

FAMILY COMPOSITION AND REMARRIAGE IN RURAL TRANSYLVANIA, 1838–1910¹

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ABSTRACT: *Analysis of remarriage in 19th century Transylvania is an unexploited research topic. The ethnical and religious diversity of the population, as well as the physical geographical variety and economic situation of the region allow a multi-perspective, comparative analysis of family and population history. Present paper explores the impact of demographic factors and family composition on widowhood and remarriage in two typical mountain villages in Szeklerland (in present-day Romania), between 1838 and 1910. By using micro-level data based on family reconstitutions we found evidence of a significant role of family composition concerning the decision to remarry for both widows and widowers. The results of multivariate analysis show that the age entering widowhood was a key-element for both widows and widowers as the probability of remarrying declined in parallel with the growing age at dissolution of marriage. The variables concerning family composition (the number, age, and sex of the children living in the families) influenced the chance of remarrying. Both in the case of widows and widowers, the presence of children under age 12 increased the chance of remarrying. At the same time, the presence of an adult son in the family decreased the chance of the remarriages of widows because of the problems related to inheritance.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The death of a spouse used to change the everyday life of the surviving household members fundamentally.³ The widowed person lost some of the material (property and income), emotional (mutual communication and empathy) and social support (social network and status), as well as potential help

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

with household chores and child raising that marriage had provided for them (Dribe 2007). The surviving spouse had to decide how to live after losing the partner. Re-marriage was one of the possible options.⁴

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

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

Remarriage has been a somewhat neglected field of family and population history. The marriage model of John Hajnal (1965) considered only the first marriage and remarriage can be regarded as a missing variable of this model (Saito 2005: 174). Co-operation between historical demographers and family historians was facilitated by a conference about this topic in 1981 (Dupâquier et al. 1981; Oris 2003). Authors⁵ defined gender and age as the most important factors of remarriage. Later, new aspects entered analyses such as financial status, inheritance, autonomy of women and the role of family systems.⁶ More recently scholars apply multivariate statistical methods in the investigation of factors influencing remarriage (complexity of the household, presence of children etc.).⁷

Analysis of remarriage in 19th century Transylvania is an unexploited research topic. The ethnical and religious diversity of the population, as well as the physical geographical variety and economic situation of the region allow a multi-perspective, comparative analysis of family and population history. Present paper focuses on remarriage in two typical mountain villages in Szekler-

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

⁵ Dupâquier 1981; reviewed by Watkins 1983.

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

⁷ Some of the latest micro historical and quantitative approaches on remarriage: Breschi and Manfredini 2007; Breschi et al. 2009; Dribe, Lundh and Nystedt 2007; Kurosu 2007a; Kurosu 2007b; Kurosu et al. 2008; Lundh 2007; McQuillan 2003; Moring 2002a; Moring 2002b; Van Poppel 1995; Van Poppel 1998.

land (in present-day Romania), Szentegyházásfalva⁸ and Kápolnásfalva⁹, between 1838 and 1910. The aim of the study is to identify the demographic and family factors of remarriage.

In Transylvania, there are very few data available on remarriage from the period before official statistics. After the Austrian-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, statistical recording became continuous, thus enabling the identification of local remarriage patterns (Faragó 2000). However, the available descriptive and aggregated data do not allow the investigation of factors that influence remarriage. Recent international studies recognised the necessity of individual longitudinal data for analysing the impact of family factors on remarriage.

The present paper is based on the analysis of parish registers and applies the method of family reconstitution. Family reconstitution has been criticised by numerous scholars in the last decades (Ruggles 1992; Kasakoff and Adams 1995). However, international examples demonstrate that family reconstitution data allow the use of multivariable statistical methods (Gutmann and Alter 1993). Recent studies have convincingly demonstrated that family reconstitution data can be successfully applied in the investigation of remarriage (Knodel 1988; Knodel and Lynch 1985; McQuillan 2003).

The first part of the paper provides descriptive statistics. We describe the marriage market, the frequency of widowhood by age, the change of remarriage propensity in time and by age, and gender differences. The second part of the paper presents event history or hazard models in order to explain remarriage. The third and last part includes descriptive statistics again to describe the main characteristics of the new spouses.

2. THE COMMUNITIES: SZENTEGYHÁZASFALVA AND KÁPOLNÁSFALVA, 1838–1910

Szentegyházásfalva and Kápolnásfalva are neighbouring settlements. They are located along the southern skirts of Harghita Mountains, in the eastern part of Inner Transylvania, present-day Romania, at about 860 metres above sea level. The territory belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy during the investigated period. The villages lay on the frontier, far from the economic centres of Transylvania. Their total population reached 4,000 in the 1900s. The majority of their inhabitants belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Due to their geographical proximity (2 km) and the joint privileges received from the Princes of Transylva-

⁸ In Romanian: Vlăhița.

⁹ In Romanian: Căpâlnița.

nia, the history of the two villages was closely interlocked: they formed one parish until 1838 and one administrative unit until 1876.¹⁰

The discovery of iron ore sites close to the villages and the opening of mines were important events in the 19th century history of the two settlements. An industrial plant, Szentkeresztbánya was founded a few kilometres away from the villages in the 1850s, which provided the opportunity for the locals to secure some extra income. Due to contemporary financial and infrastructural conditions, mining remained a small-scale enterprise.

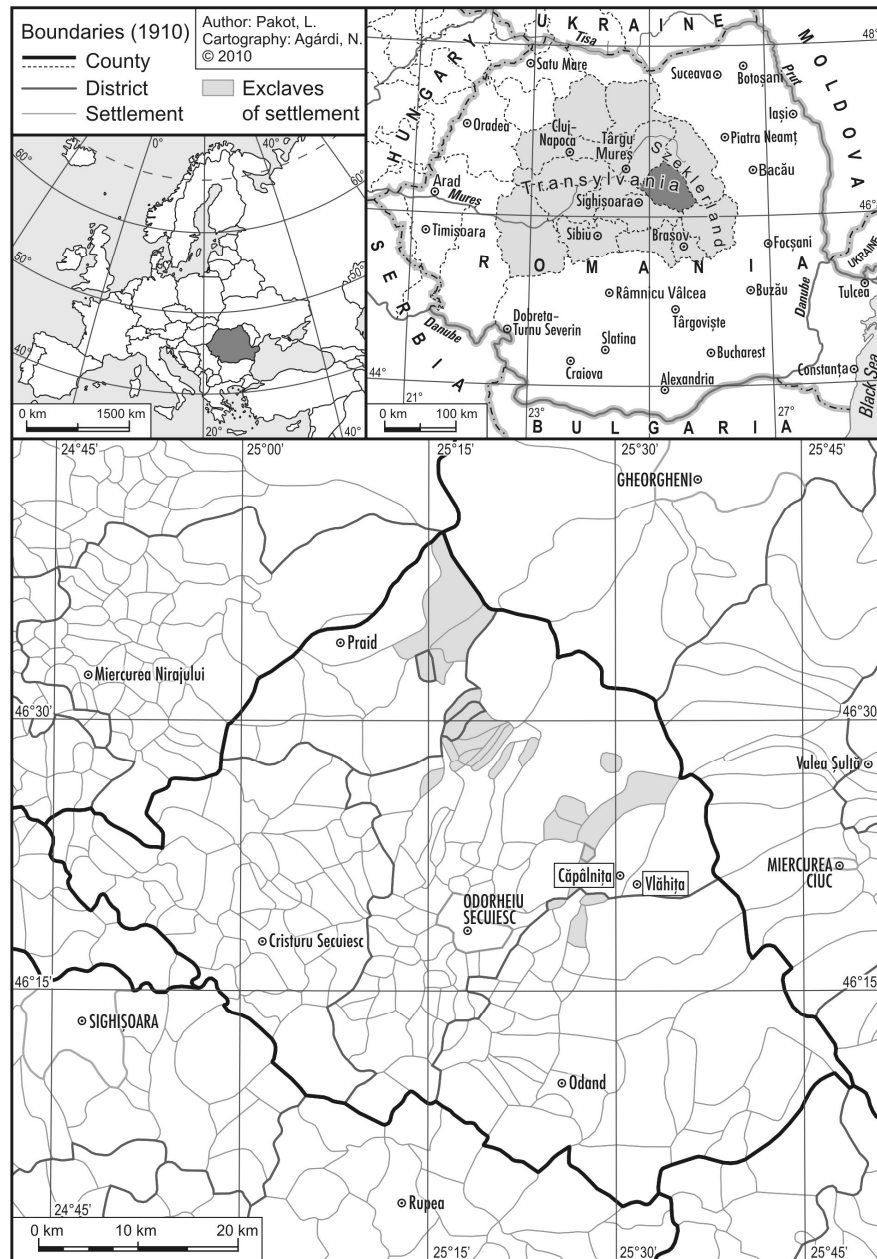
The majority of villagers were smallholders, and their living was provided by lumbering and woodwork in the communally owned woods and extensive animal husbandry. Timbering and woodwork was carried out within a cottage industrial framework that required the close cooperation of related families. The number of water-driven sawmills operated by siblings or close relatives reached 100 according to the cadastre of 1909 (Sándor 1998; Molnár 1974). The economic development of Inner Transylvania raised the demand for woodenware. Timber used in construction and agriculture was transported in carriages by male family members towards the agriculturally more developed and more urbanised Southern Transylvanian regions.

Besides their geographic and economic conditions, the population of the settlements was characterised by particular patterns of demographic behaviour (Table 1). Apart from the dynamic increase of the population and its young age structure, the common demographic characteristics of the two villages included relatively high fertility, low emigration and relatively high infant and child mortality (Pakot 2003; Pakot 2008; Őri and Pakot 2009). 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, however, a significant increase took place around the turn of the century. An important characteristic of demographic behaviour was universal and early marriage. Average age at first marriage was 20–21 years for females and 25–27 years for males. The ratio of unmarried people among the old was very low. Strict religious and community regulations forbade divorce.¹¹ The influence of the Roman Catholic Church was present in other aspects of everyday life too.¹²

¹⁰ For a history of the privileges of the communities, see Herman 1999; for a detailed account of public administration changes and the process of losing the privileges in the 1870s, see Pál 2003.

¹¹ In the 19th century, we found only four married couples who supposedly divorced.

¹² In a subregional or regional perspective, the denominational diversity of the county's villages may influence the variety of marriage regulations. Regulation on divorce is a good example: the Roman Catholic Church forbade it, whereas Protestant Churches were more permissive. Therefore, divorce was a tolerated – although not widely spread – practice in Protestant villages of the county. For more information on the institution of divorce and the regulation on divorce under 19th century Reformed Church of Transylvania, see Kolumbán 2009.



Map 1
Map of the area under study

Household structure was mainly characterised by a stem family system, in which one child – generally one of the adult sons – remained with the old parents and lived there with his wife after getting married. However, nuclear families were the most common household type due to high adult and old age mortality. Due to the dominant economic role of men, marriage was virilocal or neolocal.

Table 1
Selected demographic indicators of the two communities

	Szentegyházásfalva and Kápolnásfalva (1900)	
	Male	Female
SMAM	27.2	20.9
Celibacy	2.0	2.0
e_0	30.7	30.6
I_g		0.735

	Szentegyházásfalva and Kápolnásfalva (1868)		
	Household type	Population	Mean household size
Nuclear	71.5	71.0	4.4
Complex	19.5	26.0	6.0
Solitaries	6.3	1.4	1.0
No structure	2.6	0.5	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	
N	757	1761	

Source: Census 1900; Parish registers of Szentegyházásfalva and Kápolnásfalva; Communion books of Szentegyházásfalva and Kápolnásfalva 1868–1880

Note: SMAM is the singulate mean age at marriage; celibacy is defined as the proportion never married at age 50; e_0 denotes life expectancy at birth; I_g is the Princeton index of marital fertility

3. SOURCES

We reconstructed the demographic behaviour of the examined settlements from parish register data. An electronic database was compiled from parish registers between 1776 and 1943. Based on the principles of the family reconstitution method set by Louis Henry and Michel Fleury (Fleury and Henry 1985; Henry and Blum 1988) and making use of available computerised database management facilities, we were able to reconstitute the most important demographic events of families and individuals by applying time-consuming record linking.

When investigating widowhood and remarriage, data on marriage are of high importance. Marriages that took place in Szentegyházsfalva and Kápolnásfalva were recorded jointly until 1838. After Kápolnásfalva became an independent parish, marriages were registered separately in the parish registers of the two villages. In the first decades of the 19th century, entries included information on the date of marriage, names of bride and bridegroom, and the name of the celebrating priest. From 1822, information on the age and family status of bride and bridegroom were added to the records. Place of residence, religion and parents' name of the new couple were also recorded from 1857 (and sporadically from 1840). Registering the date of birth of both the bride and the bridegroom instead of their age at marriage started in 1926. Occupation and social status were recorded inconsistently. The label "farmer" is frequently used in a general sense. In accordance with contemporary marriage customs, marriages took place where the bride lived. Therefore, we can draw a relatively reliable picture about marriages of local women; however, marriages of local men that took place somewhere else remain unknown.

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

Due to the nature of family reconstitution data, we have no information on migration. No data are available on the number of individuals who left the villages and on the date of their emigration. People from other settlements may have moved back to their villages after the death of their spouse. Others may have left in order to find a job or to remarry. Therefore it should be kept in mind that emigration, death and remarriage were competing risks after the termination of the marriage.¹³

Table 2 describes the construction of the sample. Couples married between 1820 and 1910 constitute the total sample. Almost 29% of them were excluded due to missing data on the date of death. If we suppose that the death of all adults was registered, these individuals must have been alive at the end of 1941, the end of the data collection period, or they left the village after getting married or widowed.

Table 2
The diminishing number of cases in the complete sample of couples in the reconstitution study on widowhood and remarriage

Characteristics of couples	N	% of all couples
All couples with marriage date between 1820 and 1910	2824	100.0
Couples with end of union date	2391	84.7
Death dates known for both partners	2026	71.7
End of union between 1838 and 1910	1402	49.6
Age at widowhood is less than 65	1247	44.1

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházsfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

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

¹³ For measurement difficulties of remarriage, see Van Poppel 1998: 348–349; Blom 1991; Watkins 1983.

4. THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF WIDOWHOOD

Examining the distribution of marriages by marital status is a common method for analysing remarriage (Table 3). During the examined period, 25% of total marriages were concluded by widows or widowers. The most frequent type among these marriages was concluded between a widower and a single woman or a widow and a widower. These two marriage types constituted 40%-40% of all marriages. The remaining 20% were concluded between bachelors and widows. Thus remarriage was characterised by gender differences: widows remarried in smaller proportion than widowers. However, it is not gender differences but the high proportion of marriages concluded by widows and widowers that characterised the examined population.¹⁴

Table 3
Distribution of marriages and mean age at marriage for men and women by prior marital status and year of marriage

Year of marriage	Prior marital status of spouses									
	Bachelor and spinster		Widower and spinster		Bachelor and widow		Widower and widow		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Distribution</i>										
1838–1874	908	72.5	138	11.0	68	5.4	138	11.0	1252	100.0
1875–1909	952	72.3	148	11.2	83	6.3	133	10.1	1316	100.0
1838–1909	1860	72.4	286	11.1	151	5.8	271	10.5	2568	100.0
<i>Age at marriage for men</i>										
1838–1874	25.2		37.2		26.6		47.9		29.3	
1875–1909	26.1		38.2		27.3		49.5		29.8	
1838–1909	25.7		37.6		27.6		48.7		29.6	
<i>Age at marriage for women</i>										
1838–1874	21.2		24.3		30.1		41.6		24.8	
1875–1909	21.2		23.2		32.9		44.5		24.0	
1838–1909	21.2		23.8		31.7		43.0		24.4	

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházsfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

¹⁴ In the pre-industrial communities of Western Europe, widower-widow marriages were only 20% of total remarriages concluded by widows or widowers (Oris and Ochiai 2002: 67).

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

Table 4 describes the first widowhood experience of both males and females. According to life table calculations, the risk of widowhood increased in parallel with age. There are great gender differences. Due to early marriage, the age difference between wife and husband and high adult mortality, almost 10% of the hypothetical female cohort became widow by the age of 30. During the reproductive age (age 20–40), the risk of widowhood is higher for men than for women owing to the higher mortality of females because of childbearing. Above the age of 40, the risk of widowhood rose for both sexes and it gradually became twice as high among women as among men. This difference may be explained by higher male mortality and the age difference between the spouses. All in all, married woman aged 30 lost their partner on average 28.5 years later. The corresponding figure is 31.3 for men.¹⁵

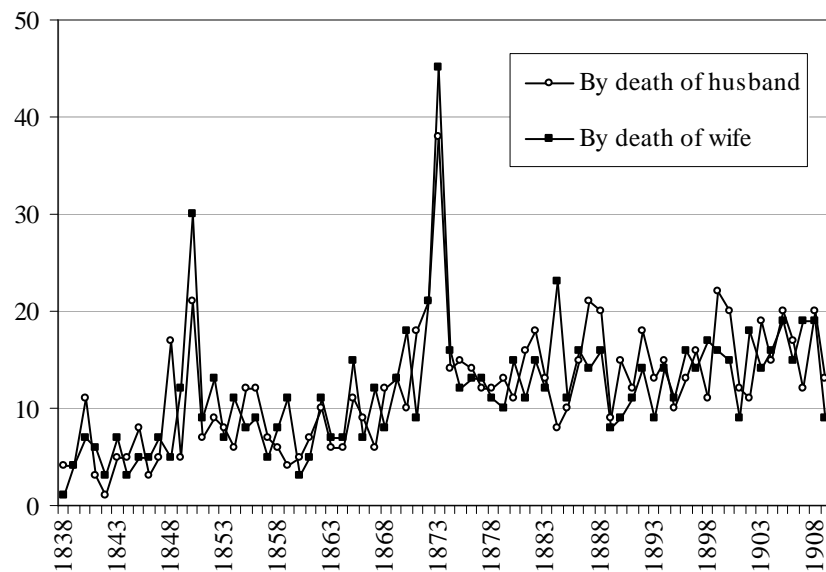
¹⁵ For the sake comparison, 30 year-old men and women lost their spouses on average 33.4 years later between 1812 and 1900 in Sart, a village in Eastern Belgium (Alter, Capron, Neven and Oris 2002: 392).

Table 4
Widowhood tables by sex, Szentegyházfalva and Kápolnásfalva (Romania), 1838–1910

Age	Men					Women				
	Married person years	Number of widow-hoods	Rates	Risks	Fictitious survivors	Married person years	Number of widow-hoods	Rates	Risks	Fictitious survivors
15–19	35.0	0	0.000	0.000	10000	544.9	4	0.007	0.036	10000
20–24	1219.1	5	0.004	0.020	10000	3307.4	36	0.011	0.053	9643
25–29	3693.8	35	0.009	0.046	9798	4700.6	36	0.008	0.038	9136
30–34	4270.5	71	0.017	0.080	9346	4512.8	57	0.013	0.061	8793
35–39	4023.7	76	0.019	0.090	8599	3992.1	50	0.013	0.061	8256
40–44	3537.0	66	0.019	0.089	7825	3359.5	88	0.026	0.122	7754
45–49	2924.7	62	0.021	0.101	7131	2566.6	80	0.031	0.144	6805
50–54	2234.6	65	0.029	0.136	6410	1900.7	70	0.037	0.168	5822
55–59	1618.8	47	0.029	0.136	5536	1299.1	66	0.051	0.225	4844
60–64	1098.4	53	0.048	0.215	4784	749.5	56	0.075	0.312	3754
65–69	581.6	34	0.058	0.254	3753	362.2	34	0.094	0.391	2582
70–74	229.8	14	0.061	0.263	2800	116.7	22	0.189	0.693	1573
75+	115.7	7	0.061	0.259	2063	19.4	7	0.361	0.938	482
				e20	36.0				e20	33.2
				e30	28.1				e30	26.0

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházfalva and Kápolnásfalva

The annual number of widowhoods demonstrates moderate fluctuation in the short- and medium term (Figure 1). It is difficult to define clear temporal tendencies for this specific non-representative sample. However, the effects of a typhus epidemic in 1850 and a cholera epidemic in 1873 are clearly visible.



Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházassfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

Note: Couples with union date between 1838 and 1910.

Figure 1
The number of marital dissolutions by death, Szentegyházassfalva and Kápolnásfalva, 1838–1910

5. THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF REMARRIAGE

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

Table 5 shows the cumulative probability of remarriage after widowhood. Strong gender differences can be observed: widowers remarried in a higher proportion and within a shorter period after the death of their spouse than wid-

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

Table 5
Life-table estimates of the proportion of those remarrying, by the elapsed time since dissolution, by period of dissolution and age at widowhood.
Szentegyházfalva and Kápolnásfalva, 1838–1910

	Proportion remarrying within					
	3 months	6 months	12 months	24 months	60 months	120 months
Males						
Period of dissolution						
1838–1874	0.166	0.351	0.487	0.596	0.676	0.685
1875–1909	0.184	0.336	0.449	0.565	0.633	0.652
Age at widowhood						
<35	0.309	0.530	0.716	0.849	0.902	0.911
35–44	0.223	0.448	0.603	0.735	0.815	0.829
45–54	0.140	0.307	0.395	0.527	0.626	0.641
55–64	0.063	0.129	0.209	0.257	0.297	0.310
Total	0.175	0.343	0.467	0.579	0.653	0.668
Females						
Period of dissolution						
1838–1874	0.020	0.055	0.162	0.301	0.451	0.509
1875–1909	0.011	0.053	0.141	0.263	0.395	0.460
Age at widowhood						
<35	0.043	0.181	0.390	0.677	0.854	0.910
35–44	0.018	0.025	0.127	0.271	0.519	0.625
45–54	0.005	0.021	0.070	0.154	0.242	0.294
55–64	0.000	0.012	0.062	0.094	0.141	0.152
Total	0.015	0.054	0.150	0.280	0.420	0.482

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

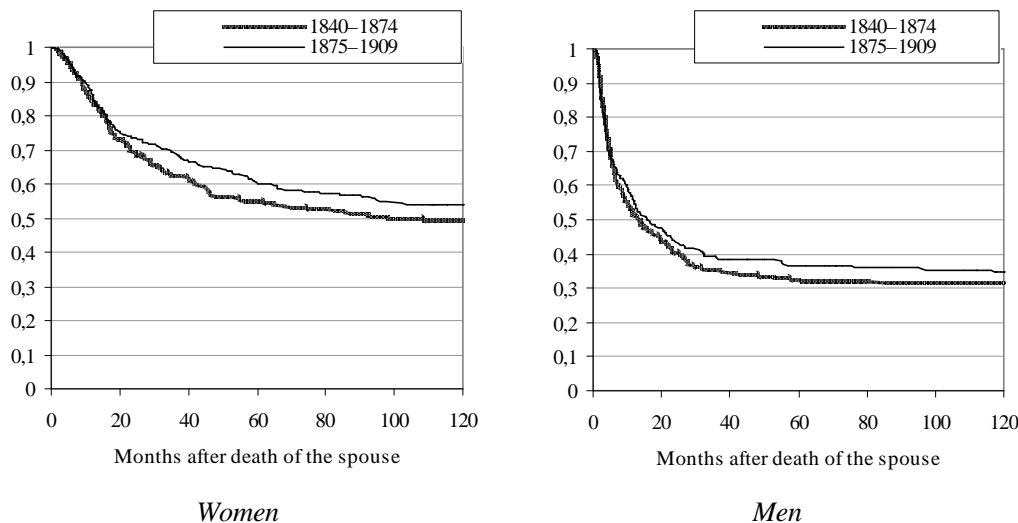
There is a close relationship between age at widowhood and the probability of remarriage. The majority of men who became widowed under age 45 remarried within a short period of time: about half of them remarried within 6 months. The proportion of remarrying males decreased in parallel with increas-

ing age at widowhood: only one third of men who got widowed at age 55–64 remarried within 10 years.

The negative effect of age was stronger among women than among men. Females widowed under age 35 had better chances in the marriage market than older ones. Those becoming widows at a later age remarried after a longer period. About 30% of females widowed at age 45–54 managed to set up a new marriage, whereas only 15% of women widowed at age 55–64 succeeded in doing so.

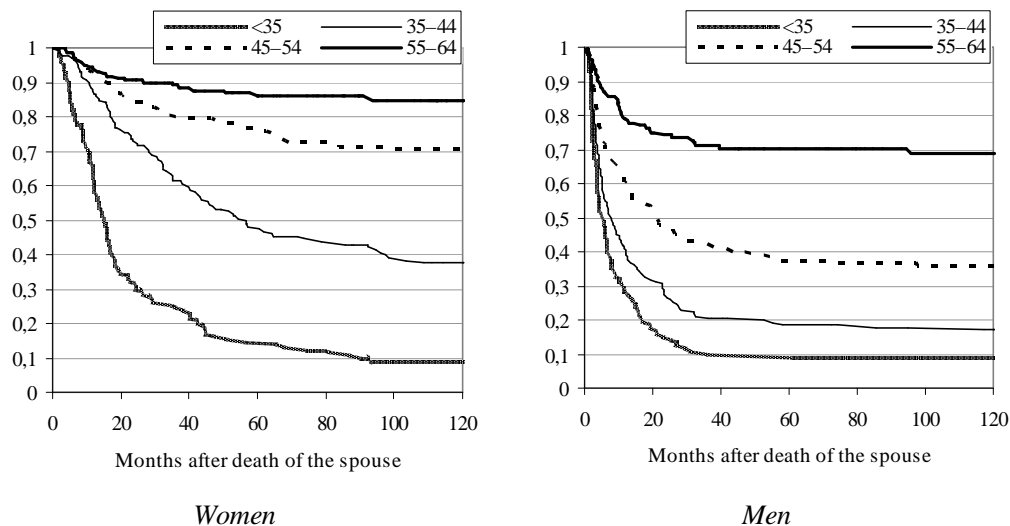
The distribution of remarriages by period demonstrates a slowly decreasing tendency for both sexes. However, no apparent decrease took place. Our data do not coincide with previous results about the decreasing frequency of remarriage by subsequent historical time periods.

Figures 2–3 provide a clearer and more detailed picture. Kaplan-Meier survival functions demonstrate the decreasing proportion of not remarrying males and females in parallel with time elapsed since widowhood. Since the values are cumulative, the curves are monotonously decreasing. Survival functions provide information on the changing risk of remarriage and the proportion of individuals at risk as well. Survival functions steeply decrease during the periods when the risk of remarriage is high and they are slowly decreasing or flat during periods of low remarriage risk.



Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházásfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

Figure 2
Proportions of remarrying women and men by elapsed time since dissolution, by period of dissolution (Kaplan–Meier survival functions). Szentegyházásfalva and Kápolnásfalva (Romania), 1838–1910



Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházsfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

Figure 3

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

The subsequent table indicates that gender differences are even more pronounced in remarriage. The majority of remarrying males found a new spouse within the first 2 years, whereas it took 5 years for the majority of widowed women. Men responded more quickly to the negative stress caused by spousal death.

Regarding men, the negative effect of age is the strongest among individuals aged between 55–64. In the case of younger cohorts, the risk of remarriage is almost identical during the first months after widowhood. It suggests that the negative impact of age affected life in the period subsequent to widowhood slowly and gradually. The negative impact of age was stronger among women and started to take effect immediately after becoming widow.

The period of widowhood had a negative effect after a few years had passed since the event. Again, this impact was stronger for women than for men. It seems that remarriages between 1875 and 1910 usually took place during the first few years after widowhood. In the last quarter of 19th century and the first decades of 20th century, the process of adaptation after widowhood was shorter and the negative period effect can be demonstrated from the third year after the loss of the spouse.

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

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

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

6. EVENT HISTORY ANALYSIS

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

Demographic characteristics are measured by two variables: the number of months elapsed since widowhood and age at widowhood. Since remarriage usually took place within the first few years after widowhood, 6 categorical variables were generated that measured the number of months elapsed since start of widowhood: : 0–3 months, 3–6 months, 6–12 months, 12–24 months, 24–60 months and 60–120 months. As the first variable was used as the refer-

ence category, we had 5 dummy variables. Age at widowhood was broken down into 4 categories: below 35, between 35–44, between 45–54 and between 55–64. The first one is the reference category, which indicates the reproductive age in which the majority of children were born.

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

By including the period of widowhood, historical time also assumed a role in the model. Two periods were differentiated – between 1838–1874 and between 1875–1910 – regarding demographic aspects epidemics (primarily cholera) gradually disappeared after 1874 among the adult population. The place of residence of individuals in the sample was also included in the analysis as a dummy variable.

Table 6 contains the distribution of the sample by the dependent and independent variables. All the variables in the model are categorical ones. The sum of the categories is 100% for all variables.

We ran three event history models. In order to highlight gender differences, first we examined the entire population at risk. Subsequently the remarriage of men and women was analysed in separate models. We expected that the more difficulties the widow(er) faced in household work, the more motivated he/she was to remarry. According to our hypothesis, marriage meant a secure and relatively cost-effective way of achieving adequate household size required for farm work and household tasks. Since rural families were based on the balancing of traditional gender roles, if one adult was missing from the work structure, it needed to be replaced immediately¹⁶. The presence of dependent children under 12 was considered as a sign of household difficulties in our model. The imbalanced gender distribution of children may signal unsuccessful family reproduction. In this way, the lack of children or having children exclusively of the same sex could have stimulated remarriage.

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

Table 6
Distribution of widows and widowers by dependent and independent variables in the sample

Variable	Widowers		Widows	
	Number	%	Number	%
Remarriage				
Yes	389	63.8	286	43.5
No	220	36.1	371	56.4
Duration of widowhood				
0–3 months	609	27.6	657	20.7
3–6 months	493	22.3	637	20.0
6–12 months	390	17.6	604	19.0
12–24 months	311	14.1	533	16.8
24–60 months	239	10.8	436	13.7
60–120 months	162	7.3	303	9.5
Age at widowhood				
<35	114	18.7	140	21.3
35–44	170	27.9	163	24.8
45–54	167	24.7	185	28.1
55–64	158	25.9	169	25.7
Number of children < 12 years old				
At least 1 son and 1 daughter	138	22.6	114	17.3
No child	287	47.1	366	55.7
Only son(s)	92	15.1	92	14.0
Only daughter(s)	92	15.1	85	12.9
Daughter 12–22 years old				
Yes	158	25.9	204	31.0
No	451	74.0	453	68.9
Son 12–25 years old				
Yes	180	29.5	218	33.1
No	429	70.4	439	66.8
Period of dissolution				
1838–1874	288	47.2	295	44.9
1875–1909	321	52.7	362	55.0
Parish/Village				
Szentegyházásfalva	336	55.1	343	52.2
Kápolnásfalva	273	44.8	314	47.7

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházásfalva and Kápolnásfalva

The presence of working-age sons and daughters eased the difficulties of the household. Therefore, these children could have been an alternative to remarriage. Working-age daughters could help their widowed father by carrying out the household chores. Sons of similar age could help the widows with the farm.

As we have mentioned earlier, children from the first marriage could have opposed remarriage as it could have been a threat to their legal inheritance. They could have tried to avoid living with step parents and step siblings as they would have had to share assets with the newcomers. Therefore, we expect that the presence of a working-age child of the opposite sex decreases the risk of remarriage.

7. RESULTS OF EVENT HISTORY ANALYSIS

Results of regression analyses are presented in Tables 7–8. Table 7 include the results of two models. The main difference between Model A and B is that the former one excludes the “age group” variable while Model B is complete. Since the number and age of children strongly correlates with the age of widow(er)s, the effect of variables relating to the presence of children was considerably modified when we controlled for age. Entering age also improved model fit.

Table 7 shows relative remarriage risks for the entire population at risk. Sharp gender differences may be observed. The remarriage risk of men was twice as high as that of women. The relative risk of remarriage significantly decreased in parallel with ageing and as time elapsed since widowhood.

According to Table 8, the negative effect of age was stronger among women than men. Gender differences may be observed in the effect of time elapsed since widowhood as well. The remarriage risk of men was the highest 3–6 months after becoming widower. For women, the risk was higher during later periods.

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

Regarding the effect of dependent children, the size of this burden encouraged remarriage. In the case of the total population at risk (Table 7), the remarriage risk of those having no child under age 12 are significantly lower than of those having at least one daughter and one son when their spouse died. This effect was more evident for males. Among widowers with underage daughters or sons, remarriage risk was 25% higher than among men with no such children.

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

Table 7
Relative risk of remarriage, total population at risk

Covariates	Model A		Model B	
	Relative risk	P-value	Relative risk	P-value
Duration of widowhood				
0–3 months	1.000	ref.	1.000	Ref.
3–6 months	1.343	0.022	1.400	0.009
6–12 months	0.874	0.290	0.950	0.691
12–24 months	0.613	0.000	0.712	0.007
24–60 months	0.242	0.000	0.299	0.000
60–120 months	0.062	0.000	0.078	0.000
Gender				
Female	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Male	2.006	0.000	2.386	0.000
Age at widowhood				
<35			1.000	ref.
35–44			0.557	0.000
45–54			0.305	0.000
55–64			0.129	0.000
Number of children < 12 years old				
At least 1 son and 1 daughter	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
No child	0.390	0.000	0.769	0.013
Only son(s)	0.824	0.103	0.876	0.266
Only daughter(s)	0.942	0.612	0.953	0.682
Daughter 12–22 years old				
No	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Yes	0.725	0.001	0.961	0.707
Son 12–25 years old				
No	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Yes	0.600	0.000	0.816	0.050
Period of dissolution				
1838–1874	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
1875–1909	0.959	0.600	1.066	0.414
Parish/Village				
Szentegyházsfalva	1.000	ref.	1.000	ref.
Kápolnásfalva	1.064	0.420	1.053	0.507
Events		675		675
Total time at risk		64768		64778
Max. log likelihood		–1744.7		–1642.9
LR test statistic		936		1140
Overall P-value		0.000		0.000

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházsfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

Table 8
Relative risk of marriage, male and female population at risk

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

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyházsfalva and Kápolnásfalva.

8. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW SPOUSE

Another possible research question is the family status of the new spouses. Our data set allows us to analyse the marital status of the new wives and husbands (Table 9). There are considerable gender differences: widowed men chose single women as new partners more often than widowed women chose single men. A high proportion of those under age 35 concluded their second marriage with spinsters/bachelors (84% of men and 62% of women). Some other researchers came to the same conclusion concerning Dutch and French rural communities (Bideau 1980; Van Poppel 1995). According to them, widows and widowers prefer single and childless partners so they could avoid the difficulties of integrating children of different sex into the new household and the complex question of inheritance. While widowers held an advantageous position in the local marriage market for a relatively long period of time (the result that the marital status of their new partners was spinster in most cases is suggestive), ageing had stronger negative effect among widows. Parallel with ageing, the number of widowed women concluding marriage with bachelors was decreasing.

As we stated earlier, the better position of men resulted from the characteristics of the family system. A widower was more likely to have his own home and household that provided him advantages in the local marriage market. The proportion of women in the same situation could have been lower, because the first marriage usually meant leaving the parental home for females. Widowhood could have raised several complex questions in regard to inheritance. We have seen in previous parts of the paper the characteristics of the own family or that of the family of the late husband (e.g. the presence of adult sons) played an important role in the decision.

Table 9

Relative distribution of widows and widowers remarrying, by marital status of the new spouse and age at widowhood. Szentegyhászfalva and Kápolnásfalva, 1838–1910

Age at bereavement	Widowers				Widows			
	Never married		Widow		Never married		Widower	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<35	87	84.46	16	15.53	75	61.98	46	38.01
35–44	82	58.99	57	41.00	18	19.56	74	80.43
45–54	32	31.37	70	68.62	2	3.92	49	96.07
55–64	6	13.33	39	86.66	0	0.00	22	100.00

Source: Parish registers of Szentegyhászfalva and Kápolnásfalva

Table 9 makes it clear that both sexes were more likely to choose widowed partners after they reached age 45. These choices are supposed to have resulted from the relatively independent decisions of the remarrying partners¹⁷ and the need for mutual support in old age could have motivated them. Literature refers to marriages between old widowed individuals as “assistance remarriages”. Our data indicate that this form of remarriage was dominant in Szeklerland, too.¹⁸

9. CONCLUSION

The death of a spouse could have significantly impacted the welfare of the surviving partner. In the villages of Transylvania, remarriage was a frequent reaction to the stress caused by spousal death. The frequency of remarriage was relatively high in international – especially in Western European – comparison.

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

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

During the analysis of factors that influenced remarriage, we emphasised that age, time elapsed since widowhood and the family context of widow(er)s were important determinants. After the inclusion of demographic characteristics as control variables, the presence of young adult and underage children remained significant predictors of remarriage. The size of the burden on the widowed person – measured with the number of dependent children – encouraged remarriage, especially among men. In the case of widows, the presence of work-age son(s) helped to overcome the difficulties and it discouraged remarriage. All in all, remarriage proved to be a useful tool for ensuring the survival

¹⁷ The lack of parental control must have contributed to the ability to make a free choice.

¹⁸ The unambiguous and clear need of the remarrying partners for mutual assistance in old age is present in contemporary written sources as well (Oláh 2007).

of the individual and the family. However, the institution of the stem family could also provide the necessary protection for older widowed people who did not find a new spouse, especially women.

When examining the remarriage behaviour of males and females in their reproductive age, a question arises: did they have any alternative? We are inclined to accept Fancine Roley's research results as valid for the examined two Transylvanian villages. In the French communities that Rolley examined there were hardly any women who were free to choose their partners. In many cases, the family selected the second spouse and remarriage was enforced by the difficulties that widows had to face (Rolley 1998: 266).

Translated by Zoltán Takács

SOURCES

Parish registers of Szentegyházassfalva:

Matricula Baptisatorum 1825–1845; Matricula Copulatorum 1825–1845; Matricula Defunctorum 1825–1845 Eccl. Oláhfalvensis, Eccl. Szentegyházass Oláhfalvensis. Roman Catholic Parish Archive, Szentegyházassfalva (hereafter RCPASZ).

Matricula Baptisatorum 1846–1856; Matricula Copulatorum 1846–1856; Matricula Defunctorum 1846–1856 Eccl. Szentegyházass Oláhfalvensis. RCPASZ.

Matricula Baptisatorum 1857–1868 Eccl. Szentegyházassfalva. RCPASZ.

Matricula Baptisatorum 1868–1879 matris Szentegyházass Oláhfalvensis. Harghita County National Archive, Miercurea-Ciuc, Romania (hereafter: HCNA), Fond 47, inv. 729.

Matricula Copulatorum 1857–1893 Eccl. Szentegyházassfalvensis. HCNA, Fond 47, inv. 730.

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Matricula Copulatorum 1893–1947 Eccl. Szentegyházassfalva. RCPASZ, vol. VI.

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Parish registers of Kápolnásfalva:

Matricula Copulatorum 1838–1857 Eccl. Kápolnás Oláhfalvensis. Roman Catholic Parish Archive, Kápolnásfalva, Romania (hereafter: RCPAK). Vol. I.

Matricula Baptisatorum 1838–1857 Eccl. Kápolnás Oláhfalvensis. RCPAK. Vol. I.

Matricula Defunctorum 1838–1857 Eccl. Kápolnás Oláhfalvensis. RCPAK. Vol. I.

- Matricula Copulatorum 1857–1906 Eccl. Kápolnás Oláhfalvensis. HCNA, Fond 47, inv. 82.
- Matricula Baptisatorum 1857–1872 Eccl. Kápolnás Oláhfalvensis. HCNA, Fond 47, inv. 81.
- Matricula Defunctorum 1857–1879 Eccl. Kápolnás Oláhfalvensis. HCNA, Fond 47, inv. 83.
- Matricula Baptisatorum 1876–1895; Matricula Defunctorum 1880–1895 Eccl. Kápolnás Oláhfalvensis. HCNA, Fond 47, inv. 85.
- Matricula Baptisatorum 1872–1908 Kápolnás Oláhfalu. HCNA, Fond 47, inv. 84.
- Matricula Defunctorum 1879–1902 Eccl. Kápolnás Oláhfalvensis. RCPAK. Vol. II.
- Matricula Copulatorum 1906–1949 Kápolnás Oláhfalu. RCPAK. Vol. III.
- Matricula Baptisatorum 1908–1937 Kápolnás Oláhfalu. RCPAK. Vol. IV.
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