

Gòdë translated by Renata Stachowicz

Gòdë are the traditions of Christmas. In the Kaszuby region they begin with the Christmas Eve supper, which is just like everywhere else in Poland with the traditional meatless dishes, straw and hay under the table cloth and the Christmas tree.

There are many beliefs, rituals and fortune telling in connection with *Gòdë*. Kashubs believe that on Christmas Eve there is a sacred flower blooming under the snow; that apple trees are blooming and fruiting and they loose their apples at midnight; animals are talking; water in the streams becomes a wine that can be only drunk by innocent beings.

A long time ago, after Christmas Eve supper, farmers would go out in the field and to the garden and they would talk to the trees and threaten to cut them down if they did not fruit generously. Farmers would also toss some of their straw which had been under the table cloth, on the fields of winter grain, so the frost would not destroy it.

There was some fortune telling on Christmas Eve night as well. Straw picked from under the table cloth would decide about the girls' marriage future, as well as describe the appearance of the groom-to-be. Twelve onions indicating the twelve months of the year would be a source of meteorological forecasting the moisture on each onion skin would describe if the month would be "dry" or "wet".

On the Eve some groups of children would go out singing 'Gwiôzdki' or 'kołëda' (carols). They traditionally dressed as a Ram, the Devil, a Beggar, a Stork, a Star Carrier (the spokesman or announcer), a Chimney Sweep, Old Women, and a Goat.

On New Year's Eve, "gwiôzdze" ('whistlers') go caroling. This tradition comes from the night-guard person who would use 'gwiôzdek' (whistle), while walking around the village, calling people for a night rest, or fire fighting, or defence. On New Year's Eve 'gwiôzdze' visit the villagers and wish them all the best for the up-coming year. They would sing and dance. Nobody remembers what 'gwiôzdze' were additionally wearing. Today the leader 'gwiôzdi' wears what an "order-keeper" wears: a Police uniform. With him is a crowd that includes a bear that is walked by a bear-keeper; 'puklaty' who is a hunch-backed Jew who offers a hare's skin to everyone; uhlan on his horse; a devil that frightens everyone-not only children, an accordion player. 'Old Year' and little 'New Year' are a must.



Kaszëbë Zemia i Lëdze by Danuta Pioch (which is the source of the original article translated on this page) and *Uczimë Sã Pò Kaszëbsku* by Marek Cybulski and Rôza Wosiak-Sliwa are newly published text books for slightly more advanced students of the Kashubian language. These are examples of the books mentioned in the adjacent article by S. Frymark.

Drzewkò danowé