Abstract

Power, Governance and Representation: an anthropological analysis of kinship, the ’Ndrangheta and dance within the Greek linguistic minority of Reggio Calabria, South Italy

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Power within the Greek linguistic minority in Reggio Calabria, South Italy, is found equally within symmetrical and asymmetrical nexuses of relations. In this thesis I argue that these relations have acquired the status and authority of governance. I consider there to be three main intertwined nexuses of relations that condition politics in Reggio; kinship, kin-like relations – such as friendship, godparenthood and the ’Ndrangheta (Calabrian Mafia) – and clientelism. The appropriation of kinship symbols such as the ‘archaic’ family, ancestors and saints into the modes of governance of these nexuses legitimises their authority. The two implicated and at first glance oppositional sovereignties – the ’Ndrangheta and the state – adopt the same language of representation, that of kinship, which suggests that there is no simple opposition between the two. Further examination of the politics of the Grecanici cultural associations problematises the coexistence of various forms of clientelism – inclusive as well as exclusive. Carefully assessing the ‘governmentalities’ of these relations, I conclude that power comes as the direct result of the actors’ productive kinesis across various social points and is not merely localised in ‘conventional’ political forms of representation such as the political parties, local administrators and economic lobbies. Thus my main theoretical argument comes to challenge previous understandings of a Southern Italian society characterised by vertical types of social relations that inhibit collective mobilisation and the empowerment of civil society.
Power, Governance and Representation: an anthropological analysis of kinship, the ’Ndrangheta and dance within the Greek linguistic minority of Reggio Calabria, South Italy

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# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements**  
7

**Chapter One: Theoretical directions**  
9
Family affairs  
13
Conduct everywhere and the notion of ‘governmentality’ in the work of Foucault  
17
Family and clientelism  
21
Civil society  
29

**Chapter Two: Research Methods**  
34
Genealogies  
39
‘Intellectuals’, Gatekeepers, and the Grecanici ‘Culture Keepers’  
42

**Chapter Three: Grecanici in Time and Space**  
47
A few words about Reggio Calabria  
52
Marginality and politics: the southern “open sore”  
58
Experiencing the landslides  
64
*Managgia alla miseria*  
70
Doing politics in Reggio: The politics of kinship  
74

**Chapter Four: The Grecaniche Cultural Associations**  
77
Contextualising the Grecaniche associations  
77
As time goes by  
78
Tracing the roots 1960-1980: “La Jonica dei Greci”  
81
“Zoi ce Glossa”: Other initiatives during the period 1970-80  
84
Poly-antagonism  
85
Historical constructivism  
88
The Greeks of the Diaspora – Diasporic Greeks  
91
*Sportello Linguistico* (Linguistic Window): Contested ideologies  
93
The Raccomandati  
94
Laureati e paesani  
95
Chapter Five: The Topology of Kinship

Part one: The Family
- Kinship organisation
- Naming practices
- Kinship intermarriage
- The ethics of the *corna*
- Taking care of one’s kin
- Gender and Economic Administration

Part two: Spatial organisation and Concepts of space
- The way we were
- Concepts of Space
- Palazzi and *Palazzi*
- Neighbourhood identification
- In Conclusion

Chapter Six: The Messy Realities of Kinship

Who is the relative?
- Contextualisation of friendship in ethnographic studies
- Gendered accounts of relatedness – Female friendships
- Gendered accounts of relatedness – Male friendships
- Brothers at odds
- Familial conflict
- *Buoni di lavoro/ Buoni di amicizia*
- God-parenthood: *Sangiovanni*
- Conclusion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Seven: Ancestors, Saints and Governance</th>
<th>179</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genealogical memory</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Histories</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalònero</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 'Ndrangheta</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ndrangheta organisation and structure</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and power</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The religious 'Ndrangheta</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'La famiglia sacra’ – the sacred family</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ndrangheta and problem solving</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The claim to self-government</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Eight: The Dance</th>
<th>219</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Madonna della Consolazione</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Cavalieri della Madonna: The Virgin and the Men</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering makes might</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il sacro e il profano</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The efficacy of ritual</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agency of dance</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public dance</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastru i ballu: Chi acceta le regole, balla</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The one who accepts the rules, dances)</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation of the dance</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sfida: Interpreting the Tarantella</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Notte Bianca (The White Night)</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Nine: Epilogue</th>
<th>251</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban/rural and other dichotomies</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making family: two final cases</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The case of Natino</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The case of Venere</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography

List of Tables
Table 1. – The ’Ndrangheta Hierarchy 199

List of Illustrations
Figure 1. – Area Grecanica 52

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I have always thought of my PhD as an adventure. Raised with the literature of Jules Verne, I was fascinated by going to strange places and coming into contact with different people. I gradually came to love difference and embrace it. Anthropology to me, probably the embodiment of celebrating difference, is as much an academic endeavour as a personal need. Throughout my PhD adventure certain people become important figures and companions, to whom I would like to express my gratitude for being my points of orientation all these years.

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Chapter One: Theoretical directions

This thesis is about relations of power that acquire a status of authority and governance. Power within the Greek linguistic minority in Reggio Calabria, South Italy, is found equally within symmetrical and asymmetrical nexuses of relationships. The Grecanici – the subjects of this study – are officially recognised in Italian law n.482/1999 as one of the linguistic minorities of Italy, and since 1999 have found fertile ground on which to substantiate their connection with the local self-government. The Grecanici, citizens of the city of Reggio Calabria, originate from the villages of area Grecanica in Aspromonte, province of Reggio Calabria, and gradually migrated to the city at the end of the 1950s due to natural disasters, as well as for economic and social reasons. They successfully utilised their kinship and friendship networks\(^1\) in order to find political representation and meet their economic needs.

Grecanici politicisation comes as the direct result of moving across relations that connect various sovereignties. Very often, Southern Italian societies have been criticised as sustaining vertical relations of hierarchy established by agents such as the state, the political parties, the church and the mafia (cf. Bull and Giorgio 1994, Lumley and Morris 1997). Since the unification of Italy (1860) this particular criticism, the so-called Meridionalismo\(^2\), has been developed within a dualistic conceptual framework – North Italy/South Italy – where social, economic and political differences pertaining to Southern Italy were explained in a comparative fashion. New approaches during the 1980s tend to move away from any comparative attempts, but they result in homogenising Southern Italy in terms of economics and politics without allowing any space for inter or possibly intra-regional differences. Fresh approaches emerge from the edited volumes published by Einaudi on Calabria, Puglia and Sicily. By adopting different analytical approaches and frameworks

\(^1\) I use the notion of network in order to indicate both the range of contacts as well as “the mix of social and technical competences” (Strathern 1996:520).

\(^2\) The Meridionalismo was an interdisciplinary effort to interpret Southern Italy’s historical, economic and political trajectories.
the authors of these volumes sketch the basis for ‘contextualising without
generalising’ (Morris 1997). Instead of comparing the South with the North or
portraying the North as the ideal to be achieved, the new studies discuss the
South ‘within the South’ and seek to provide political understanding from
within the Southern societies instead of portraying them as backward and
static. Thus phenomena such as familism, clientelism, corruption and the
mafia are seen in a new light and are examined in relation to the kinds of civil
society and politicisation that they effect (Piselli and Arrighi 1985). Even
Putnam admits that “clientelism and familism formed a rational behavioural
strategy where civic community was lacking” (Putnam 1993:177 in Morris
1997:10).

The Grecanici successfully utilise their links and relations in order to move to
various and sometime seemingly unconnected sources of order. In this sense
they accommodate personalistic – immediate economic and social profits – as
well as collective long term ones. The analytical validity of the relation rests
on the fact that it has the power to connect paradoxical sources of order, cut
across hierarchies and establish new forms of knowledge (Strathern 2005).
Links may be created between innumerable individual or collective
sovereignties (the state, political parties, cultural associations, families, the
church and the 'Ndrangheta [the Calabrian mafia]) that may possess different
degrees of power and knowledge. The space that is mapped from these dense
cris-crossings delineates a reticular form of civil society that enables the actors
to accommodate their material and non-material needs. This type of civil
society far from the sustainable western dream for a civil society (Mardin
1995:278, Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), is spaced between individual and
collective points of reference and without being exclusively identified with
any of them, may provisionally adopt their political idioms of representation.
The maintenance of civil society rests on the actors’ capacity to create strong
links between them. Foucault’s notion of the productivity of power (Gordon
2000:xix) also points to the understanding of Grecanici civil society as
perpetually charged by the actors’ constant kinesis across various types of
relations. This reticular civil society at once accepts asymmetry and enables its
subversion.
Grecanici asymmetrical relations exist within the family (elders, ancestors) as well as outside of it (cultural associations, political parties, the 'Ndrangheta, friendship, god-parenthood). Whilst asymmetry is recognised and respected, it is positively relativised by the various *vincoli* (bonds, links, restraints) that may cut across relations of asymmetry. The *vincolo* (singular of *vincoli*) is a powerful local notion of relatedness that enables various relations to exist in a simultaneous fashion. In this thesis I unfold the multilayered contexts where the *vincoli* – more or less successfully – sustain or cut across hierarchies and point to an understanding of governing as not directly related to the conventional domain of politics. I want then to explore the implications of the intriguing permeability between domains such as kinship, politics and religion (Yanagisako 2007), and to further suggest that this is reflected in particular bodies of knowledge; that of doing governing.

Examining the Grecaniche civic associations (chapter four) I show that when it comes to institutions that are deemed of the state, we notice a shift to rather exclusionist tactics of managing power, especially when compared to rather more traditional contexts of clientelism and accommodating favours. This I argue, is the direct result of the official recognition of the linguistic minorities by Italian law and their subsequent link to the local self government. Nevertheless, clientelism is highly sought amongst kin and close friends (chapter five). In chapters five, six and seven I discuss the direct implication between kinship, politics and religion and the interfaces that this entanglement entails. In chapters seven and eight I explore the techniques of doing governing by examining the 'Ndrangheta as a particular sovereignty which poses relatedness at the core of its conceptualisation. Subsequently, chapter eight is about celebrating power and the dissemination of Mafioso personhood through the ritualistic tarantella.

In the sections that follow I will theoretically unfold the claims of the thesis.

Firstly, I will argue that these relations that “have turned a multiplicity of persons into a social arena of authority” (Strathern 2005:62), are to be
understood in tandem with conventional modes of governance such as the state and the various public institutions. To put it differently, relations that are delineated between family, the 'Ndrangheta and the state or the church may adopt the same political idioms of representation. How do people who consider themselves victims of social inequality and discrimination strive to cast off their status by implementing the politics of 'victimisation'? (Ballinger 2003) How might individuals of an apparently high status become clients of people who posses less social status? What are the parameters of power and status? Throughout this thesis I look at subjectivities produced out of empowerment as well as out of coercion. Because power does not necessarily correlate with status, I seek to analyse and understand the mentalities and techniques that run through not so obviously defined relations of power.

Secondly, I argue that in the society of Reggio Calabria – contrary to assumptions that propound excessive individualism (Putnam 1993, Tullio Altan 2000) – there exist a plurality of actors (the state included) that colonise the realm of experience and communication, in the sense that individualistic and collective material and non-material interests are accommodated in a simultaneous fashion. Individuals are encouraged to exert themselves but only in direct reference to the nexus or nexuses of relations they are embedded within. Individualism in relation to Southern Italy is associated with a particular social disposition that inhibits collective mobilisation towards the public good (Banfield 1958, Putnam 1993, Tullio Altan 2000). As LaPalombara (1987:28) rightly notes, there is a paradox in this ego-centred individualism, in the sense that it modulates conflict and aggression without necessarily complying with any particular modern or traditional phenotype. Most of the time conflict between Grecanici is a discursive battlefield perpetuated in a rhetorical exchange of words (negative and positive gossip) and stories (fabricated or not, but definitely circulated) that may not physically damage the ‘enemy’ but undermine his/her reputation considerably. Precisely because politicisation is effected through mediation and connections, civil society in the city of Reggio appears more coherent and compounded than initially thought and “one that combines modernity with tradition” (Almond and Verba 1989:5).
In the last section of this chapter I discuss Grecanici civil society contextualising it within broader theoretical stances. The 'Ndrangheta is an important constitutive of the Grecanici life – similarly to the life of most citizens of Reggio Calabria. The 'Ndrangheta in this study is examined as a sovereign entity next to the state and the church as well as an idiosyncratic mode of governance which poses relatedness at the core of its conceptualisation (see chapter seven). Despite the fact that many scholars would find “its social consequence undesirable” (Layton 2006:15), the 'Ndrangheta cannot be excluded from the category of civil society just because it does not easily fit into any modernist concepts that define it.

**Family affairs**

From early on Grecanici are encouraged to conceptualise themselves as parts of a wider nexus of relations. Relations are provided in conventional terms (kinship see chapter five) and they are created (kin-like relations see chapter six, the 'Ndrangheta see chapter seven). In this context “we would call the relation a self-similar or self-organising construct, a figure whose organisational power is not affected by scale” (Strathern 2005:63). Strathern, when examining the ‘knowledge’ that is implicated, produced and abducted in kinship relations has argued that:

One not only perceives relations between things but also perceives things as relations. Yet insofar as ‘things’ (the terms bound by or containing the relationship) are routinely conceptualised apart from the relation, we can (after Wagner 1986) call the relationship an organising trope with the second order capacity to organise elements either similar to or dissimilar from itself. Hence the relation as a model of complex phenomena has the power to bring heterogeneous orders or levels of knowledge together while conserving their difference. It allows concrete and abstract knowledge to be manipulated simultaneously (2005:63).

Let us consider the familial relations. Throughout this thesis the notion of family has been problematised in order to exceed its limits. Firstly, I analyse the modern and urban familism that is a “particular form of the relationship between family, society and the state; a form in which the values and interests of the family are counter-posed to the other principal moments of human
associationism” (Ginsborg 2001:97, original emphasis). Secondly, I pay close attention to Grecanici families which apart from being constituted through “complex systems of relations of production, reproduction, nurture, love and power, along with the desires and strategies of their members” (Yanagisako 1991:324) are in “constant danger of slipping from view” (Gledhill 2000:21) simply because of their presuming ordinary form and their inchoate quality (ibid.).

Let us contemplate the following propositions:

1. Here, we are all one family
2. They used to be like brothers, they used to be a family
3. Do you believe me when I tell you that I see you as part of my family?
4. Of course they turn to the 'Ndrangheta. If one has a family to support, I ask you, what can one do?
5. Born in the family of … (the name of the family)
6. Now you are part of the family (the 'Ndrangheta family)
7. Suniu 'ndrina (I am 'ndrina – I am family)
8. Clan is the term imported by the English journalists, here we have family
9. Vote for … (the name of the politician) … protector of the family

The noun ‘family’ in the above propositions is used in a variety of meanings and directions. The actors use it in an ever abstract but at once in an always inclusive fashion. Family refers to social kinship, biological kinship, religious or political kinship, it is extended to encompass moral and social reasons and justifications, it symbolises the unity of a political party, it is equally offered as rhetoric in personal deliberations. It also covers a wide range of phenomena: legal and illegal political and economic action, organisation in the 'Ndrangheta, patronage and clientelism, values such as onore (honour – with direct reference to the honorata società that is the 'Ndrangheta) and omertà (code of silence – with direct reference to a wide cultural consensus that transcends the 'Ndrangheta) and particular rites of initiation and endogamy, to name but a few. The economic, religious and political language in Reggio Calabria is the language of kinship and family. As a result material interests
and family sentiment are not regarded as opposing ways of representing family relations. In the same manner, previous dichotomies that located the study of the family in modern/traditional, rural/urban, nuclear/extended, biological/social, instrumental/sentimental fall short in taking into consideration the creative interweaving between symbolic and material family expressions (Bestard-Camps 1991:21).

In that sense ‘family’ is at once an organic and mechanical metaphor (following Durkheim). On the one hand the assignment of the mechanical metaphor objectifies societies “of which the emotional subjectivity of kinship is characteristic, while the assignment of the organic metaphor to the impersonal and rational bureaucratic societies subjectifies them and gives them an interiority they do not, in fact, possess” (Fernandez 1986:39). The noun ‘family’ similarly to the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘we’ or ‘they’, is inchoate (Fernandez 1995). It is a “raw material” (Carrithers 2008) in the sense that it is unformed, and disordered and thus refers to the material on which the speaker’s rhetorical imagination is going to work, the raw situation which is not yet, grasped, packaged, not yet sent in a particular direction … the situation can be developed, can be subjected to movement and performance, so that what is at first unformed and unclear can become formed, directed, and clearly delineated (Carrithers 2008:163).

“As a trope of moral imagining” family has the “capacity to condense distinct doctrines and ethical strains in a fan of pliable associations that can be variously distilled and infinitely elaborated” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:6). The inchoateness of the Grecanici family further generates its internal critique for the fact that actors deform the notion by engaging in conflicting, blurring and knotted relations (see chapter six). This critique which is captured in a series of deformations and re-formations is located on two main levels. Firstly, the deformation of the presumably constituted biological family based on the shared substance of blood. Friendship, Godparenthood and the ’Ndrangheta are examples of deformed/reconstituted familial entities. The biological base of these entities is undergoing transformations in order to be newly reconstituted in family terms. This new form/family brings with it the reworked heterogeneous seeds that constitute it whilst simultaneously
conserving their difference (Strathern 2005:63). This is more evident when we examine the family of the 'Ndrangheta. One might wonder why mafia families require the ritual of initiation in order to establish familial ties between people who are already a biological family. An easy possible answer could be that ritual is important in order for non-biological affiliates to be initiated. Why then is the new constitution still called the family and not – let’s say – ‘organisation x’ par excellence? I do not deny the fact that the ritual is an important part that subjects biological and non-biological members to the same conditions.

The 'Ndrangheta interprets the family as separable from the state and it poses an essential relationship between them. In its conceptualisation, the 'Ndrangheta has already departed from kinship. The 'ndrine (cosche, clans) are biological families in their majority, where the members are fathers, sons, uncles. Nevertheless, by adopting an essentialist language of authority and sovereignty, paradoxically the 'Ndrangheta emulates the language of the state – whose claims are fashioned upon the language of kin and family (Herzfeld 2005:2) – but it is careful to keep it distant by placing kinship as the condition par excellence for doing politics. In other words, the 'Ndrangheta is completely self-identified with the master trope of family; in the imagination of the citizens of Reggio Calabria, the 'Ndrangheta is the family. Furthermore, politics are conceptualisations of relations between people who have strong vincoli between them.

Further claims in this thesis relate to debates regarding the biological and social constitution of kinship\(^3\). As we have seen with the 'Ndrangheta above, notions of strict biology need to be deformed and ritualistically treated in order for a new socio-religious entity to emerge under the ‘biological’ rubric of ‘the family’. As Franklin and McKinnon argue:

Once the focus of inquiry includes both inclusions and exclusions, both the amity and the violence at the core of kinship, and both the egalitarian and hierarchical lines of relation, ambivalence emerges as an important avenue for understanding the complexities of kinship relations ... an emphasis on ambivalence yields insights into the nature of kinship as it is shaped by the (dialectics of power) tensions and contradictions between differential relations of power and resistance, individual agency and desire, and diverse rights, demands and obligations ... attention to ambivalence and emotional valences produces a different perspective not only on kinship and family but also on the meaning of social structure and the means of theorising its determining influence (2001:18-19).

As this study will propose, the family is always an open ended category and takes many forms as the actors evoke it in various contexts. In the same manner that I am concerned with the familial boundaries raised by the actors, I am equally concerned with how these boundaries are bridged, how familial relations thus condition politics. I would like then to problematise further the relation between the family and the state: whether the one can be without the existence and support and mediation of the other. For this reason I concentrate on cases of conflict as well as collaboration in order to examine whether the two maintain their interdependence.

**Conduct everywhere and the notion of ‘governmentality’ in the work of Foucault**

The idea of self-government in Southern Italian politics is by no means new. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Meridionalisti (a body of experts addressing the economic, political and social ‘problems’ of Southern Italy; what has been known as the Southern Question, (cf. Gribaudi 1996, Schneider 1998)) Dorso, Sturzo and Salverini were advocating the South’s autonomy and self-determination by arguing that only disengagement from the central government would leave the political and economic path of development open (Gribaudi 1996). In Sturzo’s words;

> Leave us in the South to govern ourselves, plan our own financial policy, spend our own taxes, take responsibility for our own public works, and find our own remedies for our difficulties; ... we are not schoolchildren, we have no need of the North’s concerned protection’ (1901 in Gribaudi 1996:80).

Despite the fact that the first wave of Meridionalisti were addressing the problems of the South, having in mind a central government constituted by the
North as the main cause for the South’s ‘misfortunes’, their voices were to be silenced after the Second World War, due to the crisis in the colonial policies and the urgent need to develop the country internally. The critical period right after the fall of fascism, (25th July 1943) found Italy secretly negotiating with the Allies and finally signing the armistice on the 3rd September 1943. The official policy of the Allies in the South, far from bringing what it professed, was to keep “the existing administration and temper defascistisation with discretion” (Ginsborg 1990:36). The period known as the Kingdom of the South (1943-1944) was an extremely important transitional phase where critical issues such as the rebirth of the political parties, the crisis in the agrarian system and the birth of new social forces, among others, were influenced and to a degree exacerbated by policies within and outside Italy (Gallerano 1996). As Ginsborg notes regarding the Italian predicament after unification, there were too many battles fought and lost, many promises made and never kept, thus resulting in a development of a “philosophy which mixed fatalism, solidarity and distrust” (1990:33). The ‘Southern Question’ was the corner stone of the Christian Democrat policies in their pursuit for consolidating political power in the South after the Second World War and their direct association with the grassroots values and interests (Goddard 1996:32, Gribaudi 1980).

The idea of Southern self-determination, expressed in various political eras then – explicitly through the various ‘questioni’ (problems) regarding Italian ethnicities – (as well as fascism and the mafia), was also shared by other social strata in the South as well as from a new wave of Italian scholars that emerged after 1980, destined to address the problems of Southern Italian societies from within. As Goddard argues, ‘there is a ‘folklore’ of poverty and unemployment, of living by one’s wits, of surviving somehow or other, of ‘l’arte dell’ arrangiarsi’ or the art of managing, of making do’ (Goddard 1996:50). Self-determination was then as much of a top-down as a bottom-up idea. More importantly it relates to a specific ‘mode of production’ that is based on a “blurring of boundaries … between the categories of the modern organisation of labour – between the formal and the informal, the legal and the illegal, and the material and non-material” (Pardo 1996:19). Despite the fact
that the Greca
ci of today are by no means poor, collective recollections of social discrimination and racism – especially during the first decade of their migration to Reggio – as well as the 

misera (socio-economic poverty, suffering) provoked by the two world wars and the enforced relocation after the landslides of the 1950s, are employed as social justification when it comes to conflicting and blurred present political and ideological dispositions. These material and non-material modes of knowledge production are to be understood as constitutive of a particular system of values that oscillates between what is conceived as moral and sentimental on the one hand and what is conceived as practical (in the teleological sense) and material on the other.

As it will become apparent later on in this thesis, relations examined in contexts of compliance and conflict in particular, are reasserted through “the enactment and embodiment of sentiments” (Sant Cassia 2005:211, original emphasis). In this sense, (pacing Girard 1988) when a brother turns against brother the metaphorical sacrificial victim destined to divert their violence may take the form of violent sentiments (see chapter six). These sentiments destined to violate the reputation of the brother may lay on the surface of gossip or go deeper in the form of vendetta. Material assets can be sacrificed and (non-material) reputations are severely inflicted. Negative gossip is counterbalanced by positive gossip; conflict is mediated by advice and the ‘sacrificial process’ takes place in a morally acceptable way. As Pardo argues;

the flexibility of material and non-material actions and the negotiated value attributed to shared rules prevent the coherence of ordinary life from being seriously jeopardised (as is real criminality) by the tension between self-interest and the necessity of redefining it in a morally acceptable way. This activity may not always be conscious, but it is rationally determined (1996:102).

The notion of shared moral rules and rationality clearly poses the idea of self-government. Government, as Foucault has defined it, is a “practice – or a succession of practices – animated, justified, and enabled by a specific rationality (or, rather, by a succession of different rationalities)” (Gordon 2000:xxiii). Moreover, government as “the conduct of others’ conduct” (Gordon 2000:xxix) problematises as much the relationship with others as with the self (Dean 1999:12). This problematisation results in a specific way about thinking, talking and ‘doing governing’, how governing is conducted
and how conduct is governed. As Dean notes, “government entails not only relations of power and authority but also issues of self and identity … Power, truth and identity mark out three general dimensions of government corresponding to what I shall call its *techne*, its *episteme* and its *ethos*” (1999:18).

As the *techne* of government, Dean (following Foucault) defines the technical aspect and the manner in which governing is concerned with the fabrication of certain kinds of subjectivity and identity as well as discourses and rhetorics of value (1999:31, 67). *Episteme* refers to the rationale of governing, “the forms of knowledge that arise from and inform the activity of governing” (1999:31) and all these discourses and techniques of government and what Foucault calls ‘governmentality’ (1991). Finally, *ethos* refers to “an incitement to study the form and consequences of universals in particular historical situations and practices grounded in problems raised in the course of particular social and political struggles” (Dean 1999:42). Grecanici values – that is a particular system that oscillates between contextual morality and “materialistic ethic” (Firth 1961:192) – sustain idiosyncratic notions of self-government that regulate “conduct and the associated judgements” (Firth 1961:183). As a result contextual interpretive and explanatory accounts merit their own partiality to the truth (Lukes 1982:304). If we accept that “morality refers to the qualities rather than the substance of actions” (Firth 1961:184) then “interests, background assumptions and value judgements enter, not into the accounts themselves, but into their justifications” (Lukes 1982:304).

Avoiding any ‘global or radical’ position, the analytics of government is equally interested in highlighting the workings of “practices of freedom and states of domination, forms of subjection and forms of subjectification” (Dean 1999:34, original emphasis) rather than dictating any liberating strategies. Clearly then, we discuss *forms* of power not directly and necessarily identified with domination that place government neither as pure freedom and domination nor as consent or coercion (Foucault 2000). Human subjectification and agency are not viewed then as properties of a utopian sphere that lies outside relations of power and domination but as shaped within
‘states of domination’ that may be hierarchical, illegitimate, irreversible. Thinking about governing and the materialisation of such thinking through various techniques, practices and languages may clarify “how forms of domination, relations of power and kinds of freedom and autonomy are linked, how such regimes are contested and resisted, and thus how it might be possible to do things differently” (Dean 1999:37).

**Family and clientelism**

Examining the present political conditions in Italy one is compelled to problematise the placement of the family in phenomena like patronage and corruption. Concerning clientelism, Ginsborg borrows a familial metaphor to question the relevance of clientelism and family: he asks, “Are these two terms Siamese twins, locked inextricably together in the history of the republic, are they identical twins, are they twins at all?” (2001:102). Despite being unable to define the relationship between family and clientelism in precise kinship terms we cannot deny their intractable relevance. In my view it would be rather unfruitful to establish an argument of the ‘amoral familism’ kind as developed by Banfield (1958), that attempts to explain the Southerners’ inability for collective visioning located in the ‘deep politics’ of the family, or whether the ‘amoral familism’ ethos provokes or is the result of specific economic and political conditions (Silverman 1975). Clientelism, as is practiced and lived in the society of Reggio, is not merely a distribution of political and economic resources and favours in exchange for political support. Neither can it be seen as a one-sided phenomenon because older forms of patronage are coupled with contractual corruption (Moss 1995, Chubb 1982).

Clientelism as a network of relations (Boissevain 1974) is not confined solely between two parties – the patron and the client. Clientelism is equally observed in high and mighty political conglomerations (see chapter four), to catch the one side of the spectrum, as well as within one’s family and everyday politics. These relations, far from atomistic or fragmented, constitute an intertwined web of poly-sided networks that bring together a conglomeration of people and collectivities that in the end effect a reticular
form of civil society. The fact that the civil society of Reggio poses a paradox, stems from older accounts according to which traditional southern Italy is characterised by a civic ethos that prompts hierarchy and exploitation, that deprives the individual from happiness and security, civic cooperation and non-effective public policies (Putnam 1993). In so far that civil society is associated with a particular notion of democracy and western loaded notions of ‘ civility ‘ (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), the civil society of Reggio Calabria will always be a paradox for it is characterised by all the ‘ symptoms ‘ of ‘ societal ills ‘.

As agency towards politicisation, civil society allows a person to move from relation to relation or simultaneously to various relations and never assume a permanent position – that of the patron or the client – for clients are transformed into patrons and vice-versa. In all these relations power is a very elusive element for it does not always comply with one’s ‘obvious’ status in society (see chapter six). As many ethnographers argue, clientelistic power effects vertical and coercive relations and is seen as exclusively concentrated in the hands of ‘expected’ sources such as politicians, economic lobbies, the mafia, the church and other administrative and juridical institutions who altogether have the ability to monopolise and perpetuate the conditions upon which they thrive (Mouzelis 1980, Chubb 1981, 1982, Auyero 1999, Medina and Stokes 2002, 2007). Approaches such as the above have paved the way to investigating clientelism as created and directed not only from ‘above’ but also from ‘below’ and have highlighted the complex relationship between local and national politics. The approach from the ‘client’s point of view’ (Moss 1995, Auyero 1999) is then valuable but does not explain adequately how power is transformed in rather affluent economic contexts, and when clients are contextual patrons and vice-versa. In ‘distressing’ economic contexts it is easy – yet not unproblematic – to assume that the roles of patron and client are fixed. What happens then when the roles are not so easy to distinguish or when they constitute one and the same thing?

Here again we need to take into consideration that power may be ‘obvious’ or less ‘obvious’ or purposely cultivated as non-existent (Foucault 1994, 1998).
If we examine the poles of a relation rather than the relation itself then we run the risk of missing the transformative synergies of empowerment within civil society.

Grecanici (and to a wider extent the politics of Reggio) politics are based on clientelistic networks which in their conceptualisation are familial networks. Davis argues that systems of patronage have been ethnographically mis-appreciated as “out-growths of kinship: a kind of extension which is crystallised in those communities where godparenthood is used in a political form” (1977:148). He continues that “friendship, kinship and spiritual kinship are secondary characteristics of patronage which is fundamentally no more than subordination and superordination by contract: the secondary accretions are a protective colouring imposed by the powerless to mitigate the consequences of their dependence” (ibid.). The dissociation of clientelism with kinship – which at its base reflects the dissociation of kinship with politics – is a common feature of the ethnographies conducted between 1960 and 1975 among the small town and rural populations of Southern Italy. In these cases, Moss (1995:65) argues, “authors have adopted, often faute de mieux, the perspective of the client, usually a peasant”. The identification of clientelism as masking relations of domination and coercion may also be related to studies examining the poles of the clientelistic relations and not the relations per-se. This specific analysis stresses the dyadic nature of patronage whilst failing to take into consideration wider and more contemporary networks of clients and patrons.

In many ethnographies (such as Boissevain 1966, Gellner 1977, Miller and Miller 1978) there is a definite reluctance to identify clientelism as a system of representation embedded within kinship systems. This relates to a more fundamental dissociation between various systems of relatedness and their presumed degree of institutionalisation. Accordingly, kinship systems are approached a priori as possessing a specific kind of primordial social order. These systems are believed to restrain the subjects in particular roles and subvert their orientations and activities. Thus the relations developed between kin are believed to be more formalised and institutionalised and thus
“contaminated with power and instrumental orientations” (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984:15). Resultantly, other modes of relatedness – friendship, erotic relations, godparenthood, the mafia – are treated as escapism from the rigid kinship roles. Moreover, non-kinship modes of relatedness are thought of as possessing a sort of morality, altruism and egalitarianism that kinship relations lack. Nevertheless, despite the levels of obligations embedded in non-kinship relations – which in many cases resemble the kinship ones – “they often seem to be ‘purer’, not only because the obligation is voluntarily undertaken but also because it is seemingly disconnected from specific group membership or ascriptive bases, from identification with clear interests, institutional boundaries, rights to property and institutional power” (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984:16). Kinship thus, symbolically and institutionally, appears as distinct from other modes of relatedness despite their sharing of common characteristics. As Lyon has argued in the context of Pakistan, “primarily the rudiments of patronage are socialised within the family unit and secondary that patron/client role form one of the expressions of kin relations” (2004:72).

Here the study of clientelism could provide points of cultural continuity or discontinuity between various systems of relatedness due to the fact that clientelism is not a monolithic mode of representation and thus should not be treated as such (see for example clientelism as exclusivist in cultural associations, chapter four, but inclusivist in the familial context, chapters five and six). In relation to Italy, the study by Zinn (2001) is very pertinent for she engages in a complex analysis of ‘older’ and ‘newer’ forms of clientelism. She is employing the category of the raccomandazione (recommendation) in order to argue that there is a common cultural reference between various forms of clientelism that run through quotidian life, political and economic lobbies and organised crime. In that sense the raccomandazione provides a common ground for dialogue, in the Bakhtinian sense. Similar to the Bakhtinian dialogue (many voices may be incorporated into one polyphonic voice, at once unitary and singular which carries the seeds of multiple interpretations), Zinn

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4 Zinn (2001) is right when she argues that the English translation, ‘recommendation’, does not capture the spectrum of meanings that the Italian ‘raccomandazione’ entails. On the issue of translating between cultures, see also Herzfeld 1980 and Just 2001.
argues that the raccomandazione does not locate patrons and clients in fixed positions since the political volitions of both – the recommended and the one who recommends – are perpetuated in a dialogic fashion (2001:48). The category of raccomandazione is also helpful to analyse familial clientelism. Similar to Reggio Calabria, in Bernalda (in the province of Matera) there is a clear distinction between a raccomandazione that comes from a person outside of the family and an intra-familial raccomandazione. In the latter case, the family assumes a particular role and thus we refer to a kind of auto-raccomandazione “since there is an implicit familial privilege exercised in a public and apparently meritocratic space totally diverse from those that refer to private businesses” (ibid.:67). As Zinn notes, until recently in Bernalda a lot of public posts were to be possibly ‘inherited’ by other members of the family. In that case the older member of the family, who was occupying the post, was taking early retirement in order to be succeeded by a relative: usually his/her child. The same could be said for the categories of public notaries and pharmacists. The number of notary offices and pharmacies is determined by the population which restricts the insertion in the field of other than familial professionals (ibid.:68). In the case of a public quota, there is great suspicion from the public that the jobs are already taken and the results are fixed (which most of the time they are).

Grecanici adoption of the role of the client and that of the patron are to be adopted foremost within kinship relations. This probably explains to an extent the prevalence of clientelism across various historical and political contexts in Southern Italy (Chubb 1982, Moss 1995, Zinn 2001). My informants talk about l’obbligo del rispetto dei vincoli (the obligation to respect the links/knots/restraints) of the affected relationships (kinship, friendship, love, the mafia). Obbligo (obligation), rispetto (respect) and vincolo (link/knot/chain/restraint) are categories of the familial clientelism that are equally to be found in other systems of relatedness such as friendship, love, the mafia, godparenthood (see chapters six and seven). At the core of the Grecanici ideology there is a profound desire for unbounded and unconditional relatedness mostly expressed in the category of vincolo (singular of vincoli). Grecanici say that siamo vincolati (we are linked/chained/restrained) in order
to explain their avoidance of or implication in a conflictual situation or vendetta. This is also the justification for intra-familial and extra-familial clientelism, clandestine activities and participation in various groups such as the church, political parties and the mafia.

The vincoli construct a realm of intimacy that transcends biological relations and relations of hierarchy. To the degree that obblighi (obligations) are maintained and respected, the vincoli maintain a balance between hierarchy and egalitarianism, power and coercion. The obligation to respect the vincoli allows for power relations between individuals and groups to be developed and maintained. Extended trust thus does not deprive relations from a particular ethos, meaning, morality and legitimisation. These relations when examined in their content and durability are characterised by various forms of exchange: a successful accommodation of commodity orientated, gift-giving and free gift exchanges. Grecanici exchange money, favours, words (in the form of positive and negative gossip) and people (in the case of intermarriage). As Bloch and Parry (1989) have argued, money orientated exchanges do not lack moral grounds since certain forms of money are closely identified with short or longer orders of exchange. When Grecanici are engaged in money orientated exchanges they offer plausible explanations which range from the strictly utilitarian to non-utilitarian and disinterest as well as being purely altruistic.

As Davis (1992) notes, in any given society, one predominant ‘type’ of exchange does not necessarily preclude that all ‘types’ of exchanges are the same, for the same purpose or follow the same ‘rules’. This is to say that a culture dominated by exchange for profit may also have ‘free gift’ exchanges and altruistic reciprocity. Davis argues that in any culture there can be more than one type of exchange and the reasons for exchange can be multiple. He further questions the perspective held by many economists that variations away from the predominant type of exchange – for example altruism in a society associated with exchange for profit – are merely ‘distortions’ or ‘imperfections’ of the rule that deceive the actors into thinking that they are partaking in a different form of exchange (1992:7). He argues that people are
fully aware of the difference between ‘types’ of exchange. The manipulation thus of the various exchange ‘paths’ allows for different forms of economy to exist in a simultaneous fashion (ibid.:13-14). Put another way, people can choose or plan the type of exchange they partake in and it is not the underlying predominant system of exchange that determines peoples actions uncritically; “We have available to us a range of different kinds of exchange – a repertoire of socially acceptable practices which are culturally, morally and even economically distinct” (ibid.:11). For Davis, the way people choose to invest their actions is in accordance with “social rules of power, symbol, convention, etiquette, ritual, role and status” (ibid.:7-8), thus people can choose with whom to engage in specific ‘types’ of exchange. Davis further notes that some analysts have tried to show that altruism creates a ‘profit’ in terms of esteem, self-satisfaction and reputation (ibid.:18-19). He disputes this by making a juxtaposition between the shopkeeper and the altruist. He argues that shopkeepers also get esteem, self-satisfaction and reputation, esteem cannot be accurately calculated and that the ‘purchase of satisfaction’ is a metaphor; most people truly believe themselves to be altruistic when being charitable (ibid.:17-20).

For Davis, one of the principal defects with marketist and reciprocalist arguments is the assumption that under the surface lay realities that are ‘truer’ than what appears on the surface and endeavour to falsify the understandings of the actors. He believes that one should put more emphasis on ‘what natives say’ rather than sweeping analytic arguments. I certainly agree with Davis that ‘truths’ or ‘true statements’ are often seen as existing prior and independently of their conception. One need keep in mind that socially established beliefs have only a relative and contextual value. The concept of truth is a social, thought-collective concept and can be used in three ways: firstly, in order to express how things are in the world, secondly, in order to register pragmatic success, and thirdly in order to function theoretically and persuasively (emphasis on the social use of the concept) (Lukes 1982, Harré and Krausz 1996:105). Yet, epistemological relativism does not exclude accounts that are not “merely theory – but also perspective – relative … that are relatable to other perspective-relative accounts” (Lukes 1982:305), and constrained by
evidence from being commensurable and thus give perspective to the rationalities that drive them.

The 'Ndrangheta ‘free gift’, a form of altruism inspired by the religious ideology that underlies 'Ndrangheta hierarchies (discussed in chapter seven), is a deliberate form of exchange which is not outside of the predominant ‘type’ of exchange for a ‘Western’ market-orientated society – as Southern Italian society. It is a distinct and inseparable part of the exchange ‘repertoire’ which is invoked in certain social contexts and is invested with notions of power and etiquette. In a similar way to Davis, I argue that the giving of the ‘free gift’ is not governed by the same ‘rules’ of exchange. It is not thus an ‘imperfection’ or ‘social distortion’ (1992:10) and the participants are fully aware of what moral and social meanings this exchange entails.

There exist various kinds of exchanges within Grecanici. As long as individuals are willing to recognise and undertake specific obligations between them, economic and social resources are circulated and exchanged in social interaction. Here I would venture a step further. I would argue that had the kinship-associated patronage been erased, contractual corruption would thrive for it is precisely the relational value of patronage that prevents further external economic and political penetration to take place.

It has been further argued that despite their apparent fluidity, gift-exchange relationships are persistent and highly structuring (Mauss 1954). Nevertheless the social distance between people does not condition the mode of exchange (but see Sahlins 1972:196) because due to the vincoli, apparently unrelated entries of power come together within the same language of representation. Kinship as well as various political sovereignties such as the state, cultural associations, political parties and the mafia are subverted as a consequence of people’s kinesis to various levels of relatedness. The centrality of the notion of the vincoli seems to determine the power of the relation per-se. Thus the ethic of shared substance (blood) which is considered the cornerstone of Grecanici kinship is readily extended to residence, affective care and the mafia.
Civil society

A new pluralism in Italy, as expressed in an accelerated decentralisation of authority to regional and local governments, was believed to proliferate a civic spirit and spring a sense of responsibility and ideological commitment towards ‘public’ goods. The old political parties and trade unions as well as the boom in various civic associations that proliferated after 1980 (LaPalombara 1987:44, Ginsborg 2001), did not “make more broadly ‘civic’ as opposed to economic or otherwise self-interest, demands on governmental authorities” (LaPalombara 1987:45). As Ginsborg (2001:124-125) notes, by the 1990s almost two-thirds of the new associations founded in the South numbered in their membership young students as well as salaried middle class citizens. The associations revolved around issues of public culture and promoted debates and discussion on music and cinema. They further focused their attention on organised crime and significant periods of Italian history. Despite being an excellent period for the associationistic movement in the South, some pitfalls must be noted. Not all the associations were characterised by a civic content and a sufficient number of participants. The associations failed to implicate in their initiatives the lower strata of Southern society. Ultimately, civic associations did not provide their members with sufficient answers to ‘burning’ enquiries regarding one’s professional success, equality, law and justice that could be materialised outside the networks of kinship and clientelism (Signorelli 1983, 1988 in Ginsborg 2001:124).

A definition of civil society provided by Ginsborg is helpful in the sense that it indicates an ‘intermediate area between family and state’ (2001:95, Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:7, Layton 2006:11). Family and state are two broad and often rhetorically contested categories with the first associated with kinship and cultural values as well as political relations such as patronage and clientelism, whilst the second is associated with principles of democratic representation which however does not escape mediation and interference. To be sure, there is a common cultural framework of reference between state and family despite their seemingly contradicting rhetorical postulations. Especially in Italian society, family is very important as both metaphor and reality

Ginsborg has defined ‘civil’ society as positively related to democratic procedures and mechanisms that prevent the concentration of power in a single source. He says,

It (civil society) ... covers an intermediate area between family and state, but intends to distinguish between ‘civil’ and ‘uncivil’ society, between those networks and associations which stimulate democracy and pluralism, and those which do not. Civil society, in this definition, is not a catch-all area broadly equivalent to the English term 'society', but rather an area of interaction which fosters the diffusion of power rather than its concentration, builds horizontal solidarities rather than vertical loyalties, encourages debate and autonomy of judgment rather than conformity and obedience (2001:95).

The term ‘civil’ society is indeed broad enough to encompass and cover various political assumptions and directions (Bryant 1993, 1995, Kumar 1993, Hall 1995, Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), especially in a society such as Italy which is a colourful conglomeration of what Bayart termed, whilst discussing the civil society of Africa, ‘time-spaces’ (espace-temps). In relation to the notion of time-space Bayart argues:

In Africa there are no one-dimensional or homogenous societies, but rather a collection of time-spaces (espace-temps) like so many poles, created by various social actors. The value of these time-spaces lies in their formulation but, because their evolution is only relative, incomplete and temporary, they merely coalesce into an open-ended historical framework (1986:117-18).

Bayart goes on to ask whether there is any political possibility or ‘organisational principle’ of unifying these time-spaces or overcoming their discontinuities; “Even when the unity of this ‘organisation principle’ has been achieved, the heterogeneity of civil society is concealed rather than overcome. Also to challenge the state’s monopoly of power may contain within itself the elaboration of a new monopoly” (1986:118).
Bayart’s insights are very pertinent to my argument here for he engages in an ontological discussion concerning the actual production of difference within a society (cf. Derrida 1978, Schwartz 1997, Sant Cassia 2007). He is also “successful in showing that the dilemmas of civil society in Africa echo the conundrums and contradictions of democratic politics, and of liberal spheres, everywhere” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:21). In fact Bayart argues for an in­consolable civil society whose potential unity, even when it is hypothetically achieved, is concealed precisely because the ‘organisational principle’ of the successful civil society contains within itself the seeds of domination and of the disillusions to come (1986:118). He therefore says that a civil society can never achieve a level of cohesion because the various time-spaces within it always “operate according to their own ideals, interests and symbolisms which simply cannot be reduced to the rationality of the state level of politics”. Furthermore “it would be wrong to assume that the social and political content of the various notions of democratisation within civil society, even when they exist, are similar to origin, motives or meaning” (Chaui 1983 in Bayart 1986:118). Bayart locates civil society as against the domination of the state thus “chipping the state ‘from below’ rather than through an organised challenge” (Bayart 1986:119). Thus for him, ‘invisible popular modes of political action’ are positively associated with popular modes of resistance (Gledhill 2000:100).

The way I use the term ‘civil’ society in this study is to denote Gre­canici agency towards politicisation; a reticular network of relations, including the family as its master representational trope, that allows the actors kinesis in various and simultaneously possibly conflicting directions. Precisely because civil society is about enabling and co­ordinating resources and activities (Layton 2006:11), Gre­canici ‘civil’ society when examined in its whole is not one that falls within classic definitions of Italian ‘civil’ society – such as Putnam’s (1993) with positive associations to democratic ideals. Equally it cannot be seen as subordinate to or against the state. Because the state and Gre­canici civil society adopt the same political idioms of representation – that of family and kinship – they are not placed in a dominant/dominated position.
Grecanici politicisation is realised through a productive kinesis across various networks of relations such as kinship, political parties, cultural associations and the 'Ndrangheta and all these “popular coalitions” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:21) that triumphantly bring together “diverse orders of difference” which upon their succession “will proclaim themselves as new orthodoxies” (Bayart 1986:118, Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:22). In relation to the 'Ndrangheta, a popular rhetoric of resistance against the state is positively cultivated amongst the citizens of Reggio Calabria. In that sense the 'Ndrangheta assumes the role of an invisible popular mode of resistance that ‘chips’ the state from below. Yet, ethnographic substantiation points to the fact that the 'Ndrangheta in Reggio Calabria is far from being subordinate to state domination (Walston 1988, Paoli 2003, Badolati 2007, Gratteri and Nicaso 2007, Nicaso 2007). The 'ndranghetisti may occupy high posts in political life (Walston 1988:196-197) or they are indirectly implicated in it. Grecanici (and to a wider extent the citizens of Reggio) implement local notions of relatedness (vincoli) that enable them to cut across hierarchical structures, as in the case of political parties and the 'Ndrangheta.

As opposed to stasis, kinesis allows for ‘the productivity of power’ (Gordon 2000:xix) that is the effect of realising relations on every possible level or event “differing in amplitude, chronological breath, and capacity to produce effects” (ibid.). These nexuses of relations, mostly celebrated publicly in religious manifestations and dance (see chapter eight), precisely because they have acquired an authoritative status, allow actors to utilise various channels (patronage, family loyalties, kin-like relations, friendships, political parties and dance) in order to find political representation and meet their ends. Therefore a person has to claim a relation in the same manner that s/he uses and abuses bureaucratic channels. This claim lies on the assumption that power “can be exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations” (Foucault 1976:94), it is neither focalised nor bounded. Power relations depend and operate through more local, low level, “capillary” circuits of power relations (Foucault 1994). The metaphor of the ‘capillary circuits’ allows for a conceptualisation of power as the direct product of connecting various points and thus making relational otherwise.
disconnected entities. Thus power is not a substantice entity, institution, or possession, independent of the set of relationships in which it is exercised (Foucault 1994:34-36, Gordon 2000:xxiv-v).

It would be historically mistaken though to treat all Grecanici relations as one and the same thing or linearly developed. Forced migration (due to the devastating floods and landslides of 1951 and 1970) or voluntary migration (to America, Argentina and elsewhere in Europe), as well as the agency sought through kinship and mafia networks, show that Grecanici relations were emphasised or succumbed in different historical and political periods. Through ethnographic substantiation, there were – and are – contexts where interests are developed collectively and in accordance with – or more correctly, utilising – the wider policies of Calabria, Italy and the European Union extensively, as well as individually ‘secured’ within the Grecanici families. Paying close attention to the quality of the relations (duration, loyalties, homage) allows firstly for a deeper understanding of the Grecanici politics and how the actors seek to empower themselves. Secondly it sheds light on the rationality of government that underlies these relations. What is the political economy that sustains the “politics of poverty”? (Procacci 1991:155, original emphasis). What is the subjectivity of the empowered generated out of ‘volitional’ coercion as in the case of the 'Ndrangheta? While power relations “are unequal and hierarchical, they are not ‘zero-sum games’ in which only certain actors have power at the expense of others” (Dean 1999:69-70). In this sense, Grecanici empowerment is the direct effect of moving across various – hierarchical or less hierarchical – relations upon which their reticular civil society is based. Their constant kinesis across these relations charges their political and moral subjectivities and allows them a fair share of power.
Chapter Two: Research Methods

The research for this thesis was carried out from April 2006 to April 2007 in the urban environment of Reggio Calabria within the Greek linguistic minority. My original attraction to the Grecanici was shaped by an ongoing publicity in Greece regarding their language, customs and dance. The politics of linguistic and ethnic identity seemed then a plausible starting point for my research. Despite the fact that I was conscious of them being fully integrated Italian subjects the sheer fact of sharing with my subjects a similar language, seemed an initial advantage. Indeed, my being Greek helped me most of the time and practically opened a lot of “doors”. In Reggio I decided to focus on four adjacent quartieri (neighborhoods), namely those of Gebbione, Sbarre, San Giorgio extra and Ravagnese, where Grecanici live in kin clusters. I purposely avoided concentrating on one quartiere (single of quartieri) because I did not want to treat it as a ‘closed’ community. The fact that people have a tendency to live in kinship conglomerations from the same village could have restricted me from having information from different kin-groups from various villages. My avoidance of concentrating to one quartiere further allowed me to adopt a comparative perspective and thus not treat Grecanici as a homogenous group. As happens in most ethnographic sojourns our subjects dictate our mode of work; focusing thus on one neighbourhood would further mean that I would deny any ‘movement’ between my informants. As it will become apparent throughout this thesis, there is a constant movement between people who live in different quartieri. In the same manner, people constantly move between village and city. In the beginning this was a daunting prospect.

Doing urban research may cause “professional insecurity” (Pardo 1996:ch.4) emanating from the unbounded socio-political environment that a city may offer. Moreover the anthropological tendency to focus on small-scale communities may make urban projects appear methodologically frightening (ibid., Davis 1977, Kenny and Kertzer 1983, Goddard 1996:ch.8, Sciama 2003). Another possible reason that may have inhibited anthropologists to more readily undertake urban research may lie with the fact that the
“burdensome heritage of earlier conceptual models based on rural/urban dichotomy has given us a static and homogeneous view of these misleadingly contrasted poles” (Kenny and Kertzer 1983:10). Kenny and Kertzer are right when arguing that conceptual and methodological polarisations cannot shed light on the dialectics between town and country or the various degrees of ‘urbanisation’ or ‘ruralisation’ that one can encounter in the city. As the urban ethnographies of Italy have shown, one can encounter various degrees of social life that can not strictly speaking be classed as ‘urban’. In their edited volume for example we see that kinship relations tend to strengthen rather than wither due to city life. The same point is exemplified by both Pardo (1996) and Sciama (2003). In Goddard’s (1996) ethnography on Naples, we see that the women whom she studied are trying to partially recreate in the city their pre-existing environmental and social conditions of life.

An “ethnographic odyssey”, as Belmonte has characterised the fieldwork project of harnessing ethnographic knowledge through processes of adventure and pathos, may be facilitated by a meticulous theoretical preparation, usage of archival sources, literary production and filmography (Belmonte 1989:xix), and acquaintance with local musical and dancing genres. My previous studies of Greek traditional dance have equipped me with a capacity to pick-up local dancing genres with relative ease. As we will see, Grecanici dancing ethos revolves around issues of governance and self-empowerment. My direct participation in many dancing events has strengthened my status as a willing researcher and one that accommodates research methods with personal gratification.

The all-important local contacts are always imperative to any successful research (Pardo 1996:190, note 12). In my case, my relationship with a Greek-Italian family who reside in Reggio provided me with my first knowledge of the area and with a residence on my arrival. After the first two weeks that I spent with the family, I arranged to rent a flat in the quartiere of Gebbione. My initial thought to live in the main quartiere of the Grecanici, San Giorgio extra, was rejected after much deliberation. During the first two weeks of my presence in Reggio I found that Gebbione was not so far away from San
Giorgio extra. Even though my place of residence was quite some distance from the quartiere of Ravagnese, I decided that I was in the right place for many reasons. It was indicated to me that a lot of Greccanici families live in Gebbione whose relatives reside in San Giorgio extra, Sbarre and Ravagnese. Furthermore, in Gebbione live other families who originate from villages that have recently been included in provincial schemes for the economic development of the ‘traditional’ area Greccanica (Sacco 2007:71). These families are collaborating or socialising with the Greccanici that originate from the ‘traditional’ zone. They would thus prove useful in two ways; first, to provide me with the ethnographic data regarding my areas of research and second, to help me establish further contacts with the families of San Giorgio extra, Sbarre and Ravagnese. Living in Gebbione, a ‘neutral’ zone, was also providing me with both the ‘intimacy’ and the much needed ‘distance’ from my informants. Gebbione – with a population of 18,634 – shares its borders with Centro Storico (the historical centre) quartiere to the north, Sbarre to the east and Ravagnese to the south. It is within walking distance of San Giorgio extra which, with a population of 15,044, borders Centro Storico, Trabocchetto, Condera and Spirito Santo to the north, Cannavo, Mosorrofa and Cataforio to the east, Ravagnese and Gallina to the south and Sbarre to the west. Ravagnese – with a population of 15,905 – borders Gebbione, Sbarre and San Giorgio extra to the north, Gallina to the east and Pellaro to the south. Sbarre shares its borders with Centro Storico to the north, San Giorgio to the east, Ravagnese to the south and Gebbione to the west and has a population of 19,273.

Apart from the Greccanici, I established further relationships with a lot of the Reggini – politicians, influential citizens, spiritual leaders and other people of my neighbourhood. These people were not acting as a ‘control group’ or a separated political entity but rather as another piece of my research. Conducting research in the city demanded a high level of organisation in terms of...

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5 Here I refer to an apparent discrepancy concerning the local institution of Comunità Montana and its administrative identification with the area Greccanica. The paradox lies with the fact that while the number of the Greek-speaking villages is getting smaller the area Greccanica is getting larger in the sense that more villages are inserted into the scheme.

6 The population statistics are from the Annuario Statistico 2005 Reggio Calabria.

7 ISTAT Reggio Calabria Census 2005.
of time – to literally fit into people’s agendas – and close collaboration with people who had access to various ‘groupings’ (Foster and Kemper 1974). Participant observation remained my main method of data collection coupled with formal and informal interviews. In reality I was conducting a type of fieldwork that was constantly ‘on the go’. For example one day I could be picked up at my house in the morning to follow a young woman to her daughter’s school. I had a quarter of an hour to twenty minutes at my disposal to do ‘my work’, then I was left in the centre of the city where I could meet a man on his lunch break. I could then take the bus back to Gebbione where I could have my own lunch in my apartment or in one of my informants’ homes in the neighbourhood. The afternoon was usually devoted to doing work in San Giorgio extra. I could spend a couple of hours with a family, then pass from the piazza (square) and stay with the men who were usually offering me grappa (Italian arrack) or coffee in the local bar. Gradually I became a known figure in the area, constantly coming and going from my apartment but perplexing the men who were usually socialising at the bar opposite my house in Gebbione and whom I was avoiding. The reason that I avoided these people was associated with their attitude towards me and not with the fact that I was ethnographically disinterested in them (because they were not of Grecanico origin). Since I first moved to my apartment I cultivated warm relations with my neighbours apart from this specific group of men. For them I was an ambiguous figure. My then blonde hair was indicating to my neighbours a Polish origin. For this reason I was automatically perceived as sexually available, thus complying with the stereotype that is locally cultivated for the female immigrants from Poland explicitly. I was indeed flirted with to the utmost degree and I had the ‘opportunity’ to experience the local flirting ‘ingenuity’ on various occasions. Retrospectively these instances bring a smile, but during the time in question they were a constant annoyance. Nevertheless, after the ‘kind’ interference of some of my Grecanici informants the flirting prelude was severely curtailed, although it never came to an absolute end. What happened is that one afternoon I was presented to a man who I had not seen before, whose name I did not know and who after this one meeting I never saw again. My friends told him my name, which he already knew. He also knew the street and the flat I was living in. He asked a couple
of questions as to where I came from and what my purpose for staying in Reggio was. My friends did not permit me to reply. They ‘cut’ the conversation by saying “troppe domande, troppe domande” (too many questions, too many questions). Two things happened after this meeting. First, the men opposite the bar were falling silent every time I passed in front of them and second I changed my interview tactics so as not to ask ‘too many questions’.

That was another reason that I seldom used my tape recorder for my conversations. Since 1820 the date that the Grecanici were ‘discovered’ by Carl Witte (a linguist who conducted his research in the region of Aspromonte among the Greek-speaking populations of Calabria), a constant influx of local and foreign researchers of all genres have literally created ‘trained’ informants positively disposed to the needs of the researchers, as well as a considerable amount of discontented locals who are tired of finding themselves in the position of “archaeological findings” or “cultural sights” (Petropoulou 1995:5). Monumentalisation can equally work in preserving and restoring historical buildings and sights (Herzfeld 1991a, 2009, Hamilakis and Yalouri 1999, Yalouri 2001), cultural nostalgia (Mitchell 2002:51) as well as people. In the initial stage the researcher is approached with diffidence. In her reflexive methodological account of her work in Galliciano during 1984, Petropoulou offers plenty of insight in relation to what she calls ‘the initial justified refusal’ on the part of the community in her study:

My questions concerning family stories, their lives and their relatives’ lives intensified on their part a sense of ‘danger’, despite my repetitive explanations regarding my staying in the village. Conducting scientific research that could perhaps be important for the village in the future has provoked various conversations and comments like those from one of the most potent men of the village. In an almost angry manner he said. “A lot of people claim that they work for Galliciano. If we add you too, you will become too many!” ... “Here they come not to gain a couple of thousand pounds but millions” (2001:248).

Petropoulou – and myself many decades later – encountered various problems in gaining access, acceptance and trust from our subjects. An almost ‘habitual’ mistrust has been cultivated over the last hundred years and could be explained not only historically but also politically. Discontented voices,
concerned with a political and economic mistrust could be heard not only in the village but to a wider extent in Reggio and reflected not only local political preoccupations but a critique of the regional system of governmental representation.

Petropoulou (2001) further notes that her subjects changed their narrations occasionally depending on the presence of her tape recorder. She also notes that her – sometimes – over-questioning irritated her informants and subsequently impeded her work. In my case I devoted a considerable amount of time to build my relationships with my informants, socialise and take part in their lives before I proceeded to questions more relevant to my work. This “aimless strategy” (Lyon 2004:43) of the first months resulted in a more ‘natural’ flow of information over the months that followed.

During the weekends I was following my informants to their places of origin which further strengthened our relationship. These ‘mini field trips’ gave me the opportunity to formulate a clear perspective of how the ‘bond’ with the place of origin affects, and most of the time dictates, the politics of representation in the city, coalitions of an economic character and political affiliations. Any dichotomy thus between city and village, between urban and rural, is broken for the purposes of this study.

**Genealogies**

Grecanici measure their time since their migration to Reggio in generations. The term ‘generation’ is always used in discourse to denote contextual continuities or discontinuities. The category of the generation poses a continuum amongst Grecanici, in the sense that it is employed by most of my informants irrespectively of their age, gender, status and economic wealth. It further allows them comparisons, oppositions and a certain historical creativity.

The first generation refers to the people who in greater waves came to the city at the end of the 1950s. These people were largely illiterate and very poor.
Many having worked hard as emigrants in Switzerland and elsewhere in Southern Europe, they managed to create an economic base, strong enough to educate their children and provide them with a relatively comfortable life. Their economic efforts were also ‘assisted’ by the economic miracle that Calabria experienced during the 1960s. These people (in their late 70s at the time of my research) are still speaking Grecanico amongst themselves and they were very willing to speak to me in their language.

The second generation is the generation of the ‘intellectuals’ who are the protagonists of the Grecanico associationistic movement. These are the ‘educated’ Grecanici who managed to create a certain social status for themselves and their families through their education. They are mainly professori/prefessoresse\(^8\) (professors), dottoridottoresse\(^9\) (doctors), ingegneri (engineers), architetti (architects), assessori (local councillors) and other people who work in the tertiary sector. The second generation managed to differentiate themselves in the sense that they acquired a certain degree of power coextensive but not solely based on the material wealth of their parents. It is well documented that literacy provides opportunities for social mobility and may cut across established hierarchies (Davis 1977:76-77). The Grecanici of this generation have managed to reverse (to a great extent) the negative stereotype of the ‘peasant’ that was attached to their parents by the locals in Reggio. Moreover they managed to create a niche for themselves (as cultural experts) especially after the end of the 1960s and their struggle towards their recognition by the Italian state as a Greek linguistic minority.

The third generation is characterised by a relative effort to create a status independent of their parents; usually by having been married to an individual of non-Grecanico origin. For this reason they claim for themselves a more ‘modern’ and pro-Reggini identity. People who live in the same quartiere with their parents exhibit a sense of Grecanici community relatively stronger than their contemporaries who reside outside of the kinship ‘milieu’ (Pipyrou 2010). Nevertheless in all cases people acknowledge their kinship obligations

\(^8\) This term refers to people who are secondary school teachers.
\(^9\) As such are characterised all university graduates.
and try to meet these expectations without creating conflicts. Despite having a relative economic independence, the Grecanici of this generation live in the parental home until married. Usually their income is not sufficient for them to have their own household and further parental control inhibits any movement from the parental home before marriage (university is a well-accepted reason for moving out of the parental home). The majority own a car (bought by the parents) and study in the university (or just attend and subsequently drop out of their studies). They dispute the relevance of a degree to the present economic situation and as soon as they finish school they turn to other professions. They are fully aware of the relevance of paternalism in their society and they are happy to ‘play’ with the system as long as they are provided with a job. Their families are their usual patrons, for all Grecanici families are well-connected. Politicians of Grecanico origin as well as other prominent figures of Reggina life are the first that the families visit in order to help their children. The children themselves (25 to 35 years old) are more reluctant to become clients and thus leave this role to their parents. It is considered as preferable to have your parent as a patron.

In relation to the Grecanico language, only in cases of strong parental patronage do people of the third generation deal with ‘inherited’ associationistic matters. Usually parents appear ‘bitter’ because of their children’s indifference towards the issues regarding the ‘salvation’ of the Grecanico language. Parents who have fought for creating a respectable cultural market regarding Grecanico culture feel that their children should pick up where they left off. As one of my informants often moans: “we are the last ones to speak Grecanico. Upon our death the language will die”. If managing the Grecanici issues was the motto of the second generation, the third generation is almost disengaged from it. Yet when there is an exhibited interest in Grecanico this is mostly related to an attempt to find a job in the public sector.

Grecanici attribute to their generations some common characteristics and it is primarily upon them, rather than age, that they define the term. This accords with Lisón-Tolosana’s definition of generation; one of the best provided in the
anthropological literature (Loizos 2007). In his work in central Spain Lisón-Tolosana has broadly defined generations as;

An age-group of men and women who share a common mode of existence or concept of life, who assess the significance of what happens to them at a given moment in terms of a common fund of conventions and aspirations (1966:180).

Lisón-Tolosana argues that through the sharing of time and a ‘common image of the world and of life’, people create and are conditioned by ideas and attributes constituting ‘the fundamental nerve of a generation’. Thus every individual, regardless of age, that adheres to the aforementioned way of life belongs to the same generation. He notes that ‘a generation’ is directly affected by both the “cultural legacy” of former generations and “the new contribution or contributions” of the members of the current generation (1966:181). This definition complies with Grechanici conceptualisation of generations. As Carmelo (45, politician) very eloquently puts it: “look at us and look at our fathers. Look at how much we have accomplished. They came poor (to Reggio), they worked very hard (as emigrants) and succeeded financially. But we succeeded socially. We are different and at the same time the same. We have built upon them to become us”.

‘Intellectuals’, Gatekeepers, and the Grechanici ‘Culture Keepers’

My first contacts in the field were with the people who were collectively perceived as the Grechanici intelligensia; presidents of various associations of a commercial and ‘cultural’ character, politicians, Catholic and Orthodox spiritual leaders. Due to extensive gossip regarding my arrival to the area, Grechanici intellectuals were informed in advance as to the purpose of my research. This information was spread by the Greek associations (comprised of Greeks of the diaspora) in Reggio who were already ‘capitalising’ on being compatriots with l’antropologa (the anthropologist). Gossip of this efficacy is usually associated with small-scale communities where it is believed that there exists a tighter sense of ‘togetherness’. It is remarkable though that in a city of the scale of Reggio, information spreads incredibly fast. Most of the time, informants knew already about my movements and to my initial astonishment
as to how, they replied that “le parole volano” (the words fly). Nevertheless, they appeared to ‘respect’ my firmness on not sharing the content of my ethnographic discussions. This in itself may pose a paradox regarding the co-existence of high levels of gossip and omertà (the code of silence) at the same time.

My first contacts then, were with the Grecanici intellectuals who were pleased to offer their ‘expertise’ on Grecanici culture. The intellectuals were usually teachers in the local high schools (professori), medicine doctors, politicians and priests. The majority have published a considerable amount of books regarding the Grecanico language and culture. The Grecanici intellectuals, due to their education, enjoy a higher status amongst the rest of the Grecanici. Despite the fact that the majority of my informants have in their possession a lot of material assets, education is a determining factor in social recognition and respect. A ‘dottore’ (doctor, degree holder) or ‘dottoressa’ in their quotidian lives are addressed by their titles and treated with respect. It is always perceived as prestigious to have in your company a dottore and this is usually ‘advertised’ with a loud voice and the usual exaggerated compliments that make the dottore noticeable to the surrounding people. Much more of the doctor’s or professor’s ‘shine’ is then distributed to the rest of the company who through the intellectuals’ presence ultimately advertise themselves and their capability to have such company.

These first interviews with the Grecanici intellectuals, though formal, helped me to understand the politics of the various affiliations and to further establish a relationship of ‘trust’. This tactic was to prove very helpful later in order for me to keep a neutral ground among the constant disputes and local debates. With the intellectuals I was feeling comfortable enough to have my notepad with me. What was very clear to me, after the first interviews, was that they were treating me as a student to whom they need to provide information. Usually they were reciting their books and focusing on what is perceived as the ‘hot issue’ in relation to Grecanico culture: the language. They were instantly not considering themselves as parts of my research. They were
informants, yes, but not subjects of research, revealing thus the deep-rooted attitude relating to what is locally perceived as the ‘authority on knowledge’.

Usually when people in Reggio refer to the Grecanici they refer to the group which I call ‘culture keepers’ whose aim it is to ‘safeguard’ and ‘promote’ the Grecanico culture (see chapter four). This group is comprised of intellectuals and the people who participate actively in the Grecaniche cultural associations. The culture keepers, as far as cultural matters are concerned (conferences relating to Grecanico culture and language, invitations to politicians and spiritual leaders both Greek and Italian, organisation of musical festivals, and generally the promotion of the Grecanico culture in Greece and Italy), act at a political level as ‘representatives’ of the Grecanici among the wider society of Reggio. At the time of my research there were a considerable number of associations\textsuperscript{10} who were interested mainly in issues of language, culture and finance. The relations between the associations are characterised by a constant competition in terms of political authority and ‘cultural authenticity’. The people who comprise the associations come from former associations that have since disbanded. Almost none of the present associations can claim that founding members still remain among its ranks. The existence of such a number of associations – representatives of not a particularly large portion of the Grecanici population in Reggio – triggers many questions. The issues regarding the phenomenon of associazionismo Grecanico and how this is directly connected with further issues of power and political disposition is examined in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

The Grecanici intellectuals were not very keen on putting me in contact with other Grecanici who are not educated. This partially stemmed from their consideration of me interviewing and relating to ‘everyday’ people as rather pointless. I opted though to put on my informants’ list apart from the intellectuals also builders, painters, housewives, shopkeepers, private and public employees, and seasonal immigrants. My difficulty in approaching them in the first place was generated by my own ignorance of the micro-

\textsuperscript{10} According to the Sportello Linguistico (‘Linguistic Window’, see chapter four) in Reggio there exist 18 Grecanico and Greek associations.
politics of the area. On my arrival I was associated with the Greek associations thus oblivious to the tension between them and the Greca
cultural associations. I was advised not to go alone to San Giorgio extra, the Greca
time that I was ‘escorted’ there, the men who were present in the piazza refused to meet me. The invitation to them was on the grounds that I was a person from Greece who came to visit them. The words that came from the people that were escorting me were chosen very carefully. Their first intention was to highlight the fact of my nationality, that I was Greek, which could provoke the feelings of the Greca and thus, despite the bad relationship between the two opposing associations, they would succumb and talk to me.

Finding myself almost always against a ‘closed door’ I finally decided to take a different approach to the matter. With the aid of one of the Orthodox priests of Reggio and the Catholic priest of San Giorgio extra (they used to be school mates and close friends) I arranged a meeting with the cultural keepers of the neighbourhood. The first words of Enzo, one of the most influential men of San Giorgio extra, are very indicative of the political climate between opposing coalitions in the area.

Enzo – I see that this time you came alone …
SP – Yes …
Enzo – If you come alone you are welcome; with your friends, no.\[11\]

After this meeting I was finally ‘granted’ access to their homes and their lives. I was socialising with the families as closely as possible and encouraged people to tell me their own stories (Ballinger 2003, Goddard 1996:5, on the narrative construction of the collective selfhood cf. Kirtsglou 2004:ch.5). The simple fact that I was interested in their daily lives, listening to them joking and arguing with each other in the piazza or in the bars they were frequenting or in front of a television, was a ‘welcome’ change to their routine.

\[11\] Se vieni da sola sei benvenuta, con i tuoi amici no.
Finally not only the topics that I investigated (corruption and the 'Ndrangheta amongst others) but the ethnographic enquiry itself became how to ‘balance a pragmatic self-distancing and an ethical engagement embedded in it’ (Herzfeld 2001:22). Self-distancing relates to issues of objectivity and the inherent tension towards its achievement. Anthropological research though is bound to be subjective given the epistemological and practical conditions of its realisation (cf. Crapanzano 1977, Ellen 1984, Marcus 1998). Reflexivity as well as the ‘opening up’ of the research conditions endows the ethnographic work with a representational and sociological value. My further understanding of what Herzfeld terms as ‘ethical engagement’ materialises in my attempt to keep the identity of my subjects hidden, especially when it comes to people who are prominent figures in the political and social life of the area or people who are implicated in illicit activities. Confidentiality and anonymity are as much steps towards ensuring the protection of informant’s rights, sensitivities and privacy as about the transformation of experience into sociological insight. I therefore agree with Okely, that ethnography is about – among other things – drawing connections between local and global, individual and collective (1992:7). For this reason not only are the names changed, but also any further facts that could render the persons who engage in my ethnographic scenes visible are deliberately altered. Reflexive accounts are separately kept from fieldnotes – these exist in electronic form – as well as notes that refer to repetitive illicit activities. The latter exist in only one hard copy and their ‘cryptic’ structure renders them intelligible only by me. My memory alone can be jogged in a particular manner that I have devised in order to ensure that no involuntary intrusion into these notes is permitted.
Chapter Three: Grecoanici in Time and Space

The Greek linguistic minority in Italy is comprised of two ‘Greek Islands’, one in Calabria and one in Puglia and is officially recognised by Italian law (‘law n.482/1999’). The Grecoanici, the protagonists of this study, are Italian subjects, citizens of Reggio Calabria and primarily originate from the area Grecoanica in the villages of Aspromonte (White Mountain), Calabria. They speak the Griko or Greco (Greek) that is comprised of archaic Doric, Hellenistic, Byzantine as well as local Romanic and Italian elements. They also speak the local Calabrian dialect and the official Italian language (Karanastasis 1984, Caracausi 1990, Petropoulou 2000). The Greek presence in Calabria commences with the colonisation of South Italy and Sicily between the 8th and 6th century BCE and with the foundation of the first cities of ‘Magna Graecia’ (Great Greece): Reggio Calabria, Sidari and Croton. Consecutive relocations from Greece during the Byzantine and Norman eras have enriched the Calabrian populations with new linguistic elements and provoked a positive economic and social effervescence. In 1148 a huge number of people living in the Byzantine areas of Corfu, Kefalonia, Negroponte, Corinth, Thebes and Athens were ravaged by the Norman King Roger of Sicily and transferred to the area of Reggio Calabria, altering once again the demographics of the city (Spano-Bolani 1979:197, Kean 2006:136). From the end of the 9th until the 11th century Calabria flourished economically, politically and artistically (Spano-Bolani 1979). After the 14th century the Greek language started giving way rapidly mainly due to political and economic instability that was provoked by a succession of conquests upon Calabria. An important factor was the abolition of the Christian Orthodox denomination which was performed in Greek. Following the council of Trent 1545-1563 the Orthodox ritual was officially replaced by the Catholic. The

12 The linguistic minorities covered by this law are: French, Provensal, Franco-Provensal, German, Ladin, Friulian, Sloven, Catalan, Sardinian, Albanian, Greek and Croatian.

13 That was the concluding act of a ‘battle’ between the Orthodox Eastern and Latin Western Churches that started with the religious schism in 1054. The reasons for the split could be summarised as follows: first, the deep-rooted cultural misunderstanding and distrust which both sides claimed and attributed to the different ideologies of classical Rome and Greece. Second, the Filioque – the belief that the Holy Ghost proceeded not only from the Father but also from the Son – a concept which was gradually accepted in the West but was considered
Diocese of Bova (Bova was the administrative and religious centre of the area Grecanica) was the last to follow the Orthodox ritual to be performed in Greek in 1573\textsuperscript{14} (Teti 2004:60).

At the time of the unification of Italy (1860) the Greek language was spoken in twelve villages in Aspromonte whilst by the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century it was spoken in nine: Galliciano, Roghudi, Chorio di Roghudi, Amendolea, Bova, Bova Marina, Roccaforte del Greco, Chorio di Roccaforte and Condofurri. During the 1970s the German linguist Gerhard Rolfs notes that the language is not in use anymore in the villages of Condofurri, Roccaforte del Greco, Chorio di Roccaforte and Amendolea. During the same period the area was struck by devastating landslides and floods (1971 and 1972-3)\textsuperscript{15} that provoked the permanent evacuation of the villages of Roghudi and Chorio di Roghudi. These populations were initially scattered around the areas of Melito di Porto Salvo, Bova Marina and Reggio Calabria. After 1988 many relocated to the newly built area of Roghudi Nuova (New Roghudi) near Melito di Porto Salvo (Martino 1979, Petropoulou 1995). To the present day the Greek language is spoken by the elders of Roghudi Nuova, and less so by the elder populations of Bova and Bova Marina. The village where the language is still in use – even though the preferable spoken word is the Calabrian dialect – is Galliciano (Petropoulou 1997). Petropoulou bitterly notes that “if the motive to visit area Grecanica was to find Greek speakers then the visitor will be disappointed since the language is hardly spoken anymore” (1995:152).

Petropoulou here refers to the considerable publicising and tourist marketing of the area inside and outside of Italy, mainly in Greece. Area Grecanica is known in Greece as Ta Ellinofona (The Greek-speaking villages). The area

\textsuperscript{14}The first liturgy in Latin was performed by a Bovesiano priest of the Siviglia family. So heavy was the criticism that he received from his co-villagers that they attributed to him the nickname of ‘Judas’. This denigrating nickname has been transmitted to the descendants of this family; at the present living in Rome (Petropoulou 1995:150).

\textsuperscript{15}The floods of December 1972-January 1973 affected the regions of Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Marche, Molise and Sicily, caused 20 casualties and 464.81 million euros of damage (Lastoria, Simonetti, Casaioli, Mariani and Monacelli 2006).
has become known in Greece since the 1960s, after the visits of the philologist Angela Merianou and the various publications that followed. At first these publications created an idyllic, exotic and – to a great extent – distorted picture as to the populations and the conditions of their life. In a nutshell, Greconici were portrayed as the ‘descendants of an Aryan race’ (the ancient Greek) who, living amongst the ‘barbarous’ populations (the rest of the locals), managed to preserve their ‘Homeric Greekness’ and their ‘immortal Greek soul and splendour’. They are further coloured as ‘blessedly backward’ with qualities such as hospitality ‘that can be found nowhere in the whole world’ as well as a disposition towards philosophy. The extremely hard conditions of Greconici life and the miseria that plagued them before and after the Second World War were romanticised and ultimately mis-portrayed.

From within Calabria after 1970, various local publications talked of ‘the Greek roots’ that all Calabrians share and the ‘lost grandeur’ of a ‘higher civilisation’. The same exoticism regarding the Greconici was cultivated by the cultural associations (extensively treated in chapter four) which were founded at the end of the 1960s. These cultural associations engaged in a profound historical constructivism in order to address what they considered as the ‘Questione Greconica’ (the Greconico Problem). Petropoulou defines two distinctive periods regarding the trajectories of the ‘management’ of Greconici affairs. The first period – what Petropoulou calls the “Awakening” (1997:243) – refers to the 1970s and the action of the first associations with reference to religious and linguistic matters. During this decade, with the collaboration of the Greek-Italian college of Rome, ‘Saint Athanasios’, a considerable number of masses as well as baptisms and marriages following the Orthodox rites were performed in the villages of the area Greconica. These initiatives were welcomed by the monks of Mount Athos, Greece (Petropoulou 1997:216). The proselytising (on the part of the Patriarch of Constantinople) in this area has a long and interesting history which however is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say though that despite any official negations from the Patriarch

of Constantinople\textsuperscript{17} there is a considerable effort to ‘convert’ the Grecanici populations to Orthodoxy.

The ‘Questione Grecanica’ revolved around the ‘protection’ and ‘salvation’ of the Grecanico language and culture. In so far that the Grecanico language was considered as superior (due to its ancient Greek elements), the Grecanici themselves should embrace their superior roots and origins. During the same decade various associations were founded in Greece with the aim to ‘help’ the ‘Calabrian Greeks’. These associations put forward irredentist propositions based on diasporic arguments. As a result the Grecanici are portrayed as Greeks of the diaspora, ‘brothers’, and ‘of the same blood’ and not as autochthonous Italian populations.

During the 1980s, the second period of ‘dealing’ with Grecanici affairs, we note a combined effort from the public institutions in Reggio Calabria and the Grecaniche associations to develop the area for tourism. Apart from the language, culture as well as music, food and dance are advertised as exclusively distinctive and unique Grecanici products. During the time of my fieldwork I participated in a number of Greek visits to the area. Despite the general euphoria of the event, provoked by the abundant spirits and the tarantella (traditional dance) performed by exceptional local music groups, there were many times that I was asked “why these people do not speak Greek?”\textsuperscript{18}

Thus defining area Grecanica in purely linguistic terms is not a straightforward matter. The political-administrative institutions (Provincia di Reggio Calabria, Regione Calabria and Comunità Montana,\textsuperscript{19}) as well as the local organisations (\textit{Gruppo di azione locale and Ente parco dell’}

\textsuperscript{17} In 2001 the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople visited area Grecanica as part of his visit to Southern Italy. As was stated in the Italian press, the reasons behind the visit did not relate to religious conversion.

\textsuperscript{18} As Knight notes in Trikala (central Greece), trips to area Grecanica are advertised by the various tourist agencies as “vacation combined with culture”. Various packages are on offer to sample cultural activities with ‘our Greek brothers in south Italy’ (2009, personal communication).

\textsuperscript{19} Comunità Montane are institutions that were founded with the 1102/3.12.71 law, destined to develop the Italian mountainous areas.
Aspromonte) have defined area Greca

Area Greca can be understood as the administrative area that coincides with the regional autonomous institution of Comunità Montana del Versante Jonico Meridionale Capo Sud (instituted in August 2000 following the amended regional legislations regarding Comunità Montana in 1990 and 1999) and includes the comuni (municipalities) of Melito, San Lorenzo, Bagaladi, Roghudi, Roccaforte del Greco, Condofuri (with the frazioni of Amendolea and Galliciano), Bova, Bova Marina, Staiti and Brancaleone (see Figure 1). Defining area Greca is a complicated matter that involves a political as well as economic exegesis and is not solely based on linguistic concerns. Sacco (2007:70) notes that the above delineation is based on language, there are comuni Ellenofoni (literally with the Greek language, with the presence of the Grecofoni), and history/culture, therefore there are also comuni Ellenofili (literally ‘friends’ of the Greek, with Greek culture). Here, one may easily note the confusion and discrepancy regarding terms such as Ellenofoni, Ellenofili and Grecofoni. In any case, the above criteria, do not justify the inclusion into the area Greca of comuni such as Bagaladi or Brancaleone (non Greek-speaking in the modern era) and the exclusion of comuni such as Cardedo (Greek-speaking until the beginning of the 20th century) (ibid.:70). As many ethnographers have pointed out, notions such as culture, language and history are only fragments that synthesise what could be termed as ‘collective identity’ (Herzfeld 1985, 1987, Jenkins 1997, Ballinger 2003). Provisional identities as they are, the aforementioned notions are easy to handle and manipulate in different contexts and for various political, economic and other reasons. To be sure, the confines of the area Greca provoke a conflict between the administrative and the implicated comuni which materialises on many levels and is appropriated according to different political views and local interests. The desire exhibited by the nearby areas so as to be included in the area Greca is mainly dictated by economic and political reasons and has little relevance to the Greek language. Being residents of Reggio, my informants would be expected not to be affected by or directly implicated in all these affairs regarding the definition of the area. On the contrary, the Greceanici of the city are not only directly interested in everything regarding their villages but also deeply implicated in the economic and political procedures that involve their areas of origin. Particularistic
matters aside, as will become evident in the course of this study, local chauvinism or ‘control over one’s territory’ usually overshadows any personal issues.

![Figure 1. – Area Grecanica](image)

**A few words about Reggio Calabria**

Reggio Calabria is the largest city in Calabria and is situated at the far end of the Italian ‘toe’ between the Ionian and Tyrrhenian seas. Italy, a member of the G8\(^{20}\) and the G10\(^{21}\) and a founding member of the European Union, is

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\(^{20}\) The ‘Group of Eight’ is a political organisation comprised of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK, and USA. The ‘group’ represents 65% of the world economy, holds regular conferences and conducts political policy research.
divided into twenty ‘regioni’\textsuperscript{22}, (regions). According to the Constitution of
Italy of 1948, the regioni are granted a degree of autonomous authority, in an
attempt for administrative decentralisation and for better dealing with
particular local matters. Nevertheless it was after 1970 that regional councils
were created whilst since 2001 they have acquired administrative and
legislative power. Calabria\textsuperscript{23} is the most southern region of the mainland
between the regions of Basilicata and Sicily. A mainly mountainous region\textsuperscript{24},
Calabria’s capital is Catanzaro. Calabria is divided into five provinces, which
in turn also have a certain amount of administrative authority – namely
Catanzaro, Cosenza, Crotone, Reggio Calabria and Vibo Valentia.

The province of Reggio Calabria is divided into 99 ‘comuni’, (municipalities).
The ‘comune’ of Reggio covers an area of 236.02 square kilometers and is
divided into 15 ‘quartieri’, (quarters). It has a population of approximately
184,504. According to the \textit{Annuario Statistico} of 2005 on Reggio Calabria,
over 42\% of the population are employed in wholesale, 11.5\% are involved in
manufacturing, and 10\% in the construction industry while only 4.5\% are
involved in agriculture. The citizens identify themselves according to their
place of origin primarily and secondly as Calabrians.

Reggio is considered as the city of \textit{Fata Morgana}\textsuperscript{25}, a mythological mirage
that is a reflection of the city of Messina on the water provoked by the currents

\textsuperscript{21} The ‘Group of Ten’ is mainly an economic body comprised of Belgium, Canada, France,
Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the
United States.
\textsuperscript{22} Italy is administratively divided into Regioni, Provincie, Comuni and Frazioni. The Regioni,
Provincie and Comuni have a level of political autonomy but the Frazioni are politically
dependent on the Comuni.
\textsuperscript{23} Up until 752CE the name of Calabria was indicating the geographic location of today’s
\textsuperscript{24} The mountainous areas are: Pollino, Sila, and Aspromonte. The highest peak is the
Montalto, in Aspromonte, at 1,956 m.
\textsuperscript{25} Corrado Alvaro describes ‘the fabulous spectacle’ as such: “The sea on the part of Sicily,
appears black and swollen like a mountain. On the part of Calabria, it appears (the sea) clear
and transparent like a mirror. Onto this mirror there appear thousands of pillars, identical in
the width, height, distance and colour. Suddenly, the pillars crumble and in their place
splendid arches appear. But this spectacle lasts only for a moment. The arches and the pillars
disappear from the sensational mirror. In their place, castles and towers emerge, only to
shatter in silence; they give place to an entire city suspended in the mirror with her superb
edifices and colonnades. Then the pillars and the houses collapse. The magic mirror reflects a
ruined city until she transforms into an immense forest with herds, strange animals and bizarre
and the different winds of the Messina Strait. Situated on the south-western coast of the region of Calabria, right opposite the Sicilian port of Messina and facing the snow-capped peak of Mount Etna, Reggio ‘can afford’ one of the most beautiful coastal kilometres in Italy\textsuperscript{26}, namely the Via Marina (also known as Via Lungomare). It is on the Via Marina that monuments and archaeological sites from the classical period – namely the Greek Walls and the Roman Baths – are located.

The city is an architectural mixture of the old and the new, a blend of different styles, epochs and attitudes. One of the most important locations in Reggio is the Corso Garibaldi and the homonymous Piazza Garibaldi. The two main streets, the Via Marina and the Corso Garibaldi, represent the city’s heart, the heart of the ‘historical centre’; the main place for politics, socialising, flirting. In the area of Callopinace, in the Piazza Duomo situated on the Corso Garibaldi, stands the neoclassic cathedral of Reggio dedicated to Maria Santissima della Consolazione. Maria Santissima della Consolazione together with San Giorgio are the patron saints of Reggio. The first is celebrated on the second Saturday of September when the devoted Reggini form a glorious procession from the Santuario di Santa Maria della Consolazione, in Erremos, to the cathedral of the Duomo. San Giorgio is celebrated on the 23rd April. In the Piazza Duomo during the celebration of the patron saints of the city, the Reggini honour their saints by dancing the classic tarantella amid the sound of the Organeto and the Tamborello.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, Reggio was a border town of the Spanish Vicereign and was repeatedly destroyed by Turkish and Saracen pirates. From the 17th century up until 1860 it was part of the kingdom of Naples under the Bourbon dynasty. Reggio stands as a medieval city which was once circled by figures. The symmetry, the harmonious colours and the naturalness of this fantastic mirage are sensational. The enchantment lasts only for a moment. Then the mirror miraculously evaporates and the waves of the strait return to their perpetual agitation” (‘La Calabria’ 2003:184).

\textsuperscript{26} It was Gabriele D’Annunzio – famous Italian author and poet – who described the Via Marina as “Il più bel kilometro d’Italia”, the most beautiful kilometre in Italy. This perception is collectively shared by the citizens of Reggio who were always mentioning it to me on our first passeggiate (leisurely walks in public areas).
17 towers and in 1783 was totally destroyed by a terrible earthquake. It was rebuilt by the Bourbon army under the instructions of the engineer Giovan Battista Mori. Reggio was united with Italy on the arrival of Garibaldi on the 21st of August 1860. On the 28th of December 1908, the city was again devastated by an enormous earthquake that left almost 15,000 people dead. Aid arrived immediately from many directions and the city started being rebuilt. Complexes of temporary huts (baracche) were constructed in order to accommodate the homeless. Most of the baracche complexes were named after the benefactors (Villaggio Svizzero, Villini Svezzesi e Novegesi, Rione Friuli, rione San Marco, Baracche Nazionali, Inglesi, Barracchamenti Militari of the Ferovieri, Americani). They were situated on the north side of the city, crowded between the Santa Lucia, Caserta and Annunziata relief drains and the gardens of the Santa Caterina quartiere.

The Grecanici started migrating to Reggio in stronger waves at the end of the 1950s, whilst a small number had already migrated to the city before the Second World War. The quarters of San Giorgio extra27 and Sbarre are the ones with the largest number of the Grecanici populations. A considerable number also inhabit the quarters of Ravagnese and Gebbione. Upon their arrival to Reggio, the Grecanici were met with hostility and contempt. Terms like paddhechi28, parpatuli and tamarri (all derogatory to peasantry) were attributed to them by the local population in order to emphasise their peasant origin. The Grecanici on their part cultivated a discourse of isolation and superiority against the locals which was further enhanced by practices of endogamy. As far as the Grecanici were concerned, the local Reggini were equally stupid, inferior and dirty. Young male Grecanici were instructed by their mothers to never marry a Reggina, for she incorporates all the negative traits of a forestiera (foreigner) that is dirty (morally and physically), inferior in terms of blood and destined to deceive him.

27 In this quartiere up until the beginning of 1970 a street was called lu stittu di paddhechi (the street of the peasants) (Martino 1979, Petropoulou 1997:234).
28 The term ‘paddhecho’ derives from the Grecanico paddikàri (youth of pride, dash, full of life). In the course of time the term has come to denote the uncouth, the vulgar and the stupid (Martino 1979, Petropoulou 1997:234).
Examined in a broader historical context, the case of the Grecanici cannot be contextualised separately from Calabria’s trajectory and the ‘Southern Question’ (reviewed later in this chapter). Negative stereotypes regarding Calabrians and Southerners in general are perpetuated and circulated by both Southerners and Northerners up until the present day. Placanica (1985), in his excellent study “Calabria in idea”, attributes equal merit to both central governments and intellectuals (Calabrians and others) who constructed an ‘archaic’ and simultaneously ambiguous myth regarding Calabria and its people. This ambivalence regarding Calabria and subsequently the Calabrians, Placanica argues, has contributed to the essentialisation of physical characteristics and moral values of the people. Further superficial ‘ethnostudies’, historical analysis and economico-political essays/reports, have pointed to a direct historicisation (closed feudalism, ignorance and superstition, *miseria*) of the prejudice/judgement concerning the region. This oscillation between denial and myth has resulted in regarding the civic and moral backwardness of Calabria as a matter of fact.

Lombroso is the most prominent of the scholars to have attributed physiological characteristics that determine Calabrian identity. According to Lombroso (1980:11) the Greeks of Calabria exhibit specific physiological and social characteristics. They are of medium height, fearsome, stubborn, wild at heart and spirit and with a passion for dominance. For the Albanians of the same region Lombroso notes that they used to resemble the Slavs and the Serbs. They are tall, with straight teeth and nose, small eyes, nervous. They are excellent runners and hunters. Their hearts are fearless and they consider vendetta a must (1980:40). Similar to other Italian criminal anthropologists,29 Lombroso’s work was critical on the grounds that it created the basis for ongoing discussions regarding the ‘delinquent zone’: the South (Moss 1979:483). The work of the criminal anthropologists – mostly developed between 1870 and 1914 – was definitely affected by their methods of enquiry as well as their own political and social dispositions. The aim was to define the limits of the newly unified Italian state and provide a cartography of its

29 For example Alfredo Niceforo (1897) on delinquency in Sardinia.
social categories. Thus civil society was symbolically bounded by the scientific methods of positivism: “refusal of the rights and obligations of citizenship to those beyond this boundary could therefore rest on rational, scientific arguments” (Moss 1979:484).

Nevertheless, intellectuals and politicians were not the only ones to cultivate various assumptions regarding Calabria and its populations. Calabrians equally cultivated from within certain assumptions of each other. We read in Lear;

According to our friend, Bova (… all of whose inhabitants speak a corrupt Greek and are called Turchi (Turks) by their neighbours,) is a real old Grecian settlement, or rather, the representative of one formerly existing at Amendola, and dating from the time of Locris and other colonies. The Bovani are particularly anxious to impress on the minds of the strangers that they have no connection with the modern emigrants from Albania (1964:53).

Taking into consideration that the above is written during Lear’s journeys in the autumn of 1847 in the provinces of Calabria and Basilicata (Lear 1964:11), there are clear traces that negatively coloured intra-differentiation was cultivated among the adjacent populations in the area Grecanica. Later, the works of Francesco Nucera (Rovine di Calabria, 1974) and Salvino Nucera (Chalònero, 1993) have perpetuated a specific pessimism and bleakness regarding the literate portrayal of the modern Grecanici and have significantly influenced latter Grecanici works of poetry and folklore. More recent ethnographic studies such as Vito Teti’s (Il Senso dei Luoghi, 2004) is an excellent example where ethnography meets reflexive melancholia. In the latter work the sense of the ruin and its reconstruction in another place (2004:5) is invested with a particular psychological determinism which eventually reflects and is being reflected in Grecanici culture.

From an anthropological point of view, Petropoulou argues that the Grecanici embodied two ‘negative’ identity traits. First, they were a linguistic minority and as such they were facing the hostility of the non-Greek-speaking populations. Secondly they were peasant Southerners, thus ‘second class citizens’ (this observation is contextualised in the section that follows). Both
as a linguistic minority and as Southerners, the Grecoani were experiencing hostility from neighbouring Italian-speaking populations. This ‘stigma’ of inferiority however was not very different from what the rest of the Southerners were experiencing in relation to the Northerners (Petropolou 1994:191-2, 1995:4).

Marginality and politics: the southern “open sore”

During the era of the unification of the Italian state in 1860, the majority of the population spoke nothing but regional dialects (Clark 1996:35). The first decades after the Risorgimento found the state – which existed as ‘a set of unified institutions’ (Clark 1996:1) – plagued by social unrest and disillusionment (Clark 1996:1, Davis 1988:2, Smith 1997:139). This derived mainly from the social reality created after the Risorgimento which was quite contradictory to the myths of the moral and political regeneration that had been integral to the metaphor of a unified Italy. The unification, according to the southern liberal Giustino Fortunato, “has been ‘improvised’, it had been a ‘miracle’ going against both history and geography” (Smith 1997:64). At the economic level the South experienced the elimination of marginally productive industries due to free competition from the North. This gradually led to the conquest of the southern market by northern products. Agriculture was equally affected and a particularistic mode of cultivation was adopted, aimed at an equally particularistic profit. In terms of communication the South was virtually cut-off from the North due to an absent infrastructure of roads and railways. Moreover, at the political level, the parliamentary discussion at the time of elections in relation to the construction of railways in Southern Italy brought openly to light the phenomenon of transformismo\(^30\) (transformation). It was the then prime minister Depretis who successfully exploited the South’s political status in order to form strong coalitions with the local ‘notable’ cliques, pursuing further collaboration on the issue of the railways (ibid.:103). This ‘bleak’ political and social reality was expressed in the social debates regarding Italy’s ‘Social Question’ and the ‘Crime

\(^{30}\) Transformismo refers to the change of political allegiances as the occasion demanded.
Politics and corruption as well as politics and crime seemed to overlap at this stage in the consciousness of the Italian citizens. The general perception was that the southern individual was predestined, both historically and biologically, to be a criminal. During this period the first hard-core Southerner stereotype took shape. Historically it was justified by the economic development of the South based on the action of the criminal organisations of Camorra, 'Ndrangheta, Sacra Corona and Cosa Nostra. Biologically, it was the aid of the scientific brand of criminal anthropology – with Lombroso as the main figure – that pointed to the natural inclination of the criminal. Even though Lombroso himself was speaking from a rather positivist point of view, according to the new trends in psychiatry, his ideas were used to enforce the already prevalent view of a lawless and disorderly South (Davis 1988:ch.12).

This primarily political, economic as well as moral and ethical crisis led to the postulation of what later became known as the ‘Southern Question’ (Davis 1988:3, Clark 1996:2, 17, 357-60, Schneider 1998, Smith 1997:4, 33). The ‘Southern Question’ – one of the major political problems in Italy – was the result of the incorporation of the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies into the newly-born Italian state and the amplification of the existing conditions on the Southern mainland (the Mezzogiorno) and Sicily on one side, and Central and Northern Italy on the other. In the South and the islands politics were synonymous with clientelism and patronage (Allum 1973:42). During the first decades after unification, Italy was a patchwork of different economies and ways of life, different cultures, histories and religious practices. This was apparent not only at a national level, but also within the regions. The plethora of conflicting economic and cultural differences led to an unavoidable rivalry at a sub-regional and regional level (Clark 1996:30). Furthermore, as Clark informs us, “nation-building was hampered by economic backwardness, by

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31 These were events which took place during the 1870s and 1880s.
32 By the end of 1870s the Italian parliamentary system was confronted by its great weakness. There were plenty of accusations that elections were fixed, that politicians were corrupt and constantly interfering with the civil service, and that the executive power was very weak (Clark 1996:65). The years between 1889 and 1893 were also characterised by ‘a full-scale crisis of political morality’ which derived from the failure of certain important banks (c.f. Smith 1997:146-153).
clerical hostility, and by the fact that most Italians could neither read nor write” (ibid.).

At the time of unification the percentage of the illiterate\textsuperscript{33} was high and the Italian language was hardly spoken by many populations within the state (Clark 1996:34). There were several linguistic groups whose speakers inhabited Italy for many centuries (Lepschey et al. 1996:72). Ninety-nine percent of the population were speaking in dialect and that was apparent even among the upper classes. Italian and Latin were used for the purposes of writing, thus representing the ‘high languages’, while the non-literal dialects, used for every day purposes, represented the ‘low languages’ (Clark 1996:35, Lepschey et al. 1996:71). According to Clark, linguistic diversity was the main example of how ‘regional’ Italy was at the time of the unification (1996:35). It has been suggested that this ‘multilingualism’ reflected the weak economic, social and political links among the local populations throughout the centuries (Clark 1996:35).

It seemed that the only context in which to create an Italy and consequently Italians (Clark 1996:30-4) was the Great War of 1914 (Clark 1996:200, Smith 1997:284). The goal of an Italy was partly achieved due to urbanisation, the use of the Italian language – instead of dialects – by the army and a feeling of shared ‘fate’ among the populations. However the war deeply divided the people and this was fully expressed with huge dissatisfaction not only against the Giolittian (the Prime Minister’s) majority in the Parliament, but also against the Catholics and the Socialists\textsuperscript{34} (Allum 1973:43, Clark 1996:200).

\textsuperscript{33} For public education Reggio was allocating 1.89% of its budget, Catanzaro 2.53% and Cosenza 4.70% while the provincial administrations of the South were allocating over 50% of their budget to public constructions. Reggio was spending 69%, Catanzaro 38% and Cosenza 34% (Cingari 1982:47).

\textsuperscript{34}Both the Catholics and the Socialists comprised two different subcultures whose representation was shaped in a good/evil dichotomy and acquired a provisional status according to the region in which they existed (Allum 1973:43). For example, in the ‘White provinces’ (provinces under the Austrian Empire before unification where the local clergy played a vital role against the foreign ruler) the positive role of the church was exerted in both its spiritual and sociological dimensions. In the same provinces the Marxists and the atheists held the negative role which was expressed in their desire to overthrow the church’s most sacred and traditional values. By contrast, in the ‘Red provinces’ (provinces that formed part of the Papal States where the church was oppressive) the Marxists and the Communist Party...
The rise of fascism, along with organised industrial labour, militant agricultural labour and the bureaucratic-military ruling class, was the outcome of the turbulent economic and political situation immediately after the Great War. Mussolini35 “won by ‘being brought into the system’ by a king and a governing elite that could see no other way of containing organised violence” (Clark 1996:221, Smith 1997:322). Mussolini’s declaration was that of ‘normalisation’ and the restoration of law and order36. He succeeded in destroying the main opposition parties, the Catholics and the Socialists, and gained the support of the nationalists and the right wing liberals by allowing them influence and power. The institutions which were used by the new regime were traditional ones, though now extended – the army, the prefects, the police and the courts. The fascist regime was a military one and thus the country’s economic resources – agriculture and industry – were turned into military resources designed to sustain the army (Clark 1996:278).

World War II came to reveal the weakness of fascism, its corruption, hypocrisy and lack of criticism (Clark 1996:278, Ginsborg 1990:38, Smith 1997:400). The regime ‘of popular unity founded on war’ (Clark 1996:302) had failed to infuse Italian consciousness, Italianità, to the populations. Fascism started with one war and ended with another. What remained was a ‘political void’ deeply permeated by an anti-fascist ideological disposition. What emerged after the fall of fascism was a new regime similar to the pre-existing one, but without the King, the nationalists or the military. It was the regime of the ‘clericals’37 (Clark 1996:325, Smith 1997:423). The new government managed to overthrow its most important rivals – the communists – and be free to practice the “politics of accommodation” (Clark 1996:346, (and all its associations) held the positive role, while the church quite the opposite (Allum 1973:42).

35 Mussolini became prime minister of Italy on 28 October 1922. In his cabinet he included fascists, liberals, social democrats and popolari (Clark 1996:222, Smith 1997:322).
36 Mussolini employed the intellectuals of his party to advertise his ideas of grandeur, in his attempt to demonstrate that his movement “was not simply conservative but had new and seminal ideas” (Smith 1997:341).
37 The Christian-Democrat Party was a conglomeration of smaller groups which were divided on matters of tax reform, land redistribution, economic planning and freedom of conscience. Most voters welcomed the Christian-Democrat Party as the defender of Catholicism (Smith 1997:425).
Smith 1997:423-4). Even with the communists expelled, the nature of the new party was reformist (Ginsborg 1990:121). A series of laws\(^{38}\) (1950) concerning agriculture – what was known as the agrarian reform\(^{39}\) – resulted in the redistribution of land which “dealt the death blow to the old agrarian power block in the South” (Ginsborg 1990:139). The southern agrarian elites suffered the loss of their traditional dominance and felt betrayed by the political party to which they relied on to restore their authority. To confront this dissatisfaction, Christian Democrats needed to construct a new system of social alliances in the South based upon the control of the resources of the state (Ginsborg 1990:139). A clientelist relationship established between the Government and the majority of agrarian populations, fostered relations of central control and state dominance (Gribaudi 1980, Goddard 1996). Even though major economic establishments during the 1950s and 1960s\(^{40}\) have made most Italians unexpectedly prosperous, the state’s machinery was still ineffective (Clark 1966:346). Yet, due to the ‘economic miracle’ profound changes have taken place in the employment patterns and the class structure of Italian society, in the education system, in the family and the sexual morals, and in the religiosity of the populations. The ‘economic miracle’ forged an Italian society of atomisation and individualism contrary to the values projected before modernisation (Ginsborg 1990:342, Clark 1996:372). According to Ginsborg, Italy’s modernisation was far from based on collective mobilisation and action at a national level. It was rather the family which became the basic unit ‘for satisfying needs’ in contemporary Italy (1990:342). During the period of modernisation, family strategies seemed to result in an increased prosperity compared to the previous years (Ginsborg 1990:342, Clark 1996:372). In the same period the decentralisation of production resulted in the weakening of the working class despite the rise in wages (Ginsborg 1990:342). It was obvious that the needs and political projects of the ‘modern world’ were very difficult to incorporate with the long-term


\(^{39}\) The *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, 1950, was an investment agency responsible for funding heavy public constructions in South Italy (Smith 1997:433).

\(^{40}\) The period of 1950-1970 was a ‘golden age’ for international trade (Ginsborg 1990:213). Yet this boom meant an unparalleled movement of Italian populations from the rural South to the industrial North, as well as from the rural to the urban South (Ginsborg 1990:218).
traditions of Italian society (Ginsborg 1990:343, Clark 1996:372). However, Italian culture through fashion, cinema and literature started exporting its own 'blueprint' to the western world, thus re-approaching its own cultural unrest from another point of view \(^{41}\) (Smith 1997:451). Yet, corruption, terrorism and the complicity of the mafia in the body politic were still hot issues during the 1970s (Smith 1997:455, Ginsborg 2001:xii).

Between 1969 and 1973 the South was shaking under the local revolts which came to reveal once more the fragmented nature of Southern society and to question its modernisation. The revolt in Reggio Calabria during 1970 (cf. Lombardi Satriani 1979) resulted from the political promise that Reggio would be the 'capital' of the region. Catanzaro was chosen instead. The governmental reaction to the revolt which lasted from July 1969 to February-March 1971, was to allow Reggio to host the regional assembly. Special historical and economic conditions – but above all the inertia of the then political parties in power – cost Reggio the title (cf. Cingari 1982:377-89, Ginsborg 1990:338-40). Another 'war' – between the 'Ndrangheta\(^{42}\) families – was about to shake Reggio from November 1985 until 1991, leaving 1038 people dead, almost half of which were attributed to 'Ndrangheta 'cleansing' (cf. Paoli 2003).

Yet, it was obvious that Italy – partly at least – was entering into a process of modernisation. To claim that modernisation was the inspirational drive for the populations to adopt a national identity and culture would be difficult (Dickie 2001:25). Parts of Italy continued to have a 'pre-national' culture well into the twentieth century, while others have been successfully accommodated into the industrialisation and globalisation trend (Dickie 2001:26). Has the current Italian culture reached the Gramscian notion of “a coherent, unitary, nationally

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\(^{41}\) Pier Paolo Pasolini’s films such as ‘Accetone’ (1961) and ‘Teporema’ (1968) were stressing the social conditions of the working classes, while later works like ‘Decameron’, ‘I Raconti Canterbury’ and ‘Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte’ dealt more with themes of human decay and death (Turner 1999:73). The 1960s is known as the golden era of the Italian cinema. Apart from Pasolini other famous Italian directors of the era were: Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini, and Vittorio De Sica (Smith 1997:451, Turner 1999:73). For a more extensive account on Italian cinema see Bondanella 2001.

\(^{42}\) Calabrian mafia.
diffused ‘conception of life and man’… a way of life, a civil and individual conduct” (cited in Jacobitti 1981:1)? It has been suggested that instead of searching for one notion of Italianità, it would be more stimulating to look for multiple notions of Italianità: the hegemonic and the particular, the national and the regional, the ‘high’ and ‘low’ which are equally influential, alive and rich (Dickie 2001:32). Almost in the same respect there exist multiple rhetorical matrixes of Grecita (Greekness) in Reggio which has turned the initial ‘Questione Grecanica’ from a linguistic into a political and economic one.

Experiencing the landslides

The excessive floods, especially after the unification, had irreversible effects on the economy and physiognomy of Calabria, thus prompting Corrado Alvaro (the famous Calabrian novelist) to state that the Calabrians have a sense of fatalism and a conceptualisation of life based on the images of their torrents (Alvaro 1950:234).

The floods of 1951 that struck the basins of Messina, Metramo and those around Reggio as well as the most severe floods of 1953 brought to the fore the political question concerning the equilibrium between centre and periphery – the well known ‘Calabrian Question’ (explored in the previous section). Apart from the homes, cattle and human lives that were lost in the floods, another problem became apparent. Government neglect of the region is indicated in the decision to relocate the afflicted populations rather than dealing effectively with the hydrogeological problems of the area. According to the report of the governmental technical committee “the necessity to transfer the populations is not only dictated by the danger provoked by the landslides but also by the fact that in some areas the populations will never

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43 In the floods of 1951 there were 110 casualties in Calabria, Sardinia and Sicily. The estimate total damage was 15.49 million euros (Lastoria, Simonetti, Casaioli, Mariani and Monacelli 2006).
achieve a stable economic level". Voices that proposed resolutions on the extensive problems provoked by the floods obviously existed but unfortunately were not taken seriously into consideration.

The case of Africo – a mountainous village relocated to the Ionian coast thus losing completely its former agro-pastoral economy – is just one amongst the many cases which symbolise the ‘dramatic reality that the torrents provoked’ (Cingari 1982:346). At the national level, what was exposed in the aftermath of the major floods of 1951 and 1953 was that Calabria had always been used for the political justification of various taxations imposed upon all Italians. After the disastrous earthquakes of 1905 and 1908 the government passed special laws (the 12 of January 1909 law) according to which Italians were taxed for the recuperation of damaged striken Calabria. Yet, over the forthcoming years, the enormous amount of money collected, never really reached its destination; it was rather utilised for other causes such as the Libyan war, the Second World War, as well as for Mussolini’s ‘adventures’, thus compromising the social and economic rebirth of Calabria.

Actually little or almost nothing has changed in Calabria since 1953; the special laws for Calabria have been used as an instrument of political power of the Democrazia Cristiana, as a means to extend the electoral clientelism of the governmental party, as motivation for bureaucratic prosperity and corruption ... The sources from the special laws for Calabria were given to the son of the president of the consortium raggruppati di bonifica, an ex-second secretary in the public sector and Democratico Cristiano. (Atti Parlamentari — 29105 — Camera dei Deputati IV LEGISLATURA - DISCUSSIONI - SEDUTA DEL 12 DICEMBRE 1966)

What was of importance though, was the self-determination of the Calabrians who:

45 See especially Alicata 1953 where specific measures in relation to the local geology are proposed (M. Alicata 1953, L’alluvione e i problemi della difesa del suolo in Calabria in "Rinascita", a. X, n. 11, novembre, pp. 601-5).
46 From the 1st of July 1947 until the 31st of December 1950 the Italian state had allocated the amount of 33,682,991,253 liras for the stricken zones, the final amount given was 35,000,000 liras.
were waging their own battle to systemise the enormous amount of damages provoked by the landslides. Those united committees, comprised of priests, peasants, intellectuals and workers, not only were not encouraged and financed by the government but also they were rather obstructed by it (Atti Parlamentari— 29103 — Camera dei Deputati IV LEGISLATURA - DISCUSSIONI - SEDUTA DEL 12 DICEMBRE 1966).

The floods constitute one of the major problems in Italy which appear, at least in the pre-election period, to tantalise every government regardless of political disposition.

We must develop the protection of the soil via the evacuation of specific populations was also argued by the centre-left government in 1966. Yet,

It is not our fault that the Calabresi, in order to survive the Saracen invasions, have inhabited the forests over the centuries. Now, it is clear, that they can no longer live in the mountains; it is not through the mountains that the grande vie which bring civilta and prosperity pass. (Atti Parlamentari— 29117 — Camera dei Deputati IV LEGISLATURA - DISCUSSIONI - SEDUTA DEL 12 DICEMBRE 1966).

Comunità Montana – instituted with the law of 3rd December 1971 n. 1102 – appeared as the most important legal structure of the time towards the development of the mountainous zones as well as the ‘internal zones’ indicated by article 4 of the Italian constitution. With the new law, apart from the protection of the agricultural environment and its characteristics, the economic imbalance between the mountainous zones and the rest of the national territories was to be eliminated. Nonetheless a new ‘mountainous economy’ was to be based on the professional and cultural preparation of the populations. Among the main objectives, Comunità Montana was set up to provide the mountainous populations with the proper services thus aspiring to ‘compensate them for their disadvantage of living in the mountains’. In relation to Calabria, the area that today comprises Comunità Montana del Versante Jonico Meridionale Capo Sud with the relevant comuni was featured in European Union report published in 1979 as having the lowest income per capita (Clauss 1979 in Petropoulou 1997:243).

Despite the high publicity of the Comunità Montana as a promising autonomous structure that could possibly alleviate the economic and social
problems of the mountainous and rural Italian areas (Foti and Suraci 1983:19-20) the population continued the gradual abandonment of the Calabrian countryside. In the national census of 1971 – just prior to the publication of the Comunità Montana bill – the resident population of the mountainous Aspromonte region was 121,702 whilst the resident population in the city of Reggio Calabria was 165,822. When the next census was produced in 1981 the resident populations were 110,397 and 173,486 respectively. Not only had the population of the mountains fallen whilst that of the city had risen, but the difference between the resident populations had grown by approximately fifty percent in only ten years. When coupled to the relatively high internal Calabrian migration rate, it is clear that the drive of the Comunità Montana bill in keeping the population in the highlands and ameliorating their lives is in question. It is interesting to note that in the last national census in 2001 the resident population was 97,209 in Aspromonte and 180,353 in Reggio. Whilst these statistics do not necessarily suggest that the larger corpus of the Aspromonte population moved to Reggio Calabria, what is clear is that the Comunità Montana bill did not provide the impetus for the people to remain in their place of origin over the past thirty years. When comparing the net migration rates from the Aspromonte National Park with those of the Calabria region, we see that from 1960 to 2000 the rates are -22.8 for 1960, -16.7 for 1970, -6.1 for 1980, -2.7 for 1990 and -5.1 in 2000 for Aspromonte. The respective numbers for Calabria are; -16.1, -7.4, 0.6, -1.5 and -1.8.

During the landslides of 1951 the Ionian zone in the province of Reggio Calabria was severely damaged. As a matter of urgency the populations of the stricken villages were relocated to central Italy in the regions of Lazio and Abruzzo where they remained for over a year. The Gallicianesi were relocated to the fortress of Gaeta in Lazio while the people of the Amendolea (village) as well as the Roghudioti were relocated to L’Aquila in Abruzzo in a military camp. Some people describe their residence in L’Aquila as ‘very pleasant’ while for others it was an experience of forced expatriation. Mario 64, is a

teacher of mathematics in a high school in Reggio and he originates from the
village of Amendolea. He vividly remembers the years they lived in Abruzzo
as some of the best years, since “we were attending a very nice local school
and our parents were working in local jobs. A lot of families decided to stay in
Abruzzo but my family eventually returned to Reggio after some years”. The
Gallicianesi were relocated to the fortress town of Gaeta in Lazio, apart from
15 families who decided to stay in the village. The Gallicianesi remained in
Gaeta until 1954.

According to Leo, 76, “the first months in Gaeta passed very fast since we did
not have anything to worry about and they were giving us a small amount of
money for our needs. But we wanted to return”. Antonia also remembers that
“some women got married there with local men but the rest of us returned”.
She goes on to say that “we left the village because it was declared non-
habitable and we were evacuated. Our sindaco (mayor) has evacuated us” (in
Nucera 1984/5:144). There are also testimonies which actually account for
physical confrontations between the poliziotti (policemen) of Gaeta and the
Gallicianesi who threw stale bread at the policemen during their clashes. Some
women got married in Gaeta and thus mixed with the locals and stayed there.

Reflecting back on the events of the relocations a lot of my informants
criticised their own people – DC (Democratici Cristiani) local politicians –
who initiated and ultimately persuaded their co-villagers of the need to
relocate, thus avoiding further friction. Hints that point to the corruption of the
people in question and their immediate profit by the promised reconstruction
of their villages are evident: “Now he discusses the landslides as if it is
something outside of his family and he seems to forget that it was his father (a
DC councillor) who collaborated with the mayor in order to persuade us all of
the vital need for the relocation”. This is how one of my informants is
criticising a co-villager about the events of the relocation. Similarly, there is
also heavy criticism related to the favouritism of the same local councillors
who were distributing assets to the stricken populations on their return. Thus
houses and cattle were distributed to relatives as well as to people of the same
political disposition.
If the memories of people like Mario (described above) are fairly pleasant, the majority of the informants that I spoke with have a bitter memory. There is though a small number of my informants who approach the decision of the then government, to relocate the Grecanici populations so far away from Reggio, with suspicion. Even though it could not be claimed that they could be transferred to another place in flood-stricken Calabria, the selected places of residence (Gaeta which is a jail fortress and the military camp in L’Aquila) have generated a narrative which has evolved into a conspiracy theory concerning the real motives for their relocation. The narrative below is shared by a small number of intellectuals who locate the motives for this relocation to the ‘anarchic nature’ of the Grecanici. “We were trouble makers” Leonardo argues “and they [the DC government] wanted to smoothly get rid of us. We were always a pain in the arse for the governments after the unification. They knew that in our area they could not pretend that they were the bearers of the law”. The informant does not explicitly say as to why the Grecanici were viewed as trouble makers even though he admits that “in our villages there was no such thing as tax collection”. This last remark may be viewed as an attempt by the intellectual to romanticise the fact that a lot of the populations in Reggio Calabria were implicated in the mafia. Up until today the building industry of Reggio remains, unofficially, in the hands of the local mafia and there is plenty of evidence that mafia, church and local governmental sectors collaborated in order to profit from the building of the new houses in the stricken villages49 (Stajano 1979).

The Gallicianesi returned to their village in 1954. It was due to the aid provided by ‘the great benefactor’ Zanotti Bianco50 whose love for Calabria was renowned (Lombardi Satriani 1985:39) that the stricken populations were

49 In the same manner there are officially expressed fears regarding the infiltration of the building works in L’Aquila – the 2009 earthquake stricken area in Italy (See in particular La Repubblica 15 April 2009, 29 April 2009, 29 June 2009 and 31 August 2009, http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica?query=l%27+aqilia+mafia&view=archivio&testata= &sortby=news&year=2009).

50 Umberto Zanotti Bianco (1889-1963) is considered one of the most important Meridionalists whose love for Calabria was renowned. Amongst other occupations he was a senator, president of the National Association for the interests of Mezzogiorno as well as director of the journal Archivio storico per la Calabria e la Lucania.
given a sort of assistance in order to re-start their lives in the village. According to Domenico, 67, “we were given cattle as compensation for the cattle lost in the landslides. The distribution was supervised by the then consigliere comunale [communal councillor] of the DC and he was also deciding according to the political disposition of the Gallicianesi. The ones who were voting for DC were given cattle while the communists and socialists were not”.

Domenico was 18 when his family, together with more than thirty families from Condofuri, Brancaleone, Rochudi, Chorio di Rochudi, Amendolea, San Carlo and Rocafor tone, were transferred into a ‘colonia grande’ (large colony) in L’Aquila. “From Condofuri to Rome we took the train. From Rome to L’Aquila we took the bus. In L’Aquila we stayed seven to eight months. It was nice for us youths. We had a cinema. I remember the first time that my beloved grandmother ever saw a train on the big screen. She closed her eyes and fell onto her knees because she was afraid that the train would dash out of the screen and crush her. We were eating on the metal army plates. I will show you. I brought mine with me when we left. After L’Aquila they transferred us to Messina where we stayed for two months. We had a priest director. He had given instructions that the women should sleep separate from their husbands. We were living in a school building. The women were sleeping on one floor, the men on another. We did not like that and started protesting. We were given 2,50 lires per head every day. When we returned to Rochudi we were given new houses. My father did not like the new house. My father had a very beautiful house and he preferred us to stay in the house that we were living in before the evacuation. Other houses were destroyed though”.

**Managgia alla miseria**

Managgia (also mannàia) alla miseria is a common saying in Reggio Calabria employed equally in discourse by both old and very young people irrespective of their political or economic disposition. People use this expression when they are frustrated, want to swear or curse. Mannaggia is a wooden construction that resembles the guillotine and was used for
decapitation (Condemi 2006:250). In the imagery of the local populations the mannaggia could decapitate the miseria that surrounded them, thus escaping from it forever. Mannaggia alla miseria is also a warning located in the collective memories as to remember the actual material miseria that plagued them until recently. ‘It is in the mountains of Calabria’, Bell argues, that “miseria takes its most complete form. It means being underemployed, having no suit or dress to wear for your children’s wedding, suffering hunger most of the time and welcoming death. La miseria is a disease, a vapour arising from the earth, enveloping and destroying the soul of all that it touches” (1979:113).

More bleak is the picture presenting the situation in the village of Africo during 1928. The report of the Associazione nazionale per gli interessi del Mezzogiorno in Italia (National Association for the interests of South Italy) in 1928 highlights the dramatic conditions of the villagers relating to their nutrition, sanitation and extremely high mortality (according to the same report, in 1927 41 people were born. In the same year 41 people died, of whom 25 were children under the age of four) (Stajano 24-29). Petropoulou (1997:39) notes that the village of Galliciano was supplied with mains water for the first time in February 1985. In the year of my research in the same village, during the summer months the water supply was cut off for two to three successive days on a regular basis.

Thus, for a lot of the population, emigration was deemed ‘as an economic necessity’ (Kenny and Kertzer 1983:15) if they wanted to escape from the miseria that surrounded them. At the beginning of the century many Grecanici emigrated to the United States and seldom did they decide to return to their villages, while seasonal migration was the usual model over the previous few centuries. Presently, a lot of people emigrate to Switzerland and Belgium while the internal migration is usually towards the north of Italy as well as to Reggio Calabria.

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51 1880-1920 saw a transoceanic migration (Vanzetti and Meissner 1953, Rossi-Daria 1958), whilst between 1880-1970 Calabria is estimated to have ‘exported’ 1.4 million people, the majority of whom have gone to America and industrial Western Europe (De Nardo 1971, King, Mortimer and Strachan 1984:113).

52 According to the ISTAT census of 1960, the internal migratory rate in Calabria was -16.3 and the external migratory rate was 0.2. In 1970 the equivalent figures were -8.6 and 1.2 respectively. As King, Mortimer and Strachan note, movement to other European destinations
According to Cambareri and Smorto, all these populations from Aspromonte which in waves (especially after the effects of the landslides) relocated to the nearby cities (especially during the 1950s) created ‘quartieri abnormi’ (abnormal quarters) into which were inserted victims of the floods, unskilled building migrants and families who left their stricken villages in search of any kind of survival (1980:117-137). Those social problems transformed the political context with the re-emersion of the old notabilato53 and the subsequent manifestation of the phenomena of parasitism coupled with administrative corruption (Cingari 1982:380). This specific period of the mid 1950s was politically extremely important. According to a number of people who claim to belong to the old notabilato of Reggio, those newly arrived populations drastically altered ‘il pensiero politico’ (the political reasoning) of the Reggini. Not only did they bring with them their misery and incomprehensible languages54, but also their political deliberation which was reflected in a peculiar system of voting. Suddenly a larger than usual amount of votes were directed to those politicians ‘out of nowhere’. Those politicians, as one self-proclaimed ‘Reggino vero’ (real Reggino) politician argues, brought with them an attitude of ‘di essese sempre in giro’ (to always stroll

became important in Calabria after the 1950s (1984:115). Whilst the preferred initial European destination was France, many ended up going to Switzerland or West Germany (1984:116). At the same time the internal migration towards the North was particularly intense (Rella and Vadala 1984:143). It is interesting to note that between 1991 and 2001 the quarters of San Giorgio extra and Ravagnese in Reggio Calabria were growing in population at a disproportionate rate (although there is not any official study to suggest that these people came from the area Grecanica, apart from the one from Cambareri and Smorto [1980]). For example, Ravagnese had grown in population by over 15% and San Giorgio extra (with Modena and San Sperato) by 12%. The biggest rise appeared in Gallina (29%) while Centro Storico decreased by -16.2%, Santa Caterina-S.Brunello-Vito by -12.3% and Pineta Zerbi-Tremulini-Eremo by -12.1% (Il Comune di Reggio Calabria ai Censimenti della Popolazione 2003).

53 The public politics in Reggio changed dramatically during the mid 18th century with the rise in the sindacato of the nobili ex privilegio constituting thus the new nobles based on wealth and not heritage. The power of those new groups (the professionals-nobles) derived mainly from their professional occupation as well as their networks of kinship and friends (Spano-Bolani 1979:506).

54 Here I refer to the Grecanici. When they first arrived in Reggio they were speaking their language, the Grecanico, which was incomprehensible for the Reggini who were speaking the local dialect.
around). This means that from time to time they were in the position to literally ‘take’ their votes and change political coalitions. The phenomenon of transformismo is by no means new in Italian politics. It was the policies of Depretis (Piedmontese parliamentary democrat in cabinet during 1876-78, 1878-79 and 1881-87) who exploited a trend that already existed in order to “express or rationalise the absence of party coherence and organised action” (Smith 1997:103). Depretis justified and rationalised the “replacement of distinctive parties and programmes by fluid personalistic parliamentary groupings negotiating their support for a government in terms of purely local and sectional interests” (Woolf 1979:479). Until the mid 1950s the politics of Reggio was dominated by centre-right coalitions, whilst the next decades, despite still being in power, the local DC experienced intra-party conflicts (Walston 1988:189). That was the result of many factors. The mafia, firstly, was increasingly implicated in the public life of Reggio, infiltrating public contractors and politics. Secondly and perhaps most importantly, instead of developing the infrastructure of Reggio the government was exploiting the tertiary sector in return for electoral support (Cingari 1982:380).

The quartieri of San Giorgio extra, Sbarre, Gebbione and Ravagnese, similar to many peripheral quartieri during the 1950s, were inhabited by the coloni (peasant land workers), military and police force pensioners and middle and upper class families of Reggio who were also owners of land. The areas which surrounded the centro storico were characterised by their giardini (gardens) and sparse residences. In his study of the Plain of Gioia Tauro (in the province of Reggio Calabria) Arlacchi describes the gardens as “the elementary unit of the agrarian system based on medium-sized property and medium-sized enterprise, that is, a piece of territory thickly covered by fruit trees and specialising in the production of one crop only, whose sale on the market furnished a median yield among the highest in Italian agriculture” (1983:77).

55 ‘The 15,000 vote’, is the name attributed to a local politician renowned to have changed his political disposition five times.
56 Similarly, during 1954, Gebbione, (my quartiere of residence), was sparsely inhabited by nuclear families of coloni who were living and working in colonia parziaria (Mallano 2005:35).
The aforementioned mode of agriculture had a further effect on the development of the local market and the “periodic movements of the economy from cereal to pasture and back” (ibid:78) minimising thus the annual unproductive periods (Giacomini 1981:13). The agrarian reform in 1950s (cf. Biagini 1952) really gave the opportunity to some of the lower classes such as the *coloni* (peasant workers) to step onto the economic and social ladder. Apart from the land to which they were entitled according to their particular tenure contracts they also ‘inherited’ the status of the nobles for whom they were working. These shifts in social status need to be understood in the context of consolidating political power through land ownership (Rossi-Doria 1958:52). Despite the fact that Rossi-Doria (1958) refers to agrarian reforms that took place between 1880 and the First World War – a period that was also characterised by the beginning of the transoceanic migration and the beginning of the social movement and social legislation (ibid.:51) – more recent land purchases in the peripheral quarters of Reggio Calabria follow the same logic. Dr. Colleti is one of these examples. His family – originating from Bagaladi – used to be the *coloni* in Baron Taconi’s mansion. They were living in a house in the garden, which after the reform eventually passed into their possession. The mother of the doctor, the former housekeeper, is now being greeted with respect and is considered one of the ‘first ladies’ of Reggio. They employ a Romanian helper to take care of their house as well as a gardener. As both proprietor of one of the most beautiful houses in Reggio and a doctor, Dr. Colleti is considered by the society in Reggio as having a very high social profile.

**Doing politics in Reggio: The politics of kinship**

At the end of the 1950s Grecanici started migrating to Reggio in greater waves. The giardini of the peripheral quarters were cheap land and thus affordable for them. Grecanici bought adjacent land in order to be close to

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57 Colonia parziaria was an agrarian contract according to which the products and the expenditure of the property were divided in fixed parts between the *contadino* and the proprietor. The agrarian contracts such as colonia parziaria, mezzadria and compartezipazione were of particular complexity and characterised by an inter as well as intra regional complexity (cf. Biagini 1952, Ginsborg 1984:86).
their kin. Gradually, with the men working as economic migrants in Switzerland par excellence, they started building their homes. During the absence of the men, women remained back in the villages tending their lands, animals and bringing up their children. As soon as the houses in Reggio were habitable women transferred to the city, especially in time for the children to attend the local schools. With the money collected for every year’s labour in Switzerland, families were constructing a floor on top of the existing home. The main effort was to construct a number of floors according to the number of children.

In the same period Grecanici started entering the public administrative sector of Reggio Calabria. At this time Nicolo Trapani was assesseor of the comune of Reggio (the executive of the commune of Reggio was a rightist coalition) and he was married to a Grecanici woman. These kinship ties between Nicolo’s wife and some Grecanici families prompted the latter to approach him and ask him to help them find a job. Nicolo ‘systemised’ (inserted into the system) the men as public cleaners in Reggio and the families in return offered electoral support. Almost during the same period (at the beginning of the 1960s), an old ’ndranghetista from the area Grecanica became close friends with the local PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano). Giuseppe Greco came from a large family and as a result he had very extensive kin in both his village and Reggio. In his profession he was the driver and close friend of the president of the committee of the Istituto Autonomo per la Case Popolari (Autonomous Institute for Government Housing) in Reggio. When the institute started building government housing, Giuseppe exerted his influence on the president of the institute and persuaded him to favour the Grecanici as well as other Reggini who were related to him. The result was that many families found themselves with a government house. Other families who already owned a house in Reggio were selling their allocated communal house and releasing the capital. At the beginning of the 1980s, the president’s power was such that “the President (a Craxian Socialist) controls the Institute more or less alone.

58 An assesseor is a member of the executive (giunta) of local governmental bodies.
59 Similar to what Walston (1985:96) notes about Cosenza, the socialists were important in coalition building and for this reason their presence in the IACP’s (Istituto Autonomo Case
without consulting the rest of the board: ‘he goes around with a rubber stamp, signs minutes and takes decisions without having had a meeting’” (Walston 1985:97).

The provincially based public housing authority Istituto Autonomo per la Case Popolari is one of the examples of many public agencies who were deemed to serve political clientelism. As Walston notes, “public works and housing became another cornerstone of DC policy” (1988:55, 1985:96-97). Indeed, the committee of the institute, precisely due to its provincial character, is in the position to allocate houses, direct funding towards the ‘favourite’ comuni and even distribute jobs. The ’ndranghetista of Grecanico origin, similar to the DC politician, created a kinship-based ‘clientele’. Grecanici clearly utilise their various systems of relatedness in order to find representation and meet their ends. Actors exchange support (moral, economic), favours, words and people. They are fully aware of the meanings embedded in these exchanges and the morality entailed. As long as they respect their obligations to each other, people are bonded in a transcendental manner.

Popolari) executive was significant despite the fact that Reggio Calabria was always a rightist province.
Chapter Four: The Grecaniche Cultural Associations

‘Associational life’, as it has been suggested, is considerably low in southern Italy when compared to the north (Kertzer 1983). When people participate in any kind of political, social, cultural or ‘intellectual’ associations this is rather dictated by personal reasons and interests. In this chapter I will deal with the Grecaniche cultural associations, their main protagonists and the political context that gave birth and still feeds one of the most striking features of the present Grecanici culture: the associazionismo Grecanico. The study of the Grecaniche associations will complement already existing studies like Guarrasi’s in Palermo concerning people’s mistrust of institutions (1978). Further to Guarrasi’s argument on the limited faith that the subjects hold towards the institutions I will argue that the Grecaniche associations operate as individual channels of power of an exclusivist nature. They thus assume the position of the ‘institution’ which in the minds of the Grecanici is related to corruption, patronage, clientelism and political mistrust. The institution is deemed as a nebulous context that lacks individual mediation. It is further conceptualised as a constitutive part of governmental politics. A priori, thus is characterised as corrupt and is approached with mistrust.

Contextualising the Grecaniche associations

The development of the civic and political associations after the Risorgimento in a united Italy was not a casual effect but followed the general revival that the Enlightenment brought to political life among the European elites of the nineteenth century. The Italian associations of the time acted as centres of information and the exchange of ideas among the elites, inside and outside Italy, without however avoiding localismo (socio-economic interest related to a locality) and campanilismo (feeling of superiority attached to one’s place of origin), political patronage and exclusion – especially in cases where membership was determined by birth and status (Caglioti 1996).
During the 1870s and 1880s growing legal concerns for the associations\(^{60}\) and the alterations to the voting legislation made the associations more appealing to a wider variety of people. Membership was now offered in terms of political affinity, common economic interests, kinship and locality (Kenna 1974 in Davis 1977:31-37, Davis 1977:31-37, Kertzer 1983, Davis 1988, Kakaboura-Tili 1999). The associations’ interests were broad enough to pursue collaborations with local authorities in return for crucial votes and other favours. Kinship was the catalyst for these political transactions and often coincided with politics in a manner where political clientelism and kinship overlapped (Campbell 1964, Allum 1973:93-107). This overlapping between kinship and political clientelism provoked, in some cases, a peripheral associationistic shift towards the urban centre (Caglioiti 1996:4).

The creation of the first Greco association during the 1960s came as an outcome of the augmentation in Europe of the problem of minorities and the “explicit ethnicisation\(^{61}\) of policy preceded the significant development of the politics of identity” (Crowley 2001:108). During the 1980s and 90s Italy experienced a boom in relation to associations which “injected its own dynamics into modern Italian society” (Ginsborg 2001:xi)\(^{62}\).

**As time goes by**

Antonella is a middle aged woman of Greco origin who lives in Reggio on a part-time basis. She is university educated and used to be a very active political member of her community in the village of her origin. She is a fluent speaker of the Greco language while she speaks modern Greek quite competently. Antonella is very willing to provide me with relevant bibliography and ‘whatever else could help me with my research’. Antonella

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\(^{60}\) The ‘legal concerns’ focused on the auditing of membership of the associations – usually suspected of being comprised of ‘Ndranghetisti, Camorristi, Malandrini, Brigandi and other ‘suspicious’ political subjects. For an extensive account on legislation regarding the Italian associations see Davis 1988 ch.9.


\(^{62}\) In 1995 the distribution of cultural associations in ‘the South’ was as follows: Sicily 30.8%, Campania 16.4%, Sardinia 16.2%, Puglia 11%, Calabria 10.6%, Abruzzo 10.1%, Basilicata 3.8%, Molise 1.2% (survey in Trigilia 1995).
attributes the love she holds for the Grecanico language to the love for her late grandmother.

‘As a child I loved my grandmother deeply. She was speaking ‘il Greco’. My mother could understand her, but she did not speak the language. Because both my mother and father were working in administrative positions they did not speak il Greco because the language was considered inferior to the official Italian. But I remember my grandmother speaking to me il Greco and her voice was the best music to my ears. I still have her voice in my mind calling us; “Elate pedia” (come children). At that age I loved my language deeply. When we first formed “Jonica” no one was really interested in the language and its salvation. They were saying that the language is outdated and has no use in finding a job. But then, after the 70s, when the national legislation changed and declared the protection of the linguistic minorities – funding them of course [she rubs her thumb against her index finger, a gesture which indicates money] – then suddenly all started loving both the language and the culture. Especially after the interest of the EU for the linguistic minorities, numerous books were written and you could see action towards language promotion and preservation. Those days I had the hope that something could happen, something could change and the new generation would love to speak the language. How young and innocent we were, ‘running’ from village to village talking to the people and trying to make them see things from a different perspective. But now I do not believe that something can happen. They say that the only way is to introduce the modern Greek into our language. I really do love Greek (She refers here to modern Greek) but I would like my language to be spoken too.’

She sighs.

Apart from directly criticising the general policy of the Grecaniche associations past and present as corrupt, Antonella further reflects on the issue of ‘salvaging’ the Grecanico language. In the above narrative she purposely refers to her language as il Greco (the Greek) – the term Griko, often spelt Grico, is also used when Grecanici refer to their language. According to Violi (2004) the terms ‘Grecanico’ and ‘Grico’ are widely accepted with reference
to the language and culture of the Greek autochthonous populations of Calabria and Puglia (Lecce) respectively. The two terms – Grecanico and Grico – are not distinguished by Italian law as two different languages; they are both referred to as one Greek language (Greco) spoken by the linguistic minorities of Calabria and Puglia.

The term ‘Grecanico’ – indicative of language, culture and territory (Violi 2004) – that is adopted by researchers as well as by administrative and cultural representatives, appears to further pose a problem in relation to its origin. Grecanici intellectuals like Violi and Mosino, despite drawing on Rohlfs (1966, 1972) as well as Karanastasis (1984), fail to give a satisfactory answer as to the origin of the term (Violi 2004). Nevertheless, the term Grecanico – first introduced in Rohlfs’ ‘Lexicon Graecanicum Italiae inferioris’ in 1964 – is widely adopted not only by Violi and Mosino but by the majority of the local linguists as well as the officials of the province of Reggio Calabria. This is also the term that I came across very often when in the field. Similar to Antonella, there are a small number of people – mainly people related to the associations – who oppose the term as being derogatory. Greco di Calabria (Greek of Calabria), Grecofono (Grecophone), Ellenofono (Hellenophone), Ellenofono di Calabria (Hellenophone of Calabria), Calabrogreco (Calabrian Greek) are some of the alternatives proposed instead of Grecanico. Nevertheless, these terms have failed to gain popular acceptance. The aforementioned linguistic proposals are not devoid of political interest related to the direct sympathies of their supporters. Especially when the ending constitutive of the term implicates the word foni (voice), it springs to mind Bakhtinian notions of language. Language, Bakhtin argues, is never unitary.

Actual social life and historical becoming, create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems; within these various systems (identical in the abstract) are elements of language filled with the various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different sound.

Literary language – both spoken and written – although it is unitary not only in its shared, abstract, linguistic markers but also in its forms for conceptualizing these abstract markers, is itself stratified and heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system, that is, in the forms that carry its meanings (1981:288).
Foni (voice) thus, is not solely a linguistic term. It is ideologically loaded thus resulting in heteroglosia. Despite a direct reference to the ‘High’ and ‘Low’ linguistic traditions of the Italian Renaissance (Lepschy et al. 1996:71), it further reflects discourses of authority – be it ethnic, national or anthropological (Clifford 1986). In the present case, ‘foni’, expresses the associations’ heteroglosia and echoes Greek nationalist discourses as they have received recent international attention with the issue of the re-naming of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) (cf. Danforth 1995, Cowan 2000, Brown 2003). Similar to various European cases where linguistic minorities claim for themselves a historical niche that could possibly legitimise their ethnic claims – the Greek and FYROM’s subject is an illustrative example for they both draw on the same historical context – Grecaniche associations at once make a claim to both ancient as well as modern Greece.

**Tracing the roots 1960-1980: “La Jonica dei Greci”**

The first association related to the Grecanico language and culture, “La Jonica dei Greci di Calabria” was formed during the late 1960s in Reggio and appeared to be dedicated to addressing the ‘Questione Grecanica’, thus the ‘entire recovery of the cultural heritage of the Greek linguistic minority’ (Nucera 1984/5:43). The notion of ‘Questione’ alludes to political, economic and cultural urgency. The ‘Questione Grecanica’ thus implicated in a wider parliamentary interrogation regarding Calabria (Pellicano 1970), was one aspect of the ‘politics of difference’ (Poppi 1992) as this has taken shape in various parts of Italy. For instance, the ‘Ladin question’ was a debate over the consolidation of cultural and linguistic difference of the Ladins in Northern Italy. The movement that began in the late 1970s or early 1980s in the Val di Fassa, as argued by Poppi (1992), after the failure of being solved within the framework of the Italian national politics, found its partial resolution through the proposal of the Ladin language as the primary distinctive feature of the

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63 “The Jonica of the Calabrian Greeks” no longer exists.
minority. Ladin has been recognised as a dialect; “not enough to constitute the difference that mattered” (Poppi 1992:117).

The ‘Questione Grecanica’ was addressed by a group of local intellectuals and was the outcome of the intense linguistic interest in the Grecanico language that commenced in 1820 after the linguistic research of Carl Witte in the region of Aspromonte among the Greek-speaking populations of Calabria (Karanastasis 1984:ιδ’). Eighteen-twenty was the date of the beginning of a continuous argument – that still holds today – whether or not the Grecanico language stems from the ancient Greek language or from later Greek vernaculars spoken by populations who moved from Greece to Calabria especially during the Byzantine era. Despite that in the present day only a few people speak of the ‘Questione’, the origin of the language exceeds linguistic attention. As it will become apparent later, the ‘salvation’ of the Grecanico language receives only secondary attention. Under the pretext of the language, deeper claims of cultural ownership and appropriation are concealed.

Professors D. Minuto, F. Mosino, G. Barone Adesi and Father G. Engels – none of Grecanico origin – were the first people who conceptualised the creation of an association based on ethnic and linguistic claims in relation to the Grecanico culture (Campolo 2002:234-5). With them a small number of young intellectuals originally from the area Grecanica took the initiative to publicly support the ‘urgency to improve the living conditions of the Greek minority’. Furthermore it was viewed as imperative for the founders of “La Jonica” to restore the ‘collective consciousness of pride’ of the Calabrian Greeks; namely, to introduce them to their glorious past which should make them proud. This invitation was mainly extended to the inhabitants of the Greek-speaking villagers of the area Grecanica and the Grecanici migrants in Reggio. The association had a more dispersed and inclusive character, thus the offer of membership was equally open to Grecanico and non-Grecanico speakers (Campolo 2002:236).

64 For a detailed review on the problem of the origin of the Greek vernaculars in South Italy see Karanastasis 1984 and Petropoulou 1992.
“Jonica’s” policy revolved around what was perceived as a collective good65 of an inclusionist nature (Olson 1965). That was the collective ‘awakening’ of the Grekanici who were plagued by feelings of inferiority towards the rest of the Reggini co-citizens. The Grekanici – according to the association’s rhetoric – should fully comprehend and embrace the value of their glorious Hellenic past. Based on this principle they should re-evaluate their whole political existence. In the public discussion that followed during the late 1960s and 1970s, cultural and linguistic matters were conflated into what was colloquially termed as cultura Grekanica (Grekanici culture). In the publications that reflect the thinking during that era, cultura Grekanica was further associated with folklore, religion and tourist development. Thus, among the other initiatives that “La Jonica” took, we find the attempt to restore Orthodoxy in Calabria, the organisation of conferences towards the renewal of interest in the Byzantine tradition of Calabria, the effort to enhance relations with the Greek state and improve tourism in the area (Petropoulou 1995:203). The major result of “Jonica’s” persistent action was that after the contact with the A.I.D.L.C.M. (Association Internationale pour la Défense des Langues et Cultures Menacées) the regional law in relation to the Greek language was changed so that ‘the regione respects the tradition of the populations of Greek and Albanian origin, cultivates the development of historic, cultural and artistic heritage and favours the teaching of the two languages (Greek and Albanian) where they are spoken’ (Regional law 519/56 1971).

For some years “La Jonica” was the main association dealing with the ‘Questione Grekanica’. Yet, members of the association soon ‘created new associations with different political valences’ and opposing attitudes (Nucera 1984/5:61). According to Nucera, it was the differing political ideologies between the council of “La Jonica” and its constitutive members that hastened the dissolution of the association. Nucera here refers to the opposing

65 A summary of what is perceived as public good is offered by Boran (2003:194). According to Boran a ‘public good’ should be characterised by features of jointness, non-excludability, indivisibility and compulsoriness coexisting.
political disposition of the younger members of “La Jonica” who were active members of the communist party and ‘could not bear the fact that the administration of the association was in the hands of a fascist (a term for a member of the extreme political right)’ (1985:72). Political mistrust was further coupled with suspicions of economic corruption. Thus according to F. Condemi, secretary of the association, “I asked for the archives of “La Jonica” according to my jurisdiction but they were never given to me. I also proposed to the council that we should speak in Grecanico. I find it only logical: a group that deals with the problems of the Greek minority to speak in Grecanico. It did not pass” (Nucera 1984/5:72-3).

“Zoi ce Glossa”: Other initiatives during the period 1970-80

F. Condemi founded the association “Zoi ce Glossa” (Life and Language) in 1974. The objective of the new association – consisting mainly of Gallicianesi – was twofold: to arouse the migrants from Gallicano from the feeling of quotidian inferiority towards the rest of the Reggini and to utilise any possible political and social source for the ‘survival of Galliciano’ (Nucera 1984/5:74). Yet, soon the need to include in the gulfs of the association the ‘Greeks’ originating from Roghudi, Chorio di Roghudi and Bova became apparent. That was a political tactic to establish relationships with the administrators of these villages, which however was doomed to fail. Where coalitions of any form existed, they were of a ‘personal nature’ (ibid:76).

The approach of the first two associations was similar to the objectives regarding the recuperation of the Grecanico language, culture and conscience. What was different was the politics that followed. It seems that “La Jonica” had a more inclusive and international character while “Zoi ce Glossa” was more exclusive and localised66. In 1984 in Reggio most of the founders of “Zoi ce Glossa” created a new association called Centro Studi “G. Rohlfś Zoi ce Glossa” (Center of Studies G. Rohlfś, Life and Language). The council of this ‘non-profit’ (article 4 of the constitution of the association) association

consisted exclusively of people from Galliciano, Roghudi and Chorio di Roghudi since they ‘originated from villages that are still today Greek one hundred percent’ (Nucera 1984/5:79) while the rest of the members were from Bova, Bova Marina and Roccaforte.

Here I want to briefly mention that the other associations of the time dealing with the Grecanico, mainly based in Bova Marina, were: the “Circolo Culturale Greco” (Greek Cultural Circle) founded in 1972 in Bova Marina, “Jalo tu Vua” (Bova Marina) founded in Bova Marina in 1972, and “Cosmo Cinurgjio” (New World) founded in 1975 in Bova Marina, “Apodiafazzi” (Dawning) was also founded in Bova Marina in 1977. The majority of the founding members of the aforementioned associations were council members or ordinary members of “Jonica” (Nucera 1984/5, Campolo 2002). In their curricula the aforementioned associations exhibit an impressive agenda towards the salvation of the Grecanico language and culture, and their politics affect more or less the politics of the Grecaniche associations in Reggio since very often council members of different associations may co-operate for the realisation of common targets or much more often towards the realisation of personal interests.

Poly-antagonism

What characterised the first Grecaniche associations – and to the same extent the present associations as will become apparent later – were the local antagonisms and accusations of a different ‘mentalità’ (mentality) between and within the councils. The following conversation with Nino, an engineer and ex member of “La Jonica” who works and lives in Reggio, further illustrates the above argument. He first makes it clear that he does not belong to any of the associations “which claim to fight for the Grecanico cause” since “there is not such a thing as a Grecanico cause. There are only personal causes”. In relation to “Jonica” he maintains that “things got worse when the Bovesiani (from Bova) entered the club. You see they imported their corrupt

ideologies and had their minds on money. When they founded their associations in Bova Marina, they managed to implicate a number of local politicians promising them voting support. Of course the issue was not to promote the Grecanico cause, but theirs. They utilised the votes of the association’s members for personal reasons”.

Statements like the above are common and are related to literally all the associations since all the council members accuse each other of ‘money eating’, corruption, ‘exclusivity in arranging the profits’: money which enters the associations either from the regione or from the twinning with cities in Greece or various other public institutions. The problem according to Nino rests on the different mentalità of the people who are members of the associations. In other Italian ethnographic contexts mentalità is discussed as a local attribute. For example White (1980) notes that the mentalità – the way people think and behave – accounts for a collective disposition, whether good or bad. Mentalità in White’s case is discussed at the communal level and the way people are ‘doing’ politics. In her research in Montecastello, Silverman has employed the concept of civiltà in order to account for specific patterns of social behaviour that are the products of certain political and economic conditions (1975:3). She further poses that “civiltà is a fluid ideology that in the course of Montecastellese history has been manipulated and often recast by certain pursuits of their interests” (ibid.:8). As an ideological system civiltà can be equally utilised by various social strata in a critical manner. In a similar way the concept of mentalità among the Grecanici as well as in the wider context of Reggio is related to collective as well as personal dispositions. Unsuccessful personal choices are thus attributed to the absence of mentalità or the bad quality of mentalità that a person may have. It further alludes to issues of self-government. An individual or a collectivity may be successful in their political dealings which results in their relative autonomy. This autonomy is contextualised against the local historical background and the succession of various foreign conquerors of Calabria. The Grecanici mentalità rhetorically stands for the objections against the last Bourbons, and the newly formed Italian state, the glorified era of the Brigandi and the ’ndranghettisti. The same concept of mentalità is equally employed by the actors in order to
negatively portray people and groups of people. Greca
cici of different places
of origin exult or condemn a person according to their mentalità which accords to their place of origin. “Avere un chiodo fisso” (‘have a fixed nail, have an obsession but also emphasised by the Greca
cico translation carfì [nail]) is an expression indicative of mentalità. It is an indirect way of exalting oneself. Thus the person whose mind is fixed, stagnant and nailed, is most of the time the individual of a different place of origin and that individual is always the speaker’s opposite.

Above, Mimo makes it clear that the different mentalità of the people who constitute the associations is related to corrupt ideologies and further economic corruption. Mentalità also relates to accusations about an ‘obvious hypocrisy’ regarding the knowledge of the Greca
cico language. According to Patricia, the president of a minor Greca
cico association, “they pretend that they fight for the language (she refers to the bigger associations). Ma qualle lingua!!! My son understands me when I speak to him in Greca
cico and slowly he is learning how to use the language. I teach him Greca
cico music and he is playing the tamburello. Can you tell me the same about Carmelo’s sons? (Carmelo is the president of one of the other Greca
nichie associations)”. On the issue of the seminars regarding the teaching of the Greca
cico language, Patricia continues: “in the families where the parents managed to transmit the Greca
cico culture, the fourth generation are in the position to understand the language but most importantly the culture. You see culture is the values of the family, poetry, music and the love for the history of their grandparents. The culture starts from the family. It is not so much what you expect other people to do for your children. It is what YOU can do for them”. Herzfeld in his ‘Poetics of Manhood’ (1985) has argued that the personal and agnatically based eghoismos is the celebration of the unruly Glendiot selfhood. The notion of mentalità is indeed a celebration of the unruly Greca
nici subject who, rhetorically at least, locates his/her capacity for self-government within the familial context. Illegal action that is related to the family – in the case of the family of ’Ndrangheta – is recast in terms of kinship morals. Illegal action outside the family – that is harmful to the family – relates to a bad quality of mentalità.
Historical constructivism

As has been noted above, the Grecoanico associationistic movement in Reggio Calabria commences with the creation of “La Jonica” and the search for a collective identity purified by the feelings of social inferiority related to the past. According to Nucera (1984/5:43), the revival of the Grecoanici collective consciousness was not a “bottom-up effect” (Herzfeld 2005:10) but rather “the initiative of some intellectuals, residents of Reggio and Bova Marina” (Martino 1979:326-7) who decided to proceed to a Grecoanico collective representation via “Jonica”.

“La Jonica’s” policy, projected outwards regarding the construction of the Grecoanico identity, related to two different issues which seemed to overlap: the re-invention of history and the cultivation of a certain ideology by the elites of the Grecoanici communities. The first is very much akin to the construction of national consciousness as this is described by authors like Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1983). Similar to nationalistic processes followed elsewhere in Europe, the history which was officially communicated by “Jonica’s” intellectuals was depicted as partial and selective. It was mainly concentrated on the two historical periods which are directly related to the development of Greek culture in Southern Italy – namely the classic period of Magna Grecia and the Byzantine era. In effect this essentialist discourse, very similar to the Greek nationalist case, depicted the Grecoanici as direct descendants of the ancient Greeks who colonised Southern Italy during the 5th century BCE. The present Grecoanici were descendants, in a biological sense, of some glorious ancestors and the idiom of kinship was employed to justify an ‘imaginary’ link between two communities separated by almost 2,500 years. This historic discourse was offered as an endless field of potential ‘meaningful and inspiring’ events towards the creation of a normative discourse where “the discursive idioms of potential sources of opposition” (Herzfeld 1987:25, original emphasis) – historic periods and political

68 On a similar case regarding Sardinian mobilisation based on ethnicity see Schweizer 1988.
managements not highly estimated\textsuperscript{70} – could be easily excluded (Faubion 1993:xviii). The published material by “Jonica” members and many later relevant publications – initiatives of other Grencaniche associations – offer glimpses of an ethnographic, linguistic, historic and literary ideology in which the Grencanici constructivists\textsuperscript{71} were themselves ‘fully participating members’.

Grencanico folklore holds a special place in this story since it was ideologically exploited\textsuperscript{72} so as to bring together two totally diverse peoples: the classic Magno-Greci and the modern Grencanici. Following the Vician proposal on the studies of popular tradition (poetry, music, dance and popular stories) and building upon Gramscian insights on folklore "about the birth of a new culture among the broad masses" (Gramsci 1985:191), Grencanico folklore appears to concentrate on “specific cultural conditions and their persistence over the social conditions which initially triggered them” (Lombardi Satriani 1985:59). This insistence on folklore and the constant reference to a mode of life “which does not exist any more” has been heavily criticised by local Reggini intellectuals – not of a Grencanico origin – who argue that the Grencanici folklorists have created a book-lived culture located in a distant and greatly diverse socio-political past.

The ‘management’ of the Grencanico identity was thus not a straightforward matter. Apart from the historic, the issue of the ‘minority’ was further conflated with linguistic, ethnic, social, psychological as well as religious issues. The Grencanico language, since the genesis of the Grencanico associazionismo, was not approached as a historic-relic type language (Clark

\textsuperscript{70} The Bourbon past – albeit relatively recent – is one of the periods less discussed amongst my Grencanici and Reggini informants. A deep-rooted corruption which is alleged to have acquired cultural status as well as the genesis of other ‘pathological’ realities is attributed to the Bourbon era. Other issues which are carefully avoided relate to brigandage and the ‘Ndrangheta.

\textsuperscript{71} Focusing on Greek nationalism and building on Michael Herzfeld’s in-depth analysis of it, Faubion (1993) has argued that Greek nationalism was facilitated by historical constructivism – a highly synthetic praxis – whose interplay between the ‘mental’ and ‘material’ human creations constitutes history as cultural behaviour and subsequently informs identities. In the case of Grencanico culture, the same line is followed by the associations albeit on a smaller scale.

\textsuperscript{72} On the ideological exploitation of folklore during the process of Greek nation building see Herzfeld 1986a. Folklore and its reproduction, as Herzfeld has argued, are effectively proposed as the discursive idiom between different ideologies and spatio-temporal contexts.
1996:34, Lepschy et al. 1996:72) but rather as an ‘endangered’ indigenous one. The aforementioned approach closely relates to Kymlicka and Patton’s discussion on biodiversity. The disappearance of the ‘endangered’ languages, say Kymlicka and Patton, is seen as a symbol of the more “general crisis of biodiversity since indigenous languages are seen as containing within them a wealth of ecological information that will be lost as the language is lost” (2003:10). The idea of importing ecological claims and ethics into the discussion on linguistic rights is further explored by Boran (2003). Even though she admits that it is not problem free to bring ecological arguments into discussions concerning ‘endangered languages’, she manages to draw a safe line of argument useful to future discussions on linguistic rights and diversity. What is referred to as ‘bio-linguistic diversity’ emanates from the idea of extinction that both languages and endangered species face. According to Boran, linguistic rights correlate with biodiversity ethics as far as issues of collective public good are concerned. In that manner, she maintains, a viable as well a beneficial public good needs to “be substantial enough to justify obligations” (2003:196). These obligations are explained on a scientific and aesthetic basis.

In the case of the Grecanico language, the scientific as well as aesthetic argument, at least as this is proposed by the associations, is evoked by the extensive linguistic research on the Grecanico language conducted over the last two centuries. Scientific and aesthetic arguments are proposed on the premise that the specific language can ‘provide clues of different systems of organising local knowledge’ (ibid:197) since it appears to contain linguistic elements inherent in the ancient Greek language. The fear of losing a ‘genealogical knowledge’, with all its richness and the grandiloquence of a glorious era, as well as points of reference for future probabilities, directly dictates the salvation of the Grecanico language – a claim which is adequately exploited by the associations. Genealogical knowledge is understood to be the knowledge transmitted through kinship of a specific ‘ethnico-linguistic’ minority (Nucera 1984/5:40) and according to A.I.D.L.C.M., (Association Internationale pour la Défense des Langues et Cultures Menacées) ‘whose culture could enrich everybody… the loss of which would be irreparable …
and constitutes a part of the heritage for which Italy is responsible’. A.I.D.L.C.M. goes on to emphasise that ‘the Greek culture of Calabria lives its last decade … the last Greek shepherds live their last humiliation. The Greek community of Calabria constitutes an island colonised economically and culturally, in a region itself underdeveloped and colonised … a fact for which the Greek community is not responsible. To leave things as they are at the moment … would be to bear the burden of a real cultural genocide’ (A.I.D.L.C.M. 1975:104 in Nucera 1984/5:41).

Apart from highlighting the contribution of the Grecanico language and culture towards a general ‘Italian public good’ and the danger of the extinction of the Grecanico language, the A.I.D.L.C.M. goes on to claim compensation from the Italian state for the fact that the Grecanico language and culture constitute an inextricable part of Italian heritage. Compensation claims (cf. Karakasidou 1997, Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2001:398, Ballinger 2003:ch.5) in this case are justified by ‘embodiments and patterns of cultural enactment’ (Williams 1989: 409) of the bearers of an ‘endangered’ heritage which needs to be preserved.

The Greeks of the Diaspora – Diasporic Greeks

Notions of brotherhood and ‘same blood’ between Grecanici and Greeks, as well as notions of diaspora are used interchangeably by Greek and Grecaniche associations alike in Reggio. On the one hand, according to the associations’ manifestations Greece holds the place of ‘Madre patria’ (motherland) (Campolo 2002:241), while on the many CDs produced by the associations the image of the Grecanici as ‘Greeks of the diaspora’ is apparent. On the other hand, “Madre Grecia” who represents the Greeks of the diaspora in Calabria closely associates itself with the Grecanico autochthonous past, history and culture.

It has been suggested that the notion of diaspora “denotes displacement in the sense that one lives outside one’s primary land of attachment” (Laguerre 1998:8). It refers to “individual immigrants or communities who live outside
the legal or recognised boundaries of the state of the homeland, but inside the reterritorialised space of the dispersed nation” (ibid.). Strictly speaking, the Greconici are not a diasporic people, in the sense that they are not recent immigrants and have deep historical roots in the region. Yet, the existence of the modern Greek nation-state as a point of reference and the relations that this state fosters with the communities effects conditions similar to those of a diaspora.

Greconiche associations are presented as diasporic thus relating to essentialist notions of ‘home’ and historical tensions between routes and roots (Gilroy 1996, Ballinger 2003:285). The relationship between roots and routes is the discursive product of what is traced as authentic or hybrid. In this case the official rhetoric of the Greconiche associations is always rooted in a mythical past thus providing the “space where in which the competing claims of ethnic particularity and universal humanity can be temporarily settled” (Gilroy 1987:154).

Greconiche communities are equally approached by the Greek state as diasporic since they seem to act as a living ‘cultural capital’ which “expands the space of the nation beyond the borders of the state” (Laguerre 1998:8). It needs to be noted here that the extensive publicity of the Greek communities both in Calabria and Puglia by the Greek mass media has managed to generate a strong feeling among the Greeks in Greece for ‘our brothers’ in Calabria. Discussing my forthcoming fieldwork among the Greconici with people in Greece, I realised that perceptions of ‘collective suffering’ (cf. Ballinger 2003) are shared with circles who – more or less – know about the Greconici of Calabria. “Imagine how much they must have suffered from the suppression of the Italians.” The specific climate about a Greek ‘diasporic and suffering civilisation’ has been cultivated for decades in Greece since the first publications on the area Greconica after 1960. In Greece a considerable number of associations are founded in order to deal with the ‘Greeks of Calabria’. As Petropoulou notes (1997:264) these associations were of a specific rightist ideology and cultivated further irredentist dispositions. For years, she continues, these associations through specific journals with which
they shared the same ideologies were expressing their ‘anger’ and ‘frustration’ about the “nationally insensitive Athens who permits the language of an ancient Greek civilisation to perish” (Daulos 98, 1990, 5597 in Petropoulou 1997:264), the “Greek state that has eaten Greekness” (Daulos 101, 1990, 5780, ibid.) and the “pure neglectfulness of the Greek state towards its forgotten children” (Eleutherotipia 14 August 1991 ibid.). The triumph of the Greek ‘historical constructivism’ (cf. Faubion 1993) is apparent not only in history, architecture and other forms of cultural expression (Herzfeld 1987, 1991a), but also in ‘living human artefacts’ and ‘traditional neighbours’. The Greek tendency to approach the Greconiche communities as diasporic is further illustrated by the frequent visits of prominent Greek political figures to the communities and by the emphasis given on issues of common cultural and historical heritage. Both the Greek state and the Greconiche associations work towards the idea that ‘old things’ could work as transnational mediators of one and the same idea – that of Grecita (Greekness).

**Sportello Linguistico (Linguistic Window): Contested ideologies**

The implementation of act no. 482 of 1999 in Italy was crucial in the manner that it substantiated the opportunity to directly link the linguistic minorities’ issues to local self government. Following the aforementioned constitutional implementation, local populations and institutions appear very determined to make use of the law in the territorial areas where the measures of protection are applied. After the delimitation of the minority geographic areas by the provincial councils, the linguistic minorities recognised by act no. 482 were granted the right to use the minority language in the field of education both as a medium-language and as a subject in nursery schools, in primary and secondary education, in public meetings, with the public administrations and judicial authorities, in place names and in the media.

The “Sportello Linguistico”, inaugurated on 13th July 2004, is an initiative funded by the provincia of Reggio Calabria with the scope of promoting and protecting the Greeks of the Amendolea valley. With the first annual funding under the rubric of project “Valle dell’Amendolea”, three Sportelli (plural of
Sportello) commenced their operation: one centre in Reggio Calabria and one each in the communities of Bova and Roghudi. The staff employed in each Sportello include; one cultural operator, three translators, two simultaneous interpreters and six cultural-informatics animators. The Sportello is assigned to work as a cultural and information centre in relation to the Grekic language, as an ‘official interpreter’ between the Grekici and the provincia, as an organiser of promotional activities (namely conferences and seminars) and as publisher of the relevant material related to the Grekic language, history and culture. The Sportello’s intention is to inaugurate and promote official links with the Griki (Greeks) of Puglia and other linguistic minorities in the Italian state and to further strengthen the relations with Greece, especially the Greek cities which are twinned with the Greek speaking communities of the Amendolea valley. Finally, the scope of the Sportello is to proceed in the formation of an official and sufficient body of interpreters and translators with the collaboration of the Department of Philology and Linguistics of Messina University. The year of my fieldwork in, 2006, I was given the “Elenco delle Associazioni Culturali che si occupano della tutela della lingua, costume e tradizioni della Minoranza Greca di Calabria” (List of the cultural associations that deal with the protection of the language, customs and traditions of the Greek minority of Calabria) by the Sportello. At the time eighteen Grekic associations were active in the province of Reggio Calabria.

The Raccomandati

It has been extensively argued by my informants that the Sportelli Linguistici are a good source of local employment for people who can utilise their place of origin and knowledge of Grekic language and culture. As Lucia has put it “I love my language, but without work what can you do? Isn’t it right that through those courses some people can find a job?” Yet, precisely due to the fact that the Sportelli are a possible source for a ‘good job’, the employment opportunities offered are in high demand. Regarding the funded Grekic courses, the main issues which create a certain amount of upheaval are the
‘estranei raccomandati’\textsuperscript{73} (recommended externals) for the positions open to public competition. Here there is often a privileging of the university degree over Grecanico knowledge and the power that any association has to render other Grecanici ‘authentic’. The raccomandati are usually affiliated with local politicians, intellectuals as well as the associations’ councils. Their entrance to the courses heavily depends on who gives the raccomandazione\textsuperscript{74} (Maraspin 1968:113, White 1980:59).

The recommendation usually supersedes the local political level; it manages to implicate wider spheres, as many ethnographers have indicated (Campbell 1964, Boissevain 1977, Davis 1973, Zinn 2001:24). For example, Galt in Pantelleria mentions the effectiveness of the letters of raccomandazione (Galt 1974:187-8), in Sicily Boissevain discusses the ‘visiting tickets’ (1966:25) and Pitt-Rivers (1966:108-109) mentions ‘l’empeno’ (raccomandazione). Furthermore, in Spain and Mexico, ethnographers have mentioned the enchufe which has a meaning more-or-less similar to the raccomandazione (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984:73). Viewed as mean of intersection and sponsorship, the enchufe transcends moral implications since “it is not a question here of considering that one may be entitled to these things by right, for between what is one’s right and what is possible lie a thousand indifferent shrugs of the shoulder” (Kenny 1976 in Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984:73). The phrase ‘mi raccomando ...’ – much used in quotidian discourse – is as much an indicator of political guidance as it is of affection, protection and love.

Laureati e paesani

The valorisation of the university degree over knowledge of the Grecanico language provokes more serious arguments that are articulated on two levels. First, Grecanico origin is played down: “it is not fair for the people who are of a Grecanico origin not to be favoured because they do not have the university degree. How can people who work as shepherds have a degree? They are not

\textsuperscript{73} On the raccomandazione see also White 1980:59.

\textsuperscript{74} My initial introduction to different circles during my fieldwork and my successful acceptance was heavily related to the strength of the source of raccomandazione.
entitled to the jobs because they are not laureati (with a university degree) but paesani (peasants, plural of paesano)”. Second, Grecanico origin is played up: “the public competitions are fixed so as to serve the same people who once were calling us “paddhechi, tamarri e parpatuli” (all degrading indicatives of peasantry). Now they want to be the first to profit from our work on our culture. They are like vampires who want to drink our blood”. The ambivalence in handling the politics of victimisation is noted. According to members of the majority of the Grecaniche associations, local politicians as well as university lecturers and professors are ‘vampires’. By evoking traumatic memories of the recent past, the rhetoric of the ‘victimised’ Grecanici is saliently brought to the fore to assert their ‘rights’. These discussions are not ideologically free for they leave open accusations of class distinction and status.

Before the inauguration of the Sportelli, the Grecanico language was automatically assumed as the ‘capital’ of specific people. Despite being called paddhechi, Grecanici were the only ones to authenticate a tradition of the grandiose. The management of Grecanico ‘capital’, be it linguistic, cultural or folklorist, was in the hands of the cultural associations’ boards and circulated by the same people within and outside Italy from the 1970s. The exchange of favours amongst and within the association’s boards was organised on the principle of kinship and other forms of relatedness. However the Sportelli opened another market for possible ‘authenticators’ of the Grecanico culture who up to a point were abstaining from any association with the culture of the paddhechi. Similar to what ethnographers such as Blok (1974), Silverman (1975), Schneider and Schneider (1976), White (1980), Piselli and Arrighi (1985), LaPalombara (1987), Colclough (1992), Minicuci (1994), Moss (1995), Pardo (1996), Tullio-Altan (2000), have noted, political fragmentation and the overlapping of kinship, friendship, clientelism and patronage offers further possibilities for various groups to criss-cross their agencies in order to find representation. In the same way that kinship is offering representation to Grecanici through the exchange of favours, so too clientelism and patronage offer representation to people of non-Grecanico origin through recommendations. Despite the fact that the laureati (university graduates)
receive a more obvious social recognition and acceptance in Reggina society, the *sistemazione* (literally, ‘insertion into the system’) into a good job rests heavily on the network that the subjects have already crafted for themselves.

It is a ‘public secret’ in Reggio that the associations have the ability to provide ‘certificates’ of attendance attesting knowledge of the Greco language thus provoking further suspicion of corruption and favouritism. In a similar vain White discusses the associations in Trasacco as “arenas of the playing out of political rivalries” while the ‘perception’ that “organisations are illegitimate and corrupt is strikingly akin to reality; they very often are” (1980:66). Despite any rhetorical affirmations Grecanici parents happily assume the role of their children’s patron. Lorenzo for example, was adamant never to resort to such clientelistic techniques. However, for the sake of his daughter he asked his brother who is on the council of “Greci di Calabria” to provide him with a certificate that testifies his daughter’s knowledge of Greco. After ridiculing Lorenzo, whose rhetoric ‘around all these matters’ is very ‘elitist’ (public proclamations of negating favour exchange), his brother provided him with the relevant document. This was a joke much discussed among my informants which illustrates further the casual nature of ‘favours’ between kin (Kenny 1961, Lemarchand and Legg 1972, White 1980:148). It further supports Davis’ argument that kinship carries with it obligations that other relationships do not (1977:222).

**The poetics of clientela**

The *regione* is locally considered to be the main financial body for the Greco associations and every year a certain amount of money is allocated to them. It is alleged that money is also entering the associations from other diverse sources: from ghost projects – usually works that focus on Greco folklore and poetry – from Greece – from the twinning of Grecanici towns with Greek cities – and other public Greek and Italian institutions.

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75 According to Bollettino Ufficiale della Regione Calabria (16/01/2006) the total amount allocated for the Grecanici associations for the financial year 2005 was €80,000.
The members who comprise the councils of the associations are responsible for finding further financial sources for their treasuries. They are responsible for publications, conferences, the organisation of trips and fiestas and other promotional activities. In terms of money allocation, a particularistic stance is adopted. As Ciccio told me, “so Stavroula, do you find it right for other people to eat without bringing food to the table?”

Apart from economic issues, associations work at the political level on a clientelistic basis where they appear as both clients and patrons – depending on the specific case. Local politicians and other citizens approach the associations requesting political support – mainly votes in election periods – or other various political favours. Minor favours usually relate to the certificates which testify to knowledge of the language in the case of the public competitions. More serious favours deal with the sistemazione of one’s children. To put the children into the system and secure them in terms of career or material assets (Coklough 1992:21) is a matter which every Grecanici family takes very seriously as becomes apparent in the following case.

Natino was a very distinguished professor of Italian literature whose son is married to Carmela – of a Grecanico origin. Carmela also has a degree in Italian literature which enables her to teach in institutions of public or private education. But the unemployment rate in Reggio is very high and the ‘good’ posts are already occupied. Natino decides to approach the matter somehow differently. He promises a distinguished Grecanico association that he will offer his services to their educational institution for free on condition that they will hire his daughter-in-law. The association was very pleased and agreed to offer a contract to Carmela as soon as possible. Natino worked for free for a year and ‘his name’ and reputation was well exploited by the association. Unfortunately he died unexpectedly the next year. The association never kept the promise to hire his daughter-in-law. The fact that Carmela is of Grecanico origin and a laureata is not enough to secure her a career. Her father-in-law, despite being a distinguished professor in Reggio, was lacking the sufficient network of people placed in the right posts to help him. When compared to
Grecanici claims relating to the prioritisation of university degrees over the language as presented earlier, this case clearly renders how the whole system of the raccomandati operates. Colclough in a different context argues:

As never before, villagers are being thrust into contact with the state bureaucracy and national and provincial agencies. As citizenship rights are extended and welfare benefits increased, their need for help in preparing documentation and seeking raccomandazioni becomes ever greater. Indeed, even children are not immune from these pressures, and there is considerable evidence to suggest that they are socialised at an early age into the necessity of seeking patrons and raccomandazioni in school. Thus, as an only slightly cynical village schoolteacher once remarked, 'The only lesson which children learn here is that in order to be successful they must find somebody to recommend them' (1992:132).

Similar assumptions regarding the connection with the ‘right people’ as a prerequisite for being ‘systemised’ are expressed in Piault’s ethnographic film ‘My Family and Me’ (1986). Set in Ano Ravenia, Epirus, Greece, the film captures conflicting ideologies regarding the best way one can earn a decent livelihood. The dialogue between the teacher of the village school and a shepherd reveals that these assumptions comply with one’s existing level of occupation and education. Whilst the shepherd in Piault’s film insists on the connection with the right people, the teacher advocates in favour of educational excellence and one’s good character. As we have previously seen, Lorenzo’s brother was not willing to resort to clientelism in order to help his child. He is an educated man who, similar to the teacher in Ano Ravenia, strongly believes in the power of education. Lorenzo originates from a poor family but due to his educational level he enjoys the respect of his compatriots. Yet he too realises that education is not enough if he really wants to ‘systemise’ his daughter. He thus uses both the available educational and kinship-based clientelism channels to help secure his desires.

**Greci di Calabria – Madre Grecia – Le Radici: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly**

The most controversial associations, during the time of my fieldwork, related – directly or indirectly – to the Grecanico language and culture in Reggio were “Greci di Calabria”, “Le Radici” and “Madre Grecia”. Similar to what is perceived for the local political parties, the aforementioned associations are
suspicious entities for their political corruption and financial mistrust. I have
decided to focus on these associations because their conflicts represent on a
micro-scale the conflicts that exist between almost all the associations that act
within the province. For this reason I have decided to give the associations
similar pseudonyms, precisely because I consider their actions as
representative of the rest of the associations. I have also deliberately used for
the pseudonyms words that are frequently used in the associations’
vocabulary. Thus words like Greci (Greeks), Madre Grecia (Mother Greece),
Le Radici (The Roots) are taken from the quotidian language of the members
involved in the associations. I would like to further claim that the Greco
language and culture are most of the time smoke screens that mask more
elaborate financial and power-related interests. The dispersal of the Greco ‘cultural capital’ amongst various agents, whose ambivalent status is
undergoing constant critique, provokes a continuing conflict that takes place in
both fully public and less public spaces. Greco then appear to fight for
their rights to cultural ownership and its rightful appropriation.

Very often the presidents of the associations receive public criticism due to
apparent discrepancies that relate to the Greco language. “How is it
possible”, it is often argued, “to claim that they care for the language when
they do not teach it to their children”. The argument further extends to the
teaching of modern Greek towards which not all the associations are positively
disposed.

“Greci di Calabria” for instance argue that “ours is the most reformist among
the associations which deals exclusively with the Greco language and
culture and NOT modern Greek.” Official statements such as the above
constitute a direct accusation towards the other Greco associations who
encourage the study of modern Greek; namely the associations of Bova
Marina who, since 1994, favour the teaching of modern Greek by requesting
the dispatch of Greek teachers to the area from the Greek education ministry.
The main argument from “Greci di Calabria” is that “we prefer to be taught
our own language. Modern Greek will condemn Greco to death and this
we do not want”. “Greci di Calabria” openly discuss the utilisation of the
Grecanico language and culture towards the economic development of the traditional area Grecanica. This mainly refers to the refurbishment of traditional guest houses in their village of origin which were financed by the European Union project ‘Leader II’, as well as the development of religious tourism.

“Madre Grecia” was founded in 1997 by Greek residents of Reggio and their Italian relatives. Among the main objectives of “Madre Grecia” we find: the advancement and diffusion of the Greek language, culture and tradition, the care for Grecaniche communities with whom the association shares a special attachment, the support of the Greeks in Calabria who through the passage of time managed to preserve their language and culture. “Madre Grecia” collaborates closely with the Grecanico association “Le Radici”. “Le Radici” is a non-profit association for the ‘salvation’ of the Grecanico language and culture. It was founded by N. Papakalos in 1999 in Reggio and the council board is comprised of both Grecanici and Greeks. Even though the association has comparatively few members, it appears to hold a relatively prestigious position in the administrative circles of the regione regarding cultural matters. This is due to the fact that the name of N. Papakalos (similar to the presidents of the rest of the associations) is inextricably interrelated with major advances in relation to Grecanici culture. Both “Le Radici” and “Madre Grecia” advocate the simultaneous teaching of Grecanico and modern Greek.

The issue regarding modern Greek and its subsequent insertion into the Grecanico language in order to ‘fill linguistic gaps’ was, and still is, very intense. Both Rohlfs and Karanastasis argue that linguistic gaps in the Grecanico language should be filled by Italian linguistic elements (Petropoulou 1995:204). The tendency to replace Italian words existing in the Grecanico language with modern Greek has been criticised by Karanastasis, who argued that the publishers of the Grecanici journals “Jonica” and “Zoi ce Glossa” were provoking serious damage to the language by forcing it into an ahistoric course (1984:17). This linguistic implementation is much akin to the development of katharevousa in Greece, the neo-classical form of the modern Greek language which was “a cultural appeal to the West for recognition, an
attempt to demonstrate that the ordinary Greeks of today could speak a tongue which is undeniably their own yet no less clearly Hellenic” (Herzfeld 1986a:17). Since the time of “Jonica”, the utilisation of modern Greek was viewed as an attempt at modernisation and an ‘injection of cosmopolitanism’ into Grecanico language and culture (Campolo 2002:241). The teaching of ‘ti glossa ton papudon ma’ (the language of our grandfathers) and the subsequent initiative regarding the teaching of modern Greek is approached differently by the associations. Regarding the teaching of the Grecanico language, apart from the Sportello Linguistico, it is mainly the associations who appear to linguistically instruct the younger Grecanici.

In selected Grecanici communities the teaching of modern Greek operates on a more official and organised basis. The dispatch of Greek teachers from the Greek ministry of education commenced in Bova-Marina in 1994 (Campolo 2002:243) and in Reggio nearly ten years later, in 2003. The dispatch of Greek teachers had been requested by the associations for which – according to the Greek law – they are legally entitled. Even though the teachers are subject to the regulations of the Greek ministry of education, their presence is related to the enhanced prestige of the associations who ‘brought’ them to Italy in the first place.

The Collaborations – The Accusations

N. Papakalos, the president of “Le Radici”, was the ex-president of one of the existing Grecaniche associations. He left the association after some ‘accidents’ happened to some of the association’s possessions. It is rumoured that these accidents were the result of ’Ndrangheta retaliations. After he left the association, N. Papakalos seems to live a lonely life and he never appears in public places frequented by the majority of the Grecanici. Similar to all the presidents of the associations he is accused of a number of things. Primarily, it is argued that he is a member of a masonic ‘secret society’. According to some of the “Greci di Calabria” members, this explains the fact that he is well
accepted in the political circles of Reggio “which are equally Masonic”\textsuperscript{76}. Being – or being accused of being – a mason in Reggio is met with suspicion and fear. Freemasonry spread in Italy during the 1770s and 1780s and came to be a possible political solution for a future based on egalitarian and rationalistic ideas of the Enlightenment\textsuperscript{77} (Woolf 1979:123). In the beginning of 1981 a masonic lodge under the name of P2 (Propaganda 2) was understood to be part of secret lobbies in Italy and America who were acting against democracy under the veil of the communist threat\textsuperscript{78} (Ginsborg 2001:144). Calabria specifically is perceived to be the region with the highest amount of masons. It is interesting to note that between 1976 and 1980 many ‘\textit{Ndrangheta}’ members were officially understood to have become masons due to the ‘exclusive’ political power embedded in the organisation (Ginsborg 2001:201).

N. Papakalos has been publicly accused of diglossia regarding the 2006 Grecanico project ‘\textit{Calimera}’ (in Grecanico meaning ‘Good morning’) funded by the provincia, regione and the European Union. Whilst he appears to state that “\textit{Ta pendinta pedia ti piannusi, sto deftero chrono, me 500 eura to mina, echusi na ene grecofona asce rize}” (the 50 youths who are going to be chosen for the second year, with 500 euros per month, need to be of Grecaniche roots) he is accused of inserting people into the course who are not of Grecanico origin but directly connected with members of his immediate family.

“\textit{Madre Grecia}’ is equally accused by both Greeks and Grecanici alike of ‘money eating’ and the utilisation of the Greek teachers – dispatched to Reggio by the Greek ministry of education – for personal ends. Especially Greek members of the community directly accuse the council of “\textit{Madre Grecia}” of being driven by personal interests rather than by collective ones.

\textsuperscript{76} For a discussion concerning the collaboration between politicians and masons cf. Clark 1996:80, 89, 424.
\textsuperscript{77} See also Woolf 1979:268-9.
\textsuperscript{78} In the gulfs of P2 were to be found heads of the secret services, officers of the various armed corps of the Republic, leading magistrates, heads of the police, prefects, bankers and businessmen, civil servants, journalists and broadcasters, members of parliament and ministers. The list of the lodge was found in the province of Arezzo and numbered 962 members (Ginsborg 2001:144).
“Why does he (the president of “Madre Grecia”) not ask for Greek teachers from residents of Reggio who are qualified to teach, since the Italian law gives that opportunity?” ask some of the Greek members of the community who are indeed qualified to teach. “But he wants to have political connections with the Greek government for personal reasons”. The power of the council – it is alleged – stems from both parentela and clientela (kinship and clientele).

From the perspective of the Grecañiche associations, “Madre Grecia” is directly accused of cultivating a very ‘nebulous’ profile in terms of its nature and scope. This is related to the fact that the committee of “Madre Grecia” directly connects the community with other Grecañiche communities on a national scale. According to Lucia, an active member of “Greci di Calabria”, “how is it possible to utilise a culture that is not his for personal reasons? And who has crowned him ‘difensore della Grecità’ (defender of Greekness) in Calabria?” The president of “Madre Grecia” on the other hand directly accuses the Grecañiche associations of exhibiting a ‘chiusura culturale’ (cultural narrowness). “Why do they object” he argues, “to a broader utilisation of the Grecañico culture which could benefit us all?”

The council boards of “Madre Grecia” and “Le Radici” are on relatively good terms – members of “Madre Grecia” appear on the council board of “Le Radici” and vice versa. They further collaborate when it comes to ‘projecting’ a Grecañici ‘essence’ outwards, mainly to the Greek tourists who come to visit ‘ta ellinofona’ (the hellenophones), as the Grecañici villages are collectively recognised in Greece. For the same reasons “Madre Grecia” were initially collaborating with “Greci di Calabria”. The collaboration with “Greci di Calabria” worked perfectly for a few years as “Madre Grecia” could utilise the “Greci di Calabria”’ folklorist group – one of the most prominent groups in Reggio – to entertain the Greek visitors. Yet, after the allegations that both associations were implicated in an international scandal, the two irretrievably drifted apart. The organisation of fiestas for the tourists usually follows the same pattern. A welcoming speech, preferably in Grecañico, is essential to set the scene and to create the psychological climate of ‘togetherness’. Food, drink and the tarantella dance – from a traditional folk group if possible – is an
absolute must for a successful occasion. Usually the fiesta closes with a small open fair where books on Grecanico language as well as CDs of Grecanico music are sold.

Following what Bourdieu (1977) has defined as the necessity of tempo, Grecanici have invested considerable time and effort during the last forty years in order to literally create a Grecanici culture that is marketable. It would be a mistake though to assume that this gained self-consciousness is alienated from notions of honour and respect that run through Grecanici culture. In other words, the pursuit of symbolic capital is not reducible solely to economic and political interests. Theodossopoulos examines a case in Zakynthos, Greece, were the inhabitants of Vassilikos appear to resist the environmentalist projects to create a protection zone for the turtles that lay their eggs on the Zakynthian coasts. Despite the fact that the case has been negatively advertised, thus portraying the Vassilikotes as amoral and money-orientated individuals (Theodossopoulos 1997), the actors project their personal relations with the land as those mediated by the sweat and blood of the ancestors. This gives them the rightful claim to their land in order to oppose the state project for the creation of a national park (Theodossopoulos 2000). In somewhat a similar vein, the Grecanici through processes of time, have gradually engendered their culture. In other words, Grecanici culture is as much of a ‘produced’ culture as it is ‘real’, and motivates people and informs political dispositions.

**Conclusion**

As it was made explicitly clear by most of my Grecanici and Reggini informants, the associations constitute a “job among the others”. It is clearly stated in Nucera (1984/5:43) that the “Grecofoni themselves participate to a very small degree in those initiatives”, while the nature of the associations as ‘individualistic’ is highlighted by both Nucera (ibid.:76) and Campolo (2002:276). The same assumption regarding the individualistic nature of the associations is collectively shared by the majority of my informants. While in their constitutions the associations appear as political bodies of an inclusionist
nature, when it comes to profit allocations their action – according to my informants – is very exclusionist.

Above all, the main argument against the associations and their failure to implicate the majority of Grecanici people in their activities is illustrated by the fact that “we cannot stand for them to make fortunes on our backs. They have taken our memories and made them books. They did not give anything back to us. I do not mean money, figurati\textsuperscript{79}, just an acknowledgement, just to mention our names. We are illiterate, not stupid” (Toto, 70 years old).

The associations appear as ‘cultural keepers’ and as representatives of the Grecanici in society. They also act as promoters of a specific identity – related to master as well as folkloristic narratives – and a proposed culture literally lived through books. While here the question posed as to what degree people need other people to speak on their behalf is accurate (as postmodernist anthropology preaches), associations do play a significant role in the political representation of Grecanico culture inside and outside the Italian state, since they create useful political links between ‘their’ people and the ‘Others’. Even though the majority of my Grecanici informants who do not participate in the associations do not share the same positions concerning collective identity as proposed by the associations above, they recognise the associations as individual political bodies possessing a certain degree of power and authority. When my Reggini and Greek informants in Reggio refer to the Grecanici they directly refer to the associations. Thus the Grecanici who comprise the association’s councils are – in the consciousness of the rest of my informants – at once ‘all the Grecanici’, a fact which further explains the general surprise provoked by my interest to implicate in my research ‘everyday’ Grecanici people.

The policy of the associations and the relevant ideology from the time that the Grecanico associationistic movement commenced was and still is descent

\textsuperscript{79} Figurati is an idiomatic expression which is used in discourse to denote either astonishment and scepticism or acknowledgment. In this case Toto uses the term to imply what is rendered in English as ‘as if’.
based, aimed at preserving linguistic and cultural survivals of the classical era. The subsequent representation was as much linked to a political discourse, that of the ‘second type’ citizen, as to the issue of migration of a certain amount of the Grecanico population in a larger political context – that of Reggio. The policy of the associations, at least before the 1980s, was thus explicitly ethnicised in the sense that they were working at the ideological level towards a desirable reworking at the political level, namely the ‘awakening of the collective consciousness of the minority and the abandonment of feelings of inferiority towards the rest of the Reggini citizens’. The politics of ‘collective victimisation’ (Ballinger 2003:135-45) was carefully played out by the Grecañiche associations, thus elevating the first Grecañici migrants of Reggio to the status of martyrdom. Memories of the paddhechi, parpatuli and the tamarri were thus put forward to facilitate further political claims of recognition by the local and the national authorities.

The aforementioned policy had a twofold result. First, it created the opportunity for further associations to develop as autonomous political institutions in terms of their explicit actions. Second, it decisively provoked a political mobilisation at the regional and national level claiming the protection and promotion of the historical and cultural heritage of the minority on behalf of the state. The proclamation of the valorisation of the autochthonous Grecañici – as well as other linguistic minorities – with the act no. 482 of 1999 materialised in the creation of the Sportelli Linguistici.

The Sportelli during the first three years of their existence have proven to be a ‘respectable’ source of employment for the Grecañici and Reggini alike. The Grecañici can utilise their autochthony and ‘certified’ knowledge of the Grecañico language in order to pursue a place in the Sportelli while the Reggini raccomandati can equally utilise their connections with local politicians, professors and other associations for the same reasons. The materialisation of the Sportelli drastically altered the collective perception of the associations from ‘unofficial’ to ‘official’ political bodies. Due to the fact that they can decisively influence the local authorities both economically and politically, they can act as ‘officially recognised’ channels of power which
implies direct “control of both material as well as cultural resources” (Lyon 2004:4).

When discussing the public perception of ‘running against the system’ (2002:155) in Malta, Mitchell arrived at an interesting point. When ambiguity characterises bureaucratic practices, he argues, they are not considered as polluted because there is no moral measure against them. Mitchell cites his informants who argue that in Malta “the system is there is no system” (ibid.:155). Amongst the Grecanici one can identify many political systems that run counter to or alongside one another. The same subjects who appear above to heavily criticise the associations in terms of their corrupt and clientelistic practices are readily utilising them for personal ends. They thus ‘performatively contradict’ themselves (Tsitsipis 2004:110) since they adopt the same diglossia as that which they accuse the associations’ councils of possessing. As one of my informants very eloquently put it: “politics is like a boat. If one wants to sail safely, one must not sail against the wind”. Then, he proceeded to describe that similar to the wind that changes direction so one’s political disposition must change. “The only certain morality in politics is that there is no morality”. Whilst the assumption that “all politicians are bastards” (Mitchell 2002:147) is collectively shared amongst the Grecanici, the same is not applied to one’s kin. As we have seen earlier between Lorenzo and his brother, the transaction of favours between the two brothers exceeds notions of clientelism. In this case, when patronage and clientelism are personalised (thus they are a mode of kinship representation) they are not negatively charged because they are conceived as a ‘traditional’ way of doing politics. Grecanici ethos suggests that when any given system is personalised and assumes a ‘face’ then it does not provoke any anxieties in the actors. On the contrary, impersonal bureaucracy, precisely because it is a ‘faceless’ system, produces social anxieties and uneasiness. In other words, when the system lacks personal mediation it is deemed as ambiguous and thus is approached with scepticism. When the associations’ initial policy was conducted and mediated on personal bases, despite the personal confrontations and conflicts that arose amongst the members, the associations were not perceived as institutions directly tied to governmental policies. It was after linguistic minorities
managed to attach themselves to local government that the associations’ profile changed. In the present they assume the role of the impersonal and faceless bureaucratic institution. Whilst it can not be denied that personal favours are exchanged between people inside and outside of the associations, the main perception endorsed is that corruption rather than clientelism and patronage define their activities. The resemblance to governmental policies thus constitute the associations as ambiguous and suspicious in the minds of the actors. Furthermore, it suggests that clientelism cannot be approached as a monolithic system of representation.
Chapter Five: The Topology of Kinship

Sacra familiaria perpetua manento
Cicero

From a very young age Grecanici learn how to depend on and care for their kin. When they are asked for details concerning their kinship system, they commonly reply that “we are all relatives, we are all one big family”. Grecanici emphasise the notion of the *vincolo* (bond/binding obligation/restraint) to further explain/justify political and moral dispositions regarding their families. Family, familial organisation and notions of space will be the theme of this chapter. In order to facilitate my analysis, I will divide the present chapter into two sections. The premises of Grecanici kinship and family are going to be presented in the first section of the chapter. Special emphasis will be placed on kinship intermarriage not only as a strategy for collective identity fortification and subjectification but also as a moral choice. I will continue then to the second part of the chapter outlining the Grecanici residence patterns in Reggio and the explanatory moral and ideological implications behind specific residence choices.

**Part one: The Family**

**Kinship organisation**

The Grecanici maintain a system of bilateral kinship classification which has a strong patrilineal bias. As Goody notes, Mediterranean kinship is all bilateral since “ties also exist with and through the other partner, ties that are often of political and social importance” (1983:16). Furthermore “a system of agnatic clans or lineages does not exclude the active presence of bilateral kinship” (ibid.:222). My usage of the term patrilineal then complies “with the reckoning of membership to, or organisation of, a unilineal descent group, that is, a clan or lineage” (ibid.:16 note 5). The primary unit of this kinship orientation with strong patrilineal bias is the *yenía* (in Grecanico, meaning ‘patriclan’) consisting of all patrilineal descendants of an apical ancestor as well as other blood and fictive kin assimilated into the line of descent. The
term yenía\textsuperscript{80} is also used in Greece and more specifically in Mani (Alexakis 1980:36-37, Seremetakis 1991:25-26) and in Crete (Herzfeld 1980:344-345) in order to highlight the general ideological preference – rather than kinship structure – of patrilineality. An interesting example is offered by Couroucli (1994). Kinship in Episkepsi, Greece, is organised in terms of _lineage_ (lineage)\textsuperscript{81} and the locals reckon their membership in _razze_ (plural of razza, patriclan). Couroucli here puts forward an economic argument. She notes that apart from the naming systems that favour the patriline, the transmission of patrimony is a further indicator of razza. The argument is interesting in the sense that in Episkepsi patrimonial assets, similar to living descendants, are indeed indicators of the same recognised ancestor.

In the Grecanici context, the term yenía is most frequently used by people of the first and (to a lesser degree) the second generation Grecanici of Reggio. The equivalent Italian term _razza_ is employed by the third and fourth generation and this is the term that I will use. Each razza may contain more than one sub-razza formed by the male descendants who, nevertheless, acknowledge a common ancestor. Both razza and sub-razza are ideologically organised around the myth of patrilineal descent. The specific ideology is build upon two premises. First, the metaphor of the substance of blood that is believed to be transmitted through males and is shared among the people of the same patriline and second, the naming practices that favour the patriline. Blood and name are two powerful _vincoli_ (plural of vincolo) and their binding qualities will be examined shortly.

In the Calabrian literature, Lombardi Satriani has extensively examined the symbolism that pertains to blood and purity (cf. Douglas 1966). Blood, in the Calabrian imagery, stands for life and continuity, immortality and memory (Lombardi Satriani 2000:107-8, 1989:84-93). In the rituals of blood – for instance the flagellation during Holy Saturday at Nocera Terinese – blood symbolises the sacrifice of the victims/flagellated for the purification,

\textsuperscript{80}In the Greek term the accent is placed on the à whilst in the Grecanico term it is on the í.

prosperity and the pride of the family and community (Lombardi Satriani 2000:111). Following the Gramscian tradition on hegemonic relations between classes, Lombardi Satriani has associated the perseverance of the ideology of blood with the resistance of subcultures to ‘external’ forces of modernisation and globalisation. Moreover, it is believed that blood ‘transmits’ cultural ‘substance’ from generation to generation. Economic interests and physical competence for hard work were the outcome of common blood ties among economically strong families of fishermen and boat builders as in the case of Burano (Vianello 1998 in Sciama 2003:85).

When examining the impact of culture and traditions on Calabrian-born women who migrated to South Australia, Ciccone has argued that they wish to “maintain their culture and traditions by marrying a man who had the same cultural background as their own” (2006). A similar argument is put forward by the Grecanici men concerning their preference for intermarriage. It is argued that Grecanici women, precisely because they share the same blood as the men, are able to understand them better and bear all the cultural traits – that is honour, respect, value – necessary for a happy and prosperous marriage. Di Bella (1983) notes that the honour of a group rests on the equilibrium between the ‘preservation of the purity of the blood and the name’, that is gendered complementary roles. The role of the women is to secure the blood purity of their group through the preservation of their own chastity whilst men are responsible for the social status of the family name (1983:231 see also Peristiani 1966, Davis 1977, Gilmore 1987, Dubisch 1995, Sciama 2003). Di Bella’s account for gendered complementary roles does not differ in principle from the honour/shame analytic construct that has dominated Mediterranean ethnography.

Similar to Giovannini (1981), Di Bella fashions her analyses by locating men and women in complementary oppositions that is blood/name, domestic/public. As many theorists have convincingly argued, gender

82 The notions of honour and shame were employed by anthropologists of the 1960s in order to account for gender ideas and relations in the context of Southern Europe. Southern European societies were thus united on the basis of the values of honour and shame into a single cultural region – the Mediterranean.

**Naming practices**

The transmission of the patronymic surname further substantiates the emphasis on patrilineal descent. Similarly, as in many European countries, the Grecanici children adopt their father’s last name. For this reason Grecanici families strive for male descendants that can “transmit and reproduce the ‘name’ of the relative” (Clastres 1994:134 in Butler 2000:94). In this sense, Grecanici come to think of themselves as members of a particular ‘family’ associated to a particular apical ancestor whose name needs to persist through time. Seremetakis makes a similar argument in her discussion of the naming systems among the Maniats. She stresses the political nature of the naming as “central to the processes of segmentation, fissioning and clan formation” (1991:27).

The Grecanici naming systems pertain to the transmission of the patronymic surname, the first name and the nickname. The surname of the father’s line is transmitted to the children whilst the wife maintains her father’s surname. Due to widely practiced kinship endogamy among the Grecanici, the surnames that can be found are few and circulated for many generations. Each firstborn child takes his/her first or ‘given’ name from the father’s family – usually from one of the father’s parents – while the second child takes his/her name from the mother’s family. The nicknames (in Grecanico ingiuria, literally meaning
‘insult’) that are attached to people – usually inspired by physical or behavioural characteristics – are the primary identifying code between people of the same surname and thus operate as identity indicators. For example, in relation to Galliciano, Petropoulou (1999) notes that the nickname *giatros* (in Greco, meaning medical doctor), was attributed to Raffaele Nucera, a medical doctor and landowner of the 1800s who is considered as the founder of one of the first genealogies in Galliciano. His nickname is passed down to the sub-razze that stem from him similar to the genealogical first name and patronymic surname (1999:136). As not everyone inherits a nickname, at the time of its creation the nickname momentarily escapes the rigid structure that pertains to the Greco naming systems. Yet, similar to the surname, those who have a nickname inherit it from generation to generation. In marriage the women take the nickname of their husbands but also keep the nickname of their father (Petropoulou 1999:144).

Seremetakis (1991:28-29) notes a fluidity concerning the surname of Maniat clans according to residential, political or moral variants. For example, in cases of feuding or relocation, Maniat clans can absorb each other resulting in a subsequent invention of a fictive apical ancestor that can sustain the ‘blood’ ideology which reinforces assimilation between members. There is a definite similarity between the Maniats and the Grecanici regarding possible clan fusions effected through marriage. Yet Grecanici clans who lack male descendants are destined to ‘extinction’ as far as the surname and nickname are concerned. No fictive apical ancestor is employed to justify fusions or other political or social absorptions.

Some kinship terms in Greco including *ledde* (brother), *ledda* (sister), *sederfolsederfi* (cousin), *anispiola* (nephew, niece), *singeni* (husband’s brother) and *cognato/a* (brother-in-law/sister-in-law) reveal a higher diversification when compared to equivalent Italian kinship terms. For

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83 In Zaccanopoli, Calabria, it is the woman however who is the bearer of the nickname and thus passes it down to her children (Minicuci 1983). In Alcalà (Andalusia, Spain) both men and women have different nicknames. The nickname of the father is inherited by the male children while the mother’s nickname is inherited by the female descendants (Pitt-Rivers 1976).
example, Grecanici kinship terminology allows for a distinction between nephew/niece (anispio/a) and grandchild (angoni, angonaci). We note that the two kinship positions in Italian are rendered with the term nipote. Despite stressing the differences between the generations (older people still employ the kinship terminology in Grecanico – see above yenía and razza) the Italian kinship terms do not entail less binding kinship relationships.

In relation to kinship terms in Burano, Sciama notes that legal and economic factors such as inheritance and patrimonial succession emphasise patrilineal kinship as more binding than matrilateral relations (2003:85). For economic motives – keeping inheritance assets within the family – but primarily ideological reasons, one could claim that the same appears to be the case in regard to the prevalence of razza among my Grecanici informants. However as Herzfeld (1983) has argued in relation to Greek kinship, kinship terminology should not necessarily be conflated with kinship ideology that pertains to local populations. For example, the Grecanici concept of spiti\textsuperscript{84} (house) refers not only to the household – or more than one household – but also to patrilineal, affinal and cognatic relations. Here the notion is threefold: first it refers to the physical construction of the building, second to the family that may occupy it and third to the descendants of the family. It is then the ethic of spiti and the later used Italian term famiglia that dictates the equilibrium between economic, social and political relations (Davis 1973, Bell 1979, Minicuci 1994, Goddard 1996, Yanagisako 2002). Furthermore, as Goddard notes, family in Italy does not hold an all-embracing meaning. In relation to the South, family has been associated with ‘survival’ and the moral values of honour and respect, whilst in North and Central Italy, the notion of family has been associated with “successful entrepreneurial activity, often achieved

\textsuperscript{84} Here, the notion of the Grecanici house resembles the house societies as described by Levi-Strauss. Discussing the European houses he argues that “on all levels of social life, from the family to the state, the house is therefore an institutional creation that permits compounding forces which, everywhere else, seem only destined to mutual exclusion because of their contradictory bends. Patrilineal descent and matrilineal descent, filiation and residence, hypergamy and hypogamy, close marriage and distant marriage, heredity and election: all these notions, which usually allow anthropologists to distinguish the various type of society, are reunited in the house, as if the last analysis, the spirit (in the eighteenth-century sense) of this institution expressed an effort to transcend, in all spheres of collective life, theoretically incompatible principles” (1982:184). For the notion of the ‘house’ see also Bestard-Camps 1991, Pine 2007.
through close collaboration with local and regional economic and political structures” (1996:164, also Yanagisako 2002). She further argues that the South Italian family is forged as a top-down bottom-up effect highlighting thus the creative synergies of both state and church policies on the one hand and the “practical and sentimental importance of family life” on the other (ibid.:180).

**Kinship intermarriage**

It is strongly believed among the Grecanici that marriage between kin guarantees familial happiness and prosperity as well as economic and emotional security. A lot of my female informants with an age range between 30 and 40 years old and with entirely different professional occupations, lives and political agendas, concluded that being married to a man of Grecanico origin gave them the security that “nothing bad could happen”. This implies that a divorce is highly improbable among the Grecanici. During the time of my fieldwork only two divorces occurred. It is also argued that in a best case scenario, the marriage would be to a cross or parallel first cousin. In-marriage, Goody observes, “is a pattern so patently different from the exchangist, exogamic structures of which Levi-Strauss and others have written” (1983:43). Apart from reinforcing family ties (Minicuci 1994:246-7) he continues, “these particular forms also prevent female heiresses from removing property for the ‘family’, and thus combat the problem of the absence of sons” (Goody 1983:43).

Furthermore, feelings of marital security, as has been argued by both sexes, emanate from the same blood that both spouses share. Grecanici kinship intermarriage is dictated by economic, ideological and ethical agendas. Until the end of the 1960s the majority of the Grecanici had to share the inhabitable land of Aspromonte. Cultivation was difficult and the land available needed to be kept within the family. The land that comprised the patrimony was usually
inherited in equal parts among the siblings. The dowry\textsuperscript{85} and marriage settlements were also important. As Davis has argued in relation to Pisticci, “dowry and marriage settlements are complementary transactions, negotiated to achieve equality between the spouses and to set them up as independent adults” (1973:41). A similar argument is also made by Minicuci who argues that the Zacconopolesi aim through dowry and marriage to complementarily sponsor the spouses towards their future life (1984:145). Upon marriage, Grecanici women were sponsored by their families by way of movable and immovable dowry. The \textit{corredo} was the movable dowry and comprised of the \textit{biancheria} and the \textit{arredo della casa}. Biancheria refers to the white sheets, towels, underwear, laced handicrafts and other white linen or cotton clothe with which women “endowed themselves and were endowed by the womenfolk of their natal group … all goods which defined them as brides and as daughters rather than merely heirs” (Sant Cassia and Bada 1992:99). The arredo refers to the furniture and other functional household objects. It was also customary that a woman “\textit{porta la casa in dote}” \textsuperscript{86} (brings the house in dowry). The dowries were and still are tangible indicators of familial status and economic wealth. A Grecanici family was expected to work for the dowries of its women. Today both spouses contribute to the movable dowry and to the furniture for the house as well as to the expenses of the marriage. Most of the time they are both provided with a house.

Furthermore, the land that would have once formed part of the dowry has to a considerable extent been substituted by apartments, shops and other real estate in Reggio that need to be kept ‘within the family’. The official abolition of dowry – an innovation introduced into the Civil Code in 1975\textsuperscript{87} – did not alter the Grecanici custom of sponsoring their daughters with a house. Recently there has been a noticeable shift towards \textit{inter vivos} transmission of property.

\textsuperscript{85} Davis defines dowry (\textit{dote}) as “the property the wife brings to her marriage”. In legal terms, Davis notes, dowry is a term meaning “property subject to special meanings on its use”. In the non-legal sense it is “property donated from a particular source” and in the legal sense the source is irrelevant; “what is designated are the particular rights and duties attached to the property while the marriage lasts” (Davis 1973:34).

\textsuperscript{86} However, in Roghudi it was the males that were sponsored with a house.

\textsuperscript{87} The reformation of Civil Code in 1975 treated issues regarding the relationships between spouses, parents and children as well as inheritance problems. For a historical analysis of the Civil Code cf. Davis 1973 appendix III, also Pocar and Ronfani 1978.
This is closely related with the transition to Reggio and the change in the inheritance law which favours intestate successions. Patrimonial property is transmitted equally between the siblings as *inter vivos* gifts. The issue of providing the children with a house belongs to the sphere of responsibilities related to the general anxiety of “systemising” the children, that is putting the children into the system and making them independent (Galt 1991:312).

One can note the apparent inconsistency with Grecanici kinship. Whilst blood ideologies and the naming systems clearly favour male actors, dowry and present inheritance patterns make amends to female subjects. Drawing on Leach (1973), I would suggest that through dowry and inheritance practices Grecanici have well-devised notions of individual property that do not disfavour the female property owner. In principle, the Grecanici bilateral structure is “distorted for ideological reasons” (Leach 1973:54). This further complies with Goody’s suggestion that “the question is not to define patrilineal as against bilateral societies or kinship systems but to discover whether groups of groupings of such and such kind were recognised or utilised by the actors” (1983:234). As will become apparent throughout this thesis, despite the rhetorical emphasis on the patriline, the Grecanici kinship system is bilateral in character for the purposes of compensation, settlement and conflict.

**The ethics of the corna**

Further ethical obligations to take care of one’s *corna* (horn) meant that it was the responsibility of the male first cousins to ‘take care’ – implying to marry – the unmarried women of the family. *“Prima cumbogghiu li me corna, poi cumbogghiu li corna di ll’ altri”* (I must first cap my own horn and then the horn of the others). The corna here is something that needs to be capped, shielded and kept inside. As an ethical obligation towards the family, ‘to cap the corna’ means to be able to administer the affairs of the family. Successful administration of one’s family affairs enhances the collective respect towards the family and thus the family’s honour. As a collective disposition, to ‘cap the corna’, closely pertains to the ideology of keeping the women within the
family. To cap the corna thus pertains to a further disposition to keep the women capped, shielded and kept inside or as Tillion has put it “to keep all the girls of the family for the boys of the family” (1966 in Goody 1983:43). The term corna in the Mediterranean societies is related to the man who is 'cornuto' that is namely the deceived man in the case of adultery – the cuckold (Blok 1981). In the context of the Reggino it is also used in discourse as pejorative to indicate a stupid and worthless person. It is most probable that two drivers in Reggio implicated in an ‘unpleasant’ traffic incident would verbally abuse each other using the term cornuto. The case below highlights a variety of reasons as to why one family should cap their corna first before they cap the corna of the others.

Leo, 70 years old, remembers: “first I had one fidanzata [fiancée] – from the village – but I left her. She was puttanella [little slut]. First she had sex with me and then with another man. Then I met another woman who was of our village but her family had migrated to America. She wanted to marry me. She was very rich and tempted me. But the deal would be for me to leave the village. That was out of the question. Then I met Teressa. She was 12. My mother did not want her. She wanted me to marry my first cousin. My mother was furba [canny]. She preferred her niece [her brother’s daughter] because she knew that she would take care of her when old. But I was determined to marry Teressa.” Teressa continues the story: “We were fidanzati [engaged to marry] for six years. One night he sent his grandfather to tell my father that he would not proceed to marriage until they gave me a sort of dowry. My father was negative. Then Leo threatened to elope with me. After that my family agreed to a compromise”. This story hardly represents a unique event in the lives of my informants and poses questions for the ethical reasons for intermarriage and the implications in the opposite case. Leo’s mother appeared determined to keep the women in the family for reasons pertaining to her own welfare, for it is strongly believed that only people of the same blood are capable of good parent care. Apart from the fact that she wants the daughter of her brother to be married, she is also considered responsible for her own son accomplishing the 'task'. Leo’s mother never really got along with Teressa despite the fact that the latter originates from the same village and her
obedience and respect towards her is strong. In the same sense, Teressa’s family did not want Leo as a son-in-law because he was famous for being lazy. They were also negative in providing a lazy person with a house especially when this person did not belong to the razza. For this reason when Leo made his demands clear after six years of being Teressa’s fidanzato (fiancé) the family did not hesitate to refuse his demands. At this point Teressa’s wounded honour did not seem to matter for the fact that her family prioritised her ‘systemisation’ with a worthy (implying capable of working hard) man and a possible relative. When Leo threatened to run off with their daughter and get married alone they succumbed. The honour of the family in this case is not related so much with Teressa’s virginity, or retaliation for the ‘lost virginity’ for that matter, as much as with losing one person of the family.

Further reasons for intermarriage between kin pertain to 'Ndrangheta culture that encourages and sometimes demands kinship intermarriage, as it becomes clear in the case of Carolina. Carolina is 27 years old, with a university degree. Domenico, 24, is a painter. He was courting Carolina for a year but she did not seem to be interested. As a matter of fact she was negative about marrying him. A year later, during the period of my fieldwork, Domenico asked his relatives – who are allegedly distinguished members of the mafia hierarchy – to intervene. Carolina eventually accepted, a fact that deeply displeased her grandfather from her mother’s side who is still living in the village. The grandfather’s reaction towards his daughter (Carolina’s mother) was: “Puttana [whore]!!!! What have you done? The people of this razza were my servants”. Carolina’s grandfather here, allegedly a high ranking member of the 'Ndrangheta in his village, was directly criticising Domenico’s razza for being of inferior status. In such cases, the intervention of 'Ndrangheta members for the completion of specific Grecanici marriages results in the creation of new possible alliances between families of diverse economic and social status. However, the majority of Grecanici marriages takes place within the same kin group.
Some interesting points can be extracted. In the above case, Carolina has a university degree that could allow her a ‘better’ marriage, this implies a marriage to a man of similar professional qualifications. Yet Carolina is already 27 and unmarried, thus she presents a social ‘problem’ for her family. They eventually agree to her marriage to Domenico despite the fact that he is a painter and of a ‘lower’ familial status. The intervention of the ‘Ndrangheta significantly contributed towards this decision. In relation to marriage dictated by ‘Ndrangheta culture, Paoli has argued that “women are also used as a commodity to strengthen the Mafia brotherhood”. Whilst there are an increasing number of exceptions”, she continues, “marriages are usually a means to establish ritual kinship bonds among Mafia adherents, and specifically to seal alliances with prestigious and powerful Mafiosi and their families” (2003:88). I certainly agree that marriage among mafia families does create strong political and economic links between the families in question. Ingrascì cites the testimony of the penitito (penitent) Saverio Morabito who discusses the cross-marriages in Plati, a village on the Calabrian Ionian coast;

The cross-marriages have served to maintain peace in Plati, which indeed is the only place where a vendetta has not taken place ... the daughters and sons marry to each other, they become compari (godparents), they become relatives between first cousins, second cousins and third cousins. Thus, everybody knows that if they wanted to start a vendetta this would implicate everyone, and thus before they punish somebody they think of it three times (2007:39).

He further emphasises the course of action that the famiglia Papalia resorted to concerning the case of a widowed female relative. As Morabito notes, in Plati a widow is always deemed as sexually available. Moreover the chances of a widow with a child remarrying are severely curtailed or non-existent. In order to avoid the stain on the family name it was decided that the brother of the widow’s dead husband would marry her (2007:37). In this case the actors appear interested in preserving the name of the family intact. The widow in the Papalia family, precisely because she is a member of the family, albeit an affine, is privileged to remarry within the same family. Thus she avoids

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88 This is a perception that is also collectively shared by both Grecanici and Reggini. The term vedove bianche (white widows) was attributed to the wives of the emigrant Grecanici who, albeit not real widows, would reside back in the Grecanici villages for long periods of time without their husbands.
possible sexual scandals that would stain her and her daughter’s honour. This further means that her daughter would not be deprived from a ‘good’ future marriage. Both women then, mother and daughter, are found yet again in the same family with all the economic and social privileges sustained.

Returning to Paoli’s argument regarding the commoditisation of women, there is a further presupposition that this takes place in a purely commodity-oriented economy which deprives women of agency. According to Gregory (1982), in a commodity-oriented economy there is a relationship established between the exchanged objects, rather than between the exchanging subjects. Conversely, “gift exchange establishes relations between people rather than between the things being exchanged” (Sant Cassia 1991:11 original emphasis). Furthermore, as Strathern has convincingly argued, a person may be turned into an object by another person without loosing his/her status as subject and thus his/her agency (Strathern 1988). In relation to Grecanico culture – heavily influenced by mafia culture – I would argue that Paoli rests on the assumption that women are exchanged by men without considering the possibility that they could give themselves’ away as ‘gifts’ thus strategically placing themselves at the centre of exchange, politics and relationships. This is most evident in the following case of Lorenzo, 35, who is married to a non-relative.

Lorenzo’s parents were planning on marrying their son with one of his mother’s brother’s daughters, Maria. Maria apart from being a relative is also furnished by her family with a house. Lorenzo’s and Maria’s families have discussed a possible union between Lorenzo and Maria since Lorenzo was studying at the university to become a mathematician. During his studies, Lorenzo had a variety of non-Grecanici girlfriends which was acceptable by his family provided that he would eventually conclude with Maria. Maria during that time was avoiding the courting of possible fidanzadi having in her mind her future with Lorenzo. However things did not go according to the familial plans. In his last year Lorenzo fell in love with a Reggina. That in itself was not alarming for his family providing that after a while he would end this relationship. But the relationship seemed to last longer than usual and his parents started nagging Lorenzo to abandon his girlfriend. When after two
years of relationship his girlfriend fell pregnant with Lorenzo’s child, the family reluctantly succumbed to Lorenzo marrying a *forestiera* (foreigner). After fifteen years in the family, Lorenzo’s wife is still considered by Lorenzo’s kin an ‘inappropriate and unfortunate choice’ one that ‘is destined to fail’. As an extreme aversion towards Lorenzo’s wife, both Lorenzo’s mother and Maria opt for Lorenzo’s wife premature death, for Maria to eventually take her rightful position in the family. Despite the fact that this is one of the most extreme cases that I have encountered in my research regarding total negation of the foreigner, other similar cases comply with the rule that marrying a relative is the most probable conclusion.

Apart from marriage arrangements that clearly favour the females of the family, female agency is predominantly evident when it comes to feuds. As Teti argues, Calabrian women, precisely because they are considered as culture ‘transmitters’, are vendetta feeders. It is from this specific culture that the women draw their power not only not to ‘forget and forgive’ assaults against their families but perhaps most importantly to cultivate the ‘ferocity’ of the men (Teti 2007 in Nicaso 2007:30, Di Bella 1980:610, Ingrasì 2007:31-2).

**Taking care of one’s kin**

The internal migrations during the 1950s and 1960s as well as industrialisation did not impede intra-generational links. As Ginsborg notes, the Italian version of the post-modern world acquired a profoundly familial flavour. Moral explanations (ethics of kinship, assistance to elders and control over the youngsters of the family) as well as material explanations (lack of cheap rented accommodation, expensive real estate, youth unemployment) caused Italian families “to express particular qualities of spatial and emotional proximity” (Ginsborg 2001:74-6). In the context of Reggio Calabria, similar to other Calabrian urban environments (Minicuci 1994:294), Grecanici grandparents co-habit with their children and their grandchildren in extended families. Grecanici grandparents are playing a vital role in the familial life and
they are actively involved in the upbringing of their grandchildren in terms of finance and affection. Let us examine the following case.

Amedeo is very proud of his house and never misses the opportunity to give me a brief report on how “expensive all these things are”. His house is comprised of his apartment on the ground floor where he lives with his wife Maria and the apartments of his children. Every time that someone enters the house they first pass from Maria’s kitchen in order to ‘salute’ her and whoever else happens to be in the kitchen. Maria helps her daughters with the young children, tending to them every time the daughters go out shopping. Both the daughters and their husbands feel grateful that their parents provided them with houses “especially at present when you know how expensive it is to buy a house in Reggio”. Taking care of their parents when they are older and in need is something that the majority of my informants consider as their moral obligation dictated by ‘culture and humanity’. Despite the fact that the elderly are usually financially independent, they do not approve of professional carers. In a similar vein, the children do not permit a ‘strange’ carer to ‘touch the body’ of their parents. It is expected that the children themselves – irrespective of sex – wash, clothe and feed their parents when the latter are bedridden. To supervise the carer is also not good enough. There is one case to my knowledge where the sons of a family hired a professional carer for their mother. Even though the sons did not put the old woman into a residential care home, the single fact that a stranger was attending to their mother was enough to result in them losing the respect of their kin and neighbours.

Fortunata, 41, points to another dimension. “Living in the same house with all the relatives, one never feels lonely”. “I remember”, Fortunata continues, “that when my mother came from the village in order for her to go to the hospital I was terrified. But I was never left alone in the hospital. All the relatives were visiting us in rotation. We surpassed the crisis easier because

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89 During my fieldwork both my grandparents were bedridden and under the absolute care of my mother. On many occasions I insisted that my mother should hire a carer to occasionally help her. When the issue was raised in conversation, my informants were critical of my interference. They were arguing that I should leave my mother to do what “she is supposed to do, for she is the only appropriate person to take care of her parents”.

124
we were not alone‖. Fortunata lives in the palazzo (block of apartments) that her father-in-law built for his sons. Fortunata’s cognata (sister-in-law) Maria, argues that things are not always easy living all together especially when their mother-in-law is “particolare” (particular, implying difficult). This last comment was actually made in front of her cognato (Fortunata’s husband) who, however, did not raise any kind of counter argument⁹⁰. In our discussions I have noticed that the two sisters-in-law – Maria and Fortunata – engage in different forms of kinship deliberations. Maria is always very critical of her in-laws and does not seem preoccupied to give me the rhetoric of the ‘united family’. Fortunata on the other hand is very careful not to reveal anything that would give me any idea of friction between her and her in-laws. During my fieldwork I had always expressed a preference towards her old father in-law. Pietro is 70 years old and in his manner towards me was always very cordial. In one of our conversations with Fortunata and her brother Natino, I expressed my sympathy towards Pietro. “Yes, yes”, Natino said, “he is not as good as you think”. “What do you mean” I asked. Fortunata’s reaction that very moment was instant, to stop a conversation that could reveal anything bad about her father in-law. In a flash she nudged Natino in his thigh from the side that she believed I could not see. That gesture was enough to make Natino end the conversation there. That was a case of exchanging interesting ‘winking’ (Geertz 1973) between the three of us, for all three people that participated in the conversation knew exactly the semiotics of these winks.

Fortunata on her part wanted to end a conversation that would possibly damage not only the reputation of her in-law but would reveal secrets to an outsider (me in that case). Natino immediately understood that this gesture had a double meaning. First it was a warning not to proceed further and second it was a sign of disapproval that he had already said enough. I, for my part, interpreted immediately Fortunata’s intervention to protect the in-law. I pretended that I did not see anything and commented jokingly on Natino’s nature of pazzia (craziness). The conversation ended there and neither of us made any effort to make further comments.

⁹⁰ For a full description of Italian Kinship terms see Tukey 1967.
Fortunata is married to Mario, 44. They both originate from the same village. Mario was born and raised in San Giorgio extra while Fortunata, up to the point of her marriage, was living in the village. Their marriage was combinato which means that it was arranged by the parents. The parents knew each other and they were sure of each other’s social valore (value). The valore of the family is measured intersubjectively on the scale of rispetto (respect). Fortunata did not know Mario because he did not go to the village as a child. Nowadays Mario and Fortunata go to the village every weekend and spend all the family holidays with Fortunata’s parents who still reside in the village. Fortunata does not work outside of the house while Mario is employed as a builder. Natino, 28, is Fortunata’s brother who lives with his sister and his cognato in their apartment. He is unmarried and works in the local market of San Giorgio extra. Natino’s possible move to a rented flat is considered as totally absurd for a variety of reasons. In terms of finance it is rather difficult for a person who earns 500 euro per month to sustain a flat alone. This would also entail Natino’s detachment from his own sister and the rest of Mario’s family. Natino living in a separate residence was never discussed by the family as an option, it was neither further negotiated in terms of economics. This case is somewhat different to what Pitkin (1999) has described as ‘assisting the members of the family in need’. The ‘need’ when contextualised in Grencanici culture automatically places the subject in an inferior and vulnerable position. Grencanici kinship ethos does not ‘allow’ for relatives to be deemed as ‘in need’. This perception accords with the actors’ argument that family is an enactment of “relationships we live by”. Paraphrasing Lakoff and Johnson’s “metaphors we live by” (1980), I would argue that Grencanici enactment of relationships encompasses areas which are less or more rigid and highlights the pervasiveness of the notion of vincolo in quotidian discourses. First degree relatives who are not married stay indefinitely in their parents or siblings house until their marriage. Fortunata, Mario and Natino have a common bank account which they all have direct access to. They also collaborate closely in terms of finances with Fortunata’s and Natino’s parents – Santina and Calogero – who live in the village.
Apart from exalting the economic benefits of living with relatives, taking care of one’s kin exceeds physical preoccupations. The actors appear equally interested in ‘taking care’ of their kin’s reputations. During my fieldwork I was readily given the ‘united in love’ Greanici façade, according to which everybody was always speaking well about their co-patriots. *Parlare bene* or *male* (speaking in a good or bad manner) about a person is a consideration that tantalises the quotidian lives of Greanici. The phrase ‘*le parole volano*’ (the words fly) denotes the constant preoccupation of one’s reputation that can be harmed by words. Di Bella (1980:612) makes an interesting argument when contextualising the notion of the phrase ‘*la sanguinità cammina*’ (the blood walks) against the Sicilian cultural background. She notes that one’s reputation is considered as inherited in a biological mode through the blood, in the same manner that one’s reputation is ‘transported’ through word of mouth. Therefore a mother who is considered of having a bad reputation bequeaths this negative attribute to her daughter. In a similar manner a father bequeaths to his son his bad or good reputation. Greanici are indeed deeply concerned about their own and their kin’s reputation since the reputation of the kin group is reflected in individuals and visa-versa.

As many ethnographers of the Mediterranean have pointed out (du Boulay 1974, Schneider and Schneider 1976, Di Bella 1980, Dubisch 1986, Gilmore 1987, Zinovieff 1991) words which are transported or transformed through gossip create a sense of community as open-ended. Actors thus exchange words consciously preoccupied in protecting, constructing or subverting other people’s reputations. Gilmore (1987) for one, documents the devastating effects of gossip on people’s reputations in Andalusia. Pervasive gossip as it may be, one must always keep in mind that “community is as much a forum of gossip and the generation of stigma as it is about communication and respect” (Edwards and Strathern 2000:151). Greanici construct a strong sense of belonging by reckoning their membership in a wider kin-web. Whilst they are indeed affected by negative gossip this can be rectified by ‘positive’ gossip that stands in favour of the individual. Taking care of one’s kin then, involves a constant tension to protect and construct familial reputation and status.
The economic administration of the house is considered a female responsibility. My female informants are responsible for running the household as efficiently as possible and for this reason they have direct access to the family’s bank accounts. This gives them the opportunity to budget the money according to the family’s needs, pay the bills and save money for unforeseen occasions. These obligations derive mainly from the prominent position that Grecanici women assume in their homes. Unlike the Neapolitan women discussed by Goddard (1996:184-5), in the presence of guests my female informants do not remain silent. They perform their duties as mistresses of the house but they have an opinion which is considered valuable by the rest of the family. This is in direct contradiction to what is publicly preached by some of the male Grecanici who insist on the operation of the patriarchal family; the man is the ‘capo famiglia’, the head of the family. As one of my best informants argues: “I am the head of my family. In my house everybody is following my orders”. In a way of rhetorical auto-celebration most of my male informants of the first and second generation in Reggio would argue that their families are patriarchal. This mostly relates to particular concepts of honour that are cultivated amongst these generations and pertain to a successful familial representation. The head of the family, it is argued, “has the chance to establish himself as a good and rich man – to make alliances, to pursue the interest of his family, to establish his own reputation – from which may occur further advantage” (Davis 1977:179).

Elvira and Bruno are a young couple of 39 and 44 respectively with two teenage sons. Bruno works for the Comunità Montana, whilst Elvira works for the province in the Sportello Linguistico. She is very active politically and despite the fact that she encounters serious health problems she manages to counterbalance the work outside and inside the house. Elvira has literally shouldered the task to emotionally support not only Bruno who as a character

91 In the context of Belmonte de los Caballeros, Spain, Lisón-Tolosana notes that the female “holds the keys of the cupboard in which the money is kept, she disposes of the family wealth”. They have the responsibility to administer the husband’s earnings appropriately and purchase the necessities for the upkeep of the home (1966:148).
is very introverted, with disastrous results for his health, but also her children and her two sisters who experience various financial, personal and health problems. Every time I visit them Elvira is always in the best mood, happy and humorous and never gives me the impression of experiencing various serious problems. One day she confides her problems to me, which I already knew from other sources. She explained that if she collapses nobody can boost her family to go on. “Both Bruno and I know very well that I am the wheel of the family. I have my obligations towards all of them and that’s why I need to rectify my case [she refers to a serious condition in her womb] as soon as possible”. Similarly to Elena’s case as described by Kirtsoglou (2004:104), Elvira strives to keep the morals of her family high and “to safeguard the household’s prosperity and prestige” (ibid.:107, also Theodosopoulos 1999). Because Elvira is a woman of high value she enjoys a collective recognition and respect as being the ‘head’ of her family.

The preoccupation of women with the economic administration of the household has been documented by various ethnographers of Italy (Minicucci 1994, Goddard 1996, Pardo 1996), and accords with the assumptions of a certain level of capacity that women ‘possess’ in order to deal with certain issues in the best possible way. In the Greco-ni context female actors are considered as ‘endowed’ with specific qualities that make them capable household administrators. A female actor is presumably more furba (canny, implying more effective in ‘lifemanship’) than the male. In discourse, the term furbo/a does not acquire negative connotations. As Davis (1969) notes, furbizia/furberia is a positive aspect that shows the actors’ craft in effectively managing difficult situations in life. In a similar vein Schneider and Schneider argue that in Sicily the term is ambivalent in the sense that despite its not so positive connotations (people mistrust the furbo/a) it denotes a capacity for plotting successful strategies (1976:83).

Despite further ethnographic substantiation that highlights the central role of women in the family (Goddard 1996, Ginsborg 2001:76-77), the stereotypical idea of the patriarchal family is a concept that is reworked both from within and outside South Italy. It further feeds the wider stereotype of a divided Italy.
between backward Southerners and progressive/modern Northerners. Gribaudi, when interviewing southern students in the University of Naples, found that generalised assumptions ranging from the type of familial organisation to the powerful southern woman and inheritance equality to be particularly mythologised, circumvented and “rooted in the naturalness of common opinion” (1996:84). As has been argued, stereotypical images are concerned with an alterity inherent in the self and for this reason are never static (Kirtsoglou and Sistani 2003). Ethnographic representations about patriarchy are built upon previous material related to concepts such as ‘amoral familism’ (Banfield 1958) and ‘excessive individualism’ which Tullio-Altan claims to be the menace of modern Italy (2000). As Gribaudi rightly argues the North/South cultural categorisation fosters deeper political and economic interests and has provided “an ideal vehicle for rekindling conflicts and channelling hatreds” (1996:85). Assumptions concerning the Grecanici patriarchy are mostly associated with a romanticised notion of tradition as this is promoted by the Grecaniche cultural associations. In the majority of the Grecanici textual representations, patriarchy, precisely because it is associated with the ‘pure’ pre-Reggio Grecanici past, is endowed with positive almost biblical notions of living in the Garden of Eden.

Part two: Spatial organisation and Concepts of space

The way we were

The common rural Calabrian house exhibits architectural similarities throughout the region and it is built of materials dictated by the local geology. Exception to this rule is present within the Greek and Albanian minorities whose extensive use of symbolic carvings on the fronts of their houses makes them partially dissimilar to the rest of the Calabrian stereotype\(^\text{92}\) (Faeta 1984, Guidoni 1984:11, Meligrana 1984). According to Meligrana, the most diffused

\(^{92}\) The elaborate carvings on houses in Bova, as well as the phallic anthropomorphic symbols which appear on the walls of some of the houses of Falconara Albanese, are only some of the architectonic reflections of diverse local designs (Guidoni 1984). Falconara Albanese constitutes an Albanian linguistic minority in Calabria (cf. De Santis 1971:322 in Lombardi Satriani 1971).
dwelling form in Tropea consists of two levels and is of square or rectangular shape while in Bova, Gasponi, Drapia, Brattirò, Spilinga, Lampazzone and Zaccanopoli there are also three storey dwellings (1984:101). The houses of the area Grecanica are usually two storey dwellings\(^93\). The first floor is usually used as a storage room, while the next floors are designed to accommodate the needs of the family. The *focolare* (fireplace) in the kitchen is not only used for the preparation of the meals but also keeps the room warm and thus makes it perfect for familial gatherings and further socialisation. The kitchen in Grecanici villages is a multifunctional room in terms of the use of space where people cook, eat, sleep and socialise.

The contrast between rural residence patterns in the area Grecanica and present urban patterns in the quartieri (neighborhoods) that the Grecanici inhabit in Reggio, and more predominantly in San Giorgio extra, merits special attention for it is clearly as much as a context of change as of continuity. The majority of my informants live in multi-generational families who occupy a whole *palazzo*. This pattern is common not only amongst the Grecanici that inhabit Ravagnese, Sbarre, Gebbione and San Giorgio extra, but amongst the majority of the populations that migrated internally to Reggio from the nearby areas during the 1950s and 1960s. Residential patterns are to be most easily observed in San Giorgio extra for two main reasons: Firstly, the quartiere represents the centre of socialisation for the Grecanici that live in adjacent quarters who on an almost daily basis visit relatives and friends. Secondly, it is a conglomeration of the Grecanici who originate from various Grecanici villages, despite previous variations in familial organisation (inheritance and dowry patterns) in their villages of origin, in Reggio they follow a common pattern. Out of the 84 Grecanici extended families that live in San Giorgio extra, 73 have managed to build a palazzo while only 11 have not. The families who managed to build are in the majority people who migrated to Europe. The families who do not own a palazzo are either very poor or one parent families. The palazzo is basically a block of flats occupied by the elderly parents and the children of their children. Every flat is occupied

\(^93\) As an exception to the rule is Bova with a great number of three storey dwellings (palazzi) around the central square of the village.
by a *nucleo familiare* with the elderly parents inhabiting the first floor for reasons of ‘necessity and control’, because “*we are too old for all these steps and we have a good idea of what is going on in the house*”. The concept of ‘nucleo familiare’ in the Grecanici context need not be conflated with the anthropological term ‘nuclear family’. As Sciama notes in relation to Burano the term nucleo familiare denotes the ‘household’ in conventional anthropological terms, whilst the term famiglia designates the nuclear family but sometimes implicitly refers to units of three generations (2003:20). In Grecanici context, when the term nucleo familiare is evoked in conversations, it refers to the household and denotes the economic and moral entanglement of people who live under the same roof. It is not strange that the term is employed by the third and fourth generation of the Grecanici combined in discussion with the English term ‘privacy’\(^94\). Yet, the term that is employed by the subjects in order to account for extended kinship and household is ‘famiglia’.

The *palazzi* (plural of palazzo) are usually comprised of four to five floors. The number of the floors is mainly dictated by the number of children that every family has to provide for. Additional floors may be constructed – usually for renting purposes. A large proportion of the Grecanici who had emigrated to Switzerland have since resided in San Giorgio extra and built a palazzo there. After working hard for several years they are proud to exhibit their modern palazzi which can effectively accommodate their children and their children’s children. Other old couples of the first generation who migrated to Reggio, after having lived for many years in other adjacent quartieri are finally residing in the palazzi that they were gradually building in San Giorgio extra.

In the Italian literature, the discussion that pertains to the organisation of housing in extended families or nuclear arrangements is vast. Previous understandings that related nuclearisation with the impact of industrialisation have shifted to the opposite extreme: that industrialisation provoked an

\(^94\) The term ‘privacy’ is used by the younger actors in English and not translated in Italian.

Another factor that is closely connected with the nuclear family is neolocality. Neolocality is documented in Zaccanopoli (Tropea) where ideally every new family lives in a different home as a common pattern of family organisation (Minicuci 1984). Minicuci here appears more concerned with the symbolic dimensions of the ‘house’ and its further ideological implications. She contrasts la casa natale (the house of birth) with la casa sognata (the dream house) in order to account for a ‘history of the house’, its use and functions along with its transformations in Zaccanopoli. Living in a separate house further accords with the ‘progressive’ views that the Zaccanopolesi cultivate in relation to the economic administration of the family. Extended family organisation, when it exists, is viewed as a ‘situation anomalous’ reflecting old ideologies of familial economic organisation with the father being the head of the family. This congregation of ‘consanguines’ or ‘kin’ refers to ‘clan’ type familial organisation (Minicuci 1984:158, footnote 14) that means the “solidarity of a group of people closely related to the head, living under the same roof perhaps in several domestic units but working as one productive unit” (Davis 1977:173). When the Grecanici use the term ‘clan’, it is employed to denote the ‘family’.

Additionally, the ideological juxtaposition of ‘la casa natale’ and ‘la casa sognata’, Minicuci argues, “reflects the profound contrast between diverse images and life aspects of the urban reality of which the tension between ‘reason’ and ‘pride’ becomes deeper” (1984:143). Neolocality then, in the context of Zaccanopoli, is more likely to reflect the independence of older schemata of economic endo-familial subordination as the case of the clan-type conglomeration indicates. Subsequently, la casa natale is the beloved house which in relation to the past signifies the identity of both the individual and the family in relation to the community. La casa sognata, comes to embody the amelioration of life and the dream of a better and more beautiful house according to the evolving needs of the Zaccanopolesi (Ibid.:154). This house, especially in relation to the villette (detached houses), introduces new
elements concerning housing organisation and thus paves the way to “consanguine and kin aggregations”. The house becomes a symbol of social status, which reflects a successful professional and economic situation (ibid.:157). In the same line of thought, Pitkin argues that the extended house that ‘Giacomo built’ in order to accommodate his children should be understood in the context of the economic rationales of the post-war economic boom. He maintains that “the close connection between the working-class family and the forces of production is in turn linked to changes in expectations of consumption” due to new demands that the exposure to market relations creates’ (1999:21).

Bell, in his discussion of familial organisation in Rogliano, argues that “la famiglia is a flexible process that facilitates joint living arrangements whenever these appear useful. In the scattered outlying houses of Rogliano as late as 1951 and in the village of Albareto especially when emigration rates fluctuated greatly, more than one married couple and their children often shared the same house. It was functional to do so” (Bell 1979:109, 112). The functional aspect of living in close proximity with one’s kin is also documented by Pardo in Naples. He noticed that “as local people prefer to stay in the quarter, joint households are sometimes a necessary arrangement; particularly in the form of co-residence of nuclear families linked by kinship ties” (1996:96). Sciama also documented that while living in extended families was a common pattern in Burano during 1920, at present it is more preferable for “related nuclear families to live in close proximity” (2003:77). Douglass in his study in Agnone points out that, “the joint-family household was perceived by the actors themselves to be the basic social unit of Agnone society” (1991:286), irrespective of social class (Douglass 1980:343-348).

In Montecastello, as Silverman notes, a town house may be occupied by a single family or may be divided into apartments occupied by other nuclear families (1975:20), while it is not unusual that some farmhouses are clustered together or that a single house is divided for two families (ibid.:23). Silverman distinguishes the ideal household which according to her informants is the
three generation family\textsuperscript{95} with the ideologically supported home which is the nuclear family. Silverman maintains that “the family types existing at any given time are best regarded not as “regular” or “deviant” in relation to an ideal, but rather as alternative outcomes of certain principles that guide residence decisions” (Silverman 1975:180-81, Sciama 2003:76-85). Silverman is right to make a clear distinction between ideologically or ideally preferred family types with the families that actors for various reasons create. When asked, the Grecanici would readily identify neolocal and nuclear arrangements – in conventional anthropological terms – as the ideal type of family organisation of their villages before the migration to Reggio. As one of my informants has put it: “the couple needed space away from the parents”. In reality though, the majority of the familial arrangements were far from nuclear. The morality of Grecanici kinship and further inheritance rules were contradicting possible ideals regarding nuclear arrangements. The primogeniture (daughter/son in various Grecanici villages) would inherit the parental house and the responsibility to take care of the parents. This arrangement then would never be perfectly nuclear. Other cases would include an unmarried brother or sister who would never be left to live alone. In fact the constant movement of my informants back and forth from their villages of origins for various motives, where they become active members of another household besides their own, poses the need for a further problematisation of the notion of the family itself. As it will become apparent later on, Grecanici understandings of family allows for the conceptualisation of households as familial constitutive moral parts rather than physical entities. Similarly, Lineton (1971) argues that Maniot households are ‘potential households’ in the sense that they are fluid in terms of member composition. Despite the fact that members are in a constant movement in and out of the Maniot household, they recognise their moral obligations and the subsequent economic ones towards each other. Placing emphasis on the fluid nature of the household, Lineton wishes to question “the possible misleading nature of the standard categories which anthropologists are apt to use” (Davis 1977:174).

\textsuperscript{95} For the oscillation between the ‘ideal’ and ‘feasible’ housing organisation in the villages of Luco and Trasacco in the region of Abruzzo, see also White 1980:156-7.
Concepts of Space

Meligrana (1984) maintains that the distinction between a peasant and a noble house is ever present in the Calabrian imagery. “It could be argued” he states, “that the peasant house is the point of a symbolic departure … is the annulled point, dialectically connected with the search for another status or a different situation” (1984:108). On the contrary, the *palazzo signorile* (senior or ‘noble’ house) “with its special architecture and its different levels materialises the social stratification of the community. The peasants ‘climb’ on the *palazzo signorile* and this has a symbolic as well as a real dimension. It marks the point of arrival, a higher social status and a possible life without obligation for hard work” (ibid.:109). Meligrana argues that the peasant/noble house distinction reflects further deep-rooted peasant/patron and slavery/authority dichotomies that are present in Calabrian narratives (ibid.:108). Polarities like the above, on the bases of power, Pardo argues, are not so clear in the urban environment “where relations of power may be unbalanced” since “urban life makes more immediate what is latent in rural settings” (1996:165). Pardo draws on Martin (1977:163) in order to emphasise that the “issue of power is too complex and multifaceted to be addressed in polarized terms, even those – however dialectic and complex – of hegemony and subalternity. Coercive elements may still exist but exchange relations appear more symmetrical and well balanced” (1996:165). Grecanici palazzi are demarcations of familial status and power. By examining the palazzi as particular kinship arrangements I would like to account for specific notions of privateness and publicness as they are understood by the actors.

Giovanni’s palazzo is the typical Grecanici house in San Giorgio extra, comprising of five floors – two occupied by the married daughters, one destined to the younger son, one spare floor and the ground floor occupied by Giovanni and Elisabetta. Every time I visit them we stay in the kitchen, sit down around the table and they offer me coffee, homemade liqueurs or other alcoholic beverages (beer, wine or grappa) usually all of them successively. The kitchen is very big, as is the kitchen table. I need to mention here that I never came across a small or medium-sized kitchen table despite the size of
the kitchen. In Greconici daily lives the kitchen table for practical and social reasons appears to be “the most important item of furnishing … where all formal gestures of hospitality are performed” (Hirschon 1993:77). In some rare cases where the kitchen is really small, the large table restricts any movement around it but it is considered as an indicator of the family’s socialisation and therefore “the bigger the better”. Similar to my own, Hirschon’s informants ask; “how can you receive people into your house without it (the table)?” (ibid.:77). Likewise in the case of Maria, as described by Pitkin, the centrality of the kitchen table symbolises the control of the purse and hence the control over the economic resources of the family (1999:289).

Any analysis of the kitchen cannot be understood separately from the symbolic analysis of the household space (Douglas 1972, Bourdieu 1973, Ardener 1993, Moore 1996, Donnan 1997) exemplified in Bourdieu’s work on the Kabyle house. According to Bourdieu, the Kabyle house is the embodiment of opposing, albeit complementary, dyadic constitutives that “organise and order both the conceptual and the spatial domains of the Berber world” (Moore 1996:83). More specifically when discussing Bourdieu’s dyadic contrasts, Moore argues that an analysis of this type fails to “enquire into the economic and social conditions which produce those oppositions and contrasts” (ibid.:83). Moore attempted to transcend the problem of intentionality inherent in the structural analyses of the household. She follows thus a midway path that pertains to both meaning and the strategic intentions of social actors. She claims that “meanings are not inherent in the organisation of domestic space, but must be invoked through the activities of social actors” (ibid.:10). Furthermore social actors are also “in the position to choose how to invoke and reinterpret those meanings through their actions” (ibid.:85).

In the Mediterranean literature the kitchen has been mainly theorised in terms of gender as a primarily female space of action and part of a symbolic order that pertains to daily activities (Lisón-Tolosana 1966, Hirschon 1993, Sciama 1993)96. This association of women with the household and the private sphere,

Rosaldo and Lamphere argue, is the outcome of an emphasis placed on the maternal role that “leads to a universal opposition between domestic and public roles that is necessarily asymmetrical” (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974:10). Moreover, the confinement of genders in asymmetrical roles that are associated with specific domains entails further asymmetry in terms of power and agency (Pitt-Rivers 1954, Peristiany 1965).

The descriptive and analytical value of the private/public domain opposition has been questioned by Sciama who argues that:

Ethnographers have frequently reported, sexual divisions in the use of the house, temple village or city space generally corresponds to different conceptions of the moral natures of men and women. Spatial arrangements of the house compound, therefore, often carry great symbolic significance, as do other spatial distinctions studied by anthropologists, such as those between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, the neighbourhood and the village, or the village and the bush (1993:89-90).

This mainly pertains, Sciama continues, to cross-cultural generalisations of the private/public analytic categories and negative attachments to them (ibid.:89).

Hirschon attempts to transcend dualistic oppositions that would narrow her spatial analysis of the refugee houses in Kokkinia, Athens. With reference to the kitchen, she notes, that the use of ‘the movable chair’, bridges the ‘house’ and the ‘road’; the inside of the house with the outside. In Hirschon’s case the discussion relates to spatial arrangements which further account for gendered arrangements and more specifically the “cultural notions related to the family as a unit and to the woman’s role within it” (1993:76). For example she maintains that the fundamental spatial dichotomy of house/road is mediated by two ‘marginal agents’ that are the kitchen and the movable chair (ibid.:71). Furthermore the women as described by Hirschon transcend the nature/culture dichotomy in the Levi-Staussuan sense because “it is the woman who, in dealing with the raw “natural” substances of the ‘outside’ world, acts as the agent in the cultural process” (ibid.:76). Through acts such as cooking and receiving guests in, the kitchen becomes the ‘zone of transition’ between inside and out, nature and culture, and thus the crossing of the threshold between these two worlds (ibid.).
A Greccanici kitchen is a constantly transformable place subjected to the intentions of the family as well as a forum for politicisation. It is not only used as the main space for familiar gatherings but also brings the outside of the house in, in the sense that a constant movement of people is taking place in the kitchen. Most of the serious discussions are held in the kitchen where ‘knowledge’ and information are ‘exchanging hands’. In this sense a kitchen is as much about the private as about the public. During the 1945 upheavals in central Italy (Tuscany, Umbria and parts of Emilia and the Marches) regarding the struggle to modify the relationships between landlords and peasants, the most important meetings of the unionists took place in the farmhouses. As one of the trade unionists recalls:

In one of those houses’ great kitchens … you had the whole family there: the young, the women, the heads of family, the other members. In such meetings there was more active participation and discussion from these junior elements of the family. You have to remember that at the time there was a lot of timidity around, with the exception of the cleverer ones or those most involved politically. So this type of meeting made for a more democratic form of participation because it was traditional, because it corresponded to their way of being together, it was theirs, in a word it was in casa (De Simonis 1986 in Ginsborg 1990:108).

“Far from the public and the private being rigidly separated” Ginsborg argues, “the very organisation of protest and the exposition of politics took place within the home, with whole families listening and participating” (1990:108).

From the preceding theoretical discussion I opted to show that fixed dichotomies of the public/domestic type cannot always account for the actor’s conceptions of what constitutes the public and what the private. As Goddard notes (2000:17) we need to understand that the terms private and public are better conceptualised “as ideological constructs that define spaces, activities and persons in differing ways. The meaning and significance of actions and spaces need to be contextualised and we should not underestimate the capacity of agents to redefine and/or undermine such boundaries and distinctions”. I will thus offer my ethnographic examples in order to account for particular notions of privateness and publicness, instead of locating my actors in public and/or domestic domains.
Visiting friends and/or relatives is on the daily agenda of my informants. Most of the time people – usually men – arrive in other peoples' houses uninvited. These men are mainly relatives or very close friends. The upheaval that especially Grecanici men create on their entrance does not bother the patrona (mistress) of the house. In a very short visit the patrona offers coffee (what is known as espresso) in very small white plastic cups. In the case of a prolonged visit the guest is treated with more coffee – on request – or grappa (Italian arack) or homemade limoncello (a type of liqueur made from lemons), beer or whisky. Guests can be offered a variety of alcoholic drinks without exhibiting any signs of being drunk. Women usually do not indulge in ‘hard’ spirits such as grappa and whisky. It is more likely that in a domestic visit a woman will ask for a limoncello or another type of homemade liqueur.

Visiting unexpectedly denotes the close relationship that is shared between guests and hosts. The kitchen during these visits loses any gendered and spatial connotations. In this sense the kitchen much resembles the multifunctional ‘porxo’ where the daily family life of the inhabitants of Formentana is carried on. The ‘porxo’ is a transformable place according to gender, social and familial needs. Above all it is the symbol of the family’s life “equally for what it concealed as for what it allowed visitors to see”. It serves simultaneously as a closed and open space which accounts for both the family’s value and social communication (Bestard-Camps 1991:126-7). The Grecanici kitchen then is frequently transformed during the day according to who is using it and the nature of that use. The kitchen space becomes public in

97 When visiting the Grecanici villages with my informants, I have noticed that not only people appear in the houses uninvited, but also they just knock on the door and after having asked for permesso (permission) enter the kitchen without having waited for an answer. Kitchen doors in the Grecanici villages are constantly open (during winter as well) and a constant movement of people (usually men) into and out of the kitchen transforms the space constantly. Goddard (1996) notes that migrant women in the quartieri of Naples try to partially re-create their past lives by leaving their house doors open thus opting for people to enter the house uninvited. In this ethnographic case the women – who have been mainly theorised in the Italian literature as subjects of the house – opt for the creation of spaces that are transcendable. Furthermore I would argue that if women were indeed ‘of the house’, by leaving their house door open they were bringing the public in, thus acting themselves as mediators who successfully transcend socially imposed spatial demarcations. This in itself constitutes another “familial paradox of privacy” (Orfali, Saraceno, Weber-Kellermann, May 1991).
conventional terms when it is intentionally treated as such – it becomes a forum for public debate.

The *ambasciata* (transport of important messages) immediately transforms the kitchen from a private to a public space. The ambasciata presupposes a one-to-one discussion between the host and the guest who brings the ambasciata. They must also perform a formal linguistic introduction before entering into further discussions. First a formal and polite invitation addressing the host must be made. More specifically the guest is using the *Voi* ('you' in plural) when addressing the patron of the house and asks for his *bontà* (kindness) for a requested conversation.

- *Col permesso degli amici e con la vostra bontà ho una mbasciata per voi* (with the friends’ permission and your kindness, I have an ambasciata for you).

The patron must also address the people present and ask for their excuse/forgiveness for the interruption.

- *Date mi permesso* (give me permission).

The people present respond

- *Permesso accordato* (permission is granted).

With the re-entrance of the patron of the house he says to his friends

- *Scusatemi* (excuse me).

And they respond

- *E di che cosa cumpare?* (what for cumpare [Godfather]?)
The formality of the above conversation indicates the publicness of the kitchen. Before entering into a conversation the two people must withdraw into another room which indicates the privateness of both the space and the dialogue performed. In this case we have multiple entries of publicness and privateness within the home which transcend any notions of physical space. “Boundaries can be moved, institutions overlap the private and public, and there are a variety of factors which define a situation as either public or private. These factors can be social, spatial or metaphysical” (York 1997:215). If the ambasciata transforms the public into private and vice-versa within the spatial demarcations of the house, then a one-to-one conversation may transform a public into private space.

In the case of a one-to-one discussion, two people who up to a point may be part of a larger group in the central piazza for example, may detach themselves from the group. They may sit near the rest of the people or stroll for a while in a nearby road. They still remain in public sight and up to an extent they are still part of the former larger group. Yet, what is created by the presence of two people together, their one-to-one discussion and the fact that the rest of the group will not jump into their conversation, is a private space within a public one. A collective understanding and sharing of privateness that accounts for these types of conversations renders them at once visibly private within the public space.

We follow then a series of spatial transformations. In the first place the kitchen becomes a public space where knowledge and information are circulated between hosts and guests. For the needs of the ambasciata people withdraw from the kitchen seeking a ‘private’ place within the house for their conversation. In this case it is indeed the meaning of the conversation that renders the space private. Meaning and intention thus mediate public and private spaces and engender them. They transcend them from actual physical and spatial entities to meaningful entities where the intentions of the actors for privateness and publicness are manifested.
Palazzi and Palazzi

The apartments in the palazzi are regularly comprised of three bedrooms, a kitchen-diner, a huge parlour and two bathrooms. In the big bathroom occasionally there is a jacuzzi. The parlour is a very big room heavily furnished with separate three and two-seater sofas and an armchair on the one side of the room, a large dinner table to accommodate eight to ten people and a sideboard with a grand curved mirror, which come as a set with the dinner table. The curtains are most commonly made from silk or sometimes good quality cotton. Modern chandeliers are used to light the room while expensive carpets are ‘thrown’ on the floor. However luxurious the parlour may be, it is rarely used apart from familial gatherings such as ‘name-days’ and more prominent religious celebrations. Its purpose is explained by the actors as “this is what modern houses have”. A more careful inspection though, will reveal that the image of the family is played out in the display of this room (Silverman 1975:20), for its real purpose is to reflect the modern ‘vision’ of the proprietors that keeps them in line with the rest of the Reggini, as well as demonstrating the economic status of the family which elevates them above the Reggini98. Thus ‘traditional’ objects that resonate back to the life in the village are absent from the Grecanici parlours. Pictures of dead ancestors and close relatives as well as religious icons and crucifixes are displayed in the kitchen and most preferably in the bedrooms. The main argument of my informants revolves around the ‘need for adaptation to the city life’ and that “dobbiamo andare avanti” (we must go on). This appears to directly contrast the ‘pro-tradition’ and ‘pro-value’ representational Grecanici life that is proposed by the Grecaniche cultural associations. In the studies published by the associations, an uncritical image of the Grecanici as ‘stubbornly clinging to traditional life’ renders them living artefacts.

Socialising in the kitchen is not a uniquely Grecanici daily practice, the majority of my Reggini informants use their kitchens as the principal room for socialisation. Only the people who belong to a higher social and economic

98 In relation to the functioning of material artefacts as the social stage upon which social structure can be played out see Weiner and Schneider 1989, Weiner 1992, Douglas 1999.
status have received me in their parlour, where familial affluence cannot only be displayed, but lived. These parlours, unlike in the Grecanici houses, usually are tangible indicators of the history of the family for they comprise elements such as antiques, rare jewellery and coins endowed with memories and feelings, partial recreators of the family’s past life (Sutton 1998, Seremetakis 1991: 215-217, Kirtsoglou 2004: 84, 97). Photos of politicians of past epochs are displayed on the walls and a library with rare and expensive books usually dominates the room. The furnishing is usually handcrafted with elaborate carvings and the upholstery is velvet. A combination of silk and velvet curtains and multiple expensive Persian carpets are atmospherically lit with the aid of heavy antique chandeliers. In these parlours, intense political discussions mingle with the smoke of the finest cigars.

**Neighbourhood identification**

As has already been noted, Grecanici residential patterns in the quarters under study (Sbarre, Gebbione, Ravagnese and San Giorgio extra) were initially dictated by economics and kinship. Especially San Giorgio extra is the geographical conglomeration of people from the villages of the area Grecanica who are related through vincoli (ties/bonds/restrain) of blood, and spiritual kinship (*Comparato* or predominantly *Sangiovanni*). As a result, the neighbourhood is comprised of palazzi which belong to first degree relatives and their extended families. The streets in the quartiere are narrow while large palazzi on either side make the streets feel even narrower. The piazza in San Giorgio extra represents the symbolic passage into the quartiere where the homonymous church of San Giorgio (Saint George) is built. Opposite the church there is a small haberdashery as well as a bar. Due to the fact that the piazza, the haberdashery and bar form the main triangle for socialisation, hardly anybody – on foot or by car – can pass without being noticed.

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100 An extended version of this section has been published in *History and Anthropology, 2010, Vol. 21, No. 1.* under the title ‘Urbanities: Grecanici migration to the city of Reggio Calabria, South Italy’.
Belmonte describes his neighbourhood of Fontana del Re as the ‘defended
neighbourhood’. Neighbour interaction, Belmonte argues, is based on
“territorial limits, loyalties and ritual modes expressing local solidarity”
(1979:41). San Giorgio extra, similar to Fontana del Re, provides sanctuary
and social security to the Grecanici who claim that they feel happier and more
secure in the territorial limits of their quartiere. These positive feelings for
one’s quartiere have also been documented by Jenkins (2002). In his
discussion of Sicilian identity Jenkins builds upon previous understandings of
belonging (cf. Cohen 1985) in order to argue that the neighbourhood “conjures
up positive, warm images of inclusion, mutuality and security” (2002:118).

In the piazza there are four benches which accommodate the men of the
neighbourhood, more seldom the women who visit the church and
occasionally the curious anthropologist. Despite the fact that the space of
men’s socialisation is actually the churchyard, men do not visit the church to
light a candle or attend the liturgy apart from the Saint’s celebration day. To
go to the church is considered a female task (cf. Dubisch 1995:210-211) and
thus my male informants are absent from the everyday liturgies. The religious
environment does not inhibit the men from being boisterous and rowdy. They
argue with each other, about politics and football, gossip and enjoy each others
company. When it rains, they gather in Carmela’s bar despite the fact that both
Carmela and Elisabetta (Carmela’s daughter) “sono piperedde” (literally they
have pepper in the tongue, implying that they are sharp gossipers).

Familial competition is apparent in San Giorgio extra for every family
competes with relatives in terms of economic affluence which is exhibited in
material possessions. As Sebastiano has put it “if my neighbour has a house
with three rooms, I must have one with four. If he has an expensive car, I must
have a more expensive one”. The role of women in this economic competition
is paramount since according to many of my male informants they are the
drive behind the current increasingly better economic conditions of their
households (cf. Kertzer and Hogan 1989:20). Even though these initiatives are
mostly grounded on the basis of female invidia (jealousy) their positive effects
are widely recognised by my male informants.
The political language employed by most of my informants when describing San Giorgio extra is mainly spatial. The space itself is very ambivalent. It has been created recently, at the end of the 1950s, when the first families migrated from the villages of the area Grecanica to Reggio and during an era when no strict building regulations applied. The space is characterised by the ‘vertical’ representation of kinship in architectural terms and the partial re-creation of village life – socialising in front of the church and in the local bar – within the spatial limits of the quartiere.

San Giorgio extra is also called San Giorgio moenia which from Latin translates as ‘outside the walls’. In the local perception ‘vivere fuori le mura’ (to live outside the walls) accords to the attitude of negation and conformity to the social rules, thus the Grecanici of San Giorgio extra are collectively considered as the outcasts and rebels. These perceptions are equally shared between Reggini and the Grecanici. Most of my informants are proud of being Gallicianesi, Rochudioti, Bovesiani, contadini (peasants), to name but a few, and not Reggini. Assumptions like this not only reflect ideological separations between cittadino (citizen) and contadino (peasant), city and countryside, but they echo pre-urban ideologies of the eighteenth century (Woolf 1979:284).

In the eighteenth century, Woolf maintains that;

the urban centres of Italy were ‘closed’ cities, usually surrounded by walls. The walls, constructed and often expanded in the communal, seigniorial and Spanish period, served a fiscal rather than a military purpose by the eighteenth century, facilitating the exaction of customs duties on goods entering and leaving the gates. But they also acted as a clear demarcation line between the cities and the countryside. The cities were consciously and deliberately closed in upon themselves. The walls might (and usually did) include unbuilt areas, often intensively cultivated, but above all they acted as a visible boundary, within which space could be planned according to aesthetic criteria, food supplies ensured, public order policed and vagabondage excluded (1979:284).

A closer relationship between the city and the countryside was encouraged during the French occupation which for most parts of Italy gave the opportunity for the urban bourgeoisies to establish their role in economy and politics. The most remote and provincial towns were hardly touched by the
new urban ideologies, which eventually could alter rooted assumptions regarding the countryside (ibid.: 284-5, cf. Kertzer and Hogan 1989:25 concerning the impact on the city of Bologna).

According to Gaetano, an intellectual and resident of San Giorgio extra (not of Grecoanico origin) “San Giorgio extra is divided between the people who live ‘inside the walls’ – the Reggini – and the people who live ‘outside the walls’ – the Grecoanici. The Grecoanici residents of San Giorgio extra are fearsome, usually delinquents and they are implicated in the ‘Ndrangheta”. I can not help but note the astonishing similarity between Gaetano’s and Lombroso’s (1980) argument. According to Lombroso the Greeks of Calabria exhibit specific physiological and social characteristics: they are of medium height, fearsome, stubborn, wild at heart and spirit and with a passion for dominance. Similarly to conflicting Grecoanici assumptions regarding their Greek inheritance of grandezza (grandiloquence) as well as their rhetoric of being victimised by the Reggini citizens, Reggini intellectuals alike shape their assumptions regarding the Grecoanici upon the influence of pre-existing intellectual ideas. Lombroso is only one example of the intellectuals that have explicitly influenced local assumptions regarding one’s origin. Yet again, this is another example which substantiates the argument that literature and specific assumptions regarding identity are shaped in a dialectical fashion (Arpaia 2002).

The present ideological separation that demarques the different status accorded to geographical delineations – albeit metaphorical – is also shared among the Grecoanici who do not reside in San Giorgio extra. Giuseppe, Antonio and Patrizia (residents of Gebbione) claim that they share a more pro-Reggina identity, thus are more ‘urban, open, modern and progressive’. They are proud to be somewhat free from the traditional familial oppression, the over-excessive gossip and the obligations posed by the parentela (kinship). For them the mere geographical separation emphasises their distance from the paddhechi and their ‘elevation’ to the social status of the Reggino. They do not closely socialise with their cousins who live in other parts of Reggio, instead their social ‘circle’ is comprised of Reggini. The three of them belong
to the third generation of the Grecanici in Reggio and they are married to people of non-Grecanico origin. Those unions did not occur unproblematically. Antonio cannot forget the threats of his mother, warning him that his marriage will fail because his wife-to-be is a Reggina and therefore a second rate woman, dirty and without morals. Giuseppe, who is a professor of mathematics was also instructed by his mother not only to choose “one of us” but also a woman of a profession similar to his. His mother’s argument could not be clearer; “I did not put all this economic effort to make you important for nothing”. As ‘nothing’ she is implying the marriage to an unemployed outsider.

Patrizia was seriously threatened by her father, that he would not speak to her again upon her marriage with a forestiero (‘stranger’, but here meaning ‘outsider’). After eight years of marriage her father is still bitter about her choice. Patrizia’s husband is a bank administrator with a high salary, one house in his name (the house that he was given by his parents as an *inter vivos* gift) and two cars (one his and one for Patrizia). He originates from a village close to Reggio and his family is well respected by friends and relatives. Despite all these apparent positive assets, he is considered by Patrizia’s father as a non suitable son-in-law on the premise that he is not a relative.

In these cases notions of pollution (Douglas 1966) as well as economic status interrelate in an indistinguishable manner. These perceptions of inclusion and exclusion of course are not relevant to the actors’ existing social and economic status and are dialectically shaped by it. In other words Patrizia’s and Antonio’s parents pose a cultural argument while dismissing an economic one, partly because they are both of a high economic status. Giuseppe’s mother on the other hand, who is a widow, emphasises equally the cultural and economic factors of the future bride.

Giuseppe, Antonio and Patrizia do not socialise with each other despite the fact that they are related through kinship ties and live within close proximity to each other. Their parents live in San Giorgio extra and, especially in the case of Patrizia, “they feel very bitter with the fact that I married a stranger”.
Yet, Patrizia maintains, “the things I was trying to escape from, turned against me because my husband’s family is really traditional (implying peasants from another rural area)”. Patrizia allocates a lot of her daily time to ‘transporting’ her mother-in-law by car to her obligations. Even though their relationship is not the ‘warmest’ in the world, Patrizia is very serious about her practical obligations towards her in-laws.

Giuseppe, Antonio and Patrizia, openly express their admiration for their parents’ determination “to live according to their traditions”. They also admire their parents for being so close to each other and for sharing this “special community”. The three of them allocate a considerable amount of their weekly time to their parents who live in San Giorgio extra. They are informed of the latest gossip, and participate in all family events: baptisms, christenings, funerals, traditional holidays and communal village patron Saints’ celebrations (cf. Pardo 1996:98). They also claim a part of their parents assets – namely the one flat originally built for them in the family’s palazzo.

Further claims of avoiding neighbourhood identification with San Giorgio extra are premised on the notion of ‘backwardness’. Elisabetta, for example, was born in one of the villages of the area Grecanica, is living in Sbarre and enjoys a high profile life after her marriage to a local politician. Her main argument is that the Grecanici of Reggio still operate as a tribu (tribe) because they still favour endogamy and exhibit a chiusura (closing, locking). Luigi, on the other hand, is of Grecanico origin and was born and raised in San Giorgio extra, counter argues that Grecanici have been incorporated into the society of Reggio without losing their distinctive identity. Luigi is a lecturer in an American university and lives part time in Reggio. His family owns a mansion in San Giorgio extra where his widowed mother lives together with two immigrant Romanians who help her. Despite the fact that Luigi’s mother is still a very active patrona of their estate, Luigi strives to find a university job close to Reggio – in Messina or Cosenza. In our discussions he expresses his feelings of solidarity for the rest of his neighbours with whom he grew up but he carefully maintains his distance from them by emphasising the fact that he is a lecturer and a part-time San Giorgio extra citizen.
Similar to Luigi, Diego maintains his distance from the Grecanici identity by putting forwards arguments of ‘backwardness’ and emphasises the fact of his professional occupation and place of residence (in the historical centre) as the main arguments for his non-Grecanici identification. He is a distinguished doctor of medicine and politician and cannot afford to be associated with ‘negative’ stereotypes. He claims that I, for my part, should not “frequent specific people for their connection with the 'Ndrangheta and under no circumstances to contact N., P., and A. for they are the most horrific among the Grecanici”. Yet, according to some other sources Diego allegedly often facilitates prisoners with medical certificates helping them get out of jail. At this point I would definitely agree with Pardo that a stance of ‘discernment’ (1996:ch.4.) is frequently adopted by the Grecanici who are considered of a higher social status.

**In Conclusion**

According to Kertzer, a “people’s sense of community and neighbourhood identification in southern Italy is subject to conflicting forces” (1983:68). In Reggio Calabria, the geographical division of the city into *quartieri* remains a significant basis for social identification due to the existence of strong stereotypical assumptions relating to diverse local areas\(^{101}\). The movement of different populations with distinct local identities over the past decades, all within the same urban area, has created the basis for new intra-local political and social possibilities. After almost 70 years since their initial settlement in San Giorgio extra (and to a lesser extent Sbarre, Gebbione and Ravagnese), the quartiere is still widely acknowledged – and to a wider extent stigmatised – as the quartiere of the *paddhechi*\(^{102}\). Despite the fact that many of the Grecanici – both men and women – are politically prominent and the considerable economic affluence that most of the Grecanici families in Reggio

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\(^{101}\) Hirschon in her study in Kokkinia – an urban neighbourhood in Piraeus – also accounts for the prevalence of specific regional characteristics in the construction of collective stereotypes (1989:68).

\(^{102}\) The case of Palio is a striking example of the issue of social organisation and neighborhood identification (Dundes and Falassi 1975).
enjoy, are still considered to a wide extent by their Reggini co-citizens as of lower social status.

The Grecanici inhabitants of San Giorgio extra for their part, appear reluctant to socialise in the more central places like the via Marina or the Corso Garibaldi which are considered as the focal points of local Reggina life. They attribute this negation to the fact that they are psychologically and socially secure in their environment and put forward narratives of discrimination against them by the locals (see also Goddard 1996:76 for a similar ethnographic case). This has resulted in a double negation on both sides. The Grecanici do not trust the Reggini who are considered to be ‘two faced’, ‘stupid’ and ‘dirty both in their houses and in their hearts’. “If they do not want us, we do not want them either”. Despite the fact that the Grecanici and Reggini co-exist and collaborate in their political environments, they carefully cultivate a social distance from each other. When deeper forms of relatedness exist between the two, this is the result of a sharing of common histories that are forged over long periods of time.

Local chauvinism is paramount in San Giorgio extra also because the Grecanici have selectively recreated in the quartiere parts of their lives back in the village. Even though the place of origin still remains a huge influential factor in social identity, the fact that people from different villages have resided in one quartiere has created a different dynamic in the city. In the wider perception of the citizens of Reggio, the paddhechi are no longer of distinctive social origins but they are homogenously acknowledged as the Grecanici with all the paraphernalia that this representation entails. While kinship organisation is the principle motive of familial organisation among the Grecanici of Reggio, community ties are weaker outside of the geographical territory of San Giorgio extra as well as among non-permanent residents. Putting forward social arguments that comply with present social positions, the Grecanici who reside in Gebbione, Sbarre and other quarters adjacent to

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103 The attempt to create a sense of continuity between past and present conditions of residence has also been documented by Goddard. When the women of the bassi moved to the new suburbs of Naples with their families they aspired to re-create the conditions of the bassi for the creation of new social networks (Goddard 1996:75).
San Giorgio extra, adopt a stance of discernment towards their co-patriots thus complying with an ethos of different degrees of urbanisation. Community ties in San Giorgio extra, on the other hand, are the direct outcome of strong kinship relationships that “organise space and resources” (Goddard 1996:75).

The Grecanici in Reggio are organised in extended households that usually accommodate three generations. Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga (1999:3) in their edited volume regarding ‘Space, Place and Family in Europe’, have placed the family and the household in one and the same discourse. In the context of the Grecanici, and I would argue the same for the rest of society in Reggio, these entities do not clash but they are not used interchangeably. As I have demonstrated, more than one household may constitute parts of the same family, “the boundaries of the nuclear family households were not nearly so impermeable … and kin often flowed in and out, as the need arose” (Kertzer 1991:168). Furthermore, when actors mention the term ‘nucleo familiare’, this is to denote the coexistence of people under the same roof without precluding relatives that may live with the couple. The term that the Grecanici explicitly use in order to denote their kinship, is ‘family’. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I am reluctant to equate ‘household’ with ‘family’. Family and kinship in Italy, as in many other Mediterranean contexts, “are as much questions of morality and values (as Fortes has suggested) as property relations, as Leach has asserted for another part of the world” (Sant Cassia and Bada 1992:16). Thus the palazzi that the Grecanici have built in Reggio in order to accommodate their children and their children’s children are ‘architectonic’ representations of kinship. Additionally, they are social and spatial demarcations of familial status and economic affluence and their form came as an epiphenomenon in relation to wider urban economic, social and kinship discourses.

104 Here I use the term architectonic in the same sense that Moore uses it in order to indicate that “the movement from one context to another is symptomatic of a wider change in social relations” (1996:80).
Chapter Six: The Messy Realities of Kinship

So far I have discussed what is considered as conventional kinship organisation among the Grecanici, based predominantly on biological facts and the sharing of a common bodily substance – the ‘same blood’. The Grecanici learn from an early age to depend on and care for their kin and their social and psychological point of reference is their relatives. Along these lines of relatedness further relationships are pursued, the cultivation of which generate equally important kin-like arrangements. In this chapter I will concentrate on amicizia (friendship) and comparatico (Godparenthood), or predominantly Sangiovanni as my informants refer to it, in order to account for kinship-like arrangements, relationships that are not based on biology but which create equally strong ties between the related parties. Alongside amicizia and Sangiovanni I have also encountered the notion of relatedness through ‘the milk’. Fratelli di latte (brothers of milk) is a notion that has been mentioned to me by some of my informants. The same notion exists in other parts of Calabria (cf. Minicuci 1994) as well as central Italy (cf. Romanucci-Ross 1991) and refers to people who are not biological brothers but are considered as such because they were fed by the milk of the same woman. I recognise the importance of such a mode of relatedness, yet I have decided not to treat it at length due to the fact that only two of my informants could account for relations based on such an arrangement. On the other hand, Sangiovanni and amicizia are prevalent in Grecanici culture. I will show that such relatedness is a powerful means for the Grecanici to create kin-like relations when these do not exist in conventional terms. In their desire to create new relations and strengthen those that already exist, the Grecanici readily transform conventional kinship into non-conventional and vice-versa.

Who is the relative?

In his discussion on American kinship, Schneider has distinguished between relatives of ‘nature’ that share biological heredity and relatives of law that are ‘legally’ bound (1980:27). It is the attribution of meaning to cultural
constructs, Schneider argues, that transforms the biological facts into a model of ‘commitment’ that is responsible for the social solidarity and endurance of kinship relations (Schneider 1980:116). Similar to what Schneider has argued with regards to American kinship, at first glance at least, GrecoNic kinship presupposes a ‘natural’, biological basis which determines who constitutes a relative and who does not. However a distinction between the relatives of nature and the relatives of law, as suggested by Schneider, is difficult to apply here. Kinship endogamy, which permits unions between first – parallel or cross – cousins, has meant that kin groupings in the GrecoNic territories have varying degrees of tighter or looser biological ties. GrecoNic kinship appears inherently tied to biology yet the ethics that are entailed from other various arrangements of relatedness provoke a scrutiny of what is construed as ‘biological’ and what is ‘social’. Kinship arrangements that privilege the positive significance of emotionally and morally binding effects (Macfarlane 1986, 1987) are considered by the GrecoNic as equally important as the kinship arrangements that are based on biology.

Previous understandings of kinship organisation based on a strict separation between nature and culture has led to the assumption that only non-western cultures are marked by kinship systems with blurred lines between the two (Strathern 1992a, 2001, Carsten 1995a, 1997, 2000a, 2004). Yet, as Carsten has argued “in the Western contexts, where we might most expect to find sharp distinctions between ‘social’ and ‘biological’ kinship, these boundaries often seem irrelevant, blurred, or difficult to ascertain” (Carsten 2004:29). Moving from context to context, there is a profound ambiguity as far as contextual valorisations of the various kinship arrangements are concerned (Just 1991:131-132, Kirtsoglou 2004:68). Furthermore, various arrangements that are kinship-like are mediated by “oscillating appeals to biological and cultural codes of relations by the various actors involved” (Howell 2001:204). These arrangements are characterised by various degrees of ‘handled’ ambivalence and tolerance which in the end permit the actors to consciously “negotiate a fine balancing act between biological and social accounts in which they undermine the paradoxes” (Howell 2001:204, Thompson 2001).
**Contextualisation of friendship in ethnographic studies**

The discussion of friendship amongst the Grecanici refers predominantly to any long-term relationship that is imbued with emotions of love, devotion and respect. People who grow up together irrespective of social status and economic affluence may create a meaningful relationship. Special emphasis is placed on childhood as a magic context where true relationships are shaped. Hierarchy and socially asymmetrical status are no hindrance to the creation of friendships. To be sure, the Grecanici value their friendships as social bonds mediated by experience and common histories. Both sexes emphasise sociality and the sharing of time as important factors in the establishment of any meaningful friendship. Both sexes engage in meaningful, albeit performatively different, friendships.

In the Mediterranean ethnographic context there has clearly been more emphasis placed on the study of male friendship. It is my understanding that this is the methodological outcome of the fact that male friendships are easier to observe; it is the ethnographic appreciation that men are ‘publicly visible’, and spend more time on socialisation outside the home.

**Gendered accounts of relatedness – Female friendships**

Friendships amongst the first generation Grecanici women that moved to Reggio at the end of the 1950s are mostly realised within their kin. Female kin who live in the same palazzo usually socialise in the yard of the palazzo where other women from adjacent palazzi often gather in order to gossip and escape domestic boredom. My female informants of this generation are very careful when they discuss issues of relatedness. Whilst they admit that they enjoy their socialisation with the same sex kin members and other neighbours, they do not readily identify these relations as friendships. This is predominantly a linguistic ‘avoidance’ of the term. These women discuss their relationships in terms of trust, cooperation, reservation and respect and the term ‘amicizia’ (friendship) is more readily used by the women of the second and third generation.
Older women cultivate amongst them a strong sense of antagonism which is materialised in gossip and *invidia* (envy). Any further thought of creating a relationship with a non-kin was usually dismissed. The women often put forward a social argument contextualised within the ‘hostile’ social conditions of Reggio during the late 1950s where “no non-kin was to be trusted”.

Maria remembers that she was 17 when her parents came to Reggio. “I did not go to the Liceo [lyceum] because my family wanted me to marry Fillipo. Immediately after the marriage I got pregnant. Where to find time for friends and who to trust? I was afraid that other women from Reggio who were living in the same block of flats in Sbarre would make fun of me. I was the peasant and they were Reggini [implying a social status higher to hers]”. From Maria’s testimony, time and trust arise as two fundamental explanatory reasons as to why her generation did not make friends outside the kin group. Especially after marriage women were so tied to their domestic obligations that they were restricted in creating any friendships that would oblige them to socialise away from the house and with non-kin. Maria’s experience is paradigmatic of the nature of friendship due to geographical mobility. As various studies of displacement have demonstrated, conflict, social exclusion and the trauma of transition are experienced differently by successive generations of immigrants (Loizos 1981, Hirschon 1989, 2004, Cohen 1997). Especially in studies that discuss the rural-urban migration and the massive movement of populations to the economic and administrative centres of Europe after the Second World War (Kertzer and Hogan 1989), the profile of the peasant was always negatively contrasted against the one of the citizen (cf. Lisón-Tolosana 1966:16-17, Silverman 1975:107, Colclough 1992:44). The spectre of social uneasiness looms in almost all the narratives regarding the first years of settlement in Reggio at the end of 1950s. From this period onwards, a dense kin network has provided women like Maria with a ‘social space’ to counterbalance the ‘hostile’ urban environment of Reggio. She learned from a practical point of view that a female kin member can become friend-like, one that could listen and provide help with utilitarian matters because they were all united under the same social conditions. In these
conditions trust mediates the kinship connection in order not to abolish it but rather to reinforce it by adding the social element of friendship-like relationships.

The experience of friendship among women of the second and third generation Greancici in Reggio is very different. These friendships are not restricted to the household environment or the kin group. They are rather the outcome of women experiencing higher education and pursuing jobs in the public sector of Reggio (yet it must be noted that female friendship between kin is still considered as the ‘safer’ option). Relatedness in these contexts is expressed in kinship terms. A female friend (kin or non-kin) is considered as sorella (sister). Similar expressions of friendship in terms of biology are also documented in France and Greece. In France the kinship idiom of cousin is often chosen to express friendship (Bourdieu 1972 in Reed-Danahay 1999:152, Kettering 1992, Reed-Danahay 1999); in Greece the term adherfia (brothers) is often employed (Just 2000:181). “Kinship terms such as theios or barba, ‘uncle’; theia, ‘aunt’; papous, ‘grandfather’ are systematically extended to particular unrelated individuals with whom the speaker comes into frequent contact” (Kenna 1976:360). When established and galvanised in time, a friendship may last for a very long time, even for a lifetime. Possible reasons that could provoke the dissolution of the relationship pertain to moral and physical discourses of harm.

Elvira, for example, is in her late forties and unmarried. She has two sisters both married in Reggio, one with a Reggino and one with a man of Grencanico origin. Elvira’s parents have both passed away. Elvira has inherited an apartment in Reggio and the paternal house in a Greancici village. She is working for the provincia during the winter and a tourist orientated cooperativa (co-operative) back in her village during the summer, when she is released from her contract with the province. Elvira has a university degree and she is interested in politics. She has an array of very close friends, two of whom are her two sisters. The other two women with whom she has built friendships are both from Reggio and she met them both almost ten years ago. Both Elvira’s friends are university educated with well paid jobs, their own
apartments in Reggio and cars. According to Elvira both her sisters and her friends have helped her at crucial times when she has had medical as well as financial problems. She claims that the four women are her family. Due to the fact that both her friends are unmarried, the three women enjoy each others company almost every day that Elvira goes to Reggio. Every time that I visited Elvira, I experienced her friends constantly coming and going from the apartment. Once, the situation was so exaggerated that Elvira decided to put her mobile phone on ‘silent’ in order to find some ‘peace’ for our discussions.

From the above case it becomes clear that Elvira experiences friendship as “an idiom that often accomplishes roles typically performed by consanguineal kinship” (Kirtsoglou 2004:63). What is important though is that in her case biological kinship and friendship do not clash or stand in opposition. They are equal in effect and “ought to be treated not as a substitute that stands in opposition to, but rather as a continuance of institutionalised, biological family” (Kirtsoglou 2004:63, also Weston 1991, 1997). Friendship in this context is the result of a “fine balancing between emotion and practicality where friendship and biological kinship are not clearly differentiated” (Kirtsoglou 2004:65, also Bell and Coleman 1999:6).

Furthermore, gender studies like that of Kennedy (1986) and Uhl (1991) have highlighted the veiled and secretive character of female friendships. Women as presented by the ethnographers above value and cultivate their relationships as ‘hidden’ from the society based on different physiological, social and economic motives. Elvira’s friendships are realised outside the household and are easily observable because Elvira is not a married woman and thus she has more time to be ‘publicly’ visible. I must also note that Elvira is one of the few Grecanici women of such an age that, due to being tied to education and politics and because of some past broken relationships, has avoided marriage altogether. Married women in their mid-forties enjoy each other’s company equally outside and inside the home and draw their friends from both kin and non-kin environments.
With reference to her work in an Andalusian (southern Spain) town, Uhl (1991) argues that south European literature has mainly concentrated on the issue of male friendship while female friendship has been severely ignored. Similar to the material I have presented above, female friendship is ethnographically portrayed as ‘of the house’ (Chapman 1971:125, Silverman 1975:208, Cronin 1977:83). Uhl challenges the widely held assumption that women in southern Europe do not have friends by arguing that women solve their need for friendship “through a process of cognitively and behaviourally veiling friendship in domesticity”. These friendships are realised within a social space that involves the women’s households. A dense network of household-based female friendships “imperceptible in public contexts” (1991:92) stresses the importance of these relations throughout the town (1991:101-2). I certainly agree with Uhl that the amount of literature on female friendship in a south European context is considerably small compared to the material that covers male friendships. However, I do not believe that this is the result of any sort of conspiracy – albeit unintentional – “between anthropologists and informants to portray friendship as public, male, and important, while minimizing or denying the existence of adult female friendship” (Uhl 1991:92). More recent gender studies, like Kirtsoglou’s (2004), set in Greece, locate the con-figuration of female friendship in the multiplicity of cultural roles that are performatively expected by the modern Greek female subject. In this sense, Kirtsoglou’s subjects are ‘of the house’ as well as ‘of the world’.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that the ‘problem’ of the mis-portrayal of female friendship rests on the ethnographic conceptualisation of friendship as ‘one-dimensional’. In other words it is the assumption that there can exist only ‘one’ kind of friendship invested with the same qualities and experienced in the same way – not only by both sexes but by people of different origins, ages and political agendas. For example, Greceanici women of the first generation in Reggio endow their friend-like relations with a more practical sense than women of the second and third generations who appear to stress the emotional aspect of their relationships. Of course one needs to keep in mind that the views of the actors were shaped in specific socio-historic conditions and thus
the way they choose to talk, or not talk, about their relationships as well as how they categorise such relationships will differ (cf. Carrier 1999). Contextually variable concepts of personhood result in different appreciations of relatedness – friendship included. If we treat relatedness amongst Grecanici women “as a multivalent context with historicity and cultural depth” (Kirtsoglou 2004:63), then I would argue that we definitely cannot account for a one-dimensional model of female or male friendship. Furthermore, locking male and female identities in one-dimensional gendered representations “offers limited opportunities for dialogical autonomy and empowerment” (Seremetakis 1991:222). With the ethnographic appreciation of various identity contexts one can safely argue that gender roles seem more flexible and divergent (Dubisch 1986), hence proving that “many of the gender-related beliefs are categories that stand for and symbolise rather than define the nature of their subjects” (Kirtsoglou 2004:110).

**Gendered accounts of relatedness – Male friendships**

Male friendship in the Mediterranean literature has usually been theorised in terms of politics or economics and been analysed in terms of an emotionality/instrumentality dichotomy. The majority of these studies describe friendship as opposed to kinship (Herzfeld 1976 in Papataxiarchis 1991:161, Olson 1982, Papataxiarchis 1991:161), as a “countervailing force … that can at best provide emotional release and catharsis from the strains and pressures of role-playing” (Wolf 1966:11); “as a haven of egalitarianism, as an autonomous basis of personhood, and in effect, as a sentimental alternative to maternal love and the amity of kinship” (Papataxiarchis 1991:158).

Wolf has argued that non-kin ties “are the product of social synchronisation achieved in the course of socialisation. The private relation of trust may thus be translated into cooperation in the public realm” (1966:9). He goes on to emphasise the “clear balance of gains and costs” that are entailed in a non-kin tie. He further distinguishes between what he calls “expressive or emotional friendship” and “instrumental friendship” (ibid.:10). Most of the Mediterranean ethnographers tend to agree with Brandes (1973) that when a
friendship can no longer be instrumental it ceases to exist. Furthermore, friendship is analysed as a contractual dyadic model (Foster 1961) between people who exchange services and goods (Galt 1973). In his discussion of Pantelleria – a south Italian island – Galt maintains that “people become friends and maintain friendships through the exchange of services or goods such as small gifts or even small loans. Social organisation outside the nuclear family is a network of such exchange relationships” (1973:327).

The Grecanici pose a clear distinction between amicizie e ‘amicizie’ (friendships and ‘friendships’) implying that not all the relationships that are called friendships are ‘true’ and of the same value and depth. Friendships that are formulated solely on the basis of exchanging services and/or goods, as the actors understand them, are to be respected but they do not constitute true friendships. These relations are colloquially described as political or economic coalitions of a utilitarian nature. When actors say that “here we are all amici” they are conscious of the ambivalence of the term. As we shall see soon enough, ‘amicizia’ is invested with moral qualities that are highly binding. In this manner any purely utilitarian relation does not acquire negative connotations because the term that describes it is primarily invested with qualities embedded in the amizicia di cuore (friendship of the heart). In this respect I agree with Wolf’s initial distinction between emotional and instrumental friendships (1966:10). An instrumental friendship in the Grecanici context may be of short or long term but it is not the result of shared experience, love and common history; its utilitarian notion is consciously accepted and recognised as such. Furthermore a utilitarian relationship also lacks a kin-like quality and a morality that is embedded in the Grecanici kinship system. My informants point to these utilitarian friendships as necessary and important if one wants to safely ‘walk in the world of politics’.

As has been mentioned above, most Mediterraneanists discuss friendship as the opposite of kinship. Biological kinship in the Grecanici lives is not restrictive in the creation of strong ‘true’ friendships. The Grecanici learn from a very early age to depend on and care for their kin. They also recognise a morality embedded in their kinship system and, despite the severe conflicts of
interest that sometimes result in fatal ruptures, they manage to carry on with their relationships precisely due to their kinship morality. The Grecanici generally pool their friends from the kin group and these friendships are mediated by various degrees of ‘handled’ ambivalence as to their nature. The way my informants practice and live their friendships between kin is a process of balance between what is considered as biological and what is defined as social. The initial biological bond mediated by processes of time and shared experience is de-biologised in order to become re-biologised eventually. This is most evident in contexts where relatives refer to the quality of the relationship with their kin not as one of kinship but as one of friendship. “We are more than relatives, we are friends” it is usually said, in order to contextually privilege friendship over the kin relation. The opposite happens when a friendship between non-kin is translated into one of biological kinship. Terms that are indicative of biological categories of fratello (brother) and sorella (sister) are thus employed as binding qualities of kinship in a non-kin relation.

Grecanici friendships can be highly asymmetrical or purely egalitarian. Social status and clearly demarcated hierarchical positions – as in the case of the ‘Ndrangheta – are not restrictive to the creation and nurturing of ‘friendships of the heart’. Saverio for example, is a successful politician and aged 52. He is a member of the provincial council. One of his most beloved friends is his paternal first cousin, Enzo, who is working as a self-employed builder. Enzo is not educated, nor does he enjoy the social status of Saverio’s family. Saverio’s father migrated to Reggio after the Second World War and was married to a woman who originated from a very influential family in the city. Enzo’s family on the other hand is of low economic status but they are highly respected by their kin and by friends. Both men meet each other on an almost daily basis in one of the central bars in Reggio. They confide in each other their anxieties and they always manage to effectively help each other in critical situations. Their seemingly asymmetrical relationship does not really affect their dispositions towards each other. Saverio does not feel that he can offer more to Enzo because of his involvement in politics. On the contrary, due to Enzo’s highly dense networking of effective and affective relations,
Saverio is very much benefited by their friendship. One may expect that Saverio, being a politician, could offer more – in terms of connections and patronage – to his friend. Yet, in the Grecanici context, visible power and social or economic position are not necessarily equitable for both men operate as patrons and clients to each other. It also becomes clear that instrumentalism is a necessary corollary of ‘friendship of the heart’. One cannot claim friendship without being able to demonstrate it with actions.

I find it thus essential to further examine particular concepts of instrumentalism, morality and love as they are articulated and manifested by the Grecanici. In this sense, terms such as onore (honour), reputazione (reputation) and amore (love) are analysed as constitutive of wider moral taxonomies understood in the local context. These taxonomies “have to do with the public evaluation of behaviour, with degrees of conformity to a social code, rather than with hypothetical inner states” (Herzfeld 1980:341). By examining how instrumentalism is perceived amongst my informants I would like to sketch an outline of the morality of Grecanici kinship. The morality of caring for one’s kin and friends incorporates otherwise instrumental manifestations. In that sense one cares for one’s friends on multiple levels. The material cannot be distinguished from the emotional. Friendships which are considered as invested with emotions of deep love, respect and devotion are tested in practice. When one cannot prove with actions that s/he cares for the friend then emotions are seriously disputed. Whilst in his ethnographic study of friendship in Mouria, Greece, Papataxiarchis notes that his informants hold a concept that “devalues the instrumental side when it exaggerates the emotional” (Papataxiarchis 1991:161), the Grecanici do not separate the two for they perceive them as non-oppositional. The morality that is embedded in friendship allows for emotional, practical, hierarchical and egalitarian notions to coexist. Grecanici cherish their friendships precisely because they are the fruit of choice. In the case that genuine friends fall out, a wall of hatred is often erected between the two. The following case is one of love and hate between ex-friends.
Brothers at odds

Lorenzo and Diego are cousins and grew up together in the same village. At the end of the 1950s they came to Reggio to attend the liceo with the further aim to attend the university. They were both perceived as youths of ‘great expectations’ and indeed they both flew high in their academic lives. After finishing university they became members of the first Grecanico cultural association, destined to promote linguistic as well as ethnic issues regarding the Grecanici of the Reggio district. Both men where fond of each other and despite already being relatives they were calling each other ‘brother’. Furthermore, they were supporting each other in every possible matter. Yet, after almost 40 years of devoted friendship they fell out. The consequences were bad. Lorenzo’s wounded feelings turned him into an animal every time the name of Diego was mentioned. “I was his soldier and he was my commandant. I respected, admired and loved him devotedly. I won all the battles for him. Until he started messing around with the power we had as an association and ignoring me. He wanted to gather all the power in his name. That did not bother me because he was always my leader. But gradually I started feeling betrayed. He had changed, he was not the same person I grew up with. Until I found out that he was preparing a big job without me. That was it. He had completely bypassed me and erased me as a friend”.

During my fieldwork I experienced this battle on every possible level – from the micro-level informal conversations between kin, to the macro-level public displays of conflict through the local newspapers. Since they are both distinguished figures amongst the Grecanici who deal with ‘cultural issues’, they were further fighting at the national level; when they were invited to Greece as cultural representatives.

On one occasion they were both asked to participate in a European Union and provincial sponsored Grecanico course, which Lorenzo initially refused to take part in. That was a strategic move, knowing very well that the organisers needed his presence on the course. After playing hard-to-get for the first few days, Lorenzo issued an ultimatum to the organisers for his participation. He
demanded three times more money than Diego, who had already signed up for the job. After his demands had been satisfied he approached one of his best friends, a lecturer at the University of Messina, in order to help him prepare his tutorials for the course. As a consequence of his friend’s assistance, Lorenzo’s tutorials were a huge success and he was highly praised by both students and colleagues. Diego’s reputation as the ‘forefather’ of Grecanico culture was under serious threat. Two months after the completion of the course Lorenzo’s shop window was blown up. Lorenzo, accompanied by one of his best friends who is allegedly implicated with the ’Ndrangheta, has made exhaustive enquiries among the local ’Ndrangheta affiliates as to by whom and for what reason his shop was attacked. After three days of investigation the possibility of the attack having been instigated by the ’Ndrangheta was ruled out. Gathered in the kitchen of his first cousin, Maria, Lorenzo and his relatives try to recall any possible little details that could give them a clue as to who is the perpetrator. They discuss about the people’s invidia (envy) towards Lorenzo and how his reputazione (reputation), especially after the course, has reached higher levels. But who would want to harm this reputation? Invidia, Maria argues, is a strong motive for trying to inflict damage on the onore (honour) of another. After many days of long discussions with his relatives and friends Lorenzo reached the conclusion that it must be Diego behind all this. It is Diego, he insists, that was humiliated by Lorenzo’s initial veto of, and subsequent academic success in, the Grecanico course. This made Diego so invidioso (envious) that he would want to plot something like this to harm Lorenzo.

Obviously Lorenzo is not in the position to prove anything that could incriminate Diego. He is thus highly recommended to forget the story and pretend that nothing happened. This raccomandazione (recommendation in the sense of advice and warning) was given to Lorenzo by his older kin out of the fear of a possible vendetta that would unavoidably implicate the kin of the two men. Grecanici men are used to the practice of asking for advice. Chiedere consiglio (asking for advice) is a morally guided practice, one which regulates personal and collective interests. Consiglio provided by a person who is recognised as charismatic may culminate in immediate aggressive impulses
and feelings of wanting to cause destruction. The Carismatico (charismatic) is
a person whose life has been forged through ‘the fire of hell’. This individual
has managed to survive the cruel world of the malavita (underworld – in this
case meaning the bad life of the underworld). The malavita usually relates
to criminality and prison. Only a person who has managed to preserve his soul
after experiencing criminality and prison life can provide highly-respected advice.

The above raccomandazione was a carefully deliberated decision by Lorenzo’s
older kin, who acknowledged the powerful position of Diego. If Diego was
indeed in the position to pull off something like that ‘right under the
’Ndrangheta’s nose’, then it would be better not to mess around with him. It is
rumoured that Diego is not part of the ’Ndrangheta but instead he is a
powerful Mason with strong political links both inside and outside the Italian
Masonic lodges. Additionally, a possible feud between Diego and Lorenzo
would mean that common kin would have to choose sides and in this instance
that was not something that the Carismatico would like. Unlike similar cases,
when the kin would support a possible vendetta, in this case Lorenzo’s older
kin deemphasised the event by highlighting the ’Ndrangheta’s ignorance of the
event. If the local ’n’dranghetisti could not account for the perpetrator then
Lorenzo should humbly accept their deliberation and forget the whole thing. A
friend has already offered to fix the almost 4,000 Euros worth of damage to
Lorenzo’s shop ‘gratis’.

Familial conflict

When similar issues relating to conflicts between kin or kin-likes, are
discussed with my informants they all point out to me that when “so many
things are implicated in one relationship, it is expected that things like that
(fatal ruptures) happen very often”. They all highlight that when a deep
brother-like relationship endowed with love is ended it would often result in a
deep brother-like hatred. Violence then between brothers is as expected and
accepted as is love and co-operation. This is an old story, as Schwartz tells us
in her analysis of identity formation, “born in violence to the Bible” (1997:5).
Violence, she notes, is born within kinship and “structures of inheritance, descent and the conferral of symbolic property in the narrative are in the service of the system wherein identity is conferred at the cost of the (br)other”. Moreover the principle of scarcity regarding material resources that engenders violence seems to equally operate in the case of emotions (ibid.:80-1). Similar to Esau and Jacob who both fight for parental blessing, so too Grecanici brothers in Reggio as well as brothers and sisters in Andalusia. Gilmore notes:

Brothers and sisters are competitors … they fight for the family patrimony and the equally limited good of parental affection. No matter how tiny the material patrimony may be – a few acres of bottom land, a dilapidated townhouse – nevertheless such minor treasures mean the difference between a grinding, humiliating poverty and a relative luxury measured by degrees of simple security. And it is not just wealth that people are fighting for. They also fight for the status that wealth confers – the cherished esteem of the self in the eyes of the group. Kinship certainly softens competition and conflict, but it does not eliminate them. A common genealogy can in fact exacerbate tensions and lead to outright conflict (1987:46).

Thus aggression and conflict seem to be derivatives of powerful emotions of love, hatred and envy and are constitutive parts of the local moral systems of relatedness that effectively indicate contextual – individual and collective – cultural and political regulations and transformations (Piselli and Arrighi 1985). In relation to the morality embedded in kinship, Bloch has argued that it is analogous to the “degree of tolerance of imbalance in the reciprocal aspects of the relationship. The greater the degree of tolerance, the more the morality” (1973:77). In the case presented above, Diego and Lorenzo are constitutive parts of a hierarchical relation described in military terms. Lorenzo was the soldier and Diego the commandant. It appears that Lorenzo is aware of this asymmetrical relationship which does not seem to fundamentally bother him. As long as both men share the same feelings of love and respect, Lorenzo in his confrontation with Diego displays a high degree of tolerance of imbalance as far as material reciprocity is concerned. The problem starts with the emotional scarcity. What Lorenzo does not tolerate is an imbalance of values and emotions. Reciprocity in this case is a blurred territory that

105 Here I follow Gilmore who defined aggression as “any behaviour the goal of which is the inflicting of injury on some object or person … this hurtful behaviour may or may not be overt (either physical or oral). It may be implicit (in the case of thoughts, wishes, fantasies, or perverse advice or information intended to deceive or defame)” (1987:13).

106 Here I follow Simmel who sees conflict and integrating tendencies as mutually reinforcing (1955:142, 20, 62).
encompasses material and emotional ‘goods’ in an undistinguishable manner. When Diego fails to reciprocate Lorenzo’s emotions, Lorenzo feels betrayed and this constitutes the reason for his further allusion to Diego’s malice. It is Lorenzo’s wounded feelings that need to be retaliated against. Even though Lorenzo does not have firm evidence that the person who has harmed his reputation is Diego, he fashions a narrative aesthetic, whose “moral content undergoes constant revision and reinterpretation” (Herzfeld 1985:206) when contextualised against the Grecanici cultural background. Local aesthetics thus – expressed in moral terms – is perhaps as much “a style of presentation of the individual in interaction with others” (Sant Cassia 1991:8) as an interesting criss-crossing between what is considered as interest and what is valued as emotion. In his influential work on conflict, Simmel has identified familial conflict as a “type of its own” (1955:68). “It is the very intimacy of its common life” Simmel argues, “the social and economic interdependence, the somewhat violent presumption of its unity – all these give frictions, tensions, oppositions a strong chance to occur” (ibid). Both the deepest love and hatred seem to grow within the familial gulf. The conflict between Diego and Lorenzo is the broken outcome of a “premise of belonging together, of an external or internal, real or presumed claim to love, friendship, recognition, union of some sort” (ibid.:52 original emphasis).

If the above case is a case of love and hatred then the next case is definitely a case of deep love between the Grecanici and a Reggino. It highlights common upbringing as a fundamental factor for the creation of relatedness.

Giovanna was raised in San Giorgio extra, and she vividly remembers when the first generations of paddhechi came from their villages to settle down in Reggio. “For us those people were so different in terms of appearance and language. I remember that a family was living in a house with two rooms, attached to mine. I remember that for us they were our living theatre. We were watching them in their poor lives, speaking their strange language. When they realised that we were watching them, they were switching their language to something that did not resemble the Calabrian dialect – now I know that they were speaking in Grecanico. One day they had a quarrel. They started exiting
from that small house with the two rooms. But how many of them were there? Have you seen this advertisement for the small car where people keep coming out of the car without ending? It was something like that. Imagine the conditions of their living. My brother was very fond of the children of the family. They had the same age and he preferred to go and play with them. Even though my mother did not permit us to play with them, my brother managed to escape her attention all the time. He was spending a lot of time with the family. Practically he was raised with them. When he went to the university to become a medical doctor he left Reggio for some years. When he returned and even though our family has moved from San Giorgio extra, his first job was to visit the people he grew up with. They had all found out that he was studying to become a doctor. There is a system here in Italy. When you want to have a specific doctor you give him your ‘National Health’ number. When my brother visited them, even though he was just a student in the university and not a proper doctor, they collected all their medicine numbers to give them to him. They wanted him to be their doctor. They were very proud of him. He was one of them’.

During the discussion Giovanna’s husband who originates from a village of the area Grecanica remains silent. Whilst he has done considerable work collecting and publishing photographic material of the Grecanici villages, he fundamentally does not identify himself as a paesano (peasant) and he keeps his distance from the ‘Grecanici identity’. He was brought up in Reggio, educated in the local liceo and attended the University of Rome to become a chemist. His wife Giovanna comes from a wealthy and politically important family in Reggio. His links with his relatives are deliberately loose. Conversely, for his brother-in-law his high status family was not an obstacle for his realisation of a meaningful bond between him and the ‘peasants’ that he grew up with. This bond effectively lasted until the premature death of Giovanna’s brother ten years ago. A lot of my informants still mention his name with respect and love.
In the Grecanici conceptualisation and practice of friendship, instrumentality and emotion are equally emphasised and reinforce each other. Instrumentality is positively highlighted in the moral sense. When Grecanici say that “if I am not of use to my friend then who could be?” and “if I don’t go to my friend for help then to who could I go”, they clearly pose an understanding of morality in Bloch’s sense. They are profoundly moral because the observed degrees of tolerance do not only refer to reciprocal services, goods, and alliances but also to reciprocal feelings, respect and reputations as the following case highlights.

Caterina is 72 years old and she is currently living in the village. She has in her possession a considerable amount of buoni di lavoro – a particular type of shares from when her late husband was working in a factory in Switzerland. The shares are worth approximately 7,000 Euros. Due to the fact that these shares are quite old, Caterina is facing the daunting prospect of losing this money. For this reason she asked for the help of her cousin Antonio who is living in Reggio in order to find a solution to her problem. After having carefully considered the possibilities and having sought legal advice, Antonio concluded that legally at least these shares could not be exchanged. He then asked Caterina if she permitted him to utilise one of his best friends who is a broker – with a small commission of course. Without establishing exactly how small this ‘small commission’ would be Caterina gave the ‘okay’ to Antonio. Antonio immediately contacted Bruno and he explained the case. Bruno appeared thrilled with the prospect and he was willing to pull the strings – illegally – in order to successfully exchange the shares. However he demanded a commission of 3,000 Euros. Antonio protested that this money was too much, but Bruno argued that Caterina is an old woman; “how many years is she going to live?” and that “if we do not exchange the money then she will lose it all”. Bruno has also calculated as to how he could allocate the money of his commission. He is planning to give a considerable amount to one of his best friends – without the latter having any prior knowledge of Bruno’s intentions – on the grounds that “he has had financial difficulties recently and my heart aches to see him like that”.
In this case some points are of particular interest. First it becomes clear that a dense network between kin and non-kin effectively facilitates services and/or goods to be successfully exchanged between people who live outside the city (Kertzer and Hogan 1989:69) and otherwise lack access to legal or illegal mechanisms of resolving particular problems. As ethnographers such as Campbell (1964), Blok (1974), Silverman (1975), Schneider and Schneider (1976) and Pardo (1996) have pointed out, mediators were always acting as bridges between different geographical, cultural and political contexts. As patrons, or ‘friends of friends’ (Boissevin 1974), people in the ‘right place’ in Reggio Calabria who are able to successfully bypass the bureaucratic and labyrinthine mechanisms of the Italian state are highly appreciated.

Second, there is no clear distinction between instrumentality and emotion in the practice of friendship. When asked, the actors themselves portray a sense of morality embedded in their friendships which appears as constitutive of their long-term relationships. Bruno and Antonio call each other brothers and their friendship is driven by a kin-like morality. Following Bloch, who clearly suggests that “if informants stress the morality of kinship then this is what we must understand”, I would invert Pitt-Rivers’ assumption that “all friendship must be both sentimental in inspiration and instrumental in effects” (1973:97). In the case of the Grecanici I would argue that a friendship is effectively instrumental when it is emotional in its conceptualisation. Instrumentality then is a real test of emotional friendship. The Grecanici very eloquently and plainly argue that “if you cannot be of use to your friend you cannot effectively prove your emotions”. The economy of Grecanici friendship thus does not privilege emotionality over instrumentality or vice versa.

**God-parenthood: Sangiovanni**

God-parenthood in many Catholic Christian cultures designates “the particular complex of relationships set up between individuals primarily, though not always, through participation in the ritual of Catholic baptism” (Mintz and Wolf 1967:174). As an idiom of relatedness, God-parenthood has mainly been
theorised in relation to the notion of practicality that privileges instrumentalist relatedness. This view of relatedness – and more precisely the idea of what kinship does – is exceptional in the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1990). With reference to Mediterranean societies, Godparenthood is classed as spiritual kinship (kinship based outside of relatedness through blood) and is practiced with the aim to establish “some kind of link which will transform an otherwise impersonal confrontation into a personal relation” (Campbell 1964:218). Most studies have analysed the political and functional aspect of Godparenthood – that is the creation of strong links with people who are not consanguineal kin (Pitt-Rivers 1973).

In the pivotal works of Campbell, Wolf and Davis, to name but a few, Godparenthood is approached as an essentially dyadic contract of economic character between the sponsors of the child – in the case of baptism – or the bride and groom in the case of marriage “with little emotional warmth” (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991:20). Counter arguments obviously exist. Stirrat, in particular, when examining compadrazgo among the Catholic population of Sri Lanka, has argued that;

relationships set up through baptism and confirmation are almost entirely devoid of political and economic content. Sponsors are not thought of as patrons either of oneself or of one’s child. Neither are economic ties important. In practice and in theory the relationships are without instrumental content, and it would be difficult to reduce the principles defining the relationships of compadrazgo set to some sort of epiphenomena of more ‘real’ or more ‘important’ economic or political factors (1975:596).

In Zaccanopoli – though without generalisations concerning the rest of Calabria – Minicuci argues that the choice of God-parents is not made on an instrumentalist basis (Piselli 1987). The Zaccanopolesi choose their compari (plural of compare) outside of their family based on the respect that they cultivate for the individuals. Minicuci further argues that it is considered futile to look for alliances outside of the family and thus the comparatico does not offer the power relations embedded in family (1994:301-304).

In the previous chapter I have introduced Fortunata and Mario who, together with Fortunata’s brother Natino, live in Mario’s father’s palazzo in Reggio.
The three of them collaborate closely in terms of finance with Fortunata’s and Natino’s parents – Santina and Calogero – who live in the village. In addition there is another person, Angelo, 48, who is considered as another member of the family. Angelo’s late parents were compari with Santina and Calogero; the latter were Angelo’s God-parents. The two families had deep respect for one another, to the degree that according to Santina “the villagers were envious of us because we were collaborating so closely and effectively. We were respecting and loving each other deeply”. Before Angelo’s mother died she asked her comara, Santina, to protect her only son as if he were her own child: “From now on, pretend that you have another child amongst your children; my son”. Santina and Calogero have honoured their comara by giving her their “parola”. According to the Calabrian code of honour, “dare la parola” (give my word) was considered to be one of the most binding accords in peoples lives. As Herzfeld notes in relation to Peško and Glendi, logos (word) is as much as about verbal insurance as “control over the expectations which one creates about oneself” (1980:343).

I have experienced the arrangement presented above on many occasions. Angelo, who was in his forties when his mother died, is working for the province of Reggio and he was one of my best friends in the field. Every time that I visited him in his home in the village at the weekends he was eating with Santina and Calogero, Fortunata, Mario and Natino. I realised that he was actually eating with the family – twice a day – every time that he was residing in the village, especially during the summertime when he was released from his work in Reggio. I, on the other hand, as a personal friend of Angelo, was also eating with him in Santina’s house. For his part, Angelo takes care of Santina and Calogero in Fortunata and Natino’s absence. He is responsible for emergency transportations to hospital, for minor issues such as when the telephone does not work as well as taking Santina and Calogero on day-trips. He often takes them to various festivals of traditional music in Bova Marina or other seaside places, especially during the summer.

The links created by Sangiovanni (comparatico) between the Grecanici and between the Grecanici and non-Grecanici are of high importance, for they
establish precise and reciprocal obligations based on respect and solidarity between the parties involved. The *comparatico di battesimo* (baptismal sponsorship) is considered the most binding link between the *padrini/madrine* (God-fathers/God-mothers) and the child as well as between the God-fathers and parents of the child. The *comparatico di anello* (ring) refers to the sponsorship of the marriage, and despite being considered as less binding than the *comparatico di battesimo*, it is gaining in preference amongst the younger generations of the Grecanici. Usually the marriage sponsors are the couple’s best friends, but can also be the couple’s close relatives. Similarly to the context of Ascoli described by Romanucci-Ross, “putting a relative in a double-bond situation is considered strategically smart as well as emotionally satisfying, and it is somehow virtuous in the sense that it is a way of exalting the family” (1991:85). These compari are usually of similar age to the couple and they may be more than one in number.

As elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the links created with comparatico extend to the rest of the family members of the sponsored member and of the sponsor (cf. Campbell 1964, Kenna 1976, White 1980, du Boulay 1984, Romanucci-Ross 1991, Minicuci 1994, Just 2000). The term ‘compare’ is also used by the relatives of the people who have established Sangiovanni thus creating an extensive network of compari “*Il compare del mio compare è mio compare*” (“the compare of my compare is my compare”) is a saying among the politicians of Reggio which highlights and summarises the density of relatedness based on the compari networks. The Grecanici consider their compari as extensions of their consanguineal kin and treat them with the utmost respect. In the not so distant past when a man was passing outside of the house of his compare he would remove his hat as a sign of respect (see also Minicuci 1994:304). Further reciprocity – immediate or generalised – characterises the Sangiovanni links.

The case of Angelo, Santina and Calogero presented above can be further analysed on various levels. To begin with I am going to bring into consideration the moral obligations that padrinini/padrine assume towards the children. Apart from being present at the most important moments of the
child’s life (wedding engagement, marriage, university graduation or other ceremonies related to personal, academic or professional success) and the traditional gifts that they offer, the God-parents assume an intimate and dynamic role in the lives of the people with whom the relationship is created. For example, the two comare presented above, Santina and Angelo’s mother, facing the imminent death of Angelo’s mother and the daunting prospect of Angelo finding himself without parents, decide that after his mother’s death Santina will count Angelo as a child amongst her children. This is not in accordance with the logic of compadrazgo as presented by Pitt-Rivers (1976). He clearly states that “the godparent is not a surrogate for the parent, but only a substitute for him in the roles from which the parent is excluded on account of his physical and social paternity and where he must be replaced by his contrary” (1976:320). He then goes on to state that when God-parenthood and parenthood are used interchangeably (Anderson 1957) this refers “only to the sentiments which are thought proper in such a relationship, not to the rights and duties involved which are totally different (1976:320). Despite the fact that Angelo is a mature man – he was in his forties when his mother died – and economically independent, the prospect of being without immediate family is unwelcome. Santina and Calogero thus gave their word that they would assume the role of the parent in the event of the biological parent’s irreversible absence. ‘Dare la parola’ is a binding contract which legitimates claims and secures privileges. Angelo thus is promised a family and assumes the position of the biological child in Santina’s family. His privileges and obligations are in further accordance with the privileges and obligations of the rest of the family members and fall into the category of ‘caring for the kin’. This further relates to practical as well as emotional assistance. The idea of suitability of the God-parent is not reduced thus to sentiments that are thought proper for the relationship. Parents appear to be concerned about the well-being of their children in case of their own premature death.

In the beginning of this chapter I discussed female friendship and the various elaborations such relatedness assumes according to generation, age and professional status. I have argued that the Greccanici women usually choose their friends from among their kin and these relationships are endowed with
strong and indistinguishable notions of emotionality and practicality. As in the case of Santina and Angelo’s mother, the relationships between Grecanici comare are equally very strong. These relationships are best described in terms of friendship, love, respect, mutual trust and assistance. The comare usually live in close proximity to each other and are often linked through kinship ties. The women usually visit each other on an almost daily basis. They shop together in the local grocery shops and butcheries. Women who work outside of the house usually meet their comare in the local bars during their breaks or after work for a quick aperitif. Similar to the Grecanici women, comparatico offers the possibility for creating very strong links between Grecanici men. In the case of Giuseppe for example, when his comare fell terminally ill in Switzerland, Giuseppe flew there just to see his beloved comare for the last time. Despite living apart for many years, the two men deeply loved and respected each other. When his comare finally passed away, Giuseppe mourned for him in such an elaborate manner that it resembles the Maniat women studied by Seremetakis (cf. Seremetakis 1991). Giuseppe’s wife describes the scene as “him screaming and pulling his hair out, throwing himself on the floor and howling so passionately that I had to remove the child from the house”. In various contexts I have experienced Grecanici men with trembling voices on the telephone when sudden news referring to the health of their comare is relayed. As has been noted earlier, friendship is described in biological terms – specifically ‘brother’ and ‘sister’. Sangiovanni amongst the Grecanici is a highly significant and binding relationship, yet in its linguistic expression it is not conflated with biological kinship terms. Despite the absence of linguistic references to biological kinship terms, the bond between sponsored individuals and sponsors and their families is considered as ‘kin-like’, for Grecanici usually emphasise that “we love our compari as our relatives”.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that amicizia and Sangiovanni create very strong and binding forms of relatedness. When relationships are not biologically ascribed, they are created through amicizia and Sangiovanni. Existing biological kinship ties are otherwise reinforced through the aforementioned mediums of relatedness. I have conventionally described both amicizia and Sangiovanni as socially ascribed not because I wanted to maintain a line between socially and biologically produced relatedness. On the contrary, by exploring how the Grecanici live-out their relationships I opted for a clear idea of how ‘unclear’ it is to determine ethnographic ‘paradoxes’ of relatedness (Howell 2001, Thompson 2001) in ‘descriptions of social life’ (Strathern 1996). In the Grecanici context, biological relationships are articulated in terms of social relatedness and non-biological relationships are cultivated in a biological fashion. Family relationships are thus created based on the sharing of common values and morality, time, histories and social conditions. These relationships – far from perfect and harmonious – reveal a deep desire of belonging whose aesthetic expression and evaluation finds way through love and hatred, conflict and mediation.

Sangiovanni – as in the case of Santina and Angelo – indicates how messy Grecanici relatedness is. In linguistic terms Santina and Angelo address each other as compare/compara. This relationship, apart from the inscribed customary reciprocity, allows for a further enactment of parenthood from Santina’s side. At once Angelo is Santina’s compare but also, in his late mother words, an ‘assumed’ child amongst Santina’s biological children. This entailment is of an emotional, economic and residential character. Furthermore, Santina and Angelo’s mother were comare but also friends. Grecanici friendship is the product of love, respect and common upbringing. Whilst in anthropological terms friendship is a social idiom of relatedness, in the Grecanici context friends borrow from biological kinship in order to account for these types of relationships. Thus the distinction is made between ‘true friendships of the heart’ and ‘friendships’. Whilst the assumption that ‘blood’ is what makes a Grecanici individual what s/he is, explicit in the
Grecanici culture is the belief that the same biological indicator accounts for cultural values – respect, love, reputation – as well.

Grecanici claims to relatedness are claims to creation, as Strathern has argued in relation to Euro-American kinship (1996:531). ‘Longing to belonging’ guides actors to “join together disparate reasons for relatedness” (ibid.). Thus “whereas paradoxes exist in the mind of the anthropologist and can become highly problematic, the same paradoxes need not bother one’s informants” (Howell 2001:204-5). The previous chapter gives a ‘clear’ idea of Grecanici kinship organisation. However, the present chapter comes as a realisation of how murky Grecanici kinship is in its lived dynamic reality. My further aim was to problematise and provide an insight into what is classified as ‘family’ in the Grecanici context. So far we have encountered various actors entering the category of family not just as ‘simple layers that sit tidily upon the other’ (Simpson 2006:6) but as agitating particles that restrain the familial façade from looking smooth. In the chapter that follows the notion of family will be further problematised as well as critiqued. The discussion on ‘Ndrangheta family will offer yet another example of a familial arrangement more ‘unclear’ (Simpson 1998) and unbounded.
Chapter Seven: Ancestors, Saints and Governance

Here on the spot, one can understand how an outlaw like Musolino was enabled to defy justice, helped, as he was, by the fact that the vast majority of the inhabitants were favourable to him, and that the officer in charge of his pursuers was paid a fixed sum for every day he spent in the chase and presumably found it convenient not to discover his whereabouts.

From Old Calabria, by Norman Douglas (1915)

In this chapter I will explore the pivotal role that ancestors play in the lives of the Grecanici. Ancestors, as it has been argued, act as mnemonic devises that give meaning to and continuation between past and present (Minicuci 1995). Furthermore, ancestors are implemented by the locals in order to explain their own versions of law and self-government (Theodossopoulos 2000). The substance of blood plays an important role, for it is believed to transmit cultural traits and values (Lombardi Satriani and Meligrana 1987, Lombardi Satriani 2000). Strict endogamy – apart from limiting the distribution of economic resources to non-kin – has assisted in establishing the “mentality” of self-government; that is various levels of knowledge regarding Grecanici socio-political, economic and religious administration and their engendering through one another. This specific idea of self-government emanates from the entanglement of two orders of authority – superiority and knowledge (Weber 1978:359) – and has been cultivated over the years as an attitude that opposes the Italian state.

In Grecanici contexts, saints are considered as the most remote ancestors whose memory is kept alive via their ritual itineraries (Connerton 1989). In the life of my informants the divine entities are considered as the community’s ‘living’ and ‘tangible’ ancestors and their worship exceeds religious representation. In this chapter I will enquire as to how the Grecanici portray their Saints as ‘acting’ as the guarantors of self-government of the Grecanici territories, thus bringing together heterogeneous elements of superiority, justice and self-perpetuation. The Calabrian mafia, known as the ‘Ndrangheta, – at present the most successful network of political power and representation
in Reggio (Walston 1988, Gratteri and Nicaso 2007) – draws on both the notions of ancestors and saints in order to exercise its claim to self-government and justice. The 'Ndrangheta is analysed here as an ‘art of government’ in Foucauldian terms, as a ‘rationality of government’ and as a political figure, one who articulates its rhetorical opposition to ‘state politics’. I would argue that the 'Ndrangheta is to be understood as a kinship-based mode of government, thus placing kinship as the sphere par excellence that conditions any possibility of politics.

**Genealogical memory**

Time in Grecanici communities refers to kinship time, which in turn is triggered by genealogical memory. The Grecanici are raised to depend on their relatives who constitute the most significant part of their daily lives. Their points of reference – whether psychological, social or political – are their kin. A narrative usually starts with reference to the closest and most respected relatives, namely the parents of the narrator, and proceeds to his/her grandparents. Even though an emphasis is placed on the patrilineal descent, no relative after the parents is considered as less ‘valid’ – irrespective of being part of the patriline or matriline. Genealogical memory appears very profound and is ‘ritualistically’ exchanged on every possible occasion during encounters between relatives and friends: in bars, shops, familial gatherings and job interviews. Simple quotidian events are analysed, deconstructed and reconstructed in terms of genealogical memory. Further, moral dispositions are also explained in relation to genealogical memory. When a person expresses his/her disapproval regarding his/her bad encounters with another individual, this is automatically explained genealogically, such as: “I was always told that our famiglia had problems with them”. My informants were very happy to reconstruct their genealogical memories at my request because this complied with their ‘mode of being’ in the world. Sitting around a large kitchen table and literally shouting at each other assuming “a sort of theatrical performance, played out in front of others” (Bourdieu 1979b:141), they were amused to discuss about their ancestors as well as their own deeds in relation to their ancestors.
Similar to the kitchen, the piazza of the quartiere is one of the most preferable spaces where memories are exchanged, constructed and re-constructed as a process of self and community formation and maintenance (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001:xvi-xvii). Many were the times that I, together with my informants, were almost liturgically listening to older men narrating Grecanici stories of the distant past. According to Ricoeur, the externalisation of experience starts from the time that experience is spatialised and leads to the “proliferation of divergencies through the deviation of individual works” (1983:80). Through story telling, elements of narrative such as the scene, action, and agency are deliberately transformed in order to convey and propose different interpretations, loaded with different messages (Bennett 2001:xxi). Powerful metaphors such as blood, moral values and love for the ancestors that pertain to Grecanici culture unavoidably inform past reflections and semantically load current interpretations. In that sense the past ‘adventures’ of the dead ancestors are mythologised and unavoidably romanticised. When an old ’ndranghetista nostalgically refers to their “past times of honour” whilst “the younger generations [of the ’ndranghetisti] have lost the old sense of honour and respect”, this is an attempt to create a truth about a whole epoch that he was part of, rather than to pose a discontinuity between generations.

Minicuci’s (1995) comparative analysis between the communities of Fitili and Zaccanopoli in Calabria – two communities closely related due to over two centuries of marriage exchange – has revealed that the inhabitants distinguish and organise themselves through different appropriations of kinship time. Genealogical memory is “reconstructed on the basis of direct experience or memory handed down” and revolves around three main axes: space, time and the organisation of the community (Minicuci 1995:79). For Minicuci, genealogical memory is constructed around the cycle of the seasons and work, production relations and working conditions, blood relations and myths of origin (ibid.:82-84). She also points to the fact that such accounts appear completely excluded from the ‘official’ history of the region. In other words, people of both communities communicate different versions of history,
different from the official history that pertains to Calabria as it is taught in Italian schools. Equally, land appropriation and the local understandings of what constitutes a ‘lawful’ appropriation are directly linked to the operation of genealogical memory.

**Histories**

Grecanico history is represented ‘officially’ from ‘without’ (by the cultural associations) and ‘unofficially’ from ‘within’ by the Grecanici people. Through the multiple accounts of history different conceptualisations of time management, relations and political claims are proposed. However it would be uncritical to categorise history simply as ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ without taking into consideration other political, social and economic parameters. If I wanted to invert Herzfeld’s postulation that, “if any history is invented, all history is invented” (1991a:12), I would say that ‘if any history is true then all history is true’. This means that in my analysis various sources of history are equally important in order to account for the dynamics of Grecanici culture. In a similar vein, MacDonald has argued in relation to the alternative histories that pertain to the Gaelic culture: “alternatives which are not equally audible in the present or equally likely to be sustained into the future. This variability depends upon the politics, social relations and technologies in which they are enmeshed” (1997:31).

By adopting a somewhat similar stance, I would like to offer diverse approaches that pertain to Grecanico history whose rhetorical “partiality to knowledge” (Marcus 1998:198) has shaped different political agendas and appear as equally representative of ‘a Grecanico identity’. The most obvious categorisation, that of history from ‘without’ and history from ‘within’, is used to indicate the degree to which Grecanici memories play an institutional role in the construction of any kind of history. Official history in the anthropological literature refers mainly to nationalistic histories and universalistic notions of ‘being in the world’ (Gellner 1983) that are implemented to encourage cultural homogenisation, tolerance and coexistence (Jenkins 2002).
As we have seen in chapter four, the Greconiche cultural associations have played and still play a pivotal role in the construction of an official Greconico history. This history appears selective when compared to the history of Calabria, but also when compared to the history that the Greconici narrate. The associations have offered textual accounts of Greconico history, mainly folkloristic narrations and local poetry rendered in Greconico and historical accounts that contextualise the Greconici within wider Calabrian history. As has been previously discussed, the history that the Greconiche cultural associations project is also closely related to the personal and generational history of their protagonists. The history of the associations is an intricate mixture of ‘individual’ and ‘collective’ “events clothed with meaning” (Davis 1989:117). It is a history of discontinuity, in Lisón-Tolosana’s (1966) words, between the generation of the intellectuals who first dealt with the ‘Questione Greconica’ in the 1960s, the next generation during the 1980s, who to an extent took over the control and production of any knowledge and subsequent history made available to a wider national and international audience, and the present generation who are ‘officially’ trained via European sponsored regional courses. Conflicting ideologies between the protagonists of the associations have resulted in clashing political decisions so now it can be easily argued that each generation has “substantial autonomy to remake its history” (Davis 1989:116).

In relation to a Greconico identity, through managing different historical periods – namely the ancient Greek and Byzantine eras – and carefully de-emphasising others, the cultural associations have proposed a type of primordialist Greconico identity ‘that needs no further explanations and thus naturalising identity within a socio-biological framework’ (Jenkins 1997:48). Equally the politics of ‘collective victimisation’ (Ballinger 2003:135-45) was carefully played out in order to elevate the first Greconici migrants to Reggio to the status of martyrs. Memories of the paddhechi, parpatuli and the tamarri (all derogative terms for the peasant) that were attributed by the Reggini to the Greconici newcomers in the area at the end of the 1950s, were put forward through the associations to facilitate further political claims for the recognition
of a distinct cultural identity by the local and national authorities. Due to the explicit actions of the associations, further international links were created with Greece and the European Union’s sponsored projects for linguistic minorities. The metaphor of blood and the common descent from the Greek ancestors of *Magna Grecia* allude to a homogenous Grecanico cultural group as ‘authentic’ and ‘pure’. The most obvious effect of this homogenisation pertains to the collective term “Grecanici” that was originally proposed by the cultural associations in order to distinguish themselves from the other Greek speaking populations of Puglia. The term has also been adopted by local intellectuals, Grecanici and otherwise, who are dealing with cultural, political and economic issues.

Of special interest are the hybrid histories that are shared between the Grecanici of the third and forth generations in Reggio and other Reggini who are all actively dealing with Grecanici cultural issues. These people are trained officially by the province and through sponsored European Union programmes and are going to take over the role of ‘cultural keepers’ after the retirement of the current ones. This mixture of people is very interesting from many perspectives for the fact that they are not – in their majority – of Grecanico origin. People of other areas in the Reggino have been taught Grecanici history, language and culture, and according to some of the tutors of the course “*they appear more eager to learn the language than our own youths*”. It can be argued that these people are trained within the parameters of Grecanico constructivism and have followed paths of identity construction similar to nationalisms. Yet, it cannot be claimed that their identity has been exclusively shaped by these curricula for the fact that they are equally influenced by the histories of their non-Grecanici families. The teaching curriculum is equally interesting for it allows for a diversity of ‘tutors’ of Grecanico origin and otherwise, to compete with each other in terms of salary (those capable of gaining the most hours of teaching), prestige (those who really exhibit the most holistic knowledge of Grecanico culture) and purity/authenticity (those capable of being of Grecanico origin and exhibit a holistic knowledge of both language and culture).
Ballinger has made explicit claims to the extent that by privileging distinctive historical segments whilst de-emphasising others, groups may author and re-author “divided” collective memories (2003:21). After the end of the Second World War and the division of the Istrian peninsula between Slovenia and Croatia, 200,000 to 350,000 ethnic Italians as well as Slovenes and Croats were forced to leave the area (2003:3). Both groups – Italians who left the region and those who decided to stay – adhere to conflicting histories regarding the wider historical events that shaped the political landscape of the region as well as possessing fragmented kinship histories “that may reflect the all-too-modern dynamics of state building, warfare and displacement” (ibid.:208). The understanding of and the belief in a fixed and submerged past, Ballinger argues, “imply both a given history and a preconstituted community that is the subject and bearer of that past” (2003:268). Hence the contrast between official and unofficial histories is not a simple and straightforward matter. The focus thus shifts to “kinds of history” (Davis 1989:116), enforcing the argument that never before have collective histories been so explicitly affected by ‘official’ history and vice-versa (Augé 1995:37).

In a somewhat similar fashion, the Grecanici – non affiliates of the Grepaniche associations – emphasise the remote past and trace their memories through blood descent and genealogical kinship. Due to the fact that Grepaniche history is predominantly an oral history, it is principally conveyed in a narrative fashion. Most narratives start with the phrase “La buon anima di mio …” (The good soul of my …) and narrate events that refer to the ‘ego’s blood relatives, both patrilineal and matrilineal. These events pertain to modes of production, the emigration to Europe and the heroic actions of their ’ndranghetisti relatives. Events of heroic action even go back to the time of the brigandaggio (banditry). Narratives regarding the famous brigand Musolino\(^\text{107}\) shift quite smoothly to narratives of other famous ’ndranghetisti of the area. These narratives of communal and kinship conflict are endowed with a specific sense of morality that not only justifies the violence involved but also considers it as

\(^{107}\)Giuseppe Musolino (1876-1956), whose persona closely resembles that of Robin Hood, was born and acted mainly in Aspromonte (Douglas 2001:287-292). His deeds were mythologised and romanticised and he is evoked by my informants as a fearsome man who fought against the rich baroni.
vital to their self-government. The stories are endless and fascinating and they are presented in such a manner that lacking previous historical understanding of the area, one can easily be chronologically and thematically confused. For instance, narrations that refer back to the era of the last piracy (1700-1827) are intertwined with stories of defending the Grecanici territories against the ‘ladri’ (villains) who aspired to conquer them. Here they mainly refer to the era of the last Bourbons which, both politically and economically, is considered the toughest era in recent Calabrian history. Further episodes of conflicts with the local barons to whom Grecanici have frequently refused to pay their taxation are linked with similar episodes of ‘economic’ opposition against the newly-formed Italian state.

Stories of how ‘their people’ humiliated the policemen who wanted to arrest them shift easily to the ways in which the Grecanici women revenged their honour by stabbing to death the men who betrayed them. Further female glorification accounts for the women’s protests during the 1950s demanding promised state economic support for their migrant relatives. During these protests, the women, despite their absent migrant husbands, frequently burst into the local police offices and threatened to kill the policemen. Narrations of men slicing the faces of the women who betrayed them at the beginning of the 20th century are mixed with contemporary narrations of love violence. The ‘ordeal’s of living out of Calabria in ex-military camps during the periods of the heavy rainfall and the landslides in the 1950s, 60s and 70s are exaggerated or played-down depending on the narrators’ political sympathies. Stories accounting for the ‘honour’ of the ‘ndranghetisti relatives are fashioned together with stories of local priests who used to have illegitimate children and carry guns. There is a consistent element in these Grecanici narratives which is of a shifting from the past to present and back to the past. This does not mean that local history is recounted as a whole and is thus homogenous. Ideologically speaking, a person originating from one village of the area Grecanica would never associate the village’s history with another village of the same area because “those from ... are a razza maledetta” (cursed). In the process of narration though – and depending on the speaker’s perspective –
histories that unite different localities appear more coherent because “they belong to the same shared space and time” (Minicuci 1995:79).

Halbwachs has argued that collective memory is socially constructed within contextual matrixes such as kinship and within other religious and social collectivities. Different memories are contextualised, constructed and reconstructed within groups with different pasts that provide diverse mental spaces for identification. “But these memories … consist not only of a series of individual images of the past. They are at the same time models, examples, and elements of teaching” (Halbwachs 1992:59). Moreover they are reconstructed pictures offered by the narrators’ reflection which does not escape moral or social evaluations of the present (ibid.:63).

Genealogically structured history, in relation to Grecanici kinship, “provides a structure in which life and loyalty are mutually determining and are granted by members of one generation to members of the next” (Davis 1989:110). On that matter genealogical “representations of pastness” are reproduced in discourse, legitimising through histories power relations and lawful social claims (Tonkin 1992:1-3). Through genealogical histories, Grecanici culture “is constituted in performative fashion, in a discourse of doing culture thus successfully persisting through succeeding generations (Langelier and Peterson 1993:56, 64), as Toto’s case suggests.

Toto, 43, comes from a very rich Grecanici family who migrated to Reggio before the Second World War, and since then the men and the women of the family have been implicated in politics with the PCI (Communist Party). I usually met Toto in his office where I had the possibility to observe his devotion to his father who, albeit quite old, still visits his son’s political office almost everyday, even though they live in the same palazzo, Toto is very happy to receive his father in his office on such a regular basis. Toto says; “If it was not for his and my mother’s effort we would not be able to lead the life we lead. My father always narrated to me the stories of our ancestors. Now he is doing the same to my children. I am not aware of the exact history as proposed by the associations. I personally do not participate in any of them
even though I know most of the people who administer them and they are my personal friends. I was proposed once to be on the board of ... [name of the association] but I refused. I do not have time. What I know about our history is what my father has told me. Now he narrates the same things to my children about our village which he calls Covo di Ladri [den of the villains]. Because he refers to the era of piracy my children are making fun of him and they say that Grecanici were pirates”.

Toto’s understanding of history, structured by his father’s narratives and handed down to Toto’s children, as the above case highlights, “is a constantly moving process that does not fix a group of blood relations in motionless time but, as it were, accompanies the group as it forms and reforms with each generation. And, as the group moves through successive generations, it sets its norms so that the movement does not result in disorder. It adopts the ancestors as guarantors of these norms, the people who came from afar to this territory … the people whose choices made it possible for them to live today and forever in the same place” (Minicuci 1995:96).

**Chalònero**

*Chalònero*, by Salvino Nucera, is the only Grecanici text that – at least to my knowledge – refers extensively to the life of the Grecanici villages as completely organised in terms of the mafia. Chalònero is a novel written in Grecanico and translated into Italian. ‘Chalònero’ in Grecanico means ‘broken dream’ and this is the allegoric name that the young protagonist of the novel assumes. The story unfolds in a Grecanici village during 1958, that Nucera calls Filosceno: in Grecanico meaning ‘hospitable’. Chalònero is a young man of high expectations, he is eighteen years old and he is attending the high school in Reggio. His dream is to study at the university in order to become an engineer. He and his school companions are dreaming of changing their lives through their professions, they also aspire to eradicate ‘old forms of governance’ that are present in their villages. Chalònero’s father Platocalo, in

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108 The last period of piracy in the Bovesia (the term for the area Grecanica) was between 1700 and 1827 (Errante 1986).
Grecanico meaning ‘the one who speaks well’, is the “optimal” amongst the “friends” of Filosceno. “Everybody knows him in Filosceno and in the nearby villages and everybody respects him. Nothing happens in the village without his permission. Not a single leaf moves\textsuperscript{109} in the area – it has been this way for the last eight years. Amongst the ‘friends’ he is the King” (1993:15). Platocalo is getting rich by constructing new houses, restoring old ones and constructing roads in Filosceno and the nearby villages. Chalònero is silently criticising his father’s life and his lack of ‘good rules’. At that stage he is planning his life away from the village and the “friends” that govern it.

In the opening scene of the novel we are also introduced to ‘Scerocardi’: in Grecanico meaning ‘hard-hearted’. He is also a “friend” in the village who does not approve of Chalònero’s dreams of becoming a professional engineer. Every time that they meet on the village roads, Scerocardi offends Chalònero’s honour. Scerocardi also partly antagonises Platocalo, because in recent years Scerocardi has climbed very high up the ladder of the “friends”. During the Christmas feasts of 1962, Chalònero kills Scerocardi with a gun that his father gave to him. As a fugitive at ‘Polimandro’s’, in Grecanico meaning ‘having many flocks of animals’, house, Chalònero is reflecting on the real motives behind his father furnishing him with a gun. It is true, he argues, that a man needs to defend his honour but on the other hand isn’t there a hidden ulterior motive on his father’s part? Isn’t it also true that Platocalo was partly conscious of Scerocardi’s rapid succession in the hierarchy of the “friends”? Wouldn’t Scerocardi’s possible elimination then be a ‘solution’, without his father however having ‘ordered’ it?

In the first part of the novel, Nucera is presenting the mafia of the Grecanici villages which he allegorically calls the “friends”. We are also given indications about the “friends” operations at the time. The “friends” are earning a lot of money due to their capitalisation of the then state operational scheme to advance the South. After 1948 the regions were allowed a degree of

\textsuperscript{109} Non si muove foglia (no leaf is moving) is an expression that is predominantly used in Reggio in order to indicate the Mafiosi whose presence is so catholic that even nature stands still.
autonomy concerning town planning, regional road building and public works, as well as other sectors that were included in the regional law which however only materialised after the beginning of the 1970s (Walston 1988:44). We are also given further information about the close networking of the “friends” in and out of Filosceno. In the story, Polimandro and Platocalo are “friends of the heart” (Papataxiarchis 1991). When in Polimando’s house Chalònero assumes the role of one of his children. This role stems from the kin-like relatedness between Polimando and Platocalo. In Polimandro’s house Chalònero is gradually introduced to the life of the “friends”. Every night after dinner, Polimandro narrates to Chalònero the stories of the “friends” of the village, dead and alive. These stories are ‘reserved’ only for the people who are “friends” themselves. Gradually Chalònero is completely taken in by the ideology and life of the “friends”, until one day he is ‘baptised’. According to the ritual of the baptism, Chalònero gave the oath to the Madonna della Montagna (Madonna of the mountain) and recited various ‘secret formulae’. Thus he “was made” a “friend”, or better he was made a “man”. Now he would be able to enter the ‘house’ of the “friends” and due to his relation with the “optimal” of the “friends” he could rapidly climb up their hierarchy.

The rumour that Chalònero killed Scerocardi has been spread in Filosceno by female gossip. One woman from Scerocardi’s kin has seen Chalònero running away from the crime scene. She has not witnessed the actual murder but nevertheless she, together with other kin women, put together various ‘unrelated’ information and thus concluded that Chalònero is the perpetrator. In order to avoid his son being captured by the police, Platocalo arranges to move Chalònero to Rome to stay with his relatives. Without Nucera narrating how it happened, Chalònero is arrested and he is taken to Reggio in order to face trial. He is sentenced to twelve years. Here begins a long period ‘between’ multiple prisons. In the Calabrian prisons Chalònero has an easy life. He is treated well by the co-prisoner “friends” and is further introduced to their deeper secrets. His father utilises his contacts in order for his son to appeal for a reduced sentence. Due to a well-prepared defence the initial sentence is reduced to nine years and six months. The years in prison changed Chalònero drastically. Gone are the days that he was dreaming of a life away
from Filosceno and the suffocating “friends”. Now, not only does he fully participate in life of the “friends” but he further aspires to inherit his father’s position.

The day that Chalonero is released from prison his father offers him a Jaguar car as a gift. By that time Platocalo’s businesses have expanded to incorporate the whole provincia and outside of it: in Sicily, Naples, America. Whilst abroad the “optimal friends” were estimating Platocalo, in Filosceno they were not in his favour any more. “Platocalo was taking all the contracts. Where there was money, there he was. Gradually he was accustomed to keeping all the profit to himself without distributing to the village “friends” not even his ‘crumbs’” (Nucera 1993:187). Platocalo was eliminated by two killers. It was said that the one possible source that ‘ordered’ his death could be Scerocardì’s family. The other rumour – and probably much closer to the truth – was attributing Platocalo’s death to the dissatisfaction of the “friends” of the village, due to Platocalo’s augmenting prestige as well as notoriety. Other much younger “friends” were aspiring to occupy his post. Indeed, in the following elections amongst the “friends”, Chalonero was not elected as the “optimal” of Filosceno. The pain provoked by his father’s death combined with a constant fear that the new “optimal” could also order Chalonero’s elimination were devouring his life.

In his desperation he buys a huge plot of land by the sea where he builds a new modern house; he also brings his mother from Filosceno to live with him. Furthermore, he is marrying the daughter of an “optimal friend” of another village hoping that way he could regain his lost position in Filosceno. “In time his star declined and obscured more and more in the village. Lost friends, others eliminated. Nobody knew who was to be killed next. Only voices. Nobody knew the motive. Voices … Chalonero was residing by the sea, constantly delusional, pulling in money from wherever he could. The new power equilibriums did not change. The years were passing but he was dreaming constantly. He was dreaming that one day he could occupy his father’s post amongst the “friends”. But he was not doing anything about this. He was just waiting and dreaming. Who knows if one day he will realise his
dream, or not … Dreams, dreams born during the night and destroyed by the first morning light …” (1993:193).

Nucera’s quasi-ethnological account offers a critical view of the Calabrian mafia from within. The name that he selects for his protagonist is not casual. Chalònero – ‘broken dream’ – thus is more than a name. It represents the life that is broken because it is conditioned by the presence of the mafia. Nucera here appears very pessimistic, almost fatalist. According to him, the mafia is a vicious circle from which no one escapes. It is almost a kind of panopticon in Foucauldian terms where people are always watched and controlled. In a similar vein, Chalònero himself is presented as caught between two opposite worlds: the world of the “friends” and thus the world of his family and his own view of a world fashioned through the power of education. The whole novel is principally about violence and violation – a constant resolution of conflicts through violence – and we are left to wonder whether things would have been different had Chalònero not killed Scerocardi. Nevertheless, the circle of violence is completed when Chalònero consciously aspires to inherit his father’s top position amongst the “friends” of Filosceno. Nucera concludes his novel abominating the fatal determinism of a system of social and economic dependence which allows access to power only through specific channels.

The ’Ndrangheta

Under the generic rubric ‘Italian mafia’ are classed the four well-known criminal organisations that exist in Italy: Cosa Nostra in Sicily, ’Ndrangheta in Calabria, Camorra in Naples and Sacra Corona in Puglia. In discourse, the term ‘mafia’ is most often used interchangeably with any of the aforementioned ‘mafias’. It is further used as an indicator of specific dispositions and type of organisation. The term ’Ndrangheta has been adopted by many scholars in order to indicate the Calabrian mafia and most prominently the mafia of Reggio Calabria (Paoli 2003:29). The word derives from the Greek ‘Andragathia’ which can be translated as ‘act of courage, prudence, artfulness, glorious action, the mode that pertains to a man of glory’
(Messina 1990:60). Etymologically it is the culmination of the prefix 'ανήρ, 'ανδρός (anér, anthrós = man), and the suffix αγαθός (agathós = good, virtuous) (Babiniotis 2002:175). In the ‘best-seller’ Grecanico vocabulary of Fillipo Condemi (a psychiatrist of Grecanico origin) the word appears as andrangheta; “a name that the organised criminality in Calabria, assumes” (2006:479). The term that I will use from now on is ’Ndrangheta, a term most commonly used by my informants and the Italian scholars that deal with the issue. The Calabrian mafia, appears in the accounts of local courts and in police reports from 1880 (Paoli 2003:36) under different names such as “mafia”, “camorra”, “uccelli di rapita” (birds of kidnap), “associazione di malfattori” (association of the perpetrators), “associazione dei picciotti” (association of the picciotti110) (Gratteri and Nicaso 2007:219) when they were operating in the territories of Nicastro to Palmi and Reggio Calabria. The definition “honorata società” (honoured society) appears after 1903 and refers to a formal body with a proper hierarchical structure and constitution (ibid.:28). The term ’Ndrangheta appears for the first time in Alvaro’s article published in Corriere della Sera on 17 December 1955 (Gratteri and Nicaso 2007:37). The term itself captured the imagination of the journalists and scholars of the contemporary era because it alludes to a distant past when the whole of Calabria was speaking Greek. Alvaro himself, born and raised in San Luca, a village of Aspromonte where a lot of Greek vocabulary has been preserved, used the term in order to describe a type of association comprised by the men of the village (ibid.:37). We could then infer that the Calabrian mafia created a kind of historical/religious constructivism of its own as it will become clearer in the rest of the chapter (see also Martino 1988).

The ’Ndrangheta suggests a cultural continuation among people of diverse origin, social status and political dispositions in the province of Reggio Calabria, thus proving – once again – the dichotomy ‘traditional/modern’ society as an inadequate analytic tool for dynamic societies like Reggio Calabria (Arlacchi 1983:1). Arlacchi maintains that for the Mezzogiorno;  

110 Picciotto (‘emissary’, Catanzaro 1988:25) is the term that refers to the first grade in the ’Ndrangheta hierarchy.
The great estate, the *latifondo* or the small peasant holding, heavy industry and family workshops, kinship and market, ‘amoral familism’ and the *Gemeinschaft* of the village, modern commercial systems and primitive systems of reciprocity, mafia and statism of the Prussian type, coexisted here side by side or at a few kilometers of distance without apparently disturbing each other (ibid.:2).

“Once upon a time – in a nebulous past – three Castilian brothers of noble origin, Osso, Mastrosso and Scarcagnosso, devoted to San Michele Arcangelo (Saint Michael the Archangel) and the saints Cosma and Damiano escaped from Madrid because they fell out with a potent local noble. After having found refuge on the isle of Favignana, they decided to follow different paths. Mastrosso went to Naples where he founded the Camorra, Scarcagnosso went to Calabria where he founded the *’Ndrangheta* and Osso set off to Palermo, Sicily, where he founded the Mafia” (Messina 1990:7). In another version of this myth of origin the figures of the three Spaniards are occupied by Jesus Christ, Saint Michael the Archangel and Saint Peter (Gratteri and Nicaso 2007:80). The former version is the most common myth relating to the origin of the Italian mafia and is circulated on internet pages referring to the *’Ndrangheta*, as well as among Italian intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike. This is also the myth of origin that I came across whilst conducting my fieldwork. These myths place religious kinship at the heart of the *’Ndrangheta* and stress the continuity of the ‘divine’ *’Ndrangheta*, seen in the form of a direct genealogical line back to its founding saints/ancestors. Furthermore, kinship links are not only traced retrospectively but also – and perhaps most importantly – futuristically, thus entailing “a change in the quality of Time (sacred vs. secular, cyclical vs. linear) but also an important transformation with regards to the nature of temporal *relations*” (Fabian 1983:26 emphasis original).

There are many definitions and explanations concerning the operations and character of the mafia. Either as a “custom and mentality of a particular social class”, “criminal organisation, with specific mode of government and laws”, “parasitic pseudo-structure of the economic and political life” (Frosini 1970:26-31) or “a method for the consolidation of ruling positions” (Hess 1998:6). Taking into consideration that the above views “make sense with respect to the social position of those who maintain them” (Blok 1974:6), the
mafia as a social phenomenon has occupied the lives of various ‘Italian’ populations for almost two centuries. Many researchers have placed the genesis of the mafia in the period of the Italian Risorgimento where newly introduced competing political and economic forces were clashing with ‘grassroots’ political and cultural structures – mainly administrative corruption, the mistrust of any political reforms, vendetta and violence – that predated the Risorgimento\(^{111}\) (Arlacchi 1983:5, Paoli 2003:180). Even the abolition of feudalism by the French occupiers in 1806, followed by further financial reforms, was not adequate to counteract the over-elaborate and ‘customary’ corruption at the communal level. Moreover, the divided small plots of land that were offered after 1810 failed to be sold to speculators due to poor economic conditions of the latter (Paoli 2003: 216-218).

Arlacchi attributes the genesis of the mafia in the Plain of Gioia Tauro, Calabria, to the extreme social and economic instability of the area after unification. This instability perpetuated what Arlacchi calls ‘a society in permanent transition’ where both social and economic mobility were extremely fluent (1983:6). Moreover the lack of interest from the government in creating a sufficient infrastructure capable of uniting the North with the South, together with high illiteracy, the proletarianisation of large sectors of the peasantry, urbanisation and migrations, accompanied by a hostile attitude towards the northern administratives (Blok 1974, Schneider and Schneider 1976, Hess 1998, Paoli 2003:179-182), expressed traditions of “territorial union and historical patriotism” at the grassroots (Woolf 1979:213). The mafia was born, Tullio-Altan maintains, out of this type of society as a social force placed equally among the other sources of power: “a social force that does not negate the existing society and its social laws – for example the communal

\(^{111}\) Paoli has suggested that part of the organisational logic of the ‘Ndrangheta is to be found in the secret societies and freemasonry (2003:116). Woolf (1979), for different reasons, also places a special emphasis on the secret societies that acted during the French occupation. These societies played a pivotal role against Napoleon. According to Woolf, the secret societies of filadelfia – adelfia were patriotic sects that acted in the north of Italy whilst the carboneria dominated the south with significant infiltrations among the local landowners, intellectuals, petty nobles and officers. This phenomenon was born in many other countries ‘united’ under the French occupation and was established upon a “desire for independence” (1979: 221). Despite their ‘earnest’ attempts for egalitarianism, the secret societies were unable to offer sufficient alternatives to government after the Napoleonic defeat (ibid.:222).
delinquency – or tries to replace it. Instead, the mafia becomes a hybrid society that gives life to a social reality sui generis” (2000:64).

As Teti has argued after the massacre in Duisburg on 15th of August 2007 between different clans originating from San Luca, Aspromonte, the mafia can no longer be viewed as a southern problem par excellence. During the last decades the mafia has flourished around Europe and America. Let’s not forget, Teti continues, that the main industry concerning mafia music production – and the promotion of the violent honour – is based in Germany (il Quotidiano 25 August 2007). Teti clearly poses a culturalist argument when he states that it is the kinship-client based relations that prevail in Calabrian life, and the illegality that characterises the political life today with all the familistic, amoral and immoral paraphernalia. In the anthropological literature the studies of Schneider and Schneider as well as Blok are points of reference to the study of the mafia, for they both manage to disavow the mafia as a localised phenomenon and place it in the broader socio-political context. Arguing primarily from an economic point of view, Schneider and Schneider, and primarily from a political one, Blok, have combined traditional ethnographic analysis with historical contextualisation in their ethnographies. The Schneiders provide a history-based argument and a ‘centre-periphery dependency’ approach in order to explain the emergence of the figure of the Mafioso ‘broker capitalist’. According to the Schneiders, when “compared with the merchants, industrialist, and financiers of the metropolis, broker capitalists control only marginal assets, their most significant resource being their networks of personal contacts” (1976:11). The mafia as “a creature of florescent broker capitalism” (ibid.:173) is viewed as a “violent and parasitic ‘businessman’s fraternity’” and is further based on a political tolerance and cooperation that stretches from local to national politicians, juridical servants and the police. Cultural codes such as onore and amicizia (honour and friendship) provided the organisational and ideological focus for the mafia consortia. The cosca (clan) is the core of the mafia organisation (ibid.:186) that “gave rise to instrumental coalitions but was not, as a rule, itself such an instrumental group” (ibid.:187). The Schneiders explained the cosca as a clique-type congregation with one – or more than one – leader and its
members linked with a variety of bonds, predominantly kinship ties and Godparenthood, which did not hold formal gatherings, neither was it based on constitutional rule. More flexible but simultaneously more important is the existence within the clique of the bond of amicizia that collectivised the cosca members under its ideological umbrella. Amicizia hence was an ambivalent idiom of relatedness. Nevertheless it was politically exploited in clandestine economic and political transactions and thus enhanced solidarity among the cosca members (Schneider and Schneider 1976).

Blok (1974) offers an account of mafia culture from a political perspective. The mafioso broker is, Blok argues, the mediator between smaller and larger socio-political contexts. Yet the mafioso does not merely reflect society for s/he manages to maintain an identity despite exhibiting large degrees of cultural accommodation. Blok further identifies the mafia’s hybrid nature when he argues that peasants and Mafiosi “were not only part of a larger society in the same sense that certain organs form a part of a larger organism. They also reflect the larger society, as a microcosm reflects a macrocosm. Their characteristics – their language, their attitudes toward manual labour, their relationship with kinsmen and women, and their relatively low level of revulsion against using and witnessing physical violence – can be understood as a representative of the larger society they formed with other individuals. At the same time they remained distinct and different from these individuals and the larger whole” (Blok 1974:xxxi). Blok investigates the genealogy of violence in order to unravel the social control and sovereignty of the mafiosi who exercise violence in the first place (ibid.:6). What are the strategies that the mafioso followed in order to become a power broker so as “to acquire and maintain control over the paths linking the local infrastructure of the village to the superstructures of the larger society?” (ibid.:7).

When discussing the issue of violence within the ‘Ndrangheta with one of my key informants he, in a semi-patronising way, was prompting me “to try to understand were these people come from”. Emphasis on the agro-pastoral nature of the Grecanici mafiosi was put forward as a determining factor for the ‘nature’ of violence. Violence was thus naturalised and prescribed in a
biological and genealogical framework (Lombroso 1980, Gibson 1998). Sant Cassia tackled the issue of the “psychology and sociology of terror” (1993:773) in Mediterranean societies by examining banditry. It is not enough, he maintains, to view the sentiments generated by bandits simply as a yearning for a pre-political justice and the terror they instilled as a means to keep the peasants docile (as Blok suggests). Apart from national as well as regional economic and developmental factors, complicity on the part of non-bandits, active or passive, suggests a serious explanatory reason for the sociology of terror. In so far as a bandit’s morals collude with the wider social morals they become “indistinguishable for kinship-based ideas of justice and retribution. Hence a reaction against banditry is often impossible because it conflicts with the moral codes that regulate traditional society” (ibid.:786).

But how does the mafia sustain its moral profile in the modern nation-state and in a society such as Reggio? Furthermore, how is violence explained and legitimised? I will show that despite the fact that direct and generalised reciprocity are the most common modes of transaction in the lives of my informants, non-reciprocity is ideologically sustained by the religious imagery of the ’Ndrangheta that draws on Christianity. I will thus demonstrate that the ’ndranghetisti in Reggio Calabria use ’free gifts’, unreciprocated gifts, that “ideologically are close to sacrifice” (Laidlaw 2000:625).

First I find it essential to present the ’Ndrangheta’s structure and organisation. Then I will proceed to highlight the two axis of the argument. First, that the ’ndranghetisti offer ‘free gifts’ as a form of sacrifice, and second that the cult of the saints so evident in ’Ndrangheta culture is an elaboration of the cult for the ancestors (shared by the wider social strata) that eventually adorns the ’Ndrangheta with religious authority. In order to facilitate my analysis I will draw on Parry (1986) and Laidlaw (2000) and their explorations of the idea of ‘pure gift’ one that “does not create personal connections and obligations between the parties” (Laidlaw 2000:617).
'Ndrangheta organisation and structure

The basic organisation unit in the 'Ndrangheta is the famiglia (family). In the 'Ndrangheta vocabulary this is called the 'ndrina; usually a 'ndrina is a biological family. More 'ndrine that are linked with economic and political ties form the locale. The locale is a circumscribed territory upon which the 'ndrine have absolute political, juridical and economic power.

The fact that the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta has not achieved the organisational structure of the Cosa Nostra with one administrative ‘head’ (Paoli 2003) does not mean that the 'ndrine do not collaborate with each other for further economic and political benefits. The following tables illustrate the organisational hierarchy of the 'Ndrangheta:

**Società maggiore (major society):**
- Associazione (association)
- Quintino
- Quartino or Trequartino (Three-quarters or Four-quarters)
- Vangelo (Gospel)
- Santista (Most holy)

The saints associated with these ranks are: Saint Apostles, Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

**Società minore (minor society):**
- Sgarrista
- Camorrista
- Picciotto (giovane d’onore) (honoured youth, emissary)

The saints associated with these ranks are: Saint Nunzia and Saint Elisabetta.

Table 1. – The 'Ndrangheta Hierarchy

Every rank is called *dote*: the word *dote* has the meaning of ‘natural gift, quality and virtue’ as well as dowry. In the initiation rite – the baptism – the oath of loyalty of the prospective 'ndranghetista is literally ‘sealed with blood’. The rite of initiation involves the puncture of the hand or the arm with a knife in order to provoke the blood of the candidate to drop onto a sacred

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112 Paoli attributes the position of sgarrista to società maggiore (2003:47). The same position is attributed by Gratteri and Nicaso to società minore (2007:78). My information regarding this position is in line with Gratteri and Nicaso.
image. This image is of Saint Michael the Archangel who is considered the forefather and protector of the 'Ndrangheta, through the mythical founder, Scarcagnosso. In his ethnography of Malta, Mitchell has observed how religious and national identity can be interwoven. In Malta, national and even European identity claims, are constructed around a direct genealogical link back to Saint Paul (Mitchell 2002:29). In the 'Ndrangheta’s case, allusions to a religious origin do not only “suggest a politics of legitimacy about who is able to discuss religious origins and who is not” (ibid.:31). An argument of the kind should be further interpreted as “a habitual self-essentialising” (ibid.) of superiority that is cultivated amongst the 'Ndrangheta affiliates and a further negation of the individual’s pre-'Ndrangheta status. This status is symbolically and ideologically cancelled by the initiation rite – the baptism. Baptism here is as much about a ‘second birth’ (Bloch and Guggenheim 1981, Stewart 1991) as about struggle, defiance and ordeal (Kirtsoglou 2004:42). The 'Ndrangheta initiation allows for an appropriation of a “different semiological web” (Kirtsoglou 2004:41) of relatedness that conveys idiosyncratic forms of knowledge and produces various forms of subjectification. When discussing the initiation rites among a non-heterocentric female community, Kirtsoglou has argued that the rite itself is about learning new forms of relating not only vis-à-vis the community but with the self. In her case too, volitional coercion results in new forms of empowerment (ibid.:39-42). The entrance into the family of the 'Ndrangheta legitimises the authority and power of its members. The term family then, creates a metaphor of relatedness for both humans and the divine entities to dialectically shape their claims to domination and power (see also Iossifides 1991).

**Time and power**

In the baptism the blood stained image is later burned whilst the capo-bastone (head of the 'ndrina) recites: “as the fire burns this image, similarly you will be burned if you stain our honour. If I recognised you before as an honourable opponent, from now on I recognise you as an honourable piccioto”. The
entrance to the family of the 'Ndrangheta is associated with a 'power' that is related to the concept of rispetto, as the case of Mico highlights\textsuperscript{113}.

- “Mico echome na se camome” (picciotu). (Mico we have to make you a picciotu)

Eci pao bariegonda. Ena viaggio, due viaggie, tu ta ipa ... (Mico was thinking of it. After one or two times, they tell him ...).

- “A se canome, pianise plen putiri”. (If we make you [picciotu], you will acquire power).

Ton efera sto … [locality]. Itandi casimeni ce ton ecamo picciotu. (They took him to the locality of … They sat down and they made him picciotu).

- “Arte iso ena asemase”. (Now you are one of us).

- “Mi ecamate ti m’ecamate ego viata tin idio putiri edo”. (You did what you did to me, yet I don’t feel any difference in my power).

“You see”, the narrator explains, “this power is not any sort of physical power as Mico was thinking. It has to do with the empowerment that comes from the respect of the family (the 'Ndrangheta). He was un uomo di rispettu (a man of respect)”. The power that is believed to be transmitted to the new affiliate with his/her entrance into the 'Ndrangheta is a combination of a particular representation of time that is at once both cyclical and linear. Probably an argument of the kind may at first seem contradictory in its own terms. This paradoxical instance is inherent in the dichotomy between western and non-western perceptions of cyclical and linear time, its content and mode of communication (Farriss 1995:108). It further relates to the perception of the ‘traditional society’ as an entity fixed in time, motionless, mute (Leach 1988).

\textsuperscript{113} This case is one of the rare cases narrated entirely in Grecanico.
I suppose that this pertains to the stances that one holds for the notion of traditional society and tradition in general. At this point I would agree with Waldren that tradition is a reflexive process “one that is constantly being made” (1996: 92).

The 'Ndrangheta rite of initiation is a ritual enactment of an event that is believed to have taken place centuries ago between a human – Scarcagnosso – and a divine entity – Saint Michael the Archangel – thus securing “the eternal return to the truth” (Eliade 1954). Cyclical time is associated with the repetition of the rites of initiation and other rites associated with the higher ranks in the 'Ndrangheta. The link between humanity and the sacred is continually re-established and secures the rotation of power between the human and the non-human. Moreover, it linearly promises genealogical power to future generations of 'ndrangetisti. The picciotu that enters the 'Ndrangheta at the level of ‘società minore’ aspires to arrive at the ‘società maggiore’ with eventually the possibility of acquiring the dote of Santista, or perhaps even more prestigiously, the dote of Vangelo. This collapsing of cyclical and linear time in the 'Ndrangheta organisation is important in managing the exercise of power within larger political contexts as in the case of the Santa discussed below.

The religious 'Ndrangheta

As many scholars have noted, the mafia draws heavily on religious imagery (Schneider and Schneider 1984, Paoli 2003, Gratteri and Nicaso 2007, Nicaso 2007). An elaborate religiosity is evident in the rite of initiation, the ethos of the 'Ndrangheta that oscillates between ‘sacred and profane’, and the very structure of the 'Ndrangheta that establishes the ranks of Santista and Vangelo as two of the highest and undoubtedly most important positions in the present 'Ndrangheta. These positions are characterised by an overt ambivalence related as much to their ‘criminal office’ as to the morality that the positions entail. The positions of the Santista and the Vangelo were specifically introduced into the 'Ndrangheta hierarchy with the implementation of the Santa (the Holy one) (Paoli 2003, Oliva and Fierro 2007) at the end of the
1960s. The main aim in creating these positions was to administer and initiate prolific collaborations outside of the local level of the province of Reggio. The Santa was initially introduced as an exclusivist sect within the 'Ndrangheta with the aim to provide further links with economic and political sources within and outside the Italian state. Most researchers place a change in the profile of the 'Ndrangheta in the period after the creation of the Santa and the elimination of the last ‘old bosses’ after the first 'Ndrangheta war (1974-76) (Paoli 2003:115). The Santa was an innovation not only because it radically changed the 'Ndrangheta’s agro-pastoral ideology but also because it boosted the 'ndrine onto another level of ‘doing politics’ and economic expansion. The ‘classic’ method of extortion – kidnapping – was abandoned to be replaced with more ‘modern’ methods of doing business. Since then, the construction of the major roads from Salerno to Reggio Calabria and Jonio to Tirreno, the railway line from Naples to Reggio Calabria as well as the city airport and industrial area of Lamezia Terme, have presented major opportunities for numerous 'ndrine of Reggio Calabria to enter the subcontracting game (Nicaso 2007:64).

This economic proliferation which during the decade of the 1980s has assumed global dimensions was “based on the expansion of consolidated models of criminality” (Badolati 2007). Badolati here refers to the organisational base of the 'Ndrangheta, that is the families. “They are fathers, sons, brothers, brothers-in-law, cousins: people who have common ancestors and descendants” (Nicaso 2007:82). The adaptation of the 'Ndrangheta to the new reality without however losing its original character is most evident in the case of the Santa. Whilst the new sect was open to the logic of the masonic lodges and collaborated with them – a fact that was initially forbidden\[114\] – the 'Ndrangheta did not lose its traditional religious points of reference. New historical figures regarded as exclusively masonic such as Mazzini and Cavour (both protagonists of masonic lodges) were added as points of reference to the

\[114\] The exclusive character of the 'Ndrangheta becomes apparent from the reading of a document of 1902 found in Catanza after a police swoop. Thus it ensured the exclusion of paedophiles, betrayed husbands, tax collectors and various grades of policemen, and in general all the people who were not able to avenge offences against their honour (Gratteri and Nicaso 2007:80).
rank of Vangelo, alongside the Apostles as well as Saints Peter and Paul (Paoli 2003:238). The term Santa itself derives from the *mamma santissima* (Madonna, most holy mother) and is reserved for the mafia bosses (ibid.:238). As Bryant has noted in the case of Cypriot Greek and Turkish nationalisms, “male and female images may be employed at various moments to express different things” (2000:518). For example, she points out that in different historical contexts there is a lack of gendered consistency in representations of land and leadership. The ‘ndranghetisti bosses have readily adopted the female image of the Madonna for their representation of power. But who is the Madonna of the ‘Ndrangheta? Whilst the church holds a formal line concerning the interchangeability for all representations of the Madonna, ethnographic accounts have shown that an excessive localism has effected different and idiosyncratic representations of the Madonna (Lisón-Tolosana 1966, Christian 1972, Woolf 1979).

In the legends of Aspromonte, the Madonna is the mother who offers protection and support. In other legends, the Madonna appears not only to be chosen as the mother of Christ but she is the one who rescues the books that transmit “the art, the science and the doctrines” from jealous mythical entities who wanted to deprive people of the power of knowledge (Lombardi Satriani 1971:285). Similar to Christ and the Apostles, the Madonna is implicated in feuds, vendettas and other collective ‘non divine’ actions (Lombardi Satriani 1971). The literal interpretation of these narrations, whilst it clearly enforces De Martino’s argument concerning the syncretic nature of the pagan-catholic culture (1959), it should not escape attention as to the “intimate relationship between the local refractions of divine grace and the political status of the communities concerned” (Herzfeld 1990:113). Christian, when discussing the religious identity of the inhabitants of the Nansa Valley in Spain, has argued that the image of the Madonna has become “the pivot, the fulcrum, the hub of the emotional and cultural relations of the whole collectivities” (1972:100). The Madonna in the imagery of my informants – and I would argue for the Reggini alike – whilst it is clearly a gendered figure, is not associated with the virgin woman or the mother. I would argue that when my informants refer to the Madonna they rather refer to the cultural values related to her. These
values are ‘genderless’. As such they are adopted by a large group of people and the 'Ndrangheta alike.

The sanctuary of the Madonna di Polsi in San Luca, Aspromonte, represents for the 'Ndranghetisti an ‘energy transformation station’ and a ‘sentiment locus’ (Dubisch 1988:122, 1995:173). As Christian has put it, the shrines are “the loci for the transformation of divine energy for human purposes and the transformation of human energy for divine purposes” (1972:101). The sanctuary further represents the ideological and administrative locus for the different 'ndrine that act in the province of Reggio. Every year during the fiesta of the Madonna di Polsi the 'ndrine gather in the territory of San Luca in order to honour the Madonna and collaborate on important financial and political decisions making.

Corrado Alvaro (2005) notes that the turning point in the history of the sanctuario of Madonna di Polsi took place in 1881 with the first ‘coronation’ of the Madonna. In 1870 the government wanted to confiscate the possessions of the sanctuary (Alvaro 2005:71). The rector of the church, Enrico Macrì, with the collaboration of the then mayor of San Luca, managed to reverse the decision. For this first coronation of the Madonna, Trimboli writes; “For the fusion of the two precious crowns destined one for the head of the Mother and one for the head of the Baby, the magnanimous don Enrico Macrì, in the year 1880, passes from house to house in the village of San Luca and asks in the name of the Madonna di Polsi, for whatever precious jewels the people had. Men and women donated their bracelets, rings and earrings and thus such affluence was the accumulated gold that it was enough to cover the beloved Queen with a gold dress. Then, every year the Sanluchesi gather around the Madonna crowned for the first time in the memory of the Man [sic]” (1980:4 in Verzi’ Borgese 2006:54).

From the case presented above, it becomes clear that it was the conscious effort of both the ecclesiastic and political ‘order’ of San Luca to collaborate and bring back glory to the parish of Madonna di Polsi. This effort was based on a further collaboration of the people of the village who readily ‘gave back
the power to the Madonna’. Up until 1880, the devotion to the Madonna di Polsi had declined. Alvaro attributes this decline to the feeling of popular aversion towards the administrators of the sanctuary (2005:59). Indeed, a feeling of popular aversion towards the church was present in Calabria and Italy in general at the time. This was the long-lasting effect of the action of the Counter Reformation (1545-63) whose aim was that “the code of parochial observance should be made watertight and universally enforced” (Bossy 1970:53) and its effects were to last in Italy over the successive centuries. The social implications in the field of parochial observance were provoked by the entrance of the church into areas like kinship and the solidarities which presupposed them. By introducing a matrimonial code which “ran counter to the collectivist and contractual traditions of kinship morality” and attacking the institution of God-parenthood by debasing the right of the parents to choose the God-parents they pleased, the church aimed at “diverting all streams of popular religion into a single parochial channel” (Bossy 1970:47).

With the exception of the catechism and confession, the Counter Reformation Church, Bossy argues, has generally failed because of its reluctance to admit the kin-group as an essential part of the community (ibid.:68).

The Madonna di Polsi was first canonically crowned in 1881 and the coronation was carried out by the Pope’s bishop-delegate Francesco Saverio Mangeruna of Sinopoli. After the Second Council of Nicea in the year 787, the veneration of sacred images – initially banned around 725 by the emperor Leo III – was reinstated and legitimised. The Council drew a further distinction between the worship of God on the one hand and the Virgin Mary as well as the Saints on the other (Carroll 1996:50-51). From the end of the 16th century it became a common practice to crown images of the Madonna after evidence was submitted to the Vatican that such images were miraculous and venerated (Christian 1972:58). Carroll argues that the Catholic Church had to adapt to the image cults if it wanted to “maintain the nominal allegiance of the Italian Catholics” (1996:57). The Madonna di Polsi has been crowned three times in the past, on a once every fifty-year basis. Yet the fourth coronation took place only twenty five years after the last one because, “this is the normal rhythm of every generation who wants to renew their faith, during the course of their
lives, within the drama and the hopes of today” (Giancarlo Maria Bregantini, vice-bishop of the sanctuario, 2006).

‘La famiglia sacra’ – the sacred family

The Madonna, in my informant’s words, is the metaphor for power and family; “The family that protects and needs to be protected” as one of my male informants has put it. Moreover, the family has to be respected and defended. The unjust death of Christ does not only violate the divine, it further violates the family. Christ’s passion is the passion of the family. The family has been ‘penetrated’ as the result of the evil betrayal of Christ. The mother loses a son and the family is left powerless. The violation against the Madonna is then the violation against the family. This first violation – the sinful act against the family – has to be punished with violence. As such, the first violation comes to justify the violence that is exercised towards the protection of the family. As Lombardi Satriani argues, “the men could not find solidarity out of the family, which is comprised by dead and alive. In the exclusive cult of the family it is a matter of honour to take the blood of the people who have stained the name of the family” (1971:287). The mama santissima then – a term reserved for the 'Ndrangheta bosses – is in the 'Ndrangheta imagery a sacred representative of the family and a living ‘man-God’ who uses ‘discursive aggression’ (Gilmore 1987) legitimately.

Patronage, as has been suggested in the past, is the best way to describe the relationship between people and the divine entities (Christian 1972:ch2, Boissevain 1977, Lombardi Satriani 1979:96-97). The metaphor, with historical and economic conditions associated with the latifundia and their patrons, places the Madonna, Christ and the Saints in the place of mediator between individuals and God. Whilst in my research I have definitely encountered a great deal of devotion, reciprocity and love towards the Saints and the Madonna in particular, the metaphor that could best capture the relationship of my informants with their divine entities is that of affinity. There is a direct analogy between the worship of divine entities via their ritual itineraries and the worship of the ancestors manifested in the love and respect
for the elders as well as in the passing down of genealogical memory. The one invests the other with representation and legitimacy. In the stories of the Grecanici, the divine entity has manifested his/her will to inhabit their villages. The inhabitants have been honoured because they have been chosen. According to Lombardi Satriani, “this sensation can generate the experience of defying time” (1971:284). For example it has been narrated that the effigy of the Madonna who inhabited the village of Pentedattilo, has left the village in order to go to an abandoned oratory in the countryside of Melito Porto Salvo. The people of Pentedattilo were bringing the effigy back to the village on a daily basis, but miraculously this was moving to the oratory of Melito Porto Salvo during the night. Apparently the Madonna wanted her own church in Melito Porto Salvo. Every year, during June, the Pentedattilesi and the Melitesi renew this ancient tension. When the procession of the Madonna in Melito Porto Salvo draws to a close, the Pentedattilesi fight with the Madonna’s carriers until the Madonna passes into their possession. Having possessed the Madonna they start their triumphal procession to Pentedattilo and they return the Madonna to her church after the end of their procession.

On the close relationship between the divine and a specific territory and its inhabitants, the Grecanico poet Antonio Nucera reflects in Grecanico:

Aio Leo tu Africu tis Calabria
ti ivrese ton protino iglio ston Vua
ce edũliese stìn zoin-su ià tin Anglišia

sòssu ti t’ọnòma-su
t’ attšia-ma acà, tuo na-son su ecanna i pelecè-su
stìn oscia

Esù ti echise ta stéa-su òssu dio anglišie
ti chorù réma ce oscie
ce catha iméra cùnnu dio lutruhie
iati acomì to thélù i dio merie

Saint Leo of Africo, Calabria
you have seen the first light in Bova
and have worked all your life for the Church

so much your name
our ears have heard
and the echo of your axe
in the mountain

You, who have your bones in two churches
and they see the sea and the mountains
and every day they hear two liturgies
due to the will of the two parties
Nucera (2006) here refers to the separation of the bones of Saint Leo who lived in Aspromonte in extreme poverty. An indication of the life of the Saint can be found in religious documents that date back to 1172 (Acconcia Longo 1991:75), and the memory of San Leo is kept alive in popular songs that narrate the life and deeds of the Saint. The relics of Saint Leo were initially conserved in the cathedral of Bova before they were ‘stolen’ by the people of the village of Africo (ibid.). As a result, at present the relics of the saint can be found in Bova, whilst only one finger is kept in Africo (Stajano 1979:14). This event clearly highlights the dialectic relationship between the people’s identification with their territory and their ancestor Saint who honours and blesses them. It further hints as to the ‘life-orientated’ use of the bones or other relics that belong to the Saint as the case below illustrates.

During my fieldwork, the base of the statue of San Giovanni in Galliciano – that was stolen in 1972 – was found. My inquiries as to whom had initially stolen the base of the Saint and who had eventually found it led me to understand that the base had been stolen by ‘ladri’ (villains) and they, “you know who” (the ‘Ndrangheta), had managed, after pulling a lot of strings, to find it. A lot of Gallicites living in Reggio went to the village to be present for the return of the base of the Saint. In the pictures taken for the occasion, the inhabitants are gathered around the base in a similar manner that they gather around their elderly kin. In other pictures the men are depicted as carrying the base which is placed on top of a long wooden board. They seem happy and they smile. Young men appear to hug the statue of the Saint and lean against him in a very friendly manner. “For us, it was as if a relative returned home” I was told. The pictures related to the event were circulated among the participants who have placed them in prestigious positions in their homes in Reggio next to photographs of their relatives. As Herzfeld argues, “ancestral photographs and saint’s icons are both foci of emotional attachment. Both simultaneously express the individuality of the individuals they portray, and their entailment in a recognisable social schema” (1990:111).
Christian hinted at the relationship of affinity when he noted the oscillation of agency between human and divine entities (Christian 1972:101) when the divine ‘can be manipulated for political ends’ (Driessen 1984:80) or when the human are believed to embody the divine. Of interest is the case regarding the celebration of Sant’ Eufemia in the location of Sant’ Eufemia of Aspromonte. According to the custom, the image of Santa Eufemia must be burned as an enactment of the Saint’s ‘pathos’ that was ordered by the emperor Diocletian. Similar to all processions in Calabria, the Saint is carried by the portatori – the carriers – who consider it a great honour and symbolic sacrifice to carry him/her. On many occasions during the enactment of the burning of Santa Eufemia, a carrier may catch fire. This is interpreted as a divine manifestation that sacralises the carrier himself. The participants crouch before the carrier who proposes his hand to be kissed by the people similar to “a saint touched by the sky” (Lombardi Satriani 1971:291).

Lombardi Satriani (1971), with his focus on the familial boundaries as oscillating between the world of the living and the world of the dead, has pushed the limits of conceptualising the family in South Italy. The same idea of the theorising life and death as not rigid and oppositional but intertwined is advanced by Ariès (1981) and sufficiently reworked by Seremetakis in her work on death in Mani, Greece. Perplexed by the beginning of death ritual, Seremetakis reflects:

During fieldwork, there was always a nagging feeling that the beginning of the death ritual eluded me. My sense of the beginning was more a function of methodological expectations than a cultural reality. The ethnographic narration of ritual is assumed to be contingent on the insertion of the observer into the performance as a participant, coexistent with the sequencing and duration of the event. This coextensiveness is a metaphor for the fieldworker’s appropriation of the culture as a totality. To be separated from the initiation of the ceremony was to be separated from my own process of initiation into the local culture. To attend the beginning of a ceremony was, in some sense, to witness its structural origins. The elusiveness of the beginning perpetuated the tensions of relative outsiderhood and cultural distance. I soon realised there was no official beginning to the death ritual in Inner Mani. I had not realised that I was against a culture of the warning in which someone somewhere knows beforehand and is therefore in a position to construct a personal entry into the ceremony of death (1991:49-50).

Throughout the previous chapters I have gradually built on the notion of the Grecanici family. In the beginning of my fieldwork in a conversation with one
of my ‘intellectual’ informants, he argued that Greca

211

115 Between 1990-94 the average number of thefts reported in Reggio Calabria was 1,398 per
100,000 inhabitants. The national average was 2,603 whilst in the provinces of Palermo and
Catania it was 3,257 and 3,709 respectively (Paoli 2003:157).
be. Antonia is 50 years old, a widow. Her car, parked outside her house, has been stolen twice in the past. Both times Antonia approached the butcher of her neighbourhood complaining about the stolen car. The reply of the butcher on both occasions was that she did not need to worry. This was working as a comfort and promise. When Antonia thanked him, he very humbly replied; “Professoressa, a vostra disposizione” (at your disposal).

Three days later the car was outside Antonia’s house. The butcher apologised that it was the zingari (the gypsies) who stole the car and that’s why it took so long to return it to her. Unfortunately Antonia’s luck did not last much longer. In one of our telephone conversations (much later after I had left Reggio) she told me that her car was stolen for the third time. This time the car could not be returned because “those who were controlling the neighbourhood were arrested in one of those ridiculous governmental attempts to show us that they exist”. Antonia went to the carabinieri to report the larceny but “their computer did not work”. After having spent most of her day waiting for the ‘computer to work’ the carabiniere informed her that his shift was over and therefore she had to wait for his replacement. Antonia, very upset, replied, “Do not bother; I am going to the poliziotti”. In the polizia she was informed that on that specific day the department for thefts was closed and she had to return two days later if she wanted to report the incident. Antonia, furious by this time, replied that, “I did well to go to the carabinieri first”.

“And what did they tell you Signora?”

“That the computer did not work”.

Here Antonia’s critique goes beyond the ‘absent state’ argument. She explicitly criticises the DIA (Direzione Investigativa Antimafia – Antimafia Investigative Directorate), a new organisation with increased personnel to coordinate the police forces specialising in organised crime. The DIA came to reinforce the Parliamentary Antimafia Commission which was activated in 1963 with the scope to deal with the mafias in Italy. In this case, Antonia refers to the events between August and September 2007 when the police arrested a number of the 'Ndranghetisti in Reggio.

The rivalry between carabinieri and poliziotti – two different police forces in Italy – is renowned in Reggio. A lot of my informants (Reggini and Grecanici alike) have expressed a deep dissatisfaction concerning the effectiveness of both institutions. When encountering less or more serious problems, people in Reggio utilise their connections with friends, relatives and other wider political and economic networks rather than the police forces themselves. When I was in a difficult situation regarding the aggression towards me from one of my male neighbours, I was advised not to go to the police but rather speak to my friends of my social circle.
Ethnographic cases like the one presented above – at first glance at least – share resemblances with similar ethnographic cases of ‘favour transactions’ as they have been documented by Mediterranean ethnographers such as Kenny (1960, 1968), Campbell (1964), Silverman (1965, 1977), Boissevain (1966), Wolf (1966), Gellner (1977), Loizos (1977), Zuckerman (1977), White (1980), Gilmore (1987), Guarino (1991), and Pardo (1996), to name but a few. In these ethnographic cases, transactions are based either on direct reciprocity – in the Maussian sense – which establishes a power balance between the exchanging parties, or indirect reciprocity – in the Levis-Staussian sense – which presupposes the existence of trust and credit and thus is generalised.

The theories of exchange that have been presented in Mediterranean literature, where the notion of the gift holds a pivotal role, stem from the readings of Mauss’s essay on The Gift (1954) in what Parry calls “the conventional exegesis” of Mauss’s position (1986).

Antonia, in the case above, is considered to be one of the ‘intellectuals’ of Reggio. She is university educated with a high profile in regard to her participation in various political and civic groups in the city. Yet, she is considered as a humble person. Similar to her late husband, she is respected by the majority of the people of Reggio. As far as her late husband is concerned, he still captures the imagination of my informants as a person with great charisma, an excellent philosophy of life, and humility and his memory is still respected and admired in an almost devotional manner. My close relationship with Antonia permitted me to be more inquisitive regarding her relationship with the ‘Ndrangheta affiliates of the quartiere. She says: “My father was never implicated in ‘Ndrangheta affairs and equally neither were my brothers. Because we all come from the same area – the area Grecanica – we show a mutual respect for each other and maintain with the famiglia [that governs the quartiere] the minimum of the social relations. Apart from a cordial salutation we did not have further relations. As a child I was schoolmates with the boss’s daughter. We were not close friends but she was a nice girl and a good student. I remember one time I needed a book which I knew that she had. This book was very important because I had to prepare an essay on the history of Italy but my family did not have enough money to buy me the book. I thought
that the girl could lend me the book and thus I went to her house to ask for it. Her father [the boss] happened to be at home at that specific time. When he understood that I wanted to borrow the book he gave it to me saying that from now on the book is mine and I no longer needed to return it back to his daughter". Antonia remembers that his “language was mild and kind; a very good person in general”.

That first Mafioso ‘gift’ of her childhood remained unreciprocated because neither Antonia nor her late husband have been approached by the mafiosi since. The more recent ‘gifts’ of her adulthood are equally unreciprocated and as Antonia states, “I know that they will never ask me for anything”. That in-depth discussion prompted me to pay close attention to various cases where mafiosi appeared to give unreciprocated gifts. As Parry notices “the unreciprocated gift debases the recipient, and the charity of the ‘rich almoner’ is condemned (Mauss 1966:63, 1973:258 in Parry 1986:458) – presumably because it denies obligation and replaces the reciprocal interdependence on which society is founded with an asymmetrical dependence” (1986:458). Laidlaw, following Derrida (1978: 251-77), explains that in the case of the gifts in India known as dan the idea that ‘there is something that is given’ (Laidlaw 2000:622) is played down linguistically and in terms of treatment by both the donor and the recipient. As a result what is given is not viewed as charity but as an “anonymous and undifferentiated substance … which disappears once it has been given” (ibid.:623).

Unreciprocated gifts are given by the mafiosi to people that are well respected and humble. These people – and their immediate families – are not affiliated with the ’Ndrangheta and may be of a higher or lower economic and social status. The prerogative for the donation is that the recipients and the donor must share common values without the necessity to share any kind of relationship. In Antonia’s case she seems to receive free gifts from a person with whom she has not established any social connection (she does not even buy her meat from him). Yet, Antonia is well respected not only by the butcher but also by the rest of the society of Reggio. What Antonia and the butcher share in common are a collective respect and values such as humility
which are mostly celebrated at the grassroots. Respect that stems from friendship is also a strong motive for free gifts – albeit seldom – as in the case of ‘Lino’ discussed by Pardo where “friendship may facilitate the management of underworld-connected crises because it allows the actors to avoid problematic reciprocation and obligation” (1996:88).

The mafioso finds out about a case where he can offer a free gift directly – from the recipient – or indirectly by people who happen to have relationships with both the recipient and the donor. In any case, the mafioso appears very careful when s/he offers his/her disposizione to the potential recipient. During the act of offering, an elaborate code of politeness ensures both parties that whilst distance between them is maintained the recipient is free to accept or decline the offer. Asymmetrical dependence in cases of free gifts is played down by the mafiosi with the use of elaborate ‘speech levels’ that are used to manipulate relative social statuses, in the sense of ‘polite social interaction’ (Goffman 1956, Cohen and Camaroff 1976:87-89, Hughes-Freeland 2001:146-147). In central and south Italy, Tosi notes, the rules of address, dare del Lei (to use the Lei) and dare del Voi (to use the Voi) are markers of politeness and respect to the social distancing between the parties (2001:76-77). For example, the over use of ‘the third person or the plural’, the Lei and Voi, generate and maintain aspects of the mafioso ‘profile’ that are associated with “order, hierarchy and social distance” (Bourdieu 1991:1, Parkes 2001:233, Thin 2001:201). Even in one-to-one conversations amongst ‘ndranghetisti, the Voi is employed as a designation of etiquette and respect for the hierarchy. Language and social life, Bourdieu (1991) has argued, are inextricably linked. Culturally semantic words such as the Voi and Lei as well as the term ‘disposizione’ are put forward in the discourse in order to encourage and secure diverse social possibilities. Such contextual linguistic uses maintain the balance between distance from and acceptance of the mafioso free gift.

Moreover, the concept of disposizione is an ideological parameter implicit in the dialogues between mafiosi gift givers and recipients. It further de-emphasises the position of the gift givers so that the recipient does not assume
the position of the powerless. Being at the disposizione of someone means being elevated to the position of duty and sacrifice and orientates the “ideal goals of social action towards a future existence” (Parry 1986:467). The idea of salvation, Obeyesekere argues, “is inherent in the historical world religions” with the prevalence of sin or religious morality to determine “hell for sinners and heaven for saints” (1968 in Parry 1986:467, 1980). In Parry’s words;

An elaborate ideology of the ‘pure gift’ is most likely to develop in state societies with an advanced division of labour and a significant commercial sector. But what is also in my view essential to its articulation is a specific type of belief system, as is suggested by the fact that in all of the major world religions great stress is laid on the merit of gifts and alms, ideally given in secrecy and without expectation of any worldly return (1986:467).

Umiltà (humility) is a mode of social behaviour embedded in the ‘religious morality’ rhetoric of the ‘Ndrangheta. Umiltà dictates a low profile and is considered as a moral virtù. Affiliates of the higher ranks must exhibit a higher degree of umiltà which is usually materialised in the form of free gifts. As such are classed – at least to the bounds of my knowledge – anything from a single book to large amounts of money to deprived families or direct assistance in case of need. These gifts, “altruistic, moral and loaded with emotion”, (Parry 1986:466-467) are not instrumental for the exchange of omertà of the non-mafiosi affiliates. As already has been ethnographically documented, omertà (the code of silence) is a cultural trait that is shared among the populations of South Italy (Sant Cassia 1993). Similar to amicizia (friendship), omertà is not a mafioso idiom par excellence but it is equally shared among mafiosi and non-mafiosi alike. The mafioso does not exchange complicity either. Through a carefully elaborate polite language, the mafioso at once maintains the social distancing of the recipient and plays down the asymmetrical relation that is generated by the unreciprocated gift.

The claim to self-government

In his work on the ‘history of ‘governmentality’, Foucault has discussed what he terms as the ‘art of government’ as this is traced through textual sources of political analysis from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end to the
eighteenth century (1991:102). The rationality of government means “a way or system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government” (Gordon 1991:3). The art of government, as this is manifested in documentations Foucault says, is to propose a continuity between the power of those who govern and other sources of power “in both upwards and downwards direction” (1991:91).

In this chapter I was concerned with the idea of ‘self-government’ so immanent in the lives of my informants. More precisely I tried to unravel the pastoral game in Foucauldian terms, namely ‘the ‘daemonic’ coupling of ‘city-game’ and ‘shepherd-game’: the invention of a form of secular pastorate which couples ‘individualisation’ and ‘totalisation’” (Gordon 1991:8). Similar to the rest of the Reggino, Grecanici culture is heavily influenced by mafia culture. Thus some of the issues that are discussed above such as Grecanici kinship and 'Ndrangheta kinship cannot be discussed as two separate entities. The reason is that both modes of relatedness draw on the same mediums of blood and genealogy. Blood is believed to transcend time, hand down knowledge and ‘culturally’ prepare future generations of kin. It is the medium through which people who are not biologically connected can become ‘brothers of blood’, as blood is closely linked with the notion of governing the famiglia. The famiglia is considered at once a specific territory with a specific constitution of people and relations. Genealogy is linked with memory, cultural values and explicit understandings of what constitutes a ‘lawful’ appropriation of “persons and things” (Foucault 1991) be it people, territories or Saints. The 'Ndrangheta in the Reggino is also regarded as a family, one that may not be based entirely on biological relations but also on ‘social biology’. The 'Ndrangheta affiliates are thus tied with links of blood and genealogy since they all trace their origin to a common ancestor. The 'Ndrangheta’s common ancestral source is an overlapping of affinal and religious relations. The figure of Saint Michael the Archangel appears to be the religious ancestor via Scaracagnosso whilst the 'ndranghetisti bosses are referred to as ‘Mama Santissima’ as metaphor that is reserved for the Madonna. Clearly a gendered image, the Madonna’s values rather than
Madonna as a female entity is equally linked with notions of identity, power and territory.

Acquiring a sort of governmental status which is evident from the documentation found after the unification of Italy, the 'Ndrangheta is considered as a 'stato nello stato' (a state within the state) with a specific art of government and morality that is a “discursive mediation which allows a whole range of technologies to be brought to bear on the social as behaviour” (Procacci 1991:158, original emphasis). Whilst clearly the 'Ndrangheta’s affairs are explicitly reciprocal I also enquired about the idea that “sovereignty is seldom grounded on pure violence alone” (Gordon 1991:8). The free gifts that the mafiosi of a certain rank make are inherent in the 'Ndrangheta’s religious rhetoric of creating an image of the 'Ndrangheta that is at once both sacred and profane but unmistakably ‘of this world’. As the titles of the Santista and Vangelo ranks indicate, the end is to ‘arrive’ at the status of the living Saint. This is only accomplished though the malavita (the underworld) of the 'Ndrangheta. Free gifts then, offered by the 'Ndrangheta, may “make no friends” (Laidlaw 2000) or do not make the Reggini “less disenchanted about crime” (Pardo 1996:88), but provide a base for how people ‘think’ about the 'Ndrangheta.
Chapter Eight: The Dance

It was 1917, during the War ... It was Thursday: the homicide took place on Sunday and they arrested me immediately. It happened due to some dispute on dance and music, petty dispute with somebody, nothing really. That's how the conflict started and one night he and his brother-in-law came and slaughtered three of my cows to punish me ... Well, I investigated, I understood that it was him, the one of the dance and music, and when I was sure I went and cut his throat: I killed him.

From Africa,
By Corrado Stajiano (1979)

In the previous chapter I have discussed notions of self-government as these are understood by the actors. The Greca[nci articulate their claims to control their territories based on the elaborate context of family; a collapsing spatio-temporal context that encompasses multiple entries: living and dead subjects, divine entities and territories. This contextual matrix in the province of Reggio Calabria, of a specific divine tradition is best captured in the persona of the 'Ndrangheta. The profile of the 'Ndrangheta as oscillating between earthly joys and heavenly possessions allows for a specific theorisation of power as continually re-established and rotated between humans and non-humans.

In this chapter I will attempt to capture the essence of the distributed personhood of the 'Ndrangheta through the ritualistic Tarantella dance. During the religious celebrations the Greca[n]ci 'ndrine, similar to the rest of the 'ndrine of Reggio, display their power by patronising almost the entire religious event. For the purposes of my analysis I will focus on the Festa della Madonna della Consolazione or simply the Madonna della Consolazione as it is colloquially referred to by my informants. The Madonna della Consolazione similar to other religious celebrations in the Reggino is a polysemic ritual.

At first, I will develop my argument by highlighting the polysemic nature of the ritual of the Madonna della Consolazione. I will then concentrate on the ritualistic dance of the Tarantella that is patronised by the various 'ndrine of Reggio. I will argue that dance holds a specific agency which indexes a variety of relations of tradition, space, rank, hierarchy, power, appropriation of power and ownership of the territory.
The Madonna della Consolazione

The Madonna della Consolazione is celebrated annually on the second Saturday of September when the devoted Reggini form a glorious procession from the Santuario di Santa Maria della Consolazione\(^{118}\), in the locality of Eremos, through the Via Cardinale Portanove, Via De Nava and Corso Garibaldi, to the cathedral in the Piazza Duomo. The fiesta for the Madonna\(^{119}\) constitutes the major religious celebration in the province of Reggio (Reggino) that clearly manifests sentiments of “submission and obedience” to the Mother of Christ (Valente 1971:278).

The night before the transportation of the Quadro (picture) that depicts the Madonna with the Holy Baby, hundreds of people of all the ages spend the night in the Santuario in Eremos where they celebrate with music and dance. ‘Sharing’ time with the Madonna holds a specific significance in the socio-cultural imagination of Greccanici and Reggini alike for the fact that divine entities are considered as ‘part of the family’. Before sunrise the following morning thousands of people start congregating at the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is built on a hill and the road to Eremos is quite demanding. For this reason, people who intend to participate in the procession wear their most comfortable shoes. The air is filled with prayers and hymns that are transmitted by the church megaphones. The Sanctuary is hermetically packed with people, priests and the portatori della Vara\(^{120}\) (carriers of the Vara). The portatori are members of the confraternity of the portatori della Madonna (carriers of the Madonna) – one of the oldest confraternities in Reggio – and they carry the Vara during the processions.

By the time the Madonna exits the Santuario the crowd has reached its peak. We are literally packed one on top of the other as we all strive for the best position in order to get closer to the Madonna. People are trying to place themselves as close as possible to the steps of the church in order to be able to

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\(^{118}\) The Santuario (sanctuary) is the parish church in Eremos where the Madonna stays during the year apart from the time that she is transported to the cathedral in the Piazza Duomo.

\(^{119}\) The first celebration dates back to 1693 (Lombardi Satriani 1971:289).

\(^{120}\) Vara refers to the whole structure upon which the picture of the Madonna is placed.
touch the Vara. The Madonna exits amidst an apotheosis of applause. The portatori push for space and I feel that I am loosing my balance as I strive to place myself close to them in order to take my pictures. How to describe the force of a human wave which is getting larger and stronger? How to put into words the emotions of 100,000 people who are shouting “Viva Maria”? Fortunately, the portatori feel flattered that a woman exhibits interest in taking pictures of them and thus permit me to photograph the Madonna from a very close proximity. People are throwing flowers towards the Vara whilst others applaud and throw flowers from their balconies. Others are taking the opportunity to do some business by selling balloons to the children. In this procession every politically important person is present ranging from the Mayor and his council to other local politicians and highly-placed public administrators.

A lot of women are without shoes, a sign of a vow. In previous processions, not many years before my fieldwork, as I was told, a lot of women were licking the road up to the Sanctuary. These powerful performances have been eclipsed but a lot of women still attend the whole procession from Eremos to the Duomo without shoes. Devotional performance is a powerful context of identity in Reggio, closely related to the Madonna herself and her allusion to the familial context. Both sexes through diverse and up to a point dramatic performances put themselves at the Madonna’s disposal.

Religious performances have extensively occupied the Mediterranean literature. Furthermore, the disproportionate participation of the sexes at religious masses has been attributed to the church’s emphasis on the women as being responsible for the spiritual health of the family (Davis 1984, Wolf 1984). This, up to a point, may explain the poor participation of the men during the everyday masses. Grecańici men for instance appear very reluctant to participate in the quotidian masses both in Reggio and their villages. Due to the fact that the church is perceived as an institution amongst the rest of the population.

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121 This is the official estimation of participation for the year 2007 provided by the representative of the church in Reggio.
122 Here I refer to social dramas in Victor Turner’s sense – that is public performances related to conflict (1974).
governmental institutions, it is approached with scepticism. Yet, expressed feelings of anti-clericalism should not be deemed as ‘atheism’ for the fact that the Grecanici love for the Divine does not comply with the love for the institution of the church. A lot of my male informants have frequently expressed their discomfort about their Catholic priests accusing them of paedophilia and corruption. They were also interested to know if men in Greece adopt a similar stance towards Greek priests.

Dubisch (1995) draws the same conclusion in relation to the men of Tinos. Whilst she notes that the Orthodox Church in Greece is always approached with scepticism by the male actors, she maintains that it is quite difficult to decide whether or not the female predominance in religious activities is a recent phenomenon. She further cites Durban (1897:101) who reports the “magnificent assemblage of men” on religious days in Athens. Piault (1980) also captures a moving image of the men of Ano Ravenia in Greece who appear very distressed due to the fact that they will not be able to participate in the mass for Easter Holy Week. The Grecanici adopt a particularistic stance in relation to divine entities. Precisely because Saints are perceived as familial members and index family, they are related to a specific territory (Lisón-Tolosana 1966, Christian 1972). This further alludes to the syncretic nature of Christianity (De Martino 1959) as this is practiced in various Mediterranean localities. For example, the Grecanici of San Giorgio extra (originating mainly from the villages of Galliciano, San Lorenzo, Roghudi, Bova, Bagaladi, Rocafora and Condofuri) perceive San Giorgio – the saint to whom the church in the neighbourhood is devoted – as not really their own saint. San Giorgio is respected but he is not the figure of Grecanici devotion. During one of my first visits to the piazza of San Giorgio extra I went inside the church to light a candle. This surprised the men who were present and prompted them to ask me why I wanted to go into the church. It was expected that my saints and Madonnas would be back in Greece in my place of origin and nowhere else. However, the very same people were very pleased to see me attending the fiestas of ‘their’ saints in their villages. Due to the fact that divine entities are more or less semantically dense figures, they are thus perceived as exercising their agency upon their subjects differently.
I Cavalieri della Madonna: The Virgin and the Men

The Madonna exits the Santuario amongst the applause of thousands of people. In front of the Vara there are a small group of priests, one of which holds a long pole with a cross on its end. One portatore (carrier) follows the priests holding the banner of the association “Portatori della Vara” (carriers of the Vara). The banner is very large, made of red velvet and with the image of the Quadro (picture) in the middle and the words “Associazione Portatori della Vara” and “Madonna della Consolazione Reggio Calabria”.

The Vara, including the four bars upon which it is placed, weights 1000kg, is 4.5 metres high and 2.18 metres long. The frame for the picture of the Madonna is a splendid handcraft in silver leaf crafted on a wooden kernel. The Quadro (120cm x 120cm) that depicts the Madonna and the Christ Child is an artwork by Nicolo Andrea Capriolo commissioned by the Reggino Camillo Diano who donated the picture to the parish church in 1547. The Virgin appears sitting on a throne. She is holding the baby and on her right side stands Saint Francis of Assisi with the sacred stigmata. With his one hand, the Saint holds open the book of the Franciscan rules and with the other a wooden cross. To the left of the Madonna is Saint Antonio of Padova with a white lily in one hand and a theology text in the other. Above the Madonna two angels are holding a crown and the palm leaf symbolises ordeal and glory (Lacava 1985:19-20).

The association of the portatori was officially institutionalised in 2000. We read in the constitution of the association that “this is a private association of believers – irrelevant of political parties” (art. 2). According to the constitutional articles, the association is born from the culture, the concrete tradition and the spiritual bond amongst the portatori of the Quadro of the Maria Santissima Madre della Consolazione. The need to develop and defend

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123 The portatori were once exclusively fishermen from Reggio. Presently, and especially after the official institutionalisation of the association of the portatori, men of diverse professions can enter the association.
the traditional values and the faith that animates the portatore during the procession of the Sacred Effigy, is predominantly stressed. The exclusive aim of the association – as it appears in art. 4 – is to provide charity, solidarity where needed and diffuse the culture and activities of the portatore. In collaboration with the assistente ecclesiastico (ecclesiastic assistant who is a member of the church) the portatori offer their services to the Archbishop for the transfer of the sacred Quadro to and from Eremo.

The Capo Stanga (head of the bars) – there are eight Capi Stanga in total – is the vanguard of the four bars of the Vara and is nominated by the portatori as their representative. Each one of the bars is sustained by approximately twenty-five men. The Capo Stanga receives the signals from the ecclesiastic assistant and transmits his commands to the portatori for any pause and restarting. The portatori are divided into two groups of 100 men and rotate in succession under the bars. They are constrained to simultaneous collective movements – they follow the tempo of the council music band that precedes them – in order to effectively transport the Madonna to the cathedral. L’Assistente Ecclesiastico is “the spiritual guide of the association” and every three years is nominated by the metropolitan Archbishop. He is the ecclesiastic guarantee of the association, responsible for the ‘spiritual’ preparation of the portatori and the organisation of the transfer of the Sacred Effigy to and from Eremo. He is also incorporated into the association as an honorary but non-voting member.

The procession concludes with the Madonna entering the Cathedral volata\(^{124}\) (flying). This is an expression used to describe the portatori running into the church whilst carrying the Vara. Hymns, people crying out “Viva Maria”, singing, applauding, invoking and crying, orchestrate the Madonna’s triumphal entrance into the Cathedral. This is the ultimate fatigue that the portatori endure and symbolises their struggle for purification. "I cavalieri della Madonna" (the Madonna’s knights/escorts) as they are affectionately called in the Reggino, claim that they carry the Madonna on their backs as

\(^{124}\) This custom dates back to the Spanish era (1503-1734).
well as in their hearts. “The emotions were reaching the stars. Our embrace and the kiss of the Archbishop were concluding the procession” (Francesco Marino, portatore, in La Stanga 2007).

Not all the members of the association are entitled to the role of portatore of the Madonna. According to the rules of the association the men must exhibit high spiritual and physical qualities. The devotion to the ‘course of the purification’ – a reference to the physical suffering of transporting the Vara – does not apply only to the specific festive day. The course of the purification needs to be a drive in life exhibited in the modest profile of the portatore. The portatore ought to be at the disposal of and in solidarity with the ‘helpless’. “Every man carries the Vara with much love and devotion. Under the Vara all the portatori are equal”.

**Suffering makes might**

Dubisch draws from her own work in Tinos, Greece, in order to discuss the female religious performances as means towards politicisation. It is through the culturally constructed idiom of ‘suffering’ – expressed through verbal complaint, the body, ritual actions or other means – that women in Greece find a performative ‘space’ for their ‘social roles’ (1995:217). “This greater involvement of women in religious activities, both within and outside the church, has been noted throughout the Mediterranean Catholic and Orthodox world” (ibid.:211). Dubisch justifies this claim by suggesting that the Virgin Mary offers a positive model for female identification (see also du Boulay 1986:141). It is the ‘shared’ values between women and the Madonna that facilitates, perhaps, women to be ‘public’. Dubisch challenges the public-men/domestic-women dichotomy by highlighting the performative aspect of female suffering both within and outside the context of pilgrimage. Performance makes “all roles public in the sense that they are defined and

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125 Here I have paraphrased Kertzer who argues that ‘ritual makes might’ (1988:102).
127 The idea of the mediator – from a political point of view – is also shared by Campbell (1964), Boissevain (1965, 1974), Gellner (1977) and Herzfeld (2005).
evaluated by a larger community” (ibid.:207 original emphasis, see also Dubisch 1993).

If indeed it is the intersubjective evaluation of the performance that makes the role public, then public roles should be examined to the degree that they are performed successfully and thus contextually evaluated. The discussion over the public, private and gendered self in Mediterranean ethnography is long (see the critiques provided by Hirschon 1993, Herzfeld 1986b, Goddard 1987, Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991, Sant Cassia 1991, Sciana 1993, 2003:133-149, Dubisch 1995:198-200, Mitchell 2002:68-71, Kirtsoglou 2004:20-24).

Religious performances in Reggio are powerful discourses that transcend gender dichotomies for it appears that both sexes are interested in their devotional performances evaluated as successful. The ritualistic context renders these performances as more dramatic and thus more powerful. Devotional suffering is an idiom equally employed by men that accounts for a successful performance of identity and is directly connected with the image of the Madonna.

The *portatori della Vara*, for example, engage in a Christian formation according to a model of Marian life (art. 3). “Modesty, meekness, humility are values only admirable for women” (Campbell 1966:167), we read in many Mediterranean ethnographies. Clearly this is not the case for the Portatori della Madonna. The portatori not only need to engage in a Marian life but also need to exhibit virtues that in other Mediterranean contexts are ethnographically documented as attributed to women. This again brings into question issues of performance and representation as they are ethnographically explored in the Mediterranean context (Block 1981, Galt 1982, Herzfeld 1984, 1985, Sant Cassia 1991).

The symbol of the Madonna, through the aforementioned example of the portatori, appears to inform the performances of both men and women (Giovannini 1981:424). While qualities like virility, power, diffidence and loyalty are elements of a successfully presented male; modesty, meekness and humility are equally powerful elements of manhood. As Herzfeld pointed out
in relation to the Glendiot men, they are stereotypically presented as “loud and boisterous or be treated as failures”. Yet, “it is often those men who do not shout curses and draw their knives at the slightest hint of ridicule who gain the greatest respect” (1991c:143, original emphasis).

Il sacro e il profano

In the province of Reggio, religious celebrations provoke the ‘effervescence’ so eloquently described by Durkheim. The celebrations of the Madonna di Polsi, Saint Roco in Gioia Ionica, the Madonna delle Grazie in Lazzaro, Saint Leo in Bova and Saint Giovanni Batista in Galliciano – to name but a few – are religious manifestations where the ballo (dance) and music are an integral part of the ritual (see also Polimeni 1983, Castagna 1988, 2006, Barresi 1997:98-100). In the Reggina imagination “festa is the anniversary of a religious date; and the profane aspect of the manifestation is the mode to express sentiments of devotion, joy, yearning and protection” (Valente 1971:278).

Alvaro (2003), portrays a vivid image of the fiesta of the Madonna di Polsi before the Second World War; “New pilgrims are added every day and night, with the song on their lips. The first and the second day of September, Polsi receives in its valley more that 20,000 people. Imagine, 20,000 people full of faith, strength and brio; 20,000 men that never sleep. In the streets of the valley, in the piazza, all seem dead from the tarantolla128; they dance like crazy wherever they hear the sound of the zampogne and the tamburini129. The crowd agitates with the most original and uncontrollable dances; hundreds of zampogne lament continuously in this nutritious firework of collective gun shots” (2003:210).

128 Here Alvaro refers to the myth that connects the bite of the tarantolla (veleine spider) with the dance of Tarantella. On this issue cf. Lombardi Satriani, 1951:90-96, De Martino 2002. Especially De Martino employs a psychoanalytic approach to explain tarantella dancing performances in Puglia as stress relief practices, a theme which is magnificently reworked in the ethnographic film “La Taranta” (1962) by Gian Franco Mingozzi. The same approach is further developed by Danforth (1989) in his analysis on Anastenaria (firewalking) in Greek Macedonia and America.

‘Lyrical’ this picture may be, but it does not diverge from reality. Madonna di Posli in the Reggina imagination, apart from being a beloved Madonna, is also the religious heart of the ’Ndrangheta. In recent years, the Madonna di Polsi receives 40,000 to 50,000 people. Every group of participants brings with them their own musicians. After having eaten the goat meat they celebrate with the music of organetto and tamburello and dance the tarantella. Thousands of goats are annually slaughtered during the fiesta. During the year of my residence in Reggio, the fiesta was overshadowed by the massacre in Duisburg on 15th of August 2007 between different clans originating from San Luca, Aspromonte.

On every occasion of religious manifestation the profane interweaves with the sacred in the most celebratory manner. The centrality of the religious manifestations in communal life has been extensively documented in the Mediterranean literature. As Boissevain (1992) has demonstrated, festivals – invented, re-invented, or not – hold a special place in the life of many European countries. Lisón-Tolosana has discussed the fiestas in Belmonte de los Caballeros (Spain) as the “secular-religious festivals, during which

130 Tarantella is a coupled dance in 12/8. The structure of the melody is not homogenous. Different villages and localities have diverse melodic structures which are reflected in the dancing style of the tarantella (Gatto 1988:86). For a labanotation analysis of the dance see Carbone 1988. The typical musical instruments to perform for the dance of the tarantella are the organetto (accordion), tamborello (tambourine) and zampogna (bagpipes).

131 In Greece for example, the religious manifestations celebrated in the name of a Saint or the Madonna are similarly discussed in relation to the appropriation of a specific time and place that hold a special importance in the collective conscience (Kiriakidou-Nestoros 1979:20-22). The fiesta offers a ritualistic time during which the community reaffirms its cohesion and constructs new relations. It is thus a centripetal and simultaneously centrifugal occasion of a religious, social and economic character (Skouteri-Didaskalou 1989-1990). Nitsiakos puts forward an environmentalist argument when he claims that ‘natural’ symbols adopted in religious practice reflect the intimate relationship between the religious subject and nature. This relationship is dialectical and is reaffirmed by a mode of respect and protection. In relation to the ‘Holy’ water that is found in many Greek shrines, he argues that this water not only prevents any private claims over the shrines but constitutes them as the loci par excellence for public administration (1997:61). Drawing from his fieldwork among a Greek minority in Albania in south Dropoli, Nitsiakos claims that it is precisely around those religious loci of public administration that collectivities may find inspiration towards the invention or re-invention of their identity (ibid.:75). Zografou has highlighted the ideological nature of the Greek religious fiesta. She is using dance as her pivotal point to examine historical and ideological formations (2007) as they are being depicted in religious rituals that are still practiced or in their folkloristic revivals (2003:227-284).
community achieves its highest outward expression of life” (1966:11). “The religious vitality of the community” – Lisón-Tolosana argues in reference to the processions of San Roque and the Assumption of the Virgin – “is abundantly clear and it is religion that is emotional, imaginative and extraverted. In the apotheosis of the external cult, the liking for its colour and dramatisation, we can see that merging of the profane festival into an occasion of religious solemnity has played so constant a part in the spiritual history of the community” (ibid.:299).

Manifestations of love, protection and devotion pertain to the quotidian life of my informants. There is not a single Grecanici home – and on many occasions a Reggini home – where icons depicting the ‘Saint protector’ of the place of origin, icons of the Madonna, small statues of the Madonna or saints and Rosario Catholic crosses are not on display. Especially the saints assume a very specific role in both familial and communal life. People who live in Reggio and in a similar manner Grecanici migrants in Europe return annually to their place of origin in order to celebrate their own saint. The local saint is not only the protector of the locality, it is ‘a member of the community’ in the sense that s/he ‘belongs’ to the people of the community as much as the subjects of the community belong to him/her. This further implies the human qualities given to the divine. San Giovanni Batista (Patron Saint protector of Galliciano) is considered as bello (beautiful). In this case the saint is ‘beautiful’; yet this is a quality not only of physical beauty but also of character. The words bello/bella are also used in reference to people with etic valuations of respect and admiration (Castagna 2006:44). San Giovanni is bello because he is compassionate, helpful and devoted to the Gallicianesi. San Leo of Bova and Africo may be vendicativo (vindictive) while San Rocco may be cattivo (bad). Stories that narrate the Saints actions are frequent.

“A woman had a son who was lost for many years. She had made a vow to San Rocco for her son to return. During the Saint’s procession the woman touched the statue of the Saint. Immediately she dropped dead”. This quality of bad character is attributed to the Saint and not to the woman. The Saint who
does not fulfil his duties towards his community is still obeyed and feared but is not _bello_.

Additionally, there is the appropriation of the images of Madonna and Christ. The conflict between Christianity and paganism and the subsequent victory of Christ is expressed in many narratives in their multiple variants in Aspromonte (cf. Lombardi Satriani 1971:284). In these narratives both Christ and the Madonna appear to interfere in every aspect of human quotidian life: battles, commerce, vendetta, joy and pain. The dance – an integral part of the quotidain life and the religious celebrations – is put forward as a means of pleasing the divine. The procession of San Giovanni in Galliciano ends with the Saint dancing the tarantella. The men who hold the Vara with the statue dance the tarantella with the sound of the tamborello and the organetto because, as they explain, “anche il Santo vuole il suo divertimento” (the Saint also wants his own amusement). In Gioia Ionica during the procession of Saint Rocco the people prompt the Saint to; “Abballa, abballa, Roccu e futtitindi” (dance Rocco and don’t give a fuck) (Lombardi Satriani 1971:292, De Franco 1988).

**The efficacy of ritual**

The ritual of the Madonna della Consolazione – and equally in every other religious celebration in the Reggino – is a succession of liturgy-procession/dance-liturgy/dance. These processes that involve speech, singing and dancing clearly incorporate many of the elements that are argued to be the “distinguishing marks of ritual” (Bloch 1989:21, original emphasis). Bloch tackled the problem of how “ritual makes its statements appear powerful and holy” (ibid.). Sacralisation and power, he proposes, need to be understood as derivatives of the formalised nature of ritual (Bloch 1971, 1989). It is then this ‘all time context’ – the result of the formalisation of traditional authority – which becomes the symbolic authority of the ritual. Taking this postulation as my starting point, I will delineate the axes of my argument around power representation, legitimisation and contestation. I am particularly concerned with the polysemic notion of ritual as this is evident in the Festa della
Madonna. Apart from collective celebratory contexts, religious fiestas in Reggio are patronised by the 'Ndrangheta.

The patronising of a specific ritualistic time and space are mostly desired by the 'ndrine that act in Reggio because this is the context where they draw their political authority and symbolic power. The dance in front of the cathedral is ritualised and a variety of dancing symbols\textsuperscript{132} – salutation, confrontational position, and challenge – are implemented to index power relations according to the hierarchical rank of the 'Ndrangheta members. The very dancing performance is thus endowed with a further political message explicitly intertwined with the ritualistic time and space. In other words it is religious power adorned with political power.

For Abélès (1988), this is dealing with the metaphor of sacred power projected through political ritual\textsuperscript{133}. The question of political drama, according to Abélès, cannot be explained separately from the question of political representation and legitimisation in modern society (1988:391-2). Abélès elaborates his argument by examining two specific political rituals performed by the President of the French Republic, Francois Mitterrand: the inauguration of a railway station in the town of Nevers and the annual pilgrimage to Solutré. The ritual, according to Abélès, brings into play the relationship between political power and civil society (1988:393). During the inauguration in Nevers the emphasis is on spatial directionality and movement and a further message of friendship, loyalty and solidarity. Mitterrand’s movement from the centre to periphery and back to the centre is a symbolic engagement – “often translated into an accumulation of a successive electoral base” (1988:394:n. 4) – through which the president seeks public legitimisation. Abélès notes that;

\ldots the consistency and polysemic range of the ritual undoubtedly derive in part from the multiplicity of registers employed in part from the insertion of the sacralised act into the field of communication shared by the global society. The president’s act consisted in adhering scrupulously to a model belonging to the Republican tradition while using its symbols, its actions, even its time to express something quite other than what should have come across in speech or a press interview (1988:395).

\textsuperscript{132} These dancing manoeuvres in the local repertoire are referred to as \textit{simboli} (symbols).
\textsuperscript{133} See also Gledhill’s analytical discussion concerning Abélès’ argument (2000:145-147).
The ritual of the ‘pilgrimage to Solutré’ revolves around the president’s personal history, his hiding from the Germans and his marriage to one of his helpers’ daughters. The president’s ascendance to Solutré partly reflects his position in the political hierarchy. The ritual thus makes visible the divine/man invested with supreme power, exposing simultaneously the earthly man/president walking with his family and friends. It also symbolises the president’s rendezvous with history and thus his ‘unchanging’ nature is further portrayed.

By combining the registers of the mundane and the sacred, the ritual provides an arresting summation of the different facets of Mitterand’s personality at the same time as it tends to establish him as a mythological hero in an arresting face-to-face with the nation and with history (Abélès 1988:397).

The “interweaving of a religious motif with profane intentionality” (ibid.:398), grants ritual a historic form of legitimacy and thus it is always open to interpretation. The ritual’s contextual dramatisation, as Abélès proposes, is to be understood with reference to specific ‘focalising elements’ – formalism and artifice, drama and sentiment – from which political legitimacy is drawn.

As Baumann has further suggested, ‘competing constituencies’ – in plural and/or non-plural societies – may draw on ritual or prescribe to it different symbolic messages according to their opposing claims. This poses ritual in an often contested spatio-temporal context towards public attention, territorial patronage and recognition (Baumann 1992:100). Mitchell (2002), in the Maltese context, has approached ritual as a ‘modern act’ through which ambivalent local perceptions and ideological positions related to wider contexts – in his case Europe – can be successfully accommodated. He builds upon Boissevain’s (1991) previous understandings of the revitalisation of European rituals to claim that ‘competing constituencies’ appear to be concerned with the “ritual mastery and negotiation of the formal hegemonic order of the festa” (2002:185). Faeta draws on the ritual of flagellation during

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Holy Saturday at Nocera Terinese in Calabria to further explore the relationship between fiesta and locality as this is experienced in Mezzogiorno. Apart from the emphasis on the celebration of local identity and political antagonism expressed during the fiesta, Faeta questions the use of the term fiesta ‘antica’ (ancient) as a form of temporal manipulation. The image of the fiesta antica is powerful, Faeta maintains, because it evokes a distant temporal dimension and is thus open to different interpretations. The one who posses these ‘temporal keys’ is the master of the fiesta (2005:161-6). Silverman, working in central Italy, has also questioned the symbolic expression of society through ritual by exploring “the relationship between social inequality and ritual statements about inequality” (1981:164 original emphasis). Through the analysis of notions such as sex, age, patronage and territoriality she argued that “in a number of instances ritual may be seen as reordering, distorting and disguising objective orders of inequality” (ibid.:180). Developing hence the Durkheimian thesis in another direction (Baumann 1992), it could be claimed that in so far as political representation is concerned, ritual is the context where power seekers and power holders can equally participate towards the same or diverse ends (Kertzer 1988:69). I would agree then with Mitchell that the move from older theoretical schemata can bring ritual – as it is performed in many European societies – to the fore as a context where local communities not only celebrate their re-affirmation but also their ambiguities and contestations (2002:185-188).

Through patronising almost the entire event of the fiesta of the Madonna, attention and legitimacy is accomplished through the performative nature of ritual. What is actively brought to the fore is the ritualistic enactment of the 'Ndrangheta’s sacred image and its perpetual reconstitution as such. By adhering closely to the notion of ‘tradition’, the 'Ndrangheta is presented as the warrantor of cultural and historical continuity. Its persona is legitimised by its anchoring to past epochs of resistance, initially to the Bourbons and then later to the ‘Piemondese’ Italian state. Furthermore, and perhaps predominantly, the 'Ndrangheta aspires to remind the Reggini that, when the other sources of power have failed them, the 'Ndrangheta has been the only ‘system’ (cf. Saviano 2007:38-60) into which their collective needs could be
comfortably accommodated. The mundane origin rhetoric and the entanglement of the myth ‘we are the people and for the people’ does not differentiate when compared to the nationalistic rhetoric as proposed in neighbouring Mediterranean contexts\(^{135}\) (such as Greece and Spain) or in the Grecaniche cultural associations. It is precisely this entanglement of the sacred and the profane that endows the persona of the 'Ndrangheta with a more authentic dimension that ideologically works as a reminder to the audience of its mundane origin. This clothing of the power of the 'Ndrangheta into religious decipherability makes it appealing to most of my informants. Furthermore the ritual of the Madonna as a polysemic context allows for various competing or non-competing elements to be registered.

**The agency of dance**

I will now concentrate on the ritualistic dance of Tarantella that, at least in the year of my fieldwork, was entirely patronised by the various 'ndrine of Reggio. I will argue that dance holds a specific agency which indexes a variety of different relations: tradition, space, rank, hierarchy, power, appropriation of power and ownership of the territory. The notion of ‘ritualisation’ is pertinent to my argument here, as it brings attention to the ‘way that certain social actions are strategically distinguished in relation to other actions’. Bell argues that;

... ritualisation is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities. As such, ritualisation is a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’, and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors (1992:74).

The 'Ndrangheta as a mode of representation attracts the interest of a lot of people who would like to be associated or directly affiliated with it. Furthermore engaging with the 'Ndrangheta’s personhood is something that is desired by most of my informants. The patronising of the ritual brings

\(^{135}\) The “self-proclaimed mission of defending the traditional values of ‘Helleno-Christian civilisation’ from the western and secular influences” (Clogg 1992:163) was the touchstone of the ideological propaganda of the military junta in Greece from 1967 to 1973.
attention and legitimacy to the 'ndrine as ‘tenders and pleasers’ of the divine. The 'ndrine, by carefully placing themselves closer to the Madonna, are elevated to a semi-divine status. The public space – in front of the cathedral – is where the 'ndrine are “visibly invested with supreme power” (Abélès 1988:397). Yet, they appear approachable in the manner that everybody who wishes to participate and celebrate with them is welcome. The 'Ndrangheta distributes its personhood in the sense that people who attend or dance with the 'ndranghetisti become themselves owners of a specific notion of power; the power to command a territory or just capturing an illusion of what it means to govern “persons and things” (Foucault 1991). Here tradition is played out to draw special attention to the political aspect of dance. The degree to which the dance is successfully ‘interpreted’ is explained by the audience’s exhibited ‘interest and desire’ to become collectively related to “an explicit social and community-wide message framework” (Feld 1984:393).

My inquiries related to the ritualistic dance were usually met with similar responses of the type: “now you touch upon things/affairs of the 'Ndrangheta”. Before entering into further conversations regarding the form of the dance and its symbolism it was perfectly clear that as far as public dancing performances were concerned these were viewed as direct signifiers of the 'Ndrangheta. One element of equal importance is that the dancers are not appreciated in relation to their capacity to produce an aesthetically pleasing performance. To put it differently, the emphasis is on the participation rather than the accomplished dancer. In this context then, as Giovanni, 25, has put it: “nobody will tell you whether you danced well or not because it does not matter. It is important though that you danced”.

Theorising the ritualistic tarantella, the analytical focus from the performer/performance shifts to that of the viewer/performance. At first sight this posses an apparent inconsistency. According to theories of performativity, the subject’s identity and that of the performance cannot be analysed separately for they are constituted and established simultaneously (Butler 1993, 1999). Furthermore, the subject approaches dancing performances in a reflexive manner (Kaeppler 1967, Cowan 1990, Manos 2003, Kirtsglou
The Greca, and to a wider extent all the subjects that choose to participate in the ritualistic dances are indeed reflexively aware of the plethora of indexical relations in their performances. In order to account for these dancing indexical relations, I will draw on the fractal concept of personhood as this is developed in the works of Strathern and Gell. I am aware that both authors have dealt with the agency of artefacts. Yet, the aspect of work and agency (Strathern 1988) as well as the relations among agents and patients and the indexical relations between work and creator I believe can be applied to dancing performances too.

For one, Strathern has argued that the work put into the creation of things is a sphere of agency that lies in the “effective definition of the scope of relations that such work can create” (1988:156). In this sense, work cannot be measured separately from relationships and subsequently objects cannot be disposed of without reference to such relations. What matters here is not the relationship to the object per-se but the relationships through others with respect to the object (1988:162). Another important issue that she poses is the relationship between work and motivation. She maintains that work is a “purposive activity but is directed towards effectiveness in relationships” (ibid.:164). Work includes making things, and as has been previously stated, things are a means towards the creation of relationships. It is work then which produces or makes visible a relationship, for example between the performance of tarantella and the audience. Consequently, the products of work become evidence of a person’s deliberation. This deliberation is directed away from the self thus acquiring a social status (1988:164). The performance of a public tarantella then can be directed away from the performer, thus targeting the audience, without being separated though from the intentionality of the performer. That is without being separated from the nexus of relations that the performer has deliberately inserted in the first place.

The focus on social relationships has also been shared by Alfred Gell, who argues that artworks and material artefacts mediate social agency (1998). An agent, Gell claims, is any 'thing' (e.g. an artwork or a person) 'who is seen as
initiating causal sequences of a particular type, that is, events caused by acts of
mind or will or intention.' (1998:16, 17, 19). 'Whenever an event is believed to
happen because of an "intention" lodged in the person or thing which initiates
the causal sequence, that is an instance of 'agency" (ibid.:17). Persons are
always the primary agents but artworks and other inanimate objects can be
agents in a secondary or indirect sense, for although they themselves are not
intentional beings they frequently act as the mediums through which people
'manifest and realise' their intentions (1998:21). The indexes that permit the
"abduction of social agency" are seen as the outcomes or instruments of social
agency (ibid.:15). As such they are 'extensions' of the persons whose agency
they express – part of their 'distributed' personhood. Agent and patient are
relational concepts: for every agent there must be a patient, and vice versa
(1998:22). Advocating the agency of dance, I am particularly interested in
indexical relations between performers as agents/patients and
performances/interpretations.

The public dance

The dance (ballo) in the province of Reggio is distinguished – in terms of rules
and organisation – between public (in public or semi-public spaces) and
domestic (ballo cardolo, in the home). Even though both the domestic and
public dance exhibit some basic similar conditions, the development of the
event and the organisation of the power relations pose between them a totally
different conceptualisation. For the present I will discuss dance on ‘traditional’
occasions. By traditional occasions I refer to dancing performances that are
incorporated in fiestas, in the home, rites of passage and various celebratory
events (i.e. the inauguration of new public buildings, services and so on). I
purposely do not involve dancing performances by folkloristic groups which,
according to the audience that the dances are destined for, follow a different
development. So far in this thesis, I have avoided the imposition of any
analytical dichotomies of the type public/domestic. As I have insisted, these
dichotomies whenever they are not evoked by the actors themselves are
constraining rather than facilitating the work of the ethnographer. In this case
though, both the actors and the ethnographic data lead towards the adoption of
the dichotomy public/domestic. The main difference is that a public dancing performance indexes directly the 'Ndrangheta power and ownership of the territory. This is also the main reason that the actors participate or abstain from the dance of the Madonna della Consolazione and other similar religious celebrations where the “Onorata Società” celebrates its hierarchies and territorial power” (Castagna 2006:70).

One common feature of both the formal and informal dance is the centrality of the dancing couple. This is to say that there is only one couple that occupies the centre of the dancing space. (The succession of couples according to a certain process will be presented later). The figure of the mastru i ballu (master of the dance) is the second common feature of the formal and informal dances. While in the case of the ballo cardolo (home dance) it is the patruni i cassa (the house patron) who assumes the role of the mastru, in semi-public spaces the mastru may be the symbolic host of the celebratory event.

In the case of the ritualistic dance, the conceptualisation of space and time renders it as privileged and distinguished from its quotidian context. The dance reflects social changes since ‘at the end of 1800s primal dancing forms have lent themselves to the stratification and symbolic choreographies of the 'Ndrangheta (Barresi 1997:57). Whilst during Mussolini’s government, religious celebrations in Reggio were not the 'Ndrangheta’s loci of power par excellence, after the collapse of the regime and especially after the Second World War the 'Ndrangheta appears as the main patron of the public dances (Castagna 2006:69). On another level, cultural desires can be transmitted through the dance as, “mafia and tarantella provide the space for the manifestation of personal capacities, dignity and personality” (Barresi 1997:57) as well as the conviction that mere participation can advance personal and collective interests.

In the public dances the space where the dance is performed is circular (rota) and is delineated by the participants/audience. The dance usually ‘opens’ with the phrase facimu rota (let’s make a circle). This is the space where both the dancers and the musicians are displayed. The space in the public dances holds
a special significance and it is associated with specific connotations of territoriality, control and local identity of the 'Ndrangheta. In Stajano’s chronicle “Africo”, Rocco Palamara and his friends confront some members of the 'Ndrangheta on the patronising of the ballo in a piazza:

The friends have occupied the piazza rossa (red) – the nickname that we gave for piazza De Gasperi – to dance the tarantella. This dance requires one so-called ‘mastru i ballu’, who has the task to indicate who enters and exits the dancing space. In a few words he must regulate the dance. The ‘occupation’ of the dance signifies the legitimate representative of the dancing space. In the dance in piazza, in the past, it was always a Mafioso as mastru i ballu, because the dance is considered to be an occasion to demonstrate authority and respect to the tradition. The friends that New Year’s Eve wanted to dance thus abolishing the mastru i ballu – an authoritative figure – that we wanted to forget forever. And so we danced between us without the maestro. But to the Mafiosi that was a huge insult, a kind of occupying the piazza: the one who dances in the piazza commands the village. So they came to provoke us (Stajano 1979:135).

Two main issues emerge from the above narrative. Firstly, that dance is considered as the symbolic agent of tradition that in turn empowers the dancers – as they themselves are becoming the bearers of tradition. Secondly, that dance is closely related to issues of territoriality and control. In the above extract, Rocco and his friends choose not just any night of the year, but New Year’s Eve, to exhibit their open confrontation against the 'Ndrangheta and the subsequent occupation of the dancing space. New Year’s Eve in the Reggino is a very special occasion for celebration, fireworks and gunfire – mainly by the 'ndranghetisti. The first year of my fieldwork I spent most of New Year’s Eve on the balcony trying to identify the direction of the gunshots. My best friend was anxiously calling me to come inside the house, clearly afraid of my carelessness. When I asked Mimo, a person of our company, the same night why the 'ndranghetisti were not afraid to openly display their supremacy, he replied; “whom do they need to be afraid of?” Rocco and his friends in the above extract, appear unafraid of the 'Ndrangheta. Whilst they are conscious of the rules that pertain to the dance in the piazza, they contest them. They employ their dance in order to exhibit their disapproval towards the 'Ndrangheta. They are adamant that they want to forever forget the mastru i ballu and the authority that he symbolises.
Contestation and provocation is thus indexed through a public dancing performance. On many occasions, during the spring and summer of 2007 I attended a lot of fiestas in the villages of my informants in the area Grecanica. In relation to one specific fiesta, I was happy to attend the procession with my friends. I took my pictures and was waiting on the church steps with one of my closest friends for the ballo to start. At one point, men started running towards the ânu kiâzza (in Grecanico meaning ‘Piazza Above’) and an upheaval among the people signalled that something happened. When I asked what had happened my friends vaguely replied that some drunken men created problems with the dance. Being Greek myself I was finding the whole thing – drunken people creating problems whilst dancing – very common and I immediately made it clear that I wanted to participate in the ‘spectacle’. “No”, my friends declared with a very firm attitude, “this is not a ‘nice spectacle’”. I remained standing still, debating between my own curiosity to find out what had happened and my respect towards my friends and hosts. In the meantime I was noticing women going back and forth extremely disturbed and the men acting in a very agitated manner. After half an hour the whole thing had finished. The men gathered in the central piazza discussing in loud voices. I asked again what happened but again my friends replied vaguely that it was nothing serious. Yet – I was thinking – this ‘nothing serious’ was serious enough to bring disorder and annul the fiesta that they had waited a whole year. It was clear though, that they did not want to tell me what happened and thus – as I have learned not to ‘push’ in such situations – I decided to drop it for the present.

The Greek film ‘Parangelia’ (The Order) directed by Pavlos Tasios and released in 1980, epitomises the above. The scenario is inspired by a real event that took place during the dictatorship in 1973 in a night club in Athens where the convicted Nikos Koemtzis ‘ordered’ the band to dance a zeibekiko. The zeibekiko is a powerful solo dance and – especially during that era – it was considered as a ‘law’ that it must be performed by the one person who ordered the dance (on zeibekiko and parangelia see also Cowan 1990:173-83, Kirtsoglou 2004:12-14). Koemtzis was provoked by three policemen who attempted to occupy the dancing floor whilst he was performing his zeibekiko. The result was that he was so disturbed by this provocation that he stabbed to death three men and injured six more. Even though Tasios’ main attempt was to focus on the political subject and his/her resistance against the “regime’s brutal and frequent absurd ways” (Clogg 1992:165) of restricting personal freedom, he did not eclipse the heroisation of Koemzis. Koemzis was translated into a hero of action and his deeds were mythologised. A parallel with the literature that covers the action of the Brigandi in South Italy could be made to draw attention as to how criminal figures are elevated in the local consciousness and become legitimate symbols of collective identity and resistance (Sant Cassia 1993:774-775).
It was after many days when I had returned to Reggio that I encountered one of my informants who asked me if I had really understood what happened on the night in question. I very diplomatically replied that I assumed that it had to do with the dance. “Precisely”, he replied. He then proceeded to inform me that one of the village’s ’ndrine was disputing the patronage of the ballo and that they brought their own musicians to play in the fiesta. That was a sgarro\footnote{In the ’Ndrangheta vocabulary, ‘sgarro’ refers to an act of ‘public provocation’ which is a reaction to a violation of the current ’Ndrangheta codes. As such, public provocation could range from public verbal offences to murder. A sgarro is also the prerequisite according to which a piccioto may prove his excellence in order to move up the ’Ndrangheta ranks.} that the patron ’ndrina could not in any case let pass. In the end, the ‘provocateurs’ left the village with no further repercussions.

The piazza and the chiesa (church) are points of social orientation and direction and their appropriation has always puzzled and tortured the Calabrian imagination (Alvaro 2003:12-14). The absolute space in Reggio is the Piazza Duomo; a space that represents the socio-political and religious heart of the city. The dance in the Piazza Duomo is organised by the ’Ndrangheta. The piazza Duomo represents the zona franca – namely the neutral territory over which no local ’ndrina has any explicit control over the dance. According to this rule, the ’ndrine celebrate in front of Duomo in different posts, each one with their own musicians. As it has been discussed above, the local ’ndrine compete for and define themselves according to the occupation and control of ‘territory’. The amount of public participation thus to the dance of the various ’ndrine could indicate their political power, patronage and clientele as well as their extensive network of friendships.

It is thus the Onorata Società (society of honour) – a term by which the ’Ndrangheta is also known – which celebrates and imposes its rules on the dance. According to Castagna:

many are the cases where the evolution of the dance is conditioned, more or less, by the presence of the Mafiosi who without exercising a complete hegemony demand their own tarantela, interpreting the dance as a kind of auto-celebration of the ’Ndrangheta and its hierarchies … (1988:17 original emphasis).
“Sangue, morte e tarantella” (“Blood, Death and Tarantella”) was the title in “Gazzetta del sud” on 17th of September 1985 to describe the last dance of the mastru i ballu Giovanni Tomasello, 47. The article narrated how Tomasello was killed by way of a ’Ndrangheta “sgarro” during the fiesta of the Madonna. As a mark of respect for the dead man, the ’Ndrangheta did not permit any music or dancing during the remaining days of the fiesta (in Castagna 1988:20-22). Barresi’s reflexive account (1997) further points to the ‘control’ over the publicity of the ritual. When she attempted to take pictures of the men dancing in the Piazza Duomo – for use in her research – a woman warned her that ‘they do not like being photographed’ and ‘you may probably end up in a difficult situation’. Barresi did not take the warning into account; instead, she attempted to take her pictures without the use of a flash and from a relative distance. Yet, she was spotted by one of the mastru’s assistants who asked her not to take the pictures on the grounds that “we are not here to be photographed. We are not photogenic”. Barresi replied that she was interested in the issue of dance and appeared quite firm in her decision to take pictures of the dancers. According to Barresi, the assistant was aggressive and called immediately for the mastru. The dance stopped and so did the music. Everybody was looking at her and she felt very uncomfortable. Eventually the mastru requested that she forgive the aggressive manner of his assistant, without however allowing her to continue her photography (1997:50).

Taking into consideration notions of territoriality and control, Castagna (1988, 2006) has distinguished between the tarantella *riggitana* (of Reggio) and the tarantella *mafiusa* (of the mafiosi). I certainly agree that we cannot homogenise the tarantella neither in relation to melodic arrangements nor in terms of dancing style. As style is interrelated with identity (Royce 1982:28), every village and locality in the Reggino approaches the tarantella in a slightly different way. Furthermore, the rules that pertain to the man/woman tarantella in terms of physical touch are equally different, and the lack of knowledge of these rules may result in a motive for serious physical confrontations. I believe that attributes such as the ‘tarantella riggitana, mafiusa, viddanedha (of the veddani ‘peasants’)’, to name but a few, refer primarily to ideological
differentiations and secondarily to an additional fluctuation in melodic arrangements or stylistic variations. It is clear that Castagna, in his analytic approach, is careful not to homogenise the tarantella in terms of style. However – and perhaps more significantly – he wishes to avoid an implication of ‘collectivity’ that would thus render all the Reggini mafiosi. Whilst by no means all the participants in the dance in the Piazza Duomo are ’ndranghetisti, the ritual per se is controlled by the ’Ndrangheta (Castagna 1988, 2006, Barresi 1997). Furthermore, a great number of people irrespective of profession, social status, gender and age, participate in the dance either as dancers or as audience. Desire, devotion or ‘vote hunting’ may be the motives for this participation.

Mastru i ballu: Chi acceta le regole, balla (The one who accepts the rules, dances)

The mastru i ballu (maestro of the dance) invites the politician to enter the dance. The politician accepts the invitation and – with a smile – enters the dance without however saluting the maestro and the audience. His dancing partner avoids making direct eye contact with him and immediately starts ‘claiming’ his space in relation to the politician. He does not seek to embrace him. Instead the dancer initiates the lotta (fight) by challenging the politician. He uses his imaginary coltello (knife) to ‘cut the air’ of his co-dancer. His dance is offensive, aggressive. For almost two minutes the man used all the symbolism of an imaginary fight to exercise his superiority over the politician. He has inflicted colpi (strokes) and contro-colpi (counter-strokes). The politician still maintains his smile.

The above passage describes one of the thousands of dancing scenes that orchestrate the dance in the Piazza Duomo during the fiesta of the Madonna in Reggio. The invitation to dance in the Duomo is open to everybody since “everyone who has their feet in the rota, and accepts the rules can dance”. The central figure of the dance is the mastru i ballu (master of the dance). The role of the mastru i ballu is very important because he is responsible for the successful unfolding of the dance. The person who is elected to be mastru is
usually a respected 'ndranghetista of a higher position in the gerarchia maggiore (major hierarchy).

The mastru’s task is crucial in the sense that he must immediately spot the ‘important’ people who approach the rota. The 'ndranghetisti who participate in the dance must be identified immediately and invited to dance according to their rank in the 'Ndrangheta hierarchy. The role of the mastru in this case is twofold: firstly, to invite the person who has the gerarchia maggiore and couple him/her with another person of a similar – if possible – grade. An ‘important’ person is also welcome. The scene with the politician that is described above is a perfect example of how an ‘important’ person is treated in terms of a cordial invitation on behalf of the mastru. It can further be analysed on many levels. The politician on the one hand, who originates from the area Grecanica, wants to be seen at an event where his people and electorate are the protagonists. This is a tactical move that can potentially bring to his ‘yard’ new voters. Furthermore, being seen in the dance is always useful since it can open the path for new collaborations and affiliations or consolidate existing ones. Additionally, by not conforming exactly to the protocol of the dance – for instance he does not salute the mastru when entering the dance – the politician plays his identity through a strategic manipulation of inclusions and exclusions (Jenkins 1997, 2002:124). He reserves his right to dance – and be ‘part of the people’ – but simultaneously he maintains his distance from any possible affiliation with the 'Ndrangheta because his performance is devoid of the 'Ndrangheta’s choreographic symbolisms. The 'ndranghetista on the other hand – the politician’s partner in the dance – at first glance at least, appears to accept the politician’s deviation from the protocol because he too acknowledges that the former is an important person and potentially a ‘useful’ person. Yet, in his dancing, he exercises the 'Ndrangheta’s hegemony over his partner by making clear who is the real master of the game in the piazza and that the “autonomy of the political in modern societies is an illusion” (Gledhill 2000:21). In this case, it is his dancing performance, invested with contextual visibility that is successfully interpreted by the audience (Farnell 2001) that clarifies power relations.
In his tasks, the mastru must also be careful to avoid pairing people who are not on good terms. For this purpose he is assisted by other people who indicate to him the order in which the potential dances can enter the dance, as a person who wishes to dance must be *invitato* (invited). The *invito* (invitation) is a very strategic and never an uncritical act and, as Driessen remarks in relation to rural Andalusian male sociability, a “socially necessary activity to cultivate friendship” (1983:128). A *boss* entering the dancing space is treated with exceptional respect, fear and love. Julio, 55, is a guitar player and remembers when, whilst he was very young, he and his band were hired to play music in a marriage celebration in Gambaria (an area in Aspromonte). “The whole event was progressing well without problems and the people were very pleased with our music. It was a marriage occasion and all were happy and cheerful. Suddenly everybody stopped laughing and speaking loudly. What happened was that a boss – kin of the bride’s side – entered the room. Immediately we stopped playing music whilst the bride’s father was hurrying to welcome the boss, who was his first cousin, to the fiesta. After this preliminary disorder that the entrance of such an important guest brought, the father who was also the mastru i ballo immediately invited the cousin to dance. The boss’s dance was modest – like a woman. He avoided any vibrant movements and with his palms on his hips was just shaking to the rhythm. Suddenly a gun dropped from his jacket. The next happened so quickly: a man of his company literally ‘dived’ in the direction of the gun and in a second the gun had disappeared. I was pretending that I did not see anything but my heart was pounding in my chest”.

**The organisation of the dance**

The mastru ‘opens’ the dance by inviting a person from the rota to dance with him. After dancing for a couple of minutes the mastru leaves his place and invites another person in from the rota to dance in his place. The couple dance

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138 As in various identity contexts, dancing performances also reveal the flexibility and divergence of gender roles that “symbolise rather than define the nature of their subjects” (Kirtsoglou 2004:110).
for a couple minutes more, before the mastru re-enters the dance and usually with the phrase *fora u primu* (the first out) or with a movement of his arms – which much resembles the action of chasing away animals – he indicates the first dancer to exit the dance. The mastru now dances with the person who remains. After a while the mastru exits the dance once again and by inviting another person from the rota, he renews the dancing couple.

The dancing couple is the centre of attention for as long as the dance lasts. The dancers may be old or very young and – at least in this case – the aesthetic evaluation of the dance is not of primary concern. Contrary to the prestige that the accomplished dancer achieves in other Mediterranean ethnographic contexts – in the Greek context for example (cf. Cowan 1990, Kirtsoglou 2004) – the dancer in Reggio is not evaluated according to his/her dancing skills or dancing performance but his/her presence in a meaningfully ascribed territory. This does not in any case imply that the accomplished dancer is not admired. Yet, this appreciation is mainly related to the rehearsal of traditional stylistic interpretations and the dancer’s ability to interpret and respect the role that s/he assumes in the dance.

Being at the centre of public attention means that a person is *notato* (noticed) and this is considered in Reggio as the ultimate moment of social visibility. As one of my informants has very eloquently put it “*uno balla per voto o voto***” (one dances for vote or vow) thus epitomising the politico-religious entanglement of dancing in the Piazza Duomo. Being noticed can equally serve instrumental purposes. The person who dances will be noticed by the ‘ndranghetisti who may not know him/her. As Mimo says; “*un domani quando si incontreranno si saluteranno così ‘mio compare a disposizione tua’ baciandosi***” (one day when they encounter they salute each other with ‘my compare (I am) at your disposal’ and they kiss each other). The invito – the offer and the acceptance of the invitation – is thus a very strategic manipulation of probable and future dispositions and *amicizie* (friendships). The audience that are invited to participate in the ritualised dance with the ‘N’drangheta “lend a sense of occasion to it and enhances its recognition and status” (Baumann 1992:110).
The *sfida*: Interpreting the Tarantella

Superiority, victory, honour, respect, distrust and reserve, possession and conquest are all interpreted in the man/man tarantella. The old forms of dancing with knives and sticks are now replaced with a variety of symbols that denote a symbolic fight. Coltelli (knives) and capinte (the shepherds’ sticks), I was told, are still used in dancing performances in some remote villages of Aspromonte.

The *sfida* (challenge) is the dominant element in the tarantella when performed by two men. The sfida pertains to symbolism – as mentioned above – related to older dancing/fighting forms when the use of knives and swords was commonplace. The use of knives and swords may be obscured in the present day, but the sfida – more that a symbolic fight – is *real* and highlights the power relations between the two dancers. The dancer who initiates the sfida uses his palm or his index and middle fingers to cut through the air as if in an imaginary knife attack. Whilst dancing he is trying to attack his partner – towards his ribs, heart or face. With almost acrobatic embellishments he is blocking the dancing path of the partner and blocking his passage. An arm fully extended above the head, with the fist held tight, is another sign of dominance. These challenges can only be performed by a man in an elevated position in the ‘Ndrangheta hierarchy. This does not make a person of inferior position submissive in his dance as his social status is enhanced just by publicly dancing with a superior. He can always exhibit his ingenuity and capacity for improvisation in avoiding the attacks of his partner.

In the sfida the dancers maintain a confrontational position. This partly derives from the need not to *farsi stringere* (be restrained) and always maintaining the space that is allocated to the dancers. The second drive to always maintain the confrontational position derives from the ambiguity of the result of the dance. The dancers exhibit at once their respect but also their diffidence towards each other. Physical contact is a sign of friendship, respect and love. Dancing back to back and with the arms on each other’s shoulders is considered as a sign of
love, friendship and respect that derives from the use of the same space by one person.

The Notte Bianca (The White Night)

During the celebrations for the Madonna “one breathes fiesta in the atmosphere” – to borrow from Lisón-Tolosana’s descriptions for the fiestas of Belmonte de los Caballeros’ religious patrons (1966:12). The Basilica in Eremo and the Cathedral are adorned with thousands of lights that makes them – especially during the night – shine form afar. But it is not only the churches that are properly decorated. The main streets of the city are equally drenched in light and ready to accommodate the various celebrations and the thousands of Reggini that attend them. The Notte Bianca139 (White Night) is a recent innovation which allows for further ‘civic’ – as the communal council’s programme declares – celebrations during the fiesta of the Madonna. The Notte Bianca in 2006 – the year previous to my fieldwork – was a lavish display in terms of spectacle, famous artists and the amount of money spent. As my informants have repeatedly pointed out to me, a large sum of public money (over 600,000 euros) was spent by the communal administration for the organisation of the event140. Not only local and nationally famous musical artists and theatrical groups were invited to participate on those sleepless Madonna’s nights but also a number of VIP guests who were very well paid just to stroll along Via Marina and sign autographs. Yet, as the Mayor concluded whilst being interviewed about the money spent for the organisation of the Notte Bianca; “it was a successful event that will potentially benefit Reggio in relation to tourism”.

The invention of the Notte Bianca cannot be analysed separately from other invented or re-invented rituals in Europe (Boissevain 1992). It is interesting to note that the occasion for Notte Bianca, so far, always coincides with a

139 The first Notte Bianca in Reggio took place on 10th September 2005. Reggio ‘adopted’ the Notte Bianca – together with other Italian cities – after the first celebration in Rome in 2003. France, Germany, Austria, Spain – to name but a few – are countries that also celebrate their ‘White Nights’.
religious fiesta. Religious symbols are thus implemented towards the direction of advancing tourism in Reggio. As Cohen notes, symbols are effective because their content is subjectively interpreted by the actors (1985:21). The implementation thus of specific “cultural stuff” (Barth 1969:15) is strategically manipulated by the town council in order to successfully accommodate apparently competing elements: the coexistence of music groups performing next to the ’ndranghetisti.

Apart from the Festa della Madonna during September, a variety of other Notte Biance have been introduced to the Reggino during the year’s festivities – for example the Notte Bianca during the celebration of the Madonna Immacolata (immaculate) on the 8th of December. The last one was celebrated in my quartiere, Gebbione, and the Vialle Aldo Moro (one of the central streets) was closed in order to accommodate celebrants, traders selling cooked local sausages and other local culinary specialities. The air was filled with a variety of music – a mixture of the tarantella, Anglo-American and modern Italian pop. Every local bar in the Vialle Aldo Moro ‘offers’ a spectacle in order to attract more clients. In front of the local bar “Porcino” a group of people are dressed in their traditional costumes and ‘mock’ the ‘old’ ways of dancing with sticks and knives. The role of the mastru i ballu is exaggerated as it is performed by a man literally dragging people into the dance and chasing out other dancers. In the distance a group of young people dressed in colourful satin costumes and with their faces painted in various colours walk on stilts and amuse the crowd that has circumscribed them. It is yet another occasion for celebration before the great New Year’s festivities.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed ritual as a polysemic discourse. With special attention to the fiesta of the Madonna, I primarily explored the level that religious motifs are intertwined with profane intentionality. Ritual efficacy is played out on three distinctive levels: time, territoriality and tradition. The primary sites of celebration are meaningfully ascribed territories. The piazza thus exceeds its spatial dimension and becomes a symbol for power, local
identity and self-representation. Tradition is played out as a site of resistance against the ‘absent’ nation and ignites an auto-celebration of local identity and historical continuation. I have also enquired upon the notion of the ‘Ndrangheta’s distributed personhood. Amongst my informants, the ‘Ndrangheta is a very powerful context of representation and as I have argued in the previous chapter it is deemed as an art of government in Foucauldian terms. Many people in the Reggio thus appear willing, in one way or another, to link themselves with those who govern. As Foucault notes, the art of government is to propose continuities in both upwards and downwards directions (1991:91). These continuities are sought after by the local ’ndrine when they patronise a religious event and more specifically a public dance. As the dance is considered a ‘thing’ of the ‘Ndrangheta it is viewed as possessing a specific agency that indexes a variety of relations of tradition, space, rank, hierarchy, power, appropriation of power and ownership of the territory.

The ritualistic tarantella is characterised by the symbolic fight and the sfida between the dancers. During their dance, the performers have the opportunity to index apart from personal attributes such as honour, love or diffidence, the power of the ‘Ndrangheta and their approval or contestation towards it. Participation in the dance alludes to powerful ‘properties’ that can be distributed to affiliates and non-affiliates. The audience and the performers in turn empower themselves because they become recipients of a specific tradition. The ritualistic tarantella thus is not limited between the two men who exhibit and exercise their hegemony. The sfida – far more than a choreographic interpretation attributed to the performers themselves – indexes ‘Ndrangheta’s notions of power, ownership and appropriation. It is thus a rhetorical gift to everybody who wishes to manifest personal capacities, dignity and personality as well as ‘lawful’ appropriation of the genealogy of the ‘Ndrangheta.
Chapter Nine: Epilogue

In this thesis I have been concerned with the dialectics of power. I have claimed that power within the Grecanici is found equally within symmetrical and asymmetrical nexuses of relationships. Whilst individualisation is encouraged, this is materialised and acquires meaning only within larger networks of relations; individualisation is possible on one level, integration is possible on another. Thus, these relations are to be understood as a dialectic between individualisation and integration. South Italian societies have been criticised as particularly individualistic lacking collective politicisation towards the public good (Putnam 1993, Tullio-Altan 2000). I realise, especially when it comes to South Italian societies, that the coexistence of individualisation and strong nexuses of relatedness may be a paradox in itself. Yet, it is my understanding that this stems from a particular mode of analysis that tends to separate and segregate actors and groups whose connections are otherwise characterised by high interdependence and cross-cutting (DaMatta 1991:244). Instead of separating my actors I opted for a ‘reading’ of their entangled rationalities. By now we know that cultures are not represented by a homogenous rationality, but rather by rationalities (Foucault 1984, 1991) that can possibly sustain various forms of government. If we then approach government not as the exclusive practice of democracies we may have a clearer idea of particular ways of thinking and doing governing as these are implemented by otherwise unconventional sovereign networks. This brings us as to why I have incorporated the 'Ndrangheta in this study. By taking the Grecanici as my starting point my primary concern was to explore and give an account of rationalities which seem to comply with those at a grassroots level. What constitutes the 'Ndrangheta as a successful network of representation and how does this become accessible to non-affiliates? The answer to this question revolved around two main claims. First that the 'Ndrangheta is just an entry of what constitutes the family in the Grecanici – and to a wider extent Reggio – context. Second that 'ndranghetisti employ various forms of exchange (direct reciprocity, generalised reciprocity, free gifts) in their encounters with affiliates and otherwise. Especially through public ritual
dances such as the tarantella performed during the celebration of the Madonna della Consolazione, 'ndranghetisti have the opportunity to openly ‘invite’ their co-citizens to share their own ‘visioning’ of doing governing in their city.

The family in Italy, it has been argued, is both a metaphor and a reality. As we have seen in this thesis I have ventured a step further. I have claimed that the family is about ontology which however is not reduced to a ‘descent into psychologism’ – as Kapferer (1988) argues in relation to “the emotional appeal of myths and other elements of the symbolic order” (Gledhill 2000:148). The Grecanici family provides ontological exegesis about being in the world and working within the world. Family then is an all inclusive spatio-temporal context with multiple entries. The Grecanici readily employ memory and imagination – to recall Vico’s understanding of the ricorso (2001) in order to create a familiar sense of allochronic time and space by evoking kin, saints and ancestors. Stewart (1991), when examining the Naxiot cosmology, has argued that the moral dispositions of the living are appropriated according to their connection with the supernatural. These cosmologies are not to be understood as alternatives but as constitutive of one and the same thing. The Grecanici family, as I have claimed, is about bringing together heterogeneous elements of relatedness and bridging worlds of knowledge thus resulting in a polymorphic knot where all individuals have a share in power.

The Grecanici desire familial relations and they reflexively engage in processes of their creation. In the same manner that they recognise the binding qualities of these relations they exercise their agency by maintaining, exploiting and subverting them. I have maintained that there are three main and intertwined nexuses of relations that condition politics in Reggio: kinship, kin-like relations – such as friendship, godparenthood and the 'Ndrangheta – and clientelism. These relations are built upon symbols such as blood, name, the ‘archaic’ family, ancestors and saints, that lend them a particular authority and legitimacy. Within these relations asymmetry as well as symmetry is observed. Asymmetry is not fundamentally problematic. The actors accept and respect asymmetry since the existence and experience of local notions of relatedness such as the vincolo (bond/link/restrain), obbligo (obligation) and
rispetto (respect) relativise it positively. Furthermore by examining the category of raccomandazione, I have come to agree with Zinn (2001) that this is realised foremost within the family and quotidian contexts, and thus poses a common cultural reference and analytical link between older and newer forms of clientelism. Grecanici clientelism thus, is a communicative context that is as much about exchanging favours as caring “about the Self” (in the Foucauldian sense). As such clientelism is not a dyadic – more or less economic based – relation but a network which relies on notions of “caring” and facilitates rather than restricts people from various strata and economic status in finding representation.

The second claim pertains to forms of exchange that allow the actors to cultivate shorter or longer term relations or pursue other forms of free gifts and ‘altruistic’ reciprocities. Whilst exchange based on reciprocity has been the analytical focus on Mediterranean societies – and this study is not an exception to the rule – I have also enquired about the ideology of ‘pure gift’ that is “a voluntary and disinterested donation made without ostentation or expectation of any kind of this-worldly return, whether material or immaterial” (Parry 1989:66 original emphasis). Monetary, gift or free-gift exchanges seem to coexist in the society of Reggio Calabria, and this coexistence may reinforce Davis’ argument that western societies are characterised as exhibiting a repertoire of morally, socially and economically distinct forms of exchange (1992). I endeavoured then to further explore what Sant Cassia (1993) termed as the psychology and sociology of terror in situations of coercion and subjectification. By shifting the focus from terror to altruism I opted for a ‘reading’ of grassroots rationalities that relate to notions of rispetto and omertà rather than fear in order to partially explain the prevalence of the mafia as a system of representation in contexts such as Reggio Calabria.

The notion of the free gift in the society of Reggio is closely related to virtues such as umiltà (humility) (see chapter seven), which at once indicates the humble person who is gaining respect through his/her humility, and carisma (charisma) (see chapter six), which is associated with very few particular
people who have led a particular life. Charisma, Weber argues, is used to characterise “self-appointed leaders who are followed by those who are in distress and who need to follow the leader because they believe him to be extraordinary qualified” (Gerth and Mills 1970:52). Catanzaro (1988) is following Weber’s notion of the ‘routinisation of charisma’ in order to explain the legitimisation of mafioso power into society. He says:

At the beginning of his career the Mafioso must have been able to show certain extraordinary virtues, such as strength, ferocity, and astuteness: These were gifts that made it possible for him to build a following, create a cosca for himself, or to set himself at the head of another cosca. Once his charismatic virtues were recognised, he no longer needed to exercise violence directly; he could confine himself to threatening violence, and when he turned to it as a last resort, he usually did not use it directly, but through one or more members of the cosca (1988:37).

As I have argued, the mafioso free gifts can be explained as ‘reminders’ that could comply with the inert mafioso religiosity. Weber notes that “in order to do justice to their mission, the holders of charisma, the master as well as his disciples and his followers, must stand outside of the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations, as well as outside of the routine obligations of the family life”. Weber recognises the dissolving possibilities of the ‘pure’ charisma since this is “the force that disregards economy” (1970:248). Standing/stepping outside of the community can explain – at least up to a point – why the un reciprocated gifts comply with self-essentialising mafioso rhetoric.

I have also claimed that civil society in South Italy is not as weak as initially thought. By arguing that civil society is an agency towards politicisation I have avoided its exclusive identification with the state, or state institutions par-excellence, or with kinship. I have maintained a middle ground and one that allows civil society a particular fluidity and flexibility. Neither as subordinate to the state nor as exclusively chipping away at it from below, it moves as between the state and kinship and sometimes it assumes the position of both thus revealing the “multilayered complexity of political reality” (Abélès 1992:17 in Gledhill 2000:20). In that sense, I have argued that civil society in Reggio Calabria assumes a reticular form, one that is mapped from the actors’ moving into dense and criss-crossed lines of relations. As Grecanici
politicisation (and I suspect for the rest of the population of Reggio) is achieved through a productive kinesis across various networks of relations (kinship, political parties, cultural associations and the 'Ndrangheta). Grecanici civil society escapes a classic definition and one in particular accordance with positive associations to democratic ideals. Precisely because civil society is placed in an ‘in between’ space it cuts across hierarchies sustained by social status, economic affluence and family name. This leads to an understanding of power not as directly related with the aforementioned qualities (social status, economic affluence and family name) and testifies to the conflicting nature of the relationship between structure and agency. The Grecanici consciously exercise their agency by recreating, sustaining and subverting hierarchical structures like kinship and the 'Ndrangheta and thus empower themselves. Power then, in the context of the Reggino, is rather dispersed and not merely localised in ‘conventional’ political forms of representation such as the political parties, local administrators and economic lobbies. Civil society thus is a privileged site of political colonisation where agents empower themselves through “techniques of distraction” (Seremetakis 1994:13).

By keeping an eye on the quality of the relations (duration, loyalties, homage) I opted for a deeper understanding of the rationalities that govern them. Grecanici values – that is a particular system that oscillates between contextual morality and “materialistic ethic” (Firth 1961:192) – sustains idiosyncratic notions of self-government. Self-government relates to particular moral rules that “regulate conduct and the associated judgements” (Firth 1961:183). What Foucault has termed “the conduct of other’s conduct” (1994:xxix) can then be seen as a morally sanctioned and rationality justified idea of self-government that is thinking about doing governing and thinking about being governed. The techne, episteme and ethos of self-government is fully captured in the persona of the 'Ndrangheta where heterogeneous elements of justice and self-perpetuation are fully articulated. By examining the politics of the 'Ndrangheta I have highlighted the deeper workings of relatedness that involve practices of freedom and domination, coercion and subjectification, individualisation and integration. Agency then is associated
with particular forms of power and is not reducible either to freedom or domination. The Grecanici seek hierarchy, respect it and sustain it. At the same time they form affective relations based on sentiments of love, respect and humility. Following this, vertical relations of hierarchy are subverted by horizontal relativisers of relatedness. Grecanici empowerment then comes as the result of a particular kind of subjectification: the realisation of multiple relations on multiple levels and a conscious oscillation between hierarchical and egalitarian forms of relatedness.

**Urban/rural and other dichotomies**

This project has taken place within the urban environment of Reggio Calabria. Nevertheless I would be reluctant to categorise this ethnography as strictly urban. Thus far in my analysis I have avoided dichotomies that may frame my subjects in irretrievable ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’ rationalities.

The Grecanici of this study may live in Reggio Calabria but a constant movement to and from their villages of origin points to a critical rethinking of their historical and political subjectivities. To be sure the “metaphor of movement” (Ballinger 2003:268) between core and periphery problematises equally the notions of boundary, core and periphery. As many Mediterranean ethnographers have pointed out, the notions of core and periphery may perpetuate stereotypical assumptions of domination and dependence without however taking into consideration that domination may be equally found ‘at the top’ as well as ‘at the bottom’ of social formations (Schneider and Schneider 1976, Wolf 1982, Ballinger 2003). As this study reflects, relations of authority are not the ‘privilege’ of the top but also of the bottom. Large numbers of people who may really feel or rhetorically articulate their oppositions to governmental and other institutional policies retrieve their power by engaging in techniques that accord with a particular rationality of governing and being governed. These techniques are associated with the politics of Grecanici kinship and a particular idea of ‘caring for the Self’ whilst ‘caring for the Other’.
Another question that emerges from this study pertains to notions of “top” and “bottom”. What is it to be accepted as at the top and what as at the bottom? Examining the Grecoanoi case the above question has led to various dimensions and explorations. The Grecoanoi are represented in idea – to pace Placanica (1985) – by Grecoanoi scholars and representative bodies such as the Grecoanoi cultural associations, the Comunità Montana and the Sportelli linguistici. These representative bodies have successfully formulated an argument based on linguistic biodiversity and historical constructivism that effectively essentialises Grecoanoi subjectivities in an unhistorical and static framework. Similarly with the Grecoanoi language, the Grecoanoi linguistic minority is represented as an ‘indigenous’ – thus acquiring a particular type of politicisation – minority who oscillate between historical interpretations of grandeur and victimisation or what Kirtsoglou has called the “surreptitious narratives of the periphery” (2004:155). These sovereign interpretations – clearly proposed as top-down – are contested by ‘truths’ that equally relate to the constructivist notion of identity. Generational memory offers another type of representation that – at the present – is neglected by Grecoanoi scholars as unworthy to be communicated to the public. This relates to memories associated with the ’Ndrangheta and the brigantaggio as well as vendetta in Grecoanoi histories. These representations, mainly in a narrative fashion, come from the ‘bottom’. Yet, as we have seen when examining the Chalonero case, these ‘forbidden’ narratives constitute the ‘educational curriculum’ of a successful relative or ’ndranghetista for what matters. As we have also seen, the ’Ndrangheta is a hierarchical representational system with precise roles and rules and one that is sought after by a large number of people. Historical and subjective interpretations then that refer to the ’Ndrangheta are constructed from the ‘bottom’ in order to account for the ‘top’. Clearly then, the intersection of “top-down” and “bottom-up” historical interpretations/representations point to the idea that the Grecoanoi can be seen as a category constructed out of “literature and myth as it is of power” (Goddard 1994:26).

The Grecoanoi family, I have argued, is premised upon moral and material grounds. The Grecoanoi citizens of Reggio Calabria exhibit particular qualities
of spatial and emotional proximity. Economic distress and natural disasters have forced the Grecanici to seek economic alleviation through migration. Similar to a large number of the Calabrian population, the Grecanici migrated to northern Europe, northern Italy and the nearby city of Reggio Calabria. By the end of the 1950s, particular quarters (San Giorgio extra is the most illustrative case) received a considerably large number of people from the area Grecanica. The newcomers successfully utilised kinship links for acquiring accommodation and employment. Migration was another source for economic alleviation. At present neighbourhood identification is a strong element for one’s sense of community, which derives from the existence of deep-rooted stereotypical assumptions regarding each particular quarteriere and its inhabitants. As a result, according to claims over a more ‘modern’ political and cultural disposition, the Grecanici proposed stances of discernment, coalitions or loyalty reveal a deeper ethos that accords to various degrees of ‘urbanity’ (Pipyrou 2010).

The majority of my informants live in kinship clusters. They have built multi-storied houses which accommodate grandparents, parents and their children. The ethics of kinship, assistance to the older members of the family and control over the youngsters, lack of cheap rented property and youth unemployment, are put forward as plausible explanations for strong family identification which is not only premised in biology. After Schneider, the interest in Euro-American kinship studies has been renewed and relatedness may be cast in biological as well as social terms. More recent studies like Franklins and McKinnon’s edited volume (2001), Carsten’s edited volumes (2000, 2007) and Strathern’s (2005) have pointed to the fact that reckoning in relatedness is multiply constitutive, be it biological or social, as well as their recognition as such (Strathern 1985). Whilst actors consciously recognise and respect what anthropologists may cast as biological, social or religious relatedness they freely engage in prolific syntheses of the above. Notions of biology, sociology and religion are used in a knotted fashion to indicate one and the same entity: that of family.
A strict distinction then between relatives of blood and social relatives would have not been prolific for the purposes of the present study, but recognition of their importance is, I believe, imperative in order to highlight the dynamics of forming and deforming relatedness. As I have argued, actors consciously deform the notion of family by engaging in conflicting, blurring and knotted family constructs. The phenomenology of Grecanici kinship – based on notions of blood and name – is undoubtedly strong but on closer inspection this apparent biological prerogative is deformed in order to give way to various other constitutions of relatedness. The entities that come out, after a productive reworking – based on the exchange of knowledge and power – are ultimately reconstructed in biological terms. The Grecanici do recognise the positive reworking of power embedded in all these metamorphoses. Throughout this study then I tried to distinguish among events, networks and relations and decipher the rationalities that connect and engender them.

Making family: two final cases

**The case of Natino**

Gossip leaves virtually no space for private life in Reggio Calabria. The most ‘personal’ stories are quick to come out into the open. Stories that account for corruption, violence, love, passion, deceit become public property that are circulated by word of mouth, narrativised and ultimately historicised. Such an approach regarding peoples’ histories leaves no room for secrets.

I have heard the story of Natino from various people. Nevertheless, my relationship with him lacked the intimacy that would allow me to directly ask him to verify or contradict it. Yet as in many other ethnographic contexts – probably most celebrated in Seremetakis’ (1991) work on lament compositions in Mani – the subsequent events of some particular stories become a matter of local history “in various versions”, according to personal sympathies and collective alignments between the narrators and the protagonists of the stories (Seremetakis 1991:144). Yet, the reason that I consider Natino’s case as an important one to conclude this thesis is because it
epitomises the negation of boundaries when it comes to making family, and ultimately, relatedness.

Natino is a successful politician with conservative dispositions. He has been in the political limelight for the last twenty years, successfully climbing the ladder of power in his party and thus being elected to the regional council for the last ten years. He originated from the Logotheti family which is numerous. Natino’s father, Mario, was married to Patrizia, one of the three sisters of the family, yet, Patrizia was unable to conceive. Then – the story goes – Mario was having a sexual relationship with his mother-in-law, Antonia. As a result Natino was born as a union between his father/brother-in-law and his mother, this also makes Patrizia Natino’s half sister. Natino was raised by his biological mother, Antonia, and her husband who works in the fruit market. Natino’s biological father, Mario, is a Reggino with a respectable circle of friends and politicians. When Natino exhibited his desire to be involved in politics, Mario provided him with the most appropriate assistance and support needed.

Two striking points – apart from the obvious complication of kinship terms – emerge from this story. First, that the narrators do not convey any feelings of disgust or anger for the apparent entanglements of sex and illegitimacy in the story. All these stories about honour and shame – so much celebrated in the anthropological literature – do not seem to fundamentally bother them. Similar to some of the cases discussed in this thesis, the shame of Patrizia (she cannot conceive), Antonia (she has an extramarital child) and Antonia’s husband (who not only finds his wife pregnant with the child of another man but he ultimately raises and provides for the child) seem to succumb to one important necessity: that every individual in the family needs to be protected and defended according to the circumstances that surround their cases. Here, as in other cases throughout this thesis, individualisation and collective interest go hand in hand and the honour of the family needs to be preserved as well as the interests of the individuals that comprise it. As in other instances of my Grecanici female informants unable to conceive, the line between biological and social relatedness is thin. In these cases the couples exhibit their desire for
a child without taking into consideration its colour and origin, and thus have
already pulled the strings for adoption. An admittedly very powerful woman in
her early forties told me that she does not care whether the child is black,
yellow or white. As she emphatically pointed out, “we (Grecanici) believe that
the mother is not the one who gives birth, but she who raises the child”.

The second point of the story is that we are not sure whether Mario was
messing around with his mother-in-law because of pleasure or because he
wanted a biological child; here again the desire for a child is not restricted by
social prohibitions. However, the narrators are fast to point out that he is not of
Grecanico origin, thus leaving a window open for speculation. This is to say
that having illegitimate sex in order to have a child is not as contemptible as it
is when you do it for pleasure. In the first case it is assumed that a man of
Grecanico origin would never go for something like that just for pleasure but
only for ‘necessity’. The bottom line is that Natino seems to have benefited
from having Mario as his biological father.

The stories that relate to Mario’s political career are also interesting. It is
rumoured that being a conservative, Mario consolidates his political power
through close ‘cooperation’ with the church. The relationship is assumed as
reciprocal since he is always positive towards the church’s financial matters.
Yet, always according to the local gossip, Mario has a lot of other ‘sponsors’:
the local ’ndrine and other economic lobbies behind him. The narrators of
Mario’s stories, in a very ironic manner, mentioned the miracle of the
‘Feeding of the 5000’ in order to justify the fact that the required number of
votes in order to come to power in the recent elections were far beyond the
number of his electorate. His political manifesto revolved around the family
rights which he appeared to promote with eagerness. “Of course he appears as
defender of the family” the narrators continue. “But whose family? Most
clearly his own, since he has appointed his wife, children and other relatives
to administrative positions close to him”.

Apart from the obvious mistrust towards the local politicians, the narrators
appear aware that Mario is not ‘playing a peculiar game’ since this is the ‘only
game for doing politics’. Playing with the system and if possible using and abusing the system is the landmark of ‘governmentality’ in the Reggino. More specifically thinking about and doing governing is related to an ability to be in and out of the system in a simultaneous fashion. The system is not always faceless – despite the fact that actors rarely bother to become more specific and their narrations resemble Carlo Levi’s observation on the abstract nature that power and governance are being conveyed:

What had the peasants to do with Power, Governance, and the State? The state, whatever form it might take, meant ‘the fellows in Rome’. ‘Everyone knows’, they said, ‘that the fellows in Rome don’t want us to live like human beings. There are hailstorms, landslides, droughts, malaria and … the state (2000:77-78).

Thus the Greccanici consider state bureaucracy and the ‘Ndrangheta as systems which need to be played out and played out well. As the case of Mario suggests, the family comes as the in-between factor. The family as a political manifesto – not only for the rightists, but equally for the leftists in the Reggino – is more of an abstract idea rather than an everyday reality. Stripped out of its moral and political implications, the notion of the family is reworked – this time at another level – in order to be ‘thrown’ back to the electorate by the majority of the political representatives in Reggio Calabria. Despite the fact that the family in this matter appears more of a ‘purified’ and unmistakably ‘Christian’ entity, its constant appropriation and re-appropriation reveals its own centrality in Reggina political life.

The case of Venere

Venere is a middle-aged woman who is renowned in Reggio for her beauty and kindness. She lives alone after having lost her husband six years ago, and she has two children, a daughter (41) and a son (45). I met Venere through her daughter. The daughter informed me that her mother was living in close proximity to my house. “My mother adores Greek people” the daughter said “their vivacity and their dance”. I happily arranged to meet the mother soon after that. I already had an idea about the specific family, how educated both Venere and her late husband were, how sociable and hospitable they were.
And I was not disappointed, for Venere was all of the above and more. The first day that I went to her house, she and her daughter were listening to Greek music, a specific genre called *rebetiko* (cf. Damianakos 1974/2001, Andriakaina 1996, Zaimakis 2009). They asked me whether I liked rebetiko and I replied that it was amongst my favourite genres. Then they requested that I dance. During my fieldwork I had a lot of requests to dance, be it Greek traditional dances or the Tarantella. As we have seen, dance in the Reggino is a powerful context with a specific agency, and people are very keen on putting their dancing performances on display.

After having requested a specific rebetiko song I complied with the wish of my hosts and danced for a couple of minutes. At the end of the dance both Venere and her daughter applauded me. The visit continued with less physically demanding activities: that of drinking home made liquors and grappa. When seeing me to the door, Venere said “I like you because your dance is beautiful”. Venere has proven to be not only one of my best informants, but she further introduced me to her circle in Reggio, thus I had the opportunity to socialise with very important political figures of the local society.

Gradually she became my best friend and the only person in the field whom I trusted completely and could confide in with my fears and anxieties. In the beginning, I was invited a couple of times during the week to eat with her. I could drop by her house around ten o’ clock in the evening when I finished my work. She cooked all of the local cuisine superbly. The invitation to eat soon became a custom up to the point when I did not need an invitation any more. When work was demanding, I would give her a phone call to warn her that I would be late and therefore she should not wait to eat together. But she was always waiting.

Venere’s children regularly invited me to their homes where I met their extended families. They, in turn, introduced me to other families with whom they were related or close friends. When I left Reggio, similar to many other ethnographers in the past, I felt that I had left a part of myself back in the field.
Whilst this is totally different from the classic anthropological stance of avoiding ‘going native’, relating to and making family between the ethnographer and the informants, reveals the deep humanistic nature of the ethnographic adventure.

During the two short visits to Reggio after my initial extended fieldwork period I stayed at Venere’s home. She provided me with a separate room and my own key to the house. As she explained; “*we are both busy people therefore you need your own key. This is your family, this is your home, and you are entitled to come and go whenever you please, and invite here whoever you want*”. Despite the fact that I was given such freedom I tried not to abuse it and kept my schedule as appropriate as possible. Our custom to eat together around ten o’ clock in the evening did not change. One evening, after having already informed her that I would be late, I entered the house prepared that this time I would eat alone. I was wrong. The house was lit and the table set. She was there with the usual smile, opening a bottle of beer for me. “*You did not need to wait. I told you that I would be late*”, I complained. She smiled and gestured with a nod for me to sit down. “*You cannot eat alone*”. 
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