Bandits and banditry in Sardinia
A negative social phenomenon transformed into a cultural-tourism experience

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This paper will analyse the evolution of the perception of Sardinian banditry from an Anglo-American perspective through a corpus-driven analysis carried out on a selection of texts written from the beginning of the 20th century up until the last few years. Over this period in fact, the image of the bandit has undergone a process of rehabilitation, resulting from his being depicted in the past as an extremely negative figure, to his becoming a legendary, folkloristic character to be sold as a tourist product.

The paper will attempt to retrace this evolution from a linguistic point of view by analysing a corpus of articles, travel reports and travel guides sections (regarding bandits and banditry in Sardinia) published in USA, Canada and UK from the early 1900s up to the present day. The relatively rapid conceptual change of these themes it will be outlined from the Anglo-American perspective, demonstrating how Sardinian bandits are no longer solely defined as social beings to be condemned, but are portrayed as legendary figures characterized by positive and fascinating implications. This conceptual and linguistic evolution appears particularly evident in the language of tourism, which traditionally omits what Dann (1996: 209) defines as the “undesirable elements” rooted in the history and/or culture of a specific place, thus avoiding any reference to criminal events, persons or other unpleasant aspects of a tourist destination. However, the contemporary language of tourism used in several English tour guides, travel reports and articles dedicated to Sardinia portrays banditry as a cultural attraction and transforms it into a tourist product for specialized tours.

Through a corpus-based approach, this research will analyse the most frequent collocations and linguistic contexts employed to define bandits and banditry in Sardinia, classifying the results also in a diachronic perspective in order to illustrate their progressing conceptual transformation. The analysis will also highlight how the language used to describe these phenomena shaped (and continues to shape) the image and the perception of Sardinia and of its culture in the Anglo-American world and, in particular, how the
language of tourism has managed to transform banditry and bandits from a negative phenomenon into a cultural-tourism experience.

Key words: bandits and banditry, Sardinia, corpus linguistics, language of tourism

1 Banditry in Sardinia: a brief history

The phenomenon of banditry has characterised Sardinian history for many centuries, and represented the expression of a culture and social unrest which shaped a long-held negative image of Sardinia and of its people, both identified as criminal and dangerous entities, rebellious to any imposed laws or domination and led by principles inspired to ancient rural codes and to a “sub-culture of violence” (Wolfgang, 1970: 10) particularly spread in the Barbagia area. The Barbagia region is a mountainous and unspoilt territory located in the province of Nuoro, further subdivided into four main sub-regions: the Barbagia of Ollolai, the Barbagia of Seulo, the Barbagia of Belvì and the Mandrolisai. Its name derives from the Latin term barbaria and it was used by the Romans to identify the barbarian-like character of local populations that the Roman Empire never managed to completely tame. Marongiu (2004:16) defined this area as an “[…] obscure triangle of isolation, the undisputed territory of the shepherd and the bandit” with which “banditry and serious crime seem […] to be constantly correlated”. Pirastu (1973: 146) identified Barbagia as the “epicentre” of Sardinian criminality, stating that:

“In Barbagia […] there is a type of criminality whose deep origins should be retraced in the archaic shepherd world that generated it and in the contradictions and civilization conflict with its surrounding society”.

Several anthropologists, sociologists and historians (Ferracuti, Lazzari and Wolfgang 1970; Pirastu 1973; Hobsbawm 1969; Marongiu 2004; Brigaglia 2009) carried out extensive studies to investigate and comprehend the reasons and origins of Sardinian banditry, identifying those socio-historical events and factors that characterised criminal history in Sardinia from 1600 up to the late 1990s, including both minor crimes such as theft, robbery, extortion, personal injury and sheep rustling, and more serious acts such as heinous murders, kidnappings and bombing attacks against local institutions and their representatives.

As shown by Pirastu (1973), between the 17th century and up to the 1960-70s, the majority of Sardinian bandits were born and/or lived in
shepherding contexts. He stated that the socio-historical origins which gave birth to Sardinian banditry could be traced back to the “[…] conflict between a natural shepherd society, living according to traditional rules settled as a downright legal order throughout time, and a conqueror State willing to dictate its laws” (Pirastu, 1973: 147). The purposes of these laws were often not compatible with the needs of those areas and populations, and were imposed from above following “a colonial-type orientation” (Pirastu, 1973: 150) that only favoured large landowners through measures entailing higher land rental rates and not including any prospective planning for the transformation of nomadic shepherding towards a more modern and independent organization.

As summarized by Pinna (1970), the history of Sardinia has been a history of alternating dominations, comprising the Phoenicians (800 B.C.), the Carthaginians (532 B.C.), the Romans (238 B.C.- 455 A.D.), the Vandals, Byzantines, Goths, Longobards and Saracens, who respectively dominated Sardinia for about four-hundred years. During the Giudicati kingdoms (9th – 15th century A.D.) Sardinia had a brief period of autonomy, subsequently followed by the Pisan, Genoese and Aragonese dominations. The Aragonese rule (1323 – 1479) was then replaced by that of the Spanish kings, who reigned over the island up to 1720. After that, Sardinia was assigned to the House of Savoy remaining part of the Piedmont Kingdom until the Risorgimento years (1861), when the island finally acquired the status of region of the Kingdom of Italy. All these centuries of domination determined strong feelings of hatred, mistrust and wariness towards foreign authorities, particularly during the four centuries of Iberian domination. In fact, the Aragonese and Spanish kingdoms harshly exploited the people and resources of Sardinia, without promoting any sort of initiative to improve the conditions of local populations. Deprived of their means of support, goods and personal belongings seized because of the non-payment of taxes, people consequently resorted to robbery, theft or to the murdering of tax collectors or other officials, in order to guarantee their own survival.

Despite the many repression campaigns carried out by the Iberian authorities, banditry in Sardinia was never completely quelled and when the Piedmontese arrived in 1720 the situation became extremely serious, worsened by the feudal contrasts inherited from the former dominators and the new House of Savoy’s impositions. Between 1889 up to the beginning of the 20th century, the phenomenon of Sardinian banditry burst out once again, proving some of its bloodiest moments, with protagonists such as Giovanni Corbeddu6, the Sanna-Serra brothers7 and the beginning of the so-called Manna Disamistade [The Great Enmity], a blood feud originated in Orgosolo because of an inheritance dispute between two families, which

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6 Giovanni Corbeddu
7 Sanna-Serra brothers
steeped the village in blood between 1902 and 1917 and led to twenty homicides and an imprecise number of robberies, sheep-rustling episodes and retaliations (Cagnetta 1975).

During the First World War the phenomenon of banditry decreased considerably, mostly because of the conscription of many Sardinian men, while in the following twenty years of Fascism the war on banditry was stepped considerably. Despite of the killing of Samuele Stochino\(^8\) (one of the most violent Sardinian bandits) in 1928 and the subsequent declarations by the Fascist regime that it had completely eradicated banditry, the phenomenon never completely died out. On the contrary, it was exactly in those years that the so called “cruel bandits”\(^9\) (Marongiu 2004: 59) committed some of their most heinous crimes, including the kidnapping and killing of children, murders, robberies, hold-ups and gunfights.

After the Second World War, the social and economic conditions were extremely critical in Sardinia. Between 1949 and 1955 banditry arouse once again with high peaks of violence resulting in criminal episodes such as a mass hold-up in 1952 on the road to Ozieri, during which a group of bandits managed to stop and rob around 240 people travelling by car or truck on that road without being interrupted or caught by the police; or the kidnapping of 20 people in 1953, during which one of the hostages, an engineer called Capra, was actually killed by the kidnappers (Pirastu 1973).

Finally, from the 1970s up to the 1990s Sardinian banditry went through a deep process of transformation. In fact, during these years bandits were almost exclusively involved in kidnapping activities aimed at the collection of high ransoms, and this new merely economic attitude determined somehow the end of “traditional banditry”\(^10\) (Marongiu 2004: 71) that, up to that moment, had recurred to kidnapping only to reduce social distances through the impoverishment of rich people and not just to pursue a personal self-centred enrichment.
2 Sardinian banditry and Anglo-American written media

From the Anglo-American perspective, Sardinian banditry was usually and mostly perceived as a negative phenomenon, as shown in the image below which illustrates the title of a New York Times article published in 1899.

![Image of New York Times article](image.png)

Figure 1: extract from an article related to Sardinian banditry - The New York Times 1899.

However, from the second half of the 20th century the spread of anthropological studies allowed a deeper political and cultural awareness of the phenomenon, and Anglo-American media started describing Sardinian banditry with a less patronising and condemning attitude by taking into account its profound socio-cultural implications (as it will later shown in the analysis, see paragraphs 3.3.2 – examples 28 and 29 – and 3.3.3 – examples 39 to 41).

From a linguistic point of view, such a different approach is particularly evident in the analysis of Anglo-American newspaper/magazine articles specifically related to banditry in Sardinia. In fact, while at the beginning of the 20th century Sardinian bandits were portrayed in the news as ferocious figures, guilty of the most horrendous crimes and murders, around the 1960s and the 1970s the sociological and cultural implications behind these figures started to emerge from the media, also influenced by the numerous investigations on the phenomenon. Furthermore, in the 1960s and the 1970s the release of films such as *Banditi a Orgosolo* or *Padre Padrone* amplified the interest in banditry with a new attitude based on the documentary description of the society of inland Sardinia. In more recent times, Anglo-American newspaper/magazine articles depicted Sardinian banditry with a prevalently cultural slant and a sort of folkloric interest,
visible in particular in the descriptions of past bandits and banditry events markedly set against contemporary criminal episodes, whose protagonists were only occasionally defined *bandit(s)* just to compare them with the nobler ‘bandits of the past’ or to simply employ a synonym of the terms *kidnapper(s)* or *killer(s)*.

The analysis showed also that, since the beginning of the 20th century and, above all, up to the present day, Anglo-American travel articles and guides dedicated to Sardinia have mainly described the phenomenon of banditry in minimizing terms, responding to a typical strategy of the language of tourism, namely the technique of *significant omission* (Dann, 1996). This technique entails both the visual and verbal dimensions of a tourist text and results in the leaving out of any potential reference to the unpleasant aspects of a destination, or in the omission of the most gruesome details related to these aspects14. This is particularly evident in the most contemporary tourist texts analysed of the corpus, in which the negative implications related to Sardinian banditry undergo a further process of transformation by becoming a heritage feature characterising cultural tourism experiences in Sardinia.

The following paragraphs will outline then the linguistic representation concerning the perception of Sardinian banditry and bandits in the Anglo-American perspective, demonstrating the cultural and linguistic evolution of the phenomenon in a corpus of newspaper/magazine articles, travel reports and travel guides published between 1900 and 2011.

### 3 Analysing Sardinian banditry in Anglo-American written media

#### 3.1 The corpus

To delineate the evolution of the figure of the bandit in Sardinia from the Anglo-American perspective, we have applied the methodology and tools of corpus linguistics15 to a selection of newspaper and magazine articles, travel reports and travel guides sections regarding bandits and banditry in Sardinia, and published in USA, Canada and UK from the beginning of the 20th century up to 2011, in order to investigate and analyse more carefully the linguistic representation of Sardinian bandits and banditry in the Anglo-American media, and document its process of *rehabilitation* throughout time and genres. We created a specialised diachronic corpus of texts selected from a wide range of sources (figure 2 below), in order to guarantee a more complete and homogeneous representation of the Anglo-American perspective on Sardinian banditry.
The corpus analysed in this research is a relatively small one (tokens: 57,640; types: 8,596; type/token ratio: 14.91), but the high specificity of the research topic justifies its size. It comprises three written genres: newspaper/magazine articles (49%), travel articles (41%) and travel guides (10%). The majority of texts were downloaded from the online archives of magazines and newspapers through a combined key-word search comprising terms such as bandit* and Sardinia. The travel guides analysed in this research were partially digitalised in OCR mode from their paperback editions and converted into text files, while some of the oldest documents of the corpus (newspaper articles dating back to the 1900-1914 and available as pdf images) were manually re-typed on text files because the font used for their print could not be recognised by the OCR tools.

3.2 Preliminary results

The corpus was analysed through the WordSmith suite and its Wordlist and Concord applications in order to retrieve and examine the most relevant collocations related to the concept of banditry in Sardinia.

First, we created a record of all the terms across the corpus genres with Wordlist, and these preliminary data confirmed a considerable presence of the word bandit[s] (67 instances, including 8 adjectival instances) and synonyms, such as brigand[s] (10 instances) or outlaw[s] (7 instances). There were also several instances of terms identifying bandits according to their criminal activities such as kidnapper[s] (27 instances), killer[s] (5 instances), murderer[s] (4 instances) and rustlers (1 instance).

When mentioning the phenomenon and criminal activities of bandits, the corpus showed the employment of generic terms such as banditry (13
instances), brigandage (4 instances) or brigandry (1 instance), and other terms more specifically referring to Sardinian bandits’ criminal activities such as:
- *kidnap[ping][s]* (63 instances including nominal, adjectival and verbal forms);
- *kill[ed][ing][s]* (28 instances including nominal, adjectival and verbal forms);
- *rob[ed][bery][ies]* (18 instances including nominal, adjectival and verbal forms);
- *murder[ed][s]* (18 instances including nominal, adjectival and verbal forms);
- *steal[ing][s]* (11 instances, including nominal and verbal forms);
- rustling (9 instances).

From these preliminary data, it was already interesting to notice that the terms *kidnapper[s] + kidnap[ping][s]* were very frequent in the synonymic reference to Sardinian bandits, even if kidnapping was not their solely criminal activity. This is certainly due to a deeper sensitivity towards the methods, effects and consequences on the victims of this crime, which affected also many international victims\(^\text{19}\), thus suggesting that the implied perception on kidnapping was that of a potential threat to be reported and explained for the Anglo-American public’s own safety.

The data emerging from the corpus included also some loan terms from Italian and Sardinian such as *banditos, banditi, banditti, briganti, cumpanzos, disamistade, omertà* and *vendetta[s]*, which were mainly used to define bandits and banditry or related notions. They were retraced both in newspaper/magazine articles and in travel reports and guides to confer a more authentic style to the texts and emphasize the wild image of banditry and Sardinia.

3.3 Concordances classified into genres and years

After having identified the most relevant terms of the corpus we proceeded with the analysis by investigating their related concordances. Concordance lines were retrieved through the *Wordsmith Concord* tool and classified according to diachronic and textual genre criteria, starting from the ones found in newspaper/magazine articles and proceeding with the ones identified in travel articles and guides.
3.3.1 Sardinian bandits and banditry in newspaper/magazine articles: 1900 – 1950

The Anglo-American newspaper and magazine articles comprised in the corpus and published between the beginning of the 20th century and up to the 1950s showed that the portrayal of Sardinian bandits focussed on the dangerous aspects of the behaviour and also their dark physical appearance. In these years bandit and related terms collocate with negative evaluative adjectives (e.g. terrible, notorious, most feared, dark eyed, primitive etc.), and are associated with criminal, violent contexts (e.g. bandit-ridden country, mysterious refuge, pistols and dagger) and figures (e.g. the expressions dark eyed ruffian, complicity with criminals), as shown in the concordances below:

1. Several of the prisoners are of the gentler sex and among these is a sister of the terrible bandits Serra-Sanna (The New York Times, 1900)
2. Chief of Police Of Milan in his memoirs gives a stirring account of his adventures with brigands, especially with Corbeddu, most notorious outlaw in the bandit-ridden country. (The New York Times, 1911)
3. The primitive man [...] showed clearly: one who knew no other restraint than that of his will, or rather of his own appetite, who to satisfy passion did not hesitate to raise his hand against his kind, and then go out separating himself from human society and threatening continually from his mysterious refuge with the hidden power acquired by complicity with criminals. (The New York Times, 1911)
4. A mustachioed bandit with pistols at his sash and a dagger in his hand is suddenly pounced upon by an unarmed man [...] (TIME magazine, 1928)
5. For years the most feared bandit in all Orgosolo has been a dark-eyed ruffian named Gian Battista Liandru, who turned outlaw some 32 years ago when he became bored with sheepherding at the age of 17. (TIME magazine, 1952).

Even Sardinia and the villages where bandits operated were depicted as unsafe and lawless places (see examples 2, 6 and 7), far from the modernity and progress depicted as characterising the Anglo-American society of those years. For instance, the pronoun we in example 7 marks a striking comparison between the civilized Anglo-American world and the archaic villages of early 20th century Sardinia. Therefore, Sardinia was implicitly described as a wild and primitive land in which a sense of resignation and desolation prevailed (example 8) and whose inhabitants behaved almost like animals, blindly driven by their instincts and by irrational superstitions (example 9), thus depicting a society that needed to be civilized even by resorting to military intervention (examples 10 and 11):
6. Last year Sicily led Sardinia in murders by a small margin; but Sardinia completely distanced Sicily in thefts. (TIME magazine, 1928)

7. The town of Fonni, a place of 60,000 inhabitants, primitive, without comforts, or even what we call necessities. (The New York Times, 1911)

8. The people of Orgosolo, like those in many another villages of Sardinia, live with banditry as they live with poverty — helplessly, fearfully and always. (TIME magazine, 1952)

9. On this occasion he executed a number of the brigands when they assembled for a ceremony which guaranteed protection against the evil eye. So strangely are the minds of these people […] that to secure themselves against imaginary perils they would gladly run the risk of real ones. (The New York Times, 1911)

10. Fascist Carabinieri will now go to tidy up unspoiled, unmodernized Sardinia. (TIME magazine, 1928)

11. The trial of the brigands and their “accomplices” captured or arrested during the energetic operations against these disturbers of peace in Sardinia last year, is to take place in Sassari (The New York Times, 1900).

In example 6 we can also notice a frequently recurring pattern in the corpus, namely the comparison between Sardinia and Sicily. This comparison appeared quite systematically throughout the years and genres represented in the corpus, although more frequently in newspaper and magazine articles. It was often accompanied by terms such as omertà, or vendetta (two fundamental aspects of a mafia society – see example 13, 14 and 16) to reinforce the expressive function implied in this comparative pattern, which evidently shows an Anglo-American perception of Sardinian banditry as similar to Sicilian Mafia and implies a cultural association between these two criminal phenomena. In example 12 for instance we can notice the reference accomplices and corrupt individuals, including officials, who favoured and supported bandits in their criminal activities, exactly like a mafia organization:

12. Among the accused, either of being guilty of brigandage itself or as having favored and assisted the bandits, are many persons holding high positions in the island. (The New York Times, 1900)

13. Orgosolo’s bandits often slip into town from their hiding places in the mountains […] but the villagers who recognize them stay mum, for the bandit code called omertà exacts a heavy penalty from the informer […]. (TIME magazine, 1952)

14. Most were released, through lack of evidence and through omertà, the Mafioso code of silence, which derives from the Sardinian dialect word omu, meaning man. (The Independent – travel report – 1992)

15. Orgosolo is to Sardinia what the Mafia town of Montelepre is to Sicily (Sardinia – Lonely Planet, 2006)
16. 50-year-old vendetta suspected in killing of Sardinian poet […] Both Muntoni and Marotto were killed during the holiday season, a classic sign of a vendetta murder as the victim is killed just as he and his family are celebrating. (The Guardian, 2008)

3.3.2 Sardinian bandits and banditry in newspaper/magazine articles: 1960 – 1980

During the 1960s and up to the late 1980s Anglo-American newspapers dedicated extensive coverage to the numerous kidnapping episodes which took place in Sardinia at the time. In those years the image of Sardinia and Sardinian bandits was thoroughly characterized by the description of the cruel modalities of kidnappings, the sense of fear among local population but also by an emerging interest in identifying the social and political reasons behind those crimes and their high incidence in the central areas of Sardinia. In fact, as previously mentioned (see paragraph 2), during the 1960s and the 1970s several Italian and international researchers investigated the causes behind the origins and latest developments of Sardinian banditry, identifying a co-occurrence of causes which, at different stages in history, led to development of banditry and to its inner transformation; and also the appearance of movies such as *Banditi a Orgosolo* (1961) and *Padre Padrone* (1977) contributed in those years to the increased international interest over Sardinian banditry and Sardinian rural society.

The newspaper/magazine articles published between the 1960s and up to the late 1980s reflects these implications: on one hand Sardinia and its bandits were still depicted with their most wild and cruel traits, mirroring the movies images on the phenomenon (examples 17 and 18) or describing the brutal modalities of kidnapping and ransom payment (examples 19 to 26) with nominal and verbal expressions such as *roving bandit gang, bestial excitement, outrageous ransom, death and mutilation* denoting the violent and beastlike character of kidnappers; on the other hand newspaper/magazine articles reported also an emerging sociological and cultural interest in these societies, with the aim of understanding both the reasons behind Sardinian banditry and the attitude of local populations, who were finally starting to rebel against bandits (examples 27 and 28) after having constantly supported them in the past (example 29).

17. Cinema: A Shepherd’s Tale - *Bandits of Orgosolo*. The shepherds of Sardinia are elemental men. Short, square, silent, they look like the rocks of their rocky land, like faintly sentient boulders. The big island’s landowners
and the rural police consider them scarcely human and treat them accordingly. (TIME Magazine, 1964)

18. Padre Padrone tells the story of a shepherd who spends the first 20 years of his life in illiterate isolation in the hills of Sardinia. [...] a universal statement about the struggle of a man to overcome the animal side of his nature. (The Globe and Mail, 1978)

19. "They talked in an atmosphere of bestial excitement," reported wealthy Cattleman Giovanni Campus, 32, whose family paid the bandits $48,000 for his release. (TIME magazine 1968)

20. Lately, the bandits have been pushing the Sardinians a bit harder than usual. [...] They grew more vicious, asking outrageous ransoms and even killing some of their kidnap victims. (TIME magazine 1968)

21. For centuries the roving bandit gangs of Sardinia terrorized the island's people. (The New York Times, 1975)

22. Feeding the specter of fear, they have sent their kidnap victims back home with breathless accounts of their cruelty. (The Guardian, 1980)

23. Kidnappers of Ferrari executive Giancarlo Bussi still have not released him despite receiving the ransom. (The Globe and Mail, 1978)

24. Sardinian police believe the kidnappers are seeking about $4-million for the release of the two Schilds. (The Guardian, 1979)

25. Each click of their gun cartridges struck against my brain so that I had to keep myself from crying out in desperation. (The Guardian, 1985)

26. it was wiser to pay the bandits rather than risk his death or mutilation. (The Guardian, 1985)

27. Many islanders are still anxious to fight the bandits, but they know that they will need outside help to do it. (TIME magazine 1968)

28. Young people have organized into associations to combat the briganti. [...] priests have declared a moral war on the bandits. The mayor of the northern town of Nuoro has demanded their punishment. (TIME magazine 1968)

29. [...] the capture of the most celebrated bandit of them all, Graziano Mesina. The darkly handsome Mesina, an idol to many Sardinian women and youth. (The New York Times, 1968)

3.3.3 Sardinian bandits and banditry in newspaper/magazine articles: 1990–2011

Finally, during the years between 1990 and 2011, Anglo-American newspaper/magazine articles focussing on Sardinian banditry and bandits reported the transformation of this phenomenon and of its protagonists. In the last 20 years in fact, Sardinian bandits have modified their traditional criminal activities, favouring kidnappings, damages to goods, and retaliations (including murders) against public officials, with the almost total disappearance of episodes of sheep rustling or robbery, thus continuing the evolutionary trend which started in the 1960s.
Consequently, from a linguistic point of view the term bandit* was less frequent in the 1990 – 2011 newspaper/magazine articles, while there was a wider presence of terms such as kidnapper*, killer*, criminal gang* which refer more specifically to the crimes committed in Sardinia during this period. The co-text usually features verbs (for example: to blow up, to cut to pieces etc.) and adjectives (such as gruesome, mystery etc.) denoting violent and criminal contexts and the transformation of traditional Sardinian banditry into a profit-oriented operation, as shown in the examples below (examples 30 to 34):

30. Supporters of the park have been threatened, mayors have had their cars burned and forestry service installations have been blown up. Opposition comes from farmers and shepherds, but criminal gangs have joined their campaign [...] (The Guardian, 1999)
31. [...] the mystery killer emerged from the shadows of the church steps on 29 December. (The Observer, 2008)
32. Banditry is a way to take revenge on the wealthy sightseer (it may account for the mysterious deaths of Mr and Mrs Townley); and kidnapping has become an easier means of making money than the traditional crime of rustling livestock. (The Independent, 1992)
33. It was not the first time that the kidnappers of the 62-year-old businessman had sent such gruesome evidence to prove that their victim was still alive. Last November [...] his family received a piece of his left ear [...] (The New York Times, 1998)
34. There he found a package containing a part of Farouk's ear, a photograph of the boy and a letter warning the parents that he would be cut to pieces unless the ransom was paid. (The New York Times, 1992)

In the 1990 – 2011 newspaper/magazine articles, the areas formerly affected by the phenomenon of traditional banditry continued to be described as being troubled and economically disadvantaged (examples 35 to 38). However, it is interesting to notice the presence of past tense verbs or temporal deixis such as once, at the time etc. in order to mark the temporal distance from episodes of banditry in the past. These considerations are usually immediately followed by a description of the area’s contemporary situation (see examples 37 and 38) in which the positive cultural aspects and the authentic beauty of the places described in the articles were highly lauded. This binary structure outlines the tourist value of these areas and partly draws on some strategies of the language of tourism, namely structure21 and keying22 (Dann, 1996). For instance in example 37 we can clearly see the structural binary opposition between Costa Smeralda and inland Sardinia and its implied contrast between fake and real, a strategy that, as it will be later shown in the analysis, was widely employed in the tourist texts of the corpus and that manages to rehabilitate the image of
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Sardinia by considering the wild and rebellious character of its troubled inland areas and of their bandits as features of authenticity. Therefore, employment of tourist discourse properties and techniques in these newspaper/magazine articles managed to introduce a more positive perception on Sardinia and in particular on the phenomenon of banditry.

35. in this village in the mountainous and poor Barbagia region of central Sardinia, far from Costa Smeralda to the north […] (The New York Times, 1992)
36. This is the place where Mr. Mesina, the kidnapper, was born, the place that Italian reporters once labeled "the capital of silence". […] (The New York Times, 1992)
37. Until fairly recently it was not a welcome destination - poverty-stricken, riddled with malaria and infested with bandits […] but the swamps where the mosquitoes bred were drained, the bandits tamed and when the Aga Khan built the luxury resort of Costa Smeralda in the 50s he put the island firmly on the tourist map. Most people's knowledge of the island, however, will be restricted to the coast; the real Sardinia is inland. (The Guardian, 2006)
38. At the time Orgosolo was a hotbed of banditry, with bus hold-ups a speciality, combined with a romantic reputation bestowed on brigands who saw themselves as resisting the authority of Rome, just as their Sardinian ancestors had stubbornly resisted the Roman empire. Today the town attracts tourists who make the trip from Sardinia's beaches to see the famous murals painted on houses of shepherds and farmers[…] (The Guardian, 2008)

Another positive implication that emerged from the 1990-2011 articles was the focus on the fact that local populations no longer supported in the support to bandits’ activities. On the contrary, newspapers and magazines reported an increasing will to get rid of the criminal traditions that up to then had characterized inland Sardinian society, as shown in examples 39 to 41 below:

39. What marked Farouk's kidnapping though was the wave of revulsion it inspired. (The New York Times, 1992)
40. Italian Ban On Paying Kidnappers Stirs Anger […] in recent months, the law -- as much as the kidnappings themselves -- has become the target of public outrage. (The New York Times, 1998)
41. "This was an absurd crime," said Pasquale Mereu, mayor of the remote town of 4,500 inhabitants. […] "If there is an explanation, and there must be, it needs to be looked for in the darkness of the past," said another local poet, Paolo Pillonca. (The Guardian, 2008).

On the whole, Anglo-American newspaper and magazine articles published between 1990 and 2011 reflected a new image of Sardinia and of
the areas traditionally afflicted by banditry. In comparison to the 1920 – 1950s articles, an evident change has occurred during these latest years, a change that results in a new perspective on Sardinian banditry, now described as a phenomenon of the past, no longer involving local populations and no longer being the most notorious element characterising and determining the culture and life of inland Sardinia. Such a new attitude derived both from a deeper cultural awareness on the phenomenon and its protagonists, and from the actual transformation of the crime and of local populations’ attitude towards banditry. However, it was also influenced by the presence of tourist discourse strategies that opened a new source of positive implications connected to the areas affected by banditry, a process that started in travel texts even long before the 1990s, as it will be shown in the following sections.

3.3.4 Sardinian bandits and banditry in Anglo-American travel articles: 1900 – 1950

The concordances lines referring to Sardinian bandits and banditry were largely found also in the travel texts of the corpus. However, travel reports and guides written between the beginning of the 20th century and up to the present day depicted the phenomenon in quite different terms with respect to contemporary newspaper/magazine articles.

In particular, travel reports written between 1900 and 1950 simply evoked and gave a new perspective the events and protagonists of Sardinian banditry. In these texts banditry and bandits were described as a phenomenon no longer existing (examples 42 and 43), as a legend of the past filled with once-upon-a-time characters living in once-upon-a-time settings (examples 44 and 45). Through the employment of past tense verbs, dubitative verbs and structures (e.g. it was said to be, one hears) or temporal deixis and adverbial expressions such as today, at one time, occasionally, more or less etc. these articles managed to distance the negative features of Sardinian banditry from the reality of the potential visitor, implying the non-existence of the phenomenon, and thus depicting Sardinia as a safe and hospitable place for the tourist.

42. Unfortunately, the general impression outside of Sardinia, even in Italy, is that the island is more or less overrun by bandits; this is not true, and a traveler on the island today is even safer than he would be in southern Italy or Sicily. (The National Geographic, 1916)

43. the center of a mountainous district, the Barbagia, which was at one time said to be the home of the famous Sardinian brigands. These are
practically "extinct" now, although occasionally one hears of a man who has murdered a neighbor or a member of his family for some personal wrong and, in order to escape the carabinieri, or national police, flees to the mountains and lives as best he can, sometimes stealing a lamb or a goat from a shepherd or stopping a lonely traveler to ask for food or a few soldi. (The National Geographic, 1916)

44. A legend too strongly rooted still persists about Sardinia as a land which cannot be conceived without its shepherds, wearing goatskin mantles; its large inclosures decked with asphodel; its women all dressed in the most gorgeous costumes, dancing and singing all the day long, and banditti at every house corner. (The National Geographic, 1923)

45. Sardinia is still unspoiled. The banditry of the open road has become a mere tradition and the most romantic islander is liable to prove a solicitous friend. (The National Geographic, 1923)

46. The history of Sardinia might be summed up in a few words. Invaders in every age came to pillage, to carry away treasure, and to impose heavy taxes on the inhabitants, who had to fight incessantly lest they be torn to pieces by these birds of prey. (The National Geographic, 1923)

47. Rome never quite succeeded in subjugating the Sards, for the mountain dwellers of the Barbagia at that early date gave evidence of the same spirit of independence which has ever since been one of their cardinal characteristics [...] that picturesque remoteness that has been theirs. (The National Geographic, 1946)

Furthermore, these travel texts reported the long history of invasions Sardinia had undergone (examples 46 and 47) in order to represent the phenomenon of banditry as a understandable defensive response to unfair treatment over centuries of foreign domination. In this perspective banditry was ennobled and portrayed as a heritage feature characterising Sardinian society and its people proud character, thus adding a new cultural dimension to Sardinia as a tourist destination. This status upgrade is confirmed for instance also by the expression famous Sardinian brigands in example 43, in which the use of the adjective famous is in striking contrast to the negative evaluative adjectives retraced in contemporary newspaper/magazine articles associated with Sardinian bandits (such as notorious, most feared, etc., see previous paragraph 3.3.1).

In the travel reports published between 1900 and 1950 we also noticed the interplay of several features related to the language of tourism, namely the properties of structure, magic and tense and the technique of significant omission (Dann, 1996, see note 22). The properties of structure, magic and tense are at work in the legendary perspective given to the phenomenon of banditry (see examples 44 and 45) and in the binary opposition between Sardinia’s mysterious past and its secure present, between adventure and safety (see examples 42 and 43); the technique of significant omission takes place through the lack of reference to the cruel and ruthless practices (see...
example 45) that actually marked several bandits’ activities during those years (and which, on the contrary, were amply described in contemporary newspaper/magazine articles), or by their being notably sized down (example 43), with the aim of appealing to the potential tourist by describing the opportunity to experience an authentic, adventurous destination without any risk for his/her well-being.

3.3.5 Sardinian bandits and banditry in Anglo-American travel articles: 1960 – 1980

The significant omission of Sardinian banditry and bandits was highly employed also in travel texts published between 1960 and 1980. In fact, the travel reports of the corpus dating back to this period rarely mentioned the phenomenon of banditry, and when they did so, they always omitted the more gruesome details of the bandits’ activities (which, on the contrary, filled contemporary newspaper articles in relation to the several kidnappings taking place in Sardinia at the time). In the few instances in which bandits were mentioned, their status was lowered to that of imaginary characters or tacky souvenirs (see example 48).

During those years, travel texts focussed mainly on positive aspects of Sardinia’s natural features, depicting the island as an unspoiled destination by means of implied similes between Sardinia and a peaceful sea paradise 24 (examples 49 and 50), or by drawing on the technique of keying and structure (Dann, 1996 – see note 22) through which Sardinia inland territories were described as uncontaminated mountainous areas representing the authentic Sardinia, and frequently opposed to the fake world of the Costa Smeralda (see examples 52 to 54). In the descriptions of the areas formerly affected by banditry, the analysis showed also the employment of other properties of the language of tourism, namely euphoria 25 (retraceable in the occurrence of positive terms and evaluative adjectives such as in examples 49 and 51) and magic (see note 22), represented by the metaphoric identification of these areas as a precious and mysterious treasure to be discovered by the tourist (examples 53 to 55):

48. Inland Sardinia has long been fabled for sheltering bandits and kidnappers, but the only trace the average tourist will find of this are little bandit dolls at the corner candy and tobacco store. (The New York Times, 1984)

49. […] there are many more attractions in Sardinia […]. I found I could laze on lovely beaches stretching for miles and miles, visit sleepy
villages, picnic in pinewoods, and drive on rolling roads above valleys with olive groves and vineyards. (The Globe and Mail, 1966)

50. This is Sardinia, an island of sun and sea, mountain and pine, fish and flamingoes, citrus and bitter honey. (The New York Times, 1984)

51. Keep going north and you see lovely mountain scenery on the way to the inland town of Nuoro, surrounded by rugged and picturesque villages. (The Globe and Mail, 1979)

52. Still, to those who know the island from the inside, [...] all the glitter of the Costa Smeralda has little to do with the real nature of Sardinia. (The New York Times, 1984)

53. Behind Costa Smeralda's glitter lies the real Sardinia. (The Globe and Mail, 1979)

54. [...] the inner world of Sardinia. This is not mainland Italy, and it is not the jet-set chic of the island's most renowned tourist corner, the Costa Smeralda. [...] these are the enclaves of tradition the Sards have built from fear of seeing their distinct, ancient culture slowly slip away. (The New York Times, 1987).

55. Sardinia is a patchwork of local cultures, dialects and customs, and this too adds to the veils that often hide the inner world of Sardinia from those visitors looking for more than sun and emerald sea. (The New York Times, 1987).

3.3.6 Sardinian bandits and banditry in Anglo-American travel articles and guides: 1990 – 2011

With respect to the previous years analysed in this research, travel reports and tour guides published between 1990 and 2011 referred much more frequently to the phenomenon of Sardinian banditry. Analogously to what happened at the beginning of the century, from the 1990s onwards travel reports and travel guides represented Sardinian banditry and bandits as events and figures belonging to the past through the use of past tense verbs or expressions such as remote wilds, time honoured banditry, since then however, memories of, once, etc., which marked the distance of these events from our present days (see examples 56, 57, 62 and 67). However, the most recent travel articles and, most of all, travel guides focussed more deeply on the historical and fearsome aspects (examples 58 to 60) of the phenomenon, giving more detailed accounts (even if not as gruesome as the ones given in the contemporary newspaper/magazine articles comprised in the corpus) on bandit-related events and on the most important protagonists of Sardinian banditry (examples 60 and 61). In this perspective, bandits were described both in terms of fiction and reality, as adventurous characters able to commit the scariest actions but also able to behave as local heroes in a
Robin-Hood-like morale, as it clearly emerges in examples 60 and 61 related to the description of Graziano Mesina.  
56. [...] The remote wilds of Sardinia were a haven for kidnappers and brigands. [...] We met high up in the Gennargentu Mountains [...], one of the least known parts of Italy, and notorious for poverty and endemic brigandage. (The Guardian, 2006)  
57. To the north lies the Barbagia, the stronghold of rebellious peasants and time-honoured banditry recorded by the Roman geographer Strabo in the 1st century BC. (The Guardian, 2007)  
58. [...] and the years leading to WWI were characterised by miners' strikes, rampant banditry and food riots. In such a context Nuoro's history of banditry and lawlessness begins to make sense. (Sardinia, Lonely Planet, 2006)  
59. Barbagia [...] sheep-rustling and internecine feuding came to be replaced by the more lucrative practice of kidnapping and ransoming of wealthy industrialists or their families. This phenomenon reached epidemic proportions during the 1966-68 [...] The most high-profile case in recent years was that of Farouk Kassam, an 8-year-old abducted from the Costa Smeralda in 1992 and held for seven months on Monte Albo, near Siniscola; part of his ear was severed by his kidnappers to accelerate the ransom payment. Since then however there has been a lull in kidnappings [...] (The Rough Guide to Sardinia, 2007)  
60. In the postwar years sheep rustling gave way to more lucrative kidnapping, led by the village's most infamous son, Graziano Mesina, otherwise known as the Scarlet Rose. He spent much of the 1960s earning himself a Robin Hood reputation by stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. (Sardinia, Lonely Planet, 2006)  
61. The village's most notorious son is Graziano Mesina, the so-called “Scarlet Rose” who won local hearts in the 1960s by supposedly robbing only from the rich to give to the poor and only killing for revenge [...] (The Rough Guide to Sardinia, 2007)  

In the 1990-2011 texts, the fictional perspective was moreover confirmed by the constant mentioning of famous movies dedicated to banditry in Sardinia or to the Barbagia society, such as Banditi a Orgosolo or Padre Padrone. This pattern, which emerged in the newspaper/magazine articles published between 1960 and 1980 (see paragraph 3.3.2), responds to the previously mentioned technique of comparison (see note 24): in fact, by mentioning movies related to these areas and potentially known to the Anglo-American audience (because of their international success), the writer of these texts manages to narrow the cultural distance between the destination and its potential visitors.  
62. All we have to go on are images from the film Padre Padrone [...] and memories of a British family who spent months - or was it years? - in a cave, care of Sardinian kidnappers. (The Independent, 1997)
Rampant banditry in the 1960s was documented in Vittorio de Seta’s film Bandits at Orgosolo (Sardinia, DK guide, 2006). In 1953 the first of the post-war kidnappings [...] took place near Orgosolo and the connection was crystallized with the screening of Vittorio de Seta’s film Banditi di Orgosolo in 1961. (The Rough Guide to Sardinia, 2007)

When mentioning Sardinian banditry, travel articles and guides paired these accounts almost immediately with the description of the positive and charming aspects of the area (examples 65 to 67), thus following a structural binary opposition further notable in the once again recurring pattern Costa Smeralda vs. inland Sardinia (examples 68 and 69). The use of this property manages to rehabilitate these areas which, notwithstanding their troubled past, have now managed to generate important cultural attractions. At the same time, by quoting its history (even if a troubled one) the place became even more authentic, thus applying the technique of keying. In this perspective, banditry is exploited as one of the features which characterizes the heritage of the destination and its authenticity from a historical and cultural point of view: it is portrayed as a natural response to centuries of colonization and as a representation of the rightly rebellious character of local populations (example 58), thus reflecting the old and, consequently, authentic Sardinia (example 69). In these texts the Barbagia area is depicted as the last testimony of real Sardinia with key words such as old, real, authentic, and the charming wilderness of its territories represents a mirror of the fierce character of its people, of which banditry was simply a historical expression (examples 65, 66 and 69).

The village of Orgosolo once had one of the island’s worst reputations for banditry and violence, though it is now best known for its striking murals. (The Rough Guide to Sardinia, 2007) A few miles away, Orgosolo has long held the distinguished title of bandit capital of Sardinia. Yet since the 1960s the shepherding community has softened its image and its cinder-block buildings are now dressed with roughly 120 politically charged murals. (The Independent, 2011) Orgosolo is to Sardinia what the Mafia town of Montelepre is to Sicily. Nowadays, Orgosolo’s past is more colourful than its present [...] because of the murals that adorn the whole town. (Sardinia, Lonely Planet, 2006) The provinces of Nuoro and Ogliastra [...] are the best places to encounter the last authentic remnants of the island’s rural culture [...] a world apart from the whitewashed luxury of Costa Smeralda. (The Rough Guide to Sardinia, 2007) But I was glad the coast hadn’t seduced me entirely—that I had followed the roads winding into the tumult of Sardinia’s rugged interior, to
A final remark emerging from this study regards the specific stylistic features of travel guides in relation to the phenomenon of banditry. It seems that travel guides represent a hybrid genre between newspaper/magazine articles and travel reports, since they share some patterns with both text types. In fact, similarly to newspaper/magazine article, travel guides presented more detailed accounts on bandit’s activities (examples 58 and 60), employed the comparative pattern with Sicily in its negative implications (example 67) and mentioned internationally awarded movies related to banditry and Sardinia (examples 63 and 64); and as well as travel reports, travel guides mentioned Sardinian banditry as a phenomenon of the past (examples 58 to 61 and example 65) and exploited it to apply strategies of binary opposition and keying (examples 65, 67) typical of the language of tourism, also resorting very often to the pattern of opposition between (fake) Costa Smeralda and (authentic) inland Sardinia (example 68).

Conclusions

Since the beginning of the 20th century and up to the last few years Sardinian banditry and its main protagonists were widely described in the pages of Anglo-American written media. This analysis has showed that newspaper/magazine articles, travel reports and travel guides dealt with the phenomenon in different ways throughout time, marking an overall conceptual rehabilitation of the bandit figure. This evolution was particularly evident in newspaper and magazine articles: at the beginning of the 20th century and up to the early 1990s the analysis of the genre related concordances reported a distinctly negative perception of Sardinian banditry and bandits, who were described in condemning and sometimes patronizing terms with reference, for instance, to the early 20th century depictions of bandits as wild and dark figures, whose behaviour was dictated by primitive and beastlike instincts, or to the description of banditry-related social contexts as dangerous and uncivilised communities. In the 1960s and up to the 1990s Anglo-American newspapers and magazine articles focussed in particular on the rising number of kidnapping episodes taking place at the time by means of lexical features that reflected the abominable behaviour of its protagonists and the cruel aspects of this crime. However, from the 1960s onwards the analysis has also shown an additional cultural perspective in newspaper and magazine articles, due to the spread of anthropological
and sociological studies on the phenomenon and also to the success of documentary movies (often referred to in these texts) which cast a new light on the reasons and the shaping of the societies from which Sardinian banditry had originated. This new sociological interest in the phenomenon and its communities was further reinforced from the 1990s onwards, with newspaper/magazine articles focussing on the criminal evolution of Sardinian banditry not only in its negative terms but also including the positive implications deriving from the strong reactions of local populations against those criminal figures, thus linguistically depicting the areas and societies that had previously supported bandits into a new perspective by means also of some features of the language of tourism.

Even in the section of the corpus comprising travel articles and travel guides, the analysis has shown an increasing transformation in the linguistic representation of Sardinian banditry. In fact, the related concordances of these genres showed the tendency to omit or minimize the phenomenon from the early years of the 20th century up to the 1980s while, from the 1990s onwards, Sardinian banditry was exploited as a feature characterising the culture and heritage of the island. As expected, travel articles and guides reported the interplay of several features of the language of tourism in relation to the phenomenon of banditry, such as the properties of:

- structure, represented by the binary opposition between Sardinia’s past and present, between adventure and safety and fake Costa Smeralda vs. authentic inland Sardinia.
- magic, found in the hero-like depiction of Sardinian bandits or in the representation of the place and of its culture as mysterious experiences to be discovered;
- tense, found in the legendary perspective given to the phenomenon of Sardinian banditry;
- euphoria, through the employment of highly positive terms and evaluative adjectives to describe the cultural and natural attractions of the areas formerly affected by banditry.

Other features of the language of tourism retraced in travel articles and guides throughout the corpus have included the techniques of:

- significant omission, avoiding any reference to the cruel modalities and episodes of banditry, or minimizing the phenomenon;
- keying, through the identification of the areas formerly affected by banditry as the real and authentic Sardinia;
- comparison, performed mostly by means of implied similes (Sardinia as compared to a peaceful sea paradise) and testimony.
In conclusion, this work demonstrated that, throughout time, the language of tourism employed in travel articles and travel guides, along with the most recent approaches to the phenomenon of banditry on behalf of the newspapers and magazine, contributed to the shaping of a new image of Sardinian banditry (and consequently of Sardinia) in the Anglo-American perspective. As Gerbig (2008: 172) noted, corpus linguistics represents a means for investigating “the meanings people construe” and the way they “circulate and become embedded” in our experience. The aim of this research is precisely that of documenting the way in which the perception on Sardinian banditry and bandits has circulated so far in the Anglo-American written media, and how this contributed in the construction and evolution of the image of Sardinia in the Anglo-American world. The results obtained showed that the folkloric and heroic evocation of bandits in tourist texts and the focus on the historical and sociological origins of the phenomenon across the genres comprised in the corpus determined a progressing conceptual transformation on the perception of Sardinia and of its culture, systematically transforming banditry and bandits into features of a cultural-tourism experience.
Notes

3 My translation. Original text: “l’epicentro” / “Nel mondo delle Barbagie […] vi è una criminalità le cui origini profonde debbono essere cercate nell’arcaico mondo pastorale che la produce e nella contraddizione e conflitto di civiltà con la società che lo circonda”. Pirastu (1973: 146).
4 My translation. Original text: "[…] conflitto tra una società naturale di pastori, che vive secondo regole tradizionali configuralistici come vero e proprio ordinamento giuridico e uno stato di conquistatori che vuole imporre le sue leggi” (Pirastu: 1973: 147).
6 Giovanni Corbeddu (1844 – 1898) was one of the most feared Sardinian bandits. He became bandit in 1885 for alleged sheep rustling. He was a bandit of honour and an avenger, and he was respected and assisted by local shepherds and bandits who recognised his leadership and his code of honour (Marongiu 2004: pp. 47-48).
7 The Serra-Sanna brothers (Giacomo Serra-Sanna, 1865 – 1899; Elias Serra-Sanna, 1872 – 1899) were the bandit-leaders of Nuoro around the end of the 19th century. They turned to life of crime after having being falsely accused of sheep rustling, and became some of the cruelest avengers of the time, killing anyone who wronged them or encroached on their property (Marongiu 2004: pp. 51-54).
8 Samuele Stochino (1895 – 1928) also known as la tigre dell’Ogliastra [the tiger of Ogliastra] became a bandit just after serving the army in the First World War. He was responsible for several kidnappings and threatening acts against those he deemed spies or personal rivals, including the infamous killing of the 7-year old daughter of one of his enemies (Brigaglia 2009, pp: 130 – 132).
11 For instance Camba et al. (1970) outlined an evolution in Sardinian rural criminality between the 19th and 20th century, the former characterised by a standardised criminality with a basic and simple structure and dedicated mainly to murders, targeted robberies or sheep rustling; the latter comprising a different, more complex and organized structure that committed new crimes such as kidnapping and damage to goods, with a corresponding decrease in the numbers of violent homicides and robberies. Pirastu (1973) traced the origins of Sardinian banditry in the socio-economical and cultural contradictions between rural and modern Sardinian society, clashing in its primitive organization of shepherding and in the wilderness of its inland territories against the rules and taxations imposed throughout time by conquerors and by the State.
12 This documentary movie was directed in 1960 by Vittorio de Seta and won an award as Best First Work in the 1961 Venice International Film Festival. Based on an investigation carried out by Franco Cagnetta, the movie portrays the society of Orgosolo depicting their harsh living conditions therein. Cagnetta’s research met with wide international success, but in Italy the author and his colleagues had to face a long trial since they were accused of public defamation of the Italian army forces and disturbance of public security by Mario Scelba, the then-Minister for Home Affairs.
Cagnetta's work in fact collected the results of an investigation carried out between 1950-54 in Orgosolo, during which the author interviewed local inhabitants and reconstructed the history and origins behind Orgosolo banditry, indicating the anthropological features characterising Barbagia society and its code of vendetta and implying that the State was responsible of the creation and upholding of a social environment in which banditry had become a natural response to injustice and political oppression. For all these reasons, Cagnetta's enquiry was firstly published abroad, and it was only in 1975, also after the film version by Vittorio de Seta and its success at the Venice Film Festival, that the debate around his research could arise again and his work be finally published even in Italy (Cagnetta, 1975).

13 The movie *Padre Padrone* won the Palme d'Or prize at the 1977 Cannes Film Festival. Directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani and based on the homonymous autobiography by Gavino Ledda, the film portrayed the harsh authoritative world of the author, whose father forced him to abandon school and work as a shepherd when he was just a child. The story gave a realistic image of the rural Sardinian society of the time, and the movie managed to combine the "intriguingly aberrant behaviour" of Gavino's father "with raw landscapes that underscore the naturalness and inevitability of the father-son rituals it depicts" (Maslin, 1977).

14 For instance, tourist texts dedicated to Medieval or prehistoric attractions fail to provide detailed accounts of the cruel practices and beliefs of those times, and similarly the descriptions of Third World destination do not usually include any reference to the tragic socio-political realities of those places. In fact, as outlined by Dann (1996: 209) "what is omitted may have at least as much influence as what is included" and by means of significant omission tourists "[…] are attracted to a changed past which enjoys a new status" and "are somehow convinced that a sanitized version of the past is the true version".


16 We digitalised travel guide chapters concerning the description of the area of Nuoro and its province, the general history of Sardinia and the sections dedicated to other cultural information, such as introductions or the author's comment sections.

17 The acronym OCR (Optical Character Recognition) refers to scanning software that can convert images of a text into a machine-readable form to be processed by word processors, concordancers, translation memories etc. Images are compared to a series of character patterns stored in the OCR database and, once they are recognised, they can be converted into new files to be saved in the required format, such as text files (Bowker 2002).

18 WordSmith is an integrated suite of programs to investigate the linguistic behaviour of words in texts. Among its programs, the Wordlist tool allows the creation of lists comprising all the words or word-clusters of a corpus, set out in alphabetical or frequency order, while Concord manages to retrieve and analyse any word or phrase in context in all the text files chosen (Scott, 1998: p.8-10).

19 An English couple (Edmund and Vera Townley) was murdered in Orgosolo in 1960. The Townleys were in Orgosolo with the intention of buying some land properties in Sardinia, but were killed in the countryside of the village. Most probably they witnessed something they were not supposed to see. Their murderers have never been officially found but investigations seemed to evidenciate the involvement of Giovanni, Pietro and Nicola Mesina (brothers of the notorious Graziano Mesina) in their killing. In fact, three days after the couple's murder, Giovanni Mesina and Salvatore Mattu were found...
dead and, close to their bodies, was a pair of binoculars belonging to Edmund Townley. Mattu, the Mesina brothers and other people were involved in the kidnapping of a local entrepreneur, Pietrino Crasta, who was also found dead later that year in the nearby of Orgosolo (Sirigu, 2007). Another episode involving international victims was the kidnapping of the Schild family in 1979. Rolf Schild, a rich entrepreneur in the field of medical equipment, was kidnapped with his wife and daughter by a bandit gang while on holiday in Sardinia in the summer of 1979. He was released shortly afterwards to arrange the ransom payment for his wife and daughter, released in January and March 1980, respectively (The Telegraph, 2003).

As outlined by Camba et al. 1970- see previous note 11.

Dann (1996) identified a series of properties which are typical of the language of tourism, namely: function, structure, tense, magic, lack of sender identification, monologue, euphoria and tautology. In particular, structure refers to the actual organization of the textual contents of a tourist text (slogans, pictures, texts) and the balancing of their related functions. It also includes the employment of a “binary language of opposites” (Dann, 1996: 45) concerning the semantic meaning of both textual elements and pictures (ancient vs. modern, chaos vs. relaxation etc.). The pattern of binary opposition is also retraceable in the property of tense and represented by “a hyper-reverential attitude towards all that is old” in contrast with our ordinary present time, by a “denial of time” (Dann, 1996: 49, 50) in the sense that holiday time becomes a sort of eternal weekend in contrast with our ordinary time and by the creation of future mythical temporal dimension corresponding to a future holiday experience. Finally, magic conveys a misrepresentation of reality by the employment of a language (or pictures) able to transform a tourist destination into an “enchancing product” (Dann, 1996: 55).

The technique of keying entails the employment of linguistic terms (such as real, genuine, authentic etc.) able to confer an “aura of genuineness” (Dann, 1996: 175) to a tourist destination.

In example 42 it is interesting to notice that the comparative pattern Sardinia-Sicily has been completely reversed with respect to the negative connotations usually implied in newspaper or magazine article (see previous paragraph 3.3.1).

Similes, along with metaphors, are employed in the technique of comparison and are used to “manage the unfamiliarity of a destination for a tourist” (Dann, 1996: 172). In example 49 we can also observer the technique of testimony in the use of the first person singular through which the narrator reports his/her experience in Sardinia, a strategy that works as “an authenticating device of a tourist site” (Dann, 1996: 178) and reinforces at the same time the technique of keying (see note 22).

Euphoria indicates the tendency of the language of tourism “to speak only in positive and glowing terms of the service and attractions it seeks to promote” (Dann, 1996: 65).

In these examples we see a neologism in the expression scarlet rose, which refers to the idiomatic expression primula rosa [eng: scarlet pimpernel] commonly used in Italian to define Mesina because of his skill at hiding and escaping. The equivalent translation into English should have been scarlet pimpernel, an expression which has been attested in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) since 1905 and derives from “the name assumed by the hero of a series of novels by Baroness Orczy (1865–1947), a dashing but elusive Englishman who rescued potential victims of the French Reign of Terror”. In its figurative use, recorded in the OED since 1945, it defines “a person engaged in clandestine activities” and also “a person who or thing which is elusive or much sought after” (Oxford English Dictionary Online: http://www.oed.com [last accessed:
In our research, the expression *scarlet rose* with the meaning of *scarlet pimpernel/primula rossa* was not found either in the OED or in the Longman Dictionary of American English, and neither the BNC (British National Corpus) nor the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) reported it. The writers of these texts might have decided not to choose the expression *scarlet pimpernel* most likely because it could have been considered as an old-fashioned phrase by the travel guide readers, and probably also to avoid any potentially ironic implications deriving from the many film parodies of the homonymous novel that have been made both in UK and in the USA. Amongst these parodies, we can recall a 1950 Warner Bros. cartoon entitled “The Scarlet Pumpernickel” starring Daffy Duck in the role of a play-writer who tries to sell a script set in “Merry Olde England, a plot involving a maiden in distress, a scheming Chamberlain, an evil Grand Duke and a dashing masked hero” (The Internet Movie Database web site: http://www.imdb.com [last accessed: September 2011]). Probably, they literary translated the expression *primula rossa* into *scarlet primrose* and decided to truncate the term *primrose* to confer and reinforce the *romantic* dimension associated with the bandit figure.

27 Graziano Mesina (Orgosolo, 1942) is one of the most famous Sardinian bandits. He was born into a shepherd family context and started turning to a life of crime just at the age of fourteen. In 1960 he avenged the death of his brother, falsely accused of the kidnapping of the local entrepreneur Pietrino Crasta, by killing Andrea Muscau, brother of one of the real kidnappers. He was supported by local population because the killings or kidnappings in which he was involved were considered a form of justifiable revenge or self-defensive action. He was arrested several times but managed to escape from prison on many occasions, thus becoming an even more legendary figure (Marongiu 2004).
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