

Rebeka Mesarić Žabčić: “Emigration from the island of Susak to the United States of America”

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Abstract

Due to the unfavourable economic and political conditions in Croatia in the Habsburg period of and the unstable times in later periods, and due to the frequent inability to feed their families, many residents of Susak (*Sušćani*) emigrated, for the most part, to the USA, more precisely to New Jersey. A significant reason for emigration was the high tax on wine, the main product of Susak. The subject of this research is the population of the island of Susak, the consequences of emigration, and the assimilation and acculturation of the *Sušćani* in the new homeland. The article examines selected demographic processes on the island of Susak based on the census of the competent diocese and data from the population censuses. The period of the research encompasses the beginning of emigration from the island until the present day.

Key words: demography, depopulation, emigrants, migration, Susak

Introduction

The migration is not a new phenomenon and not all areas have been subject to migrations equally in particular time periods. The Croatian islands were frequently at the centre of turbulent European events that were directly reflected in the socio-political changes occurring on these islands. The phenomenon of emigration from the Kvarner islands, to which the island of Susak belongs, began during the 19th century and has lasted to the present day.

This research covers the process that influenced the emigration of islanders to the USA. It establishes the specific periods of emigration from Susak, analyses population censuses from 1857-2011, detects chain migration from Susak, includes and analyses the emigrated families in the USA, analyses selected interviews from field work, draws attention to the consequences of emigration and shows the types of assimilation and acculturation present in the new homeland. It is proposed that individual migrant experiences, international migration processes and the diffuse circulation of people can be a valuable contribution to a better understanding of contemporary migration flows. Simultaneously is offered a partial insight into the process of establishing familial and social networks in localities where migrants live and a focus on the accommodation to a new locality and society and on mobility as a way of life. On the other hand, the life experience of migrants enriches knowledge about migrations and contributes to a wider understanding of this phenomenon, which opens many new questions and encourages further reflections and future research.

Methodological observations and methods of research

It is important to draw attention to the fact that the data on births in the Republic of Croatia has been recorded in the census books in the State Bureau of Statistics since 1963, while data for deaths has been recorded since 1964 and this only for settlements that have had the status of independent settlements since that year. Susak had the status of an independent settlement in 1963, while there is no similar data for earlier

census years. Therefore, data for births and deaths in this article are presented only for the years between 1964 and 2011. Data for births and deaths before 1964 were recorded thanks to the so-called *Računima od duš*, the documents which priests were obliged to send at the end of the year to the competent diocese. It is not surprising that for certain census years exists a discrepancy when compared to the population census of the State Bureau of Statistics from the year 1964. Data on births and deaths before 1964 are therefore presented in this article by listing the *Računima od duš* since the same list has only been accessible since 1901. It is also necessary to stress that external migration has only been recorded in population censuses since 1971.¹ The migration balance for the island of Susak for the period between 1961-1991 is – 65.6% and belongs to the E4 type. Like majority of Croatian islands in the Adriatic, it has been demographically broken.² Podgorelec analysed the migration balance for Susak for the period between 1962 and 1991. In the period 1962-1971, the balance was –753, between 1971 and 1981 the balance was –9, and between 1982-1991 it was –20. Podgorelec emphasizes that Susak in this regard is foremost amongst the islands of the archipelago of Lošinj.³

It is also necessary to mention that present research was conducted in cooperation with a larger group of immigrants from Sušak who live in New Jersey. Only two of these people were willing to enable the author an insight into private documentation and make available the statistical data shown in this article and without which this research would be incomplete. During the research, the work tasks included collecting and analysing existing statistical and other documentation on the population of Susak, field research that consists of partly structured interviews with 95 emigrants from Susak, the ‘oral history’ method and, finally, the elaboration of the work based on the results of the research. The partly structured interviews recorded:

¹ Friganović (2001): 37-53.

² Friganović & Šterc (1981): 152-57.

³ Podgorelec (1999): 515-30.

name, sex, age, year of birth, occupation, completed schooling, the place of interview, and the manner of finding collocutors. Each interview contained 20 main questions about the life of the collocutor. The conversation extended in different directions, while everything the collocutor considered important to articulate and everything that marked the life of that individual was recorded. It is important to note that this research was conducted in cooperation with a larger group of *Sušćani* who live in New Jersey, and who were willing to explain in detail the background to their emigration from Susak as well as hitherto lesser known facts connected to emigration from Susak.

Background and phases of emigration from the island of Susak

Consistent with the accessible documents on Susak, it is necessary to explain the background to the emigration. The identity of the first islander to migrate to the United States from Susak is unknown. It is considered that a significant characteristic of the emigration from Susak was provided, along with the generally known factors of emigration ('push and pull' factors),⁴ by the long maritime tradition of Cres and Lošinj.⁵ The strong development of maritime affairs on the Kvarner islands during the 18th century consequently stimulated the systematic education of sailors. The development of navigation also stimulated the rise of shipbuilding, at first for the repair of ships, and afterwards for the new building of ships with sails.⁶ The fall of the

⁴ For more on the 'push and pull' factors of emigration see: Friganović (1990); Wertheimer-Baletić (1999).

⁵ In an administrative sense, the island of Susak was and is still today subject to the administration of Mali Lošinj and everything that applied to the political and social situation of Cres and Lošinj also applied to Susak. Maritime affairs have been present on Susak since the 15th century, which redirected the acquired agricultural and stock-breeding habits of the islanders toward greater engagement on foreign ships, with the largest number on Venetian and Ragusan ships. On the nearby island of Lošinj, Veli and Mali Lošinj have begun to stand out as maritime centres – cf. Bozanić (1997).

⁶ An important indicator of the prevalence of the maritime tradition was the confraternity of St. Nicholas in Mali Lošinj, founded in 1704, while the brothers

Venetian Republic in 1797 only caused a momentary stagnation in maritime affairs and a new momentum very quickly followed.⁷ The exchange of the Habsburg, French and then Habsburg rule again, brought many changes on the political and administrative stage. In 1806 Mali and Veli Lošinj became independent in relation to the municipality of Osor when two important maritime institutions were founded in Mali Lošinj: the harbour-master's office and the sanitary commission.⁸ In 1814 the Viennese government separated Cres, Lošinj and Krk from the Dalmatian province and joined them to the administration of Trieste, which directed the islanders toward Trieste. Many well-to-do families, such as Premuda, Tarabochia, Ivančić, Kozulić and shipowners settled in Trieste, Rijeka or Venice in times of crisis. Through the initiatives of parish priests and shipowners, shipbuilding in Lošinj was restored and improved. In this period, there are even two private shipyards belonging to Antun Kozulić and Marko Martinolić.⁹

Mali Lošinj was already included in the regular cargo-passenger shipping line of Trieste-Kotor in 1838, while the entire 19th century was a period of rapid prosperity for Lošinj. The sailing vessels of Lošinj capable of long voyages were the first to link the economy of the Habsburg empire with transatlantic countries. These island ships sailed and were put to shore in all the larger ports of the Mediterranean, Black Sea, Western Europe, and North Sea, and were also linked with the main maritime centres of North and South America until the mid-19th century. This was conducive to the islanders becoming acquainted with transatlantic regions and becoming persuaded in the stories of their countrymen about the conditions of life there, which partly influenced

Petar and Anton Budinić from Lošinj had already sailed to American ports in 1784 and even reached Jamaica, cf. Bozanić (1997).

⁷ Sources bear witness that in 1803 Mali Lošinj possessed 154 ships while Veli Lošinj had 33, cf. Bozanić (1997).

⁸ Bozanić (1997): 51-55.

⁹ In the 19th century, the golden age of shipbuilding on the island of Lošinj, there were 12 shipyards operating on the island in total, see Bozanić (1997).

the later emigration of islanders across the ocean. With the establishment of a regular steamship line between Trieste and Rijeka in 1854, which included Cres, the islanders became considerably more mobile, and it was precisely these permanent connections with Pula, Rijeka and particularly Trieste that alleviated the emigration of Sušćani to overseas countries.

In 1858 occurred the world economic crisis, which was particularly reflected on the life of the islanders. In the background of the maritime crisis was the struggle between sailing vessels and steamships. Shortly, after a new crisis in 1880, the Lošinj sailing vessels began to descend the stage and finally yielded the trading arena of the world's seas to the more modern and economical steamships. Due to the absence of new orders the shipyards of Lošinj began to be extinguished, with the only remaining ones exclusively those that could be accommodated to the new needs of the market. Until the times of crisis, the islanders of Cres-Lošinj worked well in producing ships, but with the arrival of the steamship many remained without work and saw a way out by emigrating from the island.¹⁰

Emigration to New York and its surroundings unfolded in three phases.

In the beginning the emigration of *Sušćani* to New York does not stand out, but rather all the islanders of the Cres-Lošinj archipelago are mentioned together. In the period of the 1880s and 1890s it was mainly men who emigrated and they did not have the intention of permanently remaining and only a few married in America. The majority returned

¹⁰ In the Habsburg era, Trieste established itself as the largest maritime-trading centre, and consequently many captains and shipowners emigrated to Trieste, among them the brothers Kozulić, who founded their steamship company 'Austro-Americana & Fratelli Cosulich' in Trieste and introduced a regular line to North America in 1900. In 1912 they had 33 steamships at their disposal and they also established the shipyard *Cantiere navale Triestino - Bozanić* 1997. In the wake of the conditions of that period, the passage to the United States was 'open' to Sušćani.

to the homeland where they arranged a marriage but they would return to America on their own. The largest number of settled islanders at that time lived in the areas of Manhattan, Brooklyn, New Jersey and the Bronx. The years of intensive emigration from Susak were 1906 and 1907 and the years immediately prior to the First World War. In this period emigration was particularly influenced by the Wine clause, a component part of the trade agreement which Austria-Hungary concluded with Italy in 1891. With this agreement, the duties on the importation of Italian wine¹¹ were reduced so that Italian wine flooded the Austro-Hungarian market, and since wine was the main source of income for the Suščani, this regulation was not to their benefit. The first migrant groups during the first period of emigration consisted of merchants, sailors, fishermen, farmers and a few adventurers. The migration was of a local character, individual and was not yet massive.¹²

After the First World War, the Cres-Lošinj archipelago was annexed by Italy which led to strengthened connections between the island population and Italy. In the interwar period, the shipping industry of Mali Lošinj stagnated and consequently it is assumed that due to the impossibility of finding employment on the islands, the number of settlers from Cres-Lošinj and Susak to the USA increased. The life of men was mainly connected to ports and ships, while the women lived together with them in smaller board houses. The desire of many to temporarily remain in America was not realized. The majority temporarily returned to the old country, and arranged marriages or married on Susak in a very short period and then returned to America with their wives.¹³ In 1921 restrictive laws on immigration were passed, which prevented the free influx of a new population and according to the so-called 'quota system' only permitted the immigration to the USA

¹¹ Austria-Hungary made this concession for political reasons, in other words to more strongly attract Italy as a dissatisfied member of the Triple Alliance. For more on this, see: Antić (2002): 76.

¹² Mesarić Žabčić (2010): 29-35

¹³ Bozanić (1997): 60-67

of a specific percentage of individuals from the total number of registered inhabitants of a particular nation.¹⁴ The world economic crisis of the 1930s only temporarily returned many emigrants to their old country.

We know from history that after the Second World War, Cres, Lošinj and Susak were returned to Croatia within Yugoslavia. The free trading connections with Italian ports created over the centuries were now interrupted. In the first post-war years it was difficult to find any sort of work on Susak, apart from the fish factory which operated until 1963 (confirmed by the locals, Mr. G. B.), and can you imagine how young people could not find any life prospects on the island. In the period after the Second World War, the islanders already had cousins in America and in neighbouring Italy. The maritime orientation of the numerous population of the island found an alternative in emigration and this led to the first massive post-war migration. The migration of the island population was continued illegally in Italy in the 1950s. The islanders who managed to cross the border spent some time in refugee camps in Italy from which they very quickly immigrated to America (confirmed by the locals, Mr. G. B.). During the 1960s the procedure of acquiring a passport was simplified and only then did the Sušćani settle massively in New Jersey. In this period the population of the island of Susak almost completely moved out. In analysing the phases of emigration, it can be concluded that in the time-period between 1960 and 1970 there occurred a massive exodus of the population of Susak. This fact is supported by the following figures: in 1961 Susak had 1199 inhabitants, while a decade later, in 1971, that number was reduced to 323 (Table 1). The reason for this, alongside the well-known misfortunes, was the high tax on wine in 1964.¹⁵ In the 1980s, migration occurred individually, while during the 1990s emigration from Susak

¹⁴ *1921 Emergency Quota Law* (An act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States), 67th Congress; May 19, 1921. Available from: <http://library.uwb.edu/Static/USimmigration/42%20stat%205.pdf> (last access 24/1/2017).

¹⁵ Ribarić (1957): 311-28.

did not significantly increase. In the USA before the Second World War most of the *Sušćani* lived in the western part of Manhattan or Brooklyn, while in the 1950s they began to settle in Astoria or in New Jersey where real estate prices were more affordable.¹⁶

Population censuses as *indicators* of emigration

The socio-economic development of Susak already influenced the demographic development of the island from the first half of the 19th century. The demographic implications for Susak in comparison with other islands in the Kvarner region were mitigated to the extent that Susak retained its traditional economic structure - agriculture, fishing and livestock-breeding.¹⁷

The population censuses of the Cres-Lošinj archipelago were carried out in the period of Austro-Hungarian rule (1857-1910), continued under Italian administration (1921 and 1931), in the Yugoslav federation (1945-1991) and in the Republic of Croatia (2001 and 2011). The population censuses in the period of Austro-Hungarian rule, under Italian administration and in the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were conducted in accordance with the method of the present population (*de facto*). Consistent with this definition, every individual was listed in the census as an inhabitant of that settlement where he or she happened to be found at the time of the census. All population censuses from 1948 and including 1948. were carried out in accordance with the conception of the so-called permanent population (*de jure*). Therefore, from 1948 to 2011, all individuals who have permanent residency in some area, but were absent due to schooling, illness, travel and the like, were listed.

The first significant decline of the population was recorded in the period between 1890 and 1900 due to phylloxera, the disease of grapevines and several consecutive dry years on the islands.¹⁸ The

¹⁶ Božanić (1997): 45-80; Mesarić Žabčić (2010): 29-44.

¹⁷ Lajić (2006): 133-68.

¹⁸ Lajić (2006): 163-64.

aforementioned ‘Wine clause’ of 1891 also had an influence. Although the trend of emigration of Suščani toward the United States of America was permanently present, the massive exodus of Suščani was recorded between 1960 and 1970 (Table 1 and Graph 1).

Table 1:
The number of inhabitants of the island of Susak in the population censuses from 1857 to 2011¹⁹

Census year	The number of inhabitants
1857	1089
1869	1095
1880	1111
1890	1333
1900	1335
1910	1412
1921	1564
1931	1541
1948	1629
1953	1434
1961	1199
1971	323
1981	247
1991	188
2001	188
2011	147

¹⁹ For more on this see: www.dzs.hr (under: Naselja i stanovništvo RH 1857.-2001).

Graph 1:
The fluctuation of the number of inhabitants on the island of Susak according to population censuses 1857-2011

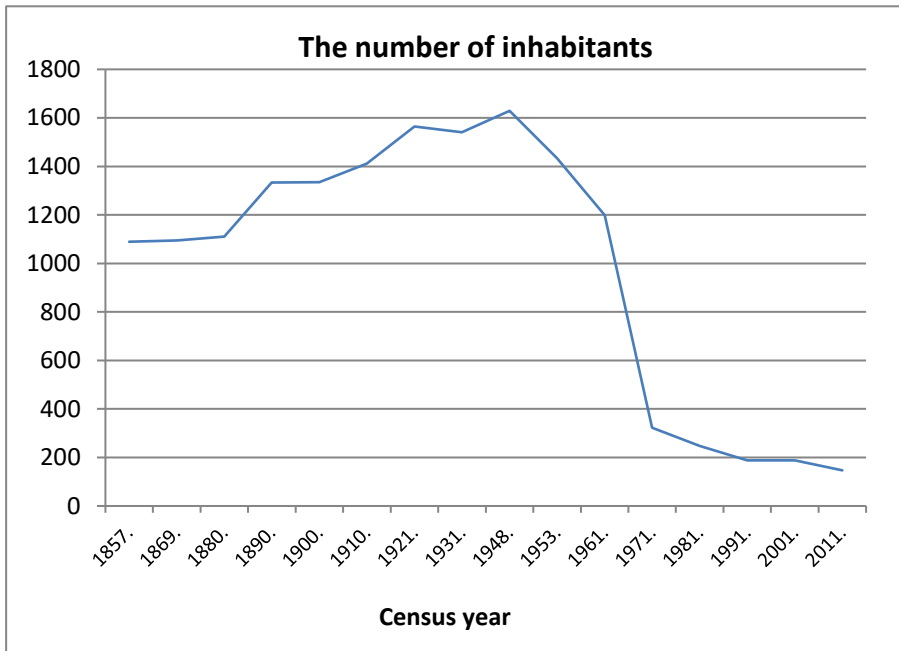


Table 2 shows the number of births and deaths on Susak and the number of emigrants from the island in the United States of America which was estimated on the basis of the census *Računima od duš*.²⁰ According to the *Računima od duš* from 1901 to 2000, a total of 2417 individuals emigrated from the island of Susak to the United States. One can conclude that the number of migrant islanders from Susak is considerably large if we compare the number of migrants with the total size of the population of Susak, according to the census years.

²⁰ Turčić (1998): 35.

Table 2:

The number of births and deaths on Susak and the number of emigrants from the island. Source: the relevant diocese; the census *Računima od duš*

Year	The number of births	The number of deaths	The number of emigrants
1901-1910	521	438	86
1911-1920	545	485	170
1921-1930	718	431	279
1931-1940	491	251	326
1941-1947	309	176	240
1948-1952	138	82	156
1953-1960	204	177	328
1961-1970	59	173	448
1971-1980	11	96	371
1981-1990	16	80	0
1991-2000	16	41	13
Total	3028	2430	2417

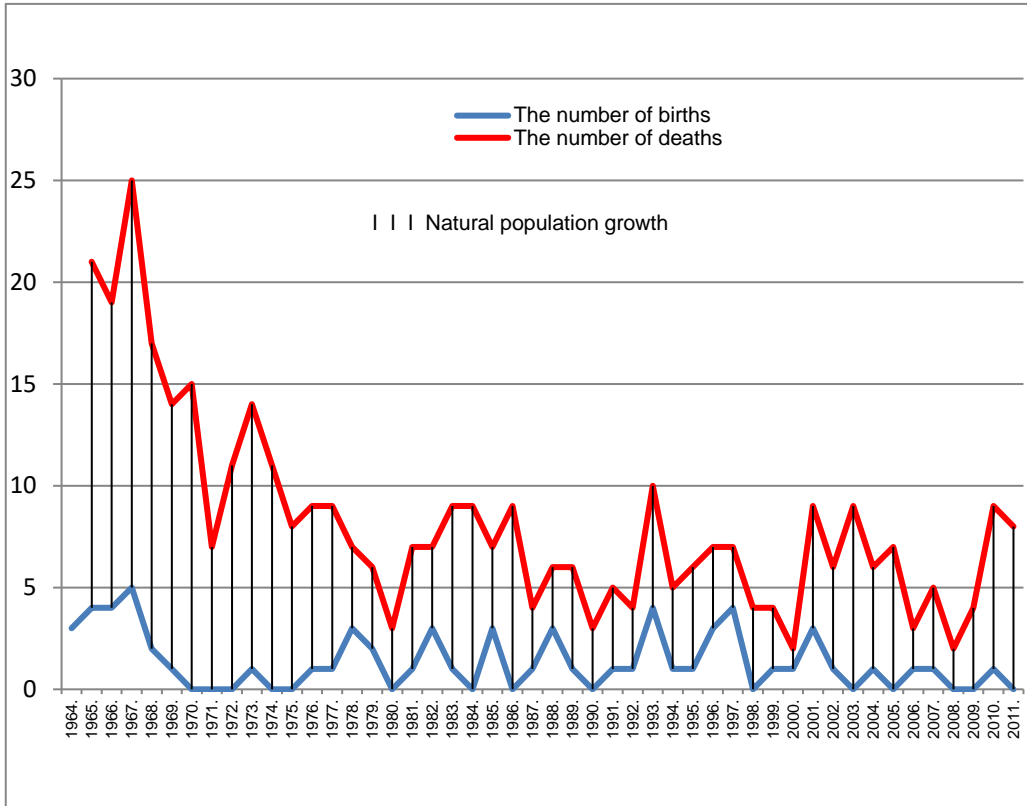
It is worth stressing that Table 2 only includes those individuals who migrated to the United States of America, while all remaining individuals who emigrated overseas or migrated within their native country are not included in the table of the competent diocese since no one kept records about these people in this period. It is considered that there are probably more than several hundred of such emigrants from Susak.

Emigration was strengthened in the 1950s (Table 2) and the culmination of emigration, as shows the data from the population censuses, occurred in the period between 1960 and 1970, while it can be noted that emigration from Susak declined during the 1980s (Graph 1). The total number of inhabitants of the island of Susak was reduced by 30% in the aforementioned period, while the island remained without its most vital and productive population with the emigration of younger Suščani.²¹

²¹ See more: Lajić (2006).

Graph 2:

The natural fluctuation of the inhabitants of Susak from 1964 to 2011.
Source: the competent diocese; the census *Računima od duš'* and www.dzs.hr



From 1963 borders were opened so that in the decade from 1960 to 1969 more than 60% of the island's population emigrated, while the shortage of a generally younger population and work force led to the collapse of the organization of the production of wine and fishing activities, since almost all Susak families found their source of income for everyday life in the fish processing factory, fishing, viticulture and wine cellars. The restructuring of the primary sector of activity on the island and the introduction of a tax on wine in 1964 had as a consequence the emigration of islanders from Susak.²²

²² Friganović (2001): 37-53; Ostojčić (2002): 387-408

In the period from 1970 to 1979, 30% of the remaining population emigrated to the United States of America, more precisely to New Jersey.²³ A lower drop in emigration from Susak was recorded in the 1980s. During the period from 1980 to 1989, after many people able to work emigrated, the remaining population of Susak was stabilized to around 200 inhabitants (www.dzs.hr).

In the period from 1990 to 2000, after the end of the Croatian War for independence, a small number of older Sušćani returned to the island from the USA. These are negligible indicators in relation to the general results of the exodus.²⁴

From the natural fluctuation of the population of the island of Susak (Table 2) one can conclude that in some periods from 1901 to the end of the 1950s the population showed a tendency toward growth, but the increase of the population was simultaneously broken by the permanent emigration from the island. The basic characteristics of the natural fluctuation of Susak in the period between 1964 and 2011 are the relatively low birth rates and relatively high rates of mortality, and the negative natural growth of the population (graph 2). Every shock of an economic and political character acted upon the emigration of Sušćani. One can conclude from the population censuses that the number of inhabitants of Susak at the beginning and middle of the 20th century was almost equal. If we compare the greater number of births in relation to deaths from 1901 to 1953 with the number of inhabitants (table 2), one could say that in the course of half a century there were 860 more births than deaths, i.e. during this period more than half of the existing population of the island emigrated (table 2). First, it is a fact that the specific square area of the island can only feed a certain number of people and, apart from viticulture and fishing, Susak as an island does not offer too many possibilities to its inhabitants. Another problem was represented by the agricultural congestion and there existed almost no economic prospects for Susak's relatively primitive

²³ Božanić (1997): 25-180

²⁴ See more in: Rudan *et al.* (2004): 409.

viticulture, fishing and domestic methods of managing households, which were based on intensive manual labour. In addition to everything already mentioned, there was little hope for starting modern industrial production which could secure work for all the islanders and emigration was imposed as the only possible solution.

Chain migration

Alongside some other local and regional²⁵ groups of Croatian emigrants, the *Sušćani* are characterized by chain migration. This phenomenon was detected at the beginning of the twentieth century by the well-known Croatian emigrant Ivan Frano Lupis-Vukić from Viganj, island Pelješac, in his book *Our emigrant question*.²⁶ One of the most significant forms of chain migration was the bringing over of young women and men from the old country for the purpose of arranging marriages which significantly influenced the depopulation and ageing of the population of Susak. Chain emigration from Susak left long term consequences for the population of the island. In the new homeland, on the contrary, the consequences of chain migration today are the existence of groups of Croatian emigrants in certain settlements, places or cities that are tightly bound by family, civic or narrower local or regional connections.

The decision to emigrate from the native soil is not an easy one. The idea, on the part of a member of a family, of departing to a far-away new land and leaving the family home is a difficult moment for every family. Poverty and unemployment make it even more difficult, but push factors are simultaneously a strong incentive for emigration. Without emigration, the islanders did not have a future on Susak and they were conscious of this (partly structured interview).²⁷

²⁵ The most well-known examples of Croatian chain migration are Blato from Korčula, Prapoće in Istria and Podgora from the littoral region of Makarska.

²⁶ Lupis-Vukić (1913).

²⁷ "...*The departure for America was a significant event in the life of every inhabitants of Sušak, but also for the whole place. In the days before the departure there were (festivities). The emigrant would visit his relatives, friends*

Table 3 shows the surnames and number of emigrants from Susak, in other words the total number of emigrants according to surname who migrated after 1945 to the USA. Data was not available for earlier periods. The total number of individuals was 2647 or around 520 families. Figures at our disposal provide evidence that 95% of migrant Suščani live in the territory of New Jersey, in the towns of Fairview, Cliffside Park, North Bergen, Palisades Park, Fort Lee, Hoboken, Ridgefield and Moonachie. It is an interesting fact that, in contrast to other Croatian emigrants and their descendants, the Suščani did not settle in all parts of the USA, but mainly settled in the state of New Jersey, which is linked to chain migration from Susak. It is estimated that today around 2,500 Suščani and their descendants live in the USA.

Table 3:

A list of surnames and the number of emigrants from Susak born on Susak and in the USA (source: private collection of data of A. Mattesisch, 1989.).

Surname	Number of persons	Men	Women
	282	144	138
Hrončić	198	101	97
Matešić	312	153	159
Mirković	103	62	41
Morina	312	166	146
Picinić	749	387	362
Skrivanić	202	93	109
Tarabokija	402	205	197
Other surnames	87	42	45
TOTAL	2647	1353	1294

and acquaintances, bid farewell and receive letters and salutations for their cousins in America. On the last day he would visit the parish priest to make confession and take communion. The members of the family would prepare dinner for the relatives in the evening before the departure, but also for all townspeople. At the same time, people would sing and cry until late into the night, and all the islanders would assemble at the sending off of every emigrant ... it was hardest for the mothers who took leave of their sons ... the departures were festive, but sad ...” (exclusive interview by Mr. G. B.).

It is important to stress that it was very difficult to obtain different types of data on the Suščani. There were many reasons for this, which was a mitigating condition for research.²⁸ For many years the Susak islander Andrew Mattesisch recorded data on the *Sušćani* in the USA, which have been used for this article. Due to the availability of only certain data, and information previously unknown to the public, attention and analysis is given exclusively to the data which is at our disposal. According to Mattesisch's data, emigrant Suščani born on Susak were settled in 8 settlements from 1945 to 1989 (Table 4).

In the same period in the following 8 settlements (Table 4), according to Susak surnames, there lived in total 1,353 men, 1,294 women, which comes to a total of 2,647 persons (Table 3).

Table 4:

Emigrant families from Susak from 1945-1989 in the USA. (Source: the private collection of data of A. Mattesisch, 1989)

Clifside Park	385 families	Moonarchie	53 families
Fairview	387 families	North Bergen	253 families
Fort Lee	197 families	Palisades Park	237 families
Hoboken	154 families	Ridgefield	106 families

Table 5:

The age of the oldest Susak emigrants concluded on 31/12/1989
(Source: the private collection of data of A. Mattesisch, 1989)

	Men	Women
Persons older than 90 years	3	1
People born 1900-1910	22	36
People born 1911-1920	65	76
People born 1921-1930	131	132
Total:	221	245

²⁸ An explanation on the collection of data on the Suščani would exceed the framework of this article.

Table 6:

The number of deaths and married Suščani in the USA in the period between 1951 to 1989. (Source: the private collection of data of A. Mattesisch, 1989)

Number of deaths in the USA:	Men	Women	Total
1951-1989	101	79	180
Number of married residents in the USA:			
1951-1989	193	184	377

Table 7:

The number of returnees from the USA after the 1990s. (Source: the private collection of data of A. Mattesisch, 1989)

Returnees from the United States:	Men	Women
Susak	92	-
Italy	7	-
France	1	-

Table 5 sums up the age of the oldest emigrants from Susak concluded on 31st of December 1989 (the private collection of data of A. Mattesisch, 1989). One can conclude that the largest number of living Suščani were born in the period 1921-1930, in total 263 persons, which is to be expected considering the biological factor. Table 6 produces figures on the number of deaths and married Suščani in the USA in the period between 1951 and 1989; this indicates that a large number of marriages were contracted between Suščani outside of Croatia in relation to the number of inhabitants on Susak according to the census years. Table 7 shows the number of Suščani who are permanent returnees from the USA to Susak, Italy and France, which indicates that a small number of individuals are returning from the USA, and only men have permanently returned.²⁹ It would be interesting to learn why not one female individual returned after the 1990s, which will certainly be a basis and challenge for new research.

²⁹ Exchanging information with Suščani in the USA, it is not known whether, in the last 25 years, anybody after Mattesisch has recorded (due to their own enthusiasm) the same or similar data which would have been very much worthy of attention and analysis in this work.

The consequences of emigration from the island of Susak

Since the basic characteristic of Croatian islands, including Susak, in the last hundred years has been the emigration of the population, the biggest consequence for the island of Susak is connected to depopulation and the ageing of the island population. At the end of the 19th century the population found itself in a pre-transitional stage in which mortality had a significant role in the fluctuation of the number of inhabitants. At the beginning of the 20th century the population of the island entered into the transitional stage. The central stage of demographic transition (high natural growth) coincided precisely with the period of the strongest emigration and could partly mitigate the loss of the inhabitants that arose due to emigration.³⁰ Emigration did not only have, as a consequence, the slowed growth or the numerical reduction of the number of inhabitants, but also considerably influenced the age-sex structure of the population, nuptiality and reproduction of the population and in the final analysis determined the further demographic development of Susak. Namely, emigration was selective with regard to sex and age; it was mainly the male population under 40 that emigrated,³¹ which led to the increase of the number of females on the island and the narrowing of the fertile contingent. With regard to the future of the island of Susak, on the basis of past trends one can conclude that the depopulation and ageing of the island's population will continue because the island cannot satisfy the existential necessities of the islanders, in the first instance those of a younger age.

From the mid-nineteenth century several theories on assimilation linked to emigration to the United States of America have been developed. The theory of Anglo-congruence dominated in the second half of the nineteenth century when the majority of immigrants came from north-western Europe. With the appearance of rapid

³⁰ Lajić (2006): 152-166

³¹ Mesarić Žabčić (2010): 32-40

industrialization and the need for a large labour force, at the beginning of the twentieth century fertile ground for the emergence of a theory of process and the theory of the ‘melting pot’ was created; this occurred when emigration was extended to the whole of Europe and beyond and the number of immigrants was considerably increased.

The emergence of the theory of the segmented labour market and multiculturalism marked the second half of the twentieth century. As the leading theoretical perspective in the modern period, but also found in earlier arguments represented in theories of assimilation, the study of the influence of social policies on immigrants (the part that deals with migrant questions) is today more and more dominant. Recognizing the proactive role of immigrants, the new theory endeavours to stress the different strategies for registering immigrants who are employed in responsible and/or leading political and socio-economic positions, taking into consideration all the values of the ancestors of immigrants with transplanted cultural traditions.³²

Unavoidable assimilation and the Americanization of their descendants is the biggest problem today for American *Sušćani*. Assimilation for the Sušćani thus represents a process of the permeation and amalgamation of the group or individuals with the milieu in which emigrants live. Many researchers who have dealt with the problem of the assimilation of emigrants for many years have observed several types of assimilation amongst emigrants and stress that a strong ethnic identification can be the result of different mechanisms. For example, a reactive identification will probably arise from repeated experiences of discrimination, and can also contribute to the creation of oppositional attitudes amongst individuals and the appearance of a long resistance to assimilation. This is seen most frequently amongst the children of immigrants from lower socio-economic classes and can also develop amongst those in higher classes. The children of immigrants with better resources and socio-economic prospects are more inclined toward selective assimilation. Their

³² Alba & Nee (2007): 269-71.

parents are generally of a higher level of education and are orientated toward their own businesses. Such families usually belong to ethnic networks and institutions that have enough means to access support outside of the ethnic community.³³ Symbolic assimilation can appear amongst emigrants who are already professionally included within large economic corporations to a large degree. This occurs most frequently amongst the children of immigrants from the highest class. Such individuals have tendency to rely on the ethnic community exclusively because of ethnic solidarity and membership of the group and less for the reason that they will fulfil their individual needs.³⁴ Therefore, with assimilation the migrant unconsciously or consciously co-opts, in a long process, the behaviour, reflections, values and culture of the new homeland, and loses or changes his ethnic identity, although the processes of adaptation and integration are still not observable. The immigrant becomes, in many ways, so similar to the *new society* that he or she can no longer be identified as a member of some ethnic community.³⁵

Lukšič-Hacin mentions the main concept of assimilation, which emerged in the sociological tradition and is particularly significant in the analysis of the phenomenon of migration and the process of adaptation of foreigners in the new milieu. On the contrary, the concept of acculturation and cultural assimilation is established, primarily in the anthropological tradition.³⁶ Acculturation is most frequently the result of the process of migration and/or exchange. The meaning of acculturation is the connection within the first or the other, new culture and/or the encounter between cultures. It is also connected with socialization, which influences the way we will behave, think and feel from the earliest period of our lives in the primary and/or in the other culture. On the one hand, an acculturative value is the learning of

³³ Brown & Bean (2006).

³⁴ Brown & Bean (2006).

³⁵ Klinar (1976): 27-30.

³⁶ Lukšič-Hacin (1995): 32-161.

another culture, while assimilation can also be understood as a withdrawal from one's primary culture in favour of the other culture in the recipient country. It is important to stress that the process of acculturation and/or assimilation can unfold in one generation or through several generations and that there exists more than one degree of acculturation and assimilation. The dominant culture creates a double process of socialization for immigrant groups that are in the process of acculturation. Mainstream institutions, education, all of media, the public, state and national holidays, popular people from host country, all reinforce the norms of the dominant culture which influences the immigrant groups with the process of acculturation. Consequently, national minorities and groups are frequently confronted with the question of how to retain their own cultural identity and work on its development and how to maintain it within the dominant ethnic group in the recipient country, while also wishing to have good interethnic contacts and positive relations with the dominant society in the recipient country.

One can generally conclude that a specific number of individuals (emigrants) in another country (the recipient country) can progressively lose their original culture in favour of another culture, which leads, as a consequence, to assimilation. Similarly, one can conclude that many emigrants, however, can learn and embrace another culture, but perhaps would nevertheless prefer to preserve their original culture as a good, i.e. they decide to add, through their attitudes and behaviour, the other culture to their primary and existing one. Therefore, all immigrants and their descendants who have experienced such acculturation but not assimilated retain their culture of origin both for enjoyment with friends and family and personal satisfaction.

Different types of assimilation can be noticed amongst the younger generations of Suščani. For example, cultural assimilation relates to the acceptance of the basic civilizational values of the country of settlement, while the immigrant retains the basic characteristics of the cultural heritage of his or her homeland. So, the migrant Suščani

accepted America as their new homeland, but they retained their language (they also accepted English) and somewhat retained their customs and tradition. The majority have retained the Susak cuisine, while they only sometimes wear national (folk) costumes at weddings, parties at their societies and during the well-known Susak carnival (*karnevola*). Social or structural assimilation relates to the participation of emigrants in the political, educational or other aspects of social life in the new milieu. Also present is economic assimilation, where the emigrant joins various areas of the economic life of the country. Following this track, in a conversation with the Busanić family we came to learn that today's Suščani in New Jersey are not what they once were, in other words, they are no longer poor or uneducated. Today they are educated people, people who send their children to universities, amongst whom there are successful lawyers, economists, doctors, etc. Our collocutor Hroncich stresses that there are also those who started their own *business* and have become successful entrepreneurs. Therefore, a great number of factors accelerate or slow down assimilation.

It is a significant fact that assimilation very easily can become denationalization or can lead to the loss of national identity, and this is closely linked with the concept of Americanization which denotes the coupling of emigrants with the native population, which is most frequently realized through the marriage of emigrants with the native people and the complete mastering of the English language. It has been scholarly established as to which factors accelerate assimilation. Amongst the most representative one can single out educational institutions of different types and conceiving families in mixed marriages where children most often do not become acquainted with the language and tradition of their emigrant parents. Today Americanization is omnipresent amongst the Suščani who are also not intermarrying with each other as much as before. *Linguistic assimilation* is also interesting; today children first learn English and only later the Susak dialect (source: partly structured interview). On the

other hand, the process of assimilation is slowed down by gatherings in various organized ethnic and fraternal associations, and gatherings at national churches and Catholic missions, songs, folklore and music.

Amongst other things, songs bring Sušćani together; a favourite is the singing group *Jerry and His Polka Tones*, whose appearances with songs from the old country are an obligatory part of different celebrations. Other groups include *Ansambl Susak* and *Emma Ansambl Susak*. The merit of these groups is that they are trying to preserve the Susak language and speech. The process of assimilation is essentially tied to acquiring American citizenship and engagement in political life.³⁷ It should be noted that assimilation does not have to completely end in the first, second or third generation. It often happens that the second generation forgets the Croatian language and customs of their parents from the homeland, but there is once more awakened interest in the third generation for one's own origin and cultural heritage and identity. For years, the theorists of Americanization presented the thesis that America is a 'melting pot',³⁸ where all emigrants are amalgamated into one mixed American civic community so that emigrants are asked to forget the old country, their culture, customs and be open toward the new society. Experience has shown that many practiced this theory and changed and adapted their surnames to the English language. Out of practical reasons many changed their names and accepted the American version of their names. In that way Susak and Croatian names were simultaneously changed: Ivan into John, Anton into Anthony or Tony, Josip into Joseph or Joe, Juraj into George, Jakov into Jack, Nikola into Nick, Pavao into Paul, Marija into Mary, Lucija into Lucy, Ljubica into Violet and so on.³⁹ In fact, the majority of emigrants use the English version of their names, i.e. due to practicality the children of emigrants most often have English names.

³⁷ Portes & Min (1993): 74-96.

³⁸ Mesić (1998): 209-24.

³⁹ Bozanić (1997): 85.

Conclusion

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the inhabitants of the island of Susak also found themselves in the focus of the unfavourable economic and political conditions in Croatia. Many push and pull factors played a significant role in individuals, families and whole groups of people making the decision to emigrate, and one of the main reasons that was stressed were the high taxes on wine, the main produce of Susak. Emigration from Susak began in the 1880s, while the mass exodus of Suščani to New Jersey occurred in the period between 1960 and 1970. Susak was then left without its most productive and vital population. The long-term process of emigrating from Susak led to the depopulation and ageing of the population on the island. Single men, married couples and whole families emigrated through chain migration. On the other hand, chain migration led to, and accelerated, the creation of compact groups or groups of emigrants connected in the new homeland through family ties or ties based on the place or region of emigration.

The re-migration of the population back to Susak is not sufficiently present, while assimilation of various forms and types is stressed as a serious problem for Suščani in the United States of America. Considering the existing and present problem of assimilation and acculturation in the case of the Suščani, the Republic of Croatia should, as much as possible, help and support the activity and work of its emigrants in the world, so that assimilation might at least be mitigated when it cannot be prevented, and also develop firm cooperation in all areas and fields of interest with displaced Croats in the world for mutual benefit has been developed.

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Sažetak

Krajem 19. i početkom 20. stoljeća povećali broj Hrvata emigrirao je u Sjedinjene Američke Države. Mnogi push i pull čimbenici imali su utjecaja na iseljavanje pojedinaca, obitelji pa i čitavih skupina ljudi. U žarištu zbivanja oko nepovoljnih gospodarskih i političkih prilika tadašnje Hrvatske našli su se i žitelji otoka Suska. Kao jedan od glavnih razloga iseljavanja u tom razdoblju ističu se i visoki porezi za vino, glavni susački proizvod. Iseljavanje sa Suska započinje 1880-ih godina, da bi masovni egzodus Suščana u New Jersey (gdje danas živi povećana zajednica otočana i njihovih nasljednika) bio zabilježen tek u razdoblju između 1960. i 1970. godine. U tome vremenskom razdoblju, Susak ostaje bez svog najproduktivnijeg i najvitalnijeg stanovništva. Dugogodišnji procesi iseljavanja s otoka Suska za posljedicu imaju depopulaciju stanovništva i starenje stanovništva na otoku.

Lančanom migracijom s otoka iselili su slobodni muškarci, oženjeni muškarci, pa i čitave obitelji. Lančana iseljavanja uzrokuju i ubrzavaju stvaranje kompaktnih grupa/skupina iseljenika povezanih ili obiteljskim vezama, mjestom iseljavanja, regijom, sličnim ili zajedničkim interesima ili nečim drugim u novoj domovini. Svojestven jezik i specifična

narodna nošnja povezuju i čine Sušćane kao etničku grupu u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama jedinstvenima. Bez obzira na veliku geografsku udaljenost Suska i New Jerseyja, ljubav i briga prema rodnom kraju niti danas nisu manjeg intenziteta.

Re-emigracija susačkog stanovništva na Susak ipak nije prisutna u značajnijoj mjeri, a kao ozbiljniji problem Sušćana u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama ističe se asimilacija različitih tipova i oblika. S ciljem ublažavanja asimilacije i njezinih posljedica, kad ju se već ne može spriječiti, Republika Hrvatska bi trebala, koliko je moguće, svestrano pomagati i podržavati djelovanje, aktivnosti i rad svojih iseljenika u svijetu te ujedno razvijati intenzivnu suradnju i uzajamno povjerenje na svim interesnim područjima i poljima s raseljenim Hrvatima za obostranu korist.