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DOI: 10.15290/rtk.2022.21.09

Family structures on Polish soil at the end of the partitions period and in the interwar Poland. The outline of issues

The article focuses on the history of the Christian family (and of the Jewish family to a lesser extent) and of the household on Polish soil since 1880s till 1939. It aims at presenting the demographic characteristics of rural families (of peasants, of petty nobility and of landowners) and urban families (of craftsmen, bourgeoisie and intelligentsia) as well as the circumstances of rising and lasting of these families. The Author of the article presents in detail such important features as: the age of the newlyweds, the length of the marriage, fertility rate and the death rate in the families. Furthermore, the Author indicates the influence of the intense economic and social transformations on Polish soil from the second half of XIX century on the role and position of each individual member of the family: the spouses, the children and the grandparents.

Key words: family, marriage, children, household, Polish soil, XIX-XX centuries.

The years of childhood and youth of Blessed Michał Sopoćko¹ were accounted for the end of the partitions period which was the harshest for Poles in the Kingdom of Poland and in the Taken Lands (Western Krai). The beginning of his productive scientific work took place in the Reborn Poland. The end of XIX century and the first decades of the next century were the period of important political events that is: the collapse of three European super-powers and the significant economic transformations which resulted in social transformations.

¹ H. Ciereszko is the author who is writing most extensively about the life, work and scientific legacy of Michał Sopoćko, *Życie i działalność księdza Michała Sopoćki (1888-1976): pełna biografia Apostoła Miłosierdzia Bożego* (Kraków: 2006).

Industrial revolution, marked by new appliances and techniques of production, which began in Western Europe at the turn of XVIII and XIX centuries was transmitted into Polish soil in the second half of XIX century. As a result of that, the heavy industry developed: mining and metallurgy (Upper Silesia, Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, Warsaw); textile industry (the Kingdom of Poland, Białystok district, Lower Silesia); sugar industry (the Greater Poland, Gdańsk Pomerania, Kujawy, Mazovia)². In the agricultural industry one of the dominating branches was distilling industry (the Kingdom of Poland, the Greater Poland, Gdańsk Pomerania). The development of industry which resulted in a great need for employees in the emerging mines, steelworks and factories, caused the greater outflow of population from the rural regions which had previously been limited by the feudal dependencies, and thus resulted in the increasing urbanization. At the turn of XIX and XX centuries, the Upper Silesia was the most densely populated – 58%; as opposed to the Prussian Partition – 39% and the Kingdom of Poland – 33%. The lowest number of population in the cities was accounted for Galicia, only 20%³. In II Polish Republic the amount of the population increased enormously, mainly in big cities, with over 100 thousand inhabitants, while the urban population during the final period of the II Polish Republic in 1939 reached only 28%.

Despite the industrial revolution, Poland was mainly rural at the end of XIX century, as around three fourth of the population of Galicia and of the western Russian Empire governorates made a living from farming (in Grand Duchy of Posen, and in the Kingdom of Poland – 54-57%). The situation in the Reborn Poland was similar, the region was poorly developed economically, and peasants constituted half of around 35 million of inhabitants in 1938, and over 61% of the population made a living from farming⁴.

Creating of the industrial agglomerations on Polish soil resulted in the transformations in the social structure⁵. Mainly, a new group of a capitalist society was created. It consisted of the working class, who worked not only in industry (factory proletariat) but also, which

² A. Jezierski, C. Leszczyńska, *Historia gospodarcza Polski* (Warszawa: 1997), 179-190.

³ Ibidem, 157.

⁴ Ibidem, 248-249.

⁵ In the text below I refer to the precise deliberations which concern the transformations of the Polish society in the 20th century written by W. Mędrzecki, S. Rudnicki, J. Żarnowski, *Spółeczeństwo polskie w XX wieku*, ed. J. Żarnowski (Warszawa: 2003).

might have been forgotten, in agriculture and in trade. The group mostly consisted of landless peasants who came to cities, but also of impoverished craftsmen. On the opposite side, a new social group was created – bourgeoisie, who was recruited from great and medium merchants, the warehouse keepers, manufacture owners, sometimes even from aristocracy and landlords, or from scholars. From the ethnic perspective, apart from Poles, there were many Jews and a few Germans. Last but not least, the growing new social group which became more and more popular in the social structure on Polish soil at the turn of XIX and XX centuries, was the so called intelligentsia (scholars, journalists, politicians) which consisted of people from various social backgrounds, from the impoverished noblemen to the petty bourgeoisie and sometimes peasants. The great importance of this social group for the national cause during the First World War, as it was one of the pro-independence communities, and its managerial role in it, cannot be underestimated. In the independent Poland the role of intelligentsia and of the white-collar workers (researchers, teachers of various types of school, judges, prosecutors, solicitors, officers, doctors and engineers, people of art and culture) was explicitly strengthened (before the Second World War intelligentsia constituted 5% of the whole population), this group took the leadership of the whole current social life, politics, economy, administration, education and culture⁶.

At the same time, the processes of territorial mobility (migrations of people) were also intensified. Apart from the well-known previous migrations in search for work from the village to another village and from the city to the country⁷, at this point in time, after the agrarian reforms which were intensified (mainly the latter), as a result of the eagerness of the peasants' sons for education, a new type of economic migration appeared and increased to a high degree, which was either seasonal (mainly to Germany), and permanent (migration to the USA or Brazil)⁸. Both groups contributed to the budgets of the families

⁶ Both invaders of Poland Germany and the Soviet Russia were aware of the state-building role of the Polish intelligentsia, therefore, while invading Poland in September 1939, since the very beginning of the occupation, they aimed at the extermination of mainly this social group.

⁷ The migrations of peasants in the pre-industrial period were connected with the progress in assimilation into the urban environment as well as with their returning to the country; the processes are well described in the latest study of M. Wyżga, *Homo movens. Mobilność chłopów w mikroregionie krakowskim w XVI-XVIII wieku* (Kraków: 2019).

⁸ See W. Wrzesiński, *Polskie migracje*, in: *Migracje: dzieje, typologia, definicje*, ed. A. Furdal, W. Wysoczański (Wrocław: 2006), 159-171. The permanent emigration

which they left in the country, and those who came back influenced the peasants' mentality by promoting increased entrepreneurship exploration of the whole world⁹. Indicating only the transformations which were taking place in the society on Polish soil, we would like to emphasise the huge differentiation, even greater than the one in the Second Polish Republic, as far as prosperity and the material conditions of life were concerned.

Without doubt the social and economic, political and cultural transformations which took place in the 1880s 1890s and at the beginning of XX century on Polish soil influenced the situation of the basic socio-demographic unit, that is the family, and its role in the society, which at that time was ethnically and religiously diverse. At the turn of both centuries Poles predominated in the Kingdom of Poland – they constituted 72% of the population, in Cieszyn Silesia – 69%, and in the Grand Duchy of Posen – 62%, in Galicia – 59%. Ethnically the inhabitants of Lithuania and Belarus mainly consisted of 55% Belarusians, 14% of Jews, 13% Lithuanians 6% of Poles. In the 3 governorates of the southwestern part of the country (districts of Volhynia, Podolia, Kiev) the main inhabitants were Ukrainians – 62%; there were only 13% of Jews and 3% of Poles¹⁰.

At the same time Catholics constituted 91% of the population of the Upper Silesia 76% of the Kingdom of Poland, 61% of Prussian Partition, 47% of Galicia and only 31% in Lithuania and in Belarus. More than 42% of inhabitants of Galicia declared adherence to the Greek Catholic Church in the population census, similarly to the Prussian Partition 38% declared their adherence to the Evangelical denomination¹¹. In

from the Polish soil in the years 1870-113 was estimated at 3,5 mln people, 2,2 mln people emigrated to the USA, *ibidem*, 162.

⁹ A. Dobroński emphasises the growing impact of peasants and petty nobility from Łomża on the state's budget after bringing the money earned in the USA, which was paradoxical because the economically retarded countryside became relatively wealthy, *Infrastruktura społeczna i ekonomiczna guberni łomżyńskiej i obwodu białostockiego (1866-1914)* (Białystok: 1979), 117.

¹⁰ A. Jezierski, C. Leszczyńska, quoted p. 162-163.

¹¹ *Zarys historii Polski w liczbach. Społeczeństwo. Gospodarka*, ed. J. Łukasiewicz (Warszawa: 2012), 146-149. According to many historians (A. Chwałba, A. Dobroński, J. Łukasiewicz) the official data referred to Poles and the people of Roman Catholic denomination, however, they were rather unreliable because of the deliberate policy of Russification which involved even the Orthodox Church. The Russian authorities policy was aimed against the petty nobility which was the mainstay of Polishness; it is well described by J. Sikorska-Kulesza, *Deklaracja drobnej szlachty na Litwie i Białorusi* (Pruszków: 1995).

Belarus, mainly in the eastern part, the majority of inhabitants were Orthodox Christians¹².

What is more, the Second Republic of Poland was also a multinational and multi-faith country in 1931, where Poles constituted almost 65% of the whole population, Ukrainians – 16%, the Jews almost 10% and Belarussians – 6%¹³. The majority of people were Roman Catholics – 64,8%, the 11,8% were Orthodox, 10,4% of Greek Catholics, 9,8% of Jews and 2,6% were Protestants¹⁴.

The following considerations mainly concern Christian families, to a lesser extent the Jewish family, and they do not constitute a comprehensive study. We think that despite publishing a few important and interesting studies about a working-class family¹⁵, about a bourgeois family¹⁶ and about a family of intellectuals¹⁷, presented with regard to bigger cities, we are far from becoming familiar with the whole situation of the family life and with the ongoing changes in it in smaller cities and in towns which were dominating in the urbanisation of the Polish soil¹⁸, not to mention the peasants¹⁹ or the petty nobility so common

¹² A. Chwalba, *Historia Polski 1795-1918* (Kraków: 2000), 386.

¹³ We rely on the estimated values suggested by Z. Landau and J. Tomaszewski with the correction of J. Żarnowski, *Spółeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918-1939* (Warszawa: 1973), 374.

¹⁴ *Zarys historii Polski w liczbach. Spółeczeństwo. Gospodarka*, 153.

¹⁵ A. Żarnowska, "Rodzina robotnicza w Warszawie na przełomie XIX i XX wieku", *Kronika Warszawy*, vol. 15, 1984, nr 2: 83-90; ibidem, *Modele rodziny i pozycja w niej kobiety w uprzemysławiającym się mieście na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Tradycja i modernizacja*, in: *Pamiętnik XV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich*, vol. 2, *Przemiany społeczne a model rodziny*, ed. A. Żarnowska (Gdańsk – Warszawa: 1995), 47-55; K. Sierakowska, *Rodzina robotnicza w Królestwie Polskim w drugiej połowie XIX i pierwszej XX wieku. Ujęcie kulturowe*, in: *Rodzina, gospodarstwo domowe i pokrewieństwo na ziemiach polskich w perspektywie historycznej – ciągłość czy zmiana?* ed. C. Kukło (Warszawa: 2012), 323-341.

¹⁶ M. Siennicka, *Rodzina burżuazji warszawskiej i jej obyczaj. Druga połowa XIX i początek XX wieku* (Warszawa: 1998).

¹⁷ K. Sierakowska, *Rodzice, dzieci, dziadkowie... Wielkomiejska rodzina inteligentka w Polsce 1918-1939* (Warszawa: 2003).

¹⁸ See on the subject – the interesting deliberations of R. Renz, *Gospodarstwo domowe i życie rodzinne w środowisku małomiasteczkowym międzywojennej Kielecczyny*, in: *Rodzina, gospodarstwo domowe i pokrewieństwo...*, 343-359.

¹⁹ Among the earlier works written by ethnographers there are interesting works of various authors, e.g. the study of D. Markowska, *Rodzina wiejska na Podlasiu 1864-1964* (Wrocław: 1970), while among the few dissertations of contemporary historians the most interesting ones are the articles of W. Mędrzecki, *Kobieta wiejska w Królestwie Polskim. Przełom XIX i XX wieku*, in: *Kobieta i społeczeństwo na ziemiach polskich w XIX w.*, ed. A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarek (Warszawa: 1990),

and large in Mazovia and Podlachia²⁰. It is worth to notice the latest attempt of the synthetic characterization of the family on Polish soil in the long term, since the end of the Middle Ages until the half of XX century, which presents if not all, at least the basic states and classes of the society, with regard to various denominations and nationalities²¹.

The sphere of the detailed research issues devoted to the family, which is the smallest social group, which maintains the biological continuity and transmits the basic cultural legacy, is so enormous that it requires every single aspect to be properly defined. The sphere of the material aspect of the family life (the structure of incomes and expenditures, nourishing, living conditions) are in the sphere of interest of the representatives of the economic science, similarly to the socializing functions of family members – this is in the sphere of interest of historians of upbringing and education, while the personal privileges and property rights of spouses, the relationship arising out of blood ties and the care for minors, belong to the sphere of interest of the specialists of the family law.

Therefore, the main aim of our dissertation is to define the main features of development of former families, from the moment of contracting marriage until getting of age of their children, with regard to the age, marital status of the newlyweds, the sustainability of marriage and widowhood and frequency of contracting the second marriage among the number of all marriages. It is also essential for us to get to know better the procreation function of the family, that is the level of fertility rates and – from the other side – the deaths rate among infants and children which used to have the greatest influence on the pace of

130-138; ibidem, *Intymność i sfera prywatna w życiu codziennym i obyczajach rodziny wiejskiej w XIX i w pierwszej połowie XX wieku*, in: *Rodzina – prywatność – intymność. Dzieje rodziny polskiej w kontekście europejskim*, ed. D. Kałwa, A. Walaszek, A. Żarnowska (Warszawa: 2005), 105-121; ibidem, “Model post-radycyjny jako forma odpowiedzi wsi polskiej na wyzwania XIX i XX wieku”, *Rocznik Łódzki* vol. 66, 2017: 181-188.

²⁰ In Łomża governorate before the I World War the petty nobility constituted more than one third of the population and was on the second place as far as the number of the population was concerned, just after peasants. See A. Dobroński, quoted, 206.

²¹ *Rodzina i jej gospodarstwo na ziemiach polskich w geografii europejskich struktur rodzinnych do połowy XX I wieku*, ed. P. Guzowski, C. Kuklo (Białystok: 2019). The English version of the volume with the added part devoted to the Jewish family in XIX and XX century was issued in 2022 by the prestigious publishing house Routledge – *Framing the Polish Family in the Past*, ed. by P. Guzowski, C. Kuklo, translated by T. Czogała-Koczy, J. Czogała-Kiełboń, London – New York.

the population growth and on social development. However, we are not going to limit our deliberations only to the married couple and the offspring, as the previous research revealed that some part of them did not constitute their own economic units and they were a part of the household of their parents or in-laws. It is therefore worth to get to know the size and the members of the households which were living on Polish soil from the end of XIX century until 1930s, at least approximately, in the rural and urban communities. And last but not least, we are interested in the issue of the influence of social, economic, political and cultural changes which were taking place during the period of partitions and the Second Republic of Poland on the prestige and the role of its members that is on the father, the mother, the children and grandparents and other relatives.

Marriage constituted the basis of the family and it was an important institution for all the social groups and communities. Thus, both among the impoverished and the middle-class, and among the landowners, merchants, bankers and entrepreneurs, there were some marriage strategies which aimed at the most beneficial marriage of the son or the daughter. Marriage was not only the reflection of the social aspirations of two young people and their families but marriage was mainly the realization of certain economic interests, while among the social elite: landowners and bourgeoisie it was an essential element of the more comprehensive ancestral policy. The society shared a common view that the newlyweds should come from the families of equal or similar financial status which would guarantee an equal financial contribution of the future spouses. This principle was supposed to provide the sense of equality of husband and wife in the family. The living parents who, especially among the landowners and bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, tried to take into account the opinion of their adult children, but mainly sons than daughters, determined the marriage strategies. However, it is worth noticing that the most important factors in choosing the spouse for the majority of social classes, that is: the economic and prestige incentives (which were also a basic principle for the working class), played a minor role among the intelligentsia where we could observe the increase in the children's independence in this sphere and attaching greater importance to the matter of the feeling which connected the couple²².

It seems that in terms of selecting the spouses the most conservative social classes of that period were the landowners, ancestral aristocracy and bourgeoisie, who felt strong sense of individuality and superiority,

²² K. Sierakowska, *Rodzice, dzieci, dziadkowie...*, 57-58.

while the intelligentsia was the most receptive to innovations. As far as the first group is concerned, it resulted from the specific limitations on marriage market. Thus, as opposed to the other groups and social classes, marriages among the wealthy landowners and among aristocracy or bourgeoisie exceeded the boundaries of partitions and of countries.

Peasants in the countryside found their spouse while watching her during the fieldwork or in their own village or in a village close to their parish or in the neighbourhood, sometimes they exceeded the boundaries, however, the spouse came from the same social class. The situation was similar in the small-town communities, where the young couples met at their workplace or during a holiday when they participated in the same liturgy in the Roman Catholic Church, in the Greek-Catholic church or in Evangelic kirche or in the Orthodox Church. Young working class, apart from the common work in a factory, met during dance parties or in the promenades which were coming into fashion at that time. In the big densely-populated cities, the correlation between the social status and professional status of the future spouses and the spatial extent of the class which they come from, was clearly visible. The extent of the network of contacts was the widest among the wealthy urban elites and the most limited among the poorer class (labourers, apprentices, domestic staff), who usually found their future spouse in the same parish, or even in the same street or tenement-house.

The age of contracting marriage in all the social classes mainly depended on the financial status, however, in the most well-off social classes men often delayed the time of starting a family. However, as a rule, the wealthier usually started their families earlier, regardless of the place where they lived (the city or the countryside). At the end of XIX century and during the first decades of XX century Catholic peasants in the big Podlachia parish Trzcianne married for the first time at the age of 25-26, similarly to the farm owners in the not very rich villages of the Kielce parish of Bejsce, or the peasants who lived in the Kochłowice parish in the Upper Silesia²³. The unmarried peasant women who were getting married at that time in the parish of Trzcianne were mainly 21 years old (until the end of XIX century), at the beginning of the next century the women getting married were even a year younger; in the countryside in the Kielce region the women were getting married at the age of 21-22, similarly to the Upper Silesia.

²³ E. Piasecki, *Ludność parafii bejskiej (woj. kieleckie) w świetle ksiąg metrykalnych z XVIII-XX w. Studium demograficzne* (Warszawa – Wrocław: 1990), 149;

The members of the petty nobility in Podlachia started their families in a similar age to the age of their peasant neighbours, which mainly concerned young women because young men married a year or two later than the peasant young men, mainly at the age of 26-27. The same situation was repeated in the parish of Ciechanowiec, where the impoverished noblemen married at the age of 24-29 (61%), to the quite young women of 19 or less (35%) and only slightly older – 20-23 years old (40%)²⁴. The Uniate young single men, peasants and townspeople who lived in the parish of Kałuszyn in the far away Ukraine at the foot of the Carpathian mountains (the basin of Dniester river) married at the average age of 27 while young women at the age of 22²⁵.

Greater differences of age of the newlyweds appeared in bigger cities (Warsaw, Łódź, Lviv, Cracow, Poznań, Białystok), which were specific because of the wider range of the social and occupational categories of the citizens. Workers married quite early, at the age of 20 to women who were even younger, which resulted from the early start of the women in entering the labour market and earning money.

In comparison to the majority of the society, the descendants of capitalists e.g. in Warsaw, as a rule married as late as at the age of 30, having reached the first successful stage of career which guaranteed maintaining the family at a sufficiently high standard of living. Until 1980s they chose to marry young women (mainly 20 year old), although the age of the women grew systematically to the age of 25 before the I World War²⁶. In the class of the rich landowners the trend concerning the age of the newlyweds was similar both for men and women, however, during that period marriages of the couples with a with a big age difference also started to appear (e.g. young women married much older men)²⁷.

There are very few surveys regarding the age of the newlyweds which would emphasise their diversified denomination structure. On the basis of the research on the society of Toruń of 1910 (the city of 45 thousand citizens, including 52% Evangelicals and 46% Catholics),

²⁴ M. Dajnowicz, *Drobna szlachta ziemi łomżyńskiej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Łomża: 2002), 182.

²⁵ K. Rzemieniecki, A. Miesiąc-Stępińska, "Śluby w parafii greckokatolickiej Kałusz w latach 1785-1897", *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* vol. 33, 2014: 53-54.

²⁶ M. Siennicka, quoted, 42-43. The earlier situation in Warsaw was similar (1858-1861) in the higher social classes (clerks, solicitors, doctors, merchants, factory owners), the majority of men married at the age between 30 and 40, see S. Kowalska-Glikman, *Ruchliwość społeczna i zawodowa mieszkańców Warszawy w latach 1845-1861* (Wrocław: 1971), 27.

²⁷ E. M. Kostrzewska, *Rodzina ziemiańska*, in: *Rodzina i jej gospodarstwo...*, 271.

referring to the period from XIX century and at the beginning of XX century, there were no noticeable differences because the age of young men contracting marriage of both denominations in the years 1881-1914 was 26 – 26, 5 and of young women 23, 5 – 24²⁸. While in Lviv, the city of many nations, denominations and cultures, the comparison of age of contracting marriage is only possible with regard to the period of 1874-1875. The oldest newlyweds were among Armenians – 35 year old but they mainly married the youngest girls (apart from Evangelicals), 24-year-old women. The single Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic men were mainly 30 years old when they got married. However, Catholics usually married women 3 years younger or at the same age, while the believers from the Uniate Church married women of the same age or even slightly older – 32 year old. The youngest married couples were among the Evangelicals: men – 28 year old and women – 22 year old²⁹. Among the Protestants of Poznań, the married couples consisted of men and women at the same or similar age (1855-1905), the men were on average 28 year old as opposed to the citizens of Lviv who were older than their wives only 3 not 6 years³⁰.

In the earlier literature we could often encounter the notice on starting the family in the Jewish community as they usually did it very early in their life which could result in the greater number of children that they could have. The latest research shows the subject in a different light – indicating the moment of gaining independence by young Israelites. In the Belarusian governorates in the first half of XIX century the age of contracting marriage was 19-20 for both sexes, and the situation was similar among the Jews in Suwalki region: 22 years for men and 20 years for women, similarly to Piotrków Trybunalski³¹.

²⁸ A. Zielińska, *Przemiany struktur demograficznych w Toruniu w XIX i na początku XX wieku* (Toruń: 2012), 367-369. Similarly K. Makowski who conducted research of the society of Poznań in the period earlier than the one presented in this dissertation, in the first half XIX century (38 thousand citizens in 1846 r., excluding soldiers and their families), and did not notice any particular differences in the age of the newlyweds between Poles, and Germans, Catholics and Evangelicals, see K. Makowski, *Rodzina poznańska w I połowie XIX wieku* (Poznań: 1992), 92.

²⁹ K. Wnęk, L. A. Zyblikiewicz, E. Callahan, *Ludność nowoczesnego Lwowa w latach 1857-1938* (Kraków: 2006), 145.

³⁰ G. Liczbińska, *Lutherans in the Poznań province. Biological dynamics of the Lutheran population in the 19th and early 20th centuries* (Hamburg: 2015), 129.

³¹ B. Stępniewska-Holzer, “Badania nad rodzinami żydowskimi w białoruskich guberniach strefy osiedlenia w XIX wieku”, *Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych* vol. 60, 2000: 173-176; A. Markowski, *Między Wschodem a Zachodem. Rodzina i gospodarstwo domowe Żydów suwalskich w pierwszej połowie XIX*

The violent economic transformations which were taking place in the second half of XIX century influenced the age of starting the family increasing this age among the Jewish males, but the Jewish women still remained the youngest among other brides. In the mid-1870s in the Jewish community in Lviv, men got married at the age of 28 (only two years earlier than Catholics and Greek Catholics), but they married much younger women of 22 years old (Catholic women – 27, Greek Catholic women – 30). What is more, in Toruniu in the end of XIX and at the beginning of XX century the average age of contracting married by Jews was similar to the Christian men, while Jewish women were one year younger than their Evangelical counterparts and two years younger than the Catholic women³². In some circles where, regardless of their size and economic structure, Jewish newlyweds were not that young. The industrializing Wrocław is a good example of such a situation (in 1885 – 300 thousand inhabitants, including 18 thousand Jews), as well as the small Greater Poland's Wolsztyn. In both of these different cities men married for the first time at the age of 30-31 to young women of 25-27 years old in Wrocławiu and 27 years old in Wolsztyn³³.

The foregoing considerations may appear to be presenting marriages as a very common phenomenon in the discussed period which meant that all adult people would sooner or later get married (apart from the monastic clergy and priests and nuns). We want to strongly emphasise that it was not true, and the number of permanently unmarried people was quite large. Only among the people from the country, peasants and petty nobility, we could meet single permanent celibates. However, in the small-town circles, only 2-3% of the population of over 50 years old, and even more women of this age remained permanently unmarried. The biggest concentration of the permanently unmarried people used to be the biggest cities, mainly consisting of women which was noticeable already in the cities of the Republic of Poland of nobility³⁴. In Cracow in 1890 there were over 69 thousand civilians

wieku (Warszawa: 2008), 128-129; T.M. Jankowski, "Małżeństwa Żydów w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim w latach 1808-1870", *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* vol. 37, 2015, nr 3: 55.

³² A. Zielińska, quoted, 369.

³³ A. Zielińska, *The jewish family in the 19th and early 20 centuries*, in: *Framing the polish family...*, 275.

³⁴ C. Kuklo, *Demografia Rzeczypospolitej przedrozbiorowej* (Warszawa: 2009), 277. It is noticeable in the big provincial of the Kingdom of Poland in 1897 in the majority of which feminization rate amounted from 112 to 119 women for every 100 men, see W. Prus, *Ludność Królestwa Polskiego 1864-1914* (Warszawa: 2019), 142.

and each 100 men accounted for 122 women, the percentage of the permanently unmarried men equalled 8% and among women – twice as much – 15%³⁵. While in the metropolitan city of Warsaw in 1931 with around 1, 2 million citizens and the noticeable predominance of women (119 W/100 M) the phenomenon was also prominent. The permanent solitude mainly appeared in the social groups with lower incomes, mainly among female workers and domestic staff, which again emphasises the importance of the material status in planning and starting the family.

Among the general amount of contracted marriages, the relationships of single men with single women predominated, however, to a various degree. In 1880s there were more of such relationships in the rural and small-town regions (75-85%) than in big cities (60-70%), mainly because of the higher mortality rate which resulted from the poor living conditions which influenced the longevity. Later on, before the I World War, in bigger urban agglomerations which gathered young people from all over the country, e.g. in the capital city of Warsaw, in 1936 there were 88% of the first marriages of Catholics and 93% of marriages among Jews among all others³⁶. The biggest group of second marriages (of widows or widowers) were contracted between widowers and young single women, and a smaller group of marriages were contracted between single men and widows. The lowest number concerned the marriages of widows with widowers. The previous studies clearly indicate that widowers were favoured over widows on the marriage market. As a rule, widowers very quickly contracted second marriages and half of them usually got married within the first 3-5 months after their wives deaths, while widows got married within the 2 or even 3 years after losing their husbands. Widowhood of women especially of the elderly and middle-aged was widespread in the demographic structures of Polish cities regardless of their size or social and occupational profile.

For the record, it should be underlined that the age of newlyweds and the structure of the contracted marriages have never been permanent and the trends of raising the age of getting married appeared during the times of the deterioration of the economic situation, similarly, it was lowered in the time of the improvement of the living conditions and of the increase in the possibilities to get employed. On the other

³⁵ The Author's own calculations on the basis of L. A. Zyblikiewicz, *Ludność Krakowa w drugiej połowie XIX wieku. Struktura demograficzna, zawodowa i społeczna* (Kraków: 2014), 127.

³⁶ *Rocznik Statystyczny Warszawy 1936-1937* (Warszawa: 1938), 16.

hand, demographic crises (which have not been sufficiently described in the Polish literature) resulted in the immediate interruption in the functioning of dozens or hundreds of the existing families and in the recurring pursuit of the widows and widowers to restore their existing household as soon as possible which meant unusually increased number of second marriages.

The previous studies confirmed the relationship between the seasonal nature of weddings and the social and occupational, denominational and spatial nature of population. What is more, the ecclesial regulations in all the Christian communities forbade to contract marriages in Advent (until the Epiphany) and during Lent (until the first Sunday after Easter), which means during March and April³⁷. Rural population (peasants, petty nobility) mostly contracted marriages in late autumn mainly in November, after finishing work in the fields. The second noticeable peak period in this circle was the beginning of the year, the period of carnival, during January and February. The economic factor, which was also noticeable in the cities and towns, exerted less impact among the population of bigger cities where the amplitude of volatility was lower and the third peak period of the increased number of contracted marriages occurred in May (Lublin, Toruń), June (Warsaw) or July (Posen).

Furthermore, the nature of Jewish weddings was also seasonal, as they strongly follow various traditions: religious and moral. Due to a different timetable of holidays in the Jewish calendar, and the greater interpretative freedom of the same religious rules in this circle it was more differentiated than among Christians. The Jews from Suwałki most eagerly contracted marriages at the beginning and at the end of agricultural work (the least in July), while in Piotrków Trybunalski, Toruń, they got married from November until March, excluding (not always, like in Toruń) the summer months..

To sum up the brief description of the marriage on Polish soil within the agreed time frame (1880-1939) we cannot ignore the issue of marriage duration. In the rural and small-town circles only the death of the spouse interrupted the functioning of the smallest social unit as the phenomenon of divorces did not appear there. However, there were also single-parent families, mainly deprived of the father and husband rather than of the mother and wife, due to the economic migrations abroad which not always ended with the happy return to the family.

³⁷ Due to the movable date of the feast of Easter which dates between March 22nd and April 25th. On the seasonal nature of marriages, see P. Rachwał, *Ruch naturalny ludności rzymskokatolickiej w Lubelskiem w świetle rejestracji metrykalnej z lat 1582-1900* (Lublin: 2019), 181-188.

Also in the working class, especially among the poorer ones, marriages ended in separation or divorce due to abandoning the family. However, in legal terms, that is divorces, the majority of divorces took place in the circles of the big-city intelligentsia, particularly among the artistic and officers' circles of the Second Polish Republic. The majority of couples, despite various problems in their everyday existence, which were sometimes even suffering from serious marital conflicts (moral and customary affairs, violence and alcohol addiction), tried hard not to allow for the break of the wedlock³⁸.

In the discussed period, marriages lasted longer than in the old-Polish period and at the beginning of the period of partitions (in the country they lasted around 15-20 years, in the cities for 15 or fewer years). The general improvement of the living conditions, in the country – wide-spread growing of potatoes, dismissed threat of starvation in the pre-harvest season even for the poor inhabitants, in big cities – the noticeable decrease in the mortality of infants and babies as well as the decrease in the mortality in the puerperium period of women and spreading of the medical care (also concerning the newly delivered mothers), resulted in extending the lifespan.

The first marriages of peasants in Kielce region in the second half of XIX century lasted on average 26-27 years, and the second marriages lasted even 18-19 years³⁹. The same applied to the marriages of peasants in Upper Silesia e.g. in the villages of Toszek parish, but only among rich peasants (26 years) and slightly shorter among peasants who owned farms and cotters (24 years), not to mention the marriages of bailiffs (only 13 years), which suggests the influence of the social and occupational status and the living conditions which resulted from it. This dependence is clearly visible on the example of the centre of the mentioned parish of the artisan town of Toszek (almost 1,9 thousand inhabitants; Catholics – 85,5%, Jews – 8,4%, Evangelicals – 6,1%), where the marriage of a merchant lasted on average 38 years, of the craftsman – 25 years and of a clerk almost 19 years⁴⁰.

³⁸ The lack of a more exact statistics of divorces before 1939 makes it impossible to make a more exact analysis, but the percentage of adults recorded in directories as divorced or separated, was very low and e.g. in Poznań in 1931 among the inhabitants at the age of 15 and more, they constituted less than 1%, see S. Abt, *Ludność. Struktura demograficzna miasta*, in: *Dzieje Poznania*, vol. 2, 1793-1945, ed. J. Topolski, L. Trzeciakowski (Warszawa – Poznań: 1998), 971.

³⁹ E. Piasecki, quoted, 153-154.

⁴⁰ D. Daszkiewicz-Ordylowska, *Rodzina w parafii toszeckiej w latach 1789-1877*, in: *Śląskie studia demograficzne*, vol. 5, *Rodzina*, ed. Z. Kwaśny (Wrocław: 2001), 98-100.

Among the Warsaw bourgeoisie, the majority of marriages contracted at the beginning of the second half of the century lasted over 30 years (over 57%), although at the turn of the centuries it definitely decreased to over 21%, which could have resulted from, on the one hand, the raised age of women getting married, and, on the other hand, the decisions to get divorced or separated⁴¹. The lack of detailed study does not allow for the precise answer to the question of duration of marriages among the wealthy landowners. Indirectly we can presume that they were functioning as long as the ones among the bourgeoisie, although the representatives of this class (mostly men) did not care much for the sustainability of marriage⁴².

Birth of a child constituted not only an important but also highly celebrated event in almost every family as it provided the most important biological continuation. Therefore, infertility was not approved of and it was usually considered to be the woman's fault⁴³. In the discussed period, the typical family usually was a large family with many children, and the peasant families used to have more children than the workers' families. The problem of the correlation between the number of children and the family's social status or the economic status used to be discussed in the thematic literature. As long as this correlation is noticeable in the rural communities (the more well-off families had more children) and in the provincial towns, it was not that clear in big cities which were characterized by variety of occupations and activities of the inhabitants and thus of various levels of prosperity.

With this brief draft of the question of birth rate of former married couples on Polish soil since the end of XIX until 1930s, we need to face the fact that we enter a sphere which is not easy for characterization as it concerns individual attitudes towards procreation which in various social classes (intelligentsia) did not have to be constant and which were undergoing transformations⁴⁴. On the other hand, even in the small-town provincial circles which embodied the traditional

⁴¹ M. Siennicka, quoted, 45.

⁴² E. M. Kostrzevska, quoted, 272; A. Szwarc, *Rygorystyczne normy i swobodne obyczaje. Matężstwo i związki pozamatężnskie w opiniach ziemiańsko-arystokratycznej elity w połowie XIX wieku*, in: *Kobieta i matężstwo: społeczno-kulturowe aspekty seksualności. Wiek XIX i XX*, ed. A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarc (Warszawa: 2004), 89-101.

⁴³ See on the subject A. Bódyrew, *Matka i dziecko w rodzinie polskiej. Ewolucja modelu życia rodzinnego w latach 1795-1918* (Warszawa: 2008), 21.

⁴⁴ A. Bódyrew wrote about the trends to avoid procreation by various social groups, presenting the used methods and the attitudes of the medical community towards the termination of pregnancy, quoted, 31-36.

ways of thinking and acting, and were not very keen on novelties or progress in sphere of marriage and the family, there were many cases of resorting to the birth control and family planning. It is confirmed by the opinions of priests in the parishes, which were collected in a survey concerning family morality of the parishioners in the years 1920-1929 conducted in the diocese of Kielce. It contains statements about avoiding procreation in the form of coitus interruptus, while a parson from Busko Zdrój wrote: “avoiding procreation is noticeable not only among intelligentsia but also among the whole population, it results from the fear of the burden and duties of motherhood”⁴⁵.

The number of childbirths was influenced but the age of contracting marriage and by the duration of marriage. Therefore, mothers who initiated procreation the earliest that is before the age of 25 usually gave birth to 10 or even 12 children, and the 5 year older mothers gave birth to 8 or 9 children. And even those who got married relatively late (35-39 years old) usually gave birth at least to 3 children. However, their whole biological potential was hardly ever used because the final number of children was usually limited by economic factors but the social and cultural practice was also of great importance (the duration of breastfeeding, the time before the births of subsequent children, the age of the previous child, physical and mental fatigue, the frequency of the sexual intercourse, involuntary miscarriages). Let’s not forget about the ongoing high death rate of infants and babies. Even at the end of XIX century, for every 1000 live births in the country, 250 children died in infancy (100 years earlier even 350), and in big cities even more. The improvement of this situation which evident in reduced mortality rate of infants took place in the period of II Polish Republic (187 deaths in 1920 and 142 deaths in 1930 for every 1000 live births)⁴⁶. The percentage of death rate of small children 1- 4 years old was also very high. It should be emphasised that at the end of XIX century in the families of peasants from Małopolska region only slightly more than a half of the children grew up until the conventional age of 20 which allowed for starting a family, while in the inter-war Poland at the beginning of 1930s as many as three fourths, and in some cities such as Poznań even more – 80%⁴⁷. On the other hand, during the whole discussed period the overall birth rate decreased. Infants usually died of pneumonia,

⁴⁵ R. Renz, quoted, 353-354.

⁴⁶ C. Kuklo, J. Łukasiewicz, C. Leszczyńska, *Historia Polski w liczbach. Polska w Europie/History of Poland in Numbers. Poland in Europe* (Warszawa: 2014), 92.

⁴⁷ E. Piasecki, quoted, 288-290; *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski wrzesień 1939 – czerwiec 1941* (Londyn: 1941), 25 [reprint Warszawa 1990]; S. Abt, quoted, 968.

diarrhoea and the accompanying intestinal disorders, as well as of the congenital defects and infancy diseases. There were two peaks of the seasonal death rate of infants: the winter peak in February and the summer peak in August, while the latter was strongly connected with infectious diseases.

Wealthy peasants used to have more than 5-7 children while the poorer bailiffs 3-4. The cases of women who gave birth to 13-15 children have been very rare, even when they had two husbands⁴⁸. The families of miners in the Upper Silesia used to have 7 children. In the small-town circles, which were also quite versatile, in the social and occupational aspects, where, similarly to the countryside, the predominant model of the family was the traditional model of family life with a few children, usually there were fewer children – 3-5. The working class families in big cities of Warsaw and Łódź used to have more children, on average from 4 to 6, although during the period of II Republic of Poland, the number of families with the greater number of children – 10 and more, clearly decreased. Researchers emphasise that in this circle the higher social status was expressed in the lower number of the offspring and on the contrary, in poorer families of part-time workers or even of unemployed, the number of children was greater.⁴⁹

The sizes of landowners families also varied, they consisted of childless families and of families with a dozen children but on average at the beginning of XX century in the Kingdom of Poland there were 5 children per family and in the interwar period even more 6-8. In rich families of financiers and the merchants of Warsaw there was the trend of limiting the number of the offspring from 6 (1850-1859) to almost 2 before the I World War, among the short-term and long-term marriages lasting a dozen years, which indicates the deliberate limitations. In the interwar period the intelligentsia families were the ones who deliberately limited the number of children, more and more couples resigned from having children. It is worth to notice that journalists writing the columns in “Przegląd Powszechny”, the magazine addressed to the Catholic intelligentsia, promoted 4-children families (but not the large ones)⁵⁰. Withdrawal from having a greater number of children was also noticed in the rural areas e.g. in the families whose members were interviewed thoroughly e.g. the families of peasants

⁴⁸ E. Piasecki, quoted, 270.

⁴⁹ A. Żarnowska, *Robotnicy Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Warszawa: 1985), 94.

⁵⁰ K. Sierakowska, *Rodzice, dzieci, dziadkowie...*, 100-104.

in the region of Kielce in which at least one fourth of young mothers postponed the next pregnancies⁵¹. Such attitudes were not accepted by the Church (the Catholic Church was particularly against birth control methods)⁵², which resulted from Her doctrine that procreation is the main aim of marriage⁵³.

The recent survey which concerns Jewish families does not confirm the myths that they used to have many children, but in various ways it emphasises the influence of the economic status of the family. In the Jewish families of Suwałki the richest merchants' families usually had only two children which could have resulted from perceiving a child in economic terms and the families of craftsmen (e.g. tailors, butchers, chimney sweeps) had around 4 children⁵⁴. In Piotrków Trybunalski in the half of 1860s the situation was totally the opposite – the wealthiest families had three children while the poor ones – only two or fewer⁵⁵. Also in Toruń (1861-1910) the number of children in the Jewish families was very low – around 3, 5 children.

In the majority of families the first child was born usually within the first year or two years after contracting marriage, although the amount of pre-marital conceptions among peasants or in the urban communities was not small⁵⁶. However, there were no pre-marital conceptions among the rich bourgeoisie, landowners and aristocracy mainly because of the parental control over the growing up youth. The next children, depending on the fate of the previous one, were usually born every 2 or 3 years although it did not concern the attempts to conceive a baby.

⁵¹ E. Piasecki, quoted, 218.

⁵² R. Renz, quoted, 74.

⁵³ See the collection of studies written by professors of the Catholic University of Lublin – *Małżeństwo w świetle nauki katolickiej* (Lublin: 1928), ibidem, *Małżeństwo – Cele*, in: *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. E. Ozorowski (Warszawa – Łomianki: 1999), 230-231.

⁵⁴ A. Markowski, quoted, 179-180.

⁵⁵ T.M. Jankowski, “Ruchliwość społeczno-zawodowa Żydów i formowanie się gospodarstw żydowskich w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim w latach 1808-1870”, *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* vol. 37, 2015, nr 4: 78.

⁵⁶ In the countryside in the region of Kielce in the second half of XIX century the pre-marital conceptions accounted for only a little over 5% (E. Piasecki, quoted, 348); while in the Upper Silesia in the villages in the parish of Strzelce Opolskie there were 23,4% of them, and in the town even – 31,3% (J. Spychała, *Rodzina w parafii Strzelce Opolskie w latach 1766-1870*, in: *Śląskie studia demograficzne*, vol. 5, *Rodzina*, ed. Z. Kwaśny (Wrocław: 2001), 9-10.

In peasant families children were conceived after finishing the works in the fields (mostly in May) and much fewer in the summer months and in the early autumn (July- October). In urban communities, especially in big cities, the seasonal nature of conceiving the child was not identical because, apart from the usual time of conceiving the child during spring (May, June), there were more conceptions during the summer (July and August)⁵⁷.

Making a short analysis of fertility rate of the former families, we cannot skip the question of extramarital conceptions which were by no means negligible but rather quite spatially diversified. At the turn of XIX and XX centuries many illegitimate children were born in Galicia – 11, 6%, in the Prussian partition – 8, 8%, and the fewest in the Kingdom of Poland – 4, 6%⁵⁸. Urban communities have always had a greater share in the birth rate than the rural communities, e.g. in the cities of the Congress Kingdom of Poland there were 8, 5% of them, while in the countryside only 3, 8%. This phenomenon was increasing in bigger cities which were inhabited by the increasing number of young people, mainly women who were looking for better living conditions and who usually ended up working as the domestic staff, labourers or often became unemployed. However, at the beginning of XX century, the high rate of extramarital births predominated not in the fast developing Warsaw or Łódź but rather in Cracow where every fourth born child had the status of being illegitimate. In comparison to the beginning of the century, in the interwar Poland, the frequency of extramarital fertility significantly decreased. At the beginning of 1930s there were only 6% of such births in the whole country (11, 1% in big cities and 4, 9% in the countryside), more in the western and southern regions (8%) than in the central and eastern regions of Poland (5%). At the same time the number of extramarital births was the lowest among the Orthodox Church believers (4, 6%) and Catholics (5, 2%) and slightly bigger in the communities of Evangelicals and Greek-Catholics (6, 4-6,

⁵⁷ We can deliberate over the fact to what extent did the religious principles which indicated the necessity of sexual abstinence during Advent (December) and the Lent (mainly March) influence the sexual activity in families. In the rural parishes and in the city of Lublin we could notice the increase in the number of conceptions during these two months, greater in the city. See P. Rachwał, quoted, 240, 244. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Toruń, Catholics and Evangelicals alike, tried to restraint from any sexual activity during this time. See A. Zielińska, *Przemiany struktur demograficznych...*, 401-403.

⁵⁸ We refer only to the collective statistics from the work of P. Szukalski, *Płodność i urodzenia pozamajążeńskie w Polsce* (Łódź: 2001), as in the smaller communities – parishes, we can observe greater differences even within the scope of the same districts or voivodeships.

5%). Among Jews 28, 6% of the children were born in ritual marriages and these children were not registered in any registry office so they were counted as the illegitimate. We should add that the “burden” of being illegitimate did not result in any problems with getting married in small and traditional communities in the countryside, however, it was long remembered by the neighbours, as the terms “illegitimate” or “born out of wedlock” are mentioned in the XIX century records of inhabitants of the parishes of Trzcianne or Knyszyna next to the names of not only children but also of adults – the father or mother of the household.

Contracting marriage and starting a family did not always mean gaining economic independence that is: creating one’s own household, separate from parents or in-laws. However, the more detailed look at the structure of these former households which will illustrate not only the models of the family functioning at that time, which involved the relatives or friends who lived together with the family but also getting to know the protective function of the family over the senior relatives.

Before the I World War in the quite large Catholic parish Trzcianne in Podlachia region, which was inhabited by 8, 7 thousand people (1755 of households), the majority of the peasants and petty nobility, three thirds, lived in simple households (the married couple with their children or without children or a widowed parent with the children)⁵⁹. Only one in five households hosted a relative from outside the family of blood ties or another married couple. The extended households with an additional person who used to be the mother of the husband (or the mother of the wife, which was rather rare) and an unmarried sibling of the host (less frequently the sibling of the hostess). Among the households which consisted of two married couples, the old married couples hosted their married children 74% (peasants) and 71% (petty nobility). Let’s add that the amount of the households of single persons or non-family households (that is: without a spouse, but e.g. consisting of lonely children or other related people) was negligible and amounted to 2, 5 (among peasants) and 4% (among the petty nobility).

The most of the heads of the household were the owners of the house but not all of them as every eighth peasant’s household and every tenth petty nobility’s household were the bailiff’s. In the agricultural environment mainly the men managed the households but in over 12% of the total amount of peasants’ households and in 10% of the petty nobility’s households women were the heads. As a rule these family-residential communities were not big, in the households of the hosts

⁵⁹ C. Kuklo – database: *Spisy mieszkańców parafii Trzcianne z 1843, 1882 i 1910 r.*

there were on average 5,3 people and in the bailiff's households there were 4,6 people. The households of women were usually smaller: 3,7 household members and 2,8 household members respectively. However, what is most noticeable here is the trend to hold the household as long as possible before passing it on to the next generation which concerned both social groups, and every fifth household was managed by the elders of 60 or more years old. These people were aware that at the moment of passing the household on to the younger generation their previous social status, through which they were evaluated by their relations and neighbours, would be lowered.

In the reconstructed image of the family system of the northern Podlachia region it is worth to notice its resemblance among the circles of peasants and the petty nobility which, however, had always tried to emphasise its superiority over the peasant neighbours even at the beginning of XX century⁶⁰.

However, drawing the direct analogy between the specification of the households of the peasants in Podlachia of the beginning of XX century and the rural communities of the remaining parts of the Republic of Poland would be oversimplification as their structures depended both on the conditions and economic opportunities and on the family strategies or the intergenerational relationships e.g. the attitude towards the elderly. However, in the south-eastern Borderlands after the agrarian reforms of 1860s in Russia (at first, liberation from servitude and abolition of serfdom, then enfranchisement of peasants), organization of households among the local Greek Catholics who lived in Volyn in the county of Krzemieniec was similar to the situation in Podlachia. In the years 1881-1885 among the peasants and the petty impoverished nobility, there were mainly simple households consisting of a married couple – more than 77% among the petty nobility and nearly 82% among peasants, to even a greater extent than in the parish of Trzciannie⁶¹. Moreover, the size of the households in both of these social groups was identical as they hosted 5 people under the same roof (median). Therefore. In the circle of Catholic peasants and the petty nobility in Podlachia and in the far away Volyn in the time after the enfranchisement, the processes of the progressing disaggregation of the family structures. The families consisting of many members which

⁶⁰ For more information see M. Dajnowicz, *Drobna szlachta ...*, 173-178.

⁶¹ P. Guzowski, R. Poniak, C. Kuklo, "The influence of emancipation reforms on the Polish rural family in western provinces of the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th century", *The History of the Family* vol. 27, 2022, nr 1: 188 (tabl. 6).

were rarely present in the countryside in Volyn (almost 3% among the petty nobility and 5% among peasants), and a little larger in the countryside of Podlachia (over 8% among peasants and almost 10% among the petty nobility), were more common and resembled, which is worth noticing, the situation among the population of Belarus⁶².

There are relatively less data about the structure of the households in big cities at the end of XIX century and in the first decades of the XX century. Taking as an example the better known community of Cracow we can conclude that in 1890 the predominant families (80%) consisted of the parents and their offspring or childless, although the percentage of childless couples was relatively high and equalled nearly 17%⁶³. There were also two noticeable phenomena. On the one hand, single parenthood which concerned every sixth family. On the other hand, in comparison to some rural communities, there were very few households of extended families hosting related people or in-laws – only 7, 1%. In the biggest cities the number of single person households was growing rapidly, from 19% in Cracow (1921) to over 27% in Posen (1931)⁶⁴.

In the Jewish community of Suwałki in the first half of XIX century the predominant household consisted of nuclear families which were deprived of the extended family structures, these families consisted of 4-5 members⁶⁵. While in Piotrków Trybunalski where the number of nuclear families was also predominant, however, among the Jews every fifth household consisted of parents and married children. This situation mainly concerned the richest families who were capable of fulfilling the custom of *kestu* which consisted in maintaining of the family of the younger generation in the household of the bride⁶⁶. In the relatively larger community of the Cracow Jews in 1890 the majority of families consisted of the married couple (88%), and there were relatively fewer households consisting of single parents in comparison to the Catholics (10, 5 to 18, 3%). While the extended households

⁶² More on the subject see. S. Tokts', *Byalaruskaya vyoska w epokhu z'myenanav. Druhaya palova XIX – Pyearshaya tratsina XX st.* (Minsk: 2007).

⁶³ L. A. Zyblikiewicz, quoted, 299-303.

⁶⁴ See E. Adamczyk, *Spółeczność Krakowa i jej życie*, in: *Dzieje Krakowa*, vol. 4, *Kraków w latach 1918-1939*, ed. J. Bieniarzówna, J. M. Małecki (Kraków: 1997), 33; S. Abt, quoted, 973-974.

⁶⁵ A. Markowski, quoted, 166-168.

⁶⁶ T.M. Jankowski, *Ruchliwość społeczno-zawodowa Żydów...*, 74.

and compact households were very rare – only 1, 7% of all existing households⁶⁷.

At the beginning of the accelerated industrialization and urbanization of the Polish soil in the second half of XIX century in all the social groups, the former peasant and petty nobility groups, landowners, petty bourgeoisie, as well as in the new emerging groups of workers, bourgeoisie, intelligentsia, the predominant model of the family was the patriarchal family. The father-husband was the head of the family and he assumed the unquestionable position (at least at the beginning of the discussed period), which had previously been privileged also in the previous Christian doctrine of marriage and Judaism. The wife, the children, the grandparents remaining under the paternal care, and the domestic staff of both sexes, were obedient to the paternal authority. Mainly the father decided about the matrimonial strategies of his adult children, about marriages of his sons and daughters. His high position in all the social groups resulted not only from the tradition but mainly from the burden laid on him to maintain the family. The agricultural enterprise was the basis of the household among peasants and the petty nobility, the craftsman's families were maintained from the income of the workshop which was also based on the physical labour of the man, like in the warehouses, but not always exclusively, as the women's labour and the adolescent children's labour was also of importance.

In the circles of landowners, the man was responsible not only for the functioning of the agricultural estate, and with time, for its modernization and industrialization, for bringing specialists, sometimes from abroad, but also for multiplying the assets by investing in various corporations (industrial, financial or trade) often with the assets of the domestic or foreign bourgeoisie. The situation in the families of bankers and industrialists was similar, the woman was not allowed to run the business or to take decisions on economic matters, and instead she was expected to focus on the private sphere of the family life.

In the patriarchal family the woman, wife and mother, was the guardian of the domestic life, and her primary tasks included motherhood and procreation, and the care for and education of children, this concerned all the social groups. In the families of peasants the woman was strongly involved into the sphere of the household but also into animal breeding and growing vegetables, and from spring to autumn also in the field works. She was engaged into the physical labour in the workshop to a minor degree. In rich families of landowners or of the

⁶⁷ L.A. Zyblikiewicz, quoted, 301-303.

rich bourgeoisie women were not directly engaged into the business, however, they knew about it to a greater or lesser extent, which was confirmed when, after the death of the husband, the wife could easily and effectively get engaged into the business and run it successfully⁶⁸. It was the woman who had to run the family household in which the number of the employed household staff: cooks, butlers, housemaids and servants, depending on the financial status of the family, was quite large. The women, as opposed to their husbands who spent most of the time out, managed the household staff, took care of the household aesthetics, organized the timetable and took care of the social life of the family. The most well-off landowners, entrepreneurs and bankers regularly invited guests and their houses were open for the family and friends and acquaintances, for partners in business or for celebrities from the world of literature, famous painters and musicians. In the families of the arising intelligentsia, who were not mainly based on financial relationships, the position of women was stronger, e.g. they could decide about the marriage of their daughters. Like their daughters, they were inclined to attach more importance to the relationships based on the feelings of the future spouses who were similar in age than in the case of the arranged marriages. However, this social class favoured the traditional approach to the female role in the family and the majority of women did not have a paid job, except for the women of independent profession or those forced to work because of the poor financial conditions.

The mother was also the beacon in the working class family, although, at the end of the XIX century, a lot of women gave up their jobs in the factory, focusing on the household duties and on raising the children. In this circle, the fate of the wife and mother was the most difficult. They were often facing the open alcohol abuse of their husbands, physical violence and the neglecting of the household duties by the husbands, which in this community was predominant among other communities. Neglecting of the household duties by the husbands usually resulted from overwork, from the amount of time spent in the factory or steelworks. The poor living conditions of the working class were definitely very hard for the people, the situation was often extremely difficult. On the other hand, the need to provide for the family e.g. in case when the husband lost his job or earned very little, forced women to find a job (often temporary), in a factory, sometimes a part-time job in in services or cottage industry.

⁶⁸ Specific examples are given by M. Siennicka, quoted, 94.

Children were highly desired, both in the Christian and in the Jewish family; even in the period of the capitalistic transitions they were treated in economic terms, apart from the well-off social communities (rich landowners, bourgeoisie) and intelligentsia. Their physical labour, even of the 10- or 12-year olds, not even mentioning the older children, consisted in the basic assistance and work on the farm or in a craftsman's workshop, by which they were contributing to multiplication of the family assets. It is commonly recognised that in the current system of values children constituted a kind of protection and care for the senior parents. The children were much more taken care of in the well-off families, although the sons had better care than daughters. However, due to the social divisions, the children at that time were taught to be hard-working, pious and thrifty. These features were in the first place taught by the mother. In the well-off families the children were taught and educated by nannies and private tutors and teachers. Gradually, the young people from the countryside and towns gained access to school education, which was meaningful both in their further life and in the way they perceived the relationships in the family and the relationships in the local community⁶⁹.

The sons of elite of landowners and industrialists were sent to gymnasiums, got a degree in economics or in business studies as these were the most useful occupations, but also in medical studies (rarely humanities studies), they often studied abroad and spoke foreign languages. However, this luxury only concerned sons. The daughters, even in well-off families, according to some researchers, were often neglected, which might not be true. Although the majority of daughters of e.g. the Warsaw bourgeoisie were educated in special finishing schools for ladies which, however, did not always provide high-level education, moreover; the girls were not sent to study abroad, although some young women took up university education. Even before the revival of the Polish statehood, in the years 1894-1918, more than 6,3 thousand women (13% of all the students) studied at Jagielloński University, and in the group of the recognized social background the majority of young

⁶⁹ In the Kingdom of Poland in December 1917 there were over 7,8 thousand schools in the country (including 78% of public schools) with almost 550 thousand students at the age of 7-12 and 366 of secondary schools with over 83 thousand students (secondary schools were mainly schools for girls – 55% of all). In Galicia in the school year 1910/11 among the population of 6-12 years old in the folk schools (over 5,8 thousand.) 85,5% of all studied in primary schools and over 40 thousand young people studied in secondary schools. In 1911 Polish students in folk schools in the countryside in the Prussian partition constituted almost 70% of all – all the data from *Historia Polski w liczbach*, vol. 1, *Państwo. Społeczeństwo*, ed. A. Jezierski, A. Wyczański (Warszawa: 2003), 230-237.

women came from intelligentsia (the professional and art, including independent professions) – 47% and from bourgeoisie – 29%⁷⁰. During the interwar period the amount of women who started to study at the 5 universities multiplied and in the school year 1934/1935 the majority of them were studying in Warsaw (over 39%) and in Vilnius (over 32%), in Cracow and Lviv 28% and slightly fewer in Poznań (27%)⁷¹.

Although, according to our studies, the majority of families were 2-generation, there were also 3-generation more extended family structures which included the elder generations, e.g. the parents of one of the spouses, mainly a widowed mother than the father, but sometimes with other elderly relatives and in-laws. Their fate in the country, among the working class or even in the petty nobility family, was unenviable, although formally they were supposed to be respected and cared for. In reality, with the loss of physical strength, they were badly treated by their children, mainly in the impoverished families of peasants, craftsmen and workers rather than in the families of the rich peasants or foremen, especially when the seniors had passed on their farm or workshop to their children⁷². Some seniors in such situations chose to become beggars. However, Włodzimierz Mędrzecki emphasises the fundamental principle of the rural environment according to which the care for the senior must not take place at the cost of major sacrifice of the adult children⁷³. Let's add that both in the countryside and in the cities seniors tried for as long as it was possible to remain the heads of the household which ensured them financial independence and provided for a better life in old age than when they gave up their farms to the children not even mentioning renting a place to live or becoming an employee.

The situation was totally different for the elderly seniors in well-off families. In manor houses and palaces of the landowners, the widowed parent or an in-law was constantly accompanied by elderly aunts and

⁷⁰ The Author's calculation on the basis of U. Perkowska, *Studentki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w latach 1894-1939. W stulecie immatrykulacji pierwszych studentek* (Kraków: 1994), 36-37, 46.

⁷¹ Ibidem, 40.

⁷² More on the subject see B. Gapiński, *Ludzie starzy na wsi polskiej od schyłku XIX po rok 1939* (Poznań: 2014), 108-125.

⁷³ W. Mędrzecki, *Uwagi o starości na wsi polskiej w XIX wieku*, in: *Ludzie starzy i starość na ziemiach polskich od XVIII do XX wieku (na tle porównawczym)*, vol. 1, *Metodologia, demografia, instytucje opieki*, ed. A. Janiak-Jasińska, K. Sierakowska, A. Szwarc (Warszawa: 2016), 77. Unlike B. Gapiński the Author does not share the view on the worsening of the conditions of the elderly in the Polish countryside in XIX century and at the beginning of XX century (ibidem, 81).

uncles or other elderly relatives and even unrelated elderly persons of both sexes, called residents (homeless, friends, military veterans, clerks). The matter of nutrition or lack of space was of no problem in this circle, therefore, these people could live there for longer periods, especially that some of the residents did their best to be helpful in the household chores. With time, especially at the end of XIX century even among the landowners who were trying to adapt to the capitalist housekeeping methods, the number of residents of both sexes decreased due to the growing costs of maintenance⁷⁴.

In the circle of intelligentsia, experiencing old age looked different depending on the health condition and the family situation. In Galicia at the turn of XIX and XX centuries the long-time civil servants and clerks, including university teachers (who were all the imperial clerks), could live off low pensions paid by the authorities.

The rapid transformations since the end of XIX century of the social and economic nature, of the cultural and legal transformations exerted an increasing influence on the ways of functioning of the family in the interwar Poland gradually replacing the previous model of the patriarchal family which clearly reminded in the encyclical of Pope Pius XI *Casti Connubii (O małżeństwie chrześcijan)* [On Christian marriage] from December 1930⁷⁵. A bit earlier the Catholic Church changed the form of the marriage vow and the woman did not have to promise to be obedient to her husband. On the other hand, the family became the object of the state legislation to a greater degree than previously⁷⁶. The emancipation process of women present in the whole of Europe and confirmed with gaining the voting rights the majority of countries before 1920 and the progressing occupational activity of not only women but also of adolescent children led to weakening of the former position of men in the family on the economic and social levels. All that, to a different extent, contributed to the transformations of the former positions of family members and the mutual relationships between the household members, marked by the weakening of family bonds.

⁷⁴ See an interesting essay of W. Molik, *Rezydenci w rodzinach ziemiańskich na ziemiach polskich w XIX wieku*, in: *Ludzie starzy i starość...*, 223-241.

⁷⁵ See F. Adamski, *Rodzina. Wymiar społeczno-kulturowy* (Kraków: 2002), 105-107; see also M. Strzelecki, *Wizerunek i rola kobiety w katolickiej koncepcji wychowania społecznego w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, in: *Partnerka, matka, opiekunka. Status kobiety w dziejach nowożytnych od XVI do XX wieku*, ed. K. Jakubiak (Bydgoszcz: 2000), 269-287.

⁷⁶ See the characteristics of the regulations of the family relationships from the period of partitions to the II World War written by P. Fiedorczyk, *Rozwój prawa rodzinnego*, in: *Rodzina i jej gospodarstwo...*, 221-240.

In the rural environment, with the progressing agrarian overpopulation, with the ongoing fragmentation of households and the increasing life expectancy, the sons and daughters of peasants could not easily gain the high and desired position of the householder and hostess, which resulted in the growing number of young men and women who were looking for work outside the family household or village. At the same time the number of peasant boys who were attending secondary (comprehensive and vocational) schools increased. This reinforced the emancipation of peasant women, also influenced by the cooperative movement, which indirectly strengthened the position of the woman and of the adolescent children in the family, even of daughters, although the leadership of the man, father and husband, and remained unquestionable.

As far as the petty nobility or the craftsmen and merchants' families were concerned, the model of the family life did not change much there. The traditional division with the male leadership and poorly paid women's labour remained unchanged. Although one fifth of women remained illiterate, they eagerly and actively participated in the popular culture activities inspired by the local well-educate women – teachers⁷⁷.

In the circles of the patriarchal families of the well-off landowners and aristocracy, who emphasised their exclusiveness till the end of the interwar period in Poland, the prestige of the woman (wives and mothers) increased due to their more frequent economic, social and cultural activity⁷⁸. Moreover, the strict principles of the male patriarchy were relaxed and the interest in children also increased not only in the light of their marriage but also of their health, emotions and interests. Furthermore, the family members gained new independence.

Some transformations were also introduced in the families of workers in the industrialized urban centres. On the one hand, the family became a two-generation unit. On the other hand, when every family member took up a job (it was rigorously required from the older children) the position of the father, who used to be the only family breadwinner, was severely weakened. The early work of the workers' children resulted in weakening of the emotional bonds with parents and in the earlier marriages that led to the acquisition of independence earlier in life.

⁷⁷ See R. Renz, *Wzorce społeczno-obyczajowe a realia współżycia kobiet i mężczyzn w międzywojennym środowisku prowincjonalnym (w świetle dokumentów kościelnych)*, in: *Kobieta i małżeństwo: społeczno-kulturowe aspekty seksualności...*, 329-340.

⁷⁸ E. M. Kostrzevska, quoted, 313.

The big city intelligentsia circles of the Second Republic of Poland, despite its unquestionable diversity, faced the majority of transformations concerning the traditional model of division of the roles of husband and wife⁷⁹. Women's equality combined with their occupational activation and the gained education usually contributed to the gradual aligning the wife's and husband's positions in the intelligentsia families, transforming the patriarchal family into a partnership-based family. It was reflected in the shared decision about the family expenditure and household budget and in the increase in the women's independence in deciding about their future. Although even in this circle it was emphasised the meaning and importance of motherhood but the birth control was introduced in this group more often than in other social groups (the number of childless families was high), while the families with many children were very rare in this social circle in Poland. This group promoted the nuclear two-generation family and the cases of three generations living together in one household were very rare. At the same time the members took proper care for fulfilling the emotional needs and respect of the intimacy of each member. Another distinguishing feature of this group was the educational model and the aspirations concerning education. The educational model strongly emphasised the need for the active civic attitude and commitment to the state and society, and as for the aspirations concerning education. It was not enough to graduate from school, but the sons of the family were expected to go to university and get a degree, it also concerned the daughters but to a lesser extent. Generally speaking, in this group the relationship between the spouses (which were enhanced by the shared interests and the little age difference between the spouses), as well as between parents and children became more of partnership.

The traditional model of the family was predominant among the Jewish families due to the importance of following the religious rules, which also regulated the marital relationships (including procreation) and family relationships (the Bible, the Talmud). In these families the family bonds were of particular importance. In the groups of Orthodox Jews, women were responsible for maintaining the household because men were busy with studying the Torah and the Talmud. The wife who was quiet and obedient, who painstakingly fulfilled the religious recommendations, was also obedient to her husband. As opposed to the Christian families, in the Jewish family the husband and the father was above all the godly representative before God and the external environment. This tradition taught children the respect for parents

⁷⁹ More on the subject see A. Żarnowska, K. Sierakowska, quoted, 102-104.

and for the elderly, and the latter were respected and appreciated among Israelites. In the Israeli families parents placed the greatest hope in their sons. It should also be noticed that the traditional model of family life in which the woman usually had to maintain the family was criticised by the Jewish intelligentsia.

The studies of the family history on Polish soil in the a broad sense, from the transformation of its structure and functions to the social status and culture-forming role (including formation of patriotism) since the Middle Ages until the end of the previous century, definitely remain the unparalleled basic interdisciplinary phenomenon which would present the process of modernisation of our society particularly rapid in XX century. It is obvious that this extremely extended survey requires taking into account the whole variety of not only the social situations but also – which must be strongly emphasised – the changing conditions of the material existence of families and the ethnic, religious and special circumstances.

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