

## **GODPARENTHOOD IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DUBROVNIK: CHILDREN, PARENTS AND GODPARENTS AS KNOTS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS\***

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**ABSTRACT:** Data analysis of 110 baptisms from the parish registers of the City of Dubrovnik for the year 1770 is used to reconstruct godparenthood as an instrument of the families' social betterment within community and a means of establishing ties with the individuals of considerable 'social capital'. Correlating the data with the sources from the pre-Tridentine Dubrovnik and those from parish registers for the year 1870 on the one hand, and taking into account the results of foreign debates on this topic on the other, this article examines distinctive features of the social alliances created by godparenthood at the sunset of the Dubrovnik Republic.

*Keywords:* Dubrovnik, 18th century, baptismal kinship, social networks, Council of Trent, social class structure, family relationship

An increasing interest of modern historiography in social networks has resulted in the study of godparenthood, a phenomenon which in Western Christendom may rather successfully be reconstructed from baptismal parish registers starting from the latter half of the sixteenth century, in some communities

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even earlier.<sup>1</sup> With regard to Dubrovnik and its area, there are valuable studies devoted solely to the issue of social networks, as well as those that address this topic within a broader discussion of either demographic or social history,<sup>2</sup> yet the history of godparenthood has only recently attracted greater scholarly attention.<sup>3</sup>

This study aims to explore how the institute of godparenthood shaped in practice and how it was used to establish social networks in Dubrovnik around the year 1770. Based on a quantitative data analysis of 110 baptisms from the parish registers for the year 1770,<sup>4</sup> the authors reconstruct individual and family

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<sup>1</sup> For our topic, especially useful were the works of Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon, among which: Guido Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers. Spiritual Kinship in Early Modern Italy*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009; Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon. »Fêtes du baptême et publicité des réseaux sociaux en Europe Occidentale. Grandes tendances de la fin du Moyen Âge au XXe siècle«. *Annales de Démographie Historique* 1 (2009): pp. 153-189; *Baptiser: pratique sacramentelle, pratique sociale (XVI e –XX siècles)*, ed. Guido Alfani, Philippe Castagnetti and Vincent Gourdon. Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2009; Guido Alfani, Agnese Vitali and Vincent Gourdon, »Social Customs and Demographic Change: The Case of Godparenthood in Catholic Europe«. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51/3 (2012): pp. 482-504; Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon, *Spiritual Kinship in Europe, 1500–1900*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> For a social network analysis based on computer modelling, see Vladimir Batagelj, »Ragusan families marriage networks«, in: *Developments in Data Analysis*, ed. Anuška Ferligoj and Anton Kramberger. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 1996: pp. 217-228.; Polona Dremelj, Andrej Mrvar and Vladimir Batagelj, »Analiza rodoslova dubrovačkog vlasteoskog kruga pomoću programa Pajek«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 40 (2002): pp. 105-126. For social history scholarship, see, among others, Zdenka Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode. Dubrovačka vlastela između srednjovjekovlja i humanizma*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 1999; David Rheubottom, *Age, Marriage, and Politics in Fifteenth-Century Ragusa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; Stjepan Čosić and Nenad Vekarić, *Dubrovačka vlastela između roda i države: salamankezi i sorbonezi*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2005; Nenad Vekarić, *Nevidljive pukotine: dubrovački vlasteoski klanovi*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2009; Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika*, vols. 1-3. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2011-2012; Zrinka Pešorda Vardić, *U predvorju vlasti. Dubrovački antunini u kasnom srednjem vijeku*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Research on the history and practice of godparenthood is carried out by the students of the *History of Population* doctoral programme of the University of Dubrovnik, under the supervision of Nenad Vekarić and Nella Lonza.

<sup>4</sup> *Matična knjiga krštenih župe Grad GI0K (1758–1798)*. Parish registers are housed in the Diocesan Archive of Dubrovnik, but for the purpose of this research digitised records from the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb have been used.

aspirations for a better position within community and formal bonding with individuals of substantial ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu). In order to illuminate the phenomenon more accurately, a parallel is drawn with the main characteristics of godparenthood in Dubrovnik a hundred years later, but also with the data regarding the period before the Council of Trent.

*The Council of Trent—a turning point in the history of godparenthood*

Since our aim here is not to canvass the history and nature of godparenthood, in short, it may be interpreted as a form of *fictive kinship* existing in many communities.<sup>5</sup> Catholic doctrine greatly leaned on the teaching of St Augustine according to which godparents represent spiritual parents of the baptised child who, through the sacrament of baptism, is being cleansed from the original sin and admitted into the community of Christians.<sup>6</sup> However, by the mid-sixteenth century, in some societies godparenthood had become a powerful social instrument for establishing strong social ties and for achieving a better position within community, which greatly weakened its original idea of spiritual parenthood.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of the fact that the Council of Trent (1545–1563) was primarily concerned with the challenges of the Reformation, the Church decided to review, reform and standardise the social practice pertaining to baptism and godparenthood. Among others, it issued decrees restricting the number of godparents to two of different sex and thus narrowed, but not impeded, the social function of godparenthood.<sup>8</sup> A Council decree by which priests were required to keep parish books<sup>9</sup> deserves all the credit for a massive and rather uniform production of the material containing information on baptisms throughout

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<sup>5</sup> For more details see Helen Rose Ebaugh and Mary Curry, »Fictive Kin and Social Capital in New Immigrant Communities«. *Sociological Perspectives* 43/2 (2000): pp. 189-209.

<sup>6</sup> For more on this see Guido Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers. Spiritual Kinship in Early-Modern Italy*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009: pp. 3-15.

<sup>7</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: pp. 22-40.

<sup>8</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: pp. 88-90.

<sup>9</sup> *Declarationes Illust. Sac. Rom. Cardinalium Congregationis, ipsis sacrosancti et oecumenici Concilii Tridentini canonibus et decretis insertae*. Coloniae Agrippinae [Köln]: Apud Petrum Henningium, sub signo Cuniculi, 1619 - Canones super reformatione circa matrimonium, Caput II - *Habeat parochus librum in quo coniugum et testium nomina diemque et locum contracti matrimonii describat quem diligenter apud se custodiat*. (URL: <http://www.internetsv.info/Archive/CTridentinum.pdf>, accessed in March 2015).

Catholic Europe.<sup>10</sup> On the basis of these entries, it is possible not only to establish the practice related to the sacrament of baptism, but to reconstruct the social ties resulting from godparenthood, which is the objective of this study.

*Godparenthood in Dubrovnik before the Council of Trent and the application of the Council canons*

Unlike some European cities, or even Istrian and Dalmatian,<sup>11</sup> Dubrovnik has no baptismal registers from the period before the Council of Trent. However, a couple of sources provide an insight into the practice pertaining to godparenthood among the sixteenth-century nobility of Dubrovnik. The *Lekcionar* of the chronicler Nikša Ragnina contains a full record of births and baptisms of his offspring.<sup>12</sup> The entries include the names of the godparents of his three sons and four daughters, born between 1532 and 1540, along with the two grandsons and a granddaughter by his son Šimun, born in the 1570s. As the Council of Trent took place between these two sets of entries, they may serve as an excellent material for the study of the impact of the Council of Trent on the changes in the social practice of godparenthood.

<sup>10</sup> Basic formularies for keeping baptismal registers are to be found in *Rituale Romanum Pauli V. P. M. iussu editum*. Antuerpiae [Antwerpen]: Officina Plantiniana, 1617: pp. 347-348 ([http://books.google.hr/books?id=u6lHAAAacAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=hr&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.hr/books?id=u6lHAAAacAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=hr&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false), accessed in February 2015). Introduction of baptismal registers in Dubrovnik experienced serious resistance, as evidenced by paragraph 8 of the indictment submitted by Archbishop Matteucci in 1582: *Non vogliono libro del batesimo con la descrizione di tempo, nomi, cognomi e compari* (Serafin Marija Crijević, *Bibliotheca Ragusina*, ed. Stjepan Krsić, vol. 2/3. Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1977: p. 33). The issue of the Church-state relationship opened by the Council of Trent fanned fierce conflicts between the clans in Dubrovnik. See Nenad Vekarić, *Nevidljive pukotine*: pp. 93-98 and Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika*, vol. 4. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2013: pp. 98, 245. Apparently, it was not until 1584 that the Senate allowed the keeping of parish books. Konstantin Vojnović, »Crkva i država u dubrovačkoj republici«. *Rad JAZU* 119 (1894): p. 47.

<sup>11</sup> For European and Croatian parish registers, see a survey in: Vladimir Stipetić and Nenad Vekarić, *Povijesna demografija Hrvatske*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2004: pp. 28-30; for Italy, see also G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p. 28 and Lorenzo Fabbri, »Una città, un fonte: il Battistero di Firenze e i suoi registri«, in: *Porta fidei. Le registrazioni pretridentine nei battisteri tra Emilia-Romagna e Toscana*, ed. Gilberto Zacchè. Modena: Mucchi editore, 2014: pp. 17-29; for Istria see Dražen Vlahov, »Matične knjige u Povijesnom arhivu u Pazinu«. *Vjesnik Istarskog arhiva* 2-3 (1992-1993): p. 283.

<sup>12</sup> *Lekcionar zadarski i Ranjinin*, ed. Milan Rešetar [Djela JAZU, vol. 13]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1894: pp. 328-330.

All entries on Ragnina's children from the pre-Tridentine period follow the same pattern: the first four children had six, the next two at least five, while the last-born daughter had at least four godparents.<sup>13</sup> Apart from one exception, each child had only one godmother, while the rest were men.<sup>14</sup> Six of his children had a commoner as godfather, and one child even had two; for some of them the occupation is cited (surgeon, overseer of the arsenal). The choice of godparents of Ragnina's son Šimun, born unexpectedly while returning from a wedding banquet of Župan Bona, was guided by most unusual circumstances: among the godparents were the groom and midwife.<sup>15</sup> None of the godfathers repeated his role in the baptisms of the brothers. Close kin were among the godparents, but they did not dominate. There were no grandfathers nor grandmothers, and—as much as the data allowed—we know that four nephews of the godchild acted as godfather, uncle, aunt, father's nephew and mother's nephew. Five out of the mentioned eight godfathers were young men in their twenties.<sup>16</sup>

Similar, though of an earlier date, are the records concerning the five children of Vlaho Gundula and Sekunda Goze, born between 1515 and 1529.<sup>17</sup> The number of godparents from the house of Gundula ranged from 7 to 10, in that the twins born in 1522 had the least godparents. Their family also followed the same pattern: four to six noblemen, a noblewoman, one or two commoners and a priest. The latter is the only marked difference in the selection of godparents in relation to the Ragnina.<sup>18</sup> It is noteworthy that the Trojan Crieva's sons and widow were godparents of

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<sup>13</sup> Ragnina entered these records afterwards, according to his memory, as evidenced from the crossed-out words and corrections of the data, as well as the fact that he was unable to remember the godmother's name of his youngest daughter. It is likely that his youngest children also had more godparents than recorded, so that the mentioned figures should be taken as a reliable minimum.

<sup>14</sup> On the prevalence of godfathers in Italy, cf. G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: pp. 31, 36.

<sup>15</sup> It is not clear whether the midwife was chosen as godmother because Šimun had previously received her emergency baptism. In Renaissance Florence midwives were selected for godmothers also out of gratitude; cf. Louis Haas, »Women and Childbearing in Medieval Florence«, in: *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999: pp. 96-97.

<sup>16</sup> These analyses are based on the data drawn from Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika*, vol. 2 and 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Privata*, series 19, vol. 4a, f. 261v-262v. This source has been noted by Zdenka Janeković Römer, »Obiteljska knjiga Andrije Antojeva de Pozza (1569-1603)«, in: *Med Srednjo Evropo in Sredozemljem. Vojetov zbornik*, ed. Sašo Jerše. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2006 : p. 492.

<sup>18</sup> On priests as godfathers in Renaissance Florence, cf. Louis Haas, »Il mio buon compare: Choosing godparents and the uses of baptismal kinship in Renaissance Florence«, *Journal of Social History* 29 (1995-96): p. 344; see also Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon, »Spiritual kinship and godparenthood: an introduction«, in: *Spiritual Kinship in Europe, 1500-1900*, ed. Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon. Houndmills-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012: p. 22.

the Gundula's first three children, which indicates a close friendship between them. Consolidation of the already established personal ties is also evident in the choice of a commoner Radić Božićković as godfather, who married an illegitimate daughter of Federik, Vlaho's brother.

The aggregation of these indicators provides a picture of godparenthood among the noble families of the pre-Tridentine period, in which godparents were a numerous and diversified group by rank, gender, age and kinship ties.<sup>19</sup> Underlying this diversity is a fixed pattern which includes at least one godfather from the common ranks and (only) one godmother.<sup>20</sup> A pattern of this type, marked by multiple godparents and gender asymmetry (model 2 in Alfani's typology) was widely distributed in central Italy.<sup>21</sup> The social practice of the Ragusan patrician rank indicates that, on the one hand, godparenthood relied on the pre-existent kinship relationships,<sup>22</sup> and on the other, used godparenthood as a means of establishing formal vertical social relationships with persons of lower status.<sup>23</sup> However, unlike Renaissance Florence, in which it was common to choose godparents from the lower ranks so as to weave and strengthen clientelism-based networks,<sup>24</sup> only one godfather from the artisan ranks (rarely two) in the practice of Dubrovnik carried an essentially symbolic meaning. It should be noted that commoners chosen to act as godfathers at the baptisms of the nobility came from generally respectful professions (at 4 out of 5 baptisms in the Gundula family, the godfathers were barber-surgeons or their sons). In the political pattern of the Renaissance Dubrovnik, commoners had no access to the institutionalised forms of power and hence the vertical social ties between ranks weighed far less than in Florence, in which the distribution of power—institutionalised and non-institutionalised—was diffused to a much larger degree.<sup>25</sup>

Due to the lack of sources, we do not know whether similar customs with regard to the number and gender structure of godparents prevailed among the

<sup>19</sup> For southern Europe of the pre-Tridentine period, cf. G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Worth noting is Louis Haas's warning on the fragmentary state of a similar source from Florence (*Ricordanze*). See L. Haas, »Il mio buon compare«. *Journal of Social History* 29 (1995-96): pp. 347-348.

<sup>21</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: pp. 42-43.

<sup>22</sup> However, all the examples in our analysis pertain to the noble rank, in which the web of kinship ties was so tightly knit that the selection of godparents among the kin proved virtually inevitable.

<sup>23</sup> For Italy cf. G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: pp. 9-10, 40, 125-126.

<sup>24</sup> L. Haas, »Il mio buon compare«: 345-351.

<sup>25</sup> On power distribution in the Renaissance Florence, see Ronald F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*. New York [etc.]: Academic Press, 1982: pp. 2-26, notably pp. 2-7 and 22-25, on godparenthood pp. 16-18.

1514 adi 30 gluglio  
 Jo Bialio gioua dogedolau maraj  
 Florija pafu pl. resurrexio d' matu, monjo  
 d. Sotoda fiola d' iuxta - la. aluis d' goja  
 Inual Jozhano ilogo d' Sotoda - d. Anja  
 Cl' pafu marionale / celebrato nel 1513 adi . octubrio in

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~~1515 adi 29 gluglio aburo / 3. d' raba  
 ala iugitia d' iro carabo apostole dia maraj  
 ferasa nra fia p' nome fran Alqual  
 Joro An d' bressero lito pari  
 pro gioua d' fo rapolan or caragol' or d' jupam  
 d' Vladisavo - zugro d' Iorgio  
 d' Baisla zugro d' burbio  
 d' barolomto - andrea - jorji d' goja  
 d' palqual toia - ta. d' jidua  
 Jacoro d' gulij spiaro ilogo d' iuxta andrea baba d'  
 Iugio d' m'istro nasal barbio Lubrosin  
 dona Anjula d' palqual mrole d'  
 raboga Comaro  
 1516 adi 14 febraro jobin aora d' uosporo  
 pafu d' quata uita p' r' r' d' fo papolin alio  
 domo d' goja Iugio d' iuxta d' palqual nra anja~~

Entry on the baptism of the eldest daughter of Vlaho Gundula from 1515.  
*Privata*, series 19, vol. 4a, f. 261v (State Archives of Dubrovnik)

non-nobles of Dubrovnik. In Labin (Istria) of the pre-Trent period, for example, it was common practice to have two godfathers and two godmothers present at baptism, and among higher ranks three godfathers and three godmothers.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Marija Mogorović Crljenko, Branka Poropat and Tajana Ujčić, »Sufficit tibi scriber: Matična knjiga krštenih župe Labin (1536.-1583.)«, in: *Raukarov zbornik: Zbornik u čast Tomislava Raukara*, ed. Neven Budak. Zagreb: FF Press, 2005: p. 450 and examples on pp. 448-449.

It is plausible that in Dubrovnik, too, the women played a more prominent role at baptism in the lower social ranks, in conformity with the more equal status they enjoyed within family and society.<sup>27</sup>

In the generation of Nikša Ragnina's grandchildren, after the Council of Trent, the situation with the selection of godparents changed profoundly. Entered by the names of three out of four children of Šimun, Nikša's son, are the names of godparents. Each entry contains only two godparents, in accordance with the maximum number decreed by the Council. However, two out of three examples infringed the regulation by which godparents were to be of different sex, as they were both men. All godparents came from the ranks of the nobility.

A similar pattern has been observed with the baptism of the eight children of Andrija Pozza born in the period 1572-1582.<sup>28</sup> None of his children received more than two godparents, all of whom came from the local (sometimes even foreign) nobility. Gender structure does not entirely follow the decrees of the Council of Trent, because in two cases the child's godparents were two men, despite the prevalence of mixed godparents, godfather and godmother. As Zdenka Janeković Römer argues, godparents were mainly selected from the kinship circle,<sup>29</sup> but there was no sign of a strict principle regulating the choice from the father's or the mother's side.

Guido Alfani has established that in Italy, the decrees of the Council of Trent came to a full effect at the turn of the sixteenth into seventeenth century.<sup>30</sup> In the case of Dubrovnik, we may assert that the rule on the number of godparents was applied strictly and without any delay,<sup>31</sup> while the gender structure adapted to the new rules over a longer period of time. Like in Italy, a 'collateral victim' of the restriction on the number of godparents was the disappearance of the lower ranks as godparents to patrician children, which altered the social role of godparenthood in Dubrovnik.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Zdenka Janeković Römer, *Rod i grad. Dubrovačka obitelj od XIII do XV stoljeća*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 1994: pp. 73, 89, 92.

<sup>28</sup> A detailed account of the records of Andrija Pozza on his children and their godparents has been given in Z. Janeković Römer, »Obiteljska knjiga Andrije Antojeva de Pozza (1569-1603)«: pp. 492-494.

<sup>29</sup> Z. Janeković Römer, »Obiteljska knjiga Andrije Antojeva de Pozza (1569-1603)«: pp. 492-494.

<sup>30</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers* : pp. 98-100.

<sup>31</sup> A first explicit decision concerning the application of the Tridentine decrees in Dubrovnik dates from 1567, when the Senate passed a deliberation on prebends. Kosta Vojnović, »Crkva i država u dubrovačkoj republici.« *Rad* 121 (1895): p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: 10; G. Alfani and V. Gourdon, »Spiritual kinship and godparenthood: an introduction«: p. 14.



### *Demographic changes and the planning of baptism*

Before presenting central analyses of godparenthood around 1770, we shall draw attention to a few details reflected in the baptismal register which speak of the importance of the institution of godparenthood for the establishment of social networks, the subject-matter in our focus.

Our sample includes 110 baptismal entries. Out of this number, fifteen children (13.64%) received emergency baptism immediately upon birth, as they faced poor chances of survival. According to Canon Law, a baptism *urgente mortis periculo vel alia cogente necessitate* was valid, but a full ceremony had to be performed including all the omitted parts of the ritual as soon as the circumstances allowed.<sup>33</sup> Added to all the cases recorded as ‘emergency baptism’ in the parish registers of Dubrovnik are the entries on the subsequently performed full baptismal rituals with the godparents. Does this mean that all the life-threatened new-borns survived? We fear not. The chronological order of the register entries reveals that they were made sometime around the ‘ritual baptism’, and not around the ‘emergency baptism’. Thus, one may assume that in 1770 emergency baptisms were not recorded into the parish registers if the child had not survived.<sup>34</sup> Despite the validity of the emergency baptism, only the ceremony with the priest and godparents conveyed genuine social significance and deserved to be recorded into the ‘bookkeeping of the souls’.

Indeed, baptism was not an unexpected social situation, as during the last months of the woman’s pregnancy the couple intensively dwelt on the prospective candidates for godparents and made the necessary plans. Therefore, considerable delays of the ‘ritual baptism’ of several months should not be interpreted as elaborate preparations for the ceremony, but rather as concern for the child’s well-being. According to the decisions passed by the synod of the Diocese of Dubrovnik in 1729, it was explicitly required for the ritual to be performed as soon as the child gained strength, condemning thus an evidently common practice of delaying baptism at the godparents’ convenience.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The decrees of the Council of Trent were given a practical frame in the Roman Ritual from 1614. See *Rituale Romanum*: pp. 45-47.

<sup>34</sup> Our assumption is also confirmed by the Register of Deaths of the City Parish *G8M* (1769-1796), in which we were not able to trace a single record related to a child known to have received an emergency baptism. Parish registers are filed in the Diocesan Archive of Dubrovnik, and for the purpose of this study digitised registers from the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb have been used.

<sup>35</sup> *Constitutiones et decreta synodi dioeceseanae Raugii in caedrali ecclesia S. Mariae Majoris anno MDCCXXIX die VIII. maii ab Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Domino D. Fr. Angelo Franchi Archiepiscopo celebratae*. Anconae: Ex Typographia Bellelli, 1730: pp. 39-40.

Further, with normal childbirths, most children were baptised within a few days of birth (average 2.19 days). Communities marked by high infant mortality showed a tendency towards baptism within a shorter time limit. The regulations issued by the government in the mid-seventeenth century for the rural area of Župa Dubrovačka required that the children be baptised on the very day of birth.<sup>36</sup> In our sample, the parents still show a certain anxiety due to high child mortality, and the child is baptised without much delay, but not on the very day of birth.<sup>37</sup> The gap of a few days or more between birth and baptism is an early sign of the process of demographic transition, which started in Dubrovnik by the end of the eighteenth century with the decline of infant mortality,<sup>38</sup> having an impact on the customs surrounding baptism.

In eighteenth-century Dubrovnik, the city children were baptised in the baptistery that adjoined the Cathedral until 1830.<sup>39</sup> The fact that the ceremony was planned to be held on feast days testifies to the significance attributed to this event. Gallatin Anderson observes that baptisms in the Italian towns were most commonly performed on Saturday, Sunday or feast day, unlike rural communities where they were performed with no particular pattern.<sup>40</sup> In 1770, Dubrovnik witnessed 45% of baptisms performed on Sunday or on more important Church feasts. The reason for such choice, Anderson argues, probably lies in the general intention of having more people attend the ceremony.<sup>41</sup> Curiously, none of the baptisms took place on the days recommended by the Church (Holy Saturday and Saturday preceding Pentecost),<sup>42</sup> which that year fell on 14 April and 2 June. The choice of the day was most evidently influenced by the local social customs, many of which greatly correspond to the practice of the Italian urban communities.

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<sup>36</sup> Josip Lučić, »Uprava u Župi dubrovačkoj«, in: idem, *Iz prošlosti dubrovačkog kraja u doba Republike*. Dubrovnik: Biblioteka D časopisa Dubrovnik, 1990: p. 370.

<sup>37</sup> In Renaissance Florence children were commonly baptised within three days of birth, sometimes even within several hours. Cf. Louis Haas, »Women and Childbearing in Medieval Florence«: p. 96.

<sup>38</sup> Nenad Vekarić, »Mijene dobnih struktura u procesima demografske tranzicije«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU* 35 (1997): pp. 110-111.

<sup>39</sup> Danko Zelić, »Romanička katedrala.«, in: *Katedrala Gospe Velike u Dubrovniku*, ed. Katarina Horvat-Levaj. Dubrovnik-Zagreb: Gradska župa Gospe Velike Dubrovnik i Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2014: p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> G. Anderson, »The Italian Godparenthood Complex«: p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> G. Anderson, »The Italian Godparenthood Complex«: p. 38.

<sup>42</sup> *Rituale Romanum*: p. 10.

*A couple godparent model with gender symmetry before and after 1770*

In 1770, in the Parish of the City of Dubrovnik a total of 110 children were baptised, 51.81% being female. The number of identified godparents is 220, which implies that each godchild had two godparents.

Table 1. Number and gender structure of godparents in the City Parish (1770)

Baptished children	Number of births	Number of godparents	Godfathers	Godmothers	Proportion of women (%)	Average number of godparents per child
Male	53	106	53	53	50	2
Female	57	114	57	57	50	2
<i>Total</i>	110	220	110	110	100	2

The findings presented in Table 1. show a strict practice with no exceptions in the number of godparents per child nor in the gender structure, which proves that mid-eighteenth century area of Dubrovnik saw full implementation of the Council of Trent aimed at the regulation of the issue of the number and gender of godparents. The Council of Trent allowed the choice of “one godfather or one godmother, that is, not more than one godfather and one godmother”,<sup>43</sup> this canon also being observed by the decrees of some regional synods and diocesan councils.<sup>44</sup>The custom of one godfather or godmother was applied, though endemically, in some parts of Veneto and in Rome. However, in 1770 Dubrovnik followed the pattern typical of the majority of Catholic communities of the post-Tridentine period with the godfather-godmother combination.<sup>45</sup>

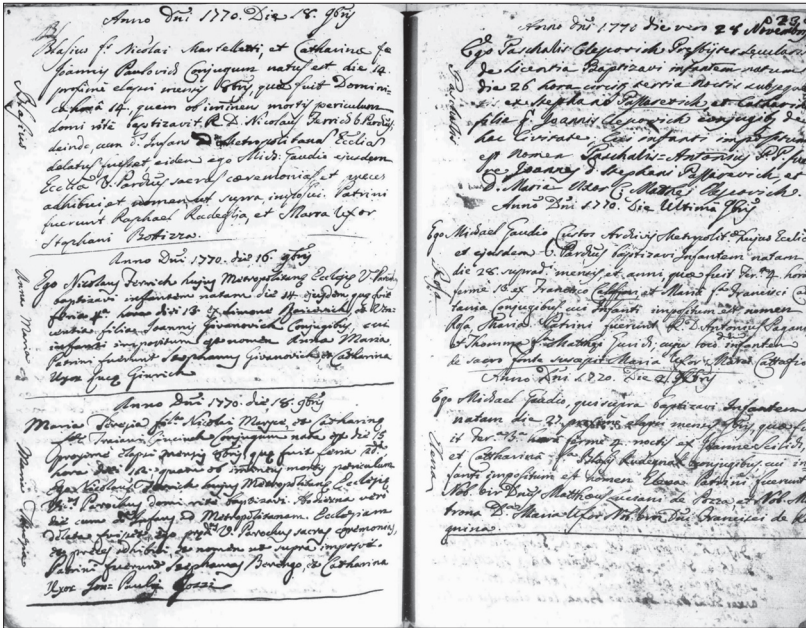
While in 1770 every child had exactly two godparents (Table 1), in 1870/1 an average number of godparents was 1.77 per child (Graph 1).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Canones super reformatione circa matrimonium, Caput II: ... unus tantum sive vir sive mulier iuxta sacrorum canonum instituta vel ad summum unus et una baptizatum de baptismo suscipiant...* (<http://www.internetsv.info/Archive/CTridentinum.pdf>, accessed in January 2015).

<sup>44</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p. 107.

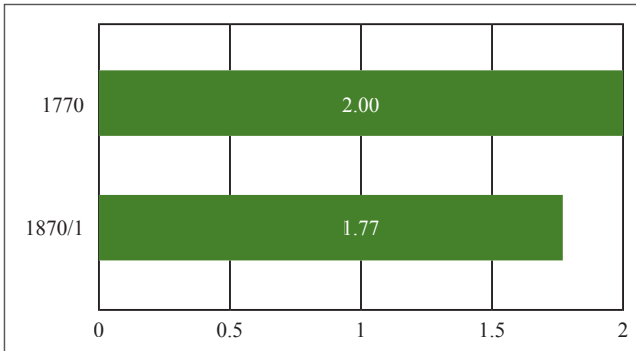
<sup>45</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: pp. 98-100; G. Alfani and V. Gourdon, »Spiritual kinship and godparenthood: an introduction«: pp. 14-15. A couple of examples from the Parish of Sutivan on the Island of Brač from the period 1622-1632, published by A. Jutronić, also include only the godfather-godmother combination. V. Andre Jutronić, »Najstarija sačuvana knjiga rođenih Sutivana (1622-1694)«. *Starine* 49 (1959): pp. 229-230.

<sup>46</sup> Ariana Koprivec-Violić and Nenad Vekarić, »Krsni i vjenčani kumovi katolika u Dubrovniku (1870-1871)«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU* 54 (2016), in print.



An entry into the register of births of the Parish of the City of Dubrovnik from 1770. *Matična knjiga krštenih župe Grad G10K (1758–1798)*

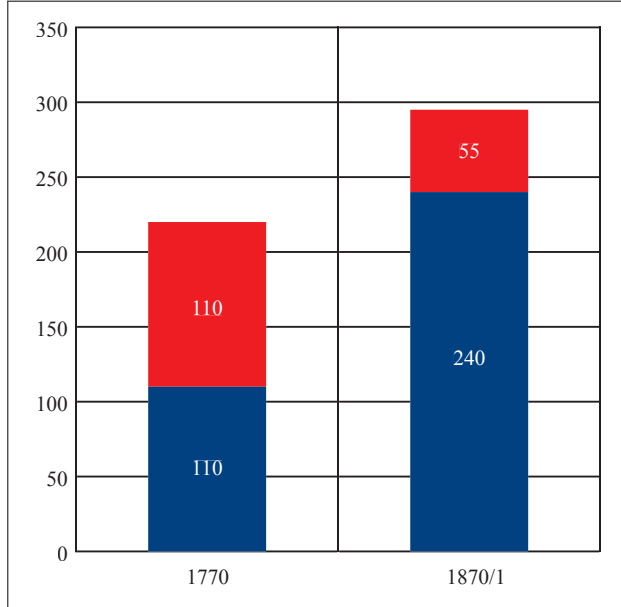
Graph 1. Average number of godparents per child in the City Parish in 1770 and 1870/1



Men prevailed in the 1870/1 choice of godparents, and the perfect gender symmetry of 1770 was abandoned (Graph 2).

In sum, in the second half of the nineteenth century we may no longer speak of godparenthood modelled after biological parenthood (godfather and godmother), as was the case in 1770, which indicates that the meaning of godparenthood underwent profound changes over the course of one century.

Graph 2. Proportion of godmothers in the overall number of godparents in the City Parish in 1770 and 1870/1



### *Godparenthood and social structure*

Out of 110 children baptised in 1770, only five were born and baptised to the patrician parents (4.55%),<sup>47</sup> which may not come as a surprise considering that around the year 1750 the overall population of the Dubrovnik Republic included only 387 members of the nobility.<sup>48</sup> By the latter half of the eighteenth century, the members of the Confraternities of St Anthony and St Lazarus (*Antunini* and *Lazarini*) had established themselves as a wealthy citizen stratum. In 1770, the proportion of baptised children whose at least one parent belonged to this rank (7%)<sup>49</sup> was considerably larger than that of the patrician offspring.

However, the relationship of these three ranks in the structure of godparents is of far greater concern for our debate (Table 2, Graph 3).

<sup>47</sup> Owing mainly to the genealogical studies of Nenad Vekarić, the nobility has been analysed in detail, while with other social groups this phenomenon has been but outlined on the basis of data from the parish registers.

<sup>48</sup> N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika I*: p. 284.

<sup>49</sup> *Vlajkijeva genealogija antunina*, Čingrija Archive, RO-161, vol. 2 and *Katićeva genealogija antunina*, the legacy of Ernest Katić, RO-170 (State Archives in Dubrovnik).

Graph 3. Class structure of the baptised in the City Parish (1770)

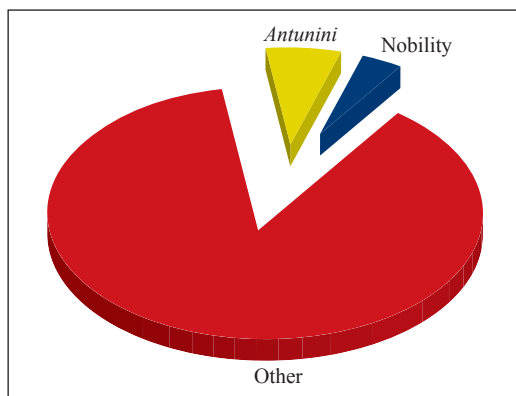
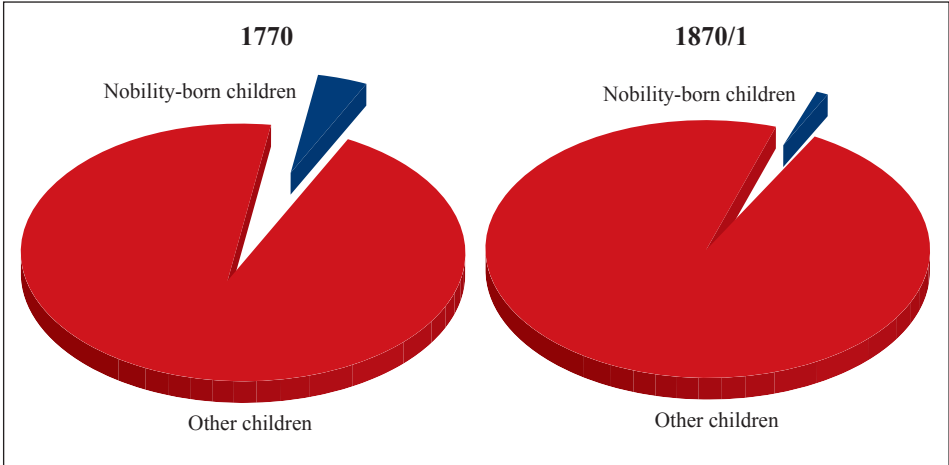


Table 2. Class structure of the baptised in the City Parish (1770)

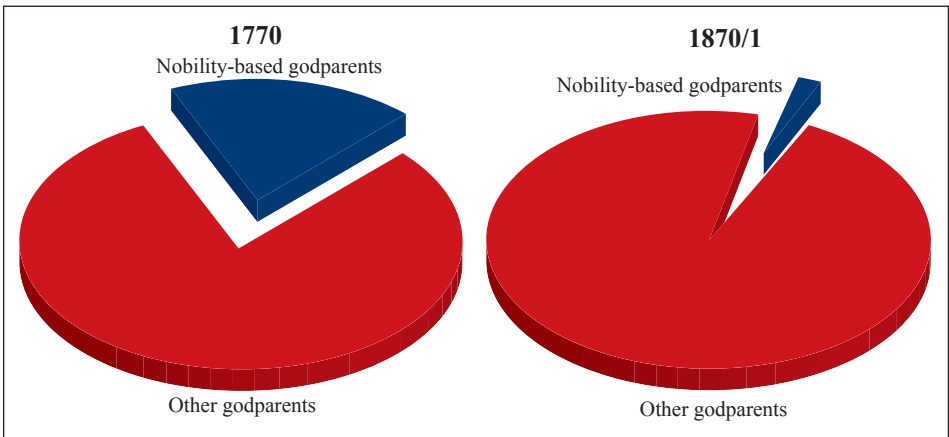
Rank	Number of godparents	Men	Women	Proportion (%)
Nobility	42	21	21	19.09
<i>Antunini</i>	30	18	12	13.64
Other	148	71	77	67.27
<i>Total</i>	220	110	110	100

The nobility shows stronger homogeneity in the selection of godparents, so that in all the five baptisms of patrician children both godparents came from the noble rank. With *Antunini*, the situation is somewhat different. Godparents of the *Antunini* offspring were commonly chosen among the noble rank, which proves that godparenthood was still associated with higher social prestige. However, in two baptisms of the *Antunini* children, at least one of the godparents was not an *Antunin* but a commoner, which shows that *Antunini* were not a sealed rank and that they encouraged interrelations with other social strata. The same probably reflects in the gender asymmetry of godparents, because—unlike the nobility—with the *Antunini* we find cases in which only the godfather came from this rank. From the sample it is evident that the members of the lower ranks tended to choose patricians rather than the *Antunini*, who, albeit often wealthier than the nobility, had no political power. This may serve as proof that in the selection of godparents, parents did not seek financial security as much as better social status, which in Dubrovnik implied more than merely property.

Graph 4. Proportion of nobility-born children in the overall number of baptised children in the City Parish in 1770 and 1870/1



Graph 5. Proportion of nobility-based godparents in the overall number of godparents in the City Parish in 1770 and 1870/1



By correlating the data from 1770 with those from 1870/1, we shall see that the proportion of the nobility-based godparents rapidly decreased (Graph 5). This mirrors the demographic decline of the noble rank, because over the period of one century the proportion of noble children among the baptised was reduced by half (from 4% down to 2%; Graph 4), in that the 2% of the noble children from 1870/1 also include children whose only one parent came from the former nobility,

while in 1770 cases such as this could not be found, as the nobility strictly observed its endogamic tradition.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the proportion of the nobility-based godparents had not been reduced by half, which would correspond to the demographic changes, but dropped to less than one-fifth as compared to 1770 (Graph 5). Lesser interest shown by non-noble ranks to use spiritual ties with the patricians clearly indicates a minorisation of the social role of the once ruling elite within a new civil framework of the Habsburg Monarchy.

### *Godparenthood and blood kinship*

Considering that from the turn of the Antiquity into the Middle Ages baptism was performed at the child's earliest age,<sup>51</sup> it was upon the parents to choose godparents. In the mid-eighteenth century the choice of godparents represented for parents a unique opportunity to create for their child but equally so for themselves better conditions for positioning within the society. This opportunity was significantly narrowed in the post-Tridentine period with the restriction of the number of godparents, but still retained some importance.

In at least 18% of the Dubrovnik cases in 1770 godparenthood was kinship based (Graph 6).<sup>52</sup> This leads to a conclusion that godparenthood was used to seal family ties<sup>53</sup> rather than pursue better social status.

But given that a spiritual relationship created between the godchild and godparent led to marriage impediments between families,<sup>54</sup> expectedly, among the nobility godparents would be commonly chosen from the family circle so as to avoid a further narrowing of the already limited marriage pool. Indeed, 80% of the nobility chose kin as godparents, therefore, more than four times above the average (Graph 7).

<sup>50</sup> N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika* I: p. 278.

<sup>51</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p. 15.

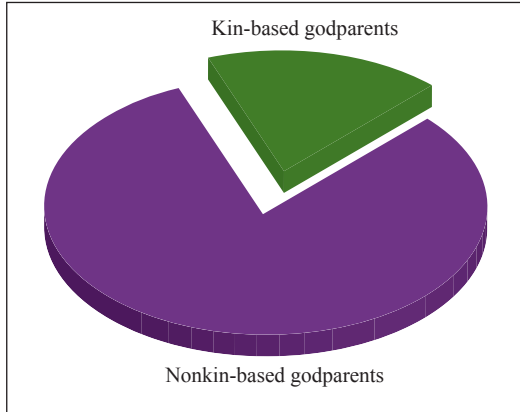
<sup>52</sup> Apart from the cases in which it could be ascertained with exactitude that the persons were related by kin, for the purpose of this paper under the term 'kin-based' we included also all godparents and parents bearing the same surname. It should be noted that only in the case of the nobility could the kin by father's and mother's side be accurately established, since no genealogical data is available for the other ranks to facilitate a similar reconstruction. Therefore, it is plausible that the proportion of kin-related godparents is even greater.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Guido Alfani, Vincent Gourdon and Agnese Vitali, »Social customs and demographic change: The case of godparenthood in Catholic Europe«. *Dondena Working Papers* 40 (2011): p. 18 ([www.dondena.unibocconi.it/wp40](http://www.dondena.unibocconi.it/wp40), accessed January 2015).

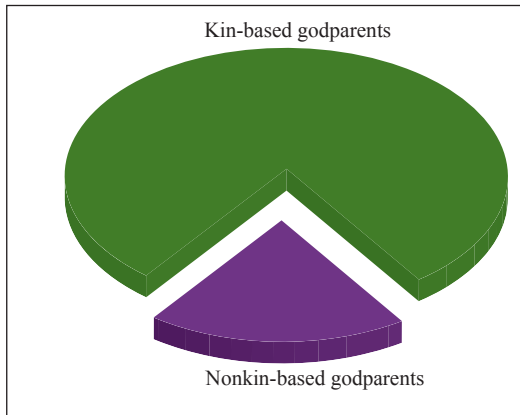
<sup>54</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p. 13.



Graph 6. Proportion of kin-based godparents in the overall number of godparents in the City Parish in 1770



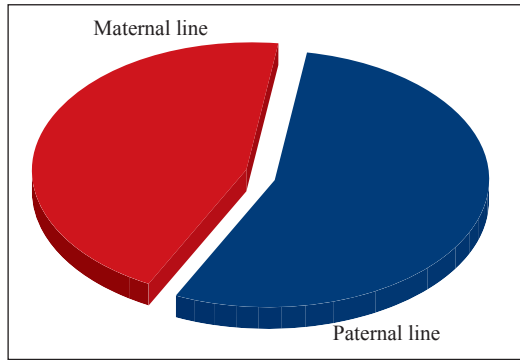
Graph 7. Proportion of kin-based godparents in the overall number of nobility-based godparents in the City Parish in 1770



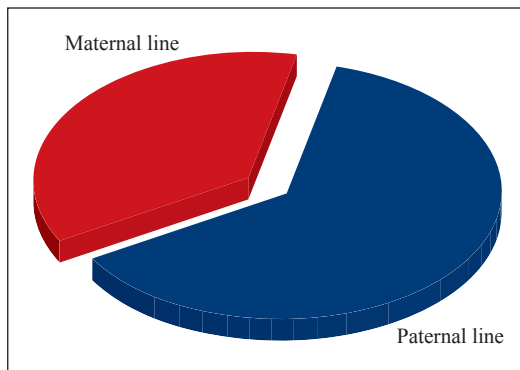
A perfect symmetry established with the godparenthood gender structure has largely been retained in the selection of godparents, i.e. godfathers were mainly chosen from the father’s side, and godmother’s from the mother’s side (Graph 8).

The nobility shows a clear preference in the selection of godfathers by father’s side, and godmothers by mother’s side (almost 2/3 of the cases, graphs 9 and 10); in the majority of cases the role of godparent was played by uncles/aunts (from the father’s and mother’s side), as well as grandfathers and grandmothers. With respect to kinship line in choosing godparents, father’s and mother’s side show a stable balance.

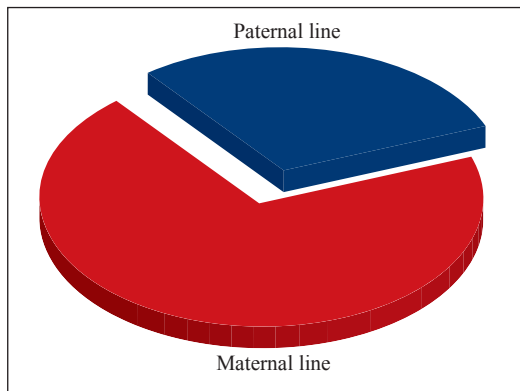
Graph 8. Kinship line in the selection of godparents in the City Parish in 1770



Graph 9. Kinship line in the selection of godfather among the nobility in the City Parish in 1770



Graph 10. Kinship line in the selection of godmother among the nobility in the City Parish in 1770



In almost 62.5% of all the cases the child's uncle from either side acted as godfather, or aunt from either side as godmother, therefore, a person closely related to the child's parents and a peer;<sup>55</sup> such a pattern has survived until the present in the area of Italy and France, as confirmed by Alfani, Gourdon and Vitali.<sup>56</sup> Naturally, certain circumstances influenced the selection: the number of uncles or aunts from either side, the fact whether it is a first-born child, male or female etc.<sup>57</sup>

With kinship-based godparenthood, only one-quarter of the samples concerns grandfathers and grandmothers. Due to lower death age, it is likely that not all children had living grandfathers and grandmothers, and godparents tended to be chosen among younger persons, to live longer and to be able to fulfil their spiritual duty and care for their godchild. In the absence of mother's or father's brothers, a combination of these two groups was common, for example, godparents to Ana Testi were her uncle and her grandmother from the mother's side. All other combinations were less common. We have also found a case in which godmother was the sister of the baptised girl.

### *Marital status and the age of godmothers*

Alfani's research of the north-Italian town of Ivrea shows that the ratio between married and unmarried godmothers was 5:1.<sup>58</sup> In Dubrovnik it was approximately 7.5:1 (Table 3).<sup>59</sup>

Table 3. Family status of godmothers in the City Parish in 1770

Family status of godmothers	Number of godmothers	Proportion (%)
Wife	94	85.45
Widow	3	2.73
Wife + widow	97	88.18
Unmarried woman	13	11.82
<i>Total</i>	110	100

<sup>55</sup> With the nobility this proportion is 50 %.

<sup>56</sup> G. Alfani, V. Gourdon and A. Vitali, »Social customs and demographic change«: p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> G. Anderson cites numerous patterns of godparent selection in contemporary Italy. See Gallatin Anderson, »The Italian Godparenthood Complex«. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13/1 (1957): pp. 32-53.

<sup>58</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p. 172.

<sup>59</sup> It should be noted that the sample does not include cases in which the priest omitted to enter information explaining the godmother's family status.

The cited data unquestionably indicate that through the institution of marriage the godmothers, in the main, already enjoyed a socially affirmed status. Guido Alfani finds a correlation between marriage and the assumption of the role of godmother, arguing that in both cases it was a specific rite of passage for the young women.<sup>60</sup> We do not have information on the age of all godmothers when they acted as such, nor on the gap between marriage and godmotherhood, nor whether it was their first godmotherhood or not. Therefore, we are unable to ascertain whether in eighteenth-century Dubrovnik the woman's assumption of godmotherhood was related to her marriage. We know with certainty that the mean age of the nobility-based godmothers in Dubrovnik was 34.21,<sup>61</sup> which exceeds the Ivrea sample of 22 years and 2 months.<sup>62</sup> However, it is possible that in Dubrovnik older noblewomen were more commonly chosen as godmothers than their peers from non-noble ranks.

As Alfani's analyses mainly concern the close of the sixteenth century, it is more appropriate to correlate them with the Dubrovnik godmotherhood data from virtually the same period.<sup>63</sup>

Out of the five women in the family of Vlaho Gundula who acted as godmothers, two were widows at the time of baptism, the age-gap between marriage and godmotherhood being somewhat higher (34 and 44 years), but with the other three women the age-gap (14, 6, 22 years) was not as short as Alfani established for Ivrea. However, it can be a pure coincidence that in the analysed cases none of the five Dubrovnik godmothers were freshly married and that none acted as godmother for the first time.

Table 4. Interval between woman's marriage and a traceable case of godmotherhood in Dubrovnik in mid-sixteenth century

Godmother	Year of marriage	Year of godmotherhood
dona Anisula de ser Pasqual Nicolo de Caboga	1501	1515
d. Orsula de q. ser Troian Lampre de Zrieva	1487	1521
d. Franusa de q. ser Bernardo Elia de Saracha	1478	1522
d. Cata de ser Dragoe Andrei de Chrose	1516	1522
d. Pera uxor de ser Nicolo Mar. Ben. de Gondola	1507	1529

<sup>60</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p.173.

<sup>61</sup> We should bear in mind that in calculating the average age of godmothers, we were unable to establish with accuracy whether they acted in this role for the first time.

<sup>62</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p. 172.

<sup>63</sup> *Privata*, series 19, vol. 4a, f. 261r-262v. Marriage years cited from N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika*, vol. 2 and 3.

The application of Alfani's thesis on godparenthood as the young girls' specific rite of passage is refuted in Dubrovnik by two eighteenth-century cases involving very young godmothers. At the age of twelve, Marija-Domenika Ghetaldi was the godmother to her own sister, Marija-Andela-Božica, and of nearly the same age was Tereza Basilio at her first godmotherhood.<sup>64</sup> Both girls had reached puberty (*in aetate pubertatis*), which the Church canons deemed mature enough for the role of godparent.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, among the nobility of Dubrovnik in the eighteenth century (and probably two centuries back) the woman's age at marriage did not correspond to that of godmotherhood.

### *Godparenthood and friendship: the centring of social networks*

In Dubrovnik of the eighteenth century only 18% of godparenthoods were kinship based (Graph 6), similar to the proportion established for the small town of Aubervilliers near Paris for the period 1552-1631<sup>66</sup> and the results of Dewight Middleton for contemporary Ecuador.<sup>67</sup> Considering that our sample is related to urban community, the choice of godparents outside the kin could mirror the prevalence of the nuclear type of family, with which kinship and affinal ties have lesser impact than in rural communities.

In our case, the nobility's declined vitality is also reflected in an increase in multiple godparenthood as compared to other social ranks. This, however, could also be an indicator of differentiation within the elite, considering that almost half of the prominent names tend to repeat. Hence Mato Lucijan Pozza was the godfather on three occasions during 1771, to the children outside his

<sup>64</sup> For information on the date of birth we are grateful to Nenad Vekarić.

<sup>65</sup> *Rituale Romanum*: p. 9. According to the Statute of Dubrovnik, men reached adult age at fourteen and women at twelve, which was in conformity with the regulations of the Roman Law. *The Statute of Dubrovnik of 1272*, ed. Nella Lonza. Dubrovnik: Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku, 2012: pp. 206-207.

<sup>66</sup> Camille Berteau, Vincent Gourdon and Isabelle Robin-Romero, »Godparenthood: driving local solidarity in Northern France in the Early Modern Era. The example of Aubervilliers families in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries«. *The History of the Family* 17/4 (2012): pp. 455-456. In some other communities of Italy and France, the proportion of kin-based godparents was smaller (ibidem). Overall, research is hampered by inability to accurately reconstruct kinship ties. Most authors have used isonymy (the method of surname congruance), the result of which is underregistration, since married aunts on both sides are omitted.

<sup>67</sup> Dewight R. Middleton, »Choice and Strategy in an Urban „compadrazgo“«. *American Ethnologist* 2/3 (1975): 466.

rank. Antun Nikola Čingrija, member of the *Antunini*, acted as godfather twice, while among the clergy, Luka Bjele was also the godfather at two baptisms. Multiple godparents can be traced among the commoners, too, the leading position being taken by Ilija Milošević who witnessed three baptisms. Among women, the situation is almost identical: the women who repeatedly acted as godmothers usually came from the patrician rank, as for example Veronika (Veća) Gozze b. Gradi, or the elite rank of *Antunini*, such as Jelena Čingrija, mother of the abovementioned Antun. In the cases when the same person was recurrently chosen for godparent it is perfectly clear that we cannot speak of genuine spiritual connection between the godchild and godparent, since such a relationship was not exclusive.

Assumingly, multiple godparents owe their repeated selection as witnesses to their personal charisma or strong personality. However, of even greater importance was their 'social capital' and the fact that they represented knots that tied different social threads. For Pierre Bourdieu 'social capital' is a distinct, permanent and more or less institutionalised network which provides individuals with the 'social credit' and 'profit' in the material and symbolic exchange. On individual basis, 'social capital', perpetually renewed and modified, is defined by the range of relationships it is able to mobilise and their benefit.<sup>68</sup> Through an institutionalised relationship of godparenthood, children's parents tried to take advantage of the 'social capital' that the person chosen as godparent has already amassed, and at the same time also to increase it, which makes this particular person a desirable candidate for other parents, too.

### *Vertical and horizontal godparenthood and inter-class relations*

With regard to accessibility and quantity, data related to the members of the nobility provides solid ground for a more detailed and more accurate analysis of the social relations established by means of godparenthood.<sup>69</sup>

With noble children, all the witnesses of baptism were, without exception, from the noble rank. The same is valid for the marriage witnesses of the

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<sup>68</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, »Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital«, in: *Soziale Ungleichheiten*, ed. Reinhard Kreckel. Göttingen: Otto Schartz, 1983: pp. 190-195.

<sup>69</sup> N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika*, vol. 1-5. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2011-2014. We are also indebted to the author for his assistance in tracing some kinship relationships that are not mentioned in the cited edition.

Table 5. The presence of patrician godfathers at the baptisms of children in the City Parish in 1770

Godfathers	Number of godfathers	Proportion (%)	Actually present at baptism	Proportion (%)
to nobility-born children	10	23.81	10	100
to Antunini-born children	3	7.14	3	100
to children of lower ranks	29	69.05	13	44.83
<i>Total</i>	42	100	26	61.90

godchildren's parents, as well as the marriage witnesses of the godparents themselves: not a single case outside the noble circle has been traced.<sup>70</sup> This, therefore, confirms extremely closed nature of Ragusan nobility.<sup>71</sup> An impact of the clear-cut clan division should also be taken into account, because all the ten godfathers belonged to the same clan as the parents.<sup>72</sup>

The group of godchildren whose parents came from the lower ranks is perhaps the most interesting, as it provides material for observing vertical interclass relationships established by means of godparenthood. Given that in the latter half of the eighteenth century these relationships could not have been established through marriage, baptism was one of the rare occasions that provided the frame for creating formal interclass social relationships. What was the nature of these relationships and what was the strategy behind them? How close were they?

A specific group of 15 cases can be singled out because it features the institution of proxy (*procurator*). Within discussion on baptismal gifts, the Council of Trent debated the issue of proxies,<sup>73</sup> and the *Roman Ritual* from 1614 offered the formularies for the case of substitution.<sup>74</sup> This practice is particularly interesting when it comes to establishing interclass relationships. Namely, if the godfather came from a higher rank than godchild's family, he was less motivated to personally attend the baptism. Considering that an extensive

<sup>70</sup> *Marriage Register of the City Parish (1729 – 1778)*. The original is housed at the Diocesan Archive of Dubrovnik, this research being based on digitised records from the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb.

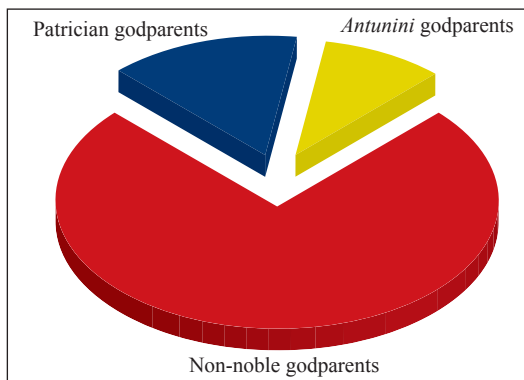
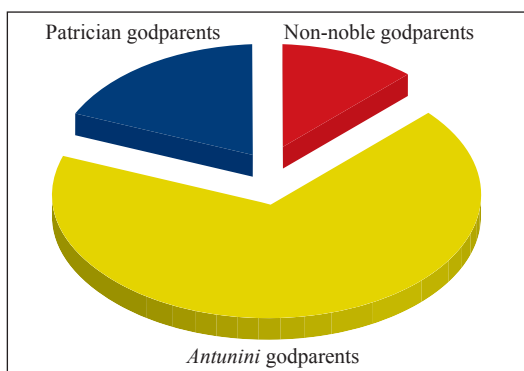
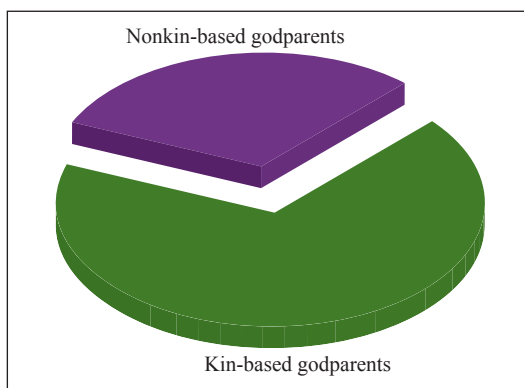
<sup>71</sup> For a more extensive account of the nobility's endogamic practice see N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika I*: pp. 149-151 et passim.

<sup>72</sup> N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika I*: p. 285.

<sup>73</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: p.74.

<sup>74</sup> *Rituale Romanum*: p. 347.

Graph 11. Class structure of godparents at baptism of non-noble children in the City Parish in 1770

Graph 12. Class structure of godparents at the baptism of *Antunini* children in the City Parish in 1770Graph 13. Proportion of kin-based godparents in the overall number of godparents at the baptism of *Antunini* children in the City Parish in 1770



collection of wills is available for Dubrovnik, we tried to elucidate the nature of the relationship between the godchild's family, godparents and their proxies.<sup>75</sup> This research failed to confirm our initial assumption that servants and ex-servants of the noble families chose their masters as godparents to their own children in order to honour them or secure their lasting favour and support.

The godparenthood network clearly delineates the nature of the *Antunini* as a citizen inter rank, which is vertically connected with both the upper and lower strata (Graph 12). *Antunini* show a mild tendency to choose godparents among the nobility due to the latter's social status and role, but it is noteworthy that godmothers were always kin-related to the godchild's mother, which thus excluded any interclass selection.

Unlike other social ranks, *Antunini* godparents show a marked gender-class discrepancy, since it was common for a godfather and godmother to come from different ranks. We have established four different combination groups: in 4 cases both godparents were *Antunini*, in one case both were patricians, in 2 cases godfather was *Antunin* and godmother a commoner, and in one case godfather was a nobleman, a godmother of the *Antunini*. Therefore, male godparenthood refers to horizontal, while female godparenthood to vertical component in the process of creating social networks (Graph 13).

At the baptism of noble and *Antunini* children, not a single (patrician) godfather resorted to representative, while at the baptism of non-noble children almost half of patrician godfathers did not attend the ritual itself. Most commonly appointed as their proxies were persons of lower ranks, with an exception of a certain Petar Lučić, soldier in Italy, who was represented by Tomo Basilio (Basiljević), aged 14 at the time. This interesting case testifies to the manner in which godparent proxies were selected. It is hardly likely that a common soldier appointed a patrician as legate, but the circumstances evidently spoke in favour of the young Tomo as a most appropriate solution, knowing that his sister Tereza was the godmother at the same baptism. This example indicates that proxies were chosen *ad hoc*. The Basilio example leads to a conclusion that the proxy was sought by the parents themselves, which shows how the social custom widened the traditional legal frame of representation.

At least some godfathers could not attend baptism due to their absence from the city on account of government duties. For example, Frano Ragnina and

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<sup>75</sup> *Testamenta notariae*, ser. 10.1, vol. 82-92, State Archives of Dubrovnik.

Marin Tudisi were dispatched to St Petersburg to negotiate with the Russian empress Catherine.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, in 70 cases in which godparents and godchildren came from the same non-noble ranks, the proportion of proxies was approximately 20%, while with the children who had patricians as godparents, this portion increased to almost 45%. Also, more than half of the non-noble proxies were in some way kin-related to the child's parents or to the godparents they represented, unlike the godparents from the noble rank. The latter simply appointed proxies as if it were a legal and not a personal matter. In sum, one may conclude that in choosing godparents, parents were guided by a strong desire to pick a specific person for the role, because they were ready to accept any proxy with whom they had no ties whatsoever.

The issue of godparent selection at the close of the eighteenth century still weighed significantly and was essential for attaining one's position within society, and in all likelihood, for most individuals was a practical means of creating social networks. It was not until the nobility's economic and biological decline, transition into civil society in the nineteenth century, and the consequential quiet secularisation of the Ragusan society that had a profound impact on the significance of godparent selection, as evident from a couple of previously mentioned examples from 1870.

### *Conclusion*

1. Although the parish registers of Dubrovnik for the period before the Council of Trent have not survived, a couple of personal records on baptism in the patrician families show that godparents were multiple, that men dominated in the role of godparent, that godparenthood was used to strengthen kinship ties and to create and broaden horizontal and vertical social networks. In terms of form and objective, the role of godparenthood as described here fully correlates with that in Italy and in other communities of Catholic South Europe of the same period.

2. The changes introduced by the Council of Trent had a strong effect on the practice of godparenthood in Dubrovnik, primarily by restricting the number of godparents, which directly reduced the potential of this institute in creating and consolidating social networks. The regulation governing godparent gender structure and the requirement for keeping baptismal parish registers were implemented in the Republic area with certain delay.

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<sup>76</sup> V. Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808*. II: p. 260.

3. Considering that according to canon law ‘emergence baptism’ was more essential than the post-performed ‘ritual baptism’, a record from 1770 testifies to a contrary practice, which—together with the preference of having children baptised on feast days—confirms baptism as a highly valued social act.

4. The practice of postponing baptism for a couple of days may be linked to the withdrawing fear of infant mortality, and interpreted, with some reserve, as one of the early indicators of the process of demographic transition.

5. As a rule, the baptisms of 1770 were witnessed by two godparents, while the ensuing hundred years saw a decline in the number of parents who considered godparenthood a useful means of establishing social networks, and some of them appointed only one godfather or godmother.

6. The selection of godparents in 1770 follows the pattern of gender symmetry, so that a godparent couple emulates ‘spiritual parenthood’. This characteristic gave way to the prevalence of godfathers in 1870/1.

7. The proportion of patricians among godparents in 1770 by far exceeds their share in society, but in the next hundred years this discrepancy melts as a consequence of social transformation marked by a new class framework.

8. The bulk of vertical networks based on godparenthood in the latter half of the eighteenth century is upwardly mobile—that is, godparents were chosen from a rank higher than that of the parents. With regard to commoners, a deviation from this pattern has been observed with the *Antunini* citizen elite, marked by horizontal godparenthood network.

9. Kinship-based godparenthood was typical of the nobility, probably because of an established high degree of kin bonding in a class at its demographic decay, and because of the possible marriage impediments implied by godparenthood. The nobility chose godmothers among the mother’s kin, and godfathers among the father’s kin, so as to honour both parental lines.

10. Unlike the nobility and the *Antunini*, non-nobles less commonly chose godparents among the kin, but tended to use godparenthood for establishing new social networks and for securing better position in the community.

11. Because of the idea of ‘spiritual parenthood’, the choice of godchild’s aunts and uncles and their spouses was more common than choosing godchild’s grandparents as godparents.

12. Unlike Guido Alfani’s results for the city of Ivrea, in Dubrovnik the assumption of godmother’s role cannot be interpreted as the woman’s initiation

into adulthood. In accordance with canon law, Ragusan girls in their puberty were known to act as godmothers at baptism.

13. Among godparents, we find certain individuals—patricians and commoners—who repeatedly acted in this role, and were considered a desirable choice because of their ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu). They may also have functioned as knots connecting different social networks into a wider system.

14. Patrician godparents to non-noble children were frequently absent from the ritual of baptism, and had proxies acting on their behalf instead, which points to a vaguely articulated personal and spiritual character of this relationship. With horizontal godparenthood, in which parents and godfather were equal, the representations of this kind were even rarer. From the selection of the proxies, we may grasp that—contrary to the idea of representation—an essential role was played by the parents.

15. The study of godparenthood in Dubrovnik in 1770 has not only brought to light the mechanisms of the establishment and cementing social networks, but has helped identify persons with a notable ‘social capital’, which may not necessarily relate to status or the gender-determined role in society.

Translated by Vesna Baće