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## Plague Epidemics in Lower Carniola between Tradition and Reality\*

### ABSTRACT

*The contribution deals with the consequences of infectious epidemics in Lower Carniola, that is in the part of Carniola where plagues between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries took the most victims. By confronting contemporary sources and the exaggerated summary accounts on the number of the deceased the demographic consequences of epidemics are in most cases given a more realistic image. Due to temporary closure of the roads the plague caused most damage in economy, although it was fatal for the people as well. With sources confirmed portion of the deceased town population during various outbreaks of the plague exceeded one fifth. In the years 1599 and 1625 the plague epidemic thoroughly vacated the town Novo mesto, badly affected Metlika and Krško in the years 1646–1647, and in the years 1691–1592 Črnomelj. Not negligible were the human victims of the last large (infectious) epidemic in 1715.*

### KEY WORDS

*Plague, Epidemics, Lower Carniola, Towns, Boroughs*

### IZVLEČEK

#### KUŽNE EPIDEMIJE NA DOLENJSKEM MED IZROČILOM IN STVARNOSTJO

*Prispevek obravnava posledice kužnih epidemij na Dolenjskem, v tistem delu Kranjske, kjer so kuge med 16. in 18. stoletjem zlasti v mestih zabtevale največ žrtev. S soočenjem sodobnih virov in pretiranih sumarnih navedb o številu umrlih so demografske posledice epidemij v večini primerov dobile realnejšo podobo. Kuga je zaradi začasnega zaprtja prometnic povzročila največ škode na gospodarskem področju, vendar je bila v posameznih primerih resnično zelo pogubna tudi za ljudi. Z viri potrjeni deleži umrlega mestnega prebivalstva so med različnimi izbruhi kuge presegali eno petino. Leta 1599 in 1625 je kužna epidemija dodobra izpraznila Novo mesto, v letih 1646–1647 huje prizadela Metliko in Krško, 1691–1692 pa Črnomelj. Tudi človeške žrtve zadnje velike (kužne) epidemije leta 1715 niso bile zanemarljive.*

### KLJUČNE BESEDE

*kuga, epidemije, Dolenjska, mesta, trgi*

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Among all Slovenian provinces, Lower Carniola was probably most often visited by various kinds of contagious disease epidemics of the Early Modern Period and, along with Istria, also most severely affected by them. Such an impression is largely justified, considering the downright alarming figures on deaths and devastation set forth either by contemporary sources or by subsequent interpretations contained in various records and the literature, starting with Johann Weichard Valvasor. Sources primarily focus on towns and market towns—and quite understandably so, because they stood out from the rest of the empire's border province as population conglomerates and social organisms performing specific, especially economic functions. Compared to rural areas, towns and market towns shouldered a heavier burden of epidemics, with a number of documents shedding light on their implications.

Overall, among all Slovenian continental towns, those in Lower Carniola, mostly miniature in size and of marginal importance, undoubtedly bore the brunt of contagious disease epidemics, and none more so than Novo Mesto, the second most important town in Carniola and the only one of seven Lower Carniolan towns with a population of more than a thousand. The small size of Lower Carniola's urban settlements makes the excessively high numbers of deaths in sources even more striking and unparalleled elsewhere in Carniola. The credibility and weight of the number of deaths therefore represents one of the key questions to which this article will aim to find a reasonably satisfying answer. Another, equally important question related to the demographic losses concerns the economic and social implications of epidemics. Due to the practical impossibility of being measured with reliable indicators, these are even less ascertainable and for the most part do not allow historians to move beyond the descriptive content and the frame of reference offered in contemporary reports.

In defining the problem of contagious disease epidemics, the author leaves aside one of the most essential questions, that is, what types of diseases occurred in the given examples. Sources of that time assigned them different names but the same underlying meaning. They were referred to as the plague in the contemporary literature, including Valvasor (*Pest*), alongside other general designations, such as: *laidige Contagion*, *laidige Infection*, *Sterbelauf*, *Seuche*, and so on. Despite their varied manifestations, all plague epidemics broke out suddenly and violently. Incidences of some other similar epidemic can only be inferred from scarce indications of symptoms or dismissals of it being the "true plague." For example, in the first half of 1599, Novo Mesto was merely affected by the "Hungarian disease," whereas the so-called plague of 1634 in Krško raises some doubt for having primarily wreaked havoc among children.

Due to a lack of distinction among different types of epidemics, the common term—plague—was established to denote nearly all types of contagious diseases that occurred during the Early Modern Period. In history and vernacular language, the plague stands for any type of contagious disease (epidemic) that suddenly breaks out in a certain area, lasts for a few weeks or months, causes a spike in mortality, and then gradually abates. In addition to the true plague (*pestis*), the name refers to about ten other diseases, including smallpox, typhoid fever or typhus, cholera, and influenza.<sup>1</sup> Epidemic dimensions of different diseases and their indistinct designations therefore command the use of a compromise term—the plague epidemic. Finally, this notion also seems justified because the article is not concerned with the nature of individual epidemics and because the latter remains largely unidentifiable drawing on scarce contemporary sources.

Lower Carniola and its urban settlements were disastrously affected by six major and several minor epidemics recurring in decades-long intervals between the mid-sixteenth and early eighteenth century. Conversely, there is no known connection between Lower Carniola on the one hand and late medieval plagues and recorded epidemic outbreaks elsewhere in Carniola during the first half of the sixteenth century on the other. Featuring prominently in reports are the plague of 1578, an epidemic wave with its peak in 1599, the epidemic of 1623–1627, the longest plague of 1645–1650, a locally limited outbreak in 1691–1692, and the epidemic of 1715. Except for the penultimate plague wave, which occurred at the end of the seventeenth century in Črnomelj and its immediate surroundings but not elsewhere in Carniola, all above-mentioned epidemics had large-scale implications that often reverberated well beyond the Carniolan provincial borders.<sup>2</sup> Not only did Lower Carniola suffer in all major waves of plague epidemics that affected Carniola, but as a gateway province lying on the empire's frontier, it was also frequently the first target of the Black Death penetrating through the nearby borders of the Ottoman Empire.

The fundamental issue with the topic discussed is the lack of contemporary, particularly neutral records of events, rendering the examination of facts a rather difficult task. A specific problem are poorly preserved sources from the time of individual epidemics. Somewhat more proliferous are descriptions of their consequences written in later periods, indirect reports, and above all subsequent interpretations as the least welcome yet all too often inevitable (and the only) type of source, which may readily provide a fertile ground for erroneous conclusions and expla-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Zupanič Slavec, *Epidemije na Slovenskem*, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, pp. 95 f.; Koblar, *O človeški kugi*, pp. 39 f.

nations. The discussion at hand undertakes an unenviable task of verification through analogies and comparisons of all momentarily available data.

In terms of structure, the sources available can be divided into two periods. The first one, lasting until the end of the sixteenth century, was characterized by extremely rare and limited contemporary reports without quantitative estimates of deaths. A few epidemic outbreaks are only known from subsequent lapidary mentions, and one can only speculate on the number of deaths and the depopulation of settlements by establishing property ownership (dis)continuity in rent-rolls and towns' tax registers. The second period, which started at the end of the sixteenth century, is slightly more generous with summary information on the number of deaths, and it also improves the possibilities of verifying the data by allowing comparisons of more neutral and mainly indirect reports. The end of the seventeenth century eventually saw the emergence of a new and still quite rare primary source—death registers and lists of infected and deceased persons.

The discussion at hand prioritizes two problems: the chronological sequence of events and the demographic implications facing individual towns and market towns in Lower Carniola. In addition to highly limited official reports compiled by plague commissioners, the developments can be reconstructed based on extremely rare contemporary sources, first and foremost, for example, on registry protocols and files of the Carniolan provincial estates, and exceptionally for the town of Višnja Gora, on a few town judges' annual accounts. As for the sources of more recent origins, town annals provide little detail, various town leaderships' complaints and reports lack in credibility, and more neutral information is set forth in commission and vidame town visitation reports.

As mentioned, the data for this poor part of Carniola and especially its towns and market towns characteristically convey shocking figures on deaths, followed by significant or complete depopulation and economic decline. After individual epidemics were quashed, the most alarming and sometimes hardly credible figures came from Lower Carniolan towns, including, for example, on more than eight hundred deceased from Novo Mesto in 1599, whose number grew to over a thousand according to another report a few years later. Two mutually independent reports for the plague of 1625 again state high figures for Novo Mesto (322 and 400, respectively), and the town reportedly buried 331 corpses during the last plague epidemic in 1715. According to less credible reports from Metlika, written four decades after the events, this White Carniolan town lost seven hundred inhabitants in 1646 alone and another five hundred the following year. Most figures above were brought forth by the fathers of the affected towns, where the amount of time elapsed played no insignificant part,

but the documents also contain some information of a (more) neutral provenance. Town leaderships penned several other disturbing figures expressed in overall percentages of town population and levels of abandonment, such as more than half of the population dead in Višnja Gora in 1599 or the half-deserted Novo Mesto, Metlika, and Črnomelj after the plague of 1623–1627. Lastly, complaints drawn by town dwellers themselves profusely blamed the plague for the economic and demographic decline. The more time elapsed since the events, the greater were the possibilities of generalizing and exaggerating. Thus, for example, the inhabitants of Črnomelj wrote fifty years after the plague of 1691–1692 that the town had completely died out (*ganz abgestorben*) and been abandoned (*verwiestet*).<sup>3</sup>

Some statements and figures above became firmly ingrained in historical memory without being properly verified and considered. Moreover, having made their way into the historiographical literature more than a hundred years ago,<sup>4</sup> they continued to be perpetuated uncritically in popular works and especially various kinds of local historical surveys until the most recent period.<sup>5</sup> Rather arbitrary summarizations and errant interpretations of lapidary data would often wildly overstate rather dry descriptions offered by original records or Valvasor, for instance, as the only source for some facts.

The demographic losses and their ramifications should be assessed variably, depending on the time distance and the authorship of reports. Sources are replete with overblown rhetoric and clichés, typical of the age. Shocking data on the dying town dwellers and the abandonment of towns underline not only reports that the town leaderships issued a few years after the plague but also statements produced fifty years later, or more neutral reports compiled by the provincial authorities. The style of writing therefore makes the task of extracting facts extremely difficult, especially in the face of lacking evidence provided by other contemporary sources. Particularly challenging are repetitive indications, highly emblematic of the period concerned in general, on the level of abandonment of urban settlements and the overall share of deceased inhabitants: for example, one-quarter of the town abandoned, one-third, over one-third, half or more than half of abandoned houses or dead. The more precise the numerical data are, the greater at-

<sup>3</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 279, fasc. 142, lit. T II-5, May 22nd, 1744.

<sup>4</sup> The data on eight hundred deceased inhabitants of Novo Mesto, obtained from an archival source, was published by Ivan Vrhovec (Vrhovec, *Zgodovina Novega mesta*, p. 79). The figure on 1,200 plague-related deaths in Metlika was already taken from a letter to the vidame of 1686 by A. Dimitz (*Geschichte Krains*, pp. 61–62) and cited from him or directly from the source by Podlogar, *Požari v Metliki*, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Dular, *Metlika skozi stoletja* (1978), p. 11; Dular, *Metlika skozi stoletja* (1986), p. 13; Jarc, *Iz preteklih stoletij*, p. 44.

tention they attract, be it in terms of years, sums of money, or other numerical indications (houses, inhabitants, abandoned homes, and so on). By the logic of things, such data could be based on a relatively detailed verification, if not on (unpreserved) specifications, with the author's integrity lending the sole guarantee for their validity. The numbers of plague-related deaths provided in this manner would also gain in credibility if produced immediately after the events or no more than a few years later.

Another issue is presented by numerical data. The already scarce summary data on deaths can rarely be incorporated into the property and demographic structure of a town, on top of which not a single case features the following two comparable specifications: the number of the deceased and the number of all masters of the house before the plague. The assessment of the impact of deaths also crucially rests on the composition of the deceased; in other words, a plague that devastated the economically vital part of the population or the population at procreative age cannot be compared to an epidemic that primarily targeted children or the poor strata of the town population.

In addition, the demographic implications presented in sources are always associated with other, especially economic ones—quite understandably so, because plague epidemics often left profound and lasting scars on the economy. An outbreak of an epidemic was usually followed by isolating (quarantining) the infected area, which meant cutting communications and suspending trade and traffic flows. In other areas, the provincial and various local authorities set up plague guards to prevent people and goods from crossing the border without health certificates known as “fede.” No matter how locally limited, an epidemic outbreak typically resulted in closing the provincial borders and restricting or completely suspending traffic, which had variably adverse impacts on the entire provincial economy. Lasting closures, in particular, could lead to devastating losses in a range of industries, the impoverishment of some social strata, the inability to pay tax (ultimately exhausting the provincial treasury), the shortage of life's basic necessities and other items, and finally, hunger.

The following sections provide a chronological presentation of the consequences of plague epidemics. Too little is still known about the factual basis to address the topic from a strictly problem-oriented perspective. Moreover, the work methods and the specificity of sources used require longer discourses and occasional distancing from the central problem.

### Minor plague epidemics until the end of the sixteenth century

The scope of plagues in Lower Carniola before the mid-sixteenth century is open to speculation,

and it will likely remain so unless new sources are chanced on. In the Littoral and Carniola, the first early modern plague raged especially in Trieste, with reliable data only available for Trieste. As for Carniola, according to V. Travner, the plague claimed many victims among White Carniolans. He arrived at this conclusion by drawing solely on L. Podlogar's statement that the Chapel of St. Sebastian in Črnomelj's town grove was erected after 1510.<sup>6</sup> There are likewise no direct references to a likely pandemic in **Novo Mesto**, with twenty-four of its 272 non-peasant properties (Ger.: *Hofstatt*) abandoned or completely ruined pursuant to the oldest preserved census from 1515.<sup>7</sup> The survey, conducted in the largest Lower Carniolan town for fiscal-military purposes, is especially revealing compared to a census carried out in the town of Kamnik a year later, which makes no mention of abandoned houses.<sup>8</sup> Still, this does not necessarily suggest their non-existence, just as the abandoned houses reported in Novo Mesto are nowhere explicitly stated as an aftermath of the recent epidemic. Even without the Black Death, there were plenty of other reasons for the economic downturn and the consequent depopulation of this border town.

The first plague that found its echo in sources swept across several parts of Carniola during the 1550s. The epidemic spread to the province in 1553 from the Croatian foci in Zagreb and Samobor. Even though contacts with the infected areas were prohibited, the disease engulfed Carniola one year later, forcing the authorities to suspend trade and close all roads to Italy.<sup>9</sup> In Lower Carniola, it claimed the life of one person in **Višnja Gora**, the single documented victim. A splendid neutral source for following the developments—and one can only wish for more of those—is provided by three consecutive annual accounts (1552–1555) of Višnja Gora's town judges, without which it would be impossible to even suspect that the epidemic also affected the Lower Carniola. The sheer nature of this invaluable source makes it worthwhile to examine the developments in Višnja Gora in full detail.

The news of the plague first startled the inhabitants of Višnja Gora on August 6th, 1553, when, apart from a regular feast, the provincial messenger was paid additional 6 pfennigs “because of the epidemic.” The messenger was entitled to an extra fee for having been exposed to danger while making his

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 95. Cf. Podlogar, *Kronika mesta Črnomlja*, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 105, fasc. 59, lit. R V-1, Der zaichnus abschrift der hoffstett der statt Ruedolphswerth anno 1515.

<sup>8</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 108, fasc. 61, lit. S XVII-1, fols. 157v–160v. Publication: Luschin v. Ebenreuth, *Ein Protokoll der Stadt Stein*, pp. 38–67.

<sup>9</sup> Smole, *Kuga na Kranjskem*, p. 98. Cf. Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 96.

rounds through towns and seigniories. However, the population of Višnja Gora still felt rather safe, given the bustling road reparations and stone-cutting at the town's quarry for this purpose. Five days later, on August 11th, 1553, the provincial messenger brought some decree concerning the plague and on September 6th a general mandate. Meanwhile, the provincial authorities' decree to close the roads due to the epidemic had caused the town judge Vincenc Steirer significant losses as the leaseholder of the town's tollhouse. Therefore, it was already on September 5th that he persuaded the town council to reduce his lease from 136 to 100 gulden, although the danger was still not imminent. A few days later, Višnja Gora held its annual onion fair and carried on with road reparations. The provincial messenger returned with new, obviously stricter epidemic mandates from Ljubljana on September 23rd and October 13th, which prompted the town council to assign a supervisor at each of the two town gates every Sunday to prevent the entrance of travelers from the infected areas. On the day before Christmas, the town judge's annual account focuses exclusively on the infected villages and then provides a list of payments to the supervisors. By January 7th, 1554, the two men had received 4 kreuzer each for every Sunday in an arrangement that was considered more a protective measure rather than a complete closure, there being no plague in Višnja Gora. The only days that raised concern were Sundays when people from the surrounding villages and foreigners would flock into the town. After February 23rd, 1553, the provincial messenger brought another plague mandate and, not long after that, the town messenger took some documents concerning the epidemic to the parish priest at Šentvid pri Stični. By spring, the threat neither grew nor did it completely abate. Provincial messengers continued to bring various ordinances and general mandates, including an undated ban related to the plague, together with a general mandate on tax backlog. Shortly afterward, Judge Vincenc Steirer and his attendant could ride to Ljubljana without restrictions. On May 22nd, the town held the Feast of Corpus Christi and the annual fair as usual. After no reports on "plague supervisors" were hung on the town gates between the Epiphany and the early summer of 1554, they were again posted every Sunday, starting with July 1st.

On July 25th, the plague also broke out in Višnja Gora, in the house of Hans Šeluti, who died after contracting it. There may have been a connection between his death and two town dwellers searching for a surgeon in Ljubljana, where they traveled to bring the collected tax. The town council immediately hired three male and an old female gravedigger to bury Šeluti and then instructed them to wait for the deaths of others and bury them as well. The male gravediggers were promised a crown each and

the woman a Rhenish gulden, earning a total of 5 gulden and 36 kreuzer according to a statement of payments drawn up a month later. Five days after the plague struck the town, on July 30th, the town council again posted two supervisors, one at each town gate, to prevent the entrance of people from the infected areas. Judging from the weekly pay of 15 kreuzer, this time they must have been posted every day of the week and continued to control the town gates until July 1555. The plague seems not to have spread after the death of Šeluti, whose life was most likely the only one claimed, as no later than August, the inhabitants of Višnja Gora already went ahead with road reparations and stone-cutting in the town's vicinity, holding their regular onion fair in September, engaging in vibrant trade, and traveling to Ljubljana in search of various necessities.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, as stated, nothing is known about the plague elsewhere in Lower Carniola. It highly likely left Novo Mesto unaffected, or else its inhabitants would not have forgotten to mention it in their report to the sovereign in 1564, exhaustively describing the town's tribulations and the reasons behind them.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the plague did make its way into Lower Carniola in the above-mentioned 1564, after it spread from Gorizia to Carniola, where it devastated Ljubljana and drove the provincial estates to Kamnik. In Lower Carniola, the plague took the heaviest toll in Šmarje and Šentrupert.<sup>12</sup>

It then visited again twelve years later, on crossing the border with Styria at Radeče pri Savi in 1576, and then raged across Upper Carniola and the Littoral.<sup>13</sup> In November, the provincial estates' registry protocols report on the plague in Radeče, the nearby Kum, and Žagorje. By 1577, the Black Death had already spread throughout Carniola. Special mention is made of Ljubljana and its surrounding area, while in Lower Carniola the peasants around Šentrupert resisted the general mandate on the plague. In December, the parish priest of Trebnje was ordered to stop conducting burials at Šentjurjeva Gora "during the time of infection" and move them to the nearby succursal church.<sup>14</sup>

Valvasor mentions this plague only once, when describing the market town of Radeče, which, as he writes, God scourged with an infectious disease.<sup>15</sup> The severity of Divine retribution can only be speculated on using a rather unreliable method of com-

<sup>10</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, town account books 1552/1553, 1553/1554, and 1554/1555.

<sup>11</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 256, fasc. 133, lit. R II-1, April 25th, 1564.

<sup>12</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 96; Koblar, O človeški kugi, p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 97.

<sup>14</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 854, registry protocols no. 6 (1567–1577), pp. 391, 403, 409, 409, 427, and 430.

<sup>15</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 464.

paring property holders' surnames. Some insight can be gathered by comparing the names of the Radeče market town dwellers in the provincial princely rent-roll from 1576<sup>16</sup> and on the list of firearms owners, compiled six years later, in 1582.<sup>17</sup> The rent-roll contains the names of thirty-four property holders in the market town and another thirty-five in the part called Krakovo, altogether sixty-nine, whereas the list of the market town's firearms owners contains no more than fifty-two. The lower number comes as no surprise because not every house had a man fit for battle, and it in no way suggests that the number of populated houses had shrunk by seventeen or nearly one-quarter. A more revealing piece of information is that only twenty-six surnames had been preserved in this six-year period, eighteen borne by the same masters as in 1576, who in 1582 accounted for merely 50 % of the same families as six years earlier. Although the two censuses use different sampling frames—applying to property holders and firearms owners, respectively, in the market town of Radeče—they clearly point to demographic discontinuity. At the worst, the plague could have partially or completely emptied forty-three or three-fifths of altogether sixty-nine houses, and further considering the different sampling frames, this share would still amount to about half of all homes. Such dramatic changes in property ownership could not have been possible in a short six-year span without a brutal external intervention. In other words, the changes that occurred in the period between 1576 and 1582 are numerically equal to those that took place in the twenty-year period between 1582 and the next rent-roll of Radeče from 1602.<sup>18</sup> Over these twenty years, the market town had retained the same twenty-one masters and five surnames or precisely half of families appearing on the list of 1582. In the quarter of the century that transpired between 1576 and 1602, the number of property holders in Radeče had declined from sixty-nine to sixty-five, with surviving twelve masters and eleven surnames, i.e., altogether about one-third of surnames from 1576.<sup>19</sup>

There are several other examples available to compare the dynamics of changes in property ownership during the second half of the sixteenth century. Strong continuity of property holders' surnames is best illustrated by the market towns of Litija and Ribnica. During the twelve-year period between

the rent-rolls of 1566 and 1578, Litija had seen a decrease in the number of property holders from nineteen to eighteen, the disappearance of only three surnames, the emergence of two new ones, and the continued presence of as many as fifteen (or 83.3 %) masters.<sup>20</sup> In 1619, Litija still counted eighteen masters, three the same as before, and seven surnames identical to those from 1578, representing a high 55 % of unchanged surnames in the forty-year period.<sup>21</sup> Slightly poorer continuity was recorded in the seigniorial rent-rolls of 1564 and 1573 for the market town of Ribnica, where the number of masters had increased in nine years from thirty-three to thirty-five and forty, respectively, taking into account that some property units were divided between two or more masters. Compared to 1564, fourteen (42.4 %) persons and ten (30.3 %) surnames had remained unchanged, and nine (27.3 %) old families had disappeared. In the meantime, ten new masters and co-masters had settled in the market town, and nearly three-quarters of old families had remained.<sup>22</sup> The difference between the two above-mentioned market towns and the market town of Radeče, where up to half of families had disappeared in no more than six years, is more than obvious.

According to contemporary sources, the plague of 1576 affected not only Radeče but also the nearby area of the Kum Mountain. The rent-rolls of the seignior of Radeče for 1576 and 1602 draw the following picture on eighteen villages around Radeče and the Kum Mountain. The number of masters had slightly increased from 135 to 138, fourteen (10.7 %) masters or at least their namesakes had remained the same as had sixty-two (47.3 %) surnames, and fifty-five (42 %) new surnames had emerged on the old property units, many already widely used in the area during the time of the earlier rent-roll. The most prominent discontinuity of surnames is recorded in two rent-rolls, one for the market town of Radeče and the other for its two nearby villages of Spodnje Radeče and Njivice. Compared to the elevated areas, the rapid change in property ownership in these lowland villages was undoubtedly owed to several factors; however, according to the list of Radeče's firearms owners from 1582, the time of intense changes clearly coincided with the plague. Out of sixty-four market town surnames in 1602, only twenty-three (35.9 %) were known in 1576, or precisely one-third

<sup>16</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 107, fasc. 60, lit. S X-1, rent-roll of the Žebnik or Radeče seignior 1576, s. p.

<sup>17</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, I. reg, carton 424, fasc. 289, pp. 863–878.

<sup>18</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 107, fasc. 60, lit. S XI-2, rent-roll of the Radeče seignior 1602, s. p.

<sup>19</sup> Of the latter, three masters and four surnames cannot be found on the list of firearms owners from 1582, which testifies to its incomplete status vis-à-vis the total number of property holders.

<sup>20</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 124, fasc. 70a, lit. W XXIII-3, rent-roll of the Višnja Gora seignior 1566, s. p.—SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 205, no. 35, rent-roll of the Višnja Gora seignior 1578, s. p.

<sup>21</sup> SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 205, no. 36, rent-roll of the Višnja Gora seignior 1619, s. p.

<sup>22</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 105, fasc. 59, lit. R I-5, Ribnica tax register 1564, s. p.—SI AS, AS 774, Gospostvo Ribnica, vol. 1, rent-roll of the Ribnica seignior 1573, s. p.

of the sixty-nine property holders listed in the earlier rent-roll. The same share of surnames (six out of eighteen) had remained unchanged in Spodnje Radeče, and in Njivice only one out of nine units of property had disappeared by 1602, whereas surnames had changed on six units and remained the same on two (22.2 %). A considerable change in surnames was observed in the villages at the foot of Kum Mountain, where the plague was also mentioned in November 1576. By 1602, over half of homesteads had changed surnames in Završe (three out of five), Briše (five out of seven), Spodnje Jelovo (three out of four), and slightly less farms scattered across Podkraj (five out of ten), Kum (three out of seven), and Spodnje Vode (three out of seven). Given the ordinarily lasting presence of surnames on isolated farms, the changes in the above-mentioned villages around Kum are rather noticeable: in the twenty-six years' period, sixty-seven units of property in two lowland and six elevated places had changed forty-one (61.1 %) surnames and retained no more than twenty-six (38.9 %), including those of four unchanged masters. By contrast, the remaining ten villages under the Radeče seigniory exhibited a much stronger continuity of property holders, with sixty-eight units of property having retained no fewer than fifty (73.5 %) surnames, including those of ten unchanged masters.<sup>23</sup> The almost reverse ratio of continuity and discontinuity in both halves of farm holdings must have been the result of a sudden shock—most probably the plague of 1576.

A detailed outline of events that unfolded during this plague can only be traced in **Višnja Gora**, thanks to the annual account that the town judge Marx Raab compiled for 1576/77. Life was almost normal, except for the annual fair on the Ascension Day in 1577, which saw less trading and poorer turnover due to the plague and fairs concurrently held in other towns. A decree on safety measures to be taken in view of the plague that erupted in the Venetian area reached the town no later than July 22nd, 1576, followed by a general mandate and another decree, both shortly before and after All Saints' Day. As stated in the town judge's account, some master carpenter performed his work in May or June 1577 outside the town walls during the epidemic (*in Sterbleuff*).<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, the Višnja Gora judicial account has not been preserved for 1578, considered the "year of the plague" in Carniola, and the discontinuity of householders' surnames between the first (1567) and the second tax register (1581) does not point to any spike attributable to the epidemic.<sup>25</sup> Nor was the

plague in Višnja Gora mentioned by Valvasor or any other contemporary source.

The plague ravaged many areas across Carniola two years later, **in 1578**; however, its chronological course is poorly documented. In the provincial estates' registry protocols, the first decrees were imposed on individual Inner Carniolan seigniories at the end of September 1578. In July the following year, a general mandate was issued, banning fairs and assemblies as well as instructing to avoid the infected areas. In August 1578, the provincial estates considered transferring their offices to Škofja Loka after the plague in Ljubljana showed no sign of relenting. In October, the secret court council in Graz reported that the transfer had indeed taken place—however, not to Škofja Loka, which was no longer secure, but to Kranj. The epidemic wave appears to have died down before January 1580, with a single isolated case of infection reported in June that same year in the Moravče Valley.<sup>26</sup> Barring a few mentions of places in Inner and Upper Carniola, there were no news about the epidemic in Lower Carniola. Limited reports on the plague can only be found in subsequent writings, including, first and foremost, Valvasor's. Valvasor states that the plague reached and decimated the town of Krško in 1578. He mentions Novo Mesto in relation to the plague of 1590 and maintains that it also claimed a heavy toll both in the small province and town of Kočevje.<sup>27</sup> The more recent literature then mentions it in Ljubljana and Cerknica, as well as Lower Carniola in the Temenica Valley, Šentrupert, Krško, Novo Mesto, and Kočevje.<sup>28</sup>

Although the epidemic delivered an especially devastating blow to **Novo Mesto**, which had burned down only two years before that in 1576, no mention is found on the plague itself, except in Valvasor's writings. The same holds for **Krško**, where the comparison of property holders, drawing on the Krško provincial princely rent-roll from 1575 and the list of armed subjects in the plague year of 1578, nevertheless allows for certain conclusions regarding the impacts of the epidemic on the local rural population. However, as the more recent list bears no precise date, it is impossible to determine whether it was compiled after or already before the plague. In the brief three-year period (1575–1578), the entire seigniory of Krško recorded a change in surname on 20.1 % farm holdings and the abandonment of 3.9 %. The "mountain office" registered a new surname on 12.7 % farms along the Sava, and on no less than 26.8 % units of property in Krško Polje. Nearly twice as many

<sup>23</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 107, fasc. 60, lit. S XI–1, rent-roll of the Radeče seigniory 1576, s. p.; XI–2, rent-roll of the Radeče seigniory 1602, s. p.

<sup>24</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, town account books 1576/1577.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., fasc. II, tax registers 1567 and 1581.

<sup>26</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 860, registry protocols no. 7 (1578–1584), pp. 91, 96, 101, 121, and 146.

<sup>27</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, pp. 242, 488, and 199.

<sup>28</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 97, citing Valvasor (Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, pp. 199 and 717).

farms (4.8 %) were abandoned on the plains than in the hills (2.8 %). The changes are especially evident compared to those that occurred in the period between 1570 and 1575, which witnessed a peasant uprising in 1573, followed by harsh retaliation. In those five years, householders' surnames had changed—to a large extent, also due to the uprising—on a roughly the same share of farms in both rent-roll offices and the seigniorship as a whole (between 16 % and 17 %). About 5 % of units of property had been abandoned. Comparisons to the dynamics of changes in land-ownership in other periods show that the seigniorship of Krško suffered many hardships during the 1570s. Moreover, given that the situation between 1575 and 1578 was even more extraordinary than in the years prior to the peasant uprising, it seems safe to assume that the changes in property ownership were largely owed to the plague.<sup>29</sup>

After that, Carniola experienced the plague in the 1580s and the 1590s, when the epidemic took an especially devastating toll among the inhabitants of Škofja Loka (1580 and 1582) and Ljubljana (1586–87) and staged the ghastliest *danse macabre* yet on the eve of the new century.<sup>30</sup>

### The plague of 1599

At the end of the sixteenth century, Carniola was hit by the thus far most severe—and, as previously, poorly documented—epidemic. Still highly lapidary, the provincial estates' registry protocols from that period provide little else than references to general decrees and correspondence with the provincial estates of the neighboring provinces. Between July 1598, when the plague first appeared in sources, and November 1600, when it found its belated echoes, the protocols make not a single mention of it in Lower Carniola but only associate it with Ljubljana and the province of Carniola as such.<sup>31</sup> Although from an overall perspective, the correspondence of the provincial estates' committee of four noble delegates (*Verordnete Stelle*) is equally scarce, it happens to provide a better overview precisely of the plague in Lower Carniola than in other parts of the province.

The epidemic reached Carniola in the spring of 1599 through Lower Carniola, where it was spread from Rijeka and its surroundings.<sup>32</sup> On May 1st, the

provincial vidame and estates sent two plague commissioners appointed from among Ljubljana's city councilors to thoroughly investigate the situation. The undated commission report, undoubtedly drawn that same month, mentions incidences of the plague in Šmarje, Šentjanž, Šentrupert, Radeče, and Raka, as well as the seigniorship of Spodnji Mokronog and around Krško, where not a single village was reportedly left unaffected. Novo Mesto and its surroundings attract more attention owing to a more recent report from 1606 on the dramatic mortality with over eight hundred deceased town dwellers, whereas in May 1599 the town leadership reassured the plague commissioners that only six persons had died by that date in Novo Mesto and even those deaths were, as the physician, the pharmacist, and the witch doctor affirmed, owed to the so-called Hungarian disease rather than the plague. On the other hand, the local parish priest wrote about three hundred deaths within a short period in the nearby parishes of Šmarjeta and Št. Peter, and a high death toll was reported from the settlements of Trška Gora and Bajnof north of Novo Mesto. According to the report, the plague had thus far spared Višnja Gora, Stična, Trebnje, and Velika Loka.<sup>33</sup> By June that same year, it had reached Ljubljana and then gradually spread toward Upper Carniola.<sup>34</sup> In Ljubljana, the plague first erupted precisely in the homes of both plague commissioners on their return from Lower Carniola, where they had most likely contracted the disease. The provincial offices were immediately transferred from the capital to Kamnik, and despite safety measures in place, the disease spread to the north unhindered, and it continued to intensify until the end of the year.<sup>35</sup>

Exhaustive reports, written while the epidemic was still running rampant in the provincial capital, shed a highly informative light on the chronology of the disease, safety measures, and various other details. Disproportionately less is known about the developments in Lower Carniola, where high mortality was reported for three towns: Novo Mesto, Višnja Gora, and Kočevje. A few years later, the inhabitants of Novo Mesto provided fairly accurate figures on the deceased and masters of the house, which, for this reason alone, are considered worthy of attention. Because early historiography accepted them uncritically and without consulting contemporary reference sources, the figures on over eight hundred dead inhabitants, including 149 masters of the house, in 1599 were insistently stated all until Ivan Vrhovec

<sup>29</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 81, fasc. 46, lit. G VIII–4, rent-roll of the Krško seigniorship 1570, s. p.—SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 141, no. 29, rent-roll of the Krško seigniorship 1575, pp. 481–529.—SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 81, fasc. 46, lit. G VIII–1, list of firearms owners 1578.

<sup>30</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, pp. 98–100.—Koblar, *O človeški kugi*, pp. 50–51.

<sup>31</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 444, fasc. 291 d, pp. 739–744, May 1st, 1599, ad May 1st, 1599.—Cf. Smole, *Kuga na Kranjskem*, p. 98.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Smole, *Kuga na Kranjskem*, p. 98.

<sup>33</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 444, fasc. 291 d, pp. 739–744, May 1st, 1599, ad May 1st, 1599.—Cf. Smole, *Kuga na Kranjskem*, p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 857, registry protocols no. 11 (1598–1601), pp. 11, 20, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 49, 67, and 84.

<sup>35</sup> Smole, *Kuga na Kranjskem*, p. 98.



published his *Zgodovina Novega mesta* (The History of Novo Mesto; 1891).<sup>36</sup> In 1606, Novo Mesto reported these figures to the vidame's commission, shortly before it visited to examine the destitute, depopulated, and partially burnt town.<sup>37</sup> The credibility of the figures is further questioned in view of the thousand deceased stated in Novo Mesto's appeal for assistance a few years later, in 1615.<sup>38</sup> Whereas the growing time distance alleviated the affected population's grievances over the recent events, reports of over eight hundred and eventually the spectacular thousand deaths partly stemmed from the belief that the provincial authorities' understanding of what actually took place in Novo Mesto in 1599 had meanwhile been blurred.

Far less ascertainable is the figure on the deaths in Višnja Gora, stated a decade after the epidemic. In 1609, Archduke Ferdinand received a petition from the judge, council, and municipality of Višnja Gora for a tax waiver and a visit by an assessment commission. The petition stated that the plague of 1599 had killed no less than half of the town's inhabitants and landless peasants, leaving desolated and unpopulated houses in its wake, and that the massive death toll had brought the outstanding personal income tax to the staggering 152 gulden in 1599 alone. It is impossible not to notice what the authors really tried to convey. In the continuation, they blamed the town's failure to pay its tax debt on Vlach troops that had torched and demolished houses and granaries while advancing toward Kaniža (1601), and by causing mayhem decimated its population, households, and the craft industry.<sup>39</sup> Like in the slightly earlier report from Novo Mesto, the plague suddenly no longer figured as the principal evil, despite having purportedly killed half of the town's population. Not even a carnage of such magnitude sufficed to undermine the town's foundations; it was essential to state other reasons to conceal the blatant exaggeration.

The inhabitants of **Kočevje**, too, wrote about the plague, and they were the first to do so in the early 1601, in a petition for assistance addressed at the court chamber in Graz. Their statements are only known from a summary report, according to which the plague (*Infection*) had been rampant in Kočevje for two years, taking the lives of the most prominent town dwellers and landless peasants, causing this small town to suffer a significant demographic decline. Yet the epidemic should not have been particularly severe, being only mentioned in passing to substantiate the request for a few-years' tax waiver

after the fire of 1596.<sup>40</sup> To compensate for the lack of hard facts, the inhabitants of Kočevje resorted to sweeping statements about the deaths of prominent figures and the town's declining population. Translated from an official language, the Black Death had reaped a minor harvest, smaller than in Novo Mesto and Višnja Gora. What should also be borne in mind is that the short time distance between the events and the writing of the petition undoubtedly kept a tight rein on the authors' desire to exaggerate. At the same time, Kočevje's example stands as eloquent proof of how quickly facts could be distorted and fabricated. Immediately after the plague had run its course in April 1600, its inhabitants sent to the provincial estates a request to defer payment of tax, merely stating that the town had been closed off after God struck them with the plague (*vns armen mit einer ruetten der straff, der infection heimgesucht*), and that the ban on movement had plunged the population into extreme poverty and distress.<sup>41</sup> Aside from the economic downturn, the town of Kočevje therefore suffered no demographic decline, about which its inhabitants wrote much more daringly to the distant Graz a year later.

The question of who copied the descriptions of the plague's aftermath in the first decade of the seventeenth century and whether they indeed did so is of marginal importance. Given that all towns whose reports have been preserved from that period pointed their fingers at the plague, the epidemic was certainly not an innocent event but one that had become deeply embedded in the collective memory, gradually shaping the belief that the true evil began with the outbreak of the plague and that the disease itself had caused all the hardship and the ensuing economic decline. In fact, the plague of 1599 coincided exactly with the time of major political and economic turmoil, which was particularly injurious to Lower Carniola as the province bordering on the battlegrounds of the Long Turkish War (1593–1606). In their subsequent explanations as to when and where the "Golden Age" had ended, the town leaderships most often dwelled on the events of that period, painting the dramatic decline in transit trade primarily as an aftermath of the fall of Bihać and Kaniža.<sup>42</sup>

Returning to the question of what actually unfolded in 1599 in the three indisputably infected Lower Carniolan towns, it should be stressed that,

<sup>36</sup> Vrhovec, *Zgodovina Novega mesta*, p. 79.

<sup>37</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 255, fasc. 133, lit. R I–2, September 24th, 1606.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, July 2nd, 1615.

<sup>39</sup> StLA, Innerösterreichische Hofkammer-Akten (hereinafter I.Ö. HK-Akten) 1611–III–105.

<sup>40</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 274, fasc. 139, lit. G I–8, June 16th, 1601.—The petition was also summarized by the administrator of the vidame's office Filip Kobenzl in his report to the court chamber (StLA, I.Ö. HK-Akten, 1601–VII–40, June 16th, 1601.

<sup>41</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 446, fasc. 291 d, p. 513, April 9th, 1600.

<sup>42</sup> E.g., SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 256, fasc. 133, lit. R II–3, s. d. Bericht A (the last-mentioned year is 1651).



*Johannes Clobucciarich's sketch of Novo Mesto (1601–1605) immediately after the plague of 1599.*

in connection to the plague, both Valvasor's writings and contemporary sources—especially the registry protocols of the provincial estates and records on the provincial estates' matters—refer solely to Novo Mesto and not once to Višnja Gora and Kočevje. Moreover, when describing the past of Višnja Gora, Valvasor mentions no specific calamity<sup>43</sup> and, on highlighting the deadly plague that devastated the town and province of Kočevje in 1578, he says not a word about the plague of 1599 but writes about the fire from three years before that.<sup>44</sup> Also, a careful reading of his lines on the two plagues in Novo Mesto reveals no distinction between the epidemic of 1578 and that of 1599, which he erroneously sets in 1590:<sup>45</sup> *“Massen sie /Pest=Seuchel/ im 1578 Jahr/ und gleichfalls !/ im 1590/ viel Leute weggerissen/ und so wenig derselben übrig gelassen/ daß das Graß/ auf dem Marckt=Platz/ so hoch gewachsen/ daß man es mit Sensen abmähen können.”*<sup>46</sup> There is some internal logic to the statement and its dramatic tone. The grass overgrowing the town's Market Square was not necessarily owed to the dramatic population decline but primarily to the fact that its trade area had not received visitors for weeks and months due to town and road closures. The unpaved square, which ordinarily hosted a bustling wheat market twice weekly, may have quite quickly turned into a grassy area.

As for the demographic losses that Novo Mesto and Višnja Gora suffered in 1599, new sources and discoveries strongly relativize the tendentious statements by their respective town leaderships. Contemporary surveys of the towns' taxpayers and aban-

doned houses lend particularly valuable support to the common-sense “incredulity.” They completely contradict the petitions raised by the inhabitants of Novo Mesto and Višnja Gora to alleviate their fiscal burdens and, notwithstanding all mitigating factors, point to nothing less than deliberate deceit and distortion of facts. At least some figures on the living and the deceased were deliberately changed, either amplified or played down, depending on whom they were addressed at. Because they can only be fully understood in the context of the property and demographic structure of both towns, they will be given further consideration below.

One thing is certain: the plague that rampaged in **Novo Mesto** at the end of the sixteenth century was indeed remorseless. According to the vidame's response to Archduke Ferdinand regarding the situation in the town, chronologically the very first source mentioning the plague in Novo Mesto, dated March 16th, 1600, the town and its surroundings suffered a heavy population loss (*an bevölkerung entplöst*) to the plague in the previous year.<sup>47</sup> Barely seven years after the events, the inhabitants of Novo Mesto would, of course, not dare to fabricate the figures completely, least of all in their report to the commissioners who visited the town to assess the level of devastation and could easily verify their claims. Another question is how many inhabitants of Novo Mesto really died because of the plague or how credible are the indications of more than eight hundred dead, including 149 masters of the house. Not impossible per se, the numbers strike terror, representing more than half of the town's population. A hundred and fifty years

<sup>43</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, pp. 628–629.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199, 200.

<sup>45</sup> Attention to the error was already drawn by I. Vrhovec (*Zgodovina Novega mesta*, p. 79).

<sup>46</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 488.

<sup>47</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 277, fasc. 140, lit. S XXI–9, March 3rd, 1600, March 26th, 1600.

later (1754), Novo Mesto had 1,485 inhabitants<sup>48</sup> or 5.67 persons per household in a total of 262 houses.<sup>49</sup> During the second half of the sixteenth century, ravaged by firestorms, economic setbacks, and emigration,<sup>50</sup> the population count was most likely even lower. For example, in the mid-eighteenth century, the same number of houses (248)<sup>51</sup> were under the town's jurisdiction as there were populated non-peasant properties (Ger.: *Hofstatt*) in 1515.<sup>52</sup> A slightly lower number of 242 hearths is provided in chronologically the closest summary data from 1541.<sup>53</sup>

As for the number of victims that the plague of 1599 claimed throughout Carniola, the only figure apart from the eight hundred in Novo Mesto is 350 persons in Ljubljana, brought forth by Valvasor.<sup>54</sup> Counting about seven hundred houses at the time, the Carniolan capital and its suburbs were home to approximately five thousand inhabitants according to Valenčič's estimate,<sup>55</sup> converting the 350 plague victims into 7 % of the total population. The difference from the more than 50 % share of deaths established for Novo Mesto is more than obvious.

However, rather than being simply rejected due to its "improbability" and the silence in contemporary reports, the staggering number of eight hundred victims in Novo Mesto<sup>56</sup> is contradicted by

far more reliable numerical sources—two lists of Novo Mesto's abandoned houses—and commission reports from the early seventeenth century. These are undated commission surveys of abandoned and burnt houses, and insolvent taxpayers. They may be labeled as lists A and B<sup>57</sup> and placed in the late summer of 1606, when the town received a visit from the provincial estates' commission.<sup>58</sup> The surveys were compiled for an investigation into the abandonment of the town following the plague of 1599 and especially the fire in the autumn of 1605. List A registers abandoned, burnt, and still-populated impoverished houses (109), whereas List B focuses on completely abandoned houses (80), that is, burnt and ruined buildings and uncultivated agricultural land. After subtracting the names of masters appearing on both lists (twenty-seven), the total number amounts to 162 abandoned houses.<sup>59</sup> Had the third commission list—a survey of still-populated houses—from 1606 also been preserved, historians could dispose of a first-rate contemporary source on the town's property and demographic structure, but instead, we can only rely on the summary report at the end of List A. The sum of 162 abandoned houses corresponds to the overall figure on more than 160 depopulated, abandoned, ruined, and burnt houses that paid no tax whatsoever. It also reveals the amounts necessary to cover for the 149 deceased masters and eight hundred deceased in total if multiplying every abandoned house by the usual coefficient of five persons per household. On the other hand, the summary provides a disproportionately low figure of "no more than 125" so-called real, mostly poor masters of their own house. The rest, not stated quantitatively, are labeled as landless peasants (*inwohner*) and thrash-

<sup>48</sup> According to the register of marriages kept by the chapter parish, the town had the following number of inhabitants over four consecutive years: 1485 in 1754, 1466 in 1755, 1441 in 1756, and 1390 in 1757 (KANM, carton 66, P/4 1754–1771, s. p.).

<sup>49</sup> SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 242 (mesto Novo mesto), no. 23, rent-roll 1756; N 11 (kapitelj Novo mesto), no. 4, February 28th, 1753.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Vrhovec, *Zgodovina Novega mesta*, pp. 76 f.

<sup>51</sup> SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 242 (mesto Novo mesto), no. 23, rent-roll 1756.

<sup>52</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 105, fasc. 59, lit. R V–1, Der zaichnus abschrift der hoffstett der statt Ruedolphswerth anno 1515.

<sup>53</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 294, fasc. 151, 6/1549, no. 9, s. d. (Gemainer statt Ruedolfswerdt auszug).—Cf. [Dimitz], Beiträge zur fünf-hundert-jährigen Gründungsfeier, 34.

<sup>54</sup> Summarizing the data from Schönleben (Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 718).—Having thoroughly studied materials from the Ljubljana City Archives, Ivan Vrhovec wrote that he could not find any statistical data on the numbers of the infected and the deceased but only tentative indications at best (Vrhovec, *Die Pest in Laibach*, p. 131).

<sup>55</sup> Valenčič, *Prebivalstvo in hiše*, p. 118.—In 1600, the town's authority covered 359 houses within the town walls, altogether about four hundred, including the forty-two identified houses under other authorities (*ibid.*, p. 112).

<sup>56</sup> To substantiate her doubt about the credibility of the data, M. Smole maintained that A. Koblar, whom she cited, did not provide any sources and that the data did not correspond to contemporary conclusions drawn by the provincial commissioners (Smole, *Kuga na Kranjskem*, p. 98). However, she was not aware about Vrhovec's publication of citations from the original source, and she also neglected the fact that the plague commissioners' reports on the epidemic in Novo Mesto and Lower Carniola only referred to the first half of 1599.

<sup>57</sup> List A (1606): SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 258, fasc. 133, lit. R V–4.—List B (1606): *ibid.*, carton 255, fasc. 133, lit. R I–2.

<sup>58</sup> Dating both lists to 1606 seems reasonable, given the extremely high numbers of burnt and abandoned houses contained in both lists as well as an indication on List A that the house of Hans Dlaka in the Market Square had already been "abandoned for thirty years since the first fire" (1576). Furthermore, the merchant Adam Gričar declared himself unable to pay the entire amount of tax because he had not engaged in any craft and trading activity for seven years (since the plague of 1599!). Even more accurate is the dating of List B, which sets forth the sum of tax loss amounting to 236 gulden and 27 kreuzer, mentioned in the commission report of September 24th, 1606. The sum refers to the revenues from widows, orphans, and landless peasants registered on List A (SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 255, fasc. 133, lit. R I–2).

<sup>59</sup> With only twenty-four names duplicated, most masters of the house on lists A and B were different individuals. Also, instead of three masters from List A, List B states widows and heirs. The conclusion that List A classifies all twenty-seven twice registered houses as completely depopulated and abandoned points with certainty that List B indeed focuses exclusively on completely empty and ruined households. Also, two of four houses that are not explicitly classified as abandoned had long been deserted according to List A.

ers (*drescher*) who paid little or no tax. In fact, these houses should be considered as part of the above-stated 160 abandoned homes, which were nonetheless occupied, albeit by landless peasants. The abandonment of Novo Mesto was therefore first and foremost a structural one: solid masters of the house were replaced by fiscally insolvent occupants, and the aggregate of both summary items reflects a realistic picture of about 285 former homes.<sup>60</sup>

This also seems to solve the mystery of how precisely the inhabitants of Novo Mesto had arrived at the 149 deceased masters and a total of over eight hundred victims of the epidemic—or it allows for at least one probable answer. If the estimate of 162 abandoned houses is reduced by those thirteen clearly listed as newly depopulated homes after being razed by the fire in the autumn of 1605, there remain exactly 149 abandoned houses with the names and surnames of their former masters. This number of completely abandoned and half-emptied homes, which now housed the town's impoverished, could have been presented at any given moment to the visitation commission for whom the information was intended. Yet the inhabitants of Novo Mesto shrewdly portrayed all former homes, many already abandoned for decades, as casualties of the plague. From here, it was only one step to reach the total of over eight hundred deaths. The town fathers merely had to multiply each deceased master by 5.4 family members, which was a slightly lower coefficient than the average of household members in 1754. And finally, as noted, the number eight hundred could also be arrived at using a much simpler calculation: about 160 abandoned households, multiplied by five persons.

To dwell a little longer on the analysis of the 149 of altogether 162 abandoned (completely and partially depopulated) homes; after subtracting the thirteen burnt houses that were completely abandoned after the fire in 1605, it becomes clear that not a negligible part of houses had already been de-

populated before 1599. List A alone states thirty-one old, abandoned houses, whereas List B says nothing about the level of abandonment and sets forth above all, if not exclusively, houses that had been consigned to ruin for many years. What remains after subtracting the thirty-one demonstrably old, abandoned houses, some expressly labeled as having been unoccupied for twenty or thirty years, are no more than 118 homes that could have been depopulated by the plague. However, given the above, it seems reasonable to assume that the actual numbers were considerably lower. Besides, no plague would have ravaged with such razor-sharp precision to kill off certain families while leaving others entirely intact. If the plague had indeed claimed the lives of 149 masters, they would have left behind many more widows instead of twelve appearing in both lists combined. To reiterate, the reference to 149 masters of the house was most likely used to cover the same number of completely or partially abandoned houses left without their real, taxpaying owners. After all subtractions, the number of completely vacated homes and the total death toll taken by the plague of 1599 remains open to debate. It is redundant to speculate whether the number of victims was more or less than stated in the source from 1625 (322, including fifteen masters of the house).<sup>61</sup> Suffice it to provide a broad estimate of up to several hundred deceased and certainly much fewer than 149 masters.

Rather than decisive, the epidemic of 1599 was a relatively incidental reason behind Novo Mesto's demonstrably poor demographic and economic status. The investigating commission, which compiled a detailed survey of tax assessments and losses suffered by each house in the late summer of 1606, stated in its final report to the provincial prince that a looming emigration of the remaining inhabitants would drive the town to the brink of collapse without the desperately needed tax relief. The main cause of this calamity were purportedly the Turks, who were blamed for the collapse of the once booming trade with Croatia and the Slavonian Military Frontier.<sup>62</sup> However, the desolation and dramatic impoverishment among the remaining population of Novo Mesto could not have been so much a consequence of the turbulent border as it was of an overall decline in non-agrarian economy, followed by a series of consecutive natural disasters. As if by an unfortunate coincidence, these struck precisely when trade and crafts were undergoing an acute crisis. In a relatively short period, the town was devastated by no less than four fires—1540, 1576, 1584, and 1605—which then various petitions and descriptions persistently described as the fun-

<sup>60</sup> In 1515, 272 non-peasant properties (Ger.: *Hofstatt*) fell under the town's jurisdiction, 248 populated and twenty-four abandoned (SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 105, fasc. 59, lit. R V–1). The next complete fiscal source is from 1726, stating 249 populated and forty-seven abandoned houses, altogether 296 house-lots (SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 256, fasc. 133, lit. R II–3, 3. 10. 1726). Although the summary from 1606 affirms that many abandoned land plots in the surroundings of Sv. Jurij were still not registered and that, in the past (*vor zeiten*), the town counted as many as 337 fully occupied houses (*wolbesezte heiser*), there is no source to confirm this in the sixteenth century. The commissioners could arrive at such a high number with a census of all built up or empty house-lots, but a document that refers to a completely unspecified time in the past raises doubt about its credibility. The same source, for example, also states that, "von jarn," the town had over 150 granaries (*gödner*), and yet List B only specifies forty-five abandoned granaries. One could come close to the number 337 by aggregating the latter, all (un)populated house-lots and taxpayers possessing various kinds of land plots.

<sup>61</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 255, fasc. 133, lit. R I–2, May 9th, 1626.—Cf. Vrhovc, *Zgodovina Novega mesta*, p. 82.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, September 24th, 1606 (commission report).

damental reason for the town's decline.<sup>63</sup> Already in 1564, the inhabitants of Novo Mesto complained about their fellow townsmen emigrating and leaving behind empty houses or tenants.<sup>64</sup> Three years later, after the town was almost completely razed by the fire in 1576, its leadership lamented the departure of a no small number of families, which had left as much as one-third of the town abandoned or undeveloped (*öder oder unausgebaut verbleibt*).<sup>65</sup> What is particularly striking is that after this fire and that in 1584,<sup>66</sup> all petitions for tax relief fail to mention a single word about the consequences of the plague of 1578, for which Valvasor remains the only known source.<sup>67</sup> The town already suffered significant demographic losses before the plague year of 1599. When they requested for a commission inspection of the town to yield a realistic tax base assessment in 1595, Novo Mesto's inhabitants reported that the biggest and most magnificent houses stood empty and deserted, while smallholdings (Ger.: *Keusche*) languished in poverty,<sup>68</sup> which only grew deeper during the Long Turkish War. The town fathers' petitions remained unanswered until the fire of 1605 turned the wealthiest and most vital part of the town into ashes,<sup>69</sup> eventually branding Novo Mesto as desolate and providing a sufficient ground for sending a visitation commission. The plague, included at the last minute in Novo Mesto's report among the causes for the deplorable situation, is solely mentioned there. Unlike the fires and impoverishment, the plague is conspicuously also missing from both the lists of abandoned houses and the final commission report.

Similar conclusions were drawn on the demographic and economic implications of the plague in **Višnja Gora**, which were substantiated with even more reliable numerical sources. Compared to Novo Mesto, the developments in Višnja Gora are also much better documented in a contemporary source,

penned by the local town judge Janez Zore—his annual account for the one-year term of office from June 24th, 1599, to the same date the following year.<sup>70</sup> The document is less revealing than its predecessor for 1553/1554 and paints a picture of an almost ordinary year. Albeit containing no mention of plague-related deaths or specifying the plague gravediggers' names, it nevertheless provides enough information to demonstrate that the risk of infection was real. On the other hand, the epidemic could not have claimed a heavy death toll, which would have manifested in the abandonment of (half of) the town. Again, according to the May report to the provincial estates, Višnja Gora had until then escaped the plague,<sup>71</sup> and the town's complaints to Archduke Ferdinand that reached Graz on June 12th, 1599, say nothing about its outbreak while reporting on no less than one-third of the town abandoned.<sup>72</sup> Considering that it traveled for no more than two weeks, the letter describes the situation in Višnja Gora at the end of May or in early June. The undocumented time up to June 24, 1599, during which the plague should have claimed the heaviest death toll, was less than a month, but on Zore's taking up his one-year term of judicial office, there were still no signs of turmoil and no plague closure, which should have been imposed in the event of mass burials. The newly appointed judge took a lease of the tollhouse at the usual amount (104 gulden and 50 kreuzer), and the town feast cost as much as it did in previous years. The disease must have occurred only later and disappeared by mid-March the following year. Namely, on March 20th, 1600, the town judge set out for Ljubljana in the company of the town clerk to visit the vidame regarding the confirmation of his term of office and the elimination of the plague closure (*Wando*), and on the same morning, the town councilors already met for breakfast at Zore's house without fear. Paralyzed traffic and trade thus delayed the confirmation of the town judge, which ordinarily followed on the heels of the election, for almost nine months, but not necessarily "through the fault" of Višnja Gora's inhabitants. Specifically, in the autumn of 1599, the provincial offices were transferred from the plague-ridden Ljubljana to Kamnik and less urgent matters were postponed to a safer date. The judicial account of Višnja Gora does not provide the exact date on which the closure was imposed on the town, nor does it describe its direct impact. No restrictions seem to have been placed at any time on the passing from and to the town by locals and foreigners, respectively.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 255, fasc. 133, lit. R I–2, September 24th, 1606; carton 256, fasc. 133, lit. R II–3, s. d. (Gravamen, after 1637). All three fires were also known to Valvasor, who further added the fourth one of 1664 (Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 488).

<sup>64</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 256, fasc. 133, lit. R II–1, April 25th, 1564.

<sup>65</sup> StLA, I.Ö. HK-Akten, 1579–VI–11, May 29th, 1579.

<sup>66</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 855, registry protocols no. 7 (1578–1584), p. 301.

<sup>67</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 488.

<sup>68</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 278, fasc. 141, lit. S XXII–16, s. d. (ad June 23rd, 1595).

<sup>69</sup> According to Valvasor, the fire engulfed the Market Square and turned sixty houses into ashes (Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 488), whereas around 1640 the inhabitants of Novo Mesto wrote about fifty-six burnt houses (SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 256, fasc. 133, lit. R II–3, s. d., Gravamen, after 1637). The most reliable source, the commission's List A from 1606, does not deviate appreciably from the indications above, stating that fifty-two of 162 abandoned houses were burned down, thirty in the Market Square and the rest in the nearby streets.

<sup>70</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, town account book 1599/1600.

<sup>71</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 444, fasc. 291 d, p. 743, ad May 1st, 1599.—Cf. Smole, Kuga na Kranjskem, p. 98.

<sup>72</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko carton 284, fasc. 145, lit. W I–3, June 12th, 1599.

As always, the regular council meeting was held in the autumn, the town envoys journeyed to Graz and back, Višnja Gora received provincial messengers, beggars, and other foreigners, and the town fathers continued to appoint officials.<sup>73</sup> Life in the town was equally busy during winter months: tax was collected on the last day of January and a deal was concluded for the town messenger's house on February 21st, after which the inhabitants of Višnja Gora and the parish priest spent a few days discussing matters concerning the spiritual assistant and teacher—all this during the closure, which was still in place on March 20th.

The town judge's bill of costs only refers to the plague indirectly, through occasional mentions of burials. Between July 28th and August 8th, 1599, for example, two representatives of the town were sent to the parish priest "to discuss the burial of those from the village of Kriška Vas," and in mid-November the town paid for a boy's burial. At the end of 1599 or the beginning of the next year, the town messenger died and was promptly replaced by another, and in January 1600 the town judge included a swineherd's post-burial feast among the expenses. On April 10th, after the town judge and clerk returned from Ljubljana and the closure was lifted, the former gravedigger Matija Arbeiter, who interred the swineherd in January, received the promised payment for his burials (*wegen seiner zuegesagten besoldung der be-grebnus halber*). The word "burial" in plural form and the item "1 gulden and 36 kreuzer" suggest that he had buried at least a few people. Interestingly, however, this time one gravedigger was enough, unlike in 1554 when the town hired four and paid them for a month's work an amount almost four times higher than the sum now paid to Arbeiter. Moreover, unlike its predecessor from a little less than fifty years before, which makes several mentions of the epidemic, the town judge's annual account for 1599/1600 contains a single direct reference to the disease, made only after the danger had passed, on June 14th, 1600, when the provincial messenger brought a general mandate on "Infection alda." Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Višnja Gora had been vigorously restoring town buildings, collecting taxes, and litigating, apart from which they also held the Feast of Corpus Christi and the annual fair.

In the light of the above, the contemporary source provides no basis to substantiate the reported deaths of half of the town's inhabitants and landless peasants. In addition, for Višnja Gora there exists a continuous series of annual tax registers issued every

few years, starting with 1567. Clearly specifying the composition of the town's population and its ability to pay tax, the registers represent a credible source, also because a vast majority have been preserved in original in the town archives.<sup>74</sup> Yet precisely the registers from 1605–1607, the closest in time to the plague, are only known through doctored transcripts held by the provincial vidame and the Inner Austrian government, respectively.<sup>75</sup> These are dismissed by appreciably different data provided in a tax survey that was carried out the following year, in 1608, for the town's internal use.<sup>76</sup>

An interesting light on Višnja Gora's allegation from 1609 that the plague had killed over half of its population is shed by their above-mentioned complaints to Archduke Ferdinand, which arrived in Graz on June 12th, 1599. More specifically, it was already before the epidemic that more than one-third of houses in the debt-ridden and deteriorating town were abandoned and dilapidated (!). The town leadership also lamented the total absence of trade and crafts, adding that since the onset of the war in 1593 various armies had passed through the town, forcibly grabbing whatever they chanced on and paying for nothing.<sup>77</sup> According to the tax register of 1591, when Višnja Gora had more taxpayers than ever in the following two centuries, the dramatic abandonment should have taken place in a short span of eight tumultuous years. In the year mentioned above, Višnja Gora counted eighty-nine homes, eleven free tenants and landless peasants, and twelve granaries—but no empty houses or insolvent taxpayers.<sup>78</sup> The one-third of abandoned houses from 1599 could correspond to the situation presented to the higher authorities in the tax registers from 1605, 1605, and 1607, when the heavily abandoned town recorded between fifty-nine and sixty-three populated houses.<sup>79</sup> However, the three surveys above served to substantiate the petitions to cancel the outstanding tax debt, whereas the original register for the following year 1681 already listed many more homes (seventy-six). The probability that seventeen abandoned houses became populated within a year should be flatly dismissed. According to the comparison of the stock of masters' names, certain persons and surnames only appeared in 1591 and 1608 and were simply suppressed or attributed to abandoned

<sup>73</sup> A partial standstill in view of the "ex silentio" of dates can only be observed between August 15th and November 11th, and even that period saw autumn assemblies, an overview of the judge's and chamberlain's accounts for the previous year, and a visit from the provincial debt collector, accompanied by indispensable feasts.

<sup>74</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, tax registers 1567–1740.

<sup>75</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 284, fasc. 145, lit. W I–4, tax register 1605, 1606.—StLA, I.Ö. HK-Akten, 1611–III–105, Steuer register 1607.

<sup>76</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, tax register 1608.

<sup>77</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko carton 284, fasc. 145, lit. W I–3, June 12th, 1599.

<sup>78</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, tax register 1591.

<sup>79</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 284, fasc. 145, lit. W I–4, tax register 1605, 1606.—StLA, I.Ö. HK-Akten, 1611–III–105, Steuer register 1607.

homes in the registers for 1605–1607. Even before 1608, the actual number of populated houses must have been higher than about sixty, and it could not be significantly lower than seventy-six, at which it stabilized for at least the following two decades.

Bearing eloquent witness to that is the population continuity in Višnja Gora. Although the discontinuity of property holding families was higher in the seventeen years between 1591 and 1608 than in the ten years between 1581 and 1591, the different durations of the periods make the difference negligible. In the first period (1581–1591), 48.2 % of all householding families remained on the same property and 32.6 % in the second. In other words, between 1581 and 1591, 4.4 households changed their master each year, and during the crisis-, war-, and plague-ridden period 1591–1608 no more than 3.5 households, including the thirteen abandoned ones.<sup>80</sup>

Still, it is important to note that between 1591 and 1608 the number of householders in Višnja Gora dropped from eighty-nine to seventy-six or by a little more than one-seventh (14.61 %) compared to the initial situation. Since the changes from eight years before 1599 and in the six years leading up to 1605 are not documented, the population fluctuations that took place in the meantime and during the plague year can only be speculated on. What the figures above nevertheless confirm is that one-third of the town's houses could not have been abandoned just before the plague in 1599, let alone that the disease had killed half of the population. Knowing about its rampaging in other parts of the province, ten years later, in 1609, the inhabitants of Višnja Gora simply inserted the epidemic in their petition for the cancellation of tax debt. The number of deaths, which could at most reach a double-digit figure, was inflated to half of the town dwellers and landless peasants, amounting to over two hundred persons in view of the eighty-nine populated houses in 1591. The plague thus only played a marginal role in the devastation of Višnja Gora, which is also why its mention is completely omitted from both the vidame visitation report in 1609 and from the report to the provincial prince on the town's status, which otherwise provides an exhaustive list of every possible reason for stagnation.<sup>81</sup>

At the end of the sixteenth century, Višnja Gora suffered from the same economic crisis as the rest of the province. According to the vidame, crafts and

trade took a severe blow, forcing much of the population to live off the land.<sup>82</sup> A conglomerate of reasons ushered in the first stage of the town's abandonment, which did not end until the early seventeenth century. How much the plague of 1599 directly or indirectly contributed to the weakening of the town's economy remains unclear. That year, for example, the town judge Janez Zore collected almost half the amount of tax less (63 gulden and 40 kreuzer) than his predecessor in 1596 (116 gulden).<sup>83</sup> The plague was at least partially responsible for this, given the town's closure and the restricted movement of people and goods throughout the province.

### The plague between 1623 and 1627

The next major epidemic threatened Carniola indirectly from Gorizia and Styria since the spring of 1623, when strict safety measures and provincial border closures were put in place. The plague first visited Upper Carniola in 1624 and then settled for two years in Lower Carniola.<sup>84</sup> The estate registry protocols first recorded it on Carniolan soil in March 1624, after a series of closures and guards had been set up since February 1623 to prevent the spread of the disease from the infected neighboring provinces. In December 1624, the secret court council in Graz issued a decree to put Ljubljana under guard, a measure that the provincial estates criticized as unnecessary. The provincial princely infection decree was issued no earlier than August 1625, when the plague had already reached full swing both in Carniola and, again, in Styria. The regest of reports, bans, and decrees, issued between December 1624 and the end of 1625, lists the following places in Lower Carniola: Žužemberk, Ribnica, Soteska, and Novo Mesto with its surroundings. Before the end of 1625, the plague receded for a while and then hit with full force again in May 1626, prompting the provincial estates to renew the patent of the plague commissioner for Lower Carniola, after which the abbot of Stična demanded to impose a ban on fairs. The epidemic finally came to an end sometime before November 1626, when the provincial estate registry protocols began to feature nothing but physician and commissioner reports, and costs incurred.<sup>85</sup>

Among Lower Carniolan towns and market towns, the plague was best documented in **Novo**

<sup>80</sup> Between 1581 and 1591, thirty-one homes (36.5 %) retained the same master and ten (11.8 %) the same surname, and five persons and seven surnames were passed on to other houses and immovable properties. Between 1591 and 1608, eighteen masters of the house (20.2 %) remained the same and eleven homes (12.4 %) retained an unchanged surname, in addition to twelve surnames of householders around the town (13.5 %).

<sup>81</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 284, fasc. 145, lit. W I-4, July 11th, 1609.—StLA, I.Ö. HK-Akten, 1611–III–105, January 24th, 1610.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, town account books 1596/1597 and 1599/1600.

<sup>84</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, pp. 102–103; Koblar, O človeški kugi, p. 51.—SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 480, fasc. 295 b, p. 999–1001, October 20th, 1625.

<sup>85</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 860, registry protocols no. 14 (1619–1629), pp. 261, 267, 271, 272, 274, 275, 276, 279, 291, 300, 308, 320, 337, 339, 344, 364, 377, 385, 390, 395, 398, 405, 415, 419, 421, 424, 428, 440, 455, and 478.

**Mesto**, for which two numbers of the deceased have been preserved. The impact of the plague is best illustrated in the report compiled by the Novo Mesto town judge and council of May 9th, 1626, requesting the provincial vidame to grant the town the right to collect bridge fee. According to the report, the town was undergoing even greater distress and decline after 322 persons had died of the plague in the previous year (*laidige Infection*), including fifteen masters of the house, condemning their widows and children to extreme poverty. Households remained empty and unable to pay tax, whereas the town council, in extending its Christian outreach to everyone, had already drained too much of the town's treasury and their own income to help the poor. The plague hit Novo Mesto in May and ended on November 4th, 1625, although it was still running rampant elsewhere at the time (i.e., May 1626). A few grudgers then reportedly spread rumors and smears to prevent the town from reopening all until March 21st, 1626, leaving the town dwellers with no work, while the excessively long closure caused damage and devastation in the fields and vineyards. The local population was also adversely affected by the exchange of coins in 1624, and all town revenues were used up for treating the infected and for other purposes. The town ordered 100 gulden's worth of medicines from Ljubljana, after which the town pharmacist sought to use the receipt to extort another 300 gulden, increasing the total amount of the town's debt to almost 1000 gulden. The inhabitants of Novo Mesto also owed the provincial estates an outstanding tax debt for 1625 and other liabilities, which they now hoped would be written off.<sup>86</sup>

The indications in the petition seem highly realistic. Even though the plague had ended in the town itself by early November 1625, the closure continued for another four months and a half, hitting the town's non-agrarian and agrarian economy the hardest. That the danger had indeed passed can be gathered from the fact that in January 1626 the physician Janez Scheidt called on the provincial estates for the second time to reopen the town, but they remained unwavering and in June that same year even threatened the town with a tax warrant.<sup>87</sup> Many details regarding the epidemic itself could be obtained from a report on Scheidt's work during the plague that the provincial estates' delegates required from the town leadership;<sup>88</sup> however, no such report, if ever written at all, has been preserved. More is known about the

dispute between the inhabitants of Novo Mesto and their pharmacist Martin Anton Mladkovič, who had already at the end of 1625 presented the provincial estates with the specification of medicines (*dispon-sirten medicinalien*) used during the plague in the town and its surroundings and mainly distributed among the town dwellers and the most prominent town councilors. The delegates then reported to the town judge and council that the provincial estates had no intention of covering the costs incurred and called on them to recover the debt as soon as possible.<sup>89</sup>

Against this background, the epidemic in Novo Mesto was by no means an innocent mishap. 322 dead, including fifteen masters of the house, are realistic and much more credible figures than the overblown statements about the plague twenty-five years earlier. The only reason that the figures do not create the impression of greater credibility is that they are significantly lower this time, which is largely owed to the nature of the report. Drawn up only a few weeks after the plague closure was lifted, this document was much more up to date than the report on the plague of 1599, which was compiled seven years after the events and almost casually woven into the reasons for the profound structural crisis. Conversely, the new report, albeit also written in the form of a petition for aid, provides a detailed description of the epidemic's direct aftermath. Six years later, Valvasor, too, stated that the plague of 1625 killed four hundred people.<sup>90</sup> The 322 and four hundred victims, respectively, in 1625 are further comparable to the still more reliable number of 331 dead in the entire 1715, when a febrile disease took hold among the town's population.<sup>91</sup> Setting both numbers of deaths against 1,485 inhabitants of Novo Mesto in 1754,<sup>92</sup> a little more than one-fifth died on both occasions. However, it seems reasonable to assume that in 1625 the town had a smaller population due to the more than fifty years' period of structural crisis, fires, and epidemics. The 322 dead thus surely accounted for more than one-quarter, if not nearly one-third of Novo Mesto's population. Because the plague of 1625 also sent to the grave many from the surrounding villages, Rudolf Baron von Paradaiser ensured a lasting memory of it by erecting the Church of St. Roch in 1627, just a stone's throw away from his Pogance mansion.<sup>93</sup>

Little credibility is afforded to plague reports that were mainly written in passing. It is interesting to observe how the White Carniolan towns of

<sup>86</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 255, fasc. 133, lit. R I-2, May 9th, 1626.—Cf. Vrhovec, *Zgodovina Novega mesta*, p. 82.

<sup>87</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 860, registry protocols no. 14 (1619–1629), p. 397; carton 480, fasc. 295 b, p. 1423–1424, June 6th, 1626.

<sup>88</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 860, registry protocols no. 14 (1619–1629), p. 419.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, carton 480, fasc. 295 b, pp. 1115–1116, December 20th, 1625.

<sup>90</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 488.

<sup>91</sup> KANM, carton 66, M/1 1704–1728.

<sup>92</sup> According to a summary report in: KANM, carton 66, P/4 1754–1771, s. p.

<sup>93</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 103. Cf. Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 449.



**Metlika** and **Črnomelj** benefitted themselves from Novo Mesto's misfortunes. When the inhabitants of Novo Mesto appealed to the emperor to grant them the right to collect bridge fee and write off a part of their outstanding tax debt, in 1632 the authorities collected opinions from the neighboring towns. The seigniorial steward of Žužemberk as well as the leaderships of Ljubljana, Višnja Gora, Krško, Kostanjevica, Metlika, and Črnomelj agreed to such a form of aid and confirmed that Novo Mesto had indeed been severely debilitated by various calamities, stripped of its population, and abandoned, especially because of the prolonged plague closure a few years earlier.<sup>94</sup> However, the inhabitants of Metlika added that the plague had been more pertinacious in their town than in Novo Mesto and that by killing many young and old it kept Metlika in shutdown for longer. Poor harvests drove the few survivors to the brink of existence, forcing most from both Novo Mesto and Metlika to move elsewhere.<sup>95</sup> Two weeks later, the inhabitants of Črnomelj sent an almost verbatim response, likewise stressing that the plague closure of their town lasted longer than in Novo Mesto and that, like Novo Mesto, half of Črnomelj stood empty (*ödt stehen*).<sup>96</sup> Whereas the inhabitants of Metlika and Črnomelj surely did not invent the long-term closure of their towns, the levels of mortality and abandonment are open to debate for the lack of other sources that historians could draw on for either town, particularly any kind of structural-numerical sources or data regarding their population—for Metlika until the beginning of the eighteenth century and for Črnomelj up to the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>97</sup> No mention of the plague of 1625–1626 is likewise contained in more recent complaints and Valvasor's writings, and the only contemporary report available is a notice from August 1625 concerning the ban on weekly fairs in Metlika.<sup>98</sup>

The epidemic only reached the town of **Krško** in the second wave. According to the annals in the Krško town book, it spread to this urban settlement on the Sava around All Saints' Day in 1626 and lasted until the New Year. The notice on the plague is very meager, especially compared to records on natural disasters and troubles in the ensuing years, making it reasonable to assume that the number of

victims was rather limited.<sup>99</sup>

Equally meager are reports on the plague in **Višnja Gora**, otherwise the Lower Carniolan town best documented through local sources. The town judge's annual account for 1623/24 only mentions the epidemic indirectly, in a record dated July 1623 concerning the reimbursement of a messenger who had arrived from Ljubljana on a plague-related matter (*wegen der infection*).<sup>100</sup> Although the judicial accounts have not been preserved for the next two years, Višnja Gora must have been safe from the plague based on a report on the ongoing reparations of the provincial road that the town submitted to the provincial estates in August 1625.<sup>101</sup> The town judge's annual account for the period between the mid-1626 and the mid-1627 then describes a perfectly normal life and a vibrant flow of people and goods. It was only in mid-December 1626 that the inhabitants of Višnja Gora sent a messenger with a plague epistle to the provisional plague administrators in Ljubljana. Beyond the reference to the epistle, nothing is known about its content and the past developments in the town. On the other hand, an evident threat loomed over Višnja Gora's wider surroundings, given that the plague (*der infection halber*) had decimated the town judge's income that year from the tollhouse at Šmartno pri Litiji, which the town held in lease.<sup>102</sup> However, as can be gathered from the town tax registers, the plague certainly had not emptied Višnja Gora's households. After the town registered seventy-nine populated homes and two abandoned houses in 1620, there are barely any detectable differences in 1629, with seventy-eight houses and one abandoned parcel of land, and a steady continuity of property holders' surnames.<sup>103</sup>

Turning to other Lower Carniolan urban settlements, the plague also appears to not have spared

<sup>94</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 255, fasc. 133, lit. R I–2, February 7th, 1632, August 31st, 1632, September 9th, 1632, September 20th, 1632, August 1st, 1632, August 15th, 1632, October 30th, 1635.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1st, 1632.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15th, 1632.

<sup>97</sup> Metlika's civil registers were started after the fire of 1705 and Črnomelj's no earlier than 1753. The first census of houses in Metlika, contained in the Theresian Cadaster (1752), was produced soon after the oldest preserved census for Črnomelj (1744).

<sup>98</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 860, registry protocols no. 14 (1619–1629), p. 428.

<sup>99</sup> The following year, in 1628, the wider Krško area was devastated by an earthquake, followed by a flood in August, which exerted a heavy toll among peasants and cattle. Horrific aftershocks continued for another five yearly quarters until the mid-1629. As a result, that and the ensuing year were a period of severe scarcity; "several thousand" people went bankrupt or died of hunger, and "several thousand" moved with their wives and children to Hungary and Turkey and became their subjects.—SI AS 1080, Zbirka Muzejskega društva za Kranjsko, Muzejskega društva za Slovenijo in Historičnega društva za Kranjsko, carton 8, fasc. 11, Civitatensia, Mesto Krško, town book 1539–1679.—Cf. [Dimitz], *Annalen der landesfürstlichen Stadt Gurkfeld*, p. 84. Cf. Koblar, *Iz kronike krškega mesta*, p. 22.—Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 103.

<sup>100</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, town account books 1626/1627.

<sup>101</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 480, fasc. 295 b, pp. 729–730, August 4th, 1625.

<sup>102</sup> On February 5th, 1627, the judge Janez Markovič received no more than 6 gulden, 22 kreuzer, and 1 pfennig from the tollhouse official Janez Plevnik (SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, town account books: 1626/1627).

<sup>103</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, tax registers 1620 and 1629.

the market towns of Žužemberk and Ribnica, both mentioned in the registry regest on “plague reports” from 1624–1625.<sup>104</sup> What kind of reports the provincial estates received from there remains unknown, just as hardly any contemporary source exists on this plague. Only Dietrich Baron von Auersperg complained at the end of August 1625 that the epidemic had left the Žužemberk seigniory in such a shambles that he could hardly draw any benefit and collectable tax from it.<sup>105</sup> According to V. Travner citing an unidentified source, Žužemberk’s death toll in 1625 was so high that the town cemetery was too small to cope. Burials were moved to the parish field, thenceforth dubbed “Kužni dol” (Plague Hollow), and a tract of land on the right bank of the Krka, where the Church of St. Roch was erected in the village of Stranska Vas the next year in collaboration with the inhabitants of the upper Krka valley.<sup>106</sup> As regards the victims of Žužemberk, the actual demographic losses suffered by the market town itself are still up for debate. Owing to the lack of relevant sources, a tentative answer can be obtained by comparing property ownership in seigniorial rent-rolls from 1619 and 1644, which reveals no major turmoil but, to the contrary, even shows that the settlement of smallholdings (Ger.: *Keusche*) on the right bank of the Krka as much as doubled in the course of twenty-five years.<sup>107</sup> It is also possible to ascertain a steady continuity of property ownership with 57.3 % units of property remaining in the hands of the same families as in 1619.<sup>108</sup>

The only reference to the plague in connection with Ribnica is contained in a “plague report” sent to the provincial estates in 1624–1625.<sup>109</sup> Apart from the fact that this period coincided with the construction of the Church of St. Roch in the village of Dolenja Vas,<sup>110</sup> more tangible traces of the

epidemic have also yet to be found in more recent sources. Indirect witnesses to the plague are perhaps the rent-rolls of the seigniory of Ribnica. Between 1621 and 1659, marking the beginning and the end of the period, during which Lower Carniola was struck by two severe plague epidemics, the market town suffered a heavy population loss. The rent-roll from 1659 sets forth a downright dramatic decline in the number of both hide owners and smallholders (Ger.: *Keuschler*), with only fifty-one masters of the house or 44 % less than nearly four decades earlier, in 1621, when there were still ninety-one.<sup>111</sup> No major upturn was seen for the next fifty years,<sup>112</sup> despite Valvasor’s assurances that Ribnica experienced a new “boom” after the devastating fires in the fifteenth century. What seems surprising is that Valvasor knew about the fateful events of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but remained mute on the possible plague epidemics or fires in the not as distant seventeenth century.<sup>113</sup>

The 1630s ushered in a period of relative relief to the Slovenian provinces between the major epidemics in the 1620s and 1640s, while the plague ravaged Istria in 1631, hitting the towns of Koper and Pula the hardest.<sup>114</sup> The news about the disease startled Carniolans in the summer and autumn of 1631, when it appeared in Rihemberk in Gorizia and around Ilirska Bistrica and the small town of Lož in Carniola.<sup>115</sup> Conversely, there is no evidence to suggest that it spread to Lower Carniola. For August 19th, 1631, for example, the Višnja Gora town judge’s annual account merely mentions the arrival of a provincial messenger bringing reports on sects, outstanding tax debt, and the plague.<sup>116</sup> The Black Death struck again in 1634, when it reaped a particularly heavy death toll in the Vipava Valley and reached the doorstep of Idrija. It had a similarly limited scope in Lower Carniola, where its sole incidence was recorded in Krško.<sup>117</sup> According to the town annals, the disease reached Krško around the Feast of St. Luke (October 18th) in 1634 and did not recede until the Epiphany (January 6th) the fol-

<sup>104</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 860, registry protocols no. 14 (1619–1629), p. 395.

<sup>105</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 480, fasc. 295 b, p. 793, August 30th, 1625.

<sup>106</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 103.

<sup>107</sup> In 1619, Žužemberk registered eighty-nine property (house-) holders, sixty-eight in the center of the market town on the left bank of the Krka and twenty-one on the other side of the river. Twenty-five years later, the total number of all masters rose to 103—dropping to sixty-two in the center of the market town and climbing to forty-one on the right bank of the Krka.

<sup>108</sup> There is a noticeable difference in the continuity of property holding families between the twenty-seven years’ period of 1592–1619 (34.04 %) and the twenty-five years’ period of 1644–1669 (30.10 %).—ÖStA, HHStA, FAA, A–15–68, Rent-roll Seisenberg 1592–1597, fols. 1–28v; A–15–70, Rent-roll Seisenberg 1619–1624, fol. 1–35v; A–15–72, Rent-roll Seisenberg 1644–1651, fols. 1–28; A–15–80, Rent-roll Seisenberg 1669–1676, s. p.

<sup>109</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 860, registry protocols no. 14 (1619–1629), p. 395.

<sup>110</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 103.—Valvasor only refers to the Church of St. Roch as the eighteenth Ribnica succursal “nechst bey der Pfarrkirchen” (Valvasor, *Die Ehre VIII*, p. 796).

<sup>111</sup> SI AS, AS 774, Gospostvo Ribnica, vol. 2, rent-roll 1621, s. p.; vol. 3, rent-roll 1659, s. p.

<sup>112</sup> The seigniorial rent-roll from 1707–1710 states altogether fifty-six hide owners and smallholders in the market town (SI AS, AS 774, Gospostvo Ribnica, vol. 4, rent-roll 1707–1710, fols. 1–46).

<sup>113</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 468.

<sup>114</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, pp. 103–104.

<sup>115</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 861, registry protocols no. 15 (1630–1645), pp. 59, 63, and 66.—Describing the plague, the inhabitants of Lož write about the economic losses rather than the victims, and the plague helped them negotiate the Cerknica fair to be transferred to their town (SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 184, fasc. 104, lit. L I–8, November 28th, 1635; carton 197, fasc. 107, lit. L XX–8, November 16th, 1634).

<sup>116</sup> SI AS, Mestni arhiv Višnja Gora, fasc. IV, town account books 1631/2.

<sup>117</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 104.

lowing year. Thanks to swift precautionary and preventive measures, it killed no more than twenty-two persons, mostly children.<sup>118</sup> Given the heaviest death toll among the children's population, it would be interesting to determine what type of disease it was. Obviously, the fear of catastrophe was bigger than the actual threat and considering twenty-two as a minor death toll suggests that the plague of 1626–1627 had a deadlier course.

### The plague between 1645 and 1650

Spread widely across Carniola, Carinthia, and Styria, this plague epidemic most likely claimed fewer lives than its predecessors, but it etched itself into the popular memory as the longest and the last major plague on Carniolan soil. Four decades later, Valvasor, who in his writings mentions no plague in relation to so many places as this most recent one, seems more objective in estimating its scope than the leaderships of the affected towns. In his words, the plague of 1646 ravaged and took an enormous human toll in Krško and its surroundings. He is similarly unexplicit about Metlika, maintaining that that same year God unleashed a plague which often ran rampant among the inhabitants of the town and its surroundings. In the chapter on Novo Mesto, he also describes Metlika's death toll and, compared to the four hundred death cases in 1625, refers to the victims of 1648 as "no more than eighteen persons." In relation to other towns and market towns, he clearly does not consider the epidemic from forty years earlier as noteworthy, making a sole reference to a plague ravaging the small town of Svibno and its castle in 1646.<sup>119</sup> Nothing is likewise known about the epidemic in other parts of Lower Carniola from contemporary reports, which remain silent on the epidemic in Kočevje and a significant part of western Lower Carniola.

Novo Mesto, which had been drained of much of its population during the plague epidemics of 1599 and 1625, seems to have weathered the plague wave in 1645–1650 much better than some other parts of Lower Carniola. Whereas the historiographical and other literature, except Valvasor, says nothing about a possible incidence of the plague in the Lower Carniolan capital, it mentions its ravages in Krško, Metlika, Svibno, and Radeče.<sup>120</sup> Contemporary reports differ in terms of their scope, content, and purpose,

and they have been variably preserved for individual affected towns and market towns. All, including the most important source—the Carniolan provincial estates' registry protocols—are characteristically scarce in content. This was also the first plague to be recorded in church registers that have only been preserved from that period for two Lower Carniolan town parishes: the chapter parish in Novo Mesto and the parish of Višnja Gora. A relatively coherent chronology of the epidemic is provided by the provincial estate registry protocols from June 1646, when it moved from Krško across the Sava to Lower Carniola and settled there until 1650, when the province was safe again.

Mutually independent synchronous reports have been preserved on the epidemic's devastating aftermath in **Krško**. The plague occurred in June 1646 in the nearby villages of Dole and Vrhovlje, which were immediately placed under guard at the behest of the provincial estates' delegation office.<sup>121</sup> By September 1647, the epidemic had caused such destruction, that the authorities also shut down both ferryboats crossing the Sava at Krško and Rajhenrburg, posted guards in the infected areas, and appointed Baron Jošt Moscon as plague commissioner. The plague reportedly raged in Krško in October 1647, after which the registry protocols do not mention it again.<sup>122</sup> According to V. Travner, the entire town street was closed, and the disease reportedly killed many in the nearby areas, especially Leskovec and Turn.<sup>123</sup> Unfortunately, there are no other contemporary reports known on the epidemic, and the keeping of the town annals ceased just before it struck. Valvasor places it in 1646 and adds that the Krško town council commemorated it by erecting the Church of St. Rosalie with broad assistance on the hill near the town the next year.<sup>124</sup>

Produced a little less than a decade later, the long report on the impact of the plague on Krško represents the most comprehensive document on this epidemic from Lower Carniola. The provincial estates' visitation commission, which visited Krško in 1655, reported that the plague had wreaked havoc for two consecutive years, killing many townsmen, women, and children, and preventing others from leaving the town. Unable to sustain a livelihood, the inhabitants became destitute and eventually left.<sup>125</sup> During its visit, the commission compiled a list of

<sup>118</sup> SI AS 1080, Zbirka Muzejskega društva za Kranjsko, Muzejskega društva za Slovenijo in Historičnega društva za Kranjsko, carton 8, fasc. 11, *Civitatensia*, Mesto Krško, town book 1539–1679, s. p.—Cf. [Dimitz], *Annalen der landesfürstlichen Stadt Gurkfeld*, p. 84.—Koblar, *Iz kronike krškega mesta*, pp. 22–23.

<sup>119</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, pp. 242, 389, 488, and 502.

<sup>120</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 110–111.—Koblar, *O človeški kugi*, p. 51.

<sup>121</sup> SI AS 2, *Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko*, Reg. I, carton 862, registry protocols no. 16 (1646–1652), pp. 43, 46, and 48.—Just like Krško's town judge and council, Baron Moscon, the owner of the Krško seignory, and the benefice of Krško, both with serfs in the above-mentioned villages, were ordered to provide the villagers with the basic life necessities.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141 and 185.

<sup>123</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, pp. 110.

<sup>124</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre VIII*, p. 744.

<sup>125</sup> SI AS 1, *Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko*, carton 171, fasc. 97a, lit. G VIII–8, August 25th, 1655.

abandoned houses. The list has only been preserved in a transcript from 1677, which was added newly abandoned homes and titled: “A Survey of Houses Completely Devastated by the Plague, Constant Burdens Imposed by Stationed Troops, Floods, and Severe Divine Punishment.” Sixteen abandoned houses were recorded in the town itself and another twenty-three “below the hill”, altogether thirty-nine. However, various levels of abandonment reveal that some houses were, after all, not completely depopulated, and that many had been emptied out before the plague.<sup>126</sup> A total of twenty dwellings had been abandoned in the town and below the hill, five were consigned to ruin, and fourteen inhabited by their impoverished owners or other occupants.<sup>127</sup>

How many households were abandoned because of the epidemic and how many due to other factors at work? Let us recall that the title of the survey of abandoned houses states the plague first, in a way confirming its role in producing the unenviable number of twenty completely abandoned homes, many widows, and houses occupied by day laborers. At a rough estimate, the plague may have killed several dozens or even several hundreds. The share of Krško’s confirmedly and possibly abandoned houses may be determined only indirectly, as the exact number of houses remained unknown at least until the mid-eighteenth century. According to the list of those who paid annual dues (Ger.: *Hofzins*) in the seigniorial rent-rolls from 1570 and 1575,<sup>128</sup> Krško counted 141 or 145 dwellings at that time.<sup>129</sup> After a strong depopulation trend, the number of inhabited houses in Krško settled during the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1752, it amounted to 110,<sup>130</sup> which can translate into about six hundred inhabitants.

The example of Krško contributed in no small part to the relativizations in subsequent shocking

reports on the economic implications of the plague. In their petition from 1747, requesting the provincial authorities to confirm the town privileges, the inhabitants of Krško complained that their trade had been driven out of existence by the fairs held in the Styrian village of Videm on the other side of the Sava ever since the deadly plague (*leydige Contagion*) had swept across Styria and Carniola. With all river crossings closed, Krško-bound traders and cattle reportedly remained stranded on the Styrian side of the river, in the territory under the jurisdiction of the provincial court of Brežice.<sup>131</sup> In its report to the court office, the Carniolan representation and chamber supported the inhabitants of Krško in their wish to reopen fairs—but with one reservation: if it were found that the fairs in Videm had indeed been established without authorization.<sup>132</sup> The owner of the seigniorial Brežice demonstrated the age of the Videm kermesses with the rent-roll from 1609, stressing that it did not say a word about the fair being transferred or any plague.<sup>133</sup> However, a confirmation that the fairs, more specifically those in 1646,<sup>134</sup> had indeed been moved to Videm due to the plague can be found in the Krško Capuchin chronicle, which was only started in late 1757. According to the chronicle, the town had endeavored to re-establish its fairs until 1757, when the district governor publicly confirmed the town privileges, including the right to hold fairs.<sup>135</sup> Although the plague may have caused the decline in the town’s trade, both interpretations regarding the collapse of Krško’s fairs and the booming fairs in Videm were produced more than a hundred years after the period in question and the reasons for their transfer across the Sava. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the otherwise revealing town’s complaints and petitions contain no such explanation. It is especially noteworthy that the provincial estates’ visitation commission in 1655 made absolutely no mention of the fairs in its minute descriptions of both direct and indirect implications of the plague.<sup>136</sup> The fairs in Videm only became a pressing issue for the inhabitants of Krško many years later. In 1674, they negotiated the arrival of the provincial estates’ commission to inspect the fairs concurrently held in Videm and Krško. The com-

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., Specification B, s. a.—In the town center, one house classified as abandoned was occupied by an impoverished owner and two by poor widows. Two abandoned houses had already been converted into gardens, whereas all trace of another abandoned house had been lost, two had been reduced to wall fragments, three to an empty parcel of land, and five to ruin. Twenty-three houses below the hill were abandoned, nine ruined, and the rest dilapidated but still inhabited by poor widows and the town’s day laborers.

<sup>127</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 171, fasc. 97, lit. G VIII–8, s. d. (1677, Specification B).

<sup>128</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 81, fasc. 46, lit. G VIII–7, rent-roll of the seigniorial Krško 1570, s. p.—SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 141, no. 29, rent-roll of the seigniorial Krško 1575, pp. 481–529.

<sup>129</sup> This number rests on the assumption that granaries did not have permanent residents and that other house-lots (Ger.: *Hofstatt*) in fact indicated buildings. In his reference to 146 families, J. Koropec simply ascribed one family to any of the 146 individuals who paid annual dues (Ger.: *Hofzins*) in money (Koropec, *Krško v obdobju*, p. 53).

<sup>130</sup> SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 239, no. 7, June 13th, 1752.

<sup>131</sup> SI AS 6, Repräsentanz in komora za Kranjsko v Ljubljani, carton 49, fasc. XIX, lit. G, no. 1, presented on May 16th, 1747.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., June 8th, 1747.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., September 19th, 1756, Annex B.

<sup>134</sup> References to the plague of 1646 were most likely influenced by the widespread knowledge about the plague in that year, which Valvasor mentioned in his description of the town of Krško (Valvasor, *Die Ebre XI*, p. 242).

<sup>135</sup> Kapucinski samostan Krško, Archivum loci Ppff. capucinarum Gurgfeldi erectum anno Domini MDCCCLVII, p. 9.—Cf. Benedik, Kralj, *Kapucini na Slovenskem*, p. 435.

<sup>136</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 171, fasc. 97a, lit. G VIII–8, August 25th, 1655.

mission confirmed that the fair in Krško had all but disappeared, while the one in Videm flourished.<sup>137</sup> And yet its report says nothing about the plague or the time when the fairs in Videm were established, nor does it explain the situation described in Krško's complaints from 1686, which, for example, has much to say about the economic implications of the Styrian plague of 1679–1683.<sup>138</sup>

Valvasor provides a similar description of the rampant Black Death in **Metlika**, which in 1646 reportedly wreaked havoc not only in the town itself but also in the nearby villages.<sup>139</sup> Whereas the plague seems to have started its *danse macabre* in White Carniola a little later than in the Krško area, it swept into Metlika before it reached the town of Krško itself. Its outbreak in July 1646 alarmed the nearby seignories, which set up guards no later than August, when the disease had already claimed several lives in Metlika. The threat was declared to have passed in March the following year, when Metlika's town judge and council submitted to the provincial estates the no longer preserved list of deceased town dwellers and requested that the town closure (*Infectios Bando*) be lifted, which also happened. However, they had less success with their petition for the reimbursement of 245 gulden of expenses, which the town had incurred because of the plague (*Infectios Uncosten*): in November 1648, the provincial estates' delegation office rejected their request, arguing that the plague was brought to Metlika by one of its inhabitants.<sup>140</sup> However, one can imagine that the provincial estates would have shown more understanding to the poor border town, had the number of deaths actually risen to hundreds, as the inhabitants of Metlika later maintained, leaving the town largely emptied out.

It is equally noteworthy that, unlike in the case of Krško, no complaints or reports have been preserved for Metlika from the time of the epidemic. Judging from reports produced four decades later, the plague also claimed a substantial death toll here. According to Valvasor, the frequent Turkish incursions, the plague, and the fires plunged Metlika into extreme poverty, from which it would not recover until his time.<sup>141</sup> Shortly before that, in 1686, the inhabitants of Metlika tried to portray the plague of 1646 as one of the causes for their demise, reporting an unrealistic number of 1,200 victims it had claimed in two years "about forty years ago," seven hundred in the first year and another five hundred in the second year. Many houses and the town walls were al-

legedly consigned to ruin at that time, after which all construction came to a halt for the lack of means and a significant population decline. They also maintained that no foreigner wanted to settle in Metlika and that even the locals were leaving the pummeled town, which could no longer pay annual levies.<sup>142</sup> Evidently, even L. Podlogar, who published this data, found the total of 1,200 victims in Metlika exaggerated and simply expanded it to the countryside: "In 1646, a terrible plague killed over 1,200 people in the town and the parish (!)."<sup>143</sup> On the other hand, a source from 1686 makes no mention of the parish but only of the deceased in the town itself. Knowing very well that the number of Metlika's inhabitants was far lower than the number of the deceased alone, Podlogar deemed it more probable that such losses were suffered across the parish. Besides, Valvasor, too, wrote about the plague in the town and its environs (*nicht nur in der Stadt sondern auch in dem umligenden Lande*).<sup>144</sup> For the sake of illustration, let us take the data from 1721, when 3,026 persons were counted on Easter confession in the entire parish of Metlika.<sup>145</sup> Provided that the demographic situation remained relatively constant seventy-five years earlier, it may be concluded that about two-fifths of parishioners were killed by the plague—but it is completely unreasonable to claim that the plague took 1,200 lives in a town that assuredly did not have such a numerous population in the mid-seventeenth century. The oldest preserved census of town houses from 1752 counts 166 homes, including the castle, forty-nine within the town walls and 117 in the suburbs,<sup>146</sup> which can translate into approximately nine hundred inhabitants.

The third Lower Carniolan town that Valvasor and contemporary sources refer to in association with the plague in the mid-seventeenth century is **Novo Mesto**. Here, the epidemic first erupted in August 1646, but by December that same year the town must have been safe enough to receive a "visit" from distressed troops stationed at the fortified town of Karlovac, requesting the town fathers to provide them with urgently needed food supplies. The news about the plague startled the inhabitants of Novo Mesto again in May 1648. After three villages near Šentjernej became infected, the provincial estates' delegates were proposed and immediately appointed two plague commissioners. By June, the plague commissioners already had their hands full in Novo

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., lit. G VIII–15, May 4th, 1674.

<sup>138</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 171, fasc. 97, lit. G VIII–8, April 13th, 1686.

<sup>139</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 389.

<sup>140</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 862, registry protocols no. 16 (1646–1652), pp. 56, 63, 122, 123, and 298.

<sup>141</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 389.

<sup>142</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 233, fasc. 124, lit. M XXXIII–9, May 6th, 1686.

<sup>143</sup> Podlogar, *Požari v Metliki*, p. 46.

<sup>144</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 389.

<sup>145</sup> DOZA, Abt. Österreich, BÖ, K 304, Specificatio eorum qui per elapsum anni quadrante usque ad 5. 6. anni curenitis 1721 etc.

<sup>146</sup> SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 242, no. 1, August 1st, 1752.

Mesto alone when, like the town judge and council, they received instructions on further measures and isolating the infected. The guards prevented people from moving between the town and its surroundings for over two months. Although the threat had apparently passed by August 1648, the provincial estates' delegation office specifically advised Novo Mesto's inhabitants not to leave the town and not to harass the guards before the closure was lifted. The threat finally ceased in September, when the town leadership extended its gratitude to the provincial estates for sending the diligent physician Gašper Vizjak.<sup>147</sup> As Sigmund von Gusič wrote to the provincial estates in mid-November, the town had already overstretched its resources supporting the garrison and the plague, following on its heels, kept Novo Mesto in isolation for more than fourteen weeks.<sup>148</sup>

The presence of the plague during the period of isolation is also documented in the register of baptisms kept by the chapter parish of Novo Mesto. The entries of three godchildren on June 1st, 1648, are followed by a separate undated entry of "tempore pestis," and the next baptism took place on June 7th under the suspicion of infection (*in suspicionem infectionis seu pestis*). On June 18th and 21st, two newborns were brought to the chapter church from infected homes (*ex infecta domo*), after which no baptism is recorded between June 24th and July 23rd. Furthermore, in June, July, and August, baptism was only performed on the town's newborns because those from the surrounding villages could not even receive the first sacrament.<sup>149</sup> Regrettably, the parish of Novo Mesto still did not keep records of deaths, which could unrefutably confirm Valvasor's claim that the plague of 1648 consigned eighteen persons to the register of deaths. The difference between this number and the four hundred victims, which Valvasor provides for 1625, is obvious.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, these are the only two comparable figures of the same origin. The minor implications of this plague for Novo Mesto are best illustrated in the town's complaints soon after 1651, which describe the impacts of the

plagues in 1599 and 1625 but do not say a word about the epidemic from a few years back.<sup>151</sup>

The developments in **Višnja Gora** during the plague waves in 1645–1650 are not documented as thoroughly as other epidemic outbreaks. It should also be stressed that this time the sources available keep silent about any kind of threat to the town or its surroundings. What may attest to the presence of the plague is that Višnja Gora suffered a drastic population decline precisely in the period of twenty-three years delimited by the town tax registers from 1629 and 1655. Meanwhile, during the Thirty Years' War, the town experienced the second and last surge in depopulation, with the number of inhabited houses dropping from seventy-eight to merely fifty-eight or by one-quarter.<sup>152</sup> Yet describing the causes for the town's economic and demographic decline,<sup>153</sup> the inhabitants of Višnja Gora never mentioned any plague or fire, which featured as popular culprits and harbingers of evil in the reports from other towns. Clearly, they would not have forgotten to mention a plague that killed at least a few of their fellow townsmen in the second half of the 1640s or temporarily sealed the town off from the outside world. No such information can either be traced in the relevant contemporary source, Višnja Gora's register of baptisms, in which the number of entries during the years of danger in no way deviates from the number of entries made in other years.<sup>154</sup>

There are likewise no reports of the plague wreaking havoc in **Kostanjevica**, the smallest Lower Carniolan town, even though in September 1646, when the disease had already reached Krško and sowed death in Metlika, the provincial estates reproved Kostanjevica's town judge and council for their negligent security and defiance of the plague commissioner's orders to post more guards. In January 1647, the inhabitants of Kostanjevica were called upon once again to rid themselves of the plague-ridden Uskoks. But the town was evidently not faced with a serious enough threat and its inhabitants continued to ignore the orders in pursuit of their economic interests.<sup>155</sup> The account book kept by the abbot of the

<sup>147</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 862, registry protocols no. 16 (1646–1652), pp. 65, 248, 255, 256, 272, 273, and 280.

<sup>148</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 503, fasc. 300 b, p. 1027, November 10th, 1648.

<sup>149</sup> KANM, carton 63, R/3 1645–1652.—Seven newborns were baptized in June 1648, only two in July, and then five in August. A low number of godchildren in the two summer months is nothing extraordinary and is also characteristic of other years. The epidemic could have led to a decline in the total number of baptisms to the town newborns two years after the plague, in 1649 and 1650. Whereas at least forty-nine newborns from the town alone received baptism in 1646, the same number in 1647, and no less than fifty-seven in 1648, the register of baptisms indicates forty-six for 1649 and no more than thirty-four for 1650, after which their number rose sharply in 1651 to sixty-five, suggesting that the town population had meanwhile completely recovered.

<sup>150</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre XI*, p. 488.

<sup>151</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 256, fasc. 133, lit. R II–3, Bericht A, s. d.

<sup>152</sup> SI AS 166, Mesto Višnja Gora fasc. IV, tax registers 1629 and 1655.

<sup>153</sup> On this: SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 284, fasc. 145.

<sup>154</sup> NŠAL, *ŽA Višnja Gora, Matične knjige*, R 1638–1656 and R 1656–1672.—In the parish of Višnja Gora, the total number of baptisms in the 1640s (547) amounted to one-third less than in the 1650s (811) and nearly half less in the town itself (60:110). On the other hand, the period, during which the plague raged elsewhere in Lower Carniola, in no way deviates from other annual averages. Unlike the register of baptisms of Novo Mesto, Višnja Gora's contains no mention of the plague.

<sup>155</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 862, registry protocols no. 16 (1646–1652), pp. 74 and 110.

Cistercian monastery of Kostanjevica likewise offers no clue to any extraordinary events unfolding in those years, barring the somewhat increased expenses for medicines that a Novo Mesto pharmacist supplied to the monastery between 1645 and 1648.<sup>156</sup>

The only market town mentioned in relation to the plague during the period concerned is **Mokronog**. In August 1646, the provincial estates sent their rapporteur Baron Konrad Rues to the infected Novo Mesto and the areas around Klevevž and Mokronog, where the disease had also erupted. In September, a plague closure was imposed on provincial roads leading through Mokronog to Radeče.<sup>157</sup> Due to a suspicion of contagion (*contagions suspect*), the plague commissioners for this area placed Mokronog Castle and the entire market town in isolation (*in bando gesezt*), ordered the main bridges over the Mirna to be demolished, and prohibited the serfs of Mokronog from performing forced labor. The owner of the castle and the seignior Ernest Schere von Schernburg rejected their actions as completely baseless and inadmissible, and on the last day of 1646 negotiated from the provincial authorities a decree to abolish all restrictions if his claims were found to be true.<sup>158</sup>

For places where the plague is documented in the literature, the consequences of the epidemic were the least determinable around the then already extinct market town of **Svibno** near the much more important Radeče.<sup>159</sup> Valvasor provides the only known source in which the local epidemic appears at all, whereas contemporary sources neither confirm nor deny its existence. With no rent-rolls preserved, it is also impossible to trace the (dis)continuity of property ownership in the Svibno seignior, and nothing is known about the plague raging in **Radeče**, as mentioned by V. Travner.<sup>160</sup>

The plague epidemic in the second half of the 1640s probably wreaked less havoc among the inhabitants of Lower Carniolan towns and market towns than its predecessors, especially the two in Novo Mesto. Nonetheless, its persistent presence and repetitive waves left a deep mark on society

and a lasting memory embodied in monuments of material culture. Just as elsewhere across Slovenian territory, the erection of several churches here dates to the time immediately after this plague epidemic. Already in 1647, a pilgrimage Church of St. Rosalie was built on the hill above Krško to preserve the memory of the plague in the town and its surroundings. The first of the most important White Carniolan plague monuments, churches dedicated to St. Roch, is the succursal Church of St. Roch in Metlika. In 1646, the inhabitants of Črnomelj, who were evidently spared by the Black Death more than their counterparts in Metlika, are also believed to have enlarged the small Church of St. Sebastian, originally constructed after 1510.<sup>161</sup>

### Isolated incidences of epidemics in the second half of the seventeenth century

During the three decades following the long plague wave of 1645–1650, the Slovenian provinces experienced no major epidemics, and there are only sporadic reports of isolated and locally limited incidences of the “plague.” In Lower Carniola, it occurred at least twice, with its presence eternalized both times in the minutes of the Kostanjevica abbey. The pest that visited **Kostanjevica** and the nearby village of Slinovce in October 1663 was identified as typhus caused by the Krka’s flooding. It reappeared in the nearby areas in 1676,<sup>162</sup> claiming no lives either time in the town itself. This much can be inferred from Kostanjevica’s complaints that have been preserved from that period in the form of annals (1618–1684), listing pestilences and woes for nearly every year between 1662 and 1684, without making a single mention of an epidemic.<sup>163</sup> Kostanjevica’s town fathers would have undoubtedly reported any however insignificant plague-related mortality or closure, at least in view of the diligence with which they presented fires and floods, and a series of other less consequential events and frustrations, such as the objectionable nearby Uskok community or poor harvests.

Despite the complete absence of reports to confirm it, soon afterward an epidemic of some kind must have broken out on the other end of Lower

<sup>156</sup> SI AS 746, Cistercijanski samostan Kostanjevica, vol. 8, account book of the abbot Jurij Zagožen 1638–1659, s. p.—The abbot paid the pharmacist 45 gulden in 1645, 33 gulden and 7 kreuzer in 1646, 55 gulden in 1647, 20 gulden in 1648, and again a larger sum of 42 gulden and 12 kreuzer at the end of 1650.

<sup>157</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 862, registry protocols no. 16 (1646–1652), pp. 65 and 345.

<sup>158</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 500, fasc. 300a, pp. 1223–1224, December 31st, 1646.

<sup>159</sup> In 1602, this small market town only had fourteen masters of non-peasant properties (Ger.: *Hofstatt*) (SI AS 1074, Zbirka urbarjev, II/22u, rent-roll of the Svibno seignior 1602, s. p.), after its rent-roll from about 1439 still listed thirty (Mil-kowicz, Beiträge zur Rechts- und Verwaltungsgeschichte Krains, pp. 7–8; cf. Koropec, Žebnik, Radeče in Svibno, p. 56).

<sup>160</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 110.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 110 and 111.—Leopold Podlogar writes the following on the construction of the church in Črnomelj: “The Church of St. Sebastian was erected in the town’s grove in 1646, the time of deadly cholera (sic!). The presbytery grew from the former chapel, built sometime after 1510” (Podlogar, *Kronika mesta Črnomlja*, p. 64).

<sup>162</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 112, cites the no longer existing “minutes of the Kostanjevica abbey.” Only the account book 1638–1659 of the abbot Jurij Zagožen has been preserved (SI AS 746, Cistercijanski samostan Kostanjevica, vol. 8).

<sup>163</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 184, fasc. 104, lit. L II–2, March 31st, 1686.—Cf. Dimitz, Zur Geschichte der Städte, pp. 79–80; Dimitz, *Geschichte Krains*, pp. 59–60.



*The marking of infected houses in Gorizia*

Carniola, given a conspicuous rise in deaths in **Kočevje**, where no news of a suspected plague had been issued since 1599. In the first register of deaths kept by the parish of Kočevje, the oldest such register in Lower Carniola, attention is drawn to the first four years from the beginning of 1669 to the end of 1672, when 317 persons were buried, forty-four from the town of Kočevje. Over the next six years between 1673 and including 1678, the number of deaths and burials amounted to no more than 287, only twenty-seven in the town itself. Although not particularly striking, the contrast between the number of deaths in the first four and the ensuing six years of keeping the death register shows notable differences in the number of deaths by individual years and significant fluctuations among the town dwellers. In 1669, the town of Kočevje registered no less than twenty of altogether seventy-three deaths across the entire parish. Only four deaths were registered in 1670 and two in 1671, after which the number of burials rose again, reaching eighteen in 1672. It is interesting to note that the town itself never counted more than

twelve deaths in the seventeenth century, and even this figure was recorded in 1680 and 1681, when the Styrian plague reached its peak.<sup>164</sup>

The parish of Kočevje was also the only one among the towns and market towns discussed to keep records of deaths during the **plague of 1679–1683**. Whereas Carniola largely averted the plague by taking swift and effective protective measures while the disease ravaged Slovenian Styria,<sup>165</sup> Kočevje may be the part of Carniola that had found itself within the grasp of the Black Death. The assumption that the Kočevje peddlers brought the disease from their journeys to northern provinces is open to debate due

<sup>164</sup> NŠAL, *ŽA Kočevje, Matične knjige, M 1666–1724*.—The numbers of deaths in the town are highly reliable, especially for the 1670s and 1680s, when the register of deaths nearly always states the decedent's place of residence. The ten-year annual average for the town population in 1671–1680 amounted to 10.9 deceased, primarily due to the high mortality in the early 1670s, in 1681–1690 to no more than 4.2 persons, and in 1691–1700 to 5.3 deaths annually.

<sup>165</sup> On the Styrian plague, see Umek, *Kuga na Štajerskem*, pp. 80 f.



to the complete absence of any contemporary report on this subject and the plague in Kočevje in general. Strongly indicative of an epidemic is the high number of the deceased, namely, eighty-nine in the entire parish of Kočevje in 1680 and as many as 138 a year later. The town of Kočevje itself registered twelve deaths each respective year. However, despite the high figures recorded at the turn of the 1670s and in the early 1680s, the death register lacks any side note confirming that it was indeed the plague or an infectious disease of some kind.<sup>166</sup> Even a surgeon's death during the biggest spike in mortality cannot be considered otherwise than a hypothetical consequence of infection contracted while treating his patients.<sup>167</sup> What caused an increased death count therefore remains subject to speculation. However, it could not have been the same plague as in Styria and Gorizia, if one is to believe Valvasor's reference to the procession of Saint Roch held in Ljubljana in 1683, thanking God for having "miraculously safeguarded the entire province of Carniola against the despicable plague ravaging all the neighboring lands."<sup>168</sup> Finally, the plague could have easily spread to the Kočevje area as the typical transit and peddler hub, just as it had reached the province of Gorizia in 1682 from Croatia and claimed a particularly high toll in the town of Gorizia.<sup>169</sup>

Carniola largely escaped a prolonged plague thanks to the swift, strict, and therefore effective measures that stopped its spread. The provincial border closures were at first understandably much to the chagrin of those whose trade suffered the greatest loss from suspended traffic. However, because the closure also variably affected broader population segments, it met with an overall resistance and infringements in various forms of smuggling people and goods away from the eyes of the plague guards.

An informative light on the protective measures and their infringements at the peak of the Styrian epidemic in the mid-1681 is shed by a fragment from the life of the border town of **Krško**, which depended on the hinterland beyond the Sava more than any other Lower Carniolan town. Soon after the Carniolan–Styrian border was reopened in April 1681,<sup>170</sup> the highest ordinance arrived at the end of June on the heels of a plague outbreak near Radgona and in a Celje quarter, prohibiting entrance to Carniola from Styria even with a "fede" and strictly forbidding serfs from navigating the border river Sava.<sup>171</sup>

Soon afterward, in early July, plague commissioners (*contagions commissarien*), mostly from the ranks of noble landowners, were appointed at eight Carniolan–Styrian border crossings and provided with between one and four guards at each crossing. Lower Carniola was protected by guards posted at Litija, Radeče, Impolca, Sevnica on the Styrian bank of the Sava, and Krško.<sup>172</sup> Taking his task very seriously, the Krško plague commissioner, Count Orfeo Strassoldo, reported to the provincial governor and estates at the end of July on his measure serving "as punishment and an example to others who might be tempted to communicate with suspicious characters." Namely, when an assistant harness maker from Ptuj came to Krško, Strassoldo immediately sent him back to Styria after he heard about the plague raging around Ptuj. Strassoldo also notified the guards at Videm and Rajhenburg that the newcomer did not carry a "fede." A few inhabitants of Krško had conversed and drank with the boy and, although the commissioner saw no potential threat in that, he ordered to confine the men to their homes and the town judge provided him with guards to prevent them from leaving. The commissioner then asked the provincial estates' delegates whether to release the men or how they were to be treated.<sup>173</sup>

The inhabitants of Novo Mesto were more cautious, probably having learned something from the example of Krško. At the end of November 1681, the plague commissioner in Brežice sent an interesting report to his counterpart in Krško, Count Strassoldo. The Novo Mesto town judge informed the commissioner of Brežice about the cancellation of Novo Mesto's annual fair on Advent Sunday and requested him to notify the Croats and ensure that no one would cross the Sava to attend the fair. The commissioner sent the notification to Samobor, but to little avail, because many Croats set out in secret to Novo Mesto crossing the Gorjanci (Žumberak) Mountains. The Brežice commissioner then wrote to the town judge of Novo Mesto that every suspicious person be placed in a lazaretto (*in ein Lasareth schafffen*) and punished, and that the goods be burned as contraband.<sup>174</sup>

The most severe implications that the Styrian plague between 1679 and 1683 had on Carniola were of indirect nature by hurting its economy. The prolonged closure of the provincial borders, combined with bans on fairs and all kinds of mass gatherings, delivered a serious blow to trade and trade fair hubs, especially towns and market towns. The bans on holding fairs, for example, drained the Novo Mesto treasury—hence the petitions addressed at the vid-

<sup>166</sup> NŠAL, ŽA Kočevje, Matične knjige, M 1666–1724.

<sup>167</sup> On June 14th, 1681, died a seventy-three-year-old townsman and town surgeon Bernard Jager.

<sup>168</sup> Valvasor, *Die Ehre VIII*, p. 822.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Jelinčič, Črna smrt v Gorici, pp. 116 f.; Waltritsch, Prvi goriški kronist, p. 196.

<sup>170</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 538, fasc. 308b, p. 417, April 18th, 1681.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 655–661, June 28th, 1681.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., pp. 687–688, July 4th, 1681.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., pp. 959–960, July 30th, 1681.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., carton 539, fasc. 308 b, pp. 1373–1376, November 27th, 1681.

ame to write off the town judge's outstanding tax debt for 1681 and 1682.<sup>175</sup> A few years later, in 1686, the town leadership of Krško described the plague in Lower Styria as the main cause for the abandonment of the town. The plague prevented the inhabitants of Krško from accessing their fields beyond the Sava and even more from attending weekly and annual fairs in Styria.<sup>176</sup>

### The plague in Črnomelj and its surroundings between 1691 and 1692

Until the end of the seventeenth century, Slovenian territory only experienced sporadic occurrences of contagious diseases, which caused much greater devastation in the neighboring Hungary and Croatia, leading to several provincial border closures. In 1690, a major plague epidemic in Hungary and Croatia threatened the eastern parts of the Austrian frontier provinces, wreaked havoc in Vienna and the Styrian town of Radgona, and in the following year (1691) burst out around Črnomelj in the southeasternmost part of Carniola.<sup>177</sup> This is the first plague on which there exists a sufficient selection of credible sources, mostly produced immediately after it was suppressed. These sources also include the only preserved lists of infected and deceased persons for all plague epidemics.

Carniola once again successfully contained the spread of infection with the practical wisdom gained from tackling the recent Styrian plague. The Črnomelj area was immediately isolated from the rest of Carniola and plague guards were posted on border crossings toward Croatia and in certain parts in the hinterland. The movement of passengers and goods to the entire territory of Carniola was also suspended by Gorizia and the Venetian Republic,<sup>178</sup> despite the relative distance from Črnomelj and Croatia and notwithstanding Carniola serving as their cordon sanitaire. Gorizia still had a vivid memory of its disastrous lack of alertness in 1682.

The plague undoubtedly reached Črnomelj and its surroundings from the nearby Croatian places, where it caused havoc in Karlovac. Local Croatian reports described the disease in quite contradictory terms; once it was purportedly the real plague and at other times an ordinary typhus.<sup>179</sup> In a similar vein, there are no sources clarifying what kind of disease affected Črnomelj and its surroundings. The list of recoveries divides the patients in two categories: those with carbuncles (*carbuneli*) and those with

more dangerous buboes (*bubones*), and some exhibited both symptoms.<sup>180</sup> The plague epidemic in Črnomelj was also the first and the last one on which there are known various details, sanitary measures, reactions in the wider area, as well as minute specifications of infected and deceased persons, all worthy of a thorough discussion that will be provided below.

**The developments** that took place in the town and its surroundings from when the plague broke out and reached its peak are poorly documented. Reports, mainly referring to sanitary measures, only began to proliferate once the disease started to abate, especially during the ensuing weeks. Therefore, nothing is even known about when precisely the disease erupted and when it reached its climax; it must have been no later than December 1691 and probably even a month or so before that. In November, for example, the plague began to recede in the Croatian town of Plaški, where the last patient died on December 12th. Soon afterward, a physician from Novo Mesto, Dr. Janez Krstnik Novak, who had fulfilled his task there, reported to the Carniolan provincial estates from the mansion Pobrežje ob Kolpi. He affirmed that there was no plague (*alda khein Pest gewesen*) in Gradac, the Metlika area, and the provincial court of Podbrežje, even though some of his rare patients indeed had died, including the wife and son of Baron Gusič, a chaplain, and a Turkish girl (a spoil of war) as the first victim of the plague. At the time of reporting, Novak had three patients in his care, whereas everyone inside and outside Gradac and in Podbrežje had completely recovered. Therefore, he requested to be released without further quarantine requirements.<sup>181</sup>

The provincial estates' delegation, of course, rejected his request, as it coincided with the outbreak of the real plague in Črnomelj and its surrounding area. The provincial authorities appointed as the plague commissioner Baron Janez Sigmund Geyman, the commander of the commandery of Metlika-Črnomelj, who resided in Metlika and paid occasional inspection visits to the infected Črnomelj. The town and the infected villages were placed under military guard, deployed specifically for this purpose, and the affected area was in the care of a physician and a healer-surgeon stationed in the commissioner's house in the commandery of Metlika.<sup>182</sup> Strict measures aimed at preventing the spread of the disease soon proved to be impractical, albeit certainly neces-

<sup>175</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 255, fasc. 133, lit. R I-9, August 18th, 1681, s. d. 1682.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., carton 171, fasc. 97a, lit. G VIII-8, April 13th, 1686.

<sup>177</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 128.

<sup>178</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 548, fasc. 311, pp. 305–306, January 21st, 1692.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 361, January 31st, 1692.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., pp. 593–595, ad February 25th, 1692.—The combined summary list of names states twenty-seven individuals with carbuncles and eighty with buboes, altogether 107 recovered patients. At the end, the list only provides the sum of eighty-seven persons, which suggests that twenty patients exhibited both symptoms.

<sup>181</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 549, fasc. 311, pp. 1721–1722, s. d. (after December 12th, 1691).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., carton 548, fasc. 311, p. 317, January 21st, 1692.



*Črnomelj according to Valvasor, ten years before the plague of 1691; in the center of the town stands the parish Church of St. Peter and Paul with the adjacent cemetery where the plague victims were buried.*

sary to ensure the safety of the province. The plague commissioner and the physician Andrej Koppeniager had their hands full with Črnomelj's inhabitants, who refused to comply with the ban on passing to and from the town. Once frozen in the winter, the Lahinja and Dobljica streams encircling the town from three sides made for an easy exit, forcing the guards to patrol the waterways at night. The plague commissioner, commander Geyman, described the guards as "malicious people" who were in cahoots with the "rebels from Črnomelj," and he even beat their corporal.<sup>183</sup> At Geyman's behest, the physician Koppeniager and the healer Janez Jakob Ubec imprisoned the agitators of "crimes committed by the opposition." After a few were released, they snuck past the guards at night and visited their vineyards in the infected villages. On their return to the town, they shot at and dispersed the guards at Rožanc, who had spotted them and tried to stop them.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., pp. 47–49, January 6th, 1692.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 235, January 3rd, 1692.

All this transpired in the last days of 1691 or the first days of the next year, when the plague lost its vigor and the inhabitants of Črnomelj could breathe a sigh of relief. Between the New Year's Day and the Epiphany, another five persons died in the town's suburbs and lazaretto, respectively, and one in the village of Tušev Dol.<sup>185</sup> The last plague victim in Črnomelj, an old woman, died on January 11th, 1692, after which no deaths or new infections were recorded. Ten days later, all affected areas only registered nine infections, four in the suburbs of Črnomelj. The main task that now lay before the commissioner Geyman was to provide clothes for about a hundred recovered patients, whose personal items had been burned for safety reasons, along with the possessions of the deceased. The provincial estates promised the commissioner to offer their assistance by ensuring means necessary to buy cloth for new clothes. The administrator of the seignory Poljane ob Kolpi tried to benefit from the misfor-

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., pp. 239–240, January 6th, 1692.

tune by offering the commander cloth and linen at an exorbitant price.<sup>186</sup> The provincial estates gave Geyman 300 gulden in German currency to dress the poor, instructed him to buy cloth at a most favorable price, and advised the better-off townsmen and serfs to purchase clothes at their own expense.<sup>187</sup> On another visit to Črnomelj on February 1st, the plague commissioner ordered that the graves be covered with high mounds of earth, despite the cold, to prevent the foul smell coming out and the evil pestilence from spreading further. As all the infected had by then recovered, he notified the provincial estates that he needed new clothes for ninety-one convalescent and destitute patients, whose names were stated on the physician's list. However, closed passages to other parts of the province and an increasing scarcity resulted in a serious shortage of supply. According to the pro-forma invoice—6 gulden and 15 kreuzer for all clothes items per person—the 300 gulden would merely suffice for forty-eight persons, leaving the remaining forty-three with nothing. From this group the commissioner excluded those who could afford to buy their own clothes and included in it the patients' family members, even though they remained healthy in infected households. Finally, he requested the provincial estates for an immediate imposition of quarantine and, on its termination, enable the earliest possible reopening of passages to remedy the damage that the closure had caused to the entire province.<sup>188</sup>

Three days later, on February 7th, the provincial authorities announced that they had no qualms about imposing quarantine for forty days, after which they would decide whether the passages could be reopened or another, shorter quarantine should be imposed. In the meantime, the plague commissioner was instructed to buy the cloth and linen to dress ninety-one persons and submit a specification based on which he would receive reimbursement from the office of the provincial main recipient.<sup>189</sup> The plague commissioner had plenty of work in those days. He rode to Črnomelj twice or three times weekly and made sure that the production of clothes ran smoothly; he ordered that all infected houses be emptied out and smoked a few times daily, and that the infected graves be heaped over with high mounds.<sup>190</sup> A month later, on March 3rd, 1692, the provincial vidame reported to the government in Graz that the infected persons had completed the first of three mandatory quarantines. The second one would commence on March 10th, followed by the third and the shortest one. After the first quarantine, the old clothes were burned under the supervision

of the plague commissioner, and the new ones were distributed among the patients with the help of the provincial estates. Meanwhile, the common burial ground had been raised above its surroundings and protected with high wooden planks to prevent people and animals from entering. With the approaching spring, when the soil begins to open, the burial site was to be further covered with a thick layer of lime.<sup>191</sup> At the end of March, a special lime kiln was set up to extract the critically needed lime and use it freshly burned to cover the graves.<sup>192</sup>

However, there were two kinds of graves and two different burial locations, with the cemetery adjacent to the parish church in the town's center also causing controversies later. Still a year after the mandate of plague commissioner was suspended, Baron Geyman, the commander of the Metlika-Črnomelj commandery of the Teutonic Knights, embroiled himself in a dispute with the inhabitants of Črnomelj by depriving them of their right to use the town cemetery at the parish Church of St. Peter and Paul, where they had buried their dead during the plague. In their undated complaint to the provincial commander in Ljubljana, the inhabitants of Črnomelj referred to the plague as "a purported contagious disease" (*in der vermeindten contagion khrankheit*) and stated that they had only buried twelve children in the cemetery and the rest in a separate location outside the town, even though burials in Karlovac and elsewhere continued to take place in cemeteries. They believed that the commander Geyman only wanted to harm them out of spite, as he had done before, and burden them with high legal expenses. In his response, the commander Geyman reported to the provincial commander that Črnomelj had been struck by the real plague (*würkliche pest*) and that more than thirty people had in fact been buried at the parish church. He had instructed its inhabitants to move the burials to the succursal Church of St. Mary in the village of Vojna Vas, but they would not hear of it and insisted on burying their dead in the town. All three provincial authorities—the provincial governor, the vidame, and the provincial estates' delegation office—replied to his report two days later by ordering the town judge and council of Črnomelj to use the cemetery in Vojna Vas situated on the outer boundary of the town. By digging new graves at the parish church, they might uncover the bodies of plague victims and jeopardize the safety of the entire province.<sup>193</sup> The inhabitants of Črnomelj undoubtedly bowed down to the order, which remained in force for as long as the possibility of another outbreak of the epidemic was likely. Burials eventually resumed at the parish

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., pp. 315–316, January 21st, 1692.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 330, January 23rd, 1692.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., pp. 381–384, February 4th, 1692; pp. 387–390, Specification etc.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., pp. 407–410, February 7th, 1692.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., pp. 523–527, February 11th, 1692.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., carton 687, fasc. 393, March 3rd, 1692.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., carton 548, fasc. 311, March 24th, 1692.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., carton 550, fasc. 311a, pp. 691–704, May 17th, 1693, May 19th, 1693, s. d.

*A list of all the deceased in the wider area of Črnomelj*

Place	Total death toll	Deceased men	Deceased women	Deceased children	Families with deceased members	Completely extinct households
Town of Črnomelj	47	10	16	21	21	0
Suburbs of Črnomlja	92	23	31	38	36	3
<b>Total Črnomelj</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3</b>
Tušev Dol	37	6	7	24	11	2
Talčji Vrh	32	9	7	16	9	0
Otovec	24	5	7	12	7	1
Naklo pri Sv. Jakobu	5	1	1	3	1	0
Sela	6	1	1	4	1	0
Svibnik	4	0	1	3	1	0
Butoraj	5	1	1	3	1	0
Total	252	56	72	124	88	6

church in the town center and continued to take place there until 1802.<sup>194</sup>

Equally stringent preventive measures were applied to the living. On March 10th, 1692, after no news about the plague arrived even from Croatia, the commander Geyman requested the provincial estates to withdraw the physician Koppeniager, the witch doctor, and the thirteen plague guards.<sup>195</sup> Two days later, immediately on receiving his letter, the provincial estates' delegates ordered him to find a suitable accommodation for the guards at Semič and place them under additional quarantine for fourteen days. The plague commissioner himself was to pass the quarantine at his residence, Commandery in Metlika, where he stayed for the next two weeks in the company of the physician and the witch doctor. At the same time, the authorities informed him that the plague in Karlovac had ended, that the guards had been removed from the border with Croatia, and that border crossings had been reopened.<sup>196</sup> Meanwhile, quarantine was still in place in Črnomelj itself, which understandably put an additional strain on the town. On March 16th, 1692, the commander sent a request to allow the town dwellers to perform their spring work in the fields and vineyards. The provincial estates consented and even granted them permission to trade with their neighbors but prohibited them from leaving the town. On Geyman's reiterated request to allow for unhindered movement of the town dwellers, who were mostly potters and waggonwrights and would run out of food in less than fourteen days, the estates replied on March 27th that the passages toward Črnomelj and Karlovac would open in eight days.<sup>197</sup> This eventually happened on April 9th. The commander also managed to persuade the provincial estates' delegates to lift the quarantine for Dr. Kop-

peniager, the witch doctor, and Dr. Novak from Novo Mesto,<sup>198</sup> who had joined the former two after passing the initial stage of quarantine at the Podbrežje mansion.<sup>199</sup>

Let us now turn to the central issue of this discussion, that is, **the demographic impact of the plague in Črnomelj**. Had the list of the deceased not been preserved, leaving historians with the above-stated numbers of twelve and more than thirty inhabitants of Črnomelj buried at the parish church, the total number of all plague victims in this White Carniolan town would have been estimated at a little over thirty. Yet the actual death count was at least a few times higher, and it reached a three-digit figure. According to the list of plague victims (*in der Laidigen Contagion abgestorbenen*) that the plague commissioner Geyman sent to the provincial estates on February 25th, 1692, the area of Črnomelj—the town, including its suburbs and seven villages mostly located west of Črnomelj—counted as many as 252 deaths, more than half in the town of Črnomelj and its suburbs, i.e., 139 or 55.2%.<sup>200</sup>

The list of deaths in Črnomelj is summarized in the table below, dividing the deceased into men, women, and children. The high percentage of adults among all victims particularly stands out, but less so among the deceased men, who represented 23.7% in the town and its suburbs and 20.4% in the seven villages. Significantly larger disparities are shown in women and children. Whereas the share of village women amounted to slightly over one-fifth (22.1%), it was higher than one-third among townswomen (33.8%). The difference between the dying adult and children population becomes especially obvious in the following ratio: children represented as much as

<sup>194</sup> Podlogar, *Kronika mesta Črnomlja*, p. 68.

<sup>195</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 548, fasc. 311, pp. 647–648 and 675–678, March 10th, 1692.

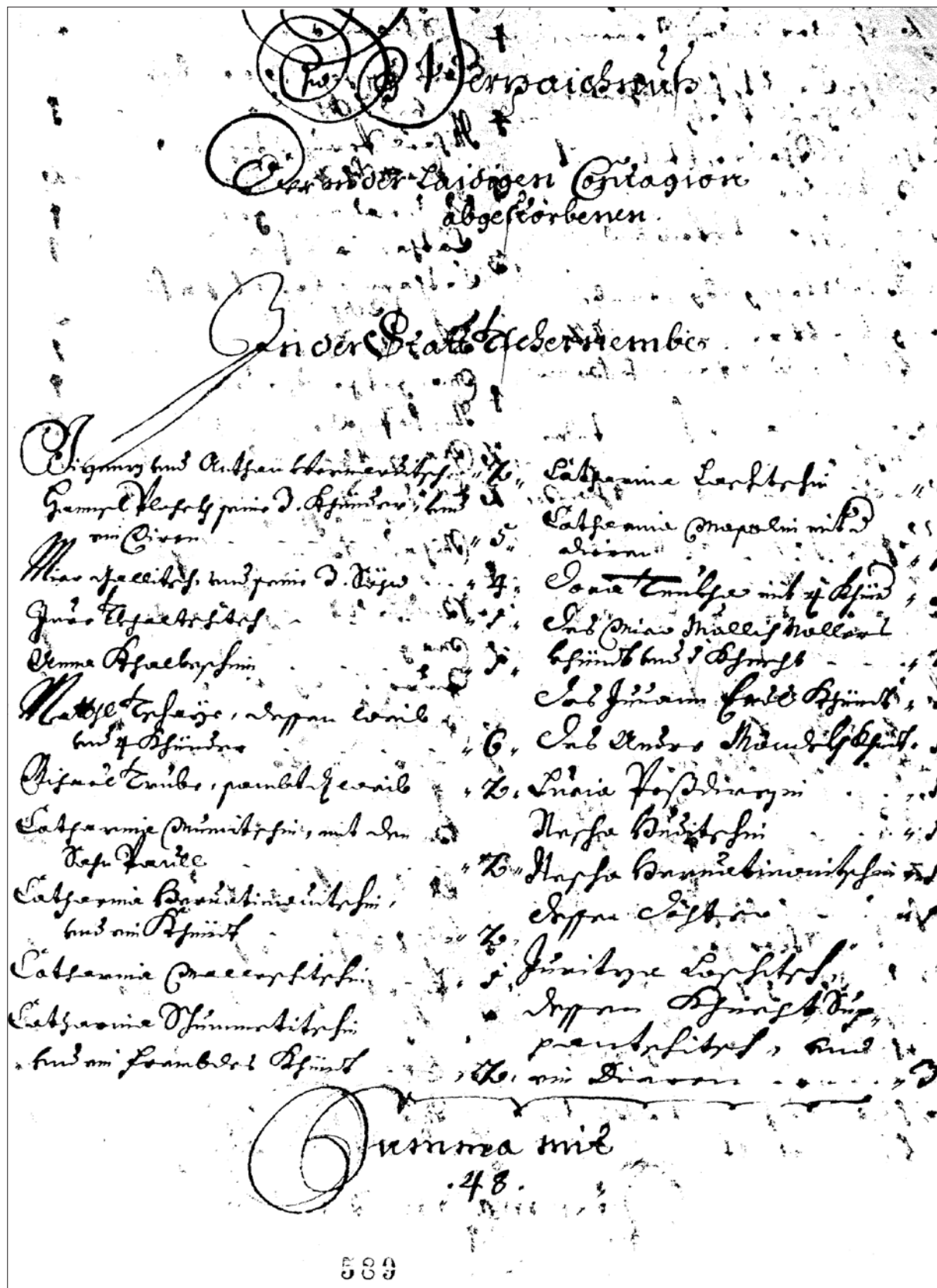
<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 679, March 12th, 1692.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 683–686; March 20th, 1692; pp. 691–692, March 24th, 1692; pp. 739–740, March 27th, 1692.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 769–770, March 31st, 1692, April 7th, 1692, April 9th, 1692.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331, January 23rd, 1692, pp. 371–372, January 31st, 1692.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 585–588, February 25th, 1692; pp. 589–592, ad February 25th, 1692, Verzeichnuß der in der Laidigen Contagion abgestorbenen.



A list of plague victims in Crnomelj, dated February 25th, 1692.

*The deceased in Črnomelj*

Number of deceased persons / Number of families	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6 Persons	10 Persons
Town of Črnomelj	8	8	1	1	2	1	
Suburbs of Črnomlja	13	8	6	6	1	1	1
Total Črnomelj	21 (36,8 %)	16 (28,1 %)	7 (12,3 %)	7 (12,3 %)	3 (5,3 %)	2 (3,5 %)	1 (1,8 %)

*The recovered according to the list, dated February 4th, 1692*

Place	Total recoveries	Recovered men	Recovered women	Recovered children	Number of households with recovered members
Town of Črnomelj	3	0	3	0	2
Suburbs of Črnomlja	43	15	18	10	21
<b>Total Črnomelj</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>
Pri Sv. Nikolaju	2	2	0	0	2
Tušev Dol	16	3	7	6	8
Talčji Vrh	15	3	7	5	8
Otovec	8	1	2	5	8
Sela	1	0	0	1	1
Svibnik	3	1	1	1	1
Butoraj	1	0	0	1	1
Total	92	25	38	29	52

Number of recovered persons according to the list of February 25th, 1692		Sum of recovered persons from both lists		
Place	Recovered with carbuncles	Recovered with buboes	Total recovered persons	Number of families with recovered members
Town of Črnomelj	–	–	3	2
Outlying part of Črnomelj	13	38	74	38
<b>Total Črnomelj</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>40</b>
Tušev Dol	6	18	33	12
Talčji Vrh	6	15	19	11
Otovec	2	4	9	10
Sela	0	1	2	2
Svibnik	0	2	2	1
Butoraj	0	2	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>78</b>

57.5 % of all victims in the villages and no more than 42.4 % in the town and its suburbs. Interestingly, the difference between the town and its suburbs expressed in percentage is insignificant. For example, adults represented 55.3 % of all the deceased in the town center and 58.7 % in the suburbs outside the town walls.

The following conclusion, which is also important for assessing the demographic impact elsewhere, concerns the number of completely extinct households. The list specifically states six such houses (*das haus ganz ausgestorben* or *völlig abgestorben*), three in the suburbs and three in the nearby villages—a figure fairly consistent with the proportional division of the deceased between the town of Črnomelj and the surrounding countryside. Considering the total number of houses from which plague-infected corpses were taken (fifty-seven), the number of those that had become completely depopulated is surpris-

ingly low. The share of extinct households among all households that witnessed death in Črnomelj represents merely 5.2 % and the percentage of their deceased members (ten) is slightly higher (7.2 %). In addition, the three extinct households in the suburbs were numerically small, composed of four at members at most. The Rupe family had become extinct with the deaths of a husband, a wife, and the mother of one spouse; the Babner family had lost a husband, a wife, and a child; and the four-member Jakša family had seen the departure of a married couple with two children. The share of extinct households among all households with deceased members was also strikingly low in the countryside, where it amounted to 9.7 %, with their fifteen deceased members representing 13.3 % of all plague victims in the rural area.

Given the above, the plague was by no means a selective agent of death that killed certain families with

a surgical precision and left others entirely intact. To the contrary, the number of infected homes was higher than those that had been left abandoned at the end of the epidemic. As is evident from the table below, nearly two-thirds of households (64.9 %) with registered deaths had been bereft of no more than one or two members. Slightly more than one-third of households (36.8 %) had lost only one member and just over one-third (10.5 %) five or more, without any becoming extinct. One of the households with six deceased members had lost both parents and four children and the other a married couple with three children and a farmhand. The house with the highest number of plague-infected corpses (ten), home to an extended family of Jurij Črnugel, consigned to the death register the master of the house, his three sons, two women, and four children.

Two lists shed further light on the dimensions of the plague in Črnomelj. The first, compiled on February 4th, 1692, presents the recovered inhabitants by sex and the other, final list, produced on February 25th, provides an overview by symptoms—carbuncles and buboes.<sup>201</sup> Neither appears to be complete, with the second list featuring only a minor part of names contained in the first one and vice versa. This required a detailed analysis of personal names and surnames, where another problem presented itself: in each family, only one person was usually indicated by the full name. On the first list, other family members are simply marked as children, women, sons, farmhands, and so on, and the more recent list merely states their total number.

The final list that the plague commissioner Baron Geyman sent to the provincial estates on February 25th, 1692, classifies the recovered individuals by symptoms. Rather than distinguish between the town and its suburbs, it combines them under the common name “Bey der Statt Tschernembl.” The table below therefore presents the numerical data from the more recent list on its left and an aggregate of the recovered from both lists on its right after subtracting individuals or families that appear on both lists. The thus obtained number of the deceased inhabitants of Črnomelj is appreciably higher (seventy-seven) than that set forth by the first list (forty-six). However, the final sum cannot be divided between the town and the suburbs because no such distinction is made on the final list.

The figures above cover all the dimensions of the epidemic. Given the total of 252 deaths, the 146 recovered persons in the town, the suburbs, and the seven villages represent a strikingly low share at slightly over one-third (36.7 %) of altogether 398 infected persons, suggesting that two out of three

infected persons were condemned to certain death. Whereas the question of what symptoms proved fatal remains unanswered, it is known, at least for most recovered individuals, who was diagnosed with buboes, the symptoms of the bubonic plague (thirteen), and who with carbuncles (thirty-eight). For the town of Črnomelj and its suburbs, the number of all deceased and recovered amounts to 216, with seventy-seven surviving patients representing a share almost equal to that of the infected (35.6 %) for the entire area.

Finally, it also seems reasonable to establish how many families in Črnomelj were affected by the plague or, rather, how many families experienced infections or deaths during the plague and what share of the total population was made up by the infected. The results of comparing all three lists are understandably somewhat relative, given that families cannot be determined as complete units based on the same surname alone. There are altogether twenty examples where the surname and location (the town, the suburbs) provide satisfactory evidence to confirm that we are dealing with one and the same family. No more than that many families saw a part of their members die and the other part recover. Therefore, it seems safe to conclude that the plague visited at least seventy-seven families or homes but certainly not more than ninety-seven. Fifty-seven families experienced death and forty saw their members recover, with twenty cases at most involving one and the same family.

As already noted, no censuses of houses or householders exist for Črnomelj until the mid-eighteenth century that would also allow for a tentative estimate of the entire population. The Theresian Cadaster of 1752 specifies 104 houses, including the castle, that is, seventy-four in the town itself and thirty in the suburbs,<sup>202</sup> which amounts to about 572, using the coefficient of 5.5 persons per household. Before that, Črnomelj—like any other Lower Carniolan town—boasted a higher number of populated houses and inhabitants. In 1744, the town leadership specified the existence of 117 homes in the period prior to the recent fire (1740) and stressed that many houses in the suburbs had been lost forever to the fires between 1660 and 1730.<sup>203</sup> This can only be verified with the sweeping evaluation by the vidame’s commission in 1573 that the town counted about a hundred houses, excluding those owned by noblemen and members

<sup>202</sup> SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 243, no. 6, August 10th, 1752.

<sup>203</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 279, fasc. 142, lit. T II–4, s. d. (Berichts copia); lit. T II–5, May 22nd, 1744, s. d. (1744, Specification).—There were twenty-one populated houses in the suburbs; the fire of 1740 left fifteen houses abandoned within the town walls, and seven house-lots had already been abandoned for about fifty years. The suburbs also counted sixteen burnt and abandoned houses.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., pp. 387–390, ad February 4th, 1692; pp. 593–596, ad February 25th, 1692.



of the provincial estates.<sup>204</sup> 180 years later, in 1752, only eighty houses fell under the town's jurisdiction, fifty in the town itself and thirty in its suburbs.<sup>205</sup>

Compared to the mid-eighteenth century, the years leading up to the plague of 1691–1692 must have seen a greater number of houses and a denser population, especially outside the town walls. Much can be gathered from the fact that in 1752 the suburbs counted no more than thirty houses, whereas the list of plague-related deaths there refers to deceased members of thirty-six families and recovered individuals from thirty-eight households, yielding about forty-six affected homes according to the name analysis. Considering, for example, that there were at least 117 populated homes before the plague as well as presumably before 1740, the population of Črnomelj in 1691 must have been about 650. The 216 infected persons would thus account for about one-third of the total population, the 139 deceased over one-fifth, and the at least seventy-seven affected houses nearly two-thirds of the existing homes. The fifty-seven households with corpses also lead to a chilling conclusion that the death knocked on every other door in Črnomelj. In the town itself, it visited twenty-one families, decimating about one-quarter of households, and in the suburbs, it practically left no house intact. By comparison, Gorizia registered 487 corpses during the plague of 1682 or about one-eighth of the total population of between 3,500 and four thousand people.<sup>206</sup>

As demonstrated by contemporary specifications, the plague in Črnomelj was by no means an innocent event. In this light, it is also necessary to understand a lapidary description of the epidemic penned by the town leadership fifty years later. Explaining the reasons for the town's abandonment and destitution in their report to the vidame in 1744, Črnomelj's town fathers also stated that he must remember how the town had been left completely extinct (*ganz abgestorben*) and abandoned (*verwiestet*) during the plague in 1691.<sup>207</sup>

On the margins of the plague in Črnomelj, this last wave of the death-dealing pestilence in the seventeenth-century Carniola, let us finally dedicate a few words to the **developments in the nearby area**, which suffered serious indirect impacts of the anti-plague measures. The province lived in fear, the movement of people and goods was constrained, and the Carniolan borders were sealed and guarded. Much

like during previous epidemics, areas not directly affected by the ravages of the plague defied the impractical and economically harmful restrictions with even greater tenacity. Thus, the inhabitants of Novo Mesto put up an open resistance by holding their annual fair and permitting entrance to suspicious Croats without a health certificate. When this came to its knowledge on September 3rd, 1691, the Inner Austrian government in Graz called on the Carniolan vidame to immediately depose the town judge and organize an early election, which was eventually not held. The regular judicial election was just around the corner, in which the current town judge failed to win retention precisely due to his disobedience, and the inhabitants of Novo Mesto elected another fellow townsman as their leader.<sup>208</sup>

The restrictions on the movement of people and goods also sparked several riots around Novo Mesto and across wider Lower Carniola. In January 1692, the guards at Čatež confiscated a wagon of honey, the property of a merchant Eder from Ljubljana, because the drivers, supposedly coming from Croatia, failed to present their "fedes." The guards also seized an ox-wagon carrying hides, leather soles, bacon, and pork, transported from Croatia by two men from Ribnica, who escaped to the hills while their confiscated goods were burned in the village of Mraševo.<sup>209</sup> The provincial estates' delegates issued a warrant for their arrest and ordered the seignior of Ribnica to publicly threaten with punishment any individual attempting to travel to Croatia and other infected areas.<sup>210</sup> At about the same time, the guards at Čatež prohibited passage to a few people who had been in contact with the Uskoks (*mit dennen Balachen*) and sent them back "to Wallachia" (*in die Balachey*). The authorities confiscated the house of some Uskok (*Besiakh*) in the hills above Kostanjevica and posted two guards in front of it at his expense for having been in constant contact with the Uskoks and offered them lodging. The permanent guard garrison on the Gorjanci Mountains struggled in the dead of winter; the seigniories of Kostanjevica, Šrajbarski turn, Prežek, and Pleterje had refused to provide them with guardhouses and wood supply,<sup>211</sup> which earned them a good scolding from the provincial estates.<sup>212</sup> These were even more alarmed by the news about two men having made their way deep into Carniola from Croatia. A baker from Sisak first tried to enter the province legally on the Styrian-Carniolan border at Brežice and, failing, then crossed the Sava at Mokronog and arrived in Kranj, where he had a house

<sup>204</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 279, fasc. 142, lit. T II–4, Berichts copia.—Archduke Karl issued the decree concerning the commission on October 13th, 1573 (StLA, I.Ö. HK–Rep. 1573, fol. 411).

<sup>205</sup> SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 243, no. 6, August 10th, 1752.

<sup>206</sup> Jelinčič, Črna smrt v Gorici, p. 119. Cf. Waltritsch, Prvi goriški kronist, pp. 194 f.

<sup>207</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 279, fasc. 142, lit. T II–5, May 22nd, 1744.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., carton 257, fasc. 133, lit. R III–1, September 3rd, 1691, November 19th, 1691.

<sup>209</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 548, fasc. 311, pp. 309–310, January 21st, 1692.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., pp. 343–344, January 23rd, 1692.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 310, January 21st, 1692.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., pp. 345–346, January 23rd, 1692.

and a family. A man going by the name of Bach, who was supposedly from around Ribnica, bought horses in the Croatian town of Klanjac and then reached Carniola using byways.<sup>213</sup> The provincial estates ordered the town of Kranj and the Ribnica seignior to investigate and apprehend both men as a warning to other lawbreakers.<sup>214</sup>

These and similar measures seem to have borne fruit. The inhabitants of Novo Mesto, who could still bypass the prohibition on fairs in the previous summer, now became more cautious than ever. On February 26th, 1692, long after the plague in Črnomelj had passed, they denied entrance to an assistant of the town's merchant Jakše,<sup>215</sup> even though the boy showed them his "fede," issued two days earlier in Metlika and demonstrating that he had spent three months there (by force of circumstances) and that the senior plague commissioner gave him the permission to leave.<sup>216</sup> As the leadership of Novo Mesto remained unyielding, the boy ultimately negotiated a signature from the commissioner Mordax and entered the town without the knowledge of the town fathers. The issuer of his health certificate from Metlika did the same for another townsman of Novo Mesto by sending him on his way without a proper "fede."<sup>217</sup> The inhabitants of Novo Mesto complained to the provincial estates' delegates, who reassured them that the danger had passed and that the provincial borders with Croatia would reopen soon. Nevertheless, they called on the town judge and council to instruct their townsmen to avoid any contact with Croats until a proper authorization was issued.<sup>218</sup>

### The final blows of plague epidemics in the early eighteenth century

The eighteenth century was the last one in which the plague visited the Slovenian provinces. It ran particularly rampant between 1711 and 1716, and then appeared in sporadic incidences here and there, but continued to sow fear over the following decades by repeatedly sweeping across the neighboring provinces in the east and southeast, reaching all the way to the Slovenian ethnic borders. When in the early 1701, for example, the disease was brought to the Croatian town of Gradiška from the European part of Turkey, the Carniolan authorities closed all borders and prohibited all fairs to prevent the disease from spreading into the province. Facing the greatest threat was again the border province of White Carniola, where the memory was still vivid of the devas-

tating plague from ten years before. For "the territory of Metlika and Črnomelj," the Carniolan provincial estates appointed the plague commissioner Franc Karl von Gusič, who reinforced the guards on the Kolpa to stop the disease from crossing the border with Croatia.<sup>219</sup>

The fear of contagion was considerable and, like in the face of similar threats, further exacerbated by false reports drawn up for one reason or another. On April 2nd, 1701, for example, all three provincial authorities—the governor, the vidame, and the estates' delegation office—ordered **Novo Mesto's** town judge and council to throw a town dweller by the name Strupi in the tower for fourteen days for illegally crossing the border on his way to Croatia. The town authorities were reprimanded for allowing him to return to Novo Mesto after he traveled through Karlovac to attend a fair in Zagreb and returned by the same route. The imprisoned Strupi appealed to the provincial estates to release him and permit him to return to Karlovac. He emphatically denied being a native of Novo Mesto and insisted that he was a merchant from Karlovac. He admitted having traveled to the fair in Zagreb with other merchants from Karlovac but maintained that they had not once been stopped to show their permits. Strupi claimed to have had absolutely no knowledge about the prohibition on border crossing and that he had only come to Novo Mesto to visit his parents. Immediately afterward, on April 12th, the plague in Gradiška had passed, and the provincial governor withdrew all guards from the border.<sup>220</sup>

There are no reports on epidemics in Slovenian territory for the ensuing years, even though the plague, smallpox, and other contagious diseases raged across many European lands, especially the Balkans, Hungary, and Poland. The Black Death inched its way unrelentingly toward the heart of Europe. Between 1708 and 1716, it frequently visited Slovenian territory on the heels or in the company of many other natural disasters. Livestock diseases were particularly rampant in Carniola, and all Austrian provinces suffered for years from smallpox epidemics.<sup>221</sup>

In 1710, the Black Death reached the doorstep of the Slovenian provinces from three sides—the east, the north, and the south. With many areas in Hungary, Croatia, and Venetia infected, the government sealed and guarded all provincial borders. The magistrates of all major towns were tasked with setting up contumacy facilities and lazarettos. However, even in 1710, after the government in Graz appointed two "central contagion deputations" in Graz and Klagenfurt, people defied rigorous measures and continued

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 311, January 21st, 1692.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., pp. 341–342, January 23rd, 1692.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 611, February 26th, 1692.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p. 579, February 24th, 1692.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 611, February 26th, 1692.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., pp. 641–644, February 28th, 1692.

<sup>219</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 129.

<sup>220</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 687, fasc. 393, March 3rd, 1701, April 2nd, 1701.

<sup>221</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 129.

to frequent the infected areas, believing it to be not the real (Asian) plague but an ordinary febrile disease. Indeed, unlike in the past when plague epidemics usually broke out suddenly and violently, death now came in an entirely different form. Patients exhibited no conspicuous and characteristic signs of the plague. The symptoms only manifested postmortem, and the course of the disease took longer, with patients dying a week or two after infection.<sup>222</sup>

Sources of local provenance shed little light on the safety measures in Lower Carniolan towns during that period. The chronicle of the Capuchin Order in **Krško** from 1757 mentions the plague twice: in 1709, when the disease ravaged Hungary and guards were set up at the town gates, and in 1712, when entrance into Krško was prohibited without a health certificate at the behest of the provincial estates. That year, death reaped its harvest in Hungary and in the neighboring Styria, separated from Krško only by the Sava.<sup>223</sup>

Three years later, Carniola was hit for the last time by what sources designate as the **plague of 1715**. The disease spread from Hungary to Slovenian Hills as early as 1710–1712 and settled in Ptuj for two years until 1714. In 1714 and 1715, it was brought from Lower Austria to Upper Styria, whence it reached the area of Maribor and Celje. In the summer of 1715, it spread from Styria to Carinthia, where it remained until mid-1716 and ultimately reached Carniola in mid-1715. By then, Carniola had already had preventive measures and a range of prohibitions in place for two years or, rather, since the first deaths had been recorded in the neighboring lands. However, despite all safety precautions, no later than the spring of 1715, the “plague” reached Lower Carniola, particularly the areas around Stična, Novo Mesto, and Šentrupert, while Ljubljana had since the New Year’s Day been afflicted by febrile diseases.<sup>224</sup>

Although contemporary reports again shed little light on the increased mortality in Lower Carniola, they can be directly confirmed with the data from a few preserved death registers, which had by then been undertaken by many parishes across the province. The cause of death was still rarely stated in that period and—as shown on Ljubljana’s example—the notion of the plague was a conflation of several different diseases. With respect to towns, the data on the deceased are solely available for Višnja Gora, Kočevje, and partly Novo Mesto. The only market towns for which such registers have been preserved are Žužemberk and Litija.

Before turning to records kept by Lower Carniolan parishes, let us look at the developments that took place in **Ljubljana** and the data contained in its civil registers. As always, there was never a lack of exaggerations, which only grew bigger with geographical distance. In May 1715, for instance, the imperial court asked the Carniolan provincial estates to confirm whether between twenty and thirty people indeed died every day in Ljubljana and whether their sudden deaths were indeed due to buboes leaving many unburied corpses lying on the streets.<sup>225</sup> Ljubljana’s physicians submitted a report debunking this disinformation. Whereas most infected patients had recovered after receiving treatment, it was impossible to help so many coming to the city to escape hunger in the countryside. Two or three individuals at most had admittedly collapsed in the street—however, not from the disease but starvation. Besides, the city had set up a lazaretto where patients were treated by physicians and witch doctors.<sup>226</sup> Seven physicians confirmed the presence of febrile diseases since January and assured that most patients had recovered after receiving proper medicines. Fortunately, no patient had exhibited buboes and only a few had developed real plague bumps. Nor did death come suddenly, but it most often lingered for one or up to two weeks.<sup>227</sup> Altogether four hundred patients were admitted to the lazaretto, thirty-nine of whom had died by mid-May. The physician Janez Leopold Raditsch also confirmed that, barring carbuncles and buboes, the symptoms were identical to those he had seen on patients in Vienna and Prague in 1713–1714 and proposed that the graves at the Šentpeter cemetery be dug deeper and covered with lime to prevent hazardous decomposition of corpses in summer.<sup>228</sup>

Eloquent witnesses to mortality in Ljubljana are the registers of death kept by the cathedral parish of St. Nicholas and the suburban parish of St. Peter. In 1714, the cathedral parish buried 124 persons, and this number rose to 231 or by 71.7 % in 1715. 125 people died between March and June, with the highest mortality recorded in April (thirty-six) and May (forty-one).<sup>229</sup> In the suburban-rural parish of Šentpeter, which covered a much vaster territory, the mass dying started as early as the autumn of 1714, in no small part also due to poor harvests and hunger. After 339 burials were entered in the parish death register in 1713, this number climbed to 634 the following year and reached no less than 951 in the plague year of 1715 or 2.8 times more than two years

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>223</sup> Kapucinski samostan Krško, Archivum loci Ppff. capucinarum Gurkfeldi erectum anno Domini MDCCLVII, pp. 45 and 47.—Cf. Benedik, Kralj, *Kapucini na Slovenskem*, pp. 460, 462.

<sup>224</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, pp. 130–132.

<sup>225</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 688, fasc. 393, May 13th, 1715.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., May 20th, 1715.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., May 18th, 1715.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., s. d., presented on May 22nd, 1715.

<sup>229</sup> NŠAL, ZA Ljubljana—Sv. Nikolaj, Matične knjige, M 1658–1735.

earlier. As the city itself, the parish witnessed a surge in deaths in April (134) and May (201). Already in March 1714, there were reports of four soldiers dying in the lazaretto (*in lazareth*), where the death count started to mount on April 28th, 1715. The number of deaths in the lazaretto peaked in May and June, with only a few deceased being listed by the full name among a host of anonymous deaths. The lazaretto frequently reported five deaths per day, six unidentified victims on May 20th, and a record-high number of seven beggars on June 16th. The last death in the lazaretto was recorded on September 5th. The total number of the deceased in 1715 amounted to a hundred, with fifty-seven marked as beggars. A massive death toll, especially among beggars, was also observed outside the lazaretto, resulting in up to eight funerals held several times per day.<sup>230</sup>

Due to the lack of such sources for Lower Carniola, the figures and reports from Ljubljana serve as a useful starting point for drawing comparisons with the numbers of deaths stated in death registers of the five Lower Carniolan parishes. All civil registers kept by the parishes of Novo Mesto—chapter, Višnja Gora, Kočevje, Žužemberk, and Šmartno pri Litiji reveal an evident increase in deaths. **Novo Mesto** probably suffered the most with the densest population and the highest mortality in both the absolute number and the percentage of deceased per total parish population. As stated on the first page of the oldest death register, the small Novo Mesto town parish, covering the area inside the town walls, counted 331 deaths and burials in 1715 alone.<sup>231</sup> Unfortunately, only this summary data is available rather than records of all buried victims, and it was not until July 5th, when the mass dying started, that the provost Jurij Franc Ksaver de Marotti instructed his priest to keep a register of deaths and enter the names of everyone who died in the town and its surroundings in a specified form. The record-keeping started the next day; however, with at least one sheet missing, consecutive entries are only available for the period from February 1716 onward.<sup>232</sup> Although the number of 331 buried is not verifiable, it is highly probable. According to the death registers from other parishes, a major wave of deaths passed through Lower Carniola in spring and (merely) thirty-four deaths were recorded in the two months of summer. What should also be borne in mind is that not all victims buried here were natives of Novo Mesto. The deaths of foreigners should be subtracted from the

high total number and, by analogy with Ljubljana, consideration should also be given to the increased number of beggars and troops, who had already represented an above-average share among the thirty-four deceased between July and September 1715.<sup>233</sup> Compared to the summary indication in the same death register on 110 deceased in 1705 (*hic sepulti*), the number of deaths almost tripled in 1715. However, if one takes an annual average of 47.8 deceased for the ensuing ten-year period (1716–1725), the number of buried victims in the epidemic year was nearly six times higher.

What share, then, of Novo Mesto's population can be attributed to the 331 deceased, only a fraction of whom was made up by those who had not been affected by the epidemic and hunger? Given that in 1754, the town counted 1,485 inhabitants and only one house under the town's jurisdiction less than in 1726 (249), it seems safe to assume that the demographic situation in the early eighteenth century was not much different. In the town with less than 1,500 inhabitants, the 331 deaths of town dwellers and foreigners who had come to the town to find relief from their afflictions could translate into a good fifth of deceased, which comes very close to the estimated percentage in Črnomelj during the plague of 1691–1692.

That same year, the death was equally remorseless in **Kočevje**. The parish of Kočevje recorded the deaths of 246 persons, stating only 145 individually. In addition, the priests buried eighty-two impoverished adults and children without payment of surplice fees but neglected to register the burials of nineteen children. The entries in the death register point to an extraordinary situation seen in no other year than 1715. No summary data on unlisted burials can be found in other death registers kept from 1699 onward, even though the Kočevje area confronted various epidemics before and after. No other year in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries probably witnessed as many deaths as 1715. Given the annual average of 93.8 deaths in the ten-year period 1705–1714, the number of deaths in 1715 increased by 262 %. However, among the 145 deceased individuals listed by their names, only twenty-three can be attributed to the town of Kočevje itself, which does not signify a substantial increase from previous years, with the ten-year average for 1705–1714 amounting to 13.1. On the other hand, the town may have also contributed its share toward the 101 unidentified decedents, suggesting that the number of deceased town dwellers could be much higher.<sup>234</sup>

<sup>230</sup> NŠAL, ŽA Ljubljana—Sv. Peter, Matične knjige, M 1690–1736, M 1715–1743.

<sup>231</sup> KANM, carton 58, M/1 1704–1728: "Anno 1715—In D(omi)no obierunt provisi sacramentis, ac tumulati illor(um) 331."

<sup>232</sup> Only two sheets have been preserved for 1715, recording the deaths of thirty-four individuals: eighteen in July, twelve in August, and four in September.

<sup>233</sup> Among the thirty-four buried persons were five beggars, three foreigners, and two soldiers, altogether nine non-locals, among them six unidentified and marked as N or N. N.

<sup>234</sup> NŠAL, ŽA Kočevje, Matične knjige, M 1669–1724.

Precise data on the deceased are also provided in the death register of the parish of **Višnja Gora**.<sup>235</sup> In 1715, the parish registered the deaths of altogether 115 individuals, including fifty-two or nearly a half classified as children and adolescents. As many as fifty-eight or a good half (51 %) were buried in spring: twenty-four in March and thirty-four in April. After subsiding in May, death claimed thirty more lives in summer—eleven in June, nine in July, and again eleven in August. Despite an increased mortality, the town of Višnja Gora was less affected than the surrounding countryside. Except for April and July, each registering five deaths, it remained largely unscathed by the plague. The deaths of seventeen locals in the entire year, albeit representing twice the annual average from previous years (8.5 %), fall short of reflecting a surge in mortality across the parish, which registered seventy-eight deaths in 1713 and sixty-three in 1714. There is, furthermore, no noticeable increase in the number of deceased foreigners and beggars, to whom this small town could not offer a hoped-for relief.<sup>236</sup>

In 1715, high mortality was also observed in the parish and market town of **Žužemberk**. Death was rampant from February to August, reaching its peak at the end of May, and claiming sixty-four lives or almost one-quarter of altogether 279 victims that year. The spike in mortality compared to previous years was much like that in Kočevje. Equally devastated were the surrounding areas registering 209 deaths and the market town sixty-eight.<sup>237</sup> Given its population of 521 in 1754,<sup>238</sup> the biggest Lower Carniolan market town had lost about one-eighth of its inhabitants. Nonetheless, this share seems excessively high because Žužemberk was much more populated in the early eighteenth century than fifty years later. Specifically, about 1703, the local seigniorship comprised 130 subordinate units and only ninety-six under the Theresian Cadaster.<sup>239</sup>

A surge in mortality in 1715 was also recorded in the parish of Šmartno pri **Litiji**. In the second half of 1714 and the first half of 1715, around 294 persons died, accounting for 2.8 times more than

the ten-year average in 1711–1720 (about 821) and, excluding the epidemic year, as much as 5.4 times more than the average (54.1 per year). Interestingly, the market town of Litija was left largely unaffected, registering three deaths at the end of 1714 and not one in the ensuing year.<sup>240</sup> As elsewhere, an unusually high number of beggars were buried in 1714–1715. The death register also contains a note describing the nature of death. After Andrej Bratun's farmhand from Kresniški Vrh passed away on August 24th, 1714, another of his farmhands died a sudden death (*repentina quasi morte*) the day after.

The number of lives claimed by the epidemic and hunger in the parishes of other towns and market towns remains undeterminable due to the lack of preserved death registers. With plenty of patient work, mortality levels could also be traced for several other rural parishes of Lower Carniola and Carniola. However, whereas such research could draw a more complex portrait of dying in different corners of the province, little if anything can be expected from it in terms of concrete reports on the nature of the disease. The so-called plague of 1715 was a conglomerate of two close allies: the epidemic incorporating several different diseases and hunger resulting from poor harvests and disturbances in economic and communication flows.

In connection with the epidemic of 1715, consideration should also be given to **Kostanjevica**, the only Lower Carniolan town where sources make not a single mention of an outbreak of any contagious disease. With more than a little luck, especially considering its exposed border position and the vicinity of the more than unpopular Uskoks, this small town on the Krka seems to have successfully weathered all major epidemics—otherwise, any Black Death harvest, however small, could have been inferred from the structure of preserved sources alone. The period that is poorly documented in sources but proved fateful for Kostanjevica started in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, which includes not only the epidemic year of 1715 but also two other periods marked by higher mortality, which will be discussed below. At that time, the number of abandoned homesteads dramatically increased. According to the census of or shortly before 1727, it only had forty-six populated houses and as many as thirty-one abandoned houses, that is, more than two-fifths of emptied or ruined homes (40.3 %).<sup>241</sup> Because these

<sup>235</sup> NŠAL, ŽA Višnja Gora, Matične knjige, M 1713–1748.

<sup>236</sup> The deaths of two foreigners in the town in no way coincided with the time of increased mortality. A beggar died in early March and a woman from the neighboring parish of Šmarje died an unexpected death at the end of September.

<sup>237</sup> NŠAL, ŽA Žužemberk, Matične knjige, M 1710–1724.

<sup>238</sup> The census of souls by individual places, including the market town of Žužemberk, focuses strictly on the serfs of the Žužemberk seigniorship (ÖStA, HHStA, FAA, A–IX–22, Conv. 1, Seelen Conscriptio June 20th, 1754), who represented almost the entire market town population, barring the inhabitants of the castle, the parish house, and the only foreign enclave—a hide subordinate to the local parish priest (SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 32, N 183).

<sup>239</sup> ÖStA, HHStA, FAA, A–15–84, Rent-roll Seisenberg ca. 1703, s. p.—SI AS 174, Terezijanski kataster za Kranjsko, N 183, no. 20, s. d. (ca. 1755).

<sup>240</sup> There were perhaps a few victims from Litija among the eight children of unidentified name and place, designated merely as “prolis” or “infans.”

<sup>241</sup> The vidame archive erroneously classified the census as a document on Novo Mesto: SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 255, I/133, lit. R I–9, Specification der hernach benanthen bürgerlichen häyßer welche bewohnt sein.—Dating the census to the time shortly prior to 1727 was made possible by statements of widows, for whom the register of marriage clearly states when they remarried (NŠAL, ŽA

developments coincided with the epidemic of 1715, which killed one-fifth of inhabitants of the neighboring Novo Mesto, the observations above lead to the assumption that the sudden abandonment of Kostanjevica was largely due to the death of a considerable part of its population. Yet everything points to the contrary, even though the epidemic of 1715 most likely also swept through this town. Namely, in their reports describing the causes for the notable decline of the town during the first half of the eighteenth century, the inhabitants of Kostanjevica mention no plague but three fires, the last of which is unknown from other sources and may be set in the time between 1703 and 1714. Whereas the tax register of 1702 still listed eighty-one unnamed taxpayers and the concurrent visitation stated no more than three abandoned houses,<sup>242</sup> in 1704 the town leadership already reported on twenty-six completely abandoned houses and poverty after the town had been razed to the ground by three fires over the last sixty years.<sup>243</sup> The structural crisis, typical of Lower Carniolan towns in general, obviously discouraged many fire victims from building new homes and compelled them to leave.

The last major plague epidemic in Slovenian territory came to an end in the early 1717, after having raged for about six years. Although the real (Asian) plague also occurred only in sporadic outbreaks elsewhere in the ensuing years, it remained a major and costly concern until the mid-eighteenth century, with its frequent eruptions in the neighboring lands in the east and south severely affecting traffic and trade. For the first time after the great epidemic, the news of a plague in the Ottoman Empire and Hungary already spread in mid-1718, after which it also sowed death in the Balkans and Hungary in 1720–1724. At the same time, a disease called “pleuriditis maligna” broke out in Slovenian territory, especially in Lower Carniola, striking fear into the Carniolan provincial estates that it might reach Carniola as well.<sup>244</sup>

This largely unknown infection could be the reason behind the higher mortality featured in the

civil registers of some parishes under discussion during the early 1720s. On the other hand, in that period, death registers still stated nothing about the causes of deaths. The situation was especially dire in **Kočevje**, where the number of deaths in 1721 again spiked to several times the average from previous years. 166 decedents were recorded in the entire parish and twenty-four, among them mostly children, in the town of Kočevje.<sup>245</sup> Still a year before that, in 1720, an increase in mortality was observed in **Novo Mesto**, which buried seventy-three persons and seventy-five in 1724.<sup>246</sup> Mortality in the parish of **Višnja Gora** showed a slight increase in 1721 and 1722, without affecting the town inhabitants as badly as it did in previous and subsequent years.<sup>247</sup> The parish priest of Žužemberk observed a high death toll for no less than five consecutive years, particularly in 1721 and 1724, recording ninety-five and ninety-six deaths, respectively. The market town of **Žužemberk** faced a similar situation in 1721, but with a slightly smaller death toll than in the plague year of 1715. It lost forty-one inhabitants (sixty-eight in 1715) and twenty-three in 1724.<sup>248</sup> Whether any family had become extinct remains unknown; compared to about 1703, the number of households was reduced by (no more than) five until 1731.<sup>249</sup> A significant number of deaths were recorded in 1721 and 1724 in the parish of **Metlika**, where the oldest preserved death register was started no earlier than 1720. 101 persons died the following year and 136 were buried three years later, in 1724.<sup>250</sup>

Unlike in 1715, the causes of increased mortality in **Metlika** are much more profusely documented in 1724. The Carniolan provincial estates sent there the physician Franc Ksaver Zalokar, who on returning to Novo Mesto stated poor hygienic conditions as the main reason for the epidemic in a report of February 26th, 1725.<sup>251</sup> For the past ten days, he had visited patients in the parishes of Metlika, Semič, and Vinica and provided a detailed description of their symptoms, which varied significantly from one place to another. In fact, this was a cohort of several different diseases; apart from the major culprit, “pleuriditis maligna,” adults were also dying of pneumonia and contagious catarrh, and children suffered from sore bottoms. Doctor Zalokar proceeded to describe how easily “pleuriditis maligna” could be transmitted through breathing in small houses that he had seen on his visitation route, adding to which was the rapid

Kostanjevica, *Matične knjige*, R 1723–1770, therein: P 1726–1770, M 1745–1770).

<sup>242</sup> SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 185, fasc. 104, lit. L II–7, Stüfft register der Statt Landtstraß v(on) 1702, April 30th, 1703.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, lit. L II–1, August 5th, 1714.—Information is available for the fires in 1663 and 1674, which razed to the ground nearly half and one-fifth of homes, respectively (SI AS 1, Vicedomski urad za Kranjsko, carton 184, I/104, lit. L II–2, March 31st, 1686, August 9th, 1686), but nothing is known from sources about the third and the last fire. Valvasor knew nothing about it, even though he kept abreast of fires that had erupted in other towns during the years leading up to the publication of his *Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. No references to the consequences of the fire are likewise made in the comprehensive instructions to the town leadership in 1691 (*ibid.*, July 28th, 1691) and the files of the above-mentioned vidame visitation in 1703.

<sup>244</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 132.

<sup>245</sup> NŠAL, ŽA Kočevje, *Matične knjige*, M 1669–1724.

<sup>246</sup> KANM, carton 58, M/11704–1728.

<sup>247</sup> NŠAL, ŽA Višnja Gora, *Matične knjige*, M 1713–1748.

<sup>248</sup> NŠAL, ŽA Žužemberk, *Matične knjige*, M 1710–1724.

<sup>249</sup> ÖStA, HHStA, FAA, A–15–84, Rent-roll Seisenberg ca. 1703, s. p.; A–15–97, Rent-roll Seisenberg 1731–1733, fols. 1–32.

<sup>250</sup> ŽA Metlika, *Matične knjige*, M 1720–1739.

<sup>251</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, p. 132.

cooling and heating of air. The second reason for infection was the bad habit among the local inhabitants to literally roast themselves near the hot embers in their humble and overheated rooms in the presence of the corpse. Not seldomly, houses would also be crammed with lambs and other livestock, and following a huge post-burial feast, called “carmina” by the Croats,<sup>252</sup> where they inhaled the infected air, mourners headed out from the warm house into the cold. On behalf of the provincial authorities, Zalokar prohibited organizing such feasts in the presence of corpses and lighting fire indoors, after a child had burnt itself to death in a room in Črnomelj. He also ordered to separate the dead from the living, as it occurred that during a patient’s confession a dead corpse was found under his bed. Patients most often recovered if they were bled immediately after contracting the disease. In several villages, between two and three persons died daily and no more than six in the same parish. The rapporteur compiled a detailed name list of the deceased based on death registers. From the New Year’s Day to February 17th, fifty-nine persons died in the parish of Metlika, fifty-two in the parish of Črnomelj, nineteen in the parish of Semič, twenty-five in the parish of Podzemelj, and one of five infected died as early as the Christmas Eve the preceding year in the parish of Vinica. The towns of **Metlika** and **Črnomelj** were variably affected, but the latter not nearly as badly as during the plague of 1691–1692. The Metlika suburbs registered eight deaths and the town itself six, including two newborns conceived by the garrisoned troops. The small town of Črnomelj lost fifteen inhabitants, including five children, and the suburbs six adults and one child.<sup>253</sup>

The period up to the mid-eighteenth century witnessed other concurrent increases in mortality across the Lower Carniolan parishes under discussion, which may be attributed to this or that contagious disease or hunger, but the death registers provide no specifications as to the type of the disease. The most conspicuous case of mass deaths that triggered a wave of unsubstantiated rumors of the plague can be traced to **Novo Mesto** between the autumn of 1736 and the spring of 1737. From November 22nd, 1736, to March 20th, 1737, forty-seven soldiers, their wives, and members from Francis of Lorraine’s regiment died of an unidentified disease, a few times up to two or three soldiers per day. Although the army was not the only social segment affected by the plague, it was an agent of its spread and its greatest victim. In January and partly in February, the number of deceased local inhabitants also more than doubled compared to the average from previ-

ous years, suggesting that the infection had spread among the civilian population.<sup>254</sup> Measures to reverse the spread of the disease must have been rather stringent and the fearmongering rumors vastly exaggerated. In March, the Carniolan provincial estates’ delegation office received two separate letters from the Gorizia provincial estates’ delegation office and the health committee of the town of Koper in Venetian Istria regarding the epidemic in Novo Mesto. The inhabitants of Koper inquired whether Carniola and especially Novo Mesto were indeed closed. The Gorizia provincial estates’ delegates even received a note from the health committee in Venetian Palmanova, stating that Carniola had imposed a closure after thirty individuals died in Novo Mesto. The fear of the plague was significant and well-justified, based on the carnage it caused that year in Turkish Bosnia. Responding to their counterparts in Koper and Gorizia, the Carniolan provincial estates’ delegates explained that these were fabrications invented by malicious tongues that spread rumors of a contagious disease and the closure. What really transpired in the previous year was that seven companies under the Duke of Lorraine’s regiment came to Carniola from Hungary with a few infected men among them, who were accommodated in Novo Mesto. The men died of the “Hungarian fever,” but no one suddenly and due to carelessness. Moreover, after the troops had had a good rest from their draining march, there had been no news of the disease since autumn. The report, written on March 25th, 1737, was not entirely truthful because the wave of mass dying ended only five days before that. At the end of that same year, the Venetian Republic closed the border with Carniola for the last time because of cattle plague and an epidemic that sowed death across the Generalate of Karlovac.<sup>255</sup>

In addition to sporadic occurrences in Gorizia in 1732, Carniola faced the last direct threat of the plague from Hungarian and Croatian provinces between 1738 and 1741. The plague entailed high expenses for security measures and complete cessation of trade. The last closure of the border with Croatia and plague closures in general were set up in 1744, when the epidemic was swiftly contained. On the other hand, the plague continued to visit Hungary, Croatia, Dalmatia, and Turkish Bosnia almost until the end of the eighteenth century, but apart from harming traffic and trade in the neighboring Austrian hereditary territories, it left no major devastation in its wake.<sup>256</sup>

From the mid-eighteenth century onward, the plague as such and as a designation for an epidemic

<sup>252</sup> Who were in fact White Carniolans (Golec, *Nedokončana kroatizacija*, p. 24).

<sup>253</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 688, fasc. 393, Sanitetno poročilo iz Bele krajine 1725.

<sup>254</sup> KANM, carton 66, M/3 1736–1752.

<sup>255</sup> SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 688, fasc. 393, Zapore v Beneški Istri 1732, 1737.

<sup>256</sup> Travner, *Kuga na Slovenskem*, pp. 132–133.—SI AS 2, Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko, Reg. I, carton 688, fasc. 393.

gave way to new and old epidemic diseases that had occasionally already wreaked havoc under its name. In the period, during which Lower Carniola transitioned to a more beneficial period unburdened by real plagues, special mention ought to be made of the dysentery epidemic in the second half of the 1750s.<sup>257</sup> Although dysentery killed several dozen adults and children in several Lower Carniolan towns and market towns in 1757–1758,<sup>258</sup> the aftermath of this and subsequent epidemics can in no way be compared to the earlier plague epidemics, when the fear of infection and the actual threat of a rapid spread struck terror into provinces far from epidemic foci. As a rule, the economic consequences of shutting down main routes and paralyzing the established life flows and functions were disproportionately more severe than the demographic impacts, which—compared to the afflictions suffered in Lower Carniola and surrounding provinces—often yet unfairly seem almost negligible.

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NŠAL – Nadškofijski arhiv Ljubljana  
 ŽA – Župnijski arhivi: ŽA Črnomelj, ŽA Kočevje, ŽA Kostanjevica, ŽA Ljubljana–sv. Nikolaj, ŽA Ljubljana–sv. Peter, ŽA Mokronog, ŽA Šmartno pri Litiji, ŽA Višnja Gora, ŽA Žužemberk.

<sup>257</sup> SI AS 6, Reprezentanca in komora za Kranjsko v Ljubljani, carton 120, fasc. XXXIX, Sanitetne zadeve, August 30th, 1756, September 6th, 1756.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Golec, *Prebivalstvo in družba*, pp. 99 f.

ÖStA, HHStA – Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien  
 FAA – Fürstlich Auerspergsches Archiv

StLA – Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv Graz  
 I.Ö. HK – Archiv der innerösterreichischen Hofkammer  
 I.Ö. HK-Rep. – Repertorien der innerösterreichischen Hofkammer  
 I.Ö. HK-Akten – Innerösterreichischen Hofkammer-Akten

ŽA Metlika – Župnijski arhiv Metlika

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## P O V Z E T E K

### Kužne epidemije na Dolenjskem med izročilom in stvarnostjo

Dolenjska je tista slovenska pokrajina, ki so jo različne kužne epidemije v zgodnjem novem veku obiskale najpogosteje in jo poleg Istre tudi najbolj prizadele. Žlasti njena mesta, povečini miniatura in malo pomembna, so med slovenskimi kontinentalnimi mesti zagotovo utrpela najhujše posledice. Tudi nasploh so mesta in trgi v primerjavi s podeželjem teže občutili breme epidemij zaradi svoje večje prehodnosti in koncentracije prebivalstva. Na Dolenjskem je nosilo najtežje breme Novo mesto, drugo najpomembnejše mesto na Kranjskem in med sedmimi dolenjskimi mesti edino z več kot tisoč prebivalci. V luči majhnosti mestnih naselij so v virih toliko bolj presenetljive izredno visoke številke umrlih, kakršnih drugod na Kranjskem ni zaslediti. Prav verodostojnost in teža števila umrlih je eno temeljnih vprašanj, na katerega skuša pričujoči prispevek poiskati kolikor toliko zadovoljiv odgovor ob precej neugodni strukturi in naravi virov. Še manj oprijemljive so razsežnosti gospodarskih in socialnih posledic epidemij, ki so praktično nemerljive z zanesljivimi kazalci, zato pri njihovem ugotavljanju le s težavo presegamo deskriptivno raven in besednjak sodobnih poročil. Prav tako skoraj ničesar ne vemo o bolezenskih znakih posameznih kug, na podlagi katerih bi bilo edino moč ugotavljati, za kakšno bolezen je sploh šlo. Pod imenom kuga se v obravnavanem obdobju poleg prave kuge skriva sicer še kakšnih deset epidemičnih bolezní.

Zelo malo je znano o samem dogajanju v času divjanja epidemij, ki ga dokumentirajo le sodniški letni obračuni Višnje Gore v času treh manjših epidemij druge polovice 16. stoletja ter poročila t. i. kužnega komisarja iz Črnomlja v letih 1691–1692, med katera spadajo tudi edini ohranjeni sezname umrlih in ozdravelih okuženecv. Ravno za mesta, od koder imamo mlajša poročila o visokem številu umrlih, tovrstnih poročil prve roke ni. Sumarne navedbe umrlih, ki so jih z večjo ali manjšo časovno distanco večinoma posredovala mesta sama, je bilo zato pri preverjanju potrebno soočiti z najrazličnejšimi drugimi sodobnimi viri.

Posebna pozornost in hkrati previdnost veljata natančnim, nezaokroženim številkam, pri katerih dobimo vtis, da so morale temeljiti na sodobnih specifikacijah. Najočitnejši pretiravanji predstavljata sumarna podatka o več kot 800 umrlih Novomeščanih leta 1599, od tega 149 hišnih gospodarjih, in o kar 1200 žrtvah kuge v Metliki v letih 1646–1647. V novomeškem primeru bi šlo za več kot polovico umrlega

prebivalstva, a je analiza imen gospodarjev opustelih hiš pokazala, da je mogoče računati z največ nekaj sto umrlimi. Metlika bi morala izgubiti več prebivalcev, kot jih je mesto sredi 17. stoletja sploh lahko imelo (okoli 900). Veliko realnejši sta navedbi o 322 umrlih Novomeščanih za kugo leta 1625, o »samo 18 umrlih« leta 1648 in o 331 pokopih v celem letu 1715, ki ga je zaznamovala zadnja epidemija.

Nenumerične navedbe v virih o smrti velikega števila ljudi in celo o »izumrtju« mesta Črnomelj je treba razumeti kot način izražanja in ne dobesedno. Med njimi so tudi evidentne neresnice, namenjene višjim oblastvom zunaj Kranjske, kot na primer podatek o polovici umrlih meščanov in prebivalcev mesteca Višnja Gora leta 1599 ali o veliko umrlih najuglednejših meščanih Kočevja v istem času. Pritegnitev davčnih registrov in drugih sodobnih poročil med epidemijo ali neposredno po njej odkriva povsem drugačna dejstva: kuga se je obeh mest le dotaknila, če se ni Kočevju sploh izognila.

Poleg Novega mesta so kuge opazno prizadele še tri dolenjska mesta: epidemija 1646–1647 Krško in Metliko, za kateri število in delež umrlih prebivalcev nista ugotovljiva, lokalno omejena kuga v letih 1691–1692 pa Črnomelj. Tu je obolelo 216 in umrlo 139 ljudi (64,4 %), kar je predstavljalo približno petino vsega mestnega prebivalstva. Vsaj eno petino umrlih prebivalcev je mogoče izračunati tudi za Novo mesto v letih 1625 in 1715, kolikor ni 322 oziroma 331 oseb predstavljalo četrtno ali celo višji delež, bližji eni tretjini.

Šele zadnjo epidemijo leta 1715 je mogoče spremljati po mrliških matičnih knjigah več dolenjskih župnij. Kot vse kaže, tokrat razen v Novem mestu ni šlo za visoke, a nikakor ne za zanemarljive človeške žrtve. To je bila hkrati zadnja velika epidemija, ki jo viri imenujejo kuga, nakar je ta vznemirjala Kranjsko do srede 18. stoletja le še z izbruhi v vzhodni sosesčini. Čeprav ni več razsajala po deželi, je tako kot prej že zaradi delne ali popolne ustavitve tovrnega in potniškega prometa tudi na Dolenjskem povzročila nemalo gospodarske škode.

Povsem razumljivo je, zakaj se demografske posledice v virih vselej navezujejo na gospodarske. Pojavu epidemije na določenem kraju je namreč sledila izolacija okuženega območja, kar je pomenilo pretrganje komunikacij in ustavitve trgovsko-prometnih tokov. Kužne straže, ki so jih v drugih potencialno ogroženih krajih postavile deželne ter posamezne lokalne oblasti, ljudem in blagu niso dovoljevale prehoda brez zdravstvenih spričeval. Izbruh še tako lokalno omejene epidemije je praviloma povzročil zaprtje deželnih meja in posledično močno omejitev oziroma popolno ustavitve prometa, zaradi česar je tako ali drugače trpelo celotno deželno gospodarstvo. Zlasti dolgotrajne zapore so lahko za seboj potegnile hude izgube raznih gospodarskih dejavnosti, obubožanje določenih slojev, davčno nesolventnost, ki jo je v končni posledici občutila deželna blagajna, pomanjkanje življenjskih potrebščin in drugih artiklov ter končno prave lakote.