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Abstract of the doctoral dissertation

*Erasmus Joseph Jerzmanowski (1844-1909). Inventor – businessman – philanthropist*

Erasmus Joseph Jerzmanowski (1844-1909) came from a landowning family and took part in the January Uprising (1863-1864). After its failure emigrated to France and to the United States of America, where – due to his engineer undertakings – he amassed a considerable fortune being the richest American Pole of his epoch. At the end of his life he returned to Polish territory and settled down in Krakow borough – in Prokocim. He conducted extensive social and philanthropic activities being a perfect example of the functioning in 19th century model of patronage. The work of his life was an award, known as The Erasmus and Anne Jerzmanowski's Foundation, funded by him and granted to various esteemed individuals between 1915 and 1938. It was given, among many others, to Henryk Sienkiewicz, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Napoleon Cybulski, Jan Kasprówic, Władysław Abraham. Soon enough it was called „The Polish Nobel Prize”.

The main aim of this thesis is to present the person of Erasmus Jerzmanowski and his inventive activities in the fields of business and philanthropy, as well as the presentation of his foundation and its history. Great emphasis was placed on the explanation the myths connected with Jerzmanowski – every single time they were confronted with preserved sources and contextualized.

The presented thesis was written using biographical approach. The traditional model of chronological approach was yet replaced by the problematic one. The key sources used to this study were the archival ones stored in the Polish and foreign (French and American) archives and libraries, correspondence, letters, memoirs, as well as press releases from the Polish, Polish-American and American press.

The dissertation consists of three chapters, divided into specific sections. Is completed by annexes containing the selected source texts, statement regarding the prize winners and iconographic material.