

„HIDAK A HATALOMBAN”

Rokoni összefonódások és női közvetítők
Brassó 18. századi városvezetésében

“BRIDGES OF POWER”

Kinship Ties and Female Intermediaries in the Urban Administration of
Eighteenth-Century Kronstadt¹

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ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

A tanulmány a 18. századi Brassó városvezetésének rokoni alapú hatalmi struktúráit vizsgálja, különös tekintettel a női ágakon keresztül érvényesülő politikai befolyásra. A kutatás kimutatja, hogy a városbírói és városgazdai tisztségek nem elszigetelten, hanem több generáción átívelő családi hálózatok részeként működtek, ahol számos vezető család – például a Seuler, Draudt, Herrmann, Filstich vagy Fronius – tartósan jelen volt a hivatali pozíciókban. A vizsgált házassági mintázatok rávilágítanak arra, hogy a nők házasságkötései stratégiai szerepet játszottak az elitesoportok közötti kapcsolatok fenntartásában, s gyakran „híd”-szereplőként kötöttek össze különböző rokoni blokkokat. A hálózatelemzésen alapuló módszer feltárja a kapcsolati struktúra szerkezetét, a tisztségviselők közti rokoni távolságokat és a hálózat szempontjából fontosabb pozíciókat betöltő személyeket. A dolgozat következtetése alapján Brassó vezetése önreprodukáló, zárt elitet alkotott, amelyben a rokonsági hálózatok és a női közvetítők meghatározó szerepet játszottak a hatalom átörökítésében.

ABSTRACT

The study examines the kinship-based power structures of eighteenth-century Braşov's (Kronstadt; Brassó) urban leadership, with particular attention to the political influence exercised through female lines. The research demonstrates that the offices of city judge and city administrator did not function as isolated institutional roles, but as parts of multi-generational family networks in which several leading families—such as the Seuler, Draudt, Herrmann, Filstich, and Fronius lineages—maintained a continuous presence. The analysed marriage patterns reveal that women's marriages played a strategic role in sustaining connections between elite groups and often served as “bridges” linking different kinship blocs. The methodology based on network analysis uncovers the structure of these relational patterns, the degrees of kinship distance between officeholders, and the individuals occupying key positions within the network. The study concludes that Braşov's leadership formed a selfreproducing, closed elite in which kinship networks and female intermediaries were essential in the transmission of power.

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Kulcsszavak: rokonsági hálózat, női közvetítők, házassági stratégia, városi elit, történeti hálózat kutatás

Keywords: kinship network, female intermediaries, marriage strategy, urban elite, historical network analysis

Introduction

The present study examines whether patterns can be identified in the transmission of political power through familial and kinship ties—particularly along female relational lines—in the urban administration of eighteenth-century Kronstadt (present day Braşov). Previous research suggests that the city administration did not function as an isolated institutional system, but rather as part of an interwoven kinship network extending across multiple family branches.² Accordingly, this study analyses which families occupied the most important municipal offices during the century and whether coalitions based on kinship networks can be identified that were capable of preserving their political influence over the long term. If such groups can be delineated, it becomes possible to determine which women, through their marriages, linked different power blocs and which individuals played the roles of informal “bridges” between distinct segments of the elite.

Following a brief methodological introduction, the study is divided into two major thematic sections. The first examines the institutional and personnel structure of the urban administration and the dynastic patterns of office-holding, while the second focuses on the intermediary role of women, marriage strategies, and the functioning of kinship networks in order to reveal the social context of political influence.

Methodology

In order to conduct this study, it was first necessary to reconstruct the personnel composition of the eighteenth-century urban administration of Kronstadt. The primary sources for this reconstruction were the official registers compiled by Friedrich Stenner³ and Gernot Nussbächer⁴ (1939–2018). To map the kinship relations among these individuals, I relied on Erich Jekelius’s (1889–1970) nine-volume genealogical synthesis, *Genealogie Kronstädter Familien*, which provides a detailed and reliable overview of Kronstadt’s families.⁵

² NAGY 2021: 235–252, NAGY 2024: 130–160.

³ STENNER 1916.

⁴ NUSSBÄCHER 1999.

⁵ JEKELIUS 1965. Detailed genealogical charts of the families under examination were prepared using the GenoPro software.

The collected data were organized into a relational database, which enabled not only the systematic classification of individuals and relationships but also the application of network analysis methods.⁶ Kinship distance was measured using the indicator of path length (number of steps), defined as the number of kinship and marital connections between individuals. In calculating these distances, both descent and marital relations were taken into account: direct family ties (parent–child, spouses) corresponded to a distance of one step, while more distant kinship relations were separated by multiple steps.⁷

Within the framework of network analysis, I define “bridges” as individuals or relationships that connect otherwise distinct family groups and whose removal would significantly weaken the structure of the kinship network.⁸ Through their marital and kinship ties, these “bridge” actors served as informal intermediaries between family blocs, thereby influencing the functioning of the relational network.

1. The Personnel Composition of the Eighteenth-Century Urban Administration

1.1 Dynastic Patterns of Office-Holding

Following the methodological overview, the first step of the analysis is to examine who occupied the principal municipal offices during the eighteenth century and what patterns can be observed in the succession of office-holders. Accordingly, the following section analyses the personnel composition of the most important offices held by Kronstadt’s eighteenth-century urban governing elite.⁹ The analysis focuses on two key offices: the town magistrate (*judex, Stadtrichter*) and the town steward (*villicus, Stadthann*), which represented complementary positions of unequal prestige. The town magistrate served as the principal holder of the city’s legal, political, and administrative authority, while the town steward was responsible for overseeing economic affairs and urban infrastructure.¹⁰ The available sources reveal a clear pattern: the town magistrate was typically selected from among former town stewards,¹¹ and those who attained

⁶ The data on office-holders and their spouses are presented in the Appendix. More on the methodology: Nagy 2019: 80–86, Nagy 2024: 21–28.

⁷ BARABÁSI 2016: 75.

⁸ BARABÁSI 2016: 79–80; SZÁNTÓ–TÓTH 2011: 8.

⁹ My earlier research has examined the advancement strategies of Kronstadt’s leading Saxon families and the extent of familial interconnections between ecclesiastical and secular offices between 1650 and 1750. See: Nagy 2024.

¹⁰ MÜLLER 1941: 29–30, 40–42.

¹¹ See the chronological register of municipal office-holders compiled by the Kronstadt archivist and historian Gernot Nussbächer (1939–2018): NUSSBÄCHER 1999: 286–293.

the office of town magistrate never returned to lower-ranking positions. The career trajectory was thus unidirectional, reflecting both the closed nature of this power structure and the hierarchical prestige associated with municipal offices.

The Town Magistrates

During the eighteenth century, a total of thirty-one town magistrate elections were held in Kronstadt. Among those who occupied the office, eighteen individuals are known to have previously held the position and re-elected later (see Table 1 of the *Appendix*). This suggests that certain families were able to secure sustained and repeated representation within the urban leadership; moreover, some dynasties succeeded in preserving their influence in municipal politics across multiple generations. In order to assess this hypothesis, it is necessary to examine kinship relations more closely.

A natural starting point is the investigation of kinship ties among individuals bearing the same family name. In this respect, two families merit particular attention, as several of their members held the office of town magistrate in Kronstadt during the century: the Draudt family provided two office-holders, while the Seuler family provided three.

In the case of the Draudt family, Georg (1661–1728) and Joseph August (1737–1798) are particularly noteworthy. Genealogically, they were related; however, their connection cannot be described in terms of conventional kinship categories. According to the “step” metric introduced above, the relational distance between them amounts to six steps (based on the date of *Appendix*, Table 3), which indicates a relatively distant kinship tie.¹² Nevertheless, the connection is worth noting: it confirms both the existence of a familial link and the fact that the two Draudt town magistrates were connected only through a more remote kinship.

The three members of the Seuler family who held the office of town magistrate in the eighteenth century likewise require closer examination. Genealogical analysis shows that the distance between Bartholomaeus Seuler (1649–1715) and Lucas Seuler (1661–1735) is two steps, which in this case corresponds to a sibling relationship. The distance between Bartholomaeus (1649–1715) and Johann Traugott Seuler (1697–1757) is three steps, indicating an uncle–nephew relationship. Between Lucas (1661–1735) and Johann Traugott (1697–1757), however, the distance is only one step: father and son consecutively occupied the highest municipal office.¹³

Overall, it is evident that both the Draudt and Seuler families were present in the office of town magistrate across multiple generations, and

¹² The ID identifiers in *Appendix*, Table 3 are cross-referenced in *Appendix*, Tables 1 and 2.

¹³ JEKELIUS VIII. 44–46.

that during the eighteenth century several individuals from these families repeatedly assumed leadership of the city.

The Town Stewards

In the case of the town stewards, thirty-eight elections were held during the eighteenth century, and a total of twenty-three individuals held the position in this period (*Appendix*, Table 2). Compared to the office of town magistrate, the position of town steward exhibited considerably more frequent personnel rotation and a higher incidence of returning office-holders. By contrast, the town magistrateship demonstrates greater stability and longer, less interrupted terms of office.

When the data in the tables are analyzed by family affiliation, sixteen families can be identified in connection with both offices. Among the town stewards, six families had multiple members who held the office during the century: these are the *Seuler* (Bartholomaeus, Lucas and Johann Traugott), the *Draudt* (Georg and Johann), the *Fronius* (Michael and Michael Traugott), the *Tartler* (Valentin and Andreas), the *Closius* (Martin and Martin Gottfried), as well as the *Herrmann* (Georg and Georg Michael Gottlieb) families. This pattern suggests, on the one hand, that the distribution of office was not random but was reserved for a relatively closed elite circle. It further implies that these positions were often concentrated within the same kinship networks.

In the case of the Seuler family, the same individuals appear whose kinship relations were discussed above in connection with the town magistrates. Within the Draudt family, only a more distant kinship tie—approximately six relational steps—can be identified.¹⁴ Among members of the Fronius family, a four-step kinship relationship can be established.¹⁵ In the case of the Tartler family, three steps separate the relevant individuals, corresponding to an uncle–nephew relationship.¹⁶ For the Closius¹⁷ and Herrmann families, direct father–son relationships can be demonstrated.¹⁸

The results presented above therefore suggest that the families in question maintained their influence within the city’s leadership on a long-term basis and across multiple generations. Furthermore, whereas in the case of the town magistrates only two families—the Seuler and the Draudt—were able to preserve their position over an extended period, among the town stewards a broader pattern of familial continuity can be observed.

¹⁴ Johann, moreover, may be described—through family connections—as the grandson of the father of Georg’s brother-in-law. See: JEKELIUS II. 94–99.

¹⁵ Michael Traugott was related to Michael on his paternal side as the son of Michael’s nephew. See: JEKELIUS III. 74–91.

¹⁶ Andreas Tartler was the nephew of Valentin. See: Jekelius VIII. 97–121.

¹⁷ JEKELIUS II. 22–34.

¹⁸ JEKELIUS IV. 53–60.

The following table summarizes these observations:

Office	Frequency of Office-Holders over a Hundred-Year Period	Number of Distinct Individuals Holding the Office over One Hundred Years	The number of each family
Town magistrate	31	18	16
Town steward	38	23	16

Table 1: The Proportion of Personnel Changes in Leading Offices in Kronstadt (Eighteenth Century)

1.2 The Temporal Dynamics of Office-Holding

The age of those occupying leading municipal offices provides important insight into the trajectory of official careers and the patterns of elite recruitment within the city. It is therefore appropriate to examine the age distribution of individuals holding the two principal offices. Town stewards assumed office at an average age of fifty,¹⁹ while town magistrates began their tenure somewhat later, at an average age²⁰ of fifty-six²¹—figures that correspond well to the broader social patterns of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kronstadt.²² This indicates that the office of town steward was typically held by experienced, mature men; no individual under the age of forty appears among them. By contrast, the town magistrateship was generally accessible only to older individuals enjoying greater authority and prestige. The age difference also reflects the hierarchical structure of urban power: the office of town steward in many cases served as preparation for the role of town magistrate.

Taking all this into account, the dynamics of elite office-holding are clearly reflected in the number of years served. Based on the cumulative data, town stewards in Kronstadt held office for approximately five years on average, though significant variation can be observed between individual

¹⁹ The youngest town stewards—such as Andreas Tartler (42), Georg Rheter (43), and Christoph Seewald (46)—appear in the mid-eighteenth century, which may signal a generational shift and the gradual rejuvenation of the elite. Most town stewards, however, entered office between the ages of forty-eight and fifty-five, for example Georg Czako (49), Martin Schneeweiss (52), Valentin Tartler (51), and Lucas Seuler (55). The oldest was Petrus Hiemesch, who assumed the office of town steward at the age of seventy-two, considerably older than his peers.

²⁰ Among the town magistrates, the youngest was Johann Gottlieb Wolff Wentzel, who entered office at forty-three, while the oldest were Georg Jeckel and Lucas Seuler, both of whom assumed office at the age of seventy-two.

²¹ In the case of individuals who held office in multiple terms, the date of their first accession to office was taken as the basis.

²² NAGY 2024: 96.

careers. The length of terms varied considerably: the shortest mandates lasted only a single year (for example in 1728 and 1763), whereas the longest cumulative periods of service, including interrupted terms, extended to twelve or thirteen years. The two most notable examples are Georg Czako, who served three separate terms totaling twelve years as town steward, and Georg Michael Gottlieb Herrmann, whose total tenure amounted to thirteen years. Most town stewards, however, served between three and six years.²³

Four town stewards—Georg Czako, Lucas Seuler, Paul Chrestels, and Christoph Neidel—returned to office on multiple occasions. Their individual terms lasted two to three years on average, separated by intervals of similar length. As noted earlier, this pattern suggests that the office of town steward was handled in a rotational system: responsibility for the city’s economic administration appears to have circulated among members of the council. Among them, Georg Czako and Lucas Seuler stand out for the number of their repeated terms.

Among the town magistrates, the pattern of recurrence is even more pronounced: five individuals—Georg Draudt, Stephan Filstich, Samuel Herbert von Herbertsheim, Joseph Traugott Schobel, and Michael Traugott Fronius—held the judgeship in more than one, interrupted terms. The most striking case is that of Stephan Filstich, who became head of the city in five distinct periods between 1714 and 1736, with shorter intervals in between. Georg Draudt served four separate terms, Herbertsheim three, while Schobel and Fronius each returned twice to the city’s leadership.

2. Women as Intermediaries within the City’s Power Relations

2.1 Marriage Patterns in the Urban Elite of Kronstadt

An examination of marriage patterns within the governing elite sheds light on how the institution of marriage was embedded in the power and kinship structures of eighteenth-century Kronstadt society. It is therefore instructive to analyze the average age at which office-holders and their wives entered into marriage.

The first wives of town stewards and town magistrates married at an average age of seventeen, a figure that corresponds closely to contemporary social norms and reflects the traditional marriage pattern of the period.²⁴ The youngest bride was fourteen and the oldest twenty, indicating relatively narrow age variation. The small standard deviation—approximately

²³ This raises the question of why some shorter one- or two-year terms ended so quickly. Did they reflect temporary substitutions or transitional arrangements within the council? The family and administrative historical sources examined here do not provide an explanation.

²⁴ NAGY 2024: 88.

1.7 years—suggests that the timing of marriage within this social stratum was fairly uniform.

By contrast, the officials who were later elected town steward and/or town magistrate entered their first marriages at an average age of twenty-four to twenty-five. Here, too, variation was limited, only 1.9 years, again pointing to a relatively standardized marital age within this social group. The youngest man married at twenty, the oldest at twenty-nine.

It is nevertheless worth examining the youngest and oldest marrying office-holders more closely. Marriages contracted at a very young age likely served to facilitate the beginning of a career, while unions formed at a more advanced age—often following remarriage—may have aimed at consolidating political positions and renewing a family's social embeddedness.

Among eighteenth-century officials in Kronstadt, the youngest town steward at marriage was Georg Rheter (1709–1757), who married in 1729 at the age of twenty. His bride, Martha Boes (1714–1747), was only fifteen at the time. Relatively little information survives in contemporary family-historical sources concerning the Boes family. The prominent family member chronologically closest to the marriage date is Thomas Boes (1642–1712), who served for more than two decades as a senator of the Kronstadt magistracy until his death.²⁵ Since no other socially prominent individuals can be identified among Martha Boes's direct ancestors, it may be cautiously assumed that, through Thomas Boes, she belonged to a senatorial family within the urban elite. This may explain why Georg Rheter—who at the time of his marriage held no municipal office himself, although his father, Petrus Rheter (†1725), had served on the city council from 1711 until his death²⁶—chose a wife from the Boes family. The union may have proved advantageous to both parties: Georg Rheter strengthened his social standing through connection to a family embedded in the city council, while for Martha Boes the marriage provided access to official circles and reinforced her social prestige.

A similar pattern may be observed in the case of Johann Traugott Seuler von Seulen (1697–1757). In 1723, at the age of twenty-six, he married Sara Chrestels (1706–1772), who was seventeen at the time. Both the Seuler and the Chrestels families belonged to the leading circles of the city administration; the marriage thus clearly served to reinforce political influence within an existing network. Here, too, the young wife functioned as a “bridge” connecting kinship branches: through her, the Seuler family—whose members held medical and councilor offices—and the Chrestels family were drawn into a closer alliance. A genealogical reconstruction of the relevant members of the Chrestels family reveals clearly discernible ties not only with the Seuler family, but also with the Igel and Draudt families.

²⁵ STENNER 1916: 17.

²⁶ Petrus Rheter (†1725) served as a member of the Kronstadt city council from 1711 until his death. See: STENNER 1916: 113.

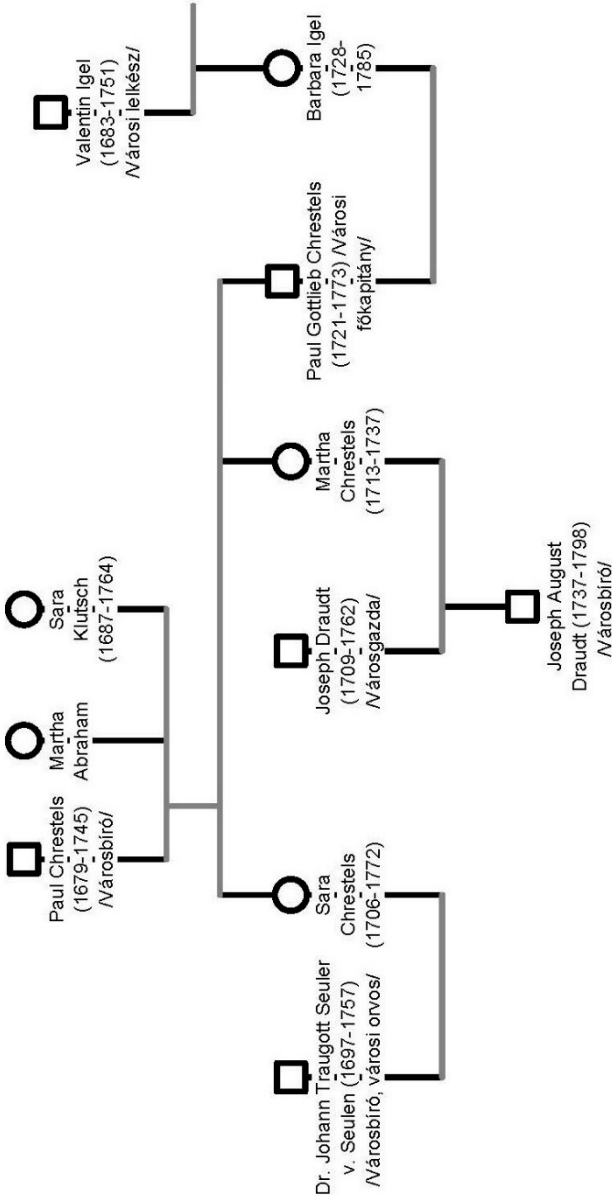


Figure 1: A segment of the Chrestels family genealogy, illustrating kinship interconnections with the Seuler, Igel, and Draudt families

A third illustrative example is the marriage of Simon Petrus Schnell (1729–1794) and Anna Maria Scheipner (1753–1826), contracted in 1770.²⁷ At the time, the groom was forty-one and the bride only seventeen—one of

²⁷ Jekelius VII. 123.

the most pronounced age differences of the period. This disparity may be explained by the groom's atypical career trajectory. Schnell completed theological studies at the University of Jena as a candidate in theology and, upon returning home, initially pursued an ecclesiastical path, teaching as an adjunct at the Honterus Gymnasium. However, subsequently he opted for a secular career and entered the service of the town council, where he was serving as town secretary (*Sekretär*) at the time of his marriage. His career then progressed steadily: vice-notary (*Vize-Notär*) from 1776 to 1778, councilman (*Senator*) from 1781 to 1785, and town steward from 1786 to 1790.²⁸

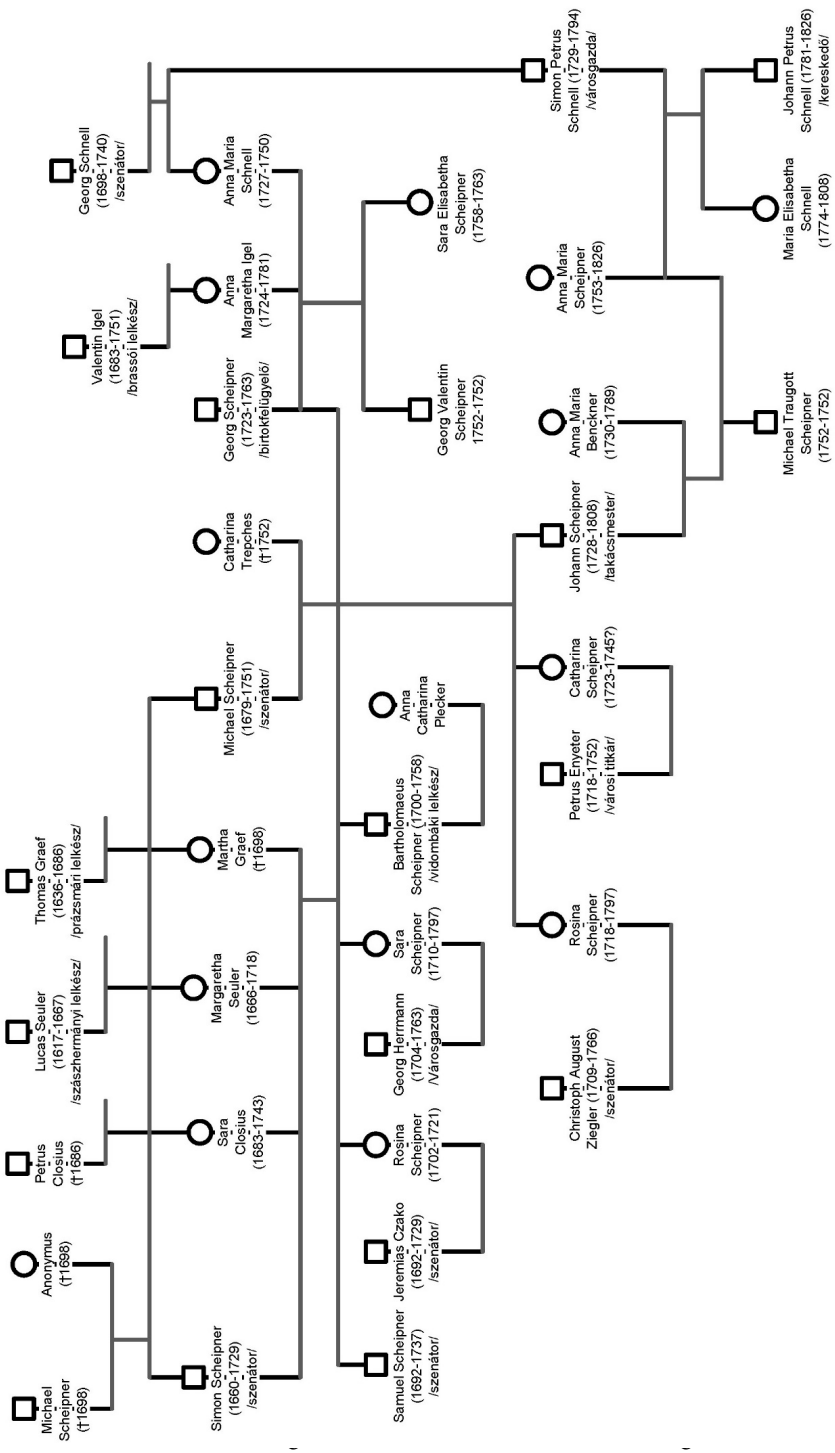
From the perspective of marriage strategy, the family backgrounds of both parties merit closer consideration. Anna Maria descended from the Scheipner family of Kronstadt. Her father, Johannes Scheipner (1728–1808), was a cloth merchant and master weaver (*Tuchmacher*) who himself belonged to a branch well embedded in the urban elite: her grandfather, Michael Scheipner (1679–1751), had served multiple terms as senator. Numerous office-holders can also be identified within her extended kinship network. Simon Scheipner (1660–1729)—Anna Maria's great-uncle—served as senator for more than three decades, while Samuel Scheipner (1692–1737) held both the office of *Stadthauptmann* (city captain) and that of senator. Two of Anna Maria's great-aunts, Rosina Scheipner (1702–1722) and Sara Scheipner (1710–1797), were likewise connected to the governing elite through their marriages: their husbands served as senators, and in the case of Georg Herrmann (1704–1763), as town steward. Another eighteenth-century branch of the family, represented by Bartholomaeus Scheipner (1727–1744), also demonstrates sustained council presence, further indicating the Scheipner family's deep and enduring integration into Kronstadt's patrician elite.²⁹

The Schnell family on the groom's side possessed a similarly distinguished background. Over several generations, its members occupied leading municipal offices; both Simon Petrus Schnell's father and grandfather were members of the Kronstadt senate, demonstrating the family's lasting presence within the city's political elite. The marriage may thus be interpreted as the union of a theologically educated municipal official and a young patrician woman, in which the familial backgrounds of both parties mutually reinforced one another. It likely contributed to Simon Petrus Schnell's social and official advancement, ultimately facilitating his rise to the office of town magistrate.

Figure 2: A Segment of the Scheipner Family Genealogy

²⁸ See: SZABÓ–SZÖGI 1998: 407. nr. 3507.; STENNER 1916: 129.

²⁹ STENNER 1916: 121–122.



advanced age. One of the most striking examples is Stephan Filstich (1657–1737), who entered into his third marriage at the age of seventy-four with Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744), then fifty-two years old.³⁰ Both parties were widowed at the time, a common circumstance within the urban elite. Through this union, two previously prominent families—the Filstich and the Herrmann—were once again linked. The marriage may thus be interpreted as an instrument for ensuring social stability and continuity of power.¹

A similarly notable age difference may be observed in the marriage of Bartholomaeus Seuler (1649–1715) and the same Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744), contracted in 1710, when the groom was sixty-one and the bride thirty-one years old. The Herrmann family again appears as a key actor: through this alliance, the Seuler household—which had produced several physicians and municipal leaders—strengthened its kinship ties with another office-holding dynasty.³¹ The thirty-year age gap reflects contemporary social practice: the comparatively young age of women facilitated relational mobility, while for men remarriage functioned as a means of political and economic repositioning.

Among members of the city council, Michael Enyeter (1711–1784) also remarried at an advanced age, entering a second marriage at fifty-eight with Theresia Neffi (†1810). Although the bride's age is unknown, the sources suggest that the union was based on a widowed alliance.

Another example is Martin Closius (1686–1752), who contracted his first marriage at the age of twenty-six with Catharina Greissing (1694–1768). Later in life, however, he was still married while serving as town magistrate at the age of sixty-two. His case illustrates how, over the course of long official careers, the social background of a wife could play an important role in sustaining a man's political position and preserving the family's rank. Catharina Greissing, a member of a prosperous burgher family, entered the urban patriciate through marriage—representing a typical example of female social mobility.

In the case of Georg Draudt (1661–1728), marriage records indicate that he contracted his first union at the age of twenty-two and likely remarried later in life. Within his lineage, the family name recurs across generations, suggesting that the female members and marital alliances of the Draudt family linked multiple office-holding dynasties, particularly the Rheter and Seuler branches. This continuity clearly demonstrates that marriages contracted by aging men functioned as deliberate instruments for reinforcing familial networks.

The examples discussed above indicate that, through marriage, families of the urban elite created durable and multidirectional kinship alliances. The Rheter–Boes, Seuler–Chrestels, and Schnell–Scheipner unions

³⁰ JEKELIUS III. 12.

³¹ JEKELIUS IV. 57.

all demonstrate that marriage served as an important mechanism for political embeddedness, social advancement, and the construction of “bridges” between elite groups. Particularly striking is the role of women from the Herrmann, Scheipner, Seuler, and Draudt families, who through their marriages connected multiple patrician branches and, as relational brokers, contributed to the maintenance of the power network. The practice of late (re)marriage further reinforces this pattern: the Filstich–Herrmann and Seuler–Herrmann unions clearly illustrate that marriages contracted at an advanced age also functioned as deliberate political and kinship alliances.

2.2 The Adjacency Matrix of the Urban Elite of Kronstadt

An intriguing question concerns the degree of kinship proximity between town magistrates and the individuals who simultaneously held the office of town steward.³² The combined examination of these two leading positions sheds light not only on the functioning of the local elite, but also on the manner in which marital ties reinforced political positions—that is, how familial and political influence became intertwined within the urban elite.

If the (shortest) kinship distances between town magistrates and town stewards in Kronstadt are examined—through the adjacency matrix—it becomes evident that these distances cluster into clearly distinguishable groups (measured in steps). This structure reveals both the configuration of kinship entanglements and the internal density of relationships within the political elite (see Table 2 and Table 3 of the *Appendix*).

Step	Number of relationships
1	2
2	15
3	18
4	44
5	50
6	89
7	56
8	46
9	29
10	2

Table 2: Distribution of Town Magistrate–Town Steward Relationships by Number of Steps³³

³² The pairings of town magistrates and town stewards are presented in Tables 1 and 2 of the *Appendix*.

³³ The adjacency matrix (*Appendix, Table 3*) lists each relationship twice; however, each pair was counted only once in the calculations.

First, it is important to emphasize that in every case some form of kinship relationship can be identified between the individuals holding the two leading offices. When relational distances are examined in ascending order, it becomes evident that direct, one- to two-step relationships are relatively rare. Only two one-step connections can be identified, and both originated through spousal or widowed remarriage ties. In the cases of Bartholomaeus Seuler and Stephan Filstich, as well as Michael Fronius, the kinship linkage resulted from the remarriage of widowed wives. In both instances, the same individual—Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)—occupied the intermediary “bridge” position within the network. There are fifteen two-step relationships, typically reflecting recurring relational patterns such as *son-in-law–father-in-law*, *grandfather–grandson*, *stepfather–stepson*, or ties created through a *wife’s* or *mother’s previous spouse*. This also indicates that the most immediate familial entanglements between town magistrates and town stewards were relatively uncommon and did not characterize the general pattern of the kinship network.

At three to five steps of relational distance, collateral ties mediated primarily through marriage dominate (e.g., son- and father-in-law, other in-law connections, and multigenerational descendant chains). This pattern suggests that the urban elite of Kronstadt consciously built its marriage strategies upon broader kinship and social circles, avoiding overly close familial interconnections.

Six-step and more distant kinship ties reflect the multi-generational, long-term entanglements of the office-holding elite, constructed primarily through multiple indirect marital and collateral pathways. This pattern indicates that the urban elite of Kronstadt did not operate as closed consanguineous “clans,” but rather as a system of loosely yet durably interconnected family networks.

From the perspective of women’s history, this is particularly noteworthy, since the overwhelming majority of relationships were created through marital pathways (e.g., *wife*, *father-in-law*, *brother-in-law*, *husband of a niece*, etc.). The pattern confirms the earlier assumption that marriages and remarriages within the office-holding elite functioned as important instruments for maintaining and expanding political coalitions. The statistical distribution—the rarity of direct one- to two-step ties and the predominance of four- to six-step or even more distant relationships—suggests that the urban elite of Kronstadt consciously avoided excessively close blood kinship while simultaneously relying intensively on multigenerational, marriage-mediated networks.³⁴ As a result, leadership within the city came to be shaped not merely by individual families but by interwoven family

³⁴ Between 1650 and 1750, precise information is available for 483 marriages in Kronstadt. Among these, only five percent involved a kinship relationship between the spouses. See: NAGY 2024. 85.

blocs, within which female kinship lines functioned as strategically significant “bridges.”

2.3 The Kinship Network of the Leading Urban Elite of Kronstadt

Thus far, the examination of kinship relations within the urban elite of Kronstadt has relied on genealogically based adjacency matrices. The following section presents a visual representation of this matrix using the tools of network analysis, in order to render the relational patterns of the eighteenth-century local power elite more transparent. The research was based on the author’s own compiled kinship database concerning families of Kronstadt during the period under study, as noted in the methodological section. From this database, the shortest relational paths among the forty-four designated officials’ wives were identified. The resulting nodes and edges formed a smaller “subnetwork” reflecting the internal relational patterns of the urban elite. Data processing and visualization were conducted using the Gephi software, enabling the identification of kinship entanglements as well as the most significant individuals—that is, relational centers—within the network.

The examined network (see Figure 3) consists of 456 nodes and 723 kinship ties, demonstrating that the kinship web of Kronstadt’s elite extended far beyond the immediate family circles of municipal office-holders. Extended kinship ties—spouses, collateral relatives, and in-laws—were all part of the social fabric that ensured the embeddedness of the local elite. The network’s average degree was 3.171, meaning that each individual was connected, on average, to three others through kinship ties. This relatively low value suggests that the kinship network did not form a dense, tightly closed system, but rather consisted of several more loosely interconnected family groups.

The network’s diameter is 14, meaning that the two most distant individuals are separated by fourteen relational steps.³⁵ This relatively high value reflects the network’s long-chain character, typical of kinship structures composed of multiple subsystems. The large diameter indicates that the community under examination did not function as a single, tightly interwoven “extended family,” but rather as several kinship blocs connected only through longer relational chains.

The average path length is 6.92, indicating a moderate level of cohesion: members of the community were not isolated, yet neither did they form a densely interconnected elite.

Among the nodes with the highest degree are Simon Scheipner and Marcus Fronius, alongside several similarly well-connected individuals, including a number of women, such as Martha Seewald and Martha Jeckel.

³⁵ The diameter value expresses which individuals within an urban community are connected to each other by the longest chain among the shortest kinship pathways relative to others. REINHARD 1979: 27; BARABÁSI 2016: 75–78.

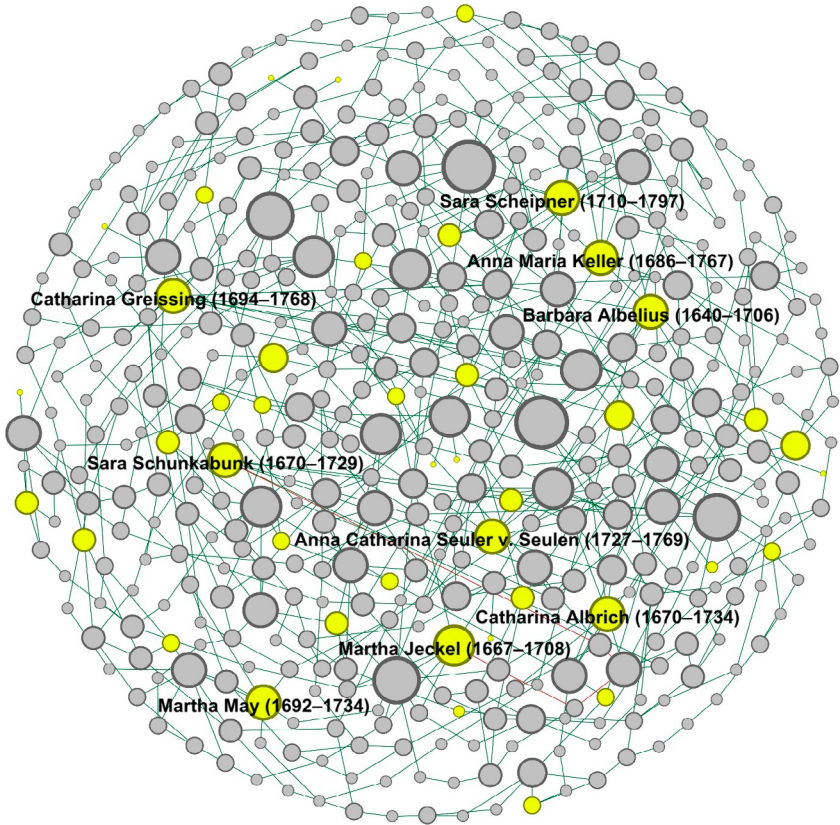


Figure 3: The kinship network among the wives of town magistrates and town stewards in Kronstadt (eighteenth century)

Based on their high degree values, these actors occupied central “bridge” positions within the network and played a significant role in connecting different family groups within the elite of Kronstadt.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the kinship network of the eighteenth-century urban elite of Kronstadt was hierarchically structured and organized around several central families. The relationships among leading office-holders and their wives did not form a single homogeneous elite but rather a set of partially overlapping, partially autonomous family subnetworks. Based on the average degree and path length values, the elite of Kronstadt constituted a moderately closed community in which a limited number of highly connected individuals ensured the cohesion of the social network. Kinship ties thus played a key role in the self-reproduction of the urban elite and in the maintenance of its position of power.

Conclusion

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that the functioning of Kronstadt's eighteenth-century urban administration was deeply permeated by a power structure grounded in kinship relations. Political positions within the urban elite—particularly the offices of town magistrate and town steward—were not isolated institutional roles but components of a multigenerational and closely interconnected network of office-holding families. The dynamics of office-holding, the recurrence of office-holders, and the patterns of office rotation all indicate that leading families (Seuler, Herrmann, Filstich, Draudt, Fronius, among others) were able to maintain their political influence in a stable and enduring manner.

The analysis of the kinship network—based on the reconstruction of 456 individuals and 723 relationships—demonstrates that the urban elite did not operate as a closed, homogeneous “family clan,” but rather as a system of interconnected subnetworks. The network's average degree (3.171) and average path length (6.92) indicate a moderately dense but not fully closed structure: longer relational chains and multiple levels of marital pathways ensured permeability among families. The most central individuals—including several female nodes—occupied “bridge” positions between family blocs and contributed significantly to the cohesion of the elite.

These findings are closely connected to women's marriage and remarriage patterns. Women typically married at a young age, while their husbands already possessed established social positions. Marriage thus represented not only the fulfillment of familial roles for women, but also entry into political and economic networks. Female kinship lines—serving as mediating and connective channels—were of fundamental importance in the reproduction of urban power relations. Anna Maria Herrmann stands out as a prominent example: through her multiple marriages, she connected different family groups and facilitated the formation of long-term power alliances.

The analysis of marital strategies demonstrates that in nearly every generation the governing elite consciously constructed its kinship ties. Direct one- or two-step kinship was rare; instead, four- to six-step relational distances created through marriage predominated, indicating that families avoided excessive endogamy while placing strong emphasis on long-term, multigenerational relational embeddedness. Political power in the city was therefore not concentrated in the hands of a single closed family, but rather distributed among several coordinated family blocs—with women usually being responsible for maintaining relations between them.

In summary, the findings show that the eighteenth-century leadership of Kronstadt functioned as a self-reproducing patrician elite, in which kinship networks—primarily through marriage—served as the principal instruments for acquiring and retaining political office. Women played

a fundamental, though formally non-office-holding, role in this system: they shaped, connected, and sustained the relational networks. The transmission of urban power, therefore, cannot be understood without taking into account female kinship lines and marital strategies.

Appendix:

Table 1: Town magistrates and their spouses in Kronstadt (eighteenth century)

	Fér-jID	Husband	Year in office	FeleségID	Wife	Year of marriage
1	1765	Andreas Rheter (1648–1707)	1701–1707	2198	Martha Henrich (1660–1734)	May 5, 1680
				5050	Sara Günther (†1679)	August 12, 1674
2	1216	Georg Jeckel (1635–1708)	1707–1708	17	Barbara Albelius (1640–1706)	July 22, 1691
				1339	Catharina Mühlmann (†1690)	unknown
3	2067	Bartholomaeus Seuler (1649–1715)	1709–1710	1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	November 4, 1710
				2077	Catharina Neunachbar (1660–1708)	unknown
4	725	Georgius Draudt (1661–1728)	1711–1714; 1718–1719; 1721–1721; 1724–1727	4122	Martha Blum (1665–1718)	February 28, 1683
5	783	Stephan Filstich (1657–1737)	1714–1717; 1720–1720; 1722–1723; 1728–1732; 1734–1736	1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	April 11, 1731
				1322	Martha Honter (1668–1691)	July 5, 1682
				2748	Sara Schunkabunk (1670–1729)	February 17, 1692

6	1414	Dr. Lucas Seuler (1661–1735)	1733–1733	42	Catharina Albrich (1670–1734)	May 31, 1690
7	2171	Samuel Herbert von Herbertsheim (1693–1747)	1737–1740; 1743–1744; 1746–1747	4379	Anna Rosina Winkler (1700–1735)	unknown
				2933	Justina Gottmeister (1695–1757)	July 29, 1736
8	446	Paul Chrestels (1679–1745)	1741–1741; 1745	3942	Sara Klutsch (1687–1764)	November 19, 1705
				3940	Martha Abraham	unknown
9	510	Martin Closius (1686–1752)	1748–1749	1133	Catharina Greising (1694–1768)	October 13, 1712
10	2161	Christoph Sewald (1696–1754)	1749–1754	5353	Susanna Orbez (1695–1754)	July 27, 1741
				5352	Susanna Wolff (1685–1741)	unknown
11	2073	Dr. Johann Traugott Seuler v. Seulen (1697–1757)	1754–1757	448	Sara Chrestels (1706–1772)	July 28, 1723
12	2215	Andreas Tartler (1714–1773)	1758–1769	3494	Agnetha Binder (1721–1787)	unknown
13	2833	Joseph Traugott Schobel (1719–1783)	1770–1778; 1781–1783	518	Martha Closius (1732–1801)	May 17, 1773
				2922	Anna Catharina Seuler v. Seulen (1727–1769)	July 22, 1742
14	765	Michael Enyeter (1711–1784)	1778–1781	4140	Martha Schnell (1714–1768)	November 14, 1735
				4141	Theresia Neff (†1810)	November 28, 1769
15	2384	Michael Traugott Fronius (1727–1799)	1783–1786; 1790–1799	1807	Martha Christina Rheter (1731–1787)	January 28, 1750

16	2296	Joseph August Draudt (1737–1798)	1786–1789	4101	Anna Elisabetha Weidner (†1802)	May 22, 1764
17	1565	Johann Gottlieb Wolff Wentzel (1746–1820)	1789–1790	1811	Justina Elisabetha Rheter (1752–1791)	June 30, 1756
18	2468	Georg Franz Clompe (1747–1828)	1799–1822	3500	Johanna Elisabetha Dürr (1762–1829)	January 19, 1780

Table 2: Town stewards and their spouses in Kronstadt (eighteenth century)

	Fér-jID	Husband	Year in office	Fele-ségID	Wife	Year of marriage
1	2067	Bartholomaeus Seuler (1649–1715)	1697–1698; 1700–1703	2077	Catharina Neunachbar (1660–1708)	unknown
				1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	November 4, 1710
2	725	Georg Draudt (1661–1728)	1704–1708	4122	Martha Blum (1665–1718)	February 28, 1683
3	783	Stephan Filstich (1657–1737)	1709–1710	2748	Sara Schunkabunk (1670–1729)	February 17, 1692
				1322	Martha Honter (1668–1691)	July 5, 1682
				1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	April 11, 1731
4	582	Georg Czako (1661–1726)	1710–1715; 1718–1720; 1723–1725	2198	Martha Henrich (1660–1734)	May 16, 1708
				2030	Martha Jeckel (1667–1708)	July 30, 1684

5	1414	Dr. Lucas Seuler (1661–1735)	1716–1717; 1721–1722; 1726–1727	42	Catharina Albri- ch (1670–1734)	May 31, 1690
6	964	Michael Fro- nius (1675– 1728)	1728– 1728	1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	January 9, 1716
				727	Anna Christina Draudt (1685– 1715)	June 23, 1700
7	1490	Martin Schne- eweiss (1677– 1734)	1729– 1731	2629	Martha May (1692–1734)	unknown
8	2206	Valentin Tart- ler (1680– 1734)	1731– 1734	3492	Anna Maria Kel- ler (1686–1767)	June 8, 1723
				2029	Anna Maria Raab (†1723)	July 26, 1706
9	698	Johann Draudt (1679–1733)	1731– 1733	2612	Margaretha Mankesch	June 21, 1704
10	446	Paul Chrestels (1679–1745)	1732– 1733; 1735– 1735	3942	Sara Klutsch (1687–1764)	November 19, 1705
				3940	Martha Abraham	unknown
11	2710	Christoph Ne- idel (1688– 1742)	1736– 1738; 1741– 1742	3743	Margaretha Schnell (1698– 1777)	May 23, 1730
				319	Anna Euphro- sina Bogner (†1730)	May ??, 1730
12	510	Martin Clo- sius (1686- 1752)	1738- 1740; 1745	1133	Catharina Greissing (1694– 1768)	October 13, 1712
13	2161	Christoph Se- ewald (1696- 1754)	1742– 1744	5352	Susanna Wolff (1685–1741)	unknown
				5353	Susanna Orbez (1695–1754)	July 27, 1741

14	2073	Dr. Johann Traugott Seuler v. Seulen (1697-1757)	1746–1751	448	Sara Chrestels (1706–1772)	July 28, 1723
15	1806	Georg Rheter (1709-1757)	1752–1755	2920	Martha Boes (1714–1747)	July 12, 1729
				2917	Justina Seuler v. Seulen (1732–1778)	April 24, 1748
16	2215	Andreas Tartler (1714-1773)	1756–1757	3494	Agnetha Binder (1721–1787)	unknown
17	1380	Georg Herrmann (1704-1763)	1758–1763	2104	Sara Scheipner (1710–1797)	October 27, 1728
18	512	Martin Gottfried Closius (1715-1770)	1762–1769	2704	Sara Regina Neidel (1733–1792)	November 22, 1752
				2601	Johanna Igel (1720–1751)	April 10, 1741
19	4390	Petrus Hiesmesch (1691-1764)	1763	4403	Sara Rebecca Gundhart (1711–1770)	?? ??, 1727
				4402	Maria Repser (†1723)	unknown
20	765	Michael Enyeter (1711-1784)	1770–1778	4140	Martha Schnell (1714–1768)	November 14, 1735
				4141	Theresia Neffi (†1810)	November 28, 1769
21	2384	Michael Traugott Fronius (1727-1799)	1778–1781	1807	Martha Christina Rheter (1731–1787)	January 28, 1750
22	1384	Georg Michael Gottlieb Herrmann (1737-1807)	1784-1786; 1790-1799	6602	Susanna Sophia Heidendorf (1743–1780)	September 5, 1764
23	3108	Simon Petrus Schnell (1729-1794)	1786–1790	2117	Anna Maria Scheipner (1753–1826)	May 2, 1770

Table 3: The shortest kinship distance between town magistrates and town stewards in Kronstadt (eighteenth century)

ID	446	510	582	725	765	964	1216	1380	1384	1414	1490	1565	1765	1806	2067	2073	2161	2171	2206	2215	2296	2384	2468	2710	2833	3108	4390
446	0	4	5	5	6	5	6	7	7	3	7	6	4	4	5	2	6	5	6	8	2	6	8	7	3	7	7
510	4	0	5	6	9	6	6	4	5	4	7	6	4	5	6	4	5	4	3	6	3	6	8	3	2	8	7
582	5	5	0	6	6	4	2	4	5	5	6	5	2	3	5	5	8	7	6	7	4	5	9	3	6	6	7
725	5	6	6	0	6	2	4	4	5	5	8	3	5	5	4	4	8	8	5	8	6	6	9	6	4	6	4
765	6	9	6	6	0	7	7	8	8	9	5	7	7	7	9	8	6	10	9	7	7	5	8	9	9	9	8
964	5	6	4	2	7	0	2	6	6	4	6	5	6	6	2	5	6	6	7	9	6	4	8	6	4	4	6
1216	6	6	2	4	7	2	0	5	6	6	6	7	4	5	4	6	6	6	7	8	6	4	8	4	6	4	7
1380	7	4	4	4	8	6	5	0	1	4	8	7	6	7	4	5	7	7	2	5	6	6	8	4	4	6	8
1384	7	5	5	5	8	6	6	1	0	4	8	8	7	7	4	5	8	7	3	6	7	6	8	5	5	6	8
1414	3	4	5	5	9	4	6	4	4	0	6	4	5	3	2	1	6	3	6	9	5	5	9	6	3	7	6
1490	7	7	6	8	5	6	6	8	8	6	0	8	6	6	6	6	8	8	8	5	7	8	5	8	8	7	9
1565	6	6	5	3	7	5	7	7	8	4	8	0	4	2	6	5	7	5	6	9	7	4	7	8	6	9	2
1765	4	4	2	5	7	6	4	6	7	5	6	4	0	2	7	6	7	6	6	8	3	4	9	5	5	8	6
1806	4	5	3	5	7	6	5	7	7	3	6	2	2	0	5	4	5	4	8	9	5	2	9	6	5	8	4
2067	5	6	5	4	9	2	4	4	4	2	6	6	7	5	0	3	6	5	6	9	6	6	9	6	4	6	6
2073	2	4	5	4	8	5	6	5	5	1	6	5	6	4	3	0	7	4	5	8	4	6	10	7	2	8	7
2161	6	5	8	8	6	6	6	7	8	6	8	7	7	5	6	7	0	9	6	8	6	3	8	7	7	8	5
2171	5	4	7	8	10	6	6	7	7	3	8	5	6	4	5	4	9	0	7	6	7	6	9	7	4	8	7
2206	6	3	6	5	9	7	7	2	3	6	8	6	6	8	6	5	6	7	0	3	6	7	6	6	4	6	7
2215	8	6	7	8	7	9	8	5	6	9	5	9	8	9	9	8	8	6	3	0	9	7	3	9	7	9	7
2296	2	3	4	6	7	6	6	6	7	5	7	7	3	5	6	4	6	7	6	9	0	5	8	6	3	9	8
2384	6	6	5	6	5	4	4	6	6	5	8	4	4	2	6	6	3	6	7	7	5	0	9	6	7	6	6
2468	8	8	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	9	5	7	9	9	9	10	8	9	6	3	8	9	0	9	9	8	5
2710	7	3	3	6	9	6	4	4	5	6	8	8	5	6	6	7	7	7	6	9	6	6	9	0	5	7	6
2833	3	2	6	4	9	4	6	4	5	3	8	6	5	5	4	2	7	4	4	7	3	7	9	5	0	7	6
3108	7	8	6	6	9	4	4	6	6	7	7	9	8	8	6	8	8	8	6	9	9	6	8	7	7	0	7
4390	7	7	7	4	8	6	7	8	8	6	9	2	6	4	6	7	5	7	7	7	8	6	5	6	6	7	0

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