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Marriages in the Parish of Płonka Kościelna in the Years 1826–1864

Małżeństwa w parafii Płonka Kościelna w latach 1826–1864

Abstract

The article presents weddings in the parish of Płonka Kościelna in the years 1826–1864, on the basis of parish registers residing in the parish archive. It contains basic issues such as the age of the betrothed and their marital status. Special attention was paid to the questions of having living parents on the day of wedding, and, what follows, the betrotheds' place of residence. The element of service is presented as a stage in the life cycle of an individual. The research employed statistical methods as well as selected examples of weddings and the couples involved.

Keywords

weddings, parish registers, Podlasie, Płonka Kościelna, 19th century, service, orphanage, life cycle

Abstrakt

W artykule przedstawiono małżeństwa w parafii Płonka Kościelna w latach 1826–1864 na podstawie ksiąg metrykalnych przechowywanych w archiwum parafialnym. Poddano analizie podstawowe zagadnienia, takie jak wiek nupturientów i stan cywilny. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na kwestie posiadania żyjących rodziców w dniu ślubu, a co za tym idzie także miejsce zamieszkania nupturientów. Zaprezentowano element służby, jako etap w cyklu życia jednostki. Posłużono się metodami statystycznymi oraz wybranymi przykładami ślubów i osób.

Słowa kluczowe

śluby, księgi metrykalne, Podlasie, Płonka Kościelna, XIX w., służba, sieroctwo, cykl życia

Five years ago Cezary Kuklo appealed in *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* (Poland's Demographic Past) for historians to undertake more intensive research on family structures in the past and broadly understand demographic changes.¹ It should be noted that, unfortunately, we still know too little about natural movement or the matrimonial attitudes of past societies. Even more modest is knowledge on the process of starting a family as a component of the life cycle of an individual in the past. This article will be an attempt to answer some important questions in the context of this problem. The basic question will be to what extent parents could have an impact on their children's matrimonial decisions. Another research problem will also be the attempt to answer whether starting a new family was preceded by independent existence outside the parents' household, for example, in the form of paid employment. It will also be important to consider whether the issues applied equally to both men and women, and whether certain regularities changed with the age of single women and men entering into marriage for the first time. In this text I would like to focus on marriage as one of the stages in an individual's life cycle. It is therefore necessary first to look at the problem of the age of prospective spouses and their marital status in the Płonka Kościelna parish. An important element of the article is also an attempt to describe the betrothed in terms of having living parents on the day of wedding. It is possible to determine all this information thanks to the detail contained in the parish registers in Płonka Kościelna.

Outline of Parish History

The Roman Catholic parish we are interested in was founded in 1502, although the Church in this area was in existence in the first half of the fifteenth century.² Until 1795, the Płonka parish belonged to the Bielsk deanery of Łuck diocese. After the first partition of Poland, Płonka Kościelna became a part of the diocese of Wigry. In 1807, the Białystok region and the areas on the Narew River were incorporated into the Russian Empire, while Płonka Kościelna was incorporated into the Duchy of Warsaw, and then the Kingdom of Poland. At that time, the parish under discussion became a part of the Augustów Province. The decision of Pope Pius VII of 1818 to found a new Augustów diocese, i.e., Sejny

¹ Cezary Kuklo, "O potrzebie intensyfikacji badań nad strukturami demograficznymi rodzin na ziemiach polskich do początku XX wieku," *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 37 (2015): 7–36.

² Tomasz Jaszczolt, "Fundacje kościelne na Podlasiu do końca XV wieku," in *Kościół a państwo na pograniczu polsko-litewsko-białoruskim*, eds. Marek Kietliński, Krzysztof Sychowicz, and Wojciech Sleszyński (Białystok: PRYMAT, 2005), 4–52.

diocese, resulted in another change in the administrative affiliation of the parish of Płonka Kościelna.

We have information on the number of parishioners in the nineteenth century. According to *Akta Kancellaryi Kurialnej Biskupa Augustowskiego tyczących się Kościoła Parafialnego w Płonce* (Files of the Augustów Bishop's Curia Chancellery referring to the Parish Church in Płonka), in 1822, the parish was inhabited by 2,014 people, including 783 adult men, 866 adult women, 203 boys and 362 girls.³ Within the parish of Płonka Kościelna, there were no people of other Christian denominations. Jews were a small minority, but they did not have their own synagogue or cemetery; they performed their religious rituals in nearby Sokoły.⁴ In 1822, they numbered about 120 people. From the very beginning, the area of the Płonka parish was inhabited by the nobility called petty, grey or neighborhood/local nobility. The number of peasants was marginal. The surrounding parishes also had a similar social structure.⁵

Sources

The basis of this analytical work were mass sources including the parish registers of Płonka Kościelna, located in the local parish archive. It is known that in the parish of Płonka Kościelna, these have been kept since 1640.⁶ The research was carried out using marriage registers from the years 1826–1864. Records for these years were kept in two marriage registers, one of them for the years 1826–1842, while the other covered the period 1843–1870. They were written in Polish. Well preserved to this day, they are relatively easy to read. The rules concerning the content of the individual entries were defined by *Kodex Cywilny Królestwa Polskiego* (The Civil Code of the Kingdom of Poland), in force in the Congress Kingdom from 1 January 1826.⁷ In comparison with those from the post-Trident period, the parish registers from the period of the Kingdom of Poland, due to the extensive set of information contained in them, allow for a much broader analysis.

³ Archiwum Diecezjalne w Łomży, *Akta Kancellaryi Kurialnej Biskupa Augustowskiego tyczące się Kościoła Parafialnego w Płonce*, sign. I 372, k. 16.

⁴ Anatol Leszczyński, *Żydzi ziemi bielskiej od połowy XVII w. do 1795 r.* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1980), 236.

⁵ Łukasz Lubicz-Łapiński, *Łapy i ich mieszkańcy. Zaścianki Łapińskich w XV–XVIII w.*, (Białystok: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Oddział w Białymstoku, 2004).

⁶ Archiwum Diecezjalne w Łomży, *Akta Kościoła Parafialnego Płonka*, sign. I 373, k. 5.

⁷ Witold Jemielity, "Akta stanu cywilnego w Księstwie Warszawskim i Królestwie Polskim," *Prawo Kanoniczne: kwartalnik prawnohistoryczny* 38 (1995): 167.

Specific issues such as the territorial selection of spouses or annual numbers of marriages are discussed in another article.⁸

The beginning of the observation was determined by legal regulations referring to the registry and the aforementioned Code. The observation, completed in the year 1864, was caused by the appearance in the Płonka Kościelna parish registry records of the first Warsaw–St. Petersburg Railroad worker. This investment, commenced in 1851 and ultimately completed in 1862, had a significant influence on the day-to-day life of the Płonka parishioners. Integration of the newcomers (railroad workers) with the residents of the areas in the study intensified. A group of the employed settled within the parish.

In the years 1826–1864, 965 marriages were registered in the parish. On average, 24.7 marriages were concluded annually. The monthly seasonality of these marriages, which was characteristic of societies at that time, was regulated by the agricultural and liturgical calendars. Therefore, as in other rural parishes, most of them took place in autumn and winter.⁹

Among all the weddings in the Płonka church under scrutiny, 73.9% were marriages between parishioners. A large percentage of marriages within the parish shows that the matrimonial mobility of past society was rather low. Scrutinizing the origins of young men seeking wives in the parish, we can conclude that the mobility of men at that time was quite limited. It should be noted, however, that the border between the Kingdom of Poland and the Russian Empire on the Narew River significantly hindered the influx of bachelors from nearby parishes, for example, from the little town of Suraż, to Płonka Kościelna. It should also be remembered that marriages were concluded in the bride's parish, so an analysis of this problem is undoubtedly more difficult in the case of women.

Marital status

Unsurprisingly, most of the marriages in the parish were between bachelors and spinsters (Table 1). In the period under analysis, such unions accounted for

⁸ Jakub Dobrzyński, "Społeczeństwo parafii w Płonce Kościelnej w świetle akt metrykalnych z lat 1826–1868," *Rocznik Białostocki* 21 (2018): 95–126.

⁹ Janina Gawrysiakowa, "Badania demograficzne w parafii Bochoznica Kościelna," *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 8 (1975): 107; Jerzy Spychała, "Śluby w parafii Strzelce Opolskie w latach 1766–1870," in *Śląskie Studia Demograficzne, Śluby*, ed. Zbigniew Kwaśny (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1995), 10; Marta Sokół and Wiesław Wróbel, *Kościół i parafia pw. Bożego Ciała w Surażu* (Suraż: Miejsko Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Surażu, 2010), 398; Pelagia Kwapulińska, "Śluby w parafii kochłowskiej w XIX wieku," in *Śląskie Studia Demograficzne, Śluby*, ed. Zbigniew Kwaśny (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1995), 78; Cezary Kukło, "Próba analizy demograficznej rejestracji metrykalnej ślubów parafii Trzcianne w I połowie XVII w.," *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 13 (1981): 89.

68.7% of the total. This was not an exceptional phenomenon; similar patterns were observed by other researchers, for instance, in the Greater Poland peasant village of Junczewo.¹⁰ Marriages between bachelors and widows, widowers and spinsters, and widowers and widows were less frequent. Most of these three groups, as in other parishes,¹¹ were widowers marrying spinsters (17.8%). Less frequently, widows decided to marry again. Marriages of widowed women to bachelors were recorded at 7.8% and those to widowers at 5.7%.

Table 1. Marriages in the Płonka Kościelna parish in the years 1826–1864, by marital status

	Marital status				total
	B + S	B + W	Wr + S	Wr + W	
Number	663	75	172	55	965
Percent	68.7	7.8	17.8	5.7	100.0

Abbreviations: B – bachelor; S – spinster; Wr – Widower; W – widow.

Source: Parish archive in Płonka Kościelna. Marriage registers 1826–1842, no signature; Parish archive in Płonka Kościelna. Marriage registers 1843–1870, no signature.

The Age of the Newlyweds

John Hajnal defined The European Marriage Pattern by specifying that in Western and Northern Europe, the average age at marriage was over 26 years for men and 23 years for women.¹² The analysis of the source material from our parish in Podlasie shows that for Płonka Kościelna, these values were slightly lower. In this parish, men entered into their first marriage at an average age of 25.0 years, while widowers decided to marry again at an average age of 39.7 years. In the Netherlands, for example, at the same time, the age at which bachelors married varied from 27 to 29, depending on the region.¹³ This is also a lower result than in other parishes examined by Polish researchers (Table 2). However, it is important to bear in mind that so far petty noblemen have not been the subject of advanced

¹⁰ Anna Czop, “Ruch naturalny ludności w parafii junczewskiej w latach 1801–1870 (na podstawie ksiąg metrykalnych),” *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 29 (2010): 104.

¹¹ For example, see Waldemar Pasięka, “Śluby w parafii opolskiej w latach 1801–1850,” *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 21 (2000): 53.

¹² Piotr Guzowski, “Geneza europejskiego modelu małżeństwa na przełomie średniowiecza i czasów wczesnonowożytnych z perspektywy historii Polski,” *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 31 (2012): 9.

¹³ Charlotte Störmer et al., “Long-Term Trends in Marriage Timing and the Impact of Migration, The Netherlands (1650–1899),” *Historical Life Course Studies* 6 (2018): 47.

studies on this matter. The comparative collation in Table 2 refers to other communities on Polish territories, of peasants and burghers. In common with other societies, women entered into their first marriages even earlier, marrying on average at the age of 22.5 years and widows at 35.3 years. In the case of the former, the age of marriage is much lower than in Western and Northern Europe,¹⁴ although it does not differ significantly from other Polish parishes.

Table 2. Average age at marriage in the 19th century

Parish	Age of bachelors	Age of spinsters
Choroszcz	27.7	22.8
Radzionków	26.2	21.7
Juncewo	27.0	23.6
Opole	27.4	24.5
Kałuż (Uniates)	25.9	21.4
Płonka Kościelna	25.0	22.5

Source: Anna Mioduszevska, "Kondycja demograficzna rodziny parafian choroskich w drugiej połowie XVIII i na początku XIX wieku. Uwagi wstępne," in *Rodzina i gospodarstwo domowe na ziemiach polskich w XV–XX wieku. Struktury demograficzne. społeczne i gospodarcze*, ed. Cezary Kuklo (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG. 2008), 419–420; Konrad Rzemieniecki, "Ludność parafii radzionkowskiej w latach 1801–1850," *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 23 (2002): 29; Czop, *Ruch naturalny* 105; Pasieka, *Śluby*, 58; K. Rzemieniecki, A. Miesiąc-Stępińska, "Śluby w parafii greckokatolickiej Kałuż w latach 1785–1897", *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 33 (2014): 53–54.

As shown in tables 3 and 4, in the period under study, among the betrothed up to 19 years of age, spinsters appear more frequently than bachelors. Every fourth woman marrying was in this group. The highest number of future spouses was found in the 20–24 age group. Nearly half the spinsters and bachelors entered into their first marriage in this age group. In the subsequent age groups, the number of single men was higher than that of single women. In the 25–29 age group, the number of bachelors hovered around 24.9%, and every tenth bachelor was in the 30–34 age group. Marriages of unmarried couples over the age of 35 were less frequent, and after the age of 45 they were the exception. The oldest of the bachelors was Feliks Włodek, who came from Lublin Province and lived in Płonka Kościelna. In 1847, at the age of 58, he married 39-year-old Agnieszka Łapińska, also from Płonka Kościelna. A significant share (17.7%) of the female population was recorded in the 25–29 age bracket. Women who reached the age of 30 were occasionally married for the first time, and their percentage in all marriages

¹⁴ Tracy Dennison and Sheila Ogilvie, "Does the European Marriage Pattern Explain Economic Growth?" *The Journal of Economic History* 74 (2014). Data taken from the authors' working paper: *CESifo Working Paper* 4244 (2013), 8.

Table 3. Bachelors marrying in the Płonka Kościelna parish by age, and information on parents, in the years 1826–1864

Information on parents	Age of bachelors																	
	19 and under		20–24		25–29		30–34		35–39		40–44		45–49		50–54		55–59	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Parents alive	42	59.2	153	43.3	59	32.1	24	30.0	6	22.2	1	6.7	–	–	2	66.7	–	–
Parents dead	11	15.5	56	15.9	33	17.9	26	32.5	11	40.7	12	80.0	2	66.7	1	33.3	2	100.0
Only mother alive	14	19.7	107	30.3	60	32.6	17	21.3	6	22.2	2	13.3	1	33.3	–	–	–	–
Only father alive	4	5.6	37	10.5	30	16.3	12	15.0	4	14.9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Illegitimate/Unknown parents	–	–	–	–	2	1.1	1	1.2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	71	100.0	353	100.0	184	100.0	80	100.0	27	100.0	15	100.0	3	100.0	3	100.0	2	100.0

Source: as for Table 1.

Table 4. Spinsters marrying in the Płonka Kościelna parish by age, and information on parents, in the years 1826–1864

Information on parents	Age of spinsters																	
	19 and under		20–24		25–29		30–34		35–39		40–44		45–49		50–54		55–59	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Parents alive	105	50.2	165	40.6	42	28.4	15	26.8	2	18.2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Parents dead	16	7.7	60	14.8	47	31.8	18	32.1	5	45.4	2	66.7	1	100.0	1	100.0	–	–
Only mother alive	68	32.5	120	29.6	36	24.3	16	28.6	3	27.3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Only father alive	20	9.6	60	14.8	21	14.2	6	10.7	1	9.1	1	33.3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Illegitimate/Unknown parents	–	–	1	0.2	2	1.3	1	1.8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	209	100.0	406	100.0	148	100.0	56	100.0	11	100.0	3	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0	–	–

Source: as for Table 1.

entered in the parish records is negligible. The oldest of the spinsters recorded in the parish records was Apolonia Łapińska, who at the age of 53 married Mateusz Zrodowski, a 39-year-old widower. The wedding of these Gąsówka Osse residents took place in 1853.

Because of the high mortality rate for women due to perinatal complications, widowed men decided to find care for their home and children. Unlike in the case of widowers, the distribution in particular groups of women marrying again is different. Nearly half of the widows who remarried were between the ages of 30 and 40, a period when they could still give birth to more children. A separate question also remains, as to whether women over 40 had adult sons who could take on the role of householder and make a common household together with their widowed mother.¹⁵

As important as the age of the betrothed seems to be the age difference between them. In the case of marriages of bachelors to spinsters, the highest percentage (40.9%) was observed when a man was 2 to 7 years older than his partner. Nearly every fourth marriage of this type took place when the betrothed were the same age or the age difference between them was no more than one year. Quite often, in 16.7% of cases, the bachelor was more than 8 years older than his future wife. The record holders in this respect included Maciej Perkowski from Porośl (parish of Sokoły) and Franciszek Zrodowski from Zdrody Nowe, who married brides 28 years younger. Situations when the spinster was older than the bachelor were not uncommon (13.4%), although the age differences were not considerable. The biggest difference was between Józef Roszkowski from Łapy Korczaki, who married Anna Dągowska from Gąsówka Somachy, older by 15 years.

Widowed men marrying spinsters from the Płonka Kościelna parish decided to marry younger wives in the vast majority of cases. 89.5% of them were older by at least 2 years, of whom 67.5% were married couples where the widower was 8 or more years older than the spinster. The biggest age difference between spouses in this group that of Leonard Roszkowski and Aniela Tomaszewska, with a 40-year age gap. Such a state of affairs undoubtedly demonstrates that widowers decided to have younger partners who could not only give birth to new offspring, but also take care of running a rural household. The situation regarding widowers' marriages to widows was similar: in this case, too, the widower was mostly older than his wife and we can see an increase in the number of marriages when the man was from 2 to 7 years older than the woman. Nearly half of this type of marriage involves an age difference greater than 8 years. There is also a higher percentage of older women marrying than in previous cases. We have a different situation

¹⁵ Edmund Piasecki, *Ludność parafii bejskiej (woj. kieleckie) w świetle ksiąg metrykalnych z XVIII–XX w.* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), 161–162.

when analyzing marriages of bachelors to widows, because in this case it was women who were usually older than their partners. In 58.6% of such marriages the widow was 2 or more years older than the bachelor. The economic factor seems crucial in this case. Following the deaths of their husbands, widows often had their own property at their disposal, which made them an attractive choice for bachelors. The greatest age difference in this group of marriages was recorded between 20-year-old Franciszek Łapiński from Łapy Kołpaki (the Poświętne parish) and 40-year-old Józefata Roszkowska from Roszki Wodźki. A detailed distribution of age differences between prospective spouses is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Age differences between the betrothed by marital status in the Płonka Kościelna parish, in the years 1826–1864

Age differences	Marital status							
	B + S		B + W		Wr + M		Wr + W	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Wife 8 yrs + older	13	2.0	29	38.6	3	1.7	3	5.5
Wife 2–7 yrs older	89	13.4	15	20.0	9	5.2	2	3.6
The same age or 1-year difference	181	27.3	11	14.7	6	3.5	6	10.9
Husband 2–7 yrs older	269	40.6	14	18.7	38	22.1	17	30.9
Husband 8 yrs + older	111	16.7	6	8.0	116	67.5	27	49.1
Total	663	100.0	75	100.0	172	100.0	55	100.0

Source: as for Table 1.

Newlyweds and their Parents

There is no doubt that the percentage of multi-generational households was determined by demographic issues.¹⁶ In Płonka Kościelna, more than half the bachelors at the time of their own marriage, and thus at the time of starting a new family, could not count on the presence of two parents at their wedding. Every fifth bachelor no longer had parents living on the day of their marriage. The bachelors lost their fathers earlier than their mothers. In 28.1% of cases, only the bachelor's mother was still alive on the wedding day, and in 11.8% of cases only the father. Let us take a look at the relationship between the age of the spouse and having living parents. The results are very interesting: It is obvious that the later the age of the man's first marriage, the less likely it would be that his parents were

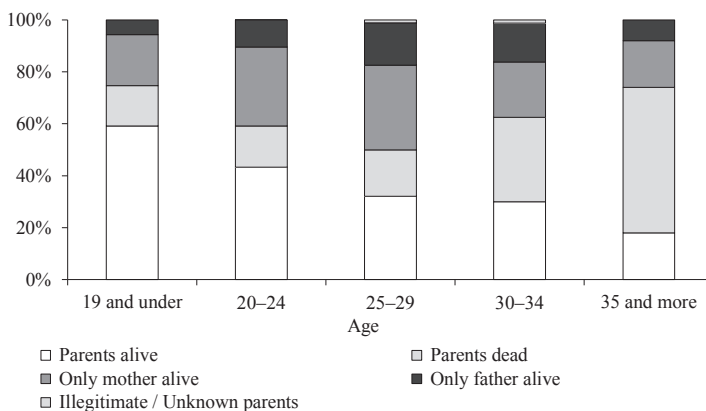
¹⁶ Mikołaj Szoltysek, "Komputerowa mikrosymulacja sieci krewniaczej a wzorce współmieszkania: rzecz o demograficznych uwarunkowaniach rodziny chłopskiej w okresie staropolskim," *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 37 (2015): 109.

still alive. Among men aged 19 and younger, only slightly more than half of the bachelors still had two parents (59.2%). In the two most numerous age groups, i.e., 20–24 and 25–29, these values were even lower. In the first of these groups, over half of the bachelors were orphans or semi-orphans on their wedding day, and two out of three men aged 25–29 married to women from the parish in Płonka Kościelna, did not have at least one parent. The situation is similar in the case of spinsters from Płonka. Most of them, i.e., 60.6%, were orphans or were missing one of their parents on their wedding day. Moreover, only half of the spinsters marrying before the age of twenty had both parents alive. Most of the spinsters aged 20–24 could not count on this. Like the bachelors, married women of all ages more often lost their father than their mother.

The Newlyweds' Place of Residence

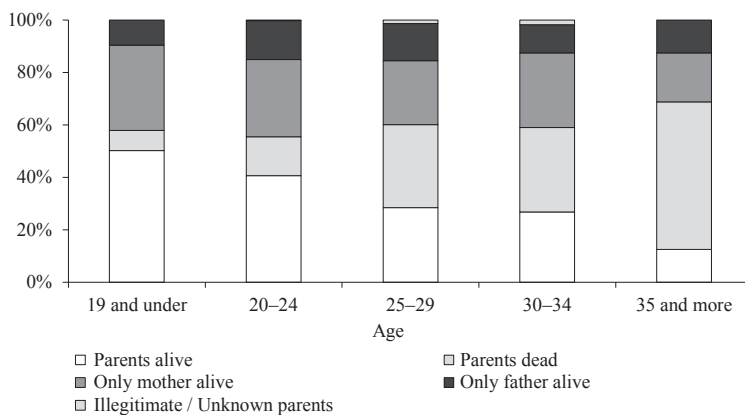
If fewer than half the bachelors and spinsters had two parents alive on their wedding day, it is worth considering where the prospective spouses were living on the day. Analysis of the parish marriage registers allows us, although superficially, to analyze this problem as well. A common limitation is the lack of information on the place of residence (Table 6). More than half the widows (54.6%) and even more widowers (62.1%) did not inform the registrar of their current place of residence. We have the most information on the girls' places of residence (no data in 19.3% of the entries). Two out of three bachelors also declared their current housing situation.

Figure 1. Bachelors and their parents on their wedding day in the Płonka Kościelna parish in the years 1826–1864



Source: as for Table 1.

Figure 2. Spinsters and their parents on their wedding day in Płonka Kościelna parish in the years 1826–1864



Source: as for Table 1.

Unmarried couples most often declared that on their wedding day they were still living with their parents (bachelors 28.7%, spinsters 28.1%). Spinsters declared that they were living with one of their parents more often than bachelors. The latter, in the absence of parents or a father, more often declared that they had their own household. Such a situation was reported by 14.0% of bachelors. An interesting issue seems to be living with a brother, which was declared by 14 bachelors and 73 spinsters. It is worth scrutinizing this phenomenon. In the case of men, four of them still had two living parents. The rest of them had only their mother, which shows that probably after the death of their father, they went under the guardianship of their brother, who took over the family farm. Spinsters also fell under the care of their brothers. As many as 65.8% of those who lived on a farm with their brother had no living parents on their wedding day, and one in ten of them had only a mother. It is worth noting that 23.3% of the women living with their brothers still had living parents. It seems that in such cases, the place of residence may have been determined by the need for additional hands to work on the newly established farms of the brothers and, at the same time, by the need to relieve the burden on the family home.¹⁷

¹⁷ Piotr Guzowski, Jacek Pielas, "Rodzina szlachecka," in *Rodzina i jej gospodarstwo na ziemiach polskich w geografii europejskich struktur rodzinnych do połowy XX wieku*, eds. Piotr Guzowski and Cezary Kukło (Białystok: Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy i Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, 2019), 52.

Table 6. Prospective spouses' declared place of residence on their wedding day in the Płonka Kościelna parish 1826–1864

Place of residence at marriage	Marital status							
	bachelor		widower		spinster		widow	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
With parents	212	28.7	7	3.1	235	28.1	3	2.3
With father	61	8.3	6	2.6	100	12.0	–	–
With mother	82	11.1	3	1.3	217	26.0	3	2.3
With brother	15	2.0	2	0.9	76	9.1	2	1.5
With stepfather	–	–	–	–	2	0.2	–	–
In service	10	1.4	1	0.4	18	2.2	–	–
Farm inherited from husband	–	–	–	–	–	–	45	34.6
Farm inherited from wife	–	–	1	0.4	–	–	–	–
With aunt	–	–	–	–	4	0.5	–	–
With relatives	–	–	–	–	2	0.2	1	0.8
At mill	–	–	1	0.4	–	–	–	–
With sister	–	–	–	–	3	0.4	2	1.5
With paternal uncle	2	0.3	–	–	3	0.4	–	–
With blacksmith	1	0.1	1	0.4	–	–	–	–
With guardian	–	–	–	–	2	0.2	–	–
Own farm	103	14.0	62	27.3	4	0.5	1	0.8
With grandfather	2	0.3	–	–	1	0.1	–	–
With brother-in-law	–	–	–	–	5	0.6	–	–
On estate	1	0.1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Outside village	1	0.1	–	–	–	–	–	–
At inn	3	0.4	2	0.9	–	–	1	0.8
On railway	–	–	–	–	2	0.2	1	0.8
No data	245	33.2	141	62.1	161	19.3	71	54.6
Total	738	100.0	227	100.0	835	100.0	130	100.0

Source: as for Table 1.

It is worth analyzing the place of residence in juxtaposition with having living parents on the couples' wedding day, with division by the age of marriage. As already mentioned, the bachelors were married at the average age of 25.0, so they were divided into two: As Tables 7 and 8 show, the first is of bachelors under 25 and the second is of those over 25. The results of this analysis demonstrate an interesting phenomenon. If the first group had living parents, it was only in exceptional cases (6.0%) that they did not live with them. The over-25-year-olds more often declared that they had their own farm. Perhaps the takeover of the farm following their parents' deaths determined their decision to start a family earlier. Unfortunately, at our current stage of research we cannot unequivocally confirm the thesis. It is necessary to scrutinize the lives of the couples' older

siblings, for example, with the method of family reconstruction. A much higher percentage of orphaned bachelors under 25 declared that they had their own farm than those over 25. This may indicate that a young bachelor who owned some land could decide to start a family faster than another who was simply earning a wage. It was men over the age of 25 marrying in Płonka Kościelna who more often testified that they were living outside the family home, for example, on their brother's farm or working in service. The patriarchal family system in the 19th century village is also reflected in the numbers concerning the place of residence on the wedding day of those bachelors who had only a father living. In this case, almost all the men under 25 (97.1%) were under the guardianship of their living father. This situation changed with the age of the bachelor, in favor of more frequent independent management of the farm or leaving the father. Bachelors with only a mother were more likely to run the farm on their own or leave it, although an increased percentage of bachelors over 25 living outside the family home is visible.

Table 7. Declared place of residence of bachelors under 25 on their wedding day in the Płonka Kościelna parish 1826–1864 (%)

Information on parents	Place of residence on wedding day											
	with parents		with father		with mother		own farm		other		total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Parents alive	158	94.0	2	1.2	3	1.8	2	1.2	3	1.8	168	100.0
Only mother alive	–	–	–	–	55	63.9	30	34.9	1	1.2	86	100.0
Only father alive	–	–	33	97.1	–	–	1	2.9	–	–	34	100.0
Parents dead	–	–	–	–	–	–	26	81.3	6	18.7	32	100.0

Source: as for Table 1.

Table 8. Declared place of residence of bachelors over 25 on their wedding day in the Płonka Kościelna parish 1826–1864 (%)

Information on parents	Place of residence on wedding day											
	with parents		with father		with mother		own farm		other		total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Parents alive	54	87.1	1	1.6	1	1.6	4	6.5	2	3.2	62	100.0
Only mother alive	–	–	–	–	23	56.1	12	29.3	6	14.6	41	100.0
Only father alive	–	–	25	73.5	–	–	4	11.8	5	14.7	34	100.0
Parents dead	–	–	–	–	–	–	22	64.7	12	35.3	34	100.0
Illegitimate/ Unknown parents	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	100.0	–	–	2	100.0

Source: as for Table 1.

The analysis by age also covered spinsters in Płonka. The division is shown in tables 9 and 10. The first group consists of women marrying before the age of 22, while the second comprises those over 22. It is worth noting that among betrothed women with both parents living, the percentage of people living with them is lower than in the case of the bachelors. They more often declared that they were living outside the family household. Every fifth woman aged 22 and over did not live with her parents. Also interesting is that the percentage of spinsters who declared that they were living with one of their parents despite both still being alive is also higher than among the men. Of particular note is the fact that none of the spinsters in the first group declared that they were living on their own farm. The vast majority of the spinsters from the parish in Płonka Kościelna whose father was still living remained under his care. In the case where only their mother was still alive, the older women more often left her farm, while the younger ones remained under their mother's guardianship until the age of 22.

Table 9. Declared place of residence of spinsters under 22 on their wedding day in the Płonka Kościelna parish 1826–1864 (%)

Information on parents	Place of residence										total	
	with parents		with father		with mother		own farm		other			
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Parents alive	171	86.4	4	2.0	13	6.6	–	–	10	5.0	198	100.0
Only mother alive	–	–	–	–	136	99.3	–	–	1	0.7	137	100.0
Only father alive	–	–	51	96.2	–	–	–	–	2	3.8	53	100.0
Parents dead	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	29	100.0	29	100.0

Source: as for Table 1.

Table 10. Declared place of residence of spinsters over 22 on their wedding day in the Płonka Kościelna parish 1826–1864 (%)

Information on parents	Place of residence										total	
	with parents		with father		with mother		own farm		other			
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Parents alive	64	71.1	2	2.2	4	4.5	–	–	20	22.2	90	100.0
Only mother alive	–	–	–	–	62	86.1	–	–	10	13.9	72	100.0
Only father alive	–	–	43	97.7	–	–	–	–	1	2.3	44	100.0
Parents dead	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	8.2	45	91.8	49	100.0
Illegitimate/Unknown parents	–	–	–	–	2	100.0	–	–	–	–	2	100.0

Source: as for Table 1.

In the 1960s, John Hajnal put forward the thesis that in Western Europe, before marriage, young people took up a job as servants on somebody else's farms and this was a very common phenomenon throughout an individual's life cycle.¹⁸ In the parish under scrutiny, ten bachelors declared that they were in service. This is a negligible percentage of all the men marrying for the first time. It should be remembered, however, that some people taking up employment as a servant may have done so outside the immediate vicinity and headed, for example, towards larger urban centers. Studies on domestic servants in Warsaw at the end of the 18th century indicate that newcomers from Podlasie, including the nobility, constituted a significant group of servants in Warsaw. If such migrations had already resulted in permanent residence in the city, it was also the place where marriages would take place.¹⁹ It is worth examining the cases from the parish in our study. Eight of the bachelors were in service in the Płonka Kościelna parish, while two others were living in neighboring parishes: Poświętne and Sokoły. Four of the bachelors living in the Płonka Kościelna parish were born outside of the parish. The noble Szymon Łapiński, born in Łapy Leśniki (Poświętne parish), who had been in service for a year in Łupianka Nowa, married the widow Franciszka Roszkowska from the same village on 19 November 1827. Stefan Ochrymiuk, a peasant who had been in service in Roszki Wodźki for thirteen years, came from the village of Boćki, located at a significant distance from Płonka Stara Wieś, and married the widow Marianna Roszkowska, also residing in Roszki Wodźki, on 5 February 1828, and Andrzej Maleszewski, born in Krzewo (Zawady parish) and in service in Płonka Kościelna, also came from further away. On 25 November 1861, he married the widow Apolonia Kwiatkowska, who was also a resident of Płonka Kościelna. Michał Krasiewski, a peasant, came from Strabla and spent two years in service in Gąsówka Skwarki. He also found a wife in the same village, following the example of those above. He married the spinster Marianna Łupińska on 13 October 1862. The only widower who declared his social status as servant was the 40-year-old Jan Połaszewski, who worked as a distiller in Stokowisko (the Poświętne parish). He married Apolonia Łupińska, a spinster from Łupianka Stara. The wedding took place on 23 July 1835.

Among the servant women entering into marriage there were only spinsters. Eighteen such cases were recorded in the parish registers for the period 1826–1864. Thirteen of them were working outside their birthplace, seven of whom came from outside the parish. The peasant woman Anna Dzieciołowska, from Zawyki (Suraż parish), who had been a servant for eight years in Gąsówka Skwarki,

¹⁸ Radosław Poniak, *Służba domowa w miastach na ziemiach polskich od połowy XVIII do końca XIX wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2014), 13–14.

¹⁹ Radosław Poniak, "Wiek opuszczania rodzinnego gospodarstwa domowego w dobie stanisławowskiej w świetle zeznań sądowych," *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 35 (2014): 24, 39.

married the widower Krzysztof Bielicki, also a peasant, from Gąsówka Skwarki, on February 3, 1828. The two servants came from the Poświętne parish. There were also noblewomen: Aniela Tomaszewska from Łapy Barwiki, and Aniela Łupińska from Gąsówki Oleksin. Both married neighbors from the same village. On 7 July 1828, the first of them married Leonard Roszkowski, a widower living in Roszki Wodźki, and the other married Łukasz Zdrodowski, born in Zdrody Nowe and in service in Płonka Kościelna. There were some born outside the parish who were also in service when they got married: In Gąsówka Skwarki, the noblewoman Franciszka Konarzewska from Brzóski in Wysokie Mazowieckie parish (who married the bachelor Ignacy Łupiński from Płonka Strumianka on 9 October 1832), the noblewoman Ewa Rzońca in Gąsówka Skwarki (who married the bachelor Jan Roszkowski from Gąsówka Bagno on 19 January 1835), the honest Magdalena Betlewska from Uhowo, spinster in Gąsówka Osse (who married the widower Paweł Domaszewski from Daniłowo in the Poświętne parish on 22 November 1836) and peasant Konstancja Łunkowska from Jamiolki in the parish Sokoły, spinster in Roszki Ziemaki (who married the bachelor Antoni Januczyk, also a peasant, from Jabłonowo-Kąty on 23 November 1847).

The bachelors who were servants married on average at the age of 27.9 years. The spinsters married at the age of 25.5. Although the analysis of this issue is carried out on a relatively small sample, it is clear that we are dealing with a higher age at marriage among those who declared work and residence as servants. It is worth noting that a large proportion of these people were born outside the parish. It is difficult at this stage of research to assess whether the inhabitants of the parish in Płonka Kościelna treated service as a part of the life cycle and therefore avoided this fact in their declarations when signing marriage certificates or whether the phenomenon was marginal. It should also be remembered that when we are examining parish registers, we only have the information given on the day of the marriage by the parish inhabitants, and due to the lack of a source database in the form of censuses, we are not able to determine the actual number of those in service in the parish. Perhaps the petty nobility from these areas actually worked in the service of richer neighbors while still living in their family home or took up this type of activity in their youth. However, this issue requires additional, separate studies.

Conclusion

Studies on marriage as a component of an individual's life cycle in the past still requires intensive research. The issues described above in basic form are only an outline. Undoubtedly, research questions can be multiplied. As an example, it would be worth considering whether the differences in prospective spouses' places of residence depended on their older siblings. It would be possible to determine this by analyzing three types of parish registers, using the method of family reconstruction. In summary, we can conclude that from the weddings of petty noblemen of Płonka Kościelna, in common with those of peasants or burghers, most marriages were concluded between bachelors and spinsters. Generally, petty nobility entered marital unions earlier than in Western Europe. Moreover, the age of petty noble bachelors was lower than peasants (for instance, Juncewo) or burghers (e.g., Choroszcz) in Polish lands. A great number of prospective spouses could not expect the presence of their both parents on their wedding day, and those who had this opportunity remained under their care before they started their own household. Perhaps the necessity to take over the household prematurely resulted in the rather unusual phenomenon of service among the petty nobility in the parish of Płonka Kościelna, even though this question requires additional studies on sources from neighboring parishes and larger urban centers.

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Marriages in the Parish of Płonka Kościelna in the Years 1826–1864

Summary

The article analyzes parish weddings in Płonka Kościelna in the years 1826–1864 in the light of parish registers. This parish was inhabited by petty nobility. The largest villages in the parish were Łupianka Stara and Płonka Kościelna. The aim of the article was to analyze the wedding as an element in an individual’s life cycle and to try to answer whether prospective spouses tried to strengthen their position before their marriage. 965 weddings were analyzed. This analysis showed that marriages in Płonka Kościelna were concluded earlier than in Western Europe. Seldom were they preceded by a stage of service and most of the betrothed remained under the care of their parents (if they were alive) until their wedding day. A statistical approach to the source also demonstrated that those bachelors who had their own farms decided to start a family earlier.

Małżeństwa w parafii Płonka Kościelna w latach 1826–1864

Streszczenie

W artykule analizie poddano śluby w Płonce Kościelnej w latach 1826–1864 w świetle ksiąg metrykalnych. Parafia ta zamieszkiwana była przez drobną szlachtę. Do największych wsi w parafii należały Łupianka Stara i Płonka Kościelna. Celem artykułu było spojrzenie na małżeństwo jako element składowy cyklu życia jednostki i próba odpowiedzi, czy nupturienci przed zawarciem związku małżeńskiego starali się ugruntować swoją pozycję. Poddano analizie 965 ślubów. Analiza ta wykazała, że śluby w Płonce Kościelnej zawierano wcześniej niż w Europie Zachodniej. Rzadko były poprzedzone etapem służby, a nupturienci w większości do dnia ślubów pozostawali pod opieką rodziców (jeżeli żyli). Statystyczne ujęcie źródła wykazało także, że ci kawalerowie, którzy posiadali własne gospodarstwa, wcześniej decydowali się na założenie rodziny.