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Traditional rural songs in Sicily

Girolamo Garofalo

Este trabajo analiza e ilustra formal y estilísticamente la música y textos de una serie de canciones rurales (una y varias voces) dentro del área de la cultura tradicional oral, ejecutadas en jornadas de trabajo campesino, así como en otras circunstancias con carácter de entretenimiento (serenatas, reuniones), dentro de los diferentes contextos socioeconómicos de la isla.

Repertorio que en la actualidad sufre un proceso de mutación debido a la evolución del proceso productivo agrario tradicional.

Premise

Until recently, in Sicily the various moments of life in the country were accompanied by a quantity of different musical expressions¹. Today, these songs, as well as other folkloric repertoires connected with traditional productive activities (for example the songs of tuna fishermen, salt-pan workers, sulphur miners, cart drivers, etc.) are undergoing a serious, probably irreversible, *crisis*². This decline is the direct result of social and cultural transformations which have had a profound influence on the whole of traditional Sicilian oral culture. Traditional methods of production have been superseded, destroying many social activities connected with them³.

Today, this musical heritage often remains only in the memory of older people. However, Elsa Guggino's general observations on work songs are valid also in this case. In fact she divides the general term of *work song* into the following categories (Guggino 1975:231):

1. Songs performed at work or during intervals (but which could be performed also on other occasions);

1. For a first guide to the anthropological characteristics of rural work in Sicily, see the essays in AA. VV. (1990). Ethnomusicological studies of the single repertoires are contained in Bonanzinga (1991, 1992); Collaer (1957-59, 1980); Corsaro-Sarica (1983); Garofalo (s.d.); Favara (1923, 1957); Guggino (1974, 1975, 1987); Macchiarella (1987, 1990, 1993); Pennino (1985, 1987a, 1987b, 1990). Recordings of the most significant genres of rural songs are contained in the anthology published by Guggino (d.1974). Other sporadic examples are to be found in the records edited by Bianco-Lomax (d.1965), Carpitella-Lomax (d.1957, d.1958), Chairidakis-Lomax (d.1979, d.1986), Fugazzotto (d.1989), Henning (d.1956), Garofalo (d.1989, cd.1992), Guggino (d.1970), Guggino-Pennino (d.1987), McNeish (d.1965), Nicosia (d.1980), Moroni-Vacante (d.1991), Portelli (d.1971), Sarica (cd.1992), Uccello (d.1974).
2. For these working repertoires see:
Tuna fishermen's songs: Bonanzinga (1993), Guggino (1986 and 1987), Guggino-Pagano (1983), Macchiarella (1986);
Salt-pan workers' songs: Bonanzinga (1993); Garofalo (1987 and 1988); Guggino (1974 and 1975);
Sulphur miners' songs: Bonanzinga (1993); Garofalo (1989b);
Cart drivers' songs: Garofalo (1987 and 1989a); Guggino (1978, 1979 and 1987); Macchiarella (1989).
3. For more details on the changes in traditional Sicilian oral culture, and the historical, social and cultural reasons behind them, see Buttitta (1990).

2. Songs which accompany the working rhythm and are functional to the work itself (and therefore are not usable outside their own specific context)⁴.

On the basis of this distinction, it should be stated that the transformations in the economy of the island and the dispersion of the oral culture have not produced a uniform effect on all the various repertoires of the rural tradition. Whereas, on one hand, the musical expressions *functionally connected* to working activities have almost completely disappeared⁵, those songs performed in relative independence from the ergological context still survive in some way even today⁶.

Object and method of analysis

This paper will illustrate several examples of rural songs traditionally performed during work in the fields, but which are also to be heard on other occasions, such as serenades, parties or meetings among friends. The analysis concentrates on the formal characteristics of the music and texts. In some particularly significant cases attention has been paid to the reciprocal interaction between text and music. Our examination has covered mainly monodic song forms, but there is also a brief summary of the polyvocal repertoire.

The verbal texts are included in the body of the paper, whereas the relative musical transcriptions are in the appendix.

The examples analysed are mostly taken from the recorded documents of those specialists who, over the last twenty years, have carried out research promoted by the *Istituto di Scienze Antropologiche e Geografiche*, part of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Palermo, by the *Associazione Folkstudio of Palermo*, and by the Ethnophonic Archives of the *Centro per le Iniziative Musicali in Sicilia* (CIMS)⁷.

The *a la campagnola* songs

In the rural environment, the *a la campagnola* (or *a la viddanisca*) songs are one of the most common and typical traditional musical forms⁸. The principal characteristics of this type of song are as follows:

4. On this distinction see also the different opinions of Arcangeli and Sassu (1990); Giannattasio (1992:221); Guggino (1974 and 1975); Leydi (1973: 294-295).
5. A particularly significant case of traditional rural vocal expression is that of the songs which accompanied the activities of reaping and threshing (see Bonanzinga 1991, 1992; Guggino 1974, d.1974, 1975). An essay by Sergio Bonanzinga on reaping and threshing songs is included in this volume.
6. An extreme case of the *neutrality* of some expressive forms respect to the occasions on which they are performed (at work or not) is that of the cultural or semicultural airs and romances, whose diffusion among the rural communities has been studied by Pennino (1985, 1987a, 1987b). Romances and airs enjoying a popular circulation are also reported by Carapezza (1977) and Bonanzinga (1993:23-26). The discographic anthology edited by Guggino and Pennino (d.1987) is centred mainly on this type of repertoire.
7. For a summary of the activities of these institutions, and of the recorded and graphic collections of the respective archives, see Garofalo (1993). In particular, for the catalogue of recorded documents belonging to the Institute of Anthropological and Geographical Sciences, see Finocchiaro (1991, 1993).
8. The *a la campagnola* songs of Central and Western Sicily are the specific object of the Garofalo's examination (s.d.).

1. *Text and music*

The *texts*, in dialect, are generally *centred on the theme of love*. The most common metric form is the hendecasyballic ottava⁹. It is not uncommon to find texts present in several different socio-cultural contexts¹⁰.

The performance is normally monodic (in some cases bivocal). The only accompanying instrument ever present is the *marranzanu* (Jew's harp). This may be played by the singer himself (in which case there is only a brief instrumental prelude and, occasionally, a postlude), or by a second performer. In the second case, as well as in the introduction, the vocal line is accompanied by the instrument throughout the performance. The style of vocal emission is usually archaic, of a *broken* or *harsh*¹¹ timbre. The voice is generally used in the upper register¹². The melodies use the Doric mode (mode on mi) following a descending profile within an ambitus of a seventh or an octave.

The musical line usually proceeds diatonically: the occasional presence of chromatism is the effect of semitonal passing notes¹³.

The rhythm is fairly *free*: it does not adhere to a rigid metric, but is determined principally by the main accents of the words. The intonation of the intervals is often far from the tempered scale. The singing is syllabic or semisyllabic, but there may be the occasional melism during the cadences ending each period (see below).

2. *Correlation between verbal and musical structures*

In *a la campagnola* songs, there exists a precise correlation between the macrostructures of the verbal and musical texts. In the formal melodic structure (f.m.s.), every distich of verbal text corresponds to one musical period¹⁴.

Though the song is based on the strophe, the various musical periods are not repeated exactly. During the performance, the singer often introduces microvariations in the music. These may intervene both on the melody (mainly due to ornamentation) and on the rhythm.

9. During performance, the verbal text structures are often modified and adapted according to the specific musical form used. For example, the presence of euphonious vowels and syllables (*e, a, ma*, etc.) is very common. This facilitates vocal emission and intonation of long-held notes, and stabilizes the rhythm by changing the total number of syllables of the verse. This is not however an exclusive prerogative of *a la campagnola* songs, and is to be found also in other traditional Sicilian repertoires (see, for example Tiby 1957:18, and Collaer 1980:45). The same sort of adaptation has been identified also in the cart drivers' repertoire, studied by Garofalo (1989a) and Guggino (1978, 1979). It should be noted that in the transcriptions of verbal texts included in this paper, syllabic insertions of this kind are placed between brackets, in that they do not form part of the original text. In the musical transcriptions, brackets are not used.

10. These texts are in many ways similar to those transcribed in the 19th. century collections of Sicilian popular songs (Salomone Marino 1867, Pitre 1870-71, Vigo 1870-74, Lizio Bruno 1871, Avolio 1875).

11. These expressions are those used by Leydi (1973).

12. For the principal characteristics of *Sicilian popular* songs, especially regarding the relationship between melodic structure and vocal register, see Collaer (1980: 88-89).

13. For general information on the monody and modality of *Sicilian songs*, see the studies of Tiby (1957) and Collaer (1957-59, 1980).

14. The use of the distich as a basis for the text-music formalization is a recurrent element of many types of Sicilian popular music (see the observations of Tiby 1957: 36, and Collaer 1980: 46).

Each musical period may be divided into two phrases (each corresponding to one line). Whereas the cadence of the first phrase is on the fifth grade of the mode, that of the second is on the first grade. This correlation may be synthesized in the following diagramme:



These general characteristics are well illustrated in the following temporized musical transcription of an *a la campagnola* song from Niscemi (Province of Caltanissetta)¹⁵.

Ex. 1 • Niscemi (CI)

An *a la campagnola* song

Male voice and *marranzanu*

	Rhyme	f.m.s.
<i>Arsira cci passaiu r'on ghiardinu (ei)</i>	A	A
<i>e dummannaiu a biviri a n'urtulanu (ai).</i>	B	B
<i>Si ni dunà so figghia ri luntanu (i)</i>	B	A
<i>pi scanciu r'acqua mi purtà lu vinu (ei).</i>	A	B
<i>Vinni cu du bicchiera (e) nti li manu (i)</i>	B	A
<i>unu r'argentu e l'atru r'oru finu (i).</i>	A	B
<i>Iu cci rissi: «Un vogghiu acqua e né vinu (i)</i>	A	A
<i>vogghiu li to billizzi a li me manu (i)».</i>	B	B

Yesterday evening I was walking past a field / and I asked a peasant for something to drink. / His daughter saw me from afar. / Instead of water, she brought me wine. / She came with two glasses in her hands: / one of silver and one of fine gold. / I said to her, «I don't want either water or wine / I want your beauty in my hands».

The basic structure of this type of song may be modified or transformed. A typical example is constituted by the *sirbi* of Resuttano (Province of Caltanissetta)¹⁶. As explained by Elsa Guggino, these are songs for two alternating voices accompanied by the *marranzanu*. However, each song is really a combination of two different texts, each of which is usually a hendecasyllabic ottava. Each distich is known as a *sirbia*. One singer performs the first *sirbia* of his song (indicated by the letter Y); the second singer answers with the first *sirbia* of his song (letter X). The singers continue, alternating the distiches of the two songs

15. Recorded by Angelo Marsiano, c. 1980. The recording belongs to the private collection of A. Marsiano, and a copy is registered in the Ethnophonic Archives of the CIMS of Palermo. The recording has been published, edited by Girolamo Garofalo (d.1989).

16. On the *sirbi* see also Guggino (1974, 1975). A musical transcription of a Resuttano *sirbia*, together with an analysis of the musical structure, has been published by Macchiarella (1993).

(Guggino d.1974). Musical transcription highlights the fact that this alternation may produce modifications only of the verbal text, without altering the musical characteristics of the *a la campagnola* song. The melodic line of each distich remains basically similar to the other examples cited above:

Ex. 2 • Resuttano (CI)

Sirbi

Two alternating male voices and *marranzanu*¹⁷

	Rhyme	f.m.s.
X1 <i>Sugnu vinutu di luntana via</i>	A	A
<i>ca sugnu stancu di lu me caminu.</i>	B	B
Y1 <i>(a) Mmenzu di du muntagni n'arcu e un monti</i>	C	A
<i>vitti a Rusina lavari nna un fonti.</i>	C	B
X2 <i>(o) Vinni a cantari nti stu bellu chianu</i>	B	A
<i>e p'affacciari tu curallu finu.</i>	B	B
Y2 <i>Ca a biviri mi detti di li iunti</i>	C'	A
<i>ca mi nni detti un pocu e fu abbastanza.</i>	C''	B
X3 <i>(a) Nun ti cridiri ca sugnu quarchi stranu</i>	B	A
<i>sugnu l'amanti tua chiddu di prima.</i>	B'	B
Y3 <i>E sti tri soru quantu su galanti</i>	C''	A
<i>Sciroccu Tramuntana e lu Livanti.</i>	C''	B
X4 <i>O ièttami sti trizzi quantu acchianu</i>	B	A
<i>quantu ti baciù sti labbruzzi fini.</i>	B''	B
Y4 <i>(e) Su la picciridda nun mi fa cuntenti</i>	C'''	A
<i>mPararisu s'allàgnanu li santi.</i>	C''	B

I have come from far away / and I'm tired after the walk. // Between two mountains, an arch and a mount / I saw Rosina washing at a spring. // I have come to sing in this beautiful place / to make you put your head out, fine coral. // She let me drink from her cupped hands / she gave me only a little, but it was enough. // Don't think I'm just a stranger / I'm your lover, the one from years ago. // These three sisters are kind / *Scirocco, Tramontana and Levante. // Throw me your plaited hair so I can climb / so I can kiss your sweet lips. // If my little girl won't please me / the saints in paradise will complain.

*(The South, North and East winds, respectively. N.o.T.)

17. Recorded by Elsa Guggino and Gaetano Pagano, 15.01.74. Contained in the Archive of Folkstudio, Palermo, under the voice: Bob. Na 253 br. 1. Published by Elsa Guggino (d.1974).

An example of the integration between text and music: the *a la Santaluciota* songs

In the case of the *sirbi*, during real performances there is a *dynamic relationship between the verbal and musical content*: obviously, folk songs nearly always survive and are transmitted as live performances rather than in a written form¹⁸.

In the Sicilian rural tradition, this fact is most clearly illustrated by a genre known as a *la santaluciota*, from the village from which it originates: S. Lucia del Mela, in the Province of Messina¹⁹.

As explained by Gaetano Pennino, in this type of song, the original form undergoes a manipulation, in that the statement of the basic distich (corresponding to the first musical period) is followed by a repetition of modified versions of the second line of the same distich (carried out on a second musical period which is a microvariation of the first. This repetition of the second line follows a precise rule: the second hemistich is sung twice, followed by a repetition of the whole line (Pennino 1985:25-26).

The example reported below is performed by a female voice in the upper register, accompanied by an *organetto* (diatonical concertina). In this case the singing is characterized primarily by a virtuoso exhibition of musical ability. The use of the voice is particularly refined and precise in its use of ornaments and phrasing, of which the transcription can offer only a pale reflection. Another peculiarity of this performance is the rhythmic accompaniment of a pair of animal bones played with a technique similar to that for castanets. The rhythm used (1 x^bx^h), omitted from the musical transcription in appendix, never changes throughout the performance.

Ex. 3 • S. Lucia del Mela (Me)

An *a la santaluciota* song (fragment)²⁰

Female voice + *organetto* and bones

Basic text

*Brunetta mi ricisti a prima vista
dari nun ti la seppi la risposta*

18. Many Italian specialists (ethnomusicologists, musicologists, anthropologists, metricists) have recently concentrated their attention on the transformations and adaptations undergone by a verbal text in a live performance. On this question and, more in general, on questions regarding the metrics of traditional song texts, the work of Cirese (1988) is fundamental and exhaustive. For a general approach of a more ethnomusicological nature, we recommend Giannattasio (1992: 171-189). Interesting examples of single regional repertoires may be found in Agamennone (1986) for Abruzzo, Lazio, Marche, Tuscany and Umbria; Carpitella-Sassu-Sole (1973) for Sardinia; De Simone (1975, 1979) and De Simone-Rossi (1977) for Campania; and Ricci-Tucci (1984) for Calabria. For Sicily see in particular Garofalo (1990, d.1990); Guggino (1974, d.1974, 1975, 1978, 1979, 1987); Pennino (1985, 1987a, 1987b).

19. Many examples of *a la santaluciota* songs, together with a detailed musicological analysis, have been published by Pennino (1985). Transcriptions of other songs appear in Pennino (1987a and 1987b), and in Corsaro-Sarica (1983). Several recordings are included in the discographic anthology edited by Guggino-Pennino (d.1987).

20. Recorded by Elsa Guggino on the 28.4.75; archive of the Folkstudio of Palermo (Index: Bob. Na 103 br. 15); recording published by Elsa Guggino and Gaetano Pennino (d.1987).

*Si su brunetta nun è cosa trista
lu suli tegnu chi mi conza e vasta.
Sugnu comu la petra di lu issu
la risposta t'à dughu passu passu.*

Brown haired girl, you said to me as soon as you saw me. / I didn't know how to reply. / If I'm brown haired, that's not sad / I've got the sun and that's plenty for me / I'm like a piece of chalk: / I'll give you a reply a bit at a time.

As sung in a real performance

	<i>f.v.s.</i>	<i>f.m.s.</i>
<i>Brunetta mi ricisti a prima vista</i>	A	A
<i>dari nun ti la seppi (vo) la risposta</i>	B (b+b')	B
<i>(vo) la risposta (vo) la risposta</i>	b'+b'	A'
<i>dari nun ti la seppi (vo) la risposta.</i>	B (b+b')	B
[...]		

The Stornello

In Sicily, the *stornello* is common in the rural environment. As stated by Gaetano Pennino (1985: 27), *the Sicilian stornello possesses the same characteristics*, regarding both the textual and the melodic structures, *as this genre of folk song widely present in many other regions of Italy*²¹. *It is not therefore an indigenous product of the island, but rather an «imported» repertoire.* Below are two examples of *stornello*. In both cases the basic text is made up of distiches of hendecasyllables, and the melody is clearly tonal. However, on a textual level, the two versions differ in regard to the technique of combining the lines; furthermore, as far as regards the music, there are noticeable differences in the type of ornamentation used. In the first document, from Sutera (Caltanissetta), the *stornello* is characterized by a not very elaborate use of the melism. In particular, it is seen that in each musical phrase, the same figures are repeated with very little variation. The second line of each distich is always repeated twice.

Ex. 4 • Sutera (CI)

*Stornello*²²

Male voice

21. It should be observed that Cirese (1988) has recently criticized the generally accepted classification of the *stornello*, highlighting the difficulty of an unequivocal application of this term to different metric forms present in oral tradition (see in particular pp. 59-60, 153-173, 175-180). A specific repertoire of *stornelli* from the province of Messina has been studied by Pennino (1985). Recordings of traditional Sicilian *stornelli* have been published by Guggino-Pennino (d.1987) and by Garofalo (cd.1992).
22. Recorded by Girolamo Garofalo on the 23.4.92: Ethnophonic Archive of the *Centro per le Iniziative Musicali in Sicilia* (CIMS): Index: *Nuove acquisizioni in via di collocazione*; recording published by Girolamo Garofalo (cd. 1992).

	f.v.s.	f.m.s.
Quannu la serra ti vitti cuddari	A	A
chiatu di l'arma mia quannu hâ biniri	B	B
chiatu di l'arma mia quannu hâ biniri.	B	B
Bedda p'amari a tia persi lu sceccu		
ora mi pigliu a tia e lu vaiu a ciercu		
ora mi pigliu a tia e lu vaiu a ciercu.		
Bedda p'amari li vostri billizzi (o)		
mPalermu mi purtaru cu li pazzi		
mPalermu mi purtaru cu li pazzi.		
Bedda li to billizzi (e) iu li trattiegnu (o)		
si tu li duni a n'antru veru m'allagnu (o)		
si tu li duni a n'antru veru m'allagnu (o).		

When I saw you go over the top of the hill [I thought] / *Breath of my soul, when will you come?* / My beauty, for your love I lost my donkey / Now I'll take you and I'll go to look for him. / My beauty, for love of your beauty / they took me to Palermo with the lunatics. / My beauty, I'll hold on to your beauty / if you gave it to another, I'd really be in despair.

The second song from S. Lucia del Mela is markedly melismatic. In a general exposition of this type of *stornello*, Gaetano Pennino (1985: 27) writes that:

*Esso [...] è straordinariamente ricco di fioriture ornamentali di difficilissima esecuzione. [...] Le ornamentazioni eseguite seguono una sorta di normativa che consente di individuare una cerchia definita di soluzioni melismatiche; esse sono principalmente: trilli raggruppati in quartine o sestine, terzine di note discendenti, grappoli di note per gradi congiunti variamente combinate, piccoli stralci cromatici ascendenti, gruppetti diretti e talvolta rovesciati. La velocità di realizzazione di tali abbellimenti è spesso sorprendente, in grado di mettere in difficoltà anche il più esperto trascrittore che può facilmente cadere in veri e propri miraggi sonori*²³.

Pennino reports the texts and musical transcriptions of two *stornelli* from S. Lucia del Mela (1985: 121-124). One of the two performances, as he himself states, is peculiar in that, whereas each musical periode is divided binarly, the text follows a *chain-like* structure: the second line of each distich is repeated at the beginning of the successive distich.

Ex. 5 • S. Lucia del Mela (Me)

*Stornello*²⁴

Female voice + *fsarmonica* (accordion)

23. It [...] is extraordinarily rich in ornamentation, requiring virtuosic abilities. [...] These ornaments follow a sort of rule which allows us to identify a limited number of melismatic solutions. These are, principally: trills of either four or six notes, three descending notes, groups of adjacent notes in various combinations, short chromatic rising phrases, direct or occasionally inverted *gruppetti*. The speed at which these ornaments are carried out is often surprising, capable of creating difficulty for even the most expert of transcribers, who may easily fall victim to authentic mirages of sound.

24. Recorded by Elsa Guggino; archive of Folkstudio, Palermo (Index: *Bob. Na 398 br. 3*): recording unedited.



	<i>f.v.s.</i>	<i>f.m.s.</i>
<i>Giuvini chi t'amai non mi lu negu</i>	A	A
<i>lo nostro amuri fu cosa di pocu.</i>	B	B
<i>Lo nostro amuri fu cosa di pocu</i>	B	A'
<i>li baci che m'hai dato non te li nego.</i>	C	B
<i>Li baci che m'hai dato non te li nego</i>	C	A'
<i>la ricevuta fammi ca ti pagu.</i>	D	B
<i>La ricevuta fammi ca ti pagu</i>	D	A'
<i>li baci che m'hai dato non te li nego.</i>	C	B

Young man, that I loved you I don't deny / Our love wasn't worth very much / Our love wasn't worth very much / [but] The kisses you gave me I won't forget / The kisses you gave me I won't forget / Give me the receipt and I'll pay up / Give me the receipt and I'll pay up / The kisses you gave me I won't forget.

Polyvocal songs

In the ethnomusical tradition of Sicily, polyvocal songs are perhaps one of the most interesting aspects. The more articulated forms of polyvocal song are mostly linked to the multiform repertoire of *lamenti* (laments), performed in many towns and villages of Sicily during the solemn processions of Holy Week (the week before Easter)²⁵. There are also, however, polyvocal expressions unconnected to religious rituals, especially those performed during collective agricultural work. For reasons of space, an examination of this type of repertoire will necessarily be extremely brief, but we consider the subject too important to ignore²⁶.

Polyvocal work songs generally follow the *ad accordo* model, in which the solo part (either a single singer or more than one singer taking turns) enunciates the verbal text, while the chorus sustains the solo melody or merely underlines the cadences. The chorus may intervene either in unison or following harmonies of a complexity which vary according to the local style. Most frequent are consonances in unison, on the fifth, or on the third. Often a single voice in the chorus, denominated *squillo* or *sbighiarino*, harmonizes in the upper register.

These characteristics are exemplified in the following song from Bafia (Province of Messina), performed according to a polyvocal model known locally as *a la capuana*. An evident trait is the variable rhythm, in which no regularity is discernible: for this reason, as in other analogous cases, the musical transcription has been carried out according to the temporized

25. Over the last few years many studies have been published on polyvocal singing during Holy Week. For a first approach, see Ignazio Macchiarella (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1991). Among the various records published, several are dedicated to traditions of single towns or villages; others, indicated below, permit an overall view of the phenomenon in the various Sicilian towns (Garofalo-Guggino *cd* 1993, Guggino-Macchiarella *d* 1987, Sarica *d* 1990).

26. A general introduction to polyvocal songs connected to work is to be found in Macchiarella (1987). An extensive study of the repertoires of the Province of Messina, together with transcriptions, notes and musical analysis, has been published by Corsaro-Sarica (1983).

system (see Appendix). In the transcription, the presence of the upper voice, known locally as the *rijddu* (Sicilian dialect for the wren) is also evident.

Ex. 6 • Bafia (Me)

An *a la capuana* song²⁷

Female voice + female voice chorus

	f.v.s.	f.m.s.
(e) <i>Sugnu arrivatu a portu di Missina (e na)</i>	A	A
(e) <i>visti l'amanti mia (e) siciliana (a na).</i>	B	A
<i>O siciliana ... o siciliana.</i>		
(e) <i>Iera vistuta comu na rigina</i>		
(o) <i>s'era figlio dô re la ncoronava.</i>		
(e) <i>Idda mi dissi no voli corona</i>		
(ie) <i>voli l'amori chi tanto l'amava.</i>		

I arrived at Messina port / I saw my Sicilian lover. / She was dressed like a queen: / If I were a king I would have crowned her. / She said she didn't want a crown, / she wanted her beloved, who loved her so well.

Another typical example of polyvocal singing is the *canto di paglia* from Calamònaci (Province of Agrigento)²⁸. This repertoire has been studied and published in a discographic edition by Giovanni Moroni and Enzo Vacante (d.1991). In the written guide which accompanies the record, the characteristics are described as follows:

Si tratta di un insieme di canti profani tradizionalmente connessi all'attività agricola, ed eseguiti sia durante il lavoro (in particolar modo durante la mietitura) sia nelle pause e/o in occasioni non specifiche con funzione di intrattenimento. Naturalmente le profonde trasformazioni nella attività lavorativa hanno determinato la pressochè totale scomparsa dei contesti tradizionali. Ben vivo ne è però il ricordo e non mancano occasioni in cui i cantori si incontrano e riprendono l'esecuzione del canto, a volte riadattandone modalità esecutive e/o contenuti del testo verbale.

Musicalmente si tratta di strutture affatto analoghe al canto ad accordo: una voce solista, realizzata quasi sempre da più cantori alternativamente, si sviluppa entro un ambito, in genere, di un'ottava, con un andamento per molti versi assimilabile al canto monodico dell'area centro-occidentale dell'Isola (incluso una ricca componente ornamentale). L'intervento corale, realizzato da un numero variabile di cantori, è in genere all'unisono e si sviluppa su alcuni gradi cardine della scala per terminate sulla finalis. Un particolare rilievo assume una pratica esecutiva, detta a la ncapu, e consistente in una serrata alternanza di distici eseguiti dalle voci soliste le quali si sforzano di cantare con il massimo volume sonoro, sempre accompagnati dalla risposta corale [...]. Un'altra significativa variante esecutiva è il cosiddetto aggrissu che è costituito da una vera e propria competizione tra i cantori solisti che fanno a gara a rubarsi vicendevolmente l'attacco sforzando il più possibile l'emissione vocale e tendendo verso il registro vocale più acuto.

27. Recorded by Elsa Guggino and Gaetano Pagano (15.1.74): archive of Folkstudio di Palermo. (Index: Bob. Na 253 br. 1); published by Elsa Guggino (d.1974).

28. On the *canti di paglia* of Calamònaci and other reaping and threshing songs, see the paper by Sergio Bonanzinga in this volume.

L'esecuzione contestuale del canto era preceduta in genere da una invocazione al SS. Sacramento e ad alcuni canti (S. Rosalia, S. Calogero ecc.), proposta da uno dei cantori cui risponde all'unisono il coro²⁹.

Ex. 7 Calamònaci (Ag)

Canto di paglia³⁰

Male voice + male voice chorus

	<i>f.v.s.</i>	<i>f.m.s.</i>
(a) Vitti la bedda acchianata a la parma	A	A
(a) cu li manuzzi sò parmi cuglia.	B	B
S'avia inchiutu lu pettu e la falla		
(a) nni li manuzzi ancora ni mintia.		
(a) Nti ssu frattempu affaccia la so mamma		
nun potti fari (o) chiddu chi vulia.		
(a) Idda mi dissi: Firria sta banna		
cuntenti t'hà lassari o sciamma mia.		
Cuntenti t'hà lassari o sciamma mia.		

I saw the maider at the top of the palm / with her tiny hands she was cutting the leaves. / She has filled her breast and her skirt / and in her tiny hands she took still more. / At that moment appeared her mother / I couldn't do what I would have liked. / She told me: *Go around to another place / I want to leave you happy, my loving flame.*

The *a la capuana* songs and the *canti di paglia* were performed in many different moments of life in the country. However, one song identified with one specific activity is the following olive gathering song from Buccheri (Province of Syracuse). The text refers to an imprisoned lover inviting his woman to be faithful to him during his enforced absence. The verbal form reiterates a fact observed previously in the *a la santaluciota* songs: the text, a structure of distiches, is modified during performance by entire or partial repetitions of the second line of the distich. In this case, after the statement of the basic distich, the second hemistich

29. This is a type of secular song traditionally connected with agricultural activities, performed both during the work itself (especially during reaping) and during intervals, as well as on other occasions, as pure entertainment. The profound transformations in agricultural methods have naturally determined the almost complete disappearance of the original context, but the tradition has certainly not been forgotten, and on many occasions singers meet and perform these songs, sometimes adapting performance and/or verbal content to the new context.

Musically the structure is analogous to the *ad accordo* procedure: a solo voice is accompanied by the chorus during the intermediate and final cadences. The solo melody, almost always sung by alternating performers, is contained within the ambitus of an octave, and the musical line is in many ways similar to that of monodic songs in Central and Western Sicily (including the rich ornamentation). The interventions of the chorus, which may vary in number, is generally in unison, and is developed around the fundamental grades of the scale, culminating in the finale. One detail of the performing technique, called *a la ncapu* is particularly interesting: the distiches, sung by the various solo voices, follow each other exceedingly rapidly and at the maximum possible volume, each accompanied by the choral reply [...]. Another recurrent variant is the so-called *aggrissu*, a whole hearted competition between the solo singers to steal the attack, forcing vocal emission to an extreme and on as high a register as possible.

The performance is usually preceded by an invocation of the Sacred Sacrament and some saints (St. Rosalia, St. Calogero, etc.), proposed by one of the singers to whom the chorus respond in a sung reply.

30. Recorded by I. Macchiarella-G. Moroni-V. Vacante: recording published by Moroni and Vacante (d.1991).

of the second line (b'') is repeated once, often with slight lexical modifications, followed by a repetition of the entire second line (b' + b'').

Musically, there is a symmetrical distribution of harmonic regions, moving from the dominant to the tonic and back again. This harmonic movement is underlined by the chorus during the intermediate and final cadences, on the second grade of the scale (1st. and 3rd. semiphrases) and on the first grade (2nd. and 4th. semiphrases). The rhythm sustaining the melody is fairly regular and constant³¹.

Ex. 8 • Bucchieri (Sr)

Song for the olive harvest³²

Male voice + male voice chorus

	<i>f.v.s.</i>	<i>f.m.s.</i>
(e) Spèttimi bedda si tu mi vuò aspittari	A	A
e pi du anni nun si può muriri	B (b' + b'')	B
nun si può muriri	b''	A'
e (o) pi du anni nun si può muriri.	B (b' + b'')	B
E pi du anni nun si può muriri		
mancu l'amuri si può abbannunari		
si può abbannunari		
mancu l'amuri si può abbannunari.		
(e) La schittulidda chianci nn'a raggiuni		
lu maritieddu vuoli comu lu pani		
e comu lu pani		
lu maritieddu vuoli comu lu pani.		
Sona l'Avimmaria e nun simu fuora		
(e) mPalermu s'anna a spiezza sta catina		
ie cu sta catina		
mPalermu s'anna a spiezza sta catina.		
(e) Lu sabatu si chiama allegracori		
(a) biati cu l'avi beddi li mughieri		
e cu li mughieri		
(a) biati cu l'avi beddi (e) li mughieri.		
(a) Cu ha mughieri beddi sempri canta		
(e) cu ha dinari assai sempri cunta		

31. For this reason, instead of the temporized system, we have adopted a *normal* transcription on the pentagram, using proportional values (see Appendix).

32. Recorded by Luigi Lombardo (10.9.87); Ethnophonic Archive of the Istituto di Scienze Antropologiche e Geografiche, Facoltà di Lettere, University of Palermo (Index: Racc. *Echos* 25 Bob. 3 br. 17); recording unedited.

*e poi sempri cunta
cu ha dinari assai (e) sempri cunta.*

*(ie) lu mischinu nun cantu e nun cuntu
(che o) m'a pigghiai brutta e senza nenti
semu senza nenti
mi la pigghiai brutta e senza nenti.*

Wait for me, my beauty, if you want to wait for me. / For two years only, you don't die. / For two years only you don't die. / And you don't have to abandon love. / The unmarried maiden cries, and she has a right to: / she wants a young husband as much as she wants her bread. / The Ave Maria is ringing and we're not out yet (of prison). / We'll go to Palermo to break this chain. / Saturday is called *delight of the heart*. / It's a lucky man who has a beautiful wife: / The man with a beautiful wife is always singing / The man with money is always important. / The man with money is always important. / I'm a poor man and I don't sing and I'm not important / I took an ugly wife with no money to her name.

The following example from Tortorici³³ (province of Messina) is also connected to a specific activity, the hazelnut harvest. It is known as a *nuciddara*. This is the beginning of the song³⁴.

Ex. 9 • Tortorici (Me)

An a la nuciddara song (fragment)

Male voice + mixed chorus

	<i>f.v.s.</i>	<i>f.m.s.</i>
<i>Lu sulì si nni va dumanì tuorna</i>	A	A
<i>(e) sì mi nni vaiu io (e) nun tornu cchiù.</i>	B	B

The sun is going but tomorrow it will be here again / but if I go away, I'll never come back again [...].

A more detailed comprehension of polyvocality in rural working contexts could be reached through research aimed at identifying analogies between these songs and the Holy Week repertoires. A first approach involving a few specific traditional manifestations confirms the potential interest of a systematic examination of this type³⁵.

33. A collection of texts of traditional songs from Tortorici, together with some musical transcriptions, has been published by Franchina (1982).

34. Recorded by Girolamo Garofalo (3.3.92"); Ethnophonic Archive of the *Centro per le Iniziative Musicali in Sicilia* (CIMS): (Index: *Nuove acquisizioni in via di collocazione*); recording unedited.

35. In the case of Delia (Caltanissetta), for example, we have already observed significant similarities between the style of the songs performed while cracking the kernels of almonds and that of the laments sung during Holy Week processions (see the piece included in the discographic anthology published by Girolamo Garofalo and Elsa Guggino: *cd.1993*).

A la campagnola

Arsira cci passaiu r'on ghiar dinu

Ex. 1

Transcription by Girolamo Garofalo

Niscemi (CL)

Male voice and marranzanu

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Ar-ci-ri-cri-gio-ri-er-sanghio-ti- - - - - su (4)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

e lo-ma-ni- - - - - su (4)

Transposition

Diagram showing a transposition of a musical phrase from one key to another, represented by two staves with a double bar line and a sharp sign indicating the change in pitch.

Sirbi

Sugnu vinutu ri luntana via

Ex. 2

Transcription by Girolamo Garofalo

Resuttano (CL)

Two alternating male voices and marranzanu

♩ - 220

A ru- gnu vi- no- tu ri lun- ta- na vi- a

ca- su- gnu- cu di lu me co- no- no

(a) A mmen- zu di du mun- ta- gni n'er- cu e un mon- - ti

vu- si Ru- si- - na la- ve- ri- - zza un fon- - ti

Transposition

Diagram showing a transposition of a musical phrase from one key to another, represented by two staves with a double bar line and a sharp sign indicating the change in pitch.

A la santaluciota

Brumata mi sicini

Ex. 3

Transcription by Girolamo Garofalo

S. Lucia del Mela (Me)

Female voice + organetto and bones

TRADITIONAL RURAL SONGS IN SICILY

♩ = 16

Brumata mi sicini

S. Lucia del Mela

Vo-la-ri- spo- sta vo-la-ri- spo- sta

De-ri nun-ti la- sop-pi vo-la-ri- spo- sta

Stornello

Quannu la serra ti vitti cuddari

Ex. 4

Transcription by Girolamo Garofalo

Sutera (CL)
Male voice

♩ = 200

Quannu la serra ti vitti cuddari

chiu- tu di l'ar- me mi- a quan- tu ha bi- ti- ni

chiu- tu di l'ar- me mi- a quan- tu ha bi- ti- ni

Transposition

Stornello

Giovini chi t'amai

Ex. 5

Transcription by Gaetano Pennino

Santa Lucia del Mela (Me)
female voice + fisarmonica

TRADITIONAL RURAL SONGS IN SICILY

$\text{♩} = 132$

Giu- vi- ni- chi t'a- ma- i ₃ non mi lu- ne- d- gu-
lo- no- stro- a- mu- ri fu co- sa di po-
Lo- no- stro- a- mu- ri fu co- sa di po- cu-
Li- ba- ci che m'ai da- to non te li ne-
Li- ba- ci che m'ai da- to non ti li ne- gu-
La- ri- ci- vu- ta fam- mi ca- ti li pe- gu-
La- ri- ci- vu- ta fam- mi ca- ti li pe- gu-
Li- ba- ci che m'ai da- to non te li ne- gu-

A la capuana

Sugnu arrivatu a portu du Missina

Ex. 6

Transcription by Ignazio Macchiarella

Bafia (Me)

Female voice + female voice chorus

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system covers measures 0 to 16, and the second system covers measures 16 to 31. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is written in a single staff with a bass clef. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

E e sugna riva ta po - or tode mi ssi - - la

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

Canto de paglia

Vitti la bedda accianata a la parma

Ex. 7

Transcription by Ignazio Macchiarella

Calamònci (Ag)

Male voice + Male voice chorus

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Avitti labe dda echianata la pa - rma

This block contains the first system of musical notation, measures 0 through 12. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written on a five-line staff. Below the staff, the lyrics 'Avitti labe dda echianata la pa - rma' are aligned with the notes. Measure 0 starts with a whole note, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes in measures 1-4, and then rests in measures 5-12.

12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Ecchi manu zziro parmieu gli a

This block contains the second system of musical notation, measures 12 through 20. It continues the melody from the first system. The lyrics 'Ecchi manu zziro parmieu gli a' are written below the staff. Measure 12 is a whole note, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes in measures 13-16, and then rests in measures 17-20.

20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

This block contains the third system of musical notation, measures 20 through 27. It shows the continuation of the melody. The lyrics for these measures are not visible in the image. Measure 20 is a whole note, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes in measures 21-24, and then rests in measures 25-27.

Canto per la raccolta delle olive

Spemmi bedda ti tu mi vuoi aspirari

Ex. B

Transcription by Girolamo Gerofalo

Boia (Ma)

Male voice + Male voice chorus

$\text{♩} = 176$

The musical score consists of four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 176$. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

System 1:
 E spe- ti- mi bed- da ti tu mi vuoi a- spi- ra- ti
 e

System 2:
 e pi- da- so- ni- su- ti- pu- mo- ti- e
 non si pu- mo- ti- ti

System 3:
 non si pu- mo- ti- ti
 e

System 4:
 e pi- da- so- ni- su- ti- pu- mo- ti- e
 pi- da- so- ni- su- ti- pu- mo- ti- e

Transposition

A short musical phrase in a single staff, likely indicating a transposition or a specific melodic fragment.

A musical staff with a large 'X' drawn over it, indicating that the music is not to be played or is a placeholder.

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Discography

d. and cd. are the abbreviations used for 33 RPM LP's and compact disc respectively.

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- CHAIRETAKIS LOMAX, Anna (d.1979): *In mezz'una strada trovai una pianta di rosa - Italian Folk Music Collected in New York and New Jersey*, Folkways Records FES 34041, with enclosed booklet.
- (d.1986): *La baronessa di Carini - Sicilian Traditional Songs and Music [collected in the Niagara Frontier region]*, Global Village Music GVM #676/677, 2 vols., with enclosed booklet.
- FUGAZZOTTO, Giuliana (d.1989): (edited by), *La Visilla e la tradizione musicale a Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto*, Albatros VPA 8495, with enclosed booklet.
- GAROFALO, Girolamo (d.1989): *Canti tradizionali di Niscemi (Caltanissetta)*, Albatros VPA 8502, with enclosed booklet; collaboration by A. Marsiano.
- (d.1990): (edited by), *Il Natale in Sicilia*, Albatros ALB 23 (2 dischi), with enclosed booklet and Presentation by E. Guggino.
- (cd.1992): (edited by), *La tradizione orale: i canti religiosi, di lavoro e d'amore, in Sutura. La tradizione musicale di un paese della Sicilia*, SUDNORD SNCD 0035, with enclosed booklet.
- GAROFALO, Girolamo - GUGGINO, Elsa (cd.1993): (edited by), *Sicily. Music for the Holy Week*, AUVIDIS-UNESCO, D 8210, with enclosed booklet.
- GUGGINO, Elsa (d.1970): (edited by), *Canti popolari siciliani*, Angelicum BIM 24, with enclosed booklet; reed. 1980, *Sicilia*, vol. II, Albatros VPA 8469.
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- GUGGINO, Elsa - PENNINO, Gaetano (d.1987): (edited by), *Tindara Amalfi e Annunziata D'Onofrio. Canti d'amore e di sdegno, romanze e stornelli della provincia di Messina*, Albatros VPA 8489, with enclosed booklet.
- HENNING, Walther (d.1956): (edited by), *Folk Music from Italy*, Ethnic Folkways Library FE 4520, 2 vols., with enclosed insert.
- MCNEISH, James (d.1965): (edited by), *Sicily in Music and Song*, Argo DA 30, with cover notes.
- MORONI, Giovanni - VACANTE, Vincenzo (d.1991): (edited by), *La tradizione musicale a Calamònci (Agrigento)*, collaboration by I. Macchiarella, Albatros VPA 8506, with enclosed booklet.
- NATALETTI, Giorgio (d.1968): *Canti delle tradizioni marinare - documenti musicali dell'archivio del Centro nazionale studi di musica popolare*, 2 LP's enclosed with the volume published under the same title by AA.VV., Ed. industria Editoriale, Roma, with illustrative notes in Appendix.

- NICOSIA, Salvatore (*d.*1980): (edited by), *Miccichè. Memorie e canti dei contadini del «Vallone»*, Paladino IZ 5025, with cover insert.
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- SARICA, Mario (*d.*1990): (edited by), *Canti della Settimana Santa della provincia di Messina*, Albatros VPA 8508, with enclosed booklet (analyses and musical trascriptions by G. Fugazzotto).
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