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The famous curse of the parish priest of Masullas.

Edited by **Maria Farranca**.

Who wrote ‘La scomunica’? The author is unknown; it may well have been a priest – who knows? It is a pastoral poem in free verse, written around the mid-nineteenth century; the meter is similar to that of the ‘repentina’. Antonello Satta writes of it in the second prologue: “Do not believe, even if people of letters tell you so, that ‘The Excommunication of Father Antioco’ is merely a joke, a trifle of little value, good for an hour’s amusement. Anyone who speaks to you in this way, unless they are a fool, has bad advisers or has been befuddled by that Italian culture which refuses to make room for Sardinian culture. ‘The Excommunication of Father Antioco’, whoever composed it, possesses poetic merit and stands up to comparison with other poems from other places that have enjoyed and continue to enjoy great renown.”

We present the opening verses here; more will follow.

The Excommunication of Father Antioco, parish priest of Masullas.

The warning. The priest Antioco berates the people from the church pulpit. He reminds them that their animals have been stolen and insists that no one can pretend to know nothing about it.

People of Masullas,
at the hour when the roosters
and hens
come out to scratch about,
pay attention to me (5)
to everything I say;
if I am right
in searching for my goats,
this is already the second time
I have made it known (10)
and this will be the third
and final warning.
So that no one
may put forward arguments
either for or against, (15)
in the event of ignorance,
we admonish them once more
in accordance with custom
by order of the Bishop.