

Musical Mourning Rituals in Sicily

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Abstract

This article surveys various vocal and instrumental performances (chants, laments, calls, sounds of church bells and drums, band music) connected to the ritual celebration and commemoration of the dead that are still characterized in Sicily by a manifest syncretism between Christian Church rules and folk customs and beliefs. These “sounds of mourning” are examined in terms of both their musical aspects and their social and symbolic functions, with special attention given to the changing dynamics between the present day and the recent past. The focus also extends to include celebrations in which “fictitious funerals” are performed, such as those for Christ during the Easter procession and for Nannu (“Grandpa”) in Carnival ceremonies.

Keywords: Sicily; Mourning Music; Celebrations of Death; Easter; Carnival

Published in memory of Rob Schultz, who came to Sicily in search of his roots and found them.

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Manuscript Editor's Introduction

This paper takes up a topic—musical mourning and lamenting—that has occupied scholars since the foundation of modern Italian ethnomusicology. In 1952, ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella and anthropologist Ernesto De Martino conducted seminal research in the Southern Italian region of Basilicata, producing extensive field recordings and publishing the book *Morte e pianto rituale / Dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria* (1958) by De Martino. Recordings from that campaign are kept in the Raccolta 18 at the Archivi di etnomusicologia of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. Carpitella, as De Martino's main collaborator, highlighted the fundamental sonic and musical features of lament, drawing from Constantin Brailoiu's methodology for investigating Romanian lament (*bocet*). While lamentation of this sort is commonly thought to be a thing of the past in modern Italy, this paper shows how some forms of mourning the dead through sounds and music are still surviving in the Sicilian context.

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Translator's Note

Translating this fascinating article presented challenges, which included accurately conveying Sergio Bonanzinga's academic style and the pathos of the songs and chants in the Sicilian dialect. The most demanding task in the translation concerned some of the musical terminology, including the specialized techniques and vocabulary of bell ringing. One of the matters that remains elusive is the translation of the word *canto*, which has a larger semantic field than "chant" in English. At times I have translated it as "chant" and at other times "sing"/"song" depending on my sense of the context, but the reader should realize that the two English terms are not translated one-to-one from the Italian.

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In ancient and communitarian cultures, death is a moment of crisis to be resolved through symbolic practices that signal the elevation of the deceased to the status of benevolent entity and restore balance to the group's relationship with its physical and existential environment. In essence, the sounds and acts of mourning always and everywhere serve as functional "techniques" to ensure the success of this transition. They punctuate its process and mark its most important moments (1).

In Sicily, as in many other areas where Roman Catholicism is prevalent, the relationship with the deceased is maintained through enduring ancient rituals (the mourning lament, the meal of condolence, divination, customs, and beliefs connected with the Day of the Dead, etc.) and the observance of norms set by the Church, ranging from the ringing of church bells to a wide repertoire of prayers and dirges commemorating them. The syncretism between these two realms is still present today in the funerary wakes and symbolic funerals staged during Holy Week. Processional "litters" transporting the dead body of Jesus Christ are frequently carried by the faithful in a distinctive swaying motion with the accompaniment of music performed by street bands, not unlike what sometimes still happens in real funerals. The mourning lament also acquires an important role in commemorating the passion and death of Christ, through a wide repertoire of chants, which are often called *lamenti* ("lamentations"), performed by groups of singers during the period from the beginning of Lent until Holy Saturday. A further form of funerary expression connected to a fictitious death is found in the continuing practice of parodic lamentations performed for the end of Carnival.

1. The code of the death knell

Numerous Sicilian communities still strictly adhere to traditional rules for the ringing of church bells, despite the increasing spread of automated bell-ringing systems (2). The bells are played by a sexton, a priest, or an occasional assistant (usually a boy living near the church) – either by imparting a swinging motion to the bell with a strong rope of variable length attached

to the end of an iron bar going through the *viòlu* (the Sicilian word for the headstock, i.e., the support in wood or cast iron to which the bell is suspended), or directly activating the *bbattàgghiu* (“clapper”) by means of a rope to strike one or both sides of the vessel. Among the numerous messages that mark “Church time” and the significant events of social life, those related to funerary rituals (from last rites to burial), are of great importance. Formal structures may differ from one village to another, and even between churches within the same village, based on specific local customs and on the number of available bells (from a minimum of two to six or more). The ringing usually reflects social hierarchy: the various connotations of community relations are represented through different “sonic emblems,” which mark the distinctions between male/female, child/adult, lay person/cleric, and aristocrat/bourgeois/commoner.

In many places, church bells were used to announce the final administration of the Eucharist (the viaticum) to a dying person. In Salemi (see maps 1 and 2), the early twentieth-century musician and folklorist Alberto Favara reported that the priest in charge of bringing the viaticum was escorted by a drummer, who performed different rhythms connected with: 1) the procession from the church to the house of the dying; 2) the arrival at the house; 3) the blessing in the house; 4) the return to the church; and 5) the blessing in the church (cf. Favara 1957, 2: n. 1019, musical example 1; other rhythms to accompany the viaticum are noted in Nos. 954, 960, 973, 1005, 1008, 1020, 1085). In Isnello, when the priest carried the viaticum, the sexton of the Cathedral first played a sequence of strokes with the *campana rà comunioni* (“communion bell”) and then either two or three strokes of the *campana i menziournu* (“noon bell”), according to whether the dying person was a woman or a man (3). In Mussomeli, when the dying person entered the critical phase, the attendants would inform the sexton of the nearest church (or, in the case of a dying monk, the head of the brotherhood to which he belonged), and he would ring the last farewell to invite the faithful to recite the prayer for the dying while the viaticum was solemnly carried to the dying person’s home—hence the frequent habit of naming the ringing that accompanied the viaticum *agunìa* (“agony”). The priest’s procession was then accompanied by the continuous ringing of the bells, often with a small informal procession of friends and relatives as well (4).

The sequence of chimes signaling a death is also referred to as *agunìa* (or *ngunìa*). Sometimes the death knell differs from the one announcing the funeral mass, as well as that which accompanies the *martòriu* (“funeral procession”). In Alcamo, the chime for people of rank was sounded with the *campanone* (i.e., the largest bell), whereas for commoners two smaller bells with two strokes each sufficed. Priests were entitled to bells with triple chimes (Papa 1958, 21). In Ciminna, the funeral toll for a nun or priest was referred to as *assèqui*, and was quite different from that for lay people, consisting of three rings at equal intervals separated by a longer one (Graziano 1935, 27). Of equal significance is the duration and acoustic intensity of the funeral bells, which could be played by one or more churches to reflect the higher or lower status of the deceased (5). The funeral-bell customs reported by Mario Ciaccio, a priest from Sciacca, at the beginning of the twentieth century are illuminating in this respect:

For the king, the queen, and their children, bells could be played full peal at any time, even at night, with the large bell and with all the others, without paying anything to the church. For everyone else, by paying two gold *tari* [i.e. an ancient Sicilian coin] to the chaplain or treasurer of the church, one could have the bells played only between the daybreak chime (the *diana*) and the

Hail Mary, with this distinction: for the priests nine calls with the big bell and nine *mote* [i.e. specific rhythmic sequences of bell ringing according to local customs] with all the others; the same for soldiers, barons, doctors of any profession and non-graduate jurists and medical doctors, but for their wives eight, for sons seven, for daughters six, for grandsons five, and for granddaughters four; for other nobles and landowners with no families, homes with servants or separate lands, only five full strokes with the large bell, four for wives, three for sons, and two for daughters and grandchildren; for the honored bourgeois only three full strokes with the big bell; for artisans and laborers only two full strokes separated by one stroke of the median bell. (Original ed. 1904; modern edition 1988, 1:65-66) (6).

In Mussomeli, death is announced by a ringing of the bells of the church nearest the house of the deceased. This type of ringing is usually called *mmartòriu* (i.e., funeral tolling). The main church in the village gives a signal, in the form of an interplay between two basic rhythmic formulas executed with three bells (musical example 2). Subsequently, the other bells in the village, on request of the family and upon payment of a donation, can repeat the announcement. In the past, if the deceased was a priest, there was a special ring, performed at the same time by the bells of all the churches, whereas if a child died the bells rang *a glòria* (“for glory”, i.e., with a joyful sound; the Sicilian expression comes from the renowned Latin Church hymn *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*). When the member of a brotherhood dies, the funeral tolling includes the bell dedicated to that brotherhood at the main church, called *campana dei fratelli* (“brothers’ bell”). If a death occurs at night, the announcement is delayed until dawn, immediately after the first morning bell call. The funeral toll is then repeated when the coffin is taken to the church, in the climactic stages of the funeral mass and at the start of the funerary procession to the cemetery (7).

The code that is still partially in force at the main church of Antillo is similarly based on gender, generational, and social distinctions. The different signals are produced by alternating the chimes of two bells (large and small, respectively): MAN, 9 + 2; WOMAN, 7 + 2; MALE CHILD, two series of rapid strokes on the small bell and a “gloria” (with both bells); FEMALE CHILD, a series of rapid chimes of the small bell and a “gloria”; PRIEST, 33 + 2 (no longer in use). Other sounds punctuate the moments before and after the funeral mass. A first call, consisting of a sequence of rapid chimes alternating between the two bells followed by 14 chimes of the large bell + 14 chimes of the small bell + 1 chime of the large bell is used to announce that the priest is about to travel to the house of the deceased (8). A second call, performed solely with the large bell, announces the transportation of the coffin to the church. When the coffin approaches the churchyard, the sound pattern is as follows: 3 chimes of the large bell + 3 chimes of the small bell + 14 chimes of the large bell + 1 chime with both bells (9). After the mass, the tolling of the two alternating bells accompanies the start of the funeral procession.

In Calamònaci the announcement of the death (*ngunìa*) is given by alternating the tolling of the two bells (large/small) of the main church and is the same for every deceased (10). The funeral toll could be repeated at varying intervals of time (every week, month or year), with the possible participation of all the churches in the village in the case of a wealthy deceased (cf. Pitrè 1889, 2: 226). In this small rural center the tolling that marks the anniversary of a death is called *ricurrenza*, and the signal is given by the alternation between three chimes of the small bell and three chimes of the large one, iterated at length with a regular rhythm (musical example 3).

In Sortino, the traditional system of funerary calls is still partially implemented by the sexton of the church of Saint Sophia using three bells: *rranni* (“large”), *picciula* (“small”), and *mminzana* (“medium”). He explains that in the past, the death (*agunìa*) was announced in the morning – around 8:30 – by the bells of all the churches in the village, while today it is performed only by those churches of the parish to which the deceased belonged. The different stages of the *assòcio* (“funeral train”) were then marked by the *appetru* (“call”), which took on different names according to its duration. The “general” *appetru* only signaled the arrival of the coffin into the church for the celebration of the religious service; the “double” *appetru* also accompanied the procession from the church to the edge of the village; the “triple” one also marked the itinerary from the house of the deceased to the church, while the “quadruple” one prolonged the duration of the tolling until the arrival of the funeral train to the cemetery. The greater or lesser extent of the *appetru* depended on the economic status of the deceased. Nowadays, it is customary to perform a simple *accumpagnamentu* (“accompaniment”), identical to the *appetru* in form, but lasting for much less time (the bells ring only for a short while after the coffin leaves the church). In current practice, bell ringing is used to differentiate between the deaths of priests (here too, called *agunìa*) and those of children (called *lloria*, “glory”). The ordinary *agunìa* starts with at least ten strokes of the medium bell, followed by the funeral toll. The expression “funeral toll” signifies a three-bell rhythmic formula used in both the *agunìa* and the *appetru* (and therefore also in the *accumpagnamentu*). The *agunìa* for priests begins complexly with a nine sequences, one chime each, of the small, medium, and large bells and ends with the usual funeral tolling. The mass for the Commemoration of the Dead is announced the previous evening, first by ringing the Hail Mary and then by funeral tolling. Finally, we cannot ignore the tradition of the *campana ô vènniri* (“Friday bell”) to commemorate the death of Christ: it involved the large bell playing at least ten sequences of two chimes on every Friday of the year at 3 pm – except on Good Friday, when bell ringing is forbidden by the Church (11). In Isnello a similar form of weekly commemoration of Christ’s death, known locally as the *vintun’uri* (“twenty one hours”) was observed: here too, the large bell rang every Friday at 3 pm, playing twelve funeral tolls (except for Holy Week and during the forty-day periods that follow Christmas and Easter) (12).

The custom of ringing bells *a glòria* for the death of children under the age of seven is directly prescribed by the liturgy, since this event foreshadows the ascent to heaven of an innocent soul. In this regard Giuseppe Pitrè notes: “In the Roman Ritual, under the heading Funerals of Children (*De exequiis parvulorum*) it is prescribed that ringing the bells for their death should not be done with a mournful sound, but rather a festive one (*sed potius sono festivo*). The populace calls this sound ‘gloria’, which in Palermo lasted until Villabianca’s time, i.e. until the end of the last century, when it was abolished. But outside of Palermo, in many other municipalities of Sicily, it is still in use” (1889, 2:240). The practice is now becoming less common, but its memory is still very much alive. In Sortino, for the death of a child they still perform the *llòria* (“glory”): the rhythmic form of three strokes repeated several times, which corresponds to the *allegro* (“allegro”) played at solemn events, except with a shorter duration (13). In Calamonaci, when a child died the *glòria* was played with a single bell (14), in contrast with the eponymous faster two-bell style, which is still used in major festival celebrations. At the main church of Isnello, the sound for the death of a child was called *gluriuni* (“great glory”). This consisted of a series of chimes with the smaller bell, called *nzinga* (“signal”), followed by the two larger bells, called *menziornu* (“noon”) and *rû santu* (“of the saint”), playing the same rhythmic figure (two chimes in unison of the same duration repeated

five times) with slight differences in tempo (15). In Petralia Sottana there was a further distinction in sound depending on whether the deceased child had been baptized or not. For unbaptized infants, the announcement was given by two bells, called *glòria nica* (“less glory”), while for baptized ones four bells, called *glòria ranni* (“great glory”), were used (16). The *glòria nica* is based on two rhythmic patterns (musical example 4), while in the *glòria ranni* the same motive is interpolated by the sound of two bells in sequences of three and nine chimes in unison.

These testimonies highlight the many functions performed by the bells on the occasion of a death: they are used both to announce the death itself and to provide important details concerning both the identity of the deceased (gender, social status, age) and the various phases of the ritual (from the final moments of life to the burial). They subsequently return periodically at each memorial service. As Jean-Claude Bouvier points out, the funeral “is a language, a communication system, which requires semiotic analysis. Like any language, the funeral is both a *langue*, i.e. a system of rules with distinct values (what Roland Barthes [1964] called “usage protocols”, accepted by all members of the community), and a *discourse*, i.e. a bundle of possible variations around those rules [...]” (2003, 283). These Sicilian examples show that the local application of the code of the funeral bells can sometimes become quite distinct from their primary function of *sound signal* (i.e., from having a merely cognitive and/or commemorative value), acquiring a more strictly expressive value, within orally transmitted performative practices, which in the past implicated even the use of the side drum (17).

2. The practice of the mourning lament

The mourning lament occupies a central role in the formalization and symbolic transformation of grief, which in Sicily assumes various local names: in the provinces of Palermo and Trapani, the prevailing terms are *rrièpitu* and *arripitiatina* (from the Latin word *reputare*, “to re-think,” and by extension “to recall”), and the act of lamentation is called *rripitiari* or *arripitiari*; in the province of Agrigento, one finds not only the term *rrièpitu*, but also *strèpitu* (“noise”) and the verb *stripitiari* (“to scream”). The expression *chiantu* (or *ciantu*) *ri muortu* (“crying for the deceased”), and consequently the verb *chiànciri* or *ciànciri* (“to cry”), is used across a vast area spanning from the island’s central provinces to the southeast. In the province of Messina, the dominant term is *triulu* (“suffering”), from the verb *triulari*, whereas in the province of Catania, it is *rriòrditu* (“memory”) and the verb *rriurdari* (“to remember”). The term *lamentu* (“lament”) is found in several places, though it is more commonly used to describe the wailing chants that accompany the funerary processions of the Holy Week (see above) (18).

The Sicilian folklorists of the late nineteenth century attest to the integrity and vitality of the mourning lament among the “lower” classes of the island, including the continuing role of professional mourners, in Sicily called *rripitiatrici* (i.e. “repeaters”) or *cianciulini* (“weepers”), whose paid lamentations were a sign of prestige and honor for the dead (cf. Salomone Marino 1886). More often it was wives, mothers, and sisters, also sometimes aided by friends and neighbors, who expressed the sorrow of death through melody and gesture. To illustrate, here are the words that Salomone Marino recorded in 1856 in Borgetto on the occasion of the death of a mule driver from Piana degli Albanesi:

As soon as he gave his last breath (which was after the Hail Mary), his wife kissed him on the mouth and exited the house to invite the neighbors one by one to help her lament her husband's death. Then, when the coffin arrived, she dressed the corpse, already cleaned, with new clothes. She spread a white shroud on the bier and lay down on it. She then rose, and carefully placed her husband over the shroud. She then covered herself with a wide shawl and loosened her hair, and, first standing then sitting next to the coffin, she bowed her head over the corpse and cried, striking herself and pulling her hair. After some time, this initial reaction was replaced by a lament that was more measured, more monotonous, more human. This was followed by a plaintive chant, interrupted and often accompanied by a desperate-sounding *ohimè* ["alas"]. The dirge was in the Sicilian language. Only two or three of the stanzas were in Greek-Albanian. In these we were later told she asked the dead man to greet her father and other relatives in the netherworld on her behalf; she wished him a good journey; she said he should not forget to come from time to time to visit his relatives here, whom he was leaving so derelict. What I remember from the part of the chant in Sicilian are the following verses, which I faithfully transcribe:

Ahimè, comu sbalancau la me' casa!
Comu cadiu e nun surgi cchiù sta culonna!
E ora, cu' mi lu porta lu pani pu'?
E ora, cu' mi li simina li favi pu'?
E ora, cu' mi li ricogli li chierchi pu'?
E ora, cu' mi li pasci sti figlioli pu'?
Ahimè! cu' cci la porta la nova a la Chiana?
Ahime! cu' mi li avvisa li parenti?
E cu' ti chianci, maritu miu, pu'?
E cu' ti chianci e t'accumpagna pu'?
E cu' ti veni supra la fossa pu'?
Ahimè! comu finisti, maritu miu! Ahimè!

[Alas, how badly has my house collapsed! / How this pillar has fallen and rises no more! / And now, who will bring me bread? / And now, who will be sowing the beans? / And now, who will collect the *chierchi* [variety of beans]? / And now, who will feed the children? / Alas! who will bring the news to Piana / Alas! who will warn the relatives? / And who will mourn your loss, my husband? / And who will weep and accompany you? / Who will go to your grave? / Alas! see how you have ended, my husband! Alas!]

And in this way the unhappy soul continued all night. For each verse, she tore a lock of her hair and put it on the hands and chest of the deceased. So much so that the next morning she was seen with sparse and short hairs on her head, whereas the previous day long braids adorned her. At the end of each verse she almost always repeated *pu'*, of which, if it is not short for *puru* (also), I do not know the meaning (Marino 1886, 42-43).

From this description one can clearly see the articulation of the dirge, characterized by the alternation of a kind of plainchant with paroxystic cries and gestures (cf. De Martino 1954). In Sicily, the latter are generally referred to as *ittari* ("to throw cries") or *isari vuci* ("to raise cries"), highlighting a conscious distinction between the different moments of the lamentation of the dead: the rhythmically chanted commemoration and the exasperated, desperate cry of pain (19). Marino's passage also illustrates the self-harming gestures and the melodic formulas involved in the lamentation, along with the significant evocation of "continuity between the two worlds," as reaffirmed through the exchange of greetings between the living and the dead.

Missing is any reference to the melodic dimension of the dirge, some examples of which would later be collected by the Sicilian musicians Corrado Ferrara (1907, 49-51) and Alberto Favara (1957, 2: 325-329), who devoted particular attention to Sicilian musical folklore.

Across the wide range of personal stories and contexts in the funerary traditions of the European Mediterranean, one can identify a thematic and expressive core centered on a small set of structural features. They depict the “journey” of the deceased to a dimension where their daily needs and concerns remain the same as when they were alive, creating a connection with the no-less-“real” community of the dead. References to religious figures (saints, the Virgin Mary, Christ) are infrequent, whereas commemoration of the virtues of the deceased, the happy or sad episodes of their life, the circumstances of death, and the emotional and material desolation in which they leave the spouse and children are recurring themes. There is never any expression of resignation with respect to happiness after death, as professed in the Catholic ideology. The performative features of the dirges are based on a series of formulas, both gestural (the swinging of the torso, shaking of a handkerchief, self-harming gestures) and vocal (ranging from melodic intonations to wailing). These create a formulaic code that ensures the “obligatory expression of feelings,” whose strong symbolic component was noted by Marcel Mauss: “On fait donc plus que de manifester ses sentiments, on les manifeste aux autres, puisqu'il faut les leur manifester. On se les manifeste à soi en les exprimant aux autres et pour le compte des autres” [It is more than just an expression of feelings; it is displaying them to others, because they must be thus displayed. Displaying them to others and for others is the way of manifesting them to oneself] (1921, 434).

The vitality of this practice today has significantly diminished, but not yet entirely disappeared. In Sicily, elderly women still lament, but only in the privacy of their own homes or in the solitude of the cemetery. It is not unusual to still see lamentation at funeral processions (often while lamenters accompany the coffin on foot), although such instances are typically more fragmented or shortened, and confined to more marginalized social contexts. Repressed by both the ecclesiastical and secular powers in order to promote a more restrained display of suffering and avoid excessive expressions, the practice of the funeral lament is part of an archaic ideology of death completely unrelated to that of Catholicism (20). Moreover, beliefs and customs related to the dead in Sicily – recurring for example in acts associated with the “Festival of the Dead” (cf. A. Buttitta 1962), in the traditional beliefs concerning the *èsseri* (“souls of the dead”), and in some divinatory practices (cf. Guggino 2004) – demonstrate the ongoing persistence of a symbolic context with distant yet vital roots (21).

In light of the above, one should not be surprised by some quite unique participatory practices involving musical street bands in several Sicilian villages: musicians march silently in their uniforms while holding the instruments under their arms; however, they are paid the same amount as for a normal performance, if not more. This silence is imposed upon them by the bereaved family – an imposition that goes against the traditional practice, common to all social orders, which provided for singers and musicians to perform at a funeral (as observed in the eighteenth century by the Marquis of Villabianca (22)). In this case the family, almost always of the upper-middle class, rejects the basic function of the music, and considers silence to be more respectful. Even more disrespectful, however, would be the complete absence of the band, since this would signify a lack of generosity on the part of the family. To confirm and strengthen a new sociocultural status, it is therefore necessary to continue to speak the language of tradition, even without implementing its forms through and through (23).

During a funeral train documented in Rosolini, the voice of the sister of the deceased alternates and overlaps with the mournful beat of the drum and funeral marches performed by the local street band (24). Here is a fragment of the *ciantu ri mortu* (“cry for the dead”), based on a descending melodic formula spanning a minor third (A flat3 - F3) that is characterized by the use of both chromatic and microtones. The chanted iteration is interrupted by a sudden transformation of the voice into a cry, truncating the final syllable of the anguished invocation to the deceased brother (*frà* instead *frati*):

O fratuzzu miu Criscènzio! / O Criscènzio, me frati bbeddu miu! / O Criscènzio bbeddu miu, mè frati! / O nicu, nicu! O nicu, nicu! O frà!

O my little brother Crescenzo! / O Crescenzo, my beautiful brother! / O my beautiful Crescenzo, my brother! / O the little one, the little one! / O brother!

A more extensive case than that found in the previous example is the *chiantu* (“crying”) observed during a funeral in Sommatino (25). The following text summarizes the climactic points of a long lamentation performed by the wife of the deceased (the entirety of which was documented). It is based on two similar formulas, characterized by constantly descending cadences restricted to the interval of a third with chromatic and microtonal passages:

1)



2)



The first formula, repeated at length, is characterized by a measured and subdued vocality. The second emerges during the climactic stage of the paroxysm, when the emotional intensity of the mourner emerges in a strained vocalization verging on a cry. The execution, captured during an actual funeral train, is characterized by a “sobbing” vocalization – graphically rendered through frequent rests and microtonal alterations of some notes – which make the words difficult to understand (see musical example 5). In fact, some words are occasionally distorted or only partially pronounced (the bold characters indicate the parts that were transcribed in the musical example, whereas the missing syllables appear in parentheses):

O ggiòia mi(a), maritu! / **O ggiòia mi(a), (ma)ritu!** / **Ma comu mi lassasti sula sta vota, lu maritu!** / Ggiòia mia, lu maritu! / Ggiòia mia lu maritu e vva vidi a to figliu, lu maritu! / Addivisci maritu e ttalia to figliu, maritu! / A testa cci facìa diri ca iò a tto figliu un lu facìa zitu! / Addivisci e ttalia to figliu, maritu! / Ggiòia mia! / Ggiòia mia! / Ggiòia mia! / Ggiòia mia! / Ggiòia mia, lu maritu! / Ggiòia mia, lu maritu! / Ggiòia mia, lu maritu! / Comu mi lassasti, lu maritu, ca nni vuliamu bbeni tutti rui, lu maritu! / Ggiòia, ggiòia u maritu! / Ahi svintura, lu maritu! / O ggiòia mi(a) maritu! / O ggiòia mi(a) maritu! / [...] / Ggiòia mia, maritu! / Ah chi mmala futtura chi appi u maritu! / Ah chi mmala futtura chi appi u maritu!

O my darling husband! / How you left me alone this time, my husband! / Wake up, o husband, and look at your son, o husband / My darling husband go to see your son, o husband! / The mind made you say that your son would not get a girlfriend [...] my darling / How you left me, o husband, and we loved each other so much, we two! / O the misfortune, o husband! / O what misfortune got my husband!

A fragment of *chiantu* performed by another elderly woman of Sommatino – collected during an interview about work in the sulfur mines (26) – highlights poetic-musical formulas that are similar to those found in the previous example. Here, however, most likely due to the decontextualized circumstances of the recording, the verbal content and melodic profile of the lamentation emerge much more clearly, with distinctive notes, spanning the interval of a fourth (C4-G3), and with the invocation *Maritu mia!* (“Oh my husband!”) closing every sentence on a descending melodic formula contained within a minor third (B flat - G). Also noteworthy is the remarkable chronometric consistency of the phrases, which almost always last for approximately 7.5 seconds. This performance was also complemented by important testimony as to how the lamentation is learned and performed – chorally during the wake and individually on commemorative occasions (with respect to self-harming practices) – and the custom of entrusting the deceased with messages intended for other departed souls. As the Italian anthropologist Alfonso Di Nola has observed, in this widespread practice “there emerge at least two elements: the illusion of being still bound in a sensible and practical form to the person who just died, and the continuity of a relationship with all the other dead, using the person who is now departing as a proxy” (1995a, 249). In the present case, it is worth noting not only the use of the chant to formulate requests to the deceased, but also the reply of his son, who – by responding “And what should my father be, a courier?” – provokes laughing among those present, triggering one of the most basic mechanisms of an exorcism: the use of laughter to dispel the threat of death (the parts transcribed in musical example 6 are marked in bold throughout).

Pena ranni lu maritu, maritu mia! / E ccomu fu sta cosa lu maritu, maritu mia! E ddunna ti vinni stu malannu maritu, maritu mia! / E ccom'ài'e ffari cu tutti sti papanciulieddi di figghi lu maritu, maritu mia! / E ccu l'av'a ccummittari tutti sti vucchi lu maritu, maritu mia! / Ggìdia mia lu maritu, maritu mia! / E ccomu t'ài'a scurdari lu maritu? Maritu mia! / Ca mi tinivatu la casa china maritu, maritu mia! / E ccom'ann'a ffari tutti sti puddicini di figghi? Figghi mia! / Piddistivu lu patri, patruzzu mia!

Such great pain, o husband, my husband! / How did this happen, o husband, my husband! / And where did you get this illness, o husband, my husband! / And what am I to do with all these young children o husband, my husband! / And who will feed all these mouths o husband, my husband! / My darling o husband, my husband! / O my darling o husband, my husband! And how can I forget the husband? My husband! / you who filled the home (with joy), my husband / And how should all these chicks, these children, do? My children! / You lost your father, dear daddy!

Mentri ch' érimu picciddi s'imparava a cchiànciri. E ppoi anche la pena viniva di lu cori. Viniva di lu cori di chianciri! Perché ristàvanu senza pani e senza nenti li cristiani! Si chianciva pi fforza! I era carusa, nni àamu a ttravagghiari ed i iva chiancennu: «E ss'avissi a me pà! E ss'avìa a mme pà!» [...] Si mittìa [u muortu] nmenzu a la casa. Tutti a priari ntornu e si lamentavanu tutti: cu diciva fratuzzu, cu diciva patruzzu, cu diciva maritu. Doppu si nni ivanu ô campusantu e ssi ivanu a ttirari i capiddi ddà ncapu a ddà tomba. M'arricurdu a me matri ienu, ca ddu ggiru

unni ma mà s'annava a ttirari i capiddi ppi me pà un mi lu scordu. E italiu sempri ddà iò! Me patri era ddocu nterra e mme matri si minnicchiava ddocu, pi ddec'anni! Doppu dec'anni livavunu ddu muortu e nnun cci ivanu cchiù.

When we were young we learned to cry. Because anguish came from the heart. The tears came from the heart! Because people were left without food and with nothing! We had to cry! I was a child, we went to work and I cried: "And if I had my father! And if my father were here!" [...] [The deceased] was placed in the middle of the house. All around him praying and mourning: and people said, dear brother, or dear daddy, or dear husband. After that, they went to the cemetery and tore their hair over the grave. I remember my mother, and I will never forget the place where she used to tear her hair to my father. And always look there! My father was buried and my mother went there to strike herself for ten years! After ten years the mourning ended and they no longer went.

Nna vota murieni unu dî Cavallotti. Allora trasiva una e cci faciva: «Cumpari Pippì, – si chiamava Pippì u muortu – m'ât'a ssalutari a cumpari Ddecu, maritu mia!» Trasiva n'atra: «Cumpari Pippì, m'ât'a ssalutari a ma maritu Caliddu, maritu mia!» E ssa ivanu a ssittari. Trasiva n'atra: «Cumpari Pippì, m'ât'a ssalutari a me maritu Peppi, maritu mia!» Arrispunni un figghiu: «E cchi era curreri ma pà?! E cchi era curreri ma pà?! E cchi era curreri me pà?! E cchi era curreri ma pà?!»

One time, one of the Cavallotti family members died. And one woman (a widow) came in and said, "master Peppino, - the dead man's name was Peppino - I want you to say hello to master Diego, my husband!" And then came another "master Peppino, you have to greet my husband Calogero, my husband!" Then came another, "master Peppino, send my greetings to my husband Peppi, my husband!" And one of the sons answered "And what should my father be, a courier?!"

The expressive values and thematic characteristics of the funeral lament fully emerge in an example kindly provided to us upon request by an elderly woman of Calamonaci. I, along with my colleagues Fatima Giallombardo and Rosario Perricone, documented the dirge almost by chance while conducting an investigation on the slaughtering of the pig and the traditional feast that would follow (27). Asked whether it was possible to listen to the "old" way of mourning the dead, Ms. Giuseppina Inga (grandmother of Rosario) replied that she would repeat the lamentation (*strépitù*) of an acquaintance who was widowed during the second world war and left alone with a daughter just a few months old. We thus moved – along with the cameraman who accompanied us and some of the woman's relatives – to a room next to the kitchen (where meanwhile the meal preparations were continuing). Although it was a pain experienced more than forty years earlier – and only indirectly at that – the commemoration of that tragic event caused deep sorrow among the women present, who vicariously relived the experience of that unfortunate orphan – who was their own age and a close friend – for the duration of the lamentation (about ten minutes). This took place in strict observance of the usual formulas and vocal mimicry. Ms. Inga accompanied the lament with a rhythmic swaying of her upper torso, waving a handkerchief, beating her legs with her palms, and stamping her feet on the floor with force at the most critical moments. The chant is based on a scheme which consists of an initial ascent (mainly within the interval of a third) followed by a descending variable formula and a cadence on the fixed pitch of B2 – corresponding to the exclamations *Lu maritu!* ("The husband!") and *La mà!* ("The mother!") – approached via a steep descending leap (varying between the interval of a fifth and a seventh). In the climactic phases of the lament there is the

usual vocal outburst verging on a cry (the parts transcribed in musical example 7 are indicated in bold) (28).

Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Ca mancu ti vitti ca partisti pi surdatu pi la maliditta guerra, lu maritu! / Ti nni isti e mmancu ti vitti cchiuni, lu maritu! / Sbinturamenti mi muristi, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Ca mi lassasti na figlia di novi misi, lu maritu! / Ah comu cci'â ddari a mmanciaru a tto figlia, lu maritu! / Co nn'ài u nenti, lu maritu! / E a to figlia non ci pozzu dari a mmanciaru, lu maritu! / Ah com'è ch'è ffari Neli, lu maritu! / A l'addeva chi l'avemu morticedda di fami, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli affàccia, lu maritu! / E bbidi ù unni sugnu ittata, lu maritu! / E l'addeva chi un ci pozzu dari a mmanciaru, lu maritu! / Oh chi sbintura chi appi, lu maritu! / Ca mancu canusci a to figlia, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Ah com'è ch'è ffari, lu maritu! / Ah comu sta sbintura appi, lu maritu! / Nca tutti s'arricamparu e tu nenti, lu maritu! / Neli, lu maritu! Neli, lu maritu! / Affàccia, Neli, affàccia, lu maritu! / Ca vidi a to figlia senza patri, lu maritu! / Oh Neli! Oh Neli! / A com'è ch'è ffari ù senza di tia, lu maritu! / Ca iù unn'ài u e mmancu tegnu pi mmanciaru ù e mmancu pi to figlia, lu maritu! / Guerra disgraziata chi bbinni ca mi levà a ttia, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli affàccia! / Neli, Neli, Neli, bbeddu lu maritu! / Oh chi cosa èratu lu maritu pi mmia! / Ca èratu bbeddu veru, lu maritu! / E quantu mi vuliàtu bbèniri, lu maritu! / E mmancu avisti la furtuna di videri a to figlia, lu maritu! / Bbedda Ninittedda, lu papà nni lu vidisti tu, lu papà! / Ca mancu avisti la furtuna di videri a to patri, lu papà! / Oh chi sbintura chi appi sta figlia! / Chi sbintura chi appi sta figlia! / Oh Neli, Neli lu maritu! / Aunn'è chi ssi ghittatu, lu maritu! / Ca ti nni isti un vinisti cchiù, lu maritu! / Neli, lu maritu, Neli, lu maritu! / Ah com'è ch'è ffari, lu maritu! / Ah com'è ch'è ffari, lu maritu! / Oh Ninittedda, la mà! / Chi fusti sfurtunata Ninittedda, la mà! / Ca lu patruzzu nni lu canuscisti, la mà! / Neli, lu maritu, Neli, lu maritu! / Oh Neli, Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Ah com'è ch'è ffari Neli, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Ca m'ammazzassi ù, lu maritu! / Ah no di diri ca nun ti vitti cchiù comu ti nni isti surdatu, lu maritu! / Oh, lu maritu! / Ah com'è ch'è ffari Neli, lu maritu! / Ah com'è ffari Ninittedda, la mà! / Ristasti senza patruzzu, la mà! / Lu patruzzu un nni lu canuscisti, la mà! / Sbintura chi àppimu tu ed ù, la mà! / Neli, Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Ah, mammuzza mea! / Ah, mammuzza mea! / Chi sbintura chi appi ù, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli! / Ah com'è ch'è ffari! / Dunn'è pigliari! / Neli, Neli d'unami cunortu, Neli! / Com'è ffari, Neli! / Com'è ffari, Neli! / Com'è ch'è ffari, Neli! / Neli, Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Neli, Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Oh, Neli, Neli! / Neli, Neli, Neli, lu maritu! / Ah chi sbintura chi àppimu, lu maritu! / Ca ti nni isti e nun ti vitti cchiù, lu maritu! / Guerra disgraziata, lu maritu! / Guerra tinta ca cci capitavu ù, lu maritu! / Neli, lu maritu! / Neli, lu maritu, com'è ffari!

Neli [familiar form for Emanuele], Neli husband! / I hardly got to see you and you went off to be a soldier in this cursed war! / You left and I never saw you again! / You died tragically! / You left me a daughter of nine months! / How can I feed your daughter! / I have nothing! / And I cannot give food to your daughter! / What should I do! / The little girl will starve! / And see where I am thrown! / And I cannot give food to the child! / What a misfortune that I had! / You didn't even get to see your daughter! / What a misfortune for me! / Everybody came back but not you! / Come out, *Neli*! / At least see your daughter without a father! / How will I do without you! / I do not have and cannot give food for your daughter! / Woe to this war that came and took you away! / *Neli*, my handsome husband! / Oh what my husband was to me! / He was such a handsome husband! / And how he loved me! / You didn't even get to see your daughter! / Beautiful *Ninittedda* [familiar for Antonina] you never saw your father! / You have not even had the chance to see your father! / Oh what misfortune befell to this daughter! / Where have you gone! / You left and never came back! / Oh what shall I do! / Oh, *Ninittedda*, how unlucky for you not to have known your father! / *Neli*, o husband! / I would kill myself! / So as not to say that I have not seen you anymore since you left as a soldier! / Oh what should I do, *Ninittedda*! / You are now fatherless! / Your father, you never

met him! / The misfortune you and I have! / Oh my mommy, what a misfortune! / What shall I do!
 / Who should I go to! / *Neli*, give me comfort! / What shall I do! / Oh what misfortune! / You left
 and I did not see you anymore! / This horrible war and I got caught in it!

The execution of a lament using fixed patterns is often considered a “simulation” rather than an expression of “true” pain, especially with respect to professional mourners. However, in the cases I have directly observed, the decontextualized repetition of the lament has always triggered transparent suffering due to the evocation of a very real and tangible grief. It was thus not easy to adopt a neutral stance during these moments. However, I received much encouragement from the performers (always elderly women), who expressed a desire to preserve and pass on the “old way” of mourning the dead. Moreover, one should not underestimate the authentic experience of emotions that can unpredictably arise during research of this kind, as for example occurred when I met a group of women in Sortino. After an initial discussion about nursery rhymes, lullabies, and religious chants and in response to my request for information on lamenting the dead in the “old way,” two elderly women (mother and daughter, respectively, of eighty-nine and sixty-eight years) began to mourn the passing of their husband/father, which had taken place almost ten years before. The wife of the deceased began and the daughter followed about one minute later, creating a poignant mixture of memories articulated in chant.

As with the *strépitù* in Calamonaci, in Sortino the *chiantu* turns into a heartfelt dialogue with the dead, including a repeated request for a final encounter, a further word of consolation and assistance. It is, as previously observed, a symbolic strategy intended to establish “a means of communication between the space of the living and that of the dead, a controlled condition of similarity that temporarily cancels the separation” (Lombardi Satriani and Meligrana 1982, 37). Thus we should understand the mourners’ urgent request for the deceased to “show the way,” so as to finally realize the ephemeral contact so desperately invoked. This request also denotes a more general reliance on the deceased for solutions to earthly matters and it is perhaps here that the ancestral spiritual dimension persists most tenaciously. The sense of continuity between the world of the living and the subterranean realm of the dead also emerges in the customary practice of asking the deceased about his/her various “health conditions.” It is significant, however, that the mourner (here the wife) connects the “well-being” of the deceased to her evening prayers, thereby establishing a connection between the traditional concepts of death and patterns dictated by Roman Catholic ideology. Such a connection also emerges in several moments of the daughter’s lament, including the parallel with the Gospel story of the Virgin Mary’s visit to Calvary (what Catholics refer to as the “Madonna Addolorata”), with reference to the “stairway” needed to rejoin the deceased. However, it is also possible that the occurrence here of syncretic elements is due to the commemorative circumstance of the event, which obviously implies an attenuation of the more extreme aspects of the lament. The “technical” aspects of the *chiantu* are given prominence mainly when the daughter remembers the sorrow of her younger sister, who, not being able to properly perform the dirge, reassures the deceased of her affection while apologizing for not being able to adequately mourn. The chant is based on a recurring pattern (an incipit using an ascending contour, then a reiteration of the fifth scale-degree and a descending cadence, all within the range of an octave), but it is interesting to observe the changes introduced by the daughter, who tends to adopt a more “cantabile” melodic style characterized by a descending triad (D5 - B4 - G4) upon which the formulaic expressions *Ciatu meu* (“Oh my breath”) and *Amuri miu* (“Oh my love”) are intoned and

repeated at the end of each portion of text (29). Some of the sentences are pronounced without melodic intonation (especially by the mother) and the “cried” phase is completely absent (the parts transcribed in musical example 8 are indicated in bold):

*Moglie: Paulu di l'arma mia, ciatu miu! / E ccommu puti(s)ti fari a llassari a mmia? Paulu di l'arma mia, ciatu meu! / Paulu, Paulu, ri(c)i l'ùrtimi palori, quantu ti sentu, Paulu di l'arma mia, ciatu meu! E ddimmillu quali strata ài'è ffari ppi circari a ttia, ciatu meu! / **Ciatu di l'arma mia, ciatu meu!** / E ccommu si pèrdunu li mariti bboni e ddi l'arma mia e ddi l'occhi mei, unni t'ài'è ttruvàri, ciatu meu? / Maria, bbonu acchiui! – Figlia: **Papà, dimmillu tu qual è la strata e qual è la via...**– Moglie: Chista è a figghia ranni ca cianci! – Figlia: **...ppi truàri la porta mia, ciatu miu!** **Papà di l'arma mia,**...– Moglie: Ssa cosa lèvila i ddocu! – Figlia: ...a ciatu miu! / E ddimmillu tuni quale è la strata ppi ttruvàri la via tòià, **ciatu miu!** – Moglie: Paulu, sèntila ta figghia e ccomu ti cianci e nun ti cianci nuddu, sulu la figghia ranni, ciatu miu, Paulu! Figlia: **Papà di l'arma mia, amuri miu!** / **Papà, ti pari ca nun ti pensu?**E ddimmillu tuni quali strata ài'è pigghiaru ppi ttruvàri a lu patri miu! / **Papà e ddapi l'occhi l'ùrtima vota, quantu trovu la strata ppi ttruvàri a lu patrìttu miu, patri miu!** / **Papà, dimmillu tuni l'ùrtima vota ca ti vegnu a circari e ppi cuntintari a la mamma mia, amuri miu!** / **Bbasta mamà, ca l'ùrtima vota ecchianu tutti li scaluni e ppi ttruvàri a lu patrìttu miu e mi l'à ddittu ca è la strata di lu cimiteru, patri miu!** – Moglie: Paulu, à ntis'a ta figghia ca t'è cianciutu? Picchè l'ùrtima vota nun ci voi dari aiutu, parrari? **Quantu menu nni purtassi na bbella notizia, quantu stai bbeni tu!** **Dimmillu tu comu stai bbeni e bbeni di notti e ddirimillu!** / **Maria santa, nun mi pozzu quitari!** / **À sira ti ricu sempri u santu Rrusàriu, l'Avimarìa, u Patrinnostu e mm'addrummisciu!** / **Commu rici tu!** / **A voi rari l'ùrtima palora o no? Parra a ta figghia!** – Figlia: **Papà, papà, dicci la strata e qual è la via!** **E ppi truàri a lu patrìttu miu, dimmillu tuni, papà, unni t'ài'è bbèniri a ccircari, u patri miu!** / **Papà, dillu l'ùrtima vota, ca trovu la via e ttrovu la strata ppi nzirtari la purtitta tòià, amuri miu!** / **Papà, cosa bbona, e nunn'u pozzu dimenticari a lu patrìttu miu e ddimmillu tuni quali strata ài'è pigghiaru ppi truàri la via tòià, ca tutti li porti li stàiu abbussannu ie nun nni trovu una aperta, amuri miu!** / **Papà, e ddapi l'occhi l'ùrtima vota e ttalìa la figghitta toi ca è mmisa ntornu a ttia, patri miu!** / **Papà, e ddàpili l'occhi l'ùrtima vota, quantu pigghiu la strata ppi ttruvàri la strata unni si ttuni, c'ài ecchianatu l'ùrtimu scaluni, commu la bbedda Matri di Ddularata, patri miu!** / **Ddapi l'occhi l'ùrtima vota, papà, e ddimmillu qual è la strata tòià e nnun trovu la via e nnun trovu la strata ppi truàri a lu patrìttu miu, amuri miu!** / **Papà, m'anna rittu ca la strata tòià è chidda di lu cimiteru, e ttutti li porti stàiu truvannu chiusi, e à bbussatu tutti i porti, patrìttu miu, e nnessuna porta m'è ddaputu, amuri miu!** / **E mma soru ca mi riciva, mi riciva ma soru: «Papà, ma chi ti pari ca nun ti vògghiu bbeni, picchè ta figghia ti sta ciancennu? Ma iu lu sàcciu ca nun cci'è firu a cciànciri, patri miu, e ta figghia a ranni è cchiù bbuluta bbeni! Ma nnun è bberu, picchè iu sugnu macari figghia, è sulu ca nun sàcciu ciànciri!»** / **E ccianciumu sulu iu e mma matri pi lu patrìttu miu!***

Wife: My Paul, my soul, my breath! / How could you leave me? My Paul, my soul, my breath! / Paul, Paul, say the last words, so I can hear you, My Paul, my soul, my breath! / Tell me what path I should follow to find you, my breath! / Breath of my soul, my breath! / And how can one lose a good husband, my soul and my eyes, where must I look for you, my breath? / Mary, enough now! - Daughter: dad, tell me what lane and what path ... - Wife: This is the elder daughter who is crying! - Daughter: ... to find my door, my dear breath! / Dad my soul ... - Wife: take that thing away! - Daughter: ... my breath / Just tell me the way to reach your path, my breath! Wife: Paul, listen to your weeping daughter, because nobody mourns you as much, only the elder daughter, my breath! - Daughter: dad, my soul, my love! / Dad, do you think I don't think of you? Just tell me what path to follow to reach my dear father! / Dad, open your eyes one more time so I can find the path to my dear daddy, my father! / Dad, tell me one last time and I will come to get you and (do

it) for mum, my love! / Enough mom, because this (is) the last time I climb the steps to reach my daddy, and my father he told me it's the path to the cemetery! - *Wife*: Paul, did you hear your weeping daughter? Why don't you want to help her, talk to her one more time? / At least you should bring us good news, of how well you are! Tell me how well you are and tell me at night! / Holy Mary, I find no rest! / In the evening I always recite the holy rosary for you, and the Hail Mary and Our Father and then I sleep! / As you say! / Don't you want to say a last word? Speak to your daughter! / *Daughter*: Dad, dad, show us the path and the street! / And to find my daddy, tell me dad, where must I go to get you, my dad! / Dad, speak one more time, so I find the street and I find the path that leads to your small door, my love! / Dad, always so kind, I can't forget my daddy and tell me what lane I should follow to find your path, because I am knocking on all the doors and I find none open, my love! / Dad, open your eyes one more time and look at your daughter who is close to you, my father! / Dad, open your eyes one more time so I can find the path to you, because I climbed the last step, like the weeping Virgin Mary ("Madonna Addolorata"), my father! / Open your eyes one last time, dad, and tell me what is the lane to reach your path, because I can't find the lane to reach my daddy, my love! / Dad, I was told your lane is that of the cemetery, but I am finding all the doors closed, and I have knocked on all the doors, my daddy, but nobody opened them to me, my love! / And my sister told me, my sister told me: "Dad, do you perhaps think I don't love you because (only) your daughter weeps for you? But I know that I don't know how to weep [i.e. perform a lamentation], my father, and (this is why) your elder daughter is more loved! But it's not true, because I'm your daughter too, it's only that I don't know how to weep!" / This is why only I and my mother wept for daddy.

3. Novenas and prayers sung for the commemoration of the dead

In Sicily, the poetic and musical expression of devotion was primarily entrusted to a class of professional singers and instrumentalists called *orbi* ("blind"). In 1661 *orbi* gathered in Palermo at the brotherhood of the Immaculate Conception under the protection of the Jesuits, marking their first official appearance in the historical record. The testimonies of the activity of *orbi* between the 18th and 19th centuries offer a detailed account of both their repertoire – consisting mainly of sacred chants, but also of *storie* ("narrative songs"), *canzuni* ("songs"), ditties, and dance music – and of the occasions when they were called to perform: religious celebrations, weddings and convivial events, serenades, and performances of the *opera dei pupi* (Sicilian puppet theatre). They usually performed as a duo: one played the violin, and the other the *citarruni* (a small three-stringed bass or adapted cello, in the twentieth century gradually replaced by the guitar) (30). These street musicians – not all of whom were necessarily blind – were particularly active in the widespread dissemination of devotional poems of ecclesiastical origin in the Sicilian dialect (cfr. Guggino 1980, 1981, 1988; and Bonanzinga 2006). The authors who took part in drafting the texts were either laymen specially hired by the Church, such as Pietro Fullone (Palermo, 17th century) or Antonio La Fata (Catania, first half of the 18th century), or priests, such as Antonio Diliberto (Monreale, 18th century) and Giovanni Carollo (Carini, second half of the 19th century). After leaving the brotherhood of the Immaculate Conception, Carollo even headed a "school for the blind" in Palermo (1871) and published several anthologies of sacred chants, including a *Nuvena pri la solenni commemorazioni di tutti li defunti* ("Novena for the solemn commemoration of the dead").

Evidence of the presence of *orbi* at mourning events is found in the custom of singing *rusari* ("rosaries"), *nuveni* or *nueni* ("novenas") (31), and prayers called *raziuni* (from Latin *orationes*) or *diesille* (from Latin *Dies irae*) (32) in the homes of people who wished to commemorate their

dead loved ones. Rosaries for the deceased were performed on Mondays and those for the “souls in Purgatory” on Mondays and Fridays (cf. some texts in Vigo 1870-74, 533-534). The novena for the feast of the Dead was held from October 25 to November 1 and it was customary during those days to request commemorative chants. Commemorative chants could also be performed throughout the year, but only on Mondays. Pitrè provides a detailed testimony of how this repertoire circulated in Palermo:

For prayers and *diesille* of one day the price is one bead (2 cents), which is usually wrapped in paper and dropped straight from balconies. For novenas the total price is ten beads (21 cents), payable at the end. The storyteller gets a down payment a few days ahead of the novena, during the time when the blind are shouting in the streets to announce its approach. The day he gets the down payment, the blind person plays and sings a kind of prelude to the novena and then marks the door with a piece of charcoal so as not to forget the house, which has now acquired a right to his performance. The love of these melancholic ditties in Sicily is such that after listening to them in their home, some women go to their neighbor’s home to listen to them a second time (Pitrè 1870-71, 1: 38).

Virgilio Saccà provides the following account, which makes specific reference to the novena of the dead performed by *orbi* in the city of Messina in the late nineteenth century:

Another feature of the commemoration of the dead is the novena. There are countless novenas in Sicily, indeed, one can say unequivocally that all three-hundred-sixty-five days of the year are a continuous novena. From the characteristic Christmas novena performed with the ancient bagpipe to the everyday ones with violins, guitars, harps and the “azzarino” (a steel triangle played with a little rod of iron), there are all kinds of novenas, suited to all tastes. Most of the time, the sound of instruments is accompanied by singing; sometimes there is music alone [...] The *novenari* [performers of novenas] are blind for the most part; but some are also young people, strong and fit [...] Mysticism was bound to find its novena, and it did. As already mentioned, around the graves we lovingly place candles, lamps, flowers, ribbons, carpets, photographs; this completes the funerary aesthetics, so we can think of morality: requiem masses are not enough, we want something more popular, more democratically religious: the novena. And the novena has now become popular heritage; common women have them sung for the souls of their dead and pay an annual fee of twenty-five cents to the *novenaro*! (Saccà 1894, 945).

More recent testimonies of chants in honor of the dead, handed down in handwritten notebooks by *orbi* from Palermo and Messina, are provided by Nino La Camera (1961, 14-15) and Elsa Guggino (1981, 50-53, 67; 1982 50-53; 1988, 110-111, 116), who also made a field recording in 1970 of the novena performed by some of the last representatives of this tradition in Palermo: Rosario Salerno (a blind man better known as *zzu Rusulinu*), Angelo Cangelosi, and Giovanni Pennisi (both of whom were not blind). The text transcribed by Guggino from the performance of Salerno and Cangelosi (33), with accompaniment of guitar and violin, corresponds almost exactly to that of the *Nuvena* published 80 years earlier by Father Carollo (1891 111-120, reproduced in Guggino 1988, 148-151). The original poem was divided into 27 hendecasyllabic eight-verse stanzas, to be performed in groups of three for each day of the cycle. The performers instead divided the text into quatrains, sang them in alternating voices and interspersed instrumental refrains. Also, on their “first day” they included the opening stanza of the *secunnu jornu* (“second day”) of Carollo’s *Nuvena*, and ended their performance with a quatrain that is

absent in the original text. The content emphasizes the need for vows and acts of penance to redeem the “holy souls of the poor dead,” without forgetting that “we are passing through this world”:

*Già sònanu a mmartòriu li campani,
l'artari su ddi nivuru vistuti,
faciti rifrigeri, cristiani,
a li parenti vostri sippilluti.*

*Nna chiddi parti scuri e assai luntani,
arsi di focu e ddi dulari acuti,
nni dicinu chiancennu a tutti quanti:
«Smuvìtivi a pietà di st'armi santi!»*

*Cci avemu ddà l'amici e lli parenti,
patri, matri, spusa, soru e ffrati,
scùttanu cu orribbili turmenti,
la pena ca si ddiv'a lli piccati.*

*Qual è ddu cori ngratu ca nun senti
pietà di st'armi afflitti e ddisulati?
Forsi un ghiornu nna du orrennu locu
cci troviremu nna lu stissu focu!*

*Pinzannu, nta stu munnu di tristizza,
ca tuttu è vvanitati e ttuttu passa,
l'àrvuli c'annu persu la frischizza,
lu ventu ca li fogghi nterra abbassa!*

*Li iorna curti e l'arii annigghiatizzi
e l'acidduzzi chi fannu la passa,
nni dicinu n-zilènziiu chiaru e ttunnu
ca semu passeggeri nta stu munnu!*

*Prega ppi li defunti lu paganu,
u Tuiccu, lu sciasmàticu, l'Ebbreu,
u pòviru, lu riccu e llu suvrano,
u ddottu, lu gnuranti e lu prebbeu.*

*Pi li morti m-battaghia ammanu ammanu
fici prigari a Ggiuda Maccabbreu,
dunca chi ccosa bbona ê nostri cari
ppi tutti li difunti di priari!*

*Viditi ca è un cunsolu a ll'armi santi,
cci appricamu tutti li ndurgenzi,
rrèstunu obbligati tutti quanti
a li vostri ddiuni e ppenitenzi!*

Fidili, cu llimòsini e pprieri,

*cu missi, cu ndurgenzi e ccu ddiuni,
rifriscati l'armuzzi bbiniditti
di li vostri parenti ddesolati e afflitti!*

Already the funeral bells are ringing, / the altars are clad in black, / o Christians bring solace / to your buried relatives. // From dark and distant places, / burned with fire and with acute pain, / they tell everyone amidst their crying: / “Have pity for these holy souls!” // Over there we have friends and relatives, / father, mother, wife, sister and brother, / who are serving with horrible torments / a punishment reserved for sinners. // What cruel heart would not prove / pity for these afflicted and desolate souls? / Maybe one day in that horrible place / we will find ourselves in the same fire. // Thinking, in this world of sorrow, / that all is vanity and everything passes, / the trees have lost their freshness, / the wind is blowing their leaves to the ground! // The shorter days and misty skies / and the little birds flying away, / all tell us in silence, plainly, / that we are passing through this world! // Prayers for the dead come from the pagan, / the Turk, the heretic, the Jew, / the poor, the rich and the sovereign, / the learned, the ignorant and the commoner. // For every fresh death in battle / Judas Maccabaeus ordered a prayer, / so it is good if our loved ones / pray for all the dead! // Behold it is a consolation to the holy souls, / that we grant them all the indulgences, / they all become indebted / to your fasting and penance! // Faithful, with your prayers and alms, / masses, indulgences and fasting, / bring solace to the blessed souls / of your relatives, so disconsolate and sad!

Girolamo Garofalo and Gaetano Pennino have analyzed the musical style of the performance by way of a musical transcription (Guggino 1988, 190-193) reproduced here by kind permission as example 9 (34):

Transcribing the vocal styles of *Zzu Rusulinu* and Angelo proved highly problematic, since they tend to fall somewhere between recitation and actual melody. For the voices, this difficulty was resolved by using “x”-shaped noteheads to indicate approximate intonation. Moreover, the vocal melodies are rhythmically free, in contrast to the regular and rigorous meter of the instrumental accompaniment. Since the mensural notation alone fails to fully account for the extreme complexity of these rhythmic peculiarities, in the transcription we have highlighted the simultaneity between sung syllables and instrumental accompaniment using dotted lines. [...] The guitar, which is always played with a plectrum, does not just strum chords in rhythm; it also provides a constant, subtle counterpoint, as the bass strings alternate with dyads and triads in the upper parts, thereby generating a sort of “false polyphony”. Along with the guitar, the violin also accompanies the singing with double stops or single notes. [...] In the *Novena of the Dead* (1970) the two singers take turns singing quatrains, each corresponding to a musical period with two asymmetric phrases and the second contracted by half a measure. The harmonic support is repeated consecutively for each iteration except at the final cadence. Of great interest is the chord on the lowered second degree that precedes the dominant in each cadence, as well as the use of the dyad C-E flat, which, produced by the violin simultaneously with the dominant G performed by the guitar, creates a harmony resembling a minor ninth chord.

In Messina, the tradition of the *orbi* came to an end in the early 1960s. Although there were no field recordings made at that time, it has been possible to document much of the repertoire through the performances of Felice Pagano, son of *mastru Vitu u sunaturi* (“master Vito the player”), one of Messina’s last blind street musicians, here called *nuviniddari* (“performers of novenas”). As a child with his vision still intact, Felice accompanied his father, and although

he never really worked as a *nuviniddaru*, he learned a large number of chants that he continues to perform with violin accompaniment. Among these are the *Nuvena dî Motti* (“Novena for the Dead”), and *raziuni* for the commemoration of father, mother, and brother (35). All compositions have the same metric structure (hendecasyllabic quatrains), and are based on the same melodic model. This is characterized by a rhythm tending toward a 6/8 meter, with the voice proceeding primarily in stepwise motion. The melody is in the key of G minor, and is composed of four phrases corresponding to the quatrain structure of the text (they would sing four stanzas of the *Nuvena* per day). The violin performs an instrumental prelude (in 2/4 meter, repeated after each stanza) and for the rest of the piece limits itself to doubling the voice. The guitar strikes the chords (in a mixture of strumming and arpeggio style with a pick), with ornamental passages appearing in the bass strings (Musical example 10). Pagano also performs the *Raziuni dû picciriddu mottu* (“Prayer for the dead child”), which differs from the others in melody and meter (36). Its pace is livelier than what is used by the Messina *orbi* for all other commemorative prayers. Moreover, the text (in eight-syllable sextets) is based on a meter more often found in cheerful and amorous arias and ditties. Therefore, the textual-musical form respects the same religious requirements once observed for the sounding of the bells – in fact, this prayer was commonly called *Glòria*. The G minor melody includes three phrases that correspond to couplets. The vocal progression and instrumental parts are similar to those already mentioned, with only the prelude running at a faster tempo (musical example 11). The text refers to specific Roman Catholic themes that are very distant from the lament themes described above. The dramatic reconfiguration of mourning is in fact based on the paradigm <life = pain vs. death = eternal joy>, made through poignant monologues calling the devout to perform prayers and good deeds in order to alleviate the “transitional” sufferings of Purgatory. Reproduced below are the verses of two *iurnati* (“days”) of this *Nuvena* (first and ninth) and the *Raziuni* commemorating the mother and the child (37):

NUVENA DÎ MOTTI

(Prima iurnata)

*Fidili cristiani sentiriti
chi ccosa voli diri puggatòriu,
chi nta stu munnu campamu smarriti
e non pensamu mai tantu mattòriu.*

*Li peni nta ddi locu su squisiti,
chi nforma e ddi lu Santu Scrittòriu.
Vi vògghiu rraccuntari, sappiati,
li peni e li tummenti in quantitati.*

*L'ànimi su ddi focu ciccundati
picchè l'etennu Ddiu l'ha cumannatu,
a ddivina giustizia â ppagari,
bbisogna in puggatòriu puggari.*

*Pi pputiri dd'animuzzi arrifrisuari
cu llimosini e ddiuni, bbona ggenti,*

*missi e ccumunioni vulinteri,
nni lu renni Ddiu di l'alti sferi.*

(Nona iurnata)

*Putènzia nfinita, Ddiu immurtali,
chi tuttu sai, tu reggi e guvernì,
fa chi lu sènsiu miu nun pìghia svali,
chi lu me cori tuttu a ttia discenni.*

*Sciogli, ti pregu, la me lingua frali,
chi lu me cori tuttu a ttia discenni.
Vi cantu dill'animi dulenti,
chi stannu misi fra tanti turmenti.*

*O viscuvadi, spiriti e ssanti,
o cherubini, o dominazioni,
tutti quanti prigamu a lu Missìa:
«Libbira l'almi di la pena ria!»*

*Puntifici, prigamu a lu Missìa,
chi tutti semu a lu celu ricoti.
E ppi stu bbeni all'animi mannati,
la pena in puggatòriu cci scansati!*

NOVENA OF THE DEAD

(First day) O you Christian faithful you will hear / what purgatory is like, / for in this world we live lost / and don't ever imagine such torment. // The penalties in that place are refined, / as we are informed and told by Holy Scripture. / Listen, I want to tell you / the amount of pain and suffering. // The souls are surrounded by fire / because God the eternal has ordered, / that to atone for divine justice, / one must expiate in purgatory. // If we can refresh those poor souls / with alms and fasting, good people / masses and communions willingly, / God will reward us from his high place.

(Ninth Day) Almighty, immortal God, / all knowing, you who commands and governs, / don't let my sense be diverted, / make my heart belong entirely to you. // Please untie my poor tongue, / make my heart belong entirely to you. / I sing of those souls in pain, / who are put through so many torments. // O bishops, spirits and saints / o cherubs, o dominions, / let's all pray together to the Messiah: / "Free the souls from cruel punishment!" // Popes, let's pray to the Messiah, / for we are all destined to go to heaven. / And for the good prayers we offer to these souls, / Spare them the pain of purgatory!

RAZIUNI DÂ MATRI MOTTA

*Cuntimplati la pena, cristiani,
dill'almi in Purgatoriu ddulenti.
Quannu sona u mmattòriu a li campani
vostra matri grida ggiornalmente.*

*Vostra matri e ppatri e li zziani
li nonni, li niputi e li parenti,
dici: «Fìghia, tu non pensi a mmia,
di mannari rifrigèriu a li me guai.*

*Pi tuttu chiddu chi a la matri fai
l'avrai ricumpinsatu da patti di Ddiu,
chi nnovi misi nventri ti puttai
ti bbinidicu cun affettu piu.*

*Figghia, pi ttia a la sedda m'assittai
ti parturìa cu dduluri riu.
Bbiniditta la mamma chi cchiamaru
e la cannula chi pi ttia ddumaru.*

*E bbinidicu cun affettu caru
a santa chiesa a cu t'èbbu accumpagnatu.
Figghia, to matri ti bbenedici tantu,
parrinu, cappillanu e ògghiu santu.
Puru lu stentu e lu travàgghiu ntantu
ti bbenedicu di quannu t'insignava,
lu latti chi tti desi tuttu quantu
ti bbinidicu i quannu ti nnacava.*

*Ti bbinidicu li carizzi chi ttu avisti
da patti di Ddiu, nostru Signuri.
Figghia, a to matri nun ti la scuddari
ma cci ha mannari bbeni e caritati».*

PRAYER FOR A DEAD MOTHER

O Christians, see the pain, / of the souls suffering in Purgatory. / When the bells ring for the dead / your mother cries every day. // Your mother and father and uncles / grandparents, grandchildren and relatives, / say: "Daughter, you are not thinking of me, / of sending solace for my suffering. // For everything you do for your mother / you will be rewarded by God, / For I carried you nine months in my womb / I bless you with devoted affection. // Daughter, for you I sat on the "saddle" [birthing bed, also called *sèggia* or *vancu*, see Pitrè 1889, 2:134] / I gave birth to you with much pain. / Blessed is the midwife who was called to my side / and the candle that was lit up for you. // And I bless with warm affection / the holy church where I took you. / Daughter, your mother blesses you, / priest, chaplain and holy oil. // Despite the hardships and sorrows / I bless the time when I bred you, / all the milk I gave you / I bless you from when I rocked you. // I bless the caresses you received / on behalf of God our Lord. / Daughter, do not forget your mother / But send her kindness and love."

RAZIUNI DÛ PICCIRIDDU MOTTU

*O fidili, ascuta e ssenti
li paroli cunsacрати
chi ddirannu ddi nnucenti
i ll'animuzzi trapassati.
Senti un'anima chi ddici
a la sua matri nutrice.*

*«Matri mia sugnu filici
picchè Ddiu mmi criau
e na gràzia mmi fici*

*nta lu cielu mmi chiamau,
pa non pàtiri tant'assai
nta sta terra, peni e guai.*

*Matri mia, tu nun sai
chi vvò ddiri Puggatòriu,
iò nu pocu cci passai
nta ddu focu transitòriu
e nni vitti nquantitati
tanti animi abbannunati.*

*Patri e matri, soru e frati
ca Ggiuseppi sentiriti
e ddi mia nun vi scurdati
vògghiu bbeni mi faciti,
chi m'aggiuva, ascuta e ssenti,
cara matri obbidenti.*

*Levirò di li tummenti
quacchi anima abbannunata
e la pottu etennamenti
nta la glòria bbiata
e mmi godu lu so visu
comu Ddiu mi ll'ha prumisu.*

*Ora sugnu in Paradisu
cu lligrizzi triunfanti
e mmi godu lu surrisu
di li tri ddivini amanti,
cu Ggesù, Ggiuseppi e Mmaria
l'ànciuli e serafini in cumpagnìa».*

PRAYER FOR A DEAD CHILD

O faithful, listen and hear / the holy words / to be spoken by the innocent / dead baby souls. / Look what a soul says / to its nourishing mother. // “Mother I’m happy / because God created me / and he graced me / he called me to heaven / not to suffer too much / the pains and troubles of this world. // My mother, you do not know / what purgatory is like, / I’ve been there a little / in that temporary fire / and I’ve seen a quantity / of many abandoned souls. // Father, mother, sisters and brothers / who will listen to Giuseppe [Joseph, the prayer’s addressee] / and do not you forget me / I want you to do good, / for that helps me, listen and hear, / dear obedient mother. // From the torments I will remove / some abandoned soul / and will bring it to eternal / blessed glory / and will enjoy its face / as God promised me. // Now I’m in heaven / in happiness and triumph / and I enjoy the smile / of the three divine lovers, / Jesus, Joseph and Mary / with the company of the angels and the seraphs.”

The performance of novenas, rosaries, and prayers for the commemoration of the dead was not exclusively entrusted to specialized officiants such as the *orbi*. A wide poetic-musical repertoire in Sicilian, spread mostly through printed sheets and chapbooks, circulated among the devotees (mostly women) who used them both in church for paraliturgical rites and in

devotional practices conducted at home. An exemplary form of the “novena for the Dead” is still performed by the women in Sortino. The rite was normally held in the church of the “Anime Sante del Purgatorio” (Holy Souls of Purgatory), but, due to restoration work being done there, has in recent years taken place at the church of “Santa Sofia” (Saint Sophie). The execution of the novena includes the recitation of the canonical prayers (in Latin and Italian) and the rosary. The liturgical text is recited in antiphonal form in correspondence with the ten small beads of the rosary (“decades,” articulated in five groups): *Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine* (the soloist’s call) / *Et lux perpetua luceat eis* (the choral response). At each of the five large beads (“places”), the faithful (all women except for the priest and the sexton) respond to the soloist’s calls in chorus with two octaves of a chant in Sicilian. The melody, in G minor and clearly of ecclesiastic origin (musical example 12) (38), was in the past also performed with the accompaniment of a harmonium (as in the recording made in 1960 by Antonino Uccello) (39). The text, not unlike the chants belonging to the repertoire of the *orbi*, revolves around the request to “friends and family” to pray for the relief of the poor souls condemned to suffer the “torments of Purgatory”:

*Genti vui la cchiù ddivota,
vui ca siti a Ddiu cchiù ccari,
nun lassati cchiù ppinari
st’animuzzi in verità.
Comu gridunu sintiti,
comu chiànciunu mischini,
fannu ll’occhi e li lavini,
ddumannannu carità.*

*Nna stu locu e tanti guai,
nna sti àspiri turmenti,
nni stu focu accussì ardenti
ca risistiri un si cci pò.
Comu fazzu, a ccui arriccurru,
grida ognun: «Ohimè infilici!
Cchiù pir nui parenti e amici
nun ci pènzunu, gnurnò!»*

*«Caru amicu ti scurdasti
anchi tu di li favuri,
fammi sciri di st’arduri
ca soffriri un pozzu cchiù.
Chi si tratta sì un amicu?
Si cci duna qualchi aiutu,
lu dumanna stu tributù
l’amicizia chi cci fu.»*

*«Figghi amati, amati figghi,
ca pir vui patemu tantu,
vi scurdàstivu fratantu
senza un minimu pirchè.
Vui sta casa unni abbitati,
tanta robba chi vvui aviti,*

*iu la fici, e llu sapiti,
e si tratta poi accussi?»*

*Ma fratantu li parenti
e lli figghi li cchiù amati,
ittri sunnu li cchiù ingrati,
nn'ittri c'è cchiù crudeltà.
Se li figghi e li parenti
ca nun pènzunu pir nui,
car'amici almenu vui,
deh, muvitivi a ppietà!*

You most devout people, / you who are dearest to God, / do not allow any more suffering / of these poor souls, in truth. / Hear how they cry, / poor crying things, / shedding rivers of tears, / begging for mercy. // In this place full of troubles, / in these harsh torments, / in this fire so hot / that you cannot resist it. / What shall I do, to whom must I go? / everyone cries: “Woe is me, the unhappy one! / Our relatives and friends / no longer think of us, at all!” // “Even you my dear friend, have you forgotten / my favors? / help me out of these flames / which I cannot stand any longer. / Is this the way to treat a friend? / One should give him some help, / this tribute is required by / our old friendship.” // “Beloved children, beloved children, / for whom we have suffered so much , / have you forgotten, meanwhile, / without even asking why? / This house where you live, / with so many things that you own, / I made it, and you know, / and then you treat me like this?” // But meanwhile the relatives / and the most beloved children, / they are the most ungrateful, / among them is the most cruelty. / If children and relatives / do not think of us, / at least you dear friends, / I pray, feel some pity!

4. The death of Christ

There is a specific repertoire of mourning sounds and chants for the yearly commemoration of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, culminating in the ritual dramatizations of Good Friday (40). In many different places the mournful event already begins during Lent (especially on Friday evenings) with paraliturgical functions, penitential practices, and door-to-door begging. In the past, the *orbi* joined in the celebrations for Holy Week with traditional novenas at the homes of the faithful (41). Still today, the Passion chants – usually called *lamienti* or *lamintanzi* (“laments”), or less often *ladati* (“chants of praise”, from Latin *laudationes*) and *parti* (i.e. “parts”, referred to a long narrative chant) – are performed by groups of men, mostly connected to lay brotherhoods, in both monophonic and polyphonic forms (according to a peculiar style that grafts tonal harmonic principles on mainly modal melodies). For their part, the women sing rosaries and chants almost exclusively in a monodic style. In addition, during the three days from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, the period of mourning is still marked today by the sound of rattles, side drums, and trumpets. The liturgy prescribes that during these days, the ringing of all bells is replaced by the sounding of rattles and wooden crotales to announce the commencement of the rites both inside the church and during the ensuing procession. Side drums carried on slings (*tammurini*) are used to mark the solemn nature of the processions, which alternate with the funeral marches of the street bands and sometimes with harrowing trumpet fanfares.

The canonic sequence segments the Passion of Christ into the ascent to Calvary, the crucifixion, the deposition, the funeral procession, and the burial. However, this sequence is not always respected in the traditional rituals. A Sicilian example can be seen in the *sepurcra* or *sabburca* (“graves”), which are set up in churches on the afternoon of Holy Thursday. According to the solemn liturgy, these graves – which are traditionally adorned with plates of *lavureddi* (“little works”: grains and legumes germinated in the dark) – are intended for the ceremony of the solemn repose of the blessed sacrament. But in folk tradition they connote a funeral “wake” and thereby anticipate the official commemoration of Christ’s death by one day. Thus, in many towns and villages, the visit to the graves, which takes place between Thursday evening and the early hours of Friday, is accompanied by itinerant devotional calls and chants narrating the Passion of Christ. The texts of the chants are in Sicilian, but of ecclesiastical origin. Their content revolves around the deeds of Our Lady of Sorrows, presented as an exemplary mother who first searches for her son, and then mourns his death.

In many places the custom of calling the faithful to visit these “graves” through special formulas alternating the sound of drums, rattles, and trumpets remains. In the village of San Filippo Superiore (neighboring Messina), children run through the streets shouting *Annat’â chiesa cu Signuri è ssulu!* (“Go to the church for the Lord is lonely!”) while accompanied by the sound of frame rattles (42). This call consists of a single, rapidly reiterated note (C, in this example) followed by a descending cadence (C - A - G) that coincides with the final word of the text (musical example 13). In Ventimiglia, the members of the brotherhood of Our Lady of Sorrows visit the graves set up in the various churches of the village in the early hours of Good Friday (approximately between 4 am and 7:30 am). They proceed in groups, stopping periodically to repeat the *chiamata* (“call”), which is preceded by nine drumbeats divided into sets of three, followed by a long blast of the trumpet. A soloist then sings: *Fratelli di Maria Addulurata, susìtivi câ tardu è!* (“Brothers of Our Lady of Sorrows, get up for it is late!”). The response from the choir is: *Tardu è!* (“It’s late!”). The call unfolds almost entirely on the note C, maintained as the recitation tone, while the response is based on a stepwise descending minor third (Ab - G - F). The side drum marks the conclusion of each call by repeating the initial sequence (musical example 14). During this musical itinerary rite, the families of friends and relatives offer food and beverages to the members of the brotherhood (43).

In Mirto, a village in the Nebrodi mountains, on the night of Holy Thursday a group of about fifteen men, both young and old, perform the chant of the *Passioni* (“Passion”) inside the two major churches. The performance revolves around two solo voices that sing, respectively, a basic couplet and a reprise (ABB form). The first part consists of an arch-shaped contour that closes on the dominant note (A), while the second descends to the tonic (E). The rhythm is free and recurring melismas are prevalent, especially in the first verse. The choir intervenes homorhythmically in the second half of each verse (some voices sing in unison with the soloist; others sing an octave below, alternating between dominant and tonic), reinforced by another voice in the high register, which proceeds from tonic to dominant to subtonic and back to tonic again (musical example 15). The poetic text, which is divided into 25 rhyming couplets, consists of a series of moving dialogues between the Madonna, the dying Christ, and various “characters” related to the Passion (the priests, the workers who are preparing the tools of the crucifixion, the apostle John, etc.). Reproduced below is the final part of the chant, which contains significant references to the performance of real funeral lamentations: from the

subdued collective weeping (“Call John to help me mourn my son”) to expressions of extreme pain (“Maria let out a shrill cry”) (44):

*«Chiamàtimi a Ggiuvanni (e) ca lu vògghiu,
quantu m’aiuta a cchiànciri a me figghiu.*

*Di niuru cci detti (e) lu cummògghiu,
iddu persi lu patri e iò lu figghiu.*

*Vàiu mi toccu nterra e toccu moddu,
toccu lu duci sangu di me figghiu.»*

*Maria ittau na vuci comu na schìghhia,
quannu mortu si vist’a lu so figghiu.*

*E sta Passioni è ditta a mmodu nostru,
ddicemu nn’avimarè e un patrinnostu.*

“Call John [the Evangelist] for I want him / to help me mourn my son. // I gave him the black veil, [because] he lost his father and I the child. // I go to touch the ground and I touch wet, / I touch the sweet blood of my son.”// Mary let out a shrill cry, / when she saw her dead son. // This passion is told in our own manner, / let us recite a Hail Mary and an Our Father.

In Misilmeri, the brothers of the Blessed Sacrament gather in front of the portal of the main church, and at midnight they begin to sing *I parti rû signuri* (“The Lord’s trials”). The text, in eleven-syllable couplets, is sung in alternating monophonic voices with brief interludes of frame rattles – locally referred to as *tròcculi* – between stanzas. After this initial performance, two or three groups of devotees make their way through the streets of the village following various routes. They sing in set places along the street, such as stands or crossroads and churches where the graves are set, continuously alternating between stanzas and soundings of the *tròcculi*. The melancholy sound of the rattles also accompanies all the movements of the groups. The sound of these instruments actually identifies the entire ritual action, which is in fact called *truccùliata* (i.e., “sound made with the *tròcculi*”). In the still of the night the sound of these “wooden bells” invades the streets. The final part of the chant stresses the ritual’s symbolic value as a display of choral commiseration with the pain of the Virgin Mary. The two-part melody extends over a range of a 4th, with particular emphasis on the second degree of the scale. A characteristic trait is the microtonal rise of the final note. The rhythm gravitates toward a 6/8 meter, alternating between a syllabic treatment in the first half of the verse and a melismatic style in the second half (musical example 16) (45):

*È un vènniri er è ddi marzu,
quannu murìu lu nostru Signuri.*

*Er’è mmortu (e) a bbintun’ura
pi saibbari a nnuatri piccatura.*

*«Figghiu meu, unni tâ vvenìri a ttruvari?»
«(e) A lu santu Carvàriu, matri mia!»*

«Sona la tròccula, affacciàtvi tutti,
ca sta passannu lu me santu Figghiu!»

È ddi lignu la campana,
Ggesù Cristu a tutti chiama.

E nni chiama (e) ad'alta vuci,
Gesù Cristu è mmortu n-cruci!

It's a Friday in March, / the day our Lord died. // And he died at 9 pm / to save the rest of us sinners. // "My son, where must I go to meet you?" / "On the holy Calvary, my mother!" // "The rattle board is sounding, come out everybody, / for my holy Son is passing!" // The bell is in wood, / Jesus Christ calls us all. // And calls us aloud, / Jesus Christ has died on the cross!

The piercing sound of the trumpets featured in many Good Friday processions is generally interpreted as the musical representation of the Virgin Mary's suffering. Often the trumpet is accompanied by a mournful drumbeat, which can be heard in the streets as early as Thursday evening.

In Pachino, from Holy Thursday to Good Friday, two pairs of players perform a motive on the side drum and trumpet that is explicitly intended to represent the weeping of the Virgin Mary (musical example 17) (46). In several other towns and villages these sounds, which characterize the processions of the dead Christ, alternate with polyvocal chants and funeral marches performed by street bands (particularly expressive performances can be found at Mussomeli and Montedoro, in central Sicily).

In the town of Vîcari, the call is made with voice, drum, and frame rattle on the night of Good Friday, after the procession of Our Lady of Sorrows. The brief text invites the faithful to worship the dead Christ so as to redeem their sins: *Veni, veni piccaturi / ca ti voli lu Signuri, / ca ti voli pirdunari!* ("Come, come sinner / for the Lord wants you, / he wants to forgive you!"). The three lines are uttered using a melodic formula framed by a minor third. The drum beats three strokes after the first line, two after the second, and one at the end, while the *tròccula* resonates between each call (musical example 18) (47).

In Butera, during the Good Friday procession, a call performed with trumpet and side drum acts as a frame for a rather peculiar vocal performance involving the *Parti* (i.e. "Parts"), a long poem composed of one hundred octaves in hendecasyllabic lines. For each stanza, the eight verses are recited with a particular intonation by a soloist, whereas the last verse is repeated in chant: one soloist, called *prima vuci* ("first voice"), sings the first hemistich, while a second soloist, called *secunna vuci* ("second voice"), sings the second hemistich with the support of the choir. The performance of the two solo singers is rhythmically free and melismatic, whereas that of the choir is more linear and simply restates the tonic with a passage through the leading tone (musical example 19) (48). Here is the stanza that evokes the moment of Christ's death and his imminent resurrection (49):

*Dulci Ggesù mi veni lu chiantu
di fàrimi la cruci e la spartenza.
Summu Ddiu d'amuri, amatu tantu,
câ morsi supra la cruci, oh chi spaventu!*

*Lu sabbattu Maria sparma lu mantu
e dduna fini a lu so patimentu.
Nni rallegramu cu lu so corpu santu,
sia laratu lu santissimu Sacramentu!*

Sweet Jesus I feel like crying / because I have to cross myself for the farewell. / Supreme God of love, so loved, / you who died on the cross, oh what a fright! / On Saturday Mary takes off her cloak [of mourning] and ends her grieving. / We rejoice in his holy body, / blessed be the Holy Sacrament!

The side drums – with their snares off and sometimes covered by a black cloth to give greater gravity to the sound – also open the processions representing the passion and death of Christ. The rhythms that mark these processions differ from place to place, as seen, for example, in those still used for Good Friday in Messina (50), Misilmeri (51), and Palermo (52) (musical examples 20-22).

A powerful representation of grief for the death of Christ can be found in a chant performed on the morning of Holy Saturday in the rural village of Sant'Anna (near Caltabellotta). During an all-female procession in which women carry a small statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, the main episodes of Christ's passion are evoked through a fascinating intersection between the narrative point of view of the faithful visiting Calvary and the heartfelt words of Mary at the foot of the cross. Here, the solidarity between "mothers" is a remarkable illustration of the extraordinary cathartic function of the story of God made man. The text is articulated in couplets of hendecasyllables. A simple bipartite melody of ecclesiastical origin is performed by a chorus in unison in G minor with a strictly syllabic pattern in 6/8 meter (musical example 23). The commemoration of the Passion then continues with the rosary, performed with a melody in G major while the frame rattles accompany in a rhythm tending toward 6/8 (53):

*O santa cruci vi vegnu a vvidiri,
tutta di sangu vi trov'allagata.*

*Cu fu chidd'omu chi vinn'a mmuriri,
fu Ggèsu Cristu c'appi la lanciata.*

*Lu misir'a la cruci e Mmària vinni
cu Mmarta, Maddalena e san Giovanni.*

*«Piglia sta scala ed a mme figliu scinni,
quantu ci passu sti so santi carni.»*

*Ca li profeti lu ier'a scinniri,
mrazza lu dèttir'a Mmaria l'addulurata.*

*Cunsìdira Mmaria, pòvira donna,
vidennu a lu so figli'a la cunnanna.*

*Ca la cunnanna è grav'e a casa n'torna,
fu cunnannatu di Pilatu ed Hanna.*

*«Com'è c'unn'è l'è cchianciri, amici mii,
ca persi un figliu di trentatrè anni.*

*Trentatrè anni chi fùstivu spersu,
manc'avistivu n'ura di cunortu.*

*La santa morti la sapìavu certu
quannu faciavu orazioni all'ortu.*

*Ca l'àriu di nivuru è ccupertu,
ca li campani sunàvanu a mmortu.*

*Ora c'aviti lu custatu apertu,
ncrunateddu di spini e ncruci e mortu.»*

*Sta razioni è dditta a nmomu vostru,
ddicemu nn'Avemmaria ed un Patrinnostu.*

O holy cross I come to see you, / I find you soaked in blood. // Who was that man who came to die, / it was Jesus Christ who was struck by the spear. // They put him on the cross and Mary came / with Martha, Mary Magdalen and St. John. // “Take this ladder and bring down my son, / so I can compose his holy body.” // And the prophets came and took him, / they placed him in the arms of Our Mary of Sorrows. // Think of Mary, poor woman, / seeing her son condemned. // That sentence is so harsh he never returns home, / he was sentenced by Pilate and Hanna. // “I do not know how I should mourn, my friends, / for I have lost a thirty-three year-old son. // Thirty-three years old and you were adrift, / you have not even had an hour of comfort. // Of your blessed death you already knew for sure / when you gave your sermon in the garden. // For the sky was shrouded in black / and the bells were ringing for the dead. // Now your flank is pierced, / you are crowned with thorns, and are dead on the cross.” // This prayer is said in your name, / let's give a Hail Mary and an Our Father.

ROSARIO

Poste

*Cu cchiovu puncenti,
o miu bbon Signuri,
la testa pirciasti
cun tantu dulur.
Nn'avu cchiù pena
lu miu caru bbeni,
non più addormentata
l'amatu Ggesù.*

Decine

*E pi ddecimilia voti
(e) lludamu la Passioni.
Lludàmula a li tutt'ura
la Passioni di lu Signuri.*

ROSARY

“*Place*” (*large beads*): With sharp nails, / O my good Lord, / you had your head pierced / with great pain. // He suffers no more / my dear one, / no longer asleep / the beloved Jesus.

“*Decades*” (*small beads*): And ten thousand times / we praise the Passion. / Let’s praise at all hours / the Passion of the Lord.

The funerary connotation of the rites commemorating the Passion of Christ in Sicily is also evident in the particular way in which they carry the *vari* (i.e., coffins), a Sicilian term to indicate special “litters” used to transport holy figures. The *vari* are carried during the processions accompanied by the sound of funeral marches (54) with a measured, undulating pace, sometimes combined with the alternation of two steps forward and one back. This rhythmic articulation of movement punctuated by music strongly evokes a kind of dance. Among the “choreutic” patterns that convey the dimension of mourning, worthy of mention are those found in Trapani during the procession of the *Misteri* (“Mysteries”): twenty groups of statues – always resting on large litters – representing scenes related to the Passion of Christ. Each of these *Misteri* belongs to one of the traditional guilds, the members of which bestow upon future generations the privilege of carrying them on their shoulders during the very long ritual procession of Good Friday (from 3 pm on Friday until dawn on Saturday). The celebration features a strong element of competition, which is expressed in the richness of the decorations, the number and attire of the *massari* (“carriers”), and the presence of a street band behind each *Mistero*. The sense of competition is also reflected in the elegance with which the *Mistero* is carried. The normal pattern, called *annacata*, is based on a wave motion imparted by all the carriers in perfect coordination. The *annacata* is perceived as a proper dance, which is performed to the rhythm of the funeral march.

Sometimes this slow movement of the *vari*, accompanied by plaintive and iterative sounds, is intentionally disrupted to dramatize the encounter between the Dead Christ and Our Lady of Sorrows. In the traditional ideology this is a particularly dramatic moment. In many villages – such as Campofelice di Roccella, Butera, Riesi, Pietraperzia, Bronte, and Licodia Eubea – the Good Friday processions are characterized by a sudden and unexpected acceleration, which leaves space for archaic expressions of grief. These are analogous to the most intense phase of the mourning lament: a verbal and behavioral state of agitation which translates into cried invocations addressed to the Virgin Mary and the Dead Christ as well as contests of strength and prowess between the carriers of the *vari*.

5. The death of Carnival

Still very much alive in Sicily is a type of Carnival ceremony once widespread in Europe. It features the mourning and destruction of a puppet named *Nannu* (“Grandpa”), or *Cannaluvári* (i.e., Carnival), who personifies the Carnival. The verbal, gestural, and culinary excesses that characterize the staging of these “fictitious funerals” connect clearly with the orgiastic traditions of the New Year’s feasts (55). In Sicily, an abundance of evidence attests to the continuity of the masquerade in the last three centuries – from the eighteenth-century testimony of the Marquis of Villabianca (modern edition 1991, 129-131) to the extensive descriptions contained in the folklore literature (see especially Guastella 1887, 146-147; Pitрэ 1889, I: 96-101; Salomone Marino 1897, 216-218; Alesso, 1917, 22-23). Here are two passages from the texts of Giuseppe Pitрэ and Michele Alesso:

The *Nannu* or *Nannu di Carnalivari* is the personification of the Carnival, its utmost and highest form, the object of all the joys, pains, fake whining, rages of the revelers, and the carefree. Finding his origin is as difficult as finding the origin of a lost tradition; but no doubt, as multifarious and ineffable as he is, he is directly descended from some mythical character of the ancient Greek and Roman tradition. His history is long, but his life is so short that it all takes place from the Epiphany to the last day of Carnival.

Ordinarily he is imagined and represented as a clumsy and cheerful old rag puppet dressed from head to toe with a cap, collar and cravat, coat, waistcoat, breeches, shoes. He is seated in a chair with his hands crossed over his belly, in front of homes, at a balcony or a window, leaning against a railing or a loggia; or he is carried around. More often, he is a masked person who rides a cart, a donkey, a litter, a chair, going around as the populace yells, screams, whistles and wrestles. [...] For him all the people go mad. The above-mentioned dirges form part of the usually anticipated funeral; but the last moments are anything but dirges! As Villabianca wrote, “the Carnival is supposed to be dead and its body is carried [...] to the gallows. In all the streets and everywhere people then mourn the Carnival and cry *Nannu Nannu!*, or *Muriu me figghiu Carnalivari!* [My son Carnival is dead!] (Catania) (Pitrè 1889, 1: 96-98).

It was not unusual to see street scenes representing the *morti di Carnalivari* [death of Carnival] also called *di lu Nannu*. A puppet resembling an old man, the *Nannu*, stuffed with straw and roughly dressed, was laid upon a bier and carried on the shoulders of four people dressed in white tunics and black shawls while two rows of youths wrapped in large white sheets followed the mock coffin, holding lighted torches and walked at a slow and rhythmic pace through the streets of the town [Caltanissetta], uttering incomprehensible, slurred words. This parade occasionally stopped, mostly at intersections or squares. At that point, they let down the coffin, surrounded it and amid cries and cackles, said: *Ah, Nannu, Nannu, pirchè mi lassasti? Comu âmu a fari senza di tì...a?! Oh, Nannu di lu me cò...ri!* [Ah, *Nannu*, why did you leave me? What am I to do without you?! Oh, *Nannu* my dear!]. They would then pretend to tear their fake hair made of tow; this was followed by more lamentations and other loud cries; they would perform all sorts of antics, until the procession resumed, with the singing of some grotesque two-choir *Miserere* or *De Profundis*, reproduced below. The first choir would plaintively sing:

*Muriu lu Nannu,
lu Nannu muriu,
pri fin'a n'âtr'annu
nun pipita cchiù!*

*Lu Nannu muriu,
lassau lu munnu,
lu jocu e lu sbjiu
nun turnanu cchiù.*

*Muriu lu Nannu
e batti lu toccu,
pri fin'a n'âtr'annu
nun pipita cchiù.*

[Dead is Nannu, / Nannu is dead, / until next year / he's not speaking! // Nannu is dead, / he left this world, / fun and play / aren't coming back. // Nannu is dead / and the bell rings, / until next year / he won't speak.]

The second choir, on the same tone, stressed the last words of each verse (Alesso 1917, p. 22).

The death of Carnival, killed by his own excesses and other peoples' violence (burned, hanged, dismembered), can be considered as a sacrificial ceremony: a "scapegoat" must be destroyed to get rid of the "old" and the "negative" so as to create a new cycle and provide for a regeneration of well-being and prosperity. In Palermo, in the neighborhood of Zisa, I documented the *abbruciatina* ("burning") of two puppets stuffed with firecrackers (*Nannu* and *Nanna*, "Grandpa and Grandma") amid the cheers of children and adults. During the ceremony, people cried *U cunsulatu, u cunsulatu!*, referring to the festive consumption of drinks, cakes and sweets that concludes the event (56). This practice is related to the *cunsulu* (funeral lunch), still offered by friends and relatives to the bereaved family in many places of Sicily (see note 21).

An example of the endurance of the mourning lament in an urban context can be seen in a field recording I collected in the neighborhood of Tirone, in Messina. In this *triulu* (i.e., trial) a female performer, one of the last representatives of an almost extinct tradition, accompanies the singing with the gestures typical of a funerary lament, interjecting exclamations such as *Figghiu, figghiu!* ("My son, my son!"), and referencing moments from the life of the "deceased" (57). Originally the *triulu* was accompanied by a *tammureddu* ("tambourine"), which substituted for the side drum normally used in funeral processions. The melody, which spans the interval of a fifth, proceeds in four phrases following an overall downward trajectory. The voice proceeds stepwise in a predominantly syllabic style (musical example 24):

Figghiu meu Cannaluvvari
la sosizza ti fici mali,
tâ manciasti a ccaddozza a ccaddozza
t'appuntau nte cannarozza.
Figghiu!

Cannaluvvari supra a bbutti
annau mi piscia e pisciau a ttutti,
cu nna fògghia di scalora
si nn'annau senza parola.
Figghiu!

E chiamàtici a Franchina
mi cci fa l'ultima pinnicillina.
E chiamàtici a Suraci
câ malatìa è llonga e nnon mi piaci.
Figghiu, comi ti nni stai annannu!

Cannaluvvari supra u molu
chi vinnìa i pumadoru,
la bbilanza cciâ tinìa
dda iarrusa di sò zzia.
Figghiu Cannaluvvari, comi ti nni stai annannu!

*Cannaluvvari c'annasti e vvinisti
 iè di dda cosa chi nni facisti?
 Mughieri mia nun ti pigghiari pena
 l'àiù sabbata nta la bbannunera.*

*Cannaluvvari murìu di notti
 lassau imbrogghi aret'i potti.
 Fìgghiu Cannaluvvari, fìgghiu!*

My son Carnival / too many sausages made you sick, / you ate them one after another / one got stuck in your throat. / My son! // Carnival on the barrel / went to pee and peed on all, / with a leaf of chard / he left without a word. // And call Franchina, / to give him his last penicillin. / And call Soraci / for the disease is long and I don't like it. / Son, why are you leaving! // Carnival sitting on the dock / selling tomatoes, / the scales held / by that scoundrel of his aunt. // Carnival, when you came and went / what did you do with that thing? / My wife, do not take pain / I kept it inside my pants. // Carnival died at night / he left trouble behind the doors. / My son Carnival, my son!

In Troina, the lamentation was linked instead to the theme of the last will and testament. The old *Cannaluvvari* does not have time to gorge himself and thus bequeaths a table full of sumptuous food. The *rrièpitu* (“lament”) was performed on the last day of celebration around the puppet deposed in the street, using sounds and gestures that parody a funeral lament. Reproduced below is an example collected by Pino Biondo from the voice of one of the last performers of the town. The text does not present a strophic articulation. The verses are sung with a descending melodic contour contained within a minor third, reflecting formulas widely seen in real funeral lamentations (musical example 25) (58):

*Eh fìgghiu miu, ggioia!
 E ccomu facimu senza di tia?
 E mmi lassasti a picciòcia nnò piattu, fìgghiu!
 I cadduna câ muddica macari, fìgghiu!
 Ie ddu bbieddu maiali c'ammazzasti mû lassasti, fìgghiu.
 Ddi cudduruna bbieddi mpiattati, fìgghiu!
 Oh fìgghiu!
 E ccom'ai'ê ffari senza di tia, fìgghiu!
 Oh fìgghiu!
 Ddi maccarruna, fìgghiu!
 Oh fìgghiu, fìgghiu!
 Ggioia mia Cannaluvvari, tu eri u spassu dâ famìghia!
 Oh ggioia! Oh!
 Cannaluvvari fìgghiu, comu facimu senza di tia? Ah
 fìgghiu!
 Ddu bbeddu salami, fìgghiu!
 Dda pignuccata, fìgghiu!
 Ah fìgghiu miu, fìgghiu!
 La tàvula cunzata mi lassasti, fìgghiu!
 Comu èravu bbieddu, ggioia mia!
 Ah Cannaluvvari miu! Ah Cannaluvvari miu!*

Oh my son, my joy! / And what shall we do without you? / And you left the soup in the plate, son!
 / And thistles with breadcrumbs, son! / And the good pig that you killed you left to me, my son! /
 Those beautiful buns on the plates, son! / Oh son! / And what shall I do without you, son! / Oh
 son! / That macaroni, son! / Oh, son, son! / My joy Carnival, you were the fun of the family! / Oh
 joy! Oh! / Son Carnival, what will we do without you! Oh son! / That nice salami, son! / And that
 cake, son! / Oh my son, my son! / You've left the table all set, my son! / How beautiful you were,
 my joy! Oh my Carnival! Oh my Carnival!

The parodic reversal of the causes of death (too much wine and sausage) overturns the true meaning of the dirge by celebrating the regenerating value of laughter and eros. Even today the Carnival is a feast that celebrates – if not the rebirth of nature as was the case in agrarian societies – the very joy of living. In this context, the use of conventional expressions of grief is a telling indicator of an archaic ideology underlying the modern practice. We must get rid of the old *Nannu*, but it is best to mediate his death with appropriate laments, expressed in a comical way so that “We don’t need to think about it for another year!” In other words, the revitalizing effect of laughter turns death into a rebirth – as already noted by Propp (1978, 189-190) – thus ensuring a safe transition from the old to the new.

Endnotes

1 Concerning the “celebration of death” in traditional societies, see, among others: Hertz 1907; Van Gennep 1909 and 1946; Mauss 1921; De Martino 1958; Alexiou 1974; Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson eds. 1976; Bloch and Parry eds. 1982; Lombardi Satriani and Meligrana 1982; Huntington and Metcalf 1991; Di Nola 1995a, 1995b; Howarth and Leaman eds. 2001.

2 For more on the sounds of the church bells in Sicily, see Favara (1957, 2:581-582, with musical transcriptions) and Bonanzinga (1993b, 44-46, 80-81, 98-100).

3 Recorded at Isnello, April 12, 1999. Performed by Pietro Lanza and Sebastiano Mazzola (church bells). Research by S. Bonanzinga and Vincenzo Ciminello.

4 Recorded at Mussomeli, March 30, 1990. Performed by Vincenzo Spina (church bells). Research by S. Bonanzinga.

5 Examples of gender and age distinctions in the ringing of bells are illustrated by Arnold Van Gennep who summarizes the different uses in France (see Van Gennep 1946), and more recently by Jean-Claude Bouvier, who focuses on the Provence region (see Bouvier 2003). Some considerations concerning the traditions in the Italian provinces of Calabria and Sardinia, which are quite close to those found in Sicily, can be found in Lombardi Satriani and Meligrana (1982, 24-25), Satta (1982, 285-287), and Ricci (2012, 126-130).

6 In two footnotes, Ciaccio specifies that the *diana* – also known as the “Our Father” – consisted of “a few bell strikes” played “at the first break of day”; the Hail Mary was performed “a half hour after sunset.” The full chime “is played with separate strikes” and the *mota* “with dragging chimes.”

7 Recorded at Mussomeli, March 30, 1990. Performed by Vincenzo Spina (church bells). Research by S. Bonanzinga. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 41).

- 8 Recorded at Antillo, January 5, 1993. Performed by Father Egidio Mastroeni (church bells). Research by S. Bonanzinga and Fatima Giallombardo. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 39).
- 9 Recorded at Antillo, January 5, 1993. Performed by Sebastiano Mastroeni (church bells). Research by S. Bonanzinga and Fatima Giallombardo. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 40).
- 10 Recorded at Calamònci, March 28, 1992. Performed by Father Mario Di Nolfo (church bells). Research by S. Bonanzinga and Giovanni Moroni. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 38)
- 11 Recorded at Sortino, September 2, 2005. Performed by Vincenzo Giampapa (church bells). Research by S. Bonanzinga. Field recordings released in Bonanzinga compact disc (2008, CD 1: tracks 38, 40, 42 and CD 2, track 1).
- 12 See note 3.
- 13 See note 11. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (2008, CD 1: track 44).
- 14 See note 10. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 48).
- 15 See note 3.
- 16 Recorded at Petralia Sottana, March 26, 1995. Performed by Giuseppe Macaluso (church bells). Research by S. Bonanzinga and Rosario Perricone. Field recordings released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, tracks 46 and 47).
- 17 The notion of “sound signal” was developed by Raymond Murray Schafer in his pioneering work on “soundscape” (Schafer 1977). For an application in traditional Sicilian contexts, see Bonanzinga (1993b, 36-38, 79-110).
- 18 Among the studies on the mourning lament in the Italian area, see: Toschi 1947 and 1952; Cirese 1951; De Martino 1954 and 1958; Palombini 1989; Ricci (2012, 130-140). For Sicily, see Bonanzinga (1995, 57-64) and Guggino (2004, 334-353).
- 19 See also the texts of two dirges recorded in 1960 in Vizzini and Canicattini Bagni by Antonino Uccello, transcribed and annotated by Gaetano Pennino (2004, 137-140, 181-183, field recordings released in the CDs attached to the book, tracks I/29 and II/4).
- 20 Concerning the Church’s attempts to repress the funeral lament through prescriptions from the Synod, see in particular Cirese 1953 and Corrain and Zampini 1967.
- 21 Among the funeral practices still alive in Sicily – especially in small towns and villages – of special note is the mid-day meal (the *cùnsulu*, or *cunsulatu*) offered to the bereaved family by relatives or friends according to a ceremonial code that reaffirms the deep complementarity between the key moments of the wedding and of death: “[...] the connection is justified by the processes of conjunction and disjunction that inevitably accompany these steps required of human life. [...] The wedding banquet and the *cùnsulu* reflect the social dynamics prompted by the life-affirming establishment of the new family and the painful event that ultimately denies it, through significant reversals of the techniques of distribution and consumption of the food as well as their preparation and quality” (D’Onofrio 1992, 65). For a broader analysis of the symbolic value of food in ritual Sicilian contexts, see especially Giallombardo 2003a.

22 In the second half of the 18th century, the Marquis of Villabianca described the canonical sounds of the funeral ceremony, recalling the “tolling of the bells”, the “prayers of compassion” and the music of the street band: “[...] even in our time it is often noticed that Sicilians have the custom, in the case of funerals of notable people and citizens of lower order, to take the corpses in procession to the church [...] the monks, friars, priests, parishioners, and the brotherhoods and the charitable associations of the city follow the procession to the sound of the funeral bells and alternate these with sung prayers of compassion, offered imploringly by groups of professional musicians and bands of wind instruments proceeding immediately in front of the bier” (modern edition Villabianca 1989, 56).

23 An emblematic reflection of the archaic ideology of death is the use of expressions in the contemporary Sicilian dialect such as *fari na bbella festa* (hold a good party) or *chi bbella festa chi cci f'ciru* (what a good party they held) to refer to the degree of solemnity with which a funeral rite is celebrated. Like the other important “parties” (weddings, baptisms, etc.) these must be adequately recorded with photographs and videos (see Perricone 2000 and 2016).

24 Recorded at Rosolini, March 24, 1989. Performed by Municipal Band of Rosolini and unidentified old woman. Research by Fabio Politi. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 42).

25 Recorded at Sommatino, August 27, 1988. Performed by unidentified old woman. Research by Antonella Corrado. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 43).

26 Recorded at Sommatino, October 1, 2001. Performed by Maria Selvaggio. Research by Alberto Nicolino. Field recording partly released in the DVD attached to Nicolino 2006 (section “Filmato”, scene 4, section “Canti”, track 10). I wish to thank the author for making available the entire recording.

27 Recorded at Calamònci, December 16, 1995. Performed by Giuseppa Inga. Research by S. Bonanzinga, Fatima Giallombardo, and Rosario Perricone. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 42). Video recording available at the archive of the Folkstudio (Palermo).

28 A musical transcription of this mourning lament was prepared by the Sicilian composer Giovanni Sollima (see Guggino 2004, 342-343), who also used my original field recording as part of his composition *I Canti* (“The Chants”, Sonzogno publisher, Milano 1998), included in the soundtrack of the movie *I cento passi* (“The hundred steps”) directed by Marco Tullio Giordana in 2000.

29 Recorded at Sortino, November 25, 2004. Performed by Sofia Fontana (the mother) e Pina Garofalo (the daughter). Research by S. Bonanzinga. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (2008, CD 1: track 43)

30 Concerning the activities of the *orbi*, see especially: Buttitta A. 1960; Guggino 1980, 1981, 1988; Bonanzinga 2006. Field recordings are available in: Garofalo and Guggino Vinyl disc 1987; Lo Castro and Sarica compact disc (1993, tracks 24-26); Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, tracks 45, 49); Bonanzinga compact disc (1996b, tracks 1, 2, 7, 9).

31 The ecclesiastical term “novena”, in Sicilian *nuvena* (or *nuena*), traditionally refers to both the ritual practice consisting of a cycle of prayers (both sung and recited) in the nine days before a given festivity and to a long devotional poem divided into “parts” (*parti*) or “days” (*iurnati*), also performed in the nine days preceding a celebratory event.

32 The *Dies irae* is one of the “sequences” of the funeral liturgy. Traditional *diesille* varied according to the recipient, the most frequent being children, parents, or siblings, although there were also those for

uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, and brothers and sisters-in-law (see Pitrè 1870-71, 1: 37-38.)

33 Recorded at Palermo (Romagnolo neighbourhood), October 24, 1970. Research by Elsa Guggino. Field recording released in Garofalo and Guggino vinyl disc (1987, track A/6).

34 Thanks go to Giuseppe Giordano for supplying the digital version of the music transcription.

35 Recorded at Messina, December 1, 1991. Performed by Felice Pagano (voice and violin) and Domenico Santapaola (guitar). Research by S. Bonanzinga e Giuseppe Giacobello. Field recordings released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1996b, track 1, first day of the “Novena for the Dead”) and Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 45, “Prayer for the dead mother”).

36 See note 35. Recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1995, track 49).

37 The fifth and sixth stanzas of this religious chant are variations of a text transcribed by folklorists Pitrè (1870-71, 63) and Vigo (1870-74, 401), who classify it as a lullaby with a religious theme.

38 Recorded at Sortino, November 23, 2000. Performed by a mixed voice choir. Research by S. Bonanzinga. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (2008, CD 1: track 39).

39 Uccello’s field recording was recently released by Gaetano Pennino, who commented: “The melody, sung with a strongly emotional style, is accentuated by the amplitude of the voices’ *portamentos* in the upper register [...]; the expressive result is heavily characterized by a sense of pity, almost a submissive act of contrition with a pleading rhetoric that recurs in many compositions of ecclesiastical origin” (2004, 153; CD 1, track 36).

40 Among the available field recordings devoted to the musical tradition of the Holy Week in Sicily, see: Guggino and Macchiarella vinyl disc (1987; Macchiarella vinyl disk (1989) and compact disc (1996); Sarica vinyl disc (1990); Garofalo and Guggino compact disc (1993); Fugazzotto and Sarica compact disc (1994); Biondo compact disc (2004). Also see: Bonanzinga compact disc (1996a, tracks 13-19); Bonanzinga compact disc (1996b, tracks 11-18); Acquaviva and Bonanzinga compact disc (2004, tracks 26-29). For further ethnomusicological studies, see: Macchiarella 1995a; Bonanzinga 2004; Giordano 2008, 2009, 2011. For a more general analyses of Easter rituals in Sicily, see: Buttitta A. 1978, ed. 1990; Giallombardo 1990, 2003a; Buttitta I. E. 1999, 2002.

41 In Palermo and Messina, the *orbi* performed the *nuvena d’Addulurata* (“Novena for Our Lady of Suffering”), handed down both in printed pamphlets (see for instance Carollo 1883) and as handwritten notebooks kept by the performers themselves (see Guggino 1988, 36-37 and La Camera 1961, 8). The last *orbi* in Palermo also performed *u Pàssiu* (“The Passion”), as documented towards the end of the 19th century by Alberto Favara (1957, 2:n.681) and recorded in 1970 by Elsa Guggino (1988, 165-166), with musical transcriptions by Girolamo Garofalo and Gaetano Pennino (Guggino 1988, 183-189; field recording published in Garofalo and Guggino vinyl disc (1987, track A/5).

42 Recorded at Messina (San Filippo Superiore neighbourhood), March 28, 1991. Performed by a group of children (voices and frame rattles). Research by S. Bonanzinga and Giuseppe Giacobello. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1996a, track 13).

43 Recorded at Ventimiglia of Sicily, April 2, 1999. Performed by members of the Our Lady of Sorrow brotherhood, generally known as “the Masters’ Brotherhood” (voices, trumpet, and drum). Research by Vincenzo Ciminello.

44 Recorded at Mirto, March 25, 1999. Sung by a male choir (lead voices Vincenzo Lanuto, Salvatore Randazzo, Cirino Sapone). Research by S. Bonanzinga. This chant was first recorded in 1954 by Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella (Carpitella and Lomax compact disc 2000, track 27).

45 Recorded at Misilmeri, March 29, 1997. Performed by Giuseppe Saitta (voice) and brothers of Holy Sacrament (frame rattles). *Research*: S. Bonanzinga.

46 Recorded at Pachino, March 24, 1989. Performed by Giancarlo Cutrari (side drum) and Angelo Ricciarello (trumpet). Research by Claudia Giordano.

47 Recorded at Vicari, April 14, 1995. Performed by Giorgio Peri (voice and frame rattle) and Giuseppe Pecoraro (side drum). Research by S. Bonanzinga and Fatima Giallombardo. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1996b, track 15).

48 These polyvocal chants have a recurrent structure based on tonal harmonic principles derived from the liturgical chant: a soloist plays the melody and the choir interjects various types of chords that coincide with the intermediate and final cadences (see Macchiarella 1995a; 1995b). The lead voice, which usually performs elaborate melismas, also has the task of enunciating the verbal part of the chant, whereas the choir pronounces only the final syllables of each verse. The different local repertoires include a variable number of chants with texts in Latin, Sicilian, and Italian. The adoption of church-derived musical procedures and the frequent use of texts of literary origin show a clear connection between musical practices from the oral tradition and the products of high culture.

49 Recorded at Butera, April 21, 2000. Performed by Rocco Chiolo, Giuseppe Marsana, Rocco Sciascia, and Gaetano Tinnirello (voices), Salvatore Cacioppo (side drum), and Fabio Guzzardella (trumpet). Research by S. Bonanzinga.

50 Recorded at Messina, March 24, 1989. Performed by Angelo Ballarò e Giuseppe Ballarò (side drums). Research by S. Bonanzinga and Giuseppe Giacobello. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disk (1996a, track 15).

51 Recorded at Misilmeri, April 14, 2006. Performed by Vincenzo Lombardo and Vincenzo Saitta (side drums). Research by Giuseppe Giordano.

52 Recorded at Palermo, August 7, 1991. Performed by Maurizio Aucello and Onofrio Aucello (side drums). Research by S. Bonanzinga.

53 Recorded at Sant'Anna of Caltabellotta, April 06, 1996. Sung by a group of women during the procession. Research by Giovanni Moroni and Rosario Perricone. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1996b, track 16).

54 Field recordings of funeral marchers performed during the Holy Week processions can be found in: Pennino and Politi vinyl disc (1989 Disc II: track D); Garofalo and Guggino compact disc (1993, track 8); Bonanzinga compact disc (2008 CD II: track 4).

55 Concerning the diffusion of parodic funerals in the Euro-Mediterranean area, see among others: De Martino 1958; Toschi 1976; Propp 1978; Lombardi Satriani and Meligrana 1982; Satta 1982; Caro Barroja 1979. Concerning the interpretation of Carnival ceremonies in Sicily, see Bonanzinga and Sarica eds. 2003.

56 Recorded at Palermo (Zisa neighborhood), February 28, 1995. Performed by Francesco Argante. Research by S. Bonanzinga and F. Giallombardo. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1996a, track 11).

57 Recorded at Messina (Tirone neighborhood), February 9, 1991. Sung by Domenica Saija. Research by S. Bonanzinga. Field recording released in Bonanzinga compact disc (1996a, track 10).

58 Recorded at Troina, 1999. Sung by Basilio Arona. Research by Pino Biondo. Field recording released in Biondo compact disc (2002, track 8).

Photo 1. Salemi (about 1940). The side drum player Baldassare Maltese, brother of Francesco and Pietro. The repertoire of this family of *tammurinari* (drummers) has been widely documented by Alberto Favara (1957).



Photo 2. Giarratana (1943). Mourning wake.



Photo 3. Bagheria (1956). Funeral train.



Photo 4. Campofranco (1960). Funeral train with musical accompaniment of the local street band.



Photo 5. Mussomeli (1990). The sexton Vincenzo Spina.



Photo 6. Calamònci (1995). Giuseppa Inga.



Photo 7. Sortino (2000). Sofia Fontana (mother) and Pina Garofalo (daughter).



Photo 8. Palermo (1970). The blind *sunaturi* ("player") Rosario Salerno.



Photo 9. Messina (1996). Felice Pagano, son of the last blind *sunaturi* ("player") in Messina.



Photo 10. Messina (1996). Felice Pagano (violin) and Domenico Santapaola (guitar).



Photo 11. Traditional Sicilian *tròccoli* (crotales and rattles): *a*) frame rattle with three small wooden hammers on each side (Messina); *b*) painted wooden crotal bell (Palermo); *c*) wooden crotal bells (Sortino); *d*) frame rattle with two iron clappers on each side (Sortino).



Photo 12. Messina (1991). Call for Holy Thursday performed by children with frame rattle (see photo 11a).



Photo 13. Misilmeri (2010). The *trucculiata* performed by the brothers of the Blessed Sacrament with frame rattles during the night between Thursday and Friday of the Holy Week.



Photo 14. Misilmeri (2010). Giuseppe Saitta sings during the *trucculiata*.



Photo 15. Vicari (1995). Call for Good Friday performed by Giorgio Peri (voice and frame rattle) and Giuseppe Pecoraro (side drum).



Photo 16. Butera (2000). Call for Good Friday performed by Salvatore Cacioppo (side drum) and Fabio Guzzardella (trumpet). Butera (2000). Call for Good Friday performed by Salvatore Cacioppo (side drum) and Fabio Guzzardella (trumpet).



Photo 17. Butera (2000). The Virgin Mary's lament at the foot of the cross, as performed by women in the main church.



Photo 18. Butera (2000). A group of men sing the *parti* (parts) for the death of Christ during the Good Friday procession.



Photo 19. Mussomeli (1993). The brothers of the Blessed Sacrament sing the traditional *lamenti* (laments) during the Good Friday procession. Each verse is preceded and followed by the sound of a bass drum and trumpet.



Photo 20. Messina (1989). The Ballarò brothers with their side drums covered by a black cloth during the Good Friday procession.



Photo 21. Misilmeri (2006). Mourning for the Death Christ in the main church and drummer Vincenzo Lombardo during the Good Friday procession.



Photo 22. Palermo (2009). Good Friday procession with wooden crotal bell (see photo 11b) and side drums covered by a black cloth.



Photo 23. Palermo (2009). Good Friday procession with wooden crotal bell (see photo 11b) and side drums covered by a black cloth.



Photo 24. Palermo (2009). Good Friday procession with wooden crotal bell (see photo 11b) and side drums covered by a black cloth.



Photo 25. Trapani (1993). The *massari* perform the *annacata* while carrying the Death Christ's coffin in Good Friday procession.



Photo 26. Palermo, Zisa neighborhood (1995). The burning of the puppets (*Nannu* and *Nanna*) on the last day of the Carnival.



Photo 27. Palermo, Zisa neighborhood (1995). The burning of the puppets (*Nannu* and *Nanna*) on the last day of the Carnival.



Photo 28. Palermo, Ballarò neighborhood (1995). Parodic ceremony for the death of *Nannu* and *Nanna* in the last day of the Carnival: the mourning wake.



Photo 29. Palermo, Ballarò neighborhood (1995). Parodic ceremony for the death of *Nannu* and *Nanna* in the last day of the Carnival: the mourning wake.



Photo 30. Palermo, Ballarò neighborhood (1995). Parodic ceremony for the death of *Nannu* and *Nanna* in the last day of the Carnival: the mourning wake.



Photo 31. Palermo, Ballarò neighborhood (1995). Parodic ceremony for the death of *Nannu* and *Nanna* in the last day of the Carnival: the mourning wake.



Photo 32. Palermo, Ballarò neighborhood (1995). Parodic ceremony for the death of *Nannu* and *Nanna* in the last day of the Carnival: the beginning of the funeral train.



Photo 33. Palermo, Ballarò neighborhood (1995). Parodic ceremony for the death of *Nannu* and *Nanna* in the last day of the Carnival: the burning and hanging.



Credits: Sergio Bonanzinga (7, 9-12, 15-20, 25-33); Gaspare Cammarata (1); Girolamo Cusimano (5); Giuseppe Giordano (13, 14, 21); Pietro Motisi (22-24); Gaetano Pagano (8); Rosario Perricone (2-4, 6).

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d = Vinyl disc

cd = Compact disc (CD)

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