

A REGIONAL DICTIONARY AS A SOURCE IN RESEARCH INTO THE DYNAMICS OF LINGUISTIC CHANGES

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Abstract The situation of subdialects is, currently, a very dynamic subject as a result of their regular contact with the standard variety of the language, linguistic integration and interference. A regional dictionary is a concept of a subdialect dictionary which registers the contemporary state of a language spoken in a village or a small region. It contains regional, colloquial and special words, as well as elements of traditional subdialects. This article introduces the idea of a regional dictionary and the opportunities it poses for studying changes in rural language. There are references to the dynamics within a dictionary (the vocabulary obtained from representatives of different generations) and comparisons with earlier sources.

Keywords:

subdialect,
dialectology,
regional dictionary,
linguistic change,
diachronic
linguistics

SŁOWNIK REGIONALNY JAKO ŹRÓDŁO DO BADAŃ DYNAMIKI ZMIAN JĘZYKOWYCH

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Abstrakt Sytuacja gwary jest obecnie bardzo dynamiczna ze względu na intensywny kontakt z ogólną odmianą języka, procesy integracji i interferencji językowej. Słownik regionalny to koncepcja słownika gwarowego rejestrującego współczesny stan języka danej wsi lub danego obszaru. Jest w nim miejsce zarówno dla elementów tradycyjnych gwar, regionalnych, potocznych czy specjalistycznych. Artykuł przybliży ideę słownika regionalnego oraz możliwości wykorzystania go do badania zmian w języku wsi. Można tu zarówno mówić o dynamice w obrębie słownika (leksyka pochodząca od przedstawicieli różnych pokoleń), jak i zestawiać słownik z wcześniejszymi źródłami.

Słowa kluczowe:

gwara,
dialektologia,
słownik
regionalny,
zmiana językowa,
diachronia

1 Introduction¹

A regional dictionary is a lexicographic source intended to register the vocabulary in a language spoken by inhabitants of villages and towns in a specific region. Therefore, I should briefly present the linguistic situation in rural areas because they are areas experiencing the most intense changes.

The contemporary linguistic situation in Polish rural areas can be referred to by means of the concepts of dynamics and interferences. Here, the dynamics are defined as movement or changes to the linguistic system; interferences occur in the coexistence of elements of various language systems. These processes should be attributed to the social, economic and cultural changes that have taken place in rural areas in Poland. The time after WWII was marked by large-scale human migration and a revival of migration from the country to cities (lately, a reverse process has been observed), establishment of a robust schooling system, accompanied by the influence of mass media (specifically, television propagating the spoken variety of the Polish language, now also the Internet), a change to employment structure and forms of employment in the country (abstaining from farming and small farms), as well as the abandonment of folk culture.² All of these factors contributed to intensifying contacts between subdialects and the general Polish language in rural areas.³ The prevalence of a subdialect as the major communication code of rural Polish speakers has been overcome.⁴ It is hard to find an individual who would only communicate in a subdialect. Switching from one code of communication to another leads to numerous interferences between the specific varieties of a language.

¹ Research work financed under the program of the Minister of Science and Higher Education under the name "National Program for the Development of Humanities" in 2018-2023, project number 0060 / NPRH7 / H11 / 86/2018, amount 787 831 / Praca naukowa finansowana w ramach programu Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego pod nazwą „Narodowy Program Rozwoju Humanistyki” w latach 2018-2023, nr projektu 0060/NPRH7/H11/86/2018, kwota 787 831.

² I do realize that the concept of *folk culture* represents a complex issue. On one hand, it serves to indicate the research subject, the type of culture. On the other hand, there is information about the researchers themselves – a concept largely examined in the history of concepts (Brzezińska 2014: 133-134).

³ As B. Wyderka (2015) emphasized, it was a process consisting of several stages which fully revealed itself after WWII; however, it was first observed in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries.

⁴ Similar processes, on a general and detailed scale, have also been observed in other Slavic countries – cf. Jaklová 1997, Čižmarová 2000, Лукашанец 2006, *Jazykovedné štúdie* 26 (2009, specifically articles in the part of *Slovenčina v zbrani*), Ostrowska 2016, *Dynamika rozwoju gwar słowiańskich w XXI wieku* (D.K. Rembiszewska [ed.], Warsaw 2017).

The social and linguistic phenomena described above triggered a change in terminology – a concept of *a language spoken in rural areas* appeared, interpreted as a multi-variety entity, consisting of elements of traditional subdialects, but also, of general, informal, regional, environmental and vocational varieties. Adopting this broad language perspective has been determined by the social composition of the contemporary rural populations, including both traditional farmers, farmers educated in agricultural schools and representatives of other professions (Sierociuk 2016).

The changes to the rural language system have been observed by dialectologists on all levels but they have been most distinct on the lexical level, owing to the system's open nature (Martynova 2016: 57). The impact on the changes to subdialectal vocabulary as confronted with the Polish language in general is determined by extra-linguistic factors (e.g., the disappearance of referents) as well as semantic factors (the distinction of the semantic field) (Rembiszewska 2017: 120).

2 The concept of a regional dictionary

A regional dictionary is not a new stage of a dictionary; lately, its concept has been redefined by J. Kaś, according to whom, the characteristic feature of this dictionary “is presentation of not only lexical units together with definitions but also their relations with other lexemes and, most importantly, in the context of more general phenomena of material or spiritual culture. As a result, this dictionary should be a combination of a dictionary of a local subdialect and culture; namely, (with the linguistic nature of the work intact) it should approximate an ethnological work” (Kaś 2009: 12). In the Poznań centre of dialectology, the idea was pursued by J. Sierociuk who indicated possible cooperation between universities and the local communities – for example, schools (Sierociuk 2006). Over time, the concept materialised in the form of a series of *Wielkopolskie Słowniki Regionalne* (Wielkopolska Regional Dictionaries – the WSR). In general, the course of work is as follows:

- Preparing the students – presenting thematic questionnaires, instructions on how to interview a grandmother, a grandfather or another informant; the emphasis is on allowing a longer utterance (on top of short utterances) because our goal is to present a broad context of using a specific word, including presentation of its cultural context.
- Recordings (made by the students and the research team).

- Transcription – the Dialectology Laboratory of Adam Mickiewicz University adopted a simplified transcript, based on general Polish spelling; abstaining from a detailed transcript by means of the phonetic alphabet makes the dictionary more accessible to non-professionals who might not be knowledgeable about the phonetic alphabet.
- Developing the dictionary entries – when working on the entries, the emphasis is placed on the relations between language and a local culture. To this end, we can not only make use of the definition but also ample quotations and graphic material.
- Use of the dictionary – on top of the academic advantages, the dictionary is also useful as a teaching tool. It can be used during Polish classes as a source of subdialectal features and to discuss phonetic phenomena and historical and linguistic processes as a context for discussing phenomena typical of the spoken variety of language, as an ethnographic source of information (Osowski 2019a: 175-178).⁵

As holistic dictionaries, regional dictionaries register subdialectal, regional and generally common Polish varieties of words, as well as colloquial, specialist and other aspects. Of importance is not the vocabulary's variety but its affinity with a specific thematic field, e.g., THE KITCHEN, FARMER'S WORK, HOUSEWIFE'S CHORES, RITUALS AND HABITS etc. Beside a word's thematic affinity, of importance is its cultural context – we choose the words which act as symbols of regional culture (Osowski 2019b: 9-10). Since the questionnaire includes questions referring to earlier research, it is possible to document the changes in the WSR taking place in the language spoken in rural areas.

3 A regional dictionary vs. research into linguistic changes

Following presentation of the linguistic situation in rural areas and characterizing the idiosyncrasies of regional dictionaries, let me proceed with the major issue, namely the dynamics of language changes. The WSR provides data for examining the issue in two ways. First, the items in the questionnaire referring to earlier research, e.g., to the *Atlas języka i kultury ludowej Wielkopolski* (The Atlas of the rural language and folk culture in Wielkopolska - AJKLW) make it possible to compare the two

⁵ The major theoretical framework of the dictionaries from this series is common, but when it comes to the details, each author may resort to a slightly different solution.

developmental stages of the Polish language spoken in Wielkopolska. Second, the WSR questions are asked not only of the oldest inhabitants of a specific village; we also collect interviews with younger respondents. This is how we document the contemporary diversity of the language and the dynamics of internal changes. Let me follow these two possibilities by using examples.

Collecting vocabulary in the Konin county in 2018–2023 focused on obtaining lexical material related to the traditional work of a farmer and his wife. Special attention was paid to food (preparing food, obtaining the ingredients, kitchen equipment, the rituals accompanying food, cultivating plants for consumption, animal breeding, etc.). The Konin questionnaire contained questions corresponding with the issues registered in the AJKLW, for example:

Table 1: A list of questions from the WSR questionnaire and the corresponding AJKLW maps.

The WSR Konin questionnaire	Question number	The question	The AJKLW map	Map title
Kitchen 1	54	What do you call a device to make butter?	32	A butter churn with a plunger
Kitchen 1	98	What do you use to fry scrambled eggs? (<i>patelka, patelnia</i>)	60	A pan
Kitchen 3	72	What do you call cooked and mashed potatoes?	94	Cooked potatoes mashed with a stick
Kitchen 4	46	What do you call duck blood soup? (<i>czarnina, czernina, czarna zupa ...</i>)	91	Duck blood soup
Habits 2	96	What do you call a jelly snack made from pig trotters and vegetables? (<i>zimne nóżki, galart</i>)	105	Jelly made from pig trotters

Source: author's research

Below, I will present the results of this type of comparative study.

A wooden device used to churn butter is one of the referents which belongs to the past. As confirmed by the AJKLW, the situation was different: in nearly the entire surveyed area, the word *kierzynka* was used, and sporadically, *kierzanka* (cf. Map 1). As the technology of making butter has changed, accompanied by purchasing butter in shops, the device became redundant in a household. Nevertheless, the name was remembered by the oldest informants – women born in 1943, 1955 and 1957 who could have used a *kierzynka* or could have seen their mothers or grandmothers using

it. Undoubtedly, this object belongs to the past as confirmed by a younger informant (born in 1971) who used the word *maselniczka*. The woman, unaware of the subdialectal word, referred to general Polish language (*maselnica* in the WSJP) and created a diminutive form with the *-ka* suffix.

The case of *patelnia*, a flat kitchen utensil used to fry food, is different. It has been used continually; therefore, the change in the name does not depend on the referent but is of a strictly linguistic nature. According to the AJLKW, there used to be three words used in the vicinity of Konin: *patela*, *patelka*, and *patelnia* (see Map 2). In location 56a, they even appeared next to each other. This is a case of coexistence of the general Polish name (*patelnia*), which encroached Wielkopolska from central Poland and the name *patela*, which connected the region with western, southern and northern Wielkopolska – areas more conservative with respect to the language. In contemporary research, the word has not been registered, although I know it by reputation. On the other hand, the words *patelnia* and *patelka* have been used. The latter word, while non-existent in general Polish, is known to representatives of the older generation (born in 1957) and the younger generation (born in 1971) alike.

Another compared issue pertains to the name of a dish or a food ingredient – potatoes, first cooked and then mashed. The words used included mainly participles in the plural, supposedly describing potatoes (regional word: *pyry*). According to the AJLKW, in the area in question, the participle *krychane* prevailed (*ziemniaki*, *pyry* etc.); sometimes, a noun form was used – *krychanki* (location 56a on Map 3). The other provided words were *tluczone* and *tarte*. The latter word, rare in the vicinity of Konin, prevailed in the other parts of Wielkopolska. After 50 years, the most popular replies still included derivatives of *krychać* – *krychane*, *ukrychane*, *krychanki*. As for the previously known forms, *tluczone* and *pożgane* were also used (in the AJLKW – *żgane* in southern Wielkopolska), whereas *tarte* has altogether disappeared. The new forms, not registered in the AJLKW, include *ugnicione* and the French *purée* borrowed via the general Polish language: *pire*, *piure*.

The question about the word for a soup with duck blood is an interesting case. It is a traditional Polish soup which, according to the AJLKW, in the area in question, was referred to exclusively as *czarnina* (see Map 4). What is more, in Wielkopolska, other words competed with this form, with *czernina* as the most popular among them. The data gleaned for the dictionary of the language spoken in the vicinity of Konin confirm both words. While the new unit could have appeared under the influence

of contacts with the other parts of Wielkopolska, the impact of general Polish is more certain. This is because *czernina* is a unit registered in the WSJP, whereas *czarnina* is not.

Another classical dish in the Polish cuisine is made from cooked pork, veal or poultry, served in jelly. According to the AJKLW, in the area in question, the word *trzęsionka* prevailed; although, in location 56a, a note was provided that the word was disappearing together with *zimne nogi*. Rare forms included *galareta* and *zimne* (see Map 5). After 50 years, the picture is now quite different: the lexemes *trzęsionka* and *zimne* no longer exist, while *zimne nogi* was mentioned only once. The forms *galareta* and *galaretkę* gained popularity while *galart/galat* were new (commonly used in Wielkopolska with the exception of its eastern part). On the other hand, the lexeme *zimne nóżki*, previously non-existent in these areas, moved into the lead. It is a diminutive form of the earlier form *zimne nogi*. Its popularity is attributed to the willingness to remove synonymia (*zimne nogi* may be a phrase referring to the physical state of a human body – cold feet). On the other hand, it may stem from willingness to present oneself as a well-mannered person (diminutives are used by Poles to express positive emotional characterization, especially in colloquial Polish – Tyka 2011: 131-132).

The obtained material is used not only in a linguistic analysis; it can also serve to illustrate local culture owing to the registered informants' longer utterances: *gotuje się ... nogi ... świnki ... do mięs kości obiera dodaje się ... dodaje się do tego ... warzywa ... i ... one ... pod wpływem z... zawartości ka... galarety ... w skórce ... z tych nóżek po prostu ... ge^ostniejo^m ... w zimnej temperaturze dlatego nazywają się zimne nóżki ... (Konin, a female born in 1944), galareta czy zimne nóżki się gotuje ... normalnie w świecie ... gotuje się ... a mięso jeź mięskie potem się oostawia wywar ... sie przeleno czyś... żeby wywar był czysty ... mi^oso się obierze z... do kości i myli przez maszynkę i ponownie ... i sie kładzie do garzka i zagotowuje jeszcze raz i do ostudzenia ... nie? ... (Kolonja Wilczogóra, a female born in 1955).*

In a diachronic context, the above presented diversity of the language spoken in rural areas is only one of the opportunities of using a regional dictionary to analyze the dynamics of change. Another opportunity is to present this diversity in synchrony. This is possible when, in the course of collecting the material, people from different generational groups are taken into account. Of course, the oldest inhabitants are given preference because they know the old reality best and their speech includes the biggest number of subdialectal features. However, when

recording the interviews, we do not limit ourselves to them but rather we also take into account younger respondents.

For example, the selected four questions from the *Kitchen 2* questionnaire indicates features of a language spoken by three generations⁶ (cf. Table 2). The oldest generation was represented by 3 informants, the middle generation by 6 and the youngest generation by 1. Clearly, differential replies were only provided by informants from the oldest and the middle generations; the youngest informant did not offer any differential form. Subdialectal forms that are familiar to the oldest and the middle generations are typically provided by single informants. This dispersion is conducive for weakening their position in the lexical system. Interestingly, the informants realize this and make attempts at controlling their utterances; e.g., when asked what is excavated in a peatland, an informant born in 1951 provided a general masculine form *torf*; it was only when she was asked an indirect question which required a description of how peat is obtained that she used a feminine subdialectal form: *no niestety ... te... teraz w tych czasach to już ... nie kopio^m tej torfy tak ... nie ma ...*

Table 2: A list of the number of replies by generations

Question	Replies ⁷	Generation 1921-1945	Generation 1946-1970	Generation 1971-1996
2. The grey foam that forms when meat is cooked	Szumy	1	1	-
	<i>Szumowiny</i>	2	4	1
	<i>Me^mty</i>	-	1	-
12. The thing excavated in a peatland.	Torfa	1	2	-
	<i>Torf</i>	3	4	1
30. What you cut off potatoes before cooking them.	Strużyny	-	2	-
	<i>Obierki</i>	1	2	1
	<i>Łupiny</i>	1	4	-
	<i>Skórka</i>	1	-	-
84. A pig's lungs (taken out after slaughter)	Lekkie	1	1	-
	Lekota	-	1	-
	<i>Ośrodek</i>	1	-	-
	<i>pluc(ke)a</i>	-	3	-

Source: author's research

⁶ The generation brackets as in Sierociuk 2016: 72.

⁷ The bold replies denote the forms which are differential against the general Polish language.

I need to make a reservation that the category of a generation, while necessary to draw general conclusions, tends to blur the nuances. In fact, differential forms are not only used by the oldest members of a specific generation. This is because the use of these forms is not only affected by the age criterion but oftentimes other conditions like education, place of residence, etc. As a result, when analyzing the occurrence of differential forms, as provided by the informants by year of birth, a specific fluctuation can be observed: these forms sometimes disappear only to reappear later.

Table 3: The occurrence of selected lexemes by year of birth

Generation	The informant's year of birth	Question 2	Question 12
The oldest	1932	<i>Szymowiny</i>	<i>torfá, torf</i>
	1940	<i>Szumowiny</i>	<i>torf</i>
	1944	<i>Szumy</i>	<i>torf</i>
Middle	1946	<i>Menty</i>	<i>torfá</i>
	1951	<i>Szumowiny</i>	<i>torfá, torf</i>
	1954	<i>Szumowiny</i>	<i>torf</i>
	1955	<i>Szumowiny</i>	<i>torf</i>
	1956	<i>Szumowiny</i>	<i>torf</i>
	1969	<i>Szumy</i>	-
The youngest	1976	<i>Szumowiny</i>	<i>torf</i>

Source: author's research

4 Conclusion

In summary, the social and economic changes that have contributed to the intensified contacts between a subdialect and the general variety of the language are also responsible for dynamizing the picture of the language spoken in rural areas. It no longer consists of exclusively subdialectal elements; they are accompanied by colloquial, specialist and other elements.

Research into these dynamics is possible owing to regional dictionaries, even if several factors are taken into consideration in planning thereof. We need to consider the earlier research results so that the dictionaries make it possible to make diachronic comparisons and to differentiate the choice of the informants. The respondents representing groups diverse with respect to the generation, profession or education, will allow to present the dynamics of linguistic changes in a synchronous plan. In the case of a research group which is also diverse with respect to the place of residence, the mentioned dynamics can be presented on a language

map. As the analyzed examples show, language changes are not always aligned with the line of integration with the general variety (*czarnina, patelnia*) because, sometimes, differential units (*krychane ziemniaki, galari*) have a strong position in the lexical system; they enjoy a bigger social and geographic range, sometimes shifted to the group of regional units.

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A list of research locations accompanying maps 1-5

The AJKLW locations:

39 – Stara Ruda, 54 – Dobrosolowo, 56 – Sławsk–Branno, 56a – Kramsk, 65 – Królików

The WSR locations:

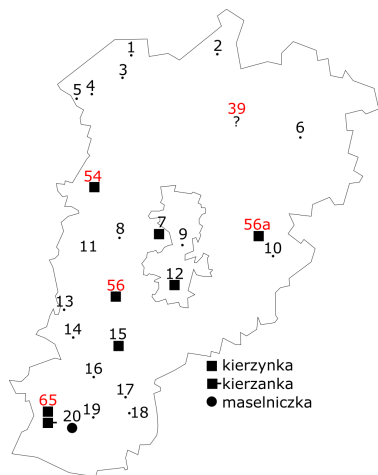
1 – Wilczyn, 2 – Mniszki, 3 – Kolonia Wilczogóra, 4 – Budziszlaw Kościelny, 5 – Słowiki, 6 – Sompolno, 7 – Wieruszew, 8 – Rosocha, 9 – Maliniec, 10 – Podgór, 11 – Golina, 12 – Konin, 13 – Dąbrowica, 14 – Rzgów, 15 – Święcia, 16 – Wardężyn, 17 – Rychwał, 18 – Milewo, 19 – Janów, 20 – Grodziec

Słownik regionalny jako źródło do badań dynamiki zmian językowych

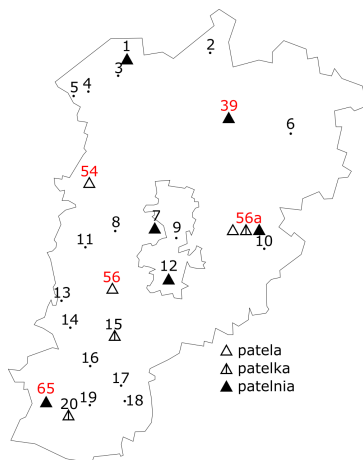
Współczesną sytuację językową na polskiej wsi można odnieść do pojęć dynamiki i interferencji. Dynamika wynika z przemian społeczno-gospodarczych po II wojnie światowej, interferencje zaś wynikają z intensywnych kontaktów gwar z językiem ogólnym. Przeobrażenia te pociągnęły za sobą zmiany w terminologii – pojawiło się pojęcie *języka mieszkańców wsi*. Słownik regionalny to połączenie słownika lokalnej gwary i kultury. W poznańskim ośrodku dialektologicznym, gdzie opracowuje się tego rodzaju słowniki, naukowcy współpracują ze społecznościami lokalnymi, m.in. szkołami. Powstają dzięki temu słowniki tematyczne i całościowe, rejestrujące słownictwo gwarowe, regionalne, ogólnopolskie, potoczne, specjalistyczne i inne.

Wybrano pięć przykładów (1. dawne urządzenie do produkcji masła, 2. płaskie naczynie do smażenia, 3. ziemniaki gotowane i ugniecione, 4. zupa z krwi kaczki, 5. przekąska z nówek wieprzowych i warzyw), by pokazać zmiany, jakie zaszły w słownictwie mieszkańców okolic Konina (wschodnia Wielkopolska) w ciągu 50 lat. W tym celu dane zebrane do atlasu regionalnego z lat 70. XX wieku zestawiono z danymi zebranymi współcześnie w ramach serii Wielkopolskie Słowniki Regionalne. W ten sposób możemy badać dynamikę zmian w wymiarze diachronicznym. W analizie planu synchronicznego wykorzystano dane pozyskane w tym samym czasie od przedstawicieli różnych grup pokoleniowych. Zmiany te prześledzono na przykładzie wybranych znaczeń w trzech pokoleniach (1921-1945, 1946-1970, 1970-1996). W przypadku grupy badawczej zróżnicowanej pod względem miejsca zamieszkania dynamikę tę można zobrazować na mapie językowej.

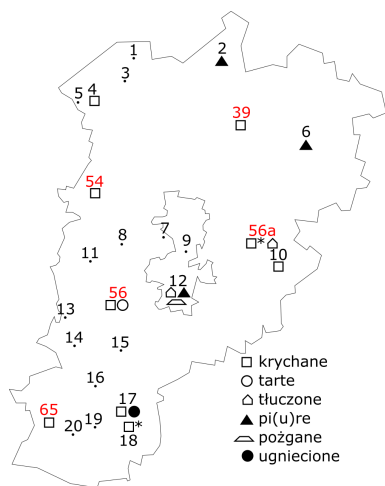
Analiza materiałów wykazała, że zmiany językowe nie zawsze dotyczą integracji polszczyzny ogólnej z gwarami (*czarnina, patelnia*), gdyż czasami jednostki dyferencyjne (*krychane ziemniaki, galarł*) mają silną pozycję w systemie leksykalnym. Cieszą się większym zasięgiem społecznym i geograficznym, przechodząc w efekcie do grupy jednostek regionalnych.



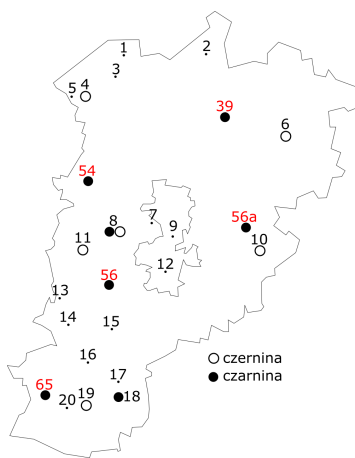
Map 1. A wooden device used to churn butter



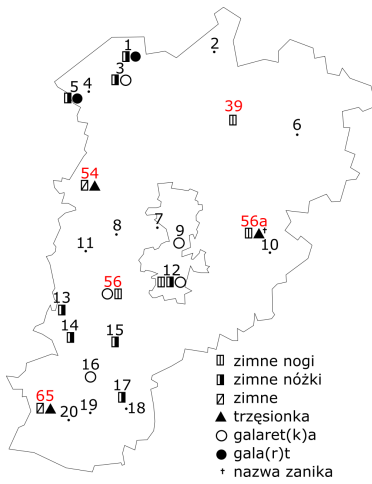
Map 2. A flat kitchen utensil used to fry food



Map 3. Cooked and then mashed potatoes



Map 4. A soup with duck blood



Map 5. Cooked pork, veal or poultry, served in jelly