

Marriage structure in Bohemia after Thirty Years' War

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Introduction

Within Czech historiography the Thirty Years' War is seen as an economic, social and political dividing line. The war had had a terrible effect on Bohemia. It was the country in which the war started in 1618 and to which troops returned periodically in the following decades. The new structure of mercenary armies affected the ordinary population more than ever before. The average measure of destruction for the whole century is estimated about a third of all properties to be destroyed or abandoned, with population losses estimated between ten and forty percent of the pre-war population. Epidemics and malnutrition occurred frequently in the Bohemian territories during this period. Plague epidemics are recorded for the years 1624, 1625, 1632 and 1633. The re-catholicization policy was the reason for emigration of many Protestants.

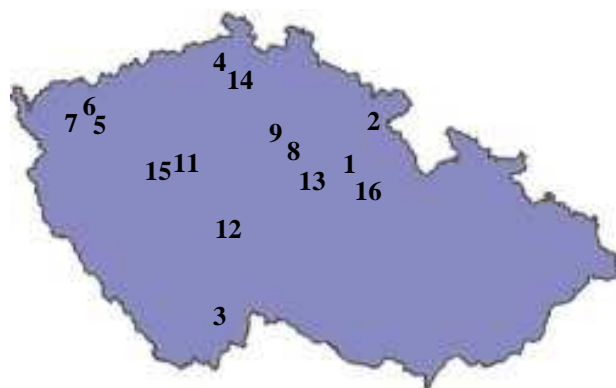
Data

The most important source of information on the structure of the population is represented by a census-like listing, the so-called List of Serfs according to Faith (Soupis poddaných podle víry) of 1651. It contains information on individuals, such as name, marital status, position in household, age, confession and, in some cases, origin. This population listing was part of the Counter-Reformation activities after the Thirty Years' War. As a survey concerned with religious attitudes among the Bohemian population in 1651 the document was specific in one aspect. In many regions, it did not register the total present population but only the inhabitants who had already received the first communion i.e. little children up to the age twelve years were excluded. Another problem concerning the data is caused by the partial rounding of peoples' age.

Marriage structure

Many studies have used the 1651 population listing as a source for the study of marriage structure. Samples from different regions of the Bohemian country have been analysed and these results tend to support the preliminary analysis of the current project.

Picture 1: Map of selected areas



1 – Choceň, 2 – Náchod area, 3 – Třeboň, 4 – Děčín,
5 – Locket, 6 – Nejdek, 7 – Sokolov, 8 – Kolín,
9 – Poděbrady, 10 – Písečnice, 11 – Točnick,
12 – Tábor, 13 – Žleby, 14 – Benešov n.P.,
15 – Žebrák, 16 – Chrudim area

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Tables 1 and 2 show a clear distinction between towns and villages and between men and women according five-year groups. Towns in our study ranged in size from a few hundred to eight thousands inhabitants. The proportion married is significantly lower in towns than in villages. Presented data clearly indicate that there was no systematic regional variation with respect to proportion married. The Točnick and Třeboň domains stand out, but even for men. Inhabitants of Bohemia around 1651 seemed to tend to early marriages. A proportion of 70 to 92 percent married women in countryside, 50 to 87 percent married women in towns, 50 to 92 percent married men in countryside and 50 to 80 percent married men in towns is very unusual for any other part of central Europe. For instance, rural Alpine regions showed quite a different picture during the second half of the seventeenth century (table 3).

Table 1: The proportion married in five-year age groups in selected areas - women

Domain		Age							
		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50+
Rural area	Choceň	24.5	62.0	81.3	65.3	76.5	65.2	65.0	37.9
	Náchod area	15.3	73.1	89.6	85.4	87.7	78.5	80.0	66.8
	Třeboň	12.3	56.2	76.1	79.2	85.8	78.1	79.3	67.0
	Děčín	17.3	60.5	80.4	76.3	76.9	62.8	54.0	40.8
	Loket	14.1	54.7	92.1	82.9	80.0	54.2	64.3	44.4
	Nejdek	13.6	56.5	84.0	82.0	87.0	71.9	81.8	57.1
	Sokolov	4.5	37.4	69.6	77.0	86.5	71.0	91.7	47.4
	Kolín	31.4	69.7	81.8	82.5	100.0	86.5	100.0	52.4
	Poděbrady	22.5	78.9	91.7	80.0	65.0	91.4	45.5	50.9
	Písečnice	30.0	68.4	72.4	77.3	76.9	55.0	25.0	50.0
	Točnick	10.0	52.9	89.3	86.7	84.6	82.9	62.5	53.5
	Tábor	3.3	57.1	83.3	87.0	82.3	70.0	25.0	10.0
	Žleby	33.3	82.7		91.2		81.3		53.6
Towns	Choceň	10.3	51.6	78.1	72.7	71.4	45.5	93.3	42.9
	Náchod	11.9	61.9	87.0	82.8	82.9	77.0	76.3	56.4
	Třeboň	3.9	24.5	69.0	63.8	68.2	61.8	50.0	32.2
	Benešov n. P.	7.2	46.7	66.7	80.0	91.7	60.0	50.0	37.5
	Poděbrady	15.4	40.0	68.4	71.9	75.0	63.6	42.9	40.9
	Žebrák	5.6	81.8	75.0	76.9	50.8	56.2	16.7	45.8
	Loket	2.8	24.3	60.0	71.9	73.3	72.7	76.2	44.1
	Sokolov	3.0	17.3	62.1	67.6	78.8	70.0	72.8	44.6
	Tábor	6.2	39.4	66.7	63.2	61.1	61.1	44.5	30.3
	Žleby	.	57.1		69.2		53.3		25.4
	Beroun	3.8	67.7	52.9	86.6	84.6	73.1	72.0	44.2
Places beyond Czech territory	Beograd (1733/4)	77.0	92.0	95.0	87.0	73.0	81.0	60.0	15.7
	Ealing (1599)	0.0	15.0	43.0	64.0	64.0	62.0	38.0	70.3
	Longuenesse (1778)	0.0	0.0	18.0	29.0	64.0	85.0	100.0	49.0

Source: List of Serfs according to Faith

Table 2: The proportion married in five-year age groups in selected areas - men

Domain		Age							
		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50+
Rural area	Choceň	8.6	39.3	80.6	87.9	93.5	93.2	91.3	72.3
	Náchod - area	0.7	37.7	82.9	91.8	93.9	92.1	96.4	89.8
	Třeboň	0.8	23.7	59.4	81.0	82.3	86.6	83.2	85.6
	Děčín	2.5	33.9	70.0	91.2	96.9	92.4	96.0	85.7
	Loket	–	27.5	87.2	93.3	91.7	90.5	94.1	87.1
	Nejdek	8.3	35.3	82.9	94.7	97.1	95.8	100.0	90.0
	Sokolov	–	19.8	61.0	82.5	93.9	93.2	89.7	81.3
	Kolín	0.0	34.6	85.7	80.0	.	.	.	.
	Poděbrady	4.5	37.5	81.5	85.6	.	.	.	.
	Písečnice	5.2	61.8	91.2	92.7	.	.	.	.
	Točnick	2.9	21.9	33.3	47.1	.	.	.	.
	Tábor	–	–	50.0	85.7	92.3	84.2	100.0	79.9
	Žleby	–	66.6		100.0		100.0		97.4
Town	Choceň	0.0	30.8	57.7	68.0	85.7	88.2	88.2	75.0
	Náchodsko	1.0	33.8	81.0	91.3	95.5	92.8	93.5	92.4
	Třeboň	–	5.6	31.6	67.1	75.0	75.3	79.4	79.2
	Benešov n. P.	0.0	33.3	77.8	100.0	85.7	100.0	100.0	88.9
	Poděbrady	0.0	27.3	53.2	79.3	.	.	.	.
	Žebrák	0.0	28.6	62.5	54.5	.	.	.	.
	Loket	–	8.7	72.2	100.0	93.3	95.2	100.0	89.1
	Sokolov	–	12.5	73.7	82.3	92.0	95.7	90.5	79.7
	Tábor	–	20.9	53.8	79.1	84.6	84.4	82.1	96.8
	Žleby	–	33.3		70.8		84.6		87.5
	Beroun	–	28.6	36.4	76.2	89.5	90.9	95.0	87.5
Places beyond Czech territory	Beograd (1733/4)	0.0	33.0	68.0	85.0	83.0	93.0	93.0	81.0
	Ealing (1599)	0.0	0.0	23.0	62.0	37.0	71.0	50.0	46.3
	Longuenesse (1778)	0.0	0.0	10.0	11.0	69.0	75.0	73.0	54.7

Table 3: Marital Status of Males aged 25-29 in the Province of Salzburg

Sample	Percent Married	Percent Single	Percent Widowed/Other
Abtenau 1632	41.4	57.5	1.2
Durnberg 1647	63.3	36.4	–
Koppl 1647	25.0	62.5	12.5
Salzburg Town 1647	36.2	61.2	2.6
Thalgau 1648	33.3	66.7	–
Berndorf 1649	–	100.0	–
Hofgastein 1690	70.0	30.0	–

Source: Vienna Database on European Family History

Let us have a more detailed look at the Chrudim area. The youngest married woman from this area was Salomena, only 11 years old, wife of Matouš Kryštof, 36 years old farmer from Dlouhá Třebová village in the Lanškroun domain.

Such a low age to get married is even below the limit prescribed then by canonical law for women; – this limit was laid down as 12 years for women and 14 years for men. Women

began to get married at 15, nevertheless, married women aged 15-17 were rather a rarity. In towns, women got married at an older age; percentage of brides under 20 was less than 8 percents in the Chrudim area (tab. 4). Lower proportion of married women aged 15–19 in towns can be explained by a high quantity of single girls who left their villages to work as maids in towns. In rural area, there were 68 percent of married women aged 20–24, whereas only 47 percent of married women of the same age in towns. In most of the selected areas, the maximum percentages of married women were in age groups 25–29 or 30–34. Helas, the above mentioned problem of rounding the data has to be taken into account. Many young widows were ascribed the age of 30. Common view on a young woman in this marital status was a woman aged 30. Proportion married women reaches its maximum at the latest in the age group 35–39 (in the villages in the Třeboň and Sokolov areas and in neighbourhoods of towns Nejdeč and Kolín – tab.1). In towns, this situation was more common, as women in towns got married more often at higher age. Higher chance of re-marriage was in case of young and propertied women or at least propertied ones. In towns, many widows of master craftsmen got married to journeymen. We can illustrate it by the case of some Caterine, aged 40, from Česká Třebová town in the Chrudim area, who was married to a 30 years old butcher called Jan Weyda. Together with them in the same house lived their two sons aged 21 and 15. Therefore, we can guess that Caterine got widow as early as her sons were too young to take the trade over. As to the social status of widows, they were mostly women-hinds living alone or with their children.

Table 4: Structure of the population in towns in Chrudim area according to age and marital status (in %)

Age	Men					Women					Total
	percentage				abs.	percentage				abs.	
	single	married	widowed	unknown	total	single	married	widowed	undetected.	total	
15–19	99.3	0.7	0.0	0.0	895	92.3	7.6	0.1	0.1	1 332	2 227
20–24	79.0	20.9	0.0	0.1	680	51.5	46.8	1.4	0.3	987	1 667
25–29	30.3	69.5	0.2	0.0	495	21.7	73.6	4.6	0.1	746	1 241
30–34	16.4	82.2	1.1	0.3	636	19.5	74.3	6.2	0.0	790	1 426
35–39	0.4	89.9	1.5	8.1	467	1.1	70.7	13.5	14.7	550	1 017
40–44	0.5	88.4	2.2	9.0	601	0.2	61.4	18.6	19.8	606	1 207
45–49	0.3	91.8	2.3	5.7	352	0.6	60.6	21.5	17.3	358	710
50–54	0.0	86.4	5.2	8.4	382	0.9	49.5	30.0	19.6	434	816
55–59	0.0	87.2	3.8	9.0	133	0.7	47.5	37.6	14.2	141	274
60–64	1.0	82.9	8.3	7.8	205	1.0	26.9	47.2	24.9	193	398
65–69	0.0	71.0	11.6	17.4	69	0.0	39.5	46.5	14.0	43	112
70–74	0.0	80.0	9.2	10.8	65	4.2	29.2	47.9	18.8	48	113
75–79	9.1	45.5	27.3	18.2	11	0.0	16.7	33.3	50.0	6	17
80–84	0.0	72.7	13.6	13.6	22	0.0	0.0	78.9	21.1	19	41
85+	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	16	0.0	12.5	37.5	50.0	8	24
unknown	35.5	29.0	0.0	35.5	31	31.0	27.6	3.4	41.4	29	60
Total	41.8	52.9	1.7	3.6	5 060	40.9	42.8	9.8	6.4	6 290	11 350

Girls got married at a rather young age, but their chance to marry decrease with growing age; in towns there were almost 20 percent of single women in age group 30–34, i.e. by 3 percent more than the percentage of single men in the same age group. In rural areas this difference was even higher.

In the age group 30–34 there were 17.6 percent of still unmarried women in contrast with 10.2 percent of single men. If a woman got widowed, her chance to remarriage decrease proportionally to age. Despite of the fact that in towns relatively many widows of master craftsmen got married to younger journeymen, the overall proportion of widows was in town population by 3 percent higher compared with the rural population. Youngest widows can be found even in the age group 15–19 both in towns and rural areas. Some of these young widows lived in their own household – Kateřina Hurtovská, aged 18, from Bohoňovice village at the Litomyšl domain, other returned to their parents, e.g. 18-year-old Anna, daughter of Šimon Hudeček from Plchovice village at the Choceň area. It is possible she did not leave them at all, even after her marriage. Some widows got to subordinate position, when a son of deceased husband took the household over. This was the case of Dorota, aged 18, from Makov village at the Polička domain, who lived in common household with a married son of her late husband, of the same age. In age group 35–39, the proportion of widows surpassed 10 percent and among women older than 60 did widows form the major part. At that time, widows were four times as frequent as widowers.

Table 5: Structure of the population in rural areas in Chrudim area according to age and marital status (in %)

Age	Men					Women					Total
	%				abs.	%				abs.	
	single	married	widowed	unknown	total	single	married	widowed	unknown	total	
15–19	96.7	3.3	0.0	0.0	2 239	78.0	21.8	0.2	0.1	3 132	5 371
20–24	55.8	43.9	0.2	0.1	1 833	31.0	67.7	1.2	0.1	2 749	4 582
25–29	19.8	79.3	0.8	0.1	1 694	15.8	81.5	2.6	0.0	2 259	3 953
30–34	10.2	88.7	1.0	0.1	2 076	17.6	77.1	5.3	0.0	2 193	4 269
35–39	0.9	90.9	1.6	6.6	1 275	1.0	76.3	10.1	12.6	1 062	2 337
40–44	0.3	89.4	3.0	7.3	1 402	1.2	62.2	20.3	16.4	1 388	2 790
45–49	0.3	89.4	4.9	5.4	754	0.2	62.6	22.0	15.3	596	1 350
50–54	0.4	84.2	8.2	7.2	903	0.9	49.5	31.0	18.6	655	1 558
55–59	0.4	83.8	8.5	7.4	272	0.0	47.5	35.8	16.8	179	451
60–64	0.2	75.7	12.3	11.8	416	0.0	33.7	47.1	19.2	276	692
65–69	0.9	82.1	9.4	7.5	106	0.0	48.1	30.8	21.2	52	158
70–74	0.0	74.8	17.4	7.8	115	0.0	25.9	55.2	19.0	58	173
75–79	2.7	73.0	18.9	5.4	37	0.0	35.7	42.9	21.4	14	51
80–84	0.0	82.8	6.9	10.3	29	0.0	15.0	60.0	25.0	40	69
85+	0.0	42.9	32.1	25.0	16	0.0	20.0	40.0	40.0	8	24
unknown	25.0	40.0	2.5	32.5	31	13.0	47.8	2.2	34.8	29	60
Total	37.4	57.7	2.2	2.7	13 219	36.3	52.2	7.3	4.3	14 704	27 923

Marital status could not have been established more frequently among women than among men. Among people with unknown marital status were probably many unmarried mothers and widows with one child. Helas, this could not have been determined with certainty without appropriate record in the registry. In the Chrudim area, such cases totalled 1 176, i.e. nearly 5 percent.

Men got rarely married up to their 20th birthdays (it is necessary take into account of course the rounding of age during survey); if so, this case was more frequent in rural areas than in towns (tab. 2, 4 and 5). The youngest married man in a town in the Chrudim area was a taylor named Tobiáš Kratochvíle from Litomyšl town, 18 years old, whose wife was of the same age. In rural area, the youngest married man was a certain Jan Doucha from Topol village in the Chrudim domain, aged only 14. The above mentioned 22 year old Dorota was his wife.

In age group 20–24, the proportion of married men in towns did not exceed 30 percent, with exception of the Náchod and Benešov nad Ploučnicí areas (table 2). On the other hand, proportion married in rural area in age group 20–24 was rarely under 30 percent as in the domains of Třeboň, Loket, Sokolov and Točnick. In subsequent age group was not the difference between towns and rural areas so significant: the percentage of married men in towns was 62 percent, in rural areas - 72 percent. In age group 30–34, proportion married men in rural areas except the domain of Točnick surpassed 80 percent and often even 90 percent. In towns was the situation more variable; there were both localities, where all the men were married (Benešov nad Ploučnicí and Loket towns) and towns, where the proportion of married men in this age group was slightly over 50 percent (Žebrák). The proportion of married men aged 35 to 49 was in most rural areas 90–100 percent, whereas the proportion of married men was not lower than 80 percent anywhere. In towns was the situation similar, the proportion of married men over 35 surpassed 80 percent, with exception of town of Třeboň where the proportion of married men over 35 was between 75 and 80 percentage. For men older than 50 years was this proportion slightly lower, but more than 80 percent (table 2).

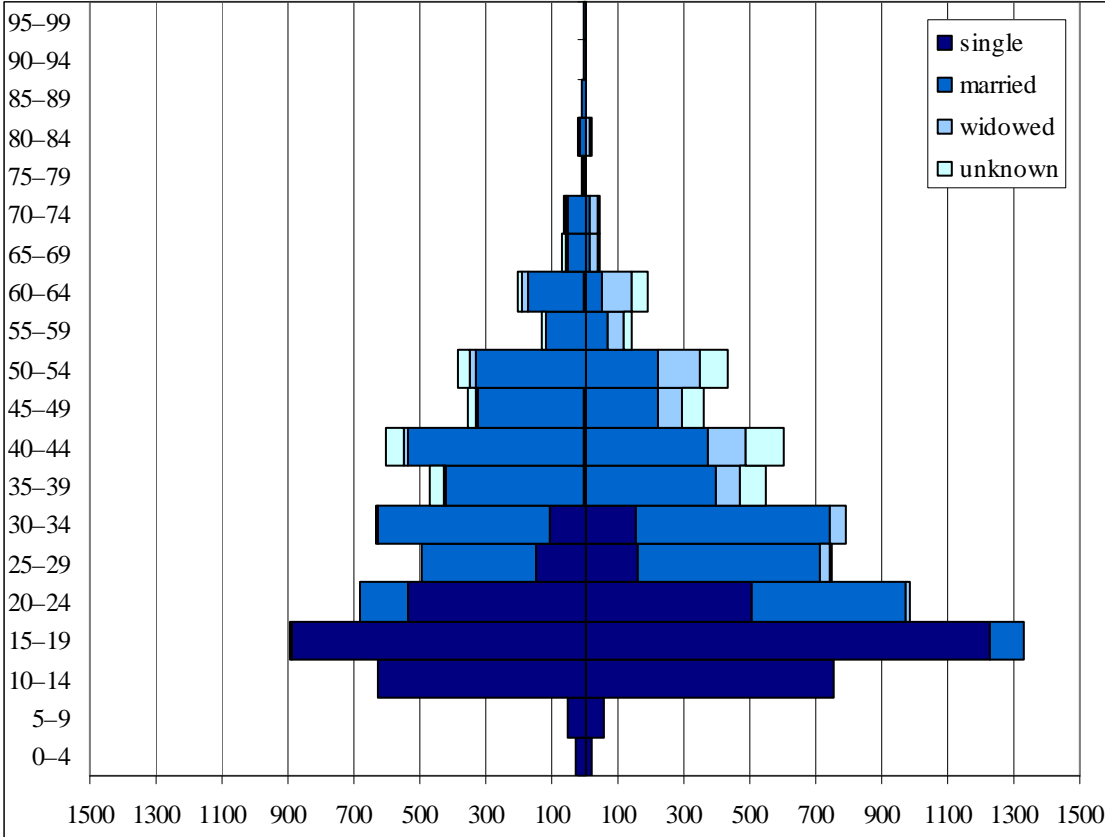
Tab. 6: Structure of the population na Chrudimsku according to age and marital status, five-year intervals

Age	Men					Women					Total
	single	married	widowed	unknown	total	single	married	widowed	unknown	total	
0–4	34	0	0	0	34	24	0	0	0	24	58
5–9	96	0	0	0	96	107	0	0	0	107	203
10–14	2 454	1	0	0	2 455	2 671	7	0	0	2 678	5 133
15–19	3 054	80	0	0	3 134	3 672	783	6	3	4 464	7 598
20–24	1 560	946	4	3	2 513	1 362	2 324	45	5	3 736	6 249
25–29	485	1 688	15	1	2 189	520	2 391	92	2	3 005	5 194
30–34	316	2 364	28	4	2 712	539	2 277	166	1	2 983	5 695
35–39	13	1 579	28	122	1 742	17	1 199	180	216	1 612	3 354
40–44	7	1 785	55	156	2 003	17	1 235	395	347	1 994	3 997
45–49	3	997	45	61	1 106	3	590	208	153	954	2 060
50–54	4	1 090	94	97	1 285	10	539	333	207	1 089	2 374
55–59	1	344	28	32	405	1	152	117	50	320	725
60–64	3	485	67	66	621	2	145	221	101	469	1 090
65–69	1	136	18	20	175	0	42	36	17	95	270
70–74	0	138	26	16	180	2	29	55	20	106	286
75–79	2	32	10	4	48	0	6	8	6	20	68
80–84	0	40	5	6	51	0	6	39	14	59	110
85–89	0	13	4	4	21	0	1	4	2	7	28
90–94	0	8	4	2	14	0	0	1	1	2	16
95–99	0	4	0	1	5	0	1	0	2	3	8
100–104	0	3	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
105–109	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
unknown	21	25	1	24	71	15	31	2	28	76	147
Total	8 054	11 758	433	619	20 864	8 962	11 758	1 908	1 176	23 804	44 668

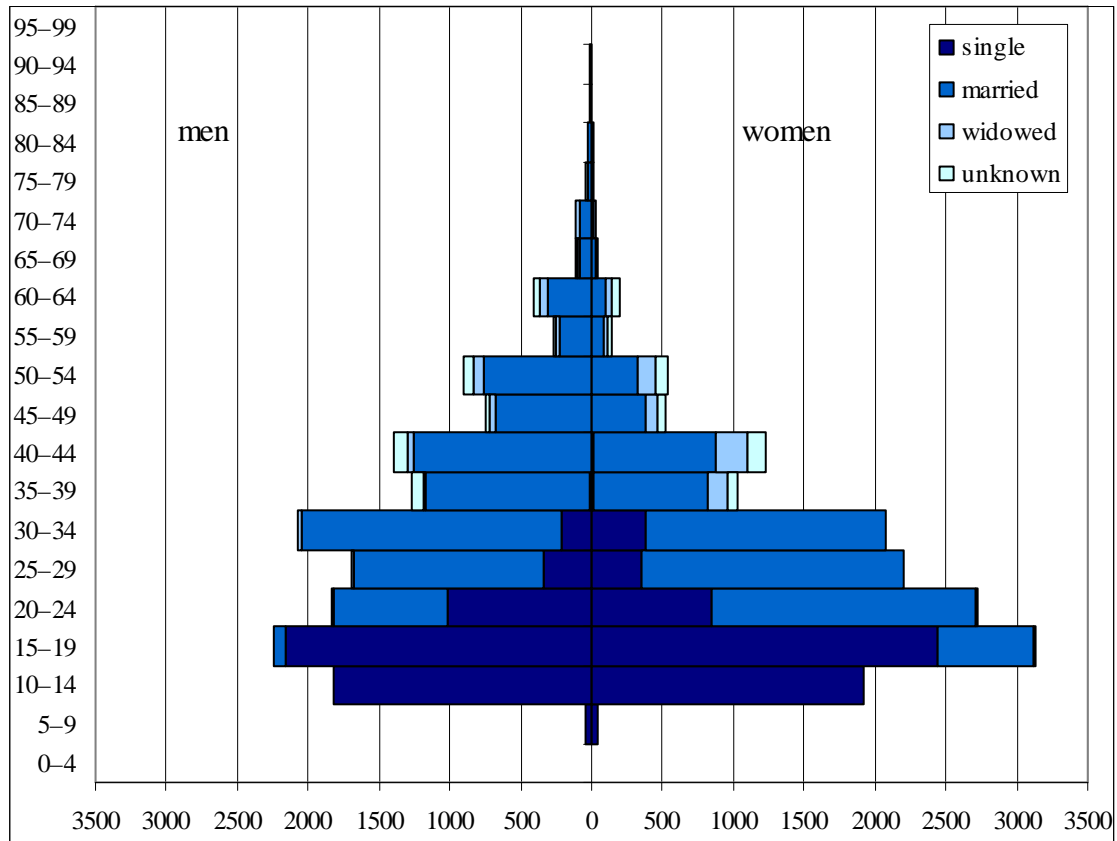
In the Chrudim area, the proportion of single men decreased with growing age. Percentage of single over 35 was neglectable. Some increase (tab. 4) occurred in town population in age group 75–79, but the population forms in this age group 11 men only, so those 9.1 percent single represent only one man at the Choceň suburbs in Vysoké Mýto town. In age 30–34,

there were 10.2 percent of single men yet in rural area and 16.4 percent in towns. Persons over 35 detected as singles were registered rarely. In the Chrudim area, the proportion of widowers was slightly higher in rural areas. The youngest widower, according the List, was a gardener and innkeeper Jan Vach, 22, who lived in common household with 18-year-old daughter! If it were really so, he had married probably with a women considerably older he was, who died relatively soon after marriage. A similar situation occurred in the household of a 23-year-old farmer and game-keeper Jiřík Mudroch from Lažany village at the domain Rychmburk (Chrudim area), living in household with a 28-year-old son Havel, evidently got by marriage, a 20-year-old Havel's wife and a Havel's younger brother, 27, in addition to two women in subservient position. Similarly, in the household of a 23-year-old farmer Jiřík Experat, widower from Vlčí Habřina village in Pardubice area lived his 16-year-old daughter got by marriage (as the List did not register children younger than 12, she could have had younger siblings). His 20-year-old brother Petr and 19-year-old brother Jakub with 18-year-old wife Kateřina are mentioned in the subordinate position. In town milieu, the youngest registered widower was a Tomáš N. from Chrudim town, aged 25–29. The 10 percentage points of widowers were surpassed in the age group 65–69 let in towns, respectively in the age group 60–64 in rural area. With growing age, the proportion of men with undetected marital status increased, according the List. In the whole Chrudim area, the number of them was 619, i.e. 3 percent (tab. 6).

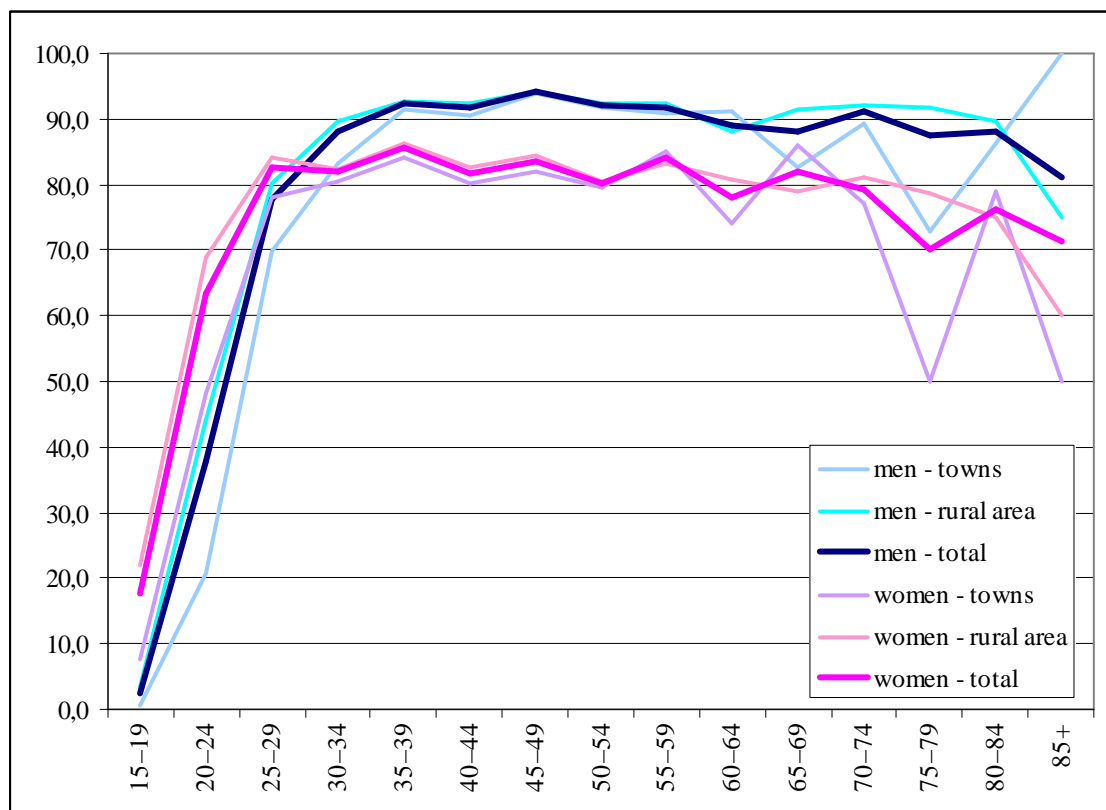
Picture 1: Town population in Chrudim area according to age and marital status in 1651



Picture 2: Rural area population in Chrudim area according to age and marital status in 1651



Graph 1: Proportion ever married according to age in towns and villages in Chrudim area



Another approach is to analyze the proportion ever married. Since elderly people are rare in the Bohemian population in 1651, the age group 45-49 was taken to represent the percentage ever married (graph xxx). The proportion of ever married (including widowed) was over 90 percent. The low proportion of widowers can be interpreted as a clear sign of male remarriage. This led to significant age difference between spouses. The proportion of females married in the age group 45-49 differs from that of the males. The proportion married among females is smaller and the proportion widowed much higher in the male population. Female remarriage did occur but obviously with much lesser frequency than the male remarriage.

Conclusion

The Chrudim area belonged to regions, where women got married in a rather young age, but after they widowed were their chances to remarriage smaller compared with other regions. In comparing the Chrudim area with regions beyond Czech Lands there is a certain similarity with Beograd. Families in the Chrudim region belonged in the middle of the 17th century to so called East-European family pattern, for which the low age to get married was typical. As in Beograd, in the Chrudim area the proportion of married women according to age reached his maximum in the age group 25–29. This proportion later decreased, but in the Chrudim region wasn't this fall so steep. The most striking difference was in the proportion of married women younger than 25. In the Chrudim region, there were 17.5 percent of married women in the age group 15–19 and 62.2 percent in the age group 20–24, whereas in Beograd the correspondent proportions were 77.0, respectively 92.0. The women age to get married was therefore in Beograd in average considerably lower in compare with the Chrudim area, nevertheless are these figures more in conformity with the Chrudim region than the situation in England, where only 15 percent of women got married till 25 years of age, or in France, where did not a woman get married till that age.

The proportion married in the age groups 20-29 was very high. The differences between villages and towns were significant. In the situation of labour shortage after the war, marriage changes for the village population must have been high. Within the context of the debate about a European Marriage Pattern, Bohemia with its high proportion married at early age, is part of Eastern Europe. A low age at marriage is typical for Eastern Europe. But the departures from West European figures are not very pronounced. Age to get married for men and women seems to have been rising in the first half of the 18th century in towns and rural areas.

This article came into being within the framework of the Research Project IGA VŠE 15/08.

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