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## THE MIGRATION OF POLES TO GERMANY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MOST COMMON POLISH SURNAMES

### INTRODUCTION

One of the methods used in studies on the origin of populations is the analysis of the distribution of the surnames that are characteristic for a given nationality. Without going into too much detail as far as the literature on the subject, what should be noted are the fundamental advantages and disadvantages of the method:

- 1) It yields rather general information on the directions of migration with respect to certain countries and nationality groups;
- 2) It is not possible to determine the actual number of migrants, or the scale of their influx in a given period, unless comparable data for different periods are available;
- 3) The presence of a particular surname in a given area is conditioned not only by external migrations, but also by internal ones (secondary migration).

With the abovementioned shortcomings in mind, we present an analysis of the 20 most frequent Polish surnames in Germany around the year 2000. Among others, the study uses data provided by the Internet website *Verwandt* ([www.verwandt.de](http://www.verwandt.de)).

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of the presence of Polish surnames in Germany is undoubtedly long, and dates back to when modern surnames were beginning to form in Poland. This fact stems from the close contact between the two countries, which entailed a constant migration exchange. The earliest Polish surnames began to appear as early as in the late Middle Ages, and emerged with increased frequency during the periods of the Renaissance and Reformation. Surnames were usually borne by students at Universities and emigrants (religious, political and economic). Already at that time many of those who arrived from Poland settled in Germany permanently, and very often their Polish surnames were kept by the following generations. However, as family names were adjusted to the German rules of pronunciation and spelling, they

usually became heavily distorted. In the eastern part of Germany (Saxony, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Pomerania) there were also indigenous surnames cognate with Polish ones, resulting from the assimilation of Polabian Slavs and Pomeranians.

The political relations between the German and Polish territories made population exchange smoother. Silesia was part of the dominium of the Austrian House of Habsburg, and subsequently the Brandenburg Hohenzollern line (since 1742). Pomerania and the Duchy of Prussia were affiliated with Brandenburg since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and in the subsequent hundred years they became part of the Kingdom of Prussia. The Polish migrations to Saxony were also facilitated by a personal union between the two states (1697-1764).

Surnames of Polish origin were present primarily in the southern part of the Duchy of Prussia, i.e. Masuria<sup>1</sup>. People of Polish decent constituted approximately 30% of the population of Königsberg<sup>2</sup>. Many Polish surnames were also present in the eastern part of the Duchy of Pomerania, chiefly in the area of the Lębork (Lauenburg) and Bytów (Bütow) Land<sup>3</sup>. To a large extent these were indigenous inhabitants of Polish or Pomeranian descent. As a result of the migration exchange, Polish surnames permeated from the territories of the borderland into Brandenburg (chiefly to the capital city of Berlin), as well as into other German states. The territorial mobility of particular migrants from the Duchy of Prussia was so great, that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was possible to find some individuals originating from this province and named "Kowalsky" or "Drosky" even in Dutch South Africa, where the largest group of settlers, next to the Dutch, were emigrants from Germany<sup>4</sup>.

The Partitioning of the Republic of Poland extended the scope of Prussian rule over Polish territories, and the final reach of this authority – lasting until 1920 – was established by the Congress of Vienna (1815). Regions that were part of the Kingdom of Prussia included Pomerania, West Prussia, East Prussia, the Grand Duchy of Poznań (Posen) and Silesia, where occurrences of Polish surnames stemmed from the presence of clusters of indigenous Polish inhabitants, as well as Brandenburg, Rhineland and Westphalia, where more and more immigrants arrived from the eastern part of the Prussian state. This process intensified in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was referred to as *Ostflucht* ("escape to the East"). Its causes are typically associated with the development of industrial areas and large urban centres in central and western parts of Prussia and Germany. This, as a result, enticed immigrants from the East seeking work and a better life (Table 1). Close-knit groups of inhabitants of Polish descent and upholding Polish traditions were formed in many towns. This was

<sup>1</sup> G. Białuński, "Nazwy osobowe na Mazurach (XV-XVIII w.)," *Onomastica* 41 (1996): 83-95; M. Biolik, "Germanizacja nazwisk polskich mieszkańców okolic Węgorzewa w latach 1653-1853," *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Olsztynie. Prace Językoznawcze* 1 (1997): 5-19.

<sup>2</sup> S. Augustiewicz, J. Jasiński, T. Oracki, *Wybitni Polacy w Królewcu XVI-XX wiek* (Olsztyn, 2005); M. Kałuski, "Polacy w Królewcu," in *Głos nad Pregoy* 6/119 (2006): 7.

<sup>3</sup> M. Dziecielski, "Pochodzenie szlachty lęborskiej i rozwój własności ziemskiej na przykładzie Dzieciela i rodziny Dziecielskich," *Biuletyn Historyczny* 10 (1999): 12-23.

<sup>4</sup> M. Kowalski, "Polish Boer Families, The influence of early Polish immigration on Boer families," *Familia – Quarterly Journal of the Genealogical Society of South Africa* 43 (2006): 38-46.



particularly true of the Ruhr district, developing between Rhineland and Westphalia. For instance, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those inhabitants of Polish origin constituted 40% of the population<sup>5</sup> of Bottrop urban centre, which was why the town was also known as Little Warsaw<sup>6</sup>. Even on the level of districts (*Kreise*), the percentage of Polish inhabitants sometimes exceeded 10% of the entire population (Table 2). However, these are only the official data, which due to various considerations should be perceived as underestimated. There must have been many more people of Polish origin, as well as an additional number of inhabitants bearing Polish surnames, as many Germans – immigrants from the East – who had had Polish surnames for generations should also have been taken into consideration. In the decades that followed the majority of the inhabitants of the Ruhr of Polish descent became Germanised, and what remained were the surnames along with other traces of a Polish presence.

The process of Germanisation also took place in the eastern Prussian provinces, where the Polish inhabitants were indigenous. The main factors constituting this process were the actions of German institutions, as well as the direct influence of German society. It should be noted, however, that the opposite process – the Polonisation of German people, both on territories belonging to Prussia and beyond its eastern border – also occurred. One of the effects of this centuries-long mutual influence was the emergence of both a large group of Germans bearing Polish surnames, as well as a large group of Poles with German surnames. Representatives of these groups left a mark on the histories of both nations. In the case of Germany, these were e.g. Otto Skorzeny, Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, Günter Schabowski, Herbert Hupka and Horst Bienek. On the other hand, in Poland, such examples were among others: Wincenty Pohl, Jędrzej Giertych, Józef Haller, Władysław Anders, Emil Wedel and Antoni Blikle.

Table 1

*The national background of miners in the Ruhr region in 1893.*

Region (country or province) of origin	thousands	%
Westphalia	67.2	42.5
Rhineland	32.0	20.2
East Prussia, West Prussia, the Poznań province, Silesia	39.4	24.9
Other parts of Germany	4.0	9.0
Austria-Hungary	1.9	1.2
The Netherlands	1.3	0.8
Italy	0.7	0.5
Other	1.4	0.9
Total	158.2	100.0

Source: *Timelines and History of Migration: Germany. The "Ruhrpolen" - Poles in the Ruhr area.* [http://www.ghs-mh.de/migration/projects/timeline/tl\\_ge\\_2.htm](http://www.ghs-mh.de/migration/projects/timeline/tl_ge_2.htm)

<sup>5</sup> F. Heckmann, *Ethnische Minderheit, Volk und Nation*, (Stuttgart, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> B. Frilling, *Bottrop – Bergbaustadt im Ruhrgebiet*, 1971, [http://www.bernhard-frilling.de/Seminararbeit/Seminararbeit\\_Inhalt.html](http://www.bernhard-frilling.de/Seminararbeit/Seminararbeit_Inhalt.html)

Table 2

*Districts (Städte or Kreise) of the Ruhr region with the largest percentages of inhabitants declaring Polish as their native language in 1900 and 1910.*

District	1900	1910
Gelsenkirchen ( <i>Stadt</i> )	13.1%	17.7%
Recklinghausen ( <i>Kreis</i> )	13.8%	15.7%
Bochum ( <i>Stadt</i> )	9.1%	n/a
Dortmund ( <i>Stadt</i> )	7.3%	12.2%

Source: *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs...*, 1903; B. Czopek-Kopciuch, *Nazwiska polskie w Zagłębiu Ruhry* (Kraków, 2004).

The large wave of inhabitants of the Polish-German borderlands moving to the territory of contemporary Germany was also caused by Germany losing some of its eastern provinces (most of the Posen district and West Prussia, a smaller part of Upper Silesia). Many Germans, also those bearing Polish surnames, did not see a future for themselves in the newly formed Polish state, and chose to emigrate to the West.

The greatest population movements affecting the people of the Polish-German frontier were a consequence of World War II. The first emigration wave was caused by the eastern front drawing nearer. Germans, but also Poles, left their homes for fear of the Red Army, but also due to a regulation issued by the German authorities. The second wave took place already after the war, and was an effect of the resolutions of the great powers, which decided to expel the German population from the territories of Central Europe, including Poland (Fig. 1).

Subsequent emigration waves were related to the exodus of the so-called native population in the decades following World War II. These were primarily members of families, which had declared Polish nationality immediately after the war. Due to political and economic considerations, a large part of that population exercised their right to a German citizenship. Between 1956 and 1989 this turned out to be the case for about 1 million people, including practically all the inhabitants of Masuria, a majority of those living in Warmia and a large number of Silesians, as well as a number of smaller population groups. Such migrations can also be observed today; however, in recent years the dynamics of this exodus have dwindled. This is connected both with the exhaustion of migration resources, as well as with the assimilation processes. Another important factor is related to the opening of borders and Poland's accession to the European Union. The possibility of free travel discourages people from making the decision to emigrate permanently. Also, it has been observed that many emigrants are returning home. The 2002 population census indicated that almost 20% of the inhabitants of the Opolskie voivodeship have German citizenship (in most cases a Polish one as well); which however, does not constitute an incentive to emigrate permanently.



Figure 1

The percentage of migrants in the populations of German regions in 1950 and the main destinations of resettlement from the territories granted to Poland.



Source: based on Putzger – *Historischer Weltatlas*, 2002

Apart from the people who either had German citizenship or had the right to one – similarly as it was before the Partitions – the migrations also pertained to the inhabitants of those Polish territories that did not constitute a part of the Prussian (German) state. The industrial centres deep inside Germany attracted Poles from Congress Poland and Galicia, and after 1918 also from independent Poland. These population movements also continued after the war and are still happening today. In fact, they were not hindered by the obstacles introduced by communism, or the restrictions on the number of Poles working in Germany after Poland joined the European Union. According to a report prepared by the plenipotentiary of the German government for immigration, within the German population there are over 2 million people who came from Poland – mostly the so-called “late resettlers” (*Spätaussiedler*). Over 300,000 of them have Polish citizenship only<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> J. Kowalski, B. Dudek, “Niemcy, kraj imigrantów,” 2007, <http://www.dw.de/niemcy-kraj-imigrantow/a-3015011>.

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF POLISH SURNAMES IN GERMANY

The historical background outlined above indicates that the strong connection between Polish and German territories and frequent migrations contributed to the relatively common presence of Polish-sounding surnames beyond the western border. What is interesting, knowledge of the fact is well rooted in Germany. For instance, the German edition of the popular online encyclopaedia – Wikipedia – reports that 13% of the inhabitants of Germany (approximately 10 million) with surnames of Polish origin. Nonetheless, this figure does seem excessive, and the authors do not give any reference for this information.

The best known and the most thoroughly studied area of Germany with respect to the incidence of surnames of Polish origin is undoubtedly the Ruhr. The unique status of this area has – among other things – caused it to be the object of numerous linguistic publications by specialists in onomastics<sup>8</sup>. With respect to the number of Polish surnames, such places as Recklinghausen, Dortmund, Wesel, Essen and Bochum have the largest numbers. In fact, practically the entire area of this industrial district is characterized by a higher percentage of Polish surnames (Fig. 2).

The most characteristic of all Polish surnames is “Kowalski”<sup>9</sup> and it is also common in this region. The communes where the number of inhabitants under this name is particularly large are the same ones where the percentage of Poles at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Tables 2 and 3) was the largest. The number of people named “Kowalski” is so high that it even matches some towns in Poland. In Castrop-Rauxel, a city with 76,900 inhabitants, there are about 60 people under this name, which equals 80 persons named “Kowalski” per 100,000 inhabitants (Table 3). In Suwałki, a Polish city with a similar number of inhabitants (69,600) there are 50 people named “Kowalski”, which translates into a slightly lower ratio (72 per 100,000). However, the northeast borderlands of Poland are not a representative area in this respect. For the entire country, this ratio is 359, and reaches “record” values in the Ciechanów district, where the frequency is 1,300, i.e. 1.3% of the inhabitants are named “Kowalski”. It can be assumed that in the case of surnames more geographically concentrated in Poland, and still commonplace in Germany (e.g. Lewandowski), the areas where the incidence of these surnames is smaller in Poland than in the Ruhr can be much larger.

<sup>8</sup> B. Czopek-Kopciuch, *Nazwiska polskie...*; K. Rymut, J. Hoffmann, *Lexikon der Familiennamen polnischer Herkunft im Ruhrgebiet*, (Kraków, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> There are more inhabitants under the name “Nowak”; however, it is also popular in other Slavic nations, in particular among Czechs.



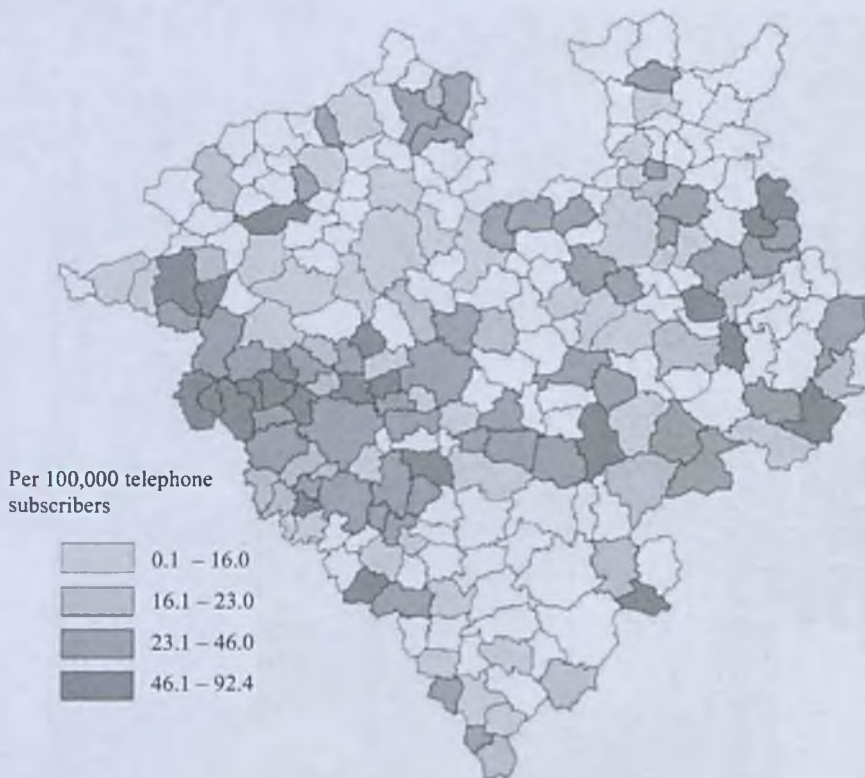
Table 3  
*Communes in Westphalia with the greatest number of telephone subscribers under  
the name "Kowalski"*

City (commune)	Number of telephone subscribers in 2005	Number of surnames per 100,000 telephone subscribers	Number of inhabitants in the city (commune) in 2007	Estimated number of inhabitants named "Kowalski"
Dortmund	76	36.9	586,909	217
Gelsenkirchen	54	60.9	264,765	161
Bochum	45	32.3	378,596	122
Hagen	31	42.6	193,748	83
Recklinghausen	24	55.4	120,536	67
Castrop-Rauxel	23	81.0	76,876	62
Bottrop	23	53.9	118,597	64
Herne	21	37.8	168,454	64
Hamm	21	33.6	183,065	62
Lünen	20	63.4	88,832	56

Source: [http://www.lwl.org/LWL/Kultur/komuna/online\\_projekte/familiennamengeografie](http://www.lwl.org/LWL/Kultur/komuna/online_projekte/familiennamengeografie). See also: R. Damme, *Familiengeografie im Internet am Beispiel des Internet-portals "Westfälische Familiengeografie"*. in: G. von Cornelissen, H. Eickmans (ed.), *Familiennamen an Niederrhein und Maas*, Bottrop 2010, p. 83-92.

Figure 2

*The number of persons named "Kowalski" among telephone subscribers in the Westphalia's communes (per 100,000 subscribers).*



Source: Source: [http://www.lwl.org/LWL/Kultur/komuna/online\\_projekte/familiennamengeografie](http://www.lwl.org/LWL/Kultur/komuna/online_projekte/familiennamengeografie).

Thanks to the presented maps, it is also possible to point out other areas where persons of Polish descent and with Polish surnames are found (Fig. 4). Many of them live in the large urban centres of northern Germany, primarily in Berlin, Hamburg, Hannover, and Bremen. Relative values, however, are not on a par with those observed in the Ruhr. In this respect, many smaller towns in North Germany are characterised by high figures. In order to illustrate this phenomenon, one can analyse the incidence of the surname "Kowalski". In Lower Saxony, districts such as Soltau-Fallingb., Peine, Wolfsburg, Vechta, Braunschweig and Helmstedt present a higher percentage of persons with this surname; in Mecklenburg – Schwerin, Parchim and Güstrow; in Vorpommern these are Rügen and Nordvorpommern, and in Brandenburg – Oberhavel, Prignitz, Potsdam and Frankfurt (Oder).



Figure 3

*The distribution of telephone subscribers named "Kowalski" before the resettlement of the German population, according to the Reichstelefonbuch 1942.*



Source: <http://www.gen-evolu.de>.

In the case of large and medium cities, the concentration of Polish surnames is undoubtedly a result of economic emigration dating back to the years of the industrial revolution at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, Polish surnames are borne by the descendants of old emigrants from Polish territories, which at the time were Prussian provinces. This process was to an extent supplemented by economic and political migrations (among others, the so called "late resettlers"), which took place after World War II. In the cases of a high frequency of persons with Polish surnames in the poorly urbanised areas of Northern Germany, it can be assumed that these were the results of compulsory resettlement during and immediately after the Second World War. The groups of people expelled from the territories lost to Poland – where surnames of Polish origin were frequent – were transferred primarily to the northern part of Germany<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 1). This is probably why this area now has a high percentage of inhabitants with family names such as Kowalski, Lewandowski, Kamiński, Zieliński, Jankowski, Grabowski and Piotrowski (Fig. 4).

<sup>10</sup> T. Kraus, E. Meynen, H. Mortensen, H. Schlenger, *Atlas Östliches Mitteleuropa* (Bielefeld-Berlin-Hannover, 1959).

Thanks to maps illustrating surname distribution one can also trace how the inhabitants of particular regions were dispersed. It is possible by analysing the incidence of surnames characteristic of a given area. Among others, this pertains to the name "Kaczmarek" typical to the region of Greater Poland (Wielkopolska). The scope of its expansion includes Brandenburg and Saxony in particular (Fig. 4).

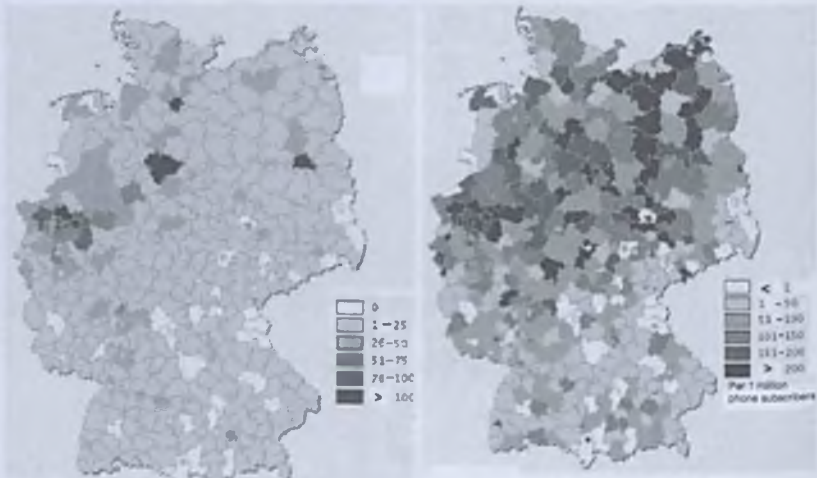
Figure 4

*The relative and absolute distribution of the selected, most common Polish surnames in Germany*

Kamiński

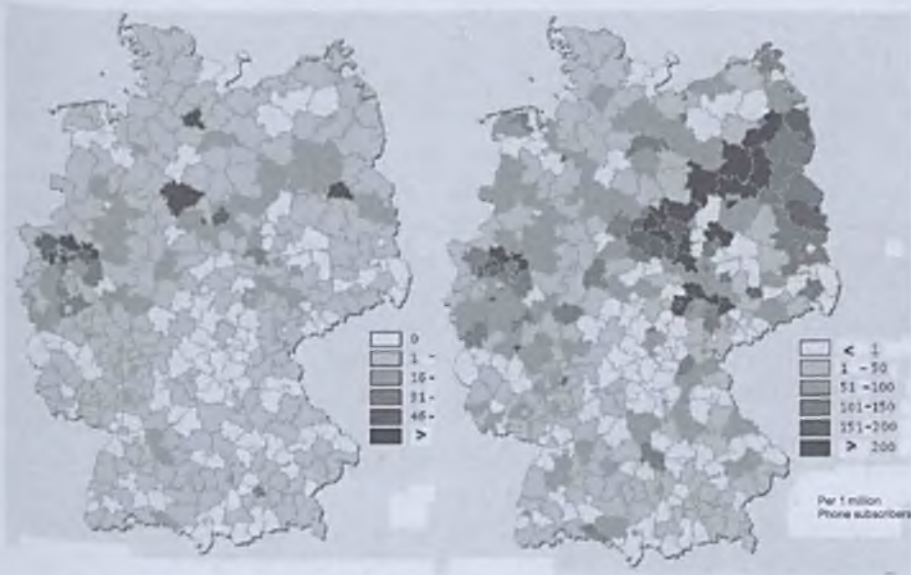
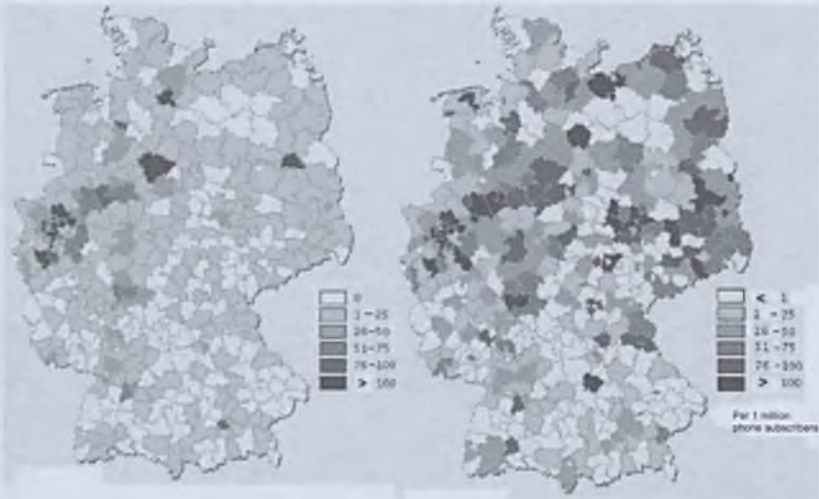


Kowalski





Szymański



Mazur



Source: www.verwandt.de.

A detailed comparison indicates that the hierarchy of the most common Polish surnames according to the frequency of their incidence is slightly different in Germany than that observed in Poland. In Poland these are: Nowak, Kowalski, Wiśniewski, Wójcik, Kowalczyk and Kamiński respectively. In Germany, on the other hand, the ordering is as follows: Nowak<sup>11</sup>, Kamiński, Kowalski, Grabowski, Dąbrowski, Jankowski. This fact illustrates the selectiveness of emigration, which pertained chiefly to the territories of the ethnic borderland, which from the point of view of onomastics was apparently not representative of the entire area of Poland. Considering only the 4% ratio calculated on the basis of the number of the most frequent Polish surnames (Table 5), one might conclude that the number of German inhabitants with Polish surnames is only about a third of what is suggested by e.g. Wikipedia or other German sources. It should be borne in mind, however, that in Germany the structure of surnames originating from the Polish language is exceptionally not representative of the structure of surnames in contemporary Poland. This can be observed when comparing statistics pertaining to the 20 most frequent surnames in Poland and those in Germany. Of the “top 20” most common Polish surnames in Germany, six achieved an incidence of over 5% with respect to their total number in Poland (Nowak, Grabowski, Kamiński, Kozłowski, Jankowski, Dąbrowski), while

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that many contemporary Germans named “Nowak” have their roots also in Czech territories (see also note 9).



in the case of "Wójcik" and "Kowalczyk" these ratios equalled only 0.7% and 1.5% respectively. However, none of the surnames exceeded the level of 10% (or, for that matter, the aforementioned 13%).

Still, the percentage of German inhabitants with Polish surnames is not necessarily restricted to 4% of the population. One can assume, that the structure of the surnames originating from Polish in Germany is characteristic of the former Polish-German borderlands, rather than the entire territory of Poland. Undoubtedly, certain surnames – absent from other regions of Poland – must be overrepresented there, whereas some of the most commonplace names in Poland (among others, the above-mentioned "top 20") are much less frequent.

Analysing the distribution of the Silesian surname "Kowol" can facilitate illustrating this phenomenon. In Poland, there are approximately 2,500 people with this surname; in Germany, in turn, about 1,300 citizens have surnames spelled "Kowol" or "Kowoll". Quite similar is the case of the name "Piechowski" concentrated in the region of Kashubia. There are 1,534 persons with this name in Poland and 426 in Germany. One can infer that the situation will be identical with respect to many other surnames present in area of the former Polish-German borderlands. These examples may indicate that there could be slightly more than just 4% of German inhabitants with surnames of Polish origin.

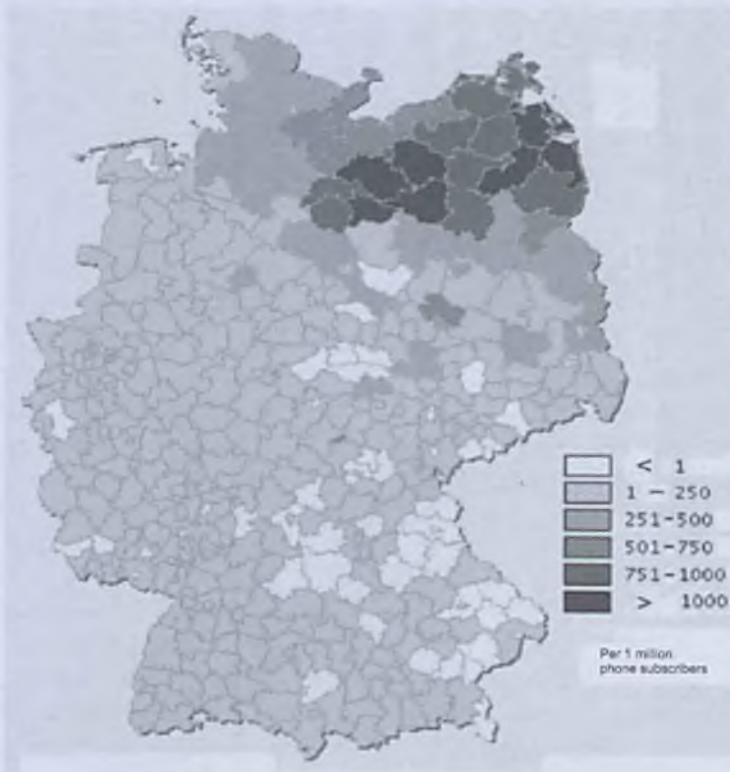
No doubt, the group of surnames present in the former Polish-German borderlands includes the following ones, which are widespread in Germany: Janke, Radtke, Reschke, Liedtke, Mielke, Paschke. According to E. Breza<sup>12</sup> (2000), they originate from diminutive forms such as: Janek, Radek, Lutek, Miłek, or Paszek, characteristic among others for the Polish Kashubia. They are also very commonplace in Mecklenburg, Brandenburg, and Saxony (in the region of Lusatia in particular), and even in the eastern part of the historic region of Holstein. This clearly demonstrates that the surnames are West Slavonic, rather than Polish. These were not only the names of Germanised Poles, but also – or maybe even above all – Pomeranians, Obotrites, Veleti, and Sorbs. Consequently, it would be difficult to classify such surnames as being strictly of Polish origin.

The examples presented above indicate that the problem of German surnames originating from Polish cannot be treated separately from the issue of surnames originating from West Slavonic. In some cases it is impossible to determine unequivocally whether they stem from Polish, Czech or Polabian territories. With these reservations in mind, however, it is possible to claim that 4% is the lowest possible estimate of the number of German inhabitants with surnames originating from Polish in the entire German population. Nonetheless, it does not seem plausible that this figure could reach 13%. Still, this percentage might refer to the number of persons in Germany who bear surnames not of Polish, but rather of Slavic origin.

<sup>12</sup> E. Breza, *Nazwiska Pomorzan: pochodzenie i zmiany* (Gdańsk, 2000).

Figure 5

*The distribution of the surname "Janke" in Germany indicates its origins in the northern part of the historic region of Polabia (among others: Mecklenburg, Wendland, Vorpommern, of the western part of Holstein).*



Source: [www.verwandt.de](http://www.verwandt.de).

An exact estimation of the number of people in Germany with surnames of Polish and Slavic origin does seem to be a feasible task. It would require access to a state register of the population of Germany as well as the participation of competent linguists. The obtained results, however, would not automatically translate into the number of persons of Polish or Slavic descent among the ancestors of contemporary Germans. It would also be necessary to include people whose forefathers changed their names to typically German ones, as well as those whose lineage originally had a German-sounding name from its very beginning. In such cases, due to the lack of materials documenting the majority of these phenomena, only rough estimates are possible. Consequently, the attained number of people with surnames of Polish and Slavic roots would, in this case constitute, the lowest possible estimate of the number of the ancestors of contemporary Germans who were Polish with Slavic descent.



Table 4

*A comparative characteristic of the 20 most frequent Polish surnames in Poland and Germany.*

Surname	Etymological category	Number of surnames		Number of surnames per 100,000 inhabitants		Ratio of the number of surnames in Germany to that in Poland (%)
		Poland	Germany	Poland	Germany	
Nowak*	general	19,008	37,730	522	46	8.8
Kowalski	cognominal (occupation)	136,937	10,313	359	13	3.5
Wiśniewski	cognominal (plant)	108,072	8,089	283	10	3.5
Wójcik	various (chiefly patronymic)	97,995	1,394	257	2	0.7
Kowalczyk	cognominal (occupation)	96,435	3,187	253	4	1.5
Kamiński	cognominal (nature)	92,831	12,602	243	15	6.3
Lewandowski	cognominal (plant)/ neophytic	90,935	5,636	238	7	2.9
Zieliński	cognominal (plant) / neophytic	89,118	6,666	234	8	3.5
Szymański	patronymic	87,570	7,225	230	9	3.8
Woźniak	cognominal (occupation)	87,155	2,322	229	3	1.2
Dąbrowski	cognominal (plant)	84,497	9,044	222	11	5.0
Kozłowski	cognominal (animal)	74,790	8,309	196	10	5.2
Jankowski	patronymic	67,243	7,467	176	9	5.2
Mazur	ethnic/cognominal (district)	66,034	4,517	173	6	3.2
Wojciechowski	patronymic	65,239	1,866	171	2	1.3
Kwiatkowski	cognominal (plant)	64,963	2,719	170	3	1.9
Krawczyk	cognominal (occupation)	62,832	2,834	165	3	2.1
Kaczmarek	toponymic	60,713	5,716	159	7	4.4
Piotrowski	patronymic	60,255	5,356	158	7	4.1
Grabowski	cognominal (plant)	57,426	9,702	151	12	7.9
Total	Total	1,750,048	12,694	4,589	186	4.1

\*a surname popular also in other Slavic countries, particularly in the Czech Republic and Slovenia (most frequent surname: see also notes 9 and 11). Interestingly, the geographic distribution of the name "Nowak" to a large extent also involves Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, i.e. regions (especially in the case of the former) closest to the Czech Republic in terms of physical distance.

Table 5

*The estimated number of inhabitants with Polish surnames in the German population.*

Number of persons with one of the 20 most frequent Polish surnames in Poland	1,750,048
Percentage of people with one of the "top 20" surnames to entire Polish population	4.59%
Number of persons with one of the 20 most frequent Polish surnames in Germany	15,694
Estimated number of people with Polish surnames in Germany, assuming 152,694 constitutes 4.59% of the population	3,328,642
Estimated percentage of people with surnames of Polish origin in the German population	4.06%

#### CONCLUSIONS

Surname distribution analysis is a valuable method of studying migrations, albeit one not without certain flaws. It produces rather detailed information on the direction of movements with respect to certain countries of nationality groups. However, it is not possible to assess the actual number of migrants or the magnitude of the influx with the use of this method, unless comparable data for various time periods are available. Moreover, the presence of a particular surname in a given area is conditioned not only by external migrations, but internal ones as well (secondary migrations).

In the case of Polish-German migrations, what has had a particularly significant impact on the current and past distribution of surnames was the complicated historical past, connected among others with the strong processes of Germanisation taking place in Polish territories. What is more, in many areas, the migration waves occurring at various points in time must have undoubtedly overlapped.

Solely on the basis of the presence of Polish surnames, without conducting more detailed research, it is difficult to determine where the immigrants with Polish names came from, and when their movements took place. Nonetheless, the presented method makes it possible to tentatively identify the distribution of minorities, and may supplement other, more accurate, sources – ones based on population registers in particular. A comparison of the data from both these sources may be of particular use in the historic studies of migrations that go beyond archive sources, or in the case of a lack of thereof.

The large number of Polish surnames among Germans, and similarly German surnames borne by Poles<sup>13</sup> also encourages more general reflections. It must be as-

<sup>13</sup> The surname *Müller* (*Miller, Miler, Mueller*) occurs in 15,000 people in Poland, and taking into consideration also the spelling *Meller* – 20,000 (calculations on the basis of the data from the website [www.moikrewni.pl](http://www.moikrewni.pl)). These persons inhabit areas where population registers indicate only isolated



sumed that many Germans had Polish ancestors, just like numerous Poles have German roots. The number of surnames in this situation serves as a general indicator, since on both sides of the border surnames were changed so as to blend in with the environment better. Surname distribution analysis, however, proves beyond any doubt that both nations – although belonging to different linguistic families and separated by historical antagonisms – are strongly intermingled.

One can only hope that with time surnames in public register systems will become more accessible for scientific purposes; currently, chiefly due to personal data privacy considerations, obtaining lists of surnames from smaller territorial units is not possible. Simultaneously, the development of information technologies such as GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and data mining techniques (statistical processing of large databases) creates enormous possibilities for using the above-mentioned sources of information for the purpose of research on migration, history and linguistics.

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cases of inhabitants with German nationality, which means that the majority of these people consider themselves to be Polish. Similar figures pertain to the number of people with the name *Schmidt* (*Szmit*, *Szmyd*).