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DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS IN THE REGISTERS OF MARRIAGES OF THE 18TH CENTURY PARISH OF MIHOLJAC

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This paper, using historical demography methods, as well as quantitative, analytical and descriptive methods, determines, analyses and interprets the demographic indicators contained in the registers of marriages of the 18th century Parish of Miholjac. In addition to identifying the corpus of the data contained in the registers of marriages, to be potentially used as indicators of certain demographic facts relating to the past of the population of the 18th century Donji Miholjac and its immediate surroundings, the paper also determines the annual, seasonal, monthly and daily distribution of marriages and examines the level of the impact which social, religious, cultural, and economic factors had on entering into marriage. The assumption that the population of the 18th century Parish of Miholjac did not enter the demographic transition phase, in other words that it exhibits characteristics specific to pre-transitional societies, is verified by determining the age of newlyweds when entering marriage and by analysing remarriages.

Keywords: Donji Miholjac, 18th century, registers of marriages, marital unions, historical demography

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Introduction

The Miholjac area, known as “Miholjština” in the native language, is located in the lower Drava region, stretching from Moslavina in the west to Čamagajevci and Črnkovići in the east, bordered by the Drava River in the north and the watershed between Karašica and Vučica in the south. The centre of this area is the Town of Donji Miholjac, which in the Middle Ages was a branch village of the Osuvak estate and had developed into a market town, keeping this role after the Ottoman conquest in 1543. The Miholjac area came under the Habsburg rule in 1687. Following the Slankamen battle in 1691, the Ottoman army completely withdrew from Slavonia.¹ Lower Drava region and the rest of Slavonia were left devastated and sparsely populated. At the end of the 17th century, Croatian population from nearby villages began moving to Miholjac. According to the 1698 census, the District of Miholjac had 11 inhabited and 7 abandoned settlements.² Censuses made in the first half of the 18th century testify to a process specific to the majority of areas in east Croatia which by the end of the 17th century came under the Habsburg rule. This process was marked by sparse population in the first decades after the liberation from the Ottoman rule, followed by a relatively fast and significant population growth. Censuses made in 1702, 1720, and 1748 recorded an increase in the number of households³ in the settlements belonging to the Parish of Miholjac.

Table 1. Number of households in the settlements of the Parish of Miholjac in the first half of the 18th century⁴

Settlement	1702	1720	1748
Miholjac	57	76	78
Podgajci	8	13	24
Rakitovica	12	12	22
Sveti Đurađ	12	21	28
Viljevo	18	23	43

¹ Mirko Marković, *Slavonija: povijest naselja i podrijetlo stanovništva* (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 2002), p. 207-208.; Mihael Sučić, *Počeci habsburške Valpovštine*, (Valpovo: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Valpovu, 2017), p. 5, 54, 75, 76.

² Stjepan Sršan, ed., *Naselja u istočnoj Hrvatskoj krajem 17. i početkom 18. stoljeća* (Osijek: Državni arhiv u Osijeku, 2000), p. 92-101.

³ Censuses made records of *hospites* (listed by name and surname), where widows were not included as *hospites* but listed only by name and surname. The 1748 census introduced a special column for recording (*viduae possessionatae*). On this occasion, households included widow households as well, regardless of whether they were taken into account in the total count by census-takers or not.

⁴ Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL), *Urbaria et conscriptiones*, HU MNL OL E 156 - a. - Fasc. 138. - No. 001., HU MNL OL E 156 - a. - Fasc. 138. - No. 002., HU MNL OL E 156 - a. - Fasc. 138. - No. 007. (Arcanum Adatbázis Kft. - <https://archives.hungaricana.hu/en/urbarium/>)

In the recently liberated Slavonian areas, the Viennese Court established the authority of the Court Chamber and the Court War Council. The Miholjac area was included in the Valpovo Provisional Administration under the authority of the Court Chamber. When the process to set up chamber administration ended, it was placed under the District of Valpovo within the Osijek Provisional Administration. That area was under the authority of the Court Chamber until 1721, when the Valpovo Manor was formed from the District of Valpovo and Karašica and given as a gift by the Habsburg Emperor Carl VI to Baron Peter Anton Hilleprand von Prandau, Advisor to the Court Chamber. The new certificate confirming the deed of gift of the Valpovo Manor to the Hilleprand von Prandau family was issued by the Empress Maria Theresa on 13 November 1749. After Anton Peter died in 1767, Baron Josef Ignac and, in 1831, his sons divided the Manor into two equal parts. Gustav von Prandau got the estate with the seat in Valpovo, whilst the estate with the seat in Donji Miholjac went to Karl von Prandau. In the administrative and territorial organisation of the Valpovo Manor, the District of Miholjac was one of three and since 1786 one of five districts.⁵

The liberation from the Ottoman rule made it possible to restore church structures, but the non-functioning of the regular church rule during the Ottoman rule led to the blurring of lines among dioceses and to struggles for jurisdiction among bishops. In 1699, the Court Committee in Győr ruled in the dispute between the Diocese of Bosnia or Đakovo and the Diocese of Zagreb in favour of the latter. As to the Miholjac and Valpovo area, the problem was not resolved because the Diocese of Pécs got involved in the struggle, and Bishop Antun II Kazimir de Thurn (1732-1734) got the Miholjac and Valpovo (including Vukovar) area from the Diocese of Zagreb, where for a certain period of time the Moslavina branch, which belonged to the Diocese of Zagreb, was under the authority of the Parish of Miholjac. The Parish of Miholjac was under the administration of the Franciscan until 1781, when it was passed into the hands of the diocesan clergy. Branches Podgajci, Rakitovica, Sveti Đurađ, and Viljevo belonged to the Parish of Miholjac, which had its seat in Miholjac. In 1781, it lost Sveti Đurađ, which became a parish, and Podgajci, which became a branch of a newly established parish, and in 1789 Viljevo, which was raised to a parish level.⁶ The population of the 18th century Parish of Miholjac was

⁵ Milan Vrbanus, "Gospodarske prilike u Donjem Miholjcu i donjomiholjačkoj okolini u prvoj polovini 18. stoljeća", *Donji Miholjac od XI. do XX. stoljeća: zbornik znanstvenog kolokvija "Donji Miholjac 1057.-2007."* (Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje: Slavonski Brod, 2010), p. 59-61.; Stjepan Maroslavac, *Donji Miholjac kroz stoljeća* (Župa sv. Mihaela Arkandela: Donji Miholjac, 2007), p. 72.; Mihael Sučić, *Počeci habsburške Valpovštine*, (Valpovo: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Valpovu, 2017), p. 83-85, 97-99.

⁶ Josip Brüstle, *Povijest katoličkih župa* (Osijek: Državni arhiv u Osijeku, 1999), 102.; Franjo Emanuel Hoško, *Franjevci u kontinentalnoj Hrvatskoj kroz stoljeća* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost,

almost exclusively Catholic, and only the 1782 visitation records 11 Orthodox families in Miholjac.⁷

Table 2. Number of Catholics in the Parish of Miholjac according to the data from canonical visitations⁸

		Miholjac	Podgajci	Rakitovica	Sv. Đurađ	Viljevo
1730	Number of houses (approximately)	50	10	12	25	30
1738	capable of Confession	500	120	100	250	157
	children	100	60	60	70	50
1754	married couples	127	71	48	83	115
	for Confession and Communion	467	220	140	260	360
	only for Confession	30	20	19	30	30
1782	capable of Confession	1118	475	431	250	875
	incapable	292	111	128	87	231

Registers of marriages of the 18th century Parish of Miholjac

Records in the registers of marriages of the Catholic Parish of Miholjac pertaining to the 18th century are made in two volumes, the first one covering the period 1722–1770, and the second one the period 1771–1841, and are kept in the State Archives in Osijek.⁹ Both volumes are bound in hardcover and well kept, showing only minor damage. The older volume shows a bit more wear and tear as the bound part has partly separated from the cover and a few sheets have been torn out. The records are made in Latin, in cursive humanis-

2000), p. 129-130.; Robert Skenderović: "Uspostava granica Pečuške biskupije u Slavoniji tijekom prve polovice 18. stoljeća", *Scrinia Slavonica*, 9 (2009): 426.; Stjepan Sršan, ed., *Kanonske vizitacije – Valpovačko-miholjačko područje 1730.-1830.*, 11 vols. (Osijek: Državni arhiv u Osijeku – Biskupija Đakovačka i Srijemska, 2005), III: X-XI.; Zlata Živaković-Kerže, "Dva posljednja stoljeća nadležnosti Pečuške biskupije u sjevernoj Slavoniji i Baranji", *Scrinia Slavonica*, 9 (2009): 466-467.

⁷ In 1738, the canonical visitation to the branch of Sveti Đurađ recorded that approximately 35 years earlier the inhabitants had returned *ex Arianis*. This is in line with the datum recorded in the 1698 census of the District of Miholjac for the same settlement (as well as for Miholjac, Podgajci, and Rakitovica) that its inhabitants under the Ottoman rule had been Calvinists, but now were Catholics. - Stjepan Sršan, ed., *Kanonske vizitacije – Valpovačko-miholjačko područje 1730.-1830.*, 11 vols. (Osijek: Državni arhiv u Osijeku – Biskupija Đakovačka i Srijemska, 2005), III: 31, 107.; Stjepan Sršan, ed., *Naselja u istočnoj Hrvatskoj krajem 17. i početkom 18. stoljeća* (Osijek: Državni arhiv u Osijeku, 2000), p. 92, 95, 99.

⁸ Stjepan Sršan, ed., *Kanonske vizitacije – Valpovačko-miholjačko područje 1730.-1830.*, 11 vols. (Osijek: Državni arhiv u Osijeku – Biskupija Đakovačka i Srijemska, 2005), III: 5, 29, 81, 83, 85, 107, 109, 111, 119, 121.

⁹ Državni arhiv u Osijeku (DAOS), *Zbirka matičnih knjiga* (HR-DAOS-500), knjiga br. 342, 343.

tic script generally typical of the 18th century. Although handwriting changes with every priest, for the most part it is neat and legible, with the text only occasionally made illegible by stains resulting from spilt ink, letter spill-over, ink running through to the opposite page, paper damage, or fading of records. Entries made in all registers are continuous and in chronological order, which is only rarely and on exceptional occasions interrupted by subsequent entries. Priests very rarely failed to record a certain datum. The only interruptions in otherwise regular entries took place in 1727 and 1731. The records are for the most part of a descriptive nature. Tabular recording was used in 1783 and from mid-November 1788 to mid-September 1797.

All records, regardless of their form, are standardised in terms of content and differ only slightly from each other. The basic elements of regularly made entries are the name of the priest giving the sacrament, the date of the wedding, and the name and surname of the bride and groom.¹⁰ The name and surname of two witnesses (mostly two men) are almost always given, whilst their home place is recorded more rarely. There are rare occasions where three witnesses are recorded. The marital status of the newlyweds is regularly recorded for the widow/widower category. Other categories are unmarried and (engaged) virgin, and they are recorded irregularly.¹¹ Priests regularly recorded if the father of the bride was deceased. The home place of the newlyweds is recorded frequently, although not regularly, whilst the place of the wedding is not mentioned in the first volume at all, and only very rarely in the second one.¹² Patriarchal relations in the family and the broader community are indicated by the data recorded in the cases of remarriages. As to the widow who is remarrying, her name and the name of her deceased husband are usually recorded, whilst no data are ever given on the deceased wife of the groom.

¹⁰ The data on the month of the wedding are missing or illegible in 25 entries (1.02 %), and those concerning the date of the wedding are missing or illegible in 45 entries (1.84 %). The name of the groom is not recorded in 3 cases and is illegible in 6 entries (0.37 %), whilst his surname is not recorded in 9 entries and is illegible in 17 (1.06 %). The name of the bride is not recorded in 10 cases and is illegible in 8 (0.74 %), whilst her surname is not recorded in 24 entries and is illegible in 8 (1.31 %).

¹¹ Out of total 276 widows who remarried, the name of the deceased husband is not recorded in 40 entries and is illegible in 2 (15.22 %), whilst the surname of the deceased husband is not recorded in 41 entries and is illegible in 2 (15.58 %). In only 5 (1.81 %) cases the name and surname of the father of the bride are also recorded next to the name and surname of the deceased husband. There are no data on the deceased wife for any of 316 widowers who remarried. The marital status of the groom who is not a widower is recorded in only 7 cases (0.33 %) and of the bride in 380 cases (17.51 %), which is another indicator of the patriarchal society paying significantly more attention to the marital status of women, although the canonical regulations on entering into marriage are equal for spouses regardless of gender.

¹² The place of the wedding is recorded in only 38 entries (1.55 %). As to the groom, his home place is missing in 195 entries and is illegible in 14 (8.54 %), whilst the bride's home place is missing in 190 entries and is illegible in 2 (7.85 %).

Moreover, the name and surname of the father of the bride and the groom are recorded irregularly, where these data are recorded much less frequently in the case of the groom.¹³ If there are no data on the father of the bride, the priest might on an exceptional basis record the name of another relative.¹⁴ Another datum that is rarely recorded is the age of the newlyweds (only from 1774 and irregularly).¹⁵ The occupation of the groom and witnesses are recorded very rarely.¹⁶ Priests recorded the cases in which the newlyweds or witnesses were not Catholics, but in the analysed registers there is only one case in which the witness was of Orthodox confession and one case in which the bride converted from Orthodoxy to Catholicism. It was regularly recorded if the newlyweds or witnesses were Roma.

The interpretive framework of the analysed data is determined by the content of entries made in the registers of marriages. Despite the restrictions of the source itself, in the first place the name entropy which, in combination with inconsistent recording and the lack of other data that would allow for an individual to be unambiguously identified, makes a systematic application of the genealogical method considerably more difficult, it is still possible to determine the annual, seasonal, monthly, and daily distribution of weddings, remarriages, and partly the age of the newlyweds when entering into marriage, as well as the impact of certain social, cultural, religious, and economic factors on entering into marriage.¹⁷ The assumption that the population of the 18th

¹³ The name of the father of the groom is missing in 1105 entries and is illegible in 6 (45.40 %). The name of the father of the bride is missing in 602 entries and is illegible in 4 (24.77 %). Priests made records of the status of the stepson or stepdaughter, with only two such cases recorded in the analysed registers.

¹⁴ The analysed registers of marriages contain only one case in which records are made of the name of the bride's sister (*Joanna Birtich*, sister of the bride *Maria Birtich* from Moslavina who on 12 January 1755 married *Stephanus Markonich*).

¹⁵ The age of the groom is recorded in 277 cases (11.32 %) and of the bride in 276 cases (11.28 %).

¹⁶ Grooms were craftsmen (one potter, one blacksmith, and one cooper) and manorial officials (bailiff and teacher). The reason why so few occupations are recorded is probably the fact that the inhabitants, as manor vassals, engaged in agriculture. In the rural patriarchal society of the 18th century, it was common that the occupations of women were recorded only on an exceptional basis. As a rule, records were made of only those rare occupations that the women were allowed to practice (for example maids and midwives). However, the analysed registers contain no data on the occupation of brides. The occupation of the witness is indicated in eight cases, in six cases the witness is an innkeeper, in one a town judge, and in another one a notary.

¹⁷ Almost all authors who used registers as a source in their papers wrote to a greater or lesser extent about the possibilities and restrictions of registers as a historical source and the related methodological issues. However, these issues were most systematically addressed by Miroslav Bertoša, Robert Skenderović, Slaven Bertoša, Nenad Vekarić, Darko Vitek, and Davor Lauc. Papers dealing with the development of name formula and anthroponymic resources in general are also important for the problem of registers as a historical demography source. - Mladen Andreis, *Stanovništvo Višnića - povijesna antroponimija do godine 1900*. (Trogir: Matica hrvatska, 1998); Miroslav Bertoša, "Matične knjige - arhivsko vrelo o demografskim previranjima predindustrijske Europe", *Vjesnik Državnog arhiva u Rijeci*, 41-42, (2000): 315-352.; Miroslav Bertoša, "Demografija predindustrijske Europe. Od

century Parish of Miholjac did not enter the demographic transition phase is based on the results of the research of individual comparable settlements and areas in east Croatia in the period observed, but primarily on the results of the research of the Donji Miholjac population in the period 1870–1880, which, for the period almost an entire century later, has determined, based on an analysis of registers, characteristics specific to the pre-transitional period (early marriage and frequent remarriages).¹⁸

Annual distribution of weddings

The earliest entries in the register of marriages of the Catholic Parish of Miholjac go back to 1723, when only 8 weddings took place. In total, 2447 weddings were held in the entire observed period by the end of 1800, meaning that over the period of 78 years covered by the data there were on average 31.37 weddings a year.

Most of them took place in 1779, i.e. 99 (4.05 %), and the smallest number was in 1785, for which records show only 1 wedding, probably due to the irregularity of entries. The years of 1766 (81) and 1765 (76) are also marked by a

statističke analize do 'zlokobnih tajni', *Izazovi povijesnog zanata. Lokalna povijest i sveopći modeli* (Zagreb: Antibarbarus, 2002) p. 313-328.; Slaven Bertoša, *Život i smrt u Puli. Starosjedioci i doseljenici od XVII. do početka XIX. stoljeća*, (Pazin: Skupština Udruga Matice hrvatske Istarske županije, 2002); Robert Skenderović, *Najstarija matična knjiga brodske župe Presvetog Trojstva (1701.- 1735.)* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, Franjevački samostan u Slavonskom Brodu, 2012); Robert Skenderović, "Analiza razvoja imenske formule u gradu Požezi i okolnim selima tijekom 18. stoljeća na temelju matičnih knjiga", *Scrinia Slavonica - Godišnjak Podružnice za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje Hrvatskog instituta za povijest*, 2 (2002): 261-276.; Vladimir Stipetić, Nenad Vekarić, *Povijesna demografija Hrvatske* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti u Dubrovniku, 2005); Petar Šimunović, "Razvitak imenske formule", *Onomastica Jugoslavica*, 9 (1982): 283-292.; Nenad Vekarić, "Metoda 'reprezentativne kapi' i genealoška metoda u povijesnoj demografiji", *Povijesni prilozi*, 39 (2010): 23-38.; Nenad Vekarić, Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, ed., *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj*, (Zagreb, Dubrovnik, 2009); Nenad Vekarić, "Prijedlog za klasifikaciju peljeških prezimena", *Anali zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku*, 30 (1992): 55-78.; Nenad Vekarić, "Prijedlog za normiranje dubrovačkih imena i prezimena iz povijesnih vrela", *Radovi Leksikografskog zavoda Miroslav Krleža*, 6 (1997): 17-26.; Darko Vitek, Davor Lauc, "Logika i povijesne znanosti – problem rekonstrukcije obitelji na temelju matičnih knjiga", *Povijesni prilozi*, 39 (2010): 93-104.

¹⁸ Dubravka Božić Bogović, *Rođenje, brak i smrt – stanovništvo južne Baranje u 18. stoljeću* (Beli Manastir: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Belom Manastiru, 2013); D. Hrkač, "Brod u demografskim izvorima od 1780. do 1850. godine" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2012); D. Njari, "Stanovništvo Hrastina, Laslova, Koroda i Retfale u 18. i prvoj trećini 19. stoljeća" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2016); R. Skenderović, "Stanovništvo Požege 1699.-1781. prema matičnim knjigama" (Master's thesis, University of Zagreb, 2002); Marija Brandić, Monika Grdiša-Asić, Ivan Čipin, "Stanovništvo Donjeg Miholjca (1870-1880): predtranzicijsko doba", *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2009), p. 91-114.

large number of weddings, whilst an exceptionally low number of weddings is recorded for 1732 (6), 1760, 1723 (8), and 1737 (9).

Table 3. Average number of weddings in the Parish of Miholjac per decades 1731–1800

Period	Average number of weddings
1731–1740	12.70
1741–1750	28.70
1751–1760	37.10
1761–1770	52.10
1771–1780	47.00
1781–1790	30.40
1791–1800	27.50

After a steady increase in the number of weddings from the beginning of the period observed, which followed population growth, the average number of weddings peaked in the period 1761–1770, for which 521 weddings are recorded (21.29 %), i.e. on average 52.10 weddings a year. Afterwards, the average number of weddings started decreasing despite population growth, most probably owing to a reduced administrative and territorial reach of the Parish of Miholjac first at the beginning (by exclusion of Sveti Đurađ and Podgajci) and then again by the end of the 1780s (by exclusion of Viljevo).¹⁹ A more significant positive deviation from the average number of weddings for the entire period observed is characteristic also for the 1770s, whilst the negative one is specific to 1730s, which is consistent with population trends.²⁰

Monthly and seasonal distribution of weddings

In traditional communities, seasonal wedding trends were most strongly affected by church norms and economic activities. The Catholic Church allows marriages during the entire liturgical year, the only exceptions being Advent and Lent when marriages could be concluded only in exceptional cases and in

¹⁹ An analysis of the impact of other factors, such as age or gender population structure or economic factors, would require the application of the genealogical method and the addition of other historical resources to the research.

²⁰ The more significant negative deviation of the average number of weddings in the 1730s from the one for the entire period observed can be explained by the characteristics of the source itself, as in 1731 entries in the register of marriages stopped.

accordance with liturgical regulations. Since wedding is, as a rule, followed by wedding festivities, the rural agricultural population found the periods during which there was no agricultural work and, consequently, not many obligations, to be best suited for wedding. Thus, marriages were most often entered in November, after agricultural work was completed, and before Advent, or in January and February before Lent. Researches to date show certain regional differences in Croatian countries, indicating that in south Croatia marriages reached their maximum predominantly in autumn, and in north Croatia in winter.²¹

In the 18th century Parish of Miholjac, the majority of marriages was entered in January, almost 72.50 %, followed by November (7.72 %) and February (5.35 %), which shows that the population of the Miholjac area fits the earlier mentioned trends of the predominant winter maximum (77.85 % in January and February). That the church regulations were fully observed is confirmed by the fact that in the entire period observed no December weddings were recorded, whilst the smallest number of marriages was entered in March – only 5 (0.20 %).²² A significantly lower portion of weddings during the months of the most intense agricultural work corresponds to the role agriculture played as the dominant economic activity. Interestingly, almost a century later, in the 1870s, December and March still represented a pronounced minimum of the number of weddings in Donji Miholjac (in December only 1 and in March only 3 in the period 1870–1880). As to the maximum, the winter one is still

²¹ Nenad Vekarić, Irena Benyovsky, Tatjana Buklijaš, Maurizio Levak, Nikša Lučić, Marija Mogo-rović and Jakša Primorac, *Vrijeme ženidbe i ritam poroda (Dubrovnik i njegova okolica od 17. do 19. stoljeća)* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik 2000), p. 51–52.

²² In the 18th century south Baranja, the largest number of weddings took place in January, November, and February, whilst the smallest number was in March and December. In Požega and its surroundings (1699–1781), the maximum was in October, January, and February and the minimum in March and December. In Slavonski Brod (1780–1850), the maximum was in January, February, and November and the minimum in March and December. In Drenovci (1870–1880), the maximum was in November, January, and February and the minimum in March and December. In Hrastin, Laslovo, Korod, and Retfala (Reformed population) in the 18th and the first third of the 19th century, the maximum was in November and October and the minimum in August and September. The autumn maximum among the population of Calvinist confession in the research by Denis Njari shows that this partial overlapping with the winter and autumn maximum of the Catholic population in east Croatia can be explained by economic reasons, whilst the deviations from the minimum can be explained by the impact of Church norms, i.e. religious customs. - Dubravka Božić Bogović, *Rođenje, brak i smrt – stanovništvo južne Baranje u 18. stoljeću* (Beli Manastir: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Belom Manastiru, 2013), p. 68.; R. Skenderović, “Stanovništvo Požege 1699.-1781. prema matičnim knjigama” (Master’s thesis, University of Zagreb, 2002), p. 103; D. Hrkać, “Brod u demografskim izvorima od 1780. do 1850. godine” (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2012), p. 138–139.; Tamara Alebić, Irena Ipšić, Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, “Stanovništvo Drenovaca (1870-1880): predtranzicijsko doba”, *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2009), p. 63–90; D. Njari, “Stanovništvo Hrastina, Laslova, Koroda i Retfale u 18. i prvot trećini 19. stoljeća” (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2016), p. 159.

predominant with 33.43 % of all weddings in January and February, but not to an extent as in the 18th century, whilst at the same time the autumn maximum is more pronounced with 26.74 % of all weddings in November.²³

Daily distribution of weddings

Since there were no Church regulations providing for wedding days, i.e. days on which weddings were forbidden, although Sunday (Lord's Day) and Friday (day of Christ's Passion) were considered unsuitable for wedding festivities, weddings were organised on all days of the week. That was also the case in the 18th century Parish of Miholjac, although, as elsewhere, some days of the week were more popular than the others. Weddings mostly took place on Sunday (1163 weddings), followed by Tuesday as the second most popular marriage day (729 weddings). An intensive growth in the number of weddings held on Tuesday started only in 1771 (until then there had been only 18 Tuesday weddings), and from that point onwards Tuesday became, next to Sunday when the majority of weddings still took place, the second most popular marriage day. The least popular was Friday. In the entire period observed, there were only 5 Friday weddings.²⁴ Although the day of the wedding depended in the first place on the decision of the newlyweds, since the Church found it most important not to violate fasting with wedding festivities, it comes as no surprise that the least number of weddings took place on Friday. The explanation why Sunday was so popular could be found in the agricultural society which, due to various economic activities, opted to have wedding festivities on the day of rest. The choice of the wedding day was probably affected also by wedding customs. As wedding festivities in east Croatia could take up to

²³ Marija Brandić, Monika Grdiša-Asić, Ivan Čipin, "Stanovništvo Donjeg Miholjca (1870-1880): predtranzicijsko doba", *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2009), p. 106-108.

²⁴ In the 18th century south Baranja, the most popular days for wedding were Tuesday followed by Monday, whilst the least number of weddings took place on Saturday and Friday. In Slavonski Brod and its surroundings (1780 -1850), the most popular days for wedding were Wednesday, Tuesday, and Monday and the least number of weddings took place on Friday and Saturday. In Hrastin, Laslovo, Korođ, and Retfala (Reformed population) in the 18th and the first third of the 19th century, the most popular day for wedding was Wednesday, and the least popular one Friday. - Dubravka Božić Bogović, *Rođenje, brak i smrt – stanovništvo južne Baranje u 18. stoljeću* (Beli Manastir: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Belom Manastiru, 2013), p. 69.; D. Hrkać, "Brod u demografskim izvorima od 1780. do 1850. godine" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2012), p. 142.; D. Njari, "Stanovništvo Hrastina, Laslova, Korođa i Retfale u 18. i prvoj trećini 19. stoljeća" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2016), p. 161.

several days,²⁵ opting for a Sunday wedding could indicate the need to ensure a sufficient number of days for celebration before fasting, i.e. Friday fast.

Wedding age and remarriages

As mentioned above, the registers of marriages of the Parish of Miholjac started recording the age of the newlyweds when entering into marriage from 1774, albeit sporadically. Hence, the age is mentioned in a total of 271 entries (11.31 % of all marriages). Generally, considering the first and each following marriage, the largest portion of spouses entered marriage between the age of 15 and 19. For men, this age bracket accounts for 56.83 % and for women, for as much as 74.54 %. Following that, men married most often between the age of 20 and 24 (21.03 %) and women between the age of 30 and 34 (8.86 %), where widows accounted for as much as 91.67 % of marriages in this age bracket.

Since by the age of 25 as much as 77.86 % of all men and 80.81 % of all women were married, the low average marrying age is no surprise. For men, it was 22.38 years of age and for women, 21.03 years of age. No major differences in the marrying age were determined even almost a century later, as the research covering the period 1870–1880 indicates that the average marrying age for men was around 22, and for women around 20.²⁶ The youngest grooms were 15: *Stephanus Kovacz* from Miholjac married in 1776 fifteen-year-old *Marta Skelegia* from Miholjac, and *Matthias Pein* from Sveti Đurađ married in 1794 the eighteen-year-old virgin *Maria Shimenich*. The youngest bride was fourteen-year-old *Martha Boshnjakovich* from Miholjac, who in 1796 married 20-year old *Ignatius Bunievcz* from Miholjac. The oldest grooms were the 60-year old widowers *Matthias Szenkovich* from Viljevo, who in 1788 married the 45-year-old widow *Catharina Vlashich*, and *Gregorius Mandich* from Miholjac, who in 1792 married the 65-year-old widow *Maria Gluhassich*, also from Miholjac, who was also the oldest bride.²⁷

Taking into account only first marriages, men and women mostly married between the age of 15 and 19 (71.16 % of grooms and 94.34 % of brides). A

²⁵ Dubravka Božić Bogović, *Rođenje, brak i smrt – stanovništvo južne Baranje u 18. stoljeću* (Beli Manastir: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Belom Manastiru, 2013), p. 67.; D. Hrkać, "Brod u demografskim izvorima od 1780. do 1850. godine" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2012), p. 141-142, 144.

²⁶ Marija Brandić, Monika Grdiša-Asić, Ivan Čipin, "Stanovništvo Donjeg Miholjca (1870-1880): predtranzicijsko doba", *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2009), p. 111.

²⁷ It was common not to indicate marital status in the case of the first marriage.

larger number of men married for the first time also in the 20–24 age bracket (23.47 %), whilst the portion of women marrying for the first time in this age bracket was significantly lower (4.25 %). Almost all brides and all grooms married for the first time by the age of 35 (there are only two exceptions: one groom was 40 when he married for the first time, and another one was 50). If the analysis covers only first marriages, the average marrying age of grooms was 19.07 and of brides 17.69. The average marrying age of young men was a bit lower and amounted to 18.87 if the father of the groom was deceased, which is explained by economic reasons and the need to become independent and create own family. At the same time, the death of the father had no effect on the average marrying age of girls, which at 17.92 years of age was almost identical compared to the entire population. This is explained by the fact that the husband was responsible for supporting the family, and the death of the father increased the pressure to become independent and create own family.²⁸ If the analysis covers only the data on remarriages, the average marrying age of widowers who chose to remarry was 34.77, whilst the average marrying age of widows was 33.67.²⁹

Remarriages were most frequently entered by men in the 25–29 age bracket (22.81 %) and by women in the 30–34 age bracket (38.60 %). The second most frequent age bracket for widowers who remarried was the 30–34 age bracket (19.30 %) and for widows the 25–29 age bracket (19.30 %). Although the largest number of remarriages was entered between the age of 25 and 34 (42.11 % of men and 33.00 % of women), dispersion is considerably higher than in the case of first marriages, which is understandable taking into account that re-

²⁸ By contrast, researches conducted in the Dubrovnik area indicate that the death of a parent accelerated daughter's marriage more than the son's marriage. - Nenad Vekarić, Irena Benyovsky, Tatjana Buklijaš, Maurizio Levak, Nikša Lučić, Marija Mogorović and Jakša Primorac, *Vrijeme ženidbe i ritam poroda (Dubrovnik i njegova okolica od 17. do 19. stoljeća)* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik 2000), p. 110.

²⁹ The average marrying age, taking into account all marriages, in the 18th century south Baranja was 26.78 for men and 23.38 for women. Taking into account only first marriages, the average marrying age was lower and amounted to 22.28 for men and 19.25 for women, whilst the average marrying age of widowers was 37.97 and of widows 33.68. In Požega and its surroundings (1699–1781), the average age when marrying for the first time was 23.4 for men and 21.8 for women. The average age when marrying for the first time in Slavonski Brod (1780–1850) was around 28 for men and around 24 for women, whilst the average marrying age of widowers was around 40 and of widows around 36.

In Drenovci (1870–1880), grooms were on average 20 years of age at the time of wedding, whilst brides were around 19 years of age. - Dubravka Božić Bogović, *Rođenje, brak i smrt – stanovništvo južne Baranje u 18. stoljeću* (Beli Manastir: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Belom Manastiru, 2013), p. 72, 76.; R. Skenderović, "Stanovništvo Požege 1699.-1781. prema matičnim knjigama" (Master's thesis, University of Zagreb, 2002), p. 98-99; D. Hrkać, "Brod u demografskim izvorima od 1780. do 1850. godine" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2012), p. 150.; Tamara Alebić, Irena Ipšić, Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, "Stanovništvo Drenovaca (1870-1880): predtranzicijsko doba", *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2009), p. 87.

marriage is mostly related to widowhood, which affects all age groups.³⁰ Still, it may be observed that young and middle-aged widowers and widows decided to remarry more frequently than the elderly ones, which can be related to their need to take care of children and to economic reasons.³¹

The average age difference between the newlyweds, taking into account all marriages, was only 1.36, where 20.66 % of all marriages was between peers (in two cases they were widowed persons, in two other cases widows married bachelors, whilst all other cases were first marriages).³² These differences in the cases where both the groom and the bride were widowed persons increased to an average of 2.23. In the cases where both newlyweds married for the first time, the average was 1.20, which was slightly lower than the average for all marriages.³³ The largest age difference, namely 20 years, was recorded when in 1790 thirty-year-old *Eva Vranjeshovich* from Miholjac married *Joannes Kontrich*, also from Miholjac, for both of whom it was the first marriage. In the large majority of cases, grooms were older than brides. Converse cases accounted for 9.96 % of marriages, where brides, half of which were widows, were on average 3.26 years older than grooms. The largest age difference, namely 11 years, where the bride was older than the groom was recorded in 1792, when nineteen-year-old *Martinus* from Miholjac married the thirty-year-old widow *Clara*, also from Miholjac.³⁴

In the 18th century Parish of Miholjac, there were 592 recorded remarriages, out of which 316 men (53.38 %) and 276 women (46.62 %) opted for a

³⁰ In the period observed, marriage, as a rule, ended by the death of one of the spouses, except in exceptional cases when divorce was allowed, although such cases are not recorded for the Parish of Miholjac.

³¹ Nenad Vekarić, Irena Benyovsky, Tatjana Buklijaš, Maurizio Levak, Nikša Lučić, Marija Mogo-rović and Jakša Primorac, *Vrijeme ženidbe i ritam poroda (Dubrovnik i njegova okolica od 17. do 19. stoljeća)* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik 2000), p. 59-63.

³² Consideration should be given to a frequent custom in the period observed to round up the age of the groom and bride to the nearest ten, which generally reduces the accuracy of determining the marrying age, particularly when the basis of observation are not age groups, but individual years.

³³ In the 18th century south Baranja, the average age difference between the newlyweds was 3.1 years; if the bride was older, the average age difference was 1.85 years, and if the groom was older, 3.22 years. The groom was on average 4.5 years older than the bride if it was their first marriage in Slavonski Brod and only around 4 months older in the surrounding villages. Widowers who married girls were on average around 11 years older in Slavonski Brod and around 8 years older in the surrounding villages. In Drenovci (1870-1880), the average age difference was less than two years. - Dubravka Božić Bogović, *Rođenje, brak i smrt – stanovništvo južne Baranje u 18. stoljeću* (Beli Manastir: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Belom Manastiru, 2013), p. 74; D. Hrkać, "Brod u demografskim izvorima od 1780. do 1850. godine" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2012), p. 146-147.; Tamara Alebić, Irena Ipšić, Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, "Stanovništvo Drenovaca (1870-1880): predtranzicijsko doba", *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2009), p. 87.

³⁴ Both surnames illegible.

new marriage,³⁵ which fits the predominant trends of men remarrying more frequently than women.³⁶ The portion of widowers in relation to widows remained higher also in the period 1870–1880, i.e. it was 30.23 % in all marriages, whilst the portion of widows was 24.13 %.³⁷ In Donji Miholjac, in 175 cases both newlyweds were widowed persons, 141 marriages were between a widower and a first-time bride, and in 100 cases a widow married a bachelor.

Conclusion

The registers of marriages of the Parish of Miholjac, despite the restrictions specific to this type of historical resources and the inapplicability of the genealogical method, which is why certain factors affecting marital unions and entering into marriage cannot be determined and analysed, still represent an important source for the study of demographic facts, such as the annual, seasonal, monthly, and daily distribution of weddings, marrying age, and certain facts related to remarriages. Restrictions of sources that are typical of the pre-statistical period (primarily the impossibility to unambiguously identify an individual as well as incorrect and/or inconsistent entries) are the reason to be cautious when interpreting the obtained data, although a relatively large sample reduces the significance of potential errors. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that the data obtained from analysis do not have to be taken as absolutely correct numbers but as representative samples of demographic indicators revealing certain demographic trends. Having regard to the regular and relatively consistent keeping of the registers of marriages of the 18th centu-

³⁵ In the 18th century south Baranja, the portion of widowers in all marriages was 48.73 %, whilst the portion of widows was 51.27 %. In Drenovci (1870–1880), the portion of widowers in all marriages was 36.82 % and of widows 21.96 %. In Hrastin, Laslovo, Korod, and Retfala (Reformed population) in the 18th and the first third of the 19th century, the portion of widowers in all marriages was 15.54 % and of widows 17.53 %, meaning that the Reformed population of these villages deviated again from the observed trends in the Catholic settlements in east Croatia. - Dubravka Božić Bogović, *Rođenje, brak i smrt – stanovništvo južne Baranje u 18. stoljeću* (Beli Manastir: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Belom Manastiru, 2013), p. 76; Tamara Alebić, Irena Ipšić, Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, "Stanovništvo Drenovaca (1870-1880): predtranzicijsko doba", *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2009), p. 87; D. Njari, "Stanovništvo Hrastina, Laslova, Koroda i Retfale u 18. i prvog trećini 19. stoljeća" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2016), p. 186-187.

³⁶ Nenad Vekarić, Irena Benyovsky, Tatjana Buklijaš, Maurizio Levak, Nikša Lučić, Marija Mogo- rović and Jakša Primorac, *Vrijeme ženidbe i ritam poroda* (Dubrovnik i njegova okolica od 17. do 19. stoljeća) (Zagreb, Dubrovnik 2000), p. 61-63.

³⁷ Marija Brandić, Monika Grdiša-Asić, Ivan Čipin, "Stanovništvo Donjeg Miholjca (1870-1880): predtranzicijsko doba", *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2009), p. 111.

ry Parish of Miholjac, we can assume a high confidence level for the recorded and analysed data as well as the obtained results.

The analysis of the data contained in the registers of marriages showed that the population of the 18th century Parish of Miholjac fitted the predominant trends specific to the area and period observed. Over the century, the number of marriages increased in line with population growth, whilst the recorded decrease was related to the change in the territorial and administrative reach of the Parish. Marriage as a basis for creating family, which in traditional societies is considered the basic unit of society, and marriage as a sacrament in Catholic communities was impacted by religious and, in general, cultural and social factors, as confirmed by the analysis of the data contained in the registers of marriages, primarily through the seasonal, that is monthly and daily distribution of weddings. This is demonstrated by the avoidance of weddings at the time of Advent and Lent, which is in line with the results obtained from the research of other Catholic, and in particular rural communities in Croatian countries. The observance of religious regulations and recommendations is also shown by the fact that Friday, intended for fasting or fast, was the least popular day selected by the newlyweds for wedding. In all probability, the selection of the wedding day was significantly dictated by practical reasons of an organisational nature, but also wedding customs, which in east Croatia often included several-day wedding festivities. The impact of economic factors can be most clearly followed in the seasonal development of weddings through a pronounced concentration of weddings in the months when there was no agricultural work. In this regard, the population of the Parish of Miholjac fully fits the trends specific to continental Croatia. The impact of economic factors and the characteristics of traditional society are visible in a significant portion of remarriages entered by widowed persons in order to ensure economic activity for their families. The larger share of widowers compared to widows who decided to remarry, in particular in the young and middle-aged bracket, is interpreted as the need to take care of children, of which, in accordance with the traditional distribution of the family roles, women were in charge. The fact that for the most part grooms were older than brides can also be interpreted by economic reasons and traditional patriarchal society, in which men had to ensure subsistence for the family, which could postpone marriage, whilst women were expected to produce offspring and therefore were preferred to marry young. The assumption that the Miholjac society by the end of the 18th century was not included in the demographic transition process has been confirmed by the low average marrying age of both spouses and by the significant portion of remarriages, which are characteristics specific to pre-transitional societies

and based on which the population of the 18th century Parish of Miholjac fits the trends specific to the area and period observed.

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