

Andrzej Karpinski

FEMALE SERVANTS IN POLISH TOWNS IN THE LATE 16th AND 17th CENTURIES

In this article I will try to characterize the group of female domestic servants, who made up one of the most numerous, but unappreciated, strata of the urban population. It is not easy to single out this occupational category from all women working in services because of the imprecise language of sources and the fact that service in the home of a craftsman or a merchant was, as a rule, an episode in the career of most plebeian women. I will focus attention on burghers' servants and ignore washerwomen, seamstresses, dealing in liquors who, as a rule, worked on their own account. I will also ignore hired females engaged as the occasion arose in workshops or stalls. For obvious reasons not much attention will be paid to female servants employed in magnatial palaces, noblemen's houses, monasteries and hospitals as well as to wet-nurses engaged by the municipal authorities. Wherever possible comparisons have been made.

This essay is part of a larger study dealing with the role and place of women in five large towns (Poznań, Cracow, Warsaw, Lwów and Lublin) of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late 16th and 17th centuries. This has determined the chronological and territorial scope of my reflections. The study is based on inventories and last wills, law court records, (records of councillors, records of benchers, criminal records), tax (especially poll-tax) registers, municipal accounts, regulations adopted by municipal authorities, guild statutes and *belles lettres*. There is a great deal of information concerning female servants in these records but it is scattered as well as imprecise and incomparable. Since such is the state of source material and since we have practically no sources produced by representatives of this socio-occupational group, historiographic output in this field has been rather modest. Apart from J. B e r m a n 's prewar article on Warsaw female servants at the end of the 18th century¹, more place has been

¹ J. B e r m a n, *Służba domowa w Warszawie w końcu XVIII wieku oraz próby jej zrzeszania się zawodowego (Domestic Servants in Warsaw at the End of the 18th Century and Their Attempts to Form Occupational Associations)*, "Ekonomista", 1926, N° 2/3.

devoted to this group only in the studies by J. Bieniarzówna and A. Karpiński².

Information on female servants can be found in some new syntheses of the histories of individual towns³, in works on everyday life⁴, treatises on the history of custom⁵, studies presenting social structure and analyzing the individual occupational categories of the urban population, especially the social fringe⁶, and essays discussing laws against luxury⁷.

² J. Bieniarzówna, *Z dawnego Krakowa. Szkice i obrazy z XVII w.* (*Old Cracow. Sketches and Pictures from the 17th Century*), Kraków 1957; A. Karpiński, *Pauperes. O mieszkańcach Warszawy XVI i XVII wieku* (*Pauperes. Warsaw Inhabitants in the 16th and 17th Centuries*), Warszawa 1983.

³ Cf. *Dzieje Krakowa (A History of Cracow)*, vol. II. *Kraków w wiekach XVI–XVIII (Cracow from the 16th to the 18th Centuries)*, ed. J. Bieniarzówna and J. Małecki, Kraków 1984; *Dzieje Warszawy (A History of Warsaw)*, vol. II, *Warszawa w latach 1526–1795 (Warsaw in 1526–1795)*, ed. S. Kieniewicz, Warszawa 1984; *Dzieje Poznania (A History of Poznań)*, vol. I, *Do roku 1793 (Up to 1793)*, ed. J. Topolski, parts I–II, Warszawa–Poznań 1988; *Historia Gdańska (A History of Gdańsk)*, vol. II, *1454–1655*, ed. E. Cieślak, Gdańsk 1982.

⁴ See M. Bogucka, *Życie codzienne w Gdańsku XVI–XVII w.* (*Everyday Life in Gdańsk in the 16th and 17th Centuries*), Warszawa 1967; J. Lilejko, *Życie codzienne w Warszawie za Wazów* (*Everyday Life in Warsaw under the Vasas*), Warszawa 1984; L. Sieciechowiczowa, *Życie codzienne w renesansowym Poznaniu* (*Everyday Life in Poznań during the Renaissance*), Warszawa 1974.

⁵ J. S. Bystron, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce. Wiek XVI–XVIII (A History of Custom in Old Poland. 16th–18th Centuries)*, vols. I–II, Warszawa 1976; Z. Kuchowicz, *Obyczaje staropolskie (Old Polish Custom)*, Łódź 1975.

⁶ B. Baranowski, *Ludzie gościńca w XVII–XVIII w.* (*Highwaymen in the 17th and 18th Centuries*), Łódź 1986; J. Bieniarzówna, *Mieszczaiństwo krakowskie w XVII w. Z badań nad strukturą społeczną miasta (The Cracow Burghers in the 17th Century. Studies in the Town's Social Structure)*, Kraków 1969; M. Bogucka, *Mieszczaiństwo Warszawy w XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku (The Burghers of Warsaw in the 16th and Early 17th Centuries)*, in: *Spółeczeństwo Warszawy w rozwoju historycznym. Materiały sesji 19–20.1.1976*, Warszawa 1977, pp. 393–421; M. Frančič, *Ludzie luźni w osiemnastowiecznym Krakowie (Unemployed People with No Domicile in 18th Century Cracow)*, Kraków 1967; A. Karpiński, *Prostytucja w dużych miastach polskich (Kraków, Lublin, Poznań, Warszawa) w XVI i XVII w. (Prostitution in Large Polish Towns (Cracow, Lublin, Poznań, Warsaw) in the 16th and 17th Centuries)*, "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej", vol. XXXVI, 1988, No 2, pp. 277–304; J. Kracik, M. Rożek, *Hultaje, złoczyńcy, wszetecznicze w dawnym Krakowie. O marginesie społecznym XVI–XVII w. (Rascals, Malefactors and Harlots in Old Cracow. The Social Fringe in the 16th and 17th Centuries)*, Kraków 1986; W. Łoziński, *Patrycjat i mieszczaiństwo lwowski w XVI i XVII w. (The Patriciate and Middle Burghers of Lwów in the 16th and 17th Centuries)*, Lwów 1890; A. Wyczański, *Uwarstwienie społeczne w Polsce XVI wieku. Studia (Social Stratification in 16th Century Poland. Studies)*, Wrocław 1977.

⁷ A. Dymmel, *Ubiór jako wyznacznik pozycji społecznej mieszczan lubelskich w drugiej połowie XVI i w XVII wieku (Dress as a Sign of Lublin Burghers' Social Status in the Late 16th and 17th Centuries)*, "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej", vol. XXXI, 1983, No 2, pp. 197–208; S. Estreicher, *Ustawy przeciwko zbytkowi w dawnym Krakowie (Laws against Luxury in Old Cracow)*, "Rocznik Krakowski" vol. I, 1898, pp. 102–134; S. Grodziski, *Uwagi o prawach przeciwko zbytkowi w dawnej Polsce (Remarks on the Laws against Luxury in Old Poland)*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego", "Prawo" 1958, No 5; H. Horowitzówna, *Reformacja w Polsce a zagadnienie zbytku (The Reformation in Poland and the Question of Luxury)*, "Reformacja w Polsce", vol. IV, 1926, pp. 32–40.

Servants and hired labour in the countryside has been dealt with in interesting articles by A. Izydorczyk-Kamler⁸.

It is difficult to determine the total number of domestic servants in towns for statistical materials are incomplete. However, one can safely assume that they were one of the most numerous socio-occupational groups during the entire period under review. Naturally, the number of domestic servants must have greatly fluctuated, increasing during periods of prosperity and falling during natural calamities and economic depression. This is fully confirmed by the poll-tax registers of 1590–1699 which provide a basis for reconstructing and estimating the size of this group. The poll-tax registers included all people living within the walls of a town, excluding children up to the age of 10. Table I shows that domestic servants, excluding journeymen and apprentices, who also performed some services in their employers' homes, accounted for 16.4 per cent of all the identified persons in Lublin (1680), 17.7 per cent in Cracow (1699)⁹, 20.9 per cent in Lwów (1662), 26.2 per cent in Poznań (1590) and 27.5 per cent in Old Warsaw (1659). This means that they constituted from one-sixth to over a quarter of all the inhabitants listed in the registers, the relatively higher percentage of this group in Poznań and Warsaw being a result not so much of the specific character of these towns as of the fact that the registers derive from different periods. At the end of the 16th century and in the first half of the 17th, before the general demographic and economic breakdown, the proportions were probably similar in Lublin, Cracow and Lwów. Rich districts were, of course, the centres with the largest number of domestic servants. In 1659, 33 per cent of all domestic servants in Old Warsaw lived in houses near the Market Square while no more than 13 per cent lived in Piekarska Street¹⁰. In 16th century Poznań, too, households near the Market Square houses employed the largest number of servants¹¹.

⁸ A. Izydorczyk-Kamler, *Praca najemna na wsi małopolskiej w XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku (Hired Labour in the Countryside of Little Poland in the 16th and Early 17th Centuries)*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", vol. XCVII, 1990, N° 1–2, pp. 3–31; eadem, *Pozycja służby w rodzinie chłopskiej w XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku (The Position of Servants in Peasant Families in the 16th and Early 17th Centuries)*, in: *Studia nad gospodarką, społeczeństwem i rodziną w Europie późnośredowiecznej (księga pamiątkowa ku czci prof. dr Andrzeja Wyczańskiego)* ed. J. Topolski, Lublin 1987, pp. 161–165.

⁹ According to J. Bieńiarzówna, *Old Cracow*, p. 70, domestic servants accounted for at least one-seventh (i.e. about 14 per cent) of the total population of Cracow in the 17th century.

¹⁰ My own calculations based on the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (henceforward referred to as CAHR), Warszawa Ekonomiczne (henceforward referred to as WE) 592, *passim*.

¹¹ S. Waszak, *Ludność i zabudowa mieszkaniowa Poznania w XVI i XVII w. (The Population and Dwelling Houses of Poznań in the 16th and 17th Centuries)*, "Przegląd Zachodni", vol. IX, 1953, pp. 64–136.

Table 1. Female Domestic Servants in the Light of Poll-Tax from 1590–1699¹²

	Cracow (1699)	Old Warsaw (1659)	Lublin (1680)	Poznań (1590)	Lwów (1662)
Number of properties within city walls	572	187	no data	480	280
Total registered population	3534	1245	1729	2800	3309
Number of servants (men and women) and their percentage	628 (17.7%)	342 (27.5%)	285 (16.4%)	735 (26.2%)	892 (20.9%)
Number and percentage of women in domestic service	536 (86.7%)	283 (82.7%)	254 (89.1%)	667 (90.7%)	755 (84.6%)
Percentage of servants in the total number of women	28.8	50.0	30.0	52.9	40.0
Number of female servants per property	0.93	1.5	no data	1.4	2.7

Women decidedly predominated in this group. In each of the five towns they accounted for over four-fifths of the servants, from about 83 per cent (Old Warsaw, 1659) to about 91 per cent (Poznań 1590). Female servants constituted a large proportion of all women liable to taxation. In Cracow (1699) and Lublin (1680) they accounted for 30 per cent, in Lwów (1622) for 40 per cent, in Poznań (1590) and Warsaw (1659) for about 50 per cent. This means that every second or third woman in each of these five towns was a servant in a burgher's house.

The poll-tax registers make it possible to ascertain the average number of servants inhabiting an urban property quite precisely. In Cracow a servant or a serving wench was registered in practically every house in 1659, in Poznań and Old Warsaw there were, on the average, three servants per every two buildings in 1590 and 1659. The greatest number of servants, three per each of the 280 properties, was registered in Lwów in 1662. This was due

¹² My own calculations based on records in: State Archives in Cracow (henceforward referred to as SA Cracow), Akta miasta Krakowa (henceforward AK) 2840, *passim*; CAHR, WE 592, *passim*. Archives of the City of Lwów (henceforward A. Lwów), Akta miasta Lwowa (henceforward AL.) 783, *passim*; *Dzieje Lublina. Próba syntezy A History of Lublin. Attempts. Attempts at a Synthesis*, vol. 1, Lublin 1965, pp. 130–131; S. Wa s z a k, *Ludność i zabudowa mieszkaniowa miasta Poznania w XVI i XVII w. The Population and Dwelling Houses of the City of Poznań in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, "Przegląd Zachodni", vol. IX, 1953, pp. 93–94.

to the prosperity of the local patriciate and common burghers who were not hard hit by the Swedish invasion of Poland.

Having ascertained the approximate number of helpers in each house covered by the tax registers we know certain proportions, but we still do not know how many women were employed in an average house of a craftsman or a merchant. This results from the fact that the number of households was several times greater than the number of houses and other dwelling accommodations covered by the registers. Very useful in this respect are S. Waszak's tables which make it possible to approximately ascertain the situation in Poznań at the end of the 16th and of the 17th centuries. Of the 422 households employing female servants in 1590 (these households accounted for 54 per cent of all households at that time) 55.6 per cent had one servant, 35.7 per cent had two, 7.8 per cent had three and only 0.9 per cent employed four or more servants. Shopkeepers and apothecaries employed the largest number of servants (two on the average), shoemakers had the fewest servants (one servant per two guild masters' households). The figures cited by Waszak for 1692 show a growing pauperisation of the Poznań burghers in the 17th century. Of the 301 households employing servants, nearly 70 per cent had only one domestic help, another 21 per cent had two, and 9 per cent had three¹³. No family had more helpers. Unfortunately, we do not have such detailed data for the other towns. But, as some single examples show, households with 1–3 servants predominated there too. The richest patricians of Lwów, Warsaw and Cracow sometimes employed 5 servants¹⁴, excluding retainers and outdoor servants.

The state of the archives which have come down to us does not make it possible to define exactly the social milieu and territories from which urban domestic servants came. On the basis of several hundred fragmentary casual examples one could say that nearly two-thirds came from towns and small country towns and only one-third were from villages. This undermines the theory that urban servants were of poorest origin; on the contrary, many of them were from relatively prosperous craftsmen's families¹⁵ which

¹³ S. Waszak, *op. cit.*, pp. 105–136.

¹⁴ In the 17th century five servants were employed by Cracow patricians Rudolf Kortyń (1632), Jan Toroszowicz (1696) and Rozalia Groszajerówna (1661), Lwów merchants Walerian Alembek (1678), Mikołaj Borez (1662) and Michał Boim (1662) and by Zofia Skupowa (1615), wife of a baker in Old Warsaw, SA Cracow, AK 773, p. 91; A. Lwow, *AL* 783, pp. 1, 72; *CAHR, WE* 1223 — Zofia Skupowa's last will of 1615, np.; Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow (henceforward referred to as LPAS Cracow) MS 429, pp. 60, 175; W. Łoziński, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹⁵ In Poznań, for instance, there were daughters of butchers, brewers, saddlers, millers, glaziers, barbers, tailors and even mayors of small towns among servants; State Archives in Poznań (henceforward referred to as SA Poznań), Akta miasta Poznania (henceforward *AP*) I 631, k. 33–33v; I 633, k. 404; I 636, k. 55–55v; I 639, k. 196–196v, 258–258v; I 640, k. 156–157v; I 641, k. 51, 118, 131–132, 146v–147, 315v.

thought that service in a patrician's home would enable their daughters to make a career.

Large urban centres were the destination mainly of women living in villages and small towns of a given region. Warsaw female servants came mostly from Mazovian settlements and towns: Chylice, Dziekanów, Białołęka, Piaseczno, Grodzisk and Sochaczew¹⁶; Poznań was the destination of girls from Klecko, Petrykowo, Olesin, Koło, Wieluń, Pyzdry, Września, Kalisz, Kostrzyn and Szamotuły¹⁷. Migrations from more distant localities were rare, but we should bear in mind that many servants were recruits from the social fringe and the poorest strata consisting of unemployed persons with no domicile who wandered all over the Commonwealth. Many were orphans from impoverished families. Jakub Turobińczyk, a mead brewer from Lwów, wrote on his deathbed in 1632: "Should she (his daughter Elżbieta) not content herself with a place in my spouse's house, she should be sent into service to the house of a kind-hearted burgher"; this is echoed by the guardians of the daughter of a citizen of Old Warsaw, Jan Grzebiennik, who died in 1594: "the girl named Zofia who has reached some age, should be given in the service of good people where she can do well until her maturity"¹⁸. There were also employers' wards and relatives among servants as well as girls entrusted to the care of charitable institutions¹⁹, and even a few persons from noble families²⁰.

Not much can be said about the age and civil status of female servants in Cracow, Poznań and Lwów. It is only known that, as in other countries, they went into service at the age of 10–12²¹. Sometimes even younger girls

¹⁶ CAHR, Stara Warszawa (henceforward SW) 543, k. lv; WE 1223 — last will of Marianna Dąbrowska from New Warsaw from 1660; np.: A. Karpiński, *Pauperes*, p. 169.

¹⁷ SA Poznań, AP I 632, k. 235v–236; I 400, k. 1095; I 639, k. 238, 258–258v; I 640, k. 155–157v; I 641, k. 78v, 131–132, 214, 215–215v, 315; I 644, k. 212v; I 662, k. 52; I 664, k. 16–16v.

¹⁸ A. Lwów, AL 340, p. 395; CAHR, SW 12, k. 339v.

¹⁹ Cf. State Archives in Lublin (henceforward referred to as SA Lublin); Akta Miasta Lublina (henceforward A.Lub.) 128, p. 413; 125, p. 99; A. Lwów, AL 341, p. 323; 342, p. 498; SA Poznań, AP I 633, k. 337, 644v; I 634, k. 157; SA Cracow, AK 773, p. 155; K. Antosiewicz, *Opieka nad dziećmi w zakonie św. Duchy w Krakowie (1220–1788) (Care of Children in the Holy Ghost Convent in Cracow (1220–1788))*, in: *Z badań nad dziejami zakonów*, ed. E. Wiśniowski, Lublin 1984, pp. 50, 74.

²⁰ Servants Katarzyna Jędrzejowska from Cracow — 1695 — (SA Cracow, AK 869, p. 494) and Jadwiga Dziekińska from Poznań — 1623 — (SA Poznań, AP I 641, k. 315v) standing trial before municipal courts said they were of noble birth.

²¹ A. Izydorczyk–Kamler, *Hired Labour*, p. 23; P. Laslett, *Un monde que nous avons perdu*, Paris 1969, Chapter II. The duty of 10–12 year old girls to go into service was also emphasized in the kahal statute of Cracow Jews of 1595, see M. Bałaban, *Historia Żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu 1304–1868 (The History of Jews in Cracow and Kazimierz 1304–1868)*, vol. I, Kraków 1931, p. 432; idem, *Umysłowość i moralność żydostwa polskiego w XVI w. (The Mentality and Morals of Polish Jewry in the 16th Century)* in: *Kultura staropolska*, Kraków 1932, p. 635.

were defined as servants²². On the other hand, this occupational group also included many mature women, widows with grown-up children and old maids who had been working for many years. In the five towns examined by me girls of marriageable age, in their teens or twenty-old years old, predominated. Married women were an exception.

Many servants are defined very imprecisely in sources, usually as wenches, maids, servants, women, petticoats and the like. It can be assumed that these words denote females with lowest qualifications employed in various kinds of unskilled work outdoors and indoors. Kitchen maids and cooks were probably more skilled, though not many of them could have had significantly higher qualifications than ordinary domestic servants. Wenches, servant girls and cooks constituted the majority of servants listed in the extant poll-tax registers, accounting for 74 per cent of the servants of Lwów (1662) and 86 per cent of the servants of Cracow (1699)²³. It would be difficult to ascertain corresponding proportions for the other towns.

Helpers who carried out a more independent, clearly defined work were treated differently in burghers' households. These included women engaged in selling liquor (much more rarely listed in sources — there were 23 of them in Cracow in 1699 and 70 in Lwów in 1662), chamber maids who saw to it that the house and workshop were kept tidy (30 in Cracow, 77 in Lwów)²⁴ and women who looked after infants and small children i.e. wet-nurses and nannies. There was a great demand for the latter²⁵ because of the high death rate of women in labour and the problem of foundlings; moreover, mothers had no time to look after all the successively born children for their presence in the family's workshop or stall was indispensable. On the other hand, only prosperous craftsmen and shopkeepers could afford to engage a wet-nurse or a nanny; this is confirmed by tax registers, in which these categories of servants are rarely listed²⁶. Let us recall, however, that many wet-nurses and nannies were employed by the municipalities to feed and bring up unwanted children²⁷; some others were employed by charitable institutions²⁸.

²² For instance, Anna from Leszno was 8 years old in 1618 when she was a servant of tailor Stanisław, an inhabitant of Poznań (SA Poznań, AP I 641, k. 120).

²³ My own calculations based on SA Cracow, AK 2840, *passim*; A. Lwów, AL 783, *passim*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ The widespread use of wet-nurses' services is mentioned in the diary of a 17th century Hungarian traveller, Marton Csombor, who undoubtedly exaggerated the issue: "Even townsmen who belong to the third estate employ wet-nurses for their children. Believe me, there are always three thousand wet-nurses in Gdańsk, *Martona Csombora podróż po Polsce (Marton Csombor's Journey across Poland)*, ed. J. Ślaski, Warszawa 1961, p. 77.

²⁶ Of the 755 servants listed in Lwów's poll-tax register of 1662 only 33 were wet-nurses; the Cracow register of 1699 mentions 5 wet-nurses and 8 nannies among 536 female servants (the author's own calculations as in fn. 22).

In addition to carrying on services, many women of this group worked in handicrafts, both legally and illegally. Guild statutes, which as a rule forbade such practices, sometimes show how widespread they were. For instance, it was stated in the privileges of Cracow needle-makers guild in 1615: "Some brothers as well as widows sometimes keep five servant girls; all brothers have agreed that no brother and no widow should dare to keep more than two; the third should be sent to the kitchen"²⁹. There was no objection to servants working in stall or bazaars for this work required no small trading abilities. The "stall misses" were a specific elite of domestic servants and employers competed for their services, as is testified to by regulations prohibiting the "winning away" of servants³⁰. The most intelligent of them could perform even more difficult functions. A tradeswoman of Poznań, widow Katarzyna Zegadłowa, wrote about her servant Barbara in 1588: "she bought Głogów linen herself, weighed and sold it, and this is how I fared and still fare"³¹.

It is not possible to define the length of service of female servants. The information we have concerns single cases and can only indicate certain trends and regularities. Some regulations in municipal laws sought to ensure stability of service and thus increase the servants' dependence on their employers. A municipal regulation issued in Poznań in 1462 enjoined citizens to employ male and female servants for a period no shorter than 6–12 months³². Also the kahal statute issued in Cracow in 1595³³ demanded that a contract with a new servant or cook should be for at least half a year. Rigorous provisions were included in work contracts to ensure that they should be adhered to. A willful breach of the contract by a servant meant severe reprisals: fines, expulsion from town, loss of the right to ply one's trade and even imprisonment³⁴. A servant who wanted to leave her job before the expiry of the contract had sometimes to obtain a special per-

²⁷ e.g. in Warsaw and Poznań. A. Karpiński, *Pauperes*, pp. 343–344; J. Kądziołka, *Finanse Poznania 1501–1648 (Poznań's Finances 1501–1648)*, Poznań 1960, pp. 130–131.

²⁸ For instance, in 17th century Cracow the Holy Ghost hospital had a special ward for foundlings where 5–7 *nutrices* were employed in 1601–1612 and 10–12 in 1671–1676; SA Cracow. AK 3421, pp. 180–191; K. Antosiwicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–88 (the author's own calculations).

²⁹ *Prawa, przywileje i statuta miasta Krakowa (The Laws, Privileges and Statutes of the City of Cracow)*, vol. II, ed. F. Piekosiński, Kraków 1886, part II, N° 1687, p. 849.

³⁰ Such practices were forbidden by, among others, maltsters (1568), soap boilers (1567) and belt-makers of Cracow (1600), *Prawa i przywileje*, vol. I, part II, N° 567, p. 688, N° 573, p. 697; vol. II, part II, N° 1624, p. 742.

³¹ SA Poznań, AP 1631, k. 114v.

³² J. Łukasiewicz, *Obraz historyczno-statystyczny Poznania (An Historical-Statistical Picture of Poznań)*, vol. I, Poznań 1863, p. 215.

³³ M. Bałaban, *Historia Żydów*, vol. I, pp. 444–445.

³⁴ M. Bałaban, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 446; J. Łukasiewicz, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 215.

mission from a court of law. This was required in Gdańsk, where in 1705 the terms of service contracts were precisely defined. Candidates applying for a job had to produce recommendations from their previous work place. In the recruitment of servants use was made of officially registered intermediaries, called *Mägde-Mütter* (servants' mothers). Gdańsk had six intermediaries; their sign-boards informed job seekers where to obtain relevant information. The Gdańsk intermediaries charged employers for their services; it was illegal and punishable to receive money from the candidates. *Mägde-Mütter* had to file monthly reports for trade matters courts on unemployed servants looking for a job³⁵. We do not know whether such employment agencies existed in other Polish towns, but we know that there, too, there were women who were engaged in recruiting servant girls³⁶.

The six-month term of service was, as a rule, observed, though some girls changed employers even five times a years³⁷. The frequent rotation of representatives of this social group is testified to by a statement concerning a Warsaw servant, Agnieszka, wife of Walenty Boczekal from Osiecko. Her former employer, Anna Bogusławska, said in 1612: "Twelve years ago Agnieszka was in my service for quite a long time; then she went to the trombonist Matys and she was also in the service of other women in the town"; the above-mentioned trombonist added: "Agnieszka was in my service in Warsaw several times, later she was also in the service of other women here, she was in Mrs. Erlerowa's house and in other places"³⁸. The mobility of servants was due to their low qualifications, bad relations with employers, their habit of running away when they committed an offence, the employers' death or the perspective of a good marriage. But there is also evidence that irrespective of constant changes, many women working as servants remained in the place of their first choice for many years³⁹.

³⁵ E. Cieślak, *Rozporządzenie w sprawie służby najemnej w Gdańsku (Regulation concerning Hired Labour in Gdańsk)*, "Rocznik Gdański", vol. XIX/XX, 1962, pp. 6–7.

³⁶ There were intermediaries who recruited wet-nurses for the Holy Ghost hospital in Cracow and who were remunerated for their services by the hospital (K. Antosiiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 53). Recruitment of servant-girls was carried out professionally in Warsaw by, among others, Dorota, wife of Wicenzysław, a tailor from Wolborz (1613), in Cracow by Zofia Piąchnowska (1684), in Poznań by Anna n.n. (1621), Marianna n.n. (1683) and Zofia, an inn lease-holder (1609). (CAHR SW 544, k. 52–53; SA Cracow, AK 867, k. 157; SA Poznań, AP I 228, k. 1012; I 641, k. 262v–264; I 645, k. 84v.

³⁷ See SA Poznań, AP I 639, k. 154v–155.

³⁸ CAHR, SW 543, k. 460.

³⁹ Among women who admitted having served a long time in one town were: Jadwiga Nowakówna from Parzew (Lublin 1676 — 15 years), Katarzyna Jędrzejowska (Cracow 1695 — 18 years), Barbara from Września (Poznań 1620 — 15 years), Zofia from Dolsk (Poznań 1631 — 20 years) and Małgorzata from Miłosław (Poznań 1629 — 30 years) (SA Lublin, *A.Lub.* 143, k. 19v; SA Cracow, AK 869, p. 484; SA Poznań, AP I 400, k. 1045–1046; I 641, k. 214; I 666, k. 18v.

The average term of a stable service for one employer oscillated between three and ten years⁴⁰; some females worked for twenty and more years for the same employer. Among them were: Agnieszka, a servant of Zofia, widow of a Cracow furrier, Wojciech Goryszowski (1644); Dorota, a servant of Jadwiga, wife of Stanisław Durycht from Kazimierz near Cracow (1616), and Maruszka who was in the service of Katarzyna Szubertowa (1664), widow of a Poznań mayor. Each of them was in the service of her employer for about 30 years⁴¹.

The financial situation of women working as servants was not very good, but it was, as a rule, more favourable than that of other representatives of the urban poor. To have a roof above one's head and free meals was a blessing, especially when inflation was high. This positive side of servants' work was noticed by Ewa Gniotczanka who, recalling the happy times when she had worked for Gallus Chraplewski, a king's doctor and burgher of Warsaw, said sorrowfully: "I am a poor woman and orphan and as I had to give up the service for five years I have been reduced to destitution and misery and though poverty-stricken, have now to pay one złoty a week for food and five zlotys a year for lodgings"⁴². Servants usually lived in out-buildings at the back of dwelling houses as well as in attics or basements. Sometimes the accommodation was bequeathed to them for life⁴³.

The employer was obliged to supplement the clothes and footwear of his servants by supplying them with an equivalent in cash or with uselessly shabby clothes. For example, in 1585 the widow of Walenty Slodzinka, a Poznań maltster, settled the debts of her deceased husband in the following way: "I gave the wench who used to make beer a marc as her wage, 21 pennies for boots, half a zloty for linen; to the other girl who had served as a cook I gave two marcs as her wage, 42 pennies for boots, one zloty for linen; to the third girl who had looked after the children I gave a wage of 20 pennies, 21 pennies for boots and 15 pennies for linen"⁴⁴. This shows that the money for clothing constituted a large part of the sums paid out.

⁴⁰ Cf. *CAHR, SW* 7, k. 348; *SW* 11, k. 146, 167; SA Cracow, *AK* 773, p. 324: Acts of the town of Kazimierz (henceforward referred to as A. Kaz.) 443, p. 175; SA Lublin, *A.Lub.* 124, p. 180; 128, p. 413; A. Lwów, *AL* 228, p. 1183; 342, p. 498; SA Poznań, *AP* 1 633, k. 376v; 1 635, k. 10.

⁴¹ SA Poznań, *AP* 1 636, k. 39; SA Cracow, *AK* 779 — last will of Zofia Goryszowska, widow of a Cracow furrier, 1614, np.; A. Kaz. 442, p. 217. Cf. similar last wills: A. Lwów, *AL* 340, p. 518; SA Lublin, *A.Lub.* 128, p. 240.

⁴² *CAHR, SW* 545, k. 129; A. Karpiński, *Pauperes*, p. 177.

⁴³ Cf. A. Lwów, *AL* 341, p. 30; SA Poznań, *AP* 1 636, k. 62v; SA Cracow, *A.Kaz.* 442, p. 217; *AK* 780 — last will of Anna Drużyńska, widow of a Cracow councillor, 1698, np.

⁴⁴ *Inwentarzmieszczzańskie z lat 1528–1635 z ksiąg miejskich Poznania* (Burghers' Inventories from 1528–1635 in Poznań Municipal Records), ed. S. Nawrocki, J. Wiślocki, Poznań 1961, p. 258.

The inventories of female servants' belongings and the quality of the articles of clothing bequeathed to them call into question the sense of the municipal laws against servants' luxuriousness issued in Poznań, Cracow and Gdańsk in the 15th–17th centuries. And yet the Poznań statute of 1535 forbade local wet-nurses and tap-room attendants to wear wide gowns made of costly materials, expensive furcoats and jewels⁴⁵ under penalty of a high fine (6–12 pennies for every infringement of the law), confiscation of property and even life-long banishment from the town, and the Gdańsk authorities forbade servants not only to wear gold and silver ornaments, silks and pearls but even to use imitation jewellery⁴⁶. The belief that domestic servants were rich is reflected in the literature of that time. The Cracow *New Song about Female Tap-Room Attendants* says:

While previously wearing a wrap she tended cows,
She is now wearing expensive, most costly gowns.
I can't buy Venetian shoes, they are not for me,
Nor can I buy English stockings, so poor are we.
Not to look dishevelled like an ugly old witch,
I should buy a bonnet, but that is for the rich.
I see that others can afford German collars⁴⁷.

E. Cieślak seems to be right when he says that if a hired servant wore rich clothes, this did not mean that her financial situation was good; it only meant that her employer wanted to show off his wealth by paying attention to the external appearance of his servants⁴⁸.

The cash remuneration at that time depended on the terms of the contract and the employer's honesty. The wage envisaged in the agreement was sometimes greatly reduced. Dorota, a servant of Elżbieta Grabowska from Old Warsaw, stated in 1599 that she had "served the deceased woman for four years; she was to pay me three zlotys a year, but she gave me only five zlotys, and I never got the rest"⁴⁹. Employers were often in arrears with payment, as is testified to by Bartłomiej Groicki's commentaries and the frequent law suits in the 16th and 17th centuries⁵⁰. However, as the church emphasized the necessity of a punctual payment of debts and regarded

⁴⁵ E. Iwanoyko, *Donna di Posnania. Strój mieszczyki poznańskiej w 1590 r. (Donna di Posnania. The Dress of a Poznań Townswoman in 1590)*, "Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Wielkopolski i Pomorza", vol. VI, 1960, N° 1, pp. 312–313; W. Maisel, *Poznańskie prawo karne do końca XVI w. (Poznań's Penal Law up to the End of the 16th Century)*, Poznań 1963, p. 203.

⁴⁶ E. Cieślak, *op. cit.*, pp. 4, 8. See also M. Bogucka, *Życie codzienne*, p. 136.

⁴⁷ Jagiellonian Library in Cracow (henceforward referred to as Jag. Libr.) old print N° 311 065 I, pp. 1–2. See S. Estreicher, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–116.

⁴⁸ E. Cieślak, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ CAHR, SW 14, k. 167; A. Karpiński, *Pauperes*, p. 178.

⁵⁰ B. Groicki, *Tytuły prawa magdeburgskiego (Titles of the Magdeburg Law)*, ed. K. Koranyi, Warszawa 1854, p. 253; A. Karpiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–179.

departure from this principle as a mortal sin, many burghers did their best to regulate their arrears, at least on their death-bed. Last wills make it easier to ascertain how high the wages were, even though they seldom define the time for which the sum mentioned in the will should be paid. Moreover, the amounts of money mentioned in the wills frequently comprise the wage itself as well as an additional gratification, a loan and a sum deposited by a servant⁵¹. Despite these difficulties, it has been possible to ascertain the wages paid in cash to 60 representatives of this social group. In view of a rapid depreciation of the Polish currency, the analysis below has been based not on the wage actually paid out in pennies but on the amount of silver corresponding to the earnings of individual persons.

Table 2. Female Servants' Annual Cash Earnings in the Late 16th and 17th Centuries in Terms of Grams of Silver⁵²

Town	Second half of the 16th century	First half of the 17th century	Second half of the 17th century	Total
CRACOW				
less than 50	1	4	1	6
51-100	1	—	3	4
101-150	—	—	1	1
over 150	—	3	3	6
Total	2	7	8	17
POZNAŃ				
less than 50	1	1	1	3
51-100	1	1	1	3
101-150	—	5	1	6
over 150	1	—	1	2
Total	3	7	4	14
LWÓW				
less than 50	—	4	3	7
51-100	1	3	2	6

⁵¹ Cf. *CAHR*, *SW* 538, k. 168; *SA* Poznań, *AP* I 633, k. 119v, 753; I 635, k. 10; *A. Lwów*, *AL* 339, p. 281; 341, p. 634.

⁵² My own calculations based on: State Archives Poznań, *AP* I 228, I 630, I 633, I 634, I 635, I 636, I 643, I 662; *CAHR*, *SW* 11, *SW* 538, *SW* 542, *SW* 545, *WE* 1223; State Archives Lublin, *A.Lub.* 124, 127, 128; *A. Lwów*, *AL* 228, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343; *SA* Kraków, *AK* 256, 510; *AKaz.* 440, 441, 442, 443; *LPAS*, Kraków, *MSS* 420, 429; *Burghers' Inventories*; *K. Antosiewicz*, *op. cit.*; *M. Bałaban*, *op. cit.*; *J. Bieniarzówna*, *Z dawnego Krakowa (Old Cracow)*, *passim*.

101–150	2	—	—	2
over 150	—	1	1	2
Total	3	8	6	17
LUBLIN				
less than 50	—	4	—	4
51–100	—	1	—	1
101–150	—	—	—	—
over 150	—	—	—	—
Total	—	5	—	5
WARSAW				
less than 50	—	—	1	1
51–100	3	—	1	4
101–150	—	1	—	1
over 150	—	1	—	1
Total	3	2	2	7
TOTAL	11	29	20	60

Table 2 shows that in the five towns under review female servants received very low wages throughout the late 16th and 17th centuries. About one-third of them earned an equivalent of 50 grams of silver annually, one-third received 51–100 grams, one-sixth was paid from 101 to 150 grams and the rest earned more than 150 grams. Of the servants with the highest earnings only two⁵³ received more than 200 grams of silver a year. The information at our disposal does not make it possible to draw far-reaching conclusions on differences between the towns in question. Let us point out, however, that in Lwów and Lublin domestic servants earned, as a rule, up to 100 grams of silver annually while in Poznań most of them received from 100 to 150 grams. Differences in wages were the greatest in Cracow, the number of servants with the lowest wages equalling that of girls in the highest group.

The fact that the highest wage was more than three times higher than the lowest one was due to a changing demand for servants, which depended on the actual state of the municipal economy, and to individual factors, such as the period of employment, the terms envisaged in the contract and employers' generosity and prosperity. The importance of service in the house of "a better master" is testified to in the following statement made by a Cracow servant: "forced by poverty, she went into service and worked as a cook for a few years in the houses of maltsters and innkeepers; then she got married, being still poor, for what payment can a cook receive and how

⁵³ CAHR, SW 545, k. 129; K. Antosiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

much money can she put by, serving in the houses of innkeepers who never pay such wages as merchants do"⁵⁴.

Qualifications must have paid a role when the employer fixed the wage of a servant. In 1696 Jan Toroszewicz, a merchant and citizen of Cracow, paid his servants the following annual wages: 40 florins to the wet-nurse (i.e. 161 grams of silver), 36 florins to the chambermaid (146 gr.), 15 florins to the nanny (57 gr.); in 1661 Rozalia Groszawerówna, also of Cracow, paid her tap-room attendant Agnieszka 10 florins (78 grams of silver) and 10 florins and 12 pennies (83 gr.) to her cook. In 1589 Sebastian Kowalowski, an assessor in Lwów, set the annual wage of his cook, Katarzyna, at 5.5 florins (109 grams of silver) and the wage of his servant Halina at 5 florins (104 gr.)⁵⁵. Differences in the wages of various categories of servants have already been pointed out in the example concerning the Poznań maltster Walenty Słodzinka⁵⁶. It is impossible to determine whether the wages paid in cash always depended on the servants' qualifications; what is known is that the wages of servants working for Jews were, as a rule, high. In Cracow they usually amounted to 15 florins, i.e. 302 grams of silver, at the end of the 15th century⁵⁷. The reason why they were so high was that Christian girls were not allowed to stay in a Jewish house at night; another reason was that Jews needed Christian servants as a result of certain rules of their religion.

A comparison of the cash earnings of domestic servants with the earnings of other representatives of the plebeian class shows that the latter often earned much more. For instance, a carpenter's journeyman in Warsaw could in 1630 get 107 florins (870 grams of silver) annually, an unskilled worker in Cracow could earn 67 florins (540 gr.) in 1660, a wet-nurse employed by the municipality of Poznań in 1685 and a spinner in Gdańsk about the year 1669 could each earn 104 florins (421 gr.) while outdoor servants working in Warsaw, Poznań and Gdańsk in 1574–1674 could earn from 203 to 317 grams of silver annually⁵⁸. The high wages of workers and

⁵⁴ SA Cracow, AK 512, p. 446.

⁵⁵ A. Lwów, *AL* 337, p. 575; LPAS Cracow. MS 429, k. 60, 175. Cf. A. Lwów, *AL* 341, p. 26; 228, p. 1183; J. Bieniarzówna, *Z dawnego Krakowa*, p. 66.

⁵⁶ Cf. fn. 43.

⁵⁷ My own calculations based on M. Bałabani, *Historia Żydów*, vol. I, pp. 444–445.

⁵⁸ CAHR, *SW* 11, k. 59v; *SW* 351, k. 151; SA Poznań, *AP* I 633, k. 133v; I 909, k. 3; W. Adamczyk, *Ceny w Warszawie w XVI i XVII wieku (Prices in Warsaw in the 16th and 17th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1939, pp. 81–83; M. Bogucka, *Dom pracy przymusowej w Gdańsku w XVII w. (The Workhouse in Gdańsk in the 17th Century)*. "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej", vol. XXXIV, 1986, № 2, p. 267; eadem, *Gdańsk jako ośrodek produkcyjny w XIV–XVII w. (Gdańsk as a Production Centre from the 14th to the 17th Century)*, Warszawa 1962, pp. 380–381; E. Tomaszewski, *Ceny w Krakowie w latach 1601–1795 (Prices in Cracow in 1601–1795)*, Lwów 1934, pp. 174–175.

workwomen are understandable for they received neither board nor lodging from their employers; the wages of guild members depended on their qualifications while outdoor servants (who, like domestic servants, were guaranteed full board) were paid higher wages because their work was hard and also because women may have been discriminated against.

Even the best paid servants could not be independent on their wages. The costs of a modest existence were very high and they increased as time went on. In the middle of the 16th century annual living costs in Warsaw amounted to about 12 florins and 3 pennies (281 grams of silver) to increase to 24 florins and 9 pennies (481 grams) at the beginning of the next century and to nearly 48 zlotys and 18 pennies (591 grams) in 1620⁵⁹. An analysis of the earnings and expenses of Cracow families in the second half of the 17th century shows that it cost 60 pennies a week (842 grams of silver a year) to keep up one family member in 1654 and as much as 150 pennies a week (1050 grams of silver annually) forty years later⁶⁰. These figures show how important it was for servant-girls to get board, lodging and clothing from their employer.

Wages and clothing were not the only forms of earnings. Domestic servants sometimes received grants from municipal authorities, charitable institutions and private persons. The most frequent grants were those allocated in connection with marriage; girls employed by patricians could rely on them; other girls received marriage allowances thanks to what was known as St. Nicholas's boxes, that is, special funds set up to equip poor maidens⁶¹. In 1574–1672 some 15 maid servants from Warsaw, Cracow and Poznań benefited from them, among them Katarzyna, a servant of Mrs. Jakub Nizina from Warsaw, who in 1611 received 7 florins (128 grams of silver), Anna Gołeczanka from Cracow, who in 1666 was given a dowry worth 50 zlotys (162 grams) and Anna Sójkowiczówna from the same town, who received 30 florins (243 grams) in 1649⁶². The amount offered (which sometimes exceeded a good annual wage) depended on the actual financial state of a given foundation and the number of girls needing assistance. Some girls could count on their employers financing their wedding and offering them a modest trousseau. This custom must have been widespread in rich families if in Cracow seven patricians arranged weddings for their servant-girls in

⁵⁹ My own calculations based on M. Bogucka, *Mieszczaiństwo Warszawy*, pp. 410–411.

⁶⁰ My own calculations based on SA Cracow, AK 256, p. 307; LPAS Cracow, MS 429, k. 195v.

⁶¹ A. Karpiński, *Skrzynki św. Mikołaja. Fundacje posagowe w miastach polskich w XVI–XVII w. (St. Nicholas's Boxes. Dowry Foundations in Polish Towns in the 16th and 17th Centuries)*, forthcoming.

⁶² CAHR, WE 978, p. 181; SA Cracow, AK 3532, pp. 17, 22; A. Wejner, *Starożytności warszawskie (Warsaw Antiquities)*, vol. IV, Warszawa 1856, p. 16.

the difficult years 1621–1626 (the time of a grave epidemic)⁶³. The municipal authorities usually participated in the costs of such events by allocating small wedding allowances⁶⁴. As to other allowances, it is worth mentioning the alms given in times of plague. The help extended to members of socio-occupational groups most exposed to the disease⁶⁵ and most affected by its consequences sometimes assumed large proportions; in Warsaw several score servant-girls received assistance on that account in 1624–1625⁶⁶.

Thanks to the support of their employers the most trustworthy and meritorious servants could increase their income by receiving from the town a profitable licence for a temporary lease of a stall. In Cracow as early as 1553–1554 two stalls were run by Katarzyna, a wet-nurse, and an anonymous servant of councillor Daniel Chroborski; twenty-three years later two local stalls were run by Katarzyna Lisowska, a servant of councillor Erazm Czeczotka⁶⁷. A survey of nearly 350 booths, stalls and jumble-shops in Cracow showed that in 1619–1625 some 20 of them were held on lease by girls serving in the houses of patricians and shopkeepers⁶⁸. Among them were Anna, a wet-nurse employed by councillor Zalasowski, Katarzyna Kulicka, who worked in the house of merchant Orlemus, and Anna from Budziejowice, a servant of Wawrzyniec Justimont⁶⁹. This must have been a wide-spread custom also in other Polish towns if a special regulation issued by the municipal authorities of Poznań in 1612 forbade local domestic

⁶³ These were Cracow councillors Grzegorz Klausznic, Zygmunt Alansec, Andrzej Borszcz, Hipolit Schedel, Najmanowicz and Kromer (SA Cracow, AK 1996, p. 49; 1991, p. 99; 1992, pp. 23, 61; 2000, pp. 17, 65, 101; 1679, p. 321).

⁶⁴ Cf. information on allowances in Poznań: "To Anna, a cook at Bunion for the wedding fl.1/18" or "For the wedding of a wench at Bunino — fl.4/o" (SA Poznań, AP I 836, k. 6v; I 840, k. 16v).

⁶⁵ People at that time were convinced that servants were especially susceptible to epidemics. In a letter to the Warmian bishop, Jan Dantyszczek, of 18.06.1547, Stanisław Górski, a Cracow canon, speaking about the plague in Cracow, says: "This disease affects only cooks, old women and beggars" (quoted after A. Wala wender, *Kronika kłesk elementarnych w Polsce i krajach sąsiednich w latach 1450–1586* (A Chronicle of Elementary Disasters in Poland and Neighbouring Countries in the Years 1450–1586), part I, Lwów 1932, p. 241); Father S. Ramotowicz says in his chronicle that "up to 700 servant girls died in Cracow" during the epidemics of 1677–1680 (*Dzieje Krakowa*, vol. II, p. 428). Cf. also A. Karpiński, *Biedota miejska wobec zaraz i innych kłesk żywiołowych w Warszawie w latach 1526–1655* (*The Urban Poor of Warsaw in the Face of Epidemics and Other Elementary Disasters in 1526–1655*), "Rocznik Warszawski", vol. XVI, 1981, pp. 108–110.

⁶⁶ A. Karpiński, *Biedota miejska wobec zaraz*, p. 105.

⁶⁷ SA Cracow, AK 1964, pp. 2–11; 1966, p. 23; *Prawa, przywileje i statuta*, vol. I, part II, N° 629, pp. 766–767.

⁶⁸ My own calculations based on SA Cracow, AK 1970, *passim*.

⁶⁹ A. Karpiński, *Przekupki, kramarki, straganiarki. Zakres feminizacji drobnego handlu w miastach polskich w drugiej połowie XVI i w XVII w.* (*Tradeswomen, Hucksteresses, Stall Keepers. The Feminisation of Small Trade in Polish Towns in the Late 16th and 17th Centuries*), "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej", vol. XXXVIII, 1990, N° 1–2, p. 85, fn. 28.

servants to trade in thread, butter and groats in stalls leased from the municipality⁷⁰. The motive given for the ban was that such trade was to the detriment of poor widows who were unable to get into service.

The financial situation of a servant could improve if she came into possession of a family inheritance or if a large legacy was bequeathed to her in a last will. An analysis of respective documents shows that female servants usually inherited used garments and bedclothes as well as some kitchen utensils and implements⁷¹. Bequests of valuables or large sums of money were rare⁷².

Work in an inn or a taproom offered an opportunity of extra earnings. In a taproom a girl could get a lavish tip or cheat a drunk customer.

The drunk's mug is only half filled with beer
 The maid will add some water, have no fear,
 She will mark two notches instead of one
 Each notch is split, this is how it is done.
 When he's dead drunk, he'll not see it,
 And she will fleece him bit by bit⁷³.
 No comment is needed.

There were also other means of getting extra money, only to mention usury, rarely referred to in sources⁷⁴, and various illegal activities, such as larceny and prostitution. Zofia Czarnecka from Zwoleń, employed in a secret brothel in Lublin, charged her clients from 3 to 6 florins (from 24 to 48 grams of silver) in 1639⁷⁵.

The posthumous inventories and last wills of female servants reflect enormous differences in the girls' financial situation. Of the 40 inventories found so far, 22 are from Poznań, 8 from Cracow, 6 from Lwów and 4 from Lublin. Some servants emphasize their destitution⁷⁶, nearly three-quarters

⁷⁰ Wilkierze poznańskie (*Regulations Issued by the Municipal Authorities of Poznań*), part II: *Handel, rzemiosło, rolnictwo (Trade, Handicrafts, Agriculture)*, ed. W. Maisel, Wrocław 1968, p. 74.

⁷¹ Cf. SA Cracow, A. Kaz. 441, pp. 196, 356; A. Kaz. 443, p. 246; SA Poznań, AP I 633, k. 188v–189, 684; SA Lublin, A.Lub., 124, p. 52; A Lwów, AL 342, p. 419; A. Karpiński, *Pauperes*, pp. 181–182.

⁷² These bequests sometimes totalled 100–400 florins; SA Poznań, AP 633, k. 644v; 1634, k. 16, 108v; LPASCracow, MS 428, k. 110–110v; SA Cracow, AP 901, p. 171; A. Lwów, AL 338, p. 458; 340, p. 242; 341, pp. 119, 323, 358; SA Lublin, A. Lub. 125, p. 99.

⁷³ Jag. Libr., old print N° 311 065 I, p. 4. See also A. Jarzębski, *Gościniec albo krótkie opisanie Warszawy (The Gift or a Brief Description of Warsaw)*, ed. W. Tomkiewicz, Warszawa 1974, p. 82.

⁷⁴ Dorota, a cook of a Poznań citizen, Ulryk (1607 — SA Poznań, AP I 633, k. 7), Anna from Kostrzyn, a servant of Wojciech Hanusik, a Poznań furrier (1598 — SA Poznań, AP I 632, k. 115–115v) and Zofia Nosalówna, a servant of Łukasz Bęgiel, a councillor of Lublin (1615 — SA Lublin, A. Lub. 126, k. 1–2) lent money accepting clothing and valuables as pledge. Cf. also SA Lublin, A. Lub., 127, k. 136; *Inwentarze mieszczkańskie*, pp. 252–253.

⁷⁵ A. Karpiński, *Prostytucja*, p. 291.

of the inventories reflect similar poverty. Typical inventories mention worn clothes, underwear, bedclothes, linen, sometimes some cash and single silver articles⁷⁷. More prosperous servants, such as Katarzyna Fiołoszczanka (1637) and Anna Przechadzanka (1629) from Lwów, Elżbieta Ruszkowska from Lublin (1635) and Anna Anuskowa from Poznań (1585) were able to boast of a large amount of money and valuables, good quality clothes and sometimes even a house of their own⁷⁸. Elżbieta Topolska from Kujawy, a servant of Agnieszka Papelewa, who died in Poznań before 1629, was certainly one of the richest servants. Her posthumous inventory includes 6 gold rings with precious stones, three silver belts, three strings of pearls, 75 red zlotys, nearly 40 pewters and several dozen items of good garments and bedclothes⁷⁹. Topolska, to whom the laws against luxury must have applied, was an exception difficult to explain.

A comparison of the inventories of the servants' belongings with their wages shows once again how deceptive it is to ascertain a servant's financial position only on the basis of her wage. Gertruda, a taproom attendant who died in Poznań in 1631, had an annual wage of only 4.5 florins (35.5 grams of silver) but she managed to save 400 Polish zlotys, to say nothing of valuables and a large amount of clothing; Katarzyna, a servant of a Lublin townswoman Anna Ogryfowa, earned only 6 florins (47 grams of silver) in 1634, but her posthumous inventory mentions 7 red zlotys, 25 Bydgoszcz "orts", 60 "szelągs" and many items of clothing made of satin, English cloth and damask⁸⁰. The two were not poor *famulae* as their wages might have suggested. On the other hand, Anna, a widow who served in Hieronim Rudzki's house in Kazimierz, received an annual wage three to four times as high (161 grams of silver), has no money before 1612, shared lodging with other people and as regards valuables, had only a silver belt, a pearly lace and a couple of rings⁸¹.

To conclude our reflections on the financial situation of female servants let us see how this is presented in the 1590 poll-tax register. Servants are not listed in the register as a separate occupational group; they were taxed from 1 to 6 pennies, depending on the house in which they were employed.

⁷⁶ See SA Cracow, AK 772, p. 701; A. Kaz. 443, p. 261; A. Lwów, AL 340, pp. 410–411; SA Poznań, AP 1 631, k. 33–33v.

⁷⁷ A. Lwów, AL 228, p. 265; SA Poznań, AP 1 636, k. 55–55v; SA Cracow, A. Kaz. 443, pp. 343–346; *Inwentarze mieszczańskie*, pp. 336, 404.

⁷⁸ A. Lwów, AL 340, pp. 701–704; 339, pp. 137–138; SA Lublin, 128, pp. 338–340; *Inwentarze mieszczańskie*, pp. 252–253.

⁷⁹ *Inwentarze mieszczańskie*, pp. 448–450.

⁸⁰ My own calculations based on: SA Poznań, AP 1 633, k. 565v–566; SA Lublin, A. Lub. 128, pp. 238–240.

⁸¹ My own calculations based on: SA Cracow, A. Kaz., 442, pp. 122–123.

In *primi ordinis* towns male and female servants of chief magistrates, assessors, merchants, stall-keepers and goldsmiths paid a poll-tax of 4 pennies, one penny was paid by servants employed by guild craftsmen. The large fourfold difference in the poll-tax paid by the servants depended on their employers, in whose opinion the tax was within the servants' financial ability. According to the same source, hired workmen and workmen paid 3 pennies, journeymen 1 to 6 pennies and apprentices 1–2 pennies⁸². Thus, representatives of the group we are examining were placed among the occupational categories constituting the urban poor.

The servants' situation and working conditions depended on their relations with their employers. These relations were often of a patriarchal character, which is reflected in last wills expressing gratitude and appreciation to faithful servants and recommending that they should be paid the bequest due them immediately⁸³. The employers' friendship and familiarity with their servants is also proved by the fact that they usually expressed a favourable opinion about their servants in law courts; moreover, servants were well cared for when they were ill, their weddings and funerals were arranged by employers, financial questions were settled without conflicts and their employment lasted many years. But the behaviour of Katarzyna Pawelczykówna, widow of a Warsaw shoemaker, who in 1614 appointed her wet-nurse, Jadwiga, as chief guardian of her child⁸⁴ was rather exceptional, and so was the behaviour of Barbara Langówna, daughter of the chief magistrate of Cracow, whose life story says: "It happened that a servant broke a beautiful Turkish bowl; she (Barbara) took the blame in order to save the servant from trouble and told her parents that the damage was due to her indiscretion and recklessness. Another time, when another servant burned the hem of her mistress's dress, Barbara, in order to protect her, told her mother she had done it herself"⁸⁵.

The behaviour of a large group of burghers was much worse. This is testified to by many, frequently groundless accusations of theft, delays in the payment of wages, incarceration for debts and use of violence. "I could not stay longer with her for I was constantly beaten, so I had to leave", "she beat me every day with a wooden hatchet, this is why I left", he tied me

⁸² *Uniwersał poboru pogłównego z 1590 r. (Poll-Tax Register of 1590)*, ed. J. Senkowski, "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej", vol. XVIII, 1970, № 1, pp. 75–76; A. Wyczański, *op. cit.*, pp. 219, 220, 231–233.

⁸³ Cf. LPAS Cracow, MS 428, k. 239v; SA Cracow, AK 780 — the last will of Anna Drużyńska, widow of a Cracow councillor, 1698, np.; CAHR, Nowa Warszawa 6, k. 36; A. Lwów, *AL* 340, pp. 584–585; W. Łoziński, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

⁸⁴ CAHR, WE 1365, k. 13; A. Karpiński, *Pauperes*, p. 188.

⁸⁵ A. Makowski, *Kwiat świątobliwego żywota szlachetny panny Barbary Langi wystawiony (The Sainly Life of Noble-Minded Barbara Lange)*, Kraków 1655, p. 4.

“with a rope to a bench and pouring water, kept beating and pounding me with his fists, put candles to my side and said he would burn me, kill me and bury here in the house, that he would nail my hands to the bench”⁸⁶, such statements testify to extreme brutality sometimes bordering on sadism. Taking advantage of their physical superiority over the girls and the servants’ complete dependence on them, many employers raped them, but only the most drastic cases were brought to court⁸⁷.

Lack of restraint in sex matters characterized many domestic servants and many other poor women. This was partly a result of the character of their work (in tap-rooms and inns) and partly of the fact thanks to their number and accessibility, servants attracted the interest of large groups of single men (journeymen, tradesmen, carters, seamen, soldiers) who lived in towns. Besides, they did not avoid contacts, hoping that these might lead to a good match, although it is doubtful whether the most lax of them had the greatest chance. The result is that court records swarm with morality cases with domestic servants as heroines in the role of either victims of acts of violence (victims of procurement, rape, seduction) or of defendants charged with infanticide, adultery or prostitution. There is enough source material for a solid study.

The frequent change of sexual partners, paid love and long concubinage usually ended in pregnancy, the birth of an unwanted child and dismissal from work. Very few of the countless servants saddled with illegitimate offspring were awarded child maintenance money which would enable them to bring up the child. “The said Wojciech” (Prosirybka, a burgher from Sieraków), reads a verdict of 1612, “is to give her (his servant Agnieszka from Kostrzyn) every week, starting with the carnival, 15 pennies for the alimentation of his children for two years and after two years he is obliged to take care of them as of his own”⁸⁸; “as regards his offspring born during her service”, Franciszek Kmita, a Poznań tailor, resolved (1612) to give his servant Dorota, the mother of his child, 5 florins for two years “so that she should give the child a fair upkeep”. He accorded her an additional 10 marcs for the loss of virginity⁸⁹.

⁸⁶ SA Cracow, AK 870, p. 68; J. Bieniarzówna, *Z dawnego Krakowa*, p. 69; H. Wiśniewska, *Renesansowe życie i dzieło Sebastiana Fabiana Klonowicza (The Renaissance Life and Work of Sebastian Fabian Klonowicz)*, Lublin 1985, p. 112. Cf. also SA Cracow, AK 901, p. 431; CAHR, SW 544, k. 322.

⁸⁷ CAHR, SW, 15, k. 171–171v, 179, 463; SA Cracow, AK 867, p. 286; SA Poznań, AP I 641, k. 120–121v; I 645, k. 81v–82; I 662, k. 75v–76.

⁸⁸ SA Poznań, AP I 229, pp. 455–456.

⁸⁹ SA Poznań, AP I 229, p. 786. Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 636–637; SA Cracow, A. Kaz. 269, pp. 125–126; SA Poznań, AP I 639, k. 160v.

The sources we have at our disposal make it impossible to determine the percentage of servants who changed their civil status. Many poor girls who were in conflict with the administration of justice were married to men from urban low strates and the social fringe; female servants working in the houses of patrician families frequently married craftsmen⁹⁰. Domestic servants did not maintain close relations with near and distant relatives, but some bequeathed small sums of money to their siblings, nephews and other relatives⁹¹.

Last wills are the main source in studies of the mentality and religiousness of domestic servants. Only 30 last wills of female servants have been found (among 2,800 examined); They all testify to the great religiousness of the poor testatrices. Małgorzata from Kostrzyn, a servant of a Poznań citizen, Mateusz Mat, expressed her profound faith in 1585: "I, a sinful woman, mindful of the future and in particular of death, which is the most certain of all, would like to say something about myself, to present myself to God as befits a Christian of the ancient faith of the Roman Catholic church, of which I am a member and by which I want to stand until my death; I condemn all renegeations from confession, penance and administration of the Holy Sacrament. Oh Lord, grant it that this should be to the glory and respect for the beloved God and for the salvation of my soul"⁹². Like all their contemporaries, servants attached great importance to their funeral, allocating a part of the money they had saved or what was due to them for this purpose. Sometimes they defined the place where they wanted to be buried (brothers' graves in Dominican churches were very popular) and the character of the funeral ceremony (procession, requiem mass)⁹³.

The authors of 26 of the 30 found last wills mention bequests for religious and charitable purposes. This greatly exceeds the proportion of

⁹⁰ Cf. Ossolineum Library in Wrocław, MS 826/1, k. 3v; SA Poznań, AP I 636, k. 302; SA Cracow, AK 3532, pp. 17–22; *CAHR*, SW 543, k. 2.

⁹¹ A. Lwów, *AL* 339, pp. 137–138; 340, pp. 701–704; SA Poznań, AP I 631, k. 33–33v; I 633, k. 7v–8, 404, 565v–566, 585–585v.

⁹² SA Poznań, AP I 631, k. 33.

⁹³ The 1585 posthumous inventory of Anna Anuskowa, a tap-room lease holder in Poznań, says: "The following sums were spent on the burial in accordance with the will of the deceased: one złoty was given to the Bernardines for the procession, one złoty and 6 pennies was given to the parish church for ringing the bell, 10 pennies were spent on the copes of St. Ann's brethren, 6 pennies were given as remuneration to the pupils of the parish church, 15 pennies were paid for the requiem mass said the following day at St. Ann's confraternity, 6 pennies were given to the pupils of the parish church", *Inwentarze mieszczańskie*, p. 252.

such bequests in all townswomen's last wills⁹⁴. More than a half of the girls (16) made bequests to churches and convents; 10 left money to local hospitals, 4 to religious confraternities and 13 to anonymous poor persons⁹⁵. The largest bequest, amounting to nearly 200 florins (for St. Agnes's church), was made by Jadwiga Paszyńska from Kazimierz (1632)⁹⁶; Poznań servants helped the greatest number of churches and poor-houses: Gertruda, a tap-room attendant helped 8 institutions (in 1631) and Małgorzata from Kostrzyn helped seven (in 1585)⁹⁷. Eight servants made bequests to a hospital or a convent, another nine left money to 2–4 religious and charitable institutions, and another 4 to 5 or more institutions⁹⁸. It is significant that testatrices left most of their modest belongings (cash, silver belts, clothes) to monks, priests and the poor. Jadwiga Moleczkowiczówna, a servant of the widow of Piotr Janczyński, a citizen of Lwów, wrote in 1633: "and although what I have is not much, I am sure that the Lord will accept two small coins from me as He accepted them from that widow"⁹⁹.

A desire to commemorate her act of charity or perhaps herself inspired Anna Przechadzanka, a servant of Hieronim Weidoldt from Lwów. In her last will of 1629 she commanded that a chalice with a paten be founded for the Carmelites' church of the Holy Virgin and that it should bear the following inscription: "Miss Anna Przechadzanka in token of eternal remembrance and love of the Holy Virgin"¹⁰⁰.

We know less about the everyday religious and charitable activities of servants. They are rarely recorded in the registers of religious confraternities¹⁰¹, although these corporations, especially the easily accessible rosary and scapular confraternities, must have been popular with servants. Domestic servants, like other women, must have also taken part in pilgrimages; those of them who rendered the greatest services to the faith could count on

⁹⁴ Only 57 per cent of the over 1,200 last wills drawn up by Polish townswomen in the 16th and 17th centuries include bequests for charitable or religious purposes; A. Karpiński, *Zapisy "pobożne" i postawy religijne mieszczanek polskich w świetle testamentów z drugiej połowy XVI i XVII w.* (*Pious' Bequests and the Religious Attitudes of Polish Townswomen in the Light of Last Wills from the Late 16th and 17th Centuries*), in: *Tryumfy i porażki*, ed. M. Bogucka, Warszawa 1989, p. 210.

⁹⁵ My own calculations based on urban servants' last wills from the 16th and 17th centuries.

⁹⁶ SA Cracow, A. Kaz. 443, p. 228.

⁹⁷ SA Poznań, AP I 631, k. 33; I 633, k. 566.

⁹⁸ Cf. fn. 93.

⁹⁹ A. Lwów, AL 340, p. 410.

¹⁰⁰ A. Lwów, AL 339, p. 137.

¹⁰¹ Cf. SA Cracow, AK 3320, *passim*; SA Poznań, AP I 1860, k. 24v–26; H. Zaremska, *Bractwa w średniowiecznym Krakowie* (*Confraternities in Medieval Cracow*), Wrocław 1977, pp. 158, 177.

being buried in elitist convent churches¹⁰².

As is the case with morals and sexual life, a detailed analysis of the criminal activities of urban servants requires a separate study which exceeds the frame of our reflections. I will therefore confine myself to a few remarks.

Extensive contacts with the social fringe, occupational instability, uncertain future and little prospect of improving one's poor financial situation were the reasons why representatives of the group we are examining often entered into conflict with the law. M. Kamler's studies on the structure and size of the criminal milieu of Poznań, Cracow and Lublin show that female servants constituted one of the main bases of recruitment and that 33 per cent of female criminals were servants¹⁰³. Servant women in these three towns accounted for nearly 100 per cent of the local infanticides¹⁰⁴, 60 per cent of occasional and professional prostitutes¹⁰⁵, about a half of female thieves and one-quarter of accessories to crime (receivers, fences)¹⁰⁶. They were often accused of adultery, more seldom of murder and robbery, sacrilege, incendiarism, witchcraft and bigamy¹⁰⁷. On the other hand, female servants often became victims of crimes: they were raped, forced to engage in prostitution, beaten and robbed.

Not much is known about the amusements and recreations of women of this group; some of them undoubtedly spent their free time dancing and feasting outside the house where they worked. This is reflected in literature. The anonymous *New Song about Tap-Room Lease Holders and Attendants*, which we have already quoted, says:

She humbly asks her mistress on a holy day
'A visit to my sister Sophie let me pay'.

¹⁰² The list of persons buried in the churchyard of the Jesuits' St. Barbara's church in Cracow includes Zofia Marszałkówna (1629), servant of Barbara Langówna, daughter of Cracow's chief magistrate and the Jesuits' servant Urszula, wife of Walentyn n.n. (1637), J. Paźenda, *Kościół św. Barbary w Krakowie z domem zakonnym księży jezuitów. Historia i architektura (St. Barbara's Church in Cracow and the Jesuits' Monastery. History and Architecture)*, Kraków 1985, p. 312.

¹⁰³ Cf. M. Kamler, *Świat przestępczy w Polsce XVI–XVII stulecia (The Criminal World in Poland in the 16th and 17th Centuries)* Warszawa 1991, p. 37–41; *ibidem*, *Struktura i liczebność środowisk przestępczych Poznania i Krakowa w II połowie XVI w. (The Structure and Numerical Strength of Criminal Milieus in Poznań and Cracow in the Second Half of the 16th Century)*, "Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski", vol. XV, 1984, p. 282.

¹⁰⁴ M. Kamler, *Infanticide in the Towns of the Kingdom of Poland in the Second Half of the 16th and in the First Half of the 17th Century*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. LVIII, 1988, p. 36.

¹⁰⁵ A. Karpiński, *Prostytucja*, p. 282.

¹⁰⁶ My own calculations based on the criminal records of Lublin, Poznań and Cracow from the 16th and 17th centuries.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, SA Cracow, AK, pp. 55–56, 130–131, 217–220, 302; 867, p. 253; A. Kaz. 267, p. 16; SA Poznań, AP I 638, k. 76–77v; I 639, k. 21; I 641, k. 159v, 163v–165; I 662, k. 79–83v; I 666, k. 43–43v; J. Bieniarzówna, *Z dawnego Krakowa*, p. 69; J. Kracik, M. Rożek, *op.cit.*, pp. 111–112; W. Maisel, *Poznańskie prawo*, p. 124.

Instead to Kazimierz she quickly ran
 There to dance with some silly foppish man¹⁰⁸.

A servant in Adam Jarzębski's *Gościńiec* (The Gift) says:

To play cards with some friendly folk,
 To dance, laugh and hear a good joke,
 With other young girls to frolic,
 To have fun and a win to pick¹⁰⁹.

Impecunity, frequent lack of qualifications, occupational instability, difficulties encountered in setting up a family and finally conflicts with the law and morals were the reasons why few servants could hope for social and financial advance through a good match. A good marriage was the lot of few servants, those who were well paid in cash and kind, who worked for rich families, had exceptional beauty and luck. But other *famulae*, mainly those who were for years connected with the same burgher family, could count on not being left alone and having a roof over their head in old age. For the majority of the other girl servants the possibility of a temporary career depended on a more or less successful concubinage or on whether they illegally gained a large sum of money. But as a rule, many domestic servants as a result of illness, decrepitude or crime sank to the rank of itinerant workwomen, beggars and prostitutes. This was the price the women from that milieu had to pay for their relative independence, which was far greater than that of craftsmen's and merchants' daughters (greater occupational and territorial mobility, freedom in manners).

Urban servant-girls were a completely disintegrated social group. Throughout the period under review no attempt was made to set up a corporation (like the associations of journeymen or beggars' fraternities) which would have defended their interests and given them a sense of belonging to a community. No wonder that they had to reconcile themselves to being completely dependent on their employers. On the other hand, domestic servants were in an incomparably better situation than representatives of other urban poor mainly because they had free board and lodging.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

¹⁰⁸ Jag. Libr. old print N° 311 065 I, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ A. Jarzębski, *Gościńiec*, pp. 79–80.