

# A Translation Guide

to 19th-Century Polish-Language  
Civil-Registration Documents

(including Birth, Marriage and Death Records)

3rd Edition

by

Judith R. Frazin

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## Purpose of this Book

This *Guide* is designed for use with only those 19th-century<sup>1</sup> Polish-language civil-registration documents that follow the Napoleonic format. This format was established by the Napoleonic Code, the system of civil laws formalized by Napoleon in 1804. The adoption of this uniform manner of document organization explains why the material in this *Guide* is generally applicable to both Jewish and non-Jewish civil-registration documents.

The Napoleonic format, which was a narrative, story-like format, was used only within Russian Poland (see Map, p. 4), although the city of Krakow, which is located in Austrian Poland, is an exception to this statement. In Austrian Poland, a columnar format in German or Latin was generally used, and in areas of Poland under German control, various formats were used, mostly in German.

Although the focus of this book is the Napoleonic documents, there are, however, some expressions in this book, identified as Modern Polish (MP), which may be helpful when reading more recent documents.

As is indicated by its title, this book is a translation guide. In order to understand what the term “translation guide” means and what the *Guide* can do for you, one must first explore what this *Guide* is not.

It is not a dictionary, and, therefore, the scope of its vocabulary is more limited. Most of the Polish words, which are included in this *Guide*, were found in actual documents, as described above. This apparent limitation, however, is, in reality, an advantage to you because you do not have to thumb through page after page of extraneous words, as in a dictionary.

The words in this *Guide* are alphabetized and sub-divided into 15 topics (e.g., age, birth, family, etc.). In the chapter on birth vocabulary, for example, you will find a listing of the important Polish words and phrases, which usually occur in birth records, along with their accompanying English translations.

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1. The term, “19th century,” as used in this *Guide*, refers to the period from 1808 through 1867, during which years the Polish civil-registration documents were written in the Polish language. For further explanation, see “General Orientation to the Documents,” pp. 16.

Unlike a dictionary, there is no need to know exactly how the Polish words are spelled in order to find the translation. After you have deciphered the beginning letters of the word, it is possible to locate its translation because the choices have been narrowed to only those words and phrases relevant to the topic.

In addition to not being a dictionary, this *Guide* is not a complete substitute for a word-for-word translation as provided by a professional translator. Rather, it is a tool, which will help you to abstract the most important genealogical information from your documents. (For specific steps on how to do this, see pp. 75-90.) You may still decide to use a translator on occasion, but, with this *Guide*, the need to do so will be far less than without it.

The *Translation Guide*, then, is a tool for unlocking the meaning of 19th-century Polish-language civil records. It should be a timesaver for you, as compared to a dictionary, and it should cut down on the need for professional translations.



**Document #2**  
**Birth Record - Post-1826**

dwudziestego trzeciego marca

- (1.) **Działo się** w Staszowie dnia czwartego kwietnia roku Tysiąc Osiemset Czerdziesiątego dziewiętego o godzinie piątej po południu (2.) **stawił się** Starozakonny Szulim Ben Ray handlarz zboża, lat trzydzieści jeden liczący, tu w Staszowie zamieszkały, (3.) **w obecności świadków** starozakonnego Israela Segal, handlarza zboża, lat trzydzieści dziewięć, i Hila Fux spekulanta, lat dwadzieścia Ośm liczących obydwóch tu w Mieście Staszowie mieszkających, (4.) **okazał nam** dziecię płci męskiej urodzone, tu w Staszowie na dniu szesnastym \_\_\_\_\_ Marca roku bieżącego dwudziestym ósmym o godzinie ósmey rano (5e.) **z M ałżonki Iego Rochl**, lat dwadzieścia ósm liczący, któremu przy obrzezaniu nadane zostało (6.) **Imię** Chaim Gecel.— (7.) **Akt ten** stawiającemu i świadkom przeczytanym i przez nas wraz z Oycem i świadkami podpisanym został.



**Document #2**  
**Birth Record - Post-1826)**  
**Translation Into English**

[The order of words in the English translation may differ from the order of words in the Polish document.]  
[The numbers in parentheses below correspond to the numbered phrases in the sample document.]

(1.) **It happened [took place]** in Staszow on the 23rd day of March/the 4th day of April of the year 1849 at 5:00 P.M. (2.) **Came [presented himself]** (the) Jew, Shulim Ber Ray, grain peddler, 31 years old, living here in Staszow, (and) (3.) **in the presence of witnesses,** (the) Jews, Israel Segal, grain peddler, 39 years old, and Hila Fux, money—lender, 28 years old, both living here in the town of Staszow, (4.) **he showed to us** a male baby born here in Staszow on the 16th/28th day of March of the current year at 8:00 A.M. (5.) **from his wife, Ruchel,** 28 years old, to whom, during the circumcision, was given (6.) **the name** Chaim Geceł. (7.) **This document** was read to those present and to the witnesses, and it was signed by us, together with the father and the witnesses.



## Document #4 - Marriage Record - Post-1826

### Piętnastego

(1.) **Działo się** w Staszowie dnia dwudziestego Siódmego Pa ździernika, roku Ty= siąc osmet pięćdziesiątego czwartego, o godzinie dziesi ątej przed południem stawil się Starozakonnny Izrael Lilienbaum, zast ępa Rabina, (2.) wraz z Starozakonnym, Fiszllem Helfont, (2.) kawalerem, lat dwadzie ścią cztery liczącym, w Staszowie (3.) z Zelmana, iuż nie żyjącego, i Estery z Zelmanowiczów Helfont ma łżonków, tu mieszkający z wy= robku utrzymujący się zrodzony, przy matce swej zostający, (4.) i Sura Linkman, (4.) **panna**, lat dziewiętnaście mająca, w Staszowie (5.) z Abraama i Feigi z Mortkowiczów Linkman małżonków, tu mieszkaj ących z handlu utrzymujących się, zrodona, przy rodzicach swych zostaj ąca; i w obecności Estery matki Fiszla, tudzież Abraama oycy Sury, niemniej (6.) w **przytomności** świadku\* Starozakonnego Ezyka Dunaietz szkolnika lat pięćdziesiąt dwa i Leybusia Has, szkolnia, lat pięćdziesiąt liczą= cych obydwóch tu w Mieście Staszowie mieszkających, (7.) **oświadczył** że przed nim na dniu wczorayszym (8.) **miedzy** Fiszllem Helfont, kawalerem, i Sur ą Linkman, pan= ną religijne zawarte zostało małżeństwo, które poprzedziły trzy (9.) **zapowiedzi** w dniach siódmym, czternastym, i dwudziestym pierwszym października roku bieżącego, w Bożnicy miasta Staszowa ogłoszone na to małżeństwo nastąpiło ze= zwolente usne, obecnych tu, Estery, i Abraama oyców osób nowo zaślubionych i tamowanie małżeństwa nie zaszło, małżonkowie nowi o świadczyli przy tym iż żadney pomiędzy sobą umowy przedślubnej nie zawarli.— (10.) **Akt ten** stawa= iącym i świadkom przeczytanym, i przez nas wraz z zast ępcą rabina; Fiszllem Helfont, Abraamem Linkman, i świadkami podpisanym został, tu Sura Linkman, i Estera Helfont, oświadczyły że pisać nie umieją

“\* — clerk’s error — should be “świadków

**Document #4 - Marriage Record - Post-1826**  
**Translation Into English**

[The order of words in the English translation may differ from the order of words in the Polish document.]  
[The numbers in parentheses below correspond to the numbered phrases in the sample document.]

(1.) **It happened [took place]** in Staszow on the 15/th/27th day of October 1854, at 10:00 A.M. came [presented himself] the Jew, Israel Lilienbaum, the assistant Rabbi, (2.) **together with** the Jew, Fischel Helfont, (2.) **a bachelor**, 24 years of age, in Staszow, (3.) **[born] from** Zelman, no longer living, and Esther Helfont [maiden name] Zelmanowicz, a married couple, living here, and earning his living as [a] day—laborer, staying with his mother, (4.) **and**, Sura Linkman, (4.) **an unmarried girl**, 19 years of age, in Staszow, (5.) **[born] from** Abram and Feiga Linkman [maiden name] Mortkowicz, a married couple, living here, and earning their living as peddlers, staying with her parents, and in the presence of Esther, mother of Fischel, also Abram, father of Sura, and (lit: nonetheless) (6.) **in the presence of witnesses**, the Jew, Ezyk Dunaietz, a synagogue sexton [caretaker], 52 years of age, and Leybus Has, a synagogue sexton [caretaker], 50 years of age, both living here, in the town of Staszow, [the assistant Rabbi] (7.) **stated** that, in front of him, on yesterday's day, (8.) **between** Fischel Helfont, a bachelor, and Sura Linkman, an unmarried girl, a religious marriage was contracted which [marriage] three (9.) **banns** preceded, published on the 7th, 14th and 21st of October, of the current year, in the Synagogue of the town of Staszow. Present here Esther and Abram, parents of the newly married couple, gave their verbal permission to the marriage. Nobody opposed the marriage. The newly married couple stated at this [time] that they did not make any pre—marital agreement between themselves. (10.) **This document** [was] read to the witnesses [who] presented themselves and was signed by us, together with the assistant Rabbi, Fischel Helfont, Abram Linkman, and by the witnesses, but Sura Linkman and Esther Helfont stated that they did not know how to write.



## Document #5 - Death Record

(1.) **Działo się** w Mieście Połańcu dnia dwudziestego dziewiątego Sty= cznia dziesiątego Lutego Tysi ąc osiemset pięćdziesiątego szóstego roku o godzinie jedenastej z rana (2.) **Stawili się** Starozakonny Icyk Sztrum lat czterdzieści jeden, i Kielman Sztrum lat siedemdziesiąt ąt mający, szkolnicy w Połańcu zamieszkałi, i (3.) **oświadczyli**, że dnia wczorajszego o godzinie dwunastej w nocy (4.) umarł tu w Połańcu Chajm Dawid Rozner żonaty, spekulant lat czter= dzieści pięć liczący w Połańcu zamieszkały, Syn Lejby i Ry= wid Roznerów małżonków, dotąd żyjących w Połańcu zamiesz= kałych, (5.) **pozostawiwszy po sobie** tu w Połańcu owdowiałą żonę , Haję, oraz Berka, lat ośmnaście, Syna, Mindla, lat pi ętnaście, i Matkę lat ośm, córki, z majątku dom drewniany— (6.) **Po przekona= niu się naocznie o zejściu** Chajma Dawida Roznera. Akt ten stawaj ącym świadkom odczytany i przez tychże podpisany został.—

**Document #5 - Death Record  
Translation Into English**

[The order of words in the English translation may differ from the order of words in the Polish document.]  
[The numbers in parentheses below correspond to the numbered phrases in the sample document.]

**(1.) It happened [took place]** in the town of Polaniec on the 29th day of January/the 10th day of February, 1856 at 11:00 A.M. **(2.) Came [presented themselves]** the Jews, Icyk [Isaac] Sztrum, 41 years of age, and Kielman Sztrum, 70 years of age, synagogue sextons [caretakers] living in Po łaniec, and **(3.) they stated** that on yesterday's day at 12:00 p.m. **(4.) died** here in Polaniec Chajm Dawid Rozner, married, money—lender, 45 years of age, [who] lived in Polaniec, son of Lejba and Rywka Rozner, a married couple, still alive, living in Polaniec. **(5.) After the deceased (lit: himself), they were left behind** here in Polaniec, a widowed wife, Haja, and Berka, his son, 18 years of age, Mindel, 15 years of age, and Maika, 8 years of age, daughters, and also an estate of a wooden house. **(6.) After being convinced with one's own eyes about [the] death of Chajm Dawid Rozner, this document was read out to the witnesses who presented themselves and was signed by these [witnesses].**

## BIRTH

### Birth Vocabulary

**adoptować** - to adopt

**adoptowany [a]** - adopted (m. & f.)

**akt (akta) (OP) § akt (akty) (MP)** -

record(s); entry (entries) in a document register

**akt niniejszy urodzenia** - this document of birth

**akt znania (OP)** - document informing about a birth

**akta urodzin § akty urodzin** - birth records

**akuszerka (akuszerki)** - midwife (midwives)

(See: **obowiązać się; postawić; przyjmować**)

**obowiązuje się § deklaruje postawić babkę, czyli, akuszerkę,**

**która go przyjmowała** - [he] obligates himself to bring

[to the registrar] the old woman (lit: granny),

in other words, the midwife,

who received him [into life]

**asystencja (OP) § towarzystwo (MP)** - assistance

**w asystencji § w towarzystwie** - with assistance

**stawił się w asystencji ojca swego §**

**stawił się w towarzystwie ojca swego** -

he presented himself with his father

**w asystencji jego rodzonej matki §**

**w towarzystwie jego rodzonej matki** -

together with his natural § biological mother

**bezdzienny [bezdzienni]** - childless

**bezimienny [bezinne]** - unnamed [died soon after birth]

(See: **imię; N.; nie ma imienia**)

**bierzmowanie (bierzmowania) § konfirmacja (konfirmacje)** -

confirmation(s) [religious]

**bieżący [bieżącego]** - current (See: **miesiąc; przeszły § zeszły; rok**)

**miesiąca bieżącego** - of the current month

**roku bieżącego** - of the current year

**bliźnięta** - twins



**blogosławić § poblogosławić** - to bless (See: brzemienna; poblogosławić)

**blogosławił § poblogosławił** - he blessed [somebody]

**blogosławiony [a] [e] § poblogosławiony [a] [e]** - blessed

**iest (OP) § jest (MP) w stanie blogosławionym (OP)** -  
she is pregnant (lit: in a blessed state)

[Note: In the last example expression above, **blogosławionym**  
is not a synonym of **poblogosławionym**.]

**bojaźń** - fear (See: przypadek)

**z bojaźni przypadku** - baptized on an emergency basis [because the  
child was in danger of dying] (lit: for fear of the circumstance)

**brzemienna (MP) § w stanie blogosławionym (OP)** - pregnant

(See: blogosławić; stan)

**być [iest (OP) § jest (MP)] [są]** - to be (See: możność; stan; swój; złożyć)

**iest § jest** - he [she] [it] is

**a że metryki urodzenia swego złożyć nie iest § jest w stanie** -  
and that her birth certificate is not in a state  
to be presented

**metryki urodzenia swego złożyć nie iest § jest w możności** -  
[he] does not have (lit: is not in) the ability to submit  
his birth certificate

**iest w stanie blogosławionym (OP)** - she is pregnant  
(lit: in a blessed state)

**chrzczony [a] [e] § ochrzczone [a] [e]** - christened § baptized

(See: chrzest; chrzestny)

**z wody chrzczone § ochrzczone** - baptized § christened with water  
(lit: of water baptized)

**chrzest (chrzty)** - baptism(s) § christening(s)

(See: chrzestny; chrzczony; odbyć § pełnić § sprawować; święty)

**chrzest święty** - holy baptism § christening

**dziecięciu temu na chrzcie świętym...odbytym §  
spełnionym § sprawowanym** - for this child  
holy christening...[was] performed

**świadectwo chrztu** - certificate of baptism