

SEVERAL PAPERS ON SURNAMES-POLISH NAMES-JEWISH NAMES

Because the following several treatises were written by different persons, there is no assurance that there is agreement between the individual authors.

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Origins of Surnames

The first known people to acquire surnames were the Chinese. Legends suggest that the Emperor Fushi decreed the use of surnames, or family names, about 2852 B.C. The Chinese customarily have three names. The surname is placed first and comes from one of the 438 words in the sacred Chinese poem Po-Chia-Hsing. The family name is followed by a generation name, taken from a poem of 30 characters adopted by each family. The given name is then placed last. Although China has over one billion people, there are only approximately 1,000 surnames and only 60 of these are common.

In early times, the Romans had only one name. Later, they changed to using three names. The given name stood first and was called a "praenomen." This was followed by the "nomen," which designates the gens or clan. The last name designates the family and is known as the "cognomen." Some Romans added a fourth name, the "agnomen," to commemorate an illustrious action or remarkable event.

By the 12th century, the use of a second name had become widespread. However, even though this custom was the source of all surnames used today, the second names used in the early Middle Ages did not apply to families, nor were they hereditary.

The modern hereditary use of surnames is a practice that originated among the Venetian aristocracy in Italy about the 10th or 11th centuries. By the 1370's, the word "surname" was found in documents and had acquired some significance.²⁴ It is believed that by no later than about 1450, most people of any social rank had a fixed hereditary surname. This surname would identify the family, provide a link with the past and would preserve its identity in the future. Surnames were first used by the nobility and wealthy landowners and the practice trickled down to the merchants and commoner

Jewish Genealogy - Origin of Jewish Surnames in Poland

To see Polish characters; in Netscape go to "View", then choose encoding Central European Windows; in IE go to "view", then "Encoding", choose: Central European Windows

Last week I described the Origin of Surnames in Poland. Lets focus on Jewish names in Poland this week.

Most Poles had surnames by the 1700s, often 100 to 200 years earlier. On the other hand, most Jews living in the Commonwealth of Poland (which included modern-day Lithuania, western Ukraine, and Belarus) did not have surnames until required to do so by authorities in the 1800s. This means that Jewish surnames were given during a period for which many historical records still survive, so they can be traced back in history more easily. Also, their meaning may be understood better than the surnames that were established before the earliest surviving records.

In the old times, Jews in Poland were named after their fathers (this so-called "otczestwo," or "father's name" was also very important in Russia). For instance Abram, son of Berk was called "Berkowicz" or "Berkson"; the son of "Ezof" was called "Ezofowicz" and son of "Mortka-Mordechaj" was called "Mortkowicz." These fathers' names sometimes automatically were converted into last names. Thus David, son of Abram, was already called David Berkowicz etc.

In addition, Jews were also given German names (Fischel, Hirsch, Toeplitz), Polish names (Paluch, Maka-Maczak), or Hebrew names (Lewin, Tuwim). Typical Jewish names from the time of Polish partition include Goldberg, Silberstein, or Feldman. Jews who converted to Christianity were given surnames such as Nawrocki (from Polish "nawrócić" = "convert"), Dobrowolski (from Polish "Dobra wola" = "good will", meaning "converted from good (free) will), Lutosławski (from Polish "luty" = "February", meaning "converted in February), Kwietniewski (from Polish "kwiecień" = "April", meaning "converted in April"), Majewski (from Polish "maj" = "May", meaning "converted in May"), Grudziński (from Polish "grudzień" = "December", meaning "converted in December") or Zieliński (from Polish feast of "Panna Maria Zielna" or "Herbal Madonna", meaning "converted during the Feast of the Herbal Madonna or Pentecost").

Some Jewish names were also polonized. For instance, the last name "Kamiński" comes from the German ending "-stein" (Polish "kamień" = German "Stein" = Eng. "stone") and "Górski" comes from the German ending "-berg" (Polish "góra" = German "Berg" = Eng. "mountain").

Many of the above-mentioned surnames were very popular in Poland and the origin of some may not be Jewish. For instance, not all people with the surname "Zieliński" were of Jewish descent, some had their name derived from Polish feast of "Panna Maria Zielna."

Some Jewish names originate from the cities inhabited by Jews. For instance, the name of the famous Russian physicist of Jewish origin, Landau, comes from the small town Landau on the border between Germany and Switzerland. Other names that originate from cities include Morawski, from Morawy (Moravia); Warschauer, Warszawski or Warski (all three names are from Warszawa (Warsaw), the Polish capital; and Krakowski (from Krakow).

The best website devoted to Jewish genealogy is www.jewishgen.org. Read more articles devoted to Jewish culture and history in Poland among them articles about Auschwitz history.

written by Jagoda Urban-Klaehn, January 2001 (article #24)
Updated by Nancy Maciolek Blake, September 2005

Family name - Ashkenazi Jewish surnames

Until a few hundred years ago, Ashkenazim (Jews from Northern and Eastern [Europe](#)) followed no tradition of surnames, but used patronymics within the synagogue, and matronymics in other venues. For example, a boy named Joseph of a father named Isaac would be called to the Torah as Joseph ben Isaac. That same boy of a mother named Rachel would be known in business as Joseph ben Rachel. A male used the Hebrew word "ben" (son) and a female used "bat" (daughter).

When Northern [European countries](#) legislated that Jews required "proper" surnames, Jews were left with a number of options. Many Jews (particularly in Austria, Prussia and [Russia](#)) were forced to adopt Germanic names. In 1781, Emperor Joseph II of Austria announced an Edict of Toleration for the Jews, which established the requirement for hereditary family names. The Jews of [Galicia](#) did not adopt surnames until 1785. He issued a law in 1787 which assumed that all Jews were to adopt German names. The city mayors were to choose the name for every Jewish family. For names related to precious metals and flowers a fee was gathered, while free surnames were usually connected to animals and common metals.

Many took Yiddish names derived from occupation (e.g. Goldschmidt, 'Gold-smith'), from their father (e.g. Jacobson), or from location (e.g. Berliner, Warszawski or Pinsker). This makes Ashkenazi surnames similar to Scandinavian and especially Swedish ones.

Many Jews also took names of their Jewish lineage. A person of Priestly (Cohanite) decent could take the last name related to his lineage (e.g. Cohen - Hebrew/Yiddish or Colons - Spanish). If a Jew was a descendant of the Levites, then he could take a surname like Lavine or Levenson.

In Prussia, special military commissions were created to choose the names. It became common that the poorer Jews were forced to adopt derogatory, offensive or simply bizarre names. Among those created by Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann were:

- Ochschwanz - Oxtail
- Temperaturwechsel - Temperatureglitch
- Kanalgeruch - Sewerstink
- Singmirwas - Singmesomething

The Jews of [Poland](#) adopted names much earlier. Those who were adopted by a szlachta family usually changed the name to that of the family. Christened Jews usually adopted either a common Polish name or a name created after the month of their baptism (that's why many Frankists adopted the name Majewski - after the month of May in 1759).

Both the given names and surnames of Ashkenazim today may be completely European in origin, though many will also possess a traditional Hebrew name for use only in the synagogue.

Interesting History Of Jewish Surnames

Other than aristocrats and wealthy people, Jews did not get surnames in Eastern Europe until the Napoleonic years of the early 19th century.

Most of the Jews from countries captured by Napoleon, Russia, Poland, and Germany were ordered to get surnames for tax purposes.

After Napoleon's defeat, many Jews dropped these names and returned to "son of" names such as: MENDELSON, JACOBSON, LEVINSON, etc.

During the so-called Emancipation, Jews were once more ordered to take surnames. In Austria the Emperor Joseph made Jews take last names in the late 1700s, Poland in 1821 and Russia in 1844. It's probable that some of our families have had last names for 175 years or less.

In France and the Anglo Saxon countries surnames went back to the 16th century. Also, Sephardic Jews had surnames stretching back centuries.

Spain, prior to Ferdinand and Isabella, was a golden spot for Jews. They were expelled by Isabella in the same year that Columbus left for America.

The earliest American Jews were Sephardic.

In general, there were five types of names (people had to pay for their choice of names; the poor had assigned names):

1— Names that were descriptive of the head of household:

Examples:

HOCH (tall),
KLEIN (small),
COHEN (rabbi),
BURGER (village dweller), SHEIN (good looking),
LEVI (temple singer),
GROSS (large),
SCHWARTZ (dark or black),
WEISS (white),
KURTZ (short)

2 — Names describing occupations:

Examples:

HOLTZ (wood)
HOLTZKOCKER (wood chopper),
GELTSCHMIDT (goldsmith),
SCHNEIDER (tailor),
KREIGSMAN (warrior),
MALAMED (teacher)
EISEN (iron),
FISCHER (fish)

3– Names from city of residence:

Examples:

BERLIN,
FRANKFURTER,
DANZIGER,
OPPENHEIMER,
DEUTSCH (German)
POLLACK (Polish),
BRESLAU, MANNHEIM,
CRACOW,
WARSHAW

4 — Bought names:

Examples:

GLUCK (luck),
ROSEN (roses),

ROSENBLATT (rose paper or leaf),
ROSENBERG (rose mountain),
ROTHMAN (red man),
DIAMOND,
KOENIG (king),
KOENIGSBERG (king's mountain),
SPIELMAN (spiel is to play),

LIEBER (lover),
BERG (mountain),
WASSERMAN (water dweller),

KERSHENBLATT (church paper),

STEIN (glass).

5– Assigned names (usually undesirable):

Examples:

PLOTZ (to die),
KLUTZ (clumsy),

BILLIG (cheap)
DREK (shit)

Original Birth Names of Jewish Performers:

Eddie Cantor — Edward Israel Iskowitz

JEWISH SURNAMES and a few words about given names

Foreword

To begin, it is worthwhile to repeat the paragraph found in the "Questions-Answers" section of the present Website :

Many people ask whether such or such surname is Jewish or not. From a general point of view, this question has no answer since almost any same name can be shared by Jews and by non-Jews as well. Nevertheless, some surnames are often borne by Jews and rarely by others. The only serious method consists in building one's family tree until indisputable documents are found.

This paragraph calls for a few nuances and precisions. A few surnames can be considered as Jewish with a very high probability. They are essentially **COHEN** and **LEVY** and their variants.

It is well known that the Cohanim were the priests and that this function was transmitted through the males. Since the Hebrew language does not use vowels, each country, each region coined its own variant of this surname. In France, one can find COHEN, CAHEN, CAEN, CAIN, but also COHN, KOHN, KAHN, KANN, KAHANE. In Russia, since the H is pronounced G, one finds KAGAN (and of course the derivative KAGANOVITCH) hence KOGAN or COGAN. In some countries, such as Alsace, COHEN became KATZ, an acronym for Kohen tzedek, "priest of justice" .

LEVY or LEVI is known to be the servant of the priests, but this surname is not spread in all countries as much as for COHEN and there are countries (such as Tunisia) where this name is rare. In a recent paper in our Journal (Revue du CGJ, # 76, October 2003, p.8), the author shows that there exists a MICHEL-LEVY family, in a village of French Jura, which has been Roman catholic for many centuries. Its name probably originates from a nickname. This amusing exception should not hide the truth, LEVY is indeed a Jewish surname. In some German-speaking countries, it is sometimes written LOEWY or LÖWY, although one can wonder whether it is a variant of LOEWE (=Lion). Finally, one of the many hypotheses about the origin of the name WEIL is that it is an anagram of LEVI. Note that LEVI is sometimes replaced by SEGAL which is a shortened version of *segan levijeh* = prince of levites.

At the other end of the spectrum, one finds **surnames which are very common among non-Jews but nevertheless exist among Jews..** Examples are numerous:

- **in German-speaking countries**, many SCHWARZ, WEISS, GROSS, KLEIN, ROTH are found, equivalent to the French Lenoir, Leblanc, Legrand, Lepetit or Leroux (meaning black, white, tall, short or red-haired respectively). A small proportion of these surnames are those of Jews. But since Jews emigrate more often, the probability that these surnames are carried by Jews in France (or other countries) is much larger..

- **in Spain and Portugal**, names such as RODRIGUEZ (Spain) or RODRIGUES (Portugal) or LOPEZ and LOPES are extremely common. When in the XVth century, the Jews of those countries had to choose between emigration and baptism, those who decided to convert took Spanish or Portuguese surnames, maybe even those of their godfather. Those who emigrated to countries where they could practice their religion, sometimes after decades of Crypto-judaism (**Marranism**), often kept their Spanish or Portuguese names.

- **in North Africa**, many Jews have Arabic or Berber surnames. Concerning the Berber ones, it is not easy to decide whether we are dealing with Berber tribes which were converted to Judaism at least 15 centuries ago or if Jews settling in a Berber region have taken local names, sometimes by translating their Hebrew name. Concerning Arabic names, it is clear that Jewish names have been arabicized. For instance, Jews as well as Moslems are called AMAR, CHEMLA or KALIFA.

- **in France**, we know people called DREYFUS who changed their names to DUMAS or DUPUIS, to avoid negative attitudes attached to the name Dreyfus. Nevertheless, a vast majority of all DUMAS or DUPUIS are non-Jews. Other common names such as LAMBERT, PICARD or BERNARD are also carried by Jews. LAMBERT appeared in Metz in the XVIIIth century. PICARD is a francization of BICKERT and, in the present case, has nothing to do with Picardy. As for BERNARD, it is a francification of BERR or BAER, but we come back to this later.

- Let us also mention the MILLER in the USA, Polish surnames such as MALY (small), KRAKOWSKI (from Krakow), names carried by nazis such as ROSENBERG etc...All these names are found among Jews but are much more common among non-Jews.

Let us now consider names which are more specifically Jewish

Patronymic Names

For a very long time, the Jews, with the exception of Cohen and Levy, did not have any family name and were **referred to by their father's given name** and sometimes also by their grandfather's such as Moses son of Abraham son of Moses.

By the way, [click here](#) to read a table of equivalences for Jewish given names, composed by Peter STEIN, and [here](#) for comments on this table.

When they were forced to choose a family name, as was the case in **the French Empire** in 1808, they often adopted their father's given name or sometimes their grandfather's. Hence the very numerous MOYSE, SALOMON, MAYER, LION, GOUDCHAUX, NATHAN....

Such given names becoming surnames are also found all over Europe, e.g. DAVID, MENDEL, JACOB,.....

In some **North African** surnames such as BENSOUSSAN or BOUANICH, it is easy to recognize the old way of naming people since Ben or Bou mean "son of". Many other given names became surnames, such as SAADA or MALEK.

In **Slavic countries**, filiation is denoted by the suffix Vich or Vicz. Therefore one finds many ABRAMOVICH or ABRAMOVICZ with dozens of spelling variants. In the same way SCHMULEWITZ has a great number of variants. In Romania, these family names end in Vici as in ABRAMOVICI and in Lithuania they end in Vicius as in ABRAMOVICIUS.

In **German-speaking countries**, the same process gives MENDELSSOHN (=son of Mendel) or JACOB SOHN. But it should not be forgotten that in Protestant countries (Germany, Great-Britain, USA...), biblical given names have been very popular. Therefore JACOB or JACOBSON and similar surnames can quite well be born by Protestants.

Geographic names

In all countries, people of any religion have been referred to by the name of the country, the province, the city, the village or the hamlet they come from.

Jews were often led to emigrate, either because they were persecuted or for economic reasons. Consequently, they often bear geographic names. But before stating that such a name is a Jewish name, one should be cautious. For instance, while the Czech politician Artur LONDON did come from a Jewish family, the American writer Jack LONDON did not, as far as we know. Similarly, many Germans, whose ancestors came from Hamburg, are called HAMBURGER, but sadly, few of them today are Jewish.

- **in Lorraine and Alsace**, many names are found corresponding to Jewish communities of western Germany: COBLENCE, WORMS, SPIRE, FOULD and FULDA (from Fulda), OULMAN and ULLMO (from Ulm), .BING (from Bingen), BRISAC (from Breisach) and many more. But one also finds names of villages close to Metz, such as ENNERY or DENNERY, SILNY (from Sillegny), MORHANGE, CREHANGE. More exotic names include POLAC (=Polish) and REICHER (German name of Rzeszow). Even more interesting are the surnames BLOCH and WALLICH, both distortions of Welsch, a German adjective denoting people and countries using a romance language i.e. France and Italy. They are likely to descend from Jewish families expelled from France in the XIIIth or XIVth century and later returned.

More information about these names from Lorraine can be found in Pierre-André MEYER's , "*La communauté juive de Metz au XVIII^e siècle*", Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1993.

- **In the Papal States**, one finds names such as CAVAILLON, BEUCAIRE, CARCASSONNE, BEDARRIDES, DIGNE, DELPUGET (from Puget), LUNEL, MILLAU and many others. They are likely Jews expelled from France in the Middle Ages or from Provence when it was united with France. The Papal States became a tolerable shelter for them.

We are left with an enigma, the name CREMIEUX. No known document mentions something like "Moïse from Crémieux" which would denote that he comes from the village of Crémieu (Isère). Therefore some people prefer to give an Hebraic origin ("the gardener, the man in charge of trees")

- **In Sephardic names coming from Spain or Portugal**, it is possible to check that quite a number of them are the names of Spanish (FONSECA, ALMEIDA, MOLINA..) or Portuguese (PEREIRA, LAMEIRA...) cities.

- **In North Africa**, one can also find a number of geographical surnames such as COHEN-TANNOUDI (probably from Tangiers), DARMON (an Algerian place), LEVI-VALENSI (from Valencia in Spain), FASSINA (from Fez), BENSOUSSAN (from Sousse in Tunisia)...

False explanations. Excepting CREMIEUX, which is still enigmatic, let us signal a few erroneous geographical origins of surnames.. PICARD has nothing to do with Picardy, but comes from BICKERT or BICKHARDT. LYON is not related to the French city of Lyons, but to the Lion of Juda (see below). Finally the family name CAEN does not come from Normandy, since it is one of the spelling variants of CAHEN. As for DREYFUS, its origin is still controversial. According to a recent paper by Denis Ingold (*Revue du CGJ #88, 2006, pages 4-6*), the name DREYFUS as well as the name TREVES would derive from the French city of Troyes.

About Kinnui

We shall now say a few words about kinnuim (plural of kinnui), a very interesting Jewish peculiarity.

The names of Jacob's twelve sons are often used as Jewish given names. It is for instance the case of Juda (=Yehuda), Nephtali, Issachar, and Benjamin. Now, in the Bible (*Genesis 49*), **Juda** is compared to a **lion**. For this reason, the given name Lion is very often used as an equivalent of Juda, it is called a **kinnui** of Juda. In written documents, the same man can sign indiscriminately Juda or Lion. Eventually, as said previously, these given names become family names LION ou LYON in France, LOEWE in Germany and possibly GARION / GOURION in North Africa.

In the same way, **Nephtali** was compared to a **doe** in the Bible. Thereafter, Cerf in French, Hirsch in German, Zvi in Hebrew are kinnuim of Nephtali and later appear as family names CERF, HIRSCH, HERSCH, HERSCHEL. Let us nevertheless note that the famous astronomers and musicians HERSCHEL were not Jews, unless we are wrong. The name ZIBI in North Africa might also be a kinnui.

As **Issachar** was compared to a **donkey**, one would expect to find Donkey as a kinnui of Issachar. But the donkey, not being very highly thought of, has been replaced by a **bear**, Dov in Hebrew, Bär or Baer in German. The corresponding family names are BAER, BER, BERR, BEHR and also BERNHARDT, frenchified into BERNARD. It is well known that the famous actress Sarah BERNHARDT was from a Jewish family.

Finally **Benjamin** has the **wolf** as kinnui. In France, the corresponding word **loup** was sometimes modified in Louis, maybe as an homage to our kings and Jewish families bear the names LOUIS or LOUY. In Germany the given name Wolf and the surnames WOLF or WOLFF are quite common among Jews.

Once more, let us insist on the fact that many of the above-mentioned names, e.g. BERNARD or WOLFF are also found in non-Jewish families.

These four kinnuim are not the only ones. There are numerous instances of equivalencies between a biblical given name and a secular one, quite often by a more or less accurate translation. We can quote **Eliakim** (God strengthens) translated in German by Gottschalk hence the French surnames GOUDCHAUX, GODECHAUX and in Alsace GOETSCHEL. In the same way, **Yekoutiel** is transposed into Kosman and eventually in the surnames KAUFFMANN and in French MARCHAND. **Menahem** (comforter) gave the German MENDEL and the French MANUEL.

James B. Koenig has written an interesting paper on calques, kinnuim, and couplets that he allowed us to reproduce [\(click here\)](#)

On a similar subject our member Peter Stein has provided us with a table of equivalence of [Jewish given names](#) accompanied by a page of [comments](#).

Professional names

There are relatively few specifically Jewish trade names which became surnames in Ashkenazi circles. At Metz, we find HALPHEN (from the Hebrew *Chalfon*, money-changer) and BASSE, name of cantors. As can be expected, there are many GOLDSCHMIDT (= goldsmith) and some SILBERSCHMIDT (=silversmith), as they are rather common Jewish

crafts. There are a lot of SCHMITT (=smith) but they are a small minority among a great number of Christians bearing this name.

The problem is the same with BAUER (=peasant), a surprising surname for Jews since agriculture has very often been forbidden to them. There were quite a number of Jewish tailors hence the name SCHNEIDER. There are also some FISCHER or FISHER, some KRAEMER and KREMER (=grocer) and many others. But these trades are not specifically Jewish, so these surnames are not either.

In North Africa, names of trades or crafts are also found, but most are not specifically Jewish, e.g. BRAMLI (cooper), ATTAL (porter), ASSAYAG (jeweller), HADDAD (smith), KEMOUN (cumin, hence grocer)....

Surnames Arbitrarily Given

In some countries, such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jews were forced to take surnames with a German appearance, and they usually could not choose them. These arbitrary family names have no relationship whatsoever with either the trade or craft, nor the physical description, nor the geographic origin of the person so named. We have already quoted SCHWARZ, WEISS, GROSS, KLEIN, and ROTH. But there are also a long series of names formed with two German roots such as MORGENSTERN, MORGENSTEIN, APFELBAUM, BIRNBAUM, ROSENBERG, ROSENBLUM, ROSENBAUM, WEINBAUM, WEINBERG..... Note that the spelling of these names varies considerably, especially when they transited through Poland or Russia.

Bibliography

For a more extensive study of the Jewish onomastics, here are a few suggestions.

For Ashkenazi names, one can consult several works of Alexandre BEIDER on Jewish names in Poland and Russia (check on the catalog of our library with the author Beider). Pierre-André MEYER's book mentioned earlier gives many details on the names at Metz.

For North African names, it is very beneficial to read Maurice EISENBETH's and Jacques TAÏEB's books published by the CGJ (see section Publications) as well as *La saga des familles, les juifs du Maroc et leurs noms*, by Joseph TOLEDANO.

On the Web, it is possible to search the origin of a name in the database of [Beth Hatefutsoh](#), for a fee. It is easy to find all the variants of a Jewish name (mainly Ashkenazi) and the corresponding references on [the CJSI of Avotaynu](#). As for the Sephardic names, in a larger sense of the term, i.e. for North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, the Website of [Fondation Sepharade](#) yields quite a choice of lists. On [sephardim.com](#), you can find a number of Sephardic names and the corresponding references. In JewishGen, [Jeff Malka](#) has also produced his own list of Sephardic names.

The So-called "Dutch Populace" in Greater Poland

by Zdzisław Pentek- from GENS Towarzystwo Genealogiczno - Heraldyczne, Poznań

For centuries the inhabitants of the Netherlands have been famed for a skill unknown to other nations, namely that of draining and reclaiming submerged land. When the wave of reform movements in the Catholic church began to sweep across Europe in the 16th century, many, among them the self-declared Mennonites¹, had to leave their native soil and emigrate to neighboring or even far-off countries to seek refuge. The first Dutch began to pour into Polish territory circa 1526-27, as they have been located in the vicinity of Paslek in Eastern Prussia in 1527². It appears that this was a populace of wholly Dutch origin. From that time also dates the beginning of a massive exodus of people - described in the Republic of those days as *olederski* [Dutch, "Hollander"] - from the Netherlands and northern Germany. The colonization advanced in a southerly direction, along the line of the Vistula, and thus reached Saska Kępa in 1624. At the end of the 17th century the Dutch began to appear in the territory of Greater Poland [Wielkopolska]. The Dutch population settled on land on the basis of laws like that of Chelmno; they received about 1.0 - 0.5 *lan* [*Trans. note* - A *lan* was a unit of land, but its value varied; the most common *lan*, the Franconian, measured 23-27 hectares, and presumably that's the size meant here], and the lease contract covered a period of 30-60 years, of which the first seven years were a "free period" (*wolnizna*). They were valued newcomers because of their high technical skills, among which their cattle-breeding was particularly advanced. Initially for religious reasons they formed a closed group, renouncing the use of force, guiding themselves by the principles of labor and duty' refusing to serve in the military. They were free peasants and in addition became the wealthiest group inhabiting the settlement³.

The Dutch began moving into the western part of Poland after the Swedish invasion, and the new waves that poured in ended up there almost exclusively. There ensued a steady mixing of the populace's ethnic composition. At the beginning the majority were unquestionably authentic Dutchmen, but then Germans from the area bordering Holland took their place, then also from northern Germany. A separate question is the immigration of people from the Silesia region, from southeastern Germany. Research shows that around 40% of the total composition of the populace described as "Dutch" at the beginning of the 18th century were Poles. One can ask whether these were exclusively Poles who in some way found themselves within the framework of Dutch laws or whether the blending of the real Dutch populace with the local population had reached such an extent that they began not only to speak in Polish but also to consider themselves as coming from Polish lands. By the 18th century the Dutch populace was already exclusively Germans from the interior of Germany or from Silesia or Pomerania. In concrete source entries - mainly parish records - the clergy making entries described them as *oledry*, *olendrzy*, *Hollander*, *Haulander*, or *inquilinus*⁴. The expert on Dutch matters, Władysław Rusiński, explains this partially by the fact that their services were used for clearing land, and in German *hauen* means "to cut down, mow." He explains the word *inquilinus* [tenant] could signify a person of foreign origin, but the meaning of the word is broader and could well be used for someone local. Often alongside these entries was given an additional notation that this person is a colonist or *oleder*. With the help of source information we have learned that usually in the first generation, and often in subsequent ones, they married from within their own distinct ethnic group. It is often

difficult to arrive at a correct spelling of their surnames. Alteration or distortion of the originally given name is no rarity. Ignorance of recent local residents is also indicated by the fact that the surnames or first names of ancestors, witnesses, and other persons are unknown. Slow assimilation, which seems to have proceeded fairly peacefully, favored the adoption of the local language, and later the formation in the group of a complete village, and its inclusion in the life of the settlement.

At the end of the 18th century in Greater Poland there were about 28,000 "Hollanders" living, of whom we do not know the actual number of authentic Dutchmen, for the new colonists who settled in the village, who worked at the same labor as the former Dutchmen and now were also building windmills, reclaiming fields, and changing the courses of streams and other waterways, were immediately associated with the Dutch. The largest concentrations of "Hollanders" in Greater Poland were regions along rivers, the vicinities of lakes, and swamps. Near the Warta their settlements were spread across the whole territory of the Greater Poland province of the time. They settled also between Wolsztyn and Nowy Tomysl and occupied many of the smaller settlements, even those scattered far apart. Between some of them there was really no migratory movement, even though they enjoyed personal freedom. At the end of the 18th century there is a perceptible decline in the maintenance of the groups' independence. The newcomers become Catholics, as opposed to earlier times when they were Lutherans or in general dissenters. First names, originally clearly of non-Polish origin, now become typical of this country. One or two generations, more or less, were enough for the populace that had migrated to this land in the 18th century to be totally blended with the local populace and to lose wholly, by the third generation, all the traditions and customs they had brought with them. It is impossible to forget the historical events in Poland at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century when, under the influence of a number of migratory movements, people deeply conscious of ethnic separateness emigrated farther to the east of Poland, and later to Russia and Siberia. These conclusions are based in large part on the study of materials dealing with my own family, described in precisely these terms in the parish records of the village of Zabno. This family, which came to that village in the second half of the 18th century from lands that were certainly in Germany, found support from the landowner Jakub Bilinski, at the time the owner of a series of neighboring districts, a representative of Greater Poland's nobility. Unfortunately the contractual document between seven families brought there and Jakub Bilinski has not survived. It was drawn up in 1778⁵. Around that year notes begin to appear more and more often in the parish documents about new people in Zabno. The family spread to the neighboring villages but remained within the limits of that same parish of Zabno. Even before 1850 there is evidence of a local element's joining in its composition, and not just of that family that had arrived 70 years before. At first they worked in those special occupations that had been reserved for them for since ancient times, then later they became peasants working for hire. It's another matter that in 1823 Prussian law eliminated all differences between the "Hollanders" and the local populace. Also evident is a clear decline in their cultural separateness.

In summary, the relationships of the "Hollander" populace in Greater Poland led to the result that over a very short period of time a known quantity of them underwent complete assimilation with the local populace. At the moment they ceased everyday usage of their own language in favor of the local language and customs they relinquished all their own attributes of independence. This process occurred more quickly than usual because the whole group did not possess the skill of writing, did not have contact with other persons of their own former cultural circle, and, numbering as they did an enclave of a few

families, they turned out to be too weak to withstand the test of time. After all, it is not very probable that they ever intended to return to their former homeland.

Footnotes

¹ The "Mennonites" are an offshoot of the Anabaptist sect, considered heretical by the Catholic church. They were founded by Menno Simons (1496-1559), and originated in Frisia. They recognize two sacraments, adult baptism and the eucharist.

² I excerpted information on the first appearance of a Dutch populace in Polish territory from Marcin Kamler's article "Oledry" in *Encyklopedia historii gospodarczej Polski do 1945 roku [An Encyclopedia of Poland's Economic History up to 1945]*, Warsaw, 1981, vol. II, pp. 14-15. Compare W. Rusinski's *Osady tzw. "oledrow w dawnym woj. poznańskim [Settlements of the so-called Hollanders in ancient Poznan province]*, Poznan; 1939, Krakow 1947.)

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, and also *Liber baptisatorum parafii Zabno, Liber copulatorum parafii Zabno, Liber mortuorum parafii Zabno [Zabno parish book of baptisms/marriages/deaths]* in the Archdiocesan Archives in Poznan; Zabno parish microfilm no. 627 and 628.

⁵ Z. Cieplucha, *Z przeszłości ziemi kosciańskiej [From the past of Koscian district]*, Koscian 1930, after *Tabela Ogólna Ludności Pow. Kosciańskiego z Tabel szczegółowych przez Kommissye Powiatowa [General List of the Populace of Koscian County, from the detailed Tables by the County Commission]* compiled in 1789 (from the Archiwum Główny Akt Dawnych in Warsaw, syg. 163, nr. 5A).