

Wilamowice is a small town on the Borderland of Silesia and Lesser Poland. It has about 3,000 inhabitants. Presently, it is associated with its exotic culture, colorful folk costumes, and its specific language. Vilamovians - as the inhabitants of the town who identify with a specific culture call themselves - say that it has been established by settlers in 13th century. In their opinion, their origin is Flemish. This version of their ethnogenesis was present at last in 19th century. In the era of growing nationalisms, it was helpful for Vilamovians in keeping distance from both Germans and Poles and constructing their own identity, separate from these two nations. When asked about their nationality, the Vilamovians answered that they were neither Poles, nor Germans, but the descendants of settlers from faraway Flanders.

According to many scholars, it was not only the specificity of the first settlers, but rather the following development of Wilamowice that caused so many differences between the Vilamovian culture and those present in the surrounding villages. The Vilamovians worked predominately as weavers and traders rather than farmers. They travelled all over Europe, which resulted in many influences from some European regions. These influences are especially visible in case of female dress, where the Turkish shawls, head-scarves from Vorarlberg, aprons from Moravia, and colorful skirts sewed from fabrics brought from Vienna or Paris are all present.

The cultivation of this colorful culture and language was banned by the local authorities after the World War 2. Vilamovians were expelled from their houses and sent to camps. Nevertheless, in the 1950s a folk-dance group, which officially represented "The Flanders from Wilamowice", was established.

In the beginning of the 21st century there was a great interest among the Vilamovian youth in the language of their grandparents. Many bottom-up activities for its preservation followed. The language revitalization process has been supported since 2014 by academics from the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw. Vilamovians belonging to all generations have also got involved, including both native-speakers as well as new-speakers.

This project aims at the analysis of theories on the ethnogenesis of the Vilamovians, which are present in the stories told by Vilamovians (with whom ethnographic interviews will be carried out) as well as in academic and journalistic texts. These texts were instrumentalized and used for achieving their own goals both by Vilamovians and academics. In times of growing nationalisms, German researchers tried to prove the German roots of the Vilamovians. Polish Germanists tried using the methodology of dialectology to prove that the Wymysorys language is a dialect of East Central German and a continuity with the Silesian-German dialects of the Bielsko-Biała region. Theories about the non-German origin of the Vilamovians were also criticized in the post-war period. In opinion of Germanists, the strong presence of the Flemish ethnogenesis of Vilamovians in their narratives was an attempt to avoid post-war persecutions. Meanwhile, other scholars (ethnologists, historians, musicologists) treated both the German and non-German theory of Vilamovians origin more cautiously.

The issue of Vilamovian ethnogenesis was also studied by many contemporary researchers. Their papers are valuable as a reference to the state of art, highlighting the large number of theories and arguments of individual authors. There is a lack of a detailed analysis of the connections between the narratives of Vilamovians, academics, and journalists. It is important because Vilamovians do read academic texts about Wilamowice, and scholars rewrite stories heard from the Vilamovians without reflection. The journalist embellished the stories heard from Vilamovians, and their works only strengthened Vilamovians' beliefs in the authenticity of their stories. They became implants of memory, in which the stories were written down and could be reproduced by the readers, even if their authors were no longer alive or have already forgotten them.

The process of adapting a story to the needs of a group (e.g. as a presentation of its identity) and variantisation, is called "fabulization and folklorization" by folklore researchers. This tool has so far only been applied for oral texts, but in my opinion it could also be used for journalistic and academic texts. I will not only treat professional texts as the state of the art about the ethnogenesis of Vilamovians, but rather as an object of analysis.

The basic research material will be 1. interviews (at least 30) with Vilamovians, which will be carried out during a long-term (150 days) fieldwork, 2. academic texts, especially those written by historians, ethnologists, and linguists, who wrote about various possible versions of the origin of the first settlers. 3. popular and journalistic texts about Wilamowice, as well as descriptions of exhibits and manuscripts kept in various museums, libraries and archives, as well as in private houses of the Vilamovians. Texts (including interviews transcripts) will be analyzed using critical discourse analysis.

The results of research will be published in four academic texts (including two in English), and presented as talks at two international conferences. There will also be talks and lectures for non-academic audience. The materials collected in museums, archives, libraries and other institutions, where there has been so far no query for Wilamowice, could be used in the future for other research projects.