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Bijela kuga

*Kad u selu, sinko, za mladom ženom zvona zazvone, onda pitaj:
«Jel sušica?» pa ako ti kažu da nije, onda znaš daj utrošila*

(Sremac, 1940: 59)

Rad analizira pojavu bijele kuge na području Slavonije od sredine 19. stoljeća do početka drugog svjetskog rata. To je vrijeme kada je u Hrvatskoj ukinuto kmetstvo i kada nastaju bitne promijene u agrarnoj proizvodnji, a ujedno time i na društvenom i kulturnom planu. Prelaskom s naturalne na robno novčanu privredu dolazi do promjena u svim životnim segmentima pa tako i u odnosu prema djeci. U promijenjenim uvjetima, kada je velik broj djece postao nepoželjan, žene su usvojile praksu abortusa s poraznim posljedicama na vlastito zdravlje. U radu su prikazani sustavi vrijednosti koje su prema toj pojavi imali različiti autori te kako su se tijekom vremena mijenjali razlozi za kontrolu rađanja u skladu s gospodarskim, društvenim i ideološkim kretanjima.

Ključne riječi: kontrola rađanja, bijela kuga, Slavonija

Uvod

Predmet ovog rada fenomen je bijele kuge koja je u Hrvatskoj bila najizraženija na području Slavonije¹. Bijela kuga naziv je za pojavu drastičnog smanjenja broja djece (jedno ili dvoje) što je inače karakteristično za industrijske zemlje. Problematika bijele kuge prikazana je u razdoblju od sredine 19. stoljeća do početka drugog svjetskog rata. To je vrijeme kada je u Hrvatskoj ukinuto kmetstvo i kada nastaju bitne promjene u agrarnoj proizvodnji,

¹ Ovaj je rad pročitao na znanstvenom skupu „Gesundheit und Hygiene II“ održanom u Schlainingu 2004.

a ujedno time i na društvenom i kulturnom planu. Posljedice tih burnih promjena dovode do raspada seoskih zadruga i patrijarhalnih vrednota vezanih uz zadružni način života i privređivanja. Rastući utjecaj modernizacije i s njom povezanih urbanih vrijednosti očituje se u svim životnim segmentima. Organizacija novih obitelji i njihovih vrednota čini bitan dio ovog istraživanja. Vidjet ćemo kako su se razlozi za kontrolu rađanja mijenjali u skladu s gospodarskim i društvenim kretanjima. U radu je prikazana bijela kuga i njezine posljedice u nižim društvenim slojevima odnosno seljačkim obiteljima i zajednicama.

Odlaskom Turaka pod kraj 17 stoljeća, u Slavoniji je započeo proces kolonizacije i planskog razvoja. Početkom 18. stoljeća Austrijanci su na području Slavonije uveli Vojnu krajinu, što je omogućilo migracije s različitih područja. Prvi službeni austrijski popisi i opisi nakon oslobođenja od turske vlasti govore o posljedicama ratova. Velik je broj ranijih sela nestao ili je napušten, razoren i popaljen. Velik dio oranica bio je zapušten, a kuće su bile kolibe omazane blatom. Starosjedilačko stanovništvo vraća se iz zbjegova već krajem 17. stoljeća. O samom stanovništvu postoje poimenični popisi iz 1698. i 1702. godine. Popisi navode ljude različitih vjeroispovijesti: katolike, pravoslavce, nesjedinjene i katolike, a po narodnosti se spominju Hrvati, Mađari, Rašani, Vlasi i Nijemci. Po boravištu su starosjedinci ili su doseljeni i to uglavnom iz Bosne (Sršan, 2000: 11). Zahvaljujući prirodnom prirastu i imigraciji, demografski porast u Slavoniji tijekom 17. i 18. stoljeća bio je značajan²

Prosječna obitelj u Slavoniji u 18. stoljeću bila je relativno mala, između 7 i 8 članova, što je daleko manje od onoga što bismo očekivali u zadrugama. U 1869. godini prosječan broj stanovnika po kući bio je 6, no u 1880. smanjio se na 5 članova (Gross Szabo, 1992: 36). U civilnoj Slavoniji, s obzirom na broj članova i bogatstvo, zadruge su svoj vrhunac dostigle u 19. stoljeću, upravo prije početka raspadanja. Zbog zakonske regulative u slavonskoj Vojnoj krajinu zadruge su bile veće i dulje su se održale.

U 19. stoljeću u civilnoj Slavoniji počela je eksploatacija šuma i rudnog bogatstva kao i uzgoj žita za europsko tržište. U skladu s novim gospodarskim orijentacijama, u seoske obitelji počeo je na različite načine priticati novac što je pridonosilo raspadu zadružne ekonomije. Novo stečeno bogatstvo ogledalo se u zlatom i svilom vezenom ruhu, bolje sagrađenim i uređenim kućama, obilnijoj prehrani i općenito poboljšanim životnim uvjetima. No slavonska obitelj suočila se tada s novim problemom: kako izbjeći osipanje obiteljskog bogatstva brakovima i mirazom. U vremenu burnih gospodarskih i društvenih previranja, život u zadrugama u 19. stoljeću bio je prema mnogim istraživačima zadružnog života strategija za očuvanje i održavanje obiteljskog bogatstva. No u Slavoniji se uz to javlja i druga strategija: smanjenje broja djece (Supek, 1995/1996: 262).

Na temelju istraživanja nekadašnjih obitelji, provedenog između dva svjetska rata na području Jugoslavije, Vera Stein Erlich dolazi do zaključka da je gotovo sve nehumano i surovo u porodičnim odnosima u Hrvatskoj došlo s prodorom novčanog go-

² Od procijenjenih 64 500 stanovnika u 1698. godini (Gelo i Krivošić prema Supek, 1995/1996: 261), do 265 641 stanovnika u 1785., a 332 478 u 1847. godini (Kesslerl prema Supek, 1995/1996: 261).

spodarstva (Stein Erlich, 1971: 459-460). Civilna i vojna Hrvatska i Slavonija, prema popisima stanovništva, bila su područja ranih sklapanja brakova. Prije 1848. bila su česta vjenčanja dječaka mlađih od 15 godina a djevojčica od 14, ali je to nakon popisa 1851. zabranjeno (Gross, Szabo, 1992: 5). Rani su brakovi bili uobičajeni u to vrijeme u seoskim sredinama, a poticaj im je davalo i raspadanje zadruga, jer se računalo s diobom zajedničkog vlasništva. Pojedina obitelj imala je više šansi dobiti u privatno vlasništvo veći dio zadružnog imetka, ako ima oženjene sinove. Statistika koja je obuhvatila broj djece na jedan brak u civilnoj Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji za 1856/57., pokazuje 3,4 djece po braku, dok je prosjek za Monarhiju bio 4,4 (Gross, Szabo, 1992: 27).

Neki antropolozi smatraju da se fenomen bijele kuge u Slavoniji može objasniti njezinom kolonističkom prirodom u 18. stoljeću, što je dovelo do rapidnog rasta broja stanovništva, a onda dosegnuvši granice rasta i bogatstva, u Slavoniji se počelo drastično ograničavati potomstvo. Dok su druga hrvatska područja bila područja jake emigracije te se broj stanovnika regulirao odlaskom muškaraca izvan sela, slavonska porodica počela se smanjivati zahvaljujući unutrašnjem faktoru, to jest, regulaciji potomstva od strane žena (Supek, 1995/1996: 261).

Položaj žene i djece u zadruzi

Podaci o namjerno izazvanim pobačajima radi smanjenja potomstava već se mogu naći u odgovorima na anketu koju je Društvo gospodarsko hrvatsko – slavonsko uputilo 1850. godine svojim članovima. Od 1848. godine kada je ban Jelačić dekretom ukinuo kmetstvo, počele su se u javnosti voditi polemike oko zadruga kao ekonomskih organizacija, ali i oko pitanja zadružnog duha kao ideologije. Te vrste rasprava vodile su se i tijekom 20. stoljeća. Većina autora koji su pisali o zadrugama slažu se s mišlju da je uzrok svemu zlu na selu raspad zadruga.

No bilo je i iznimaka. Izjašnjavajući se o zadružnom životu u spomenutoj anketi kao vrlo nemoralnom i ekonomski neefikasnom, Ivan Štefani, član društva, između ostalog kaže: «...Al, dok je i koliko moguće, nastoje svim silama i sredstvi preprečivati žene, ako mnogobrojnom decom obteršene udove ostanu, proganjane bivaju, i tako su usled naloženih njima zajedničkih kućnih poslova, koje su obavljati dužne, primorane često vlastitu svoju djecu zapustiti, niti tako lahko obteršene decom za muž poći mogu... Zato za preprečiti porod štokakve lekove (vračta) uzimlju, tiskati se daju, samo da decu iz utrobe ma kako izteraju i često zajedno s decom bivaju žrtvom» (prema Rihtman-Auguštin, 1984: 39).

Iz ovog opisa nije jasno da li se žene same odlučuju za pobačaj³ ili ih zajednica na to prisiljava, ali iz navoda se također vidi da je pobačaj već uobičajena pojava i za žene vrlo opasna, jer su smrtni slučajevi učestali. O teškom položaju udovice s puno

³ Povjesničari medicine koji su se bavili problematikom pobačaja, smatraju da se praksa obavljanja pobačaja na prostoru Hrvatske proširila u doba turskih osvajanja. Na sultanovom dvoru postojao je zakon koji je

djece u zadružnoj obitelji 50 godina kasnije govori i Josip Lovretić u Monografiji o narodnom životu i običajima u Otoku (selu kraj Vinkovaca). Lovretić je bio svećenik, rođen u Otoku 1865. godine. U poglavlju koje govori o obiteljskim odnosima kaže: «Žena koja ima puno dice, nema veći dio od one, koja nema ni jedno. Udovica sa sedmero dice dobije 25 for., a žena koja nema dice, dobije uz svog čovika 50 for. Kako će ova sa 25. for. sedmero dice odivat, kad mora kući robovat i radit ko i druge žene, a dok dicu umije i sredi, dok im rubinice opere, dok zakrpa i sašije, već je i dan prošao» (Lovretić, 1990: 258).

U etnološkoj i antropološkoj literaturi koja se bavi problematikom zadruga, uvijek se naglašava kako je žena u patrijarhalnom društvu vrednovana na osnovu svojih produktivnih i reproduktivnih sposobnosti i kako je ograničavanje poroda u suprotnosti sa zadružnom ideologijom. Djeca su bogatstvo zadruga. Ako se udovica želi preudati ili vratiti roditeljima zadruga joj rijetko daje djecu jer su «stečena» u zadruzi. Socijalna sigurnost djece, staraca, invalida i nesposobnih za rad, u zadruzi je zagarantirana. Premda se u 19. stoljeću u Slavoniji i dalje živjelo u zadrugama, slijedeći navod govori suprotno od uvriježenih pretpostavki o poželjnosti velikog broja djece. Autor napominje kako je u staro doba bilo puno djece u kućama, ali da danas: «Ima matera koje sinu kažu: 'Dok je mene žive, ne ćeš te uzeti. Nemam ništa proti njoj, al je iz čopora, pa će i tebe čoporom obdariti'» (Lovretić, 1990: 256). Iz iznesenih podataka vidimo da su temelji zadružnog patrijarhalnog života u Slavoniji poljuljani i prije ukidanja kmetstva i da zadružni poredak i nije pružao onu sigurnost koja se često ističe kao norma.

O gotovo nečovječnim uvjetima kojima su trudnice i žene s djecom izložene u zadruzi saznajemo ponovno iz Lovretićevih opisa. S obzirom na činjenicu da je bio svećenik iznenađuje smionost kojom opisuje žensku stranu života u zadrugama, osobito trudnoću, porod, obavljanje abortusa. Premda Lovretić često spominje žensku solidarnost u zadruzi ona kao da se ne odnosi na trudnice i majke s malom djecom. Ženska solidarnost više dolazi do izražaja kod obavljanja abortusa, na što ću se kasnije još osvrnuti. I sam autor uviđa težak položaj trudnih žena. One obavljaju sve poslove jednako kao i druge žene. «... Ljudi ne mare za trudnu ženu, rugaju joj se, ne pomažu joj, nego je još proganaju. Žena, kad rađa, rađa u sobi, di družina i daniva i noćiva. Nju boli spopadaju, a ima bezdušni ljudi, pa neće da idu iz sobe, dok se ona muči i porodom rastaje, nego joj se rugaju i koješta joj nepošteno govore. A u tom stidu kune se svaka, da zanit neće. Kad žena rodi dite, pa ustane iz kreveta, gone je na poso... Bude dikoja žena, da ima petero dice, a sve jedno drugom do uva. ...Kad dica poustaju, mati ji brže bolje spremi, umije, počešlja, narani, ostavi ji kod reduše, a kolivku na glavu, pa ono najmanje odnese u polje. Već je sirota za uranka umorna. Došla je poslidnja u polje. One, što su prije nje prispile, side u ladu, pa se odmaraju.

određivao da sve žene osim sultanije moraju začeti plod pobaciti ili odmah poslije porođaja ubiti. Pobacivanje začetog ploda obavljale su osobite vrste babica koje su se zvale *kanli-hebe* (krvave babice). Iz sultanovog harema taj je običaj prešao i u druge hareme kao i u niže slojeve naroda (Bazala, 1933: 12-13).

Ne će da počmu poso, dok se svi ne skupe... Pa onda vidi, kako druge žive ko divojke, a ona ko roblje, pa veli: đaba bilo i dice; dosta je tog tereta kad me nitko ne štedi... Često se čuje u selu: 'Volim se pokrovom pokriti, već još jedno roditi'.» (Lovretić, 1990: 257-258).

Pitamo se što je dovelo do takvog stava prema ženi s velikim brojem djece. Iz opisa dobijamo dojam da ljudi na neki način osuđuju trudnu ženu i žele da ispašta za to što je odlučila da rodi. Nema nikoga tko bi joj pružio moralnu podršku, a kamoli fizičku pomoć. Iz navedenog proističe da je razlog za ograničavanje poroda težak položaj žene i djece unutar obitelji. Osjeća se bijes i neslaganje s postojećom situacijom i želja da se ona izmjeni pa i pod cijenu života. No ženama je i ranije bilo teško, ali u starijim podacima ne nailazimo na one koji bi govorili o ograničavanju poroda kao uvriježenoj pojavi.

U izvorima iz 18. stoljeća pobačaji se još ne spominju. A. M. Reljković koji je 1762. godine napisao kritički osvrt na prilike u Slavoniji pod naslovom «Satir iliti divji čovjek», navodi brojne negativne pojave, od kola do mobe, no nigdje ne spominje, pobačaje to jest «bijelu kugu». On doduše kaže da žene kod vjenčanja vračaju (obavljaju magijske postupke) da odgode prvi porod kako bi što dulje bile «mlade i lipe» (Reljković, 1916: 111)⁴.

Lovretić također navodi da je ženska želja za ljepotom i mladošću uzrok bijeloj kugi: «Žene žele, da su lipe i mlade, pa misle, da će trajati i mladost i lipota, ako ne rađaju. Odboluju one i odleže svake godine po dva, po tri puta, pa opet misle još su mlade i lipe. Žene žele dok su mlade, da prispiju u kolo i veselje. A koja ima dice ne može nikuda...» (Lovretić, 1990: 258). U daljnjem razmatranju još ću se osvrnuti na «lagodan i bezbrižan» život žena s malim brojem djece.

Podaci za Slavoniju s kraja 19 stoljeća svjedoče o široko rasprostranjenoj praksi obavljanja pobačaja poznatoj kao «bijela kuga». U tisku iz tog vremena čitamo kako je «bijela kuga» razlog što su neka područja Slavonije sasvim opustjela. Ta pojava ukazuje na neuobičajeni autoritet žene u odlučivanju o potomstvu što se opet povezuje s njezinom ulogom u obiteljskoj ekonomiji. No patrijarhalne karakteristike prisutne su i dalje. Često je upravo svekrva određivala mladoj snahi koliko djece može imati (Sremac, 1940: 50).

⁴ «Jošter jedno napomenut hoću,
kod vinčana kakvu čine zloću...
kolikogod uzlića zavežeš
onoliko neće godinica
tebi, sinko, dosaditi dica,
neg ćeš biti lipa i rumena,
kao da si jučer dovedena» (Reljković, 1916: 111)

Promjene socijalno ekonomskih odnosa u zadruzi

Miraz

Obično se kao najvažniji činitelj za ne sudjelovanje žena u združnoj ekonomiji navodi miraz. U Slavoniji se u 19. stoljeću, čak i prije ukidanja kmetstva 1848. godine, spominje miraz ili *osobac*, žensko individualno vlasništvo unutar zadruge. O njemu se piše kao o novijoj pojavi. On se sastojao od zemlje, stoke i novca. U starijoj građi uopće se ne navodi da žena u združnim ili uopće seljačkim obiteljima prilikom udaje donosi miraz. To je bio aristokratski i gradski običaj. Ono što je djevojka donosila bili su tekstilni proizvodi koji su govorili o njezinim kvalitetama kao buduće domaćice i ponekad namještaj, i to se nazivalo *djevojačka sprema* ili *ruho*. Prodiranjem robno novčanih odnosa na selo, prilikom sklapanja braka, uz ženine produktivne i reproduktivne sposobnosti još značajnije postaje koliki će donijeti miraz. Na taj je način unutar patrilinearnog domaćinstva u kojem je vlasništvo prelazilo s oca na sina, postojala paralelna linija naslijeđivanja od majke (ili oba roditelja) na kćer. Mirazi su tako stvarali ekonomske razlike među nuklearnim porodicama unutar zadruge, pridonoseći njezinu raspadu.

Većina autora koji su idealizirali zadruge tvrde da je upravo miraz to jest *osobac* najčešći krivac za raspad združnog života. Ali etnografska građa iz 19. i 20. stoljeća pruža mnoštvo podataka iz kojih se vidi da je individualna imovina uvijek bila u određenom odnosu prema kolektivnoj. Ta imovina nije bila izvan kontrole zajednice. Individualna imovina počela je razarati zadruge tek onda kad su prestale djelovati snage što kontroliraju kolektivno ponašanje i kad su prestali vrijediti ekonomski odnosi prema općem društvu, koji su povezivali taj individualni i kolektivni imovinski interes (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1984: 166).

U vrijeme dok su bili kmetovi, seljaci nisu mogli davati zemlju u miraz jer nisu bili njezini vlasnici. Kad su se počele dijeliti zadruge, kolektivni imetak dijelio se na pojedine vlasnike pri čemu su sva djeca kod naslijeđivanja ravnopravna. Područja Hrvatske koja su se kasnije uključila u globalne gospodarske odnose čak i poslije uvođenja zakonskih odredbi pokazuju veliku otpornost prema pitanju miraza. Za razliku od dinarskih krajeva gdje su se sestre redovno odricale zemlje u korist braće, u Slavoniji su kćeri u pravilu mirazom dobivale punu visinu naslijeđa. Razlozi što je praksa bila u skladu sa zakonom vjerojatno su u dugom trajanju i starosti austrijskog zakona o naslijeđivanju i činjenici da se novčana ekonomija u Slavoniji relativno rano razvila, pa je pravni položaj žene bio mnogo povoljniji nego u drugim dijelovima Hrvatske (Stein Erlich, 1971: 192). Iako je miraz postao pravilo, njegovo su se značenje i karakter mijenjali ovisno o promjenama u tipu porodice i o širem društvenom kontekstu. Združni zakon u početku nije davao djevojci zemlju, ali joj je novo vrijeme donijelo dukate. Najveći broj dukata nabavljen je od kraja 19. stoljeća do početka prvog svjetskog rata. Miraz se u Slavoniji najprije pojavio u formi dukata kao što i pjesma kaže:

*Sad u modi dukati i svila
Makar cura i ćorava bila
Uzmi Maru, mili sine
Mara nosi suferine*

(Sremac, 1940: 16).

Dukat se smatrao vrijednošću koja se ne smije potrošiti jer se zlato ovisno o situaciji uvijek moglo prodati i ponovno kupiti. Lovretić se također osvrće na tu pojavu: «Žena koja nema dice, minja one novce, što u kući dobije, u dukate, pa joj se zlati vrat i prsa, a ona druga mora namicati dicit i odiću i obuću, pa je teško. Ona se onda zove sirota, a ona bogata» (Lovretić, 1990: 258). Iz ovog je iskaza jasno da djeca više ne predstavljaju bogatstvo za zadrugu već upravo suprotno.

Način kako se moglo doći do dukata bila je i krađa kolektivne imovine u zadrugama. Podaci iz Monografije o Otoku pokazuju da su se krali poljoprivredni i drugi viškovi, ono što je ostajalo poslije podmirenja egzistencijalnih potreba. Te su viškove krale žene i pretvarale u novac, najčešće u dukate. Tako stečeni dukati pridruživali su se *osobcu koji se* kao što je već spomenuto, naslijeđivao po ženskoj liniji, od majke na kćerku. Zato svaka mati koja ima imetka, nastoji da djece bude što manje kako bi njezina kći prilikom udaje dobila što bolju priliku.

Značenje miraza osobito se povećava s porastom vrijednosti zemlje, odnosno s pretvaranjem zemlje u robu koja se mogla slobodno kupovati i prodavati te nakon uvođenja intenzivnijih poljoprivrednih tehnika. Poslije prvog svjetskog rata zbog konjunktura agrarnih proizvoda vrijednost zemlji još više raste. Porastom vrijednosti zemlje o dukatima se počinje govoriti kao o mrtvom kapitalu, a u prvi plan dolazi *tal*, zemlja koju je djevojka naslijedila ili dobila od svojih roditelja.

*Više nisu dukati u modi,
Već zemlja koja dobro rodi
Ne udaju curu šlingeraji,
već udaju jutra i fitalji*

(Sremac, 1941:25).

Neposredno nakon dijeljenja zadruga bila je potreba za radnom snagom na seljačkim imanjima naročito velika. Kao što je već spomenuto u uvodnom dijelu bilo je slučajeva da su se sinovi ženili upravo zato da bi mogli tražiti diobu i steći samostalnost. Nakon opetovanih dioba, velik dio imanja spao je na male omjere te više nije postojala potreba za radnom snagom. Sada je svaki pojedinac kojeg treba hraniti teret. Mladi seljak nije mogao dovesti djevojku bez miraza u roditeljsku kuću, niti se osamostaliti bez miraza.

Djevojka čija majka ima *tal* u privilegiranoj je situaciji. Kao što muškarac želi sina nasljednika, *taloškinje* žele kćerku nasljednicu jer će inače *tal* ostati snahi, a to znači tuđoj lozi. Isto tako, često se spominje, da kad žena rodi prvo kćer, dolazi u iskušenje da ispuni veliku želju djevojačku; da bude jedina u majke, to jest *taloškinja*.

Kad je miraz to jest *osobac* u obliku zemlje postao uobičajen, otvorile su se različite mogućnosti njegove upotrebe. Žena je imala pravo raspolagati proizvodima s te zemlje i često ih je prodavala da svojoj kćeri kupi dukate, svilu i pliš povećavajući i na taj način njezine izgleda za što bolju udaju. Ako bi muž prigovarao zbog rasipanja novca za djevojačku odjeću, žena bi mu odgovorila «Svoje sam potrošila, a nisam kuću rasula» (Sremac, 1940: 31).

Odjeća je kao pokazatelj društvenog i ekonomskog statusa u Slavoniji imala osobit značaj. Djevojačka nošnja tog vremena isticala se u tisku kao glavni uzrok *bijeloj kugi*, jer majka koja rodi jedno ili dvoje ženske djece više ne želi rađati bojeći se da ih neće moći opremiti prema ondašnjim zahtjevima.⁵ Gizda ili moda već se u 19. stoljeću smatrala jednim od najvećih društvenih poroka koje je zahvatilo selo, pa u tisku tog vremena možemo pročitati niz tekstova o modi koja potkopava moralne, gospodarske i pravne temelje seoskih zajednica. Žene koje slijede modu najčešće su prikazivane kao osobe lakog morala, koje zbog lijenosti i lagodnosti zanemaruju «prirodne» ženske poslove i dužnosti. Kao izlaz iz krize u koju je upalo domaće gospodarstvo u razdoblju između dva svjetska rata, neki su članovi tada vrlo aktivne Seljačke sloge predlagali povratak proizvodnji domaćeg tekstila i ručnoj izradi odjeće, što bi selu omogućilo podmirivanje vlastitih potreba.

Žene su se doista i prihvale tkanja, samo ovaj put ne samo za sebe, već i za potrebe grada. Mnoge su se žene specijalizirale za tekstilno rukotvorstvo te su svoje proizvode prodavale na gradskim tržnicama i sajmovima te tako stečenim novcem spašavale svoje obitelji u doba agrarne krize (Sremac, 1940). Promijenjeni životni uvjeti tijekom 20. stoljeća omogućili su i seoskim ženama da se uključe u globalne gospodarske tokove i to upravo zahvaljujući tradicionalno ženskim poslovima (Supek, 1995/1996: 260). Žene su svojim radom u obitelji jednako doprinosile kućnom budžetu kao i muškarci, a uz to su raspolagale i vlastitim imetkom, pa su njihov stvarni status i moć u obitelji odstupali od klasičnog predstavljanja žene u dominantnoj ideologiji roda. Što su više utjecaja i moći žene prisvojile u realnim situacijama, više su narušile zamišljeni red, pa zajednica reagira oštrom kritikom (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1984: 172). Većina optužbi na račun žena svodi se na to da su srušile zadrugu svojim svadama i krađom, postale nemoralne i razvratne, naginju gospodskom životu i uništavaju staru kulturu, zbog lagodnosti ne žele rađati djecu i time direktno ugrožavaju naciju.

Antropolozi upozoravaju da činjenica što kćeri kod udaje dobivaju dio naslijeđa, i nije tako povoljna za ženu, jer je to ujedno znak za smanjenu vrijednost i traženost žene (Stein Erlich, 1971: 197), što potkrepljuju i slijedeći stihovi:

⁵ Za ilustraciju koliko je djevajačko odijelo koštalo kuću, može nam poslužiti slijedeći primjer: Obitelj od 4 člana. Posjed 27 jutara. Za ponovu djevojke jedinice od 14 godina potrošeno je 7000.-dinara, dukati nisu uračunati. U istoj kući potrošeno je 30 kg šećera, 80 kg soli, 42 l petroleja i odjeća za tri ostala člana; sve skupa 800.-din (Sremac, 1940: 12). Djevojka se u Slavoniji počinjala *noviti* u 12. ili 13. godini i *novi* se do udaje svake godine nekoliko puta, (na Veliki Petak, Cvjetnicu, Uskrs, Tijelovo, Veliku i Malu Gospu i Božić) a osim svečanog dobiva i običnije odijelo kao i ono radno (Sremac, 1941: 10-15).

«*Nek je cura lipa i poštena
Propala je ako tala nema*»

(Sremac, 1941: 27).

Tradicijski ideal nevjeste u doba zadruga tražio je pored radnih sposobnosti i poslušnosti, također i djevičanstvo. S pojavom miraza čini se da je popustila stroga kontrola nad ženama. Ukoliko djevojka ima *tal* nitko ne pita za njezin predbračni spolni život. U vrijeme naturalne privrede, žena je na hijerarhiji vrijednosti na niskom stupnju, no u praksi ona je dragocijena i tražena, za nju se plaća. Novo je vrijeme djevojkama pogoršalo situaciju za udaju, donijelo je zahtjeve za mirazom i žensku većinu. Odjednom je momak postao taj koji postavlja uvjete. *Miradžijke* i *taloškinje* predstavljaju privilegirane iznimke, a ostale djevojke se moraju zadovoljiti «gorim od sebe». Djevojke sa velikim talom vrlo su se rijetko udavale u selu, jer za takve djevojke tamo nije bilo prave prilike. Bogate taloškinje udavale su se za gospodu. Na pitanje zašto želi zeta gospodina jedna je žena odgovorila: «Jer je lipo bit gospoja. E, kad smislim da bi moja Fema mogla postat gospoja, srce u meni zaigra od dragosti. Lipo se nosit a ništa ne radit! Ta mučila sam se ja i moj Mata, od usta smo otkidali, toliku sam dicu utrošila, samo da moja Fema ostane jedinica, pa da bude taloškinja, i da je udam za gospodina. Ej, lip je gospodski život» (Sremac, 1940: 33). Želja da se djeci omogući lakši život jača tendenciju za ograničavanje poroda. Budući da urbane vrijednosti postaju dominantne, a pojedinci se vrednuju po tome koliko mogu investirati za urbaniziranje životnog stila svoje djece, takvo ponašanje ne izaziva kritike već se shvaća kao normalni tijek.

Kod prelaza s naturalne privrede na robno novčano gospodarstvo mijenja se iz temelja stav seljaka prema velikom broju djece. Strah pred velikim brojem djece svladava sve moralne i tehničke zapreke koje stoje na putu ograničavanja poroda. Vjerski i crkveni utjecaj na ograničavanje poroda u vrijeme raspadanja patrijarhalnog sustava slabi te se porodični odnosi uglavnom prilagođavaju gospodarskim zahtijevima. Primjena pobačaja pokazuje da to nije prolazna pojava, nego da se u krajevima u kojima se proširila više ne gubi, a njezin intenzitet ovisi o kontekstu. Raspad patrijarhalnih vrijednosti pogoduje u pravilu prodoru bezobzirnosti, individualnosti i surovosti u obitelji (Stein Erlich, 1971: 271).

Do sada je bilo riječi o razlozima koji su doveli do ograničavanja poroda. Sada ćemo vidjeti kako je to izgledalo u životnoj praksi.

Grešnice ili mučenice

Djevojke u Slavoniji počinjale su se udavati oko petnaeste godine, a do dvadesete obično bi sve bile poudane. Stare su se djevojke na selu smatrale sramotom za kuću. Žena je za rađanje ponekad sposobna i do 50-te godine. U trideset godina bračnog života žene u Slavoniji rađale su dvoje ili troje djece, skoro nikad više od petero. Dakle još

uvijek ostaje 25 godina kad su mogle zanijeti, a nisu smjele roditi. Taj «lagodni⁶ život bez djece» kako se najčešće u tisku prikazivao život žena u kontekstu *bijele kuge*, uglavnom se sastojao od straha: straha od začeca, straha od pobačaja, straha od grijeha i straha od zakona.

Od žena se očekivalo da imaju manje djece, ali način kako će to izvesti bio je prepusten njima. Zato je vrlo licemjerno kad muški autori pišući o *bijeloj kugi* sa zgražanjem govore kako ni jedan muškarac tako nešto ne želi i da se sve to odvija bez njihovog znanja: «Za sve to ne znaje ljudi, to se radi izvan kuća kod 'drugi', a najžalosnije je, kad mater u tome kćere pomaže i savjet joj daje; ima i taki luda. Sve se to od ljudi taji, a ni jedan čovek nije lud, da bi reko žene: 'Čuješ, ako si zbabna, gledaj kog da dite ugnjavi.' To žene same po sebi radi. Koja želi kupiti taj 'koreček', plati pet forinti, pa ga ima, al si ipak ne more sama uradit: mora dat babe po dva forinta, da joj dite zagjavi. Tim gnjavanjem prođu djeca i po pet, šest mjeseci stara, nestane i', a majke i' zakopaje u podrum, u bašču ili baš na đubre (Lukić, 1921: 166).

U Monografiji o Otoku, i 20 godina kasnije izašloj Monografiji o Varošu (selu kraj Slavenskog Broda), o ženama koje su napravile pobačaj kao i «majstoricama, koje djecu gnjavu» govori su u poglavlju «o zločincima i rdavim ljudima», a njih se naziva *grišnicama*. Lovretić o njima kaže: „Grišnice se zovu žene koje ubijaju porod prije poroda. Žene vraćaju kako god znadu, da ne ponesu, gledu, da se liše tereta. Neke žene prave same sebi likove, da ne radaju... A i kupuju likove...Ako to sve ne asni, idu grišnicama“ (Lovretić, 1990: 292). Na drugom mjestu Lovretić pak objašnjava težinu počinjenog grijeha: «Ako žena stroši dite tako, da to učini za rana, dok se još ni ne zna prava zamita, to ni ne kažu, da je velik gri'. Po gotovo ne vele da je gri' ako štogod pije, da ni ne zanese, ili, ako joj koja grišnica pomogne, da nikad ne može zanit. Ako ubije dite, kad se već osića, to je velik gri. Ako se tare, pa stroši, to je sve velki gri, al gri jako običan, pa kad koja u tom umre, reknu: 'Bože moj, čine i druge, pa ostanu žive,... Ako je žena samo vraćala (provodila magijski postupak), pa zbilja ne rađa dice, ona se boji zarad svog vraćanja i sama misli da je gora grišnica, već da je dite prid porodom ubila (Lovretić, 1990: 498). Iznenađuje stav da se manjim grijehom smatra

⁶ Slijedeća priča vrlo potresno pokazuje kako je izgledao taj «lakomislen» i «bezbrizan» život: «Puno sam puta učinila sama, dva puta sam stradala, preležala u špitalu ni sama neznam koliko, potrošila iljadu dinara na špital i doktore, i jedva živu glavu izvukla. Posle sam išla doktoru, al je to, gospoja moja, skupo, 500 dinara! Rasula bi kuću da sam svaki put doktora tražila. S njim je najbolje, živa glava ostane i bez brige si, al otkud nam toliki novci? Čula sam da u drugom selu ima jedna dobra babica, koja «oće». Odem k njoj i platim 100 dinara. Opet je jeftinije već kod doktora. I dobro idem sad uvijek njoj, nisam se od nje nikad razboljevala. Jo, i to mi je skupo. Četiri puta na godinu idem k njoj i svaki put stotinarka. Bila sam dosad 22 puta, e, to vam je 22 stotine, a novaca u kući nema. I Pavo se ljuti, ne da novce, kaže: 'Milostiva ne može sama, treba joj babica, a kako druge rade same, pa šta im fali'. A on gad neće da me čuva. Bojim se umrit ću, pa da svoje dobro drugoj ostavim i da mi druga dite oprema i udaje. ..Teško je, gospoja, danas ženi na ovom svitu živit u većitoj brigi i straju, a drugačije ne more bit... Kaže se: lipo je ime mater. Jest, lipo je i gorko je. De vidi, da mojoj curi bude lipo, da bude ko i druge, i obučena, i opremita, da prema sebi nađe priliku, da se zemlja ne dili, da sinu jedinku ostane didovina, kako sam ja muke namučila i kake sam patnje propatila? E, vidiš, to ti je srce materino. Do njega nije, kako bi nam tek onda bilo. Ne bi muško trpilo, ne bi, ne bi se za svoju dicu patilo, al mater je mater. Mučenica!» (Sremac, 1940: 58-59).

sam pobačaj, nego magijsko djelovanje za postizanje neplodnosti. No i sam Lovretić daje objašnjenje; pobaciti jest grijeh, ali ljudski, a magija je uplitanje u nadnaravne stvari. Poznata je činjenica da se kršćanstvo već od samih početaka pokušavalo ograditi od pučkih magijskih praksi i vjerovanja pozivajući se na Bibliju koja na nekoliko mjesta kaže da čarobnice treba kazniti smrću. Stoljećima potican strah od vještica vjerojatno je utjecao na ovakav stav prema magijskoj praksi.

No žene ne pristaju na to da se o njima govori kao o *grišnicama*. Na pitanje što misli o tome da je ljudi zovu *grišnica*, koja nema materinskog osjećaja kad svoju djecu sama ubija, jedna je žena odgovorila: «Mogla sam i ja dvanajstero rodit, slipaca a ne dice. Jo, al ja sam čestita mater, reci im pa na svoju djecu mislim. Sebe sam trovala, bola, bušila, ciganke me dropile i gnjavile, da me samrtni znoj oblivaio, samo da ne narodim dice. A zašto? Za oto da živima bude lipo, na žive sam mislila, za nji sam se patila i svoje tilo mučila...» (Sremac, 1940: 55). Žene su odlučivale o broju potomstva, no da li se njihov odnos prema djeci može nazvati nemaran i lagodan za što ih se optuživalo.

«A zar ja ne bi volila da sam sve mogla roditi, pa da mi je jedan pop, a drugi advokat, a jedan sudac ili učitelj, a divojke da su mi lipe debele i vesele u lipom ruvu i lipom životu, pa pivaje i uživaje, a ne da za milostive u varoši šlingu šlingaje za pet dinara na dan. Nisam je žena nerazumna, koja će narodit dice, pa posle kako im bog da. Već sam ja prava mater» (Sremac, 1940: 55).

Između prvog i drugog svjetskog rata Jugoslavija je po broju poroda bila ispred svih europskih zemalja. Godine 1931. imala je na 1000 stanovnika 34, 6 poroda. U Savskoj banovini gdje je spadala i Slavonija taj je postotak iznosio 31, 9 promila poroda. Usprkos velikoj smrtnosti dojenčadi, najvišoj u Europi, prirodni prirast bio je golem. Od 1000 rođenih u prvoj je godini umiralo 159, a prirodni prirast iznosio je 15, 2. No ono što iznenađuje za Slavoniju je to, da je smrtnost dojenčadi viša nego u patrijarhalnim područjima i iznosila je 206 promila. Tendencija smanjivanja poroda uslijed ograničavanja i tendencija većeg broja žive djece uslijed pada smrtnosti, razvijale su se neovisno. Također je i smrtnost žena bila jako visoka: u Savskoj banovini je udio žena u dobi od 20-40 godina u ukupnom broju umrlih iznosio čak 20%, što se može dovesti u vezu s porodima i abortusima premda državna statistika nema pouzdanih podataka o pomoru žena u vezi s trudnoćom (Stein Erlich, 1940). No u «Liječničkim vijesnicima» možemo pročitati da kad za mladom ženom zvona zvone ljudi samo pitaju: Jel umrla od abortusa ili tuberkuloze? Sjećajući se vremena svoje mladosti, a to je bio početak 20. stoljeća jedna je žena rekla : «Sad je i nekud bolje izučile se, al' u moje vrime umirale mlade ko muve» (Sremac, 1940:59).

Tridesetih godina 20. stoljeća u Liječničkim vijesnicima često se raspravljalo o toj pojavi s različitim aspektata: gospodarskih, pravnih i sociološko-psiholoških. Kontekst je bitno promijenjen. Tridesete su godine vrijeme velike gospodarske krize koja najjače pogađa seljake i radnike. Cijene poljoprivrednih proizvoda iz godine u godinu padaju, a izgledi da se seljak, radnik ili nadničar zaposli u gradu, postaju sve beznadnije. Statistički podaci koji se odnose upravo na taj društveni sloj na osiječkom području

pokazuju kako se broj pobačaja povećavao od izbijanja krize 1928. godine, kada su na jedan porod otpadala otprilike 3 pobačaja, do 1935. godine, kada na 1 porod dolazi 6 pobačaja, što je gotovo isti omjer kao i u Njemačkoj prije dolaska Hitlera na vlast. Autor teksta čije podatke iznosim, bio je liječnik osječke bolnice u razdoblju između prvog i drugog svjetskog rata. Osvrćući se na život seljanki i radnica u tom razdoblju kaže da uz sve tegobe koje ga prate, imaju još jedan križ, a to je strah hoće li im se porodica povećati za još koje dijete, te da život mnogih seljanki i radnica i nije drugo nego tjeskobno iščekivanje svake menstruacije (Pražić, 1936:308).

Kazna za osobe koje se od zanata bave abortusima mogla je u to doba biti i doživotna, a žene koje su pokušale same napraviti abortus mogle su dobiti kaznu i do deset godina. Krivični zakon također je predviđao kaznu od jedne godine za liječnika koji propusti prijaviti ženu koja mu se javila zbog komplikacija uslijed nestručno izvedenog abortusa. Liječnici se žale na situaciju u kojoj će «krvareće i grozničave žene» umjesto pomoći i povjerenja koje očekuju od liječnika naići na policajca koji ih predaje u ruke zakona. Zalažući se za uvođenje pobačaja na osnovu socijalne indikacije spomenuti liječnik kaže: «Međutim duševni šok, i trauma, koja nastaje uslijed opetovanog i stalnog straha i iščekivanja izostanaka, odnosno neizostanaka svake menstruacije, neusporedivo je jači i intenzivniji od šoka i traume, što na seljanku i građanku učini sam pobačaj, kao zahvat» (Pražić, 1936: 308).

Također je karakterističan stav prema neplodnosti u Slavoniji. Premda se osuda i prezir prema neplodnoj ženi ne nalaze u neposrednoj vezi sa željom za velikim brojem djece, jer ograničavanje poroda ne znači da ne žele ni jedno dijete, u Slavoniji podaci iz 30-ih godina 20. stoljeća pokazuju da u područjima gdje se abortusi masovno obavljaju ljudi prema neplodnosti uglavnom imaju indiferentan ili pozitivan stav. Tipičan odgovor glasi «Žene ne traže lijeka neplodnosti, jer bi bile sretno kad bi sve bile takve» ili «Seljaci ne osuđuju neplodne žene. Ako obudove takve se žene brzo udaju, jer seljak treba ženu i radnu snagu – a pritom se ne treba bojati da će imati djece. Imanje će ostati na okupu» (Stein Erlich, 1971: 282).

Preventivne i abortivne tehnike

Istraživači često naglašavaju da u područjima gdje vlada patrijahalni način života nema ograničavanja poroda ni tamo gdje bi za seljake bilo poželjno imati manje djece. Kao razlog navodi se potpuno nepoznavanje preventivnih mjera ili pobačaja. No za Slavoniju u literaturi nailazimo na podatke kako su se ljudi pokušavali zaštititi od neželjene trudnoće i to različitim sredstvima, od racionalnih do magijskih. Žene su koristile list kupusa (kao intrauterini uložak), muškarci prezervative od svinjskog crijeva ili mjehura, a zabilježeno je da su u nekim krajevima žene svojim muževima šivale prezervative od platna. Za njih je upotreba i relativno najjeftinijih kondoma još uvijek preskupa (Pražić, 1936:308).

U liječničkoj literaturi također su navedeni najrazličitiji postupci za izazivanje pobačaja. Neke od tih metoda bile su pogubne ne samo za plod već i za samu ženu: kupke u vrućoj vodi, udaranje po trbuhu, masiranje trbuha valjkom za tijesto, skakanje s povišenih mjesta ili gutanje veće količine fosfornih glavica šibica. Bazala navodi uobičajene biljke koje su žene koje su željele pobaciti, pile u obliku uvaraka, naprimjer bršljanova ili lovorova lišća te plodova bunike ili peršina (Bazala, 1943:128). Korijenje sljeza, mrkve, peršina i pirike ostavljalo se u maternici jedan ili više dana, da izazove trudove. Čak i manji komadi sljezova korijena postizali su visoku prodajnu cijenu, osobito ako se njima već bilo obavilo uspješno pometnuće.

Pobačaji su se obavljali i mehaničkim sredstvima. Za to su služili šiljasti predmeti poput vretena, guščjeg pera, igle za pletenje, kačkalice ili ženskog metalnog katetera (Bazala, 1943:128).

U literaturi se navode i neki lijekovi koji su se mogli nabaviti u ljekarnama, a zlorabili su se za izazivanje pometnuća ploda, naprimjer klinčićevo ulje (korišteno u zubarstvu) i kinin (sredstvo za liječenje malarije). U ljekarnama su se nabavljali i irigatori koji su se koristili za pobačaj.

Često obavljanje pobačaja nužno je dovelo i do promjena u metodama. Tako Bazala piše: „Virtuoze, kojim se provodi ovakova operacija na pr. u Slavoniji, premašuje svako očekivanje. Tamo je tako daleko prešlo to u običaj, da mlada uz miraz dobije kovni ili stakleni kateter i bude od iskusnih snaša upućena u tehniku provociranja aborta, te to provada više puta u životu i to s uspjehom“ (Bazala, 1933:13). Pražić spominje kako ima sve manje žena koje pobačaje provociraju sljezovim korijenom, vretenom ili perom, te navodi primjer sela u okolici Osijeka iz kojeg su ranije redovito svake godine stizale u bolnicu mnoge žene sa sepsom zbog nestručno izvedenih pobačaja: „Tada su se žene složile, dale su si od jedne iskusne žene demonstrirati kako se provocira pobačaj s metalnim ženskim kateterom, sakupile su između sebe potreban novac i nabavile ga u apoteci. Onda taj kateter putuje od žene do žene u selu, već prema tome koja ga upotreba. Svaka ga prije upotrebe iskuha, ili ga zamoči u jaku rakiju i onda zapali. Te žene vrlo dobro znadu kontrolirati tok pobačaja i čim primjete da pobačaj ne napreduje normalnim tijekom, one same odmah dolaze u bolnicu“ (Pražić, 1936:308).

Zaključak

Slavonija je bila bogato područje, otvoreno za kolonizaciju, i kao takva pružala je nove mogućnosti obiteljima, a osobito ženama, budući da se patrijarhalni poredak već počeo raspadati (Supek, 1995/1996). Prelaskom s naturalne na robno novčanu privredu dolazi do promjena u svim životnim segmentima pa tako i u odnosu prema djeci. Žene su svojim radom u obitelji jednako doprinosile kućnom budžetu kao i muškarci, a uz to su raspolagale i vlastitim imetkom, pa su njihov stvarni status i moć u obitelji odstupali od klasičnog predstavljanja žene u dominantnoj ideologiji roda

što je izazivalo veliku kritiku javnosti. U promijenjenim uvjetima, kada je velik broj djece postao nepoželjan, žene su usvojile praksu abortusa s poraznim posljedicama na vlastito zdravlje. Majke su sada još ugroženije nego u doba patrijarhalnog poretka jer uz siromaštvo, neprosvijećenost i niske higijenske uvjete obavljaju masovne abortuse. Pobjeda racionalnog stava u pogledu poroda i djece donio je u tom vremenu određeni napredak u položaju žene, ali ne i napredak u smislu smanjivanja ljudskih patnji i unapređivanja ljudskih vrednota (Stein Erlih, 1971: 283).

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The White Plague

When you are in the country, my dear, and you hear the bells ring for a young woman, then ask: 'Was it tuberculosis?', and if they answer no, then you'll know she has miscarried.

(Sremac, 1940: 59).

The paper analyzes the phenomenon of the white plague in the area of Slavonia which was present from the middle of the 20th century to the beginning of the World War II. It was a time when the serfdom in Croatia ended and major changes occurred in the farming production, and with that also on the social and cultural plane. With the transition from the barter to the monetary economy changes occur in all segments of life including the attitude towards the children. In the changed circumstances, when a large number of children seemed undesirable, women adopted the practice of abortion with appalling consequences to their personal health. The paper presents all the judgments of values shown by the authors who wrote about this phenomenon and how during time the reasons for birth control changed according to the economical, social and ideological changes.

Keywords: birth control, white plague, depopulation, abortion, Slavonia

Introduction

The subject of this paper is the phenomena of the white plague, which was, in Croatia, most prominent in the area of Slavonia¹. *The white plague* is the term for the phenomenon of the drastic reduction in the number of newborns per family (to one or two), which is usually

¹ This paper was read at the Gesundheit und Hygiene II, Science conference, Schlaining, Austria, 2004.

characteristic for industrialized nations. The issue of the white plague has manifested itself in the period between the middle of the 19th century to the beginning of World War Two. It was the time in Croatia when serfdom was ended and when significant changes in the field of farming occurred, and because of these, changes in the sphere of culture and society. These turbulent changes spelt the end of the farming cooperatives and the patriarchal values that came from that way of life and subsistence. The growing influence of modernization and the urban values it brought is reflected in all segments of life. The organization of new families and their values are a significant focus of this research. We will see how the reasons for birth control changed according to the changes in the society and the economy. This research throws light on the white plague and its consequences in the lower strata of society, the peasant families and communities.

When the Turks left at the end of the 17th century, the process of colonization and planned development began in Slavonia. At the end of the 18th century the Austrians formed the Military Frontier, which made migrations from different source areas possible. The first official Austrian censuses and descriptions after the liberation from the Turkish realm show the aftermath of war. A great number of earlier villages disappeared or was abandoned, destroyed and burned. A greater part of arable land was unattended, and the houses were huts protected with mud. The native population returns from the refuges already in the 17th century. About the population itself there are censuses by names from the years 1698 and 1702. They name people of different confessions: Catholics, Orthodox, non-unionists and Greek catholic, by nationalities naming Croats, Hungarians, Rascians, Walachs and Germans. By their residence they are natives or immigrants, mainly from Bosnia (Sršan, 2000: 11). Owing to the birth rate and immigration, the demographic growth in Slavonia was significant².

The average family in the 18th century Slavonia was small, between 7 and 8 members, which is far fewer than we would expect in a cooperative. In 1869 the average number of inhabitants per house was 6, but in 1880 it was 5 (Gross Szabo, 1992: 36). In the civilian Slavonia, when we focus on the number of members and the affluence, the cooperatives reached their peak in the 19th century, just before they began to break up. Because of the legal environment the cooperatives were bigger and lasted longer.

In the 19th century, the exploitation of woods and the mining industry made a start in Slavonia, as well as the growing of wheat for the European market. In line with the new orientation in economy, money started to pour into the family purses in many ways. The new money was reflected in clothes embroidered with gold and silk, better houses and housing circumstances, richer nutrition and generally improved living conditions. The Slavonian family then faced a new problem: how to avoid the break-up of the family property by ways of marriage and dowry. In the time of turbulent

² Of the estimated 64 500 inhabitants in 1698 (Gelo i Krivošić acc. to Supek, 1995/1996: 261), up to 265 641 inhabitants in 1785, and 332 478 in 1847 (Kesslerl acc. to Supek, 1995/1996: 261).

economic and social upheavals, the survival of the cooperatives in the 19th century was, according to many researchers of the life in the cooperative, the result of the drive to keep and secure the family fortunes. But in Slavonia another strategy appears: having fewer children (Supek, 1995/1996: 262).

On the basis of the research of the contemporary families, taken between the two world wars in the territory of Yugoslavia, Vera Stein Erlich arrives to the conclusion that almost everything inhuman and cruel in the family relationships came with the advent of the monetary economy. (Stein Erlich, 1971: 459-460). The civilian and militarized Croatia and Slavonia, according to the censuses were areas where marriages occurred earlier in life. Before 1848 there were often marriages between 15 year old boys and 14 year old girls, but that was forbidden after the census in 1851 (Gross, Szabo, 1992: 5). Earlier marriages were common in rural areas at that time, and induced by the breakup of cooperatives, because the division of communal property was counted on. A family had better chances of acquiring a larger portion of the communal property if the sons were married. The statistics that covered the number of children per marriage in civilian Croatia and Slavonia for 1856 and 1857 shows 3,4 children par married couple, while the average for the Monarchy was 4.4 (Gross, Szabo, 1992: 27).

Some anthropologists are of the opinion that the phenomenon of the white plague in Slavonia can be explained by Slavonia's colonist outlook in the 18th century, which caused a rapid growth of population, and then when the limits of growth and wealth were reached, Slavonia saw a drastic limitation of population growth. While other regions of Croatia were areas with strong emigration, and the population was stabilized by men leaving their villages, the family in Slavonia was kept at bay thanks to an internal factor, i.e. by women controlling their procreation. (Supek, 1995/1996: 261).

The position of the women and children in the cooperative

The data on the deliberately induced miscarriages can be found in the responses to a poll administered by the Croatian-Slavonian economic society (Društvo gospodarsko hervatsko – slavonsko) among its members in 1850. Since 1848, when ban Jelačić ended serfdom by his decree, polemics were fought in public about the cooperatives as economic organizations, and the spirit of the cooperative as an ideology. Those kinds of discussions persisted into the 20th century. Most authors who wrote on the topic were of the opinion that the cause of all evil in the countryside was the collapse of cooperatives.

But there were different opinions as well. Declaring the life in cooperatives as very immoral end economically inefficient, Ivan Štefani, a member of the society, says, among other things, "But, as much as possible, they try with any power and means to prevent women from having numerous children, because if they become a widow burdened with children they will be unwanted, and since many chores are asked

from them, they neglect their children, and cannot find a husband for the same reason. So to prevent birth, they take all kinds of bogus 'medicaments', and perform other 'procedures' just to get their children out of the womb, and often die in birth" (according to Rihtman-Auguštin, 1984: 39).

It is not clear from this description if the women decide on abortion³ by themselves or is it forced upon them by the community, but it is obvious from the quote that abortion is a common course of action, and a very dangerous procedure, as many fatalities show. Josip Lovretić deals with the difficult situation of the widow in a cooperative family 50 years later in his monography on the folk life and customs in Otok (a village near Vinkovci). Lovretić was a priest, born in Otok in 1865. In the chapter that deals with the relations in the family, he writes: "A woman who has many children, doesn't get a bigger share than the one who has none. A widow with seven children gets 25 forints, and a woman with no children, gets 50 forints if she's with her man. How will the one with seven kids clothe her seven children, if she has to tarry and work at home like other woman, and by the time she bathes and washes their faces, and washes and repairs their clothes, the day has passed" (Lovretić, 1990: 258).

In the ethnological and anthropological literature that deals with the issues of cooperatives, it is always pointed out that in a patriarchal society a woman is evaluated on the basis of her productive and reproductive abilities and that restricting birth is contrary to the ideology of a cooperative. Children are the treasure of a cooperative. If a widow wished to remarry or return to her parents the cooperative rarely cedes children to her because they were "acquired" within the cooperative. The social security of the children, the elderly, the disabled and those unable to work was guaranteed in a cooperative. Although people still lived in the cooperatives in the 19th century Slavonia, the following quote goes against the usual assumptions on the desirability of a greater number of children. The author points out that before there were lots of kids in the houses, but today: "There are mothers who tell their son: 'while I'm among the living, you'll not marry her. I have nothing against her, but she came out of a pack, and will give you one'" (Lovretić, 1990: 256). From the published data we can see that the foundations of the cooperative patriarchal life in Slavonia were shaken even before the end of serfdom and that the cooperative system didn't deliver the security that was normally expected of it.

About the almost inhumane conditions we find out again from Lovretić's descriptions. When we take into consideration that he was a priest it is surprising how openly he was describing the female side of life in the cooperative, especially pregnancy, birth and abortion. Although Lovretić often mentions female solidarity in the coop-

³ The medical historians who dealt with the issue of abortion, think that the practice of performing abortions in the area of Croatia spread during the Turkish conquests. There was a law in the sultan's palace that all women except the sultan's first wife had to abort their child or kill it immediately after abortion. The abortions were performed by a special order of midwives which were called kanli-hebe (bloody midwives). It seems that the custom spread to other harems and into the lower strata of society (Bazala, 1933: 12-13).

erative it seems it doesn't apply to pregnant women and mothers with small children. Female solidarity comes into play when abortion is performed, which we will get to later in the paper. The author too realizes the difficult position of the pregnant women. They perform all chores just as everyone else. "People don't care about a pregnant woman, they mock her, they don't help her but they bother her. A woman, when she gives birth, gives birth in a room, where the rest of the family lives. She is in pain, and the pitiless people won't get out of the room, and while she is suffering, they mock her and say ugly things. And every one of them is cursed not to conceive again. When a woman has a child, and then gets out of bed, she is made to work. A woman with five kids, head to ear high next to each other...When the kids rise out of bed, she quickly clothes, washes, combs and feeds them, leaves them to someone, and puts the cradle on her head and carries the youngest one in the field. Early in the morning she's already tired. She comes to the field last. Those who came before her sit in the shade and rest. They won't start working until everyone has gathered. ... Then she sees how others live like girls, and she lives like a slave, so she says to herself: 'What use having kids; I've had enough of that burden and not being spared by anyone'. You often hear in the village: 'I'd rather be covered with earth than bear another'" (Lovretić, 1990: 257-258).

Why did such an attitude towards a woman with a larger number of children develop? From the descriptions we get the picture that people in a way condemn a pregnant woman and wish her to suffer for having a baby. There is no one who would offer her moral support, let alone physical help. From that we deduce that the reason for limiting births is the difficult position of women and children in the family. Rage and resistance against the current situation can be felt, and so too the wish to change it even if it means to pay the price with one's own life. But women had it hard before, and yet we don't find data indicating that birth control was a common occurrence.

In the sources from the 18th century abortions are not yet mentioned. A. M. Reljković who in 1762 wrote a critical review of the circumstances in Slavonia under the title "Satyr or the wild man" mentions many negative customs, from *kola* to *mobe*, but he never mentions abortion, i.e. "the white plague". He says though that woman cast spells ('perform magic') to postpone their first birth in order to remain "young and beautiful" (Reljković, 1916: 111).

Lovretić also states that the female quest for beauty and youth is responsible for the white plague: "Women want to be young and beautiful, so they think that the beauty and youth will last if they don't give birth. They stay in bed every now and then, two or three times a year, and think that they are still young and beautiful. Women want to dance and be merry when they're young. And if one has children she can't move..." (Lovretić, 1990: 258). Further down I will reflect on the "easy and carefree" life of women with a small number of children.

The data for Slavonia at the end of the 19th century witness about a widely used custom of performing abortions known as the white plague. In the press of that age we read that the white plague is to blame for some areas in Slavonia being deserted. This

phenomenon points to an unusual authority of a woman on decisions about progeny which is in turn connected with her role in the family's subsistence. But the patriarchal characteristics are still present. Often it is the mother-in-law who determined how many kids her young daughter-in-law could have (Sremac, 1940: 50; Supek, 1995/1996).

The changes in the social-economic relations in the cooperative

Dowry

Usually dowry is listed as the most significant factor of women's non involvement in the cooperative economy. In the 19th century Slavonia, even before the end of serfdom in 1848 dowry or *osobac* is mentioned as the woman's individual property within the cooperative. It was written about as a new fact. It consisted of land, cattle and money. In the earlier archives it is not even mentioned that a woman in cooperatives or peasant families in general brings dowry into a marriage. It was an aristocratic or urban custom. What a bride brought was a few textile products which showed her qualities as a future housekeeper and sometimes some furniture, which would be called *djevojačka sprema* or *ruho* (robe). When the monetary economy permeated into the countryside, besides her productive and reproductive abilities the size of her dowry rises in significance. In this way, within a patrilinear household where property was transferred from the father to the son, there existed a parallel line of inheritance from the mother (or both parents) to the daughter. Dowry thus created economical differences among the nuclear families within the cooperative, thus contributing to its dissolution (Supek: 1995/1996).

Most authors who idealized the cooperatives claim that the dowry or *osobac* was the guiltiest culprit for the ending of the cooperative life. But the ethnographical archives from the 19th and the 20th century provide information in abundance which shows that the individual property was always in a defined relationship with the communal. That property was not out of reach of the community control. Individual property began to undermine the cooperative only when the forces which controlled the collective behavior disappeared and when the economic relationships with the society in general, which connected the individual and the communal economic interest, were broken (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1984: 166).

When they were serfs, the peasants couldn't give away the land as dory, because they didn't own it. When the cooperatives began to dissolve, the communal property was shared among the individual owners, and all the children had equal claim to it. The regions of Croatia which got drawn into the global economic relations later, showed a significant resistance to the issue of dowry even after the appropriate laws

were introduced. In contrast to the dinaric regions where sisters relinquished their inheritance in favor of their brothers, in Slavonia daughters usually inherited fully towards their dowry. The reasons for that being so and in accordance with the law was probably the long existence of the Austrian law on inheritance and the fact that the monetary economy developed early in Slavonia, so the legal position of the woman was much more favorable than in other parts of Croatia (Stein Erlich, 1971: 192). Although dowry became the rule, its meaning and character changed depending on the changes in the type of the family and the wider social context. The cooperative law didn't entitle the girl to land, but the new times brought gold coins to her. The greatest number of them were acquired between the need of the 19th century and the beginning of WWI. The dowry in Slavonia first appeared in the form of gold coins, as the song goes:

*Now gold coins and silk are the fashion
And even if the girl is half-blind
Take Mary dear son
She'll bring in the gold*

(Sremac, 1940: 16)

The golden coin was considered a valuable not to be spent because gold, depending on the situation could always be sold or purchased. Lovretić points to this phenomenon too: "A woman without children changes the money she receives in a household into golden coins, so her neck and chest glisten in gold, and the other one has to get clothes and shoes for her children, so it's hard. She is then called the poor one, and the first rich" (Lovretić, 1990: 258). From this we can assume that the children were no longer a fortune for the cooperative, but the opposite.

A way of getting hold of some gold coins was also theft of the communal property of the cooperatives. The data from the monography on Otok show that agricultural and other surpluses were stolen, those being left after the existential needs were covered for. Those surpluses were stolen by women and converted into money, usually the gold coins. Coins acquired this way were added to the *osobac* which was, as already mentioned, inherited in the female line, from the mother to her daughter. Therefore every mother with property strives to limit the number of children so that her daughter would have a better match.

The significance of dowry especially increases with the rise of the land value, or the conversion of land to goods that can be freely bought and sold, and the introduction of the more intensive agricultural techniques. After World War One the conjuncture of agricultural produce the gold coins are beginning to be considered as unused capital, and *tal* comes to front, the land the girl inherited from or was given by her parents.

*The gold coins are no longer in fashion
But land that fertile is
No coinage marries a girl,
But acres and quarters.*

(Sremac, 1941:25)

Immediately after the dissolution of the cooperatives the need for hands in the peasant lands was very great. As it was already mentioned in the introductory part there were cases when sons got married just for the reasons of seeking division of property and becoming independent. After repeated dismemberments, a great number of farms was reduced to small sizes and the need for workforce no longer existed. Now every single individual that had to be fed became a burden. A young peasant couldn't bring a girl who had no dowry into his family home, nor become independent without the dowry.

A girl whose mother had *tal* was in a privileged position. As a man wishes for a son who would inherit him, the woman with *tal* wanted a daughter who would inherit her *tal*, because otherwise it would be left to her daughter-in-law, which would mean another bloodline. It is also often mentioned that when a woman has a daughter first, she is tempted to fulfill the great wish of every girl - to remain the only daughter, the one with *tal*.

When dowry or *osobac* in the form of land became common, many ways to use it became available. A woman had the right to use the produce from it and she often sold those to buy gold coins, silk, and plush improving her chances for a good match. If a husband would object the use of money to purchase clothes for a girl, the wife would respond: "I spent my own, not of the household" (Sremac, 1940: 31).

Clothes as the evidence of the social and economic status had special significance in Slavonia. The girls' garments were mentioned in the press as the main cause of the white plague, because a mother who had one or two girls didn't want to have any more children because she feared that she couldn't provide them with everything that was expected at that time.⁴ The *gizda* or fashion was at the time considered to be one of the greatest social vices that affected the peasantry, so many articles denouncing it and the erosion of the moral, economic and legal foundations of the peasant communities it wrought, can be found in the contemporary press. The women who followed the fashion were usually pictured as persons with weak morals, who owing to their laziness and easy life neglect the "natural" woman's duties and responsibilities. As a way out of the crisis into which the economy fell between the two World Wars, some members of the then active Peasants concord suggested a return to the production of homemade textiles and manufacture of clothes, which would cover the needs of the countryside.

Women really started weaving and embroidering, but this time not only for themselves, but also for the needs of the town. Many women specialized for textile manu-

⁴ To show how much a girl's robe cost the house, we can use the following example: A family of four members. 27 acres of land. To 'freshen' a 14 year old girl, an only child, 7000 dinars were used, without counting the gold coins. In the same house 30 kilos of sugar were spent, 80 kilos of salt, 42 liters of petroleum and clothes for the other three members: all in all 800 dinars. (Sremac, 1940: 12).. A girl in Slavonia began to 'freshen' in the 12th or 13th year and she gets new items several times in a year until she's married (on Easter Friday, Palm Sunday, Easter, Corpus Christi Day, Assumption Day, Nativity of the Virgin Mary Day and Christmas) and except her special robes she gets an ordinary and a work one (Sremac, 1941: 10-15)

facture and sold their products on the city's markets and fairs and thus saved their families during the agrarian crisis (Sremac, 1940). The changed living conditions during the 20th century made it possible for peasant women to get involved into the global economy, owing particularly to the traditional woman's chores (Supek, 1995/1996: 260). Women contributed to their family budget with their work in the home as much as men, and besides they had control over their own property, so their actual status and power within the family were not the ones typically expected in the dominant gender ideology. The more power and influence the women had the more they erode the imagined order of things, so the community reacts with strong criticism (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1984: 172). Most of the accusations against women amounts to them ruining the cooperative by their fighting and theft, becoming immoral and promiscuous, leaning to a ladylike life, and destroying the old culture, for their leisure they don't want to have children and by this they directly endanger the nation.

Anthropologists warn that the fact that daughters get part of their inheritance is not as favorable for the woman as it seems, because it indicates her lower value and desirability (Stein Erlich, 1971: 197), which is corroborated by these verses:

*Even if a girl is pretty and true
She's doomed if she has no land.*

(Sremac, 1941: 27)

The traditional idea of a bride in the age of cooperatives was that she should, besides being capable of working and obedient, also to be a virgin. With the introduction of dowry it seems that the control of women relaxed. If a girl had *tal* no one asks about her premarital sex life. In the time of the barter economy, a woman has low position in the hierarchy, but in reality she is valuable and sought for, she is being paid for. The new times made it more difficult to get married, brought demands of dowry and the majority of women. Suddenly it was the groom who set the terms. The ones with dowry or *tal* became privileged brides, while other girls had to make do with "those beneath themselves". The girls with large *tals* very rarely married in their own village because there rarely was a suitable match for them there. Rich girls with *tal* married gentlemen. To the question why she wanted a gentleman to be her son-in-law one woman responded: "Because it is nice to be a lady. Oh, when I think of my Fema being a lady, my heart quivers with joy. To act posh and not to work. We tried hard, me and Mata, we deprived ourselves, I aborted so many children, just so that my Fema remains an only child, to be with *tal* and to marry a gentleman. Oh, so nice that gentry life is" (Sremac, 1940: 33). The wish for a make an easier life possible for their children strengthens the tendency to limit birth. The urban values become dominant, and individuals were valued by how much they can invest to urbanize the life of their children, so such behavior didn't provoke critique but was taken as the normal way of things.

With the transition from a barter to the monetary economy the attitude of peasants towards the large number of children changed totally. The fear of a larger number of children overcomes all moral and technical obstacles that stand in the way of limiting

birth. The religious and clerical influence on birth control weakens at a time when the patriarchal system weakens, and the family relationships adapt to the demands of the economy. The practice of abortion shows it is not a transitory phenomenon, but that in the areas where it spread it doesn't disappear, and its intensity depends on the context. The disappearance of patriarchal values usually works in favor of the spreading of ruthlessness, individuality and cruelty in the family (Stein Erlich, 1971: 271).

Up to this moment the reasons for birth control were discussed. Now let's see what it looked like in everyday life.

Sinners or martyrs

The girls of Slavonia began married life around the age of 15, and by the time they reached 20 usually they were all married. Old maids were considered a disgrace for a house in the countryside. A woman was capable of having children even to the age of 50. In the thirty years of married life women in Slavonia had two or three children, almost never more than five. So there were 25 years when they could have become pregnant, but not bear a child. This "easy life without children"⁵ as it was often portrayed in the press consisted for the most part of fear: fear of conception, fear of miscarriage, fear of sin and fear of the law.

Women were expected to have fewer children, but the way to accomplish that goal was left for them to find out. Therefore it is very hypocritical of male authors to write about the white plague as if allegedly no man wants it and that everything takes place without them knowing it. "The men don't know anything about that, it is done in 'others homes', and the saddest thing is sometimes mothers help and advise daughters about that; they are such fools. Everything is kept secret from the man, and no man is that foolish to say to women: 'Listen, if you're with child, find someone to get

⁵ The following story shows in a moving way what this 'easy' and 'careless' life looked like. I've done it myself many times, got very sick two times, laid in hospital so many nights I can't count them, spent thousands of dinars on doctors and others, and barely got out of it all alive. I went to a doctor later, but that's expensive, my lady. 500 dinars. I would have bankrupted our household if I asked for that every time. It's best that way, you stay alive, but where will we find the money? I heard that there was a good midwife in the other village, who 'does it'. I go to her and pay 100. It is still cheaper than a doctor. So now I always go to her, and I've never got sick. Oh, but that's expensive too. I go there four times a year and every time a hundred. I've been there 22 times so far, and that's 22 hundreds, and we don't have much money. And my Pavo is angry, he doesn't give the money, says 'Her grace can't do it herself, needs a midwife, and how those others do it themselves, and what happened to them?' And he, bastard, won't spare me. I'm afraid, I'll die, and leave all that's good and mine to someone else and she will prepare my child for marriage. It is hard to live in this world in constant fear and worry, but it seems there's no other way. ..They say mother is a nice name. Yes, it's nice and bitter. Look here, for my daughter to have it good, to be like others, well dressed and endowed, to find a good match, for the land not to be divided, to leave the inheritance to our only son, what torments did I live through and pains I suffered? See, that's a mother's heart. If it weren't for it, what would it all be like.. No, a man wouldn't suffer, he wouldn't, wouldn't suffer for his kids, but a mother is a mother. A martyr. (Sremac, 1940: 58-59).

rid of it'. Women do it by themselves. When one wishes to buy that 'root', she pays five forints, so she has it then, but she can't do it herself: she pays two forints more to an old woman to get rid of the child. Five or six months old babies perish this way, they disappear, and mothers bury them in the basement, garden or the dump" (Lukić, 1921: 166).

In the Monography about Otok, and the 20 years more recent Monography about Varoš, women that had abortions and the "experts for snuffing children" are written about in the chapter named "On criminals and bad people", and are called "sinners". Lovretić writes about them as follows: "Women who kill their unborn are called sinners. The women cast spells any way they know, in order not to conceive, looking for ways to rid themselves of the burden. Some women make medications to prevent pregnancy, some buy them, and if all that doesn't succeed, they go to the sinners. (Lovretić, 1990: 292). At another point Lovretić explains the graveness of the sin committed: "If a woman snuffs a fetus early, while its still unformed, they don't say it's a grave sin. They don't mind especially if she takes something to prevent conception, or if some sinner helps her to prevent conception forever. But if she kills a baby when it's already showing, then it's a grave sin. If she punches herself, and miscarries, it is all a grave sin, but common, so if one of them dies, they say: 'My god, others do that and stay alive'. And if a woman just cast spells (perform magic), and really has no more children, she thinks she's an even greater sinner because of the spells than if she killed a child "(Lovretić, 1990: 498). It is surprising that abortion is considered a smaller sin than casting spells to achieve infertility. But Lovretić himself provides the explanation; to abort is human, but magic means involving into the supernatural. It is a known fact that Christianity from its very beginnings tried to separate itself from folk magic and beliefs by invoking the Bible which in several places states that witches should be punished by death. The fear of witches rekindled through centuries probably contributed to such attitude towards the practice of magic.

But women don't accept being called sinners. To a question what she thought about being called a sinner with no maternal feelings because she kills her babies, a woman responded: "I could have had twelve, blind beings, not children. Oh, but I'm a true mother, tell them I'm thinking of my children. I've poisoned, poked, jabbed myself, was handled by gipsy women, so much I broke in agonizing sweat, all that just to prevent myself from having kids. And why? So that those living have it good, I was thinking of the living, for them I suffered and tortured my body" (Sremac, 1940: 55). Women decided on the number of their children, but can their attitude towards children be called negligent or self-serving, as they were accused?

"Wouldn't I like to have had them all, and one of them to be a priest, another a lawyer, the third judge or a teacher, and my girls to be nice and fat and cheerful in beautiful robes and good life, singing and enjoying themselves, and not to sow garments for town ladies for five dinars a day. I'm not a silly woman, who will bear a bunch of kids, and then just watch what becomes of them. Instead I'm a real mother" (Sremac, 1940: 55).

Between the two world wars Yugoslavia was ahead of all other European countries in the number of births. In 1931 it had 34.6 births per 1000 inhabitants. In the Sava *banovina* this amounted to 31.9 per 1000. And regardless of the high infant mortality, the highest in Europe, the population growth rate was high. Out of 1000 newborns 159 died in their first year, and the growth rate was 15.2 per 1000. What is surprising is that the infant mortality was higher than in patriarchal areas, and it was 206 per 1000. The tendency of limiting births and the tendency of the increase in the number of newborns developed independently. The mortality of women was also high, in the Sava *banovina* young women between 20 and 40 years of age made up 20% of the number of deaths, which can be related to births and abortions although the state statistics has no reliable information regarding the deaths of women related to pregnancy (Stein Erlich, 1940). But in the Medical gazette we can read that if bells ring for a young woman the people just ask if she died of abortion or tuberculosis. Remembering her youth, which was the beginning of the 20th century, a woman said: "Now it's better, they learned the way, but in my time they died young, like flies" (Sremac, 1940:59).

In the thirties this was discussed in the medical journals from many standpoints: economic, legal and socio-psychological. The context was changed profoundly. The thirties are the years of the great economic crisis that hit the workers and peasants most. The prices of the agricultural products fell year after year, while the chances for a peasant, a worker or a hand to get employment in the town became increasingly hopeless. The statistical data that refer to this social strata in the Osijek area show that the number of abortions increased between 1928, when there were 3 miscarriages for every birth, to 6 miscarriages for every birth in 1935, which is almost the same ratio as in Germany before Hitler's rise to power. The author of the text this data is from was a physician in the Osijek hospital between the two world wars. Looking at the life of peasant women and workers in that age he said that, with all the inherent difficulties they had to fear if their family would increase by one more member, and that the life of many peasant women and workers was nothing but anxious expectation of every period (Pražić, 1936:308).

The punishment for the persons who performed abortions as if it was their trade could have been life in prison at that time, and women who tried to perform abortions by themselves could get sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. The penal code also stipulated one year in prison for those physicians who failed to report a woman who showed due to complications caused by a botched abortion. The physicians complained about the position they were put in where the "bleeding and septic women would find a policeman turning them into the hands of the law instead of a helping hand and trustworthiness they expect from a physician. Advocating the introduction of abortion when indicated by the social circumstances one physician said: "The social stress caused by the constant and repetitive fear of the occurrence or a missing period, is much stronger and more intensive than the shock and trauma caused by an abortion as a procedure" (Pražić, 1936: 308).

The attitude towards infertility is also characteristic for Slavonia. Although the judging and the scorn towards an infertile woman were not closely related to the wish to have a greater number of children, because limiting births didn't mean wishing to have no children at all, and in Slavonia the data from the thirties of the 20th century show that in areas where abortions were performed on a massive scale people had an indifferent or positive attitude towards infertility. A typical response would be: "Women don't seek a cure for infertility because they would be happy if they were all infertile" or "Farmers don't condemn infertile women. If they become widows such women remarry quickly, because a farmer needs a wife and a hand – and he doesn't have to worry about more children. The property will remain whole" (Stein Erlich, 1971: 282).

Preventive and abortive techniques

Researchers often point to the fact that in areas where the patriarchal way of life prevailed there was no birth control even if it was beneficial to the peasants to have fewer children. As a reason for this, the lack of awareness about preventive measures and abortions was cited. But for Slavonia we have data that shows how people attempted to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies by various means, from those rational to those magical. Women used cabbage leaves (as intrauterine membranes) men used preservatives made from pig's gut and bladder, and it was noted that in some areas women sewed preservatives made of cloth for their husbands. For them even the relatively cheapest preservatives were too expensive (Pražić, 1936:308).

In medical literature we can find mentions of many ways to induce miscarriage. Some of these methods were dangerous not only for the fetus but the mother herself: hot water baths, punching the belly, massages of the belly with a roller, jumping from elevated points or ingesting a greater number of phosphorus matchsticks tops. Bazala cites the common herbs that woman who wanted to abort drank as herb tea, for instance ivy or laurel leaves or the fruit from henbane or parsley (Bazala, 1943:128). The roots of marshmallow, carrot, parsley or couch were put into the uterus for several days to induce labors. Even smaller pieces of marshmallow root reached high prices, especially if already used for a successful miscarriage.

Abortions were also performed by mechanical means. For this pointed objects like a spindle, a goose feather, a knitting needle, a crochet-hooks or a metal female catheter were used (Bazala, 1943:128).

Some medicaments that could have been bought in pharmacies are also mentioned in the literature, which were misused for abortions, for instance clove oil (used in dentistry) or quinine (used to cure malaria). Irrigators, used for abortions, were also acquired in pharmacies.

The frequent abortions necessarily brought a change in methods. Bazala thus writes: “The skill, with which this kind of operation is performed in Slavonia surpasses what one would expect. It has so much become a tradition, that a bride gets a metal or glass catheter as part of the dowry, and gets instructions from more experienced married women how to induce abortion, which she does several times in her life, and with success.” (Bazala, 1933:13). Pražić mentions that there are fewer and fewer women who induce abortions by marshmallow root, spindle or feather, and cites examples from villages around Osijek from which women regularly arrived to Osijek with sepsis caused by botched abortions. “Then women came together, they asked an experienced woman to demonstrate how to perform an abortion with a metal female catheter, they gathered the money among themselves and bought it in a pharmacy. Since then this catheter moves from one to the other women in the village, as need arises. Each one boils it, or puts it in strong brandy and then burns it. These women know very well how to control the course of abortion and if they see it’s not proceeding normally, they come to a hospital by themselves”(Pražić, 1936:308).

Conclusion

Slavonia was a rich area, open to colonization, and as such it gave new opportunities to families, especially women, since the patriarchal system began to unravel (Supek, 1995/1996). With the transition from the barter to monetary economy changes occur in all areas including the attitude towards children. Women contributed to their family budget with their work in the home as much as men, and besides they had control over their own property, so their actual status and power within the family were not the ones typically expected in the dominant gender ideology what caused great public criticism. In the changed conditions, when a greater number of children became disadvantageous, women adopted the practice of abortion with devastating consequences to their own health. Mothers were now even more put at risk than in the time of the patriarchal hierarchy because in addition to the poverty, lack of education and low hygiene, they now performed abortions en masse. The victory of the rational attitude towards birth and children brought some progress in that time for the position of women, but no progress in the field of alleviating human suffering and the advancement of human values (Stein Erlich, 1971: 283).

Translated by Tomislav Redep