

SEASONALITY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MARRIAGES IN SREMSKA MITROVICA

Milena Sekulić^A, Milica Solarević^A, Srđan Timotijević^A

Abstract

Marriage is a socially acceptable institution in which biological and socio-cultural components interact. One of the most important features of marriage is seasonality because different factors affect the time of entering into marriage, which is the primary subject of this research, analyzed on the example of the settlement Sremska Mitrovica. In agrarian societies, natural conditions were mostly between key factors that influenced the date of entering into marriage. Religion was often the deciding factor of seasonal marriage because of the limitation of dates in which it was allowed, because of religious holidays and periods that were preceded by religious holidays. The goal of this research is to highlight and notice specific trends, marital norms and patterns, the seasonality of marriage as well as to connect those changes with historical, political, economical, cultural and social contexts. Data were obtained from marriage registers (1900-2011) in Sremska Mitrovica. The characteristics of marriage in Sremska Mitrovica in the period from 1900 to 2011 were changing under the influence of historical and demographic heritage as well as the factors mentioned which also affected the seasonality of marriage in this period. In the observed period of 112 years, the highest percentage of marriages are made during autumn, in November.

Keywords: Sremska Mitrovica, marriages seasonality, nuptiality

Introduction

The study of marriage as a sociological category is a relatively new field. Major social upheavals, such as World War I, the great economic crisis of the 1930s, the World War II, numerous civil conflicts, have imposed an interest in the study of this social phenomenon. Certainly, these events have not caused the start of marriage researches, but only accelerate the process leading to a lot of scientific debate, the theory of models, and even the referendum questions on marriage or divorce. Special interest has always been shown by almost all religions, claiming to be the sole regulators of marital relations, and it can be said that the influence of religion and the church may have persisted most

precisely in this sphere of social relations (Solarević, 2016).

Sremska Mitrovica is located in Srem area, on the left bank of the Sava River (Ђурчић, 2002). The city has a huge cultural and historical heritage, which are built primarily by the Romans in Sirmium, one of four Roman capitals, and set other nations who during antiquity, the Middle Ages and the new settled in this region (Јемајић, 2008). Great influence on the settlement had a period under the Habsburg or Austro-Hungarian Empire, which has shaped many of the population structures and patterns in different segments of life (Prca et al, 1969).

^A University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management, Trg Dositeja Obradovića 3, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia milena.sekulic@dgt.uns.ac.rs; milica.solarevic@dgt.uns.ac.rs; srdjan.timmy@gmail.com

Theoretical background

Marriage as a social institution, within which biological reproduction is the largest proportion, is an important topic considering the factors of low fertility of the population. Historically, one of the first functions of marriage has been to control sexuality, that is, the institution of marriage has imposed itself as a socially acceptable framework for the procreation and extension of the human species. At the same time, marriage has played an important role as a means of social integration. In agrarian societies, marriage and family are constituted and basic economic units, and thus the economic function of marriage was expressed.

Methodology

The primary data were obtained from marriage registers in Sremska Mitrovica and the secondary data were collected through desk research, based on available literature. The methodological approach is based on the general scientific method in which are applied: the analytical and synthetic, inductive-deductive, comparative, generalization method, as well as the historical, statistical, mathematical, descriptive, demographic method. The research aims to define and show specific marriage trends, norms and patterns, seasonality of marriages, and link these changes to the historical, political, economic, cultural and social context.

The analysis primarily uses the demographic method. This method deals with the demographic measures and indicators, the probability using the account

Marriage occupied an important place in all religious and ideological systems, as it was thought that by establishing control over marriage, control over society as a whole was established. Therefore, in each historical epoch, control of marriage was exercised by the church or the state, that is, the most powerful social force (Vuletic, 2008; Solarevic, Djercan, 2016).

Research on the seasonality of marriages, when it comes to Vojvodina, conducted in Kovačica, Bačinci, Lalic, Kać, Padina and Sajkaska region (Imro, 2013; Petras, 2019; Demiter, 2014; Petric, 2015; Zegarac, 2006; Arsenovic et al. 2015).

in the demographic analysis, making demographic tables, demographic projection models, analysis of demographic structure, by measuring and presenting the population development in time. For the seasonality is used specific index, called Henry's seasonality index (Hinde, 2014; Solarevic, 2016).

Henry's seasonality index is calculated using the following formula:

$$H_m = \left(\frac{\sum N_{m,t}}{\sum_{12} N_{m,t}} \right) \cdot 1200 \quad (\text{Arsenovic et al. 2015}).$$

Data were analyzed on a monthly and annual basis, relating to the total number of marriages.

Results and discussion

Marriage is, in the broadest sense, understood as a relationship between two people of different gender with the purpose of living together and creating a family. Also, marriage appears as spouses need to create a family and is affected socially and economically. On the other hand, weddings in certain parts of the year are influenced by various factors. Agricultural work in rural areas was among the most important factor that influenced the wedding date in the past. Moreover, religious practice has been the crucial factor in seasonal marriage due to limitations imposed by the marriage religious holidays and the period which preceded the religious holidays (Arsenovic et al., 2015).

In the period 1900-2011, 8,731 marriages were concluded in Sremska Mitrovica, which means about 79 marriages annually.

Distribution of marriages by month

In order to calculate changes in the number of marriages per month and to determine whether some seasonal factors affect the number of marriages in individual months, the period from 1900 to 2011 is divided into eleven periods: ten periods of ten years and a period of eleven years (2001-2011). Based on Figure 1, it can be concluded that the greatest value of Henry's seasonality index was recorded in the period from 1900 to 1910, in November and stood at 254.96. It is interesting that the lowest value was recorded in the same period, next month, in December, and amounted to 7.37. Throughout the eleven periods, one can see a change in the value of Henry's seasonality index by month.

In the first four observed periods, from 1900 to 1940, the highest values of Henry's seasonality in-

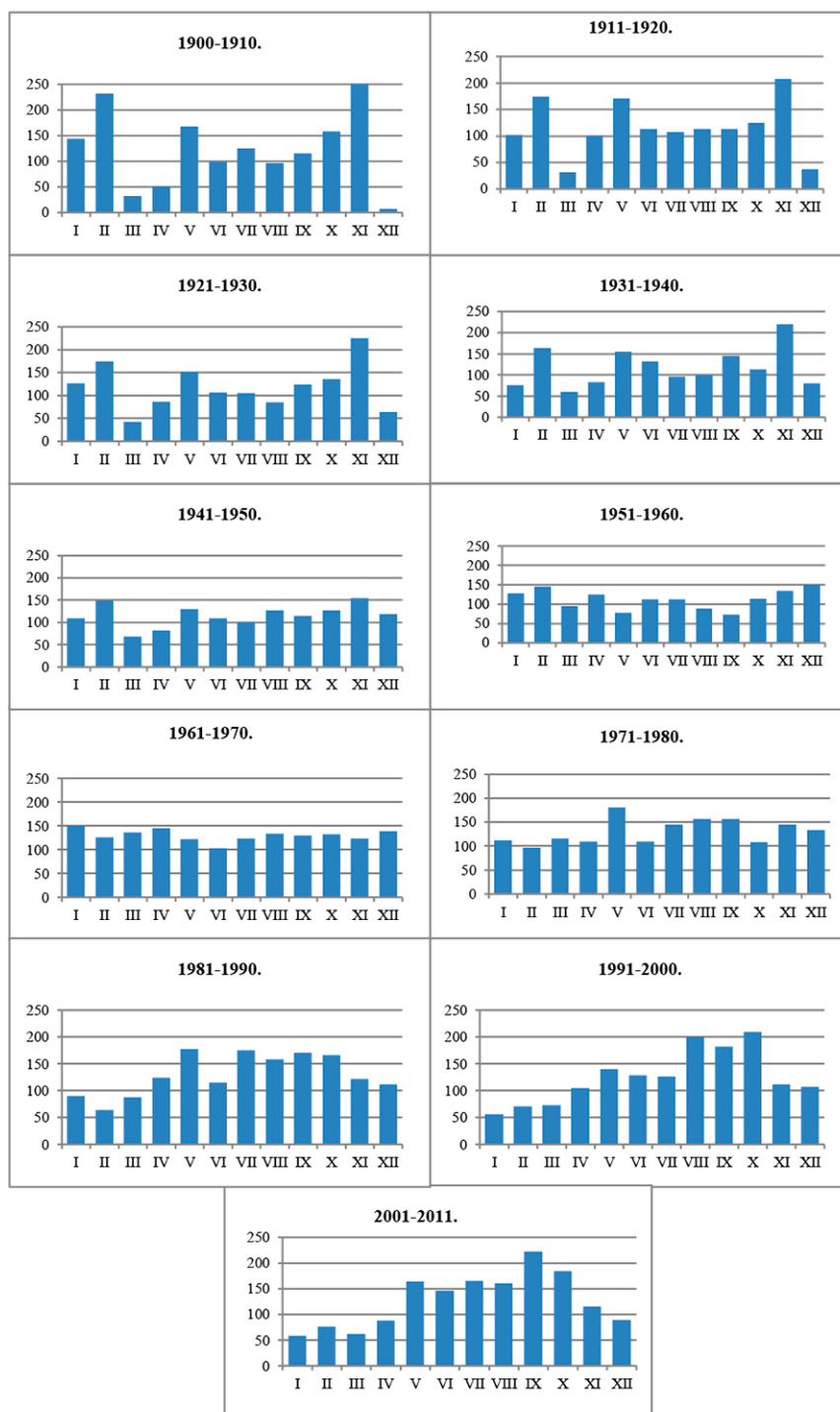


Figure 1. Henry seasonality index from 1900 to 2011

Source: Marriage Registers in Sremska Mitrovica from 1900 to 2011

dex were recorded in the following months: February, May and November. The lowest values were noticed in March and December. The values of Henry's seasonality index were consistent throughout almost every month between 1961 and 1970. May is the month to the end of the period (to 2011) that had high levels of Henry's index of seasonality. However, February and November were losing their high values together, from 1981 to the end of the period (2011).

The reasons for this distribution of marriages by months are certainly socio-economic. At the beginning of the observed period, most marriages were concluded during the winter months. Residents of Sremska Mitrovica were mainly engaged in agriculture in the first half of the 20th century. In modern times, in the last observed period from 2001 to 2011, couples often get into marriage in the period of the year when they can get days off or vacation, or when

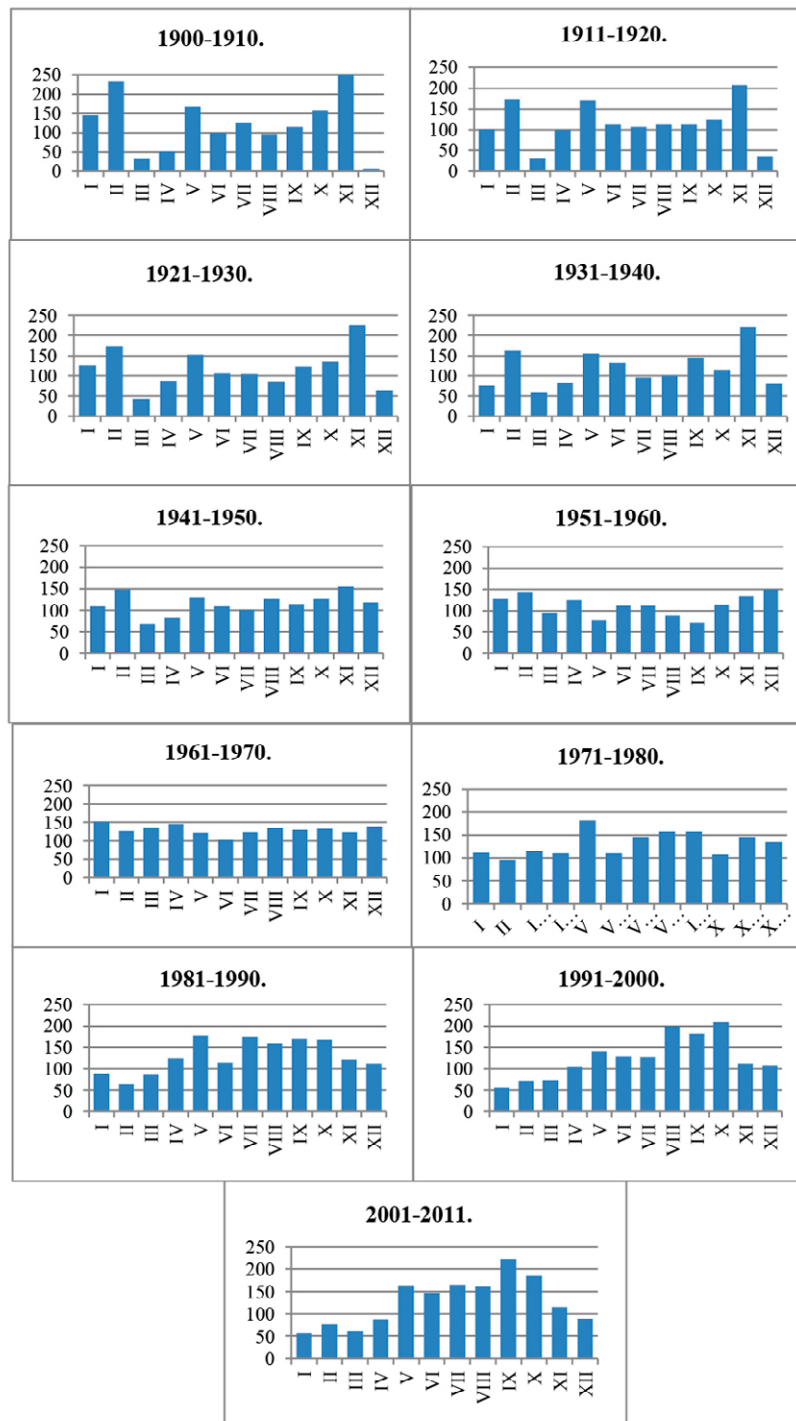


Figure 2. The percentage value of marriages by months in Sremska Mitrovica in the period from 1900 to 2011

Source: Marriage Registers in Sremska Mitrovica from 1900 to 2011

there is a vacant appointment with the registrar. The population is not engaged in occupations that are dependent on work in the field.

If we compare the value of Henry's index of seasonality with the values in some other countries, we can see that this characteristic of nuptiality is most influenced by the socio-economic structure of the population of the given region. So Henry's index of seasonality in the Province of Teramo (Abruzzo Region,

Italy) in the 18th century recorded the highest value in February, May and June, while in the 19th century, most marriages in February, June and November. The reasons for this are the distribution of marriages religious nature, as well as the economic features of the settlement in the aforementioned region (agriculture) (Coppa et al., 2001).

In the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries in England shows that the value of Henry's seasonality index

also had the highest values in October and November, when they were at the beginning of the period followed by January and June, which were replaced at the end of May and December (Cressy, 2013). In southern Sweden in the 19th century, about 20% of marriages annually concluded in November and December (Dribe and Van de Putte, 2011).

Figure 2 shows the percentage values of marriages by months in the eleven mentioned periods. In the first three periods (1900-1910; 1911-1920; 1921-1930), the highest share of marriages in Sremska Mitrovica was concluded in November. The month with the lowest share of marriages during the entire observed period from 1900 to 2011 is December. One of the reasons is the fact that the large share of the population in Sremska Mitrovica is of the Orthodox religion. There are four major fasts during the year. The most important are the Great fasting (Easter) and Christmas fasting. The Christmas fast begins on November 28 and ends on January 6. During this period it is not possible to conclude a church marriage.

The distribution of marriages according to the seasons

In the early 20th century population in Sremska Mitrovica had different attitudes towards religion,

compared to today. Many people strictly adhere to religious norms. According to some religious norms and principles, such as fast, it is expected that the significant share of marriages depends on that. Furthermore, mentioned norms are related to a specific period of the year (season).

When we look at all the periods respectively (Figure 3), it can be said that the biggest share of marriages was concluded in the autumn. At the beginning of the observed period from 1900 to 1950, autumn represents the season with the most marriages. Starting from 1951 to 1971, autumn loses its primacy. In the period from 1951 to 1960, winter marriages were dominant, while in the next period (1961-1970), the spring and winter marriages had an equal share. In the period from 1971 to 1980, the share of marriages was equalized in the three seasons, spring, autumn and winter. After 1991, the share of marriages in the autumn have increased.

According to Sanna and Danubio (2008) in Sardinia in the 19th century, most marriages were concluded in the autumn. A similar trend existed in Sremska Mitrovica, in the 20th century.

The share of marriages in the summer was low in two periods, from 1961 to 1970 and from 1971 to 1980. The last two periods are closely matched. For future

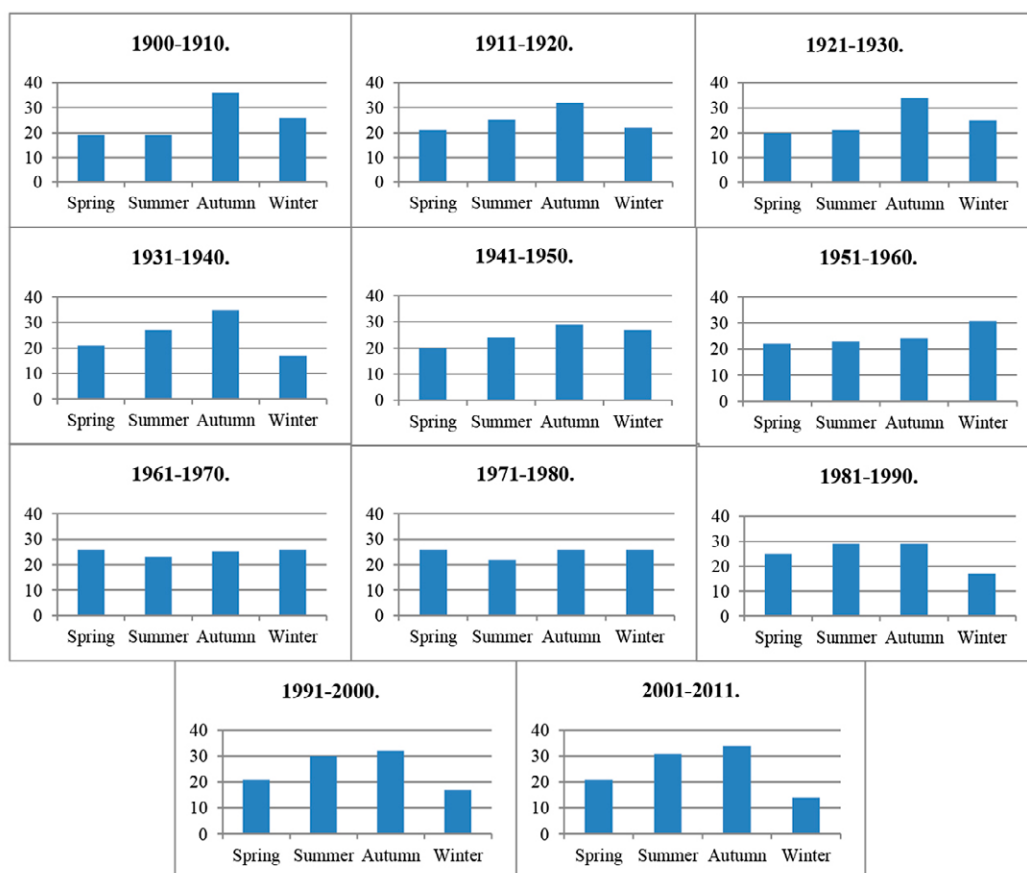


Figure 3. The distribution of marriages according to the seasons in the period from 1900 to 2011

Source: Marriage Registers in Sremska Mitrovica from 1900 to 2011

spouses it is important to make a picturesque and nice marriage ceremony and memories, so most of them want to be photographed in nature, in monasteries, and this requires good weather and holidays mainly.

Analyzing and comparing the results of the seasonality of marriages according to the seasons for many

other settlements in Vojvodina (Kovačica, Bačinci, Lalić, Kać, Padina) to the results of Sremska Mitrovica, it can be concluded that the results of the seasonality of marriages differ. In the mentioned settlements of Vojvodina, most marriages were concluded during the summer.

Conclusion

In past, it used to be the rule that only one who is married can start a family because only this kind of family was acceptable, but today is a completely different situation. Today, many couples start families without getting married. Tradition and customs are losing importance, in terms of the modern way of life and thinking. Probably, this would be one of the reasons for future trends of marriage numbers and patterns in Sremska Mitrovica. The basic hypothesis of the research was confirmed and it means that the characteristics of marriage in Sremska Mitrovica in the period from 1900 to 2011 were changing under the influence of historical and demographic heritage, primarily so-

cial and economic factors, as well as cultural, religious and ethnic influences. According to the data from the marriage registers in Sremska Mitrovica in the period from 1900 to 2011, it can be concluded that in 112 years there have been only a few months in which even one marriage was not concluded. This points to the assumption that despite all the circumstances it faced (the wars, poverty, unstable political situation in the country), the population of Sremska Mitrovica is still traditionally oriented, but with an increasingly clear indication of modern marriage, trends proved that the most important pillar of society in Sremska Mitrovica is precisely the family.

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