

Popular science abstract

Title: The Family and Household of the Rural Population in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the End of the 18th century

The main objective of the project is to reconstruct the structure of households and families, rural populations inhabiting selected areas of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the end of the 18th century. The analysis will be conducted mainly on the basis of quantitative methods used in historical demographics. This will make it possible to gain insight into key issues such as age structure, gender, average population and number of children in each family. As a consequence, it will be possible to show the general demographic specificity of the surveyed populations, to trace the life cycle of individuals and households, as well as to isolate the dominant family and household model in specific areas. A separate, also important element is the analysis of the impact of non-demographic factors on the composition of families and households. The assessment in this context will concern, among others, the practiced profession, religion, state affiliation, social class within the rural community or the level of urbanization. The research process will be complemented by a comparison of the results with selected European regions.

The source basis for this research will be the materials of the so-called 5th Soul Revision. It was a kind of census carried out by the tsarist authorities in 1795 after the incorporation, resulting from the Third Partition of Poland, of the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into the Russian Empire. In this way, the authorities wanted to obtain information on the demographic potential of the new lands, which was to facilitate the collection of taxes and conscription for military service. The census was carried out according to parishes. Several censuses will be selected from each available province, possibly representing different types of property. In total, at least 30 census forms will be used.

Research on the geography of family forms in pre-industrial Europe has a long tradition, yet many areas remain unknown in this context. The lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania are a good example. So far, only one extensive monograph describing strictly demographic issues referring to the Lithuanian lands at the end of the 18th century has been published. Other works cover a much wider chronological range, focusing mainly on the 19th and 20th centuries, and only partially addressing the issue of demographic and family structures. Among other things, this argumentation justifies the need to address the above-mentioned issue.

The results of individual stages of the research will be presented at specialist national and international conferences devoted to socio-demographic issues. The results will be published in recognized national and international journals focusing on the issues of historical demography, family and household history as well as the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.