

# **Subsydiarność - uwarunkowania, regulacje i praktyka**

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# **Część I. Historyczne i aksjologiczne koncepcje zasady subsydiarności**



# Rozdział 1. On subsidiarity or selfless help for the needy in the Times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

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The noble Commonwealth, also known as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has no good reputation in the history of our nation, particularly due to the collapse of the Polish state in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as a result of partitions by three neighboring powers. However, perceiving the functioning of the state through the prism of the weakness of its political institutions, fights of magnate coterie anarchizing public life from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the progressing decomposition of the central state apparatus, often-times burdened, in the subtext, with certain developmental retardation of our state (e.g. the high share of nobility in the social structure and the domination of manor serfdom in economy), by no means facilitates following the problems and issues which are the subject of this article, embedded in social history. It is undoubted that, like many other states of the old continent, also the noble Commonwealth was full of social and economic contrasts.

On the one hand we dealt with the functioning of c. 100–120 magnate houses, including bishops' ones, with their luxurious internal consumption, and the same number of further households of the richest patricians of Gdańsk, Warsaw, Cracow, Vilna and Poznań<sup>1</sup>; on the other hand, the standard of living of thousands of peasant families of tenants and the urban poor, constituting in the largest cities even a quarter of their residents, remained at the verge of biological survival<sup>2</sup>. There are also opinions that from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards one could observe the progressing pauperization of society<sup>3</sup>. It is worth adding that the whole population, but the poorest groups to the highest degree,

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<sup>1</sup> W. Czaplński, *J. Długosz, Życie codzienne magnaterii polskiej w XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1976, p. 55–70, 113–128; M. Bogucka, *H. Samsonowicz, Dzieje miast i mieszczaństwa w Polsce przedrozbiorowej*, Wrocław 1986, p. 526–528.

<sup>2</sup> See Z. Kuchowicz, *Z badań nad stanem biologicznym społeczeństwa od schyłku XVI do końca XVIII wieku*, Łódź 1972, p. 68–127.

<sup>3</sup> W. Kowalski, *Opieka szpitalna i dobroczynność na terenie archidiecezji sandomierskiej w dobie przedrozbiorowej*, [in:] *U. Augustyniak, A. Karpiński* (red.), *Charitas. Miłosierdzie i opieka społeczna w ideologii, normach postępowania i praktyce społeczności wyznaniowych w Rzeczypospolitej XVI–XVIII w.*, Warszawa 1999, p. 184.

malnourished, biologically weaker, were tormented by the epidemics of bubonic plague and other epidemic diseases every few years<sup>4</sup>, which caused not only major demographic damages but also discontinuation of hundreds of families and their households<sup>5</sup>.

The objective of this chapter is a synthetic presentation of actions taken by different institutions: church, government, urban and even private in the area charity and social aid, in their broad meaning, to the poorest in the pre-partition Poland.

Such a group of those in need for support has since ancient times until now been made of old, decrepit, often disabled and lonely people, who not always could rely on the closest relatives. A certain part of them found help primarily from the Church, which understood mercy as a religious prescript, and selfless help to the needy was one of the pillars of Christian ethics. The practical manifestation thereof was the development of the institution of hospitals (*hospitale*, *xenodochium*), which till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were mainly refuges for those in need for aid. Initially, in the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> c., first hospitals were run by orders, but in the subsequent two centuries dominated so-called hospital prepositures (*provostries*) located primarily in towns, frequently founded by rulers and the mighty<sup>6</sup>. As late as 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the dioceses of Gniezno, Poznań and Cracow, hospitals could be found in towns only. The more common development of hospitals fell on the period after the Trident Council (1545–1563), which emphasized the importance of these institutions, prescribed their development and obliged diocese bishops to special care thereof<sup>7</sup>. What is important, hospitals were then founded not only in cities and towns but also in country parishes. For example, if in the Poznan diocese in the early 17<sup>th</sup> c. there were hospitals in 60% of urban parishes and only 7% in rural parishes, in the era of Enlightenment the number of hospitals increased up to c. 84% in towns and 27% in the country<sup>8</sup>. In the age of King Stanisław August Poniatowski, the densest network of refuges for the poor characterized the following dioceses: Vilna: 67% of parishes; Płock:

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<sup>4</sup> A. Karpiński, *W walce z niewidzialnym wrogiem. Epidemie chorób zakaźnych w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku i ich następstwa demograficzne, społeczno-ekonomiczne i polityczne*, Warszawa 2000, p. 69–76.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 201, 233–235; A. Wýrobisz, *Misericordia pestis tempore. Postawy i zachowania w czasie zarazy w Polsce nowożytnej (XVI–XVIII w.)*, [in:] U. Augustyniak, A. Karpiński (red.), *Charitas. Miłosierdzie i opieka społeczna*, p. 219.

<sup>6</sup> S. Litak, *Parafie w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku. Struktura, funkcje społeczno-religijne i edukacyjne*, Lublin 2004, p. 330–334.

<sup>7</sup> See S. Litak, *Szpitalne w Polsce przedrozbiorowej*, [in:] M. Dąbrowska, J. Kruppé (red.), *Szpitalnictwo w dawnej Polsce*, Warszawa 1998, p. 16–17.

<sup>8</sup> A. Jezierski, A. Wyczański (red.), *Historia Polski w liczbach*, t. 1, Państwo. Społeczeństwo, Warszawa 2003, p. 112.

64% (thanks to the huge organizational effort on the part of Bishop Michał Jerzy Poniatowski); Cracow: 61%; with a smaller representation in Poznań: 41% and the Archdiocese of Lvov: 40% of parishes<sup>9</sup>.

Hospital buildings, usually erected near a church, beside the presbytery and the school, frequently wooden, one-story (except those built in brick and stone in richer urban provostries), had a few rooms, usually 2–6 (more in towns) and provided refuge for a few people (4–8 boarders)<sup>10</sup>. After years of exploitation they were frequently derelict, requiring renovations and reparations<sup>11</sup>. Certainly, hospitals in towns provided refuge, even at one time, for a higher number of the needy. In sum, in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> c., hospitals in the Cracow diocese housed jointly 2,745 boarders and c. 1781 in the Vilna diocese not much fewer: 2,424. Parish almshouses were usually not sufficiently endowed; there were numerous troubles with collecting payments declared for their support. Not rarely did parsons try to economize on the board and care of the poor, so, beside works at the church and certain religious practices the latter were commonly engaged in begging and supported themselves from alms. Hospitals-almshouses, even though struggled with different deficiencies, provided shelter only for a small number of the needy, securing the minimum of their needs.

Social care, modelled on the hospitals of the Catholic Church was more poorly developed in the Orthodox and Uniate Churches<sup>12</sup>. In turn, charity among Jewish communities, as a laudable deed, was part of the responsibility of their communes, whereas officials responsible for charity – gabbaim belonged to those more important in the management of the commune. Among the Israelites a special, specialized in the field, role was played by charity fraternities (chevra kadisha). They functioned in all major communes of pre-partition Poland<sup>13</sup>.

A better image of the care of the paupers could be observed in the largest and richest city of the ancient Commonwealth before the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century: Protestant Gdańsk. Of crucial importance was there taking over the supervision over the charity organization by the City Council, which resulted in build-

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<sup>9</sup> S. Litak, *Parafie*, p. 338–344.

<sup>10</sup> M. Surdacki, *Opieka społeczna w Polsce do końca XVIII wieku*, Lublin 2015, p. 166–176.

<sup>11</sup> C. Kukło, *Xenodocia parochialna dekanatu kowieńskiego w świetle wizytacji z 1782 roku*, [in:] T. Kasabuła, A. Szot (red.), *Mój Kościół w historii w pisany. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Księdzu Profesorowi Tadeuszowi Krahelowi*, Białystok 2007, p. 216–217.

<sup>12</sup> A. Mironowicz, *Działalność charytatywna w Kościele prawosławnym na terenie Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku*, [in:] U. Augustyniak, A. Karpiński (red.), *Charitas. Miłosierdzie i opieka społeczna*, p. 79–86; S. Litak, *Szpitalne*, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> M. Horn, *Szpitalnictwo żydowskie w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] M. Dąbrowska, J. Kruppé (red.), *Szpitalnictwo w dawnej Polsce*, p. 45–54.

ing a whole administrative system<sup>14</sup>. In 1610 the previous charity organization was perfected and four offices were founded, a kind of departments of social care responsible for food, finance, health and construction. Besides, their scopes of competence were determined. All four together made the Charity Office. Suffice it to say that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it included c. 130–150 people and in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> cc. 170–200 people. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. the property of charity institutions amounted over a million guldens, which allowed them to eliminate extreme poverty<sup>15</sup>.

Beside the old and the decrepit, a separate group of the most needy in the era of the noble Commonwealth were undoubtedly abandoned and orphaned children, especially infants, whose survival depended on providing them with immediate help. It is important to bear in mind that this sad phenomenon of abandoning unwanted children commonly occurred as early as Antiquity. Moreover, in Christian times the attitudes involving abandoning children were condemned neither by law nor by the Church; it was not treated as a crime. Although from time to time the natural principle obliging to bring up the born children, simultaneously poor parents or a single mother giving their babies away to the hospital for not being able to feed them was accepted. In the understanding of parents, local communities, but also the Church and other institutions, giving away the child to the hospital secured it a higher chance of survival and was better than dooming it to die of poverty and starvation.

The practice of abandoning unwanted children also occurred in Polish lands. Among the boarders of Polish first 13<sup>th</sup>-century hospital facilities of the Order of the Holy Spirit in Cracow, Kalisz, and Sandomierz were also foundlings. Also in Wrocław from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> c. onwards functioned a facility, initiated by a private burgher institution, defined as infant hospital, which would indicate an increasingly broader scale of the functioning of the institution of foundlings. However, in Poland, even in the largest cities of the late Middle Ages and the early modern era, there were few institutions specialized in dealing with caring of foundlings and orphans. One of them was the Child's Home founded in Gdańsk in 1542. In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century only 40 pupils stayed there, which, considering the dynamic development of the city of, then, 40 thousand residents, seems very insufficient. A new orphanage, the Charity House in the capital of Royal Prussia opened at the end of the

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<sup>14</sup> Z. Kropidłowski, Organizacja dzieł miłosierdzia chrześcijańskiego w Gdańsku w XVI–XVIII w., [in:] *U. Augustyniak, A. Karpiński* (red.), *Charitas. Miłosierdzie i opieka społeczna*, p. 140–141; see also *M. Bogucka*, Organizacja szpitalnictwa w Gdańsku w XVI–XVII wieku, [in:] *M. Dąbrowska, J. Kruppé* (red.), *Szpitalnictwo w dawnej Polsce*, p. 144–154.

<sup>15</sup> Z. Kropidłowski, Organizacja dzieł, p. 160.

17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1730 it housed 301 orphans and further 185 children who had parents<sup>16</sup>. In 1791 there were already over 500 minor pupils. The same problem was struggled with by Warsaw with its increasing population. In late medieval Warsaw the care over foundlings was probably temporarily performed by the Holy Spirit extra muros hospital. However, as soon as the advent of the modern era, under the Vasa dynasty, there emerged new facilities which were more like orphanages. There was also St. Bruno's hospital, built in the 1620s, for boys (accepted also foundlings), as well as St. Casimir Charity Sisters' hospital for girls founded in 1659<sup>17</sup>.

In the mid-1730s the Foundlings' Home was founded in the capital of the country, which was built not only on the initiative but also with a huge effort on the part of the French monk of the Congregation of the Mission, Gabriel Pierre Baudouin, which indicates how common this phenomenon was<sup>18</sup>. In 1737, so at the beginning of the facility, 241 children stayed there, even though a part of them were abandoned in different other public places, which is confirmed by records of their baptisms in Warsaw parish registry books<sup>19</sup>. A few years later, in the summer of 1754, he brought about the foundation of the Infant Jesus Hospital, which absorbed the previous home for foundlings. Finally, as late as 1761, the shelter for unwanted children was combined with the newly constructed, specially designed facility of the same name. It was the Infant Jesus Hospital, with an additional status of General Hospital by virtue of the royal privilege, where the majority of Warsaw, although not only, abandoned children were placed, and the scale of this phenomenon was enormous. If at the end of the Wettin dynasty's rule in Poland the facility admitted, on average, 220 foundlings a year, at the beginning of Stanisław August Poniatowski's rule there were nearly twice as many of them, and in the early 1780s it was as many as 680 children a year. The most unwanted children, on average as many as 880, were brought to the hospital not only in the stormy, and also economically very difficult years 1794–1797, with the maximum (906 foundlings) in 1795<sup>20</sup>. They were the years, as the bright observer of the life of Warsaw at that time, Ft. Jędrzej Kitowicz, wrote, of very high prices of food in the capital with over 100 thousand residents, numerous diseases, including epidemics as well as the higher mortality rate of not only permanent residents but also incomers, and

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 158.

<sup>17</sup> A. Karpiński, *Pauperes. O mieszkańcach Warszawy XVI i XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1983, p. 271–275.

<sup>18</sup> Z. Podgórska-Klawe, *Szpitaly warszawskie 1388–1945*, Warszawa 1975, p. 73–84.

<sup>19</sup> See C. Kukło, *Rodzina w osiemnastowiecznej Warszawie*, Białystok 1991, p. 133.

<sup>20</sup> C. Kukło, *The Population of the Holy Cross Parish in Warsaw in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, Białystok 2016, p. 176.



soldiers<sup>21</sup>. Fewer children, on average only 510, were abandoned in the last two years of the 18<sup>th</sup> c., when the capital became depopulated and the number of inhabitants fell to the level of 60 thousand.

A group of infants were fed but hospital wet nurses, another was given to be fed by paid wet nurses in city families, whereas those who survived, as older ones were given to their relatives or to the craft. The mortality rate among hospital foundlings was enormous. In the years 1772–1786 as many as three quarters of them died out. The Infant Jesus Hospital, beside providing shelter for foundlings also admitted the sick and the poor. In 1791 it housed, not including infants and wet nurses feeding them, as many as 739 sick and poor people, among Commonwealth there were over 2 thousand adult boarders and over 900 children<sup>22</sup>. The scale of the enterprise, for instance the costs of their daily support, can be clearly seen in the size of the personnel employed there, which made 142 people in the period 1794–1795. It is worth adding that the application of the so-called welfare ration proposed by the American historian Robert C. Allen<sup>23</sup>, which results from referring annual incomes of a worker or a craftsman to the costs of maintaining their household, demonstrates a clear dependence: the lower the incomes of both groups of the residents of Warsaw in the age of Enlightenment, the more children were abandoned there. Thus, periods of more difficult than normal conditions of day-to-day existence of thousands of poor Varsovians, often living in the circumstances of extreme poverty, correlated with the periods of the higher number of abandoned infants, yet also children of 2–3 in the capital<sup>24</sup>.

A similar facility, of the same name and modelled on that in Warsaw, was founded in the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. The initiator of the foundation established in 1786 and the propagator of building the Vilna Infant Jesus Hospital located at the Suboch Gate, was Jadwiga Ogińska nee Załuska, the wife of the voivode of Troki, who assigned 100 thousand Polish zlotys for that purpose. In this work she was supported by the general inspector of the Order of the Mission and Charity Sisters, Andrzej Pohl. Eventually, the Vilna facility commenced its activity after four years of construction, in October 1791, providing shelter for a hundred orphans<sup>25</sup>. In subsequent years it housed, at a time, 150–300 children, primarily girls.

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<sup>21</sup> J. Kitowicz, *Pamiętniki czyli Historia polska*, red. P. Matuszewska, Warszawa 2005, p. 639–642.

<sup>22</sup> C. Kuklo, *The Population*, p. 77.

<sup>23</sup> R.C. Allen, *The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices from the Middle Ages to the First World War*, *Exploration in Economic History* 2001, Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 411–447.

<sup>24</sup> C. Kuklo, *The Population*, p. 107–109.

<sup>25</sup> M. Korybut-Marciniak, *Działalność dobroczynna zakonów i zgromadzeń zakonnych w Wilnie w końcu XVIII i pierwszej połowie XIX wieku*, *Echa Przeszłości* 2010, Vol. 11, p. 134.

Urban environments in pre-partition Poland witnessed a problem of permanently growing ranks of single women, foremost spinsters and widows. In order to, at least in part, solve it by local communities was founding specialist charity facilities: widow hospitals. They usually were built in the largest and richest centers, such as: Gdańsk, Cracow, Poznań, Vilna and Warsaw. One of first such facilities was founded in renaissance Poznań with its c. 20 thousand residents<sup>26</sup>. In 1590, the Międzyrzec castellan's wife, Anna Kościelska, nee Splawska, bought a house for five poor elderly widows of the nobility. In 1626, another similar foundation, this time for seven burgher widows, was established by a Poznań furrier, Anna Hanuszkowa, primo voto Brzeźnicka, who dedicated her own house for the purpose. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. Warsaw joined the group of towns with widow hospitals. In 1622 sisters Zofia and Dorota Runowski transferred a house to support pious widows and maidens in the capital, and another was offered by Zofia Tarnawska in 1640<sup>27</sup>. A similar house functioned in Cracow, financially supported by better-off burghers, built probably as early as the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> c, like in Vilna, on the initiative of Dorota Porzycka at the local St. John's church. Hospitals could host, after an entry fee, only women of good reputation, who declared staying in widowhood till the end of their lives, or, in the event there were no widows, spinsters. From among themselves they elected the elder who supervised them, and their responsibilities were not very numerous: daily participation in the Holy Mass liturgy, a prayer for the founder, care of a particular object, sometimes a joint rosary prayer.

Strong emphasizing in the regulations the need for life in peace, harmony and love, seem to show that mundane qualities, such as their own ambitions were no foreign to them. All the more, that the Poznań statue of the local House of 7 widows clearly and bluntly named "penalties for negligence and minor vices", but also punishments "where something more serious appeared"<sup>28</sup>. The behaviors of God abiding widows might have been provoked by guests and friends of both sexes, and therefore the residents were clearly and strictly forbidden to have visitors. For this reason the house was to be closed at the hour determined by the elder.

The ancient Commonwealth, tormented by frequent wars, had quite a great number of decrepit soldiers, war invalids and veterans, who were tried to take care of and secure their last years of life. A refuge clearly directed to admitting war invalids and well-worn soldiers was founded in Warsaw in 1582 on the ini-

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<sup>26</sup> C. Kuklo, *Kobieta samotna w społeczeństwie miejskim u schyłku Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej. Studium demograficzno-społeczne*, Białystok 1998, p. 190.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 192.

tiative of Stefan Batory<sup>29</sup>. In the 16<sup>th</sup> c. such facilities were also founded in Podolia – in Yazlovets and Kamianets Podilskiy. Also in Podlasie in 1633, not far from Łomża, in Tykocin, the Lithuanian marshal and Tykocin starost, Krzysztof Wiesiołowski founded an alumnat (shelter/refuge) for 12 well-worn soldiers, which functioned until the outbreak of World War I<sup>30</sup>. The Tykocin facility was relatively well endowed, for its founder allocated for its maintenance incomes from his hereditary Dolistowo and Białystok estates, which allowed for payment to each invalid a yearly pension of 200 Polish zlotys<sup>31</sup>. Around 1750 the facility was rebuilt on the order from Jan Klemens Branicki. Facilities for war veterans were also in Lvov: St. Martin's Hospital at the Carmelites' monastery (from 1637 onwards). Over a hundred years later, such an object was founded in Rzeszów in 1753 on the initiative of Jerzy Ignacy Lubomirski. At the beginning of his rule, in 1768, King Stanisław August Poniatowski founded a House of Invalids in Vilna.

The subject of reflection so far has been selected examples of the institutional care and charity dedicated to the weakest groups of society in ancient, pre-partition Poland, such as old people, single women, orphaned children and war veterans. In the end I would like to present two other forms of old-Polish subsidiarity, with two different purposes and dedicated to different sexes, i.e. dowry funds and school and academic scholarships.

As it may seem, in the past all people, except diocesan and monastic clergy of both sexes, went through the institution of marriage. However, it is a totally wrong view, for the size of the group who never entered into marital relationships was not very small. Nearly 6–8% of men and by 2–3% more women never started a family, and in towns these proportions were even more considerable: 10–15% of all adult men and even 15–20% of female population<sup>32</sup>. This resulted from the fact that marriages were concluded, especially in the old-Polish era, only when the families of the young couple's family and they themselves were able to secure independent supporting of the future family and the household they made. The most serious problems with marriages were experienced by maidens from poor social strata, who largely migrated to towns and constituted there quite a big group of servants, vendors, odd job workers, not men-

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<sup>29</sup> A. Karpiński, *Pauperes*, p. 267–268.

<sup>30</sup> A. Wyrabisz, *Żołnierze, weterani, inwalidzi wojenni – nowy problem społeczny w miastach europejskich w XVI–XVIII w.*, [in:] W. Fedorowicz, J. Snopko (red.), *Wojsko, społeczeństwo, historia. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Mieczysławowi Wrzosekowi w sześćdziesiątą piątą rocznicę Jego urodzin*, Białystok 1995, p. 93; S. Wicher, *Alumnat wojskowy w Tykocinie*, Biuletyn Konserwatorski Województwa Podlaskiego 2003, No. 8–9, p. 7–47.

<sup>31</sup> W. Nagórski, J. Maroszek, *Tykocin miasto królewskie*, Tykocin, 2004, p. 68.

<sup>32</sup> C. Kukło, *Demografia Rzeczypospolitej przedrozbiorowej*, Warszawa 2009, p. 277.

tioning the social margin. The level of their wages, like that of the numerous group of male servants and day workers, was often insufficient to secure material foundations for the future family. This situation was recognized and at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century dowry funds for worse-to-do maidens began to be established in largest cities, which were called St. Nicholas's boxes<sup>33</sup>. The most of them were in Cracow (21), Poznań (13), Warsaw (9) and Vilna (5). There were a few in Gdańsk, Kovno (Kaunas), Rzeszów, and probably also in Lvov and Lublin. A third of them all were founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a half in the next century, and the fewest in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. The oldest dowry fund, an effect of the donation from a Warsaw merchant, Ludwik Ulryk Fiszer in 1481, supported by an additional bestowal in the 1620, collapsed during the Swedish Deluge. Others, those founded at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> c. functioned with certain difficulties. In Warsaw, a similar form of aid was restored late, towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1780, Bishop Stanisław Andrzej Młodziejowski of Poznań bequeathed the sum of 200 thousand Polish zlotys to a dowry fund and half as much for benefits for those who were ashamed to beg<sup>34</sup>. 548 ducats, being interest from the capital sum, were divided into 36 dowries of various amounts for 12 maidens from each of the three estates: nobility (450 zlotys each), burghers (250 zlotys each) and peasantry (122 zlotys each). The regulation provided for drawing lots in the case of a higher number of candidates. The dowries were paid either directly to the maiden if she was 25 and more, or to her parents or guardians, if she was younger. The assigned resources remained the property of poor and virtuous maidens even when they eventually failed to marry for certain reasons. In 1791 as many as 432 maidens applied for dowry funds of Bishop Młodziejowski, including 242 noblewomen, 137 burghers and 53 peasants. A year later the dowry lottery was attended by a little fewer girls: 311. Unfortunately, in the subsequent years the owners of the estates on which the capital sums of the fund were deposited, through numerous court procedures, brought about its liquidation.

The second, after Warsaw, town to have St. Nicholas's boxes was Poznań. At the beginning of the 1480s, one was founded by Dean Adam Dąbrowski of Poznań, another by Mayor Jerzy Bock. With the course of time the supervision over them and subsequent ones was taken over by the city authorities. However, the autonomous fund of the local charity brotherhood was not controlled by them. In Cracow, a similar fund was founded in 1546 by a burgher, goldsmith Grzegorz Przybyły. Due to obtaining numerous and high donations, famous was a box of the charity brotherhood, founded in 1588 by Ft. Łaszcz and Piotr Skar-

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<sup>33</sup> A. Karpiński, *Fundacje posagowe w dużych miastach Rzeczypospolitej w XVI-XVIII w.*, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1998, Vol. 105, No. 1, p. 3–20.

<sup>34</sup> C. *Kukło*, *Kobieta*, p. 206.

ga himself. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century it provided yearly dowries for 6 poor maidens; in subsequent years the number of the beneficiaries increased reaching its maximum in 1785, when 22 dowries were paid.

In Vilna, only in the years 1620–1654 300 women received dowries, including only two widows<sup>35</sup>. Dowries of the highest value went to women in Poznań, Cracow and Warsaw, of the lowest value to poor residents of Vilna. In the largest old-Polish cities in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> c. their average value reached 200 day wages of an unqualified worker or a few years' wages of a female house servant. Even though they facilitated their starts in life, simultaneously raising the attraction of poor maidens as future wives, they were far from dowries of better-off townspeople, not mentioning the patricians.

It is also important to mention another fund dedicated to country women only. At the end of his life, Ft. Jan Chryzostom Bohomolec, parson of the Skaryszew parish in Praga (now part of Warsaw), allocated, in 1793, 100 Polish zlotys to support every year one newlywed couple from a village in the parish<sup>36</sup>.

From the Renaissance onwards, education, especially high and higher, became a certain social value, which secured prestige already in pre-partition Poland, facilitated career, and for members of the political estate which was the noble estate, it was even a status attribute of a nobleman. However, it was not common among poor noblemen in Masovia and Podlasie, poorer burgher families, not to mention peasants who made c. three quarters of society at that time. Present day studies of literacy or the skills of writing and reading in society in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> c. indicate that c. 57% of adult noblemen could write, whereas 47% could be suspected of being illiterate<sup>37</sup>. Among the literate the least numerous were representatives of farm gentry (poor nobles, 9%). In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> cc. over 15% of nobles in that region could not rite (over 56% of noble women), over 21% of burghers (over 2/3 of women), and over 90% of peasants (peasant women were completely illiterate)<sup>38</sup>.

In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, or in the peak of the Polish renaissance, it is possible to talk about a scholarship system supporting poor students with financial benefits. It was initiated by a graduate from the Academy of Cracow, Stanisław Borek's bequeath in 1557, who was soon followed by others, in-

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<sup>35</sup> A. Karpinski, *Wileńska skrzynka św. Mikołaja w XVII wieku i jej podopieczne*, [in:] C. Kukło, P. Guzowski (red.), *Cała historia to dzieje ludzi... Studia z historii społecznej ofiarowane profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyczańskiemu w 80-tą rocznicę urodzin i 55-lecie pracy naukowej*, Białystok 2004, p. 219–227.

<sup>36</sup> C. Kukło, *Kobieta*, p. 206.

<sup>37</sup> A. Wyczański, *Polska Rzeczą Pospolitą szlachecką*, Warszawa 1991, p. 152.

<sup>38</sup> A. Jezierski, A. Wyczański (red.), *Historia Polski w liczbach*, vol. 1, p. 123.

cluding bishops and university professors<sup>39</sup>. By the end of the century c. 20 funds provided scholarships for c. 50 poor students for the period of 1–3 years. In the following century there were six times more scholarships (nearly 300 students), but their real value decreased. Academic charity was possible due to the activities of both Church elites with the leading role of bishops and also parish clergy. Even though those in the diocese of Przemyśl excelled in it, it is important to mention 16<sup>th</sup>-century scholarship funds and expenditures on dormitories made by Bishop *Andrzej Noskowski* of Plock and Canon *Stanisław Krasieński*, who consciously supported poor petty nobility of Masovia. In this landscape of human attitudes characterized by aid for the weaker in the old-Polish period, undoubtedly a prominent figure was *Jan Zamojski*, the Great Crown Chancellor and Hetman, one of the richest citizens of the Commonwealth. He did not only found the *Akademia Zamojska* (Academy of Zamość) in 1595 but also a generous sponsor of various scholarships and grants dedicated to the poorest youth<sup>40</sup>. A certain part of them were also supported by scholarships founded in Zamość by clergy of higher hierarchy and graduates, often professors at the Academy.

There were also funds for poor students in Poznań, Warsaw and Lvov, while in the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the early modern era, among pro-educational donations prevailed grants making small dormitories providing full board for the time of education, to a lesser degree typical scholarships. First founders of boarding schools for poor boys were representatives of the elite of Vilna clergy. In 1579, as a result of the donation from Bishop *Walerian Protasiewicz* of Vilna, a dormitory was founded for poor noble sons, and in 1602 another one founded by a canon of the Vilna chapter and philanthropist, *Ambroży Bejnar*<sup>41</sup>. Several later dormitories were, on the other hand, laymen's work. The land judge of Oszmiana, *Jan Mikołaj Korsak*, established a fund to support 20 students in 1618, Count *Antoni Kazimierz Sapieha* for 6 students in 1729, Castellan Daniel Szyszko of Nowogródek for 7 students in 1737 and Count *Gabriel Dominik Szankowski* for 4. Their limited range, even if in some of them stayed considerably more students than their founders provided for, facilitated a small number of young men access to education, but did not solve the problem.

An extend subsidiary system for poor students studying at home and abroad characterized Gdańsk. The city authorities supervised it directly. From the mid-17<sup>th</sup> c. onwards it was supported by the fund of *Abraham Calovius*, rector of the protestant Academic Gymnasium, renowned for its high standard of education,

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<sup>39</sup> *M. Surdacki*, *Opieka społeczna*, p. 384.

<sup>40</sup> *W. Partyka*, *Opieka społeczna w Ordynacji Zamojskiej w XVI–XVIII wieku*, Lublin 2008, p. 190–191.

<sup>41</sup> *M. Korybut-Marciniak*, *Działalność dobroczynna*, p. 140–142.

and from the middle of the following century onwards also numerous family funds of the wealthiest Gdańsk residents.

Synthetically presented, the material demonstrates the functioning in pre-partition Poland both organized and individual activities for the weakest groups, which sometimes, as in the case of the sick and the poor, reached a large range through founding hospitals-refuges. They also took different forms aiming at providing the needy with material and health, as well as spiritual, aid. By no means does it mean that a centralized care system based on the state law came to existence, even though in the era of Stanisław August Poniatowski social care became a subject of the state's interest. On the other hand, among religious-denominational minorities, for instant Protestants in the towns in Royal Prussia, social care was of more secular nature.

## **Streszczenie**

Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów jest często postrzegana przez wydarzenia polityczne, których głównymi aktorami, często negatywnymi, były postawy magnackich elit lub przyzmat ustrojowego systemu konstytucyjnego, w którym szlachta poszerzała swe uprawnienia i przywileje, pogarszając jednocześnie sytuację nieuprzywilejowanych: chłopów i mieszczan. Badania ostatnich lat, w tym dotyczące historii opieki społecznej w epoce staropolskiej, wyraźnie zmieniły kolory i akcenty, prowadząc do złagodzenia wielu wcześniejszych surowych osądów i opinii.

W rozdziale pokazano wybrane elementy systemu i rodzaj opieki nad osobami, które najbardziej potrzebowały pomocy w przedrozbiorowej Polsce. Wśród tych, którzy nie mogli poradzić sobie z ówczesną rzeczywistością, byli ludzie starzy, osoby kalekie i zaniedbani, często samotni, jak np. stare panny lub weterani wojenni. Niewątpliwie wśród nich były porzucone niemowlęta i sieroty. Autor koncentruje swoją uwagę przede wszystkim na opiece instytucjonalnej: szpitalach, będących rodzajem schronisk, czasem nawet specjalistycznych, dla najbiedniejszych i potrzebujących pomocy. Ponadto zwraca uwagę na jedną z form charytatywnych skierowanych do biednych młodych dziewcząt, które były funduszami posagowymi mającymi na celu zapewnienie lepszego startu w życiu. Kluczową rolę w tej sprawie odegrały różne programy Kościoła, których nauki społeczne najszerszej odwoływały się do idei chrześcijańskiego współczucia i które aktywizują inne środowiska: władze miasta, cechy i osoby prywatne.

Rozdział kończy się spostrzeżeniami dotyczącymi form wsparcia młodzieży zainteresowanej edukacją i studiami wyższymi, szczególnie widocznymi w epoce renesansu. Wśród nich znalazły się nie tylko stypendia i świadczenia dla stu-

dentów najpopularniejszych w Krakowie, nie tyle w Zamościu, ale także założenie licznych, mniejszych lub większych akademików i szkół z internatem, np. w stolicy Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów, pomocniczość, opieka społeczna, przytułki parafialne, dom inwalidów, fundacja posagowa.

## Abstract

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is frequently perceived through political events, the main actors of which, often negative, were attitudes of magnate elites, or through the prism of its estate constitutional system, in which the nobility extended their powers and privileges, simultaneously worsening the situation of the unprivileged estates: peasants and burghers. Studies of recent years, including those on the history of social care in the Old-Polish era, have clearly changed colors and accents, leading to mitigating many previous harsh judgements and opinions.

The chapter shows selected elements of the system and the type of care for people who needed help most in pre-partition Poland. Among those who could not cope with the then reality were old, crippled and decrepit people, often lonely, such as spinsters or war veterans. Undoubtedly among them were abandoned infants and orphans. The author concentrates his attention primarily on institutional care: hospitals, being a kind of refuges, sometimes even specialized, for the poorest and needing help. Moreover, he draws attention to one of charity forms addressed to poor young girls, which were dowry funds aiming at securing a better start in life. A crucial role in this matter was played by various agendas of the Church, whose social teachings most extensively referred to the idea of Christian compassion and which activate other environments: town authorities, guilds and private individuals.

The chapter is concluded with observations concerning the forms of support for the youth interested in education and higher studies, especially visible in the renaissance era. Among them were not only scholarships and benefits for students most popular in Cracow, not so much in Zamość, but also founding numerous, smaller or bigger dormitories and boarding schools, for example, in the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

**Keywords:** Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, subsidiarity, social care, parish almshouses, house of Invalids, dowry foundation



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