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NEW GENEALOGICAL DISCOVERIES
RELATING TO FRYDERYK CHOPIN’S GRANDPARENTS

Thanks to many years of archive research conducted by Piotr Myślakowski and Andrzej Sikorski, our knowledge of the fortunes of Fryderyk Chopin’s Polish grandparents has been considerably enhanced. That research has led to the reconstruction of their life together in the Kujawy region of Poland, approximately between 1760 and 1805, discussed in the book *Fryderyk Chopin. Korzenie* (Warsaw 2009; Eng. edn as *Fryderyk Chopin: The Origins*, tr. Zygmunt Nowak-Soliński and Sandra Jacobson, Warsaw 2010). Still to be discovered, however, were official documents bearing information such as the first names of Chopin’s ancestors, their birthplaces, and so on. We were not familiar with any such documents concerning Antonina Kołomińska and did not know to which branch of the Krzyżanowski family her husband Jakub belonged.

We knew from Jakub’s death certificate (Świętosławice, 1805), discovered much earlier, that he left a widow, Antonina, and two daughters, Marianna and Justyna. We also knew that six months later, Justyna married Mikołaj Chopin in Brochów. It was obvious, therefore, that Justyna’s widowed mother had been taken in by her elder daughter, Marianna Bielska, but it was not known where they lived. That information recently came to light thanks to the discovery of the death certificates of both Marianna Bielska (1 August 1811) and Antonina Krzyżnowska (13 June 1812). Both deaths occurred in the village of Żdzenice, in the district of Malanów, near Turek. The deaths were declared by the nobleman Leon Bielski, husband and son-in-law of the two deceased women, described as a ‘bailiff’. We may assume that he leased a farm and that his social-financial status was not particularly high. While the age of the deceased Marianna given in the certificate (32 years) essentially tallies with the year of her birth (1780), the age of the deceased mother-in-law, Antonina (78 years), would indicate that she was born in 1734. Meanwhile, another discovery – her birth certificate from Sanniki – gives the year 1743, so nine years later. It could be that after Marianna’s death, her son-in-law had no one to ask about his mother-in-law’s exact age.

Entered into Antonina’s birth certificate (1 May 1743) are the first names of her parents: the nobleman Maciej Kołomiński and his wife, Barbara. Her birthplace is given as

‘Sanniki Wójtostwo’. Sanniki is familiar to us from a later sojourn by the young Chopin at the Pruszaks’ residence in 1828, but those two facts cannot have anything in common, since the Pruszaks only became owners of that estate much later than 1743. The address ‘Wójtostwo’ suggests, however, that Antonina’s father leased a grange that went with the function of village administrator – the ‘wójt’. This was a common phenomenon among the petty nobility without their own landed property. They would lease a different grange every few years and provide for themselves and their families by farming on their own account, paying an annual sum as lease to the owner of the property.

The last of the new discoveries is the certificate of the wedding between Antonina Kołomińska and Jakub Krzyżanowski. That took place in Żukczynek, in the parish of Kłodawa, near Tczew, in 1771. It is not entirely certain that this certificate concerns Chopin’s grandparents, since it gives neither the first names of the newly-weds’ parents nor their age or birthplace. Hence researchers are faced with further investigation enabling us to confirm this latest discovery and explain the presence of Chopins’ grandparents near Gdańsk, whereas Jakub’s presence near Izbica Kujawska, a long way from Gdańsk, during earlier years has already been confirmed by previous scholars.

Appended to the text are reproductions of the following documents:

- the death certificate of Marianna Bielska, dated 1 August 1811, Żdżenice (parish of Malanów). Zespół 54/782/0. Civil records of the Roman Catholic Parish of Malanów (district of Turek), shelf-mark 15, p. 10 (no. 27). State Archive in Poznań, Konin Branch;
- the death certificate of Antonina Krzyżanowska, dated 13 June 1812, Żdżenice (parish of Malanów parish). Zespół 54/782/0. Civil records of the Roman Catholic Parish of Malanów (district of Turek), shelf-mark 18, p. 18 (no. 35). State Archive in Poznań, Konin Branch;
- the certificate of baptism of Antonina Kołomińska, dated 1 May 1743, Sanniki Wójtostwo (parish of Sanniki). Civil records of the Roman Catholic Parish of Sanniki. Zespół 514/153/0. Diocesan Archive in Płock;
- the marriage certificate of Jakub Krzyżanowski and Antonina Kołomińska, dated 19 August 1771, Żukczynek Mały (parish of Kłodawa Gdańska). Registry of marriages, Kłodawa parish, 1771. Gdańsk Archdiocesan Archive.