



Polish Street Namesakes. General Characteristics and Preliminary Outline for Analysing Urban Space Names*

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ABSTRACT: The article addresses the issue of commemorative street names as carriers of memory and signs of national identity. The overall collection of Polish streets, gathered in the TERYT database of the Central Statistical Office, is taken into consideration. The specificity of commemorative names and the essence of commemoration as a social phenomenon

are discussed. The article presents a list of the 100 most common street namesakes in Poland, along with their most general characteristics (typology of namesakes) linked to numerical data. The final section sketchily outlines the research potential based on such a database, focused on unveiling significant aspects of Polish culture and value patterns.

KEYWORDS: street names, commemoration, onomastic discourse analysis, values, Polish identity.

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1. Commemorative names as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon

Even in the most general classification of the street naming system, it is possible to distinguish names with a real motivational connection to the object and names without such a connection, where motivation is more subjective and arbitrary [cf. e.g. Handke 2010: 358; Kosyl 2001]. Among the latter ones, the most productive group of commemorative names currently stands out,¹ with the primary symbolic function (beyond naming, identifying and distinguishing) being related to the desire to commemorate a person/event/date. Commemoration of this kind is an extremely important symbolic activity with momentous social effects for the whole community. It is conceptualised as “a cultural form of making past events or persons present in order to be honoured by a specific social group, which thus affirms its own identity” [Saryusz-Wolska, Traba, ed. 2014: 509]. In street nomenclature, a specific type is implemented—intentional and selective commemoration, in which “with full awareness, there is no attempt to save the entirety of the past from oblivion, but rather only its few deliberately chosen instances, considered particularly valuable for some reason” [Szpociński 2018: 20]. These “selected instances” of the past are precisely the namesake patrons, serving as the subjects of commemorations.

In modern societies, not only in Poland, the custom of commemorative naming is one of the most important ways of honouring² particularly deserving members of these societies. Naming in honour of a person is even interpreted as an “act of civic canonisation” [cf. Redwood, Alderman, Azaryahu 2017: 10]. The community thus indicates personal models of attitudes, behaviours and, through them, an arrangement of values that are important for the persistence of the community.

However, in the interpretation proposed here another aspect of naming commemorations comes to the forefront. It is related to the perpetuation of the memory of a person/event. The “memoryological” feature becomes important here—the street name perpetuates a character or event in the social

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- 1 I use the term *commemorative names* here, abandoning the widely used but criticised term *memorial names* in recent years [Myszka 2018]. The use of this term is primarily justified by the nature of the names, as in the names under discussion, the primary purpose is commemoration, often involving a patron not directly connected to the denotation (the street as a place). Only a few units with a clear denotative motivation have a memorial character. The term *commemorative names* aligns with the concept used in English literature as well. For further details on this topic, refer to Myszka 2018; Bieńkowska, Umińska-Tytoń 2012.
 - 2 It is this very aspect that is sometimes seen as foregrounded, which is reflected, for example, in the proposal to use the term *honourific names* for street names commemorating individuals [Myszka 2018].

consciousness, and thus functions as a carrier of memory.³ Such a methodological orientation is part of a very popular trend in recent years in humanistic and social research related to collective, social or cultural memory. For at least 30 years, the concept of collective memory has been one of the most widely supported and research-explored phenomena in contemporary humanities, so much so that it has been indicated as one of the turning points in the social-humanities—cf. the concepts of *mnemonic turn*, *memory turn* or *memory boom* [Klein 2003, Whitehead 2009, Bachmann-Medick 2012]. The predictions of some researchers even go in the direction of postulating a new scientific paradigm in the field of cultural cognition, which will shed new light on art, literature, politics, society, religions, and law as a whole [Assmann 2008: 27]. In a somewhat more conservative tone, the contemporary trend in memory studies is seen as a bloom of specific “memoryological” variations of previous turns and paradigms—in this view, memory is just another dimension of the linguistic, pictorial, spatial, performative, postcolonial, and other turns [Saryusz-Wolska 2011: 67].

The paradigm clearly leaves its mark on linguistic research as well. Language is treated as a specific, particular carrier of memory, as well as the substrate for conveying cultural knowledge in general. Without it, the execution of any (beyond iconic exceptions) mnemonic functions in the social or communal dimension would not be possible. Linguistic research on social memory takes various forms, and its scale and developmental perspectives even justify formulating the postulate of linguistics of memory as a specialised stream of linguistic research [Chlebda 2012, Czachur 2018]. Attempts to interpret street names also align with this trend—as linguistic signs and simultaneously carriers of memory, they effectively combine the essential characteristics of both phenomena, namely language and memory. They also possess two additional values that make them very specific constructs of social communication: the value of spatial signs, structuring the city’s space, and the value of official names. These two aspects will constitute the fundamental focus of analyses conducted in line with the general assumptions of onomastic discourse analysis (OAD) [cf. Rutkowski, Skowronek 2020].

The analysis aimed at reconstructing the discourse through the constituent elements in the form of street names is based on assumptions, related to their administrative, spatial, social and communicative functioning. These assumptions can be reduced here, in a very generalised and synthetic form, to several theses. Firstly, persons, dates or events that are commemorated in the naming

3 The concept of a *memory carrier* is understood here in the sense given by Macin Kula [2002], according to which it can be anything that has the capacity to evoke thoughts about the past.

of streets can be treated as an emanation of the Polish cultural code, because they symbolise points of reference that are important for the overall national identity. The possibility of drawing conclusions about the cultural structure or national identity is based on this. It is therefore possible to infer the structure of “Polish identity” as a set of values and attitudes, representative of the Polish community or at least honoured by it.⁴ Secondly, street names “fit in” with the urban space. They form an important element of the “informational garment of the city” [Jałowiecki, Łukowski, ed. 2008], without which it would be impossible to move efficiently on the meta- (or rather: symbolic level, in texts or acts of communication in general). This makes street names “signs of action”, incorporated into the habitus (in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms), which in turn allows consideration of their nature to be taken to the next level: social practices. This level makes visible—thirdly—the particular mode of social “remembering”, which is no longer based so much on strictly mental activities, but also, or even primarily, on kinaesthetic actions (on acting in physical space).

In this article, the above-mentioned assumptions will form the conceptual and methodological framework conditioning the analyses of street naming as memory carriers. The next section will present a general overview of the set of Polish street namesakes (key figures, numbers, and conceptual categories). The subsequent section will outline the possibilities of analysing this material in the spirit of OAD.

2. Namesakes of Polish streets. Basic overview

The material basis for the presented data here is derived from the TERYT register, which serves as the formal register of official territorial data in Poland. It

4 This assumption is not disturbed by the administrative, and therefore formal nature of the naming process—one could say that it even strengthens it. In Poland, street names are assigned in the form of resolutions adopted by municipal councils, so in this case the social community acts through its representatives, who are members of these councils and officials. Behind specific resolutions on the commemoration of street namesakes, there are always some social needs and ideologies—according to discourse concepts, these can be (and most often are) hidden and unconscious [Faiclough 2010: 56–69]. These forces also operate at other levels of the social functioning of names [Rutkowski, Skowronek 2020: 15–16], but their official constitution further sanctions the desired distribution of ideologies, because it is done by the hands of elected representatives (also elected “for some reason”). The administrative formation of nomenclature of a certain kind is thus a very powerful manifestation of the formation of the axiological sphere and thus a tool of symbolic power. These functions become particularly evident at the moment of change—in Poland, such systemic changes in naming accompanied changes in the political system in 1945, then 1989, and partly also in 2016 as a result of the enactment of the so-called Decommunisation Act.

is managed and made available by the Central Statistical Office on the website the teryt.gov.stat.pl. Part of this register is the Central Street Catalogue, containing a list of all street names in Poland arranged in alphabetical order.⁵ The database contains 287,072 street names, of which 68,522 are commemorative. The names considered commemorative are those which refer directly to a person, date, event name, or institution. In some cases, the scope of commemorations was arbitrarily limited, e.g. street names (names of cities or countries) were excluded, except for those that metonymically commemorate an event related to that place (e.g. *Grunwaldzka* street, which commemorates not so much Grunwald as a place but the Battle of Grunwald, similarly *Westerplatte*). In the collection processed in this way, 15,485 individual “namesakes” were identified, i.e. individual persons, events or dates referred to by name. It follows that out of the entire set of all street names in Poland, 23.87% are commemorative names.⁶

The average number of commemorations for each namesake is 4.42, with the actual “productivity” of individual namesakes varying greatly. The vast majority of them, as many as 11,881, have been commemorated only once, a further 1603—twice, another 570—three times, 268—four times, and 1163—five times or more. The most frequently commemorated street namesake in Poland (Tadeusz Kościuszko) has received as many as 1159 commemorations. 102 namesakes have been commemorated in street names at least 110 times; their list (along with an indication of the number of commemorations and the percentage share in the entire set of commemorative names) is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Ranking list of the 100 most common street namesakes

Ranking	Street names	N	%
1	Tadeusza Kościuszki	1159	1.69
2	Adama Mickiewicza	1142	1.67
3	Jana Pawła II	994	1.45
4	Henryka Sienkiewicza	882	1.29

5 The TERYT_ULIC database is updated daily, this article uses the status as of 17 May 2022.

6 This percentage result largely corresponds with the findings of onomastic researchers who study urbanonyms in various Polish cities. They report figures of 25% for Warsaw [Handke 2011: 56], up to 38% for Rzeszów [Myszka 2016: 125]. However, it is important to remember the differences in interpretation, which are also related to the terminology used (*memorial* names not always being the same as *commemorative* names).

Table 1. Ranking list of the 100 most common street namesakes—continued

Ranking	Street names	N	%
5	Juliusza Słowackiego	833	1.22
6	Marii Konopnickiej	778	1.14
7	Mikołaja Kopernika	672	0.98
8	Stefana Żeromskiego	604	0.88
9	Józefa Piłsudskiego	586	0.86
10	Fryderyka Chopina	567	0.83
11	Bolesława Prusa	550	0.80
12	1 Maja	542	0.79
13	3 Maja	533	0.78
14	Władysława Sikorskiego	517	0.75
15	Władysława Reymonta	512	0.75
16	Armii Krajowej	506	0.74
17	Jana Kochanowskiego	503	0.73
18	Wincentego Witosa	475	0.69
19	Mikołaja Reja	467	0.68
20	Jana Kilińskiego	427	0.62
21	Bolesława Chrobrego	425	0.62
22	Elizy Orzeszkowej	423	0.62
23	Stefana Wyszyńskiego	420	0.61
24	Stanisława Moniuszki	411	0.60
25	Jana III Sobieskiego	399	0.58
26	Stanisława Staszica	379	0.55
27	Jana Matejki	365	0.53
28	Ignacego Paderewskiego	360	0.53
29	Cypriana Kamila Norwida	350	0.51
30	Grunwaldzka	349	0.51
31	Juliana Tuwima	339	0.49
32	Adama Asnyka	334	0.49

Table 1. Ranking list of the 100 most common street namesakes—continued

Ranking	Street names	N	%
33	Stanisława Wyspiańskiego	332	0.48
34	Królowej Jadwigi	320	0.47
35	11 Listopada	312	0.46
36	Józefa Bema	309	0.45
37	Władysława Broniewskiego	305	0.45
38	Marii Skłodowskiej-Curie	294	0.43
39	Kazimierza Wielkiego	284	0.41
39	Romualda Traugutta	284	0.41
41	Mieszka I	277	0.40
42	Stefana Batorego	271	0.40
43	Władysława Jagiełły	263	0.38
44	Powstańców Wielkopolskich	256	0.37
45	Władysława Łokietka	253	0.37
46	Ignacego Krasickiego	245	0.36
47	Janusza Korczaka	231	0.34
48	Żwirki i Wigury	229	0.33
49	Kazimierza Pułaskiego	227	0.33
50	Jana Henryka Dąbrowskiego	224	0.33
51	Hugo Kołłątaja	222	0.32
52	Józefa Ignacego Kraszewskiego	219	0.32
53	Bartosza Wojciecha Głowackiego	217	0.32
54	Gabriela Narutowicza	216	0.32
55	Jerzego Popiełuszki	215	0.31
56	Jagiellońska	214	0.31
57	Józefa Poniatowskiego	208	0.30
58	Władysława Andersa	206	0.30
58	Powstańców Śląskich	206	0.30
60	Jana Kasprowicza	203	0.30

Table 1. Ranking list of the 100 most common street namesakes—continued

Ranking	Street names	N	%
60	Solidarności	203	0.30
62	Stefana Okrzei	202	0.29
62	Witolda Pileckiego	202	0.29
64	Aleksandra Fredry	184	0.27
64	Józefa Hallera	184	0.27
64	Czesława Miłosza	184	0.27
67	Krzysztofa Kamila Baczyńskiego	180	0.26
68	Batalionów Chłopskich	171	0.25
68	Marii Dąbrowskiej	171	0.25
70	Jana Brzechwy	167	0.24
71	Stefana Czarnieckiego	166	0.24
71	Szarych Szeregów	166	0.24
71	Karola Szymanowskiego	166	0.24
74	św. Floriana	164	0.24
75	Konstantego Ildefonsa Gałczyńskiego	163	0.24
75	Zofii Nałkowskiej	163	0.24
77	Zygmunta Krasińskiego	162	0.24
77	Józefa Wybickiego	162	0.24
79	Józefa Chełmońskiego	149	0.22
80	Emilii Plater	147	0.21
81	Stefana "Grotą" Roweckiego	146	0.21
82	Janusza Kusocińskiego	145	0.21
83	Jana Długosza	144	0.21
84	Ignacego Daszyńskiego	143	0.21
84	Piotra Skargi	143	0.21
86	Konstytucji 3 maja	142	0.21
87	Ludwika Waryńskiego	140	0.20
88	Leopolda Staffa	137	0.20

Table 1. Ranking list of the 100 most common street namesakes—continued

Ranking	Street names	N	%
89	Kosynierów	132	0.19
90	Stanisława Maczka	131	0.19
91	Henryka Wieniawskiego	130	0.19
92	Michała Drzymały	127	0.19
92	Tysiąclecia	127	0.19
94	Bolesława Krzywoustego	120	0.18
95	Jacka Malczewskiego	119	0.17
95	Henryka Sucharskiego	119	0.17
97	Romana Dmowskiego	112	0.16
97	Wisławy Szymborskiej	112	0.16
99	Jarosława Dąbrowskiego	111	0.16
99	Karola Miarki	111	0.16
99	Leopolda Okulickiego	111	0.16
100	Władysława Orkana	110	0.16

Source: author's own compilation based on TERYT of STREETS database.

Overall, the top 100 most frequently recurring namesakes refer to 31,113 streets, i.e. in total exhausting more than 45% of all commemorative names. In addition, the number of 100 commemorations is reached by a further 7 namesakes: Maciej Rataj (109), Tadeusz Rejtan (104), Artur Grottger (103), Stanisław Konarski (103), Piotr Ściegienny (101), Kornel Makuszyński (100) and Gabriela Zapolska (100).

Out of a total of 68,522 commemorative names, four main types of namesakes stand out: people (individual and collective), dates, events, institutions, and organisations. Figures on these are presented in table 2.

As some street names could be assigned to more than one category, a more detailed characterisation of namesakes, taking into account the two basic categories at the same time, could be proposed. An example of this type of street name is, for example, *Ofiar Katynia* (*Victims of Katyn*) street, for which two categories were assigned—1) person (victims) and 2) place (Katyn). A detailed breakdown of the data, taking these variables into account, is presented in table 3. It is important here to distinguish almost 60,000 names commemorating

Table 2. Types of namesakes: what is commemorated?

Category	N	%
Persons	61,722	90.07
Dates	1824	2.66
Events	1485	2.17
Institutions, organisations, and places	3416	4.99

Source: author's own compilation.

Table 3. Street namesakes: detailed data

Category	N	%
People	58,932	86.01
Dates	1822	2.66
Events	1289	1.88
Institutions, organisations, and places	3345	4.88
Fictional character	68	0.10
People + events	373	0.54
People + institutions, organisations, and places	1415	2.07
Persons + fictional character	1002	1.46
Dates + events	24	0.04
Events + institutions, organisations, and places	217	0.32
Fictional character + institutions, organisations, and places	18	0.03

Source: author's own compilation.

specific, single, and personal namesakes, constituting the vast majority of all Polish commemorations (86.01%). Additionally, almost 1.5% of the analysed street names commemorate a fictitious person (e.g. *Oleńki Bilewiczówny* street).

The largest group of namesakes (persons) can be internally differentiated according to a number of more specific characteristics: individual person—collective, real person—fictional character, period of life (years of activity), field

of activity, and gender. With regard to this last category, a huge disproportion is drawn: 87.8% are male namesakes (N = 54,146), while women are namesakes of only 8.2% of street names (N = 5059). The remaining 4.1% (N = 2499) refers to a collective namesake (both genders or gender unspecified, e.g. *Jana i Izabeli Działyńskich* (*Jan and Izabela Działyński*), *Jabłonowskich* (*The Jabłonowskis*), *Bohaterów Getta* (*The Heroes of the Ghetto*), *Rodziny Ulmów* (*The Ulma Family*)).

It is interesting, especially in the context of further analyses and interpretations aimed at reconstructing the structure of “Polish memory” and the components of national identity, to consider the field or main field of a person’s activities, or the nature of an event (and date). In view of the immense wealth of figures and the enormous variety of activities associated with their activity, which became the basis of commemoration, it seems necessary to outline only the general fields in which the more individualised achievements of street namesakes fall. Nine general fields can be identified here:

- POLITICS/ SOCIAL ACTIVISM
- CULTURE AND ART
- LITERATURE
- ARMY / FIGHT FOR FREEDOM
- SPORT
- CHURCH AND RELIGION
- RULERS
- SCIENCE
- ECONOMY

The division proposed above is to a large extent arbitrary, and the separate fields in many individual cases cross each other—e.g. Józef Piłsudski as the street namesake can be assigned to both the field of POLITICS / SOCIAL ACTIVISM and the field of the ARMY / FIGHT FOR FREEDOM. This kind of indeterminacy (or rather: multidimensionality) can also be indicated at the model level: the field of POLITICS / SOCIAL ACTIVISM often overlaps with the field of ARMY / FIGHT FOR FREEDOM and RULERS. Also, many a time, ARMY / FIGHT FOR FREEDOM, CULTURE AND ART as well as LITERATURE—as a separate field⁷—also have clear links to the others, etc.).

Table 4 indicates the distribution of commemorations in street names by realm / field of primary activities.

7 The separation of literature from the broader scope of culture and art seems sufficiently sanctioned by the number of namesakes from this field and their distinct position, overlapping with the various fields and profiles of patriotism.

Table 4. Commemorations by field

Field	N	%
POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM	8810	12.86
CULTURE AND ART	6547	9.55
LITERATURE	15,239	22.24
ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM	16,195	23.63
SPORT	1148	1.68
CHURCH AND RELIGION	8599	12.55
RULERS	4601	6.71
SCIENCE	5563	8.12
ECONOMY	629	0.92
Not identified	1191	1.74

Source: author's own compilation.

As mentioned, for many namesakes it was impossible to define only one realm, because, due to the specificity and multiplicity of activities, it can be located in several different fields. This is particularly common with regard to personal namesakes, which can often be attributed to several fields, because their activity is associated with specific achievements of various types: from political or social activities, through literary or artistic creation, to scientific activities and fight for independence. Therefore, in situations where the consideration of a single field would be insufficient or arbitrary, an attempt was made to identify the two most important areas of the patrons' activities. The data taking into account the "two disciplines" of street namesakes are shown in table 5. It shows that the representatives of the field of LITERATURE (19.08% of links with others) as well as ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM (18.90% of links) most frequently combine their basic activities with other types of activity. This is due to the particular involvement of literary authors in social issues, especially the fight for independence, and, looking at the phenomenon in a slightly different way, to the fact that the Polish pantheon of national authors includes precisely those who were also involved in this kind of activity or devoted the subject matter of their works to it. At the other extreme are the fields of SPORT and ECONOMY, whose representatives generally concentrated on one primary field of activities (1.21% and 0.79% of links, respectively).

Table 5. Frequency of the field with dual affiliation

Field	N	%
POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM	6694	9.769
POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM + CULTURE AND ART	533	0.778
POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM + LITERATURE	1349	1.969
POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM + ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM	3321	4.847
POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM + SPORT	9	0.013
POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM + CHURCH AND RELIGION	1173	1.712
POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM + RULERS	74	0.108
POLICY, SOCIAL ACTIVISM + SCIENCE	808	1.179
POLICY, SOCIAL ACTIVISM + ECONOMY	153	0.223
CULTURE AND ART	6211	9.064
CULTURE AND ART + LITERATURE	405	0.591
CULTURE AND ART + ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM	124	0.181
CULTURE AND ART + CHURCH AND RELIGION	16	0.023
CULTURE AND ART + RULERS	53	0.077
CULTURE AND ART + SCIENCE	104	0.152
CULTURE AND ART + ECONOMY	18	0.026
LITERATURE	13,073	19.079
LITERATURE + ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM	339	0.495
LITERATURE + SPORT	3	0.004
LITERATURE + CHURCH AND RELIGION	495	0.722
LITERATURE + RULERS	190	0.277
LITERATURE + SCIENCE	192	0.280
LITERATURE + ECONOMY	2	0.003
ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM	12,953	18.903
ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM + SPORT	380	0.555
ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM + CHURCH AND RELIGION	273	0.398

Table 5. Frequency of the field with dual affiliation—continued

Field	N	%
ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM + RULERS	651	0.950
ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM + SCIENCE	334	0.487
ARMY AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM + ECONOMY	19	0.028
SPORT	832	1.214
SPORT + SCIENCE	24	0.035
SPORT + ECONOMY	1	0.001
CHURCH AND RELIGION	6029	8.799
CHURCH AND RELIGION + RULERS	406	0.593
CHURCH AND RELIGION + SCIENCE	312	0.455
CHURCH AND RELIGION + ECONOMY	1	0.001
RULERS	4400	6.421
RULERS + SCIENCE	1	0.001
RULERS + ECONOMY	2	0.003
SCIENCE	4752	6.935
SCIENCE + ECONOMY	76	0.111
ECONOMY	546	0.797
Not identified	1191	1.738

Source: author's own compilation.

Another parameter differentiating the set of personal street namesakes may be ethnicity. Almost 95% of the analysed streets were associated with Poland. This is followed by much less numerous names originating from countries with special historical and cultural ties to Poland: Germany, France, Italy, and Russia. One common group included street names associated with other origins (3.3% in total), including Ukrainian, English, and American. Detailed data are presented in table 6.

It is also extremely interesting and culturally significant to locate street namesakes on a timeline. The data on the period of their activities and the lifespan mainly pertains to personal namesakes, as well as, understandably, dates and events. The majority of street names are associated with the periods of the

late 19th to early 20th centuries (32.8%) and the late 20th to early 21st centuries (25.5%), or considering the years of the most significant activity—the 19th century and 1900–1939. Detailed data are presented in table 7 and the chart.

Table 6. Origin of patrons of street names

Origins	N	%
Poland	64,773	94.53
Germany	455	0.66
France	288	0.42
Italy	365	0.53
Russia	346	0.50
Other	2287	3.34
Not identified	8	0.01

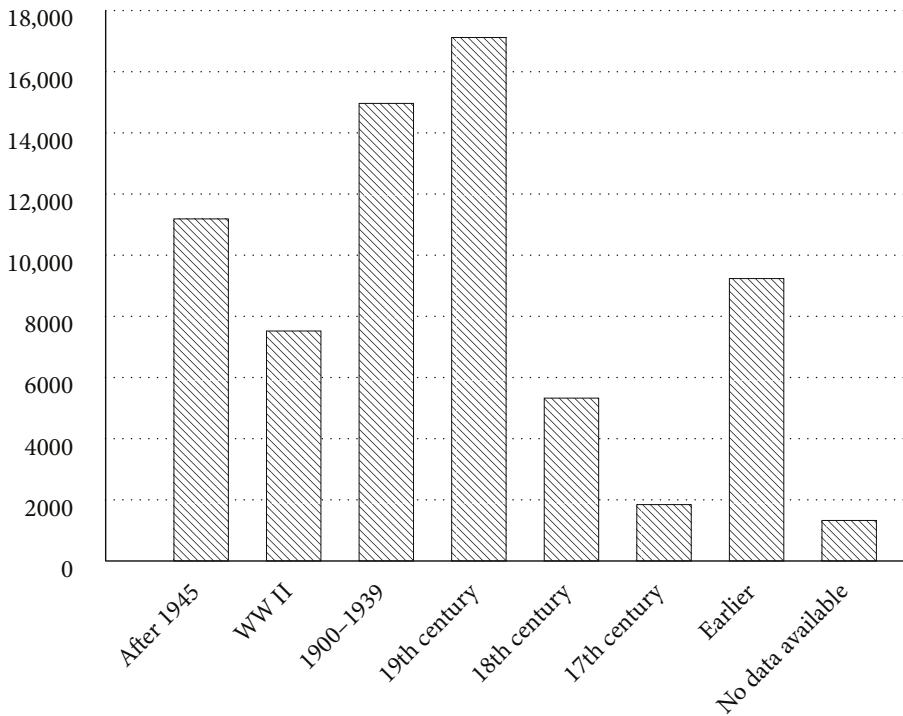
Source: author's own compilation.

Table 7. Temporal distribution of namesakes

Period	N	%
After 1945	11,187	16.33
World War II	7521	10.98
1900–1939	14,964	21.84
19th century	17,119	24.98
18th century	5326	7.77
17th century	1844	2.69
Earlier	9236	13.48
No data available	1325	1.93

Source: author's own compilation.

Chart 1. Commemorations by time of activities / date of event



Source: author's own compilation.

The data presented in this section and, above all, the set of street namesakes itself (supplemented by further items with lower frequency) are, of course, only selected exemplary possibilities for quantitative characterisation of the entire set of names. Their inclusion (along with the addition of others) may constitute an initial phase of qualitative analyses related to the basic objectives immersed in the OAD method.

To sum up this overview section, let us draw some preliminary conclusions and, next, outline the possibilities for further discursive research on the collected linguistic material:

- A. The names given refer in significant part to two fields: literature and the army/fight for freedom. Combined with the data related to the most represented historical period (19th century) and the type of literature of the Romantic period, one can see here the idea of freedom and independence still predominating in the Polish historical memory. This value constitutes the key and most important focus of Polish commemorations.

- B. Personal commemoration predominates—over 90% of the namesakes are specific individuals who distinguished themselves enough through their activities to become symbols (representatives) of certain values. The most esteemed values commemorated in this way are the fight for freedom, sacrifice for the fatherland, patriotism, and activity in the cultural sphere. The proportions of personal commemorations reflect a mythical way of thinking, with a centrally located hero who, with their special attributes, talents, deeds or courage, is able to change the fate of the nation and fatherland.
- C. The predominance of male patronymic names over female ones is striking: the relationship here is 92% of males against 8% of females. This shows the masculocentrism of Polish memory.
- D. It is typical to commemorate our own Polish heroes (almost 95%)—however, ethnocentrism is not only a Polish feature, but is also characteristic of other nations and countries.
- E. The overrepresentation of the World War II period in the structure of Polish memory is striking. The relatively short five-year period from September 1939 to May 1945 accounts for nearly 11% of all personal commemorations. Even the 19th century, which is commemorated most strongly in terms of the number of names (nearly 25% of all names), cannot compare with the war: if one wanted to attribute to it a similar value of “power of memory”, it should correspond not to more than 17,000 names (as at present), but to over 150,000, i.e. nine times as many. This confirms the special position of the Second War in the structure of social memory. Such a strong commemoration of this tragic period affects a peculiar “distortion” of Polish memory towards trauma and martyrology.

In the following section, as indicated above, more elaborate and more widely designed possibilities for more in-depth analysis and interpretation of the collected nomenclatural material are presented.

3. Lines of analysis. Preliminary overview

The fundamental research questions of the overall commemorated names in Poland are, as previously indicated, linked to inquiries about components of Polish collective memory, the structure of the contemporary Polish cultural canon, and the Polish axiological system. In a broader perspective, they revolve around questions about the components of Polishness and the externalised dimension of Polish national identity “on the streets” as an idea—or as a representation of an officially and formally established pattern of patriotism. The possibility of such interpretations stems from the assumptions made, in particular the thesis

that street namesakes constitute certain important models of attitudes (and, through them, also the values they represent), important enough for Polish society (the nation) to be the subject of commemorations with precisely such numerical (and spatial) representation. The numerical and spatial (expressed in the distribution over the entire territory of Poland) representativeness of these namesakes/models is a strong argument for recognising their place in the Polish cultural canon and in the structure of collective memory as a set of those “events, figures and artefacts which a member of the community should know something about” [Szpociński 2021: 16].

In outlining even the most general profiles for interpreting these data, a few tidying-up remarks must be made. The first concerns the overall validity of inferring cultural patterns from a set of street namesakes. This is not a direct inference, but it is quite well-founded—its existence is evidenced, for example, by the special documents that constitute an important part of the administrative procedure of the naming act, which are the justifications for naming. This is because in the course of the proceedings, municipal officials are obliged to provide justification for the choice of the namesake, which for the discourse researcher provides an excellent opportunity to examine the ways in which the adopted (established) axiological order is argued. The content of the justifications includes verbal formulas testifying to the values represented by the street namesake: they are given here explicitly (“he fought for independence”, “he was a distinguished social activist”, “he gave his life for the fatherland”) or merely implied by quoting short biographical notes. These documents, in themselves, can be the subject of analysis focused on the linguistic structure and formatting of expressions, aiming firstly to articulate, and secondly to present arguments for the adoption of specific values or attitudes as emanations of particular ideologies.

The second interpretative path leads towards describing the functioning of names as linguistic signs of social communication. In addition to all the communicative consequences arising from the nature and specificity of *nomina propria* [Šrámek 1999, van Langendonck 2007], street names have their own numerous specific properties. These include materialisation, inscription in space, reification and habituation. Materialisation is the real manifestation in various physical forms that results in a certain “reception” and “use” by community members. Street names are physically present not only on maps, directories, lists, or official documents, thus naturalising themselves in physical contexts (buildings, information boards in urban spaces) and in symbolic contexts. It is impossible to navigate a city without using them. During this process, there is an involuntary and unconscious reconstruction of the components of

the cultural code, all the more effective because it is unnoticed, involuntary, inscribed in everyday life. This kind of reconstruction, and therefore remembering, is more effective than conscious and deliberate memorative practices: this is perfectly evident when street names and other commemorative signs in the urban space, such as monuments, are juxtaposed. Monuments are festive and belong to the sphere of the sacred, while street names are everyday and devoid of such sacredness, so that the patrons in street names are incorporated into everyday practices, which makes them “better remembered”. The use and reproduction of the patrons’ surnames in street names is nothing but “the daily recitation of important historical events and heroes that is not institutionalised or subject to administrative control. It is everyday and intimate” [Azaryahu 1996: 321]. In the course of this “recitation”, a process of consolidating the ideological order, embodied by elected and officially identified and socially sanctioned heroes, takes place.

Very similar effects, namely the shift to the realm of imperceptible and unconscious actions and practices, occur through spatialisation as a kind of reification of memory elements. The inscription of names in space, and in practice, its association with a specific place (street, square), causes them to be just as naturalised in social perception as the space itself. The bestowal of commemorative names is an action of state administration, as a result of which specific cultural symbols and memory signs are placed in a particular space. Consequently, the validity of such strong commemoration of figures like Adam Mickiewicz or Kościuszko is generally not questioned, sanctioned on one hand by their prevalence and dissemination (repeatability and spatial representation), and on the other hand, precisely by their spatial character [Azaryahu 1996: 320]. Here, there is a kind of feedback loop—since X is commemorated in a street name, in societal perception, it signifies that X is/was someone outstanding, deserving, and that they represent some important and recognised values or attitudes. This systemic sanctification of heroes is another stage in strengthening a specific symbolic order, and its analysis is the subject of a separate, emerging research area in the form of critical toponomastics [Berg, Voulternhao 2009].

Another layer of interpretation is at the level of social practices and the associated social sanctioning/naturalising of the symbolic order, entrenched in urban nomenclature. The key tool for this kind of analysis is the concept of habitus in the framework proposed by Bourdieu.⁸ Habitus, which refers to the dispositions, practices and repetitive order of everyday activities, creates a dis-

⁸ Discussed with reference to: Matuchnik-Krauska 2015.

cursive construction of a familiar social world. Actions and activities ritualise but also tame the world of symbols, so that it becomes “second nature”. In this way, when people practise history, they also practise their world of values without being aware of the symbolic level of their actions. The symbolic dimension and ideologies become overlooked and “forgotten”—because they are practised.

The analysis conducted in this way could be complemented by inferences about the structure of national identity. At this level, names can be treated not only as carriers of memory, but also as markers of the cultural code of a particular community, and, taking into account the distribution of the analysed material across Poland, of the entire nation. The deconstruction of the idea of “Polish identity”, thus embedded and expressed, is based on the symbolic link between street namesakes and the values and attitudes they embody. Sometimes attitudes relate to values directly (X fought for independence—so freedom and independence are important values), but sometimes it is necessary to include a more complex connection. An example would be a metonymic relationship between a work and its author, where a person (the author) is commemorated, but the reservoir of values is their work. These values (e.g. patriotism, dedication to the common good and sacrifice) are transferred to the author’s person, who at the level of the nomenclature represents them. Mickiewicz became the Polish symbol of a peculiarly conceived messianic and romantic patriotism because this was the nature of his works. The question is why he himself became such a “value” for Poles that he occupies a pinnacle place in the pantheon of national heroes—as Szpociński notes,

the validity of a carrier can be founded on the validity of an idea (e.g. we value Adam Mickiewicz because he did great things in the literary field), but another, opposite situation is possible—Adam Mickiewicz or *Pan Tadeusz* may function in our culture as keystones, carriers, places where values and ideas important for the community are found. [Szpociński 2021: 100]

The persistence of certain ideas in the axiological structure of the nation, and therefore also the understanding of them as constituent parts of the abstract idea of Polish identity, is probably correlated with their consolidation in the embodied form of street namesakes. A mere glance at one exemplary parameter—the overrepresentation of namesakes chronologically linked to the 19th century—can already accentuate an important factor that left (and still leaves) a clear mark on the understanding of, for example, patriotism and duty towards the fatherland. This brings the analysis of street naming to the level of social patterns and matrices, unconscious duties and desired (expected and praised)

attitudes, revealing along the way a set of ideologies reproduced in this naming by means of the tools offered by the OAD. Read as components of a multi-level (e.g. administrative, urban, and political) discourse, proper names appear as clearly ideologically charged signs, as a means of power and symbolic coercion.

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