

Wesela, chrzciny i pogrzeby w XVI-XVIII wieku. Kultura życia i śmierci (Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals in the 16th–18th Centuries. Life and Death Culture), ed. Henryk Suchojad, Warszawa 2001, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 355 pp.

This collection of materials from a conference which was held in Kielce on November 14 and 15, 2000 on the initiative of the Central Library and the Institute of History of the Kielce Academy has not fully met our needs. The organizers wanted researchers into Polish 16th–18th century historiography to abandon factual information and concentrate on a new interpretation of Sarmatism in the context of crucial moments in the lives of individuals, but their idea was realized to but a small extent. Of the 25 articles included in this volume only a few are on the level which the reader could expect after reading the editor's assurances. Several authors have not even solved the problem of who their text is addressed to. Alongside scholarly texts, the volume includes many fragmentary and popularized scientific articles. The texts are uneven and some are disappointing from the editorial point of view. The book is equipped with an index of persons.

The articles deal with several questions. The first concerns family celebrations connected with the rites of passage. This question is discussed by: Jan Kwak (*Family Celebrations in Upper Silesian Towns from the 16th to the 18th*

Century), Zbigniew Kwaśny (*The Peasant Family in the Dobra Parish in 1727–1758*), Krystyna Górna (*Births, Weddings and Deaths in Upper Silesia in the 18th Century*), Edmund Kizik (*Cases Concerning the Breaking of Wedding, Baptismal and Funeral Regulations Heard by the Gdańsk Court in the 17th and 18th Centuries*), and Zofia Trawicka (*Jakub Sobieski's Wedding and Funeral Orations*).

Z. Kwaśny enters into the spirit of everyday life with the help of statistical methods. This is one of the most interesting articles in the volume. The text is correct methodologically and the subject is presented in a concise but interesting way. The article is based mainly on a register kept by the pastor of the Protestant parish at Dobra. On the basis of parish entries, the author presents the natural increase, name giving, the age of the engaged couples, death rate, marriage rate, fertility and many other data. He compares these data with those of other Upper Silesian parishes. The text shows the inhabitants' links with their parish in the sublime moments of their lives and confirms that the nuclear family gained popularity in the early modern era.

J. Kwaśka's article will disappoint many readers. The author describes the birth and baptism of a new member of an urban family, the choice of name and of the godparents, churching, marriage, wedding and funeral. One gets the impression that nothing has been written on this subject for the last thirty years (the latest book quoted by the author was published in 1972). Surprisingly, it seems to be a problem for the author to keep within the framework of the title he chose himself. The trial for fornication, the use of the services provided by a house of ill fame¹, or a tussle between spouses are picturesque events but they can hardly be regarded as family celebrations.

K. Górna's article supplies new facts. The author wanted to establish the time of births, conceptions and baptisms on an annual, monthly and weekly basis. She pays great attention to the problem of illegitimate children and their mothers. As regards funerals, she tries to establish when the deaths were the most frequent and who the deceased were. The text is based on the author's study of 20,000 records of the urban and rural communities of the Krapkowice parish from the years 1682–1800. The individual questions are discussed separately for the town and the rural areas.

E. Kizik's text is based on solid sources and a profound knowledge of literature. The author examines the role of legislation in the shaping of modern society (questions of social discipline, progress of civilization). He is particularly interested in the regulations issued by the police between 1590/95 and 1734, especially in regulations concerning excessive manifestation of wealth (very well selected examples). The tables of fines illustrate the system of punishment. Contrary to the widespread view that the regulations were ineffective, the author says that they helped to bring down the number of banqueters and suppress the fashion for writing poetry on special occasions.

Z. Trawicka's article is fragmentary. She discusses Jakub Sobieski's speeches chronologically in order to observe how they changed with the passage of time. She mentions the dates of the speeches but does not analyze them, presenting only selected fragments. There is no mention in the text of Sobieski's actual alliances. Nor is it possible to follow changes in style which always occur if a person practises speech making over a long period of time. In her summing up Trawicka does not present her own conclusions but refers to Witold Taśzycki and Karol Mecheryński (the literature referred to ends in the 1970s). The only conclusion one can reach after reading the article is that Jakub Sobieski had oratorical talents and made public speeches on various occasions.

The ceremonies in rulers' houses were of a double character; they were both state and private ceremonies. Elections and coronations were a special category. The only article on this subject is Mariusz Sawicki's *The Election and Coronation*

¹ *Op. rec.*, p. 15.

of Stanislaus Leszczyński in the Light of German-Language and Polish Occasional Prints. The author set himself the aim of comparing the objectivity and reliability of the occasional prints which informed readers of the election and coronation, but has failed to reach his aim. According to Sawicki, the main aim of the occasional prints was to provide information; the shortcomings in the presentation of events were due to misinterpretation of facts or lack of precise information. He does not try to find out the **real** reasons for this lack of precise information. He belittles the question of propaganda. The result is that Sawicki presents rather the course of Stanislaus Leszczyński's election and coronation than a profound comparison of individual accounts and their influence on public opinion³.

Births and baptisms are the subject discussed by: Monika Zeromska-Ciesielska (*Births and Baptisms. A Tentative Characterization of the Respective Customs during the Saxon Times*). She wanted to present Baroque baptisms as a specific variant of religious initiation and to show rites of passage as a manifestation of Sarmatian Catholicism. Even though the article frequently refers to anthropological studies, it is disappointing, for the author has not managed to find an analogy between the anthropological theory and her sources. The result is that we do not learn whether the nobility realized the symbolism of the ceremonies practised on these occasions and if so, to what extent. There is no connection between the religionary theories discussed by the author and the ceremonies. The text is full of truisms and strange formulations, e.g. "It can be seen that old Polish baptisms acquired a religious character and became a custom". Was there a time when baptism was not of a religious character?

Marriages and weddings are described by: Jan Rzońca (*Bona Sforza's Nuptials and Coronation*), Anna Filipczak-Kocur (*The Wedding of Sigismund III and Anna in 1592 and the Queen's Coronation as Reported in German-Language Occasional Prints*), Maria Bogucka (*The Social and Religious Contexts in which Marriages Were Contracted in Danzig in the 16th-18th Centuries*), Jacek Pielas (*The Social and Financial Aspects of Marriages in 17th Century Prosperous Noble Families, with the Oleśnicki Family of the Dębno Coat of Arms as an Example*), Mariusz Lubczyński (*Marriages Contracted by Noble Families in the Light of pre-Marriage Contracts Entered in Cracow City Books in 1680-1730*), and Piotr Bażyńska (*Model of Epithalamia published in the First Half of the 18th Century*).

J. Rzońca's article is a great disappointment. The author clings obsequiously to Władysław Pocięcha's conclusions and only from time to time indulges in independent intellectual ventures. When he does, the text swarms with information of an encyclopaedic character (e.g. that Sigismund I was the fifth son of Casimir Jagiellon) which is only loosely connected, or even completely unconnected, with the subject. Rzońca is another author who does not seem to know who his readers are. Having full confidence in popularized scientific literature⁴, he does not even refer to Italian studies. What is shocking is his ignorance of Latin⁵, his references to non-existent editions⁶ or to such publications as *Leksykon historii świata (Lexicon of World History)*⁷. I presume that the word *Vivat* spelt with a "w" is just a proof-reader's mistake⁸.

² *Ibidem*, p. 20.

³ One has a feeling that this is partly due to the author not being able to define who his readers are. It is surprising that in fn. 3, p. 105 the author explains what occasional prints are.

⁴ See *ibidem*, p. 76, fn. 6 in which the author refers to Edward Rudzki's book *Polskie królowe. Żony Piastów i Jagiellonów (Polish Queens. The Wives of the Piasts and Jagiellons)*, vol. I, Warszawa 1985.

⁵ *Op. rec.*, p. 83, fn. 31; the abbreviations in the title of Declius's work have been grammatically wrongly deciphered.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 79, fn. 15; there was no edition in 1960; Zygmunt Wojciechowski's book was published in 1947 and 1979.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 77, fn. 10.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

A. Filipczak-Kocur's solid, well-constructed article is arranged chronologically. Since the custom of publishing official reports on royal weddings and coronations was not yet known in Poland at the end of the 16th century, the author has turned her attention to occasional prints (a total of eight) which acquainted Europe with Anna's marriage and wedding. She compares these reports with notes in diaries, taking the latest literature into account. She has adopted a critical approach to her sources and uses them only as a framework to present what the royal ceremonies really looked like. She points out that her sources show various aspects of the ceremonies, that they are complementary. She focuses on differences in the presentation of events and tries to explain the reasons.

Maria Bogucka devotes her article to one of her favourite cities. She writes about marriages in Danzig in the social, economic and religious context, drawing attention to gaps in historiography; for instance, she points out that there are no studies on young couples' age when they married for the first time in early modern Danzig, but she fills this gap. She cites some extraordinary events (e.g. the scandal which broke out in Danzig in 1516 when a rich widow, Anna Mandt, remarried contrary to the wishes of her family).

J. Pielas discusses an important question which has been neglected in Polish historiography. He points out that the policy behind marriages has been discussed mainly with reference to magnates while the motives behind the marriages of middle and prosperous gentry are hardly known at all. Taking the Oleśnicki family as an example, Pielas presents the social and financial aspects of marriages contracted by members of prosperous gentry. He is mainly interested in marriage settlements, the setting provided for marriages, the dowry and the impact all these factors had on the financial and social situation of families. Pielas's research has confirmed that there was a close correlation between a family's social and financial situation and the quality of the marriage it could aspire to.

For some unknown reason M. Lubczyński has decided to examine the years 1680–1730, but his text provides a great deal of valuable information on how marriages were arranged in practice at that time. Our knowledge of this question is rather modest, for the old Polish legal regulations were ambiguous and fragmentary. Only an examination of the daily practice could lead to new conclusions. The author does not agree with many popular views on the manner and time of marriage settlements, even though they are shared by historians specializing in the early modern period. Lubczyński's conclusions on the customs observed by noble families can be a starting point for an examination of changes which took place in this respect in the early modern period.

P. Badyńska's aim was to present a simplified model of old Polish epithalamia (he has analyzed 31 epithalamia). He says that as regards the number of speeches, the wedding ceremonies in the 17th and 18th centuries differed greatly from the 16th century ones. He points out the sources which served as models for wedding orations. Printed wedding speeches contain some constant elements, such as the title page, the coat of arms, its symbolism and references, the status of the bridal pair and their parents, dedications and expressions of thanks after the armorial page. The central subject of a wedding speech was the bridal pair's family (close or more remote relatives by blood or marriage) and not the bride and bridegroom themselves. Stress was laid on the history of the family which commissioned the speech.

Deaths and funerals have been depicted by: Waclaw Urban (*17th Century Epithalamia and Epitaphs of Pastor Wegierski's Family*), Bogdan Rok (*Funeral Prints in Old Poland, 16th–18th Centuries*), Sławomir Baczewski (*The Propaganda Role of a Nobleman's Funeral in the 17th Century in the Light of Funeral Sermons*), Tomasz Ciesielski (*Military Funerals in Saxon Times*), Włodzimierz Kaczorowski (*Pompa funebris of the Royal Couple, Sigismund III and Constance, in Cracow*), Dariusz Złotkowski (*The Baroque Setting of the Funeral of*

Konstanca Stuszczyńska Denhoff and Her Son, Stanisław Ernst Denhoff), Tomasz Wiślicz (*How Much Did the Funeral of a Peasant Cost in Poland in the 17th and 18th Centuries and Who Paid for It*), Mieczysław Rusiecki (*The Picture of Death in the Catechesis of the Catholic Church in the 16th–18th Centuries*), Henryk Suchojad (*Departure from This World of Father Jakub Grometius /1572–1651/*, Vicar of Gnojno, in the Light of His Last Will and the Accompanying Documents), Jarosław Dumanowski (*Pompa funebris? The Last Wills of Great Poland's Nobility in the 18th Century*), Jan Główk a (*The Last Wills of Kielce Townsmen from the End of the 18th Century — a Mirror of the Epoch in the Light of the Kielce Municipal Council's Book from the Years 1789–1792*), and Kazimierz Przybóś (*Teofila Sobieska's Foundation Act of 1653 for the Dominicans of Żółkiew*).

W. Urban presents a family which could not afford to engage a person to write special family texts. He writes about texts circulated within the family, but the Węgieńskis wrote more often for the needs of their patrons, especially the Leszczyńskis. Urban confines himself to mentioning and putting in order the texts left by the Węgieński family; he does not analyze them. This is the history of a parson's family, from the point of view of its output of panegyrics, epitaphs and epithalamia. The text shows that in addition to Andrzej Węgieński, the best known member of the family, other members also deserve attention.

B. Rok has devoted yet another text to his favourite subject. His article is a short chronological guide to the funeral prints of the early modern period. The author also presents developments in this field. However, Rok embarrasses the reader when he explains the term "early modern times" or tries to force through the term "funeral book"⁹, not a very fortunate term for the prints often had but two leaves. It is also difficult to agree that unlike visual arts, the funeral texts also reflected man's spiritual nature.

S. Baczewski's article is one of the most interesting texts in the volume. In accordance with Thorstein Veblen's theory, the author presents *pompa funebris* as "conspicuous consumption" organized for the sake of appearances (funerals could ruin less prosperous persons). For the upper strata of the nobility a lavish funeral was an unwritten duty in the constant competition for prestige. This is why the family was obliged to organize a sumptuous funeral. The author is also interested in the addressees of hidden information transferred during funerals. He points out that funeral sermons emphasized the special role played by the nobility and the importance of the coat of arms. He presents funerals as a way of promoting not only the family of the deceased person but also his coat of arms, the nobility in general and the knightly ethos.

T. Ciesielski has managed to avoid the stereotyped picture of military funerals invariably accompanied by the clang of crushed insignia. He acquaints readers not only with the funeral ceremonies but also with the cost of the burial of soldiers of various ranks. He emphasizes that great attention was paid to provide a proper setting for commanders' funerals. Ciesielski tells readers how long it took to organize a funeral, how long the ceremony lasted, and who the participants were; he informs them of the form and setting of the funerals (also the artistic setting — cartouches, *castrum doloris*), the course of the main ceremony and its costs.

W. Kaczorowski describes chronologically the funeral of Sigismund III and his wife Constance. He depicts the route of the funeral procession, the atmospheric conditions, the composition of the group of mourners and the funeral sermon. He also describes the architectural setting of the ceremony and the sarcophagi of the royal couple. He emphasizes that the ceremonies marked a turning point: Sigismund III's funeral became a model for the funerals of monarchs and magnates. The explanations in the author's notes refer only to the main facts. (The article is equipped with a list of persons who kept an all-night vigil at the royal coffins).

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 188.

D. Złotkowski departs from the title in his text. He is more interested in the cost (though he does not cite the full cost) of the funeral than in its setting. Instead of concentrating on what is promised in the title and include a description of the Denhoff chapel, he devotes the largest part of the article to the lives of Konstancja Denhoff and her son Stanisław Ernst. Contrary to the title, he analyzes the temporal existence of the deceased and not the ceremonies organized for them. There are also shortcomings in his analysis of the panegyric written in honour of Konstancja.

T. Wiślicz's text is based on a wealth of sources. The author has calculated the costs of peasants' funerals on the basis of about 550 peasants' last wills and other documents registered in rural court books. He pays much attention to synodal decisions. The main expense was the contribution paid to the priest. (The author describes the disgraceful practice of clergymen raising the prices of church services). Wiślicz not only informs readers of the prices of coffins, funeral feasts, the services of grave diggers and bell-ringers. He also describes situations when the owner of the village helped peasants to organize the funeral. The table which shows the sums spent on peasants' funerals from the middle of the 16th century to 1792 makes it easier for the reader to get the hang of things.

M. Rusiecki discusses his subject on the basis of catechisms used in early modern Poland and some auxiliary sources, e.g. theological handbooks and treatises written to deepen religious life. However, one cannot help feeling that in trying to tackle the problem of death the author has not paid enough attention to the specific character of religiousness in early modern times.

H. Suchojad has made use of an extensive last will to present the personality of a village parish priest deeply rooted in his environment. Father Grometius left an inventory, a codicil and an estimate of funeral costs and on this basis the author describes the equipment of the house of a village parish priest and of the parish church, things of everyday use, members of the household, relations with neighbours; he also shows how the church property and the priest's belongings were divided; Father Grometius took care, first and foremost, of his closest family, his ecclesiastic and lay friends. The article supplies a great deal of information not only on the things used by the priest, on members of his household and his relations with neighbours but also on his horizons, manners, talents, erudition and contacts.

In his interesting article *Pompa funebris* J. Dumanowski points out that although numerous studies emphasize the splendour of Baroque funerals, many funeral ceremonies were reserved for the richest persons. The economic reality was complex at that time and most funerals departed from the model observed by magnates. The author depicts various funeral instructions from the sociological point of view. In his opinion two attitudes could be noticed: a desire to display one's wealth and demonstrative modesty. Dumanowski is interested not so much in the organization of burials as in the motives behind the testators' decisions which form of funeral to choose. Ostentation and the showing off of one's wealth were not the predominant attitude.

J. Główa's article is fragmentary. The author planned to depict social and economic conditions in Kielce on the basis of three last wills and the only extinct old Polish municipal book, but he has failed. He describes everything that makes him think of Kielce inhabitants' everyday life in the early modern period, including their diet.

The volume ends with K. Przyboś's edition of Teofila Sobieska's 1653 foundation act for the Dominicans of Żółkiew. It is equipped with scholarly explanations and an introduction which acquaints readers with the foundress and with the circumstances which induced her to make the foundation.

Paradoxically, the volume has, on the whole, complied with the requirements of the organizers of the conference, for it contains few new facts. Many texts do not reflect the actual state of research, do not put forward new research proposals and do not provide a reliable picture of the cultural phenomena which they

describe. One cannot but agree with the organizers of the conference that it is high time for Polish historians to intensify research in order to produce a new interpretation of Sarmatism. New sources should not be avoided. The approach proposed by the organizers of the conference requires not only methodological elasticity but also openness to what is unexpected also in the field of archival exploration. It is a pity that so few historians are able courageously to elaborate the unexamined aspects of seemingly well known questions.

Małgorzata Pitaszek