CHAPTER 10

Succession Choices of Small Farmers and Women Farmers’ Wills in the Area around Trieste in the Nineteenth Century

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The paper discusses the succession choices of peasant men and women in Breg, an area on the south-eastern outskirts of Trieste, which in the 19th century was the most important port of the Habsburg monarchy. The area, beginning less than ten kilometres from the city centre, was part of the municipality of Dolina, which as the seat of religious and political authority played the role of local political and cultural centre. From the beginning of the 16th century to 1814 it belonged administratively to Carniola, while clerically it was subordinate to the Diocese of Trieste. The administrative separation from Trieste and the existence of the Dolina deanery, led by Slovenian priests from Carniola, ensured that the villages of Breg, which were inhabited by a Slovenian-speaking population, enjoyed a relatively independent political life, and prevented the meddling of Italian-speaking city authorities in local matters.

In 1832 the municipality of Dolina, consisting of seven villages (Log, Ricmanje, Boršt, Zabrežec, Boljunec, Kroglo, Dolina), came under the jurisdiction of

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1 In the 19th century Trieste was mainly populated by Italians, even though the size of the Slovene population grew steadily, through both immigration and activities that raised national awareness. In 1910 Slovenes represented 30% of the city’s population, while the outskirts of the city were predominantly populated by Slovenes. For a general overview, see Marina Cattaruzza, “Population Dynamics and Economic Change in Trieste and its Hinterland, 1850–1914”, in Population and Society in Western European Port Cities 1650–1939, eds. Richard Lawton and Robert Lee (Liverpool, 2002), 176–211; idem, “Slovenes and Italians in Trieste, 1850–1914”, in Ethnic Identity in Urban Europe, eds. Max Engman et al. Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850–1940, 8 (New York/Dartmouth, 1992), 189–219.

2 On the cosmopolitan business elite which settled in the city since the beginning of the 18th century after the Free Port of Trieste was established (1719), see Lois C. Dubin, The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste (Stanford, Ca., 1999).

3 In Table 10.3, which shows population change in Breg, smaller settlements that were part of the municipality of Dolina are also included. In the article Slovenian names of the villages are used because Italian versions of the villages’ names are in use only from the second half
FIGURE 10.1  The area of Breg