

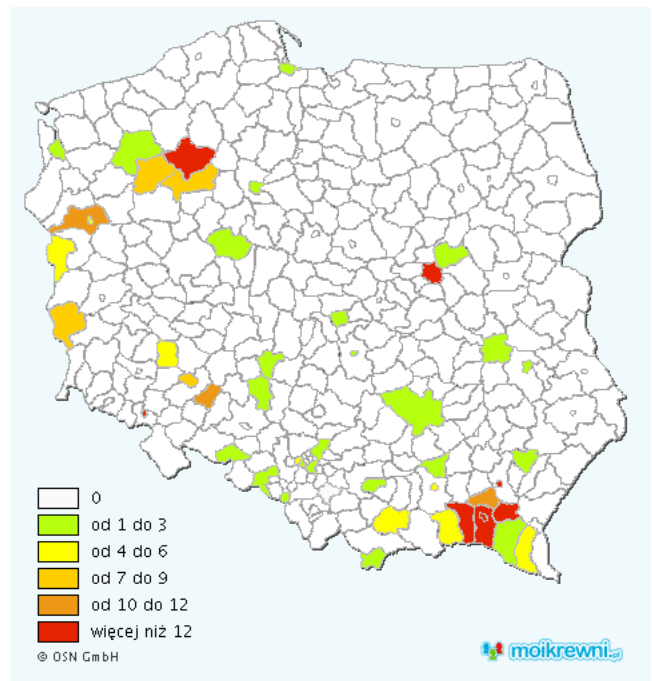
## SABIK

Requested by Patricia Yocum: “My ancestors came from Wysoka Strzyzowka, SW of Rzeszow. I am told the name is not Polish but might be Hungarian because there was a Hungarian priest in the vicinity in the 19th century. I appreciate any light you can shed on the name’s origin.”

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Sometimes the information people have been given about a name’s origins is utterly wrong or at best misleading. I’m pleased to say this is one time the information may have some validity.

In Polish **Sabik** is spelled with no diacritical marks, and it is pronounced roughly “SAH-beek.” The data available at the Moikrewni Web site (<http://www.moikrewni.pl/mapa/kompletny/sabik.html>) shows that as of 2002 there were 373 Polish citizens who went by this name. As the map at right shows, they were scattered in small numbers, with the largest numbers in the counties of Brzozów (79), Krosno (40), and municipal Rzeszów (31) of Podkarpackie province (the red counties in southeastern Poland on the map). Wysoka Strzyżowska is in Strzyżów county of Podkarpackie province; the data showed 10 Polish citizens named Sabik living there. On the map, Strzyżów is the small county in orange just north of the three red counties in southeastern Poland. So your ancestors came from the general area where this name is most common, though it shows up most often a little farther south.



Map showing the distribution of the surname **Sabik** as of 2002.

Professor Rymut mentions **Sabik** in his book *Nazwiska Polaków* [The Surnames of Poles]. He says it appears in Polish records as early as 1623. He lists it under surnames beginning *Sab-*, which can have several different origins. They can come from a first name *Saba* of Aramaic origin—this name shows up more often among Eastern Slavs (Belarusians, Russians, and Ukrainians) as *Caba* [*Sava*], less often among Poles. Or surnames beginning *Sab-* can come from the noun *saba*, which Rymut defines as “a large skin for preserving milk.” He says names beginning *Sab-* can be influenced by Belarusian to have the vowel *a* where Polish would have *o*, so that they can be variants of Polish names beginning *Sob-*. Or they can come from Hungarian *Szabó*, a surname from the Hungarian word for “tailor.” In Hungarian, the combination *sz* is pronounced like our *s*, while *s* is pronounced like our *sh*. (This is confusing because Polish is exactly the opposite, using *sz* for the sound we write as *sh*.) The point is that a Pole hearing the first part of the Hungarian name *Szabó* would write it down as *Sab-*. Rymut specifically mentions that *Sabo* shows up as a name in Polish records as early as 1605, and says flat out that it comes from Hungarian *Szabó*.

So if a Hungarian by that name settled among Poles, his son or kin might come to be called *Sabik*, “son/kin of S[z]abó.” This is a very plausible interpretation of this name’s origin, especially in view of where the surname *Sabik* shows up most often. In southeastern Poland we see a very rich mixture of linguistic elements in name forms. Slovak, Ukrainian, Rusyn, Hungarian, and Romanian all show up in names

from that region. This is largely due to the history of the area, which bordered on the Kingdom of Hungary for quite a while. There was also a fair amount of trade and interaction between Poles and Hungarians. It's not at all rare to see Poles bearing names of Hungarian origin, and Hungarians with names of obvious Polish origin. So all of this tends to support the hypothesis that *Sabik* comes from the Hungarian word for "tailor."

Of course, it's not an absolute certainty; we can't just ignore the other possibilities Rymut mentioned. That Aramic name *Saba* might possibly be a factor, especially given the appearance of the name *Sabik* in a region so close to the border with Ukraine. But I think that's less likely, because Slavs generally adopted that name with a *v* sound rather than a *b*. Poles spell it *Sawa*, and we often see it in surnames of Ukrainian origin such as *Sawczuk*, "son of Sawa." Belarusian influence is not likely to be all that strong in southeastern Poland, so Rymut's suggestion of *Sab-* = *Sob-* is less convincing for this name than it might be for other surnames beginning *Sab-*. I guess *Sabik* could mean "son of the milk-skin guy," but I don't find that terribly convincing. Of all the plausible interpretations, I really think the Hungarian connection is the most persuasive one, at least for this particular name.

The only way one might settle the matter for sure, of course, is through detailed genealogical research. If you trace the family back far enough, you might find a document that mentions an ancestor and includes a comment about his Hungarian roots. Stranger things have happened. But all things considered, I'd have to say I think "son of the [Hungarian] tailor" strikes me as the most likely derivation for this name. The fact that you've run across information suggesting the same connection makes it all the easier to believe.