

The Price of Success: Adaptation or Assimilation? Romanian Officials of Maramureș Under Hungarian and Romanian Rule (1822–1945)*

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Abstract: The study argues that in 19th-century Maramureș, assimilation was not a prerequisite for achieving high office. When it occurred, it largely resulted from adaptive strategies in marriage and education, combined with the dynamics of local politics. Depending on the wider political climate, both Hungarian and Romanian nationalism, as well as the personal interests of the families, could either hasten or counteract these tendencies. The article examines the history and national identity of the Romanian Iurca (Jurka), Man (Mán), Mihalca (Mihálka), and Mihalyi (Mihályi) families of Maramureș through a prosopographical approach. In the Reform Era, these families formed a tightly knit alliance, rallying the Romanian petty nobility in pursuit of their shared goals. Their *Hungarus* identity further bolstered their political weight during the 1848 – 49 Revolution. In the Dualist period, intermarriage with Hungarian families accelerated their social integration, while they also accumulated estates surpassing those of competing Hungarian landowners. Through pragmatic political agreements with both Hungarian and Romanian governing parties, they not only consolidated their authority but also maintained it through successive regime changes – from the Austro-Hungarian Compromise and the dissolution of the Monarchy to the Second Vienna Award.

Keywords: Maramureș, nationalism, elite studies, prosopography, county officials.

* The present study builds on and substantially expands a previous article by the author, published: Szabó Zsolt, “Adaptation, Assimilation, Integration or Opportunism? The Case of a Family of Romanian Functionaries in Maramureș Under Changing Regimes,” in *Civil servants under changing Regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the First Half of the 20th Century*, ed. Veronika Szeghy-Gayer (Košice: Institute of Social Science, CSPA Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2024), 33–53.

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Rezumat: Studiul argumentează că, în Maramureșul secolului al XIX-lea, asimilarea nu a constituit o condiție esențială pentru ascensiunea profesională. Atunci când a avut loc, ea a fost mai curând rezultatul unor strategii de alianțe matrimoniale, de instruire și de adaptare la contextul politic local, procese care – în funcție de conjunctura politică – puteau fi accelerate sau inversate de naționalismul maghiar ori român, precum și de interesele proprii ale familiilor. Lucrare examinează istoria și transformările identității naționale ale familiilor românești Iurca (Jurka), Man (Mán), Mihalca (Mihálka) și Mihalyi (Mihályi) din Maramureș, utilizând o perspectivă prosopografică. În perioada pașoptistă, aceste familii au format un grup strâns unit, capabil să mobilizeze mica nobilime românească în sprijinul propriilor interese. Apartenența lor la identitatea *hungarus* le-a sporit influența în timpul revoluției din 1848 – 1849. În epoca dualistă, căsătoriile mixte au facilitat integrarea în societatea maghiară, iar proprietățile funciare acumulate au depășit pe cele ale familiilor maghiare concurente. Prin înțelegeri politice cu partidele aflate la guvernare, atât maghiare, cât și românești, aceste familii și-au consolidat și ulterior și-au menținut poziția de putere în ciuda schimbărilor de regim – de la Compromis, trecând prin Marea Unire, până la cel de-al Doilea Arbitraj de la Viena.

Cuvinte cheie: Maramureș, naționalism, elite studies, prozopografie, funcționari comitatensi.

Introduction, methodology and sources

The Romanian county official families of *hungarus* identity so far have not been properly studied.¹ Hungarian historiography has so far paid no attention to this specific *hungarus* group,² and the study of Romanian county officials in the Dualist era remains incomplete. The main reason is that most elite research has focused on the territory of present-day Hungary, on counties that were more ethnically homogeneous. In Romanian historiography, these

¹ The study was supported through the OTKA K20 K137378 project entitled “A dualizmus kori parlamentarizmus regionális nézőpontból” [Parliamentarism in the dualist era from a regional perspective].

² For the definition of *hungarus* see: Ambrus Miskolczy, “A „hungarus-tudat” a polgári-nemzeti átalakulás sodrában,” *Magyar kisebbség* 3–4, no. 65–66 (2012): 196, 199. For other types of *hungarus* see: Károly Halmos, “A hungarus, a fia az osztrák tiszt és a magyar nemzeti szabadságharc. Hild Rafael megmenekülése és bukása,” in *A város örök. Tanulmányok Bácskai Vera emlékére*, eds. Gábor Czoch, Csaba Sasfi, Árpád Tóth (Budapest: Korall, 2022), 182–194.

same families long fell outside the scope of scholarly inquiry.³ Owing to their pro-government stance, they were counted among the “official” elites of the Monarchy, while scholarly attention was centred on the Romanian national elites.⁴ Consequently, they received little attention – most of it negative. Although a revision of this narrative has begun in recent years,⁵ no study has yet been produced that examines several Romanian official families over an extended period of time in a comparative manner.

In this study, therefore, I examine the history of the Iurka, Man, Mihalca, and Mihalyi families of Maramureş, from their rise during the Reform Era to the end of the Second World War. I analyse the conditions of their social advancement, their adaptation to the Dualist state, their integration into the Romanian administration, and their reintegration into the Hungarian state following the Second Vienna Award. Finally, I explore what these strategies of adaptation to shifting political circumstances reveal about their national identity, and to what extent assimilation was a prerequisite for a successful career.

The method employed in my research is prosopography. The sources include school matriculation registers, minutes of the general assembly of the county, contemporary press, obituaries, genealogies, biographical lexicons, parliamentary almanacs, investigative documents of a royal commissioner, memoirs, and private correspondence. The prosopographical analysis brought to light the group’s shared social characteristics, which I compared with the major county-level political events of the period. This approach made it possible to interpret the individual motivations of the officials and to reconstruct their strategies of adaptation. At the same time, the analysis was complicated by the fact that the sources varied not only from family to family but also from

³ Ioan Chiorean gives a general overview of the Transylvanian officials, mentioning the Man and Mihalyi families. Ioan Chiorean, “Funcționarimea din Transilvania în perioada dualismului austro-ungar (1867–1918),” in *Anuarul Institutului de cercetari socio-umane “Gheorghe Sincai” al Academiei Române*, 5-6 (2003):43–60.

⁴ Judit Pál, Vlad Popovici, “O perspectivă comparativă asupra cercetării elitelor politice din secolele XIX–XX în Ungaria și România,” in *Analele științifice ale universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași* 61 (2015):598–599.

⁵ See: Ovidiu Emil Iudean, *The Romanian Governmental Representatives in the Budapest Parliament (1881–1918)*. (Cluj: Mega Publishing House, 2016); Vlad Popovici “Considerații privind funcționarii publici români din Transilvania. Studiu de caz: comitatul Sibiu și scaunele săsești care l-au format (1861–1918),” in *Anuarul Insitutului de Istorie George Barițiu din Cluj-Napoca* 54 (2015): 159–177.

period to period in both quantity and nature. In some cases, the information was contradictory, which made the assessment of objectivity in certain questions a particular challenge.⁶

Laying the foundations of success: the reform era

One of the distinctive features of Maramureş County was the presence of a large Romanian petty nobility with roots reaching back to the Middle Ages.⁷ Until the mid-eighteenth century, they provided the majority of the county officials,⁸ since until the early part of the century, only the Romanians possessed a sufficiently numerous nobility capable of fulfilling administrative duties. It was at this time that the noble self-government of the Reformed crown towns began to take shape,⁹ and in parallel, the number of central offices increased,¹⁰ with their occupancy increasingly tied to formal education.¹¹ The nobles of the crown towns were employed by the Transylvanian magnates who commanded the castle of Khust (Huszt). However, after the expulsion of the Ottomans, the castle lost its significance,¹² and the educated urban Reformed nobility was left without positions. Meanwhile, some Romanian noble families fell into poverty at the end of the seventeenth century and moved out of the county,¹³ while the influential Szaplóczay and Baron Sztojka families assimilated into the Hungarian nobility. As a result, county leadership was

⁶ K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, "Introduction: Chameleon or Chimera? Understanding Prosopography," *Prosopography Approaches and Applications, a Handbook*, ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (Oxford: Unit for Prosopographical Research, 2007), 27–28.

⁷ Ioan Drăgan, "Studiu introductiv: Nobilimea românească din Transilvania," in *Nobilimea românească din Transilvania*, ed. Marius Diaconescu (Satu Mare: Editura Muzeului Sătmărean, 1997), 22; Vilmos Bélay, *Máramaros megye társadalma és nemzetiségei* (Budapest: Sylvester Nyomda, 1943), 100.

⁸ National Archives, Maramureş County Service (hereinafter A.N.S.J. MM), Baia Mare, Prefectura Judeţului Maramureş, F 45, inventory no. 629, folder no. 1. "Evidenţa funcţionarilor comitatului Maramureş pe anii 1629–1849" (hereafter Evidenţa funcţionarilor), 2, 2–32.

⁹ László Glück, *Az öt máramaros város társadalma a 16–18. században* (PhD diss., Pécsi Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kara, 2013), 230–236, 241.

¹⁰ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 629, 1, Evidenţa funcţionarilor, 14–25.

¹¹ Andor Csizmadia, *A magyar közigazgatás fejlődése a XVIII. századtól a Tanácsrendszer létrejöttéig* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976), 21–26, 73.

¹² László Glück, *Az öt máramaros*, 19.

¹³ Livia Ardelean, "Contribuţii la studiul nobililor maramureşeni," in *Istoria ca datorie: omagiu academicianului Ioan-Aurel Pop la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani*, ed. Ioan Bolovan, –Ovidiu Ghitta (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de studii Transilvane, 2015), 471–479.

gradually taken over by the Reformed nobles of the crown towns, while the Romanians were increasingly confined to the district offices.

Despite this, the Dunca (Dunka), Petrovay, and Rednic (Rednik) families continued to play an active role in the county administration until the dissolution of the Monarchy. In the early nineteenth century, however – presumably due to overpopulation and impoverishment within these families – they were pushed out of county leadership.¹⁴ A similar decline also afflicted the Roman Catholic landowning Hungarian families of Szaplontzay, Sztojka, and Pogány.¹⁵ The resulting power vacuum was filled by the Iurka, Man, Mihalca, and Mihalyi families. Although the noble origins of all four families can be traced back to the fifteenth century,¹⁶ they only came to play a decisive role in the life of the county from the late eighteenth century onward.

The Reform Era generations typically had long careers, advancing through every rung of the official hierarchy. The best example of this is Ladislau Manu (László Mán). His ancestors had already served as deputy chief magistrates in the early eighteenth century, but his father, Ștefan Man (István Mán), secured the family's place in the elite as chief county attorney (*vármegyei főügyész*).¹⁷ Ladislau entered the administration in 1805, first as an honorary deputy county attorney (*tiszteletbeli vármegyei alügyész*). In 1812, he became deputy county attorney (*vármegyei alügyész*), in 1822, high sheriff (*főszolgabíró*), in 1833, second county commissioner (*másodalispán*), and three years later, first county commissioner (*első alispán*).¹⁸ His son, Iosif Man (József Mán), began his career in 1836 as an honorary deputy county attorney, and by the time his father retired, he was already high sheriff; two years later, he was also elected to the Diet.¹⁹ Gavrilă Mihalyi (Gábor Mihályi) served first as an honorary deputy county attorney and then as deputy sheriff (*alszolgabíró*); he was high sheriff for seven years, a delegate to the Diet in Bratislava (Pozsony),

¹⁴ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 629, 1, Evidența funcționarilor, 14–32.

¹⁵ Iván Nagy, “Magyarország családai czimerekkel és nemzedékrendi táblákkal. I. (Pest: Kiadja Ráth Mór, 1863), 372; Iván Nagy, *Magyarország családai I*, 873–874; György Petrovay: “A Szaplontzay család leszármazása 1360-tól (Három czimerrajzzal),” *Turul* 11, no. 2 (1901): 78.

¹⁶ Pál Joódy, *Máramaros Vármegye 1749–1769. évi nemesség vizsgálata* (Máramarossziget: Varga Béla Könyvnyomda Vállalata, 1943) 100, 126, 140–141.

¹⁷ Pál Joódy: *Máramaros vármegye*, 126.

¹⁸ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 629, 1, Evidența funcționarilor, 33–35, 38, 40; *Jelenkor* (August 3, 1845): 371.

¹⁹ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 629, 1, Evidența funcționarilor, 41, 43; A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 338 *Inventarul Protocoalelor de Ședințe ale Congregației comitatului Maramureș 1629–1848*, 164, *Vármegyei közgyűlési jegyzőkönyv* (hereafter Vm. kgy. jgy.) 1836: 1808; *Pesti Hírlap* (October 29, 1847): 685.

and in 1845 became second county commissioner.²⁰ In the same year, Ioan Iurca (János Jurka) also became high sheriff, having earlier served as deputy sheriff.²¹ Vasile Mihalca (László Mihálka) was the only one who did not enter the elite – he was still deputy sheriff at the end of the era.²²

The successful careers can be attributed to several factors, including family background, education, the network of connections built through marriage, and the county's distinctive political climate. Of the officials listed, all but Vasile Mihalca and Gavrilă Mihalyi had fathers who were also officials. Mihalyi's father was a Greek Catholic priest, while Mihalca was "born to poor,²³ noble-descended farming parents."²⁴

Education was also an important factor. The officials generally lived in or near Sighetu Marmăției (Máramarossziget) and attended the Piarist Gymnasium (Máramarosszigeti Piarista Gimnázium) there. From there, they continued to the Catholic Gymnasium in Satu Mare (Szatmárnémeti Királyi Katolikus Líceum), and then pursued studies in the humanities and law at the law academies of Kassa or Nagyvárád (Kassai Jogakadémia, Nagyváradi Jogakadémia). Once again, Vasile Mihalca was an exception: because of his modest family circumstances, he had to interrupt his studies in Satu Mare. Iosif Man's case was the opposite. He studied at both the Reformed and Piarist Gymnasiums of Sighetu Marmăției, with the Premonstratensian Order in Levoča (Lőcsei Premontrei Rend Gimnáziuma), philosophy at the Reformed College in Cluj (Kolozsvári Református Kollégium), and at the Archbishopal Law Academy in Eger (Egri Érseki Jogakadémia), while he studied law at the Evangelical Lyceum in Bratislava (Pozsonyi Evangélikus Kollégium) and at the Law Academy of Košice (Kassai Jogakadémia).²⁵

Three of the four families formed a nexus centred on the Man family. Of Vasile Man's daughters, one married Gavrilă Mihalyi, the other Ioan

²⁰ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 338, 140, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1830:1633; A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 629, 1, Evidența funcționarilor, 40, 43; *Nemzeti Újság* May 12, 1843, 299.

²¹ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 338, 140, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1830:1634; A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 629, 1, Evidența funcționarilor, 38, 43.

²² A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 629, 1, Evidența funcționarilor, 41.

²³ A.N.S.J. MM, F 430 Gimnaziul Romano Catolic Sighetu Marmăției, 948, Inventory of archival documents, 11. Informatio primo semestrialis de juventute in r. gymnasio Szigethiensi Anno 1820–21, 4.

²⁴ *Fővárosi Lapok* (July 4, 1886): 1328.

²⁵ *Vasárnapi Újság* (February 4, 1877): 67–68, 70.

Iurca.²⁶ Through the Man family, all three families were also connected to the Roman Catholic Hungarian Baron Sztojka family, as Vasile Man's son, Iosif Man, married Klára, the daughter of Baron Imre Sztojka.²⁷ Imre Sztojka was one of the most influential figures in Reform Era Maramureș; he was elected as a delegate to the Diet on three occasions, and, in 1848, briefly served as the senior president of the Upper House.²⁸ The four families thus represented a politically significant force. Vasile Mihalca also belonged to this alliance system, but due to his lower social standing, he acted more as an election agent (*kortes*) than as an equal ally.²⁹

The marriages ultimately crystallized into political alliances that, within Maramureș's distinctive political climate, facilitated the rise of Romanian official families. Owing to the county's isolation, the major political fault lines of the era had little impact; instead, political relations were shaped more by generational and confessional divisions. In the 1843 election of delegates to the Diet, the four families, allied with the Sztojkas, formed the "Man Party," named after Ladislau Man, while their opponents – the Reformed officials and the Pogány and Szaplanczay families – organized into the "Pogány Party," named after second county commissioner Károly Pogány. The election ended in victory for the former.³⁰ The result outraged the Reformed population of Sighetu Marmăției, as two Catholic delegates – Gavrilă Mihályi (Greek Catholic) and Imre Sztojka (Roman Catholic) – won mandates. An enraged crowd ransacked the county hall and drove the Romanian petty nobility out of the town.³¹

The electoral system of the time worked to the advantage of Romanian officials. In the elections and delegate selections held in the county seat, only

²⁶ *Familia* (January 22, 1895): 37.

²⁷ *Ellenőr* (December 19, 1876): 3.

²⁸ *Magyar Kurir* (June 15, 1827): 372; *Jelenkor* (December 5, 1832): 769; *Nemzeti Újság* (May 12, 1843,): 299; *Pesti Hírlap* (July 5, 1848): 620.

²⁹ Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, hereafter MNL OL), Budapest, C 44 Magyar Királyi Helytartótanács Departamentum politicum comitatum, F8:1848, 11117/1844, A királyi biztos vadjai Hatvany József tiszteletbeli esküdt ellen, 264–266

³⁰ Cluj County Branch of the Romanian National Archives (Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Cluj, hereafter DJ ANR CJ), F 245, Mihályi Family Fund, 204, Documents on the election of deputies 1843–1844, 288, Mán László elsőispán kérvénye a főkancelláriához (hereafter Mán László elsőispán kérvénye), Máramarosziget, 06 May 1843, 2.

³¹ MNL OL, C 44, F8:1848, Történeti vázlat tekintetes Mánn László elsőispán pártjának nyilatkozata szerint, 115.

members of the nobility had the right to vote,³² and the majority of Maramureș's nobility was Romanian. A significant proportion of them lived in villages near the county seat, under the influence of the Mihalyi family.³³ Clergymen wielded great influence over the inhabitants of these villages, making them easy to mobilize; in Gavrilă Mihalyi's case, his father assumed the role of chief election agent. By contrast, the Pogány Party could rely on the Hungarian nobility of the crown towns and on the small Ruthenian nobility living in the county's more isolated areas. The latter, however, did not even reach the polling place, as they were forcibly prevented from doing so in Săpânța (Szaplónca), a village with a Romanian majority.³⁴

The tension between the two political camps gradually subsided. In the 1845 election of county officials, Ladislau Man retired from his position as first deputy county head, thereby creating an opportunity for his own allies to advance while also giving room to the younger generation of the rival Szaplónczay family, which had been excluded from the elite.³⁵ The outbreak of the 1848 Revolution brought the conflict to an end. Under the new parliamentary system, instead of two delegates to the Diet, five members of parliament had to be elected, making it possible to satisfy the demands of both sides. The formerly rival parties fought together for the cause of the revolution. Through their extensive family networks and close ties with the Greek Catholic Church, the Romanian officials maintained the peace in the Romanian-inhabited areas of the county. In return, the revolutionary situation offered them the same opportunities for advancement as to their Hungarian counterparts. Both Gavrilă Mihalyi and Iosif Man became members of parliament.³⁶ In August 1848, Mihalyi was appointed government commissioner for the counties of Maramureș, Ugocsa, Bereg, Ung, Satu Mare (Szatmár), Közép-Szolnok, and Crasn (Kraszna), for the Țara Chioarului (Kővár) region, and for the

³² Alajos Degré, "Szavazási rend a megyegyűléseken 1848 előtt," *Fejér megyei történeti évkönyv* VII., ed. Gábor Farkas (Székesfehérvár: Fejér Megyei Levéltár), 125.

³³ MNL OL, C 44, F8:1848, Vlád László nyilatkozata a királyi biztosnak, Máramarosziget (April 03, 1844): 349–350.

³⁴ MNL OL, C 44, F8:1848, A fennálló országgyűlésre nemes Máramaros megye részéről 1843ik évi április hónap 26ik napján véghezment követválasztás körülményeknek, s elkövetett kihágásoknak valóságos történet leírása, 150.

³⁵ *Jelenkor* (July 24, 1845): 354.

³⁶ *Közlöny* (June 30, 1848): 81.

17th Border Guard Infantry Regiment.³⁷ His assistant was Iosif Man, who, in early 1849, was appointed by the government as commissioner responsible for recruitment and military provisioning in Maramureş.³⁸

The rise to success: the dualist era

Because of their *hungarus* identity, the Romanian officials could sincerely identify with the cause of the Revolution. A significant proportion of the Romanian nobility of Maramureş linked the exercise of their liberties to the feudal *natio hungarica*. Therefore, when modern nationalism emerged, they envisioned their opportunities for advancement within the framework of the Hungarian political nation. This meant that their fate was tied to that of the Reformed, national-liberal officials, who constituted the bulk of the local revolutionary forces. After the Revolution's defeat, they too suffered reprisals. In 1851, Iosif Man was sentenced to four years and Gavrilă Mihalyi to six years of fortress imprisonment, along with the confiscation of their property.³⁹ However, a year later they were released and their property was restored. When a political shift favourable to Hungarian liberals occurred in imperial policy, the careers of the Romanian officials also took a favourable turn. The issuance of the October Diploma in 1860 brought the neo-absolutist era to an end, and Hungary regained part of its autonomy. At the same time, the county system was reinstated.⁴⁰ Iosif Man became the county's lord lieutenant (*főispán*), Gavrilă Mihalyi its parliamentary representative, Ioan Iurca its first deputy county head (*első alispán-helyettes*), and Vasile Mihalca was elected high sheriff.⁴¹

By the end of 1861, another major political shift occurred. The government of Anton von Schmerling – this time on liberal foundations – attempted to centralize the empire. The Hungarian legislature was dissolved,

³⁷ A.N.S.J. MM, F 48 The personal collection of academician Ioan Mihalyi de Apşa, F 48, 427, 8, Mihályi János és Mán József kegyelmi kérelme, October 31, 1849, 1–2.

³⁸ Szinneyi József, *Magyar írok élete és munkái*. I (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor Könyvkereskedése), 473–474.

³⁹ *Pesti Napló* (October 09, 1851): 2–3.

⁴⁰ Jenő Gergely, *Autonómiák Magyarországon 1848–2000* (Budapest: ELTE Történelemtudományi Doktori Iskola – L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2005), 278–279.

⁴¹ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 340, 1, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1860:6; *Politikai Újdonságok* (November 1, 1860): 691; *Sürgöny* (January 1, 1862): 1.

and the county administrations established in 1860 resigned.⁴² Péter Dolinay, a royal commissioner (*királybiztos*) of Ruthenian origin, was appointed to lead Maramureş. In place of the Romanian and Reformed crown-town nobility who had traditionally led the county, Roman Catholic Hungarian and Ruthenian officials from other counties were appointed.⁴³ Dolinay consciously sought to marginalize the Romanians. In 1856, the Romanian-inhabited part of Maramureş had been transferred from the Diocese of Mukacevo (Munkács) to that of Gherla (Szamosújvár), but the position of the Sighetu Marmăției parish, which lay on the boundary between the two nationalities, remained unresolved – both dioceses sought to claim it.⁴⁴ Like the Romanians, the Ruthenian Greek Catholic clergy wielded significant influence over the functioning of the county. As an outsider in Maramureş, Dolinay may have aimed to strengthen his ties with the local Ruthenian clergy by displacing the Romanian officials.

Thus, instead of the “customary” Romanian–Hungarian antagonism found in Transylvania, Maramureş had a Romanian–Ruthenian one. Moreover, Ruthenians made up half of the county’s population, yet up to that point they had had almost no representation in the county leadership, so they could justifiably feel marginalized. This became especially evident after Dolinay was dismissed in 1862 over a corruption scandal.⁴⁵ Schmerling’s government fell in 1865, initiating the process that led to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise.⁴⁶ This also brought about a realignment of power relations in the county. The local elite had to regain its positions, but without completely excluding the Ruthenians. The solution was offered by Iosif Man – who again held the office of lord-lieutenant from 1865 – through the Agreement of Călineşti (Kálinfalva), concluded in the house of Ioan Iurca. The agreement settled the ecclesiastical question and stipulated that for the next Diet the county would send two

⁴² József Pap, *Magyarország vármegyei tisztikara a reformkor végétől a kiegyezésig* (Szeged: Belvedere Meridionale), 65–66.

⁴³ *Sürgöny* (January 5, 1862): 4.

⁴⁴ Gábor Várady, *Hulló levelek II.* (Máramarossziget: Sichermann Mór Nyomdája, 1892), 241; MNL OL D 191 Magyar Királyi Helytartótanács. Elnökségi iratok (a továbbiakban MNL OL D 191), I. D. csomó, 17467, Máramaros megye királyi biztosa a szigeti vicariatus kérdésének tárgyalásakor történt dolgokról, 289–293.

⁴⁵ Ágnes Deák, “Vizsgálat egy megyei királyi biztos ellen hivatali visszaélés ügyében, 1863,” *Századok* 152, no. 1 (2015): 210–212.

⁴⁶ László Csorba, “Az önkényuralom kora (1849–1867),” in *Magyarország története a 19. században*, ed. András Gergely (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2005), 313.

Romanian, two Ruthenian, and two Hungarian representatives.⁴⁷ The spirit of the agreement was also reflected in the 1867 county elections, as the county leadership was composed of one Romanian, one Ruthenian, and one Hungarian county commissioner, and each nationality received at least one high sheriff's office.⁴⁸

The agreement also consolidated the position of the four Romanian families. From 1865 until his death in 1876, Iosif Man served as the county's lord-lieutenant.⁴⁹ His only son (see Appendix 2), Isidor Manu (Izidór Mán), died two years later, bringing his branch of the family to an end. In 1867, Ioan Iurca was once again elected first deputy county commissioner,⁵⁰ but he retired two years later. His son, Basiliu Iurca (Bazil Jurka), served for two years as deputy sheriff,⁵¹ then won two terms in parliament.⁵²

Vasile Mihalca, by marrying into the Roman Catholic Hatfaludy family – which held the position of county commissioner several times – and taking advantage of the retirement of his peers, reached the peak of his career when he was elected county commissioner in 1869.⁵³ He held this office for seventeen years, until his death in 1886. From his second marriage, he had six sons (see Appendix 3), four of whom reached adulthood. Ioan (János) became a Greek Catholic priest;⁵⁴ Vasile II (László) served for seventeen years as chief magistrate of the Sziget district;⁵⁵ Pavel (Pál) was high sheriff for nine years, then for one year president of the orphans' court, but died young, at the age of 41, in 1899;⁵⁶ and George (György) worked as a lawyer and in 1915 became the county's chief prosecutor.⁵⁷

⁴⁷ Várady Gábor: *Hulló levelek* II, 241.

⁴⁸ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 340, 6, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1867:6.

⁴⁹ *Vasárnapi Újság* (February 4, 1876): 70.

⁵⁰ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 340, 6, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1867:6.

⁵¹ *Pesti Napló* (May 24, 1878): 3.

⁵² Judit Pál, Vlad Popovici, Andrea Fehér, Ovidiu Emil Iudean, *Parliamentary Elections in Eastern Hungary and Transylvania (1865–1918)* (hereafter Pál: *Parliamentary elections*) (Berlin: Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2018), 240–241.

⁵³ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 340, 14, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1869: 769.

⁵⁴ Mihálka László gyászjelentése, accessed 9 August 2025, <https://dspace.oszk.hu/handle/20.500.12346/425049#>.

⁵⁵ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 340, 41, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1877:274; *Pesti Hírlap* (March 28, 1894): 7.

⁵⁶ *Magyarország tisztí cím- és névtára 1891* (hereafter MTCN 1891) (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvénytársaság, 1891), 107; *Budapesti Hírlap* (April 28, 1898): 9; Mihálka Pál gyászjelentése, accessed 09 August 2025, <https://dspace.oszk.hu/handle/20.500.12346/425058#>.

⁵⁷ MTCN 1916, 136.

The Mihalyis (see Appendix 4) became the most successful and influential. Gavrilă I Mihályi served as regency councillor (helytartósági tanácsos) during the liberal period. As a result, he fell into the camp of the politically “compromised” and was not re-elected to the legislature in 1865, but after the Compromise he was immediately appointed a judge of the Supreme Court. He died in 1875. From his marriage to Iuliana Manu (Julianna Mán) he had five sons.⁵⁸ The youngest, Gavrilă II (Gábor), a district judge (*járásbíró*), died at just 41 years of age in Sighetu Marmăției.⁵⁹ The eldest, Iuliu Mihalyi (Gyula), became a colonel in the common army’s hussar regiment and died at 61 in Blaj (Balázsfalva).⁶⁰ Victor Mihalyi (Viktor), born in 1841, entered the church; in 1875 he was appointed Greek Catholic bishop of Lugoj (Lugos), and in 1895 archbishop of Blaj.⁶¹

Petru I Mihalyi (Péter) served as high sheriff between 1867 and 1869, then represented the county in the Budapest legislature for 41 years almost without interruption.⁶² His elder son, Gavrilă III (Gábor), became high sheriff. His brother, Petru II, first served as captain of the border police and was later elected to parliament.⁶³ Their youngest brother, Florentin (Florent), entered neither politics nor administration; instead, he became a wealthy lawyer,⁶⁴ running a successful practice in Sighetu Marmăției and served as the “economic backbone” for his two brothers. Gavrilă I had only one son who chose a career in the county administration: Ioan Mihalyi (János Mihályi). He served as the county’s chief prosecutor for 43 years, from 1871 to 1914.⁶⁵ Of his sons, two reached adulthood: Silvestru Mihalyi (Szilveszter Mihály), who became a bank clerk,⁶⁶ and Longin, who, like two of his cousins, entered the

⁵⁸ József Szinney, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*. VIII (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor Könyvkereskedése, 1902), 1284; *Magyarország és Nagyvilág* (September 12, 1875): 452.

⁵⁹ *Tribuna* (March 21, 1892): 267.

⁶⁰ Mihályi Gyula gyászjelentése, accessed August 09, 2025, <https://dspace.oszk.hu/handle/20.500.12346/425620#>.

⁶¹ Nicolae Bocșan, Ion Cârja, *Memoriile unui ierarh uitat: Victor Mihalyi de Apșa (1841–1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2009), 8, 13–51.

⁶² A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 340, 6, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1867:6; Pál: *Parliamentary elections*, 240–241, 243.

⁶³ Az “*Athenaeum*” *Magyar Közigazgatási Kalendárium* 1902-dik évre (Budapest: Athenaeum Irodalmi Nyomdai- és Részvény-társulat, 1902), 169; MTCN 1907, 151; MTCN 1910, 166.

⁶⁴ MTCN 1910, 209.

⁶⁵ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 340, 41, Vm. kgy. jgy. 1871:1659; *Alkotmány*, October 16, 1913, 13.

⁶⁶ Museum of Maramureș in Sighetu Marmăției (Muzeul Maramureșului din Sighetul Marmăției, hereafter MMSM), Fund Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa, Obituary of Silviu Mihalyi de Apșa.

administration. In the interwar period, he served as high sheriff and later as deputy prefect.⁶⁷

The career paths clearly show that the four families successfully consolidated their power during the Dualist period. This is remarkable because, in the late Dualist era, imbued with nationalism, the county elite had become almost entirely Magyarized, yet these families retained their positions throughout. By 1918, only 4 of the 16 senior county officials were of non-Hungarian nationality. Two of them have already been mentioned: chief county attorney George Mihalca and high sheriff Gavrilă III Mihályi. As in the Reform Era, the reasons for success in the Dualist period can be found in education, marriage strategies, the local functioning of the political system, and the landholding patterns of official families. Most members of the Dualist-era generation studied at the Royal University of Budapest (Budapesti Királyi Tudományegyetem). In the Iurka and Mihalyi families, the younger generations often began their schooling outside Sighetu Marmăției. Petru II, for example, began at the Premonstratensian Gymnasium in Košice (Kassai Premontrei Gimnázium); Gavrilă III studied at the Roman Catholic Lyceum in Lugoj (Lugosi Római Katolikus Líceum) and then at the Archbishopal Gymnasium in Nagyszombat (Nagyszombati Érseki Főgimnázium), before continuing in Budapest.⁶⁸ Flaviu Iurka (Fláviusz Jurka) attended the Piarist Gymnasium in Budapest (Budapesti Piarista Főgimnázium). Petru I and Petru II both studied law at the University of Vienna,⁶⁹ while Victor studied theology in Rome.⁷⁰

From the Reform Era onward, the families no longer intermarried among themselves. In fact, a marked change occurred. The wives of Gavrilă Mihalyi and Ioan Iurca were Romanian, as was the first wife of Vasile Mihalca. Naturally, all the wives were Catholic, but in the Dualist period marriages were also contracted with Protestant families. The four officials had 10 sons and 7 grandsons. Of these, eight married into Hungarian families, three into

⁶⁷ Alexandru Filipașcu: *Istoria Maramureșului* (Baia Mare: Editura „Gutinel”, 1997), 214.

⁶⁸ István Schlick, *A nagyszombati érseki főgymnasium értesítője az 1888–89. tanév végén*, (Nagyszombat: Nyomatott Winter Zsigmondnál, 1889), 97; Márton Billmann, *A lugosi róm. kath. magy. főgymnasium értesítője az 1881–82. tanévról. Wenczel János és fia könyvnyomdájából* (Lugos: 1882), 33.

⁶⁹ *Magyarország* (September 16, 1900): 8.

⁷⁰ Bocșan and Cârja, *Memoriile unui ierarh uitat*, 8–13.

Romanian families, four remained unmarried, and for two we have no data. They also had seven daughters and seven granddaughters; of these, six remained unmarried, six married into Romanian families, one into a Hungarian family, and one into a Ruthenian family.

The examples of the Mihalca and Mihalyi families best illustrate the emerging mixed marriage strategy: the men tended to marry into Hungarian families, while the women tended to marry into Romanian ones. Of Vasile I Mihalca's four sons, one remained unmarried and three married into Reformed Hungarian families. For instance, chief county attorney George Mihalca's wife, Margit Székely, came from a Unitarian family in Kis-Küküllő County; her father, Mihály Székely, had been appointed chief forester (*főerdőtanácsos*) in Maramureș, which facilitated the family's local integration.⁷¹ Vasile I Mihalca had two daughters: Iustina Mihalca married the Ruthenian-born high sheriff Miklós Szilágyi, and Dora Mihalca became the wife of Iosif Pop Jr. (József Papp), a member of parliament and lawyer from Somcuța Mare (Nagysomkút).⁷²

Of Gavrilă I Mihalyi's five sons, two married. Petru I married Lujza Simon, a member of an Armenian-origin lawyer family from Budapest. Petru II found his spouse in the Kovássy family, one of the most influential Reformed official families of the crown towns.⁷³ Florentin's wife was Karola Hieronymi, daughter of Károly Hieronymi, Minister of the Interior, and Gabriella Várady. The latter was the daughter of Gábor Várady, member of parliament and second county commissioner, who also belonged to one of the distinguished Reformed families of the crown towns.⁷⁴ Gavrilă I Mihalyi's younger son, Ioan, married twice, both times to Romanian women. His first wife was Dunca Paula from Sibiu (Nagyszeben), whose father served as a councillor to the Gubernium during the liberal era. His second wife was Iustina Popp,⁷⁵ whose father was a Greek Catholic priest in Vișeu de Sus (Felsővisó).

⁷¹ *Unitárius Élet* (January 1, 1962): 1; Mihálka Györgyné szül. Székely Margit gyászjelentése, accessed July 3, 2025, <https://dspace.oszk.hu/handle/20.500.12346/425042#>.

⁷² Mihálka Jusztina családfája, accessed July 03 2025, <https://www.geni.com/people/Jusztina-Mih%C3%A1lka/6000000002930298828>.

⁷³ *Kárpáti Híradó* (February 20, 1944).

⁷⁴ *Alkotmány* (February 2, 1905): 8.

⁷⁵ *Fővárosi Lapok* (April 28, 1878): 480; *Krassó-Szörényi Lapok* (July 21, 1881): 4.

The secret of success: adaptation strategies in the Hungarian and Romanian states

As shown in Table 1, among the official families the Romanians possessed the largest and most valuable estates. There are no sources on their landholdings during the Reform Era, but it is likely that their accumulation of wealth took place during the Dualist period, which had a political dimension. The Dualist electoral system no longer favoured the Romanian officials. The right to vote was no longer limited to the nobility but extended to anyone who met the property or literacy requirements prescribed by law. County official elections were still held in the county seat. Voters were members of the county assembly (*törvényhatósági bizottság*), half of whom were elected by the enfranchised citizens and the other half composed of *virilists* – those paying the highest amounts of direct state tax.⁷⁶ Romanian petty nobles born in or before 1848 retained the vote “by ancient right,” regardless of their property status, but their numbers steadily declined toward the end of the period.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the number of wealthier Hungarian voters from the crown towns, as well as Ruthenian voters from the northern part of the county, increased.

Table 1: Landholdings of Romanian, Hungarian Landowning, and Reformed Official Families Combined, in acres

Families	Pastures	Arable land	Total amount
Mihalca, Mihalyi Iurka	4078	789	11 996
Szaplonczay and Pogány	870	1076	4086
Protestant families of the five royal cities	61	199	542

Nevertheless, in two of the county’s ten districts – the Sziget and the Visó – Romanians formed a relative majority, while in the Izavölgy district they were an absolute majority.⁷⁸ In 1896, the Sugatag district was created

⁷⁶ Dezső Márkus, *Magyar Törvénytár 1000–1895. 1869–1871. évi törvénytörvények* (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1900), 212–213, 215–218.

⁷⁷ András Gerő, *Az elsőpró kisebbség. Népképviselő a monarchia Magyarországon* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1988), 31–32.

⁷⁸ *A magyar korona országainak 1900. évi népszámlálása* (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvénytársaság, 1902), 299, 301, 303, 305.

from part of the Sziget district,⁷⁹ and here too the Romanians were an absolute majority. Of the county's six electoral constituencies, Romanians also formed an absolute majority in both the Sugatag and Visó constituencies. In these areas, the influence of the three families remained strong, making them valuable allies in the eyes of the Hungarian governing parties.

From Budapest, Maramureş was a distant, isolated county. For this reason, the governing party sought to secure its positions through informal agreements with the local elite.⁸⁰ Essentially, the bargain meant that the Romanians would support, or at least not openly oppose, the government's nationality policy, and would guarantee the government the mandates from the Romanian districts. In return, the positions of the Romanian elite were likewise guaranteed, and the government turned a blind eye to their questionable dealings.

This mode of operation may explain the spectacular rise of the Mihalca family. County commissioner Vasile Mihalca was the local president of first the Deák Party, then the Liberal Party, and in his public appearances often declared that he "knew of no nation in this homeland other than the Hungarian."⁸¹ In March 1879, minister of education Ágoston Trefort submitted a bill that made the teaching of the Hungarian language compulsory in public education institutions. This step had been preceded by a petition from Vasile Mihalca to the King, signed by 400 Romanians of Maramureş, requesting that the monarch give prior approval to the bill so that it could be submitted to parliament.⁸² At the same time, he was president of seven joint landholding associations.⁸³ This attracted attention in the county, and one member of the county assembly, Simon Hollósy, accused him of abusing his position to appropriate land from the associations.⁸⁴ The affair turned into a national scandal; the pro-government press rallied behind Mihalca, and Prime Minister

⁷⁹ *Pesti Napló* (April 2, 1896): 1.

⁸⁰ Gábor Egry, "Unruly borderlands: border-making, peripheralization and layered regionalism in post-First World War Maramureş and the Banat," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 27, no. 6 (2020): 715.

⁸¹ Gábor Várady, *Hulló levelek. III* (hereafter *Hulló levelek III*) (Máramarossziget: Sichermann Mór Nyomdája, 1895), 86.

⁸² Gábor Várady: *Hulló levelek III*, 244.

⁸³ A.N.S.J. MM, F 45, 818. Presidential documents of the supreme court, written inventory by subject, 1883: 5; Mihálka László alispán levele Lónyay János főispánnak, Máramarossziget (November 25, 1885).

⁸⁴ *Közérdek* (September 16, 1883): 1; *Máramarosi Lapok* (May 1, 1896): 1.

Kálmán Tisza himself defended him during a parliamentary interpellation.⁸⁵ Mihalca died in 1886, at which point the matter lapsed, but the accusations could not have been unfounded, since in 1893 the three sons of the county commissioner, who had come from poor petty noble origins, together owned 7,117 acres of land.⁸⁶

Petru I Mihalyi represented the Sugatag constituency in parliament for the governing party between 1865 and 1869, and the Visó constituency between 1869 and 1881. During his last mandate, he joined the United Opposition and then the Apponyi-led National Party. He paid the price for this, losing in the 1881 election to the pro-government Ödön Jónás, but in 1884 he managed to defeat him. In the 1887 election, Lord Lieutenant János Lónyay brokered a “peace” between Mihalyi and the governing party: Mihalyi would no longer run in the Visó constituency, and in return, the Liberals would not field a candidate against him in Sugatag. As a result, both the constituency and the district became the “property” of the Mihályi family. Gábor III served as chief magistrate of the district for 18 years, and Péter II was elected to parliament immediately after his father’s retirement.⁸⁷

This strategy proved successful in Greater Romania as well. In the final year of the Great War, it was still not certain that Maramureş would become part of the Romanian state. On October 23, 1918, Petru II declared in the Budapest parliament that the Romanians of Maramureş did not wish to join Romania.⁸⁸ His brother, Gavrilă III, the chief magistrate, was arrested in early 1919 by the Romanian army that occupied Maramureş because he refused to take down the Hungarian flag from the official building of the Sugatag district.⁸⁹ However, once it became clear that Romanian rule would be permanent, both Mihalyis adapted. Petru II, alongside his “Hungarian gentry overcoat,” began wearing a “Romanian large, tall, sheepskin cap.” They hosted soirées for Romanian officers, attended even by Petru II’s Hungarian wife, who did not

⁸⁵ Károly P. Szathmáry (ed.), *Az 1884. évi szeptemberhó 27-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója* IX (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda Részvény-Társaság, 1886), 339–342.

⁸⁶ Károly Baross, József Németh (ed.), *Magyarország földbirtokosai* (Budapest: Hungária Könyvnyomda, 1893), 406–407, 410–413, 415–417.

⁸⁷ Pál: *Parliamentary elections* 240–241, 243.

⁸⁸ *Az 1910. évi június hó 21-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója*. XL (Budapest: Athenaeum Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részvénytársulat Könyvnyomdája, 1918), 425–427.

⁸⁹ Alexandru Filipaşcu, *Istoria Maramureşului*, 208, 211, 214; *Patria* (February 11, 1923: 3); *Patria* (May 14, 1927): 2.

speak Romanian.⁹⁰ The adaptation was successful: Gavrilă became president of the Maramureș branch of the National Liberal Party, and both brothers held the office of prefect and were decorated with the Iron Cross of Romania. Petru II also served for a time as mayor of Sighetu Marmăției and as the county's senator.⁹¹ The bargain was possible because the Liberals from the Old Kingdom had no political infrastructure in Maramureș, whereas their rivals, the National Peasants' Party, did – having built upon the foundations of the former Romanian National Party. The Mihalyis guaranteed Liberal influence, and in return, their “renegade” past faded into the obscurity of the war.

An example of reintegration after the Second Vienna Award is provided by their distant relative, Flaviu Iurca, appointed lord lieutenant in 1940. The son of Basil Iurca (see Appendix 1), he had also navigated the interwar Romanian political scene successfully, serving as both high sheriff and prefect.⁹² His appointment served as a tool of legitimacy for the Hungarian state, as he was “the scion of a respected family of the local Romanian community [...] eloquent proof of the government's intention to pursue a policy of understanding and fairness toward the nationalities.”⁹³ Iurca and the Mihalyis were the last two official families in the county to retain their power and survive the changes brought by both the fall of the Monarchy and the Vienna Award. By contrast, the Reformed official families of the crown towns had already been pushed out of Maramureș county leadership during the Dualist era, while the landowning Szaplóniczay and Pogány families, as well as the Mihalcas, lost their positions in the interwar period. With the establishment of the communist regime, however, Iurca fled to Hungary.⁹⁴ The fate of the two Mihalyis remains unclear, though they likely remained in Romania.

The price of success. Assimilation?

Ioan Iurca, Vasile I Mihalca, Gavrilă I Mihalyi, and Iosif Man considered themselves Romanians belonging to the Hungarian political nation. This is how they described themselves in the sources, and their contemporaries also

⁹⁰ Aurél Szent-Gály-Faur, *Máramaroszi napló 1919. január– 1919. július* (Budapest: Erdélyi Szalon Kiadó, 2023), 65.

⁹¹ *Patria* (February 11, 1923): 3

⁹² *Monitorul Oficial* (October 11, 1925): 11425; *Aradi Újság* (May 11, 1931): 1.

⁹³ *Budapesti Közlöny* (November 20, 1940): 1.

⁹⁴ Jurka Fláviusz gyászjelentése, accessed July 3, <https://dspace.oszk.hu/handle/20.500.12346/123187#>.

perceived them as such.⁹⁵ Owing to their leading roles, they sought to support the development of the Romanian language and culture in Maramureș. All of them contributed financially to the establishment of the Maramureș Romanian Popular Education Association (*Asociațiunea pentru Cultura Poporului Român din Maramureș*).⁹⁶ Man and Mihalka served as presidents of the association.⁹⁷

It is more difficult to determine the loyalties of their sons and grandsons. Although he corresponded with his elder brother, Petru I, alternately in Hungarian and Romanian, and often in a mixed language,⁹⁸ Ioan II was politically drawn to the Transylvanian Romanian national movement and was convinced that the Romanians had a historical right to autonomy. This is no coincidence: during his university years he had a keen interest in the history of the Romanians in Hungary.⁹⁹ His work in the field later earned him election as an external member of the Romanian Academy, and he also corresponded with Nicolae Iorga.¹⁰⁰ Locally, together with his brother Petru I, he mortgaged their estates to take out a loan for the construction of a boarding school for the association's students.¹⁰¹ His children also retained their Romanian identity: Longin, for example, was raised in Blaj by his uncle, the archbishop. He brought the first Romanian flag from Cluj to Sighetu Marmăției, which was hung on the house of his father, who had already passed away.¹⁰² Of his seven daughters, three remained unmarried, while three married Romanian colonels and one a Romanian state official.¹⁰³

⁹⁵ Gábor Várady, *Hulló levelek* III, 68, 86; *Vasárnapi Újság* (February 4, 1877): 67.

⁹⁶ *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (October 11, 1902): 2.

⁹⁷ Jenő Gagy, *A magyarországi románok egyházi, iskolai, közművelődési, közgazdasági intézményeinek és mozgalmainak ismertetése* (Budapest: Uránia Könyvnyomda, 1909), 247.

⁹⁸ A.N.S.J. MM, F 245, 1204, 183, Letter from Petru Mihalyi to his brother Ioan Mihalyi, Sighetu Marmăției, February 23, 1871, 2–6; MMSM, Mihályi Péter levele Mihályi Jánosnak, Szarvaszó, June 02, 1907.

⁹⁹ Mihai Dăncuș, "Casa muzeu Mihalyi de Apșa în Pantheonul neamului românesc," *Acta Musei Maramorosiensis* 3, no. 3 (2005): 395

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 381.

¹⁰¹ Jenő Gagy, *A magyarországi románok*, 248.

¹⁰² *Anuarul institutelor de învățământ gr.-cat. Din Balázsfalva (Blaj): gimnaziul superior, institutul pedagogic, școala civilă și elementară de fete, școala de aplicație, școala învățătorilor de meserii și negustori pe anul școlastic 1914–15* (Blaj: Tipografia seminariului teologic greco-catolic, 1915), 107; Mihai Dăncuș, *Casa muzeu*, 382.

¹⁰³ MMSM, Fondul Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa, *Necrologul lui Longin-Virgil Mihalyi de Apșa; Necrologul lui Marie Theodora născută Mihalyi de Apșa*.

Most members of the second and third generations found themselves situated between acculturation and assimilation. Petru I may have thought much like his father: he integrated well into the highest circles of the Hungarian elite, while also seeking to devote part of his wealth to supporting Romanian cultural life. He too served as president of the Popular Education Association.¹⁰⁴ His sons displayed no national commitment until 1919. Petru II was born in Košice and spent his early years there. As a student, he was a member of the Arany Self-Education Circle (*Arany-Önképző-kör*), and as a university student he served as president of the University Circle under the colors of the National Party (Nemzeti Párt); he also worked as a journalist for the nationalist newspaper *Magyarország*.¹⁰⁵ The second generation of the Mihalca family was likewise indifferent to the Romanian cause. In the same article, the Romanian newspaper *Unirea* referred to Vasile I Mihalca as a “good Romanian,” spelling his name in Romanian, while giving his son George Mihalca’s name in Hungarian form and noting that he no longer spoke his father’s language.¹⁰⁶ According to Alexandru Filipaşcu, all three officials’ children moved to Hungary after the change of sovereignty.¹⁰⁷

The social environment played an important role in shaping attitudes toward Romanian roots. The second and third generations of both the Mihalyi and Mihalca families were educated in a Hungarian milieu. Above all, however, the most decisive factor was marriage. The Mihalca family is the only one that can be said with certainty to have assimilated. Of the Reform Era officials, only Vasile Mihalca had a Hungarian wife. The Romanian press attributed the Magyarization of his sons to the upbringing provided by his wife, Mária Hatfaludy, and their wives were also Protestant.¹⁰⁸ By contrast, all five male members of the Mihalyi family’s second generation “received a national upbringing” from Iuliana Man, and thus retained their identity.¹⁰⁹ The worldview of Ioan Mihalyi and his children was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that his first wife came from Sibiu, a centre of the Romanian national movement.

¹⁰⁴ Jenő Gagyí, *A magyarországi románok*, 254.

¹⁰⁵ *Magyarország* (September 16, 1900): 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (July 30, 1899): 3; *Unirea* (July 30, 1914): 1.

¹⁰⁷ Alexandru Filipaşcu, “Înstrăinarea unor familii şi averi maramureşene,” *Transilvania* 63, no. 10 (1942): 749.

¹⁰⁸ *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (November 26, 1899): 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Familia* (August 16, 1881): 393–394.

The Iurca family presents something of an exception. Basil Iurca's wife, Baroness Aurelia Popp, was the daughter of Baron Ladislau Popp, president of the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (*Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People*, hereafter ASTRA). Flaviu was even provided with a Romanian governess from Bucharest.¹¹⁰ However, in shaping his identity, the years he spent studying in Budapest and his marriage to Anna Klíma, the daughter of a Hungarian ministerial councillor (*minisztertanácsos*), proved decisive. After the Second World War, he converted to Roman Catholicism and was buried in his wife's family crypt in Vác.¹¹¹

Two further important factors were the families' local interests and nationalism. These exerted both a pull and a push effect on the officials' identities. In the second generation of the Mihalyi family, although Romanian identity was present, their political and economic interests hindered its full expression. Ioan, as the county's chief prosecutor, only openly embraced sympathy for the national movement after losing the contest for the position of county commissioner.¹¹² Following this defeat, he changed strategy: unable to realize his power ambitions with a moderate stance, he began investing in mining, and only after securing a stable economic base did he attempt to organize a local branch of ASTRA.¹¹³ Petru I, as a large landowner, was for a long time a member of the National Party, which represented agrarian interests but was more strongly nationalist than the Liberals. He only spoke out against his former party when, in connection with the Lex Apponyi, it endangered the teaching of the Romanian language in schools.¹¹⁴ His sons found themselves in a reverse situation but similar in essence under the Romanian state: owing to their socialization, they moved far more comfortably in the Hungarian cultural milieu, but they could preserve their wealth and power only by "rediscovering" their Romanian roots within the framework of the National Liberal Party.

¹¹⁰ Alexandru Filipașcu, "Contribuțiuni documentare la administrarea Maramureșului," *Transilvania* 63, no. 7–8 (1942): 553–556.

¹¹¹ *Váci Hírlap* (November 15, 1931): 2; Jurka Fláviusz gyászjelentése, accessed 9 August 2025, <https://dspace.oszk.hu/handle/20.500.12346/123187#>.

¹¹² *Tribuna* (April 21, 1898): 345–346.

¹¹³ *Pesti Hírlap*, (October 22, 1904): 13; *Budapesti Hírlap* (January 14, 1913):19.

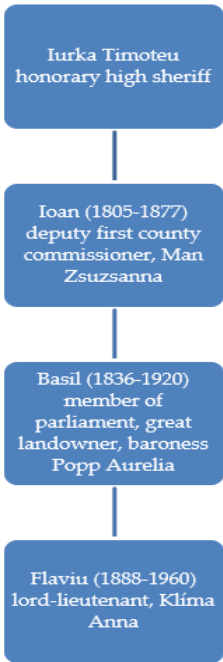
¹¹⁴ *Az Újság* (September 9, 1909): 3.

Conclusion

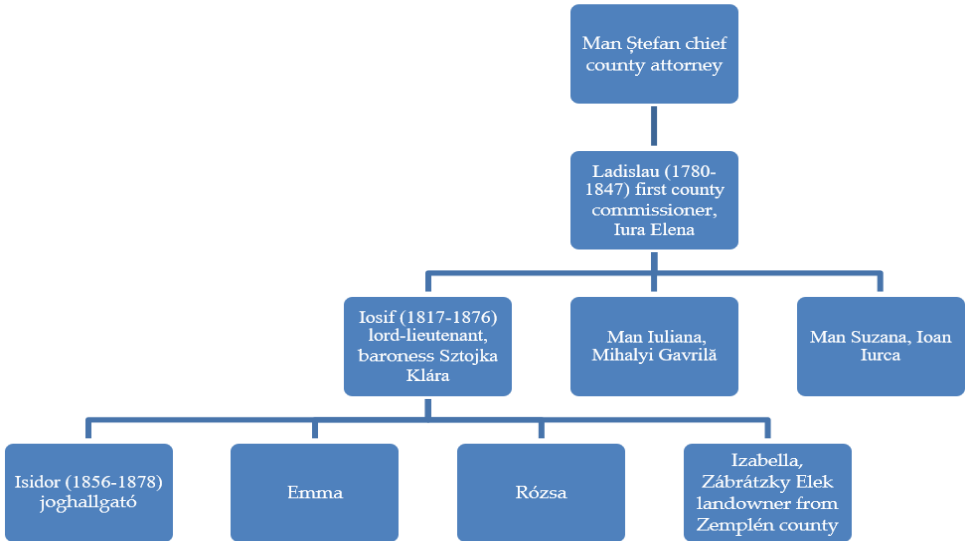
In the late eighteenth century, the power vacuum in Maramureş was filled by the Iurca, Man, Mihalca, and Mihalyi families. Their forebears had held lower-ranking offices or served in ecclesiastical careers, but they ensured a proper education for their children. Marriages between the families were used as political alliances, and by exploiting the advantages of the electoral system they secured their place in the elite. During the Revolution, they fought on the Hungarian side, and the prestige thus gained was converted into political capital at the time of the October Diploma and during the Dualist period. The Agreement of Călineşti further strengthened their position. They often married their children into influential Hungarian and Romanian families far from the county, and sent them to prestigious educational institutions – something made possible by their growing landed wealth. This accumulation of property was secured through political bargains with the government: the local Romanian elite guaranteed pro-government mandates and did not oppose official nationality policy. In return, their local influence was consolidated and the government overlooked their questionable dealings. Following the same logic, they reached similar arrangements with the governing parties in Bucharest after the change of sovereignty, and later again with those in Budapest.

Marriage was the factor with the greatest impact on national identity. Officials who married into Hungarian families raised their children in a Hungarian milieu. Assimilation, therefore, was not a prerequisite for successful advancement. The process did exist, but it was more often the result of adaptive mechanisms of marriage and education aimed at social ascent or the consolidation of existing power, as well as of the local political climate. Depending on the political context, this could be reinforced or reversed by either Hungarian or Romanian nationalism, as well as by the private interests of the families.

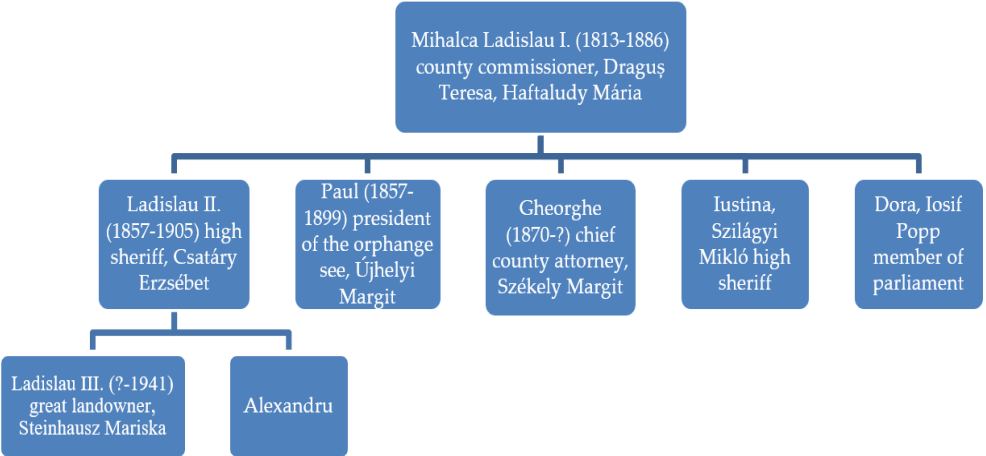
Appendix



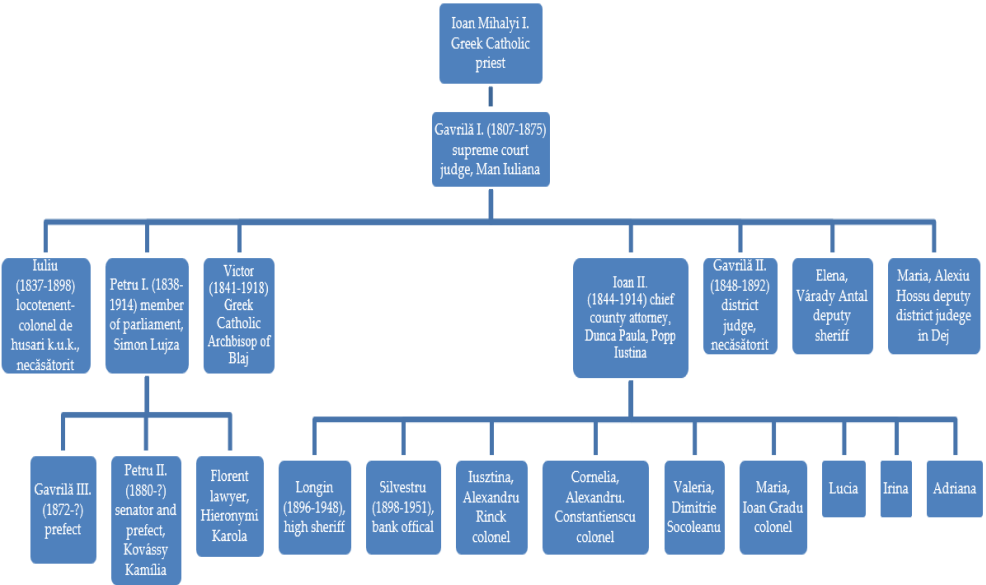
Appendix 1: The Iurca family tree



Appendix 2: The Man family tree



Appendix 3: The Mihalca family tree



Appendix 4: The Mihalyi family tree