Marriage systems and remarriage in 19th century Hungary: a comparative study[1]

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Draft version!

Introduction

Marriage is traditionally regarded as one of the key elements of pre-modern demographic regimes. In traditional societies it was generally considered a 'normal', desired status, independently of the real percentage of the married or the age at first marriage. But marriages were fragile because of high adult mortality, a considerable proportion of marriages sooner or later ended by the death of one of the spouses. The death of a spouse used to change the everyday life of the surviving household members fundamentally.[3] The widowed person lost some of the material (property and income), emotional (mutual communication and empathy) and social support (social network and status), as well as potential help with household chores and child raising that marriage had provided for them (Dribe 2007). The surviving spouse had to decide how to live after loosing the partner. Re-marriage was one of the possible options.[4]

Although the intention to remarry can be regarded as more or less given, it was not sufficient to conclude another marriage. It was also important whether the widow(er) was considered an appropriate partner by their environment. Their situation was characterised by numerous disadvantages (their age and children from the first marriage) and also some advantages if they were property owners and already had a house, a farm and some income.

Historically legal regulations, cultural attitudes, specific social circumstances and local marriage markets could also influence the decision to remarry. The options of widow(er)s were highly dependent upon gender, age, socio-economic status and household composition.

Remarriage has been a somewhat neglected field of family and population history. The marriage model of John Hajnal (1965) considered only the first marriage and remarriage can be regarded as a missing variable of this model (Saito 2005: 174). Co-operation between historical demographers and family historians was facilitated by a conference about this topic in 1981 (Oris 2003). Authors[5] defined gender and age as the most important factors of remarriage. Later, new aspects entered analyses such as financial status, inheritance, autonomy of women and the role of family systems.[6] More recently scholars apply multivariate statistical methods in the investigation of factors influencing remarriage (complexity of the household, presence of children etc.).[7]

Analysis of remarriage in 19th century Hungary is an unexploited research topic. The ethnical and religious diversity of the population, as well as the physical geographical and

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[3] For the latest historical demographic and family history approach on widowhood and loss of parents, see Derosas and Oris 2002.

[4] By analysing village communities in Sweden, Martin Dribe and his fellow researchers enumerated many alternatives after widowhood: a) individual management of the household with the support of family members or individuals outside the family; b) re-marriage to maintain the continuity of the household; c) moving to a household headed by own child or his/her spouse; d) moving to a household headed by someone else; e) leaving the village. The authors consider these choices as strategies of widows and widowers to survive the difficult life conditions caused by spousal death (Dribe, Lundh and Nystedt 2007).

[5] Dupâquier 1981; reviewed by Watkins 1983.

[6] For a detailed review of the literature on remarriage, see Oris and Ochiai 2002: 63–79.

[7] Some of the latest micro historical and quantitative approaches on remarriage: Breschi and Manfredini 2007; Breschi et al. 2009; Dribe, Lundh and Nystedt 2007; Kurosu 2007a; Kurosu 2007b; Lundh 2007; McQuillan 2003; Moring 2002a; Moring 2002b; Van Poppel 1995; Van Poppel 1998.

economic variety of the country allow a multi-perspective, comparative analysis of family and population history.[8] Present analysis aims at studying marriage, widowhood and remarriage in a society considered traditionally 'eastern' concerning marriage customs and household composition (Hajnal 1965, 1982). For the sake of comparison, we studied different communities to identify local patterns of remarriage and used longitudinal micro-data and multivariate statistical methods to better understand the influencing factors of remarrying.

In Hungary there are very few data on remarriage from the period before official statistics. The descriptive and aggregated data available from the last third of the 19th century onwards do not allow the investigation of factors that influence remarriage. Therefore, in harmony with recent international studies, we had to recognise the necessity of individual longitudinal data for analysing the impact of family factors on remarriage. As we have very few population registers and census-type sources surviving up to the present, this paper is based on the analysis of parish registers and applies the method of family reconstitution. Family reconstitution has been criticised by numerous scholars in the last decades (Ruggles 1992; Kasakoff and Adams 1995). However, international examples demonstrate that family reconstitution data allow the use of multivariable statistical methods (Gutmann and Alter 1993). Recent studies have convincingly demonstrated that family reconstitution data can be successfully applied in the investigation of remarriage (Knodel 1988; Knodel and Lynch 1985; McQuillan 2003). Having presented some descriptive statistics of the studied communities we used event history or hazard models in order to explain remarriage (Piecewise constant exponential models). The possible influencing factors of remarrying studied in the course of the analysis were sex, age at widowhood, duration of widowhood, locality and in some cases period. For lack of continuous population registers, we have no data on household composition beside the supposed presence of children born in the households.[9] Their sex and age at their parents' entering widowhood were also important explaining variables in the analysis.

The communities under study were Bük in Western Hungary near the Austrian boarder and two large Transylvanian villages (Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva) in the eastern part of Hungary, on the territory of present-day Romania (Map 1).[10] The period studied was between 1810 and 1890 in the case of Bük and between 1820 and 1910 in the case of the two Transylvanian villages. Bük consisted of three smaller villages in the 19th century, the population was partly Roman Catholic, partly Lutheran. This paper focuses on Lutheran population, as the elaboration of Roman Catholic parish registers has not been finished yet. The population of Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva was entirely Roman Catholic whose data are completely included into the analysis.

[8] As for the country's diversity in terms of religion, ethnicity, geographic, economic, social and cultural conditions see e.g. Andorka – Faragó 1983, Faragó 2003.

[9] We had to suppose that all children having ever been born and surviving until the date of remarriage were present in their parents' households. Although it seems to be a very strong assumption, we have to take it into account that life-cycle servanthood was much less common in pre-modern Hungary than in Western Europe, especially among males.

[10] The parish register data of Bük were elaborated in the course of Rudolf Andorka's family reconstitution program, the family sheets were prepared and available although the results of the analysis have never been published. The use of the complete family sheets made our work much easier. The 18-19th century demographic development of the two Transylvanian villages is the topic of Levente Pakot's doctoral dissertation, the results related to widowhood and remarriage have been already published (Pakot 2009).

Map 1.
The communities under study: Bük (county Sopron, Western Hungary); Szentegyházasfalu and Kápolnásfalu (Vlăhița and Căpâlnița in Transylvania, Romania at present)

The communities: Bük, Kápolnásfalva and Szentegyházasfalva in the 19th century

Bük is located in the Western part of Hungary close to Austria. This part of the country is regarded as open to western economic and cultural impact where the flow of people and goods was continuous between the two neighbouring countries. The number of its inhabitants was around 3,000 at the end of the 19th century (3,030 in 1880 and 2965 in 1910). About one third of the population belonged to Lutheran denomination while the others were Roman Catholics. A significant noble community lived in the village (almost 40% of the adult male population at the end of the 18th century) enjoying privileges and high social status, who formed the majority of the landowning part of the community. Society was well differentiated in other respects too: the proportion of 'peasants' (copyholders using landlords' land) and 'others' (small tenants with little fragments of land or landless people living on handicraft industry, forestry, transport or as day-labourers) was also considerable (Table 1). The two Transylvanian villages are located close to each other, they formed one parish and one administrative unit until the second part of the 19th century, and represented a common social, economic, cultural, and demographic pattern. While Bük's position was more central in many respects (the railway reached it in 1865 and a sugar factory was established in 1869), Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva were remote settlements on the frontier among medium-high mountains and large forests, far from the economic centres of Transylvania. Their total population reached 4,000 in the 1900s. The majority of their inhabitants belonged to

the Roman Catholic Church. The majority of villagers were privileged smallholders, out of the feudal system who were classified as 'others' (non-noble landowners) in the course of the census in 1785-1786 (Table 1).

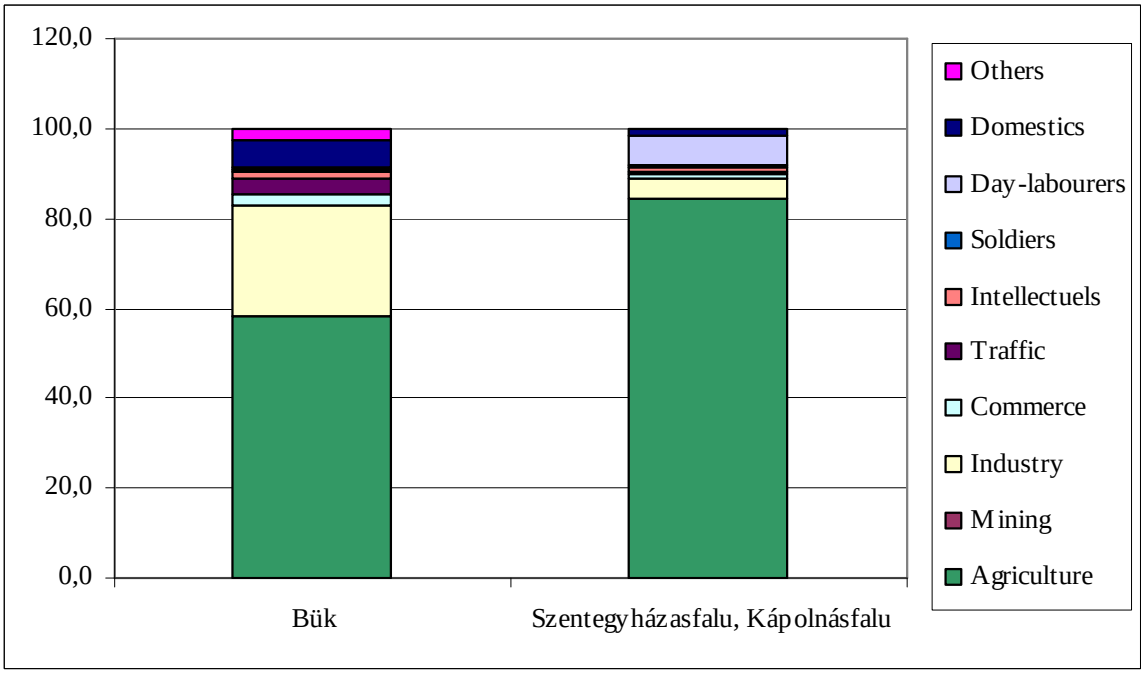
Table 1.
Distribution of the adult male population by social groups, 1785-86

Society (males 18+), 1785-1786, %					
	Clergymen	Noblemen	Artisans	Peasants	Others
Bük	0.7	38.7	0.7	13.0	46.8
Szentegyházasfalva, Kápolnásfalva	0.2	-	-	-	99.8

Source: Population census 1784-1787 (Dányi – Dávid 1960)

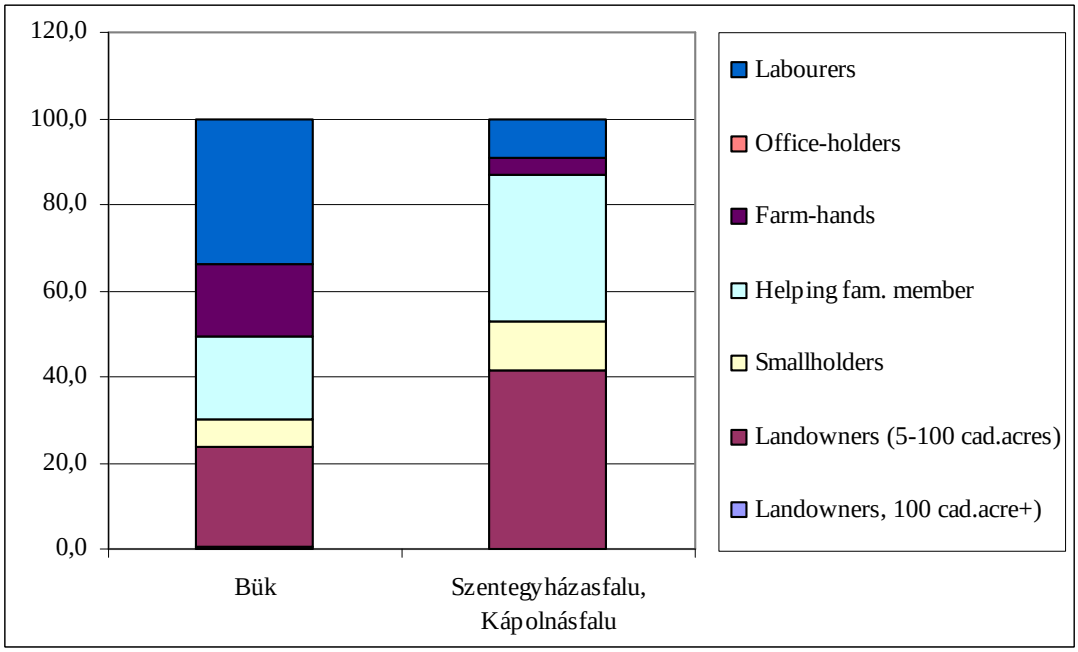
By the end of the 19th century industry had become an important factor in Bük, more than 20% of the breadwinners were industrial workers (working in handicraft industry and in the mentioned sugar factory alike). Regarding population living on agriculture, the proportion of landowners was around 50%, farm hands and waged labourers had also a considerable role in agricultural production. We would say that the village were gradually becoming more 'modern' and differentiated in the course of the 19th century (Figure 1 and 2).

Figure 1.
Distribution of the bread-winners by occupational groups, 1900



Source: Population census, 1900

Figure 2.
Distribution of the bread-winners in agriculture, 1900



Source: Population census 1900

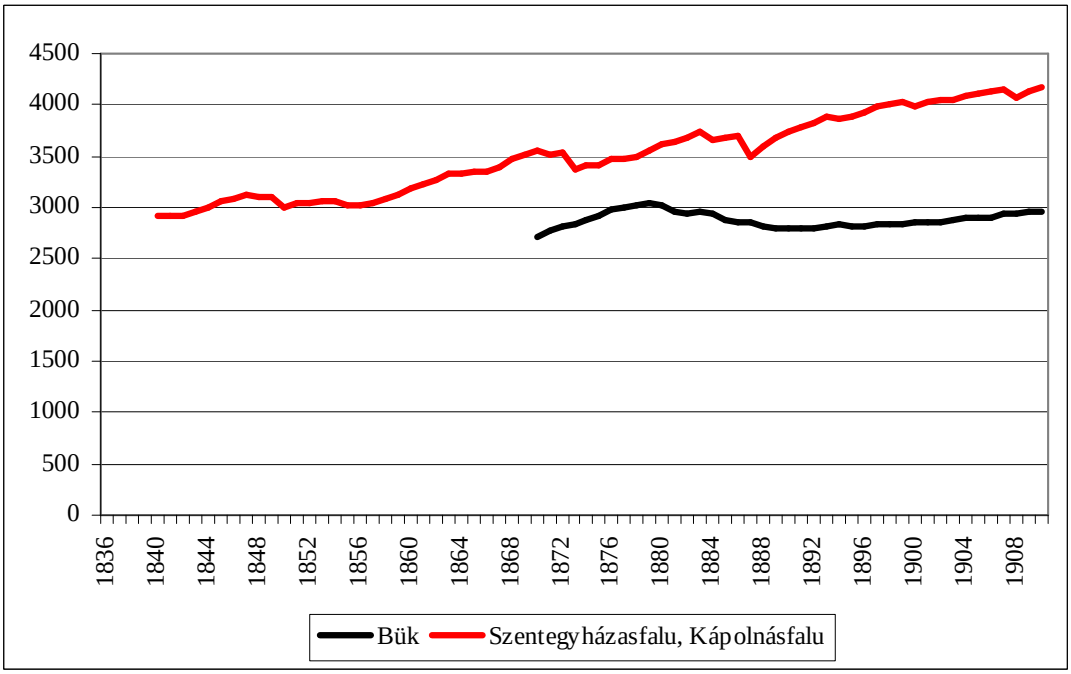
On the contrary, in the two Transylvanian villages the majority of the population lived on agriculture, and their living was provided by lumbering and woodwork in the communally owned woods and extensive animal husbandry. Timbering and woodwork was carried out within a cottage industrial framework that required the close cooperation of related families. The number of water-driven sawmills operated by siblings or close relatives reached 100 according to the cadastre of 1909 (Sándor 1998; Molnár 1974). The economic development of Inner Transylvania raised the demand for woodenware. Timber used in construction and agriculture was transported in carriages by male family members towards the agriculturally more developed and more urbanised Southern Transylvanian regions. A mine and an industrial plant, Szentkeresztbánya was founded a few kilometres away from the villages in the 1850s, which provided the opportunity for the locals to secure some extra income. Due to contemporary financial and infrastructural conditions, mining remained a small-scale enterprise. Despite this fact, agriculture remained the most important branch of local economy, as census data above can demonstrate it.

Demographic differences were also considerable in the 19th century between the Western and Eastern Hungarian communities. Population growth must have been strong in both cases, but in the case of Bük a smaller decrease then stagnation can be observed for the two last decades of the 19th century. Population growth was much more dynamic in the Transylvanian communities with some stops due to mortality crises even in late 19th century (Figure 3). Natural growth was significant in both cases, but in Transylvania it was sometimes interrupted by strong mortality peaks caused by rapidly rising infant and child mortality. In the case of Bük demographic development was more balanced in the second half of the 19th century with less serious mortality peaks (Figure 4 and 5).

Crude birth rates were higher and more stable in Transylvania while decreased considerably in Bük in the second part of the 19th century. Crude death rates were also lower and more stable in western Hungary. Fertility and mortality differences can be proved by Table 2. Infant mortality was much higher in Transylvania, similarly to the level of general

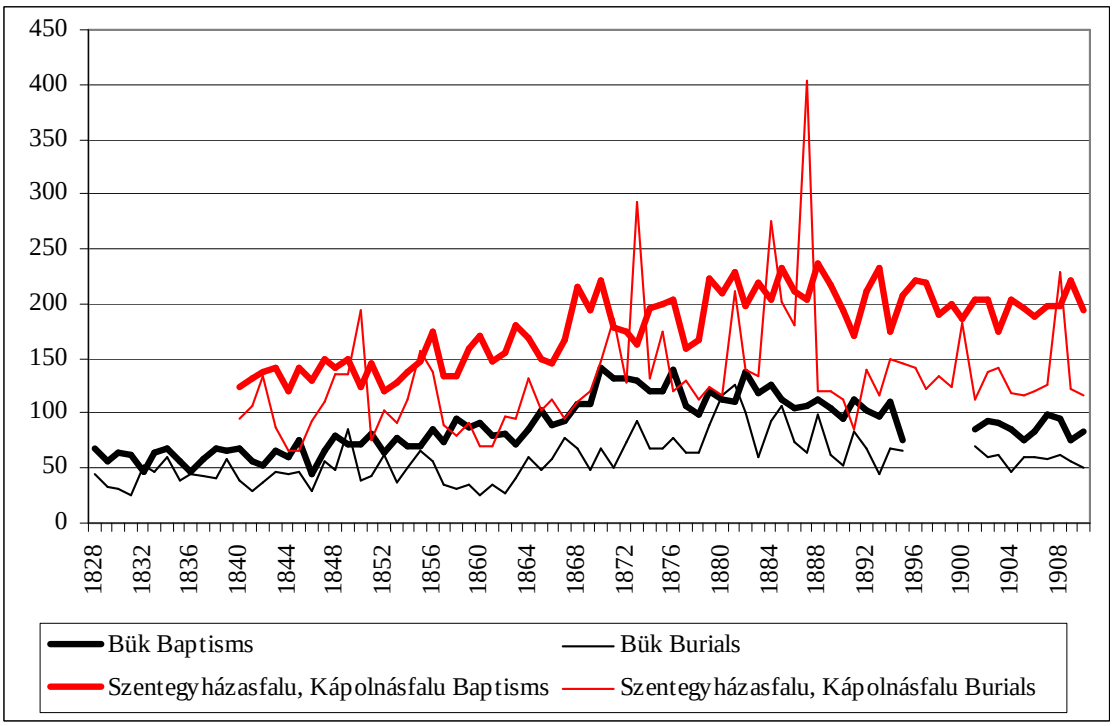
fertility. Since there is no difference in the level of marital fertility, the role of nuptiality appears to have been important.

Figure 3.
Population size of the studied villages in the 19th century



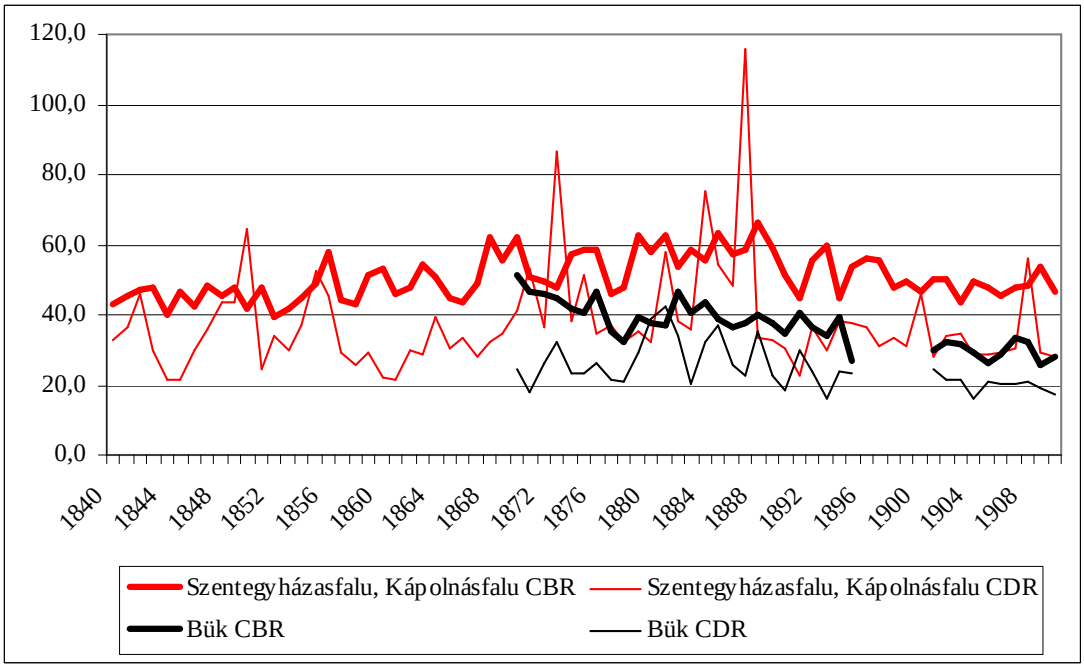
Source: Parish registers of Bük and Kápolnásfalva and Szentegyházasfalva; 19th century population censuses.

Figure 4.
The number of baptisms and burials in the studied villages, 19th century



Source: Population censuses and parish registers of the studied communities

Figure 5.
Crude birth and death rates of the studied villages, 19th century



Source: Population censuses and parish registers of the studied communities

Table 2.
Some basic demographic variables of the studied communities

	Bük		Szentegyházasfalu, Kápolnásfalu	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Married men/household	1785		1786	
	0.738		0.747	
Age at first marriage	1830-1889	1830-1889	1830-1889	1830-1889
	27.6	22.8	25.3	21.2
Celibacy (%)	1890		1900	
	4.9	3.9	2.0	2.0
	1890		1890	
If	0.444		0.573	
Ig	0.646		0.638	
Im	0.634		0.841	
	1901-1910		1901-1910	
Balance of migration (‰)	-55.7		-65.6	
Infant mortality (‰)	186.0		236.3	

Source: Population censuses and parish registers of the studied communities

In the Transylvanian villages an important element of demographic behaviour was universal and early marriage. At the same time, in Bük the level of celibacy was higher and the age at first marriage was also higher, especially in the case of males. Most of the

households consisted of nuclear families in both cases, the low number of married men per household shows that the proportion of widowed heads of household was high. At the same time we know that in the Transylvanian villages household structure was mainly characterised by a stem family system, in which one child – generally one of the adult sons – remained with the old parents and lived there with his wife after getting married. However, nuclear families were the most common household type due to high adult and old age mortality. Due to the dominant economic role of men, marriage was virilocal or neolocal.

On the basis of those rough demographic variables Bük can be regarded as a community of changing demographic conditions where the signs of demographic transition can be observed in the second part of the 19th century. On the contrary, the two studied Transylvanian villages represent a more traditional demographic pattern with higher fertility and mortality, a typical pre-industrial pattern of high 'demographic pressure'. Marriage customs were close to the classical 'eastern' pattern described by Hajnal, while in Bük they were closer to the 'western' pattern. The level of nuptiality was lower in Bük, therefore one can study whether this lower nuptiality influenced the intensity of remarriages or not, in other words remarriage fitted into the general pattern of marriage or not.

Sources

We reconstructed the demographic behaviour of the examined settlements from parish register data. An electronic database was compiled from Roman Catholic parish registers between 1776 and 1941 in the case of the Transylvanian villages and from Lutheran registers between 1784 and 1941 in the case of Bük. Based on the principles of the family reconstitution method set by Louis Henry and Michel Fleury (Fleury and Henry 1985; Henry and Blum 1988) and making use of available computerised database management facilities, we were able to reconstitute the most important demographic events of families and individuals by applying time-consuming record linking.

When investigating widowhood and remarriage, data on marriage are of high importance. In accordance with contemporary marriage customs, marriages took place where the bride lived. Therefore, we can draw a relatively reliable picture about marriages of local women; however, marriages of local men that took place somewhere else remain unknown.

Using family reconstitution data for the analyses of remarriage face a specific problem. Reconstitution studies usually have to define the population at risk. According to the rule of Louis Henry, one shall separate the continued presence of a family during a particular period and the examined behaviour itself. This rule put major limits on the analysis of remarriage. By following the sampling strategy of John Knodel and Kevin McQuillan (Knodel 1988; Knodel and Lynch 1985; McQuillan 2003), this study may regard only a fraction of the couples. Our data set includes couples who married in one of the villages and for whom the death certificates for both partners are available. This conservative approach ensures that widow(er)s are followed until remarriage or death. A drawback of this method is that it uses a non-representative sample of the total population; therefore, individuals leaving the settlement after the death of their spouse are excluded from the analysis. Consequently, we underestimate the relationship between emigration and marriage: if the individuals left the village in order to get married, the study underestimates the likelihood of remarriage.

Due to the nature of family reconstitution data, we have no information on migration. No data are available on the number of individuals who left the villages and on the date of their emigration. People from other settlements may have moved back to their villages after the death of their spouse. Others may have left in order to find a job or to remarry. Therefore it

should be kept in mind that emigration, death and remarriage were competing risks after the termination of the marriage.[11]

Table 3 describes the construction of the sample. Couples married between 1820 and 1910 (Szentegyházasfalva, Kápolnásfalva) and between 1810 and 1890 (Bük) constitute the total sample. Almost 29% and 68% (!) of them were excluded due to missing data on the date of death. If we suppose that the death of all adults was registered, these individuals must have been alive at the end of 1941, the end of the data collection period, or they left the village after getting married or widowed.

Table 3

The diminishing number of cases in the complete sample of couples in the reconstitution study on widowhood and remarriage

Characteristics of couples	Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva		Bük	
	N	% of all couples	N	% of all couples
All couples with marriage date between 1820 and 1910 (Sztf, Kápf), 1810-1890 (Bük)	2824	100.0	765	100.0
Couples with end of union date	2391	84.7	453	59.2
Death dates known for both partners	2026	71.7	250	32.6
End of union between 1838 and 1910 (Sztf, Kápf), 1830-1890 (Bük)	1402	49.6	139	18.1
Age at widowhood is less than 65	1247	44.1	110	14.3

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva (Romania) and Bük (Hungary).

The final sample is the result of further data selection. It contains couples whose marriage terminated between 1838 and 1910 or between 1830 and 1890 and the age at widowhood was 65 or less. Hereby we tried to avoid that individuals becoming widow(er)s at an old age dominate the sample. For instance, a marriage that was terminated in 1930 could have been included in the sample if the surviving partner died until 1941. During this period, however, those widow(er)s were more likely to die who had been old at widowhood, therefore, they had less opportunities in the marriage market.[12]

The demographic profile of widowhood and remarriage

Examining the distribution of marriages by marital status is a common method for analysing remarriage (Table 4). During the examined period, about 27% of total marriages were concluded by widows or widowers in the Transylvanian villages. In Bük the percentage of remarriages was around 22%. This fact seems to prove our assumption: lower nuptiality meant lower frequency of remarrying at the same time. The most frequent type among these (re)marriages was concluded between a widower and a single woman (both in Western

[11] For measurement difficulties of remarriage, see Van Poppel 1998: 348–349; Blom 1991; Watkins 1983.

[12] It is quite obvious that because of the low case numbers of Bük the results are much more uncertain than those related to the Transylvanian villages, and they are not representative for the Lutheran community either. The investigation should be continued and data-base has to contain the data of the Roman Catholic population of Bük as well as those of the neighbouring parishes in order to complete the data collection by the demographic events of migrating people (most of the moves were of short distance and caused by marriage).

Hungary and Transylvania) or a widow and a widower (in the Transylvanian villages). These two marriage types constituted 40%-40% of all remarriages in the latter case. The remaining 20% were concluded between bachelors and widows. In Bük more than 60% of all remarriages was concluded between a widower and a spinster while the weight of the other two types do not differ considerably (19.6 and 17.5%). Thus remarriage was characterised by gender differences in both samples: widows remarried in smaller proportion than widowers. However, it is not gender differences but the high proportion of marriages concluded by widows and widowers appears to be a unique feature of the examined population in the Transylvanian villages.[13] Remarriage – similarly to first marriage – was probably of more 'Western' character in the case of Bük.

It is also important that age differences between spouses were smaller in Bük – disregarding those cases where both partners were single at marriage. This fact also refers to the existence of different marriage systems: different age at marriage, different frequency of marriages and remarriages, differing social status of widows especially in landowning noble families in Bük, the peculiarities of the local marriage markets might be the elements of this difference.

Table 4

Distribution of marriages and mean age at marriage for men and women by prior marital status

Place	Year of marriage	Prior marital status of spouses									
		Bachelor and spinster		Widower and spinster		Bachelor and widow		Widower and widow		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Distribution										
Bük	1830–1889	339	77.7	61	14.0	19	4.3	17	3.9	436	100.0
Szo. and Ko.	1838–1909	1860	72.4	286	11.1	151	5.8	271	10.5	2568	100.0
Age at marriage for men											
Bük	1830–1889		27.6		34.3		31.3		41.7		29.3
Szo. and Ko.	1838–1909		25.7		37.6		27.6		48.7		29.6
Age at marriage for women											
Bük	1830–1889		22.8		26.1		29.0		38.9		24.3
Szo. and Ko.	1838–1909		21.2		23.8		31.7		43.0		24.4

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva (Romania) and Bük (Hungary).

The distribution of marriages concluded by widows or widowers is not sufficient to make any conclusions, since differences in emigration, mortality and first marriage may significantly influence the proportion of remarriages after spousal death within all marriages. Analysing the phenomenon of widowhood may provide a clearer picture.

First of all, using life table calculations, we can find interesting differences between the studied communities which may partly explain the differing frequency of remarriages. In the Transylvanian villages married woman aged 30 lost their partner on average 26.0 years later. The corresponding figure is 28.1 for men.[14] At the same time, in Bük the expected length of life spent in marriage was 33.0 years in the case of married men and 35.0 years in the case of married women. In Bük adult mortality was more favourable in the 19th century, people entered widowhood at a higher age therefore their chance to remarry was lower as the risk of remarrying decreased in parallel with age. Naturally, beside the role of mortality, one has to

[13] In the pre-industrial communities of Western Europe, widower-widow marriages were only 20% of total remarriages concluded by widows or widowers (Oris and Ochiai 2002: 67).

[14] For the sake of comparison, 30 year-old men and women lost their spouses on average 33.4 years later between 1812 and 1900 in Sart, a village in Eastern Belgium (Alter, Capron, Neven and Oris 2002: 392).

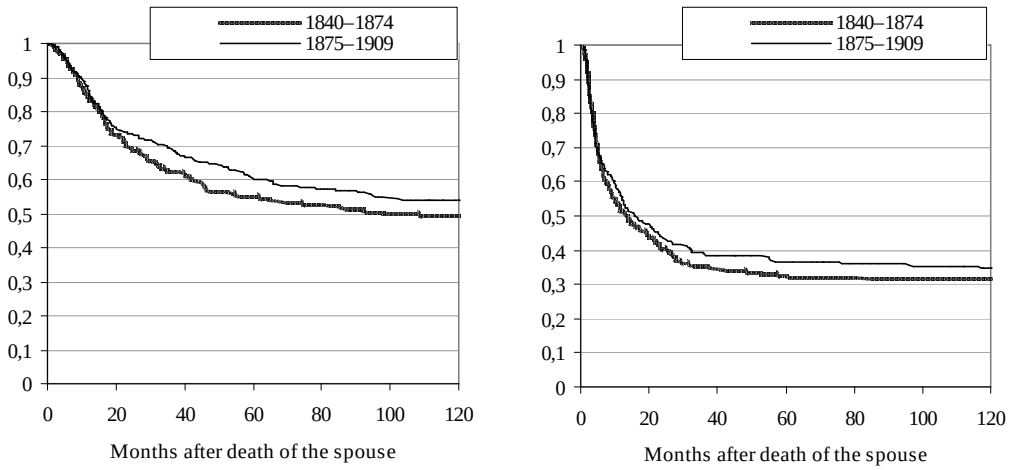
take other aspects into consideration: e.g. the more favourable financial possibilities of noble widowers or widows and the larger autonomy of noble widows which also decreased the risk of remarrying in the West Hungarian village.

For the study of remarriage, the longitudinal method has to be extended to the period after widowhood. Therefore we defined an observation period spanning 10 years after widowhood. The observation of an individual lasted until the first event (remarriage or death) or until the end of the 10-year observation period.

Figures 6–7 provide a clear and detailed picture for the Transylvanian communities. Kaplan-Meier survival functions demonstrate the decreasing proportion of not remarrying males and females in parallel with time elapsed since widowhood. Since the values are cumulative, the curves are monotonously decreasing. Survival functions provide information on the changing risk of remarriage and the proportion of individuals at risk as well. Survival functions steeply decrease during the periods when the risk of remarriage is high and they are slowly decreasing or flat during periods of low remarriage risk.

Figure 6

Proportions of remarrying women and men by elapsed time since dissolution, by period of dissolution (Kaplan–Meier survival functions). Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva (Romania), 1838–1910



Women *Men*

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

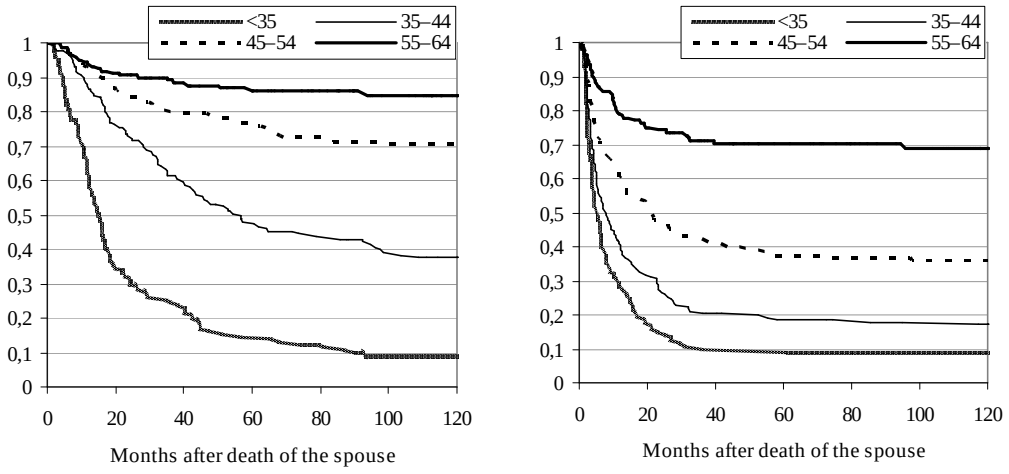
Strong gender differences can be observed: widowers remarried in a higher proportion and within a shorter period after the death of their spouse than widows did. The likelihood of women for remarriage significantly increased after the year of mourning was over (usually 10 months after the death of the husband). Overall, almost two thirds of men and 42% of women managed to remarry within five years after widowhood. This result seems to validate the conclusion from macro studies that the proportion of remarrying females was higher in the Transylvanian Basin than the national average in the last third of the 19th century (Faragó 2000: 434).

The period of widowing had a negative effect after a few years had passed since the event. Again, this impact was stronger for women than for men. It seems that remarriages between 1875 and 1910 usually took place during the first few years after widowhood. In the last

quarter of 19th century and the first decades of 20th century, the process of adaptation after widowhood was shorter and the negative period effect can be demonstrated from the third year after the loss of the spouse.

Figure 7

Proportions of remarrying women and men by elapsed time since dissolution, by age at widowhood (Kaplan–Meier survival function). Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva (Romania), 1838–1910



Women *Men*

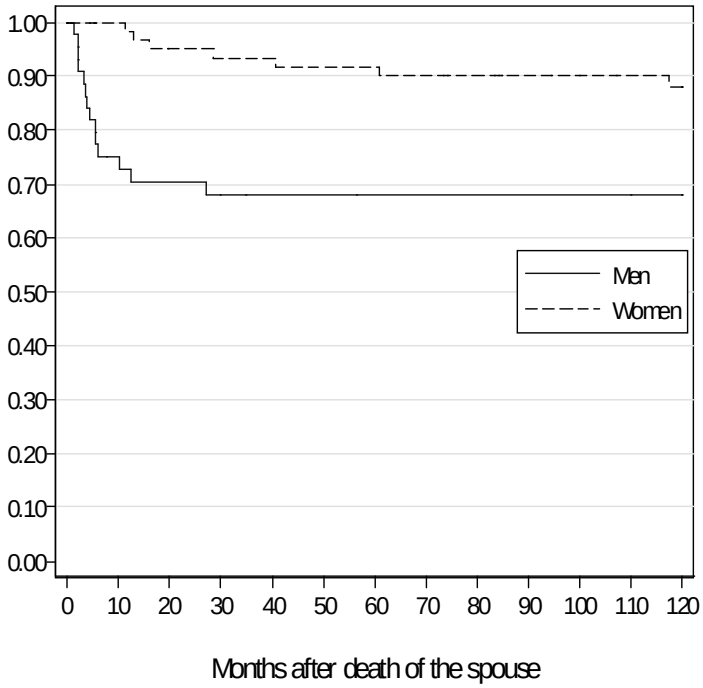
Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva

The negative effect of age was also stronger among women than among men. Females widowed under age 35 had better chances in the marriage market than older ones. Those becoming widows at a later age remarried after a longer period. About 30% of females widowed at age 45–54 managed to set up a new marriage, whereas only 15% of women widowed at age 55–64 succeeded in doing so. Regarding men, the negative effect of age is the strongest among individuals aged between 55–64 although the 30% of them succeeded in remarrying. Thus the chance of remarrying among older males was twice as high as among older females. In the case of younger cohorts, the risk of remarriage is almost identical during the first months after widowhood. It suggests that the negative impact of age affected life in the period subsequent to widowing slowly and gradually. The negative impact of age was not only stronger among women but started to take effect immediately after becoming widow.

As for Bük, because of the low case numbers it would have been senseless to make any difference according to the period or age at entering widowhood. The only aspect we could regard was sex. Gender disparities observed in Transylvania or anywhere can be found in this village too. Otherwise rather the differences appear important: regarding all age groups about 70% of Transylvanian widowers succeeded in remarrying within ten years after entering widowhood, on the contrary, the same proportion was 30% in Bük. The difference in the proportion of remarrying Transylvanian and West Hungarian widows was the same: 50% in Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva and 10% in Bük. Naturally, after an investigation of the parish registers of neighbouring villages this picture can be modified but much lower intensity of remarrying will remain in all probability a fact which can be explained by higher

age at entering widowhood and special socio-economic status of widowers and widows of the village.

Figure 8
Proportions of remarrying women and men by elapsed time since dissolution (Kaplan–Meier survival function), Bük, Lutherans, 1830-1890



Concerning the explanation of gender differences in remarriage, we may rely on the arguments of Christer Lundh (Lundh 2007: 378–379). According to him, gender differences may be explained by the following factors. Firstly, assuming the role of the head of the household was an accepted and "normal" situation for married men and it was not threatened by widowhood and/or remarriage. As the head of the household, the man represented the household for the outside world (for the local community, village leaders or the landlord). Women, especially in non-peasant strata, were scarcely able to cover the expenses of the household and take over the tasks of their late spouse. Women having rented land had to remarry soon in order to keep the land.

Secondly, it must have been easier to find a woman who was able to take household chores than to meet a man who can provide as much financial support as the late spouse. Widows or spinsters who were able to do household work were considered as potential wives. Widows needed a new partner who was able to carry out the same tasks as the late husband, who possessed land, a work contract or an own house. The restricted number of available men impeded or postponed the remarriage of landowning widows.

Thirdly, a widower could bring more property to a new marriage than a widow, which inequality ensured a better position for males in the marriage market. Fourthly, a widow may have lost her legal rights regarding property and her position as the head of the household if she remarried. Finally, the psychological burden associated with remarriage could have been more severe for widows than for widowers. Adult children, especially among landowning peasants, had the right to declare their disagreement regarding the remarriage of their mother. Since one of the adult children usually took over the farm from the widowed mother, the remarriage intentions of widows and the expectations of her children could have been in

conflict with each other. In the following section we investigate the validity of above statements by applying event history analysis.

Event history analysis

In the previous chapter we have demonstrated that remarriage patterns and risks differed by gender, age and locality. We used stepwise event history models with demographic and family context variables.

Demographic characteristics are measured by two variables: the number of months elapsed since widowhood and age at widowhood. Since remarriage usually took place within the first few years after widowhood, 6 categorical variables were generated that measured the number of months elapsed since start of widowhood: : 0–3 months, 3–6 months, 6–12 months, 12–24 months, 24–60 months and 60–120 months. As the first variable was used as the reference category, we had 5 dummy variables. Age at widowhood was broken down into 4 categories: below 35, between 35–44, between 45–54 and between 55–64. The first one is the reference category, which indicates the reproductive age in which the majority of children were born.

Family composition was measured with three categorical variables including information on the supposed presence of children surviving up to the period of observation. The first one referred to the presence and gender of children under age 12 at the date of widowhood: no child; only son(s); only daughter(s); at least one son and one daughter. The latter one was used as reference category and three dummy variables were created. This variable indicates not only the presence of children in the household but also their gender. The second variable refers to the presence of daughter(s) aged between 12–22 at widowhood (yes or no). The third variable indicates the presence of son(s) aged between 12–25 at widowhood (yes or no).

By including the period of widowhood in the case of the Transylvanian villages, historical time also assumed a role in the model. Two periods were differentiated – between 1838–1874 and between 1875–1910 – regarding demographic aspects epidemics (primarily cholera) gradually disappeared after 1874 among the adult population. The place of residence of individuals in the Transylvanian sample was also included in the analysis as a dummy variable. In the case of Bük, we could not make differences according to the period of widowhood, low case numbers did not make it possible.

Before the analysis we expected that the more difficulties the widow(er) faced in household work, the more motivated he/she was to remarry. According to our hypothesis, marriage meant a secure and relatively cost-effective way of achieving adequate household size required for farm work and household tasks. Since rural families were based on the balancing of traditional gender roles, if one adult was missing from the work structure, it needed to be replaced immediately[15]. The presence of dependent children under 12 was considered as a sign of household difficulties in our model. The imbalanced gender distribution of children may signal unsuccessful family reproduction. In this way, the lack of children or having children exclusively of the same sex could have stimulated remarriage.

The presence of working-age sons and daughters eased the difficulties of the household. Therefore, these children could have been an alternative to remarriage. Working-age daughters could help their widowed father by carrying out the household chores. Sons of similar age could help the widows with the farm. As we have mentioned earlier, children from the first marriage could have opposed remarriage as it could have been a threat to their legal inheritance. They could have tried to avoid living with step parents and step siblings as they would have had to share assets with the newcomers. Therefore, we expect that the presence of a working-age child of the opposite sex decreases the risk of remarriage.

[15] See Segalen 1980: 15–16 about the complementarity of traditional gender roles in the rural family.

Table 5

Relative risk of remarriage, male and female population at risk, Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva, 1838-1910

Covariates	Widowers		Widows	
	Relative risk	P-value	Relative risk	P-value
Duration of widowhood				
0–3 months	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
3–6 months	1.349	0.032	2.684	0.008
6–12 months	0.661	0.007	3.806	0.000
12–24 months	0.408	0.000	3.589	0.000
24–60 months	0.127	0.000	1.865	0.065
60–120 months	0.015	0.000	0.676	0.289
Age at widowhood				
<35	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
35–44	0.710	0.013	0.386	0.000
45–54	0.452	0.000	0.159	0.000
55–64	0.181	0.000	0.075	0.000
Number of children < 12 years old				
At least 1 son and 1 daughter	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
No child	0.762	0.051	0.937	0.704
Only son(s)	0.866	0.353	0.992	0.967
Only daughter(s)	0.936	0.675	1.164	0.401
Daughter 12–22 years old				
No	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Yes	0.975	0.859	0.988	0.944
Son 12–25 years old				
No	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Yes	0.871	0.311	0.704	0.027
Period of dissolution				
1838–1874	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
1875–1909	1.043	0.688	1.158	0.225
Parish/Village				
Szentegyházasfalva	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Kápolnásfalva	1.136	0.217	0.915	0.463
Events		389		286
Total time at risk		23502		41265
Max. log likelihood		–890.6		–681.7
LR test statistic		751		403
Overall P-value		0.000		0.000

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházasfalva and Kápolnásfalva (see: Pakot 2009: 68).

According to Table 5, in the Transylvanian villages the negative effect of age was stronger among women than men. Gender differences may be observed in the effect of time elapsed since widowhood as well. The remarriage risk of men was the highest 3–6 months after becoming widower. For women, the risk was higher during later periods.

Contrary to expectations, period effect is positive for both sexes; however, these results are not significant. There are no differences between the two villages in either the effects or in the reliability of results. This result coincides with our expectations as the basic demographic and family characteristics of the two neighbouring settlements were quite similar.

Regarding the effect of dependent children, the size of this burden encouraged remarriage. In the case of the total population at risk, the remarriage risk of those having no child under

age 12 are significantly lower than of those having at least one daughter and one son when their spouse died. This effect was more evident for males. Among widowers with underage daughters or sons, remarriage risk was 25% higher than among men with no such children.

The presence of working-age daughters had no effect on the remarriage risks of either men or women, as opposed to the presence of working-age sons. The remarriage risk is 30% lower if there is at least one 12–25 year old son in the households of widows. The presence of young adult sons decreased the remarriage risk of widowers as well, however, this result was not significant.

Table 6

Relative risk of remarriage, total population at risk, Bük, 1830-1890

Covariates	Relative risk	P-value
Duration of widowhood		
0–3 months	1.000	Ref.
3–6 months	0.221	0.144
6–12 months	0.887	0.896
12–24 months	3.583	0.128
24–60 months	5.067	0.047
60–120 months	0.352	0.257
Gender		
Female	1.000	ref.
Male	2.805	0.033
Age at widowhood		
<35	1.000	ref.
35–44	1.123	0.825
45–54	0.984	0.984
55–64	0.206	0.179
Number of children < 12 years old		
At least 1 son and 1 daughter	1.000	ref.
No child	0.560	0.381
Only son(s)	0.358	0.142
Only daughter(s)	1.024	0.970
Daughter 12–22 years old		
No	1.000	ref.
Yes	0.628	0.486
Son 12–25 years old		
No	1.000	ref.
Yes	0.348	0.114
Events		21
Total time at risk		800
Max. log likelihood		9.815
LR test statistic		61
Overall P-value		0.000

Source: Parish registers of the Lutheran community of Bük

As for Bük, we have to emphasize again, that Table 6 presents only preliminary results of a current research in the course of which the data-base is still to complete. Regarding this fact, our results have only orientating character. Gender differences in remarrying was strong in this case too, the chance of males to remarry was almost three times higher than that of females. The supposed presence of working-age sons in the households of widowers and widows also appears to have been a significant factor of remarrying, its negative effect is obvious and similar to that observed in Transylvania. But it is also worth mentioning that this

effect seems to be much stronger in Bük than in Transylvania. Here we have to take different social conditions into consideration again. The negative effect of working-age daughters' presence is also stronger but the result is not significant. The presence of more under-age children in the households incited the remarriage of widowed parents and the period of mourning seems to have been longer than in Transylvania but these relative risks are not significant either.

Conclusion

The death of a spouse could have significantly impacted the welfare of the surviving partner. In the villages of Transylvania, remarriage was a frequent reaction to the stress caused by spousal death. The frequency of remarriage was relatively high in international – especially in Western European – comparison. Differences can be found even in Hungary, the West Hungarian village Bük seems to represent a different demographic pattern with earlier decreasing fertility and more favourable mortality, higher level of celibacy and lower level of nuptiality. The lower frequency of remarriages fits well into this model first of all as the consequence of better mortality and higher social status. This observation can show that there were considerable differences 'east of the Hajnal-line' regarding marriage customs and the possibilities of remarriage and intentions to remarry. At the same time, we do not know whether these differences were stable over time or were the results of 19th century modernisation process which started at different times in different places.

Otherwise the analysis found evidence for previous findings in the literature. The role of gender is important: men concluded another marriage more often than women in all age groups; however, this difference was lower among older individuals. Remarriage propensity dropped in parallel with ageing, nevertheless, the negative impact of age affected women more strongly. Remarriage took place relatively shortly after the termination of the first marriage although probably with local differences.

Results related to the Transylvanian villages differ from previous ones in one respect. While researches on Western European and Asian communities consider the decreasing frequency of remarriage with time as evident – explained by improving mortality, attitude change, transformation of local marriage markets, changing attitudes about gender roles and the function of family –, our data do not support this kind of overall decrease. In the examined period (1838–1910), a slight decrease of re-marriage took place. It may be explained by the fact that we analysed only a short period from a historical perspective. Moreover, the Transylvanian sample was drawn from a basically agrarian, immobile population. It is possible that this stratum preserved "traditional" demographic patterns for a longer period.

During the analysis of factors that influenced remarriage, we emphasised that age, time elapsed since widowhood and the family context of widow(er)s were important determinants. After the inclusion of demographic characteristics as control variables, the presence of young adult and underage children remained significant predictors of remarriage. The size of the burden on the widowed person – measured with the number of dependent children – encouraged remarriage, especially among men. In the case of widows, the presence of work-age son(s) helped to overcome the difficulties and it discouraged remarriage. Concerning these influencing factors strong local differences do not appear – contrary to the frequency of remarrying. All in all, remarriage proved to be a useful tool for ensuring the survival of the individual and the family – particularly in the remote villages of Transylvania while its importance seems to be smaller in a more 'modern' community of different demographic, economic and social conditions.

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