

Promotion of Destinations of Excellence: Reevaluation of a Medieval Tourist Route – Guidone’s Itinerary (1119 a.d.)

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Abstract. In 1119 Guidone, a monk, geographer, and cosmographer, described in “Geographica” a medieval route that crossed over parts of Apulia and Basilicata (Italy). He travelled along tracks and minor roads to visit major ecclesiastical centres, medieval rock churches, archaeological sites and rural sceneries such as: the Sassi of Matera, the Abbazia of Montescaglioso and the ruins of Grumentum. The revitalization of Guidone’s itinerary goes beyond the identification of a significant tourist route: the direct involvement of local communities makes it possible to enhance the territory’s identity, traditions, handicrafts and oenogastronomy.

Enhancing a medieval itinerary is positive for a cultural, economic and social development, and at the same time offers and promotes quality tourism capable of revitalizing the territory’s heritage (historical centres, monuments, etc).

This route has two points of excellence:

- historical value of the itinerary;
- rich valuable heritage: crypts and grottoes symbolize the presence of large archaic communities.

Keywords: medieval itinerary, communities that lived in grottos, medieval cultural heritage, sustainable tourism

Palavras-chave: itinerário medieval, comunidade rochoso, património cultural medieval, turismo sustentável

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1. Preliminary notes

Already since many years ago, the European Council financially backs different cultural routes whose aim was to give relevance to regional and local identities, promote a strict link between urban and rural cultures and finally support a cultural heritage in the perspective of the sustainable development of the territory (Resolution CM/Res 2007, 12).

On the basis of these European decisions here now I suggest the revaluation of an almost unknown route which starting from the town of Oria reaches Grumentum, passing through Apulia and Basilicata.

2. Guidone and his “Geographica”

2.1 The Origin of the route

The route which I want to illustrate is the one described by a cosmographer: the monk Guidone at the beginning of the XII century. He travelled through a territory rich with environmental and cultural values which may easily be revalued from a touristic point of view.

Before presenting the tourist proposal which is the aim of this paper, I will briefly speak both about the author and the territory which he passes through, as it is described in Guidone’s text.

a) The author

G. Uggeri (1974) maintains that for his critical attitude Guidone may be considered the first modern Italian geographer or better the first topographer as he gave a great relevance to the monuments, the inscriptions and signs of those Christian sanctuaries which in that period attracted a great number of pilgrims. “He consciously stands in front of the Apulian geographic tradition to inspect it with instruments obviously extremely rudimental but already with the competence of an archaeologist and an epigrapher, [...], even adding his personal observations and considerations” (Uggeri, 1974, p. 238).

Thus Guidone’s work, entitled *Geographica*³, consists of an interesting and valuable compilation of encyclopaedic type, as far as it contains important geographic and cartographic documents (Uggeri, 1974). This work is divided into

³ A copy of the original text is kept in Bruxelles in the Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, Ms 3897-3919. It is usually designed as manuscript b. For this paper the edition edited by J. Schnetz entitled *Itineraria Romana*, Leipzig, 1949, has been used.

six books, the first three are mostly geographic while the last ones are historical and mythographical.

Many historiographers (Uggeri, 1974) believe that the text was written in the South of Italy or probably Guidone was an Apulian⁴ as he shows a good knowledge of Apulia. The hypothesis of Guidone’s geographical belonging is justified by some considerations:

- the characters of the manuscript writing might be those used in the town of Benevento in the Bari-type⁵ version, showing the peculiar southern small letter;
- Guidone’s writing style, which is generally very terse and directly inspired by Anonimo Ravennate’s text, becomes detailed and original only from the description from the town of Salpi⁶ to Metaponto, that is the whole Apulia of the XII century;
- in addition Guidone gives a list of Apulian medieval centres “which are of a very limited interest and that only a person living there would know [...]”. On the other hand many of these towns became important exactly in the Norman period” (Uggeri, 1974, p. 239).
- The route taken into consideration here, entitled “*Item Samnum*”⁷ is described in chapter 49. It starts from Oria and reaches Anzi – Mottola – Minerva (near Castellaneta)⁸ – Monscampi (?) – Ginosa – Montescaglioso – Matera – Muro Lucano – Botromagno (near Gravina) – Misicuro (?) – Banzi⁹ – Acerenza – Grumento (picture 1).

4 Other authors think he was from Pisa, as he describes this city in detail.

5 The definition “Bari-type” was given by E. A. Loew in 1914. The characteristics may be identified in: a thin and fluent hatching, more rounded characters with a great decrease of inferior and superior strokes.

6 See for example the description of Trani, Lecce and Metaponto.

7 That is «Ories in qua reliquiae martirum Crisanti ed Dariae sunt, deinde civitas Auxia, Mutula, Minerva Monscampi, Genusium Severiarum que nunc Mons Seabius dicitur, Castra Annibalis quae Materies dicitur, Murus, Botrum Magnum, Mesechorum quam Sericorum corrupte dicunt, Bantea, Nidum Corvi quae est Acerentia, Grumentum quae dominio confinata est cum Tarentum».

8 A Prehistoric and then Roman station. The toponym still exists today (Mastrobuono, 1943, p. 67).

9 An important ecclesiastic epicentre similar to Taranto.

b) Territory and roads

The route I am going to talk about moves through an area which is especially rich in rural villages (Ginosa, Mottola, Montescaglioso, Matera) which according to Uggeri's opinion are in contrast with the ancient Roman tradition as they are characterized by dispersion and inaccessibility (Uggeri, 1978, p. 129). Nonetheless at the same time it is necessary to underline the fact that the rural centre of the XII century was strongly integrated and not separated, alternative or inferior to the urban one¹⁰. Actually this was a relevant element of the complex reality of Southern human settlement (Fonseca, 1978, p. 16-17). Such rural settlements were autarkic from an economical and technical point of view, so that all those resources peculiar to a Mediterranean environment were perfectly exploited. This was a consequence of the fact that the rural village employs its technical equipment to work the products of the land: oil presses, yards, mills and mill stones (Uggeri, 1978, p. 130).

Moreover in the same area there are many important Benedictine monasteries such as the ones in Montescaglioso and Banzi or the rural monastery in Casalrotto (Mottola). To conclude Guidone's route "reaches many relevant ecclesiastical centres, numerous rural villages and also Latin or Italian-Greek monasteries" (Dalena, 1995, p. 130)¹¹. Another point is that our geographer walked along a rural territory which presented a new peculiarity due to the economic revival of the XI century: new small villages became small fortified towns and most of all new roads were built. The increase in agricultural production¹² required new channels of distribution, so in Dalena's opinion (1995, p. 192) new routes were created to satisfy the local need of connection between the new centres – which often were located on hills – and the centres of greater political, commercial and religious interest. The ways of communication are not any longer linear as the Norman ones so far as one or more than one road passed side by side "the ancient one" that is mule tracks, vicinales, semitae, carrarae, strectule, which are hierarchized in local routes with difficulty. In general these new roads are "suitable for travellers but terribly winding, peculiar and substituted with alternatives. They are often located on the crest of hills to avoid bridges and at the same time the danger of marshes and ambushes while usually the roman routes were at piedmont" (Uggeri, 1983, p. 119). For example Guidone to go from Taranto to Matera had to walk along the

10 To better state this point, in his text Fonseca refers to a document where it is written that Roberto il Guiscardo and King Ruggero Great Count of Sicily in 1061 stayed "juxta criptas subterraneas" (Fonseca, 1978, p. 17).

11 Moreover as Uggeri states "during the Norman rule a very thick web of carriage roads which linked the new born towns must have developed. This towns arose near rural centers" (Uggeri, 1978, p. 132)

12 It was caused also by the deforestation and drainage which had already begun in the X century.

Tarantinian Appia¹³ but even in this case he was obliged “to take alternatives similar to the above mentioned ones, in order to substitute the long open and unsafe road with another one which was on a higher level and for this reason longer and winding but which offered close range shelters” (Uggeri, 1983, p. 123).

In some places this route corresponds to an important sheep-track¹⁴ called today Melfi-Castellaneta, which was and still is very large and crosses – as far as Guidone’s route is concerned – the territory of Gravina-Laterza-Castellaneta.

Another route which is present in the ending part of his travel is the Herculia route, which connected Basilicata on one side to Apulia and on the other to Calabria. This route, too, in Middle Ages was not totally fit for walking along so that it was substituted by mule tracks and narrow sheep-tracks. On this point Uggeri writes: “when he moves along the Roman routes, Guidone has a precise consciousness of time and distances. In case he has to go from Bari to Bitonto he knows that there are 12 miles [...]. When he has to move along ‘modern’ routes it is different; everything is more vague and general, nobody knows when one leaves, nobody knows when he will arrive, nobody can tell what he is going to pass through because in reality this system which seems near is not near at all, it is something which gives birth to movement and improvisation according to the many opportunities of the moment” (Uggeri, 1978, p. 120). Fortunately this second road system is still used and gives Guidone’s route a flavour of actuality.

2.2 Guidone’s route today: perspectives

The route and the territory Guidone crossed may be employed to favour the promotion of a cultural, rural heritage which should at the same time recuperate its historical memory.

As far as the route is concerned what I suggest here presents some variations due to the fact that Guidone’s description for today shows some “incongruities”. For example the next stop after the town of Matera is Muro Lucano which is located in the western side of the first town; the next to Muro Lucano is Gravina which is in the east further Matera and this doubles the length of the stretch of the road without any reasonable cause. Again from Acerenza to Grumentum there is a “lack” of information. In this case my suggestion is to fill “the gap” with short stops on the ridge of hills or not very high mountains giving, in my opinion, the route a greater touristic appeal.

So the route I propose is the following: Oria – Taranto – Mottola – Minerva (Castellaneta) – Ginosa – Montescaglioso – Matera – Gravina in Puglia – Banzi – Acerenza – Vaglio Basilciata – Tito – Satriano di Lucania – Brienza – Marsico

¹³ Its itinerary changes from Gravina in Puglia to Castellaneta.

¹⁴ Today it coincides with the sheep-track n. 21 of the Map of the Park of Tratturi – Apulia Region, Foggia, 2008.

Nuovo – Grumentum, with an amount of 260 km. It wants to give value most of all to those territorial characteristics already present at Guidone's time, such as:

- environmental values*: areas with an almost intact Mediterranean scrub like the one of Difesa di San Biagio which is in the countryside of Montescaglioso district;
- landscape values*: that is rural “archaic” landscapes which can be revalued as Museum of en plain air landscape or ecological Museums;
- existence of small medieval centres* which are still well preserved but not included in touristic programmes;
- existence of some elements peculiar of the territory* as Norman farms – for example Grancia of Santa Maria del Vetrano, which is located in Montescaglioso area – or fortified farms;
- Benedictine convents* which date back to early medieval period (XVIII and IX century) like the one in Banzi or Montescaglioso;
- Rupestrian Churches* existing on the whole territory, most of all in the ravine of the Ionian coast (only the town of Matera has 155 churches of this typology);
- rural habitats*, for example the Sassi of Matera, Mottola, Ginosa which in the past were inhabited by large communities.

To cover such a territory the line guides I suggest to follow are mostly tratturi¹⁵, for example: Tratturello Salentino, Tratturo Tarantino, Tratturello Martinese, Tratturo Melfi-Castellaneta (Apulia District, Foggia, 2008) or white roads.

Moreover one of this aims is to promote a kind of tourism which requires a slow travelling time – walking, trekking and when it is possible the use of bikes or regional trains –.

It is necessary to foresee places where to stop at the utmost 10 or 15 kilometres. These places should correspond to the location of historical centres which are already endowed with facilities to give hospitality to travellers and are located along the route; when this is not possible other buildings near architectural, landscape, environmental necessities should be erected.

3. From the analysis to the project

This route tends to become a project so it implies objectives and means of management.

¹⁵ “Tratturi” are large paths covered by grass or packed earth suitable for animals. The Royal Tratturi of Transumanza start from L’Aquila to reach Manduria in Apulia. They also pass through part of Basilicata. Small tratturi, instead, enable the connection between fields and farms.

3.1 Target

- 1.To promote an alternative tourism, focused on a local development which exploits local resources and gives relevance to touristic products in the light of an integrated strategy (definition of package holidays).
- 2.To reevaluate rural sceneries and small historical centres; this can favour a positive relationship with “places”.
- 3.To restore this Cultural Heritage, that should be more open to public view (for example Norman farms, fortified farms, Benedictine convents, etc.).
- 4.To indentify and reclaim the Medieval roads, and especially their intersections with new roads, to consider the possibility of recreating slow routes.
- 5.To utilize the system of *tratturi* present between Apulia and Basilicata to vary or enlarge the itinerary (mutual exchange of routes).
- 6.To destagionalize tourism, favouring spring and autumn also to reduce the pressure on Ionian and Tyrrhenian coasts.
- 7.To promote the multifunctional activities of agricultural farms (primary activities, restaurants, tourism).
- 8.To use to the vast network of “masserie” and “agriturismi” which covers the whole Apulian and Lucan territory. This favours local development to promote resources and diversify activities.
- 9.To empower and extend regional tourist offers, in the context of cultural, environmental, rural and oenogastronomic tourism.
- 10.To spread the knowledge of the results obtained at national and international level, by creating a web portal.

3.2 Instruments to manage the project

- 1.To involve local Bodies, both public and private, to constitute aggregations of main towns present along the itinerary; the areas where there are no aggregations could create consortiums (for example, small towns around Matera).
- 2.To promote new enterprises and new jobs, through the training of tour guides (such as territory animators or couriers).
- 3.To set up, for residents, sensibilization campaigns to favour proper tourist welcome and to plan, for tour operators, refresher courses.
- 4.To organize the participation in fairs and the preparation of texts able not only to illustrate places and itineraries but also Cultural, Environmental and Landscape Heritage present along the route.
- 5.To involve tour operators (for example farm managers, natural park persons in charge, etc.) to set up a network to share good practices and experiences.

4. Final considerations

Different forms of alternative tourism can favour local development, exploiting the available resources and promoting a systemic organization of the territory. Actually a tourist itinerary aimed at discovering a medieval route is directed to a specific target of tourists interested above all in a cultural-historical vacation, which has to be lived in direct contact with natural environment, Cultural Heritage, local traditions and typical products. To achieve this purpose, it is important to train tour operators, who should properly welcome visitors, appropriately propose the resources of the territory and suggest a range of alternatives, such as visits to neighbouring areas. Moreover the accommodation facilities which can easily satisfy this kind of alternative tourism are farm holidays, which mingle historical, natural and oenogastronomic aspects, largely present in this area¹⁶. To promote this itinerary, also the involvement of local tour operators is required (in particular Pro Loco¹⁷, tourist guides, tourist service companies, etc.) which should cooperate all together to offer a quality integrated package.

In any case, setting up a positive relationship with “places” is fundamental to give relevance to rural sceneries and small historical centres. For this purpose, it is necessary to make local inhabitants understand the deep importance of their traditions and identity values. Also archaic rural sceneries could become open air museums or ecomuseums. “Improvements which concern heritage elements [...] imply active preservation measures carried out through reutilization and resemantization projects [...]. Such revaluations in reality relate to synergism with socio-economic and territorial planning” (Furnari, 1994, p. 21). In the case here presented, resemantization can include also the organization of events and shows which take place nearby or inside Cultural Heritage areas, suitable for an open public usage.

It is relevant to render the medieval routes still present on the territory usable. In case they need to be restored: “the final purpose to pursue for the revaluation of these ancient millenary routes is to rebuild and preserve a mosaic of sceneries which symbolize the territory’s history and its evolution” (Moavero, 2004, p. 148). The restoration of the intersections with the present road system will promote the visit to nearby places which are connected by historical, cultural or archaeological affinities: for example the route from Minerva to Castellaneta. The old sheep-tracks – as already mentioned better known as *tratturi* – have to be considered as “peculiar

16 Actually it is important to evaluate the accommodation facilities present along the itinerary: they should be considered in terms of quantity and quality, in the light of better qualification and increase the inadequate facilities in the areas where they are not sufficient.

17 “Pro Loco” are organizations which work to evaluate the territory. Founded in 1881, these associations originally had tourist, cultural and sport purposes. Nowadays they are about 6,000 in Italy and are mainly devoted to tourism, because they safeguard and promote typical products, local traditions and historical, artistic, architectonic, cultural and environmental heritage.

monuments, because from one side as icons of the scenery they reconcile man to nature, and on the other as Arianna's thread they guide him into the labyrinth of history" (Paone, 1999, p. 151). A better evaluation of *tratturi* has given origin to a "Tratturi Park" in Apulia. As for Guidone's itinerary, also in this case, the *tratturi* already identified need connections with the main routes and/or with other similar itineraries.

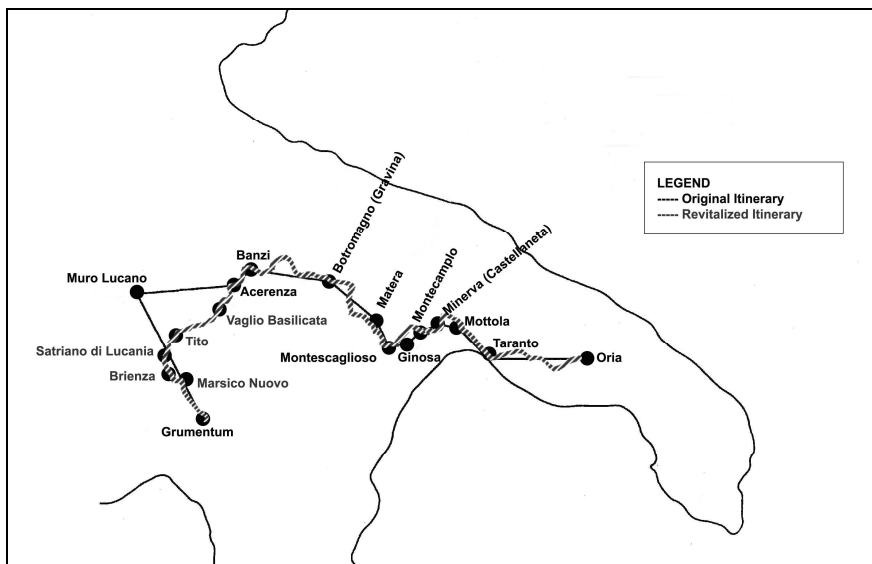
Tourism in Apulia and Basilicata is mainly due to seaside holidays and is concentrated during summer. The possibility to do a sustainable vacation (as the one presented in this paper) will certainly help tourism destagionalization, because the best periods for this itinerary are spring and autumn. Thus this produces cheap price offers and the extension of tourists' stay in the core of Apulian and Lucan territory.

Farms can promote active rural tourism, if linked to a didactic experience addressed to young tourists who may enjoy a multifaceted holiday, where the environmental and didactical aspects are linked to the territory features. "Rural tourism refers to the kind of tourism which takes place far from both traditional seaside and mountain destinations and cities of art [...]. In recent years a 'new' tourist population has emerged, characterized by a greater possibility and willingness to spend money for leisure time" (Ercole and Gilli, 2004, p. 87). The great number of farms present in Apulia and Basilicata gives a tourist the possibility to organize his/her stay according to personal attitudes and interests.

The promotion and marketing of the itinerary and of its features must be set up intended to a Regional and Interregional Tourist Plan. This tourist offer has to appear as an "unicum" based on a systemic approach to empower resources and efficiency.

Globalization and its new instruments make extremely easy to spread information on a vast scale: "thanks to internet features it is easier to promote, differentiate and destagionalize tourist offers. In fact it is very simple to update a web site and, as it reaches a wide audience, it seems to be one of the more interesting means to spread and promote new products" (Montani, 2005, p. 128).

In the end, the itinerary here proposed has to be considered as a form of alternative tourism which, combining the great variety of resources present in Apulia and Basilicata, is a destination of excellence that exploits local peculiarities to offer a sustainable holiday.



Picture 1 - Guidone's Itinerary in Apulia and Basilicata

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