

## THE KASHUBIAN LANGUAGE – A MINORITY LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN BORDERLANDS AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS TODAY

JADWIGA ZIENIUKOWA

*Abstract:* The article presents in a diachronic and synchronic perspective a minority language (regional) which has existed for centuries on the borderland of cultures and languages – the ethnolect of Kashubians, indigenous, Slavic people living in Gdansk Pomerania – and the history of its contacts with German (unrelated language) and Polish (an example of a Slavic-Slavic borderland); in case of its contact with, foremost, the official version of the German language there was a language conflict. There exists a *language continuum* between the Kashubian language and the Polish dialects from Masovia and Wielkopolska. They coexisted and complemented each other functionally for a long time. For centuries, Kashubians remained trilingual, but after 1945, when the Kashubian-German borderland ceased to exist, they started to become bilingual (Kashubian-Polish bilingualism) or monolingual (Polish). The 1990s mark the beginning of a qualitative change in how the Kashubian language functions: a standard version of the language emerged, manifested through various communication channels. The Kashubian ethnolect became the object of a language policy at the regional, state and European level – in 2005 it officially became a regional language. Despite all this, the Kashubian language is endangered.

*Key words:* Kashubian language, minority languages, regional languages, language contact, linguistic borderlands.

This article offers a diachronic and synchronic overview of the specific minority (regional) language<sup>1</sup> located over the centuries in borderlands between cultures and languages.

<sup>1</sup> For minority languages and regional languages (regiolects) see Wicherkiewicz 2003; A. Majewicz – T. Wicherkiewicz in: Breza 2001: 81–89.

The Kashubian language (Kashubian: *kaszëbizna*) is a native Slavic ethnolect (language of social communication) used by an ethnic-cultural group known as the Kashubs (Kashubian: *Kaszëbi*). Kashubs are the autochthonous population of a region in Poland called Kaszuby (Kashubian: *Kaszëbë*, English: *Kashubia*), located west of the lower Vistula and the Bay of Gdansk (Zatoka Gdańska), bounded in the north by the Baltic coast and in the south by a stretch of the river Brda. The area is part of a larger historical region known as Pomorze Gdańskie (Gdańsk Pomerania). As a result of the migrations which followed World War II, there are Kashubs living in other parts of Pomerania as well. The territory of the Kashubian language and population has varied over the centuries, mainly in the west (Mordawski 2005: maps; Lorentz 1958–1962: map; AJK; Treder 2006: 69–72<sup>2</sup>). As a community, the Kashubs are Catholics who manifest their religion in traditional ways. Politically and linguistically, the territory in which the Kashubian language is used is nowadays wholly contained within Poland. Far from being ethnically and linguistically isolated, Kashubs remain in contact with Poles, whose population in the region underwent major changes around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of population transfers in the wake of World War II, which saw enforced resettlement to Pomerania of Poles living in Poland's former eastern borderlands, as well as individual migrations of Poles from different areas of Poland who spoke standard and/or dialectal Polish.

As late as the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Kashubian ethnolect occupied a larger area than it does today. It used to incorporate the sub-dialect of the Protestant Slovincians (Polish: *Słowińcy*) who inhabited the north-eastern part of Western Pomerania around the lakes Gardno and Łebsko, as well as some neighbouring north-western Kashubian local dialects. Because those areas were part of the German state before 1945, the Slavic population experienced strong Germanizing pressures in terms of language and culture, with attendant discrimination against their native language (see among others Breza 2001<sup>3</sup>). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the authorities of the Lutheran Church banned the use of Kashubian

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<sup>2</sup> In the book, the entry and map on the geographical area of the Kashubian language (“Granice kaszubszczyzny”) was written by E. Rzetelska-Feleszko.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Szultka, Szkic dziejów Kaszubów ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem przemian językowych: 11–41; E. Rzetelska-Feleszko, Kaszuby i kaszubszczyzna – granice historyczne i współczesne: 43–50; E. Rzetelska-Feleszko, Słowińcy i ich dialekt: 51–59.

during religious services,<sup>4</sup> to be replaced by German. Well researched by F. Lorentz and M. Rudnicki at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>5</sup> the local dialect of the Słowińcy population became extinct around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Shortly after World War II, Polish linguists collected written and audio records of what little remained of it (Sobierajski 1997; Stieber et al. 1961; Borzyszkowski – Obracht-Prondzyński 2001: 222–229<sup>6</sup>; Popowska-Taborska 2006: 135–139; 2010: 185–190).

As a result of their geographical location and political history, the ethnolect of the Kashubs was for a long time borderland language (a description which continues to apply in a modified form). Historically speaking, the area was a kind of dual borderland: Kashubian-German and Kashubian-Polish. Since the Middle Ages the Kashubs remained politically, culturally and linguistically influenced by Germany. Following the first partitioning of Poland (1772), the entire Kashubian population became part of the Prussia, a country hostile to Slavs (Poles or Kashubs) which implemented some heavy-handed Germanizing policies. The Kashubs remained under German domination until the end of World War I. In the words of the historian and sociologist C. Obracht-Prondzyński: “for Germans [...] the Kashubian culture was always inferior and treated with disdain”, and: “...the Kashubian movement was born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a form of resistance against the Germanizing policies [...]. To the leaders of the Kashubian population of the day it was obvious that one could not be Kashubian and German at the same time.” (Kleina – Obracht-Prondzyński 2012: 23) The Kashubs briefly came under German rule again during World War II. In 1945, the end of the war brought about profound change; as a result of geopolitical negotiations, state borders in Central and Eastern Europe shifted on a massive scale, resulting in deportations and population transfers (of Germans and Poles). This brought to an end a period when Germans and Slavs (Kashubs and Poles) lived as neighbours in Pomerania. The Kashubian ethnolect ceased to be part of the borders of the German language area. (See among others Knoll 2012.)

<sup>4</sup> Since the Reformation, the Bible has been used in a translation into the slawięsky or słowięski (i.e. Slavic) language (see among others J. Treder, in: Obracht-Prondzyński – Wicherkiewicz 2011: 93). Sermons were preached based on the translation. Though essentially written in the Polish of the day, those sermons contained numerous features of the Kashubian ethnolect, as shown by the surviving manuscript pericopes from Smółdzino which were later published (Berlin 1967) in F. Hinze’s careful edition, who also published a manuscript of the local *Śpiewnik starokaszubski* (Old Kashubian Songbook) (cf. Popowska-Taborska 1987: 85–92; 2006: 135–139; Zieniukowa 1969).

<sup>5</sup> For more information see among others: Treder 2006: 231–233, 152–154, 68–69, 222–223; *ibid.*: 141–150 (entry for “Leksykografia” by H. Popowska-Taborska).

<sup>6</sup> H. Rybicki, *Z badań nad problematyką słowińską po 1945 roku*.

The Kashubian-German contiguity which brought the two unrelated languages into contact, was not uniform. Kashubian dialects came into contact with German dialects, mostly the Low German (less often Middle German) spoken by the German settlers coming to Pomerania since the Middle Ages. Another type of contact (which occurred later, taking place from the closing decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) was the contact with High German (New-High-German), which was used by the new colonists and functioned as the official state language of Prussia (Zabrocki 1956; Szultka in: Borzyszkowski – Obracht-Prondzyński 2001: 159–178). One result of this long contiguity were the linguistic interferences of German in the Kashubian language – mostly lexical (e.g. *draszowac* ‘to thresh’, *brutka* ‘bride’), but also affecting the linguistic system as a whole, including syntax. There were also some reverse interferences, where borrowings were made from the Kashubian language into the local German dialects (Hinze 1963; 1965; Popowska-Taborska 1998a; AJK; SEK; Piotrowski 1981; Siatkowski 1994; Knoll 2012). The Germanisms imposed on the Kashubs by the language of the Prussian administration receded after World War I (e.g. *amt* ‘office’). One useful theory in talking about the contacts between the Kashubian language and German is the theory of linguistic conflict, a sociolinguistic phenomenon. Harald Haarmann pointed out that the operation of the linguistic conflict may manifest itself in several areas, notably including such factors as: 1. Ecological conditions, such as social and cultural conventions in which the contact takes place, 2. Individual communication competence (including, among others, social knowledge, system of values, emotional scale), 3. Conditions of interaction in the context of the communication (including, among other things, the timing, place and ethnopolitical conditions) (Haarmann 1990).<sup>7</sup> In view of the above, and knowing what we know about the history of the Kashubian language, one may state that the contacts between the Kashubian and German languages – especially with the official variety of German – bore the characteristics of linguistic conflict (cf. the opinions of C. Obracht-Prondzyński quoted above, also see below).

The relationship between the Kashubian language and the Polish language, two related Slavic ethnolects, was completely different. Realized in the form of

<sup>7</sup> For more information on language conflict see also P. H. Nelde (ed.), *Sprachkontakt und Sprachkonflikt. Languages in Contact and Conflict*. Wiesbaden: 1980; R. Marti, *Nachbarn in Kontakt und Konflikt. Zum gegenseitigen Verhältnis nahe verwandter Sprachen*. In: *Nachbarn Sprachen in Europa*, Frankfurt am Main: 1994; J. Zieniukowa, *Języki w kontakcie i konflikcie. Rozważania o sytuacji języka dolnośląskiego*. In: J. Zieniukowa, *Języki mniejszości w komunikowaniu społecznym. Studia nad funkcjonowaniem języków łużyckich w XIX i XX wieku*. Warszawa: 2006, SOW: 185–195.

numerous dialects (see among others AJK; Treder 2006: 78, 281), the Kashubian language (*kašëbizna*, *kaszëbskô mòwa*), was a means of everyday spoken communication within the family and the local community. For centuries, the Kashubian language (and the Catholic religion<sup>8</sup>) provided the Kashubs with the main basis for ethnic identification. The Kashubs realized (and continue to realize) their separate linguistic identity, but they also had a sense of closeness with the Polish language. The contact between the Kashubian ethnolect and the Polish language took place in two ways: firstly, in the form of spoken interchanges with speakers of the adjacent Polish dialects to the east and south, which were located on the periphery of two large neighbouring dialects of Polish: Mazovian (*mazowiecki*, spoken in the region of Mazowsze) and *wielkopolski* – the dialect of Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) (see among others Stieber 1974: 406–417<sup>9</sup>; AJK – especially vol. XV; Handke 1979: 111–123<sup>10</sup>; Zieniukowa 2001b); secondly, there were contacts with literary (standard) Polish. In grammatical or lexical terms, there has never been a sharp line delimiting the Kashubian dialects and the neighbouring Polish dialects since we are dealing with a *linguistic continuum*. Under the circumstances, and coupled with other phenomena, such as the fact that the Kashubian language shares some of its characteristics with Old Polish and with various Polish dialects (see among others AJK; Sychta 1967–1976; SEK), the language of the Kashubs was a difficult problem for researchers once they took an interest in it late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its relationship to Polish and to other Slavic languages was unclear. The question was whether to treat Kashubian as a dialect of Polish or as a separate Slavic language. Learned discussions and controversies, also among Kashubian elites, continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Finally, the problem of the status of Kashubian was resolved at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the aid of sociolinguistic criteria. The *linguistic continuum* was interpreted as two related *continua*, Kashubian and Polish. Today, the Kashubian ethnolect is considered to be a Slavic regional language closely related to Polish (also see below) (see among others Breza 1992; Majewicz 1986; Popowska-Taborska 2006: 115–133; Stone 1972; Topolińska 1980; Wicherkiewicz 2000; Obracht-Prondzyński – Wicherkiewicz 2011; Zieniukowa 2001a; 2001b; 2005; 2007; 2009b; 2013; see also AJK and SEK).

<sup>8</sup> With the exception of the Slovicians and their neighbours (see above), the Kashubs did not convert to Protestantism.

<sup>9</sup> Z. Stieber, *Stosunek kaszubszczyzny do dialektów Polski lądowej*. Reprint of Stieber, Z. (ed.): *Konferencja pomorska (1954). Prace językoznawcze*. Warszawa: PWN: 37–48.

<sup>10</sup> K. Handke, *Wewnętrzne podziały gwarowe Kaszub i sąsiednich terenów*.

As regards language function, Kashubian (in its dialect form) and Polish (in its literary form) have supplemented each other in the social life of Kaszuby. The relationship between these languages may be considered as one of coexistence. Kashubian was the language of everyday interactions. For communicating in intellectual contexts (alongside Latin in the Church, in sacral and secular writings and in education), the Kashubs have been using literary Polish, a high-status language since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This state of affairs was recorded in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by Florian Ceynowa,<sup>11</sup> an educated Kashub, doctor, folklorist, philologist, initiator of a movement to create a literary variety of Kashubian, who wrote an article in Kashubian in which he deplored the ongoing efforts to Germanize the Kashubs and reminisced about the good old times before the partitioning of Poland in 1772, when Polish priests preached in a familiar language, brought in Polish prayer books and established schools where teaching took place in Polish. In the period of 1772–1918, both the Kashubian language and the Polish language in Pomerania found themselves in conflict with the German, which was heavily promoted by the Prussian administration. The Kashubs resisted Germanisation in two ways: by consistently communicating in the native dialects and by efforts to retain Polish in churches and schools (especially in religious education), despite the fact that church and state authorities were seeking to eliminate the language from those environments (Zieniukowa 1997: 205–216<sup>12</sup>).

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Kashubian became a written language<sup>13</sup> thanks to the pioneering efforts of F. Ceynowa (1817–1881) and the father of Kashubian literature, Hieronim Derdowski (1852–1902). Literary output in Kashubian is being developed to this day in various literary genres and different forms of the Kashubian language (see among others Borzyszkowski – Obracht-Prondzyński 2001<sup>14</sup>; Treder 2006: 281–282<sup>15</sup>). Attempts to standardize the language had long been unsuccessful as written productions tended to reflect the native local dialect of the writer. It was not until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that norms began to be successfully introduced into the language (Treder in: Breza 2001; Treder 2005; Popowska-Taborska 1987; 1998b; 2006; Zieniukowa 2006; 2009a; 2013).

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on F. Ceynowa, a leading figure of Kashubian culture, and on his writings see Treder 2006: 35–41.

<sup>12</sup> J. Zieniukowa, *Powstawanie i funkcjonowanie języków literackich małych grup etnicznych. Paralele i kontrasty kaszubsko-łużyckie*.

<sup>13</sup> The first texts considered as monuments of Kashubian literature were written in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in connection with the Reformation, which affected the western part of the territory of the Kashubian dialects (Treder 2005; see also note 4).

<sup>14</sup> Works by several authors.

<sup>15</sup> E. Rogowska-Cybulska, *Zróźnicowanie stylistyczne kaszubszczyzny*.

Until the end of World War II, the Kashubs had spoken Kashubian, Polish and German.<sup>16</sup> After 1945 they became bilingual (asymmetrical Kashubian-Polish bilingualism), and partly monolingual (speaking Polish only). In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Kashubian language still existed in the form of numerous dialects, cumulatively treated by the Kashubs as a distinctive language, *kaszëbskô mòwa* ('Kashubian language') (see among others AJK; Sychta 1967–1976). This native language represented an emotional value and a symbolic element of ethnic identity. At the same time, the Kashubs realized the low level of prestige of their language, particularly to outsiders. As a result of Communist policies directed against ethnic minorities the social situation of the Kashubian language deteriorated even further. The coexistence between the Kashubian ethnolect and the standard Polish language weakened as the latter became predominant. A process of moving away from Kashubian to Polish monolingualism began, interrupting its transmission from generation to generation (see among others Zieniukowa 2001b; 2011).

This trend was gradually reversed after 1975. Kashubian elites and institutions starting with the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association (*Zrzeszenie Kaszubsko-Pomorskie*, ZK-P) and later taken up by others including the Kashubian Institute (*Instytut Kaszubski*, from 1997) contributed to a growing sense of linguistic and ethnic awareness among the Kashubs. Pope John Paul II and his visits to Poland played a positive role as well (the pope visited Kaszuby in 1987 and 1999). After the collapse of communism in the early 1990s there was a qualitative change in the way the Kashubian language functions in society, leading to a revival, emancipation and intellectualization of the language. Kashubian has come to be used in areas of communication other than just family life and the local community. There have been intensive efforts to create a literary (standard) Kashubian language, and some extensive written production including sacred texts (several Bible translations, published sermons), all boosting the prestige of the ethnolect. The Kashubian-Pomeranian Association (ZK-P) published a strategy for the Kashubian language and culture for 2005–2015 (*Strategia języka i kultury Kaszubów*), appointed a Kashubian Language Council (*Rada Języka Kaszubskiego*) which develops norms and promotes the language.<sup>17</sup> Today, Kashubian is a literary written language (although standard Kashubian is still rare in spoken communication, where dialectal forms predominate). The Kashubian language manifests itself through various channels of communication: in schools (with

<sup>16</sup> This applies to the Kashubs as a community; individual people were not always fully multilingual.

<sup>17</sup> It publishes a bilingual Kashubian-Polish yearbook, "Biuletyn Rady Języka Kaszubskiego" (Gdańsk, vols. [1]–[6], 2007–2012).

some schools offering the option to take a final high school exam in Kashubian) and training courses for teachers, in the Catholic Church (where a Kashubian-language liturgy is used in some of the churches), in regional institutions and, in terms of literary output, in various functional styles (including, among other things, academic texts), in the media (including the Internet) and in local names (on signposts and road signs next to Polish names). The language is even beginning to appear in the Polish parliament. The Kashubian language has become the subject of linguistic policy at regional, state and European level. Thanks to efforts to perfect the language and the work of Kashubian elites, the Kashubian language became recognized as a regional language in Poland under the National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language Act dated 6 January 2005 (within the meaning of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the treaty adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe) (Dołowy-Rybińska 2011; Obracht-Prondzyński – Wicherkiewicz 2011; Kleina – Obracht-Prondzyński 2012; Treder 2006; Zieniukowa 2006; 2007; 2009a; 2009b; 2013).

Despite such considerable sociolinguistic achievements, the Kashubian language is endangered. The standard form is not widely used in spoken communication among the Kashubs (despite being promoted by the elites), and efforts to popularize reading in Kashubian have failed to produce large-scale success. A knowledge of Kashubian is no longer necessary for communication purposes since all members of the community speak Polish. A qualitative and quantitative language shift has occurred in the Kashubian community. The dialects are disappearing (young people practically never learn the dialects in the family), but the supra-dialectal form of the language is being developed and taught (see among others Obracht-Prondzyński 2007; Dołowy-Rybińska 2011; Zieniukowa 2011). Activists involved in promoting the native Kashubian culture and language hope that the educated variety of Kashubian will replace the form acquired in the family for the communication purposes. Whether this is going to happen is an open question; the future of the Kashubian language is not easy to predict.

Over the centuries, the Kashubian language has undergone numerous changes. The first kind of change relates to the linguistic structure, involving the development of the Kashubian grammar and lexis, as well as the way in which the ethnolect functions in society (an area well-researched by linguists and sociolinguists which continues to attract scholarly interest). The second kind of change relates to the territorial range of Kashubian and its ethnic and linguistic neighbours, i.e. the borderlands in which Kashubian comes into contact with other languages (in their various forms). The internal development arc of the Kashubian ethnolect could be synthetically described as a transition from Kashubian dialects



(involving numerous variants which form three larger groups) to a Kashubian literary language. In terms of external conditions, namely the linguistic borderlands, the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a major change as the Kashubian language completely lost touch with German in geographical and social terms. After the Polabian language became extinct in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Kashubian language became the north western periphery of the Slavic languages (bounded on the west by the German-speaking area). The geopolitical changes which took place in the wake of World War II resulted in the German population being expelled from Pomerania, with Polish people (mostly Polish deportees from the east) arriving to replace them in the vacated territories. As a result, the former borderlands of the Kashubian ethnolect changed. The borderlands between Kashubian and German disappeared, and the borderlands between Kashubian and Polish took on a different nature. No longer the northern Slavic periphery, the territory of the Kashubs became a Kashubian ethnic and linguistic enclave within the northern part of the Polish linguistic area (see among others Zieniukowa 2001b).

January 2015

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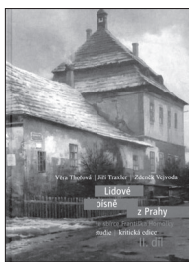
*Contact:* Prof. dr. hab. Jadwiga Zieniukowa, (professor emeritus), Institute of Slavic Studies Polish Academy of Sciences, ul. Bartoszewicza 1b/17, 00-337 Warszawa, Poland; e-mail: zieniukowa@wp.pl.

## Kašubština – jazyk menšiny na pomezí. Jaká byla, jaká je?

*Resumé:* Článek představuje jazyk (regionální) menšiny, existující během řady staletí na pomezí kultur a jazyků, z diachronické a synchronické perspektivy: etnolekt Kašubů – autochtonního, slovanského lidu na Gdaňském Pomoří – a také dějiny a druh jeho styků s jazykem německým (nepříbuzným) a polským (příklad slovansko-slovanského pomezí). Kašubský jazyk přicházel do kontaktu s dolno-německými nářečím a horní němčinou; zejména jeho styk s oficiální verzí německého jazyka byl jazykově konfliktní povahy. Mezi kašubštinou a polskými nářečím mazovskými a velkopolskými existuje jazykové kontinuum. Kašubština (v podobě mnoha nářečí) a polština (ve standardní podobě) se dlouho funkčně doplňovaly. Spojovala je koexistence. Kašubové byli během staletí trojjazyční. Po roce 1945, kdy přestalo existovat kašubsko-německé pomezí, se Kašubové stávali dvojazyčnými (kašubsko-polský bilingvismus) nebo byli jen polsko-jazyční. Od devadesátých let 20. století dochází působením kašubských elit ke kvalitativní změně ve fungování kašubského jazyka: byl utvořen standardní jazyk, který se projevuje různými komunikačními kanály. Kašubský etnolekt se stal předmětem jazykové politiky na regionální, státní a evropské úrovni. Od roku 2005 má právní status regionálního jazyka. Přesto je ohrožen.

### Věra Thořová – Jiří Traxler – Zdeněk Vejvoda Lidové písně z Prahy ve sbírce Františka Homolky II.díl

Vydal Etnologický ústav AV ČR, v. v. i., Praha 2013, 371 stran, rejstříky, obrazová dokumentace, anglické resumé.



Písňová sbírka libeňského učitele Františka Homolky (1885–1933) představuje základní pramen z oboru městského folkloru v českých zemích. Obsahuje přes tři a půl tisíce záznamů písní a říkadél z různých regionů a lokalit Čech z první třetiny 20. století, je tedy svým rozsahem a časovým rozpětím srovnatelná se sbírkou Erbenovou. V letech 1904–1929 Homolka sběratelsky pokryl také oblast do té doby zcela opomíjenou – Prahu a její periferie – a zaznamenal zde tradiční repertoár ve stadiu kontaminace pololidovými a městskými folklorními prvky. V tomto období byl završen proces zlidovování společenské a kramářské písně a do lidové zpěvnosti stále výrazněji zasahoval vliv dechové hudby a lidovky.

Druhý svazek komentované kritické edice Lidových písní z Prahy ve sbírce Františka Homolky zahrnuje legendy, balady a kramářskou epiku, koledy, dětské písně a říkadla. Připojená studie obsahuje kapitoly věnované kupletu, říkadlům a hudební analýze písní z Homolkovy pražské sbírky.

ISBN 978-80-87112-78-6

CENA s DPH: 350 Kč

Objednávky vyřizuje: Etnologický ústav AV ČR, v. v. i., Na Florenci 3, 110 00 Praha 1,  
tel. 234 612 611, e-mail: gergelova@eu.cas.cz