

Interesting in this performance is the attempt to sing the drone - the *ison* [ἰσον] - every now and then by one or two people. People of the older generations remember that they use to sing it until the middle of the 20th century during the Liturgy. People in Sicily mention the same practice. The fact that this practice has almost disappeared today has to do particularly with the demographic changes in the Arbëreshë villages. The younger generations are leaving them to study and work in the big cities in Central and North Italy, elsewhere in Western Europe and in the USA. This is a widespread phenomenon in all ethnic groups in Sicily and southern Italy. Being far from their home places, people inevitably forget some of the older traditions, including characteristic ways of singing in the church.

In some Arbëreshë churches in southern Italy people sing also in Italian. In some cases, the music can hardly be distinguished from that of the Italians. Example 7 is a fragment from a song in which people wish that Maria of Constantinople were still alive; she is the Queen of the world and they pray to her to help the village (Barille) and Italy. In this recording a woman alone sings in a small church not very well maintained. The minor mode, its leading tone (the augmented seventh degree of the scale) and the giusto rhythm are only some of the features which make this music so different from the previous examples. The similarity to Italian folk songs is also obvious.

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of two staves of music in 6/8 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff has a treble clef and a common time signature of 6/8. The second staff also has a treble clef and a common time signature of 6/8. The lyrics are: "E vi - va Ma - ri - a, Ma - ri - a sem - pre vi - va vi - va Con - tan - di - nobl e chi l'ha cre - o." There are some markings above the notes, including a "2" with a slur, indicating a second ending or a specific rhythmic pattern.

Example 7: A song for Maria of Constantinople (in Italian). Barille. February 11, 2000.  
Singer: Amalia Rella (Recording and transcription: Ahmedaja)

#### IV KALIMERE

Another kind of music which is to be heard in churches, streets and houses of Arbëreshë villages are the songs called *kalimere* (also *kaljimere*). The term comes from the Greek word *kalimera* [καλημέρα] meaning the "good day". In this case it is used in the sense of "congratulations" or "good news". The reasons for this connotation lie in the songs and the context in which they are usually performed. Through *kalimere* - which are performed only in Arbërisht - episodes of Jesus's life are recounted, the great mysteries, the glory of the Virgin and the Saints are sung about. Groups of people sing them usually during the Easter Festivities, such as for example before daybreak on Palm Sunday - also often during the vespers of Saturday evening - to commemorate the raising of Lazarus. Very popular also are performances before Holy Friday. Often, small groups of people go from home to home singing *kalimere* for the family

being visited, effectively becoming donations. *Kalimere* are also performed during processions round the church or inside after the Liturgy.

The bishop of the Eparchy of Lungro - Giovanni Stamati - wrote in 1971 as follows:

“The kalimere are like texts of a folk “paraliturgy”, which the Italo-Albanian Church has used widely, especially in the past, with a brilliant pastoral sense, to transmit the catechism, to nourish the faith, to inculcate religious devotion and to create a festal atmosphere.”

Le “Kalimere” sono come i testi di una “paraliturgia” popolare, di qui con squisito senso pastorale, particolarmente nel passato, se è servito largamente la Chiesa Italo-Albanese per impartire la catechesi, alimentare la fede, inculcare la pietà religiosa e creare il clima festivo.”

(Stamati 1990 [1971])

It is therefore not at all surprising that religious institutions themselves have published *kalimere*, as it is the case in the *Grande e Santa Settimana. Canti Popolari e Kalimere* with an introduction by Bishop Giovanni Stamati<sup>24</sup>.

Villagers and priests say that a good part of the lyrics are written by Giuglio Varibobba (1704 – 1788) a priest from San Giorgio Albanese<sup>25</sup>, who is particularly known in the history of Albanian literature for his work on the life of the Mother of God, published for the first time in Rome in 1762<sup>26</sup>. Though a number of Varibobba’s *kalimere* lyrics are known today as traditional ones, there are many others still known to be his. This can be seen in the publication of Antonio Bellusci on traditional religious songs in certain Arbëreshë villages<sup>27</sup>. Bellusci, born in Frascineto in 1934, has collaborated and published extensively in parallel with his duties as priest. He has focused both on Arbëreshë traditions in Italy<sup>28</sup> and on those living in Greece<sup>29</sup>, called Arbëreshë of Greece or Arvanites, in contrast to contemporary Albanians, who are called Alvanoi in Greece. He has also been the editor of the journals *Vatra jonë* (Our Hearth, 1966 – 1972) and *Lidhja* (League, 1980-2003), in which the cultural traditions of Arbëreshë including *kalimere* had a special space.

Bellusci’s publication on Arbëreshë religious songs<sup>30</sup> includes also lyrics written by other Arbëreshë authors, such as those of *kalimere* number 18 and 19 by Giuseppe Schirò<sup>31</sup> or number 17 by Antonio Santori, and priests of the second half of the 20th century including Bellusci himself (number 12)<sup>32</sup>. Of great value in this publication is the musical transcription of the main melody of each song. *Kalimere* have also been published in a similar way in other

24 Stamati s.a., 3-4.

25 Mbuzati (in Arbërisht).

26 Varibobba 2002 [1762] and 1984.

27 Bellusci 1990a [1971], 70.

28 See, among others, Bellusci 1990a, 1990b, 1991, 1992, 2003.

29 See Bellusci 1989 and 1994.

30 Bellusci 1990a [1971].

31 See Bellusci 1990a [1971], 70.

32 Ibid.