Relationships between generations in post-Emancipation Lithuania (1864–1904)

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ABSTRACT. One of the most powerful influences on modern peasant studies has been Chayanov’s notion that the peasant farm household balanced the labour efforts of a household and its consumer demands. As a result, peasant households have been seen as autarchic units of production and consumption, and peasant strategies were held to be designed to preserve the common enterprise in which everyone was expected to work and pool resources, and to maintain the integrity of the original holding, of which all family members were expected to receive an equal share. This article focuses on familial strategies of Lithuanian peasants after the abolition of serfdom in the second half of the nineteenth century and argues that the strategies of different generations were shaped by a multiplicity of dependencies, a constant reshuffle of resources and the maximum utilization of land and labour. Examination of the pattern of generational turnover and of the working arrangements between parents and adult children suggests that relationships between the generations were built on reciprocity and that co-operation or some other mutual help was essential in the post-emancipation village.

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the familial strategies of Lithuanian peasants, which involved the maintenance of long-term reciprocities between generations. The process of generational succession – in particular the working arrangements between parents and adult children – will illustrate the gradual process of the transfer of authority from parents to children, the ways in which resources were allocated, the supply of labour was
ensured, and obligations created and a specific dynamic of exchanges between parents and children laid down.

One of the most powerful influences on recent studies of peasant societies has been Chayanov’s notion that the peasant farm household was a viable economic unit, constituted on the basis of a balance between the labour efforts of a household and its consumption needs. As a result, the historiography has focused on the forms of production from the perspective of how production was managed. Peasant households have been seen as autarchic units of production and consumption, with peasant strategies directed towards both the preservation of the common enterprise, where everyone was expected to work and pool resources, and the integrity of the original holding, of which all household members expected to receive an equal share. Property transmission, however, is not only a means by which the reproduction of the social system takes place, but also a way in which interpersonal relations are structured. This article examines divisions of family property, intestacy, wills, cases brought before different courts and petitions to the bishop on matrimonial issues. Analysis indicates a complex pattern of social relationships constructed by parents and adult children, involving mutual interaction, interdependencies and varying degrees of control of children by parents. All intra-familial social transactions in rural Lithuania involved rights, duties, expectations and obligations, demonstrating the interplay of economic, emotional and social interests, which could coalesce or separate depending on the interests of the family or the individual concerned. The extent of the exchanges of labour and equipment between households, and the multiplicity of dependencies between and within the households, suggest a slightly different interpretation of peasant household strategies than that proposed by Chayanov.

For a better understanding of the problem, it is important to understand why specific strategies of property transmission were implemented. Such strategies indicate the degree to which parents discriminated between their children. The way rights and expectations were distributed structured the relationships between the generations. The investigation of peasants’ strategies reveals how peasant households secured their standard of living and labour supply and provided the necessary emotional support. Nineteenth-century memoirs and autobiographies did not dwell on these topics. Admittedly, a number of Lithuanian historians have considered the extreme fragmentation of landholdings in post-Emancipation Lithuanian villages and the socio-economic changes and increased proportion of agricultural production destined for the market that helped modernize relationships between generations. However, this research has not analysed the transmission of property between
generations, the recruitment of labour or the rights and expectations of family members. The fragmented and limited nature of the statistical data (such as parish registers and the population census of 1897) precludes the systematic reconstruction of the role of households but it is fortunate that disputes between peasants about inheritance, entitlement to property and personal relationships are documented in various civil and consistory court records (see Appendix 1). Analysis of these sources enables the patterns of interdependency between generations to be reconstructed. Although the courts detail the more unusual and extraordinary situations in families, inferences can be drawn about what was considered normal or acceptable in everyday life.

The article begins with a brief description of the socio-economic structure of Lithuania in the second half of the nineteenth century. The second section focuses on the forms of generational succession in order to discern how equality between siblings was achieved. In the last section it is argued that the reason why parents provided their children with meagre resources was to ensure long-term co-operation between the generations and thereby reduce the risk of general impoverishment.

1. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE LITHUANIAN COUNTRYSIDE, 1864–1904

There was little economic change in Lithuania following the abolition of serfdom in 1861, and minimal internal and external threats to stability. In this period, Lithuania was part of the geographical-administrative North Western region of the Russian Empire. The major features of the socio-economic structure in post-Emancipation Lithuania were the minor role of towns in the economy, the significance of agriculture in the national economy and, for peasants, hereditary tenures, continued dependency on landlords plus new obligations to the state such as the redemption tax. Of the total population, 73.4 per cent were peasants who lived in villages, cultivated medium-sized plots and derived most of their livelihood from agriculture. Statistical data from the nineteenth century indicates that 76.6 per cent of the population was Catholic. The household was the fundamental institution in rural Lithuania, fulfilling welfare and social functions and providing economic support within the limits of its capability.

In this period, Lithuanian villagers began to experiment with cropping systems and improved agricultural productivity which increased the prospect that peasants would achieve a steady income and continue their families. Traditionally, Lithuanian peasants planted rye, winter and summer wheat, barley and oats. By the 1870s other crops such as flax, peas, beans and root crops had found their way in the three-field rotation
system. In some regions of Kaunas Province, for example in the district of Telšiai, flax covered larger plots in the fields than grain because it was more suited to the soil conditions and because, as it was a cash crop, the proceeds could be used to buy in grain in the event of harvest failure. In the province of Kaunas the standard of living of peasant households improved as a consequence of gradual specialization in cattle breeding and improvement of cattle. These experiments encouraged the greater consumption of milk and meat products through the marketing of these products, which in turn augmented peasant incomes.

After Emancipation, settlement patterns were strongly affected by property division in peasant households. The frequency of nucleated-type villages increased due to household divisions when married couples built separate dwellings in the new location. In such villages several farmsteads composed the ‘nucleus’ of the settlement while the other farmsteads were distributed seemingly at random in the gardens or fields. This type of village typically suited the agricultural economy of peasants where the collective and individual strips of lands intersected, making a locally bounded network of ties with neighbours, many of whom were adult married children or other close relatives, as will be shown below.

The nature of land tenure in Lithuania differed in significant ways from that in the Central Provinces in the Russian Empire. The predominant type of commune in Central Russia was the repartitioned commune. Periodically, parcels of land were redistributed among households, apportioning a greater number to some while diminishing the holdings of others according to household size, composition, labour strength and tax burden. In Lithuania, by contrast, hereditary communes predominated, exempted by law from repartition and communal control of land use. Land was distributed among households on the basis of inherited right rather than current circumstances. The village community, exempt from communal obligations, had no responsibility for households that were unable to meet their tax burden.

The laws governing Emancipation reform guaranteed the rights of most villagers to own their own land but in practice this right was limited by the multiple obligations owed both to the state and to the landlord. The individual peasant household with hereditary tenure owed the landlord labour rents and taxes in kind or in money in return for the privilege of holding land and residence rights. After the abolition of serfdom, some of the responsibilities for extracting taxes from peasants passed to the state. Peasants supplied produce to the state for the privilege of occupying their farmsteads. The 1863–1864 laws granted peasants the right to own their land but required that they pay land taxes to their landowners until the redemption contracts had been arranged, and redemption taxes to the
Although property in Lithuania was formally owned by individuals not families, in practice the laws of the Russian Empire imposed familial ownership of property until redemption taxes had been paid to the state and considered all family members as co-owners. The impact of many of these factors on Lithuanian economy and society has been considered by historians. Their analyses, however, have not emphasized the difficulties experienced by farmstead heads, who were burdened with additional managerial responsibilities in the post-Emancipation period, responsible as they were for resolving the conflicting social pressures that arose from the duty to pay redemption taxes to the state, while also running the landlord’s estate until redemption was paid and trying to ensure the economic survival of their own household. As a result, the peasants modified their inheritance patterns in order to adapt to the new conditions. Cultural imperatives to favour one heir, typically the oldest son, were re-examined in the post-Emancipation period in order to take account of the managerial abilities of other potential candidates for the headship of the household, particularly their ability to secure the family’s welfare. Conflicts between father and sons before the transfer of the property to the younger generation emerged as one of the major problems and were evident particularly in legal battles over the timing and terms of the father’s retirement, as well as in the psychologically difficult situation of having the old farmer within the household after the loss of his position as master of the house. These points are fundamental for an understanding of the dynamics and logic of relationships between parents and their adult children, to which we now turn.

2. Property Transmission Between Generations in Lithuania

According to Lithuanian ethnographers and legal historians, parents preferred to grant sons land and to provide daughters with dowries. This rule suggests that everyone in the family received some of the assets of their parents. However, this does not explain precisely how the process of intergenerational transmission structured parent–child relationships. Was the ideology of equality the rule in Lithuanian villages, or were sole heirs privileged or sons favoured over daughters?

The transfer of parental property in Lithuania was a gradual process, which depended on the willingness of the parents to retire, the family’s size and the amount of property to be transferred. Retirement might signal a change in the distribution of property between family members and the allocation of work and power between generations. When the parents passed on the property, they found it necessary to stress their inability to
do the work or manage affairs and delineated carefully the entitlement of their children to specific properties. Thus, it was the decision, desire and interest of the senior generation that defined the situation rather than the needs of the younger generation. Evidence I have examined indicates that parents treated their children equally. It will be argued below that this was a strategy which parents designed to provide all the heirs with meagre resources and thus keep them dependent on the older generation.

2(1). *Family forms and the devolution of property*

In Lithuania, under customary law, the entire property of the parents belonged to both the mother and the father, and was identified as common property which they had either brought to the marriage or accumulated by their common work. This property was needed to raise the children and provide them with the wherewithal for their marriages. Variations in the composition of the household according to the age of the household head demonstrate that parents attempted to control the property and administer household affairs as long as possible by delaying their retirement.

Table 1 covers households in two districts (Kaunas and Ukmerge) in the province of Kaunas from the Russian Imperial Census of 1897, and shows the tendency of landed peasants in Lithuanian villages to retain the headship of their household until their death rather than to retire. Whatever the age group, the evidence demonstrates the considerably greater number of households without retired parents than with them. Other significant factors are, first, the rarity of households containing married heads and retired parents (5) in the age range 31–40, during which the highest number of marriages occurred. It can thus be inferred that the marriage of a child involved the establishment of a household separate from that of their parents. The second feature is the number of households where the head of a household was over 60 (41). This suggests that retirement was postponed and that generational transmission of land and goods often occurred only after the father’s death.

Court documents show that elderly parents attempted to manage their households and to preserve authority and control over their children, married and unmarried, for as long as possible. They justified their position as head of household by referring to their physical ability to work and run the farm. Their unwillingness to retire accompanied their complaints to courts about their children’s disobedience and disrespect. Fathers stated that they were the proprietors and administrators of the property, and that no one child could manage the assets as well as the father. The parent might grant the son the position of manager of the farm, but reserve the right to replace him at any time, accusing him of rude behaviour
and disrespect, often mentioning as a reason that he felt dependent on the son. Sometimes the situation in the household could become even worse when the retired parent tried to return to his position as head by remarrying following the death of his wife. This unwillingness to retire could be interpreted in terms of a strong patriarchal tradition in the Lithuanian village family. However, writers of the time expressed concern about the decline of patriarchal authority. Thus the reasons for postponed retirement rest with psychological difficulties parents experienced when they contemplated passing on to their children the property that had been accumulated through their common work. Once parents had maximized their assets, they attempted to preserve them until their death or enfeeblement in old age. If they did appoint a son to manage the farm they did not relinquish ownership and kept the headship of the household.

Children were involved in the process of their parents’ retirement and transmission of the property, and had their own expectations as to what they hoped to gain from their parents’ property. Their aspirations, however, usually only became apparent after their parents’ death. Following the father’s death, division of the family’s property was usually initiated by the direct heirs, sons and daughters, who demanded the right

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group of household head</th>
<th>Households with a married head and retired parent(s)</th>
<th>Households with a widowed head and retired parent(s)</th>
<th>Households with a single head and retired parent(s)</th>
<th>Households without retired parent(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20–30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>61 +</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
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Source: Compiled by the author from the population census of 1897, Lithuanian State Historical Archive in Vilnius (LVIA), F.768, Ap.1., B.20, 21, 35, 38, 43, 45. The dataset of 1,152 souls in 202 households was extracted from the Russian Imperial population census, 1897. In the census of 1897, households were tabulated by size and relationship or affiliation to the head of household. The principal information provided on individuals was their first and family names, age, sex, marital status, relationship to head, dependency status, occupation, education, literacy, native language and religion. The province of Kaunas consisted of seven administrative districts. The poor condition of the population census of 1897 rendered it impossible to cover the whole population of the province. For this article, all available data for peasant households in two districts (Kaunas and Ukmerge) were investigated (LVIA, F.768, Ap.1., B.20, 21, 38, 43, 45).
to establish their own family economies. The number of direct heirs usually determined what constituted an appropriate share. There is increasing evidence during this period to indicate that more and more children were resolving to leave their parents’ household through a division of the family’s property.

Some examples from court records illustrate how family property was divided and the how different family members were treated. If the parents had not distributed their property before their retirement or death, the heirs could resolve any disagreements by taking the case to the court of their township and, if they were still dissatisfied, appealing to a higher court. Land, dwelling houses and outbuildings, livestock, agricultural implements and cash were the items to be divided among heirs when they could not agree as to what constituted an equal portion of the inheritance. The requirement that everyone should receive a share of the inheritance meant that the heirs demanded a specified portion of the available resources and appropriate distribution of the responsibilities.

Typically, male heirs received equal amounts of the immovable property: part of the household plot, some of the arable land and some of the meadow, with the borders of every strip carefully drawn. The buildings were either divided up equally or according to their value. Even the harvest, standing crops, fruits and food were separated out and distributed in the same way as land. Women inherited the same amount as men but frequently received it in the form of cash and movable property because they were expected to marry and join their husbands’ households. However, this was not always the case: the wills of parents show diverse practice, as discussed below. The partition typically involved not only property but also the ‘equal distribution’ of the care and custody of the retired mother or father when the division occurred during the parents’ lifetime, obliging the children to take turns maintaining and supporting the retired parent(s) for a week or more at a time out of the proceeds of their share of the parental holding. An equal responsibility for debts and taxes was also established. Other arrangements might take place as well. One heir might pay off the rest, and buy or rent parts of the plot, house, barn or outbuilding. When such financial transactions occurred, the children who had been paid were supposed to be deprived of their rights in the patrimony.

The practice followed by families when distributing property among the heirs demonstrates that equal treatment of all heirs, married and unmarried, applied in Lithuanian villages. In theory, married children got dowries and were then excluded from further participation in their parents’ inheritance. However, in practice, whatever children had received was detailed in the final settlement and they were then granted additional properties to make up any shortfall in equality. Thus children expected
equal shares in their parents’ property and applied to the courts when these expectations were violated.

2(2). Property devolution in wills

Parents had to decide how their property should be divided when one or more heirs approached adulthood and required a part of the inheritance. Surviving wills demonstrate that parents were careful to specify the property they had accumulated in order to pass it on and obviate future quarrels between children.\(^{36}\) A house or household plot could be passed on to just one heir as compensation or reward for taking care of the surviving parents, even though the rest of the land continued to be divided equally.\(^{37}\) If parents favoured one child, this was calculated in exchange for other responsibilities. Examination of the wills shows that parents carefully calculated the balance between the property to be handed over and responsibilities to be completed in exchange, in accordance with the principle of fairness among the children.\(^{38}\) They were aware that the principle of equal shares and distribution of property would fragment the estate and that initially the resources of the children would be limited. Nineteenth-century writers saw poverty as the direct consequence of this division.\(^{39}\) Senior generations were concerned to provide their children with equal resources even though the prosperity of each individual child might be sacrificed. The share of property that was received was tied to obligations that the children had to perform, and failure to fulfil assigned responsibilities could force a redistribution of the received inheritance portions.\(^{40}\) In one case, a ‘privileged’ child did not take proper care of his elderly father, who, with the help of the court, decided to favour another child.\(^{41}\) Sometimes, the father or mother explicitly stated in their wills that abandonment or failure to complete the assigned responsibilities would occasion the nullification of the provisions of the will.\(^{42}\) Thus, the strategy of parents with meagre resources which involved dividing their property equally among their children might be interpreted in terms of keeping the younger generation dependent,\(^{43}\) in other words, allowing the younger generation to own property while maintaining some control over them. Parents used their power to define the responsibilities and obligations of the younger generation towards the older.\(^{44}\)

2(3). Women and inheritance practice

Custom dictated that men should receive immovable property and women should be awarded a dowry on their marriage. Lithuanian ethnographers
have asserted that women were granted land only in cases when there were no male heirs. Analysis of court records reveals that female heirs received property of equal value to the males’ but in different amounts and forms. Daughters could receive a third of the parents’ immovable property and/or livestock, tools and cash. Some parental wills stipulated that daughters were to be treated as the co-owners of the farm (not as servants) and if the family’s property was to be divided they could claim half of the value of the plot, house, outbuildings and other property that was received by sons. Nobody had the right to eject a daughter or reduce the amount of immovable property granted to her, but by mutual agreement she could sell it or transfer it to another heir and be compensated in cash.

Married daughters appeared before the courts to claim a share of the patrimony. They argued that marriage did not deprive them of the right to receive an equal share of the parental property. Particularly if they lived very close to their parents’ farm, they argued they could work together and pool incomes. Frequent claims in the courts show that married daughters provided evidence of their assistance and work for the patrimony, indicating that they might expect additional property from the entire estate as compensation for the shortfall of a dowry. In one case, for example, the court granted the claim of the married daughter for an extra part of the parental immovable property, because only she, and not her brother, took care of their mother. In another case, a mother arranged additional payment to her married daughter to cover the shortfall of the dowry. As discussed in the next section of this article, such a practice was one of the indicators of long-term exchanges between generations.

Brothers refused to share with their sisters if they considered that the latter had already received their fair share of the parental property, and might accuse the parents of being insane if they privileged their daughters. Brothers complained that their sisters had already enjoyed preferential treatment when they received an equal share with the brothers, because they were exempted from tax payments. Typically they confronted the parents’ strategy of equal distribution by demanding slightly more. In some cases, daughters were rewarded with land and other immovable property for their diligent work on the farm or for their expected better care of an elderly parent.

The principle of equality was thus the major feature in the strategy parents adopted when devolving property in post-Emancipation Lithuania. All the heirs, whether male or female, were treated equally. Frequently, men received land and immovable property and women cash and movables. However, practice shows that parents relied on their daughters and rewarded them with land, houses and other immovable and
movable property because they considered that their daughters would provide a better standard of care. Any advantage a particular heir received was usually compensation for the obligation to support and maintain a surviving parent. Inherited property was accompanied by responsibilities and obligations towards the parents. Even married children could expect to have their dowries augmented if they fulfilled whatever obligations their parents had placed upon them. These aspects of property transmission demonstrate that the senior generations attempted to keep the younger generations dependent as long as was practical.

3. INTERDEPENDENCIES BETWEEN PARENTS AND ADULT CHILDREN

The relationship between generations thus rested upon a reciprocity of expectations in which property to be received by the children balanced their obligations to their parents. I have argued above that property devolution was arranged so that parents could control their children both by delineating their rights to various properties and by building in obligations towards parents. In this section I explore the mechanism of interdependencies between parents and adult children through an examination of retirement arrangements, marriages and post-mortem inventories. I argue that parents and children were linked to each other in such a way that the senior generation offered agricultural tools and resources in exchange for the labour of the younger.

Lithuanian scholars interested in the issue of generational relations have argued that marriage and/or retirement signalled a breakdown of the relationship between parents and children. This conclusion has been inferred from the fact that the land of Lithuanian peasants was treated as individual property in contrast to Russian Imperial law. Referring to custom and state laws on property relations, Lithuanian ethnographers have noted that parents passed on their land to the eldest son (or daughter when there were no sons in the family), obliging them to maintain their parents for the rest of their lives through payments in kind and to provide dowries for their younger siblings. When the financial accounting between generations took place, there is nothing to distinguish such arrangements from any other business transaction.

This breakdown in parent–adult children relationships has been interpreted in one of two ways. Some ethnographers have claimed that the growth of capitalism and individualism in Lithuanian villages in the second half of the nineteenth century influenced the nature of such relations. Recently, social historian Dalia Marcinkeviciene has offered an alternative interpretation of the relationship, seeing these relations as
traditional and pre-modern. Her argument is based on an investigation of the motives that induced Lithuanian peasants to marry and she emphasizes the significance of economic and financial considerations. The economic importance of land ensured that it continued to be a central factor in intra-family relations from the initial decision to marry through to its distribution after death. Marcinkeviciene argues that there was no emotional attachment to home, family and close kin after the children married and left the parental household. It was in this context that families were formed, lived and died. Yet an analysis of the daily routines of agricultural families suggests that many processes connected senior and junior generations through inter-household exchanges of labour and equipment. This indicates that household boundaries were permeable and that interconnections between households were being continually redrawn according to labour and consumption needs, refining Chayanov’s argument about the balance between the labour efforts of a household and its consumption requirements.

Although historians, both Lithuanian and in general, agree that land had such a symbolic (as well as economic) value that families employed specific strategies when deciding on its use and distribution, and made great efforts to preserve it, land was not the only source of wealth. There were other forms of property and labour that linked generations. Nineteenth-century observers noted that economic and social differentiation among villagers depended on the possession and accumulation of domestic livestock, agricultural implements and other goods. Therefore, the transmission of goods was as important for relationships between generations as land distribution. Detailed examination of marriage and post-mortem inventories as well as conflicts over retirement agreements suggests that parents and adult children constructed various claims and obligations with respect to different kinds of property such as tools, domestic livestock, harvest crops and working arrangements. It appears, therefore, that there was a specific dynamic of reciprocity between parents and adult children based on the long-term exchange of labour in the exploitation of productive resources. It was this mechanism of co-operation that was the essential weapon in the fight against general impoverishment in the post-Emancipation period.

3(1). Structure of generational interdependencies

Comparison of the property of parents and of their newly-wed children provides clues as to the structure of the interdependencies between them. Analysis of a selected sample of 72 post-mortem documents and 72 dowries, from which inventories at the time of marriage can be
reconstructed\textsuperscript{64} suggests that, among owners of the same amount of land, older villagers had more tools and domestic livestock compared to newlyweds. The majority of families whose property was listed in the post-mortem inventories held 16–29 desiatina\textsuperscript{65} of land, representing about 65 per cent (48 cases) of the total (72 cases). Post-mortem inventories of newlyweds in the same category constituted 35 per cent (26 cases). Comparison of the two sets of inventories suggests that newlyweds received smaller amounts of land, 0–15 desiatina and meagre resources (representing just 55 per cent of the value of equipment and livestock held by other villagers).\textsuperscript{66} Moreover, by the time older people were inventoried, the most usual situation was that they owned a full set of tools.\textsuperscript{67} There are a very few cases among the 72 studied here where parents kept land but passed on their movables to their heirs,\textsuperscript{68} or where the essential implements were provided by the dowry of the son-in-law.\textsuperscript{69} At the same time, movables held by recently married children to be required to be returned to the original household in the event of a spouse’s unexpected death, divorce, separation or other evidence of marital breakdown.\textsuperscript{70} It is to be expected that some period of time was allowed for the newlyweds to accumulate the equipment they needed and establish full ownership of all the parental property. The transition period may have lasted from several months to a year or more before the head of the household in which the young couple resided became the owner of all of it.\textsuperscript{71} Until that time, the dependence of the younger generations on the senior was arranged in such a way that a child, when s/he married and received land, would be dependent on the parents for access to tools.\textsuperscript{72}

Proceedings in various courts and observations at the time demonstrate that farmers with little or no agricultural equipment were dependent on larger landholders for ploughing, harrowing and carting, through either the use of borrowed or rented equipment or their actual work, paid in money or in kind. Frequently, young married couples received help or made deals to ease their difficulties by cultivating land with their fathers or fathers-in-law (or sometimes with their older brothers) who, living in the neighbourhood, possessed more equipment for agricultural work.\textsuperscript{73} One court case, for example, mentions that a father had assigned a portion of land to his son and provided him with a limited quantity of livestock and tools. The son regularly returned to the father’s farm to work in the fields with his father’s waggon, which he was later allowed to borrow for his own purposes. Alternatively, as other cases show, in return for his work in his father’s fields, a son could be rewarded with seed, a cart and a plough or sometimes with cash.\textsuperscript{74} The writers of the time noted the poverty of young families who provided their manual labour in exchange for extra land to sow or for cash, or sought other ways to escape disaster due to
shortages of domestic livestock and equipment. In this respect the dependence of the young on the old resembles that between the poor and rich.

3(2). Retirement agreements

The analysis of retirement arrangements below further elucidates the mechanism of reciprocity between parents and children. Retirement agreements illustrate the long-term exchange between generations, in which parents 'bargained' with their children over property in return for labour services. Retired parents might not work in the fields together with their children, because they were too old or because they had retained for their own use a separate strip in the field and garden. Parents lived in a separate part of the house and in effect maintained a separate household. This is evident from the terms of retirement agreements where parents calculated precisely the value of the goods, cash and supplies they would receive annually from the children. A sample of the 72 post-mortem inventories shows that the total value of the goods supplied to parents each year typically varied between 250 and 300 roubles, a considerable sum, and in kind this was sufficient to sow and cultivate 14–16 desiatina of land, an area equivalent to that of a medium-sized farm. The items required in kind were simple but important, for example, one puras of rye or wheat, without which the children might not have enough to sow their fields or use of some tools, outbuildings or domestic livestock necessary to plough, transport, store and produce the goods required for their subsistence. Shortages arising from the need to make retirement payments forced children had to borrow the necessary equipment or offer their labour in exchange for it. Conflicts between generations, however, thus threatened some children with debt or even ruin. This happened because the labour force on the farm was depleted when parents moved to their separate household, but their demand for goods remained the same. The young married man who headed the household, his wife and under-age offspring had to work hard to produce the necessary food and other goods for themselves and the retired parents, or alternatively to find the payments due to their parents from the surplus which they would in other circumstances have sold on the market. Some evidence from the nineteenth century indicates that middle-aged farmers of medium-sized farms (15–20 desiatina) who didn’t have retired parents sold a third of their harvest in a good year and received a profit of about 200–250 roubles. The proceeds were approximately equivalent to what the children might have had to pay to their retired parents. Such a situation naturally caused tension between generations that resulted in frequent complaints to the courts.
Some cases in the canton courts illustrate clearly how serious the situation could become when pressures arose between generations over items borrowed, stolen or forgotten to be returned. A mother used to let her parcel of land for sowing, and her son-in-law had to return half of the harvest to her. Widow Terese Strasciene required her son to pay her annually for the use of her land. Widow Elena Kupziene brought a complaint against her son who had broken the conditions of their agreement and had not supplied his mother with 2 purai of rye, 2 purai of barley, 1 trunk, 2 big and 1 small pots, as well as a room to place her things, a meadow, 2 cows and 3 sheep.

Negotiations over retirement settlements and exchanges between parents and their offspring prove that a specific dynamic of reciprocity was created. Examples of canton court cases suggest that parents imposed a series of obligations on their children, the successful completion of which brought rewards that would increase the prosperity of the children’s household and offer the prospect of the accumulation of further property in the future. The failure to fulfil exchanges was treated as an act of disobedience to parents, who could initiate certain sanctions to control or even disinherit their children. Sometimes children refused to help their parents and did not cultivate land for them, arguing that their parents would not reward them for this work. Therefore, parents typically retained control of a certain amount of property in order to stimulate the desire of the children to receive it. By failing to specify the exact amount their offspring could expect to inherit, parents forced them to provide proper care, supplies and work and perform whatever services they might request. Children had to take on assigned responsibilities, obey and aid their parents in order to protect their future standard of living. It was a specific parental strategy to provide children with basic resources and to postpone to a later date the proper reward for their help. The dynamics of reciprocity between the generations was a necessary process in an agricultural environment in order to accumulate family wealth.

3(3). Co-operation between generations

Bearing in mind the various reciprocities between generations, intergenerational relationships cannot be reduced to the ethnographers’ explanation of the material interests of parents and children, excessive retirement payments and disobedient children. Through retirement arrangements, young people were shown that having a separate household did not necessarily entail freedom from the will of their parents. Both generations needed each other’s assistance even though they lived in separate households.
A detailed examination of dowries provides clues as to the property owned by newlyweds and how co-operation between the generations operated in practice. The pattern of co-operation helps explain the rationale for the divisions of family property that were such frequent events in the life cycles of peasant families after Emancipation. Parents assigned dowries equally to every child, and the value of the dowry was proportionate to the value of their whole property. Taking into consideration that most marriages took place within social and economic groups that were equal in status, the dowry brought to the marriage by one spouse was roughly the equivalent of the wealth of the other. Inequality in dowries could provide the occasion for conflict. In one case, for example, a conflict arose between the parents of newlyweds when the groom’s father accused the bride’s father of failing to provide the goods that it had been agreed would constitute her dowry while the latter explained that her marriage portion matched the value of the groom’s property, which had been divided between the groom and his father and the rest of family.  

Analysis of the dowries reveals what property children received and from this it is possible to see what marriage choices were open to them. In 46 cases out of the 72 investigated, the value of property received was between 350–500 roubles. A daughter or son with such a dowry could make a match with a party who possessed from 9 to 12 desiatina of land (the average value of 1 desiatina was 40 roubles). One plough, harrow, waggon or cart received in a dowry was sufficient to cultivate up to 10 desiatina of land. This indicates that the marriage of a child was an important event in the family life cycle because it marked a division of the family’s property. Divisions of property, to a great extent, depended on the family’s size and economic wealth. If there was only one heir s/he would inherit the entire property after the parents’ death. Wealthy farmers could afford to divide their land among multiple heirs. For instance, one father divided 32 desiatina of land equally among his three sons and still each individual farm was economically viable. When property was limited, parents could ensure that the rights to specific items were shared. Parents could also pass on land to a single heir on condition that s/he supported the rest of the family, and could leave all the moveables to the surviving spouse, thereby giving him or her the power to enforce the obligations placed on the heir. Other strategies were devised by parents and agreed with the children, or even by the children acting on their own, to resolve situations in which there would be little profit for anyone if the land was fragmented. In all such cases, it was expected that, by marrying someone of equal status, children would merge their property to secure a marriage settlement, consisting of some land and tools or land and other equipment and obligations towards parents.
Through the system of dowries, parents established a satellite work group in the village and ensured co-operation between households that helped combat the general rural impoverishment. The structure of dependencies between newlyweds and parents, and details of the marriage settlements, suggest that children received either land without a full set of tools or some useful equipment to cultivate a smaller parcel of land. The mechanism of reciprocity between the generations indicates that parents developed strategies that rewarded their children in return for fulfilling obligations. Over the course of the nineteenth century the number of farms increased and the size of the average farm fell as more families divided their properties into ever smaller units. However, this did not mean that these smaller farms were immediately impoverished, as writers of the time claimed. The productivity of farms was largely unaffected by the frequent divisions of familial property because the viability of smaller farms was preserved through joint working agreements between family members and neighbours in the village community. The ethnographic literature describes the seasonal agricultural work that involved teams of farmers in the village carting manure, ploughing, harrowing and harvesting. Carting of manure, for example, was the first field task in the spring. The entire village agreed to work together and to supply each farmer in turn. Everybody involved in this work arrived with their own waggon, horse and whatever other equipment was required. As mentioned above, villages were inhabited by closely related families. On average, there were between two and four related families in a village. In some large villages there were between six and eight such families established as separate households. Two generations might take up residence next door to each other following a division of property, but by continuing their day-to-day agricultural routine they could help each other and share necessary equipment or such major structures as barns and storehouses.

After the division of certain properties, some tools or other property circulated between households. A father and son, elder brother and other siblings, or in-laws would usually contribute some tools or harrowing implements to cultivate separate family holdings or they could agree on some other form of co-operation. One young married head of household, for example, divided the family property with his father, each receiving a horse and cow; the son had two-thirds of the land and a cart, while his father occupied a third of the land and had a waggon, plough, harrow and cart. In another case, a son-in-law had already divided their land with his father-in-law several years earlier, and subsequently partitioned the outbuildings (three barns, a storehouse, granary and bathhouse). The son-in-law received the granary and storehouse; his father-in-law got the three barns and a small sauna. Only the house and
the outbuildings along with two sides of the farmyard remained for common use.\textsuperscript{107} In another case, brothers possessed some tools – such as a plough, a cart, harness and two scythes – individually, but shared a large waggon and a harrow.\textsuperscript{108} Co-operation between parents and offspring or, in some cases, between elder and younger brothers was essential, because it was clearly impossible to house domestic livestock in the granary or storehouse, to transport manure without a waggon, cultivate land in the absence of tools and to grow crops without seeds. The young couples divided the land with their parents (or siblings) but maintained close ties to ensure access to the equipment needed to work the land. Throughout the period under study, cases of divisions of familial property were frequent and mutual assistance was a necessary consequence.\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{CONCLUSIONS}

Over the course of the later nineteenth century, then, a significant trend was a long-term exchange between parents and children. Contrary to Chayanov’s interpretations of the peasant household economy, which assumed a balance between production and consumption to ensure survival, I have argued that the strategies of generations who continued to live in separate households were redrawn in terms of a multiplicity of dependencies, a constant reshuffle of recourses and the maximum utilization of land and labour. These were essential aids to avoid the impoverishment that was a potential consequence of a decrease in size of many farms. Young couples seldom had all the equipment necessary to cultivate land in the first years of their marriage and depended on their parents for a period of time. The senior generation controlled tools and productive resources and had a strong sense of themselves as providers of wealth to their offspring. The transmission of goods in retirement agreements was arranged in return for an obligation on the part of the children to provide proper care and/or manual labour when necessary. In this way young people were better able to cope with a shortage of necessary agricultural implements while the elderly received assistance either in cultivating their strips of land or in essential produce. Therefore, established reciprocities bonded children and parents. Co-operation and mutual aid were essential in the post-Emancipation village.

In sum, analysis of the strategies of different generations in post-Emancipation rural Lithuania suggests a high degree of complexity in the relationships between individuals, in which they were variously allies, partners and rivals when fighting for economic survival in difficult circumstances, negotiating their rights and duties, and expressing their expectations and sentiments. The findings with regards to equality in the
way property was distributed, the family-based organization of labour and mitigating power relationships imply the merging of individuals’ economic, emotional and social interests. It would be interesting to discover whether the enhanced role of the market, urbanization, the separation of work and family and the advent of public welfare in the twentieth century when Lithuania was independent between the two World Wars presented individuals with new opportunities to develop economic, political and social strategies which gave them greater scope for independent decision-making, autonomy and the creation of varied social networks beyond the household and the village. At the same time, no complete break with the nineteenth-century heritage should be expected. Interactions between the individual’s economic, emotional and social interests continued to reproduce cultural patterns of reciprocal exchange and interdependency between individuals and families throughout the twentieth century. The collapse of such social relations may produce unknown consequences in the future.

APPENDIX 1. ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Lithuanian State Historical Archive in Vilnius (LVIA)
Collection of the Ecclesiastical Consistory Court of Telsiai (Samogitian) Roman Catholic Bishopric F.669, Ap.4 (1861–1905)
Collection of Panevezys Orphans’ Court F.1456, Ap.1

Kaunas District Archive (Kauno Apskrities Achaiyas; KDA)
Collection of Kaunas District Canton Courts I-92, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 101 (1904–1913)

Vilnius University Library, Manuscripts Department, in Vilnius (VUB RS)
Collection of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society F.34 (1873–1874)

Library of the Academy of Sciences, Manuscripts Department, in Vilnius (MAB RS)
Collection of Naujoji Zagare Canton Court F.37-350 (1863)

ENDNOTES

1 Alexander V. Chayanov, in Daniel Thorner et al. eds., The theory of peasant economy, (Homewood, 1966).


5 Lithuania became part of the Russian Empire after the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795. After the administrative reforms in 1843 in Imperial Russia, Lithuania was divided into three provinces: Vilnius, Kaunas and Augustavas. The boundaries of the province of Kaunas corresponded closely to those of present-day Lithuania with the exception that modern Lithuania includes three districts formerly in the province of Vilnius. The province of Kaunas was settled mainly by Lithuanians. In Lithuanian historiography the province of Kaunas and three districts of Vilnius province are generally considered ‘Lithuania’ and treated as present-day Lithuania. This article follows this historiographic tradition.


8 Observations in the files assembled by the Russian Imperial Geographical Society (Vilnius University Library, Manuscript Department in Vilnius, hereafter VUB RS), F.34, B.99–178.


14 Prior to Emancipation the obligations of peasants to their landlords typically included corvée (three days’ labour per week for an adult man aged 17–55 to work with his horse, and one day per week for a woman aged 16–50) plus a share of products such as milk and meat; see Pamerneckis, ‘Vilniaus ir Dysnos apskričių būdžiavinių òkių raidos XIX a. viduryje statistinė analizė’ (‘Statistical analysis of the development of serfs’ farms in Vilnius and Dysna Districts in the mid-nineteenth century’), *Lietuvių Istorijos Studijos* 3 (1996), 38–9; Mečislavas Jučas, ‘Oсобенности аграрного развития Литвы в XVII-XVIII vv.’ (‘Particularities of agrarian development in Lithuania in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’), in *Ежегодник по аграрной истории Восточной Европы за1971 год* (Yearbook on the Agrarian History of Eastern Europe) (1974), 115.


19 The psychological dimensions of the transfer of authority between generations was apparent in contemporary writings; see Konstantin Gukovskij, *Panevezkij ujezd* (Kovna, 1895), 35–9, *Opisanije Rossienskogo ujezda*, 59–60, and *Telsevskij ujezd*
(Kovna, 1890), 83–5; Shavelskij ujezd (Kovna, 1896), 46–52, and Novoaleksandrovskij ujezd (Kovna, 1895), 43–6; Jan Witort, ‘Su kuro pavyde’ (‘Courts of the Lithuanian people’), Przegląd powszechny 42, no. 11 (1894), 235–57; and B. Fridman, Juridicheskije vozzrenija v obytschaj krestjan Severo-Zapadnogo kraja (Peasants’ legal attitudes and customs in the North-Western countryside) (Vilna, 1890), 60–73. These authors described the legal customs, practice and institutions of the Lithuanian population in order to codify the customary law. The result of those initiatives was the preservation of vital information about the proceedings of the village and county courts and records of canton councils concerning sales, rents and pledges – vital as the original records of the courts have not survived.


24 In one case, for instance, Juozas Abramovic petitioned to the canton court, complaining about his daughter-in-law and her demand to use his portion of the garden. He


The practice in Lithuania differed from the custom in the Central Provinces of the Russian Empire where equitable shares were decided on the basis of the number of adult workers and ‘eaters’ (edoki); and Frierson, ‘Razdel’, 77–8.

Records of the Councils for Peasant Affairs in the Province of Kaunas include data collected by the Peace mediators from the canton and village officials who reported on farm divisions between 1861 (Act of Emancipation) and 1882. The divisions of family property was regulated by law. A review of the cases indicates that the property of 493 families was divided with the permission of the village assembly and Provincial Council for Peasants’ Affairs; 11,323 families divided voluntarily; and 9,566 families divided to create separate households but continued to constitute a single unit for tax purposes. See Leonas Mulevičius, Eglė Griškūnaitė, and Antanas Tyla eds., Lietuvos TSR istorijos šaltiniai (Sources for Lithuanian history), vol. 2 (Vilnius, 1968), 62.

nineteenth century frequently described and emphasized the details to be found in property division, how even barns, firewood, fences or ham and cheese were apportioned equitably; see Gukovskij, \textit{Novoaleksandrovskij ujezd}, 181; Witort, ‘Sądy’, 236–7, and [G. R.], \textit{Rasskazy o Litve}, 11–13.


35 Parents mentioned in their wills that married children were already dowered, but in the event that these had not received an equal share of parental resources, they would add that the favoured heir had to pay the already dowered siblings a certain amount of money. In one case, Gertruda Gadbisova obliged her married daughter Liudvika Urban to pay 50 roubles to each child from her first marriage who had already married and received their dowries; see KDA, I-106, Ap. 1, B.2374, L.5–6 (1893). In another case, the court decided to grant money to already married daughters who had quarrelled with their brothers over their inheritance. See the division of property by the Spegoskiai family, LVIA, F.447, Ap.7, B.904, L.27–34 (1870–1871). For similar examples see property divisions by the family of Antanas Lavrinovic, KDA, I-106, B.2197, L.3–4 (1890); or the property divisions of the family of Jokubas Pamedgitis, KDA, I-106, Ap.1, B.2278, L.12–13 (1892); and Juozas Liutiakas’ will, KDA, I-106, Ap.1, B.3021, L.3 (1904); Juozapas Urbanovas v. Baltramiejus Kalandas, MAB RS, F.37-350, L.5. See also the notary archive of Kaunas District Court, LVIA, F.1245, Ap.1, B.69, L.30–1 (Albert Kigel’s file); L.103–6 (Katarzyna Paskovska’s file), and L.107–20 (Viktorija Papirosova’s file).

36 For this study I examined 90 wills found in various civil and consistory courts. Devolution of property by written will was rare in Lithuanian villages. The will had to be certified by the District Civil and Criminal Court. According to civil law, state authorities did not recognize the private ownership of land by peasants prior to redemption, and typically refused to validate peasants’ wills. The civil courts, however, preserved the texts of the so-called domestic wills, which were written at home, and often never officially recognized by the authorities. For the purposes of the present study I analysed the contents of all types of wills.


40 One father had divided his land, 23 desiatina, equally between two of his three sons and ordered them to live separately from their portions (see note 65, below, for a definition of the desiatina). The youngest son was to receive 100 roubles from each brother. The court found that the eldest son had received a slightly larger portion and resolved the quarrel forcing the youngest to demand his portion in immovable property from the ‘privileged’ brother in the event of necessity; see the decision of the Abelis Canton court in Gukovskij, Novodealsandrovskij ujezd, 180. For similar examples see the Kazimieras and Juozas Macelijai peaceful deal, LVIA, F.703, Ap.1, B.400, L.18–20 (1906); Aloizas Mickevic v. Povilas Mickevic, LVIA, F.447, Ap.7, B.197, L.1–4 (1877); the Francisca Martiusovas v. Tadas Martysusovas, LVIA, F.445, Ap.2, B.1857, L.5 (1896).


43 Retirement payments to parents placed an additional economic burden on siblings. According to the ethnographer Vysniauskaitė, the retirement payments due to parents were set higher than was necessary for two retired parents or even one; see Vysniauskaitė, Kalnius and Paukštėtė, Lietuvių šeima ir papročiai, 138–40. Similarly some international scholars have found evidence of the hardship offspring found in trying to make retirement payments to parents; see Gaunt, ‘The property and kin relationships’, 260–76.


49 In her complaint to the court, Marijona Grigas argued that though she was married and living in a neighbouring village, she could constantly return to the parental house to work and enjoy the products of her work, see Marijona Grigas and Ona Pukas v. Judita Serenis, LVIA, F.445, Ap.2, B.570, L.5–7 (1886). Similar arguments were presented in the other court cases: Antanas Kislo v. Ona and Antanas Zilinskai, LVIA, F.445, Ap.2, B.158, L.5–8 (1884); Rozalija Krakovska v. Južefata Škurolska, LVIA, F.445, Ap.2, B.2450, L.8–10 (1893); Francisco Martysova and Agota Katilisova v. Žadas Martisusovas, LVIA, F.445, Ap.2, B.1857, L.5–10 (1891). In the records of the appeal court there are 60 cases out of a total of 250 where sisters, frequently already married, protested against their exclusion from inheriting the parental property even though they had received a marriage portion; and LVIA, F.445, Ap.2 (calculations by the author).


52 Kazimieras Liūtik explained that he had paid his sister, Ona Kanevskaja, a dowry of 400 roubles, because her chosen partner had a large plot of land, buildings and all the essential farming tools and did not want to marry Ona without a dowry of 400 roubles. Ona had begged her brother in tears. Kazimieras had felt sympathetic to his sister and pledged parents’ land to enable her to marry a rich neighbour. Therefore, Kazimieras refused to share any further land, because he considered she had already been adequately rewarded; see LVIA, F.445, Ap.2, B.3056, L.17–18 (1898). Although women were usually exempted from the payment of tax (see the text), in one case, Juozas Milius brought suit against his two sisters, Ona and Agota Milius, for refusal to pay taxes in kind for their assigned portion; see KDA, I-101, Ap.1, B.7, L.1–3.

54 Jurgutis, Valstiečių kiemas, 47–80.

56 Jurgutis, Valstiečių kiemas, 47–80.


59 Marcinkevičienė, Vedusiuį visuomenė, 68–71.

61 In her research Marcinkevičienė demonstrated how the marriage strategies pursued by successive generations of Lithuanian farmers were designed to consolidate holdings in the person of one heir; see Marcinkevičienė, *Vedusiuju visuomenė*, 49–60. Historians interested in inheritance practices in other areas of Europe have associated the system of impartible inheritance with the preservation of both material and symbolic capital. For a review see Segalen, ""Avoir sa part", p. 129.


64 Where marriage inventories have not survived the evidence has been inferred from details on dowries. The items listed and the value of the dowry approximate the property a couple might hold on marriage. Information was derived from 36 cases of divorce and separation (LVIA, F.669, Ap.4); 5 marriage contracts (VUB RS, F.107–20, L.1–10 (1910–1918); 13 cases from the Kaunas Tax Office (KDA, I-106, Ap.1); 6 from the canton court (KDA, I-92, 95, 99, 101), and 12 from the appeal and district courts (LVIA, F.445, Ap.2; F.448, Ap.2; and F.447, Ap.2, 5, 7, 13).

65 The *desiatina* was an official unit of land measurement in the Russian Empire, equivalent to 2.7 acres or 1.095 hectares.

66 More than half of the newlyweds (those who held fewer than 16 *desiatina*) did not own a full set of tools but only some items, making up, say, half or a quarter of what was needed to cultivate their land; siblings would then share what they had so that they all had use of what was necessary. Sometimes the wills or court cases indicate that brothers had equally divided the land, outbuildings, livestock and some tools, but owned in common a large wagon and a harrow; see Tomas Serputis’ will, LVIA, F.448, Ap.2, B.5164; Kazimieras and Jonas Motiejunai, LVIA, F.703, Ap.1, B.400, L.8–10, 18–19 (1906–1907); Ignas and Petronela Zdanoviciai v. Dominikas Zdanovici, LVIA, F.447, Ap.7, B.1325, L.5–10 (1871–1872); Izidorius Gruodis v. Boleslavas Gruodis, KDA, I-92, Ap.1, B.94, L.1–3 (1904); Juozas Sidlovskis v. Jonas Sidlovskis, KDA, I-101, Ap.1, B.30, L.7 (1909).


Details of one case show that the bridegroom owned only land, but his father-in-law promised to supply the necessary tools and resources for farming after his marriage; see LVIA, F.1671, Ap.4, B.271, P.3 (1888). In another case, a bride received a dowry of 300 roubles, agricultural implements and livestock which were what the young couple required in order to improve the abandoned farm of the bridegroom; see LVIA, F.1671, Ap.4, B.275, L.676 (1893).


It is evident from the records of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society that a farmer with 16–29 *desiatina* usually planted on his arable land 18 *purai* of rye, 2 *purai* of wheat, 6 *purai* of barley, 6 *purai* of oats; 8 *purai* of potatoes; and 0.5–1 *purai* of hemp (VUB RS, F.34, B.99–179; calculations by the author). Analysis of post-mortem inventories suggests that retirement payments in kind to elderly parents could include sufficient seed grain to sow a medium-size farm. In one case, for example, it was reported that the father, Juozas Skrauminas passed over 20 *desiatina* of land with buildings and full farm equipment to his son and in exchange demanded support in kind for himself and his wife. The portion for the parents included 10 *purai* of rye, 4 of barley, 3 of oats, 2 of potatoes, hay to feed and raise a cow, one sheep and a pig, and the supply of 20 pounds of linen; see KDA, I-99 Ap.1, B.162, L.28 (1909). (See note 80, below, for a definition of the *puras*.)

1 *puras* was around 84 kg.

Lithuanian ethnographers have claimed that parents often demanded larger retirement payments than were needed for their subsistence. However, they did not interpret the relationship between generations in terms of obligations owed to the parents in exchange for the transfer of property; see Vyšniauskaitė, Kalnius and Paukštytė, *Lietuvių šeima ir papročiai*, 138–9; Mačiukas, ‘Papročių teises elementai Upininkų valstiečių santykiaose’, 76–87; Mačiukas, ‘Papročių teisės elementai’, in *Rietavo apylinkės*, 365–378; Čilvinaitė, 180–201.


*Lietuviškas balsas* (*Voice of Lithuania*) (27 June 1888), 81–2.


Josif Keblis, for example, stated that if his son, Kazimieras Keblis, did not follow very precisely the conditions set out for the running of the farm and neglected his obligations to take proper care of him and his wife, it would be treated as a rejection of parental authority, leading to his expulsion from the farm; see Kazimieras Keblis v. Agota Keblis, LVIA, F.445, Ap.2, B.576, L.6–7 (1886). Similar statements are indicated in wills and other records, for example the will of Motiejų Kolesnikovas, KDA, I-106, Ap.1, B.2883, L.1–2 (1899); LVIA, F.1671, Ap.4, B.273, L.279 (1891); LVIA, F.1671, Ap.4, B.275, L.13 (1893); LVIA, F.1671, Ap.4, B.279, L.212; L.674–6 (1899); and Adolfas Kelpsa v. Nikodema Kelpsa, LVIA, F.669, Ap.4, B.700, L.7–8 (1866).

him to cope with hardships, but while his father was alive, he had not managed it and he claimed the right to own the plot of land only after father’s death; see LVIA, F. 445, Ap.2, B.1703, L.5 (1890). In another case, Agota Keblis wrote that her son had to complete all the responsibilities she had assigned him and, in the event of failure, he would lose the right to own the farm; see LVIA, F. 445, Ap.2, B. 576, L.8 (1886).

Nineteenth-century contemporaries observed how parents claimed to own some additional property or children suspected them of hiding some of the property. In fact, sometimes there was neither hidden nor additional property. See [G. R.], Rasskazy o Litve, 59–60; Gukovskij, Novoaleskandrovskij ujezd, 177–9; Juozas Tumas, ‘Ką gera gali padaryti valsčiaus teismas’ (‘What canton courts can do’), in Tevynės sargas, 2 (1896), 15–17; Witort, ‘Sądy ludowe’, 13–14.

David Gaunt has described other alternatives as they operated in the Scandinavian countries at the end of the nineteenth century, when the senior generation placed money in the bank and drew a pension from their capital; see Gaunt, ‘Retirement in Northern and Central Europe’, 270–1. Throughout the period under study there is no record of such a practice in Lithuania.

This included cash, livestock, agricultural tools, food reserves, clothes and bedclothes. Some cases indicate that a man with 500 roubles would marry a woman with 13 desiatina of land; see LVIA, F.1671, Ap.4, B269, L.713 (1885). For similar cases see LVIA, F.1671, Ap.4, B.269, L.410–11 (1885); LVIA, F.1671, Ap.4, B.275, L.538 (1893).

Contemporaries defined the standard of the peasants’ economy in the following way: the average plot of 20 desiatina of land needed in order to be fully equipped to cultivate the land: 3 ploughs, 3 harrows, 4 waggons, 4 carts, at least 3 collars, 3 straps, 2 saddles, 3 harnesses and chains for 3 horses; see the records of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, VUB RS. F.34, B.99–178.

Juozas Liutikas in his will divided his property, worth 4,000 roubles, among his widow, their three sons and two daughters. Each son received 10 desiatina from a total of 32 desiatina of land. Buildings and movables were shared equally between them and they were required to pay dowries for two daughters. Each dowry consisted of 300 roubles, 5 cows (worth 65 roubles), 1 horse (60 roubles), 2 pigs (20 roubles), 3 sheep (9 roubles), 3 geese (6 roubles), 2 waggons (4 and 5 roubles). The value of one dowry was 465 roubles; see Juozas Liutikas’ will, KDA, I-106, Ap.1, B.3021, L.1–2 (1905).

For example one father divided his 13 desiatina of land, a house, a storehouse, 1 waggon, 1 yoke and 2 cows (a total value of 720 roubles) into equal parts between his two daughters: each received a half share of the plot, half of the house, one cow, and shared rights to the storehouse, a waggon and harness. See Steponas Stepanovas’ will, KDA, I-106, Ap.1, B.2417, L.1–5 (1893).

Tomas Serputis in his will specified that his oldest son was to receive the immovable property (51 desiatina of land) with the obligation to take proper care of his widowed mother and the other children until their marriage. The father also detailed the value and composition of the dowries they were to receive when they should marry: each dowry was to include 100 roubles in cash, 1 horse, 1 calf, 5 cows, 4 pigs, 2 swine, 5 geese, 5 hens, 1 cockerel, 1 axe, 1 scythe, 2 waggons, 2 carts, 8 wheels, 1 plough, 1 harrow, bedclothes and clothes (the total value of the each dowry was 375 roubles). The remaining items of equipment and livestock (valued at 300 roubles) were left for the widow; see the will of Tomas Serputis, LVIA, F.669, Ap.4, B.1595, L.1–7 (1875).

Marcinkevičienė, for example, described the practice of exchange between siblings: one heir would acquire the rights to the land, and compensate his brother or sister, using the dowry of his wife; see Marcinkevičienė, Vedustijų visuomenė, 50–61.
Ethnographers have described in detail the rituals and customs of peasants’ work in Lithuanian villages in the post-Emancipation period. They have established that the spring field works such as ploughing and carting were done in teams (talka): the whole village agreed upon the carting of manure and supplied fertilizer daily to every farmer’s field. The villagers attended to these tasks using their own wagons, horses and agricultural implements. The same occurred in the case of ploughing and harvesting. See Dunduliene, Žemdirbystė Lietuvoje, 114–37; Balys Buračas, Lietuvos kaimo pašovų simbolių identifikacija (Customs in the Lithuanian village), cf. Albinas Degutis, Vidmantas Jankauskas and Vacys Milius (Vilnius, 1993), 24–32; M. Katkus, Balanos Gadyne (Balana time [a balana was a strip of wood traditionally burnt like a candle]) (Vilnius, 1964), 35–41; and [G. R.], Rasskazy o Lite, 85–9.

Lithuanian ethnographer Pranė Dunduliene, for example, mentions that there were cases of entire villages that were composed of relatives as a consequence of families having divided their land over many generations; see Dunduliene, Senieji lietuvii seimų pašovų simbolių jeiškinys, 130–2.


See the records of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, VUB RS, F.34, B.117, L.3–4.