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An irreducible plural: Franciscan observances in Europe (15th century)

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Résumés

English Italiano

The paper argues that within the Franciscan Order, the question of regular Observance raised specific problems which are unknown in the other religious orders. It highlights the place of Observance within Franciscan history (and the issue of 'fidelity' to Francis and to the Rule) and discusses the various Franciscan reactions to the demand of a *strictior observantia* of the Rule (beyond the traditional *regularis observantia*). The paper underscores the main trends of historiography on the Observance, from chronicles and literature of the fifteenth century to the ecclesiastical erudition of the Early Modern Age, up to the most recent historiography. The author suggests that, above all when considering Franciscan Observance at a European scale, it is appropriate to speak in plural of Franciscan observances. Considering a wide variety of sources (both documentary and literary), the author reflects on the very meaning of 'observance' in the context of Franciscan history. She then defines the characteristics of Observant spirituality, with a clear distinction between the *Italici patres* (and the Cismontanian area entrusted to them) and the other European contexts, mainly beyond the Alps.

Entrées d'index

Keywords : Franciscan Order, religious history, regularis observantia, Cismontanian Observance, Ultramontanian Observance, Franciscan sources

Parole chiave : Ordine dei Minori, storia religiosa, regularis observantia, Osservanza Cismontana, Osservanza Citramontana, fonti francescane

Plan



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Texte intégral

A historical framework for Franciscan Observances

- 1 It is well known, by now, that "Observance" is a historical (and historiographical) label referring to various experiments of internal reform, practiced within all religious Orders, starting from the middle of the fourteenth century. Dealing with this label means balancing between what is generally common to, and what is – instead – individual and typical of each religious Order: our main goal is to identify differences and convergences in a comparative perspective.
 - 1 A warmly thank to Allegra Iafrate for the help she provided to correct the English.
- 2 The Franciscan Order was marked by some characteristics that make it impossible to speak in terms of 'Observance' as a movement (or as a phenomenon or as a reform) in the singular form. Given the weight of the Rule and the reference to the strong charisma of Francis of Assisi, the idea of 'Observance' and the development of Observant movements is deeply intertwined with the matter of 'being Franciscan' ever since the foundation of the Order, and increasingly more after the break with the papacy, which occurred at the time of John XXII, between 1317 and 1328². Consequently, both the term and the theme of *regularis observantia* recur frequently in the literary, hagiographic and juridical sources even during the first two centuries of Franciscan history and, above all, after the crisis with the papacy, when the need to rethink the way of 'being Franciscan' became compelling.
 - 2 See Merlo 2003, p. 260-276, and related bibliography p. 461.
- 3 It must also be noted that the long lasting debate about *regularis observantia* did not hold immediate importance for the institutional Observant reform: what could be defined 'Observance' with respect to other Orders (i.e. an attempt to restore the *forma vitae* according to the *regularis Observantia*), for the Franciscans it is an attempt to attain a "stricter *observantia regularis*". Here, 'stricter' is not an ethical orientation but a juridical position: it means to observe the Rule without the mitigations progressively granted to the Order by papal privileges. It is a fact that, in the history of the Order, a unique form of Observance has never emerged. Thus, in the specific case of the Order of Friars Minor, as a result of long lasting debates about identity, the ancient tendency to observe the Rule more strictly has given rise to reforms for which we need to resort to a plural form, thus speaking of observances, observant movements, reforming currents, and so on.
 - 3 "A differenza dei Domenicani, Agostiniani, Carmelitani e Serviti, gli sforzi di riforma databili a (...)
- 4 To put it synthetically, according to the old but still valid formulation by Kaspar Elm, for Franciscans – and unlike all other mendicant Orders,

the reform efforts dating back to the mid-14th century [...] are not at all a novelty pursuing the purpose of ending the decadence of the Order, but constituting the extension of the efforts upcoming to the thirteenth century [...] to correctly understand and apply the *forma vitae* of Saint Francis³.

 - 4 Sensi 1985; Lambertini 2000; Merlo 2003, p. 277-290.

considered heretic at least after the condemnation of John XXII . Let me now fix the chronological limits of this issue.

- 6 The starting point is the drafting of the new Constitutions by General Minister Guillaume Farinier, written in order to provide a definitive and unified appearance to the Order after the rift with the papacy in the first half of the fourteenth century. These Constitutions were approved by the General Chapter of Assisi in 1354⁵. The new Constitutions bear the burden of all previous legislation and remained in force throughout the fifteenth century; they represent, therefore, the legal framework within which the Franciscan observances took shape and gained their space⁶. In fact, the document takes into account the possibility of living *in observantia strictiore* within the Order:
- Ceterum, cum in nostro Ordine aliqui fratres fuerint et sint excellentes in devotione et observantia strictiore nostrae professionis [...] vult ipse Minister cum generali capitula universe, quod sic viventes per praelatos bene tractentur et favorabiliter in suis devotionibus nutriantur, sicut semper in nostro Ordine fieri consuevit*⁷.
- 7 In the initial phase of the search for a 'more Franciscan' way of life, the identity mark coincides with a sort of revival of Franciscan eremitic tradition; but – due to the possible confusion with the controversial *Fratricelli* – the Order was afraid of the danger of hermitage. For this reason, immediately after the permission to live *in strictiore observantia*, the Constitutions specify that all friars are nevertheless compelled to live in the convents⁸.
- 8 The ending point of the matter corresponds to the promulgation of the bulla *Ite vos* by Pope Leo X in 1517. The pontiff takes measures to definitively avoid the fragmentation and ideological fights between the Order, and several groups of reformed friars scattered among many different denominations⁹.
- 9 Along this broad span of time, the Council of Constance is generally seen as a watershed. In recognizing the *quaerimoniae* submitted by the French Observants with the decree *Supplicationibus personarum*, the Council, in fact, provided a suitable space for them: it was an efficient way to let the Observance become an institution capable to live in relative peace within the reformed convents. At that time, to be 'observant' in Italy meant to have the permission of the general Minister to reside in the hermits and not in the convents, to be exempted from the *curriculum studiorum* taught in the convents, and to give precedence to the dimension of individual spirituality over pastoral militancy. Observance was still an option practiced within the Order.
- 10 According to a quite traditional view, the Council of Constance marks the separation of two main currents (the Ultramontanian – French, and the Cismontanian – Italian), although this distinction became institutionally more relevant between 1443 and 1446, when Pope Eugene IV guaranteed the Observants – both Cismontanian and Ultramontanian – the right to appoint a representative (called 'general vicar') and provincial vicars¹⁰. Then, both at a historical and at a historiographical level, the destinies of the two branches proceed in parallel; each one under different perspective: but, for sure, the development of Ultramontanian Observance had an easier life. It depended on their living *sub ministris* and thus practising what Ludovic Viallet called the *via media*, without any tendency to be divided from the Order¹¹.
- 11 At least in its outlines, the European map of Franciscan reforming movements is quite clear. The Lands of the Empire, and the countries of Centre-East Europe, reaching as far as the Balkans and Greece, were committed to the Cismontanian family. In Spain, on the other hand, between the fourteenth and the fifteenth century, at least three distinct experiences emerged within a revival of Franciscan eremitic tradition, respectively linked to Gonzalo Martino in Galicia, to Queen Maria de Luna in Valencia, and to Pietro de Villacreces in Castile.
- 12 In the *Ite vos*, the panorama of Franciscan reforms is even wider: the pope mentions Observants, both *de familia* and reformed *sub ministris* (meaning the *Reformaten* of Germany), and brothers belonging to the reforms promoted by Amedeo Joao da Silva (Amadeiti) and Colette de Corbie (Coletтини), the group derived from Angelo Clareno (Clareni), and, lastly, the brothers called "of the Holy Gospel" or *de cappuccio*¹². This papal bull was meant to have the final say, without leaving the right to reply. Formally, its goal was to organize by simplifying, bringing together a Franciscan world that had been, for too long, excessively litigious and fragmented, which is why it is generally known as *bullae unionis*. But in fact it ended up being a *bullae divisionis*: it is the document representing the definitive division between the Order of Friars Minor (henceforth officially identified as "Conventuals", and called "unreformed" in the bull) and the reformed Franciscans, that is, the various observances, which are now legally gathered under the Observance (henceforth called "Friars Minor").
- 13 The *Ite vos* is just the last papal attempt to regulate relationship among

• 5 Edition in Bihl 1942.

• 6 For the principal characteristics of the Farinerian text within the corpus of the Franciscan Const (...)

• 7 Bihl 1942, p. 95.

• 8 Sensi 1992.

• 9 For a systematic study of the Franciscan historical context that brought to the *Ite vos*, see Sella (...)

• 10 The reference is to the Eugenic bulls *Fratrum Ordinis Minorum* (1443) and *Ut sacra ordinis Minorum* (...)

• 11 Viallet 2014, especially p. 76-124.

• 12 For each of these different groups, see the proceedings of the conference *Identità francescane, es (...)*

• 13 The best introduction

Franciscans groups: the whole history of the fifteenth century is marked by papal documents aimed at governing the development of Franciscan reforms and to regulate the conflicting relations between the various branches of the Order ¹³. Such an effort, however, proved vain: the *Ite vos* could not stop the clashes among the many different Franciscan factions. During the first half of the sixteenth century, animated by similar objectives, new Franciscan reforms emerged, as it happened in Italy, for instance, through the experience of the first *Cappuccini* and the movement of the *Reformati*.

to the relationship between the Franciscan Observants and the popes during t (...)

Historiographical trends and main bibliographical references ¹⁴

- 14 Because of the genetic complexity of Franciscan Observance, the analysis of historiographical trends constitutes an integral part of the standard research. Three main historiographical phases can be outlined, up to the present-day:

- 14 On this complex topic, only hinted at here, see Pellegrini 2017a, and Pellegrini – Viallet 2017.

a) Fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries Observant historiography

- 15 While Observance was being structured and gaining space a specific literature was functional to the creation of the specific identity of the movement. The Observant narrative served both to the self-representation and to the official memory of the group. It should be noted that the literary production of the fifteenth century has been oriented by at least three primary needs: to polemically defend the legitimacy of the Observance itself; to argue in favour of the perfect adherence of the Observance to an authentically Franciscan vocation; to celebrate the family 'heroes', the so-called "four columns", at least three of which were eligible for canonization. Thus, hagiographical literature related to Bernardino of Siena, James of the Marches and John of Capestrano, along with the collection of documents prepared for their canonization, is part of the same historical apparatus.

b) Early Modern Age ecclesiastical erudition

- 16 Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, that narrative was re-written and enriched with the proto-edition of documents: the best sample of this genre is the series of *Annales Minorum*, begun by Irish friar Luke Wadding, who also resorted to the previous works of Mariano da Firenze and Marco de Lisboa (written during the first half of the sixteenth century). Wadding's *Annales* are considered, even nowadays, a pillar in the discipline, indispensable for many investigations, since they often represent the only trace of documents otherwise lost. Obviously, these early editions were prepared according to criteria that do not always meet modern standards: they are generally not at all philologically reliable and, being unsystematic, they often hand down an erroneous tradition of texts, lacking, moreover, a critical apparatus.
- 17 This second period coincides with the resumption of the canonization processes of James of the Marches and John of Capestrano, with further documentary research and the revision of literary and hagiographical texts.
- 18 The *corpus* of sources on which contemporary historiography is based took shape during these two phases. The narrative produced in the course of the fifteenth century has held up for centuries, and it has been essentially repeated throughout the twentieth century. Contemporary critical historiography has substantiated that narrative, re-reading it with refined critical tools, and it has expanded the domain of research (including, for example, the fields of preaching and of iconography) but it has not challenged it in any substantial way.

c) Contemporary scholarship

- 19 Between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, many fundamental research tools, like catalogues of documents, ¹⁵ were developed; and new editions of works were printed ¹⁶. The most active context for the edition of documents became, from the nineteenth century onwards, the one established by the Franciscan Orders in the Florentine suburb of Quaracchi ¹⁷, later on moved to Grottaferrata ¹⁸. We owe to the brothers of Quaracchi the reprint of the *Annales Minorum*, but also some capital sources about Observance: the *Chronica* by Nicolas Glassberger (1887) ¹⁹, the *Regestum Observantiae Cismontanae* (1983) ²⁰, and the new series of the *Bullarium Franciscanum*, spanning from 1431 to 1492, published between 1929 and 1990. The main subjects of interest were still the 'heroes' of the Observance, now also celebrated with the compilation of modern

- 15 For example, a first catalogue of the correspondence of John of Capestrano was undertaken, *simulta* (...)

- 16 E.g. the *opera omnia* of Bernardino da Siena, after the ancient *editio princeps* (Lugduni 1650), has (...)

- 17 All their publications – like the *Annales Minorum*, or the series of *Analecta*

- biographies, substantiated by a remarkable documentary work (although not always openly acknowledged) ²¹.
- 20 The second half of the twentieth century represented a particularly fruitful season, especially after the *nouvelle vague* of religious history. It is not possible to carry out a systematic mapping of this historiographical *mare magnum*: I will only try to outline it in broad terms, while pointing out some milestones.
- 21 Chapters about Observance, mandatory in every handbook about the history of Franciscan Order, became more carefully analytical: for decades, the work of reference has been John Moorman's *A history of the Franciscan Order from its origin to the year 1517*, printed in 1968 ²². In 1987, Duncan Nimmo published the important *Reform and division in medieval Franciscan Order* ²³. Nowadays, the most original, reliable and updated synthesis is provided by Grado Merlo's *Nel nome di san Francesco. Storia dei frati Minori e del Francescanesimo sino agli inizi del XVI secolo* ²⁴.
- 22 In general, but often to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the main characters of Italian Observance, a high number of editorial and cultural initiatives were promoted in Italy. Here, it will suffice to recall some fundamental works: the studies by Celestino Piana ²⁵, the conference devoted to Bernardino and Caterina in Siena ²⁶, that on *Bernardino predicatore nella società del suo tempo* ²⁷, the three conferences about Observance organized by the Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani established in Assisi ²⁸, and the series of Capestranian conferences promoted by the Centro di Studi Giovanni da Capestrano ²⁹. Recently, moreover, a "Centro di Studi" has been inaugurated also in Montepredone (Ascoli Piceno), the birthplace of James of the Marches, with a series of dedicated conferences.
- 23 The beginning of the twenty-first century has brought about a growing number of studies, characterized by a more distinctive European dimension, starting from the synopsis by Kaspar Elm (2001) ³⁰. I just recall here the miscellaneous works about *Identités franciscaines à l'âge des Réformes* (2005, 2011) ³¹, and some capital studies on important areas: the Hungarian monograph by Marie-Madeleine de Cevins of 2008 ³², the conference of the International Society of Franciscan Studies in Assisi, devoted to *I frati osservanti e la società in Italia* of 2012 ³³, the masterpiece of Ludovic Viallet on *Les sens de l'Observance*, with its telling subtitle: *Enquête sur les réformes franciscaines entre l'Elbe et l'Oder, de Capistran à Luther (vers 1450-vers 1520)*, published in 2014 ³⁴.
- 24 New venues of research have recently opened up, in light of the reconsideration of John of Capestrano's figure and of the historical relevance of his European mission ³⁵. This line of research, recently pursued by Ludovic Viallet and by myself, began with the in-depth analysis of the rich correspondence of the friar (largely still manuscript, or badly published in the course of past centuries). We considered John of Capestrano's mission beyond the Alps as the eye of the storm of a broader missionary and European dynamics that characterized the activity of the Italian Observants throughout the fifteenth century. Before and after him, several missions were carried out: among them, I will mention the journeys of James of the Marches and, later on, of Gabriel Rangoni from Verona, prominent figure of the order.
- 25 The successes and failures of John of Capestrano's missions, their various outcomes, the way they clashed with European and Franciscan religious realities, the different reactions they sparked in response to the proposal and to the methods typical of the Observance *more Italico*, make them a benchmark for different ways of being "Observant".
- 26 Aware of the pernicious ideological bias that have characterized the judgement about his mission for centuries (or, conversely, of the equally ideological denigrations of his figure), we intend to set his mission in a European context and interpret it within the perspective of a *long European Reformation* ³⁶. I do not dwell on the subject, here, but I refer to the recently published monographic issue of *Franciscan Studies*, devoted to John of Capestrano and edited by Bert Roest ³⁷. Among the most stimulating initiatives to which this renewed attention gave rise, I would also like to recall the conference held in Macerata in 2015 about *The mission of John of Capestrano and the process of Europe making in the 15th century. State of the art in the history and historiography of Danube and Balkan Europe* (forthcoming). In addition, a research group – directed by Pavel Kras and myself – was activated in Warsaw, and it is now working on the critical edition of the letters concerning Poland; we hope to do the same for Hungarian correspondence soon.
- franciscana* etc.) bea (...)
- 18 The relocation to Grottaferrata (Collegio San Bonaventura) dates back to the Seventies (after the (...))
 - 19 Glassberger *Chronica*.
 - 20 See *Regestum*.
 - 21 This is the case of the *Mistico sole* by Camillo Vittorino Facchinetti for Bernardino da Siena and (...)
 - 22 Moorman 1968.
 - 23 Nimmo 1987.
 - 24 Merlo 2003, translated into several languages (e.g. into French in 2006, into English in 2009), p. (...)
 - 25 Particularly relevant Piana 1951, and Piana 1978.
 - 26 *Simposio* 1982
 - 27 *Bernardino predicatore*.
 - 28 Cfr. the three conferences *Rinnovamento, Frati Minori, Frati Osservanti*, respectively organized in (...)
 - 29 Namely, *Capestrano, Chiesa e società; Cultura, società e vita religiosa* and *Ideali di perfezione*.
 - 30 Elm 2001.
 - 31 See Meyer – Viallet 2005 and Meyer – Viallet 2011.
 - 32 Cevins 2008.
 - 33 *Frati osservanti*.
 - 34 Viallet 2014.
 - 35 For a full introduction to the topic see now Pellegrini – Viallet 2017.
 - 36 It is a quotation of the title of Wallace 2012.
 - 37 Pellegrini - Viallet 2017.

Typology of sources

- 27 Despite the rapid development of the research about Franciscan Observances at a European level, we are still far from a reliable census of literary and documentary sources related to the topic. Besides, too many sources are still

unpublished and, among the editions available, a high number is quite out of date.

a) Literary sources

- 28 As previously mentioned, many (and many kinds of) literary texts have contributed to the formation of a *corpus* of Observant Franciscan narratives, by providing a solid base to the movement and testifying to the historical memory and the tradition of Observance ³⁸: some focus on the general history of the Order (like the chronicles by Iacopo Oddi and Mariano da Firenze) ³⁹, others on specific provinces ⁴⁰ or large areas (like those by Bernardino Aquilano and Nicolas Glassberger, respectively for Cismontane and Ultramontane areas) ⁴¹. Relevant testimonies are also provided by chronicles external to the Order: I refer, in particular, to city chronicles, recording the establishment of Observant convents or the activity of Observant preachers and the reactions provoked in response to their religious and social proposals.
- 29 For Observances in general, hagiography is extraordinarily relevant, since one of its main goals is to propose a normative model, that meets the canons of the movement propaganda ⁴². To hagiographical accounts, we can add also other sources, such as those related to the cult reserved for members of the Observance, like the collection of miracles – the best example of the genre being the so-called *liber miraculorum* of Bernardino of Siena and John of Capestrano, still mostly unpublished ⁴³.
- 30 Finally, we should mention all those documents (sermons, letters, and *reportationes*) keeping track of the preaching campaigns of the Observants: sermons and collections of sermons – again, mostly unpublished – represent the basis for the study of the social and political implications of Observant preaching.

- ³⁸ For a first approach, see Lappin 2000, namely chapter III (*Things Worthy of Memory: Observant Hist* (...))
- ³⁹ The important *Chronica Ordinis* (L'Aquila, Archivio di Stato, ms. S 73) awaits publication. Its aut (...)
- ⁴⁰ Such as *Blasii de Zalka et continuatorum eius Cronica fratrum minorum de observantia provinciae Bo* (...)
- ⁴¹ Bernardino Aquilano da Fossa, *Cronica dell'Osservanza cismontana* (edition in Lemmens 1902); and th (...)
- ⁴² The main scholar of hagiographic Observant literature is Daniele Solvi; see at least Solvi 2009, 2 (...)
- ⁴³ A partial edition in Delorme 1918. See Andrić 2000 and Zajchowska – Starzyński 2014.

b) Documentary sources

- 31 In my opinion, the study of the development of the Franciscan Observance can be fruitfully advanced, by analysing three different typologies of documentary sources:
- ■ Franciscan documentary sources (e.g. *acta capitulorum* or letters addressed by provincial ministers, formularies of different Observant provinces collecting documents on their internal organisational matters ⁴⁴). These highly-detailed documents regard the internal organisation of Franciscan Observance in each European province and they have been fruitfully exploited, for instance, by Marie-Madeleine de Cevins in her works on Hungarian Observance and by Ludovic Viallet on Franciscan provinces lying *entre l'Elbe et l'Oder* ⁴⁵.
 - ■ Papal documents and evidences of the strategies practiced by papal legates: sources useful to outline papal policies about the affirmation and dissemination of Observance.
 - ■ Collections of letters, written and received by Franciscan Observants, that bear witness to the political, institutional, religious, and ecclesiastical networks of the persons involved; but also the correspondences of humanists and other notable personalities, who were in direct contact with Observant friars.

Nature and meanings of the reform

- 32 The history of the Franciscan Order is marked by a recurring feature about observance: the concern that the experiments of Observant reform would end up creating a division within the Order. For this purpose, the Constitutions by Guillaume Farinier provided the possibility of a peaceful way of living in the hermitages, thus creating the space for the simultaneous presence of two ways of interpreting Franciscan life. To contrast the danger of the internal division of the Order, Farinier himself dismantled attempts at reform earlier than that of Paoluccio di Vagnozzo (called Trinci) was recognized at the basis of the origin of Observance in the Italian peninsula.
- 33 1417 is a 'fatal year' for Franciscan Observances. As I stated earlier, French Observants obtain their right to exist, and they agree to live *sub ministris*: they begin to practice a *via media*, which will allow them to keep relatively distant from the turmoil. In the same year, with the end of the Great Schism and the election of Martin V, the preaching of Bernardino of Siena became famous in Italy. Thanks to his charisma – and even more decisively after his canonization – Franciscan Observance becomes an active support to the reconstruction of authority and prestige of Roman papacy after the Schism.
- 34 Such a commitment, aimed substantially at an (impossible) refashioning of mediaeval *christianitas*, gave the Italian Observance a particularly militant

quality: it was characterised by an aggressive attitude from the pulpit, which assured popular support, and was favoured, in many cases, by a positive expectation toward a certain preaching ability, which could lead to the *fama sanctitatis* of preachers. Other factors of this success were less evident, although they were in the foreground: the increasing support granted by Italian urban elites or regional governments, and a strong backing by the papacy. The combination of these ingredients contributed to make the settlement of the Observant convents, in Italian cities, quite rapid and widespread, evidently not without some anxieties and frictions within the Order. Moreover, after the death of Bernardino, and as part of John of Capestrano's juridical work in reshaping the Observance, a new phenomenon determined the specific nature of Italian Observance: the progressive acquisition of an increasingly autonomous government, almost a *de facto* self-government.

- 35 All this provoked a violent controversy within the Order: towards the end of the century, Observance felt more and more as 'something else' in comparison to the ancient *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*. The Order accused the Observants of in-observance, because they obeyed a vicar, while the Rule clearly states that all friars owe obeisance only to the General Minister. The Observants replied that the regime *sub vicariis* – and all the privileges they enjoyed – had been conferred to them by the papacy, and the Rule clearly states that all brothers – including the General Minister – should obey the pope. This is just one example, among many, which shows how the Rule –and its observance– can be involved in a controversy that has little to do with the Rule. With this ideological, ecclesiastical, and pastoral equipment, Italian friars were ready to reform, and committed to manage an area that included the North-Eastern European quadrant from the Holy Roman Empire to the Near East.
- 36 At this point, a question emerges: is Observance a matter of a "stricter Observance of the Rule"? Can we precisely define the Franciscan spirituality typical of the Observants? As far as these matters are concerned, my reflection is limited to the Observance that has developed in Italy (that is, close and functional to papal politics) in the course of the fifteenth century.
- 37 Both the effort to structure itself as a Franciscan presence authentic and reformed, and the determination to impose an appropriate pastoral proposal depend on a re-reading of Franciscan origins. It starts at the end of the fourteenth century, when the Observants begin to reside in the glorious primitive settlements, such as Fontecolombo and Greccio, still imbued with the charismatic aura of St. Francis. This literary path culminates in the 1470s, when the Observant Iacopo Oddi draws up his own *Mirror of the Minor Order*, known as *Franceschina*. The work embraces the whole history of the Order: it is not a *Mirror of the Observance* since, according to it, the 'real' Franciscan Order is, in fact, the Observant branch. At that time the Observance was much more than a particular branch, and it was already clear what the Pope would have said a few decades later in the *Ite vos*.
- 38 Both hagiographical literature and juridical sources make a constant reference to the virtues, the practices, the values and the way of life of the best Franciscan tradition, by evoking an austere individual lifestyle, made up of penitence, asceticism, prayer, and poverty, in the footsteps of all Observant reforms of other religious Orders⁴⁶. But, in addition to individual religious life, there is also a shared spirituality ground on other bases: the keywords become, then, 'mission' and 'papacy', to which the Franciscan values and virtues, just recalled, become functional. Mission and papacy refer to the propaganda of the Observant reform, the support of papal authority, the commitment in a social reformation effective in reshaping a Christian (and not just a Franciscan) society.
- 39 Thus, in Italian society, Observance became functional to papal power; according to this project, the Italian missionary fathers tried to work throughout Europe entrusted to their jurisdiction and pastoral care. Meanwhile – surely – in other regions of Europe, "observing the observance" meant to take care of an interiorized spirituality, putting in the forefront the cornerstones of a kind of Franciscanism that Observance was formally born to defend and rehabilitate. Perhaps, even in the Italian peninsula, for some anonymous friars, to observe the Observance meant the same, but in general within the movement this meant something else. The growing number of studies and research produced in the past few decades, more aware of the irreducible plurality of the meanings of Observance in the Franciscan world, have paved the way for a fundamental reconsideration of the traditional (I would say devout and intra-religious) reading of the phenomenon. Despite this, we are still far from an exhaustive map of the meanings and practices of Franciscan ideas of Observance.
- 40 It would still be necessary to carry out a full investigation about the entanglement of certain salient phenomena on the European agenda of the Quattrocento and the different currents of Franciscan Observance, that asserted themselves in various geopolitical realities. In addition, it would also be necessary to ask how these reformist movements acted in relation to the

• 46 For the outline of a possible Observant spirituality, see Pellegrini 2017b.

most prominent issues extant on the European chessboard and which perspectives they offered to the reforming aspirations shared both by the Church and the society of the fifteenth century.

- 41 It is not easy to balance the vision between the individual regional realities and a general vision; and to remember that, in any case, under the name of St. Francis, the 'Observance' label incarnates very different attempts and accomplishments, yet concerning the same centralized Order of the Friars Minor, at least until 1517. It is necessary to study the empirical and institutional adaptations of a problematic idea, that of Observance, which finds different embodiments through space and time, in search of a way that combines restoration with reform. The history of the Church is full of experiences of reform in the name of formal restoration: the myth of origins is always seducing and its appeal is consequently very strong. As far as St. Francis' heritage goes, this aspect was particularly problematic, and so it remains today for contemporary historians.

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Notes



- 1 A warmly thank to Allegra Iafrate for the help she provided to correct the English.
- 2 See Merlo 2003, p. 260-276, and related bibliography p. 461.
- 3 "A differenza dei Domenicani, Agostiniani, Carmelitani e Serviti, gli sforzi di riforma databili alla metà del XIV secolo [...] non rappresentano affatto una novità che persegue lo scopo di porre fine alla decadenza dell'Ordine, bensì costituiscono il prolungamento degli sforzi risalenti fino al XIII secolo [...] di intendere correttamente e mettere in pratica la forma vitae di san Francesco" (Elm 2001, p. 493).
- 4 Sensi 1985; Lambertini 2000; Merlo 2003, p. 277-290.
- 5 Edition in Bihl 1942.
- 6 For the principal characteristics of the Farinerian text within the corpus of the Franciscan Constitutions, see Maranesi 2010, § 3.
- 7 Bihl 1942, p. 95.
- 8 Sensi 1992.
- 9 For a systematic study of the Franciscan historical context that brought to the *Ite vos*, see Sella 2001, p. 161-200 and p. 279-312. A scholarly exegesis of the text is now available in Bartocci 2015. The fifth centennial of this capital document has provided the occasion to organize two important conferences in Italy: the first one was organized on October 25th 2014 in Florence by the Tuscan Province of St. Francis (*Anno 1517*); the second one was organized by the International Society of Franciscan Studies in Assisi in October 2017 (*Identità francescane*).
- 10 The reference is to the Eugenic bulls *Fratrum Ordinis Minorum* (1443) and *Ut sacra ordinis Minorum religio* (1446).
- 11 Viallet 2014, especially p. 76-124.
- 12 For each of these different groups, see the proceedings of the conference *Identità francescane*, especially the papers by Letizia Pellegrini, *Gli Observantes de familia*, L. Viallet, *L'altra Osservanza. I Riformati sub ministris e i Colettani*, G. Andenna, *Gli Amadeiti*, A. Sancricca, *Dai Poveri Eremiti ai frati Minori della Custodia di S. Girolamo "de Urbe": il complesso iter intrapreso dai frati di Angelo Clareno e gli spazi di autonomia conquistati in margine alla Ite vos (1517)*, F. V. Sánchez Gil, *Dai fraters de sancto evangelio ai discalceati: Identità riformistiche in Spagna dal XV secolo fino alla bolla Ite vos di Leone X (1517)*.
- 13 The best introduction to the relationship between the Franciscan Observants and the popes during the fifteenth century is still Fois 1985.
- 14 On this complex topic, only hinted at here, see Pellegrini 2017a, and Pellegrini – Viallet 2017.
- 15 For example, a first catalogue of the correspondence of John of Capestrano was undertaken, simultaneously but separately in Italy by Chiappini (Chiappini 1927a and 1927b) and in Hungary by Bölcskey (Bölcskey 1923-1924) during the 1920s,.
- 16 E.g. the *opera omnia* of Bernardino da Siena, after the ancient *editio princeps* (Lugduni 1650), has been published by the Quaracchi between 1950 and 1965. See *Bernardini Opera omnia*.
- 17 All their publications – like the *Annales Minorum*, or the series of *Analecta franciscana* etc.) bear as location *ad Claras Aquas prope Florentiam*.
- 18 The relocation to Grottaferrata (Collegio San Bonaventura) dates back to the Seventies (after the Florence flood of 1966). In 2009, the Grottaferrata office was also abandoned and the Quaracchi friars are currently housed in the Irish monastery of St. Isidoro in Rome.
- 19 Glassberger *Chronica*.
- 20 See *Regestum*.
- 21 This is the case of the *Mistico sole* by Camillo Vittorino Facchinetti for Bernardino da Siena and of Giovanni Hofer who, in order to write a biography of Giovanni da Capestrano, makes an extensive use of the correspondence without acknowledging it (see Facchinetti 1933 ; Hofer 1955).
- 22 Moorman 1968.
- 23 Nimmo 1987.
- 24 Merlo 2003, translated into several languages (e.g. into French in 2006, into English in 2009), p. 305-362.
- 25 Particularly relevant Piana 1951, and Piana 1978.
- 26 *Simposio* 1982
- 27 *Bernardino predicatore*.

28 Cfr. the three conferences *Rinnovamento, Frati Minori, Frati Osservanti*, respectively organized in 1983, 1984, and 2013.

29 Namely, *Capestrano, Chiesa e società; Cultura, società e vita religiosa* and *Ideali di perfezione*.

30 Elm 2001.

31 See Meyer – Viallet 2005 and Meyer – Viallet 2011.

32 Cevins 2008.

33 *Frati osservanti*.

34 Viallet 2014.

35 For a full introduction to the topic see now Pellegrini – Viallet 2017.

36 It is a quotation of the title of Wallace 2012.

37 Pellegrini - Viallet 2017.

38 For a first approach, see Lappin 2000, namely chapter III (*Things Worthy of Memory: Observant Historiography*), and chapters VI and VII, devoted respectively to Iacopo Oddi and Mariano da Firenze.

39 The important *Chronica Ordinis* (L'Aquila, Archivio di Stato, ms. S 73) awaits publication. Its author, Alessandro de Ritiis (well-known as the author of a *Chronica civitatis Aquile*), is a prominent member of the Observance in L'Aquila during the second half of the fifteenth century. The *Chronica Ordinis* includes the copy of hundreds of documents. Cfr. Chiappini 1927c.

40 Such as *Blasii de Zalka et continuatorum eius Cronica fratrum minorum de observantia provinciae Boznae et Hungariae* (see edition in Toldy 1871) ; or the unpublished work by Eberhard Ablauf a Rheno, *De novella plantatione provincie Austrie, Bohemie et Polonie*, the *Memoriale* by Jan of Komorowo, provincial of the Polish Observants (the "Bernardins") in 1520-1523, edition in Liske – Lorkiewicz 1888; and, by the same Komorowo, the *Tractatus cronice fratrum Minorum* (edition in Zeissberg 1873).

41 Bernardino Aquilano da Fossa, *Cronica dell'Osservanza cismontana* (edition in Lemmens 1902); and the *Chronica* by Nicolaus Glassberger.

42 The main scholar of hagiographic Observant literature is Daniele Solvi; see at least Solvi 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014.

43 A partial edition in Delorme 1918. See Andrić 2000 and Zajchowska – Starzyński 2014.

44 Hungarian colleagues Balázs Kertész and Antal Molnár are currently preparing the edition of two such formulary-collections of the Hungarian Observant province. See Molnár 2014.

45 Cevins 2008, Viallet 2014.

46 For the outline of a possible Observant spirituality, see Pellegrini 2017b.

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