

## Two Moses Cassirers: Two family lines Which was ours?

Jim Falk, 4 Aug 2023



Moses Cassirer – but which one?

In the history of the famous Cassirer family there is confusion as to who was the father of Markus Cassirer (1801-1879) whose sons were to become very prominent in Berlin in the early nineteenth century, and later their sons and daughters assuming prominent roles globally.

As recorded in the Family Anecdote book (produced in 1937) it is clear that Markus's father was named Moses<sup>[1]</sup>. However, there were two Moses Cassirer's alive at the time, both with large families, and living not far from each other.

It is a reasonable speculation, as discussed later, that these were first cousins, and for convenience I will refer to them generally as Moses [1] and Moses [2].

The two Moses Cassirers

1. **Moses [1]: Moses ben Loebel Cassirer** was the son of Loebel Cassirer (~1768 – 28 April 1837), and married Pesel (‘Pauline’) bat Salomon Friedländer (1771 – 2 Jan 1841). This is attested to by a marriage declaration, death certificates, and grave stone inscriptions recovered from the destroyed Claassenstrasse Jewish cemetery in Breslau (now Wrocław).<sup>[2]</sup> These also confirm that Moses[1]’s grandfather was, as was the custom, named Moses (‘Mosche’).<sup>[3]</sup>
2. **Moses [2]: Moses (‘Mausche’) Cassirer** (6 Aug 1770 – 17 Sep 1852) was the grandson of “Cassirer of Bujakow” , and married Eva Schiffer (died 23 Sep 1852). His father or grandfather was, according to family memory<sup>[4]</sup>, a cashier at a "Grafen" (estate of a person of high rank similar to a lord or earl). Bujakow is a place in Poland (now Bujaków) and about 22 km from Kattowitz (now Katowice) and 18 km from Gleiwitz (Gliwice). He was buried in Grave no. 157 in the Alter Juedischer Friedhof (the old Jewish cemetery) in Gleiwitz.

### **Which Moses Cassirer was Markus Cassirer’s father?**

This has been a vexed question with different proffered solutions:

- (1) In 1989 Harry Nutt in his book “Bruno Cassirer” presents a genealogy with Markus Cassirer as son of Moses [2] (1771-1852).<sup>[5]</sup>
- (2) In his extensive family tree, presented to the Berlin Cassirer Reunion in 2002, genealogist Michael Geballe, identified Moses [1]. The documentation was an entry in the Mormon database, which in 2023 remains. In 2002 the death was shown as 20 April 1837.<sup>[6]</sup> In 2023 this had been re-set with a claimed birth and death of both Moses [1] and his wife Pesel as 1777-1852.<sup>[7]</sup>
- (3) Subsequent attributions followed that of Michael Geballe, including mine when I began to create the first extensive web published genealogy (<http://genealogy.meta-studies.net>). This is replicated now in many websites.<sup>[8]</sup>
- (4) The book Here Comes Mr Cass identifies Markus as the son of Moses [1] (1771-1837) in a family tree researched for the book, but undocumented.<sup>[9]</sup>
- (5) Sigrid Bauschinger in her excellent book *Die Cassirers: Unternehmer, Kunsthändler, Philosophen* (C.H. Beck, Munich, Germany, 2015) reflects the resulting confusion by continuing the identification as Moses [1] but continues with the common birth and deaths as 1771-1852, but with the graves in Bujakow.

#### **Resolving the issue.**

Recently, with the assistance of Stephen Falk (no relation), who with his brother maintains a wonderful archive of the graves and grave-stones of the destroyed Claassenstrasse Jewish cemetery in Wrocław Poland (previously Breslau), we have found documentary evidence that Markus and his brother Siegfried were not the children of Moses [1] and that rather, they were the children of Moses [2].

I will proceed to develop this with an explanation of why I returned to the issue, and then the evidence we have uncovered.

#### **The trigger**

This re-evaluation of this issue was triggered recently by the discovery of a date .

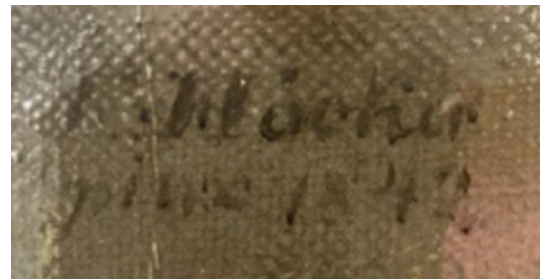
The date was painted on the portraits – of Moses Cassirer and his wife – bequeathed to me by Peter Cassirer who had held them on behalf of the family at his house in Götteburg, Sweden.

Suffering from the rigors of their considerable age, the paintings required expert restoration.



The restoration was carried out by the University of Melbourne Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation. During the 3 months of treatment the removal of dirt, varnish and overpainting were removed and damaged sections repaired.

This revealed the signature of the painter and the date on which he signed them (shown opposite). The first line shows the painter's name, arguably as something like K. Höchir. The second line unimstakeably reads pinx ('I painted this') 1842. According to known documentation the death of Moses [1] was 1837, five years before the painting was done.



## Evidence and Analysis

### 1. The portraits

Either the portraits are copies by 'Höchir' or the subject cannot be Moses [1] and his wife Pesel. Certainly there is evidence that portraits were made. In the family anecdote, already mentioned, of 1937, Toni Cassirer recalls:

*I suppose I'm starting off this collection with an error, if I attribute this anecdote to our greatgrandfather Moses.*

*Moses' two sons Markus and Siegfried wanted a portrait of their father very badly. He, however, as a devout Jew, strenuously refused to yield to their wish. So they thought of a way around this. They asked an artist friend of theirs to accompany them to their parents' home, and to sketch their father going about his daily tasks from the next room. They succeeded in this plan only for a short time. Suddenly their father looked up, noticed the artist, and said, "Boys, I think he's drawing me".<sup>[10]</sup>*

### 2. Certification for Moses [1]

Vital records – birth and death and related official certificates, whilst they may still contain transcription and other errors (given details like name spelling and ages were more fluid back in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), still form the best

evidence available. The following records have become available for Moses [1] and his wife Pessel:

- a. Grave-stone inscriptions analysed by Stephen Falk from the destroyed Claassenstrasse Jewish cemetery in what was Breslau show that Mosche ben Jehuda Leib Cassirer (ie Moses ben Loebel Cassirer) died on 24 Nisan and was buried on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> of Nisan 5597, ie 28 April 1837 in Grave No 1716.
- b. Similarly Pessel bat Schlomo Kronik mi'Berlin aschat Mosche Cassirer (ie Pessel the wife of Moses Cassirer), died in Breslau on 9 Tevet 5601, which corresponds to 2 January 1841 and was buried the next day in Grave 1717 next to Moses.
- c. Finally, there are grave-stones for the father Loebel Cassirer (grave 2939, buried 2 April 1809) and, by its side, the mother Zerchen (grave 2938, died 6 April 1805 and buried the next day).
- d. Consistent with this, the Todesanzeige (death certificate) for Moses Loebel Cassirer, signed by his newly widowed Pessel (Pauline), reports his birth at Breslau, and his death on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1837. She reports 4 sons and 3 daughters alive when he died, including 2 minor children. This is not enough sons if Markus and Siegfried are included. There seems to be a discrepancy here!
- e. Finally a statement of Moses Loebel Cassirer's will (a Legat Certificate) also uncovered by Stephen Falk<sup>[11]</sup> lists the children of Moses [1] and wife Pessel, but includes neither Markus (Meir) Cassirer nor Siegfried Cassirer.

### 3. Conclusion

The evidence is clear that Moses [1] was born in and lived with his children in Breslau. His children did not appear to include either Markus or Siegfried Cassirer. For their parents we should look elsewhere. Happily we do not have to look far.

### 4. Certification for Moses [2]

So far we are not as blessed with certification for Moses [2] Cassirer, but there is evidence at least to show that Markus's brother Siegfried Cassirer, was the son of Moses [2].

- a. The death certificate for Siegfried Cassirer, pensioner in Berlin, shows him to have been born in Bujakow (Kr. Beuthen) ca.1815 and to have died in Berlin on 16 December 1897 (82 years old), husband of Jette geb. FISCHER who died in Breslau, **son of the pensioner Moses CASSIRER and his wife Rosa geb. FISCHER**, who both died in Gleiwitz. The death was reported by son of Markus, Louis CASSIRER, Kaufmann in Berlin.

(The apparent discrepancy in the first name of Moses's wife ('Eva', 'Rosa') is not uncommon given the flexibility with names and dates at the time. Rosa could not have been a second wife as Eva Cassirer, wife of Moses, is shown in the bequest to the Jewish Theological Seminar Foundation, as dying on 23 Sept 1852, after the death of Moses.<sup>[12]</sup>)

- b. The marriage entry in November 1930 for Salomon Cassirer with Rosel Krämer shows Mausche Cassirer, Arrendator (tenant) in Bujakow, as his father. Mausche, Mosche, Moses are different spellings for the same name. The father is almost certainly Moses<sup>[2]</sup> Cassirer of Bujakow.

## 5. Secondary evidence for Markus as son of Moses <sup>[2]</sup>

- a. The Deutsche Biographie, along with many other secondary sources lists Marcus (Markus) Cassirer with wife Jeanette (born Steinitz in 1814) as born in Bujakow (bei Kattowitz) and with all the well known immediate relatives listed.<sup>[13]</sup>
- b. Whilst Sigrid Bauschinger in her well researched book ‘Die Cassirers’<sup>[14]</sup> not surprisingly (given lack of access to the certification now available) maintains what appears to be a historical error that the parents of Markus were Moses <sup>[1]</sup> nevertheless assigns the birth of Markus to Bujakow, and the burial of his parents also buried there, both of whom died within two weeks of each other in 1852 at the age of 81.

According to this book her tombstone reads: "Those who loved each other in life did not leave each other in death".<sup>[15]</sup> As we now know neither Moses <sup>[1]</sup> nor his wife died in 1852. But for Moses <sup>[2]</sup> and his wife who did, and died within a week of each other, the sentiment seems much more appropriate. To her credit, whilst Sigrid Bauschinger assigned the wrong Moses couple names, she got the dates and places right.

- c. Consistent with the above Harry Nutt in his book “Bruno Cassirer”, 1989, has the parents of Markus Cassirer as Moses Cassirer (1771-1852) and his wife Eva Fischer (1771-1852).<sup>[16]</sup> This is not documented, but is probably derived from a similar assignment by Edith Tietz around 1900.<sup>[17]</sup> She did not document hers either, but 90 years earlier, family memory was more likely to be true.
- d. Also consistent with the above, the portrait of Moses Cassirer is dated 1842, after Moses<sup>[1]</sup> died, but a decade before Moses <sup>[2]</sup> died. The couple, as depicted, are perhaps offered a touch of youth by the painter, but the images are not inconsistent with 71 years old.
- e. These conclusions are also supported by family memories recounted at the London Reunion by some of the surviving members of the line known to have descended from Moses <sup>[2]</sup>. These included memories of Siegfried having been descended from a brother of Markus. The evidence supports these family memories.
- f. Reasonably consistently my own father, Werner Falk, son of Betty Cassirer, recalled Markus and Jeanette living in Schwientochlowitz, which is 19 km from Bujaków. This is also attested to in the family Anecdote book.<sup>[18]</sup> Also, consistent with this their daughter Rosalie married Abraham Goldstein on 20 Jan 1865 in Schwientochlowitz. Abraham was born in the same region (Kattowitz).

- g. Jewish families at the time did not name children after living relatives. But it was common to name the first child after an honoured relative who had just died.<sup>[19]</sup> Thus it is consistent with the above that Markus did not name a son Moritz (for which read Moses) until his fifth son in 1853, the year after the other Moses [2] died. It was also only after , but in the same year that his brother Salomon had died, that Markus and Jeanette were to name their newborn son Salomon.

## **6. Conclusion**

Whilst it is not completely certain, it is highly likely and completely consistent with the available evidence that Markus Cassirer and Siegfried Cassirer were, not the sons of Moses [1], but rather were born in Bujakow of parents Moses [2] Cassirer and his wife Eva nee Fischer.

### **Were Moses [1] and Moses [2] related?**

Given the naming conventions of the time Moses [1] and Moses [2] could not be brothers. Further, if they had been they would have been so named on the Stamm Nummer Certificate of Loebel Moses Cassirer, At best they would have had a common grandfather, making them 1<sup>st</sup> cousins. There is suggestive evidence that they were closely related, making this the most likely relationship.

The evidence again arises from naming conventions. According to his death certificate Loebel Moses Cassirer died in 1809. Naming conventions would have prevented any children from either the line of Moses [1] or that of Moses [2] being named Loebel. But, if there was a close relationship between Moses [1] and Moses [2] with Loebel, it would be consistent for the next newborn child to be named after him. As it happened this was the case.

The first children in both lines to be named Loebel were, Loebel son of Moses [2] so named on 7 March 1809, Loebel, son of Moses [1] so named on 3 July 1809, and Loebel, grandson of Moses [1] so named by his father Gerson and mother Rebecca on 15 November 1810.

From the above it is at least suggestive, and in the absence of contrary evidence a reasonable working assumption, that Moses [1] and Moses [2] were closely related and most probably 1<sup>st</sup> cousins sharing the common grandfather. From the gravestone of Loebel Cassirer we know that Mose[1]'s grandfather, and thus by this assumption the grandfather of Moses [2], was also named Moses.

Since each of the grandchildren were named Moses, it is reasonable to assume that they were named in honor of their shared grandfather – Moses of Bujakow. This is supported by the inscription on the gravestone of Loebel Cassirer, which gives his father's name in the traditional form 'ben haRav Mosche' (literally son of Rabbi Moses, but haRav may simply be a respectful form of "Mr"). For this reason, for the purposes of this study I will tentatively refer to this stem ancestor as Moses of Bujakow.

It is in all probability Moses of Bujakow who was forced to adopt a family surname. As Princeton historian and Cassirer descendent Peter Paret has written: "it was in the 1740s, after Prussia acquired Silesia in the War of the Austrian Succession, Jews living in Breslau needed to adopt family names on the West- and Central-European pattern, if they did not already

possess them."<sup>[20]</sup> So, sometime before, or around then, as a working hypothesis, Moses of Bujakow adopted the name Moses Cassirer.<sup>[21]</sup>

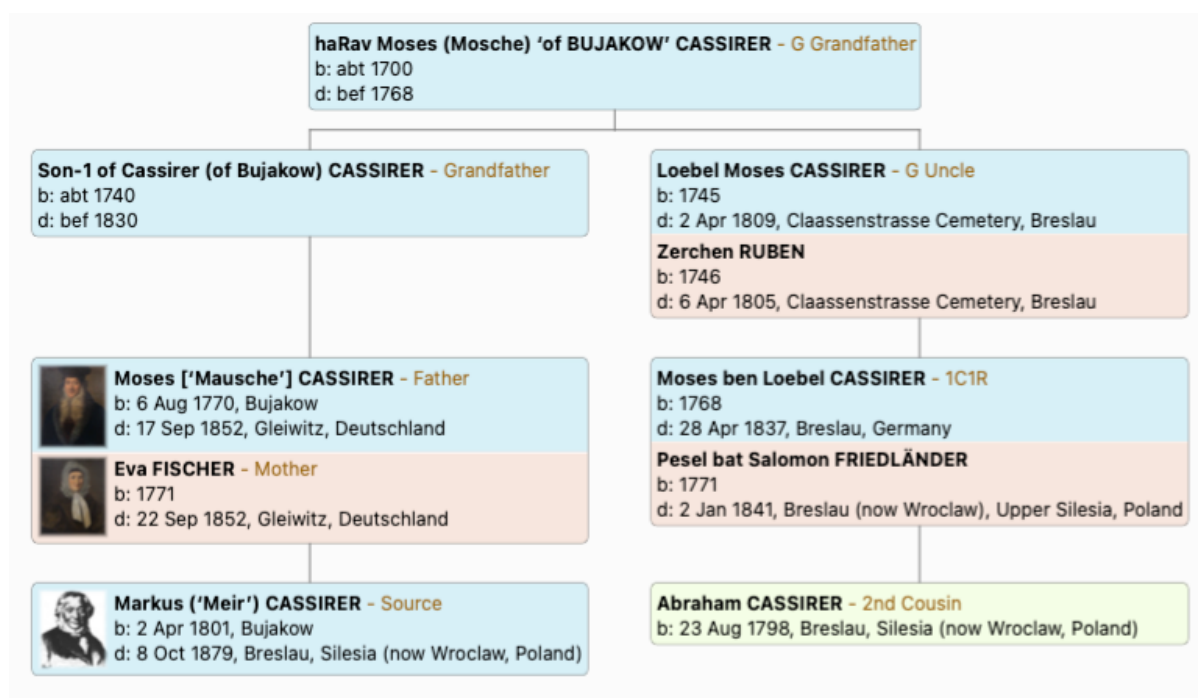
## Conclusions

As then required by law, around 1740 haRav Moses of Bujakow (abt 1700- bef 1768) changed his name to Moses Cassirer. He is said to have been a cashier at a "Grafen" (estate of a person of high rank similar to a lord or earl). He had at least two sons, (1) Loebel Cassirer, and (2) another son (whose name has yet to be identified).

The first son (Loebel Moses Cassirer) married Zerchen Ruben. The two were buried, as were most of their known children, in Breslau in the Classenstrasse Cemetry.

The second son, himself produced a son named Moses ('Mausche') Cassirer (1770-1852) who continued the family line in Bujakow. He had at least one daughter - Ida, and four sons – Loebel, Salomon, Siegfried, and Markus. They continued to thrive in the Bujakow region.

It is Markus (1770-1852) and his wife Eva Fischer (1771-1852), still in the vicinity of Bujakow (in Schwientochlowitz) that the famous Cassirer family descends. As they reached adulthood the children moved first to Breslau to assist an uncle in the timber trade, and then to Berlin. And it is from their successes that their progeny created the line of Cassirers that have formed the focus of a now large academic and popular literature (and which is also the focus of my website <http://genealogy.meta-studies.net>).



+ Loebel, Ida, Saloman, Siegfried

+ Joseph, Jochem, Loebel, Jacob

The family paintings, dated 1842, that remain prompted this re-assessment of the roots of this line of the family are those of Moses ('Mausche') Cassirer of Bujakow, who was the father of Markus, and his wife Eva, Markus's mother.

My <http://genealogy.meta-studies.net> website has now been adjusted to be consistent with these conclusions.

Whilst these changes may not be good news for those who have relied on the contrary account in their research and publications, it is good news for quite a few Cassirer family members who according to the previous understanding were rendered somewhat peripheral to the family story. But they had clear family memories, recounted at the London Reunion in 2012, that they descended in a direct line from a brother of Markus, and also that line extended from Moses Cassirer of Bujakow (and thus Moses [2]). The conclusions now reached have the happy consequence that not only do they remove many apparent inconsistencies, but give support to these memories. As a consequence they heal what previously could have been seen as a rift between two sides of the Cassirer family. That seems to be a fortuitous but significant potential benefit of this clarification of the Cassirer family history.

### **Acknowledgement.**

I would like to pay special tribute to Stephen Falk, who with his brother has taken charge with assembling and documenting evidence of the history of the Jewish population in and around what was then Breslau. Much of that evidence has to be assembled piece by piece, and Stephen and his brother have helped create the Urban Memory Foundation as the institutional framework to support that work. Over now decades Stephen has been always available to provide his expertise to researchers to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of the scattered Cassirer extended family and his generous availability for this review is no exception.



## Notes

<sup>[1]</sup> For example, this is referenced in the Family Anecdote book, produced in 1937, for the occasion of Max Cassirer's 80th birthday. Max would certainly of known who his grandfather was.

<sup>[2]</sup> With the generous help of Stephen Falk I have consulted images of the gravestones of Moses ben Loebel Cassirer and his wife Pesel. From the gravestones Moses Loebel CASSIRER died in on the 28 April 1837, with burial on the 30th, in Grave No. 1716 in the Claassenstrasse Jewish cemetery in Breslau. Pesel died on 2 January 1841 and was buried the next day in the grave standing next to that of Moses in No. 1717. The Death Certification declares Moses Loebel Cassirer to have pre-deceased Pesel, dying on 28 April 1837. The certificate (signed by P. Cassirer) puts his age at death as 70 years which is close enough to consistent with the detail derived from the Stamm Nummer certificate. The death certificate for Pesel (signed by Joseph Cassirer) puts her age at death to be 62 suggesting a birth date for Pesel of 1771.

<sup>[3]</sup> Inscribed on the gravestone of Loebel Cassirer's grave.

<sup>[4]</sup> Marianne Serck-Hanssen (ne Cassirer) recounts this from recollections of Gertrud Cassirer (nee Buckhhorn) at the London Cassirer Reunion.

<sup>[5]</sup> Harry Nutt, Bruno Cassirer, Preußische Köpfe, Stapp Verlag, Berlin, Germany, 1989.

<sup>[6]</sup> Michael Geballe, unpublished family tree, Berlin Reunion 2002, and private communication.

<sup>[7]</sup> The entry now read: Moses ben Loebel Cassirer, Birth 1771 Bujakow, Kattowitz, Schlesien, Preußen, Deutschland, and death 7 September 1852, Gleiwitz, Schlesien, Preußen, Deutschland. The source reads 1840 Moses Cassirer in entry for Siegfried Cassirer, "Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1500-1971." Entered by David G Pihl, 27 January 2019. <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/sources/GM7N-NQF>, consulted 21 Jul 2023.

<sup>[8]</sup> eg. <https://www.geni.com/people/Markus-Cassirer/6000000011627186452>; <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Cassirer-13>; <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassirer>; [https://histomania.com/app/Moses\\_ben\\_Loebel\\_Cassirer\\_W21173390](https://histomania.com/app/Moses_ben_Loebel_Cassirer_W21173390)

<sup>[9]</sup> Wilfred Cass, Here Comes Mr. Cass, Laurence King Publishing, UK, 1 December 2014.

<sup>[10]</sup> Toni Cassirer, Cassirer Anecdote Booklet (Anekdotenbüchlein), on the occasion of Max Cassirer's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, 18 October 1937, tr by Irene Newhouse, p. 7. <http://meta-studies.net/pmg/index.php?n=Main.CassirerAnecdoteBookletTrns>

<sup>[11]</sup> in the collection of Breslau Jewish community files in the archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw: [https://cbj.jhi.pl/documents/456401/5/105\\_0743b](https://cbj.jhi.pl/documents/456401/5/105_0743b) Legat des Moses Löbel Cassirer.

<sup>[12]</sup> Geschichte des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars (Fraenckel'sche Stiftung) in Breslau - Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Jubiläum der Anstalt. (Taschenbuch) Marcus Brann (Autor), Peter Maser (Vorwort)

<sup>[13]</sup> Deutsche Biographie, <https://portal.dnb.de/opac.htm?method=simpleSearch&cqlMode=true&query=idn%3D107972379X>, consulted 21 Jul 2023.

<sup>[14]</sup> Sigrid Bauschinger, Die Cassirers: Unternehmer, Kunsthändler, Philosophen, Biographie einer Familie, C. H. Beck, München, Germany, 2015.

<sup>[15]</sup> See also [https://beckassets.blob.core.windows.net/product/other/14439797/leseprobe\\_die-cassirers.pdf](https://beckassets.blob.core.windows.net/product/other/14439797/leseprobe_die-cassirers.pdf) p. 13.

<sup>[16]</sup> Harry Nutt, Bruno Cassirer, op. cit.

<sup>[17]</sup> Papers of the Cassirer-Tietz Family, 1879-1983 (<http://digifindingaids.cjh.org/?pID=482057>).

<sup>[18]</sup> Cassirer Anecdote Booklet, <http://meta-studies.net/pmg/index.php?n=Main.CassirerAnecdoteBookletTrns>, p. 9: "Finally the Cassirers were going to move from Schwientochlowitz to Breslau...".

<sup>[19]</sup> See for example, Meredith Dreyfuss, "Name Fluidity and its Effect on Ashkenazi Genealogical Research", Dominican University of California, <https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2019.HCS.ST.05>, consulted 24 Jul 2023.

<sup>[20]</sup> Private communication to Jim Falk.

<sup>[21]</sup> Marianne Cassirer recalls that Gertrud Buchhorn, (13 May, 1876-11 January, 1964), remembered that the grandfather of her grandfather, "Bujakow", was a cashier at a "Grafen" (estate of a person of high rank similar to a lord or earl). He was given the name of Cassirer. This recollection may well hold truth, although for strict accuracy according to the interpretation in this study it would be the great grandfather of her grandfather – an understandable adjustment to memory over so many generations.