












Marta Raczyńska-Kruk

'Here Szela, the hero, was made'. Selected Issues From the 19th Century Scientific Discourse Around the Forest Germans¹

„Tu powstał bohater Szela”. Wybrane zagadnienia z XIX-wiecznego dyskursu naukowego dotyczącego Głuchoniemców

ABSTRACT

The article is concerned with the changes undergone by the Polish scientific discourse (mainly ethnographic) on the phenomenon of the so-called 'Forest Germans' (in Polish: *Głuchoniemcy*) in the 19th century, i.e. from the late Enlightenment to 1914. The author analyses excerpts from scholars accounts by, among others, Franciszek Siarczyński, Wincenty Pol, Józef Łepkowski, Oskar Kolberg, Józef Szujski and others, as well as narratives appearing in reaction to them in the press. The history of the Głuchoniemcy – as descendants of medieval German settlers in the Carpathian Foothills, who became completely

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Polonised in the 19th century, and the discourse, both academic and public, constructed around them, reflects the mechanisms governing descriptions of peasant history and culture in Polish ethnography and related branches of the humanities, and related to aspirations for national independence.

Keywords: Forest Germans, Polish peasantry, ethnography, discourse, 19th century

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł stanowi studium przemian, jakim na przestrzeni XIX w., tj. od schyłku epoki oświecenia do 1914 r., podlegała narracja na temat fenomenu tzw. Głuchoniemców w polskiej nauce (głównie etnografii). Autorka poddaje w nim antropologicznej analizie dyskursu fragmenty przekazów autorstwa m.in. Franciszka Siarczyńskiego, Wincentego Pola, Józefa Łepkowskiego, Oskara Kolberga, Józefa Szujskiego i innych badaczy, a także drogi recepcji tychże w publicystyce. Historia Głuchoniemców jako potomków średniowiecznych niemieckich osadników na Pogórzu Karpackim, którzy w XIX w. ulegli całkowitej polonizacji, oraz skonstruowany wokół nich dyskurs akademicki i publiczny, okazują się jednak odzwierciedlać mechanizmy rządzące opisami dziejów i kultury chłopskiej w polskiej etnografii i pokrewnych gałęziach humanistyki, a te z kolei związane są z dążeniami niepodległościowymi.

Słowa kluczowe: Niemcy leśni, chłopci polscy, etnografia, dyskurs, XIX w.

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘Forest Germans’² (in Polish: *Głuchoniemcy*) refers to the descendants of German-speaking settlers brought by Casimir III the Great in the mid-14th century to develop the forested Polish-Ruthenian frontier after the annexation of the Red Ruthenia to the Kingdom of Poland³.

² In this text, I will generally use the English term ‘Forest Germans’, which best captures the ambiguity of the Polish name *Głuchoniemcy*, literally translated as ‘deaf Germans’, or ‘forest Germans’. The first understanding of the term (socio-linguistic) refers to the fact that the term originated and functioned at its root as an ethnic stereotype to describe the descendants of German settlers, who were separated from their neighbors by a duplicated communication barrier: they were mute and deaf (literally ‘deaf Germans’ in Polish). The second understanding has geographical connotations. Since Polish word *głusza* derived from the adjective *głuchy* (deaf) is a synonym for the forest, and German colonists in the Middle Ages settled in the Carpathian Forest area, the term can also be understood precisely as ‘Forest Germans’ (*Niemcy w Głuszy*). See: P. Kołpak et al., *Forest Germans: a forgotten ethnic group in the contemporary landscape of the Polish Carpathians*, “Miscellanea Geographica” 2025, 29, 3, pp. 140–149.

³ Settlement processes taking place in the Middle Ages in the Carpathian Foothills with the participation of German-speaking settlers were indicated from the 15th to the 17th century by, among others, Jan Długosz (1480), Marcin Bielski (1551), Marcin Kromer

This phenomenon is directly related to the history of villages founded under the Magdeburg Law in the areas of Biecz, Jasło, Krosno and Łańcut, and the peasantry living there. In Polish-Slavic circles of rural/peasants culture the principle of 'self-foreign'⁴ was most clearly revealed as the basis of group identification leading to the emergence of the exoethnonymic⁵ and stereotypical name *Głuchoniemiec*. This term, already understood through the prism of stereotyping, appeared in the records of the Łańcut town court from 1687 in connection with a brawl. The assailant allegedly said the following words to the victim: 'Your business is linen making, not copper trading, you dog, Polish deaf German!'⁶.

In modern times, the descendants of colonists living in the Polish ethnic milieu developed locally distinct cultural traits – transitional between German and Polish culture – and became almost completely Polonised in the 18/19th century (Łańcut and Krosno areas), or even earlier (Biecz area)⁷. Today, relics of the Forest Germans' culture are mainly visible in local linguistic landscape such as German-sounding family names or toponyms⁸. Up to a certain point in history, they were also captured in vernacular local dialects, some traditions (*vide*: Markowa near Łańcut⁹) and social organisation of Lesser Poland's villages drawn from administrative and social models initiated by German settlers in the Middle Ages, as evidenced by village court records, in some cases written in distorted German¹⁰.

In the article, I will attempt to answer two main questions: (1) what changes occurred in the image of Forest Germans against the background of interest in the peasantry, its culture, and history in 19th-century Polish humanities¹¹, and (2) what has been the significance of these changes in discourse for the very phenomenon – namely, the people and their culture – that is the focus of this study? The starting point

(1577), Maciej Strykowski (1582), Stanisław Sarnicki (1587) or Szymon Starowolski (1632). Unfortunately, in none of these sources does the term 'Forest Germans' appear.

⁴ E. Nowicka, *Swojskość i obcość jako kategorie socjologicznej analizy*, in: *Swoi i obcy*, ed. E. Nowicka, pp. 5–53, Warszawa 1990.

⁵ Exoethnonym – a name given by representatives of a foreign group. See: *Słownik etnologiczny, terminy ogólne*, ed. Z. Staszczak, Warszawa–Poznań 1987, p. 107.

⁶ Biblioteka Jagiellońska, ref. no. P-1606 (inv. no. 926), p. 21.

⁷ M.W. Solarz, M. Raczyńska-Kruk, *Głuchoniemcy, Taubdeutsche, Waldddeutsche – przyczynek do biografii pojęcia*, "Prace i Studia Geograficzne" 2023, 68, 2, p. 116.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

⁹ See below.

¹⁰ T. Wiślicz, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie z XV wieku*, in: *Świat średniowiecza. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Henrykowi Samsonowiczowi*, eds. A. Bartoszewicz et al., Warszawa 2010, pp. 166–169.

¹¹ This text uses 1795–1914 as the chronological framework of the 19th century.

for these considerations is the assumption that the history regarding the description of the Forest Germans by Polish ethnographers, historians and geographers (from the dawn of these disciplines to the present day, with the renaissance of local identities and the need to democratise history) is a very telling part of the history of peasant culture research in Poland, reflecting wider tendencies and ideological currents in human and cultural sciences. Therefore, I will examine the correlations between the ways of creating a description of this phenomenon and the socio-political changes occurring in the background.

The collected source material from academic studies and the 19th century press (as a space for the circulation and transformation of research-based) was subjected to anthropological discourse analysis. The basis of this research is that the essence of social science discourse lies in its contextualisation and variability¹².

RESEARCH AND RESULTS

The birth of interest in cultural diversity in the Polish lands, with an emphasis on the culture and history of the countryside and the peasants who inhabited it, began the history of the scientific discourse shaped around the Forest Germans¹³. The turn of the 18th and 19th centuries was a time of searching for and collecting 'national antiquities' in the face of Poland's loss of independence. The activities that led to the emergence of modern ethnography¹⁴ as an academic discipline with a range of research methods and tools are therefore rooted in the ideas of the Enlightenment and early Romanticism. Although the division of the Polish lands between the partitioning powers significantly impeded the institutional development of ethnographical studies at the beginning of the 19th century, various initiatives were undertaken during this period to document folk

¹² M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, transl. A.M. Sheridan Smith, London–New York 2002.

¹³ The history of the Polish term *Gluchoniemcy* can be traced back to the writings of Benedict Chmielowski. A proto-ethnographic note on the descendants of medieval German colonists in the Foothills known as 'Forest Germans' appeared in the 1756 expanded edition of the "New Athens" universal encyclopaedia. It consisted of four different etymologies to justify the term, which appear to have referred to Sarmatian vision of the world.

¹⁴ It is difficult to speak of monodisciplines in relation to the Age of Enlightenment. Future academic disciplines developed by combining different types of knowledge, e.g. ethnographic, archaeological, historical, regionalist and geographical, etc. See: J. Burszta, *Oświecenie i romantyzm a słowiańska etnografia i folklorystyka*, "Lud" 1973, 57, pp. 6–7.

culture, both within the borders of the former state and at the regional level. The breakthrough came with a postulate to describe the 'customs of the ordinary people in all provinces, provinces and districts' of the First Republic of Poland, expressed by Hugo Kołłątaj in a letter sent in 1802 from Olomouc to Krakow, addressed to the bookseller and printer Jan Antoni May. This letter, which contained practical guidelines for collecting material on the peoples inhabiting the Polish lands, came to be regarded as the 'founding document' of Polish ethnography and regional studies. Other programmes for the study of rural peoples and their cultural, social, and geographical diversity also offered the hope of uniting, or at least symbolically linking the parts of a fragmented but yet fundamentally multicultural identity of former Polish state. Zbigniew Jasiewicz, a researcher in the history of Polish ethnography and ethnology, explains this process in the following words:

'The cognitive goals for which the activities preceding the establishment of ethnology were undertaken, including documentary activity, were intertwined with ideological aims and related practical objectives stemming from the conviction of the need to reform and transform society characteristic of the Enlightenment period, and, in Poland, justified and reinforced by the loss of statehood'¹⁵.

It was around this time that the folk became a significant concern in [the nation's] life, and the folk studies and description of regional cultures had [the] task of somehow addressing this issue. Recognising that a nation is also, or perhaps above all, the folk, ethnography was given a social and political mission to fulfil. The work of Franciszek Siarczyński, and later Wincenty Pol, Józef Łepkowski, or Oskar Kolberg (among others), who drew attention to the phenomenon of the Forest Germans, should be seen in this context.

The writings of the priest Franciszek Siarczyński (1758–1829), the author of the first large regional dictionary project in Polish literature devoted to the territory of Galicia at that time¹⁶, probably provide the most complete and detailed picture of the culture and history of the Forest Germans ever created¹⁷. The researcher has accumulated

¹⁵ Z. Jasiewicz, *Początki polskiej etnologii i antropologii kulturowej (od końca XVIII wieku do roku 1918)*, Poznań 2011, p. 38.

¹⁶ See below. For more: M. Raczyńska-Kruk, *The memory still endures in the names of the German generations... Forest Germans in Franciszek Siarczyński's anthropogeographical description of Galicia*, "Miscellanea Geographica" 2025, 29, 3, pp. 150–154.

¹⁷ The period of Siarczyński's activity can be described as transitional, in which scholars educated in the Stanislaus era were slowly opening up to new ideological currents slowly

highly diverse and multicontextual material which contains a number of clues relevant to understanding who the Forest Germans were, how and where they emerged, and why their cultural distinctiveness eventually disappeared. Although Siarczyński is definitely closest to historical sciences and geography, his narratives about the descendants of German settlers from the Łańcut and Krosno region have features of ethnographic description created on the basis of archival research and fieldwork¹⁸. The paragraphs in question are those contained in the manuscripts: *Historical-Statistical-Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Galicia*, vol. 1, *General Information*¹⁹, and other volumes of the dictionary with descriptions of some villages, e.g. Markowa near Łańcut) preserved in the form of an incomplete and worn typescripts, and a collection of writings entitled *About Łańcut and its heirs*²⁰, as well as *A dissertation on the ancient German settlers in Podgórze and Red Ruthenia by Franciszek Siarczyński* published in print in "Pamiętnik Narodowy" in 1827²¹. The conclusions reached by Siarczyński set out the directions and trends of research on the Forest Germans' phenomenon in the future.

In Siarczyński's view, the peasants living in the villages of the Carpathian Foothills and who were the descendants of German settlers were a relic of the multiculturalism of the Polish lands that needed to be documented. In sorting out information on the ethnic geography of Galicia at the time, the author counted them among the minorities inhabiting the former First Polish Republic alongside Ruthenians, Poles, Armenians, Jews, and Karaims. Explaining who *Głusi Niemcy*²² were forms part of a larger subsection of *Dictionary...*, in which Siarczyński described the ways in which the German ethnic element penetrated Polish culture in the Middle Ages, and the relics of these processes within the borders of Galicia.

The author's attention was particularly drawn to the issue of the origins of the stereotype of Germans and Forest Germans in Polish folk culture. In his opinion, both terms were identical at their source, because they ultimately referred to strangeness and communication barriers (intensified

heralding Romanticism.

¹⁸ In the course of the fieldwork Siarczyński observe peasant culture, or at least made use of informants and interviewers, as evidenced by his surviving notes on the environs of Łańcut and Jarosław. See: A. Wójcik, "O skalnym oleju" – publikacja księdza Franciszka Siarczyńskiego z 1828 roku, "Hereditas Monasteriorum" 2016, 3, p. 246.

¹⁹ Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich [hereinafter: ZNO], ref. no. 1827 I (1827a), pp. 150–163.

²⁰ ZNO, ref. no. 3108/III.

²¹ F. Siarczyński, *Rozprawa o starodawnych osadnikach niemieckich na Podgórzu i Rusi Czerwonej pióra Franciszka Siarczyńskiego*, "Pamiętnik Narodowy" 1827, 1, pp. 129–147.

²² Siarczyński used a two-part term (MRK).

in the case of Forest, i.e. 'deaf' Germans). Siarczyński perceived Forest Germans primarily as a linguistic and sociological phenomenon rather than as a cultural group that arose as a result of the development of German settlement in the lands inhabited by Slavs. Indeed, this name should be interpreted as deriving from an ethnic stereotype which emerged from the need to categorise reality, attempting to simplify it and then conceptualise it on the basis of the 'self-stranger' principle organising the world of rural people²³. Siarczyński, creating a kind of classic ethnographic discourse, looked for analogies (the Greater Poland folk saying *Głuchy od Szamotuł*²⁴, or the etymology of the Hungarian term *Szomszed*, etc.)²⁵. He also suggested the kinship of the terms 'German' and 'forest/deaf German' with contemptuous stereotypes (the word *flądra*²⁶ describing a slovenly woman, derived from settlers coming from Flanders, or *Szwab* as a term for newcomers from the region of Swabia extended to all foreigners, i.e. Germans), which were adopted into the Polish language through contacts with representatives of the Germanic-speaking population expanding eastward²⁷. In *The Image of the Reign of Sigismund III* (X) he also included an observation explaining the etymology of the Polish word *gbur* ('a boor' in English, which is also a synonym for 'peasant') and, interestingly, connecting it with the Forest German territory. 'In Prussia, in the Kraków Podgórze area and in Red Ruthenia, where are [old] German settlements – wrote Siarczyński – the peasants were referred to by variations of the German word *Bauer* ('peasant', 'farmer' in English) as *gebaur*, *gbaur*, and *gbur*'²⁸.

Siarczyński took a particular interest in the language used by the descendants of German settlers in the Polish-Ruthenian borderlands. In the case of Markowa near Łańcut, which he scrutinized, he described this language as a kind of local, unique dialect, that emerged as a result of the 'corruption' of German. As Siarczyński remarked, 'to this day, in several villages of the Foothills, the Forest Germans still speak German among themselves – in a form so corrupted that they can only understand each other, and not all of them because the majority of them

²³ J.S. Bystroń, *Megalomania narodowa*, Warszawa 1935, p. 102; Z. Benedyktowicz, *Portrety obcego. Od stereotypu do symbolu*, Kraków 2000, p. 129.

²⁴ See: "Przyjaciel Ludu" 1837, 4, 1, 12, p. 91.

²⁵ ZNO, ref. no. 1827 I (1827a), pp. 158–159.

²⁶ 'Flounder' in English.

²⁷ ZNO, ref. no. 1827 I (1827a), pp. 158–159.

²⁸ F. Siarczyński, *Obraz wieku panowania Zygmunta III, króla polskiego i szwedzkiego, czyli obraz stanu, narodu i kraju wystawiający religię, obyczaje, [...] zgoda wszystko, co do dokładnego obrazu wieku tego należy*, vol. 2, Poznań 1858, p. 107, footnote 21.

speak only Polish'²⁹. In his opinion, the emergence of a vernacular variety of language was to occur over time under the influence of the dominant Polish language in these parts. Having visited Markowa, and villages from the Krosno region, he recorded several examples of the effect these processes had on colloquial rural speech:

[Peasants in old German villages] still say: *Koza doytza spracha?* Do you know German? *Schno der fara agath.* Look, the priest is coming. *Szwind szpano ferda.* Hurry and hitsch up the horse. In Jasło district near Korczyn, household equipment is called: *Gerada* from German *Geräthe*, sisters-in-laws call each other: *Estercho*³⁰ from the German word *Schwesterchen*³¹.

What seems exceptional is that Siarczyński gave the peasants from Markowa the opportunity to speak for themselves about their roots and traditions. In a text entitled *A relic of the German Language in the Area of Łańcut*³², he recorded the texts of songs sung in the local dialect as an element of the cultural heritage of the Forest Germans³³, together with translations and other ethnographic information obtained during a field research³⁴. His native informant was an elderly resident of the village of Markowa, Kuba Szputnar (probably 'Szpunar', as other village and parish historical registers inform – MRK):

Szputnar [...] knows many German words and even speaks a little. In his pronunciation, he clearly distinguishes between *ü*, *ö*, and *e* very clear. He ends most words with *a*: *Büchta*, *Bünkla*, *Schmiela*, *Konnst deutsch?* *Pilnisch*. The priest is called *Fara*, the dress *Lewan*, etc. Szpunar says that he never spoke any language other than German with his parents, and that his wife also still understands it³⁵.

Finally, the author placed the phenomenon of village courts strictly in the context of the Forest Germans. The scholar quoted fragments from the *Dictionary...* fragments of the Krzemienica court book from the beginning of the 16th century, written in distorted German³⁶. He implicitly

²⁹ ZNO, ref. no. 1827 I (1827a), p. 161.

³⁰ szesterka u Kolberga

³¹ ZNO, ref. no. 1827 I (1827a), pp. 159–161.

³² Polish title: *Zabytek mowy niemieckiej w okolicy Łańcuta*.

³³ Siarczyński made a kind of compilation of several songs, of which it is possible to distinguish three: a Lenten song, sung in Markowa on Good Friday and Saturday (beginning with the words: *Am Donnerstag zeita...*), an Easter song (*Chrysta ist adestanda*) and a Marian song (*Der Reiter sey di Igey und har will d'resta...*).

³⁴ ZNO, ref. no. 3108/III (1827b), pp. 12–15.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

³⁶ ZNO, ref. no. 1827 I (1827a), p. 162, footnote.

considered these texts as relics of the German language – on the same basis as the above-cited songs from Markowa, although, unlike the songs, they were preserved in written form than transmitted orally. 'Our Forest German settlements – Siarczyński pointed out – especially where they were not outnumbered by locals, retained their speech for a long time, and used no other, not only in colloquial needs, but also in court and official actions'³⁷. According to Siarczyński, rural communities, as conservative structures, had to preserve their speech and traditions for generations, unlike city and town inhabitants, where the pace of cultural change was much faster, partly due to population movement.

The court book from Krzemienica is one of the surviving Lesser Poland village court books that provide insight into the functioning of village courts and their socio-cultural background in medieval and modern times³⁸. However, to what extent is it legitimate to associate this phenomenon with the Forest Germans? The rural communities pursuing such a social model must have been characterized by a specific type of bond, reflected in the institution of the cluster (*gromada* in Polish) and manifested in the persistence of cultural patterns specific to the colonists' homelands³⁹. Also the relationship between German colonisation, of which the Forest Germans are a remnant, and colonisation under German (Magdeburg) law in the Middle Ages appears highly significant in this context. These were two different phenomena that did not always coincide⁴⁰, however, the origin of some of the settlers from German-speaking lands and countries may have involved the transmission of certain norms, traditions and cultural practices, including legal ones, characteristic of the original areas, regardless even of the uniform model of law adopted in the territory of their settlement. Perhaps the issue of local linguistic distinctiveness – since tradition and identity are embedded in language – played a role in the relatively long maintenance of legal customs and consequently in the preservation of documentation in villages considered as Forest German. Currently Polish historians point out that

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ See e.g.: B. Baranowski, *Sprawy obyczajowe w sądownictwie wiejskim w Polsce wieku XVII i XVIII*, Łódź 1955.

³⁹ See: M. Raczyńska-Kruk, „*Za uproszeniem wszytkiej gromady*”. *Antropologia gromady ołpińskiej w świetle wiejskich akt sądowych*, in: P. Kołpak, M. Raczyńska-Kruk, M.W. Solarz, *Na chłopski rozum. Wiejskie akta sądowe nowożytnych Ołpin i ich konteksty społeczne*, Warszawa 2024, pp. 187–268.

⁴⁰ Z. Kaczmarczyk, *Kolonizacja niemiecka i kolonizacja na prawie niemieckim w średniowiecznej Polsce*, in: *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie w historiografii*, part 1, Poznań 1974, p. 218.

the oldest, 15th and 16th century court books of Lesser Poland originate from the Forest Germans villages of Łańcut and Krosno regions⁴¹.

In Siarczyński's writings, the descendants of German settlers in the area of the medieval Polish-Ruthenian border are usually referred to as the 'elemental' people, i.e. original and first (or even pioneering⁴²) inhabitants in the Carpathian wilderness: 'these settlements [of the Forest Germans] prove that the land they settled was regarded as the property of the Crown or the king'. The names of German Forest families and their customs were therefore also of an 'elementary' nature⁴³. The terms 'elemental people' and 'elemental race' appeared in this sense not only in Siarczyński's narration, but also in the study *Liber memorabilium of the parish in Krościenko Wyżne* written by the priest Andrzej Nowina Ujejski (1801–1867), a follower of Enlightenment philosophy, referring to German-sounding surnames of the inhabitants of this village near Krosno⁴⁴. It can be concluded that, similarly to Krościenko Wyżne, the Forest German village of Markowa researched by Siarczyński was still (i.e. in the 19th century) inhabited by families brought by Casimir III the Great. 'The race of these Forest Germans' – wrote the author of the *Dictionary...* – is actually the race of the first settlement'⁴⁵.

Perceiving the folk and its genealogy in terms of spatial context, including natural conditions, was typical of the pre-Romantic researchers. Volume 1 of *Dictionary...*, in which Siarczyński characterises the Forest Germans, covers general knowledge of natural science (physical geography, including natural resources, climate and fauna etc.), social geography, ethnography and history. In other volumes, the individual dictionary entries on the culture and history of Galician villages portray the population as shaped by natural conditions. The categories used by the researcher to describe reality were therefore the result of assumptions about the influence of the natural framework on human beings, social life and cultural heritage, according to object naturalism⁴⁶. The attitude to cultural diversity was shaped by the concept of the nation

⁴¹ T. Wiślicz, *op. cit.*, p. 166; P. Kołpak, *Miedzy ideałem a rzeczywistością. Prawny i społeczny model wójta w teorii i praktyce na Pogórzu Karpackim od XVI do XVIII wieku*, "Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych" 2023, 85, p. 128, footnote 10.

⁴² M.W. Solarz, M. Raczyńska-Kruk, *op. cit.*, pp. 118, 122.

⁴³ ZNO, ref. no. 3108/III (1827b), pp. 2–3.

⁴⁴ A. Nowina Ujejski, *Liber memorabilium parafii w Krościenku Wyżnym*, prep. and introduction P. Rachwał, Krosno 2010, pp. 100–105.

⁴⁵ ZNO, ref. no. 1827 I, 1827a, p. 162.

⁴⁶ J.S. Bystroń, W. Dynowski, *Kultura ludowa i ludoznawstwo w Polsce*, in: *Kultura ludowa*, issue 1, Gdynia 1948, p. 48; S. Węglarz, *Etnograficzne mapowanie polskiej Góralstwy przez Wincentego Pola i innych badaczy*, "Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne" 2021, 60, pp. 70–71.

as a self-contained and primordial entity, which emerged in Europe at the end of the Enlightenment and determined the relationship between folklore studies and anthropogeography of that time⁴⁷. Siarczyński's description of the descendants of medieval German settlers, devoid of national-patriotic discourse, was typical of the Enlightenment period. In 1844, referring to his work, the historian of Polish literature Michał Wiszniewski called the inhabitants of Pogórze 'old Germans'⁴⁸. It is significant that Wiszniewski was considered the last thinker of the Polish Enlightenment. Later authors rather omitted Siarczyński's writings, including his observations on the history and culture of the Forest Germans⁴⁹.

The belief in the nation-building role of the state determined the works of the authors of the Romantic era. In the period of intensified national aspirations in the mid 19th century, the phenomenon of Forest Germans became one of the topics of public debate concerning the formation of the national consciousness and identity among the Polish peasantry. At the time, there was then an increase in interest both in the folk as a social class and in the folk as a nation – that is, an ethnic group and its culture⁵⁰. In 1849, the Polish educational activist and historian Jan Rymarkiewicz presented a program of ethnology as a science about nationalities, closely related to history, geography and philosophy, emphasizing the Polish issue⁵¹. This was undoubtedly one of the factors determining the focus in the description of local/regional cultures and their customs. These changes affected the image of the Forest Germans.

A new generation of national antiquities collectors followed in the footsteps of Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski, a pioneer in Slavic folklore research. The archetype of the writer-traveler was then developed, and travel descriptions became a new literary genre in the Polish ethnographic writings. An example is the work of historian and archaeologist Józef Łepkowski, containing his letters from archaeological trips. One of them, written on September 10, 1852 in Dukla, contains a note about the Krosno area:

⁴⁷ Z. Jasiewicz, *Początki*, p. 38.

⁴⁸ M. Wiszniewski, *Historia literatury polskiej*, Kraków 1844, p. 367.

⁴⁹ In 1857, in the *Weekly Supplement of "Gazeta Lwowska"* (no. 1, 2, 11–12, 14, 24–25, 35–41, 44, 48–50), fragments of the *Dictionary...* were published under the title *Galicja, its land, fetuses and peoples. From the posthumous writings of priest Franciszek Siarczyński*. He also returned as an inspiration for positivist dictionary creators, i.e. *Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and other Slavic countries* (1880–1902).

⁵⁰ Z. Jasiewicz, *Początki*, p. 46.

⁵¹ R. Sulima, *Literatura a dialog kultur*, Warszawa 1982, p. 41.

Almost all villages surrounding Krosno are German settlements, dating back to the times of Casimir III the Great and Władysław Jagiełło. Evidence of this historical German presence can be found in almost every church. Most of them were weavers, hence even the name Krosno comes from the looms. To this day, there are still many peasant families: Bachman, Bergel, Feiki, Gems, Glasar, Heusner and others, in whose speech you will hear words such as: *bruslik* as corset, *manta* – coat, *szesterka* – husband's sister, *Geistag* – Pentecost, etc.⁵²

The above fragment from Łepkowski seems to have been only slightly modified by ethnographer Oskar Kolberg. 'Here I met – Kolberg wrote – the Bachmans, Bergels, Feikls, Gems, Glasars, Heusners and other similar peasant surnames'⁵³. Then he quoted words with translations from Łepkowski's text. It should be remembered that the authors of this time went on research trips with the knowledge acquired from archival sources and the existing literature⁵⁴. The vast majority of folklore texts were not the result of direct field observations, but rather reinterpretations of older sources. Often it was their own reconstruction or even a copy.

It is significant that neither Łepkowski nor Kolberg mentioned the term 'Forest Germans' in any of their works. Authors put forward arguments aimed at emphasizing the Polish identity of the inhabitants of the described areas. 'Despite this small number of settlers, in general, the population speaks Polish beautifully, clearly pronouncing *cz, sz, rz, ę, ł*'⁵⁵ – noted Łepkowski, then referred to the alleged voices justifying the Germanness of the local peasantry. 'Some people, going further through the vastness of these settlements, see Tacitus's *flavi capilli Germanorum* in the tawny hair of peasants and women, see German costumes on the foreheads adorning women's heads and their jackets, and finally derive names such as *Krosno* from *Grossan*'⁵⁶, he wrote. It is worth referring to the treatise of the Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus titled *On the origin and country of the Germans*. This work, describing and idealizing the peoples living in ancient Germania which also included the Vistula basin, was eagerly reinterpreted in a nationalistic spirit by representatives of German

⁵² J. Łepkowski, *Listy z podróży archeologicznej po Galicji. Dukla, 10 września 1852 roku*, "Gazeta Warszawska" 1852, no. 247, p. 5.

⁵³ O. Kolberg, *Sanockie-Krośnieńskie*, part 1, *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 49, ed.. A. Skrukwa, Wrocław-Poznań 1974, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Z. Libera, *Etnografia jest praktykowaniem semiotyki (przykład z polskiej etnografii XIX wieku i później*, "Prace Etnograficzne" 2021, 49, 3, p. 188.

⁵⁵ J. Łepkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

romanticism⁵⁷. Łepkowski, like many other Polish authors of that time, was looking for counter-arguments to the German narrative, in this case highlighting the absurdity of attempts to prove the Germanness of peasants from the Krosno region. In his view, an additional problem was the persistence of combative attitudes among the peasantry after the Galician Peasant Uprising of 1846. 'The present time is not favorable for this type of research [on the origins of the Galician peasants] – he noted in the same text – because today, due to very legitimate political sensitivities, it is not safe to collect folk lore among the [Polish] peasantry or pursue other goals'⁵⁸. Unfortunately, many political factors made it difficult to address the issues of culture and history of the peasantry in this area, at that time.

It seems that the prototype for the description of the Forest Germans known from the writings of Łepkowski and Kolberg was the narrative created by the geographer Wincenty Pol. He outlined the territorial scope of this phenomenon with a remarkable precision:

[T]he entire area, which the area of Wisłoka, Ropa, Jasła, Jaselka and the middle Wisłok occupies, was settled by the so-called Deaf Germans, starting from the Sanok pits, i.e. from the area of Kombornia, Haczów, Trześniów to the Grybowski department: Gorlice, Szymbark and Ropa from east to west, north to the Pilzno land, which is already the land of the Sandomierskie Voivodeship. Some areas are settled by Swedes [...]⁵⁹.

Pol also placed emphasis on the purity of Polish speech and on disappearance of customs associated with German origins: 'Today, this entire people speaks the purest Polish language of the Lesser Poland dialect in the Forest German region – the author maintained – and although different in form and called Forest Germans until now, it has not preserved it neither in speech nor in customs, traces of their former ancestral origin'⁶⁰. With the words 'in the area of Wisłoka, we are struck by a different fact' or '[a people] different in form', he signaled the distinctiveness of the phenomenon, and it must therefore have manifested itself in some way in material culture⁶¹. As not only a geographer, but also a romantic poet, he employed hyperbole, elevating and dividing the attributes

⁵⁷ C.B. Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book*, New York 2012, p. 20.

⁵⁸ J. Łepkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁹ W. Pol, *Historyczny obszar Polski [rzecz o dialektach mowy polskiej]*, Kraków 1869, p. 32.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*. This difference probably concerned the clothing ('the entire area of the Forest Germans is the new settlement of the Saxons; they kept the same clothing as the Hungarian and Transylvanian Saxons') and areas of life related to agriculture and the weaving craft

of Forest Germans into Polish and German – i.e., spiritual and material, ideal and transient. Polish customs and language were raised to the rank of the highest moral values, and the element of old Germanness were confined to what was physical and impermanent.

A new chapter in the history of the discourse surrounding the Forest Germans in Polish humanities and public debate was opened by historian and a conservative publicist Józef Szujski. In 1882⁶², his german-language treatise *Die Polen und Ruthenen in Galizien* was published. This work dealt with the topic of ethnic relations and historical processes on the Polish-Russian border. Szujski, moving away from the older models of describing cultures and ethnicities, and focusing on political argumentation, created a kind of quasi-ethnographic theory. He drew attention, unfortunately without giving proper citation, to the presence of 'remnants of the original native languages testifying that at the time of their arrival every foreigner was called «a German», and the ethnic complexity of the local element (German, Swedish and even Tartar), as well as, probably following Pol, to the characteristic folk costume. 'The type of population varies greatly – as he wrote – here and there [the population] is slender and strong, elsewhere poorly built and unpleasant to look at'⁶³. First of all, he established a connection between the multicultural origins of Galician peasants living in villages settled by German colonists in the Middle Ages and the mass emigration of this population to America in the 1880s⁶⁴. In fact, the author turned the issue of the Forest Germans into a tool for criticizing current social phenomena. This interpretation aligned with the political narrative of the group of Polish conservatives known as 'Stańczycy', to which Szujski belonged. In another paragraph of the text, he returned to the topic of the Forest Germans, referring

('agriculture is at a higher level here, and weaving is a vocation and mainly the domestic occupation of these people').

⁶² The Polish version was published in 1896.

⁶³ W. Pol, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁶⁴ J. Szujski, *Polacy i Rusini w Galicji*, Kraków 1896, p. 17. 'Neighbouring the Mazurians to the south, [...] from Pilzno to Łańcut, is a tribe called the Forest Germans, formed by the 13th and 14th century settlements. The Forest Germans speak only Polish, and remnants of their various native languages testify that at the time of their arrival every foreigner was called «a German». The settlements have a German, Swedish and even Tartar element; the folk costume is similar to that of the Transylvanian Saxons. It is interesting to note that this very population, even though settled on a good soil, has in recent times been frantically emigrating to America, so that not only the proletarians, but even wealthy peasant families have been selling their fields and cottages to Jews or peasants from further afield and making the long sea journey to Hamburg and Bremen, while the same propaganda of transport agencies has had little effect in other parts of the country'.

to a German settlement from the medieval period that had completely vanished. He also added that 'today they are called Germans in Galicia only those inhabitants (Catholics and protestants), which were settled down [in the end of 18th century] by Emperor Joseph II (1782–1786)'⁶⁵.

The Kraków daily "Czas", in issue 35 of 3 February 1882, published an article about this work but mentioned little about the Forest Germans⁶⁶. A year later, on 7 February 1883, Szujski died. Around the first anniversary of his death, the journalists of "Czas" decided to revisit his theory. In the issue 23 of 27 January 1884 they elaborated on the connection between the non-Slavic origin of the Forest Germans and their propensity to migrate. The thesis of the mental (for it was no longer merely cultural and material) distinctiveness of the people inhabiting the 'several-mile-long corner' stretching between Tarnów, Krosno and Rzeszów was supported by their argument about the outbreak of the Galician uprising: 'the «storm» of 1846, which spread also to other areas with equal violence, had its original focus in this corner of the country – here its hero Szela was born'⁶⁷. Less than two weeks later, social activists and publicists from the Warsaw positivist circle began a polemic against this controversial text.

The issue 6/1884 of "Prawda", a weekly published under the editorship of Aleksander Świętochowski, contained a perverse and malicious retort to theory presented by "Czas":

In order to demonstrate that the problem [of the emigration of the Galician peasantry] has by no means any causes, "Czas" invented an ethnographic theory based on the fact that the emigration movement is mostly confined to [...] the localities between Tarnów, Krosno and Rzeszów; it denies the Slavic origin of the population in these areas, and thus explains their urge to emigrate. Naturally, in order to better justify this procedure, it has at hand an appropriate authority – [Józef] Szujski, who, in addition to having covered the stupidity and inanity of the [conservative] political party with his knowledge like a cloak during his lifetime, has no peace in his grave and must defend his inept followers with the charm of his name even after his death. These so-called 'Forest Germans' turn out to be, perhaps, not even the descendants of Tatar captives. They, who have preserved neither in speech nor in folk costume any outstanding type, are to blame for everything. In Metternich's time⁶⁸ they called themselves 'imperial peasants', they

⁶⁵ J. Szujski, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁶⁶ "Czas" 1882, no. 3, p. 1.

⁶⁷ "Czas" 1884, no. 23, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Klemens Lothar Fürst von Metternich-Winneburg – minister of Foreign Affairs (1809–1848) and Chancellor of Austria (1821–1848).

orchestrated the 1846 robbery and now, probably out of spite, they emigrate just to portray the Stańczyk's economy in a bad light⁶⁹.

This fragment was included in an article on the attitude of politicians to labour migration among the peasant masses. The voice of "Prawda"'s publicists in the polemic on the causes of migration reflected the programmatic assumptions of positivism, including the postulates advanced by Świętochowski as a social activist⁷⁰. In contrast to the Kraków conservatives, who criticised the political emancipation of peasants and grass-roots social uprisings, the followers of Warsaw positivism advocated grass-roots work for the development of education among the peasantry or the equal rights of all citizens, regardless of nationality and religion. The debate that broke out in the Kraków and Warsaw press placed the issue of the Forest Germans firmly within the context of folk/peasants history, making them a kind of symbol in the political discourse around the Polish peasantry of that time. In November 1885 "Prawda" published an article reporting on news of recent peasant riots in several villages in the districts of Pilsen and Tarnów. The article ended with the sentence: '[W]hen the Tarnów Forest German was a true Slav, he would have known that the Lord God had commanded him to strictly honour and love the land lords, closer in Kraków and further away in Vienna'⁷¹.

In the course of this discussion, however, the focus shifted away from the substance of the matter; the phenomenon of Forest German ceased to be viewed as a purely cultural quality and began to be perceived as a political problem. The democratic-liberal "Gazeta Narodowa"⁷², published in Lviv under the editorship of Jan Dobrzański, and the conservative weekly "Kraj"⁷³, published in Petersburg under the editorship of Erazm Piltz, also took part in this polemic. It is noteworthy, however, that at the same time the issue of Forest Germans was presented in a positive light in textbooks for folk schools published at the end of the 19th century. The author of one such textbook, Wojciech Michna, a priest from Krościenko Wyżne and social activist, wrote that 'today the Forest Germans are completely polonised, they don't even know

⁶⁹ "Prawda" 1882, no. 6, pp. 62–63.

⁷⁰ M. Tobera, *Posel prawdy* (Aleksander Świętochowski), "Kwartalnik Historii Prasy Polskiej" 1991, 30, 3–4, pp. 62–70.

⁷¹ "Prawda" 1885, no. 48, p. 569.

⁷² "Gazeta Narodowa" 1884, no. 37, p. 2.

⁷³ "Kraj" 1884, no. 14, p. 3.

anything about their former origins', but 'they are a beautiful, hard-working, sober and country-bound [sic!] people'⁷⁴.

The late 19th century was a period that saw the emergence of regional dictionary and encyclopaedic publications. The leading study of this type was *Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavonic Countries* (1880–1902) published in Warsaw and edited by Filip Sulimierski, Bronisław Chlebowski and Władysław Walewski. The practice of collecting historical, geographical, demographic and ethnographic data contributed to the revival of an interest in the investigation of verifiable facts, while the contemporary call to free scholarship from metaphysical speculation (so prominent in Romantic narratives) encouraged a more critical view of the achievements of previous generations. In some respects, the studies emerging at the time resembled the work of authors active during the Enlightenment, including Franciszek Siarczyński, with whom we began our 'journey' through the narratives of the Forest Germans in Polish scientific literature. The *Geographical Dictionary...* includes village-specific entries containing information on medieval German colonisation and its relics⁷⁵. It also features – albeit in a very laconic form and largely summarising Wincenty Pol's account – a definition under the entry *Głuchoniemcy*⁷⁶.

Another dictionary project, although never completed, concerning the German past of the Carpathian Foothills' villages, was carried out by the ethnographer and documentarian of Galician history, Antoni Schneider. Work on the lexicon was interrupted by his death in 1880. Under the entry for Albigowa he included a footnote:

The surnames of the local inhabitants mostly end with -ar -or -er, which clearly proves their German origin, as these: Szpunar, Rajzer, Trojnar, Bytnar, Falgier U[l]man, Bem, Inglot, Pelc, Pysz, et. al. Other

⁷⁴ W. Michna, *Geografia dla szkół ludowych*, Kraków 1879, p. 20.

⁷⁵ Among others: *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 6, eds. F. Sulimierski, B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, Warszawa 1885, pp. 126–127 (Markowa); *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 1, eds. F. Sulimierski, B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, Warszawa 1880, p. 26 (Albigowa); *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 3, eds. F. Sulimierski, B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, Warszawa 1882, p. 6 (Haczów), pp. 594–596 (Jodłowa); *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 15, part 1, eds. W. Chlebowski, J. Krzywicki, Warszawa 1900, p. 155 (Binarowa); *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 9, eds. B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, Warszawa 1888, p. 833 (Rozembark).

⁷⁶ *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 6, p. 612.

Mazurians in the vicinity of Tyczyn and Rzeszów usually call the local inhabitants Forest Germans⁷⁷.

Also in his loose, never-published material devoted to other localities we find references to the Forest Germans (e.g. '[here] in the face you can see a German'⁷⁸ in the material on Haczów).

The authors of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, although fascinated by the everyday life of the countryside and peasant culture in general, that can be seen in the literature and art of the Young Poland period (1890–1918), did not devote as much attention to the Forest Germans. Distant echoes of medieval German colonization present in the folklore ('local people still call this area *Na Głuchoniemcach*') were concisely noted in 1904 by ethnographer Jan Aleksander Karłowicz, editor of the monthly geographical and ethnographic magazine "*Wisła*"⁷⁹. Historian Antoni Prochaska, in the *Foreword to Town and Land Records from the times of the Republic of Poland* (1901), also included a chapter devoted to ethnographic relations in the Carpathian Foothills in the Middle Ages and modern times. He drew attention to the 'German population' scattered 'across villages and towns'⁸⁰. Prochaska listed a number of place names from the Krosno region alongside their original German versions ('who would deny that Haczów had Polish origins, but it was *Hetzhoff*') and characteristic family names of peasants from Haczów, Jaćmierz, Rogów, Harta, Frydłów, Iwonicz and Próchnik that appeared in old town and land records he studied⁸¹.

At the same time, it was a period in which German and Austrian researchers and publicists increasingly turned their attention to the problems of historical settlement in the Carpathians, creating tendentious and propagandistic studies. Growing national movements began to exert a strong influence on the development of ethnographic thought and on reflections concerning the culture and history of the peasantry in this part of Europe⁸². These processes culminated in the interwar period. Nevertheless, the topic of Forest Germans appeared sporadically in texts created as part of the peasant movement in Poland of that time.

⁷⁷ A. Schneider, *Encyklopedia do krajoznawstwa Galicji pod względem historycznym, statystycznym, topograficznym, orograficznym, geognostycznym, etnograficznym, handlowym, przemysłowym, sfragistycznym, etc. etc.*, vol. 1, Lwów 1871, p. 24.

⁷⁸ Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie, Teki Antoniego Schneidra, ref. no. 1/599, p. 1.

⁷⁹ J. Karłowicz, *Lud. Rys ludoznawstwa polskiego*, Lwów 1904, p. 117.

⁸⁰ A. Prochaska, *Przedmowa do Akt Grodzkich i Ziemskich z czasów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Lwów 1901, pp. XLI–XLII.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

⁸² Z. Jasiewicz, *Skąd*, p. 73.

In the 1920s, many years after the polemics in "Prawda", Aleksander Świętochowski published a *Outline of the history of Polish peasantry*, where he decided to mention the Forest Germans alongside the *Kaftaniaki*, *Gardlaki*, *Nadrabiany*, *Rzeszowiacy*, *Szwedy* [sic!], *Mazurzy*, *Podgórzanie* and other groups living in western Małopolska⁸³. The agricultural economist Wiktor Bronikowski, in part three of the dissertation *The Paths of Progress of the Polish Peasant* (1934) noted to a certain distinctiveness of the population living 'from the Sanok Pits to Gorlice and Pilzno'⁸⁴. He concluded that 'both the cursory consideration and the above-mentioned considerations about various differences must lead to the conclusion that there is no possibility of the existence of a uniform type of population in Poland, especially in terms of a uniform psyche'⁸⁵. These examples confirm that the issue of the ethnic complexity of the Carpathian Foothills population was not ignored by authors representing associated with the peasant movement, though it was consistently framed within the broader context of the Polish identity of the local peasantry.

Finally, the term 'Forest Germans' was evoked for the last time by the ethnographer Jan Stanisław Bystroń and published in 1935 in *National Megalomania*⁸⁶. In ethnographic literature, it was replaced by new, Polonized designations for ethnographic groups: *Pogórzanie* (by Adam Wójcik, 1936⁸⁷) and *Rzeszowiacy* (by Jan Stanisław Bystroń, 1925⁸⁸). The outbreak of World War II and the Polish-German antagonism that resonated during the Polish People's Republic prevented this issue from re-emerging within Polish humanities. A term *Głuchoniemcy* thus disappeared from the scientific discourse for several decades, until the 1980s⁸⁹.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of ethnographic and historical sources on the Forest Germans, and of the discourse constructed around them in the 19th century, shows that the process of polonisation of this phenomenon

⁸³ A. Świętochowski, *Historja chłopów polskich w zarysie*, vol. 1, *W Polsce niepodległej*, Lwów-Poznań 1925, p. 498.

⁸⁴ W. Bronikowski, *Drogi postępu chłopu polskiego*, Warszawa 1934, p. 126.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁶ J.S. Bystroń, *Megalomania*, p. 102.

⁸⁷ "Kurier Literacko-Naukowy" no. 33, supplement to "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny" 1936, no. 227, pp. IX-X.

⁸⁸ J.S. Bystroń, *Ugrupowanie etniczne ludu polskiego*, "Krakowskie Odczyty Geograficzne" 1925, no. 2, p. 9.

⁸⁹ L. Stomma, *Antropologia kultury wsi polskiej XIX w.*, Warszawa 1986, p. 32.

proceeded along two lines. Firstly, the image of Forest Germans that emerged in the scientific descriptions was not a straightforward collection of facts about the culture and history of peasants with roots in medieval German colonization in the Carpathian Foothills. Each time, the narratives on the subject reflected changing ideologies and socio-political thought under the Partitions and, especially in the second half of the 19th century, authors' stance on the peasant question. It can be concluded that the Forest Germans become Polish under the influence of changes in the categories of describing the past, reflecting the mission that ethnography and related sciences pursued under conditions of the lost statehood.

Secondly, beneath these narratives lay real phenomena affecting Polish peasantry in the 19th century. Peasants, their cultural identity and historical memory, became the focus of particular attention from scholars and writers of that time⁹⁰. Moreover, it was a period in which peasants began to develop self-awareness. This process, based on emancipation, necessarily involved the adoption of cultural patterns shaped by the upper classes. In this context, the ethnic diversity of the rural population and local cultural differences gradually diminished, giving way to the emergence of a Polish national identity. The remnants of original cultures were subjected to various forms of folklorization. It appears that all these activities significantly accelerated the process of Polonization of the descendants of German-speaking settlers living in the villages of the Carpathian Foothills.

In conclusion, the contexts in which the authors of the time placed the phenomenon of the Forest Germans have been adopted by contemporary humanities. This subject first emerged in the second half of the 19th century within the discourse surrounding the Polish peasantry, laying the semantic foundations for its study by future generations of researchers. Consequently, it can be considered as part of peasant history in Poland today. This connection is particularly evident in the study of village court books, which provide an insights into a fragment of the social reality of rural communities established in modern times on the basis of remnants of medieval German settlement.

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