

INFLUENCE OF BIRTH ORDER AND INHERITANCE PRACTICE ON MARRIAGES OF PEASANT DAUGHTERS IN THE RURAL SOCIETY OF PRE-INDUSTRIAL BOHEMIA, 1701–1850

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Abstract: The study examines the question of whether birth order influenced the marriage circumstances of peasant daughters and whether a change in inheritance practice influenced marriage strategies. The research was conducted on the Štáhlavy estate in western Bohemia, where 94 families, formed in 1701–1820, were selected. The sample under study was made up of 256 daughters surviving into adulthood, divided into four categories based on birth order (eldest, youngest, middle, and only daughters). The research focused on several parameters, such as how large the percentage of women who entered into marriage was. It was also examined whether they entered into homogamous marriages as regards social class, age and family status and whether they married while their fathers were still alive. All these parameters were observed in the context of a change in inheritance practice (1787) consisting of ultimogeniture being gradually replaced by primogeniture.

A careful analysis of the data led to several noteworthy conclusions. It confirmed that the marriage circumstances of peasant daughters did depend on birth order and the differences were more pronounced in the system of ultimogeniture. Youngest daughters were the most disadvantaged category, suffering from the fact that their fathers usually died before they became adults. They were also adversely impacted by the inheritance practice according to which inheritance shares were allocated when the property passed to the farmer's youngest son when his sisters had already been married. The new inheritance system improved the marriage prospects for all categories of daughters, streamlining the distribution of shares which was, as opposed to the earlier system, carried out before the daughters became adults. It was among the youngest daughters where the changes were most prominent. Although they continued to marry the latest, they were no longer so seriously disadvantaged in their access to homogamous marriages.

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Introduction

Recent studies focusing on the relationship between inheritance law and marriages of members of the peasant class in pre-industrial society have shown that there existed quite a great variety of strategies adopted by the parents in order to ensure the best possible marriage conditions for all their offspring.^[1] Marriage in pre-industrial times was often considered to be closely connected with necessary resources, which had to be accumulated before a young couple could establish an independent household.^[2] Not just the marriage of the heir but also the marriages of his siblings were closely related to the inheritance practice applied. According to numerous studies, it was the way in which inheritance shares were distributed that was crucial in determining when and under which circumstances the heir's siblings would marry.^[3] Unfortunately, siblings are often regarded indiscriminately as a homogenous group without distinction of sex or birth order,^[4] which might lead us to believe that the parents applied only two basic strategies – one towards their successors and one towards their other children. The relationship between birth order and marriage is discussed mainly in analyses of marriage age^[5] however, other factors must also be taken into account such as family status, age, or social status of the future husband.^[6]

Not even those studies which deal specifically with the territory of Bohemia focus too closely on the relationship between inheritance practice and marriage.

[1] Christophe DUHAMELLE – Jürgen SCHLUMBOHM (eds.), *Eheschließungen im Europa des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts. Muster und Strategie*, Göttingen 2003; Margarida DURÂES – Antoinette FAUVE-CHAMOUX – Llorenç FERRER – Jan KOK (eds.), *The Transmission of Well-Being. Gendered Marriage Strategies and Inheritance Systems in Europe (17th–20th Centuries)*, Bern 2009; Anne-Lise HEAD-KÖNIG – Péter POZSGAI, (eds.), *Inheritance Practices, Marriage Strategies and Household Formation in European Rural Societies. Rural History in Europe*, Turnhout 2012.

[2] Walter G. RÖDEL, *Die demografische Entwicklung in Deutschland*, in: Helmut Berding – Etienne François – Hans-Peter Ullmann (eds.), *Deutschland und Frankreich im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution*, Berlin 1989, p. 21–41; Georg FERTIG, *Demographische Autoregulation in vorindustriellen Bevölkerung*, *Beiträge zur Historischen Sozialkunde* 30, 2000, p. 93–98.

[3] Anne-Lise HEAD-KÖNIG, *Inheritance Regulations and Inheritance Practices, Marriage and Household in Rural Societies. Comparative Perspectives in a Changing Europe*, in: A.-L. Head-König – P. Pozsgai (eds.), *Inheritance Practices*, p. 17–48, here: p. 28, 40.

[4] Volker LÜNNEMANN, *Familialer Besitztransfer und Geschwisterbeziehungen in zwei westfälischen Gemeinden (19. Jahrhundert)*, *Historical Social Research* 30, 2005, p. 31–48.

[5] Julie MARFANY, *Choices and Constraints: Marriage and Inheritance in Eighteenth- and Early-Nineteenth-Century Catalonia*, *Continuity and Change* 21, 2006, p. 73–106.

[6] Levente PAKOT, *Family Composition, Birth Order and Timing of First, Marriages in Rural Transylvania. A Case Study of Szentegyházásfalu (Vlâhîța) and Kápolnásfalu (Căpâlnița), 1838–1940*, *Hungarian Historical Review* 3 (1), 2014, p. 141–167, here 145; Lisa DILLON, *Parental and Sibling Influences on the Timing of Marriage, XVIIth- and XVIIIth-Century Québec*, *Annales de démographie historique* 119, 2010, p. 139–80, here p. 145.

Although the inheritance law has been quite extensively discussed in Czech historical demography,^[7] the interplay between inheritance practice and marriage strategies concerning the specific position of siblings within the family has so far been studied only in the context of heir selection – i.e. whether under a particular inheritance practice only heirs of a certain sex and birth order were given preference.^[8] Various marriage strategies have been analyzed, with a special focus on the marriage of the heir, which was considered pivotal since its timing influenced the marriage opportunities of the heir's siblings.^[9] Detailed research has been conducted on the connection between the heir's marriage and the transfer of property since this transfer of property was also seen as crucial for the future social status of the heir's siblings.^[10]

The present study focuses on two problems. The first question to be answered is whether the birth order of the daughter in peasant families was important to an individual's position on the marriage market, i.e. whether marriage age and the possibility to conclude a homogamous marriage were influenced by the order in which the siblings were born. The second aim of this study is to verify the hypothesis that inheritance practice significantly influenced the marriage circumstances of the heir's siblings.

One specific feature of this study is that it solely focuses on peasant daughters, not sons. This decision is based mainly on reasons of methodology: the position of sons, in fact, was so heterogenous that it would virtually exclude a proper and objective analysis. In the first place, the sons in any birth order were always potential heirs due to unexpected circumstances (the appointed heir could die

[7] Vladimír PROCHÁZKA, *Česká poddanská nemovitost v pozemkových knihách 16. a 17. století*, Praha 1963; Josef GRULICH, *Poddanská nemovitost a dědické právo na Táborsku (Vřesecká rychta v letech 1625–1825)*, Jihočeský sborník historický 65, 1996, p. 34–42; Eduard MAUR, *Das bäuerliche Erbrecht und die Erbschaftspraxis in Böhmen im 16.–18. Jahrhundert*, Historická demografie 20, 1996, p. 93–118; Alice VELKOVÁ, *Staatliches Eingreifen in die Beziehung zwischen Gutsherrschaft und Untertanen. Zu Erbrecht und ländlicher Familienstruktur in Westböhmen an der Wende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert*, in: Markus Cerman – Robert Luft (eds.), *Untertanen, Herrschaft und Staat in Böhmen und im „Alten Reich“*. Sozialgeschichtliche Studien zur Frühen Neuzeit, München 2005, p. 153–175.

[8] Alice KLÁŠTERSKÁ, *Výběr partnera a sňatkový věk dědiců venkovských usedlostí na Štáhlavsku a jejich sourozenců v 18. a na počátku 19. století*, Historická demografie 22, 1998, p. 145–168; Alice VELKOVÁ, *Household Formation in Bohemia: Inheritance Practice and Family Strategy, 17th–19th Centuries*, Český časopis historický 109, 2011, p. 328–343.

[9] Alice VELKOVÁ, *Marriage and Property Transfer in Rural Western Bohemia 1700–1850*, in: A.-L. Head-König – P. Pozsgai (eds.), *Inheritance Practices, Marriage Strategies and Household Formation in European Rural Societies*, p. 101–125.

[10] Josef GRULICH – Markéta SKOŘEPOVÁ, *Rodinná kontinuita a venkovské hospodářství. Držba poddanských usedlostí v 17. až 19. století jako historiografický problém*, Český časopis historický 113, 2015, p. 50–75.

or refuse to take over the holding). The position of the successor fundamentally differed from that of his brothers. Hence, analysing the influence of birth order on marriage would only be possible for those sons who did not become heirs. This, however, was impossible for many families due to biological limitations: as a result of high child mortality there was often only one son who survived into adulthood. In 18th and early 19th century Bohemia, this was the case on an average of 27–32% of the cases in which landholding was transferred from father to son. Cases in which more than two sons survived were not frequent enough to allow for a particular analysis.^[11] As for the daughters, the situation was quite different. Their starting position was virtually equal, and the different conditions of their marriage depended on a particular family strategy in which birth order may have played a major role.

The present study deals with the years 1700–1850. Although this is a relatively long period covering 150 years, from a demographic point of view, it can be considered homogeneous, as there are not yet any significant changes in rural areas that could affect the results of this research (e.g. increasing life expectancy leading to a reduction in remarriage or a fertility regulation).^[12]

Geographical area of research and methods used

Geographically, the research is limited to four localities which, during the studied period, belonged to the Štáhlavy estate near Pilsen in Western Bohemia, a region remarkable for its proto-industrial production of iron which had developed here since the 16th century^[13] which, among other things, is of particular interest due to its position on the border between the Western European and Eastern European family type.^[14] The basic principles of family and household formation (simple family household, neolocalism, domestic service) as well as a relatively late marriage age place it within the Western European type,^[15] in

[11] Alice VELKOVÁ, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní? Proměny venkovské rodiny a společnosti v 18. a první polovině 19. století na příkladu západočeského panství Štáhlavy*, Praha 2009, p. 200; Hermann ZEITLHOFER, *Besitzwechsel und sozialer Wandel. Lebensläufe und sozioökonomische Entwicklungen im südlichen Böhmerwald, 1640–1840*, Wien 2014, p. 214.

[12] Ludmila FIALOVÁ, *Vývoj sňatečnosti a plodnosti obyvatelstva českých zemí v 19. století*, Historická demografie 12, 1987, p. 207–224; Ludmila FIALOVÁ a kol., *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí*, Praha 1996.

[13] Alice VELKOVÁ, *Die Herrschaft Štáhlavy: Wirtschaft, soziale Strukturen und Demographie*, in: Markus Cerman – Hermann Zeitlhofer (eds.), *Soziale Strukturen in Böhmen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Wien – München 2001, p. 29–41.

[14] John HAJNAL, *European Marriage Patterns in Perspective*, in: David V. Glass – David E. C. Everseley (eds.), *Population in History*, London 1965, p. 101–143.

[15] Markus CERMAN, *Central Europe and the „European Marriage Pattern“: Marriage Patterns and Family Structure in Central Europe, Sixteenth through Nineteenth Centuries*, in: Richard

which thanks to the principle of impartible inheritance the heir enjoyed a special position (*Anerberecht*). Around 1700, these localities contained a total of approximately 1,000 inhabitants, living in 130 houses. Over the following 150 years, the estate saw considerable population growth, so that by 1850 these four localities numbered c. 2,800 people, living in 300 houses.^[16]

Trying to answer the complex questions raised above requires a thorough examination of various sources. My research is chiefly based on parish registers (1650–1850),^[17] which were used to carry out a family reconstitution. Parish registers also provided essential information on the socioeconomic status of people, which was further refined by data contained in land registers started in 1694–1695^[18] and population lists from the 19th century.^[19]

Based on family reconstitution, I selected those families which were formed in 1701–1820 and belonged to the class of farmers (*sedláci, Bauern*), who held the largest plots of land (usually more than 6 ha).^[20] At the same time, I considered only those families in which at least three children (both daughters and sons) were born and survived into adulthood (including in different married couples).

Wall – Tamara K. Hareven – Josef Ehmer – Markus Cerman (eds.), *Family History Revisited. Comparative Perspectives*, Newark – London 2001, p. 282–307.

[16] Johann Gottfried SOMMER, *Das Königreich Böhmen, statistisch-topographisch dargestellt*, 6. Bd., Pilsner Kreis, Prag 1838, p. 82–83; František PALACKÝ, *Popis Království českého*, Praha 1848, p. 390.

[17] Extraction of data was always carried out from the oldest register (i.e. for the register of births from 1651, the register of marriages from 1661 and the death records from 1708) and terminated for the register of births in 1834 (for Lhůta in 1850), for the register of marriages in 1855; for the deceased the data were searched as far as the registers contained in the archives allowed – the most recent registers were available for the village of Lhůta – until 1938, which made it possible to determine with certainty the date of death of all the persons born before 1835. For the other localities, the death records terminate earlier – for Starý Plzeňec in 1895, for Sedlec in 1893 and for Štáhlavy as early as 1877. Státní oblastní archiv (hereinafter SOA) Plzeň, roman-catholic (hereinafter r. c.) vicarage at Starý Plzeňec, volume number 1–9, 12, 15–18, 21, 23, 25, 26, 31, 34, 35; ibidem, r. c. vicarage at Štáhlavy, volume number 1–6.

[18] Two isolated records, dating respectively to 1686 and 1691, appear in the land registers. SOA Praha, Collection of State land registers (hereinafter LR) Blovice n. 133–139, 161, 168; LR Plzeň n. 134–136; LR Rokycany, n. 233, 268, 270, 273–276.

[19] SOA Praha, collection Štáhlavy Estate, Conscription of population of Starý Plzeňec, i. n. 169, year 1775; List of subjects, i. n. 43–49, years 1802–1817; Lists of population for the purposes of capitation tax, i. n. 201–204, years 1816–1824. Státní okresní archiv (hereinafter SOKA) Plzeň-south based in Blovice, collection Archives of the vicarage of Starý Plzeňec, i. n. 3a, Condition of souls, year 1838; Národní archiv (hereinafter NA), collection List of subjects by religion 1651, volume number SM R 109/45, P–K 86.

[20] Markus CERMAN – Eduard MAUR, *Proměny vesnických sociálních struktur v Čechách 1650–1750*, *Český časopis historický* 98, 2000, p. 737–773; M. CERMAN – R. LUFT (eds.), *Untertanen, Herrschaft und Staat in Böhmen und im „Alten Reich“*.

Families in which one of the daughters inherited the farm were excluded from the sample. In the end, I selected 94 families, with a total of 969 children (533 boys and 436 girls), out of whom 42.9% died before reaching 20 years of age, which means that 297 men and 256 women lived into adulthood (and hence could enter into marriage). It is these 256 women that formed the final sample. On average, 10.3 children were born per family, of which 5.9 survived to adulthood (of which 2.7 were daughters).

Methodologically, this study is based on descriptive data analysis. I am aware of the fact that the statistical significance of the presented results would need to be verified by multivariate analysis. However, in this particular case, I do not consider this method to be the most appropriate, as the sample of 256 women is not very large and there could be an excessive dilution of the data, which could distort the finding of such testing.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF SURVIVING PEASANT DAUGHTERS, ŠTÁHLAVY (1701–1820)

Number of adult daughters in the family	Number of families	%
1	21	22.3
2	23	24.5
3	22	23.4
4	19	20.2
5	8	8.5
6	–	–
7	1	1.1
Total	94	100.0

Source: see footnote 17–19; own calculation.

In general, the composition of the family determined the position of the children in the marriage market. This meant that the number and sex of the sibling, as well as the age gaps between them, and, quite naturally, their birth order, were of utmost importance.^[21] At the same time, however, equally important was the strategy which the parents adopted in order to secure the future of their offspring. Here, they had several options to choose from. They may have tried to distribute the compensation more or less evenly among their children. Or they may have preferred to try to maintain at least some of their children in the social class of farmers at the expense of others. In other words, they might have decided to buy out some of their children even before the property transfer occurred and may

[21] L. PAKOT, *Family Composition, Birth Order and Timing*; Bianca SUANET – Hilde BRAS, *Sibling Position and Marriage timing in the Netherlands, 1840–1922: A Comparison across Social Classes, Local Context, and Time*, *Journal of Family History*, 39 (2), 2014, 126–139.

have given them in principle larger shares than their remaining siblings. Also important were the available economic resources whose distribution was decisive for the future status of the non-successors.^[22] At the same time, the number of available resources could vary over time, since it depended on the size and composition of the family which changed in relation to the family cycle.^[23]

In order to compare the different strategies applied to daughters of a particular birth order and to study the different positions of these women in the marriage market, I divided the peasant daughters into four categories. The first category is made up of the only daughters in a family, since we may presume that these girls did not have to share finances or any other means with any of their sisters and therefore enjoyed the best position in the marriage market. The remaining women have been further divided into three more categories, based on whether they were the youngest, middle or eldest daughters (the category „middle“, applied to all the daughters between the two extremes). At the same time, I took into account the birth order only to the extent to which the siblings survived into adulthood, given that from the point of view of marriage strategy what mattered was the order of the bride when she was getting married. The elder and younger sisters who died during childhood were logically excluded from the analysis. In some cases, I took special account of those girls who grew up as the eldest or the youngest child in absolute terms, i.e. regardless of sex.

In order to find out how a particular birth order influenced marriage, it was indispensable to gather as much information as possible on the adult lives of these peasant daughters. In the first place, I tried to establish whether a particular girl did or did not marry. For the married daughters, I analysed their marriage age and the characteristics of their partners. When possible, I also tried to look up the age, family status and social category of the husband. As regards the husband's social status, I considered his social position either at the time of marriage (if he had already established his position in society by then) or in the first few years after the wedding (usually when the couple had their first child). I did not take the possible improvement in the family's social status achieved in later years into account, since my chief objective was to find out whether the women, through their marriage, managed to remain in the class of farmers or whether they fell to the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. Another factor which I observed was whether the bride's father was still alive when she married.

The earlier-mentioned inheritance practice played a major role in my research. The time period covered by this study, 1701–1850, is worthy of attention given that a major change in inheritance practice took place in Bohemia over those decades. Until as late as the end of the 18th century, no unified inheritance system existed in Bohemia. It was the landlords of different estates who formulated and decided

[22] B. SUANET – H. BRAS, *Sibling Position and Marriage Timing*, p. 126–129.

[23] Alexander V. CHAYANOV, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, Madison 1986.

upon the rules governing inheritance practice, which, as a consequence, may have differed from region to region.^[24] In the 18th century, it was most often the existing holder's youngest son who inherited the holding (the system of ultimogeniture).^[25] In 1787, Emperor Joseph II issued a patent stipulating that if the holder died without leaving a testament naming his heir, it was his eldest son who would be appointed as his successor (the system of primogeniture).^[26] Previously one year before, in 1786, holders were granted the right to leave a testament,^[27] but until that time they were not allowed to choose their heirs freely without the permission of the landlord.^[28]

In the concrete case of the Šťáhlavy estate, the result of this change was as follows: while in 1691–1787 the youngest son inherited the property in 73% of the cases and in 10% of the cases preference was given to the eldest son, then in 1788–1850 the eldest son was appointed as heir in the majority of cases (38%), followed by the youngest (36%) and the second eldest son (5%).^[29]

To establish whether this change in the inheritance system exercised any influence on the marriage conditions of the heir's sisters, I divided the women in my sample into two groups based on the period in which their original family was established. The first group was made up of daughters born into families formed in 1701–1770, who still followed the traditional pattern of appointing the youngest son as heir. The second group included daughters born into families formed in 1770–1820. The decisive moment for establishing the year in which a particular family was formed was the year of the first marriage concluded by the father, his possible subsequent marriages being classified as a continuation of the same family. If the exact date of the marriage could not be found, the decisive year was that in which the first child was born into the family. The year 1770 has

[24] V. PROCHÁZKA, *Česká poddanská nemovitost*.

[25] E. MAUR, *Das bäuerliche Erbrecht und die Erbschaftspraxis*; Alice VELKOVÁ, *Transformations of Rural Society between 1700–1850*, *Historica* 13, 2008, p. 109–158; A. VELKOVÁ, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní*, p. 150–174.

[26] Joseph KROPATSCHKEK (ed.), *Handbuch aller unter der Regierung des Kaisers Joseph II. für die k. k. Erbländer eingegangenen Verordnungen und Gesetze vom Jahre 1780 bis 1789*, vol. 13, Wien 1789, p. 89.

[27] Joseph KROPATSCHKEK (ed.), *Handbuch aller unter der Regierung des Kaisers Joseph II. für die k. k. Erbländer eingegangenen Verordnungen und Gesetze vom Jahre 1780 bis 1789*, vol. 10, Wien 1788, p. 89–92.

[28] Karl GUTKAS, *Probleme der Landwirtschaft zur Zeit Maria Theresias*, in: Helmuth Feigl (ed.), *Die Auswirkungen der theresianisch-josephinischen Reformen auf die Landwirtschaft und die ländliche Sozialstruktur Niederösterreichs*. Vorträge und Diskussionen des ersten Symposiums des Niederösterreichischen Institutes für Landeskunde Geras 9.–11. Oktober 1980, Wien 1982, p. 1–35; Roman ROSDOLSKY, *Untertan und Staat in Galizien: die Reformen unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II.* (ed. Ralph Melville), Mainz am Rhein 1992.

[29] A. VELKOVÁ, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní*, p. 192–211.

been chosen as a watershed between the two periods since it was not unusual for peasant families that the last child was born as late as twenty years after the wedding (or even later, in the case of subsequent marriages by the same father). For those families which were set up after 1770, it is therefore highly probable that all of their children were coming of age at a time when the rule of primogeniture was already fully implemented. Further in the text, these two groups of daughters or periods will be referred to as the *first* group/period and the *second* group/period.

Out of the total number of 94 families, 48 were formed in the first and 46 in the second period. The first group of daughters consisted of 123 girls. In ten families, a total of seventeen girls were born after 1770 (precisely from 1773–1786). The second group consisted of 133 girls. In eight families, a total of 14 girls were born in 1773–1787, while in the remaining 38 families all the daughters were born after 1787, at a time when the rule of primogeniture was already applicable.

Marriage circumstances

In the following analysis, I will attempt to find out whether any substantial differences in the conditions influencing the first marriage of peasant daughters can be ascribed to their birth order and also whether any changes occurred in these cases after the new inheritance law was introduced in 1787. One of the key questions is how large the percentage of women who did not marry at all was. Some studies indicate that the probability of not getting married as well as the marriage age increased proportionally to the number of siblings in the family.^[30] However, no such trend could be observed in the Štáhlavy region.

If we examine the sample of 256 women, we can see in Table 3 that for 83.6% of them it was possible to prove that they entered into marriage; 7.8% of the women died unmarried in their adulthood. At the same time, however, 40% of the women who demonstrably did not marry, died prematurely. Their age at death was between 21–27 years, and it is therefore impossible to exclude the fact that at least some of them would have married if they had not died at such an early age. For the remaining women (8.6%), marriage records could not be found due to migration. At the same time, the daughters from the second group had a better chance of getting married than those in the first group, as the figures clearly show: in the second period, at least 88% of the women did marry compared to 78.9% in the first period. Also, the percentage of women who remained single appears to be lower in the second period: in the first period, single women accounted for 10.6% (the maximum could have been up to 21% if we suppose that all those women for

[30] Sofia HOLMLUND, *Family Strategies or Individual Choice? Marriage and Inheritance in a Rural Swedish Community, 1810–1930*, in: A.-L. Head-König – P. Pozsgai (eds.), *Inheritance Practices, Marriage Strategies and Household Formation*, p. 231–260, here p. 242–243; J. MARFANY, *Choices and Constraints*, p. 88–90.

which we have no available data remained single), compared to 5.3–12% in the second period. This result seems to confirm earlier studies which also showed that in certain regions of Bohemia, the percentage of women who never married in the middle of the 18th century was as much as twice as high as at the beginning of the 19th century.^[31]

TABLE 2. MARRIAGE OF DAUGHTERS BORN IN THE ANALYSED FARMER FAMILIES, ŠTÁHLAVY (1701–1820)

Formation of family		Total	Entering into marriage				Husband's family status	
			Yes	No (lived to age 30 at least)	No (died before reaching 30)	Unknown	Widower	Unknown
1701–1770	N	123	97	7	6	13	19	8
	%	100.0	78.9	5.7	4.9	10.5	19.6	8.2
1771–1820	N	133	117	5	2	9	11	3
	%	100.0	88.0	3.8	1.5	6.7	9.4	2.6

Source: see footnote 17–19; own calculation.

There were also other factors in which the availability of marriage differed for the women in the two groups. For example, compared to the women in the second group, the women from the first group had to marry a widower as their first husband much more often. This was the case for at least one fifth of the daughters from the first group but could have possibly concerned as many as 28%. Compared to that, only 9–12% of the women born in the second period married a widower. Considering the social class of the brides, the percentage of widowed bridegrooms in the first period is surprisingly large. These young women did, after all, come from families at the top of the rural social hierarchy and they might therefore have been expected to have the best possible starting position to get married. Moreover, they also had a wider choice of suitors. The results show, however, that it is likely that not all peasant daughters were able to profit from their social status and that even within this social category, certain women were for some reason disadvantaged in the marriage market. This suggests that the mere fact that one belonged to the class of full peasant holders did not automatically guarantee that the family was rich enough to provide a corresponding dowry for all its daughters. What could really make a difference was the momentary economic situation of

[31] Karel DUDÁČEK – Ludmila FIALOVÁ – Pavla HORSKÁ – Marie RÉPÁSOVÁ – Miloš SLÁDEK, *On Using the 1661–1839 Lists of Subjects of the Třeboň Dominion to Study the Age Structure of the Population*, *Historická demografie* 13, 1989, p. 59–124, here p. 93, 107; Ladislav DUŠEK – Ludmila FIALOVÁ, *Age Structure of the Population of Česká Kamenice in 1670–1750*, *Historická demografie* 13, 1989, p. 125–160, here p. 149–152.

the family.^[32] As a consequence, the eldest and the youngest children in the family could have been coming of age in different economic conditions and this could have influenced the marriage strategy of their family.

Another important aspect to consider was the family constellation in which the marriage took place. As a rule, it was the head of the household, most frequently the father, who had the decisive say in the selection of a partner and the timing of marriage. It was precisely the authority of the parents which played an important role in formulating the marriage strategy. The stronger the authority, the higher the family was positioned in the rural social hierarchy.^[33] Some studies show that in a traditional agricultural society, this type of authority survived far into the 19th century when it started to give way to the new concept of romantic love as described by the theories of E. Shorter and L. Stone.^[34] It is also clear that not all the children felt parental authority equally. In some families, there was a considerable age gap between the eldest and the youngest children, especially if these were born in different marriages of the same father. Sometimes, the father did not even live long enough to see his youngest children come of age.^[35]

My data show that approximately one third of the daughters in each period lost their fathers before they became adults and could start thinking of marriage. Quite possibly for at least some of these girls their father's death may have resulted in a profound change in their lives, making them leave their original family, which could sometimes mean that they never married. Among those women who demonstrably did get married, 52% in the first group married while their father was still alive compared to the slightly higher 56% in the second group. Although at first glance there does not seem to be much difference between the two groups in this respect, in reality, the girls in the two periods concerned were in markedly different situations.

During the first period, the father died mostly when the appointed heir was still a minor. In the Štáhlavy region, 35% of the successors were under the age of 10 which in practice meant that 83% of the intergenerational property transfers

[32] S. HOLMLUND, *Family Strategies or Individual Choice*, p. 243–244.

[33] Matthis KALMIJN, *Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends*, Annual Review of Sociology 24, 1994, p. 395–421.

[34] Edward SHORTER, *The Making of the Modern Family*, New York 1976; See also Lawrence STONE, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*, New York 1977; Hans Henrik BULL, *Deciding Whom to Marry in a Rural Two-Class Society: Social Homogamy and Constraints in the Marriage Market in Rendalen, Norway, 1750–1900*, in: Marco H. D. Leeuwen – Ineke Maas – Andrew Miles (eds.), *Marriage Choices and Class Boundaries: Social Endogamy in History*, International Review of Social History Monograph, Cambridge 2005, p. 43–64, here p. 44–46.

[35] Renzo DEROSAS – Michel ORIS (eds.), *When Dad Died. Individuals and Families Coping with Family Stress in Past Societies*, Bern 2002; Markéta SKOŘEPOVÁ, *Ovdovění a osiření ve venkovské společnosti. Panství Nový Rychnov (1785–1855)*, České Budějovice 2016.

in 1691–1787 occurred only after the father had died. After the inheritance law changed, the situation in this respect improved significantly. A mere 16% of the successors were under 10, which meant that in 45% of the transfers the father was still alive.^[36] As was already mentioned, the moment of property transfers usually coincided with the allocation of inheritance shares to all the offspring of the original farm holder. In the first period discussed, orphaned girls would often find themselves in a very inconvenient situation. As was already explained, the management of the farm was often entrusted to an interim holder, who was not obliged to pay back possible debts or shares, which certainly did not enhance the economic prosperity of the landholding. Neither did he care too much to secure the future of the deceased farmer's children. If anything, he was more concerned with his own children born from his marriage to the widow of the deceased farmer. The interim holder also tried to manage the farm for as long as possible and the rightful heir was sometimes unable to get hold of his property until relatively late, definitely later than if the property had been transferred directly from his father. Moreover, the interim tenure may have aggravated the debt of the landholding and lowered its value. As a result, when inheritance shares were finally determined, the offspring of the original farmer sometimes had to put up with considerably lower shares than they would have obtained if the shares had been determined right after their father's death. Often, the orphaned daughters had no idea of when and how large an amount they would obtain, which was detrimental to their marriage prospects.

All this changed after the new inheritance practice started to apply in 1787. Not only did almost one half of the fathers transfer their landholding to their sons while still alive, but, compared to the first period, a considerably larger percentage of the successors could take charge of the holding immediately after their father's death since they were already adult and there was, therefore, no need to appoint an interim holder. Other research also shows that children orphaned at a young age had worse marriage prospects compared to children who lost their fathers as adults.^[37] While in 1691–1787 an interim holder had to be appointed in 53% of the intergenerational property transfers, for an average of 14 years of interim tenure, in the period 1788–1850 he was appointed in only 18% for an average time of 10 years.^[38] At the same time, given that since 1786 farmers were allowed to write a testament, the father could decide about the individual inheritance shares in advance in case he died before his children became adults. All these factors positively influenced the property rights of orphaned peasant daughters. Even if their father died, it was much clearer than before 1787 what share of the

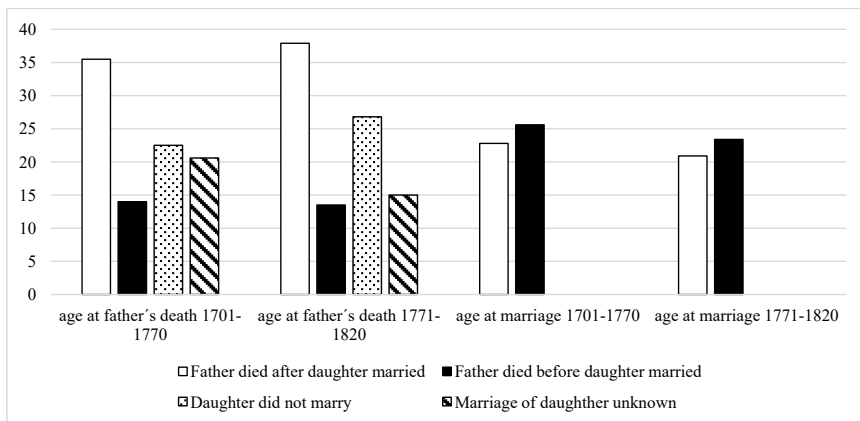
[36] A. VELKOVÁ, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní*, p. 195, 215–217.

[37] L. PAKOT, *Family Composition, Birth Order and Timing*, p. 147.

[38] A. VELKOVÁ, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní*, p. 132–133, 262–265.

inheritance a daughter would obtain and what dowry she would be able to bring to her future husband. The following section looks more closely at how these changes were reflected in our sample.

FIGURE 1. MEAN AGE OF DAUGHTERS AT THEIR MARRIAGE AND THEIR MEAN AGE AT THEIR FATHER'S DEATH, ŠTÁHLAVY (1701-1820)



Source: see footnote 17-19; own calculation.

The data show that peasant daughters who were coming of age without a father were indeed seriously disadvantaged when entering into marriage compared to daughters whose father was still alive. This is an interesting result since a similar study in Norway proved this relation in the case of sons but not daughters.^[39] This disadvantage is most evident when examining marriage age. In fact, across the whole time period covered, women who married while their father was still alive married on average three years earlier than those whose fathers died before they could reach this important milestone in their lives. In the first group, while fifty percent of the daughters who married during their father's lifetime did so before 22 years of age, only 29% of those who married after their father's death, managed to do so by the same age. Similarly, in the second group, 71% of the peasant daughters whose father was still alive married before age 22, compared to only 40% of those whose father had died.

The differences between fatherless and non-fatherless brides did not concern only their marriage age. Fatherless women also had to often lower their expectations concerning their partner choice, especially those who were born in the first period. Their future partner was more frequently (in 56.7% of the cases) over 30 years old and often came from a lower social class than the bride. Not only was

[39] H. H. BULL, *Deciding Whom to Marry in a Rural Two-Class Society*, p. 57-60.

the brides' marriage age higher, but also the partners of fatherless women were on average three years older than the partners of those women whose marriage could be controlled by their fathers. Among the men who married fatherless women only 23% were farmers, while for those brides who still had a father, the percentage of full peasant holders was more than 50%.

The differences between the fatherless and non-fatherless brides were not so profound in the second period, although even here girls who married while their fathers were still alive, were clearly in a better position. The fundamental difference between fatherless and non-fatherless women concerned the marriage age of the brides themselves as well as that of their partners. As regards the socioeconomic origin and family status of the husbands, the differences were less obvious here than in the first period. The conclusion to be drawn from all of this is that the change of inheritance law which reduced the need to appoint an interim holder positively influenced the marriage circumstances of orphaned peasant daughters.

Naturally, the youngest children were hit the hardest by the death of their father. This is why I also looked into whether the youngest daughters really were the most disadvantaged in the marriage market when their father died. Birth order was crucial for whether the girl entered into a homogamous marriage based on the criteria of age, family and socioeconomic status. Was it the eldest daughters who profited the most from their birth order? Or was birth order not so decisive after all? Did the situation change in any way after the inheritance law reform?

The first question I analyzed relates to how many girls from each category entered into marriage at all and how often, in their first marriage, they had to marry a widower. As I already mentioned, the overall context of marriage was less favourable for women in the first period. At the same time, in both periods we can observe various differences resulting from the birth order of siblings who survived into adulthood.

In the first period, the disadvantages of being the youngest daughter are evident. Although records show that there was only one woman who died unmarried, it does not seem very likely that all the remaining youngest daughters managed to marry. For one quarter of this category, in fact, no data are available. This may in part be due to the fact that these women had to often bear the consequences of their father's death while still underage (in only 27.3% of the cases do we have evidence that the father was still alive when these women were getting married). It is possible that their father's death changed the course of their lives and they had to leave the home and seek refuge with their kin or do domestic service on someone else's farm.^[40] Be that as it may, we have no available records for nearly

[40] Martin DRIBE, *Leaving Home in a Peasant Society. Economic Fluctuations, Household Dynamics and Youth Migration in Southern Sweden, 1829–1866*, Södrtälje 2000, p. 129–136; Kevin MCQUILLAN, *Family Composition, Birth Order and Marriage Patterns: Evidence from Rural Alsace, 1750–1885*, *Annales de démographie historique* 115 (1), 2008, p. 57–71, here p. 67.

one quarter of these women, and we are therefore unable to establish whether they married or not. When the youngest daughters did marry, though, they had to make do with a widower with a lower socioeconomic status much more often than their sisters. At least one third of the youngest daughters did in fact marry a widower; the percentage of marriages to a widower may even be higher if we add those spouses whose family status could not be ascertained. More than half of the bridegrooms were cottagers, craftsmen, or houseless lodgers at the time of marriage, and only one third counted themselves among full peasant holders.

TABLE 3. SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF PEASANT DAUGHTER MARRIAGES IN RELATION TO THEIR BIRTH ORDER (FAMILIES FORMED IN 1701-1770)

From children who survived childhood		N	Did not marry (lived until 30 at least)	Did not marry (died before reaching 30)	Unknown	Widowed husband	Family status of husband unknown	Husband farmer
Eldest daughters	N	36	4	2	1	3	3	14
	%	29.4	11.1	5.6	2.8	10.3	10.3	48.3
Youngest daughters	N	34	–	1	8	8	2	8
	%	27.0	–	2.9	23.5	32.0	12.8	32.0
Only daughters	N	12	1	1	1	2	–	3
	%	8.7	8.3	8.3	8.3	22.2	–	33.3
Other daughters	N	41	2	2	3	6	3	13
	%	34.9	4.9	4.9	7.3	17.6	8.8	38.3
Total	N	123	7	6	13	19	8	38
	%	100.0	5.7	4.9	10.6	19.6	8.2	39.2

Source: see footnote 17–19; own calculation.

The fact that the youngest daughters were the most seriously disadvantaged group in the marriage market is further supported by the finding that the marriage circumstances of the remaining categories of daughters did not differ so substantially.^[41] Concerning the choice of partner, it was probably the eldest daughters who benefitted the most from their birth order. They married a widower only in 10 to 20% of the cases and in half the cases, they married a farmer. In this latter respect, their position was even better than that of the only daughters, whose condition, surprisingly, does not differ much from that of the other categories. One reason for this may be that only one fifth of the only daughters married during their father's lifetime and, like other groups, had to overcome the disadvantages suffered by fatherless women.

[41] J. MARFANY, *Choices and Constrains*, p. 92–95.

TABLE 4. SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF PEASANT DAUGHTER MARRIAGES IN RELATION TO THEIR BIRTH ORDER (FAMILIES FORMED IN 1771-1820)

From children who survived childhood		N	Did not marry (lived until 30 at least)	Did not marry (died before reaching 30)	Unknown	Widowed husband	Status of husband unknown	Husband farmer
Eldest daughters	N	38	1	1	2	5	1	16
	%	29.3	2.6	2.6	5.3	14.7	2.9	47.1
Youngest daughters	N	38	0	0	5	3	0	17
	%	27.8	0.0	0.0	13.2	9.1	0.0	51.5
Only daughters	N	8	0	1	0	1	0	7
	%	5.2	0.0	12.5	0.0	14.3	0.0	100.0
Other daughters	N	49	4	0	2	2	2	10
	%	36.8	8.0	2.0	4.0	4.7	4.7	23.3
Total	N	133	5	2	9	11	3	50
	%	100.0	3.8	1.5	6.8	9.4	2.6	42.7

Source: see footnote 17-19; own calculation.

Let us now see whether the new inheritance practice led to any changes. It appears that as concerns the availability of marriage and the proportion of widowers as the first husbands, there was little difference between the individual categories of daughters in the second period. No disadvantages whatsoever appear for the youngest daughters; on the contrary, they married the lowest number of widowers (9.1%) of all the categories. Also, from the point of view of the social status of the partner, the youngest daughters entered into the most convenient marriages, since 52% of their partners were full peasant holders and 15% were smallholders. Similarly, the eldest daughters married full peasant holders in 47% and a smallholder in 27% of the cases. It appears that it was the category of the middle daughters, whose prospects were the worst. They had a somewhat lower chance of maintaining their current social status by entering into marriage – here, the percentage of those who married full peasant holders and smallholders was in both cases 23%. Clearly, the only daughters profited most from their status in the family, since all of them married a full peasant holder even though one of them (9%) had to make do with a widower.

To summarize, my analysis has shown that the change of inheritance law generally improved the overall situation concerning the availability of marriage and the possibility of attaining a socially homogamous marriage for peasant daughters, although it needs to be seen whether other factors, such as new social or economic developments, could have also contributed to this improvement. Daughters born in the first period did not marry at all in 11-21%. Those who did

marry had to marry a widower in 20–28% of the cases, and only 40% of the girls married a full peasant holder and 14% married a smallholder. In contrast to that, girls from the second group married generally more often (only 5–12% remained single) and they more frequently married a single man (i.e. the bridegroom was a widower only in 9–12% of the marriages), 43% of the brides managed to maintain their social status by marrying a full peasant holder and a further 21% ended up marrying a smallholder. The fact that after 1787 there was less need to appoint an interim holder and that inheritance shares were often allocated before all the children became adults resulted in an equal distribution of shares for all the daughters. This reduced the disadvantages stemming from being the youngest daughter, birth order was progressively losing its importance and the differences between daughters of different birth orders were becoming less significant.

After examining the general context of the marriage of peasant daughters in different sibling positions, let us now focus more closely on the marriage age of these women and their husbands. Here, too, we will attempt to find out first whether there were any differences in marriage age depending on birth order and second whether any changes in this respect occurred after the new inheritance practice was implemented in 1787. We shall also see whether there was any such correlation with the marriage age of the husbands. Besides that, I will look more closely at the category of the youngest and the eldest daughters. I will try to find out whether even within these two categories there were any differences in marriage age and the various characteristics of the husbands. In particular, it would be interesting to verify whether a woman's future could vary based on whether she was the eldest (or youngest) child in absolute terms, or merely the eldest (youngest) daughter, who had an older (younger) brother.

Marriage age of peasant daughters and their husbands

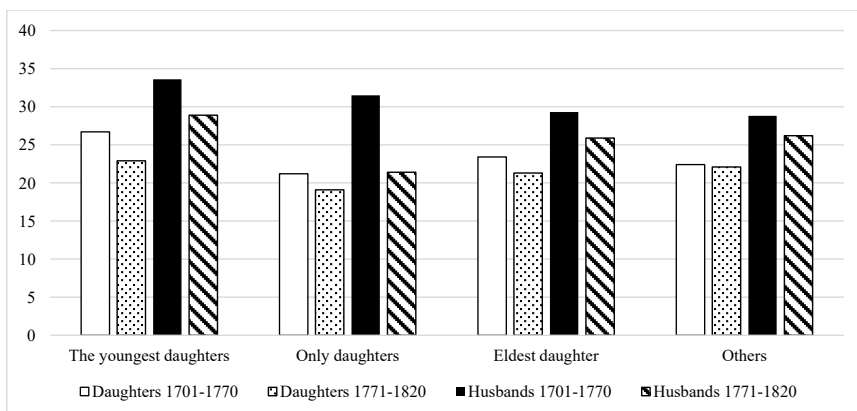
Generally, girls in the peasant class married earlier than women from other social strata. While the overall mean age at first marriage for women on the Štáhľavy estate was 25 years in the period 1721–1787 and 24.3 years in the period 1788–1850,^[42] which corresponded to the mean marriage age in the Bohemian countryside,^[43] peasant daughters usually married on average 1.5 to 2 years earlier.^[44] This trend, however, applies only to the mean marriage age since among peasant women there were also those individuals who married significantly later than their sisters and whose age at marriage was much the same as that of the houseless lodgers.

[42] A. VELKOVÁ, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní*, p. 377.

[43] L. FIALOVÁ a kol., *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí*, p. 159–160.

[44] A. VELKOVÁ, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní*, p. 386.

FIGURE 2. MEAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE OF PEASANT DAUGHTERS AND THEIR HUSBANDS ACCORDING TO DAUGHTERS' BIRTH ORDER AND THE PERIOD



Source: see footnote 17–19; own calculation.

It is not surprising that it was those peasant daughters who had no sister surviving into adulthood who married the earliest. Although they were not numerous in either of the two periods (there were 12 and 8 of them in the first and second periods respectively), it is nevertheless evident that, compared to daughters who did have sisters, they married much more often before they reached 20 – most of the only daughters married between 15 and 19 (44% and 71% in the first and the second period respectively), whereas only 27% of the women who had sisters married before the age of 20 in the first period and only one third in the second period. The favourable position of the only daughters is especially evident among women born in the second period, which is in line with the above-described general circumstances of marriage in this group. Not only did all the only daughters marry a full peasant holder, but their spouses were also considerably younger than the husbands of the other peasant daughters. Their mean marriage age in the second period was only 21.4 years (compared to the first period when husbands of the only daughters were rather old, their mean age being 31.5 years).

In contrast to that, those girls who survived into adulthood as the youngest daughters in the family tended to get married the latest. In both periods studied, the youngest daughters (excluding the only daughters) married later compared to their sisters. This difference was most evident in the first period when their mean age at first marriage approached 26.7, which was more typical of men than women. Compared to that, other daughters married on average 3 to 4 years earlier. The youngest daughters were even more disadvantaged when they did not have any younger brothers. Under such circumstances, women married as late as the age of 28

on average, and their husbands' mean marriage age was almost 36. This high marriage age reflects the fact that fifty percent of these women married a widower. Moreover, their husbands were not a good match from the socioeconomic point of view either – at most 30% of them were full peasant holders at the time of marriage.

TABLE 5. SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FIRST MARRIAGE OF THE YOUNGEST PEASANT DAUGHTERS ACCORDING TO THEIR POSITION IN THE FAMILY

From children who survived childhood (excluding only daughters)	N	Mean age at the first marriage	Husband		
			Mean age at the first marriage	% of widowers	% of farmers
Family formed in 1701–1770					
The youngest daughters	25	26.7	33.6	32.0–44.8	32.0–36.0
The youngest daughters who had a younger brother	14	25.5	31.5	21.4–28.5	35.7
The youngest daughters who were the youngest child	11	28.1	35.9	45.5–54.6	27.3–30.0
Family formed in 1771–1820					
The youngest daughters	33	22.9	28.9	9.1	51.5
The youngest daughters who had a younger brother	18	23.0	29.0	5.6	66.7
The youngest daughters who were the youngest child	15	22.8	28.8	13.3	46.7

Source: see footnote 17–19; own calculation.

As I mentioned earlier, even in the second period the youngest peasant daughters married the latest (22.9) of all the categories as well as their husbands (28.9). Nevertheless, the age differences between them and the other categories were not as large as in the first period, and what's more, in contrast to the first period, they no longer had to put up with the other disadvantages, such as marrying proportionately more widowers and fewer full peasant holders. Moreover, unlike in the first period, in the second period, there were no differences in marriage age among the youngest daughters resulting from their different position in the family, i.e. from being the youngest child in absolute terms or having a younger brother.

As for the eldest daughters, they were also influenced by the changes brought about by the modification of inheritance practice in 1787. If we look at the marriage age of all the daughters who, in the first period, grew up as the eldest, we can see that their mean marriage age was one year higher than that of their younger (but not the youngest) sisters. On closer inspection, though, this one-year average

difference was due to a few brides who married at a significantly older age than the remaining eldest daughters (the median age in the category of eldest and middle daughters was the same). A more detailed analysis of the data also shows that there was a significant difference between those girls who were born (or grew up) as the oldest child in the family in absolute terms and those who had at least one older brother.

While the situation of the first-born daughters was similar to that of the most disadvantaged youngest daughters, those girls who had an older brother enjoyed the most favourable marriage conditions. The difference in marriage age between the two groups was almost six years for the brides and it was even larger for the marriage age of their partners. There were other differences here as well. While 25–33% of the first-born daughters married a widower and only slightly more than one third of their husbands belonged to the full peasant holder class, those girls who had an older brother married a widower in only one tenth of the cases, and their husband was a full peasant holder in 60 to 70%.

Those girls who were not first born but became the eldest children in the family due to their elder siblings' death, had a somewhat lower marriage age (25.8) than the first-born daughters, which, however, was still higher than the mean across the total sample of all the peasant daughters. Explaining the reasons underlying such differences would require a detailed analysis of family constellations. It is possible that the first-born daughters, of all the siblings, were those who were the most adversely affected by the disadvantages of an inheritance system privileging the youngest son of the farmer. They may have had to wait until the heir's adulthood to receive their inheritance share which made them postpone their own marriage. On the other hand, it is also quite likely that at least some of the older brothers of the eldest daughters were designated as heirs, and if they married before their sisters became adults, it could have lowered their sisters' marriage age.

As for the second period, the picture is quite different. If we exclude the only daughters, it was the eldest daughters who married at the earliest age (21.3), virtually independent of whether they were first-born or not. On the other hand, those eldest daughters who had at least one older brother had slightly worse prospects than those in the first period. In any event, we may assume that any marriage that took place in a family influenced the family strategy and the future prospects of the remaining siblings. Before 1787, the inheritance shares were most often passed on to the siblings when the farm was formally transferred to the successor. In all probability, when it was the youngest son who inherited the farm, the eldest sisters in the family had already grown up and were married by then. After 1787, when the eldest son in the family inherited the land, the age gap between the eldest son and the eldest daughter was not as large as the age gap between the eldest daughter and the youngest son.

TABLE 6. SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FIRST MARRIAGE OF THE ELDEST PEASANT DAUGHTERS ACCORDING TO THEIR POSITION IN THE FAMILY

From children who survived childhood (excluding only daughters)	N	Mean age at the first marriage	Husband		
			Mean age at the first marriage	% of widowers	% of farmers
Family formed in 1701–1770					
The eldest daughters	27	23.4	29.3	10.3–20.6	48.3–58.6
Eldest daughters, first-born	12	26.5	35.1	25.0–33.3	33.3–41.6
Eldest daughters, not first-born	15	20.8	25.9	0–11.8	58.8–70.6
Eldest daughters as a first child surviving into adulthood	17	25.8	31.9	16.7–27.8	33.3–44.4
Eldest daughters, had older brother	10	19.2	26.1	0–6.7	54.5–72.7
Family formed in 1771–1820					
The eldest daughters	34	21.3	25.9	14.7–17.6	47.1–50.0
Eldest daughters, first-born	10	21.7	24.7	10.0	40–50.0
Eldest daughters, not first-born	24	21.1	26.3	16.7–20.9	50.0
Eldest daughters as a first child surviving into adulthood	16	20.3	25.0	12.5–18.8	43.8–50.1
Eldest daughters, had older brother	18	22,2	26.6	16.7	50.0

Source: see footnote 17–19; own calculation.

In the second period, the eldest daughters could benefit from both advantages: when their marriage was being arranged, their father was usually still alive (in approximately 75% of the cases) and at the same time he had more financial means at his disposal to use for his daughter's dowry than in the previous period. This was so because, after 1787, the system of primogeniture began to prevail. As a result, the successor was one of the first children or even the very first child to marry; he may even have married before a potential suitor started to propose to the eldest of his sisters. But even when the farmer's eldest daughter married before the heir, the father could count on the fact that the heir's marriage would take place soon afterwards. He could therefore use his existing financial means as a dowry for his eldest daughter and subsequently use his future daughter-in-law's dowry to provide for his remaining offspring.^[45]

[45] A. VELKOVÁ, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní*.

Conclusion

My study aimed to analyze whether the marriage conditions of peasant daughters were related to their birth order and whether anything in this respect changed following the transition of inheritance practice from ultimogeniture to primogeniture, introduced in 1787. Although theoretically, peasant daughters were supposed to occupy the highest rungs on the social scale of the preindustrial rural society, my analysis has revealed that not all peasant daughters had equally favourable starting conditions.

The results show that it is in the categories of the eldest and the youngest daughters that we find the most prominent changes in the marriage circumstances across the whole period under study. As for the youngest daughters, they married the latest and had the oldest partners in both periods concerned. Nevertheless, the age gap between their mean marriage age and that of their sisters was reduced from 3.8 in the first to 1.2 years in the second period. Moreover, other conditions related to their marriage also significantly improved after 1787.

In the first period, up to 45% of the youngest daughters married a widower. It is therefore not surprising that they had the oldest husbands (33.6) and that they attained the highest mean marriage age (26.7). Only one third of them managed to maintain their social category after the wedding. Compared to that, five times fewer (9%) youngest daughters married a widower in the second period. In 52% of the cases, they married a full peasant holder, which is the highest percentage across all the categories. The only parameter which did not change from the first to the second period was late marriage age: even in the second period, the youngest daughters continued to have the highest mean age at marriage (22.9) as well as their husbands (28.9). As for the eldest daughters, their husbands' characteristics remained the same in both periods (in 48–49% the husband was from the peasant class, in approximately 15% he was a widower). The change was quite substantial in the marriage age. In the first period, the eldest daughters married on average at 23.4, which was due to the high mean marriage age (26.5) of the eldest daughters who were born as the eldest child in the family. In the second period, that handicap disappeared, and the eldest daughters married on average the earliest (21.3) of all the peasant daughters who had at least one sister.

What is remarkable about these results is that even though under ultimogeniture the eldest daughters had to wait the longest before the property transfer took place, this did not adversely influence their marriage conditions. I believe that it was chiefly due to the fact that their choice of partner as well as the property arrangements were more strongly determined and influenced by their father, who was still active and could fully implement his own strategy. He could in fact decide to give the eldest daughter a compensation higher than would have been her inheritance share determined at the moment of the property transfer and that may have improved her position in the marriage market. As for the farmer's

younger children, the father was more likely to die before these children became adults, especially if they were born into his second or third marriage.

Those girls who lost their fathers before they became adults had worse prospects of a homogamous marriage, especially in the first period. It was here that the difference between the two inheritance systems manifested itself most clearly. Under ultimogeniture, a direct transfer of property from father to son occurred very rarely, since in most cases the father did not live long enough to see his successor reach the age of majority. The interim holder, who was usually appointed under such circumstances, was not interested in providing for the orphaned children nor in transferring the property to the rightful heir as soon as possible. Peasant daughters, therefore, often grew up without knowing the size of their inheritance share or when and whether at all they would receive it since the shares were only allocated when the property passed from the interim holder to the heir. Moreover, the size of the shares reflected the economic condition of the holding, which could have deteriorated due to the interim tenure.

The division of inheritance shares became much more transparent after the eldest son started to be systematically prioritized as the heir of the landholding. Much more frequently than before, the transfer of the property now took place while the father was still alive. Even if the father died, his successor was, much more often than in the previous period, already an adult and consequently, in most cases, no interim holder had to be appointed. As a consequence, the transfer of property between generations as well as the distribution of inheritance shares ran more smoothly. Even in those cases when the father had died before his successor became an adult, the new legislation ensured a better position for the orphaned children, since the father was now allowed to write a testament which clearly stipulated the individual shares. As a result of all these changes, under the system of primogeniture, peasant daughters either actually obtained their inheritance shares when they were getting married or it was possible to conclude a marriage contract clearly stating the inheritance to be obtained and guaranteed by their father's farm. A clear distribution of equal inheritance shares to all the siblings reduced the differences in marriage circumstances among daughters of different birth orders.

Studies dealing with different positions of children in one family focused so far on the contrasting position of the heir on one hand and that of his remaining siblings on the other. The present study shows that even within the group of peasant daughters, at first sight homogenous, there were important differences when starting an independent life. It confirms earlier results suggesting that parental strategies to secure one's children's future were very diverse and cannot be limited to the simple claim that in the Anerberecht system, the heir enjoyed a privileged (and therefore different) position from his siblings. At the same time, my analysis has shown that the system of inheritance was crucial in shaping family strategies since it created the general framework in which members of

pre-industrial families had to act. Further research on marriage conditions of the heir's siblings should not be limited only to differences in marriage age but should evaluate more thoroughly the entire spectrum of factors. Not even the present study could take into account all the different elements which played a role in planning a marriage. It aimed to show that even individuals from the same social class did not necessarily enjoy the same starting position in entering a new phase of life, such as marriage. Specific situations of individual peasant daughters depended on several factors and inheritance system or birth order were just some of the components influencing the general marriage strategy.

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