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LIFE CYCLE IN THE POLISH COUNTRYSIDE IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY

The study of the life cycles of individuals and families is the sub-discipline of demography that has dynamically developed in the last twenty years. By supplementing the macro-scale observations with an analysis of individual behaviour, we may describe more precisely the mechanisms that condition the development of the population. The study of the life cycles of individuals and households has also become the subject of interest of historical demography. Due to this research, conjectures concerning earlier populations could get out of a dark, often blind alley, consisting of estimates based on defective fiscal sources and early, non-nominative censuses¹. The technique of longitudinal reconstruction of families on the basis of parochial registers, elaborated by Louis Henry, became the basic instrument of such research². English historical demography, closely connected to economic history, has developed a macro-scale aggregative analysis and specializes in the study of households³. The latter is based on parish censuses. Some of them contain data concerning the age of the inhabitants of parishes; hence, on the basis of an analysis of age-groups in parish censuses, the stages in the life cycle of an individual can be reconstructed.

In England, where the Western-European models of family and household found an ideal embodiment, the typical life

¹ See A. E. Imhof, *Einführung in die Historische Demographie*, München 1977.

² L. Henry, *Historical Demography*, in: *Population and Social Change*, eds. D. V. Glass, R. Revell, Cambridge, Mass. 1972.

³ E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871, a Reconstruction*, London 1981; P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, London 1965.

cycle of an individual consisted of the following stages: childhood, a 10–15 year long period of service after leaving the family home at the age of 15–19, marriage (for females at the age of over 26, and for males 28–29), connected with setting up a new household, a child-bearing period, and the decline of life from the birth of the last child till the death of both spouses⁴. At this final stage the household assumed the character of an empty nest. In England, with her strong tendency towards moving to a new locality, a typical form of household was that of a nuclear family (both with children, and childless). There were also many households of single persons. Extended families (those with kinsmen, or composed of two or more related couples), were among the exceptions. The structure of households and the models of life cycle prevailing in England were also observed in northern France, Flanders, Netherlands and Denmark⁵.

A slightly different variant of the above-presented model could be found in the 18th century peasant communities of Central Europe (Sweden, some parts of present-day Austria and Germany). The basic difference concerned the structure of households. The families extended due to the addition of parents and grandparents constituted over 20% of the total. Most often these were widowed mothers, though frequently both parents were lifelong residents in the same household. In this region one could also observe lodgers who were not related to the head of the household, but rented a room and sometimes a plot of land in return for labour, or a monetary payment. The life cycle of an individual here diverged from that of the North–Western model. The percentage of peasant children who went into service was smaller here than in England, an empty nest was a sporadic phenomenon, and some young people, when they had left service enriched the ranks of lodgers⁶.

⁴ R. Wall, *Leaving Home and the Process of Household Formation in Pre-industrial England*, "Continuity and Change", vol. II, London 1987.

⁵ P. Laslett, *Characteristics of Western Family Considered Over Time*, in: P. Laslett, ed., *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations*, Cambridge 1977; J. Hajnal, *Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System*, in: *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, eds. R. Wall, J. Robin, P. Laslett, Cambridge 1983.

⁶ M. Mitterauer, *Familie und Arbeitteilung. Historischevergleichende Studien*, Wien 1992; L. K. Berkner, *The Stem Family and the Developmental Cycle of the Peasant Household: an 18th Century Austrian Example*, "American His-

The Western- and Central-European models differed essentially from the one prevailing in Russia. Russian households were also in need of labour, but in a household inhabited by a few related couples that need was taken over by the members of the family who usually married early⁷. The three above-mentioned models are characterized in table 1. I also present, for the sake of comparison, the most characteristic features of households in Kujawy, the region under analysis in this text.

Table 1. Laslett's typology of households in early modern Europe

Variables	Regions			
	Western	Middle	Kujawy	Eastern
1	always	Often	often enough	never
2	late	Late	early	early
3	late	Late	late	early
4	low	low	high	high
5	very low	low	low	high
6	very often	very often	very often	no
7	no	often	often	often
8	high	high	high	low
9	low	low enough	low	very high

Variables:

1. Household formation is based on male marriage
2. Marriage age of females (up to 23, more than 23 years)
3. Marriage age of males (up to 25, more than 25)
4. Percentage of married
5. Percentage of relatives
6. Life-cycle servants as household members
7. Lodgers as household members
8. Percentage of nuclear families
9. Percentage of multi-family households

Source: P. Laslett (1983), 58, ff.

Polish studies of the life cycles of individuals and families in the countryside in the pre-industrial era have been few.

torical Review", vol. LXXVII, 1972; *idem*, *Inheritance, Land Tenure and Peasant Family Structure: a German Regional Comparison*, in: *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800*, eds. J. Goody, J. Thirsk, E. P. Thompson, Cambridge 1976.

⁷ P. Czaj, jr., "A Large Family: the Peasant's Greatest Wealth": *Serf Household in Mishino, Russia, 1814-1858*, in: *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, *op. cit.*; M. Mitterauer, A. Kagan, *Russian and Central European Family Structures: a Comparative View*, "Journal of Family History", vol. VII, 1982.

This issue was discussed on the basis of censuses by Stanisław Borowski and Włodzimierz Obraniak, and with respect to the Jews by Jakub Goldberg⁸. They mostly referred to the fiscal sources and inventories, which were preserved in large numbers, and which enable only a static analysis, since they do not provide the age of the respective persons⁹. The lists prepared towards the end of the 18th century for the use of civil–military commissions, embracing the population of larger areas than a parish (usually numbering a few hundred people), have been used to a small extent¹⁰.

One of the statutory duties of the commission was to make the parish priests prepare the lists of inhabitants with the specification of house, age, sex and function in the household. The presented observations are based on the lists of inhabitants of villages situated in 23 parishes of the Radziejów and Podgórze districts in the Brześć–Kujawski voivodeship. Altogether they embrace 14,851 people. With the exclusion of the gentry, the clergy, Jews and persons of nondescript age, the community under analysis numbers 14,381 people [cf. AGAD].

This is not the full list of the inhabitants of this region. Comparison with other sources of that period shows villages and their parts that have not been included in it. Moreover, at least sometimes, the non–Catholic population was not taken into account. It is difficult to establish the scale of omissions, since both earlier sources (diocesan visitations of the 1770s and

⁸ S. Borowski, *Próba odtworzenia struktur społecznych i procesów demograficznych na Warmii u schyłku XVII w. na przykładzie Dobrego Miasta i okolic (An Attempt at Describing Social Structures and Developmental Processes in Erm-land at the End of the 17th Century. The Case of Dobre Miasto Township and its Region)*, "Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski", vol. VIII, 1975; W. Obraniak, *Oblicze demograficzne wsi wieluńskiej w epoce Sejmu Wielkiego (Demographic Structures of the Wieluń Countryside in the Times of the Great Sejm)*, "Studia demograficzne", vol. XVI, 1968; J. Goldberg, *Die Ehe bei den Juden Polens im 18. Jh.*, "Jahrbücher für Geschichte Europas", vol. XXXI, 1983.

⁹ A. Woźniak, *Kultura mazowieckiej wsi pańszczyźnianej XVIII i początku XIX w. Wybrane zagadnienia (Culture of the Serfs in the Mazovian Countryside in the 18th and the Beginning of the 19th Century. Selected Problems)*, Wrocław 1987; J. Rutkowski, *Studia nad położeniem włościan w Polsce XVIII w. (Researches on the Situation of Polish Peasants in the 18th Century)* in: *Studia z dziejów wsi polskiej XVI–XVIII w.*, ed. W. Kula, Warszawa 1956.

¹⁰ Civil–Military Commissions were, according to the Great Sejm constitutions, the instruments of regional administration.

accounts of the tenth groschen offerings of 1789) and the later ones (censuses of the Duchy of Warsaw of 1808 and 1810) are not free of similar defects, sometimes even more conspicuous.

The literature has already discussed the good and bad aspects of parish censuses¹¹. Among the latter we may cite the over-representation of persons whose age finish with number 0 or 1, which grew with their age, and which forces us to form ten-year age-groups. Another defect is the omission of the youngest children, old women and males at military age (15–30 years). From the point of view of the present analysis the omissions in the youngest age-groups are of minor importance, so we will not deal with them here. More important are those of young males and the oldest women. In the case of males between 15–30 years of age this may be a symptom of a fear of being called up, in the case of older women this may be the neglect of the authors of the source. The premature death of women aged 30–45 is not probable, although both the life table for 1850–1852 in Great Poland, and the students of this problem suggest such an eventuality¹². Neither the analysis of Western-European life tables for the 17th and 18th centuries, nor the literature devoted to death in child-birth allow us to accept the premature death of women as a credible explanation¹³. Citing the influence of immigration in this case would also carry little conviction, since one can hardly suppose that males over 40 constituted a significant group among the migrants.

In order to reduce the distortions in the structures of age and sex we applied a two-stage procedure. In the first stage we verified the errors in the declared age with the aid of Carri-

¹¹ I. Gieysztorowa, *Wstęp do demografii staropolskiej (An Introduction to the Demography of Old Poland)*, Warszawa 1975, p. 123 ff.

¹² M. Kędelski, *Umieralność i trwanie życia w Wielkopolsce w latach 1816–1875 (Death Rate and Longevity in Great Poland in the Years 1816–1875)*, "Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski", vol. XVI, 1986; A. Fauve-Chameaux, *Starość w rodach pirenejskich w XVIII i XIX w. (Old Age in Pyrenaean Families in the 18th and 19th Centuries)*, "Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski", vol. XVIII, 1990; O. J. Benediktow, *The Medieval Demographic System of the Nordic Countries*, Oslo 1992.

¹³ Y. Blayo, *La mortalité en France 1740 à 1829*, "Population", vol. XXX, 1975; J. Dupaquier, *La population rurale du bassin parisien à l'époque de Louis XIV*, Lille 1982; I. Loudon, *Death in Childbirth from the Eighteenth Century to 1935*, "Medical History", vol. XXX, 1986.

er-Farrag's formula¹⁴. In the second stage, we attempted to estimate the omissions of males at military age and the oldest women by citing the proportions of sex in the age-groups of the stagnant population constructed on the basis of life tables for 1856-1858 in Great Poland¹⁵. Table 2 presents the original source data as well as the results of estimates based on their correction by Carrier-Farrag's method.

Table 2. Population by sex and age. Radziejów and Podgórze districts, 1791

Age	Crude source data		Estimates to Carrier- Farrag's	According Farrag's	Expected data	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0-4	927	878				
5-9	972	897				
10-14	792	698				
15-19	631	644	681	722	726	
20-24	678	766	628	688	677	
25-29	535	766	628	688	677	
30-34	749	742	625	617		
35-39	330	319	581	473		
40-44	735	516	484	362		
45-49	250	166	365	265		
50-54	371	291	256	192		257
55-59	88	76	153	132		200
60-64	169	151	104	95		145
65-69	47	41	76	72		105
70-74	85	84	56	53		67
75-79	21	15	46	39		89
80-84	53	48	28	24		
85-	22	16	22	16		

¹⁴ Cf. Shryock, 1971, p. 223. The formula is:

$$v''_i = v_i \div (1 + K)$$

$$K = \sqrt[4]{v_{i-1} \div v_{i+1}}$$

$$v'_i = v_i - v''_i$$

where: v_i — number of persons in a ten-year age-group.

v''_{i-1} — number of persons in the previous ten-year group.

v''_{i+1} — number of persons in the next ten-year group.

v'_i — estimated strength of the younger five-year group (e.g. 15-19 in the 15-24 group).

v''_i — estimated strength of the older five-year group (e.g. 20-24 in the 15-24 group).

¹⁵ M. Kędelski, *op. cit.*

Source: own calculation based on the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, court records of Great Poland, records of the civil-military commission of Brześć Kujawski Voivodeship, № 1, 4.

By accepting as a basis the structure of stagnant population according to the life table for the years 1856–1858 in Great Poland we may estimate the deficit of males aged 15–30 at 123 people (5.9%) and of women aged 50–80 at as many as 280 (32%). In all, the scale of omissions amounts to about 2.8%. These estimates do not, of course, take into account immigration, which must have been considerable. One may suppose that the women omitted in the censuses were mainly widowed relatives of household heads and their lodgers. This conclusion is backed up by the fact that very few males from older age-groups remained single (table 5).

The historian may also be distressed by another defect of the source. The civil-military lists of Kujawy, as well as the parish lists of believers on which they were patterned, do not contain any data concerning the social or financial position of individual households. One can only isolate 75 households of the village headmen and farm-holders, 217 households of lodgers of independent cottages on their landlord's land¹⁶, and 1340 households of peasants, who were classified as "farming population". Since only the farm-holders were mentioned by name or nickname, it is impossible to connect the servants to the families in which they were born. Consequently, we must base our conclusions on the indirect observation of the occupational and family careers of individuals.

Age and Position in the Household

Ethnographic research on the peasant communities that were contemporary or temporally not too distant from one another shows that the social position of an individual was in a greater measure determined by his inclusion in a definite functional

¹⁶ W. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *Chłop polski w Europie i w Ameryce (Polish Peasant in Europe and America)*, vol. I, *Organizacja grupy pierwotnej (Organisation of Original Group)*, Warszawa 1976; D. Markowska, *Z problematyki zmian struktury rodziny; rodzina wielopokoleniowa a ludzie starzy (On the Changes in Family Structures: Multigeneration Family and Old People)*, in: *Zmiany kultury chłopskiej. Problematyka i metody prac etnograficznych*, Wrocław 1973.

group than by his registered age¹⁷. Besides the individual's socio-economic standing, what determined his position in a group was his role in the household.

Our further inquiry is based on table 3 that depicts the position in the household depending on age and sex. We distinguish five groups: children, servants, householders (their wives), relatives from outside the householder's nuclear family and lodgers/cottagers. The first group embraces only the children of household heads, while the children of the servants and lodgers have been left in the respective categories. The category of lodgers/cottagers embraces all those inhabitants of a household who were neither the householder's servants nor relatives. Economically, they probably created their own households, though due to inhabiting the same house they were to a greater or smaller extent connected to the peasants who let them into their houses in return for some payment or labour.

Table 3. Population by sex, age and household position, Radziejów and Podgórze districts, 1791 (in %)

Household position							
Age	Children	Servants	Householders, their wives	Relatives	Lodgers	In sum	Total
Males							
0-4	73	7	-	3	17	100	927
5-9	74	7	-	2	17	100	972
10-14	61	27	-	2	10	100	792
15-24	25	62	3	3	7	100	1309
25-34	3	42	37	5	13	100	1284
35-44	0	22	61	1	16	100	1065
45-54	-	17	63	2	18	100	621
55-64	-	14	59	6	21	100	257
65-	-	8	46	19	27	100	228
Total	2254	2096	1814	245	1046	x	7455
In percentage	30	28	24	3	14	x	99

¹⁷ A. Woźniak, *Kultura mazowieckiej wsi (Culture of the Mazovian Countryside)*, op. cit.; A. Wyczański, *Opieka nad ludźmi starymi na wsi polskiej w XVI w. (Old People Care in the Polish Countryside in the 16th Century)*, in: *Biedni i bogaci*, ed. M. Aymard et alii, Warszawa 1992.

Household position							
Age	Children	Servants	Householders, their wives	Relatives	Lodgers	In sum	Total
Females							
0-4	73	7	-	3	17	100	878
5-9	74	7	-	3	16	100	897
10-14	61	26	-	1	12	100	698
15-24	19	47	17	5	12	100	1410
25-34	1	20	56	3	20	100	1320
35-44	-	10	63	2	25	100	835
45-54	-	10	52	10	28	100	457
55-64	-	12	30	23	35	100	227
65-	-	4	14	45	37	100	204
Total	2010	1406	1830	370	1310	x	6926
In percentage	29	20	26	5	19	x	99

Source: as in Table 2.

The change of proportions in individual columns of table 3 shows that the connection between age and position in a household was not accidental. Childhood, understood as a period before leaving the household, usually finished between the 15th and 19th year of age (graph 1 A-B). The fall in the proportion of children was paralleled by a conspicuous growth of the percentage of servants in the 15-24 age-group. In the 25-34 age-group, on the other hand, a growing proportion of householders and lodgers could be observed, connected to a fall in the percentage of servants. The high proportions of servants between 15 and 34 justify a conclusion that the servants who lived in more than a half of peasant households came from the same village, and not, as it was sometimes maintained, from the ranks of "loose" people. This conclusion remains unchanged even if we add the estimates of the missing number of males aged 15-29. If we accept that only the sons of peasants were omitted in censuses, the percentage of servants would nevertheless be high (58% in the 15-24 age-group, and 41% in the 25-34). So, we will not risk a major error in accepting that youth in the Polish countryside in the late 18th century, understood as the period between

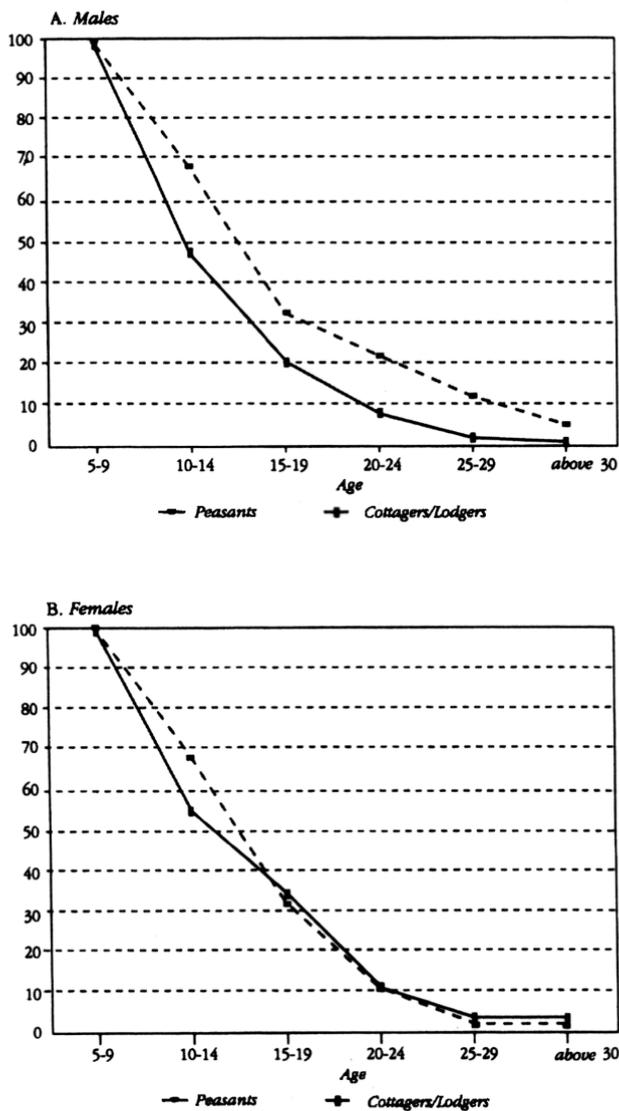
leaving the family home and marriage, should be identified with service [see Obraniak, 1968]. The length of so understood youth depended on sex. Fewer females than males went through service. Moreover, women stayed in service shorter, since they married earlier.

The analysis of the data in table 3 may also lead us to some conclusions concerning old age. Ethnographic and historical literature shows that people might go through their old age in various ways. In the first place, they could spend their last years in their family homes as life-long residents. Another variant was living in village hospitals or the homes of other householders as lodgers. In each of those cases old age meant that the household was handed over to the successor. Ethnologist Jacek Ołędzki says that relinquishing one's household and "admitting in one's own mind that one is old threatened being relegated to the worst category of the representatives of the then community of villeins"¹⁸. It is precisely this factor that may justify a relatively indistinct fall in the proportion of householders in the oldest age-groups. Women reached old age and relinquished their position of a housewife much earlier. Even in the 45–54 age-group the proportion of housewives diminished in favour of a growing percentage of female relatives and lodgers. If we correct the data from table 3 by adding the estimates of the missing people, the above-mentioned characteristics will be even more conspicuous. If we assume that female lodgers and relatives of the householders were omitted in equal proportion, the percentage of female relatives in the last three age-groups in table 3 will be 15, 32 and 47%, while the proportion of female lodgers respectively: 31, 40 and 41%.

Youth, Tantamount to Service

In the Radziejów and Podgórze districts servants made up about 20% of the population (precisely 24.4%, but if we add the estimates of people omitted in censuses, this percentage will be lower.) If we divide servants in peasant households and farms

¹⁸ J. Ołędzki, *Murzynowo. Znaki istnienia i tożsamości kulturalnej mieszkańców wioski nadwiślańskiej XVIII–XX w. (Murzynowo. Signs of the Existence and Cultural Identity of the Inhabitants of a Rural Settlement on the Vistula in the 18th–20th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1991.



Graph 1. Leaving parental households by peasants' children, Radziejów and Podgórze districts, 1791

from those in gentry manor-houses and estates, the differences between those two groups will stand out very clearly (cf. table 4). The different demographic profile of servants to peasants and to the gentry is only partly due to the older age of the administrative personnel of estates and domestic servants in the manor-houses. The most numerous group of servants, comparable on the ground of their function, consisted of farmhands (584 on peasant farms and 217 on gentry estates). These groups clearly differed by their age. The median age of farmhands working for the peasants was 25 years, while of those working for the gentry — 32. What is most important, only 12% of labourers employed by peasants had families, while about 25% of those working for the gentry had wives¹⁹. This difference should be attributed to the fact that many among the servants to the gentry came from poorer families who could not ensure their children an alternative future.

Table 4. Selected demographic indicators of servants for Radziejów and Podgórze districts, 1791*

Indicators	In peasant households		In households of the gentry	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Number of persons	1244	783	712	474
Mean age	23.7	20.8	31.2	28.3
Median age	22	20	30	25
Quartile 1	17	16	21	20
Quartile 3	29	24	40	36
Percentage of persons below age of marriage**	69.9	71.4	44.0	40.6
Married persons	228		322	

Source: as in Table 2.

* Children and other family members of servants are excluded

** Below 27 years for males and 23 years for females; age limits are based on estimated mean age of marriage

As it has been said, the fact that most people aged 15–24 were servants shows that the latter were recruited mainly from the same village. Graphs 1 A–B show how soon children left their parental households. If we take into account the farm–

¹⁹ M. Kopczyński, *Młodość i młodzież na Kujawach w XVIII w. (Youth and Young People in the Kujawy Region in the 18th Century)*, "Przegląd Historyczny", vol. LXXXVI, 1995.

holders' sons who supposedly were hiding from conscription, the indicators in graph 1A in individual age-groups would increase by 8–12%, but this would not change the general picture. As it can be seen, home-leaving was a universal phenomenon, typical both for farm-owners and landless families. What differed was only the time when the children left home. Lodgers' children left earlier, at the age of 10–14, farm-holders' children and those of the peasants at the age of 15–19. It is worthy of note that the average difference in age between fathers and the eldest sons remaining in the family home was 45 years in households headed by people over 60, and 34 years in those headed by men aged from 41–60. This shows that peasants deliberately sent their eldest sons into service. This created a want of hired workers who had to be at least partly remunerated in cash. This means that the peasants were not, as is sometimes supposed, completely cut off from the market and money turnover and their farms should not be treated exclusively as provision-producing plots²⁰. In order to answer the question about the motives of the peasants' behaviour in the Kujawy region, we must take a closer look at the fate of old people.

Adulthood and Old Age

The transition from youth to adulthood was on the one hand determined by marriage, on the other by assuming the function of a householder or his wife.

Civil-military lists are not the best source for studying marriage age. Their basic defect is that they only sporadically inform of the civil status of lodgers and servants on the estates who lived alone. Consequently, the proportion of single persons is heightened, and since the lists leave a wide margin of people of nondescript civil status, the calculation of the mean marriage age is very uncertain. On the basis of the list of population arranged according to age and civil status, we may accept, however, with considerable certitude that males married at the age of 25–29, while females at that of 20–24. This is on the one

²⁰ J. Kochanowicz, *Spór o teorię gospodarki chłopskiej. Gospodarstwo chłopskie w teorii ekonomii i w historii gospodarczej (Debate Over the Theory of Peasant Farm Economy. A Peasant Farm in the Theory of Economy and in the Economic History)*, Warszawa 1992.

hand corroborated by demographico-historical literature, on the other by the data in table 3 that show a higher percentage of householders and their wives as well as lodgers, and a lower proportion of servants in those age-groups²¹.

Interesting observations can be made on the basis of the list of elderly people arranged according to their civil status (table 5). We remember from table 3 that males tried to retain their position of householders as long as possible. But this was not possible without marriage. Hence the many successive marriages of males, contracted much more frequently and at a more advanced age than by females. The difference between the age of the spouses that was growing with the age of males shows how important those marriages were for them. It ranged from 4 years in the case of males below 30, till 11 years for males over 60. The contrast between the civil status of males and females will be even greater, if we take into account old women who were probably widows and were omitted in the source. The fall in the proportion of married women in favour of widows can be noticed beginning with the 35-44 age-group. The growing percentage of widows goes hand in hand with a diminishing proportion of householders' wives in the corresponding age-groups, which means that widowhood entailed a passage to the status of a life-long resident, or lodger.

Table 5. Persons aged 54 and more by marital status, Radziejów and Podgórze districts, 1791

Marital status	Males	Females	Males	Females
	in %			
Single	6	3	1	1
Married	373	169	77	38
Widowed	45	196	9	46
Unknown	61	63	13	15
Total	485	431	100	100

Source: as in Table 2

²¹ I. Gieysztorowa, *Rodzina staropolska w świetle źródeł demograficznych. Zarys problematyki (Old Polish Family in the Light of Demographical Sources. An Outline)*, in: *Spółeczeństwo staropolskie*, ed. A. Wyczański, vol. II, Warszawa 1978; E. Piasecki, *Ludność parafii bejskiej (woj. kieleckie) w świetle ksiąg metrykalnych z XVIII-XIX w. (The Members of the Bejsce Parish, Kielce District, in the Light of Public Registers of the 18th-19th Centuries)*, Wrocław 1991; *Śluby (Marriages)*, in: Z. Kwaśny, ed., *Śląskie studia demograficzne*, Wrocław 1994.

As it has been said, old age had three scenarios: life-long residence, the fate of a lodger, or hospital. The latter possibility did not count for much in the statistics. The total number of the inmates of the five village hospitals was 37. Their mean age was 43, being similar to that of the householders and lodgers, which shows that these hospitals were rather shelter-houses for vagabonds than for old-people.

Our analysis should thus focus on two scenarios. In the Kujawy region the proportion of people we defined as relatives was small (4.3%), although it cannot be ruled out that some old women omitted in the source were relatives of the householders. Consequently, the percentage of households inhabited by nuclear families extended by the inclusion of relatives was also small. They constituted 24% among the farmholders and 17.5% among the peasants. A lower position in the socio-economic hierarchy entailed a lower percentage of families with relatives. They made up 9.2% among lodgers renting a plot of land, and 1.6% among lodgers/cottagers.

The most numerous group among the relatives consisted of the widowed mothers of householders (212, that is almost 30% of the total). The presence of relatives in a household could be noted especially in two periods of the developmental cycle of the family: when the household head was over 60 and when he was under 35 years old. In the first case we have to deal with successors, mainly married sons of the householder and their children (this concerned 5.5% of the households of farm-holders and peasants taken together). In the second case we deal with widows, in the first place the householders' mothers (9.2% of households). Families with both parents were the most rare (1.3% of households), which shows that endeavours were made to avoid the burden of supporting a couple of life-long residents.

The most difficult group to define consisted of lodgers/cottagers. Single persons, mainly widows and widowers, made up as many as 33.7% of their number. Their relatively low median age (40 years) does not allow us to identify them fully with old people. We should rather attribute the large number of middle-aged lodgers/cottagers in the Kujawy region to the attractiveness of this territory for seasonal labourers, which may be, in its turn, connected with a greater expansion of the large estates demanding hired labour in this area.

The growing percentage of lodgers/cottagers in the oldest age-groups combined with the less dynamic decrease in their absolute number (if compared with other categories of people) inclines us to suppose that the oldest lodgers/cottagers consisted largely of ex-householders/their wives. It cannot be ruled out, of course, that some of them were related to the house-holders. It seems, however, that this relationship might be more distant, since the source is quite consistent in recording the ties between parents and children. Thus we may accept with much probability that at least some section of the oldest lodgers/cottagers spent their last years outside their own families. It seems that there was an alternative of spending old age as a life-long resident or lodger. Generally speaking, the possibility of spending one's last years as a life-long resident depended on the wealth of the family.

A question remains what percentage of old people whose children were still alive lived alone in independent homes or rented rooms. Since there are no direct data at our disposal, we have to rely on estimates. Our most important assumption in this case is that the basic demographic realities concerning the Kujawy countryside in the late 18th century are comparable with the parameters calculated by Edmund Piasecki for the Bejsce parish in the Kielce region²². We accept this scholar's chronological boundary of old age: 60 years for males, and 50 years for females.

The analysis of the family situation of old people in Kujawy shows that among 325 males aged over 60, 114 (35.1%) did not live together with their children. Among females aged over 50, this related to 231 (39%) out of 586. If we take into account the estimates of the omitted old women made above, and assume additionally that among those omitted a half consisted of relatives and another half of lodgers, the percentage of females living alone will amount to 42%. If we accept the information provided by ethnographic literature that in the peasant milieu marriage was a universal custom, the proportion of childless may be estimated (as in Piasecki) at 5% for each sex. (Piasecki [p. 272 ff.] accepts that sterile persons were those who had no children in two marriages.) This should be augmented by persons who sur-

²² E. Piasecki, *op. cit.*

vived their children's death. According to data from the Bejsce parish, among people born between the years 1780–1820 such fate concerned 7.6% of males who lived up to 60 and 6.6% of females aged 50 [Piasecki, p. 262]. If we transpose these data to Kujawy it would mean that the percentage of childless persons and those without living children should not surpass 13% of males over 60, and 12% of females over 50. This means that 22% of the total of old men and 27–30% of old women lived alone, although their children were probably alive.

*

Our analysis of the life cycle of an individual in the Kujawy region in the late 18th century would not be complete unless we try to present it in reference to the above–outlined Western– and Central–European models. It has to be stressed that the multi–family households and the life cycles known in the Russian guberniyas were completely foreign to the Polish realities.

The above–presented characterization of the servants in the Kujawy region generally corresponds with the criteria of the Western–European model formulated by John Hajnal²³. The fact that the percentage of people over 30 among the servants was higher here than in the West can be explained by the demand for hired labour in the Kujawy estates. Nevertheless, most servants took such jobs only for a short time. Since during their service the males stayed unmarried, such employment, just as in the West, delayed the moment of marriage. A much earlier marriage age of females may be associated with the fact that the estates and peasant farms specializing in corn–growing were mostly in need of male labour.

The Kujawy countryside differed from North–Western Europe in several points. There were many lodgers/cottagers, and women married earlier. Old age was also different here, as illustrated in table 6 that shows the situation of old people in the Kujawy and the Danish countryside towards the end of the 18th century²⁴. The contrast consists in the great number of lodgers/

²³ J. Hajnal, *Two Kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation System*, in: *Family Forms*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ H. Ch. Johansen, *The Position of the Old in the Rural Household in the Traditional Society*, "The Scandinavian Economic History Review", vol. XXIV, 1976.

cottagers in the oldest age-groups in Kujawy, and also of servants, though to a lesser extent. When discussing the fact that there were 75% householders among the oldest Danes, we have to comment that they were mostly the heads of "empty nests". Only 35–40% of the peasants were able to retain the position of householders till the end of their lives²⁵. In the Kujawy region empty nests were encountered rarely. Almost all the households headed by people aged 55 or over, were also inhabited by their servants or lodgers/cottagers. In about 30% of households there were two or more servants, which suggests that they were peasant households and not classic empty nests.

Table 6. Household position of the elderly, Denmark 1787 vs Kujawy 1791

Region	Household position				
	Householders, their wives	Relatives	Servants	Lodgers	Total
Males (in %)					
Denmark*	72	19	4	5	100
Kujawy	53	12	11	24	100
Females (in %)					
Denmark	54	33	1	12	100
Kujawy	23	33	8	36	100

* Denmark: persons aged 60 and over, Kujawy: persons aged 55 and over.

Source: as in Table 2 and H. Ch. Johansen, *The Position*, p. 142.

From the point of view of typical household structures and individuals' life cycles, the northern part of the Polish Crown was the closest to the realities of the German-speaking territories. However, being close should not be understood as being identical. The basic difference consisted in the structure of multiple families, which was a derivative of differences in the social and financial status of old people. In contrast to the German-speaking territories, in Kujawy we rarely encountered families with a couple of life-long residents. There were, however, more families with a married son or daughter living together with the householders, that is examples of Le Play's *famille souche* in its classic form.

²⁵ F. Skrubbeltrang, *Faestegarden som forsorger: aftaegt og anden forsorg i det 18. arhundrede*, "Jyske Samlinger", vol. V, 1961.

Becoming a life-long resident or a lodger was in Kujawy tantamount to a far-reaching degradation in the social hierarchy, much more severe than in the countries of Western and Central Europe. Researchers into this problem, David Gaunt and Herman Rebel show that the financial status of old people in Sweden and Austria was not in dramatic contrast to that of the householders²⁶. In 17th century Upper Austria life-long residents sometimes were even able to make a fortune, or contracted successive marriages, something absolutely unbelievable in the Polish countryside, even after the enfranchisement of the peasants²⁷. This could make life-long residency an attractive alternative. In the territories where undivided inheritance and late marriage prevailed, men handed over their farms when they were about 60. Their sons-inheritors as a rule got married right after taking the farm over, hence the typical multiple family consisting of two related couples was made up of the householder and his wife and his parents — life-long residents²⁸. This made it possible to sustain the demographic regime typical of Western and Central Europe, where marriage and setting up a new household were closely connected. This, in the long run, helped to retain a balance between the resources (land) and the number of people²⁹. In the Kujawy region the connection between marriage and setting up a new household was not so strong, although the nuclear family dominated there as well.

A change came in the 19th century. The abolition of serfdom, the spread of contract system in the relations between landlords and peasants after 1807 and the fact that estates started in a larger measure to rely on hired labour that was more productive than serfdom, entailed a gradual disappearance of peasant servants and a growth in the numbers of a new social category

²⁶ D. Gaunt, *The Property and Kin Relationships of Retired Farmers in Northern and Central Europe*, in: *Family Forms*, op. cit.; H. Rebel, *Peasants Classes. The Bureaucratization of Property and Family Relations Under Early Habsburg Absolutism 1511-1636*, Princeton 1981.

²⁷ J. Nakonieczny, *Pojęcia prawne ludu (Popular Legal Ideas)*, "Wisła", vol. XVI, 1903, p. 741.

²⁸ L. K. Berkner, *The Stem Family*, op. cit.

²⁹ R. S. Schofield, *Family Structure, Demographic Behavior and Economic Growth*, in: *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*, ed. J. Walter, R. S. Schofield, London 1989.

made up of professional farm-workers³⁰. The disappearance of servants left at least some peasant households in a situation of shortage of work-force which had to be filled by the work of family members, including old people. A real breakthrough came with enfranchisement. In the course of one decade a distinct growth in the proportion of three- and four-generation rural families could be observed³¹. Underlying such a radical transformation was certainly a change in the peasant family strategy, although a fall in the death-rate was also bound to produce its effect in the long run. If this scenario is confirmed by further empirical studies, it will be possible to accept that the factors that lay at the basis of the rapid growth of the population of the Polish Kingdom in the 19th century were in an equal measure the improvement of the parameters of longevity and a change in the demographic behaviour of the population, connected with the evolution of economic conditions.

(Translated by Agnieszka Kreczmar)

³⁰ S. Borowski, *Kształtowanie się rolniczego rynku pracy w Wielkopolsce w okresie wielkich reform agrarnych 1807-1860 (Shaping of the Rural Labour-Market in Great Poland During the Years of Agrarian Reforms 1807-1860)*, Poznań 1963.

³¹ D. Markowska, *Rodzina wiejska na Podlasiu 1864-1964 (Rural Family in Podlachia 1864-1964)*, Wrocław 1970, p. 195.