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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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## Conclusion

In their treatises on the Holy Land, both Paul Walther von Guglingen and Francesco Suriano emphasise the importance of Bonaventure's metaphysical circle for understanding the significance of the sacred centre, also linking the beginning of their treatises to the end through the device of the circle. These two friars thus engaged with particular crucial elements from their order's ideological canon, when thinking about the Holy Land as friars of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae*. Later observant Franciscans whose work and ideas this dissertation examines, likewise strove to create ever stronger ties between themselves and their role as friars of the Holy Land, formative Franciscan myths of origin, and the spaces and places in the Holy Land associated with central events in salvation history. It has been the purpose of this dissertation to lay bare this web of interconnecting stories about oneself, as well as how this tissue of memories served not only to firmly anchor the Franciscans in the Holy Land, but also to transport Jerusalem to Europe in a particularly Franciscan matrix: the sacro monte. The resulting picture is that of an ever closer conversation between the Life and topography of the stigmatisation of St Francis, and the Holy Places overseas.

From Paul Walther von Guglingen's late fifteenth-century *Treatise on the Holy Land* to seventeenth-century publications such as Quaresmio's *Elucidatio* (1639) and Calahorra's *Chronica* (1684), the Franciscan Holy Land as an ideological construct underwent several major changes. This period witnessed a process that included the building of sacri monti and the reinterpretation of the Life of St Francis. In response to other Christian groups vying for the Franciscan position at the Holy Places, the friars of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae* became more eager than before to associate themselves, as a religious group, with the Holy Land. This dissertation aims to unite several strands of Franciscan Holy Land territoriality expressed through various media, with particular attention to the collective identity that the friars forged as guardians of the Holy Places, based on ideological links between themselves and the sacred places and spaces of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

The methodological intervention of this dissertation has been twofold. First, to combine insights from theories of social space and cultural memory studies with the concept of territoriality, and in particular the exclusivist bond that religious groups may seek to cultivate with locations where powerful religious memories have been anchored. In addition, the process through which Palestine became a sacred space for Christians, shaped by the mental frameworks of the medieval cult of the saints, have guided my analysis of the sa-

cred spaces the friars engaged with. The combination of these analytical tools has allowed me to study the particular relationship the Franciscans sought to promote between themselves, as a religious group, and the Holy Land, as well as the constructed geographies they created along the way, as historically contingent and interrelated products of human thought. In addition, I have sought to define the corpus of sources by bringing together rather divergent types of texts and other media, on the basis of the shared constitutive memories, ideologies, and identities they engage with, over a relatively extended period of time.

The very purpose of the term Franciscan Holy Land writing (see introduction) has been to facilitate considering texts such as the late medieval treatises by Guglingen and Suriano alongside seventeenth-century travelogues such as those of Bernardinus Surius and Antonius Gonsales. Since the main criterion has been that a source needed to be linked to a Franciscan, preferably connected to the *custodia Terrae Sanctae*, and reflect a particularly Franciscan perspective on the Holy Land, it thus became possible to emphasise continuities as well as developments in what it meant to be a Franciscan of the Holy Land, bridging obvious breaks such as the Reformation and the instating of Ottoman rule over Jerusalem. A vital connection that has become apparent is that between key moments in the Franciscan Order's collective memory, such as Francis' journey to Damietta and his stigmatisation, and Franciscan representations of the Holy Land. Without claiming to have reconstructed an exclusive or even hegemonic perspective among Franciscans, I have sought to demonstrate that Franciscan ideologies and order memories are crucial for understanding how the Franciscans of the custody of the Holy Land saw their own role, and how they expressed this, for example in the shape of sacri monti. The sacred space of the Franciscan Holy Land was thus very much forged in an ongoing *dialogue* between Franciscan order historiography, texts on the Holy Land, and sacri monti. Francis' trip to Damietta was thus turned into a possessive Holy Land pilgrimage, and La Verna into a Franciscan Calvary and Jerusalem, in a reciprocal conversation between the locations of formative events, Franciscan texts of various typologies, the newly created sacred geographies of the later sacri monti, and certainly not least apocalyptic spirituality. The Franciscan Holy Land writing examined in this dissertation aimed to serve the territorial purposes of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae*, but did so on the basis of more general Franciscan memories and ideologies, and later also again provided input for a more broadly defined Franciscan self-image, as Pietro Antonio da Venezia's *Giardino Serafico* (1710) testifies, for example.

Another crucial connection that this dissertation has investigated in

depth is the ideological relationship between the (friars of the) *custodia Terrae Sanctae* and the fifteenth-century sacri monti of Varallo and San Vivaldo, and the sacro monte of La Verna. Even though there is no shortage of academic work on either La Verna or later sacri monti, particularly that at Varallo, these literatures tend to be isolated from one another, thereby obscuring an essential link between these sanctuaries. I have found that La Verna is a highly plausible ideological intermediary between the Holy Land and later sacri monti, as well as a model for their material fabric, consisting of a sacred geography of chapels on a hill, decorated with terracotta sculpture. Translating the Holy Land to Europe in the shape of a sacro monte, is thus uniquely Franciscan not because the founders happened to be Franciscans, but because these founders based their initiatives on a much broader Franciscan cultural programme, as becomes evident from the ideological strands examined in this dissertation. Their choices were informed by long pre-existing associations between La Verna and the Holy Land based on Joachite interpretations of Francis' stigmatisation, as well as contemporaneous Franciscan Holy Land territoriality.

Moreover, there is not only a vital bond between La Verna and later sacri monti, but also a significant interrelationship between La Verna and Franciscan Holy Land writing. For example, Diego de Cea and Francesco Quaresmio transported Francis to the Holy Land and turned it into a Franciscan territory by reinterpreting the Life of St Francis, and parallelism between Christ and Francis. To a great extent informed by the same ideologies of the Franciscan Joachite apocalyptic and conformity between Francis and Christ, the episode of the stigmatisation on La Verna was valorised by transporting Calvary to Italy and making it Franciscan. In 1642, Vincenzo Berdini in turn sought to base the legal prerogatives of the friars in Jerusalem on vestiges of the passion in the rocks at La Verna. These texts and the three earliest sacri monti are thus not only expressions of the same phenomenon, namely the same Franciscan territoriality with regards to the Holy Land, but they also hinge on the same underlying Franciscan cultural memories that gave shape and meaning to both Franciscan texts on the Holy Land and sacri monti. It has, therefore, proven very rewarding to study these ostensibly very different phenomena together, rather than in isolation.

Collectively, the case studies that this dissertation investigates point to a number of important developments in Franciscan representations of the Holy Land from the late fifteenth century onwards, all part of a closely interrelated ideological framework. In order to sketch these developments it is perhaps useful to return to the starting point of this dissertation: Guglingen's *Treatise on the Holy Land*. I have subjected this understudied text to rela-

tively extensive source critique, precisely because it contains or suggests so many of the typical features of Franciscan representations of the Holy Land for two centuries to come. Unlike the Franciscan historical compilations that precede it, Guglingen's *Treatise* is the first cohesive history of the Holy Land by a friar of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae*. This historical outlook is significant; re-evaluating the past, reviewing previous owners of the Holy Land, and thinking about the future, envisioning a specific role for the Franciscans in the unfolding of this history; it markedly prefigures the concerns of later Franciscan Holy Land territoriality.

The novelty of Guglingen's project and its outlook are best illustrated by the collaboration it involved with his colleague Francesco Suriano. Together these two friars thought up a kind of mental map of the Holy Land, ingeniously embedding their analyses of the sanctity of the historical centre of the universe in Bonaventure's metaphysical circle. Both conclude their treatises with wonders of the East for proving the sanctity of the centre, inspired by the Seraphic Doctor's ideas about cosmic exemplarism. What is significant about their collaborative effort is its approach, the belief that *as Franciscans* they could, and should, offer a perspective on the sacred geography of the Holy Land. Moreover, the form in which they chose to write down their closely related ideas is important: that of the treatise, instead of the conventional forms of the travelogue or devotional tract on the Holy Places.

Not only their approach, but also this interest in generic experimentation is significant. Although the travelogue remained an accepted form to write about the Holy Land, Franciscans increasingly favoured other, new forms of expression such as treatises and histories. These changes, though in sync with the evolving literatures of Mediterranean travel and *geographia sacra* on the Holy Land, were particularly catalysed in the case of Franciscan texts by their historical as well as territorial outlook, exemplified by Guglingen's treatise, but also for example by Francesco Quaresmio's seventeenth-century *Elucidatio*. While Guglingen may have tentatively hinted at the foundation of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae* by St Francis, Quaresmio took the relatively few and brief late medieval suggestions of Francis's presence in the Holy Land to the next level, by staging a pilgrimage-*possessio* that turned the Franciscans into the rightful heirs to the Holy Land. Like Guglingen, Quaresmio portrayed the friars as the new and improved version of the clergy of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. These and other Franciscan texts were increasingly preoccupied with lodging Franciscan memories in the Holy Land, alongside more general Christian (Catholic) ones, giving their founding father and order an ever more central place there.

Guglingen's, and to an extent Suriano's, treatises thus signal a number of new developments in Franciscan representations of the Holy Land, which this dissertation seeks to delineate based on a variety of Franciscan texts on the Holy Land. The Franciscans of the Holy Land show themselves to be increasingly self-aware, and more audaciously territorial, than they had been up to the end of the fifteenth century. An important component of this discourse are the repeated calls for renewed Crusade to European monarchs: first expressed by Guglingen, in the context of Crusade campaigning by the *custodia Terrae Sanctae*, and proliferating around the turn of the seventeenth century. Rather than literary topoi, these texts contained genuine calls for Crusade; and as pleas they were not only characterised by an ever more aggressively territorial tone, but also that they served new, particularly Franciscan goals.

The Franciscans aimed to defend themselves, to fortify their occasionally insecure position in Jerusalem as elsewhere in the Holy Land from other Christians primarily, whom they saw as encroaching upon their rights. This is true for late fifteenth-century treatises, written in a context of strife with the Georgian patriarchate following the fall of Constantinople in 1453, as well as later specimens. The struggle with the strengthened Greek patriarchate, from the third decade of the seventeenth century onwards, may have to a certain extent shaped the territorial outlook of later Franciscan Holy Land writing. Yet analyses that identify the Greeks as these texts' main target audience, perhaps alongside the Ottoman sultanate, overlook the primary intended audience, namely Western European religious and political elites. For the friars aimed above all at warding off the attempts of Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries to gain a footing in the Holy Land. Moreover, the Franciscans of the *custodia Terrae Sanctae* do not seem to have been particularly interested in proving that Malik al-Kâmil may have granted certain rights to Francis. Instead, they delved much more deeply into their version of salvation history, in order to answer the question what it meant to be a Franciscan of the Holy Land: a divinely appointed protector of the Holy Places, heir to St Francis, and by extension the land promise of the Abrahamic covenant, a position confirmed by parallelism between Francis and Christ, very much at the expense of other Catholic orders contending for their share of the Holy Land in *De propaganda fide*.

The friars of the Holy Land not only engaged in inter-, but also cross-confessional debates both in their texts and in real life. My examination of the exchange between the Franciscans and their Protestant guests in Jerusalem, demonstrates that in this case the friars likewise reserved a special role for themselves, vociferously defending the sanctity of place and pilgrimage,

as well as reproving and judging the merit of all pilgrims. This controverts previous characterisations of the friars' attitude toward Protestants as dispassionate and equitable. Moreover, my examination of the Franciscan version of this meeting complicates the historiography on Protestant pilgrimage, by projecting a different image of the members of the newer persuasion, who seem much more insecure around the Holy Places than they chose to let on in their own travelogues.

My analysis of the Franciscan 'voice' concerning the Holy Land from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century thus presents a picture that is complex and diverse, and suggests a number of possible directions for future enquiry. First, the reception of these Franciscan texts on the Holy Land, as well as the *sacri monti*, are issues that have yet to be explored in depth. We might suppose that the readership of Quaresmio's *Elucidatio* (1639) had a quite different background than that of Bernardinus Surius' *Den Godtvruchtighen Pelgrim* (1650), but finding out more about the actual readers and their responses, could contribute a great deal to our understanding of the wider discourse they participated in. For example, was the latter's presumably well-read defence of sacred space and pilgrimage actually read by the 'newly minded' he so explicitly addressed? More generally, future avenues of research might also be aimed at improving our knowledge of the position of mendicant friars in general, and Franciscan ones in particular, within the Counter-Reformation Church. While historiography has tended to portray the Jesuits as the absolute champions of this era, my work suggests that the observant Franciscans also were an effective, self-conscious, and intellectually active group, who stood their ground in confrontations with Jesuits, Capuchins, as well as Protestants, apart from being very capable of expressing the story of their own worth.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, charting the later life of Franciscan Holy Land writing may be a topic worthy of more attention, since authors connected to the *custodia Terrae Sanctae* continued to publish well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, presumably harking back to earlier heavyweights such as Quaresmio. Moreover, the role of the *sacro monte* of La Verna as a primordial Franciscan *lieu de mémoire*, as well as its significance in other contexts also remains to be fully explored. It may, for instance, be seen as a discrete influence on the other translations of the Holy Land and the agenda of Franciscan Holy Land writing described so far. Whether La Verna was either a source of inspiration, or even just a happy coincidence, the *sacro monte* nonetheless helped shape Holy Land memory and translations of Jerusalem in the West. Accordingly, the study of *sacri monti* and their role in advancing territorial

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1 cf. Pjotr Stolarski, *Friars on the Frontier: Catholic Renewal and the Dominican Or-*

narratives of appropriating the Holy Land, remains to be examined in depth. For example, the territorial disputes implicit in the very existence of the other Franciscan Calvary at Orta (1590), a *sacro monte* in the care of the rivalling Capuchin order, is a case in point, and certainly warrants further investigation. This dissertation only skims the surface of this, and other relatively unmapped terrains, such as the conflicts implicit in allowing visitors into the sacred space of a *sacro monte*, based, for example, on diverging assumptions of appropriate behaviour, and considerations of gender. Finally, territoriality as a methodological tool may still offer new insights into the impact of Holy Land copies on the identity formation of various groups.

Both these various directions for future research as well as the ensemble of this dissertation, accentuate the perennial dialogues with one's own and other groups, future hopes and events past, and the locations where they took place, that constitute the historical processes of collective memory. Exactly the type of 'historical license' in short, that Francesco Quaresmio accused the early biographers of Francis of, when arguing for the saint's unverified Holy Land pilgrimage. The resulting narratives, projected by Quaresmio and others, are the very mortar used to construct the Franciscan Holy Land.

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*der in Southeastern Poland, 1594–1648*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010; Bert Roest, "Franciscan Studies and the Repercussions of the Digital Revolution: A Proposal," *Franciscan Studies* 74 (2016): 383-4.