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The “Tradition” of Many Children in Albania...
and the Evidence: the Census of 1918

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Introduction

Carleton S. Coon gathered data for his study of the inhabitants of Northern Albania during the fall, winter, and spring of 1929–30. His study focused on physical anthropology and he also gathered data about the number of children fathered by the fathers of the men he surveyed. According to his data, 1,060 fathers had 5,466 children, which is an average of 5.2 children. These 5.2 children were composed of 3.2 boys and 2.0 girls, which gives a ratio of 163 boys per 100 girls (Coon 1950:23). Coon defends such an unusual sex ratio on the ground that it was the same for Muslim and Catholic Albanians and that otherwise the mothers of Northern Albania “would have been taxed beyond their capacities” (Coon 1950:26). Since such a ratio can no longer be defended scientifically, an average of 6.4 children is much more reliable. Coon admits that children who had died in infancy were probably not included, so we are therefore talking about an average of 7–8 children per father. Since some of the fathers were married to more than one wife, a mother would have had about 6 children.

This is very much in contrast to an investigation of 12 Albanian settlements in the census of 1918. The average number of co-residing children ranged between 0.8 and 2.0 children per couple (Gruber/Pichler). The highest average number of children was 2.6 children when a woman reached about 40 to 45 years, near the end of childbearing age. Only 15 couples out of a sample of 558 couples and widowed or divorced persons had 5 or more children (2.7 percent). How can this discrepancy be explained?

The cultural background of Albanian family life

In 1998, Albania had the highest total fertility rate in Europe: 2.5 children born per woman. Only the neighboring country of Macedonia had a total fertility rate of more than 2 children born per woman (2.1). All other European countries had fertility rates below replacement level (UNICEF 2000:36). Albania was the last country in Europe to enter demographic transition and has yet to complete it. Albania lies within the “Eastern European marriage pattern” with low age at marriage and a virtual lack of celibacy (Hajnal 1965). A common feature of the Eastern pattern of household formation was equal male inheritance. This pattern was, with minor exceptions, also dominant in the Balkans (Kaser 2000:76-141; Todorova 1993:127). However, the pattern of inheritance was only one among numerous aspects that may explain the formation of specific household structures. We know from studies on upland communities that different patterns of inheritance may lead to similar household structures (Cole/Wolf 1974). A much more decisive factor for the formation of nuclear or joint family households was the time at which the fission of a household took place. Did it coincide with the time of marriage, with the death of the head of the household or did it occur only after generations? Maria Todorova points out that neolocality as a prerequisite for marriage has a limiting effect on the complexity of households, whereas the absence of neolocality as a precondition may promote a high rate of marriage and the proliferation of joint family household forms (Todorova 1993:131). On the basis of these findings, Karl Kaser distinguishes four different systems of household formation in Southeast Europe. Three of them are based on partible inheritance and one, the northern transitional zone, partly overlaps with the impartible inheritance system. The northern border zone corresponds with the above-mentioned Hajnal-line, which constitutes the border between the “(Western) European marriage pattern” and the “Eastern European marriage pattern”.

According to Karl Kaser's subdivisions, the area of this study belongs to zone 4, where the so-called *patrilocal-household cycle complexity household formation system* was prevalent. In the patrilocal residence pattern, a bride moved into the household of her husband who, in line with this system, lived together with his father and continued to live with his brothers even after his father's death. The male offspring constituted the nucleus of a household, while the

female offspring had to leave the household at the time of marriage. “Transmission of property was not related to death or marriage and took place after generations, when the household divided into several different groups. This system can be found in parts of Hungary proper, Croatia and Slovakia, most parts of Serbia, Western Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania and Northern Greece. Variants of it occurred in the Maina region of the Peloponnesus and on larger islands like Crete, Corfu and Cyprus.” (Kaser 1996:383). Karl Kaser furthermore subdivides this zone into a northern and a southern variant. In this paper we will focus our attention on the southern variant, which is characterized by a distinctive patriarchal cultural background that Karl Kaser calls *Balkan patriarchy* (Kaser 1992:173-294). Basic elements of this cultural pattern are strong blood ties, ancestor worship, patrilocality, patrilineal kinship structures, bride price and blood feuds. It was considered very important for a woman to bear sons. If she delivered only girls or no children at all, her husband could marry another woman. This was no problem for Muslims in contrast to Catholics. The male line had to be continued, even at the expense of severe problems with the Catholic church. “In northern Albania girls are married as soon as they come to sexual maturity and begin bearing children as soon as they are biologically able. There is no time of peace.” (Coon 1950:27).

New data

A recently rediscovered source allows us to compare the ideal with reality, the problem for Southeastern Europe in general and Albania in particular being that except in rare cases, we do not have accurate information from population censuses before the late 19th century. The general scholarly opinion is that in Albania, accurate population censuses were not carried out before the census of 1945 (Lienau and Prinzing 1989:160; Schmidt-Neke and Sjöberg 1993:464).

Michael Schmidt-Neke and Örjan Sjöberg describe the inaccuracies of the earlier population censuses and mention the following problems:

- a widespread lack of well organized marriage license and registration offices in many places;
- the tendency to register less children and to name only sons under the item “number of children”;
- the possibility of avoiding military service by non-registration;
- double registration in the case of migration or transhumance, etc.;
- political claims: the population census of 1930 was reported to have been conducted with the intention of securing the result of at least one million people (Schmidt-Neke and Sjöberg 1993:464).

The first population census conducted by the Albanian government was taken in 1923; many of its results on a macro level have been published (Selenica 1927). The next population census was taken in 1930, the original data of which is still available, although not as a compact collection. Parts of it are stored in the Tirana State Archive and parts are dispersed among provincial archives. As mentioned above, the data from this census seems to be rather inaccurate. The census lists include persons who were born later or who moved to a village due to marriage after 1930. In the village of Konaj-Fanë, 11.2 % of the whole population belonged to this group. Another problem is that of under-enumeration. In a study of 10 villages, there was a proportion of 100 men to 90.98 women. This phenomenon was much more accentuated among Muslims (100 men to 87.93 women) than among Orthodox (100 men to 92.74 women) and Catholic (100 men to 94.64 women) Christians. Most of this imbalance is probably due to the under-registration of girls: in the age group above 19, there was a ratio of 100 men to 102.9 women (Gruber and Pichler). This census is obviously of less

value than that organized in 1918 by Graz-based Franz Seiner, an expert on statistics. The quality of this population census has been underestimated in scholarly literature until now.

In January 1916, almost the entire territory of Albania was occupied by the Austrian-Hungarian army with the exception of fringe areas in the south of the country, which were occupied by Bulgarian, French, Italian and Greek troops. Shkodër, at that time the country's largest city, became the seat of a military administration that left the traditional civil administrative structures unchanged.

The population census was taken on March 1st, 1918. The material was transported to Shkodër and safely stored. It was then processed “with the help of a large number of intelligent young Albanians” (Oberhummer 1921). By the end of September 1918, the data had been double-checked and completions and supplements carried out. However, these activities had to be stopped due to the planned withdrawal of the army in October. The order to destroy the entire census material was neglected with the exception of the district headquarters in Lushnja. Therefore, the material concerning the Berat, Fier, Lushnja and Shkrapar regions (89,142 persons) is missing (Seiner 1992b:5). The surviving material, which covers the major part of the country, is as follows: 435,075 out of the 803,959 (this figure was calculated too high) persons counted in 1923 (54 percent) or 20,096 square kilometers out of the country's total area of 28,748 square kilometers (70 percent). It was very difficult to transport the census material to Vienna. The military administration unit responsible for the delivery agreed to hand out the material to the Austrian Academy of Sciences along with the permission to publish and to work with it. The Academy asked the census director, Franz Seiner, to work out the basic statistics. These tables were published in 1922, supported by funds from the Albanian government (Seiner 1922b). Instructed by the Albanian government, Seiner also separately published the results of the census relating to the tribal areas of northern Albania. On the basis of these results, he prepared the first map on the distribution, size and borders of the tribal territories (Seiner 1922a). One year earlier, the director of the Balkan Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Eugen Oberhummer, published first preliminary statistical results (Oberhummer 1921). At that time there were also plans to publish the village level data, but the Academy was not able to find adequate funding for the publication. Oberhummer concluded: “If we do not receive outside support, this material indispensable for both scholarly work and any orderly administration in Albania will go to waste.” (Oberhummer 1921:63). And this is what happened.

The population census was taken very carefully. It was precisely conducted and prepared over one year in advance. The collection of statistical data began two months after the Austrian-Hungarian army entered the country. In March 1916, a provisional population census was taken, linked to a livestock census and a survey of food supplies. It was badly prepared and full of crucial mistakes. In March 1917, Franz Seiner, a census expert and statistician, was sent to Albania to take over the post of chief census official in the occupied territories. It was his duty to establish a provincial office for statistics and after that to organize a general population census (Seiner 1922b:1f.).

This population census needed huge preparation. First of all, all houses, households, huts and buildings in general had to be counted and the houses provided with numbers, since this had never been done before. A second step was to delineate settlements and fix the borders of villages, as well as to decide how the names of the villages should be recorded in writing. An index of villages, towns and cities with about 1,800 entries was created. An official order for a rough population census was given on May 26th 1917, in order to familiarize the population with the census procedure and to convince people that it would not make sense to under-report the number of children (usually the female ones), since the distribution of necessary food supplies would be based on the data of the population census (Seiner 1922:2). The result was that the census reported 252,794 men and 251,423 women, i.e. 100 men to 99.4 women, or an almost equal distribution (Seiner 1922b:8). This is in contrast to the 1930 census

mentioned above, and to the results of all Balkan countries in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, which always reported a large surplus of men.

The process of establishing a naming system for topographical locations was difficult and time consuming, since many locations had names in three or four languages and there may have been significant differences in the pronunciation and spelling of the topographical names by villagers. In addition, many villages did not have a fixed communal name, but just the names of the quarters (mahalle) of the village. Finally, an “Albanian Literary Commission” was established in Shkodër, which worked out guidelines for naming Albanian localities (Seiner 1922b:2f.).

Another problem that had to be solved was how to establish family names and people's first names. Until then, only few Albanian families had a fixed family name. Generally, the mass of the people used only first names, and for distinguishing purposes they added the names of the father and of the patrilineal grandfather. An additional problem was that in the villages the naming pool was relatively small, thus the administration ran into problems. This was why settling on names for the purpose of the population census was made obligatory. The heads of the households were free to choose their names. In only a few cases, the name was selected by the administration; the guidelines of this process were worked out by the scholar of Albanian, Max Lambertz (Seiner 1922:4f.).

The 1st March 1918 was finally chosen as the date for the population census. This date was not chosen arbitrarily since in spring many families left their villages in order to migrate to the mountainous summer pastures for at least half of the year. A “census commissioner” was appointed for every village. This could be a member of the occupation forces or an Albanian military officer; they were supervised by regional and district commissioners. Most of the commissioners were trained by Seiner personally. The registration forms with their 24 columns were in German and Albanian, and the data could therefore be entered in German or Albanian. The village chiefs were obliged to correct false data given by the head of a household (Seiner 1922:2-5).

Evidently everything was done to conduct a precise population census; this is why we can qualify this material as outstanding relative to the conditions of that time and in comparison to the later censuses. Beryl Nicholson investigated the data for the *Kreis* (district) of Malakstra and stated: “The evidence so far gives reason for optimism that the manuscript census schedules will prove to be a rich source for the study of society in Northern and Central Albania in the early part of this century.” (Nicholson 1999:29).

The contents of the census forms

The population census counted 524,217 persons who lived in about 1,800 villages, towns and cities on the territory administrated by Austria-Hungary. Due to the destruction of the material mentioned above in the four districts of Berat, Fier, Lushnja and Shkrapar, the total figure was reduced to 435,075 persons. The whole material is now stored in 47 boxes in the Archive of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

The census comprises the following information for each of the persons and households:

- the name of the village, town and city, the name of the quarter and/or the street
- the number of the house
- the current household number
- the different conjugal units of the complex household are indicated in part
- first name
- the family's name or house name, field name, nickname, father's name and the name fixed by the administration
- the relationship of a person to the head of the household
- sex

- date of birth or age
- place (village, district, country) of birth and home town or village
- confessional affiliation
- ethnic affiliation
- marital status
- ability to read Latin or Turkish (= Arabic) characters
- position in agricultural activity
- non-agricultural occupation and specific position, or “without occupation”

Data used for this paper

The research project “The 1918 Albanian Population Census: Data Entry and Basic Analyses” aims at making the data of this census available for scholarly research.¹ The research project started in August 2000, and we are still adding new data, which means that the results presented in this paper are still preliminary. This article is based on the details of 66,722 people who lived in 205 settlements in Albania. During the data entry, we divided the settlements into two groups: “normal” settlements and “deviant” settlements. Deviant settlements will be entered completely, while normal settlement will be entered in 5-percent-samples. The following criteria serve as markers for “deviant” settlements:

ethnic minorities: more than 20 percent of the population is made up of non-Albanians.

occupational structure: more than 20 percent of the population is engaged in non-agricultural activities or more than 150 people are engaged in non-agricultural activities.

cities: settlements that are cities.

sex ratio: more than 60 percent male or less than 40 percent male population.

household size: the household size is more than 10 persons or less than 3.5 persons.

size of the settlement: more than 2,000 inhabitants.

Orthodox Christians: more than 20 percent of the population is made up of Orthodox Christians.

These criteria often overlap, e.g. size of settlement, occupational structure and cities.

Table 1: Data according to criteria

criteria	settlements	persons
ethnic minorities	41	16,693
cities	4	12,715
occupational structure	12	17,379
sex ratio	53	7,768
household size	49	12,975
size of settlement	3	11,414
Orthodox Christians	32	9,775
all “deviant” settlements	149	48,062
5-percent-sample	56	18,660
all settlements	205	66,722

Since the 5 percent sample has to be weighted with the factor 20, the article is based on 66,722 persons representing 421,262 persons.

¹ The team of the research project consists of Helmut Eberhart, Karl Kaser, Siegfried Gruber, Gentiana Kera, and Enriketa Papa. The research project is financed by the Austria Science Fund (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung). We are grateful to Beryl Nicholson, who has drawn our attention to this source and to the Austrian Academy of Sciences for the cooperation.

Characteristics of Albanian society according to the census of 1918

The Albanian society at that time was almost entirely rural and agricultural. Only two cities, Shkodër (23,000) in the north and Korça (22,000) in the south-east (outside the area occupied by Austro-Hungarian forces) had more than 20,000 inhabitants (Duka 1997:9f.). In the area covered by the census there were only 7 cities with at least 3,000 inhabitants; they accounted for 12 percent of the total population (Seiner 1922b:6). Out of more than 1,800 settlements, only 37 (including the cities mentioned above) had at least 20 percent non-agricultural population. The population was almost entirely Albanian by ethnic affiliation: 95.9 percent (in Upper Albania, the northern and central part of the Austro-Hungarian territory in Albania) according to Seiner (Seiner 1992b:9). Our database has the same percentage, but covers also Lower Albania (the southern part of the Austro-Hungarian territory in Albania). The remaining population was mostly of Slavic origin with some Gypsies (Roma). The majority of the population was Muslim (74 percent according to Seiner (Seiner 1922b:10) and 85.9 percent in the database). The remaining population was Roman Catholic (18 percent according to Seiner (Seiner 1922b:10) and 12.4 percent in the database) and Orthodox Christians (8 percent according to Seiner (Seiner 1922b:10) and 1.6 percent in the database). The small number of Orthodox Christians is due to the fact that most of them lived outside the territory occupied by Austria-Hungary and that most of the Orthodox villages within this territory have not yet been included in the database. The percentage of literate people was almost negligible: 1.6 percent of men and only 0.2 percent of women were able to read and write with Latin letters. The percentages concerning the ability to use Turkish (Arabic) letters were similar: 1.4 percent of men and 0.02 percent of women. Outside the larger settlements, literacy was almost completely absent. The age structure shows a young population, as can be expected: half of the population was younger than 24 years old. There was also much age-heaping, so age groups are used in this article instead of single year groups and are centered around ages ending in "0" and "5", the most frequently registered last digits. Figures given in this article should be seen as approximate ages compared to our modern concept of age. The young population means there was a high percentage of unmarried people: 40.7 percent of the female population and 58.2 percent of the male population. The difference was due to the higher age at marriage for men. The married population comprised 41.3 percent of females and 37.6 percent of males. This astonishing difference was due to the slightly higher number of males in the population and cases of men having more than one wife. Being widowed was much more common for women than for men: 18.1 percent as compared to 4.2 percent. 3.6 percent of the population was absent at the time the census was conducted. This can be attributed to two facts: a tradition of migrant workers in the north-east of the country and the effects of the First World War.

The census showed almost the same number of men (50.1 percent) and women (49.9 percent) in the population, according to Seiner (Seiner 1922b:8). The database has more men (51.2 percent male and 48.8 percent female), which is mostly due to the fact that it includes people absent during counting who were mostly men.

Living with parents

The following data about parents and children was obtained by an automatic linkage process, which still has to be improved. In about 3 percent of cases, the age difference between parents and their children is below 15 years and therefore the parent-child relationship is unsure. Second to fourth wives are also not yet included in this linkage process. The data is concentrated on male heads of the household and it is therefore often impossible to decide whether a wife is the mother of a child or whether she is only a stepmother. A marked age difference between parents could be an indicator for stepmothers.

Normally, a percentage of 100 percent indicates a child's living with parents at birth and this percentage afterwards gradually or sharply declines. Charts 1 and 2 show this process for males and females according to the census of 1918. Already in the first years of life, some children lost their parents through death. At the age of 10, 20 percent of boys had lost their mother and 37 percent had lost their father, which resulted in 15 percent of the boys having no parents. These percentages gradually rose until the age of 20, by which time 29 percent had lost their mother, and more than half of the boys had lost their father (54 percent). All in all, 23 percent lost both parents. By the age of 40, 62 percent had lost their mother, 76 percent had lost their father, and 58 percent had lost both parents. At higher ages these percentages decline slower, so that at the age of 60 some people still lived with a father or a mother. The gradual loss of parents indicates the influence of mortality and does not point to people leaving the parental household, which would result in much sharper declines in these percentages. The female life-course shows such sharp declines. Between 15 and 20 years of age, the percentage of women living with their father dropped from 51 percent to 13 percent, the percentage living with their mother dropped from 68 percent to 17 percent, and the percentage living with both parents dropped from 49 percent to 12 percent. This is the outcome of a marriage pattern with an age at first marriage for women below 20 years, and the custom that the wife would move into the household of her husband or her husband's father. This pattern of living with parents is more or less consistent throughout the country. The only main differences concern different household types. Men living in joint families, as was the case for almost half of the population, showed higher percentages of living with parents. Men living in nuclear families (22.7 percent of the population) were much less likely to live with their parents after an age of 20 years. Men living in extended families (26.4 percent of the population) lived with their mothers to a similar extent as men living in joint families and to a much lesser extent with their fathers. These phenomena are due to the definition of household types, i.e. mortality and fertility shape household structures and not the other way around.

Living with children

Here the feature of living with parents is seen from a reversed perspective. Living with parents is much more important and frequent for younger people, while living with children begins with adulthood and can go until one's death. Charts 1 and 2 also include data about living with at least one child. Data about men having children under an age of 20 years should be considered as questionable. It took quite some time for Albanian men at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century to father living children: at an age of 30 years, only 30 percent of all men lived with a child. It was only after the age of 40 that more than half of the men lived with at least one child. At an age of 55 years, a peak was reached with 85 percent of all men living with at least one child. This rate remained over 80 percent until the age of 85. Chart 2 shows a similar development during a female's life-course with the exception that the 80 percent mark was reached earlier. At the age of 30, 65 percent of women lived with at least one child. This percentage had risen to 79 percent 10 years later. The percentage remained at such a level until an age of 85 years.

The highest percentages were reached rather late in life, for women at the end of their fertile period or even later, which may be attributed to overestimation of age. The peak at an age of 55 years for men may result from three factors: the higher age of men in comparison with their wives, remarriage with younger women, and marrying a second wife (younger than the first).

Living with sons

In patriarchal societies, especially when connected with ancestor worship, it is essential to have a son. In Albania, too, it was considered to be of crucial importance for a man to continue the male line. Chart 3 depicts the results of this effort. The red area represents successful attempts in producing a surviving son. The green area shows the percentage of fathers who had only daughters or whose sons had already died or left the household (rather uncommon). Finally, the blue area is made up of males without children, males without surviving children, and males whose children (daughters) have already left the parental household. The percentage of fathers with sons steadily increased to 73 percent at the age of 55, and afterwards stagnated at this level. The peak was reached with 84 percent at the age of 75 years. This means that 16 percent of men failed in their attempt to produce a male heir. The percentage was probably even higher since high percentages of living with sons were only achieved at the age of 50 or later. Many men died before reaching such an age due to high mortality. So we have to consider that at least every fourth or fifth man who reached adulthood was unable to secure the male line.

Number of children

Living with children is dependent upon two factors: adding children through birth and removing children through death or leaving the parental home. Figures for the birth of children should normally outnumber deaths and therefore the number of children should rise during the fertile years of the mother (not necessarily on the level of an individual). Leaving home in this context mostly meant a daughter moving into the household of her groom or her groom's father. The turning point is when daughters leaving their parental home outnumber new births.

In the following part of the paper only married or widowed people are included. In chart 4 you see the steadily growing number of children up to the age of 55 years with the first peak at 2.60 children (1.53 sons and 1.07 daughters). Then there was a gradual decline and a second peak at the age of 75 years with 2.63 children (2.10 sons and 0.53 daughters). This was also the peak concerning the number of sons, while the peak concerning the number of daughters was already reached at the age of 50 years with 1.08 daughters. After this age, the number of daughters marrying and leaving the parental household already outnumbered the newborn daughters.

In chart 5 you can see the number of children living with females in Albania in 1918. There was also a rising number of co-residing children up to the age of 45, which was the peak for the number of sons (1.63), the peak for the number of daughters (1.04), and the peak for the overall number of children (2.67). After that age, the number of daughters steadily decreased while the number of sons remained almost the same until the age of 75. The age of 45 years seems to mark the end of childbearing for women. Sons obviously remained in the same household with their mothers and fathers until their parents were aged 75. The effects of out-marrying daughters can already be seen at age 40 for women and at age 50 for men, when the increase in the mean number of daughters almost came to a standstill. The later peaks for men compared to women can once again be attributed to the three factors mentioned above: a higher age of men in comparison with their wives, remarriage with younger wives, and marriage with a second wife (younger than the first). After the peak in the number of daughters at the age of 50, there was still an increase in the number of sons until the age of 75 years for men. This can only be attributed to the children of a younger wife due to remarriage or bigamy.

Table 2: Number of children

Number of children	Percentage of men	Percentage of women
0	36.4	33.5
1	19.5	22.0
2	16.2	17.7
3	13.2	13.1
4	7.6	7.3
5	4.2	3.8
6+	3.0	3.6

Table 2 shows the number of children of married and widowed persons in Albania in 1918. One third of them had no children living in the same household. These were young couples, who had married only shortly before the census was taken. However, there were also older ones, as we have already seen. Half of the married or widowed population had one to three children and only a minority had more than three children living with them in the same household.

The overall mean number of children for married or widowed persons were 1.63 children for women and 1.64 children for men. There was almost no difference between the Muslim majority (1.62) and the Christian minority (1.72) concerning the mean number of children. This may be due to the fact that Christians reached the peak for the highest number of children during their life course earlier. There is much more regional variation: Albania was divided into 7 “*Bezirke*” (regions) and 28 “*Kreise*” (districts). There is a low 1.53 children for women and 1.54 children for men in the *Bezirk* Tirana North in Central Albania and a high 1.81 children for women in the *Bezirk* Tirana South (south of Tirana North) and 1.80 children for men in both the *Bezirke* Kruja (Central Albania) and Tirana South. At the *Kreis* level, the range for women is from a low 1.36 children in the *Kreis* Tirana to a high 2.18 children in the *Kreis* Ljuma (Northeast Albania). Men had a mean number of children ranging from a low 1.34 children in the *Kreis* Malcija e Gjakovës (Northern Albania) and a high 2.05 children in the *Kreis* Ljuma. Figures on the level of individual settlements were much more extreme: the lowest mean number of children was found in the village of Lavdari with only 0.55 children. The highest number of children was found in the village of Preçi e poshtëme with 2.77 children, which is five times the number of children in the village of Lavdari. Lavdari was part of the *Bezirk* Tirana South and the *Kreis* Shinapremtja (Southeast Albania), while Preçi e poshtëme belonged to the *Bezirk* Tirana North and the *Kreis* Elbasani North (Central Albania). How was it possible that there was such a low mean number of children in Lavdari? 43 Orthodox Albanians lived there in 12 households. 60 percent of them were female, one third of them was widowed, an additional 16 percent were registered as married, but no spouse was registered. Half of the population was older than 50 years – a complete contrast to the rest of the country. A reason for this situation may have been the location of the village near the southern border of the territory occupied by the Austro-Hungarian forces and the effects of warfare. Preçi e poshtëme was inhabited by 102 Albanian Muslims, 61.2 percent of whom were unmarried. It had an extremely young population; half of the population was younger than 12 years. In this village, there were no people between 20 and 30 years, an age group with many young couples without children. This missing age group therefore accounted for the high mean number of children. Small villages are much more likely to have extreme results simply because a few exceptional cases can have profound effects on village averages. The various household types also show some differences: nuclear households had the highest number of children in the same household: 2.01 children per woman and 2.14 children per man. In joint households, men and women had a mean number of 1.55 children and in extended families men had 1.39 children and women had 1.58 children on average. This is astonishing, since joint families have very often been seen as one of the reasons for higher

birth rates in the eastern half of Europe. One factor contributing to the higher number of children in nuclear families was that men and women in nuclear households had children a little earlier. Some possible reasons for this fact are as follows. Orphaned young men may have needed a female in the household to replace the dead mother. Albania was a region where a bride price had to be paid for a bride and therefore a poorer household with many sons could run into trouble. In such cases, younger sons might have waited some time before getting married and therefore had less time for producing more children.

Married and widowed women had almost the same mean number of children, while widowed men on average had only 1.23 children compared to 1.68 children for married men. This could have been the reason for the lower number of children in joint families, but an analysis of the marital status of men shows that the percentage of widowed men living in joint families was only slightly higher than the percentage of widowed men living in nuclear families.

Table 3: Mean number of children for men living in different household types

household type	married	widowed
nuclear family	2.16	1.85
extended family	1.47	0.88
joint family	1.55	1.48
all types	1.68	1.23

Table 3 shows that men living in nuclear families on average had more children, whether they were married or widowed. In all household types, widowed men had less children than married men and men in extended families had the lowest mean number of children, whether they were married or not.

Table 4: Mean number of children according to household type and position of men within household

household type	household head	non-household head
nuclear family	2.15	0.80
extended family	1.46	0.57
joint family	2.29	1.03
all types	1.96	1.01

Table 4 shows that a decisive factor may have been the position of the man within the household: the heads of a household on average had about twice as many children as non-household heads. This is now the first time in our research that men living in joint families had the highest numbers of children. Men who did not head a household were the reason for the low average number of children in joint families. Such men made up the majority among married and widowed men within joint families and therefore lowered the average. Many men spent some time after their marriage in a joint family and founded an independent household later in life, and this pattern was obviously the reason for the low average number of children within joint families. It is also possible that in cases where brothers lived in a joint family and one of them had no children or no sons, this could have prevented them from dividing the common household.

Table 5: Mean number of children according to ethnic affiliation

ethnic affiliation	mean number of children
Albanian	1.62
Macedo-Slav	1.80
Bosniak	1.84
Bulgarian	1.64
Serbo-Croatian	1.79
Serbian	1.95
Macedo-Slav/Bulgarian	2.10
all Slavs	1.81
Gypsy	1.61
Others	1.45

Table 5 shows that Slavs had the highest number of children in Albania at the beginning of the 20th century. Albanians (95.9 percent of the whole population) and Gypsies (Roma) had almost the same number of children and the very small group of others had the lowest number of children. Until now, we have not found differences in cities or settlements with a non-agricultural population or an uneven sex ratio in the number of co-residing children. However, marriage to more than one woman had a profound effect on the number of co-residing children: such men had an average 2.37 children, which is 0.78 children more than men with only one wife.

Marriage patterns

There were almost no illegitimate children in Albania at the beginning of the 20th century (0.02 percent of the population were registered as being unmarried and having children, but information about marital status is not always reliable) and therefore marriages formed the starting point of securing the male line. Many children were seen as the best insurance against high mortality. Coon also mentions the impact of blood feuds in Northern Albania, which caused many deaths among men. He gives a rate of 40 percent for death by violence out of all male deaths in some places (Coon 1950:25). Such high rates could have existed only for a short time in a certain area, otherwise the population there would have run into demographic troubles, according to the data presented in this paper.

The best means of ensuring a high number of children was a low age at first marriage: Coon writes about girls of 14 or 15 years being married (Coon 1950:25). Our database contains 5.7 percent of girls already married at the age of 14 years, and there are even younger married girls (although the age given may be incorrect). 24.2 percent were already married at the age of 15, and almost half of the girls (49 percent) were married at the age of 17. At 20 years, only 11.8 percent of women were still unmarried. 5.8 percent of the boys were already married at the age of 14, and there were also younger ones (although the age given may be incorrect). The percentage rose to 20.5 percent at the age of 17, and then there is a long stretch before more than half of the men married (at the age of 27, 10 years later). It is only at the age of 39 that more than 90 percent of the men were married or widowed. Age at marriage was therefore associated with many variations for men, while marriage took place within a short period for women. This led to marked differences in age among spouses: the average was between 9 and 10 years. This mean age difference was consistent for the age groups from 20 to 50 years, while it was lower for younger and older women. The mean age difference for men showed a steady increase from 1 year at the age of 20, to 21 years at the age of 75.

A share of at least 10 percent widows was first reached at age 30, which indicates high mortality among men. At age 40, almost every third woman was already widowed and from about age 50 at least half of the women were widowed. This resulted in 18.1 percent widows

among all women. The share of widowers among men was much lower, and at the age of 50 only 10 percent were widowers. The share exceeded one third only at the age of 79 years, and so only 4.2 percent of all men were widowed. The death of one of the spouses ended legal reproduction and limited the number of children born. Men tried to avoid this by remarrying, while this was not so often the case for women. Another possibility to avoid childlessness – or better being without a son – was to marry a second woman. 5.1 percent of all married men were married to more than one wife. Second wives were normally younger than first wives and the mean age difference rose to 17.5 years for second wives and 21 years for third wives. This strategy worked quite well: the percentage of childless men with only one wife was 37.2 percent, while it was only 19.7 percent among men with more than one wife. The share of men with at least one co-residing son rose from 51.2 percent for men with only one wife to 63.6 percent for men with more than one wife. In considering the whole life-course, the strategy worked well only for avoiding having no children, since only 10 or less percent of all such men at the age of 50 to 60 years had no child in the same household. The highest percentage of living with a son in the same household was reached with 82 percent at the age of 70 years, which is 2 percent less than the highest percentage for all men.

Marrying several wives was permitted for the Muslim population, but forbidden for Christians. There are observations in the ethnographic literature about Catholics in the tribal areas in Northern Albania living with more than one wife because the first wife had not born a son. In our database we have found 5 such cases, but they may have been registered as some sort of other relative or widow in other households. Here is a short description of these 5 households:

Case 1: A 65-year-old Catholic of the Kurbini tribe living with 2 wives (aged 60 and 30 years) and no children.

Case 2: A 60-year-old Catholic of the Lurja tribe living with 2 wives (aged 60 and 40 years) and one son and one daughter (aged 10 and 13 years). We do not know who their mother is.

Case 3: A 34-year-old Catholic of the Lurja tribe living with 2 wives (aged 31 and 39 years) and one son (5 years). We do not know who his mother is.

Case 4: A 63-year old Orthodox Christian of the Durrësi area living with 2 wives (aged 63 and 38 years) and 5 stepsons.

Case 5: An 64-year old Orthodox Christian of the Dibra e poshtëre *Kreis* living with 2 wives (both aged 60) and one married son, one unmarried daughter, and one widowed daughter-in-law.

Under the assumption that the second wife had been married because the first had not born a son or no children at all, the men in cases 2, 3, and 5 were successful in having at least one son from the second wife. In cases 1 and 4, the men still had no co-residing son and were already in their sixties.

Conclusion: Reconciliation of this data with Coon's data

Here we shall try to reconcile these recent research results with Carleton S. Coon's data: but is it possible? The first point is the fact that Coon measured completed fertility, although he admits that children who had died in infancy were probably not included. We therefore assumed an average of 7–8 children per father. Coon collected the data from surviving sons, which means that only men with surviving sons were included in his sample. Our research has shown that there was a considerable minority of men without a son or without surviving sons. In assuming an average of 7 children per father and a percentage of 20 percent of men without children we get an average of 5.6 children per man. As a next step, we have to take into account mortality. There is no data available for Albania concerning survival rates until adulthood at the beginning of the 20th century. Data for two other Balkan countries may serve as an approximation. 40.1 percent of the people born in Serbia in 1893 died before the end of

age 18 (Sundhaussen 1989:166f.). Bulgarian data from 1899–1902 resulted in 61,657 male and 63,572 female survivors at age 20 out of 100,000 born children. In 1925–28, the rates had risen to 68,529 male and 69,817 female survivors (United Nations 1949:506). Therefore a survival rate of about 60 percent until adulthood may also have prevailed in Albania at the beginning of the 20th century. 5.6 children and a survival rate of 60 percent resulted in 3.36 surviving children per father. Research for this paper has shown a peak of 2.63 children per father, which is not so far behind the 3.36 children mentioned above. In assuming a lower survival rate, a higher percentage of men without children (considering the high number of widows at younger ages), and a certain tendency to collect data about more “successful” men, both figures may approximate each other.

These considerations hold true only under the assumption that the number of children in Coon’s study actually covered most of the children who died before reaching adulthood. In the case, they are only partially included, two other explanations are possible. The first is, that Coon collected a sample that was severely biased towards men with more siblings than the average. The second is, that the informants provided Coon with data that reflected more of an ideal situation than reality. The influence of patriarchal thinking is striking in the sex ratio of the recorded children.

Studies on demographic features of Albania’s population at the beginning of the 20th century are still rare and we hope to contribute more to future research in this field.

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Chart 1:

Albania 1918, males

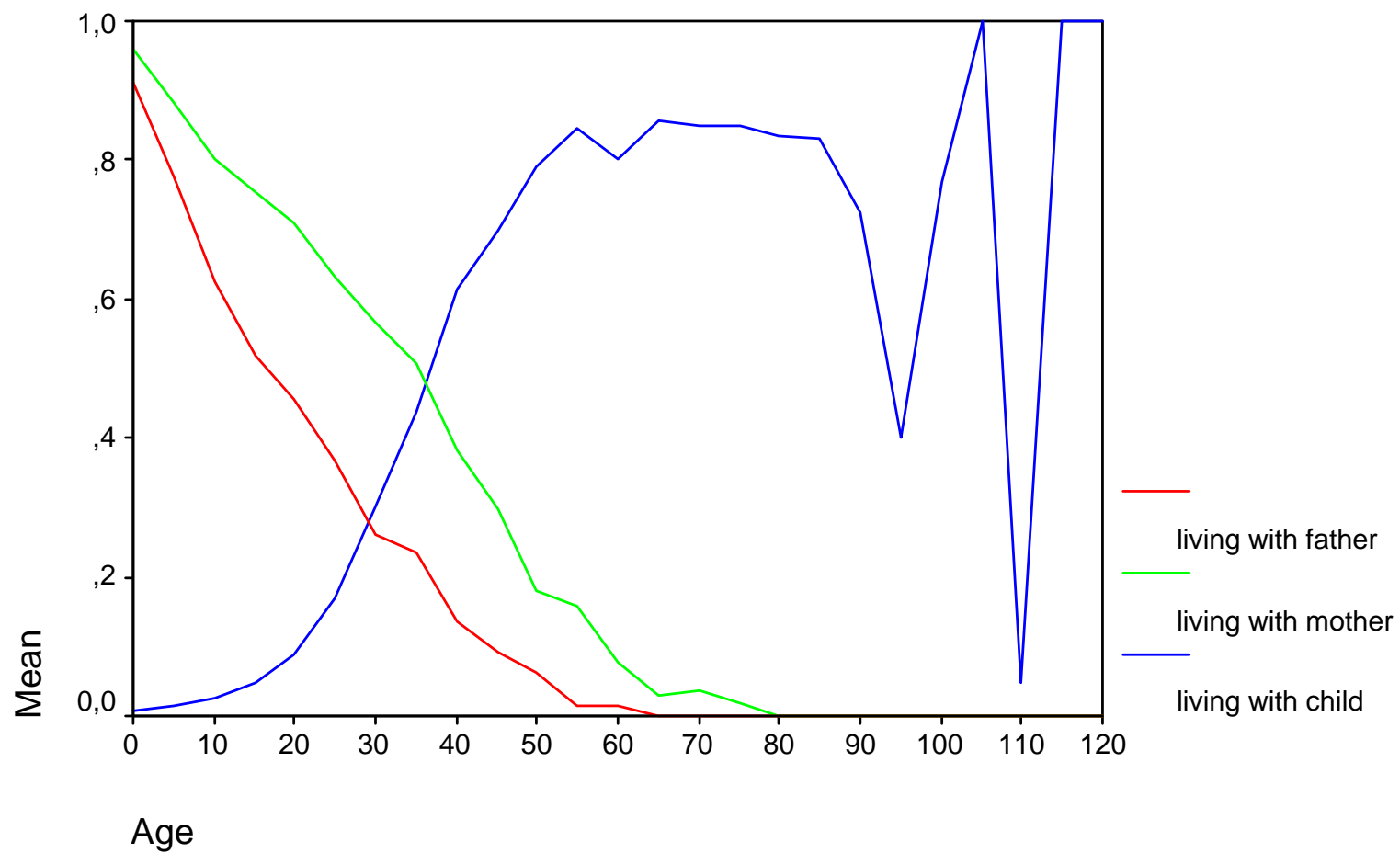


Chart 2:

Albania 1918, females

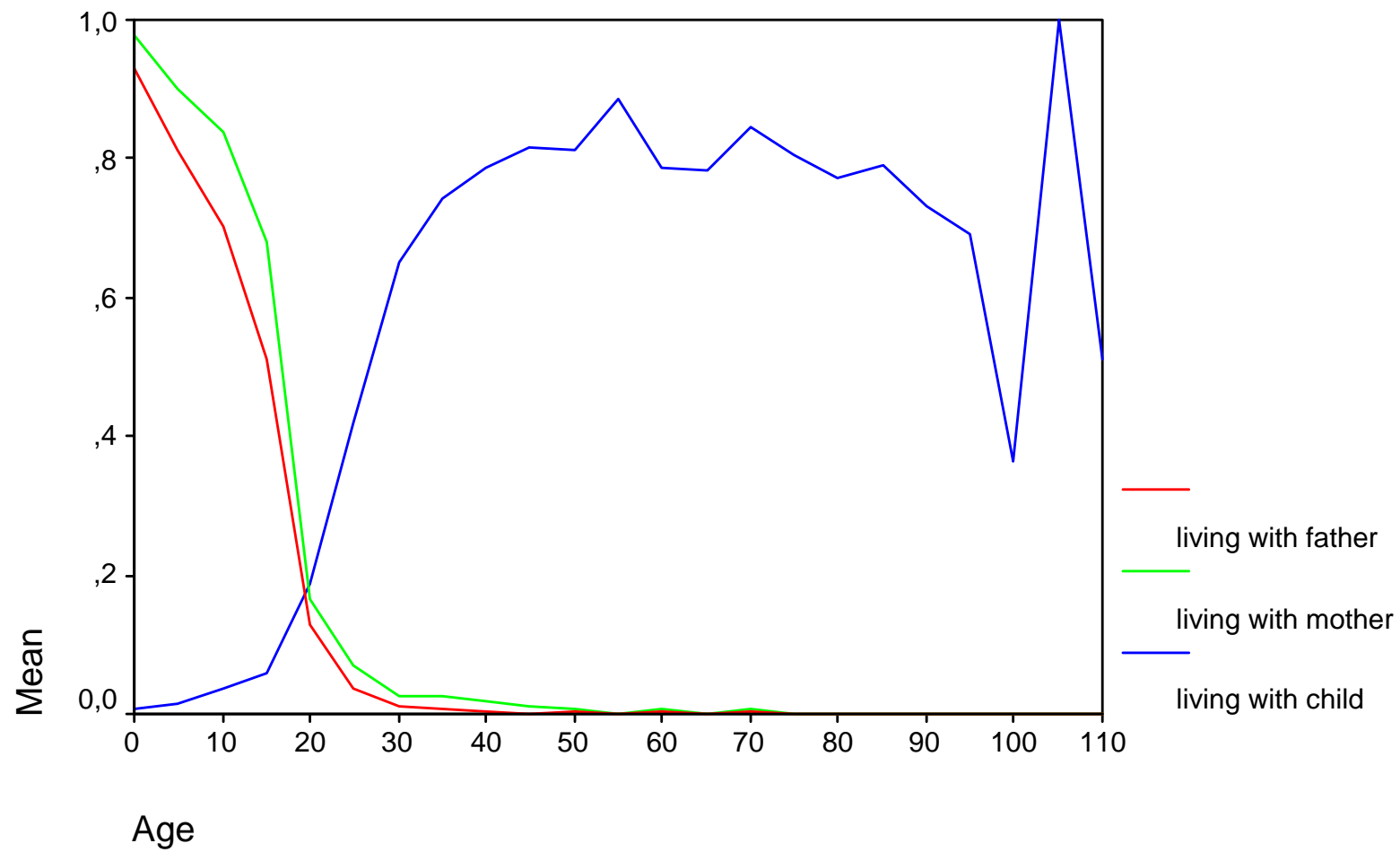


Chart 3:

Albania 1918, males

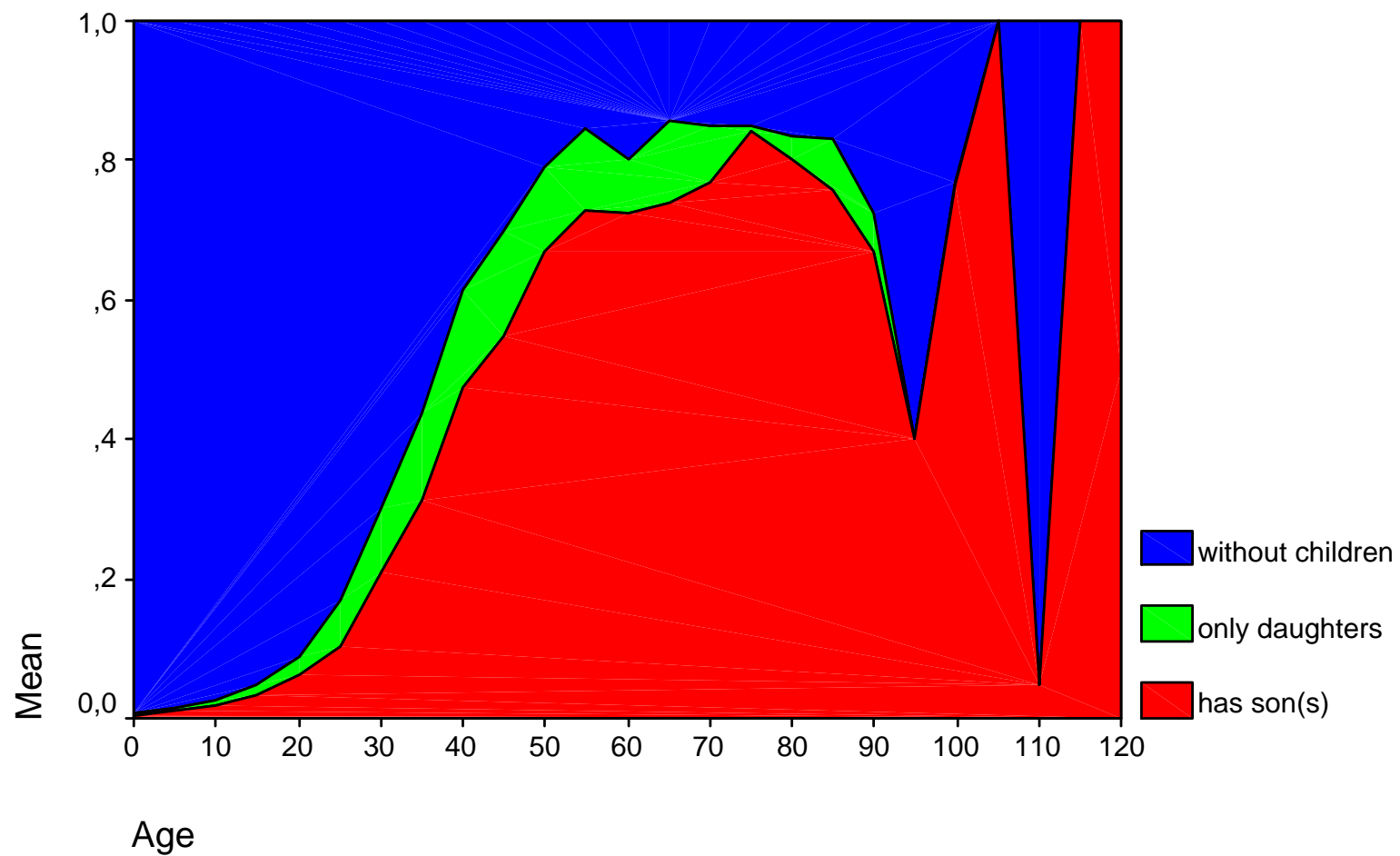


Chart 4:

Albania 1918, males

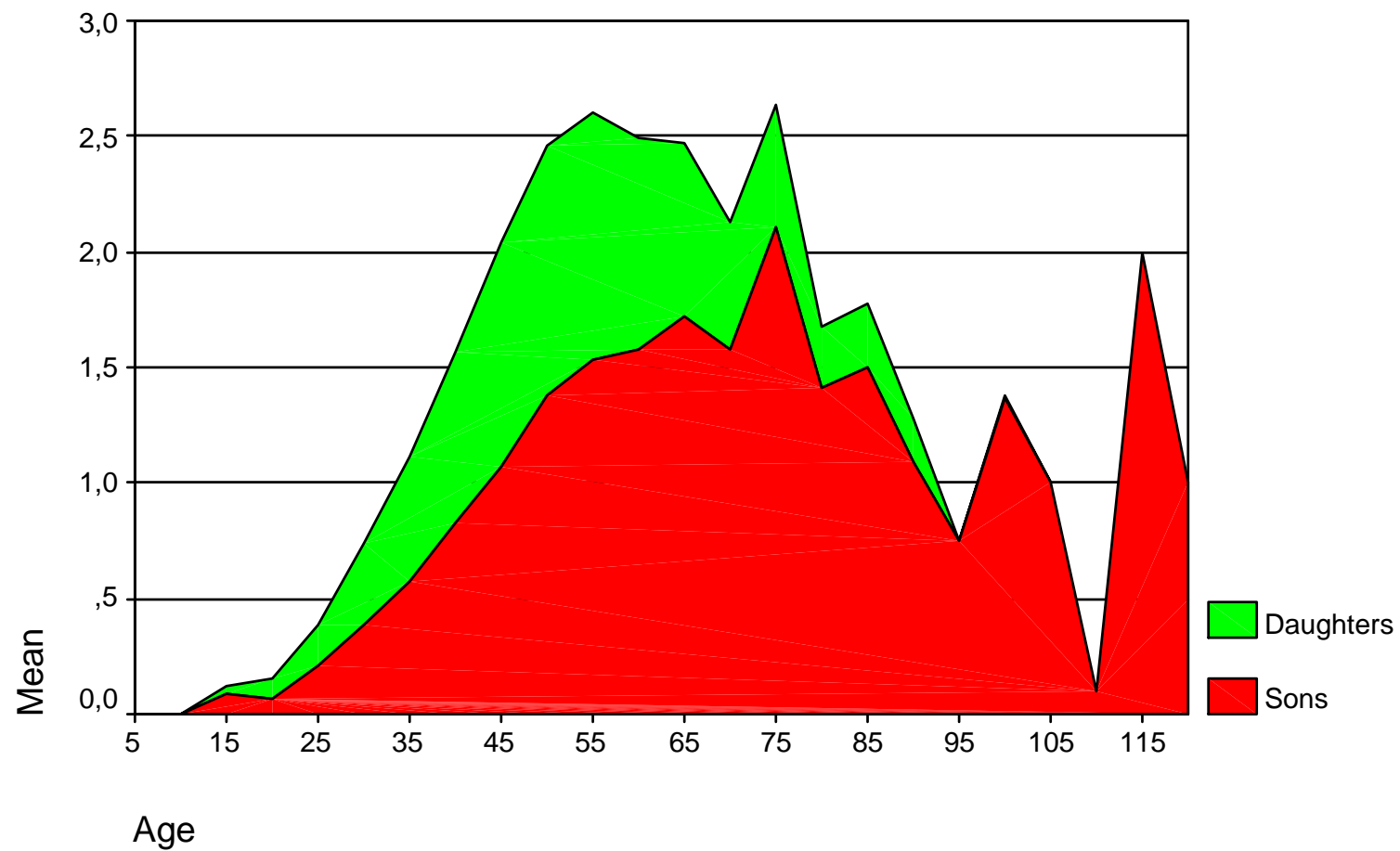


Chart 5:

Albania 1918, females

