

**Traces of ison and biphonies in the Byzantine chant of Sicilian  
Arbëresh**

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Making Multipart Music: Case  
Studies



### The Arbëresh of Sicily: Byzantine chant and cultural identity<sup>1</sup>

The Albanians (the *Arbëresh*) constitute the largest linguistic ethnic “minority” in Sicily. The community is made up of around 20,000 people living in 5 towns, all of which are in the province of Palermo. The most important of these villages is Piana degli Albanesi, where the Bishop (whose Greek name is *Eparca*) of the Diocese (the *Eparchia*) of the Albanians of Sicily has his seat, see figure 1.

The cultural identity of the Albanians of Sicily is basically expressed by the language and rites:

1. Arbëresh is currently spoken both as a colloquial language and in religious celebrations;
2. a large part of the Arbëresh people follow Greek-Catholic rites.

In fact however, there are many other elements that mark the richness and complexity of this cultural identity. One fundamental aspect, for example, is the iconographic tradition: from a historical and artistic point of view, the Sicilian-Albanian icons painted in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century are especially important (see figures 2, 3 and 4). Another meaningful trait is the traditional female costume (see figure 5). In the rest of Sicily the use of traditional costumes has “disappeared” over the last century or two, whereas in the Arbëresh towns, even nowadays, we can still see women and girls wearing their wonderfully rich costumes for weddings and other festive occasions; this is another feature that clearly stresses the conservative nature of the Sicilian-Albanian culture.

The chant is a fundamental element of the Byzantine Liturgies and Offices (Matins, Vespers, Hours). The origin of the Arbëresh musical tradition traces back to the period between the end of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, when - after the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Turks in 1453 - a great exodus of Albanian and Greek populations occurred from Albania and Morea towards Sicily and other southern Italian regions. Since that time the Arbëresh-Byzantine chant has been handed down only orally: therefore in the Mediterranean area, it represents one of the very few “local” Byzantine oral traditions still surviving to the present day. The liturgical repertoire of the Byzantine Diocese (*Eparchia*) of Piana degli Albanesi is very wide and accompanies the entire liturgical year. Weekly celebrations and feast ceremonies, as well as various officiations, are usually adorned with an unceasing flow of melodies. In the Arbëresh-Byzantine rite, the chant is an expression of fundamental importance for the development of Liturgies and Offices and greatly contributes to evoking and reinforcing the dimension of the “sacred”. Only secret prayers whispered by the celebrant are recited, as well as the *Holy Father* and the *Credo* repeated by the assembly. At all other moments, every Holy Word always becomes chant, and everything else is sung: from the deacons’ short declamatory modulations (*ekfónisis*) to the psalms sung by priests, from the schematic cantillations of Readings and Gospels to the magnificent hymns sung by believers.<sup>2</sup>

1 For further information about the musical tradition in connection with the cultural identity of the Arbëresh of Sicily, see Garofalo 2004.

2 For a wide excursus on the various aspects of the Byzantine musical tradition of



Figure 1 - Map of the Sicilian-Albanian colonies (from Petrotta 1966: photographic table without page's number).

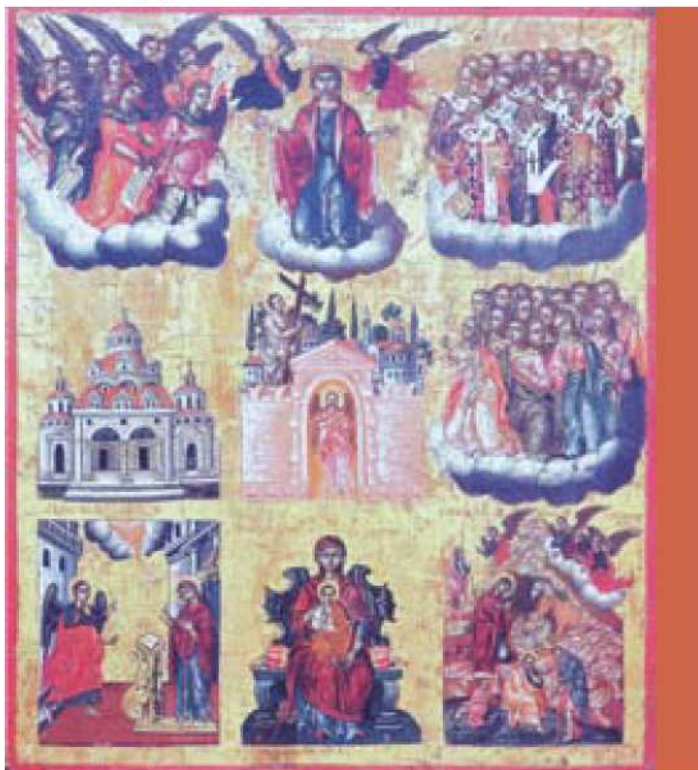


Figure 2 - *Epi si cheri* [In you all creation rejoices], tempera on panel, icon by Leos Moscos (Sicilian-Cretan school) 2nd half of the 17th century, Church of St. Nicholas of Myra, Mezzojuso.

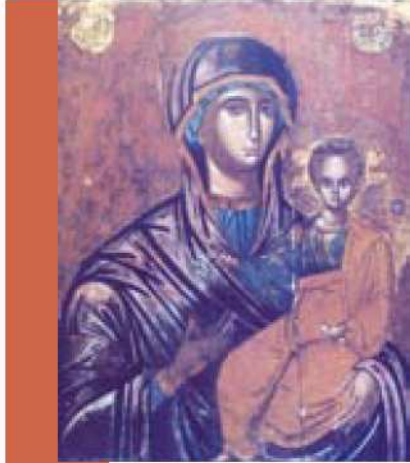


Figure 3 - The *Theotokos Odigitria*, tempera on panel, icon by Joannikios (Sicilian-Cretan school) 2nd half of the 17th century, Chapel of Mary Odigitria, Piana degli Albanesi.



Figure 4 - *St. Nicholas the Wonderworker*, tempera on wood, icon of an anonymous of the Sicilian-Cretan school) 2nd half of the 17th century, Church of St. Nicholas of Myra, Mezzojuso.



Figure 5 - Traditional costumes of Piana degli Albanesi photo by G. Garofalo (1993).

#### The textual aspect: Greek, Arbëresh, Italian

Until a few decades ago, the chants were sung only in Greek. Different translations into Italian and Arbëresh have only recently been used.<sup>3</sup> Believers (who usually do not know Greek) generally read editions in Greek transliterated into Latin characters with a parallel translation into Italian (see figures 6, 7 and 8).

#### Oral and written heritage

Still today, the chants are generally handed down orally. However, there are several collections of pentagrams transcribed by priests and monks at the beginning of the 1920s. Here I

the Albanians of Sicily (from the history of studies and research to the main musical characteristics of this repertoire) and for an updated bibliography, see Garofalo 2006a and Garofalo 2006b.

<sup>3</sup> In this regard, we must especially mention the work of Papàs Gjergji Schirò (1907-1992), who, between 1950 and 1970, when he was Archpriest of the St. Demetrios Cathedral of Piana degli Albanesi, translated almost all the liturgical books from Greek into Arbëresh.

Η ΘΕΙΑ ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ  
ΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΑΓΙΟΙΣ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ  
ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤΟΜΟΥ

Ὁ Διάκονος· Εὐλόγησον, δέσποτα.

Ὁ Ἱερεὺς, ἐκράνωσ, ὁψῶν ἅμα τὸ ἅγιον Εὐαγγέλιον, καὶ ποιῶν δι' αὐτοῦ τύπον σταυροῦ.

Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ, καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, νῦν, καὶ ἀεί, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

Ὁ Χορὸς· Ἀμήν.

Εἶτα ὁ Διάκονος λέγει τὰ Εἰρηνικά, ψαλλόντων τῶν δύο Χορῶν ἐναλλάξ μετὰ πᾶσαν δέξαι τὸ Κύριε, ἐλέησον.

Ἐν εἰρήνῃ τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ἐπερ τῆς ἄνωθεν εἰρήνης, καὶ τῆς σωτηρίας τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν, τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ἐπερ τῆς εἰρήνης τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου, εὐσταθείας τῶν ἁγίων τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἐκκλησιῶν, καὶ τῆς τῶν πάντων ἐνώσεως, τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ἐπερ τοῦ ἁγίου οἴκου τούτου, καὶ τῶν μετὰ πίστεως, εὐλαβείας, καὶ φόβου Θεοῦ εἰσιόντων ἐν αὐτῷ, τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Figure 6. - The text of the beginning of the Byzantine Mass (the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom) in Greek, from *I Thia Liturgia tu en Agiis Patros Imon Ioannu tu Chrysostomu*, Grottaferrata, Tipografia del Monastero Esarchico di Grottaferrata, 1960.

M E S H A

Zoti: Bekuarë rrogjëria e Atit,  
Sirit edhe e Shpirtit She-  
jt, nani e gjithëmonë e  
për jetë të jetëvet.

Pop.: Amin.

Z.: -Në pakje parkalesiëm t'ën'Zonë.

P.: Lipisi, o i Madh'in'Zot.

Z.: -Për pakjen s'larti e për shën-  
detën e shpirtit t'anë,  
parkalesiëm t'ën'Zonë.

" -Për pakjen e gjithë jetës të-  
rë, e për kjëndresën e Klishë-  
vet shejte të Perëndis e sa  
gjithë një të jenë, parkales-  
iëm t'ën'Zonë.

" -Për këtë shpi shejte e për  
gjithë atë që këtë hijën me  
besë, me ponë e me trëmbësi të  
Perëndis, parkalesiëm t'ën'Zo-  
në.

" -Për Episkopin' t'ënë (...), për  
të ndershëmen priftëri e dia-

Figure 7 - The text of the beginning of the Byzantine Mass (the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom) in Arbëresh, from *Parkalesitë të të Krështerëvet të vërtetë* [Prayers of true Christians], mimeographed edition [ed. by Papàs Gjergji Schirò], Piana degli Albanesi, without publisher, 1975.

can quote, for instance, the collection written by Papàs Lorenzo Perniciaro from Mezzojuso, whose critical edition I published myself (see figure 9).<sup>4</sup>

Very few collections have been printed so far (usually in limited editions which are basically unknown). The only one that somehow circulated is *I canti ecclesiastici greco-siculi* [The Greek-Sicilian Ecclesiastic Chants] by layman Francesco Falsone (1936): priests occasionally resort to it whenever they have to face particularly melismatic or rarely sung chants (see figure 10).

<sup>4</sup> For more information about these collections, see Garofalo 2006a. For the critical edition of the manuscripts of Papàs Lorenzo Perniciaro, see Garofalo 2001.

Il sacerdote alza l'Evangelo (1), facciando con esso un segno di croce sull'altare, e dice:

**SAC:** Evloghimèni i vasilla tu Patròs, ke tu Iiù, ke tu Aghiu Pnevmatos, nin ke al ke is tu eònas ton eònon.

**CORO:** Amin.

Benedetto sia il regno del Padre e del Figliuolo e dello Spirito Santo, ora e sempre e nei secoli del secol.

Così sia.

**DIAC.:** (se manca, lo supplisce il sacerdote):

En irini tu Kiriu dheithòmen.

**CORO:** Kirie elèison.

In pace preghiamo il Signore.

Signore, abbi pietà.

(E così a tutte le petizioni seguenti):

**DIAC.:** Ipèr tis ànothen irinis ke tis sotirias ton psichòn imòn tu Kiriu dheithòmen.

Ipèr tis irinis tu simpandos kòsmu,

Per la pace che viene dall'alto e per la salute delle anime nostre, preghiamo il Signore.

Per la pace di tutto quanto il mondo,

(1) Il libro degli Evangelii, la parola del Salvatore, si trova sempre sull'altare nel posto centrale, sopra l'antimensia: pezzo di stoffa nella quale è rappresentato il seppellimento del Signore e vi sono cucite reliquie di martiri.

Figure 8 - The text of the beginning of the Byzantine Mass (the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom) in Greek transliterated into Roman types with parallel translation in Italian, from *Prosefchitàrion. Manuale di preghiere per i fedeli di rito bizantino*, ed. by Papàs Damiano Como, Palermo, Associazione cattolica per l'Oriente Cristiano, 1959.

The liturgical musical tradition of the Arbëresh can be considered an “independent” family of the Byzantine chant. It shows many features in common with other better known Byzantine traditions (those of the Orthodox Church of Greece or the Slavic Znamenny chant, for example) but also has specific characteristics.



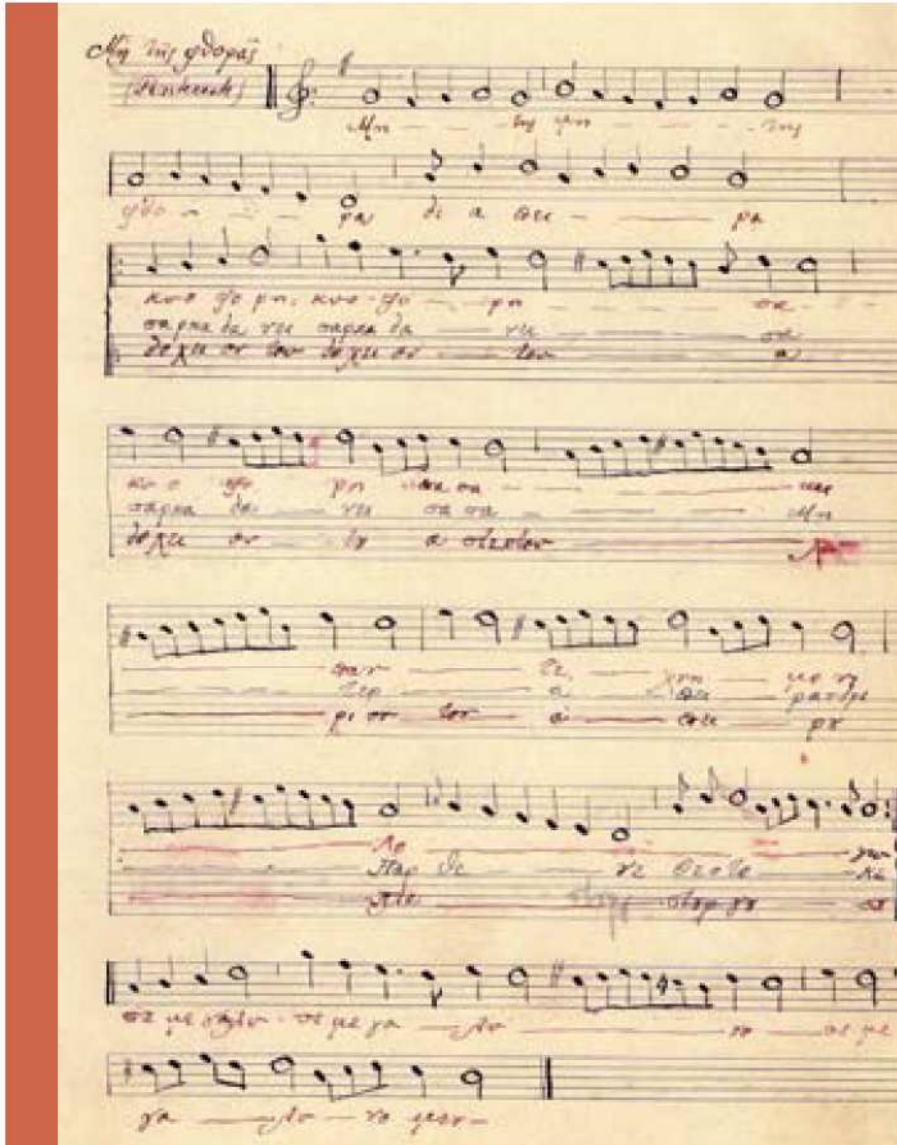


Figure 9 - A page from the manuscripts of Papàs Lorenzo Perniciaro (published by Garofalo 2001).

#### The *ison* among the Arbëresh of Sicily

An important feature of the Arbëresh Byzantine chant of Sicily is that the singing style is basically monodic. However, in many circumstances we observe a choir of the faithful and priests sustaining the soloist (in Greek, *protopsaltis*) using the *ison* technique.

# ΚΕ ΚΡΑΓΑΡΙΟΝ

63 Adagio (♩ = 95) ἦχος δ'

Κό-ρα-εἰ εὐ-  
καλεῖσθαι τὴν ἀπο-πέμ-ψή-  
μα-τα ἑ-νό-ου-σόν σου ἡ  
ψαλμὴ τῆς δε-ψή σε-ως  
ἔσθωσεν χερσῶν

Figure 10 - A page from the printed collection of *I canti ecclesiastici greco-siculi* edited by Francesco Falsone (1936).

The *ison* is very widely practised in Byzantine-Greek music: it consists in accompanying the main melody with long notes in the lower register. The *ison* is especially used for particularly complex or melismatic melodies, while it is not usually employed for syllabic or psalmodic styles.

As regards the main characteristics of the Greek-Byzantine chant, here I wish to quote, very synthetically, the following:

1. In the Byzantine semiography the musical signs do not indicate the absolute height of the notes to the singer, but rather the intervals that exist between a note and the next. For the singer, therefore, the misinterpretation of a sign com-

promises the interpretation of all subsequent signs, producing substantial errors in the intonation of the melodic development;

2. Greek-Byzantine music is modal, often chromatic, commonly with frequent use of microtones. In a single chant, moreover, there may be changes in the modes (that is to say *modal modulations*).

With regard to these features, the *ison* accomplishes three functions in the Greek-Byzantine chant:

1. it creates a background sound that emphasizes the fundamental degrees of the modes and highlights the moments of modulation from one mode to another;
2. it offers a stable reference point for the singers that helps them to read the musical signs properly and to maintain a good intonation, preventing the pitch from increasing or decreasing during the performance;
3. it assumes an “aesthetic” value.

On the contrary, the musical tradition of the Arbëresh of Sicily:

1. is transmitted only through an oral tradition;
2. is also modal, but uses far fewer chromaticisms, microtones and modal modulations as compared to the Greek-Byzantine one.

Consequently, in the Arbëresh-Byzantine chant the functions of the *ison* are more “essential”, as I shall try to explain better later.

In the Greek-Byzantine praxis, although in terms of placement of the degrees, the notes made with the *ison* can often apparently perform similar functions to those of the tonic, subdominant, dominant and submediant, the *ison* does not indeed have any tonal function, but, on the contrary, puts the modal nature of the melody in clear evidence.

In comparison with the Greek-Byzantine style, the Sicilian-Arbëresh *ison* presents quite different features, which we can summarize as follows:

1. employment of the *ison* is far less frequent than in the Greek tradition;
2. very often in Sicily, the *ison* is reduced to a single note, the fundamental degree of the mode, which usually coincides with the finalis, held continuously by the chorus from the beginning to the end of the chant: in these cases, therefore, the *ison* consists in a real drone.

To observe these features, listen, for example, to the *Megalinàrion* from the Christmas Matins performed by the Choir of Papadhes from Piana degli Albanesi ([audio example 1](#), Megàlinon, psichì mu).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Performed by the Choir of the Papadhes of Piana degli Albanesi, rec. by G. Garofalo, September 2003. Audio example published in Garofalo CD2005 (see discography). The Choir of the Papadhes of Piana degli Albanesi is a non-professional choir, founded in the

*Megàlinon, psichi mu, tin timioteran ke endboxoteran ton ano Stratevmaton.  
Mistirion xenon orò ke paràdboxon: uranòn to spileon; thronon cheruvikòn tin Parthe-  
non; tin fatnin chorion, en o aneklithi o achòritos Christòs o Theòs; on animnundes meg-  
alinomen.*<sup>6</sup>

Exalt, oh my soul, she who is the most honourable among the heavenly Arrays.  
I admire a marvellous and incredible mystery: heaven is the cave; cherubic throne  
is the Holy Mary; the fodder-trough is the cradle where Christ, infinite Lord, lays;  
whom we magnify by singing hymns.

In this example, we must note that the *ison* sometimes generates an interval of a minor second with the melody. This is an extremely significant phenomenon. When discussing Greek-Byzantine chant executive praxis, many Greek scholars complain that in similar cases the singers (especially the non-professional ones), under the influence of a “westernizing” taste, sometimes prefer to avoid the “dissonant” interval of the minor second, making the *ison* descending by a degree, in order to obtain the interval of a third (see, for instance, Giannelos 1996: p. 215).

I have stressed above that the liturgical chants of the Albanians of Sicily are usually performed only monodically, without *ison*. The *ison* is mostly reserved for solemn ceremonies or special circumstances. In this case, the Choir of the Papadhes of Piana degli Albanesi performed the *Megalinàrion* with the *ison*, because the recording was made “in studio” for the publication of a compact disc.

Another interesting example of *ison* performed by the Choir of the Papadhes of Piana degli Albanesi is the first Ode of the Christmas Kanon: *Christòs ghennate*. Here we can hear a rather more “dynamic” *ison*, sung on two notes: the first and the seventh degree of the mode (through – pay attention, please – a major second). Here the *ison* clearly makes the modal features of the melody evident. You can also observe that, in correspondence with the three sections of the chant, the Papadhes adopt three different modalities of vocal organization:

1. *solo* voice, without *ison*, for the first part of the Ode;
2. soloist + *ison*, for the second part of the Ode;
3. all the voices (the choir was composed of four singers) *in a perfect homophony* for the *katavasia* (i.e., in Byzantine hymnographic terminology, the whole repetition of a part of the poetic text with a different melody: in this case with a more rapid rhythm).

It is clear that the Choir of the Papadhes from Piana degli Albanesi adopted all these

year 2000, composed of four priests: Papàs Rosario Caruso, Papàs Jani Pecoraro, Papàs Piergiorgio Scalia, Papàs Marco Sirchia. The Choir of the Papadhes has performed numerous times in selected contexts (for example, Byzantine music conferences or festivals of sacred music) and has recorded two CDs (see discography Garofalo 2002 and 2005).

<sup>6</sup> In this paper all the Greek texts have been transliterated into Latin characters for easier reading.

musical choices for aesthetic reasons, to make the performance of the chant more “beautiful” and the style more “interesting”: once again specifically for a CD (listen to [audio example 2](#)).<sup>7</sup>

*Christòs ghennate, dboxàsate; Christòs ex uranòn, apandísate; Christòs epì ghis, ipsò-thite. Ásate to Kirio, pása i ghi, ke en effrosini animnísate, lat, oti dhedhòxaste.*

Christ is born, give ye glory. Christ comes from heaven, meet ye Him. Christ is on earth, be ye exalted. O all the earth, sing unto the Lord, and sing praises in gladness. O ye people, for He has been glorified.

In the reality of a liturgical celebration in church, the situation is completely different. In the following audio fragment, for example, you can listen to how the Bishop of Piana degli Albanesi actually performed the *Christòs ghennate* at the Matins during Christmas 2008: in a much more sober style and without *ison*. Although this is an aspect that has no specific musical interest, note that the text sung in the *katavasia* is sung in Arbëresh according to Papàs Gjergji Schirò's version (see figure 11): not so much for a kind of taste for the sake of variation, but rather, to bring the faithful closer to the intense atmosphere of celebration by using their colloquial idiom (listen to [audio example 3](#)).<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the *ison* among the Albanians of Sicily, we can make some further remarks:

1. the *ison* is generally perceived by priests and the faithful as “foreign”, far from the oldest and most authentic style of the Arbëresh Byzantine chant. In fact, it is considered a recent innovation (in general Arbëresh, especially priests experienced in singing, think that the *ison* has begun to be used in Sicily over the last 70-80 years);
2. the *ison*, however, plays an important aesthetic function: helping to make a performance with a more “profound” sound;
3. this aesthetic function also has interesting symbolic connotations. Although perceived as a “modern” innovation, the *ison* is, paradoxically, considered both an element that adds a “touch of antiquity” to the chants. In fact, the *ison* “evoking” the musical style of Byzantine Greece – and consequently the dimension of a supposed “authentically oriental spirituality” – contributes to stressing (not only for themselves, but also in the eyes of an external observer, such as a group of Roman Catholic faithful or of tourists visiting an Arbëresh church) the specificity of this musical tradition, and, with it, the singularity of the Byzantine rite, of the Arbëresh language and traditions and, more generally, the identity of an entire community;

<sup>7</sup> Performed by the Choir of the Papadhes from Piana degli Albanesi, rec. by G. Garofalo, September 2002. Audio example published in Garofalo 2002 (see discography)

<sup>8</sup> The *irmòs* in Greek is sung by Bishop Sotìr Ferrata; the *katavasia* in Arbëresh is sung by Papàs Elefthèrios Schiadà, rec. by G. Garofalo, 24 December 2008. Unpublished recording.

#### ODHA E PARË

Shi' lehet Krishti, lëvdonie  
ahi' vien nga kjiellia, ju t'e pritëni.  
Shi' Krishti mbi dhet: ju ngrëhuni.  
Zotit po t'i këndon jeta e gjithë,  
edhe ndë gësime, zëni kënka, popuj, ju  
se u lëvdërua Ai.

(Hristòs jennàte ,doksasate; Hristòs  
eks uranòn, apandisate, Hristòs epi jis,  
ipsòthite. Asate to Kjirio, pasa i ji,  
kje en evfrosini animnisate lai, òti  
dhedhòksaste.)

Figure - 11 The Arbëresh text of *Christòs ghennate* from *Eortogogji a Libri i Esperinon-jëvet të ditëve të kremtje të vitit* [Eorthològhion or Book of Vespers of the feast days of the year], mimeographed edition [ed. by Papàs Gjergji Schirò], Piana degli Albanesi, without publisher, 1978: 196.

4. the *ison* also has the important function of strengthening and promoting social cohesion and participation in the Liturgy. In fact, just like in Greece, the *ison* in Sicily is never used in syllabic chants and psalms, but only for the most complex and melismatic melodies. Apart from some melismatic chants of the fixed parts of the Mass (corresponding to the *Ordinarium* of the Roman Rite), more widely known by all the faithful, we can find the use of the *ison* especially during the Offices: indeed, in the Matins, Hours and Vespers, we can find chants whose performance is particularly difficult. These melodies, which are not well known by the faithful, may be performed only by the most skilled singers: generally the priests themselves. In these cases, the *ison* therefore plays an important social function, because even if the assembly or the choir cannot sing these particularly complex and melismatic chants, through the *ison* they may also contribute to solemnize the holy celebrations by collective singing. In this way, through the *ison* a melismatic chant (which because of its sophistication may be excessively received for its appearance, charm and beauty) does not become a passive experience for the faithful, but returns to be an expression of a communitarian prayer;
5. particularly for these reasons, the *ison* is primarily reserved for solemn occasions among the Sicilian-Arbëresh.

Compared to the Byzantine chant of Greece, the *ison* represents an aspect of secondary importance in the Arbëresh tradition. Other phenomena, in fact, are the most interesting features of this repertoire. Among these: the orality, the specific characteristics of its modal system (*oktoichos*), the implicit rules for the improvisation (oral

composition) of the melodies.<sup>9</sup>

However, investigations into the *ison* of the Albanians of Sicily have several reasons of interest. For instance:

1. they can provide tools for understanding the phenomenon of polyvocal singing [*multipart singing*] in the Balkans (notably in Albania and in Greece);
2. they can provide important historical information for a survey of the origins of the *ison* in the Byzantine chant (once again with particular reference to Albania and Greece).

These aspects have been the subject of significant studies over the last few years by my friend and colleague, Eno Koco (see his paper *Styles of the iso-based multipart unaccompanied singing [IMUS] of south Albania and north Epirus* in this same Symposium). Some results have already been published. In my communication, therefore, I shall omit these issues and focus instead on other ones, which are more relevant to this Panel's title (*Discussing written sources*).

#### Written traces of the Sicilian-Arbëresh *ison*

Among the Arbëresh of Sicily, the *ison* is an “extemporaneous” and improvised practice. As well as for other aspects of this tradition – such as the modal system of the eight tones (the *oktoichos*) or the implicit rules for formulaic improvisation – no awareness or theory about the *ison* exists, not only amongst the faithful but also among the priests. Therefore we can only observe what happens in the concrete praxis.

On the “written traces” of the *ison* among the Sicilian-Arbëresh, I wish to recall once again that this tradition is handed down orally, and that the few manuscripts I know are all very recent. The most “ancient” or rather the “oldest” date from 1899. Others date from the 1920s and 30s, while other ones are more recent (60s).

In these manuscripts only very few *ison* were signed. Often, someone other than the author put the annotations of the *ison*, exclusively for a performative purpose. This shows that the author of the manuscript (usually a priest who through the transcription of a chant intended to preserve it for posterity) did not consider the *ison* “important” but only a matter of improvisation. In the case of the older manuscripts (1920-1940), the absence of records relating to the *ison* can also be seen as an indication that at that time, the *ison* was *never* executed. At the present time, however, we cannot give a sure answer to this question.

See, with regard to this, the transcription of *Dhefte idhomen pisti*, the *káthisma* of Christmas Matins, made by Bishop Sotir Ferrara in 1988 (see figure 12).<sup>10</sup> As you can

<sup>9</sup> For these aspects see, once again, Garofalo 2004 and Garofalo 2006a.

<sup>10</sup> Bishop Sotir Ferrara made this collection of scores (in total 44 pages) when he was the Directory of the Choir (the *Corale San Demetrio*) of the Cathedral of Piana degli Albanesi. It

see, here, the *ison* only consists in a long extension of a single note: a fourth below the keynote of the mode.

It is interesting to listen to how the Choir of the Papadhes of Piana degli Albanesi performs this same chant: once more, on the occasion of a “studio recording”, to get a fuller and more solemn sound, the Choir of the Papadhes sings a somewhat less static *ison*: on the first degree and on the fifth lower e (listen to [audio example 4](#), Dhefte idhomen pisti).<sup>11</sup>

*Dhefte idhomen, pisti, pu eghennithi o Christòs: akoluthisomen lipòn entha odhevi o Astir metà ton Magon, Anatólis ton Vasiléon. Angheli immusin akatapavstos eki. Pimenes agravlusin odhin epàxion: “Dhoxa en ipsistis, légondes, to simeron en to spiléo techthendi ek tis Parthenu ke Theotoku en Vithleém tis Iudhèas”.*

O faithful, come and see the place where Christ is born. Together with the Magi, the Kings from the East, let us follow the star wherever it goes. The shepherds keep watch, while Angels majestically sing their hymns of praise, saying: “Glory to the God on High who is born today of the Virgin, in a cave at Bethlehem of Judah”.

### Biphonies

In the context of liturgical chants, it sometimes happens that the Byzantine chants are performed in two parts, with a prevailing movement of parallel thirds. This executive style is not traditional and has no relation with the technique of the *ison*. This is clearly a recent influence of a mode of multipart singing that comes from popular music, but also from the devotional paraliturgical songs (these songs, often accompanied by the harmonium, date back to the XIX<sup>th</sup> century).

An example of this kind can be the hymn *O Monoghenis Iiòs ke Logos* sung after the second antiphon of the Divine Liturgy, in a contextual recording in Piana degli Albanesi’s San Demetrio Cathedral (listen to [audio example 5](#), *O Monoghenis*).<sup>12</sup>

*[Dhoxa Patri ke Iiò ke Aghìo Pnevmati, ke nin ke ai ke is tus eonas ton eonon. Amin.]*  
*O Monoghenis Iiòs ke Logos tu Theù, athàntos iparchon, ke katadhexàmenos dhià tin imeteran sotirian sarkothine ek tis aghias Theotoku ke aiparthenu Marias, atrèptos enanthropisas, stavrothis te, Christè o Theòs, thanato thànton patisas. Is on tis Aghias Triàdhos, sindhoxazòmenos to Patri ke to Aghìo Pnevmati, soston imàs.*

[Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages

was the anthology used by the singers of the *Corale* for their concerts.

<sup>11</sup> Performed by the Choir of the Papadhes from Piana degli Albanesi, rec. by G. Garofalo, September 2002. Audio example published in Garofalo 2002 (see discography).

<sup>12</sup> Performed by the choir and faithful of Piana degli Albanesi’s San Demetrio Cathedral rec. by G. Garofalo, 14 January 2008. Unpublished recording.



Dhëfte idhomen, pisti, • pu eghennithi o Christos; • skoluthiasmon lipda •  
entha odhëvi o Istir • metâ ton Magon, Anstolis • ton Vasillôn. • 'Angheli  
imânias • aketapêvetos eki. • Pimènes agravlûsîn odhîn sphîon, • Dhôza en i-  
peistis, lûgandês, • to almeron en to spilô techthêndi • ek tis Parthênou •  
ke Thîotôku • en Vitheôm tis Iudhês.

The musical score is written on ten staves. The lyrics are in Greek and English. The Greek lyrics are: Dhëfte i dho - nen pi is ti - pu e gheni thi o - Chri is tò - - - - os ma tâ ton Mh so - nen li - pò - on ên tha o dhé vi o - A as gon A ma to - li - is to - on Va - si - - - - ti - - - - ir lé - - - - on A anghel'im nh - - - - ei in a ka ta pâ - - av sto - os e ki - Pi mé nes ag rav lû sin o dhin e pâ - - - - kai on Dhò ksa en i pais ti is lé go on de - es to si se ron en to spi lé o tech thê - - - - en di ek tis ke the Par thé - - - - nu - en Vi thleôm tis o tò - - - - ku - i - a - dhé - - - - as

Figure 12. - The score of *Dhëfte idhomen pisti* from the collection of transcriptions recorded by the Bishop Sotir Ferrara (1998: 16).



Figure 13 - A particular of a page (the responses of the faithful for the Holy Mass) from the manuscripts of Papàs Lorenzo Perniciaro (published by Garofalo 2001).

of ages. Amen.]

Only begotten Son and Word of God, although immortal You humbled Yourself for our salvation, taking flesh from the holy Mother-of-God and ever virgin Mary and, without change, becoming man, Christ, our God, You were crucified but conquered death by death. You are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us.

Bivocality is very often used in the so-called “short replies” sung during the Mass or the Offices by the faithful: *Amin* (Amen), *Kirie elèison* (Lord, have mercy), *Si Kirie* (To Thee, O Lord) and so on. Listen, for instance, to these types of responses during the Little Litany after the second antiphon of the Divine Liturgy in a contextual recording made in the Piana degli Albanesi’s San Demetrio Cathedral. Please note that in this case the text of the three petitions of the Litany proclaimed by the Deacon and of the *ekphònisis* pronounced by the concelebrant are in Italian, as happens on some solemn occasions (in this case it was Easter Sunday) in which tourists and believers from other non Sicilian-Arbëresh villages attend the Liturgy (listen to [audio example 6](#)).<sup>13</sup>

*Little Litany after the second antiphon of the Divine Liturgy*

**Diacono:** *Ancora preghiamo in pace il Signore.*

**Popolo:** *Kirie elèison.*

**Diacono:** *Soccorrici, salvaci, abbi pietà di noi e custodiscici, o Dio, con la tua grazia.*

<sup>13</sup> Performed by Deacon Paolo Gionfriddo, Papàs Eleftherios Carbone, the choir and faithful of Piana degli Albanesi’s San Demetrio Cathedral, rec. by G. Garofalo, Easter Sunday (23 March) 2008. Unpublished recording.

**Η ΘΕΙΑ ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ**  
ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΑΓΙΟΙΣ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ  
**ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤΟΜΟΥ**

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**LA**  
**S. LITURGIA GRECA**  
DI  
**S. GIOVANNI CRISOSTOMO**

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**CANTI TRADIZIONALI**  
**DELLE COLONIE ITALO-GRECO-ALBANESE**  
**ARMONIZZATI PER ORGANO OD ARMONIUM**  
DAL  
**SAC. CARLO ROSSINI**  
DIPLOMATO ALLA PONT. SCUOLA SUPER  
DI MUSICA SACRA IN ROMA



*Carlo Rossini*  
*Harmonized 1926*

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**J. FISCHER & BRO., NEW YORK**  
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Figure 14 - The front cover of the harmonized version of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom published in New York by Father Gregorio Stassi (1924).

**Popolo:** *Kirie elèison.*

**Diacono:** *Facendo memoria della tuttasanta, immacolata, benedetta, gloriosa Signora nostra, la Madre di Dio e semprevergine Maria, insieme con tutti i Santi, raccomandiamo noi stessi, gli uni gli altri, e tutta la nostra vita a Cristo Dio.*

**Popolo:** *Si Kirie.*

**Sacerdote:** *Poiché Tu sei Dio buono e amico degli uomini, e noi rendiamo gloria a Te, Padre, Figlio e Spirito Santo, ora e sempre, e nei secoli dei secoli.*

**Popolo:** *Amin.*

**Deacon:** In peace let us again pray to the Lord.

**People:** Lord, have mercy.

**Deacon:** Help us, save us, have mercy upon us, and protect us, o God, by your grace.

**People:** Lord, have mercy.

**Deacon:** Remembering our most holy, pure, blessed, and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

**People:** To Thee, O Lord.

**Priest:** For You are a good and loving God, and to You we give glory, to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

**People:** Amen.

Concerning these “short replies”, we can again assume a recent origin, derived from popular music and from the devotional songs. Of this practice, however, there are already many traces in some manuscripts from the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. This is the case of an *Amin* recorded in a manuscript book written by Father Lorenzo Perniciaro of Mezzojuso in the 1930s. (see figure 13).<sup>14</sup>

On the bivocality used by the faithful for this type of “short answers” (sometimes, depending on the presence of male voices, we hear not *two* but *three* parties), I will briefly add that such use can also be traced back to a polyphonic version of the traditional Mass of the Arbëresh of Sicily, published by Father Gregorio Stassi<sup>15</sup> in New York in 1924 by Fischer Edition (see figure 14).<sup>16</sup>

The publication was printed in New York, but it was almost inevitable that this harmonized style was widely successful even among many Arbëresh of Sicily. Here you

<sup>14</sup> See the critical edition of Papàs Lorenzo Perniciaro's manuscripts edited by Garofalo 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Father Gregorio Stassi, born in Piana degli Albanesi, spent his entire life as a monk in the “San Nilo” Greek Abbey in Grottaferrata, near Rome.

<sup>16</sup> See Stassi 1924. The idea to publish a version of the polyphonic Mass with the traditional Byzantine melodies of Sicily came to Father Stassi for this reason: after the First World War, a priest from Piana degli Albanesi founded a Parish of Greek-Byzantine rites in New York to accommodate the many Arbëresh immigrants. With this Mass, harmonized in four parts for the organ by Maestro Carlo Rossini, Father Gregory Stassi intended to encourage the participation of the faithful, making the chant more involving and “more modern”.

N. 4  
*Piccola Sinapti.*

*Diac.* Ἐν, καὶ ἔτι, ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ Κυρίου δε - γ - θῶ - μιν.  
Eni, ke eti, en i'riai tu Kyriou de - i - tho, min.

*Coro.* Κύ-ριε ἐ-λέ - γ - σον. Κύ-ριε ἐ-λέ - γ - σον. Σὺ Κύ-ριε Ἄ - - μιν.  
Ky.ri.e e.le - i. son. Ky.ri.e e.le - i. son. Si Ky.ri.e. A. . . min.

Figure 15 - A page of the harmonized version of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom published in New York by Father Gregorio Stassi (1924).

can see how this type of “short answers” for the Little Litany (the *Piccola Sinapti*) are harmonized in the Liturgy printed in New York (see figure 15). As you can easily observe, the style of the harmonization does not differ either from the one we found in the manuscript of Papàs Lorenzo Perniciario or from the one still practiced today by the Arbëresh faithful in Piana degli Albanesi.

