

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE SEASONALITY OF MARRIAGE IN RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

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Abstract

The article analyzes the religious influence on the regulation of the demographic behavior of the population, in particular the seasonality of marriages, using the example of the Orthodox parish of the village of Biloshytsi, Ovruch County, Volhynian Governorate, in the last quarter of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The study is based on an analysis of the metric records of St. Dmytro's Church and archival sources, which make it possible to trace the peculiarities of the marital behavior of the parish community. Particular attention is paid to the institutional influence of the Orthodox Church on the regulation of marriage practices through a system of religious and calendar restrictions associated with periods of fasting, major church feasts, and specific days of the week. The church calendar acted as one of the key factors shaping the seasonal dynamics of marriage. Based on a statistical analysis of metric records, it was found that the highest marriage activity occurred in January, February, and May, whereas during periods of religious fasting and major feasts the conclusion of marriages practically did not occur. At the same time, during the summer-autumn period marital behavior was additionally influenced by the agrarian cycle. A separate aspect of the study is the analysis of remarriages, which makes it possible to trace the correlation between religious norms, moral perceptions, and the pragmatic life strategies of the Orthodox population. It is shown that church prescriptions regarding the timing of marriage were generally observed by the clergy and parishioners; however, in the practice of remarriages a combination of religious norms with the economic and social needs of the family can be observed.

Keywords: religious identity, religious practices, church wedding, marriage, parish community, metric books, religious calendar, Volhynian Governorate, Right-Bank Ukraine, clergy, seasonality of marriages, church.

Introduction

Historical-demographic research is based on three main processes: fertility, marriage, and mortality. Unlike fertility and mortality, which are natural processes, marriage was subject to human will and determined by the socio-cultural and religious norms of the time. Only marriage (church wedding) constituted the legitimate basis for the creation of a family and the fulfillment of reproductive functions. Accordingly, this study focuses on the problem of marriage among the Ukrainian Orthodox population through the prism of the religious factor, which remained a key regulatory element of marital and family relations in the modern period.

To study marriage in the last quarter of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the method of microhistorical analysis was applied. This approach made it possible, using the example of a specific Orthodox parish, namely, St. Dmytro's Church in the village of Biloshytsi, Ovruch County, Volhynian Governorate, to determine the seasonality of marriages and the church-religious influence on them. In addition, the theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of marriage are presented in the work of Yu. Voloshyn. He thoroughly analyzes the socio-historical and historical-demographic dimensions of the Pyriatyn protopopy—a church-administrative unit of the Kyiv Orthodox Metropolis in the eighteenth century. Particular attention in the study is devoted to the parish community, which is examined in terms of its social structure and demographic indicators (fertility, marriage, mortality), not only by analyzing and interpreting each indicator but also by identifying the methodological tools for the study of demographic processes.¹

The chronological framework of the study covers the years 1875-1912, which is determined by rapid demographic growth in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the course of the research, 1,542 entries from parish marriage registers were analyzed, creating a representative sample for forming an understanding of demographic and social processes over nearly forty years. Metric records make it possible to analyze the main demographic indicators (seasonality of marriages, socio-age structure, remarriages), to determine social structure and mobility (the geography of the marriage market, marriage prospects), and thus to reconstruct the characteristics of marital and family relations.

Institutional Foundations of the Church Regulation of Marriage in an Orthodox Parish

¹ Ю. Волошин. Парафіяльна спільнота. Пирятинська протопопія другої половини XVIII ст. (соціально-історичний та історико-демографічний виміри). [The Parish Community of the Pyriatyn Protopopia in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century: Social-Historical and Historical-Demographic Dimensions]. Львів: Український католицький університет, 2023, 420.

St. Dmytro's Church in the village of Biloshytsi was built at the expense of the parishioners in 1776. Until 1912, the Dmytro Parish included the residents of the villages of Biloshytsi, Zhlobychi (Zlobychi), Kholosne, and Ioanivka. Geographically, the parish was located 75 *versts* (approximately 80 km) from the Volhynian Ecclesiastical Consistory in the city of Zhytomyr and 6 *versts* from the center of the 2nd Deanery District—the town of Iskorost.² During the studied period, the Orthodox population of the Dmytro Parish increased from 2,730 in 1875³ to 4,391 persons in 1909.⁴ In the social structure of the parish community, townspeople predominated, constituting almost the absolute majority in the village of Biloshytsi, whereas the other villages until the end of the nineteenth century were represented exclusively by peasants and a small percentage of military personnel.⁵

Religious life largely depended on the relationship between the priest and the parishioners. Thus, between 1875 and 1912 five parish priests served in the parish: Feofil Rybchynskyi (1867-1887), Mykola Shemetylo (1887-1888), Vadym Myroliubov (1888-1902), Oleksandr Tiiumenev (1902-1903), and Ilarion Myliasevych (from 1903). In the case of the Dmytro Parish, the priest's loyalty largely determined the duration of his tenure. Archival sources indicate that Feofil Rybchynskyi was rather accommodating toward the parishioners, particularly indulging wealthy families and avoiding conflicts with them, which was due to his poor health.⁶ At the age of 47, Rybchynskyi died, and Mykola Shemetylo (35 years old) was transferred to the parish.⁷ Shemetylo critically assessed the moral and religious condition of the parish and sharply criticized the actions of certain believers. In response, the parishioners

² Клировые ведомости. Овручский уезд. 1905 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 73. Спр. 296. Арк. 35-35зв. [Clerical Registers. Ovruch County, 1905. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 73, File 296, fols. 35–35v.].

³ Клировые ведомости. Овручский уезд. 1875 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 73. Спр. 271. Арк. 17зв. [Clerical Registers. Ovruch County, 1875. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 73, File 271, fols. 17v.].

⁴ Клировые ведомости. Овручский уезд. 1909 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 73. Спр. 299. Арк. 40зв. [Clerical Registers. Ovruch County, 1909. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 73, File 299, fol. 40v.].

⁵ Клировые ведомости. Овручский уезд. 1898 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 73. Спр. 292. Арк. 30зв. [Clerical Registers. Ovruch County, 1898. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 73, File 292, fol. 30v.].

⁶ Дело о священнике Былошицкого прихода Овручского уезда, Николае Шеметило, вымогательствах им платы при требоисправлениях, нанесение оскорблений прихожанам в церкви 1888 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 23. Спр. 225. Арк. 53. [Case concerning the priest of the Byloshytsi parish, Ovruch County, Mykola Shemetylo, regarding the extortion of fees for the performance of religious rites and the insulting of parishioners in church, 1888. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 23, File 225, fol. 53].

⁷ Ibid. Арк. 17-18. [Fols. 17–18].

filed a complaint against the priest, for which he was deprived of his clerical rank and sent to the Tryhiria Monastery to perform penance.⁸

Vadym Myroliubov served as the head of the parish for a relatively long period; clerical and archival records contain no information about complaints or conflicts with the parishioners.⁹ His successor, Oleksandr Tiiumenev (24 years old), a hereditary noble by origin, remained in the parish for less than one year and, by order of the consistory, was transferred to the position of district supervisor of church schools in the Volodymyr-Volynskyi County.¹⁰ Until the end of the studied period, the parish priest remained Ilarion Myliasevych, the son of a psalmist, who repeatedly received both ecclesiastical and secular awards, in particular for the successful fulfillment of pastoral duties during the revolutionary events of 1905-1907, for caring for wounded soldiers during the Russo-Japanese War, for organizing the food supply system of the district *zemstvo*, and for his educational activities.¹¹ Thus, the clergy not only influenced the demographic behavior of the believers in their parish but were also responsible for ensuring adherence to moral norms, church attendance, the observance of religious rites, and so forth. Moreover, considering the priest's influence on parishioners, through weekly sermons he also transmitted state interests.

It should be noted that marriage existed within the framework of customary, ecclesiastical, and secular law. Traditionally, marital and family relations were under the control of the community and were determined by socio-cultural norms. The responsibilities of the community included monitoring compliance with marriage strategies, adherence to expectations regarding family formation and childbearing, and the condemnation of premarital relations and adultery. From the first quarter of the eighteenth century, as a result of the reforms of the Russian Emperor Peter I, marriage law increasingly came under state control, and the

⁸ Ibid. Арк. 65. [Fols. 65].

⁹ Клировые ведомости. Овручский уезд. 1889 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 73. Спр. 284. Арк. 30. [Clerical Registers. Ovruch County, 1889. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 73, File 284, fol. 30].

¹⁰ Дело о назначении священника м. Былошиц, Овручского уезда Александра Тюменева наблюдателем школ Владимирского уезда. 1903 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 31. Спр. 1124. Арк. 1-1зв. [Case concerning the appointment of the priest of the town of Byloshytsi, Ovruch County, Oleksandr Tiiumenev, as supervisor of schools in Volodymyr County, 1903. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 31, File 1124, fols. 1–1v].

¹¹ Клировые ведомости. Овручский уезд. 1909 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 73. Спр. 299. Арк. 38зв. [Clerical Registers. Ovruch County, 1909. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 73, File 299, fol. 38v].

church, represented by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), became an institution of the state.¹²

The incorporation of most Ukrainian lands into the Russian Empire at the end of the eighteenth century, including Right-Bank Ukraine, contributed to the unification of ecclesiastical and civil legislation. Consequently, from the second half of the nineteenth century marital and family relations were regulated by civil legislation and the decrees of the Synod. According to imperial legislation, the right to marry was granted to persons of the Orthodox faith who had reached the prescribed age, 18 years for men and 16 for women, provided there was the personal consent of both partners and the permission of their parents. Marriage was prohibited for persons over the age of 80, for those already married, for individuals who had previously entered into three marriages, or for close blood relatives. In addition, marriages involving military personnel on active service required special permission. Violations of these rules were subject to consideration by an ecclesiastical court, which also determined the appropriate punishment.¹³

The church was responsible for ensuring compliance with imperial legislation, the registration of marriages, the issuance of marriage permits, divorces, and related matters. In particular, as confirmed by metric records and archival documents, marriages between persons of close kinship required special permission. For example, in 1903 the Volhynian Diocesan Authority, at the request of Pavlo Biloshytskyi, granted permission for his marriage to Mariia Biloshytska, with whom he had a fourth degree of kinship and with whom he had already lived in an unlawful union for three years, having extramarital children.¹⁴ Divorces occurred extremely rarely and were permitted only in cases of marital infidelity¹⁵ or the prolonged absence of one of the spouses.¹⁶ Moreover, from 1883 to 1904, according to a decree of the

¹² І. Петренко. Шлюбно-сімейні відносини в православній повсякденній культурі Росії XVIII ст. [Marriage and Family Relations in the Orthodox Everyday Culture of Russia in the 18th Century]. дис. док. істор. наук: 07.00.02. Київ. 2011, с. 81, 85.

¹³ Россия. Законы и постановления. Гражданские законы (Свод законов, том X, часть I), с разъяснением их по решениям Правительствующего Сената. [Russia. Laws and Regulations. Civil Laws (Digest of Laws, Vol. X, Part I), with explanations based on the decisions of the Governing Senate]. Санкт-Петербург, Тип. Юлия Андреевича Бокрама, 1869, 1-3.

¹⁴ Дело о разрешении брака Павлу Былошицкому с Матроной Былошицкой. 1903 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 31. Спр. 2273. Арк. 1-13в. [Case concerning the authorization of the marriage between Pavlo Byloshytskyi and Matrona Byloshytska, 1903. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 31, File 2273, fols. 1-13v].

¹⁵ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1907 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1230. Арк. 288зв. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-V), 1907. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1230, fol. 288v.].

¹⁶ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1899 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1160. Арк. 230. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1899. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1160, fol. 230.].

Synod, individuals who committed adultery were sentenced to lifelong celibacy, and the performance of a church wedding for such persons entailed ecclesiastical punishment.¹⁷ Thus, the conclusion of marriage (church wedding) was an act that fully belonged to the ecclesiastical-religious sphere, regulated and carried out directly by the church. Accordingly, this study turns to the metric records of the Orthodox St. Dmytro's Church in the village of Biloshytsi.

The Religious Calendar and the Seasonal Dynamics of Marriage: The Case of the Dmytro Parish

The most noticeable influence of the church on the demographic behavior of the population manifested itself in determining the period for contracting marriages. The calendar year contained a number of prohibited days and weeks for the performance of the wedding rite, which were strictly observed by the clergy. Despite the extension of religious prohibitions to other demographic processes, including conception, only marriage was entirely within the competence of the church. First and foremost, the days of fasting and major religious feasts were prohibited for weddings. According to the Julian calendar, the prohibited periods for marriage could be identified as follows: beginning in late autumn, from 15 November to 24 December, the Philip's Fast (Nativity Fast) lasted; it was fixed and repeated annually. In the post-Christmas period, the prohibition continued from 25 December (Christmas) until 6 January (Epiphany). The next was the Great Fast (Lent), the dates of which were movable: during the studied period, the earliest starting date was 4 February (1885),¹⁸ while the latest was March 7, (1888).¹⁹ It lasted seven weeks, but according to church canons it was preceded by the week of Maslenitsa and followed by Easter Week. Thus, these nine weeks were prohibited for the performance of wedding ceremonies. Metric records confirm this: in particular, in December and March—two months during which fasting periods were always present—no marriages were registered. The duration of the Apostles' Fast (Peter's Fast) depended on the date of Easter. It began one week after Trinity (this feast is also movable—the

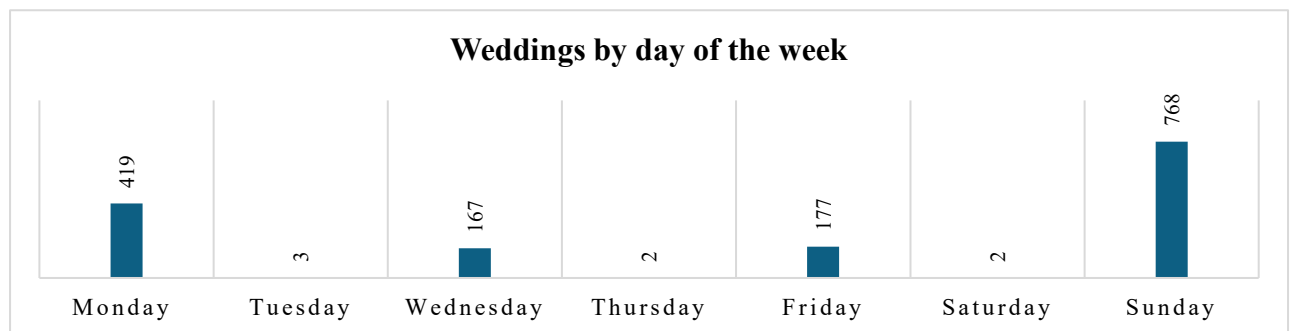
¹⁷ Об ответственности священно-церковно-служителей за повенчание, без разрышенія, лиц, бракорасторгнутых по вины их в прелюбодеянии. [On the Responsibility of Clergy for Performing Marriages, without Authorization, of Persons Whose Previous Marriages Were Dissolved Due to Their Adultery]. *Волинские епархиальные ведомости*. № 30, 1907, 687-689.

¹⁸ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1885 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 240. Арк. 185. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1885. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 240, fol. 185].

¹⁹ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1888 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 521. Арк. 213. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1888. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 521, fol. 213].

fiftieth day after Easter, hence its other name, Pentecost) and ended on June 29, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Accordingly, in the study there are years when the Apostles' Fast lasted the longest—from 20 May to 28 June (1885)—and the shortest—from June 20 to 28, (1888). The period of prohibitions concluded with the Dormition Fast, which lasted from August 1-14.

Priests also did not perform weddings on the so-called Twelve Great Feasts or on their eves. In addition to the already mentioned feasts of Christmas and Epiphany, these included: the Meeting of the Lord (February 2), the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos (March 25), the Ascension of the Lord (the fortieth day after Easter), Trinity (the fiftieth day after Easter), the Transfiguration of the Lord (August 6), the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos (August 15), the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (August 29), the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos (September 8), and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14). It is noteworthy that in the parish under study the day following Trinity—Monday (the Day of the Holy Spirit) was quite common for weddings. Religious prohibitions also applied to certain days of the week, namely the eves of fasting days, Tuesday and Thursday, and Saturday preceding the Sunday service. Consequently, marriages were permitted on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. Given these restrictions, both clergy and parishioners were expected to observe clearly defined norms. To assess compliance, we turn to the parish marriage records of St. Dmytro's Church in the village of Biloshytsi. Figure 1 presents the



number of marriages by days of the week during the period 1875–1912.

Figure 1. Marriages in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi by Day of the Week (1875–1912).

During the studied period, several cases of weddings performed on prohibited days were recorded, specifically three on Tuesday and two each on Thursday and Saturday. Most likely, this was not related to the priest's deliberate violation of religious rules. The majority of these marriages (four) were concluded in January–February 1900, when one additional day was

added to the Julian calendar. The parish priest at the time, Vadym Myroliubov, may not have taken this discrepancy into account, which resulted in an error in the records.²⁰

Two additional cases also occurred during Myroliubov's tenure, in 1897 and 1899. In these instances, we cannot exclude the possibility that, in exchange for a certain monetary reward, the priest may have violated church regulations and made concessions to the couple. This assumption becomes more plausible considering that one such marriage, dated February 11, 1897, was a remarriage for the groom, who came from another parish, while his bride was seventeen years younger than him.²¹ Such unions were often concluded hastily, since the marital prospects of one of the partners were, for various reasons, not considered particularly favorable. In this case, for the groom, who, for certain reasons, sought to remarry quickly, a significantly younger bride, who had remained outside the attention of local suitors, was entirely satisfactory. Likewise, for the bride, if her position within the parish was uncertain, marriage could have been the only viable option for improving her social standing. Therefore, it may be assumed that weddings performed on prohibited days of the week were motivated by the couple's desire to conduct the ceremony quickly and privately, without other couples present and without attracting the attention of the community.

Returning to Figure 1, it must nevertheless be noted that the clergy generally adhered strictly to religious norms, and the majority of weddings took place on Sunday. For example, in 1875-1888 approximately 82% of marriages were performed on Sundays. The choice of this particular day for the wedding ceremony was made due to its status as a festive day free from work. Moreover, on most such days the priest performed several wedding ceremonies simultaneously, which confirms the limited time permitted for the conclusion of marriages. Gradually, however, the statistics began to change. From the early 1890s onward, the wedding rite increasingly began to be performed on other permitted days of the week. Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the percentage distribution of marriages performed on Monday and Sunday amounted to 32% and 47% respectively. Around 10% occurred on Wednesday and Friday, which is further illustrated by the data presented in Table 1.

Weekday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Period	1875-1888 pp.							
Weddings	41	0	25	0	19	1	362	448

²⁰ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1900 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1170. Арк. 234, 237. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1900. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1170, fols. 234, 237].

²¹ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1897 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1132. Арк. 225. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1897. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1132, fol. 225].

%	9%		5%		4%	<1%	82%	100
Period	1889-1903 pp.							
Weddings	205	3	62	2	65	1	301	639
%	32%	1%	9%	1%	10%	<1%	47%	100
Period	1904-1912 pp.							
Weddings	173	0	80	0	93	0	105	451
%	38%		18%		21%		23%	100
Total	419	3	167	2	177	2	768	1538

Table 1. Periods of Marriages in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi by Day of the Week (1875-1912).

The changes were primarily caused by the overall increase in the number of marriages. If during the period 1875-1888 an average of 34 wedding ceremonies were performed annually, by 1903 their number had risen to 43, and by 1912 to 50. The personality of the priest also played an important role. For example, on January 25, 1887 Mykola Shemetylo performed nine wedding ceremonies on a single Sunday,²² whereas his successor Vadym Myroliubov distributed weddings throughout the entire month, performing them on all permitted days of the week. Thus, the growing workload of a single priest altered the approach to selecting the day of the week for the wedding ceremony.

It should be noted that the moral condition of the parish was effectively within the competence of the priest. Archival sources reveal that the parishioners of St. Dmytro's Church were characterized by unsatisfactory moral behavior, as indicated by the priest Mykola Shemetylo. In particular, he sharply criticized female drunkenness, cohabitation without marriage, the considerable number of illegitimate children and unmarried mothers, and the failure of believers to attend church even on major feast days.²³ Hence, priests increasingly avoided performing weddings on Sundays, since parishioners, instead of attending the Sunday service, focused on celebrations, violated the rules of conduct within the church, and ignored admonitions.

From 1905-1907 onward, political issues were added to ecclesiastical and moral concerns. The onset of the Stolypin reaction transformed the parish priest into an agent of state authority at the local level and an instrument of political reaction. Thus, between 1907 and

²² Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1887 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 515. Арк. 28-30. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1887. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 515, fols. 28-30].

²³ Дело о священнике Былошицкаго прихода Овручского уезда, Николае Шеметило, вымогательствах им платы при требоисправлениях, нанесение оскорблений прихожанам в церкви 1888 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 23. Спр. 225. Арк. 16. [Case concerning the priest of the Byloshytsi parish, Ovruch County, Mykola Shemetylo, regarding the extortion of fees for the performance of religious rites and the insulting of parishioners in church, 1888. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 23, File 225, fol. 16.].

1911 only one wedding was performed on a Sunday in the parish under study. Sunday therefore ceased to be the most suitable day for weddings and instead became a time of political pressure upon the community. During Sunday services priests delivered not only sermons of a religious and moral character but also explicitly political messages; consequently, the attention of parishioners was expected to be focused on the content of these announcements rather than on celebrations.

As a result, during the period 1907-1912, 38% of all marriages took place on Monday, whereas 18% occurred on Wednesday, 21% on Friday, and only 23% on Sunday, with a slight relaxation of this tendency in the final years under study. On Sundays, marriages were predominantly remarriages or unions involving representatives of other parishes, which were not accompanied by large gatherings, as well as marriages of “politically reliable” individuals – for example, the marriage of January 11, 1909, between the non-commissioned officer of the Volhynian Provincial Gendarmerie Directorate, Oleksandr Biloshytskyi, and Lidiia Shuber.²⁴ Thus, the choice of the day of the week for concluding a marriage was largely determined by the priest and constrained by religious norms. At the same time, even this process became an instrument for improving the moral condition of parishioners and exerting political pressure.

As with the choice of the day of the week for the wedding ceremony, the church calendar also shaped the monthly seasonality of marriages in the Dmytro Parish. The rhythm of marital activity was largely determined by Easter and the fasts associated with it—the Great Fast and the Apostles’ Fast. In this study, years with the earliest and the latest dates of Easter (Table 2) are used in order to demonstrate the dependence of marriage seasonality on the religious factor.

Year	Great Fast	Easter	Trinity	Peter’s Fast
1880	March 3-April 19	April 20	June 08	June 16-28
1885	February 4-March 23	March 24	May 12	May 20-June 28
1888	March 7-April 23	April 24	June 12	June 20-28
1891	March 4-April 20	April 21	June 09	June 17-28
1896	February 5-March 23	March 24	May 12	May 20-June 28
1907	March 5-April 21	April 22	June 10	June 18-28
1912	February 6-March 24	March 25	May 13	May 21-June 28

Table 2. Correlation of Great Fast with Easter, Trinity, and the Apostles’ Fast.

²⁴ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1909 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1247. Арк. 227. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B–V), 1909. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1247, fol. 227].

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of marriage formation in the Dmytro Parish, the monthly seasonality of marriages in the selected years is presented (Table 3).

Characteristic s	Year	Sum withi n year	Monthly weddings number											
			I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
General number of weddings per year	1880	30	0	15	0	0	9	0	2	0	0	2	2	0
	1885	34	11	0	0	6	3	1	0	1	0	6	6	0
	1888	37	9	13	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	4	5	0
	1891	38	1	15	0	0	6	7	0	0	1	5	3	0
	1896	38	11	0	0	3	7	0	5	0	2	6	4	0
	1907	39	4	10	0	0	7	8	1	0	0	2	7	0
	1912	60	26	0	0	10	13	0	4	1	0	5	1	0

Table 3. Monthly Seasonality of Marriages in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi in Selected Years (Based on 1880, 1885, 1888, 1891, 1896, 1907, and 1912).

Thus, as can be seen from the tables, in the years with an early Easter (1885, 1896, 1912) weddings began in mid-January, since Great Lent started in early February. Consequently, parishioners attempted to marry before the beginning of the fast so as not to wait for the next opportunity two months later.²⁵ The next wave of marriages occurred in April-May, in the period after Easter and before the Apostles' Fast.²⁶

In addition to the church calendar, the agrarian cycle also played an important role, as the spring period was associated with the intensification of agricultural work. As the data in Table 3 show, parishioners sought to conclude marriages before the start of the spring agricultural season. The influence of the religious factor can also be traced during the summer period. For example, in the indicated years the Apostles' Fast could last up to six weeks,

²⁵ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1885 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 240. Арк. 176-178. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1885. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 240, fols. 176-178].

²⁶ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1896 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1119. Арк. 210-212. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1896. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1119, fols. 210-212].

meaning that almost the entire month of June was prohibited for marriages,²⁷ even though the intensity of agricultural work somewhat decreased. Turning to the years with a late Easter (1880, 1888, 1891, 1907), we observe the opposite situation, since a significant proportion of winter marriages shifted from January to February.²⁸ In such years parishioners did not feel an urgent need to marry quickly, and weddings therefore took place during a month that was almost entirely permitted for marriage ceremonies. Accordingly, seasonal marriage activity shifted by one month, while March and April fell under a complete prohibition.²⁹

Another increase in marriages occurred in May and partly in June, which was due to the short duration of the Apostles' Fast (up to ten days).³⁰ An additional factor was the completion of the spring fieldwork, which made these months more favorable for parishioners. It is also worth noting that the day following Trinity (the Day of the Holy Spirit) was particularly popular among the faithful of St. Dmytro's Church.³¹ It may be assumed that the continuation of festive celebrations, the reduction in agricultural work, and the absence of a direct prohibition from the parish priest contributed to the choice of this day for weddings.

The second half of the year contained fewer religious prohibitions; however, the number of marriages was the lowest during this period. The summer and autumn seasons were influenced more strongly by the agrarian calendar than by the church calendar, as confirmed by the data presented in Table 4.

Characteristics	Year	Sum within year	Monthly weddings number											
			I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
General number of weddings per year	1875	31	7	8	0	3	8	0	0	0	2	3	0	0
	1876	18	6	1	0	3	5	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
	1881	24	6	2	0	1	5	2	0	0	0	1	7	0
	1884	42	5	9	0	2	10	0	2	0	1	5	8	0
	1900	47	13	6	0	2	13	1	0	1	3	1	7	0
	1901	47	17	2	0	6	7	0	1	1	2	4	7	0

²⁷ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1912 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1275. Арк. 283-294. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1912. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1275, fols. 283–294].

²⁸ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1880 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 217. Арк. 211-216. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1880. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 217, fols. 211–216].

²⁹ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1888 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 521. Арк. 214-219. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1888. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 521, fols. 214–219].

³⁰ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1891 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 538. Арк. 256-260. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1891. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 538, fols. 256–260].

³¹ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1907 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1230. Арк. 289-294. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1907. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1230, fols. 289–294].

	1909	51	17	0	0	3	12	0	2	0	1	6	10	0
	1910	62	8	26	0	1	4	7	0	1	1	2	12	0

Table 4. Monthly Seasonality of Marriages in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi in Selected Years (1875, 1876, 1881, 1884, 1900, 1901, 1909, 1910).

Thus, July, August, and September were unfavorable months for the parishioners of St. Dmytro's Church, who were occupied with harvesting and the preparation of crops. In addition, religious restrictions were also in effect, particularly those associated with the Dormition Fast and a number of August–September religious feasts.³² These observations are also illustrated by the diagram of the monthly seasonality of marriages during the studied period (Figure 2).

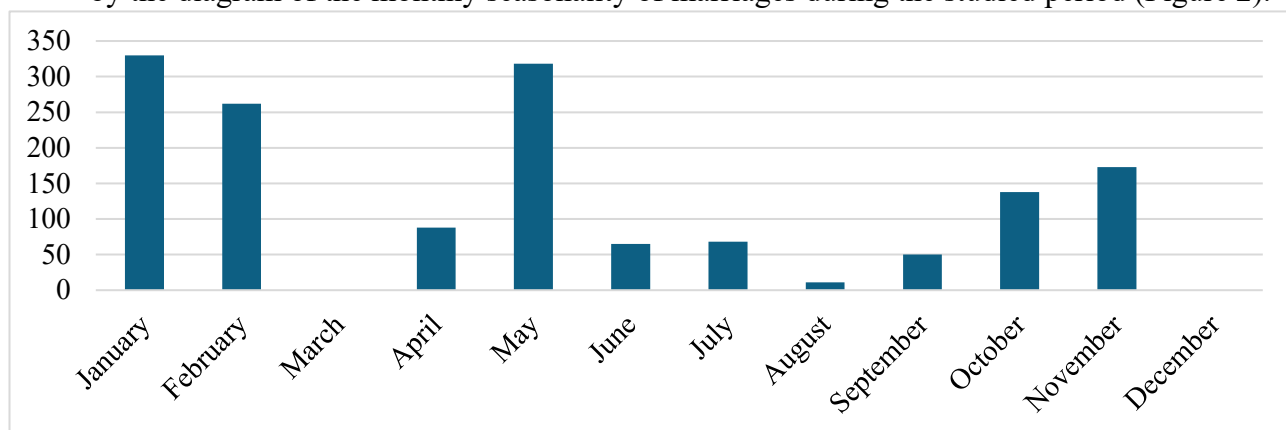


Figure 2. Monthly Seasonality of Marriages in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi (1875–1912).

It should also be noted that from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century the number of marriages in October and November increased. Despite the considerable number of marriages in November, they could only be concluded before the beginning of the Philip's Fast, that is, before November 15. In seeking an explanation for this seasonal increase, it is necessary to return again to the agrarian calendar. As noted by I. Petrenko, O. Siryi, and V. Tomazov in their study of marriage patterns in the settlements of the Hrun Cossack Company of the Hadiach Regiment in the first half of the eighteenth century, marital activity increased in autumn, which was facilitated by the completion of agricultural work, relative material prosperity, and, of course, the absence of religious prohibitions.³³

The research of Yu. Voloshyn on the Pyriatyn protopopy in the second half of the eighteenth century also confirms a slight increase in the number of marriages in October and

³² Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-П. 1875 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 51. Арк. 193-194. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B–P), 1875. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 51, fols. 193–194].

³³ І. Петренко, О. Сірий, В. Томазов. Шлюбність у населених пунктах Грунської сотні Гадяцького полку в першій половині XVIII ст. (за даними парафіяльних метричних книг 1723-1741 pp.). [Marriage Patterns in the Settlements of the Hrunska Sotnia of the Hadyach Regiment in the First Half of the 18th Century (Based on Parish Metric Books of 1723–1741)]. *Український історичний журнал*. Iss. 5 (2025), 125.

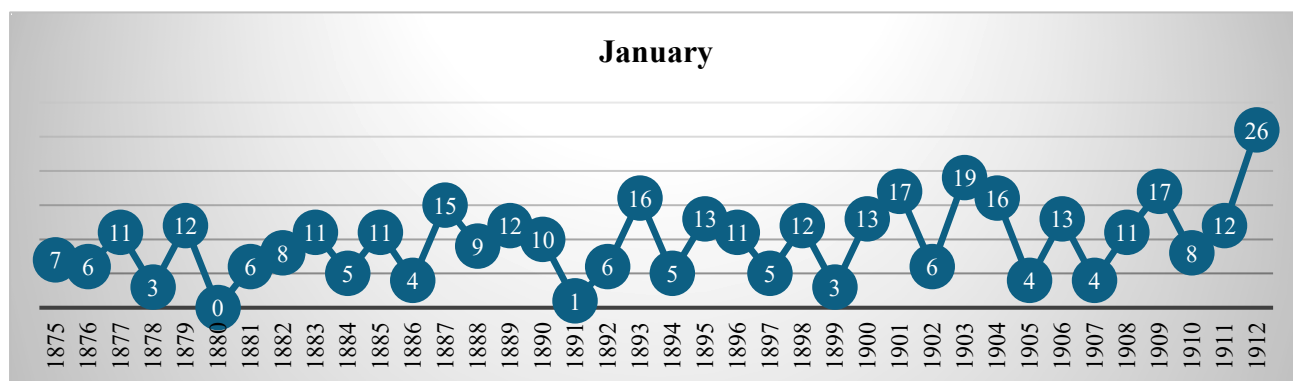
November. At the same time, the historian refutes the opinion widespread in ethnography (referring to the work of N. Zdoroveha) that autumn was the main wedding season. Instead, he identifies the months with the highest marriage activity as belonging to the first half of the year, namely January, February, April, and especially May.³⁴ It should be noted that the early modern tendencies observed in Left-Bank Ukraine were generally preserved in the Right-Bank provinces of the modern period as well, since they were determined primarily by church-religious norms.

Thus, the results obtained from the analysis of the metric records of St. Dmytro's Church in the village of Biloshytsi indicate that the principal wedding season should be considered the first half of the year. The greatest marital activity among parishioners occurred in January, February, and May, and from the beginning of the twentieth century October and November may also be added. While occasional deviations from religious norms occurred with regard to the choice of the day of the week, the indicators of monthly seasonality demonstrate the complete adherence of the clergy to the permitted periods for performing the wedding ceremony.

To further confirm the observance of the church calendar, the following diagrams (Figures 3, 4, and 5) illustrate fluctuations in marital activity across different years in relation to Great Lent, Easter, Trinity, and the Philip's Fast. It should be noted that, in addition to religious restrictions, the amplitude of these fluctuations also depended on the overall increase in the number of marriages in particular years. For an agrarian society of the modern period, the number of marriages was closely connected with climatic conditions and the harvest of the previous year, which determined the availability of resources for families to celebrate weddings. Fluctuations also depended on whether the previous year had been marked by epidemics or crop failures accompanied by high mortality.

³⁴ Ю. Волошин. Парафіяльна спільнота. Пирятинська протопопія другої половини XVIII ст. (соціально-історичний та історико-демографічний виміри). [The Parish Community of the Pyriatyn Protopopia in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century: Social-Historical and Historical-Demographic Dimensions]. Львів: Український католицький університет, 2023, 259.

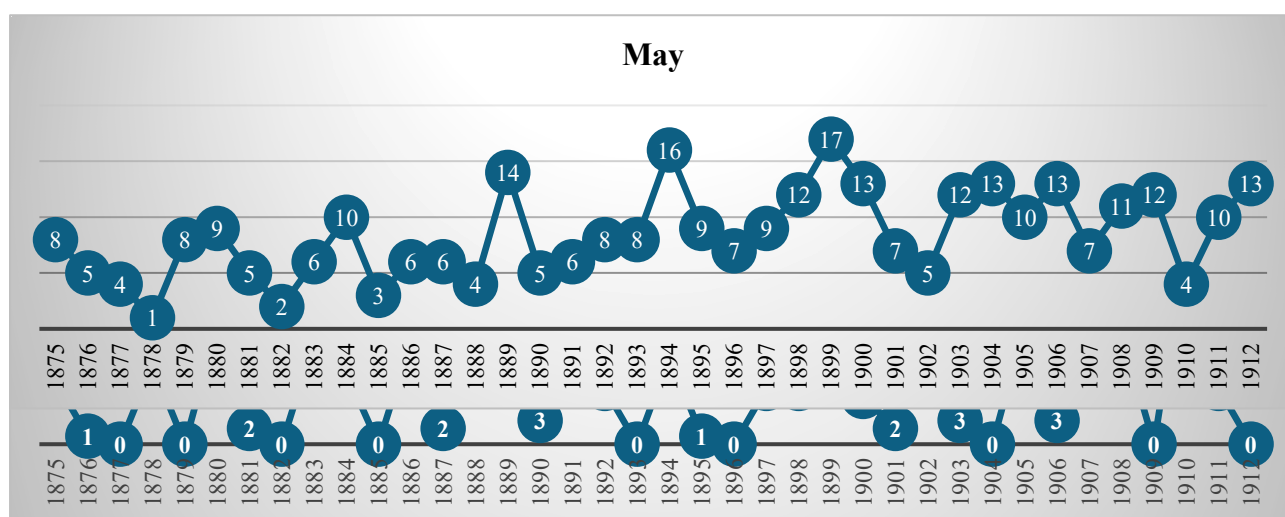
For example, in 1889 there were 51 wedding ceremonies,³⁵ whereas in the preceding and following years there were 37 each.³⁶ Accordingly, in 1888 high mortality rates were recorded, in particular due to the spread of dysentery, from which children suffered the highest mortality.³⁷ The following year, 1889, demonstrated a sharp increase in marriage rates, which likely reflects a response to crisis conditions aimed at population recovery, since with the increase in the number of marriages the birth rate also rose significantly in 1890 (from 177



births in 1889 to 222 in 1890).³⁸

Figure 3. Indicators of Marriage Activity in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi in January (1875–1912).

Figure 4. Indicators of Marriage Activity in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi in February (1875–1912).



³⁵ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1889 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 527. Арк. 392-403. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-V), 1889. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 527, fols. 392–403].

³⁶ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1888 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 521. Арк. 213-222. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-V), 1888. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 521, fols. 213–222].

³⁷ Ibid. Арк. 225-242. [Fols. 225–242].

³⁸ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1890 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 532. Арк. 95-129. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1890. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 532, fols. 95–129].

Figure 5. Indicators of Marriage Activity in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi in May (1875–1912).

As can be seen from the diagrams, a year with an early or late Easter can be identified by the number of marriages, particularly during the winter period. In years with a late Easter, the number of weddings in January declined or even equaled zero (as in 1880), which correspondingly increased the number of marriages in February. A similar correlation can be observed in years with an early Easter, when the majority of weddings took place in January, while February sometimes showed a partial or even complete absence of marriages, and the next increase occurred in May. Marriage activity in May, as shown in Figure 5, exhibited less pronounced peaks and depended on both the agrarian and the religious calendars.

Remarriages in the Context of Religious Norms and the Everyday Strategies of Parishioners.

An equally important issue in studying the church-religious influence on marriage is the phenomenon of remarriages. It should be taken into account that their share in the marriage structure of the Dmytro Parish was noticeable, and precisely these unions make it possible to reveal the features of everyday life among the Ukrainian Orthodox population in matters of morality, religion, and ritual practices. To begin with, it is important to outline how the Orthodox Church regarded remarriages. From a Christian perspective, as stated in the First Epistle to the Corinthians regarding married life,³⁹ marriage is considered a necessary and proper path for a believer in order to avoid the temptation of a licentious life, that is, intimate relations outside marriage. For widowers, the Church also advised marriage if they were unable to restrain their physiological desires. Thus, remarriages did not contradict Christian values and were even encouraged.

In general, marriage was not only regarded as the proper path but also as an opportunity for moral correction and the expiation of sins for such categories as individuals born out of wedlock, unmarried mothers, adulterers, and those suspected of premarital relations.

³⁹ Bible Gateway. <https://www.biblegateway.com>.

Overall, the monthly seasonality of remarriages did not demonstrate significant deviations from the indicators of first marriages (Figure 6).

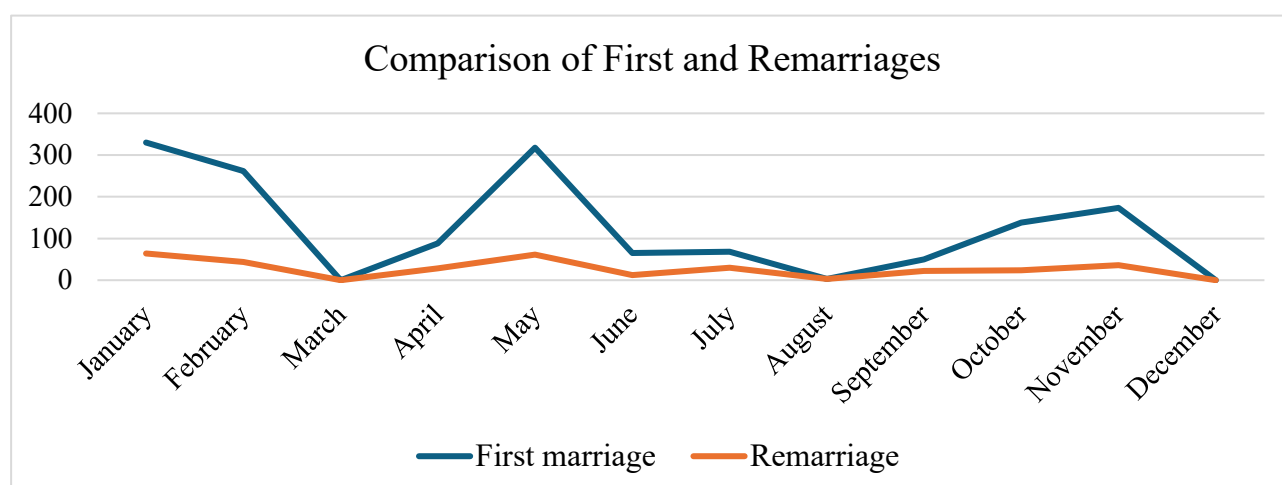


Figure 6. Comparison of First and Remarriages in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi (1875–1912).

From the presented diagram, it can be observed that the general trends in the seasonality of marriages remain largely consistent, with the exception of certain differences during the summer and autumn periods. In particular, during the period studied 30 remarriages were recorded in July, allowing this month to rank fifth out of twelve in terms of marital activity. An opposite situation can be observed in October: 24 remarriages and a seventh-place ranking, which is significantly lower than the indicators of first marriages.

It may be assumed that widowers and widows chose less common months for marriage, since the interval between the death of a previous spouse and the conclusion of a new marriage was often relatively short. The choice of a partner in remarriages was generally determined by more pragmatic considerations rather than emotional attachment; therefore, such marriages were often concluded quickly, frequently separately from other couples and without celebrations or the attention of the community. For example, on Sunday, February 8, 1881, only one marriage was recorded, that of the peasant Mark Perekhozhuk (21 years old) from the village of Ioanivka and the peasant Fekla Kosianchuk (20 years old) from the village of Zhlobychi.⁴⁰ For the groom this was his first marriage, while for the bride it was her second. Another case illustrates the reluctance to publicize a remarriage involving a woman with a marginal social status. On June 28, 1886, a resident of the village of Zhlobychi, Andrii Lytvynchuk (36 years old), concluded his third marriage with Pavvola Khodakovska (31 years

⁴⁰ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-Д. 1881 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 221. Арк. 310. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B–D), 1881. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 221, fol. 310].

old), a noblewoman from the village of Biloshytsi.⁴¹ For her this was the first marriage; however, she already had two children born out of wedlock. It should also be noted that the woman's social status was higher than that of the man, which also influenced the choice of a marital partner.

The scholar of the early modern period Yu. Voloshyn distinguishes several categories of remarriages: second marriages, when both partners marry for the second time; semi-second marriages, when only one spouse marries for the second time; third marriages, when both partners have already been widowed twice; and semi-third marriages, when one spouse enters a third marriage.⁴² As mentioned above, civil legislation and the Church officially permitted no more than three marriages. However, the Church retained the authority to consider a personal request from an individual wishing to marry for the fourth time and to grant the appropriate permission.

In the parish under study such a case occurred only once. On January 22, 1907, Mykhailo Biloshytskyi (31 years old) entered into his third marriage with Anna Biloshytska (18 years old), who was marrying for the first time. The marriage was dissolved on November 17, 1910, due to accusations of the husband's adultery. The reason for the divorce was that on March 22, 1909, he had fathered an extramarital daughter, Mariia, with his unlawful partner Iuliianiia Markivna.⁴³ According to the metric record, the man, "as one who had already been married three times, was forbidden to marry for a fourth time," and he was also sentenced to a seven-year ecclesiastical penance.⁴⁴ Since the Church was responsible for overseeing the moral conduct of parishioners, the man was not granted permission to remarry after the divorce; however, this did not prevent him from continuing to live in an unlawful union with another woman. Because ecclesiastical punishment was not accompanied by a real restriction of personal freedom, the prohibitions imposed by the Church were often ignored by parishioners. It should also be taken into account that Mykhailo Biloshytskyi was a young man of

⁴¹ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1886 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 509. Арк. 210. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B–V), 1886. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 509, fol. 210].

⁴² Ю. Волошин. Парафіяльна спільнота. Пірятинська протопопія другої половини XVIII ст. (соціально-історичний та історико-демографічний виміри). [The Parish Community of the Pyriatyn Protopopia in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century: Social-Historical and Historical-Demographic Dimensions]. Львів: Український католицький університет, 2023, 262.

⁴³ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1909 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1247. Арк. 209. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B–V), 1909. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1247, fol. 209].

⁴⁴ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1907 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1230. Арк. 289. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B–V), 1907. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1230, fol. 289].

reproductive age, for whom physiological needs evidently outweighed the desire to atone for sin.

Returning to the statistics of remarriages, the following situation emerges: semi-second marriages accounted for nearly 70% of all remarriages in the period 1875-1912. Among them, about 51% of marriages, 166 out of 324 cases, were unions between widowers and younger unmarried women or women with a marginal social status. For example, on January 15, 1896, the widower Zynovii Tkachuk (28 years old) married the 18-year-old Oleksandra Nesterchuk, for whom this was her first marriage.⁴⁵ In another case, in 1884 the widower Hnat Biloshytskyi (29 years old) married the unmarried mother Matrona Biloshytska (27 years old).⁴⁶ Approximately 18% (59 marriages) were unions between younger men and widows. Although such cases were less frequent, they were also conditioned by difficulties in finding a marital partner. For instance, on January 18, 1881, the illegitimate peasant Vasyl Novytskyi (21 years old) from the village of Zhlobychi married the widow Fekla Fedorenko (27 years old) from the same village.⁴⁷ The marital prospects of widowers, unlike those of widows, were significantly higher; therefore, they were able to choose wives regardless of their social status, though they often preferred younger women who could bear additional children and assist with household work.

The next category consisted of second marriages, which accounted for almost 19% of all remarriages. For example, on October 15, 1889, the widower Dmytro Biloshytskyi (38 years old), a townsman of the village of Biloshytsi, married the widow Oleksandra Biloshytska (33 years old).⁴⁸ Metric records indicate that his first wife Mariia and their seven-year-old daughter Iuliianiia had died on August 30 of the same year from dysentery.⁴⁹ Another case illustrates the economic motivations behind remarriage: on November 10, 1896, Moisei Stuzhuk (52 years old), a widower and peasant from another parish, married the widow Hanna Biloshytska (42

⁴⁵ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1896 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1119. Арк. 208. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1896. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1119, fol. 208].

⁴⁶ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-Д. 1884 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 236. Арк. 209. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-D), 1884. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 236, fol. 209].

⁴⁷ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-Д. 1881 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 221. Арк. 208. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-D), 1881. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 221, fol. 208].

⁴⁸ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1889 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 527. Арк. 401. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-V), 1889. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 527, fol. 401].

⁴⁹ Ibid. Арк. 418. [Fol. 418].

years old) from the village of Biloshytsi.⁵⁰ Thus, the primary motivation for widowers' marriages was usually the joint management of a household or the upbringing of children.

Semi-third and third marriages were the least common. Among them were 18 cases in which the marriage was the third for the man and the first for the woman; 2 cases in which it was the third for the woman and the first for the man; 10 cases in which it was the third for the man and the second for the woman; 7 cases in which it was the third for the woman and the second for the man; and only 2 cases in which it was the third marriage for both partners. In addition to the practical motivations behind such unions and the unwillingness to live alone, the position of the Church also played a role. As Yu. Voloshyn notes, such marriages were not encouraged but were still considered preferable to cohabitation without marriage.⁵¹

Thus, it is possible to determine the percentage ratio of remarriages to first marriages (Figure 7).

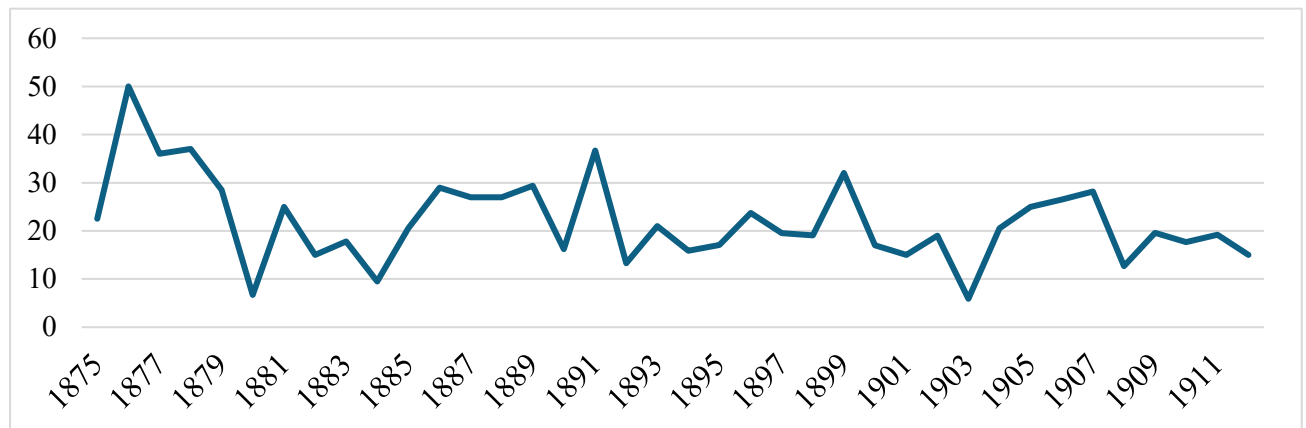


Figure 7. Percentage Ratio of Remarriages to First Marriages in St. Dmytro's Church in the Village of Biloshytsi (1875–1912).

The increase in the number of remarriages during the studied period can be explained by the presence of unfavorable conditions in certain years, as mentioned above, caused by epidemics or crop failures and the consequent rise in mortality, particularly among the adult population. In addition, periods of decline and growth may also indicate the participation of the Church in regulating marital practices. For example, in 1903 the parish priest of St. Dmytro's Church was replaced, which clearly affected the number of remarriages in the parish. As shown in Figure 7, in that year remarriages constituted only 5.9% of the total number of

⁵⁰ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1896 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1119. Арк. 216. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1896. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1119, fol. 216].

⁵¹ Ю. Волошин. Парафіяльна спільнота. Пирятинська протопопія другої половини XVIII ст. (соціально-історичний та історико-демографічний виміри). [The Parish Community of the Pyriatyn Protopopia in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century: Social-Historical and Historical-Demographic Dimensions]. Львів: Український католицький університет, 2023, 262.

wedding ceremonies.⁵² It is noteworthy that during the period from October 1902 to July 1903, when the parish priest was Oleksandr Tiiumenev, not a single remarriage was registered.⁵³ It may be assumed that the priest either did not approve of such practices at all or did not insist on obligatory marriage even when cohabitation outside wedlock occurred, since it was precisely in 1903 that the proportion of illegitimate children increased to 4.4%,⁵⁴ whereas in 1902 and 1904 this indicator was 2.9%⁵⁵ and 1.9%,⁵⁶ respectively. Already in the following year, 1904, the number of remarriages returned to the average level of almost 20%,⁵⁷ which indicates that the new priest, Ilarion Myliasevych, renewed attention to issues of the moral conduct of his parishioners.

Returning to the moral dilemmas surrounding remarriages, it should be noted that after the death of one spouse the other was expected to observe a mourning period (the ninth day, the fortieth day, and the anniversary). A widow or widower independently decided how long to maintain mourning, but external factors (young children, a large household, etc.) often encouraged a rapid remarriage. It should also be taken into account that interpretations of the value of human life in the modern period differed from those of today, and death as a commonplace phenomenon caused less emotional shock. The Church might not approve of rapid remarriages; the priest, for his part, could recommend maintaining mourning for a longer time, but he did not forbid remarriage if a necessity existed. In most cases, rapid remarriages were practiced by men, whereas widows were often viewed with suspicion regarding female independence and their status was emphasized as a deviation from the norm that could be corrected through remarriage.⁵⁸

⁵² Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1903 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1201. Арк. 313-323. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-V), 1903. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1201, fols. 313-323].

⁵³ Ibid. Арк. 313-319. [Fol. 313-319].

⁵⁴ Ibid. Арк. 281-312. [Fol. 281-312].

⁵⁵ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1902 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1190. Арк. 335-372. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1902. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1190, fols. 335-372].

⁵⁶ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-В. 1904 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1209. Арк. 238-270. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-V), 1904. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1209, fols. 238-270].

⁵⁷ Ibid. Арк. 271-279. [Fol. 271-279].

⁵⁸ О. Кісь. Жінка в традиційній українській культурі (друга половина XIX – початок XX ст.). [Woman in Traditional Ukrainian Culture (Second Half of the 19th – Early 20th Century)]. Львів: Інститут народознавства НАН України, 2012, 219.

For example, in 1896 alone, out of nine remarriages six were concluded within an interval of two to four months after the death of one of the spouses.⁵⁹ Several examples from 1896 illustrate this pattern: on January 15 Zynovii Tkachuk entered into a second marriage with Oleksandra Nesterchuk only two months after the death of his first wife Anastasiia;⁶⁰ on January 22 Andrii Petrenko remarried Domnykii Biloshytska, while his first wife Oleksandra had died on November 4, 1895;⁶¹ on May 15 Yosyp Stepanenko remarried Mariia Dubenchuk, although his first wife Iuliianiia had died on 23 January 1896 from fever, leaving behind a one-month-old child;⁶² on July 1 Roman Nazarchuk married Kateryna Chumak, even though his first wife Domnykii had died only on April 18, 1896.⁶³ Thus, if the widower or widow observed the mourning period and no religious prohibitions on marriage were in effect, remarriage occurred within the shortest possible time.

In addition, there are examples of violations of church prohibitions by both believers and priests. In particular, on November 11, 1877, the widower Dmytro Petrenko (31 years old) married the widow Marfa Zarytska (21 years old) only eight days after the death of his first wife Sofiia.⁶⁴ Within the chronological framework of this study, metric records indicate the existence of only one child, a son, Pavlo, born on 27 June 1877.⁶⁵ Regarding the priest, it is worth recalling the earlier characterization of Feofil Rybchynskyi, who, due to his poor health, avoided conflicts with parishioners and often made concessions to them; this may have been precisely such a case, taking into account the need to care for a four-month-old child. In the case of Dmytro Petrenko it can also be assumed that the approaching Philip's Fast and the Christmas holidays influenced the decision to remarry one week after the death of his first wife, since wedding ceremonies were impossible during prohibited periods and the priest would not have violated this restriction. Thus, sympathy for a widower left alone with a small child pushed ethical and ecclesiastical norms into the background.

Another example is the remarriage of April 6, 1912, between the widower Stefan Kolesnyk (36 years old) and the widow Hanna Tkachuk (30 years old), which took place twelve

⁵⁹ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1896 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1119. Арк. 207-216. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1896. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1119, fols. 207–216].

⁶⁰ Ibid. Арк. 208. [Fol. 208].

⁶¹ Ibid. Арк. 210. [Fol. 210].

⁶² Ibid. Арк. 212. [Fol. 212].

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б-И. 1877 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 208. Арк. 156. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B-I), 1877. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 208, fol. 156].

⁶⁵ Ibid. Арк. 126. [Fol. 126].

days after the death of his first wife Hanna during childbirth (the child also did not survive).⁶⁶ Metric records show that from his first marriage, which had lasted eighteen years, the man already had four children (no information about the bride's children was found).⁶⁷ Thus, the Church demonstrated flexibility and tolerated remarriages, taking into account the circumstances and the needs of marriage, thereby also caring for the moral condition of parishioners.

Conclusion

Marriage, as an important stage in the human life cycle, was subject to socio-cultural norms and religious canons. Marriage, as an important stage in the human life cycle, was subject to socio-cultural norms and religious canons. A decisive religious influence was evident in determining the date of the wedding ceremony, which shaped the seasonality of marital activity. Although the traditional rural environment of Ukrainian Orthodox communities and the agrarian cycle determined the availability of time and resources for celebrations, the religious calendar formed the foundation of marital seasonality. This confirms the institutional influence of the Church in regulating demographic behavior and private life.

The religious influence on marriage was manifested through the existence of prohibited periods for weddings, particularly during the Philip's Fast, Great Lent, the Apostles' Fast, the Dormition Fast, the Twelve Great Feasts, and their eves. From a Christian perspective these periods were devoted to spiritual purification, repentance, and restraint, which were considered incompatible with the festive character of wedding rituals. Similar prohibitions also applied to certain days of the week (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday). As a result, the Church strictly adhered to and enforced these restrictions, prohibiting marriages on forbidden dates, which is confirmed by metric records.

Religious restrictions directly influenced the demographic situation, creating statistical declines in the number of marriages in certain months and a complete absence of marriages in March and December. Depending on the dates of movable fasts, increases in marriages occurred in the months preceding them and immediately afterward. Thus, the peak periods for marriages were January, February, and May. In the second half of the year, the cycle of

⁶⁶ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1912 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 1275. Арк. 288. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1912. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 1275, fol. 288].

⁶⁷ Метрические записи по селам Овручского уезда. Б. 1894 г. Державний архів Житомирської області. Ф. 1. Оп. 77. Спр. 554. Арк. 239. [Metric Records for the Villages of Ovruch County (B), 1894. State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (Ukraine). Fond 1, Opys 77, File 554, fol. 239].

agricultural work also exerted a significant influence, resulting in a decline in the number of marriages during the summer and autumn months.

Ecclesiastical restrictions applied equally to couples entering their first marriage and to those remarrying. Within the marital structure of the studied parish, in addition to first marriages, second marriages, semi-second marriages, and the least common third and semi-third marriages can be distinguished. The general trends in seasonal activity were similar for both first and remarriages, with the exception of July and October, which suggests a desire to conclude remarriage quickly before the onset of a new period of religious prohibitions on weddings.

In addition to the restricted periods for wedding ceremonies, widowers were expected to observe a period of mourning; however, this requirement could be violated, and the Church itself tolerated rapid remarriages when small children required maternal care or when the approach of agricultural work threatened the survival of the household. Thus, widowed parishioners were forced to combine strategies of survival with the religious calendar, using short summer and autumn intervals that couples entering their first marriage usually did not choose. Cases of remarriage, despite adherence to religious restrictions regarding the timing of weddings, also demonstrate that the morality and religiosity of the population were often subordinated to pragmatic goals rather than purely spiritual considerations.

*The authors confirm that no AI tools were used in the preparation of this article.

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