

spiration of the Florentine Dante Alighieri). The Alterati had their own alternative facts: to them, the New World was forever Florence, even if scarcely any Florentine other than Vespucci had ever been there.

Markey cites Stephen Greenblatt's concept of the "colonization of the marvelous" as one context for the Medici's persistent engagement with the wonders of America. Closely allied is Markey's unifying claim that the Medici, through their collecting, display, and appropriation of New World artifacts, carried out a form of "vicarious conquest." Just as Medicean artists and their patrons cast their city as heir to the legacy of ancient Rome, Markey shows the myriad ways in which they were able to reimagine Florence as the discoverer and the master of the New World through the power of representation. And that was a power the Medici court wielded with an experienced hand.

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*L'aurora del Giappone tra mito e storiografia: Nascita ed evoluzione dell'alterità nipponica nella cultura italiana, 1300–1600.* Gianluca Caputo.

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Gianluca Caputo's *L'aurora del Giappone tra mito e storiografia* is a detailed contribution to our knowledge of the reception of Japan's myth and historiography in late medieval and Renaissance Italian culture in the collective consciousness over a period ranging from Marco Polo to Francesco Carletti. The analysis is carried out from multiple critical perspectives, from philology to literary criticism, historiography to geography, philosophy to theology. The research relies on a critical reading of primary sources and secondary literature in order to comprehend the reception of Japan's "otherness" in Italy and the debate among scholars around the role of "Cipangu," or "Giapam" (Japan), all over Europe. Drawing from images appearing in selected literary works, accounts, and cartographic descriptions that are identified as vehicles of knowledge about Japan in the Italian cultural heritage, the author traces how the symbolic dimension of the archipelago shifted in later literary and historiographical narratives. Among the authors studied, Rustichello da Pisa, Pietro Bembo OSIH, Ludovico Ariosto, Giovan Battista Ramusio, and Francesco Carletti are particularly relevant to outline the profile of the country and its culture as it was conceived at the time, providing a portrait of a conventional myth of Japan as it was diffused among or at least accepted by Italian writers.

The book is arranged into five chapters. Chapter 1 opens with an analysis of the birth of the Western idea and myth of Japan: the Latin version of Polo's *Milione* by Francesco Pipino is identified as the ethical and aesthetic forerunner of all the following literary myths in the West, as it was conceived by the literary and geographic works, from the medieval Cipangu to a Renaissance Giapam portrayed in a different way by both

Francis Xavier, SJ, and Ramusio. Chapter 2 offers a philological comparison between the medieval myth of Japan—i.e., Cipangu as it was represented in a Venetian origin and mercantile source, like Polo's *Milione*—and an early modern Giapam, for instance, the one illustrated by the Portuguese and missionary descriptions, from Xavier's 1552 editio princeps of his letter onward. Moreover, beyond the myth shaped by literary descriptions, a transmyth of Cipangu/Giapam also appeared in other disciplinary fields, such as geography and cartography, notably after the landing of Iberian merchants in the archipelago around the mid-sixteenth century. Thus the same myth is interpreted in different ways before and after the age of discoveries. Accordingly, the author distinguishes a representation of Cipangu as it was developed by cartography before the mid-fifteenth century—for example, in the *Catalan Atlas* by Abraham Cresques—and the same entity, conceived and represented by European cartographers in some of the most renowned maps, as early as the *Mappamondo* by Fra Mauro. The latter is worthy of mention as it pushed the myth of Japan forward in the guise of a legendary gold and silver island, inspiring, for example, Columbus's overseas enterprises, but also promoting a cultural debate around Japanese otherness. Caputo argues that this argument is well represented in works like Bordon's *Isolario*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and Ramusio's *Navigazioni et viaggi*.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the geopolitical and diplomatic vision of an atypical “colonial” Japan as it appeared in the mercantile sources and the *Avisi* (newsletters) by the Jesuits. As soon as European evangelization and commercial expansion moved toward Far East Asia, Japan was seen as a land of conquest, both for religious aims and for trade and political purposes. The overarching impact of Xavier's letter and the *Avisi*, at least those edited by the first three generals of the Society of Jesus, on the latter sixteenth-century Italian narratives allows us to assess the coeval knowledge, collective opinion, and beliefs vis-à-vis a different universalistic Japan. A turning point is finally Carletti's *Ragionamenti*, described in chapter 5, whose secular perspective provides a clear and pragmatic distinction between Western and Japanese cultural identities.

The book offers historical depth to a multifaceted subject and is appropriate for interdisciplinary scholarship in early modern world history, mostly for the East-West intercultural relationships, offering a sophisticated and erudite overview on the very first encounter of Italian cultural identity with Japanese civilization.

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