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Origins of the European Marriage Pattern at the Turn of the Middle Ages from the Perspective of Polish History

Publication of John Hajnal's seminal articles on European marriage pattern¹ brought marriage patterns to the center of scholarly interest not only among demographers, but also among scholars whose main areas of study are economic, legal, and cultural history². All scholars, including Hajnal himself, have usually concentrated on determining distinctive features of the pattern, its geographical reach, and various consequences of its existence. Yet, the very origins and circumstances in which the pattern emerged have not been for many years subjects of separate studies. In recent years, however, two very interesting theories have been formulated concerning the time and causes of the emergence of the EMP and the circumstances of appearance of a distinguishable way of household formation in Western and Central Europe. The first one was developed by two Dutch economic historians Jan Luiten van Zanden and Tim de Moor³, the other by an eminent Austrian economic historian, historical demographer and anthropologist Michael Mitterauer⁴. The aim of this article is to look at these theories from the perspective of socio-economic changes occurring in the Polish lands at the turn of the Middle Ages described in Polish historiography not known to the said authors. As it was recently stated by Mikołaj Szoltysek, widespread popularity of the

¹ J. Hajnal, "European marriage in perspective", [in:] *Population in history*, ed. by D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley, b.m.w. 1965, p. 101-143; J. Hajnal, 'Two kinds of preindustrial household formation system', [in:] *Family forms in historic Europe*, ed. by R. Wall, J. Robin and P. Laslett, Cambridge 1983, p. 65-104..

² For the summary of discussions in historiography see: M. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past*, Cambridge 2004.

³ T. de Moor, J. L. van Zanden, "Girl power: the European marriage pattern and labour markets in the North Sea region in the late medieval and early modern period", *The Economic History Review* 63 (2010), p. 1-33.

⁴ M. Mitterauer, *Why Europe. The Medieval Origins of Its Special Path*, trans. Gerald Chapple, , Chicago and London 2010; German version: *Warum Europa ? Mittelalterliche Grundlagen eines Sonderwegs*, Monachium 2003. See also his previous papers: "Medieval Roots of European Family Development", [in:] *Stredoeurópske kontexty ľudovej kultury na Slovensku*, red. J. Michálek, Bratislava 1995, p. 95-105 i *Ostkolonisation und Familienverfassung. Zur Diskussion um die Hajnal-Linie*, [w:] *Vilfanov zbornik. Pravo-zgodovina-narod*, red. V. Rajšp i E. Bruckmüller, Ljubljana 1999, p. 203-22.

stereotypical view of the European family, rooted in nineteenth-century publications of Frédéric le Play⁵, or in an even earlier “invention” of Eastern Europe by the Enlightenment⁶, results from three factors. Firstly, western historians are not familiar with the achievements of contemporary East and Central European historiography (the majority of texts published in native languages). Secondly, they tend to draw very far-reaching conclusions from extremely limited data available to them. Finally, a common practice among some western historians is that they ignore sources which disprove their working assumptions⁷.

In his first article, John Hajnal divided Europe along the Saint Petersburg-Trieste line into two parts with two different dominant models of marriage. Around the year 1900, in Western Europe, the age at first marriage was relatively late and the number of people who never married was relatively big, whereas in Eastern Europe the situation was exactly opposite⁸. In another text, John Hajnal emphasized the relationship between the European marriage pattern and household organization. He claimed that the north-west of Europe, i.e. in Britain, the Netherlands, northern France, German-speaking countries and Scandinavia (except Finland)⁹, average age at first marriage was more than 23 for women, and over 26 for men. With the moment of marriage a new couple formed a separate household, thus simple households based on nuclear families (parents plus children) tended to dominate in the north-west of Europe. Another characteristic feature of this area was popularity of service, as a result of which servanthood became an important element in the life cycle of almost all young people (prior to marriage)¹⁰. European, or rather west-European, model was to dominate in preindustrial societies in the 17th and 18th centuries. Evidence to support this thesis was provided by historical demographers gathering data from early modern England and Denmark. Other regions of Europe (as it was proven by historical evidence from Russia, Hungary and Italy) and Asia were characterized, according to Hajnal, by younger age at first marriage (under 21 for women, under 26 for men) and by complex households, where young

⁵ F. Le Play, *L'organisation de la famille selon le vrai modèle signalé par l'histoire de toutes les races et de tous les temps*, Tours 1871; F. Périér, 'Le Play and his followers: over a century of achievement', *International Social Science Journal* 50 (2002), p. 343-348.

⁶ L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the map of civilisation on the mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994; M. Szoltysek, B Zuber-Goldstein, "Historical family systems and the great European divide: the invention of the Slavic East", *Demográfia: English Edition* 52 (2009), p. 5-47.

⁷ M. Szoltysek, "Spatial construction of European family and household systems: a promising path or a blind alley? An Eastern European perspective", *Continuity and Change* 27 (2012), p. 12.

⁸ J. Hajnal, "European marriage patterns", p. 101.

⁹ J. Hajnal, "Two kinds of preindustrial household", p. 66.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

spouses lived under the same roof with their parents or another closely related couple (sometimes even more than one)¹¹.

Hajnal did not ask further questions about the time and reasons for emergence of the European marriage pattern. The questions were not put by Peter Laslett either. His famous geographical classification of family forms in historic Europe appeared in the same volume as Hajnal's text. Following the general pattern established by Hajnal, Laslette proposed a division of Europe into four regions: Western (north-western), Central, Mediterranean, and Eastern, each of which was characterized by unique ways of household formation, age of marriage, the importance of kin in household, and distribution of work within a household¹².

Hajnal's and Laslette's models have been popularly accepted within the field of historical demography, even though other scholars challenged their claims by noticing flexible boundaries between different regions with particular marriage and household patterns, by pointing out to considerable geographical diversity of marriage and household patterns within some areas of Western Europe itself, and by drawing attention to varying intensity of occurrence of individual marriage and household patterns across Hajnal's and Laslette's regions¹³. Revisionist approach was also proposed in publications by scholars from Eastern and Central Europe and the Balkans. They tend to emphasize great diversity of family forms in these parts of Europe, as a result of which they often escape simple models of classification¹⁴.

The point that appeared most interesting from the perspective of Polish historical demographers was that Hajnal's line dividing Europe into two parts ran right across the Kingdom of Poland, which obviously provokes questions about the predominant marriage pattern in the Polish lands and about legitimacy of Hajnal's classification of Polish lands as belonging to the eastern model.

¹¹ Tamže.

¹² P. Laslett, "Family and household as work group and kin group: areas of traditional Europe compared", [in:] *Family forms...*, p. 526-527.

¹³ P. Goubert, "Family and Province: A Contribution to the Knowledge of Family Structures in Early Modern France", *Journal of Family History* 2 (1977), p. 179-95.

¹⁴ M. Cerman, "Central Europe and the European marriage pattern. Marriage patterns and family structure in Central Europe, 16th–19th centuries", [in] R. Wall, T. K. Hareven, J. Ehmer, & M. Cerman (Eds.), *Family history revisited. Comparative perspectives*, Newark 2001, p. 282-307 ; M. Todorova, *Balkan family structure and the European pattern. Demographic developments in Ottoman Bulgaria*, Washington 2006; S. Sovic, "Moving beyond stereotypes of "east" and "west", *Cultural and Social History* 5 (2008), p. 141-63.; A. Plakans, C. Whetterell, "The Hajnal line and the Eastern Europe", [in:] *Marriage and family in Euroasia. Perspectives on Hajnal hypothesis*, eds. T. Engelen, A. P. Wolff, Amsterdam 2005, p. 105-126.

Household formation system

Studies conducted by Polish scholars demonstrate clearly that in the second half of the 18th century in most lands belonging to the Kingdom of Poland (and in those inhabited by Polish people, e.g. Silesia) nuclear families (two-generational), i.e. simple households, were definitely predominant. In towns they were between 66% and 85% of all households (table 1)¹⁵, whereas in the countryside their percentage ranged between 70% and 82 % (table 2)¹⁶.

Town	Year	No. of households	Percent of nuclear households
28 towns in the Podlasie voivodship	1662-74	1118	71.3
Praszka	1791	161	85.1
Wieluń	1791	261	71.6
Radziejów	1782	124	79.1
Olkusz	1791	126	79.4
Kraków	1791	1159	67
Warszawa	1791	4122	66.3

Table 1. Simple households in early modern Polish towns.

Sources: A. Laszuk. *Ludność województwa podlaskiego w drugiej połowie XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1999, p. 194; C. Kuklo, *Kobieta samotna w społeczeństwie miejskim u schyłku Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej*, Białystok, p. 77-82.

¹⁵ C. Kuklo, *Kobieta samotna w społeczeństwie miejskim u schyłku Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej*, Białystok, p. 72-85.

¹⁶ M. Kopczyński, *Studia nad rodziną chłopską w Koronie w XVII-XVIII wieku* Warszawa 1998, p. 56, 101; M. Szołtysek, „Różnorodność czy tożsamość? Chłopskie gospodarstwo domowe na ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej i Śląska pod koniec XVIII wieku”, [in:] *Rodzina i gospodarstwo domowe na ziemiach polskich w XV-XX wieku*, ed. C. Kuklo, Warszawa 2008, p.375; M. Szołtysek, “Life cycle service and family systems in the rural countryside: a lesson from historical east-central Europe”, *Annales de démographie historique* 117 (2009), p. 60.

Region	Year	No. of households	Percent of nuclear households
Pomorskie	1662	2767	84.8
Podlasie	1662	4313	70.5
Kujawy	2nd half of the 18th c.	1901	82.3
Western lands of the Crown of Poland (Pomorze, western Greater Poland and Little Poland, Silesia)	2nd half of the 18th c.		77.7
Red Ruthenia	2nd half of the 18th c.		59.5
Belarussian lands of the Great Dutchy of Lithuania (Mińskie, Nowogródzkie, Brzesko-Litewskie voivodships)	2nd half of the 18th c.	18440	49.7

Table 2. Simple households in early modern Polish villages.

Sources: M. Kopczyński, *Studia nad rodziną chłopską w Koronie w XVII-XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 1998, p. 56, 101; A. Laszuk, *Ludność województwa podlaskiego w drugiej połowie XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1999, p. 194; M. Szoltysek, "Life cycle service and family systems in the rural countryside: a lesson from historical east-central Europe", *Annales de démographie historique* 117 (2009), p. 60.

Western scholars should soon become familiar with studies showing similarities between the structure of Polish households and the west European model thanks to the intensive research programme conducted by Mikołaj Szoltysek¹⁷. Publications of Cezary Kuklo also demonstrate that from the demographic point of view history of Polish family is in many respects similar to what can be seen in French, German, British, or Scandinavian historiography, allowing, of course, for some obvious differences¹⁸. It is hard, for example, to deny the fact that in the significant part of the Commonwealth of Two Nations and in the Crown of Poland itself regional diversity in the household structure is clearly visible. It may

¹⁷ M. Szoltysek, "Rethinking Eastern Europe: household-formation patterns in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and European family systems", *Continuity and Change* 23 (2008), p. 389-427; M. Szoltysek, "Historical family systems and the great European divide: the invention of the Slavic East", *Demográfia* (English edition) 52 (2009), p. 5-47; M. Szoltysek, "The genealogy of Eastern European difference: an insider's view", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 43 (2012), p.335-371; M. Szoltysek, "Spatial construction of European family and household systems: a promising path or a blind alley? An Eastern European perspective", *Continuity and Change* 27 (2012), p. 11-52.

¹⁸ A. Wyczański, A. Wyrobisz, "La famille et la vie économique", *Studia Historiae-Oeconomicae* 18 (1983), p. 46 –nn; C. Kuklo, "Odmiennosc rytmów rozwoju? Rodziny europejskie, rodziny polskie na przełomie XVIII i XIX w.", [in:] *Rodzina – prywatność – intymność. Dzieje rodziny w kontekście europejskim*, Warszawa 2005, p. 11-29; C. Kuklo, "Rodzina staropolska na tle europejskim. Podobieństwa i różnice rytmów rozwoju", *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 26 (2005), p. 27-45

be illustrated by the situation in Red Ruthenia where the percentage of nuclear households was much smaller than in central or western Poland, or in Belarusian lands of the Great Duchy of Lithuania, where it did not even reach 50% (see: Table 2)¹⁹.

Age at first marriage

While the predominance of simple households in the Polish lands appears indisputable, the question of the age of marriage is more complex. On the one hand, men's age at first marriage, both in the countryside and in Polish and Silesian towns was 26 and more, which met the criteria of the European Marriage Pattern. On the other hand, women in Silesia married at the age of 21.5 to 25, and in some areas in the Crown women's age at first marriage was 20 to 23.

Parish	Region	Period	Age at first marriage	
			Men	Women
Szaradowo	Greater Poland	1731-1800	27,4	21,9
Wieleń	Greater Poland	2nd half of the 18th century	28,2	22,3
Ostrów Mazowiecka	Masovia	18th century	27,9	23,8
Bejsce	Little Poland	1781-1800	26,6	20,5
Brzeżany (r-c)	Red Ruthenia	1784-1800	24,8	19
Brzeżany (g-c)	Red Ruthenia	1784-180	24,1	19
Krapkowice	Silesia	1761-1800	25	22
Toszek	Silesia	1791-1800	26,1	22,5
Bielawa	Silesia	1766-1830	26,7	23,5
Strzelce Opolskie	Silesia	1766-1830	24,6-29,2	21,5 - 25,1
Rzaśnik	Silesia	1794-1800	27,4	25,4

Table 3. Age at first marriage in the Polish countryside

¹⁹ M. Szoltysek, *Life cycle service*, p. 60.

Sources: C. Kuklo, *Demografia Rzeczypospolitej Przedrozbiorowej*, Warszawa 2009, p. 279

The conclusion is that the difference in the age of marriage between men and women was bigger than in Western Europe, so Polish lands did not fit the model created by Hajnal. It must be remembered, though, that the picture that results from the analysis of Polish sources is far from homogeneous because among parishes whose archives have been examined by Polish scholars there are also many that ideally meet the criteria of the European Marriage Pattern²⁰.

Parish	Region	Period	Age at first Marriage	
			Men	Women
Gdańsk	Royal Prussia	15-16th centuries	30	20
Toruń	Royal Prussia	1636-1700	28,4	22,2
Poznań	Greater Poland	1800-1815	29	24
Warszawa (st. John)	Masovia	17th century	25,9	20,8
Warszawa (st. Cross)	Masovia	1740-1769	28,8	22,2
Warszawa (st. Cross)	Masovia	1770-1799	29	21,8
Wieleń	Greater Poland	2 hf 18th century	29,5	24,3
Ostrów Mazowiecka	Masovia	18th century	27	23
Krapkowice	Silesia	1761-1800	27	23
Strzelce Opolskie	Silesia	1761-1800	22,8-35,5	20-25,5
Toszek	Silesia	1791-1800	24,4 (27,5)	22,3 (23,7)
Brzeżany (catholics)	Red Ruthenia	1784-1800	26	20,9

Table 4. Age at first marriage in the Polish towns

Sources: C. Kuklo, *Demografia Rzeczypospolitej Przedrozbiorowej*, Warszawa 2009, p. 279

²⁰ Zob. M. Szoltysek, "Central European household and family systems, and the Hajnal-Mitterauer line: The parish of Bujakow (18th-19th centuries)", *The History of the Family* 12 (2007), p. 23.

Never Married

Equally problematic is the question of the percentage of women living in definitive celibacy. Since it is difficult to identify people's definitive celibacy in past societies, historical demographers attempt alternatively to juxtapose the proportions of married and unmarried women (widows and young maids). Hajnal claimed that late marriages in north-western Europe (especially in the case of women) contributed to an increase in the proportion of unmarried women, who made at least 10% and usually more than 15% among women about the age of 50. In female adult population young maids and widows were about 40% of the total²¹. Their growing number had a greater statistical effect on the fertility level than the practice of postponing marriage²². The issue of definitive celibacy has not been widely studied in Polish historiography, but some conclusions can be presented, for instance, for the largest Polish city at the end of the 18th century. It is estimated that about 10% to 12% of women in Warsaw at that time never married²³. In the country, the proportion was somewhat smaller, but it also reached about 10%²⁴. Unmarried women over the age of 15 made about 30% to 40% of all women inhabiting small towns, whereas in bigger cities, such as Cracow or Warsaw, they were over 40% of the total female population²⁵.

Servants

The final element of difference between Polish preindustrial society and the model of family and household created by Hajnal and Laslett is the importance of service and servants. Polish studies into this issue cannot be compared in terms of extent with research conducted by western historical demographers, and sometimes their findings do not fit exactly the models propounded by western historiography. Nevertheless, publications of Anna Kamler provided clear evidence that service was a common phenomenon in early modern Poland. Mikołaj Szołtysek also found that in Silesia, western Little Poland, Greater Poland, and Pomerania 28.7% of peasant households employed servants, who made 40.5% of village population²⁶. In Kujawy, servants made 24% of village population²⁷, while in village on

²¹ J. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns", p. 102, 117, 136.

²² D. R. Weir, "Rather Never Than Late: Celibacy and the Age at Marriage in English Cohort Fertility, 1441-1871", *Journal of Family History* 9 (1984), p. 340-354; R. Schofield, "English Marriage Patterns Revisited", *Journal of Family History* 10 (1985), p. 2-10.

²³ C. Kuklo, *Rodzina w osiemnastowiecznej Warszawie*, Białystok 1991, p. 172.

²⁴ C. Kuklo, *Demografia...* p. 277.

²⁵ C. Kuklo, *Kobieta samotna*, p. 59.

²⁶ M. Szołtysek, *Life cycle service*, p. 60

²⁷ Kopczyński, *Studia nad rodziną chłopską w Koronie w XVII-XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 1998, p. 121.

Polish-Ruthenian border, servants made between 12% and 21% of population²⁸. It is estimated that the proportion of servants in Polish towns was about 20% to 33%²⁹. In spite of its relatively big popularity, the importance of service in Poland was lesser than in Western Europe, where in model English parishes, for example, servants were 58% of the population and 54% of households employed servants³⁰.

Preindustrial Polish society living in the area crossed by the Hajnal line differed in many respects from West- and North-European societies, but at the same time it appeared to display some characteristics which were close to West- and North-European standards. On the one hand, Poland did not meet the criteria of the European marriage pattern: Polish women married earlier and the proportion of women who never married was smaller. Moreover, the importance of servants was lesser than in the West. On the other hand, from the point of view of the modes of household formation and the role of nuclear family, Poland did not differ so much from England. To explain this demographic ambiguity, it is important to examine the genesis of the above phenomena.

Origins

Shortage of data for periods prior to the 17th century forced Hajnal and Laslette to focus their interest on the time between the 17th and the 19th centuries. Meanwhile, many historians have made their attempts at explaining the origins and identifying the exact moment of creation of European marriage and family patterns. Some scholars point to Tacitus for the earliest information about late marriages among Germanic tribes³¹. It is popularly accepted, though, that both late marriages and dominance of nuclear families became large-scale phenomena in the Middle Ages³². Beatrice Gotlieb claims that the earliest direct mention of nuclear families is in late 13th-century England, but in the following centuries such families soon became at least 50% of all households in various regions of Western Europe³³. Some evidence for late marriages in England prior to the Black Death was found by Richard

²⁸ Z. Budzyński, M. Sochacka, „Ludność parafii Hyżne koło Rzeszowa w świetle spisów spowiedniczych z lat 1728–1747”, [in:] *Studia i materiały z dziejów społecznych Polski południowo-wschodniej*, red. Z. Budzyński, t.1, Rzeszów 2003, p. 179.

²⁹ C. Kuklo, *Demografia*, p. 367

³⁰ P. Laslett, *Family life and illicit love in earlier generationp. Essays in historical sociology*, Cambridge 1977, p. 30.

³¹ D. Levine, “Recombinant Family Formation Strategies”, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 2 (1989) nr 2, p. 93.

³² Tamże, p. 89-115.

³³ B. Gotlieb, *The Family in the Western World from the Black Age to the Industrial Age*, Oxford 1993, p. 13

Smith³⁴, while in the period after the Black Death by H.E. Hallam³⁵. Their findings were used by Wally Seccomb, who proved that the situation in England and on the continent differed because although nuclear families were also becoming more common on the continent after the Black Death, the change was much slower than in England³⁶. Examples of differences between late medieval Mediterranean and English models are provided in the analysis of Toscan family patterns in the 15th century³⁷. Popularity of the European marriage pattern and dominance of nuclear families characterized rural as well as some urban communities in Western Europe³⁸. The proportion of unmarried women in some towns and cities (e.g. Reims, York) increased³⁹. As shown by Maryanne Kowaleski, in late medieval English, French, German, and Swiss towns unmarried women made over 40% of total female population⁴⁰.

Following the idea of late medieval origins of the European marriage pattern two scholars from the University of Utrecht, Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden, studying economic, social and cultural causes of this phenomenon, published their findings in prestigious *Economic History Review*, giving their article a significant title: *Girl power: the European marriage pattern and labour markets in the North Sea region in the late medieval and early modern period*. The two authors' determination to explain the origins of the European marriage pattern derived from their conviction about its decisive influence on the exceptional economic growth of north and west European countries, England and the Netherlands in particular. They believed that the emergence of the EMP was an institutional response to the growing possibilities on the labour market after the Black Death and it was a deliberate strategy of hired workers, forming about 30% to 60% of the population⁴¹. Tine de

³⁴ R. Smith, "Some Reflections on the Evidence for the Origins of the European Marriage Pattern in England", [in:] *Sociology of the Family*, ed. C. Harris, Keele 1979, p. 97-101. R. Smith, "Hypothèses sur la nuptialité en Angleterre aux XIIIe-XIVe siècles", *Annales Economies Sociétés Civilisations* 38 (1983), p. 120.

³⁵ H.E. Hallam, "Age at first marriage and age of death in Lincolnshire Fenland, 1252-1478", *Population Studies* 39 (1985), p. 55-69.

³⁶ W. Seccombe, *A millennium of Family Change: Feudalism to Capitalism in Northwestern Europe*, p. 151. W. Seccombe, "The Western European Marriage Pattern in historical perspective: A Response to David Levine", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 3 (1990), p. 50-74.

³⁷ D. Herlihy, Ch. Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and Their Families. A Study of Florentine Catasto of 1427*, New Haven – London, 1985, p. 202-207; D. Herlihy, *Medieval household*, Cambridge (MA) 1985, p. 108-109.

³⁸ K. Lynch, "The European Marriage Pattern in the Cities: Variations on a Theme by Hajnal", *Journal of Family History* January 16 (1991), p. 79-96; K. Lynch, *Individuals, families, and communities in Europe, 1200-1800, The Urban Foundations of Western Society*, p. 58-59

³⁹ P. Desportes, "La population de Reims au XV^e siècle d'après un dénombrement de 1422", *Le Moyen Age* 72 (1966), p. 487-501; J. Goldberg, *Women, work, and Life Cycle: women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300-1520*, Oxford 1920, p. 225-232.

⁴⁰ M. Kowaleski, "Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. The demographic Perspective", [in:] *Single Women in the European Past, 1250-1800*, eds. J. Bennett, A.M. Froide, Philadelphia 1999, p. 41-51; table A1 – p. 326-327.

⁴¹ T. de Moor, J. L. van Zanden, *Girl power...*

Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden identified two constitutive elements of the European marriage pattern which affected the level of fertility. One was the late age at first marriage, the other was a big number of unmarried women. In their article they concentrated on the former. They claimed that postponing the time of first marriage was a combined effect of three socio-economic and ideological factors occurring in North-Western Europe: (1) emphasis put by the Church on consensus of the spouses instead of marriages arranged by parents, (2) strong position of women in the transference of property between parents and children and husbands and wives, (3) expansion and greater access to the labour market⁴². All these factors presented by Tine de Moor and Luiten van Zanden as characteristic of the Netherlands and England at the turn of the Middle Ages will be reconsidered in this article to show whether and how they affected also Polish reality at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern period.

Consensus as a basis for the formation of marriage

Mutual consent as a basis for marriage formation in the European marriage pattern was identified by John Hajnal, but these were Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden who noticed the relation between this phenomenon and Christianity which since late antiquity had had a considerable influence on Roman and barbaric legal norms and customs⁴³. In early medieval period, marriage was perceived as a civil contract in which a woman was handed over by her father to her future husband, both parties exchanged gifts and a bride was formally accepted as a member of her husband's family. Gradually, however, the Church took over and began to control the institution of marriage⁴⁴. That was precisely the moment when a debate over the definition of marriage commenced. De Moor and van Zanden explain that while Parisian theologians as representatives of theological thought in northern Europe argued for the importance of mutual consent of both interested parties, others preferred viewing marriage as a physical union, a union of bodies, dating back to St Augustine's idea of marriage. In Gratian's code of law, an essential condition for marriage formation was mutual consent rather than consummation because, as he believed, marriages contracted by unwilling couples were highly unlikely to succeed. Consensual doctrine was included in the decrees of

⁴² Ibidem, p. 3.

⁴³ J.A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, Chicago 1987, p. 87-88; M. Kuefler, "The Marriage Revolution in Late Antiquity: The Theodosian Code and Later Marriage Law", *Journal of Family History* 32 (2007) p. 343-370.

⁴⁴ J.A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society...*, p. 124-142.

Pope Alexander III in the 12th century and in the 13th century (1234) Pope Gregory IX established marriageable age for boys at 14 and for girls at 12⁴⁵.

De Moor and van Zanden further claim that consensual doctrine was not well received by members of the social elite, but it appears that episcopal and conciliar legislation propagated and supported in sermons succeeded in transforming ordinary people's perceptions of marriage. The analysis of pastoral manuals which became widely used in England after 1215 shows that the consensual doctrine spread quickly to common people via their parish churches and by the middle of the 15th century it had already been widely accepted⁴⁶.

Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden argue that the doctrine of consensual marriage strengthened the position of women because they became equal partners in the contract. A woman had, at least theoretically, an equal right to choose a husband on her own, just as much as a man could select a wife. The two Dutch historians concluded that the doctrine of consensual marriage emphasized the importance of mutual love between partners as a prerequisite for marriage. De Moor and van Zanden quote David Herlihy who wrote that "The father . . . could neither force a son or daughter into an unwanted marriage, nor prevent him or her from marrying . . . The Church's doctrine was a damaging blow to paternal authority within the medieval household, and by itself assured that the medieval family could never develop into a true patriarchy"⁴⁷. It prompted some scholars to conclude that the most characteristic feature of the EMP was the fact that parents were no longer capable of exercising control over their adult children⁴⁸. As a result, fathers were more likely to allow their children to leave house and live their lives on their own. At the same time other parents' children were hired as servants to perform tasks in the household that would elsewhere, in China for example, be performed by the father's own children⁴⁹.

It has been noted that although the doctrine of consensual marriage was promoted by Catholic Church across Europe, it was in its north-western part that the European Marriage

⁴⁵ J. T. Noonan, "The Power to chose", *Viator* 4(1973), p. 414-1434; Ch.Donahue, "The cannon Law on The Formation of Marriage and Social Practice in the Later Middle Ages", *Journal of Family History* (1983), p. 144-158.; C. McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England. Law, Literature and Practice*, Woodbridge 2004, p. 19-50

⁴⁶M. Sheehan, "Choice of Marriage Partner in the Middle Ages: development and Mode of Application of Theory of Marriage", [in] M. Sheehan, *Marriage, Family and Law in Medieval Europe. Collected studies*, ed. J. K. Farge, Toronto 1997, p. 87-117.

⁴⁷ D. Herlihy, *Medieval household*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1985, p. 81.

⁴⁸ T. Engelen, "The Hajnal Hypothesis and Transition Theory", [in:] *Marriage and the Family in Eurasia. Perspectives on the Hajnal Hypothesis*, Amstrdam 2005, p. 51-73.

⁴⁹ T. de Moor, J.L van Zanden, *Girl power...*, p7.

Pattern emerged⁵⁰. An explanation for this fact has been sought in greater resistance of common people in southern and eastern Europe to the idea of consensual marriage, even against the official teaching of the Church. Although de Moor and van Zanden claim that it was not coincidental that the prevalence of the EMP coincided with the presence of the Catholic Church, they also admitted that Catholicism was definitely not enough for the EMP to emerge and that some other factors must have also been involved⁵¹.

It is popularly accepted in Polish historiography that “the institution of family had been fully Christianized by the end of the 13th century due to the introduction of the Christian concept of marriage and the popularization of sacraments”, while “the model of indissoluble, equal, monogamous, faithful, fertile marriage” was propagated in hagiographic literature⁵². The Church hierarchy also put much pressure on popularizing Roman and canon law in Poland⁵³. The oldest known codes of canon law in Poland reveal that ideas concerning marriage formation spread from Rome to Poland very quickly. Eighteen years before the Fourth Lateran Council introduced a rule that marriage ceremony should be performed *in facie ecclesiae*, that is by a priest, the very idea was promoted in Poland by the Papal Legate Pietro Capuano⁵⁴. The issuing of Gratian’s *Decretum* in c. 1140 and then the promulgation of the decretals of Gregory IX in 1234 inspired Polish bishops to issue their own legislation following papal codifications⁵⁵. Three archbishops of Gniezno issued their own codes of canon law which were to be recognized and enforced in all Polish lands :

- archbishop Jarosław Bogoria Skotnicki in 1357;
- archbishop Mikołaj Trąba in 1420;
- archbishop Jan Łaski in 1523⁵⁶;

⁵⁰ M. Hartman, *The household and the Making of History. A Subversive View of the Western Past*, Cambridge 2004, p. 98.

⁵¹ T. de Moor, J.L van Zanden, *Girl power...*, p7.

⁵² J. Tyszkiewicz, „Rodzina w Polsce na początku XIII w. ”, [in:] *Spółeczeństwo Polski Średniowiecznej*, t. 6, red. S. K. Kuczyński, Warszawa 1994, p. 119.

⁵³ Tamże.

⁵⁴ *Rocznik kapitulny krakowski*, [in:] A. Bielowski (Ed.) *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, vol. II, p. 800; W. Abraham, *Zawarcie małżeństwa w pierwotnym prawie Polskim*, Lwów 1925, p. 349.

⁵⁵ S. Tymosz, *Ewolucja kościelnego prawa polskiego w świetle kodyfikacji do XIX wieku*, Lublin 2008

⁵⁶ I. Subera, *Synody prowincjonalne arcybiskupów gnieźnieńskich*, Warszawa 1971, p. 73-104; „Debent autem iniri Matrimonia, libero et mutuo contrahentium consensu” Statut Jana Wężyka z 1628 r, [in:] I. Subera, *Synody prowincjonalne arcybiskupów gnieźnieńskich. Wybór tekstów ze zbioru Jana Wężyka z r. 1731*, Warszawa 1981, p. 299

All these codes included rules and regulations of canon law introduced by Rome, and so did legislation passed by diocesan synods, from the earliest, held by bishop Nanker in 1320⁵⁷. Beside the emphasis on consent being expressed by a bride and a groom during the marriage ceremony, Church authorities insisted also on introducing ceremonial betrothal witnessed by a priest. The aim of the latter was not only to strengthen the bond between future spouses and make it more difficult for either partner to withdraw from the promise of marriage, but above all to give a woman an opportunity to express her will freely⁵⁸. Resolutions of provincial and diocesan synods were to be made known to the clergy on the parish level and the procedure was described in the acts of the 1357 synod: “On the orders of the archbishop copies of synodal resolutions were made, which were then delivered to all parish churches. Archdeacons were obliged to read out and explain the laws and regulations contained in synodal acts to their local clergy”⁵⁹. Parish priests were then supposed to propagate the rules in sermons and the work of ministry⁶⁰.

It took some time for canon laws to be fully received and accepted by Polish people, but it is now believed that by the end of the Middle Ages, getting married by moving in together without a formal ceremony performed in the presence of a priest, which had been the most popular way of getting married, had become to be viewed as inappropriate⁶¹. Gradually, some kind of symbiosis between lay and ecclesiastical forms of marriage formation was established, with local customs being still respected⁶². In spite of church’s and local administration’s opposition, marriages by consensual abduction occasionally took place in late medieval and at the beginning of the early modern period when elite children wished to get married against their parents’ objections⁶³.

The canons and decrees of the Council of Trent were acknowledged in Poland first by the provincial synod in Lvov in 1564 (for the Lvov archbishopric) and then by two provincial

⁵⁷ *Statuta Synodalia Episcoporum Cracoviensium XIV et XV saeculi*, Ed. U. Heyzmann, Starodawne Prawa Polskiego Pomniki, t. IV, Kraków 1875, p. 9. Similarly: synod of bishop Wojciech Jastrzębiec from 1423 r. – Ibidem, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *Statuta synodalia episcoporum Cracoviensium*, p. 234-235; W. Abraham, dz. cyt., s 355.

⁵⁹ I. Subera, *Historia źródeł i nauki prawa kanonicznego*, wyd. II, Warszawa 1977, p. 134.

⁶⁰ J. Wiesiołowski, „Kultura i obyczaje kręgu wiejskiego”, [in:] *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV-XV wieku*, ed. B. Geremek, Warszawa 1977, s. 140-141.

⁶¹ M. Koczerska, „Zawarcie małżeństwa wśród szlachty w Polsce późnego średniowiecza”, *Przegląd Historyczny* 66 (1975)

⁶² ibidem, p. 22.

⁶³ M. Koczerska, p.9-10; E. Bezubik, „Rapt w okresie staropolskim”, *Studia Podlaskie* 9 (1999), s. 65-66.

synods in Piotrków in 1577 and 1589 (for the archbishopric of Gniezno)⁶⁴. The introduction of changes in local church laws and implementing them in the work of ministry and in the lives of people was a longtime process. An event of considerable importance in the process was publication of a pastoral letter by the bishop of Cracow Bernard Maciejowski in 1601, which took the form of a manual for parish clergy first in the Cracow diocese and from 1608 in whole Poland⁶⁵. As regards marriage, Maciejowski strongly emphasizes that “the sacrament of marriage requires free will and consent of both parties”⁶⁶. Feudal lords and royal officials, under whose authority marrying couples remained, were also warned that forcing their subjects into marriage was forbidden under the threat of excommunication⁶⁷.

It is of course difficult to measure the extent to which church regulations were observed in everyday life, especially that they regarded matters where distinguishing between consent under pressure and heartfelt consent was and still is very difficult. Some help in this matter is provided by the records of Polish courts dealing with matrimonial cases. The records reveal that coercion was very rarely a basis for the annulment of marriage. In the fifteenth-century court in Lublin, only six per cent of marriages were declared null on this account⁶⁸. On the other hand, in the early modern period an increasing number of women appearing in court to have their marriages annulled because of the fact that they had been forced by their husbands, parents, relatives or feudal lords to marry may be indicative of women’s growing self-awareness⁶⁹.

Decline in the number of marriages arranged by parents may also be explained by demographic factors. Using seventeenth- and eighteenth-century data, we may determine the age at first marriage in the lands of the Polish Crown at over 20 for women and over 26 for men⁷⁰. In the 15th and 16th centuries, average time of economic activity of Polish peasants, measured from the moment a man established his own household and started a family to his

⁶⁴ A. Kakowski, *Biskupa Stanisława Karnkowskiego Zbiór Konstytucji Synodalnych. Przyczynek do historii ustawodawstwa kościelnego w Polsce*, Włocławek 1912

⁶⁵ S. Litak, *Od reformacji do oświecenia. Kościół katolicki w Polsce nowożytnej*, Lublin 1994, p. 60-61.

⁶⁶ S. Nasiorowski, *List pasterski kardynała Bernarda Maciejowskiego*, Lublin 1990, p. 235.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ P. Hempterek, „Sprawy małżeńskie w oficjalacie okręgowym w Lublinie w XV w”. *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne* 17 (1970), z. 5, p. 34.

⁶⁹ W. Wójcik, „Prawo małżeńskie w praktyce oficjału latu okręgowego w Sandomierzu”, *Roczniki Teologiczno-kanoniczne* 9 (1962), p. 132-133; G. Jawor, „Obraz rodziny chłopskiej w Polsce XV wieku w świetle ksiąg oficjała lubelskiego”, *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, vol.41/42 (1986/87), p. 89;

⁷⁰ C. Kukło, *Demografia Rzeczypospolitej przedrozbiorowej*, Warszawa 2009., p. 279.

retirement or death, was about twenty years⁷¹. Thus it is very likely that when young people married and created their separate households their parents had already been dead. The situation was very similar among city dwellers. Andrzej Wyczański, noted that among members of the guild of goldsmiths in Cracow succession was very often disrupted and only 22 per cent of goldsmiths had been mature enough on their fathers' death to inherit their businesses⁷².

It seems that the role of feudal lords in arranging their subjects' marriages was also relatively limited, especially with regard to women. Although peasant women, like their fathers, brothers or husbands, were also somebody's subjects, the king's, the bishop's, the town's or the nobleman's, they were in fact more independent of their lords than men. Fourteenth-century legislation prohibiting peasants from leaving their villages was much less restrictive with regard to women, so they had more freedom than men to marry outside their villages⁷³. A parliamentary act of 1511 stated that peasant daughters were to be free to choose their marriage partners⁷⁴. Close proximity of a town enabled young women first to find employment and then probably also a husband⁷⁵. However, it appears that most women sought their marriage partners within the boundaries of their parishes or their immediate neighbourhood⁷⁶. Freedom to choose one's spouse was guarded by the Catholic Church which fought, more or less successfully, against any attempts on the part of the gentry to limit peasants' liberty in this respect⁷⁷.

To sum up, comparison of Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden's findings concerning the role of the Church in the emergence of the European marriage pattern with the findings of Polish researchers reveals many similarities. Preaching of the Catholic Church on

⁷¹ A. Wyczański, „Powrót do dyskusji o łańcach pustych”, [in:] *Celem nauki jest człowiek... Studia z historii społecznej ofiarowane H. Madurowicz-Urbańskiej*, Kraków 2000, p. 347-353; P. Guzowski, „Demograficzne uwarunkowania funkcjonowania rodziny chłopskiej na przełomie średniowiecza i nowożytności” (in print)

⁷² A. Wyczański, *O dawnej rodzinie w Polsce i Europie*, [in:] *Cywilizacja europejska. Eseje i szkice z dziejów cywilizacji i dyplomacji*, ed. M. Koźmiński, Warszawa 2010, p. 149-164

⁷³ K. Tymieniecki, *Historia chłopów polskich*, vol. 3, p.129-190; L. Żytkowicz, „Przesłanki i rozwój przytwierdzenia do gleby ludności wiejskiej w Polsce – połowa XIV – początek XVI wieku”, *Przegląd Historyczny* 74 (1984), p. 3-21.

⁷⁴ G. Jawor, *Obraz rodziny chłopskiej Polsce XV wieku w świetle ksiąg oficjała lubelskiego*, „Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska”. Sectio F. Historia, 41/42, 1986/1987, p. 8; P. Guzowski, *Demograficzne uwarunkowania*

⁷⁵ G. Jawor, „Obraz rodziny chłopskiej”; P. Guzowski, „Demograficzne uwarunkowania”

⁷⁶ A. Izydorczyk, „Rodzina chłopska w Małopolsce w XV i XVI wieku”, *Spoleczeństwo staropolskie*, vol. III, Warszawa 1983, p. 9-15.

⁷⁷ Z. Kaczmarski, B. Leśniorski, *Historia państwa i prawa Polski*, t. II red. J. Bardach, wyd. II, Warszawa 1966, p. 315, M. Koczyński, „Dwór a rodzina chłopska - przymus i koegzystencja”, [in:] *Dwór - plebania - rodzina chłopska. Szkice z dziejów wsi polskiej XVII i XVIII wieku*, ed. M. Ślusarska, Warszawa 1998, p. 13-26

marriage in late medieval Poland did not differ from the Church's preaching on the same subject in late medieval England or the Low Countries. Clergymen used the same, universal, doctrinal programme, and everywhere the same "west-European" ideals of marriage by mutual consent were propagated. In Polish reality, the spreading of the doctrine of consensual marriage strengthening the rights and social position of women was facilitated by factors of demographic nature: parents did not live to see their children marry, and of institutional nature: unlike women's, men's freedom of movement was restricted.

Transfer of property between generations

De Moor and van Zanden claim that another factor contributing to the emergence of EMP in the north rather than in the south of Europe is differences in the system of inheritance and transference of property between generations and from husband to wife. In western Europe, the system of inheritance was characterized by the right of women to inherit and to transfer land. A decisive difference between the north and the south concerned, as de Moor and van Zanden explain, the "timing of women's access to their share in the inheritance"⁷⁸. Marriage played a crucial role in it. In southern Europe, it was marriage that entitled a daughter to claim her right to her share in the inheritance, which she received in the form of a dowry. In the north, land property was transferred on daughters, as well as on sons, on their parents' death although it was not, of course, completely unusual for living parents in England or the Low Countries to transfer land on daughters or to endow their daughters with some property in the form of a dowry⁷⁹.

De Moor and van Zanden point to regional differences in France as evidence. In the south of France, in the land of written law, the rules of inheritance and transfer of property, equal to all people, regardless of their social standing, were derived from Roman law, unlike in the north, where the system of inheritance was governed by custom. Individuals could decide about their property, how it should be used and transferred. Theoretically, a father could decide not to divide his property into equal parts and thus his children's shares would not be the same because the size of the dowry was in fact negotiated with the family of a future marriage partner. Another difference between northern and southern regions of France

⁷⁸ T. de Moor, J.L. van Zanden, *Girl power...*, p. 7-8.

⁷⁹ T. de Moor, J.L. van Zanden, *Girl power...*, p.8. More about inheritance systems see: *Family and Inheritance. Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800*, ed. J. Goody, J. Thirsk, E.P. Thompson, Cambridge 1976; About medieval England: R. Smith, "Women's property rights under customary law: some developments in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5 (1986), p. 165-194; About Low Countries: M.C. Howell, *The Marriage exchange: property, social place, and gender in the cities of the Low Countries, 1300-1550*, Chicago-London 1998.

concerned the way property was managed within the marriage. The southern model is often referred to as ‘separatist’ because the property that a husband and wife brought into the marriage as a dowry was treated separately; individual property of a wife did not merge with the property of her husband. The northern model is known as ‘conjugal’ because at marriage the property of a wife and the property of a husband merged to create a conjugal fund. The fund was under the full control of a man, but it did not preclude the wife’s right to her share in it. Moreover, the rule was that both spouses were equally entitled to their shares in property accumulated by them during the marriage⁸⁰. This rule, de Moor and van Zanden argue, was a reason why northern women could be, at least in theory, more motivated to help to increase their conjugal property. Since the wealth of southern women “was more or less fixed, regardless of what economic activities they undertook”, they were much less motivated to undertake any economic activity at all. The rule had some implications for the position of widows in the north. Their right to wealth accumulated during the marriage put them in a favourable position in comparison with their southern counterparts. They could invest their wealth in a new business. Moreover, property at their disposal made them more attractive to potential partners, hence they were more likely to remarry⁸¹.

The north-south divide is even more evident with regard to the transfer of property between generations. In Italy, once a daughter was endowed with a dowry, she lost her right to any further share in her father’s property. The Italians called this system *fraterna*, in France it was called *frèrèches*. The system had its important demographic implications. Parents as well as daughters were interested in arranging the marriage as soon as possible, which resulted in lowering of the age at marriage⁸². In north-western Europe, where the inheritance system was often based on primogeniture, but also guaranteed women equal rights to their parents’ inheritance, women were not pressurized to marry early⁸³.

The status of women in Poland was similar to the status of women in north-western parts of Europe. Maria Koczerska writing about the inheritance system of Polish gentry concluded that “...the characteristic feature of Polish family at the turn of the Middle Ages

⁸⁰ T. de Moor, J. L. Van Zanden, *Girl power...*, p. 9-11; E. Leroy Ladurie, “Family structures and inheritance customs in sixteenth-century France”, [in] J. Goody, J. Thirsk, E.P. Thompson, *Family and Inheritance*, p. 37-70.

⁸¹ T. de Moor, J.L. van Zanden, *Girl power...*, p. 8

⁸² T. de Moor, J.L. van Zanden, *Girl Power...*, p. 9.; J. Kirshner, A. Molho, “The dowry fund and the marriage market in Elary Quattrocento Florence”, *Journal of Modern History* 50(1978), p. 403-438; “Deception and marriage strategy in Renaissance Florence: the case of women’s ages”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 41(1988), pp. 193-217. A. Molho, *Marriage alliance in late medieval Florence*, Cambridge 1994.

⁸³ T. de Moor, J.L. van Zanden, *Girl Power...*, p.

[...] was the equality among siblings, or to be more accurate, the equality between brothers and sisters”⁸⁴. The situation was alike among the less privileged. As Anna Kamler stated, “Peasants in Little Poland observed the rule that the estate of parents should be divided among all children”⁸⁵. The farm was normally transferred on the eldest son, but his duty was to pay off his siblings. If there was no male heir, the farm could be transferred on daughters, but in practice they either sold the farm or the estate was taken over by the husband of one of them. Widowed mother of the children was entitled to a third of her late husband’s property. The rule was that the main heir did not divide the land so that the widow could be given her share, but established the value of the land and paid it to the widow in cash. The dowry played a less important role in this system. It often took the form of movables or cash endowments. What was of much greater importance was the fact that women were legally entitled to share in their parents’ and husbands’ real estate, which considerably strengthened the position of peasant daughters, wives and widows⁸⁶. Similar rules of inheritance were followed in Polish towns, where men and women had equal rights to the family inheritance⁸⁷. As a result, a marrying woman received her dowry and trousseau (Pol. *gierada*), but she retained her right to claim her share in the family holdings after the parents’ death. The value of her dowry was just deducted from her share⁸⁸.

There is no reason to doubt that similar systems of inheritance in the Kingdom of Poland and in north-western European countries led to similar consequences. In both cases patterns of inheritance were conducive to the postponing of marriage, which, in turn, had its far-reaching demographic consequences. On the other hand, it must be remembered that women in the Kingdom of Poland did marry earlier than in the North West, which cannot be satisfactorily explained either by the teaching of the Catholic Church or by the inheritance system because there were no fundamental differences between these two in Poland and in the North Sea region.

⁸⁴ M. Koczerska, „Geneza, znaczenie i program dalszych badań nad kobietą i rodziną w średniowieczu i nowożytności” [in:] *Kobieta i rodzina średniowieczu i na progu czasów nowożytnych*, red. Z.H. Nowak i A. Radziwiński, Toruń 1998, p. 10.

⁸⁵ A. Izydoreczyk, „Rodzina chłopska”, p. 7-27.

⁸⁶ P. Guzowski, „System dziedziczenia chłopów”, p. 29-35

⁸⁷ B. Groicki, *Porządek sądów i spraw miejskich prawa magdeburskiego w Koronie Polskiej*, wyd. K. Koranyi, Warszawa 1953, s. 181; A. Karpiński, *Kobieta w mieście polskim w drugiej połowie XVI i w XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1995, s. 29-30; U. Sowina, „Wdowy i sieroty w świetle prawa w miastach Korony w późnym średniowieczu i wczesnej nowożytności”, [in:] *Od narodzin do wieku dojrzałego*, cz. 1, Warszawa 2002, p. 15-28; U. Sowina, „Testamenty mieszczan krakowskich o przekazywaniu majątku w późnym średniowieczu i wczesnej nowożytności”, [in:] *Sociální Svět Středověkého Města*, red. M. Nodl, Praha 2006, p. 173-184; Taż, „Testamenty krakowskie z przełomu średniowiecza i nowożytności wobec zasad dziedziczenia według prawa magdeburskiego”, *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* 58 (2010), p. 185-200.

⁸⁸ A. Karpiński, *Kobieta w mieście polskim...*, s. 28.

Labour market

According to Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden, the third most important factor contributing to the emergence of the European Marriage Pattern, after the teaching of the Catholic Church and the patterns of inheritance, was labour market⁸⁹. Changes in its structure were caused by the outbreak of the Black Death and the renewed outbreaks of the disease later in the Middle Ages. One of the consequences was an increase in the demand for female labour. Women in villages as well as in towns became active in sectors of economy previously dominated by men⁹⁰. Of particular importance in this context was servanthood, especially in towns. In north-western Europe, unlike in Italy, women entered service more often than men⁹¹. Another significant difference between the North and the South lay in the circumstances of entering service. In the North, servanthood was a free career choice made with the aim of saving enough money to be able to establish a family. In the South, women treated service as the least desirable occupation⁹². It is also mentioned by De Moor and Van Zanden that after the Black Death labourers' wages rose much faster than food prices and that the increase concerned male as well as female workers, who were often paid almost the same as men. The authors pointed out also that young people were given opportunity to become wage-earning labourers as early as at the age of 12 to 14⁹³. All these factors led to particular economic and demographic consequences and to some changes in social practices which, in turn, facilitated the emergence of the EMP. Firstly, young women gained a chance to become independent of their parents without necessarily getting married and they used this opportunity to assume control over their lives. They now had more freedom to select a husband, to delay a decision to marry, or not to marry at all. On the other hand, however, women's greater independence of parental control resulted in them becoming more subject to fluctuations in wage rates and total economic situation. These two factors eventually began to determine women's decisions concerning marriage. According to De Moor and Van Zanden,

⁸⁹ T. de Moor, J.L. van Zanden, *Girl Power...*, . p. 11.

⁹⁰ B.A. Hanawalt, *The ties that bound: peasant families in medieval England*, New York and Oxford 1986; P.J. P. Goldberg, *Women, work, and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c. 1300-1520*, Oxford and New York 1992.

⁹¹ T. de Moor, J.L. van Zanden, *Girl Power...*, . p. 11-12.

⁹² R. Smith, "Geographical diversity in the resort to marriage in late medieval Europe: work, reputation and unmarried females in household formation systems of northern and southern Europe", [in:] *Women is a worthy wight: women in English society, c. 1200-1500*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg, Wolfboro Falls 1992, p. 45.

⁹³ T. de Moor, J.L. van Zanden, *Girl Power...*, . p. 12-13, 15, 17.

average age at marriage had risen by the end of the 16th century as a result of declining economy and growing population⁹⁴.

Marriage based on consensus was characterized by deeper emotional relationship between spouses. Children born in such families enjoyed greater freedom, as their parents were willing to let them live on their own at a relatively early age. Service and apprenticeship became popular lifestyle choices among young people and an important part of people's life cycle, allowing them to acquire professional skills and experience (social capital). From the later Middle Ages onwards, the number of servants steadily increased to reach 15 per cent of England's total population⁹⁵. At the same time, taken as a percentage, wage earners represented 20 to 50 per cent of the population in England and about 60 per cent in the Low Countries at the beginning of the early modern period⁹⁶.

While the expansion of labour market at the turn of the Middle Ages was characteristic of north-western Europe, it was by no means unique to this region. Although the growth of Polish urban centres was not as spectacular as, for instance, in the Low Countries, relatively smaller demand for labour in towns was offset by an increase in demand for labour in the country. The number of towns in the Kingdom of Poland increased from 706 in 1500 to 932 a century later. Town and city dwellers represented about 25 per cent (about 1 million) of the population of Poland, which in 1580 was 3.65 million people⁹⁷. The majority of Polish towns were relatively small, which was a feature of central and eastern European urban development. Only 6 per cent of total population lived in cities that exceeded a population of five thousand⁹⁸. Nevertheless, migration patterns show that even those small towns attracted peasant youth and offered them a variety of employment opportunities. It can be seen through marriage strategies of peasant children. For example, citizens of fifteenth-century Lublin, whose population was nearly five thousand, frequently found their marriage partners among peasant men and women working as servants and apprentices in Lublin. Statistics reveal that most of them came from villages within a radius of 20 kilometres from the city⁹⁹. When there

⁹⁴ Ibidem, p. 16-17

⁹⁵ P. Laslett, *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations: essays in historical sociology*, Cambridge-New York 1977, p. 93; G. Mayhew, "Life-cycle, service and the family unit in early modern Rye", *Continuity and Change* 5 (1990), p. 201-3.

⁹⁶ B. van Bavel, "Rural wage labour in the 16th century Low Countries: an assessment of importance and nature of wage labour in the countryside of Holland, Guelders and Flanders", *Continuity and Change* 21 (2005), ; C. Dyer, *Age of transition? Economy and society in England in the later middle ages*, Oxford 2005, p. 218-220.

⁹⁷ M. Bogucka, H. Samsonowicz, *Dzieje miast i mieszczaństwa w Polsce przedrozbiorowej*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź 1986, p. 119, 332. R. Szczygieł, Lokacje, p. 99

⁹⁸ C. Kukło, Demografia, p. 234.

⁹⁹ G. Jawor, „*Obraz rodziny chłopskiej*”, p. 8.

was no larger town or city in the area, statistics show that peasants searching for jobs and marriage partners migrated to places even 80 kilometres away from their villages¹⁰⁰. The earliest available quantitative data concerning the number of servants in big cities come from the 18th century. They show that servants made up from 20 per cent (Warsaw) to 35 per cent (Cracow) of the cities' population¹⁰¹.

Another factor which ought to be mentioned in the context of the rise of labour market in Poland is rapid development of manorial economy at the beginning of the early modern period. Manorial economy in Poland is popularly associated with the exploitation peasants working for free on their lords' lands. Although the use of forced labour was gradually increasing over the decades, it was by no means the only form of labour arrangement. In the second half of the 16th and in the first half of the 17th century, only 13% to 36% of royal manors in Little Poland did not hire labourers and relied on forced labour only. Similarly, as many as 76% of manors run by noblemen hired extra hands and so did 89% of manors owned by the clergy¹⁰².

Irrespective of the above facts, a group of hired labourers in the Polish country was smaller than in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Western Europe. The majority of peasant families derived their income and sustenance from their own farms, but these were not economically isolated, self-sufficient farms as defined by Chayanov. Polish peasants engaged, especially since the 16th century, into market production of foodstuffs and into proto industrial activity¹⁰³. Throughout the late Middle Ages and at the beginning of the early modern period the Kingdom of Poland was characterized by abundant land resources and continuous shortage of labour. In the second half of the 16th century population density in Poland was lower than in Western Europe, with an average rate of 20 people per square kilometer in Poland¹⁰⁴, 30 people per square kilometer in England, and 40 people per square kilometer in the Netherlands¹⁰⁵. On the other hand, average acreage of peasant farms in Poland was

¹⁰⁰ P. Guzowski, *Demograficzne uwarunkowania funkcjonowania rodziny chłopskiej na przełomie średniowiecza i nowożytności*

¹⁰¹ C. Kukło, *Demografia...*, s 367.

¹⁰² A. Kamler, *Chłopi jako pracownicy najemni na wsi małopolskiej w XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku*, Warszawa 2005

¹⁰³ A. Knotter, *Problems of the „family economy”. Peasant economy, domestic production and labour markets in pre-industrial Europe*, [in:] *Early Modern Capitalism. Economic and social change in Europe 1400-1800*, red. M. Prak, London-New-York 2005, p. 140

¹⁰⁴ I. Gieysztorowa, *Ludność*, [in:] *Encyklopedia historii gospodarczej Polski do 1945 roku*, red. A. Mączak, Warszawa 1981, p. 431

¹⁰⁵ E. Helin, A. van der Woude, *Les Pays-Bas*, [in:] *Histoire des populations de L'Europe*, t. 1, red. P. Bardet i J. Dupaquier, Paris 1998

significantly bigger than in England, France, or the Netherlands. A typical late-16th-century peasant farm in the south of the Kingdom of Poland (Little Poland, Red Ruthenia) occupied half a *mansus* of arable land (over 8 hectares); farms in relatively less wealthy Mazowsze region were of similar size, whereas in Greater Poland and Royal Prussia average acreage of peasants' farms was much, usually two times, bigger¹⁰⁶. Moreover, acquisition of land was not difficult and land prices were relatively low. As a result, coming-of-age peasant sons and young manorial servants were not doomed to joining the group of landless peasants working as seasonal workers, but they could relatively easily set up their own farms. It is estimated that both in Western Europe and in Poland, 4-5 hectares was an acreage that guaranteed self-sufficiency of peasant farms. In the second half of the 16th century, 90% of peasant farms in Korczyn starosty¹⁰⁷ and 92% of farms in Sandomierz starosty¹⁰⁸ in Little Poland were of this or bigger size. The situation in other regions was alike. In the late 16th century, in wealthy Greater Poland, the percentage of peasants whose farms were smaller than 4-5 hectares was only about 2%¹⁰⁹; in less wealthy Kujawy and in central Poland this number was 2.1% to 7.1%¹¹⁰. Finally, the group of villagers who did not possess hereditary farms at all was also relatively insignificant, reaching 10% to 15% of rural population in Little Poland¹¹¹.

The growth in the commercialization of Polish economy in the 16th century was much less significant than in the most developed West- and North-European countries. Natural conditions and social system did not favour the expansion of agrarian capitalism either. Also, the degree of urbanization in Poland was incomparably lower than in the Netherlands and in England. Although some factors contributing to the emergence of the European marriage pattern operated also in Poland – marriage based on consent and inheritance system similar to that in the north and west of Europe – the age of Polish women at first marriage was lower than in the Netherlands and in England. Likewise, demographic processes similar to those that

¹⁰⁶ A. Wyczański, *Studia nad gospodarką starostwa korczyńskiego 1500–1660*, Warszawa 1964, p. 105; J. Muszyńska, *Gospodarstwo chłopskie w starostwie sandomierskim 1510–1663*, Kielce 1991, tab. 9–12. J. Półciwiatek, *Położenie ludności wiejskiej starostwa leżajskiego w XVI–XVIII wieku*, Warszawa – Kraków 1972, p. 132. L. Żytkowicz, *Studia nad gospodarstwem wiejskim w dobrach kościelnych w XVI w.*, Warszawa 1962, tabl. 1; A. Nowak, *Początki kryzysu sił wytwórczych na wsi wielkopolskiej w końcu XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku (na przykładzie województwa kaliskiego)*, Warszawa – Poznań 1975, tab. 20–22; W. Jakóbczyk, Jakóbczyk, „Uwarstwienie ludności wiejskiej w królewskich zachodnich województw Korony w II poł. XVI w.”, *Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych* 5 (1936), p. 58; A. Mączak, *Gospodarstwo chłopskie na Żuławach Malborskich w początkach XVII w.*, Warszawa 1962

¹⁰⁷ A. Wyczański, *Uwarstwienie społeczne w Polsce*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁸ J. Muszyńska J., „Gospodarstwo chłopskie”, tab. 18.

¹⁰⁹ A. Nowak, „Początki kryzysu sił wytwórczych”, p. 78.

¹¹⁰ S. Cackowski, *Gospodarstwo wiejskie w dobrach biskupstwa i kapituły chełmińskiej w XVII–XVIII wieku, cz. I.: Gospodarstwo chłopskie*, Toruń 1961, p. 100; L. Żytkowicz, „Studia nad gospodarstwem”, vol. 2, tabl. 1.

¹¹¹ A. Wyczański, *Uwarstwienie społeczne*, p. 91

were responsible for the emergence of the European marriage pattern and unique family forms in western Europe were taking place in Poland as well, but their intensity was lower and spread out over longer time. It must be clearly stated, however, that even though the European marriage pattern (as a strategy of wage earners in the world of budding capitalism) was not visible in Poland, distinctive features of the west-European family (having older, feudal roots) enumerated by Laslett characterized also Polish family since the late Middle Ages.

Hufenverfassung

Hufenverfassung (Eng. *hide system*), described by Michael Mitterauer, which since the Carolingian period had spread throughout Western Europe, then the Kingdom of Poland, to reach the Great Duchy of Lithuania at the beginning of the early modern period, is a perfect explanation for the predominance in the Kingdom of Poland of simple households based on nuclear families. The hide system with its concept of *terra unius familiae* favoured unigeniture (inheritance by a single heir) because such practice prevented family holdings from decreasing in size, which was in feudal lords' as well as peasants' interest¹¹². It is true that inheritance rules in Poland assumed equal division of family holdings among all siblings, regardless of their sex, but in practice peasant land was inherited by a single heir (or sold), who was supposed to buy back his siblings' shares of land¹¹³. Thus, inheritance practices in Poland reinforced the hide system, which, in turn, created favourable conditions for nuclear families to become dominant family forms.

Conclusions

Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden point to a number of factors which contributed to the emergence of the EMP and attempt to explain the unique nature of economic development in the north west of Europe. My argument here is that while marriage based on consensus and 'women-friendly' inheritance system were indeed characteristic of the Low Countries and England at the turn of the Middle Ages, they were by no means unique to these countries

¹¹² M. Mitterauer, *Why Europe.*, p. 58-143

¹¹³ P. Guzowski, „System dziedziczenia chłopów”, p.29-35

only, which I have attempted to prove by showing similarities between the situation in the north west of Europe and Poland. Economic development in Polish lands took a somewhat different direction than in the West and Polish social system did not create favourable conditions for the emergence of a large social group of wage earners whose standards of living depended heavily on the situation on the labour market. The European marriage pattern could have contributed to the emergence of new, capitalist developments in the economy, as it did in the north-west, but it could hardly exist in Polish economic conditions, where the development of urban centres was hindered by the dominance of manorial economy. Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden focus on the EMP and do not mention some other important features of European (or west European) family as they were described by Michael Mitterauer, that is, predominance of a nuclear family model, characteristic composition of a family as a community including non-kin servants, and a distinguishing system of retired parents care. The origins of all these characteristics are connected with the old manorial system rather than with capitalism, and it must be said that nothing precluded their emergence in Poland. Indeed, all these features were typical of Polish family at the turn of the Middle Ages. Therefore, the Hajnal line, being the western border of the EMP, should not be mistakenly identified with the line setting the western border of the occurrence of the “western family” as it was described by Michael Mitterauer.