

Spiritual kinship and the others

Ivrea, XVIth-XVIIth Centuries

G U I D O A L F A N I

Stimulated by a recent surge of interest in the subject, new research projects suggest that spiritual kinship had considerable importance in societies of the past¹. In particular, recent works focussed firmly upon data (compared to the more abstract speculations predominant in older scholarship) have indicated that spiritual kinship played a significant role, and that this role was highly variable in space and time and difficult to define².

The problem with spiritual kinship is that it was a 'strange kinship'. It was kinship indeed, as for the Catholic Church, between the group of godfathers and godmothers on one side and godchildren and their parents on the other there were kinship links which were consequently an impediment to marriage³. Godfathers and godmothers constituted a kind of spiritual family for the child, as a group of relatives that had fostered his 'spiritual birth', but they also were kin to the child's parents, and probably this relationship, called *comparatico* in Italian, *compérage* in French and *compadrazgo* in Spanish but unfortunately lacking an equivalent in English⁴, was even more important than the relationship between godfathers and godchildren⁵. In an epoch and culture that knew almost only infant baptism, fathers chose the godfathers for their children, knowing that they were going to become kin to them through the baptismal rite. This kinship created a social tie between them or changed an already existing one (for example, of friendship), influencing future behaviour and creating the premise for elaborate social strategies.

Even though it was kinship, spiritual kinship was very different from 'natural' kinship. The way it was perceived and the range of social possibilities it implied changed according to local customs, but in all cases spiritual kinship had characteristics that made it a peculiar instrument of social alliance. For example, only the baptized child, his parents and his godparents were made kin, and kinship did not extend to the whole families as marriage, through affinity, did (and does). I developed elsewhere an analysis of the characteristics of godparenthood as an instrument of social alliance (Alfani 2006a). Here I shall limit myself to noting that, compared with natural kinship, marriage and affinity, godparenthood can be defined as a 'weak' social tie. As demonstrated by sociological research, weakness is not synonymous with ineffectiveness. Indeed, sometimes weakness opens up possibilities that are closed to stronger ties⁶.

Being so strange, it is no wonder that spiritual kinship is attracting growing interest from historians who until recently had neglected it and were led to this topic mainly by anthropological research. This is surely good news for the progress

of our knowledge of societies of the past, but the risk is that, in much the same way as happened for marriage, historians interested in godparenthood focus solely on it in isolation from other kinds of relationship (marriage alliance, friendship, neighbourhood...) and thus fail to consider how spiritual kinship interacts with them.

In this paper, my aim is to describe the characteristics of the network of spiritual kinship found in the Italian city of Ivrea during late XVIth and early XVIIth Century, indicating both the very particular status of spiritual kinship, and the position it occupied in a more complex system of social alliances and contacts. The fundamental question which I seek to answer is the following: did spiritual kinship help create a network isolated from other social networks, or did it integrate with them, or did these networks overlap and, if they did, in what measure and in which way? In previous research, I compared marriage and godparenthood choices at the level of community⁷ for the Canavese area (Ivrea is the main city of Canavese), and found that marriage and godparenthood ties created an integrated pattern that seemingly corresponded to specific relational and economic interests of different towns and villages (Alfani 2005a). Did something similar happen at the individual level?

To answer such question, I will focus on three kinds of social relationship that available sources (and in particular, parish registers) permit us to study systematically: godparenthood, marriage and 'marriage witnessing'⁸. However, I will take into account other types of relationship (e.g. neighbourhood) whenever the sources are available and they offer a relevant contribution.

It is obvious that a certain degree of coherence between networks of marriage, marriage witnessing and godparenthood can be taken for granted, because baptism and marriage are social events that create contacts which promote the occurrence one of the other. What is not obvious, is whether such mutual help was also underlined by choices (of spouses, of witnesses, of godparents) that brought to a recognisable interaction between different social institutions and the social spaces related to them.

1. The city, the sources and the database. Ivrea is a town situated in northwestern Italy, in Piedmont, and in XVIth Century was one of the most important cities of the Duchy of Savoy. In the period I will concentrate on here, the capital of the Duchy had just been transferred from Chambéry to Turin (1560), and the latter was booming. Ivrea, which had been besieged twice and had repeatedly changed rulers during the 'Wars of Italy' fought by France and the Empire for supremacy over the peninsula, suffered badly. It was no surprise that it started on a path of slow decline that would continue in the following centuries. At the end of XVIth Century, it still was one of the biggest and most important cities of the Duchy, yet compared to other cities in Italy it was not big (4.467 inhabitants in 1613⁹) and, due to the heavy demographic attraction of Turin (Levi 1985), it was destined to stay small.

Although small, Ivrea was a city, with all the economic, commercial, administrative and religious functions (it hosted a bishopric) typical of cities, as well as the relative juridical status and privileges. These circumstances make it an interesting

case for study, because it allows for research on an urban environment whose dimension is still quite manageable. Furthermore, Ivrea offers excellent historical documentation, in particular some of the oldest available parish registers.

For the parish of S. Ulderico, registers of baptisms are available starting from 1473, well before the Council of Trent (1545-1563) made them compulsory for the entire Catholic world. Unfortunately, the other urban parishes are not so well documented, but data preceding the Council is available for a second parish (S. Maurizio, whose baptismal registers start in 1529). I have used elsewhere these precious sources to study the social transformation caused by the imposition of the Tridentine reform of baptism and godparenthood that outlawed Ivrea's traditional system of spiritual kinship, characterized by the presence at each baptism of many godfathers and many godmothers; the Council allowed one per type as a maximum (Alfani 2006a). This painful transition, which people of Ivrea tried vainly to resist, was complete by 1586, just before the period this paper is focussed on. This fact is important and has to be kept in mind, especially considering that as a result of this change in the 'godparenthood model', spiritual kinship in Ivrea had become a much more vertical tie than it was previously: the way in which godparenthood ties could be used, and their role in society, had changed. I shall return to this matter later.

For the present work, I chose to focus on the last decades of XVIth Century and the first of XVIIth for two reasons. First of all, while baptismal registers are available since the beginning of the century, marriage registers appear only later: in 1587 for S. Ulderico and in 1588 for S. Maurizio respectively. Given my comparative aim, I decided it was preferable to limit myself to a period when all necessary data was available. Secondly, from 1616 there is a long gap in S. Ulderico baptismal records, ending only in 1631 (a similar gap is present in S. Maurizio baptismal records between 1562 and 1583). For these reasons, the majority of the analyses I shall conduct in the following pages concern the years 1588-1610, but sometimes I shall use as a complementary data concerning previous or following years.

In fact, I extracted this sub-set of data from a much larger database, that I named *Eporedia* (the Roman name of Ivrea), presently consisting of about 36.000 nominative records spanning the years 1466-1616. Such information comes from disparate sources: other than parish registers (of baptisms and marriages), it comprehends *estimi* (property records complete with estimates), censuses, notarial acts etc. The database has been built with the precise intent of studying spiritual kinship and other 'weak' relationships (neighbourhood, marriage witnesses...).

Up to now, the data from parish registers found in *Eporedia* relates to the two aforementioned parishes only that have the oldest documentation. I estimated that at the end of XVIth Century about a third of the population of Ivrea lived in these parishes. In the years 1588-1610, 412 marriages were celebrated at the two parishes (157 in S. Ulderico and 255 in S. Maurizio) at which 1.021 witnesses were present, and 2.210 baptisms (607 in S. Ulderico and 1.603 in S. Maurizio), at which 2.224 godfathers and 2.160 godmothers were present. In the next paragraph I shall discuss in greater depth such numbers; what I want to underline now, is that study-

ing weak ties results in a kind of explosion of the relevant data. In face of 'only' 412 marriages, we find 1.021 witnesses¹⁰, on average 2,5 per marriage (the Council of Trent had stated that two or three witnesses were needed¹¹, but in many cases I found more, up to a maximum of 10). In face of 2.210 baptisms, we find 4.384 godparents (we would have found many more, had the Council of Trent not reformed godparenthood: in Ivrea before 1563, 2,6 godfathers and 1,3 godmothers per baptism were the average). In the case of baptisms, the biggest issue is that only the aim of studying spiritual kinship (or, in some cases, namegiving¹²) could induce us to transcribe nominative data concerning them.

This situation surely poses some problems for research, especially considering that the 'quest for weak ties' has not a clear point of arrival. Apart from godparenthood and marriage witnessing, we could consider neighbourhood, professional affinity, participation in confraternities, corporations and institutions, or simple friendship... and, as the number of relationships increases, so do the problems posed by the sources, not only in the terms of their comparability, but also in their availability and capacity to answer our questions. This helps to explain why historical research has neglected these topics for so long; it also suggests that new projects on them must be carefully planned in order to avoid waste of time and discouraging others from further research on this subject.

2. Spouses, godparents and marriage witnesses: an aggregate analysis. The way different networks integrated (or stayed apart) can be studied from different perspectives and levels¹³. Elsewhere I adopted the community level to compare marriage and godparenthood, but here I have chosen to focus on individuals. By reconstructing individual paths of netbuilding, I plan to describe the interaction of the networks built on three kinds of social ties: that between spouse and spouse, and their affines; that between the baptized child, his parents and godparents; and that between spouses and their marriage witnesses. To satisfy this aim, it is necessary to start with as clear a picture as possible of the whole networks based on the three aforementioned ties so that we are able to underline significant differences, that at the same time regulate (through social customs) the way these ties can be used, and explain how they were used, as relational instruments.

It is widely recognized that one of the most important characteristics of a social tie is its relationship to blood kinship. Together with marriage, blood kinship is surely the most important relationship in Western societies up to the present day, although many different ties are based on blood: obviously the relationship between father and son is different from that between siblings. Indeed, in a comparative perspective the strength of blood ties poses some problems. For example, at what degree does a blood tie become weaker¹⁴ than a newly built tie based on spiritual kinship? Some scholars have argued that siblings tend to become distant relatives over time, to the extent that kinship is no longer perceived. Marriage can be used to solve this problem (Delille 1985), but to overcome it in a less 'definitive' way some societies recur to godparenthood (Zonabend 1978).

It is obvious that this kind of systematic cross between networks based on blood

and spirit would be of the utmost interest. However, it must be stressed that my data does not allow me to reconstruct full genealogies, for two reasons: firstly, no marriage registers have been preserved for Ivrea parishes before 1587, and secondly, baptismal registers (available since the last decades of XVth Century) as a rule do not specify the family of origin of the mother. Only the surname of the father is registered. Being unable to ground my analysis on genealogical reconstruction, I can only check the role of blood ties in a limited and imprecise way, i.e. by comparing surnames¹⁵. I will hypothesise the presence of a blood tie (which could be more or less close) when the same surname appears in the records, for example between the father of the baptized child and godparent, or between spouse and marriage witness. It is obvious that not every blood tie implied the same surname, and that having the same surname did not always mean being part of the same family (if we mean as ‘family’ the group in which kin is perceived). Luckily, in the case of Ivrea the problem is somewhat circumscribed by the fact that the homonymy rate was low, so the information given us by surnames, even if limited, is however relevant.

In table 1 I present data concerning the presence of blood ties between godparents and godchildren/godchildren’s parents, and between spouses and marriage witnesses. The data is divided on a parish and gender basis (I distinguished between godfathers and godmothers, and between marriage witnesses with the same surname of the husband or of the wife). Marriage witnesses were witness to the couple as a whole, but I differentiated those whose surname was the same as the husband (witnesses ‘of the husband’) from those whose surname was the same as the wife (witnesses ‘of the wife’), in order to identify kin of the two different sides of the alliance: for this reason the total number of witnesses is always the same.

In the case of godparenthood, no significant differences are found between the two parishes considered: in both of them, the proportion of godfathers having the same surname as the father of the child (baptismal registers do not record the surname of the mother) is quite small (3.72% in S. Ulderico and 4.73% in S.

Tab. 1. *Godparents, marriage witnesses and blood ties (S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio parishes. 1588-1610)*

	S. Ulderico			S. Maurizio			S. Ulderico + S. Maurizio		
	TOT	Kin (n.)	Kin (%)	TOT	Kin (n.)	Kin (%)	TOT	Kin (n.)	Kin (%)
Godfathers	618	23	3.72	1606	76	4.73	2222	99	4.46
Godmothers	599	7	1.17	1561	44	2.82	2158	51	2.36
All godparents	1217	30	2.47	3167	120	3.79	4380	150	3.42
Witnesses ‘of the husband’	365	3	0.82	656	31	4.73	1021	34	3.33
Witnesses ‘of the wife’	365	0	0	656	36	5.49	1021	36	3.53
All witnesses	365	3	0.82	656	67	10.21	1021	70	6.86

Maurizio), and is even smaller if we look at godmothers (1.17% in S. Ulderico and 2.82% in S. Maurizio). The fact that godfathers are chosen among kin about twice as often as godmothers could be due to a difference in social customs, or to the aforementioned unavailability of the surname of mothers. In the latter case we are hypothesising that godfathers came more often from the family of the fathers, and godmothers from that of the mothers, but I have no reason to think that such a social custom existed in Ivrea, and if we consider the 55 cases when the family name of the mother is recorded in the registers, we find just one coincidence of surname with godfathers, and one with godmothers (1.82% in both cases). For this reason, I think that the fact that godfathers were more often kin to the parents of their godchildren than godmothers is due to differences in the way male and female godparents were selected, which I studied elsewhere (Alfani 2006b).

With marriage witnesses, we face a different situation. Gender does not play a significant role, as the proportion of witnesses 'of the husband' and 'of the wife' is more or less the same (3.33% and 3.53% respectively for S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio parishes together). The people who married in S. Ulderico, however, seem to have acted in a very different way from that who married in S. Maurizio. In the first parish, witnesses were almost never kin to the spouses (in total only 0.82%), while in the second this was quite common (in total 10.21%). Such a marked difference is not easy to explain, especially considering that the relevant number of cases considered means that it is highly improbable that it is due to chance. We can hypothesise that it is due to different parish customs: even though both parishes were part of the same city and bordered each other, it is not impossible that different traditions developed. Otherwise, we can hypothesise that in S. Ulderico witnesses coming from kin were not registered (but I think this highly improbable, considering the overall precision of the records), or that the priest there suggested that the spouses choose different 'official' witnesses. At the time, the church of Ivrea was actively trying to reassert control over how rites were performed¹⁶, and such an attitude would not be inconceivable, especially considering that, for the Church, the role of marriage witnesses was that of 'pure witnesses', i.e. people suitable for certifying that a marriage had taken place.

Truth be told, I am not completely satisfied with any of the above explanations, and I think that only further research could allow us to fully understand the reasons of this different parish behaviour. Here, however, I can not develop the matter further, so the difference between S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio will be simply assumed as a matter of fact.

Together, the data concerning godparents and marriage witnesses suggest a relevant conclusion: the networks of weak ties built on such social relationships were generally not coherent with the network of blood ties. Even if my sources do not allow me to fully study kinship, I think that the results are so clear that this conclusion could not be upturned. This is very important in starting to define (by negation) the social space where the activity of netbuilding I shall analyse here took place: it was *not* the space dominated by blood, whose importance is well known. The space of spiritual kinship and the space in which the choice of marriage wit-

nesses took place was separate from the space of kin, even if there were points of connection: 3.42% of all godparenthood ties and 6.86% of all witness-relationships considered probably overlapped with a blood tie. In the case of godparenthood, a long tradition of anthropological studies has insisted upon the consideration that, in different communities, spiritual kinship could be used to intensify or to extend natural kinship¹⁷. According to such a dichotomy, surely Ivrea should be counted among the places where the latter behaviour was prevalent.

Discussing the coherence of the aforementioned social spaces with that of blood ties, we might wonder what the position of the marriage alliance was. Through marriage, new blood relationships start, but only concerning the offspring of the spouses. Through the social institution of affinity, however, also the families of husband and wife become relatives, with specific impediments to marriage. So the question is: did affinity cross blood ties, or did marriages at Ivrea take place outside of kin? I compared the surnames of the spouses for all the 412 marriages celebrated in S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio parishes in 1588-1610, and found that only in 3 cases (0.73%) they matched. The conclusion is that people of Ivrea chose their partners outside the family, or at least avoided the closest degrees of kinship, those for which special dispensation from the bishop was required: in the registers I found only two annotations concerning such dispensation, for a 4th and 3rd degree respectively. It is interesting that, compared with such complete exclusion of kin from marriage alliances, strategies of selection of godparents and marriage witnesses were much more kin-oriented, even if such choices represented a small portion of the total.

Research on social and demographic history conducted on marriage strategies suggest us another field where the selection of partners can be compared with the choice of spiritual kinsmen and marriage witnesses: exogamy/endogamy. It is a well known fact that some communities chose spouses mainly from the outside, while others chose them inside the community; a great variety of intermediary cases have also been described. Did these preferences¹⁸ correspond to similar strategies of selection of godparents and marriage witnesses, or did they differ? Behaviour in this regard is essential in defining the relevant characteristics of each network, and in particular their degree of openness towards other communities.

In table two, I present data about geographic exogamy for alliance, godparent-

Tab. 2. *Geographic exogamy: foreigners as spouse, godparents and marriage witnesses (S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio parishes. 1588-1610)*

	TOT	Foreigners (n.)	Foreigners (%)
Husbands	412	147	35.68
Wives	412	85	20.63
All Spouses	824	232	28.16
Marriage witnesses	1021	105	10.28
Godfathers	2224	210	9.44
Godmothers	2158	104	4.81
All Godparents	4384	314	7.16

hood and the choice of marriage witnesses. S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio parishes are considered together because I did not find any relevant difference between the two. I excluded immigrants, i.e. people registered as «coming from... but now living in Ivrea», from the count of foreigners.

The data suggests that the three social institutions gave way to very different choices from a 'geographic' point of view. The selection of a partner, in particular, was much more open to the outside than the choice of marriage witnesses or of godparents. 35.68% of the husbands and 20.63% of the wives came from a community other than Ivrea, as opposed to only a 10.28% of marriage witnesses and 7.16% of godparents.

The weaker ties seem to be confined to a much more local space. While this statement is true in a general sense, it must be pointed out that this does not mean that weaker ties played a lesser role in establishing links with other communities. Actually, if we look at the number of ties and not at the proportion, we discover that marriages accounted for 232 ties with 'foreigners', marriage witnesses for just 105, and godparenthood for 314. Thanks to the fact that baptisms were much more numerous than marriages, godparenthood is the single most 'outside-connected' social institution, while not being the most 'outside-oriented'.

Inside godparenthood, there are relevant differences between the choice of godfathers and godmothers. Among the first, foreigners are twice as many as among the latter (9.44% versus 4.81%): the godmotherhood network is confined to a much more local space while being at the same time less connected to natural kinship network, seemingly in accordance with the people of Ivrea's view of the practice as less important. Obviously, an inferior openness to the outside and weaker connections with kin do not automatically bring with them an inferior relevance, but in the case of godmotherhood as compared to godfatherhood I found lesser care in the selection of godmothers, even if their importance had been recently boosted by the Council of Trent which (involuntarily) fostered spiritual parity between sexes by forbidding strategies aimed at selecting multiple godfathers (Alfani 2006a; 2006b). Inferior mobility of females compared to males could also have played a role in closing godmotherhood to the outside.

The choice of foreigners as godfathers, godmothers or as marriage witnesses can be linked to the place of origin of the fathers/mothers and of the spouses; I shall focus here on godfathers. In 424 baptisms the father of the child was registered as coming from a place different from Ivrea. Often, but not always, the baptismal registers add that he was *civis*, *habitor* or *incola* of Ivrea: for my purpose the differences between these classifications are not relevant, because all of them indicate that the father was an immigrant residing in Ivrea¹⁹. More important would be to know whether those fathers registered as coming from another place, but baptising their children in Ivrea, were residents or not. Probably most of them were residents; here I shall hypothesise that all of them lived in Ivrea. The children they baptized received a total of 431 godfathers; of these, 78 (18.01%) were immigrants (people coming from other places registered as *civis*, *habitor* or *incola* of Ivrea); 84 (19.49%) were foreigners (in the same sense as 'foreigners' in table 2) and 269

(62.41%) were citizens of Ivrea. The evidence suggests that people migrating to Ivrea, although they did not create an isolated community inside the city (the most of their ties of spiritual kinship were established with 'old' citizens), nevertheless kept stronger than normal ties with other communities: 40% of all foreign godfathers were chosen by this 19.19% of immigrant fathers.

If the degree of geographic exogamy²⁰ of marriage alliance, godparenthood and marriage witnessing was very different, the orientation of the links they established with the outside presents striking analogies. The three communities from which came more foreign spouses, godparents and marriage witnesses are the same, in almost the same order of relevance. First, we find Biella (except for marriage witnesses, that come more often from Montalto, a village that occupies the second place in the other two lists), the city with which Ivrea had the strongest economic ties even if it was not easy to reach due to the mountainous territory between them (the morenic hills called *Serra*). Second, we find Montalto, a village of medium importance positioned along the road leading to Val d'Aosta. Third, we find Pavone, a small village very near Ivrea.

This apparent exact geographic coherence of the networks of ties vanishes if we consider the links with other communities, occupying lower positions in the lists. I shall not discuss the matter in detail here (I have compared in depth marriage and baptismal strategies at the community level for the Canavese territory elsewhere. Alfani 2005a); suffice to say that the logic seems that of integration between networks having different characteristics. Through marriage, the most important knots of a general network of territorial relationships are secured. Through godparenthood, such knots are strengthened and, most importantly, connected by means of social contacts with other communities where marriage would be impossible or undesirable, but where having some friends is useful. For example, while the marriage ties with the city of Biella are very strong, ties with a series of villages and towns situated along the difficult roads that crossed hills and mountains between the cities were based almost only on godparenthood.

Endogamy and exogamy can be thought not only as 'geographic' but also as 'social' phenomena. In fact, we might wonder whether partners, godparents and marriage witnesses were chosen among peers i.e. people having more or less the same social position (social endogamy), or at higher or lower level of the social ladder (social exogamy). Should different behaviours appear for the three social institutions, we would have important information about what kind of ties they allowed to establish.

Parish registers contain one kind of information that can be used to evaluate the relative social ranking of fathers and godfathers, spouse and witnesses etc: their titles. On this base, I divided the population in four ranks: those who were registered without titles; *Magistri*, i.e. masters of the guilds; members of the clergy; *Signori*, i.e. all titled people, save for masters and clergymen. *Magistri* and clergy had special titles reserved only for them, so they can be easily distinguished from other titled people. It is evident that, inside the *Signori* group, there could be great differences between individuals. However, I find grouping them together a prefer-

able choice, because establishing a hierarchy of all titles would be risky both for the inherent imprecision of some social classification, and for the existence of local titling customs that could cause confusion.

In table 3 I cross data concerning titles of fathers of baptized children and husbands with that of godfathers, wives and marriage witnesses. Fathers/husbands are divided in three ranks: untitled, titled *Signori* or *Magistri* respectively (obviously fathers and husbands could not be part of the clergy, to whom marriage was prohibited, and thus also legitimate reproduction). In some cases, it has been necessary to integrate titles given to women with those given to their fathers or husbands²¹.

Evidence presented in table 3 suggests a marked difference between the marriage alliance and other, weaker social institutions: the first would be much more socially endogamic than the latter. Looking at the marriages celebrated in S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio parishes, of the 300 marriages where a husband without title was present, 285 (95%) saw the presence of a wife without title. For the lower ranks of Ivrea's society, the marriage alliance created almost solely horizontal ties. This conclusion, however, is somewhat softened by considering the 107 marriages where the husband came from the Signori group: only 60.75% of them took a wife coming from the Signori, while 38.32% took it from an inferior social level (Without Title). However, in absolute numbers this means just 41 marriages, so that the first impression of a substantially horizontal strategy of selection of partners stays true²². This is coherent with what was shown by research into marriage strategies during the Early Modern Age: in general, people thought that the best marriage was that between social and economical equals²³; the game of 'great marriages' concerned almost solely the upper classes.

Marriages, however, did not spawn only horizontal ties. Actually, if we look at marriage witnesses, we discover that the marriage alliance, the most socially endogamic tie among the three considered here, was coupled with the most exogamic. In fact, of the 735 witnesses present at marriages of husbands without title, just 61.5% were without a title (as opposed to 95% of wives) and a consistent 35.52% came from the Signori group. The same can be said by comparing wives with these same witnesses, as wives without title had 59.27% of witnesses without title and 35.12% of Signori. Looking at the Signori group, we find that 63.37% of witnesses of Signori husband and 65.59% of those of Signori wives came from the Signori group, while those coming from the Without Title group were 28.57% and 24.73% respectively. For the Signori, who were able to choose a partner of high social level, choosing low status witnesses represented an opportunity to diversify a general strategy of building social relationships in much the same way as happened with godparenthood, i.e they looked also at social ranks they would not consider for a marriage.

At the time considered here, the Council of Trent had recently reformed godparenthood. The reduction of the number of godfathers and godmothers had consequences that the Church neither expected nor desired. The tie of spiritual kinship became much more vertical than before: when the group of godparents had to be reduced in number, only those perceived as the best matches (the most desirable

Tab. 3. *Social exogamy: relative ranks of the parties (S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio parishes. 1588-1610)*

Husband and Wife		Magistri				Signori			
Without Title		Without title (%)		N. Marriages		Without title (%)		N. Marriages	
Tot. Marriages	N. Marriages	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)
Wife:									
S. Ulderico	157	79	7.59	7.59	-	75.00	25.00	74	-
S. Maurizio	255	221	1.36	-	-	100.00	-	33	-
S. Uld.+S.Mar	412	300	3.00	2.00	-	80.00	20.00	107	-
Husband and marriage witnesses									
Husband:									
Without Title									
Tot. Witnesses	N. Witnesses	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)
S. Ulderico	365	173	45.09	7.51	39.31	8.09	10.00	182	10.00
S. Maurizio	656	562	66.55	1.78	30.43	1.25	33.33	91	-
S. Uld.+S.Mar	1021	735	61.50	3.13	32.52	2.86	15.38	273	7.69
Wife and marriage witnesses									
Without Title									
Tot. Witnesses	N. Witnesses	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)
S. Ulderico	365	229	41.92	6.11	45.41	6.55	26.67	121	6.67
S. Maurizio	656	591	65.99	1.86	31.13	1.02	-	65	-
S. Uld.+S.Mar	1021	820	59.27	3.05	35.12	2.56	26.67	186	6.67
Father of the baptized child and godfathers									
Without Title									
Tot. Witnesses	N. Witnesses	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)
S. Ulderico	618	259	53.28	5.79	40.93	-	22.45	309	-
S. Maurizio	1606	1377	81.26	2.11	16.56	0.07	70.59	207	-
S. Uld.+S.Mar	2222	1635	76.88	2.69	20.37	0.06	34.85	515	-
Father of the baptized child and godmothers									
Without Title									
Tot. Godfathers	N. Godfathers	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)
S. Ulderico	618	259	53.28	5.79	40.93	-	22.45	309	-
S. Maurizio	1606	1377	81.26	2.11	16.56	0.07	70.59	207	-
S. Uld.+S.Mar	2222	1635	76.88	2.69	20.37	0.06	34.85	515	-
Father of the baptized child and godmothers									
Without Title									
Tot. Godmothers	N. Godmothers	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)	Without title (%)	Magistri (%)	Signori (%)	Clergy (%)
S. Ulderico	598	253	52.57	3.56	43.87	-	38.64	300	-
S. Maurizio	1562	1331	86.48	0.45	13.07	-	75.00	203	-
S. Uld.+S.Mar	2160	1584	81.06	0.95	17.99	-	48.33	503	-

In the total number of godfathers and godmothers are comprised a few cases in which a comparison with father's title was inopportune: bastards and abandoned children. Their godparents, while comprised in the total, have been excluded from the other measures provided in the table.

spiritual kinsmen) survived. I found this transformation in many places of Northern Italy, so this was a general transformation that affected almost all the places where social customs preceding the Council of Trent led to selection of many godparents (Alfani 2006a).

Anyway, according to table 3 godparenthood seems to have been a much more vertical tie in S. Ulderico parish, than it was in S. Maurizio. Fathers without title chose 40.93% of godfathers and 43.87% of godmothers among the Signori in S. Ulderico, while in S. Maurizio the percentiles drop to 16.56% and 13.07% respectively. This suggests a difference in how godparenthood connected social ranks in the two parishes; a difference that we also find when looking at marriage witnesses, even if in this case it is much more limited (for example, 39.31% of witnesses of husbands without title marrying in S. Ulderico came from the Signori group, as opposed to just 30.43% of witnesses in S. Maurizio). It is probable, however, that this fact is not, or not only, due to differences in behaviour between the two parishes, but also to differences in their social composition. S. Ulderico was positioned at the very centre of the city, in an area where many of the best shops and stores were placed. Its inhabitants had many relationships (for example, of a commercial nature) with members of the upper class that could both have enabled them to ask Signori to be godparents, and made this kind of choice more strategically useful. S. Maurizio, instead, while also being an important productive parish, was more residential in nature. Looking at the way spiritual kinship connected social ranks in a longer period, in S. Ulderico a verticalization of the tie happened after the Council of Trent for the aforementioned reasons (in years 1540-1549 just 20% of the godparents of children without title came from the Signori group, i.e. in proportion less than half as many as in years 1588-1610); a similar transformation happened also in S. Maurizio, even if it started from a more horizontal situation and had lesser scope, but the more fragmented data available for this parish before 1580s somewhat complicates the comparison.

Looking at the Signori fathers, what for the inferior levels of society was a verticalization process assumed the characteristics of an 'horizontalization' process. Before the Council of Trent, in the large groups of godparents that were usual in Ivrea, the Signori also selected people coming from lower social levels, as well as a member of the clergy²⁴. When the Tridentine 'couple model' (one godfather and one godmother) had been imposed, however, the Signori restricted their choices to members of their own social group: 80.91% of godfathers and 77.67% of godmothers of Signori children baptized in S. Ulderico were Signori themselves, as well as 72.46% and 67% of godfathers and godmothers in S. Maurizio.

Considering the evidence presented in table 3 as a whole, the most striking conclusion is that marriage alliance was socially endogamic, while selection of marriage witnesses and godparents was much more exogamic, especially looking at the lower levels of the social ladder. As already noticed, selection of godparents was however more socially endogamic than that of witnesses. From this point of view at least, we find a clear connection with the strength of ties: a strong parental tie (marriage) is very endogamic; at the weakening of parental ties (godparenthood) we find many

more exogamic choices; outside the boundaries of kinship (marriage witnesses) we find the most exogamic behaviours of all.

Looking at such variables as the overlapping of newly built social ties with blood ties, geographic endogamy and social endogamy, the three social institutions present some analogies, but even more striking are the differences. In general, they created social spaces different one from the other: even if the space of blood ties, of marriage alliance, of godparenthood and of marriage witnessing presented important points of connection, nevertheless they were not at all the same. A first lesson can be learnt from this: by looking just at one institution, an incomplete picture would appear. I shall further discuss the matter when analysing individual paths.

Before proceeding from the aggregate survey to individuals, however, it is necessary to tackle another issue. Looking at godparents and at marriage witnesses as a whole, are we facing a situation where the ties are equally distributed among the population of Ivrea, or are there some people who are chosen with particular frequency as godparents or witnesses? In other words, has the network of social ties built on such institutions a kind of homogeneous thickness, or does it thicken around some individuals capable of attracting a bigger than usual share of ties? In the case of godparenthood, I shall focus here on godfathers for reasons of simplicity.

Among the 2.224 godfathers taking part in baptisms celebrated in Ivrea between 1588 and 1610, we find only 1.111 different people; on average, each godfather participates at 2 baptisms. Among the 1.021 marriage witnesses, we find 599 different people; on average, each of them took part at 1,7 marriages. The averages, however, do not give us an important information, i.e. whether a small number of people was able to attract the biggest share of the ties, being requested often as godparent or marriage witness. At this end, it is better to use measures apt at describing concentration, such as the Gini index. In table 4 I present Gini index²⁵ for both godfathers and marriage witnesses (remember that Gini index would have value 1 if all godfathers/witnesses were just the same person, and 0 if all of them were different individuals), as well as related percentiles telling us, for example, which share of godparenthood ties was attracted by the 10% most chosen godfathers, etc. Data for S. Maurizio and S. Ulderico parishes has been used together.

As regards concentration, there are no big differences between godparenthood and marriage witnessing. The first is slightly more concentrated than the latter, as revealed by Gini indexes of 0.41 and 0.35 respectively. These values by themselves

Tab. 4. *Concentration of godfathers and marriage witnesses (S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio parishes. 1588-1610)*

	Godfathers	Marriage witnesses
% of ties related to 10% most chosen	36.76	33.40
% of ties related to 20% most chosen	53.14	48.68
% of ties related to 30% most chosen	63.51	58.96
% of ties related to 50% less chosen	24.91	29.29
Gini index	0.41	0.35

do not suggest a great degree of concentration of ties, but it is striking that the percentage of ties connecting the top 10% most frequently chosen as godfathers and witnesses is of 36.76% and 33.4% respectively. Very few people were chosen repeatedly to perform such roles; expanding the selection (i.e. looking at the 20% most chosen, then at the 30%) we find quite a steep decline in the favour accorded to progressively less commonly chosen people. This means that index values result from the combination of a small *élite* of *abituées* godfathers and witnesses, and a majority of people rarely chosen. Actually, 743 out of 1,111 (67%) individuals were chosen just once as godfathers, while 434 out of 599 (72%) were chosen just once as marriage witnesses.

It is now clear that very few people took part much more often than average at ceremonies. Who were they? And, more importantly given my aims, can we find the same names among *abituées* godfathers and witnesses?

Let's consider the 15 most chosen godfathers. On average, they take part in 15 baptisms celebrated in S. Ulderico or S. Maurizio in 1588-1610, having as extremes the 22 ceremonies of *dominus* Giovanni Pietro Scala and the 10 of *dominus* Francesco Cortella. Usually, they have a good social position as revealed by their titles (10 Signori, 1 *magister* and just 4 without title). However, just three of them (the aforementioned Scala, Cortella and *dominus* Girolamo Alberti) can be counted also among the 15 most chosen marriage witnesses. It is true that the other 12 most chosen godfathers were however present in my list of 434 individual witnesses (with 2 exceptions, the 12 times godfather Bernardo Vercelli and the 18 times godfather Battista Menaldo: both, probably not by chance, without title), but did not have particularly distinguished positions.

Among the 15 top marriage witnesses we find a prevalence of Signori (10) exactly corresponding to that found for godfathers, but of even greater status (5 *magnifici domini* and 1 *illustris dominus*, of which none was found among the top godfathers); probably the fact that marriage witnesses remained outside the boundary of kinship made it easier to induce them to take part in ceremonies.

For the sake of brevity, I shall not develop here an analysis of *abituées* godfathers and marriage witnesses²⁶. Suffice to note that social spaces created by godparenthood and witnessing ties differed when looking at those people that were chosen most often, and around which the network of ties corrugated and thickened. In other words, we are faced with different, albeit partially overlapping networks, with different crucial knots. What now needs investigation is how people moved inside these networks and how they used them to forward a comprehensive strategy of social relationships.

3. From the aggregate to individuals. Paths and netbuilding. Marriage, marriage witnessing and godparenthood spawned different social ties, with different characteristics and usable in different ways and in different situations. This condition can be also thought of as one of just partially overlapping social spaces. But how did individuals move in and through such spaces? Is any regularity or any strategy recognisable? Was there any interaction between the three social institutions, maybe destined to stay hidden in aggregate analysis?

To answer such questions, I focussed on a reduced sample, chosen to be sure that all the three social institutions considered could interact, if the actors involved meant them to. In selecting the data, first I restricted the sample to the 227 marriages celebrated between 1588 and 1600, leaving out those celebrated in 1601-1610 because I wanted to consider only marriages capable of producing children (and thus baptisms) before the gaps in the registers I already wrote about. Then, I further restricted the sample to 111 marriages that generated at least one child baptized in S. Ulderico or S. Maurizio in 1588-1610. Considering that in Ivrea the prevailing social custom required marriages to be held in the parish of the wife, it is possible that some marriages, celebrated with a 'foreigner' or with a man from Ivrea residing in a parish other than S. Ulderico or S. Maurizio, preceded the disappearance of the new couple outside the horizon of observability. By imposing on marriages of the sub-sample the condition of generating at least a child later baptized in the aforementioned parishes, I focussed on 'stationary couples', who married and later resided in the area considered here. Exceptions are obviously possible, but this represents a minor issue.

The event of marriage will be the starting point in my analysis. I have already shown that marriage witnesses and godparents were usually chosen outside the boundaries of blood and affinity ties, so I will not develop further such a conclusion limiting myself to remember that the social space in which partners were chosen was other than social spaces created by selection of witnesses and godparents. Presently I shall focus on such weaker ties.

At marriage, witnesses were chosen. Who chose them? Probably they were chosen partly by one of the families involved and partly by the other. Occasion and circumstance however also played a role, considering that sometimes we find the same witnesses at marriages celebrated the same day²⁷. In this case, it is possible that witnesses chosen by many different families came to form a single group. Another problem is discovering who actually took the decision: the husband and the wife, or their parents, or the 'family' in a broader sense? I can not discuss the matter here, but surely this is a relevant question, albeit one that is difficult to answer with early modern age sources.

How did selection of marriage witnesses interact with that of godparents, and especially godfathers given that women were not considered acceptable witnesses? One could presume that relationship between godfather and godchild was emotional and 'father-like' and that at the time of marriage godchildren asked godfathers to witness. Truth be told, in such a view a lot of prejudice is involved. Actually, during the early modern age we have no proof of this type of godfather-godchild relationships (save for very rare cases that *might* suggest that: emotional wordings, for example in letters, could be due mainly to social customs and convenience²⁸). However, it is clear that as a rule the most important godparenthood relationship was that between *compari* (parents of the child and his godparents) and not that between godparents and godchildren.

Anyway, I checked whether godfathers of the spouses appear among their marriage witnesses. The number of cases considered is small (15), given the difficulty

of tracing the relevant baptismal registrations. However, it seems significant that in none of these cases was a godfather present among the witnesses. Surely this can not be ascribed to a 'lack of emotion' or 'lack of involvement' because the most important variable was probably demographic: given mortality and life expectancy conditions of the epoch, it is reasonable to think that few godfathers survived until the marriage of their godchildren, or were healthy enough to allow them to participate.

Demography, however, can not be thought to be so important in the interaction of godparenthood and witnessing after marriage. Usually, the first child of fertile couples was born in the 2-3 years immediately following marriage (as confirmed by some, albeit incomplete, researches I did on Ivrea recurring to nominative reconstruction of families), so it is conceivable that the majority of marriage witnesses were still alive and in good health. Were they chosen to act as godfathers?

Out of 111 marriages, I found just 13 (11.7%) in which one of the witnesses (never more) later acted as godfather for one of the children of the couple. The case of the *dominus* Giovanni Maria Sala, who together with Battista Furno witnessed on 4th February 1596 the marriage of Francesco Bertinoto and Maddalena daughter of the *nobilis* Lodovico Vespa and later acted as godfather for well two children of the couple (their firstborn Margherita, baptized 13 April 1597, and their secondborn Bartolomeo, baptized 26 May 1599) is unique.

Considering that the 111 marriages generated many more baptisms, it is obvious that the share of godfathers chosen among marriage witnesses was very low. The other way round (spouses acting as marriage witnesses at marriages of the godfathers of their children) was not tracked either, as I practically found no such cases.

On the basis of the evidence we have to recognise, once again, that different social institutions generated substantially different social spaces, with very few intersections among the relative networks. This does not mean that the choices are not interrelated and can not be seen as part of a whole strategy, but just that different people were chosen to cover different roles. From this point of view, a strategy aimed at extending social contacts seems to be recognisable: each different occasion would be used in order to extend the number of people to whom one was tied. Variety of ties was assured by different social customs associated to different institutions (more or less socially and geographically exogamic, etc.), and also by different strength of each tie and thus different possibilities associated to them.

Such an analysis, however, still needs completion. Given that different social institutions were used to extend the total number of connected people by generating little-connected social spaces, are we sure that, looking at each institution by itself, does not result a somewhat different picture? Are we sure that choices were orientated to increase the number of tied people, or were always the same people preferred for a particular role (for example, selecting the same godfather for each child of a couple)?

To develop my analysis in such a direction, I shall focus on godparenthood. About marriage witnesses, suffice to say that such an institution was not particularly favourable to repeating choices, given that second and further marriages, while

not rare, were nevertheless the exception. However, out of five cases comprised in the sample of widows marrying again, I found just one case of repeated witnessing (*dominus* Marc'Antonio Turino, who on 6th June 1594 witnessed the marriage of Pietro Turino with *domina* Angela, daughter of Stefano Sordevolo, and on 1st October 1600 with *nobilis domina* Anna Marina). Even if the few cases considered can not guarantee statistical precision, the impression is that they have little relevance, especially keeping in mind that marriages were not as recurrent events as baptisms. Furthermore, I found no cases of 'exchange of witnessing', i.e. of spouses acting as witnesses at their witnesses' marriage.

As anticipated, the focus shall be on godparenthood: not least because I found that this institution exhibited very different behaviour from that just underlined for marriage witnesses. For a start, data at my disposal showed that sometimes parents and godparents were willing to establish a particularly sound relationship. Actually, in some places it was customary to give all the children of a couple the same godfather²⁹. Nothing like this happened in Ivrea, but nevertheless repetition of godfathers was not unknown, as shown by table 5, where I make use of two sub-samples different from the one used before. I focussed on godfathers taking part at baptisms celebrated in S. Ulderico in 1544-1547 and 1592-1595 (i.e. before and after the Council of Trent), following their activity as godfather during all the period included in Eporedia database in its current form (1473-1616) and in both parishes (S. Ulderico and S. Maurizio). The data presented has been cleared of those cases in which, when a baby died very young, his first brother to be born in following months or years received the same godparents. Furthermore, I considered the possibility that a godfather was represented at baptism by his wife or daughter, acting as godmother, or that 'couple strategies' were pursued³⁰.

Tab. 5. *Repetition of godfathers (S. Ulderico parish. 1544-1547 and 1592-1595)*

Samples	Tot. Godfathers	Number of repeated godfathers	% on total
1544-1547	184	35	19.02
1592-1595	237	45	18.99

The incidence of repeated godfathers on the total is significant, reaching almost 20%. It is probable that these ties accounted for a kind of privileged relationship, stronger and more intense than normal because it was continuously renewed. This statement seems to be confirmed by the fact that such a relationship is exclusive: save for two cases (Francesco Gasseno and Cristoforo Sutor), only one is developed by each couple. The most striking example is that of *magister* Martino Feletto, who baptised 7 children of *magister* Michele Turino. The two were colleagues, both exercising the craft of tailor.

In other cases, a tie built on spiritual kinship was strengthened by exchanges of godparenthood services: a man acted as godfather for the children of another, and vice versa. Compared to repeated selection of the same godfather, this kind of relationship seems more horizontal, and probably indicated and confirmed a relation-

Tab. 6. *Godparenthood and 'systems of reciprocity' (S. Ulderico parish. 1544-1547 and 1592-1595)*

	Godfathers participating in a system of reciprocity (%)	Incidence of reciprocity on the total of godparenthood services (%)
1544-1547	50.00	14.08
1592-1595	41.67	34.37

Note: Measures relative only to those godfathers taking part in at least one system of reciprocity.

ship of friendship between the parties involved. On the other hand, repeated selection of the same godfather hints at a relationship of patronage. In table 6 data concerning systems of reciprocity built on exchanges of godparenthood services is presented³¹.

Many godfathers were part of at least one system of reciprocity. The reduction in the frequency of such cases between 1544-1547 and 1592-1595 is significant. It could mean that the transition from the 'multi-godfathers' model customary in Ivrea before the Council of Trent towards the 'couple model', with a consequent reduction in the total number of godfathers, caused a crisis of traditional social systems of services and counter-services. However, the fact that at the same time the proportion of godparenthood services marked by reciprocity increases, suggests that the transformation was not caused by disaffection towards a social custom that had become too difficult to pursue. Actually the problem was more one of choices and of 'selectivity': even if some people went on cultivating such privileged relationships, an increasing share of godfathers came to be completely excluded from them. These systems of reciprocity are interesting also in an anthropological perspective, because they can be likened to systems of gifts and counter-gifts whose importance has been underlined many times³².

Considering the non-negligible importance of behaviours that strengthened godparenthood ties between individuals instead of enlarging and further diversifying the total personal network of social contacts, it is even more striking the virtual absence of interaction between social spaces generated by different institutions. I shall return on the matter in the Conclusion.

As already noticed, many other weak relationships, placed outside the boundaries of kinship (traced by 'natural' kinship, affinity and spiritual kinship), could play a relevant role in the internal workings of a society: for example, neighbourhood, relationships based on profession (such as the practice of the same craft or art), being part of the same confraternity. We could wonder if such relationships interacted with godparenthood, by influencing the choice of godparents. Unfortunately, the sources available for Ivrea do not allow us to evaluate systematically the importance of such influences. I could only make limited enquiries into neighbourhood and relationships based on profession (no lists of members of confraternities of Ivrea ancient enough has survived). The tests, however, suggested that the influence exerted by these relationships on selection of godparents was very feeble, and surely unable to condition selection in a clearly distinguishable way³³.

More extensively, I studied another kind of relationship, i.e. witnessing at notarial acts. The relationship between the parties of the act and the witnesses has been studied very little³⁴, and presents problems of a theoretical nature. In particular, it is not clear what was the real status of such witnesses: were they chosen by the notary or by the parties? In the first case, were they his collaborators (ex. scribes, secretaries...), and were they paid to act as witnesses? In general, was their selection due to casualness or was it issue of strategic thinking?

I can not answer such questions here, although they are very similar to those posed by marriage witnesses (the act of witnessing in general still has dark sides). Suffice to say that the evidence at my disposal suggest that they were partly '*abituées* witnesses', and partly people rarely acting as witness and probably chosen by one of the parties, or by both, for specific reasons. For example, when at least one of the parties did not come from Ivrea but was a foreigner, we find witnesses coming from his same town, and we can hypothesise that they accompanied him to the deed. Only rarely collaborators of the notary acted as witnesses.

This being said, I did not find any systematic link between the role of notarial witness and godparenthood ties. However it is quite frequent to find the existence of spiritual kinship among one of the parties and one or more witnesses (excluding from the analysis, for obvious reasons, *abituées* witnesses). For example, in 1586 *comendabilis* Pietro Chiampo, godparent of messer Giovanni Maria Ecclesia, witnessed the act in which Giovanni gave acquittance to Giacomo Iurde from Carema. The same did *reverendus dominus* Matteo Guidetti for messer Giacomo Facio, *procurator fiscalis et notarius collegiatus* of Ivrea, and Giovanni Battista Cagnino for *comendabilis* Bernardo Gotino, and so on; however no relationship is discernable between the presence of godparents among witnesses and the kind of act drawn. The most interesting case is that of *dominus* Giovanni Battista Cavallo, exciseman and among the wealthiest inhabitants of Ivrea³⁵, who on 9th June 1584 baptizes Margherita, firstborn of *nobilis* Eusebio Strata, trader. In 1586, when Giovanni has to concede a credit to another trader, Giacomo Castelletto from Castiglione, he asks to his *compare* Eusebio to witness the act. Very shortly afterwards, the tie of spiritual kinship in renewed: on 8th August 1586 Giovanni Battista baptises Laura, second and last daughter of Eusebio.

Such examples, albeit sporadic, give us a glimpse of what was the role of spiritual kinship in sociability and even in economic activity of societies of the past. To overcome the reticence of the sources, however, further research would be needed.

Conclusion. The three social institutions considered here (marriage, marriage witnessing, godparenthood) showed little interaction in Ivrea during XVIth – early XVIIth Centuries. Instead of always choosing the same people, for example to act first as marriage witnesses and then as godparents of the children issued from such marriage, in Ivrea it was preferred to select different individuals. The strategy or repeating choices to intensify existing ties was not pursued, in favour of strategies aimed at extending the scope of the general network of social contacts. This picture is softened by considering that, looking at godparenthood, it was not infrequent to

repeatedly choose the same godfathers (the same man baptized many children of the same couple) or to exchange godparenthood services (one man acted as godfather for the child of another and vice versa). In general, social customs regulating godparenthood seem to be very well developed and potentially very important in regulating sociability in Early Modern Age Italian societies. This, together with the fact that the godparenthood ties were numerous due to the great number of baptisms for each couple that was typical of *ancien régime* societies, and with the Church's consideration of spiritual kinship as true kinship, suggests that this social institution played a particularly significant role among the 'weak' kinds of relationship.

However, it is striking that the social spaces built on marriage, marriage witnessing and godparenthood did not overlap, or did so only in very limited ways. An important lesson can be learnt from this: by looking just at one of these spaces, i.e. focussing on just one social institution (as happened for marriage in the past), an incomplete picture would appear. In much the same way, a distorted image would also be created if we attributed special and overbearing value to one social institution over the others. It is true that, generally speaking, marriage alliance can be thought of as more important than godparenthood (suffice to think of its patrimonial implications), but in some cases a spiritual tie could be more useful than a tie of affinity. So, in order to understand the way these societies worked, it would be useful to dig deeper into the realm of possibilities: what kind of social tie was more apt for answering a specific need? In which way was it possible for individuals to activate each tie? What social strategies were put in place to secure all the ties that each individual might *eventually* need? Questions such as these surely call for further research, focussed on the less well-known ties, especially those lurking outside the spotlight focussed on marriage.

¹ Among the most recent studies concerning godparenthood, see Coster 2002; Fine 1994; Hérítier-Augé and Copet-Rougier 1995; less recently, Lynch 1986.

² See for example Sabean 1998; Ericsson 2000; Munno 2005; Gourdon 2005b. I have contributed to this field too, for ex. Alfani 2003; 2004b; 2006a.

³ In effect, before the Council of Trent an even greater extension was recognized to spiritual kinship coming from baptism. At the beginning of XVIth Century canon law stated that spiritual kinship existed between godfather, godmothers and their spouses on one side, godchildren and their parents on the other side. Furthermore, there was spiritual kinship between godchildren and the children of their godparents, and between the baptized child

and the person who baptized him. In any case, relationships between the child, his parents and his godfathers and godmothers (i.e. the actors of baptism) had a prominent position among the other relationships of spiritual kinship. It must be noted that, originally, godparenthood had been introduced for two different rites: baptism and confirmation, both thought to generate spiritual kinship. I will focus myself here on baptismal godparenthood only. For the evolution of canon law on these themes, see Cimetier 1932; Iung 1937; Bailey 1951.

⁴ Actually, once such a word existed: 'godsib', that meant more or less 'spiritual brother/sister'. The word is the etymological antecedent of the modern word 'gossip', but has long disappeared from the English language. Coster 2002, 93-97.

⁵ The relationship between godfather and godchildren is called *padrinato* in Italian, *parrainage* in French and *padrinazgo* in Spanish. In English, the word 'godparenthood' comprises both *padrinato/parrainage/padrinazgo* and *comparatico/compéage/compadrazgo*.

⁶ For example, nobody wished to marry people positioned at a social level lower than theirs, but on the contrary few disdained to become spiritual kinsmen of these same people. About sociological research on effectiveness of weak ties, see Granovetter 1973; 1983.

⁷ For 'level of community' I mean a kind of analysis in which the focus is on difference in behaviour among communities as suggested by aggregate data (for example, what community interacted with what other by means of sending godparents to baptisms there celebrated?) and without descending to the level of individuals.

⁸ In the last decades, there has been much research on marriage witnesses, especially in France. Such research can be distinguished on the basis of the type of witnesses concerned: witnesses of church marriages; witnesses of civil marriages; witnesses of marriage contracts (at the presence of a notary). The three kinds of witnesses did not have completely homogeneous characteristics and were not chosen for the same reasons; this is especially the case with witnesses of marriage contracts. Here I shall focus only on witnesses of church marriages.

For a synthesis of the literature concerning witnesses of civil marriages, see Gourdon 2006, 2007; Pauquet 1998; Van Poppel and Schoonheim 2005. About witnesses of marriage contracts, see Beauvalet and Gourdon 1998 and Jahan 2004. About witnesses of church marriages, see for example Jacquemet 1984 and Gunnlaugsson and Guttormsson 2000. However such research has been mainly focussed on XIXth and, to a lesser extent, XVIIIth Century, so that the role of marriage witnesses during the Early Modern Age still is quite obscure.

⁹ Estimated on the basis of a census. *Censimento* of 1613, Historical City Archive of Ivrea, Category 14 (censimento).

¹⁰ All these witnesses are male, even if canon law did not explicitly prevent women from playing such a role. The only requirement was that witnesses were able to understand what was happening and in the condition of constatting the exchange of consensus between the spouses. It is probable that exclusion of

women from witnessing was due to the fact that they were not considered to be faithful enough, as it happened for notarial deeds. In France, for example, this was the opinion of jurists, as noted by Imbert 1993.

¹¹ In the famous *Tametsi*: see Alberigo and Dossetti 1991, 756.

¹² In some parts of Europe, for example in France, it was customary for godparents to give their names to godchildren (Burguière 1984). This however was not the case in the most of Italy at least, and surely not in Ivrea (Alfani 2005b; Klapisch-Zuber 1985).

¹³ See for example the comparison between networks based on marriage alliance and on marriage witnessing by Gourdon 2005a.

¹⁴ Generally speaking: it is obvious that an enormous variety of specific situations is possible, both comparing different societies, and inside each society.

¹⁵ At the time, surnames were not completely fixed yet. In few cases, I had only information such as patronimes, indication of provenance or of profession, etc. This difficulty has been overcome through using complex standardization procedures, that I described elsewhere (Alfani and Guerzoni 2007).

¹⁶ I studied the case of baptismal rite in detail (Alfani 2005c; 2006a).

¹⁷ See for example the early synthesis of Mintz and Wolf 1950.

¹⁸ Sometimes it is a matter of constrictions, not of preference: ex. when the local 'marriage market' is too little, it is unavoidable to choose partners outside the community in order not to commit incest of various degrees. See for example Merzario 1981.

¹⁹ Only to *cives* was recognized full citizenship with the relative rights; *habitatores* and *incolae* were considered just as residing foreigners (*forestieri*).

²⁰ The notion of exogamy and of endogamy, if applied to spiritual kinship and marriage witnessing becomes a kind of etymological nonsense. However, considering the common use of such words, I think that it is acceptable and non confusing to speak for example of 'spiritual endogamy', in the sense of 'inward-oriented' selection of godparents (in a geographic region, in a social group...), and vice versa for exogamy.

²¹ When a woman was registered as wife or daughter of somebody, her title was not always recorded. So, when I had to compare the title of the spouses at the time of marriage I crossed the titles given to the wife and to her father.

For example, I considered women without a title but registered as daughters of a *nobilis dominus* as part of the *Signori* group and I considered daughters of *Magistri* as part of a 'Magistri group' of women. I used the same procedure while comparing the title of the wife with that of marriage witnesses, and a similar one while comparing titles of fathers of baptized children with that of their godmothers; in the latter case the only difference is that women could be registered both as 'wife or somebody' or 'daughter of somebody'.

²² Without considering *Magistri*, few in number and thus statistically less important, we find that out of a total of 407 marriages where the husband was Without Title or came from the *Signori*, 350 (86%) were celebrated with a partner of approximately the same social level.

²³ See for example Merzario 1981.

²⁴ Before the Council of Trent, at every levels of the social ladder children often received, as part of a large group of godparents, a member of the clergy, to complete a 'good' strategy of selection of godparents having precise characteristics. Anyway, clergymen were surely among the victims of Tridentine reform, as having to select just one godfather per each child, fathers of Ivrea and of other communities of Northern Italy chose to renounce to this kind of ties. As is evident in table 3, at the time considered here clergymen were almost completely absent from baptisms celebrated in Ivrea (they account for only 23 of 2,222 godfathers: 1.04%); in S. Ulderico parish, in 1540-1549 they were 5.2%. About this issue, see Alfani 2004a.

²⁵ Gini index has been calculated by using the following formula: $G = (2/(n-1)) * \sum_i (F_i - Q_i)$, where n is the number of godfathers/witnesses, i is the position of each individual in the rank-

ing organized by increasing frequency of participation at baptisms/marriages, the sum goes from 1 to $n-1$, F_i is equal to i/n , Q_i is the sum of participations at ceremonies of all individuals comprised between position 1 and i , divided by the total number of participations as godfather/witness of every individual.

²⁶ For godfathers, see Alfani 2004a; 2006a.

²⁷ It is also possible that some of the witnesses were chosen by the priest, or randomly selected. This however probably accounts for very few cases (at least in early modern Ivrea); see in this regard the literature quoted in note n. 8.

²⁸ See for example what noted by Reinhardt 2000.

²⁹ For example, in the the German city of Neckharhausen during XVIIth Century (Sabeau 1998, 24) or in the Balkans between the end of XIXth and beginning of XXth Century (Hammel 1968).

³⁰ About godmothers acting as representatives of 'absent' godfathers and about couple strategies, see Alfani 2006a; 2006b.

³¹ The sample of godfathers has been cleared of those that did not have children, or that baptized them in parishes other than those studied here.

³² Suffice to remember Mauss 1950.

³³ About the role played by neighbourhood and by practicing the same craft on selection of godfathers in Florence, see Haas 1998.

³⁴ A notable exception are some of the works collected in Ruggiu, Beauvalet and Gourdon 2004.

³⁵ In 1594 he declares properties for 702 *scudi*, while the average calculated on all people owning property in Ivrea is 130 *scudi*. *Registro degli estimi del 1594*, Historical City Archive of Ivrea, Category 11 (catastro), n. 1470.

Bibliography

G. Alberigo, G.L. Dossetti (a cura di) 1991, *Concilium Oecumenicorum Decreta*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna.

G. Alfani 2003, *E pluribus unum: forme di padrinnaggio nell'Italia moderna a cavallo del Concilio di Trento*, «Quaderni Storici», 114, 823-848.

G. Alfani 2004a, *La famille spirituelle des prêtres en Italie septentrionale avant et après le*

Concile de Trente: caractéristiques et transformations d'un instrument d'intégration sociale, «Annales de Démographie Historique», 1, 137-161.

G. Alfani 2004b, *Padrinato e parentela spirituale in una prospettiva di lungo periodo: una questione storiografica a lungo trascurata*, «Storica», 30, 61-93.

G. Alfani 2005a, *Mobilità «matrimoniale» e mobilità «spirituale». L'integrazione territoriale per affinità e parentela spirituale nel*

- basso Canavese tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, «Popolazione e Storia», 2, 33-46.
- G. Alfani 2005b, *Naître sans famille: prénoms et parentés spirituelles des enfants trouvés dans l'Italie septentrionale (siècles XV-XVII)*, paper presented at Congress *Denomination et destin des enfants trouvés (XVII-XX siècles)*, Paris, September 2005, forthcoming in the Proceedings.
- G. Alfani 2005c, *Dalle pratiche alla norma: il Concilio di Trento e la riforma del padrinate in una prospettiva di lungo periodo*, «Società e Storia», 108, 31-62.
- G. Alfani 2006a, *Padri, padrini, patroni. La parentela spirituale nella storia*, Marsilio, Venezia.
- G. Alfani 2006b, *Les réseaux de marrainage en Italie du Nord du XV^e au XVII^e siècle: coutumes, évolution, parcours individuels*, «Histoire, Economie et Société», 4, 17-44.
- G. Alfani, G. Guerzoni 2007, *Court History, Career Analysis and a Prosopographic Approach. An Investigation into the Reciprocal Benefits of Contamination in the Este Case*, forthcoming in «The Court Historian» 12, 1, 1-34.
- D.S. Bailey 1951, *Sponsors at Baptism and Confirmation: An Historical Introduction to Anglican Practice*, Macmillan, New York.
- S. Beauvalet, V. Gourdon 1998, *Les liens sociaux à Paris au XVII^e siècle: une analyse des contrats de mariage de 1660, 1665 et 1670*, «Histoire Economie et Sociétés», 4, 583-612.
- A. Burguière 1984, *Prénoms et parenté*, in A. Dupâquier, A. Bideau, M.E. Ducreux (eds.), *Le Prénom: mode et histoire*, Éditions de l'EHESS, Paris, 29-35.
- F. Cimetier 1932, *Parenté (empêchements de)*, in A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, E. Amann (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Librairie Letouzey et Ané, Paris, 1995-2003.
- W. Coster 2002, *Baptism and Spiritual Kinship in Early Modern England*, Ashgate, Aldershot.
- G. Delille 1985, *Famille et propriété dans le Royaume de Naples (XV^e-XIX^e siècles)*, Ecole française de Rome, Rome-Paris.
- T. Ericsson 2000, *Godparents, witnesses, and social class in mid-nineteenth century Sweden*, in «The history of the family», 3, 273-286.
- A. Fine 1994, *Parrains, marraines. La parenté spirituelle en Europe*, Fayard, Paris.
- V. Gourdon 2005a, *Aux coeurs de la sociabilité villageoise: une analyse de réseaux à partir du choix des conjoints et des témoins au mariage dans un village d'Île-de-France au XIX^e siècle*, «Annales de Démographie Historique», 1, 61-94.
- V. Gourdon 2005b, *Working paper* discussed at seminary of J.P. Bardet, Université Paris-4, 1 December 2005.
- V. Gourdon 2006, *Réseaux des femmes, réseaux de femmes. Le cas du témoignage au mariage civil au XIX^e siècle dans les pays héritiers du Code Napoléon (France, Pays-Bas, Belgique)*, «Annales de Démographie Historique», 2, 33-55.
- V. Gourdon 2007, *Les témoins de mariage civil dans les villes européennes du XIX^e siècle: quel intérêt pour l'analyse des réseaux familiaux et sociaux?*, «Histoire, Economie et Société», forthcoming.
- M.S. Granovetter 1973, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, «American Journal of Sociology», 6, 1360-1380.
- M.S. Granovetter 1983, *The strength of weak ties: a network theory revisited*, «Sociological Theory», 1, 201-233.
- G.A. Gunnlaugsson, L. Guttormsson 2000, *Cementing alliances? Witnesses to marriage and baptism in Early Nineteenth-Century Iceland*, «The history of the family», 3, 259-272.
- L. Haas 1998, *The Renaissance Man and his Children: Childbirth and early Childhood in Florence, 1300-1600*, Macmillan, New York.
- E.A. Hammel 1968, *Alternative social structures and ritual relations in the Balkans*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.
- F. Héritier-Augé, E. Copet-Rougier (eds.) 1995, *La parenté spirituelle*, Éditions des Archives Contemporaines, Paris.
- J. Imbert 1993, *Les témoins au mariage du Concile de Trente à 1792, en France*, in *Le Droit de la famille en Europe. Son évolution de l'antiquité à nos jours*, Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, 307-313.
- N. Iung 1937, *Cognatio spiritualis*, in R. Naz (ed.), *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*, Letourney & Ané, Paris, 952-970.
- G. Jacquemet 1984, *Belleville au XIX^e siècle. Du faubourg à la ville*, Editions de l'EHESS, Paris.
- S. Jahan 2004, *Parenté et stratification sociale. Les témoins au contrat de mariage dans la France du Centre-Ouest (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, in F.J. Ruggiu, S. Beauvalet, V. Gourdon (eds.), *Liens sociaux et actes notariés dans le monde urbain en France et en Europe*, Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, Paris, 187-204.

- C. Klapisch-Zuber 1985, *Parrains et filleuls: Une approche comparée de la France, L'Angleterre et l'Italie médiévales*, «*Medieval Prosopography*», 6, 51-77.
- G. Levi 1985, *Come Torino soffocò il Piemonte*, in *Centro e periferia di uno stato assoluto*, Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino.
- J.H. Lynch 1986, *Godparents and kinship in Early Medieval Europe*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- M. Mauss 1950, *Essai sur le don*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris (first ed. 1923-1924).
- R. Merzario 1981, *Il paese stretto*, Einaudi, Torino.
- S.W. Mintz, E.R. Wolf 1950, *An Analysis of Ritual Co-Parenthood (compadrazgo)*, «*Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*», 6, 341-368.
- C. Munno 2005, *Prestige, intégration, parentèle: réseaux de parrainage dans une communauté ouvrier vénitienne (1834-1854)*, «*Annales de Démographie Historique*», 1, 95-130.
- A. Pauquet 1998, *La société et les relations sociales en Berry au milieu du XIX siècle*, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- N. Reinhardt 2000, *Macht und Ohnmacht der Verflechtung*, Bibliotheca academica Verlag Tübingen, Tübingen.
- F.J. Ruggiu, S. Beauvalet-Boutouyrie, V. Gourdon (eds.) 2004, *Liens sociaux et actes notariés dans le monde urbain en France et en Europe (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, Presses de l'Université Paris- Sorbonne, Paris.
- D.W. Sabeau 1998, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- F. Van Poppel, M. Schoonheim 2005, *Measuring cultural differences between religions using network data. An example based on Nineteenth-Century Dutch marriage certificates*, «*Annales de Démographie Historique*», 1, 173-197.
- F. Zonabend 1978, *La parenté baptismale à Minot (Côte-d'Or)*, «*Annales ESC*», 33, 3, 656-676.

Summary

Spiritual kinship and the others. Ivrea, XVIth-XVIIth Centuries

Recent research shows that the 'spiritual kinship' coming from baptism, which tied godfathers and godmothers on one side and godchildren and their parents on the other, had considerable importance in societies of the past. In general, this kinship created a new social tie or changed an already existing one, influencing future behaviour and creating the premise for elaborate social strategies. My paper aims to describe the characteristics of the network of spiritual kinship found in the Italian city of Ivrea during XVIth and early XVIIth Century, indicating both the very particular status of spiritual kinship, and the position it occupied in a more complex system of social alliances and contacts. Data used comes from «Eporedia» database of 36.000 nominative records spanning the years 1466-1616. The fundamental question to which I seek an answer is the following: did spiritual kinship help create a network isolated from other social networks, or did it integrate with them, or did these networks overlap and, if they did, in what measure and in which way? To answer such question, I compare three kinds of social relationship: godparenthood, marriage and 'marriage witnessing' (the only relationships that available sources, particularly parish registers, permit to study systematically).

The main finding is that these three social institutions showed little interaction. Instead of always choosing the same people, for example to act first as marriage witnesses and then as godparents of the children issued from such marriage, in Ivrea it was preferred to select different individuals. Social spaces built on marriage, marriage witnessing and godparenthood did not overlap, or did so only in very limited ways. A lesson for network analysis can be drawn from this: by looking just at one of these spaces, i.e. focussing on just one social institution (as happened for marriage in the past), an incomplete or even distorted picture would appear.

Riassunto

La parentela spirituale e gli altri. Ivrea, secoli XVI-XVII

Ricerche recenti vanno mostrando che la 'parentela spirituale' originata dal battesimo, la quale legava padrini e madrine da una parte, i figliocci e i loro genitori dall'altra, aveva un'importanza considerevole presso le società del passato. In generale, questa forma di parentela creava un nuovo legame sociale oppure ne modificava uno preesistente, influenzando in molti modi il comportamento futuro e costituendo il presupposto per elaborare complesse strategie sociali. Il mio articolo intende descrivere le caratteristiche della rete di rapporti di parentela spirituale esistente nella città d'Ivrea nel XVI e primo XVII secolo, evidenziando sia il peculiare status di questa forma parentale, sia la posizione che occupava in un sistema di alleanze e contatti sociali più esteso e complesso. I dati impiegati provengono dal database «Eporedia», forte di 36.000 registrazioni nominative che coprono gli anni 1466-1616. La questione fondamentale cui cerco risposta è la seguente: la parentela spirituale contribuiva a creare una rete isolata da altri network sociali, oppure questi network si sovrapponevano e, se sì, in che misura e come? Per cercare una risposta, confronto tre diverse relazioni sociali: il padrinato, il matrimonio e il rapporto con i testimoni di nozze (si tratta delle sole relazioni che le fonti disponibili, in particolare i registri parrocchiali, permettono di studiare in modo sistematico).

Il principale risultato emerso dal confronto è che le tre istituzioni sociali interagiscono poco. Invece di scegliere sempre le stesse persone, per esempio per agire prima come testimoni di nozze e poi come padrini dei figli generati dalle nozze stesse, a Ivrea si preferiva selezionare individui diversi. Gli spazi sociali costruiti su matrimonio, scelta dei testimoni di nozze e padrinato non si sovrapponevano, se non in modo molto limitato. Da ciò si può trarre una lezione di rilevanza generale per l'analisi di rete: guardando a uno solo di questi spazi sociali, vale a dire concentrandosi su una singola istituzione sociale (come in passato è accaduto spesso per il matrimonio), appare un'immagine incompleta o addirittura nettamente distorta del sistema di relazioni sociali complessivo.