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Custodians of Sacred Space

Constructing the Franciscan Holy Land through texts and sacri monti (ca. 1480-1650)

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Chapter 5. Reinventing the *sacro monte*: the memory of Bernardino Caimi at Varallo

The first four chapters of this dissertation deal with how the Franciscans of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae* constructed the Holy Land, and their own particular relationship with it, by writing texts, from the late fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. The present and subsequent chapters deal with very similar territorial Franciscan ideologies, but then grafted onto material recreations of the Holy Land in Italy: the earliest *sacri monti*, or holy mountains. Two of these in particular, the *sacri monti* of Varallo and San Vivaldo, explicitly translate the sacred spaces and places of the Holy Land, and were established by veteran observant Franciscans of the custody of the Holy Land. Like the treatises on the Holy Land by Paul Walther von Guglingen and Francesco Suriano, these two *sacri monti* date to around 1500, and are likewise symptomatic of a new Franciscan self-assertiveness in relation to the Holy Land. Similarly, Franciscan Holy Land writing increasingly strove to appropriate the Holy Land as a Franciscan territory, while the contemporaneous *sacri monti* breathe a similar assertiveness, and aim not only to possess, but also to construct an ideal Franciscan *Terrae Sanctae*. The first four chapters, which deal with textual representations, and the last two chapters, on *sacri monti*, thus all capture reflections of the same phenomenon, namely Franciscan Holy Land territoriality expressed through different media.

At the barest material level, a *sacro monte* is a complex of small chapels distributed in a park, intended for devotional use. Bram de Klerck defines the *sacro monte* as “a series of chapels, of which the interiors are decorated with frescoes and sculptures.”¹ This definition certainly applies to the Northern Italian *sacri monti*, and the state in which they survive today, even though modifications to this definition can be made for the original state of the earliest *sacri monti*. My main concern, however, is not primarily with the material aspects and development of the *sacri monti*, but with the question: what is a *sacro monte*, when approached as a space inscribed with particular meanings, as a *lieu de mémoire*? Furthermore, this dissertation is focused on *sacri monti* connected to the Franciscan order, which evoke the sacred geography of the Holy Land; not all *sacri monti* are connected to the Franciscans, and they

1 Bram de Klerck, “Jerusalem in Renaissance Italy: The Holy Sepulchre on the Sacro Monte of Varallo,” in *The Imagined and the Real Jerusalem in Art and Architecture*, ed. Jeroen Goudeau, Mariëtte Verhoeven, and Wouter Weijers (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 218; for the rich literature on *sacri monti* see *I Sacri Monti: Bibliografia Italiana*, ed. Pier Giorgio Longo and Danilo Zardin (Ponzano Monferrato: Atlas, 2010).

may be dedicated to a number of objects of devotion, such as for example the rosary or the Virgin Mary.² Accordingly this and the following chapters examine how the sacro monte functioned as a highly versatile Franciscan *lieu de mémoire*, a constructed sacred space and Franciscan Holy Land. First, the sacro monte or ‘new Jerusalem’ of Varallo, which represents the life and passion of Christ, will be examined and in the following chapter the sacro monte dedicated to life and stigmatization of St Francis at La Verna in Tuscany will receive attention. The translated Jerusalem of San Vivaldo (1513), likewise in Tuscany, and the sacro monte of St Francis at Orta (1590) in Novara, receive attention where relevant, but significantly less so than Varallo and La Verna, because they are much less important for the Franciscan self-image in order historiography and Franciscan Holy Land writing central to this dissertation.

This chapter examines the ideologies that lie at the basis of the sacred geography of the sacro monte of Varallo, paying particular attention to the memory of friar Bernardino Caimi (d.1499), the founder of this translated Jerusalem (fig. 1). It aims to demonstrate that in the early days of the sacro monte Caimi as a person was not so fundamental to the significance of the complex. Referring to the memory of Caimi developed into an important strategy for giving meaning to the sacro monte within the context of disputes between the Franciscan friars and the civic powers of Varallo, from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards. Both the Franciscans and their opponents tried to put Caimi’s lustre to the best use, attempting to claim the sacro monte by referring to the memory of beatified Caimi, showing a keen interest in his original intention, his plan for the project, apart from the fact that it evokes the Holy Places in Jerusalem. The portrayal the sacro monte in Franciscan Holy Land writing is heir to these troubles, although it has different purposes, while a similar fascination with Caimi also pervades present day scholarly literature on the sanctuary. By considering the significance of the memory of Caimi in all of these contexts, it will become clear that in this case too the Franciscans engaged with the memory of a founding father to

2 Nine sacri monti exist in the Northern Italian Alps, mostly as a result of the efforts of Counter-Reformation bishops such as Carlo Bascapè, who not only exercised a great deal of influence over the later development of the Sacro Monte of Varallo (1491), but was, for example, also involved in the establishment of that of Orta (1590), which represents the life of St Francis. The sacro monte at Crea (1589) is dedicated to the Virgin Mary; Ghiffa (1591) to the Trinity; Varese (1598) to the rosary; Oropa (1617) and Ossuccio (1635) both to the Virgin; Dommosola (1657) to Calvary; and Valperga (Belmonte) (1712) to the rosary. The sacri monti of San Vivaldo (1513) and La Verna (second half of thirteenth century) are situated in Tuscany, outside of Northern sphere of influence. Amilcare Barbero, *Atlante dei Sacri Monti, Calvari e Complessi Devozionali Europei* (Novara: De Agostini, 2001).

further their territorial interests with regards to this little, transplanted piece of Holy Land (see chapter four). Moreover, but this analysis also prepares the way for chapter six, which suggests an alternative way to understand Caimi and his intentions, and sets out to demonstrate that the sacro monte is an archetypically Franciscan way to translate the Holy Land to Europe that goes much beyond the mere identity of its founder(s).

Accordingly, the first section of this chapter discusses the portrayal of Caimi, and his plan for the sacro monte in Juan (de) Calahorra's *Chronica* (1684) of the Franciscan Province of the Holy Land. Calahorra describes the sacro monte of Varallo in a way that largely coincides with the main strands of interpretation that have given meaning to the space of the complex, then as now, namely by referring to the memory of the almost saint-like figure of Caimi. The second section then sketches the surviving sources on the earliest developmental phases of the sacro monte, and the emphasis on 'similarity' to the Holy Places that emerges from these sources, as a fundamental component of the sacred space of the sanctuary. The third section describes the speculation about Caimi's, largely undocumented, original intentions for the sanctuary in contemporary secondary literature. This preoccupation can, on the one hand, be explained by the relative scarcity of information about the early years of the sacro monte of Varallo, but may also, on the other hand, be connected to developments in sixteenth century historiography on the sacro monte. The fourth section explores how the memory of Caimi only started to matter in the later decades of the sixteenth century, when the *fabbricieri* and the Franciscans of Varallo starting rivalling each other for control of the sacro monte, and both based their claims on their own supposedly superior understanding of Caimi's original intentions. The fifth and final section examines how the sacro monte of Varallo was reflected into Franciscan Holy Land writing in the guise of a site of conflict, an important piece of Holy Land abroad, that needs to be claimed back by Franciscans, through the figure of Caimi.

5.1 Bernardino Caimi and the *sacro monte* of Varallo according to Calahorra

In his *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), friar Juan de Calahorra records the election and deeds of a long succession of Franciscan superiors of the same province. For the year 1487, Calahorra mentions that Francesco di Perugia was elected for that office, but he died, and was substituted by Bernardino Caimi of Milan. Calahorra relates Caimi's noble descent, outstanding education and virtues, and his career within the observant branch

of the Franciscan order. Concerning Caimi's performance as superior of the Holy Land, Calahorra only has a few words to say: "Having been elected superior of the Holy Places, he satisfied the obligations of this important office in an exemplary manner."³ Few words suffice because Caimi's main achievement for the custody of the Holy Land took place not in the Holy Land, but in Italy. Calahorra continues:

and returning to his own province, completely inflamed with love of the passion of the Redeemer of the world, he went solicitous and anxious to find a place where he could represent to the life [*al vivo*] such great mysteries, so that those who could not go on pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, would have the appropriate convenience to be able to contemplate (without great cost, and less danger) that which our Redeemer accomplished and suffered there [in Jerusalem].⁴

The place that Caimi selected was a hill next to Varallo in Piedmont, where he established a *sacro monte*. Calahorra relates that Caimi founded an observant convent in Varallo, of which he received possession on April 14, 1493.⁵ Meanwhile the construction of the *sacro monte* was underway, Calahorra mentions a chapel that represented the Holy Sepulchre in "that form and figure as it is seen in the Holy City of Jerusalem," and a chapel "in honour of the most sacred place" where Mary met Christ on his way to Calvary.⁶

Following this initial phase of construction, Calahorra explains that an interval ensued in which Caimi was away from Varallo on other duties, before returning to build more chapels. At this point in his discussion of the *sacro monte* of Varallo, Calahorra takes the opportunity to recount a miracle that

3 "Electo Superior de los Lugares Santos satisfizo con grande exemplo a las obligaciones de tan grave oficio, ..." Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 315.

4 "Electo Superior de los Lugares Santos satisfizo con grande exemplo a las obligaciones de tan grave oficio, y bolviendo à su propria Provincia todo abrasado en el amor de la Passion del Redemptor del mundo, andaua sollicito, y ansioso por hallar vn lugar adonde pudiesse representar al vivo tan soberanos Misterios, para que aquellos que no pudiesen peregrinar à la Santa Ciudad de Gerusalen, tuuiesen oportuna comodidad para poder contémpplar (sin tantos gastos, y con menos peligros) lo que obrò, y padeciò en ella nuestro Redemptor." Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 315.

5 This is the exact date of the notarial act which records the donation of the convent and *sacro monte* of Varallo to the new Franciscan community. For the text of the act itself see: P. Galloni, *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Atti di Fondazione* (Varallo: Camaschella & Zanfa, 1909), 3-11.

6 "Padre Fray Bernardino à las Capillas del Monte de Varalo, fauoreciendole con gran

occurred after the construction of the chapel of Calvary had been completed. Here, a crucifix was hung that Caimi brought from the Holy Land, “made from the same quality of wood” as Christ’s original. Forty hours after the crucifix had been in place, he noticed that the opening in the floor of Mount Calvary (as it is in Jerusalem) was missing. Caimi was distraught because of this defect, gave himself to prayer until the ground under the crucifix miraculously opened. Not only did this resolve the shortcomings of the Calvary chapel, but now it was also marked with Divine privilege.⁷ Indeed, this miracle warrants the inclusion of Varallo in Calahorra’s history of the Holy Land, because this is not a mere Holy Land copy, but a divinely corrected and approved copy: truly a Franciscan piece of Holy Land in Italy.

Following the verifying miracle of the ground opening under the cross in the chapel of Calvary, the sacro monte of Varallo began to be venerated by pilgrims, according to Calahorra. A few years later Caimi died, and his head was preserved next to the entrance of the Holy Sepulchre chapel, as if it were a saintly relic (fig. 2).⁸ Caimi was beatified, but never canonised as a saint; however, in Calahorra’s eyes he seems to have acquired the role of a founder saint, whose very person gives credibility and importance to the site. He sees the sacro monte as Caimi’s legacy: during his life Caimi worked hard to build it, and after his death the work was continued “little by little following the model and architecture left outlined by the venerable father, friar Bernardino.”⁹

Calahorra portrays Caimi as an outstanding figure, returning from the Holy Land impatient to find a place where he could represent mysteries of the passion, for those who could not travel to Jerusalem. By means of his fervent prayers, Caimi also performed a miracle, so that the Calvary chap-

piedad, y deuocion, el sobredicho Señor Emilan Scaroñino, el qual edificò la Capilla, y Sepulcro de nuestro Redemptor en aquella forma, y figura, que se vè en la Santa Ciudad de Gerusalem. Otra Capilla hizo edificar el Venerable Padre Fray Bernardino en medio de el camino que baxa de la cima de el Monte al Convento, en honor de aquel Sacratissimo Lugar, en el qual estaua la Santissima Virgen traspassada su purissima alma de vn acerbissimo cuchillo de dolor, aguardando à ver su Dulcissimo Hijo quando caminava al Monte Calvario angustiado con el graue peso de vna Cruz.” Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 316.

7 Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 317; cf. Galloni, *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Atti di Fondazione*, 45.

8 Caimi died in December 1499 at the convent of Varallo.

9 “..., trabajase en ella poco à poco siguiendo el modelo, y Arquitectura, que dexò delineada el Venerable Padre Fray Bernardino, ...” Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 317.

el at Varallo became just like the original in Jerusalem. Finally, Calahorra emphasises the importance of Caimi's original plan and design for the sacro monte, which then remained the blueprint for later building activities, carried out after his death. Calahorra's particular interest in Caimi's person can easily be explained, as his book is a history of the Franciscan province of the Holy Land, and Caimi was a famous and productive member of the custody of the same province. In the secondary literature on the sacro monte of Varallo there is a similar focus on Caimi, his plan and intentions in founding the sacro monte. Whatever Caimi intended to construct or did construct on the mountain close to Varallo, no longer exists in the same form and is sparsely documented to boot. By attempting to reconstruct Caimi's original intentions, academics hope to reconstruct the layout and function of the sacro monte of Varallo in the first two decades of its existence. The next section reviews the surviving primary sources and discusses the direction in which these point for understanding the nature of the sacro monte as a sacred space. The third section of this chapter then explores the scholarly preoccupation with Caimi's wishes that is often connected to these primary sources.

5.2 Similarity to the Holy Places at Varallo around the turn of the sixteenth century

The earliest primary sources concerning the sacro monte of Varallo are often silent on the subject of Caimi's intentions. The first piece of written evidence does reveal something about them; it is an inscription found above the entrance of the Holy Sepulchre chapel (fig. 3). The inscription states:

The magnificent Milanese Lord Scarrognino erected this sepulchre with its adjoining workshop for Christ on the seventh day of October 1491 / The reverend father Bernardino Caimi of Milan, of the observance of the friars minor, conceived the sacred places of this mount, so that he who cannot go on pilgrimage sees Jerusalem here.¹⁰

Apart from mentioning the names of the patron and of the founder to the site, the inscription states the intended purpose of these 'sacred places': they were meant to offer the opportunity *to see* Jerusalem and its Holy Places, for

10 "MAGNIFICVS DOMINVS MILANVS SCARROGNINVS HOC SEPULCHRUM CVM FABRICA SIBI CONTIGVA CHRISTO POSVIT MCCCCLXXXI DIE SEPTIMO OCTOBRIS: R.P. FRATER BERNARDINVS CAIMVS DE MILANO .OR.MI.DE OBS. SACRA HVIVS MONTIS EXCOGITAVIT LOCA.VT HIC HIERUSALEM VIDEAT. QVI

those unable to travel overseas. The next surviving document is a notarial act dated to April 14, 1493 that records the donation of the monastery at Varallo, some freestanding chapels on the mount next to Varallo, and the surrounding grounds to the observant Franciscans. This document also names Scarognino as an important patron and Bernardino Caimi in his capacity of Vicar of the observant province of Milan. Furthermore, three ‘hermitages’ or chapels are mentioned: the hermitage of the Holy Sepulchre, the chapel ‘under the Cross’ and the chapel of the Ascension.¹¹ The word *sacro monte* or the intended purpose of these three chapels are not mentioned in the donation, nor is Jerusalem or the Holy Land.

Two years later, on April 18, 1495, the community of Varallo sent a letter to Ludovico Sforza, the duke of Milan, to prevent the Franciscan chapter of Aquila from assigning Caimi to a post outside the province of Milan. This letter speaks of “the worthy mysteries” that Caimi had built “of the passion of our Redeemer in that manner and form [as] they are in Jerusalem.” In case Caimi would be transferred, “there is no religious who has the experience of those mysteries of Jerusalem apart from him, they will remain imperfect.”¹² The insistence on the fact that the mysteries near Varallo imitate the mysteries of the Passion in Jerusalem is quite explicit here, and the importance of first-hand knowledge (represented by Caimi) is too. Indeed, P. Galloni has suggested that the letter may well have been written by Caimi himself.¹³ However this may be; if the duke interceded on Caimi’s behalf, he was unsuccessful, because Caimi was subsequently elected Commissary of Croatia, Bosnia and Cyprus. He did return to the province of Milan, dying at Varallo in 1499.¹⁴

From the limited documentation about the *sacro monte* of Varallo that

PERAGRARE NEQUIT.” There is no reason to doubt the authenticity or dating of this inscription. Roberta Panzanelli, “‘Hic Hierusalem Videat...’: Ipotesi per il Progetto di Bernardino Caimi al Sacro Monte di Varallo,” *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 39, no. 3 (2003), 412, n. 9.

11 The act identifies the *Heremitorium Sancti Sepulchri*, the *Capella existente subtus Crucem*, and the *Capella Ascensionis*. Galloni, *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Atti di Fondazione*, 10.

12 “Essendo noto a la V. Excellentia li digni misterii ha fatto fabricare qua in queste montagne el Reverendo et devoto religioso Messer Frate Bernardino Chaymo de la passione del nostro Redemptore in quel modo et forma sono in Jherusalem ... : che quando altramente sequisse ch’esso frate Bernardino andasse fora de la provintia per non esserli religioso che habii la experientia de quelli misterii de Jhierusalem si no lui rimanerebena imperfecti.” Galloni, *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Atti di Fondazione*, 63.

13 Ibid., 64; cf. Pier Giorgio Longo, “Alle Origini del Sacro Monte di Varallo: La Proposta Religiosa di Bernardino Caimi,” *Novarien* 14 (1984): 64.

14 There is some disagreement as to the exact date. Galloni, *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Atti*

can be dated to Caimi's lifetime, we can gather that it was founded by him, and that by this time at least three chapels existed: that of the Holy Sepulchre, the Ascension, and the one 'under the Cross'. Caimi's familiarity with Jerusalem was regarded as important for the site because visitors are supposed to *see* the sacred places or mysteries of the passion as if they were in Jerusalem. After his death in 1499, Caimi does not appear in the record of primary sources on the sacro monte for a while. It seems that during the first decades of the sixteenth century Caimi as a person, or his original plans did not matter so much for the significance of the sacro monte. In other words, the memory of Caimi as the saintly founder with a number of particular pious intentions had not yet become one of the dominant strategies for inscribing meaning into the space of the sacro monte.

What does seem to have mattered a great deal is similarity to the original Holy Places, so that one sees things as they are in Jerusalem, as the 1491 inscription testifies. Another undated, but early, inscription (fig. 4) above the inner room to the sepulchre chapel states: "This [sepulchre] is similar to the Holy Sepulchre of Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁵ This stress on similarity to Holy Places in Jerusalem can be explained by considering the source of the sanctity of medieval Holy Sepulchre copies, as it was influentially analysed by Richard Krautheimer. Rather than relying on a relic for sanctity per se, these copies could also rely on similarity; not strict visual similarity as we would appreciate nowadays, but another type of more formal similarity: "The dedication – sometimes supplemented by the existence of a relic from the Holy Site or by a *similitudo*, a *forma* of the venerated original – was evidently considered a sufficient stimulus to arouse all religious associations which were connected with the prototype."¹⁶ A selective transfer of only a few elements associated with the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem could be enough to sanctify a copy through similarity: one or two measurements or a generalized visual trait such as 'roundness'.¹⁷ Which elements of similarity were consciously

di Fondazione, 72-3.

15 "SIMILE.E.IL.STO.SEPVLCRO.DE.YV.XPO" / simile est illi sancto sepulcro domine [*sic*] yhesu christo [*sic*].

16 Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture'," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 16; for recent reexaminations and modifications of Krautheimer's article see Laura D. Gelfand, "Sense and Simulacra: Manipulation of the Senses in Medieval 'Copies' of Jerusalem," *Postmedieval* 3 (2012): 407-22; Sarah Blick, "Exceptions to Krautheimer's Theory of Copying," *Visual Resources* 20, no. 2-3 (2004): 123-42; Catherine Carver McCurrach, "'Renovatio' Reconsidered: Richard Krautheimer and the Iconography of Architecture," *Gesta* 50, no. 1 (2011): 41-69.

17 Krautheimer, "Introduction," 12-17.

copied under the direction of Caimi is difficult to gauge, but the interior of the Holy Sepulchre chapel and slightly later structures such as the chapel of the Nativity at Varallo do display a number of visual resemblances with their originals.¹⁸

Similarity to the Holy Places in Jerusalem also plays an important role in the first source dated to after Caimi's death that mentions the sacro monte of Varallo: a letter that the Milanese nobleman Girolamo Morone sent to his friend Lancino Curzio in 1507, to accompany a description of the sacro monte in verse that unfortunately has been lost. Morone was on an expedition for the king of France to determine the borders of France, close to Varallo. In his letter, Morone writes that he took a small detour to Varallo, to visit a sanctuary in the care of the Franciscans: "in the guise of that which is visited on Mount Calvary." At the foot of the mount, a friar whom Morone describes as expert on the sacro monte came to meet him, and led him on a visit of all the chapels "in which images are shown, as they are narrated in the gospels: the mysteries of the passion of Christ in successive order." By this time, apparently, the sacro monte had developed into a sequence of chapels that offered a chronological passion narrative. Similarity to the Holy Land originals remained important for the sacro monte, because Morone reports that his guide affirmed that "everything was done in likeness [*somiglianza*] to the places of the true Sepulchre, at the same intervals, with the same disposition, with the same pictures and figures." Apart from emphasising similarity to the Holy Place overseas, Morone's Franciscan guide thus also suggested a certain topographic similarity, by indicating that they were at the same distances from each other as in the Holy Land. Morone's letter is the first report of a visitor to the sacro monte, and it seems that the sanctuary made quite an impression on him. In his letter, he professes that "I have never seen anything more religious, more devout, that touches the heart more, that incites to abandon all the rest to follow Christ," and that this impression led him to write some, now lost, verses.¹⁹

18 de Klerck, "Jerusalem in Renaissance Italy," 221-7.

19 "..., mi piacque di fare una diversione al monte che giace presso Varallo e che volge ad oriente, sul quale sapevo che si costruiva dai Minori un piccolo santuario, a guisa di quello che si visita sul monte Calvario, dove il nostro Signore e Salvatore soffrì, (quello che) si è soliti visitare con grande accorrere di cristiani e con grandi fatiche e pericoli. Quindi ai piedi del monte mi venne incontro un sacerdote, primate di quell'ordine, uomo religioso e esperitissimo di quel posto in cui il corpo di Gesù fu sepolto il quale mi condusse agevolmente, per salite e discese, attraverso i declivi vicini, una per una alle cappelle nelle quali sono rappresentate immagini, così come sono narrati nel vangelo in ordine di successione i misteri della passione di Cristo e come si tramanda che Cristo stesso fu trascinato in vari luoghi e da-

Even though he had died only eight years ago, Caimi does not figure at all in Morone's letter. This could be attributed to coincidence: perhaps Morone's Franciscan guide mentioned Caimi's role as a founder and his plans for the sanctuary at every turn, but this could not interest the visitor enough to report this in his letter. Alternatively, it could also be the case that the sacro monte was presented to Morone simply as a series of chapels that offered a passion narrative by means of images, formally similar to the places of the passion in the Holy Land. The latter alternative seems more likely because the first devotional guide for use on the sacro monte, published in 1514, fails to mention Caimi as well.

This small guide, titled *These Are the Mysteries that Are on the Mount of Varallo* (1514), can easily be held in one hand, and was clearly meant as a *vademecum* to bring on the sacro monte during a visit of its chapels.²⁰ The little booklet contains twenty-one pages with rhymed octaves that address the visitor in the second-person singular and lead her on a tour of the sacro monte, by now counting no less than twenty-eight chapels or *places*, starting from the observant Franciscan convent in Varallo.²¹ At every stage the guide explains which scenes are displayed at different locations, and suggests appropriate emphatic responses.²² On the first page, the guide is presented as the "newly composed treatise on the chapters of the passion founded on the mount of Varallo."²³ Most likely, an observant Franciscan of the convent in Varallo composed it; Alessandro Nova suggests Francisco da Marignano, guardian

vanti a molte persone e da ogni parte fu schernito e torturato. Questo affermava che ogni cosa era fatta a somiglianza dei luoghi del vero sepolcro, con lo stesso intervallo, con la stessa disposizione, con le stesse pitture e figure. Senza dubbio, o mio Lancino, non ho mai visto niente di più religioso, di più devoto, che toccasse di più i cuori, che spingesse ad abbandonare tutto il resto per sequire solo Cristo." For the entire text of this letter see Panzanelli, "'Hic Hierusalem Videat,'" 429-431.

20 The reprint of Alberto Durio's first edition of this text in 1926 in Stefani Perrone's volume also contains a made to scale facsimile edition of the text: *Questi Sono li Misteri che Sono Sopra el Monte de Varalle (in una "Guida" Poetica del 1514)*, ed. Stefania Stefani Perrone (Borgosesia: Valsesia Editrice, 1987).

21 Anna Maria Brizio, "Configurazione del Sacro Monte di Varallo nel 1514," *Bollettino della Società Piemontese di Archeologia e di Belle Arti VIII-XI* (1954-57), reprint in *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 45-52.

22 William Hood, "The Sacro Monte of Varallo: Renaissance Art and Popular Religion," in *Monasticism and the Arts*, ed. Timothy G. Verdon and John Dally (Syracuse [NY]: Syracuse UP, 1984), 300-302.

23 "Tractato de li capituli de passione fundati sopra el monte de Varale nouamente composti." *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 23.

after Caimi's direct successor Candido Ranzo.²⁴ However, Caimi himself is not mentioned even once in this guide. Apparently, the in all probability Franciscan author of this guide thought that visitors to the sacro monte did not need to know about Caimi, or that he had been to the Holy Land, to perform their devotions. What does seem to have mattered a great deal according to the 1514 guide is similarity to the Holy Places.

Similarity to sacred locations in the Holy Land is underscored several times, starting with the second introductory stanza: "one sees ordered / on the mount of Varallo, it has such figure / similar to the places of the Holy Land."²⁵ About the Bethlehem complex the guide says "Christ was born in a similar place / next to the good and humble ass / inside the mount similar to this one."²⁶ The circumcision of Christ also occurred in a "similar place," as did the place where Christ was taken prisoner.²⁷ Moreover, the guide dwells on the natural similarity of a rock found at the sacro monte Varallo to the one that closed the Holy Sepulchre (fig. 5), the similarity of the imprint of Christ's feet on Mount Olives, and the *similarity* of the tombs of Anna and Joachim.²⁸ With the twentieth chapter, about the sepulchre of Christ, the guide reaches its devotional peak:

Contemplate there, oh devout soul
Your Lord who lies buried dead here
There everyone afflicts himself with weeping
Only to admire the similar place

24 Alessandro Nova, "'Popular' Art in Renaissance Italy: Early Response to the Holy Mountain of Varallo," in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450-1650*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995), 115.

25 "si vede ordinato / nel monte di Varale ha tal figura / di terre sancta i lochi a somigliato." *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 23.

26 "Donde giesu ha simil luoco nato / Acanto il buone e lhumile Asinelo / Dentro al monte a quello somigliato." *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 25.

27 "un tal luoco simile," *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 25, "che a simul luoco fu ligato e preso," *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 32.

28 "In terra giaza un saxo riposato / Che per natura simile scolpito / A quello che in terra sancta somigliato / Chiunque vede questo ne stupito / Ueder lun laltro simile formato / Col qual reclause il gran sepulcro sancto / Simile questo a quello tanto e quanto." *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 33; "El gran vestigio de lo sancto pede / Simile a quello in marmore tagliato." *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 35; "Due sepulture luna laltra a fronte / Di Joachim e Anna Vederai / Qua per similitudine ivi gionti." *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 41; for the legend of the *first stone* see Jonathan Bober, "Storia e Storiografia del S. Monte di Varallo: Osservazioni sulla Prima Pietra del Sepolcro," *Novarien* 14 (1984): 3-18; Panzanelli, "'Hic Hierusalem Videat'," 412.

The dark place where one spends the night²⁹
Cut in marble like [*simil*] the sepulchre³⁰

These lines attest a type of affective passion devotion, which encouraged the devotee to imagine him- or herself as a participant in the event, spiritually as well as physically.³¹ The emphasis put on the *similarity* of the chapel to the original place in these verses was meant to enhance the visitor's experience of participating in the Gospel event. During the initial decades of the sixteenth century, visitors of the sacro monte were encouraged to move between the sculpted scenes and possibly to touch and kiss the statues, as opposed to the second half of the sixteenth century during which screens were placed in front of the scenes.³² In the case of the Holy Sepulchre chapel, they would have been confronted with a wooden statue of the dead Christ reclining (fig. 6) to enhance their devotions.

Thus, rather than relying on the figure of Caimi to lend the sacro monte credibility as a Holy Land copy, the Franciscan keepers emphasized unspecified formal similarity to the Holy Places, because this could boost affective immersion in gospel scenes, and the type of devotion they wished to promote. For this reason, the friars employed, among others, the artist Gaudenzio Ferrari, who made the wooden statue of the dead Christ in the Sepulchre chapel.³³ In 1513 Gaudenzio had painted the passion cycle on the *tramezzo* of the friars' convent church, possibly having worked for the friars even before that (fig. 7).³⁴ With his work on the chapel of the crucifixion, between 1517 and 1521, Gaudenzio set a new model for the interior of future chapels of the sacro monte: later artists were often explicitly instructed to imitate his style.

29 This may possibly be a reference to the tradition that allowed pilgrims spend a night locked inside the Holy Sepulchre aedicule in Jerusalem.

30 "Quivi contempla o anima devota/ El to signor qua morto riposato / Quivi di pianto ognun si se percota / Sol amirar il loco asomigliato / El luoco scuro tale si pernota/ simil sepulcro marmore intagliato." *Questi Sono li Misteri*, ed. Stefani Perrone, 31-32; for an alternative translation into English see de Klerck, "Jerusalem in Renaissance Italy," 232-3.

31 Nova, "'Popular' Art in Renaissance Italy;" de Klerck, "Jerusalem in Renaissance Italy," 232-3.

32 Rebecca Gill, "Galeazzo Alessi and the Redevelopment of the Sacro Monte di Varallo in Tridentine Italy," in *Aid Monuments. Conoscere, Progettare, Ricostruire*, ed. C. Conforti and V. Gusella (Aracane, 2013), 103-5.

33 Stefania Stefani Perrone, "La 'Gerusalemme' delle Origini nella Secolare Vicenda Edificatoria del Sacro Monte de Varallo," in *Sacri Monti: Devozione, Arte e Cultura della Contro-riforma*, ed. Luciano Vaccaro and Francesca Ricardi (Milan: Jaca, 1992), 39.

34 Giovanni Testori, *Il Grande Teatro Montano: Saggi su Gaudenzio Ferrari* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1965), 23, 40, 127.

In the crucifixion chapel Gaudenzio retained the old wooden crucifix, but he surrounded it by life-sized terracotta statues that portrayed the main action, while wall fresco's provided the background, adding a crowd of bystanders (fig. 8).³⁵ Thus, visitors of the chapel could completely submerge themselves in the scene of the crucifixion, becoming a participant in it, walking in between and touching the statues.³⁶ Although similarity to the Holy Places overseas was still a fundamental feature of the sacro monte when Gaudenzio Ferrari started working there, his contributions also mark a turning point. In the words of Christine Göttler: "Ferrari's furnishings marked a shift from a spatial or architectural re-creation of a sacred prototype to a theatrical staging of the history of salvation."³⁷

In conclusion, the 1491 inscription above the sepulchre chapel, the donation of 1493, and the 1495 letter to the Duke of Milan, identify Bernardino Caimi as the Franciscan founder of the sanctuary close to Varallo. These sources confirm the existence of three chapels, indicate that pilgrims may see the Holy Places of Jerusalem there, and that Caimi's first hand knowledge of these 'mysteries' in the Holy Land could help to perfect them. Following Caimi's death in 1499, the 1507 letter by Girolamo Morone, as well as the 1514 verse guide *Questi sono li Misterii* fail to mention the founder. Instead, both emphasise the similarity of the various locations on the sacro monte to the associated Holy Places, as well as emphatic devotion to gospel events aided by the 'similar' environment on the sacro monte. The undated, but early, inscription above the entrance to the inner room of the Holy Sepulchre chapel at Varallo, likewise invokes similarity to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This is very comparable to what Juan de Calahorra concludes in his discussion of the sacro monte. After citing the inscription above the door of the Sepulchre chapel, he reflects: "Wherefore I say, that the servant of God, friar Bernardino Caimi invented the fabric of the mount of Varallo for those who could not go on pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, did not lack completely the solace, that one receives visiting that Holy City, and the merit, which one acquires on such a holy pilgrimage."³⁸ An important difference

35 Christine Göttler, "The Temptation of the Senses at the Sacro Monte di Varallo," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 406-7; *Gaudenzio Ferrari: La Crocifissione del Sacro Monte di Varallo*, ed. Elena de Filippis (Torino: Umberto Allemandi, 2006); Stefani Perrone, "La "Gerusalemme" delle Origini," 37; Testori, *Il Grande Teatro Montano*, 28, 103- 124.

36 Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*, trans. Gloria Custance Grau (Cambridge [MA]: The MIT Press, 2003): 41-46.

37 Göttler, "The Temptation of the Senses," 404.

38 "Quare dezio, que el Siervo de Dios Fray Bernardino de Caymo inventò la fabrica del

with the early sources on the sanctuary is, however, that Calahorra emphasises the significance of Caimi as the ideator of the sacro monte at every turn. This is perhaps not surprising within the context of a chapter on Caimi as a guardian of the custody of the Holy Land, and his main accomplishments. A similar fascination with Caimi exists in both secondary literature, as well as primary sources from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, for less straightforward reasons than Calahorra's as we shall see.

5.3 The quest for Caimi's design

The relatively few primary sources documenting the earliest phase of existence of the sacro monte of Varallo, provide little information about the sanctuary beyond the name of its founder and patrons, and that its sanctity derived from similarity to locations in the Holy Land, making it suitable for emphatic passion devotion. How exactly the material fabric of the sacro monte developed in the period from 1491 to 1514, or what visitors would have encountered inside the chapels, is not known. The lack of precise information about the sanctuary during this period seems to have attracted quite some speculation on the part of academics, about what Caimi could have wanted or intended for the sanctuary. The adage seems to be: reconstruct Caimi's plan, and one can reconstruct the sacro monte and its significance around the turn of the sixteenth century.³⁹ While it is good (art-) historical practice to aim to reconstruct the socio-cultural context that may help to understand the initial phases of this sanctuary, the literature is characterised by an occasionally disproportionate amount of attention for the personal wishes of Caimi. Ultimately, the fascination with Caimi and his original intentions as the mythical, almost saintly founder of the sacro monte can be traced back to earlier, sixteenth- and seven-

Monte de Varalo, para que aquellos que non pudiessen peregrinar à la Santa Ciudad de Gerusalen, no careciessen totalmente de consuelo, que se recibe visitando aquella Santissima Ciudad, y del merito, que se adquiere en tan santa peregrinacion." Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 318.

39 Bober, "Storia e Storiografia del S. Monte di Varallo," 3-18; Longo, "Alle Origini del Sacro Monte di Varallo," 19-98; Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, "Gli Studi sulle Origini del Sacro Monte di Varallo e sulla Personalità di Bernardino Caimi," In *Terra Santa e Sacri Monti*, ed. by Maria Luisa Gatti Perer (Milan, 1999), 7-36; Panzanelli, "'Hic Hierusalem Videat'," 410-440; Celestino Piana, "Il Beato Bernardino Caimi da Milano: Un Epigono della Predicazione Bernardiana nell'Ultimo Quattrocento," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 64 (1971): 303-336; Edda Guglielmetti, "Le Cycle de la Passion dans l'Église Santa Maria delle Grazie a Varallo Sesia: Est-il un Modus Meditandi et Orandi Issu de l'Idéologie de B. Caimi?" *Bollettino Storico per la Provincia di Novara* 89, no. 2 (1998): 523-553.

teenth-century, historiography (see section 5.4). The present section reviews the two most important topics dominated by scholarly fixation on Caimi's person and supposed wishes: Caimi wanted the sacro monte to be a topo-mimetic space, and had intended it for locative commemoration of the passion. Overall, the same arguments can be made without connecting these things to Caimi's personal ideas on these subjects, while in-depth consideration of his life and background may point us in a different direction entirely (see chapter six).

In the secondary literature on the sacro monte of Varallo the idea that Caimi had topo-mimetic intentions is pervasive. Guido Gentile, for instance, speaks of the "topographic-imitative framework *willed* by Caimi" (my italics).⁴⁰ Another important historian of the sacro monte, Pier Georgio Longo, also associates earliest phase of the sacro monte with the "topography of the Holy Places" and uses the word "topo-mimesis."⁴¹ More recently, Roberta Panzanelli has also argued that Caimi had topo-mimetic intentions, loosely based on the sanctifying concept of similarity to the Holy Places, discussed above.⁴² She insists that "the concept of imitation is evident and fundamental: the chapels of the first period, apparently constructed under the direct supervision of Caimi, exhibit a clear topo-mimesis."⁴³ The idea that the sacro monte specifically imitates the topography of the Holy Places, explicitly based on Caimi's wishes, was first introduced by P. Galloni in 1914, who compared the plan of the sanctuary with the locations of the Holy Places in Jerusalem. Galloni then sought to confirm the topo-mimetic intention he attributed to

40 "... dell'impianto topografico-imitativo voluto dal Caimi ..." Guido Gentile, "Le Fonti dell'Immaginario del Sacro Monte di Varallo, tra Letteratura Francescana e Memorie di Terra Santa," in *Terra Santa e Sacri Monti*, ed. Maria Luisa Gatti Perer (Milan, 1999), 50.

41 Longo, "Alle Origini del Sacro Monte," 22, 71.

42 This concept remained important for the sacro monte in later periods, as some inscriptions testify. The Italian inscriptions on the Tomb of the Virgin and the traditional *first stone* of Varallo attest to this, they both are "IN TUTTO SIMILE" to their Holy Land originals. These inscriptions together with the older ones, have led Panzanelli to argue that the sacro monte of Varallo is based first and foremost on imitation and more specifically on *topo-mimesis*. See, for example, the inscription of the legendary *first stone* of the Sacro Monte (fig. 5); cf. Bober, "Storia e Storiografia del S. Monte di Varallo," 3-18; for Panzanelli's argument for topo-mimesis based on those inscriptions, see Panzanelli, "'Hic Hierusalem Videat'," 410-412.

43 "Nella prima fase di costruzione del Sacro Monte il concetto di imitazione è evidente e fondamentale: le cappelle del primo periodo, costruite apparentemente sotto la diretta supervisione del Caimi, esibivano una topomimesi dichiarata ed una accentuate corrispondenza formale con gli interni degli originali gerosolimitani e palestinesi." Panzanelli, "'Hic Hierusalem Videat'," 414.

Caimi's wishes, by appealing to the authority of Girolamo Golubovich, a friar and a renowned scholar of the Franciscan custody of the Holy Land. Galloni had sent him a letter with a sketch of the complex, to which Golubovich replied:

The little topographic scheme of the sanctuary of Varallo, drawn in your letter, is enough to convince me that, as you say, father Caimi *really wanted* to represent the Holy Places with a disposition very much approximately analogous to that in which they are found in Jerusalem (my italics).⁴⁴

Indeed, if one compares the plan of Varallo, as it would have looked in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, with the map of the actual localities in the Holy Land, it is possible to see that the Holy Places of Jerusalem are very roughly in the right orientation with respect to one another (fig. 9 & fig. 10).⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the often-used term topo-mimesis is perhaps not entirely warranted: the Nazareth and Bethlehem complex disrupt the topography. The layout of the chapels at Varallo does not display any striking similarity with the distribution of the equivalent places in the Holy Land; especially in comparison to, for example, the coeval sacro monte and Franciscan new Jerusalem of San Vivaldo in Tuscany, which does rather faithfully reproduce the topography of the Holy Places.⁴⁶ In order to

44 "..., ho potuto mettere assieme quanto era necessario a ricostruire la disposizione delle Cappelle, quale fu nel concetto del fondatore, ed a chiarirne i mutamenti. ... Però quando, tracciato una schema di pianta, mi venne in mente di raffrontarlo colla topografia dei "Luoghi Sacri" di Palestina, il concetto del fondatore mi si disegnò in tutta evidenza. *Egli volle* qui rappresentare i "Luoghi Sacri" con disposizione approssimativamente analoga a quella in cui sono commemorati in Gerusalemme e Terra Santa. ... Anzi, per acquietare ogni scrupolo, volli conoscere in proposito il parere dell'illustre storiografo Francese P. Girolamo Golubovich, il quale, essendo stato assai tempo in Palestina e conoscendola in ogni sua parte ed avendola illustrata con dotte pubblicazioni, è considerato come l'autorità maggiore e più sicura in materia. Ed egli mi ha risposto: "Il piccolo schema topographico de' santuari di Varallo, disegnatommi nella sua, basta a convincermi che, come Ella dice, il P. Caimi *volle proprio* rappresentare i Luoghi Santi con una disposizione molto approssimativamente analoga a quella in cui si trovano a Gerusalemme." E col resto della cortese lettera di risposta, me ne assicurò più partitamente, di guisa che non rimane possibilità di dubbio (my italics)." Galloni, *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Origine e Svolgimento delle Opere d'Arte*, 6-7.

45 For reconstructive maps of the sacro monte during this and later periods, see Annalisa Scaccabarozzi, "Gerusalemme sulle Alpi: Progetti per il Sacro Monte di Varallo," *Sacri Monti* 2 (2010): 124; cf. David Leatherbarrow, "The Image and Its Setting: The Sacro Monte at Varallo," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 14 (1987): 113.

46 Franco Cardini and Guido Vannini, "San Vivaldo in Valdelsa: Problemi Topografici ed

resolve this issue, the term “topographic evocation,” introduced recently by Guido Gentile, seems more appropriate to describe the layout of the sanctuary of Varallo during its first phase of existence.⁴⁷ Gentile holds that Caimi did in fact copy a few relative distances within the Holy Sepulchre basilica, but otherwise concludes that the topography of the sacro monte comes down to evocation rather than mimesis.⁴⁸ Note that Gentile again involves Caimi in his argument, which is of course, on the one hand, logical because he was the only person associated with the sacro monte known to have been in the Holy Land, but on the other hand, it is also possible to question the pervasive tendency to attribute undocumented agency to Caimi in this matter.

What stands out about Galloni’s argument quoted above, often mirrored by later scholars, is that it connects these approximate topographic correspondences to the assumption that Caimi purposefully *wanted* to imitate the geography of the Holy Land. However, this intention is mentioned nowhere in the evidence that dates back to his lifetime. Thus, it is very difficult to attribute securely the intention of achieving geographic similarity to Caimi himself. Only three chapels of the sacro monte were built under his direction with certainty, while arguments for topo-mimesis willed by Caimi generally include several chapels that were first recorded some fifteen years after his death.⁴⁹ Whether or not topo-mimesis of the Holy Places on the sacro monte of Varallo was inspired by a desire of Caimi’s, seems much less important than the fact that it does indeed roughly evoke the topography of the Holy Places. Moreover, copying measurements from the Holy Sepulchre aedicule and church, as well as other Holy Places in Jerusalem, to Western Europe was

Interpretazioni Simboliche di una ‘Gerusalemme’ Cinquecentesca in Toscana,” in *Religiosità e Società in Valdelsa nel Basso Medioevo: Atti del Convegno di San Vivaldo 29 settembre 1979*, ed. Sergio Gensini (Società Storica della Valdelsa, 1980), 11-74; idem, reprinted in *Due Casi Paralleli: La Kalwaria Zebrzydowska in Polonia e la Gerusalemme di San Vivaldo in Toscana*, ed. Sergio Gensini (Società Storica della Valdelsa, 1983), 21-72; also see Amilcare Barbero, “Gerusalemme e la Terra Santa nei Complessi Devozionali,” in *Come a Gerusalemme: Evocazioni, Riproduzioni, Imitazioni dei Luoghi Santi tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, ed. Anna Benvenuti and Pierantonio Piatti (Florence: SISMEL, 2013), 384-400.

47 In addition, the use of topographic names (“topo-nomi”) such as Bethlehem, Nazareth and Mount Sion to designate parts of the sacro monte, is a way to accentuate this topographic evocation. Panzanelli, “‘Hic Hierusalem Videat’,” 415.

48 Guido Gentile, “‘Luoghi’ e ‘Misteri’: Modi della Rappresentazione a Varallo e in altri Sacri Monti,” in *Come a Gerusalemme: Evocazioni, Riproduzioni, Imitazioni dei Luoghi Santi tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, ed. Anna Benvenuti and Pierantonio Piatti (Florence: SISMEL, 2013), 433-460.

49 Longo, “Alle Origini del Sacro Monte,” 41-42; Panzanelli, “‘Hic Hierusalem Videat’,” 414-15.

hardly a unique thing to do during the medieval period.⁵⁰ Emphasis on Caimi as the one who most likely came up with the idea in this particular case, rather than someone else, does not by itself contribute to our understanding of the sacro monte of Varallo. This does not mean that contemplating the possible inspirations of the founder is on all accounts useless: the idea of building a sacro monte is, for example, much more original, and can only be fully appreciated by considering Caimi's background as a Franciscan (see chapter six). However, the impression becomes manifest that in much of the secondary literature about the earliest phases of the sacro monte of Varallo, connecting arguments to the undocumented plans of Caimi is somehow expected to lend these arguments more importance. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that topo-evocation *remained* important for the sacro monte up to the present, not just in Caimi's day; it endured to co-exist with the drama of sacred history of later periods.

An additional topic, often connected to Caimi's intentions, is what visitors were expected to *do* on the sacro monte. From the inscription above the door of the sepulchre chapel, we know that he wanted the faithful, who could not travel to Jerusalem, to *see* the Holy Places here. Other than that, the primary sources on the sacro monte that can be dated to Caimi's lifetime are silent on how contemporaneous visitors were supposed to engage with the devotional parcours it offered. The 1507 letter by Morone and the guide of 1514 offer more clues on this score, but cannot be connected to Caimi. However, a collection of sermons that he wrote do survive, and are often referred to as an important source for the type of devotion Caimi may have expected visitors to perform on the sacro monte. These sermons are preserved in a single manuscript in the municipal library of Como, and were completed in 1488.⁵¹ According to Celestino Piana, Caimi's memories of the Holy Land were still very fresh, judging from a number of occasions on which he briefly refers to

50 For example, from the eleventh century onwards, the ecclesiastical complex of the church of Santo Stefano in Bologna not only contained a Holy Sepulchre copy, but also evoked Calvary, with rather precise measurements of the distance of these two locations in Jerusalem between them. During the twelfth century, this "new Jerusalem" of Bologna expanded more and more by means of a network of relevant dedications in satellite chapels and churches throughout the city. Bianca Kühnel, "Productive Destruction: The Holy Sepulchre after 1009," in *Konflikt und Bewältigung: die Zerstörung der Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem im Jahre 1009*, ed. Thomas Pratsch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), esp. 41-44; also see Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages*, 97-107; Zur Shalev, "Christian Pilgrimage and Ritual Measurement in Jerusalem."

51 Piana, "Il Beato Bernardino Caimi," 308-11.

his experiences there.⁵² The collection also includes a number of meditations on the passion, firmly based on the popular late medieval pseudo-Bonaventurian *Meditationes Vitae Christi* often interweaved with Caimi's personal memories of the places of the passion in the Holy Land.⁵³

This personal touch combined with traditional affective passion devotion has led some scholars to suggest that Caimi intended the sacro monte for a meditative exercise of locative memory of the passion, in the externalised *parcours* the chapels offer.⁵⁴ The fabric of the sacro monte does lend itself extremely well to affective meditation incited by vivid images, placed in the *loci* of the chapels.⁵⁵ For a later period, David Leatherbarrow has argued for the possibilities of locative memory exercises on the sacro monte during its later life, based on the *Spiritual exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola.⁵⁶ The argument for this type of passion devotion, can thus be based on the fabric of the sacro monte itself, and need not necessarily be connected to Caimi. Moreover, his sermons were written years before the sacro monte came into existence, and fail to mention the sacro monte. We should therefore be careful with reading them as a programme of mediations for the same. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* were very popular in, and outside of, the Franciscan milieu. The 1514 guide to the sacro monte is an excellent source to pursue this line of investigation, even though it is not directly connected to Caimi.

To sum up, the secondary literature concerning the earliest phase of the sacro monte of Varallo shows a strong interest in Caimi as founder and what he may have intended. Due to the scarcity of sources for this period, it seems that all we know for sure is that the sacro monte was designed to achieve formal similarity to Jerusalem, and offered the opportunity to see that city for those who could not travel to the Holy Land. Indeed, the academic preoccupation with any hypothetical wishes of Caimi appears to be slightly anachronistic, because, directly after his death in 1499, Caimi completely disappears from the record of primary sources on the sacro monte for a while (see section 5.2). Apparently, in the first decades of the 16th century Caimi as

52 Piana, "Il Beato Bernardino Caimi," 321-25, 328-36.

53 Nova, "'Popular' Art in Renaissance Italy," 116-18; Longo, "Alle Origini del Sacro Monte," 56-63.

54 Longo, "Alle Origini del Sacro Monte," 63; Panzanelli, "'Hic Hierusalem Videat'," 422-4; Gentile, "Le Fonti dell'Immaginario," 48.

55 For medieval mnemonic techniques based on vivid memory images placed in a spatial framework of *loci* or places see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1990).

56 Leatherbarrow, "The Image and Its Setting," 111-7.

a person, or his original plans, did not matter so much for the significance of the sacro monte. In other words, the memory of Caimi as the saintly founder with a number of particular pious intentions had not yet become one of the dominant strategies for inscribing meaning into the space of the sacro monte. The emphasis on the plans and wishes of Caimi in modern secondary literature may perhaps be traced back to P. Galloni and his series of publications on the sacro monte during the first half of the twentieth century, which rely on sixteenth and seventeenth-century historiography to a significant extent.⁵⁷ Both the secondary literature, as well as these early modern sources, often adhere to the idea that the personal plans and wishes of the eminent, almost saintly, founder of the sacro monte, are the key to rediscovering the long extinct 'first concept' or ideal of the sacro monte. This conviction first appeared in the territorial controversies over the sacro monte during the second half of the sixteenth century.

5.4 Remembering Caimi: the *sacro monte* as a site of conflict

Following the 1520s, when the artist Gaudenzio Ferrari ceased to be active at the sacro monte, a period of relative peace and quiet and few alternations to the complex ensued. In the second half of the sixteenth century, however, the space of the sacro monte was transformed into an arena for contesting powers. It was in this atmosphere of conflict that Bernardino Caimi started to be remembered again, as a symbol of the pristine beginnings of the sacro monte, with which both litigant parties attempted to claim the sacro monte for themselves. The outline of the main developments in these disputes below, serves to illustrate how the notables of Varallo defended their programme for remodelling the sacro monte by presenting it as a return to what Caimi had originally intended. The Franciscans, in turn, sought to reclaim the sacro monte by insisting that, since it was donated to the observant Franciscan Caimi, they should therefore have full possession and management of the site.

The first signs of struggles over the control of the site emerge in a papal letter of 1554, which assigns the income of *cassa* with alms to the *fabbricieri*, notables from Varallo who were in charge of building activities at the sacro monte, radically reducing Franciscan authority over the site. The following year, Pope Julius III cancelled the order following protests by the friars, but the controversies were not to end soon. This financial conflict about who should receive the donations given by pilgrims indicates that the Francis-

⁵⁷ Galloni, *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Atti di Fondazione* (1909) and *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Origine e Svolgimento delle Opere d'Arte* (1914).

cans and the *fabbricieri* had different ideas about how the site was supposed to be developed and managed.⁵⁸ In 1568, the famous Counter-Reformation bishop Carlo Borromeo acted as a mediator between the *fabbricieri* and the friars, installing two *casse*, one with donations for the *fabbrica* and one for masses, controlled by the friars.⁵⁹ This and other measures, introduced by Borromeo, boosted a new surge in building activities in the 1560's.

During this period, while the *fabbricieri* had the upper hand, drastic changes were introduced into the structure of the sacro monte, most likely little appreciated by the Franciscans.⁶⁰ A prominent *fabbriciero*, the Milanese Giacomo d'Adda commissioned the *Libro dei Misteri* by the architect Galeazzo Alessi in 1565.⁶¹ This exceptional book was completed in 1569, and contains more than three hundred drawings that together present a grand and radical re-design of the sacro monte.⁶² The changes that Alessi projected include a relaying of all the paths between the chapels, so as to change the order in which the chapels are visited, also introducing new chapels such as that of Adam and Eve and the Last Judgement, and the construction of *vetriate*, screens with viewing holes that separated the visitor from the scenes in the chapels and at the same time direct his or her gaze (fig. 11 and fig. 12).⁶³

Not all of Alessi's plans were realised, and some that were, were later cancelled. Yet the effect of the adaptations was to transform the sacro monte into a sanctuary focused on the narrative of salvation history. Rebecca Gill cogently argues that, with the addition of the chapel of Adam and Eve and that of the Last Judgement, the sacro monte transformed into "a lesson in the nature of original sin, in Christ's role as the saviour of man and his position as a second Adam, and on the process of justification," in line with Tridentine theology.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, Alessi's redesign of the sacro monte also explicitly aims to preserve topo-evocative sites with strong claims to similarity to places in the Holy Land, such as the Holy Sepulchre chapel and that of the

58 Pier Giorgio Longo, "Il Sacro Monte di Varallo nella Seconda Metà del XVI Secolo," in *Da Carlo Borromeo a Carlo Bascapè: La Pastorale di San Carlo Borromeo e il Sacro monte di Arona* (Novara: Ass. di Storia Chiesa Novarese, 1985), 87-8.

59 Longo, "Il Sacro Monte di Varallo," 90-1.

60 Gill, "Galeazzo Alessi," 101.

61 Galeazzo Alessi, *Libro dei Misteri: Progetto di Pianificazione Urbanistica, Architettónica e Figurativa del Sacro Monte di Varallo in Valsesia (1565-1569)*, ed. by Stefania Stefani Perrone (Bologna: Forni, 1974).

62 Gill, "Galeazzo Alessi," 98-9.

63 Göttler, "The Temptation of the Senses," 427-8.

64 Gill, "Galeazzo Alessi," 103.

Nativity.⁶⁵

Both a new verse guide to the sacro monte published by Francesco Sesalli in 1566, as well as the preface to the *Libro dei Misteri*, completed by Alessi a few years later, exhibit interest in, and respect for the beginnings of the sacro monte and its founders. The verses in the first edition of Sesalli's guide are preceded by a preface titled *Who were the founders of the Mount of Varallo and the most notable things about this [mount]*.⁶⁶ After briefly describing the situation of the sacro monte close to Varallo the preface states:

The first founder was friar Bernardino Caimi of Milan, who had already been guardian of the Holy Sepulchre of Christ in Jerusalem, and he made this holy journey two other times, and from there he carried the plan design of the Holy Places in imitation of those [overseas].⁶⁷

The text goes on to describe how Caimi's plan was then executed with help of Scarognino, and to cite the 1491 inscription above the entrance of the Holy Sepulchre chapel. The fact that Caimi is explicitly introduced, with much insistence on the *designo* (the outline or plan for his project), is significant because the previous 1514 verse guide from a most likely Franciscan ambit had contained neither mention of Caimi, nor his plan.

The attention for the Franciscan founder of the sacro monte in the preface to Sesalli's guide was not inspired by sympathy for the Franciscan keepers of the sacro monte: the first two editions of the Sesalli's guide, in 1566 and 1570, were dedicated to Francesca Scarognina, the daughter of Caimi's patron Francisco Scarognino and wife to Giacomo d'Adda, Alessi's

65 Göttler, "The Temptation of the Senses," 427.

66 "Quali fossero li fondatori del Monte di Varallo: et quali d'esso siano le cose più notabili." Francesco Sesalli, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte di Varallo di Valsesia* (Novara: Sesalli, 1566), ed. Alberto Durio in *Francesco Sesalli e la Prima "Descrittione" del Sacro Monte di Varallo* (Novara: E. Cattaneo, 1927), 16.

67 "Il primo fondatore fu Frate Bernardino Caimo Milanese, che già era stato Guardiano del Santissimo Sepolcro di Christo in Gierusalemme, e fece quel santo viaggio due altre volte, e di là portò il disegno delli santi loghi a imitazione di quelli: E doppo l'haversi eletto questo Monte per il più commodo di Lombardia, che tutta per tale effetto minutamente discorse: designò in esso, secondo i siti, tutti gli edificii oue si haueuano a fare, edificando in ogni logo una capelletta, depinta di quel sacro misterio, che al sito era conveniente, aiutato dagli homini di quella Valle e particolarmente dal S. Milano Scarognino, che del suo dette poi principio alla Fabrica, e fece fare il Sepolchro simile a quello di Terra Santa: E cosi fino al di d'hoggi si legge sopra l'uscio di quello: [inscription 1491]." Francesco Sesalli, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte* (1566), ed. Durio, 17.

patron.⁶⁸ In terms of the ongoing conflicts for control over the sacro monte, the guide sides with the *fabbricieri*, and not with the Franciscans. In these first two editions, this preference is still relatively implicit, apart from ample attention for the civic elements who had contributed to the site over the years, including Giacomo d’Adda and his most recent initiative for restructuring the sacro monte to display Sacred History.⁶⁹ Later editions of Sesalli’s popular guide have an expanded preface titled *Brief discourse of the site, the origins and establishment of the mount of Varallo*, which sides with the *fabbricieri* more explicitly.⁷⁰

The introductory *Brief discourse* of the 1585 edition of Sesalli’s opens with profuse praise for the founders of the sacro monte: “Pious, devout, and beautiful, pleasing, ingenious, and new, was truly the invention of the first founders ... Pious, devout, and divine was the thought.”⁷¹ After about a page of praise for the unnamed founders and the sacro monte itself, Caimi is named as founder, and Sesalli indicates that he, as a mendicant friar, could not accept donations: this is a reference to the 1493 donation of the sacro monte to the Franciscans, which, according to the *fabbricieri*, did not give the friars any

68 “ALLA NOBILISSIMA SIGNORA FRANCESCA SCAROGNINA D’ADDA,” Francesco Sesalli, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte* (1566), ed. Durio, 16; Göttler, “The Temptation of the Senses,” 426.

69 “Et sequitandosi, doppo quello con l’elemosine publiche e private, si sono fabricate le altre Chiese, essendo anche stati alcuni altri particolari c’hanno sovenuto per l’edificatio di una Chiesa intiera, fra quali Francesco secondo Duca di Milano, il Marchese di Vasto, il S. Francesco d’Adda, il S. Cesare da Napoli, et alcuni altri: et hoggidi il S. Giacomo d’Adda liberalissimamente sovieni di continuo a detta Fabrica. Di modo che al presente è scolpita una bona parte dell’Historia Sacra di rilievo tutto depinto a imitatione del vero, e ogni gioro si va perseverando per redurla a pefettione.” Francesco Sesalli, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte* (1566), ed. Durio (1566), 17-18.

70 “Breve Discorso del Sito, Origine, et Fondazione del Monte di Varale.” Francesco Sesalli, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte di Varale di Val’di Sesia. Dove, Come in una Nova Gierusalem, è il Sepolchro Simile à quello di N.S. Giesu Christo, con Infiniti Luoghi Pii, ad Imitatione di quelli di Terra Santa, con Statue e Pitture Maravigliose*. (Novara: Francesco Sesalli, 1585), [no pagination].

71 “Pia, deuota, e bella, piaceuole, ingeniosa, et noua, fu ueramente l’inuentione dei primi Fondatori; et parimente di quelli che con tanto bello, et nuouo ordine, s’affaticano con tant’alto, e diuino concetto, di ridurre a pefettione la sacra e diuina historia che hoggi di sopra il Monte di Varale si uede. Pio, deuoto, & diuino fu il pensiero d’esprimere in questo piaceuol Monte i marauigliosi gesti della uita, passione, e morte del Redentor nostro, accioche dall contemplatione di cosi santi misterij, i quali in questo loco representano quelli istessi, che noi malageuolmente pottamo nei luoghi di Terra santa uisitare; potessero le deuote persone, cauarne quel grandissimo frutto spirituale, che ogni di si uede.” Francesco Sesalli, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte di Varale* (1585), [no pagination].

actual rights, since they were not supposed to hold property.⁷² Only now, when the Franciscans were effectively losing control over the sacro monte, Caimi is accorded the role of eminent saintly founder. Within the scope of the *Brief discourse*, Caimi offers the starting point, the innovative and very holy idea of founding the sacro monte. The spotlight then immediately shifts to Francesco Scarognino, who made it all possible, and to *li Fabbricieri* of Varallo who developed the site over the years. In a passage directly cited from Alessi's *Libro*, the *Brief discourse* praises d'Adda for restoring the sacro monte to its original state, and implicitly accuses the friars of not having been attentive to the original design:

Especially, since a few years [since the 1570s], in which, through divine grace and inspiration, it was given a new, better order and form, with the means of Sig. Giacomo d'Adda, a pious and devout person. And continuously it is being ordered better. Because in the past, the said edifices were made at different times and by different persons, who perhaps did not aim so precisely at the same thing as those first founders had.⁷³

Later editions of Sesalli's guide copy the preface to Alessi's now completed *Libro* at length, and promote the project; several subsequent editions of this guide, especially that of 1578, reflect the changes at the sacro monte Varallo due to Alessi's project.⁷⁴

Both the *premio* of Alessi's *Libro* and the *Brief discourse* in Sesalli's guide, project an image of Caimi that is perfectly analogous to that in more recent secondary literature: Caimi as the founder represents the *idea* of the sacro monte, its true, but now lost, nature. This nature, according to the *Brief discourse*, also includes the fact the *places* of the sacro monte represent the

72 "E perche non si debbe tacer chi fosse di cosi sant'opera fondatore; prima scrutatore a'esso, fu frate Bernadino Caimo Milanese ... Essendo però il suo pio concetto; che altro non gli potea dare lui, essendo frate; aiutato dalle pie elemosine degli homini die quella Valle, ..." Francesco Sesalli, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte di Varale* (1585), [no pagination].

73 "Massime che d'alcuni anni in qua per gratia, & inspiratione Diuina, gli fu dato un nouo miglior ordine, & forma, col mezzo del su S. Giacobbo d'Adda persona pia, & deuota. Et di continuo si va anche meglio ordinando. E si come per l'adietro, i detti edifitii erano fatti in diuersi tempi, & da diuerse persone, le quali forse non mirauano cosi al fine, che per aventura ebbero quei primi fondatori." Francesco Sesalli, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte di Varale* (1585), [no pagination].

74 Damiano Pomi, "Le Guide Cinquecentesche del Sacro Monte," in *Gaudenzio Ferrari: La Crocifissione del Sacro Monte di Varallo*, ed. Elena de Filippis (Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 2006), 117-8; Longo, "Il Sacro Monte di Varallo," 116-7.

places of the Holy Land, in other words topo-evocation, although ‘nowadays’ it also includes a visualisation of sacred history.⁷⁵ Alessi professes he desires to restore it to “the beautiful concept that the first founders exhibited.”⁷⁶ The *Brief discourse* too explains that Alessi’s *Libro dei Misteri* was commissioned to put everything back in order, and restore the sacro monte to its original nature.⁷⁷ The *fabbricieri*, led by d’Adda and helped by Alessi’s designs, were going to ‘restore’ the sacro monte to Caimi’s first concept. It is thus in the context of promoting a project resented by the Franciscans, that the star of Bernardino Caimi starts to rise for the first time. The friars too, employed the memory of the founder of the sacro monte in the context of the ongoing disputes; their approach was more legalistic in character, as documents from around the turn of the seventeenth century demonstrate.

During the 1570s, there was continual conflict between the friars and the *fabbricieri*, including attempts to evict the Franciscans; Borromeo had to intervene again. In 1576, the guardian of the convent at Varallo and the Franciscan Minister Provincial of Milan signed an agreement to allow the execution of the Alessian project, but in 1577 the friars still had to leave the hermitage next to the Sepulchre chapel. The position of the Franciscans became somewhat stronger during the period when Claudio Medulla acted as Minister of the Franciscan province of Milan, in the years 1578-82 and 1589-92. Medulla supported the changes proposed by the *fabbricieri*, but also established a Franciscan seminary on the sacro monte in 1580, and in 1581 he issued decrees which stipulate that the *fabbricieri* had to request permission for any restructuring. Furthermore, a Franciscan manager and representative of the Provincial, the *presidente del sacro monte*, was installed, and secular clergy were prohibited from being active on the grounds of the sanctuary.⁷⁸

The strengthened position of the Franciscans on the sacro monte was

75 “La sacra e divina historia che hoggi di sopra il monte di varale si vede, ... accioche dalle contemplatione di cosi santi misteri, i quali in questo loco rapresentano quelli istesi, che noi si malagevolmente pottamo ne i lugoghi di Terra santa visitare; ... Si che al di d’hoggi se gli vede scolpita una granparte dell’historia sacra.” Francesco Sesalli, *Descrizione del Sacro Monte di Varale* (1585), [no pagination].

76 “io desidero, che’in tal cosa si facci, accio si conforme co’l bel concetto che monstrarne havere quei primi fondatori di cosi santa opera.” Alessi, *Libro dei Misteri*, 3; Longo, “Il Sacro Monte di Varallo,” 92-3.

77 “Per l’auenire il tutto si farà regolatamente, come anche da molti anni in qua si è fatto, sotto il desegno d’un Libro, nel quale il detto Gentilhomo fece designare tutti gli edificij, che possono commodamente capire nella sommita di questo Monte, ...” Francesco Sesalli, *Descrizione del Sacro Monte di Varale* (1585), [no pagination].

78 Longo, “Il Sacro Monte di Varallo,” 94-5, 98-102.

resented by the *fabbricieri*, as is reflected in an anonymous text dated to around 1578-80: the *Principio e Progresso del Sacro Monte*.⁷⁹ This document is a polemic against the friars, who, after Caimi's death, have become greedy for money, unobservant of their own rule and careless of the sacro monte. In 1581, the *fabbricieri* officially complained to Borromeo about Medulla's decrees. Borromeo then appealed, apparently unsuccessfully, to Francesco Gonzaga, the Minister General of the observant Franciscans at the time, to have the friars replaced with other religious.⁸⁰ In his chronicle of the Franciscan order, Gonzaga does not explicitly mention any disputes in the short description of the sacro monte it contains. However, he does reveal his opinion in a small aside: "In the year 1493 after the Incarnation, it was entirely transferred from the community of Varallo, with *all its income* from various alms, to Bernardino Caimi, Vicar of this Province at the time (my italics)."⁸¹ The interpretation of the original donation of 1493 of the mount of Varallo to Caimi was constantly at the centre of the controversies. According to the friars, since the donation was given to Caimi, in his capacity of Franciscan superior, they held the better claim to administrating the sacro monte.

The controversies of the 1580s were temporarily concluded in favour of the Franciscans, after the *fabbricieri* had lost an important ally with the death of Borromeo in 1584. In 1587, Pope Sixtus V, himself a conventual Franciscan, issued regulations concerning the management of the sacro monte of Varallo at the request of, amongst others, Francesco Gonzaga, which confirmed the status quo and the rights of the Franciscan guardian, and had the *fabbricieri* defer to him in most matters.⁸² This measure also did not prove to be a final solution, and after the departure of Medulla in 1592, the observant Franciscans of Varallo lost control of the sacro monte more and more.⁸³ In 1603, they were finally replaced with reformed Franciscans, by means of a

79 Archivio di Stato Varallo: Archivio del Sacro Monte, m. 2; cf. Longo, "Il Sacro Monte di Varallo," 95-8.

80 Longo, "Il Sacro Monte di Varallo," 104-5.

81 "Id anno à partu Virgineo 1493. omnibus suis numeris ex diversis elemosynis absolutum, atque beato patri Bernardino Caimo, huius tunc Provincie Vicario, à Varallensi communitate traditum fuit." Francesco Gonzaga, *De Origine Seraphicae Religionis Franciscanae eiusque Progressibus* (Rome: 1578), 355.

82 *Constitutio Sixti V Pon. Max. De Administratione Sacri Montis Varalli. Sacra Loca, quae ad Dei gloriam, ... Dat. Romae ad Sanctum Marcum sub annulo Piscatoris. Die xxx. Maij M. D. LXXXVII. Pontificatus nostri Anno Tertio.* (Varallo: Apud Petrum Reuellum, 1610). Archivio di Stato Varallo: Archivio del Sacro Monte, m. 3 and m. 8.

83 Longo, "Il Sacro Monte di Varallo," 121-2.

brief by Pope Clement VIII.⁸⁴ These reformed fathers then continued to have their share of disputes with the *fabbricieri* during the seventeenth century.⁸⁵

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, the question who should have precedence at the sacro monte was still pressing enough for the reformed Franciscan Advocatus Balla to publish a tract on the legal finesses of the case, in order to help the friars of Varallo in their struggle with the *fabbricieri*.⁸⁶ In his *Riflessioni Giuridiche*, Balla returns to the 1493 donation, and argues that the community of Varallo did not donate anything they actually owned to Caimi then, and even if they had, they did not reserve any rights to administer the sacro monte in the text, or ‘instrument’ of that donation. Therefore, according to Balla, the *fabbricieri* needed to acknowledge the regulations and authority of the Franciscan guardian at Varallo, as stipulated in the 1587 brief of Sixtus V. From Balla’s text it appears that the Franciscans still aimed to stake their claims on the 1493 donation. The single surviving authenticated copy of this document had been extracted from a local notary’s archive and recopied and authenticated once more in 1641, and was subsequently printed.⁸⁷

A copy of this printed version of the *Instrumenta Donationis*, preserved at the archivio di stato at Varallo, illustrates how, by combining the text of this deed and the person of Caimi, the Franciscans of Varallo aimed to demonstrate their rights. The text of the donation is preceded by a title page that identifies the main text and adds “Item the full conditions of the possession of these places through blessed Bernardino himself.”⁸⁸ The title page

84 *Instrumento del Possesso Del Sacro Monte di Varallo, e del Monastero di Santa Maria delle Gratie preso dalli P.P. Minori Osservanti Riformati di S. Francesco conforme il Breve della felice memoria di N.S. Clemente Papa Ottavo inserto nel detto Instrumento* (1603). Archivio di Stato Varallo: Archivio del Sacro Monte, m. 8.

85 *Memoria riguardante il Sacro Monte* [primo decennio del sec. xviii], Archivio di Stato Varallo: Archivio del Sacro Monte, m.2; there seem to have been disagreements in the 1640s in particular, Archivio di Stato Varallo: Archivio del Sacro Monte, m. 8 contains several documents that relate to these disputes.

86 Aduocatus Balla, *Riflessioni Giuridiche Per li RR.PP. Minori Oss. Riformati del Sacro Monte di Varallo Prouincia di Milano. CONTRO Li Signori Fabricieri, e Comunità di quel luogo* (Place of printing unknown: ca. 1710-20).

87 Galloni, *Sacro Monte di Varallo: Atti di Fondazione*, 1-5.

88 *Instrumenta Donationis Monast. S. Mariae Gratiarum ac Erem. rri S. Sepulchri cum Pertin. tiis a Vicinia Varalli Vallis Siccidae Beato Patri Bernardino de Caymis Mediolanensi Ordinis Minorum Sancti Frncisci [sic] De Observantia Provinciali factae. Item Plenariae eorundem locorum Possessionis per ipsum Beatum Bernardinum Habitae*. Archivio di Stato Varallo: Archivio del Sacro Monte, m. 8.

also features a copperplate engraving from the second half of the seventeenth century that enforces this message, identified as the “emblem of the reformed Franciscan religion at the sacro monte of Varallo” (fig. 13).⁸⁹ On this image we see, to the left, Christ lying in his tomb, as well as the risen Christ elevated above it, with the Franciscan convent of Varallo in the background. To the right, Mary lies buried in her tomb, and above it, she is shown as the queen of heaven. At the centre of the image, Bernardino Caimi, identified as founder, and his direct successor Candido Ranzo are depicted holding up the sacro monte between them, St Francis overlooking the entire scene from above their heads. The ensemble of this image with Caimi as the blessed Franciscan founder of the sacro monte, and the donation to Caimi printed below, was designed to drive home the message that the sanctuary belongs to the Franciscans.

Remembering Bernardino Caimi became an important strategy to lay claim to the sacro monte from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards. As the spiritual founding father of the sanctuary, about whom relatively little was known, he presented a conveniently adaptable symbol of the equally sparsely documented beginnings of this *lieu de mémoire*. Within the precincts of the sacro monte, remembering Caimi could thus serve to support exclusivist territoriality for both contesting groups, boosting a group identity for *fabbricieri* as the truest interpreters of Caimi’s original design, as well as for the Franciscans of Varallo as his rightful heirs to the donation to his name. In Franciscan Holy Land writing too, Caimi figured as a key character in discussions of the sacro monte of Varallo, and served a more comprehensive territorial agenda.

5.5 The *sacro monte* of Varallo in Franciscan Holy Land writing

In Franciscan Holy Land writing the memory of Bernardino Caimi is impor-

“Instrument of the Donation of the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie and the hermitage of the Holy Sepulchre, with the things belonging to it, close to Varallo Sesia to the blessed Father Bernardino Caimi of Milan, of the order of the friars minor of the observance of St Francis. Item the full conditions of the possession of these places through blessed Bernardino himself.”

89 “Franciscanae reformatae religionis insignia in sacro Varalli monte.” This engraving has been attributed to Giovanni Antonio Bianchi. Michaela Cometti Valle, *Iconografia del Sacro Monte di Varallo: Disegni, Dipinti e Incisioni dal XVI al XX Secolo* (Borgosesia: Tipolitografia, 1984), 44, 107-8; Guido Gentile, “La Storia del Sacro Monte nei Documenti: Note per una Letteratura della Mostra,” in *Il Sacro Monte di Varallo, Catalogo della Mostra Documentaria* (Borgosesia, 1984), 80.

tant for apparent reasons. He qualified, for example, as the subject of a chapter in Calahorra's history of the Franciscans of Syria and the Holy Land by virtue of being former guardian of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae*. Moreover, by having established a translated Jerusalem in Italy, he produced a little piece of Franciscan Holy Land abroad that Calahorra judged relevant enough to be described in his larger history of the province of the Holy Land. The memory of Caimi and its importance for the sacro monte entered Franciscan Holy Land writing in the guise it had developed in the context of disputes during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: as a symbol of the sanctuary's foundation. Everything good about the sacro monte was attributed to the genius of Caimi by these authors, including for example later developments such as the drama of Sacred History initially only promoted by the *fabbricieri*. Through Caimi, these qualities were claimed for both the *custodia Terrae Sanctae*, and eventually the Franciscan order. However, these sources also attest an awareness that all was not always well at the sacro monte of Varallo.

The sacro monte as a site of conflict between the forces of civic and Franciscan religion, entered Franciscan Holy Land writing by means of Angelico di Milano's Italian translation of Calahorra's history, which was published in Venice in 1694.⁹⁰ At the time, Angelico was custodian of the Franciscan province of the Holy Land, and, like Bernardino Caimi, was also a native of Milan. Moreover, he was well aware of the sacro monte near his hometown, judging from the interpolations he added to Calahorra's chapter on Caimi and Varallo, while his translation otherwise mostly follows the Spanish original faithfully. In his translation of Calahorra's chapter on Caimi, Angelico reports bitterly on the struggles for control over sacro monte, confirming the impression that the reformed Franciscans at Varallo did not fare much better than their observant predecessors.

Angelico maintains that the donations of the benefactors of the sacro monte would have been more liberal, had these patrons not been so prone to quarrelling: "with manifest oppression of those religious, who so punctually administrate those holy mysteries." This seems even more unjust to Angelico, since the friars diligently administer the sacraments to both pilgrims and *paesani*, they take confessions in their convent church, and are "continuously exercising piety in service of the people."⁹¹ On the subject of the donation of the mount above Varallo to Caimi in 1493, Angelico likewise adds an interpolation. He explains that although the property was transferred to the Apostolic

90 Juan de Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica della Provincia de Syria e Terra Santa di Gierusalemme*, trans. Angelico di Milano (Venice: Antonio Tivani, 1694).

91 "..., e si v`a continuamente facendo con le limosine de Benefattori, che forsi sarebbero pi`u

See, because the Franciscans cannot hold property, it was in fact donated to the friars, and they should have full use of it. Neither the people nor the clerics of the Borgo of Varallo have any rights on the sacro monte. In conclusion, he fulminates:

[T]he unrest and continuous disturbance, caused by the Infernal Enemy, and meant to diminish the devotion of that holy place are truly striking; while every year new disputes are born, or for a pretence, albeit approved by those clerics, without having, nor ever being able to exhibit the slightest foundation of reason, while so many times that donation has been confirmed by papal bulls, and most recently by Pope Clement VIII, who gave it to the reformed Fathers.⁹²

Angelico di Milano fears that these unjust claims on the sacro monte and the conflicts they cause, have an effect on the space: they contaminate the “devotion of that holy place.” Yet, in spite of the blemish of conflict, the sacro monte still enters the history of the Franciscan Holy Land as unqualified success. Notwithstanding the continuous conflicts and pressure on the position of the friars at Varallo, this and other texts withal interpret the sacro monte as an important Franciscan achievement. In practice, this meant embracing the new configuration of the sacro monte realised by the *fabbricieri* as an accomplishment of Caimi, as well as welcoming the memory of another, non-Franciscan, saintly figure now strongly associated with it. While Juan de Calahorra praises Bernardino Caimi at length as a prominent Franciscan Holy Land veteran and founder of the sacro monte in his *Chronicle*, he also accords importance to the presence of St Carlo Borromeo at the sacro monte, and applauds the contemporaneous layout and artwork.

liberali, se restassero ammirati de litiggi, che continuamente si muouono da quelle genti, con oppressione manifesta di quelli Religiosi, che con tanta pontualità custodiscono quei santi misterij, & officiano quella Chiesa amministrando li Santissimi Sacramenti con tutta diligenza à Pellegrini, e Paesani, poiche oltre il Convento, che stà à piedi del Monte ci è l’Ospito de medesimi Religiosi doue stanno del continuo quattro Padri confessori, subordinati al Padre Guardiano del Convento, che stanno in continuo essercitio di pietà in seruitio de Popoli.” Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica*, trans. Angelico di Milano (1694), 341.

92 “Onde è bene da stupire l’inquietudine, e continua turbatione, che caggiona il Nemico Infernale per minuire la Deuotione di quel santo Luogo; mentre ogni Anno nascono nuovi litiggi, o per vna pretensa, ma segnata giurisdittione di quel Clero, senza hauere, ne mai potere esebire vn minimo fondamento di raggione, mentre tante volte è stato confermato con Bolle Pontificie questa Donatione, & ultimamente la Santità di Papa Clemente Ottauo, lo diede alli Padri Riformati, ...” Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica*, trans. Angelico di Milano (1694), 339.

Calahorra offers no little praise when he describes the sacro monte of Varallo as “one of the most devout places in whole of Christendom.” He then enhances that statement by adding that Borromeo esteemed it as such. Borromeo’s visits to the sacro monte, especially his last one, shortly before his death in 1584, are commemorated by Calahorra as important events. He explains that “some imitate the devotion of this saintly cardinal, and withdraw from the pomp and vanities of this world, to deplore on that holy mountain time badly spent,” as opposed to those who come to venerate the mysteries of the passion at Varallo, because they cannot travel to Jerusalem, as Caimi had intended.⁹³ These lines were omitted in Angelico di Milano’s translation. Apparently, he did not want to give Borromeo too much credit, perhaps based on his familiarity with the conflict over the sacro monte, although he does include Calahorra’s remark that Borromeo was a “protector of the Seraphic Religion of St Francis.”⁹⁴ Borromeo is linked to a new kind of devotion to the sacro monte, other than peregrination to a new Jerusalem. Most likely, he relied on a type of meditation modelled on the *spiritual exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, directed by his Jesuit confessor Father Adorno.⁹⁵ His last retreat to the sacro monte is particularly famous, because at that time Borromeo was struck by the illness that would end his life. The episode entered the hagiography and iconography of the saint as a last, sublime mediation of the passion, whilst looking death in the eyes.⁹⁶ In the context of Calahorra’s *Chronicle*, the memory of Borromeo’s last visit sanctifies and gives additional meaning to the sacro monte, alongside that of Caimi.

Borromeo’s devotions, based on calling forth strong mental visions of

93 “Algunos imitaron despues la deuocion de este Santo Cardenal, y se retiraron de las pompas, y vanidades de el mundo, à llorar en aquel Santo Monte el tiempo mal gastado. Otros por no tener posibilidad, ni fuerças para peregrinar à la Santa Ciudad de Gerusalen, veneran en el Monte de Varalo los Misterios de la Sacratissima Passion del Hijo de Dios, que fu el fin que tuuo en tan santa obra el V. P. Fray Bernardino Caymo ...” Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 318.

94 “... , e come tale lo veneraua, e stimaua quell’Eminentiss. Santo Cardinale Carlo Borromeo, zelantissimo Protettore della nostra Serafica Religione, il quale volse coronare gl’vltimi giorni di sua Santa vita, nella meditatione in luogo cosi santo, della Passione del nostro Redentore, in quello gli riuellò il Sign. l’hora della sua morte, e gli diede l’vltima infermita dalla quale passò à godere il suo adorato Creatore. Qual fosse l’intentione del Beato Bernardino ...” Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica*, trans. Angelico di Milano (1694), 342.

95 Longo, “Il Sacro Monte di Varallo,” 127-30; Leatherbarrow, “The Image and Its Setting,” 110-11.

96 Charles Bascapè, *The Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, ed. Edward Healy Thompson (Philadelphia: Cunningham, 1870), 336-340; de Klerck, “Jerusalem in Renaissance Italy,” 215-7; Göttler, “The Temptation of the Senses,” 393-403.

the passion, were perfectly accommodated by the *tableaux* of sculptures and *freschi* that the sacro monte afforded.⁹⁷ Even though the sanctuary, as it was in Calahorra's day, was already highly modified by the Alessian project and other interventions of the *fabbricieri*, he sees it as the ongoing materialisation of Caimi's original design. He relates that, by now, forty-five chapels have been built, and that in them the mysteries of redemption are represented with "exquisite statues and paintings," and he foresees that the sacro monte will be "one of the most celebrated and magnificent works in Europe," upon completion.⁹⁸ The type of devotion these exquisite works of art excite is also hinted at by Calahorra: when admiring the *Ecce homo* chapel he concludes: "everything is represented with such perfection, that it surprises for its curiosity, and it is the motive for many tears and sighs for devotion."⁹⁹ About the chapel of the Crucifixion he marvels that this dolorous spectacle is "represented so much to the life, that it seems, rather, that the reality of this mystery was represented."¹⁰⁰

Angelico di Milano, in his translation of Calahorra's *Chronicle*, admires the artifice of the sacro monte even more: to Calahorra's observation that its art is exquisite he adds that "they seem miracles of sculpture and of the brush."¹⁰¹ He also inserts a substantial interpolation after the assertion that

97 Longo, "Il Sacro Monte di Varallo," 129-9; Leatherbarrow, "The Image and Its Setting," 111-12.

98 "Hanse fabricado hasta aora quarenta y cinco Capillas, que algunas parecen Iglesias muy sumptuosas, en las quales se representan diuersos Misterios de la Redempcion humana con estatuas, y pinturas tan exquisitas, que en llegando à la vltima perfeccion; sarà vna de las obras mas celebres, y magnificas de la Europa." Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 317.

99 See chapter 2 on curiosity and devotion in relation to Franciscan perspectives on pilgrimage. "Solo en la Capilla, que dizen de el Ecce homo, se ven sesenta estatuas de Iudios, la de el Presidente Pilatos con los Pajes, que le assistieron quando sacò à vista de aquella perfida gente à nuestro Dulcissimo Redemptor, cuya Santa Imagen representa aquella inmensa humildad, y serenidad con que saliò à vista de aquel ingrato, y desconocido Pueblo, como tambien las de los Iudios los ademanes, y gestos con que instauan que fuesso crucificado; todo lo qual se representa con tal perfeccion, que es pasmo para la curiosidad, y motiuo de muchas lagrimas, y suspiros para la deuocion." Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 317.

100 "No es para menos el ver la Capilla de la Crucifixion al inocentissimo Cordero Iesus entro doze Soldados de à cauallo, cercado de crueles verdugos, y de otras personas, que concurrieron à tan doloroso expectaculo, el qual se representa tan al viuio que mas parece verse la realidad de el Misterio, que fu representacion." Calahorra, *Chronica de la Provincia di Syria y di Tierra Santa* (1684), 317.

101 "¿; sono à quest' hora fabricate quaranta sette capelle, ..., che sembrano miracoli della scoltura, e del Pennello, e quando sarà ridotta all' vltima perfettione, sarà vna merauiglia

upon completion the sacro monte will be a marvel of Europe, which opens: “Going in, where the chapels with the mysteries are seen, one enters through a majestic arch in that Sacred Theatre, upon which these words are carved in capital letters: *Haec nova Jerusalem, vitam summosque labores / Atque Redemptoris omnia gesta refert.*”¹⁰² First among the chapels is that dedicated to Adam and Eve, and which calls for “tears, because of the reflection that so much was lost for so little.”¹⁰³ Angelico would give a tour of the entire sacro monte, “but because it is not the intent of this history to refer to all the marvels of this sacro monte, we will highlight only that, which keeps the curious, but devout mind of the pilgrim occupied with awe the most.”¹⁰⁴ The chapel with the slaughter of the innocents is a good example of this, according to Angelico, because it satisfies the curiosity, and excites devotion as well as indignation through its visual commemoration of Herod’s barbarity (fig. 14). Angelico allots the highest praise to the chapel that shows the angel appearing to Joseph in a dream: “the chisel has surpassed all other art: so lively, and well-formed, so that the lingering spectators do not know how to leave, because of the devotion and the marvel.”¹⁰⁵

dell’Europa.” Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica*, trans. Angelico di Milano (1694), 341.

102 “Auanti, che cominciano à vedersi le Capelle de Misteri s’entra per vna Maestosa in quel Sacro Theatro; sopra la quale stanno à caratteri cubitali scolpite queste Parole: *Haec nova Jerusalem, vitam summosque labores / Atque Redemptoris omnia gesta refert.*” Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica*, trans. Angelico di Milano (1694), 341. “This new Jerusalem represents to the life, the highest labours, and all the deeds of the Redeemer.” This arch was designed by Alessi.

103 “... puoco longi dalla quale è la capella della creatione del Mondo tanto al vivo effigiata con le statue de nostri Protoparenti, e di tutti gli animali, che li rendono Obbedienza in quel stato d’Innocenza, che caua le lagrime con la riflessione, che così per puoco si perdesse vn tanto bene, e si riportasse con tanto male à tutta la posterita, ...” Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica*, trans. Angelico di Milano (1694), 341.

104 See chapter 2 on curiosity and devotion in relation to Franciscan perspectives on pilgrimage. “..., mà perche non è l’intento di quest’historia il riferire tutte le merauiglie di quel sacro Monte, accenneremo solo quello, che maggiormente tiene occupato con lo stupore la mente curiosa, mà deuota de Pelegrini, ...” Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica*, trans. Angelico di Milano (1694), 341.

105 “..., onde non è da tacersi la rappresentatione della stragge de bambini Innocenti, nella quale restano come absorti dal vedere non solo così al vivo espresso il misterio, ma tanto inquisitamente scolpite quelle figure, che con l’istesso motiuo si sodifà alla curiosità, alla Diuotione, non senza accendersi lo sdegno de riguardanti con la memoria della barbarie d’Erode. Qui si vedono li carnefici spietati col ferro in mano trucidare quei pargoletti, le madri, con diuerse maaiere, che anelano di saluarli, li manigoldi, chi glieli leuano à forza dalle braccia; spettacolo, che nella varietà de gesti, e nella diuersità de soggetti rassembra al viuuo vno di quei luoghi doue si faceua scempio tanto crudele. In vn’altra capella si rappresenta, quando

In their ecstatic passages about the sacro monte, both Juan de Calahorra and Angelico di Milano accept and appropriate the artwork realised by the *fabbricieri*, as the achievement of Bernardino Caimi. Calahorra, whose text Di Milano translates and elaborates upon, turns the spotlight on Bernardino Caimi as a distinguished member of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae*. They turn the idea, that Caimi's blessed mind had been the source of all the devout glories that can be seen on the sacro monte, first introduced by proponents of the Alessian project, to their own best, Franciscan, advantage. In addition, Calahorra allows Carlo Borromeo's presence at Varallo, especially his last visit, to provide an added air of sanctity and signals newer fashions in devotion, even though Borromeo had implicitly promoted the interests of the *fabbrica* over those of the friars. The sacro monte thus affords sublime works of art that overwhelm the visitor, and trigger strong devotional reactions, aptly described as a *sacred theatre* by Angelico di Milano, ideal for both Ignatian prayer, as well as a surrogate pilgrimage to Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ In addition, Angelico di Milano sees the sacro monte is not only a sacred theatre for art and devotion, but also explicitly a space of conflict, in which the Franciscan keepers suffer constant harassment of the citizens of Varallo.

All of these understandings of the sacro monte by these friars of the Holy Land - a space of conflict, a sacred theatre, the all-important figure of Caimi, secondarily that of Borromeo - then entered Franciscan historiography as a smash hit of the order. For instance, Pietro Antonio di Venezia's *Giardino Serafico Istorico delle trè Ordini Instituti dal Seraphico Padre S. Francesco* (1710), is a history of the order aimed at celebrating its successes in seven parts.¹⁰⁷ Part six is entirely dedicated to revelling in the pre-eminence of the Franciscan custody of the Holy Land, and part seven "particular privileges that were conceded by Christ to St Francis, and some victories, and glorious

l'Angelo apparue in sogno à San Giuseppe, auuisandolo, che non temesse della grauidanza della sua sposa sacratissima, & iui si vede Maria Vergine, sopra van seggiola, che stà cucendo, nella cui effigie pare, che il scalpello habbi superato tutta l'Arte, tanto al viuo, e formata, che non sanno partirsi li riguardanti trattenuti, e dalla Deuotione, e della merauiglia." Calahorra, *Historia Cronologica*, trans. Angelico di Milano (1694), 341-42.

106 The dramatic, theatrical potentiality of sacri monti, including that of Varallo has been noted in the secondary literature. Testori, *Il Grande Teatro Montano*; Paola Ventrone. "I Sacri Monti: Un Esempio di Teatro «Pietrificato»," in *La Gerusalemme di San Vivaldo e i Sacri Monti in Europa*, ed. Sergio Gensini (Commune di Montaione, 1989): 145-162; Giovanni Reale and Elisabetta Sgarbi, *Il Gran Teatro del Sacro Monte* (Milan: RCS libri S.p.A, 2009).

107 Pietro Antonio di Venezia, *Giardino Serafico Istorico delle Trè Ordini Instituti dal Serafico Padre S. Francesco* (Venice: Domenico Lovisa, 1710), vol. II, [indice del secondo tomo, parte settima].

triumphs,” of the order.¹⁰⁸ Among these triumphs, friar Pietro Antonio lists the creation of knights of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, as well as the sacri monti of La Verna in Tuscany, and of Varallo: “Jerusalem transported to Italy, for more comfort of the faithful, to the sacro monte of Varallo by the blessed Bernardino Caimi of Milan, observant minor of our father S. Francis.”¹⁰⁹ Sampling from a number of texts, but primarily Angelico di Milano’s account, Pietro Antonio advertises the sacro monte as a particular accomplishment of the Franciscan order championed by Bernardino Caimi.

In short, all of the Franciscan texts discussed in this section so far, claim the sacro monte of Varallo as part of a Franciscan Holy Land, as well as an important achievement in the history of the Franciscan order, through the figure of Caimi. My discussion of this sacro monte in Franciscan Holy Land writing would not be complete, however, without briefly mentioning Francesco Quaresmio’s reference to the sanctuary in his *Terrae Sanctae Elucidatio* (1639). His discussion of the sacro monte is altogether of a different nature, and is developed at a more abstract, scholarly level than that of his colleagues analysed above. Quaresmio uses the sacro monte of Varallo as an example, within the context of a deliberation of different kinds of pilgrimage that leans heavily on Jacobus Gretser’s *De Sacris et Religiosis Pererinationibus* (see chapter 2, section 3). On the one hand, Quaresmio recognizes external profane pilgrimage, actual physical travel to the Holy Places, which he then subdivides into two categories “honest and laudable” and “detestable and vicious,” depending on the intentions of the pilgrim.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, he recognizes “spiritual pilgrimages” which can be subdivided in striving for the heavenly Jerusalem, the pilgrimage any believer must embark on in his life, and travelling to places where pilgrims can visit “an image of earthly Jerusalem.”¹¹¹

108 “PARTE SETTIMA. Privilegj particolari, che furono concessi da Cristo al Serafico Padre S. Francesco, & alcune Vittorie, e Trionfi gloriosi riportati da suoi Figli con accrescimento de fregi del suo Ordine,” cf. “PARTE SESTA. Quanto fiorisca la Religione Serafica ne Luoghi di Terra Santa, che per speciale Providenza Divina furono alla di lei cura assegnati, e quanto in essi successe di mirabile, e di prodigioso da che stanno sotto la Custodia dell’Ordine Francescano.” Pietro Antonio *Giardino Serafico*, [indice del secondo tomo].

109 “Cap. 6. Gerusalemme trasportata in Italia per più commodo de Fedeli nel Sacro Monte di Varallo dal B. Bernardino Caimo da Minlano Min. Osservante del nostro Padre S. Francesco.” Pietro Antonio, *Giardino Serafico*, vol. 2, 382-390.

110 Quaresmio, *Elucidatio*, vol. I, 823-839.

111 “... vellent Ierusalem terrestrem illius figuram adire, & hinc velut per tutam viam ad caelestem pervenire. Vellent inuisere, oculis videre, pedibus calcare, ore lambere sancta illa loca, ...” Quaresmio, *Elucidatio*, vol. I, 841.

In order to furnish examples of destinations well suited for this kind of spiritual pilgrimage, Quaresmio plagiarises Gretser, who first proposes St Stephen's Church in Bologna, founded in 423 by St Petronius, in imitation of a number of Holy Places in Jerusalem.¹¹² Quaresmio then briefly introduces Bernardino Caimi and the sacro monte at Varallo that he founded, based on a much abbreviated and slightly paraphrased passage from Francesco Gonzaga's history of the Franciscan order, which he does explicitly acknowledge.¹¹³ He then returns to plagiarising Gretser, who quotes a short description of the sacro monte from the Life of Borromeo by Carlo Bascapè (1550-1615), and concludes with some words of Gretser's.¹¹⁴ It is perhaps surprising that

112 "Hoc sancti Petronij exemplum posterius quoque imitati sunt, locorumque sanctorum quasi ... quodammodo donarunt, & ut omnium sermone celebrarentur, effecerunt." Quaresmio, *Elucidatio*, vol. I, 843; "Hoc S. Petronii exemplum posterius quoque imitati sunt, locorumque sanctorum quasi ... quodammodo donarunt, & ut omnium sermone celebrarentur, effecerunt." Gretser, *De Sacris* (1606), 36; cf. Robert Ousterhout, "The Church of Santo Stefano: A 'Jerusalem' in Bologna," *Gesta* 20, no. 2 (1981): 311-321; Quaresmio cites the life of Petronius as recorded in the *Vitae Sanctorum* by Laurentius Surius.

113 "Testis est B. Pater Bernardinus Caimus Mediolanensis, qui absoluta Ierosolymitana peregrinatione, & postquam Guardianatus officio in sacro Monte Sion laudabiliter functus fuisset, & propriam Mediolani Provinciam repetijisset, quaereretque anxius aliquem locum repraesentandis ... Atque Redemptoris omnia gesta refert." Quaresmio, *Elucidatio*, vol. I, 843; "Cum igitur beatus pater Bernardinus Caimus Mediolanensis, post Guardianatus officium in sacro monte Sion laudabiliter functum, propriam Mediolani Provinciam repetijisset, quaereretque anxius aliquem unum locum representandis ... Atque Redemptoris omnia gesta refert." Gonzaga, *De Origine Seraphicae Religionis* (1578), 352-3.

114 "Hinc factum est, ut locus superioribus saeculis vix de nomine notus, clarissimus redditus sit, & populorum & peregrinorum ex proximis & longinquis partibus concursu celebris, ut praeter alios qui de illo scripserunt, notavit Illustrissimus & Reuerendissimus Franciscus Gonzaga Part.2. *Historiae Franciscanae Religionis, ubi agit de Prouincia Mediolanensi*. Sed testem non vulgarem audi auctorem illum, qui Caroli Borromaei, Cardinalis optimi & sanctissimi Antistitis res gestas litteris consignavit. *Varallum vici nomen est, ..., & religiosè contemplantur*. Neque tantum sacra loca maiorum nostrorum pietas expressit, sed & variis locis ipsam longitudinem viae, qua Redemptor noster ex aedibus Pilati ad crucem ductus est, accurate descriptam fidelibus non modo inspiciendam, sed & pie pertranseundam proposuit." Quaresmio, *Elucidatio*, vol. I, 843-4; "Testis ille, qui Hierosolymis regressus in monte Varallio novam quasi Hierosolymam condidit; locumque superioribus saeculis vix de nomine notum, clarissimum effecit. De quo audire lubet Auctorem, qui Caroli Borromaei Cardinalis, optimi & sanctissimi Antistitis res gestas litteris consignavit. *Varallum, vici nomen est, ..., & religiosè contemplantur*. Neque tantum sacra loca maiorum nostrorum pietas expressit; ..., sed & pie pertranseundam proposuit." Gretser, *De Sacris* (1606), 36; cf. Carlo Bascapè, *De Vita et Rebus Gestis Caroli S.R.E. Cardinalis, Tituli S. Praxedis Archiepiscopi Mediolani* (Ingolstadt: Sartorius, 1592), 258-9; As bishop of Novara from 1593 onwards, Bascapè was closely involved with the sacro monte. He was interested in conforming the layout of the

Quaresmio shows relatively little interest in the sacro monte of Varallo, or Bernardino Caimi, especially since he spent quite some time in the Franciscan province of Milan (see chapter four). He really only seems to refer to this sacro monte in order to illustrate his discussion of spiritual pilgrimage, without any particular interest in European translations of the Holy Places, Franciscan or otherwise. Elsewhere, he does, however, also briefly mention the Franciscan sacro monte of La Verna in a more significant context, as we shall see in the following chapter (see chapter six).

5.6 Conclusion

The memory of Bernardino Caimi and his elusive plans or intentions for the sacro monte of Varallo, were not immediately an important way to give meaning to this sacred space. In the years prior to, and directly following Caimi's death, the sanctity of the sacro monte was based on evocation of places in the Holy Land by means of 'similarity'. This changed, however, from the 1550s onwards in the context of disputes between the Franciscans and the *fabbricieri* of the sanctuary. The latter group not only realised several transformations in its material fabric, but also revived the memory of Caimi to legitimise their restructurings: as a symbol of the elusive, unspoilt beginnings of the sacro monte. Once the figure of Bernardino Caimi had been resurrected, it stuck; the Franciscans of Varallo also sought to claim back control over the sanctuary by referring to him. Certain authors of the Franciscan custody of the Holy Land likewise celebrated the memory of Caimi and through him claim the sacro monte as part their province of the Holy Land by extension. This includes general acceptance of the interventions and artwork introduced by the *fabbricieri* as Caimi's achievements, while reserving only a supporting part for the memory of Carlo Borromeo and his last visit to the sacro monte. Via these texts, the sacro monte then entered eighteenth century order historiography as an unqualified Franciscan success achieved through the merit of Caimi.

The idea that Caimi's mind must have held some sort of crucial master plan for the sacro monte is still present today in the secondary literature: re-

sacro monte to the life of Christ on the firm basis of scriptural evidence, as well as turning the sacro monte into a pastoral instrument of the Tridentine reforms. Guido Gentile, "Gli Interventi di Carlo Bascapè nella regia del Sacro Monte di Varallo," in *Carlo Bascapè sulle Orme del Borromeo: Coscienza e Azione Pastorale in un Vescovo di Fine Cinquecento* (Novara: Interlinea, 1994), 427-90; Pier Giorgio Longo, "«Un Luogo Sacro... Quasi Senz' Anima» Carlo Bascapè e il Sacro Monte di Varallo," in *Carlo Bascapè sulle Orme del Borromeo: Coscienza e Azione Pastorale in un Vescovo di Fine Cinquecento* (Novara: Interlinea, 1994), 369-426.

constructing the original intent of Bernardino Caimi has been a major focus, perhaps also because whatever layout he superintended was soon supplanted by something else. While Caimi is often commemorated as an especially, even divinely, inspired person, the idea of a sacro monte that offers a new Jerusalem did not necessarily spring from his mind fully formed and *ex nihilo*, nor can it be explained in a satisfactory manner by referring to his experience in the Holy Land alone. He took inspiration for this, very Franciscan, phenomenon of the sacro monte as a second Jerusalem elsewhere. Accordingly, the next chapter turns the spotlight onto the intertwining strands of hagiography, apocalypticism, and order historiography that together produced this form of Franciscan Holy Land territoriality materialised: the sacro monte.