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THE CHORALE SAINT MICHEL ARCHANGES IN CREMONA (LOMBARDY, ITALY) BETWEEN LOCALITY AND TRANSLOCALITY

ABSTRACT

All'interno di un più ampio progetto di ricerca sulla musica e l'immigrazione a Cremona e dintorni, dal 2015 sto studiando le musiche dei rituali dei migranti. Nel caleidoscopico panorama religioso costituito da decine di culti diversi, chiese e templi – da quelli dei Sikh, a quelli ortodossi o buddisti – una larga parte riguarda i cristiani d'Africa. La loro pratica religiosa è organizzata sulla fede e la nazionalità, cosicché molti hanno chiese e sacerdoti propri. Tuttavia i canti che essi cantano raccontano appartenenze etniche e locali multiple, una ricchezza di specificità musicali e di linguaggi che hanno origine nei vari capitali culturali dei partecipanti, che incrociano la nazionalità con il luogo di origine, l'etnia, la nazione di ricezione, l'essere Cristiani e l'essere africani. Nonostante ciò, o forse anche per questo, è in atto un tentativo della diocesi di creare un'unica comunità transnazionale di chiese cristiane francofone africane. In questo articolo concentrerò la mia attenzione sul ruolo che la musica ricopre in questi rituali. Come può allo stesso tempo unificare e esprimere specificità? Quali appartenenze rivela? La musica può raccontare molto più di quello che gli attori vogliono rappresentare con le parole.

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SUMMARY

As part of a larger fieldwork project on music and migration in Cremona (Lombardy, Italy) and its surroundings, I have been studying the musics of migrants' rituals since 2015. In the kaleidoscopic religious soundscape made up of more than 15 churches and temples – from Sikh, to Orthodox, to Buddhist – a larger part is made up of Christian Africans. Their religious practice is organised by faith and nationality, thus most of them have specific churches and priests. But the chants they sing tell a story of multiple ethnic and local belongings, a richness of musical specificities and languages that comes from the various cultural capitals of the participants who mix nationality with place of origin, ethnicity, nation of reception, Christianity and Africanness. Furthermore, an attempt by the Diocese to create a single transnational community of African Francophone Christian churches is taking place. In my article I concentrate my attention on the role music has in these rituals. Which belongings does it express? Music can tell more than what the actors intend to represent with words.

KEYWORDS: cultural capital, migration, musical translocal contexts, processes of belonging, religion, transnational social fields



If scholars once considered migration as a phenomenon that had to be studied in terms of community, ethnicity and nationality, they have now become more and more aware that it has to be interpreted in terms of cultural capital, concentrating on the behaviour of single individuals and the multiple interconnections they are involved in.¹ Strongly reducing the role of Nation in the everyday life of people, Glick Schiller and Mainhof² insist on a transnational approach to migration, based on plural identity and multi-sited belonging. It is nowadays taken for granted that belonging is not an expression of a single time, place, ethnicity or Nation. It is a continuous process of definition of self and group in which many factors are involved.

One of these factors is religion. For immigrants this often means a de-territorialised and re-territorialised religiosity, in dialectic between local and global, diaspora and settlement in the new territory. As Capone well describes it,

la transnationalisation religieuse confronte le chercheur au défi de comprendre comment se met en place cette dynamique qui conjugue cosmopolitisme et particularisme, fermeture communautaire et ouverture sur le monde, hybridité et pureté.³

That is why, since 2014, as part of a larger action research project⁴ on music and migration with my students at the Pavia University Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage in Cremona (Lombardy, Italy), I have been documenting and analysing religious musical practices in the foreign communities and groups settled in Cremona and its surroundings.⁵ The main goal is to learn and spread information about these realities, creating a public archive of audio-visual recordings and organising occasions to share this documentation and encounters with the migrants involved. At the same time the analysis of the role music has in religious rituals can highlight values and cultural meanings the various communities inact in resettlement.⁶

This wealth of documentation of the music involved in rituals and the role it plays in religious and everyday life of migrants is crucial to understanding if, how, and why people are still linked to the musical tradition(s) of their place of origin, and how the devotees use religious music to build both shared and multiple

¹ KIWAN – MAINHOF, *Music and Migration*.

² GLICK SCHILLER – MAINHOF, *Singing a New Song?*; GLICK SCHILLER *et al.*, *Towards a Definition*.

³ CAPONE, *Religions 'en migration'*, p. 247.

⁴ LEWIN, *Action Research*.

⁵ A complete description of the project can be found in CARUSO, *How do we go about singing a new song about migration?* In every situation we document the rites and carry out more or less formal interviews with musicians and individuals who have a leading role in the community and/or in the ritual.

⁶ See DESROCHES, *Musicque et rituel*.

belongings despite their different backgrounds.⁷ Focusing on the phenomena of transnationalisation and transnational connections and/or circulation that emerge from this reality, a new perspective of cultural behaviour appears, which is not simply based on a bilateral relationship between state of origin and state of relocation and on ethnicity as a homogeneous reality.⁸

With transnationalisation I mean the belonging at the same time to both one's nation of origin and the nation of resettlement, and the co-presence of more belongings in a single place and space created by religious practices.

Religious communities in Cremona

Immigration in Italy is quite recent, making it a good field for the investigation of resettlement processes. Moreover, doing fieldwork in a small area like the province of Cremona can offer more insights about the transnational dynamics involved in this process.

Only a few Italian ethnomusicological studies have been devoted to the religious music of communities of foreigners: to date, studies have only focused on the Greco-Italian and Albanian communities who have been present in South Italy for centuries,⁹ while in 2013 Serena Facci and a group of scholars began comparative fieldwork in Rome aimed at understanding the contemporary reality of the particular context of a city like Rome.¹⁰

Even though Cremona is a small town, an extremely rich plurality of faiths and many different religious realities have emerged from our investigation. Our documentation is still incomplete: some churches or temples were the in-depth

⁷ The documentation intends to highlight in particular: language/s used in the ritual and in the musical performances; the role of the musical events in the ritual; elements of the performance (solo, choir, instruments, dance...); participation of the believers in the ritual and in the music; use or not of writing or other technologies in the learning process and in the rendition. More generally speaking, the role of music in the migrants' lives, through the understanding of their musical tastes and listening in everyday life, and how this has changed in their moving from one place to another.

⁸ In addition to the aforementioned article by GLICK SCHILLER – MAINHOF, *Singing a New Song?*, in which the authors insist on identity pluralism and multi-locality and reduce the concept of Nation to a minimum, against the essentialisation of ethnicity see also BAUMANN, *The Multicultural Riddle*; KAUFMAN SHELEMAY, *Musical Communities*; MARCUS, *Past, present*; VERTOVEC, *Super-diversity*.

⁹ See GAROFALO *et al.*, *Chants of the Byzantine Rite*; RIZZUTO, *Prima ricognizione*.

¹⁰ Serena Facci and her team at Tor Vergata University participated in the National Research Project *Processi di trasformazione nelle musiche di tradizione orale dal 1900 a oggi. Ricerche storiche e indagini sulle pratiche contemporanee* (coordinatore nazionale Giovanni Giuriati), Unità di Roma "Tor Vergata", *Musica, festa, rito. Dinamiche di trasmissione e trasformazione di forma e comportamenti musicali in contesti di socializzazione e rapporto con il sacro* (coordinatore Giorgio Adamo). See FACCI, *La gioia nel cantare*; FACCI, *Liturgie musicali*; COSENTINO, *Tra matrici musicali africane*; COSENTINO, *Esengo. La musica nella chiesa congolese di Roma*; COSENTINO – CRUPI, *La festa dei popoli*; RIZZUTO, *Due canti liturgici*.

focus of students' dissertations,¹¹ others served only as fieldwork experience during Ethnomusicology courses.¹² Some have yet to be documented.¹³

We found a kaleidoscopic situation made up of more than 15 religious groups, from Sikh to Orthodox to Buddhist, to specific Christian communities of migrants. This has come about because most of the migrants tend to maintain a link not only with the religion they grew up with, or practised at home, but also with the specific ways they learnt to perform it, even when they are Christians. Instead of (or in addition to) attending Mass in their neighbourhood parish, they prefer to recreate a national or transnational community based on their national language (for many Africans this is French or English). But they can also change faith on account of relationships born during migration. This is what has happened in the case of the Evangelical International Bethel Church, which rose up in Cremona.

The religious groups are normally composed of people from the same nation, as in the case of the Christian communities, or with the same ethnicity, as in the case of the Sikhs, but it can also depend on faith, as in the case of the Bethel Church, which is attended mostly but not exclusively by Ivorians.

The chance to freely and properly profess the various faiths is firstly challenged by the difficulty to gain a stable space in which to perform the religious rite. The faithful often need to travel for kilometres to get to a church where they can find people of the same faith and/or nationality.

Even Christian communities, which are normally more accepted by the Diocese, have problems. The Diocese only allocates a dedicated church where they can celebrate Mass every Sunday to the larger communities.¹⁴ The others normally have a designated church where (mostly as guests) they can receive Mass once a month celebrated by an officiant of the same (or near) nationality, or by an Italian priest who can celebrate in either English or French.

Thus, the distribution of dedicated churches depends on the high concentration of people coming from the same area. So, for example, Casalmaggiore is the city of Ghanaians, Rivarolo Mantovano that of Nigerians, Brescia the Senegalese, Piacenza the Malians... as we are told by the faithful themselves.

As Capone writes,

la «nature transnationale» de l'Église catholique, des Églises évangéliques ou pentecôtistes, aide les immigrés à retrouver une continuité entre différents

¹¹ Thea Tiramani on the Sikh Temple in Pessina Cremonese (CR); Davide Pancetti on the Buddhist Temple of the Sri Lanka community of Spilamberto (MO); Margherita Tealdi on the Ukraine Orthodox community in Cremona; Sara De Bernardis on the Evangelical International Bethel Church in Cremona.

¹² Rumanian Orthodox Church, Rumanian Christian Catholic Church, Ghanaian Christian Catholic Church, Nigerian Christian Church, Senegalese Mouride Brotherhood.

¹³ Rumanian Church of Philadelphia, Hindu Temple, Islamic cultural and religious centres.

¹⁴ In Cremona only the Romanian Catholics have a church. The Romanian Orthodox community had to repair an old and disused one themselves. The various African churches, as the Orthodox Ukrainians, can only meet once a month.

territoires, en renouant dans la nouvelle société d'accueil avec des rituels familiaux, des organisations et des réseaux religieux déjà connus dans leur terre d'origine.¹⁵

It is also true that the Catholic Churches in the world, especially after the Second Vatican Concilium, adapted the official rite to specific localities.¹⁶

Even for those Catholics who share the same ritual as Italians, there is a strong need to profess their faith 'as at home'. As Giselle explained me: «We have a need to gather at least once a month to celebrate a Mass in French. To do something to let our children know to how it is in Africa. It is very important for us».¹⁷

The present article reports the first results of on-going research on this reality, through the musical life of the *Chorale Saint Michel Archanges*, mostly made up of migrants from Ivory Coast.

Ivorians in Cremona

Some of the Ivorians in the province of Cremona have been settled here for decades. There are only 711 of them (equally distributed for gender) and they mostly live in Cremona (418). The majority are Catholic Christians. Despite this fact, and even though Cremona is quite a small town,¹⁸ they only meet for religious rituals and for special occasions such as weddings, baptisms and funerals.¹⁹ Religion is then the common ground to reunite people from the same Country of origin. Nevertheless until recently they did not have an African priest of reference, since they were not recognised by the Diocese as a Community. Occasionally a priest came from Brescia to celebrate a Mass for them. In 2016, after much insistence, the Diocese assigned them Alois Ntedika Ngimbi, a priest from Congo, who operates in the church of Ardole San Marino, ten kilometres outside the town. The priest is very busy with many small parishes in the surroundings and therefore he can only celebrate the Mass in French for Ivorian people on the third Sunday of the month.

They wanted to have an Ivorian priest, because «an Ivorian one could better understand and guide us because he would have known our culture and our habits that are different from the ones of the other African countries». In any case, they are happy to have an African francophone one, and now that they have a priest, they are trying to obtain their own parish from the Bishop «that can house us and all the activities of the Community, from catechesis to Weddings».²⁰

¹⁵ CAPONE, *Religions 'en migration'*, pp. 235-236.

¹⁶ INGALLS *et al.*, *Music as local and global positioning*.

¹⁷ From the interview conducted on 19.2.2017.

¹⁸ In January 2016 there were 41.166 foreigner residents in the province of Cremona: 11,4% of the population. Those who come from Ivory Coast rank eleventh in terms of number, sixth amongst the Africans.

¹⁹ There are 6 Ivorian Associations in Lombardy, but none in Cremona. See *Diaspora Ivoriana*.

²⁰ From the interview conducted on 17.5.2017.

The situation is still on-going: in 2018 the community parish was moved closer: first, to Migliaro, and more recently to Boschetto. Unfortunately, Father Alois was moved to another parish,²¹ and the Italian priest assigned to the church celebrates in French for Ivorians once a month. At the same time the closeness of the church allows them to attend Mass almost every Sunday.

The *Chorale Saint Michel Archanges* has an important role in this process of empowerment of the Community. The *Chorale* was born ten years ago to accompany the Sunday liturgy dedicated to their community and special events like weddings and baptisms. It also participates in special religious and non-religious events outside the Ivorian community, like charity concerts, or the Mass for the Day of the Migrant and the Refugee.²² They also have a FaceBook page.²³

The *Chorale*²⁴ meets regularly once a week and is made up of approximately 20 people (7 men and 13 women), all coming from Ivory Coast, except for two men, one from Cameroon and one from Ghana, who are married to Ivorian women in the choir. The director has to be Ivorian, and when the former director died a new one was found in Forlì, which is quite far from Cremona. In any case, the *Chorale* is open to other nationalities and faiths: on some occasions Beatrice, a Protestant Ivorian woman, joins the choir and in the past some non-Catholic Ivorians have taken part in the *Chorale* life.

All the members have been in Italy for many years but arrived in Cremona at different times. The last to arrive was the director Richard, who has been in Italy since 2012 and who settled in Piacenza, near Cremona, in 2017, thanks to the efforts made by the *Chorale* to regularly rehearse and have him at every celebration.²⁵

We²⁶ attended and recorded several Masses from 2015 to 2019, but I will concentrate in those recorded in 2017: two ordinary monthly Masses (19 February and 28 March), the Mass for the retreat of the African French-speaking Communities of Lombardy held in Cremona (19 March) and the wedding of Terence, Giselle's elder son, to Evelyne on 21 July (see Table 1). Moreover, every year the *Chorale* participates in the Mass for the Day of the Migrant and the Refugee, and we documented this from 2015 to 2019 (see Table 2). We also attended some rehearsals and did some interviews with Richard, the director of the *Chorale*, with Alfred, its former president, and with Giselle, who has been in Italy since 1987 and is one of the most active participants in the life of the *Chorale*. From the analysis of

²¹ And would shortly return home, recalled by his bishop.

²² It is now at its 16th celebration. It used to be celebrated on 1 January, but in 2006 the Pontifical Commission of Migrations asked for it to be celebrated on the second Sunday of the ordinary liturgical year. From 2019 it is celebrated in June. It is normally attended by all the Christian Catholic communities of foreign people and takes place each year in a different church of the Cremona Diocese.

²³ <<https://www.facebook.com/ChoraleSaintMichelArchangesDeCremona/>>.

²⁴ I shall use this term because for them it means a 4-voice choir, while *Chœur* is used for a single voice choir.

²⁵ He was the director of an African Choir in Forlì and met the *Chorale* during one of the retreats of the African French-speaking Communities.

²⁶ Edoardo Boschetti and Clarissa Biscardi, two students on the Graduate Course in Ethnomusicology, helped me in the specific documentation of this community.

the celebrations and the chants involved, and the results of the interviews, I will try to highlight the transnational flows that occur in the life of the *Chorale*.²⁷

Table 1. *Songs and their distribution in the masses of 2017*

Mass structure	Mass moments for singing	February 19 (Ordinary mass)	March 19 (Retreat of the African French communities of Lombardy)	28 May (Ordinary mass)
Introductory rites	Entrance	<i>A qu'il est bon</i>	<i>Ton visage Seigneur</i>	<i>En cette jour venir Te glorifier</i>
	<i>Kyrie and Gloria</i>	<i>Seigneur pitié de nous Ecrit mon nom</i>	<i>Edongo</i> (Beti language, Congo)	/
Liturgy of the Word	Responsorial Psalm	/	<i>Au jour d'hui ne regardez pas notre faute</i>	/
	Hallelujah	<i>Alléluia</i>	<i>Gloire et louange à toi</i>	<i>Alléluia</i>
	(before Gospel)	/	<i>L'amour de Dieu</i>	
Liturgy of the Eucharist	Offertory antiphon	<i>Donner a notre Dieu</i>	<i>Donne nous la paix Seigneur</i>	/
	Offertory	<i>Hosanna</i>	<i>Yawe</i> (bamilenké language, Cameroon) <i>Osanna</i> (Italian)	/
	<i>Sanctus</i>	/	/	<i>Santo</i> (Italian)
	Lord's Prayer		<i>Notre Père</i>	
	Agnus Dei (Exchange of peace)	<i>Agnus dei</i> (Latin)	<i>Agnus Dei</i> (French)	<i>Agnus Dei</i> (French but in cantillation)
	Communion	<i>Prenez et mangez</i>	<i>O doux Jésus</i>	<i>O doux Jésus</i>
Concluding rites	Dismissal	<i>Merci Seigneur</i>	<i>Le Seigneur est mon berger Ecrit mon nom</i>	<i>Allez nous voici des enfants</i>

²⁷ We interviewed Giselle on 19 February and 17 May; Richard on 19 February and 2 June. From now on, I will only use their names. Normally the interviews were conducted in Italian. I decided to quote them directly in English to make the text more fluent.

Table 2. Songs and their distribution in the masses for the day of migrant and refugee (in bold the songs executed by the *Chorale*).

Mass structure	Mass moments for singing	2015 Casalmaggiore	2016 Rivarolo Mantovano	2017 Cremona
Introductory rites	Entrance	Je t'adore o Dieux de bonté	?? (we arrived late!)	Adorons le Seigneur
	<i>Kyrie</i> and <i>Gloria</i>	<i>Kyrie</i> and <i>Gloria</i> (Rumanians)	<i>Kyrie</i> and <i>Gloria</i> (Rumanians)	Seigneur pitié de nous Gloria (Rumanians)
Liturgy of the Word	Responsorial Psalm	Rumanian chant	/	Rumanian chant
	<i>Hallelujah</i>	Alléluia	Alléluia	Alléluia
Liturgy of the Eucharist	Offertory antiphon	Rumanian chant	Rumanian chant	Asempapa
		/	Togolese chant by the nuns for the consecration of nun Mary Regina	/
	Offertory	Ashanti chant+ <i>Osanna</i> (Ghanaians)	Donnez sans regret à votre Dieux	/
	<i>Sanctus</i>	/		<i>Sanctus</i> (Rumanians)
		/	Before Consecration Nigerians sing <i>Osanna</i>	/
	<i>Agnus Dei</i>	<i>Agnus Dei</i> (Rumenians)	Rumanians chant of peace.	<i>Agnus Dei</i> (Rumanians)
	Communion	Prenez e mangez + Abidi don wô (ebrié)	3 songs of the Ghanaian community	Rumanian chant
Concluding rites			Through the declaration of the new nun, the Togolese and Beninese nuns sing 3 chants: 2 in Italian and 1 in French, probably by Togo or Benin	
	Dismissal	Asempapa (ashanti) Chant in ashanti (Ghanaians)	<i>Osanna</i> in Ebo (Nigerians) Asempapa (Ghanaians and Ivoirians) 3 Ghanaians chants	Asempapa (ashanti) Ewrodie (ashanti) Eme gname (adjoucourou/Ivoirian)

«Here in Italy we try to do our best to reproduce what happens in Africa»

We learn from Giselle's words that Ivorians try to replicate what happens in Ivory Coast here in Italy. What does that mean? As they are part of the Roman Catholic Church, they follow the liturgy defined by the Vatican, the celebrations follow the same calendar and the same readings and singing of the official Catholic Church are utilised in the specific moments defined and allowed by the Holy See.²⁸ At the same time, there are some differences, which are approved by the Second Vatican Council,²⁹ one of the reasons why the Ivorian Community in Italy looks for a specific church and a specific priest. The celebration is entirely in French, but only the songs allow a real 'localisation' of the mass.³⁰ As Richard explained to us, the major difference between the Italian Mass and their Mass is that

Normally in the Italian ordinary Mass only few moments are sung: Introduction, Alleluia and Conclusion. We sing the whole Mass instead. Our idea is that singing and dancing and waving handkerchiefs are the best way to communicate our thanks and our joy to God and happiness to be with God.

Richard knows that in Italy we can also have solemn Masses that are entirely sung, but he wants to stress that it is normal for them to participate in every Mass through a strong presence of music. Richard's words emphasise bodily participation as an essential part of the performance, expressed through dance and the use of handkerchiefs to accompany the singing: the moving handkerchiefs and the small dance they perform on the spot express the meaning of the words of the chant. This was also confirmed by Giselle: she complains that despite their efforts, the celebrations in Cremona cannot be exactly the same as the ones at home, on account of the smallness of their community and the lack of participation of the Italians who attend their Masses.

As Richard told us, the Sunday chants for the ordinary Masses are chosen according to the official Liturgical calendar in the first part, but the ones for Communion and Dismissal (where there is more freedom) are decided according to the content and the feelings expressed by the priest during the sermon. That is why on special occasions some more pieces can be added during the Communion and the Dismissal (see table 1). As Giselle says:

The chants can – better, they have to – change every celebration. In Africa we have a lot of chants, and we are taught each time with new ones, especially when we have to sing for a wedding, because the couple wants its favourite ones, and one of them may also be not Ivorian. Anyway, all the chants are pertinent to the Church and to the verses of the Bible.

²⁸ For a complete description of the Mass see: <<http://www.usccb.org/about/public-affairs/backgrounders/structure-and-meaning-of-the-mass-backgroundunder.cfm>>. A schema of Ivorian Masses is also shown in Table 1.

²⁹ See Chapters III and VI in PAUL VI, *Sacrosantum Concilium*.

³⁰ It is not the case for the Congolese, as well explained by COSENTINO, *Esengo. La musica nella chiesa congolese di Roma* and for Tanzanian, as in MKALLYAH, *Affects and Effects*.

The *Chorale* learnt most of the chants in Ivory Coast, but many were learnt in Cremona. It depends on the need to please those who ask to sing or listen to chants they remember from their past or recently heard at home during a trip to Ivory Coast, as happened to Giselle in Easter 2017. She loved one chant sang during the Easter celebration and asked the priest for the score so as to bring it to Richard and add it to their repertoire.

More than 80 languages are spoken in Ivory Coast and French is the official language.³¹ That is why the celebration is in French both in Ivory Coast and in Cremona. But as regards the songs, it should be pointed out that they are in several languages. Only three people in the *Chorale* speak the same language,³² and so they sing mostly in French but also in various languages. As you can see from Tables 1 and 2, the *Chorale* at the moment sings in *ashanti* (Ghana), *beti* (Congo), *bamilenké* (Cameroon), *ebrié* and *adjoucrou* (Ivory Coast). The same multilinguality also happens during the retreats of the French-speaking Communities or the Masses for the Day of the Migrant and the Refugee, where they sing chants in French but also in the various local languages of the Communities involved. According to what is available on the web, the same thing happens back home. Nevertheless, I think that the diasporic setting allows more exchanges between communities who speak different languages.

According to Sanga, we can define the *Chorale's* repertoire as «art church music»:³³ chants are transmitted on a score, a stable director conducts the *Chorale*, and he normally accompanies the voices by keyboard or organ. The previous director taught some of the men in the *Chorale* to play some idiophones (*axatse* - calabash shaker - and *mbaqua* - wooden sticks), which they still have, but the choristers do not normally play them. Some exceptions are made on particular occasions, such as for the Mass for the Day of the Migrant and the Refugee: in 2015 and 2017 one of the singers played a *gankogui* (double bell) and in 2016, since the *Chorale* was without Richard (so without keyboard), they were accompanied by Bawa Salifu, a Muslim Ghanaian djembe player who often accompanies Christian choirs when asked. The use of the word 'art' must be clarified, since several distinctions have been made in African music.³⁴ The distinction Sanga makes between «art church music» and «popular church music»³⁵ is strictly linked to the reported characteristics, not to the melodic or rhythmical structures. The repertoire of the *Chorale* only partially comprehends Western hymns translated into local languages and is mostly made up of hymns composed by African

³¹ According to *Ethnologue* the number of individual languages listed for Ivory Coast is 87. Of these, 86 are living and 1 is extinct. Of the living languages, 75 are indigenous and 11 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 4 are institutional, 36 are developing, 30 are vigorous, 12 are in trouble, and 4 are dying. French is the principal language. The other wider communication languages are Dyula, Bawle and Bambara, all Malinké languages. <<https://www.ethnologue.com/country/CI/languages>>. Last visit 20.07.2019).

³² Giselle and another two members speak *ebrié*.

³³ SANGA, *Composition Processess*, p. 250.

³⁴ See FALOLA – FLEMING, eds., *Music, Performance and African Identities*.

³⁵ SANGA, *Composition Processess*, p. 247.

specialists in this repertoire. In the words of Kauffman «The church is becoming rooted in the soil of Africa and is making itself relevant to the great wave of nationalism that is sweeping the continent».³⁶

When they attend the Sunday Masses the *Chorale* wear their Sunday best, which is mostly African attire. Special garments are worn for the special Masses, clothes with the religious emblem of the *Chorale* printed on them, as happens all around Africa (and in Italy too³⁷). It is interesting to note that the cloth comes from Ivory Coast and the garments are then made up in Italy.³⁸ However, for very special occasions such as the marriage of Evelyne and Terence, a Nigerian friend gave them spectacular clothes and headdresses that are typically Nigerian. In this case, therefore, it is more important to wear something special than to express Ivorianness.

All the elements that distinguish their celebrations from Italian ones identify them as Ivorians first and then as African, something that all the interviewees pointed out and which was further confirmed by a comparison with documentaries³⁹ and YouTube material. Even the body and handkerchiefs movements are exactly the same. Nevertheless, some differences between celebrations in Ivory Coast and in Italy can be found. In Giselle's opinion, in Ivory Coast celebrations the priest takes his time, chants are longer, and people dance moving around the church, while in Italy they dance moving their bodies in the same place, occasionally spinning around.

In our home [Ivory Coast] every Sunday is incredible and you always want to go to Church. Every chant is danced and even after the Mass is over, we continue dancing. I went to a wedding and it was already a party in the church! When we came back my kids didn't want to go to Italian church anymore. It was too simple and they were bored. (Giselle)

Richard also feels that back home the participation of devotees is stronger and the whole community takes part in the singing and dancing, but he also stresses that the chants and dances are the same in number and duration. In my experience, much depends on how many devotees attend the rite: the more they are, the more they get involved and the greater their participation through singing and dancing. It also depends on the attitude of the officiant: the Italians do not normally encourage long and danced musical moments, and the *Chorale* can only freely express itself at the end of the Mass, if another celebration does not immediately follow.

Indeed, there is a kind of shyness in prolonging the occupation of a space that is not entirely theirs. They know that someone else owns the keys and is waiting for the Mass to finish to close the church. One more element deserves further investigation: Pentecostal churches are growing in number in Africa and in Italy,

³⁶ KAUFFMAN, *Impressions of African Church Music*, p. 109.

³⁷ See COSENTINO, *Esengo. La musica nella chiesa congolese di Roma*.

³⁸ At Terence and Evelyne's wedding, the bride's and bridegroom's families stood out for their clothes which had clearly been made for the occasion with special cloths coming from Africa.

³⁹ AULT, *African Christianity Risign*.

and their celebrations involve a lot of bodily participation through music. In Cremona there is the Pentecostal church of Bethel, mostly attended by Ivorians. In the interviews I conducted, all Ivorian Catholics have stressed that they pray in silence or singing, but not shouting and exaggerating their participation as the Pentecostals do. Thus, dancing and singing with moderation in Cremona could be a way to distance themselves from the Pentecostals.⁴⁰

Your way of playing is different

The repertoire of the *Chorale* is made up of chants in four mostly parallel parts, resembling many Western liturgical repertoires in four parts.⁴¹ Soprano and alto voices move mostly in parallel thirds while the tenor or bass double one of the female voices and complete the chords. The other male voice moves in parallel thirds with the other. The melody is mostly syllabic and made up of short intervals (see Figure 1). The structure of the chant is normally in verse-refrain. At the same time, they present several musical features that make them “African”. First of all, the accompaniment: the scores do not present any part for piano or organ, and Richard, director and organ and keyboard player, improvises an accompaniment according to precise roles that he explained as follows:

Your way of playing is different from ours: you only play an accompaniment and the melody, doubling bass and soprano voices. We study your way of doing but we prefer instead to double all four parts, so as to always give the entire chord. For us the important thing is to play with the choir: to discover every voice, because every voice is important. So, when we play you can listen to all the notes. It is not an accompaniment, it is a way to play together.

Richard has a degree in composition and organ from the conservatory of Abidjan. This means that he knows classical music well; in fact, his dissertation was on Bach and Handel. In his words, then, he wants to stress the difference between the two traditions and the fact that he fills the sonic space with his accompaniment, sustaining all the voices of the *Chorale*. He uses a strong way of accompanying them, of being together through music.

One other thing that Richard adds to the chants are improvisations. Every chant normally starts with a short, improvised introduction played by Richard, developed on the melodic phrases of the chant. When the chant does not have a

⁴⁰ This also testifies to the fact that many of them have also tried going to this church, moved by national ties.

⁴¹ Simha Arom stresses similarities between African and European medieval polyphonic organization (AROM, *Une parenté inattendue*). In my opinion this is not the case. As shown in Figure 1, the compositions are organized by tonality and through modern laws of polyphonic composition. In other writings (AROM, *Polyphonies et polyrythmies*) he stresses the differences, as for example the persistence of the horizontal perception instead of the harmonic vertical one. In my opinion this is not the case. The liturgical chants of the Ivorian Church are strongly influenced by the Western music. Except for those aspects I try to underline in this paragraph.

refrain, or when they wish to lengthen the execution, Richard improvises a kind of bridge between the verses, in which he again recalls kaleidoscopically all the distinctive elements of the melody. This is also can be seen as African traditional music behaviour.

The image shows a handwritten musical score on a piece of paper. At the top left, it reads "Diocèse de Yopougon" and "Paroisse Saint Joseph De Vieil Aklodj SP de DABOU". In the center, there is a logo of a person standing on a pedestal. To the right, it says "Repertoire de la Chorale St Joseph de Vieil Aklodj ABIDJAN" and "Cet : 08 23 02 36 / 08 63 36 43 / 07 63 85 11 / 05 33 29 71". Below this, it says "Musique : SIE ROBERT". The title of the piece is "TITRE : Donnez sans regret". The score itself is written on four systems of staves, with lyrics in French: "Donnez à notre Dieu sans regret", "grat (le Dieu d'Abidj) il vous ou-ri-ra sa main de", "gloi-re il vous fe-ra voir son gra-a-mour vous", and "ne re-gre-te rez pas d'a-voir don-nez sans regret". There are some handwritten annotations like "offrande" and "1^{er}", "2^e".

Figure 1. Score of *Donnez sans regret* used by the director. On the right you can see part of a tablet, which is also used to read digital (or digitised) scores.

Another feature that can be linked to African musical traditions is the tendency to assign the verse to a soloist (often Richard himself) and the refrain to the choir.

It should also be noticed that the *Chorale* sings by heart. Although they use scores during rehearsals, neither Richard nor the choristers ever use them during the Mass. They chant and Richard conducts and plays without scores, as we saw during several Masses.

Improvisation is a fundamental feature of their performances also in the choice of the pieces to sing. As a matter of fact, the director decides during the mass what to sing, according to the atmosphere created by the priest during the homily. As Richard told us:

To learn by heart is the first lesson in Africa! I prepare photocopies of the score, but the choristers love to memorise the music. To learn by heart allows us to give more stress to the meaning of the text, freeing the mind from reading. The produced feeling of freedom gives us the possibility to support the musicality of the text, which can be translated in that natural composition of gestures that is the dance.

As Alfred and Giselle explained to us, music, rhythm and dance are strictly connected as a unique thing. In Richard's words: «Compared with Italians, our masses are very rhythmical and animated. Rhythm is the musical feature that more than others can express our joy to be together».

Most of the chants, with few exceptions, are sung homorhythmically by the four voices. Only some chants in Ivorian languages, like *Eme Gname*, are in call and response. What adds dynamism is the accompaniment played by Richard, which gives strong accents, and also the loop base of virtual drums on his keyboard⁴², chosen from the pre-existent ones or from the ones he records himself. Particularly in the parts that separate the repetition of the verse Richard introduces many fragmentations of the melody and anacrusis.⁴³

Richard told us that many of the chants in their repertoire use the basic rhythm of the Highlife, the famous Ghanaian 'popular traditional' genre. It is this rhythm that makes the chants danceable. This is not the only popular rhythm used in church music; Ivorian popular styles can also be used, as in *Le Seigneur est mon berger*, in which the author Jean-Claude N'Guessan indicated «à exécuter dans le style du Ziglibility».⁴⁴ Both share an up-bit rhythmical frame and an up-tempo.

One more rhythmical element has to be considered: clapping hands. When Richard uses a strong accompaniment the choir rarely underlines it by clapping their hands, but at other moments, or when Richard is not with them, they do this

⁴² A Yamaha PSR-S750, which offers 12 styles of auto accompaniment.

⁴³ The same attitude can be found in the accompaniment performed by the director of the Ghanaian choir of Casalmaggiore.

⁴⁴ «To be played in *Ziglibility* style». The *ziglibility* is a musical style and dance born in Ivory Coast that mixes modernity with traditional elements, such as the *zagrobi* dance, the most common, rhythmic and lively male dance of the Western region of Ivory Coast.

more and more. Despite the regularity of what they sing, the clapping is poly-rhythmic, introducing a four feel to a six feel, with the result of a superposition of a 3:2 beat.

Moreover, it has to be stressed that a homorhythmic procedure does not imply a static movement of parts, since the voices often present a rhythm that contrasts the metre, as can be seen in the score of *Donner sans regret*.

A last element to be underlined is the timbre. The female voices are quite high and there is a continuous search for the melding of male and female voices.

To summarise, we can define these chants as fruits of localisation of the classical Western choral style with specific, both popular and traditional, African elements. If the choristers are proud to sing in four parts («We are a Chorale, not a choir, that means we do not sing on a single melody!» is the first thing Giselle pointed out at our first meeting), they feel these chants as their own, thanks to the local elements that characterise them, that is accompaniment, rhythm, timbre and dance. The language is less important because, as Richard stressed, texts can be translated from one language to another.⁴⁵

These features are the same for Ghanaians. When we asked Richard if there are specific features that distinguish Ivorian chants from the ones from Ghana or Cameroon that they occasionally play, he told us that the only difference is language, and that if a chant is successful it can be translated into other languages or simply circulate beyond nations. Giselle added that they perceive a real difference only with the chants of Central and South Africa: «They do not have the same rhythms and sing with different voices, very deep». This is confirmed by both the literature and the specific situation of the Cremona province: the Ghanaian choir have a very similar repertoire and performance style, while the Rivarolo Mantovano Nigerian choir have a different instrumental accompaniment, and the vocal parts are generally different.

Scores always come from below

There is a strong circulation of scores both through people and through the Internet.

Richard has hundreds of scores. These can be of various kinds: the edited ones, which can also be found on the Internet (on freescor.es.com or the Facebook page *Forum des maîtres de chœur ivoirien*), and those manuscript by the choir directors (as can be seen in the score *Donnez sans regret* that comes from an Abidjan chorus, Figure 1).

Richard has also inherited the scores of the late former director, and when someone in the *Chorale* wants to sing a new chant, he/she finds the score and gives it to Richard, or sings it to him and asks him to write it down to then teach it to the group. When Giselle was in Ivory Coast for Easter this year, she heard a

⁴⁵ Thus affirming the strong circulation of songs and the custom of translating the lyrics.

new chant and found the score for Richard. What is important, as she told us, is that «Scores always come from below». Even *Prenez et mangez*, composed by Richard (who is not a very famous composer), was already known by the *Chorale*, learnt thanks to the previous director.

To appreciate the high dissemination of scores, one only has to quote *Asempapa Oye*. This is a chant composed by James Varrick Armaah in 2009 in Atlanta, USA, which also had great success all over Africa and in Cremona and is sung by both Ghanaians and Ivorians.

The media also play a strong role in the diffusion of chants. There are many famous composers of religious chants in Ivory Coast⁴⁶ and their compositions can be heard on the Internet but also on the radio, since there are several radio stations (two famous ones are Radio National Catholique and Radio Espoir⁴⁷) or Internet TV (such as Musique Chrétienne TV) that broadcast sacred music. Many choirs are on YouTube or on Facebook. The *Chorale* also has a Facebook page where we can find video recordings of concerts or special events. This is normal practice for many choral groups and increases the circulation of chants.

Transnational social fields

Some information about the behaviours of the community emerges both through the singing, playing and dancing and the priest's words (during the sermon and in the communications before the concluding rites).

As stressed at the beginning, our investigations have shown that foreigners tend to aggregate by nationality and that every city in the area around Cremona has a prevailing community. They travel in order to attend celebrations of their faith in their own language and possibly by a celebrant who comes from their homelands. The rite is thus «an occasion to re-experience together our faith, to express our culture in our language» as Father Agnero said during one of his sermons. And music is an important part of this process, as he adds:

Our group is strong because we have a choir who gives strength, stability and unites all. It animates our rites with that African spirit that is missed by those who live far away from their land.

What is meant by «our» when every African nation is made up of different ethnicities and languages? In my opinion there is more than one answer. On the one hand, there is the resettlement situation, in which migrants tend to aggregate by nationality and even in terms of the whole continent. Often the discourse switches from the nation to the entire African continent, as emerges from Giselle's words:

⁴⁶ Such as Michelle Beugre Gahi, Jean Claude N'Guessan, Maxime Mobio, Gnagne Joseph, Agnero Hyacinth.

⁴⁷ It should be noted that the latter was set up by Franco, an Italian from Carpi, who lived for a long time in Ivory Coast.

I've always sung since I've been here. This is the only thing I hold of Africa not to get lost. Even if I've lived more here than in Africa, I'm not Italian, I'm African. This is the only thing that ties me to my roots.

On the other hand, there is the colonial inheritance they bring with them. Giselle told us that she learnt to pray in French, and thus it is normal to want a Mass in French. French language became her religious language, the one she uses for intimate praying.

Their belonging is expressed in the will to reproduce as much as they can the same performances they remember or experience at home. Their experiences are in their memories but also in their daily life thanks to the media, the circulation of scores and to the several trips back home they make. In the words of Giselle and Richard, Ivory Coast is «home», Ivorians are “us”, despite the differences and vastness of the country.

Belonging is expressed by nationality, Africanness and Christianity. «We are Italians now, but we will be African forever» is what Giselle said at the end of the Mass of the French-speaking communities, testifying at the same time to a conscious multiple belonging and transnational identity that goes beyond the Italy – Ivory Coast dichotomy.

The *Chorale* also sings chants that come from outside their nation. This often happens through family bonds: the *Chorale's* president's father is from Ghana and some of the choristers are married to non-Ivorians. They sing at weddings and familiar occasions, learning some of their chants. But it can also happen through located bonds,⁴⁸ as in the case of the collaboration with the *Chorale Saint Cyprien* of Forlì, where Richard played keyboard, or with the Togolese nuns who attend the Francophone Masses. The same attitude can be found at home, as testified by the success of *Asen papa* from the United States to sub-Saharan Africa., In a process

by which Christian communities take a variety of musical practices – some considered ‘indigenous’, some ‘foreign’, some shared across spatial and cultural divides; some linked to past practice, some innovative – and makes them locally meaningful and useful to the construction of Christian beliefs, theology, practice or identity⁴⁹

what has been made local at home is made local in Cremona.

These migrational trajectories are also influenced by the politics of the Italian Church.

During the Masses for the Day of the Migrant and the Refugee in 2015 and 2016 every community had its own choir. The Casalmaggiore Ghanaians, the Rivarolo Nigerians and the Cremona Ivorians sang separately and only occasionally sang or danced the chants of the others.⁵⁰ Ethnic elements like particular instruments or clothes are only present on these occasions, as if they feel a need to

⁴⁸ YUVAL-DAVIS *et al.*, eds., *The Situated Politics of Belonging*.

⁴⁹ INGALLS *et al.*, *Music as local and global positioning*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ This happens when they already know a specific chant because they learnt it for special occasions, normally transnational marriages.

stress their own provenance and specificities. Instead, in 2017, they all sang together and the distinctive elements disappeared.

This is linked to the initiative of the «Recollection of French-speaking African communities»⁵¹ which happened in the same year in Cremona. This operation was an attempt by the Vatican to try and convince the various African French-speaking communities all over Italy to feel they belong to a single community. It is no coincidence if on this occasion they all sang together learning chants from each other (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Chorale Saint Michel Archange, Recollection of African Churches, Cremona, March 2017.

During the Sermon at the March 2017 French-speaking community retreat, the Congolese priest Don Germaine first talks about the Communities in the various cities (Cremona, Lodi, Como, Bergamo, Pavia) then about nationalities (Congolese, Cameroonian, Ivorian, Togolese and Senegalese) deploring the fact they are not united. In his opinion, the fault lies in Africa's history: «there are dangerous things we inherited from Africa that divide us. The Pope's will is that all African communities stay united in a single Church».

As Capone explains:

Si la religion peut contribuer à l'affirmation d'un nationalisme «longue distance», en transposant des espaces sacrés dans le nouvel environnement, elle peut aussi aider à former des «champs sociaux transnationaux», des nouveaux

⁵¹ In the case of Cremona, we have a French speaking community, the Ivorians, and two English speaking communities from Ghana and Nigeria. Nevertheless, the officiants addressed them as «African».

espaces de sociabilité créés par des chaînes de liens qui croisent de multiples États-nations.⁵²

What Capone affirms is true when we speak of musical features in general, but what emerges from the experiences documented in Cremona is that every group needs to sing at least one of the chants that they feel to be their «own» chants. This identification does not lie in specific musical features or languages, but more in the use they normally make of these chants, in the customary practice of singing them. This means that beyond the attempt to recognise themselves as a unique church, as African, there is always a need to affirm their specificity, which can only lie in the songs.

This is also the reason why, since 2018, the various African communities have once again started participating separately in the Masses for the Day of the Migrant and the Refugee.

Different cultural behaviours intersect in a single ritual. Some concern religious belonging, others cultural (local or national) belonging, others social belonging or relative positioning between different groups.

The *Chorale* is proud to sing in French and in four parts, because it makes them more ‘cultured’ compared to other foreign communities – African or not – or even compared to the normal communities of Italian faithful.

As I witnessed during the 2018 Masses, Italians greatly appreciate their singing at the ordinary Masses. As far as I know, only the *Chorale* is often invited by the Municipality or the Dioceses to participate in public events. Thus, those elements inherited from colonialism can paradoxically become elements of distinction and at the same time of affinity.

Transnationality is then expressed on various levels: the same faith professed by various nations in Italy and at home with the same rite; the use of their official language, that is also the language of other African and European nations; the use of chants from other nations (identified by the nationality of people or the place where they were learnt, instead of by the author and/or the original provenance).

Undoubtedly, the first function of singing is to express their faith, but other elements enter into the play of their sociability, and can change from one situation to another, depending on who is sharing the same ‘stage’. In the current state of the research, it seems that specificities - and then transnationalities - are given by languages and by temporal and situated bonds more than by musical features. The *Chorale*, just like other church choirs of migrant communities, seems to reproduce a «musical localisation»⁵³ that occurred at home more than in Cremona. Depending on the occasion, they move on a line between an expression of locality and transnationality. In the 2018 Mass for the Day of the Migrant and the Refugee, as mentioned above, the various national groups were again separated, and different levels of affinities emerged, as of difference. No connection with Italians was expressed. Also the connection with Nigerians was also quite weak. In the

⁵² CAPONE, *Religions ‘en migration’*, p. 249.

⁵³ INGALLS *et al.*, *Music as local and global positioning*.

new church in Boschetto, where the *Chorale* has recently moved, some Italians do participate in the singing.

The kaleidoscopic situation of just a single choir that depends on the circumstances in which it performs, the various belongings and social forces involved, the precariousness of the migrants in Italy (even if they have been regular residents for decades), show how complex can be transnational processes and localisation processes in migration contexts.

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