

Spiritual Genealogy: A Look at Polish Notary Documentation

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A meeting between a genealogist and a historian a few years ago inspired this historian to consider the usefulness of notarial deeds in genealogical investigations. In fact, notarial sources can be extremely helpful in family history research.

The analysis in this article is based on records held in the State Archives in Warsaw (Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie—APW) and the State Archives in Suwałki (Archiwum Państwowe w Suwałkach—APS). The set of documents that make up the "Warsaw Notariate" of 1808–1924 includes the registers of 192 notarial offices. The registers occupy approximately 1,200 shelf-meters.¹ The legacy of the 52 notarial offices that operated in Suwałki from 1809 to 1951 is far more modest; its collection of documents occupies 89 meters of shelves.

My research covered 20 Warsaw notary offices and seven offices of notaries who had worked in Suwałki for the period between 1808 and the 1870s. In the Suwałki archives, I examined the files of all notarial offices that had operated since the establishment of the institution of notary public in 1808 until the 1860s.

The Warsaw Notariate includes repertories and indexes prepared for tax control purposes.² Repertories are chronological records of matters handled by individual notarial offices and include names of clients; consecutive deed numbers; dates and brief summaries of their contents, confirmed by the signatures of the parties involved. For example, deed 2709, drawn up in the office of notary Józef Bikowski, dealt with the distribution of property after the death of Michał Bergsohn Sonnenberg.

In every alphabetically arranged index, the names of clients and matters handled are listed in chronological order.² For example, in the index kept by the office of notary Jan Wincenty Ostrowski is an entry made in 1832 under the letter "A": "Adamska, Acknowledges Receipt (of money from) Jakub Bereksohn Sonnenberg." In the next column, the number of the notarial deed is given. The index covering the 1850s is arranged in a similar manner, a letter of the alphabet, then the year, and below that the name of the client, type of matter handled and number of the notarial

deed. Warsaw repertories and indexes are almost entirely preserved. For some notarial offices in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Kutno and Nidzica, documents are stored in branches of the Warsaw State Archives.

When the institution of notariate was introduced in Polish territories, notaries began to receive so-called acts of good will, that is, various types of private agreements (pertaining to lease, hire, partnership), to draw up testaments, inventories of movable property, prenuptial agreements and catalogues. The task of a notary, as a public official, was to prepare in writing a document whose content was dictated by the parties involved. Documents were prepared in the notary's office, usually at his residence. One exception to this

rule was the preparation of posthumous inventories, physical inventories of sealed movables that were listed in accordance with the division of items into various categories or in accordance with the division of a home into individual rooms.

From 1808, when the notariate was established, until 1876, when administration of the Congress Kingdom of Poland became fully Russianized, the majority of documents were prepared in Polish. Some exceptions occurred, depending on the type of document prepared.

Prenuptial agreements were written primarily in Polish. In cases when the mother tongue of one spouse was other than Polish, the prenuptial document was translated into another language. One example is the prenuptial agreement of Stefania Laska, a Warsaw banker's daughter, who married Wilhelm Rau, the administrator of a factory producing machines. Attached to this document is a long list (in Polish only) of items making up the bride's trousseau. The prenuptial agreement of Zofia Lesser, daughter of Warsaw merchant Levy Lesser, includes a German translation of the document, and the prenuptial agreement of Julianna Kronenberg, who intended to marry Paris merchant Emil Oppenheim, was written in French. Attached to this agreement was a short specification (translated into French) of Miss Kronenberg's personal effects. Wills could be written in any language.

Inventories

The lengthiest notarial documents were inventories.

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Inventories usually consisted of several pages or even several hundred pages on which a notary or an authorized expert listed the movable and immovable property remaining after a person's death. The length of an inventory depended on the number of possessions left by the deceased, but also on his or her family relations. Rarely—and only in the case of death of a woman—an inventory merely stated the total value of the remaining movables without presenting a detailed description of the possessions or the estimated value of individual items.

Items that constituted the deceased's movable possessions were registered in accordance with the so-called German model, that is in accordance with their division into separate categories or in accordance with the English model in which items found in individual rooms were listed. In Congress Poland, the category method was used more commonly in inventories. An inventory was made at the request of the surviving spouse. In the case of death of both parents, all matters pertaining to the inheritance of children under full legal age were regulated on the minor's behalf by a guardian appointed by the so-called family council. Inventories usually were prepared immediately after an individual's death, most often at his or her residence. To ensure a fair presentation of the property, the movable possessions were entrusted to a person appointed to protect them. This could be the surviving spouse, a child who had attained the legal age of majority, a relative, a friend or a clerk who received remuneration for his services from the decedent's family. In cases when possessions were not listed until several or more years after a person's death, an inventory was prepared in a notarial office. The family of the deceased attached to the document a list of items made by an authorized expert.

The preparation of an inventory could take a few or more days, depending on the number of possessions left. Listed in the inventories were both movable items such as clothes, jewelry, valuables, furniture and cash, funds constituting income from economic activities and the value of a business. Income from economic activities could mean both income obtained from major industrial ventures as well as income earned by small businesses. The estimated value of property was reduced by the liabilities. The remaining amount was divided among the inheritors in proportions set forth in the Civil Code of Congress Poland unless the beneficiaries' share in the remaining property was regulated differently by the terms of a will.

Prenuptial agreements, wills and posthumous inventories all are mass sources. Although the preparation of such documents was not legally required, the procedure became common, especially among property owners. The circumstances under which such docu-

ments were created and the form of the documents constitute a valuable source of information for genealogists.

Prenuptial Agreements

Prenuptial agreements served to regulate financial relations between intended spouses. Such documents were designed to ensure economic safety for women in the case of divorce or the death of her husband. The documents also defined how property issues would be resolved in the case of the childless death of one of the spouses. Prenuptial agreements registered in the form of notarial acts could not be revoked after the marriage had been contracted.

The first registered prenuptial agreement was prepared in 1813 by Anna Tischler, nee Jakubowicz (the daughter of Judyta), who was marrying a future senator of Congress Poland, Józef Aleksy Morawski.⁵ Anna, who was 25 years old at the time, previously had been married to Łazarz Tischler, a trader. That marriage had ended in divorce. Her second husband was not Jewish, which compelled her to convert to a different religion and also to use new legal opportunities. The prenuptial agreement, concluded in the form of a notarial document, constituted a sort of material guarantee, the function served by a *ketubah* (marriage contract) among Jews.

It seems that Mrs. Jakubowicz, who acted as an agent and supplier of goods, expected that her daughter's marriage to a high-ranking official of Congress Poland would help increase the mother's income through resultant government contracts. Although this was a typical "business" marriage, the couple lived in harmony and had six children during 15 years of wedlock.

The structure of prenuptial documents changed little over the years. In the right upper corner of the first page, the place and date of the occurrence is indicated. We read that the event "took place in the capital city of Warsaw on May 7, 1826." The text written immediately below provides information about the official receiving the act:

They appeared in person before Jan Wincenty Ostrowski, notary public of Mazowieckie voivodeship who resides at 542A Długa Street, in the presence of witnesses appointed with my knowledge.

Next, persons acceding to the act are characterized and their decision is announced. On one side we see that: Miss Emilia Moldauer, the daughter of the late Febus Moldauer and his wife Machela Anna Moldauer, nee Lesser, who live here in Warsaw at 5426 Nowolipie Street, appears, assisted by her mother.

On the other side, Zachariasz Londyński, a merchant from Płock, appeared before the notary. The text further states "their common will to act being known

they have voluntarily and deliberately concluded and confirmed the following prenuptial contract."

Here follows a declaration that the future spouses wish to regulate financial questions prior to the civil and religious solemnization of marriage. Emilia Moldauer brought to her husband at marriage a dowry of 12,000 zlotys. In accordance with the prenuptial contract, this amount and other gifts for Emilia Moldauer were to constitute her exclusive property. The amount contributed in the form of a dowry was not secured by a mortgage or in any other way. An oral promise made by her fiancé was the only guarantee obtained by the future bride.

In article II of the document, the right to represent Emilia Moldauer as a minor is transferred from her relatives to her husband, and article III states that in the case of the childless death of one of the spouses his or her property passes to the surviving spouse. Article IV ensures the rights to the inheritance of the surviving spouse if the couple has any children. Below the text are the signatures of persons acceding to the act. Emilia's mother, declares, "I can't write; therefore, I haven't signed the document."

The pattern of the document was identical for the first part of every prenuptial agreement. Compare now a document prepared in 1858 in the office of a notary in Sejny. Here again, in the upper right corner of the page, the notary stated where and when the event occurred (this happened in Sejny in the notarial office in the house situated at 234 Grodzieńska Street on November 18 [30], 1858).⁴ Before the notary, Szymon Mocarski, there appeared in person—in the presence of witnesses—Chaskiel Chaimowicz Bardyni, a trader and owner of real estate in Sejny who resided in that town, and Fajga Ryt, nee Typograf, a widow from Kaunas in the Russian Empire (now Lithuania). The couple took the rather unconventional decision to preserve separate property rights. In practice, that meant both the possessions owned before marriage and those acquired by each of the spouses during marriage would constitute their separate property. Article II of the prenuptial agreement provides interesting information from the point of view of the principles of conduct. It makes it clear that Fajga Ryt, nee Typograf, lived in the house of her future husband before the solemnization of marriage and that all the movables that formed her dowry were in Bardyni's house in Sejny. These movables consisted of items of everyday use and personal effects whose value and descriptions are presented in points 1–98 of the document. The total value of these possessions amounted to 1,551 silver rubles. Chaskiel Chaimowicz Bardyni also received from his future wife 500 rubles in the form of a loan secured on his real estate in Sejny. The future spouses put their signatures on the document, Bardyni in Polish and Fajga Ryt, nee

Typograf, in Yiddish.

Yet another prenuptial agreement was concluded in Warsaw between Balbina Stern and Izydor Poznański.⁵ As in the case of the documents discussed above, this one, too, characterizes the parties to the agreement. Balbina Stern, already of age, arrived in the office in the company of her parents, Izaak Stern, a lottery-office keeper, and Pessa Stern, nee Joachimowicz. Izydor Poznański, employed in the Lesser Brothers trading firm, arrived unaccompanied by his parents. Article I of the document offers interesting information from the point of view of social customs: "Balbina Stern and Izydor Poznański, inspired by the feeling of mutual attraction, have decided to unite through marriage with the consent and blessing of the bride's parents."

This declaration of mutual feelings is extraordinary for 1845. The openness and courage with which the young pair spoke about the reasons for their marriage are intriguing. First, the young people had an occasion to meet personally, because they lived in the same house in Warsaw, at 2323 Dzielna Street (as indicated by information included in the prenuptial agreement). Second, Miss Stern not only was an enterprising young woman who earned her own living, but she also received an outfit of articles forming a bride's trousseau from her parents and a handsome amount of money from her uncle. The future bride contributed items worth a total of 4,474 rubles and 900 rubles in cash bequeathed her by Lewin Witkowski from Gniezno. Izzak Stern handed this amount directly to his daughter and not, as normally would be expected, to his son-in-law. The document contains no information about property owned by Izydor Poznański.

The documents discussed so far make it absolutely clear that financial independence allowed women to break the barriers of social customs and change behavioral stereotypes. In the successive articles of the document, Balbina Stern, who engaged in trade, obtained guarantees from her future husband that she would be allowed to continue business activities under her own name. Also worthy of attention is article VI of the document, which defines the financial duties of the spouses:

All incomes earned by the future spouses will constitute their joint property which will serve to finance the needs of their household, to satisfy all their life needs and to support children with whom, God willing, they may be blessed.

The parties to the agreement and the parents first put their signatures on the document and, next, also on the attached list specifying movables owned by Balbina Stern. In addition to personal effects, clothes, lingerie and furs, the future bride also owned bedclothes, towels and furniture as well as jewels, kitchen

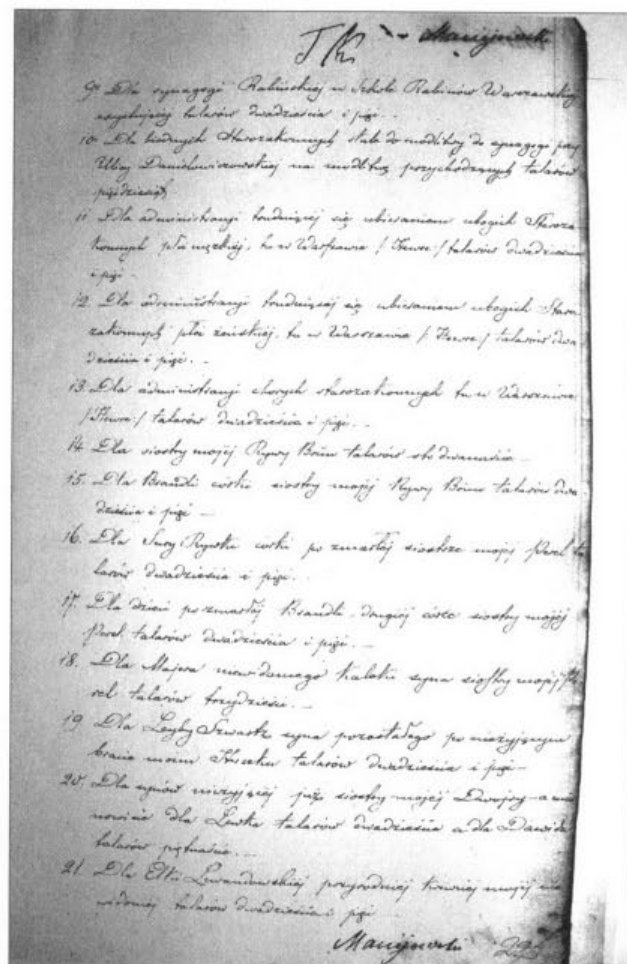
utensils and such luxurious articles as silver cutlery, candlesticks, clocks and mirrors.

As for men, the signing of the document was followed by a declaration concerning the value of property they owned. Herman Meyer, a merchant from Warsaw, declared upon marrying Matylda Toeplitz that his property consisted of "a sum of 10,000 silver rubles and personal effects and movables worth a total of 2,000 rubles."⁶

The presentation of a separate list of movable possessions of the future husband was absolutely exceptional. Among several hundred prenuptial agreements examined, only one—that concluded between Anna Marii Wawelberg and Leon Rotwand—included a detailed description of the possessions attached by the husband-to-be.⁷ The amounts contributed by each of the future spouses were impressive. Miss Wawelberg received from her father 20,000 rubles in cash and 10,552 rubles in articles forming her trousseau. Her total property was worth about 34,000 rubles. This amount was increased by 1,090 rubles inherited after the death of her mother and by the value of silver articles that she received as a gift from her future husband. Property owned by Leon Rotwand was far more modest. It consisted of 4,000 rubles in shares, securities and cash; 8,000 rubles invested in an enterprise selling timber; and 2,270 rubles in "movables indispensable to a man." The total value of Rotwand's property was 14,270 rubles.

Equally exceptional is the prenuptial agreement concluded between Ludwika Bershon and Dr. Ludwik Natanson. Miss Bershon's contribution consisted of 20,250 rubles in cash and in various articles, whereas her future husband declared that "he currently had no possessions and that his property would consist of only that which, after the longest of lives, he might inherit or receive as a gift." It seems hardly probable that a physician working in Warsaw could have no possessions. He certainly had to have some medical instruments, clothes and the most necessary pieces of furniture. Perhaps this was a marriage between money and intellect. We do know, however, that after the death of his wife, who died three years after the wedding (and shortly after giving birth to a child), Ludwik Natanson badgered his parents-in-law for money allegedly due him and even criticized them for summoning, without his consent, a doctor to examine their daughter and for making arrangements for her stay at a holiday resort in the summer. The documents suggest that the well-known physician, founder and editor of the medical weekly *Tygodnik Lekarski* and later chairman of Warsaw's Association of Physicians, was a miser and an irritating man.

Genealogical information contained in prenuptial



Testament of Tekla Kronenberg giving a list of beneficiaries

agreements reveals insights into the character of their authors. During the preparation of a prenuptial agreement, children who had not yet attained the age of majority had to appear before the notary in the company of both parents—if the parents were still living. In 1838, Sara Krasnopolaska, a maiden not yet of age, arrived to sign her prenuptial document in the company of her father, Hersz Krasnopolski. The future bridegroom, Wolf Landau, a merchant from Brody in Galicia, arrived in the company of his mother, Rebeka Landau. For unknown reasons, the document includes no information about Hersz Krasnopolski's marital status. The document does state, however, that Rebeka Landau was a widow. I inferred that Sara's mother had already died by that time and later found confirmation of the assumption. Hersz Krasnopolski's first wife must have died before 1837, because he married again that year, choosing for his wife the widow Chaja Basia Czerkasowa, nee Fejnberg. This explains why Sara was accompanied by her father alone during the signing of the prenuptial agreement.

In the case of death of both parents, the duty to represent underage children shifted to the primary guardian and the auxiliary guardian. Adela (whose Jewish name was Eidl), the underage daughter of the late Hersz Krasnopolski and his first wife, Maria Krasnopska, nee Gold, appeared before a notary in the company of her primary guardian, Mathias Rosen, a Warsaw banker, and the auxiliary guardian, Zajwl Gold, her dead mother's brother and a trader, who arrived in Warsaw from Zamość to fulfill the indispensable legal formalities.¹⁰

A minor girl gained legal power as a result of marriage. In the case of divorce, a girl such as Sara Krasnopska whose marriage with Wolf Landau was dissolved in 1842, four years after the wedding, did not again fall under the guardianship of the Family Council, but was merely given a "curator," a man—usually a family member—who was responsible for advising the young divorced woman in her business affairs.

In sum, prenuptial agreements provide valuable genealogical data about the future spouses and their parents (revealing their age and marital status). The agreements include addresses, occupations and descriptions of property and social status, as well as shed light on family relations and moral attitudes. They provide information about the relations between spouses, as well as about their hopes and fears. They make it possible to observe changes in customs and behaviors. Prenuptial agreements also introduce us to

the universe of possessions indispensable to a young married couple.

Wills and Testaments

Testaments seem equally worthy of attention. To be valid, a testament had to be written in the testator's own hand, although some exceptions are found among the notarial records. For example, Aleksander Laski, who stayed in Aachen in August 1850, dictated his last will to the local notary. "This took place in Aachen at the testator's bedside."¹⁰ In similar situations, a testament prepared abroad was filed with a notarial office in Congress Poland. Any corrections or additional notes could be made in the document exclusively by the testator. Every change made in the text of the document had to be confirmed by the testator's signature and date written in his own hand.⁸ Next, the testament was accepted by a notary in the presence of witnesses. Since the document was an expression of the testator's last will, it also could also be revoked by him. Binding legal regulations required that after the announcement of a testament, efforts to prepare an inventory should be launched at the request of the first beneficiary, no later than three months after the testator's death.

No regulations addressed when a document expressing a person's last will could or ought to be prepared. Such decision depended chiefly on the testator. Some testators prepared documents disposing of their property decades before their death; others did so only when

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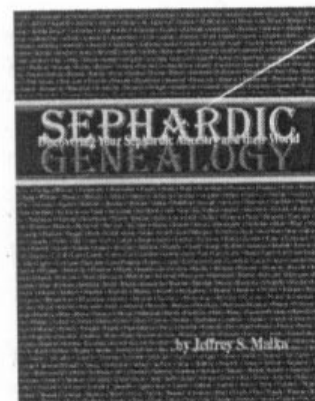
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old and ill or even on their deathbed.

A Jakub Epstein used the following words to describe his motives for preparing a will:

Blissful is the man who always remembers that God will summon him some day hence it is just and reasonable to think about a testament while one is sound in body and mind. And as for me, guided by good sense, I have decided on the following testamentary disposition.

The provident testator lived in good health for ten more years.

Samuel Antoni Fraenkel, in turn, wrote in the introduction to his testament that "old age and poor health compel me to predict that my life will end soon, therefore, I am not putting off the preparation of my testament."¹¹

The preparation of a testament was not obligatory, and it seems to have depended largely on the individual's character. Many testators, guided by the concern for the prosperity of the members of their families, felt obliged to write a testament to confirm oral promises. They also wished to guarantee adequate means of livelihood to the surviving spouse.

Berko Mendlowicz, a merchant from Wizzajny (the notary scrupulously records the fact that the testator lived in his own house near the town's Market Square, at number 92), unburdened his grief before disposing of his property in a testament written in 1814. He complained that his only daughter, Paja Berkowicz, married to Abel Boruchowicz, had retained the entire income from the family property and business managed by her after the death of her mother, Gitla (maiden name Dawidowicz).¹¹ Berko Mendlowicz, who married again, wanted to prevent discord in the family. Although, in accordance with Jewish religious laws, he guaranteed financial safety to his new wife via a ketubah, tense relations with his daughter prompted him to write and file a testament with a notarial office. It also is probable that his second wife urged him to prepare a testament, because she had brought to him at marriage not only a dowry but also children by her first husband.

What may we learn from this document? We can learn that Berko, the son of Mendel, was a trader and a resident of Wizzajny. He lived in the best part of that town, where he owned a house and ran a brewery and an inn. The testator described himself as a man "of more than 60 years of age." He also stated that eight years earlier (in 1806) he had married Irana Szmerkowicz, the widow of Chaskiel from Białystok. We can also learn from the testament that his daughter managed the affairs of the family's business and household in the 12 months following the death of Berko's first wife. This means that Berko's wife died around 1805. Since, according to the testator's remark, his first marriage lasted 40 years, it may be assumed that Berko

and Gitla married about 1765. In determining the year of the testator's birth, some flexibility is required, which allows an estimate of between 1740 and 1748.

The content of individual testaments differs greatly. Some included brief dispositions, "I bequeath all my movable possessions, with the exception of cash, shares and securities, to my wife...Berta Tischler," whereas others gave detailed instructions indicating who should receive what and why. Bequests are made not only to family members but also to employees and institutions.

Tekla Kronenberg, who died in 1848, declares in her testament, "After the labors of my life...I would like to donate a part of the property that I have acquired through work (Tekla Kronenberg's husband died in 1826, and she did not marry again) for charitable purposes, for assistance to the poor members of my own and my dead husband's family. I would also like to show through little gifts granted to other persons, even those better off, my affection for them."¹¹ The testator donated a quarter of her property to charity. She made bequests to welfare and religious institutions representing various denominations, among them an Orthodox Jewish hospital and an Evangelical hospital, a Jewish almshouse and workhouse, the Institute for Charitable Affairs and the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb. She donated to the poor of the Jewish and Calvinist communities and made bequests designed to support the expansion of synagogues and the activity of religious societies. On the long list of beneficiaries appear the names of both her close and distant relatives since, as she expressed it, a family consists not only of parents and their children.

Relations linking the members of the Kronenberg clan, that is, Tekla Kronenberg's husband's family, are detailed in a pre-World War II publication.⁹ Her testament, on the other hand, is a source abounding in information about Tekla's own large family. The list of bequests made to private persons starts with the name of the testator's sister, Rywa Brun. Rywa's daughter, Brandl, is 15th on this list of beneficiaries. Laja Brun is bequeathed several pieces of expensive garments instead of money. Other beneficiaries include Sura Rywka, daughter of the testator's already deceased sister Perel, and the children of Perel's other daughter, also named Brandl. Perel had a blind son, Mejer, and the testator made a bequest to him as well. Bequests were also made to the sons of the testator's deceased sister Dwojra, Lewek and Dawid, and to Leyb Schwartz, son of the testator's deceased brother, Herszek. Small amounts of money were given to the testator's two stepsisters, Elka Lewandowska, who was blind, and to Zysla Lewandowska. A bequest in the form of a small amount of money made to Leyb Grunstein, brother of the testator's husband, occupies 24th position on the list, and a far larger amount is be-

queathed to her husband's sister, Anna Maria Breslau, shown as 25th on the list. Unfortunately, the testator does not mention the remaining relatives by name but merely writes that, "to my own poor relatives—and not the relatives of my husband—who are connected to me by blood in any degree and who have not been mentioned by name among the beneficiaries I bequeath 150 talers." The last names on this long list of beneficiaries are linked to the synagogue situated on Danielewiczowska Street in Warsaw—Cantor Izaak and his two assistants.

Testaments not only provide genealogical information, but also yield information about the character and personal attitudes of the testators. An exceptionally interesting testament is one written in 1833 by Samuel Antoni Fraenkl, who arrived in Warsaw from Wrocław at the turn of the 19th century and who converted to Roman Catholicism upon marrying Atalia Jakubowicz Laska. In the 1830s, he belonged to the financial elite of Congress Poland. The testament that he left paints a portrait of a man with an original mind far ahead of his time in his thinking and attitudes.¹⁰ He left his property to the family and relatives and his body to science, with a request for an autopsy to determine the cause of his death. It was his wish to be buried in the clothes that he wore during the illness preceding his death, in a plain black wooden coffin that he wanted to be put in a grave dug directly in the ground. He also expressed a wish for the funeral Mass to be celebrated by the priests from his parish. He divided his property among the children that he had with Atalia and among Atalia's children by her first marriage. Fraenkel also ensured life rents to his two sisters (Rozalia Neyderman in Berlin and Babeta Delmar in Charlottenburg, currently a district of Berlin) and to three meritorious employees.

Among notarial documents, only testaments were formulated freely by their authors and, therefore, offer the best and most reliable characterizations of individual people. The authors of testaments verbalized their fears, concerns and priorities, and their decisions concerning bequests shed light on family relations and the personal attitudes of individual testators.

Property Inventories

Posthumous inventories, the most extensive of the notarial documents, constitute the richest source of genealogical information. The earliest registered inventory kept in the State Archives in Suwałki¹¹ was prepared in 1812 after the death of hop and timber merchant Zelman Dawidowicz Josielewicz, who lived in the church village Lejpuny, a village situated on land belonging to the Catholic Church.¹⁴ (The notary used both Josielewicz and Dawidowicz as the patronymic in different parts of the document, so both

names are given here.) The structure of the document resembles that of the prenuptial agreements. In the upper right corner of the first page, the place and date of the document's preparation are given, along with the registration number of the document above. The first lines of the text identify the notary, and beneath the text are the signatures (in Yiddish script) of the legal guardians of Zelman's minor child, Mowsza. The guardians are the child's paternal grandfather, Josiel Dawidowicz; his maternal grandfather, Szachn Dawidowicz and Wolf Zelmanowicz.

The inventory was made two years after the death of Zelman Josielewicz, probably because his widow Cypa Josielewicz, nee Szachnowicz, remarried, and Zelman's son was entrusted to the guardianship of his grandfather, Josiel Dawidowicz. It became necessary to estimate the value of goods and movables left by the deceased. Mowsza's guardians (Josiel, son of Dawid from the village Lejpuny; and Szachn, son of Dawid from the village Lipniunce¹²) decided to sell the remaining movables at auction. Part of the funds raised through the auction were to be used to cover expenses incurred in connection with Zelman's terminal illness and medical treatment as well as debts drawn after his death. The amount remaining after payment of all debts was to pass to Mowsza, Zelman's only son and heir.

This document may be regarded as a family chronicle. Zelman Josielewicz "feeling weakened in health and seeking a remedy, traveled to the Prussian town of Tylża to consult and undergo treatment prescribed by Doctor Morgens." The medical treatment, continuing for several months, proved ineffective and Zelman Josielewicz died on August 14, 1810, at the age of 28. We can estimate then that he was born about 1782. Zelman had two children by Cypa (maiden name Szachnowicz) whom he had married around 1805—Mowsza Zelmanowicz, born in 1806 (it is stated in the inventory that the boy was four years old in 1810), and Chaja Dyna Zelman, a daughter who was 18 months old when her father died. Thus, the daughter was probably born in February 1809 and died in February 1811. The document also indicates that Zelman Josielewicz's widow married Dawid Ruwenowicz in November 1811 and went to live with him in Olwita.¹³ The property of the deceased was estimated at 14,765 zlotys, of which 12,348 zlotys were accounted for by credits and other loans. Thus, money in cash constituted about 84 percent of the property left by the deceased. The index of debtors shows the amount owed, first name of the debtor, his patronymic and his place of residence. The debt owed by Chaim Berkowicz from Lejpuny amounted to 30 Polish zlotys. A part of the debt amounting to 500 Polish zlotys owed by Jankiel Jickowicz, also a resident of Lejpuny, and his

wife was paid back. Only the unpaid amount of 398 złotych was included in the estimate of the property's total value. The debt owed by Eliasz Judelowicz from Kalwarja was reduced by a sum returned by the debtor.

Preparation of an inventory constituted an important event in the life of a family. This is why all the closest surviving relatives of the deceased accede to the act either in person or by plenipotentiary representatives.

In a situation in which birth, marriage and death certificates offer only limited information, notarial acts may be an excellent complement to them. Notarial records hold information about occupation and sources of income, place of residence, marital status and even number of children of the persons involved. They provide facts about family ties, particularly important in the case of a change in a woman's name. Accounts of deliberations held by family councils that are attached to inventories allow one to acquire knowledge about distant relations and friends of persons concerned.

The sources discussed here have been used to resolve genealogical puzzles by combining dates found in birth, marriage and death certificates with information in notarial documents.

Below are results of research on several families. When selecting documents for examination, I deliberately searched for acts that did not involve prominent or esteemed citizens of Congress Poland. I chose an inventory prepared in 1844 after the death of Jakub Joachim Kempner.¹⁴ The inventory of property left by the deceased reveals Jakub Joachim Kempner and Rozalia Rosenthal married in April 1822 in Olesno in the "Prussian State." The groom declared that his permanent place of residence was Lipie in Kalisz province, where he probably held a lease on a metallurgical facility. Jakub Joachim and Rozalia had three children, Aleksander, who was their eldest child but still a minor in 1844, which means that he was born after 1826; Franciszka, who died in April 1843; and Edward, their youngest child.

Without the notary records, birth dates for the two younger children could not even be approximated because only three family vital statistics documents certificates have survived: the marriage certificate prepared in Olesno, Jakub Joachim Kempner's death certificate and the certificate of death of Rozalia Kempner who outlived her husband by 41 years. The two death certificates are kept in the State Archives in Warsaw. The marriage record is in Berlin. Information included in the Kempner property inventory suggests a direction for further genealogical investigations. The documents prove that the family did not have its roots in Warsaw. Rozalia's parents probably lived in the part of partitioned Poland controlled by Prussia. Jakub

Joachim Kempner, who maintained that the place of his birth was Praszka, lived and certainly had relatives in the Kalisz region.

I conducted a similar analysis on the basis of an inventory of property left by Helena Bein, nee Libas, who died in December 1870.¹⁸ The document was signed by three of her children: Jakub, Aleksander and Anna, wife of Ludwik Hirschfeld. Unfortunately, the document does not permit me to establish the name of Helena's husband or her marital status. The document does mention, however, the fact that Ludwik Hirschfeld's first wife was Anna's sister, Róża Bein. Ludwik and Róża married in 1855, a fact confirmed by their prenuptial agreement.¹⁶ This agreement was very important to my investigation because it included the name of Róża Bein's deceased father, Salomon. An inventory also was prepared when Róża Bein, Ludwik Hirschfeld's first wife, died in December 1861.¹⁷

The inventory of property left by her showed that Róża and Ludwik had four children: Stanisław Samuel, Amalia, Bolesław and Róża. I also found a prenuptial agreement which made it possible to ascertain that the older son of Helena and Salomon Jakub, who was a merchant and who lived in Warsaw on Nowiniarska Street, married Charlotta Merzbach in 1856. She was the daughter of a Warsaw bookseller, deceased at the time of her marriage. The establishment of facts concerning this marriage may not be a particularly spectacular event. However, the unsuccessful efforts of the earlier quoted Kazimierz Reychman¹⁸ to establish the date of Jakub Bein's marriage or his occupation and place of residence, despite access to family archives and birth, marriage and death certificates, allow me to emphasize the value of notarial acts in genealogical research. I have enriched the retrieved information about the family by facts stemming from several certificates.

Salomon and Helena Bein had another son, Michał, who was born in 1828 and died in infancy.¹⁹ His birth certificate allowed me to determine that Helena Bein died at the age of 71. I have not managed to establish the year of death of her husband, Salomon. It can only be stated that he probably died not earlier than 1837 and not later than 1855 (his daughter Róża was born in 1837, and she concluded her prenuptial agreement in 1855). The certificates in question also made it possible to determine that Ludwik Hirschfeld's eldest son, Stanisław Samuel, married Żaneta Ginsburg in 1881.²⁰ Three years later, they had a son whom they named Ludwik in memory of his deceased grandfather.²¹ Ludwik Hirschfeld and his first wife, Róża Bein, their son, Stanisław Samuel, and his wife, Żaneta Ginsburg, are buried in the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw (plot XX).

I also have examined the documents of the Eiger family from Warsaw. The starting point for my analysis

was, naturally, an inventory made after the death of Mojżesz Eiger.²² Although this document says nothing about his occupation, the list of possessions left by him suggests that he engaged both in trade and money lending. He and his wife, Gitla (Wertensztein, nee Goldreich), had nine children.

It was much more difficult to apply a similar method of linking various facts during the examination of documents kept in the Suwałki State Archives. To explain why, consider the inventory of property left by Zelman Josielewicz discussed above.²³ Zelman's son, Mowsza, who was entrusted to his grandfather's care after Zelman's death and who lived in Lejpuny, started to use a name derived from the name of this village. Among the birth, marriage and death certificates of the residents of the area around Sejny is a document (number 15) confirming that Zelman Leypuner, son of Mowsza and Chana, was born in 1829. Mowsza Leypuner and Chana Leypuner had yet another child, Sora Bejla, who married Oszer Frank in 1849. Chana probably was Mowsza's second wife, since a document (registration number 28) dated 1828 confirms the death of Złatka Leypuner, child of Mowsza and Bluma. It is probable that Złatka's mother, Bluma, died that year, too, and that Mowsza remarried.

It was equally difficult to establish the family connections of Abraham Szymon who died in Sejny in April 1816. This lumber merchant left property whose value was estimated at 130,518 Polish złotys. The successors of the deceased were his wife, Sura (maiden name Dawidowicz), and children, Izaak Abrahamowicz, Leyb Abrachamowicz, Hirs Abrachamowicz and Chaja Szaj (nee Abrahamowicz), who all lived in Sejny,²⁴ Rywka Leybowicz, who lived in Sereje,²⁵ Rochla, who lived in Szereszewo²⁶ and Leja Leybowicz, who lived in Wilkomierz.²⁷ Surviving birth, marriage and death certificates show that Rywka Abrahamowicz married Lejb Wazbucki. It is not clear, however, how many children the couple had. It is certain only that they had a daughter named Złatka, born in 1827 (act number 21). A year later (in 1828), the death of Lejb Wazbucki was recorded.

Summary

Using notarial information is not an easy task. First, the sources in question are incomplete, and second, meticulous and laborious analysis is needed to discover essential evidence. With a bit of luck, however, one can achieve spectacular results.

I personally derived great pleasure from studying the life and character of people mirrored in the documents. The quality of information about ancestors who lived two centuries ago contained in these sources must be regarded as exceptional and paralleled only by memoirs and records of well-preserved family archives.

In the case of Warsaw, however, examples of the latter two types of sources can be counted on the fingers of one hand. In the notarial deeds, we see ordinary people reveal their feelings, desires, maladies and life priorities. The clients of notarial offices were not Mr. X and Mrs. X, who were born and who died on such and such a day, but noble, caring and prudent great-great-grandfathers and great-great-grandmothers, generous fathers and enterprising mothers, grateful children, and probably also inconsiderate and wasteful great-great-grandfathers and great-great-grandmothers, unscrupulous fathers, helpless mothers and greedy children.

Thanks to notarial documents, it is possible to check the accuracy of stories and legends that often have circulated for generations among the members of various families. For example, in a conversation with a descendant of a Warsaw family who still lives in Poland, I heard that his ancestor had owned a landed property. Of course, there was a grain of truth in that story. The ancestor actually purchased the property in question, but only to transfer it to his brother who did not have the right to buy land or to sign the necessary contract. The brother financed the deal. According to a tale circulating in another family, one of the ancestors bought real estate owing to a prize won in a lottery. In fact, the family became rich when the ancestor remarried, taking as his wife a wealthy and enterprising widow.

A satisfying part of my work was the search for and discovery of family connections. The use of notarial sources was essential for the direction of my pursuits, and it allowed me to link generations and, sometimes, to explain why birth, marriage and death certificates pertaining to a Warsaw family could not be found in the city's archives. In the case of one family, I have managed to establish the existence of a child who was not mentioned even in Kazimierz Reychman's *Szkice genealogiczne* (Genealogical sketches) which I often quote. Thanks to the analysis of an inventory, I learned that Levy Lesser had a daughter named Rebeka who was baptized prior to marriage and who changed her name to Aniela Górka. Together with her husband, Stanisław, she settled in Brześć Litewski. By adopting a new name, she so effectively covered her tracks that she was almost impossible to trace. It is probable that Lesser had yet another child, Abraham, who had a mental illness and lived in an asylum, which, again, was a fact stated in the inventory.

Notes

1. E. Mazur, *Wykorzystanie inwentarzy w badaniach nad kulturo XIX wieku na ziemiach polskich* (Use of Inventories in Research Covering 19th Century Culture on Polish Territories), @Kw.HKM@, R. LI, 2003, No. 2, p.177.

2. APW, the Office of Notary J. Ostrowski, call number 55, p.1-v and 2.

3. APW, the Office of Notary J. W. Ostrowski, act number 7118.

4. APS, the Office of Notary Sz. Mocarski, act number 134. The two dates, 12 days apart, refer to the fact that, in Czarist Russia, the Julian calendar was still used, although the rest of Europe had converted to the Gregorian calendar.

5. APW, the Office of Notary J. Jeziorański, act number 715.

6. APW, the Office of Notary M. Zieliński, act number 1396.

7. APW, the Office of Notary J. Jasiński, act number 6211.

8. J. Hensel, op. cit. p. 19.

9. K. Reychman, *Szkice genealogiczne* (Genealogical Sketches), Warsaw 1936, pp 111-115.

10. APW, the Office of Notary J. W. Bandtkie, act number 6479.

11. APS, the Office of Notary K. Olechnowicz, act number 42.

12. Lipniunce, a village situated southeast of Mariampol, now in Lithuania.

13. Olwita, a village in the former Wyłkowyski district, now in Lithuania.

14. Jakub Joachim Kempner (1801-40) holder of a lease for a lottery office in Warsaw, owner of a factory producing kerchiefs in Tomaszów.

15. APW, the Office of Notary Ks. Józefowicz, act number 3023.

16. APW, the Office of Notary N. Stêpowski, act

number 890.

17. APW, the Office of Notary J. ębikowski, act number 763/465.

18. K. Reychman, op. cit. p. 136.

19. APW, Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates of Persons of Non-Christian Faith, 1882, birth certificate number 242.

20. APW, Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates of Persons of Judaic Faith, 1881, marriage certificate number 27.

21. APW, Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates of Persons of Judaic Faith, 1884, birth certificate number 70.

22. APW, the Office of Notary, M. Zieliński, act number 1863.

23. APS, the Office of Notary, K. Olechnowicz, act number 85.

24. Sejny, a town in northeastern Poland.

25. Sereje, a town situated northeast of Sejny, currently in Lithuania.

26. Szereszów, a locality situated west of Pruzhany, currently in Belarus.

27. Wilkomierz, a small town northeast of Kaunas, currently in Lithuania.

Anna Wiernicka earned her master's degree in history at Warsaw University in 1993 and is currently a historian and researcher in the Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw. Her research interests include 19th-century history of the Kingdom of Poland. She is preparing a PhD dissertation on the everyday life of wealthy Jewish families in Warsaw in the mid-19th century.

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