Uncle Portolu spoke seriously; and every now and then, he turned his eyes of wild affection to the girl.

“When this is the case, let’s be careful,” warned Priest Porcheddu. “And now let’s go and drink.”

“To drink, yes, good priest Porcheddu. Whoever does not drink is not a man, nor a priest.”

While they were walking, Aunt Annedda was waiting for them with her coffee pots and jugs and her baskets of sweets. Maddalena and her procession broke into the cumbissia laughing and chatting; in brief there was a confusion of voices, of shouts, of laughter; a tinkling of glasses and grains. Uncle Portolu was heard telling that he had made the whole journey with the sheep, already promised to Saint Francis, tied on the back of the horse.

“It was my most beautiful sheep,” said the prior.

“Such long wool. Eh, Uncle Portolu is not mean.”

“Go to hell!” The prior answered him. “You don’t see that it’s a white-haired sheep, as old as you!”

“Canute, it’s you, Antoni Carta! If you insult me again, I’ll put my leppa in you” (Sardinian knife).
And Porcheddu the priest kept his glass high, his head a little reclined on his humerus, his flattering eyes turned to Magdalene and the pretty daughters of the prior. (…)

Uncle Berte, sitting on the ground next to the hearth, roasted a whole lamb on a long wooden skewer. He boasted that no one in the world roasted a lamb or a pig better than him.

“I will go, I will go,” he answered his wife, “let me first deal with this little animal.”

“The lamb is roasted, Berta; go in search of your son.”

“The lamb is not roasted, my wife: what do you know about it? Oh, what do you have to say about this to Berte Portolu? Let the boys have fun, after all; they have to have fun.”

(from the novel Elias Portolu, 1903)

A poor society in economic decline, like the one described by Deledda in Sardinia at the end of the nineteenth century, had very few moments of recreation. One was certainly the feast in rural sanctuaries.

Elias Portolu has just returned from the continent, where he was in prison probably for rustling. He returns to the village, and he is bewitched by Maddalena, his brother’s future wife. He has a relationship with her from which a son is born who then dies, almost to increase the pains of the two.

Elias decides to become a priest and, to atone for it, renounces forever Maddalena, who in the meantime has remained a widow.
In the piece, we are at the feast of the sanctuary of Saint Francis, who a great poet from Nuoro, a little older than Grazietta, Sebastiano Satta, will call “Saint of the bandits and robbers.” In fact, when even the bandits were in the parvis of the small country church of Saint Francis near Lula, not even the Carabinieri could arrest them. The people of the village went to the sanctuary for at least three days, living in the cumbissias, houses built next to the church to accommodate pilgrims. They prayed and were happy in company. Even priests drink and eat with taste. The meat is, of course, for the use of Sardinian shepherds, cooked on a spit next to the fire after the coffee and sweets have also cheered the families of the “prior,” that is the influential villager who started the collection of alms for the saint.