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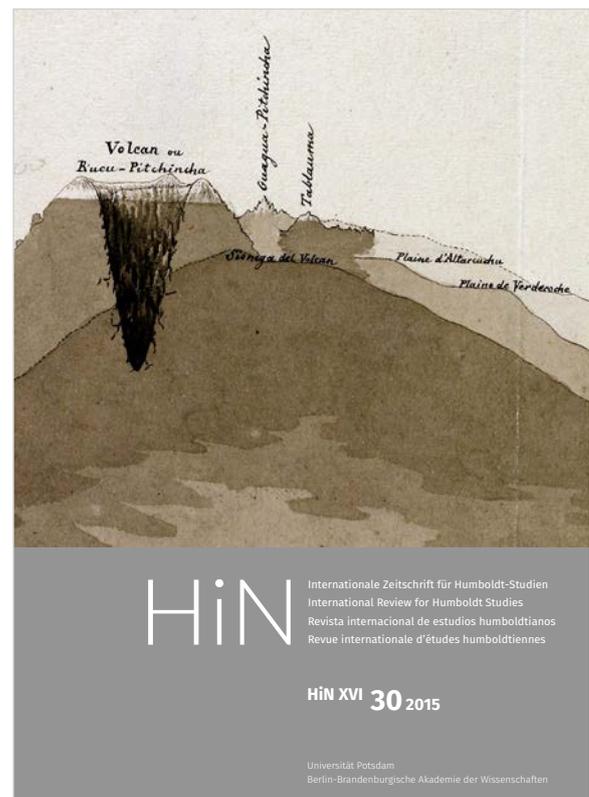
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Giuseppe Buffon

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places. A Contribution for the genealogy of geographical knowledge of Alexander von Humboldt

Summary

The study analyzes the process that leads to the elaboration of the thesis of a continuity between the Medieval Asia mission and the New World mission. This effort, undertaken by the Catholic historiography of the mission during the XIX century, is the result of the impulse provided by Alexander von Humboldt's studies about the discovery of America (*Examen critique*). The data about the geography of Asia collected by the missionaries-travelers working in the territory between Karakorum and Khanbalik during the XIII e XIV century reaches Christopher Columbus with the mediation of Roger Bacon, whom Humboldt himself esteems as a true cultural mediator. The conclusion of the article tries to identify reasons and modalities of the secularization of the missionary concept, i.e. the shift from the ideal of the propagation of the Christian message to a prevailing interest for cartography and topography, transformations arranged by a late medieval historiography that introduces into martyrologia the loca toponomastica.

Sommario

Lo studio analizza il processo che conduce all'elaborazione della tesi di una continuità tra missione asiatica medievale e missione nel Nuovo Mondo. L'impegno, assunto dalla storiografia missionaria cattolica lungo il corso del XIX secolo, costituisce l'esito dell'impulso proveniente dagli studi svolti da Alexander von Humboldt intorno all'esplorazione delle Americhe (*Examen critique*). Le informazioni sullo spazio asiatico trasmesse dai missionari operanti durante il XIII e il XIV secolo tra Karakorum e Khanbaliq pervengono a Cristoforo Colombo mediante Ruggero Bacone (*Opus*

majus), che Humboldt stesso stima mediatore culturale per antonomasia. La parte conclusiva della ricerca si occupa di stabilire modalità e ragioni della secolarizzazione del concetto di missione, cioè del trasferimento all'interesse cartografico dell'anelito alla propagazione del messaggio cristiano fino agli estremi confini della terra, trasformazione predisposta dalla storiografia medievale che nei martirologia inserisce appunto i loca toponomastici.

Resumen

El estudio analiza el proceso que conduce a la elaboración de la tesis sobre una posible continuidad entre la misión asiática medieval y la misión en el Nuevo Mundo. El empeño, asumido por parte de la historiografía misionera católica a lo largo del siglo XIX, constituye el resultado del impulso proveniente de los estudios desarrollados por Alexander von Humboldt en torno a la exploración de las Américas (*Examen critique*). Las informaciones sobre el espacio asiático transmitidas por los misioneros que operaron durante los siglos XIII y XIV entre Karakorum y Khanbaliq llegan a Cristóbal Colón a través de Roger Bacon (*Opus majus*), que el mismo Humboldt considera como un mediador cultural por antonomasia. La parte conclusiva de la investigación se dedica a establecer las modalidades y regiones de la secularización del concepto de misión, es decir, de la transferencia al interés cartográfico del anhelo por la propagación del mensaje cristiano hasta los extremos confines de la tierra, una transformación que fue predispuesta por la historiografía medieval que en los martirologios insertaba los lugares toponímicos.

The persistence of the Medieval myth of Prester John fuels catholic westward expansionism

The recent publication by Thomas Tanase titled *Jusqu'aux limites du monde* : la papauté et la mission franciscaine de l'Asie de Marco Polo à l'Amérique de Christophe Colomb¹ allows to express an almost final judgement both in favour of the continuity between Euroasia mission and overseas mission and the Franciscan responsibility for the mobilization towards the most extreme frontiers of the Earth,² as a result of an eschatological yearning. It also satisfies the reader's desire to review the perspective traced in the important studies by Petech³ and Richard⁴. Indeed, one cannot deny that

1 Rome, École française de Rome, 2013.

2 The work, which is already valuable for the collection of a broad range of updated publications on the history of cartography and geographical discoveries acquires much more significance because it gives a religious interpretation of the publications in contrast with economic interpretations of the modern expansive phenomenon.

3 Luciano Petech, «I Francescani nell'Asia centrale e orientale nel XIII e XIV secolo», in *Espansione del francescanesimo tra Occidente e Oriente nel secolo XIII. Atti del VI Convegno internazionale, Assisi 12–14 ottobre 1978* (Assisi, Università di Perugia Centro studi francescani, 1979), pp. 213–240; Id, «Les marchands italiens dans l'empire mongol», in *Selected papers on Asian History* (Roma, Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1988), pp. 161–186.

4 I just mention two of the major works by the author. Jean Richard, *La papauté et les missions d'Orient au Moyen Age* (Roma, École française de Rome, 1977); (2) Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998; Id, *Au-delà de la Perse et de l'Arménie. L'Orient latin et la découverte de l'Asie intérieure. Quelques textes inégalement connus aux origines de l'alliance entre Francs et Mongols (1146–1262)* (Turnhout, Brepols, 2005). According to Richard, evangelization in Asia was unsuccessful and without any legacy (*La papauté et les missions d'Orient*, p. 294). Modern mission, expanding towards America, was built on completely new basis. Therefore he thinks that the story of the dissemination of the Christian message should be divided into at least three phases: Christianization of dark ages of Europe; evangelization of the late Middle Ages which tries to overcome the frontiers of christianity; modern mission aiming at reaching a universal church – a global church. The continuity of the history of evangelization could be clarified by the Franciscan historiography. With its chroniclers and analysts such as Nicola Glassberger, Mariano da Firenze, Marco da Lisbona and Luke Wadding, it assumes a long process of missionary expansion which goes from the XIII century to the XVI century, exactly from Marco Polo to Christopher Columbus. On this subject, see what Tanase affirms (*Jusqu'aux limites du monde*, p. 9), considering Richard as a prisoner of an ideology which is typical of the decolonization period and which aims at distinguishing between mission and crusade and consequently between the era of the crusade and the era of the mission. Yet, we cannot keep the lid on an oversight by Tanase himself. In dealing with the universalistic conception of Franciscan historiography, he did not mention at all the work by Domenico De Gubernatis, *Or-*

their investigations created a prejudice on the reasoning about the religious, economic and social effects of the Franciscan complex history in the Asian region. According to them, the mission of the friars minor was a failure from the ecclesiastic and institutional point of view.

In fact, the thesis of the continuity between Euroasia mission and overseas mission corroborated by the Tanase study enjoys a long historiographic tradition stemming from the anthropological and ethnographic studies carried out in the XIX century especially by Alexander von Humboldt.

Humboldt dedicates in particular to the study of the sources on Christopher Columbus the work *Examen critique de l'histoire de la géographie du nouveau continent et de progrès de l'astronomie nautique aux quinzième et sixième siècle* (5 volumes, Paris Librairie de Gide, 1836–1839), on which we rely for this reflection. In relation to Humboldt's study, Ottmar Ette proposed meaningful considerations for our analysis. For example, he highlighted that the *Examen critique* contains the premises of an analysis of the interconnections between the old world and the new world. According to Ette, Humboldt's work recognised already in the XV century the emergence of a new concept of space and time for which Christopher Columbus was an excellent cultural mediator, a sort of engine of the globalization of ideas⁵.

bis seraphicus (vol. I–VI Romae – Lugdunum 1682–1689; vol. VII Quaracchi 1896). Indeed, the divulgation of the Franciscan universalism started with the *Orbis seraficus* and not with the *Annals* by Wadding, as Tanase seems to affirm. In Asia and the far East, Franciscan universalism calls for a continuity between the mission in the Cathay of the Mongols and the mission in the China of the Mings, an idea already in the minds of the first missionaries in Western India, Martino di Valencia (†1534) and Juan de Zumaraga (†1548), first archbishop of Mexico.

5 « Au centre de ce questionnement se situe la tentative d'analyse des interactions et entrelacs entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Monde aussi bien dans l'espace que dans le temps et de détection des transferts de savoir qui concernent tout aussi bien la constitution et la production de nouveau savoir que sa diffusion spécifique dans l'espace. Colomb apparaît en ce sens comme un médiateur de savoir ou plutôt comme celui qui fait bouger le savoir d'un monde intermédiaire sur la scène du 'théâtre du monde' pour multiplier les objets à l'horizon de la pensée européenne et ainsi démultiplier brusquement la 'masse des idées' ». Ette, «Réflexions européennes sur deux phases de mondialisation accélérée», p. 41. On the importance of the studies carried out by Humboldt on the discovery of America, interpreted as a stimulus to start modern globalization, you can see the following studies: Ottmar Ette, «Entdecker über Entdecker: Alexander von Humboldt, Cristóbal Colón und die Wiederentdeckung Amerikas», in Titus Heydenreich (dir.), *Columbus zwischen zwei Welten. Historische und literarische Wertungen aus fünf Jahrhunderten*, (Frankfurt am Main 1992), pp. 401–439; id, «Réflexions européennes sur deux phases de mondialisation accélérée chez Cornelius de Pauw, Georg Forster, Guillaume-Tho-

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

But before the German naturalist and geographer and, above all, within the framework of Franciscan historiography, we have to remind that at the end of the XVII century the official chronologist of the order, Domenico de Gubernatis, in his *Orbis seraphicus*, a monumental work published in Rome and Lyone between 1682 and 1685, showed his readers the full awareness—that never faded away—of a sort of continuity between the ancient evangelization of Cathay and the modern Chinese mission, supporting a globalized Franciscanism and highlighting its universal dimension in opposition to the Jesuit attitude, which prefers universal contents rather than universal spaces and times⁶.

In the wake of Domenico de Gubernatis, during the XIX century, the official historian of the Franciscan missions, father Marcellino Ranise da Civezza, replaced the rhetorical erudition of his predecessor with a rich bibliographical research which is the result of a huge effort of researches that he carried out in the most prestigious European libraries. On the basis of such an in-depth analysis formalized by the author in a volume and at the same time a review titled «Saggio di bibliografia geografica, storica, etnografica» (Prato 1879), Ranise did not hesitate in affirming that the missions promoted by the Franciscans Persia, a Caspian area in the Tenduc region, did not end before the discovery of Cape of Good Hope, «continuing in this way the work started in the XIII century and perpetuated until nowadays»⁷.

mas Raynal et Alexandre de Humboldt», in *HiN – Internationale Zeitschrift für Humboldt Studien* XI, 21 (2010), pp. 24–44: 39–44; id, «Archeologies of Globalization. European Reflexion on Two Phases of Accelerated Globalization in Cornelius Pauw, Georg Foster, Guillaume-Thomas Raynal and Alexander von Humboldt», in *Culture & History Digital Journal* 1/1 (2012): e003. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2012.003>; Anja Bandau, *Marcel Dorigny et Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Les Mondes coloniaux à Paris au XVIIIe siècle. Circulation et enchevêtrement des savoir* (Paris, Éditions Karthala, 2010).

6 Giuseppe Buffon, *Tra spazio e territorio. La missione francescana in epoca moderna* (Assisi, Porziuncola, 2006), pp. 73–80; Id, *Sulle tracce di una Storia omessa. Storiografia moderna e contemporanea dell'Ordine francescano* (Grottaferrata – Roma, Collegio S. Bonaventura, 2011), pp. 184–202; *Khanbaliq. Profili storiografici intorno al cristianesimo in Cina dal medioevo all'età contemporanea (XIII–XIX sec.)* (Roma, Antonianum, 2014), pp. 221–239.

7 It is worthy to quote the whole passage where Ranise affirms the continuity between Asia and America: «in the most remote areas of those immense regions we left our missionaries until 1486, even though it was extremely difficult to penetrate them, because all communications started with the Mongols ended and all the colonies created by Genoese and Venetians collapsed. They governed prosperous Christian communities in Persia, on the Montes Caspii and in Tenduc: thus we can say that they settled there until the discovery of Cape of Good Hope». *Storia universale delle missioni francescane*, vol. VI. *Dall'anno 1500 al 1550* (Prato 1881), pp. 3–4.

The Ligurian historian had no doubts in thinking that also the next generation of minor friars drew from the heritage of the old Franciscan presence in Cathay⁸. Indeed under the leadership of Eugene IV the friars enthusiastically looked for the representatives of Asian churches and outstanding figures from the Middle East willing to participate to the council of Florence to promote the crusade against the Turks⁹. Moreover, it is ab-

8 The historian of the Franciscan missions tries to demonstrate the consistency of the outcomes of the first Asian missions also after the XIV century, despite the obstacles created by the islamization of the Asian region by Timūr Barlas (1337–1405) historically known as Tamerlane («the effects of the numerous expeditions of the Friars Minor to Tartary and China from 1369 to 1371»). His argument primarily aims at demonstrating the mistake committed by the famous Italian Orientalist Simome Assemani, in the third volume of the *Bibliotheca orientalis* (part II, p. 535), where he declared that the Minors definitively left China because of the end of the Mongolian leadership in the region (1369), replaced by the Chinese Ming dynasty. *Storia universale delle missioni francescane* IV (Roma 1860), pp. 306–308: 654. It is necessary to take into account that Ranise later challenges the statements by another famous orientalist, Evariste Regis Huc, who in the work *Le Christianisme en Chine, en Tartarie et au Tibet* (Vol. I. Paris 1813, p. 462) failing to consult the famous Franciscan annalist Luke Wadding, would date the end of the Franciscan and Dominican missions in China during the military campaigns of the Tamerlane (1398–1403). Ranise affirms that several papal documents prove the existence of the mission in Central Asia and China also for most of the XV century. The Franciscan historian believes that the shortcomings of Huc are grave because it shows some methodological flaws. Yet, he was much more concerned for the damage to the Catholic and Roman universalism inflicted by the statements of the French historian. In deed, we should not forget the attachment of the author of the *Storia universale delle missioni francescane* to the universalistic idea of the *ecclesia romana* represented by mendicants for which the continuity Eurasia – America is not a secondary issue (Marcellino da Civezza, *Il Romano Pontificato nella Storia d' Italia*, 3 vol., Firenze 1886–87). Ranise wrote about this: «far from affirming that since then nobody had talked about Christianity in the areas of Far Asia, there are documents of the Holy See about some regions of India not only those of the Mount Caspii in 1422 and 1429 and 1448 those in China where the apostolic activity of the Friars Minor continued. And we regret that it is not the first time and maybe it will not be the last time that we have to warn our readers on some rash statements by mr. Huc that nonetheless we highly value for his works about the history of Asia. Maybe he did not study well enough, as he usually did for his works and he committed some omissions that someone could not consider very serious but that for us on the contrary are extremely grave because they make people believe that the action of the papacy was over in those areas, whereas on the contrary history tell us that it continued trying to fuel the spark of the sacred fire for all the nations of the Earth to rise in a spiritual rebirth in Christ». *Storia universale delle missioni francescane* IV, p. 331.

9 Ranise deals with the council of Florence in chapter XIII of the fourth volume of his *Storia delle missioni*, where he illustrates the endeavours of Alberto da Sarteano, Bartolomeo da Giano, Giacomo Primaldizi, Francesco and Luigi da Bologna. He concludes his analysis focusing on the mission of Antonio da Troia, to the Tartars, Assyrians, Persians, Ethiopians, Maronites, Druses, Nestorians and Arameans. He deals with the story of Luigi da Bolo-

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

solutely necessary to notice that Eugene IV was the Pope that arbitrated, beyond supporting the hegemony of the devout in the Holy Land and sending John of Capistrano to prepare the offensive against the Turks, the diplomatic-religious match between Portuguese and Spaniards, fierce rivals in the rush to conquer the Canaries¹⁰.

In fact, for the Portuguese and the Spaniards the occupation of the Canaries as that of the other islands on the Atlantic coast of Africa was just one of the numerous endeavours in line with the spirit of the crusades, because it was part of the so called pincers military operation that according to the plans of the minor friar Fidenzio of Padua had to encircle Islam from the West¹¹. The absolute protagonism of the generation of friars minor contemporary to Eugene IV in organising the Catholic offensive against Islam and the competition between Spaniards and Portuguese in the conquest of the Canaries according to the ideology of the crusades, were ideologically supported by the famous legend of Prester John. Following the example of the Mongolian Gran Khan, who was considered favourable to Christianity, Prester John's myth fed the hope to find a powerful king in Far Asia ready to forge an alliance in favor of the Christian conquest of the World¹². In the years af-

gna also in the following volume (XIV, 1453–1550), focusing on his trips to Ethiopia, Persia, Tartary and India aiming both at preparing the civil poker to the crusade and to promote the dissemination of faith. In this volume, he is also interested in the bishops appointed for Beijing from 1405 to 1456 (chapter V) and in the vestiges of Christianity in Beijing, Persia, in the Crimean peninsula (Caffa) and in Abissinia (chap. VI). He then dedicated three chapters to the mission in the Canaries (chap. VII–IX) and to those promoted by Spain in the Mediterranean coasts of Africa, dealing then with the crusade planned by the iberical monarchs, decided to support a military action to conquer Jerusalem (chap. X). Then the volume goes on with two more chapters (XI and XII) dedicated both to the preparations of Columbus for the transoceanic sailing and to the relationships between the Genoese navigator and the Franciscans of the Rábida monastery.

10 Tanase, *Jusqu'aux limites du monde*, pp. 716–718

11 On the plan elaborated by Fidenzio of Padua, in view of the crusade in the Holy Land, see the remarks by Paolo Evangelisti, «La crociata allo specchio. Andare in Oriente per ripensare i paradigmi politici dell'Occidente», in Alvaro Cacciotti and Maria Melli (dir.), *I Francescani e la crociata*, (Milano, Biblioteca francescana di Milano, 2014), pp. 275–321.

12 Ranise shows great interest for the role played in the Western Christianity by this original figure, dedicating him numerous pages and focusing more and more times on the event with new information about the importance of the Minors as architects of his fame and 'inventors' of his meaning to the benefit of the missionary actions (*Storia universale della missione francescana I*, cap. IX; II, cap X; III, cap. I; VI, cap IX: 336–342). The legendary figure of Prester John, already known thanks to the *Chronica* by Otto of Freising (1114–1158), assumes a more important meaning due to an *Epistula latina* addressed to Manuele Comneno, a fake with clear anti-papal pur-

ter the Council of Florence and the failure of the crusade to defend Constantinople (1453), it was thanks to the myth of Prester John and that of one powerful descendant of him, a strong ally against Islam, that started the process of Christian expansion towards the West in view of a transoceanic leap that would happen in a few years time¹³.

poses, to support the Emperor, drafted by a cleric of the court of Frederik I (1150–1160). Also the Franciscans Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, William of Rubrouck and Odoric of Pordenone contributed to the fame of Prester John, as well as the Dominicans Simon of Saint-Quentin and Andrew of Longjumeau, and the most famous Venetian merchant, Marco Polo. The Venetian traveler confused the identity of that figure with that of the prince George of Önggüt, converted to Catholicism in 1294 by the Franciscan John of Montecorvino. The author of *Divertissement du Monde*, Marco Polo, was in debt with Montecorvino, who sent a letter from Khanbalik in 1305 talking about the conversion of king George, «qui erat de genere illius magni Regis, qui dictus fuit Presbiter Iohannes de Yndia» (Attanasio van de Wyngaert (dir.), *Sinica Francescana I*, Quaracchi, S. Boneventura, 1929, 348–349). According to Montecorvino, the conversion of the Mongolian king triggered the conversion of the whole population of his kingdom to the Roman Church. Moreover, after his conversion, the prince wanted to build a sacred building which was necessary for the celebrations of the new worshipers. Odoric of Pordenone, by identifying the city of Prester John with the capital of Önggüt (1330), draw from the same heritage of knowledge disseminated in the Franciscan milieu (Alvise Adreose, *La strada, la Cina, il Cielo. Studi sulla Relatio di Odorico da Pordenone e sulla sua fortuna romanza*, Catanzaro, Rubbettino, 2012, pp. 109–116). In deed, in 1440 the Franciscan Luigi da Bologna introduced to the papal court of Pius II a person who claimed to be Prester John's ambassador. It was a surprising event, despite doubts and perplexities on the true identity of that man; therefore the Pope decided to appoint him as patriarch of Antiochia and delegate to the East. It is also necessary to remind that he established contacts with various European courts such as that of Bourgogne where, in 1445 two envoys of the king of Portugal arrived in search of information about prester John. A. Bargellesi Severi, «Nuovi documenti su fr. Lodovico da Bologna, al secolo Lodovico Severi, Nunzio Apostolico in Oriente (1455–1457)», in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 69 (1976), 3–22; Jacques Paviot, *Les ducs de Bourgogne, la croisade et l'Orient (fin XVIe–XVe siècle)* (Paris, Presses de l'Univ. de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003), pp. 262–265.

13 John of Capistrano proved to be a decisive figure in the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople. He stopped the advance of Mehmed II, thrilled the conquest of the capital of the Byzantine Empire and decided to extend his domination towards central Europe. The victory in Belgrade by the army of volunteers gathered by the Franciscan from Abruzzi was praised by the Catholic community also thanks to Callixtus II, who organized numerous processions and celebrations to support the hagiography of the martyr alive, become a model and a symbol unsuitable for the propaganda campaign to relaunch the crusade. But it was the successor of Callixtus, II, Pope Piccolomini (Pius II), supporter of the faith in Capistrano and Bernardino da Siena, who wrote an essay on Europe and one on Asia, assuming a global crusade for the reconquest of Jerusalem. Colombo himself read carefully and took notes on the *De Asia* by Pius II, a text supporting the vocation for the universal mission of the Latin Church. Civezza, *Storia universale della missione francescana IV*, pp. 625–645; Tanase, *Jusqu'aux limites du monde*, pp. 698–701.

The historiographic fracture

According to Marcellino Ranise da Civezza, if one accepts the hypothesis of a fracture between Eurasia and America, or between the Medieval evangelization mission and the modern mission, this hypothesis would involve historiography rather than the actual events. Therefore, the fracture would be the result of a heuristic gap rather than of the lack of documents testifying the reality of the events. According to the Franciscan historian, such a gap can only be the consequence of the failure of the Franciscan historiography to record the apostolic continuity between the Medieval evangelization mission and the modern evangelization mission. This is why, trying to fill this gap, Civezza put in the first of the volumes constituting the new series of his work «Storia universale delle missioni» (“Universal history of missions”) some important integrations concerning the origin of the Asian mission and its developments until the time of Christopher Columbus.

The choice made by the author is for us absolutely emblematic. Indeed, by mentioning the studies on the Asian missions of the XIII and the XIV century in the volume exclusively dedicated to the Franciscan mission of the first fifty years of the sixteenth century, Civezza shows his determination or his obstinacy. In order to prove the link between the Euroasian mission and the mission in the New World, he is even ready to subvert the chronological structure of the volume. Moreover, to corroborate the thesis on the responsibility of historiography for the gaps on the Medieval evangelization mission and the modern mission, Marcellino Ranise da Civezza highlighted the omissions identified in the works by Bartoli¹⁴, Maffei¹⁵, Charlevoix¹⁶ and others in

the texts by Henrion¹⁷, Wittman¹⁸ and Marshal¹⁹. In comparison, he mentioned as examples, some protagonists of the real discoveries in the field of documents research such as Santarem²⁰, D’Avezac²¹, Jimenes de la Espada²², Morel Fatio²³ until Oscar Ferdinand Peschel²⁴, who had the merit for having discovered the manuscript by the friar Pietro Bonthier about the discovery of Northern Af-

17 Mathieu Richard Auguste Henrion (1805-1862) *Histoire générale des missions catholiques depuis le XIIIe siècle jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris, Administration de la Librairie, 1844–1847).

18 Patrizio Wittman, *La Gloria della chiesa nelle sue missioni dall’epoca dello scisma nella fede ossia storia universale della missioni cattoliche negli ultimi tre secoli*, 2 vol. (Milano 1942–1943).

19 Thomas William Marshal (1818–1874), *Die Christlichen Missionen*, 3 vol. (Regensburg 1863) (*Les missions chrétiennes*, 2 vol., Paris 1865; *Le missioni Cristiane*, 3 vol., Napoli 1888).

20 Manuel Francisco de Barros e Sousa, Visconte di Santarém (1791-1856), *Saggio sulla storia della cosmografia e della geografia nel medioevo*, 2 vol. (Parigi 1848); *Essai sur l’Histoire de la Cosmographie et de la Cartographie pendant le Moyen-âge*, 2 vol., Paris 1849-1850. The Universal annals of statistics and public economy, geography, history, travels and trade (Milan 1849, 5) present the work as the best comment to the history of Medieval cosmography by Humboldt, particularly appreciating the illustration of the Italian geographers and travelers.

21 Marie-Armand-Pascal d’Avezac y Macaya (1799–1875), in the capacity of official of the navy ministry attended history, geography, old and modern cartography and mathematical geography, focusing mainly on the Italian travelers such as Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, about whom he published numerous documents in *Nouvelles annales des Voyages* e nell’*Encyclopédie Nouvelle*. Among his works, it is worthy to recall: *Les îles fantastiques de l’Ocean occidental au Moyen-Âge* (1845), *Ethicus et les ouvrages cosmographiques intitulés de ce nom* (1852), *Martin Hilacomylus Waltzeemüller* (1867).

22 In relation to the work by Marcos Jiménez de la Espada (1831–1898), Spanish explorer and zoologist, Civezza referred to the publication titled *Cuestion bibliografica por d. M. Jimenes de la Espada*, Madrid, Medina y Navarro, 1875 and the introduction by Civezza to the *Libro del conocimiento de todos los reynos* (Madrid, Fortanet, 1877).

23 Alfred Morel-Fatio (1850–1924) professor at the École des Chartes and at the Collège de France was famous for his hectic search to archive everything, that led him to publish literature, chronicles and documents about the Spanish monarchy as his publications prove: *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France* (1894) and *Chronique des rois de Castille*, as well as *Catalogue des manuscrits espagnols et portugais* (1889–92).

24 Oscar Ferdinand Peschel (1826–1875), professor at the Leipzig university, in the wake of Humboldt (*Geschichte der Erdkunde bis auf A. v. Humboldt und K. Ritter*, 2 vol., 1865) focuses particularly on the studies of comparative geography (*Neue Probleme der vergleichenden Erdkunde*, 1870), showing his interest for natural environments; he was famous above all for his *Geschichte der Erdkunde*.

14 Daniello Bartoli (1608–1685), Jesuite historian and theologian whose main work is the *Istoria della Compagnia di Gesù* (1653–73), divided in numerous sections: Assia, Japan, China, England, Italy, Rome, Ignazio de’ Lazzari, 1660–1663. The work was published again during the XIX century by several publishing houses: Marietti–Torino 1925–1929; Birindelli - Firenze, 1830 (Japan); Aurelij–Ancona, 1843 (China).

15 Pietro Maffei (1536–1578), Jesuit latinist and historian, author of numerous works such as: *Historiarum Indicarum (libri XVI)*. *Selectarum item ex India epistolarum (libri IV)*, Florentiae 1585; *De vita et moribus Ignatii Loiolae qui Societatem Iesu fundavit, (libri III)*, Romae 1585.

16 Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix (1682–1761), Jesuit missionary operating in Canada. In 1720 the ruler of France sent him to explore Northern America where he went up the river Saint Lawrence and the Mississippi Lakes. Among his works, we remind: *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France*, Parigi (1744); New York (1865–72), *Histoire du Japon* (1715), *Histoire de St. Domingue* (1730) and *Histoire du Paraguay* (1756).

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

rica and the Canaries and, above all, for having contributed to discover an unknown code of the work credited to Bonthier himself about the Portuguese navigation along the shores of Guinea²⁵. Ranise attracted the attention on the studies about Marco Polo, Odoric of Pordenone and John of Marignola carried out by Yule²⁶, those about the itinerary of Giovanni da Pian del Carpine carried out by D'Avezac²⁷ and those about William of Rubrouck, Odoric of Pordenone and Ricoldo da Montecroce carried out by da Bacher²⁸.

The Franciscan historian referred to the studies carried out by overseas americanists about the idea of the trips to the New World. He observed that like the European scholars he previously mentioned, they were strongly interested in the manuscript by friar Pietro Bonthier about the discovery of Northern Africa and the Canaries, that «deals with daring trips of the Europeans and the missionaries in Asia and Africa, unknown until now»²⁹. It is therefore clear that in the historic perspective of Civezza, there is a synergy between the Euroasian mission and the New World mission which is based not only on the sources but also on the interest for their discoveries.

«Last year in 1879, the Congress of the Americanists was held in Brussels», the Franciscan historian wrote, «and its records were very important from the geographical, historical and ethnographic point of view». *Storia universale della missione francescana* VI, 5 footnote 2. Considering the continuous references made by Civezza to Humboldt, it is important to notice that the real americanist science started exactly with Humboldt's trips to America and with the publication of his great work *Vues des Cordillères et monumens des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique* (Paris 1810). Later, the growing interest in this

domain created a network of exchanges that reached its acme in 1875, when the first international congress of the americanists took place.

Marcellino Ranise da Civezza did not only offer a bibliographical essay to confirm his own thesis on the continuity between Asia and the New World, but he also traced a genealogy of figures and events pointed out in those publications. First, he focused on the profiles of some missionaries in the ultramarine regions, from Greece to the Holy Land, whose story quoted in the «Chronaca» by Salimbene de Adam was unknown even to Wadding³⁰. He then focused on Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, a Pope envoy in Tartary, exalting his capacity not only to take note of habits, customs and territories but also to try to transmit them, by conveying his own experience and above all by inciting to read the book that he wrote. Then, he studied William of Rubruck, outlining his interesting personality by quoting some passages of the work by Backer³¹. By mentioning a long passage of *De Conformitate* by Bartolomeo da Pisa, he finally intertwined the net of the places constituting the geography of the Franciscan presence in Asia between the XIII and the XIV century, when it reached its biggest expansion³². As for the evidence of the extension of the Franciscan mission offered by the works by Odoric of Pordenone and Jean de Mandeville, Civezza just gave simple bibliographical indications, aware of the celebrity of those documents on which cartographers, geographers, scholars and orientalist relied, and even historians of the Enlightenment attracted by the exoticism of the marvel.

Between Beijing and Feodosia

In order to prove the continuity of a mission which was undoubtedly influenced by the political and religious significance of the main events of the XIV century, Mar-

25 *Le Canarien: livre de la conquête et conversion des Canaries (1402–1422)*. Publié d'après le manuscrit original avec introduction et notes par Gabriel Gravier (Rouen, C. Métérie, 1874).

26 Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither. Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, 2 vol. (London, Hakluyt Society 1866). Yule (1820–1889), Scottish orientalist, focused on the history of Central Asia in the Middle Age, successfully publishing the abovementioned study on Cathay and another one on Marco Polo, for which he was awarded with the golden medal of the Royal Geographical Society, that he later presided over.

27 *Relation des Mongols, ou Tartares, par le Frère Jean du plan de Carpin, par M. d'Avezac* (Paris, Dondey Dupré, 1838).

28 *Guillaume de Rubrouck, Ambassadeur de Saint-Louis en Orient. Récit de son voyage*. Traduit de l'original latin et annoté par Louis de Backer (Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1877); *L'Extrême Orient au Moyen-âge d'après les manuscrits d'un flamand de Belgique moine de Saint-Bertin à Saint-Omer et d'un prince d'Arménie moine de Prémontré à Poitiers*, (Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1877).

29 *Storia universale della missione francescana* VI, 5.

30 *Chronica Fr Salimbene Parmensis, Ordinis Minorum, ex Cod. Vaticano nunc primum edita* (Parmae, Petri Fiacadori, 1857).

31 *Guillaume de Rubrouck, Ambassadeur de Saint-Louis en Orient. Récit de son voyage*, cap. I, p. 29; cap. XX, p. 13; cap. XXI, p. 14, cap. XXIII, p. 7.

32 In relation to the work by Pisano, the historian referred to some critical considerations he had already made in his *Saggio di bibliografia geografica storica etnografica*, (Prato, Ranieri Guasti, 1879), where he illustrated Affò's thought about the *De conformitate* condemned to the oblivion after the denigrating campaign waged by the Protestants who had even distorted its title, replacing it with *Coranum Franciscanum*. Ultimately, Civezza wanted to be the guarantor of an operation with which he attributed historical value as documents to the geographical indications given by Pisano, whereas for the scientific community its work was just a mere booklet. «This book was uselessly discredited by the Jewish and derided by some idiots who never had the patience to read it». *Saggio di bibliografia geografica storica etnografica*, p. 471

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

cellino Ranise da Civezza preferred showing the exceptional data discovered in a publication on the tauro-ligurian colonies in the Crimean peninsula and in another on the historic *Commentarii Crimea*³³. The new elements allowed the author to «better illustrate more than one mission of the Franciscans and the Dominicans in the same country: a mission that we just mentioned in the previous volumes, but that can be dealt with all the interesting and wonderful details now»³⁴.

In the following pages, the author was clearly satisfied to list the names of the various missions: Feodosia, Crim, Sudak, Mangut, Balaclava, Cembalo, Cherson, Sevastopol, Ikerman, Kertch. These were the places already mentioned in the reports of the first crusade and then presented again in the trip itineraries drafted by Genoese and Venetian merchants. Among the toponyms, one can identify the places that depended on the Franciscan diocese of Feodosia, a stage of their «peregrinations across Asia, after having been lead to the East in 1219 by the same seraphic Father»³⁵. The Franciscan delegates of the Pope traced their itineraries still on the map of Tauris, while they yearned to promote unity with the eastern churches and the alliance of the Christians against the Islamic antagonist.

In concluding his close examination, the historian referred again to the Feodosia of Friar Girolamo, reminding his election by Pope John XXII (1318) and, above all, his previous office as suffragan bishop of John of Montecorvino. According to Ranise's historical perspective, Tauris was a new headquarter of the old Khanbaliq mission and the missionaries who lived there carried out an extensive apostolic activity across the region «reaching out on the one hand to their brothers in Persia, and on the other hand to those in India and China»³⁶.

Under the pressure of the Ottoman Turks, who later took those territories causing the defeat of Constantinople, the friars enhanced their commitment fueling the ideology of the crusade and contributing together with the Pope to establish diplomatic relationships with the major European powers in order to raise the necessary money to fund the armed campaign. Marcellino Ranise da Civezza dedicated numerous pages to illus-

trate the interest of the Pope for the Asian mission and, in particular, he highlighted the interest of the great supporter of the Council of Florence, Eugene IV, for the main protagonists of the Franciscan mission: James of the Marches, Alberto da Sarteano and John of Capistrano. Moreover, he recalled the actions of the Popes Martin V, Nicholas V and Callixtus III. Relying on the information written in the diplomatic code of the Tauris Ligurian colonies, he highlighted the requests submitted to the Pope and to the general minister of the order by the Genoese merchants and the local population in order to have missionaries and Franciscan bishops³⁷. In closing, he stressed the measures adopted by the order for a universal mobilization in favour of the crusade³⁸.

In summary, it is right to reiterate that in the historic perspective of Marcellino Ranise da Civezza the attraction for the Far East, although weakened by the impermeability of the Muslim regime, still had a central role in the awareness of the Pope and in the unconscious of the Western world until the end of the XV century, thanks to the activism shown by the Franciscan order in the religious and diplomatic field in favour of the missionary expansion! The anxiety for a ground invasion of Asia that intertwined the alliance between Franciscans and Genoese in the effort to safeguard the Tauris outpost of Feodosia heralded transoceanic campaigns thrilled by the same Asian goal. The historian reminded that during the fall of Feodosia, in 1475, Friar Alessandro da Caffa, bishop of the suffraganean Cembalo, that Wadding confused with Cambalik (Beijing), chose to live

37 «And this was the aim of the letter that they wrote to the Pope one year later imploring him to send numerous brothers to that monastery as soon as possible, because the people extraordinarily loved and respected them. [...] They also wrote to the cardinal of the holy church and the minister general of the Order, Friar Francesco della Rovere, explaining that it was impossible to express the love of the people of Feodosia for the Franciscans. Moreover, being those brave friars more important than the soldiers in the defense of the city, they prayed to listen to their request». *Storia universale delle missioni* VI, p. 29–30.

38 «So, first he implored the General Minister of the Order to invite all his brothers who were preaching in favour of the crusade, to call for help and support to defend Feodosia, and among the collectors proposed by Cardinal Giorgio Fieschi to the Lords of san Giorgio to collect handouts, there were also two Franciscans, Cristoforo di Ceva and Leonardo Grillo; [...] All those groups of missionaries in the East worked side by side to defend the cause that risked to deteriorate [...] Meanwhile Callixtus III, with the letter of March, the fourteenth and of May the fifteenth 1456, sent Friar Giacomo de Mozzanica, minister general of the Minors, to the Duke Sforza of Milan and the Marquise Giovanni di Monferrato to urge them to save Feodosia; at the same time he appointed them as collectors of the handouts asked to the Christians (christianitas) for the same purpose». *Storia universale delle missioni* VI, pp. 27–28.

33 Amedeo Vigna, *Codice diplomatico delle colonie Tauro-Liguri durante la signoria dell'Ufficio di S. Giorgio (1453–1475)*, *Atti della Società ligure di Storia patria*, vol. VI (Genova, R.I. de' Sordi-Muti, 1968); vol. VII (Genova, R.I. de' Sordi-Muti, 1971–1979); Id., *Della Crimea, del suo commercio e de' suoi dominatori dalla origini fino ai dì nostri*, *Commentari storici dell'Avvocato Michele Giuseppe Canale*, vol. I (Genova, R.I. de' Sordi-Muti, 1955).

34 *Storia universale delle missioni* VI, p. 19.

35 *Storia universale delle missioni* VI, p. 22.

36 *Storia universale delle missioni* VI, p. 23.

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

in Tuscany where, in 1485, he consecrated a Church of his own order³⁹.

Yet, at that time, Enea Silvio Piccolomini wrote his «Somnium», the work where he dreamt of reconquering the heart of the Christian East, Jerusalem, thanks to the intervention of Constantine and the spiritual leadership of Bernardino of Siena, who played a leading role as a spiritual guide, like Beatrice in the Divine Comedy by Dante⁴⁰.

From the Asia of the Genoese to the India of the Portuguese

After concluding the history of the Eurasian Franciscan mission, Marcellino Ranise da Civezza analyses the developments of the Franciscan presence in the regions conquered by the Portuguese on the Atlantic side. He drew a connection between the two events—seemingly distant only from the point of view of time, but actually also from the point of view of space—through an overview on the Christian presence in Morocco, mentioning also the story of the Franciscan protomartyrs and other stories of the Iberian friars to settle in those areas⁴¹ with the same contrast as the Muslim rival.

At this point, the author seemed to suggest that the Portuguese government endorsed the ideal of the

39 *Storia universale delle missioni VI*, p. 33.

40 Alessandro Scafi, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Dialogo su un sogno: Dialogus de somnium quodam*, (Torino, Aragno, 2004). Piccolomini's work titled *Dialogus* was published for the first time in Rome in 1475 by Iohannes Schurener. Giuseppe Cugnoni (*Aeneae Silvii Piccolomini Senensis qui postea fuit Pius II pon. max: Opera inedita descriptis ex codicibus chisianis vulgavit notisque illustravit Iosephus Cugnoni, Chisianae bibliothecae praefectus*, Roma 1883) published a second edition declaring it was Piccolomini's (pp. 234–299) unreleased work, titled *Tractatus*. S. Bernardino informed his eminent disciple that the garden of Eden was in a region of the Far East, beyond the territory that Ptolemy identified with China. About cosmography, he dared to correct Albert the Great, affirming that the great Dominican thinker was too busy to deal with other studies to focus on geography. Scalfi, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Dialogo su un sogno*, pp. 275–283.

41 Ranise, after writing numerous pages on the disappearance of Christianity in Africa, at the end of the XIII century, went on by saying: «Since then, history has talked only about christian slaves or renegades: no bishops or churches which were destroyed and converted in Mosques [...]. Yet, there is the exception of a Church in Morocco, where the Franciscans sent there by their seraphic father kept alive the spark of faith thanks to their predications and their martyrdom, and whose story we have narrated until the end of the XV century. Here we add some important details that we learned from later studies, and namely the conquests made by the Portuguese in those regions with the participation of the Franciscans trying to expand their apostolic ministry». *Storia universale delle missioni francescane VI*, p. 55.

crusade pursued by the West in the fight against the Turks, and under John I the country started the conquest of Ceuta (1414), because it didn't want to be second to Spain, always fighting against the Moors. The conquest of Ceuta, mainstop for Morocco, seemed to aim at starting trade with Damascus to prove that the center of the Portuguese action always moved towards Asia, the craved destination of the papacy and now also cut through by the routes of the Venetian and Genoese merchants⁴².

Also after the failure of the Portuguese effort in the African inland, the research for new solutions did not set aside the symbolic incentives of the ideal crusader aiming at encircling Islam according to the strategy suggested by the Popes to the Portuguese kings. Therefore, even the exploration of the African coast and of the nearby islands, which savored like the future transoceanic experience, were included in the traditional plan of the crusade that now the Portuguese contended with the Spaniards. It is not a coincidence that the efforts to oppose Northafrican Islam made by John I and his third-born son Henry the Navigator between 1415 and 1436, prepared the real crusade organized in 1437 by Alfonso V against Tunis⁴³.

As Ranise highlighted, this new and bitterer failure urged new Atlantic explorations lead by Henry the Navigator who ventured along the African coast reaching Senegal in 1443 and Gambia and Cape Verde in 1555–1556⁴⁴. Afterwards, Henry received precise indications by the Pope who urged him to sail towards Guinea and India in search of the legendary Prester John⁴⁵, a project already proposed during the Council of Florence when Eugene IV gave similar indications to Alberto da Sarteano⁴⁶.

42 *Storia della missioni francescane VI*, p. 58–59.

43 «We saw again the Portuguese in Africa in 1458, when Alfonso V after a short resistance took Alcacer-Ceguer (Ksar-es-srit) between Ceuta and Tangeri on the river Larache; it was an expedition which had to be linked to the crusade launched by Callixtus III against the Turks in 1457, and which had no effects because of his death». *Storia della missioni francescane VI*, p. 58.

44 On the role played by Henry the Navigator in the Portuguese expansive policy aimed at expanding Christianity, see: David Abulafia, *The discovery of Mankind. Atlantic Encounters in the age of Columbus* (New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 82–86; Peter Edward Russell, *Prince Henry "the navigator", A Life* (New-Haven/London, Yale University press, 2000).

45 Charles-Martial De Witte, «Les bulles pontificales et l'expansion portugaise au XVe siècle», in *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 49/2–3 (1954), pp. 438–462: 455.

46 Tanase, *Jusqu'aux limites du monde*, p. 717.

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

In the chapter about the Portuguese navigation towards India, Marcellino Ranise da Civezza insisted again on the link between the modern Portuguese endeavour and the medieval tradition related to the Franciscan Asia. After mentioning the endeavours of the Arab, Jewish and Muslim travelers during the XI century, he dealt with the papal initiative of the Franciscans William of Rubrouck and Giovanni da Pian del Carpine and that of the Genoese who, during the crusade, experienced «faster routes and paths»⁴⁷, thanks to the agreements sealed with Saracens Turks and Armenians. According to him, the Azores and Madeira were discovered by the Genoese Valdino and Guido Vivaldi, as reported by the Portolano medico, that Ranise attributed to another Genoese⁴⁸.

Among the Genoese explorations there is the story of the two Friars Minor who participated in the discovery of the Canaries made in 1291 by Tedisio Doria and Ugolino Vivaldi⁴⁹. The anonymous Franciscan known as Montebarroccio, who lived in the Noli monastery, sailed on the galleys of the Genoese Antonio da Noli who was the first to reach the islands of Cape Verde (1440)⁵⁰. Marcellino Ranise da Civezza pointed out Antoniotto Usodimare as the real mediator between the Franciscan-Genoese experience and the Portuguese courage. Supported by Henry the Navigator, he «went beyond eight hundred miles, where no Christian had never arrived; he reached the land of Prester John or Abissinia, where he found a descendant of the Vivalda galley»⁵¹.

Thanks to Antoniotto Usodimare, the Portuguese reached the country of Prester John, where they met those who were getting of the galleys of Ugolino Vivaldi and Tedisio Doria, where the two Friars Minor were traveling. The author clearly illustrated the reasons why the Portuguese discoveries depended on the Franciscan medieval tradition, dealing with the contribution of the Minors to the Council of Florence. The historian widely reported on the links between the friars Alberto da Sarteano and Luigi da Bologna and the representa-

tives of the Eastern Churches in Asia. In particular, he made a long overview on the different traditions about Prester John and the contributions by the Franciscans of Jerusalem to the Portuguese discoveries of the Abyssinian Christianity, confirming the strong appeal of the myth of the anti-Islamic ally stemming from the Medieval Franciscan adventure in Cathay. About this, Marcellino Ranise da Civezza quoted a long passage of the *Annales Maritimos* by Albano Silveira⁵², where he clearly stated that the myth of Prester John was the real horizon of the Portuguese explorations along the African Coast beyond Cape of Good Hope and until Asia. John II, king of Portugal, after asking his mathematicians to analyze the information about Prester John, decided to engage in the exploration of the territories, ordering Bartolomeu Dias to go ahead by sea and to the Franciscan Anthony of Lisbon to go ahead overland: «Searches went on, Civezza reported, and they soon found the long-sought monarch, even if the reality did not coincide with his fame. Civezza concluded that the contribution of the Minor Order to this success was quite clear»⁵³.

For the Franciscan historian, Portuguese geographical discoveries were an extension of the idea of the crusade and they did not take attention away from the goal of the fight against Islam. In this perspective, we can understand how the purpose pursued by the Portuguese in circumnavigating Africa was not just the mere conquest of the continents, but rather the creation of the crusade's medieval myth of Prester John, fueled by the debate which took place during the Council of Florence. Therefore, the Portuguese who always wanted the franciscan presence in their navigations aimed at reaching the Cathay of the Gran Khan from the West, hoping that Gran Khan would be in favour of the Christians.

The discovery of the Canaries

Marcellino Ranise da Civezza explicitly affirmed the continuity between the Asian mission and the discovery of America, taking into account the role played by the

47 *Storia della missioni francescane* VI, p. 200.

48 *Storia della missioni francescane* VI, p. 201.

49 «The said Vivaldi brothers were on board of those galleys not only with other citizens but also with two Friars Minor of San Francis». *Storia della missioni francescane* VI, p. 201.

50 «According to what Barro says, in 1440 the Genoese Antonio da Noli and two other members of his family discovered the island of Cape Verde. This is the clear explanation of the evangelization carried out by the Franciscan from Montebarroccio in the monastery of Noli on the western coast of Genoa we referred to in the previous chapter». *Storia della missioni francescane* VI, p. 203.

51 *Storia della missioni francescane* VI, p. 203.

52 *Annales maritimos et coloniae, publicação mensal redigida sob a direção da Associação marítima colonial, ser V. Memoria chronologica ecerca do descobrimento da terra do Prete João das Índias e embaixadas que a ello enviaram os Portuguezes, coordenada pelo socio Albano Silveira* (Lisboa 1820).

53 *Storia della missioni francescane* VI, p. 342. The proposal of John II of Portugal to send the abovementioned Franciscan missions in search of Prester John, was the alternative to the project that Columbus had submitted to the Portuguese king, that was sailing to the India of Prester John crossing the Ocean (Jacques Heers, *Christophe Colomb*, Paris, Hachette, 1991, p. 185). In relation to the trip of the Franciscans, see Teodosio Somigli da S. Detole, *Etiopia Franciscana nei documenti dei secoli XVII e XVIII I* (Quaracchi, S. Bonaventura, 1928), LXXXIX; Geo Pitarino, «I Portoghesi verso l'Asia del Prete Gianni», in *Studi Medievali* 3a serie 2,1 (1961), pp. 74–137: 118.

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

Spanish government in the missionary history. In this matter, he particularly focused on the influence of the Franciscans first on the discovery of the Canaries and then on the ambitious project to reach Asia from the West crossing the Atlantic Ocean. For the contribution of the Franciscan tradition in Asia to the plan of Christopher Columbus, the author preferred to rely on the influential testimony by Alexander von Humboldt, strong supporter of the reliance of Christopher Columbus on Bacon and, thus, on Rubrouck.

Marcellino Ranise da Civezza—already engaged in a book to which friar Pietro Bonthier and Giovanni Le Verrier, the two historians of the Canaries expedition referred—had the privilege to find the manuscript whose publication was possible thanks to Jimenes de la Espada, who had discovered the original manuscript in the Library of Madrid. The work titled *Conoscimento del todos leo reynos, y tierras y señorios que son por el mundo* (Madrid 1877) gave Ranise the chance to add another segment of missionary history, developing an ideal fil rouge linking Eurasia to America. In fact, the thesis of continuity was already confirmed by verifying that the Minors really drafted that document. According to the author, the person who wrote the manuscript in mid-XIV century was a Franciscan because—by offering precise indications on the place where the Genoese galleys lead by Tedisio Doria and Ugolino Vivaldi (1291) sank (Amanahea)—he showed astonishment about the discovery of the presence of two Friars Minor on those galleys⁵⁴. By analyzing the book, Marcellino Ranise da Civezza suggested that the author of *Conoscimento* was himself a traveler⁵⁵, maybe belonging to the Pilgrim Fathers, or that he was just a person who «collects memories that he knows» or conveyed by «travelers, writing a magnificent universal geography essay, that nobody had never written before»⁵⁶.

Later, he added that «finally, nobody knows about these trips and the reports written on them and then read in the monasteries (as we know also from Salimbene), and the copies diffused that contributed to raise

54 To corroborate his reasoning, the historian quotes a long passage of the abovementioned manuscript: «Eodem anno (1291) Thedisius Auriae, Ugollinus de Vivaldo, et eius frater quibusdam aliis civibus lanuae coeperunt facere quoddam viaggium, quod aliquis usque nunc facere minime attemptavit [...] In quibus inveniunt dicti duo fratres de Vivaldo personaliter, et duo Fratres Minores: quod quidem mirabile fuit non solum videntibus sed audientibus.» Iacobi Auriae, *Annales*, t. XVIII. *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, by Henricii Pertz, *Annovarum* 1826–1872, quoted in *Storia universale della missione francescana* VI, p. 80 footnote 1.

55 For an updated edition of the work, see: N. F. Marino (dir.), *El libro del conocimiento de todos los reinos. The Book of Knowledge of All Kingdoms*, (Tempe, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999).

56 *Storia universale della missione francescana* VI, p. 81.

the desire of new adventures to explore new territories and peoples which lead to the discovery of the New World, the beginning of the complete exploration of the whole globe where we live»⁵⁷.

As for the document maybe written by a Franciscan traveler or a simple writer, the Ligurian historian thought that it was a real scoop of cartographical science about the regions of Africa until Far Asia. The notes of the Franciscan in the Middle Ages about the routes from Azof to «Catayo» are more precise than those by Pegolotti (1335), the author of a handbook for merchants⁵⁸. Moreover, his indications about the Canaries, in Madeira and the Azors were made a decade before the charts of Florence (1351)⁵⁹ and Venice, by Francesco and Domenico Pizigani (1367)⁶⁰, the Catalan charts and those from Majorca (1375–1378)⁶¹, giving also clarifications of the location of at least ten more islands belonging to the same archipelagus. He also gave the correct definition of the Rio de Oro, the *Niger* of Ptolemy, Pliny and Marino Sanudo (1321)⁶², the *Nil Gana* of the ancient Arab geographers, not to mention the information on the Gulf of Guinea, *Sinus aethiopicus*, designed for the

57 *Storia universale della missione francescana* VI, p. 82.

58 Francio Balducci Pegolotti, *La pratica della mercatura* (Cambridge MA 1936), pp. 20–31. At the beginning of his work, the author included some information on the routes of Cathay, without any practical purpose because he was mainly interested in the Middle East, but with an ideological purpose considering the exotic element, which is an ingredient of the typical culture of the Italian-Florentine merchant.

59 Civezza referred to a Medici code (Florence, Laurentian Library, Gaddi 9, ff. 3v–4r) described by Gio. Battista Baldelli (*Il Milione di Marco Polo testo di lingua del secolo decimo terzo*, Firenze, Giuseppe Pagani 1827, CLIII–CXIX). On the cartography of the Renaissance, also in reference to the use made by Columbus, it is useful to see the study by Corradino Astengo, «The Renaissance chart tradition in the Mediterranean», in David Woodward (dir.), *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 3. *Cartography in the European Renaissance* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 174–237.

60 On this map, see Giuseppe Caraci, «A conferma del già detto: Ancora sulla paternità delle carte nautiche anonime», *Memorie Geografiche* 6 (1960), pp. 129–40: 138–39.

61 Julio Rey Pastor, Ernesto García Camarero, *La cartografía mallorquina* (Madrid 1960), p. 14.

62 We refer to the maps produced by Pietro Visconte and included by Marino Sanudo in the *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis super Terrae Sanctae recuperatione et conservazione*, an essay aiming at encouraging the organization of a new crusade to free the Holy Land. The *liber secretorum* published in Gesta dei per Francos II, Hanovie Wecheliani apud heredes Ioannis Aubrii, 1611, was printed again in Jerusalem in 1972.

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

first time in the Borgia planisphere (1452)⁶³ and in that of friar Mauro (1457–1459)⁶⁴.

In order to definitively prove the link between Asia and America, between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Marcellino Ranise da Civezza relied on Humboldt, whose work was a thorough analysis of the sources, used also by Columbus to plan the Transoceanic crossing towards the region that he expected to be Asia. The German scholar, indeed, did not hesitate in attributing to Albertus Magnus and above all to the Franciscan Francis Bacon the first intuition on the possibility «to reach directly India from the West». According to the German Anthropologist, Bacon who was a disciple of the Arabs for the study of tools and methods for empirical observation, became the founder of experimental science and relied on the huge knowledge of the «brothers William of Rubruck and Giovanni dal Pian del Carpine»⁶⁵.

The Oxonian philosopher joined the Franciscan Order pushed by the exceptional discovery that, during the Middle Ages, in the monasteries there were real agencies for the transmission of knowledge⁶⁶. Indeed, quoting Humboldt, Ranise highlighted that «Bacon himself, talking about the power of knowledge and languages noted that a strong desire to learn and to know had been emerging for forty years in suburbs and monasteries together with the general ignorance of the people»⁶⁷. With reference to the specific issue of the Baconian influence on the Genoese navigator, Marcellino

Ranise da Civezza by quoting Humboldt, affirms that «among the authors consulted by Columbus, the preferred author was undoubtedly Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly. There is no doubt that Pierre d'Ailly eliminated from the letter *Opus majus* by Friar Rogero Bacon the passages taken by Columbus as evidence of the truth of the great project of discovering the New World»⁶⁸.

Indeed, for Humboldt, Bacon played a key role for the success of the endeavour promoted by Columbus. That's why we could compare the Franciscan philosopher to Janus Bifrons, who on one side observed with Rubruck and Pian del Carpine the Asia of the XIII century, and on the other side imagined the mobilization which triggers modernity⁶⁹. In order to confirm his thesis, he illustrated a synopsis to prove that the quotation of a passage by Cardinal d'Ailly, included by Columbus in a letter he wrote to the Spanish monarchs, was identical to a passage of the *Opus majus* by Bacon⁷⁰. Ranise grasped the effectiveness of this philological operation carried out by Humboldt who was glad to report on the conclusions of the outstanding scholar: «That is what Humboldt says, corroborating his statement by comparing the three manuscripts he refers to»⁷¹.

Continuity in the geographical knowledge

The continuity between Eurasia and America traced by Marcellino Ranise da Civezza is clearly based on the theory of geographical information almost trying to identify missions with expeditions, travels and explorations. In some ways, Ranise secularized the frontiers of the Earth, a symbolic element to indicate the missionary

63 Roberto Almagià, *Monumenta cartographica vaticana I, Planisferi carte nautiche e affini dal secolo XIV al XVII* (Citta del Vaticano 1944), pp. 27–29. The title *Mappamondo Borgia* comes from the fact that it has been bought in Portugal by Cardinal Stefano Borgia in 1794.

64 Piero Falchetta, *The Fra Mauro World Map* (Turnhout, Brepols, 2006).

65 *Storia universale delle missioni francescane VI*, pp. 84–85 (*Examen critique de l'histoire, de la géographie du nouveau continent et de progrès de l'astronomie nautique aux quinzième e seizième siècle I* (Paris, Librairie De Gide, 1836), p. 59).

66 Indeed, Davide Bigalli explains, the participation of Bacon to the Franciscan Order has to be interpreted in light of a difficult mediation between the canons imposed of the revealed wisdom and the needs of the modern *potestas*. This is the typical scenario of the transition periods that need the elaboration of new forms of organization and dissemination of knowledge. According to Bigalli «The Franciscan Order has to be seen in the framework of this path of wisdom that must be embodied by the *potestas*, the human relations which must become strength, the capacity of intervention of man in the divine project, and the participation of Bacon to all this». *Espansione del francescanesimo tra occidente e oriente nel secolo XIII. Atti del VI convegno internazionale Assisi, 12–14 ottobre 1978* (Assisi 1979), p. 302 (round table).

67 *Storia universale delle missioni francescane VI*, 84.

68 *Storia universale delle missioni francescane VI*, 85;

69 Andreas Daum highlights that Humboldt's thought could be interpreted as a history of the space and thus a history of modern mobilization. «Alexander von Humboldt, Natur als "Kosmos" und die Suche nach Einheit. Zur Geschichte von Wissen und seiner Wirkung als Raumgeschichte», in *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Weiheim) 23 (2000), pp. 243–268.

70 «J'ai d'ailleurs remarqué, en comparant differens (!) textes, que la passage dont l'amiral a inséré la traduction dans la lettre aux monarques, a été emprunté par Alliacus [Pierre d'Ailly] presque littéralement à l'*Opus majus* de Roger Bacon. Il est vrai que le cardinal dit à la fin de l'*Imago mundi: scriptura ex pluribus auctoribus recollecta anno MCCCX*; mais, au milieu de tant de noms d'auteurs classiques et de cosmographes arabes, il ne cite jamais le nom célèbre de Roger Bacon. Voici la collation des trois passages; celui qui est extrait de la lettre de Colomb offre une transposition de quelques phrases d'Alliacus». *Examen critique de l'histoire, de la géographie du nouveau continent et de progrès de l'astronomie nautique aux quinzième e seizième siècle I*, pp. 63–65: 65–69.

71 *Storia universale delle missioni francescane VI*, p. 85.

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

goal, the anxiety for the globalization of faith, which is the heritage of the ideology of the crusade.

For example, he praised the qualities as geographer of the anonymous author of the manuscript found in Madrid. He then exalted the qualities as explorers or *ante litteram* anthropologists of John of Montecorvino, Andrew of Perugia, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine and all the other travelers and missionaries in Cathay⁷². In the conclusions of the chapter about the Madrid manuscript and the Bacon of Humboldt, Ranise applauded a work by Decker on the catholic missions because it «would clarify the religious and social usefulness of the missions [...] the services to sciences and letters»⁷³.

In the work by Civezza it is easy to understand his conviction that globalization was granted by science more than by the anxiety for the mission. The Franciscan historian showed his full solidarity with Humboldt because he considered Bacon as a transmitter of geographical notions as it was suitable for a pioneer of the modern empirical science.

In fact, Civezza quotes *l'Examen critique* of Humboldt instead of his source, the *Opus majus*, written by his confrere, the Franciscan Roger Bacon

Ces mêmes aperçus sur la possibilité de se rendre directement aux Indes par la voie de l'ouest, sur les parties de la terre qui sont bitables, et le rapport entre les surfaces des continents (!) et des mers se retrouvent chez Roger Bacon, homme prodigieux par la variété de ses connaissances, la liberté de son esprit et la tendance de ses travaux vers la réforme ses études physique⁷⁴.

If Civezza involved Humboldt and, thus, Bacon to trace the continuity between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as a channel of simple empirical information that the explorers of Asia offered to those of America,

when he pointed out the shift from a strictly religious mission to a mission which was an expansion of time, he had to rely on Bartolomeo da Pisa, author of *De Conformitate*⁷⁵. Marcellino Ranise da Civezza presented a series of profiles of the missionaries working in Asia (from Giovanni da Pian del Carpine to Rubruck) using the list of the places of the Asian mission provided by Bartolomeo da Pisa in his work, proposing the compendium, the summary and the results of that adventure⁷⁶. In this way, he considered the *De Conformitate* by Pisano the junction among the agents of the mission, the missionaries and the spaces of their apostolic mission.

If he called for Bacon and Humboldt to illustrate the shift from Asia to America, he relied on Pisano to introduce another fundamental link to the idea of mission: the shift from *ire ad infideles* to *loca*, from the missionaries to the spaces⁷⁷! With Bacon, he annotated the important document of the geographer friar on the space of the Asian mission, whereas to annotate the list of the missionaries in Asia he introduced the *loca* of Pisano.

To conclude, Marcellino Ranise da Civezza considered Bacon as a cultural mediator, Janus Bifrons, between the Asian space and the transoceanic space; whereas he considered Pisano as a cultural mediator between *ire ad infedes* of the missionaries (linear space) and the mission as the latitude space. Ranise seemed to identify Bartolomeo da Pisa as the initiator of a literary genre that, if not belonging to the criteria of the statistics dear to the lovers of the missions contemporary to the Franciscan historians, it seemed to fully comply with the geographical model, typical of the modern *status locali*. Actually, Bartolomeo da Pisa was the first official historian of the Minors engaged in writing lists of *loca* in order to classify the minor sanctity according to a geographical criterion. Pisano took from the traditional *cataloga sanctorum* the habit of associating the name of the Saint and his biographical data with his burial-place⁷⁸.

72 «This is the narration of the Franciscan traveler, or missionary, or geographer of the first half of the XIV century that offers scholars of geography and history a good chance to understand how much we owe to the missionaries and the travelers of the last centuries». *Storia universale delle missioni francescane* VI, p. 140.

73 *Les missions catholiques introductif a l'histoire des missionnaires belges par P. de Decker, ancien ministre, membre de L'Académie de Belgique* (Bruxelles 1879).

74 «Ces mêmes aperçus sur la possibilité de se rendre directement aux Indes par la voie de l'ouest, sur les parties de la terre qui sont bitables, et le rapport entre les surfaces des continents (!) et des mers se retrouvent chez Roger Bacon, homme prodigieux par la variété de ses connaissances, la liberté de son esprit et la tendance de ses travaux vers la réforme ses études physique». *Examen critique de l'histoire, de la géographie du nouveau continent* I, p. 58.

75 *Storia universale delle missioni francescane* VI, 17

76 «Finally, concluding the information about our old missions in Asia, I would like to notice that Bartolomeo da Pisa in his book wrote about the main stations fonde by the Franciscans». *Storia universale delle missioni francescane* VI, pp. 17–18.

77 Indeed, Civezza, after concluding a long quotation of Pisano, adds: «Also in the trip of our blessed Odoric of Udine there are news of some places where the Order settled in the far East. Mandelville reports of three places [...]». *Storia universale delle missioni francescane* VI, p. 18.

78 Brother Elemosina da Gualdo would be the first to put the burial place of the martyrs next to their names, proposing in this way a sort of geography of sanctity, a topography of martyrdom. Roberto Paciocco, *Da Francesco ai "Catalogi sanctorum"* (Assisi, Porziuncola, 1990), p. 105. In relation to the research on the text by Elemosina still under an in-depth analysis it is

From the mission to the space

The novelty of Bartolomeo da Pisa is not just the introduction of the concept of space in the geographical field, but the fact that he attributed to the *loca* – that is to say to the space – the theological meaning of *conformitas*⁷⁹. In his work about the *conformitas* of Francis with Christ and of the results of that *conformitas*, he included some lists of places considering the geographical element as a real outcome of *conformitas*. In this perspective, by sending his brothers to the world, Francis imitated Christ. The fruit of this imitation would create an expansion space corresponding to the mission. Therefore, space as real translation of *conformitas*, would take on a utopian martyrial meaning, that is to say the profile of the eschatological ideal belonging to the conquest of the frontiers of the Earth, typical of the spiritual literature that Pisano absorbed and transformed. One should not forget, indeed, that Olivi himself defined the mission as *fructus finis*, as ultimate and almost exclusive purpose of the order⁸⁰. According to Olivi, chapter 12 the Rule, the last chapter, deals with the mission.

The space – fruit of Pisano – does not represent just the implementation of a missionary dynamic which has reached its end, like an ended and static horizon, the so called *status locorum*. The status, which is the result of *conformitas*, in the work by Pisano is like a space

possible to see the following publications: *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa II* by Girolamo Golubovich, pp. 105–106; Michele Faloci Pulignani, «Memorabilia de sanctis fratribus minoribus», in *Miscellanea Francescana* 15 (1914), pp. 65–69; Isabelle Heullant-Donat, «Livres et écrits de mémoire du premier XIVe siècle: le cas des autographes de fra Elemosina», in Giuseppe Avarucci, Rosa Maria Borraccini Verducci, Giammarco Borri, *Libro, scrittura, documento della civiltà monastica e conventuale nel basso medioevo (secoli XIII–XV). Atti del convegno di studio, Fermo, 17–19 settembre 1997* (Spoleto, Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1999), pp. 239–262; Id., «À propos de la mémoire hagiographique franciscaine aux XIII et XIV siècles. L'auteur retrouvé des Memorialia de sanctis fratribus minoribus», in *Religion et société urbaine au Moyen âge. Etudes offerts à Jean Louis Biget, réunies par Patrick Boucheron–Jacques Chiffolleau* (Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2000), pp. 511–529.

79 Among the last biographical synthesis it is possible to see that by Bruno W. Häuptli, «Bartholomaeus de Rinonico», in *Bio-Bibliogr. Kirchenlexikon* 26 (2006), pp. 125–127. The publication of the *Liber de Conformitate Vitae Beati Francisci ad Vitam Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, is available in *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. 4–5 (Quaracchi 1906–1912).

80 «Primum est superabundans et supererogativus fructus et finis ad quam decet istum ordinem erigi prae cunctis ordinibus ecclesiae Dei. Et hic est non solum fideles sed etiam universitatem infidelium trahere ad Christum, et pro hac re omni martyrio et peregrinationi apud illos se offerre et opponere». «Expositio Petri Johannis Olivi super Regulam Fratrum Minorum», in David Flood, *Peter Olivi's Rule Commentary* (Wiesbaden 1972), c. 12, 1, p. 192.

soaked with the blood of the martyrs, marked by the actions of the confessors and constellated by stigmata like those of Francis' body in *conformitas* with the Cross. It is a space fecundated by testimony, pregnant of the future⁸¹. Unlike the chroniclers of the XIII century who used the concept of *conformitas* just to look at the past and pay a nostalgic tribute to Francis as the perfect imitator of Christ and inimitable by the friars, Pisano urged to expand space⁸²! With space categories he translated the concept of progress elaborated by Bonaventura da Bagnoregio from whom he also took the formal structure of his work: the tree and its fruits⁸³!

81 «Quare volens Christus Salvator suam vitam et passionem mundo declarare et renovare Franciscum cum suo direxit ordine; qui crucis Christi, id est vitae ipsius, assumpto vexillo, in mundum progredientes, vitam pro observantia assumpsisse evangelicam, prout paefata ostendunt, ipsamque primo operibus, demum verbis mundanis patefacere studerunt. Et ut in dubia fides beato Francisco principaliori daretur a cunctis, etsi praevia revelatione de assumptione vitae evangelicae a Christo fuerit praemonitus, post tamen susceptionem vitae evangelicae bulla stigmatum Christi ab ipso est consignatus, ut post ipsius vitam et regulam ire tutissimum a fidelibus putaretur et teneretur. Quod, cum crucifixio Salvatoris in fine vitae suae sit facta, ac vitae Christi perfectio sit in crucifixione compendiose reserata, beatique Francisci stigmatizatio sit facta iuxta finem vitae suae et post regulae confirmationem et institutionem, loquendo de regula, de qua ad praesens est sermo, indicium est, beatum Franciscum evangelium et vitam Christi servasse, et in ipsa regula talia praefata posuisse et descripsisse». Bartolomeo da Pisa, *De Conformitate*, in *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. IV, p. 379.

82 Among the chronicles before the *de Conformitate*, we remind the following: *Speculum* (Sabatier) 1318; *Fioretti-Actus* 1370 1390, de *Cognitione di Sarrant* 1365; a series of minor compilations whose common source has not been identified yet such as those calle D'Angers, Antoniana, Avignonese, first and second of Barcelona, Belgian, Florentine, Isidorian, the so called Little, Sarnanese, the Upsala, Venetian. In them, we can find texts of the thirteenth century often re-written to the letter, apparently collected just for a personal interest, sign of an unease or a nostalgia for the past that cannot be replicated. If on the one hand they represent the attempt of a continuity with the tradition of the fourteenth century, on the other hand they disclose new developments compared to the texts of the thirteenth century: the ideological and polemic endeavour linked to claim a betrayed ideal; essentialism, crystallization of models evoking a past removed from its historical context and far from the present. It is in the *Cognitione* that *conformitas* is put into the foreground. The reference to Christ acquires the figure of *topos*, the prototype excessively formalized that betrays the awareness of the impossibility to go back to the experience of Francis. Enrico Menestò, «Dagli "Acta" al "de Conformitate": la compilazione come segno della coscienza del francescanesimo trecentesco», in *I Francescani nel trecento. Atti del XIV convegno internazionale. Assisi, 16–17–18 ottobre 1986* (Assisi, Università di Perugia Centro studi francescani, 1988), pp. 43–68.

83 Pisano's work follows the footprints of Bonaventura not just because for the general principle of his work he used the image of the tree, but also because he shared with the seraphic doctor the concept of *conformitas* of Francis with Christ. According to Bonaventura, Francis, by choos-

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

In summary, compared to his predecessors, Pisano inverted polarities and like Bacon he played the role of Janus Bifrons. He did not look at the past anymore, free from nostalgia, to relaunch the Order bringing it to the modernity of the Joachimite eschatology dear to the spirituals⁸⁴. By no coincidence, the following observant movement drew stimulus from the *De conformitate* for its own development, as it also happened for the Capuchin reform of the XVI century⁸⁵. On the contrary, for the Lutheran reform, the *De conformitate* became the symbol of a secularizing effort if not deconsecrating! For Luther followers, there could not be a real relationship between man and God; this is the reason for the separation in the anthropological and topographic fields with the fronts that oppose on the Danube *limes* to propose again the old split between Romans and Germans evoked by Braudel.

Pisano received the primordial impulse to merge space and martyrdom, the incentive to conceive the idea of space as *conformitas* thanks to the chronicle by friar Elemosina, the first to introduce in a list of saints

ing Christ through the stigmata becomes the symbol of prophecy. He can give a spiritual interpretation of the holy writs, renewing the human and church reality. In this concept of prophecy and through the evangelic life of the Saint who imitated the Cross, there is the clear expression of the concept of the progress of history that Bonaventura took from Joachim of Fiore, contrasting it to the Augustinian vision of history. In summary, Bonaventura prepares the reflection of the fourteenth century adopting the concept of historical progress of Joachim of Fiore: the rising of the anti-Christ is not marked by degradation and ruin, on the contrary it is a time of struggle and martyrdom; a sort of preparation for the new world. Degradation is only apparent, temporary and functional to the future happiness. In particular, in his *Collationes in Exaëmeron* Bonaventura proposes an interpretation of misfortune/tribulations not as degradation according to the Augustinian interpretation but as a chance to go towards a future of peace. Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, «Collationes in Exaëmeron», in *Opera omnia*, vol. V (Quaracchi, S. Bonaventura, 1891), cap. XVI § 30, p. 408; cap. XVII § 28, p. 414. These are the concepts that the seraphic doctor evokes also in his *Legenda Major*, where he better illustrates the identification of Francis with the angel of the sixth seal which inaugurates the new era.

84 On the frequency and modalities with which Pisano used the spiritual texts and the texts by Joachim of Fiore, one can find some indications in the introduction to his works: *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. IV, pp. XVIII–XIX.

85 Janusz Kaźmierczak, «L'ideale francescano nelle ordinazioni di Albacina e nelle costituzioni del 1536», in Vincenzo Criscuolo (dir.), *Ludovico da Fossombrone e l'Ordine dei cappuccini* (Roma, Istituto storico dei Cappuccini, 1994), pp. 307–322. The success of Pisano does not fear any comparisons with other works of the Franciscan historiography as eloquently testified by the huge number of codes disseminated throughout Europe (more than 150), the three printed editions published in just 80 years (Minano 1510 e 1513; Bologna 1590), and several imitations: from Giacomo Oddi da Perugia (1488) to Mariano da Firenze (1523); from Pelberto di Temesvar (1504) to Dionigi Pulinari (†1582), curator of an Italian version; from Valentino Marée (1660) to Pietro Alva y Astorga (1667).

and martyrs the indication of their burial place. It is astonishing that the inventor of an authentic geography of the minor saints is the most telling witness among the chroniclers not only of the mission in Cathay, but also of the heroic virtues of John of Montecorvino, whom he considers a saint, even if he didn't make any miracles and he didn't die as a martyr. Friar Elemosina in his chronicle included the history of the Order within the universal history, to establish a parallel between the origin of Medieval Christianity born at the end of the Roman Empire, and the beginning of the Minor Order which started a new Christian era. He compared Orosius – the promoter of the first Medieval civilization – to Francis, promoter of the new missionary momentum which arrived to its completion with the announcement of faith until the furthest frontiers of the East. Elemosina illustrated the martyrial outcome of the missionary adventure in Asia while the spirituals left to the Holy Land thanks to the political and economic support of the Angevin monarchs. The memory of the martyrdom in Cathay was for Elemosina the symbolic and memorialistic backbone of the mission in the Holy Land, the other East⁸⁶.

U-topia, soul of the Humboldtian genealogy of geographical knowledge

The political and economic contribution given by Sancia to the conquerors of the new eastern spaces did not imply the idea of renouncing to the ideal of martyrdom. On the contrary, Sancia offered her power for the settlement of the spirituals in the holy places and wrote to Perpignan who wanted to die as a martyr to defend the Franciscan ideal⁸⁷. It was rather the papacy of John XXII who condemned the spirituals and was reticent to find a successor of Montecorvino, to show a certain detachment in relation to the canonizations of martyrs proposed by the Minor Order. On the contrary, Paolino da Venezia, author of the *Mappa Mundi* (1320–1330), al-

86 On the concept of history and especially of periodization adopted by brother Elemosina, see the interesting remarks by Heullant-Donat, «Livres écrits de mémoire du premier XIV siècle: le cas des autographes de fra Elemosina», pp. 239–263: 245–246; Tanase, *Jusqu'aux limites du monde*, pp. 598–600.

87 To compare the text of the letter see Luke Wadding, *Annales Minorum an 1331*, vol. VIII (Quaracci 1932), p. 141. Isabelle Heullant-Donnat, «En amont de l'observance. Les lettres de Sancia, reine de Naples aux Chapitres généraux et leur transmission dans l'historiographie de XVIe siècle», in Frédéric Meyer and Ludovic Viallet (dir.), *Identité franciscaine à l'âge des réformes* (Clermont-Ferrand, Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2005), pp. 73–79.

The Franciscans in Cathay: memory of men and places (G. Buffon)

though far from the ideals of the spirituals, had no reserves in including the martyrs in the lists of saints⁸⁸.

Only Trinci and Bernardino da Siena brought back eschatology in the heart of the papacy. In 1350, Pietro da Narbona left Catalonia to Jerusalem stopping in Brogliano, Trinci's homeland. In 1368 he died as martyr in the Holy Land where Christ had died, example and model of life in the Spirit and canon of holiness. In the Holy Land, at the beginning of the XIV century *potestas* and *martiria* coincided: on the one hand, friars did not reject honours by the pilgrims who considered them as the custodians of the power of the Latin church founded by the crusaders; on the other hand, they justified their presence by proposing again the values of Olivi and Clareno. In the place where Christ was born poor and had died naked, only the followers of the poor Francis with the stigma could live. The conformitas with Christ was the *conditio sine qua non* to live in that place where people had to be ready to be martyrs waiting for the time to be mature and for the people to convert. Even if Minister General Oddone tried to expunge spiritual elements from the Holy Land (as *Chronica XXIV* that did not renounce to martyrdom) omitting the reference to the Angevin monarchs, the Spirituals from Catalonia and Narbona, the territories of Sancia and Roberto d'Angiò, continued to reach the Holy Land, urging the residents and Cola di Rienzo himself to build a new world. In 1414, once all the fears of ostracism against spiritual eschatology had disappeared, the General Minister Antonio da Pireto introduced in the statutes of the Custodia the eschatological legitimization of the Spirituals. In the Holy Land those who were ready to lead the world by example of holiness could live, mirroring the evangelical perfection, always reminding the model of the Redeemer, who is *totius vitae spiritualis exemplar*⁸⁹.

It is not surprising that modern cartography flourished in the territories where Spirituals settled, with maps that allowed to expand geographical knowledge and projects aimed at making new discoveries. It is indeed in the Angevin and Aragonese milieu, close to the spiritual Franciscan order, that the Catalan atlas and the *Libro del conocimiento*, source for the historians of the Canaries, Berthier and Le Verier⁹⁰, were produced. After all, the book of the prophecies of Cristopher Columbus

is permeated by Spiritual eschatology, being Columbus guest at the Rábida, where the iberical spiritual lovers of Joachimites lived⁹¹. From the point of view of Bacon and Bartolomeo da Pisa, of the humanist cartographers of the Renaissance supporting global mobilization, the legacy of Francis of Assis—complying with Christ until the martyrdom of the stigmas and for this reason image of the angel arising from the East—certainly represents the space.

It is not just a topographic category, but it is a dynamic concept that, for Bernardino da Siena, Olivi's disciple, is fulfilled through the expansion of economic, social and civil spaces, as a result of the inclusion of new social categories in the field of citizenship. The Franciscans of Humanism and the Renaissance, those who accompanied Columbus in the transoceanic sailing, thanks to the contribution of Bartolomeo da Pisa with the *De conformitate* celebrated the space as Francis' authentic legacy, the fruit of his *conformitas*. They also inspired Piero della Francesca in portraying the Council of Florence of Eugene IV, the panel of the big fresco on the Legend of the true cross. The artist superimposed the Council aiming at emphasizing the unity of the Church and the victory of Eraclio (314) against the Persians, which unified the East and the West to recapture the relic of the cross, the trophy triumphantly brought to Jerusalem, the *locus teologicus* of the *conformitas franciscana*.

This is then how it is precisely the utopian nature of martyrdom as a privileged condition of entry into the celestial space that substantiates that same tension that animates the genealogy of geographical knowledge, which Alexander von Humboldt rebuilds with the principal intent of demonstrating the continuity between the medieval perception of space and modern cartographic technique. In fact, while the memory of martyrdom—as a consequence of the specialization of knowledge typical of the modern era—remains the prerogative of confessional contexts in form of devotion for the souls, the idea of space produced by the utopia of martyrdom is instead seized by cartography and its technicians. This took place in a period that was enlivened by the aspiration to cross borders to reach new worlds, to acquire new knowledge and, ultimately, to encounter beings never before known. Modern cartography, therefore, reborn from the ashes of the topography of martyrdom, is emerging as its flagship product. This genealogical relationship should not be ignored. To do so would mean consigning to oblivion that fecundity is the profound meaning of its own vitality, and thereby closing off the pathway for anyone who may wish to try their hand not in the drafting of a history of discoveries, but in the adventure of conquering new horizons.

88 On Paulinus Venetus, see: Isabelle Heullant-Donat, «Paolino da Venezia et les prologues de ses chorioniques universelles», in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Age* 105/1 (Roma, École française de Rome, 1993), pp. 381–342 : 430.

89 Kaspar Elm, «La custodia di Terra santa. Franziskanisches Ordensleben in der tradition der lateinischen Kirche Palästinas», in *I francescani nel Trecento. Atti del XIV convegno internazionale: Assisi, 16–17–18 ottobre 1986* (Perugia 1988), pp. 127–166: 161–164.

90 Tanase, *Jusqu'aux limites du monde*, pp. 643–647.

91 Alain Milhou, *Colombe et le messianisme hispanique* (Montpellier, Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2007).

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