Some Family Connections with Wahl Katzenellenbogen

Edward Gelles

Introduction

The family traditions that I had heard in childhood finally prompted me to embark on a serious study of my ancestral background when I reached the age of three score and ten. My starting point was the intriguing story of our ancestor Saul Wahl, scion of the 16th century Katzenellenbogen rabbis of Padua and Venice, who rose to prominence in Poland at the time of the interregnum of 1587 which preceded the election of Sigismund Vasa of Sweden to the Polish throne.

A systematic study of the history and genealogy of my immediate forebears gradually expanded to take in dozens of related families. My first book An Ancient Lineage - European Roots of a Jewish Family : Gelles, Griffel, Wahl, Chayes, Safier, Loew, Taube was published in 2006 (1).

I proceeded to refine the traditional methodology of my genealogical research, bringing genetic genealogy and ancillary studies such as onomastics into play, and setting the results against the background of our millennial migrations across Europe. My book published in 2016 – The Jewish Journey : A Passage through European History describes this continued quest (2).

I have recorded subsequent studies on my web page Edward Gelles at Balliol College Archives & Manuscripts, where a full list of my publications can be found (3).
Saul Wahl and the Katzenellenbogen

The grandfather of Saul Wahl was Meir Katzenellenbogen (1483-1565), the Chief Rabbi of Padua, whose ancestral connections included the Treves, Shapiro, and Luria families. My appended chart begins with his son, Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, Chief Rabbi of Venice and his wife Abigail Jaffe. The descendants of their son Saul married with other distinguished families including Horowitz, Kloisner, Shor, Teomim, Halpern, Helman, and Cohen (or Katz).

The principal work on the connections of hundreds of inter-related descendant lines over many centuries is the *Unbroken Chain* by Neil Rosenstein (4), while a starting point for consideration of Saul Wahl’s life is the tradition-bound *Yesh Manhilin* by his 18th century descendant, Rabbi Phineas Katzenellenbogen (5).

I began my ongoing studies some years after the publication of Rosenstein’s work which barely touches on my immediate ancestors. As for the legends of *Yesh Manhilin*, and some other hagiographical works of that genre, they are now being subjected to long overdue critique (6).

Connections of Gelles and Taube families

The present brief essay limits itself to my and my cousin Thaddeus Taube’s descent from Saul Wahl. Both our families had a background of migrations across Europe over many centuries. Our paternal forebears lived in Galicia from the end of the 17th to the beginning of the 20th centuries. They were once based in Brody and Belz respectively before continuing their journeys. We have a common Galician great-grandfather Shulim Wahl of Tarnobrzeg. His daughters included my maternal grandmother Chawa and Tad’s grandmother Rachel. Their family had long established traditions of descent from Saul Wahl (7).
On my father’s side I have a millennial rabbinical background. Intermarriages with many of the leading Jewish families, brought our line close to the Wahl - Katzenellenbogen. Thus, about five hundred years ago many of these families flourished in Prague. I am directly descended from or related through ancient marriages with all the 16th century Chief Rabbis of that city. Many members of these families later moved to Poland and beyond. My ancestors Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe of Prague, Grodno, and Posen and Pinchas Halevi Horowitz of Prague and Cracow were followed by migrations to Poland, Lithuania, and then southward - to Galicia, Hungary, and Austria, or west - to Posen, Silesia, and Germany. My immediate Gelles line were in Galicia and gravitated towards Vienna while distantly related Gelles and some Jaffe were in the province of Posen and later moved to Berlin and further into Germany (8).

Abigail Jaffe, the wife of Chief Rabbi Samuel Judah of Venice, was a relative of Mordecai Jaffe who spent ten years in Venice. The appended chart continues to Hinde, the first wife of Saul Wahl’s eldest son Meir, who was a daughter of Pinchas Halevi Horowitz. Meir and Hinde’s son, Moses Katzenellenbogen of Chelm married a Kloisner whose father was a leader of the Jewish community in Posen (9). Their son Saul Katzenellenbogen of Brody, Chelm and Pinczow, had a first wife believed to be a Teomim (10) and married secondly Yente, a daughter of Jacob Shor, who was a son of Saul Wahl’s daughter Hanele (11). My paternal family connections and those of the Wahl-katzenellenbogen continued with Halpern of Fuerth and Shmuel Helman, the Chief Rabbi of Mannheim and Metz, whose family were based in the Silesian city of Glogau. Shmuel Helman was a common ancestor of the later Katzenellenbogen and of my Gelles line.

The chart also shows descent from Saul Katzenellenbogen of Pinczow and his first wife via Rabbi Saadia Isiah Katzenellenbogen and Eidel Katz through several rabbis of Brest to family branches which
adopted Padua or Padwa as their surnames. Bracha Padwa and Israel Meir Hakohen of Brody and Busk had a daughter Breine Padwa who married Samuel Taube of Busk (12).

The Taube Padwa line starts with the son of this marriage, Eliezer Wolf Taube Padwa, and continues to the distinguished Rabbi Hanoch Dov Padwa, follower of the Rokeach Chasidic dynasty of Belz, who became Chief Rabbi of the ultra-orthodox (Haredi) communities in London (13).

My cousin Thaddeus Taube, who shares with me a line of descent from Saul Wahl to our Wahl grandmothers, is also connected to the Katzenellenbogen branch of Padwa via his relative Samuel Taube of Busk.

NOTES

(2) Edward Gelles, The Jewish Journey (I.B. Tauris, 2016)
(3) Edward Gelles at Balliol College Archives & Manuscripts web site
(5) Phineas Katzenellenbogen, Yesh Manhilin (18th century MS in Bodleian Library; published in Jerusalem, 1986)
(6) Julia Haarmann, Hüter der Tradition (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013)
(7) An Ancient Lineage, Chapters 4, 5, 13, and 18 and The Jewish Journey, Chapters 7 and 8
(8) Edward Gelles, Balliol College web site: under the heading “Some Family Charts” No. 6 (Katzenellenbogen and Helman), No 9 (Jaffe) and No. 10 (Horowitz) and under the heading “Reflections on my ancestral background” numerous charts including “Millennial Descent from Shem Tov Halevi of Gerona (Horowitz) and “Migrations of rabbinic families in central and eastern Europe over the past few centuries” (Gelles connections)
An Ancient Lineage, Kloisner chart (Table 38 on page 287)
Benyamin Beinish Mendels (died 1626) was a son of Zeccharia Mendel Kloisner of Posen who married a sister of Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague

Julia Haarmann, Hütter der Tradition, pp 30-31 (footnote 15 on Teomim connection)

Edward Gelles, Balliol College web site: under “Some Family Charts” No. 19 “Some Lines of descent from Saul Wahl”

An Ancient Lineage, Chapter 22 (The Taube Family)
see notes on pp 148-149

Neil Rosenstein, The Unbroken Chain, Volume I, pp. 31 - 36 “Padua and Padwa (Kohen) Families “

The Taube Padwa line descended from Samuel Taube and Breine Padwa to Eliezer Wolf Taube Padwa, and then to Hanoch Dov Padwa (ca. 1908 – 2000), who was born at Busk in Galicia, brought up in Vienna, and ultimately became the distinguished Chief Rabbi of the ultra-orthodox (Haredi) Jews in London.
(Personal communication from his grandson Akiva Padwa)
Some lines of descent from the 16th century Katzenellenbogen, Chief Rabbis of Padua and Venice, and Saul Wahl

K. stands for Katzenellenbogen and ABD for Head of the Rabbinical Court (Chief Rabbi)

Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen 1521-1597 of Padua and ABD of Venice  m. Abigail Jaffe  
Saul Wahl K. 1545 – 1617 from Padua to Brest (Litovsk) and prominent in Polish affairs of State  m. Deborah Drucker  
Meir Wahl K. died 1631 ABD of Brest  m (1) Hinde, dr of Pinchas Halevi Horowitz 1535 – 1617 (President of Four Lands Council)  
Moses K. died ca 1643 ABD of Chelm  m Sarah, dr of Benyamin aka Beinish Reb Mendels (Kloisner), Parnas of Posen  
Saul Katzenellenbogen 1617 -1691 ABD of Brody, Chelm and Pinczow  
m (2) Yente, dr of Jacob Shor (grandson of Saul Wahl)  m (1) dr of Chaim Jona Teomim ?

Moses K. 1670 – 1733 ABD of Schwabach  
m. dr of Eliezer Heilprin of Fuerth

Eliezer K, 1700-1771 ABD of Hagenau and Bamberg  
m Yached, dr of Shmuel Helman died 1764 ABD of Mannheim and Metz

Naftali Hirsch K 1750 – 1823 Grand Rabbi of Upper Rhine etc  
m Rachel, dr of Feivel of Glogau  
their grandson Lazare Isidore 1813 -1888 became Chief Rabbi of France

Descendants of Naftali Hirsch Katzenellenbogen and of my paternal great-grandfather Rabbi David Isaac Gelles are cousins, having Shmuel Helman of Metz as a common ancestor (see following page)

Saadia Isiah K. died 1726 ABD of Holleschau  
m. Eidel, dr of Naftali Katz  
Haim K. m Rachel Sarah Schwabacher  
sister of Eliezer K.)

Meir K. died 1777 ABD of Brest  m. Yente  
Aaron K, died 1807 of Brest  m. Sheine Halevi  
Haim (K.) Padua of Brest died 1837  m. Mirke Padua  
Bracha Padwa 1799 – 1848 m Israel Meir Hakohen died 1827 (from Brody to Busk)

Breine Padwa m Samuel Taube of Busk  
(from the Taube of Belz)

Eliezer Wolf Taube Padwa 1875 – 1970

Hanoch Dov Padwa 1912 –2000  
m Channah Gitel, dr of Naftali Gottesman
My maternal grandmother Chawa Wahl and her sister Rachel Wahl, the grandmother of Thaddeus Taube, claimed descent from Saul Wahl as did the related Wohl family of Krakow.

Autosomal DNA matches of Edward Gelles with probands of Bamberger and Schwabacher connection lend support to the link with the Katzenellenbogen line going back to Moses of Schwabach, son of Saul Katzenellenbogen of Pinczow and Yente Shor (see above).

Y-DNA test of Thaddeus Taube shows his haplogroup to be the Kohanic J–M 267. Y-DNA matches with numerous probands confirm a Cohen matronymic link in his paternal line.