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## Places and Religious Bands: Explorations in spiritual tourism

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# Places and Religious Bands. explorations in spiritual tourism

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The musical aspect of religious tourism is currently amongst the less investigated themes. A first survey suggests that although it does not appear to be the main motivation for religious travel, it is a valued component of the experience. The aim of this study is to explore how sounds operate to forge social and spiritual identifications on the principles of Lefebvre's rhythm analysis (2004).

This paper contributes to the emerging field of experiential tourism research by confirming that religious experiences are not only interior but also involve sensory experiences. It follows that tourists' sensory experiences should be a key component of any comprehensive tourist satisfaction assessment. In an empirical case study in cities of Southern Italy we explored the phenomenon of religious bands. This is part of an ongoing study that employs music, religion and tourism as a platform, situating music as a basis for advocating engagement with spirituality and religion tourism.

**Key Words:** soundscape, tourist experience, religious band, Italy

## Introduction

Religious tourism is a kind of tourism linking the phenomena of tourism and pilgrimage and involves all of the senses. Nocifora (2010), for instance defined religious tourism as a tourist practice that has as its destination places that have a strong religious connotation but whose motivation is eminently cultural and spiritual, additionally it can be ethnic, or naturalistic, or of an ethical / social character, not just a form of travel related to religion in a narrow sense. At the same time there are spatial, visible, concrete, knowledge and sacred factors relevant to the geography of pilgrimage (Lopez, 2014).

Today, religious heritage tourism is an international phenomenon, involving millions of people of different nationalities from around the world. Development of religious tourist destinations has recently allowed pilgrimages to regain their historical importance and religious itineraries to recover their role as a link between people and nations. Religious tourism also combines cultural and sonorous events (e.g. sacred music). While motivations have changed over time, contact with local people, visiting places with spiritual and historical significance and immersion in soundscape in the places for which music was composed still give tourist-travellers a new experience.

Tourist experiences are multisensory and tourism involves various senses, however, while most tourists recognise the importance of the soundscape to their experiences, sound and soundscapes are seldom taken into consideration when choosing a destination.

From experiential perspectives, religious journeys become paradigms of a new way to see mobility into contemplation and perception of the cultural and environmental context, becoming a metaphor of the qualities of the internal and visible worlds. The term pilgrim is derived from the notion of pilgrimage; historically, a pilgrim was a person who walked to a shrine or holy place out of religious motivation (Rinschede, 1992). Nowadays, a pilgrim (*sensu stricto*) is typically a traveller who moves within time and space on an international scale or can be someone who goes on a spiritual, metaphysical pilgrimage that can take place anywhere (Lopez and Lois González, 2017).

This paper examines several dimensions of pilgrimage tourism, from the relationship between soundscape and tourist satisfaction and the tourist's sensory experience, to the economic and religious dimensions of the experience. The term 'soundscape' is used to refer to

While the paper is the result of a joint work, Section 3 is attributed to Antonietta Ivona, Section 2 to Donatella Privitera. The introduction and conclusions are common.

all sounds that come from the environment as a result of energy produced by various phenomena. From one point of view, soundscapes contribute to the conservation of the cultural heritage of places and to their identity, and the quality of soundscapes is essential to their recreational use. In tourism the soundscape is the acoustic environment perceived by tourists from their first step into a destination until their departure (Liu *et al.*, 2017).

Spiritual or religious tourism includes visits to religious sites such as churches, cathedrals and temples, and events. Events frequently coincide with the feast day of the patron saint of a city and take various forms (religious rites, special street lights, food festivals, markets, brass band and popular music concerts), attracting a high number of visitors motivated by tourism as well as those motivated by spiritual interests (Trono, 2016).

This study uses the existing soundscapes literature to investigate the visitors' experience of a religious site offering a multi-sensory experience. The aim of the paper is to explore how sounds forge social and spiritual identifications using methods based on the principles of Lefebvre's rhythm analysis (2004). We ask what kind of experiences visitors are seeking and what the key elements of these experiences are. We also attempt to identify the main factors contributing to positive perception of a religious place. Through all of this, we are highly aware that tourism studies have tended to ignore the importance of sonic ways of knowing (Waite and Duffy, 2010).

The geographical context of investigation is a region of Southern Italy. In Apulia we aimed to examine the phenomenon of religious bands. To this end we carried out a direct survey and interviews with local stakeholders. The history of the religious band dates, in some cases, from several centuries ago. In addition to travelling around the area to play at religious festivals, they play during funerals and religious and civil ceremonies in their own communities.

This article is structured as follows: Section 2 conceptualises the framework of motivations for a religious trip in addition to discussing the role that music can play in the development of religious journey; Section 3 explains the research design used, and illustrates the case study findings; the paper concludes by discussing these findings and the limitations of the study, thereby setting out the direction for future research as well as highlighting the implications for management.

## **The religious journey: cultural, economic and sonorous components**

The concept of the religious journey has ancient roots; it was the first typology of tourism to be practiced, with religious purpose. Cultural and economic components of religious travel are relevant to mobility phenomena. Mobility theorists direct their attention to the movement of different types of travellers across time and place and some compare the movements of travel organised by tour operators, business tourists, economic migrants or pilgrims. The various (formal and informal, legal and illegal) agencies involved in the movement of these various groups might prefer to relate such movements to the socio-economic, cultural and political contexts of their origins and destinations (Harrison, 2017).

Religious tourism and pilgrimage are substantial motives for the global movement of people (Griffin and Raj, 2017) and can also promote peace by encouraging intercultural and interfaith dialogue and understanding. Spiritual motives, search for the divine, for religious support and for physical health are amongst the motivations for a religious trip. Religious trips were practised by the 'society of all the continents' (Battilani, 2009:65) and painted caverns developed a function analogous to that of today's cathedrals. In the earliest civilisations - the Sumerian, Assyrian-Babylonian, Ittitan and Egyptian civilisations, religious and political power were tightly connected and the great cities attracted thousands of pilgrims visiting both the sacred places and the representatives of the (Battilani, 2009). Over time the notion of religious travel has assumed a double meaning: to feel attracted by the divine and to go and meet God through the roots of faith. The experience of pilgrimage embodies the pilgrim's desire to seek or manifest his or her identity and value as a person. The choice of travel destination can be seen as a manifestation of spiritual awareness of the notion of life's journey (religious or not) and can be a means of expressing one's personal or social identity, or a search for or reaffirmation of one's identity (Liutikas, 2017). It is important to define spiritual pilgrimage as the segment of a trip that involves visiting somewhere outside of one's usual environment, for the purpose of spiritual growth, which encompasses not only religious growth, but also non-religious, sacred or experiential purposes (Griffin and Raj, 2017).

Nowadays, pilgrims travel for many reasons other than religious ones and pilgrimage is a type of cultural tourism which UNWTO (2017) identified as having

three main benefits, noting that: religious tourism raises awareness of humanity's common heritage and provides resources for preservation; it can contribute to local development; it builds cultural understanding.

In general, visitors to sacred places are characterised by a remarkable loyalty to the site visited. This loyalty can be regarded as an essential element of the relationship between the religious tourist or pilgrim and his or her destination. Thus, religious tourism is usually less affected by trends and economic crisis than other forms of tourism (Rocca, 2013).

A key principle of religious tourism is to preserve the spirit of the destinations, respect their authenticity and manage and promote them with integrity whilst making them accessible for all. This can be a challenge when strategies for tourism promotion can encourage the arrival of new tourists to sacred places in less known regions. Overall, this form of travel is often connected to holidays, cultural or religious events and in such case, it is difficult to distinguish a pilgrim from a tourist.

In the high Middle Ages, the term pilgrim assumed a new meaning. In the Christian world this resulted in the integration of two different forms of pilgrimage - devotional and penitential - which underlined the deep and spiritual nature of pilgrimage (Fortress, 2013).

Today religious sites present a wide variety of offerings, ranging from services, music and other structured religious activities to more secular visitor facilities such as museums and attractions located within their historic buildings. There are often many reasons to visit religious places: they offer the opportunity to pause for reflection, engage in spiritual practice, gaze in wonder at the aesthetic beauty of the architecture (De Salvo, 2015) and participate in events (Getz, 2007). Given the proliferation of blogs and diaries of trips and the potential for 'virtual walks' or virtual tours (before and after the experience), in some aspects we are facing a new sacred space (Lopez, 2013) that is questioning what is officially sacred (Kong, 2010; Collins-Kreiner, 2010). However, religion is an essential part of society, and so information related to religious issues has a crucial influence on culture and individuals' thinking styles. Religion continues to play a critical role as a catalyst for travel or at the very least an underlying influence on choice of destination. Religious motivation remains central to much spiritual tourism:

*if spirituality is the goal, travelling seems like an ideal setting within which it can be sought and, sometimes, even found (Cheer et al., 2017:252).*

At the same time, above all, tourism related to religious heritage connects communities and plays an important role in ensuring mutual understanding, as it has in the past. Hence, religious trips are not solely penitential but also an experience, which implies that there is an element of curiosity underlying religious tourism, a curiosity about different engagements in sacred places (Lois González and Lopez, 2015). In many instances, in modern times, the difference between pilgrimage and tourist experience is actually reduced. Modern pilgrims go to, for example, Lourdes or Santiago de Compostela, to mention well-known pilgrim destinations, also visiting the surrounding territories. An integration of faith with the beauty of the sanctuaries, and therefore of the places where they are positioned doesn't differentiate the pilgrim from the tourist. At the same time, all travellers can be searching for answers to questions of faith and experience their journeys as occasions for meeting with God (Andreatta 2017). In addition, because of its cultural and historical components, religious heritage tourism contributes to the host country's economy and adds to the attraction of cities, villages, and natural areas, thus leading to increased sustainability (Trono, 2012; Trono and Oliva, 2013).

The idea of binding sites and religious events to the tourism phenomenon is in itself very controversial: it is difficult to interpret religious tourism as a mere tourism phenomenon but the relationship has important implications in key territories where

*functions and religious ceremonies are an important geographic factor for the tourism development in the area that welcomes them (Dallari, Trono and Zabbini, 2009:25).*

In terms of religious tourism, Italy offers about 1,500 shrines, 30,000 churches, 700 diocesan museums and large numbers of monasteries and convents. According to research conducted by Isnart (National Institute of Tourism Research, 2013) religious tourism in Italy attracts more than 5.6 million visitors per year. Of these, 3.3 million are foreign tourists and 2.3 million are domestic tourists. Foreign customers represent approximately 60% of the segment with 45.3% coming from Europe and 14.9% from non-EU countries. The study also showed that 41.4% of religious tourists were aged between 30 and 50 years and 44.4% relied on intermediaries, tour operators and travel agencies to



organise their trip. About a third (32.7%) travelled with a partner, 20.0% chose an organised tour; 19.7% travelled with a group of friends, 13.3% with their family and 9.8% travelled alone

Religious motivation, which is the principal reason (71.9%), is linked with the desire to participate in events of a spiritual nature (37%). Among the other motivations for choosing an Italian destination are the wealth of the artistic and monumental heritage (42.4% of tourists), desire to get to know new places (26.3%) and to get to know the habits and customs of local people (21.1%) (Isnart, 2013).

Research of the data shows that the theme of music reveals great potential for development linked to religion. At the same time music is able to produce an alternative, offering a tool for expression of self and others for the subject, representing and inducing emotions (Izis 2012).

Music represents the identity of a territory, and also the spatial and other influential origins of the composer (Revill, 2000; Caterina, 2008). Therefore, music, is linked to the cultural and internal aspects of religious tourism. Musical destinations and religious-musical itineraries have potential for tourism development, but this remains a niche market for tourist numbers and profits.

Henri Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* (2004) offers a starting point for investigating the complex temporal rhythms of the multiple mobilities that course through space. The visceral sonic map of Duffy *et al.* (2016), was based on the principles of Lefebvre's rhythm analysis (2004): this is founded in the concept of space, as a form of registration and description of the lived music experience that can capture the dynamic relationship between space and body, building on the concept of space-time and known sound-rhythm through the perceptions of the body (Duffy *et al.*, 2011).

A broad range of critical studies of soundscapes have been carried out within the field of sonic geography, however the interpretation and application of detailed examinations are still underdeveloped (Boyd and Daffy 2012). To summarise, social rhythms may be institutionalised (e.g. marked by national and religious occasions; or television schedules) or produced through synchronised habits (eating, playing and working together). The links between 'tangible' and 'cultural', 'internal' and 'intangible' are important when they become evoked by sound and therefore we must

consider the particular connections between the sounds, and the multisensory practices and places that make up a religious event. The rhythms of an event as sense of community can contribute to the musical component of a religious journey, in its broadest sense.

### A case study: The 'touring bands' of Apulia

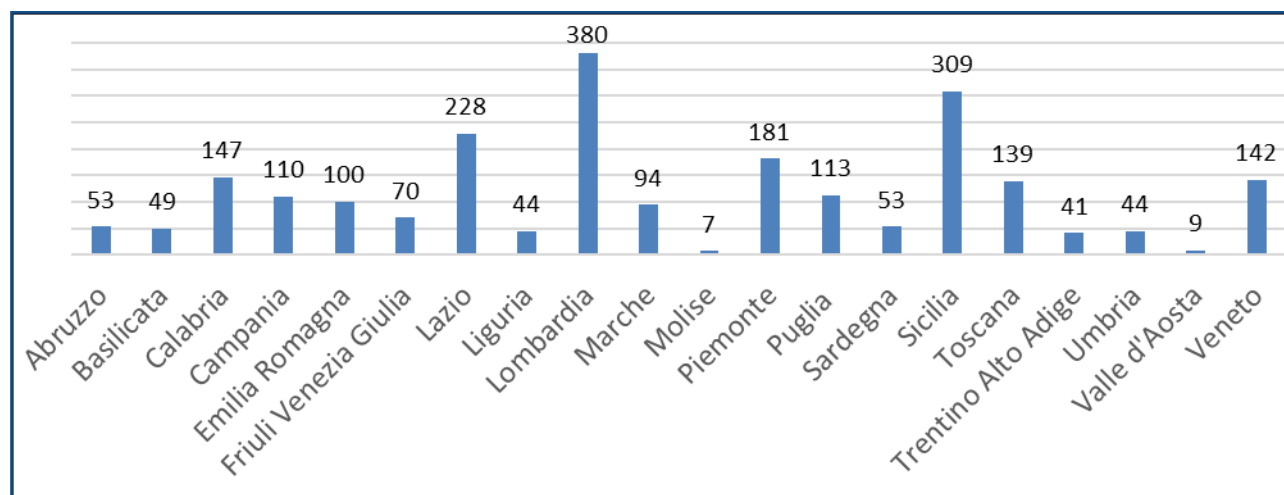
Music is currently among the less explored aspects of religious tourism. After an initial review of existing literature on the history of Italian bands (Pipitò and Vranca, 2002; Raganato, 2018; Creux, 2016), the authors analysed the case of the Apulian bands (Tragni, 1985; Taranto and Zirioni, 1988; Cavallo, 2008; Pascali, 2008; Rinaldi, 2016; Mastromarino, 2018). To this end, the investigation required field research through historical documents, archival images and interviews with local history specialists to understand when the musical bands stopped being just a support for a religious event to become, themselves, a tourist-religious attraction. The following question has been asked:

*Can music, in its many expressions, be part of the demand for religious tourism?*

A first analysis suggests that although musical experience does not appear to be the main motivation for religious travel, it is in fact a valued component of the experience. For example, experiencing gospel music in the United States of America is a common travel suggestion. Gospel music spread during the 1930s; it represented a break with the classical music sung in Baptist churches up to that point and, over the years, it has become a symbol of identity for African-American communities throughout the country. Nowadays, many holiday packages to US cities offer chances to hear gospel choirs during religious ceremonies (e.g. an association of major North American travel operators offers a package called the 'Mississippi Blues Trail', which allows customers to experiences the places and music of the area).

In Southern Italy, specifically in Apulia, the phenomenon of religious bands, in particular the 'touring bands', represents a significant synthesis of music with religious travel.

Touring bands are a particular type of professional, civil symphonic band (with different structures and history from military bands)<sup>[1]</sup>. They are large groups that, alongside a wide repertoire of symphonic marches and religious music, perform versions of entire classical symphonies and symphonic poems on typical

**Figure 1: Number of Bands in Italian Regions, 2018**

platforms called ‘bandstands’. The origins of these bands can be traced back to the eighteenth century, as can the sonority, the use of certain instruments, the repertoire and the particular form of organisation. Considering the use of some instruments (like the saxophone and the clarinet) and the adoption of original repertoire, this aspect of the bands developed from the mid-nineteenth century into the twentieth century (Ass. Ars Vita Est, 2012).

The scholars of the band phenomenon, attribute the formation of the band in its modern guise to the French Revolution and argue that the French Revolution radically changed the way that music was enjoyed: instead of being confined to closed and elitist places such as theatres, music moved to outdoor spaces and became accessible to anyone who was interested in listening. Thus, the main influence of the French Revolution on music was that it changed or at least widened its functions, making it an essential element of every public occasion and thereby extending the audience in an extraordinary way (Ass. Ars Vita Est, 2012; Creux, 2016).

The intent to popularise music can also be detected in Italy from its Unification in 1861. From that date, the bands of many Italian cities were transformed into bands of the National Guard and remained, later, as municipal bands. The transformation affected their overall organisation and repertoire.

1. All the members of a military band are members of a specific institution that shapes the band’s activity. Civil bands emerged later and can be divided into amateur (and hence part-time) and professional bands.

In Italy bands are particularly widespread in the North but there are important examples throughout the country (Figure 1). In total Italy has 2,312 musical bands; in the southern regions there are officially 726 bands (309 in Sicily alone) while in the other regions of Italy there are 1,586 bands (in Lombardy there are 379, more than in all other Italian regions) ([www.bandamusicale.it](http://www.bandamusicale.it)). Their history dates back several centuries in some cases. The oldest band in Italy was founded on 8th July 1518 by the parish priest of Pietra Ligure, in the province of Savona, to accompany religious services. For the purposes of distinguishing between bands Italy can be divided into three regions, the North, the Centre and the South. In the North, amateur bands are more widespread and their repertoire is no longer just lyric-symphonic, but also includes film music or light music. In the Centre there are amateur and military bands belonging to different Italian military corps made up of hired professionals, with national competitive exams. In the South, touring bands predominate and are much more common than in the rest of Italy. The exceptions are Sicily and Sardinia, where there are similar numbers of amateur and touring bands.

Apulia has a long and important band tradition dating back to the second half of the 1700s, when the touring bands served a combination of religious and entertainment functions, as they still do today. As well as travelling around the area to play at religious festivals (hence the name touring bands), touring bands played during funerals and religious and civil ceremonies in their own communities. Their recreational function, on the other hand, took the form

of concerts in public gardens or ‘municipal villas’ that were promoted by public administrations and for which iron structures similar to modern bandstands were constructed (Tragni, 1985).

The first groups of what became known as ‘funeral musicians’ were founded in Orsara di Puglia, in the Province of Foggia (Northern Apulia), in 1780; in 1773 in Terlizzi to accompany the triumphal chariot of the Madonna of Rovereto; in 1797 they performed in Acquaviva delle Fonti directed by an anti-Bourbon Carbonaro, and subsequently in Conversano (the three municipalities are in the province of Bari); since then the number of Bands has gradually increased in many other municipalities of the Apulia region.

At first, touring bands mostly consisted of amateur musicians, but over time they came to be made up of professional musicians. Until a few decades ago, Apulian band musicians passed their passion for music on to their children, who would play in the town band from a young age (Rinaldi, 2014). Being a soloist or member of the city’s musical band meant social elevation and popularity. Before World War II the members of most of the Apulian bands were paid by their Municipality, which also provided the Master Director and foreign soloists with accommodation and a rehearsal room.

Often the direction of the band’s activities was entrusted to notable figures in the municipalities to which they belonged. This served a dual purpose: it encouraged the affluent classes to take philanthropic attitude towards members of the band and gave the latter an economic conduction, as we would say today. For example, the Constitutive Act (of 1852; the band had been playing touring for several years by this point) of one of the oldest Apulian Bands, that of Castellana Grotte (in the province of Bari), states

*The lords dell’Erba and Sgobba [the two directors of the company], in the firm idea of improving the condition of the country more and more, pushing it down the road to civilisation; as well as with the aim of relieving Band members of the weight of the interest payments as above [on loans for the purchase of instruments and other items] and encouraging them to study music, voluntarily offer to advance the sum of 160 Ducats<sup>[2]</sup> for the purchase of musical instruments without claiming any compensation or interest (Mastromarino, 2018:9).*

From the Unification of Italy, the Bands were formalised through public documents to establish their

educational role within the community; the members of the band were recognised as musicians and began to receive a grant, e.g. the band leader of Castellana Grotte was awarded an annual salary of 120 ducats, as stated in the Constitutive Act.

Although the social value of belonging to a music band has perhaps been completely lost, bands remain as widespread as ever in many Apulian communities. Today there are 113 Apulian music bands providing celebratory music for religious events and over time, their function has expanded to include attracting local and non-local tourists. In Apulia there is no Patron Saint Day that is not marked by band music. The solemnity of the early morning departure of the statue of the Patron Saint or Madonna (Patron of the village) from the church in which it is guarded, is emphasised by band music. Together with these sounds and the traditional ‘calecasse’ (mortar blasts) the entire community comes together in a kind of collective acknowledgement of the sacred that, over time, has slowly come to draw in more and more tourists.

In the 258 Municipalities of Puglia one or more religious festivals are held every year; these numbers can help us understand how much interest exists and can increase around the aggregate value of the musical bands which, where it is not already present, can turn into a resource for internal tourism and the attraction of non-residents. An interesting tourism initiative in the Apulia region is the ‘Patron Saints of Apulia’ (<http://www.patronidipuglia.it>) initiative, which brings together thirty-five towns in Puglia around a strongly religious theme, linked to the patron saints of the cities and is based on thematic itineraries: the fires and the lights; pilgrimages, historical parades, triumphal chariots and music. The latter theme recognises band music as a tourist attraction (Figures 2-3).

An evolution in modern band music has been perceptible for several years; bands no longer play primarily, in support of religious events, but are a tourist attraction in their own right, which is capitalised on through the organisation of *ad hoc* events. Recent examples are the ‘Sounds of Passion Festival’ in

2. In 1852 160 ducats corresponded to approximately to the average annual salary of a state employee (Battilossi, 1999, pp. 94-95). In the Kingdom of Naples, salaries differed according to place, commitment and many other variables. For example, in 1839 the salary of an elementary teacher in ‘Terra d’Otranto’ ranged from 20 to 30 ducats whereas in the Kingdom of Naples it was about twice this sum (Vigo, 1977:77).



**Figure 2: The Bands during the celebration for Patron Saint Maria Santissima della Vetrana on April 25<sup>th</sup> in Castellana Grotte (Bari, Italy)**



Photo: Ivona, Privitera, 2018

Sorrento (Campania), which celebrates band music as an essential component of the tradition of Holy Week in Southern Italy and the Bandalarga Festival in the Municipality of Conversano (Apulia), which celebrates band concerts, making them the central to a twenty-day event. This second event, which has seen its 21st edition, originated as a 'party of the bands' and over the years has evolved into an event that protects and promotes the whole musical tradition of the Apulian territory by spreading knowledge of Apulia's musical heritage. The founder of the event was Master Schirinzi, director of the Grande Orchestra di Fiati Gioacchino Ligonzo - City of Conversano, one of the oldest and most important in Apulia, as mentioned above. The band consists of about sixty elements and Schirinzi's innovation of playing great operas such as Verdi's *Nabucco*, which was a great success with audiences, led to the acceptance of the new role of this band in particular. In addition, the Municipality of Conversano is preparing to ask UNESCO to recognise its band as a form of intangible cultural heritage, in order to enhance the profile and recognition of the entire Apulian band heritage.

Another important example of cultural synergy between music, tradition and territorial valorisation is the Valle d'Itria Festival of Musical Bands, which hosts European and international bands and is now in its twenty-second season. The repetition during the years of thematic festivals clearly demonstrates the desire to preserve the enormous cultural capital that the bands, with their ancient roots, represent and it also highlights current interest in the value of this musical genre. This interest also exists at national government level, where proposals for legislation have been introduced (thus far not transformed into state law!) for the promotion, enhancement and support of popular music, in which band music could be included. The band itself is a tool whereby a whole nation expresses its joy, its pain, its religious sentiment. The band is the medium that conveys, through music, the feelings of the people, their enthusiasm, their passion, their defeats. This was even more true in the past, when people, to a greater extent than today, occupied the streets and squares in displays of humanity. The bands were ever ready to interpret collective turmoil, alternatively they would express the form of beauty and joy that music communicates, in the form of airs and songs that people would come to know and love.



This relevance is even more amazing considering the simplicity of the men who made up the band: humble, yet sensitive souls immersed in the nobility of art, who generously performed for whoever would listen.

In short, the Apulian bands, which began with the almost spontaneous formation of groups to carry out a social function (cultural elevation of less wealthy cults), or in some cases a political function - as in the case of the aforementioned Band of Acquaviva delle Fonti (Apulia), which was created as a propaganda tool against Bourbon domination - have, over the centuries, become real music laboratories serving in the area.

## Conclusions

Religion represents and influences the way many people lead their life and interpret their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Faith can become culture and culture can become a mediator of religious experience. Looking at the connections between tourism, religion and knowledge, one can understand how a visit to a religious or sacred site can deepen the faith of believers; for other visitors it is a chance to encounter different cultures and stories. The contribution of this study, though simulated, can be summarised in the recommendations to focus on the experience of sound in the field of tourism, especially in the religious one. Travel is commonly an occasion for sonic immersion, which can thus be shaped by the merging of religious rhythms, with religious walking events, or visits to sanctuaries and variously spaced musical interludes.

The limits of this paper are considerable, but the work leads the authors to a series of theoretical questions for exploration; in particular the spatial, cultural, sound and emotional aspects appear interesting. The findings highlight that a religious trip offers a multisensory experience that encompasses the general sounds of the places visited in addition to the music one encounters. From the case study of Apulia that we have presented one can begin develop a wider appreciation for the attractiveness of religious tourism in all its components.

**Figure 3: The Bands during the celebration for Patron Saint Maria Santissima della Vetrana on April 27th in Castellana Grotte (Bari, Italy)**



Photo: Ivona, Privitera 2018

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