

**“Until Death Do Us Apart” and Even Longer:
Demographic and Social Disapproval of Remarriage
in 19th Century Italy**

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1. Remarriage in pre-transitional Italy

Remarriage is a very complex phenomenon depending on both the level of mortality and the marriage pattern, and only sophisticated analysis can prepare the ground for the historical interpretation of trends and differentials. Quantitative information in the pre-statistical period are scarce. In Italy the first statistics of marriages by marital status of spouses date back to the first years of the nineteenth century. It is only with the political unification of Italy (1861) that the documentation became more continuous, allowing the identification of the different marriage patterns within the national borders (Livi Bacci 1981). However, the descriptive and aggregative nature of such data did not allow any research on the determinants of the decision to remarry. Even the nominative approach, at least the techniques based on family reconstitution, only permitted partial analyses of remarriage: a situation due to either the few remarriages celebrated in a given parish or the intrinsic technical problems of measurement which restrict analyses to an even smaller set (Knodel 1988; Wrigley et al. 1998). Notwithstanding these difficulties, some studies on small communities outlined some of the most important aspects of remarriage, especially those concerning the biodemographic characteristics of widowed people. Those studies generally agreed on some key points: a) widowers were more likely to remarry than widows, generally shortly after wife's death, and to younger and never-married women; b) conversely, widows over 40 years of age seldom remarried, particularly if they had dependent children; c) however, the younger the widowed person, the higher the chances of finding a new spouse regardless of the gender of the widow/er (Blom 1981).

This strong asymmetry by gender is associated not only with demographic constraints but also with economic, cultural and social factors linked to the different roles of men and women in marriage, family and in the inheritance system. It is therefore of great interest to analyze remarriage in relation to household characteristics. This is crucial in Italy due to the marked regional and socio-professional differences in the household structure and the importance of family ties in the Italian society of the past. Living in simple rather than in multiple households could be indeed a key factor influencing the chances to remarry. In a simple nuclear family, the loss of the spouse could have dramatic consequences on the surviving partner who found him/herself alone in taking care of children. On the other hand, widowed persons living in multiple households could count on the other household members for help and support, and this reduced the risk of a fall in their standard of living. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that this latter situation could weaken and make less urgent the search for a new spouse (Tittarelli 1991), depending again on the gender and age of the

widowed person and also by his/her position within the family group. As it is easily recognizable, the role of household composition on the chances of remarriage is closely associated with the socioeconomic status of the widowed person and the family group where he/she lived.

“This, anyway, is the theory” as Kertzer and Karweit (1995, 230) have observed in their study on the impact of widowhood in Casalecchio di Reno between 1861 and 1921. A community located in the outskirts of Bologna that had long been dominated by a sharecropping economic system before it underwent a huge transformation led by the spread of capitalism, industrialization, and urban life. This period of tremendous changes, namely between the end of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century, changed and made less clearly interpretable the complicated relationship between household system, impact of widowhood, and propensity to remarriage. Kertzer and Karweit concur with Livi Bacci in his tentative interpretation of the regional geography of remarriage rates in Italy reconstructed at the beginning of demographic transition. Massimo Livi Bacci’s (1981) study of remarriage in the 1880s found much higher rates in the South than in the Centre-North Italy. “It is tempting to correlate the very low proportions of women who remarry in some rural regions of central Italy with the more structured family system typical of the sharecropping system of agriculture. The extended family provided the help needed by the widow, thus lessening the need for a second marriage” (Livi Bacci 1981, 358-359).

Nevertheless, this interpretation is still waiting to be definitely proved. In this view, individual-level data are necessary to disentangle the effects of socioeconomic status and household structure, and these data are only seldom available for Italian populations of the past. Thus, the role of those factors in the remarriage pattern remains still largely unexplored for Italy, especially if considered in a dynamic and longitudinal perspective. A dataset with such specific information has been patiently set up for a Tuscan – Casalguidi (1819-59) – and a Friulan community – Treppo Carnico (1835-67) – in the period preceding the demographic transition. As we will describe in more detail later on, Casalguidi was a rural population situated in an area dominated by sharecropping, a form of land tenure that favored the presence of complex households on farms owned by absent landowners. Conversely, Treppo Carnico was a mountain village where almost all family groups lived in their own house and owned small plots of land and wood. Moreover, recordings of the economic status of families are available for both the communities. This offers us the rare opportunity to investigate both the consequences of widowhood and the chances of remarriage taking into account both the socioeconomic status of widow(er)s and the structure of the households.

2. The studied communities: Casalguidi, 1819-1859 and Treppo Carnico, 1835-1867

Casalguidi is a small town (2,400 residents on average) in Tuscany, only few kilometers from the cities of Pistoia and Florence. This proximity was the reason for continuous contacts among the populations and gave rise to constant flows of immigration and emigration both of individuals and entire households (Manfredini 2003a).

Seventy per cent of the total active population of Casalguidi was employed in farm labors. The majority of them were sharecroppers, Tuscan sharecropping (*podere mezzadrile*) being the most common form of land tenure in Casalguidi in the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to sharecroppers, agricultural labors were provided by small independent farmers and day laborers. Artisans, small shopkeepers and a tiny bourgeoisie completed the socio-economic structure of the population (Breschi, Derosas, Manfredini 2004).

From the demographic point of view, trends and patterns of the most important demographic indicators match those of the whole Tuscany. The annual population growth rate was indeed exactly the same, 8.3 per thousand in the period 1819-59, the estimates of life expectancy at birth, 35.0 and 36.2 years, respectively in Casalguidi and Tuscany and the total fertility rate 5.3 and 5.1 children per woman.

As in many other sharecropping communities of mid-nineteenth century Italy, high age at first marriage and high celibacy rates for both males and females were the two key features of the marriage pattern.¹ In Casalguidi men married at around 28-29 years and women at 25, with proportions never-marrying respectively at 15.1 and 10.1 (tab. 1). The form of living arrangement after marriage was determined by the groom's occupation. Sharecroppers followed usually a virilocal pattern due to the importance of the male working force for the sharecropping households, whilst day laborers and artisans were much more likely to form brand new families after marriage, independent from parents' households (Barbagli 1988). However, weddings were always celebrated in the bride's parish regardless of the residence chosen after marriage. This is reflected in the total absence of acts of wife-exogamous unions in parish registers (Manfredini 2003b).

Looking at the household structure (tab. 1), between 1819 and 1859, 13.1 per cent of the population lived in multiple family households, and an additional 22.1 per cent lived in extended family structures. Consequently, 48.2 per cent of the inhabitants lived in complex households, and almost half of total population lived in nuclear family units (49.6 per cent). The rest of population was divided between solitaries (about 1 per cent) and unclassifiable

¹ For a synthesis see Della Pina 1990; Rettaroli 1990; Cocchi et al. 1996.

households (1.2 per cent).² Farmers were more likely than non-farmers to live in complex households, with respectively 54.5 and 42.8 per cent of persons living in such multiple and extended family households.

Tab.1. Selected demographic indicators of Casalguidi (1819-59) and Treppo Carnico (1835-67).

	Casalguidi			Treppo Carnico		
	Male		Female	Male		Female
SMAM	28.7		25.6	31.4		28.7
Celibacy	15.1		10.1	14.4		16.7
e ₀	36.6		33.9	39.5		38.9
TFR			5.3			-
	Households	Population	MHS	Households	Population	MHS
Nuclear	58.1	49.6	4.4	59.4	56.9	4.7
Complex	35.2	48.2	7.1	30.5	39.6	6.4
Solitaries	4.5	0.9	1.0	6.3	1.3	1.0
No structure	2.2	1.3	3.1	3.8	2.2	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
Annual mean	464	2,402	5.2	230	1,122	4.9

Note: SMAM is the Singulate Mean Age at Marriage; celibacy is defined as the proportion never-married at age 50; e₀ denotes life expectancy at birth; TFR is the Total Fertility Rate; MHS is the Mean Household Size

Table 2 provides a detailed overview of the socio-economic profile of the population of Casalguidi. The inhabitants are listed by head's socio-professional occupation (farmers, artisans-shopkeepers, middle-class) and family tax (collapsed in three categories: high-middle, low and untaxed).³

Tab.2. Households by socioeconomic status and head's occupation. Per cent values. Casalguidi 1819-59

	High & Medium Tax	Low Tax	Untaxed	Total	N
Farmers	9.1	44.4	22.5	76.0	14100
Artisan & shopkeepers	2.0	7.1	7.1	16.2	3005
Middle-class & nobles	1.5	0.5	0.3	2.3	428
Unknown	0.0	0.0	5.5	5.5	1020
Total	12.6	52.0	35.4	100.0	18553

Despite the modest amounts families had to pay – the amount for the Low-tax group was approximately the daily pay of a wage-earner – over 35 per cent of the households were exempt from taxation due to their evident poverty. If we add those families included in the low tax bracket, about 87 per cent of households were in poor economic circumstances. The

² In these latter cases insufficient information was provided on relationships within the household to enable the structure of the household to be determined.

³ The amount to pay corresponded roughly to 70 Kg of wheat on average for the highest class, and to less than 4 Kg for the lowest one. However, some very poor families might be allowed to pay by installments.

incidence of indigent and poor families was particularly high among artisans (44.0 per cent within the occupational group), whilst farmers had a slightly better economic profile. About 97 per cent of households headed by widows were indigent or poor, clear proof of the marginal social and economic role that widows had in this sharecropping community if they remained alone. In fact, women and above all widows could not have direct access to sharecropping contracts (only men could be in charge), and their possibilities to be engaged in farm works were practically absent. Employment as a servant was the almost the sole opportunity available to them in this rural society.

At the top of the social ladder, the few members of the middle-class lived in relative prosperity: 65 per cent of middle-class household heads paid the highest taxes.

Treppo Carnico is a village of about 1,100 inhabitants and 230 households on yearly average, located in Carnia, a mountainous region of north-eastern Italy.

The local economy was based on a sustained seasonal emigration of adult men. In the mid-nineteenth century the activities associated to those emigration flows were in a phase of profound change. Until the middle of the 18th century, emigrants were mainly pedlars and artisans, professions which were progressively substituted, in the second half of the 19th century, by masons. In the period of transition between the two professional patterns – i.e. the period studied here – farm activities gained a more important role in the seasonal emigration of men although they still had a minor role in the local economic system (Fornasin 1998).

From a demographic point of view, Treppo displayed the characteristics typical of the Carnia region. The mean annual growth rate was lower than in Casalguidi, 5.8 per thousand (1834-68) against a figure of 6.5 for the whole region. Life expectancy at birth was higher than it was in the Tuscan community, 39 years for Treppo and 41 for Carnia, whilst the TFR was lower, 4.7 children per woman in the whole territory. The mountain area where Treppo was situated was therefore characterized by a low-pressure demographic system, whose preventive checks were very high ages at first marriage (31.4 years for men, 28.7 for women) and permanent celibacy, respectively 14.4% for males and 16.7% for females. Like other mountain populations, residence after marriage was virilocal or, secondarily, neolocal. Very rare were the uxorilocal marriages. As for the household structure, we can provide robust data only for those years in which the three distinct population registers were set up, namely 1834, 1851, and 1867. Briefly, complex households were less numerous than they were in Casalguidi, accounting for 30.5% of total households. Nuclear households were 59.4%, whilst one-person households (6.3%) and those without a structure (3.8%) were more

numerous than in Casalguidi. The part of population living in complex households was consequently by far lower (39.6%).

As for the socioeconomic status of households, for Treppo we do not have information on the Family Tax. However, the Austrian Cadastre of 1851 supplies economic data on the population of Treppo. We have to say that although land possession in Treppo did not have the same meaning as it had in the plan, it can be taken anyway as a proxy of the real economic status of families. In addition, it is to underline that in Carnia collective land possession was still of great economic relevance. In Treppo, the cadastre revenue for public goods was higher than the corresponding revenue for private owners. We think this is an important element for a correct assessment of wealth distribution within the community. In fact, it allowed every family descending from the original one, also the least well-off, to have non-irrelevant revenues at their own disposal. The large size of collective land ownership worked then as a mechanism of wealth redistribution able to reduce even remarkably the economic inequalities within the population.

The cadastre does not only report information concerning land possession but also those relative to houses. Taking into account data on houses, the evidence of an egalitarian distribution of property are even more striking. At the end of 1851, 229 out of 236 households lived in their own house. The total number of variously-defined habitations was 298, higher than the number of resident households. The resulting picture is a community where the property of a house was an almost universal element.

3. Sources

The data used in this paper are derived mainly from two different types of documents: local population registers and parish registers. Our sources for the Tuscan population of Casalguidi are annual nominative lists of inhabitants called *Status Animarum*, supplemented by parish registers of vital events covering the period 1819-1859. The *Status Animarum* was a kind of annual census, recorded by the parish priest on Easter, where data were organized by household. Age, sex, marital status, and relationship to the household head were recorded for each person. Since these lists were made annually (only one year is missing from the series), it is possible to trace changes in household size and composition throughout the period studied. Vital events (registers of baptism, burial, and marriage) were linked to *Status Animarum* by means of nominative techniques.⁴

⁴ The linkage technique is described in Manfredini 1996.

The marriage registers were analysed for the period 1819-1859 and they actually include all the endogamous and husband-exogamous unions whose weddings were celebrated in the church of Casalguidi. These acts provide information about the wedding date, name and surname of spouses and parents, marital status at the moment of marriage as well as current spouses' place of residence. As mentioned in section 1, marriages between local men and non-local women were always celebrated in the bride's parish, leaving no trace in the registers of the groom's parish.

The nominative linkage of individual information from both vital and census sources have thus allowed the reconstruction of the life-histories of each resident (as long as he/she remained in the community) of Casalguidi), including those wife-exogamous marriages not recorded in the local marriage parish registers. By checking all the men who changed their marital status from unmarried (or widowed) to married between two consecutive *Stati Animarum* it was possible to retrieve information such as the year of marriage, name, surname and age of the spouse for those missing events. Identification of the groom's marital status the year before marriage allowed us to determine whether this was his first or subsequent marriage.

Parish registers do not usually provide information on socio-economic status. The *Stati Animarum* of Casalguidi are a rare exception since they always report the name of the property owner. Moreover, we drew additional data from the Tax Register which records the name of the household head, his/her occupation, hamlet of residence, level of taxation, and other useful details for each taxable household.⁵ All 'miserable and needy households' were exempt from taxes, and therefore not recorded in the register. Data taken from the Tax Register combined with those drawn from *Stati Animarum* allowed us to reconstruct the local socioeconomic hierarchy as described in section 2.⁶

For the alpine village of Treppo Carnico we use two population registers. The first was started in 1834 and kept updated until 1850; the second register, which replaced the first one,

⁵ The number of tax brackets changed over the period studied. There were six levels between 1819 and 1848, seven in 1849, and ten in 1850. Finally, beginning in 1851, the number of categories rose to fourteen. However, these changes concerned almost exclusively the two poorest tax categories which were divided into more sub-groups. In conjunction with the necessity to have a large number of observations for each tax group, these variations make impossible for us to adopt a finer classification of social status by amount of tax paid. It would be in fact impossible to identify movements within the Low-Tax category for those married before 1848 and were widowed later.

⁶ Unfortunately, the *Status Animarum* was drawn up at Easter while the tax register was compiled in autumn or January. Since we defined as 'poor' those households listed in *Status Animarum* but not recorded on the tax registers, the imperfect synchrony of the two sources may have overestimated their number. Some of the unlinked households may in fact have been taxed. However, the proportion of households recorded on the tax registers but not found on *Status Animarum* is very low, under 5 per cent.

started in 1851 and continued until the end of 1868, about two years after the passage of the Friuli region under the control of the Kingdom of Italy. The population register contains information on all the households residing in Treppo, specifying for each household member his/her name, family name and vital events: birth, death, marriage(s), and movements into and/or outside the household. Nominative data recorded in the population register were supplemented with information taken from parish registers, which served mostly to correct underreporting of newborn deaths.

At the end, we can trace the life history of each individual (as long as he or she remained in the community) either directly by consulting the population register (Treppo) or indirectly by linking the *Status Animarum* to parish vital registers (Casalguidi). By placing demographic events in the household context where they occurred, we can go beyond family reconstitution to examine the relationship between family organization and individual life histories. This in turn opens new prospects for understanding demographic phenomena before the era of modern statistics in Italy. While the usefulness of civil population registers for the study of post-Unification Italy has been recognized for some time (Schiaffino 1979a and 1979b; Kertzer and Hogan 1989), our analysis of ecclesiastical sources is the first to our knowledge.⁷

4. A demographic profile of widowhood in the two communities

Thanks to our reconstruction of the populations of Casalguidi and Treppo Carnico, we are able to look at characteristics and timing of widowhood in each community. In table 3 we show the mean age at widowhood for Casalguidi and Treppo Carnico in the respective studied period. The first age class reflects obviously the different timing of access to marriage. Late age at first marriage in Treppo Carnico determined a lower number of union disruptions due to the death of one of the spouses before age 35. Nevertheless, in both the villages about 50% of the men who lost their wives became widowers before age 50. At the end of the reproductive period, the proportion of widows is lower than that of widowers, although with different figures in the two populations, 44.6% in Casalguidi against 31.8% in the alpine village. Although women are younger than men at marriage, the numerous childbirths exposed them to higher risks of death during the reproductive period, in particular in Treppo where one third of women had their first marriage after 33 years. Once this risky life phase was over, union disruptions due to husband's death became more frequent, and

⁷ Although family reconstitution can incorporate census data, such data are not used frequently in family reconstitution studies in Italy. For details, see Manfredini (1996).

women enter widowhood later than men: about 51 years in Casalguidi (50 years for men) and 55.6 in Treppo (53 for men).

Tab.3. Age at widowhood by sex, Casalguidi (1820-58), Treppo Carnico (1835-67)

Age	Casalguidi		Treppo Carnico	
	M	F	M	F
< 35	18.7	14.6	10.2	9.1
35-49	31.2	30.0	37.8	22.7
50-64	30.5	37.1	29.6	38.6
65+	19.6	18.3	22.4	29.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
% age unknown	5.4	6.1	3.0	2.2
N	290	309	101	90
Proportion < 50	49.8	44.6	48.0	31.8
MAW	49.7	50.8	53.1	55.6

Notes: MAW is the Mean Age at Widowhood

Widowhood is therefore a later event in the mountain village because of the later age at first marriage. The differential in the access to marriage between the two populations (3 years on average for both men and women) tends to broaden due to a lower intensity of mortality in the alpine population (cfr. Tab.1). This partly explains the small amount of widowed people before 35 years especially in Treppo, about 0.5% among both men and women (tab. 4). Widow(er)s are vice versa about 1-2% of the ever-married population. This latter calculation partly eliminate the effects of the marital-status structure of the population produced by the differential access to marriage, delayed and with higher celibacy rates in Treppo Carnico (cfr. Tab.1).

Tab.4. Percent of population widowed by age and sex, Casalguidi and Treppo Carnico

Age	Casalguidi 1820-58				Treppo Carnico 1835-67			
	Total population		Married+Widow		Total population		Married+Widow	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
18-34	0.8	1.1	2.4	2.3	0.6	0.5	2.5	1.5
35-49	2.9	8.8	3.6	10.0	4.8	8.1	6.2	10.2
50-64	9.2	29.5	10.6	32.7	13.0	24.1	14.3	28.1
65+	25.4	65.6	28.2	70.9	36.9	55.7	39.0	62.3
Total	5.1	13.9	8.2	19.6	8.1	13.4	13.6	21.5

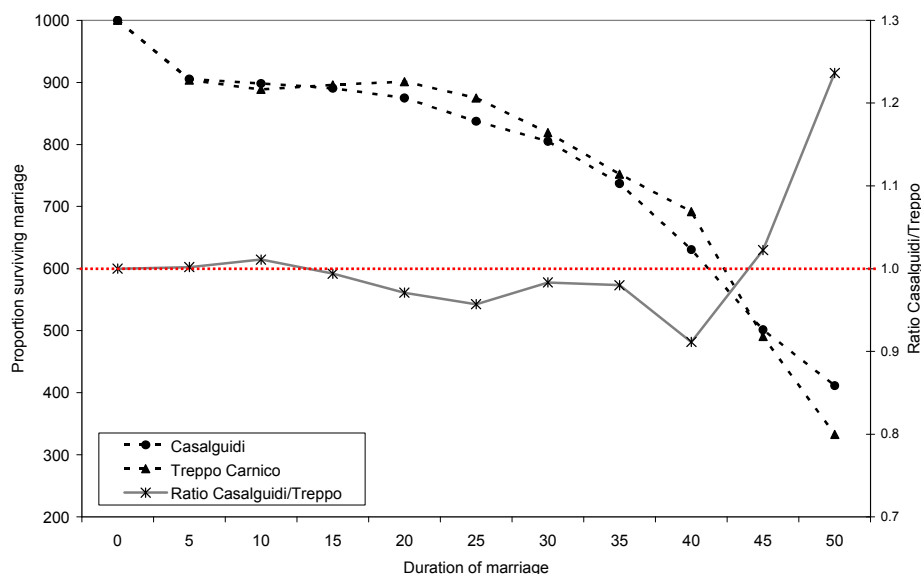
The presence of widow(er)s tends to increase with age as well as the gender differential (tab.4). In both the communities, about one woman out of three is widowed in the age group 50-64. Widowers are less numerous: 1 out of 10 in Casalguidi and 1 out of 7 in Treppo. Over 65 years, about two third (65.6%) of all aged women are widowed against an incidence of only one fourth (25.4%) among men. In Treppo, this gender asymmetry is less marked:

widows amount to 55% of all women 65+ and widowers to 37%. Widowhood was therefore a more common status in Treppo than it was in Casalguidi, as also reflected in the overall proportions of widowed on ever-married people. Widows are about 20% in both the populations whilst widowers amounted to only 8.1% in Casalguidi and 13.6% in Treppo.

The figures of table 4 are the result of many forces. Limiting the description to the sole demographic ones, we can remind the different marriage model, the age difference between spouses, the different impact of mortality by gender and age and, finally, the different access to remarriage of widows and widowers in the two communities.

Before moving on to remarriage analysis, let us spend some more words on the timing and intensity of widowhood. Figure 1 shows a synthetic view of the process of union disruption due to death of one of the spouses. For each village, dotted lines represent the proportion of surviving marriages by marriage duration whilst the solid line (right axis) is the ratio between the surviving couples at different durations. Calculation were made on the basis of the values in table 1. Thus, in Casalguidi the average couple is formed by a never-married man of 28.7 years and a never-married woman of 25.6 years, in Treppo the husband is 31.4 and the wife 28.7.

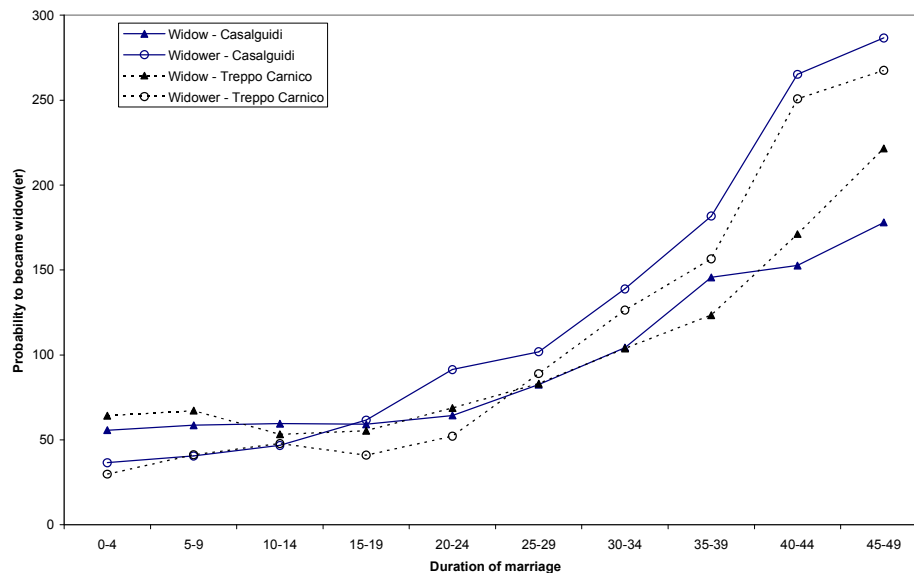
Fig.1. Proportion surviving marriage by marriage duration, Casalguidi and Treppo Carnico



Despite a higher age at first marriage in Treppo, union disruptions are almost equivalent in the first 15 years after marriage, whilst between the 15th and the 40th anniversary mortality selection is slightly stronger in the Tuscan community. Only at very high marriage durations selection by death gets stronger in the alpine village. In general, the couples living in Treppo

succeeded to recover the gap due to their late marriage pattern thanks to the lower mortality levels existing in the mountain community (cfr. Tab.1).

Fig.2. Probability to became widow(er) by marriage duration, Casalguidi and Treppo Carnico



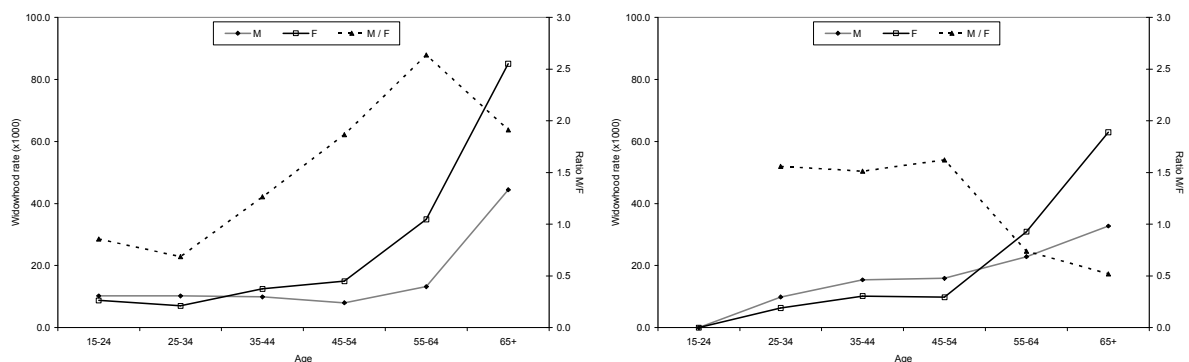
But which spouse was more likely to end marriage by death? Starting again by the standard couple with age at marriage equal to the mean values of men and women, we calculated for each village the probability to become widowed for both genders at different marriage durations (fig.2). In the first years of marriage, characterized by a higher number of deliveries, it is more likely to become widower than widow: the male figures are by far higher than the corresponding values for women. Given 1,000 standard couples at duration 0, in Casalguidi we have 164 widowers and 119 widows at duration 15: the former are 1.4 times more numerous than the latter. In Treppo, we have 174 widowers and 114 widows at the same duration, with a ratio of 1.5. The selection is therefore slightly stronger among the women of this alpine village. The risks connected to childbirth were probably more marked for women arrived later at marriage. Over 20 years of marriage, when the women of both the communities were close to 50 years, the probabilities to become widow increase rapidly, getting almost double than the corresponding figures for men.

The process of union disruption by death of one of the spouses can be seen also looking at the age of spouses rather than to marriage duration. The following two figures describe, for each village, the widowhood pattern by means of age-specific widowhood rates, for men and women separately. The crude widowhood rate, here expressed as the ratio between the number of widow(er)s and the total married population, is 16.4 per thousand among widows

and 13.1 among widowers in the Tuscan village. The higher widowhood rate of men is present also in the mountain village (17.8 per thousand) although it is only slightly higher than that of women (16.0 per thousand). Much more interesting is the comparison between age-specific rates as they are less biased by the age structure of the populations. In both the communities, the ratio between the number widowed and the number married was highest in the oldest age groups both for men and women, but from the age of 40, the ratios between widowed and married for women were twice those for men.

This finding probably arises from the combined impact of the higher mortality of males and the growing age gap between spouses, as described above (tab. 5). As previously observed, it is only during the reproductive period that the risks associated to pregnancy and childbearing determined higher rates of widowhood among men than among women. In particular, the women of Casalguidi are more likely to die in the early stage of the reproductive period, whilst those living in Treppo in the later stage: a result coherent with the different pattern of access to marriage.

Fig.3-4. Age-specific widowhood rates (x1,000) for men and women. Casalguidi 1820-58 (left) and Treppo Carnico, 1835-67 (right).



4. Remarriage in the two communities

The phenomenon of remarriage is usually approached by analyzing the distribution of marriages by marital status (tab.5). Using existing sources (as marriage parish registers), this is relatively easy to measure even for the 16th-18th centuries.⁸ Nevertheless, the “proportion” of remarriages is not an accurate measure of remarriage intensity. The proportion of remarriage is also a function of first-marriage intensity and mortality level. The use of such

⁸ This possibility depends on the quality of recordings. In Italy, marital status is recorded also in the most ancient parish registers, although in an indirect form (name and surname of the previous spouse). However, one should pay much attention in the use of such a piece of information since it was more likely present for women than for men.

simplified indicator is justified by the difficult to measure correctly the population at risk to enter a new union, namely widowed people (Matthijs 2003). Although such information is rarely available for historic populations, in this study the reconstruction of individual life-histories allowed more precise evaluations of remarriage in terms of intensity and tempo. Hereunder we will provide a description of remarriage by using both the approaches.

Tab.5. Types of marriages. Casalguidi (1820-58), Treppo Carnico (1835-67)

	Casalguidi			Treppo Carnico		
	n	%	%	n	%	%
Bachelor/Spinster	716	69.6	78.2	233	73.0	84.7
Widower/Spinster	137	13.3	15.0	36	11.3	13.1
Bachelor/Widow	26	2.5	2.8	4	1.3	1.5
Widower/Widow	37	3.7	4.0	2	0.6	0.7
Bachelor/Unknown	67	6.5		10	3.1	
Widower/Unknown	30	2.9		4	1.3	
Unknown/Spinster	1	0.1		29	9.1	
Unknown/Widow	4	0.4		1	0.3	
Unknown/Unknown	9	0.9		-		
Total	1028	100.0		319	100.0	
Total both known	916		100.0	275		100.0
Total with widow(er)	234	22.8	21.8	47	14.7	15.3
Widower/widow	3.0			6.0		

A total of 1,028 marriages involving inhabitants of Casalguidi were celebrated between 1820 and 1858, but unfortunately we retrieved information on marital status of both spouses for only 916 of them.⁹ Of those unions (table 5) 716 were first marriages (78.2 per cent), whilst 200 (21.8 per cent) were remarriages. In particular, 137 (15.0 per cent) were between a widower and an unmarried woman, 26 (2.8 per cent) between an unmarried man and a widow, and 37 (4.0 per cent) between two widowed persons.

The overall intensity of remarriage (21.8 per cent) is similar to that for the whole Tuscany (Breschi 1990) in the period 1853-1860 (20.6) although there are some differences in the frequency of various types of remarriage: for instance, unions between widowers and never-married women account for 12.3 per cent against the figure of 15.0 per cent found in the studied community. Widowers living in Casalguidi remarried at 42.6 years (± 10.8) on average, whilst widows remarried earlier (37.6 ± 10.6), figures that do not substantially differ from those calculated at the national level in 1880, respectively 44.7 and 38.9 years (Livi Bacci 1981, 355). Therefore, in Casalguidi 20 men out of 100 were widowed at the moment

⁹ For some marriages reconstructed from *Status Animarum* it is impossible to determine the marital status of non-local spouses coming to Casalguidi (see section 3).

of marriage, a figure about three times higher than the corresponding proportion of women (only 8 out of 100).

Notwithstanding a certain degree of similarity in the structure of marriages by marital status, the community of Treppo presents some peculiarities. The number of marriages is lower (319) due to both the smaller population size and the shorter period studied (23 years against 39 for Casalguidi). A large majority of unions, about 85% of all the marriages whose marital status of both spouses is known, is between two never-married persons. The 13% of marriages is between a widower and a never-married woman, and only 2% of unions involve a widow. The picture does not change significantly as far as marriages with at least one spouse whose marital status is known are concerned.¹⁰ In Treppo Carnico, remarriage is a less frequent event than in Casalguidi. Unions with a widow(er) amount to 15.3% in the alpine village against a figure of 22.8% in the Tuscan community. In particular, the marriage between two widowed persons is a real rarity in the former population: only 2 unions in 23 years. A specificity observed in other four villages of the Carnia region we were able to analyze. Marriages involving widowers are maximum 16%, whilst widows are present in less than 2% of total unions.

Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration in an analysis of remarriage patterns is the median age difference between spouses by age at marriage. This information is set out in Table 6. The gap is relatively modest until men and women reached their late thirties. Husbands aged 25-34 were on average around 4 years older than their wives in Casalguidi.

Tab.6. Median age difference between spouses by gender and age at marriage.

Age at marriage	Casalguidi				Treppo Carnico			
	M		F		M		F	
	Diff.	n	Diff.	n	Diff.	n	Diff.	n
15-24	1.0	232	5.0	543	-1.0	37	6.0	74
25-34	4.5	556	3.0	408	2.0	133	1.0	136
35-44	11.0	160	7.5	74	9.0	9	1.5	22
45-54	14.0	63	2.0	15	14.0	14	(14.0)	(1)
55+	19.0	39	-2.5	10	22.0	22	-	-

Note: the age difference was calculated as groom's age minus bride's age at marriage. Thus, a positive sign indicates a husband older than his wife and a negative sign a husband younger than his wife.

¹⁰ Once redistributed the spouses whose marital status is unknown, the percentages are 84.9% and 15.1% respectively for never-married men and widowers. Among women, the never-married are 98.0% and the widows 2.0%.

The differences are even narrower in Treppo Carnico: in the 25-34 age group, which includes over half of total marriages for both genders, husbands were on average 1-2 years older than their wives. As age at marriage increased, different patterns emerged. Older men married much younger women. In both the populations, men 55+ married women of at least 20 years younger. In Casalguidi only, older women changed their marriage pattern by marrying men younger than themselves. This differential behavior is influenced, as we will see later, by the different characteristics of the marriage markets of widows and widowers. The much larger number of widows than widowers and the scarcity of older never-married men caused unmarried women to look for eligible grooms much younger than usual, breaking a social tradition where wives were usually between 3 and 5 years younger than their husbands.

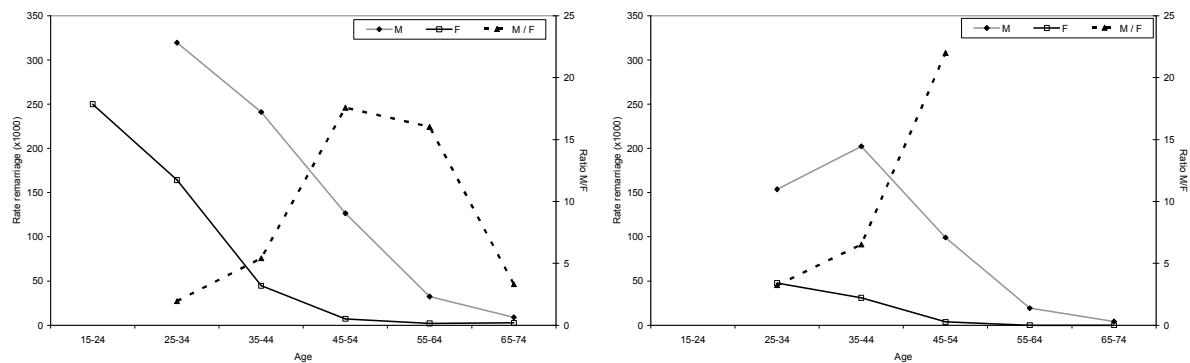
An opposite model is present in Treppo Carnico, where the youngest husbands (<25 years) married less young women. Even in this case we are faced with particular cases, first because early marriage was not frequent among men (1 out of 7), then because marrying older women was an exception. In the 37 marriages involving young husbands, the union is always between never-married persons.

The following two figures describe, one for each village, this process by means of age-specific remarriage rates, for men and women separately. The gender differential results even more striking in the process of formation of a new family. In Casalguidi, the crude remarriage rate is 14.7 per thousand for widows against a figure six times higher among widowers (87.4). The levels of crude remarriage rate are lower in Treppo Carnico (56.0 for widows; 4.6 for widowers) but the gender differential is higher. Such a higher male propensity to remarry is present throughout the life course and increases at older ages (figg. 5-6). At the end of the reproductive period (45-50 years), the chances of finding a new spouse in Casalguidi are almost zero for widows, whilst one widower out of eight of the same age was still able to remarry. At younger ages, a widow had more chances to remarry (1 out of 4), but still less than widowers (1 out of 3). The figures in Treppo Carnico are always lower for both genders. Because of a late access to marriage, the phenomenon of widowhood is negligible before the age of 25 and so is remarriage. For young women (25-34 years), the chances to remarry are modest, only 1 out of 20. Widowers had higher chances than widows (1 out of 5), but the age-specific rates of male remarriage are always lower than the corresponding figures of the Tuscan community.

Quite obviously, other socio-demographic factors affected the chances to remarry besides age, such as the number of children, their age, and the composition of the household. One could calculate various set of remarriage rates for each of the variable above mentioned, but

this procedure would not allow investigation of the complex mechanism of interrelationship among all those factors. A correct evaluation of the determinants of remarriage as well as of their interrelationships is possible only through a micro-analytic approach.

Fig.5-6. Age-specific remarriage rates (x 1,000) for men and women.
Casalguidi (left) and Treppo Carnico (right)



Note: No rate was calculated at 15-24 years for M because no remarried widows of that age were found and the number of widows was less than 20.

5. Remarrying in a micro-analytical perspective

As previously mentioned, there is no doubt that descriptive analyses provide only limited insights into remarriage patterns. Instead, the best way to analyze the determinants of nuptiality is to investigate the process in a dynamic perspective. The decision or opportunity to remarry was a consequence not only of many demographic factors interacting one another, but also of other (sometimes) more relevant elements of different nature, such as household co-residential patterns, previous marriage history, socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the complexity of the explicative framework that determines the choice of a spouse makes descriptive statistics ill-adapted to illuminate the multidisciplinary nature of such an issue. For all these reasons, we used Event History Analysis to analyze individual-level data. A logistic regression has been used because of the discrete-time nature of the data available. In addition, due to the marked differences by gender in the intensity of remarriage and the possible differential role played by some factors on the chances to remarry, we estimated separate models for widows and widowers respectively.

Once controlled for the demographic variables already analyzed at the descriptive level – namely age and duration of widowhood – we included in the models covariates that focus principally on socioeconomic status and household structure. The aim is to look for determinants other than demographic ones able to explain the differences between the two communities.

As for household compositional factors, our aim is to check not only the role of children from previous marriage(s), but also its interaction with household structure. Given the differences in family system and in family size existing between the two populations, this could reveal itself as an important element at the basis of the different access to remarriage within genders and localities. Actually, the presence of children has been often regarded as an obstacle to remarriage, especially for widows. The economic burden that the arrival of many non-productive persons may put on the husband's family group could in fact become unsustainable. Conversely, co-residing with children could be positively associated to the chances of remarriage for widowers as it could stimulate the search for a new bride able to provide them with more care and attention (Bideau and Perrenoud 1981).¹¹ Moreover, we may argue that the two cases above mentioned could only be relevant in case of dependent children, those not able yet to be of use in the family economy but simply in need of close care and attention. What about the presence of older children able to work or help in domestic labors? Would the outcome be the same? For all these reasons, we investigated separately the effects on remarriage linked to the presence of dependent (<12 years) and children of working age (12+ years), respectively.

However, our hypothesis is that the chances of remarrying associated with the presence of co-resident children could also be shaped by the structure of the household in which the widowed lived. For instance, it could be argued that a widower living with children in a large and multiple household, as half of the inhabitants of Casalguidi, could be less pressed to find a new partner than a widower living only with his children. In the Italian family system, especially in sharecropping areas, the household was a work group formed by couples of different generations and where each member had his or her own role and function. Thus, large and complex households were characterized by a network of relatives, with the potential to provide mutual help and support in case of necessity made the need for remarriage less pressing. Nevertheless, this was true only for blood relatives. Women living in the parents-in-law's house (given the patrilocal pattern of living arrangement after marriage this was the most common situation) were in a subordinate position within the husband's family group, and their position could weaken further after the husband's death from both a social and economic points of view. Parents-in-law and/or siblings-in-law could press the widow not to remarry since in such a case they would have been obliged to return her dowry. On the other

¹¹ This effect has seldom been investigated as a time-dependent variable, susceptible of change as a result of departures, emigration, and deaths of some or all of the children that modified the household structure and meant they no longer posed an obstacle to remarriage.

hand, in nuclear households, there was only little opportunity for support in case of widowhood, and this situation could pressurize the widow or widower, especially the former if she had children, to look for a new partner. It could therefore be interesting to check which force prevailed: the need of widows for security and economic support that urged them to find a new partner or social stigma and the economic problems that remarrying a widow, especially with children, could pose to possible husbands.

Rather than specifying various covariates capturing the effects associated with different co-residents such as parents, parents-in-law, brothers, sisters and so on, we decided to use a single variable combining the effects on remarriage of co-residing children and the household structure. This latter element was classified by means of a simplified version of Laslett's categorization involving nuclear, complex, solitary, and undefined households. The final covariate is thus a categorical variable combining the household structure and the presence or not of children aged, respectively, less than 12 years and over 12 years (tab.7).

The socioeconomic status of the household where the widowed person lived is the other part of the story. If remarriage was mainly intended and pursued as a way to find economic support for him/herself and his/her children, remarriage would be a more pressing need for widows, as women in nineteenth century Italy had less status and were poorer. Measured by means of the Family Tax, we expect socioeconomic status to have more impact on the remarriage risk of widows than on that of widowers, with well-off women less likely to remarry than indigent ones. This could also explain some of the differences both between socioprofessional categories in Casalguidi and between the two communities.

At this stage, this longitudinal approach has been carried out for the sole population of Casalguidi. For Treppo Carnico, the small number of remarriages makes the use of multivariate regression models quite unstable, especially as far as widows are concerned (only 6 remarriages were observed). Some preliminary tests using basic and reduced models would seem confirming the results emerged from descriptive analyses. Even for widowers, the low frequency of the various household-structure categories does not allow to draw any robust conclusion. In the case of the alpine village, the issue of remarriage should therefore be interpreted, at least at this stage of the study, in a wider context: What was the reason why in such a community there was so low predisposition to remarriage? A tentative interpretation can anyway emerge from the results of the Tuscan population, synthesized hereunder.

Table 7 shows the relative risks and the p-values for each category of the variables included in the models. The most striking result is the clear distinction between men and women in the factors that promoted or alternatively hindered remarriage.

Tab.7. Risk models. Determinants of remarriage. Widow(er)s 18-79 years. Casalguidi, 1820-58

Covariates	M	F
	Odds	Odds
<i>Age (ref. <35 years)</i>	1.000	1.000
35-49 years	1.513	0.262
50-79 years	0.345	0.014
<i>Duration of widowhood (ref. 0-2 yrs)</i>	1.000	1.000
3-10 yrs	0.405	0.514
11+ yrs	0.145	0.555
Duration unknown	0.482	0.389
<i>Household structure & presence of coresident children from previous marriage (ref. nuclear & only children <12 yrs)</i>	1.000	1.000
Nuclear & no children	1.876	12.762
Nuclear & only children 12+	0.197	1.726
Nuclear & both children <12 and 12+	0.733	0.604
Complex & only children <12	0.556	3.579
Complex & no children	0.597	7.769
Complex & only children 12+	0.142	1.080
Complex & both children <12 and 12+	0.210	3.479
Solitary	0.346	10.206
Undefined	0.185	-
<i>HH's profession & house possession (ref. day laborers without house)</i>	1.000	1.000
Day laborers with house	1.248	-
Farmers with house	0.298	0.735
Sharecroppers & tenants without house	0.732	0.721
Artisans with house	1.609	1.091
Artisans without house	0.513	0.611
Bourgeois & nobles	0.392	0.689
<i>Tax level (ref. Untaxed)</i>	1.000	1.000
High & medium tax	0.463	0.482
Low tax	0.823	0.440
Log likelihood	-280.9	-172.2
Person-years	1,330	3,141
Events	119	55

Note: In bold coefficients statistically significant at 0.05 level.

As expected, the remarriage risk of widows was more sensitive to age, in the sense that the risk of remarrying falls significantly as age increases. This effect of biological age for widows is strong enough to reduce the impact of the duration of widowhood on their chances of remarriage, an effect that is conversely evident in the case of widowers. For the latter, after only 3-10 years following wife's death the likelihood of remarriage decreases significantly by 60 per cent.

Let us move on to non-demographic factors. As for household structure and the role of co-resident children we found a differential impact on the remarriage risk of men and women. For widowers, the presence of dependent children without other family support is the key

factor encouraging remarriage, in line with the hypothesis that widowed men in one-parent families did need to remarry in order to find someone to take care of their children. The results displayed in the Table show, in fact, lower coefficients for all the categories with respect to the reference category of widowers living in nuclear households with children 0-11 years. On the other hand, co-residence with older children acts as a deterrent to second unions. In particular, we found an 80-90 per cent significant lower risk of remarriage for widowers living with children 12+ years whatever the household structure. The urgency of remarriage disappears quite remarkably when the children are either already able to work and help the family in some way or in less need of parental care and assistance.

The absence of co-residing children was definitely key for the remarriage of widows, their risk of remarriage being far higher compared to that of widows living in a nuclear household with dependent children. Living without children prevailed therefore on whatever family situation one could take into consideration. Widows with children did long to remarry, at least for economic reasons, but they faced many difficulties in finding a new husband willing to take care of them. These women were unattractive marriage partners because of their other commitments. These results reflect the different positions and roles of men and women within the Tuscan society of mid-nineteenth century. Given the greater economic and decisional power of men, we can say that, in some sense, widowers could choose whether to remarry while widows had to wait to see if they were chosen.

The results concerning the relationship between socioeconomic status and remarriage fulfill, at least in part, our hypothesis. Wealth resulted negatively associated with remarriage, and widows appeared to be much more responsive to variations in the economic status, suggesting that the need to find someone able to provide them economic support was crucial in the search for a new husband. The same pattern holds for widowers too, even though the coefficients are not statistically significant.

The effects associated to profession & house possession would seem less straightforward to interpret, although the pattern resulted much more varied among widowers. Again, rich widowers but also farmers show a general lower risk to remarry than “real” day laborers (no house possession), especially those living in their own house (-70%).

Some conclusive remarks

The possibility to reconstruct life-histories of the inhabitants of two communities of mid-nineteenth century Italy allowed us to investigate in depth two phenomena usually on the fringe of historical demography, namely union disruptions and remarriage. The results shed

some light on the intimate demographic, social and economic mechanisms that led some widowed persons to find a new partner and other to remain excluded from second unions. In addition, we had the opportunity to compare the patterns of widowhood and remarriage in two populations different in geographic localization, political administration, demographic regime, and family formation system. Those patterns showed similarities and deep differences, especially for remarriage: a strong gender asymmetry in both Casalguidi and Treppo coupled with different intensity of second unions, higher in the Tuscan than in the mountain village.

The elements we can take into account to try to explain the different disposition to remarriage between widows and widowers as well as between Casalguidi and Treppo Carnico concerned demographic, economic and legal factors, in other words intensity and timing of marriage and widowhood, family formation system, inheritance and dotal systems, and wealth distribution. From a demographic point of view, we can claim that populations with high permanent celibacy like Treppo may also have a lower propensity to remarriage, situation that was even reinforced by the presence of a late and delayed first marriage pattern. In turn, these socio-demographic shaped and so strongly conditioned the marriage market of widowed people that, at the end, they could be already sufficient to substantiate the lower propensity to remarriage in the alpine village with respect to Casalguidi. Nevertheless, things are not as simple as they might appear, especially in remarriage.

The results for Casalguidi seem suggesting that widowers living in complex households with coresiding siblings had lower risks of remarriage. The fact that in Treppo households were in general less complex and smaller-sized should have consequently favored widower's remarriage. However, we it is possible that the higher level of closeness and inbreeding of the alpine village could have increased the importance of the kin network outside the household as a system able to support relatives and provide them some help in case of necessity.

Nevertheless, other factors were at play in discouraging widowed persons, but mostly widows, from remarrying in the alpine community. The social stigma attached to remarried widows revealed itself also through economic and legal elements aimed at preventing remarriage or at least at making it a very hard choice for widows. We will illustrate some points starting from the inheritance and dotal system. In general, there were no marked differences between the two populations. The land was handed down from father to sons along the male line. In case of husband's death, the surviving wife was normally excluded from succession both in Tuscany and Friuli, unlike the husband in case of wife's death. However, some different elements in the local civil law could play an important role in

favoring or hindering remarriage. According to the Austrian law, the widow could inherit from the oldest son. Moreover, the wife could always dispose of all goods and properties that the husband had registered to her as well as of his gifts and donations to her. Normally, the will included a clause of widowhood to inherit, but in the territory of the Austrian Empire, this norm had value only if the widow had children (Pincherli 1901, 187). In theory, the widow and her heirs could also dispose of the dowry. This economic “protection” and consideration of widows did not exist at all in Tuscany (Scardozi 1998, 97).

Legal constraints on succession and the dotal system conditioned marriage customs because they had consequences on the distribution of wealth. From this point of view, there were marked differences between the two communities. In Casalguidi, economic inequality was stronger than it was in Treppo, where almost each family, widows included, had real estates and at least a house. This was a common situation in many mountain communities (Fornasin 2002), but in Carnia the Law further favored it. Thus, widows were generally less protected in the sharecropping Tuscany than they were in the mountain Friuli.

If there was an inverse relationship between wealth and the propensity to remarriage, as the results for Casalguidi would suggest, one could assume that a large diffusion of real property, although not so important in absolute economic terms as it was in Treppo, coupled with better widow’s economic conditions and legal protection could act as preventive checks of remarriage in the mountain community. On the contrary, in the agricultural population of Casalguidi, widows were in a weaker position and the economic necessities became the strongest spur to remarriage for them.

At the end, we can conclude that the different demographic regimes as well as the different economic and Law systems characterizing the two populations combined in a way that made remarriage much more likely in Casalguidi than in Treppo.

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