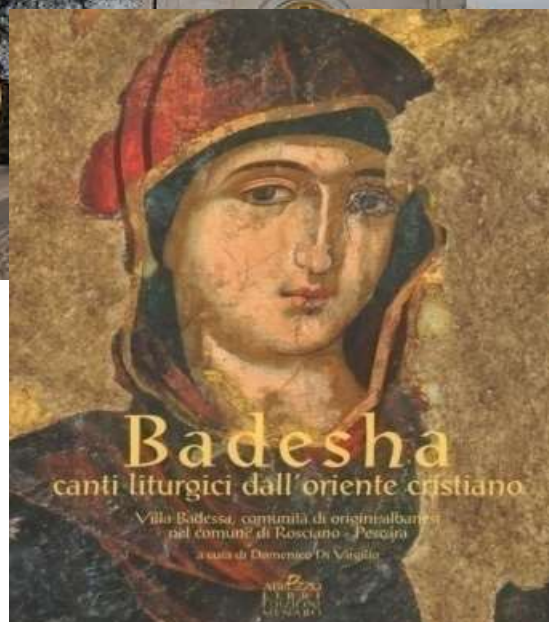


Villa Badessa di Rosciano (**Badhèsa**)

Associazione culturale Villa Badessa (www.villabadessa.it) Italy



Villa Badessa di Rosciano (Badhèsa)

THE HISTORY

The Albanian community of Villa Badessa was one of the most recent to emigrate to Italy. Other Albanian emigrants settled in Calabria, Sicily, Molise and Puglia in the XV century. This group fled from Turkish Ottoman domination and religious persecution in 1743. They came from Epirus, a region in the south of Albania, people from the villages of Piqèras, Ljukòva, Nivizza, and settled in Abruzzo in 1743.



The community “Arberesche” of Villa Badessa were granted hospitality in the Kingdom of Naples by Charles III of Bourbon. At first they stayed in the holding of “Bacucco”, then they settled in the area of Pianella. The King assigned them lands he had inherited from his mother Elizabeth Farnese. Lands in the area of Piano di Coccia and allotments leased to the Taddei Family, who lived in Pianella, where they were known by the nickname “Abbadessa”. From this comes the name “Villa Badessa”.



From notary acts of the time the exact number of Albanian Families who arrived in Pianella can be seen 23 families (18 families in 1743 and 5 families in 1748).

The surnames of the head of the families, the land allocated to them and the conditions and duties they owed to the Royal family are noted. As well as the free “allotment” of the 320 hectares of land the King furnished the families with the necessities to live, money and means to keep themselves.



He also allowed them to be free of the obligation to pay any income to the Royal House for 20 years. The confirmation of the arrival of the Arberesche community in Abruzzo can be seen in an old register of Baptisms in the Church, where the date of the first baptized is on 18th November 1743.

Despite being inserted in an area populated by “Latini”, as were called the inhabitants of the near-by towns, the Albanians of Villa Badessa managed to keep their Byzantine-Greek traditions and a good part of the Eastern way of thinking. Mixed marriages between Albanian and Latini only began in 1923, and with them the gradual decline of the language, traditions and many culinary dishes began. Unfortunately, such a small community, over a period of time couldn’t avoid being influenced by the life style of the surrounding population.

This is the history of the Arberesche community of Villa Badessa. Its survival in time is entrusted to the zeal and enterprises of the Cultural Association and the care and attention the managing local authorities wish to dedicate to the small ethnic minority in their area.



(On the left: A bust in memory of the Albanian hero Giorgio Kastriot Scanderbeg



A view of the old village. The Oriental Oasi-multi language signpost

THE CHURCH

In 1754 the little church dedicated to “Santa Maria Assunta” was built. It is the only one in the Abruzzo Region which follows the Greek-Byzantine rites, headed by the diocese of Lungro in Calabria. It is a small building with the typical architectural elements of the Greek-Balcanic religious style. The outside structure is simple and austere. It is plastered white, with a three-mullioned window on the façade and three small crosses in



the spaces between the side windows and a semicircular pronaos which connects the outside world to the inner, through which the Faithful pass to the holy environment.

It is in the inside that one is immediately struck with wonder at one of the most important treasures of the area. Closing the view of the end area, is the iconostasis, a wall and screen to separate the area for the people from that reserved for the priest “Papas”.

Seventy-five precious icons can be seen on the side walls. They were painted on wooden boards from the XV to XIX century. Many of which are historical-artistic works of international interest.

The amazing icons shine enriched with a background of pure gold. They are there to be seen, almost to demonstrate how Art, in this community, has not only an aesthetic and functional value, but is seeped with sacredness. Where the works of art are one of the elements that recall the bond between the Greek- Byzantine rites and the origins of the community.



THE RITE

The rite is the complex of ceremonies, orations and readings which make up the external cult of the Religion of the Mother Church. There are numerous rites but they can be divided into two main categories. The Western Rites of which the main one is the Roman Rite, and the Eastern/Oriental Rite of which the Byzantine Rite, commonly known as the Greek Rite (in the primitive Greek language), is the most diffused.



The difference of the rite does not create any division-separation in Christ's Church. It does not touch Dogma-Doctrine and instead is a demonstration of the unity of the Church with its variety of external cults.

The Byzantine-Greek rite is that form of external religious

act which originated in Byzantium Constantinople, the centre of the Byzantine Empire.

Even today, as in other Eastern Christian communities, traditions and rituals are passed down. The liturgical phrases, the gestures and the flow of the rite is as those used in the nearby Eastern countries where the Christian Faith originated. The participation to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit takes place through the liturgy, particularly the Eucharist, the mysterious communion with the glorified Body of Christ, the seed of immortality.

.....Liturgy, with the participation of all baptized in Jesus Christ, is the fundamental moment of confession and celebration of faith. Liturgy as a moment of unity of faith, of Humanity where, with the sacredness of the Church, all created things have their own meanings.

THE CHOIR

An essential part of the liturgy is the aesthetic aspect and the importance of beauty. In the East it is one of the most beloved words to express divine harmony and the example of human transfiguration. It includes iconography, both painted and melodic (chants and liturgical chorus).

Liturgy as a spiritual example of the tight bond between theology-liturgy-iconography. Liturgy as the source of life in the Spirit. Liturgy enriched by chants sung in original Greek by both men and women.



The main differences between Roman and Byzantine rites are:

- the external and internal structure of the Church, the Vestments, Sacred vessels, and some external forms of the cult.

- The two main liturgies used are those of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil.

- The administration and way to receive Holy Communion, consecrated bread and wine.
- The Calendar, Feast days and Fasting days.
- Some blessings and ecclesiastic duties.

In general there is a strong feeling of the sacred at a Byzantine ritual.

THE HOLY ICONS

The origin of the word “Icon” is from the Byzantine-Greek word for image “Eikon”.



Icons are described as being “written” rather than painted, because they are designed to communicate. They are sacred works of art that originated in the Byzantine and Slavic culture around the V century.

The Icons were painted on boards made of wood (lime, larch or pinewood), which after being smoothed down were suitable to be painted on.

The colours are obtained from natural sources, vegetable or mineral, or fragments of oxidized metal finely crushed, and added an organic binding agent (egg yolk or casein). After an early sketch the contours are etched with gold leaf as are the folds of the clothes and the halo.

Then the clothes, buildings and surrounding countryside are enriched with colour.

Great attention was paid to the countenance, on a clear background, darker colours used for cheekbones, forehead and nose whereas as red was used to outline lips and cheeks, brown was used to outline eyes, lashes, beards and moustaches. The icon is both a religious and theological art. It is part of the great flow of tradition, the interior life



of the Church, a continuation of the incarnation of God, intimately bound to God's gospel and the liturgy.

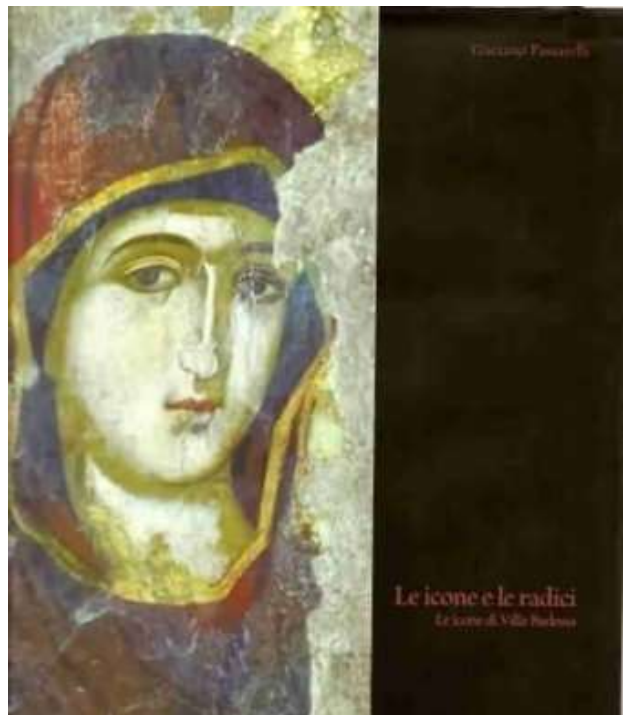


Even the simplest icon not only “describes” a scene or a character, but has a theological background. “Writing” an icon is an art that signifies passing a

moment of contemplation. Every stroke is dissolved in the rhythm of prayers and spiritual supplications that soften the hues of colour and the heart of the artist who sets about changing praise into colour.

The icon is the reflection of divine human nature without blending into the figure of Christ. This principle of union between divine and human dominates all fields of the Byzantine Church: its doctrine, sacraments, liturgy, art, and relationship with the world.

*Icona della Madre
di Dio Odigitria*



TRADITIONAL COSTUMES

The identity and distinctive character of the community is to be found, as is the dialect “arbereshe”, only in the older senior citizens and documents. This is due to isolation from other towns and the changing social and economic conditions which began in the ‘50s.



An important sign of a reborn interest in tradition is the interest in authentic traditional dress, the “arbereshe” (a long tunic edged with a red and yellow decoration, a coloured apron, a woolen jacket with silver buttons and a large red silk headscarf), pendant ear-rings of coral and cornelian and precious stones, shaped as a cross or Greek T.

Traditional arbereshe costume used during festivities in Villa Badessa)

LOCAL DISHES

TEPSI

To prepare the pastry:

500 grams of flour, 1 glass of white wine, 4 tablespoons of olive oil, salt.

Filling:

1.5 of spinach, 100 grams of uncooked rice, 1 finely chopped medium white onion, salt.

Roll out the pastry in a baking tray with a 5/7 cm rim, fill with the spinach, rice and onion. Salt.

Spread the mixture evenly and cover with pastry, leaving the central part free, so that evaporation takes place.

Cook in an oven for 60 minutes at 180° C.

PIPECCHIO

Ingredients:

1 litre of whole milk, 2 eggs, 250-300 grams of fresh cheese, 1 cinnamon stick, salt.

Beat the eggs in a bowl and add the milk and the crumbled cheese. Mix well and add the chopped cinnamon and salt.

Put the mixture into a baking dish and put into the oven at 150° C.

Checking from time to time you can see a film forming of a brown caramel colour. Using a perforated wooden large spoon, remove the film, then pour into a deep dish or small appropriate tins.

COLLIVI

Traditional recipe of spiced cooked corn.

Ingredients:

1 Kg. of corn, 200 grams of icing sugar, 200 grams of chopped almonds, 5 grams of cloves, 3.5 grams of cinnamon, 100 grams of flour, candied cherries, 10d of Sambuca.

Preparation:

Soak the corn for 24 hours. Boil the corn until it is cooked, strain and in a bowl add icing sugar and chopped almonds, cloves, cinnamon and flour (toasted until it is golden), and finally the Sambuca.... Mix. Decorate with the glazed cherries in the shape of a Greek Cross.

FESTIVITIES

-Easter Day: the Holy Sepulchre

-8th September: The Procession

-Entwined olive leaves

-Eggs painted red with vegetable extracts, symbols of Easter Rebirth

-12th December: the celebration of the Patron Saint of Villa Badessa, St. Spiridione

TRADITIONS

LA RUZZOLA ("*Cheese Rolling*"):
a game played since ancient times.

The origin of this sport is uncertain but it certainly dates back to Etruscan times. On a wall painting by Tarquinia "The tomb of the Olympiad", a competitor can be seen, and the position in which he is seen, indicates he is rolling a "disc". The object to be "thrown" was originally an extremely hard round matured Pecorino cheese. The shepherds enjoyed rolling it along the slopes and cattle tracks. "La Ruzzola" is a game in which tradition, culture and sport are wholesomely blended. To play you need: a very hard round Pecorino cheese which has been matured for 2/3years; a string measuring 1/1.50 meters. The string is tied to the wrist or finger of the competitor and the end of the string is tied around the cheese.

The “throw” takes place when the string is pulled in such a way as to make the “ruzzola” roll as far away as possible.

The competition takes place in the street. The players must try to make the cheese go as far as possible, using a certain number of “throws”. A rule dating back to 1500 states that the winner, as a prize is given his opponents cheeses.

In the past this game “la Ruzzola” took place on September 8Th, the feast of the Patron Saint. This tradition was revived thanks to the Cultural Association of Villa Badessa. In 1991 on 1st May they organized a competition in which many people took part, competitors and spectators. The success of “La Ruzzola” competition was also due to the youthful joyous spirit of the game. The competition is open to all, “professional” players and, above all, amateurs. The tradition of competition using real cheeses is kept alive.

THE CULTURAL ASSOCIATION “VILLA BADESSA”

SHOQUATA KULTURORE “BADHESA” was formed in 1991 by the promoters who wished to start the activities with the aim of increasing the value and appreciation of the hamlet of Villa Badessa “Oasi Orientale” a cluster of houses part of Rosciano (Pe). An Italo-Albanian community in Italy, the ONLY such community in Abruzzo.

Only a part of today’s inhabitants are descendents from the original 18 families. However, at a distance of over three centuries, they proudly maintain their faith following the Greek-Byzantine liturgy and rites.

The cultural association of Villa Badessa aim to rediscover their origins, local traditions both religious, linguistic and gastronomic.

Art. 2 of the Act reads:

- The rediscovery and appreciation of particular traditions coming from the original Albanian community of Villa Badessa.



- The promotion of all activities, cultural, artistic, ecological and sportive that can enhance the lives of the members.
- Collaboration with local authorities to enrich the Association's working environment.

Today there are more than 70 members of the Association. They have been working solidly for more than twenty years in a host of activities to bring to light the story of the area and the beauty to be found within. To be enjoyed by people living both near and far away.

HOW TO REACH VILLA BADESSA

From Pescara take the SS 602 for Villanova, Cepagatti towards Catignano.
From A 14 – A 24 exit at Villanova – toll booth – then continue towards Cepagatti – Catignano.



Contact: Associazione Culturale Villa Badessa
65020 Villa Badessa di Rosciano (Pe) Italy

www.villabadessa.it
e.mail: info@villabadessa.it
gieranalli@yahoo.it