Origin of the Morkel Name

I found three versions for the origin of the Morkel name. The third one is the more convincing. The most common version of the name is Morkel, including descendants of Philip Morkel in Southern Africa. Other versions include Morkell, Morckel, Morchel and Morgel.It is reasonable that Merkel and Markle are also variations on the theme.

St Mauritius

According to the historians[1] who assisted P.W. Morkel with the history and family tree for the family, the origin of the Morkel name can be traced back to a medieval Saint named Mauritius. This was shortened to St. Maurus, while the German version Moritz was also varied to Maritz. Maurus developed into a nickname Moro, and this in turn evolved a diminutive in old German Morico which became Mörike. Another version of the diminutive was Morilo, which became Morkel and in German Mörkel.

Mushrooms

Another explanation is that the name came from the Morel mushroom (in German: Morchel, and in Danish: Morkel). Thus the family were mushroom gatherers *(Pilzsammler)*. The Morel is a gourmet mushroom with its head a characteristic brain coral like appearance[2].

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[1] P.W. Morkel 1961. *Frontispiece to The Morkels. Family History*

[2] Jordan and Wheeler 1995, *The Ultimate Mushroom Book p84.*

Morel Mushrooms
(Morchella Esculenta)

Markwart

Melchior[3] traced the family in Butzbach going back to 1383, based on taxation records. The name apparently started out as Markwart or Markholt. The root of the word 'mark' refers to the border or remote region[4]. Thus Markwart could be originally have been a border guard, someone from a remote location, or simply a stranger. It then changed to Markel and Marckel and eventually Morkel.

Melchior's article[5] shows a family tree where the name is spelled 'Morkel' for the first time in 1535 — for Emmerich Morkel, the younger mayor (jüngerer burgermeister) of Butzbach. His descendants were either Morckel or Morkel,

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[3] Melchior 1982. Butzbacher Familien: Marckel, Morckel

[4] Etymology dictionary: https://www.etymonline.com/word/march March (noun) "boundary," late 13c. (in reference to the borderlands beside Wales, rendering Old English *Mercia*), from Old French *marche* "boundary, frontier," from Frankish **marka* or some other Germanic source (compare Old High German *marchon* "to mark out, delimit," German *Mark* "boundary;"

[5] Melchior Ibid

with the latter used consistently in the Butzbach church books from 1651 on. the younger mayor attended to regular duties of the town while the older mayor was more ceremonial

Morkel house-mark

Emmerich had a "house-mark" *(hausmark)*[6] which was used in early European societies as a form of a brand. Such marks or brands are still commonly used to identify livestock and in their modern equivalents, as commercial brand names.

House -mark (Hausmark) 1535

of Emmerich Morkel

André T. Morkel

December 2008, Revised Jun 2018

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[6] Melchior Ibid