

ABSTRACT

ESTRATTO

da

VESPUCCI, FIRENZE E LE AMERICHE

A cura di

GIULIANO PINTO, LEONARDO ROMBAI, CLAUDIA TRIPODI



Leo S. Olschki Editore
Firenze

VESPUCCI, FIRENZE E LE AMERICHE

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CLAUDIA TRIPODI

(con CD-ROM)



Il volume si articola in due parti: la prima dedicata a Vespucci e ai viaggiatori della prima Età moderna, la seconda al rapporto privilegiato che, dall'Ottocento ai giorni nostri, ha legato l'America, e in particolare gli Stati Uniti, a Firenze. I saggi qui riuniti affrontano temi distinti nel tentativo di delineare un percorso lungo almeno cinque secoli che parte dalla società tardomedievale, studiandone i viaggiatori, la grande espansione economica, le conoscenze geografiche e cartografiche, per giungere a definirne alcuni degli esiti sulla cultura contemporanea.

Al volume è allegato un CD-ROM, a cura di Luciano Formisano, contenente il Codice Alberico, quarto volume della silloge curata dall'umanista veneziano Alessandro Zorzi che riunisce relazioni e lettere, manoscritte e a stampa, di interesse geografico.

In coperta: Il globo con i ritratti di Vespucci e Colombo, incisione di Philip Galle da Giovanni Stradano, *Americae relectio*, 1587-88.

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ABSTRACT

SESSIONE PRIMA

AMERIGO VESPUCCI E I MERCANTI VIAGGIATORI IN AMERICA ED ASIA FRA TARDO MEDIOEVO E PRIMA ETÀ MODERNA

GIULIANO PINTO, *Cultura mercantile ed espansione economica di Firenze (secoli XIII-XVI)*

This essay traces the reasons for the meaningful participation of Florentine merchant-navigators in the European expansion toward the New World, Central-South Africa and the Far East between the XVth and XVIth centuries. Among them A. Vespucci and G. da Verrazzano emerge, but they were not alone. To understand how merchants who came from a non coastal town not yet equipped with its own harbour, could be among the leading actors in the Atlantic expeditions, it is necessary to go back to the great economic Florentine development and to the widespread presence of the Florentine banks and companies in the Iberian peninsula as well as in most European and Mediterranean countries. Such expansion rested on the solid mercantile culture so well established in Florence which drove to the search of new markets and new experiences in far away countries, not only for economic profit but also for coming into contact with new realities.

DAVID ABULAFIA, *Dal Mediterraneo all'Atlantico, dall'Europa all'America: il mondo delle isole atlantiche e la visualizzazione dell'Atlantico*

The emphasis in this paper is on the previously uninhabited Atlantic islands – how they affected knowledge of the Atlantic itself, and how they were colonized and utilized by the Europeans, particularly the Portuguese. After a brief consideration of Madeira and the Azores, the article takes into account documentary sources for trade in the Cape Verde islands, as well as new archeological evidence. The settlement in São Tomé is also examined. Finally, the article relates knowledge of the Atlantic to Waldseemüller's famous map and the activities of the Gymnasium Vosagense under Duke René II of Lorraine.

MARIA ELISA SOLDANI, *Dal Mediterraneo all'Atlantico. Gli uomini d'affari fiorentini nella Penisola Iberica fra Tre e Quattrocento*

In order to understand a personality like A. Vespucci, his relations with the crowns of Castilla and Portugal, with C. Colombo and the local and international mercantile milieu, it is important to keep in mind the fact that he arrived in the Iberian peninsula as a merchant for a well established Florentine commercial company. One must also remember that he was part of a specific socio-professional milieu and at the same time was dealing within a context that was no longer simply Mediterranean but already opening up to the Atlantic. This essay portrays the main features of the Florentine presence in the Iberian kingdoms which, consolidated between the XIVth and XVth centuries, gradually moved its financial and commercial interests from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic.

ANGELA ORLANDI, *Dall'Andalusia al Nuovo Mondo: affari e viaggi di mercanti toscani nel Cinquecento*

Following Cristoforo Colombo's enterprise, merchants and adventurers from Florence, Siena, Lucca and Pisa also launched themselves into the discovery of the New World. Relying on the Tuscan community of Seville and Cadice and maintaining close relationships with their homeland, they ventured into the West Indies, seeking fortune. During the XVIth century at least fifty three Tuscans left Andalusia for the Caribbean and other territories of center and South America. Some of them continued to be merchants, others became entrepreneurs in sugar and mine products, and some chased glory at the service of conquerors. Their contribution to the developing American economy was in some cases quite relevant, and success was awarded to those who in addition to being the most resourceful were able to maintain active relationships with their fellow countrymen in Europe.

This study inserts itself into the ongoing historiographical debate on the crisis of the Mediterranean Sea and its businessmen after the Great Discovery. It offers new points of reflection on the presence and role of the Tuscan businessmen in Andalusia, whose actions appear to be more effective than was thought until now.

HILARIO CASADO ALONSO, *Il mondo spagnolo della mercatura e le Americhe nei secoli XV e XVI*

Trade and business people in Spain at the end of the Middle Ages have developed considerably and was similar to the development of other European territories. The fact that Castile recovered promptly from the crisis occurring at the Low Middle Ages, as well as the economic growth led to several important social and economic transformations. One of them was Spanish trade and financial dynamism at the

end of the Middle Ages, something that could be observed both internally and externally. Within this framework, two questions stand out: (a) the beginning and development of Castilian trade agencies in the main European economic centers during the 15th Century; (b) the establishment of the Iberian Peninsula as a meeting point of trades coming from many different places, being specially relevant those coming from Italy. Hence, Spanish and foreign traders were really interested in the new geographical discoveries, both mentally and economically. These events did not occur by chance; rather, they were the results of the social and economic forces that have been developing during the 15th Century.

FRANCESCO GUIDI BRUSCOLI, *Capitali fiorentini nei primi viaggi verso il Nord America: Giovanni Caboto e Giovanni da Verrazzano*

The Florentine contribution – in terms of both men and capital – in the process of expansion pursued by the Iberian States has long been known, as well as their investments in some of the French voyages, notably that of Giovanni da Verrazzano. Recent research has discovered that Florentine merchant-bankers in London provided funding to John Cabot. Therefore it has become clear that the English voyages – previously thought of as an exception – were also part of the same network of transoceanic enterprises organized by the Atlantic European States and financed by Italians.

CLAUDIA TRIPODI, *Mercanti scrittori, mercanti viaggiatori tra città e famiglia: Firenze e le famiglie Vespucci, da Empoli, Corsali, da Verrazzano*

This essay considers the merchant-travelers of the Florentine area (A. Vespucci, G. Da Empoli, A. Corsali, G. Da Verrazzano) seen in their context of origin (place of residence, dimension and cohesiveness of the family, economic situation, political affiliation) and not in their relations to the New World. It therefore assumes Florence as the center of the scene and analyses the family relationships and their socio-political positions, and tries to understand the similarities that sometimes they present. Through the analysis of various archival sources (family memoirs, letters, fiscal sources, public records and last wills) emerges a panorama that shows how the mobility of these travelers frequently led to an improvement in the image of their families. This caused, in the short term, the families' social growth and promoted, in the long run, the creation of their lasting reputation.

SEBASTIANO GENTILE, *Da Paolo Dagomari a Vespucci: gli studi astronomici e geografici a Firenze tra Tre e Quattrocento*

How was Vespucci's career possible? From factotum of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, from merchant to "ploto major" of the Casa della Contrattazione. The answer to

this historical question lies probably in Amerigo's vast geographical knowledge bestowed upon him by his uncle Giorgio Antonio, a leading figure in the humanistic Florence of the second half of the XVth century. In his letters Amerigo prides himself in his ability in measuring longitude using a method similar to that introduced by Paolo Dagomari more than a century before. A thin thread actually connects the fourteenth century scientist and the seaman: the attention, matured within the scientific environment of Florence, to a more accurate calculation of geographic coordinates. In the period of the great discoveries it became of essential importance to employ a cosmographer like Vespucci who could calculate the longitude of the places with precision.

LEONARDO ROMBAI, *Le possibili basi geografiche e cartografiche di Amerigo Vespucci e degli altri navigatori fiorentini*

This contribution focuses on the cultural and scientific knowledge and on the professional abilities (geographic, astronomic, cartographic) of the main Florentine merchant-travelers in the period of the great discoveries (mainly A. Vespucci, with mention of other personalities as G. Da Verrazzano and A. Corsali). Such abilities allowed them to use their travel experiences in prestigious commissions received by the Atlantic European States and in the redaction of travel reports already highly appreciated by their contemporaries. This essay also necessarily traces the role of Florentine science and humanism between the second half of the XVIth and the beginning of the XVIIth centuries.

CARLA MASETTI, *L'immagine del nuovo mondo nelle xilografie delle lettere a stampa vespucciane*

Besides of some handwritten family letters, are attributed to Vespucci two printed letters, published in the early decades of the '500: the *Mundus Novus*, edited for the first time at Augusta in 1504 and the *Lettera di Amerigo Vespucci delle isole nuouamente trouate in quattro suoi viaggi*, that saw the light in Florence (1505) and was best known in the Latin version of *Cosmographiae Introductio* (Saint Die, 1507). From the beginning, these two letters recorded a great success, responding in a simple and suggestive way to the wide desire for knowledge, stimulated by the contemporary geographical explorations; and provided a strongly Eurocentric key to all of the main questions raised by the Columbus' discovery. In many Vespucci' translations of the first decade of the '500, the graphics became more attractive and included several woodcuts – more or less elaborated – promoting the image of a “new world”, partly in contrast with the knowledges inherited from the classical tradition and from the ancient sciences.

ADELE DEI, *Nel bagaglio dei viaggiatori. Punti di riferimento e retaggi culturali di due fiorentini nelle Indie*

The aim of this essay is to present, in parallel, Filippo Sassetti's *Lettere dall'India* and Francesco Carletti, *Ragionamenti del mio viaggio intorno al mondo*. The comparison is meaningful both for the similarities (the two were both Florentines who started off as merchants little more than ten years apart), and for the biographical, cultural and stylistic differences that it brings to light. A different time, a different memory and a different relationship with the experiences of travel.

FRANCESCO SURDICH, *Le potenzialità economiche e mercantili del Nuovo Mondo nelle Decadi di Pietro Martire d'Anghiera*

The "Decades de Orbe Novo", compiled by an Italian humanist who lived and worked at length at the Spanish court, represent the first organic reconstruction of the exploration, conquest and perception of the New World. Even if they offer, especially in the first 'Decades', a reading of the newly discovered countries and populations that is mainly oriented toward the myth of Eden, they also contain information and reflections on the economic potential of the new territories that haven't yet been appropriately stressed.

DANIELA OTTRIA, *Riferimenti intertestuali fra le fonti vespucciane e l'utopia di Tommaso Moro*

This paper explores close relationship between Thomas More's most famous work, *Utopia* and the letters and travel reports attributed to Vespucci that were already largely diffused in Europe at the end of XVth century. The evident correspondence between the main features of the New World discovered by Vespucci and those of the Utopian fiction created by More helps to better understand the influence that geographic discoveries, as though ancient and Christian philosophy, had on the genesis of *Utopia*.

LUCIANO FORMISANO, *Le lettere di Amerigo Vespucci e la 'questione vespucciana': bilancio di un trentennio*

The 'Vespucci issue', after a period of lack of interest, or rather of a stalemate brought on by the opposition of two differing historical views, was resumed in the last two decades of the XXth century, thanks to renewed interest in literature of discovery and of explorations. It therefore became necessary to start up a new critical examination of the letters attributed to Vespucci and their philological, linguistic and literary interpretation. Thirty years after the reopening of the debate- and thanks

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also in part to the discovery of new documents that were thought to have been permanently lost—historians, geographers and philologists now seem to have reached a historically accurate agreement regarding the authenticity of Vespucci's letters and therefore about the actual extent of his travels. From this point of view the 'Vespucci issue' gains methodological interest relative to the need for a cooperation between different fields of specialization, a cooperation out of which positive results emerged with the hundredth anniversaries of the years 1999 and 2001-2002.

VITTORIA CHEGAI, *Amerigo allo specchio della critica moderna. I riflessi di 500 anni di ricerca storica, geografica e letteraria*

On the occasion of the fifth centenary of Vespucci's birth, Florence has renewed its leading role staging an event that has already been cause for reflections in the past and in-depth analyses of the navigator and reawakening of the most discussed topics. The event gave not only the opportunity to recall the meaning of Vespucci's exemplary life and of the historiography that flourished around him, but also to perceive, through a new look and new perspectives, paths that needed further exploration. Most contemporary critique, distancing itself with the out-of-date research, identifies itself with a deep contextual analysis. This essay traces the methods and main perspectives of the recent historiography and points out its cross curricular peculiarities compared to past research.

ENRICO SPAGNESI, *Angelo Maria Bandini alla scoperta del Vespucci gentiluomo fiorentino*

In 1745 a very young Angelo M. Bandini writes a book dedicated to the life of Vespucci, publishing the navigator's travel reports. Through the analysis of the period's cultural and political context, the author formulates the hypothesis that such an interest in Vespucci was not stimulated by the geographical discoveries but rather by the explorer's belonging to an ancient and renowned Florentine family. The historical setting is in fact represented by the discussions over the essence and political role of the nobility, that became, within a few years, the object of important legislation.

SESSIONE SECONDA

FIRENZE E L'AMERICA, INCONTRI E SCAMBI CULTURALI
ED ECONOMICI DALL'ETÀ MODERNA AD OGGI

ZEFFIRO CIUFFOLETTI, *Un "rapporto privilegiato": fiorentini in America e americani a Firenze*

This essay highlights the close and prolific relationships between Florence and the United States of America through the latter attraction to Florence, since the Lorena

period, due not only to the city's cultural and artistic history but also to its political culture which inspired the founding Fathers. At the same time the American Constitution and its democratic models played a great role in Florentine culture, starting with the project of Constitution elaborated by Pietro Leopoldo. The present research outlines the lives of several Florentines who, up to recent times, went to the States, (land of freedom and opportunities) sometimes as poor emigrants but often as skilled entrepreneurs, such as Filippo Mazzei, Antonio Meucci, Celso Capacci, Emanuele Fenzi, Emilio Cecchi, the Rosselli family after the assassination of Carlo and Nello, Lamberto Dini, Enzo Tayar, Leonardo Bartolini, Giovan Battista Giorgini and Salvatore Ferragamo. At the same time quite a few American personalities left relevant traces of their Florentine residence, such as James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Frank Lloyd Wright, and including the late Bernard Berenson.

STEFANO U. BALDASSARRI, *Interpretazioni statunitensi del Rinascimento fiorentino*

This essay discusses the main 'readings' of the Florentine Renaissance by North American scholars – above all historians – from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. The author identifies several stages in this process. Understandably, all of them are dictated by the different expectations and interests of North American scholars and their audience, that is readers, art collectors and university students. A first 'aesthetic' stage, typical of the late XIX and early XX century, was succeeded by a more 'militant' one, which was characterized by a political reading of Renaissance Florence. This kind of interpretation was heavily indebted both to German scholars, above all Hans Baron, who were forced to migrate to the US shortly before the beginning of World War II and the scenario caused by the so-called 'Cold War' in its aftermath. Eventually, towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the following decade, this interpretation too started being contested. The main consequences were a general reassessment of what Renaissance culture meant and a growing skepticism towards previously unquestioned notions, such as the Renaissance being the cradle of modernity and the crucial role that Florence played in it. The author believes that this 'critical' phase led both to a more cautious interpretation of this time period and greater attention to the sources. This is why in the last twenty years critical editions of previously unpublished or rare texts have elicited remarkable interest in the US. Such texts are often published by North American university presses with facing English translation and a light critical apparatus. The author thus regards this 'textual' feature as one of the main novelties of North American scholarship in its approach to the Renaissance both in Florence and beyond.

GIGLIOLA SACERDOTI MARIANI, *La Firenze di 'Henry James and his friends'*

This paper explores some 'neglected' books – Henry James's *William W. Story and His Friends. From Letters, Diaries and Recollections*, Thomas A. Trollope's *Tus-*

cany in 1849 and 1859 and *What I Remember*, Theodosia Garrow Trollope's *Social Aspects of the Italian Revolution in a Series of Letters from Florence*, Enrico Nencioni's *Saggi critici di letteratura inglese* – and offers a new perspective on the complex network of human, political, cultural and artistic connections established by the Anglo-American community and the Italian one in 19th century Florence.

ELISA CAMPOREALE, *Il mito di Firenze tra Otto e Novecento: echi e arredi fiorentini in America*

The paper addresses the reception of Florentine Renaissance furnishing among American collectionists between the end of the nineteenth century and WW1, from the great success to the decline during the Twenties. Studies of History and Art History, travels and sojourns in Tuscany combined with the action of collectors, scholars and art dealers contributed to shaping the myth of Florence in the United States.

Starting from key-figures who acted as cultural links between the Florentine and the American worlds, from Bernard Berenson to Elia Volpi, a series of mansions rich in Renaissance art and furniture is illustrated. Many are no longer extant, but some are open to the public: the Gardner Museum, the Morgan Library and Museum, the Ringling Museum of Art or the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. Through the presentation of the display of the Renaissance pieces in such collections, the role played by the culture of the Italian Renaissance in building American cultural identity is also discussed.

ANNA MARIA MARTELLONE, *Da Firenze a Firenze via Massachussets. Una storia (americana?) di incontri*

The author describes her own personal work itinerary from the moment she met Giorgio Spini who had, first, initiated in Florence the teaching of American History, to her own teaching the same subject (then renamed History of the United States) as full professor at the University of Florence. It covers the decade 1954-1964, from her departure for the United States to the definitive return to Italy and includes considerations of the development of American history in Italy from the sixties to the nineties of the XXth century.

STEFANO LUCONI, *L'istituzione e gli sviluppi dell'insegnamento di Storia Americana nell'Università di Firenze*

This essay outlines the troubled route for the creation of the first courses in American history at the University of Florence against the backdrop of U.S. cultural

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diplomacy in Italy in the mid 1950s. The establishment of the teaching of this discipline at the Faculty of Humanities in the academic year 1955-56 resulted from the combined efforts of Giorgio Spini, who was committed to promote the study of U.S. history in Italy, and the government in Washington, which was interested in spreading the knowledge of the multifaceted features of U.S. society – including its history – in order to curb communist propaganda in the cultural sphere, too, during the Cold War. However, in spite of this initial concurrence of intentions and the financial contribution of the United States Information Service, the teaching of American history developed autonomously from U.S. policies.

LUCIANO FORMISANO, *La compilazione di viaggi di Alessandro Zorzi. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, B.R. 233-236*

Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, B.R. 233-236 (ex Magliabechiano XIII, 80-83). It consists of four volumes (manuscripts and printed books) with which the Venetian erudit Alessandro Zorzi wanted to update the collection of voyages, *Pae-si novamente ritrovati et novo mundo da Alberico [sic] Vesputio Florentino intitolato* (Vicenza, Enrico Vicentino. 1507, novembre 3rd, with further reprintings and translations) providing it with annotations, marginal notes and valuable autographs sketches. The collection, which is still unpublished except for some excerpts, can be considered as a kind of anticipation of the well known encyclopedic settlement made by Giovan Battista Ramusio in the mid-fifteenth century; being actually settled after 1507, in February 1537 the compilation was still open to new additions. Already described by Roberto Almagià in “Bibliofilia”, XXXVIII (1936), the version we offer here is an updated one, combined with a CD-ROM that while opening its accessibility to all scholars, could help preserve the manuscript life.

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