

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



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

James Nelson Novoa

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Situating Conciliarism in Early Modern Spanish Thought  
Situier conciliarisme dans la pensée espagnole de la première modernité

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bien dans les camps catholique que protestant ... Notons enfin la diversité des médiums étudiés (de la peinture à la poésie, en passant par la musique et les traités cynégétiques), autant de qualités qui font de cet ouvrage un jalon majeur dans les études consacrées à Charles IX.

FABIEN LACOUTURE

Université de Lille

### Caputo, Gianluca.

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

Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2016. Pp. xix, 351. ISBN 978-8-8222-6463-3 (paperback) €30.

Gianluca Caputo's book has the great merit of shedding light on a subject that until now has not had an overarching study dedicated to it, namely, the depiction of Japan in the Italian literary tradition from the Middle Ages until the seventeenth century. The study traces the evolution of the vision of the country of the Rising Sun in that tradition—from the earliest sources with their indirect knowledge of the land to the authors who benefitted from direct experience. Grounded in Italian literary texts and conversant with other literary traditions, Caputo provides readers with an impressive overview that is sure to interest a variety of readers.

In its first chapter ("Mito, transito e metamito all'estremo dell'estremo oriente: la nascita del Giappone nella cultura italiana ed europea") the book quite naturally dedicates a disproportionate amount of space to that first great chronicler who provided news about *Cipangu*: the Venetian Marco Polo. Here Caputo delves into the nature and merit of Polo's actual knowledge of Japan as an island abundant in gold, and into the reception of his text, especially through Francesco Pipino's Latin translation. Caputo identifies Polo as the source of knowledge about *Cipangu* through to the sixteenth century, for such as Columbus, and convincingly identifies evocations of it in Ariosto. Especially interesting in this chapter is his semiotical reading of several *mappamondi*, including those of Fra Mauro and Martellus from the fifteenth century and their different depictions of the imagined land.

The second chapter (“Mirando l’alba di *Giapam* dalla vetta di *Cipangu*: generazione e rigenerazione dei miti veneziani nelle *navigationi et viaggi* di Giovan Battista Ramusio”) engages with the sixteenth century directly. It further deals with the fascination for Japan, in the Venetian imagination in particular, by concentrating on Ramusio’s edition of the text, among the other travel accounts he published in his *Navigazioni e viaggi*, as part of a general interest in the Orient linked largely to the European expansion into Asia and especially the Portuguese presence there, which further fired interest in Japan specifically.

Chapter 3 (“*Ad majorem dei gloriam*: nascita del *Giapan* nella cultura italiana tardo rinascimentale, 1552–1556”) is dedicated to the literature produced after direct contact was made with Japan and its culture upon the arrival of the Portuguese. Curiously, the first hands-on encounter with *Giapan*, in the initial Iberian accounts of contact, was not identified by the first “discoverers” with Polo’s *Cipangu*. Especially important was Francis Xavier’s 1549 account of Japan, which circulated widely.

Chapter 4 (“Evoluzione di *Giapan* nella seconda edizione dell’epistola saveriana e negli *avvisi* del primo periodo editoriale gesuita”) gives special attention to Ramusio’s 1563 edition of Xavier’s account, displaying philologically how the text was transformed to enter the Italian literary landscape. It proved to be a major source of information on Japan for that context along with other Jesuit *avvisi* literature, which, translated into Italian and circulated widely, brought Japan to the attention of Italian readers.

The final chapter (“Alterità globale e alterità universale: la retorica identitaria italiana nel Giappone dei *Ragionamenti* di Francesco Carletti”) is centred on the Florentine merchant Francesco Carletti (1573–1636) and his role as a cultural translator and informant on Japan in his *Ragionamenti sopra le cose da lui vedute ne’ suoi viaggi*. By taking into account Carletti’s attempts to translate Japanese terms and realities into Italian, Caputo shows how the Florentine author tries to negotiate an “us and them” reality for his readers, attempting to make Japan, its culture and its language, intelligible to Italian readers.

Caputo’s book fills a gap in the literature on the subject and is surely to be of interest to people working on Italian literature, travel accounts, and Asian and European interactions in the Middle Ages and early modern period. Its interdisciplinary approach, blending semiotics, literature, history, and

cartography, makes it a fascinating read and provides readers with an overall picture of a distant world that became progressively more familiar to an Italian literary public over several centuries.

JAMES NELSON NOVOA

University of Ottawa

**Carocci, Sandro, and Isabella Lazzarini, eds.**  
***Social Mobility in Medieval Italy (1100–1500).***

Viella Historical Research 8. Rome: Viella, 2018. Pp. 430 + 8 ill. ISBN 978-88-6728-820-5 (hardcover) €75.

This volume is the result of a conference held in Rome (26–28 September 2016), which marked the culmination of a research project entitled *La mobilità sociale nel medioevo italiano (secoli XII–XV)*. Financed by Italy’s Progetti di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale grant system (2014–16), this project brought together researchers from four universities who coordinated a larger group of participants over three years, and was influenced by a previous collective investigation focused on the *conjecture de 1300* that produced a conference and multi-authored volume (2010). In this new undertaking, participants used economic and social lenses to launch a large-scale investigation of social mobility from the twelfth through the fifteenth century.

In such a limited space it is challenging to do justice to the breadth of knowledge and scholarly commitment found in this volume. As a spur to further research, this book provides a compendium of historiography, analytical approaches, new questions, and energetic offerings by experts in the field. While many of the authors focus on the Italian peninsula, the discussion also embraces England, France, the Low Countries, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Iberian Peninsula. The volume is divided into three sections: “Frameworks,” which offers geographically oriented overviews; “Surveys,” which explores specific questions related to medieval social mobility; and “Themes,” which offers thematic and historiographical discussions. The volume begins with an introduction by the editors, Sandro Carocci and Isabella Lazzarini, and ends with a concluding chapter by Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, both of which aim to