

THE POPULATION OF SATU MARE COUNTY ACCORDING TO THE JOSEPHINE CENSUS(II)

Abstract: In 1874 the system of conducting the population census changed completely. The modifications were made in accordance with the reforms introduced by Joseph II. For the first time in the history of Hungary, the noble population was also included in the census. Thus, the census of 1784-1787 became the first “modern” census of the population. Not only the social categories that were surveyed changed, but the implementation method was entirely altered. The civil authorities collected data about the civilian population in parallel with the military, by settlements and from every household. During the process of information gathering and recording, each household had a record sheet of its own, which contained data about its members: names, ages (only in the case of the males), qualifications (position in the household, socio-professional status, stature and other physical features in the case of men, etc.). At the same time, the individuals administering the census had to classify the persons according to several set categories, on the basis of gender, marital status, some socio-professional categories, indicating their position in the household, but also the permanent departure of some of the members. In the case of women, only their marital status was noted down. The presence of foreigners had to be recorded too. There was a special, but much simpler record sheet for households belonging to the population of Jewish faith.

For the county of Satu Mare, the population census of 1784-1787 counted the distribution of the inhabitants in the four regions of the county, in the urban settlements or in the rural areas. Also, the focus was on the number of men, women and children, on their religion, occupations, etc. The data collected in 1784-1787 showed an increase in the number of population in this region compared to the previous count. This was the consequence of the improving standard of life, the overcoming of natural disasters and military conflicts, but also the result of the colonization organized by the local nobles in the first part of the 18th century.

Keywords: population, census, household, increase, count

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This paper is a sequel to the study published in *Satu Mare, Studies and Papers*, XXXI/II, 2015. In that study, we discussed a series of issues such as the distribution of the population according to religion and gender, the distribution of the nobles by villages, of the priests by communities, the distribution of the teachers, the situation of the emigrants and the immigrants, etc. In what follows, we will make an analysis of the evolution of the population in the county of Satu Mare in terms of the territorial-administrative division of the county, more specifically, according to its distribution by *plase* (a territorial division smaller than a county and larger than a commune).

The natural environment of the county of Satu Mare

At the end of the 18th century, the area of Satu Mare County covered 5,852 square kilometres. The county stretched from Curtușeni, a village situated in the county of Bihor today, to Baia Sprie (located in Maramureș County today), and from

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the Tisza to the Forest Mountains (Munții Codrului). From a territorial-administrative point of view, it was divided into four *plase*: Crasna, Nyír, Szamos and Baia Mare.²

The fauna and the vegetation were completely different from what we can encounter today in Satu Mare County. On the territory of the Nyír *plasa*, to the north-west of the localities from the region of Carei, there was a marsh, Ecedea, which influenced economic life in the area. Agriculture had peculiar characteristics here. Dense forests covered a large surface of the county, stretching from its southern border, in the region of Codrul, all the way to the banks of the Tisza. Studying the map of Satu Mare County from that period, we could notice that the three towns were also surrounded by forests.³

The lowland area, dominated by the valleys of the rivers Szamos and Tisza, and Ecedea Marsh influenced the development of human settlements, but also that of agriculture. The riches of the subsoil of the region of Baia Mare and the Oaş Mountains determined settlement in these areas of people who made a living from mining and processing of mineral ores. The population density in these regions was very high.



Fig. 1

Nyír was a *plasa* that stretched over a fertile plain area. Ecedea Marsh represented a special form of relief which imprinted certain features of the region, as it had a specific fauna and flora, causing the population to adopt a peculiar life style.

² For more details about the geographical setting, see the first part of this study, published in *Satu Mare, Studii și Comunicări*, XXXI/II, Satu Mare, Editura Muzeului Județean Satu Mare, 2015, p. 65.

³ In writing this study, we have used the map drawn by Zanathy on the occasion of the journey undertaken by Duke Maximilian through Maramureș County, Bihor County and Transylvania. The map is part of the collection of the County Museum of Satu Mare, inv. no. 15.393 Mo.

The main occupations of the inhabitants were agriculture-related (farming, animal husbandry, fishing, hunting). The abundant reed and bulrush in the natural environment of the marsh led to the development of crafts based on processing these plants (the weaving of baskets, chairs, etc.). The objects crafted thus were then sold in other regions of the county or even across its borders. The same thing happened with other agricultural products that were sold to the residents of other areas whose topography and climate was less favourable to land cultivation.

The territorial units of Crasna and Szamos (*plase*) were dominated by the valleys of the Someş and the Tisza rivers. These valleys were favourable to agriculture, too. The hilly areas were good for the cultivation of vines and fruit trees. The population of the forested regions practised the specific activities of this natural habitat: hunting and woodworking.

In the *plasa* of Baia Mare, there were regions that had rich ferrous and non-ferrous ores, which favoured the development of the mining industry. Next to this branch, wood processing also developed. This was a mountainous area so agriculture was less practised here, livestock farming being the main occupation in this area.

In conclusion, it can be said that each *plasa* had a specific natural environment in the county of Satu Mare, putting its stamp on the evolution of the population. The occupation of the inhabitants was strongly influenced by the landforms, the soil and the subsoil resources. There were areas with a higher population density, others with a lower density, depending on the region and the resources necessary for livelihood.

Characteristics of the population in the county of Satu Mare at the end of the 18th century

The census organized in 1784-1784 recorded 3 towns in Satu Mare County. These were Satu Mare (Szamos *plasa*), Baia Mare and Baia Sprie (Baia Mare *plasa*). The number of boroughs was 16: Ecsed, Kis Mada, Carei, Szalka (Nyir *plasa*), Fehérgyarmat, Jánk, Nagy Peleske, Matolcs (Szamos *plasa*), Medieşu Aurit, Varallya, Seini, Szyer (Baia Mare *plasa*), Csenger, Beltiug, Ardud, Arduşat (Crasna *plasa*). The town of Satu Mare was formed around the fortress of the same name. Here was a political centre that provided protection, but also an outlet market for the products necessary to the personnel of the fortress, stimulating economic exchanges.⁴ The towns of Baia Mare and Baia Sprie were formed around mining settlements, where specialists in the exploitation of the subsoil were brought. The distribution of boroughs on the territory of the county was equal. In each *plasa* there were 4 boroughs: these were somewhat bigger and richer settlements, which had an intermediate status between a town and a village, with an active, continuously developing economic life.

⁴ Ovid Sachelarie, Nicolae Stoicescu, *Instituțiile feudale din Țările Române. Dicționar*, Bucureşti, Ed. Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1988, p. 343.

Nyír *Plasa*:

- boroughs: Ecsed, Kis Mada, Carei, Szalka
- towns:

Szamos *Plasa*:

- boroughs: Fehérgyarmat, Jánk, Nagy Peleske, Matolcs
- towns: Satu Mare

Baia Mare *Plasa*:

- boroughs: Medieșu Aurit, Varallya, Seini, Szyer
- towns: Baia Mare, Baia Sprie

Crasna *Plasa*:

- boroughs: Csenger, Beltiug, Ardud, Ardușat
- towns:

Table no. 1 – The localities of Satu Mare County, divided by *plase*⁵

<i>Plasa</i>	Town	Boroughs	Communes	Praedium	Houses	Families
Nyír	0	4	43	7	6,396	8,118
Szamos	1	4	65	0	3,761	4,330
Baia Mare	2	4	71	1	9,307	9,660
Crasna	0	4	66	5	7,237	8,503
Total	3	16	245	13	26,701	30,611

The largest number of houses and families was recorded in *plasa* Baia Mare: 9,660 families and 9,307 houses. At the opposite pole was *plasa* Szamos, with 4,330 families and 3,761 houses.

Table no. 2 – The population of Satu Mare County, divided by *plase*⁶

<i>Plase</i>	Rightful population	Emigrated Population	Foreigners	Actual population
Nyír	39,084	210	203	39,077
Szamos	21,664	133	80	21,611
Baia Mare	46,327	241	234	46,410
Crasna	43,394	128	179	43,445
Total	150,469	712	786	150,543

From the point of view of the distribution of the number of inhabitants, the Baia Mare *plasa* was situated on the first place, the actual population here amounting to 46,410 inhabitants. In view of the fact that there were two towns on the territory of this *plasa* (Baia Mare and Baia Sprie), as well as four boroughs (Medieșu Aurit, Varallya, Seini, Szyer) important for the economic life of the region, the large number of the population in this territorial-administrative unit of Satu Mare County is not

⁵ *Az első Magyarországi népszámlálás (1784-1787)*, Budapest, Olvasótermi példány, 1960, p. 150.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 154.

surprising. First of all, there was an intense activity of extracting and processing the riches of the subsoil, an activity that attracted investments from the Austrian crown and the nobility of the region. Secondly, it attracted people interested in this field, despite the fact that living conditions were rather difficult.

The economic and demographic superiority of the Baia Mare *plasa* can be seen in the following table, relating to the occupation of the population of Satu Mare County. Thus, the data collected at the census of 1784-1787 showed that of the 93 officials who worked in the county, 69 were located in the Baia Mare *plasa*. Here there were also numerous priests (86) and villeins (5,672). At the opposite pole, there was the social category of the nobles: in the Baia Mare *plasa* there were only 1,380, compared to the Szamos *plasa*, where their number amounted to 3,013.

Table no. 3 – The occupations of the population of Satu Mare County, divided by *plase*⁷

<i>Plase</i>	Priests	Nobles	Officials	Civilians	Peasants	Villeins	Others	Discharged soldiers
Nyír	83	2,942	18	244	2,223	4,503	688	20
Szamos	67	3,013	1	40	1,323	1,835	561	7
Baia Mare	86	1,380	69	612	3,251	5,672	1,290	19
Crasna	76	2,480	5	789	2,350	4,997	925	27
Total	312	9,815	93	1,685	9,147	17,007	3,464	73

Located on the valley of the Someş river, in an area proper for land cultivation, but also encompassing hilly regions, favourable to the cultivation of vines and fruit-trees, the Crasna *plasa* occupied, from a demographic point of view, the second place. 43,445 inhabitants lived here. If we study the map of Satu Mare County, we can notice that on the surface of the Crasna *plasa* there was a conglomerate of settlements, most of which were located on the valleys of the Someş, the Homorod and the Crasna rivers, but also along other rivulets that flowed through this region. The most important settlements here were the boroughs Csenger, Beltiug, Ardud, Arduşat, all on the estate of Count Károlyi. The inhabitants here worked primarily in agriculture (land farming, viticulture, fruit trees, animal husbandry), crafts and trade. The data provided by the Josephine census showed that here lived 2,480 nobles, 2,350 peasants and 4,997 villeins. 76 priests were active in this area, and there were 5 officials (from these points of view, the Crasna *plasa* occupied the third place, after the *plasa* of Baia Mare and that of Nyír).

The smallest number of residents was recorded in the Szamos *plasa*, where the free royal town of Satu Mare and the boroughs of Fehérgyarmat, Jánk, Nagy Peleske, and Matolcs were located. Located on the valleys of the Someş and the Tisza, this *plasa* had a smaller area than the other three, which could explain the lower number of inhabitants here.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 156.

A big part of the surface of the Nyír *plasa* was covered by Ecedea Marsh, a geographical region that was unfavourable to the development of settlements with a large number of residents. Consequently, the population of this *plasa* was concentrated especially in the plain area, where the land was fertile and where agriculture could be practised more intensely. This explains why the actual population of the Nyír *plasa* amounted to 39,077 inhabitants, the rightful population being 39,084 inhabitants. Neither population growth, nor the markets in the area where they could travel with the means of transport of the time could stimulate the inhabitants of the Nyír *plasa* to increase the production of goods in the last third of the 18th century. The population here oriented themselves towards autarky. This meant that, aside from a minimum number of tools or other objects used in everyday life or in the household, everything else had to be produced by themselves. This fact is also proved by the answers given to the nine main questions of the urbarial questionnaire. Apart from one or two localities, the others did not complain about the lack of arable land. In areas where, because of the relief, there was not enough arable land, the people could work the land within the boundary of the neighbouring village on the landlord's allodium. Several people complained about the lack of pastures or meadows, but in a radius of 3-4 miles, anyone could rent pastures or buy hay. With the exception of some areas with less arable land, in the Nyír *plasa* sowings followed the triennial system. Approximately equal amounts of wheat and rye were cultivated, but people also grew a mixed cereal, between wheat and rye, oats, a little barley and vegetables (peas, lentils). They also cultivated buckwheat, spelt, millet and spring wheat. The latter were sown usually in the years when the remaining water after the melting of the snow withdrew rather late from the cultivated land. As early as 1760 and 1770, the inhabitants of the Nyír *plasa* cultivated maize, in particular in gardens or in areas demarcated for this purpose. Maize was used for food and, in the absence of oak forests, for the farming of pigs. In a few villages there were huge orchards, similar to forests, and thus, most of the serfs' landplots featured plum trees, apple trees or pear trees. They made vinegar from the pears and the wild apples, jam from the fruits of cornel bushes, and syrup from blackberries. A good part of the bare necessities of life were picked in the boundary area.⁸

The social category with the largest number of members in the county of Satu Mare was that of villeins. Probably, this group also included the freemen who had purchased letters of liberation from serfdom, the tax-payers, i.e., those craftsmen who paid their feudal obligations in the form of sums of money, and the villeins proper, divided into those who had a house and those who did not. The fact that these heterogeneous social categories were collapsed under the generic name of villains (*jeleri*) emphasizes the fact that lines of separation between the social categories could not be easily drawn. The elements of these categories overlapped, feudal society being in fact a mosaic of these elements, which were situated on very different positions, from an economic and social point of view.⁹

⁸ Takács Péter, *Documente urbariale din plasa Nyír a comitatului Satu Mare*, Nyíregyháza, 2010, p. 53.

⁹ Rudolf Wolf, "Populația din comitatul Crasna în lumina unor conșcripții din 1720," in *AMP*, X, Zalău, 1986, p. 246.

The class of the nobility consisted of 9,815 people. But even this category was not distributed in unitary manner across the county. The highest number of nobles was recorded in the Szamos *plasa* and then in the Nyír *plasa*, where the authorities counted 2,942 of nobles. We must emphasize the fact that not even this category was unified from an economic point of view. A special category was represented by the great magnates, earls, barons, etc. The family of Count Károly was the most prominent in Satu Mare County.

Table no. 4 – The population of Satu Mare County, by gender, distributed into *plasa*¹⁰

<i>Plasa</i>	Married men	Unmarried men	Total	Women	Children between 1-12 years of age	Children between 13-17 years of age
Nyír	7,381	12,338	19,719	19,365	4,757	1,472
Szamos	4,002	7,187	11,189	10,475	2,373	654
Baia Mare	8,952	14,827	23,779	22,548	6,397	1,607
Crasna	8,444	13,635	22,079	21,315	6,086	1,532
Total	28,779	47,987	76,766	73,703	19,613	5,265

Considering that the largest population in all the territorial-administrative units of Satu Mare County lived in the Baia Mare *plasa*, it was natural that there also lived the largest number of married men (9,952), unmarried men (14,827) and women (22,548). The situation also held true for the number of children, whether they were aged between 1 and 12 years (6,397), or between 13-17 years (1,607). An interesting thing was the fact that at the level of the entire county of Satu Mare, and in each individual *plasa*, the number of women was not much lower than the total number of men. Knowing the number of the rightful population of the county and then comparing the number of men and women who lived here, we can notice that the ratio was fairly balanced, with 960 women for every 1,000 men.

¹⁰ *Első Magyarországi népszámlálás (1784-1787)...*, p. 158.

Table no. 5 – The population of Satu Mare County, by gender¹¹

County	Rightful population	Men	Women	No. of women per 1000 men
Satu Mare	150,469	76,766	73,703	960

The census data allow us to analyse some important features of the structure of marriage, the family and the organization of households in Hungary. Even though the number of married women at older ages was very small, we cannot say that in 18th-century Hungary, marriage at the age of adolescence was dominant. Based on the age of marriage, one can identify several regions of the country. In the western and northern counties, this average age was very common – around 21 years of age. In the centre and east of the country, the age of marriage was in keeping with the national average, this is 20 years of age, while in the third group of counties, consisting especially of those situated at the eastern edge of the Great Plain, the average age of marriage was under 20 years of age, marriages being contracted at very early ages, according to the theories on the Eastern European model of marriage. There were only two insular areas in Hungary where marriages at over 20 years of age were dominant (Árva, the county of Szepes, in the region of the Northern Carpathians, and the counties of Sopron, Moson and Pozsony, located on the border with Austria).¹²

Most marriages were contracted thus before the age of majority, the children being under their parents' economic and social domination. The head of the family was the one who established the matrimonial strategy and he had to give his consent on the chosen partner. Most of the times, the future partner, whether male or female, was chosen from within the community, preferably in order to avoid the sons or the daughters leaving the village, or if they were forced to do so, to avoid their moving to very remote locations. Other criteria in choosing a husband or a wife were related to the social group to which he or she belonged, to the economic interests, but also to the traditions and customs of the community. Very often the newlyweds remained in the household of the parents of one of them. There were also cases when the couple settled in their own household immediately after the wedding.

Some researchers who have studied the theme of family life and childhood in the period of the 18th century have stressed the fact that there emerged a change of attitude towards children, but also towards family life. These two aspects began to be given more importance, more care and affection. However, this view is contradicted by British researchers Foyster and Marten, who state that family life

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 158.

¹² Faragó Tamás, *Different household formation system in one country at the end of the eighteenth century: variations on John Hajnal's thesis*, MPIDR Working Paper Wp 2011-020, December 2011, p. 161.

could range from emotional and intimate aspects to violence and brutality, just like in any other previous period.¹³

Regardless of the divergent opinions of some researchers, it is certain that both in the 18th century, and in the periods preceding and subsequent to it, the Church exerted control over civil society and particularly over family life. On an obviously inferior position were children, who were supposed to be entirely obedient to their parents, to whom they owed respect and submission. These requirements extended even after the age of majority, or after their departure from the basic cell of the family and their inclusion in another social group. The woman had an inferior position to the man, her status being firmly regulated by the canons of the Church, but also by the traditions of each region. She was supposed to be faithful and obedient to the man, these two aspects being essential in conjugal relationships. The head of the family was the man, who had responsibilities to each member of the family. He was granted increased powers, both by the Church and by the civilian authorities. Thus, he had to assert control over every member of the family, having full authority over his wife and daughters, as well as over the sons until they married, an authority that could be extended in the case of non-compliance with the minimum “rules” of social behaviour, as requested by the community, society, and the unwritten social relations, which were important, however, in regulating everyday life.¹⁴ The first who had to obey this authority was the wife. The husband could punish her in many ways, ranging from slapping her for different mistakes, to killing her in the case of adultery. Control over children was exercised from birth to marriage, and in some cases, especially in the case of daughters, even after that. But this power granted to the head of the family did not come without certain responsibilities. He had to ensure the economic basis of the family and to work for the benefit of the others, to feed his children, to provide them with a dowry and to marry them. If he was a “weak” man and failed to support or control his family, he could be sanctioned both by the civil or the ecclesiastical authorities and by the community of which he was part.

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1. - Satu Mare County in 18th century, Map drawn by Zanathy for Duke Maximilian's journey in Maramureș, Bihor and Transylvania. This map is part of the patrimonial collection of the Satu Mare County Museum, no. 15,393 Mo.

¹³ Andrea Fehér, *Family life in eighteenth century Transylvania. Case study: the Halmágyi family*, in *AMN*, an 50, II, Ed. Argonaut, Cluj Napoca, 2013, p. 154.

¹⁴ Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, “‘Să-mi ridic piatra de față din casă’: strategii matrimoniale și conflicte familiale în societatea românească (sec. al XVIII-lea),” in Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, Corneliu Pădurean (eds.), *Om și societate. Studii de istoria populației României (sec. XVII-XXI)*, Cluj Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2007, p. 96.