

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN THE DISTRICT OF SMEDEREVO: 1846–1866

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**SUMMARY:** Summary data in the statistical examination of births and deaths in the district of Smederevo in the period from 1846–1866, collected by the Serbian Orthodox Church and submitted to government institutions, reveal a typical model of a late pre–transition phase, or a very early demographic transition. Calculated birth and death rates are very high, with repeated significant oscillations. The “Malthusian scissors” seem to appear between 1854 and 1859, and after 1862. The overall population growth of nearly 50% between 1846 and 1866 seems to be mostly the result of natural growth. Still, comparing the total number of births and deaths with overall population growth, an estimated 9% of the district’s total population in 1866 appears not to have been originally born there.

**KEY WORDS:** birth rates, death rates, demography, immigration, Smederevo district, Principality of Serbia, 19<sup>th</sup> century

Analyses of demographic data either reveal new, or confirm or deny old theses about certain processes that a society undergoes. Serbia of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was considered to be an underdeveloped country, not only in terms of institution building, economy or infrastructure, but also by the degree of demographic models of development. The rates of birth and mortality of the population reveal the state of society – whether it is stable or sensitive to external influences. In the case of Serbia, a specific problem was also the issue of the role of immigration in the total increase of the population. During the first few decades after gaining autonomous status within the Ottoman Empire, an unidentified number of people of mostly Serbian origin moved to Serbia. That this phenomenon was massive is not controversial, but its scope has remained largely uncertain. Serbia of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a country with a very high natural increase, and it remains unclear to what extent the total population growth was influenced by immigration, and to what extent by the reproductive activity of the domicile population. This problem was especially poorly studied in regard to the 1840s and 1850s, when immigration waves started to weaken [Jagodić 2004: 27–32].

One possible approach to solving this problem is to compare natural growth with the absolute increase in the number of inhabitants. Data on the number of births (baptized) and deceased in districts for the period 1862–1873 were published in 1874 and have often been used for analyses [*Statistical Yearbook of Serbia VIII*: 43–117]. The data for the previous years were never published in an integral manner, but were certainly used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for some research by Serbian statisticians. Vladimir Jakšić certainly possessed data for the period 1837–1851, having published them in recalculated form, and in integral form for the period 1852–1854 [Jakšić 1853: 259–260; Jakšić 1854: 307, 314; Jakšić 1855: 307, 313].

Serbia started systematically collecting data on vital population statistics well before the establishment of an independent statistical authority. Since 1836, the continuous keeping of registries has been prescribed by law [Vuletić 2012: 3]. In 1839, priests were ordered to report children that were not vaccinated, which was interpreted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs twenty years later as an obligation to submit the lists of baptized children to district chiefs [Rules for Vaccination Against Pox: 72; AS, MPs–P 1861 / III–445]. From the beginning of the 1840s, the Metropolitanate of Belgrade sought summary lists of baptized, dead and married persons from its dioceses, in order to forward them in concise form to the superior Ministry of Education, which further distributed them to other administrative bodies as needed. The Ministry of Education also requested these lists due to the obligation to submit an annual work report to the State Council. From other bodies, data were mainly requested by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance, but the State Council also showed great interest in the problem of population growth [AS, DS: 1852/1, p. 1; 1852/2, s. 1; 1852/376, p. 1; MPs–P: 1845 / III–58; 1848 / V–399; 1852 / III–144]. The obligation of collecting and storing summary records from registers at the level of consistories was established by law in 1847 [The Constitution of the Spiritual Authorities of the Principality of Serbia, 1849: 107–108, 113]. In 1862, Diocesan Consistories were ordered by law to submit similar lists to the Ministry of Education on an annual basis [Law on Church Authorities of the Orthodox Faith 1863: 22]. These lists, of course, only referred to the Orthodox population<sup>1</sup>. Turkish Muslims were not subject to population censuses in Serbia. The Roma, mostly Orthodox and, in a minority portion, Muslim, were entirely listed only in 1846 and 1866, while in 1854, 1859 and 1863 only those with permanent residence were listed [Vuletić 2012: 7]. The number of Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Jews was significant only in Belgrade, and possibly in several more major urban centers. In Smederevo district there were almost none [*Statistical Yearbook of Serbia VIII*: 43]. In 1844, the city of Smederevo had 3,265 Orthodox and 750 Turkish Muslims, while in all of Serbia there were only 1,368 Jews and about 900 foreigners [Gavrilović 1994: 151, 153]. According to the census of 1866, there were only 64 “infidels” in the entire Smederevo district [*Statistical Yearbook of Serbia III*: 100].

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<sup>1</sup> The lists sent by the Metropolitanate of Belgrade referred only to the Orthodox population. In the data for the period from 1862, all other Christians, as well as Jews, were included in the data, which, however, could only be a minimal number in the Smederevo district. Consequently, this fact does not affect the results in this article [*Serbian Statistical Yearbook VIII*: 43].

With the help of the aforementioned lists, which are stored in the Archives of Serbia, as well as published data, we are able to reconstruct vital statistics for the Smederevo district for the period from 1846 to 1866, that is, for the period between two quite reliable population censuses that are necessary for demographic analysis. It should also be noted that it is not possible to determine the extent to which these lists are truly reliable. The keeping of registries was a relative novelty, and it is difficult to estimate whether priests were sufficiently up-to-date and conscientious about this issue, especially in the earlier period. It was even assumed that data were not published until 1862, because they were not considered reliable enough [Natural Growth 1957: 1]. However,

*Table 1.* Number of born (baptized) and deceased persons by gender in Smederevo district 1846–1866.

Year	Born (N)			Deceased (M)			Natural increase (J)
	sex		total	sex		total	
	male	female		male	female		
1846	717	686	<b>1.403</b>	457	402	859	544
1847	712	644	<b>1.356</b>	415	368	783	573
1848	966	873	<b>1.839</b>	524	434	958	881
1849	830	767	<b>1.597</b>	791	690	1.481	116
1850	913	826	<b>1.739</b>	532	551	1.083	656
1851	947	821	<b>1.768</b>	531	428	959	809
1852	1.022	904	<b>1.926</b>	642	581	1.223	703
1853 <sup>2</sup>	770	929	<b>1.540</b>	822	693	1.644	-104
1854	976	932	<b>1.908</b>	666	524	1.190	718
1855	1.029	1.011	<b>2.040</b>	677	564	1.241	799
1856	1.094	1.011	<b>2.105</b>	630	499	1.129	976
1857	1.159	1101	<b>2.260</b>	772	603	1.375	885
1858	1.373	1.254	<b>2.627</b>	778	622	1.400	1.227
1859	1.284	1.207	<b>2.491</b>	706	590	1.296	1.195
1860	1.105	1.115	<b>2.220</b>	913	843	1.756	464
1861	1.188	1.136	<b>2.324</b>	1.183	944	2.127	197
1862	1.319	1.180	<b>2.499</b>	1.315	1.289	2.604	-105
1863	1.296	1.336	<b>2.632</b>	1.260	1.101	2.361	271
1864	1.564	1.426	<b>2.990</b>	1.015	803	1.818	1.172
1865	1.462	1.505	<b>2.967</b>	806	669	1.475	1.492
1866	1.505	1.440	<b>2.945</b>	848	756	1.604	1.341
Total	23.231	22.104	<b>45.335</b>	16.283	13.954	30.237	15.098

Source: [AS, MB, 1847/421; MPs–P 1848/V–399, 1855/III–71, 1856/V–36, 1857/IV–30, 1858/VI–54, 1860/IV–605, 1862/I–180, 1862/III–547; DS, 1852/1, p. 3, 1852/2, p. 3, 1852/3, p. 3, 1852/376, p. 3, 1853/409, p. 3, 1854/262, p. 3, *Statistical Yearbook of Serbia VIII*: 92–93].

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Jakšić gives for this year 957 male and 892 female newborns. Whether there was some kind of revision of the list, or amendments on the basis of which Jakšić published these numbers, is not clear. His data, however, indicate a decrease in birthrate in the county [Jakšić 1854: 307, 314].

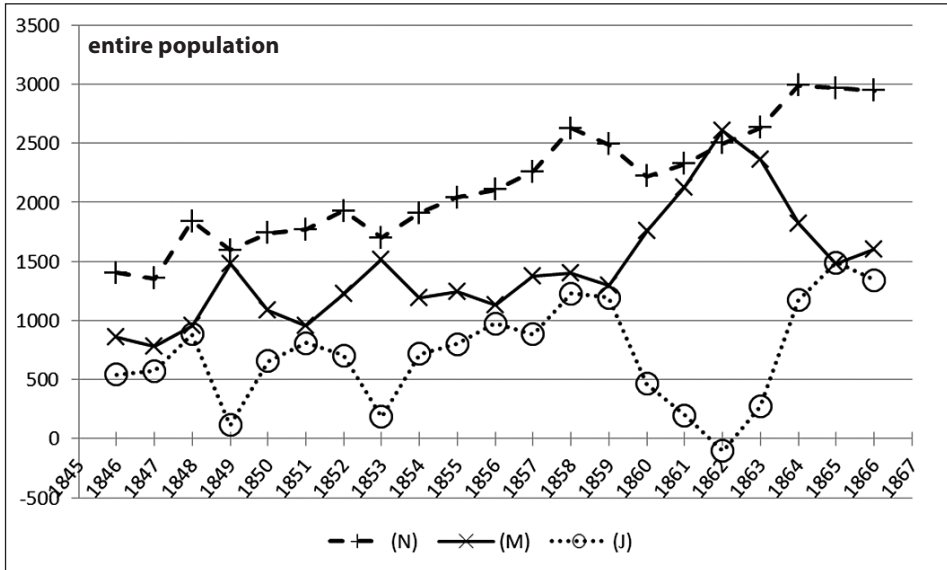
since they are the only existing data on vital statistics for that period, we will try to use them to analyze trends and for a general assessment of the immigration framework. One of the reasons why the 1846–1866 period is suitable for research lies in the fact that, between the two censuses, there were no administrative changes in the jurisdiction of the Smederevo district, so all the data refer to the same territory [*Administrative–Territorial ...* 1955: 14–17]. As can be seen from Table 1, in two years a negative, and in the remaining years a positive natural increase was recorded, which, however, was not at all uniform.

The data show an interesting structure according to sex, based on which it is evident that the mortality for men was much higher than for women (with the exception of 1862). Out of the total positive balance of 15,098 people for the entire period (natural increase), female persons represented a majority of 54% (8,150). The proportion between the sexes almost did not change at all, although it was supposed to become more balanced. According to the census of 1846, there were 21,111 men and 20,137 women in the district (0.95 women per one man), and in 1866 30,934 males and 29,143 females (0.94 women per one man) [Gavrilović 1851: 188–189; *Statistical Yearbook of Serbia III*: 100]. This data suggests that a larger number of men migrated into the district. In the years when population censuses were conducted (1846, 1850, 1854, 1859, 1863, 1866)<sup>3</sup>, birth rates were extremely high and showed a tendency of growth. At the same time, significantly lower rates of mortality showed occasional oscillations. In the period 1854–1859, as well as after 1862, there was an “opening of scissors” that is, an increase in the difference between birth and mortality rate, which is characteristic of a late pre–transitional or a very early stage of demographic transition. The 1859–1864 period also deserves attention, when, for unclear reasons<sup>4</sup>, the mortality rate was extremely high.

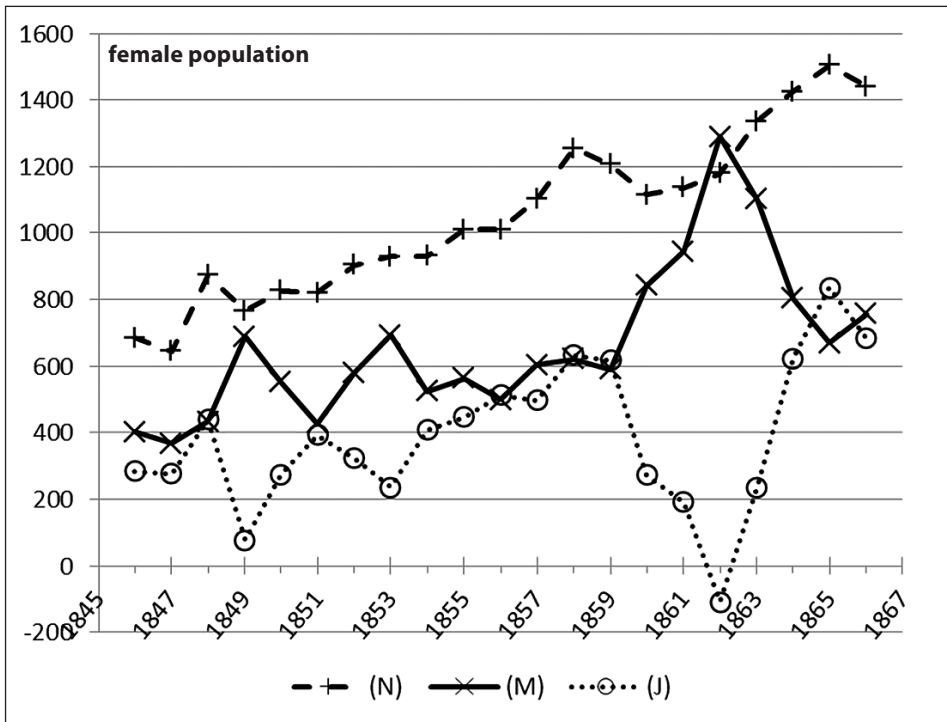
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<sup>3</sup> Of these, only the 1863 census was not considered entirely reliable, although more in the domain of property than population statistics [*Statistical Yearbook of Serbia I*: 86–87; Vuletić 2012: 11–13].

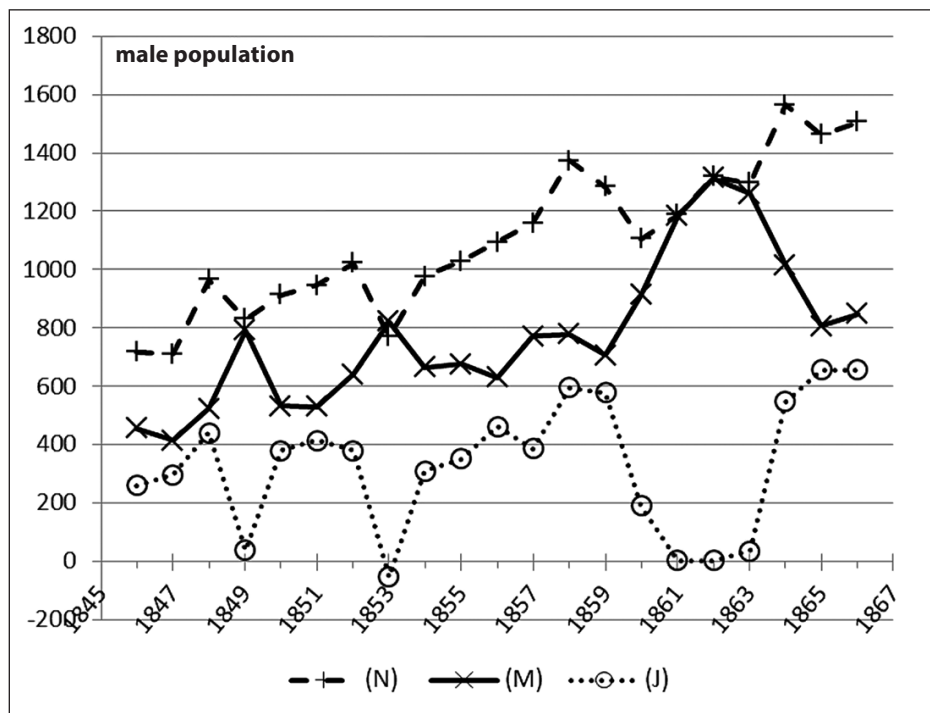
<sup>4</sup> During this period, there was a significant drop in livestock production, concomitantly with the reduction of cultivated areas per capita in the whole of Serbia. It is also indicative that, in the period of 1862–1864, the export of cereals and fruits was very weak (despite high demand in neighboring Banat due to drought), while fresh fruit imports were increased, indicating shortcomings in the domestic market. It is possible that economic factors also contributed to the increase in mortality rate [Jagodić 2004: 53; Miljković Katić 2014: 110, 126–128, 157, 202, 236].



Graph 1. Natural growth of the entire population 1846–1866.



Graph 2. Natural growth of female population 1846–1866.



Graph 3. Natural growth of the male population 1846–1866.

Table 2. Approximate rates of birth and mortality in Smederevo district 1846, 1850, 1854, 1859, 1863 and 1866.

Year	Population (P)		Birth rate (n) in ‰			Mortality rate (m) in ‰		
	Total	Sex		Total	Sex		Total	
		male	female		male	female		
1846 <sup>5</sup>	41.248	17,38	16,63	34,01	11,08	9,75	20,83	
1850	42.732	21,37	19,33	40,70	12,45	12,89	25,34	
1854	47.221	20,67	19,74	40,41	14,10	11,10	25,20	
1859	52.904	24,27	22,81	47,09	13,34	11,15	24,50	
1863	52.681	24,60	25,36	49,96	23,92	20,90	44,82	
1866	60.077	25,05	23,97	49,02	14,12	12,58	26,70	

Source: Data on population: [*Statistical Yearbook of Serbia I*: 88; *Statistical Yearbook of Serbia II*: 13; *Statistical Yearbook of Serbia III*: 100; Gavrilović 1851: 186–190; Gavrilović 1852: 228–229; Gavrilović 1857: 224–225]. The rates of birth and mortality calculated on the basis of the data in Table 1 and the formulas:  $(n = N \div P * 1000)$ ;  $(m = M \div P * 1000)$ .<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Data according to Gavrilović. In the Statistical Yearbook of Serbia, data on a total of 40,573 inhabitants of the district subsequently appeared as well, but without specifying the gender structure.

Natural increase, despite occasional oscillations, was certainly very high. Taking into account known data on the number of inhabitants from 1846<sup>6</sup> and 1866, it follows that the geometric rate of increase of the entire population of the district ( $j$ ) was 38.32% during that period. Natural increase for the period 1846–1865 showed a total of approximately 13,500 people, while total population growth was close to 19,000. A difference of about 5,500 people is too high to be a statistical error or a census deficiency. This difference points to the frames of the “mechanical inflow,” that is, the approximate number of immigrants. Based on these data, it follows that about 9% of the population of the Smederevo district in 1866 was not born there. In other words, immigrants accounted for approximately one-quarter of the total population increase. These are, of course, respectable numbers, which testify to the great impact of immigration on the structure of the population, and consequently on social trends in that area.

*Table 3.* Demographic growth components (inter-census population increase and natural increase) 1846–1866.

Population 1846	Population 1866	Population increase 1846–1866	Born (N) 1846–1865	Deceased (M) 1846–1865	Natural increase (J) 1846–1865
41,248	60,077	18,829	42,231	28,762	13,469

Source: *Table 1; Table 2.*

\* \* \*

The number of inhabitants of the Smederevo district increased by almost 50% in the mentioned period. The main cause should be sought in high natural growth, and partly, in the mechanical influx of population – immigration. Nearly one-tenth of the district’s population in 1866 consisted of immigrants, who made up a quarter of the overall population increase. Unfortunately, the lists used do not contain vital statistics for the regions or municipalities, which would provide insight on the micro level. There remains, too, an open question regarding the impact of immigrants on population increase. The tendency of

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The data from the Statistical Yearbook of Serbia is very confusing because it is said that this is the total number of all inhabitants, including Roma, unlike Gavrilović’s data from which they are excluded. For the other districts Gavrilović gives lower numbers than those given by the Statistical Yearbook, but in the case of the Smederevo district he gives a higher number, which is illogical. The data for 1846, which were subsequently published in the Statistical Yearbook of Serbia, show that in Serbia there were 13,377 inhabitants more than according to Gavrilović (including foreigners in 1846). This information is essentially in line with Gavrilović’s assertion that up to 15,000 Roma lived in Serbia at that time and speaks in favor of the credibility of the data from the Statistical Yearbook. Considering Milićević’s data that in the Smederevo district in 1866 there were a total of 2,498 Roma (or 4% of the population), it can be said that their number does not significantly affect the calculations regardless of the number of inhabitants for 1846 that is used. In this case, we have opted for the higher number, as it seems more realistic to us [Gavrilović 1851: 186-190; *Statistical Yearbook of Serbia III*: 104–105; Milićević 1876: 169].

<sup>6</sup> Taking into account the number of inhabitants for 1846, according to Gavrilović. See footnote 5.

birth rate growth suggests that the “new” residents in the district may have had a larger number of descendants than the native residents. An examination of the registries, as well as of preserved detailed census lists, could provide some answers to this question.

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Matica Srpska International Journal  
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*Publication of this issue was supported by  
City Department for Culture of Novi Sad and Foundation “Novi Sad 2021”*

## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES AND TREATISES

Srđa Trifković  
FROM UTOPIA TO DYSTOPIA:  
THE CREATION OF YUGOSLAVIA IN 1918  
1–18

Smiljana Đurović  
THE GREAT ECONOMIC CRISIS IN INTERWAR YUGOSLAVIA:  
STATE INTERVENTION  
19–35

Svetlana V. Mirčov  
SERBIAN WRITTEN WORD IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR:  
STRUGGLING FOR NATIONAL AND STATEHOOD SURVIVAL  
37–59

Slavenko Terzić  
COUNT SAVA VLADISLAVIĆ'S EURO-ASIAN HORIZONS  
61–74

Bogoljub Šijaković  
WISDOM IN CONTEXT: PROVERBS AND PHILOSOPHY  
75–85

Milomir Stepić  
FROM (NEO)CLASSICAL TO POSTMODERN  
GEOPOLITICAL POSTULATES  
87–103

Nino Delić  
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN THE DISTRICT  
OF SMEDEREVO: 1846–1866  
105–113

Miša Đurković  
IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL CONFLICTS ABOUT  
POPULAR MUSIC IN SERBIA  
115–124

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman  
TOWARDS A BOTTOMLESS PIT: THE DRAMATURGY  
OF SILENCE IN THE STRING QUARTET PLAY STRINDBERG  
BY IVANA STEFANOVIĆ  
125–134

Marija Maglov  
TIME TIME TIME: CONSIDERING THE PROBLEM  
OF MUSICAL TIME ON THE EXAMPLE  
OF VLASTIMIR TRAJKOVIĆ'S POETICS  
AND THOMAS CLIFTON'S AESTHETICS  
135–142

Milan R. Milojković  
ELECTROACOUSTIC MUSIC IN VOJVODINA:  
FROM EXPERIMENT TO ACADEMIC SUBJECT (1960–2000)  
143–156

Ljiljana Lazić  
THE ENDOWMENT OF DR. BRANKO ILIĆ:  
A VALUABLE COLLECTION OF FOREIGN ART IN SERBIA  
157–176

#### BOOK REVIEWS

Jelena Jovanović Beguš  
BALKAN MUSIC BEYOND THE EAST–WEST DIVIDE  
(Ivana Medić and Katarina Tomašević, *Beyond the East–West Divide. Balkan Music and its Poles of Attraction*, Institute of Musicology SASA, Department of Fine Arts and Music SASA, Belgrade 2015)  
177–178

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman  
SOVTIĆ'S MONOGRAPH ON BRUCCI  
(Nemanja Sovtić, *Rudolf Brucci's Non-Aligned Humanism: The Composer and the Society of Self-Managing Socialism*, Matica Srpska, Novi Sad 2017)  
179–180

AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE  
181–187

SYNAXA  
Matica Srpska International Journal for Social Sciences, Arts and Culture

*Publisher*  
Matica Srpska  
Matice Srpske Street No. 1  
21000 Novi Sad, Serbia  
www.maticasrpska.org.rs

*For Publisher*  
Prof. Dr. Đorđe Đurić  
Secretary General of Matica Srpska

Matica Srpska Department of Social Sciences  
*Associate of the department*  
Jovana Trbojević, PhD

*Technical editor*  
Vukica Tucakov

*Cover design*  
Atila Kapitanji

*Lay-out*  
Vladimir Vatić, GRAFIT, Petrovaradin

*Print*  
SAJNOS, Novi Sad

*Circulation*  
500 copies

CIP – Каталогизacija u publikaciji  
Библиотека Матице српске, Нови Сад  
3(082)

**SYNAXA** : Matica Srpska International Journal for Social  
Sciences, Arts and Culture / editor-in-chief Časlav Ocić. – 2017,  
1– . – Novi Sad : Matica srpska, 2017– . – 24 cm  
Godišnje  
ISSN 2619-9998  
COBISS.SR-ID 322560775