). In the 1980s, two researchers of the Cieszyn Silesia Region, Teresa Dobrowolska and Elżbieta Duszeńko, stated that belonging and living in the same part of the village were conducive to cooperation and mutual help: "Readiness to help stems from living in the same part of the village. Consciousness of belonging to the same *dwór* or farmstead is an additional platform for self-identification that augments the feeling of homeliness deriving from neighbourhood [...]" (1984, 152). Moreover, help should not be refused, especially to the person inhabiting the same *dwór*.

Customary help offered to the people living within the same *dwór* still occurs today, although to a lesser degree. However, the obligatory character of participation in certain works, as registered in the 1980s, cannot be confirmed. This is related mainly to the ever-increasing number of houses within the individual *dwór*, affluence of the outsiders (due to the growth of families), and the variety of incomes. However, cooperation within the same *dwór* is still as intensive as in the past, when territorial proximity and inhabiting the same habitation unit

The exchange model proposed by Marcel Mauss (triple obligation: offering – accepting – returning) and the rule of symmetry (balance of reciprocity) underlined by Bronisław Malinowski, were main categories / tools in analyses of the presented social behaviours. It is remarkable that in situations related common farming duties application of the rule of reciprocity, as of the so-called neighbourly help, is very natural and easily observable. In such cases the return for received favours follows in relatively short time. Nowadays, the range of works subjected to cooperation of that time becomes more and more limited (due to use of machines, additional incomes, untraditional economic approach, or avoiding to be indebted) and confined to family circles.

Immediate return is not applicable to *pobaba* which nowadays is limited only to construction works. Therefore, help received in such infrequent event as building a house can be returned much later, even by the next generation, while an immediate gratitude takes form of snacks and alcoholic drinks offered to helpers. It is not a substitute of the return which is being postponed for a while.

The second discussed rule – the rule of symmetry, is also subjected to exceptions. In traditional communities a favour was returned almost always by the same kind of

work in the same time. Nowadays, return for help received in farmstead works depends on actual needs, in contrast to rules of *pobaba*.

**Common elements** in both researched areas (in general: diminishing role of mutual assistance due to additional incomes, use of machines, lack of possibilities for selling produced goods, and lob profitability of farming) are related to overall socio-economic transformations. Observable **differences** include ranges of mutual help rendered within *dwór* and *plac* and their close vicinity. In my opinion they can be explained by mental predisposition of inhabitants culturally dependent of the researched villages belonging to different regions. Jaworzynka and Kamesznica have similar layouts and settlement structures (*dwór* or *plac*), similar economies and similar living standards. Moreover, inhabitants of both villages earn extra money outside in a similar way. However, in Kamesznica the cooperation within *plac* has always played lesser role than cooperation within *dwór* in the adjacent Silesian villages.

The observed differences have pose a question, why this type of undertaking has gained such a high status in Jaworzynka, whereas in the neighbouring village of Kamesznica not. The simple ascertainment that it is due to the fact that they are parts of two different regions is not satisfactory. Many resemblances in the cultural *visage* of both villages have been observed. These similarities should influence similarities within the researched subject rather than promote such clear differences.

Although each village belongs to a different historical-cultural region, they are both situated within the same geographical sphere: in the Silesian Beskid Mountains. Placing Kamesznica within the area of the Silesian Beskid might be surprising.[6] However, location of the village on the eastern slopes of Barania Góra Mt., the highest peak of the range (1220 m above sea level), places Kamesznica in this geographical region.

Both localities have the highland character and represent the settlement typical for the mountainous regions. They can be referred as villages of the so-called *łan leśny* type.[7] Kamesznica can be described as a typical *zarębna* village. It has been built along creeks of Janoska and Bystra that merge in the centre of the village (in its lowermost part) into the Kamesznicki Creek. The latter flows through outskirts of the village, joining the Soła River in the neighbouring Milówka. Along the creeks, houses are built on both sides of a road. Still visible are *zarębek* outlines running perpendicularly to valleys of the creeks.

Jaworzynka is a village of the *łan leśny* type located in the main part of the mountain ridge. It was first settled in its north-western parts. According to Franciszek Popiołek, the oldest part of Jaworzynka was located on both sides of the Istebna road, just behind

[6] I stress this point because the location of the Kamesznica village has not always been correctly referred to in the literature. A simplified chain of thought – Żywiec highlanders equal the Żywiec Beskid Mountains – is often found in the sources.

[7] *Łan leśny* – a forested lot endowed to a settler for clearing and settling; *łan rolny* – a lot cleared of forest (usually in valleys) endowed to a settler. In the Żywiec Region, *łan rolny* is referred as *rola*, and *łan leśny* as *zarębek*. *Cf.* also Dobrowolska 1971; Broda 1956, 24–25.

the present limits of the village (1939, 159). Subsequently, it spread to the northwest towards the locality called *Wawrzaczów Groń*. It was not a compact rural settlement but rather a dispersed settlement spread on mountain slopes, originally inhabited in places by single families.

The last element that should be taken into account in our research is the past of Jaworzynka and Kamesznica. It is not my intention to discuss the history of both villages and their regions in detail. However, it seems useful to underline the most important historical events related to the area in question.

Table 1. Chronological chart of main historical events in the history of the Żywiec Region and Cieszyn Silesia

<table>
<tr><td>The Żywiec Region ruled from the 12th c. by the Silesian Piasts.</td><td>The Cieszyn Region ruled by the Silesian Piasts.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">1327 – the Cieszyn Piasts accepted sovereignty of the King of Bohemia.</td></tr>
<tr><td>1457 – The Żywiec Region sold (as a part of the Oświęcim Dukedom) to the Polish King Casmir IV Jagiellon and since then it shares the fate of Poland.</td><td>1526 – Ferdinand I Habsburg became the King of Bohemia and a ruler of the Cieszyn Silesia.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Various events in the history of the Żywiec Region. At times owned by the royal family, at times by magnate families (Komorowski, Wielopolski, Potocki).</td><td>1653 – after the death of Princess Elisabeth Lucretia, the last heir of the Silesian Piasts, the Cieszyn Dukedom became a part of the Habsburg domain.</td></tr>
<tr><td>1608 – inception of the so-called Żywiec and Łodygowice States.</td><td>After 1653 parts of the Cieszyn Dukedom form a great latifundium, the so-called Cieszyn Chamber.</td></tr>
<tr><td>1626 – first account on Kamesznica in records of the Żywiec State.</td><td rowspan="2">1643 – first account on Jaworzynka (an entry in the Urbarium from 1621).</td></tr>
<tr><td>1772 – the first Partition of Poland.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">As a result of the Partitions, the Żywiec Region joined Cieszyn Silesia within the Holy Roman Empire (from 1805 the Austrian Empire and from 1867 the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Despite being governed by the same ruler, both territories belonged to different administrative units. The Habsburg State encompassed many nations and included regions which had a certain degree of autonomy.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Those were: the Austrian territories, territories of the Crown of St. Stephen (i.e. the Kingdom of Hungary with Croatia and Siebenburgen), those of the Crown of St. Wenceslaus (i.e. Bohemia with Moravia and Silesia), northern Italy, and parts of Poland incorporated after the partitions.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The 1st half of the 19th c. – the Żywiec State was sold to Archduke Karl Ludwig of the Żywiec line of Habsburgs.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">The Żywiec State and the Cieszyn Chamber are owned by the Habsburg family. They were at times ruled by the same administrators (e.g. J.F. Kalchberg).</td></tr>
</table>

The table is based on: Broda 1956, Chlebowczyk 1966, Chlebowczyk 1971, Chwalba 2000, Gierowski 1984.

The chronological chart (*supra*) indicates that in the 12th century both areas were subjected to the same rule of the house of the Silesian Piasts, who in 1327 accepted sovereignty of the Kings of Bohemia. In 1457 the Żywiec Region was purchased by the king of Poland and subsequently became a part of the Commonwealth of Both Nations (of Poland and Lithuania; Broda 1956, 11–13). The border established at that time is regarded as one of the more lasting. However, throughout the ages its status has changed. For more than 300 years it was a part of the border separating the Polish Kingdom and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. After 1772, following the first Partition of Poland, it became an internal border within the Habsburg Monarchy, separating the so-called Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria from the land of the Crown of St. Wenceslaus (comprising Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia; the latter two joined in 1782 to form the Moravian-Silesian Government with Opava as a capital) (cf. Chlebowczyk 1971, 7; Chwalba 2000, 188–189; Gierowski 1984, 71).

The Żywiec Region and Cieszyn Silesia shared the fortune of the large states within which they were located. Over the period of 300 years they were dependent on different legislature and subjected to different political processes. The importance of these factors in shaping cultural regions was noticed in 1938 by Kazimierz Dobrowolski, who raised the question of the "dependence of people from various centres of the patrimonial rule on territories with clearly defined borders"[8] (1938, 183). The issue has been also discussed by Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska (1950–1951, 177) and Jacek Schmidt (1997).

The situation became more complicated in 1772 when both territories had been incorporated into the same state. At that period the Habsburg Empire was ruled in the spirit of the "enlightened absolutism". The aim of the reorganisation was to create a homogeneous state with a strong central rule based in Vienna. Hence, the Habsburgs endeavoured to impose their legislature on Galicia, as well as on other countries of the Monarchy. These attempts were not completely successful. Although in both of the areas the statute law was the same (prohibition of partition of farms), its execution in both areas was different. Writing about the situation in the then Galicia, Rozalia Rybacka notes that

> "[...] despite the official prohibition, the land was being divided usually following the death of the farmer. Because the authorities did not accept such manner of inheritance, the land was portioned unofficially, according to needs and custom. The community had strongly favoured this procedure [...] the landowners did not oppose it as they gained more profits, while the authorities stayed silent as they did not want to be bothered" (Wantuła 1954, 46).

[8] This quotation is from a report of K. Dobrowolski entitled "Studies on ethnographic formations in Western Carpathians" (*Badania nad ugrupowaniami etnograficznymi w Karpatach Zachodnich*), presented on the session of the Ethnological Committee PAU in May 1938 (summary in: *Sprawozdanie z czynności i posiedzeń Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności* 43 (5). 1938).

Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, the situation looked different. The local administration of the so-called Cieszyn Chamber endeavoured to restrict pasture land in order to afforest it, strictly observing the Josefite Patents, as well as the Law of Indivisibility of Farms (*cf.* Wantuła 1954, 45). In consequence, there were two, three, or more farmers on one freehold, not being able to divide it.[9] The farmers worked the land together and jointly paid taxes. This influenced the emergence of the institution of partnership (*instytucja wspólnictwa*) which characterised the whole area of Cieszyn Silesia. Cooperation existed mainly in larger farms, which nevertheless were being unofficially divided between a few owners. However, the authorities did not recognise such practices and treated such farms as undivided units.

It is possible that different ways of implementing operative regulations as described above resulted in the fact that the tradition of mutual help and cooperation on territories of the Cieszyn Chamber is deeper than in the adjacent Żywiec State.[10] Restrictive adherence to the law by the authorities of Cieszyn Silesia had forced local highlanders to run their farms collectively, as well as to deal with their obligations together. In the Żywiec Region, although the rules of the law were the same, the practice of partitioning farmland was common. This did not promote the deepening the custom of cooperation within one *plac*.

I would like to point out that, in my opinion, being parts of different states played a significant role in creation of separate cultures in these two close-lying regions. Moreover, my view is that this cultural divergence has resulted not only from being subject to different legislatures, but also from specific social mentalities developing on territories of my interest. Although after 1772 the regulations became the same, they were observed and adhered to differently in Cieszyn Silesia and in the Żywiec Region. Therefore, the attitude of people to formally the same law was different.

On the one side, there is the proverbial "Galician disorder", on the other, the specific "law-abiding" minds strictly obeying no-matter-what orders and prohibitions. Such are the symbolic characteristic features of mentalities in both regions. They influenced to a high degree the issue which is the subject of my study.

At that place I would like to underline the importance of the already mentioned specific element of the researched area – the border. No mater if is natural or draw by man, its presence influences considerably cultural development of territories on both sides of the line.

Space is not homogenous. It includes roads, communication junctions, natural and artificial (home-made) barriers, etc. All these elements influence our perception

[9] For example, in the mid-19th century Jaworzynka and Istebna the average number of owners of one freehold was 2.6 (Gładyszowa 1984, 40; Chlebowczyk 1966, 272–276).

[10] Especially important in this respect are memoirs of the already mentioned long-time administrator of the Cieszyn Chamber J. F. Kalchberg, who, after the purchase of the Żywiec State by the Habsburgs, observed the "miseries – that of Silesia and that of Galicia" (*cf.* Wantuła 1954, 45–46, 123–129).

and valuation of the space and lead to its "emotional" division into smaller parts more close to us. Appraisal of a given space by its habitants direct a researcher to important places, connected with fates of individuals, generations, or the whole community.

Borderland as a space has its specifics. It is dominated by the border/line/*limes* that runs across the area or separates it from another "space". Its presence was reflected in responds of informants who spontaneously (not specifically questioned) mentioned this invisible line dividing different villages, communities, and regions. The borderland here is very interesting in this respect that it reflects cultural, historic, and administrative divisions of the standing changing throughout the periods.

Piotr Kowalski in his "Lexicon – Signs of the World" (*Leksykon – znaki świata*) presents his definition of "border": "It is a strip of land between two adjacent areas... which not belongs to neither of them but connects them and separates in the same time" (1998, 149). Border and "bordership" – according to the author – reflect a specific perception of space in which heterogeneity is the most important element. Border is a quintessence of heterogeneity. My reflections born during the field research on areas cut through by the border established during the reign of Casmir IV of Jagiellon, follow the same line.

Border indicates limits of one's property, influences, or rules. It is a division line. In contrast to it, borderland is a link. Halina Rusek writes that, borderland is an area of specific socio-cultural processes related to spatial proximity (2000, 145). Observations presented in this paper indicate that in the researched area the border is a dominant element which underlines division and differences. Responds of my informants confirm that they are conscious of regional specifics in the analyzed aspects of the social life. They are also aware of advantages and disadvantages (or perhaps difficulties) of customary mutual assistance and cooperation, both in their villages and in the adjacent region.

Further research of the borderland between Cieszyn Silesia and the Żywiec Region would perhaps reveal a "common zone" of both areas, but rather "psychological" than "territorial". Such a perception of borderland has been already put forward by some socio-researchers, among them by Antonina Kłoskowska. She writes:

> "... borderland comprises a neighbourhood of national cultures related to nationally/ethnically mixed genealogy and intermarriages, to being national or ethnic minority on a territory dominated by another national culture, to situations related to emigration or individual national conversions that changes one's national self-determination without severing completely his previous cultural ties" (2005, 125).

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