

# Italian Rural Fieldsite

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## Location and theme

This study argues that strong ties and spatial proximity between parents and married sons, and in general between close relatives, is the central diacritic of the Italian family. Tramonti is an excellent field site in which to observe this phenomenon because the “lineage quarter system” characterized Tramonti, and the entire Amalfi Coast until well into 19th century. Tramonti is located in the hinterland of Amalfi Coast. This rural region has a population of about 4.000. The town is historically divided in thirteen villages, each with its own parish.

## Economical situation

From an economic point of view agriculture retains some importance, but currently it is the tertiary sector - services, commerce and tourism that offers the majority of jobs. The very high rates of unemployment found in Tramonti are a sign of the fragility of the local economy, and have led to the emergence of “figure miste”, economically mixed figures, who combine different sources of income to make up the family budget.

Emigration to Northern Italy traditionally provided an escape from economic deprivation, but has declined over recent decades. Kinship and familial ties played a significant role in this emigration, enabling a large number of Tramonti emigrants to prosper in the external economy.



Tramonti panorama (photo: Carlo Capello)



Religious procession, Campinola, Tramonti (photo: Video Sirius)



Tramonti panorama (photo: Video Sirius)



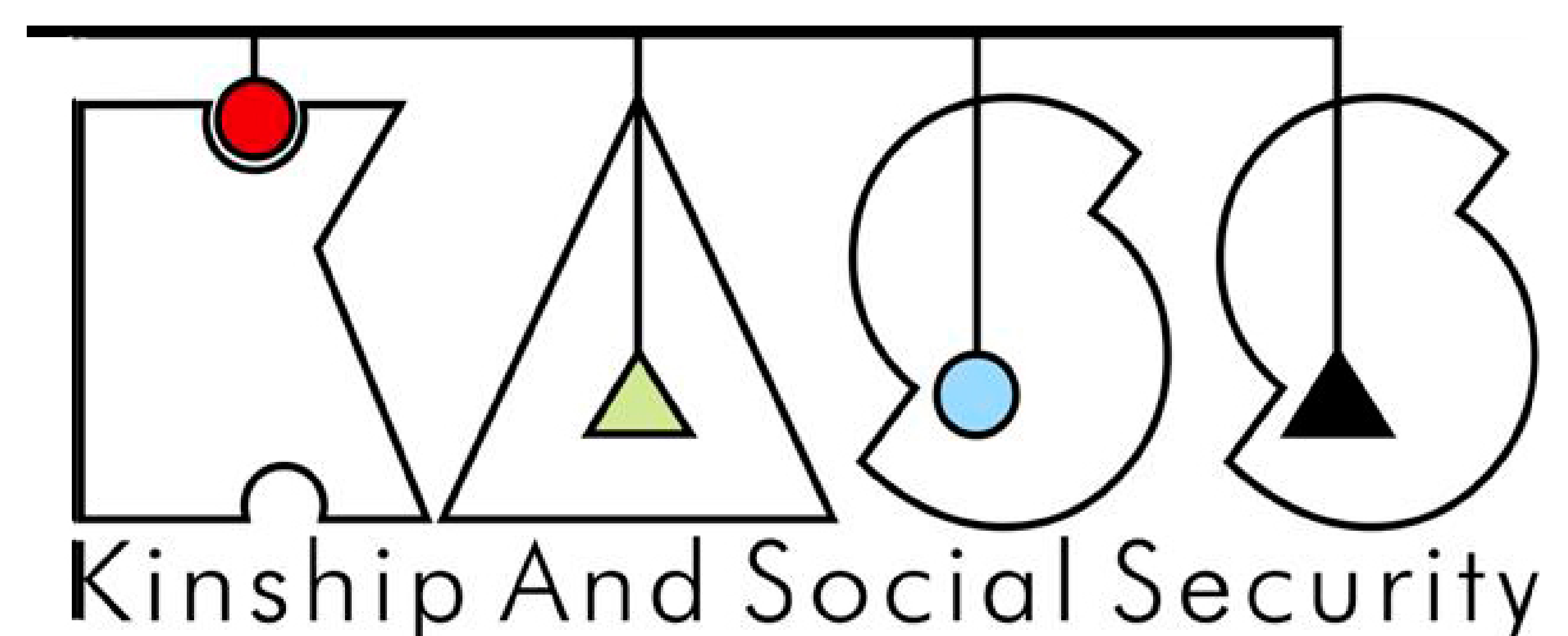
## Kinship and space

In the village, an emphasis on the spatial proximity between close relatives is noteworthy - despite emigration and the growth of the residential area. This norm is the most visible survival of the “lineage quarter system”. Under this system families were bound together in male lineages, each spatially concentrated in a different zone of the village. As historical research has shown, this “lineage quarter system” was related to agricultural organization, based in this region on intensive farming and ‘peasant’ smallholdings.

## Kinship and social change

And, despite the progressive nuclearization of the family, and the economic and social transformations of the last century, traces of this “lineage quarter system” are still evident: male lineage segments – called “razze” – are still the core of the kinship system, and there is a strong tendency towards spatial proximity between relatives.

This partial survival, with the substitution of the lineages by “modified extended families” based on spatial proximity, is in great part due to role of the extended family as a source of resources and mutual help, itself favoured by spatial proximity. From being the productive cell of an intensive farming system, the family has now become the main means of redistribution of resources. To a lesser degree, kinship, neighbourhood and friendship relations have the same role.



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