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The History of Family, Marriage and Divorce in Eastern Europe

Gabriella Erdélyi and Sándor Horváth
Special Editors of the Thematic Issue

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András Péter Szabó

Betrothal and Wedding, Church Wedding and Nuptials: Reflections on the System of Marriages in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Hungary

The aim of the present study is to sketch briefly the relationship between the ecclesiastical and secular elements of the marriage customs in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Kingdom of Hungary and Principality of Transylvania with the help of the sixteenth-century nuptial invitations preserved in the town archives of Beszterce (German: Bistritz; today Bistrița, Romania), the specialist literature and ethnographic analogies. The common Hungarian and Latin designation for the betrothal and the church marriage (*kézfogás/desponsatio*) indicates that the two concepts had not separated completely. The terminological uncertainty can be explained by the slow implementation of canonical requirements: in practice the betrothal, adopted in the twelfth century, originating in Roman law, only gradually earned its place. The Reformation gave further impetus to doctrines proclaiming the binding force of betrothal, perhaps also connected with this is the fact that a binding form of betrothal also existed alongside that corresponding to today's version for a very long time in both Transylvania and Hungary. Betrothal accompanied by church ceremony in this case was followed as a second phase by a purely secular wedding feast. Only after the wedding subsequently became permanently embedded in the wedding feast did the church ceremony become the central element in the series of events.

Keywords: marriage rites, church law, ethnography of nuptials, wedding invitations

The Starting Point for Research

The examination of marriage in the medieval and early modern eras has been one of the most preferred topics of European and American social history in recent decades. Research into legal history has extended attention not only to the family as an institution but also to the legal regulation of marriages.¹ Among the

1 A set of important books: Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Steven E. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); John R. Gillis, *For Better, for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Woman, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Joel Francis Harrington,

sources of both trends the protocols and documents of the various ecclesiastical courts, which are truly the best and most eloquent sources for the practice of concluding marriages and domestic cohabitation, have occupied a prominent place despite the fact they first and foremost attest to deviations from the norm.² With a certain lapse of time, indirect evidence has also been included, and thus have, for example, literary texts come under the magnifying glass as well.³ In the present study our guiding thread will be a set of sources that until now has mostly escaped the attention of research: the formal letters of invitation to the great weddings of the early modern era.⁴

A source publication I collaborated on, which appeared in 2005, forms the starting point for the examination. In it were published the sixteenth-century nuptial invitations sent to Beszterce (today: Bistrița, Romania), more specifically those invitations that the German-populated town received from the Hungarian nobles of the surrounding territories and preserved in its exceptionally rich archives.⁵ The 123 invitation letters and the 111 nuptials included in them are a quantity that cannot be statistically evaluated, and in terms of quantity do not even approach the documentary material of the activity of any medieval English ecclesiastical court; yet on the eastern frontiers of Western Christianity, where

Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Regarding the marriage law, see Hartwig Dieterich, *Das protestantische Eherecht in Deutschland bis zur Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Claudius Verlag, 1970); John Witte, Jr., *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 199–256; and Philipp L. Reynolds, “Marrying and Its Documentation in Pre-Modern Europe: Consent, Celebration and Property,” in *To Have and to Hold: Marrying and Its Documentation in Western Christendom 400–1600*, ed. Philipp L. Reynolds and John Witte, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–42.

2 The probably best-known book based on records of medieval ecclesiastical courts is Charles Donahue, Jr., *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages: Arguments About Marriage in Five Courts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). About the Hungarian applicants of the late Middle Ages at a central church court (*Sacra Poenitentiaria Apostolica*) in Rome, see Gabriella Erdélyi, “‘Szerettem egyszer egy nőt’: Házasságkötés és házasságtörés 1500 körül,” *Történelmi Szemle* 49, no. 2 (2007): 165–78.

3 To cite one example: Conor McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature and Practice* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004).

4 About the concept of early modern “big wedding,” see Gillis, *For Better*, 55–83, and Hans Deltmer, *Die Figur des Hochzeitsbitters: Untersuchungen zum hochzeitlichen Einladungsvorgang und zu den Erscheinungsformen. Geschichte und Verbreitung einer Brauchgestalt* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1976), 16–42.

5 Ildikó Horn, Andrea Kreutzer, and András Péter Szabó, ed., *Politika és házasság: Menyegzőre hívogató levelek a 16. századi Erdélyből* (Budapest: ELTE BTK, 2005). For my detailed interdisciplinary analysis of the published wedding invitations in Hungarian (including, among other things, a presentation of the social background of the invitations and an analysis of marriage seasonality), see András Péter Szabó, “Menyegzőtől menyegzőig: Gondolatok a házasságkötési szokásrend magyarországi fejlődéséről,” *Századok* 144 (2010): 1027–83.

even from the early modern era the types of serial source known from Western Europe have survived only sporadically, this does represent a sizeable quantity. In our opinion, the multilingual region, which after the Reformation became confessionally variegated as well, as a unique laboratory may also assist us in gaining a better understanding of pan-European developments.

It was while preparing the abstracts of the invitations that we realized just how much the marriage practice of the sixteenth century diverged from that of the modern era. In our study, starting from the invitations of Beszterce, but extending our research to the entire sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as all of historical Hungary, we will attempt to chart the most important differences. At the center of our interest there are two questions of key importance: the relationship between the betrothal and the wedding ceremony, as well as that between the ecclesiastical and secular episodes of the marriage (simply put, the wedding ceremony and the wedding feast). In order to obtain a fuller picture, we have extended our research to the full range of source types based on the specialist literature and published sources. The archaism of nineteenth-century folk culture, unknown in the West European region, made it possible for us to rely also on the results of ethnography in interpreting medieval and early modern rituals.⁶

From the outset a few basic concepts must be clarified, however. By the modern practice of marriage we mean that system in which the betrothal, a legally non-binding promise relating to marriage in the future, creating a freely dissoluble betrothed relationship, represents the first step, and the legal transaction establishing the marriage, the exchange of vows in church or, beginning with the introduction of secular marriages, the civil marriage, represents the second step. Occurring on the same day as the latter is the wedding feast, with a purely social integration function, which can even be omitted altogether. The custom of the traditional folk culture differs from this in two respects: first, the betrothal is more serious and accordingly more difficult to dissolve; and second, the wedding feast as a framework completely encompasses the ecclesiastical (and later the secular) marriage ceremony (thus the celebration commences already before the “wedding”) and cannot be regarded simply as eating and drinking intended to announce the new position in society and strengthen familial ties, but possesses legal significance as well. In other words, the wedding feast is a rich storehouse

6 Important publications of Hungarian ethnography on marriage rites include: Ferenc Bakó, *Palócföldi lakodalom* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1987); and Lajos Balázs, *Az én első tisztességes napom: Párválasztás és lakodalom Csíkszentdomokoson* (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1994).

of legal folk customs, and according to popular perception some of these make up the secular ceremony necessary for contracting the marriage.⁷ Yet in reality the church could not have considered the wedding feast to be a simple entertainment either, since it included as a crucial factor the consummation of the marriage as well, which had significance in canon law and Protestant church law. Despite its crucial significance, however, we cannot regard canon law/church law as the sole possible framework for interpreting medieval and early modern marriage.

The Nuptial Invitations

At first the invitations serving as the guiding thread for our examination were written in Latin, in both of the Christian successor states of the medieval kingdom of Hungary, in the kingdom forming part of the Habsburg Monarchy, and in the Ottoman vassal state, the Principality of Transylvania. In Transylvania it is only from the 1580s on that letters of invitation composed in Hungarian or German completely assume their role. In the Holy Roman Empire, by contrast, invitations in the vernacular were typical in the fifteenth century as well.⁸ Here it was only Humanists who favored the use of Latin. The structure of the wedding invitations, however, almost independently of the language of the letter, show a uniform image throughout the late medieval and early modern eras, allowing us to conclude that they were written according to a widely used model.

In Hungary the first Latin-language letter we know, already displaying numerous obligatory elements of the genre, is from the early fifteenth century. The Hungarian-language invitations appearing in the mid-sixteenth century are free translations of the Latin versions.

The text of the invitations, regardless of whether they were sent to a noble, a town or some other body, in almost every case is divided into the following units. 1. Address, greeting. Generally in Latin, the corresponding Hungarian- and German-language formulae came into use only beginning in the late sixteenth century. 2. *Arenga*, or introductory flourish, which calls attention to the fact that man must live in matrimony as ordained by God. In the more verbose formulations, it is the story of Eve's creation that crops up: "It is not good for man to be alone" (*Non est bonum homini esse solum*, Genesis 2:18). The story of the first human couple is incidentally the leading topic of Catholic and

7 Bakó, *Palócföldi lakodalom*, 135–36.

8 An early example (from 1446): Georg Steinhäuser, ed., *Deutsche Privatbriefe des Mittelalters*, vol. 1, *Fürsten und Magnaten, Edle und Ritter* (Berlin: Heyfelder, 1899), 44–45, no. 58.

Protestant wedding sermons. Often only the expression “as ordained by God” (*divina ordinatione/Isten rendelése szerint/durch Gottes Ordnung und Fürsorgung*) remains of the obligatory theological justification. Sometimes this is supplemented also by a comment referring to the fact that the decision has occurred “by the approval” of the relatives. 3. Announcement of the approaching nuptials and the antecedent act contracting the marriage, with the names of the marrying parties, their fathers or, in the case of a widow bride, the previous husband. 4. The place and date of the wedding. 5. The actual invitation. 6. The justification for the invitation, which is always that the presence of the addressee will elevate the splendor of the festivities. 7. In return for the favor, the addressee’s presence, the sender of the invitation pledges his future services. 8. The closing good wishes, date and signature customary in such missives. The various component elements of the invitation text at times slide together, winding up in the same sentence, though this does not alter the essence of the structure. From the point of view of the present study it is the third point of the invitations that will be of fundamental importance.

The Unknown Menyegző (Nuptials)

At first it perhaps seems curious to ask what kind of event is in fact specified by the early modern wedding invitations. An answer to the question is rendered exceedingly difficult by the fact that the words we currently use for marriage and the modern rituals behind them latently influence all attempts at an interpretation. Therefore, it is worth first examining the meaning of the words, and thereby we may perhaps come one step closer to the old system of marriage.

The Meaning of the Words

The Hungarian-language invitation letters of the sixteenth century generally refer to the event specified in the invitation with the word *menyegző*. The expression *menyegző* appears in the fourteenth century and is a noun formed from the medieval Hungarian verb *menyez* (*nubo*). In contrast to the Latin equivalent, it contains not the word “veil” but “bride” (*meny*). At the same time, the first printed Latin–Hungarian dictionary (1604) and the bilingual sources give the

word *menyegző* as the precise translation of the Latin word *nuptiae*.⁹ We may regard the German *Hochzeit*, which replaced the earlier expression *Bräutlauf* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and originally meant simply a large celebration, as having semantic spheres completely identical to these two terms.¹⁰ According to the most plausible view, in the early modern era all three words referred to a feast in the modern sense as the secular part of the marriage; however, in many cases they implied the marriage ceremony blessed by the church as well, and thus in their latter meaning they are actually the equivalents of “wedding” (a complex matrimonial event: wedding + feast) in today’s broader sense. While the German *Hochzeit* is the primary noun for marriage even today, the word *menyegző* began from the late sixteenth century on to be supplanted in a large part of the Hungarian language area by the expression *lakodalom*.¹¹

We can show the use of the word *lakodalom* beginning in the early sixteenth century. Contained in it is the verb *lakik* (to regale oneself) referring to eating. Originally the term *lakodalom* was used for all large celebratory feasts. The role played by the festive meal in the *menyegző* may explain how the word *lakodalom* could so easily assume the earlier meaning of the word *menyegző*: first perhaps the narrower, and then in the seventeenth century the broader one encompassing the entire marriage. The explanation of the expression *menyegzői lakodalom*, typical of this same century, confronts us with a more difficult task. Based on our sources it appears unequivocal that it is the Hungarian equivalent of the Latin expression *nuptiarum sollemnitas*. In the Transylvanian and Hungarian invitations of the seventeenth century, the event specified in the invitation is quite frequently called *menyegzői lakodalom*. Does the phrase *menyegzői lakodalom* possess the broader meaning of *menyegző* as the word *lakodalom* does? The signs indicate that generally not in the usage of the majority, but rather that it was used only for the secular celebration, somewhat like the structurally similar modern English *wedding party* or the German *Hochzeitsfeier* expressions.

In place of both *menyegző* and *lakodalom* the invitations very often employ those words which originally referred to a single episode of the event, though one that held crucial importance, the handing over of the bride from her parents’

9 Albert Szenci Molnár, *Dictionarium Latinoungaricum* (Nürnberg: Elias Hutter, 1604), without page numbering, word “nuptiae”.

10 Bernward Deneke, *Hochzeit* (Munich: Prestel, 1971), 7. Christian Rubi, *Hochzeit im Bernerland* (Wabern: Büchler-Verlag, 1971), 42–43.

11 The Latin–Hungarian dictionary of Ferenc Pápai Páriz (first published in 1708) reflects this changing usage, although in some cases listing also the older term “menyegző;” Ferenc Pápai Páriz, *Dictionarium Latino–Hungaricum* (Bratislava: Johann Michael Landerer, 1801), 418.

home, and her being led over to the groom's house, but later on they covered the whole secular part of the marriage. In Hungarian these expressions are the *megadás* and *házadás* (on the part of the bride's family), as well as the *elbozás* and *házavitel* (on the part of the groom's family), while the equivalent Latin technical term, which underwent a similar expansion of meaning, is unequivocally *elocatio*.

The name for the church part of the marriage represents a problem of comparable weight to the above, since some of the equivalent words may equally designate a betrothal in today's sense also. Such polysemous words are the Hungarian *kézfogás/kézfogó* ("handfasting") and the Latin *desponsatio* or *sponsalia*. However, there also exist words that beyond any doubt designate only the church ceremony.¹² Both the sixteenth-century *bitlés/bitelő*, and the *esketés/esküvő* and its variants in use beginning in the seventeenth century refer to the vow by which the parties affirmed their mutually declared intention to marry (*consensus*) during the ceremony. Our seventeenth-century sources also reveal that a *pars pro toto* referring to a completely different element of the marriage was regarded as the Latin equivalent of the two word clusters: the word *copulatio*, which in a narrower sense is that element of the wedding ceremony when the priest (for Catholics before the parties take their vows, and for Protestants following this) declares the marriage established. It is very important to make clear that only in the rarest of cases do the terms for the church part of the marriage occur in the nuptial invitations of the sixteenth- and seventeenth century.

For the sake of better comprehensibility, the results of our conceptual analysis are summarized in a table as well (Table 1).

Modern name	16 th -century Hungarian	17 th -century Hungarian	16 th –17 th -century German	16 th –17 th -century Latin
Lakodalmom (The entire series of events taken together, or the secular part of the marriage, "nuptials")	Menyekező Menyegző Örömem napja Tisztességem napja	Lakodalmom Örömem napja/ Menyegzői lakodalmom	Hochzeit Hochzeitliche Freude/ ~r Freudentag	Nuptiae/ Nuptiarum sollemnitas/ Celebratio

12 E.g., the handfasting of Judit Thurzó on November 25, 1607 was definitely a church wedding and not a betrothal. Documents published in Béla Radvánszky, *Magyar családélet és háztartás a XVI. és XVII. században*, vol. 3 (Budapest: Helikon, 1986), 6–8, no. 12.

Lakodalmos (<i>pars pro toto</i> terms, not including the church part)	Megadás Hazaadás Elhozás Hazavitel	Megadás Hazaadás (often preceded by tiszteletes “respectable”)	Übergabe (modern form) ausgeben (verb)	Elocatio Elocationis sollemnitatis
Esküvő (the ecclesiastical part of the marriage, the church ceremony)	Hitelő Hitlés Kézfogás	Hitlés (rare) Esketés/ Esküttetés Öszveesketés Esküvő Derék házasság Kézfogás	Trauung	Sponsalia Desponsatio Copulatio
Eljegyzés/ Eljegyez (the preliminary promise of marriage, i.e., “betrothal”)	Kézfogó/ Kézfogás Vettem/ választottam magamnak házastársul	Kézfogó/ Kézfogás/ eljegyez (verb)	Verlobung/ verloben Zu einen zukünftigen Ehgemal vermählen Zu Ehgemal vertrauen (jemandem)	Sponsalia Subarrhatio Desponsatio/ desponso elego in coniugem

Table 1.

The polysemy of the nouns meaning marriage in and of itself would not cause much trouble if in the invitations the verb clearly defined the act preceding the invitation. Unfortunately this is not the case. While most Latin-language letters as a rule make use of the phrase *desponsavi/despnsaverim in coniugem/uxorem* (thus, the inviting party literally speaks of betrothal), in the Hungarian-language letters we generally read *vettem magamnak feleségül* (“I have taken for myself as a wife”). But if the father or guardian of the bride writes the letter, in the majority of cases he uses the expression *adtam feleségül* (“I have given as a wife”) and its Latin equivalent (*elocavi/elocaverim in coniugem/uxorem*). Yet according to our modern linguistic intuition these formulations would mean not the betrothal but rather the marriage.¹³ The seventeenth-century invitations introduce the announcement of the wedding much rather with the phrases *jegyzette(m) el* (“I

13 One interesting comparison: in English “I take thee as wife/husband” was a typical verbal formulation of present consent and not designed to be used at betrothals; Donahue, *Law, Marriage*, 17.

have betrothed”) or, in the case of the bride’s father, *ígértem házastársul* (“I have pledged as a spouse”). The enigmatic form *vettem* (“I have taken”) known from the letters crops up in the earliest Hungarian-language marriage vow (from the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), as well as in numerous Protestant ritual books of the sixteenth century.¹⁴

One means of resolving the contradiction would be if we took the expression *feleségül venni* (“I have taken as wife”) to be equivalent to the phrase *választottam feleségül* (“I have chosen as wife;” in Latin: *elegerim (et petiverim) in coniugem*) employed in some of the sixteenth-century invitations, thus we could apply it to a simple betrothal. According to another proposed solution, the odd past-tense expression allows us to conclude the occurrence of a “handfasting” (*kézfogó*) prior to the invitation and reinforced by a vow (a firmer betrothal than that of today).¹⁵

Even more surprising than the above was that some of the sixteenth-century Latin-language invitations from Beszterce feature *iungo* or *copulo*, which are unequivocally the verbs of the church marriage, instead of *desponso*. All this would mean that the marriage ceremony occurred well before the wedding feast (*lakodalom*), indeed, before the letters were sent out. Moreover, the verb *desponso* is also frequently accompanied by a phrase difficult to interpret, namely, *iure/ritu matrimonii* (or possibly in the form *ritu sanctae catholicae ecclesiae*), that is, in accordance with the law/rite of marriage of the Universal Church (in a longer version: *iuxta ritum et (antiquam) consuetudinem sanctae catholicae ecclesiae/ matris ecclesiae*, that is “according to the ancient rite and custom of the Holy Mother Church”).

Our analysis of the early modern vocabulary of marriage has perhaps succeeded in conveying the difficulties with which our sources confront us at almost every turn. It is also clear that the old Hungarian system of marriage cannot be decoded solely with the help of the invitations and ritual books—only with the help of reference points outside the text can we free ourselves from the influence of our own era. We must move beyond and examine the ecclesiastical law background and conceptual network that defined the content and interrelationship of the above expressions.

14 Dániel Báth, *Esküvő, keresztelő, avatás: Egyház és népi kultúra a kora újkor Magyarországon* (Budapest: MTA–ELTE, 2005), 105.

15 Báth, *Esküvő, keresztelő*, 106–7.

The Evolution of Christian Marriage Law in a Nutshell

At first Christianity prescribed no formal marriage ceremony for its adherents; from the mid-fourth century on, however, the practice of the priest blessing marriages after the fact spread. Although the blessing was by no means necessary for the validity of the marriage, later nevertheless it was around it that a nuptial mass gradually crystalized, and as the last stage of the process the marriage ceremony of the church. In this evolution, the twelfth century, when marriage—primarily based on the teachings of Saint Augustine—finally earned its place among the sacraments, was of crucial importance. The consequence in this life of the acceptance of the sacramental nature was the veritable “reformation” of marriage law and, through it, of society.¹⁶ The church thereafter increasingly lay claim to the oversight of marriages, and demanded for itself the right to adjudicate them as well, while it regarded marriage as indissoluble. A new ideal equal in rank to celibacy was born,¹⁷ the institutional regulation of which was formed with the incorporation of important elements of Roman law. The most important borrowing undoubtedly was the basic principle that only a free act of agreement between two persons (*consensus*) with no external coercion could establish a marriage, which was a radical departure from the view emphasizing the exclusive right of the extended family of Germanic law to decide.¹⁸

Two great twelfth-century canonical schools were allotted a crucial role in shaping the details of the reform: the Parisian school, representing the Gallic church, and the Bolognese school, closely linked to the Italian church (*ecclesia cisalpina*). The Parisians, led by Peter Lombard [Petrus Lombardus] (†1164) and the Bolognese, associated with the name of Gratian [Gratianus], agreed on the primacy of *consensus* and the indissolubility of marriage, though their opinions differed over which act contained the sacrament that ultimately sealed the marital relationship.¹⁹ According to Gratian, this element was the consummation of the marriage (*copula carnalis*), therefore an unconsummated marriage (*conjugium initiatum*) could be dissolved, and of two declarations of consensus it was always the consummated one (*conjugium ratum*) that was the valid one, regardless of chronological order. The Parisian school, however, believed to have discovered

16 Harrington, *Reordering Marriage*, 134–42.

17 Franz Falk, *Die Ehe am Ausgang des Mittelalters: Eine kirchen- und kulturhistorische Studie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1908).

18 McCarthy, *Marriage*, 13–14.

19 Ozment, *When Fathers*, 26–27.

the sacrament in the declaration of the will to marry itself and sought to achieve the consolidation of the institution of marriage by introducing an additional concept of Roman law, betrothal in today's sense. It is in the canonical works of Ivo of Chartres (†1116) that the view first appears, which distinguishes the betrothal (*sponsalia de futuro*), containing a pledge in the future and dissoluble, from the marriage (*sponsalia de praesenti*), articulating a present-tense promise and regarded as completely indissoluble. By adopting this distinction, the Parisian school—at least on a theoretical plane—created the system of Christian marriages known today. In their view, if a person entered into two “betrothals” (*sponsalia*), the one in which the intention to marry is expressed by the exchange of words of present consent (*de praesenti*) was the valid one, and the issue of which was consummated was not crucial. While Gratian carried forward the traditional notion of a processual marriage (placing, it is true, unusually great emphasis on consummation), the Parisian school tied the establishment of the marriage to a single act, the *sponsalia de praesenti*.²⁰

It was Pope Alexander III (1159–1181), recognized as a canon lawyer as well, who settled the debate between the two schools, in essence more inclined to agree with the Parisian school. Gratian's views regarding the significant legal role played by consummation prevailed in merely two particulars: in the event of an unconsummated marriage the church permitted the spouses to enter a religious order; and it recognized that consummation transformed the intention to marry expressed by words of future consent into a valid marriage (*sponsalia de futuro carnali copula subsecuta*).²¹

Although these changes were meant to increase ecclesiastical influence over marriage, as a result of the exclusive emphasis of *consensus*, in a given situation they provided an opportunity to evade ecclesiastical and societal rules. For the church, because of its own principles of canon law, was also forced to recognize the validity of those marriages concluded out of the public eye and without formal ceremonies, or even without seeking the parents' consent (*matrimonium clandestinum*).²² Thus it is understandable that the fight against clandestine marriages became one of the engines for the development of marriage law. In the eyes of the church marriage remained a sacrament that the parties bestowed to one other, but for this there was an increasing demand for public scrutiny and

20 Reynolds, “Marrying,” 8–11.

21 Donahue, *Law, Marriage*, 16–17.

22 Gillis, *For Better*, 20.

the authenticating role of the priest.²³ Accordingly, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) prescribed the priestly blessing of marriages, and in addition considered the reading of the banns three times in advance and the presence of witnesses to be necessary. It is true, however, that this regulation did not call the validity of clandestine marriages into question either.²⁴

Yet the late medieval evolution ultimately brought about the slow but continuous strengthening of the church's role. In many places the church ceremony confined itself to a blessing of the contracted marriage after the fact, but elsewhere it now became linked to some act of the traditionally multiphase marriage, for example, the rite of handing over the bride (*traditio/Trauung*). Here the priest was promoted from prominent witness to master of ceremonies: instead of the bride's relative or an entrusted third person it was now he who placed the girl into the groom's hand, while the ceremony moved from private homes and public spaces to the churches. At first it appeared that the Reformation was creating a new marriage law radically departing from the medieval one. Luther after a brief vacillation rejected the sacramental nature of marriage. Accordingly, he no longer regarded it as indissoluble either, calling it in fact a secular matter, by this he meant that it belonged among the institutions of the world that came into existence after the fall from grace, and subject to secular regulation.²⁵ One practical consequence of the line of thought was that the possibility of divorce appeared, while among the impediments to marriage "spiritual kinship" (coming about during baptism) disappeared.²⁶ Although the Reformation removed marriage from among the ranks of the sacraments, it increased its significance vis-à-vis celibacy, held to be harmful, and in the long term this laid the foundations of the superior ecclesiastical notion of marriage almost reminiscent of that of the sacraments.

At first Luther considered the distinction between the two kinds of betrothal (*sponsalia de praesenti/de futuro*) also to be contrived, a word game, and recognized only one, legally binding betrothal.²⁷ He questioned the constituting power of betrothal only in those cases where its validity was tied to some specific condition. In his view, therefore, it was the betrothal that created the marriage, while within

23 Ozment, *When Fathers*, 25–26; Reynolds, "Marrying," 12–13.

24 Harrington, *Reordering Marriage*, 57; Donahue, *Law, Marriage*, 32.

25 Dieterich, *Das protestantische*, 24–74; Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 5–9, 201. Calvin, too, acknowledged the basically secular nature of marriage; Goody, *The Development*, 167.

26 On the medieval diriment or impedient impediments of marriage, see: Goody, *The Development*, 110–45; Donahue, *Law, Marriage*, 18–31.

27 Witte, *Law and Marriage*, 233–37.

the church ceremony only the public affirmation of the already contracted marriage took place. His opinion is strongly reminiscent of the teachings of the master of the Bolognese school, Gratian, though he does differ from the latter in that he considers parental consent as necessary for the marriage and, unlike Melanchthon or Théodore de Bèze, does not attribute primary legal significance to consummation. Luther's view about the "secular" character of marriage was shared by the great figures of the Swiss Reformation as well, though the renewal of the faith ultimately failed to bring about a revolutionary change in the area of marriage law.²⁸ It is the medieval legacy of the new denominations that makes it comprehensible why in the end, despite Luther's fierce outbursts against canon lawyers, Protestant ecclesiastical law was established on foundations of medieval canon law and failed to break completely with the distinction between the two kinds of betrothal: the views regarding the question were visibly sharply divided. It may be stated in any case that, like Luther, a significant number of Lutherans saw the public betrothal as the beginning of legal marital relations and regarded the church ceremony that followed it as only a kind of affirmation. It is the medieval roots that explain also why right up until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Protestant churches did not necessarily link the validity of the marriage to the church ceremony. However, in their case, too, the ambition to control marriages became increasingly strong, which was reflected in the marital arbitration as well.

The new Catholic Church born in the debates of the Council of Trent, on the other hand, already quite early on resolved itself to a comprehensive regulation of marriage law, first and foremost in order to eliminate clandestine marriages. With the Council of Trent's so-called *decree Tametsi* issued in 1563 a new era commenced in the area of marriage. Here those requirements already articulated in the Middle Ages but not consistently enforced were incorporated into a general system: marriages were to be concluded in a church, before the competent parish priest or priest entrusted by him, in the presence of two or three witnesses, and it was necessary to read the banns three times before the wedding because of any potential obstacles to marriage.²⁹ All marriages not satisfying these criteria were deemed invalid. The Catholic Church therefore stepping over the previous theological and canonical reservations broke with the monopoly of *consensus*, and proclaimed its own collaboration to be indispensable. (It was from

28 John Witte dates the turning point of Lutheran approach (i.e., the first comeback of canon law) to the 1530s (Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 199–256); Harrington, *Reordering Marriage*, 16–17, 273–78.

29 Reynolds, "Marrying," 17.

this time on that there appeared the widely held view, naturally erroneous in the canon-law sense, that the act establishing the marriage was the joining of the couple by the priest.)

The reorganization exerted a significant influence also on the Protestant denominations, which were trying to introduce similar rules at this same time. As the final result of a lengthy process, by the eighteenth century, with the adoption of the Roman law notion, they too arrived at a result similar to the Catholic regulation, prescribing the church ceremony for the validity of marriages.

An Old Debate and Its Hungarian Offshoot

Naturally, the evolution of Christian marriage outlined above is the topic of numerous debates even today, with regard to both the form of the acts and their legal content. From the point of view of our present inquiry (the relationship of the ecclesiastical and secular elements of marriage) a nineteenth-century German legal history debate that hardly crops up in the modern English-language specialist literature, and its completely unknown continuation in Hungary will be the most important for us. It was at the time of the Bismarckian *Kulturkampf* in Germany that the debate between two extraordinarily well-prepared Lutheran legal historians, the national liberal supporter of the chancellor, Emil Friedberg (1837–1910), and the conservative Rudolph Sohm (1841–1917) about the history of marriage would take place.³⁰ Their positions held quite strong topicality as well, for it was precisely during the debate (in 1875) that compulsory civil marriages were introduced in the German Empire. The debate occurred mostly around the content and origin of the various legal acts: they tried to uncover the role and interrelationship of Germanic, canon and Roman law in the historical formation of West European marriage.

Sohm claimed no less than that the Germanic marriage law had lived on latently, in the guise of scholasticism, in medieval canon law, and from there the

30 Emil Friedberg, *Das Recht der Eheschließung in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Leipzig: Verlag von Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1865); Rudolph Sohm, *Das Recht der Eheschließung aus dem deutschen und canonischen Recht geschichtlich entwickelt: Eine Antwort auf die Frage nach dem Verhältnis der kirchlichen Trauung zur Civilehe* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1875); Emil Friedberg, *Verlobung und Trauung. Zugleich als Kritik von Sohm das Recht der Eheschließung* (Leipzig: Verlag von Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1876); Rudolf Sohm, *Trauung und Verlobung: Eine Entgegnung auf Friedberg: Verlobung und Trauung* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1876). For a brief reference to the debate: Harrington, *Reordering Marriage*, 4. About the historical context: Stefan Ruppert, *Kirchenrecht und Kulturkampf: Historische Legitimation, politische Mitwirkung und wissenschaftliche Begleitung durch die Schule Emil Ludwig Richters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 118–20.

basic structure passed over intact into Lutheran ecclesiastical law as well. Of the two phases of the marriage throughout it was the first that remains binding. In the most widespread form of Germanic marriage (*Muntebe*) this first phase was the betrothal (*Verlobung*), which the two extended families concluded with one another in the form of an oral contract (later the groom was also allotted an active role), while the second phase is the ceremonial handing over of the bride and the guardianship exercised over her to the groom (*Trauung*). The marriage, according to Sohm's theory, was established by the *Verlobung*, though to purely negative effect, determining that they could not enter into a similar relationship with another person, then during the *Trauung* as an act of fulfillment the positive impact appeared: namely the marital union. The Gratian-type *conjugium initiatum* of canon law was nothing less than the Germanic *Verlobung*, while the *conjugium perfectum* essentially corresponded to the Germanic *Trauung*.³¹ The sole difference was that in canon law the legal function of the *Trauung* was assumed by consummation (*matrimonii consummatio*). Sohm also claimed resolutely that the Parisian school's distinction, elevated to an official position in the twelfth century, had remained a dead letter: the *sponsalia de futuro* (the betrothal corresponding to today's notion) originating in Roman law had not taken hold in practice, and throughout the Middle Ages only a single marriage-forming betrothal had existed.³² This was attested also by those words in numerous Germanic and Romance languages that could designate equally spouse and betrothed, as well as betrothal and marriage. (We could note this fact earlier in relation to the Hungarian language as well.) The church ceremony coming into use after the great reform of the twelfth century as a complementary element in his view was connected to the second phase, counting as an act of fulfillment, and not to the betrothal actually establishing the marriage, since it was on the day of the *Trauung* that the secular celebration of the marriage was held, i.e., the wedding feast in its narrower sense (*Hochzeitsfeier*), and it appeared logical that the church celebration should also be connected to this.³³ With the linking of the element of fulfillment and the church ceremony, however, it was precisely the act forming marriage, the legally crucial betrothal, that had remained unregulated, and this had resulted in the complete irrelevance of the church. The Catholic Church had drawn the lesson at the Council of Trent: it had carried out the first substantive modification of canon law marriage. Recognizing the marriage-constituting

31 Sohm, *Trauung und Verlobung*, 61–62.

32 Sohm, *Trauung und Verlobung*, 74–108.

33 Sohm, *Das Recht*, 187.

force of betrothal, they had changed the church ceremony into a ceremony in the nature of a betrothal, the second phase, the *Trauung* in fact had ceased to exist, and its remnants came to be linked to the binding betrothal as wedding formulas. However, it was not these words of *copulatio* that formed the essence of the new church ceremony, but rather the *consensus* solemnly declared in the presence of the priest as witness. It was now that the distinction formed in the twelfth century became reality: before the *sponsalia de praesenti* as marriage solemnized by the church's involvement, the genuine, modern betrothal that originated in Roman law and could no longer be changed into a marriage through consummation, appeared in the Catholic matrimonial ritual.

The Lutherans, according to Sohm, had tread a different path. Luther had by no means opposed the essence of canonical teachings when he deemed the entirely theoretical distinction between the *sponsalia de futuro* and *sponsalia de praesenti* to be word play but rather had simply registered the previously widespread perception.³⁴ As Sohm saw it, Lutheran church law in the sixteenth century had completely preserved the marriage system of medieval canon law, with the betrothal that created a legal relationship, and the fulfillment of the contract, consummation. Over the course of the seventeenth century this had been altered in that it was the church ceremony emerging around the handover transaction of Germanic law (*Trauung*), at first in addition to consummation, and later completely assuming its role, that represented the second, contract-fulfilling act. And this would have restored the original Germanic marriage system, which only the reception of Roman marriage law in the eighteenth century effaced.³⁵

Friedberg's views, expounded with similar erudition, were diametrically opposed to the above ideas. For him, already in the era of Germanic law it was the second phase, the *Trauung*, that established the marriage, and in his view this remained so in canon law as well. Friedberg believed that the *Verlobung* of Germanic law over the course of the Middle Ages had fused into the *Trauung*, forming a single act of marriage, and it was as preparation for this that the betrothal originating in Roman law (*sponsalia de futuro*) appeared in the twelfth century. The *sponsalia de praesenti* establishing the marriage, likewise adopted from Roman law, in turn appears as one of the elements of the new complex *Trauung*. It was precisely in this that the canon lawyer believed to have discovered the

34 Sohm, *Trauung und Verlobung*, 110–23.

35 A recent application of Sohm's theory: Richard von Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag in der frühen Neuzeit*, vol. 1, *Das Haus und seine Menschen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1990), 144–48.

proof that it was the *Trauung* that had been the start of marriage in earlier times, too.

Thus, according to Friedberg the distinction of the Parisian school had indeed taken root, and in fact had become generally accepted in canon law. He calls into question the significance of Gratian's teachings.³⁶ In his opinion, the significance of the Tridentine reform lies not in the fact that it joins the church ceremony to the act establishing the marriage, since it had been connected to it up until then, but rather in that with the complete fading of the legal significance of the *Trauung* the last elements of Germanic law also disappeared from the marriage rite formed on the basis of Roman law in the twelfth century.

Friedberg naturally thought differently about Luther as well. In his assessment, the reformer had adopted the binding betrothal not from the hated medieval canon law but from the church fathers. Although the Luther-type "sponsalia theory" had won acceptance in Lutheran church law (and betrothals, in contrast to Sohm's view, were regarded as marriages possessing full legal force), in practice because of the resistance of society and the secular authorities it had penetrated but little.³⁷ Critical voices among Lutheran church lawyers appear already in the seventeenth century, then in the eighteenth century the influence of natural law displaced the archaic notion introduced by Luther, which was completely at variance with medieval practice as well.³⁸

From the above it is perhaps clear that both theories contain numerous speculative elements, and it is their strength that is also their weakness: they seek to provide a unitary, comprehensive explanation for the development of marriage in Western Europe. The seeds of the debate in Germany a decade later sprouted in Hungary. This is no coincidence, for in the decades prior to the introduction of compulsory civil marriage (1894) in Hungary, too, interest in the history of marriage customs increased greatly. Gyula Kováts's (1849–1935) work *A házasságkötés Magyarországon egyházi és polgári jog szerint* [Marriage in Hungary according to Ecclesiastical and Civil Law] appeared in 1883, followed in 1887 by Baron Ervin Roszner's (1852–1928) strongly polemical monograph.³⁹ A heated scholarly debate erupted between the two canon lawyers, followed with lively attention by educated public opinion as well. The Protestant Kováts emerged

36 Friedberg, *Verlobung und Trauung*, 32–34.

37 Friedberg, *Das Recht*, 153–75 and 203–10.

38 Friedberg, *Verlobung und Trauung*, 70–78.

39 Gyula Kováts, *A házasságkötés Magyarországon egyházi és polgári jog szerint* (Budapest: Hoffmann és Molnár, 1883); Ervin Roszner, *Régi magyar házassági jog* (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1887).

as a follower of Sohm, while the Catholic Roszner championed Friedberg's teachings.

Although more than one renowned legal historian of the era paid tribute to Roszner's accomplishment, nevertheless in hindsight it is evident that in a few important questions we must side with the much better trained Kováts, who adapted his German master's theses independently. For us, the most interesting element of the dispute is the same question that earlier had caused the greatest commotion in Germany too: the presumed marriage-forming nature of betrothal. In the course of the debate Roszner succeeded in proving that the distinction between *sponsalia de praesenti* and *de futuro* in the thirteenth century cropped up in legal documents in Hungary (later, sporadically, in diplomas as well), and on the basis of this he presumed that the modern ritual had appeared in Hungary already in the Middle Ages, with the betrothal that created the engaged relationship, and the subsequent marriage.⁴⁰ Kováts by contrast argued that although the distinction had been known in theory, in practice for a very long time only one marriage-forming betrothal, called *desponsatio* or *desponsatio per verba de praesenti* in Latin, had existed, followed after a certain interval by a secular act of fulfillment incorporating consummation as an essential moment: the wedding feast.⁴¹ (In the Hungarian canon lawyer's theory this occupied the place of Sohm's *Trauung*, originating in Germanic law, becoming over time part of the church ceremony.) From his writings it is strongly apparent that he himself could not decide with absolute certainty: to which phase of the marriage the church ceremony, at this time still insignificant in a legal sense, was typically linked—the first: marriage-binding betrothal, the second: the wedding feast (*lakodalom*), or perhaps occurring as a third element in time between the betrothal and the wedding feast (*lakodalom*). As far as can be discerned from his obscure formulations, he considers perhaps the first version to be the most widespread, though he does not reflect at all on how strongly he diverges from Sohm's thinking in this regard. Kováts believed that this custom—at times with the temporal separation of the betrothal (*kézfogó*) serving as marriage and the church wedding (*összeadás*)—had predominated, for Catholics until the reception of the Council of Trent while for Protestants right up until the mid-eighteenth century.⁴² The great strength of his argument, compared not only to Roszner's

40 Roszner, *Régi magyar*, 70–78.

41 For the most detailed explanation of Kováts's views, see Gyula Kováts, *Szilágyi Márton tanítása az eljegyzésről 1690* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1885).

42 Kováts, *Szilágyi Márton*, 61–68.

thinking but Sohm's as well, was that his attention also extended to the role played by the wedding feast in the marriage. (For Sohm the wedding feast was merely a secular celebration accompanying the *Trauung* always held on the same day as the latter, to which he attributes no great significance despite the fact that it serves as the framework for consummation—essentially he considers it a sort of appendage to the second phase.) Although Kováts's assertions, formulated partly following Sohm and partly on the basis of his own research, are highly generalizing, and debatable with regard to the legal content of certain acts, his theory as an attempt at description nevertheless can offer a strong basis for analysis.

Marriage Practice in Medieval and Early Modern Hungary

One of the Hungarian canon lawyer's most important guiding threads in the issue of betrothal was Transylvanian memoir literature. It was Gyula Kováts who first read with a truly keen eye the description of marriages given by Baron Péter Apor (1676–1752) in his nostalgic Hungarian-language work about the everyday life of the Transylvanian nobility in the seventeenth century. The text, apart from the blessing of the nuptial table, mentions only one church ceremony, specifically in connection with the “handfasting.” According to the author of the *Metamorphosis Transylvaniae*, among the Transylvanian nobility the custom was that immediately after the exchange of rings:

... the young man sent again his two relatives and called on the girl to pledge herself. Then the father and mother and their relatives once more brought out the girl and the ceremony took place. There was a decent cloth on the table, and another was spread on the ground in front of it, and the priest stood in front with his back to the table facing the assembled company; the young man came forth and stood on the cloth, a female relative led the girl forth, and the priest administered the vows. When the ceremony was concluded the girl was led inside once more (translation by Bernard Adams).⁴³

The authenticity of Apor's description is buttressed by the autobiography of Miklós Bethlen (1642–1716) as well. Reading his account of the two marriages carefully, it is unequivocal that on both occasions the wedding (church ceremony)

43 Baron Péter Apor of Altörja, *Metamorphosis Transylvaniae*, trans. Bernard Adams (London: Kegan Paul, 2003), 56.

took place only within the framework of the betrothal, while the feast following the rather large-scale event was merely a feast and nothing more.⁴⁴

Kováts also uses the bible of traditional Hungarian noble customary law, István Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* (1514) as support for his theory. The legal scholar in the first part of his work writes that sons are freed from paternal authority through division of the estate and daughters by the *desponsatio* and the *nuptiarum sollemnitas*.⁴⁵ Because a Roman-law type *de futuro* betrothal could not have involved such a legal consequence, it is therefore unequivocal in his opinion that the former expression must be translated as a binding betrothal, and the latter as *wedding feast*. The identification of the *nuptiarum sollemnitas* in addition is aided by the fact that Werbőczy equates it with consummation by inserting the Latin conjunction *sive* ("that is").

Although Kováts unfortunately ignores the ritual books (and his work suffered from this), nonetheless he does list one Calvinist ecclesiastical source rejecting the distinction between the betrothal and the marriage among the main proofs for his theory. This is a work of ecclesiastical law appearing in 1690 and written by Márton Szilágyi, from the Tiszántúl (region east of the Tisza River): the *Triga divortialis*, which in its outlook truly stands quite close to the old teachings of Gratian.⁴⁶ Kováts's observations about the form of the marriage can be supported, apart from the already quoted wedding invitations, primarily with narrative sources: for example, noble diaries, which are excellent records of the schedule of customs. In these it frequently occurs that the church ceremony (handfasting, vow-taking) is joined not to the wedding feast, but to the betrothal. However, in general the two elements are clearly distinguished from one another.⁴⁷

Among the sources of the church administration, too, we find ones attesting to the fact that the church ceremony did not, or more precisely did not always occur within the framework of the wedding feast (*lakodalom*). The church visitation register of István Csulyak Miskolci, the Calvinist dean of Zemplén County (1629–1645), contains the following requirement, reflecting

44 Miklós Bethlen, *The Autobiography of Miklós Bethlen*, trans. Bernard Adams (London: Kegan Paul, 2004), 241, 351–52.

45 János Bak, Péter Banyó, and Martyn Rady, ed. and trans., *The Customary Law of the Renowned Kingdom of Hungary: a Work in Three Parts Rendered by Stephen Werbőczy. The "Tripartitum"* (Los Angeles: Charles Schlacks, 2005), 118–19.

46 Kováts, *Szilágyi Márton*, 19–38.

47 E.g., Kálmán Szily, ed., "Farkas Pál és Farkas Ádám följegyzései 1638-tól 1694-ig," *Történelmi Tár* (1884): 91.

the multiplicity of practice: that “those who do not wed at the time of their betrothal (*kézfogáskor*) should wed in the morning, and in the church.”⁴⁸ The 1649 ecclesiastical law book of the Transylvanian Calvinist bishop István Geleji Katona prescribes that not much time should pass between the joining of the couple (*copulatio*) and the wedding feast (*nuptiae*), lest the couple become intimate ahead of time or, on the contrary, quarrel.⁴⁹

In examining the relationship of the ecclesiastical and secular elements of marriage ethnographic research also comes to our aid. It was the best known Hungarian researcher of folk legal customs, Ernő Tárkány Szűcs, who observed that in a few conservative Calvinist villages in southern Hungary the handfasting (*kézfogó*) likewise used to be held in the church, before a priest.⁵⁰ Among the Hungarians of Slavonia, this ceremony assured the groom the right also to sleep with his fiancée. The author himself thought that the phenomenon was the remnant of an archaic set of customs, in which the contracting of a marriage consisted of merely two elements: the betrothal performed in the presence of the church and the consummation. More recently, researching the ecclesiastical administration of justice, Réka Kiss pointed out that in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hungary and Transylvania the church wedding ceremony (*esküvő*) was often linked to the betrothal and in such instances preceded the completely secular wedding feast.⁵¹

However, we also possess ample sources that prove the existence in the medieval and early modern eras of the custom known today: the church ceremony integrated into the wedding feast, and the betrothal preceding it. For example, it is unequivocally in connection with the *menyegző* that the 1538 special statute of Beszterce, citing the provisions of the *Hochzeitsordnungen* (wedding ordinances) of Germany, stipulates that only as many bridesmaids (*nyoszolyólány*) escort the bride to the church as can be seated at one table.⁵²

48 Jenő Zoványi, ed., “Miskolci Csulyak István zempléni református esperes (1629–1645) egyházlátogatási jegyzőkönyvei,” *Történelmi Tár* (1906): 64.

49 István Geleji Katona, *Canones ecclesiastici: Ex veteribus quam Hungariensibus, quam Transilvaniensibus in unum collecti, plerisque tamen aliis etiam pro temporis ratione aucti, ac in paulo meliorem ordinem redacti* (Gyulafehérvár/Alba Julia: n.p., 1649), 33–34.

50 Ernő Tárkány Szűcs, *Magyar jogi népszokások* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1981), 336–38.

51 Réka Kiss, *Egyház és közösség a kora újkorban: A Külkülli Református Egyházmegye 17–18. századi iratainak tükrében* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2011), 106–9.

52 Archivele Naționale Direcția Județeană Cluj, Primăria orașului Bistrița [III, a, 2, Magistratsprotokoll 1525–1541], 46–47.

Elsewhere we likewise encounter wedding feast linked with wedding ceremony (and with the betrothal, or exchange of rings, presumably preceding it, functionally corresponding to that of today). One such is the *menyegző* combined with *kézfogó* (i.e., wedding) of György Thurzó's daughter Judit in 1607.⁵³ Nor must we forget that a significant number of the early modern Protestant ritual books not consulted by Gyula Kováts record the custom known today. Finally, we must mention also that in a few of our sixteenth-century invitations from Beszterce the impending event is called *bitelés* rather than the customary *menyegző*, which almost certainly indicates that the church ceremony was held within the framework of the wedding feast.

Apart from the two basic form of marriage presented, additional variants crop up in early modern Hungary: it is very likely that the separation and joining together of the different elements of the church marriage (*copulatio*, vows, exchange of rings, nuptial blessing), as well as their varying connection to the wedding feast, brought about numerous variations.⁵⁴ Instructive is the case of a seventeenth-century Lutheran noble, Mihály Libercsey, whose first marriage in 1638 occurred entirely according to the modern custom: he became engaged to the girl with an exchange of rings, then the wedding feast was celebrated on the same day as the *kézfogás* (= wedding).⁵⁵ After becoming widowed he remarried, but this time following a completely different schedule. On April 3, 1667 he became engaged to the widow of György Zmeskál, Anna Aranyadi, in Lestina [Leština, Slovakia], the next day he “takes her as a wife,” while they hold their wedding feast on May 1, 1667 in the castle of Gács [Halič, Slovakia].⁵⁶ The betrothal and the handfasting presumably incorporating the church ceremony as well here almost coincide (though they are clearly distinct), while the wedding feast became detached in time and space.

53 Gabriella Weichhart, *Keresztelő, házasság és temetés Magyarországon 1600–1630* (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1911), 11–13.

54 About the church rites of marriage and ritual books in early modern Hungary, see Báth, *Esküvő, keresztelő*, 39–142.

55 9. October 1638. Wedding invitation of Mihály Libercsey. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Nógrád Megyei Levéltára XIV, 3. Nagy Iván akadémikus-történész iratai D/1, fol. 1810.

56 The data comes from the diary of the Libercsey Family: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára P 481. Madách család levéltára, fasc. IV, no. 14, fols. 13–38.

Conclusion

Based on the above, a unitary, pure picture of the forms of marriages like that which the German and Hungarian legal historians of the nineteenth century believed to see, can certainly not be drawn. All signs indicate that in medieval and early modern Hungary and Transylvania several forms of marriage existed. The Tridentine reform of marriage and the similar resolutions of the Protestant synods later on gradually made the modern betrothal and the wedding ceremony (*esküvő*) integrated into the wedding feast (*lakodalom*) a general practice. However, the invitations from Beszterce and other sources reveal that, prior to the reception of the Decree *Tametsi* and the complete consolidation of Protestant marriage law, a betrothal closely linked to the church ceremony and a purely secular wedding feast formed one of the basic types, which we may by no means consider a rare exception.

It may also be rightly assumed that among commoners despite prohibitions in numerous cases the church's collaboration was lacking.⁵⁷ Some of the European parallels likewise show the long survival of clandestine marriages and diversity.⁵⁸ The Protestant and Catholic ritual books of the seventeenth century reveal that the church did not insist firmly in every case on the church building as the venue for administering the vows. The uniform timetable and form of marriage in Hungary emerged as the result of a very long process, through the gradual encroachment of ecclesiastical supervision. We as yet cannot see clearly the existing territorial, confessional and societal differences in regard to marriage, nor the date when the unification occurred in the various areas of the country. We suspect that in many areas this transpired only in the eighteenth century. Indeed, even in an early ethnographic description of customs, György Nemesnépi Zakál's 1818 work on the ethnography of the Órség region, the wedding feast figures as an event separate from the church wedding in time. (True, the church ceremony is preceded by a "modern" betrothal.)⁵⁹

It is not by chance that we spoke about the form of marriage above. At the forefront of Rudolph Sohm's and Gyula Kovács's inquiry—being legal historians—is not this, but rather the legal content of the marriage acts.

57 Bakó, *Palóc lakodalom*, 31; Kiss, *Egyház és közösség*, 115–18.

58 Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530–1987* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 51–66; Klapisch-Zuber, *Woman, Family*, 181–212.

59 György Nemesnépi Zakál, "Órségnek leírása," in *Magyar tájak néprajzi felfedezői*, ed. Attila Paládi-Kovács (Budapest: Gondolat, 1985), 45.

Kováts considered betrothal as constituting marriages not only in those cases when they were paired with the administration of wedding vows, but rather he regarded every betrothal as establishing marriage, regardless of the form it took. This was specifically because he denied the validity of the canonical distinction that appeared in the twelfth century separating the betrothal from the marriage. (Regarding the characteristic form, he in fact diametrically opposes Sohm: according to the German canon lawyer, the church act, for a long time insignificant, was always connected to the second stage of the marriage.) In Kováts's works the questions of legal content and form become blurred in a very misleading way. The historical sources from Hungary that he cites to demonstrate the marriage-binding betrothal in reality prove only the temporal separation of the wedding feast and the wedding, as well as the frequent coincidence of the betrothal and the church ceremony, that is, the physical sequence of the events. Today scholars view the marriage of Germanic law, which served as Sohm's standard, differently as well: in addition to *Verlobung* and *Trauung*, they interpret the "taking home of the bride" (*Heimführung*), as well as the ritual placing of the couple into the nuptial bed (*Beilager*), very important from the point of view of property law, as an independent, temporally separate, third phase introducing marital life.⁶⁰ Through the change in outlook it was the acts of the wedding feast in fact that assumed independent legal meaning. Moreover similar developments in research obviously dismantle the perfect symmetry of nineteenth-century theoretical systems. Must we completely reject the views of the German canon lawyer and his Hungarian follower concerning the binding betrothal? We think not, because in addition to the opinion victorious in the great debate of the twelfth century, the Gratian-type position, which did not accept the betrothal of Roman law (*de futuro*), reappeared time and again with varying intensity. It is our strong suspicion that ultimately it is to this legal outlook, gaining strength once again after the Reformation, that the past tense forms appearing in Hungarian wedding vows and banns, as well as the wedding invitations of the sixteenth century, can be traced back, and not to the fact that in terms of form the betrothal happened to occur in combination with the administration of the vows. A further argument in favor of the existence of the notion of marriage-forming betrothal, and against the general and fully clear distinction between betrothal and marriage is the prominent fact that in the early modern era both

60 Jörg Wettlaufer, "Beilager und Bettleute im Ostseeraum (13–19. Jahrhundert): Eine vergleichende Studie zum Wandel von Recht und Brauchtum der Eheschließung," in *Tisch und Bett. Die Hochzeit im Ostseeraum seit dem 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. Thomas Riis (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 81–128.

the Latin and Hungarian languages each had a very widespread term which, as we saw, was equally applied to both acts (*desponsatio/kézfogás*). And this allows us to conclude that the undifferentiated betrothal of medieval marriages only slowly disappeared from both spoken usage and practice.⁶¹

Therefore, the simplest and most concrete results of our examination are the following. From the point of view of the historical sciences, one of the serious lessons is that we must proceed very cautiously in analyzing our medieval and early modern sources: the Latin *nuptiae*, the Hungarian words *menyegző* and later *lakodalom* may designate both a purely secular celebration as well as an occasion that incorporates the church ceremony. The Latin *desponsatio* and its verbal forms may denote not only a simple betrothal (*sponsalia de futuro*) but also a betrothal contracting marriage, i.e., “wedding” (*sponsalia de praesenti*).⁶²

For ethnographic research, in turn, it may be very interesting that in the event of a binding form of betrothal (betrothal + administering of vows) followed by a separate feast (*lakodalom*) all those liminal rites⁶³ that in a wedding integrated into the feast (known from twentieth-century popular culture) immediately precede the church ceremony, here occur later: do prepare the taking home of the bride or the consummation; moreover, they occur within the framework of a secular *feast*. The emphasis fall completely elsewhere, it is not the church wedding ceremony that is the great turning-point of the ritual. In addition to making the Trident conditions compulsory this may be one of the crucial moment when the church exercised decisive influence on folk culture. That the integration of the wedding ceremony into the *lakodalom* fundamentally altered the secular rites of marriage is clearly shown by nineteenth-century ethnographic collections as well. From all parts of the Hungarian language territory we have data from this time that after the wedding ceremony the couple and the two wedding parties withdrew from the church separately and went to separate houses to have lunch as if nothing had happened.⁶⁴ Only in the afternoon, after the meal had been consumed, did the groom’s wedding party set out for the bridal house, so that the final requesting the bride (*kikérés*) and solemn handing over of the bride (from an ecclesiastical point of view already wife) to happen in dramatic form, which is followed by the sad farewell of the bride from her kinfolk and her companions and her being led over to the groom’s house. (The above liminal rites

61 About the marriage contracting betrothal of the early Middle Ages, see Reynolds, “Marrying,” 4–7.

62 Reynolds, “Marrying,” 11.

63 Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1–14, 116–45.

64 Bakó, *Palócöldi lakodalom*, 57–60.

clearly indicate that in the given system the leading of the bride to the groom's house [*átvezetés/hazavitel* = *leading over, taking home*] is the most important secular element of the marriage.) This peculiar sequence of nuptial events, widespread in Hungary but not occurring in the West European descriptions of customs known to us, the requesting after the church wedding in our opinion mirrors the fact that the rigid structure of the feast, in its basic form purely secular, only gradually adapted to the insertion of the church ceremony, only after some delay. If we regard the late rise of ethnographic collecting, we now see that the abovementioned liminal rites as the indicators of the crucial event shifted to an earlier time, that is, they immediately precede the church wedding ceremony.

With the help of the sixteenth-century wedding invitations sent to the Transylvanian town of Beszterce we have perhaps succeeded in showing that, in addition to the much-interrogated protocol records and documents of ecclesiastical courts, other sources may also take us closer to the labyrinthine system of medieval and early modern marriages. Their serious advantage over the litigation material is that they are witnesses not of deviations from the norm but rather of everyday practice. The invitations, the narrative and legal sources called upon to assist in their analysis, as well as the ethnographic data all point in the direction that not even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can we speak of the full realization of twelfth- and thirteenth-century ecclesiastical regulation in the Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania. Perhaps the denominational variety of the territory also played a role in this, but a comprehensive explanation can hardly be the task of our brief study.

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Translated by Matthew Caples

György Kövér

“A Satisfactory Combination in Every Respect...”

The Spouse Selection Dilemmas of a Young Man of the Christian Middle Class at the Turn of the Century

This case study looks at how a late nineteenth-century diarist from Hungary approached the problem of finding a wife. His system was to make lists of the ladies he met in various social circles, and appraise their potential benefits and drawbacks. In later life, he also left memoirs of his youth, although these make few references to the dilemmas he faced in choosing a wife. The literature on spouse selection focuses on the relative weights of socio-economic motives and “emotional-affective” conditions in courtship. How much did parents and relatives have a say in the choice, and how much did the decision rest on the young people’s individual will, or feelings of love? How much were the norms and the actual relationships differentiated by social class and gender? What was the balance between interests and emotions in the final outcome? Alajos Paikert (1866–1948), taken as a representative of the non-gentry middle class, did attempt to meet family expectations, but did not leave the choice to his parents. He wanted to find his future partner himself. The diary is a document of internal struggle, but is less concerned with feelings than with desires, possibilities and calculations. By bringing in other sources, however, the historian can try to work out what lay behind the words.

Keywords: gender relations, spouse selection, courtship, marriage

Max Weber’s primary operationalized index of “ständische Lage” (which in American sociology became simply “status”) was connubium, or who marries whom.¹ Weber here was not thinking of status in its historical-legal sense, but of “behavioral-sociological” status. If we relate this concept to nineteenth-century Hungarian history, then in the pre-1848 (*Vormärz*) period, this might mean marriage of noble and bourgeois young people within their own groups, and in the second half of the nineteenth century, when “the society of Estates” was breaking down, it manifested itself much more as an expression of the endogamy of occupational or socio-cultural groups.

Historiography oriented to modernization, or more broadly, to evolution, has also come up with a model of the long-term development of spouse-

1 Max Weber, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 1978), 305–6.

selection strategies. This sees a dominance in traditional societies of socio-economic interests rather than "emotional-affective" relations.² In the transition to modern society—which Lawrence Stone sees as having taken place in England and New England in the second half of the seventeenth and in the eighteenth century—the spread of individualism resulted in a radical shift of emphasis. Young people increasingly took the decisions themselves, of course leaving their parents the power of veto over socially or economically unacceptable candidates.³ The general picture naturally has some social differentiation, in that wealth strongly influenced the possibility and justification for intervention by parents and relatives, and there must have been numerous types and variants within each group.⁴

A decade later, although maintaining his views on the direction and phasing of the process, Stone put his argument much more subtly:

At all levels of society, there was a complex admixture of emotion and interest, affection and calculation, and a complex interaction between the wishes of the individuals and those of their 'friends.' The higher the social level, the more parents and friends dominated the situation and controlled the outcome; the lower in the social and economic scale the families were, the more free were the individuals to make their own choices, although that choice was itself not infrequently based as much on economic calculations as emotional commitment. Only in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did patriarchal ideas of parental power, even at the highest levels of society, begin to give way to a new ideal of affective individualism, so that the companionate marriage emerged first to compete with, and finally to take full priority over, calculations of interest and economic advantage.⁵

Pressure for a more sophisticated evaluation of the process came from leading historical anthropologist authors for whom the above argument was never

2 Reinhard Sieder, "Ehe, Fortpflanzung und Sexualität," in *Vom Patriarchat zur Partnerschaft. Zum Strukturwandel der Familie*, ed. Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder (Munich: Beck C. H., 1984), 143.

3 Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 270–73.

4 Stone, *The Family*, 390–95.

5 Lawrence Stone, "Love," in Stone, *The Past and the Present Revisited* (London–New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 334–35. It is interesting that at the end of the quotation, the author refers to chapter IV of his own 1977 book, making no further comment.

fully convincing.⁶ The somewhat limited set of sources—diaries from various social groups—did not support the chronological linearity of the thesis either in the early stage or the stage of transition.⁷ And the customs of transferring wealth and the regulated institutions of courtship for a long time permitted the parents to control their offspring.⁸

In addition, if we look beyond the early modern and Western European transition and take a comparative perspective on nineteenth century changes in continental Europe, we find much more differentiated views in recent literature. For example, Josef Ehmer, writing about nineteenth-century “bourgeois” marriages, asserted:

Of course, in many individual cases, there were conflicts between family strategies, parental plans, and the feelings of young people. The novels of the nineteenth century are full of such plots. Historical research, however, has shown that marriage alliances and individual love did not necessarily have to come into conflict. Since these young people moved within a particular social milieu and communication network, their individual contacts were concentrated within a narrow circle of marriage candidates who fitted into their own family strategies.⁹

David Sabean, looking at European systems of relations over a much longer timespan (and of course always drawing on the enormous Neckarhausen microhistory base) goes further, in declaring about the formation of various networks:

The education of both men and women to open and fluid systems where couples had to cooperate in tasks of social representation required protracted drill in taste, morality, sentiment, and style. Love and sentiment and emotional response or their expected development were

6 Alan Macfarlane's highly critical review of Stone's book: *History and Theory* 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1979): 103–26. See also Alan Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism. The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); Jack Goody, *The European Family. An Historico-Anthropological Essay* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

7 Leonore Davidoff and Cathrine Hall, *Family Fortunes. Man and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Good examples are the negotiations concerning finance and religious creed preceding the marriage of Rebecca Solly and Samuel Shaen. *Ibid.*, 326.

8 Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500–1914* (London–Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), 51.

9 Josef Ehmer, “Marriage,” in *The History of the European Family*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, vol. 2 of *Family Life in the Long Nineteenth Century 1789–1913* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2002), 315.

built into the very nature of familial circuitry. They were the software necessary to direct the course of all the hard-wired connectors. There were, of course, different ways of falling in love. Some people first chose a suitable family by visiting, dining, walking, and playing cards together in the evening, and others did it by correspondence. Some looked for a friendly face among relatives, while others latched onto families where their careers were directed. Some followed the wishes and advice of their parents and siblings, and some bravely struck off for themselves. But love always determined the flow of capital, access to office, the course of a career.¹⁰

Here, the financial and mental motifs are not static preconditions, but interactive products of everyday social organization and the subtle and sensitive network of relationships.

When we examine marriage strategy in general, we attempt to answer the question of “who marries whom” using registers of births, marriages and deaths, and genealogies. So we determine from a kind of ex post viewpoint what the ex ante motives of spouse selection might have been. From the “what it became” we try to find out “what it evolved out of”. Without going into the argument of how this is methodologically possible, we address the question using a source which allows us to take a definitely ex ante approach. This case study looks at how a late nineteenth-century diarist from Hungary approached the problem of finding a wife. His system was to make lists of the ladies he met in various social circles, and appraise their potential benefits and drawbacks. Of course it is difficult to determine the extent to which “marriage market” is based on rational choices, because the emotional motive of decisions, however unpredictable it might seem, is somewhat self-evident. In our case, however, as we shall see, the presence and extent of rational assessment is quite striking. In addition, the man in question left later memoirs, so that we do not lose the ex post viewpoint either. If we have to rely on memoirs alone, we deprive ourselves of the sight of the rival candidates and are forced to look at the whole process of spouse selection purely through the actual marriage.

Youthful diaries permit a genetic study of marriage strategies even for the pre-1848 period. A well-known diary in the Hungarian literature is that of Etelka Slachta. While she was tending her sick mother in Balatonfüred in the summer

10 David Warren Sabean, “Kinship and Class Dynamics in Nineteenth-Century Europe” in *Kinship in Europe. Approaches to Long-Term Development (1300–1900)*, ed. Sabean et al. (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 309–10.

of 1841, she was also choosing among suitors. At the same time, she wrote the following to her cousin and friend:

There are two serious candidates among these 14 suitors, but that must remain between us. If I do not take their hand, I do not want to enquire about what they have to offer. One is as handsome as Adonis, with fine manners, a majestic upbringing, very noble, elegant exterior. His father was only a grain factor, but he is very rich. He came here with four horses, but fancy, I didn't say yes! I am this young man's first true love. He is from Komárom. I thought for a moment, but I know little about this handsome, intelligent youth. The other is from Pest, not so handsome as pleasant, intelligent, jolly, witty and so dreadfully in love, declaring that only now he sees what true love is. He is so rich he keeps an equipage in the city. I think he should also be considered. I am not in love with either of them; I would go to them only out of reason. And where the mind and not heart decides, we always choose more slowly.¹¹

In her diary, she goes well beyond wealth and noble origin to consider many other aspects and tricks of hunting for a husband. Here it is worth having a look at the subtle differentiation of social life in Balatonfüred in the circumstances of society of estates, where a distinction was made between “société” and aristocratic “haute volée”. Etelka, although her mother was a baroness, was not at home in the latter.¹² Etelka Slachta's freedom of choice was afforded to a great extent to her remaining alone after the death of her mother, allowing her to give free rein to her feelings towards the man of the Reformed faith who kept an “equipage”.

Even the diaries do not simply record established customs. That would hardly be worth writing down on a daily basis. As Alan Macfarlane wrote about the diary he published, kept by a seventeenth-century pastor, “the very fact that he kept a diary suggests that he was slightly exceptional.”¹³ Contemporary diaries

11 To Baroness Mária Baumgarten, 3 August 1841. Katona Csaba, “*Azért én önnek sem igent, sem nemet nem mondtam.*” *Válogatás Slachta Etelka és Szekrényessy József leveleiből*, vol. 5 (Győr: Mediawave, 2008), 41–43. The diary reveals that the first candidate was called Mihály Csetke and the second József Szekrényessy. The latter became her husband. In the eyes of the Catholic baroness mother, the latter's greatest defect was that he was of the Reformed faith. Descriptions in the diary: Csaba Katona (ed.), “...kacérkodni fogok vele.” *Slachta Etelka soproni úrleány naplója 1840. december – 1841. augusztus*, vol. 3 (Győr: Mediawave, 2006), 133–36.

12 Katona, ed., “...kacérkodni fogok vele.” 139, 159–60, 165, 179.

13 Alan Macfarlane, ed., *The Family Life of Ralf Josselin a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman. An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (New York: The Norton Library, 1977), 11; Macfarlane, *The Origins*, 65.

certainly do not contain all the important information. There are things that are kept quiet deliberately, and others for which the author has no words. There are facts that cannot be uttered.

This is when we can find some assistance in the memoirs of advanced age, which show more insight by virtue of life experience and wisdom, not to mention the distance from the emotional storms of the time. Júlia M. Hrabovszky, aunt of Sándor Márai, put to paper at the age of eighty her memories of struggles to find a spouse in the late 1870s. She too had lost her father at an early age, and the family of landed gentry became impoverished. When still a girl, she earned her bread as a governess while seeking possible spouses in various spa towns (Herkulesfürdő, Buziás). She also had several suitors, and according to the narrative of her memoirs, she too made her own choice. One suitor inquired after her financial position, causing her deep offence. Another, for similar reasons, did not want to marry her but invited her as a girlfriend on a trip around the world, thus putting an end to that connection. One she rejected because he was old, and another was unacceptable on account of his employment as a farm bailiff; she did not want to live with him in a village. The latter, according to gossip, was of Jewish origin, although “nobody could prove it” (why take the trouble if a rumour did the job!). Then she met the nephew of the Prince of Serbia, but ruled him out because he had neither wealth nor employment. Finally, a noble judge of Romanian origin and a Romanian architect from Bucharest came on to the scene almost simultaneously, and clearly coincidentally. Somewhat less accidental was Júlia Hrabovszky’s choice of the latter. In Georges Muntureanu she found everything in one. As she looked back, the former bride wrote in the narrative present: “now that the matter is settled. I am marrying a handsome, elegant witty, well-placed man whom I like.” Later she added, “although I found perfect satisfaction in marriage, and the happiness I wanted, I would still say that unless one is moved by great love or great advantage, a girl should marry in her own country and not wish for a foreign place.”¹⁴ But it is not only abroad that sentiment and interest (“advantage”), can harmoniously complement each other.

14 Júlia M. Hrabovszky, *Ami elmúlt. Visszaemlékezések életemből*, ed. Ágota Steinert (Budapest: Helikon, 2001), 33–95. Quotations: 88; 93–94.

Alajos Paikert's Diary Entries and Gender Lists

Alajos Paikert (1866–1948) was much more of a public figure than Etelka Slachta or Júlia Hrabovszky, indeed the biographical dictionaries tell us he was one of the founders of *Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle* (Hungarian Economic History Review) and a founder of the agricultural museums in Budapest and Cairo and of the Turán Society. It is his diaries, however, rather than any public capacity, which make him interesting here. These, written in several volumes of various sizes, and now held in the Manuscript Department of the National Széchényi Library, cover the years between 1887 and 1943.¹⁵ He also wrote several versions of his autobiography, now held in the Personal Memory Collection of the Budapest Museum of Agriculture, and from which a member of the Museum staff has published an extensive selection.¹⁶ Although he clearly did not keep his diary continuously, we have documentation of a volume that permits analysis to some depth. As might be expected from a male diary, the main subject is the author's career and his activities in public life. Nonetheless, his private life does feature quite strongly in the diaries of his youth, particularly on the subject of seeking and courting potential spouses. The young man tried to fulfil family expectations, but did not leave the choice to his parents. He wanted to find his future wife himself. His diary is the documentation of this internal struggle. First of all, in order to understand the parental norms, we must first introduce the family.

His parents traced themselves, according to the author of the diary, to Sudeten German ancestors. His father and his maternal grandfather were both high-ranking military doctors: the father, also Alajos, was staff doctor in the army and at the peak of his career was chief medical officer of the

15 OSZK Kt. Quart. Hung. 3264. Paikert Alajos naplói (1887–1943), vols. 1–11. The extensive bequest contains other volumes: Quart. Hung. 3265. Paikert Alajos vegyes feljegyzései és rajzai (1889–1894), vols. 1–4; Quart. Hung. 3509. Paikert Alajos: Naplórajzok (1889); Quart. Hung. 3605. Paikert Alajos naplói és egyéb feljegyzései. (1886–1895), vols. 1–4; Oct. Hung. 1299. Paikert Alajos naplója és egyéb feljegyzései (1909), vols. 1–2; Oct. Hung. 1445. Paikert Alajos évről évre szóló kis naplója (1911–1916), vols. 1–2; Fol. Hung. 2549. Paikert Alajos: Napló (1890. március–október). The Personal Memory Collection of the Museum of Agriculture (MgM) also holds some diary-like notes: 2012.3.1. Paikert Alajos, Régi feljegyzés 2 May – 18 December 1898, and notes marked “24. napló” 3 May 1944 – 8 May 1945; 2012.9.1. Paikert Alajos, Kis napló, 1 January – 30 December 1947, 2012.8.1. Paikert Alajos, Kis napló 1946.

16 Alajos Paikert, “Életem és korom (Egy emlékirat a múzeum Adattárának őrzetében),” pub. Rózsa Takáts, in *A Magyar Mezőgazdasági Múzeum Közleményei, 1998–2000* (Budapest: 2001), 159–218. The original manuscript and its typed versions: MgM 1338. Paikert, Életem; 1339–45.

Budapest corps. His mother's father, Dr Vince Walter of Waltenau was also a staff doctor, the chief medical officer of the Kassa corps. Alajos senior (Jeleny, 1831–Budapest, 1914) was raised to the nobility in 1909 with the noble predicate “of Seprős”, which extended to his two surviving sons. Henrik (1865–1949) and Alajos were born in Nagyszombat (now Trnava, Slovakia) and went to school in Pozsony. Henrik chose a military career, enrolling in the military academy of Wiener Neustadt and advancing to the rank of lieutenant of hussars. After his marriage, however, he exchanged life as a hussar officer for that of a farming landowner.¹⁷ Alajos first graduated from the agricultural college in Magyaróvár and then matriculated in the Faculty of Law in the University of Pest. For both sons, the somewhat autocratic father played a decisive part in their choice of career. In his memoirs, the son largely blamed his father's strictness for the loss of his hitherto swelling fortune in 1873. To at least partly recover it was thenceforth his father's overriding ambition. He did not succeed.¹⁸ Young Alajos for a long time swithered between an agricultural or a legal career, and even toyed with the idea of painting (robustly opposed by his father) or becoming an inventor. For a short time, he served as a junior lecturer in the anthropological department in the humanities faculty. Finally, in 1891, he became assistant secretary of the organization representing large estates and the agricultural profession in Hungary, the National Hungarian Agricultural Association (OMGE), later rising to secretary. In that capacity, he made extended visits to England and North America, was involved in organizing the international agrarian movement, edited the agricultural historical journal *Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle*, and founded the Museum of Agriculture. He resigned his office in OMGE in 1896 (again earning his father's disapproval), and as he rebuilt his career, his thoughts increasingly turned to marriage.

On 21 April 1897, he noted in his diary:

I *should*: get married, have myself appointed director, I should write articles for newspapers and journals, I should go to meetings, take part in moderate movements, correspond with various personages, make

17 Paikert, “Életem és korom,” 167. In the substantial apparatus to the diaries, Rózsa Takáts notes: “He married a daughter of the publicly respected and very wealthy Kintzig family... At his wife's behest, he entered the reserves and farmed as a tenant at Seprős (Arad county). It became a model farm, he had a fine stud farm, ten thousand apple trees... he lost the estate, husband and wife live apart...” Ibid., 208.

18 Paikert, “Életem és korom,” 164. Shortly before his death, his father declared in his will that he had no substantial fortune (capital, property, jewellery, etc.). Only household furniture, clothes, etc. BFL VII,6 e, 1914.-V(I)-105. Alajos Paikert, Testament, Buda, Mai 1913.

some appearances in society, I should travel, I should take photographs, paint, sculpt, invent, write poetry, do scientific research, etc. etc. This is all feasible!¹⁹ (Underlining in the original)

Ultimately, he was not appointed director of the agricultural museum he had founded. Nonetheless, he moved into his office there and worked as a curator (*custos*) while he planned his future.

His distinctively thorough approach to the subject of marriage was not a new line of thought for him. He also received clear prompts in this direction from home. As he wrote in the unfinished memoirs he intended for his family, after his elder brother married, his mother urged the issue: "...often holding agreeable tea parties to which she invited mothers of girls whom she considered worthy of my considering as a bride; of course the mothers were to bring their daughters."²⁰ Most often, however, the young man did not even attend these. He wanted to take his affairs into his own hands. Living in the same house as his parents, this was not easy to do.

Over several days in 1894, he drew up a list of his acquaintances among members of parliament, the aristocracy, academia, finance, literature, the arts and public administration. His review of this network of contacts ended with a list of ladies and girls.²¹ Of course, not all of the seventeen spinsters in the list could have been regarded as candidate brides, but they all had a reason for being there. We cannot identify every name on the list (one even lacks a Christian name), but some are marked with the letter "t". Since this also appears in the other lists, we have inferred from the names that it denotes a level of social connection. On the page before the young-lady acquaintances, for example, it appears in the list of lady acquaintances against the names Baroness Ida Kollmann, Mrs Ferenc Kintzig and Mrs Béla Kintzig.²²

19 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5, Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 32v; 21 April 1897.

20 MgM 2012.20.1. Paikert Alajos önéletrajza 1940. Életem és működésem, 25.

21 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3265/3, Paikert, 45–53, 12–14 November 1894.

22 Baroness Kollmann, née Ida Zinn (1839–1913), for example, may have been one of his acquaintances from Nagyszombat. Certainly, her husband, Colonel Antal Kollmann, died in Nagyszombat in 1875. János József Gudenus, *A magyarországi főnemesség XX. századi genealógiája*, vol. 4 (Budapest: Heraldika, 1998), 383. Mrs. Ferenc Kintzig née Ilona Kintzig and Béla Kintzig were siblings of Henrik Paikert's wife Lujza Kintzig. These markings may even indicate guests of the tea parties arranged by his mother. Except where I indicate another source, I have used the death notices collection of the National Széchényi Library to identify the families. Accessed December 26, 2013. http://www.rakovszky.net/E1_LSG_ObitsIndex/GYJ-NevIndex.shtml

	gf. [countess] Mária Kornis
	Erzsébet Concha
	Hedvig Concha
	Melanie Koller
	Margit Tyroch
	Margit Baross
	Laura Whilen [?]
	Elsie Whilen [?]
	Iza Dömötör
	Irén Dömötör
t	Ida Kollmann
	Herzog
	Natalia Kormann
	Margit Gombár
t	Margit Kintzig
t	Erzsébet Hasz
t	Sarolta Hasz

The girls marked "t" are mostly placed towards the end of the list, and the last three were probably relatives: his brother Henrik had married Lujza Kintzig in 1891, and Sarolta and Erzsébet Hasz's brother Antal was also married to a Kintzig girl.

Alajos Paikert's diary includes several lists of marriageable girls. When planning the period ahead of him a year later, in October 1895, he envisaged getting engaged before the end of the year and marrying during the next. The engagement and marriage had career overtones. The engagement was connected with a post of "ministerial secretary" which carried a salary of 2–3000 forints and required further actions to attain ("an article, a plan, a drawing, a poem, a speech, a deed"), while marriage by 1896, counting on the higher income, was linked with the keywords "travel, son, district, abroad". The word district (*kerület*) undoubtedly alluded to an election constituency, and thus to political ambitions. After the action plan came a reduced list of names marked only with initials (although at least half of the names can be deduced from the first list).

Winifred W.

Marie D.

Mária K. [Countess Mária Kornis]

Erzsébet C. [Erzsébet Concha]

Hedvig C. [Hedvig Concha]

Anita G.

Melanie H.

Natalia K. [Natalia Kormann]²³

The other names, as our present knowledge stands, remain undecipherable. Even such an intimate journal, it seems, does not lift the veil on every secret. We are restricted to discussing the girls who feature on subsequent pages of the diary.

Countess Mária Kornis (1878–1955), who we may recognize from the top of the first list, was the daughter of Count Károly Kornis (1841–1893). Her brother, also Károly Kornis (1869–1918) appears on Alajos Paikert's diary as one of his friends.²⁴ Károly, the child count, who was some years younger than Alajos, went to school in Pozsony. Indeed, the strict Paikert father allowed him—at the request of the Batthyány counts—to live in their house as part of the family. Through this friendship, Károly Kornis the elder invited Alajos Paikert several times during his school years to his estate in Szerep, Bihar county, where the hunts and the wetlands of Sárret aroused pleasant recollections when he wrote his memoirs several decades later.²⁵ We know only from the diary, however, that when he met his friend again in 1896, somewhat different experiences came to the mind of the still-young man:

In Váci utca, I met with Count Károly Kornis, my best friend. I was most pleased to meet him again, and he was too. We walked and talked for half an hour, while he told me of his plans (to sell land for 300 florins per lesser hold [1 lesser hold=0.36 hectares]) and I told him mine (museum and attaché). If Károly divests himself of his estate, he will get about 2 million for it. He will be there in winter, and he will

23 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/4, Paikert, Vegyes, 1894–1895. Kis Napló, 41, 7 October 1895. This was not the only list of females in autumn 1895. Shortly afterwards, in early November, in the same book, we find lists of “handsome ladies” and “girls”. Here there are again only different names: “Girls: Kornis, Pallavicini, Szechenyi, Concha, Hegedüs, Kormann, Haller, Tyroch, Lukács, Koller, Czigler, Fábán, Károlyi” OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/4. Paikert, Vegyes. 1894–1895. Kis Napló, 51, 1 November 1895. Besides the standard women's names, there seems to be a strong presence of girls from aristocratic families.

24 Gudenus, *A magyarországi főnemesség*, vol. 2, 105–6.

25 Paikert, “Életem és korom,” 166.

visit me. Marie is now 18 years old. If she loves me as she did then, I will immediately ask her hand [...]”²⁶

The feelings of a young girl are of course no basis for marriage, as the young Paikert clearly well knew, but Mária’s fate was still on his mind in spring 1897: “I take umbrance at Károly Kornis visiting me so rarely. He has no office, he’s got the time. Will Mária be happy?”²⁷

It was during his years at school in Pozsony that Alajos first developed strong inclinations towards the aristocracy (and the gentry), and some illusions in that regard.²⁸ The feeling of “amalgamation” may have been aroused by musical evenings in certain houses, although the partitions between the “first” and “second” societies clearly remained in place and were apparent on some occasions.²⁹ This occasionality may be compared to that moment after the aeroplane takes off, when the stewardess discreetly draws the curtain between the business and economy classes so as not to show off the difference in service between the classes (but to indicate that this dividing line exists). His time in the

26 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5, Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 11, 16 December 1896.

27 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5, Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 24, 13 April 1897. The remark was clearly prompted by Mária’s marriage to Baron Géza Gudenus on 26 May 1897. Gudenus, *A magyarországi főnemesség*, vol. 2, 106.

28 He recorded in his memoirs: “Pozsony was a very aristocratic city at that time, exuding the nimbus of the old coronation city and the direct proximity of the imperial court in Vienna. In my youth I had invitations from the following aristocratic families in Pozsony and environs: the Frigyes archducal (his wife was Princess Izabella Croy-Dülmen), the Rohan, Pálffy and Odescalchi princely, the Esterházy, Batthyány, Pálffy, Zichy, Hunyady, Erdődy, Apponyi, Waldstein, Henckel-Donnersmarck, etc. county, the Vay, Prónay, Podmaniczky, Feilitzsch, Lederer, Hengersen, etc. baronial and many fine Hungarian gentry families. For most of them, my father was their doctor. The magnate families were by their nature of a courtly bent, owing to their family bonds, somewhat international outlook, marriages and extensive travels.” Paikert, “Életem és korom,” 164.

29 “In Pozsony, we lived first in Szél utca (Windgasse) near the county hall and the Crusaders’ Church, and later on the first floor of the enormous Wittmann House in Ventur utca. In the second-floor flat of the insignificant building in the former side-street, my parents, who were both great music lovers (my father played the violin well and my mother sang in a fine alto voice), held intimate musical evenings attended by the finest intelligentsia in Pozsony. Only classical music, Haydn, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Boccherini, was played. Most frequent were quartets, on which István Dávid played first violin, Gessler viola, Frigyes Dohnányi cello, and Baroness Lederer Mathild played the piano part. There were several excellent musical evening families in Pozsony at that time, such as the Baron Lederer family, Princess Odescalchi née Countess Valerie Erdődy, and several others.” Paikert, “Életem és korom,” 165–66.

OMGE only stoked the awe Paikert felt towards the aristocracy.³⁰ We know from the original manuscript of his memoirs that, after he moved to Budapest, he often went on excursions to the Buda hills. The lady members of the party may have been the inspiration behind his lists of women.³¹ It was clearly after one of these occasions that Paikert put to himself a kind of “why not?” question: “Why should I not marry Count Béla Széchenyi’s daughter?”³² An interesting point about the retrospective lists of excursion-goers and the contemporary lists in the diary is that Cécile Tormay, who later became a writer, appears only among the excursion company. Considering the system of social connections, this seems plausible, because her father, Béla Tormay, who had graduated in veterinary science and agriculture and gained employment on the Derekegyház estate, rose step by step to membership of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (in 1899).³³ It may be a subtle sign that Edina Pallavicini (1877–1964), whose divorce case put the matter of Cecil Tormay’s lesbianism on spectacular public display in the 1920s, may be found in both the contemporary and retrospective lists.³⁴ The name at the head of the list of the excursion company was Helén Bartha, daughter of military staff doctor János Bartha, who belonged to the same professional circle as the Paikert family and was made a noble in 1909. She,

30 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5. Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 43, 23 April 1897. “Aristokratia. This is my world. Oh, democracy is such a fine word. Today we see such climbers in every field, base, villainous climbers ... out in the open or into the arms of the aristocracy! Károlyis, Dessewffys, Széchenyis, Andrássys, Pálffy, Esterházy etc. etc. That is my world.”

31 MgM 1338, Paikert, Életem. The participants in the excursions, according to a later list, were: “Helén Bartha, Adrienne Fischel, the Nagy sisters, Miczi Kormann, Alice Széchenyi, Czilli Szalay, Edith Koller, Edina Pallavicini, Erzs Concha, Cecil Tormay, Mária Herzog [Margit], Elza Pethes, Ilona Dömötör, Margit and Ella Lukács [?]”. 71. The Christian names faded in his memory. The Herzogs had a daughter called Margit (*1871) and not Mária, and she got married in 1893. Gudenus, *A magyarországi főnemesség*, vol. 1, 542. And Antal Lukács had—to our knowledge—seven daughters, none of which were called Ella.

32 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3605/4. Paikert, Vegyes, 1894, 95, 6v, before December 1894. Alice Széchenyi (1871–1945), eldest daughter of Béla Széchenyi, married Count Tibor Teleki in summer 1895. Gudenus, *A magyarországi főnemesség*, vol. 4, 52.

33 The literature on Cecile Tormay classes her without qualification as a child of the gentry, even though her father only gained a title with the noble predicate “of Nádudvar” in 1896. Before then, following her mother (Hermin Barkassy) she could have been at most considered as ‘agilis’ (matrilineal nobility). Béla Pettkó and Ede Reisz, eds., *Magyar Nemzetiségi Zsebkönyv*, part 2, *Nemes családok*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Franklin, 1905), 43.

34 Zoltán Ónag, *Tormay Cécile* (2009), accessed December 26, 2013. <http://www.irodalmijelen.hu/05242013-0953/tormay-cecile>. After Count Rafael Zichy’s divorce in 1925, he claimed in public that his former wife Countess Edina Pallavicini had a lesbian affair with the celebrated conservative writer of the age, Cecile Tormay. The two women took the matter to court; the ex-husband lost, and was even imprisoned.

however, does not appear in any of the lists of potential brides. In addition, at the turn of the century, the Barthas lived nearby in Döbrentei utca 4, and were very likely to have attended the tea parties arranged by Paikert's mother.³⁵ The name Margit Tyroch does not appear in the retrospective list of excursioners, but recurs in several other lists. She also belonged to the father's old professional-collegial circle and the Pozsony company: "Last night I was at the Tyrochs, perhaps the first time for a year. Margit indeed takes my fancy, a bright, kind, natural girl, just right for me. I felt very good in her company."³⁶

The diary for autumn 1895 makes several mentions of the Concha girls, daughters of Professor Győző Concha. Prof. Concha, from Kolozsvár (now Cluj-Napoca, Romania), was one of the pioneers of political science and history of ideas in Hungary. He had been widowed upon the birth of his fourth daughter in 1883, in the eighth year of marriage. He had multiple connections to the Paikerts' company, and his mixture of occupational and kin relationships extended to the Baross, Forster and Dömötör families.³⁷ We know only from the memoirs that Alajos wrote for the family that the Dömötör girls' brother László, another leading light among the young members of OMGE, was also a great admirer of Erzsébet Concha, although this did not damage the friendship between the two men.³⁸ The four marriageable girls must have been a factor in the young Paikert's interest in the family, even if Győző Concha headed the

35 BFL Budapesti cím és lakjegyzék, 1900. Accessed December 26, 2013, <http://bfl.archivportal.hu/cgi-bin/lakas/lakas.pl>. Helén Bartha (d. 1947) married a military officer, Frigyes Quandt and was soon widowed (in 1907).

36 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5. Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 2v, 29 September 1896. Dr József Tyroch [sic] was a staff medical officer. He died in Pozsony in 1899 at the age of 62. Only one of his daughters survived to adulthood.

37 First of all, Concha himself came from an agricultural family. His father was bailiff of the Marcaltó estate, and died in 1865. Additionally, his wife Emilia Forster, who died in childbirth, was the daughter of János Forster (1810–1891), primatological steward and brother of Gyula and Kálmán Forster, pioneers of the agrarian movement. Through the Forsters, the Concha family were in-laws to the Baross family of Bellus and also related to the Dömötör girls, who also featured on the list, because Izabella Dömötör's elder sister Emmy was married to Gyula and Kálmán Forster's brother Géza. On the Forster family, see József Szinnyei, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, vol. 3 (Budapest: Hornyánszky, 1894), 656–58, András Váci: *Urak és gazdászok. Arisztokrácia, agrárértelmiség és agrárius mozgalom Magyarországon 1821–1898* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2009), 419. Pál Baross' wife was called Anna Forster. Their son was Károly Baross, a key figure in the management of the OMGE and elder brother of Margit, born in 1870, who featured on the first list. See Béla Pettkő and Ede Reisz, eds., *Magyar Nemzetiségi Zsebkönyv*, part 2, vol. 1, 44; Béla Kempelen, *Magyar nemes családok*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Grill Károly Könyvkiadó, 1911), 431–36. Emmy, daughter of the retired bailiff of Tordas, who died in 1893, buried her husband, Géza Forster, retired director of the OMGE, 1907. He was also mourned by his brothers Gyula and Kálmán, and his brothers-in-law Pál Baross and Győző Concha.

38 MgM 2012.20.1. Paikert, Életem és működésem, 16.

list of academics for 1894. “I would very much like Erzsike as my wife, but I do not have enough money to satisfy her ambitions. Marriage: must think about it very hard...”³⁹ Perhaps his attitude to the girl would have been more positive had he still been aiming for an academic career, although there may have been something else in the background: upon meeting her father a year later, he noted: “Concha came with kindness. – Concha was as charming as ever, it seems he would like me to forget the past and marry Erzsébet.”⁴⁰ The Concha girls never completely disappeared from the list of choices. Hardly six months later, new motives appeared: “On the way to Köztelek I met the Conchas. Oh Erzsi why are you not my wife. On the way back, I saw Erzsi again on her father’s arm. It is only because of my parents I do not ask her. And yet what a splendid wife she would make...”⁴¹ Alajos, whose abilities also extended to art, actually painted Erzsébet in 1898. The picture shows not a social type but one of the female ideals: she is painted with a bonnet, a combination of innocent little girl and nun.⁴²

A high-ranking name on the early lists was Melanie Koller. Although it has not been possible to identify a Koller named Melanie, the diary frequently mentions the pretty Edith Koller, daughter of Koller Lajos of Grantzow, trade counsellor, who died in 1891 at the age of 51. They also lived not far from the Paikerts in Buda, on Várkert rakpart.⁴³ Beauty and brightness of eyes clearly complicated the choices:

When I was on the underground in the afternoon, Mrs László Arany came on to the train with the pretty Edith Koller at the Opera. She is a decidedly beautiful girl, with good taste. I was somewhat clumsy and did not greet the handsome lady, but Edith threw me a secretive glance with her black eyes – and set me alight. It is difficult to choose.⁴⁴

39 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/4. Paikert, Vegyes. 1894–1895. Kis Napló, 47, 27 October 1895.

40 Ibid., 12v, 20 December 1896.

41 Ibid., 52v, 25 April 1897.

42 MgM 2012.19.1. Paikert, Vázlatkönyv. 35. Erzsébet Concha, 4 February 1898. Two of the four Concha girls—Erzsébet and Emília—did not get married. Paikert also notes in his memoirs that Erzsébet retreated to a convent for a while, and most significantly, the rival friend László Dömötör never married either. MgM 2012.20.1. Paikert, Életem és működésem, 16.

43 The Paikerts lived in Buda, at Jégverem u. 2. Paikert, “Életem és korom,” 169. (Note by Rózsa Takáts, *ibid.*, 194).

44 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5. Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 27, 14 April 1897. Edith Koller of Granzow (1878–1958) married the later minister of finance, Baron Frigyes Korányi of Tolcsa, in 1901. Gudenus, *A magyarországi főnemesség*, vol. 2, 97.

So powerful was the experience that next day he put her on the list of his top favourites: “I must get married. Margit Lukács, Erzsébet Concha, Edith Koller, all three *grazia* are beautiful and good and intelligent.”⁴⁵ This shows how uncertain was the rationally-selected place in the hierarchy when exposed to the caprices of the market.

For all his thoroughness, the lists he produced were far from perfect. The detailed diary entries reveal that in autumn 1896, young Alajos was making his most fervent advances towards Margit Lukács, whose name is absent from the first lists. Although not listed until early November, she was not a new acquaintance and came from a family with several marriageable girls. Antal Lukács, Director of the Magyar Földhitelintézet (Hungarian Agricultural Land Credit Institute), had seven daughters and one son. Margit (1875–1952) was the fourth daughter.⁴⁶

I am utterly happy. This evening I was at the Lukácses. I went up in some trepidation that they might receive me somewhat coolly owing to my long absence, but they received me warmly indeed! – they were just having tea, and I went with them to the opera and we had a fine time together. I am completely reassured. – I find Margit most attractive, she will be just right for me! It will be splendid, why can't we have the wedding tomorrow!⁴⁷

He was clearly finding his self-confidence, as if marriage was of more concern to him than progress in other areas of life:

But my marriage is even more important. At the moment, Margit Lukács is the favourite. I would be glad if she married me, and I think she would be glad to be my wife. I will truly love her and I can make her happy, and that is approximately what I will say to her.⁴⁸

Then he seemed to waver, while feeling a stronger drive than ever:

My lady, my fine upright lady, loving wife. I forget the past, live for the future, my family's future. Margit Lukács was a proper and in every respect satisfactory combination, and that it did not become a reality was down to me alone. She was taken hand in hand before me in her finest dress, with the sincere good wishes of both parental families.

45 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5. Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 28v, 15 April 1897.

46 Tamás László Rozsos: *Az erdélyi örmény eredetű nemes Lukács család genealógiája* (Budapest: 2012), 16.

47 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5. Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 8v–9.

48 Ibid., 11v, 18 December 1896.

One word, one misunderstanding, drew us apart. And yet how good it would have been for both sides! There is so much in common between the two families, and it would have been a truly harmonious and healthy accord.⁴⁹

There seems to have been an understanding between the families, and the failure of the match was obviously because of the young people. In the light of what happened later, it is hard to believe Alajos:

I sigh deeply, thinking that in January I could have taken here my bride, Margit Lukács. How splendid it would have been. What joy I would have caused the good parents!⁵⁰

Nonetheless, the fateful year of 1898 still seemed to revolve around Margit:

Margit. You have wounded me. I am not like the others. Love me, or do not love me and let us go our separate ways. I will not run after you. I found everything in you that I sought – I want to be your everything, and if I am not, that is the end of everything.

In the meantime, more about the background comes to light:

Margit. She would still have been best for me. She is homely, good-hearted, healthy, nice, good family, thrifty, pretty, etc. etc. – But I have done everything, she knows I am not a *courmacher* (“Romeo”), why does she demand that from me? I will not humiliate myself.⁵¹

What the girl actually felt is sadly unknown to us. Some signs, however, do emerge from the background. These suggest more than “one word” or “a misunderstanding”. There must have been more subtle “behavioural sociological” barriers to the marriage if the error was in the courtship. Could it be that Margit Lukács put him to the test, or in fact wanted to rebuff a young man who she did not really like?

This was just as he was producing his final list, consisting mostly of familiar names (or at least Christian names), but ending with a completely new one.

49 Ibid., 20, 12 April 1897.

50 Ibid., 54–54v, 26 April 1897. On his 31st birthday at the end of May 1897, he was fantasizing about getting engaged in Csömör (where the Lukácses lived), *ibid.*, 61, 31 May 1897.

51 MgM 2012.3.1. Paikert, Régi feljegyzés, Személyes, 1898. máj. 2 – dec. 18, 1, 2 May 1898; 3, 5 May.

“Girls: Erzsébet – Margit – Adrienne – Hedvig – Irma – T. Margit – Mila – H. Marie – Winifred – Deli.”⁵²

Erzsébet and Hedvig are clearly the Concha girls. The Margit without a surname is Margit Lukács, and T. Margit is Margit Tyroch. The name Adrienne appears only on this list, and may be the Adrienne Fischel from the retrospective list of excursioners, or possibly the lady to whom he wrote a poem in 1895 (Paikert wrote poetry throughout his life), the eldest daughter of Károly Andrányi of Győrök, trade counsellor of Arad, who died in 1893 at the age of 55. Whoever it was, she still ruffled the conscience of Alajos Paikert as he sought a mate in 1897: “I am so miserable! – I have alienated the angelic Adrienne from me. How long will this last? It will end in madness.”⁵³ This was clearly the period of ultimate desperation and final effort, but one in which a new ray of hope appeared.

The Decision: Deli

In summer 1898, several of his relatives were still encouraging him to make up his mind and finally marry Margit Lukács: “...I must embark upon the siege of Margit, God grant me that I will succeed and M. will love me, I know we will be a very good couple.”⁵⁴ In early September, however, he was back to the cultural and methodological problems of courtship, considerations unlikely to win him the battle.

Why cannot I say to Margit: I love you, love me, do you love me? – Yes or no. – No, nowadays I have to swerve around the question ten times in all kinds of attitude and costume, and she has to play the most hostile faces, before we get anywhere. What’s the use? Ah – the choice of a wife is certainly the most important when one is married for life. A one-year marriage with a six-month break, that is much more practical.⁵⁵

52 Ibid., 3. 4 May 1898.

53 OSZK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/5. Paikert, Napló 1896. szept. 29 – 1898. márc. 11, 72, 11 March 1898. The nexus did indeed fit into the above web of relationships, especially after she married Ferenc Baross of Bellus and her younger sister Elvira married Lajos Baross.

54 MgM 2012.3.1. Paikert, Régi feljegyzés, Személyes, 1898. máj. 2 – dec. 18, 4, 28 June 1898. He even came out with a slogan: “Csömör – courtship, siege, capture!” Ibid., 4 August. Theodore Zeldin has aptly described the traditional masculine model of courtship to be a combination of commercial techniques and military means. Theodore Zeldin, *An Intimate History of Humanity* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994), 116.

55 MgM 2012.3.1. Paikert, Régi feljegyzés, Személyes, 1898. máj. 2 – dec. 18, 5, 4 September 1898.

His outrage against middle-class courtship norms was stronger than his resolution.

Then the diary seemed to find a new protagonist. At the end of May, for the sake of Deli, the last on the list, he seemed to put all of his cards on the table.

Deli – Do you understand me, will you love me? Oh God give my heart peace! From your beautiful gentle eyes, so much goodness radiates towards me, will you keep what you promise me?⁵⁶

Then he gives himself a stern command: “It must be decided, a man cannot love more than one! – Let there be an end.”⁵⁷ This sentence is misleading at first sight. It looks as though Alajos had been simultaneously in love with all of the women he had listed and courted. His diary is not, however, the outpouring of an adolescent girl’s secrets. In fact, he betrays no signs of romantic love, and as for feelings, he wrote much more about what he perceived—or hoped for—in others, than about what he felt himself. We cannot say he was devoid of feelings, but he was certainly either incapable of expressing them or considered it unmanly to write them down.

The diary fails to reveal what caused the sudden urgency surrounding marriage two years into his thirties, or what led to Deli Rónay’s appearance at the end of the final list. More helpful are the memoirs he wrote for his family. From there, we find that he had seen her as a little girl on a photograph when she was eight years old and immediately declared, “she will be my wife.” His first real-life acquaintance with the Rónay family was a wedding, where he was a groomsman and asked Deli to accompany him as bridesmaid.⁵⁸

Who were they? Károly Rónay (1849–1935) was a prosperous attorney and later royal notary. His wife Izabella Sztipán gave him three daughters and a son, the first, in 1880, being Deli Franciska Izabella.⁵⁹ The father (and his family) were raised to the nobility in 1912 with the noble predicate “of Osgyán”, thus following a similar path of elevation to that of the elder Alajos Paikert (although neither of them could have known this in 1898).⁶⁰ Károly Rónay’s wife on her mother’s side was a descendent of the “Fluk family of Rággamb” and brought

56 Ibid., 7, 24 September 1898.

57 Ibid., 7, 2 October 1898.

58 MgM 2012.20.1. Paikert, *Életem és működésem*, 35–36.

59 Register of Birth and Death, accessed June 16, 2013. <https://familysearch.org/search/record/results#count>, All four were registered in the Lower Víziváros Roman Catholic register, not far from the Paikerts’ home.

60 József Gerő, ed., *A királyi könyvek* (Budapest: Gerő József, 1940), 176.

with her “a substantial fortune”. This important aspect only comes to light in the memoirs, as does the fact that the Rónay parents were “highly cultured, learned, well-travelled and spoke fluent English, French and German, and provided their children with a first-class education.”⁶¹

The memoirs give an accelerated account of the courtship, at first leaving the year of engagement blank. The somewhat slower progress of events in reality is evident from the diary. “On 3 October I talked to Dr Rónay. Deli, my gentle little Deli, my youthful dream will come true. Love me, love me, and heaven will be ours!”⁶² Since the girl was still a minor, it was natural that he spoke with the father. But this did not settle the matter. The uncertainty partly arose from external causes: the father did not want to act in haste:

I do not understand Rónay’s advice not to be in undue haste. I can find no other explanation than that Deli cannot yet decide. It has made me very sad. Or... or. This vacillation cannot go on. As soon as possible! Oh, how I would like a nice little wife.⁶³

On the other hand, the young man himself was in a state of some confusion. We almost see the great dilemma of classical dramas in microcosm: reason or passion? Failing (or not wanting) to realize this himself, he directly ascribed the curious situation to nature (he resembles his mother) or upbringing (father’s hard drilling) or even some kind of disease.

My mind is utterly confused. I am mixing up everything, I cannot make a good judgement, I ascribe importance to matters of no substance and miss what is important, I busy myself with trivialities, ignoring questions of life itself. – Paralysis progressiva. My speech is slovenly, and I write the same way, leaving out words, letters and sentences. I mix up everything. It is all the consequence of an unnatural way of life. I must get married.⁶⁴

61 MgM 2012.20.1. Paikert, *Életem és működésem*, 36. The Fluk family were raised to the nobility in 1792. Kempelen, *Magyar nemes családok*, vol. 4, 145.

62 MgM 2012.20.1. Paikert, *Életem és működésem*, 7, 13 October 1898.

63 Ibid., 9–10, 28 Nov 1898.

64 Ibid., 8, 24 Nov 1898. There is no sign in the diary of omitted words or letters.

And although falling somewhat short in logic, this sequence of thoughts ends with a fairly definite conclusion. Since the goal seemed to be coming no closer, dissatisfaction and rumination escalated:

Deli's irresolution is extremely irritating. Or is it hostility? (5 Dec)
Tomorrow, after a long enforced pause, I go again to Deli, or to the Rónays. Why must they draw this out so? – I very much like the girl and would be happy with her, but I do not want to force my love on anyone.⁶⁵ (6 Dec)

Finally, however, his perseverance bore fruit, and the engagement took place before Christmas. The diary does not confine itself to the romantic moment of the avowal, and records for posterity the family ritual of the engagement day:

Today I engaged myself [sic!] to Deli Rónay. Heaven grant us that we will find mutual happiness. The avowal took place in the Museum of Applied Arts, in the English exhibition in front of a drawing of a yacht. Yes, oh Deli, how happy you have made me.
We went home by coach. Kinga, Alice. Then I went home to give the happy news. Mama was very moved, Papa had been to Count Endre Csekonics and came home in full dress. They came to the Rónays, introductions, festive mood, friendship made. After lunch, at 4 o'clock, the Rónays, the parents and Deli came to us. It was so congenial. Papa and Mama were very cordial, sincere, showing all kinds of things. [...] Farewell, tea, whist party, and then to the Rónays, photographs, signatures, [...], Papa, dinner, champagne, toasts, Kinga, joyful mood, Dalma, drafting the engagement card.⁶⁶

The wedding took place on 4 April 1899. The groom's witness was his youthful friend Count Károly Kornis, effectively representing the historic aristocracy, and raising the tone of the occasion.⁶⁷ In his sketch book, we find only a portrait taken after the wedding, with the title *Deli my lovely wife*.⁶⁸ She was hardly more than a girl, her hair done up in a bun. Not long after the wedding they left for North America, which solved Paikert's employment problems for a

65 Ibid., 11, 5–6 December 1898.

66 Ibid., 12, 18 December 1898. Sunday. On the "English exhibition" see Radisics Jenő, "Az orsz. iparművészeti museum," *Magyar Iparművészet* 8 (1898): 368. Kinga and Dalma were younger sisters of Deli.

67 Register of Birth and Death, accessed June 16, 2013. <https://familysearch.org/search/record/results#count>.

68 MgM 2012.19.1. Paikert, Vázlatkönyv, 47, 13 November 1899.

while. The Minister of Agriculture, Ignác Darányi, appointed him as agricultural counsel to Washington (as Paikert had written “attaché” in his earlier plans). The ageing Paikert joined up the themes of career and marriage in his memoirs thus:

My dear wife Deli immediately declared me ready for travel over the ocean, there to share with me for at least three years the vicissitudes of unaccustomed climate and social conditions. This showed her intelligence, astuteness and wifely devotion. Few *Hungarian genteel brides* would have done the same.⁶⁹

Thus even in reminiscence, Alajos Paikert felt that he had taken a long time but chosen well. He did not regret missing his mother’s tea parties with girls.

I did the right thing, because that way I could choose as my wife the one who was and is best suited to me, and who has devoted her entire life to me and our children, and if I have achieved anything in life, it is mainly thanks to her... she gave me the gift of three splendid children, brought them up admirably, and now shares with me everything that fate has dealt.⁷⁰

This frank statement of the male-centred family model may be regarded as a social fact, even if the reminiscence obviously idealizes the image of the past. The marriage hardly features in subsequent volumes of the diary, and we do not even know whether his wife left any source on this subject. Our evaluation is therefore unfortunately but unavoidably asymmetric.

Consequences

The characteristics of Paikert’s marriage strategy may be viewed according to Weber’s criteria of “behavioural sociological status”, and the young man’s dilemmas—at least in the “end game”—can be placed in the context of the “marriage market” model. We will not, however, attempt to interpret events in the spirit of the “stable matching algorithm” of the Nobel prize-winning theory.⁷¹

69 Paikert, “Életem és korom,” 179. Here the “genteel” (*úr*) was a reference to bearing and not just origins. (GyK’s italics in the quotation.)

70 MgM 2012.20.1. Paikert, *Életem és működésem*, 35.

71 The game theory model goes back to a 1962 paper by D. Gale and L. S. Shapley. D. Gale and L. S. Shapley, “College Admission and the Stability of Marriage,” *American Mathematical Monthly* 69, no. 1 (1962): 9–15. The 2012 Nobel Prize went to the surviving Lloyd S. Shapley and to Alvin E. Roth, who developed its

Our sources, however informative and intimate they may be, unfortunately do not provide a sufficiently comparative perspective. We do not know the preference of the other side, the ladies, or the potential rivals.⁷² Secondly, the original model makes the implicit assumption that there is “no payment (dowry) between the actors,” which in our case would clearly not be realistic. One conclusion of the theory was considered self-evident in the male-dominated society of the turn of the century: the stable matching algorithm leads to a boy-optimum result.⁷³ For the candidate brides who stayed in the “competition” longest, however, we would have to assess which parameters the self-appointed groom took into account.

Two empirical observations should be stated at the outset:

1. There was a substantial oversupply of females in the Concha, Lukács and Rónay families. We cannot say that this was the general demographic male/female ratio (although there was actually a female surplus in the 15–45 cohort at the turn of the century), but it was clearly the situation in the middle-class circles where Alajos Paikert made his selection in the “end game” (the Conchas with four girls, the Lukácses with seven girls and one boy, and the Rónays with three girls and one boy). And as well as playing a part in the number of potential heirs, it indicates a buyer’s market in the wider sense.

2. This is why Alajos Paikert stresses in his memoirs how “the market came to him”, how much in demand he was (which he of course tended to ascribe to his own qualities): “I could have chosen a daughter from any of several very fine families, because I was a young, educated, healthy, well brought-up, well turned-out, modern young man, I excelled in nearly all the manly sports, and I had a good general knowledge and a promising future.”⁷⁴

application further. The subject has been covered in Hungarian by Péter Biró in “Stabil párosítási modellek és ezeken alapuló központi párosító programok,” *Szigma* 37, 3–4 (2006): 153–75. I would like to thank Aladár Madarász for bringing the model to my attention.

⁷² We could take as a basis for comparison the reminiscences of other social ladies, although we do not know of the treatment of any diaries. With reference to the introduction, however, we do not consider this to be methodologically sound. A revealing attempt at confronting interests with feelings has been made by Gábor Gyáni, who examined individual cases of “patriarchal” and “partnership” marriages through three 1914 marriage contracts. Gábor Gyáni, *Hétköznapi Budapest*, (Budapest: Városháza, 1995), 14–20. On the same, in a wider context, see Gábor Gyáni, “Middle-Class Kinship in Nineteenth-Century Hungary,” in *Kinship in Europe*, 293–94. These cases were from the year the First World War broke out and I would not hazard to extrapolate them back to the turn of the century.

⁷³ See Biró, “Stabil párosítási modellek,” 153, 155. There have been many attempts to develop the model by building in payment and dynamics (i.e. the effect of new market entrants).

⁷⁴ MgM 2012.20.1. Paikert, *Életem és működésem*, 38. It should be noted that according to the 1895 “gazdacímár” [Farm Directory], the Paikert family did not have land greater than 100 holds. Only the

Let us now look at Alajos Paikert's "ranking matrix" in 1896–98:

Candidate bride	Father	Noble birth	Wealth
Erzsébet Concha (1st of 4 girls)	professor	noble (mother's side)	
Margit Lukács (4th of 7 girls)	bank director	noble (father's and mother's side)	paternal and maternal inheritance*
Deli Rónay (1st of 3 girls)	notary public	noble (mother's side)	paternal and maternal inheritance**

* According to the 1892 national register, Lukács Antal, *virilis* [major taxpayer] of Bihar county (address: Bp. V., Bálvány u. 7.) paid direct taxes of 2547 forints. In 1895, Lukács' estate in Újpalota (Bihar county) extended to 2149 cadastral holds (1 hold = 0.57 hectare), but he also owned land in Csömör (Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun county) and in several places in Csanád (his wife also owned land in one of these).⁷⁵

** Károly Rónay, then still an "attorney" (address: Bp. II., Apór u. 3.) in 1892 was a *virilis* of Pest, paying tax of 604 forints. He was also part-owner, in 1895, of a farm of 1380 cadastral holds in Osgyán (Gömör and Kishont county), from where later he took his noble predicate.⁷⁶

Had Alajos chosen a university career (he did reach the status of junior lecturer), Professor Győző Concha's family would clearly have appreciated in value, even though the father was not of noble birth and the four girls' dowry could not have been large (this was probably what caused the Paikert parents to oppose the match). To marry her, Paikert would have needed more money of his own ("I do not have enough money to satisfy her ambitions").

The choice of Margit Lukács ("harmonious and healthy accord") was expressly supported by the parents (and other relatives). A bank-director father-in-law would have opened up good prospects on the economic front, and he was of noble rank and had a substantial fortune. Here, however, the girl was choosy, demanding that her suitor be a *courmacher*, which must have meant more than the usual middle-class norms if Paikert regarded the idea of fulfilling her wishes as

first-born son Hennik farmed, as a tenant, a 330-hold estate in Seprős (Arad county), which was owned by his father-in-law. KSH, ed., *A magyar korona országainak gazdaczímtára* (Budapest: M. kir. Statisztikai Hivatal, 1897), 418–19. That was the origin of the family's predicate upon their ennoblement.

75 J. Lajos Máté ed., *Magyar Almanach. A főrendiházi tagok, Országgyűlési képviselők- és az Országos Virilisták Czimkönyve az 1892. évre* (Budapest: Fischer J. D. 1892), 85; KSH, ed., *A magyar korona országainak gazdaczímtára* (Budapest: M. kir. Statisztikai Hivatal, 1897), 244–45; 340–41; 422–25.

76 Máté, *Magyar Almanach*, 40; *A magyar korona országainak gazdaczímtára*, 566. It should be noted that in 1917—calculating double—he was a Pest *virilis* with direct tax of 11,704 crowns (1 forint = 2 crowns). *Budapest Székesfőváros leg több állami adót fizető – 1200 választó – 1917. évi névjegyzéke* (Budapest: Székesfőváros házinyomdája, 1918), 7.

“humiliation”. He was clearly put off by a female character who placed strong demands, but it is also possible that Margit Lukács was employing a courting-game gambit to express distance, and difference in rank, from her suitor.⁷⁷

It seems that Paikert, just as he was embarking on a government-service career, was most impressed by a man who was freshly—in 1898—elevated from attorney to notary public in the 1st District (!) of Budapest. Rónay had authority, learning and knowledge of languages (which must have been particularly important for the future American “attaché”), and had inherited wealth and rank through both the paternal and maternal lines. It cannot have been accidental that the Rónay daughters all made marriages befitting their rank. The memoirs particularly mention the excellent upbringing, which in these circles was almost natural. And since Deli was hardly 18 years old, she could be further “educated” as an obedient wife. Although the young man had not found the answer among the military officer–medical-profession circles managed by his mother, he did make a decision that his parents could support. This also contributed to the establishment of a stable marriage. The family dynamics of the choice was only confirmed by the raising of the two heads of the family to noble rank. The match proved to be a “harmonious accord” for more than just that moment, and persisted in the long term. The young couple could make their own lives, but within the bounds of social norms and parental expectations. For which, of course, they had complete freedom in America. Paikert must surely have looked through his old diary entries as he was writing his memoirs in old age. The diary’s serial account of protracted indecision may not have made for pleasant reading. The gallery of rival ladies did not find its way into the catalogue listing of the memoirs. He did, however, leave everything for the archives, so that someone in a later age, with time and inclination, could reconstruct his youthful decision-making mechanism.

77 Margit Lukács got married in 1900, two years following the siege recorded in the diary. Her husband was also of the nobility, an assistant secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr Jakab Tahy of Tahvár and Tarkeő. Rozsos, *Az erdélyi örmény*, 16. (The noble predicate were written out in full in the marriage register!)

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Living Arrangements of the Elderly in Two Eastern European Joint-Family Societies: Poland–Lithuania around 1800 and Albania in 1918

This paper re-addresses the nature of joint-family systems in historic Eastern Europe. It identifies two “hotspot” areas of family complexity and uses census microdata to shed light on attributes of household organization and living arrangements of the elderly in a comparative perspective. A detailed examination of various demographic components of the joint-family systems under discussion reveals important inter-societal differences and suggests that “de-essentialization” of the notion of the “joint-family system” might be necessary when discussing the geography of family patterns in this part of the continent.

Keywords: historical demography, household structure, living arrangements, co-residence, joint-family, Eastern Europe

Clarifying the Question

The joint family has long been seen as one of the most peculiar living arrangements in historic Europe. While a preference for residential independence in adulthood (i.e. for residing in small, conjugal groups),¹ has long been viewed as the norm in Europe, the underlying principles of joint-family coresidence centered on extensive family solidarity, a high degree of parental control over adolescent children, and the subordination of some groups of individuals to others within the domestic space. It therefore comes as no surprise that historians have commonly assumed that the appearance of joint families in a given area, society, or culture must have resulted from economic, demographic, and cultural constraints which prevented people from indulging in the (allegedly) universal preference for small and simple households. In their explanations of the economics of joint-family arrangements, historians assert that the

1 For the argument see: Daniel S. Smith, “The Curious History of Theorizing about the History of the Western Nuclear Family,” *Social Science History* 17 (1993): 325–53; Michel Verdon, “Rethinking Complex Households: the Case of the Western Pyrenean »Houses«”, *Continuity and Change* 11, no. 2 (1996): 191–215; Mary S. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History. A Subversive View of the Western Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

landholding patterns typical of sharecroppers and some serfs and the demands of the pastoral economy in mountainous settings fostered the formation of big, laterally extended multiple-family residence groups.² When seeking to explain the cultural factors underlying these family arrangements, scholars argue that patrilinealism, closely linked with corporate (joint) ownership structures that negate individual property rights, probably created mental structures that favored family solidarity, cohabitation, and obedience.³ It was generally assumed that in the absence of these two constraining forces, the “aversion” to joint-family living arrangements⁴ would find expression and the “instinctive wishes” of the population could be realized.

Despite a lack of clarity about the exact meaning of the term,⁵ “joint family” (or extended family) has often been used to describe laterally extended multiple-family domestic groups in societies widely dispersed across historic Eurasia.⁶ Early scholars of historical family patterns argued that joint families could be found in many different societies of Eurasia, from the nomadic tribes of the Middle East to the Slavic serf agriculturalists and the ancient civilizations of the Far East.⁷ Indeed, more recent research has revealed that legal and residential arrangements that followed joint-family rules existed in many parts of historic

2 Lutz K. Berkner and John W. Shaffer, “The Joint Family in the Nivernais,” *Journal of Family History* 3 (1978): 150–62; David I. Kertzer, “The Joint Family Revisited: Demographic Constraints and Complex Family Households in the European Past,” *Journal of Family History* 14 (1989): 1–15; Ulf Brunnbauer, *Gebirgsgesellschaften auf dem Balkan. Wirtschaft und Familienstrukturen im Rhodopengebirge (19./20. Jahrhundert)* (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar: Böhlau, 2004); Pier Paolo Viazzo, “Pastoral and peasant family systems in mountain environment,” in *Pratiques familiales et sociétés de montagne, XVIe – XXe siècle*, ed. Bernard Derouet, Luigi Lorenzetti, and Jon Mathieu (Basel: Schwabe, 2010), 245–64.

3 Mark O. Kosven, *Semeinaia obschchina i patronimiia* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1963); Karl Kaser, *Familie und Verwandtschaft auf dem Balkan. Analyse einer untergehenden Kultur* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1995); Michael Mitterauer, “A Patriarchal Culture? Functions and Forms of Family in the Balkans,” *Beiträge zur historischen Sozialkunde. Special Issue 1999: The Balkans: Traditional Patterns of Life* (1999): 4–20.

4 Steven Ruggles, “Stem Families and Joint Families in Comparative Historical Perspective,” *Population and Development Review* 36, no. 3 (2010): 563–77.

5 Triloki N. Madan, “The Joint Family: A Terminological Clarification,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 3 (1962): 7–10.

6 For the sake of convenience, throughout this paper the terms “domestic groups,” households, or “housefuls” are used interchangeably, despite some clear qualitative distinctions between them.

7 Frédéric Le Play, “Le Réforme Sociale,” in *Frederic Le Play on Family, Work, and Social Change*, ed. C. Bodard Silver (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 259; Frédéric Le Play, *L'organisation de la famille selon le vrai modèle signalé par l'histoire de toutes les races et de tous les temps*, 3rd edition (Tours: Alfred Mame et fils, 1871), § 12, 94; Charles S. Devas, *Studies of Family Life: A Contribution to Social Science* (London: Burns and Oates, 1886); M. F. Nimkoff and Russell Middleton, “Types of Family and Types of Economy,” *American Journal of Sociology* 66, no. 3 (1960): 215–25.

Europe, including in early medieval Germanic societies,⁸ fifteenth-century Tuscany, early modern France,⁹ nineteenth-century northern Italy,¹⁰ Finland,¹¹ Russia,¹² and parts of the Balkans.¹³ Until quite recently, the joint-household system was the most prevalent family arrangement in the world's most populous agricultural societies, China and India. Referring to such diverse cultural areas, Berkner and Shaffer¹⁴ argue that anyone reading ethnographic descriptions of joint-family living "cannot help but be struck by the broad similarities." These common features include the following: the coresidence of two or more nuclear families; the patrilineal succession of family titles and property; a tendency to keep the sons on the patrimony and virilocal household formation; a tendency to unify the joint domestic group around some common economic project; a tendency toward fission at some point in the developmental cycle; a marginal position of female siblings; and a tendency to recruit workers from among kin rather than from among wage laborers.¹⁵

Demographers have been fond of making such essentialist claims and have often used the concept of the extended family to explain worldwide demographic differentials. Accordingly, demographers have contrasted stylized versions of the joint-family system with nuclear or stem-family systems in order to establish a theoretical foundation on the basis of which to link different family types to various demographic outcomes. Since the work of Lorimer,¹⁶ Davis,¹⁷

8 Milovan Gavazzi, "Die Mehrfamilien der Europäischen Völker," *Ethnologia Europaea* 11 (1980): 167–68.

9 Berkner and Shaffer, "Joint Family."

10 Kertzer, "Joint Family."

11 Elina Waris, "Komplexe Familienformen. Neue Forschungen zu Familie und Arbeitsorganisation im finnischen Karelien und in Estland," *Historische Anthropologie* 10, no. 1 (2002): 31–51.

12 Peter Czap, "The Perennial Multiple Family Household, Mishino, Russia, 1782–1858," *Journal of Family History* 7 (1982): 5–26.

13 Karl Kaser, "Introduction: Household and Family Contexts in the Balkans," *The History of the Family* 1, no. 4 (1996): 375–86; Robert Wheaton, "Family and Kinship in Western Europe: The Problem of the Joint Family Household," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5, no. 4 (1975): 601–28; Gavazzi, "Mehrfamilien"; Milovan Gavazzi, "The Extended Family in Southeastern Europe," *Journal of Family History* 7, no. 1 (1982): 89–102; Michael Mitterauer, "Komplexe Familienformen in sozialhistorischer Sicht," *Ethnologia Europaea* 12 (1981): 213–71.

14 Berkner and Shaffer, "Joint Family," 150.

15 Wheaton, "Family."

16 Frank Lorimer, *Culture and Human Fertility* (Paris: UNESCO, 1954).

17 Kingsley Davis, "Institutional Patterns Favouring High Fertility in Underdeveloped Areas," *Eugenics Quarterly* 2 (1955): 33–9.

and Davis and Blake¹⁸ there has been broad acceptance among scholars of the assumption that extended or joint families encourage high fertility.¹⁹ Hajnal pushed the analysis toward a specification of the rules of household formation and distinguished two main family forms. He also emphasized an East–West divide, contrasting the “joint-household (formation) system” of the major Eurasian societies with the Northwestern European system.²⁰ To exemplify the characteristics of the joint-family pattern, Hajnal cited data from various historical periods from a wide range of countries with very different conditions, including India, Nepal, China, Italy, Croatia, Russia, and Hungary.²¹ More recently, Das Gupta drew “a stylized contrast between the stem-family systems of Northern Europe and the joint family of North India” in order to highlight their essential features as determinants of divergent health behaviors and health outcomes.²²

While the stereotypical belief that in past centuries the elderly lived out their twilight years nestled in the bosom of their families has generally been refuted over the course of the last two decades,²³ the perception that complex family societies performed welfare functions better than Western nuclear family based societies has been particularly resistant to change. Reflecting views that have been prevalent since the nineteenth-century writings of Le Play,²⁴ family historians and demographers have continued to assert that nuclear-, stem-, and joint-family societies performed certain welfare functions for their members and coped with

18 Kingsley Davis and Judith Blake, “Social Structure and Fertility: an Analytic Framework,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 4 (1956): 211–35.

19 John C. Caldwell, “A Theory of Fertility: From High Plateau to Destabilization,” *Population and Development Review* (1978): 553–77; Thomas K. Burch and Murray Gendell, “Extended Family Structure and Fertility: Some Conceptual and Methodological Issues,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 32, no. 2 (1970): 227–36 for counterarguments; also the discussion in Monica Das Gupta, “Lifeboat Versus Corporate Ethic: Social and Demographic Implications of Stem and Joint Families,” *Social Science and Medicine* 49, no. 2 (1999): 181–82.

20 John Hajnal, “Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System,” *Population and Development Review* 8 (1982): 449–94.

21 Hajnal, “Two kinds,” 455.

22 Das Gupta, “Lifeboat”; also George W. Skinner, “Family Systems and Demographic Processes,” in *Anthropological Demography: Toward A New Synthesis*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Tom Fricke (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 53–95.

23 Richard Wall, “Relationships between the generations in British families past and present,” in *Families and households: division and change*, ed. Cathie Marsh and Sara Arber (London: Macmillan, 1992), 63–85; Peregrine Horden and Richard M. Smith, eds., *The Locus of Care: Families, Communities, Institutions and the Provision of Welfare since Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1998).

24 Le Play, “Réforme.”

economic hardships in particular ways.²⁵ The residential patterns of the elderly in joint-family societies were seen as representing a combined effect of the authority structure (with elderly males at the apex) and the associated family and kin-based approach to welfare provision.²⁶ Regardless of when and where they lived, most joint families were portrayed as private institutions that encouraged solidarity and support for the elderly and other vulnerable individuals.²⁷ Culture-specific values supported that system, especially those stressing family solidarity and a greater sense of obligation towards members of the kinship group.²⁸

It is in this context that the concept of patriarchy has often been evoked, becoming a convenient shorthand for the presumed distinguishing trait of joint-family relations. The term has often included many different elements, such as the dominance of patrilineal descent, patrilocal or patrivirilocal residence after marriage, power relations that favour the dominance of men over women and the older generation over the younger generation, customary laws that sanctioned these patterns, the absence of an interfering state that could mitigate their influence, and an inert traditional society that emanated from these conditions.²⁹ Combinations of these elements have been used to explain the peculiarity of

25 Peter Laslett, "Introduction," in *Household and Family in Past Time*, ed. Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1–89; Peter Laslett, "Family, Kinship and Collectivity as Systems of Support in Preindustrial Europe: a Consideration of the »Nuclear-hardship« Hypothesis," *Continuity and Change* 3, no. 2 (1988): 152–75; Mead Cain, "Welfare Institutions in Comparative Perspective: The Fate of the Elderly in Contemporary South Asia and Pre-Industrial Western Europe," in *Life, Death, and the Elderly: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Margareth Pelling and Richard M. Smith (London: Routledge, 1991), 222–43; Das Gupta, "Lifeboat"; Skinner, "Family systems."

26 Cain, "Welfare Institutions," 241.

27 Laslett, "Family."

28 Laslett, "Family"; Roger Schofield, "Family Structure, Demographic Behaviour and Economic Growth," in *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*, ed. John Walter and Roger Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 282–95; Cain, "Welfare Institutions"; Hartman, "Household"; critically Sandra Cavallo, "Family Obligations and Inequalities in Access to Care in Northern Italy seventeenth to eighteenth centuries," in *The Locus of Care: Families, Communities, Institutions and the Provision of Welfare since Antiquity*, ed. Peregrine Horden and Richard M. Smith (London: Routledge, 1998), 90–110; Peregrine Horden, "Household Care and Informal Networks: Comparisons and Continuities from Antiquity to the Present," in *The Locus of Care: Families, Communities, Institutions and the Provision of Welfare since Antiquity*, ed. Peregrine Horden and Richard M. Smith (London: Routledge, 1998).

29 Vera St. Erlich, *Family in Transition: A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966): 32; Joel M. Halpern, Karl Kaser, and Richard A. Wagner, "Patriarchy in the Balkans: Temporal and Cross-Cultural Approaches," *The History of the Family* 1, no. 4 (1996): 425–42; Karl Kaser, *Hirten, Kämpfer, Stammeshelden. Ursprünge und Gegenwart des balkanischen Patriarchats* (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar: Böhlau, 1992); Kaser, "Introduction"; Mitterauer, "Patriarchal Culture."

the joint-family residence patterns in the East and Southeast of Europe relative to the West.³⁰

Although many of these claims are no doubt accurate, the assumption that all joint-family societies are basically the same is, in our view, a gross oversimplification. Why would we think that societies that differ in terms of their cultural metrics, environmental characteristics, and place-specific historical trajectories adhere to the same rules of joint-family living, or that these rules would apply to the same extent in the everyday lives of their members? Without denying that it is possible to identify some essential and generally accepted features of extended families, this paper re-addresses the nature of joint-family systems in Europe by looking at the differences between two exemplary joint-family societies. Instead of treating them as inherently similar, we argue that a detailed examination of various demographic components of the joint-family systems under discussion may uncover important differences and hence suggest the extent to which a “de-essentialization” of the notion of the joint family might be necessary.³¹

Methodological Issues

This paper identifies two “hot spot” areas of family complexity in historical Eastern Europe and uses census and census-like microdata to describe the residential situations of the elderly in two populations governed by a joint-household formation regime. To compare the living arrangements of the elderly,

30 Siegfried Gruber and Mikołaj Szoltysek, *Quantifying Patriarchy: an Explorative Comparison of Two Joint Family Societies*, MPIDR Working Paper WP-2012-017 (Rostock: Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, 2012).

31 Strangely enough, the existence of intra-regional differences within the specific types of family household systems has been endorsed only recently in the family history literature. Richard Wall, in particular, argued that many distinctive patterns could be identified within an area in which Hajnal's Northwest European household system was allegedly dominant (see Richard Wall, “European family and household systems,” in *Historiens et populations. Liber Amicorum Etienne Helin* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia, 1991), 617–36; Richard Wall, “Historical Development of the Household in Europe,” in *Household Demography and Household Modeling*, ed. Evert van Imhoff et al. (New York: Plenum Press, 1995), 19–52; Richard Wall, “Transformation of the European family across the centuries,” in *Family History Revisited. Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Richard Wall et al. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 217–41; see also discussion in Mikołaj Szoltysek, “Spatial Construction of European Family and Household Systems: Promising Path or Blind Alley? An Eastern European perspective,” *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 1 (2012): 11–52. However, Wall's claims remain largely unheard or unacknowledged, cf. Alter's recent statement about the pervasiveness of the Northwest European family model: George C. Alter, “Generation to Generation: Life Course, Family, and Community,” *Social Science History* 37, no. 1 (2013): 1–26.

we used measures commonly applied in demographic and family history studies of aging populations.³² However, we also proposed several indicators which have, to our knowledge, never or only rarely been used in the literature. As our focus is on the comparative morphology of residence patterns in joint-family systems, issues related to the origins of the joint family in the regions under examination or to the factors that contributed to the system's persistence are not discussed.³³

However, because our investigation of the situation of the elderly was based solely on the observation of their residential units registered in the listings, our analysis has certain limitations. The coresident family members may have represented only a small fraction of the kin to whom an elderly individual could turn for economic, physical, or emotional support, and coresidence as such may have been an imperfect proxy for the actual sharing of resources within domestic groups.³⁴ In most developed countries, as well as in some historical societies, the coresidence of the elderly with their kin is just one of many transfer flows involving the aged. The other sources of support are generally in the form of social transfers (pensions, health payments, home care, etc.).³⁵ While we do not wish to ignore these problems, some reservations regarding their implications for our study should be stated. In joint-family societies, household membership strategies were conventionally oriented toward an extensive recruitment of kin, which meant that many (if not most) domestic groups retained their complex structure through a continuous sequence of generations.³⁶ Although it is unlikely that even highly complex domestic groups would encompass all of the kin available

32 See Susan De Vos and Karen Holden, "Measures Comparing the Living Arrangements of the Elderly," *Population and Development Review* 14, no. 4 (1988): 688–704; Eugene Hammel and Peter Laslett, "Comparing Household Structure Over Time and Between Cultures," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (1974): 73–109; Steven Ruggles, "Availability of Kin and the Demography of Historical Family Structure," *Historical Methods* 19 (1986): 94; Steven Ruggles, "Family Demography and Family History: Problems and Prospects," *Historical Methods* 23 (1990): 22–30; Miriam King and Samuel H. Preston, "Who Lives with Whom? Individual versus Household Measures," *Journal of Family History* 15, no. 2 (1990): 117–32; also Lutz K. Berkner, "Household Arithmetic: a Note," *Journal of Family History* 2, no. 2 (1977): 159–63.

33 See, however Karl Kaser, "The Balkan Joint Family Household: Seeking Its Origins," *Continuity and Change* 9 (1994): 45–68; Mikołaj Szoltysek, "The Genealogy of Eastern European Difference: An Insider's View," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 43, no. 3 (2012): 335–71.

34 Ruggles, "Availability"; also Douglas A. Wolf, "The Elderly and Their Kin: Patterns of Availability and Access," in *The Demography of Aging*, ed. Linda Martin and Samuel Preston (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1994), 146–94; Wall, "Relationships," 70–76.

35 Alberto Palloni, "Living Arrangements of Older Persons," *Population Bulletin of the United Nations, Special Issue* 42/43 (2001): 64ff; Smith, "Structured Dependence."

36 Czap, "Perennial Multiple Family Household."

to an average “ego,” the accretion of relatives was normally substantial enough in such an environment that we can be certain that, in most cases, coresident kin would have been the most significant “others” from the perspective of an individual. Moreover, in joint-family societies in which domestic units act as property and labor cooperatives, the sharing of physical space was highly related to having the right to the use and ownership of a concrete part of the communal property. Although coresidence may not have always indicated the flow of support from the younger to the older generations, the economic and physical assistance derived from relatives who coresided was likely to have been more beneficial to the aged than the assistance provided by kin who lived close by.³⁷ The coresidence of the elderly with kin had an even greater social and economic significance for pre-industrial rural populations, among which institutionalized social transfers were precarious and investments in human capital were low.

Our analysis relies on two additional operational assumptions. First, we assume there was a hierarchy of caring contexts within domestic groups, with different categories of relatives providing different types of support.³⁸ Second, we assume that the more dense the environment of coresident kin surrounding the elderly—i.e. the larger the group of coresident immediate kin—the greater the potential benefits that could flow to the aged.

In this paper, we only deal with the population living in family (“private”) households. Unlike in historic western Poland, institutional households (often misleadingly called “hospitals”) were largely nonexistent in the eastern part of the country in the eighteenth century. Institutional households were equally scarce in Albania, and the few that existed were omitted from the analysis that follows.

*Societies and Data*³⁹

To investigate the residential situations of the aged in the two exemplary joint-family societies, we used historical census microdata from two different regions of Eastern Europe: the eastern borderlands of the Polish–Lithuanian

37 Wall, “Relationships,” 63.

38 Sara Arber and Jay Ginn, “In Sickness and in Health: Care Giving, Gender and the Independence of Elderly People,” in *Families and Households: Divisions and Change*, ed. Catherine Marsh and Sara Arber (London: Macmillan, 1992), 92–93.

39 For the purposes of this exposition, the discussion of data-related issues was reduced to a minimum. See more in Siegfried Gruber and Mikołaj Szoltysek, “Stem Families, Joint Families and the ‘European Pattern’: How Much of Reconsideration Do We Need?” *Journal of Family History* 37, no. 1 (2012): 105–25.

Commonwealth at the end of the eighteenth century and Albania in 1918. The Albanian population census of 1918 and the Polish–Lithuanian database are currently the only existing databases that are large enough to allow us to investigate the demographic conditions and household composition in historical Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

Regions	Households	Population	No. of parishes (estates)	No. of settlements
Eastern Poland–Lithuania, 1791–95	13,885	83,727	143	511
Albania 1918	14,937	82,646	n/a	850
Albania 1918 (weighted)	67,056	390,428	n/a	

Table 1. Basic data distribution. Source: Karl Kaser, Siegfried Gruber, Gentiana Kera, Enriketa Pandejmoni (2011) 1918 census of Albania, Version 0.1 [SPSS file]. Graz.; Mikołaj Szołtysek, CEURFAMFORM database, Version 0.1 [SPSS file]. Rostock, 2011.

On the Polish side, the present study makes use of data for 13,885 peasant households from the eastern territories of historical Poland–Lithuania (Table 1).⁴⁰ These data were derived from two types of population listings enumerating individuals by residential units.⁴¹ The first group of listings (37 percent) comes from the surviving remnants of the censuses carried out by the Polish Diet (*Sejm*) between 1790 and 1791. The second group of census microdata for the Commonwealth came from the so-called 5th Russian “soul revision.” Designed as periodic tax censuses to be used by the central government to assess the poll tax (which all male peasants in Russia were liable to pay), the “revision” was taken in the Belarusian heartland of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after the third partition of Poland in 1795. Despite being ordered by an alien administration

40 Various parts of this data collection have already been analyzed: e.g., Mikołaj Szołtysek, “Three Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System in Historical Eastern Europe: A Challenge to Spatial Patterns of the European Family,” *The History of the Family* 13, no. 3 (2008): 223–57; Mikołaj Szołtysek, “Rethinking Eastern Europe: Household Formation Patterns in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and European Family Systems,” *Continuity and Change* 23 (2008): 389–427; Mikołaj Szołtysek and Barbara Zuber Goldstein, “Historical Family Systems and the Great European Divide: the Invention of the Slavic East,” *Demográfia: English Edition* 52, no. 5 (2009): 5–47.

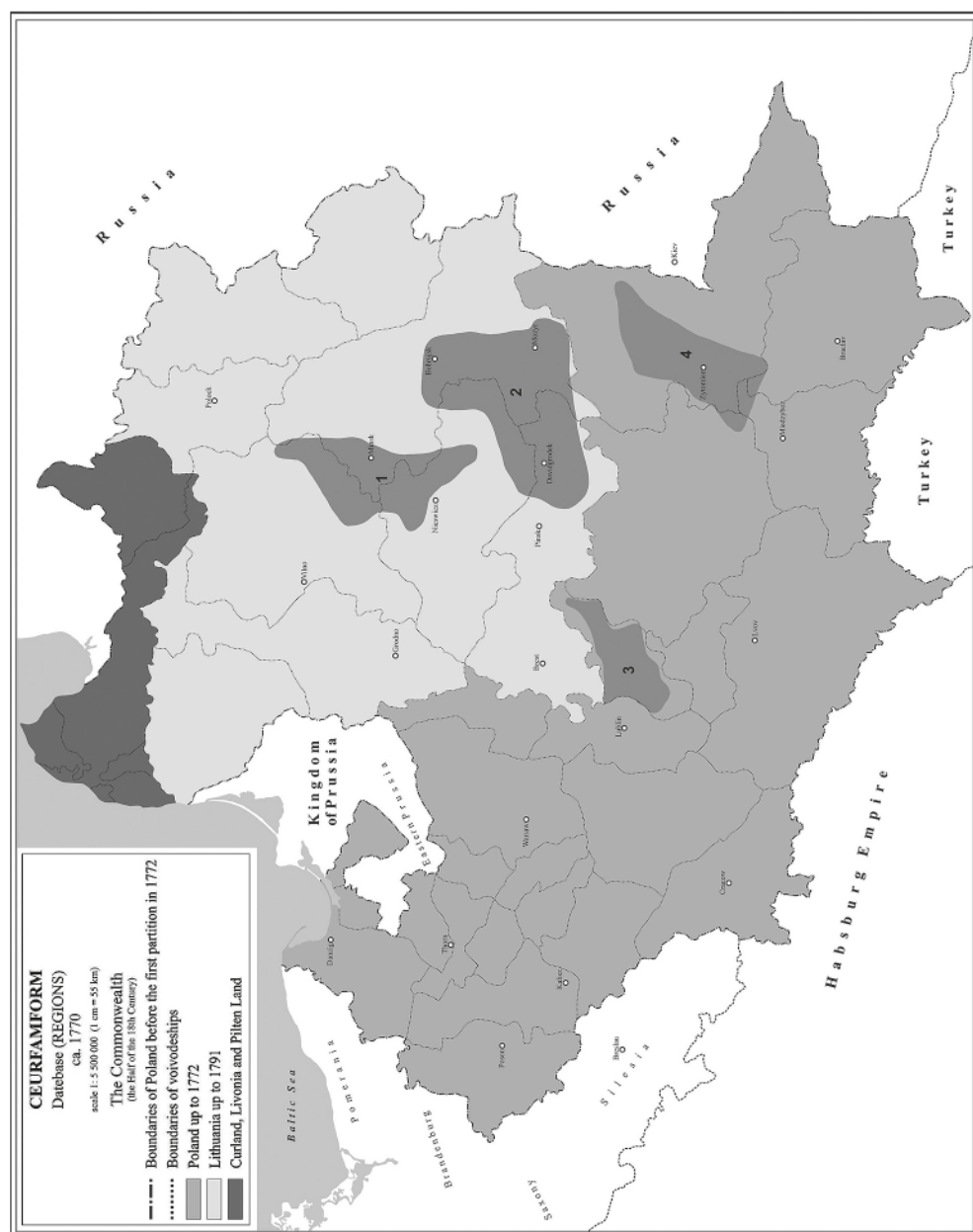
41 The database development was supported by the Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship project (FP6-2002-Mobility-5, Proposal No. 515065) at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, Cambridge, UK, 2006–2008. More details in Szołtysek, “Three kinds,” “Rethinking.”

for the Polish territories, the 1795 revision in Poland–Lithuania followed the traditional Polish concepts of census-taking, rather than the official Russian principles of taxation.

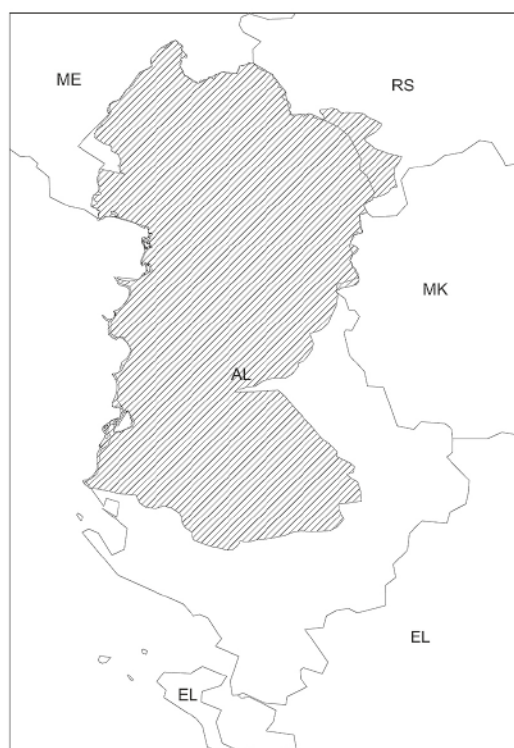
The area enumerated in the listings are clustered into four territorial groupings located on either side of the historical Polish–Lithuanian border of the Commonwealth (Map 1). To the north of this border, there are two regions that stretch over the central and southern parts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (regions 1 and 2). The second of these, region 2, constitutes one of the largest European swamplands, known as Poles'ya. To the southwest, region 3 covers a portion of the historic territory of Red Ruthenia, which today is at the intersection of Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland. Region 4 consists of the Żytomierski district in the former Kiev Voivodship on the southeastern fringes of the Commonwealth, now in Ukraine. However, for the purposes of this study, the four regions are treated jointly for socioeconomic, demographic, cultural reasons. All of the listings discussed here precede the abolition of serfdom in the territories in question. The serf population under consideration was essentially non-Polish and non-Catholic, and was mainly comprised of Uniates (Greek Catholics). Ethnically, the population was mainly Ruthenian (which meant they spoke various dialects typical of “proto-Ukrainians” and “proto-Belarusians”).⁴² All of the regions also had lower population densities and less stringent forms of the manorial economy based on the forced labor of the peasantry than the western and southernmost territories of Poland.

From January 1916 onward, northern and central Albania was occupied by the Austro–Hungarian army, and a population census was taken on March 1, 1918. The checking and the processing of the data had to be stopped due to the planned withdrawal of the army in October. The order to destroy all of the census material was ignored except in some areas in the south of the occupied territory. The surviving material, which covers the major part of the country, therefore includes people who lived in roughly 1,800 villages, towns, and cities in the territory administered by Austria–Hungary during World War I (see Table 1 and Map 2). The census director published basic tables in 1922 with funds provided by the Albanian government.

42 Not to be confused with Carpatho-Russians or Rusnaks from the Subcarpathian areas in Eastern Central Europe.



Map 1. Spatial distribution of Polish-Lithuanian data. Map design: J. Suproniuk for CEURFAMFORM Database.



Map 2. Territory of Albania covered by the 1918 census.

The population in the Albanian census was predominantly Muslim (78.2 percent), with a Catholic minority in the north (18.6 percent) and an Orthodox minority in the south (3.1 percent). The ethnicity of the population was almost exclusively Albanian. The economy was dominated by agriculture and the urban population made up only 13.2 percent of the total. Very few Albanian adults who lived outside of the cities were literate.

The majority of individuals in our collection were listed by domestic groups comprising all of the people occupying separate residential units, consisting not only of the core family of the head of the household, but also his immediate and more distant relatives, as well as coresident servants and inmates or lodgers.

We recognize, of course, that a comparison of a phenomenon in Albania in 1918 with phenomena in Poland–Lithuania in the course of the eighteenth century may raise some questions. Sklar has noted that marriage behaviors among the populations of the Czech, Baltic, and Polish regions differed markedly from those of people in the Balkans during the demographic

transition.⁴³ However, while our country-specific data span long periods of time, from a demographic perspective both of these populations are pre-transitional. While the Belarusian population exhibited the highest fertility levels in Eastern Europe well into the 1920s, Albania was the last country in Europe to enter the demographic transition (i.e. after the World War II).⁴⁴ The age-standardized marital fertility ratios of both the Polish eastern borderlands at the end of eighteenth century and early twentieth-century Albania were very similar (60–61).⁴⁵ Female nuptiality patterns were also very similar (female SMAM of 18.4–18.6), although there were significant differences between the male nuptiality patterns in the two locations (the male SMAM was 27.2 in Albania and 22 in eastern Poland). Apart from the age gaps between spouses, the major difference between the two populations appears to have been the share of elderly people aged 60 and older, which was higher in Albania than in Poland (nine percent in comparison with six percent).⁴⁶

43 June L. Sklar, "The role of marriage behaviour in the demographic transition: the case of Eastern Europe around 1900," *Population Studies* 28, no. 2 (1974): 231–47; cf. also Kaser, "Balkan joint family household," 45–46, who contended that "the Balkan joint family came into being independently from other East European joint-family-household organizations." However, there is an abundant nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature that claims that the "Balkan zadruga" was a relic of ancient all-Slavic forms of ancestral organisation which can be traced back to the era of first settlement (see below; also reviewed in Szoltysek, "Spatial," 26–28). Although asynchronic comparisons of the elderly population in eastern Poland–Lithuania and Albania yield important lessons for specific areas of family history research, these lessons are hardly applicable to the broader social history of these regions, because the social, economic, and institutional environment have diverged in the meantime.

44 Samuel Fogelson, "Z badań nad demografią Polesia i Wołynia," *Prace Wydziału Populacyjno-Migracyjnego* 6 (Warsaw, Instytut badań Spraw Narodowościowych, 1938).

45 Age-standardized number of own children under age five per 100 married women aged 15–49. Total fertility rate (the average number of children a woman is expected to bear if she survives through the end of her reproductive life span and experiences a particular set of age-specific fertility rates at each age), among the inhabitants of Poland's eastern borderlands was estimated to have ranged between 5.1 and 5.6 at the end of the eighteenth century. Mikołaj Szoltysek, *Rethinking East-Central Europe: Family Systems and Co-residence in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth* (Bern: Peter Lang, forthcoming). 150 years later in Albania, TFR averaged more than six births per woman: Jane Falkingham and Arjan Gjonca, "Fertility Transition in Communist Albania, 1950–90," *Population Studies* 55 (2001): 309–18.

46 See also Gruber Szoltysek, "Stem Families." Unfortunately there is no reliable data about life expectancy at birth available for Albania prior to 1950 (at which time it was 51 years for males and 61 years for females), so we cannot be sure whether that feature is an effect of enhanced survival chances or partly an outcome of exaggerated ages later in life. On the other hand, it is rather unlikely that life expectancy at birth on Belarussian and Ukrainian territories of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the eighteenth century was much higher than 27 years for a man and 30 years for a woman (Szoltysek, *Rethinking East-Central Europe*).

The populations covered by our listings were joint-family societies *per se*, with a large share of individuals living in joint-family constellations at some point in their lives. Data from the Polish borderlands and Albania displayed some of the highest indicators of joint-family coresidence out of more than one-hundred census populations from around the globe.⁴⁷ Further proof of the prevalence of joint-family coresidence in the areas under examination is found in ethnographic accounts and historic-anthropological research. According to Kaser, Albania historically belonged to the area of the Balkans where patrilocal household cycle complexity was prevalent.⁴⁸ The area covered by Albania was characterized by a distinctive patriarchal cultural background that has been called the Balkan patriarchy.⁴⁹ The basic elements of this cultural pattern were strong blood ties, ancestor worship, patrilocality, patrilineal kinship structures, the levying of a bride price, and the waging of blood feuds.⁵⁰

The eastern lands of historical Poland were also characterized by the longevity of archaic forms of communal social organization based on male ancestral kinship. These familial-ancestral communes were believed to resemble closely the well-known South Slavic institution of *zadruga*.⁵¹ The patriarchal model of intra-familial relations prevailed, with full economic power being held by the commune's head, usually the oldest male. When a head died, the position was passed on to the next-oldest male in the group.⁵² In the period under investigation, large agnatic descent groups were already at different stages of disintegration, mainly due to frequent efforts by landlords to split up large

47 Gruber and Szoltysek, "Stem Families."

48 Kaser, "Introduction," 383; Siegfried Gruber, "Household Composition and Marriage Patterns in Albania around 1900," *Balkanistic Forum* 1 (2012): 101–22.

49 Kaser, "Familie," 61–165.

50 Karl Kaser, *Patriarchy after Patriarchy: Gender Relations in Turkey and in the Balkans, 1500–2000* (Vienna: Lit-Verlag, 2008).

51 Maxime Kovalevskii, "Obscinnoe zemlevladienie v Malorossii v XVIII veke," *Juridiceskij vestnik* 1 (1885): 36–37, 54–55; Fedor I. Leontovich, "Krestianskij dvor v litovsko-russkom gosudarstve," *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosvescenija* (1896): 341–82; Aleksandra Efimenko, "Dvoriščnoe zemlevladienie v južnoj Rusi," *Russkaja Mysl'* 5–6 (1892): 370–412; Kosven, "Semeinaia obshchina," 168–69; Marija Gimbutas, *The Slavs* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 133; Ivan V. Lutchitsky, "Zur Geschichte der Grundeigentumsformen in Kleinrussland," *Schmoller's Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im Deutschen Reich* 20 (1896): 165–96; also Oswald Balzer, "O zadrudze słowiańskiej. Uwagi i polemika," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 13, no. 2 (1899): 183–256; Henryk Łowmiański, *Z dziejów Słowian w I tysiącleciu n.e.* (Warsaw: PWN, 1967), 344–72.

52 Mitrofan Dovnar-Zapolsky, "Očerki semejnogo obyčnogo prava krest'jan Minskoj gub," in *Issledovanija i stat'i*. T. 1. *Ėtnografija i sociologija, obyčnoe pravo, statistika, belorusskaja pis'mennost'*, ed. Mitrofan Dovnar-Zapolsky (Kiev: A. P. Sapunov, 1909), 9–12.

groups and create individual families.⁵³ Nevertheless, archaic extended family patterns were still going strong in the Polish eastern borderlands, although the patriarchal family group at the time was confined primarily to individuals who jointly inhabited one domestic group (“*dym*”). Despite increasing tendencies toward household division, even in the second half of the nineteenth century large, multigenerational families had not yet disappeared from the Polish eastern territories.⁵⁴

	Rural Albania, 1918		Poland–Lithuania, 1791–95	
Category	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Solitaries	2,590	3.9	78	0.6
No family	2,274	3.4	79	0.6
Simple family household	26,177	39.0	6,644	47.9
Extended family household	12,619	18.8	1,841	13.3
Stem family household	7,630	11.4	2,705	19.5
Joint family household	15,763	23.5	2,515	18.1
Indeterminate	3	0	23	0.2
Total households	67,056	100	13,885	100

Table 2. Household structure in Albania and Poland–Lithuania. Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandejmonj, “1918 census of Albania”; Szoltysek, “CEURFAMFORM database”. Hammel–Laslett scheme slightly modified. All lineally extended multiple-family households with more than two conjugal family units are treated as “joint families’.”

To further illustrate the widespread character of joint-family coresidence in the societies under examination, three measures of joint-family coresidence were applied to our data and presented in tabulated or graphical form.⁵⁵ The first

53 Szoltysek, “Three Kinds.”

54 Dovnar-Zapolsky, “Očerki.”

55 Yet another feature bridging the two regional societies was a pastoral or agro-pastoral mode of agrarian production that has dominated both. The cultivation of land in Albania was decisively constrained by the mountainous environment due to the climatic effects of altitude and the scarcity of productive land, hence the emergence of mountain pastoralism or the combination of animal husbandry and the cultivation of small plots of land (see Kaser, *Patriarchy*, 236–69). In eastern Poland–Lithuania, on the other hand, the

measure applies a slightly modified Hammel–Laslett scheme to the populations under investigation, while the other two move away from a sole concentration on the household and focus instead on the distribution of individuals and CFUs among different types of domestic groups.⁵⁶

In Table 2 a canonical Hammel–Laslett scheme was used to present a distribution of households by type in Albania and Poland–Lithuania. The scheme was modified in order to give a better representation of the domestic group structures that fall into the category of joint families. All of the households that belong to Laslett category 5 were divided into two groups (stem versus joint).⁵⁷ Both datasets show a high prevalence of non-nuclear residence groups. Extended, stem, and joint domestic groups account for more than half of all of the units in both Albania and Poland–Lithuania. While the overall share of multiple-family units was larger in the Polish borderlands than in Albania (38 percent and 35 percent, respectively), the number of domestic groups displaying joint structure according to our definition was slightly higher in the Balkans. The proportions of joint-family households in both datasets were very high compared to other sites in historic Europe, although they are smaller than in the Russian paradigmatic case of the joint family studied by Czap.⁵⁸ Among Tuscan households in 1427—which have long been regarded as exemplifying joint-family structures in late medieval Europe—only 15 percent were multiple-family households, and only eight percent of those were composed either of two married brothers or three or more couples. Among the Indian rural households in the mid-twentieth century, no more than 12 to 13 percent would have been classified as joint families according to our definition.⁵⁹ Before Mishino's data

generally low soil quality (and extensive swamp areas in southern Belarus) and the extensive chessboard of arable plots often implied a tendency to switch to non-farming activities (such as cattle breeding) (see *Szotysek, Rethinking East-Central Europe*). On the long tradition of postulating links between pastoral economies and a prevalence of extended family forms, see Viazzo, "Pastoral and peasant family systems".

56 Berkner, "Household Arithmetic"; Steven Ruggles, "Reconsidering the Northwest European Family System: Living Arrangements of the Aged in Comparative Historical Perspective," *Population and Development Review* 35, no. 2 (2009): 249–73.

57 Ruggles, "Stem Families"; On the sometimes fluid distinctions between stem- and joint-family systems, see Osamu Saito, "Two Kinds of Stem Family System? Traditional Japan and Europe Compared," *Continuity and Change* 13, no. 1 (1998): 167–86.

58 Peter Czap, "A Large Family: the Peasant's Greatest Wealth: Serf Households in Mishino, Russia, 1814–1858," in *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, ed. Richard Wall, Jean Robin, and Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 128–29.

59 John Hajnal, "Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System," in *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, ed. Richard Wall, Jean Robin, and Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 88.

were published in the early 1980s, the highest overall incidence of joint families in historic Europe was found for an estate in eighteenth-century Kurland, where the incidence was about 17 percent.⁶⁰

It is generally understood that the distribution of households by structure can obscure the actual fluctuation over the developmental cycles of domestic groups.⁶¹ A number of scholars have asserted that these Eastern European domestic groups underwent no cyclical changes from one household form to another, but rather maintained the multiple-family form over the entire life-cycle of the group.⁶² However, neither the Albanian nor the Polish–Lithuanian data confirm this assumption. When all of the households are ordered by the age of the male household head (Figures 1a and 1b), then a clear upward-trend in the propensity to form joint domestic groups over the family lifecycle becomes visible, with much higher proportions of joint families found among older heads. Some differences between Albania and Poland–Lithuania are also discernable. The accretion of additional family units in Albania occurred

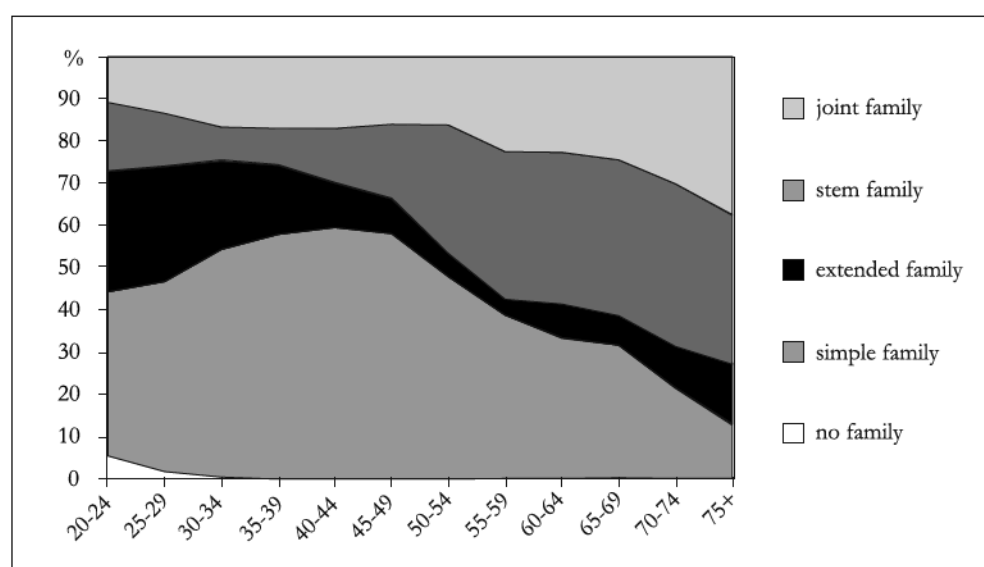


Figure 1a. Household structure by age of household head (male heads only) Poland–Lithuania 1791–1795. Source: Szoltysek, “CEURFAMFORM database”.

60 Wheaton, “Family,” 615–16; Andrejs Plakans, “Seigneurial Authority and Peasant Family Life: The Baltic Area in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5, no. 4 (1975): 629–54.

61 Lutz K. Berkner, “The Stem Family and the Developmental Cycle of the Peasant Household: an Eighteenth-century Austrian Example,” *The American Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (1972): 398–418.

62 Czap, “Perennial Multiple Family Household,” 18; Czap, “Large Family,” 143–44.

earlier in the lifecycle of domestic groups than in the Polish borderlands. Among Polish–Lithuanians, a factor that also contributed to a sharp decline in the share of simple families among middle-aged heads was the increasing tendency to form households composed of only two conjugal-family units, some of which then obviously turned into joint-family households. It appears, however, that the number of joint families in both societies was significant enough that we can conclude that joint-household formation rules were well-integrated into the social norms regarding domestic group recruitment and membership.

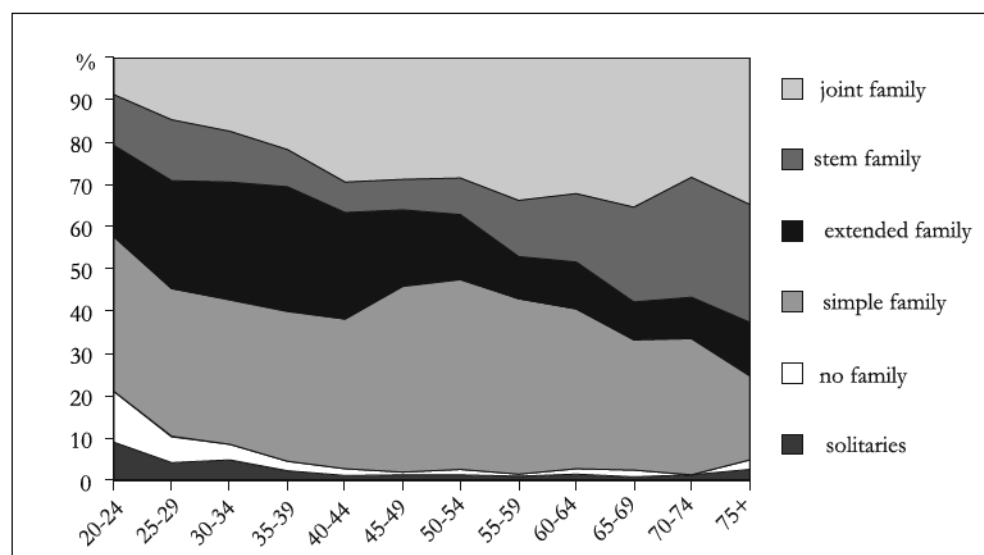


Figure 1b. Household structure by age of household head (male heads only) Albania 1918.

Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandelejmoni, “1918 census of Albania”.

While a substantial fraction of the population spent most of their lives in joint-family environments in both societies (Figures 2a–2b and 3a–3b), the percentage of people in this category was consistently higher in Albania than in eighteenth-century Eastern Poland, where the share tended to fluctuate. But in order to understand better the differences between these two joint-family societies, we need to look at the distribution of conjugal-family units (CFUs) among the different types of domestic group structures based on the age of the family unit head.⁶³ The proportion of CFUs living in joint-family households in

63 The “head” of a CFU was considered to be the oldest person within it.

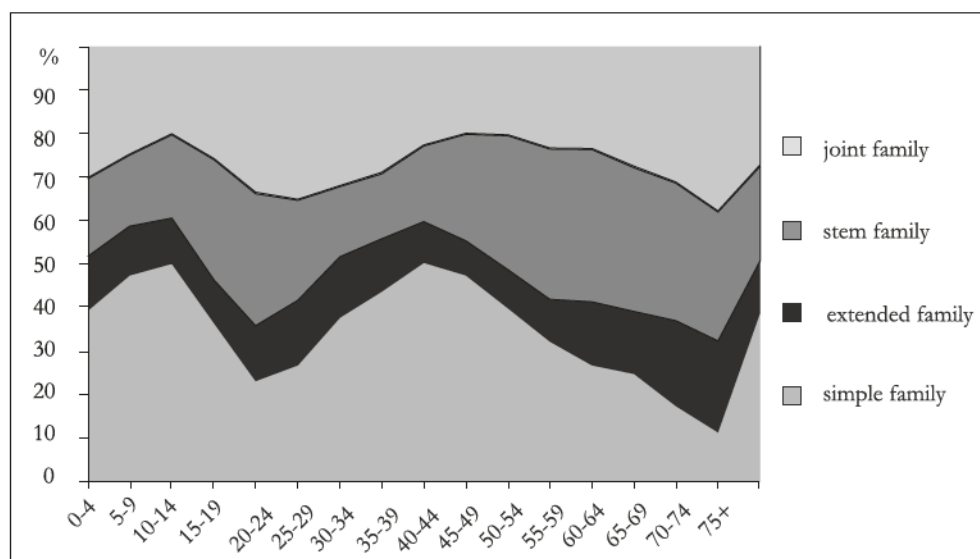


Figure 2a. Population by household type membership (sexes combined), Poland-Lithuania 1791-95. Source: Szoltysek, "CEURFAMFORM database". Notes: Categories 'No family' and 'Solitaires' omitted (below 0.5 percent across all age groups).

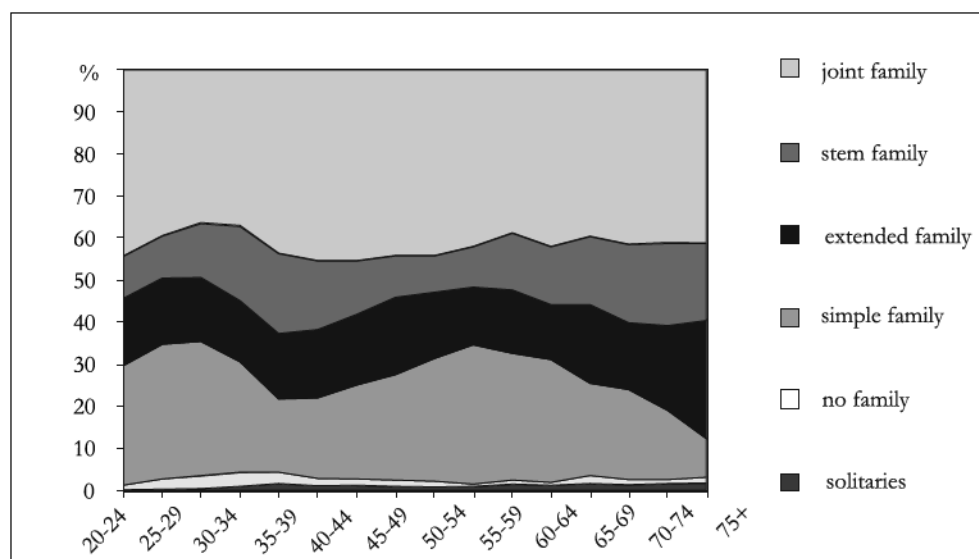


Figure 2b. Population by household type membership (sexes combined), Albania 1918. Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandelejmoni, "1918 census of Albania".

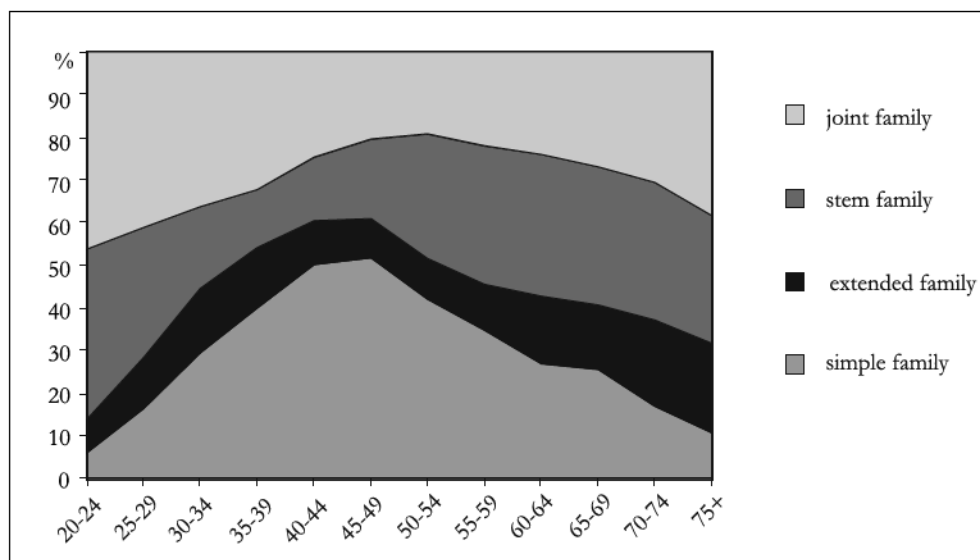


Figure 3a. Conjugal family units (CFUs) by household type membership, Poland–Lithuania 1791–95. Source: Szoltysek, “CEURFAMFORM database”. Notes: Categories ‘No family’ and ‘Solitaires’ omitted (below 0.3 percent across all age groups).

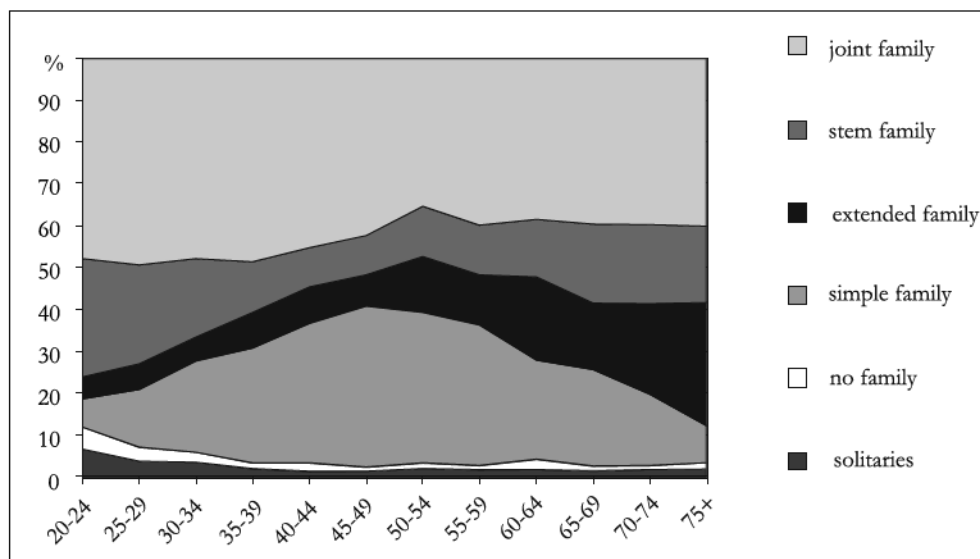


Figure 3b. Conjugal family units (CFUs) by household type membership, Albania 1918. Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandejmoni, “1918 census of Albania.”

Albania generally held steady at around 40 to 50 percent, with only very negligible changes occurring as the CFU head grew older (Figure 3b). Household divisions were obviously occurring less frequently in this society. By contrast, a clear lifecycle pattern of joint-family coresidence can be seen in Poland–Lithuania (Figure 3a). There, the proportion of CFUs residing in joint groups decreased substantially as the head progressed from early adulthood to his mid-fifties.⁶⁴ While a reverse pattern could be observed after that age, joint coresidence was never as common among units with older heads as it was among family groups with younger heads. Household divisions must have occurred at a very rapid pace among adult Polish–Lithuanians, with a large number of conjugal units gaining residential independence before their heads had reached their late forties. Then, after the head reached the age of 55, the living arrangements of a CFU often shifted again, with many of these groups moving from residing in simple units to living in stem or joint families. These differences in lifecycle developments in Albania and historic Poland may have had important implications for the living arrangements of the elderly in these two societies. It is likely that the delayed division of households in Albania resulted in a considerably higher number and wider range of relatives living in domestic groups that included older people than in Poland.

Living Arrangements of the Aged

Demographers and family historians have devoted considerable attention to measures of living arrangements among the elderly.⁶⁵ The most common approaches take into account household headship rates among the elderly, the relationship of the older person to the household head, the older person's coresidence with married or unmarried children, and/or whether the household in which the elderly person lives has a simple or an extended structure.⁶⁶ In

64 These are, of course, hypothetical life-courses constructed from synthetic cohorts based on cross-sectional data.

65 For a review see: De Vos and Holden, "Measures"; Susan De Vos, "Revisiting the Classification of Household Composition Among Elderly People," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 19, no. 2 (2004): 135–52; also United Nations, Population Division, *Living Arrangements of Older Persons. Special issue of Population Bulletin of the United Nations* 42/43 (New York: United Nations Reproduction Section, 2001); Wall, "Historical Development"; Steven Ruggles, "Living Arrangements and Well-Being of Older Persons in the Past," *Population Bulletin of the United Nations* 42/43 (2001): 111–61.

66 De Vos and Holden, "Measures"; De Vos, "Revisiting."

the analysis that follows, we merge these approaches⁶⁷ and propose a wider palette of quantified indicators for investigating the position of the elderly. After discussing the results we obtained using these standard measures, we consider some additional tools that may provide us with more insights into the morphology of the residence patterns of the elderly in truly complex family systems like the ones we are dealing with here.

When we look at the living arrangements of the elderly, kin availability plays an important role. The patterns of kin availability are determined by age- and sex-specific mortality, fertility, marriage and remarriage rates, and the age differences between spouses.⁶⁸ To capture the demographic effects of the availability of kin on the residence patterns of the aged in the populations under examination we use a very simple measure that can be calculated on the basis of the age structures of our populations. The so-called “availability ratio” (AR)⁶⁹ is the ratio of members of the population aged 15–59 to members of the population aged 60 and over. The former population represents the pool of available individuals with whom the elderly could co-reside. The AR was 10.1 for Poland–Lithuania, but it was only 5.8 for Albania. Assuming this finding is not entirely an artifact caused by the under-registration of certain groups of individuals or a consequence of the age heaping and age exaggeration in the Albanian population, it appears that in Albania there were fewer younger people available for potential coresidence with the elderly.

We begin our analysis by classifying elderly individuals by their relationship to the household head (Table 3). The advantage of this approach is that it allows us to look at the percentage of older people who head a household in conjunction with other features of the living arrangements of the elderly.

The headship rates were uniformly high for men in both locations, but they were much lower for women. In addition, in both datasets far more women lived as parents (or as parents-in-law) in the households of children or children-in-law than men. At this point, however, the similarities between the patterns in historic Poland and in Albania come to an end. While one-sixth of the older women in Poland–Lithuania still held a headship, the corresponding share was drastically

67 Cf. Steven Ruggles, *Prolonged Connections: The Rise of the Extended Family in Nineteenth-Century England and America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Wall, “Relationships”; Richard Wall, “Characteristics of European Family and Household Systems,” *Historical Social Research* 23, no. 1–2 (1998): 44–66.

68 Wolf, “Elderly”; also Ruggles, “Availability”; Palloni, “Living Arrangements,” 88–91.

69 Palloni, “Living Arrangements.”

smaller in Albania. This seems to indicate that due to a “patriarchal bias,” women in Albania had fewer chances of heading a household as widows. The fewer household divisions also explain why elderly Albanian men were found more frequently in the other household membership categories—particularly those of other relatives and siblings of the head or the head’s spouse—than elderly eighteenth-century Ruthenian men. Moreover, relative to their counterparts in Albania, both elderly men and women in Poland–Lithuania were more likely to reside in a household headed by a non-relative, even though this arrangement was still rare.

Relationship to household head	Poland–Lithuania 1791–95		Albania 1918	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Head	88.6	16.1	79.3	1.7
Spouse	0	34.3	0.1	16.1
Parent or parent-in-law	4.9	39.0	5.2	58.6
Sibling or sibling-in-law	1.5	1.9	5.8	5.8
Other relative	1.2	1.9	6.9	14.2
Non-relative	3.8	6.7	1.4	2.3
Lives alone	0.1	0.1	1.3	1.4
Total	100 (N=2639)	100 (N=1853)	100 (N=16391)	100 (N=17913)

Table 3. Elderly (60+) relationship to head of household by sex. Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandejmonj, “1918 census of Albania”; Szoltysek, “CEURFAMFORM database”. Note: Albania: weighted population.

The major patterns shown in Table 3 allow an initial, tentative hypothesis regarding gender-based differences in the well-being of the elderly in the populations under examination. Assuming the domestic groups in the societies in question were structured hierarchically—and that the household head was the key decision-maker regarding access to resources and used his or her power to ensure that other household members acted in accordance with his or her wishes—it appears that old age was much more advantageous for men than for women in both societies. As only a minority of women were entitled to head households at older ages, relatively few of them were able to exert direct control over decision-making in their domestic group, and this happened much

more often in Poland–Lithuania than in Albania. Thus, the well-being of women was dependent on the nature of their membership in a household; i.e., on their placement in the overall web of intra-household relationships.

Before we attempt to deepen our understanding of this issue, we should categorize the elderly householders by sex and the structure of their domestic group (Table 4). Our goal is to determine whether female-headed households were structurally different from male-headed households and whether these structural differences translated into potential vulnerability for older women.

Household category	Poland–Lithuania 1791–95		Albania 1918	
	Male heads (%)	Female heads (%)	Male heads (%)	Female heads (%)
Solitaries	0.2	0.7	1.7	48.6
No family	0.2	0.3	1.2	14.4
Simple family	25.3	19.0	31.8	20.2
Extended family	9.9	29.0	10.8	12.1
Stem family	36.0	20.0	21.9	2.3
Joint family	27.9	31.0	32.6	2.3
Indeterminate	0.5	0	0	0
Total	100 (N=2340)	100 (N=300)	100 (N=13211)	100 (N=555)

Table 4. Household structure of elderly heads (60+) by sex of householder. Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandejmoni, “1918 census of Albania”; Szoltysek, “CEURFAMFORM database”.

The figures in Table 4 show significant differences between male- and female-headed households in both datasets; however, these differences are manifested in a very specific way. In Poland–Lithuania, female householders were much more likely than male ones to head extended domestic groups and were less likely to head stem families. The first gap is largely attributable to the combined effects of higher rates of remarriage among men and the excess male mortality at older ages, but it points to the relatively strong position of widowed women in the joint-family societies of historic Poland–Lithuania. It is particularly striking that, in Poland, the relative shares of heads living in solitary and joint-family households were similar among men and women. Again, the rather high number of female heads of extended and joint-family units in eastern Poland–Lithuania

suggests that the widowed “matriarch” occupied a relatively strong position in the joint-family societies of historic Poland.

The Albanian patterns were quite different. Male-headed households in Albania were far more likely than female-headed households to have been extended and multiple-family arrangements. However, the most striking gender difference in terms of household structure is that women headed almost all of the solitary and “no-family” domestic groups (which represented three-quarters of all of the units headed by women). Thus, unlike in Poland–Lithuania, most of the elderly female heads in Albania were not co-residing with relatives, and they might have been detached from wider kin groups in several important respects.⁷⁰ However, before we attempt to explain this phenomenon, we should point out an interesting interplay between the figures presented in Tables 3 and 4. Whereas women in Poland–Lithuania were much more prone to head independent households than women in the Balkans, women in Albania—a strictly patriarchal society at the time—were much more likely to have lived alone than their Polish counterparts.⁷¹ This issue definitely requires further investigation, but the most obvious explanation is that women were only able to act as household head in Albania in cases in which no male person was available in the household, and such households were rather negligible in number.

While they are easy to calculate and are potentially informative, the research approaches that focus on the household position of the elderly (based on the relationship to the head) and on the composition of older people’s households are obviously insufficient for a description of the entire spectrum of intra-household relationships among elderly people. Although the connection to the household head is definitely the most important principle structuring relationships within domestic groups, it is not the only one in which the coresidents were involved. To explore these issues more fully, we need a classification scheme that takes into account relationships that were not tied to the head and allows us to consider the

70 As remarked above, in reality the exact kinship network or the network of supporting family members is not known in this type of analysis; it can be independent of co-residence. For arguments about a close correspondence between the structure of the co-resident kin group and the overall importance of kinship in Polish–Lithuanian reality, see Szoltysek, *Rethinking East-Central Europe*, ch. 10.

71 In economic demography, living in single-person households in old age is sometimes taken as a manifestation of the desire for privacy and autonomy, which is most likely to be realized when the income of the population increases (see the discussion in Fred C. Pampel “Changes in the Propensity to Live Alone: Evidence from Consecutive Cross-Sectional Surveys, 1960–1976,” *Demography* 20, no. 4 (1983): 433–47. Another perspective stresses the negative consequences of living alone; namely, the limited potential for assistance from family members, indicated by the presence of others in the same household.

relationships between older individuals and other members of the domestic group in which they live,⁷² at least in a dyadic form. For this purpose, we have used a classification scheme that allocates individuals according to whether they were members of a core-family group, which may include unmarried children living with at least one parent, married couples, and lone parents. People who were not members of families are classified in three ways, according to whether they lived with relatives, with non-relatives only, or alone. It should be emphasized that, in this classification, the category of relative is not defined by a specific relationship to the household head, but by the existence of a relationship between the elderly person and members of the household other than his or her children or spouse. The focus is therefore on the individual and not on the household, and relatives are identified not by their relationship to the head of the household, but by their relationship to any household member in the absence of closer family ties.⁷³ The comparison of Polish–Lithuanian and Albanian populations is presented in Table 5.

	Poland–Lithuania 1791–95		Albania 1918	
Type of relationship ("lives as")	Males	Females	Males	Females
Child	0	0.1	0.4	0.2
Spouse	69.5	36.8	77.7	19.0
Lone parent	26.8	56.3	15.8	68.4
Other kin	1.6	2.5	3.4	8.7
Other non-kin	2.0	4.3	1.4	2.3
Lives alone	0.1	0.1	1.3	1.4
Total	100 (N=2639)	100 (N=1853)	100 (N=16,391)	100 (N=17,913)

Table 5. Dyadic relationships in the households by sex and region. Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandelejmoni, "1918 census of Albania"; Szołtysek, "CEURFAMFORM database".

The allocation patterns of older persons to different categories represented in Table 5 are generally very similar in both societies, with more elderly men living with spouses and more women being classified as "lone parents." However, the differences in the numeric intensity of these patterns are probably more

⁷² De Vos and Holden, "Measures," 694.

⁷³ Wall, "Characteristics."

important. First, it should be noted that in Albania, over 80 percent of older women were living without a spouse (potentially the most important source of support, at least in old age), compared with 63 percent in Poland–Lithuania; which again represents a clear effect of the age gap between spouses in Albania. Both men and women in Albania were more likely to live without coresident children than their counterparts in Poland–Lithuania, although the trend was stronger among women than men (14.4 percent of women versus 6.9 percent of men).

Poland–Lithuania 1791–95				
Females living with/as	N (=100%)	% living with adult child (16+)	% living with married child	% living with unmarried or widowed child
Spouse	681	87.7	72.1	54.9
Lone parent	1044	95.4	84.5	40.3
Albania 1918				
Females living with/as	N (=100%)	% living with adult child (16+)	% living with married child	% living with unmarried or widowed child
Spouse	691	73.2	55.9	62.0
Lone parent	2343	86.6	70.0	42.5

Table 6. Selected dyadic relationships by category of coresident offspring (female population only). Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandejmon, “1918 census of Albania”; Szoltysek, “CEURFAMFORM database”.

To better assess the potential vulnerability of older Albanian and Polish–Lithuanian women, it is useful to distinguish between the different types of children coresiding with elderly females in the two settings. For the calculations presented in Table 6, two categories of women who could have lived with children in the same premises (“spouses” and “lone parents” in Table 5) were further subdivided into those who lived with adult children, at least one married child, and unmarried and widowed children (as these categories partly overlap, the given percentages do not sum up to 100). It thus appears that, relative to their counterparts in Albania, women in Poland–Lithuania were more likely to have been living with a husband and were more likely to have been coresiding with

adult and married children. The difference between these two sites is equally revealing when coresidence with adult and married children is examined for women classified as lone parents. In Poland–Lithuania, women in this category co-resided with adult and married offspring 10 to 15 percent more often than in Albania.

Lives as	Relationship to the household head							N (=100%)
	Head	Spouse	Parent or parent-in- law	Sibling or sibling-in- law	Other relative	Non- relative	Lives alone	
	Poland–Lithuania 1791–95							
Child	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	1
Spouse	0	93	2	1	1	3	0	681
Lone parent	28	0	68	1	0	2	0	1044
Other kin	7	0	0	30	52	11	0	46
Other non-kin	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	79
Lives alone	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	2
	Albania 1918							
Child	0	0	0	28	72	0	0	43
Spouse	0	84	7	3	5	0	0	3400
Lone parent	2	0	83	4	11	0	0	12,261
Other kin	5	1	5	23	64	1	0	1553
Other non-kin	6	0	0	0	0	94	0	409
Lives alone	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	247

Table 7. Dyadic relationships of elderly women by individual household position. Source: Sożyłtysek, “CEURFAMFORM database”; Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandejmoni, “1918 census of Albania”.

We can perform an even more detailed accounting of the living arrangements of the elderly if we combine the information provided above in Table 5 with the pattern of relationships to the head of household. This approach is based on the assumption that dyadic relationships between individuals within domestic groups can also be structured hierarchically. In other words, it might be assumed

that lone parenting, for example, may be framed differently in terms of the flow of resources and support depending on whether a lone parent is a household head, a head's relative, or a stranger.

Again, the cross-classifications of the various relationships of older people in the two societies are generally similar, particularly among men. However, among women, some interesting differences can be observed (Table 7). The share of women who were lone parents in Poland-Lithuania was highly concentrated among two household statuses: the head and the parental generation (including the parents-in-law). At the same time, the share of female lone parents who headed a household was almost six times lower in the Balkans, and lone mothers in Albania were predominantly clustered around the head's parents. One possible interpretation of these findings is that Polish lone mothers were receiving more resources from the younger generation; i.e., they were receiving intra-household support. It is important to note, however, that in the Balkans, the authority of the female spouse of the head normally increased only with the age of the woman, and often culminated in the woman achieving the position of the respected mother of the new "patriarch." This does not fit in with the image of the subordinated, vulnerable, and fully dependent elderly woman.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, even if we accept that the underrepresentation of Albanian widowed mothers among household heads was counterbalanced by their equally strong position after stepping down from co-headship, we still have to explain the finding that some 10 to 15 percent of lone parents among Albanian women were not mothers or even siblings of the heads, but were more distant relatives of the head couple. It is not entirely unrealistic to argue that a widow's relationship with her children and the flow of resources between her and her children would have been framed by the status of their respective family units with respect to the core family of the head and his close relatives. Inequality and mistreatment may have arisen in such contexts, especially given that Albanian women often were not surrounded by their adult offspring.

74 This holds true even though in general women are structurally less advantaged in the patrilineal joint-family system than in nuclear- or stem-family societies. According to Das Gupta, "Liveboat," 178, 180: "This is because the primary unit is the corporate group which consists of male patrikin. Women are at the bottom of two hierarchies: the gender hierarchy as well as the age hierarchy. A young bride enters her husband's family as a marginal person with little autonomy (...). The powerlessness of women in the patrilineal joint family system (...) is at its peak during the early phases of a woman's marriage, which are the peak childbearing years (...). In the joint family system, old people are likely to obtain greater emotional and physical support, and also perhaps greater access to financial support in an emergency than might have been forthcoming for retired parents in the stem family system."

We have already noted that divergences in the life-cycle patterns of domestic groups in Albania and Poland–Lithuania probably had an effect on the number of coresident kin to the elderly. Unless excess mortality took a toll, older Albanians should have had a considerably higher number and a wider range of relatives present in their households. Is it possible to find hard evidence that confirms this assumption?

For the purpose of exploring this issue, the unweighted average of the distribution of households by size commonly labeled “mean household size” needs to be distinguished from another related measure, the “size of household of the average member of the population” (“mean experienced household size”) (Table 8).⁷⁵

Region	Sex	M(E)HS	No. Of adults	All relatives	Spouse	Children	Sibling	Nephew	Cousin	Grand-children
Poland–Lithuania 1791–95	males	7.07	4.60	3.36	0.68	1.36	0.07	0.04	0.00	0.05
	females	7.13	4.67	3.37	0.36	1.47	0.01	n.a.	n.a.	0.09
Albania 1918	males	8.49	5.26	4.13	0.83	0.97	0.28	0.26	0.16	0.04
	females	7.88	5.06	3.96	0.19	1.25	0.07	n.a.	n.a.	0.15

Table 8. Elderly population by sex, mean experienced household size, and mean number of adult coresident relatives (16+). Source: Kaser, Gruber, Kera, Pandejmonj, “1918 census of Albania”; Szołtysek, “CEURFAMFORM database”.

The figures in Table 8 show that the experienced household size was higher in Albania for both males and females, although for older men the difference was substantially larger. Interestingly, unlike in Albania, the size of the household of the average elderly woman in Poland–Lithuania was very close to that of the average man. Once again, this provides some additional evidence that elderly women in historic Poland had a better standing than women in Albania. In both societies, most adults who co-resided with an elderly person were the person’s

75 See Joel M. Halpern, “Town and countryside in Serbia in the nineteenth-century, social and household structure as reflected in the census of 1863,” in *Household and Family in Past Time*, ed. Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 401–27; Thomas K. Burch, “Household and Family Demography: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Population Index* 45, no. 2 (1979): 173–95.

relatives by blood or marriage. Far more elderly men than elderly women were living with a spouse. However, whereas men in Poland were less likely to have been living with a spouse than men in Albania, the pattern for women was reversed. These results are attributable to the higher remarriage rates of men relative to women in both societies, and to the large age gap at marriage in Albania.⁷⁶ Older people in Poland–Lithuania generally had more adult children in their household, though we do not yet have enough information to determine whether this was simply an outcome of less favorable demographic conditions in Albania.⁷⁷ Overall, however, we can see that in Albania, the proportion of elderly people who lived with relatives other than spouses and children was higher than in Poland–Lithuania (figures for men only). In both datasets, the mean number of adult, coresiding grandchildren was negligible.

Conclusions

Although it is still not fully acknowledged in the historical and sociological literature, a significant degree of variation has been shown to have existed within Northwestern Europe with regards to household organization. Richard Wall was among the first to tackle the problem of inter-regional differences in familial organization within areas traditionally subsumed under the label of simple (and neolocal) household systems.⁷⁸ Referring to the substantial range of variation between individual settlements in England, he warned that it would be incorrect “to see English households as variations on one basic type.”⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the considerable degree of variation in household structures Wall found within the confines of Northern and Central Europe led him to point out rather boldly that “so great is the degree of variation that it must be doubtful whether Hajnal’s

76 Larger age gaps between spouses in Albania may have resulted in better chances of remarrying for widows, as they were younger. However, differing household structure, as well as the differing household position of the women could counterbalance that advantage, as the presence of married adult sons could diminish the probability of remarriage.

77 A similar number of children-in-law should be present in these households (most of these adult children were married), although we have not yet been able to calculate their exact numbers. It is worth pointing out that early twentieth-century observers of demographic conditions in southern Belarus were equally struck by the extremely high fertility of the local population and the surprisingly low mortality (Fogelson, “Z badań”).

78 Wall, “Household systems”; Wall, “Transformation.”

79 Richard Wall, “Regional and Temporal Variations in English Household Structure from 1650,” in *Regional Demographic Development*, ed. John Hobcraft and Philip Rees (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 109.

generalization captures much of the reality of family and household patterns of Northwest European societies in the past.”⁸⁰

Following this thread, in this paper, we have attempted to demonstrate that, even though eastern Poland–Lithuania and Albania both followed joint-household formation rules (i.e., the pattern antithetical to the neolocal one according to Hajnal) and can both be seen as examples of societies with long traditions of the ownership of joint property rights, the family systems in the two settings were not entirely the same. Throughout this exercise, Wall’s argument that family and household systems should not be defined solely on the basis of variations in the proportions of extended and multiple-family households⁸¹ has proven particularly valuable, and we have taken a large number of factors into consideration to demonstrate the validity of our approach.

The paper demonstrates several differences between the two Eastern European regions, however, the most convincing findings are related to the distinctly different role of females in households of Poland–Lithuania and Albania. It is in this regard that the patterns detected in the regions of eastern Poland–Lithuania deviate most significantly from many of the tendencies found in Albania. The distinctiveness of female position in the two societies, in turn, suggests that their patriarchal underpinnings may not have been the same. This disparity stemmed from the interplay of various socioeconomic, institutional, and ecological factors that are too complex to be fully discussed here.⁸² Here, it must suffice to say that manorialism, demesne lordship⁸³ and the associated interventions by landlords in the lives of peasants created a political-economic framework within which historical tendencies to form corporate family groups in eastern Poland–Lithuania were to some extent constrained and the power of lineage groups was partly mitigated.⁸⁴ In Albania, on the other hand, rather extreme environmental conditions in alpine or highland areas far from communication and trade routes appear to have facilitated the continuity of

80 Wall, “Household Systems,” 625.

81 Wall, “Household Systems”; Wall, “Transformation.”

82 See, however, Mikołaj Szołtysek, “Residence Patterns and the Human-ecological Setting in Historical Eastern Europe: a Challenge of Compositional (Re)analysis,” in *Population in the Human Sciences: Concepts, Models, Evidence*, ed. Philip Kreager (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

83 See Markus Cerman, *Villagers and Lords in Eastern Europe, 1300–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

84 Cf. also Michael Mitterauer, “Ostkolonisation und Familienverfassung. Zur Diskussion um die Hajnal-Linie,” In *Vilfanov zbornik. Pravo-zgodovina-narod. In memoriam Sergij Vilfan*, ed. Vincenc Rajšp and Ernst Bruckmüller (Ljubljana: ZRC, 1999), 203–21.

patriarchal cultures barely subject to state surveillance or socio-cultural currents of the Early Modern and Modern Eras.⁸⁵

The different interactions among the microprocesses of elderly household membership recruitment discussed in this paper—all within a broad geographical area traditionally associated with family complexity—not only raise the question of how, ultimately, the area as a whole should be characterized, i.e. as pertaining to the operation of different household systems, or, alternatively, variations of one basic system. They also point to the more substantial question of the extent to which the term “joint family” should be used to describe a distinct family system. Further research along the lines proposed here, but extended over other areas of traditional Europe, could help us resolve this problem.⁸⁶ In fact, the most recent studies suggest that the residential patterns of the elderly are but one element of a much wider “package” of dissimilarities between Polish–Lithuanian joint families and their counterparts in the Black Earth region in nineteenth-century Russia and Albania.⁸⁷ One solution to the problem could be to abandon the idea that one country or region belongs to one rigid “pattern” and another country to another “pattern,” and instead to use a set of different variables to compare countries, regions, or subpopulations within them. Such a set of variables can be used to analyse similarities and differences between two or more populations and see which ones are closer to or more distant from each other; thus, to approach the Eastern European joint families as various “scalar types.”

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85 Cf. Mitterauer, “Komplexe Familienformen,” 67–68; Pier Paolo Viazzo, *Upland Communities: Environment, Population and Social Structure in the Alps since the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Ulf Brunnbauer, “The Mountains and the Households. Household Structures in the Rhodopi Mountains in a Comparative Perspective.” Paper presented at the 2010 SSHA Convention, Chicago, Ill., October 17–21, 2010.

86 See the agenda for the research and data collection project recently launched by MPIDR, called Mosaic at www.censusmosaic.org.

87 Szoltysek, *Rethinking East-Central Europe*, and Gruber and Szoltysek, “Quantifying Patriarchy.”

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Levente Pakot

Family Composition, Birth Order and Timing of First Marriages in Rural Transylvania. A Case Study of Szentegyházsfalu (Vlăhița) and Kápolnásfalu (Căpâlnița), 1838–1940

In this article I explore the roles of family composition in the timing of first marriages in two mountain villages in the eastern part of Transylvania (in present-day Romania) between 1838 and 1940. Using micro-level data based on family reconstitutions, I found evidence suggesting the dominant role of family composition in the decision to marry in the case of both males and females. Although strong age norms existed with regards to marriage in the settlements in question, the results of multivariate analysis show that ordinal position of birth, number of siblings, parental presence, and the historical period during which a marriage was concluded, all played decisive roles in determining the age at the time of marriage of males and females. The effect of ordinal position of birth differed by gender: first-born males tended to marry at an older age than their brothers, as opposed to first-born females, who normally married at a younger age than their younger sisters. The death of one or both parents was an inducement among males and females to marry. This response to a family crisis reflects the acceleration of the inheritance process and an effort to maintain the viability of a rural household.

Keywords: marriage timing, sibling configuration, birth rank, Transylvania

In most cases, marriage is not considered an isolated event. Rather it is a complex family event that is related to the needs of parents and siblings.¹ If marriage is analyzed within the context of family dynamics, one of the questions that may arise is how the presence of parents and siblings affects the marriage prospects of unmarried sons and daughters. Little research has been done on this question in the case of Transylvania in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this article I explore the roles of family composition and birth order on the timing of first marriages in two mountain villages in the eastern part of Transylvania (present-day Romania) in the period between 1838 and 1940.

1 Lisa Dillon, "Parental and Sibling Influences on the Timing of Marriage, XVIIth and XVIIIth Century Québec," *Annales de démographie historique* 1 (2010): 139.

Background

Historical research on marriage patterns has long been dominated by John Hajnal's hypothesis.² It is important to emphasize that, according to Hajnal, the Western European historical model, which is characterized by late ages at the time of marriage, is unique since marriage was accompanied by the establishment of independent households. This is the underlying cause of the dominance of simple family households. The material goods required in order to set up a new household were acquired partly by inheritance and partly by savings gathered during the period prior to marriage. Therefore, the average age at the time of marriage was often rather high and a small portion of the young never married at all. According to Hajnal's model, in other parts of the world where complex family households dominate, the marriage of children requires fewer resources from the parents, as the children normally stay in the parental household. Thus the average age at the time of marriage is lower than the average age in Western Europe, and the proportion of individuals who married is higher.

The Western European marriage model inspired a series of studies on inheritance systems and family reproduction.³ The studies focused on two closely interrelated questions: on the one hand, the differential reproduction of families living in the settlement and, on the other, differences among siblings within the family regarding access to local marriage and migration. Recent studies based on individual level and longitudinal data are part of this inquiry. The underlying question is to what extent do the individual characteristics and the composition of the family, the household and the community in historical-social context affect the possibility of marriage or migration.

In the nineteenth century, the demand for a female workforce in the booming textile industry in small towns in Eastern Belgium led to the migration of young women from nearby villages, thereby creating a very unbalanced

2 John Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in *Population in History*, ed. V. David Glass and David E. C. Eversley, 101–43 (London: Edward Arnold, 1965); John Hajnal, "Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation Systems," *Population and Development Review* 8, no. 3 (1982): 449–94.

3 For a review of the secondary literature on family reproduction and differential demography prior to 2000 see Luigi Lorenzetti and Muriel Neven, "Démographie, famille et reproduction familiale: un dialogue en évolution," *Annales de démographie historique* 2 (2000): 83–100. For the possibilities of comparative analysis of different family systems see Michel Oris and Emiko Ochiai, "Family Crisis in the Context of Different Family Systems: Framework and Evidence on «When Dad Died»," in *When Dad Died. Individuals and families coping with family stress in past societies*, ed. Renzo Derosas and Michel Oris (Bern–Berlin–Brussels–New York–Frankfurt am Main–Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002), 17–80.

marriage market.⁴ Under these circumstances, the children of farmers had much better marriage prospects than the other groups and were less likely to emigrate. Paternal presence decreased the risk of marriage and migration. The death of a father and/or mother was an inducement for their children to marry and to proceed with the process of inheritance. The risk of marriage and migration was lower among members of groups with many siblings with one exception: older girls living in the same household with their younger sisters, who were prone to emigrate. Based on the results, differential access to marriage and migration were of importance among families and not within the family, and birth order meant neither an advantage nor a disadvantage.⁵ A comparative analysis of Pays de Herve in Belgium and Zélande in the Netherlands suggests the adverse marriage perspectives of groups with a high number of siblings.⁶ In these regions, the presence of older sisters reduced the likelihood of younger sisters to marry. However, the marriage of older sisters facilitated the marriage of their younger siblings.⁷ Inheritance and marriage were tightly correlated in the villages of Alsace in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where sons without siblings were more likely to marry and on average at a younger age than those who had siblings.⁸ In parallel to an increase in the number of siblings of the same gender, marriage prospects worsened and the possibility of migration came up, mainly for children in higher ordinal position of birth.

Systematic gender differences in accordance with birth order were observed among Norwegian-Americans living in Wisconsin where the marriage prospects of children of higher ordinal position of birth with limited access to household resources were worse than the marriage prospects of the elder siblings.⁹ Members

4 George Alter and Michel Oris, "Access to Marriage in the East Ardennes during the 19th Century," in *Marriage and Rural Economy: Western Europe since 1400*, ed. Isabelle Devos and Liam Kennedy (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 133–51; Muriel Neven et al., "Les déterminants du mariage rural en Belgique orientale: une approche multivariée," in *Le mariage dans l'Est de la Wallonie, XVIII^e – XIX^e siècles*, ed. Paul Servais and George Alter (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant, 2005), 97–135.

5 Alter and Oris, "Access to Marriage," 144, 147–48. Neven et al., *Les déterminants du mariage*, 116–24.

6 Hilde Bras and Muriel Neven, "Mariage et décohabitation dans deux régions rurales (XIX^e–XX^e siècles): Frères et soeurs: rivaux ou solidaires?," in *Les fratries: Une démographie sociale de la germanité*, ed. Michel Oris et al. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 181–218; Hilde Bras and Muriel Neven, "The Effect of Siblings on the Migration of Women in Two Rural Areas of Belgium and the Netherlands, 1829–1940," *Population Studies* 61, no. 1 (2007): 53–71.

7 Bras and Neven, "Mariage et décohabitation," 205–13.

8 Kevin McQuillan, "Family Composition, Birth Order and Marriage Patterns: Evidence from rural Alsace, 1750–1885," *Annales de démographie historique* 1 (2000): 57–71.

9 Jon Gjerde and Anne McCants, "Individual Life Chances, 1850–1910: A Norwegian-American Example," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 30, no. 3 (1999): 387–88.

of groups with a low number of siblings had better chances of marrying. There was a positive correlation between the death of the father and the marriage of daughters, whereas the marriage prospects of sons were lessened by migration at a younger age.¹⁰ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, first-born children married at a younger age than their younger siblings in Québec.¹¹ Due to the abundance of land and the possibility of establishing one's own farm, they did not have to wait until they came into their share of an inheritance, and the high fertility of parents ensured the utilization of the younger siblings as a contribution to the workforce on the family farm.

In 1973, when Daniel Scott Smith analyzed the marriages in Hingham, Massachusetts, he drew attention to the fact that the marriage of daughters in accordance with their birth order reflected the influence of parents on their children.¹² In pre-industrial patriarchal society, parents were responsible for their daughters' virginity, as the reputation of the young woman was closely intertwined or even identical with the reputation of her family.¹³ Therefore, a divergence between birth order and the order in which siblings were married could imply greater freedom in decision-making. Smith's paper reflected on the fact that, regarding females, the custom of concluding a marriage in accordance with the birth order began to vanish at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the same work, Smith also indicated that in the American colonies fathers sought to delay the marriages of their sons because they needed their sons' help for a longer period of time and the portion of the inheritance required for the establishment of a new household was issued later.

Most recent studies on Western European and Asian historical populations emphasize the oversimplification and untenable nature of Hajnal's hypothesis.¹⁴ In Asian societies, which were dominated by complex households, providing a dowry for a child who was going to leave the household placed a great burden on parents. Moreover, a child's savings from the pre-marital period played a less significant role than was supposed by the model. The characteristics of

10 Gjerde and McCants, "Individual Life Chances," 394, 398.

11 Dillon, "Parental and Sibling Influences," 164–69.

12 Daniel Scott Smith, "Parental Power and Marriage Patterns: An analysis of Historical Trends in Hingham, Massachusetts," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35, no. 3 (1973): 419–28.

13 Smith, "Parental Power," 412.

14 Tommy Bengtsson et al., "The Influence of Economic Factors on First Marriage in Historical Europe and Asia," (Unpublished paper, 2011).

the family, namely, its socioeconomic position and the presence of parents and siblings, also play an important role in marriage in both Europe and Asia.¹⁵

Similar efforts can be observed in the Hungarian scholarship on the social history of towns. Differences in age at the time of marriage were detected for the first time by Vera Bácskai.¹⁶ She examined the average age at the time of marriage of males and females by applying groups of place-of-origin and occupation data gathered from marriage certificates in Pest from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, organized according to five different periods of time. Results suggest that men and women from Pest had more marriage options and different marriage customs according to occupational group. The impact of occupation, social status and religion on individual life cycle and age at the time of marriage has also been emphasized by Tamás Faragó.¹⁷ Among the Hungarian studies, Gyula Benda's work on marriages in the town of Keszthely is of high significance. It examines marriage at the levels of population, family and the individual.¹⁸ By processing individual data of parochial registries in Keszthely and comparing this data with data from other sources, he made it possible to articulate further hypotheses regarding the impact of demographical events (e.g. the death of parents) and family context (the presence of siblings).

Ethnographic and historical studies on marriages in Transylvania, more precisely in the Székely Land, emphasize the influence of parents on the marriages of their children.¹⁹ In general, the youngest boy could stay in the parental home, and he had to look after the aging parents in exchange for their property.²⁰ Earlier, parents provided older sons with the chance to establish a separate household.²¹ According to the study on inheritance customs,²² at the end of the nineteenth

15 Bengtsson et al., "The Influence of Economic Factors," 17–21.

16 Bácskai Vera, "Pest társadalomtörténetének vizsgálata a házasságkötések alapján (1735–1830)," *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 21 (1979): 59–105.

17 Faragó Tamás, "Életrajzok és családminták egy magyarországi városban a 18–19. században," *Demográfia* 48, no. 4 (2005): 415–35.

18 Benda Gyula, "A házasságok Keszthelyen 1749–1850: az átlagtól a mikrotörténelemig avagy a léptékváltás problémája," in *Mikrotörténelem: vívmányok és korlátok*, ed. Dobossy István (Miskolc: BAZ M. levéltár, 2003), 82–93.

19 Faragó Tamás, "Nemek, nemzedékek, rokonság, család," in *Magyar Néprajz VIII. Társadalom*, ed. Sárkány Mihály and Szilágyi Miklós (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2000), 393–483; Tárkány Szűcs Ernő, *Magyar jogi népszokások* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1981), 289–318; Kozán Imre, *Fekete ugar* (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1978), 15–16; Zsigmond Erzsébet, *Sírató. Életem panaszos könyve* (Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca]: Krúza János Néprajzi Társaság, 1995), 49–50.

20 Imreh István and Pataki József, *Készcséki krónika 1650–1750* (Budapest: Európa, 1992).

21 Tamási Gáspár, *Vadon női gyöngyvirág* (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1983), 14.

22 Matyasovszky Miklós, *Törzsszörökölési jog és törzsszörökölési szokás* (Budapest: Eggenberger, 1904).

century sons inherited a significant share of real estate, whereas daughters were given movable belongings and assets and some real estate. Parents aimed to provide the youngest son with the biggest portion of the wealth, and they paid the other children two-thirds or three-quarters of the market value.²³

Hypotheses

In the subsequent sections, I examine the impact of the presence of parents and the sibling configuration on the timing of the first marriages for young females and males. Since the sources are chiefly limited to members of the younger generation who did not migrate, the question here differs slightly from the question posed in mainstream studies. Instead of access to marriage, I focus on the timing of the first marriage. More precisely, I examine how the composition of the family of a young person who was concluding marriage, by which I mean parental presence and sibship configuration, affect such timing.²⁴ I offer hypotheses regarding this subject in the following section.

The first factor I consider is parental presence. The death of either or both parents could accelerate the inheritance process and break up financial resources, thereby indirectly facilitating the marriage of children. The death of a father, for instance, could increase the speed of the distribution of family assets among children and smoothen the progress of their conclusion of a marriage. It is supposed that such a change (the death of a father) is accompanied by the disappearance of tight control, so the child may enjoy a greater degree of liberty in the choice of a partner. Based on the fact that a significant share of the real property was inherited by sons, it is reasonable to assume that the death of either or both parents facilitated the marriage of sons. In order to maintain the economic viability of a household, one alternative was for the surviving parent to marry again or for one of the children to marry, or for the family to dissolve and establish new households. It was in the interests of parents to find a spouse for their children, as the families of children normally supported the parents when they grew old. Moreover, whereas the older generation was able to exploit its status and social network to seek spouses for their adult children, the young who had lost their parents may face disadvantages. Based on the data gathered

23 Mattyasovszky, "Törzsöröklési jog," 388–90.

24 For a similar analytical approach see: Bianca Suanet and Hilde Bras, "Sibling Position and Marriage Timing in the Netherlands, 1840–1922: A Comparison across Social Classes, Local Contexts, and Time," *Journal of Family History* 39, no. 2 (2014): 126–39.

in Keszthely, Gyula Benda articulated a similar opinion. He argued that children orphaned at a young age had worse marriage prospects, whereas coming close to the acquisition of an inheritance significantly improved marriage prospects.²⁵ At the same time, however, living parents were interested in postponing the marriage of adult sons in order to profit from their labor on the family farm as long as possible. All in all, I assume that the loss of one or both parents at an early age resulted in a higher than average age at the time of marriage. However, in the case of people who were adults when one or both of their parents died, the death of a parent (or the parents) accelerated the conclusion of a marriage. Moreover, as the sons inherited the real property, it is reasonable to suppose that the impact of the death of a parent on marriage is more noticeable among sons.

Sibling configuration may radically influence age at the time of marriage. The size of the group of siblings, the order in which they were born and the composition of the group according to gender played a decisive role. Due to the limited resources of the family and parallel to the increasing number of children, one observes resource dilution. Resources of the family of origin could be modified by the life cycle of the family, and this could affect the children who were born at different times in dissimilar ways.²⁶ Limited resources could greatly impact first-born children, as upon reaching marriage age they had to compete with younger siblings. The position of later-born children who were reaching the normative age of marriage could be better if their older sibling(s) had already married. One of the resources that affected the timing of marriage was the space available for the young adult.²⁷ In households with big families, children often shared a room. The desire to establish their own household may have been a strong incentive to marry for children who had reached marriageable age. According to this reasoning, the establishment of a new family was appealing for first-born children, so they tended to conclude marriages at younger ages than later-born children. The impact of the number of siblings and birth order within the framework of parental resources could be perceived in various ways. In the case of first-born young males, marriage was normally accompanied by the establishment of an independent farm that was indisputably headed by males. In less ideal cases, marriage led to a shared household and shared farming with

25 Benda, "A házasságok Keszthelyen," 89.

26 Aleksandr V. Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy* (Homewood IL: R. D. Irwin, 1966 [1925]).

27 For a similar approach see Wei-hsin Yu, Kuo-hsien Su and Chi-Tsun Chiu, "Sibling Characteristics and Transition to First Marriage in Taiwan: Explaining Gender Asymmetries," *Population Research and Policy Review* 31, no. 4 (2012): 612–16.

the possibility of establishing a separate farm later. The majority of females, however, moved to a different household upon marriage. The establishment of an independent household by a first-born son often depleted resources that had to be replaced, and the process of replacing these resources took time. Parents aimed to utilize the labor of the first-born son on the family farm. Based on the reasoning outlined above, it is reasonable to hypothesize that older sons married later than their younger brothers, who had to vie with fewer competitors for the available resources. One could expect quite the opposite in the case of daughters. Since the marriage of a daughter required less financial contribution from their parents, and since resources were limited to space, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the scarcity of resources was a source of pressure for the oldest girl in the sibling group to marry as soon as possible. Put simply, they married at a younger age than their later-born sisters.

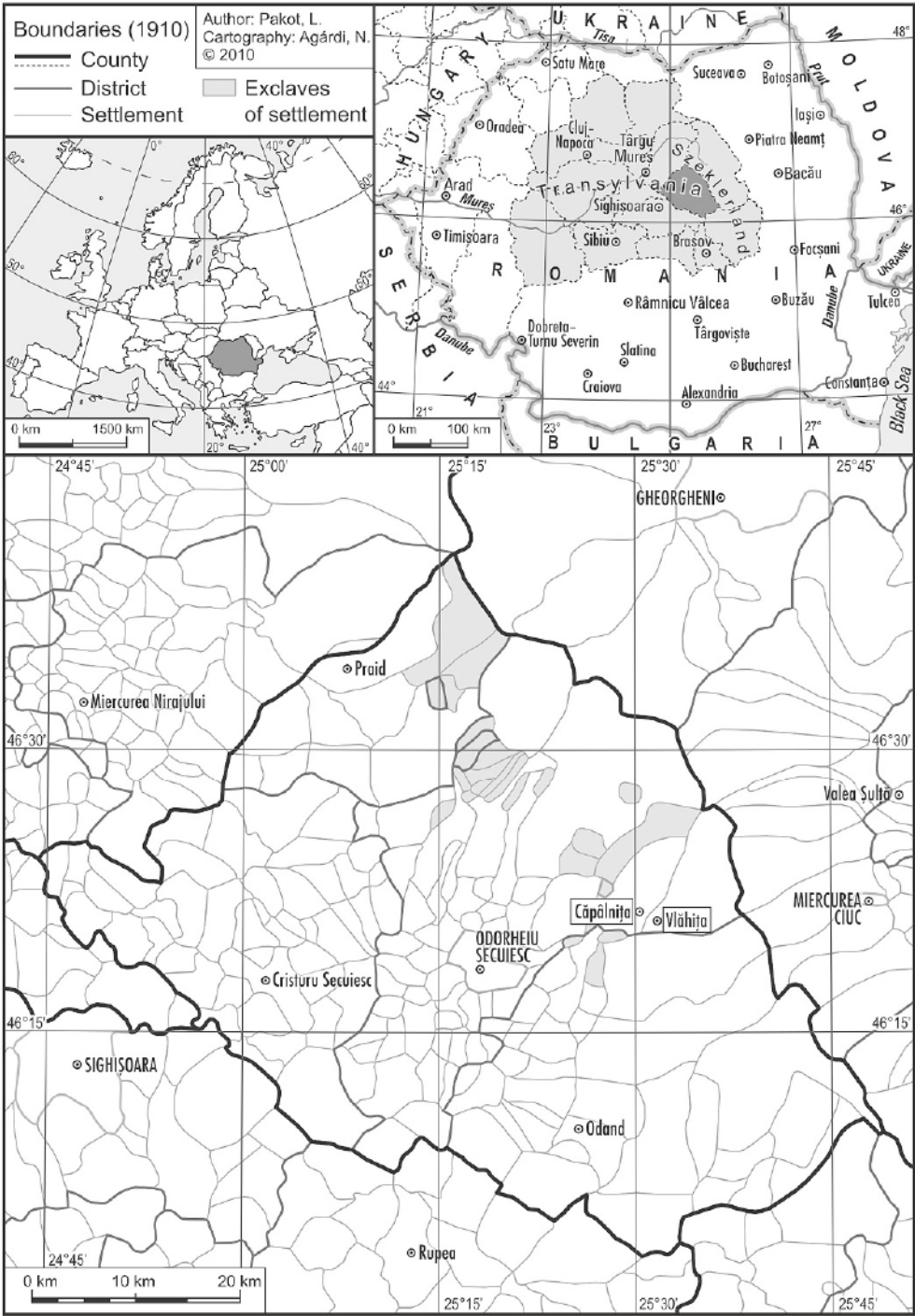
The impact of sibling characteristics on the timing of a first marriage can also be approached from the field of social relations. According to this, the presence of siblings of opposite gender in childhood facilitates the establishment of relationships with the other gender. I therefore assume that the presence of siblings of the opposite gender smoothens the progress of transition to the first marriage at a younger age.

The Communities Under Study

Szentegyházásfalva (Vlăhița) and Kápolnásfalva (Căpâlnița) are neighboring settlements. They are located along the southern skirts of the Harghita Mountains, in the eastern part of Inner Transylvania, a region in present-day Romania, at about 860 meters above sea level (see Figure 2). The villages lie on the frontier, far from the economic centers of Transylvania. Their total population reached 4,000 in the 1900s. The majority of their inhabitants belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Due to their geographical proximity (2 kilometers) and the joint privileges received from the Princes of Transylvania, the history of the two villages was closely interlinked: they formed one parish until 1838 and one administrative unit until 1876.²⁸

The discovery of iron ore sites close to the villages and the opening of mines were important events in the nineteenth century in each of the two settlements.

28 For a history of the privileges of the communities, see Gusztáv Mihály Hermann, "Az Udvarhelyszéki Havasfalja kiváltságos települései: a két Oláhfalú és Zetelaka," in *Emlékkönyv Imreh István nyolcvanadik születésnapjára*, ed. András Kiss, Gyöngy Kovács Kiss, and Ferenc Pozsony (Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca]:



An industrial plant, Szentkeresztbánya, was founded a few kilometers away from the villages in the 1850s. It provided an opportunity for the locals to secure some extra income. Due to contemporary financial and infrastructural conditions, mining remained a small-scale enterprise.

The majority of villagers were smallholders, and they earned their livelihoods through lumbering and woodwork in the communally owned woods, as well as through extensive animal husbandry. Timbering and woodwork were 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 cadaster of 1909.²⁹ 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 in the direction of the agriculturally more developed and more urbanized Southern Transylvanian regions.

The population of the settlements was characterized not only by geographic and economic conditions, but also by particular patterns of demographic behavior. In addition to the dynamic increase of the population and its relative youth (as an average), the common demographic characteristics of the two villages included relatively high fertility, low emigration and relatively high infant and child mortality. Between 1786 and 1869, the population doubled. After 1869, epidemics (cholera in 1873) and increased infant and child mortality in the 1870s and 1880s slowed down this increase, but this was followed by a significant increase around the turn of the century. An important characteristic of demographic behavior was universal and early marriage. Average age at first marriage was 20–21 years for females and 25–27 years for males. The proportion of unmarried people among the old was very low. Strict religious and community regulations forbade divorce.

Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1999), 138–98. For a detailed account of public administration changes and the process of losing the privileges in the 1870s, see Judit Pál, *Városfejlődés a Székelyföldön 1750–1914* (Csíkszereda [Miercurea Ciuc]: Pro-Print, 2003).

29 Lajos Sándor, “Fűrészek, malmok, ványolók jegyzéke az 1909-es kataszteri telekkönyv és telekkönyvi rajzok alapján,” in *Népélet a Kis-Homoród mentén*, ed. József Kardalus (Szentegyháza, 1998), 112–16. István Molnár, “A hazai zsidófaragás térbeli-időbeli alakulásának néhány vonása,” in *A Székelykeresztúri Múzeum Emlékkönyve*, ed. István Molnár and Nicolae Bucur (Csíkszereda [Miercurea Ciuc], 1974), 328–43.

Data and Methods

We reconstructed the demographic behavior of the settlements under examination on the basis of parish registry data. An electronic database was compiled from parish registries from the period between 1776 and 1941. Based on the principles of the family reconstitution method established by Louis Henry and Michel Fleury³⁰ and making use of available computerized database management facilities, we were able to reconstitute the most important demographic events of families and individuals by applying time-consuming record linking.

The sample population was comprised of people who concluded their first marriages locally in the period between 1838 and 1940 ($N=4,116$). To define the sibling characteristics, we applied only the data on siblings who concluded marriages locally, that is to say, we disregarded the deceased and migrated members of a sibling group. The exclusion of the first group is explained by the fact that death could be a competing risk with marriage. Regarding the second group, the exact date of migration remained unknown. Consequently, the time at risk of first marriage cannot be detected. In order to arrive at the most accurate identification of surviving parents, the sample was reduced to young individuals whose parents' date of death is known. The sample, elaborated in this way, was narrowed down by excluding the group of single children ($N=346$). All in all, the sample used for this study contains first marriages concluded between 1838 and 1940 of 1,580 unmarried females and 1,424 unmarried males.

For the analysis of the timing of first marriages, the beginning of marriage risk was defined at age 15. Individuals in the sample were followed from age 15 until the date of their first marriage. Sibling characteristics were explained by time-constant covariates. Married siblings who shared the same father and mother were grouped and are described according to the following variables: number of siblings of the individual in question, place in the birth order and number of brothers and sisters. A dummy variable was applied to indicate that the individual is the only son or daughter in the sibling group.

In order to test the hypotheses regarding the presence of parents, a series of time varying covariates were introduced that represent the paternal presence from age 15 until the transition to the first marriage. For the hypothesis on the death of a father and/or mother (a factor that, it was conjectured, would be an

30 Michel Fleury and Louis Henry, *Nouveau manuel de dépeillement et d'exploitation de l'Etat Civil ancien* (Paris: INED, 1965); Louis Henry and Alain Blum, *Techniques d'analyse en démographie historique* (Paris: INED, 1988).

indirect inducement to marry and to accelerate the inheritance process), the not too remote period of losing parents is also emphasized. I divide the sample into nine categories on the basis of the parent or parents with whom they lived and also on the basis of whether or not either their mother or father had died in the preceding three years. First we identify persons living with both parents. Next we identify persons who had lost a parent more than three years earlier, and lastly we consider those who had lost a parent in the previous three years according to whether this was the first or second parental death.³¹ Inheriting and marriage subsequent to the decease of one of the parents could be accelerated by the remarriage of the surviving parent. Dummy and time-constant covariates are applied if the surviving parent remarried. To evaluate the impact of the historical period, marriages were analyzed in five separate sections, as follows: 1838–1869; 1870–1889; 1890–1913; 1914–1918 and 1919–1940. To reveal differences by location, data were grouped by parish of residence.

Table 1 gives an overview of the characteristics of the sample.

	Men	Women
Sibship attributes		
Number of siblings	2.95 (1.60)	2.98 (1.54)
Birth-order rank	2.47 (1.40)	2.52 (1.46)
Number of brothers	1.32 (1.11)	1.46 (1.08)
Number of sisters	1.62 (1.18)	1.52 (1.17)
Period		
1838–1869	21.56	25.32
1870–1889	24.22	23.49
1890–1913	25.60	21.50
1914–1918	1.65	3.13
1919–1940	26.94	26.56
Parental mortality		
Both alive	58.12	63.64
Only mother alive	14.52	14.08
Only father alive	13.33	10.64
No parents	5.10	3.90
Father died < 3 years, mother alive	3.78	3.64
Father died < 3 years, mother dead	1.01	0.57

31 In the process of the construction of parental presence and mortality variable we followed the method proposed by George Alter and Michel Oris: Alter and Oris, "Access to marriage," 143.

Mother died < 3 years, father alive	2.63	2.11
Mother died < 3 years, father dead	1.11	0.86
Both died < 3 years	0.35	0.55
Father remarried	18.05	16.34
Mother remarried	11.93	14.37
Parish		
Kápolnásfalu	49.11	52.71
Szentegyházsfalu	50.89	47.29
Marriage	1,424	1,580

Table 1. Characteristics of the analytical sample

I examine the timing of first marriages in two separate parts. In the first one, I use descriptive statistics in order to present average age at the time of marriage of males and females, the differences by birth order, and the number of brothers and sisters. In the second part of the analysis, by applying event history analysis, I examine the impact of parental presence, sibling configuration, historical period and the parish of residence on the timing of the first marriages for males and females.³² Since I am interested in the effects of family composition and sibling configuration on the timing of marriages, I utilize a series of Cox proportional hazard models.³³ By applying Cox models, my aim is to reveal the extent to which the covariates under discussion facilitated or impeded the transition to first marriage.

Results

Descriptive results

Average age at the time of marriage for women in the sample is 21.9 years. In the case of men it is 26.1 years. Figure 2 shows the percent of unmarried males and females between 15 and 39, more precisely, it shows how this ratio decreases with age. Since these are cumulative values, the curve is monotonically decreasing. These curves provide information about the change of risk of concluding marriage and the percent of individuals at risk. Curves steeply decrease in periods when the risk of concluding marriage is high. The curve slowly decreases or is

32 Possibilities of family reconstitution as event history analysis are described in Myron Gutmann and George Alter, "Family Reconstitution as Event History Analysis," in *Old and New Methods in Historical Demography*, ed. David Reher and Roger Schofield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 159–77.

33 Hans-Peter Blossfeld, Katrin Golsch, and Götz Rohwer, *Event History Analysis with Stata* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

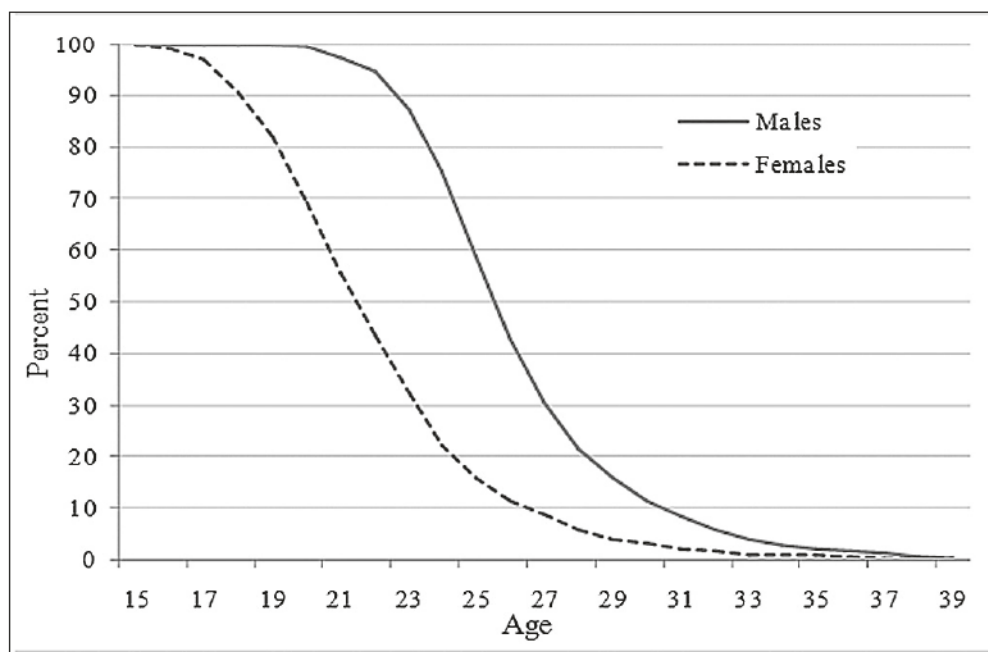


Figure 2. Percent of unmarried males and females by age in the two parishes, 1838–1940.
Source: Family reconstitutions based on the data of parish registries from the period 1776–1941.

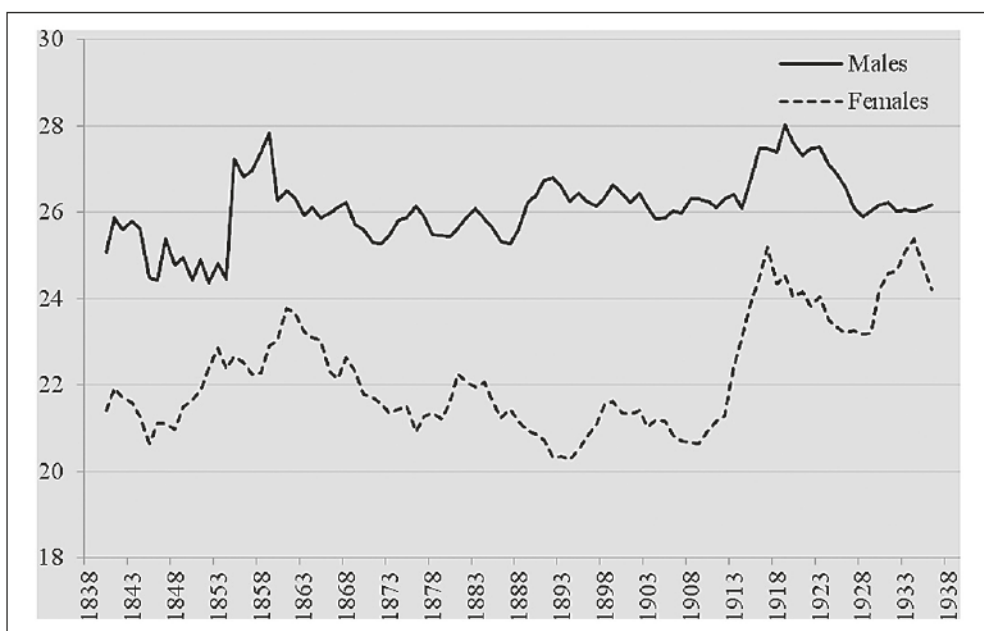


Figure 3. Average age at first marriage for males and females in the two parishes, 1838–1940.
Source: Family reconstitutions based on the data of parish registries from the period 1776–1941.

horizontal in phases when the risk is low. Significant differences are observed in the timing of first marriages by gender. Women tended to marry at an earlier age than men. Median age at the time of marriage is 21.5 years for females and 25.6 years for males. According to survival curves, the impact of the normative age of marriage is noteworthy for both sexes. However, the curve is more long-drawn in the case of women. Based on this, particular differentiating factors may have played a more significant role among females.

Figure 3 shows the mean age at the time of marriage for males and females. The extent of fluctuation of age at marriage is different by sex. In the case of men, average age at the time of marriage is between 25 and 26.5, except for two periods: the second half of the 1850s and World War I. In the case of women, age at the time of marriage varies more significantly, but the postponing of marriage during the wars is also observed. After the war, the age at marriage remains higher for a while and then gradually starts to decrease. The reason for the higher age at the time of marriage during the late 1920s and early 1930s, which can be a sign of the introduction of a new pattern, remains unknown. Around the middle of this period, the age difference between males and females increased, whereas around the end of the period it started to diminish.

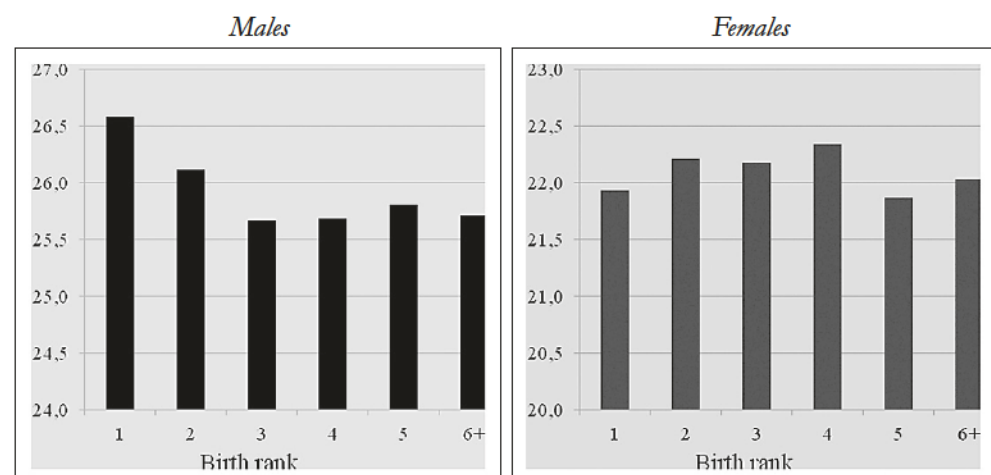


Figure 4. Average age at first marriage for men and women by birth rank

Source: Family reconstitutions based on the data of parish registries from the period 1776–1941.

Regarding the investigation of the effects of sibling characteristics, age differences by sex still played an important role in determining the average age at the time of marriage. Figure 4 and 5 shows the average age at the time of

marriage for males and females by birth order and the presence of siblings of the same sex. One observes contrasting impacts concerning males and females. The average age at transition into the first marriage of men decreases by birth order. The highest age at the time of first marriage is found among the older sons (26.6 years), whereas this value is one year less (25.7 years) among the younger siblings.

It is likely that parents aimed to delay the marriage of oldest sons and take advantage of their contributions as part of the labor force on the family farm as long as possible, at least until their siblings reached working age. In the case of females one observes a tendency in the opposite direction: ordinal position in birth increases the age at the time of marriage. While the average age at the time of the conclusion of the marriage of first-born daughters was 21.9 years, it was 22.5 years in the case of the children who were born later. Parents probably pressured oldest daughters to marry, and limited parental resources also were an inducement for them to marry as soon as possible.

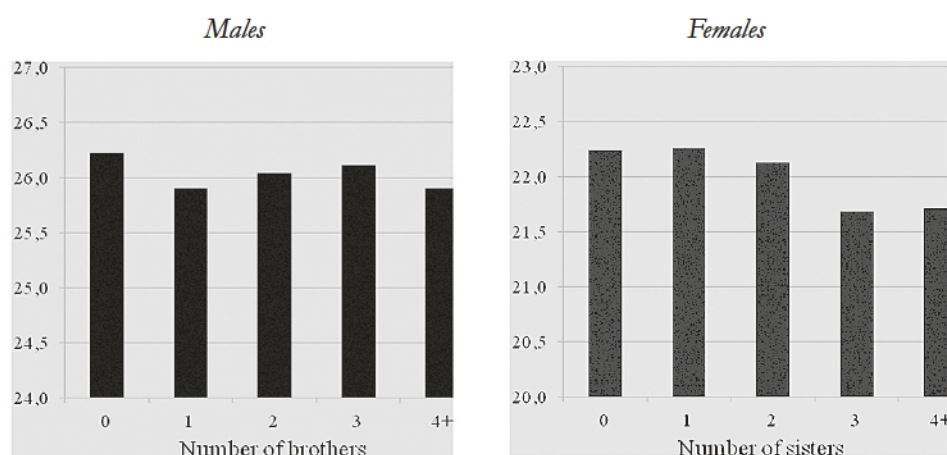


Figure 5. Average age at first marriage for men and women by number of brothers and sisters
Source: Family reconstitutions based on the data of parish registries from the period 1776–1941.

Multivariate analysis

In the next section, by applying multivariable event history models elaborated for each sex, I examine the impact of parental presence and sibling configuration on the age at the time of first marriages for males and females. Table 2 presents results from Cox event history models for men's entry into a first marriage. Five

different models were applied to examine the effects of sibling configuration. The entries in Table 2 are estimates of the relative risk of marriage associated with one unit change in an explanatory variable. A relative risk of 2.0 implies that a one unit increase in that variable doubled the likelihood of marriage. A relative risk of 0.5 implies that the risk of marriage decreased by 50 percent compared to the reference category. In this case, where all the individuals in the sample experienced the transition to marriage, the increase of the risk means a lower age at the time of marriage, while a decrease of risk means a higher age at the time of marriage compared to the reference category. For example, the estimate of 1.14 in the model for male marriage during the period 1870–1889 means that men were 14 percent more likely to marry. In other words, they married at a lower age during that period than in the reference period, 1838–1869. Sibling characteristics. According to the results of models 1 and 2, the marriage risk of males increases parallel to birth order. In other words, the youngest males of sibling groups tended to marry at a younger age. The number of siblings, however, did not significantly affect age at marriage. This corroborates the hypothesis according to which the difficulties of finding the material goods required for marriage delayed the act. Based on the outcomes of model 3, men with a larger proportion of female siblings had a greater risk of entering first marriages at any given pace. That is to say, such men transitioned to first marriage at a faster pace. This result seems to support the hypothesis according to which sisters had positive effects on the marriage timing of their brothers and may have played an intermediary role in the first marriage of a brother. The presence and growing number of brothers had no significant impact on the average age at the time of marriage among males. In model 4, the introduction of an “only son” variable makes no major changes. Age at marriage of only sons did not significantly differ from age at marriage of men who had at least one brother. However, the number of sisters remains an accelerating factor of transition to marriage.

1. Parental presence and mortality. Parental presence was of key importance regarding the first marriage of males. The death of a father and/or mother in the preceding three years accelerated the process of inheriting and, possibly as a consequence of this, the conclusion of the first marriage. The recent death of both parents almost doubled the risk of first marriage ($p < 0,00$) compared to people both of whose parents were still alive. The lack of the presence of both parents for a longer period, three years after the last death, was also an

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	r.r.	p.	r.r.	p.	r.r.	p.	r.r.	p.	r.r.	p.
Sibship attributes										
Number of siblings	1.026	0.12	0.995	0.84					1.000	0.97
Birth-order rank			1.060	0.02					1.060	0.02
Number of brothers					1.010	0.68	1.012	0.71		
Number of sisters					1.042	0.07	1.041	0.08		
Only male in sibship							1.009	0.91	1.051	0.47
Parental mortality										
Both alive	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Only mother alive	1.064	0.46	1.019	0.82	1.070	0.42	1.070	0.42	1.024	0.78
Only father alive	1.061	0.58	1.003	0.98	1.066	0.55	1.067	0.55	1.008	0.94
No parents	1.239	0.03	1.132	0.25	1.242	0.03	1.243	0.03	1.137	0.23
Father died < 3 years, mother alive	1.292	0.03	1.272	0.05	1.293	0.03	1.293	0.03	1.273	0.05
Father died < 3 years, mother dead	1.204	0.41	1.109	0.65	1.204	0.41	1.206	0.41	1.115	0.63
Mother died < 3 years, father alive	1.813	0.00	1.759	0.00	1.818	0.00	1.818	0.00	1.762	0.00
Mother died < 3 years, father dead	1.110	0.58	1.045	0.82	1.114	0.58	1.116	0.57	1.054	0.78
Both died < 3 years	2.184	0.00	2.030	0.00	2.183	0.00	2.185	0.00	2.037	0.00
Father remarried	1.145	0.16	1.177	0.09	1.150	0.15	1.150	0.15	1.180	0.09
Mother remarried	1.226	0.03	1.238	0.02	1.214	0.04	1.214	0.04	1.232	0.03
Period										
1838–1869	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
1870–1889	1.143	0.08	1.124	0.13	1.145	0.08	1.146	0.08	1.129	0.12
1890–1913	0.905	0.21	0.886	0.13	0.906	0.21	0.906	0.21	0.887	0.13
1914–1918	0.588	0.02	0.581	0.02	0.585	0.02	0.584	0.02	0.575	0.02
1919–1939	0.823	0.01	0.793	0.00	0.821	0.01	0.821	0.01	0.793	0.00
Parish										
Kápolnásfalu	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Szentegyházsfalu	1.030	0.57	1.030	0.57	1.032	0.56	1.032	0.55	1.032	0.55
Log likelihood	–8885.8		–8883.1		–8885.4		–8885.4		–8882.9	
Number of events	1424		1424		1424		1424		1424	
LR Chi2	70.2		75.6		71.1		71.1		76.1	
Overall p-value	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

Table 2. Estimated relative risks of first marriage, males, ages 15–39, Szentegyházsfalu and Kápolnásfalu, 1838–1940. Source: Family reconstitutions based on the data of parish registries from the period 1776–1941.

Note: gray background if $p < 0.1$.

inducement to marry. The death of only one parent in the preceding three years could also have been an accelerating factor for marriage. The death of a father who was survived by the mother increased the risk of marriage of sons by 30 percent, while the death of a mother who was survived by a father increased the risk of marriage of sons by 80 percent compared to the reference category of young males where both parents were still alive. This difference can be explained by the fact that the economic survival of the household relied on the complementarity of traditional gender roles. The death of a mother created a need for the labor of an adult female, whereas no such need arose when a father died, particularly if an unmarried adult son lived with the family. The remarriage of the surviving parent was also an inducement for a son to marry. Sons of remarried mothers and fathers transitioned into their first marriages at a younger age than those whose parents married only once in their life. The impact of remarried mothers on the transition into first marriage is greater and statistically significant. It is important to note that these are time-constant variables. They therefore do not reveal the presence of a stepfather or stepmother, but rather only show whether the surviving parent remarried or not. On the basis of this, we may conclude that the potential or actual presence of a stepfather, probably in connection with inheritance, also prompted sons to marry.

2. Historical period. Between 1870 and 1889, the age at the time of marriage slightly decreased compared to the period between 1838 and 1869, and it remained the same until World War I. Average age at marriage rose between the two World Wars, as is well represented by the lower risk of first marriage of this period ($p < 0,02$).
3. Parish of residence. After the consideration of family and community factors, there was no significant difference in the timing of transition into first marriages for males living in the two parishes.

Table 3 presents similar models of women's transition to first marriage.

1. Sibling characteristics. According to model 1, an increasing number of siblings raised the risk of marriage, which means it reduced the age at the time of marriage. When applying a birth-order variable, this effect is more accentuated. Namely, the gradual dilution of family resources motivated daughters to transition into their first marriages as soon as possible. Marriage risks of girls of higher ordinal position of birth were lower than the marriage risks of their older siblings. Due to the marriage of older

siblings, the pressure was lower on them and they transitioned into their first marriages at a later age. According to model 3, an increasing number of brothers resulted in a later average age at the time of marriage. However, these results are not statistically significant. On the contrary, the age at marriage decreases with the growing number of sisters. The effect of this variable is more conceivable when the effect of an only sister in the sibling group is filtered (model 4). All in all, females tended to marry in accordance with their ordinal position of birth.

2. Parental presence and mortality. The impact of paternal presence on the age at the time of marriage of females was less than the impact on the age at the time of marriage of sons, including both direction and extent. It is clear that the recent death of one or both parents was an inducement to marry. In the three years following the death of a mother, the marriage risk of females almost doubled in comparison with females both of whose parents were alive. The distant death of both parents, however, delayed the marriage of women. Lacking the supporting presence of parents, these females had a worse position on the marriage market than those whose parents were still alive. The presence of the mother is of high significance, since the distant death of a mother still delayed marriage of a female even if the father was still alive. It is also valid vice versa: presence of the mother had beneficial effects that counterbalanced the effects of the distant death of the father. However, these results are not statistically significant. Subsequent to the death of her mother and in the presence of her father, it is very probable that a young girl took up the female's roles in the family, and this directly delayed her marriage. In accordance with this, daughters of remarrying parents married at a younger age than those whose parents married only once. The chance of a female marrying increased with the remarriage of the father by 24 percent to 27 percent and with the remarriage of the mother by 11 percent to 15 percent, compared to the reference category of females where the surviving parent did not remarry at all. Due in part to having received an inheritance after the death of a parent and in part to the potential conflict with the step-parent, young females tended to marry as soon as possible.
3. Historical period. During the period before World War I, the age at the time of first marriages decreased. Throughout the years of the war and the subsequent period, this trend turned around and women began to marry at

older and older ages. In the interwar period the postponement of marriage was characteristic.

4. Parish of residence. The comparison of the two settlements reveals that, after other factors have been excluded, females born in Szentegyhászfalu married at a younger age than those born in Kápolnásfalu.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	r.r.	p.	r.r.	p.	r.r.	p.	r.r.	p.	r.r.	p.
Sibship attributes										
Number of siblings	1.042	0.00	1.066	0.00					1.059	0.01
Birth-order rank			0.961	0.09					0.959	0.08
Number of brothers					0.993	0.80	0.992	0.76		
Number of sisters					1.084	0.00	1.099	0.00		
Only female in sibship							1.064	0.46	0.937	0.36
Parental mortality										
Both alive	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Only mother alive	1.066	0.44	1.110	0.23	1.063	0.46	1.058	0.50	1.116	0.21
Only father alive	0.884	0.23	0.921	0.43	0.878	0.21	0.876	0.19	0.924	0.46
No parents	0.805	0.08	0.853	0.21	0.815	0.09	0.813	0.09	0.859	0.23
Father died < 3 years, mother alive	1.088	0.48	1.115	0.37	1.092	0.46	1.088	0.48	1.121	0.34
Father died < 3 years, mother dead	1.966	0.00	2.065	0.00	1.991	0.00	1.979	0.00	2.086	0.00
Mother died < 3 years, father alive	1.162	0.34	1.179	0.29	1.163	0.33	1.160	0.34	1.182	0.28
Mother died < 3 years, father dead	1.063	0.78	1.132	0.58	1.083	0.72	1.080	0.72	1.141	0.55
Both died < 3 years	1.089	0.77	1.130	0.68	1.071	0.81	1.070	0.81	1.128	0.68
Father remarried	1.272	0.00	1.245	0.01	1.260	0.00	1.260	0.00	1.243	0.01
Mother remarried	1.156	0.08	1.125	0.16	1.141	0.12	1.143	0.11	1.119	0.19
Period										
1838–1869	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
1870–1889	1.174	0.02	1.188	0.02	1.183	0.02	1.186	0.01	1.187	0.04
1890–1913	1.459	0.00	1.479	0.00	1.450	0.00	1.448	0.00	1.480	0.00
1914–1918	0.731	0.06	0.741	0.07	0.728	0.05	0.732	0.06	0.737	0.06
1919–1939	0.713	0.00	0.725	0.00	0.703	0.00	0.702	0.00	0.724	0.00

Parish										
Kápolnásfalu	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Szentegyházsfalu	1.170	0.00	1.168	0.00	1.184	0.00	1.186	0.00	1.168	0.02
Log likelihood	–9,990.0		–9,988.6		–9,986.4		–9,986.1		–9,988.2	
Number of events	1,580		1,580		1,580		1,580		1,580	
LR Chi2	144.0		146.8		151.2		151.7		147.6	
Overall p-value	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

Table 3. Estimated relative risks of first marriage, females ages 15 to 39, Szentegyházsfalu and Kápolnásfalu, 1838–1940. Source: Family reconstitutions based on the data of parish registries from the period 1776–1941.

Note: gray background if $p < 0.1$.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study the effect of parental presence and sibling configuration on the timing of first marriages was investigated using data found in parish registries in two Transylvanian mountain villages in the period between 1838 and 1940. The first marriage of young adults was not treated as an isolated phenomenon. Rather, it was placed in the complex relationship of familial and individual considerations. In the course of this analysis, I intended to reflect on the importance of family dynamics. The most fundamental question of my inquiry was how the ordinal position of birth and the presence of siblings and parents influence the average age at the time of marriage. Based on the inheritance norms regarding young adults, I conjecture that the effect of sibling group configuration might be different by gender in the context of available parental resources.

In compliance with the outcomes of the research, the average age at the time of marriage in a given group of siblings was greatly affected by obligations towards siblings and parents. Although strong age norms existed regarding marriage in the settlements in question, ordinal position of birth, number of siblings, parental presence and the period in history during which a marriage was concluded all played decisive roles in determining the age at the time of marriage of males and females. The effect of ordinal position differed by gender: first-born males tended to marry at an older age than their brothers, as opposed to first-born females, who normally married at a younger age than their sisters. This is explained by the fact that the norms governing the process of inheritance took two factors into account

first and foremost, namely, gender and ordinal position of birth. Because the male line inherited real estate, upon reaching the normative age of marriage, males of higher ordinal position of birth competed less for goods required for marriage with their siblings. Since normally the youngest male member of a sibling group remained in the family home as to provide support for parents in old age (even after having married), the parents wanted them to marry as soon as possible. With the aid of their older siblings, more precisely, their sisters, resources based on social relations were more accessible. In the case of daughters (who inherited less than their brothers), parental resources often meant the available living space, and the eldest daughters had the worst position in this context. Desire to establish their own home inspired these females to marry as soon as possible.

Death of one or both parents was an inducement among males and females to marry. This response to a family crisis reflects the acceleration of the inheritance process and an effort to maintain the viability of a household.

According to my interpretation, the timing of marriage for young adults in the period in question was characterized by strong social control and parental influence. The power of parents over their children's marriage was more palpable in the case of young women. The first marriage of young adults certainly was an important source of tensions between generations. Further studies are needed to investigate the nature of the relationships between generations in greater detail.

The major limitation of this study is that I examined only the experiences of young adults living in these two Transylvanian mountain villages, and these populations were rather homogeneous in terms of religion and socioeconomic composition. Subsequent studies should include more settlements with populations that show a higher degree of variance with regards to religion and socioeconomic background. Furthermore, the period after the Second World War should be included in the analysis.

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Stanislav Holubec

Between Scarcity and Modernity: Working Class Families in Prague in the Interwar Period

This study investigates the life experiences of working class families in Prague in the interwar period with particular emphasis on processes of family formation and sustainment. With regards to the notion of “family formation,” I examined in particular the search for partners, patterns of cohabitation, and sociological aspects of partner’s choice. I analyzed the life course of workers’ families with a focus on child births, questions pertaining to health, and divorces and other non-traditional forms of family. Working class families are interpreted as having undergone and reacted to different aspects of modern social change. These include demographic transition (declining infant mortality, declining fertility), the adoption of modern values (individualization, rise of divorce rates, secularization, female emancipation, multiple identities), the effects of World War I (material scarcity, high mortality), local circumstances (housing shortages), and persistent traditional patterns and values in the mentality among the working class (gender inequality and family hierarchies).

Keywords: Prague, interwar period, working class families, life experiences, life course

In the following article I investigate the life experiences of working class families in Prague¹ in the interwar period with particular emphasis on processes of family formation and transformation. In the first part I will outline briefly the socioeconomic development of Prague between 1870 and 1940, concentrating

1 The classic sociological work on working class families: Mirra Komarovsky, *Blue-Collar Marriage* (New York: Random House, 1964). On the interwar period: Steve Humphries, Pamela Gordon, *A Labour of Love: the Experience of Parenthood in Britain, 1900–1950* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1993). More recent: Kathe Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex, and Marriage in Britain 1918–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). The English historiography of working class families, however, put emphasis on the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century was regarded rather as a field of sociology. Both disciplines bore witness to a shift in interest in the past two decades to questions on gender and ethnicity, although the history of the working class was never abandoned, see: Andrew August, *The British Working Class, 1832–1940* (Harlow: Pearson education limited, 2007). The German historiography seems to have experienced even more radical development: While in the 1990s the histories of working class families were as much in vogue as they had been in the 1980s, in the 2000s the subject nearly disappeared from the research, replaced by questions of gender or ethnicity. The best examples dealing with topics similar to those in this article are: Michael Seyfarth-Stubenrauch, *Erziehung und Sozialisation in Arbeiterfamilien im Zeitraum 1870 bis 1914 in Deutschland: ein Beitrag historisch-pädagogischer Sozialisationsforschung zur Sozialgeschichte der Erziehung* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1985). Heidi Rosenbaum, *Proletarische Familien: Arbeiterfamilien und Arbeiterväter im frühen 20. Jahrhundert zwischen traditioneller, sozialdemokratischer und kleinbürgerlicher Orientierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp,

on the surroundings in which workers lived, the factors that, in my view, exerted a substantial influence on their family lives, and complex questions regarding identity. In the second part I will present the life experiences of working class families in Prague with emphasis on the processes involved in the formation of a family, including dating, cohabitation and marriage, in their sociological context. The family lives of workers, which includes child births, questions pertaining to health, mortality and the disintegration of families, will be analyzed in the last part. As there has been little research on these topics in the Czech context, I occasionally draw on comparisons with the situation in Germany.

The practice of writing about the everyday lives of workers and their families has a long history. It was strongly ideological under state socialism. The historiography concentrated on the political and social “struggles,” particularly in communities of heavy industry and mining workers, and simultaneously ignored the workers in other branches of the economy, such as agriculture. The official historiography tended to combine very pessimistic descriptions of the prevailing conditions based primarily on statistical data with idealized descriptions of workers as politically highly conscious and supportive of the Communist Party.² The predominance of class and class struggle in peoples’ identities and life courses was taken for granted. In the studies on working class family histories, the statistical or folklorist perspective prevailed.³ Since 1990, Czech historiography has almost completely abandoned “workers” as a category of study, and only a small group of historians of the older generation has attempted to promote the social history of the lower classes, with emphasis on the nineteenth century.⁴ The interests of mainstream historiography shifted to the social history of the everyday lives of “elites” or members of the middle classes, sometimes presented as “typical citizens,” or to gender history and the history of ethnic relations. Attention was also paid to the history of the

1992). Bettina Günter, *Schonen – Schützen – Scheuern: zum Wohnalltag von Arbeiterfamilien im Ruhrgebiet der zwanziger Jahre* (Münster: Waxmann, 1995). Christina Benninghaus, *Die anderen Jugendlichen: Arbeitermädchen in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verl., 1999).

2 Antonín Chyba, *Postavení dělnické třídy v kapitalistickém Československu* (Prague: Svoboda, 1982). Václav Veber, *Postavení dělnické třídy v českých zemích 1924–1929* (Prague: Práce, 1965).

3 E.g. the best work written from the statistical perspective: Pavla Horská, *Kapitalistická industrializace a středoevropská společnost: příspěvek ke studiu formování tzv. průmyslové společnosti* (Prague: Academia, 1970). The most substantial work from the folklorist perspective: Antonín Robek, Mirjam Moravcová, and Jarmila Šťastná, *Stará dělnická Praha* (Prague: Academia, 1981).

4 Jiří Matějček and Jana Macháčová, *Nástin sociálního vývoje českých zemí 1781–1914* (Prague: Karolinum, 2010).

most marginalized social groups (prostitutes, Roma). The political history of the interwar period shifted from class struggle to the clash between democracy and totalitarianism. The history of industrial work remained as insignificant as it had been before 1989. The German scholar Peter Heumos was one of the few exceptions.⁵ Only in recent years have we begun to experience a return to the history of workers. The pioneering work by Martin Jemelka on everyday life in the miners' colony in Ostrava until 1950,⁶ followed by the monograph on the interactions between the middle classes and workers in Moravia at the turn of the century by Lukáš Fasora,⁷ my monograph on everydayness and the social status of the Prague workers in the interwar period,⁸ and most recently the monograph on the everyday life of Czech workers during World War I by Rudolf Kučera.⁹ The problems faced by Czech workers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also started to interest young non-Czech historians.¹⁰

Prague and Members of the Working Class During Industrialization

In the late nineteenth century, Prague, the historical capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia, was the third largest city in the Habsburg monarchy and one of its most important industrial centers.¹¹ At the time, it had experienced the greatest period

5 Peter Heumos, "Die Arbeiterschaft in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik: Elemente der Sozialstruktur, organisatorischer Verfassung und politischen Kultur," in *Der tschechische Weg: Transformation einer Industriegesellschaft (1918–1998)*, ed. Dirk Tänzler (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1999). However, the situation had been different in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, during the period of Socialist industrialization where workers in particular were thematicized, in the 2000s, see: Blažej Brzostek, *Robotnicy Warszawy. Konflikty codzienne (1950–1954)* (Warsaw: Trio, 2002). Mark Pittaway, *The Workers' State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944–1958* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012). Malgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

6 Martin Jemelka, *Na kolonii: život v hornické kolonii dolu Šalomoun v Moravské Ostravě do začátku socialistické urbanizace* (Ostrava: VŠB–Technická univerzita Ostrava, 2007).

7 Lukáš Fasora, *Dělník a měšťan: vývoj jejich vzájemných vztahů na příkladu šesti moravských měst 1870–1914* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2010).

8 Stanislav Holubec, *Lidé periferie: sociální postavení a každodennost pražského dělnictva v meziválečné době* (Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita v Plzni, 2009).

9 Rudolf Kučera, *Život na příděl: válečná každodennost a politiky dělnické třídy v českých zemích 1914–1918* (Prague: NLN, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2013).

10 Adina Lieske, *Arbeiterkultur und bürgerliche Kultur in Pilsen und Leipzig* (Bonn: Verlag J. H. W. Dietz Nachf, 2007).

11 The population of the capital of Hungary was twice that of Prague (in 1910 the population of greater Budapest was 1,178,000, while the population of Prague and its boroughs was only 600,000; the municipality of Budapest had 870,000 inhabitants, whereas the municipality of Prague had only 224,000,

of industrial and demographic growth in its history. The population growth in the period between 1870 and 1914 was 25 percent every ten years. Because of the influx of migrants from the Czech-speaking countryside, like other cities of Central and Eastern Europe, Prague started to lose its multicultural character.¹² Symbolically, in 1868 the Czech administration enforced the replacement of German street names with bilingual versions and in 1894 exclusively with Czech names.¹³ Prague was still described as provincial in comparison with the imperial charm of Vienna or Budapest. It had neither the power nor financial resources to develop edifices comparable with those of Budapest. The Prague National theatre (1883), National Museum (1891), and Municipal House (1912) hardly rivalled the Hungarian parliament, the Budapest subway (the first in continental Europe), or St. Stephen's basilica.

After 1918, as the capital of the new Czechoslovak Republic, Prague became the seat of the central authorities. The influx of migrants to the city continued, although it was slowing. Due to an administrative reform, in 1922 Prague expanded its territory eight fold and its population grew to 676,000 inhabitants, and in the late 1930s it reached 900,000. The historical center was unified with industrial suburbs, residential districts, and in some cases even with villages that had not yet been integrated into the infrastructures of the city. The creation of greater Prague weakened the power of the National Democratic Party (*Československá národní demokracie*), which was comprised of liberal nationalist forces that had dominated Prague in previous decades. After the administrative reform, the proportion of workers and members of the lower middle classes in the city increased significantly, and power shifted to the hands of centrist Socialists (*Československá strana socialistická*) and Social Democrats (*Československá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická*). Prague was not spared post-war political radicalization, and the Communist Party became an important

due in part to postponed administrative reform, which was implemented only in 1922). Tamás Faragó, "Die Budapestener Bevölkerungsentwicklung und die Zuwanderung 1870 bis 1941," in *Wien-Prag-Budapest: Blütezeit der Habsburgermetropolen*, ed. Gerhard Melinz and Susan Zimmermann (Vienna: Promedia, 1996). For more on pre-1939 Budapest see: Gábor Gyáni, *Parlour and Kitchen: Housing and Domestic Culture in Budapest, 1870–1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002). Péter Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). The best synthesis on the history of Prague in German: Jiří Pešek, Václav Ledvinka, *Prag* (Prague: NLN, 2000).

12 Jaromír Korčák, *Vylidňování jižních Čech: studie demografická* (Prague: Spolek péče o blaho venkova, 1929). Josef Pohl, *Vylidňování venkova v Čechách v období 1850–1930* (Prague: Masarykova ak. práce a Čs. ak. zemědělská, 1932).

13 Václav Ledvinka and Marek Laštovka, *Pražský uličník* (Prague: Libri, 1997), 14–16.

representative of the professionally less qualified and poorest strata of Prague inhabitants. The creation of Greater Prague also further contributed to its ethnic homogenization. Jews and Germans, who lived primarily in the city center, now comprised less than 8 percent of the population, and as a political force they held onto influence only on the level of the central districts. Even increased migration to Prague from Slovakia, Polish Galicia and revolutionary Russia after 1918 did not modify the prevailing ethnically Czech character of the city.¹⁴

In spite of the rapid industrialization that had begun in the 1860s, as the country's capital Prague maintained a strong proportion of middle and upper classes and was never perceived as an unambiguously industrial center, in comparison to Brno (Brünn in German) or the centers in northern Bohemia and Moravia. Its character as a regional capital and its proximity to northern and central Bohemian industrial centers and coal districts promoted industrialization, but the simultaneous growth of administration and the service sphere kept the social structure more balanced, so even after unification with the industrial suburbs, the number of workers and their families did not surpass 40 percent of the population according to statistics. The center of Prague never lost its high social status during the process of industrialization, and it remained home primarily to members of the middle classes,¹⁵ who also established the residential districts around it, such as Vinohrady, Bubeneč and Střešovice.¹⁶ Proletariats arriving to the city had to look for places to live comparatively far from the city center, close to the factories in the northeast or southwest of the city. As of the early twentieth century, the industry of Prague was oriented primarily around the production of machines, electric equipment and carriages. Textile production and glass production were less important. Industry in Prague was strongly diversified, with predominantly small places of production in comparison with the urban centers established during the period of rapid industrialization from 1870 to 1914. Only eleven plants in the city had more than 500 workers in early

14 Antonín Boháč, *Hlavní město Praha: Studie o obyvatelstvu* (Prague: Státní úřad statistický, 1923), 50.

15 I understand the middle classes as those families whose bread winner had an average or slightly above average income and held a position that required professional qualifications (clerks, managers, professionals, intellectuals) and who could have, due to their economic and cultural capital, a lifestyle different from the lifestyle of a working class family. Such a family typically had an apartment with more rooms or a separate house, and the wife was able to stay at home, money was available to finance tertiary and secondary education for the offspring, holidays were taken at hotel resorts, and help was hired for housework.

16 Josef Šiška, *Statistická zpráva hlavního města Prahy za léta 1930 – 1933* (Prague: Statistický úřad hl. m. Prahy, 1937), 66.

1920s, and two of them were publically owned (the railway heating plant and a tram depot).¹⁷ The relative diversity of industry in Prague also meant a diversity of workers and less influence of trade unions.¹⁸

In combination with the general housing shortage, the migration of large segments of the agrarian population to Prague created serious social conflicts in the early 1920s. The presence of new workforces allowed owners to cut wages. The lack of appropriate housing led to crowding in apartments and the spread of slums. However, economic growth, which as of 1923 was increasingly rapid, helped to ameliorate the situation.¹⁹

The interwar urban slums, which were referred to as “poverty colonies” (*nouzové kolonie*), are an interesting phenomenon widely discussed in the literature. They came into existence shortly after 1918, as the plots of wasteland at the outskirts of Prague began to be rented to the migrants to the capital for the construction of provisory wooden cabins (old carriages were also used). Their inhabitants were sometimes people from the eastern parts of the republic or refugees from Galicia or revolutionary Russia.²⁰ The colonies, with their picturesque appearance, soon attracted the attention of journalists and writers, and numerous reports on the conditions in them were written. Also the Prague municipal governments began to perceive the colonies as a problem primarily because of hygiene and crime. The illegally built cabins were sometimes destroyed in the presence of the police, creating conflicts between the inhabitants of the slums and the organs of public administration. The political left used the defense of slum dwellers as part of its own political agenda. Later, even the municipal administration of Prague attempted to start its own project of provisional housing for the families in need. Although the colonies are the subject of many documents in the archives and the secondary literature,²¹ their

17 NA ČR, ÚV KSČ, 1921 – 1938, VII/2. Zpráva o odborovém hnutí v Praze, p. 2.

18 For international secondary literature regarding the position of unions in interwar Europe see: Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism and Social Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). On the position of trade unions in Czechoslovakia in the interwar period see: Peter Heumos, “Die Arbeiterschaft in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik: Elemente der Sozialstruktur, organisatorischer Verfassung und politischen Kultur,” in *Der tschechische Weg: Transformation einer Industriegesellschaft (1918 – 1998)*, ed. Dirk Tänzler (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verl., 1999).

19 For more on the economic history of interwar Czechoslovakia: Václav Průcha et al., *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992* (Brno: Doplněk, 2004). On the economic history of interwar Europe: Charles H. Feinstein, Peter Temin, and Gianni Tonniolo, *The European Economy Between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

20 AHMP, KP, III/7177. Referát o prohlídce provisorních kolonií v obvodu hlavního města Prahy, 22.

21 Vanda Tůmová, *Pražské nouzové kolonie* (Prague: Ústav pro etnografii a folkloristiku ČSAV, 1971), 23.

inhabitants in fact comprised only a small portion of the population of Prague, about 2 or 3 percent.

Even for workers' families not living in the colonies, the housing situation was not easy. The average workers' household in Prague was truly overcrowded. The families lived either in one-room apartments or (for the more fortunate) an apartment with a separate kitchen. Two-room apartments with separate kitchens were affordable only for the small numbers of workers who had the best jobs, such as typographers.²² The workers' families sometimes even offered other people a place to stay, mainly grandparents.²³ Occasionally other relatives lived together with the partner's family, either new arrivals from the countryside or boyfriends or girlfriends who lived together with the family before they could establish their own households. Under these circumstances, not everyone had his or her own bed.²⁴ Most children shared their beds with siblings, and older siblings sometimes slept on the floor.²⁵ The only modern technologies Prague workers enjoyed at the time was the water pipe line to the houses (but only rarely to the apartments) and sometimes electrical lighting, which gradually became more common after the war (in 1931 about half of the workers' households already had it).²⁶ Other modern technologies already common in the middle class apartments, such as water lines, gas stoves, central heating, separate toilets and bathrooms, and refrigerators were rare in workers' households until the 1950s.²⁷

The high level of spatial stratification in Prague contributed to the fact that working class families lived primarily in the local neighborhood on the outskirts of the city.²⁸ While workers made up only 10 percent of the inhabitants of the city

22 Josef Šiška, *Sčítání bytů v Praze ze dne 1. prosince 1930* (Prague: Vydal Statistický úřad hlavního města Prahy, 1935), 3. The situation in Prague seems to have been worse than in Germany at the time, where apartments with more rooms were common among members of the working class. (Benninghaus, *Die anderen Jugendlichen*, 69.)

23 Life expectancy, which grew from 55 to 60 between 1918 and 1938, meant that most of the children of working class families knew their grandparents. (Life expectancy among the working class was possibly five years lower than among the middle classes, but somewhat higher than among the rural workers, because medical care was nearby.)

24 Josef Apetauer, *Příspěvek k psychologii a pedagogice puberty českého dítěte* (Prague: Ústav pro výzkum dítěte a dorůstající mládeže Českého pedologického ústavu hlavního města Prahy, 1927), 19–20.

25 Marie Nečasová, *Školní prospěch a sociální poměry dítěte* (Prague: Sociální ústav RČS, 1929), 12.

26 Šiška, *Sčítání bytů*, 65.

27 Holubec, *Lidé periferie*, 112.

28 Holubec, *Lidé periferie*, 98. In the attempts to reconstruct the social structure of interwar Prague, we have to rely on the statistical surveys conducted at the time. They defined three categories of Prague inhabitants according to their positions in the labor market: "the independents and landlords" (samostatní

center according to the censuses in 1921 and 1931, they often comprised more than 50 percent of the population in the peripheral parts of Prague. Although public transportation and bicycles were affordable to all social groups, the lower strata did not frequently go to the city center to indulge in amusements or cultural events, or even to shop, but preferred rather the local facilities. Much of social life also took place in the yards of the houses. The apartments had shared laundry rooms where the women met, and the modest size of the apartments pushed their inhabitants outside, where they spent time interacting with other neighbors (woman doing the laundry, men doing a little craftsman's work, and children playing).

Those who lived without much contact with their families were mainly the newcomers to Prague from the countryside. In some cases these people commuted on Sunday to visit their relatives, or their work in Prague was of a seasonal nature (construction workers), so they spent the winters at home. If their families lived at greater distances, they would visit them even less frequently. If the grandparents and other relatives lived in the countryside, contact was kept with them only sporadically. Short workers' vacations, which lasted only about one week (in contrast with the longer vacations enjoyed by state employees or managers), and high transportation costs did not allow workers to take regular visits to relatives. People compensated for the lack of personal contact by writing letters, a practice that was already significant at the time.²⁹ In contrast, families with grandparents living in Prague kept regular contact with them. The grandparents helped with the children and household, while the parents, who had paying jobs, supported them financially, as the elderly often had no pensions.

Due to the character of Prague industry and the character of modern society (which was slowly approaching the phase of mass consumption), the identities of Prague workers were more diverse than the pre-1989 historiography used to claim. It is likely that the inhabitants of Prague recorded in the statistics as "workers" (dělníci) often did not like to use this term to describe themselves. It had a negative connotation for them, and they preferred to call themselves

a nájemci), "employees" (zaměstnanci) and "workers and day-laborers" (dělníci a nádeníci). Concerning the first group, it might have been very heterogeneous, including owners of small shops and self-employed craftsmen, but also owners of large enterprises. The line between "employees" and "workers" is the line between intellectual and physical work. On the basis of the statistics regarding the apartments inhabited by these three groups, we can assume that the groups were marked by the different incomes, although there were undoubtedly overlaps.

29 ANTM 791/ 275, Paměti Václava Kindla.

“craftsmen” (řemeslník). They called themselves workers only if they had a job that required no training. The register books that were kept by every district of the city contain interesting information in this respect. Couples who were getting married were obliged to state their professions, along with other data. One could consider, for example, the register book from the district of Karlín from 1923–24. In this district, according to the statistical survey the percentage of workers was about 38 in 1921, roughly the Prague average.³⁰ The wedding book contains 456 marriages, a total of 912 people, which can be considered representative. Surprisingly, in this sample only 13 percent of the people describe themselves as “workers” (dělník, dělnice), and there is no significant difference between males and females. Sometimes male respondents added an adjective, such as “factory,” “shoe,” “brick,” or “mill.” The other employees with manual jobs described themselves as “craftsmen” or mentioned their trade, e.g. “locksmith,” “plumber,” or “joiner.” This group, which can be referred to as manual trained professions, comprised about 40 percent of the sample among males. Among females the proportion was much lower (only about 10 percent). In the register book no one described his or her job as “day laborer” (nádeník), the term used in the statistics for the untrained workers who worked without contracts at jobs that had the least prestige.

The reluctance of young workers to identify with this term is also visible in the personal ads, which as a practice was quite widespread at the time. We can cite here several ads that were published in the Prague women’s magazine *Hvězda* in 1930 showing the contrasting worlds of the middle and upper classes and the world of the workers. The first placed clear emphasis on the importance of property, while the second stressed personal characteristics: “A factory owner would like to marry an intelligent woman of gentle character possessing adequate capital. Replies with photographs are welcome and will be given back discretely.” “25-year-old farmer, in possession of 300,000 crowns, with the duty to care for his old parents, would like to marry a woman with a farm of at least 70 acres or a pub with its own farm. Widows are not excluded.” “40-year-old owner of factory, villa and car, intelligent and not unattractive would like to meet an intelligent lady, widow, possessing capital in the amount of 600,000, I offer a marriage and dowry, mortgage ensured.” Sometimes the personal ads were difficult to distinguish from the job ads: “I am looking for a female sales

30 Šiška, *Statistická zpráva hlavního města Prahy za léta 1930–1933*, 66, 67, 247.

assistant for my shop, who will contribute by deposit 5,000 to 10,000 crowns. Latter marriage to me not excluded.”³¹

If one looks at ads taken out by people who had less assets, as is the case in the register books, the authors did not like to describe themselves as workers. In the case of males looking for females, they preferred to refer to themselves as “craftsmen” (řemeslník) or “employed.” Sometimes they did not mention their profession at all and stated only their age, along with descriptions of their character and physical appearance. Their ads were also shorter, because the cost of an ad depended on its length: “a blonde with a tall figure would like to meet a nice boy, preferably a craftsmen.” “28-year-old craftsman would like to meet a nice girl.” “25-year-old employed girl would like to meet a railway man, or someone with a similar profession who does not need money, but rather a good housewife.” Obviously the workers could neither offer nor expect money or assets and concentrated instead on character, sentiments or physical appearance.³²

Although unattractive in everyday life, the term worker as a collective political identity still had its appeal. Social democratic forces used it in the name of their party and in the names of the affiliated organizations (Workers’ Academy, Workers’ Sport Association),³³ while the Communists preferred the more radical term “proletariat.” Those who were reluctant to label themselves “workers” obviously had no difficulties voting for “workers’ parties,” which regularly got one-third of Prague’s votes in the interwar elections. The parties were conscious of this contradiction and strove to educate their members to become more “class conscious.” The party publications appealed to young members not to be ashamed of the word “worker” when they had to state their profession.³⁴

31 *Hvězda československých paní a dívek*, 1930, 929/1, 5. *Hvězda československých paní a dívek*, 1929 217/46, 4. *Hvězda československých paní a dívek*, 1929, 162, 5. *Hvězda československých paní a dívek*, 1929, 108/4, 5.

32 The study on personal ads in Germany and France came to similar conclusions concerning the importance of property in personal ads in the first half of the century: Monika Kraemer, *Partnersuche und Partnerschaft im deutsch-französischen Vergleich 1913–1993: eine empirische Analyse zum Wertewandel anhand von Heirats- und Bekanntschaftsanzeigen* (Münster: Waxmann, 1998). The most recent work on the history of personal ads: H. G. Cocks, *Classified: The Secret History of Personal Column* (London: Random House, 2009).

33 *Dělnická akademie, Dělnické tělocvičné jednoty*.

34 *Dělník gentleman (o společenské výchově)* (Prague: Dorostový odbor výchovného výboru svazu D. T. J.Č., 1922), 13.

Young Workers Dating and Marrying

Young people from working class families usually had jobs before they were married. For working class boys and girls it was natural to take a job after leaving school or completing an apprenticeship, while for members of the middle class about half of the girls did not have any job before marriage. They either pursued studies or helped at home. The girls from working class families of Prague did not have much chance of getting a job as a house servant, since middle and upper class families tended to prefer girls from the countryside (who were in abundant supply) over girls with a working class background (who were perceived as unclean, frivolous or otherwise having bad habits).³⁵ Workers' wives did not stay at home after their weddings either, but rather had jobs until they bore children. In contrast, in many cases middle class girls who worked as clerks did not wait until they were pregnant to quit their jobs, but rather quit immediately after having gotten married "to take care of their husbands."

As it was unusual to send children to a nursery, women had to stay at home with them until they reached school age. This time span was as long as seven to ten years, if one takes into consideration the average number of children and the differences in their ages. As the children began to attend school, only a minority of working class women sought out regular paid work in the factories, as the factories offered jobs primarily to childless women. Instead, mothers in working class households took part-time jobs, mainly as helpers and cleaners in middle class households or as wash-women (a task that was time-consuming; one had to set aside one day a week to clean the clothes for a single family).

Concerning the places where one could find a future partner, the dancing room was a well-known option, but there were other places as well, such as outdoor swimming pools, the workplace, sport organizations (for instance the numerous but middle class and nationalist leaning *Sokol* [Falcon], which resembled the German *Turnvereine*, or the less numerous *Dělnické tělocvičné jednoty* [Workers' Sport Association], which was close to the Social Democratic Party). Sometimes shared quarters also offered people a chance to get acquainted. An activity that was specific to Czech culture and that allowed young people a chance to meet one another was weekend camping, referred to in Czech as "tramping" ("tramping" usually took place from Saturday afternoon to Sunday, as Saturday

35 Ludmila Fialová, "Domáci služebnictvo v českých zemích na přelomu 19. a 20. století ve světle statistik," *Historická demografie* 26 (2002): 150. Naďa Machková-Prajzová, "Profese služby v Praze na sklonku 19. a v prvních desetiletích 20. století: služebná na trhu práce," *Pražský sborník historický* 39 (2011): 155.

morning was still a workday). Tramping is considered the first Czech youth subculture,³⁶ taking form in Prague in the early 1920s, imitating in its dress code and leisure-time activities the life of the American mountain man known from Westerns and adventure novels by Karl May and Jack London. In comparison to the scout movement, it was anti-authoritarian, not divided by gender, and its social base was more working class than middle class. While scouts were mainly for pre-adolescent and early-adolescent kids, “tramping” was popular among late teenagers and young adults. At the time, the only similar subculture seems to have been found in Germany, the so called “wilder Wandervogel” (Wild wandering birds), which was an anti-authoritarian split from the German *Wandervogel* movement.³⁷ Czech tramping profited from the hilly landscape covered by forests in the south of Prague, which was easy to reach by local trains. Tramps would stay overnight in tents or improvised wooden cabins, wearing cowboy-like clothing and playing guitars by camp fires and singing their “tramp songs.” Naturally this all created an ideal atmosphere for young people to fall in love. The authorities were alerted by the shocked moralists of older generations (who complained that tramping was a site of “free love,”), and in 1931 the regional government issued a regulation prohibiting unmarried people from spending the night together in a tent or a cabin, bathing together without proper dress, or singing “obscene songs”.³⁸ This was soon followed by police raids against tramps. In response, the movement organized protests, including demonstrations and a press campaign, and the regulation was repealed four years later.

As the working class youth started to date, it was not uncommon for them to have sex.³⁹ Again, the world outside offered more suitable sites for trysts than the overcrowded apartments. The prevalence of premarital sex among members of the working class contrasted sharply with the prevailing expectations of the

36 See: Jan Pohunek, “Kultura trampů,” in *Folklor atomového věku, kolektivně sdílené prvky expresivní kultury v soudobé české společnosti*, ed. Petr Janeček (Prague: Národní muzeum, Fakulta humanitních studií Univerzity Karlovy v Praze, 2011).

37 However, this subculture did not survive long. See: Jonas Kleindienst, *Die Wilden Cliquen Berlins: “Wild und frei” trotz Krieg und Krise. Geschichte einer Jugendkultur* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2011).

38 Marek Wajc and Jiří Kössl, *Český tramping 1918–1945* (Prague–Liberec: Práh–Ruch, 1992), 52.

39 For more on workers’ sexuality see: Carrola Lipp, “Die Innenseite der Arbeiterkultur: Sexualität im Arbeitermilieu des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts,” in *Arbeit, Frömmigkeit und Eigensinn. Studien zur historischen Kulturforschung*, ed. Richard van Dülmen (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1990). Detlev Peukert assumes that young workers began to become sexually active around 17 or 18 years of age in the Weimar Republic: Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Jugend zwischen Krieg und Krise: Lebenswelten von Arbeiterjugend in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne: Bund Verlag, 1987), 241.

middle classes, according to which a bride had to be a virgin,⁴⁰ which was still common at the beginning of the interwar period. Middle class boys had their first sexual experiences as visitors to the brothels, although this habit among middle class students and soldiers, though strong before the war, started to decline after 1918, not least due to the spread of venereal diseases caused by the war.⁴¹ It seems that in the 1920s middle class girls also become more liberal in terms of sexuality. In the 1930s all urban youths may well have had similar experiences of premarital sex.

Cohabitation was also quite common among young workers, while it was taboo for the Prague middle classes. This pattern of cohabitation existed at the time primarily among the poorer segments of the working class in Prague, while the “workers’ aristocracy,” like the middle class, rejected cohabitation as unacceptable. From our sample of the 456 couples who married in 1923–1924 in the Žižkov district (who could be identified as workers, at least as far as their professions were concerned), about 15 percent lived at the same address on the day of the wedding.⁴² Among the 101 couples at least one member of which characterized himself or herself explicitly as a “worker” the proportion of cohabitation was about one-third. Cohabitation sometimes preceded dating in cases in which young people met each other as inhabitants of the same apartment. Cohabitation among workers was sometimes criticized by the middle class journals and authorities. One of the complaints of the Prague municipality regarding the urban slums was that many of the inhabitants lived together without having gotten married.⁴³ The young workers active in the Communist Party were similarly scandalized by allegations made in the right-wing press that they lived in a “concubinate.”⁴⁴ It is worth stressing that unmarried cohabitation often was not a consequence of love but rather of necessity. According to the most common model, due to the lack of apartments one of the partners moved into the home where his or her partner lived with the parents.⁴⁵

Conservative middle class authors tended to offer shocking descriptions of the sex lives of young members of the working class in the late nineteenth century, characterizing workers as promiscuous, rash, and prone to incest.

40 Milena Lenderová and Karel Rýdl, *Radostné dětství: Dítě v Čechách devatenáctého století* (Prague–Litomyšl: Paseka, 2006), 263.

41 Milena Lenderová and Karel Rýdl, *Radostné dětství*, 6.

42 AHMP, SM, MG KAR 03.

43 AHMP, RHM V/24, Stížnost obyvatel domů družstva Domov, 2.

44 Pavel Reiman, *Vě dvacátých letech* (Prague: SNPL, 1966), 133.

45 Karel Čapek, *Obrázky z domova* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1959), 80.

This discourse was still used in the 1920s and 1930s, mainly with regards to the sexuality of “socially difficult” families, but not anymore with regards to workers, who were perceived in the mainstream discourse almost as “normal citizens.” On the other hand, leftist authors tended to present the sex lives of young workers as “clean” and “honest,” in contrast with the “cynical” sexuality of the sons of the bourgeoisie.⁴⁶ The two main political forces representing the workers—the Communists and Social Democrats—had different views on the sex lives of young people. The Communists, who were influenced by the radicalism of the Russian revolution, seemed to be more liberal, while the Social Democrats remained quite conservative. For example, in 1922 the Social Democratic brochure recommended that people begin to have sexual relations only after having gotten married and secured employment.⁴⁷ The question of contraception was not mentioned at all.

Contraceptives that were commonly used by members of the middle classes already in the early 1920s came into use more slowly among the working class. They seem to have entered widespread use first among youngsters. An article entitled “How to avoid unwanted conception,” printed in the women’s communist magazine *Rozséváčka* (female sower), popularized contraceptives among workers in 1930 as something entirely new. Condoms were recommended as the safest method of contraception. Contraceptives were propagated in Prague with the argument according to which they were already in widespread use in the Soviet Union and they would allow women to be more active in the revolutionary struggle.⁴⁸ Interestingly, the article was not approved by the police censorship, and only its title and the last sentence were published. The editorial board, however, did not give up, and they let it be read as a speech in parliament by a Communist MP, which meant it could be published again uncensored.⁴⁹

If contraception failed, abortion was fairly widespread. Although it was prohibited by the law inherited from Austria (approved in the Czech lands in 1852),⁵⁰ abortion was quite common in the interwar period in Prague, and practitioners ranged from luxurious clinics where it was performed officially as a treatment of the appendix or an inflammation of the peritoneum to backstreet

46 Reiman, *Ve dvacátých letech*, 134.

47 *Dělník gentleman*, 12.

48 “Nechceme děti, jež nemůžeme uživit,” *Rozséváčka*, 1, January 23, 1930, 5.

49 This practice, referred to as “immunization,” was used in cases of important texts, as according to the law everything said in Parliament could automatically be published.

50 The Czechoslovak Republic, however, somewhat expanded the cases in which abortion was legal, in contrast to the Austrian law, which allowed abortion only if the mother’s life was threatened. According

abortionists. The Social Democrats and Communists protested against the law primarily by noting its “class” character. According to them, it brought harm primarily to poor women, because they could not afford good treatment and they were forced to ask for help from amateur backstreet abortionists.⁵¹ Also biological arguments were used. For instance the claim was made that too many births would weaken a woman. The Communists argued that women should not produce “slaves for the bourgeoisie” or “soldiers for imperialist wars,” and they referred, in support of their argument, to the legality of abortion in the Soviet Union, at least they did until 1933, when abortion was prohibited there.⁵² Interestingly, the individual right of a woman to choose (which today is perhaps the most important argument in favor of the legality of abortion) was not cited as an argument.⁵³ The left-leaning MPs even repeatedly initiated the abolishment of abortion laws, but they were unsuccessful in their efforts. The state authorities, however, were quite tolerant in putting the law into practice. They did not actively search for cases of abortions, and they pursued charges only if they had been informed by a doctor, which was usually only the case if an amateur abortionist had endangered a woman’s health and she found herself compelled to ask for professional medical treatment. According to the health statistics, of the estimated 100,000 thousand annual abortions, only about 600 were prosecuted in Czechoslovakia.⁵⁴ The common penalties ranged from a couple of weeks to six months in prison, though mothers of children generally were given milder sentences.

Many young male and female workers became parents as unmarried couples.⁵⁵ The extramarital births (referred to as “illegitimate” in the public

to the republican law, abortion was allowed if the pregnancy was the result of rape, if the girl was younger than 16, if the pregnancy endangered the mother’s life, if the fetus was deformed, or if the woman was poor and had more than three children already.

51 “Odstraňte potratový paragraf,” *Rozsévka*, 21, 1926, 4–5.

52 See: Cynthia Hooper, “Terror of Intimacy: Family politics in the 1930s Soviet Union,” in *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, eds. Christina Kaier, Eric Naiman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). Frances Lee Bernstein, *The Dictatorship of Sex: Lifestyle Advice for the Soviet Masses* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007).

53 Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 130.

54 “Sociální patologie,” *Sociologická revue* 4, no. 2–3 (1933): 277–79. The estimated number of abortions was even higher than the rate at the peak of the abortion wave in late socialism.

55 See the most recent history of illegitimate children in Germany: Sybille Buske, *Fräulein Mutter und ihr Bastard: eine Geschichte der Unehelichkeit in Deutschland 1900 bis 1970* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004). For the United Kingdom: Alysa Levene, ed., *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

discourse at the time) were more frequent in Prague than in the rest of the country (about 13 percent of births between 1921 and 1931 in Czechoslovakia were “illegitimate,”⁵⁶ whereas the figure in Prague was 22 percent). Extramarital birth rates were higher in the capitals all over Europe, because many unmarried pregnant girls from rural areas left for the city to give birth in order to avoid social stigmatization in their communities. The illegitimacy rate was somewhat higher in Prague among the working class than it was among the middle classes. It can be estimated at one-fifth of the total number of births.⁵⁷ However, most children were “legitimized” by later weddings, which were very informal in these cases. Only very rarely did children grow up living together with both the unmarried parents.

Members of the working class in Prague married at a relatively young age and at a relatively high rate in comparison with members of the middle classes or the Czech Germans and Jews. They also married earlier than the rural population. A typical age at marriage of a working class girl was around 23. Members of the middle class in Prague married on average four years later. The age gap between the workers’ brides and grooms was about two years, lower than among the middle classes, where it was about seven years. This was the result of the middle class custom according to which a man first had to obtain a position and accumulate wealth before entering a marriage. A working class girl who was not married at age 25 was considered an old maid, while the public was much more tolerant of men who remained unmarried. The number of women who never married was much higher than the number of men, in part because of the tremendous casualties suffered by men in World War I. In the cohort born between 1890 and 1900, one in ten males died in the war and one in ten was permanently disabled.⁵⁸ About one-fifth of the females born between 1880 and 1900 therefore remained unmarried and childless, the highest proportion since the introduction of statistical records until today.

People tend to marry people of similar social, demographic and economic backgrounds (this is known as endogamy). On the other hand, marriage is also considered a channel of upward social mobility, which leads to a certain exogamy. There are numerous discussions regarding the factors that lead to shifts in patterns of exogamy and endogamy, how to categorize different societies, and the thesis according to which there was a shift from endogamy to

56 Josef Nechamkis, “K otázce nemanželských dětí u nás,” *Sociální problémy* 2, no. 1 (1932): 197.

57 Šiška, *Statistická zpráva hlavního města Prahy za léta 1930–1933*, 117.

58 Vladimír Srb, *Tisíc let obyvatelstva českých zemí* (Prague: Karolinum, 2004), 205–6.

exogamy during the transition from pre-modern to modern society.⁵⁹ Although comparisons are always difficult, the inhabitants of Prague in the period under discussion seem to have been more exogamous than the rural population. Of course, a working class girl could not hope to find her millionaire (a common plotline in penny novels and movies at the time), but there was a chance of marrying a bit higher on the social ladder. Men who worked in public service were regarded as a “good catch” for working class girls. They included policemen, subordinate officers, tram conductors, railway men, or qualified workers in the private sector (typographers or electrical workers). A working class man could hope to marry his foreman’s daughter or possibly a widow with some wealth but few other endearments.

Although class barriers were strong in Prague at that time, some marriages were sealed between two people of differing social status. The prevailing marriage pattern of socially unequal partners followed the pattern typical in other modern societies, meaning that a marriage between a bride of lower status and a groom of higher status was more acceptable than vice versa. A young woman with a working class background had somewhat higher chances of marrying someone from the middle classes than a young male worker. In 1925, 9.1 percent of the marriages were partnerships between a female worker and a male clerk, while only 1.8 percent of the marriages involved a male worker and female clerk.⁶⁰ The barriers between the social classes, however, seem to have been more permeable than the barriers between the Czechs and Germans or Jews, as ethnic identity was considered more important than class identity, and members of different social classes were more likely to meet one another than people belonging to different national backgrounds were, due to a rather clear geographic line dividing ethnic Czechs and Germans.⁶¹ Interethnic marriage was almost nonexistent

59 Marco H. D. van Leeuwen, Ineke Maas, “Endogamy and Social Class in History: An Overview,” in *Marriage Choices and Class Boundaries: Social Endogamy in History*, eds. Marco H. D. van Leeuwen, Ineke Maas, Andrew Milles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

60 Josef Šiška, *Statistická zpráva hlavního města Prahy za rok 1925* (Prague: Statistická komise hl. m. Prahy, 1930), 38–39.

61 Concerning Czech–German marriages, although the Germans made up as much as one-third of the inhabitants of the Czech lands, the interethnic Czech–German marriages constituted less than 5 percent of the total. See more on Czech–German marriages: Chad Bryant, “Občanství, národnost a každodenní život. Příspěvek k dějinám česko–německých smíšených manželství v letech 1939–1946” *Kuděj. Časopis pro kulturní dějiny* 2 (2002): 43–54. Benjamin Frommer, “Expulsion or Integration: Unmixing Interethnic Marriage in Postwar Czechoslovakia,” *East European Politics & Societies* 14 (2000): 381–410. On Jewish–Czech and Jewish–German marriages: Gaby Zürn, “Religion Nebensache. Intermarriage between Biological Integration and (Self-)Destruction,” *Bohemia. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der böhmischen Länder* 1 (2005): 108–119.

among workers in Prague, as Germans or Jews were not numerous in the city. Although the Prague workers and their families belonged to different Christian denominations (about half of them were baptized as Catholics, a third were atheists,⁶² and one-sixth was protestant), it was not considered a problem to marry a member of a different church, as the working class in the capital city was already highly secularized.

The political orientation of grooms was sometimes a big problem for the families of brides. There was a significant rift between the Communists and the rest of the community.⁶³ Some girls were explicitly warned not to marry a Communist, and in some cases this led to a break with other family members.⁶⁴ There was some rational basis for this attitude, since a Communist Party activist sometimes had to face the loss of work, and in military production there was an explicit prohibition against giving members of the Communist Party a job. In contrast, if one had a membership card for the Socialist Party (bearing since 1926 the name National Socialist Party), which dominated Prague, this could prove helpful in the search for a job in publically owned enterprises.

Working class girls were also warned not to marry an alcoholic or a man who liked to play the cards, a habit considered (along with alcohol consumption) the worst social evil.⁶⁵ For example, one female who wrote a letter to the journal *Hvězda* on her personal troubles, expressed her appreciation of her husband, since he neither drank nor played cards.⁶⁶ Consorting with prostitutes, which was particularly common among students and soldiers, was not a big issue among workers.⁶⁷ All in all, in contrast with the middle classes, working class parents did not have much influence on their children's choice of partners. The last

62 Only after 1918 was it permissible to become an atheist. Atheism spread mainly among unskilled workers and activists of the leftist parties. Even the politically moderate Social Democrats were militantly atheist. The form of its party functionaries contained a column: "To which date he/she left the church?" (NA ČR, ČSD, XVIII/ 9, Osobní dotazníky zaměstnanců sociální demokracie.) Catholic or Protestant working class families were in the decisive majority, but many of them were very secular in their everyday habits. Protestant workers belonging to the Czechoslovak church were numerous among the better qualified workers and supporters of the centrist National Socialist Party. (Antonín Boháč, "Hlavní město Praha," 121.)

63 Jana Kosáková, "Příspěvek ke studiu způsobu života dělníků v Praze v Malém Břevnově" (Master thesis, Charles University Prague, 1975), 200.

64 Josef Spilka, ed., *Šípek u baldy: Karolína Štiková vypravuje a ilustruje* (Prague: Práce, 1964), 260.

65 Vašek Káňa, *Válkou narušení* (Prague: SNDK, 1953), 111.

66 "Dopisy jež nás došly," *Pražanka*, 59, 1925, 12.

67 Thomas Nipperday, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1990), 100. Andreas Gestrich, *Geschichte der Familie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 32. According to the contemporary statistics of the Prague's hospitals the workers were rather underrepresented among the sexually infected males. NA ČR, SPPCP, VI/218. Zpráva o činnosti dispenzáře prof. Janovského, 2.

obstacle to marriage was age. One was only allowed to marry without parental permission at the age of 21. Couples between the ages of 17 and 21 were only allowed to marry if they had the permission of their fathers or legal guardians.⁶⁸

Family in the Life Course

The period under discussion was marked by the end of a demographic transition in the Czech lands. In 1880, the average woman gave birth to 4.7 children. This figure declined in 1900 to 4.1, in 1920 to 2.8 and in 1938 to 1.9. The working class people of Prague were average in this respect. The birth rate was lower than in the countryside, but higher than among the middle classes. The prevailing model among workers was a family with two or three children.⁶⁹ The one-child model was not preferred due to child mortality, which was still high.⁷⁰ The social surveys on the working class people of Prague revealed more nuanced views. According to a survey conducted by Marie Nečasová in the late 1920s, the average clerks' family had two children, the average workers' family⁷¹ had 2.8, and the average day laborers' family had 3.8.⁷² Other authors have consistently confirmed that a lower social position means more children. This was also the case according to a criminological survey on prostitutes with many brothers and sisters,⁷³ as well as a pedagogical survey on schools, according to which "neglected [pupils] who were in danger of being ruined" usually came from the largest families.⁷⁴ We do not have any data on the basis of which we could compare birth rates among atheist, protestant and Catholic workers, but denominational belonging does not seem to have played a significant role, as social workers did not pay any attention to it. Although the statistics indicate a decline in fertility, even in the 1930s working class women in Prague complained that they gave birth to more children than they actually would like to have had.⁷⁵

68 Emil Svoboda, *Rodinné právo*, Prague, Vesmír, 1921, 32.

69 "Znáte viníky, suďte je," *Rozsévka*, 28, July 10, 1935, 2.

70 "Nechceme děti, jež nemůžeme uživit," *Rozsévka*, 1, January 23, 1930, 5.

71 She did not give a precise definition of "workers," but she seems to mean people who had regular jobs and even jobs for which they required professional qualifications, because she also writes about "day laborers".

72 Marie Nečasová, *Školní prospěch a sociální poměry dítěte* (Prague: Sociální ústav RČS, 1929), 28.

73 Jan Schneider, *Cestou ke prostituci* (Prague: Spolek pro péči o slabomyslné v RČS, 1928), attachment, 6.

74 Cyril Stejskal, "Poznatky z všestranného výzkumu žactva pokusných škol v Praze," *Pedagogické rozhledy* 1 (1932): 119.

75 "Otrokyně otroka". *Rozsévka*, 21, 1933, 5.

Another aspect of the demographic transition was the decline in infant mortality, which fell from 15 to 9 percent in the Czech lands in the period between 1920 and 1940.⁷⁶ However, this figure indicates that even towards the end of the interwar period the death of an infant was not uncommon. Although the statistics do not offer any breakdown of infant mortality rates according to social class, the data from different districts of the city clearly show social stratification. Prosek, the district of Prague with the highest proportion of workers and the highest concentration of slums, also had the highest infant mortality rate, 23 percent in 1935, while the suburbs with the highest percentage of “independents and landlords” had rates of only about 10 percent.⁷⁷ Higher infant mortality was also recorded among children born out of wedlock, whose chances of reaching adulthood were two times lower than those of children of married parents.

Even the children of working class parents who survived infancy often were in poor health according to doctors, primarily as a result of malnutrition. About half of the children at the schools in the working class districts were characterized as unhealthy. The most frequent findings were rickets, anemia, “backward body development,” “weakness,” “nerve instability” and “hypertrophied chest glands.”⁷⁸

Fathers were often absent from working class families. Female mortality rates were lower, and many men had died in the war. The death of a woman in childbirth, which had been frighteningly common only a few decades earlier, became less frequent, occurring in no more than 5 out of 1,000 of births. The most common cause of death in working class families was tuberculosis, which reached its peak during the war, but steadily declined afterward. In 1914, 26 of 100 deaths in the Czech lands were caused by tuberculosis. By 1937 this proportion had declined to 9 of 100.⁷⁹ Tuberculosis was truly a “malady of the proletariat,” affecting primarily young adults. According to the statistical bureau of Prague, it was the cause of one in four deaths among male workers, but

76 Also the practice of giving birth in the clinics contributed to the decline in infant mortality. Two-thirds of the births in Prague in 1926 took place in the hospital. *Zprávy Státního úřadu statistického republiky Československé* (Prague: Státní úřad statistický, 1927), 21 (8), 149. The recommendation to give birth at home was considered old fashioned. *Znáš své dítě? Rozčívka*, 3, January 15, 1936, 6.

77 Emanuel Hruška, *Rozbor zdravotních a osídlovacích poměrů velké Prahy* (Prague: Ústav pro stavbu měst při Masarykově akademii práce, 1935), 83. This was also confirmed by Otto Lehovc, *Prag: eine Stadtgeographie und Heimatkunde* (Prag: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1944), 78.

78 Cyril Stejskal, “Poznátky z všestranného,” 16.

79 *Atlas obyvatelstva ČSSR* (Prague: Ústřední správa geodézie a kartografie, 1962), 56.

only one in ten deaths among people employed in liberal professions.⁸⁰ Even successful medical treatment meant a long period of time and a considerable financial burden for the family.

Two other reasons for the absence of fathers were single motherhood and divorce.⁸¹ The Austrian legislature only allowed divorces in the sense of separation (*Scheidung*/rozvod), but without the right to remarry. Divorce (*Trennung*/rozluka), meaning that the parties to the process would have the right to remarry, was rarely allowed. The Czechoslovak Republic liberalized the laws regarding divorce after 1918, making divorce (*rozluka*) much easier and taking the procedure out of the hands of church. Consequently, the divorce rates began to rise: In 1921 they rocketed to 4.7 percent, possibly in part because the option had only recently become available and many people who had already separated from their spouses chose to finalize their separations with divorce. Although the rise in the divorce rate slowed down soon, as of the latter half of the 1920s it began to grow again, reaching 7.9 divorces annually for every 100 marriages in 1935–1937.⁸² Among the working class people of Prague, divorce was by no means unheard of. However, the statistical evidence shows that divorce was less widespread among working class families than it was among the middle classes, who might have had better proficiency in the use of the law. Members of the middle classes were also better able to afford divorce, since the breakup of a household represented a less threatening economic burden for them than it did for working class families. According to the statistics, divorce was twice as frequent among the middle classes in Prague than among the workers.⁸³

Concerning the reasons for divorce recorded by the court of justice, domestic violence was more common among workers, while adultery was more common among the members of the middle classes.⁸⁴ This could mean either that adultery was actually more common among the middle classes, who had more opportunity (more leisure time, better apartment conditions), and that domestic violence was more common in the working class families, or that adultery was not as frequently perceived as grounds for divorce among workers.

80 Šiška, *Statistická zpráva hlavního města Prahy za léta 1930–1933*, 186.

81 Kristin Celello, *Making marriage work: a history of marriage and divorce in the twentieth-century* (Chapel Hill, Univ. of North Carolina Press: 2009).

82 Ludmila Fialová et al., *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1996), 395.

83 Josef Šiška, *Statistická zpráva hlavního města Prahy za rok 1925* (Prague: Statistická komise hl. m. Prahy, 1930), 101–11. Josef Šiška, *Statistická zpráva hlavního města Prahy za léta 1930–1933*, 98–107.

84 Ibid.

The outcome of a divorce was the separation of the household and a ruling regarding alimony, which could be a big financial burden to a male worker.⁸⁵ However, Nečasová noticed in her survey that in the majority of cases divorced working class fathers did not pay anything. According to her, although the court of justice declared it the duty of the father to pay alimony, in many cases the fathers did not meet this obligation and their ex-wives had no legal means of compelling them to do so.⁸⁶ The impact of the great depression on divorce rates was ambivalent. On the one hand, the rise in unemployment and increasing financial uncertainties frequently led to conflicts within families, while on the other among members of the working class divorce rates declined, presumably because the financial burdens were too great.

Combining divorce and the death of a parent, one can estimate that about one-third of the school-age children of working class parents in Prague came from “incomplete” families. According to research by Stejskal, in three-fourths of the cases the father was absent because he had died. The other one-fourth were cases of unwed mothers or divorced parents.⁸⁷ The relatively frequent “incompleteness” of the family is confirmed by Apetauer. According to him, about 20 percent of Prague apprentices had lost their fathers, and 10 percent had lost their mothers. In the 1930s, as World War I become a more distant memory, the ratio of deceased fathers and mothers equalized somewhat.

The death of a father created a situation of extreme difficulty for a working class family. One strategy to minimize the disastrous consequences was to move in with grandparents or take in sub-tenants, who sometimes became new partners, as one sees on the basis of the information collected by the authorities about the widows of the 46 men who died during the collapse of construction works of the new shopping mall in the city center in 1928 (street Na Poříčí), the biggest catastrophe of this sort in the interwar period in Prague. Many widows found new partners astonishingly quickly.⁸⁸ In the case of the death of his wife, a husband usually preferred to turn the children over to the care of relatives or sometimes institutions than to try to combine child care with paid work.

While first marriages were based on personal preferences and sympathies among workers, a marriage after the death of partner or after a divorce was generally a way out of a difficult situation, and the expectations placed on a

85 “Zn. Jediná spása”. *Hvězda československých paní a dívek*, 11, 1930, 12.

86 Marie Nečasová, *Školní prospěch a sociální poměry dítěte*, 18.

87 Cyril Stejskal, “Poznatky z všestranného,” 119.

88 VA, OSČ. Zpráva o sociálních poměrech pozůstalých po katastrofě na Poříčí, 168/ 2173–97.

potential partner were much lower. In particular, children from the previous marriage were instructed by their mothers to behave respectfully in the presence of their stepfathers. Records from the 1920s indicate that mothers even pressured their children to kiss their stepfather's hand, a practice that was no longer common at the time, or to greet him with the words "praise the lord Jesus Christ" (*pochválen buď pán Ježíš Kristus*).⁸⁹ This greeting was already out of fashion before the First World War, and after 1918 it was abolished from the schools and other public spaces, but still was perceived by some people as more polite than the civil "Good day" (*dobrý den*).

Conclusion

The family-lives of the Prague workers can be interpreted in light of the different transformations at the time. These include a demographic transition (declining infant mortality rates, declining fertility, rise of divorce rates), the adoption of modern values (individualization, secularization, female emancipation, emotionalization), combined with the effects of World War I (material scarcity, high mortality), local circumstances (housing shortages), and persistent traditional patterns and values (gender inequality and family hierarchies). The crucial aspect of the everyday lives of workers' families seems to have been material scarcity, which was particularly significant at times of economic depressions (in other words roughly half of the period under discussion), resulting often in the malnutrition of children. The welfare system still existed only in rudimentary forms, so changes in the nuclear family, such as the death of a spouse or serious illness, could have disastrous effects on the family. Although the emotional bonds were important aspects of a marriage, in order to minimize the consequences of such catastrophes emotions sometimes had to be put aside, and remarrying was not always a sentimental so much as a rational choice.⁹⁰

Living standards did not improve much during the period under discussion, and real average wages grew above the pre-1914 levels only for a short period of time, in the second half of the 1920s. World War I and the subsequent economic depression had disastrous effects on every segment of society, but particularly

⁸⁹ Tůmová, *Pražské nouzové*, 75.

⁹⁰ In Czech historiography no research has been done on urban widows. The secondary literature has concentrated until now on the lives of rural widows in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In English see: Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives, Laws, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).

on the urban workers. The spread of “incomplete” families and the “marriage squeeze” for females were two of its consequences. On the other hand, the foundation of the Republic brought an improvement in the living conditions of workers due to the passage of new socially conscious legislation, including the reduction of work hours and the introduction of vacations, pensions and unemployment benefits, not to mention the emancipation of women during the war.

1918 also marked a shift in the values of the generation of young workers, who seemed to bear more affinities with their middle class counterparts than their parents had. In leisure-time activities, the formation of subcultures, dating practices, pre-marital sex, and the free choice of partners, the young workers even seem to have adopted these practices more rapidly than the middle class youth. The youths were also reluctant to accept the exclusive identity as “workers,” as the register books and personal ads illustrate. Also marriages between members of different social classes probably became more common than they had been in the past. The levels of social inequality and perceptions regarding these differences nonetheless remained strong at the time, separating the social strata in terms of consumption, space or demographic behavior. In this respect Prague did not differ from other cities of Central Europe. Due to our limited knowledge of the social history of Polish and Hungarian working class families, comparisons can only be drawn with well-researched life histories of German and Austrian working class families. In this context, Prague was not unusual, differing primarily only in housing welfare policy, which was more developed in the case of Germany or Austria.

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Mónika Mátay

The Adventures of Dispute: a Marriage Crisis

Various developments in the study of history over the past few decades have borrowed theoretical assumptions and methodological innovations from cultural anthropology. Similarly, some of the leading scholars in the field of legal history have done the same. In this article I investigate the avenues of dispute within a Calvinist burgher family from Debrecen, the biggest Hungarian city at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I try to reconstruct the individual strategies they adopted in order to achieve their goals and the means and tactics they used against each other in business, defamation conflicts or a divorce case. I approach the legal construction as a creative moment, a formative period in which the combination of central legislation and local statutes offered a space for individual strategies and legal maneuvering. In the analysis, I scrutinize both the disputing habits and the internal motivations of a quarreling couple, the Ladányis, to take their private matters and conflicts to the court, as well as the mutual influences of social actors and increasingly modern social institutions, more precisely, the city court and the legal profession.

Keywords: Calvinism, family, gender, marital dispute, divorce

In the 1970s, a harsh debate erupted among anthropologists over legal theory and practice in which the rule-centered or functionalist paradigm and the processual paradigm were juxtaposed.¹ Representatives of the first model concentrated on formal written law and legal institutions as the only legitimate objects of legal analyses, and they thought that only laws and norms “from above” could define the boundaries between deviant and acceptable social behavior. Supporters of the second paradigm emphasized individual decisions and the legal competence of social actors, and they refused to view conflicts as “pathological phenomena.” For them, conflict is a natural ingredient of everyday life and it is unavoidable when the individual attempts to realize his or her goals. These anthropologists accept that “order” in a society provides the basis for stability, but they believe that order is not a well-defined structure, but rather a shifting and dynamic environment shaped by the members of the community.

1 For more on the debate: John Comaroff and Simon Roberts, *Rules and Processes. The Cultural Logic of Dispute in the African Context* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 5–17; Simon Roberts, *Order and Dispute. An Introduction to Legal Anthropology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 11–29; Simona Cerutti, “Normes et pratiques, ou de la légitimité de leur opposition,” in *Les formes de l'expérience. Une autre histoire sociale*, ed. Albin Michel (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1995), 127–49.

In the end, the scholarly debate led to more ambitious considerations than the mere challenge to traditional views grounded in the coercive power of law and legal institutions. According to Sally Falk Moore, Simon Roberts, John L. Comaroff, Laura Nader and other anthropologists, the processual paradigm as a primary approach to legal life has the potential to pose more radical questions than the subordination of the formal, institutional perspective to individuals' manipulative strategies and legal competence. In general they argue that the analyses of legal norms should rely on social behavior, because this is the formative context in which social norms and rules are determined. In other words, social behavior is more dependent on social relations than on the regulative authority of any political or social institutions. The shift of focal points led these anthropologists into a new arena in which they paid more attention to concrete conflicts among individuals or social groups as well as to the possible resolutions of these conflicts. That means that social practices are not subordinated to rules, but that they have equally important power in shaping social conditions.

According to the functionalist model, law determined the lives of ordinary people, and historians who applied it ignored the possibility that there might exist a less hierarchical structure and failed to articulate a more mutual correlation between regulations and actors. In the new framework, however, the reductionist interpretation of the law is replaced by a more flexible and complex paradigm in which social historians focus on individuals' legal competence and manipulative capacities. Undoubtedly, the liberation of ordinary historical actors from the constraints of political, economic and social structures is not an entirely novel approach to history. Microhistorians, among others, Carlo Ginzburg, Nathalie Zemon Davis and Judith Brown, contributed to this "deliberating" process to a large degree. Ginzburg illustrated the contours of self-fashioning, the freedom of individual actions and decision-making strategies in the example of the miller, Menocchio, who even confronted the much-feared Inquisition and sacrificed his life to have a chance to discuss his strange ideas with competent people.² Davis excellently crafted the personality of Martin Guerre and his rival, the impostor Arnaud du Tihl alias Pansette, who tried to make his fortune by slipping into another person's skin.³ Brown, in a genuinely new fashion, showed the possibilities a unique female character had to gain public attention

2 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

3 Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

in Renaissance Italy.⁴ After reading these historical analyses, no one would think that these actors of the past were helpless puppets whose actions were dictated entirely by contemporary social and economic conditions. Just the opposite was the case; they seemed to be remarkably creative and active in shaping their own lives. The new paradigm in the study of legal practice made it possible to apply the findings of social and microhistory in a new field, legal history, which has been neglected by most social historians, including the representatives of the *Annales* School.

One of the most successful attempts to apply the findings of legal anthropology in social history is Thomas Kuehn's collection of essays that claims to explicate a "legal anthropology" of Renaissance Italy.⁵ Although the ambitious endeavor remained incomplete in the sense that instead of Renaissance Italy the author focused only on one Italian city (Florence), this does not reduce the value of the work. Kuehn argues that laws and statutes attempted to diminish the freedom of action of the individual within a coherent and logical structuralist framework. Legal practice in real everyday life, however, was very different and contained many irrational, chaotic and contradictory elements. Kuehn paid particular attention to individual choices and decisions even if they did not seem cogent.

Using published and unpublished notarial records and private sources (such as letters and diaries), Kuehn demonstrates that the citizens of Florence were not only familiar with the ever-changing legal statutes, but also knew that the law had an immense influence on people's everyday lives. For Kuehn, *quattrocento* Florentine law was incoherent and fluid; therefore, it left space for individual creativity and for the application of alternative methods of dispute in addition to formal litigation. "My desire has been to understand how, or how much, the very sophisticated and complex apparatus of law could serve the interests of litigants and to see how law functioned in a context with other mechanisms of disputing and settling disputes, ranging from fairly formal arbitration to violence."⁶ The inherently ambiguous laws created a broad horizon for social actors, individuals and kinsmen, in which they could find ways of accomplishing their goals and interests in competition with other members of the community.

4 Judith Brown, *Immodest Acts: the Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

5 Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).

6 *Ibid.*, 11.

Kuehn's vision of the relationship between law and society as a formative process, combined with his aim of integrating alternative legal habits into his investigation, provides his readers with a new understanding the legal authority of certain social groups, especially women. He admits that women's legal activity was circumscribed by the immanently oppressive, patriarchal order of the period. At the same time, he also explains the manifest contradiction between formal legal regulations and everyday legal practice, and the interpretation and application of law in matters such as female inheritance or, more generally speaking, women's legal authority.

Simona Cerutti, in her work on the summary court of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Torino, examines the day-to-day operation of this peculiar form of jurisprudence.⁷ She demonstrates that legal practice could serve as a major source of law, because the summary court excluded all forms of professional juridical intervention, including legal experts and written law, and was grounded purely in non-professional individuals' sentences. Cerutti's focus on this ancient institution made it possible to pay closer attention to the practical consequences of the ideological assumptions that were articulated by the followers of the processual legal paradigm. In *Domestic Dangers*, Laura Gowing attempts to reconstruct the litigation and, most importantly, the complex motives outside the court that inspired seventeenth-century Londoners to seek justice and initiate civic legal cases.⁸ Like Kuehn, Gowing warns against overemphasis on the patriarchal order of early modern society and illustrates in various ways how legal instruments could become powerful weapons even in the hands of women.

Legal anthropology provided several theoretical and methodological findings for historians that I consider in my work. The present inquiry, restricted to an examination of the squabbles of a Debrecenian couple in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is an attempt to uncover the importance of lawsuits by integrating into its methodology historiographical developments. As opposed to "rules-oriented" legal historians, who were reluctant to apply the law in actual cases and focused either on structural institutional changes or legal theory, my goal is to provide a more nuanced understanding of the couple's litigation. Of course, I acknowledge that legal norms and rules are "ranges of discourse" which

7 Cerutti, Normes.

8 Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

set constraints on disputants as they argued over marriages, wealth and honor.⁹ However, I try to avoid imposing on my understanding of litigation a sharp distinction between “theory” and “practice.” I approach the legal construction as a creative moment, a formative period, in which the combination of central legislation and local statutes opened up space for individual strategies and legal maneuvering. In the analysis, I scrutinize both the disputing habits and the internal motivations of the quarreling couple, the Ladányis, to take their private matters and conflicts to the court, and the mutual influences of social actors and modernizing social institutions, more precisely, the city court and the legal profession.

The Husband, the Wife and the Marriage

János Ladányi and Erzsébet Diószegi got married on April 27, 1774.¹⁰ Both of them were born in Debrecen, the biggest Hungarian city at the time. Debrecen is a former trading center located in the Hungarian plain, about 150 miles to the east of the present-day capital, Budapest. The city lay far from rivers, quarries, forests, and mountains that could have supplied it with raw materials for development and provided natural defensive borders. There was hardly reason to build a city on this empty plain, with the exception of the endless supply of space for expansion. Throughout the early modern era, and even today, visitors have always been struck by the stark contrast between the city’s large size and density and its rural characteristics. In 1715, it was the largest city in the country, and in 1787, when Joseph II ordered a census of the total population of Hungary, Debrecen, with its 29,000 inhabitants, was still ahead Pressburg (27,000; Pozsony in Hungarian, today Bratislava in Slovakia) and Buda (25,000).

Both János and Erzsébet were scions of noble families.¹¹ Within the urban community nobles formed a somewhat closed and particular social group. Fleeing the plunders of Turkish soldiers, they began to move to Debrecen in the 1500s. During the following centuries the Debrecenian nobility permanently grew in

9 Kuehn, *Law*, 97.

10 Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerületi és Kollégiumi Levéltár (hereafter Tt.REL) Registers of Baptism and Marriage. I. 99-a 6 VI. 1772–1778, 30. “János Ladányi from Péterfia Street married Pál Diószegi’s daughter from Csapó Street on April 27, 1774.”

11 János Ladányi was born on Csapó Street on June 23, 1748. His father was János Ladányi the elder, his mother was Sára Hadházi. Tt.REL. Registers of Baptism. I. 99-a vol. n. 35, 1742–1757, 283. Erzsébet Diószegi was born on the same street on November 24, 1749. Her parents were Pál Diószegi and Erzsébet Szappanos. Ibid. 372.

size. Most of them never owned estates, but were so-called *armalis* nobles; in other words, they were ennobled without land, which in practice meant that they enjoyed tax exemption but had to work for a living.¹² Most noblemen were farmers and artisans, others were Debrecenian merchants and intellectuals. Some of the nobles of Debrecen had estates outside the city, but regardless of that, none of them were allowed to invoke their noble privileges within the city; like the burghers, they were required to pay ranks and taxes. Although they preferred to marry among themselves, according to profession and residence, they integrated themselves well into the city. According to contemporary national and county records, 132 noble families lived in Debrecen in 1715, and during the reign of Joseph II (in the late 1700s) this number rose to 207. Despite the slow growth of the Debrecenian nobility, their proportion within the total urban population remained around one or two percent.¹³

The groom's father, János Ladányi, was a native of Debrecen. Little is known about his background except that he was a hard-working citizen who contributed considerably to the family's assets. His grandmother, Anna Rácz, made a last will and testament in which she praised her son, János the elder:

...he suffered with me much cold and warm, he rushed and troubled himself with my matters and helped me a great deal [...] for these reasons all the money I lent to him once or twice [100 Forints] and the vineyard which I bought together with him I leave to János, and my other children should not demand any part of that wealth.¹⁴

The elder János Ladányi was probably an artisan, but the available sources do not indicate his craft. Due to the fact that he did not make a last will and testament and did not leave his son valuable properties, I assume he was not particularly wealthy. Affluent members of the urban community usually left behind a written will and made scrupulous decisions about their properties. Mihály Jándi, a tanner and member of a prestigious noble family, was undoubtedly rich, and his last will and testament documents his wealth. He was well-off, and this obliged him

12 Rácz István, *Városiaké nemesek az Alföldön 1541–1848* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 83.

13 Rácz István, "A civis fogalma" in *A Déri Múzeum Évkönyve* (Debrecen: Déri Múzeum, 1986), 77–111, 104, and also see Herpay Gábor, *Nemes családok Debrecenben* (Debrecen: published by the author, 1925).

14 Anna Rácz's last will and testament, August 6, 1746. Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár (hereafter HBmL) IV.A. 1011/z. 206. Anna Rácz was first married to János Ladányi's the elder's father, István Ladányi, a native of Debrecen. Her second husband was a well-to-do nobleman in the neighboring Közép-Szolnok county.

to make a number of final decisions. He had a house, several mills, a vineyard, a large piece of land, animals and movable assets.¹⁵

Many Debrecenian noblemen spent most of their income on their children. They spent their earnings on their sons' education and their daughters' dowries. The elder Ladányi provided his son with reasonable schooling. After completing his compulsory years of apprenticeship, at the very young age of 18, he joined the highly esteemed guild of tanners in Debrecen.¹⁶

There is more information about the bride's background. She was a child of the illustrious Diószegi family.¹⁷ Her great-great-grandfather was István Diószegi, who had been a prominent professor of the city's College for more than three decades. Among her ancestors, Sámuel, the famed chief justice of Debrecen, was a particularly prominent personality. He also headed the highly esteemed postmaster's office and led the city during wartime at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was well connected with contemporary European political elites and his exploits were legendary among the citizens of Debrecen. According to a popular anecdote he hosted the Swedish king, Charles XII, for an evening of entertainment.¹⁸ István Szűcs, the nineteenth-century chronicler of Debrecen, noted that the king spent an amusing evening and a peaceful night in Diószegi's house, where he met members of the Magistrate, Protestant pastors, and professors from the College.¹⁹

Erzsébet's father was Pál Diószegi, a teacher at one of the ten girls' schools in the city.²⁰ Noblemen who did not possess extensive estates had to learn a trade or enter the world of industry or the intellectual professions.²¹ Debrecenian elementary school teachers established the Teachers' Association in 1708, which

15 See: Younger Mihály Jándi's last will and testament, February 17, 1837. 1944. Mihály Jándi the younger married the unmarried daughter of Mihály Szabó from Sámson, June 25, 1832. Records of Marriage. Tt.REL. I. 99-a Book 140, 491.

16 Registers of the tanners guild of Debrecen. HBmL IX. 35/9, 234.

17 See the article on the history of the Diószegi family: S. Szabó József, "Diószeghy Sámuel". *Debreceni Képes Kalendárium* (1908): 226–34. The Diószegi family was registered as noble in the eighteenth century. See: Herpay, *Nemes*.

18 S. Szabó, *Diószeghy*, 228.

19 Szűcs István, *Szabad királyi Debreczen város történelme három kötetben ábrákkal. A legrégibb kortól a mai időkig*, vol 1 (Debreczen: Városi Nyomda, 1871).

20 He was called the *praeceptor* of Kis-Csapó street. Tt.REL. Registers of Baptism I. 99-a3 vol. 5, 1742–57, 283. I found further information on his profession; István Vecsei mentioned in his last will and testament that his northern neighbor was his daughter's teacher, Pál Diószegi. István Vecsei's last will and testament, April 17, 1769. 441.

21 Rác, *Városlakó*, 126–37.

increased their prestige, but this still did not mean financial recognition. Teachers in Debrecen lived under miserable conditions. They received their salaries directly from the parents, which resulted in endless complaints on behalf of the teachers: “[...] they brought their children from one school to the other and so they avoided paying tuition-fees. They did not pay, so we could not even afford our basic everyday necessities.”²²

Although Pál Diószegi registered his daughter at one of the girls’ schools in the city, Erzsébet apparently possessed no more than a very basic education—typical of elementary schools of that time.²³ She learned to read and write and she probably acquired primary mathematical skills and a fundamental understanding of the Bible. Decades later, a letter she wrote as an adult indicates that she could write, but she made many grammatical and spelling mistakes. Like many girls at the time, she most probably learned the necessary skills of a housewife, and later she became an assiduous housekeeper.

Erzsébet had two brothers, Mihály and Sámuel. Mihály married into the nationally recognized Fazekas family. His brother-in-law was a writer and the author of one of the most popular satires of the early nineteenth century, *Ludas Matyi*, which is still required reading for Hungarian school children. Erzsébet’s other brother, the twelve-year younger Sámuel, taught at the city’s College. Later he moved to a neighboring town, Hajdúböszörmény, where he worked as a schoolmaster. He then moved on to a bigger city in the Hungarian Plain, Kecskemét. He attended the University of Göttingen, where he studied geometry, physics and medicine. He completed his university degree in the 1790s and became a Protestant pastor in his native Debrecen. Sámuel co-authored the first Hungarian botanical treatise and was member of the enlightened intellectual workshop, the Debrecen Assembly. His sermons, entitled *Moralistic Teachings in Preaching*, were published in Debrecen in 1808.²⁴

We do not know whose idea the marriage was, nor can we know how and when they met first. Both the Ladányi and the Diószegi families resided in the heart of Debrecen, and most likely the couple had already known each other as children. There are no references to mutual attraction or love in the archival documents, but neither physical attraction nor emotional commitment was

22 On conditions of teaching in eighteenth-century Debrecen, see: Mervó Zoltánné, “A leányok iskolai oktatása Debrecenben a polgári forradalom előtt,” *A Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár Évkönyve*, vol. 1. (1974): 27–58, 35.

23 Mervó, “A leányok”.

24 Diószegi Sámuel, *Erkölcsti tanítások prédikációkban* (Debrecen: n.p., 1808).

considered a prerequisite for marriage in the waning years of the eighteenth century. The surviving archival sources on divorce cases suggest that marriages were usually arranged by the parents or relatives and sometimes the couple hardly saw each other before the wedding.

Marriage was considered the first real step into adulthood. In order to be accepted as a “mature man,” János had to get married. He was already 26 and had been guild master for eight years at the time of his wedding. Most likely he was following public expectations when he decided to marry Erzsébet. The bride was almost the same age, 25, anything but too young to marry by the standards of the time. Examining registers of marriage from this period, the data suggest that most women married about five years earlier, around the age of 20.²⁵ For a woman, marriage was almost compulsory: in the traditional Protestant views of Debrecenians, it was shameful, dangerous and immoral for a woman to live alone.²⁶

In Debrecen, parents or relatives arranged marriages. They introduced the couple and controlled the necessary fiscal negotiations. Documents of divorce cases suggest that economic motivation provided a weak bond to sustain a bad marriage, and mere financial ties were not enough to prevent separation or divorce. Many plaintiffs in divorce cases complained that they disliked their spouses from the first time they met and reluctantly yielded to parental pressure, resulting in a forced wedding. They used this circumstance to convince the court that the marriage had not been the result of a voluntary decision. Erzsébet Böszörményi, the wife of János Szilágyi, a cobbler, argued during her divorce trial that “boundless parental power forced her to marry János Szilágyi,” but after nine doleful years of her marriage she preferred to try the life of the lonesome female than suffer the hardships of living together with her husband.²⁷

Presumably, in this case money did not serve as a primary motivation for the marriage.²⁸ Neither of the two families was particularly wealthy. Despite

25 Mátay Mónika, *Törvényszéki játszmák: válás Debrecenben 1793–1848* (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2006). 161–73.

26 For Protestants, marriage was a means of maintaining social order, morals, and control over people's sex lives. The institution was intended to protect the faithful from earthly seductions. As opposed to the Catholics, Protestants did not consider celibacy superior to marriage. They believed that single life was contradictory to human nature and God's will. See: Roderick Phillips, *Untying the Knot. A Short History of Divorce* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1–27.

27 Divorce case of Erzsébet Böszörményi and János Szilágyi HBmL IVA. 1018/c. n. 46. Supplement A.

28 Analysis of the Debrecenian divorce and inheritance cases demonstrates that money could play an important role in marriages. See for example: Mónika Mátay, “The Adulterous Wife and the Rebellious Husband: a Marital Dispute in a Calvinist City,” *Social History* 34 (2009): 145–62.

the lack of economic motivation, the parents thought this an acceptable match because of the noble origins of both families. Nobles in the market towns of the Hungarian Great Plain lived in closed communities and preferred to marry among themselves. In most cases, noble families refused to allow their children to marry to non-noble citizens.²⁹

The couple had been living in lodgings for more than twenty years and could afford a house only as late as 1798, when they received Erzsébet's inheritance.³⁰ It is true that in Debrecen many young people, even scions of wealthy citizens, often began their adult lives in a sublease. That did not necessarily mean that they were poor. But the fact that the Ladányis were unable to buy a house for more than two decades indicates that they were not financially prosperous. Ultimately, they could only afford the house when they received Erzsébet's inheritance.

Once they were able to buy their own home, they purchased it along with a very small piece of land. In nineteenth-century Debrecen houses were surrounded by land. Actually, the value of the property was dependent on the size of the adjacent estate, not the building itself. The Ladányis bought their house with a plot that was a bit smaller than the average size on their street.³¹

A document about the renovation of the house in 1823 offers a rough sketch of the ground plan. It was a typical Debrecen home, neither rich nor poor. There were two rooms in the house. The main room, which was bigger and more comfortable, was the multipurpose *tisztaszoba* (clean room). The window in this room afforded a glimpse of the street. The members of the household rarely used this room; it was a combined living and dining room, and visitors were entertained here. The only bedroom of the house, reserved for the spouses and their daughter, was in the back of the building. The family spent most of their time in the kitchen, located between *tisztaszoba* and the bedroom, which also served as the main entryway from the yard.

Unfortunately, the sources do not indicate why the couple was in such dire financial straits. Whatever the case, they were unable to accumulate much wealth despite the fact that Ladányi was a recognized master craftsman. After entering the guild in 1766, he made something of a name for himself as a talented

29 Rácz, *Városlakó*, 152.

30 The Ladányi couple bought the house for 1,225 Forints, which was the average prize for a middle category house in Debrecen in the late eighteenth century. Records of civic properties 1636–1848. HBmL IV.A. 1011/y/vol. 5.

31 Rácz, *Városlakó*, 32.

artisan by producing high quality leatherwork.³² The Magistrate rewarded him for being more productive than his fellow-artisans in the guild by bestowing monetary recognition on him. His products earned a special prize from Joseph II, the emperor in 1785, furthering bolstering his reputation.³³ When making his testament, he displayed with pride to the witnesses and the notary “that golden medal [...] which weighs about 10 ounces and which [he] received from late glorious Joseph II for exemplary knowledge of his trade.”

Erzsébet contributed substantially to his work as an artisan: “in the practice of the craft she took an active part.”³⁴ In the everyday life of an artisan family, women always played an important role. In addition to performing the traditional tasks of women, which included cooking and looking after the servants and the apprentices, they were also expected to work the land, trim and hoe the vines, and feed domestic animals. As legal documents suggest, Debrecenians harshly criticized “lazy and neglectful” housewives. Mária Zefer, a cobbler’s wife, “worked in the craft like a man, as much as she could.”³⁵ Besides assisting their husbands in the workshop, artisans’ wives also sold the products at local or even distant fairs. If the husband joined the army, left his family, or squandered the family’s earnings, women often took over the craft as if they were masters. We also know of a few examples when women, although they lived together with their husbands, were independent artisans. Although her husband was a well-off quilt-maker, János Kapros’ wife brought in a huge amount of money by herself according to her husband: “she has always lived on independent earnings.”³⁶

Erzsébet’s contribution to the family’s income was essential because Ladányi did not hire apprentices. Certainly he could have had assistants, and he was competent enough to supervise the workshop with multiple apprentices. Sámuel Teleki, a royal representative in Debrecen and a well-known, enlightened figure of contemporary public life, noted in his report on the work of tanners in the city that masters should send their apprentices to the house, where they could profit from Ladányi’s knowledge of the craft. Still, in the documents of the guild no assistants were ever registered with the tanner. Erzsébet later testified during the trial that young men were afraid of her husband’s “cruelty and rigor.”

32 His name was mentioned in the register of the guild several times between 1776 and 1785. Registers of the tanner guild of Debrecen, HBmL IX. 35/9.

33 Relations by count Sámuel Teleki. MOL, C-53:1786/205.pos.1.p.1-58.(=fol.5-34.)

34 Witness record. HBmL IV.A.1018/a, August 30, 1823, 388.

35 Gábor Tsenger, an apprentice’s confession. Divorce case of Gergely Barta and Mária Zefer. HBmL IV.A. 1018/c/1822, n. 48.

36 János Kapros’s last will and testament, April 23, 1763. 300.

There were many rumors in the city regarding his unruly behavior. How could she live together with a man who alienated potential apprentices and seemed so uninterested in furthering their economic means?

Dilemmas of a Bad Marriage

The marriage was anything but a good emotional match, at least by the second decade. Erzsébet wrote a statement around 1806 or 1807 that was fashioned in the style of a last will and testament and bears further witness to the hardships of their relationship. We do not know to whom she addressed her writing. Most likely, she just wanted to document the miserable conditions under which she lived. Although this unique reflection on her circumstances is informal, she prepared it as part of the legal maneuverings that she used against her husband, or rather as part of a strategy to ensure that she would be able to defend herself from him when necessary. She complains that, with her husband, “[she] suffered much, and in particular in the course of the past four years I underwent enormous torments.”³⁷ She does not go into the details, but the bitter tone of her letter attests to endless miseries. Most likely, Ladányi brutally struck and possibly tortured his wife. At the end of her one-page long note, Erzsébet crafts a statement in a convention meant to leave a record of her misery. She complains about her husband’s control over the family house and his intent to distribute her wealth. Ladányi refused to give her either the wealth she had inherited from her parents or the goods they had accumulated together. She declares that she wishes to leave all her belongings to her daughter and grandchildren. The letter suggests that she had decided to leave her husband: “that from now on I not suffer further disasters.”³⁸ Such an act would make her a social outcast.

Erzsébet’s letter shows that her relationship with her husband was irrevocably ruined, and yet they did not separate. We learn from Ladányi’s last will and testament that the couple split-up several times. He laments that his wife “was unfaithful to him, she left him many times, on at least 13 occasions.”³⁹ Finally, in 1818, at the age of 69, she fled from the house, three years before he made his will and testament. Why did she wait so long? Why did she return to

37 The letter was attached to Ladányi’s last will and testament. The document is a unique mixture of informal last will and testament and private contract.

38 Ibid.

39 János Ladányi’s last will and testament, August 14, 1822. 1605.

her “devilish husband” over and over? And most importantly, why did she fail to initiate divorce proceedings against Ladányi?

Were there any economic considerations behind her reluctance to leave? In Debrecen, an independent life for a woman was hard, but possible. Compared to their counterparts in small villages, where women could only find work jointly with their husbands or male relatives, Debrecenian women had opportunities to work outside the family circle. At times, widows could make respectable incomes, and when they made their wills, they proudly emphasized how much they had amassed after their husbands’ deaths. Mária Ferge, the widow of a carpenter, acquired money through net making.⁴⁰ Women also worked as servants, midwives, bartenders and innkeepers. They spun thread for weavers and made loaves of bread or cakes to sell. One young girl made her living by painting furniture. Between 1820 and 1830, more than 400 spinners were registered as artisans working outside of guilds, and most of them were women. In all likelihood, Erzsébet could have managed to live independently from her husband. She probably had skills in some traditionally female work. Still, she decided to stay. Why? If divorce was legally possible and socially acceptable, why did Erzsébet Diószegi not decide to write a petition and start divorce proceedings against her husband? One possibility was that, while divorce was considered acceptable, it clearly was not looked on favorably at the time, and this may have influenced Erzsébet.

In 1791, Leopold II, the Habsburg Emperor, passed a law that permitted Protestants to be granted a divorce in a secular court for the first time. The law was liberal by the standards of the time, since it allowed divorce on a broad range of grounds and divorce was made available both for men and women. Still, Leopold II’s enlightened policies did not lead to a divorce revolution in Debrecen. Between 1793, when the first petition for divorce was submitted to the court, and the middle of the nineteenth century 201 couples in Debrecen decided to get divorced.⁴¹

Leopold II’s legislation was similar to statutes in Germany, where people could also get divorced regardless of their social status or gender.⁴² A divorce law was introduced in France during the revolution in 1792 that prompted thousands

40 Mária Ferge’s last will and testament, October 25, 1806, 1152.

41 See Mátay *Törvéyszéki*, 161–73.

42 L. Abrams, “Crime against Marriage? Wife-beating, the Law and Divorce in Nineteenth-century Hamburg,” in *Gender and Crime in Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret L. Arnot and Cornelia Osborne (London: UCL Press, 1999), 118–36.

of French couples to turn to the courts.⁴³ In England, the situation was not that liberal. For the overwhelming majority, legal divorce was not available. A Divorce Reform Act was introduced in 1857.⁴⁴

To initiate a divorce case in Debrecen, first the couple had to go to their pastor and request a certificate asserting that reconciliation was impossible. Then the main plaintiff called on a barrister and initiated the divorce proceedings in the local court. In this sense, the ecclesiastical authorities played an important role in the legal procedure, but the decision was made by a secular assembly.

Remarks that were made in the course of trials and the arguments that were made by the magistrates when they issued their decisions suggest that the courts were adamantly opposed to divorce. They were well aware that citizens of Debrecen paid close attention to the outcomes of divorce trials: “Many eyes watch at this scandalous trial in the local Public and eagerly await its outcome [...]”.⁴⁵ Clearly, the judges attempted to discourage divorce among Debrecenians, and whenever possible they rejected petitions for divorce.

A high number of divorce petitions were withdrawn, which suggests that the vast majority of ordinary people were somewhat hesitant about divorce. As is often the case in the study of history, sources yield little insight into the opinions individuals had regarding the dissolution of a marriage. Still, on the basis of the plentiful archival documents, we can attempt to reconstruct views about divorce expressed by the couples involved and by the witnesses, who most often were parents, relatives, servants, tenants or neighbors. Like the judges of the city, most of the petitioners said they were reluctant to divorce and contended that the drastic step had been forced upon them by external circumstances. They complained about their spouses’ misconduct, which included multiple attempts to poison and physical and psychological torture, alcoholism, adultery, and absence. Despite the hostility of the legal elite and the reluctance of the general public to accept divorce, the number of court cases that ended in divorce and the attitudes of defendants suggest that someone living in an impossible marriage could find a sympathetic ear and persuade the courts and society in general to accept divorce as one possible solution to a marital breakdown.

43 On the law see: Roderick Phillips, *Family Breakdown in Late Eighteenth-Century France. Divorces in Rouen 1792–1803* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 12–14.

44 Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce. England 1530–1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 368–82.

45 Divorce case of István Steiner and Zsuzsanna Bóhm, September 12, 1816. HBmL IV.A. 1018/c 40/22, 61.

In addition to the doubts she may have had regarding the attitudes towards divorce, Erzsébet may well have had several other considerations on her mind. For a while, she might have hoped that Ladányi's coarseness would pass. Perhaps she thought of her family, especially her brother, Samuel, the respected scholar, and did not want to involve them in a scandalous family battle. She had a daughter, Julianna, whom she certainly did not want to leave under the care of a brutal father. Gathering her belongings, leaving the house, and starting a new life under someone else's roof was anything but appealing in the eyes of a lonely mother with a child. The probability that a divorce decree would give her back her ancestral property was very low. Not that the court was reluctant to respect women's property rights, but Erzsébet's inheritance had been spent when the couple had purchased their house. Even if the divorce sentence was favorable to her, due to her husband's extremely aggressive behavior, she would never see a penny of her money. Finally, she had invested not only her money but also her energy into the shop and the household. She may have been unwilling to leave everything behind. Last but not least, though she might not have put it in these words, she certainly was concerned about her reputation as a woman. She was no longer young and did not have significant economic resources, so her chances of marrying again were very small. For whatever reason(s), she learned to accept life with her husband for almost fifty years. What can we know about the person with whom she decided to live for so long? Did he have any redeeming qualities that persuaded her stay, or did she remain with him simply because of the factors enumerated above?

János was vindictive, bitter, and peevish. As a young man, he worked as a tanner. In the census of 1792, twenty years into their marriage, when all the members of the tanner guild of Debrecen were registered (including the widows), he was listed as "inactive": "They are masters, but they do not work in the trade themselves, neither do they have assistants who would work for them, and they do not bring profit to the guild."⁴⁶ Why did Ladányi decide to stop practicing his trade? We know about special cases when an artisan went into bankruptcy or was too incompetent or helpless to work alone. Many artisans of Debrecen were engaged in agriculture in the city's extended adjacent lands.⁴⁷

46 Records of the tanner guild of Debrecen 1599–1825. *Classificatio*. September 17, 1792. HBmL. IX. 35/1.

47 A contemporary journalist reflected on the double activities of artisans: "All residents, with the exception of farmers, have two occupations; the tanner, the cobbler, the salesman, the pastor, the attorney, and the teacher at the same time cultivate their land, sometimes so intensely that their original profession is often secondary." Helmecczy Mihály, ed., "Debrecen állapotjának rövid rajza," *Társalkodó* I. (1837) 35–36.

They purchased farms outside the borders of the city and worked in the fields, in addition to working as members of the guild. Sometimes the wife took over the trade while the husband devoted his energies to cattle breeding and other peasant work. None of this was true of Ladányi. Unquestionably, he was a very talented tanner, and neither in wealth registers nor in the legal documents is there evidence indicating that he pursued work in agriculture.⁴⁸

It is impossible to know why he stopped working as a tanner, but in all probability he thought that he would raise more money and better succeed in life as a casual businessman than as a hard-working artisan. We know for certain that he abandoned his craft sometime in the 1790s, and, as the surviving legal documents of his multiple conflicts with fellow citizens suggest, most likely his earnings came from fishy business dealings.

A Quarrelsome Nobleman

Ladányi started his first legal case against a certain András Nagy, a local salesman, in 1815.⁴⁹ They were involved in a honey hoarding business together, but, as Ladányi argued in court, Nagy had cheated him and refused to give him his share.⁵⁰ Nagy, on the other hand, firmly stated that he had never asked Ladányi to take part in the transaction because Ladányi had no talent and he was also far too vehement and “impetuous.” Still, he required the money for the transaction. Nagy called the tanner a person “who was well-known for his unruly behavior” and “made a judge of himself and took revenge without any consideration of the consequences.” The court rejected Ladányi’s request on the basis of the lack of a written contract. Further evidence about his court cases suggests that he was engaged in several business dealings in which he became entangled in interpersonal conflicts and gained quite a few enemies in Debrecen.

The tanner was unbearably aggressive, a real scandal-maker. In 1816, one of the city representatives began a defamation case against him because he had publicly called him a bastard. Ladányi was sentenced to pay a considerable fine, and the judges, who usually were impartial, used extremely derogatory language

48 On the basis of wealth registers we can trace most of Ladányi’s activities between 1811 and his death in 1822. In this period, he owned the same house at Czegléd Street, he did not work as a tanner, he did not buy land, and he had a tenant only once. Wealth Register of Czegléd Street (1811–1838) HBmL. A. 1011/v, vol. 6.

49 Civic court records, 1760–1850. HBmL IV.A. 1018/c/1815, May 8 and 16, vol. 21, 231–34, 261–62.

50 Ibid.

when talking about him. They described him as “hideous-tongued, blatant, and disobedient.”⁵¹ Undoubtedly, the city authorities were tired of the intractable old man’s disruptive behavior. The Magistrate was especially sensitive to a haughty demeanor and the flaunting of noble origins.⁵² Clearly Erzsébet lived with an irresponsible husband who abused her and all those around him. Enough was enough. In 1821, after 47 years of marriage, she called on a well-known attorney, Gábor Keresztessy, and asked him to draft a petition for divorce.

The brief for Erzsébet was a masterpiece, both in its style and its content. The petition effectively captured the attention of the judges and no less effectively infuriated Ladányi (these two goals went hand in hand for a well-written legal petition at the time). Many of the most successful petitions were first-person narratives created on the popular notion that putting one’s life on display in all its details was automatic proof of virtue and honesty. One was not compelled to address the court, but this could be a very convincing tactic. So, Keresztessy composed a first-person account that studiously imitated the tone of a humiliated, tortured and guileless elderly woman: “A single day has not passed without me suffering from his [Ladányi] violent nature, either because I am chased or because I am tortured. At times, he forced me to take my clothes off and then he laid me down naked on the floor and, standing next to me, beat my naked body with a wooden stick until he finally got tired. I remained half-dead on the floor, he kicked me several times... A year before last Christmas he hurt me so badly with a ripping iron that I lost one of my eyes; other parts of my body have also been injured. Considering that it is impossible to share a house with such an inhuman husband, who has threatened to kill me one day, a year ago I had to flee, and I moved in under someone else’s roof to escape his fury.”⁵³

The opening gambit of the petition was unquestionably dramatic and artistic, at least according to standards at the time. Lawyers attempted to sway the magistrates by appealing to their sense of compassion, indignation, and horror. They therefore composed sensationalistic narratives of the tragic turns of a simple life. These narratives demanded a unique vocabulary consisting of extravagantly excessive terms. Contemporary lawyers almost routinely adorned their briefs with hyperbolic language, and they presented the two parties to the case as moral polar opposites: complete innocence on the one hand, the embodiment of evil on the other.

51 Civic court records, 1760–1850. HBmL IV.A. 1018/c/1816, July 22, vol. 23, 288–89.

52 See more about the conflicts between the city and the nobility: Rácz, *Városlakó*, 152–82.

53 Register of civic legal actions. HBmL IV.A. 1011/b, 21, 1821, 281–82.

Keresztessy's rhetorical efforts harmonized with the everyday realities of early nineteenth-century Debrecen. The most common manifestation of family breakdown, at least according to the evidence presented to the court, was domestic violence. Offended wives and eyewitnesses gave testimony indicating cases of brutal physical torture. Usually violence was directed at women and can simply be described as wife beating. Although men did not have a monopoly on rage, examples of women using violence, even to defend themselves, were rare. While it is impossible to provide a catalogue of the various forms of violence used by men against their wives, the offenses included frequent punches and kicks, beatings with sticks, stones, and whips, and the use of knives or whatever else happened to come to hand, not to mention starvation, imprisonment, the binding of various body parts, and murder. This list, though surely not complete, gives an impression of the many ways in which husbands vented their fury. Legal testimony made frequent mention of women's cries of pain and calls for help, which indicates that physical violence against wives was a common pattern of masculine behavior. Was this really true, or were the varieties of brutality fictive contrivances, little more than a rhetorical strategy used by shrewd attorneys who were seeking favorable rulings for their female clients? The truth is perhaps somewhere between the two extremes. Women may have exaggerated their complaints in their statements to the judges, but at the same time, divorce and criminal documents attest to widespread male violence against women and indicate that the charges that were levelled against husbands and fathers for unusual brutality could not possibly all have been inventions, and indeed may well have been mostly true.

Contemporaries considered wife beating a proper and accepted form of discipline and punishment for a woman's misbehavior. Relatives and neighbors did not interfere in this kind of domestic strife unless the wife's life was in danger. Erzsébet Somogyi complained that her husband struck her so brutally, and "without any true reason," that she needed medical treatment for weeks.⁵⁴

Keresztessy's brief, although somewhat manipulative, was not exaggerated at all. The certificate of pastoral reconciliation, which had to be attached to the petition, confirmed the allegations of brutality. Ladányi acknowledged his wife's accusations: "He confessed to me the cruel acts he had visited on his wife several times. He also declared that he did the right things to his wife when he beat her, so I do believe that there is no hope for improvement."⁵⁵

54 Divorce case of Erzsébet Somogyi and István Czezei. April 29, 1816. HBmL IV.A. 1018/c/40.

55 Ibid. attachment n. 3.

Erzsébet also accused her husband of adultery, saying that “my murderous husband met with bad women and squandered our money ...”⁵⁶ If the plaintiff had a good lawyer and was able to provide satisfactory evidence, these allegations were enough to persuade the court in Debrecen to grant a divorce. In the Ladányis’ case divorce was never granted. A few months after the beginning of the case, Ladányi made a last will and testament, and shortly after that he died.

Last Farewell as Punishment

The tanner’s last will and testament caused as much distress after his death as his presence had during his life. He decided to punish his unruly family members and left the house, which he had purchased together with his wife, to the city. “Forgetting about his fatherly duties,” Ladányi also excluded his daughter, Julianna, and his grandchildren from the inheritance.⁵⁷ His daughter’s behavior had been a great disappointment to him, because, despite his wishes, she had left a suitable and auspicious marriage that he had arranged for her, and after her divorce she had married a second time, taking a lowly pastor as her husband, although her father harshly opposed the union.

Ladányi sent a letter to the council written in a humble tone in which he said that he wanted to make a last will and testament. He named the people he wished to be present for the act. Usually, the chief justice designated five or seven members of the council and neighbors or friends of the person making the will to execute the process. As always, the tanner’s case was exceptional. He had so many enemies in the city that he was cautious about including his friends as members of the testament committee. He knew very well that his wishes ran contrary to the law. In all probability, he must have realized that the members of his family were likely to challenge the testament after his death.

The process of drawing up his will was a *magnum opus*, a melodramatic performance. Ladányi moved those who were present to pity, but at the same time, he remained dignified. He made it clear that he was well aware of his extraordinary skills. He was sitting on his bed when the officials entered the room. He then stood up clumsily and crawled to his trunk. He opened it and produced the major piece of evidence of his family’s cruelty: “a torn and blood-spoiled shirt,” which he had been wearing when his granddaughter’s husband,

⁵⁶ HBmL IVA. 1018/b/1822, May 21, 282.

⁵⁷ Civic court records, 1760–1850. HBmL IVA. 1018/c/1830, February 18, attachment “A.”

Bálint Szetsey, had attacked him. In tears, he described to the officials his family's rogueries and his loneliness, calling his wife and his daughter "disloyal, unjust, and his murderers." Then he got to the point. He declared that he "had always lived in this city in peace and quietly." He also reminded the committee the Magistrate had once rewarded him for his extraordinary talent. To ensure that he would be remembered as an upright citizen, he had chosen to leave his house, which was so dear to his heart, to the city. He gave the medal that he had received from the emperor to the Reformed Church under one specific condition: "the pastors should make a small golden plate of the medal with his name engraved on it...."

As of the first half of the nineteenth century, personal memory became a much more prominent concern among Debrecenians. Testators had a strategy for the afterlife: they made decisions regarding how to be sure their names would be remembered. Some of them established special scholarships in the city's College, others made pious gifts to the Calvinist church. In Ladányi's case, his self-fashioning included stressing his noble origins, to which the family documents attested. Finally, although "they do not deserve it," he was "generous" with his family and forgave them for their hostile behavior. He gave the chattels to his wife and daughter, but "the people who took care of him should get a reasonable portion of that wealth."⁵⁸

A City against a Widow

A few days after making his last will and testament, Ladányi died.⁵⁹ His testament was read aloud in the presence of his widow's new attorney, Sándor Sinay, who "challenged the document as a whole and in all of its details." Sinay argued that the house that Ladányi had left in his will to Debrecen was a common property with his wife, and when the couple had purchased it, they had used Erzsébet's inheritance. The widow initiated a case to revoke the testament, while the representative of the city ordered it finalized.

58 According to Ladányi's last will and testament, the chattels consisted of the furniture of the house, the goods in his case, his bed-clothes, dishes, a wall-clock, a pocket watch, and a silver spoon.

59 He died in his house at Czegléd Street on August 17, 1822, three days after making his last will and testament. Usually, the cause of the death was given in the Register of deaths. In his case there was no comment about why or how he died. Considering the fact that when he made his will he did not seem very ill and could still move around in the house, he may not have died a natural death. However, there is no surviving archival evidence of murder or any other malicious acts against him. Tt.REL. 99-a 88, 223.

A few months earlier Ladányi had tried a very unusual trick to cheat his heirs. He tried to exchange the house for one outside of the city. Alarmed by her husband's plans, Erzsébet had immediately turned to the court and asked the judges to prevent the transaction."⁶⁰

It is hard to imagine that Ladányi, who was current in legal matters and knew how quickly gossip spread in the city, seriously believed that he would be able to pull off this transaction behind Erzsébet's back.⁶¹ Most probably, he hoped that his wife, who was weak and was struggling with financial troubles, would be unable to exercise her legal rights. Even with a lawyer's help, if the real estate were no longer in the city, it would have been much more difficult for her to stake her claim to it. The transaction was registered in the city's real estate records, but since the court ruled in her favor, she could take some satisfaction in the fact that she had hindered her husband's attempt to defraud her at the last moment.

Still, the old woman was in a weak position, because her husband's last will and testament caused her a great deal of trouble. She had to fight against the city, against commissioners with whom, while her husband had been alive, she "had apparently experienced [...] good will." In the legal petition, her attorney, Sinay, marshalled the whole arsenal of eloquent romantic rhetoric.⁶² He reminded the judges that they had previously expressed their compassion for the weak and defenseless woman when she had suffered from her husband's "brutal cruelty." He described Erzsébet's torments in detail, the horrors of her decades-long marriage. He asked the judges not to withhold their compassion now in a time of need that matched her misery during the divorce case. He also reminded the jury that Ladányi had deliberately caused confusion with his last will and testament, which had created the conflict of interest between the city and Erzsébet. Based on the man's history and the evidence against him, Sinay claimed that the will should simply be nullified and that the court should allow the homeless widow to move back into her house. Two days later, Erzsébet received permission to move back home.⁶³ She had every reason to hope that neither she nor her family would ever be disturbed again by any questions concerning its ownership.

60 HBmL IVA. 1018/c/1821, November 22, 581–82.

61 In fact, according to the documents, Ladányi had exchanged the house for "some real estate in a village," but the court invalidated the contract.

62 Ibid. September 19, 1822, 337–38.

63 Ibid. September 21, 1822, 348. Erzsébet provided a copy of the city's real estate register that proved that the house was common property with Ladányi. She could also prove along with her two brothers that she inherited money and a vineyard from her mother, Pálné Diószegi. HBmL IVA. 1018/c/ 1823, 388–89.

This, however, was not the case. Although the court was well aware of Ladányi's malicious intentions, the widow's interests conflicted with the interests of the city. In the end, Erzsébet was allowed to remain in the house for the rest of her life, but the city retained half of its ownership. This essentially meant that after her death the house had to be sold at public auction and the heirs were only entitled to half of the total price. Erzsébet had no other choice than to accept the ruling. Legal restrictions made it impossible to open the same case again, but even had they not, she herself had neither the money nor the energy to renew struggle against the city. She was old and weak and could hardly survive on the money she received from her tenants. She died in 1825 at the age of 75, in a "miserable state,"⁶⁴ according to the register of deaths.

The Stalwart

After her father's death, Julianna, who had also been widowed, decided to leave her own household and move in with her mother.⁶⁵ Her children had already grown up, so this seemed like a rational choice, since it would have been financially wasteful to maintain two separate households for two single women.⁶⁶ After her mother's death, for five peaceful years nothing happened to the house. Finally, in 1830, the Magistrate decided to enforce the ruling. The sale of the house was announced by the beat of a drum, in the typical fashion, and the property was turned over to the buyer who offered the highest price. A local artisan purchased it for a reasonable price that exceeded the opening bid.⁶⁷

Julianna brought a suit against the city immediately. She claimed that nine years earlier, in 1821, Ladányi had violently taken her money and invested a large amount into a precarious brandy business. Since the city now held her father's estate, she contended that it was also responsible for his debts to her. She argued that the business in question caused her immense losses, and now she demanded compensation. She also demanded a huge amount as reconstruction expenses. Once she had moved in with her mother, she had initiated major reconstruction

64 She died as János Ladányi's widow at the age of 75 in her house at Czegléd Street on March 19, 1825. Tt.REL. 00-a 88, 327.

65 This information is in a letter written by János Kálmán, who was born from Julianna's second marriage. He wrote a letter to the city council on March 16, 1830 in which he described his mother's reasons for returning to her parents' house. HBmL IV.A. 1018/c, vol. 56, n. 5, August 26, 1830, attachment "t."

66 Detailed list of the instructions given to the artisans, *ibid.*

67 On February 22, 1830, Sándor Németh bought the house for 3,056 Forints, while the sale price was 3,000. *Ibid.*, attachment "D."

of the old building. Moreover, in an attempt to appeal to people's sense of compassion, she requested funds to cover her mother's funeral expenses.⁶⁸

The next step in the legal procedure was to collect information from the witnesses named by Julianna. She listed people who stated that they knew about the brandy conflict and remembered the scandalous event very well. Julianna gathered enough evidence to prove that she finally had had to sell the brandy for only one-third of the original sum her father had stolen from her. Although Ladányi had promised in front of other people to compensate her, he had never lived up to his word.⁶⁹

She went too far and her apparent greed made the jury irate. For five years after her mother's death, she lived rent-free in a house that was owned by the city. The lawyer representing the city rejected Julianna's request and indignantly lectured her on the "impudence" of her suggestions. Legally, the demands were unfounded because she had already received her maternal inheritance, half of the price of the house.

Again years passed. In 1835, as a final step, Julianna played her last card. She alarmed her adult son by explaining that the case did not seem very promising, and she asked him to address a letter to the jury. Her well-educated son used an age-old trick when he tried to play on the jury's empathy. He described his mother's lonely life in detail, the torments of an atrocious father, the sacrifices she had made for her mother, and in general he convincingly portrayed Julianna's life as a permanent struggle for survival. He argued that she needed the money she was seeking from the city badly. Otherwise, the judges risked committing the cruel sin of sentencing a lonesome and deprived woman to starvation.⁷⁰ The Ladányis' legal skirmishes came to an end in 1836, more than twenty years after János Ladányi had first sought to exact his form of justice in the city court. In their final ruling, the judges rejected all of Julianna's requests for money, stressing that the widow had been disrespectful of the jury's generosity. She should have been satisfied with half of the price of her homestead. Any further demand was unrealistic and surely demonstrated her infinite greed.⁷¹ There is no evidence indicating that either Julianna or her children were involved in any further legal fights in Debrecen.

68 Sándor Borsai's confession, *Ibid.*, attachment n. 1.

69 She refers to confessions in which Ladányi had made such a promise to his daughter.

70 János Kálmán's letter to the Council of Debrecen. HBmL IV.A. 1018/c, vol. 59, n. 7, August 12, 1835, attachment "z."

71 HBmL IV.A. 1018/c. vol. 60, February 22, 1836, 123–24.

Conclusion

My interest in Ladányi's case was piqued by a series of legal conflicts and cat-and-mouse games that he played with his family and the city authorities. I had been working with last wills and testaments from Debrecen, collecting statistical data from the documents in order to study the mental changes of the Calvinist burghers. In the meantime, however, I began to understand the limitations of the quantitative approach. János Ladányi appeared in my database as an old, married male who had one daughter, who was a Calvinist by religion, a tanner by profession, and a nobleman, and whose most important decision was to will his house to the Magistrate. Shortly after reading about the circumstances of his decision, I realized that by forcing his life into a column of figures I lost useful information about his motives and I misinterpreted his acts. After all, he was not a generous donator, but a vengeful Debrecenian tanner who wanted to vex his wife and daughter, and he was fairly successful in doing so.

In fact, preparing a last will and testament was not a particularly widespread practice among Debrecenians. Although this was one of the most important privileges of the city, granted to Debrecen as early as the fifteenth century, until the mid-1700s it remained rather sporadic. Even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was not common. No more than 5 percent of the adult population prepared written wills.⁷² Although it was not obligatory to provide a reason for making a will, most people explicitly named their reasons for doing so. The overwhelming majority of Debrecenian testators were obsessed with potential conflicts among their successors, and included clauses and conditions in their wills to avoid fights over their wealth. Many will-makers stated that they actually decided to leave behind a written testament because they thought that the family members and relatives would not be able to agree about how to divide up their belongings. Most burghers only referred to these possible "battles" in general, but some explained their family circumstances in detail and named the potential enemies. Mihály Csonka, a farmer, declared in his last will and testament that he had had two wives, that he had living children from both, and that he wished "to avoid competition and litigation" among them.⁷³ Csonka tried to explain his circumstances as clearly as possible, and he described in detail what he had accumulated with his first and second wives, how they had

⁷² Tárkány Szűcs Ernő, *Magyar jogi népszokások* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981), 727.

⁷³ Mihály Csonka's last will and testament, September 6, 1799, 1035.

raised the children, how much they had spent on them and what they had already received in their adult years. These explanations served as justifications for his decisions. Meticulous testators enlisted not only the members of their nuclear families, but also their cousins, uncles, aunts, brothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law, not to mention other legatees, such as friends, servants, journeymen, neighbors, mentors, doctors and lawyers. The most common reason for making a will was to prevent “disturbances,” and other factors (such as war, epidemics, illness, old age or enlistment) were mentioned much less frequently. What should one think of this rhetoric, that placed such emphasis on order and peace?

It should not be taken for granted. Reading the testaments more closely, one has the impression that conflict-management rhetoric was only a “facade” and actually concealed the real motivation of will-making: in many cases the testament served to reward and to punish surviving family members, relatives and other relations.⁷⁴ Most testators made decisions that were favorable to one or more heirs, while leaving significantly less to others or even completely excluding them from the inheritance. These acts did not prevent conflicts, they generated them. We can identify various grounds for privileging or punishing heirs that were a mix of emotional causes and rational considerations.

Those children—both sons and daughters—who “showed cold behavior” and neglected their parents were more likely to receive less of the inheritance. Parents often accused their adult children of “never showing up on the doorstep anymore,” although they provided them with financial means for their professions and weddings.⁷⁵ The archival sources suggest that emotional alienation had the biggest role in the decisions, but other factors could also play an important part. Testators kept personal offences in evidence and often mentioned them in wills, which were tools with which they could inflict punishment for what they saw as improper behavior. István Dobszai complained that his elder sons did not respect him and that once one of them had even struck his beard.⁷⁶ As a

74 The statements I make in the following paragraphs are based on an examination of 1,000 last wills and testaments drawn up between 1700 and 1875. They include about one-third of the last wills and testaments made by Debrecenian burghers in this period.

75 István Munkácsi used this reasoning in his testament. He stated that although he had five children, four of them refused to take care of him and they did not even knock on his door. “Although all of them were his own children, some behaved as if they were stepchildren, never helped him with anything, except his daughter, Mária, János Kováts’s wife, who had been taking care of him for 17 years, and she treated him properly ... lifted and washed his body, gave him food, while the others did not show up and did not even give him a glass of water.” István Munkácsi’s last will and testament, September 20, 1792, 895.

76 István Dobszai’s last will and testament, February 8, 1738, 133.

consequence, the aggressive child was excluded from the inheritance. In addition to physical violence, other forms of abuse were mentioned in the complaints, including verbal abuse and theft. István Horváth had two adult daughters. The younger, Erzsébet, “once called him a bad father and old man in front of the maid.”⁷⁷ Her punishment was severe: she did not get a penny of her father’s possessions. An old widow, Anna Oláh, left her soldier son nothing because “when he enlisted in the army, he stole 70 Forints from her.”⁷⁸

Parents rewarded children who had learned trades, built careers, and accumulated wealth. They scathingly commented on half-wit, alcoholic, vagrant, and prodigal offspring, who received less than their siblings because of their misbehavior. In most cases, testators did not consider the causes of successes and failures, but simply punished “losers” by leaving them trifling amounts or excluding them entirely from the family wealth.⁷⁹ Deviant children were regarded as unworthy of “parental benevolence,” both because they were unable to attain much in life and because they were a source of shame for their families. Idiots got less or nothing, and they were often left in the care of their healthy family members. Sons were punished for frequenting pubs and daughters for immoral sexual behavior. János Csarnai, a potter, endlessly grumbled about his children. His sons were journeymen, but he could not expect much of them (so he lamented), because they spent more time in inns than in the workshop. His daughter, Erzsébet, stole from him several times and, even worse, wasted her life in taverns, engaging in “sinful conversation with strangers, causing her father much bitterness and pain.”⁸⁰

Of all the possible sins a child could commit against his or her parents, entering a match that did not have the approval of the parents was the worst. Péter Mélius, the city’s most influential pastor in the sixteenth century, defined marriage as the following: “Marriage is a contract that is dependent on the free and legal consent of the uniting parties and their parents.”⁸¹ By the nineteenth century, parents had somewhat less influence on their children’s decisions to marry, their approval remained an important consideration. An advantageous

77 István Horváth’s last will and testament, July 20, 1744, 226.

78 Anna Oláh’s last will and testament, August 8, 1736, 122.

79 Weak or sick, disabled children could not count on an inheritance from their parents. Their share was mostly left under the supervision of a sibling or relative.

80 János Csarnai’s last will and testament, March 6, 1794, 920.

81 Cited in Bucsay Mihály, “Méliusz teológiája kátéja tükrében,” in Bucsay Mihály–Czeglédy Sándor–Esze Tamás et al., *A második helvét hitvallás Magyarországon és Méliusz életműve* (Budapest: A Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztálya, 1967), 305.

match could secure the family more wealth and stability, and children who resisted their parents' instructions could suffer exclusion. John Gillis has argued that early modern parents regarded the marriage of one of their children as a capital investment;⁸² in nineteenth-century Debrecen this perception was still dominant. Although in the early 1800s Sámuel Diószegi, the protestant pastor and professor of the city's College, preached that parental coercion was the worst possible foundation of a marriage, in everyday practice fathers and mothers continued to meddle in their children's affairs, and they used the testaments as a means of enforcing their will.⁸³ János Kovács's widow openly blackmailed her son: "if he does not marry that girl from Somogy with whom he had a secret relationship against his mother's and relatives' will, he will receive 40 Forints as a reward; if, however, he marries her, he gets nothing for his wedding."⁸⁴

Testators also mentioned their spouses in their wills. Although wives and husbands received less attention than sons and daughters, the distribution of an inheritance could serve as the pronouncement of final judgment on the spouses' behavior. Debrecenians made a very clear distinction between good and bad marriages; from the testaments we can more or less reconstruct the criteria of both. In a good marriage the spouses lived together peacefully and diligently accumulated wealth. In this case, the surviving mate could at least expect access to common properties for a lifetime; if there were no children, he or she could count on full property rights. When the union was less successful, the will was often written in a bitter tone and dwelt on the everyday details of the bad marriage, resembling more at times a petition for divorce than a last will and testament. An artisan, György Horváth, took five wives in the course of his long life. When making his last will and testament he had an opportunity to compare them to one another. While his second mate was "hard-working and modest," his last spouse was a rover who neglected him in his final days: "she does nothing but take her baby in her arms, and she stays out of the house with him all day."⁸⁵ She was excluded from any inheritance by her husband for her misbehavior. Many people punished their spouses in their testaments. The causes varied, but drinking, laziness, prodigality and infidelity were the most common.

82 John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse. British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 86.

83 Diószegi, *Erköltsi*.

84 Last will and testament of János Kovács's widow, July 26, 1783. HBmL IV.A. 1011/z, 724. Somogy is a county in southwestern Hungary.

85 György Horváth's last will and testament, November 17, 1808, 1274.

One might be tempted to ask at this point whether Ladányi's will was, after all, really so extraordinary. The fact that so many people used their last will and testament to exact vengeance or bestow rewards suggests that his ploy was not exceptional. He adhered to an old and widespread tradition by punishing the members of his family, especially his daughter, Julianna, who married against his will, and his wife Erzsébet, who may well have been acting on her daughter's advice when she initiated divorce proceedings against him. The testament is a formal legal action, but also a social practice which serves to address private conflicts.

The tanner consciously induced and cannily seized on the conflict of interest between the city and his family, maximizing the avenues of revenge. His story also allows us to pose questions about the authority and role of a last will and testament, and it offers insights into a historical phenomenon usually overlooked by social historians who tend to end their analysis where, one might suggest, they should begin. They interpret testaments as documents that settle earthly matters, taking for granted the idea that the words of the testament, cloaked in legal authority, are a terminal point, and not the beginning of new conflicts between the surviving heirs.⁸⁶ Their focus on the last will and testament as a reflection of social reality blinds these historians to the underlying tensions, motivations, and goals of the testator and ultimately to the aftermath of human conflict. Closer study of inheritance legal cases offers new perspectives on people's everyday lives and daily squabbles. These questions remind us that the dead have an afterlife in human affairs and that death does not remove people from the stage of history. We can explore a lively human space filled with tensions and hostility on behalf of the successors.

The analysis of the tanner's will and the subsequent legal battles is an account of an exceptional person's life and his influence on those who were unfortunate enough to be members of his family. The story extends beyond the borders of

86 See for example: Jacques Chiffolleau, *La compatibilité de l'au-delà: Les hommes, la mort, et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du moyen âge, vers 1320-vers 1480*. In *Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome*, vol. 47 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1980); Samuel Kline Cohn, *Death and Property in Siena, 1205–1800. Strategies for the Afterlife* (Baltimore–London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Samuel Kline Cohn, *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death. Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy* (Baltimore–London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Steven Epstein, *Wills and Wealth in Medieval Genoa, 1150–1250* (Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 1984); Hoffman, Philip T., "Wills and Statistics: Tobit Analysis and the Counter Reformation in Lyon," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17 (1984): 813–34; Michel Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIII^e siècle. Les attitudes devant la mort d'après les clauses des testaments* (Paris: Pion, 1973).

Ladányi's personal narrative and opens avenues of further investigation into the social structures, legal practices, marriage and divorce, cultural values, conflict and solidarity among the burghers of Debrecen. This case study allows us to pose questions about how Debrecenian burghers tried to fashion their lives in unexpected and extraordinary ways and how they used legal means to do this.

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Sándor Nagy

One Empire, Two States, Many Laws

Matrimonial Law and Divorce in the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy¹

Following the Compromise of 1867 between the Habsburg House and the parties pressing for Hungarian independence, the territory of Austria and the territory of Hungary constituted separate jurisdictions, thus it is not surprising that matrimonial law developed differently in the newly sovereign Kingdom of Hungary. In Austria the 1811 civil code specifically circumscribed the right of Catholics, who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population and were only able to “separate from bed and board,” and non-Catholics to dissolve the bonds of marriage. In contrast, in Hungary as of the middle of the nineteenth century Catholics were also able to dissolve the bonds of marriage. In this article I examine the evolution of matrimonial law as well as the influence of the economic and social transformations of the nineteenth century on divorce rates and the spread of divorce. The introduction of the matrimonial law of 1895 and the easing of divorce proceedings in 1907 were direct causes of the steep rise in the already higher rates of divorce in Hungary around the turn of the century. While the higher divorce rates in the larger cities were influenced by industrialization and urbanization, in rural areas, where the rise in divorce rates was not negligible, other factors must be sought. After the adoption of the Hungarian matrimonial law, the number of divorces among Catholics grew and the number of divorce proceedings initiated by members of the lower classes, in particular peasants and agricultural workers, also rose. In general, the data indicate cultural divergences in the practice of divorce and reveal the significance of the differences between the lifestyle customs and legal traditions of different denominations on the one hand and on the other the importance of efforts on the part of the state to reconcile these differences and foster social integration.

Keywords: matrimonial law, divorce rates, denominational difference, urbanization, social integration, nationalism, Austro–Hungarian Monarchy

The rise in divorce rates in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is one of the most interesting questions in the history of the family as an institution. How is it possible that while divorce was practiced almost exclusively among Protestants and only in unusual cases up until the nineteenth century, over the course of

¹ This essay was made possible by the Balassi Institute – Hungarian Scholarship Board, which provided a fellowship for residence at the Collegium Hungaricum in Vienna in the summer of 2005, the spring of 2012, and the autumn of 2013.

the next 200 years divorce gained legal acceptance in almost all of the states of the Western world and indeed by the end of the twentieth century had become almost familiar (as it were).¹ While contemporaries frequently blamed the moral decline of the family for the rise in divorce rates, sociologists and, in their wake, historians have emphasized the importance of economic and social factors. According to the theory of modernization, which gained ground in the decades immediately following World War II, the social structures that existed prior to the nineteenth century, which were necessarily founded on stable family households, were transformed by industrialization. Family bonds weakened and the nuclear family, consisting only of parents and children, became a more characteristic phenomenon. Parallel to this alleged shift, individual preferences began to play a role in the selection of a partner that would have been inconceivable earlier, and people's expectations regarding marriage also grew, making marriages less stable and in the end leading to the gradual and accelerating rise in the number and proportion of divorces.²

150 years of research that have been pursued in the social sciences and the work that has been done by historians over the course of the past few decades notwithstanding, we still have only a vague sense of the reasons that have led to the current state of affairs regarding matrimonial law and the institution of marriage.³ Modernization theory has proven useful in understanding social processes, but at the same time it has made us aware of apparently unresolvable contradictions as well. Among these, the most important is perhaps the fact that modernization by no means caused a consistent rise in divorce rates outside the Western world,⁴ which throws into question the causal relationship between economic transformations and changes in the nature of family relationships or rises in divorce rates. In a historical context something that did not as yet seem problematic with reference to the time of the origin of the modernization theory, namely whether the history of divorce can be blurred with that of the

2 William J. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 27–86. Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder. A History of Divorce in Western Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 361–402, 591–600.

3 Phillips, *Putting Asunder*, 582–83. Lotta Vikström, Frans Poppel, and Bart Van de Putte, “New Light on the Divorce Transition,” *Journal of Family History* 36 (2011): 107–9.

4 William J. Goode, *World Changes in Divorce Patterns* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 214–50. Japan is a paradigmatic example. In the era of capitalist development leading up to World War II, divorce rates continuously declined. See Harald Fuess, “Als Japan die Welt anführte. ‘Das Land der schnellen Eheschließung und der schnellen Scheidung,’ 1870–1940,” *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens e. V.* 171–172 (2002): 75–92.

dissolution of marriages, and what divorce rates themselves actually signify, has also been questioned. To cite a classic example, the difference in divorce rates in England and France at the turn of the century was striking. Divorce was far more common in France than in England. Gail Savage poses the question, “How is it that at the turn of the century a comparatively rural Catholic nation should have so many more divorces than a Protestant nation that was the most urbanized and industrialized in the world?”⁵ Her answer, that the legal system can effectively hamper or facilitate the spread of divorce, may be part of the explanation, but the problem makes clear the need for further study of the social uses of alternative solutions, both legal and otherwise.⁶

If we must be willing for the moment to do without a comprehensive theory that explains the general if varied rise in divorce rates, we nonetheless stand to glean some insights into the phenomenon from a comparative study of states and legal systems in which one discerns not only contradictory tendencies, but also similarities that may shed light on underlying causes for these divergences. An examination of trends in the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy (a state that was the creation of the Compromise of 1867 between the Habsburg House and Hungary) may prove particularly illuminating. A comparison of matrimonial law in Hungary and Austria is revealing not simply because the two states shared a close history and were indeed successors to the same political body (thus one confronts fewer methodological problems), but also because matrimonial laws in the territory of the Monarchy (which was a distinctive political formation in which two states shared power) were both a sign and symptom of the cultural and religious diversity of the population and the attempts of the state to bridge these differences. Thus, while the rise in the number and proportion of divorces corresponded to the general upward trend, the cultural and political-legal factors that either furthered or hindered this rise (and that in the case of other nation-states are perhaps more difficult to discern) are more easily distinguished.

5 Gail Savage, “Divorce and the Law in England and France prior to the First World War,” *Journal of Social History* 21 (Spring 1988): 500.

6 Olive Anderson, “State, Civil Society and Separation in Victorian Marriage,” *Past and Present* 163 (1999): 161–201. Samuel Pyett Menefee, *Wives for Sale. An Ethnographic Study of British Popular Divorce* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981); Ginger S. Frost, *Living in Sin: Cohabiting as Husband and Wife in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), 96–122.

Roads to(ward) Divorce

Austria and Hungary,⁷ the two constituent yet legally separated states of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, were both heirs to the reforms in matrimonial law of Emperor Joseph II, the Marriage Patent of 1783 (according to which marriage was a civil contract, not a religious institution). In the periods of increased centralization (1780–1790, 1850–1860), the differences between the two systems of matrimonial law disappeared, or rather diminished significantly, but in time they became determining. In the Austrian territories the civil code that was introduced in 1811 (the *Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) gave considerable momentum to the efforts to secularize matrimonial law. In the lands of the Hungarian Crown, however, the system of denominational laws was restored following the death of Joseph II, albeit with significant modifications, and state matrimonial law was introduced only a century later with a law that was passed in 1894.⁸ Originally both systems permitted divorce only in the case of people who were not Catholics. Catholics, who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population, were only allowed to separate, not legally divorce. This similarity in the substantive law changed, however, following the Compromise of 1867, when Hungary introduced laws permitting converted Catholics to divorce. In the Austrian provinces (what is referred to as Cisleithania) the tendency was in the opposite direction. Through the Catholic impediment to marriage the rights of the Protestant spouses of converted Catholics and in general of divorced Protestants were curtailed (they were not allowed to remarry or could only marry a non-Catholic).⁹ These diverging tendencies were topped by the matrimonial law

7 My use of the term “Hungary” in this essay does not include Croatia, which constituted a distinct jurisdiction. Regrettably, there are neither contemporary statistics nor the necessary historical inquiries for an examination of demographic shifts related to divorce in Croatia. Until the middle of the nineteenth century Hungarian matrimonial law was in effect. After this essentially the Austrian matrimonial law of 1856–1868 was adopted. See Ljiljana Dobrovšak, “Ženidbeno (bračno) pravo u 19. stoleću u Hrvatskoj,” *Croatia Christiana Periodica* 29 (2005): 77–104. An examination of demographic shifts in Bosnia, which was occupied and then annexed by the Monarchy, is also not possible due to a similar dearth of sources.

8 1894: Statute XXXI in *Magyar Törvénytár. 1894–1895. évi törvénygyűjtemek*, ed. Dezső Márkus (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1897), 174–93. To date, the best survey of the evolution of matrimonial law in Hungary is the general part of the ministerial justification of the proposed law. *Az 1892. évi február hó 18-ára hirdetett Országgyűlés Főrendi Házának irományai*, vol. 8 (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1894), 201–64. With respect to Austria: Werner Ogris, “Die Rechtsentwicklung in Cisleithanien 1848–1918,” in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, ed. Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, vol. 2, *Verwaltung und Rechtswesen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975), 591–93.

9 Ulrike Harmat, *Ehe auf Widerruf? Der Konflikt um das Eherecht in Österreich 1918–1938* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999), 17–24.

that was introduced in Hungary in 1895. With the exception of Croatia, it made divorce legal for any Hungarian citizen, regardless of his or her denomination.

A comparison of the divorce rates in Austria and Hungary at the turn of the century clearly illustrates the significance of the differences in the two systems of matrimonial law (Figure 1).¹⁰

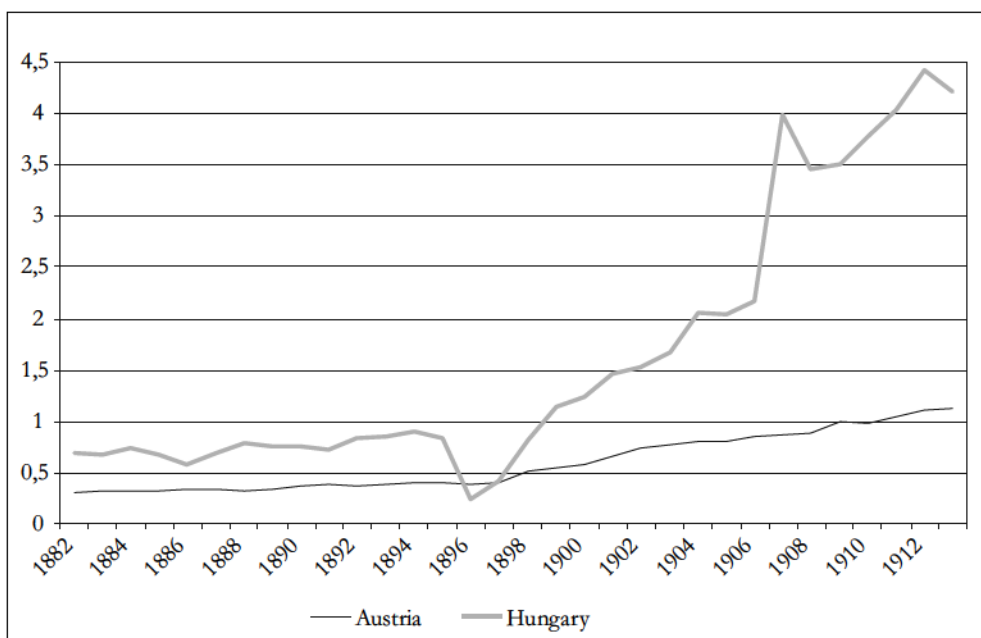


Figure 1. Crude divorce rates (divorces per 10,000)

10 Figure 1 and the published statistics on which this essay is based: Karl Hugelmann, “Die Ehelösungen in Oesterreich in den Jahren 1882 und 1883,” *Statistische Monatschrift* 11 (1885): 1–21; *Oesterreichische Statistik. Die Ergebnisse der Civilrechtspflege in den im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreichen und Ländern im Jahre* [1884–1909] (Vienna: K. K. Statistischen Central-Commission, [1888–1912]); *Österreichisches Statistisches Handbuch* [1910–1913] (Vienna: K. K. Statistischen Central-Commission, [1912–1916]); *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien für das Jahr* [1884–1913] (Vienna: Verlag des Wiener Magistrates, [1885–1916]); Tivadar Szél, *A budapesti házasságok* (Budapest: n.p., n.d. [1935]), 302; *A M. Kir. Kormány* [1901–1913] *évi működéséről és az ország közállapotairól szóló jelentés és statisztikai évkönyv* (Budapest: [1902–1915]); *Budapest Székes Főváros Statisztikai Évkönyve* [1894–1912] (Budapest: Budapest Székes Főváros Statisztikai Hivatala, [1896–1914]). It is worth noting that I am consistently including among the divorces in Austria the “separations from bed and board” and the annulments, which because of restrictions on research on the ecclesiastical archival material is only possible in the case of Hungary as of 1895, at which time the number of these kinds of matrimonial cases dwindled to virtually nothing. It is also important to note that the raw figures for divorce in Hungary before 1896 were much higher.

As the chart illustrates, divorce rates in Hungary were almost always higher than in Austria. A significant rise in both took place around 1900, but while this rise was considerably less abrupt in Austria thanks to the stability of the legal framework there, in Hungary the legal changes resulted in a far more dramatic growth in the divorce rates. In the wake of the easing of restrictions on divorce in 1895 and the elimination of automatic appeal in divorce cases in 1907, divorce rates in Hungary were proportionally among the highest in Europe in the years leading up to World War I.¹¹

As in the case of France and England, this comparison again throws into question one of the basic assumptions of the modernization theory. How is it that in Hungary, which was considerably less industrialized and held on to denominational matrimonial law for a much longer period of time, divorce rates were higher than in Austria, which was more economically developed and had secularized matrimonial laws as part of its civil code? The answer, of course, is obvious: divorce, which in 1868 was made possible in Hungary for converted Catholics and as of 1895 for every Hungarian citizen, was much more appealing than the institution of separation which was only available for the majority of the population in Austria. While the rise in divorce rates (both in absolute terms and proportionally) in Austria clearly indicates a growing social demand, the question remains: how is it that steps were taken towards the liberalization of the institution of divorce in Hungary a half-century before the secularization of matrimonial law, at a time when denominational laws were still in effect, while in Austria this did not take place until the Austrian state actually ceased to exist (the dissolution of the bonds of marriage was permitted in general only following the annexation of the country by Nazi Germany in 1938).

The divergent tendencies of the evolution of matrimonial law in Hungary and Austria were undoubtedly due in part to the different confessional structures of the two populations and the greater importance in Hungary of non-Catholic denominations for which divorce was permissible. At the turn of the century, the population in Austria was 80 percent Roman Catholic and 12 percent Greek Catholic. Only roughly 5 percent was Jewish, 2 percent was Protestant, and 2 percent Orthodox. In Hungary the majority was also Catholic, but Roman Catholics comprised only 49 percent of the population, while 11 percent was Greek Catholic, 5 percent was Jewish, 13 percent was Orthodox, 7

11 On the international comparison of divorce rates, see Phillips, *Putting Asunder*, 585. For ratios of newly concluded marriages, see Béla Tomka, *Családfejlődés a 20. századi Magyarországon és Nyugat-Európában: konvergencia vagy divergencia?* (Budapest: Osiris, 2000), 127.

percent was Lutheran, and 14 percent was Calvinist.¹² The importance of these differences, however, should not be overstated, since in Hungary as in Austria matrimonial law was dominated by canon law until the middle of the nineteenth century, supported on the institutional level by the courts of the Catholic Church, which was regarded as the *avita religio* and enjoyed a special relationship with the Habsburg House. It is worth noting, for example, that until the introduction of reforms by Joseph II, the sphere of authority of the Catholic ecclesiastical courts extended in principle to the affairs of non-Catholic couples as well.

The distinctive confessional structure of the population in Hungary really became important towards the end of the eighteenth century. Following the death of Joseph II, the National Assembly that was held in 1790 rehabilitated in defense of the old constitution, which had been ignored by the late emperor, the rights of the “accepted” religions (*receptae religiones*), which alongside the Catholic Church also included by then the Orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Calvinist Church. This included jurisdiction in matrimonial affairs, which in Austria remained within the sphere of the state.¹³ The only reason that the establishment of the planned Protestant courts in Hungary was never implemented and matrimonial cases among Protestants remained within the sphere of authority of the county and urban courts (which were still under the influence of the Estates and made rulings based on the Marriage Patent of Joseph II) was that the Hungarian law was shelved in Vienna.¹⁴ The noble reform movement that began to emerge in the National Assemblies held in the 1830s, which pressed, in the name of liberal and national ideals, for a transformation of the legal system and greater independence for Hungary, saw not the defense of ecclesiastical rights, but rather national integration and the creation of civil society as its primary goal. Prominent figures of the movement took a stand in support of the freedom of religion and equality among the various denominations. In practice, this meant curbing the written and unwritten

12 Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. 4, *Die Konfessionen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985), Tabelle 3. (Die Konfessionelle Gliederung der Bevölkerung Cisleithaniens 1869–1910), and 282–83. *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása. Első rész: A népesség főbb adatai községek és népesebb puszták szerint* (Budapest: Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1912), 8.

13 The 1790: Statute XXVI, point 11 proclaims the reassertion of the jurisdiction of the Church in marital affairs. Dezső Márkus and Kálmán Csiky, eds., *Magyar Törvénytár. 1740–1835. évi törvénygyűjtemek* (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1901), 175–77.

14 Kornél Sztelho, *A házassági elválás joga Magyarországon és az ország erdélyi részeiben* (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1890), 32–33.

prerogatives of the Catholic Church, a supra-national institution that enjoyed a kind of alliance with the dynasty. Regarding the question of matrimonial law, it meant restrictions on canon law and the assertion of the newly introduced liberal legal measures.

Fundamentally, the fact that with respect to the legal acceptance of divorce there was a “breakthrough” in the Hungarian half of the empire in the middle of the nineteenth century in that every Hungarian citizen, including converted Catholics, could seek a divorce, was a consequence of this political situation. The key element of this was the liberalization of religious conversion, which was established in a law passed in 1844.¹⁵ While the goal of the law was not to facilitate divorce, but rather only to make the free practice of religion a legal reality, the measure nonetheless had this as one of its consequences. In the case of a husband or wife who had converted to a Protestant denomination, when arriving at a ruling in a case of divorce the county and city courts took into consideration the person’s denomination at the time of the submission of the request for a divorce, not his or her denomination at the time of the marriage, and therefore were able to grant a divorce in spite of the Catholic belief in the inviolability of marriage.¹⁶ This was all brought to an end by the defeat of the 1848 Revolution, since in 1853 the Austrian civil code was temporarily introduced in Hungary, but after the reassertion of the Hungarian legal system in 1861 and then the passage of new laws in 1868, the courts not only revived these practices but even built on them. Since the Hungarian laws of 1868 specified that “the acts committed by a convert following his conversion should be judged by the teachings of the Church to which he has converted, and the principles of the Church he has left impose no obligations on him,” the Hungarian courts would even grant a divorce in cases in which only one of the spouses had converted, while the other had remained part of the Catholic Church.¹⁷

Thus when the Hungarian state resolved, at the end of the nineteenth century, to make questions of matrimonial law entirely the prerogative of the state, it was absolutely clear that divorce would become a matter of civil law, and that the Catholic dogmas would constitute no obstacles to it. The domination of the Austrian civil code, in contrast, ensured a durable legal framework

15 1844: Statute III, paragraphs 5–11. Dezső Márkus, ed., *Magyar Törvénytár. 1836–1868. évi törvénygyűjteménye* (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1896), 199.

16 Sztrehlo, *A házassági elválás joga*, 87.

17 1868: Statute XLVIII Addressed the question of divorce in cases of mixed marriages. *Magyar Törvénytár 1836–1868*, 500–1. On conversions and their legal force, see 1868: Statute LIII, paragraphs 1–8, *ibid.*, 501.

which, with a brief interruption of an ultramontan course taken by the neo-absolutist regime in 1856 to 1868, when the matrimonial affairs of the Empire's Catholic subjects were relegated to the competence of the ecclesiastical courts, lasted for more than a century. Furthermore it preserved the various systems of different church dogma, which it had adapted and incorporated into the civil code. Thus while Jews and non-Catholic Christians were able to divorce (if according to different rules), the 111th paragraph of the Austrian civil code contained the following stipulation: "The valid bond of marriage between two people of the Catholic faith can only be broken by the death of one of the two. This bond is indissoluble even if at the time of the marriage only one of the two was Catholic."¹⁸ The liberal political initiatives of the 1860s and the social movements that began to gather steam at the turn of the century (and had the reform of matrimonial law as one of their goals) were unable to alter these basic principles, even if, as of the middle of the nineteenth century, it became ever more common for people to circumvent the law (and even if by the first years of the twentieth century this was not unheard of among people belonging even to the highest circles).¹⁹

The Frequency of Divorce: Traditions and Modernity

A hasty overview of the evolution of matrimonial law clearly reveals that over the course of the nineteenth century denominational belonging was of tremendous significance for married couples in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The right to marry or divorce depended on the denominations of the spouses, whether the case was held in a Church forum or a secular forum. There were no exceptions to this until the practice changed entirely with the enactment of the new matrimonial law in Hungary on October 1, 1895. This law introduced marriage and divorce as civil institutions and brought matrimonial cases under

18 *Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch für die gesammten Deutschen Erbländer der Oesterreichischen Monarchie*, I. Theil (Vienna: k. k. Hof und Staatsdruckerey, 1811), 41.

19 Waltraud Heindl, "Aspekte der Ehescheidung in Wien um 1900. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten der Erforschung des Problems," *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 33 (1980): 218–46. Harmat, *Ehe auf Widerruf?*, 24–72. Margarete Grandner and Ulrike Harmat, "Begrenzt verliebt. Gesetzliche Ehehindernisse und die Grenze zwischen Österreich und Ungarn," in *Liebe und Widerstand. Ambivalenzen historischer Geschlechterbeziehungen*, ed. Ingrid Bauer et al. (Vienna-Cologne-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), 287–304; Ulrike Harmat, "Divorce and Remarriage in Austria-Hungary: The Second Marriage of Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf," *Austrian History Yearbook* 32 (2001): 69–103; Sándor Nagy, "Osztrák válások Erdélyben 1868–1895. Otto Wagner erdélyi házassága," *Fons. Forráskutatás és Történeti Segédanyagok* 14 (2007): 359–428.

the purview of the state. Social scientists have not yet examined the ways in which contradictory secularization (in the case of Austria) or belated secularization (in the case of Hungary) influenced the matrimonial or legal behavior of people of different denominations in practice, and the extent to which these processes of secularization contributed to or slowed the rises in divorce rates in different parts of the empire, parallel to the economic and social transformations of the nineteenth century.

If one compares the published statistics on marriage with the denominational composition of the population, in both Austria and Hungary people who belonged to non-Catholic denominations (which had permitted divorce for centuries) were the most active. In the Austrian lands, even if we draw no distinction between divorce and separation, people belonging to the religious minorities (Protestants, Orthodox, Jews), which represented only 8 percent of the population, accounted for 15–18 percent of the divorces. The percentage of Roman Catholics who had “separated from bed and board” corresponded to their percentage of the overall population (80 percent), while the percentage among Greek Catholics fell short of their proportion to the entire population. While one can no longer speak of legal distinctions between the denominations in Hungary following the enactment of the matrimonial law in 1895, in the period between 1898 and 1913 non-Catholics still accounted for 64 percent of the divorces, while they represented only 40 percent of the total population. One discerns the influence of religious proscriptions against divorce in the fact that Roman Catholics accounted for only 32 percent of the total number of divorces and Greek Catholics only 4 percent. In the period under examination the denominational composition of the demographic trend (in other words the rise in divorce rates) was influenced (somewhat surprisingly) only by the growing weight of the Orthodox population living in the peripheral areas of the Monarchy. In Austria their contribution grew from a mere 1 percent at the end of the nineteenth century to 4 percent by 1910²⁰ and in Hungary from 4 percent in 1900 to 21 percent in 1913.

The attitudes of the various denominations regarding divorce, however, were by no means uniform. The denominational composition of the population and the divergent political and legal traditions and denominational “popular customs,” all of which varied from region to region, resulted in significant differences in

20 As of 1910 the statistics on divorces in Austria do not indicate the number of divorces among Orthodox separately, so it is not possible to assess the potential increase in their significance. *Oesterreichische Statistik, Die Ergebnisse der Civilrechtspflege* [1884–1909], *Österreichisches Statistisches Handbuch* [1910–1913]

the practical attitudes towards matrimonial law, even among groups of people belonging to the same Church. Thus the regional differences in divorce rates (Figure 2) were not simply products of divergent denominational structures. Transylvania, a province in the southeastern corner of the Monarchy that had the highest divorce rates, is a revealing example. The Hungarian statistics do not provide a breakdown of the divorce rates on the basis of denomination, but we can nonetheless state with confidence that the high rate of divorce was due to the remarkably high proportion of people belonging to non-Catholic denominations (58 percent). This does not explain the high divorce rate entirely, however, since the non-Catholic population of the neighboring region bordering the River Tisza was just as high (57 percent), but the divorce rate was considerably lower.²¹ The phenomenon was basically due to the special position of Transylvania and the wide-ranging political and legal autonomy that the non-Catholic Churches enjoyed there. In the Transylvanian Principality, which became independent from Habsburg-ruled Royal Hungary at the time of the Ottoman conquest, the ideas of the Reformation found fertile ground, bringing with them an early version of the notion of religious tolerance. Thus the Counter-Reformation that swept through the Hungarian Kingdom in the seventeenth century did not gain much ground in Transylvania, which remained something of a bastion of Protestantism, even after the province became part of the Habsburg Empire at end of the century. The Catholic rulers essentially respected the distinctive political setup in Transylvania, one essential part of which was the maintenance of the rights of the “accepted” denominations (Lutheran, Calvinist, Unitarian, Roman Catholic, and as of 1848 Orthodox). As of the sixteenth century the rights of the Churches included purview of issues pertaining to marriages,²² and this was suspended only briefly (for a few years) in the wake of the reforms of Joseph II.²³

21 A.M. Kir. Kormány [1901–1913]. *évi működéséről*.

22 Réka Kiss, *Egyház és közösség a kora újkorban. A Külkülli Református Egyházmegye 17–18. századi iratainak tükrében* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2011), 99–145; Sztéhló, *A házassági elválás joga*, 37–44.

23 The 1791: Statute XXXIV in Transylvania reestablished the jurisdiction of the Churches in the province. See Dezső Márkus, Sándor Kolosvári, and Kelemen Óváti, eds., *Magyar Törvénytár. 1540–1848. évi erdélyi törvények* (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1900), 529. Later the enactment of the Austrian civil code did not affect the Protestant Church courts: “Kaiserliches Patent vom 29. Mai 1853,” *Reichs-Gesetz-Blatt für das Kaiserthum Oesterreich*, 31(1853) (Stück. 7, Juni 1853). Following the Compromise of 1867 cases involving marriages between Protestants in Transylvania remained within the sphere of authority of the Churches. 1868: Statute LIV, paragraph 22, *Magyar Törvénytár 1836–1868*, 511.

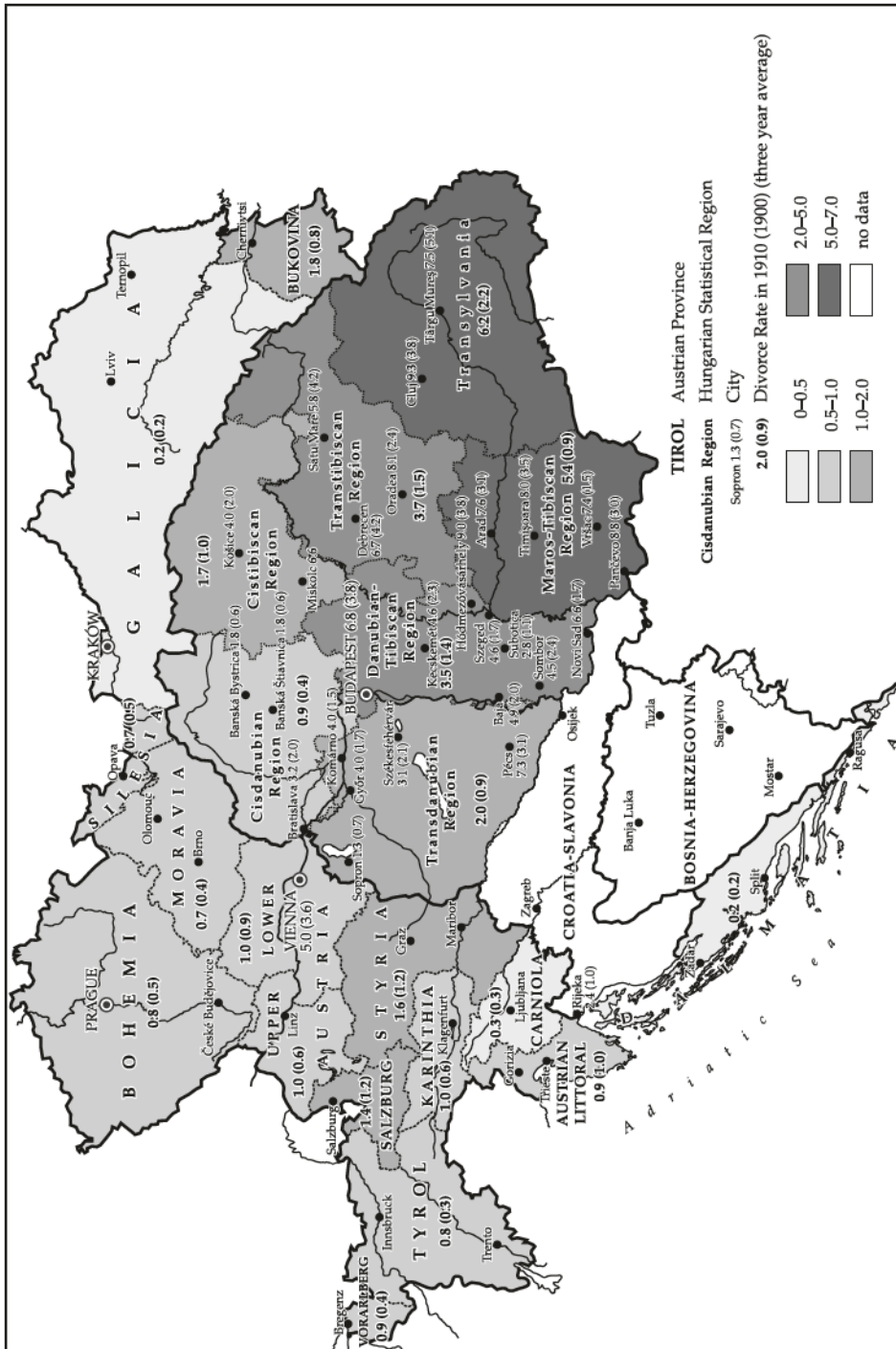


Figure 2. Crude divorce rates (divorces per 10,000 inhabitants) in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1910 (1900)

The separate right and practice of divorce in Transylvania brought with it the early spread of the recourse to this institution. It is telling, for instance, that in the middle of the nineteenth century in the Calvinist diocese of Udvarhely there were annually 7–12 divorces for every 10,000 Calvinists, which was double the average in Hungary in the 1910s (see Figure 1) and also considerably higher than the Transylvanian average (see Figure 2).²⁴ The divorce rate among Lutheran Saxons and Unitarians (the smallest Protestant denomination in Transylvania) was similarly high. In the period between 1871 and 1893 the Lutheran Matrimonial High Court in the city of Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt in German, today Sibiu in Romania) granted between 100 and 150 divorces every year,²⁵ which came to an average of 5 to 8 divorces for every 10,000 Transylvanian Lutherans. The records of sittings of the Unitarian Ecclesiastical High Court of the city of Kolozsvár (Klausenburg in German, today Cluj in Romania) in the period between 1869 and 1895 contain similar data. The average of 40 to 70 divorces per year indicates a divorce rate between 8 and 13 divorces for every 10,000 Unitarian people.²⁶ While the Orthodox Church was not included among the “accepted” religions until 1848, the continuously working ecclesiastical courts in Transylvania probably also granted more divorces than those in Hungary. In the decanal district of Torda (today Turda in Romania) at least 10 divorce cases were initiated on average every year in the period between 1880 and 1899, which may have raised the divorce rate among the local Orthodox community to 8 for every 10,000 Orthodox people in the district.

The divorce rates among members of different denominations and the divorce rates in general in the second half of the nineteenth century were influenced not only by denominational structures and legal traditions, but also by accelerating economic and social transformations, which can be discerned most clearly in divergent divorce rates in the expanding cities on the one hand, and among the rural population on the other. The two metropolises of the

24 Zsuzsanna Kolumbán, “A házasságok felbontásának joga és az erdélyi református egyház a 19. században,” in *Jogi néprajz – jogi kultúrtörténet. Tanulmányok a jogtudományok, a néprajztudományok és a történettudományok köréből*, ed. Barna Mezey and Janka Teodóra Nagy (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 2009), 450.

25 Bogdan Crăciun, “Three paradoxes of the Family History or Divorce, Lutheran Style,” in *Families in Europe between the 19th and the 21st Centuries. From the Traditional Model to Contemporary PACS*, ed. Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux and Ioan Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: University Press, 2009), 651.

26 Erdélyi Unitárius Egyház Központi Gyűjtőlevéltára. Főpapi Törvényszék ülésjegyzőkönyvei 1869–1895. When compiling the statistics I made every effort not to include divorces that had been obtained through migration or conversion (in other words divorces that had been granted by Unitarian courts, but initiated by couples who had not initially been Unitarians and had either migrated and/or converted).

Monarchy, Vienna and Budapest, offer striking and paradigmatic examples of this. Vienna's place in the popular divorce movement at the beginning of the twentieth century was on the verge of being extreme: 37 percent of the divorces and separations granted in the Austrian half of the empire were issued by the Wiener Landesgericht. The divorce rate hovered around 4.5 percent, in contrast with 0.5 percent in rural areas. The divorce rate among Catholics living in Vienna at the beginning of the twentieth century was eight times as high as the divorce rate among Catholics living in rural areas (3.9 percent in comparison with 0.5 percent), among Jews living in Vienna it was seven times as high (7 percent in Vienna in comparison with 1.1 percent in the rest of Austria), and among Protestants six times as high (5.9 percent in Vienna in comparison with 1 percent in the rest of Austria). Similarly, in Hungary the divorce rate of 5.8 divorces for every 10,000 people in Budapest was much higher than the divorce rate of 2.1 percent in the rest of the country. Regarding denominational breakdown between the capital city and the rest of the country, the largest difference again is found among Catholics. While the divorce rate among Catholics in Budapest was four times as high as the divorce rate among Catholics in the rest of Hungary (5 percent in comparison with 1.2 percent), among Jews it was two-and-half times as much (7.5 percent in comparison with 3 percent), among Lutherans twice as much (6.2 percent in comparison with 3.3 percent), and among Calvinists one-and-a-half times as much (6.4 percent in comparison with 4.7 percent). The actual differences in divorce rates between urban centers and "rural" areas in both halves of the empire must have been even larger than these statistics suggest (both in general and broken down according to denomination), since the term "rural" in this context actually includes many cities in Austria and Hungary.

Nonetheless, with regards to the question of urban lifestyle and urbanization, the differences between the two countries are at least as telling as the similarities. As the example of Vienna suggests, in Austria the cities played a considerably larger role in the divorce movement than in Hungary. While in Austria cities with populations of at least 50,000 (which served as judicial seats) accounted for approximately 50 percent of the divorces, in Hungary this percentage was only 15.²⁷ It is also worth

27 In Austria the divorce statistics for 1907 and 1908 include the number of divorces pronounced by the courts in the large cities, but the territorial jurisdiction of these courts (with the exception of Vienna) extended far beyond the administrative area of the city. The divorces that were pronounced constituted 59 percent of the total number of divorces (data from the court in Innsbruck for 1907 were not published), hence the estimate of 50 percent. Cities that numbered more than 50,000 inhabitants but did not have a court were: Pilsen, Königliche Weinberge, Zizkow, Pola, Przemyśl, Smichow.

noting that in Hungary in the first decade of the twentieth century, parallel with the rapid rise of divorce rates, the role of the larger cities in this trend did not grow, but rather declined (from 19 percent in 1900 to 15 percent in 1910). In other words, the rise in the divorce rates was rather fuelled by the “rural” population. In Transylvania, among Unitarians and Lutherans who were seeking a divorce in the second half of the nineteenth century, urban residence and lifestyle certainly did not play an important role (in the case of Lutherans this is particularly surprising given the large proportion of Lutherans who lived in cities).²⁸ For instance, the decisive majority of the Unitarians who were seeking a divorce (a group about which we know more) lived in villages and were probably simple peasants.

Divorces among Jews offer a distinctive but nonetheless revealing example of the interrelationship between “modernization” and denominational belonging with respect to marital relations. The statistics on divorce indicate that attitudes towards and trends regarding divorce among Jews (who had practiced separation for millennia) in the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy and especially Austria were similar to attitudes and trends among Catholics. Marriages among Jews in rural areas rarely ended in divorce, in contrast with marriages among Jews in urban centers. The Jews in Vienna, who constituted 13 percent of the Jews in the Austrian provinces, accounted for 50 percent of the divorces among Jews, while this same figure for Jews in Galicia (where 62 percent of the Jews of Austria lived) hovered around 25 percent. In this case, however, one must be careful with the official data. As the Austrian statistician Karl Hugelmann has cautioned with regards to the figures from 1882 and 1883 (i.e. before the regular disclosure of divorce statistics), “We must compare the Jewry of Vienna and Galicia in order to discover the reason for the differing results, and then we begin to suspect that the difference is merely a matter of appearances. As in the case of many marriages among Jews in Galicia, many divorces never came to the knowledge of the state authorities.”²⁹ Thus the statistics only include divorces that were recognized according to the civil code.

One finds an explanation for this phenomenon in the discrepancies between state and denominational law regarding divorce and the civil and ritual practice of divorce. Before the introduction of the Marriage Patent of 1783 in Austria and the Austrian civil code in 1853 in Hungary, issues pertaining to marriage among

28 Among the Saxons divorce rates in some of the entirely rural seats in the period between 1886 and 1890 were higher than the divorce rates in the city of Nagyszeben or Sebes: Crăciun, “Three Paradoxes,” 652.

29 Hugelmann, “Die Ehelösungen,” 9.

Jews were decided by the rabbinical courts (the *bet-din*), which was autonomous from the state. In accordance with the age-old ritual, divorce was completed when the husband handed the bill of divorce (*get*) to his wife and his wife accepted it. Over the course of the nineteenth century the expansion of state oversight to include these affairs in general collided with the “quiet” resistance of the Jewish communities. At the same time, some rabbis and some spouses (in particular wives) used the compulsion to adapt as a means of increasing their own influence or bringing about a turn in their seemingly hopeless situation for the better.³⁰ It was primarily Jews who lived in the western provinces of the Habsburg Empire and Jews who lived in cities and had essentially integrated into Christian society who turned to the state to resolve marital issues. In contrast, the vast majority of the Jews of Galicia were able to continue to ignore the state laws regarding marriage and address the questions that arose in accordance with their religious law (*halakha*). Clearly the growing middle-class Jewry represented an ever larger proportion of the couples seeking divorces, though the available sources yield no reliable estimates of these proportions. It is quite possible that if we could compile statistics regarding the purely ritual divorces (i.e. not acknowledged by the state), then the ratio of divorce rates in Vienna to divorce rates in rural areas would be flipped. Given the dearth of data regarding these ritual divorces, we can mention as a kind of analogy the case of Russia. The frequency of divorce among the Jewry living in the western provinces in the first half of the nineteenth century was strikingly high, and while in time it declined considerably, it remained high at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1901, for instance, there were 12 divorces in Vilno (today Vilnius in Lithuania) for every 10,000 Jewish inhabitants of the city, in other words the divorce rate was roughly comparable with the divorce rate among the Lutherans and Calvinists of Transylvania.³¹ It is perfectly conceivable that the divorce rates among the Jewish communities of Galicia and even among the Orthodox Jews of the Hungarian counties neighboring Galicia were just as high.

In 1878 the Hungarian government was compelled to pass a separate decree “on the subject of hindering divorces of Israelite couples that were carried out in a

30 Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste. Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 174–97. Lois C. Dubin, “Jewish Women, Marriage Law, and Emancipation: A Civil Divorce in Late-Eighteenth-Century Trieste,” *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 13 (2007): 65–92.

31 ChaeRan Y. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (New England–Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2002), 157, 148–59.

careless manner by some rabbis.”³² One decade later *Magyar-Zsidó Szemle* (Hungarian-Jewish Review) carried a report indicating that of the marriages conducted by rabbis among the Jews of Sáros county, only one-third were recorded in the registry of marriages kept by the representatives of the religious community.³³ The periodical, which was neologue in its spirit, may well have exaggerated these “irregularities” and the scale of the alleged flouting of the laws of the state, but the Jewish communities of Máramaros, another county in northeastern Hungary (today Maramureș in Romania) also become notorious for the striking number (and proportion) of illegitimate children and cohabitating but officially unmarried couples, which was due in part to the failure to register marriages with the local organs of the state.³⁴ Considering the fragmentary data, it is quite clear that the statistics do not reflect a significant proportion of the divorces among Jews, as they were not granted by the state courts (much as the marriages themselves had not always been recorded in the official registries). Thus the regional divergences in divorce rates among the Jewry were not so much a product of different attitudes towards marriage or divorce. Rather they reflect varying degrees among the Jewish communities of integration into the larger civil society.

The Role of Law

The peculiarities of marital law and divorce rates that were rooted in differences between denominations, regions, settlement types and legal systems, while accounting for the varying pace of the spread of divorce in the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the empire, shed only limited light on the reasons behind this growth, and fail completely to explain the dynamics of the process. The immediate cause of the steep rise in the divorce rates in Hungary was legal in nature: it was prompted by the adoption of the matrimonial law of 1895 and the curtailment of the process of divorce in 1907. Thus it is clear that, as a next step, one must examine more closely how the legal reforms influenced in practice the spread of divorce and what was happening at the same time in Austria, where the practice of law and the civil code on which it was based ensured a continuously stable legal background.

32 Decree 17619 of the Ministry of Religion and Education, issued in September 27, 1878: *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára* 12 (1878): 774–83.

33 *Magyar-Zsidó Szemle* (1889): 28–29.

34 Dávid Kohn, “Zsidó népmozgalmi statisztika,” in *Az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat Évkönyve*, ed. Vilmos Bacher and Ferenc Mezey (Budapest: n.p., 1895), 35–40.

By way of introduction it is worth noting that the Hungarian matrimonial law of 1894 was not simply a “divorce law,” but rather ushered in a complete change of systems in the sphere of matrimonial law in Hungary. It codified matrimonial law by creating a coherent system that took the place of norms that had been shaped somewhat freely by the courts within a framework created by royal decrees and laws. In doing so, it secularized and civilized matrimonial law, creating a civil law in lieu of norms that varied from region to region and denomination to denomination. The civil law regulated the means of contracting and dissolving marriages in a way that applied to all Hungarian citizens uniformly and exclusively. At the same time, given the complexity of the legal changes it is not easy to venture an answer to the question of what role was played by the matrimonial law in the breaking loose of divorce rates. It is true that the elimination of denominational distinctions led to an abandonment of many formal procedures (priestly mediation, dual litigation in the case of mixed marriages) and informal ones (such as religious conversions before the submission of a petition for divorce) that were a hindrance to divorce (first and foremost for Catholics), but the law also contained many measures that tightened restrictions. It created serious obstacles to hasty divorces, eliminating for instance the practice of divorce by mutual consent. It also introduced the principle of culpability, defined precisely the acceptable grounds for divorce, made the right of action obsolete, and limited the period of time for the initiation and completion of the proceedings for a divorce.

The effects of the matrimonial law on the legal practice at the time developed in a contradictory manner. In the wake of the enactment of the law, the decisions of the courts became unpredictable. In divorce proceedings that had begun earlier and had not been concluded by October 1, 1895 (and were based on grounds for divorce that were no longer compatible with the new regulations), new petitions had to be submitted and in many cases the high courts directed the lower courts to arrive at new rulings. The proportion of rejected petitions also grew, the proceedings lasted years, and the costs of a divorce case grew considerably.³⁵ In the first two years the divorce rate fell to a historical low (see Figure 1), while at the same time the number of petitions for

35 For more on the example of Budapest, see Sándor Nagy, “A házasság felbontása Budapesten (Pest-Budán) a 19. században” (PhD diss., Eötvös Loránd University, 2012), 201–3. Reaching similar conclusions regarding the judicial practice of the Royal Court of Pécs: Csabáné Herger, *A nővértől az állami anyakönyvvezetőig. A magyar házassági köteléki jog és az európai modellek* (Budapest–Pécs: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2006), 192–95.

divorce submitted on the basis of the new matrimonial law rose abruptly. As a consequence of the initiation of an enormous number of proceedings by the end of the century there was a huge backlog of divorce cases, as indicated by the court statistics (which were kept as of 1899; see Figure 3).³⁶ Even five years after the enactment of the new matrimonial law only 30 percent of the new or unresolved divorce cases in Hungary were settled in some manner, either with the acceptance or the rejection of a petition for divorce or with a legally binding annulment (or in some cases with withdrawal of the petition). This did not change much until 1907, the continuous rise in the number of divorces that were granted notwithstanding.

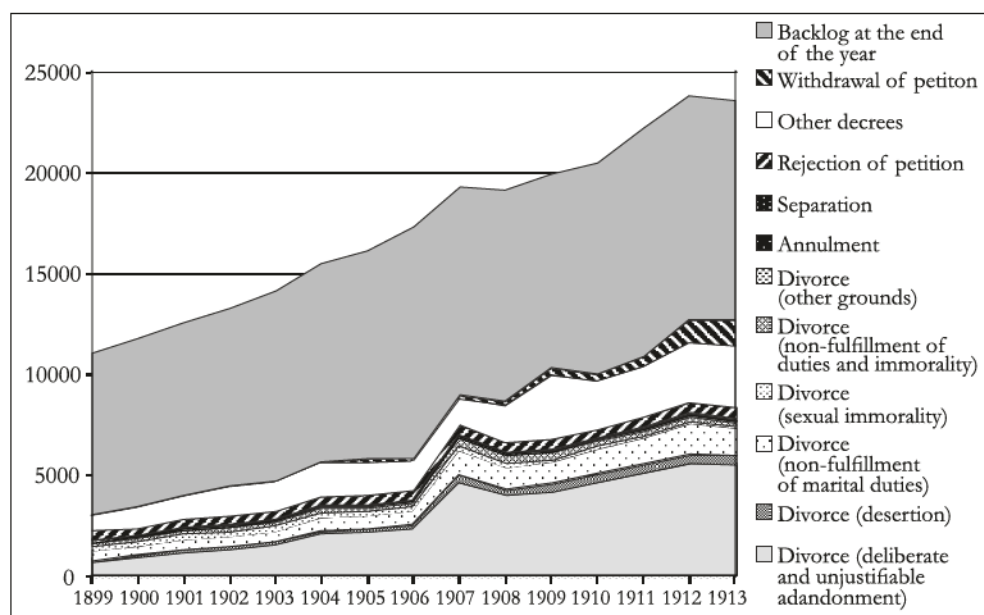


Figure 3. Circulation of matrimonial cases in the royal courts in Hungary (1899–1913)

One can get a sense of what this backlog of cases actually meant in practice by comparing the duration of divorce proceedings at the turn of the century in different parts of the Monarchy. Given the sources, this is possible first and foremost in the case of the two capital cities. While only 24 percent of the divorce proceedings that were initiated before the Royal Court of Law in Budapest in 1900 were completed within a year, 34 percent within two years, and 19 percent

36 *A.M. Kir. Kormány [1901–1913]. évi működéséről.*

within three years (and the remaining 23 percent took even longer),³⁷ on the basis of the marital actions approved by the Wiener Landesgericht in 1901, 98 percent of the cases it handled were brought to completion within a single year and only a small fraction took years to be resolved. In general the Austrian courts handled matrimonial cases rapidly. 97 percent of the divorces, annulments, and invalidations that were issued in Austria in 1901 were issued within a year, and this rate did not drop later. And one should note that the Austrian statistics only measured the duration of cases of separation (*processuale Scheidungen*) and divorce (*Ehetrennungen*) that were subject to litigation, and these comprised only one-fourth of the total number of divorces. Separations that took place with the announcement and acceptance of the consent of the two parties (*einverständliche Scheidungen*) took even less time, officially at most only a few weeks or, in the case of a consensus reached in the course of legal proceedings, a few months.

The state of affairs in Hungary became unmanageable at the turn of the century. In time the courts and the government were compelled to submit to the pressure put on them by people involved in divorce proceedings. In a manner that was in clear contradiction with the spirit of the law, the courts began to give ground to people seeking a divorce. In cases of petitions for divorce that were based on “deliberate and unjustifiable abandonment,” they did not examine the circumstances of the break, but simply took cognizance of the fact of the separation itself. In consequence, it became more common for spouses to bring their cohabitation to end by mutual consent, and they were not compelled to air their “dirty laundry” in the courts. They were thus able to free themselves of each other relatively quickly and painlessly. As Figure 3 indicates, soon most divorces in Hungary were proclaimed following cases of abandonment. The proportion of such cases rose from 44 percent in 1899 to 72 percent by 1913. In 1907 the government also contributed to the reduction in the proportion of cases awaiting adjudication by securing passage, at the suggestion of the Minister of Justice, of a law to reduce the burdens of the Hungarian Royal Court of Law, part of which was a restriction of appeals in divorce cases. The law rescinded the obligatory submission of divorce cases to higher courts and limited the right of appeal of an attorney charged with the task of defending the marriage to a second instance.³⁸ The adoption of the law helped to reduce

37 Budapest Főváros Levéltára, VII.2.c. Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék peres iratai, 1900, V. irattári osztály; Nagy, “A házasság felbontása Budapesten,” 201.

38 1907: Statute XVII, paragraphs 6–7, in *Magyar Törvénytar. 1907. évi törvénygyűjtemek*, ed. Dezső Márkus (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1908), 174–78.

the pressure on the highest court, but it made the proceedings simpler for husbands and wives who in a concealed manner had mutually agreed to seek a divorce and had no intention of appealing, while in the meantime the minority who prolonged marital conflict in the courts frequently sought legal redress. This clearly also pushed spouses who earlier had hoped to resolve their marital disputes in the courts in the direction of divorce by mutual consent. However, mutual consent was not accepted by the courts as legitimate grounds for divorce. The couples could only achieve their goal by requesting divorce on the grounds of abandonment in order to circumvent this obstacle. In the end, the elimination of obligatory appeals and the consequent rise in the number of divorces granted on grounds of abandonment shortened the procedures in divorce cases, thereby also reducing the costs of a divorce, making people more likely to pursue a divorce, and causing an increase in the proportion of completed divorces (which rose to 54 percent by the outbreak of World War I). In consequence, divorce rates rose steeply.

What considerations prompted legislators to give in to the “pressure” applied by those seeking a divorce? In response to a note of caution made during the discussion of the 1907 bill, that the abolition of the compulsory supervision of divorce cases would make separation much easier, the representative who had submitted the bill noted, “the goal of this law is not to make divorce more cumbersome, or divorce cases more difficult or more costly, but rather to ease the burdens on the Royal Court of Law.”³⁹ This may seem like a cynical reply, but one cannot deny its logic. Easing the burdens on the Royal Court of Law and the civil courts in general, one of the consequences of which was the steep rise in the number of divorces, was intended to facilitate the effective enforcement of state law. The effective enforcement of state law was particularly important in both halves of the Monarchy, since the law was one of the most important tools in the hands of the government with which to integrate the ethnically and denominationally variegated peoples into one at least legally uniform society. In Austria the civil code of 1811 asserted the authority of the state in questions of matrimonial law. In Hungary this process was unquestionably belated, but Hungarian nationalism, which by the end of the nineteenth century had gathered considerable strength, made etatist tendencies more pronounced and

39 *Az 1906. évi május hó 19-ére hirdetett országgyűlés Képviselőházának naplója*, vol. 7 (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1907), 207–8.

placed tools at the disposal of the state in the interests of furthering not only social integration, but also cultural assimilation.⁴⁰

The big question that remains, however, is what caused the sudden jump in the number of petitions for divorce in Hungary after 1895 and the subsequent continuous rise. For it was this jump that diverted the courts to a road that ran contrary to the intentions of the legislators, and eventually broke the resistance of the legal system. We should not delude ourselves with the hope that we will find an entirely adequate answer to this question on the basis of the contemporary statistics, but an examination of the changes that took place around the turn of the century in the composition of the groups of people seeking a divorce may offer some insights regarding the underlying reasons for this phenomenon. It may not provide us with any understanding of the expectations of the husbands and wives who sought a divorce, nor may it help us grasp their motivations, but it will enable us to learn more about the group of people who hoped to resolve their marital disputes once and for all in the civil courts. The statistics reveal two very important tendencies. One is the denominational shift in the composition of this group, the other is the social shift.

The extension of the right to divorce to include Catholics after 1895 undoubtedly gave momentum to the rise in the number of petitions for divorce and the number of actual divorces. True, we do not really have any statistic with which we can compare the proportion of Catholics among those seeking a divorce (they comprised 35 percent, this proportion rose to 40 percent only towards the end of the period under examination), but the change should be regarded as revolutionary, since for Catholics the dissolution of the bonds of marriage had previously been legally impossible. While we have no figures for the number of separations issued by the ecclesiastical courts, the mere appearance in the civil courts of people who had sought separations from the ecclesiastical courts could not possibly have caused the increase. One finds further confirmation of this in the fact that while legislators supported the assertion of Catholic dogma in civil law by maintaining separation from bed and board as a legally recognized option, until the outbreak of World War I a total of only 23

40 It is characteristic that at the time the Hungarian matrimonial bill and the necessity of the introduction of marriage as a civil institution were justified with the following argument: "the individual Churches, both in their organization and in their liturgies, rest on foundations of national belonging, and the Churches' jurisdiction over matrimonial law also emerges as the jurisdiction of the nationalities." Justification of the bill "on matrimonial law" General justification: *Az 1892. évi február hó 18-ára hirdetett országgyűlés Képviselőházának irományai*, vol. 15 (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1894), 44.

petitions for separation were approved in the entire country, which indicates that there was hardly any interest in this civil variant of the legal institution. The example of the Hungarian capital clearly indicates that with the enactment of the matrimonial law, the rise in the proportion of Catholics among the people seeking a divorce was not caused simply by the emergence among them of those who would previously have opted for conversion. In the matrimonial disputes over which the Budapest Royal Court of Law presided in the period between 1866 and 1895, the proportion of people who were either Catholic or who had converted to Catholicism in order to facilitate the procedure was 41 percent of the total number of people pursuing litigation. Following the enactment of the law of 1895, with the rise in the number of petitions for divorce this grew to 52 percent.⁴¹ (It is hardly likely that the number of conversions that took place in order to enable a couple to divorce in other parts of the country would have come close to the number in Budapest.)

The other important shift, alongside the removal of legal distinctions between denominations with regards to matrimonial law, was the broadening of the social base of the people seeking divorce. If one examines the national statistics regarding divorce, which go back to 1898, the rise in the proportion of industrial workers and agricultural day-laborers at the end of the nineteenth century is striking. The proportion of people subsumed under the statistical category that included industrial workers, day-laborers employed in industry, and factory workers rose from 4 or 5 percent to 11 percent. The proportion of agricultural day-laborers among people seeking a divorce, which before 1904 never went even as high as 10 percent, was consistently above 25 percent in the years leading up to World War I. At the same time, the proportion of people with characteristically middle-class occupations, who earlier had comprised a significant share of the people seeking a divorce, as well as the proportion of land-owning peasants dropped significantly. In the case of Budapest, the written documentation of divorce cases indicates that while the proportion of people from lower social strata among those seeking a divorce had already begun to grow earlier, this proportion grew significantly after 1900.⁴²

41 Nagy, "A házasság felbontása Budapesten," 28–29.

42 The proportion, among the people involved in divorce proceedings in Budapest, of artisan assistants, shop assistants, day-laborers, office workers and attendants, as well as other tradesmen who were probably also not professional independent was (taken as a group) 29 percent in the cases initiated in 1866–1880, 34 percent in 1881–1895, and 50 percent in 1896–1910. Nagy, "A házasság felbontása Budapesten," 32–33, 181.

In contrast with the shift that took place in the denominational composition of the group of people seeking a divorce, this transformation was by no means unique to Hungary. In Austria there was also a rise in the proportion of manual laborers (the category included factory workers, journeymen, miners, day-laborers and pieceworkers, and people employed in other non-independent occupations) among men seeking a divorce at the turn of the century. While in the period between 1884 and 1886 they comprised 17 percent of the divorcees and 18 percent in 1890–1892, in 1900–1902 and 1906–1908 this figure rose to 27 percent. The strikingly high proportion of agricultural workers among those seeking a divorce, however, was peculiar to Hungary. The proportion of peasants with small-holdings, for instance, dropped to 25 percent in the years just before the outbreak of World War I, but this figure nonetheless surpassed the corresponding figure of 9 percent for the category of “farmers, small-holders” in Austria.⁴³ Thus the “democratization” of divorce in Hungary, which was one of the most important factors in the rise in divorce rates, cannot be as closely linked to enactment of the matrimonial law as the transformation in the denominational composition of the group of people seeking a divorce. Perhaps it was due in part to shifts in mentality, possibly something of a “renaissance” of marriage and the spread of the middle-class cult of the family. Whatever the hypothetical causes, it is quite clear that the formulation and realization of aspirations for social change were facilitated by a legal change that was not directly tied to the regulation of divorce, namely the expansion of litigation by right of poverty *in forma pauperis*.

While for the moment we are compelled, in the absence of the necessary statistics, to base conclusions about the rise in the use of litigation *in forma pauperis* on the complaints of the attorneys who were officially ordered to take up the defense of paupers, the tendency connected to the “demand” for social justice and the acknowledged function of the law as a tool of integration is unmistakable.⁴⁴ Otherwise it would be impossible to explain how spouses who belonged to the lower social strata were appearing in ever larger numbers in the chambers of the royal law courts precisely at a time when people seeking a

43 One cannot compare the entire agricultural sector, because the Austrian court statistics include agricultural day-laborers, servants, and domestics among the workers.

44 Nagy, “A házasság felbontása Budapesten,” 96–97. According to this, in the 1890s the administrative practice of issuing certificates of poverty became more consistent and the countersignature of a clergyman, which had been customary, was no longer necessary. This was particularly significant for poor Catholics who were preparing for a divorce case.

divorce were faced with obstacles that were entirely new and that naturally added to the costs of the litigation. Because the court files survived in a more complete form in Vienna, which accounted for more than one-third of the total number of divorces (which as noted earlier includes separations and annulments) in Austria, we know that after 1900 many husbands and wives involved in divorce cases requested free legal aid, although the costs they would have had to cover without free legal aid did not even come close to the costs in Hungary.⁴⁵

Conclusion and Discussion

An examination of the evolution of matrimonial law in the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, the divorce rates in Austria and Hungary, and judicial practice in both halves of the empire strengthens the doubts that have arisen recently concerning the modernization theory and the spread of divorce, at least with regards to the early stages of this process. The theory presumes and implies the homogeneity of “traditional societies” in that it presupposes the general stability of the family as allegedly necessitated by exterior forces and characterizes the destabilization of the institution of the family, which is the alleged cause of the spread of divorce, as a process that was closely intertwined with economic and social transformations. The use of this model to explain the demographic shifts that took place in the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy with regards to divorce, however, is encumbered by numerous problems. For instance, the different directions in which the legal systems in Austria and Hungary developed with respect to matrimonial law and the differing legal regulations regarding divorce resulted in higher divorce rates and a more abrupt rise in divorce rates in Hungary in spite of the fact that the economic and social transformations in the (western) Cisleithanian provinces were considerably more advanced than in Hungary. As an examination of the regional divorce rates demonstrates, there is no connection between the rise in divorce rates within the individual systems of jurisprudence and economic development, or if there is, it is only discernible in the case of the larger cities. The high rate of divorce in Bukovina (in the case of Austria) and Transylvania or Banat (in the case of Hungary) can hardly be explained by the modernization theory.

45 Heindl, “Aspekte der Ehescheidung in Wien,” 228. My research on divorce cases in Vienna in the period between 1898 and 1910 confirms the spread of divorce cases initiated with free legal aid.

The example of Hungary, a country in which the rise in divorce rates at the turn of the century was abrupt, is revealing. Not only do the distinctive trends in divorce rates broken down by region not corroborate the suppositions of modernization theory, the social factors behind the spread of divorce also do not correspond to the expectations one would have. Seemingly paradoxically, in Austria, where divorce rates rose much more slowly, the significance of urbanization was much more pronounced than in the other half of the Monarchy. In Hungary, after 1900 the role of the large cities (which was not decisive in the first place) actually declined with the spread of divorce. Regarding the occupational composition of the group of people seeking a divorce, the sources clearly demonstrate that peasants with small holdings, agricultural workers and servants comprised an increasingly large proportion (in time more than 50 percent) of this demographic shift. While the proportion of peasants with small holdings within the agricultural sector declined, in the years leading up to World War I they still accounted for one-fourth of the divorces in Hungary. (In Austria, the rise in divorce rates in Bukovina was also largely the result of divorce proceedings initiated by peasants with small holdings.)

The example of the Hungarian half of the empire is also notable from the perspective of the regulatory role of the law. Unquestionably the rise in divorce rates reflects a shift in the nature of family ties. However, in my assessment the legal system, legal traditions, and legal changes did more than merely facilitate the early spread of divorce. The divorce rates in Transylvania clearly indicate the importance of changes in the concrete political power relations. They also reflect the significance of the extent to which a particular law had become an integral part of the value system of a given community. (The data on Transylvania belie the misconception according to which the low rate of divorce in so-called "traditional societies" can be attributed to structural causes and objective compulsions.) Political factors, including the conflict between the Habsburg House and the Hungarian Estates and the nation-state political ideals of the liberal opposition, all played a role in the breakthrough with regards to divorce in Hungary in the middle of the nineteenth century. In Austria, where there were no similar tendencies and where the Catholic Church remained very influential, the law moved in another direction, or rather it essentially came to a standstill with the introduction of marriage as a civil union. In contrast, the enactment of the Hungarian matrimonial law offers a revealing example of the interrelationship between social forces and legal shifts. While in the stable legal context of the Austrian provinces the rise in divorce rates was consistently

moderate, in Hungary legal reforms at the turn of the century caused divorce rates to rise sharply. Matrimonial law put many obstacles in the path to divorce, but by opening wide the legal gates, it set off a process that provided its own momentum. The flood of petitions for divorce resulted in less stringent judicial practice and compelled the state to ease the legal procedures in divorce cases.

With regards to the regulatory power of the law, it is worth noting the culturally different application of the institution of divorce. Economic causes played only an indirect role in the rise in the number and proportion of divorces. In contrast, one can cite several examples demonstrating that not only was social access to the legal institution different denominationally and socially because of legal or financial reasons, but legal divorce itself was different depending on the religious and/or regional traditions and the value systems of the various social groups, what one might call “informal law.” The serious marital conflicts of Transylvanian Protestant peasants probably ended in the majority of cases with the dissolution of the marriage by the court. This may have been true in the case of marital conflicts among Jews as well, though these issues only rarely went beyond the religious communities, which stuck to their traditions, and for the most part never made it to the civil courts. In general members of wealthy social strata were also compelled to settle their marital conflicts by legal means, though this didn’t always necessarily mean a divorce case. However, for the better part of the nineteenth century this was not true of members of the working class who were born in the large cities or the rural (Catholic) peasantry.

The fact that, as of the end of the nineteenth century, legal solutions to marital conflict and, among them, sooner (Hungary) or later (Austria) the dissolution of the bonds of marriage began to prevail was due first and foremost not to the influence of economic processes, but rather to the complex interplay of power relations, social demands, changes in the law, and shifts in jurisprudence. Thus an ever-larger proportion of failed marriages ended in legal divorce, washing away the aforementioned cultural differences and gradually making strikingly divergent social practices more uniform to some degree. The cultural diversity of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on the one hand and the efforts of the state, in particular in Hungary, to promote social and national integration on the other cast the problem in a particularly sharp light and show the responses and reactions with which it met. In this regard, the assertion and strengthening of state purview of Jewish marriages, which took place parallel with the process of emancipation, is paradigmatic. This expansion of state authority resulted in an increase in the number of divorces, but only according to the official statistics.

But this constituted not simply an attempt to undermine the competency of the organs of the Jewish religious communities, but rather the displacement by the state courts of their Church rivals, as well as, in the case of Hungary, the assertion of a civil code that was independent of denominational traditions and the expansion of the authority of the state to include the affairs of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant married couples. Parallel with legal regulation and official intervention that was intended to facilitate the “normalization” of family relations, the assurance of the ability of members of lower social strata to pursue legal action was an additional factor, alongside the shifts that took place in role of denominational difference. In this context it is understandable that the government and the courts did not take more aggressive measures to reduce the unquestionably alarming rise in the number of divorces. As a legal institution, divorce paradoxically was a tool of social integration, and the state saw the rise in the number of divorces as at most an unpleasant but necessary concomitant of this process.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin. By Timothy Snyder. New York: Basic Books, 2010. xix + 524 pp.

Soviet style Communism may not have lost all of its appeal. Stockholm “boasts” a bar aptly named KGB after the dreaded Soviet political police and dedicated to the Soviet Union. The walls are adorned with tasteless communist memorabilia. Would a public place commemorating the Gestapo, complete with swastikas and Nazi memorabilia, be conceivable? In a brilliant analysis, Timothy Snyder explains two of the worst genocides in modern history as products in part of interaction between the two most repressive and tyrannical regimes. The nature of this interaction is exemplified by the fact that “Stalinism had displaced east European Jews from their historical position as victims of the Germans, and embedded them instead in an account of an imperialist conspiracy against communism. From there, it was but a small step to present them as part of a conspiracy of their own. And thus the communists’ hesitation to distinguish and define Hitler’s major crime tended, as the decades passed, to confirm an aspect of Hitler’s worldview” (p.376).

Timothy Snyder’s now almost iconic *Bloodlands* has debunked Stalin and the communist leadership of the Soviet Union as the perpetrators of one of the most massive crimes against humanity in history and the rulers of a terroristic state rivaled in Europe only by Hitler’s regime —after 1939. The novelty is not the comparison of the two states and tyrannical systems, but the analysis of the two regimes without the usual bias towards the Soviet Union and the focus on the role of the dynamics of Soviet and German policies in the escalation of mass killings, which yields the revelation that the ideologically motivated quest for (absurdly conceived) security led them both to mass murder. The implication of Snyder’s work is that in the competitive quest between the Stalinist Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany for the creation of an ideologically grounded empire and the attainment of world domination, the Soviet Union was in no way a morally superior system. Both were equally monstrous, tyrannical, oppressive, disdainful of human dignity and murderous. Stalin had no desire to oppose Hitler. Had he had a choice, he would have chosen cooperation with the Nazis. Hence Hitler’s attack does not make the Soviet system more virtuous than the National Socialist, which does not diminish the merit of the efforts mounted

by Soviet citizens in fighting the German invaders for their home and sheer survival. Stalin's war against Hitler was not a crusade against tyranny, but a life and death struggle for the survival of his regime. The defeat of Hitlerism was a result of this struggle for self-preservation; the liberation of Europe from the Nazi yoke was not the motivating factor in Stalin's war. After all, in 1937 Stalin toasted "the complete destruction of all enemies, themselves and their kin" (p.72) and declared that "people belonging to national minorities should be... shot like mad dogs." By then he and his entourage had murdered millions. The question was why. One of the main merits of Snyder's work is to show that Stalinist genocides targeted both class enemies *and* ethnic minorities to an equal extent.¹

However, some of the arguments in the book are problematic. Snyder asserts that Stalin was "abandoning" the kind of Marxism according to which people "opposed the revolution because of their class background." According to Snyder, "with Stalinism something was changing; normal state security concerns had infused the Marxist language and changed it unalterably." In the show trials the accused were charged with having betrayed the Soviet Union to foreign powers: "Theirs was a class struggle, according to the accusation, only in the most indirect and attenuated sense: they supposedly had aided states that represented the imperialist states that encircled the homeland of Communism" (p.85). In fact Snyder concludes that existence "no longer preceded essence," "politics was no longer comprehensible in terms of class struggle," (p.109) and most emphatically, "the Soviet Union was no longer an ideological state" (p.116). Of course if one reduces Marxist/Stalinist ideology to the dimension of *internal* (but not external) security, Snyder's argument could be plausible. Even then it would be good to see a *sociological* analysis of the *national* victims of Stalin's killings. Yet "ideology" and "class struggle" were not uni-dimensional. For anyone who was educated in a communist state, the proposition that state security is part and parcel of class struggle does not sound like the antithesis of class struggle at all. On the contrary, the extension of the enemy status to ethnic groups allegedly in the service of foreign powers plotting to undermine communism was the logical conclusion of the struggle against class enemies, resistance to which, according to Stalinist logic, intensified even though the

1 In an important book on Hitler's rule in Europe, Mark Mazower contrasted national socialist killing to Stalinist killing by claiming that the purpose of Soviet policy was "social revolution and not national purification." Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 98.

relentless struggle against them allegedly diminished their numbers. The script of the Rajk trial in Hungary demonstrated this link. Leninism and Stalinism extended class struggle to the international scene, and in fact the “theory” of communism encompassed an international struggle between the progressive forces of history and retrograde imperialism. The Novikov telegram (Novikov was the Soviet ambassador in Washington at the time, but the ideas put forth in the document are usually attributed to Vyacheslav Molotov), which was penned in 1946 in order to underpin ideologically the Bolshevization of Eastern Europe and the schism with the West, attests to this logic. Communism was more than a struggle with domestic enemies: it was conceived as a global struggle. In addition, communist ideology was more than a fight against enemies.

Stalin’s absurd security concerns stemmed from the fact that he looked at the world through the lens of a communist ideology that he himself formulated. Moreover, communism encompassed more than just class struggle. It was a belief in progress towards “communism,” which meant the withering away of the state, the ability of economic planning to overcome economic cycles, unemployment and exploitation. One would have to overlook the mountains of evidence and the history of the Soviet export of communism to Eastern Europe to claim that the Soviet Union was not an ideological state. Societies in Stalin’s USSR and in Eastern Europe, where the Stalinist system was transplanted, were permeated with communist ideology, and plenty of people cherished a belief in communist ideology. As the historian Peter Kenez, who grew up in Stalinist Hungary, put it, “Many were careerists... but... genuine hypocrisy is difficult... It is better and easier to convince ourselves that what we say is true. There was a group of people who had become Communists long ago and had spent their lives remaining faithful to their original commitments.” Kenez also noted that in the Soviet Union “the people who consciously and completely repudiated the lies that are at the foundation of every repressive society were in a tiny minority.”² Economic history also underscores the fact that the Soviet Union adhered to Marxist notions to the end of its existence, although it should be noted that economic development did have a security dimension. Let it suffice to say that when in 1946 Eugene (Jenő) Varga revised a basic tenet of Marxist economic thought, he was forced to revoke his thesis.

2 Peter Kenez, “Dealing with Discredited Beliefs,” *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 369–77, 376.

Bloodlands attributes the two greatest genocides in modern history, Stalinist and Nazi killings, to Stalin and Hitler's attempts to construct a self-sufficient empire. They both targeted agriculture, albeit for different reasons. Stalin murdered kulaks to promote collectivization in order to support Soviet industrialization; Hitler turned east to provide a lasting source of food for Germans through colonization and the murder of the indigenous population. In Poland both Hitlerites and Stalinists first targeted the same group for extinction: the Polish intelligentsia. In the Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltics, German liquidation squads committed mass murders in the very places where the NKVD had done so before them, sometimes killing the sole family member to have survived Soviet slaughters. Nazi and Soviet systems interacted to produce the mass killings. Mayhem descended into an irrational vortex in the murderous German occupation of the Soviet Union, in which the initial support enjoyed by the occupiers was fueled by the locals' hatred of the system to which many of their friends and family members had fallen victim before the Germans came. "Germans killed Jews as partisans, and many Jews became partisans. The Jews who became partisans were serving the Soviet regime, and were taking part in a Soviet policy to bring retributions upon civilians." The partisan war in Belarus was "a perversely interactive effort of Hitler and Stalin" (p.250).

Snyder is at his best in his interpretation of the dynamics of the events; the escalation of Stalinist murder, the interactions that brought about the brutalization of the war in the east to levels unmatched in Europe's not terribly peaceful history. However his explanation of Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union and the related German decision to annihilate European Jewry is weakened by contradictions within his argument.

How could so many lives be brought to a violent end? Snyder seems to say that the killings were products of failed policies. In his assessment, the failure of collectivization in the USSR and the failure of Operation Barbarossa brought about the Holocaust. Thus genocide appears to have happened almost by default as a result of Hitler's and Stalin's botched utopic visions: "they brought about catastrophes, blamed the enemy of their choice, and then used the death of millions to make the case that their policies were necessary or desirable. Each of them had a transformative Utopia, a group to be blamed when its realisation proved impossible, and then a policy of mass murder that could be proclaimed as a kind of ersatz victory" (pp.387–88). Yet the death of millions may not have been *ersatz* victory for the two dictators, but their primary purpose. Furthermore, they did not act alone, but required the collaboration and cooperation of countless

people from many walks of life in order to carry out the mass murders, and these murders were often committed with great enthusiasm or opportunism. The broad array of motives (greed, ideological zeal, racial, national and ethnic hatred) remain largely unexplored, so the killings are not sufficiently explained.³ Is it convincing to argue that the failure of collectivization caused Stalin's policy of starvation, or that Hitler shifted to mass murder and presented it as an end in itself after the defeat in Moscow and the United States' entry into the war?

The narrative leading up to Snyder's explanation of the Final Solution starts with the road to war. The author takes it for granted that Hitler's aim was to colonize the East, meaning Poland and parts of the Soviet Union, in order to satisfy his vision of German colonization there. Yet if this was the case, why did Hitler first wish to destroy not Poland but Czechoslovakia, and preferably by way of war? At first glance, this might seem irrelevant to Snyder's narrative, but if these were indeed Hitler's long-term goals, he was taking a risk regarding their attainment. If colonization in the East was what he sought, why risk defeat in Czechoslovakia? One should remember that on paper at least Czechoslovakia was guaranteed by France and the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia had absolutely no importance in a future campaign against Poland or the Soviet Union. Thus it was an odd choice to take on one of Central Europe's strongest military powers when the Wehrmacht was not yet ready. Furthermore, what would have happened if Poland had decided to accept the German demands for Danzig and an extraterritorial passage to East Prussia? Some historians believe, moreover, that Great Britain was Hitler's main prize, and knocking out the USSR, Hitler hoped, would force the British to come to terms.⁴ Contemplating Hitler's goals in the war sheds light on the ultimate aims of Nazi policies. Yet the British option is not discussed at all, and Snyder makes no attempt to offer an explanation as to why Hitler attacked Britain. In fact there is evidence to suggest that the Germans

3 For the strength of microhistory in explaining the complex web of motivations in both participation in and resistance to persecution, see Omer Bartov, "Communal Genocide: Personal Accounts of the Destruction of Buczacz, Eastern Galicia, 1941–1944," in *Shatterzone of Empires – Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz (Bloomington, In.: Indiana University Press, 2013), 399–422. Alexander Prusin, "A 'Zone of Violence': The Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Eastern Galicia in 1914–1915 and 1941," *ibid.* 362–77.

4 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 137. See also John Lukacs, *The Duel: 10 May – 31 July 1940: the Eighty-Day Struggle between Churchill and Hitler* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 2001). We know that Hitler and the German military leadership were still interested in a landing in Britain shortly before they launched the attack on the Soviet Union. See Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie. Politik und Kriegführung 1940–1941* (Frankfurt: Bernard & Graefe, 1965).

may have been amenable to the idea of prolonging the truce with Stalin. Molotov went to Berlin in November 1940 to negotiate a *modus vivendi* in Europe. It was only after the talks failed due to Molotov's refusal to cede Bulgaria to Germany that Hitler gave the final order for Operation Barbarossa. Yet Snyder does not mention the Berlin talks. More recently a debate emerged on the notion of preemptive attack, more precisely the contention was made that Hitler invaded the Soviet Union because he learned that Stalin was preparing for war against Germany. This position is incompatible with Snyder's position. Perhaps one does not want to buy into this assumption, but the pros and cons of this argument brought new facts to light and gave rise to new interpretations regarding Hitler's and Stalin's motives.⁵ As Snyder's arguments revolve around the two dictators' concepts of security, it would have been useful to have presented the main ideas of this debate.⁶ I would tend to agree that given Hitler's worldview, the destruction of Bolshevism may have been his main war aim, but I feel that the reader should be made aware of the dilemmas and controversies, as well as the lacunae in our knowledge.

Snyder's explanation of the war against the Soviet Union is also problematic. He argues that "Hitler's economic vision could be realized only after actual military conflict" (p.159). According to Snyder, "the Soviet Union was the only realistic source of calories for Germany and its Western European Empire" (p.161). Colonization was motivated by access to agricultural space, which in turn was allegedly needed to grow enough food to supply a growing number of Germans. Potentially there was ample food available for Hitler's Germans without the resort to war as a result of exploitative bilateral clearing agreements. Through this ingenious arrangement, Germany received essential items, including foodstuffs, from the Soviet Union, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. In fact the latter three sold much of their surplus to Germany, the market of which helped them emerge from recession. Eventually Germany was not paying for the shipments it received (the mechanism of the clearing agreements made this possible with impunity). The fact that exports from Southeast Europe declined after 1939 can be partly attributed to the war.⁷ Mark

5 Several authors have argued that the doctrine of "interimperialistic contradictions" shaped Stalin's policy. This again proves the ideological nature of Soviet thinking.

6 For good overviews see e.g. Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War – Soviet Russia in the Second World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007); Gerhard Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe: The Emergence and Development of East-West Conflict, 1939–1953* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

7 György Ránki, *The Economics of the Second World War* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993).

Mazower's conclusion that Nazi racial goals were the *raison d'être* of the war in the East seems more convincing.⁸

Snyder's explanation of the evolution of the Final Solution flows from his presentation of the war against the Soviet Union as having been ineluctable. Originally, or so Snyder argues, Hitler sought a peaceful solution, the emigration of European Jews to distant lands. Only when this turned out to be impossible did killing come to the forefront. Again this idea is presented without any attempt at a dialogue with other positions on this complicated issue. Snyder claims that deportation to Madagascar was the original "plan." Snyder claims that, "In late 1940 and early 1941, the Royal Navy prevented Hitler's Oceanic version of the Final Solution," as the British still controlled the sea lanes (p.160). Madagascar definitely floated around as a "solution" to the "Jewish Question." For instance, the Hungarian Nazis openly talked about it in the early 1940s and even after extermination became official policy in Germany. Was this a *plan* in a technical sense? On page 159 Snyder asserts that the Germans lacked the ships necessary to invade Britain. If the Germans lacked the capacity to carry a few hundred thousand troops across the channel, how would the deportation of millions of people to an island in the Indian Ocean have been possible? Ground transportation was also a problem: German planners understood that the deportation of 160,000 Jews from the Lodz ghetto to the Generalgouvernement would require 200 days.⁹ As Saul Friedländer put it, Hitler may have used "the Madagascar idea as a metaphor for the expulsion of the Jews from the continent."¹⁰ Hitler was aware of the logistical problem. When Martin Bormann asked how they were to be shipped there, he answered ironically, "A Strength through Joy Fleet?"¹¹

Bloodlands runs into a similar difficulty with the claim that the Nazis hoped to use the Soviet Union as a dumping ground for Jews. Snyder notes that "[t]he allied Soviet Union had rejected Germany's proposal to import two million European Jews" (pp.160–61). How serious this proposal was we do not actually learn, but Snyder contends that "if Germany conquered the Soviet Union, it could use Soviet territories as it pleased" (p.161). Later in the book he argues that, "Russia is vast:

8 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 104.

9 See on this and more details on the "Madagascar Plan" Götz Aly, *'Final Solution' Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (London: Arnold, 1990).

10 Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination – Nazi Germany and the Jews* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 81.

11 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 120.

the Germans never even aimed to colonize more than its western fifth" (p.336). It is hard to see how they could have dumped millions of unwanted people there if the full stretch of the country was not to be a German colony.

In Snyder's view Hitler and his leaders did not originally intend to kill all the Jews. The Final Solution, rather, was the result of a lack of other options and the German failure in the war against the Soviet Union. "Six months after Operation Barbarossa was launched, Hitler had reformulated the war aims such that the physical extermination of the Jews became the priority" (p.187). "When the war was lost, Hitler called the mass murder of the Jews his victory" (p.388). The question is whether Hitler knew in early December that he had lost the war. And could he ever openly call the killing of the Jews his victory and hence substitute it for victory in the war to the German people? We know that everything about the killings was kept secret as far as possible. Snyder contends that the physical liquidation of European Jews was not a foregone conclusion. Rather, according to him it was a resolution that evolved during the first phase of the war.

Snyder's argument may be problematic on several important points. In the fall of 1941 Hitler did not know that the invasion of the Soviet Union would fail, and neither did anyone else, including people with a far more astute perception of the situation than Hitler. Snyder himself claims on page 211 that "Even *after* the failures of Operations Barbarossa and Typhoon, Hitler... seemed to believe that he could conquer the USSR in early 1942." It is more reasonable to assume that even in 1942, "victory was assumed to lie only a few months away" (p.379). It is therefore difficult to believe that the Holocaust was a substitute for a victory that Hitler thought he could still obtain. However, Snyder's argument *rests on this claim* if we are to believe that Hitler adopted the Final Solution in response to a dramatic constellation of events. One factor was the alleged realization that Germany could not win the war; the other was the formation of the grand alliance: "Jews as such would be killed as retribution for the U.S.–U.K.–USSR alliance" (p.217). Hitler announced on December 12 that "the world war is here. The annihilation of Jewry must be the necessary consequence." As Snyder asserts, Hitler became convinced that a worldwide Jewish conspiracy had brought Germany into war with all three powers. This would make sense only if the United States had declared war on Germany, which was not the case. Snyder admits that the United States reciprocated the German declaration of war. Even Hitler's warped mind could not have missed that point. Thus the question should be why Hitler actually brought about the Grand Alliance by declaring war on the United States.

In addition, Snyder's own chronology throws into question the argument that Hitler made up his mind to kill the Jews only in December. Himmler, as Snyder asserts, "endorsed the killing of women and children in July 1941" (p.197) and "the total extermination of Jewish communities in August 1941" (p.206). The "death factory" of Bełżec was established in "late October 1941" (pp.255–56), and the Chełmno facility was gassing Jews "as of December 1941" (p.258). This was hardly a result of a new policy initiative after the coalition came into existence *later* that month. Goebbels stated on November 16 that the fate of the Jews would be annihilation. Finally, one would need to demonstrate that there was a change of paradigm in Jewish policy before and after December 1941. In fact, mass killings to exterminate Jews were already taking place in 1941. Even though it was the preferred option, exterminating the Jews may not have become automatic, even after 1941. The policy of exterminating Hungarian Jews was an evolutionary policy in 1944, and immediate, total liquidation was the desired outcome, although it conflicted with a pressing need for forced labor in the *Jägerstab* program.¹² Snyder constructed a timeline of events that would support his argument that the extermination of the Jews became the only Nazi option when Hitler no longer believed in victory. In doing so, he may have underestimated the murderous propensity of Hitlerism. Victory was not yet beyond reach for the Germans in 1941 or even 1942, although it was delayed. My intention is not so much to address the question of whether German extermination policies were predetermined or escalated (radicalized), but rather to observe that by introducing the formation of the Grand Alliance as the trigger for the implementation of the policy to kill *all* Jews, in my reading Snyder has rationalized a policy the real foundation of which, in my assessment, was irrational hate.

Snyder argues that Hitler could still have reversed his policies in December 1941, much as Antonescu did. This statement obscures the difference between the two leaders. Antonescu may have been a murderous anti-Semite who presided over the annihilation of 300,000 people in territories attached to Romania after the Soviets were pushed back by the Wehrmacht. Yet he was a Romanian nationalist first and acted in (his perception of) Romania's national

12 Gábor Kádár, Zoltán Vági, *A végső döntés: Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944* [The Final Decision: Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2013). For a similar argument see also Tim Cole, *Holocaust City – The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (New York–London: Routledge, 2003). For a view that the Germans had a "master plan" when they invaded Hungary, see Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide – The Holocaust in Hungary*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

interest. The Jews in Romania proper were his Jews, not the Germans' Jews, and their fate would be decided according to the perceived national interests of Romania. Unlike Hitler, Antonescu did not construct an ideology around mortal struggle for the survival of his race.¹³ Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the Hungarian National Socialists, understood that Hitler's mission was to "struggle against international Jewry." Szálasi was a self-professed Jew hater. He called the Jews "executioners of the peoples," and he sought to expel all Jews from Hungary and the continent, but he did not share other aspects of Hitler's racist ideology. He too was first and foremost a nationalist. This explains why Szálasi refused to hand over Hungary's remaining several hundred thousand Jews to the Germans after they installed him in power in October 1944. Eichmann had to content himself with 60,000 forced laborers who were "lent" to him by the Hungarian Nazi leader, but whom Szálasi expected to get back after the war.¹⁴

Robert Jervis has remarked that in order to kill Jews the Germans sacrificed security.¹⁵ This would be true if German politics had been anything close to rational. In fact, for Hitler and many of his followers killing Jews was a prerequisite of security, indeed of the very survival of the German race. Snyder actually cites sources to support this claim, but he fails to go as far as his sources potentially could have taken him. He understates the essence of Nazism and presents the drive to kill all members of a group of people as a product of rational politics. An Austrian policeman wrote to his wife of his emotions while killing Jews: "I aimed calmly and shot surely at the men, women and infants. I kept in mind that I have two infants at home, whom these hordes would treat the same, if not ten times worse." General Gustav von Becholstein advocated the mass murder of Jews as a preventive measure, arguing that had the Soviets invaded Europe, the Jews, who were "no longer humans," would have exterminated Germans (pp.205–6). As Goebbels put it, Jews were "suffering a gradual process of annihilation" that they had "intended for us." In a recent book Wendy Lower has reconstructed the genocidal mindset of the many thousands of German women who went on a torture and killing spree against the Jews in the East.

13 For an outstanding biography of Antonescu see Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania 1940–1944* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

14 Rudolf Paksa, *Szálasi Ferenc és a hungarizmus* [Ferenc Szálasi and the Hungarist Movement] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó–MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2013), on his views regarding Jews and Hitler's struggle: 66–67. See also László Karsai, *Reflektor a sötétbe. Szálasi Ferenc naplója 1943. szeptember 15–1944. július 18.* 1–2. [Reflector in the Dark. The Diary of Ferenc Szálasi] *Beszélő* 13, no. 3. (2008) 54–76; *Beszélő* 13, no. 4. (2008), 60–79.

15 Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York–London: Routledge, 2005).

Lower cites a wartime letter penned by a woman who “took dictation” from Hitler: “Our people immigrating here [to the Ukraine] do not have an easy task, but there are many possibilities to achieve great things [...] One comes to the conclusion that the foreign people are not suitable for various reasons [...] an admixture of blood between the controlling strata, the German element and the foreign people would occur. That would be a cardinal breach [...] of the need to preserve our Nordic racial inheritance and our future would then take a similar course to that of... the Roman Empire.” Killing may not have been “a substitute for triumph” (p.215).¹⁶ In Snyder’s portrayal, economics (the “foundation” in Marxist thought) underlay Stalin’s and Hitler’s killing sprees. But Hitler did not need to kill in order to get all the food he needed and more from the East. The bilateral clearing agreements that Hitler had signed with his clients (Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary and the Soviet Union) worked well, and Germany was receiving goods even when it was no longer paying for them. Even when one considers the food needs of a “thousand-year” Reich, more traditional colonial practices would have sufficed, assuming that food shortage was a primary factor in Nazi politics at all.

The thesis that the killings of 1932–1945 were an interaction between the two tyrannical powers is persuasive for many of the areas under discussion. It breaks down for Hungary and even Yugoslavia and Slovakia, where the Holocaust had nothing to do with Stalin or the Soviet Union. The statement that Hungarian Jews (or most but not all of them I should say) were murdered in the “Bloodlands” does not help explain why this last chapter (one of the most rapid and devastating episodes) of the Final Solution took place. For a clearer understanding of the motivations of the many participants in the politics of genocide it would have been interesting to compare the motivations of leaders like Antonescu, Szálasi, Tiso and Ante Pavelić, as well as to contrast the peculiarities of the Romanian Holocaust, which created its own “bloodlands,” with the Holocaust in Hungary, which used its own territory as a killing ground to a much smaller extent. In one sentence, for a more universal explanation of Nazi genocide, the geographical scope ought to have been slightly extended.¹⁷ After all, the title of the book does claim to discuss “Europe.” This is not to say that I fault the author for not providing a more systematic, country-by-country

16 Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2013), 215.

17 For a geographically broader approach to violence in twentieth-century Europe see Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent – Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2012).

account of Nazi or Communist rule in Europe. Yet the vast number of victims of the Holocaust in the Yugoslav territories and in territories under Romanian and Hungarian jurisdiction would have justified a comparison with “bloodlands,” all the more so since a comparison of the methods that were used would have provided further insights into the mindsets and motives of the perpetrators.

In Snyder’s account, as in many recent accounts of the genocides that occurred in twentieth-century Europe, the comfortable notion of a leader-centric world (Stalin and Hitler and their close knit group) is shattered. No longer can we comfort ourselves with the thought that the tyrants’ maniacal visions were shared by only a few. Mass murder was not just part of Hitler’s and Stalin’s agendas, but rather was part of an agenda shared by many of their compatriots of every rank and file. Mass murder, dehumanization, and the persecution of tens of millions on racial and social grounds was a product of a quest for state/racial security that is not security understood in the normal sense. The Stalinist and National Socialist security dilemma arose through the lens of two ideologies of hatred and prescribed the annihilation or at least the incarceration of millions as a *sine qua non* of state/national survival. Snyder underestimates the scope of communist genocide perpetrated against foreign nationals after the war. On page 318 he asserts that the Soviets took 287,000 people as laborers from East European countries, but he makes no mention of the tremendous death toll. From Hungary alone almost 230,000 civilians were taken in so-called cleansing actions, and together with POWs some 600,000 Hungarians languished in labor camps, where roughly a third of them may have perished.¹⁸ And this is just the Hungarian figure. Snyder is also mistaken that Noel Field was not tried in the Rajk trial (p. 318). He was, and he was held in prison until his release after Stalin’s death. Moreover, Rajk’s main crime was not that he was allegedly an agent of Field, although this may have been the first script of the trial. Rather, he was convicted primarily for his purported service to Tito’s Yugoslavia, revealing a new, ominous turn in Stalin’s lethal paranoia.

These qualifications notwithstanding, *Bloodlands* is a brilliant analysis and a deeply emphatic and humanistic approach to suffering and its causes in an all but forgotten part of Europe. It is likely to be read and debated for a long time to come.

László Borhi

18 Stark Tamás, *Magyar foglyok a Szovjetunióban* [Hungarian Prisoners in the Soviet Union] (Budapest: Lucidus, 2006).

Régi könyvek, új csillagok [Old Books, New Stars]. By Gábor Farkas.
(Humanizmus és Reformáció, 32. kötet.) Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2011.
282 pp.

Few people would think that a supernova in the Early Modern Era would be of much interest to anyone apart from a few small circles of historians of the science of astronomy. Yet the “new star” that appeared in the skies in 1572, the glow of which was visible for a time even in daylight, has become a central character in numerous works of scholarly literature, including studies written on the history of philosophy and accounts of the emergence of the modern concept of the world. How can an exploding star have attracted interest from such an array of fields of inquiry? The answer to this question lies in the role it played in a paradigm shift, for interpretations of its appearance in the sky prompted a shift in visions of the world. In the Middle Ages it represented a sudden and unexpected assault on (or at least challenge to) the ruling Aristotelian-Ptolemaic conception of the universe. According to this conception of the world, change, creation, and destruction could only take place in the sphere beneath the moon, in other words on the planet earth, which was at the center of the universe. The celestial bodies beyond the moon were in a realm of perfection in which only the most perfect form of motion, the circle, was possible, and stars were neither created nor destroyed. It was not possible for a celestial body to move in an ellipse in the sphere of perfection, and naturally comets could not orbit among them, since they were regarded as atmospheric phenomena, similar to falling stars, rain, clouds, fog, wind, and lightening. This conception of the universe, which gradually began to lose its plausibility over the course of the seventeenth century and today is regarded as elegant but utterly inadequate and inaccurate, was accepted for over a millennium. It constituted an entirely satisfactory framework for interpretation of celestial phenomena. Its unraveling was a long and gradual process one of the most important milestones of which was the publication of Copernicus’ *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, or On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres, in 1543. From the perspective of the impact it had on thinking at the time, however, the new star that flared up in 1572 in the sphere of the fixed stars (in other words in the part of the universe where such things were not supposed to happen) but then vanished some 18 months later (in fact it was a supernova in the constellation Cassiopeia) was even more momentous

than Copernicus' work, which only later acquired the revolutionary significance we attribute to it today.

Drawing on a rich array of sources, Gábor Farkas' new book documents the effects of this momentous occurrence. He examines the impact of the event on cultural circles in Hungary and the broader European context in the Early Modern Era. Since the celestial phenomenon represented something of a shock to the scholars at the time and could hardly be accommodated to their understanding of the universe, observations and reflections on the significance of the supernova appeared in great numbers and numerous debates were held on its meaning (in all likelihood the star mentioned by Barnardo in act 1, scene 1 of *Hamlet* is a reference to this). Farkas demonstrates clearly that the responses to the event cannot be divided simply into an acceptance or a rejection of the Ptolemaic understanding of the cosmos. Many other possibilities were raised. For instance, some people understood it as a unique divine miracle, a celestial sign that did not contradict the medieval vision of the universe. Others insisted that it was an atmospheric phenomenon, merely a comet that somehow had lost its tail. It was also understood simply as the light released by the celestial bodies, concentrated in a given point in the skies.

The methodology on which the book rests is a close reading of the many responses given to the event and a thorough examination of the dissemination of the ideas on the basis of the history of books and readings (this is hardly surprising, since the author is a student and colleague of István Monok, a distinguished and prolific scholar of the field, as one reads in the acknowledgements). Farkas uses materials in libraries currently in use and data regarding the collections of libraries that once existed to examine which books were owned by whom in the Carpathian Basin, whether or not we can presume that the owners of these books actually read them, and what marginal notes they contain. This philological inquiry develops into a kind of history of mentalities. Farkas' comparison of the various sources, the reactions to the real and imagined celestial events, and the astronomical, theological, and astrological interpretations casts light on the scientific theories, superstitions, and religious and political ideas that preoccupied scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The study of responses to the supernova offers insights into the mentality of the intelligentsia of the era, which was influenced by the celestial event, but also (and perhaps more fundamentally) by its classical education.

The appearance of comets and the celestial phenomena that accompany comets have traditionally been associated with natural disasters, plagues, and

the commencement of severe cold fronts. One of the interesting aspects of the book is the contrasts it brings to light between the observations we would have expected people to make and the observations they actually made. People of the time often made no mention whatsoever of celestial phenomenon that took place in their lifetimes and that we consider significant today, while other occurrences that according to contemporaries were in some way related to natural disasters or important political events are given considerable attention in the sources, including occurrences that today we think may well not actually have taken place. For instance, as noted in the micro-historical discussion of the 1595 military campaign of Zsigmond Báthory in Wallachia, the allegedly inauspicious appearance of an eagle was linked to the appearance of a new star, but the existence of this new star is not confirmed by other sources. Thorough and methodical study of the textual sources and the depictions that have survived in old prints reveals how the prince's court and the Jesuits used a topos familiar from the works of classical authors, tying a political shift to a celestial event in order to legitimize the acts of the prince. At times this was the foundation for an observation concerning the movements of celestial bodies.

One of the most interesting chapters of the book concerns the reception of the ideas of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, and Johannes Kepler (in other words the reception of the new understanding of the heavens) in Hungary. Farkas first discusses the extent to which these works were disseminated across Western Europe (surprisingly Copernicus' *De revolutionibus* was read in far wider circles than traditionally thought or than Arthur Koestler contends in his famous book, *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe*). He then examines which editions of these works can be found in Hungary today (or were ever in Hungary) and how the ideas they contained were received. As Farkas notes in his summary, this reception did not go beyond a very narrow layer of the intelligentsia, and some of these intellectuals purchased the books of the three "world-shattering" astronomers second-hand. Boldizsár Battyhány, András Dudith, Ferenc Krasznai and János Zsámboky were perhaps the only people in Hungary to purchase the books soon after their publication. As this inquiry into this aspect of the history of reading in Hungary demonstrates, while the reception of works of modern physics in Hungary was not entirely negligible, until the end of the seventeenth century Aristotle continued to be regarded as the primary authority in the natural sciences.

The book is a pleasure to read, its rich, lengthy list of sources notwithstanding, and its publication constitutes an important contribution to the study of the

history of science in Hungary. If I were to venture one critical remark, I would have been curious to have read a bit more about the extent to which the author, given his knowledge of the sources, regards physics and astronomy in Hungary as peripheral or able to catch up. While he does give a brief answer to this question at the end of the book, Farkas could have devoted a bit more attention to the impressions he gathered in the course of his study of the sources. The book concludes with a detailed appendix in which the reader finds data concerning editions of the works of the three great astronomers in Hungary, a list of observations of comets in the sixteenth century, and a considerably longer list of observations of alleged celestial phenomena that scholars have been otherwise unable to confirm.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Benedek Láng

Köleséri Sámuel tudományos levelezése 1709–1732 [The Scientific Correspondence of Sámuel Köleséri]. By Zsigmond Jakó. (Kölesériana 1.) Edited by Zsuzsa Font. Latin text edited and summaries written by László András Magyar. Cluj: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2012. 256 pp.

In 1969, Zsigmond Jakó, one of the most prominent medievalists in international scholarship, wrote a captivating article in German on the early period of Enlightenment thought in East Central Europe and, within this, one of the most important figures of the Enlightenment in Transylvania in the early eighteenth century, Sámuel Köleséri. Although the article was published also in Romanian and Hungarian, to this day only the members of a small circle have a grasp of the importance of the array of sources on which it rests. In the 1950s and 1960s, Jakó pursued research in libraries and archives in the cities of Sibiu, Braşov, and Cluj, where he compiled an indispensable collection of documents from Köleséri's correspondence with other scientists and scholars. However, he did not publish the documents he had assembled, but rather, in the interests of facilitating further research, passed them on to Bálint Keserű, with whom he had been continuously exchanging ideas on the unsolved questions of Transylvanian cultural history, and the Department of Hungarian Literature at the University of Szeged. Thanks to Keserű's efforts, a team was organized under the leadership of Zsuzsa Font, and the 112 letters that had been collected by Jakó were published, along with 14 additional letters collected by the group in Szeged.

This book is particularly significant in part simply because of the remarkable personality of Köleséri, who was born in 1663 and died in 1732. As we learn about the various twists and turns in his life, we get an impression of the exceptional breadth and span of his career. He was the child of a Hungarian Calvinist family. His parents had intended for him to adhere to family tradition and become a pastor, but he decided not to complete a doctorate in theology, but rather to pursue studies in the medical sciences and mine-engineering and then to immerse himself in the world of the natural sciences, which was beginning to gain increasing importance. This decision was soon followed by a political event that was to have a shaping effect on his life, namely the incorporation of Transylvania into the Habsburg Empire. As his family was Calvinist, one would assume that he would not have welcomed this change and would have showed signs of at least passive resistance, along with many other Transylvanian protestants. Köleséri did not do this, but he also did not simply bide time and

wait to see what would come. Rather he sought out fields in which he could make useful contributions while also satisfying his curiosities and interests as a scientist. Various signs suggest that he attempted to do this in part by regarding his homeland as part of a larger Southeast European region and working to promote cultural growth and development in the interests of cultivating a “civilized” society. (His recommendations concerning methods of containing plague epidemics, which were repeatedly breaking out, and his suggestions regarding hygienic measures and important tasks in the economic sphere offer concrete examples of his commitment to his vision, which derived from his profound sense of mission as a doctor.)

Naturally not every aspect of the career of a scientist, even a scientist who is acting out of motives such as these, is so clearly oriented towards the practical. Keeping pace with the scientific tendencies of Europe in the early eighteenth century, he authored works that deal with the geology and history of the region (of these, one of the most important is *Auraria Romano-Dacica*, which was published in 1717), as well as notions regarding the history of Earth as a whole, notions that made the fossils found in the cliffs both in the Alps and in the Carpathian mountains exciting findings for him. This is an additional reason why he deserves a place of distinction in the history of science, for he was one of the first people to accept the “diluvial doctrine” (in other words the belief that world history was drastically affected by a great flood or floods) in the study of rock deposits, and alongside Johann Jacob Scheuchzer he played an important role in enriching the source materials on which this doctrine was based. Miklós Kázmér, a Hungarian natural scientist, recently identified eight findings sent by Köleséri in the Cambridge Woodwardian Collection (which is named after John Woodward, the inventor of the doctrine). While neither Scheuchzer nor Köleséri was timid, they were clearly accepted as members of the Royal Society because of the importance of their findings (Scheuchzer’s son was also made a member of the Society).

I have already mentioned one of the principal topics of the correspondence, but as is perhaps not surprising given that we are speaking of the exchange of ideas between two natural polymaths in the eighteenth century, the correspondence addresses an array of other subjects pertaining to the sciences. Köleséri was intensely interested in the questions of linguistic relationships, and in his writings he touches for instance on the practical problems of compiling a Finno-Ugric glossary and also on the possible relationship between Romanian and Welsh. Influenced by one of the prominent traditions of Central European humanism, he was preoccupied with the antiquities, understood in the broadest sense, of the

Roman province of Dacia. He also deals with questions that were being raised at the time in philosophical inquiries, though to a smaller extent. As his exchange of letters with Michael Gottlieb Hansch reveals, he was remarkably versed in these question as well, and Christin Wolff, whose privations in Germany he seems to have looked on with great compassion, had a significant influence on his thinking. Some of the references indicate that for a time at least he exchanged letters with Wolff himself, although these letters have not survived. His other letters not only give a clear impression of his insatiable thirst for knowledge, but also reveal the difficulties with which he had to contend in order to maintain his erudition and his knowledge of many fields of inquiry, both of which were virtually unparalleled in East Central Europe.

What Köleséri wrote on the religion of the pagan Dacians is interesting in part simply because, perhaps surprisingly, neither theological nor denominational questions figure among the topics. But it is also interesting because it is the only document in which it becomes clear that Köleséri's letter to András Huszti begins to gesture in the same direction. Like many of his contemporaries, Köleséri showed an interest in a kind of ancient *religio naturalis*. The strength of his interest in the creation of a religion that would be above denominational differences is illustrated clearly by many of his other statements and gestures, first and foremost his republication of the texts of two significant theologians and philosophers (Pierre Poiret and Jacobus Gardenius) with his own commentaries on them. (The publication, as part of a continuation of the series that has begun with this volume, of these and similar introductory commentaries will constitute a major step forward in the research on the religious Enlightenment in Transylvania.) If one applies to Transylvania the approach developed by Johannes van den Berg and David Sorkin (among others), the century that preceded mature Enlightenment thought, sometimes treated as something of a stepchild of Hungarian cultural history, appears in an entirely different light, and the works of many interesting authors, predominantly Protestants, emerge from obscurity as writings worthy of our attention. This volume is indispensable, however, not simply because of the importance of Köleséri and the topics with which he was preoccupied, but also because of the exemplary thoroughness with which the team following in Zsigmond Jakó's footsteps prepared the material for publication. The preface and the afterward provide a concise and objective description of the situation with respect to the sources. For instance, we learn which letters belong to which period of Köleséri's life, and which letters came from which collection. There is also a separate summary of where these documents can be found today. As

collections that serve as sources for the inquiry have been moved many times in recent decades, the task of locating them cannot have been simple, even if the editors were able to count on the assistance of young Transylvanian scholars. Naturally at the beginning of the book there is a precise list of the letters that are included, and of course there is also an index of names and places and a summary in German and Romanian.

The admirably detailed index of subjects, which betokens discriminating philological precision, will make the book remarkably easy to use. The thoroughness of this breakdown was made possible by the erudition of András László Magyar, a scholar of the history of medicine and the history of the sciences who worked together with the editor in the preparation of the source materials for publication. Thanks to the work of this precise scholar, who compared the Latin texts with the originals, there are, alongside Jakó's succinct but sometimes sparing summations (which indicate the subjects of the letters), comprehensive summaries that touch on the relevant details at the beginning of each letter. Given the wide array of topics, the composition of these summaries must have required meticulousness and unusual breadth of knowledge, since in the majority of cases we are speaking of an exchange of ideas between people who made casual and frequent use of the technical terms and jargon of their fields of inquiry.

The notes, which have been done with the proper degree of attentiveness to the sources, make the historical background (including the history of science) comprehensible and the material engaging and useful to a wide readership. Zsigmond Jakó's precision and legendary erudition as a historian combine with Zsuzsa Font's knowledge of the institutional, philosophical, and scientific history of the Early Modern Era. The secondary literature on the individual figures offers the reader an image of the network of relationships among scientists and scholars within which Sámuel Köleséri, a man who by no means sought isolation, but who nonetheless was in many respects a lonely figure, pursued his work.

This book, which is indispensable to anyone who is interested in the cultural history of Central Eastern Europe, is the product of a rare, harmonious encounter between generations of scholars, ateliers, and individuals capable of cooperating in the interests of furthering the sciences. The Transylvanian Museum Society was responsible for the last stages of publication. Hopefully and presumably it will become a part of the collections in the most important libraries and research institutions where scholarship is pursued on the Early Modern Era.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Mihály Balázs

Unfinished Utopia. Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–56.
By Katherine Lebow. Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 2013.
xiv + 233 pp.

Unfinished Utopia is more than what it claims to be in its title. It draws a narrative framework that encompasses the entire socialist period, and this narrative also seeks links between elements of the experiences of the Stalinist years and longer structures of modern Polish history. Choosing a well-defined locality as the focal point also allows Lebow to challenge aspects of the chronology of the Socialist era. Both Stalinism and the thaw of the years of Gomułka after 1956 appear more heterogeneous than the periodization itself suggests.

The six chapters address two major themes. Chapters 1, 2 and 4 are about features of Modernity and modernization as embodied by postwar reconstruction and industrialization in Poland. Chapters 3, 5 and 6 address the problem of resistance against the regime. Lebow argues that the paradox of Nowa Huta serving as one of the major centers of Solidarity in 1970 and in 1980 can be explained by the continuity of the tradition of collective action that was kept alive in the city by local identity and class-conscious worker solidarity. Lebow makes these themes a good read by maintaining a focus in each chapter on individual experiences.

Postwar reconstruction lends itself as a topic for global history. Local elites published plans from 1943 onwards in such distant parts of the globe as India and Italy. Reconstruction as a term was applied to a number of situations throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Europe had to be reconstructed after 1814, the USA after the Civil War, and the world after 1920 and again after the economic crisis. In 1943 the Fabian Society published a booklet that contained essays on various aspects of postwar reconstruction, such as medicine, diet, agriculture and international migration. John Marrock, one of the authors, advised that since planning would be based on science, it must start before the end of the war: “When the fighting ends they will be hungry and exhausted, in no mood for experiments.”¹ Postwar reconstruction was not about reinstating the pre-war world. The Fabian Society, the ministries of India led by the Indian National Congress, and the communist parties of Italy or Belgium and the newly formed Eastern Bloc wished to create a different world. Lebow takes issue with

1 John Marrock, “Food for Starving Europe,” in *When Hostilities Cease. Papers on Relief and Reconstruction Prepared for the Fabian Society*, ed. Julian Huxley, H.J. Laski et al. (London: Fabian Society, 1943), 79.

the assumption that the craving for normalcy in the postwar world created an atmosphere in which things went back to an earlier stage: “[...] wartime exposure to a wider world had often been compulsory and far from pleasant, this did not necessarily make it easier to settle down again at home with the return to ‘normalcy’” (p.44). She demonstrates that Poland was uprooted, with migrants all over the country, so restoration was not an option.

In this context, the construction of a large steel plant in the vicinity of Krakow in the early 1950s had multiple meanings. It was not only about countering and controlling a stubbornly “bourgeois” city. The plan for such a venture itself carried the long-term dream of Polish Enlightenment about modernization and industry, the strategic need to relocate industrial centers away from the border areas of Silesia, and the zeal of postwar reconstruction. The plans for Nowa Huta were drawn up in the Stalinist period, but this does not automatically mean that they were shaped entirely by monolithic ideas without links or roots. Lebow also asserts that there was no linearity between plan and practice in the course of the construction of Nowa Huta as the first socialist city of Poland. Many planned features remained only on paper and were postponed to later decades, while many unplanned edifices were built. The plan followed the octagonal shape of many Soviet cities, but it integrated the garden city ideal that was an Anglo-Saxon concept and was ideologically ambivalent in the eyes of the communists. In fact, prefab houses erected in the 1970s and 1980s diverge from the initial design, for which Socialist Realism meant neo-renaissance buildings for administrative centers, theatres, central squares and greenness.

Taking Nowa Huta as an archetypal example, postwar architectural reconstruction in the Soviet Bloc differed from the Western experience in that the former took housing as a secondary goal after industrialization. A recent volume shows that governments in Western Europe had ambitious plans to improve the living conditions of the working classes, but they implemented public projects on a smaller scale than planned and supplemented them with compensation and cheap loans that facilitated private initiatives. In the case of Belgian cities, the choice of architects reflected ideological preferences and professional recognition, but the houses that were built were often unremarkable parts of the postwar cityscape.² Moreover, housing schemes were not necessarily integrated with industrial projects.

2 Fredie Flore, “Housing for War Victims, 1946–1948. A Problematic Building Project by the Belgian Government,” in *Living with History. Rebuilding Europe after the First and Second World Wars and the Role of Heritage Preservation 1914–1964*, ed. Nicholas Bullock, and Luc Verpoest (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011), 263–80.

Lebow stresses that Nowa Huta's housing problems were serious throughout the Stalinist period, but the construction project entirely altered the landscape. The gap between insufficient housing and increasing industrial output was extreme in the Soviet Union in the period between 1946 and 1948. David Filtzer has demonstrated that the space available for workers, which was already scarce during the war due to the extensive damage done to industrial cities, actually decreased during postwar reconstruction on average.

Chapters 2 and 4 address two aspects that have dominated much of the social sciences for a decade, but hardly surface in discussions of Eastern Bloc Modernity: migration and emancipation. In his examination of the experience of moving to Nowa Huta, Lebow focuses on non-official documents, primarily the published memoir of a worker, Edmund Chmielinski. A close look at important junctures in the life of this youth leads Lebow to develop a model of identity formation and change between village and urban life (pp.45–50). However harsh housing conditions may have been at the site, the decision to become a member of a youth brigade could signify an immediate rise in standards of living for many simply because they were given new clothes and a clear goal in life. The visibility of the new sense of belonging brought about conflicts with family members who had been left behind and also with local farmers, in other words, with the world that had once been familiar (pp.59–60). Coexistence with local villages could potentially be symbiotic as long as the urban site did not threaten the existence of lifestyles: workers needed meat and liquor that was produced by locals. However, the city more frequently appeared as the disgraceful “other” in the imaginations of inhabitants of nearby villages. Yet it remained attractive as a destination to large sections of Polish society who had lost their standing in their own localities due to clashes with state, imprisonment and large-scale displacements. It was relatively easy to begin a new life at a muddy, chaotic and enormous construction site like Nowa Huta in the early 1950s.

For Lebow, emancipation is yet another theme from the perspective of which the political history of Stalinist years and their relationship to what followed were more ambiguous than textbooks usually suggest. The recent historiography of Stalinist Hungary emphasizes that images of female roles hardly changed in the postwar years and women essentially continued to be associated with domesticity. Mark Pittaway argues that this feature is a key to understanding the emergence of the double economy in the 1950s: income generated in the villages from agricultural produce was at least as important for the household budget as salaries earned at industrial centers. Women hardly entered heavy industry, and they were

almost always poorly paid however vital their contributions may have been to this second economy.³ This picture also holds also for Poland. The rhetorical model, in which “the new woman extended her traditionally nurturing role beyond the sphere of the nuclear family to embrace not only the nation, but also the wider family of international progress and peace,” effectively meant that the workplace did not destabilize traditional roles (p.100). Lebow also shows that Nowa Huta women played an important role in Stalinist society, since “no other Polish women have ever penetrated so deeply into the sanctum sanctorum of national industry” (p.97). Journalists’ descriptions emphasized that women did not wear makeup, but they wore the distinctive rubber boots, just as male workers did, and thus could easily be distinguished from the bourgeois of Krakow on Sundays in the city. The female metal caster brigade was the only such brigade in the country, and it performed well. Plastering brigades also produced Stakhanovite women. Yet while Nowa Huta female workers had a high standing in the official propaganda, their prospects were limited. Although 11.5 percent of the physical labor force was female, they had little chance of entering vocational schools unless they were well connected. Clerical jobs that required minimal qualifications and fit traditional roles were the most easily available throughout the 1950s (pp.102–5). Lebow points out that late Stalinist and post-Stalinist years bore witness to a setback from this perspective. The casting brigade was dispersed on the grounds that the work that they did was a threat to a woman’s health. While families were under heavy pressure due to lack of housing, inadequate childcare and imbalanced division of labor, after 1956 public opinion blamed Stalinism for these problems instead of addressing them through policies. In this period moral panic regarding sexual life and sexual freedom in the city was on the rise. Lebow shows that changes in policies regarding the “Gypsy problem” were influenced by this sense of moral panic. In Nowa Huta official voices believed in integration through work and guardianship, especially as far as hygiene was concerned, and the official stance acknowledged differences among Roma groups. In the 1960s the new policy focused on policing, force and surveillance. Lebow does not construct an image of Stalinist golden years of social mobility. She emphasizes that many of the instances in which the presence of a Roma population in Nowa Huta was a factor before 1956 involved prejudice and conflict, and she also highlights the ambiguity regarding gender that was

3 Mark Pittaway, “Retreat from collective Protest: Household, Gender, Work and Popular Opposition in Stalinist Hungary,” in *Rebellious Families. Household Strategies and Collective Action in the 19th & 20th Centuries*, ed. Jan Kok (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books), 198–228.

present throughout the socialist era. Yet she manages to convince the reader that a simple juxtaposition of ‘bad Stalinist years and policies’ and ‘better post-1956 times’ is misleading for the analysis of gender roles.

Lebow’s vision of resistance against the regime and its successes focuses on continuity rather than miracles (pp.152–77). She shows that Nowa Huta played a vital role in building up the tradition of resistance, even if this may seem paradoxical at first glance. Despite the long dominance of the totalitarian paradigm, the historiography of the Soviet Union reveals a great deal about the problem of resisting the regime. While there is an array of available sources, historians studying Soviet Society have often found themselves compelled to confront the problems of silence and the comprehensibility of speech. One of the outstanding undertakings of recent years is *The Whisperers* by Orlando Figes. The volume, which is based on written memoirs, personal documents and the oral histories of hundreds of families, attempts to decipher the logic of the disintegration of society and the reach of Stalinist oppression. Figes focuses on the contrast between the public reality and the reality that existed as a whisper and hardly found expression, even at the family level. From this perspective, actors remain passive throughout, except during the years of the Second World War, when alienated central rule could not silence individuals to the same extent as it had before.⁴

Sarah Davies, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola have argued that there are a number of voices still to be uncovered. Davies believes that it is possible to some extent to allow these voices to speak for themselves by rearranging police reports. Researchers who believe in the existence of popular protest against the regime accept the content of police reports on the continued presence of a will to uproot it. In this context, the regime fought a successful war for rule over voices, but fear did not triumph over resistance.⁵ However, one of the strongest arguments against the resistance thesis is that well-documented dissenters revolted against exclusion, but not against the foundations of the regime.⁶ Figes argues that whispers are cries for help from pioneers who broke down during the period of terror, and these whispers do not constitute a fight for freedom.

Labor history of the Soviet Union often addresses the question of resistance, but does not arrive at definitive answers. In 1994 the landmark volume *Making*

4 Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers. Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

5 Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia. Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

6 Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Workers Soviet, edited by Lewis H. Siegelbaum, was hesitant about theoretical frameworks.⁷ A decade later Jeffrey J. Rossmann openly challenged previous wisdom regarding the Soviet Union as a totalitarian society. On the basis of a close analysis of a textile factory, he describes collective action and resistance as mass phenomena during the 1930s.⁸ Looking at the postwar years, Donald Filtzer found a diffuse form of resistance in evasion and flight. Importantly, he points at vocational training as one of the major sites of such protest.⁹ Lebow argues that the potential for resistance stemmed from the faith of part of the population in ideas about a workers' state throughout the 1950s and 1960s that in turn facilitated collective action and also maintained the memory of such action. On the other hand, the protest regarding the cross clearly demonstrates that the idea of rights, and thus the moral economy of Nowa Huta workers, did not match the ideal type of Homo Sovieticus, who should have thought of religion as 'opium.' Lebow also emphasizes the generational aspect of resistance. This feature links Stalinist Poland to global trends of youth culture in the 1950s and creates important cultural bridges among countries of the Eastern Bloc. Although the author pays attention to gestures during moments of conflict and offers a thick description of some of them, she does not list any occasions when youth culture and the moral economy of workers interacted, combined or clashed. She comes closest to this question in Chapter 5 when looking at the "Poem for Adults." In August 1955 Adam Wazyk, a party hardliner, published a piece that wounded Stalinist sensitivities almost as much as Khrushchev's speech did some months later. The poem asserts that Nowa Huta was a political failure where young males were bored and did nothing apart from desperately seek opportunities to copulate with girls waiting for them in their corrupted 'convents,' i.e. hostels (pp.146–7). The critique of Nowa Huta from a dissenting figure rebuked youth culture on the same grounds as the official voices: sexual promiscuity and the number of unwanted children.

Her appreciation of the significance of individual life stories and situations enables Lebow to locate freedom, dreams and struggle in Nowa Huta under Stalinism. She convincingly links many of these to *longue durée*

7 Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Making Workers Soviet. Power, Class and Identity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994).

8 Jeffrey J. Rossmann, *Workers Resistance under Stalin. Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

9 Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism. Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

trends of modern Polish history. She uses a variety of archives, though with more innovative readings she could have overcome two problems that arise in the course of her examination. First, she does not render the dynamics of communities within the city perceptible. She makes mention of groups, such as the voluntary brigades, the theater groups, and informal youth circles, but these groups seem to function only as frameworks without internal lives and forces. By showing individuals, she highlights the importance of individual agency and choices in creating new spaces, but she unintentionally confirms the totalitarian model according to which society is atomized. This is in contradiction to her larger narrative about collective action. One way to overcome this paradox would have been to use photographs as archival sources instead of illustrations of arguments. Second, while the change of landscape was the essence of the story of creating a new city, there is no discussion regarding how the rural landscape was transformed into an urban one. At one point we see peasants in conflict with brigades, and in the second chapter she stresses the role of changes in the hinterland of would-be workers, but no picture emerges of the role that was played by environmental change or how an old landscape changed, merged with, or remained part of the city, nor is there any characterization of the new human ecology that replaced the old one. Lebow often quotes descriptions that stress mud. Contemporaries were so preoccupied with getting stuck in the mud that the author seems to have forgotten to consider how it might have looked from a bird's-eye view.

The book is a well presented case study that provides the reader with a firm foundation on which to develop ideas regarding some of the most salient historiographical issues of Stalinism, such as Modernity, the role of the Second World War, repression and resistance. Lebow talks about her actors with empathy and skill. She is good at describing events and personal dramas. She does this with warmth, sensitivity and understanding, but without pathos. And she has chosen themes, including housing issues, moral panic, sexuality, youth culture, and women's emancipation, that make her work useful for those interested in global histories. The book also demonstrates how much an analysis of this period can reveal about the social history of Central Europe. These features make the volume relevant for a large number of students and researchers working on the postwar history of the region.

Róbert Balogh

Hungary and Romania Beyond National Narratives: Comparisons and Entanglements. By Anders E.B. Blomqvist, Constantin Iordachi, and Balázs Trencsényi (eds). Bern: Peter Lang, 2013. 855 pp.

This is an ambitious volume whose goal is no less than to rewrite the history of East Central Europe from an integrated transnational perspective, using the entangled histories of Romania and Hungary as a point of departure (p.8). By adopting this approach, the editors hope to overcome the ethno-national based perspectives that have so dominated the historiography on the two countries and the region, opting for a multi-layered framework for transnational research and analysis that can open new lines of inquiry for historians and others (p.34). Chronologically the contributions cover roughly the last 160 years, beginning with the Hungarian and Romanian nation-building projects that grew out of the Revolutions of 1848 and ending with the postmillennial bid to reach a political and historiographical *modus vivendi*. Many of the volume's articles emerged out of the "Shared/Entangled Histories" international conference held in Cluj in 2008, which brought together an array of historians from around the world, including some of the leading experts in their respective fields. The volume itself marries a number of these well-established scholars with an invigorated new generation of historians.

In the auspicious introduction, which should be required reading for any student working on the transnational history of East Central Europe, the editors have drawn on the history of transfers and especially *histoire croisée*,¹ citing Franco–German historical reconciliation as a model for writing a common history of Hungary and Romania.² Using these frameworks, they hope to refocus the attention of scholars on the two countries' shared patterns of experience. As the introduction also makes clear—and as anyone who has lived in Hungarian–Romanian borderlands knows well—there is indeed a long if also overlooked tradition of fertile intercourse between Hungarians and Romanians, intellectually, culturally, and otherwise.

1 Cf. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45 (February 2006): 30–50.

2 Notable examples of "entangled history" include Bénédicte Zimmermann, Claude Didry, and Michael Werner, eds., *Le Travail et la Nation: Histoire croisée de la France et de l'Allemagne* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1999); Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander M. Martin, eds., *Fascination and Enmity: Russia and Germany as Entangled Histories, 1914–1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); Roumen Daskalov, Tchavdar Marinov, and Diana Mishkova, eds., *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vols 1–2 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013).

With over 20 chapters spanning 855 pages (and weighing in at 1.2 kg), there is certainly much to like in this volume and, doubtless for some readers, enough to dislike. With such a *mélange* of topics, the volume could benefit from segmentation into different parts, though perhaps that would defy the logic of “entanglement.” The sheer size and scope of the volume make reviewing it all the more difficult, especially as some contributions tally 50, 60, and even 70 pages. Consequently, the chapters highlighted in this review reflect some of the reviewer’s own interests.

One of the major themes tackled in this volume is the representation and perception of the “Other,” in other words, Hungarian views of Romanians and *vice versa*. In the opening chapter Sorin Mitu takes a theoretical stab at the heart of the “story of Romanian–Hungarian hostility” that has seemingly existed for a millennium. Whether the negative images of one another are “imagined realities” or “real images” is beside the point, argues Mitu, as these images often have tangible effects on the relations between the two communities and on the everyday lives of individuals (pp.37–38). Mitu locates the genesis of Hungarian–Romanian negative imagology and stereotypes in the overlapping Hungarian and Romanian national projects, which began in the first half of the nineteenth century and converged in Transylvania. Mitu describes how the modern Hungarian self-image was constructed against a Byzantine Romanian one so as to circumscribe Catholic/Protestant Hungary within the enlightened Western Europe. Turn about was fair play, as the Romanian self-image as Latinate inheritors of the Roman legacy was constructed against an image of the equestrian Finno-Ugric from the steppe, which depicted the Hungarians as cultural and geographical interlopers in Europe’s hapless eastern periphery. The postcolonialist paradigm of Orientalism and its various adaptations have become axiomatic in explanations of self-imagining and Othering in the European East.³ However, it does not always explain the countervailing trends in both countries that led to positive conceptions of identity using explicitly Eastern-oriented, mystical, and indigenous notions of spatiality, temporality, and being.⁴ In some

3 See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York–Oxford: OUP, 1997); Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, “Orientalist Variations on the Theme ‘Balkans’: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics,” *Slavic Review* 51 no. 1, (Spring, 1992): 1–15; Milica Bakić-Hayden, “Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia,” *Slavic Review* 54 no 4, (Winter, 1995): 917–31; and Alexander Kiossev, “Notes on Self-Colonizing Cultures,” in *Rethinking the Transition*, ed. Ivaylo Znepolski et al. (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridsky University Press, 2002), 361–69.

4 In recent years scholars working on the region have begun to challenge or at any rate counterbalance

respects these self-imaginings had greater identity-building ramifications than the nesting discourses from the West.

Judit Pál offers a fascinating look at the use of flags as symbols of cohesion and mass mobilization in Transylvania during the Revolution of 1848. Pál shows how “the struggle of colors” symbolized the political disunity that plagued the Hungarians, Romanians, and Saxons in Transylvania. Flags expressed newly formed national and ethnic identities and corresponded to specific political discourses about national belonging (p.122).

Keith Hitchins provides a typically masterful account of the aspirations and apprehensions of majority and minority elites in dualist Hungary and interwar Romania. Examining periods of intransigence, reconciliation, and separation between the competing nationalities, Hitchins argues that their point of divergence was ultimately not political but rather fundamentally cultural and spiritual, giving rise to a *Kulturkampf* of sorts that, for generations, impacted the status and treatment of minorities in Transylvania (p.126). The idea of ethnically based nation-states as the only legitimate form of social organization prevailed over attempts at accommodation.

Several chapters in this volume deal with the entanglements of economic nationalizing in the contested ethnic borderlands. In his case study of Szatmár/Satu Mare County between 1867 and 1940, Anders Blomqvist depicts the struggle for supremacy on the “internal front,” where local minority and majority elites “cut their political teeth” while Budapest and Bucharest experimented with nationalizing policies (p.170). Blomqvist makes a convincing argument that excluding minorities from the economic life of a town or region can have devastating consequences for majorities alike. He also shows the uncanny ability of some minority elites to adapt amphibious-like to the realities (and sometimes perks) of majority rule, only to co-opt the selfsame strategies of nationalizing whenever their turn to rule. Barna Ábrahám’s chapter compares the modernization and *embourgeoisement* processes of the Slovaks and Transylvanian Romanians in dualist Hungary, specifically their respective efforts to achieve social and economic progress and ultimately to construct ethnically based national economies independent of “the encompassing context of Hungary”

post-colonialist discourses that depict “Eastern” Europe as a space of passive receptivity and reproduction of “Western” European models of easternness. See especially Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, eds., *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008); Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism: Liberal Ideology and the Image of Russia in France (c. 1740–1880)* (Oxford–New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

(pp.203–4). Gábor Egry likewise examines through the lens of regionalism the parallel processes of Romanian and Hungarian national building. Egry looks at regionalist programs, organizations, ideologies, and discourses that took place in apposition and frequently in opposition to the nationalizing and statist agendas from Budapest and Bucharest. He challenges taken-for-granted assumptions about what unites people beyond the creed of nationhood.

The history of science and medicine in East Central Europe is a neglected field, which, as Marius Turda shows, has the potential to fulfill the kind of research agenda envisioned by the volume's editors. Within a broader overview of the history of anthropology in Hungary and Romania, Turda discusses the “entangled epistemologies of race” that anthropologists in both countries worked to disentangle in the first half of the twentieth century (p.306). Turda shows how this research was impressed into national service and used as a weapon in the political war over disputed territories and peoples.

One of the strengths of this volume is the collection of chapters dealing with the politicization of history writing and education, from the rewriting of school textbooks to the reorganization of universities. Zoltán Pálffy gives a prosopographical account of elite formation and the nationalization of higher education in Transylvania before and after 1918, while Lucian Nastașă provides a timely study on the development and vicissitudes of the Hungarian University in Kolozsvár/Cluj since 1875. Nastașă shows how the politics of higher education in this most important Transylvanian town reflected the national and international politics of Hungary and Romania. Eric Beckett Weaver looks at the League of Nations' initiative to review and improve foreign texts. Hungarian politicians and historians enthusiastically supported the initiative, frustrated as they were by the “false” histories portraying Hungary as oppressive and “inhumane,” and thus deserving of its fate as a defeated and diminished country (pp.422–23). To revisionists in Hungary, such discourses not only enabled the disaster of Trianon but also prevented its revision and justified de-nationalization policies targeting Hungarian minorities in neighboring states. In detailing this historiographical counteroffensive for “re-narrating” Hungarian history abroad, Weaver shows that, even with the best intentions, the efforts to arrive at a common understanding of the past can often lead to greater mutual misunderstanding.

Holly Case paints a reflective portrait of a young historian's pursuit of a promising line of research, in this instance her own discovery of a personal letter written by a dispirited woman in Northern Transylvania to a friend across the border in Romania. How did such an innocuous letter, which lamented the

difficult local conditions under Hungarian rule, spark an international dispute between Hungary and Romania that eventually drew in Axis allies Germany and Italy? Contemplating this question, Case traces her own journey from writing a “micro-social history” as a graduate student to writing a “different sort of big history,” one that was transnational and accounted for the multiplicity of contexts in which individuals, communities, and states interacted with one another (pp.467–68). Case’s contribution is all the more satisfying, as it answers the editors’ call for historians to consider their own involvement in the process of knowledge production (p.7).

In his chapter on “national essentialism” in post-World War II Romania and Hungary, Balázs Trencsényi provides a welcome coda to his book on “national character” in interwar East Central Europe, showing how communist regimes in both countries appropriated the essentialist national discourses of the interwar past to serve the aims of the communist present. Hungarian and Romanian communist regimes incorporated the national(ist) canon into the framework of “socialist patriotism” by selectively appropriating the national bona fides of the populist (*népi*) tradition in Hungary and the “young generation” in Romania, respectively (pp.516, 520). In the context of de-Stalinization, especially after the 1956 Revolution, and increasingly inadequate class narratives, the “national turn” served as a mediator between the regime and the pre-communist cultural traditions. It helped, moreover, to indigenize a new generation of communist elites eager to distance themselves from the old cadre of “foreigners” and internationalists. In Romania the *topoi* of national essentialism lent succor to autochthonist and protochronist discourses and the re-emergence of a national metaphysics, while in Hungary it facilitated an emerging “neo-populism,” enabling a diverse group of intellectuals and political actors to speak in familiar terms about the nation and the plight of the Hungarian minority across the border (pp.527–28). Trencsényi also assesses the legacy of the interwar ideological tradition of national essentialism since 1989, suggesting that in both Hungary and Romania ethnic revivalism has lent itself to many of the “therapeutic” projects in an effort to break out of the transition process (p.563).

Martin Mevius takes a fresh look at the controversial 1986 publication of the three-volume history of Transylvania, *Erdély története*.⁵ The volumes were assembled and published in large measure as a response to Romanian propaganda and historical writing under Ceaușescu. In this respect, *Erdély*

5 Béla Köpeczi, ed., *Erdély története*, vols 1–3 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986).

története was “not only a work of scholarship but also a political weapon,” exemplifying the recurrent theme of history as an open battlefield for international disputes over the symbolic territorial spaces and the treatment of minorities (pp.571–72). Mevius shows how historians and politicians of both regimes instrumentalized history for reasons of national legitimacy, promoting increasingly national(ist) perspectives on history in lieu of increasingly inadequate Marxist ones. One of the assets of this contribution, and of the volume as a whole, is the great range of sources used. Mevius draws on many forms of research available in the historian’s toolkit, including personal interviews with the “hard-line (*vonalas*) party hack” Béla Köpeczi, the volume’s lead editor and author (p.537).

Several chapters deal with the seemingly intractable issue of rapprochement and reconciliation after 1989, giving a kind of history-of-the present critique of reconciliation processes in Hungary and Romania. In a comparative analysis of history textbooks in Hungary and Romania, Csaba Zahorán revisits the issue of rival national narratives that continue to obsess over ethnogenesis, state foundation, and demographic unity. Zahorán notes, however, that a more accommodating space is beginning to open up, which can allow for multiple perspectives and the de-mythologizing of traditional national heroes and events. Michael Shafir sets out to explore cross-border attitude grouping of Hungarians and Romanians, but for the most part offers a discourse analysis of Cristian Tudor Popescu’s and Horia-Roman Patapievic’s writings on such topics as the Roma (“Gypsies”), anti-Semitism, race, and political correctness. While certainly provocative, the upbraiding of two high-profile Romanian public intellectuals makes an awkward fit for a pioneering volume aiming to forge a common history of Hungary and Romania.

Shafir’s dismal portrait of Hungarian–Romanian reconciliation stands in stark contrast to Constantin Iordachi’s assertion that the ever-closer integration of the two countries through participation in European and global institutions has positively redefined the nature of their interstate relations. Iordachi’s chapter is another fine example of the potential of *histoire croisée* to yield fruitful results on under-researched topics. His sweeping overview and analysis of the development and evolution of nation-state citizenship in Hungary and Romania show how the citizenship issue has moved from one of “disentanglement” to “interdependence,” having finally overcome the pre-World War II demographic-territorial mixing (p.712). The citizenship issue is an important category of analysis, argues Iordachi, as it has a number of heuristic advantages, one of

which is to bridge the institutional (state) and the subjective (nation) dimensions of modern identity construction (p.717).

Despite the editors' clarion call to break new paths in the historiography on Romania and Hungary, many of the contributions deal with well-trodden issues of national and ethnic identity, the minority question, and elites and their institutions (invariably in Transylvania). This is not so much a criticism as it is an endorsement of the editors' conviction that a common history of the two countries should go "beyond national narratives." As the editors readily acknowledge, "[w]riting the history of Romania and Hungary from a unitary perspective is a difficult if not a self-defeating exercise, a genuine test for the uses and abuses of history" (p.4). This makes the contributions on flag colors, textbooks, regionalism, and citizenship all the more outstanding. The book's great achievement is not so much that it fills a historiographical gap but that it exposes this gap and offers new ways to fill it. One can envision a new generation of scholars working on the entangled traditions of Hungarian and Romanian art, architecture, music, food, and even sex (miscegenation, anyone?). Also, there is certainly more room for the life stories of individuals, small communities, and local cultures, all of which can be made relevant as a sort of connective tissue supporting or uniting larger themes. Employing innovative and transnational frameworks such as the ones proposed in this volume will be necessary if the historian's craft is to have wider appeal and application across disciplines. For these reasons, the book represents a seminal contribution to the recent historiography not just on Hungary and Romania but also on the wider region.

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THE

Hungarian Historical Review

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The Hungarian Historical Review is a peer-reviewed international journal of the social sciences and humanities with a focus on Hungarian history. The journal's geographical scope—Hungary and East-Central Europe—makes it unique: the Hungarian Historical Review explores historical events in Hungary, but also raises broader questions in a transnational context. The articles and book reviews cover topics regarding Hungarian and East-Central European History. The journal aims to stimulate dialogue on Hungarian and East-Central European history in a transnational context. The journal fills lacuna, as it provides a forum for articles and reviews in English on Hungarian and East-Central European history, making Hungarian historiography accessible to the international reading public and part of the larger international scholarly discourse.

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THE

Hungarian Historical Review

Family History

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