

**The Preservation of an Ancient Tradition
in the Arbëresh Ecclesiastical and Secular Musical Practice
and Father Lorenzo Tardo**

Abstract: Arbëresh, or Italo-Albanians, are the Albanian-speaking population in parts of southern Italy, the descendants of the 15th century refugees from the Balkans. Maintaining their native culture and language, they now populate about 50 villages in Southern Italy. The oral tradition of the Arbëresh liturgical chants it can be said that it is based on the classical Byzantine, medieval style of chant, without “heterogeneous influxes”, as Father Lorenzo Tardo of the Abbey of Grottaferrata puts it, or other Ottoman expressive devices and musical effects such as “lamenting trills, guttural pulsations, nasal paraphoniae and nostalgic dirges” (Tardo 1938, 100). The Arbëresh possess a considerable patrimony of this repertoire, which even today is still transmitted orally. At the present time the liturgy is sung in Albanian and Italian as well as the traditional Greek. In order to make the understanding of the text of the liturgy easier, in 1968 it was decreed that the use of the Albanian language should be substituted (although not totally) for the Greek language.

Keywords: Classical Byzantine Music, Arbëresh, Father Lorenzo Tardo, Abbey of Grottaferrata, Ison.

The Arbëresh Byzantine Musical Liturgy

Arbëresh, or Italo-Albanians, are the Albanian-speaking population in parts of southern Italy, the descendants of the 15th century refugees from the Balkans. Maintaining their native culture and language, they now populate about 50 villages in Southern Italy. The oral tradition of the Arbëresh liturgical chants it can be said that it is based on the classical Byzantine, medieval style of chant, without “heterogeneous influxes”, as Father Lorenzo Tardo of the Abbey of Grottaferrata puts it, or other Ottoman expressive devices and musical effects such as “lamenting trills, guttural pulsations, nasal paraphoniae and nostalgic dirges” (Tardo 1938, 100). The Arbëresh possess a considerable patrimony of this repertoire, which even today is still transmitted orally. At the present time the liturgy is sung in Albanian and Italian as well as the traditional Greek. In order

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The Byzantine chant of the Arbëresh of Sicily is still perceived as not archaic or exotic, but as a living occurrence and developed with the consent of the local people, Sicilians, who have shown tolerance and sympathy for diversities. Tardo's *L'Antica melurgia bizantina* is an important reference for Classical Byzantine music (from the 9th to the 15th century) and many recordings of these chants use Tardo's theoretical investigation, which is meticulously examined in his book. He also referred to the Neo-Byzantine theory (from roughly the 15th century to the present day) concentrating predominantly on the "Chrysanthine" reform.¹ Tardo based his musical grammar of Byzantine chants on the "ancient and modern" reading, classical form and Chrysanthus reform; the latter codification showed strong Ottoman influence. Tardo appears to disapprove some of Chrysanthus' proposals presented in his *Theory*, among others, the note signs such as *endófonon* (endophonon), which he describes as performance styles of "an inner or nasal voice", or *rinofonia*² "an obvious anti-aesthetical expression". According to Tardo, these devices "do not exist either in any of the ancient codices or in the small but numerous theory texts of Byzantine music manuscripts" (Tardo 1938, 100).

The new Ottoman expressive qualities incorporated in the Byzantine chant, such as the small inflections and fluctuations in the intonation, Tardo did not perceive them as an enrichment of the flexibility of the voice or a conscious means of expression. It should be stressed that for strong ideological motifs, Chrysanthus' approach attempted to provide a link between the genera of the ancient Greek music and Neo-Byzantine music; however, correspondences to Ottoman *makams* were also assigned in his *Theory*. Leaving aside distinctions between their theoretical organisations, the resemblance of modal systems and audible features of Byzantine and Ottoman modes is striking. This is because of the long co-existence in the same geographical area of Byzantine music and Ottoman court (classical) music.

Tardo makes clear that the Orthodox Albania of the 1930s certainly adopted the system and the chant of its neighbouring country, Greece, based on written or printed music of the post-Byzantine period. He points out that the Serbian, Romanian and other peoples of the Balkans, as well as the Albanian people, have long since adopted the liturgical music of the present-day Oriental Greece altering it with the "polyphonic superstructures of anachronistic type" (Tardo 1938, XV).

An Apolytikion (Greek: Ἀπολυτίκιον) or Dismissal Hymn, sung by the Byzantine Choir "Saint John Koukouzel" of the Church of Albania and

recorded in 2005, it clearly shows a Greek approach where, as opposed to the Arbëresh approach, the excessive articulation of words and rhythmic pulsating syllables take special priority (“While the stone was sealed by the Jews . . .”, First Tone).

However, Tardo is more interested in the Byzantine orally transmitted chants, as he states:

All of these Byzantine songs, used before in Albania, in Morea, in the Near East, and then transmitted and jealously preserved (as perhaps being something sacred and rather exaggerated) in the new places of Sicily, represent a monument of an incomparable value that, for their unaltered tradition, give a great prominence to the Byzantine *melurgical* art. The liturgical melodies, in their general complexity, belong to the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 14th. The Albanians, loathing their Muslim slavery, left their homeland soil, not taking with them the ultimate musical pattern of Constantinople, or the scholarly and wise art of the refined *protopsalti*, but rather a provincial, mountainous and archaic tradition (Tardo 1938, 111).

In the 1930s Tardo made an appeal to the Byzantine world by stating that the classical Byzantine tradition should not be considered as being entirely lost, as certain songs still survive among the Greco-Albanian community of Sicily.

The Vocal Ison “Question”

“In the Oriental Church”, Tardo states, “the ison is traditionally conserved and it is of a very ancient origin”. He makes an assumption on how the ison was perceived and sung since the time of the great Fathers of Eastern Church, St Basil (4th century), St John Chrysostom (4th–5th centuries) and St Sophronius (6th century). The influence of the Byzantine Empire on Italy in the early middle ages was evident and the Roman Church referred to Byzantine chants for some of their theoretical and performance aspects. With regard to the ison practice, there are some contemporary theories which suggest that the ison, as Tardo also believes, was used in medieval Italy. “On the practice of this kind of ison, that is the *sotto voce* chord, memories are preserved also in Rome. When the Greek colony was flourishing, the Greek chants alternated with the Latin ones, not only in the liturgical but also extra-liturgical functions” (Tardo 1938, 392). Based on the verses of the Greek chants, Tardo came to conclusion that the melodies of the chants were Greek, but the Latins added to them single chords

and set the accompaniment in a Byzantine form expressed by the word *sussurros* (murmur).

It is on this basis that “the Gregorian chant, the far filiation of the Byzantine chant, has started to be accompanied by the organ” (Tardo 1938, 392). He also gives an explanation of the use of a “simple” ison based on the tonic, and a “double” ison, as he named the movements according to variations of the Tone (Echos) from the tonic to the dominant; these movements he is inclined to perceive as harmonic, or a certain form of polyphony. “There are parts”, he explains, “where the ison should not be heard, in some other parts where the ison should be slightly heard, and there are points where the ison should really sustain the fundamental tone of the whole singing part (Tardo 1938, 393). “The ison”, writes Tardo “corresponds to an accompanying note similar to the organ pedal or the so-called *falso bordone*” (Tardo 1938, 390). In his *Theory* he uses the term “ison” also to represent a written sign or a distinct hand sign, *chironomy*,³ which identifies the repetition of a tone and expresses a special value of the rhythm. Tardo makes a special point by stressing that apart from certain Byzantine chants, such as the *papadike* and *melismatic*, not all of them are accompanied by the ison: the psalms, the *prokimen* and other small psalmodic forms, they do not employ the ison. In his *L'Antica* Tardo examines the ison feature but not, however, as a component of the Arbëresh chant. He clearly exposes his viewpoint on the use of ison sign and ison performance form (ὑποφάλλω or ὑπηχεω, accompanying) during the Classical period of Byzantine music, but he does not proceed to show why ison singing was not practiced in the Arbëresh liturgical chant, although a considerable number of these chants belongs to the Byzantine medieval period.

Tardo's theoretical research is based on the transcription of the codices found mainly in the Italian land, in Badia di Grottaferrata, the Vatican Library, *Biblioteca Ambrosiana* (in Milan), as well as in some other great monasteries and libraries of the West and East. In my view, the practice of Byzantine chant which the Albanians and Greeks brought from the Balkans into the Italian soil did not make use of the ison: my belief is that any kind of ison employed in the Arbëresh chant would have been inherited from refugees arriving from the Balkans and not from that Byzantine legacy which existed in south Italy since the early centuries of the Christian era or after the 8th century, when the region was placed under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. I believe that no ison was brought onto Italian soil from Balkans church singing because the ison had only started to be used in the South West Balkans when the Byzantine practitioners left the peninsula after the Ottoman conquest. If during the medieval times the ison was intended to represent a graphic sign which “simply repeated the preceding note” (Tardo 1938, 267), from the 15th century onwards the

practice of ison became an important style of singing of Byzantine chant; its role as a sustained base of the mode and the sole accompaniment over which the melody evolved, gave the chant its modal soul.

Tardo had strong reservations about the way the Byzantine melodies developed in Oriental Greece during the Ottoman period. The tendency to enhance the chants with polyphonic and harmonic textures or to re-dress them with details of a modern harmonization, this, according to him, disfigured and distorted the aesthetic sense of the Byzantine melody and destroyed the *oktoechos* tonality. To emphasize this idea he quotes a paragraph from the *Rassegna Gregoriana, No 1-2 1909*: “The application of the polyphonic style in Byzantine chants in the Balkans and among the Slavs has produced the destruction of the ancient ecclesiastical ἤχοι and the traditional melodies; a great loss for the science, for the arts and for the liturgical tradition” (Tardo 1938, 394). Although he was against some patterns of adaptation towards a Middle-Eastern approach that occurred in Greece and the Balkans, but also believing that the ison had an ancient origin as he described in his *Theory*, he “allows” an exception of its use in the Neo-Byzantine chants and accepts the idea expressed in the *Μουσικὸς κόσμος* (Athens, October 1929–February 1930) that the “admirers of the traditional melodies love leaving them in their original form, without any superstructure, except, it is understood, the artistic use of the ison” (Tardo 1938, 394).

It should be stressed that elements of microtones, melismatic ornamental patterns, improvised melodic formulae, and above all the ison, they dwelt in the corpus of the early and mid-medieval Byzantine chant but were of a basic, rudimentary nature. During the Ottoman times, however, these rudiments developed significantly by absorbing resonant drones and heavily ornamental Middle-Eastern stylistic features. Discussing the microtones (quarter-tones and neutral tones) of the Byzantine chants, Tardo recognises the use of “intervals smaller than semitones, which also exist in nature” (Tardo 1938, 354). These divisions of intervals (microtones), according to him, were used in Italy up to the 16th century, but are also to be found in the traditional and popular songs, as well as the Byzantine chants of the Greco-Albanian colonies of south Italy. He also discerns that such fluctuations in the intonation occur in the contemporary Greek chanting practice.

Performance

Father Lorenzo Tardo of the Abbey of Grottaferrata, among others, put a great deal of effort into the practical revival and performance of the ancient Byzantine chants. If other scholars of his time were interested in the

theoretical aspect of this field, Tardo's inclination was both in theoretical and practical matters. His reconstruction of the liturgical chants could not be made just based on, as he described, "academic" approaches or "silent transcriptions" and "omitting the study of the living tradition" (Tardo 1938, 110). He was able to read the manuscripts of melodies composed for liturgical use and transcribe them from the Middle-Byzantine into Neo-Byzantine and Western notation. He was also able to sing the hymns from the Byzantine classical manuscripts as he was familiar with the traditional chant of the Sicilian-Arbëresh communities of the 14th and 15th centuries. Chorus conductors or Protopsaltis often enriched their repertoire by including newly composed chants and using the Oktoechos according to the necessities of the church. Tardo was one of them.

Based on the medieval theoretical texts and notated manuscripts, Tardo conceived the performance of the ison not as it developed in reality in the Balkans after 1453, i.e. as the lowest sound and foundation of the mode, but in an organ-pedal or *falsobordone* style, that is the soloist melody with a triadic form of choral accompaniment. Listening to his own performances of Byzantine chants with the *Coro della Schola Melurgica di Grottaferrata* where he acted as conductor, his perception of the "accompaniment" used in some of liturgical pieces becomes evident; it is of a *falsobordone* structure of an accord type in root position; the top note of the chord is often placed an octave higher than the lowest note of the melody and it is in a triad position. The *falsobordone* type of the accompaniment, which is generally very light and serves as a gently woven background to a solo voice, changes the harmonic function according to the modulation of the melody. Here is an example where the *falsobordone* (drone/ison) is conceived as a spread harmony of a consonant chord (*Asate Kyrie*, First Tone, in *L'Antica Melurgia Bizantina*).⁴ In another example of the Grottaferrata version of Byzantine chants, one can hear in the chanter's melodic line two augmented second intervals, which, in another study, I have classified as Non-Diatonic (Chromatic) Mode C, Second Type (Koço 157, 2004). Viewed from a South Western Balkan Mode perspective, the cantor's melodic range is comprised of two main structures; a non-diatonic pentachord above the tonic and a non-diatonic tetrachord below the tonic. Despite the fact that chants of non-diatonic (chromatic) intervals of Neo-Byzantine inclination with a drone accompaniment were hardly practiced in the Italian soil, Tardo's attempt to match the Balkan's new developments in the field of intonation or Chrysanthus' assigned church modes (echoi) resulted in some ingenious outcomes ("Nyn dynamis", Cherubic Hymn, Fourth Tone, in *L'Antica Melurgia Bizantina*). By employing this kind of choral accompaniment or, as he called it, *organum vocale*, for his transcribed ancient Byzantine chants, Tardo researched and experimented with what he considered to be

the ison practice during the medieval times, based on his interpretation of palaeographic Byzantine notation.

The fact that in the Balkans from the 15th century onwards the ison took a totally different course, i.e. a participatory role in the form of a sustained single tone within an originally monodic, non-harmonized, chant, shows the importance of its function in the Neo-Byzantine liturgical tradition. It should be stressed that in the Epirus zone of the Balkans (in its geographic context), the Byzantine ison coexisted with the oral traditions of the iso(n)-based multipart unaccompanied singing (IMUS) of the same region. Neo-Byzantine ecclesiastical ison has more in common with the secular oral tradition of IMUS of South West Balkans than with the *falsobordone* type of ison used at the Badia di Grottaferrata. Although several Arbëresh clerics studied and worked at *Grottaferrata* and *Collegio Romano* in Rome during the end of 19th century up to present days, none of them tried to introduce the ison practice to their everyday musical liturgy in the Arbëresh churches of Sicily and Calabria. Just as they were loyal toward preservation of the ancient Byzantine rite in their church, sung in traditional Greek and recently in Albanian, so they were reluctant to introduce “new” features to their chants, such as the case with the ison, borrowed either from the post-Byzantine new tradition of the Balkans or the Byzantine medieval ancient tradition of Italy. However, in recent times efforts have been made to adopt an ison to the traditional Arbëresh chants, but, in my view, it sounds out of context.

In Piana degli Albanesi I had the privilege to record the singing of the Eight Tones by Papa Jani Pecoraro, Parish Priest of the Cathedral of St Demetrio. He sung in both languages, Greek and Albanian. I am not certain how many of these Tones would sound similar to the Classical Byzantine turns of melody. However, compared to the present day “Chrysanthine” tradition where modes of soft and hard chromatics, excessive ornamentations, “through the nose” solos and the practice of the ison, Papa Jani’s versions of a Megalinario and oktoechos, sound somewhat different. They have almost no Middle Eastern expressive devices, or shades of the Old Roman or Gregorian chant, although, at a certain period in history, the Old Roman chant is supposed to have borrowed the intonation, structure and system from the Byzantine Classical chant (*Epi si cheri* {In You Rejoices}, from *Theotokos to ònoma afti* – Mother of God is His Name).⁵ When discussing the Oktoechos system of the Sicilian-Albanians, Di Salvo noted that “a characteristic of these chants was the absolute absence of the chromatic scale of Plagal Second Mode and Second Mode used in the Greek Church” (Di Salvo 1952, 129). Papa Jani’s Tones have adopted, in my evaluation, a “light touch” approach towards the Neo-Byzantine Oktoechos.

Apart from the monastic tradition of Grottaferrata in the very recent

times the performance of the Arbëresh chant has been reevaluated, especially in the Bishopric of Lungro. The Neo-Byzantine musical system characterized, among other things, by *melismatic* melodies in a free rhythm and enriched by expressive elements, is the result of a research of Giovan Battista Rennis and is achieved through an impressive performance/recording of the Italian-Albanian Byzantine Choir of Lungro. Based on the supposedly Classical Byzantine legacy, Rennis uses long holding notes of the bass line and sometimes as a top line in combination with the solo parts to create a solemnity effect and a captivating resonance of a choral harmonized ison, a subtle blend of Byzantine tradition and Western chant.

After the Byzantine period, between the 15th and 19th centuries, i.e. during “Neo-Byzantine” period and “Neo-Greek” or “Chrysanthine” reform, not only the ison, but other performance characteristics such as the timbral nuances, size of intervals and articulation of the melody developed with different inclinations: in Greece and the rest of Middle East, the novelty features comprised fluctuation in the intonation (expansion and contraction of intervals, the augmented seconds in particular), semi-nasal tone qualities and highly wrought melodic embellishments.⁶ In Italy, on the other hand, in Grattoferrata in particular, during the second millennium the reverse of the meaning of the phrase “Rome conquered Greece but Greece conquered Rome” happened; it was the Byzantine chant that being separated from the Eastern main trunk and acclimatized to the new Western milieu absorbed some features of Old Roman and Gregorian chant of the 11th to early 13th century versions. Assumptions on the supposedly use of ison in the Old Roman chant are nowadays becoming more frequent (Offertoire, Old Roman Chant, Byzantine period).⁷

Byzantine Chant and the Ison

Different views over the necessity of adaptation of a polyphonic language to Byzantine chant or leaving it intact and uncorrupted by Western or Eastern influences have always been a question of principle, of a doctrine of the Byzantine liturgy. The addition of a second accompanied voice, for example, to the Byzantine traditional monophonic tune functioning as a variable ison, as well as other polyphonic effects such as the ascending major thirds in a heterophonic style, have attempted to change the perception that the Byzantine chanting is supposed to be strictly monophonic. Has this diaphony in thirds been borrowed from the idiomatic vocabulary of the folk music, or has it been borrowed from Western or Slavic practice? Joining the singing to the melody in parallel thirds also is a feature of Greek folk music. Commenting on the use of thirds in the Neo-Byzantine chants,

as well as a kind of mania for harmonization of the Oktoechos recurring in Greece, Tardo paraphrases the journal Φόρμιγξ (February 1911) that “there are harmonized even the απολυτίκια of the οκτώηχος, with a continuation of thirds, which give to melodies, beautiful in themselves, a banal feeling” (Tardo 1938, 394). However, the ison function in the chants is not perceived by the practitioners as a matter of harmonizing, for example, the “parallel moving thirds”; its role remains participation. In some less frequent occurrences this participation, in a more systematized form, takes place as a double ison in which case the upper or second ison is a pentachord higher and is meant to be softer than the basic one.

The Byzantine chant was originally monophonic, but with the addition of the ison it became, in some way, more “dependent” on the harmony. Nowadays, performance reconstructions of ancient Byzantine tunes are quite often done by incorporating an ison in them with the intention of creating a pleasant moulding, similar to a presupposed earlier stylistic form of the ison practice, or making them sound more remote but at the same time more fashionable. This is obviously done with good intentions to show the best of the Byzantine chant legacy and also to relate it to classical Byzantine chant, or even to the supposedly ancient Greek classical music. A “variable ison” or a harmonized bass note to correspond the tune above it, and at other times a fully harmonized Byzantine chant (with the accompaniment of a second voice or a third one in vertical harmonization) as well as harmonising the intervals of the Byzantine echos within a Western tempered system have been attempted, but these experiments has been met with reservations among some Byzantine scholars. For academic purposes of a given study, it is, of course, interesting and tempting to research various stylistic approaches and shades of an ison, sometimes mutating it into an Occidental, organum-like refined bass, but any attempt to synthetically associate it with an ancient origin would have need of stronger evidence and more importantly would have to fit the consciousness and awareness of the people who practiced it at the time.

The Arbëresh Traditional Multipart Music

In Calabria, where the majority of the Arbëresh were settled, local people, the Calabrians, practised their own multipart singing. However, the newcomers brought from Albania and Morea a different kind of musical expression and structure. The blending of the Balkan style with the local Calabrian style of multipart singing into a new repertory, a process which lasted hundred of years, created an Arbëresh/Calabrian physiognomy by evoking feelings of remoteness and perceiving images of an individual

and popular consciousness and imagination. Whatever the origin of the Arbëresh song, whether Albanian, Calabrian or from Basilicata, the present product is a fascinating result; a sensation associated with the vocal production, the Arbëresh language and elements of an accompaniment in the character of a drone; the latter, although a partial one, is a significant element. The folk traditional drone/iso which came to Calabria from the South West Balkans as a component of the song was embryonic and remained as such, of course, allowing room for a natural process of transformation. Conversely, during Ottoman times in the South West Balkans, the drone grew to become an important element of the multipart singing and employed a variety of specific styles of singing. The following example is a three-part *ajre* (a type of song with a pedal accompaniment) from Lungro in Calabria, characterised by its own structure and its own character. It is the first soloist that in a descending scale pattern opens the song followed by a second soloist that, together with rest of the drone group in unison, establish the initial modal basis of the beginning of the song. At the first hearing, the first soloist, in the nature of its declamatory style, gives the impression of a resemblance with the Albanian types of IMUS. However, the drone of this song, often doubled at the octave, makes a stepwise downward movement reaching at the cadence the interval of a perfect fourth. This form of drone movement differs fundamentally from the Balkan versions of IMUS where the drone remains unchangeable (*Ti ndë një finestër e u nën një ballkun* (You under the Window and I under the Balcony)).⁸

Coexistence of Ison-based Multipart Unaccompanied Singing and Byzantine Chant

Judging by their Byzantine (almost entirely oral) musical legacy of a specific repertoire and “classical” Oktoechos organisation, it could be said that the Byzantine chants of Southern Albania and northern Greece belonged to the “poor churches” tradition and did not strictly follow the Constantinople musical principles, but allowed adaptations, in fact corruptions, of mainstream scholarly teachings. The two approaches of iso(n)—secular and ecclesiastical—introduced into the South West Balkans through the eastern routes in mid-medieval times, were only in the process of their formation and did not reach Italian shores as a consolidated element of Byzantine chant or traditional secular multipart singing. That is why only segments of holding notes of a drone type could be found in Arbëresh multipart traditional singing, whereas evidence of the use of the ison in Byzantine chant in the early stage of Albanian emigration is difficult

to verify. However, the introduction of the ison for use in Byzantine chant, or rather Neo-Byzantine chant, brought by the clerics from the Orient, can be considered to belong to the late-medieval times.

In a wider spectrum, melodic outlines and patterns of folk origin, not solely in the South West Balkans but across the Byzantine Empire, also suggest an interaction between the folk-song repertoires and musical liturgical tradition. The iso(n) of both traditions, liturgical and secular, in their earlier period, shaped features of the Medieval Byzantine culture, and in the course of time incorporated in them new Middle Eastern traits. Although the iso(n) of Byzantine chant functioned as a totally separate and different style from the traditional folk singing, it served the same purpose: to supply a tonal reference point for the melodies. This tonal reference, however, is not the only element of correspondence between the IMUS and liturgical Byzantine traditions; the interjected syllables of the text are used in both iso(n) practices. A combination of a syllabic iso sung to the text-words and the humming of the words of the verse line which accompanies the melodic-line, is a characteristic of Gjirokastër IMUS styles. In the Byzantine chant the ison holders sing together with the *psalti* (chanters) by saying, in certain places, the syllables of the text. The path from a rhythmic/syllabic ison to a hummed one and again resuming the syllabic ison, displays, from the point of view of technique rather than perception, a remarkable correspondence between the Gjirokastër IMUS and Byzantine chant. As far as the ison breathing as part of an entire musical phrase or closing verse line is concerned, that of the Byzantine chant has some fascinating parallels with the Tosk IMUS styles; in the latter the ison constantly holds the sound over the long phrases, while in the former the ison line carries on uninterruptedly, however, it changes to humming and resumes when the *psalt* (chanter) continues the melody.

Ramadan Sokoli remarks that “at the beginning of each *pleqërishte* (old men) singing, usually the leader of the group briefly marks the tone of the iso by oscillating his voice in a ‘gruppetto’ form around this tone, which terminates with a descending glissando” (Sokoli 1965, 129). Observing the intoning process among Prespa singers, Sugarman interprets it in a different way: “Before beginning the song proper, he or she intones the syllables *e-o*. This intonation serves in part as a signal that someone is about to sing and those others in the room should curtail their conversations and prepare to join in on the drone” (Sugarman 1997, 64). In discussing a record on Hymns of the Epitaphios and Easter, which included church services as well as folk songs from various Greek provinces and islands, Velimirović points out that “the second band contains a practice not observed in most churches, that of singing the intonation for the mode prior to the chanting. These intonations are found in mediaeval manuscripts but are never heard

now in 'normal' services. It is therefore of substantial interest to observe these intonations as they lead into the hymns" (Velimirović 1978, 384). Another supposition could be that this intonation is a replacement of an accompaniment formerly played by the lyre of the anterior of primitive Christian origin with a vocal passage sung before the psalm. Thus, the "tone of the iso" of multipart unaccompanied singing and the *apechema*⁹ of Byzantine music seem to play the same role. As the *apechema* or *echema* is regarded, in the following dialog Wellesz quotes Tardo's discussion on the intonation formulae: "How do you start, if you want to begin a Sticheron or another hymn of that kind? – "According to the Intonation". "What is the Echema?" – "The layout of the Mode". – "And how do you intone?" – "Anane Anes" – "What does that mean?" – "This is the approved and very useful beginning; when you hear it you will admire the singer who executes the Intonation" (Wellesz 251, 1949). Strunk observing the intonation process in an article dedicated entirely to the Intonations and Signatures of the Byzantine Modes stresses: "The formula of intonation, sung by a solo singer, the Canonarch or Protopsaltes, serves as a link connecting the verse with the chant that follows. . . . it serves as a preparation and as an announcement of the mode" (Strunk 1945, 353-354). Has the Byzantine intonation left any imprint on the intonation feature used in the IMUS? Any speculation that the borrowing could have been from the folk music to church music is hard to prove.

Returning to the Arbëresh singing, liturgical and non liturgical, a strong reason why it did not employ a clear iso(n) as in its country of origin is, I would like to reiterate, that this new component of multipart singing was only on the eve of its configuration as a sustained droning sound, whereas in the Balkans the iso(n) developed conspicuously and took on an important role. In Byzantine singing, initially as a foundation of the mode, the ison stayed on the same note, unchanged, but later it took the role of an intermittent pitch change and jumped down when the melody moved down. In contrast, in the IMUS of the south-west Balkans, the iso dwelt within the framework of a pentatonic and archaic origin of singing, but it developed largely towards various stylistic forms and structures.

As the ecclesiastical and secular interrelationship is regarded, Çabej suggests that Byzantine liturgical practice penetrated into folk-song tunes of the Arbëresh as well as the chants of South Albanian Orthodox Church:

Albania is also the land where Oriental-Islamic tunes are mingled with the Byzantine tunes found here, which became familiar to the people through the church. Differentiation between them becomes more difficult because Arabo-Islamic tunes were formerly mingled in the Orient with Byzantine tunes. ... More apparent are the influences

of medieval Byzantine tunes on liturgical and religious song and its dissemination from here to the secular song of the Albanians of Italy and also to the church song of the Orthodox Christians of south Albania (Çabej 1975, 128-9).

In a personal communication with Father Giordano, parish priest of Frascineto, he also believed that Byzantine music has influenced the Arbëresh traditional music.

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- 1 It should be pointed out that what Tardo named as “Neo-Byzantine” notation, the post-WWII musicology (Wellesz, Velimirović) termed “Middle Byzantine”.
 - 2 *Rinofonia* (rhinophonia) is an alteration of the voice characterized by nasalization of sounds.
 - 3 The *chironomy* is the transcription of a series of *gestures* of the hand and/or fingers, each gesture representing a musical value.
 - 4 CD accompanying the volume *L'Antica Melurgia Bizantina*, Coro della Schola Melurgica della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata diretto da Padre Lorenzo Tardo; registrazioni 1953–1956; Scelta e revisione dei brani: Padre Nicola Cuccia.
 - 5 CD “Theotokos to ònoma aftì” (Madre di Dio è il suo nome), Inni all Madre di Dio della tradizione bizantina di Piana degli Albanesi; Choro dei Papàs di Piana degli Albanesi: Papàs Giovanni Pecoraro, Papàs Marco Sirchia, Papàs Piergiorgio Scalia, Rosario Caruso, a cura di Girolamo Garofalo, Regione Siciliana, Assessorato Beni Culturali, Ambientali e P.I., in collaborazione con l’Eparchia di Piana degli Albanesi, 2003.
 - 6 CD Koukouzelis—*Protect, O Most Glorious*, Mathimata, Greek Byzantine Choir—Lycourgos Angelopoulos, 2017.
 - 7 CD Chants de L’Eglise de Rome—Periode Byzantine (Chants of the Roman Church—Byzantine Period; Marcel Peres (Conductor), Ensemble Organum (Orchestra), 1992.
 - 8 CD *Musica arbëreshe in Calabria*: le registrazioni di Diego Carpitella ed Ernesto De Martino, 1954; Antonello Ricci, Roberta Tucci, Roma, Squilibri, 2007.
 - 9 In Byzantine music the term *apechema* means a short musical phrase preceding the chant and serving as an introduction to the scale or family of scales the chant belongs to.

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