

WEALTH AND MARITAL MOBILITY IN WESTERN HUNGARY: FELTORONY, 1827-1920

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I. Introduction

A common belief among historians of the family is that the selection of spouses in the past was partially, if not primarily, determined by economic factors. According to this view, each family was interested in utilizing the marriages of its children to improve, or at least to maintain, the economic status of the family. As a result, the critical importance of mate selection was not left entirely in the hands of the potential couple. Rather, the parents and, often, the extended family involved themselves in the selection process. Because the fortunes of one family could be affected greatly by the ties to another, the parents and other close relatives felt an obligation to exercise their influence.

Hungary, a country in which the nature and level of economic development and the distribution of land during the nineteenth century determined largely the social structure, provides an appropriate setting in which to examine the relationship between marriage and wealth.² Because Hungary was, essentially, an agricultural country, the peasant groups were predominant. By the end of the 18th century, the small-holders (serf-farmers) constituted 45.6% of the population, and the cottagers were 29.2%, which was nearly three-quarters (74.8%) of the populace.³ In the village of Feltorony, in Moson County, the national census of 1828 revealed a similar pattern. A total of 221 dwellings were surveyed, with inhabitants being enumerated in 210 of them. The total adult population of the village, excluding those older than 60 years of age, was 479 persons. 398 of the adults were classified according to occupation. The community claimed one "honored one", who was a petty noble or, more likely, the representative of the noble owners of the village, the Archduke Charles, the victor at Aspern, and his children. The balance of the inhabitants belonged to the vast servile population of Hungary. Of the households for which the heads were listed, 33.8% were small-holders (*coloni*) and 34.3% were cottagers (*inquilini*), a total of 68.1%. The remaining 31.9% of the agrarian population were dwarf-cottagers (*subinquilini*).⁴

The small-holders represented the upper level of peasant society in Feltorony and possessed a disproportionate share of the plowland, meadowland and livestock. The cottagers, who possessed houses, held very little land and livestock, but had a right to the communal pasture. The dwarf-cottagers did not own plow- or meadowland, and were often employed as hired hands.

II. History of peasant land holdings in Hungary

Serfdom had a long history in Hungary and became particularly oppressive after an unsuccessful peasant revolt in the early sixteenth century. The situation created by resultant *Tripartitum* of 1514 continued until the 18th century, when the landlords, due to improved transportation and the rising prices for farm products, became increasingly interested in manorial production and sought to enlarge their holdings of land at the expense of the peasantry. To prevent the impoverishment and divestiture of the servile population of its land, Empress Maria Theresa enacted the *Urbarium*. This "national standardization of serfdom" was instituted between 1766 and 1772.⁵

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the *Urbarium* was its determination of what area of land would belong to the serfs and the holdings which would remain in manorial production. Although the amount of land granted to the peasants varied among the Hungarian provinces, the peasants could no longer be deprived of their right to work the land and to transfer their holdings to their heirs. Only in the case of extreme incompetence could a landholder be deprived of his holdings. Although not the free owner of the land allotted to him, the serf was the proprietor.⁶

Land in the villages of Hungary was allotted on the *telek* system, which was a fixed area determined for each county according to the quality and quantity of land available. The *telek*, or *Session*, consisted of several plots of land: a plot in the village, where the peasant maintained his house, garden, fruit trees and livestock; and shares of plowland, the common pasture, meadow and forest.⁷

In the Great Hungarian Plain, a full *telek* (*Session*) ranged as high as 58 cadastral yokes (approximately 82 acres), while in other provinces the holdings were as small as 22 yokes.⁸ Prior to 1848, the minimum size into which a *Session* could be subdivided was 1/8 of an allotment. Originally, one *Session* (*jobbágytelek*) was supposed to be an area large enough to yield adequate produce for eight serfs and their families, and to enable them to fulfill their obligations to the landlord, the church and the state. Because of the common practice of dividing holdings, however, many peasants were reduced to near poverty.

At the other extreme, a peasant was allowed to accumulate a maximum of four *Sessionen*, which would have been a source of relatively considerable wealth. Few peasants, though, acquired such extensive holdings and most were subject to the loss of part of their land due to partitioning it among their children.⁹

III. Peasant land holdings in Feltorony

The inhabitants of Feltorony were fortunate to live in a county where the peasants possessed more land than elsewhere in Hungary. In Moson County (Wieselburg), a *Vollbauer* (*colonus*, small-holder) was not always considered, as in other counties, a person who possessed only one *Session* of land, but a possessor of 4 *Sessionen* in an area where a *Session* ranged from 32 to 39 cadastral yokes.¹⁰ In addition, 80% of the

provincial land was held by the peasantry, with less than one-fifth remaining in the hands of the lords for manorial production.¹¹

In Feltonry, a *Session* of land appears to have been 64.67 *hold* of plowland. This estimation is based on the Urbarial granting of one local *Session* to each small-holder and the fact that most landowners in the community possessed either one *Session* of 64.67 *hold*, or nearly even fractions of 1/2 (32.33 *hold*); 1/4 (17.44 *hold*); or 1/8 allotment (8.67 *hold*) of plowland. There was a total of 92 landowners in the community, with an average of 0.73 *Session*, which was more than three times the national average.¹²

Table 1.¹³ Distribution of plowland – 1828

Amount of Plowland	No. of Owners	% of Landowners
More than 64.67 <i>hold</i>	4	4.4
64.67 <i>hold</i>	44	48.9
More than 32.33 <i>hold</i>	18	20.0
32.33 <i>hold</i>	5	5.6
17.33 <i>hold</i>	18	20.0
8.67 <i>hold</i>	1	1.1
Totals	90	100.0

In addition to plowland, a *Session* in Feltonry included 3 *hold* of meadow and an undetermined amount of the communal pasture. Each of the possessors of a full portion of plowland owned a full share of meadowland, whereas lesser landholders did not. There was a nearly exact correlation between the amounts of plowland and meadowland possessed. Each owner of a full allotment of plowland obtained 3 *hold* of meadow. Those persons with a half allotment of plowland received 1 1/2 or 2 *hold* of meadow. One *hold* of meadow was granted to those who held a quarter portion of plowland, while the owner of a one-eighth *Session* had 1/2 *hold* of meadow.

Table 2. Distribution of meadowland – 1828

Amount of Meadowland	No. of Owners	% of Landowners
More than 3 <i>hold</i>	4	4.4
3 <i>hold</i>	44	48.9
2 <i>hold</i>	18	20.0
1 1/2 <i>hold</i>	5	5.6
1 <i>hold</i>	18	20.0
1/2 <i>hold</i>	1	1.1
Totals	90	100.0

The distribution of land for vineyards at Feltorony was clearly unrelated to other land holdings. In fact, owners of large amounts of plow- and meadowland possessed relatively little of the vineyards. The village contained a total of 1037 1/2 "hoes" of vineyard. Although all of the small-holders owned plow- and meadowland, less than half (43.7%) appear to have worked vineyards. While comprising one-third (33.8%) of those in the agricultural group, these small-holders possessed slightly more than one-sixth (18.3%) of the wine-producing land. In contrast, the cottagers, while nearly equal to the small-holders in numbers, held 44.3% of the vineyards, while only 7.4% of the plowland and 8.7% of the meadows. Also, a larger percentage of the cottagers (81.9%) possessed vineyards. A similar percentage of the dwarf-cottagers (80.6%) worked in the wine industry and possessed a share of the vineyards (33.5%) nearly equal to their numbers (31.9%) in the land-working population. None of the dwarf-cottagers possessed meadows or plowland. (See Table 3.)

Table 3. Composite Percentage of Land Holdings - 1828

Status	Plowland	Meadow	Vineyard
Small-holder	92.6	91.3	18.3
Cottager	7.4	8.7	44.3
Dwarf-cottager	0.0	0.0	33.5
Unknown	-	-	3.9

Composite average of land holdings - 1828

Status	Plowland	Meadow	Vineyard
Small-holder	56.5 <i>hold</i>	2.73 <i>hold</i>	2.68 "hoes"
Cottager	4.45	0.26	6.39
Dwarf-cottager	0.0	0.0	5.19
Unknown	0.0	0.0	10.0

IV. The relationship of marriage to landownership

At some time prior to the eighteenth century, the serf population likely had enough land to support itself, hence the development of the *telek* system, a scheme which provided each peasant family with enough land to obtain the necessities of life. After the end of the Turkish overlordship in Hungary, the population grew rapidly because of natural increase and immigration. As the land became increasingly crowded and it was impossible or not allowed for the serfs to obtain more land from the nobility, the peasants were required to divide and subdivide their plots.¹⁴ The most common occasion for such subdivisions was upon the marriage of children. In 1828 the small-holders in Feltorony were relatively well-off and had not fallen victim to the fragmentation of holdings to the degree that was common throughout much of Hungary. One means

through which families retarded the loss of landownership through subdivision was to marry their children to members of families of similar wealth. Thus, when the land was divided to provide for the new couple, all parties concerned had more property than if the union involved a less wealthy family.¹⁵

The 1828 census conducted in Feltorony listed the land and livestock holdings of the inhabitants of this rural community in extreme western Hungary. Table 3 shows that small-holders owned the most land of the three peasant categories and that dwarf-cottagers owned the least. A similar ranking of wealth is indicated in Table 4, where livestock ownership is specified for the three groups.

Table 4. Percentage of livestock holdings - 1828

	Coloni	Inquilini	Subinquilini
Yoked Cattle	99.2	0.8	0.0
Cows with calves	51.0	28.8	20.2
Cows without calves	80.0	11.5	8.5
Bulls/Heifers over 3 yrs.	89.0	7.7	3.3
Bulls/Heifers over 2 yrs.	80.6	11.3	8.1
Horses over 3 yrs.	81.6	17.6	0.8
Horses over 2 yrs.	91.5	8.6	0.0
Sheep	74.5	12.9	12.6
Pigs	94.3	3.8	1.9

The number and type of livestock were a reflection of the amount and type of land possessed by the populace. A dwarf-cottager with a few "hoes" of vineyard would have little need for oxen or horses, whereas a small-holder with a *Session* of plowland would find draft animals a necessity. The more equitable distribution of cows and sheep indicate that all members of the community practiced animal husbandry to obtain meat and animal by-products.

Between 1828 and 1848, 72 marriages occurred in which the parents of the bride and groom can be identified positively as Feltorony residents who were included in the census. These marriages were analyzed to determine the degree of homogamy in occupation and wealth. Table 5 shows that the brides came from families of slightly higher occupational ranking. About 11 per cent more of the brides' than the grooms' fathers were small-holders. Given a scheme in which small-holders are ranked 3, cottagers 2, and dwarf-cottages 1, the mean occupational score of the brides' fathers was 2.33, while that of the grooms' was 2.13. Brides' fathers also owned more land and livestock (means = 34.38 *hold* and 12.22 head, respectively) than did grooms' fathers (means = 29.20 *hold* and 10.15 head).

Correlation of brides' fathers' occupational rankings with grooms' fathers', number of *hold* of land possessed by brides' fathers with those of grooms' fathers, and the number of livestock owned by brides' fathers with those of grooms' fathers produced coefficients of 0.27, 0.29 and 0.19, respectively. These correlations indicate a moderate degree of occupational and wealth homogamy.

Table 5. Occupational rankings of fathers of brides and grooms

	Brides N (%)	Grooms N (%)
Small-holders	35 (48.6%)	27 (37.5%)
Cottagers	26 (36.1%)	25 (34.7%)
Dwarf-cottagers	11 (15.3%)	18 (25.0%)

Their difference scores were computed to provide more information about similarity of marriage partners' economic status. The first score was determined by subtracting the groom's father's occupational ranking from the bride's father's. The second subtracted the amount of land owned by the groom's father from that of the bride's father, and the third followed the same procedure using the number of livestock.

Table 6 shows that in about 46 per cent of the marriages there was no occupational difference. Another 43 per cent scored -1 or +1. A mean difference of 0.2 indicates that where differences occurred they favored the groom, i.e. grooms married into wealthier families than those from which they originated. A negative mean score would have indicated upward mobility through marriage for the brides.

Table 6. Difference scores between occupations of fathers of brides and grooms, 1828-1848

Score	N	%
-2	2	2.8
-1	12	17.1
0	32	45.7
1	18	25.7
2	6	8.6

mean = 0.20

Difference scores based on land and livestock had means of 5.18 and 2.07, respectively. Both of these values suggests a small degree of upward mobility for grooms. In other words, brides' fathers owned an average of about 7 *hold* of land and 2 head of livestock more than the grooms' fathers.

While the mean difference scores show the direction of mobility, the mean of the absolute difference scores provides an indication of the degree of mobility. The absolute difference means were 0.66 for occupational rank, 24.18 *hold* of land, and 9.88 head of livestock. Ratios of mean absolute difference scores to largest possible absolute difference scores were computed. These ratios were 0.329 for occupational difference, 0.333 for land ownership differences, and 0.353 for livestock ownership differences. Eleven per cent of the marriages were characterized by no difference in land ownership with the modal difference being 5 *hold*. Thirty-two per cent had either no or 5 *hold* differences.

No difference in livestock ownership occurred in 7 per cent of the marriages with the mode being 1.

The small size of the ratios combined with the proportion of marriages with no occupational difference provides evidence that homogamy in economic status occurred to a substantial degree in Feltorony in 1828. Families were successful in maintaining their social status through the marriages of their children and retarding the decline into poverty resulting from the division of land among children. Where upward mobility occurred, it favored grooms, perhaps because brides' families were generally wealthier.

V. Patterns of wealth homogamy from 1827 to 1920

When fathers' occupational rankings were correlated with their land holdings and head of livestock, the coefficients were 0.76 and 0.82 for grooms and 0.77 and 0.81 for brides. These high correlations suggest that the occupational rankings are reasonably accurate indicators of family wealth. They can be used with confidence to detect changes in marriage patterns across the century.

The parish register of the community from 1827 to 1920, inclusive, is available and lists for each marriage the wedded couple, the parents of the bride and groom and the occupations of the parents and the newly married pair. Thus it is possible to examine the marriages during the period of the register to learn if the brides and grooms married within their own economic levels or changed their economic levels through marriage.

As marriage data were collected during the century, the terms used to describe the agricultural population changed and multiplied. Between 1827 and 1920, the categories colonus minor (dwarf-holder), domuncularius (hired hand) and famulus (day-laborer) accounted for nearly one-third of the occupations of the fathers of the brides and grooms. Day-laborers and hired hands were agricultural workers, but the day-laborers likely had more job stability and better pay.¹⁶ Colonus minor appears to have designated a farmer with less land and livestock than a small-holder, but more than a cottager. In order to increase the number of subjects, these categories will be included in the occupational rankings for the longitudinal analysis. Two variations will be used. A more conservative scheme will rank small-holders as 4, cottagers as 3, dwarf cottagers as 2, and farm workers, (famuli and domunculari) as 1. A second ranking will have six categories in the following order of descending wealth: small-holders (coloni), dwarfholders (coloni minor), cottagers, dwarf-cottagers, day laborers (famuli) and hired hands (domunculari).

Using the more conservative ranking scheme, 62.5% of the marriages over the century united brides and grooms whose fathers were of the same occupation. The mean difference score was -0.02 , indicating a very slight tendency for brides to marry grooms from wealthier families. Table 7 shows that brides were slightly upwardly mobile in five of the periods, while grooms married up the economic scale in four periods. The analysis of variance shows that if one were attempting to infer from a sample to a population that the mean difference scores for, the nine periods are sufficiently similar, that such differences could be attributed to chance rather than to systematic difference between

periods ($F=93$, $p=0.49$). This analysis is based on complete data from parish registers across the century, rather than a sample of the data. Therefore, the inferential statistic is not necessary, but does give an indication that the variations from negative to positive in mean difference scores from period to period are small and relatively unimportant.

Table 7. Mean difference scores between occupations of fathers of brides and grooms, 1827-1920

Four-category scheme			
Time Period	N	Mean	Absolute Mean
1827-1839	87	0.149	0.494
1840-1850	75	-0.213	0.880
1851-1862	83	0.181	1.217
1863-1874	103	-0.107	1.194
1875-1884	90	-0.078	0.878
1885-1895	69	-0.217	0.565
1896-1904	81	-0.049	0.296
1905-1912	46	0.109	0.413
1913-1920	38	0.079	0.342
Total	672	-0.025	0.754

Six-category scheme			
Time Period	N	Mean	Absolute Mean
1827-1839	106	0.208	1.038
1840-1850	79	-0.278	1.392
1851-1862	84	0.250	1.988
1863-1874	104	-0.173	1.942
1875-1884	91	-0.099	1.484
1885-1895	83	-0.060	1.120
1896-1904	115	-0.035	1.061
1905-1912	75	-0.027	0.853
1913-1920	58	0.207	1.000
Total	795	-0.006	1.335

When the ranking scheme using six categories is used, the results are very similar. About 53 per cent of the marriages involved families with the same occupational class. The mean difference score was -0.006 . Six of the periods were characterized by upward mobility for brides and three for grooms. (See Table 7.) Except for one period (1905-1912), the valence of the mean score was the same for both ranking systems. No significant differences between periods were detected by analysis of variance for the six category ranking scheme ($F=0.58$, $p=0.79$). Therefore, according to analysis with both

ranking schemes, the pattern of occupational differences throughout the century did not favor brides or grooms to any substantial degree.

The mean absolute difference score of the conservative occupational ranking scheme for the century is 0.75. The largest possible difference with this scheme is 3. With the six category ranking scheme, the mean is 1.33 of a possible 5. The ratios of mean difference score to largest possible score are 0.25 and 0.27, respectively, for the two ranking schemes. This indicates that homogamy in occupational class existed to a considerable degree across the nineteenth century. Significant differences in degree of homogamy occurred in some periods, however ($F=8.45$, $p=0.00$ using the conservative ranking scheme; $F=5.16$, $p=0.00$ for the six category scheme). Table 7 shows the periods between 1851 and 1874 to be the highest in wealth difference of marriage partners' families. The least amount of difference occurred at the beginning of the century (before 1839) and at the end (after 1896).

VI. Summary and conclusions

While the data examined do not reveal the degree to which the peasants of Feltorony were required to subdivide their property, it is evident that the institution of marriage was used to maintain the wealth status of the families of the village and forestall economic decline as long as possible. Whatever the range of friendships of a person of marriageable age, little consideration was given to making a relationship permanent if the prospective partners were from different economic strata. Although a family might be required ultimately to partition its holdings among its children, the necessity of economic survival and the desires of the extended family resulted in marital alliances which reduced the potential impoverishment of the peasantry of Feltorony.

The majority of marriages in the village across the nineteenth century united children from families of similar wealth, regardless of whether the economic indicator was occupational status, landownership or livestock possession. Economic mobility through marriage was very limited and, when it did occur, there was no consistent pattern favoring one gender. There were some variations in degree of economic homogamy, with the greatest amount occurring at the beginning and end of the time period examined. Overall, the data support the contention that economic factors played a critical role in mate selection in nineteenth-century Hungarian society.

Notes

1. Research funds for this project were provided by the Women's Research Institute, the Department of History and the Center for Family and Community History, all of Brigham Young University.
2. Edit Fel and Tamas Hofer, *Proper Peasants. Traditional Life in a Hungarian Village*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, No. 46 (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), p. 33.
3. Rudolf Andorka, *Population and Socio-economic Change in Peasant Societies: The Historical Record of Hungary. 1700 to the Present* (Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 1978), p. 8.

4. Microfilm copies of the 1828 census of Moson County and the parish registers of Feltorony from 1827 to 1920 are contained in the Genealogical Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. For this project, the following rolls of film were used:
 Nos. 623058–623060. Census of Moson County, Hungary, 1828.
 No. 700271. Births, 1895–1904: Feltorony.
 No. 700272. Births, 1905–1920: Feltorony.
 No. 700273. Marriages, 1895–1920: Feltorony.
 No. 700274. Deaths, 1895–1920: Feltorony.
 No. 700861. Births, Marriages, Deaths, 1827–1864: Feltorony.
 No. 700862. Births, Marriages, Deaths, 1865–1895: Feltorony.
 No. 719825. Census of Moson Country, Hungary, 1848.
5. Andorka, 7; Fel, 31; Henrik Marczali, *Hungary in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1910), p. 192.
6. Heinrich Ditz, *Die Ungarische Landwirtschaft* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1867), p. 107.
7. Fel, 24.
8. Ditz, 93–94. The size of the Hungarian yoke varied from 1100 to 1300 square fathoms (Klafter), while a cadastral yoke was 1600 square fathoms. A fathom is usually approximately six feet. Vörös estimates that the average serf plot in Hungary consisted of one *hold* (1.42 acres) for houseplot, and between 22.7 and 53.2 acres of plowland, and between 8.5 and 31.2 acres of meadow and/or pasture. Cf. Antal Vörös, "Age of Preparation: Hungarian Agrarian Conditions between 1848–1914," ed Joseph Held, *The Modernization of Agriculture: Rural Transformation in Hungary, 1848–1975*, East European Monographs, vol. 63 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 51, fn. 1.
9. Ditz, 95–96.
10. It was only possible for any person to possess more than one *Session* if the village total comprised more than 40 *Urbarialsessionen*. For each additional 40 *Sessionen*, it was possible to have individual owners of more than one *Session*. Thus, a community with more than 160 *Sessionen* could have potentially individual landowners with four *Sessionen*, which was the maximum allowed. Cf. Ditz, 94.
11. W. Hecke, *Die Landwirtschaft der Umgebung von Ungarisch-Altenburg und die landwirtschaftliche Lehranstalt daselbst in Briefen* (Wien: Braumüller, 1861), pp. 29–43.
12. Ditz, 94.
13. The figures are derived from the 1828 census for Feltorony. The amounts of individual holdings were the following:
- | Amount of Land | Number of Landholders |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 129.33 hold | 1 |
| 97 | 1 |
| 82 | 1 |
| 73.33 | 1 |
| 64.67 | 44 see Fel, p. 56. |
| 34.67 | 17 |
| 34.33 | 1 |
| 32.33 | 5 |
| 17.33 | 18 |
| 8.67 | 1 |
14. Andorka, 7.
15. *Ibid.*, 7, 16.
16. Jerome Blum, "The Village and the Family," ed. Jerome Blum, *Our Forgotten Past. Seven Centuries of Life on the Land* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982), p. 14.