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## **SPIRITUAL KINSHIP ON THE ISLAND OF LASTOVO IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**MARKO RAŠICA AND LJILJANA MARKS**

**ABSTRACT:** Over the past centuries, the island of Lastovo was a closed and isolated community in which the institution of godparenthood played a cohesive role. Based on the fieldwork conducted in September 2015, this article investigates and analyses spiritual kinship on the island of Lastovo in the nineteenth and twentieth century in terms of the choice of godparent, confirmation sponsor and marriage witness as well as the role of godparenthood in everyday life. The analysis reveals that lower natality, pursuit of education outside the island and depopulation had a greater impact on the centuries-old type of the institution of godparenthood and the social role of godparents than the island's isolation due to the permanently stationed military troops.

*Key words:* Lastovo, spiritual kinship, 19th and 20th century, social networks, customs, baptism, confirmation, marriage, fieldwork, demographic changes

### *Introduction*

The study of spiritual kinship,<sup>1</sup> alongside the customs, social networks and family ties relevant to it, aids in the understanding of the historical context of

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike English, which distinguishes three witnessing roles—(1) godparenthood at baptism, (2) sponsorship at confirmation, and (3) witnessing at either Church or secular marriage—Croatian term *kumstvo* embraces all the mentioned meanings.

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**Marko Rašica, student of the History of Population doctoral programme of the University of Dubrovnik. Address: Put dragovoljaca domovinskog rata 105, 20207 Mlini, Croatia. E-mail: [marko.rasica@gmail.com](mailto:marko.rasica@gmail.com)**

**Ljiljana Marks, member of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research. Address: Šubićeva 42, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia. E-mail: [marks@ief.hr](mailto:marks@ief.hr)**

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everyday life in a specific time and space. Therefore, modern historiography tends to give more prominence to this topic either by analysing parish registers or by using other methods and approaches.<sup>2</sup>

Fieldwork entitled “Spiritual Kinship on the Island of Lastovo” was conducted within a broader research project *Social trends and networks based on the analysis of parish registers and notary records* carried out at the doctoral programme History of the Population of the University of Dubrovnik. The aim of this field investigation was to establish the application of the institution of godparenthood and its practice on the island by the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, choice of godparents/witnesses and the significance of this type of relationship in everyday life on the basis of face-to-face interviews given mainly by the elderly locals. The time frame of the research was essentially governed by the informants’ memories of their own godparents, transmitted memories of their parents, and observations of the current practice in which they no longer actively participate.

The community of Lastovo differs from other island communities of the broader Dubrovnik area because from the end of WW II to 1988 it served as a military base of the Yugoslav National Army, and as such fell victim to many restrictions (e.g. forbidden access to foreigners), which further added to its remoteness and lack of transport connections. On the other hand, the fact that the island remained encapsulated, challenged the investigators to establish whether, as compared to other communities, certain customs related to godparenthood experienced less change, whether they tend to be more immersed in tradition, whether physical isolation knitted this community even closer, and, not less importantly, how the permanently stationed military troops

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<sup>2</sup> Spiritual kinship and its importance has been extensively discussed, yet here we single out: Helen Rose Ebaugh and Mary Curry, »Fictive Kin and Social Capital in New Immigrant Communities«. *Sociological Perspectives* 43/2 (2000): pp. 189-209; Guido Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers. Spiritual Kinship in Early-Modern Italy*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009; Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon, *Spiritual Kinship in Europe, 1500-1900*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012; Guido Alfani, Vincent Gourdon and Agnese Vitali, »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; Rina Kralj-Brassard, Irena Ipšić and Ivana Lazarević, »Godparents Network of the Dubrovnik Foundlings (17th-19th centuries)«. *Annales de démographie historique* 130/2 (2015): pp. 161-185; Vedran Stojanović and Nella Lonza, »Godparenthood in eighteenth-century Dubrovnik: children, parents and godparents as knots of social networks«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 19 (2015): pp. 71-98; Ariana Violić Koprivec and Nenad Vekarić, »Krsni i vjenčani kumovi katolika u Dubrovniku (1870-1871)«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 54/2 (2016): pp. 327-370.

influenced the practice of godparenthood and witnessing. This research also aimed to establish whether the demographic changes of the last few decades as well as depopulation contributed to the change of the social importance of godparents as it used to be in the past. In order to place the institution of godparenthood into a specific context, the investigation included customs pertaining to baptism, confirmation, marriage, along with other important events in the life of an individual, family and island community.

*Geographical, economic and social context of the island of Lastovo from the nineteenth century to the present*

As part of the southern Dalmatian archipelago, the island of Lastovo lies south of the island of Korčula, from which it is separated by the Lastovo Channel at a varying distance from 13 to 20 km. Lastovo lies 94 km from Split on the mainland, 57 km from the island of Vis, and 31 km from the island of Mljet. It occupies 3% of the territory of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County, contributing to its population with merely 0.67%.<sup>3</sup> According to the census of 2011, the island of Lastovo had 792 inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> Although part of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County in terms of territorial administration, Lastovo gravitates towards Split rather than Dubrovnik, its administrative centre. The Municipality of Lastovo comprises seven settlements and islets (Glavat, Lastovo, Pasadur, Skrivena Luka, Sušac, Uble and Zaklopatica). The settlement of Lastovo is the island's administrative centre,<sup>5</sup> located along the northern border of Lastovsko Polje on the north-east side of the island.

Throughout history,<sup>6</sup> the island of Lastovo had an important strategic role on the busy sea routes, but also learnt to cope with the consequences of its remoteness and isolation. In the mid-thirteenth century, most probably, the men of Lastovo “willingly accepted the rule of Dubrovnik”,<sup>7</sup> and remained part of

<sup>3</sup> »Prostorni plan uređenja Općine Lastovo«, *Službeni glasnik Općine Lastovo* 1 (2010): p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Statistički ljetopis Republike Hrvatske 2014.*, Državni zavod za statistiku (Croatian Bureau of Statistics; hereafter: DZS), www.dzs.hr.

<sup>5</sup> »Prostorni plan uređenja Općine Lastovo«: p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Considering the period covered by this field research, emphasis has primarily been placed on the history of the Lastovo island from the start of the nineteenth century to the present. For a more detailed survey of the island's history in the earlier periods see Josip Lučić »Iz srednjovjekovne prošlosti otoka Lastova«, *Radovi Instituta za hrvatsku povijest* 6 (1974): pp. 5-51.

<sup>7</sup> J. Lučić, »Iz srednjovjekovne prošlosti otoka Lastova«: p. 7.

the Dubrovnik Republic until its fall in 1808.<sup>8</sup> After short-lasting French, Austrian, and English rule, under the terms of the Congress of Vienna in 1815<sup>9</sup> the island became recognised as part of the Habsburg Dalmatia until the end of World War I. According to the data from that period, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the island had only 945 inhabitants living in 184 households.<sup>10</sup>

According to the Austrian census of 1910, the island of Lastovo had 292 households and 1,417 inhabitants, women mostly.<sup>11</sup> The population was mainly engaged in agriculture (wine and olive growing, as well as Mediterranean fruits), cattle breeding and fishing (sardines in particular). The settlement of Lastovo, inhabited by the majority of island's population, was the seat of the parish, with a customs and post office, health agency within the port authority and a three-year public school,<sup>12</sup> yet the shortage of water, lack of medical care and connection with other islands and mainland greatly determined Lastovo's poor development and reliance on its own sources.

The political aftermath of WW I also reached the shores of Lastovo, and by the Treaty of Rapallo with the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the island was ceded to Italy in 1920. Political measures aimed at development and Italianisation between the two World Wars led to the island's economic prosperity and positive demographic trends (by 1948 the population of Lastovo rose by 22.65%).<sup>13</sup> With

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<sup>8</sup> A demographic and genealogical breakdown of all Lastovo families since 1272 has been given in Antun Jurica and Nenad Vekarić, *Lastovski rodovi*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Stjepan Čosić, *Dubrovnik nakon pada Republike*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1999: pp. 111-131.

<sup>10</sup> For more details see: Stanko Piplović, »Prilike na otoku Lastovu u XIX. stoljeću«. *Rad Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru* 49 (2007): p. 450, as well as Josip Lučić, »Prilike na Lastovu početkom 1808.«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 30 (1992): p. 192.

<sup>11</sup> According to Stanko Piplović, in administrative terms the island was related to Dubrovnik in the first half of the nineteenth century, and in the latter half of the century to Korčula. He cites that in 1869 this territory was inhabited by 1,042 people, with a modest increase to 1,050 inhabitants in 1880. Virtually all inhabitants lived in the only settlement that existed on the island – today's settlement of Lastovo. By 1900, the number of inhabitants rose to 1,384. S. Piplović, »Prilike na otoku Lastovu u XIX. stoljeću«: 452.

<sup>12</sup> S. Piplović, »Prilike na otoku Lastovu u XIX. stoljeću«: 449.

<sup>13</sup> This percentage was established by comparing the official data based on the 1910 census (total of 1,417 inhabitants) and the 1948 census (total of 1,738 inhabitants), when Lastovo witnessed the largest population ever recorded by census enumerations. *Naselja i stanovništvo RH 1857.-2001.* (www.dzs.hr)

the capitulation of Italy in 1943, the Italian residents left the island, and by the decision of the Executive Committee of ZAVNOH (State Antifascist Council of the National Liberation of Croatia) of September 1943, Lastovo was reclaimed together with some other Croatian territories that were under Italian rule between the two World Wars (Istria, Rijeka, Zadar, Cres and some Adriatic islands).<sup>14</sup> In legal terms, however, it was not until the Treaty of Paris in 1947 that the island of Lastovo, within Croatia, was recognised as part of Yugoslavia.<sup>15</sup>

After World War II, Lastovo served as a military base to which foreign visitors were forbidden access. The fact that this restriction remained in effect until 1988 speaks eloquently of the island's poor demographic and economic prospects, but also of the preservation of its natural resources and tradition.<sup>16</sup> The Lastovo archipelago consists of 44 islands, islets and reefs, and thanks to its preservation, beauty of the landscape, biological diversity and other features in 2006 it was officially proclaimed as an eleventh Nature Park in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>17</sup> Only recently has the island started to develop as a tourist destination, yet depopulation and economic stagnation are still at work despite the efforts of the local authorities towards improvement.

### *The practice of spiritual kinship on the island of Lastovo as evidenced in earlier sources*

Early records pertaining to godparenthood on the island of Lastovo may be traced in Chapter 74 of the Lastovo Statute from 1449,<sup>18</sup> by which valid marriage may be contracted once it is established that there are no impediments due to consanguinity, or affinity or due to godfatherhood of those intending to enter

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<sup>14</sup> *Istarska enciklopedija*, ed. Miroslav Bertoša and Robert Matijašić. Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2008 (<http://istra.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=3088>, accessed in January 2016).

<sup>15</sup> *Hrvatska enciklopedija*, ed. Slaven Ravlić. Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013-2015. (<http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=46710>, accessed in January 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Stjepka Popović. »Obilježja zdravstvene zaštite na otoku Lastovu«. *Amalgam – časopis studenata sociologije* 5 (2011): p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ministarstvo zaštite okoliša i prirode, Uprava za zaštitu prirode* (<http://www.zastita-prirode.hr/Zasticena-priroda/Zasticena-podrucja/Parkovi-prirode/Park-prirode-Lastovsko-otocje>, 2011, accessed in January 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Lastovo Statute dates from 1310, whereas the provision regulating godfatherhood which is of relevance to this research was added in 1449.

into marriage.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, spiritual kinship was considered an impediment to marriage, conform to the teaching of the Catholic Church.<sup>20</sup>

Written evidence on godparenthoods on the island of Lastovo in the nineteenth century may be found in Baltazar Bogišić's *Zbornik sadašnjih pravnih običaja u južnih Slovena* from 1874.<sup>21</sup> Among other issues, this work provides a parallel survey of the customs pertaining to spiritual kinship by giving answers to a questionnaire.

The answers on the practice of the island of Lastovo were given by Melko Lucianović, who in 1869 was studying philology in Vienna.<sup>22</sup> We thus learn that *kumstvo* on the island of Lastovo at the time was still viewed as 'spiritual kinship' and represented an impediment to marriage, and that the people distinguished "three types of *kumstvo*, i.e. at baptism, confirmation and marriage". According to Lucianović, through *kumstvo* "a closer friendship and spiritual kinship is established between *kumovi*" than through brotherhood.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> „... et non siando ditto alcun opposito de consanguinità, overo affinità, ò de comaternità...“: *Libro delli ordinamenti e delle usanze della universitade et dello commun della isola de Lagusta*, ed. Frano Radić [Monumenta historico-juridica Slavorum meridionalium, VIII]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1901: p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> G. Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers*: pp. 17, 21 et passim.

<sup>21</sup> As an exponent of the historical school of jurisprudence, in this work Bogišić aimed to encompass the contemporary legal customs of Thrace, Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Banat, Srijem, Slavonia, Croatia and other lands. This work gave much rise to criticism and controversy, in which Bogišić himself also participated. Bogišić also distinguished himself as creator of the General Property Code of Montenegro, in which he codified many popular sayings and customs. For more on this see: *Bogišić i kultura sjećanja. Zbornik radova znanstvenog skupa s međunarodnim sudjelovanjem održanog u prigodi stote godišnjice smrti Balda Bogišića*, ed. Josip Kregar et al. Zagreb: Pravni fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu and Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Melko (Melkior) Lucianović (Lastovo, 30 November 1844 – Lastovo, 14 February 1929), has earned his place in cultural history as a publicist, literary historian and folklorist. He recorded folk songs on the island of Lastovo and other data concerning popular life and customs, among which is the first detailed description of the Lastovo *poklade* (carnival) from 1877, filed at the Bogišić's Library in Cavtat (IEF Ms. 189, vol. II, pp. 287-290).

<sup>23</sup> Baltazar Bogišić, *Zbornik sadašnjih pravnih običaja u južnih Slovena*. Zagreb: JAZU, 1874: p. LI, 205-206, 385-388.

*Field research and methodological guidelines*

Field investigation was conducted on 11 September 2015 in the settlement of Lastovo where 14 people were selected to be interviewed, who on the basis of their memories and long life experience were to provide the material that could be used as a representative data sample.

Based on literature and available results of the previous field investigations carried out on the island of Lastovo, Ljiljana Marks has delineated the content area with a list of topics and questions that would guide the research groups towards the project goal. The questions concerned the choice of godparent, sponsor and marriage witness, importance of godparenthood, godparenthood relationship, unusual godparenthoods; family attitude to godparenthood and godchild—godparenthood relationship; possible impact of politics on the selection of godparent and the role of godparent in customs.

Each research group, consisting of one or more PhD students and mentors, interviewed and sound recorded the reports of one or two informants, sometimes joined by other family members present at the spot.<sup>24</sup> Providing record of the informants' personal names and vital data, their direct words and not only the researcher's interpretation are among the basic methods of ethnological and folkloristic research, with due respect to the privacy of the informants' personal data if and when they required protection. In this case study, the informants gave explicit permission regarding the publication of their full personal data, in which case the ethic rules of privacy and anonymity have not been violated.

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<sup>24</sup> Interviewee Antun Jurica (born 1923), a physician and author of works on local history, interviewers doctoral students Lada Lozančić and Natalia Varnakova, mentor Nenad Vekarić; interviewee Lucije Ivelja nicknamed Pece (born 1932), interviewer doctoral student Marija Radonić, mentors Nella Lonza and Marina Gjurašić; interviewees Kata Škratulja (born 1937) and Mato Škratulja (born 1928), interviewers doctoral students Sanja Lozančić and Ankica Džono-Boban, mentor Jasna Čapo; interviewees Marino Rino Sangaletti (born 1933) and Magdalena Sangaletti (born 1939), interviewers doctoral students Ariana Violić-Koprivec and Ahmet Kalajdžić, mentor Štefica Curić Lenert. Interviewees Marija born Šantić married Glumac (born 1933) and Tonko (Kuzma) Glumac (born 1929) nicknamed Kaštro, interviewer doctoral student Antun Car, mentor Rina Kralj-Brassard; interviewees Marija Kučarić (born 1929) and Ivo Kučarić (born 1928), interviewers doctoral students Daria Vučijević and Vedran Stojanović, mentor Ljiljana Marks; interviewee Kata Karlović (born 1934), interviewer doctoral student Lucija Komaić, mentor Irena Ipšić; interviewee Anica Glumac (born 1941), interviewers doctoral students Sanja Krželj and Marko Rašica, mentor Ivana Lazarević; interviewee Lucija Đivoje (born 1938) and Bartol Đivoje (born 1965), interviewers doctoral students Sandra Šutalo and Radoslav Zaradić, mentor Marinko Marić. The research was conducted by Nenad Vekarić and Nella Lonza, Jasna Čapo as consultant, and coordinated on the site by Brigita Masle Dražinić. We are grateful to all mentors and doctoral students.



Fieldwork and interviews are always something of a research adventure. We embark upon investigation armed with our assumptions and expectations, yet we do not know what actually lies ahead to be discovered, and where exactly it will take us. Lastovo field research was prepared excellently beforehand, given that its organisation rested also on the local people, the insiders. The theme was merely suggested to them and announced in outlines, and hence the field notes mainly reveal what the informants found to be most striking in the interviews on godparenthood, what was most deeply stamped on their memory, what were their first and most vivid collections. We witnessed spontaneous evocation of shared episodes (involving two or more informants), even those not directly linked to the institution of godparenthood but to Lastovo's past (entertainment, social gatherings, carnival, etc.). We seem to have brought some change into their everyday life and have shown how much their lives are important. We kindly thank all informants who hosted the doctoral students and their mentors in their homes, and contributed with their stories to this project. Their hospitality and openness added to mutual trust, so that the interviewers were able to obtain spontaneous, and hopefully sincere answers to the informants' attitudes, feelings and memories.<sup>25</sup>

In our text, these informants are given the voice of author because in ethnographic and folkloristic research it is important who the speaker is, which explains the many quoted statements. Our aim was to present similar and at the same time differently shaped, toned and accentuated personal reports and that they in their own right provide a general, and further, a more individual picture of godparenthoods on the island of Lastovo without our personal interventions and interpretations. Sometimes, they happen to be mere remarks, brief comments, sketches, or even well-grounded rhetorically elaborated personal stories, since some of the informants were given such a chance for the first time in their life, though within a given theme, yet framed by unique and exceptionally important life events (wedding, baptism of children, family relationships). We decided not to enter the research or conceptual views from the previous field investigations or literature on spiritual kinship into the observations of the

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<sup>25</sup> Lastovo being the first field investigation of the majority of these doctoral students, they were previously given detailed instructions on the research theme so that their personal behaviour, approach to the informants as well as the course of the interview could in no way contaminate the interviewees' credibility or opinion.



reports, so as not to walk into a trap of writing down our aspirations instead of actual facts. We are fully aware of the challenging position of having to find a scientific standpoint which should, at the same time, preserve the character of an 'intimate view' and be an unbiased report.<sup>26</sup> Previous research results proved necessary for the purpose of comparison and conclusion.

In our argumentation of the data sample representation, we should first draw attention to the population structure of the island of Lastovo, age of informants, as well as the time frame of this research. Depopulation of Lastovo was particularly accentuated in the period between 1948 and the most recent census of 2011.<sup>27</sup> Given the fact that the island of Lastovo during Yugoslavia had its share of military history and as such took no part in the development of tourism, it was an evident reason for its economic stagnation. Following the democratic changes in 1991, the bulk of the population left the island together with the members of the ex-Yugoslavian National Army and their families (there were interethnic marriages between local women and soldiers). In the census period 1991-2001 the overall population dropped by 14.39%.<sup>28</sup> For example, according to the census of 1948, the settlement of Lastovo had 1,562 inhabitants, only to drop to 350 in 2011,<sup>29</sup> a decrease by 77.6%. The shrinking of population and the changes that accompanied it influenced the lives of the remaining islanders, including the informants who draw their descent from Lastovo and inhabit it permanently, or at least much of the year.<sup>30</sup> Further, out of the enumerated 792 inhabitants of the island of Lastovo, 228 inhabitants are 60 years of age and above,<sup>31</sup> 174 inhabitants are 65 and above, 87 inhabitants are 75 and above (Graph 1).

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<sup>26</sup> Kliford Gerc (orig.: Clifford Geertz), *Antropolog kao pisac*. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2010: p. 19. For more on problems of modern field research and a specific manifold responsibility of the investigator with regard to both research and theme, see in the collected papers *Etnologija bliskoga. Poetika i politika suvremenih terenskih istraživanja*, ed. Jasna Čapo Žmegač, Valentina Gulin Zrnić and Goran Pavel Šantek. Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku and Naklada Jesenski Turk, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> *Kretanje broja stanovnika 1857.-2011.*, DSZ.

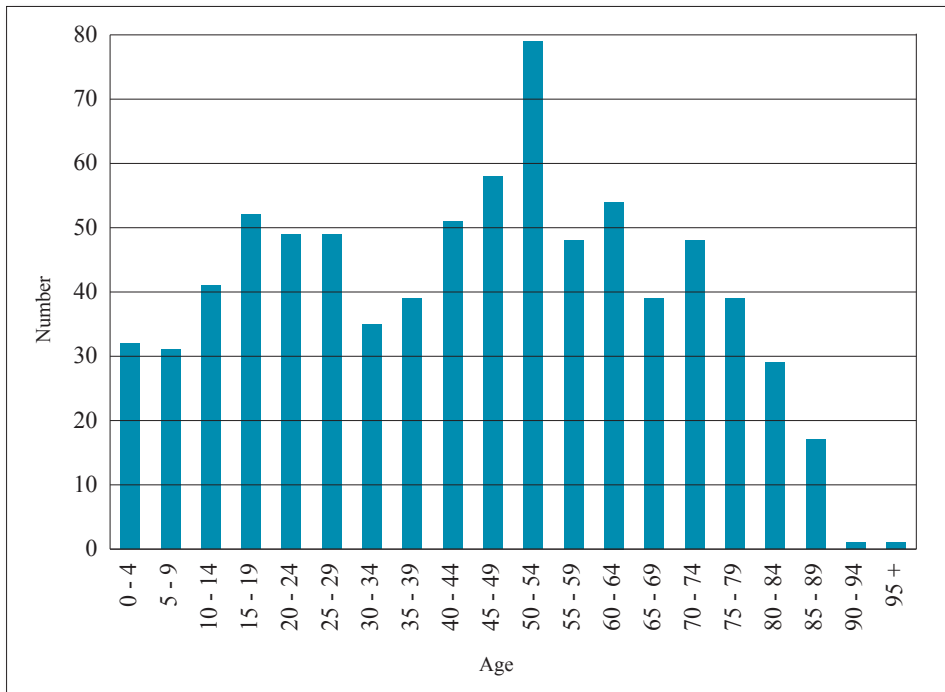
<sup>28</sup> S. Popović, »Obilježja zdravstvene zaštite na otoku Lastovu«: pp. 5-28.

<sup>29</sup> *Kretanje broja stanovnika 1857.-2011.*, DSZ.

<sup>30</sup> Several informants (Marin Rino Sangaletti, Magdalena Sangaletti and Kata Karlović) spend part of the year abroad.

<sup>31</sup> Age of population as cited by the census of 2011 is based on the age status of 31 March 2011. *Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2011. godine* (<http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/censuses/census2011/results/censusmetod.htm>, accessed in December 2015)

Graph 1. Population of the island of Lastovo by age structure, census of 2011

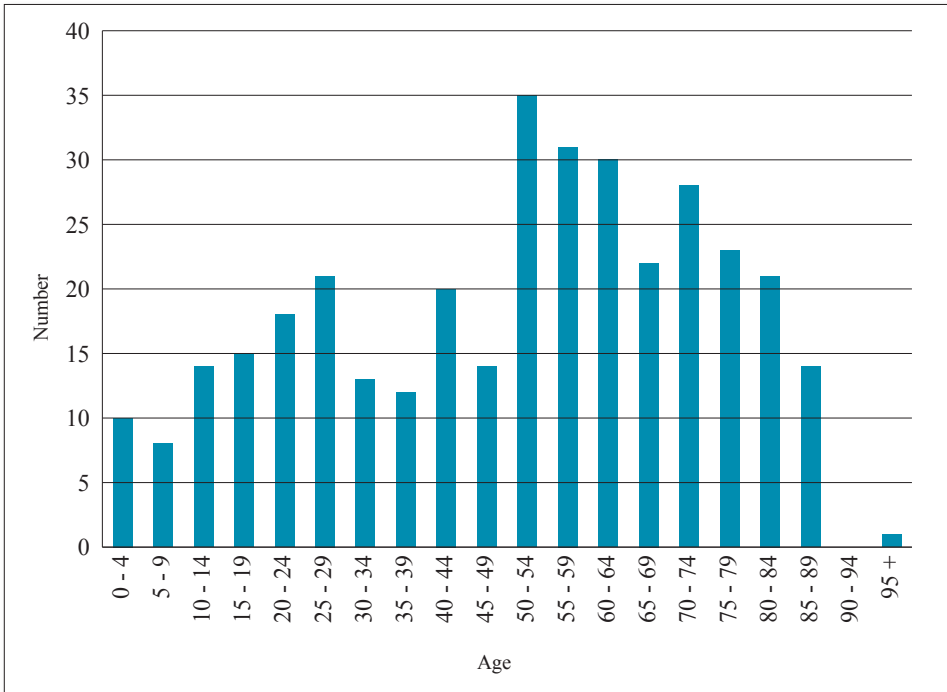


Source: *Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2011*, Statistical Report no. 1468 – Stanovništvo prema spolu i starosti: p. 80 ([www.dzs.hr](http://www.dzs.hr), accessed December 2015).

In the settlement of Lastovo itself, the residence of our informants, out of the enumerated 350 inhabitants as many as 87 are above 70 years of age (see Graph 2). These data are important because out of fourteen informants, thirteen were above the age of 70 in 2011, while in 2015, when this research was carried out, twelve were above the age of 75. The informants constitute a representative data sample of 7.5% of the island's population of 65 years of age and older. They also constitute 15% of the population of the island's urban centre above the age of 70.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Calculation is based on statistical data from 2011. Four years later, in 2015, when the research was conducted, the portion in the overall number of inhabitants may have changed and thus increased the representative sample. Namely, according to the accessible data published by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics on the population trends from 2010 to 2013, on the island of Lastovo 10 births were registered, and 11 deaths in 2010; in 2011, 4 births, and 9 deaths; in 2012, 6 births and 12 deaths, while in 2013, 8 births, and 10 deaths, which clearly confirms the continuing depopulation trend on the island (DZS, *Prirodno kretanje stanovništva RH – privremeni podaci*, 2010-2013).

Graph 2. Population of the settlement of Lastovo by age structure, census of 2011



Source: *Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2011*, Statistical Report no. 1468 – Stanovništvo prema spolu i starosti: p. 649 ([www.dzs.hr](http://www.dzs.hr), accessed December 2015).

Indeed, the elderly portion of Lastovo's population is the target group of this theme research since their own life experience, respectable age and long time memories bear witness not only to their own lives but also to the customs of their parents born and living in the twentieth century, as well as to those of their children and grandchildren of the turn of the twentieth century. The information thus spans a longer time period marked by various historical, economic and social influences.

### *The choice of witnesses*

In the analysis of the results regarding the choice of witnesses, one should distinguish the role of godparent at baptism, the role of witness at confirmation (confirmation sponsor) and/or witness at marriage. According to the rituals of

the Catholic Church,<sup>33</sup> the mentioned three sacraments are *sacramenta maiora*,<sup>34</sup> and require the presence of witnesses.

## 1. Baptism

According to the informant reports, at the beginning of the twentieth century it was customary for a child to be baptised in the presence of two godparents. At first, they were both male, and later one of each sex. Godparent was chosen among kin and friends. Witness at marriage was also usually chosen as godparent to the first-born child in that marriage. Informant Antun Jurica claims the following:

For the first born child, the person witnessing marriage was also the child's godfather, regardless of the child's sex. Marriage witness was already a very important person, and he, de facto, witness at marriage, male or female ... was the godparent to the first-born child in marriage. Therefore, if a person was a marriage witness, his chances of being the child's godfather were ninety-nine and nine percent. A double bond was created: with the child's parents and the child.

Anica Glumac also states that “when your first child is born—my daughter was born first—you can choose a godfather either from your side or that of your husband. I chose my brother as my marriage witness and my daughter's godfather ... yet nowadays there can be five people, things are changing”. Asked whether her marriage witnesses were also her children's godparents, Lucija Đivoje responded affirmatively: “Yes, to my daughter. ... Then it was customary for the marriage witnesses to godparent your first-born child”. Lucija Ivelja Pece confirms that the first child's godparents witnessed the marriage of the parents. The choice of godparent to other children rested on the parents. Godparent was most commonly selected at the suggestion of the father- and mother-in-law.

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<sup>33</sup> According to the census of 2011, 89.5% of the population of the island of Lastovo declared themselves as Catholics. Of 792 inhabitants of the Lastovo island, which constitutes the administrative municipality of Lastovo, 709 declared themselves as Catholics, 9 as Orthodox, 11 as Moslems, 1 adherent of Asian religion, 3 agnostics and sceptics, 24 declared themselves as non-religious or atheists, and 35 did not declare themselves. *Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2011*, Statistical Report no. 1469 – Stanovništvo prema državljanstvu, narodnosti, vjeri i materinjskom jeziku: p. 130 (www.dzs.hr, accessed December 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Christian sacraments may be classified as *sacramenta maiora* or major sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Communion, Repentance, Anointing the Sick, Matrimony and Ordination) and *sacramenta minora* or minor sacraments or blessings.

Marija Kučarić remembers her godparents: “It was my mother’s brother, and godmother was my father’s sister”. She and her husband Ivo Kučarić also chose their marriage witnesses to act as godparents to their first-born child.

It was not common to honour the godfather by naming his godchild after him. Tonko Glumac quotes: “First child was named after his grandmother or grandfather on the father’s side, and then from that of the mother. Godfather’s name may have been given randomly”. Marija and Ivo Kučarić also state: “You had to give the mother’s name. First child was named after the mother if a girl, and if a boy, after the father on the husband’s side. In that way it was possible to trace the relations in the family. In that way one could know the name of his parents”. Kata Karlović, too, links godparenthoods to the traditional naming patterns, but not in the sense of ‘honouring the godparent’:

My godmother was my uncle’s wife, also kin. She lived here, and godfather was this neighbour living next to us. He was good with my dad. I am the first child. My mother’s marriage witness was this man known as Gude, they lived here. He was then my godfather at baptism, and godmother was the wife of my father’s brother. That’s how it was. My mom gave birth to eight children, all by the rules. You had to bear your grandmother’s name, mainly. First child is named after the husband’s mother, if female, or husband’s father, if male. Third child? After my father or then after my mother, later after whomever, but also from the family. This no longer is the case. But I have named my children in this way. I have been named after my grandmother and I also appreciate it. They are dead, but the names of my father and mother are known.

Lucija Ivelja Pece also confirms the pattern by which sons were named after the grandparents from the father’s or mother’s side, and daughters after those of the grandmothers.

Therefore, this naming pattern, as seen from the reports, opens an emotional niche towards one’s own ancestors who are usually no longer living, yet are present in the memories and their names. The informants confirm examples of families who exchanged godparenthoods, referring to each other as *kumpari* or *kumovi*.

The oldest narrator, Antun Jurica, mentions two men as witnesses, in harmony with the report given earlier by Marija and Tonko Glumac: “At marriage, there were two witnesses, two men ... since two male witnesses were at marriage,

and both these male witnesses were also godfathers at the first child's baptism". Other informants, apart from drawing attention to kinship ties (*svojta*), mainly speak of the godmother and godfather. Lucija Đivoje, maiden name Sangaletti, quotes that it was possible for the girls to have a godfather at baptism, but according to her knowledge "men were commonly godfathers to boys, and women godmothers to girls". Kata and Mate Škratulja testify that on Lastovo "godparent was chosen ... among friends and kin. Baptism was held immediately upon birth".<sup>35</sup>

Lucija Ivelja Pece states that "in the old days" public baptisms were performed by the baptismal font, then at the main altar, and nowadays again by the font left of the main entrance to the Church of SS Cosmas and Damian. According to Marija and Ivan Kučarić, children were baptised on Sundays during the High Mass at noon, and only rarely during the evening mass, which confirms the importance and celebration of this act for the community. The ritual of baptism has always been additionally accentuated by solemn dress of all those attending it. The main role was played by the godparents, who took upon themselves to act as the child's natural parents when the latter were not present in the church. Most commonly being from the same family, they also represented those members who did not attend the ceremony. Lucija Ivelja Pece, too, stresses that the church baptism is attended by the godparents with the child, while the parents stay at home and prepare lunch. The child is carried by a midwife at godfather's expense. In Lastovo it was simply uncommon for the mother to go to the church, even if baptism was held after the lying-in. The reports fail to correspond on the issue whether the father attended baptism or not. However, there were no particular reasons or impediments for the father not to attend the child's baptism at church, and we are thus inclined towards the reports that confirm it.

It is quite indicative that mothers did not attend the actual ritual of baptism performed in the church. Marija Kučarić states: "No. It was not customary here to go". Despite forced displacement to Italy, Magdalena Sangaletti has not given up the Lastovo custom: "I wasn't at church because it's not customary for the woman to go to church within 40 days from childbirth and she was carried

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<sup>35</sup> Until the nineteenth century children in the Catholic states of Europe were baptised immediately upon birth, although with time the number of those baptised until the first birthday or later tended to increase. For instance, in 2008 the portion of Catholic baptisms of children above the age of seven was 1.1% in Italy, 2.6% in Spain, and 6.3% in France. For more on this: G. Alfani, V. Gourdon and A. Vitali, »Social Customs and Demographic Change «: p. 485.

there by her father and godmother. Our son, too, was baptised in that way at the Church of St Peter in Milan, I waited for all them at home". Anica Glumac confirms this practice on Lastovo: "...upon 40 days you could baptise the child!" The mentioned rule of 40 days from childbirth—which corresponds to the medical and custom-based six-week *babinje* or lying-in term, but also to the period when a woman was believed to be 'unclean'—was not applied in case of emergency. "At home anyone could baptise the child, without the priest, only to save his soul", reports Marija Kučarić. Kata Karlović had a situation such as this: "The child's godmother was the woman who assisted in labour, it's not common, but she insisted because I had a difficult childbirth at home, up there in that house by the church, where my husband was. She then came and took it to be baptised". Lucija Ivelja Pece also states that in case of illness or imminent death "anyone" could baptise the child, and such baptism was considered valid. The sister of this informant gave birth to a weak child which was baptised by another sister.

The role of midwives is intriguing. "In the beginning the midwife carried the child. At times there were three baptisms". They were rewarded by the godfather "plentifully" (*dobre ruke*), as emphasised by Marija Kučarić, who continues: "Nowadays they all go to Split, but in the old days childbirth was at home. There were two midwives. She would be called upon during the night, and she arrived and she had to take the child to be baptised. ... Whenever she went to baptism, she would ask who the godfather was. She was always concerned about the godfathers' standing. Who would reward her". As implied from these reports, midwives were rewarded upon childbirth but also for the baptism. Kata Karlović, however, reports:

A woman was not allowed to go to church within 40 days from birth and the baptism was held once this term had elapsed. I think that my mother also had me baptised upon 40 days, she always used to say that you are not to go to church until you are "clean", that's what she said. Then the priest comes to your door, gives you blessing and leads you into the church. I had my little son baptised in the same way, exactly on the fortieth day. Two godfathers need to be present, and a girl of the kin to carry a tray. Mine was made of silver. ... And that girl carried the tray, I have a photo. Then you put cotton wool on it, salt and what you have to give to the priest, some money. And that child accompanies the godfather to church, carrying that. And then he takes all he needs, not from the church, but from that tray.



According to Lucija Ivelja Pece, the contents of the tray prepared for baptism included cotton wool and grains of salt; cotton wool was used to wipe the oil, while a grain of salt was placed “under the tongue”.

Marija Kučarić also mentions the tray (*gvantijera*) and claims that no money was given to the priest in the old days, neither by godparents or parents. She quotes: “The tray was carried for baptism. On the tray there was a candle, some money—as much as you could afford and two or three biscuits and some salt. And the money on the tray was intended for my father”. Namely, Marija Kučarić’s father was a sacristan (*crkovinar*), who witnessed and acted as godfather to clandestine baptisms during the Communist military regime on the island: “My father godfathered many times, and had he given gifts, we would have been penniless. And there. He would go out in the evening to say the Hail Mary. There was no electricity, and he used his hands. After he tolled the bell, he closed the church and then came home. The dinner was waiting. But if my father was late half an hour, hour, as usual, then he kept silent when he arrived home. Don’t say a word, don’t ask where he was late”. Ivo Kučarić adds: “Those persons were mostly in the army or in the party who would have their children baptised without anyone knowing”, and on the fear during Yugoslavian regime Tonko Glumac reports: “You couldn’t speak or sing, jail awaited. We weren’t allowed to go to church, we would lose our jobs”.

The abovementioned reports clearly describe the rules of godparent selection under normal circumstances and otherwise (in case of the child’s weak health, political ban, refusal of father or mother to baptise the child due to confessional differences), when this role was played by a midwife, sacristan or priest, no gift was included. Irregular as they were, even these situations tended to adhere to certain custom norms, whereas deviations and improvisations were certainly most rare as we have recorded none.

The choice of child’s name at baptism as well as the selection of godparents are correlated with the traditional family organisation and upbringing. The informants underline the important role of father- and mother-in-law on both sides in the selection of godfather. “I think that my grandfather, father, my old man had great authority, he was the master of it all. Patriarchal family. ... He ruled”, reports Antun Jurica. Kata Karlović quotes that she has no idea who chose her godfather: “Probably parents, but in the old days due to poverty father- and mother-in-law often decided”.

Antun Jurica testifies that the godfather had to be a Catholic, and responds negatively when enquired about the possibility of an “outsider” or an Orthodox to be chosen as godfather:

The attitude of the Catholic Church during Austria was firm with regard to Orthodox faith, and the Orthodox towards them. As if the two Churches are set apart. Nowadays the situation is a bit different, perhaps, but then it was an entirely different story. This I’m telling you, Lastovo did not have many Orthodox, but there were several families who remained as Orthodox, the old, who had arrived, yet in their family, by law, in order to get married, they had to sign, therefore, all their children became Catholics, there, so ... But otherwise, I’ve never seen, I’ve never found that during the Dubrovnik Republic any Orthodox lived on Lastovo.

Illegitimate children had no godparents either, and the former were looked upon inadequately, as testified by Antun Jurica. “I believe that there were some common folk servants who came here, wretched women, girls, this, that... In that case godfathers, godfatherhoods were out of the question”. On the representative level a community always stigmatised any deviations from the usual and expected behaviour. A child born out of wedlock was known as *mulo*. His mother was stigmatised by the community. “There is a story of the old: for a bastard to become a man, it would take nine generations”. The child was not to blame, “but he for ever bore a nice stamp and he was a *mulo* and that was it”.

Foundlings were also reported, yet their existence was systematically concealed, and naturally, they had no godparents. They were mainly sent to the foundling home. A rumour has it that a foundling ended up in Konavle under a different name, so that his family could continue life in the Lastovo community. Apparently, the girl came from a doctor’s family originating from Korčula, while the child’s father descended from the old, though impoverished, Saraka noble family “Saraka came penniless, a nobleman, yet penniless into the house. ... She was a virgin, she waited for him, yet no one knew that she gave birth to a child. It was hushed up absolutely to the end”. Lastovo community also witnessed a certain Susović, child of a foundling, fatherless and motherless, and since he had no surname he was given it—Isusović (baby Jesus)—and hence became colloquially known as Susović (Antun Jurica).

These stories of the times and events that had reached our informants indirectly, handed down orally or recounted, are not always based on the truth.

Rather, they fall within a fictional layer characteristic of the legends and tales of Lastovo's past, and by being deeply anchored in the local setting they also belong to the culture of remembrance. These stories are intertwined with historical data, archival and literary sources: the fact that the foundlings of the Dubrovnik nobility often ended up in Konavle might lie behind the mentioned anecdote of the Lastovo foundling. A story of how the count was known to be chosen as godfather during the Dubrovnik Republic belongs to the same layer. Antun Jurica, born in 1923, corroborated these statements with his archival research of the Lastovo wills, on the basis of which he dated the choice of count as godfather to the post-earthquake period: "No, you see, after the earthquake, ... better-off people chose the count as godfather...". He found some ten examples, "perhaps even more in which godfathers were the counts of Dubrovnik ... Then I found that there were some families in which virtually every child was godfathered by a count ... Therefore, I believe that it was the alliance of the family, that family, with the government, with the count, meaning friendship. ... The count and his wife would also attend lunch and they were godparents". Parish registers provide even more evidence on counts in the godfather role: "They can be found in the book. If you had a chance to see the baptism parish register, yes, there it says who the godfather was and so on ... There are several cases, not as many as hundred, perhaps around thirty, as much as I have detected, involved counts as godfathers. And what is godparenthood nowadays, what kind of responsibility, what kind, I wouldn't know". Jurica further states that more distinguished families chose count as godfather in order to strengthen mutual friendship ties, yet this remains to be questioned as it can partly be confirmed by the wills but not by baptism registers. Equally doubtful is the future of thus based friendship and the very nature of godfather—godchild relationship since the count's term of office in Lastovo was only one year, or was it possible that the successive count took up some of the godfather duties of his predecessor?

Orphans were treated in a different manner. The community tried to find them a guardian and that relationship remained for life. "In case of illness, epidemics, whatever, an ill fate often befell a family by leaving the children motherless, fatherless, orphans, and they tried to compensate it in the way: 'Let's find him a godfather' who would ultimately have guardianship, who would care for him" (Antun Jurica).

Festive lunch prepared at home after baptism would not commence without the priest, greeted at the house door by the parents "It wasn't like today in restaurants, but at home". For festive lunch "a ram was usually killed, because

we used to have a herd of rams, sheep or whatever” (M. Kučarić). Lunch evidently concluded the celebration of baptism.

## 2. Confirmation

The choice of confirmation sponsor was guided by less strict rules, in which the child itself often had its say. The selected person did not necessarily have to be kin-related to the family. Antun Jurica explains this freedom: “Confirmation sponsors were somewhat different. In fact, the children were already grown ups, and this relationship pertained more to the child than the kin, unlike baptism! And that relationship was looser, in the sense, it wasn’t a responsibility of any kind obliging the sponsor to ... whatever ... unlike godparenthood”. Lucija Ivelja Pece remembers that the choice of confirmation sponsor usually rested on parents or the child, and that he had no specific role in the child’s future development.

Marino Rino Sangaletti’s confirmation sponsor was a neighbour who married his cousin, while Magdalena Sangaletti’s confirmation was witnessed by her aunt. According to them, confirmation witness was selected among the family, and to them, godparent and confirmation sponsor played an equal role in the child’s life.

According to the reports of older informants,<sup>36</sup> confirmation sponsor and godfather were never the same person: “Baptism and confirmation were not witnessed by the same person”, quote Kata and Mate Škratulja. Tonko Glumac also confirms the choice of different persons: “Confirmation sponsors could not be the same as godparents. A friend was chosen for confirmation. You can choose whomever you like, the child has grown up. Confirmation sponsors were not ‘business’ related, but friends, younger people of the child’s choice”.

His wife, Marija Glumac, adds that the sponsor organised a banquet at his home: “If there is a young goat, meat of better quality. Kuzmo had a priest for uncle on the island of Koločep. He asked him: Is it a sin not to fast? The priest replied: It is not a sin what goes into the mouth but what comes out of it”. Bartol Đivoje testified on this too: “In case of confirmation, on the island of Lastovo it was customary only for the child to have lunch at the sponsor’s home. The

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<sup>36</sup> Most informants were born by the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s. They stated that it was not customary for the godfather to witness the godchild’s confirmation. Only Bartol Đivoje, born in 1965, testified to the changes concerning the choice of confirmation witnesses in his ‘generation’ on Lastovo. In fact, he states that on Lastovo it was customary for the godfather to act as witness at confirmation.

parents would not join, only the child would go”. Lucija Ivelja Pece and Tonko Glumac confirm his statements by which only the child attended lunch at the sponsor’s home without the parents, while Lucija Đivoje adds: “In the past the confirmation sponsor would pick up the child at his place in order to take took him to the church”.

Marija Kučarić testifies that “sponsor was usually a close kin. And friends. Nowadays they take brothers and sisters”, concluding that in the old days it was not the case. This has also been confirmed by Anica Glumac, whose confirmation sponsor was a relative who left for the Americas, Nikola Fantela. She emphasises that there was “one witness for confirmation, not two—female witness to a girl, but a male could also be chosen”. Lucija Đivoje confirms that back then “girls always had female witnesses and boys had male”. As a rule in the choice of confirmation sponsor she stresses that “it would be the person whom the child picked once it is grown up”. Her daughter had “our kin from Split” as sponsor. Her son Bartol Đivoje described his choice of confirmation sponsor and parents’ influence: “They came with some suggestions, for example, you can have such and such. I was fond of him somehow and I chose him”. Mother’s opinion proved crucial for the choice made by Ms Đivoje, too. Enquired as to who was her witness at confirmation, she replied: “My father suffered terribly in the war. He died shortly after his return home and the end of war. He was in the army in Zadar with the husband of my confirmation sponsor. I don’t know how we chose our sponsor, but I think it was my mother’s wish, but also of the rest of my family, since my late father was a good friend with her husband”. The informant was aged ten at the time, and the name of her witness was Anica Čučević.

### 3. Marriage

Special importance was given to the choice of marriage witnesses. Namely, it was a long-term choice, and at the same time implied the choice of godparent to the first-born child in the witnessed marriage. According to the informant reports, it was customary for the bride to have her brother as witness. Marija Kučarić provides more details: “If you had a brother, it was the brother. He had no siblings. His witness was his uncle, mother’s brother. Kin. Or brothers, or brother-in-law, cousin, or uncle. If you had no one, then a friend. As you wished”. Ms Lucija Ivelja Pece had her mother’s brother from Americas as marriage witness, he gave some money, and later cared for her. Kata Karlović explained the choice of her and her husband’s marriage witnesses:

My marriage witness was my brother, and Kuzmo's, my husband's, it was Petar Bibov. And then on Lastovo these two best men have to be the child's godfathers at baptism. It was custom here. Most commonly the brother had to be taken first as the best man. If you had no brother, then someone else from the family. My brother had a friend as best man, they grew up together, he was like a brother to him. You could take a friend, too, but since I had a brother, he was my witness. When I had the child, my brother was the child's godfather. Kata and Mate Škratulja got married in 1956. Their brothers witnessed the wedding, that is, because Kata's brother was absent, he was replaced by her uncle.

The selection of witnesses rested on the bride and groom, and with the Škratulja couple, the same persons witnessed the ceremony in the Municipality Office and in the church.<sup>37</sup>

Magdalena Sangaletti, too, confirms the choice of brother as marriage witness: "I got married at the age of 20, I am from Lastovo, from the house nearby. His best man was a cousin, and mine, my brother Vicko Dellaqua, but they called him Cenco; my father was Italian, Dellaqua Petar and he kept his Italian surname. I picked my brother because I loved him, and it is customary to choose the brother or friend. Friends and neighbours chose kin and friends". As quoted by the Škratulja couple, male witnesses were chosen for the marriage. Marija Kučarić

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<sup>37</sup> In compliance with the regulations governing marriage and family relationships of the then Socialist Republic of Croatia, the only marriage deemed valid was the secular, civil marriage solemnised before a civil official. The ceremony was held in the Municipality Office, in the presence of bride and groom, civil official and two witnesses. Marriage contracted in the church only was considered invalid, and had no legal implications of a civil marriage. Therefore, besides church marriage, it was also necessary to contract civil marriage.

Informant Anica Glumac reports: "When did we get married? We got married, I and my husband's sister on the same day. But she went for an army officer and thus married only at the municipality, yet we married at Saint Antun's, because the church was being reconstructed".

Informants Marija Kučarić (MK) and Ivo Kučarić (IK) shared the following account on this topic:

IK: When we were to get married, you first had to go to the municipality, because when you came to the church, the priest would ask if you had finished it at the municipality.

MK: No, you had to hand him the paper first.

IK: You had to give him the paper. Otherwise, he wouldn't marry you.

Interviewer: Did you have the same witnesses at the municipality and church?

MK: Yes, we did.

Interviewer: You didn't have special witnesses for the municipality, and other for ...

MK: No, no. Some used to marry on Saturday at the municipality, and on Sunday at church. And some on the same occasion...

explicitly states: “No. Never before was a female witness at marriage”. Informant Lucija Đivoje got married in 1960. Her marriage was witnessed by Antun Jurica because they, according to her statement, were *porodični kumovi*, that is, the two families exchanged their ties based on spiritual kinship. Both she and her husband had male witnesses, and Ms Đivoje adds: “In the old days it was not customary for the women to witness marriage. I’ve never experienced or seen anything of the sort”. However, Anica Glumac, born in 1941, showed a photograph of her parents’ marriage to other informants: “My mother’s witness was her first cousin, and my father’s his brother”, which confirms the long tradition of choosing a brother or kin as marriage witness, but also the fact that a bride did not necessarily have a man for her witness, as testified by other informants. Unlike her mother, who had a female witness, Ms Glumac ‘picked’ her brother: “My mother deeply wished for me to choose my brother as witness and I humoured her. It was possible then, I’ve been married 54 years now, and I humoured her then. Well, you cannot have a marriage witness to your own choice, it has to be kin with whom you’re not on hostile terms. You go to your parents to seek permission”.

On parents’ role in the choice of marriage witness Antun Jurica testified: “Well, if his son was getting married, 99% that he would be the one to choose, to insist, to say: you will take such and such as witness ... It seems to me, I’m not sure, but... looking at the story ... who had the authority in the house, and that was the father, ultimately the grandfather”. Kata Karlović shared an identical experience: “When I got married, we had to obey our parents, it was strict. You had to abide by the choice, unlike now, whomever. You had to consider the family background, if he had any diseases, and if he went to church”. Yet, as reported by A. Jurica, the selection tended to narrow down to the neighbours: “In eighty percent of the cases, or even more, the bride who was to enter this house at ninety percent would come from one of these five houses. Therefore, they picked the wife from the neighbourhood. Ninety percent they picked the witnesses from the neighbourhood. They did not wish to go far, they had their circle”.

Most commonly, the brides were not pregnant although some cases were reported. Kata Škratulja describes how she had a wreath on her head at the wedding, but had no wedding gown because she was six months pregnant.

The father of the informant Marija Kučarić, who as *crkovinar* played a special role in the community at public and clandestine baptisms, was just as important at marriages: “When we were to get married ... The priest would announce the marriage of such and such on the previous three Sundays. If anyone had something against, he would speak up. And on the day of marriage,



the priest would ask you if you had brought the cake for the sacristan. My father was a sacristan and they would bring him a round cake or bread or else”.

According to the reports, marriage witness played no special role during the marriage ceremony. Magdalena Sangaletti states:

Witness at that marriage did not have any special role but to pick up the bride and propose a toast. He said only a couple of words, and that was it. It was customary then and still is now: I awaited at home and he leaves his home, and arrives at my place accompanied by the best man. My witness was with me at home. And then I would go first with the witnesses, he [husband] second in order. And later, when we came out of the church, I and he went first, followed by witnesses, and the wedding party at the back.

Antun Jurica offers an interesting description of the specific wedding customs of Lastovo:

We never speak of marriage but of *udaja* [marriage of the bride], because *udaja* was ... the woman was important, and not the man. We would then go to the groom's house and not the bride's! Because they celebrated separately, in two houses, separated: groom's men with his kin, and the father and mother of the bride in theirs. Separated. ... Lastovo *udaja* had a distaff. Distaff was a stick, piece of wood, where you put wool, and the women would spin it, you know, that's what was meant by *kudeja* ... When lunch was over, the woman to be wed would stay at home, and the groomsmen would take the distaff and arrived at the house of the bride's father and mother. There they would be greeted, saluted right-left, and then they would put the distaff, they would decorate it with apples. ... They would stand in the middle of the hall, her brother usually, and would start to 'spin wool', decorate the distaff. ... These were the gifts for the bride, this decoration of the distaff. ... It was her distaff! Gold coins were stuck into the apple, and decorated it with ... I don't know ... If it didn't stop here, they would walk the whole village. Whoever wished to shower the bride, did so, he would wait for that procession...And when they came home, they would give this decorated distaff to the bride. Yes, this is the Lastovo distaff!<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Recorded in the manuscript collection of Lastovo are two merry wedding songs with love theme about the spun fibres of the distaff, the latter being a metaphore of the bride, celebrating the wedding; a distaff with unspun fibres is “barren”, i.e. an unmarried girl (Maja Bošković-Stulli, *Narodne pjesme, priče, predaje i drugo sa Šipana i Lastova, 1953*, IEF MS 115: p. 20).

This is a variant of the wedding branch, known as part of the wedding customs widespread in other Croatian parts, when a branch with four to five sprouts is decorated in a specific way: sometimes gilt apples are placed on the branch tops, sprouts are tied together with ribbons decorated with strings of seeds, pop-corn, dried plums, rosehip fruit, colourful shreds of cloth and other, that is, as the *kudeja* mentioned in the Lastovo example. In some parts, this decorated branch was pierced into the wedding cake or cross (hence the term *kravalj*), and stands on the table during the wedding celebration and is presented to the groom or offered for auction to the guests. The money earned in this way belonged to the bride.<sup>39</sup> Here the branch decorated with *kudeja* and gilt apples had the same function. Magdalena Sangaletti describes her showering:

Let me recount the Lastovo custom to you. His mother, when the bride arrives from church, awaits at the door holding a half-full glass of water, at the bottom of the glass is a gold necklace or ring and she puts it on her hand or around the neck. And addresses her fairly. That was the custom back then, I don't know nowadays. She gave me a ring with an inscription MS, Magdalena Sangaletti, on it. Because, when I marry, I take my husband's surname. It was a nice ring.

According to the reports given by Kata and Mate Škratulja, the marriage was usually held on Sunday, and the celebration (*fešta*) lasted two days (Sunday and Monday) because it was organised at home and there was not enough space for all guests to be entertained on the same day. Meat was usually served, not fish, since meat was rarely on the daily menu and was served only on special occasions. Marija and Ivo Kučarić state that the poverty that prevailed on the island should be taken into account. "The wedding celebration was paid by the person marrying. When we got married, we had nothing. They didn't even have any pasta. They killed a lamb, and the uncle sent some pasta and coffee. ... There wasn't a photographer when we married either". Anica Glumac describes her wedding celebration: "Large house, large hall, it could accommodate 100 people ... In 8 days' time *osmine* were at my place, at my parents'. We didn't invite all our relatives as there was no restaurant like today. Where would they all sit?! They couldn't all be seated. We invited whom we had to invite, and then in eight-days' time the rest". Given that Anica Glumac got married on the same day as her husband's sister to a JNA officer, the wedding party was sizeable. We have to bear in mind that in those

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<sup>39</sup> Zorica Vitez, *Hrvatski svadbeni običaji*. Goldenmarketing – Tehnička knjiga, Zagreb, 2003: p. 66.

days people had no refrigerators or other appliances that would enable safe storage of food, which also had to be taken into account when organising a wedding.

Marin Rino Sangaletti, too, testifies about the so-called *osmine*: “Back then there were large weddings at the groom’s house, and on the next Sunday, a week later at the bride’s”. The name of this part of the custom, *osmina*, evidently stems from an eight-day interval between the wedding banquet at the groom’s house and the entertainment at the bride’s place. It was common for the newly-wed couple, accompanied by the groom’s parents or not, or even the bride alone in someone’s company, to make an official visit to her parents’ home as a married woman for the first time. That visit, known as *prvići* or *povrati*, usually took place on the first Saturday or Sunday after the marriage, that is, upon eight days, or even later. It was also common for all guests to shower the bride’s mother, usually with beverages or food.<sup>40</sup> The specificity of Lastovo actually involves an organisation of another, lesser wedding celebration at the bride’s house, primarily attended by the guests other than those invited to the first banquet.

*The significance of spiritual kinship and the relationship established through it*

“Godparenthood was a bond, it was a link, a chain that couldn’t be broken. Once you became a godfather, you bonded with someone for life”, states Antun Jurica. He confirms the importance of godparenthood on Lastovo, drawing attention to the ways the locals saluted each other: “They used *gospār* to salute a man, *dundo* and *kum*. *Kumpar* (godfather) was a title in Lastovo”. “It was important for the godfather to be honest and good for your child’s well-being”, reports Lucija Ivelja Pece.

All informants confirm that godparenthood was considered important. Anica Glumac testifies: “Our godparenthood was nice, we used to meet during *poklade* and so forth.<sup>41</sup> It wasn’t easy like today, there wasn’t much entertainment at home, there was no refrigerator. ... It means to me, we can help each other if necessary, and God forbid, in calamity should it befall”. Informant Magdalena Sangaletti explicitly states: “Families connected through spiritual kinship and friendships are happier and their life is nicer, no doubt”.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> The customs of Lastovo *poklade* (carnival) have a centuries-old tradition and meaning among the people of Lastovo, as documented since the start of the fourteenth century. On 17 January 2008, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia included *Lastovski poklad – pokladni običaj s otoka Lastova* (Lastovo poklad—carnival custom of the island of Lastovo) in the register of the protected intangible cultural heritage of the Republic of Croatia.

Antun Jurica underlines: “Well, godparents were always chosen, as you said, thank God, were chosen among the wealthier, the poorest were not chosen, always with an aim to strengthen the relations between families, to have several godfathers so that the family strengthens. Therefore, each child had its own special godfather from a better-off family, with the purpose of the family’s betterment, that is, for its financial rise”.

Enquired about the godparent’s duties to the child, in case something happened to the parents, Kata Karlović replies that in such circumstances godparents took over the care of the child: “That’s why the children are baptised so that godparents can take care of the children should anything happen”. Marija Glumac confirms this role of the godparents: “Yes, they cared. And at baptism, godfather was asked if he would be responsible. And there were cases when godparents took over the parents’ role. Especially in war, when the partisans came”.

On the relationship with his godfather, Marin Rino Sangaletti reports: “We were very bonded. He didn’t help me much only because he died early, when I was only 13. I had no duties to my godfather, only when I met him I had to salute him with ‘Good day, kumpar’”. Ivo Kučarić also testifies that in the godfather—godchild relationship “nothing was obligatory”.

Kata and Mate Škratulja, Lucija Ivelja Pece together with Lucija Đivoje hold that godparents had no duties nor did they care for the godchild in any particular way. Despite the fact that, for example, Kata Škratulja was left motherless at an early age, her godparents did not take upon themselves any special responsibility or helped her. Yet, all informants confirm that godparents were still treated as special members of the family, with whom calls were exchanged on festive days, on Christmas in particular. “It’s your godfather, you always seat him next to your table at wedding and elsewhere. Nowadays it’s the same, when we celebrate, we invite our godparents, they’re always close. They are respected. My daughter keeps to this custom, that’s my godfather, that’s my godmother. Not everyone does it, but it has to be observed, if you live by the rules. God has his people”, reports Kata Karlović. Bartol Đivoje concludes: “If you remain on good terms with him, then he’s always welcome and invited”. Anica Glumac adds nostalgically: “Back then we used to call each other *kum*, and not by the names ... That’s how it used to be, it is no more”. Antun Jurica, too, stresses the role of the godfather:

Godafther was, de facto, a person whose responsibility was to take over the child’s upbringing in case his parents parished. ... They wished to bond him to the child: if I as parent parish, he has a godfather to take care of him. ... Godfather in child’s eyes, and

ultimately, in the eyes of the kin, was lasting, he was lasting. Godfathers connected two families. Therefore, we would visit the godfather, and he would come here ... The child would also visit the godfather, and the godfather, in fact, could hit the child, he had almost the same authority as the father and mother, or the parish priest. If the godfather hit the child, the father wouldn't say a word against it. It was good that the godfather hit him. ... Therefore, godfather was the second father.

Informants agree that godparents most often gave pieces of jewellery as gift. Kata Škratulja confirms that godfather used to give gold as gift, yet confirmation sponsor gave gold or money, "but not much, not like nowadays, because people were poor". Magdalena Sangaletti reports: "As gift my son got a bracelet worth ten thousand liras, but I don't know what you could buy for that sum. For that occasion I prepared a better lunch. My son got a gold bracelet, and my daughter earrings from Veronika Vera Verzotti. I don't remember what my godmother gave me, I remember the gift from my confirmation sponsor: silver bracelets that tarnished with time". Like Magdalena Sangaletti and Lucija Ivelja Pece, Marija Kučarić received earrings from her godparents, who often presented her family with gifts: "They always gave us something. Always. Earrings. As much as they could afford. The earrings were made of gold, and sometimes they would give a small dress or something ... But most often earrings were given to a girl, and a ring or cross to a boy or ... As much as you could afford". Ivo Kučarić adds that a child was given something of gold. Lucija Đivoje cites the same kind of gift for baptism or confirmation "Necklace, chain or a ring. Something of gold for baptism". And for the wedding: "Here too a gift would be bought, not too expensive". Anica Glumac remembers her gift: "For confirmation I received a piece of fabric from my aunt in Italy, and she made my wedding gown and brought it. Wedding gifts included tableware, clothes, bed linens, towels, table sets ...". Marija Glumac reports the following as gifts from godparents: "Boys got a watch. I was given a piece of fabric to tailor a dress. And for baptism, something made of gold—a chain to both boys and girls. A chain with St Blaise". Lucija and Bartol Đivoje also mentioned *koralj* (coral) as gift. Coral carried the same meaning as gold and was *nasljedstvo od kuće* (family legacy). Bartol Đivoje adds that "back then gifts were taken or given from home. If purchased, then it had to correspond to the value of gold".

Kata Karlović places godparent gifts into a broader context: "Godfather didn't have to give a present, it wasn't expected, but later he was like family. I have a gift from my marriage witness, given to me by my husband's witness:

six glasses and a bottle. Sometimes a gold coin was given, a lira. My godmother gave it to me at baptism, but not everyone could afford it, or a ring, a chain, those were the gifts”.

*Other types of spiritual kinship, and beliefs and legends pertaining to it*

The informants have no knowledge of unusual forms of spiritual kinship on the island of Lastovo, such as *šišano kumstvo*,<sup>42</sup> *kumstvo uz ispadanje prvog zuba* or other.

Marija Glumac reported a custom pertaining to newborns: “When the child’s nails are cut for the first time, the wedding ring of his father or mother is placed on the finger, then the nail is cut and the same is done on each finger. The cut nails are then thrown away. Otherwise the child would never speak. Dried navel-string was preserved as souvenir. It was left to the heirs”.

Also, the informants have no knowledge of any legends related to godparenthood. The life story of Kate Karlović is worthy of attention:

Back in the old days, a woman would give birth, really, it’s true, I know, when a child was born in the *modra kućica* (little blue house), then the midwife would go early in the morning to the hill named Grža and would say: ‘People and folk, a baby has been born in *modra kućica!*’ And the witch could not harm that child. Those were tales. (...) Had she not done so, then the witch could harm the child. But the church didn’t allow this belief. It was my brother’s case, my mother was carrying him, she dressed him nicely. When she came to the church door, there were two women, saying how handsome he was. And then at night he wouldn’t suck her breast any more, he shut his eyes. My mother already had another child after me that died, a son, he got fever after six months. And then my mother,

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<sup>42</sup> *Šišano* or *strigano kumstvo* is a specific type of godparenthood related to the child’s first haircut. It was widespread in the central part of Croatia at the beginning of the twentieth century, south of the Sava River (Pokuplje, Žumberak, Gorski kotar, Lika), and in the border area of southern Dalmatia and Herzegovina. *Hrvatska enciklopedija, Mrežno izdanje*, <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?ID=34614> (December 2015). Unusual godparenthoods such as these have also been discussed by V. Bogišić, *Zbornik sadašnjih pravnih običaja u južnih Slovena*: pp. 387-388. This custom was still adhered to in 1962 in Mandaljena and Imotica, as cited by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin (*Hrvatski narodni običaji iz okolice Dubrovnika, Župa i Dubrovačka Rijeka*, IEF MS. 393).

having seen that, started crying because she thought he too would die. I remember, I was upstairs with my mother in the room. And then a doctor was sent for, they couldn't help him, they said it was nothing, my old man believed it. And then my grandmother arrived, took a broom and started sweeping out in the front where the earth was. Fetch a certain Kate, she says prayers, makes crosses; then my father came, she sent him to fetch that woman. When the sun goes down below, fetch three pieces of wood and go in front of the three churches, some three herbs were also to be taken. I don't know what she did, how she treated him, she took a glass, and said: 'See, you saved him by the hair's breadth!' All those coals fell to the bottom, the ones she put in the holy water. The number of times she treated him, the coal rose up, and then he opened his eyes. But his legs were like this [demonstrates the deformity]. Mother cried that the boy would have bandy legs. 'Don't cry', they were telling her, 'but pick a walnut leaf and boil it in a large pot and leave it in luke warm water for 15 minutes in the sun, on a blanket'. And then his legs straightened and he was all right. You don't believe it, but that's how it was. With no other but with my own brother. Then my mother learnt how to do it. People then fetched for her on Lastovo. If some person had a problem, she would go there and did these ceremonies. But the church doesn't know. There, my mother was like a witch. They weren't witches, but it was that when a child was born in the *modra kućica* that something could harm it. Thus spoke the village!<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Behind this report is an interlacement of beliefs and residues of ancient legends of mythical beings. Blue afterbirth (placenta in which rare children are born) is a sign that a child with supernatural qualities has been born. That child, if initiated, can grow up into a mythical character which in Croatian oral tradition is connected with the analogous characters (*krsnici, zduje, zduhači, moguti, vještice, viščuni, nagromanti, vjedogonje, vješturci*). The analogy between them rests on the desire to protect one's territory, as he struggles against his enemies in the stormy clouds carrying hail that could destroy the crops. He himself, however, in a storm can harm those whom he wishes. The witch still falls among the most productive characters of the oral tradition. Here, two such women are in question: one that can impose harm and another that can 'lift' it. Witches feature in many legends in the Lastovo accounts from the twentieth century, some of which, with regard to motif, are similar to the cited text. Not a single record has been found on a child being born *u modroj kućici*, yet they have been traced in the surrounds of Dubrovnik (Konavle, Župa, Dubrovačko primorje). For more on this in: Ljiljana Marks, »Čudesni konavoski svijet (predgovor i izbor priča)«. *Dubrovnik* N.S. 9/1 (1998): pp. 230-272, text *Vješturak dobrić*; Ljiljana Marks, »Župske priče iz zbirke Nikole Bonifačića Rožina«. *Zbornik Župe dubrovačke* 4 (2005), texts *Zduja, Zduja iz Brgata, Zduj Đurica*.



*Politics and spiritual kinship*

The informants agree that there were examples when the chosen marriage witnesses who would subsequently godfather the first born child proved as an instrument of social alliance, and thus contributed to the family's social betterment. Earlier in the text, we have quoted the report of Antun Jurica regarding the choice of the count of Lastovo as godfather. However, all informants agree that the choice usually rested on the kin—most commonly those of the benefit for the child—and that the choice of godparent could not specifically be linked to his political position or money as indirect warrants of the child's better future and prosperity. "Here it has always been the family. Nowadays, friends maybe, regardless of whether he is a professor, doctor or governor. We were ordinary, common folk", reports Magdalena Sangaletti.

On Lastovo there was a story about ... Not a story, but custom that some were godfathers to many people, but that kind of died out later when a merchant godfathered twenty children ... Nowadays, in that, so to speak, bond of love and respect, interest has appeared: Yes, he's a tradesman, and he might perhaps look better after my son. And all of a sudden, the tradesman didn't godfather only one child, but ten of them and ... all the intimacy once known was gone, the connection that existed earlier. How can one person godfather ten and have love for all? I think it has all changed.

Antun Jurica reports. Marija Kučarić confirms that a distinguished person, such as an executive (*direktor*) or 'someone important' was chosen as marriage witness. Ivo Kučarić adds: "Yes, it has always been important to choose a person of a better standing ... For the child's sake rather than the gift".

Informant Lucija Ivelja Pece knows of only one case when the choice of godparent was guided by political reasons during the Italian administration. At that time, a family from Jurjeva luka picked Italian dignitaries as godfathers and named their children after them.

During the political changes of the twentieth century, the government showed interest in the island demographic trends and honoured multiple-child families with godparenthood. For instance, Lucija Đivoje reports that Mussolini was godfather on Lastovo on three occasions, but the baptisms were attended by the representatives only. These baptisms concerned the tenth and twelfth child in the family. Informant Ivo Kučarić recalls "how good it was" to have several children in the period when the island was under Italian administration. He

remembers a certain islander: “Mussolini gave him much, much money on account of his ten children”. He also remembers a man with eighteen children. Bartol Đivoje concludes: “It is to the mutual satisfaction. A man is proud to have a certain person for godfather, and that person is given extra popularity”.<sup>44</sup>

During Yugoslav administration, the observation of customs was extremely difficult—not only godparenthood—but also religious acts of baptism, confirmation and marriage, and the island did not have a resident priest, confirm Marija and Tonko Glumac:

It was forbidden, people would do it secretly, if you had a job, you’d lose it. They didn’t want to send a priest for her (informant) to get married because there was none, he was in Korčula. He was to be recruited, and he had an old grandfather whom he couldn’t leave alone and then they had to get married so that I could look after him. There was no priest, we would send for him only if someone died and he would occasionally come on Saturday. And when she was about to marry, they didn’t sent for the priest and then he arrived on Thursday morning or Wednesday and when she got married, he left. Immediately. It was back in 1949, the worst of times. ... my father when my brother was about to be confirmed, my mother took him to the confirmation, and he [father] didn’t know about it and he had to protect his job and he had to yell at her mother. Other people used to go to Split, no one knew them there. Grandmother would take the child and had him baptised in Split. And no one would know.

### *Spiritual kinship among younger generations and among emigrants from Lastovo*

Lastovo informants spoke about spiritual kinship with nostalgia, their age also being taken into consideration. At the same time, their reports included

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<sup>44</sup> Head of state (or some other highly-positioned government official) chosen as godfather in multiple-child families is a common practice in Croatia. For instance, Josip Broz Tito often godfathered children with many siblings; Franjo Tuđman also acted several times as godfather: “Dr. Franjo Tuđman was the godfather to the eighth child of Janko Kutleša from Vinjani Gornji, to the eighth child of Marko Šitum from Cista Provo, as well as to the seventh child of Ban Jukić from Runovići” <http://arhiv.slobodnadalmacija.hr/11121999/dalmacija.htm> (accessed on 13 January 2017). Milan Bandić, Mayor of Zagreb, has repeatedly acted as godfather to multiple-child families, which, in addition to the inventory of his gifts, has always been highlighted by the media. This is a telling testimony of the significance of fecund families for the state and nation, and how it is marked on the ceremonial level, and at the same time speaks of the institution of godparenthood recognised as support.

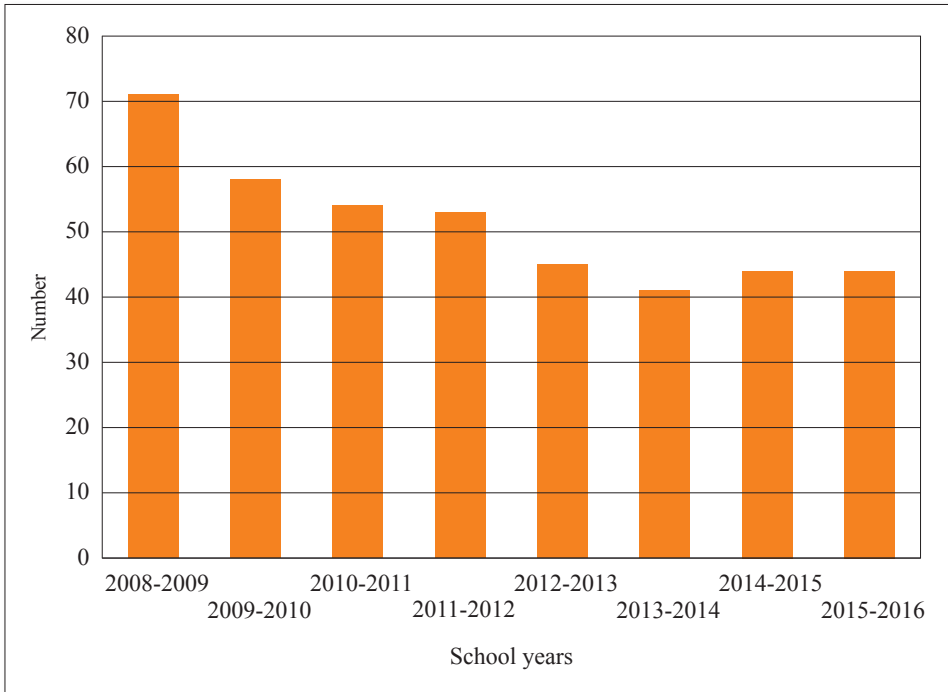
the reminiscences of the times past. It should be noted that the traditional customs related to spiritual kinship and the social importance attached to it are generally decaying. Apart from societal 'modernisation', negative demographic trends may also be held responsible. Today Lastovo is being depopulated. Spouses Kučarić report: "Where you spot the light, there is someone ... All is ... old and wretched. Had it not been for our granddaughter, Margarita's daughter, we would've been alone". Rare have managed to preserve godparenthood and family customs in their children's families. Marija and Ivan Kučarić have two daughters and three grandchildren, who are also residents of Lastovo. They were all baptised in the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian and each had two godparents: "for the first ... they had to take the marriage witness, while the second child, the younger one, I was the godmother to the second child and his father. There, all within the family! Nowadays, too, it's all mostly within the family. Kin without exception". Their granddaughter mentioned above married in Lastovo and her brother was her marriage witness—as befits 'ancient' customs.

Anica Glumac has a son and daughter: "Daughter of mine, she was, her marriage witness was from Brač, her friend Diana from school, and his was a friend. ... Nowadays they marry in church, yet no one goes to church. I don't approve of that either".

Permanent residents of Lastovo tend to gravitate towards Split rather than Dubrovnik, although the latter is the administrative centre. On the island there is only one elementary school. In eight years, from the school year 2008-2009 to 2015-2016, the number of schoolchildren dropped by as many as 38% (Graph 3). This figure also testifies to the difficult demographic situation on the island. In order to continue their schooling, children aged 14-15 are forced to commute or leave the island in order to pursue their student career in larger urban centres on the mainland. Schools and education opportunities are often at the root of out-migration of the whole families. Migration necessarily involves a change of employment, which further complicates the eventual return to the island. And thus the process of depopulation continues.

Observance of customs proved particularly difficult to the ex-islanders who left Lastovo over the past decades. Informant Magdalena Sangaletti, who with her husband Marin Rino Sangaletti left Lastovo and settled in Italy, reports that objectively she was unable to uphold all Lastovo customs: "We have a son (49) and daughter (47); for our son's godfather we picked an in-law, brother-in-law Verzotti, and we picked him because he's our relative, we wanted to strengthen

Graph 3. Number of pupils at *Braća Glumac* Elementary School in Lastovo by school year



Source: official school web site: <http://os-bglumac-lastovo.skole.hr/skola> (January 2016)

our relationship even more. Both they and we lived in Milan at the time, and after the baptism we prepared lunch at our flat. Our daughter had only one godmother, husband’s aunt Veronika Verzotti”.

Informants Marija and Ivo Kučarić fled to Canada, where they built their new home. They have three children: “One was born in 1950, daughter as second in 1958, and son as third in 1966. (...) The girl was born in Canada, the girl. The first boy was born here. He was five when we fled across the sea. From here to Italy. Because then it was...Communists were then”. As godparents to their daughter, spouses Kučarić chose Lastovo emigrants in Canada, who shared their fate. “For the younger son they were also Croats. I had the boy and girl baptised in the Italian church in Canada. He says (priest) that he will not baptise here because my husband is not Italian. When I was born, it was Italy. Later my father changed [the last name] into Šantić. I couldn’t change it when I left for Canada because all my documents, birth certificate, were registered under Santi”.

Informant Kata Karlović, known as Careva to her older fellow islanders, recounted some details from her life. She was born on Lastovo in 1934, where she lived until 1957. It was then that she, her husband and the first son, aged only six months at the time, fled for Italy, and from there they soon proceeded for Australia. Their second son was born while they were in an Italian camp, and the daughter in Australia. She has been visiting Lastovo over the last five years, having reconstructed the old house with the assistance of her family. She herself comes from a family in which tradition and customs have always been honoured. Her husband died nineteen years ago in Melbourne, Australia. “My mother was very strict, we had to obey our parents and that’s how it had to be. Back then everything was different from nowadays. Nowadays they have a child, they don’t marry, don’t baptise and whatever, and back in the old days you had to”, adds Kata Karlović:

Back then customs were observed, when a girl was to get married, and not like nowadays. And today, they don’t care about the parents, and in the past customs were upheld. ... In Italy we baptised our little son eight days after birth, in the camp, because we couldn’t wait as we might have done had we been on Lastovo. He also had two godparents, but a godfather and godmother. Then in Australia we had our daughter baptised as befits! Godfather was my husband’s brother, we waited for him to come and then he was her godfather, and my sister was the godmother. Down there in Australia we organised everything in the same way as if we were here. Nowadays it’s a bit different because brides are not from Lastovo. A Columbian bride here, an Italian there, of each and every nation are the brides today, but back then it wasn’t like that.

### *Conclusion*

Field research of 11 September 2015 was carried out through an interview of elderly informants, on a representative sample of 7.5% of the island’s population over the age of 65, that is, 15% of the population of the settlement of Lastovo over the age of 70.

Being considered a type of kinship, godparenthood represented an impediment to marriage from as early as 1449, as regulated by the Lastovo Statute. This attitude survived till the end of the twentieth century. As a rule, godparenthood

was established between families equal in rank and social status, yet there were cases when godfather was chosen among a higher rank in order to secure the child's prosperity. According to the informant reports, records have it that in the time of the Dubrovnik Republic the count of Lastovo often godfathered the island children.

Field investigation has confirmed that godparenthood managed to survive and remain an essential integrative family institution on Lastovo despite the change of political framework and regimes. In doing so, godparenthood goes beyond the frame of religion—people salute each other with *kumpare*, *kume* as an expression of close alliance even when their relationship is not based on godparenthood.

The informants who had been forced to leave the island in the course of the twentieth century and who settled in Canada, Italy and Australia remained determined to preserve the Lastovo customs so as to be able to hand them down to the next generations. The emigrants from Lastovo (who visit the island every year where they spend their retirement days) have preserved a 'petrified' and idyllic image of their own past and that of the island from the time prior to their emigration. Informants of their age who had never 'set foot' off the island, spontaneously adapted to the changes since they themselves participated in them, even when they refuse to admit it.

The research has shown that on Lastovo a person was not chosen as godparent or witness on account of gratitude for service or deed provided or done, but, as the informants state, the selection was essentially guided by the child's or the couple's future prospects and benefit. Almost all informants have reported that virtually nothing was expected from a godparent with regard to his duty pertaining to the child's future, although at the same time this role implied certain moral and material care of the godchild, if needed. In formal terms, as reported, godparents had no obligation to present the godchild with gifts, although they did so, by usually giving pieces of jewellery. A godparent was not honoured in the sense of naming the godchild after him. Also reported are the cases of exchange godparenthoods and reciprocal alliances between families based on spiritual kinship.

All informants had godparents and they have all confirmed that they received the sacraments in the Catholic Church. Godparenthood was also a part of the community's social expectation. Even when the island was turned into a military base and had no resident priest, a person who wished to fulfil the sacrament of

baptism, confirmation or marriage—could do so despite the obstacles and fully aware of the consequences that might follow on account of his actions contrary to the political moment.

According to the reports, a child most commonly had two baptismal godparents, two men at first, and later one of each sex. The selection was made among kin<sup>45</sup> and friends, of Catholic faith generally, and the choice mainly rested on the family elders, in accordance with the patriarchal family structure.

Being a witness at confirmation did not carry the same significance as compared to witness at baptism. Godparents were not chosen to also witness their godchild's confirmation (although one informant reported that in the last few decades such a practice happened to be quite common on Lastovo). Confirmation sponsor was usually chosen among kin and friends upon the child's wish or under the influence of his parents.

Greater attention and importance was given to marriage witnesses. Namely, a person chosen for a marriage witness acted as godfather to the first born child in this marriage, and it was his responsibility to care for the child's future and well-being. It was customary for the bride to have her brother as witness, while the so-called *Lastovska svadba* (Lastovo wedding) carefully defined the roles of all those participating in it. Spiritual kinship consolidated the already established social networks, because marriage witnesses were mainly family members or very close friends. This sacrament, too, was at first witnessed only by men, only to be joined by women in the second half of the twentieth century. Also noteworthy is the value system by which illegitimacy was considered socially unacceptable and children born out-of-wedlock were not baptised nor did they have godparents, while at the same time high pregnancy was not

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<sup>45</sup> Informants have confirmed that the first choice of male and female godparent always included (1) brother of the child's mother, and (2) sister of the child's father, and if there existed objective reasons against such a selection (i.e. the mother had no brother nor father a sister), then the choice was made among the close kin.

Kin as the 'first choice' on Lastovo corresponds to the tendency of godparent selection witnessed in the Catholic Italy and France. According to the research (on a data sample of baptised persons from 1981 to 1991) carried out in Italy, kin constitutes 86% of all male and 85% of all female godparents, while in France 88% and 71% respectively. Uncles constitute 54% in Italy, and 59% in France, while aunts constitute 50% and 48%. Interestingly, in Italy the second next choice of godparent falls upon grandfather (17%) and grandmother (18%), as opposed to the French practice (4%). On Lastovo, the informants did not single out grandparents as witnesses at baptism. For more details on the research in Italy and France, see G. Alfani, V. Gourdon and A. Vitali, »Social Customs and Demographic Change«: pp. 482-504.



deemed an impediment for witnessing marriage (the absence of bridal gown being tolerated for this reason). None of the informants reported that in the twentieth century spiritual kinship proved an impediment to marriage between godparent and godchild as recorded on Lastovo in 1874,<sup>46</sup> yet it might have been implied.

In the period covered by the investigation, the number of godparents dropped from two to one. Contrary to past custom, godparent also assumes the role of witness at confirmation.

The institution of godparenthood has managed to retain its social relevance despite the demographic changes due to which the island is being speedily depopulated. Yet, its social functions are disappearing. Younger generations no longer feel bound by traditional customs despite their parents' efforts. In a fairly short twenty-year term, depopulation and demographic changes contributed to a rapid shift in the social function of spiritual kinship and objective obstacles in the choice of a close kin such as aunt or uncle as marriage witness (who would later act as godfather/godmother). The results based on the research of the practice in Italy and France confirm an equal influence of demographic changes, and the island of Lastovo may also serve as an example of a similar process in Croatia.<sup>47</sup>

Dawning with the new era are the social networks that are beyond the historically closed island community, and in which the institution of godparenthood in its hitherto form might be preserved merely as a random relic of the past.

Translated by Vesna Baće

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<sup>46</sup> In Baltazar Bogišić's *Zbornik sadašnjih pravnih običaja u južnih Slovena* from 1874.

<sup>47</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the impact of demographic changes on godparenthood in Italy and France, see: G. Alfani, V. Gourdon and A. Vitali, »Social Customs and Demographic Change«: pp. 482-504.