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THE SOURCES AND INFLUENCE OF THE  
DESCRIZIONE DI TUTTA ITALIA OF FRA LEANDRO ALBERTI

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The divisions of Italy according to Leandro Alberti.

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Explanatory Preface

The text of the Descrittione di Tutta Italia referred to (unless otherwise stated) is the third edition of Venice, 1553. This was the most convenient edition for me to consult and it differs only slightly from the first edition in spelling, not in content. (On this see Appendix I. These spelling differences have been analysed by Dr. Alan Freedman, who found only that the first edition was more latinate than the others). Since this study is concerned with the content of the text, not with linguistics, and since the 1553 edition suffered only minor revisions (involving one or two dates which were obviously added later than 1550) the fact that this edition is used does not affect the arguments in any way. The edition of Isole referred to is that of Avanzi (Venice, 1567) with maps. Complete lists and discussion of all the editions are to be found in Appendix I, while Alberti's works are listed in Appendix II.

Page references to the Descrittione are inserted in the text directly after the reference or quotation concerned, and are by folio, recto and verso. In quotations from the text, spelling is not corrected except where obvious mistakes alter the sense of the passage in question.

Dates are given throughout as they appear in the sources, i.e. without modernization. Contemporary forms of proper names, in their Italian spelling, are used as far as possible, except where they have a commonly used English form, for example, Erasmus, Aldus, Cajetan. Certain Italian and Latin words in frequent use are not italicized, for example, fortuna, virt<sup>u</sup>, studium (generale), laudatio (the term for a city eulogy). Classical authors' works are referred to by Book,

Chapter and Paragraph, as appropriate. References to Muratori, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, are given as R. I. S. (old series) and RR. II. SS. (new series).

When the controversial terms 'humanism' and 'humanist' appear in the text, it is intended that they should be interpreted along the lines suggested by P. O. Kristeller, The Classics and Renaissance Thought, (Cambridge, Mass., 1955).

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## SUMMARY

The subject of this thesis is the Descrittione di Tutta Italia, written by Fra Leandro Alberti, a Dominican scholar from Bologna, in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The work is a chorography of almost one thousand pages describing the history, geography and antiquities of Italy, region by region. Ten editions in Italian were printed between 1550 and 1596 and one in Latin.

The main purpose of the thesis is to examine the genre to which the Descrittione belongs; to investigate how the work came to be written, what source material was available to the author and how he used it, and to see how far the work reflects interests typical of scholars of the period. Secondly an attempt has been made to evaluate the usefulness of the work to later scholars, and to see how the genre to which it belongs developed after its publication.

The author was a devout Dominican with influential contacts in his Order. He was well thought of in Bolognese academic circles and numbered many leading Italian scholars among his friends. His work is therefore important as a reflection of the achievements of a scholar who was not an outstanding mind but who was well aware of contemporary intellectual developments.

The Descrittione reflects a number of Alberti's interests, his study of classical texts, his antiquarian interests and the delight he took in the natural beauty of Italy. It is possible that Flavio Biondo's Italia Illustrata was his model, but Alberti does not adhere to its pattern completely, and he was fortunate in having at his disposal not only classical sources but a considerable number of local histories and



descriptions, written in the century before he was at work, which had contributed to establishing the chorographical genre.

An analysis of the sources reveals that Pliny, Strabo, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the spurious fragments of Annius of Viterbo are most heavily used for discussion of early settlement in Italy. Ptolemy, Pomponius Mela, Livy and Diodorus Siculus are his other most favoured sources for Italy's classical past. He was familiar with the writings of Paul the Deacon, Eutropius, and other Dark Age authors. Dante, Boccaccio and Fazio degli Uberti are referred to. Most mentioned among fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century writers are Biondo, Volaterrano, Sabellico and Corio. Although there are scattered references to chronicles and to archaeological remains, Alberti in general prefers his literary sources, in particular the trusted 'reputable' authors of the classical texts. He is at pains to present as wide a variety of opinions as possible and to reconcile conflicting views. Most controversy arises over the foundation myths and Alberti is sceptical of the more fanciful tales, though he gives credence to any which are supported either by 'approved' authors or by Biblical traditions. His critical abilities have to be set against sixteenth-century standards, and often show rational thinking which would not have been unworthy of more eminent scholars.

The Descrittione contains history of a chronicle nature which is of little value to Alberti's successors. The antiquarian information reveals Alberti as a man of his age who enjoyed the remains of antiquity for their own sake. His interest in biography was also appropriate for a sixteenth-century scholar, and despite the sketchy and somewhat stereotyped nature of his information, it proved a useful starting point

for later, more systematic biographers. Of particular interest are the personal observations made by Alberti on his travels, especially in the southern provinces, where local descriptive literature before his time was almost totally lacking. In the field of geography the Descrittione was of little value except for some descriptive material on crops, minerals, etc. since it took no account of developments in astronomy and mathematics which were directing the interest of geographers elsewhere.

The value of the Descrittione lies mainly in its being the prime example of the chorographical genre in Italy, the successor to the Italia Illustrata, and on a par with Celtis's Germania Illustrata and Camden's Britannia. As such it was never surpassed, indeed there were no later attempts to write a description on such a scale.

In tracing the use successive generations of scholars made of the Descrittione, it can be seen that the chorographical genre went out of fashion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in a large scale work like the Descrittione, for a number of reasons. In the first place scholars interested in antiquities and history confined their activities to detailed studies of smaller regions. Secondly the various topics covered by the chorography emerged as separate disciplines on their own, and were no longer combined in encyclopedic works. While these developments were taking place in the intellectual field, there evolved a new genre of literature which owed something to works like the Descrittione, namely the guide-book. For scholars, pilgrims and travellers in the late sixteenth century who had no such volume to hand, the Descrittione was the next best thing they could use but it suffered

from over-emphasis on classical literature. Early writers of itineraries and travel accounts make some reference to the Descrittione, but it was surpassed in the sixteenth-century by Schott's Itineraria, and in the eighteenth-century by an endless succession of guide-books proper.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE AUTHOR'S LIFE AND THE BACKGROUND TO THE DESCRITZIONE

#### 1. His early life and education in convent and studium

It can hardly be said that Leandro Alberti is an over-written figure. Comparatively little is known about his life except for the dates when he received appointments in the Dominican Order, or when his various literary works appeared. A few literary historians mention these writings and his activities in the Order are recorded by Dominican annalists, but it is on the whole an impersonal, faceless figure which emerges. Possibly because his writings tend to be dispassionate, with little personal involvement in the subject, some readers might argue that they can easily be understood without demanding a thorough investigation into the complexities of their author's character and background. Indeed the Descrittione at a first glance might be regarded as evidence of a scholarly, but otherwise rather colourless personality, not one inviting great attention. His biographers include seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century literary writers like Vossius<sup>1</sup>, Tiraboschi<sup>2</sup>, Mazzuchelli<sup>3</sup>, Nicéron<sup>4</sup> and Fantuzzi<sup>5</sup>, and Dominicans, for example Tournon<sup>6</sup> and the more celebrated Echard<sup>7</sup>, who himself owed a debt to

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1. Gerardi Ioannis Vossii de historicis Latinis Libri III, (Leiden, 1651), pp.679-680.
  2. G. Tiraboschi, Storia della Letteratura Italiana, 11 Vols, (Modena, 1772-95), VII, part 2, 170-171.
  3. G.M. Mazzuchelli, Gli Scrittori d'Italia, Vols 1,2. (Brescia, 1753-63), I(1), 306-310.
  4. J.P. Nicéron, Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire des Hommes illustres, 43 Vols, (Paris, 1729-45), XXVI, 302-4.
  5. G. Fantuzzi, Notizie degli Scrittori Bolognese, 9 Vols, (Bologna, 1781-84), I, 146-153 and IX, 17 seq.
  6. A. Tournon, Histoire des hommes illustres de l'Ordre de St. Dominique, 6 Vols, (Paris, 1743-49), IV, 121-127.
  7. J. Quetif- J. Echard, Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum, 2 Vols, (Paris, 1721), II, 137-139. Bayle and Moréry both have short entries drawing mainly on Echard.

Alberti's own lives of famous men of the Order<sup>8</sup>. The best modern articles on his life and work are the entries by Redigonda in the Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani<sup>9</sup>, and by R. Almagia in Enciclopedia Italiana (Treccani)<sup>10</sup>. Cosenza's note in his dictionary of Italian humanists is not particularly helpful, and does not mention the more modern material<sup>11</sup>. In order to appreciate and understand the place that the Descrittione takes in sixteenth-century literature it is essential to attempt as full a reconstruction as possible of its author's life, his interests and preoccupations, the external influences upon him of his teachers and friends and the environment of the studium and convent. It is the aim of my introductory chapter to fit the known facts about his life into what is known of this environment, and to try to draw some tentative conclusions about his character and outlook.

Alberti was born in Bologna in 1479. 'F. Leander Alberti Italus patriae Bononiensis vir nunquam satis pro meritis laudandis anno MCCCCLXXIX honestis parentibus natus est', writes Echard<sup>12</sup>. Tournon and Nicéron follow him almost word for word, though Nicéron

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8. De Viris Illustribus Ordinis Praedicatorum, (Bologna, 1517). In future references this will be given as D.V.I. For Echard's use of this see R. Creytens, 'L'Oeuvre bibliographique d'Echard, ses sources et leur valeur', Archivium Fratrum Praedicatorum, 14 (1944), 43-71.
9. Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, (Rome 1960-) I, 699-702. Referred to as D.B.I.
10. Enciclopedia Italiana (Treccani), II, 180. Also helpful is G. Roletto, 'Le cognizione geografiche di L. Alberti', Bollettino di R. Società Geografica Italiana, Series V, 11 (1922), 455-485, which has a short biographical introduction. Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclesiastique contains a reference, I, col.1582, also Enciclopedia Cattolica, I, col. 677, and T. Boccalini, Ragguagli di Parnasso, (London, 1669) part 4, Number 4.
11. M. Cosenza, Biographical and Bibliographical Dictionary of the Italian Humanists and the World of Classical Scholarship in Italy 1300-1800, 5 Vols, (New York, 1962-1967), I, 83.
12. Echard, op.cit., II, 137.

adds the date, December 11th<sup>13</sup>. This is a day earlier than Ghirardacci gives in his history of Bologna, written in the sixteenth century. 'A di 12 di decembre, in giorno di domenica nell'apparire dell' aurore nacque fra Leandro, teologo et historiografo eccellente dell'Ordine de'Predicatori, chiamato al battesimo Leandro', he writes<sup>14</sup>. Almost nothing is known of his family. His father's name is given as Francesco<sup>15</sup> and the family had originally come to Bologna from Florence, as Alberti says in the Descrittione, (f.42vo.) so that it is possible that they had connections with his more famous namesake Leon Battista. Alberti claims no direct kinship, but his pride in the name is obvious, 'non si maraviglierà alcuno se alquanto più mi sono dimorato nella narratione delle virtuti di questo huomo, (L.B. Alberti), conciosia cosa che pare a me narrando le virtuti d'esso di narrare di uno di mei, essendo io degli Alberti già usciti di Fiorenza benche egli sia nato in Fiorenza et io in Bologna'. His father served under Bartolomeo Colleoni, again we learn from the Descrittione, (f.290) and he also had a liking for travel, which he must have passed on to his son<sup>16</sup>.

Nothing is known of the first ten years of his life, but he

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13. Tournon, op.cit., IV, 121. Nicéron, op.cit., XXVI, 302. Also Fantuzzi, op.cit., I, 146.
14. C. Ghirardacci, Della Historia di Bologna, edited by A. Sorbelli, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, 2nd Edition, (Città di Castello 1915-32), XXXIII, part 1, 221. The 12th December in 1479 was a Sunday, see C.R. Cheney, Handbook of Dates, (London, 1945).
15. D.B.I., I, 699.
16. According to Roletto, op.cit., p.456, who gives no reference, and I have been unable to find it.

was born into a society and state at the peak of its splendour in Italy. Bologna under the Bentivoglio, especially Sante and Giovanni II, flourished not only as an intellectual and artistic centre, but also as a politically important state in Italy, expanding economically and enjoying in a more provincial fashion something of the political and cultural spirit of Medicean Florence, with which the Bentivoglio created strong ties<sup>17</sup>. It was with some justification called 'Bologna Grassa' and 'madre de studi' as Alberti points out<sup>18</sup>. Mediaeval Bologna had passed through vicissitudes similar to those of her neighbours; she had at various times been torn between Guelf and Ghibelline factions, seen the rise of the 'popolo' and the capture of her constitution by the trade guilds, and had placed herself under foreign despots. Most important of all, her politically strategic position in the centre of Italy, commanding the north-south highways made other states vitally interested in her fortunes, particularly in attempts to keep her free from Papal control, with the result that though the Papacy claimed Bologna as its possession, papal authority there was contested vigorously by citizens and outsiders alike.

Equally as important as her political, strategic and economic resources was the intellectual climate of the city. The ancient studium generale to which Alberti was sent at the age of ten<sup>19</sup>, had a long established tradition of attracting great men of scholarship

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17. C.M. Ady, The Bentivoglio of Bologna, (London, 1937).

18. Descrittione, f.294, and Alberti's History of Bologna, Historie di Bologna, (Bologna, 1541-1543), Decade I, Lib.I, f.EI.

19. He tells us so in his work on the famous men of the Dominican Order, D.V.I., Lib.IV, f.135vo.

to study and teach in all subjects, and despite the temporary decline in Bologna's reputation at the beginning of the century the patronage of Nicholas V and Bessarion's term as Legate had restored her to the forefront of the intellectual scene. There Alberti came under the guidance of one man especially who had a lasting influence on his character and interests, the humanist Giovanni Garzone<sup>20</sup>. Garzone was an outstanding rhetorician and scholar, a pupil of Guarino da Verona and tutor to Giovanni Bentivoglio's children. In his work on famous men of the Dominican Order Alberti mentions Garzone, (who was not a Dominican but had many friends in the Order), as 'Garzo ille conterraneus meus, ille inquam clarissimus orator, quo quattuor annis dum in humanis esset, in discenda oratoria socio atque audiuntiore usus fueram, stylo eleganti signavit'. In the Descrittione he is called 'mio honorando precettore', (f.127vo.) and singled out among the famous men of Bologna both as a Doctor of Medicine and as an historian, '..fece assai libri dell'histoire della città con molte altre historie in nobile stilo..' (f.299vo.). According to Ghirardacci Garzone 'fu di mediocre statura, di lieto aspetto, balbutiente in pronunciare ma molto eloquante e libero scrittore'<sup>21</sup>. Sorbelli in his work on the University of Bologna notes his interest in classical culture both Latin and Greek<sup>22</sup>. These were not all his talents, he also

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20. Cosenza, op.cit., II, 1553, gives dates only as 15th-16th century. Ghirardacci tells us he died in 1505. F. Banfi, Un Umanista Bolognese e i Domenicani, (Florence, 1936), p.3, gives his dates as 1419-1505. He was also a friend of Andrea Urceo called Codro, Pomponio Leto, Poliziano, Beroaldo, G.B. Pio, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, etc. see Ady, op.cit., p.161.

21. Ghirardacci, op.cit., p.341.

22. A. Sorbelli, Storia della Università di Bologna, (Bologna, 1944), I, 251.



lectured in medicine from 1466 to 1504<sup>23</sup>, and while taking on some medical duties in the town probably contracted the disease which ultimately caused his death<sup>24</sup>. Garzone must have been an important influence on the young Alberti and despite the sixty years age gap treated him as a friend and adviser in historical matters. There is a large collection of Garzone's correspondence with Alberti, some of which has been commented on by F. Banfi in his article using the unpublished selections edited by the eighteenth-century Dominican, Fassini, now in the Vatican.<sup>25</sup>

Although almost all the letters are undated we can assume that most of them were sent to Alberti after he left Bologna in November 1493 and entered the Dominican Convent of S. Giacomo Apostolo in Forlì. The statutory age for admission, seldom maintained, was eighteen, and Alberti certainly seems to have been quite a scholar for his years, even by sixteenth-century standards. Tournon writes that already in his fourteenth year he had a fairly exact knowledge of the best Latin authors, poets and orators, and he wrote and spoke with great purity and elegance, in prose and verse, in both Latin and Italian<sup>26</sup>. It was soon after his arrival at Forlì that

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23. G. Zaccagnini, Storia dello studio di Bologna durante il Rinascimento, (Geneva, 1930), p.110. See also C. Malagola, Della vita e delle opere di Antonio Urceo detto Codro, (Bologna, 1878), pp.223-224.

24. Ghirardacci, op.cit., p.541, says he died of 'male mazucco', a fever resulting in incurable brain damage. He was buried in the cloister of St. Domenico in Bologna. Descrittione, f.293vo.

25. Banfi, op.cit. Codice Vat. Lat. 10636 includes only eleven letters to Alberti. These are taken from the MS collection of Garzone's works, Cod. 1896, Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, which includes seventy-three letters to Alberti and one from him. (Referred to as Garzone, Letters.)

26. Tournon, op.cit., IV, 121-122.

Garzone wrote to him encouraging him in the life he had chosen.

'Summam laudem consecutus es qui divino Spiritu afflatus, nondum profecto quartum decimum anni agebat, (my italics) ad sanctam

Religionem adulasi nunquam defuisti constantiae tuae. Nemo unquam te de sententiam deducere potuit, non libido, non insolentia, non avaritia, non inanis pompa mundialis te a sancta Religione abstraxit'<sup>27</sup>. Piety and oratory rather than history seem to have been Garzone's main concerns, and since we know from his correspondence that he was a close friend of several members of the Dominican Order in Bologna and elsewhere it may well have been due to his influence that Alberti decided to go into the Order.

Garzone was pleased with his pupil's progress, yet continually urged him to keep up his studies. He gave him practical advice on literary matters, and above all stressed the desirability of imitating Cicero in his style, for example he is glad to hear that Alberti aspires to eloquence because, he says, 'in rebus humanis nihil sit eloquentia dignius, nihil praestantius. Tenenda tibi erunt praecepta Ciceronis... Vitanda tibi erunt Verbas novas aut priscas... Sit oratio tua pura, non absit a Latinitate, sit aperta ac dilucida. Haec consequere si Ciceronem imitaberis'. Several letters enlarge on this theme. He backs up his opinion by that of Leonardo Bruni and presumably his advice must have been followed as Leandro's style soon becomes the object of fulsome praises. 'Vehementer sum admiratus', he writes, 'Ita trophis, figuris schematibus uteris ut ad Ciceronis eloquentiam accedere videaris.

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27. Garzone, Letters, f.193. He was born in December 1479, so in November 1493 when he went to Forlì, he was, as Garzone says here, not yet fourteen.

Non est apud me dubium quin ipsum Cicerone si tibi vita suppetet vel aequaturus sis vel superaturus'. Nor is he the only person of this opinion, 'Plerique et hi quidem clarissimi viri opinioni meae accedunt.'... many people have admired Alberti's letter... 'Affirmaverunt omnes te unum esse qui de caelo delapsus fuissess'. He points out that the Dominican Order has had its share of philosophers and theologians but 'nullam habuit oratorem'.<sup>28</sup> Alberti is the man to rectify this, endowed with such gifts as he is, he alone will make good this deficiency.

The correspondence is what one would expect of a stringent critic but kindly teacher and adviser to his young pupil. He answers philological questions<sup>29</sup>, discusses the demands of the religious life<sup>30</sup>, expounds on the virtue of charity<sup>31</sup>, praises Alberti's oratory, and his devotion<sup>32</sup>, and constantly expresses his great affection for his pupil<sup>33</sup>. In a letter to F. Io. Tru. O.P. he predicts that Leandro will become a great orator, commends him to his friend and asks him to help him, then he adds, 'Historias scribere agressus est: ut mihi ipsas legenti maxime fuerit admirationi'.<sup>34</sup> Fra Giovanni was in the convent in Bologna, and Garzone also sent him a life he had written of Aquinas<sup>35</sup>, and asked to have it placed in the convent library. Aquinas interested

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28. Garzone, Letters, ff.185-186.

29. Ibid. ff.239vo., 240, 271vo..

30. Ibid. ff.215vo., 240-240vo..

31. Ibid. ff.215-215vo..

32. Ibid. ff.215vo., 227vo., 260vo.. e.g. 'religiosissime Leander addo et doctissime'.., '...Magna est hominum opinio de te: magna comendatio sapientiae magna memoria virtutum tuarum..'

33. Ibid. ff.186, 216, 265-265vo., 287vo., 298. etc.

34. Ibid. f.271.

35. Ibid. f.298vo. Fra Giovanni is not mentioned by Echard.

Garzone, he praises him as the greatest theologian and philosopher of his age<sup>36</sup>, not surprisingly, since the studium in Bologna had a tradition of interest in the Aristotelianism of Aquinas and Averroes.

In the only letter in the collection from Alberti, he writes expressing his gratitude to Garzone for his guidance and teaching, ...'te unumque delegi, quo in discendis litteris utor praeceptore.

Nunquamque tui memoriam deponam...Tuas ducentas et eo amplius epistolas exscripsi quibus (mihi crede) immortalis fies...'<sup>37</sup>.

Presumably some of these survived to form the Bologna collection.

In fact Garzone actually asked Alberti to send him any letters he might have, 'Quare si quae apud te sunt epistolas ad me dederis: eas in meum libellum referam.' He adds that probably many people will be amazed at how much time he has spent writing to Alberti, but they should not be so surprised if virtue delights them<sup>38</sup>.

There are other letters covering various topics such as some biographies Garzone has written<sup>39</sup>, his worries about his health and fear of death<sup>40</sup>, and the consolation of studies in old age<sup>41</sup>. We may also note in passing occasional references to 'fortuna', that obsession of the Renaissance historiographer. I shall deal with Alberti's ideas about this later, but he may well have been influenced in his attitude by Garzone who continually warns against

36. Garzone, Letters, f.288.

37. Ibid. f.241vo..

38. Ibid. f.220vo. 'Forte nonnulli admirantur, quod multum temporis in tuis conscribendis libellis impendo, quaque doctrina et moris elegantia: nulla est, mirari desinerent, si eos virtus delectaret....Homo virtuti deditus, haud quaequam virtutem spernit'.

39. Ibid. ff.185, 207, 336.

40. Ibid. ff.200, 201, 202, 207, 266vo., 270, 285.

41. Ibid. ff.219, 285.

trusting fortuna, one's possessions or one's own abilities in preference to the virtuous life. When things are going wrong it is as well not to trust fortune, but we cannot dismiss it as of no consequence, since Aristotle, Pliny, Aquinas, Scotus, Egidius etc. and other skilled theologians claim 'Natura sine ratione fortuna esse'.<sup>42</sup> All the evidence of Garzone's many letters suggests that he regarded Alberti as a pupil of great promise in Ciceronian oratory and a novice of great devotion. From Alberti's comments later it is clear that he accepted Garzone as his guiding light in these early days<sup>43</sup>.

Although Alberti speaks affectionately of Forlì in the Descrittione he does not mention the convent, nor does he refer to the time he spent there. It has a pleasant climate and fertile soil, '...che produce abundantissimamente frumento, et vino.... si cava etiandio da questo paese orzo, spelta, oglio, rubba, gualdo, anesi, fen greco, cimino e coriandoli.' (f.280). Its inhabitants are 'di grand'ingegno, tanto accomodati alle lettere quanto all'armi, et etiandio alla mercantia'. Cardinal Egidio Colonna's 'suntuoso pallagio' must have been standing when Alberti was a boy there, though by the time he was writing the Descrittione it was half ruined after the invasions of Cesare Borgia and Charles Duke of

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42. Garzone, Letters, ff.220, 252vo.; 283, for quotation from letter to F. Bartolomeus Manzolo.

43. Roletto, op.cit., p.457, suggests Garzone may have interested Alberti in astrology and cosmography, but there are no references to this in the surviving letters to Alberti. The emphasis is entirely on oratory and the religious life, with some reference to literary-historical studies.

We know of Garzone's interest also from, Johannis Garzonii de dignitate urbis bononiae commentarius ad antonium galeatium bentivolium, R.I.S., XXI, (Milan, 1723), cols. 1162-1163.

'Semper mea sententia fuit, ut nullum scientiae genus esset, quod cum Astrologia conferri posset:quod ea esset, quae hominibus maxime esset utilitati atque honori.' etc..

Bourbon. In this pleasant and peaceful place, he says, the citizens greatly admire virtuous men, molto osservandogli, et apprezzandogli' (f.280). It may have been at Forlì that he encountered one Andrea de Bernardi, who he tells us is buried there though he came from S. Giovanni di Persiceto near Bologna. He died in 1522 aged 72 and was very fond of Alberti who mentions him as someone who wrote history 'avvenga che rozzamente'. 'L'Amore che portava à me, e la fatica sua m'ha constretto a farne memoria', he writes (f.303vo.). At about this time too he must have visited Urbino, and had access to the Montefeltro library, since he claims to have seen it before it was dispersed when Cesare Borgia took over the state<sup>44</sup>.

Alberti's stay in Forlì was brief. He seems to have returned to Bologna some time in 1495 and received the habit on 19 November of that year<sup>45</sup>. In September 1500 he was transfiliated to the convent in Bologna<sup>46</sup>, and two and a half years later was ordained priest<sup>47</sup>. Life in the convent was devoted to prayer and study. Manual work was, of course, the task of the lay brothers and as well as the customary vows of obedience, poverty and chastity there were the ascetic vows concerning fasting, the wearing of rough woollen clothing, sleeping on only the hardest of straw

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44. Descrittione, f.262vo-3. (Federico) 'orno Urbino.... di quel sontuoso pallagio, ove fece una superba libreria mettendovi dentro gran numero di pretiosi libri coperti, e ornati d'oro, argento, e di seta, ch'era cosa maravigliosa da vederli, come io vidi avanti che Cesare Borgia s'insignorisse d'Urbino, i quali libri furono portati in quà, e in là, nel tempo di detto Cesare Borgia, e cosi è stata roinata tanta degna opera'.

45. Echard, op.cit., II, 137.

46. Liber Conciliorum Conventus S. Dominici Bononiae, f.29, 'notus sit omnibus quod fra Leander de bononia filius conventus forlivese transfiliatus est da prefato conventu forlivese ad conventum bononiensis'. (18 September 1500). (In future notes this is abbreviated, Lib. C.C.S.D.B.).

47. On 2 March 1503 according to C. Piana-C. Ceni, 'Promozioni agli ordini sacri a Bologna e alle dignità ecclesiastiche nel Veneto nei Secoli XIV - XV', Specilegium Bonaventurianum, 3 (1968), 50, 240.

matresses and observing almost perpetual silence. The governor of the convent was the prior elected by the brothers, while the doctor was in charge of teaching and appointed by the provincial chapter. The convent in Bologna had a long established link with the studium, for it had become customary as the curricula of the studia everywhere expanded for the Dominican conventual schools, with their traditional interest in teaching, to take over theological teaching for the studia. With increased numbers of Masters of Arts entering the Order there was a gradual infiltration of philosophy and metaphysics and not surprisingly the writings of Aquinas encouraged this. A pious aspiration which proved to be ahead of its time was the proposal, made by the general chapter of the Order in 1310, that the master general should set up provincial schools for the study of Hebrew, Greek and Arabic. The convent does earn a comment in the Descrittione where it is referred to as the 'magnifico monasterio (nel quale habitano da 120 religiosi) oltre à gli nobili edifici vi è quella eccellente libreria, à cui credo non ritrovarsi alcuna superiorem, ne forse uguale' (f.293vo.). More interesting points about the church are also to be found in the History of Bologna, and the library is again praised as the best in Europe. The learning and devotion of the clergy is also noteworthy. 'Assai potrebbesi scrivere della praeclara dottrina; e del singolare e religioso modo di vivere de questi Venerandi, e ottimi padri, ma per essere io tassato di troppo affettione, e amore verso quelli, per hora piu oltre non scriverò'.<sup>48</sup> Clearly he found no difficulty in settling into the way of life he had chosen, and in the convent he

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48. Historie di Bologna, Dec. I, Lib. I, ff.c.ii - c.iii.

found congenial surroundings in which to continue his studies.

Indeed the peace of the convent must have been a welcome relief from the turbulent situation in the city. By 1500 Bologna was no longer the peaceful, prosperous city of Alberti's early years. Fears of a French invasion had run high when Charles VIII of France had led his army through North Italy and Giovanni Bentivoglio had been in a tight corner, unwilling to desert his Florentine allies on the one hand, but fearful of his friend Ludovico Sforza in Milan who was supporting the French and harbouring his enemies the Malvezzi on the other. Louis XII was even more dangerous, in view of his treaty with Cesare Borgia by which Louis was to get Milan, and Borgia to be Lord of the Romagna. Bologna had not only to come to terms quickly and allow the French troops passage south, but also in 1500 pay protection money to the French, now the only means of survival against Borgia's ambitions. We do not know what Alberti's views were of the threats to the city in 1502-3, Borgia's inexplicable reluctance to attack, and the ultimate collapse of his plans with the death of Alexander VI. In the Descrittione he refers only to Giovanni Bentivoglio's expulsion from the city by Julius II and Louis XII in 1506. (f.296). Was he so immersed in theological studies that the full implications of these crises passed him by, or was he determined as far as the Descrittione was concerned to maintain strict impartiality; to record only the salient facts, keeping the history of Bologna on a par with that of other cities? Perhaps the lost chronicle of events from the time of the invasion of Louis XII might have been more revealing, and contained some



personal reactions to the Bolognese predicament<sup>49</sup>. Garzone certainly informed him of the difficulties Florence faced in 1494, judging by the content of one of his letters<sup>50</sup>, and of the trust the Bolognese put in Giovanni Bentivoglio, presumably at about the same time. 'Adest praeterea Joannes Bentivolus qui sua opera, consilio, industria, virtute nos omnes servabit incolumens:....'<sup>51</sup> He also writes to Alberti in praise of freedom, applauding the efforts of the city to safeguard its liberty, which it has enjoyed for 854 years<sup>52</sup>.

The Ephemeridi Latini, the chronicle which Alberti cites in the Descrittione<sup>53</sup> and also in the De Viris Illustrius<sup>54</sup>, has proved to be an extremely elusive work. Its whereabouts are discussed by Fantuzzi<sup>55</sup> who says it is mentioned by Bumaldi among Alberti's unpublished works, and referred to as being up to 1542. Rovetta, Fantuzzi continues, referred to it as being among the manuscripts of the convent, but Fantuzzi reports that he could not find it there. Moréry says that Alberti published it in 1552, but there is no record of it ever having been printed. More recently Redigonda refers to it as being in the University Library in Bologna, 'Rimasero inedito presso la Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna le Ephemerides ab adventu Ludovici XII Galliae regis in Italiam fino al 1522 (?)'<sup>56</sup>.

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49. Ephemerides ab adventu Ludovici XII Galliae regis in Italiam.

50. Garzone, Letters, f.225vo..

51. Ibid. f.255.

52. Ibid. f.268vo..

53. E.g. Descrittione, ff.285vo., 312, 324, 328, 353, 424, 427, 431vo., etc.

54. D.V.I., lib. I, ff.23-23vo..

55. Fantuzzi, op.cit., I, 150.

56. Redigonda, op. cit., I, 702.

The fact that he appears uncertain of the closing date suggests that he did not in fact see the manuscript, and he gives no catalogue reference. He may have been misled by Almagià's remark that the manuscript is in the University of Bologna<sup>57</sup>. There is no reference to such a manuscript in any catalogues in Bologna, and I have been unable to find any trace of it there.

Alberti, one can only assume, must have shared the fears of the citizens about their future under Julius II; while the threats to Bentivoglio power, their unjustified attack on the Marescotti family and Julius's ambitions could have been of little comfort to the dying Garzone. 'Bentivole ecce prius fortuna, malivola nunc est', reads one of Garzone's epitaphs. It could equally well have been an ironic pun on the name of Bologna's ruling family and its fortunes. Garzone did not live to see Giovanni and his sons leave the city on All Souls Day 1506, and he was spared the horrific aftermath of the attempted coup led by Giovanni's impetuous wife Ginevra, when the enraged Marescotti sacked the Bentivoglio palace, all but wiping out the cultural achievement of the family. Alberti must have indeed been, as Echard says 'Museo totus addictus'<sup>58</sup> judging from the Descrittione, where we find no trace of these catastrophes nor any comment on Annibale's brief return to power in 1511-12. (Giovanni had already died in exile in 1508). 'Rimasero i Bentivoglio nella città insino all'anno seguente che (sic) si partirono, essendo partiti i Francesi d'Italia. Et cosi ritorno incontinente Bologna à divotion della chiesa'. (f.296vo.). No doubt he was at the time

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57. Almagià, op.cit., II, 130.

58. Echard, op.cit., II, 137.

of writing a devout supporter of the Papacy's policy. In fact he has nothing but praise for Julius II who, he claims, extended papal possessions, freed the church and Italy from the French and restored Maximilian Sforza to Milan. He remarks that, 'Sempre querregio, (sic) e mai non impose gravezze al chiericato, e meno a i suoi popoli, anzi la liberava dalle gravezze, che haveano'. (f.12).

(One suspects that Alberti knew from his experience of demands made on the convent that Julius's impositions had been lighter than many. Although papal income rose sharply, most of Julius's revenues came from the Papal States<sup>59</sup>.) His other numerous activities would take too long to relate, 'Che si io le volesse descrivere ne farei un' alto (sic) libro'. (Alberti does in fact mention the tomb to be made for him, 'per mano di Michel'Angelo Fiorentino eccellente scoltore'.) The Descrittione is not the place to look for detailed political analysis, and Alberti does refer the reader at this point to the 'Effemeridi latine' for the details of Julius's campaigns, but nevertheless it is disappointing to find absolutely no personal comment nor even any indication of the tensions behind events.

Garzone's death marked the passing of an age for Bologna and also for Alberti, who was by then in his mid-twenties. His formal education had been completed since his return to Bologna with the help of the theologians Mozzolino da Priero<sup>60</sup> and Georgio Cacatossico

59. P. Partner, 'Papal finance and the Papal State', History Today, Nov. 1957, p.774.

60. Mozzolino de Sylvestris Prieriatis 1460-1523. I have referred to him as Mozzolino to avoid confusion with Sylvestri de Ferrara. On him see D.V.I. Lib.IV, f.140; Echard, op.cit., p.137; F. Michalski, De Sylvestri Prieriatis Ord. Praed. Magistri Sacri Palatii, (Munster, 1892) Pastor, History of the Popes, (London, 1908), VII, 363 seq.

Casalensis<sup>61</sup>, and the philosophers Vincenzo Barattiere Placentino<sup>62</sup> and Paulo di Monticelli<sup>63</sup>. All understandably were Dominicans and Mozzolino and Barattiere certainly were friends of Garzone<sup>64</sup>.

Casalensis is referred to in the Descrittione as, 'gran Teologo, filosofo, e ornato di lettere grece, latine, hebree, e caldee. Invero,' Alberti continues, 'era huomo di tal ingegno che pareva ad ogni generatione di scientia esser disposto'. He ranks among the most learned men of the age and Alberti is most grateful to him for the instruction he received from him. 'Son io molto ubligato a tanto huomo, essendo egli stato mio honorando precettore nella dottrina Teologica'. Casalensis in 1511 was appointed regent to the convent in Bologna and in the same year became inquisitor of Crema, Cremona, Bergamo and Brescia, and in 1512 was both vicar-general of the congregation of Lombardy and procurator of the whole Order<sup>65</sup>. Alberti also praised Barattiere as his 'honorando precettore in Logica, e Filosofia'. He was, he tells us, also skilled in Greek and theology. 'Sono invero molto ubligato a tanto huomo per la benevolentia che a me dimostrava; e la carità

61. Echard, op.cit., II, 43, suggests he was still alive until about 1520. He draws on Alberti, Descrittione, f.340; and D.V.I. Lib. IV, f.150. For his appointments see Registrum litterarum Fr. Thomae de Vio Caietani O.P. Magistri Ordini 1503-1513 etc., edited Albertus de Meyer, Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica, 17, (Rome, 1935).
62. D.V.I. Lib.IV, f.150, 'in logicalibus et in philosophia pluribus annis socio atque adiutore cum Paulo Montiscellano viro eruditissimo usus sum. Ab his viris quicquid logicae, quicquid philosophiae habeo, accepta refero.' cf. Descrittione, f.334; Echard, II, 81-82, suggests he died sometime after 1530; Banfi, op.cit. p.22, says he came to Bologna c.1495.
63. Echard, op.cit., II, 82, mentions him but gives no dates, clearly using D.V.I. Lib.IV, f.150. See also Fantuzzi, op.cit., p.146.
64. Banfi, op.cit.
65. Registrarum Litterarum Fr. Thomae de Vio... pp.91, 96, 268, 272. D.V.I. Lib.IV, f.150, 'Quicquid habeo theologiae ab Silvestro Prieriate e Giorgio Casalense me accepisse profitear.'

che usava insegnandomi, e facendomi partecipe della sua degna dottrina.' (f.334). Paolo da Monticelli escaped such generous praise and seems to be a lesser known figure.

By far the most well known of the four was Mozzolino, who had established in the Order a high reputation for his skill in canon and civil law, in astronomy, philosophy and theology. He was in fact a student of logic and metaphysics in Bologna from 1495-6<sup>66</sup>. In the De Viris Illustribus Alberti describes him as 'Silvester ex oppido Prierio vir praeclarissimus dotibus ornatis qui patriam veluti Aristoteles stagiram illustravit sua dotrina et virtutum praeeminentia'.<sup>67</sup> Mozzolino's writings ranged from works on planets and the powers of demons, to historical and theological works for which he was most renowned. He also taught medicine, jurisprudence, oratory, mathematics, poetry, Greek and oriental languages<sup>68</sup>. When he was teaching theology in Bologna he explained the holy books 'avec tant d'applaudissement et un si grand concours, q'on venoit des pays les plus éloignés ou pour prendre les leçons ou pour le consulter.' says Touron<sup>69</sup>. This closely follows the De Viris Illustribus, where Alberti demonstrates his skill as a teacher, 'Habet enim in docendo cum claritate vocis optimum litteras tradendi modum cum quaedam festivitate quo fit, ut audientes attentis et dociles reddantur, quod paucis concessum est.'<sup>70</sup>

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66. Michalski, op.cit., p.8.

67. D.V.I. Lib.IV, f.140. Surprisingly he is not mentioned in the Descrittione, nor is the town of Prierio which is situated only 6km. east of Ceva in Montferrat. Alberti mentions Ceva (f.341vo.) and the River Bormida (f.342vo. Flu. Burmia) which flows near Prierio. The omission seems inexplicable.

68. Michalski, op.cit., p.14.

69. Touron, op.cit., III, 716.

70. D.V.I. Lib.IV, f.140.

Student behaviour at lectures was evidently not always so encouraging for the teacher! He was teaching logic and dialectic in the university in 1500<sup>71</sup> and in 1508 his reputation led to his election as vicar-general of the congregaton of Lombardy<sup>72</sup>. Theological studies, which had until this time been provided by the convent became part of the studium in 1507<sup>73</sup> and in 1509 Mozzolino was appointed regent to the studium, notwithstanding the apparently erroneous appointment of Giorgio Casalensis who was eventually appointed in 1511<sup>74</sup>. Bologna conferred another honour on him in 1510 when he was elected prior of the convent<sup>75</sup>. After this it is hardly surprising that he should have been summoned to Rome in 1514 to be theological adviser to Leo X, or that here again students flocked to him<sup>76</sup>. He became master of the sacred palace in 1515. The master-general at the time was Tommaso de Vio, better known by his later title as Cardinal Cajetan. He was a close friend of Mozzolino and the two were to work together over the first official Papal polemics against Luther, drawing up and promulgating the Bull of 1520<sup>77</sup>. Such a universally recognised scholar and theologian<sup>78</sup> could scarcely have failed to make Alberti aware of the theological

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71. Zaccagnini, op.cit., p.129.

72. Registrum Litterarum Fr. Thomae de Vio., p.251.

73. Zaccagnini, op.cit., p.129.

74. Registrum Litterarum Fr. Thomae de Vio., p.80. He was also inquisitor of Brescia and Crema in 1508, and of Milan and Lodi in 1511, *ibid.* pp.251, 268.

75. Lib. C.C.S.D.B. f.31, 10 July 1511, refers to him as 'Sacrae Theologiae professor et conventu Sti. Dominici de Bononia Prior'.

76. D.V.I.; Michalski, op.cit., p.14, gives this date. Echard, op.cit. p.137 gives the date as 1511 and the Pope as Julius II but in April 1512 he was still professor of theology and prior of the convent, (Lib. C.C.S.D.B. f.32).

77. Touron, op.cit., III, 719. Mozzolino died in 1522 in Rome helping sufferers from the plague. For Cajetan see below p. 21.

78. Erasmus sought his help when charged with heresy, Michalski, op.cit., p.19.

disputes of the age, with which he was so deeply involved. He probably passed on an interest in reform, and in the activities of the Inquisition, though Alberti was not fully involved with this until near the end of his life.

Bologna at that time could boast the services of several other famous scholars. It is not certain whether Alberti studied Greek, though Mozzolino for one could have taught him, and most of his other teachers and friends knew the language. He does report in the Descrittione that he went to the Greek text of Strabo to check an erroneous translation (f.395vo.) and also he checked a translation of Polybius (f.344), so it is reasonable to assume that he had at least a rudimentary knowledge. Certainly most of the Greek material used in the Descrittione had been translated by the 1520's, soon enough for Alberti to use it<sup>79</sup>. Perhaps Alberti's early interest in antiquity was encouraged by attending some of the lectures of the famous 'Codro' (Antonio Urceo) a pupil of Guarino, and one of the most outstanding Greek scholars in Italy<sup>80</sup>. Giacomo della Croce was a leading Latinist teaching at the same time<sup>81</sup>, and Filippo Beroaldo the elder, pupil of Puteolano and lecturer in rhetoric was retained by the senate at a very high fee<sup>82</sup>. Beroaldo

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79. See the table of Greek authors used at the beginning of Chapter IV.

80. 1446-1500. Zaccagnini, op.cit., p.121. Alberti does not mention having heard him in the Descrittione (f.325vo.) where he mentions his skill in Latin and Greek. He taught Greek in the studium from 1485 until his death in 1500. See Malagola, op.cit..

81. Zaccagnini, op.cit., p.121.

82. Ibid., pp.122-124. He held the chair of rhetoric and poetry, 1479-1503, Malagola, op.cit., p.305. See also L. Frati, 'I due Beroaldi', Studi e Mem. per la Storia dell' Università di Bologna, 2 (1911), 209-228.

had an international reputation as a humanist and like Garzone was tutor to Annibale Bentivoglio. The intellectual influences to which Alberti was exposed were, it seems, those of the traditional humanist outlook, (using the term 'humanist' with the precise definition Professor Kristeller attributes to it)<sup>83</sup>. In the field of philosophy Aristotelianism still predominated. There is little to suggest that this in any way interested Alberti, though as a Dominican he must have studied the writings of Aquinas. The antiquarianism derived from the study of classical texts which led scholars to search for epigrams, undertake archaeological expeditions, collect medals, coins, inscriptions etc., and investigate the origins of place names aroused an interest among several Bolognese scholars who were friends of Alberti<sup>84</sup>. The importance of these topics in the Descrittione will be discussed later, but it is clear that this was a growing field in which Alberti enthusiastically shared.

ii. The De Viris Illustribus, travel for the Order, the groundwork for the Descrittione.

In 1510, aged thirty, Alberti delivered the advent address at Pesaro<sup>85</sup>, and received the honour in 1514 of being chosen as the companion to the master-general of the Order, Tommaso de Vio<sup>86</sup>.

83. P.O. Kristeller, The Classics and Renaissance Thought, (Cambridge, Mass., 1955).

84. See Descrittione, ff.299-300. He lists the 'Antiquari' of Bologna. Giovanni Filoteo Achillino is especially singled out for praise.

85. D.B.I.

86. b.Gaeta, 1469, d.1534, (as Alberti correctly says, not 1546 or 1525, as given by Tournon and Mortier respectively). He succeeded Jean Clerée as Master-general of the Order 1507-1508, until 1517 when he was made a cardinal by Leo X. See R.P. Mortier, Histoire des Maîtres Généraux de l'ordre des frères prêcheurs, (Paris, 1911), V, 141-230. Descrittione f.123vo. '...é stato uno de singolari ingegni di nostri età e parimente di molti secoli...' etc.



This office took him away from Bologna for the best part of two years. Some of this time must certainly have been spent in Rome, and he must have also travelled to Naples, where De Vio held the 1515 general chapter of the Order<sup>87</sup>. Thus by the time he returned to Bologna he had some first-hand knowledge of central Italy. Whether the idea of the Descrittione had as yet occurred to him we do not know, but no doubt in future conversations with antiquarian friends he remembered the quantities of classical ruins, the potential hunting-grounds for the classical historian and philologist, even if on this trip he had little time for exploring them or investigating natural phenomena.

He had however been at work on his first major volume, the lives of famous men of the Order<sup>88</sup>. No doubt the writings of Garzone which he had seen gave him the idea of assembling a more comprehensive collection for which Garzone's work would be useful. He incorporated also lives by Giovanni Caroli, Matteo Bandello, Nicola of Brescia, Francesco Castiglioni 'canonicus Florentinus', Giovanni Antonio Flaminio, Flaminio's son Marc Antonio, another Flaminio called Sebastianus, Bartholomaeus Mortarius and Giorgio

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87. Touron, op.cit., IV, 9.

88. See note 8 above. The entry in A. Serra-Zanetti, L'Arte della stampa in Bologna nel primo ventennio del cinquecento, (Bologna, 1959), p.173, suggests that there was an earlier form of this no longer in existence, printed in 1503 by Hieronymus de Benedictis. If this is the case it must have lacked much of the material written by Alberti himself and Flaminio, who in 1515-16 were corresponding about the progress of the Lives. The printer in question, Hieronymus de Benedictis, was responsible for the 1517 edition, and was also the cause of some inconvenience to Flaminio, see below, p. 25.

Mediolanensis, together with a large contribution of his own<sup>89</sup>.

The work, part of which is in humanist dialogue form, deals, in six distinct books, with master-generals, martyrs, ecclesiastical dignitaries, learned men, saints and lay brothers. In 1516 he sent the script of what was to be the first book to Giovanni Antonio Flaminio. This consisted of the biographies of the thirty-eight master-generals of the order from Giordano di Sassonia to Cajetan, and he claimed to have written them in the remarkably short time of eighteen days while at the same time attending to his clerical duties<sup>90</sup>. Alberti and Flaminio were close friends, as is evident from their correspondence about this and other matters<sup>91</sup>.

He sent the first collection of lives for Flaminio to revise

89. The work is much quoted as a source by Dominican annalists, although little is known of the other contributors, except for Flaminio and Bandello. Giovanni Caroli is mentioned by Echard, *op.cit.*, I, 393. Matteo Bandello, *ibid.*, II, p.155-57, D.V.I. Lib.I, f.137, D.B.I. V, 667. He was nephew of Vincenzo, a former master-general, lived c.1500, and in 1505 toured the convents of central and southern Italy with his uncle. G.A. Flaminio, 1456-1536, came from Imola, taught in Bologna, and was a close friend of Alberti, though not a member of the Order. In fact his son was suspected of sympathising with Lutherans, see A. Battistella, Il S. Officio e la riforma religiosa in Bologna, (Bologna, 1905), p.10, note 2.) Bartholomaeus Mortarius, d.1533, Echard, *op.cit.*, II, 36, D.V.I. f.227, Descrittione, f.393, was active in the Order, a fine orator, philosopher and theologian. F. Giorgius Mediolanensis, Echard, *op.cit.*, II, 31, D.V.I. f.154, 255vo. (There is debate over whether there are two men of this name or not.) Nicola of Brescia, F. Castiglioni and Sebastianus Flaminio are not mentioned by Echard which suggests that they were not Dominicans.

90. D.V.I. Lib.I, f.23-23vo.

91. *Ibid.* Some of the correspondence concerning the writing of these lives and Flaminio's revising of them is printed in Lib.I. See also Johannis Antonii Flaminii forocorneliensis Epistolae familiares, edited by Flaminio Scarselli, (Bologna, 1744), Lib.X. Letters I-III, XVI-XIX inclusive concern the D.V.I. (Referred to as Flaminio, Letters.)

and asked for his opinion, saying that once he had seen them they would be fit to pass before the most stringent critic. He then requested Flaminio to return them as quickly as possible, as friends were pressing him to get them into print. Another reason for haste was probably the fact that Alberti hoped to have the whole collection published to coincide with the third centenary of the recognition of the Dominican Order in 1516, but in fact he was disappointed, and the work appeared a year later. Flaminio was one of Alberti's trusted critics. He saw the lives before anyone else, and apologised for spending only two days reading them, as he tells us in his reply to Alberti, because he wished to return them as he had been asked.

The Descrittione, also, in its earliest draft, was read by Flaminio with great interest and delight in 1536, almost ten years before Alberti began negotiations to print it<sup>92</sup>. 'Legi tuam mi Italiam, opus sane laboriosus, ac multiplici rerum cognitione refertum, Qua quidem lectione, a Deo sum delectatus, ut mihi attentius ac maiore cum voluptate iamdiu legerim. ...Restat igitur ut tam egregius tam praeclarum opus iam publices, et in manus hominum venire sinas, nec dutius efflagitantium amicorum studia et expectatione differas.' Here and in his other communications can be seen his deep admiration for Alberti's work and his affection for him as a person. Alberti returned the compliment in the Descrittione, praising his learned works, his elegant oratory and his fine poetry, '...Era la sua oratione pura, elegante tersa,

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92. Descrittione, 1550, f.ii vo. Flaminio's letter is dated 1537, although it must have been 1536 since this was the last year of his life, as Alberti himself tells us in the Descrittione f.288. Cosenza erroneously attributes this letter to Flaminio's son Marcantonio, on Bayle's authority. op.cit., II, 1429.

florida e redolente della eloquentia Tulliana, della quale era imitatore' (f.288).

Flaminio, in 1515, had been in Imola, anxiously awaiting Alberti's return from Rome. On hearing from others that his friend had reached Bologna three days previously, he was apparently quite upset that Alberti had not immediately contacted him, especially as he needed Alberti's help in dealing with a printer in Bologna, who was refusing to get on with a contract to print something for him<sup>93</sup>. The printer concerned is referred to as Hieronymus or Chalcographus, so the work in question must be Flaminio's Silvarum Libri II et Epigramatum Libri III which was printed in Bologna in 1515 by Hieronymus de Benedictis<sup>94</sup>. The following letters are of interest also as evidence of links with another noted young Bolognese humanist and historian, Achille Bocchi<sup>95</sup>, who for some reason had annoyed Alberti. Flaminio is puzzled as to the cause, but eventually the one-sided correspondence reveals that Bocchi had been asked to look into the issue with the printer, with no results, while Alberti was away. Flaminio hearing nothing from Alberti, and thinking that he might have been too busy to have acted for him, seems to have turned again to

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93. Flaminio, Letters, VIII, IX. They can be dated from the following letter X, which from the content was written soon afterwards, and dated Idibus Augusti. MDXV. Ex Forocornelii.

94. 'Impressum Bononiae per Hieronymum de Benedictis Calcographum Bononiensem Anno domini MDXV'. see A. Serra-Zanetti, L'Arte della Stampa in Bologna nel primo ventennio del Cinquecento, (Bologna, 1959), p.237.

95. Flaminio, Letters, X-XIV, XX-XXII. Bocchi, b.Bologna 1488, d.1562. Cosenza, op.cit., I, 630-631.

Bocchi, giving Alberti the impression that he did not trust him. Since the printer was ill there was nothing either could do, and Flaminio hopes that they will patch up this misunderstanding, as the last thing he wanted was to cause a quarrel between his friends. Several letters refer to this controversy, eventually ending on a happy note when he not only hears that printing has begun, but receives the first proofs in elegant type<sup>96</sup>.

After the publication of the Lives, the next known fact about Alberti's career is his own record in the Descrittione that in 1517 he was in Vienna where he heard of the fame of Giovanni di Camerino O. Min. 'Assai tempo dimorò à Vienna d'Austria in gran riputatione, si com'io ne posso render certo testimonio per essermi ivi ritrovato nel 1517.' (f.251vo.) What took him to Vienna he does not say. We know that Lorenzo Campeggio was in Austria as apostolic nuncio to the Emperor Maximilian, and in that same year received his cardinal's hat from Leo X<sup>97</sup>. Although Campeggio was Bolognese there is nothing to connect him with Alberti except their mutual friendship with Cajetan and Mozzolino, nor is there any reason to suppose that Alberti might have been in Augsburg with Cajetan in 1518, though this is not impossible. In any case by 1519 he was back in Bologna and took up duties in the convent as 'cellarius', or brother in charge of dispensations<sup>98</sup>. At this time the convent

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96. Flaminio, Letters, VIII-XV, XX-XXVIII. Letter X also mentions Alberti's work on Joachim which Flaminio has just received. 'Joachini abbatis Vaticinia circa Apostolicos viros etc. Edited, with a life of Joachim by Leandro Alberti, (Bologna, 1515).

97. L. Pastor, Op.cit. Descrittione, f.298vo.

98. Lib. C.C.S.D.B. ff.36-37. 10 Feb. 1519. Hironymus de Landi was prior, and Alberti signed the minutes as 'Fra Leander di Bononia Cellarius'.

seems to have been in grave financial difficulties owing to the heavy dues demanded by the Papacy, and presumably a lack of bequests, so much so that the question of whether or not the friars could repair or rebuild the dormitory building was a very controversial one. The entries in the convent council records suggest that the building had been gradually becoming less weather-proof over the past three winters, and in February 1519 it was decided that Alberti, the 'cellarius' with two others, should estimate the money to be put aside for food and vestments, and the rest should be used to rebuild the dormitories. Work was begun, but opinion was divided, a month or so later, on whether it could continue, since the convent could not pay for it as well as pay the papal tenth in May. Some thought that the building should be abandoned, but the greater number were against this, 'Maior pars patrum dixit quod deberemus prosecui fabricam iuxtam consilii prece dictis determinationem. Et annon esset in conventu modus solvendi propter gravamen inopinatum decime diste impositum Conventui, propositum fuit an deberemus vendere aliquam domum....ut evitaret damnum ruine iminentis....'<sup>99</sup> Alberti clearly had a problem on his hands, the outcome of which is not recorded.

The scrutiny of accounts and the maintenance of buildings were only two of the many jobs dealt with by the convent council<sup>100</sup>. This, in effect, was a small business committee of the more respected brethren, nominated by the prior to advise him over jobs either too trivial or too complicated to be dealt with by the daily meeting of the convent chapter. It dealt also with the appointment of friars

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99. Lib. C.C.S.D.B. ff.36-37.

100. For details on this and other Dominican bodies and officials see G.R. Galbraith, The Constitution of the Dominican Order, (Manchester, 1925).

to hold office in the convent, to preach or beg or hear confessions, with the employment of servants, the distribution of books, and so on. There were other matters such as those concerning the use of the convent seal on documents, or transactions involving large quantities of property, which the council would refer to the whole convent. In Bologna the council seems to have been an ad hoc body of between six and ten people. Alberti's name appears intermittently among those signing the minutes, especially in the 1530's and 40's, so that one can conclude that he was highly thought of as a member of the community.

The fifteen-twenties were hard times not just for the convent but for the whole city. They must have been, for they even merited a comment in the Descrittione. Alberti refers to the destruction left by the army of Charles Duke of Bourbon passing to Rome in 1527 and adds, 'Et non solamente pati per lui, ma per la gran carestia, e pestilentia, ch'era per tutta Italia. Nel qual tempo morirono fra la citta, et il territorio di essa da 20 milia persone....' (f.296vo.).

Alberti seems to have had some plans to go to Venice in the early twenties. Flaminio, at any rate was expecting him there, and writing in the utmost despair and misery because he had not joined him<sup>101</sup>. '...tu me Leander facis, cuius absentia tanto mihi in dies acerbior sit, quanto diutius desideria mea protrahi video et tui spes reditus me nunquam defecit. Quid enim esse mihi durius possit, quam illo carere?' This in spite of the fact that he is

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101. Flaminio, Letters, V,VI,VII, by their content seem to belong to the same period, and VI is dated 'Idibus Januarii MDXXII'.

well looked after in the household of Domenico Grimano<sup>102</sup>, the Cardinal of St. Mark, but without Alberti life is not worth living ....'si doleo, si angor, et excrucior, si videor, immo certe impatiens sum, quod abes, quod, nescio quo fato, mihi tam cito ereptus es, mirum nemini videri debet.' Only Alberti's letters relieve the gloom. He could scarcely have believed that they would be so long apart, and would never have gone to Venice if it had not been for Alberti's plans to join him. Flaminio's correspondence overflows with superlatives of misery, praise, affection, hate, a characteristic present also to a lesser extent in Garzone and no doubt derived in part from their Ciceronian training. It is hard to imagine Alberti writing with similar outpourings, in spite of his youthful ability in Ciceronian rhetoric. Indeed the few surviving remnants of his correspondence are relatively unemotional and far from discursive. In view of the numbers of letters to him from Garzone and Flaminio alone, it is disappointing that so many of the replies (unless he was a very bad correspondent) have been lost; they could, no doubt have thrown light on so many obscurities about his career.

From the contents of Flaminio's next letter it is apparent that Alberti's absence was due to some misfortune, which is not explained, but Flaminio offers him his consolation in his difficulties and unhappiness<sup>103</sup>. It is surprising, in view of this

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102. b. 1461 d. 1523. Cosenza, op. cit., V, 225, Descrittione, 1553, ff.460-60vo., tells us of his patronage of arts and literature, his legacy of 8000 Latin and Greek books, his great wealth, and collection of antiquities, etc.; it was no insignificant figure to whom Flaminio was attached.

103. Flaminio, Letters, VII.



correspondence, to find L. Simeoni writing that Flaminio from 1520 to 26 held the newly established chair of 'lettere hebraiche e caldaiche' relating to ecclesiastical studies, in Bologna<sup>104</sup>. He gives no source for this, but since Cardinal Grimanus died in August 1523 this probably gave Flaminio the chance he wanted to return to Bologna. Alberti, however, makes no reference to his friend's skill in oriental languages when he lists his other intellectual achievements<sup>105</sup>. It was only in the final year of the contract that he took up tenure.

If the two were reunited, it was not for long. In 1525 Alberti went to Rome for the meeting of the general chapter of the Order, and this was the start of three most eventful years, from the point of view of his career in the Order, and as far as the idea of the Descriptione is concerned. In Rome on 4 June he was chosen for a second time as companion to the master-general, now the newly elected F. Silvestri di Ferrara<sup>106</sup> (or Ferrariense, as he was known), and he received the title of Provincial of Terra Sancta. In the Liber Consiliorum in Bologna is a transcript of his letter dated 28 June 1525, in which he reports Ferrariense's election and his own promotion, returning his seal of office to the convent<sup>107</sup>.

104. L. Simeoni, Storia della Università de Bologna, (Bologna, 1947). II, 46. cf. Malagola op.cit., p.31, note 1, says Flaminio was appointed in 1520-21 to the office which he held throughout the academic year 1525-26, after which it fell vacant.

105. Above p.24.

106. b. Ferrara 1474, d. Rennes 19 Sept. 1528. Succeeded Garcias de Loyosa as General.

107. Lib. C.C.S.D.B. f.38vo. In 1521 he became regent in the studium in Bologna. He was four years older than Alberti. Touron, op.cit. p.122 and Echard, op.cit. both draw on the D.V.I.Lib.IV, f.141, 'Franciscus Ferrariensis nostrae aetatis deliciae, vir optimi ingenii et ad quaeque intelligenda prodendaque accommodati ...Unum dixerim, rarus est imo rarissimus homo; soleo dicere, in ipsum procreando omnes suas vires naturam congressisse ...' etc. Alberti's appointment is also recorded in S. Sabina, Rome, Archivium Generale dei domenicani, ser.IV, Regesta Magistri generalis. O.P., 20, f.37.

The two men knew each other well from the time Ferrariense had spent in Bologna, when they shared the common bonds of religious and literary interests. Leandro could hardly have refused an old friend, now his superior, although he might have been equally content to remain in the convent occupied with his studies and his devotions. But Ferrariense was one of the great theologians of his day, another associate of Cajetan and Mozzolino and like them anxious to oppose heretical ideas, especially Lutheranism, and encourage devotion within the Order and outside. Alberti tells us in his biography of Ferrariense that he was widely loved, that his learning was diverse in the fields of Latin and Greek, in philosophy, theology and logic, that he was an eloquent speaker and a lover of music. In the Descrittione there is more of a character study than is usual for Alberti, again he says that this was a man on whom all nature's gifts were bestowed. He was '...di bellissimo aspetto, prudente, saggio, affabile, humano, e d'ingegno disposto ad ogni grado di scienza....' etc. (f.313)<sup>108</sup>.

Ferrariense, like Cajetan, Mozzolino and Campeggio, was active in promoting reform and on his election instructed Dominicans everywhere to oppose Luther, in the convent, from the pulpit, and at the universities. His desire to fulfil his duties as master-general led him to undertake an extensive programme of visits to convents all over Italy, and on this undertaking Alberti accompanied

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108. Roletto, op.cit., p.457, note 6, suggests that Ferrariense's interests probably extended to geographical and astrological studies, since he attended the astrological school of Pietro Bono Avogario of Ferrara. In which case he may have influenced the form of the Descrittione. However these interests are not mentioned by Alberti, neither does he acknowledge any debt to his friend.

him along with a second companion, Fra Augustin de Ferrara.

According to Mortier Ferrariense had ordered the setting up of the studium generale in Cosenza at the meeting of the congregation of Calabria in June 1525<sup>109</sup>. This must have taken place before he was officially confirmed in office, and certainly before Alberti could have been free to attend<sup>110</sup>. A tour of the southern states occupied the rest of 1525 and the first half of the following year. Alberti reports that he was in Apulia and Otranto in 1525, and at that time he must have visited the Cave of S. Angelo (f.224), the monastery of S. Lionardo near Ascoli, sadly in need of reform (f.227), and passed through the customs at Serra Capriola where he learned that more than '100 milia ducata' a year was collected (f.228vo.). On route south the party may have stopped too in the Abruzzi, as Alberti seems to have been at the monastery of S. Liberatore (f.233), and certainly saw the river Fibreno and had the name 'Termine' explained to him by the inhabitants (f.244vo., 230). Bari was another port of call, where the priests showed the visitors the vestments and regalia of the King of Naples and Sicily, (f.217,217vo.). October found them at Castel Nuovo near Rossano where they enjoyed a splendid reception by the Contessa de Miletto de Severini, (f.201vo.), and the following month they were in the Otranto area, at Corano and Coliano, where again Alberti was overwhelmed by the hospitality, this time of Signor Giovan Batista di Monte (f.214-214vo.).

In December they travelled back through Calabria to Sicily passing near Nicastro and Calimero where the mild weather and spring flowers were more reminiscent of May than December (f.190co.-191vo.), and they reached Messina before the end of the year. From his description of the island Alberti must have spent some time there,

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109. Mortier, op.cit., p.210.

110. see above, page 30, his letter to the convent is dated 28th June.

in fact he says that he returned to the mainland in March, when he passed through another delightful spot in Calabria, Rossano itself (f.291). In the south Alberti also spent time visiting the more primitive, inaccessible parts of Calabria, like the Castel Regina area whose inhabitants were cave-dwellers, with no 'ziminieri' on their houses. This settlement greatly intrigued him, and provides the basis of one of the most vivid descriptions in the Descrittione (f.187vo.). On his way north to Rome Alberti passed through Fossanova and Baia in May, Prenestina, Formia, and Anagna (f.156vo., 130, 130vo., 121vo., 131vo.), where he was greatly interested in the classical remains he saw. The Bay of Baia, Lake Avernus and the so-called cave of the Cumaean Sibyl (f.153vo.) proved so memorable that Alberti revisited them, when the Descrittione must have been all but completed, ten years later (f.153vo.).

For the rest of the year the master-general was at work in central and northern Italy, for example in Bologna in October, and in Venice in November<sup>111</sup>. North Italy was not the easiest of places to travel about in at this time. The Imperialist forces were still hoping to further the advantage won at Pavia and the Duke of Bourbon's army was becoming increasingly bitter at its lack of activity and remuneration. In only a matter of months the mutinous horde was to descend on Rome. Ferrarriense and his companions must have made a swift crossing of the Alps via Turin as soon as possible in 1527 and by May they were at Lyons<sup>111A</sup>. Poissy and Paris were

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111. Mortier, op. cit., p.274.

111A. The Turin-Mt.Cenis crossing is suggested by Mortier, presumably because of the destination - Lyons. It is made more probable by the detail in which Alberti describes the pass (f.406).

visited in June and July, and Blois in August. January 1528 found them at Poissy again, making plans for a trip to Spain<sup>112</sup>. The master-general had got so far as obtaining safe-conducts from Charles V for himself and a small group of associates, (only eight horses were permitted)<sup>113</sup> to undertake a new series of visitations, but this was not to be.

At Bourges in May 1528 he held a Chapter and went on to Brittany, either to continue his visits or possibly to visit the tomb of St. Vincent Ferrer. What exactly caused his death is not certain, but it seems to have been pneumonia following the capsizing of his boat on the Vilaine at Rennes<sup>114</sup>. He died 'entre les mains du Saint Eveque de cette ville, Yves Mahyeu'<sup>115</sup>.

Alberti gave him the last rites and bewailed his loss as a personal friend and as a most worthy head of the Order. The death of the master-general inevitably meant the end of Alberti's travelling for the time being. He had evidently been making the most of the experiences of the last three years to collect interesting scraps of information on history, geography and antiquities. The idea of describing all the sights he saw must already have occurred to him. The wonders of nature and Italy's past splendours were ideas to be worked on until he had collected material for a description of the whole country. The material of the Descrittione is of specific kinds, too systematically organized to assume that he was simply remembering here and there odd scraps from his travels. He must have set out with some more clear plan of the intended work in his

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112. Mortier, p.282.

113. Ibid. p.283.

114. Ibid. p.284.

115. Touron, op.cit., III, 719.

mind, especially since such an opportunity for travel did not frequently arise. Another reason for assuming that the work was already envisaged at this time is the sheer volume of information it contains, and the time it would take to collect and assemble, however industrious the author<sup>116</sup>. His interest in history led him to keep an eye open for manuscripts and look carefully at archives and libraries on the way. Touron suggests that he might have been doubly eager for a visit to Spain for this reason<sup>117</sup>.

iii. Work in Bologna, his history of Bologna and the language dispute.

After this he did not immediately return to Bologna as Echard says, 'Tum vero Italiam et Bononiense museum suum repetit, a quo deinceps non videtur avulsus'<sup>118</sup>. Also it would be wrong to interpret this to mean, as Nicéron does, that he never thereafter left Bologna<sup>119</sup>. He spent some time in Rome, where, still as Provincial of Terra Sancta, he took part in the general chapter of 1530<sup>120</sup>. He tells us in the Descriptione how he passed through Gubbio on his way to Rome, in 1530, and how the priors showed him

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116. cf. F.J. Levy's comment on Leland's plan for a similar work on Britain. 'Leland had the intention of doing for England what generations of antiquaries had done for Italy. His plan would have taxed the energies of a whole team of scholars.' and again, '...that it was visionary is obvious when we consider the number of men necessary to elaborate it.' Tudor Historical Thought, (California, 1967), pp.127-130. I shall discuss later Alberti's plan in relation to other chorographical works. Though the amount of fieldwork required was understandably less than for a work on England, it was still very considerable.

117. Touron, op.cit., IV, 122-23.

118. Echard, op.cit., II, 137.

119. Nicéron, op.cit., XXVI, 304.

120. Regesta Magistri Generalis, 22, ff.32vo., 34vo.

some tablets partly in Latin and partly in Etruscan, which, unfortunately, he was not able to read (f.80). He also visited Narni and Fossombrone when he was on his return journey in July, and saw some antiquities there (f.92, f.248vo.).

He had certainly been in Bologna the previous winter at the time of Charles V's coronation by the Pope. He reports on this magnificent occasion in the Descrittione with more than usual detail. Clement arrived first, before the New Year, with fifteen cardinals, and a short time afterwards came Charles with his splendid retinue of barons together with ambassadors from almost every Christian nation. The two princes were lodged in the palace of the Signoria and it said much for the resources of Bologna that the city could cater for such an influx of European nobility and clergy, their bodyguards, servants, officials and hangers on. 'Allora fu sperimentata la grandezza della città,' says Alberti, 'tanto in alloggiare tanti Cardinali, Signori, Baroni, Soldati et altre genti, con facilità, e comodità (che in poche città di Europa, e forse in nessuna talmente sarebbero stati alloggiati) quanto nell'abbondanza delle cose necessarie per il vivere.' (f.296vo-297). On 24 February, Charles's birthday, the coronation took place in S. Petronius, 'con gran trionfo, et allegrezza. Credo di non mai più vedere un simil trionfo.' The Pope and Emperor, wearing their jeweled crowns, mounted on two white horses, with a golden canopy above them, paraded round the city, Charles receiving further honours at the more important churches.

On this occasion Alberti had the good fortune to meet again an old friend, the Dominican Jerome Balbi, a Venetian noble, a

canon lawyer and Thomist theologian<sup>121</sup>. He had been appointed Bishop of Gurk in Lower Carinthia and was a friend of King Louis of Hungary and Bohemia who sent him to Spain to congratulate Charles V on his election as Emperor, according to Echard<sup>122</sup>. Balbi then assisted at the latter's coronation at Aix-la-Chapelle, and eventually returned to Bologna with him in 1530, when he renewed his friendship with Alberti. According to Tournon each was the other's critic, '...ce qui sortoit de la plume de l'un passoit ordinairement sous les yeux de l'autre'<sup>123</sup>. Balbi was in many ways a strange person to find in Alberti's company. As a young poet in Paris he had a reputation for immorality and heresy, and was even compelled to leave the city. It was only later in Germany that he gained a reputation as a theologian, and presumably then that he met Alberti<sup>124</sup>. Allen, in his article on Balbi, says that the contrast between the 'quarrelsome and loose-lived poet and brilliant prelate' was so great that even contemporaries were uncertain whether they could be the same person<sup>125</sup>. He concludes that there is no ground for questioning the identification, however. To Echard and Tournon it was inconceivable that Alberti should have befriended such a character, 'on ne distinguoit pas Jérôme Balbi ou

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121. Descrittione, f.317. Alberti says he came from Castel Finale, lists some of his works and describes him as 'elegante scrittore di versi'. Cosensa, op.cit., I, 367, says Balbi was Professor in Paris in 1485, and was in Vienna in 1497. See also P.S.Allen, 'Hieronymus Balbus in Paris', English Historical Review, 17 (1902), 417-428. Balbi was embroiled in two violent quarrels in Paris, firstly with the French humanist and rhetorician William Tardif, secondly with Faustus Andrelinus of Forli. cf. Tournon op.cit., IV, 124.

122. Echard, op.cit., II, 78.

123. Tournon, op.cit., IV, 124.

124. Alberti was only seven years old when Balbi was already Professor in Paris, so it must have been sometime after Balbi had left Paris when they met, either in Germany or in Italy, when Balbi had turned over a new leaf.

125. Allen, op.cit., p.428.



Balbus Eveque de Gurez d'avec Jérôme Balbus, aussi Italien, qui enseignoit les Belles Lettres dans les Ecoles de Paris, sur la fin du quinzieme Siècle. Celui-ci n'étoit point religieux...' etc. says Tournon.

From the convent records it is evident that Alberti was in Bologna from 1532-36<sup>126</sup>, and he reports in the Descrittione that 1532 was the year when Francesco Guicciardini, having just finished a spell of duty in Modena, was sent by Clement to govern Bologna. This year also saw the return of the Pope and Emperor to the city along with other princes of Italy to endeavour to negotiate a means to preserve peace in the country (f.297).

There is evidence that Alberti shared the interest which many members of the Dominican Order showed in promoting works of art to decorate their churches. Not that the Descrittione abounds with artistic criticism, but it does describe with enthusiastic admiration some of the most obvious artistic and architectural triumphs of the Renaissance, for example, Brunelleschi's dome, 'quella stupenda cupola tanto artificiosamente fatta...', (f.40vo.), Ghiberti's Baptistery doors, 'con tanto artificio condotte massimamente quella ch'è di rincontro alla Chiesa di S. Maria del Fiore, che giudica ciascun di qualche ingegno, che non si possono ritrovare in tutta Europa le simili,' (f.40vo.), and Leonardo's Last Supper 'quel Cenacolo di Cristo con gli Apostoli, dipinto tanto maravigliosamente da Lorenzo Vincio (sic) Fiorentino. Nel qual appare il gran magisterio di lui, cosa da ogn'uno nelle pittura perito, sommamente lodata' (f.309vo.). His interest was more in the skill and

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126. Lib.C.C.S.D.B., f.41vo.

ingenuity of the artist than in the appreciation of the work of art, and his omissions are often more striking than the comments he does make. Though he praises the library of the Monastery of S. Marco in Florence, for example, he does not mention Fra Angelico's work there; the old sacristy at S. Lorenzo in Florence is mentioned, but not Michaelangelo's Medici tombs, which admittedly he might not have seen completed when the first draft of the Descrittione was completed, but some reference could have been added (f. 41, f. 44). Nothing is said about any Roman or Venetian work of the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

Alberti is nevertheless indirectly connected with two important works of art in the church of S. Domenico in Bologna. Firstly he was one of those involved in commissioning the intarsia work on the choir stalls and doors of the sacristy, which was worked by Fra Damiano Zambelli of Bergamo, begun in the fifteen-thirties, and given the name of La Leandra<sup>127</sup>. Fra Damiano's work is highly praised by Alberti for its skill and precision, and the wonderful way it resembles painting. He enjoyed an international reputation for his work, but that done in Bologna, as Alberti says, could hardly have been surpassed. The first panels produced in 1538 were originally intended for the frontals of S. Dominic's chapel. They depict scenes from the saint's life, and are now to be found in the sacristy. It must have been these, together with the seven central choir stalls, which so impressed the Pope and Emperor and their retinues when they were in Bologna<sup>128</sup>. The other choir

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127. Lib. C.C.S.D.B. f. 47.

128. Descrittione, ff. 366-66vo. 'Frate Damiano...huomo di tanto ingegno...in comettere legni insieme, con tanto artificio, che paiono pitture fatto con penello,...' Clement and Charles 'non si isdegnarono amendue di voler minutamente considerare tante eccellente opere, e sommamente poi lodarle'.

stalls were not begun until 1541 and were completed after Zambelli's death in 1549. Secondly Alberti persuaded the senate of Bologna to provide public money for the decoration of the tomb of S. Dominic. Alfonso Lombardi was responsible for the bas-reliefs which, like the inlay work, can still be seen<sup>129</sup>. This coincided with the third centenary of the canonization of S. Dominic and Alberti wrote a small work about the death and canonization of the saint for the occasion. He referred to the beauty of the tomb, declaring that never on all his travels had he seen a finer<sup>130</sup>. 'Unum dixerim... me quamplurima nobilissima sepulcra...vidisse, non solum per Italiam, quam totam peragravi, prout in Geographia ac Topographia ipsius Italiae ostendi, sed etiam per Germaniam Galliasque et adhuc non solum superius ullum hoc sanctissimo sepulcro sed nec par vidi.'

During the 'twenties and 'thirties Alberti was working on the Descrittione, as I have shown, and at the same time he probably also had the idea of writing a history of his native city. Revision of the Descrittione probably continued while Alberti was in Rome again, from 1536 to 1538 as vicar of the convent of S. Sabina there<sup>131</sup>. At this time too he paid another visit to the so-called Cave of the Cumaean Sibyl, and probably to Lake Avernus and the Bay of Baia, which so fascinated him on his previous visit ten years earlier (f.153vo.). He also travelled north in 1536 to Ferrara where he reports having been shown a twelfth century chronicle by 'Messer Battista Papazzone dalla Mirandola' (f.308).

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129. For Lombardi see Vasari, Lives of the Painters, etc., (4 vols.), (London, 1962), II, 328-332. He does not mention Zambelli.

130. De divi Dominici Calaguritani obitu et sepultura, (Bologna, 1535).

131. S. Sabina, Arch. Gen. dei Dom. Ser.IV, Regesta Magistratis Generalis. O.P., 24, f.182.

Back in Bologna after the term of duty in Rome, he was often at the convent council<sup>132</sup> and having more or less completed the Descrittione to his satisfaction, started on his last major work, the history of Bologna. It is worth bearing in mind that he was now sixty years old. The Descrittione had occupied the middle years of his life, the time when other men more ambitious might have sought promotion in the Order. Alberti certainly had influential friends and no doubt could have enjoyed high office, had he wanted it, but his studies clearly came first.

The first book of the History of Bologna was presented to the Senate of Bologna early in 1540. The dedication is dated 2 January 1540, and it appeared in print the following year<sup>133</sup>. The city magistrates thought sufficiently highly of the work in its Italian version to pay for its printing, and according to Fantuzzi, Alberti was promised 75 lire a year for as long as he continued to work on it<sup>134</sup>. A surprising contract, in fact, in view of his clerical vows, but the money could have gone to convent funds, or to assist in financing the printing.

132. Lib. C.C.S.D.B., f. 47 sequ. He signs the minutes in 1536 (post October, the date of the preceeding entry), June 1538, August 1539, in 1540 (twice) in 1541 (twice) and in Sept. 1543. His only absence at this time was in August 1538.
133. Historie di Bologna: Deca prima e libro primo della Deca Seconda, (Bologna, 1451-1543), goes up to January 1254. The first eleven books only were printed during Alberti's lifetime, and a further fifty, up to 1543, remain unedited in an autograph manuscript in the University Library in Bologna. (MS.98). The first eleven books were reprinted posthumously by L. Caccianemici, who also had printed for the first time a further four books, 'Il libro secondo e terzo della deca seconda, (Bologna, 1589), up to 1273. Il supplemento per il quarto libro della Deca Seconda, (Bologna, 1590), up to 1279, and finally Il supplemento ultimo e quinto libro della deca seconda, (Vicenza, 1591), up to 1288.
134. Fantuzzi, op.cit., I, 148-149, quotes the entry in the Senato Consulto for 1540.

The History raises one or two puzzles, and reveals Alberti's ideas on several points which bear some relation to the Descrittione. Firstly, we may ask, when was the History written? It is, like the Descrittione, a sizable work, and must have been a demanding task, not for a few weeks or months, but over several years. Altogether sixty-one books survive, divided into Livian decades. The first decade and half the second have been printed (but only the first eleven books in Alberti's lifetime) and fifty books, written in Italian, from book two of the second decade onwards still remain in an unedited autograph manuscript in the University Library in Bologna. They take the history to the year 1543. In the prologue, dedicating the work to the 'molto illustre senato e potente popolo di Bologna', Alberti claims that he had already written the History in Latin, when he was urged by some citizen friends to translate it into Italian so that everybody could benefit from this most interesting and instructive subject. (The prologue reveals his ideas about the value and purpose of history<sup>135</sup>, and also involves him in the contemporary linguistic controversy<sup>136</sup> . Both of these topics I shall discuss later.

It may be tempting to treat this apologia as little more than the polite fiction, or feigned reticence of a man eager to draw attention to a new work which he was planning and hoping to see in print, but Alberti's genuine humility and devotion makes this less likely in his case. Also in view of the length of the work, it seems feasible that some draft must have been in existence before 1539, and what more natural than that this draft should have been

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135. See below, p. 322-324.

136. See below, p.44 .

in Latin? The first book of the first decade was completed in December 1539<sup>137</sup>, and the last book of the decade in July 1541<sup>138</sup>, and the intervening ones at roughly two monthly intervals in between. It seems likely therefore that it was translated and polished up at a fairly consistent rate of one book every two months, so that allowing for the same rate of production, he could not have completed the remaining fifty-one books before January 1550. This gives rise to another problem. In the Descrittione Alberti claims to have written (concerning Bologna) 'insino ad hora circa settanta quatro libri' (my italics) 'de i quali parte ne sono stampati'<sup>139</sup>. If this statement is correct there are thirteen books unaccounted for, which exist neither in print nor in manuscript. Thirteen books which, perhaps, were never translated into Italian, but remained somewhere in their original Latin. Alternatively one could argue that a printer's error might have been responsible for 'settanta' instead of 'sessanta' reducing the problem to a mere three missing books, and the total number written to sixty-four not seventy-four. Thirteen books does in any case seem an excessive number to cover the years 1543-49, (the latter being the latest year in which the above reference in the Descrittione could have been written). Three seems a more reasonable number to expect, and their disappearance can be attributed to their not having been translated.

It is worth mentioning in the context of missing books that the autograph Italian manuscript in the University Library in

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137. Historie de Bologna, 1541-3, f.G.iv.

138. Ibid. f.GGG.iv.vo.

139. Descrittione, 1550, f291vo. (The statement appears in the first edition printed during 1549, as well as in subsequent ones.)

Bologna lacks the first eleven books, exactly the number that appeared in the first printed edition. This is no coincidence. The explanation must be that they were used by the printer who destroyed them once the printed copy had been made.

The opening book of the History has a certain interest when compared with the treatment of Bologna in the Descrittione. The site, name and origins of the city are discussed, along with a very detailed description of its gates, churches, palaces and other famous buildings. These topics are dealt with in exactly the same order in both works, and clearly derive from one draft<sup>140</sup>. As Alberti refers the reader of the Descrittione to the History for further details, it is tempting to suppose that the History had been written before the Descrittione, but such a reference could easily have been added as the Descrittione was revised, and is far from conclusive evidence.

Of more importance than this, however, is the fact that the History was ultimately printed in Italian, and Italian which would be comprehensible to all classes of Italians. It is in this connection that Alberti is involved in the debate over the supremacy of Latin as opposed to the vernacular, and of Tuscan Italian as opposed to the less polished language used in common parlance<sup>141</sup>. It is evident that he felt the need to justify his language from the long apology and explanation in the dedication. The response to requests had made him depart from his Ciceronian training in

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140. Historie di Bologna, Dec. I, Lib. I. and Descrittione, ff. 291v.-294.

141. For the progress of this argument in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries see B. Migliorini, Storia della lingua italiana, (Florence, 1963), especially pages 320-321.

language and style. The prologue, as I have already pointed out stressed the value and interest of History for everyone. 'Dall'istorie puo` ciascun'ordine e conditione di persone pigliare regola, per laquale felicemente potra passare li suoi giorni, conciosia cosa che quelle ammaestrano il rozzo contadino, l'industrioso artefice, il noble Cittadino il strenuo soldato, il saggio e prudente Capitano, l'alto e famoso Prencipe, e'l consagrato ad Iddio sacerdote, con tutti gl'altri gradi degl'huomini'.<sup>142</sup> He points out the value of history to women also and goes on to explain its importance to the rulers of states. So far, he says, the only histories of Bologna are those of 'mio honorando precettore Giovanni Garzone' and of Achille Bocchi, 'huomo di singolare lettere cosi greche, come latine ornato'. (Bocchi had been given help and encouragement by the authorities of the studium to produce a history. He and his family had been exempt from certain taxes, and he had accumulated sufficient wealth to build a palace for himself and found his own school, the 'Accademia Bocchiale', but he did not prove a profitable investment to the town. The history faded into the background and what little was written was never printed<sup>143</sup>.) Many citizens, Alberti continued, admired Bocchi's elegant style, but pointed out that, 'non essendo concesso ad ogn'uno a Corintho passare, come si dice...', not everyone could

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142. Historie di Bologna, Dec. I Lib. I, f.Aii.

143. Zaccagnini, op.cit., p.276, 278-280; G. Ravera Aira, 'Achille Bocchi e la sua "Historie Bononiensis"', Studie e Memorie per la storia dell'Universita di Bologna, 15, (1942), who points out Alberti's error in assuming that Bocchi was commissioned to write it. He was given a salary after he had presented part of it to the Senate, like Alberti.



benefit from his work.

'Vero è che poi molti Cittadini sapendo non essere dette historie per il gusto del volgo, per essere quelle con ornato, et elegante stilo latino tessute, non essendo concesso ad ogn'uno à Corinto passare, come si dice, '... (having heard that he has written a history in Latin)... 'assai mi pregarono dovessi fane di quelle partecipe la Citta, in volgare descrivendole, acciò ogn'uno instruttione e diletto pigliare ne potesse.'<sup>144</sup>

As a result of these 'honesti petitioni', as he calls them, Alberti is, he continues, translating the work into Italian. So much for the reasoning behind not retaining Latin. It is the language of academics, of the few, not of the ordinary citizen who might be interested in the history of his city, and it would not therefore enable the work to be read by very many people. This argument was not uncommon among scholars, to justify the abandoning of Latin.

However, says Alberti, some people still may not find his work to their taste because he has not used 'quella polita e dolata lingua Tosca'. In view of the complexities of this issue I shall quote the following argument in full.

'Forse parerà alli sollevati ingegni non essere questa nostra opera per il loro gusto, etiandio dilettrandosi della volgar lingua, per non essere scritta con quella polita e dolata lingua Tosca, come hora molti scriveno, non havendo seguito Dante, il Boccaccio, et il Petrarca con le osservazioni del Fortunio, Bembo, Clarito, Philotheo, Tressino, e de molti altri curiosi, rari, e nobili scrittori di nostra eta, della volgare lingua ristoratori, ma se consideranno la cagione perche cosi l'ho scritta senza quelle osservazioni, m'haveranno iscusato. Ho pigliato questo incarico non curandomi di tanta osservanza, per beneficio del volgo, e di quelli non hanno intelligenza de latine lettere, ne anchora son'occupati nelle osservazioni della lingua Tosca, conciosia che quelli hano peritia de latinita, potranno sodisfare a suoi honesti voti, leggendo l'histoire del faondo Bocchio, e non manco gli osservatori della lingua

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144. Historie di Bologna, Dec, I, Lib.I, ff.Aiivo.-Aiii.

Thosca, havendo cognitione de latini et osservati vocaboli del Petrarca, di Dante, e del Boccaccio, per liquali facilmente intendere si possono le cose latine, benche dal latino discosto sovente paiano. E cosi solamente hò atteso à descrivere la sostanza delle cose con vera integrità, non molto curandomi degli accidenti. Perchè s'haves'io voluto ornare questa nostra opera, con quelli esquisiti vocaboli da molti eccellenti scrittori della volgare lingua hora usati, non essendo poi dal rezzo volgo inteso, overo da pochi, sovente passarebbono molti di mala voglia parte dell'istoria senza intelligenza, e perchiò serebbe senza frutto, e senza piacere. Egliè ben vero che mi sono sforzato usare tal parlare che non serà però tanto rozzo riputato, ne anche tanto oscuro per li vocaboli, che non sia tenero, dolce, facile, sincero, piacevole, e da tutti inteso, come potra dare sentenza il candido e giusto lettore.' 145

So this work is for the benefit of the common crowd, for those who do not know Latin, and might equally well be put off by too much elegant phraseology and 'esquisiti vocaboli' in the vernacular and not understand what they are reading. One can hardly believe that Alberti expected the peasant or artisan to turn avidly to the History of Bologna. It would, after all, be unlikely that they could even read. But no doubt some of the cittadini, though literate, were certainly not inclined to wade through elegant, rhetorical prose and unfamiliar words to find out the facts about Bologna's past government and politics.

So long as these facts appeared clearly expressed, this was all that mattered to them. As Alberti points out, the scholars who were fussy about the use of Tuscan idioms could be expected to be able to read Latin, and so to enjoy the writings of Garzone or Bocchi. (Although perhaps it is as well to remember that these works were not printed, and Alberti hoped that his would be, although he might well have expected Bocchi's and Garzone's to have

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145. Historie di Bologna, f.Aiii.

suffered the same fortunes as his own.)

There is an interesting foot-note to the argument, in which Alberti points out that the reader will, however, find Latin quotations in the text. He should not be annoyed at this. They are there for a good reason.

'Questa non senza ragione hò fatto, cioè per sodisfare ad alcuni nasutuli, ò siano gioiletti, ò vogliamo dire, favioli, liquali non havendo veduto gli antichi scrittori (se in volgare le loro autorita havess'io posto) forse, anzi senza forse, direbbono da me finte fussero. Et così leggendo dette sentenze in latino, come giaceno, taceranno, maggiormente con facilita possendole ritrovare, mostrandoli fedelmente il luoghi dalli quali sono state cavate'. 146

The use of these quotations is not so monstrous, since some of the most excellent (presumably classical) authors include Greek quotations,

'sicome in più loghi è fatto da Cicerone maestro della Romana eloquenza, Cosa invero che molto più mostruosa di questa nostra serebbe, quando mostruosa fusse da riputare, perchè non solamente è differenza dell'interpretazione, ma anchora delli caratteri.'

A curious argument, presumably intended to imply that something written in different characters was even further beyond the comprehension of the ordinary citizen, than something merely in a different language.

A similar justification for the vernacular appears in the introduction to Alberti's translation of the younger Pico's Libro detto Strega, printed seventeen years earlier, where he apologises for not having followed the Tuscan canon, again for the benefit of the 'rozzo volgo'. People may wonder, he says, that he has not followed the rules and regulations of the 'leggiadro Fortunio, o

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146. Historie di Bologna, f.Aiii.vo.

dallo amenevole e gentile Messer. Marc. Antonio (Flaminio) della età nostra dilitie', or 'il sottile indagnatore e osservatore della limata lingua Msr. Geronimo Clarito', or 'il dotto e curioso Sanazaro, o l'arguto e terso Bembo, o il candido e dilettevole Bandello' etc. 'Cessarano di maravigliarsi se considerano qualmente ho pigliato conte sta fatica....cioè di fare parlare in volgare questo libro....piu presto per il rozzo volgo, che per li dotti huomini.'<sup>147</sup>

Alberti evidently appreciated that the printed book might reach a fairly wide public and should therefore be designed for such a public to read, if they could benefit from it in any way. Another example of the same idea comes over in his translation of Fra Vincentio da Bologna's Praeclara operetta dello ornato delle donne, where he writes in the preface, 'Anchora ha lo voluto involgare scrivere, acciò sia profitevole a qualunque grado di persone Italiano, vero è con maggiore modestia di favellare gli sia stato possibile, in questo luogo, e più agrevolmente'.<sup>148</sup>

These ideas, interesting for their own sake, take on a new importance when we turn to the Descrittione. Here we find no apology or explanation for not writing in Latin, and from the comments above we can thus fairly safely infer that it was not intended simply as a book of reference for academics. There is no hint that it might have been composed first in Latin, so that it represents a departure from the norm for Alberti, who had otherwise

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147. Libro detto strega, o delle Illusioni del Demonio del Signore Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, Dialogo volgarizzato dal.. P(adre) F(rate) L(eandro) delli Alberti. (1524), f.aa.ii.  
 148. Praeclarae operetta dello ornato delle donne...per il Venerabile Padre Frate Vincentio da Bologna dell'ordine de Predicatori. (?1530).

been involved in translating into Italian but not actually writing in the vernacular. Alberti nowhere indicates who his reader might be, he is only the 'curioso lettore'<sup>149</sup>. Alberti's vocabulary is simple, if somewhat Latinate, with little concession to regional peculiarities. This surely is where the appeal of the Descrittione lay, it was designed for 'qualunque grado di persone Italiane', if we are to accept that what Alberti had already said about the simple vernacular was a view which he held to be generally applicable. Scholars, it is true, would be more likely to find in the Descrittione specific information on the origins of place-names, for example, on the ancient inhabitants of an area, or on other antiquarian, historical or geographical topics. But the non-specialist general reader, not, no doubt, the 'rozzo volgo', but every type of person with some elementary education, would find something to interest him in a work of such encyclopedic proportions. Since there is no introductory preface to the work we are left to draw our own conclusions about who the intended readers might be. The language in this context does seem to be a sure indication that it was intended for as wide an audience as possible.

Alberti's ideas on style and language had become capable of considerable adaptation to suit the needs of the reader. It is worth noting that he did consider that Tuscan too had a place in the literary scene, if we are to accept that Giovanni Filoteo Achillino's dialogue 'Annotazioni della volgar lingua' in which he appears as defender of standard Tuscan is representative of his

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149. Descrittione, e.g. f. 465, 463vo. (curiosi ingegni?).

personal views<sup>150</sup>. Achille Bocchi appears in the dialogue as the mouth-piece of Achillino's own views, defending his poem Il Fidele against accusations made by the other speakers that its language is not 'integramente thosco'. Fra Leandro, as Achillino calls him, is on the side of pure Tuscan and is referred to as 'della Thosca lingua professore'<sup>151</sup>, but he does not play a major role in the discussion. There is evidence that Achillino thought Alberti a pleasant and cheerful person for he writes 'Et F. Leandro allegramente (come è sua consuetudine) così disse..' <sup>152</sup>. Alberti certainly seems to have found Achillino a man of exemplary character, and varied achievements. His collection of antiquities called for special praise (f.299-300). Achillino's dialogue was partly

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150. Giovanni Filoteo Achillino, Annotationi della volgar lingua, (Bologna? 1536). Achillino, 1466-1538, contributed to the preliminaries to the Descrittione, and was a collector of antiquities. Malagola, ...Antonio Urceo... p.81. Achillino was succeeded as professor in Bologna by his more famous pupil Pietro Pomponazzi, the most important sixteenth-century Aristotelian scholar. Achillino was not so brilliant as Pomponazzi, but was still a good scholar and a follower of Averroes. See Eugenio Garin, Italian Humanism, (Oxford, 1965), p.136. As one of the famous men of Bologna he is singled out for unusually lengthy praise in the Descrittione (f.299<sup>v</sup>-300). 'In lui ritrovasi tal'ingegno che ad ogni atto virtuoso era adagiato, concio fosse cosa che parimente in esso combattea la cognition delle lettere grece, e latine, e non meno l'eloquenza, con la poesia, tanto volgare, quanto litterale.' He was also skilled in music and singing and could play various different instruments. 'Pocchia tanto si dilettaua d'antichità c'havea ragunato gran moltitudine di statue di marmo antiche, e altresì di medaglie d'oro, argento, e di bronzo, nelle quali si vedeano le vere effigie de gl'Imperatori, consoli, e Capitani Romani, e d'altri huomini famosi antichi, che forse in pochi luoghi d'Europa in tanto numero, e in tanto eccellenza si ritrovano'. Among them was a head of Cicero's daughter and a head of Seneca, both very fine. He left several 'curiose opere' among them 'l'annotatione della volgar lingua e il Fedele in versi volgari opera dotta e curiosa'. Alberti continues that he could write much more about him, showing the 'candita della sua vita', but to be brief he will leave it to the history of Bologna.

151. Achillino, op.cit., f.8.

152. Ibid. f.29. I am grateful to Dr. A. Freedman for help on the question of the language of the Descrittione.



inspired by the controversy he was involved in with another noted scholar and teacher of rhetoric in the studium, Romolo Amaseo, who opposed the use of Italian in literary works<sup>153</sup>. He no doubt also knew Alberti, since he was a friend of Flaminio and Bocchi, and he had contact with a wide circle of humanists, including Pietro Bembo, Aldus and Cardinal Pole, who was his pupil.

It is continually brought home to one that Alberti was moving among the intellectual élite of his day. He was in touch with not only some of the most influential Italian theologians, but also a group of scholars with an international reputation, men who had studied, taught or travelled in Italy and north of the Alps<sup>154</sup>.

I have already remarked upon Alberti's apparent lack of interest in promotion in the Order, but nevertheless he was no doubt respected in the convent for his scholarship and latterly as a senior member of the community. It was, according to Echard, under his auspices that the Archbishop of Upsala and his companions came to lodge there in 1541<sup>155</sup>. Echard tells the story of how Alberti made another devoted friend by the help he gave to the unfortunate cleric. During attempts to deal with Lutheran heretics in Sweden the Archbishop had been driven from his church and lands and, with others similarly afflicted, had made his way to Italy,

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153. 1489-1552. He was professor of Greek in Bologna, 1513-20 and 1534-38; Zaccagnini, *op.cit.*, pp. 275, 282-83, also secretary to the Senate in Bologna from 1550, and a papal secretary.

154. Another scholar worth mentioning for his friendship with Flaminio, Bocchi and Achillino, and hence almost certainly with Alberti, is the younger Beroaldo, 1470-1518, a Latinist and teacher of rhetoric and poetry in Bologna. Zaccagnini, *op.cit.*; Cosensa, *op.cit.*, I; L. Frati, *op.cit.*, *Descrittione*, 299vo. Even more noteworthy was Andrea Alciati, see below, p. 61. Alberti also had contacts with the Neapolitan literary circle as he says that he met Leonardo Nugarolo there: 'qual conobi à Napoli, ritrovandomi con Giacomo Sannazzaro, e con molti altri huomini litterati'. (f. 413vo.).

155. Echard, *op.cit.*, II, 137-138.

a penniless exile. For some time they were looked after in Venice by the patriarch, Jerome Quirini, then Alberti welcomed them to Bologna and attended them with great kindness and generosity, giving them accommodation in the convent for as long as they wished, helping them in preparations for their journey to Rome. In 1547, Echard continues, on hearing that the archbishop was returning from Rome to Venice, Alberti again invited him to stay in Bologna, and received a reply expressing heartfelt gratitude to him for all he did to help and comfort the expatriates<sup>156</sup>.

The archbishop in question was Johannes Magnus, ex-primate of Sweden and papal legate, who was accompanied by his brother, none other than Olaus Magnus the author of the famous map of northern Europe, which was printed in Venice in 1539 under the auspices of Quirini<sup>157</sup>. Olaus shared Alberti's interest in descriptive geography. He followed up the map with a descriptive work, Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus, (Rome, 1555), which incorporated the type of topographical, ethnographical, economic and political information displayed on the map. As we have seen the Descrittione must have been all but complete by the time of Olaus' visit to Bologna, but no doubt the content of their respective works and the methods of collecting information, gave them plenty of food

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156. Ibid., p.138 'Consolator amantissime, imo per amplius semper agere conabor; quia...me et coexules meos ex hospitio nimis incommodo et salutis nostrae plurimo contrario extractos in domum vestram deduxistis summaque benevolentia et nunquam obliviscenda liberalitate fovistis et recreastis; imo a faucibus mortis jam, jam pereuntes reduxistis.'
157. Carta marino et Descriptio septentrionalium terrarum ac mirabilium rerum in eis contentarum, diligentissime elaborata Anno Domini 1539 Veneciis liberalitate Reverendissimi Domini Jeronimi Quirini. (Venice, 1539), see E. Lynham, The Carta Marina of Olaus Magnus, Venice 1539 and Rome 1572, (Jenkintown, 1949), pp.2-3. Lynham does not mention Olaus' visit to Bologna, nor his contact with Alberti. Briefe von Johannes und Olaus Magnus, (edited by Gottfried Buschbell, (Stockholm, 1932) includes a letter from Johannes to Alberti dated 1543, and several from Olaus from Bologna between Sept. 17 1547 and March 10 1548 and one from Bologna April 24 1549.



for conversation. When Johannes died in 1544 Olaus was made nominal archbishop of Uppsala by the Pope. The convent was also visited in 1543 by the Bishop of Armenia, who was suitably impressed by the devotion of the Dominicans, 'dicendo non ritrovarsi altri Chierici (sic) nella detta provincie eccetto che i Frati Predicatori' (f.297vo.).

iv. The printing of the Descrittione and Alberti's last years.

The last ten years of Alberti's life must have been very fully occupied with the History of Bologna, but he still kept the Descrittione up to date and negotiations were begun to get it printed<sup>158</sup>. In 1544 he was writing to his friend from Ferrara, Gasparo Sardi<sup>159</sup> asking him for news on the possibilities of printing the Descrittione, and of negotiations with 'Joann Andrea de O/ana bibliopolae'<sup>160</sup>. The following year Sardi reveals that he had been seeking the help of the Ferrarese orator in Venice,

158. Descrittione, f.18, 'nell'anno 1548 piglio il Ducato (of Genoa) Gasparo de Grimaldi...che ora lo tiene nel '49.', f.358, records the death of Cardinal Uberto da Gambara 'quest'anno 1549 in Roma'; f.366vo., Fra Damiano died 'quest'anno 1549 a i 30 di Agosto'; f.139vo. Paul III's death in 1549 is mentioned; f.158-159 he refers to an event of 1538 as being 'four years ago', so he must have been writing in 1542. f.185vo. he refers to the sack of Reggio Calabria by the Turks in 1543, and there are other examples of such revision.

159. Cosenza, op.cit., IV, 319<sup>4</sup>, gives no dates, only 15th.-16th. century. He was a noted humanist who wrote a history of Ferrara. Historie Ferrarese, (Ferrara, 1556), cf. Descrittione, f.313vo. 'Parimente di continuo si far conoscer Gasparo Sardo, eccellente historico, quanto vale in scriver l'histoire de i signori da Este...' Alberti read Sardi's work before it was printed, as can be seen from the Descrittione, and from a letter he wrote to Sardi praising the work (in Bib. Estense. MS. Alpha G.1.15).

160. Letter from Alberti to Sardi dated 2 January 1544, in Bib. Est. MS Alpha G.1.15. No Venetian or Bolognese printer seems to fit this description. He may have been Ferrarese.

Jacopo Tebaldi in trying to arrange for its printing in Venice.

Sardi wrote to Tebaldi, 'Et perche` lui ha pratica con uno stampadore li me sareti cosa gratissima selge (sic) bisogna il vostro aiuto con detto stampitore.'<sup>161</sup> By 1548 arrangements were still being

made and printing had not yet started. Alberti wrote to Sardi 'Quanto alla Italia gia` ho in casa da 80 risme di carta et expectamo le lettere tragetate da Vinegia, le quale havute essendo il resto in ordine, se la darà principio in nome del Signore.'<sup>162</sup> Alberti,

it seems, was responsible for obtaining the paper and type, presumably extra type would be needed to cope with such a large volume. By now he had settled for the Bolognese printer Anselmo Giaccarelli, who was responsible for the 1550 first edition. Work had started but only 40 folios were printed, ten months later, when Alberti wrote again to Sardi, 'Quanto all'Italia insino ad hora ne sono stampati da 40 folii, et si seguita.'<sup>163</sup> Trouble with the workmen was another cause of delay. In July Alberti wrote that

161. For this and the following references see A. Campori, 'Sei lettere di Fra Leandro Alberti a Gasparo Sardi ed una del Sardi a Jacopo Tebaldi', Atti. e Mem. di R. Deput. di storia patria per le provincie modenese e parmensi, I, (1864), 413-420.

The letters are as follows,

- |      |                               |                |              |
|------|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| I.   | Alberti to Sardi from Bologna | 3 July 1548,   | p. 417.      |
| II.  | " " " " "                     | 6 April 1549,  | pp. 417-418. |
| III. | " " " " "                     | 7 July 1549,   | pp. 418-419. |
| IV.  | " " " " "                     | 29 July 1549,  | p. 419.      |
| V.   | " " " " "                     | 13 Sept. 1549, | pp. 419-420. |
| VI.  | " " " " "                     | 20 Oct. 1549,  | p. 420.      |

and Sardi to Tebaldo from Ferrara, 23 Jan. 1545, p. 420.

In future notes the letters from Alberti will be referred to by number only. Campori says that the letters I-V are from Bibl. Palatino, and that VI and Sardi's are from the R. Archivio Palatino. The autograph copies of the first five are in fact now contained in Bib. Estense. MS. Alpha G.1.15, together with the two letters mentioned above (notes 159 and 160) and a third dated 21 June 1548 which seems to directly precede No. I of Campori's. See below p. 58 note 174.

162. Letter I.

163. Ibid. II.

one of the printers had run away and another wanted time off.

'La nostra Italia è caminato il giorni passati alquanto lentamente perche è fuggito uno de i stampadori l'altro ha chiedono licentia, e cosi lentamente sono procedute le cose; pur alquanto sono relevatore et si comincia a far forte, et siamo a 222 carte,<sup>164</sup>.

For a month or so the printers must have been doing their best, for Alberti continues, 'Se havessero seguitati li stampadori come haveano fatto per un mese, non dubito che seria stata finita per tutto questo presente mese, onde non sarà poco se la forniscano per tuto il sequente.'<sup>165</sup>

The labour situation did not get any easier as the month continued, and on 29th he was writing,

'lentissimanente si procede (the Italia) per esser partiti quasi tutti i lavoranti. Io non so quando la sarà finita. Siamo

hora nello Abruzzo. Et ne havemo da 120 fogli.'<sup>166</sup> In September

Alberti was able to ask Sardi to tell Lanfranco Gessi that honourable mention had been made of him in the section on Terra di Lugo which

had by then been printed, 'dite al Sr. Gipsio che hora è stampata la memoria di Sua S. in Lugo onde siamo arrivati'<sup>167</sup>. And by

October the end was in sight, 'Quanto all'Italia nostro ne havemo da circa 370 Carthe st siamo di la del Po, nella Gallia Transpadana passero alla Marca Trevigiana et al Ducato di Frioli, et all'Histria et alla Citta di Vinegia, et sic finis erit, piacendo ad Iddio.

Se lavora molto forte onciosia cosa che ne havemo al giorno un foglio et mezzo stampato. Invero sarà un granvolume, non sarà

164. Letter III.

165. Ibid.

166. Ibid. IV.

167. Ibid. V cf. Descrittione, f.285, 'Hora da gran nome a Lugo Lanfranco Gipsio giureconsulto celeberrimo, huomo saggio et pratico nel trattar le cose dello stato, il quale hora tratta le cose con somma prudenza et integrità d'Hercole Duca di Ferrara'.

meno di 400 che saranno 200 fogli senza la tavola.<sup>168</sup>

Alberti's estimate was conservative, in fact the first edition ran to 469 leaves with another 28 leaves for the index. With 100 leaves or 50 folios to print, we may assume that the printer's efforts were not always 'molto forte', as it took him until January to complete the work, which even allowing for holy days and holidays would make the rate of production nearer to one folio a day<sup>169</sup>. On the other hand there can have been no more major upsets, and Alberti must have been relieved to have it finished at last. He certainly seems to have kept very close supervision over the printers, despite the fact that the Giaccarelli father and son were considered the leading Bolognese printers of their day<sup>170</sup>. In 1547 Anselmo Giaccarelli had been given an annual subsidy of 200 lire for seven years guaranteed and the unprecedented title of 'Impressore del governo o camerale' by the Bolognese senate.<sup>171</sup> Considering the high standard of work which Giaccarelli generally produced, one wonders why Alberti wanted a Venetian printer for the Descrittione. It may have been difficult or expensive to obtain Giaccarelli's

168. Letters, VI.

169. Descrittione, 1550, f. 469vo. Colophon: 'In Bologna per Anselmo Giaccarello dell'anno MDL del Mese di Genaro'.

170. A. Sorbelli, Storia della Stampa in Bologna, (Bologna, 1927), pp.101-103. Anselmo Giaccarelli died or retired c.1557, and his son or brother Antonio continued his work.

171. *Ibid.*, p.102. Sorbelli thinks that he possibly came to Bologna with this in mind, and offered to set up a press where it would be of use to the studium. He was not however the first to print there, the Bonardi family and Grossi di Carpi were established in the 1530's, and Hieronymus de Benedictis and others before that. Alberti had employed local printers for his previous works. Giaccarelli came from Coreggio as Alberti tells us in the Descrittione, f.324vo. 'Sforzarsi Anselmo Giaccarelli di far nominare questa sua patria facendo fabricare belli edifici in Bologna (ove dimora) e havendo drizzato la stamparia d'eleganti carateri di lettere, per la quale ha meritato d'essere stipendiato dal Senato Bolognese, et annoverato fra i cittadini'.

services; on the other hand there must have been prestige value in obtaining a Venetian printer who could bring the work to the notice of a wider public. Sardi was of the opinion that it would sell well when he wrote to Tebaldi in 1545 'l'opera sara molto bona et venale al mio giudicio, pero tanto vi l'arecomando quanto so et posso'<sup>172</sup>. Certainly the personal watch kept over the precious work in Bologna could hardly have been extended to Venice. Nevertheless it was in Venice that the second edition was published in 1551, by Nicolini da Sabbio,<sup>173</sup> with Alberti's consent, no doubt, as he was still alive.

Alberti's correspondence with Sardi deals not only with the publication of the Descrittione. Gasparo Sardi was a philosopher and scholar and author of a history of Ferrara, where he was attached to the court of Ercole II d'Este. The letters contain several references to the academic argument, the 'Questione de lana caprina', or dispute about a trifle as Alberti calls it, which was raging between Sardi and Ricci de Lugo over the spelling of the family name of the Este family<sup>174</sup>. A fruitless discussion it may well have been, but Alberti and his friends seem to have supported Sardi, despite regretting the continuation of the quarrel.

172. Campori, op.cit., p.420.

173. Descrittione, 1551, Colophon, ' In Vinegia per Pietro e Giovan. Maria fratelli de i Nicolini da Sabio, nell'Anno del Signore MDLI del Mese di Maggio. For a discussion of the editions of the Descrittione see below, Appendix I.

174. Campori, op.cit., letters I, II, III, IV, V. and Bib. Est. MS. Alpha G.1.15. letter dated 21 June 1548 from Alberti supporting Sardi. Bartolomaeus Riccius da Lugo 1490-1569 taught the sons of Ercole, wrote Defensio contra Gasparem Sardium, de praenomine, nomine, cognomine... Ricci said that the name should be Atestius, and not Atestinus or Estensis as Sardi wrote. Ricci became abusive, a pacification was followed by further outbursts and then silence.

Alberti kept in touch with other friends in Ferrara as well as Sardi and his son Alessandro. He speaks kindly of, and sends greetings to 'il p. frate Michele', and in July 1548 thanks him for some advice he has given<sup>175</sup>. Lilio Giraldi a scholar and friend, (writer of two laudatory epigrams in the preliminaries to the Descrittione), is frequently mentioned and Alberti sends him a message via Sardi that his work on the gods is highly thought of in Bologna. 'Dira V.S. al nostro Lilio che molto è apprezzato qui in Bologna il libro delli Dii ch'ha fatto.'<sup>176</sup> He continues, 'et che havendone copia volentieri lo pregarei me ne desse uno che similmente ne mandero uno dell'Italia nostra stampata che sarà.' He also sends him a message about a book which Giraldi has requested, and tells him that the book-seller in Trentino will send a copy as soon as he has it.<sup>177</sup> Alberti's high opinion of his friend is shown in the Descrittione, 'Da nome à Ferrara Lilio Gregorio Giraldi di continuo scrivendo cose, overo traducendole di greco in latino, per le quali dimostra di quanto ingegno sia.' Few men can be found to equal his knowledge of Latin and Greek. 'Oltra di ciò è di tanta tenacità di memoria, che pense che quello haverà letto una volta sempre gli sia presente.'<sup>178</sup> No doubt Alberti was also aware of his friend's interest in archaeology, though he does not mention it.<sup>179</sup> Another classical scholar, Marcantonio Antimaco

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175. Letters, I, IV, VI.

176. Letters, I, II, III, IV, VI. (1479-1552) He was a friend of Ricci and of Renée of France, Cosenza, V, 217. The work is Historia de Diis gentium in Syntagmata XVII distributa.

177. Letter IV.

178. Descrittione, f.313vo.

179. Cosenza, op.cit., V, 217. He travelled to Naples, Capri and Milan.

of Mantua had sent a Greek epigram in praise of the Descrittione, for which Alberti promises to show his gratitude once the work is finished.<sup>180</sup> Not only are messages sent to friends in Ferrara, but news is passed on about members of their circle in Bologna. Two of these who feature frequently in the correspondence are 'il Nostro Monsignore', as he calls Giovanni Pietro Ferreto Bishop of Milo<sup>181</sup>, and Sebastiano Corrado da Arceteo who taught in the studium at Bologna<sup>182</sup>. Both of these are praised in the Descrittione<sup>183</sup>, and both contributed to the prefatory commendations of the work. Ferreto wrote among other things a history of Ravenna, and Corrado was especially interested in classical antiquities and Roman institutions. He held the chair of humanity in the studium from 1545-1556<sup>184</sup>.

These letters to Sardi make it clear that Alberti was friendly with several other scholars like Giraldi, Corrado and Antimaco who shared his interest in antiquarianism. It is unfortunate that we have no surviving correspondence from the earlier period when he was writing the Descrittione. There must have been points concerning the derivation of names or the interpretation of archaeological evidence, inscriptions etc., on which he would have valued opinions

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180. Campori, op.cit., letter IV. The epigram does not seem to have been included in the work, but Alberti praises Antimaco as a Latin and Greek scholar. Descrittione, f.352vo.

181. Campori, op.cit., letters I, II, III, IV, V, VI.

182. Letters II, III, IV, V.

183. Descrittione, ff.277vo.-278. 'Ora vive Giovan Pietro Ferreto Vescovo Milense, huomo di elegante ingegno, e di lettere latine, et greche ornato,... and ibid. f.327vo. 'che dirò di Sebastiano Corrado huomo ben qualificato con la peritia delle lettere non solamente latine ma anche grece. Ora legge con gran concorso de gli studenti in Bologna, stipendiato dal senato...'

184. Zaccagnini, op.cit., p.329.

of other scholars. They in turn were enthusiastic about the printing of his work which would no doubt greatly assist their own investigations.

At this point it is worth mentioning that among other contributors to the praises of the Descrittione was Andrea Alciati 'Iurisconsultus'<sup>185</sup>, an outstanding lawyer and scholar of international reputation, with a great interest in antiquities and philology, who taught both Calvin and Erasmus. The latter wrote admiringly of him that he was 'unicum huius aetatis miraculum ac studiorum delictum'<sup>186</sup>. Alberti must have valued the interest and opinions of such a great figure. Indeed he is unstinting in his praises in the Descrittione telling how Alciati taught in France, Pavia, Bologna and Ferrara to huge numbers of students from all over Europe. 'Concorrono ad esso, si come all'Oracolo d'Apolline', he says. 'Non potrei esplicare il singolare ingegno, che in lui si ritrova, e la peritia della lingua greca, e latina, e la cognition delle civili leggi, e delle altre degne scienze, e delle antichita, da pochi conosciute,' (my italics), an accomplishment which must have especially endeared him to Alberti. Skill in oratory and in composing elegant verses were among his other talents. Alberti concludes, 'Invero sarei molto lungo si volesse descrivere (come egli merita) la grandezza del suo ingegno, e l'affabilità che in esso si ritrova. Altrove sarò più lungo, benché siano però manifeste le sue nobil virtù, e la sua dottrina, hormai à tutta la parte d'Europa, per esse volgare le opere da lui

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185. 1492-1550? Cosenza, op.cit., I, 99-106. cf. Descrittione, f.391vo. He must have been alive in 1549.

186. Zaccagnini, op.cit., pp.321, 206.



composte.' (f.391vo.) This is in fact one of the longest eulogies in the Descrittione. Sardi, Giraldi, Corrado and Flaminio look pale figures in comparison. In view of Alberti's habit of describing people in somewhat stereotyped language, it is interesting to find that he does occasionally dwell longer on a really outstanding personality, even mentioning his character as well as his intellectual achievements. He does not claim to have been taught by Alciati, but he probably came into contact with him when Alciati was in the studium.

The printing of the Descrittione was the culmination of a lifetime's researches. It is a work of monumental size and complexity, remarkable by any standards, and made even more so by the fact that its author also found time to produce other works requiring similar industry, the De Viris and the History of Bologna, not to mention the lost Ephemerides, and other short pieces. The budding orator, looked for by Garzone had never emerged, but a diligent biographer, historian, antiquarian, observer of natural phenomena (one hesitates to call him a geographer) did, and he made his mark just as surely in these fields.

The last known fact about Alberti's life brings us back to the Dominican Order, and its long established ties with the reform movement and the inquisition in Italy. As the need for the inquisition spread, Dominicans, as had been customary in the past, frequently took leading positions in the organization. I have already mentioned how Giorgio Casalensis was made inquisitor of Cremona, Crema, Brescia and Bergamo in 1551, succeeding Mozzolino,

who took over the office in Milan and Lodi<sup>187</sup>. From the setting up of the office in Bologna in 1517, it was always held by a Dominican, (Ferrariense held it 1519-26), and according to Banfi and Battistella when Alberti took it up in 1550 he had already served as vicar to the inquisitor-general Stefano Foscherari<sup>188</sup> and as inquisitor, presumably temporarily, for a time, from 1544-46 when Tommaso Maria Beccadelli was officially inquisitor<sup>189</sup>.

Battistella, and more recently Delio Cantimori<sup>190</sup>, both point out how need for the inquisition was growing in Bologna, somewhat surprisingly, since Bologna generally paid her dues obediently to the papacy. But the city was a centre for foreigners, on the main commercial routes and close enough to Ferrara and Modena to feel the winds of change that were blowing there. Groups of protestant sympathisers in the studium were corresponding with Bucer in Strasburg, and after Rome and Ferrara, Bologna was one of the main centres of publication and distribution of protestant propaganda which the 1543 papal edict was aimed against. During the thirties and forties the situation was becoming quite serious, in 1538 there was a burning of heretical books in the Piazza, and the papal legate there in 1544-47 complained of the growing number of Lutherans. Baldassare Altieri wrote to a friend in Germany that

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187. see above, p. 17.

188. In 1532, Banfi, op.cit., p.30. See also his letter written in approval of the work of Fra Giovanni da Fano, 'Opera utilissima vulgare contra le perniciosissime heresie Luterane per li simplici', (Bologna, 1532).

189. A. Battistella, Il S. Ufficio e la riforma religiosa in Bologna, (Bologna, 1905), p.188-189. He tells us that Alberti took up the office again in 1550 'quando torno a Bologna dal suo giro quale visitatore dell'ordine', but he gives no source for this information about Alberti's activities, and in view of Alberti's involvement in the printing of the Descrittione in Bologna at this time, and also his work on the history of Bologna, it seems unlikely that he could have been doing much for the Order.

190. New Cambridge Modern History, IV (Cambridge, 1958), Chapter VIII pp. 251-274, especially pp. 264-274.

a Bolognese citizen was ready to raise 6000 men in favour of evangelical communion if it should be necessary to fight the Pope. When Alberti was appointed he was the first to hold jurisdiction in the city alone, and not in the surrounding districts. In October 1549 he had sent his greetings to 'il P. frate Michele', in a letter to Sardi. He says 'dicendo gliche io ho molto in caro del buon officio che el fa nell'Inquisitione'<sup>191</sup>. Evidently with his mind free from the problems of printing the Descrittione he felt drawn to work for the safeguarding of his religion. As with every task he undertook he worked with great fervour and enthusiasm. To judge from a letter of Paolo Giovio which has a comment on Alberti's earlier inquisitorial work, the genial friar became a vicious fanatic, blood-thirsty and money-grabbing in his desire to rescue lost souls. Giovio's words are so harsh that one can only explain them by suggesting that they represent an attack on inquisitors in general, rather than against Alberti personally. One can scarcely imagine Alberti licking his lips in expectation of burning human flesh and untaxable (or inquisitorial) gifts, as the passage below suggests; nevertheless one must bear in mind that it was always possible for religious fanaticism to play tricks with the character of the mildest man. Giovio was writing in April 1542 to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, and the reference to Alberti is made only in an aside, as he professes his great desire to assist Farnese in his historical enterprises:-

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191. Campori, op.cit., VI. Alberti gives no indication of who Fra Michele was, Fra Michele Gilieri was made inquisitor of the Valtelline and Bergamo in 1545/6/7 (Mortier, op.cit., V, 439), but these dates are earlier than Alberti's congratulations.

'Tanto mo' che stara' fuora Sua Santità, io lavorarò sopra il vostro libro de imperiis, perchè le carezze che V.S. Rev.ma e Ill.ma mi fa me farebbero passare per il bucco della serrature, come fanno le ribalde strighe (sic) di fra Leandro, dolce cosmografo e brusco inquisitore, leccardo del arrosto di carne umana ad odorem suavitatis delle dote infiscalabili'. 192

This seems to be the only reference to Alberti among Giovio's letters, and shows clearly that Alberti's work for the Descrittione was known to Giovio. Perhaps like Flaminio he saw an early draft of the work, but contact between the two men does not seem to have been particularly close.

There is some doubt about the date of Alberti's installation as inquisitor. According to one view he was installed in 1550 by the provincial Angelo da Verona, and was replaced the following year by G. Muzzarelli, which could make 1551 a possible date for his death as given by Campori<sup>193</sup> and Battistella<sup>194</sup>, though the latter names his successor as Reginaldo Nerli of Mantua. In a copy in the convent records of a petition to the master-general dated 1551 his signature appears for the last time as 'Fra Leander Bononiense Inquisitor'<sup>195</sup>. He was present on 9 June 1551 and again on 15 January, presumably 1552<sup>(new style)</sup>, since the entry follows that for June 1551. In which case clearly he was still alive in Spring 1552. Echard admits doubt over the dates, but suggests that

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192. Paolo Giovio, Lettere in Opera, (Rome 1956- ) Edited by Ferrero, Vols. I and II, (I, 311-312). Letter 163, from Bologna, 4 April 1543. See below p.274 for comment on Giovio's chorographic work.

193. Campori, op.cit., p.413.

194. Battistella, op.cit., p.198.

195. L.C.C.S.D.B. ff.52-53vo. Entry dated 1 April 1553 is signed by 'Raynaldus de Mantua Regens et Inquisitor'. Alberti is referred to as inquisitor at Bologna in 1551 in I costituiti di dom. Pietro Manelfi, edited by C. Ginzburg. (Corpus Reformatorum Italicorum), 1970.

since his successor was appointed in 1552 he must have died about then<sup>196</sup>. His conclusions are in general followed, e.g. by Tiraboschi, Nicéron and Touron, who points out that Echard omitted to notice that Alberti had his chronicle 'Ephemerides' written up to 1552, which probably was the last year of his life<sup>197</sup>. The evidence of the Ephemerides is somewhat flimsy, since its existence has been reported for so long at second hand<sup>198</sup>. Equally there is no reason to assume that because the acts of Alberti's tribunal came to an end he must have died. It was an extremely arduous job to take on at any age, there were processes to be compiled, hearings to be presided over, the Scuola to be looked after, the promulgation of bulls and lists of forbidden books, and a multitude of administrative tasks. Since Alberti was already seventy, it is scarcely surprising that he held the office for only one year. Redigonda says he died 'dopo il Marzo del 1552'<sup>199</sup>, and Banfi, Roletto and Almagia choose 1553 as more likely. The latter goes so far as to suggest a date, 9 April, although he gives no source for this. The convent can offer no more information, but inscribed on the fly-leaf of a copy of the 1596 edition of the Descrittione in the library there are the words 'autore mori le 9 Aple 1553' in a hand which is certainly not modern. Roletto reports the chronicler Galeati as giving this exact date but with no source, while, again according to Roletto, G. Marinelli suggests 1556, but cites no

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196. Echard, op.cit., II, 138.

197. Tiraboschi, op.cit., VII (2), 170; Nicéron, op.cit., XXVI, 304; Touron, op.cit., IV, 127.

198. see above p. 14.

199. Redigonda, op.cit., p.700; Rolletto, op.cit., p.458 (refers to a chronicler Galeati).

authority for this<sup>200</sup>. Roletto prefers 1553 on the ground that Alberti showed great interest in the printing of the second (he must mean third) edition of the Descrittione in 1553. The inclusion of events occurring in the year of printing cannot however be considered proof of Alberti's personal interest as Roletto suggests. It was by no means likely that the printer Giovanni Maria Bonelli should have made the odd alteration, indeed he does claim to be editing the text. There is in fact no conclusive evidence for a date of death, except that it must have been after spring 1552.

What kind of picture can be drawn from the jig-saw I have tried to reconstruct? Clearly the author of the Descrittione was an academic rather than a theologian, a man who was prepared to work for his Order but, to make the fifteenth-century distinction, one who in general preferred the contemplative scholarly life to that of action. He was not interested in worldly ambition or the fame of high office; not a career man, though there is no reason to suppose that he could not have been given high office had he wanted it. His education was not unusual for a young man in Holy Orders. He was brought up with the accepted humanist approach to the classics, that they should be studied firstly in order to imitate them, to write and speak well, and secondly for the ideas they might convey. An interest in antiquarianism and history developed early, and with it the idea of constructing a historical, geographical and antiquarian guide to Italy; the Descrittione, itself a sure indication of single-mindedness, dedication and hard

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200. Roletto, op.cit., p.453.

work. This is not the place to discuss Alberti's ideas on geography and history. A study of the Descrittione should illuminate them more thoroughly and reveal the extent of the author's critical powers, whether he had a fresh approach to his subject, how far he was hidebound by convention or his religious views, and so on. Of his curiosity about the world about him there is no doubt. He was ready to travel and explore, absorbing information of every kind with fascination, amazement and care, looking at records, writing to friends, talking to local people, studying classical texts, all with equal dilligence. Mathematics, or the new developments in physics and astronomy do not seem to have attracted him; his geography, for example, was not a scientifically based interest, but that of a pious man enraptured by nature's wonders.

He maintained, one feels, a strong sense of duty to his religion, his Order and his friends. Most of his time was spent in the convent in Bologna, in close contact with university circles there and in Ferrara. His teachers, who were among some of the most noted scholars of their day, became also his fiends. Indeed the large group of scholars with whom he had contacts and among who were many very close friends, is evidence that he was exposed to the most up-to-date thinking on academic and religious matters. On the other hand his life and interests must have been typical of many of his contemporaries, if slightly less exciting. His more retiring personality is revealed perhaps also in the fact that unlike many of his friends he does not seem to have taught in the studium, or held the office of doctor in the convent.

The organization of life in the convent, with peace and quiet to pursue his studies, must have suited him well enough; with few exceptions he kept out of even academic controversies. On the other hand he was not an academic recluse, but part of a wide circle of scholars, with interests stretching from his convent to his city, and from there to the whole of Italy.



Eden Grove

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TUB SIZED

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## CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESCRIPTIVE GENRE IN ITALY BEFORE THE  
APPEARANCE OF THE DESCRITTIONE1. Introduction

In the Descrittione di tutta Italia Alberti undertakes to describe, as the title-page tells us, 'il sito di essa, l'origine, e le Signorie delle Città, e de i Castelli, co i nomi antichi, e moderni, i costumi de'populi, le conditioni de i paesi. Et Piu, gli huomini famosi, che l'hanno illustrata, i Monti, i Laghi, i Fiumi, le Fontane, i Bagni, le Minere; con tutte l'opere maravigliose in lei dalla natura prodotte.' The country was to be portrayed in as comprehensive a manner as possible, with information on all subjects from antiquities and topography to copper-mining and cheese production. From what is known of the author's life one can deduce that his travels made him interested in the world around him, and his intellectual pursuits aroused his curiosity about the past, especially Italy's classical past. It is not my intention in this chapter to turn immediately to the sources he cites and examine how he uses them or what their influence on his writing was. Before doing this I intend to examine such earlier literature as can be found in which the authors make any claim to describe Italy. From this I hope to put Alberti's work in its correct setting and then to compare his treatment of the subject with those of earlier authors to find out whether there was any specific trend which he was following, or whether he was adopting any former work or works as his model.

Since Alberti was trained in classical literature and taught by humanist scholars, one might expect to find him searching among

the writers of Greece and Rome for a literary form in which to present his discoveries. There was indeed a set literary or rhetorical definition of a descriptio. The grammarian Priscianus wrote, 'Descriptio est oratio colligens et praesentans oculis quod demonstrat. Fiunt descriptiones tam personarum quam rerum et temporum et statu et locorum et multorum aliorum.'<sup>1</sup> A description involved a multiplicity of detail surrounding an event; the people involved, the time and scene and place, for example. It was also agreed that the description of a place constituted topography. 'Topographia est loci descriptio, ut apud Vergilium: Est locus Italiae medius sub montibus...etc..'<sup>2</sup>

There does not, however, seem to have been any more precise instructions as to what should be included in a description of a particular country, state or city, though there was a classical canon for encomiastic literature, or works in praise of cities and regions. Instructions for a work 'De laudibus urbium' can be found among the collection of rhetorical works <sup>made</sup> by C. Halm. These state that firstly such a treatise should praise the founders of the city, secondly describe the site and city walls, thirdly the nature of the soil, the customs of the inhabitants and any other claims to fame it may have, and finally any famous men it may have produced.<sup>3</sup>

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1. C. Halm, Rhetores Latini Minores, (Leipzig, 1863), p.558.

2. Ibid, p.73, from the Schemata Dianoeas. cf. p.569, from Emporius, De demonstratura materia. 'Demonstrationes vero urbium locorumque iam non demonstrationes, sed topographiae a plurimis existimantur.'

3. Ibid, p.587, Exerpta Rhetorica e codice Parisino. The Works of Priscianus, at least, were known in the sixteenth century. see R. Sabbadini, Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli xiv e xv (nuove ricerche), (Florence, 1914), pp. 244-5.

Although antecedents of a description of all Italy are being sought, the regional descriptions cannot be entirely overlooked, since they are far more numerous, and contain more detail than any literature dealing with the whole Italian peninsula. Also their format could easily be used to deal with a large area split up into separate towns and regions. Italy as a whole, after all, enjoyed no administrative or political reality during antiquity or the Middle Ages. Regional descriptions for the most part can be termed eulogistic, but they appear within various kinds of works, for example local histories, antiquarian tracts, pilgrim guides and itineraries, and they do not necessarily follow rhetorical precepts, even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although inevitably they include some, if not all, of the topics laid down by the classical theorists. I shall return later in this chapter to the format of the regional description and the city eulogy, but for the present I shall concentrate on such attempts as there were to describe the whole of Italy, before the appearance of the Descrittione.

ii. Descriptions of Italy as a whole

To find anything approaching a historical and geographical description in classical times one turns inevitably to Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy. Diodorus Siculus in his Universal History,<sup>4</sup> gives the origins of his native Sicily, its shape and size, but does not deal with the rest of Italy, while Dionysius of Halicarnassus

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4. Diodorus Siculus, Universal History, translated C.H. Oldfather, (London, 1935), Bk.V.

Another work which fits into the category of historical and geographical descriptions, and which was not used by Alberti, is De origine et situ urbium Italicarum, by the Spanish Iginus, written in the first century B.C.

passes a few sketchy comments on Italy's origins and geography.<sup>5</sup> Strabo, though setting out to write a geography, includes in this term rather more than one might imagine from the title. In his introduction he explains how 'there is need of encyclopaedic learning for the study of geography'.<sup>6</sup> The geographer must be a philosopher, a man of wide experience, since the subject includes arts, mathematics, science, theories of history and myths, geometry and astronomy. His description of Italy in Book V is extremely methodical and includes a discussion of the origins of Italy, its shape and measurements, the origins of place-names and the tribes of each area. In fact history, topography and geography are combined, although the historical content is rarely more than details of tribal origins, combined with a few myths and legends. Since Italy forms only a very small part of the whole geography nothing is dealt with in any great detail, and it is only the more important settlements which are discussed. Strabo's work was well-known in the Eastern Empire, but not among the Romans, even Pliny seems not to have been aware of it. Manuscripts were circulating in Italy in the fifteenth century, when the first Latin translation was undertaken by Guarino da Verona. For fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century writers it was considered to exemplify most ideally the combination of history and geography and was printed several times.

Pliny was a native of north Italy. Although geographical descriptions constituted only a portion of his Natural History, and

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5. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, The Roman Antiquities, translated E. Cary, (London, 1937). Bk. I, Chs. 35, 36, 37.

6. The Geography of Strabo, translated Jones (London, 1917). Bk. I, Ch. 1.

Italy only a part of the geographical section, he apologised for his brevity in dealing in so cursory a manner with 'the land which is at once the foster-child and parent of all lands', etc..<sup>7</sup> He was aware that there were so many celebrated places and that such fame was attached to each nation that it would be impossible to do justice to the city of Rome, for example, the coast of Campania, the splendid climate, or the genius of the inhabitants. He limited himself to describing Italy region by region, roughly following the divisions of the Emperor Augustus, enumerating the main tribes and towns of each region. Like Strabo's, his work deals first with Italy's general shape, size and position. Within each region the main rivers are indicated as guides to the location of towns and the position of tribes. Occasionally he suggests an explanation for the foundation of a city, but there is scarcely any history or place-name analysis.

Strabo and Pliny were also made known to the mediaeval world through their epitomisers. Pomponius Mela's De Situ Orbis, (first century A.D.), is a sketchy geography based on Pliny, and does deal with Italy very briefly, taking the reader round the peninsula from Istria to Liguria, listing the main towns, rivers, mountains and lakes.<sup>8</sup> Pliny, of course, was digested by Solinus (third century) who also drew on Mela, and thus, unwittingly, on Strabo.<sup>9</sup> He

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7. Pliny, Natural History, translated Bostock and Riley (London, 1855) Bk.III, Ch. 6.

8. Pomponii Melae De Situ Orbis, (Lyons, 1538), Bk.II, Ch.4.

9. C. Julii Solini Polyhistor .. (Lyons, 1539), Ch.VIII

heads one of his chapters 'De Italia et eius laudibus, deque peculiaribus multis quae in ea reperiuntur', but there is nothing new in his approach or information.

The third of the classical masters of descriptive geographical writing was Ptolemy, who composed his Cosmographia or Geographia at Alexandria in C.160 A.D. It was the mathematical approach to cartography on which it was based, and the construction of maps on projections which made Ptolemy's rediscovery in the West of such importance. Although some sceptics suggest that the Byzantine manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are not originals, but tenth-century or eleventh-century compilations from Ptolemy's works and the maps productions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, most authorities accept the text as Ptolemy's original. The text of Book III deals with 'Italiae Situs' and defines Italy's geographical position and boundaries, then lists different areas with their tribal divisions and towns. Again the emphasis is on the tribal divisions and where settlements were made. There is no history, place-name analysis nor any sort of discussion.<sup>10</sup> Of more interest to students of sixteenth-century descriptive literature is his initial chapter entitled 'In quo differat Geographia a Chorographia', in which he attempts to define the respective roles of geography and chorography. Firstly geography describes the whole world and chorography describes its tiny parts, the exact sites of cities, ports, villages, etc.. Secondly, chorography describes what a place is like, while geography describes size and measurement,

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10. Ptolemy, Geographia, Bologna, 1477, Rome, 1478. Facsimiles edited R.A. Skelton, (Amsterdam, 1963, 1966)(Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Series 1, Vol. 1, and Series 2, Vol. 6.)

and thirdly chorographers must be painters who can make a likeness of the appearance of a place, while geographers use mathematics to locate the situation of a place. A chorographer thus has to reproduce the visual appearance of a place in words, and not only describe but explain what is before his eyes. Ptolemy also distinguishes cosmography from chorography and geography. These technicalities of form were to be noted especially among German descriptive writers.

Dark Age writers on the world around them produced little of any great originality. The main problem which obsessed the geographers of the third, fourth and fifth centuries was the reconciliation of classical and Christian ideas. Ptolemy had his followers among writers like Ammianus Marcellinus, Macrobius and Martianus Capella, while the Christian encyclopaedic approach to knowledge was responsible for works like Orosius' history of the world, and Isidore of Seville's Origins.<sup>11</sup> These works had their geographical descriptive elements, but there is no surviving work from the early Christian era which devotes any special attention to Italy. This is not the place to discuss early mediaeval geography, but in pursuing the idea of a description of Italy one is drawn into the more thorny problem of why descriptions of what was clearly considered a geographical unit in classical times are hardly to be found among mediaeval writers. It is easy to point to the fragmentation caused by the barbarian invasions, the break-up of the Roman Empire, and the emergence of new political groupings in Western Europe. Italy was divided. The South suffered varying fortunes under the Duke of Benevento, the

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11. G.H.T. Kimble, Geography in the Middle Ages, (London, 1938), Ch. 2.

Normans, Angevins and Aragonese. In the North Imperial claims to the Lombard and Tuscan cities encouraged local unities for self-preservation, while the Pope tried to carve out some sort of territorial state in central Italy, in the face of threats from the Emperor, the King of Sicily and local factions. In spite of these divisions there is still evidence to suggest that Italy was thought of as a particular unit, geographically if not politically. At the end of the seventh century the anonymous writer of Ravenna speaks of that 'patria nobilissima quae dicitur Italia'.<sup>12</sup> The Lombard Communes, when meeting Pope Alexander III at Ferrara in 1117, claimed to be speaking in the name of all Italy, 'universa Italia', and to have fought 'pro honore et libertate Italiae', according to the contemporary chronicler Romoaldus of Salerno.<sup>13</sup> However, there is no record of how they would have interpreted 'Italia' in geographical terms. The question of Italian sentiment, of whether Italians before the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries thought of Italy as a unit and themselves as Italians, is discussed by Gardner, who produces some evidence to show that they did, at least on some occasions, but there is no doubt that these sentiments came second to regional loyalties. Italy was not described as a whole during this period, and even city and regional descriptions are few and far between. Lack of political unity alone does not account for the apparent lack of interest in describing the countryside, territorial divisions, or the foundation and growth of cities. Such topics

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12. See E.G. Gardner, The National idea in Italian Literature, (Manchester, 1921).

13. Romoaldi Archiepiscopi salernitani Annales, in Muratori, RR.II SS, VII pt. 1, (Città di Castello, 1935).



evidently were not popular or fashionable. There were road-books or itineraries of routes to pilgrim shrines, to Rome and to the Holy Land. Arab writers produced books of roads and provinces, climates and kingdoms, but these did not lead to much wide-scale imitation in the West.<sup>13a</sup>

In fact Italy is not treated as a unit in any form of description until Dante's treatise on the Italian language, De Volgari Eloquentia. Here he speaks of the country as divided into two parts by the yoke of the Apennines, 'ceu fictile culmen', like a tile roof, which drips rain water to both sides, draining to the two seas.<sup>14</sup> Dante, as he says, is not making an original remark, but paraphrasing Lucan. He continues, 'Dextrum quidem latus Tyrrenum mare grundatorium habet; laevam vero in Adriaticum cadit'. Dante's idea of the map of Italy was upside down, with Naples and Sicily at the top and the Alps at the bottom. He proceeded to list the various regions on each side of the Apennines (twelve regions and the islands) and then to point out the variations in language to be found. We get some idea how the thirteenth-century or fourteenth-century Italian viewed his own country, its territorial and linguistic divisions, but little more, and it would be impossible to credit Dante with 'describing Italy'; such was not his purpose. Boccaccio however, has rather more claim to inclusion in this discussion. In his work De montibus, silvis, fontibus, lacubus, etc. he is dealing with the identification of natural phenomena throughout the known world.<sup>15</sup> In general he gives little comment

13a. Kimble, op. cit., pp 48-50.

14. Dante, De Volgari Eloquentia, Bk. I, Ch. 10. cf. Purgatorio, XXX, 85-86 where he describes them as, 'the living rafters along Italy's back'. See Lucan, The Civil War, Bk. II. On Dante see P. Revelli, L'Italia nella Divina Commedia, (Milan, 1922), pp 59-73 on the 'confini e regioni d'Italia.' Also G. Vinay, 'Ricerche sul De volgari eloquentia, iii. Apenini devexione clauduntur', Giornale storico della letteratura italiana, 136 (1959), 367-82; and D. Hay, 'The Italian View of Renaissance Italy,' in Florilegium historicale; essays presented to W.K. Ferguson, edited J.G. Eowe and W.H. Stockdale, (Toronto, 1971).

15. Boccaccio, De montibus, silvis etc., (Venice, 1473) No pagination or signatures.

beyond the location of a river or lake with occasionally some name analysis or reference to an important event connected with the place concerned. His professed intention is to sort out the confusion surrounding unidentifiable place names, and his work is arranged alphabetically for easy reference. He too has his map upside down. The Apennines, he says, divide Italy into two parts, and look on the right towards the 'mare inferum', or Tirrenian sea, and on the left to the 'mare superum' or Adriatic. ('a dextris inferum spectans mare; a sinistris autem superum siculum usque fretus progreditur'). He also lists towns to be found on each side of the Apennines. Thus he does make some contribution to the knowledge of contemporary Italy.

Boccaccio's near contemporary, Faccio degli Uberti, is described by Alberti as a geographer.<sup>16</sup> However his lengthy and tedious poem Dittamondo was mainly a compendium on world history, with a few abstractions from the Almagest of Ptolemy concerning the configuration of the earth. Book III, chapter 2 describes Italy in the words of Solinus, with whom the author holds an imaginary dialogue. In fact this is no more than a reiteration of Pliny, and the author begins with the familiar comparison Pliny makes of Italy being shaped like an oak leaf. The following chapters on Italy draw further on Pliny and Solinus, Isidore and Pomponius Mela, and give mainly historical information rather than geographical or topographical descriptions. Another fourteenth-century writer who contributed to contemporary knowledge of Italy was Benzo d'Alessandria,<sup>17</sup> a friar from Como, who

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16. Descrittione, f.43. 'Faccio degli Uberti ingegnoso geografo e poeta laureato che scrisse il Dittamondo'. (He died c.1368, and is not to be confused with Bartolomeo Fazio, a contemporary of Biondo.)

17. On Benzo see R. Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, (Oxford, 1969), pp.24-26; and Hyde, *op. cit.*, pp.329-30; also J.R. Berrigan, 'Benzo d'Alessandria and The Cities of Northern Italy', Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History, 4 (1967), 125-92; 'The Prehumanism of Benzo d'Alessandria'. Traditio, 25 (1969), 249-263.

was writing his Chronicon round about 1316. This was an encyclopaedic work, in the tradition of Solinus and Isidore (two of his most important sources), beginning with the history of the universe since the Creation. The fourteenth book, following sections of general geographical lore, deals with the cities of the world. Benzo had rediscovered Ausonius's Ordo Nobilium Urbium at Verona, and this no doubt stimulated his interest. Although Greek and Biblical cities are mentioned, it is the northern Italian cities, and Milan in particular, which dominate this book. The south of Italy receives no lengthier treatment than areas outside the peninsula.

Benzo had contact with Mussato's circle in Padua, which helps to explain his interest in antiquarianism and his critical attitude towards his sources. He is most concerned with the cities' founders and the origin of their names, although he does pass the occasional descriptive comment. (Milan is an exception in this respect. It is very fully described and famous men, especially clergy, are listed.) His originality lies in the use he makes of a wide selection of patristic and mediaeval sources, some not well-known, and his refusal to accept ancient myths and folk-lore without reliable historical evidence, while he treats Livy with due respect.

So we come to the fifteenth-century, having found scarcely any work written since Roman times which could meaningfully be said to constitute a description of all Italy, with the dubious exception of the Dittamondo. There is nothing new in the idea that the fifteenth-century witnessed a reawakening of man's interest in the world around him, the world of nature and the countryside beyond the city walls. An explanation of this change of outlook has been

attempted in respect of pictorial art, where the desire to represent visually a three dimensional naturalistic landscape may be said to reflect man's growing self-confidence and lack of fear of the unknown, the forests and mountains which for many reasons had been repellant and forbidding to the mediaeval artist.<sup>18</sup> This change of attitude cannot have been limited to the artist, and for some people led to an interest in investigating and explaining natural phenomena. There are many cross currents of opinion at work here which contributed to an interest in geographical and topographical knowledge. The stimulus given by the rediscovery in the west of Strabo and Ptolemy, and their translation from the Greek cannot be overlooked, especially in the realm of cartography, a study attracting more attention as its value for sailors in Mediterranean waters and further afield became apparent. Boccaccio's work had already tried to remedy some of the difficulties encountered by readers of classical histories, who were ignorant of the location of a particular range of mountains, or the site of a particular city. As interest in classical literature became more intense, the problem of unidentifiable places whose names had changed over the centuries was increased. Geographical evidence could also be useful in identifying lost cities, or searching for Roman remains, while men looking for such antiquities ventured into inaccessible places and viewed the natural world with more interest, and less sense of temerity.

The fifteenth century yields several Italians who showed some interest in their surroundings, among them Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini whose Germania depicts in some detail the German civilization of his day. This was not conceived as a descriptive work, but was written

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18. Kenneth Clark, Landscape into Art, (London, 1949).

in 1457 as a long open letter to Martin Mayr, Chancellor of the Archbishop of Mainz to counter Mayr's accusations of Papal extortions.<sup>19</sup> Aeneas's Commentaries contain some descriptive remarks about various parts of Italy, but they are simply observations in passing. Of more relevance to the present discussion is the Asiae Europaeque descriptio the first two parts of a cosmography, which, in the Europa particularly, combined history and geography.<sup>20</sup> He says his intention is to describe the regions and peoples of the world and on this basis to understand the histories of the various countries. Strabo, Ptolemy and Herodotus are his main sources for the Europa, and he combines references to them with contemporary history (which is what the work is really about) and identification of city sites. The part of the work dealing with Italy is above all concerned with recent local history, and more attention is given to the North than to the Neapolitan area, which is dealt with only in the last of eighteen chapters. There are occasional remarks which could be considered descriptive, for example he passes favourable comment on his native city, Siena, but such remarks are rare. Descriptions of the landscape are minimal, there are few attempts to explain the origins of placenames and no lists of famous men. However Aeneas's writings had a particular influence in Germany, where the Germania aroused much interest, and stimulated German scholars to look anew at their homeland and to produce descriptive works intended to vindicate the country from the unfair and often ill-informed attacks made on it by foreigners, especially Italians.

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19. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Germania Eneae Silvii (Argentinem, 1515). Reprinted, Descriptio altera urbis Basileae 1438, edited, A. Schmidt, with a German translation, (Cologne, 1962).
20. Cosmographiae in Asiae et Europae descriptione, (Venice, 1503), (I consulted the edition of 1531).

Even more influential in Germany and Italy than Aeneas's works were the writings of Flavio Biondo, and in particular his Italia Illustrata, written c.1449-1453. Here for the first time was a single work, conceived not as part of a general cosmography, world history or description of Europe, but devoted to one country, Italy. The Italia Illustrata was written at the request of Alfonso of Naples, whose appetite for classical antiquity had probably been whetted by Biondo's earlier work on Rome, the Roma Instaurata.<sup>21</sup> Biondo in his preface to the Italia Illustrata clearly states the purpose of the work. He explains that, although history was highly prized by the ancients, after the fall of Rome this art was lost, 'extinctaque est historia'.<sup>22</sup> The barbarians overthrew everything, and left no records, so that by the fifteenth century even the placenames used by the ancients can no longer be identified and the origins of new settlements are unexplained. The aim of the Italia Illustrata is to throw some light on these problems and bring historians up to date with the events of the past centuries. He divides Italy into eighteen regions and the order in which they are dealt with reflects very much the varying degrees of difficulty Biondo experienced in collecting his material. We know, for example, that his description of the first region, Liguria, was based to a very large extent on Jacopo Bracellio's researches and description of the area, written at Biondo's request. It proved very difficult to find out much about the southern provinces, although Biondo wrote to Bartolomeo Fazio

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21. See Scritti Inediti e Rari di Biondo Flavio, Edited B. Nogara, (Città del Vaticano, 1927). The author's introduction deals with the writing of the Italia Illustrata, pp. cxviii-cxxix. Also p. 163, letter of Biondo to Cardinal Prospero Colonna from Ferrara 21 December 1450 shows that Alfonso urged Biondo to write the work.

22. Italia Illustrata, f. 43vo.

asking him to do some research for him, after requests to Alfonso himself had failed.<sup>23</sup> Biondo explains that he intends to deal with the whole of Italy and to include the famous men of each area along with anything else worthy of mention. In the next chapter I shall discuss the plan and content of Biondo's work in more detail, and compare it with Alberti's, since it has often been claimed that Alberti in large measure derived the idea for the Descrittione from the Italia Illustrata. Biondo does introduce some geographical information into his work, as he describes the location of towns and villages, but he is more concerned with historical information and, like Boccaccio, with the accurate identification of place names.

The Italia Illustrata, along with the Roma Instaurata, established the link between classical and contemporary Italy, and stimulated among Germans the desire to link their classical past, such as it was, with modern times. Historico-topographical writings blossomed in Germany as scholars were urged by Conrad Celtis to contribute to the Germania Illustrata, a clear imitation of Biondo's work. In Italy it is evident that the Italia Illustrata was widely circulated among scholars in manuscript, even before it appeared in print.<sup>24</sup> Aeneas Sylvius may have been influenced by Biondo, Francesco Berlinghieri certainly was, and<sup>used</sup> his work freely for the Geographia.<sup>25</sup> This was a paraphrase of Ptolemy's Cosmographia in Italian verse, accompanied by thirty-one engraved maps and printed in Florence, 1481-82. Berlinghieri was, according to Almagià, a member of Ficino's Platonic

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23. Nogarà op.cit.p.163,n.2 and p.165, letter to Bartolomeo Fazio, from Venice, 1451.

Italia Illustrata (1527, Turin). This edition also contains Roma Instaurata, together with work by Volaterrano, Sabellico and Merula, see below, p.96.

24. The first editions were Rome 1476, and Verona 1481-2.

25. Francesco Berlinghieri, Geographia, (Florence, 1482). Facsimile edited R.A. Skelton, (Amsterdam, 1966). (Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, series 3, Vol. 4.)

academy, and more of a humanist versifier than either a geographer or a poet.<sup>26</sup> His additional sources included Pliny, Strabo and Mela, and also contemporaries like Cristoforo Buondelmonti and Biondo. The sections on the European areas contain numerous digressions, e.g. on mythology and history, on contemporary persons, and he adds some modern names and identifications. The section on Italy is expanded in this way, but although Berlinghieri was incorporating some new information in an old format, he did not add a great deal, and again he was not primarily concerned with describing Italy.

Biondo's work must have been known from an early date in France also, since it is referred to in a brief description of Italy contained in a French manuscript dating from about 1480 and entitled, 'La toutalle description en abrégé de tout le pais d'Ytalie contenant la situation, longueur et largeur, ensemble les seigneuries, contrées, et provinces principales qui y sont, avecques l'estimation en particulier de ce qu'on tire communément, tous les ans, desdites seigneuries d'Ytalie.'<sup>27</sup> This work begins with some discussion of the name of the country, as Biondo's does, its site, with references to Pliny, Solinus and Ptolemy, and a short description of the Apennines and Alps. The author says that Italy begins at Mount Cenis, or as Biondo says, at the River Varro. ('Ou selon la description de Blondus les commencement (sic) d'ytalie si peust prendre a la riviere du Var au bout de provence.')<sup>28</sup> He gives some measurements for the length of Italy and says that at the present time it is divided into nine regions,

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26. R. Almagià, 'Osservazioni sull'opera geografica di Francesco Berlinghieri', Arch. della R. Deput. Romana di storia patria, 68 (1945), 211-55. cf. Tiraboschi, op. cit., VI pt. ii, Bk.3. p.106.

27. Brit. Mus., Egerton MS.619.

28. Ibid, f3vo.



Lombardy, Venice, the Romagna, the March of Ancona, the Duchy of Genoa, Tuscany, the Duchy of Spoleto, Campania di Roma, and the Kingdom of Sicily.<sup>29</sup> These are in fact the first eight regions of the Italia Illustrata, (though not in the same order), with a final section for the whole of the southern part of the country. The author omits the provinces east of Venice. He goes on to deal with each region in turn giving its borders, describing the towns, listing the marquisates and the lordships of the various duchies. His main concern is with political divisions and the local ruling families. He does not mention classical authors, analyse placenames or the origins of cities, nor does he give more than a passing remark of historical information. His map of Italy is viewed from the French point of view, upside down like Dante's and Boccaccio's, for he tells us that the boundaries of the March of Ancona are the Apennines on the right and the Adriatic on the left.<sup>30</sup> The work ends with an attempt to estimate the wealth of the big cities, which, added up, represents the total value of all Italy. This description which is probably an agent's report, does not relate to the antiquarian interests which were dominating the development of descriptions in Italy, nor is it based on classical sources. More than anything else it is an attempt to define geographical and political boundaries within the main territorial divisions of the north, divisions which follow Biondo.

This was not the first description of Italy to appear in France. Another earlier work containing quite an extensive section on Italy was Guy Le Bouvier's Le Livre de la Description des Pays, completed after 1451, and therefore roughly contemporary with the Italia Illustrata.<sup>31</sup> Le Bouvier was a herald in the service of the Duc de

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29. Ibid, f4.

30. " f7vo.

31. Edited E-T. Hamy, (Paris, 1908).

Berry and eventually of the king. He travelled widely, not only in France, but also to Constantinople and to Rome in 1448. The description is one of his later works finished after the recovery of Guienne, and primarily intended as a description of France, though he adds that he has written it so that the reader can see the true manner and form of all Christian kingdoms and others. The description of Italy follows that of France. Italy is, he says, like a 'fasce', a heraldic bar or band, 'long et etroit'. He deals with the country region by region, but they are the contemporary political divisions not the traditional classical geographical ones which we find used by Biondo and several sixteenth-century writers. For example, he talks first of Piedmont, a large country with six cities; it is fertile, with corn, vines, and cattle, watered by great rivers, like the Po. At the foot of the mountains are men who have huge appetites, as do those of Dauphine and Savoy! He tells us too the extent of the Duke of Savoy's territories, and that in this region also live the Count of Asti, and the Marquesses of Montferrat, Saluzzo and Carretto. This type of information makes up the descriptions of the other regions. Geographical descriptions leave much to be desired; he mentions Lake Maggiore, but none of the other lakes and few rivers. Although most of the important cities are included there is little precise description of their locations. He points out the wealth of Milan, Venice, Genoa and Florence and the surprising poverty of Rome, which one may assume he witnessed in person in 1448. He does not, however, discuss the origins of cities or their names, nor does he give historical information or lists of famous men. The things which are noteworthy for Le Bouvier are the day-to-day ordinary things like the crops, the

characteristics of the people, their occupations and whether they are good Christians. His approach is quite the opposite to Biondo's; there is nothing for the scholar or intellectual in Le Bouvier although for the traveller or ambassador he had useful information. He was also interested in the cities, at least in how many there were. This was a growing concern in Italy too, but more often from the point of view of explaining their origins and classical antecedents.

Another fifteenth-century work which was primarily a work of identification in alphabetical form like Boccaccio's De montibus was the Orbis Breviarium of Zacharius Lilius, printed in Florence in 1493.<sup>32</sup> This was an alphabetical dictionary of placenames, names of regions, tribes, peoples and descriptions of them using classical sources. For example, the Brutii are people 'italiae inter lucanium et Rhegium siti', and are referred to by Solinus, Strabo, etc. Italy, of course is only a minor part of the whole work, but nevertheless, Lilius does point out that the country is divided into sixteen regions excluding the islands; (Liguria, Etruria, Latium, Campania, Lucania, Brutii, Calabria, Apulia, Abruzzi, March of Ancona, Romandiola, the Duchy of Spoleto, Lombardia, Venetia, Friuli and Istria.) Their ancient and modern names are given in every case. Under each region one finds further description e.g. of the towns and rivers and famous families. There is an especially long note on Tuscany and Florence, explaining the city's origin and history, mentioning famous buildings, the wool trade, the great wealth of the city, her military victories etc. and her illustrious sons like Dante and Petrarch, Boccaccio,

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32. Zacharius Lilius Vicentinus canonicus regularis, Orbis Breviarium, (Florence, 1493).

Poggio, the Strozzi, the Medici, etc. Venice and the towns of Verona, Vicenza and Padua are also given extensive treatment. So although this work is not intended as a description of any one country, a considerable amount of information on Italy can be gleaned from its pages. As a work of reference it was a marked step forward from Boccaccio's, and though it did not concentrate solely on Italy, nor aim to deal systematically with the whole peninsula, it shows interests similar to those displayed in the Italia Illustrata.

In the century before Alberti was writing, at least two works appeared which dealt with the cities of Italy.<sup>32A</sup> One of these unfortunately we know very little about, as the only remaining references to it are in the Descrittione itself. This is the 'libro di molte città d'Italia' as Alberti calls it, written by the Dominican Albertuzzi dei Borselli (1432-1497). Echard refers to it as Chronicon seu descriptio plurimum Italiae civitatum, very likely a purely conjectural title, since Echard was working from the Descrittione, and combining the information he found there with his knowledge of Albertuzzi as a chronicler.<sup>33</sup> F.M. Zaccaria in 1780 claimed to have found a manuscript of the Cronica a principio mundi

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32A There were no doubt others. A third which I have been unable to see at first-hand, but which is described by E. Corra, Testi inediti di Storia Trojana, (Turin, 1889), p.94-95, is Ms. X.169 Ms. Lat. in the Marciana. It is entitled, De origine urbium Italiae, et ipsius Italiae primo incolatu, per Ricobaldum ferrariensem, qui plura ex his habuit ex antiquissimis libris Ravennae compertis. It is a fifteenth-century manuscript, of 102 sheets, containing also a chronicle of Lombardy. The author is not the Ricobaldo Ferrarese who lived in the thirteenth century and whose work is recorded by Muratori, R.I.S. XX, 867. He deals with the legends concerning the ancient inhabitants of Italy before and after the flood, the geography of Italy in his own time, the various names Italy has had, and so on. It is largely a repetition of other chronicles, in Corra's view.

33. Echard, op. cit., I, 863.

of Albertuzzi belonging to the Marchese Foschiera at the end of which, he maintained, was the Tractatus de origine Civitatum Italiae, edited by Fratre, but with the title in the author's hand.<sup>34</sup> From this he concluded that the author was Albertuzzi. Zaccaria's hypothesis becomes much less dubious if one looks elsewhere in the Descrittione, where one finds Alberti referring to it sometimes as 'trattato delle città d'Italia,' and sometimes as 'libro delle città d'Italia'.<sup>35</sup> There seems then little doubt that Albertuzzi's work was the Tractatus found by Zaccaria. The work was not complete, judging by Alberti's use of it, was probably limited to north Italy, and was more historical than geographical, dealing particularly with the problem of origins. From Alberti's observations on them, it seems that Albertuzzi's geographical and philological observations had their shortcomings. Nevertheless it is interesting to find a further example of a fifteenth-century author writing on Italy in this way, and reflecting the growing interest in historico-chorographical literature. Whether he was influenced by Biondo is a question which cannot be answered with certainty although, since the Tractatus was apparently unfinished, it could well have been a later work, started even after the Italia Illustrata was available in print. A connection would thus seem quite likely.

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34. F.M. Zaccaria, Dissertazioni varie Italiane e storie ecclesiastica appartenenti, (Rome, 1780), II, 297-317. In particular p.305.

I am indebted to Dott. Gianfranco Pasquale for information concerning the identification of Albertuzzi's work.

35. Descrittione, ff. 332, 336, 340 vo, 372 vo. etc.

The second writer to concern himself with the sites and origins of cities was Rafael Maffei or Volaterrano as he is more often known.<sup>36</sup> Books III-VI of the Urban Commentaries deal with Italy. He begins with an introduction describing the shape and name of Italy according to several sources, (Pliny, Trogus Pompeius, Livy, Dionysius, and Virgil), the tribes inhabiting Italy, and a brief history of her government under Rome and the barbarians, followed by praises for Italy from Aristides, Plutarch and Iginus, and the divisions of Italy according to Strabo, Antoninus's Itineraries and the Sacro Libro, ('Fiscus apostolicus in sacro codice' or 'the sacred book of Rome', as Alberti calls it. (f.6vo.)) He does not give Biondo's divisions. Starting with Liguria he discusses the towns of each region in turn. His main interest is in what classical authors had to say about the various places, and in general he is interested in historical rather than geographical information. Towns tend to be listed one after the other, with little geographical link-up or precise location, though some of the main rivers are mentioned and their names discussed. Where the site of a city is mentioned it is generally as given by some classical author, and there are almost no comments describing the appearance of a town, its buildings or the surrounding countryside. As with all the works mentioned, except the French manuscript, the Italia Illustrata, and Albertuzzo's Tractatus, the description of Italy is only part of a much wider work covering towns all over Europe.

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36. Rafael Maffei, Volaterranus, Commentariorum urbanorum libri XXXVIII (Paris, 1515). See R. Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, (Oxford, 1969), pp.82-83, also P. Paschini, 'Una famiglia di curiali - I Maffei di Volterra', Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia, 7 (1953), 344-69.

The scope of all these other works was distinctly European, not Italian. As the sixteenth century progressed there appeared other such general works owing something to the rediscovery of Ptolemy, and to Strabo and Pliny. The Cosmographia or Europa of Gaudentius Merula clearly takes its title from Ptolemy and was written in the 1530's and 40's, in fact at about the same time as the Descrittione.<sup>37</sup>

Merula's work was not printed at the time, and was on a much smaller scale than the Cosmographia of Sebastian Munster, the famous German scholar with whom Merula was in contact. Merula did not include the customary sections on astronomy, physics and mathematics, and his work lacks any detailed descriptions of natural phenomena, despite his claim to describe, 'Mores populorum terrarum aquarum et ignium mirabilia: metallorum animaliumque natura.'<sup>38</sup> It is a work in the encyclopaedic tradition, drawing exclusively on classical sources, and approximately a third of it deals with Italy. The country is divided into seventeen regions, based largely on the tribes which inhabited them in classical times. He shows very little antiquarian interest, though there are occasional identifications of ancient names. As for geography, it too gets fairly scanty treatment. Florence, he tells us, is on the bank of the Arno, and little more, though there is a chapter on the customs of the Tusci, their immorality and lasciviousness as reported by Timaeus of Athens. Treviso, we learn is<sup>a</sup> strongly fortified state, while Venice is the emporium of the Orient.<sup>39</sup> In similar tradition, and also unprinted, was Pietro Coppo's De toto orbe, a

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37. Gaudentius Merula, Cosmographia printed in Ausonia Zappa, L'Europa di Gaudenzio Merula, (Turin, 1963).

38. Ibid, p.97.

39. Ibid, pp.203, 193, 194.

ponderous four volumes claiming to describe 'le provincie et lochi de tutta la terra a cerco', composed between 1518 and 1520.<sup>40</sup>

The cosmographical form undoubtedly was more popular in Germany where its greatest exponent was Sebastian Munster. Munster's impressive volume appeared in 1544 and was the result of concerted efforts by many scholars who answered his requests for information from all areas of Germany. The work is based on Ptolemy and Book II is a description of Italy as follows, 'Descriptio Italiae secundum varios eius populos, civitates, montes, amnes, mores, mutationes: res in ea temporis successu gestas, etc.'<sup>41</sup> He begins in classical tradition with the site of Italy, her first inhabitants and how her name was derived. He continues with the peoples and regions, dividing the country into ten parts, Histria, Gallia Togata, Liguria, Tuscia, Umbria, Latium, Campania, Apulia, Calabria and Magna Graecia, and for comparison he lists the divisions of Strabo, Antoninus and the Rota Papae (the 'Sacro Libro' referred to by Volaterrano). There are sections on the mountains, rivers and lakes of Italy, on the Po, and on the states of Italy, which includes some identification of the new and old names of various states and towns, for example 'Brixia, et ab aliis Brexa, volgo vero Presz, non multum abest a lacu Benaco.' Rome, its topography and its history are covered extensively in further sections, and then follow more detailed descriptions of some of the important cities. Natural history and phenomena are dealt with next,

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40. On this see A. Degrassi, 'Di Pietro Coppo e delle sue opere', Archeografo Triestino, Sériés 3, Vol. 11, 321-387.

41. Munster, Cosmographia, (Basle, 1544). I consulted the edition of Basle, 1550.



and then the author goes on to a historical narrative of some of the more notable events in Italy's past. This is followed by a description of Apulia and the southern provinces, and the work ends with information about Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica including discussion of the administration, local customs and language peculiarities.

One further work which appeared before the Descrittione, and claimed to describe Italy, was Ortensio Landi's Commentario delle più notabili et mostuose cose d'Italia et altri luoghi, di lingua Aramea in Italia tradotto. This is scarcely comparable with the works mentioned above as it is a personal description of one or two journeys of the author (in the guise of an 'Arameo'), largely anecdotal, with little scholarly information.<sup>42</sup>

What conclusions can be drawn about the state of descriptive historico-geographical writing about Italy before the Descrittione appeared? Firstly it is clear that this literature had strong classical antecedents and drew on classical sources. The two French works mentioned do not fit into this tradition and concentrate on describing the contemporary political realities, rather than their relation to traditional geographical and ethnic areas. Both Dante's and Landi's works are for different reasons outside any main line of development, although both throw light on the Italy of their day. It is clear also that it was not usual to describe Italy apart from the rest of Europe, or even the whole known world. There are several works which can be loosely categorised as cosmographies, for example those of Aeneas Sylvius, Berlinghieri, Gaudentius Merula, Coppo and

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42. Printed in 1548. See also Giovanni Sforza, 'Ortensio Landi e gli usi ed i costumi d'Italia nella prima metà del cinquecento', Mem. della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, Ser. 2, Vol. 64 No. 4. (1914).

Munster, and within these works Italy is certainly described. To a varying degree these works include historical, geographical and topographical information, some identification and explanation of place names and notes on natural phenomena or famous persons. Boccaccio and Lilius, although producing works of reference and organizing their material differently, still give us information of the same type. Their works would be useful to scholars, especially classical scholars, and it is not surprising that for this reason they cover the whole of Europe. The only authors who deliberately set out to devote a whole work to Italy alone, were Biondo and possibly Albertuzzi, although we cannot be certain about the latter's precise intentions. Biondo was writing to fill a gap in scholarship, to identify placenames and to bring up to date the history of Italy, of each city and commune, and to identify antiquities. Although he brought geographical information also into his work it was not a primary objective as it was to be later for Alberti, who combined all these fields of study into a complex and highly detailed work. It is worth noting that there must have been a market for this kind of work in the early sixteenth century. Not only was the Italia Illustrata published alone and together with other works by Biondo in Italian as well as Latin, but it also appears in a volume printed in Turin in 1527, together with the Roma Instaurata, the Italian section from Volaterrano's Urban Commentaries, Marcantonio Sabellico's De Vetustate Aquileiae and De Venetae Urbis Situ, and Giorgio Merula's Mediolani et Italiae Illustratio, taken from the Antiquitatis Vicecomitum

Historia. They are printed as a single work, not merely bound together, and the editor/printer tells the readers that he has been urged to do this by the Abbot Caspari Caprio.<sup>43</sup>

Another fact which emerges is that authors who attempted to combine their own investigations, whether historical or geographical, with material from classical sources experienced great difficulty in gathering material on the southern provinces. This was a problem for Biondo, and judging from the writings of Aeneas Silvius, Volaterrano and what we know of Albertuzzi, it was for them also. The development of regional divisions was clearly along the lines of the classical writers, even though names might change, (eg. Umbria became the Duchy of Spoleto). In the southern provinces authors show more variation over the number of regions they recognise, again depending on their knowledge of the area. In almost all the Italian works also, the original tribes of each area are frequently mentioned, emphasising the stress placed upon the early settlements and the foundations of cities.

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43. The full title is as follows: Blondi Flavii Forlivensis de Roma instaurata libri tres. Eiusdem Italia illustrata in provincias sexdecim divisa. RR. Volaterrani geographiae pars ea quae ad Italia illustrationem spectat. M. Antonii Sabellici Forii Iulii seu Patriae descriptio a Blondo et Volaterrano non plene et alia quae ad Italiae illustrationem pertinet. Eiusdem Venetae urbis situs. Georgii Merulae ex antiquitatis vice comitum historia pariter ad hanc illustrationem facientia. Eiusdem Montis Ferrati descriptio.

For other editions of the Italia Illustrata see Nogara, op.cit.

(iii) City and regional descriptions

Although Italy was not separated from the rest of Europe in the cosmographical tradition, on the other side of the coin there was the development of the local 'descriptio', of a town or region. This has a history all of its own and could take several forms. As has been pointed out above the form with the clearest classical antecedents was the *laudatio* or *encomium*. This could be either prose or verse and had a clearly defined rhetorical form. Such classical rules can be found in the *Ars Rhetorica* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and also in the writings of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. There are examples of classical authors praising Italy and Rome in particular, for example Polybius, Vergil or Ovid, although these do not necessarily follow any strict set of rules. Perhaps the most influential classical *laudatio* was the *Panathenaicos* of Aristides, which found several imitators in fifteenth-century Italy and Germany.<sup>44</sup>

There are very few mediaeval descriptions which fit clearly into the classical mould. J. K. Hyde has suggested that the eighth-century *Laudes Mediolanensis Civitates* or the *Laudes Veronensis* of fifty years later show evidence of some earlier model, and likewise the thirteenth-century *De laude civitatis Laude*, but these did not create a tradition of such works. When Leonardo Bruni wrote his *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* (c.1405), he was influenced directly by Aristides, and not by any mediaeval literature,<sup>46</sup> but by this time there were new

44. For the question of encomiastic literature, especially in Germany, see W. Hammer, *Latin and German Encomia of cities*, University of Chicago thesis (University of Chicago libraries, 1937).

45. J.K. Hyde, 'Mediaeval descriptions of cities', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 48 (1965-66), 308-340.

46. See G. Kirner, *Della Laudatio Urbis Florentinae di Leonardo Bruni* (Livorno, 1889) and H. Baron, *The Crisis of the early Italian Renaissance*, (Princeton, 1955), pp.448-454. Bruni's *Laudatio* is also printed with an introduction in Hans Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, (Chicago, 1968), pp.217-263.

political and intellectual forces at work which gave rise to a whole spate of works describing city and province and aiming to show them in a new light in their relationship to their classical heritage. Thus the classical form of the encomium became more often the appropriate way to present such a description.

There is a temptation to suggest that every description is in some measure a laudatio. Naturally any author with pride in his native city would concentrate on its good points, whether these lay in its fine countryside, beautiful buildings, commercial prosperity, the efficiency of the government or the devotion of the inhabitants. Even a work which contained criticisms would contain also commendation. Another difficulty in assessing the degree of continuity or tradition present in descriptive literature, whether of continuity between classical and mediaeval, mediaeval and Renaissance, or classical and Renaissance works, is the inescapable fact that these descriptions are bound to cover roughly the same sort of things. Take the classical canon for example. The topics for discussion were the foundation of the city, its site and natural resources, the customs of the citizens, their achievements in peace and war, and persons who might have brought it fame. These basic topics can cover a multitude of subsidiary points, there can be variation in emphasis, some additions and omissions, but necessarily the same topics keep appearing in any description, so that on this basis a case can be made for continuity. On the other hand if one examines the purpose of individual works, the context in which they were written, and the possibility of one author being aware of another author's work, and if one concentrates on the peculiarities and differences between the various works, the

similarities appear to arise more from the nature of the work in question than from conscious imitation. It is as well to bear this in mind when examining how the idea of what constituted a topographical description developed during the middle ages.

Mediaeval descriptions of cities have already been discussed by J.K. Hyde who sees three main phases in the generic development.<sup>47</sup> Firstly<sup>there are</sup> early mediaeval poems framed around the contrast between pagan and Christian times praising the cities concerned, secondly the twelfth century descriptions expressing a new civic consciousness of the new towns of the west, and thirdly the more detailed writings of the period 1288-1340, describing mediaeval cities at the height of their development. The available evidence for these periods is small and any generalizations have to be made on the basis of a few individual works, and the attempt to create something approaching a genre out of a small number of fourteenth-century and fifteenth-century examples which show little consistency of approach or purpose, does not seem particularly valuable. Bonvesin della Riva's De Magnalibus Urbis Mediolani (1288), was, Hyde says, the definitive form of the mediaeval descriptio, while Leonardo Bruni paved the way to a Renaissance descriptio, with a more rhetorical background. However Hyde points out that not many Renaissance works were as polished as Bruni's and most had more in common with Bonvesin's. This may be true in respect of their style of writing, but the unusual plan of Bonvesin's work does not seem to have been copied. He had eight subdivisions, praising the city in respect of 'ratione, situs, habitationis, habitantium, fertilitatis et omnium bonorum affluentie,

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47. Hyde, op. cit.

fortitudinis, fidelitatis et dignitatis'. Brunì's description divides into three parts, the first praising the city, its buildings, antiquities and fine climate etc., the second dealing with its origins, and the third with events of Florentine history and the virtue adorning the city. Most Renaissance descriptions are much more evocative of Brunì than of Bonvesin in the organization of their material. Brunì's work had its official opponent in Milan in the work of Pier Candido Decembrio, while in Venice the equivalent propaganda came almost a hundred years later in the writings of Marcantonio Sabellico and Jacopo Sannazaro.<sup>48</sup>

The laudatio did herald a new wave of descriptive writing and some of these descriptions were intended as laudations. Francesco Bandini's letter describing Naples and dating from about 1470, points out the advantages of Naples over Florence; its site, climate, harbour, the profusion of learned men and women, fine food and merchandise and the beauty of its surroundings. He also shows an interest in classical antiquity, for example, praising Pozzuoli for its marvellous remains.<sup>49</sup> Naples is the subject of a laudation delivered in the city by Zenobio Acciaiuoli at the chapter general of the Dominican Order in 1515 (which was, of course, attended by Alberti).<sup>50</sup> Acciaiuoli begins with remarks on the city's site and beauty, augmented by several references to Strabo, goes on to its history, mentions the founding of the university, relations with the church, (understandably, at such an assembly), and the devotion of the citizens. Finally he gives a glowing description of the Neapolitan countryside. He almost certainly had the plans of

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48. Petri Candidi Decembrii opuscula historica, RR. II. SS. 20. M.A. Coccìus, (Sabellico), De venetae urbis situ, etc. in Opera Omnia 4 vols, (Basle, 1560). Sannazaro, Opera Omnia, (Venice, 1535).

49. 'An unpublished description of Naples by Francesco Bandini', in P.O. Kristeller, Renaissance thought and letters, (Rome, 1956), pp. 395-410.

50. Oratio Fratris Zenobii Ordinis Praedicatorum in Laudem Civitatis Neapolitane, (Naples, 1515).

Aristides and Isocrates in his mind, and the dedication to his second laudatory work, Oratio in laudem Novae urbis (Rome), written in 1518, refers to these two authors. Florence was the subject of a laudatory poem by Ugolino Verino,<sup>51</sup> and also of a section of Albertini's larger work on Roman topography and antiquities, De laudibus civitatum Florentinae et Saonensis.<sup>52</sup> This devotes its praises mainly to lists of famous men, there is less emphasis on origins or history or on the physical appearance of the city. One could also include possibly the works by Burtius on Bologna, Sarayna on Verona and several other works to which I shall refer below under a less specialized heading. It would, I think, be misleading to assume that any of these writers were following the classical pattern for a laudatio, except where some reference is made to an earlier model, as in the case of Acciaiuoli, for example. There are variations in the purpose of the works concerned and in the prominence given to different aspects of the description.

One place which had, above all others, attracted description in the Middle Ages was the city of Rome. This did not result from any great civic pride, but from the desire of pilgrims to have some guidance to the various shrines and relics, and also to the classical monuments. The earliest surviving description, the Mirabilia Urbis Romae was written in the mid-twelfth century by Benedict the Canon of St. Peter's. It is little more than a catalogue of monuments and shrines with a large quantity of purely speculative identifications, and over-imaginative explanations of the origins of the city together with some comments on Roman government derived from documents of the

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51. De illustratione urbis Florentiae

52. F. Albertini, Opusculum de Mirabilibus Novae Urbis Romae, Bk III (Rome, 1509).



late Imperial & Byzantine periods. It did also describe the walls and gates, and notable features of the city. In the thirteenth century this was superseded by a less fanciful account, the De Mirabilibus Urbis Romae which showed a similar interest in antiquity, but concentrated on describing the monuments with fewer fables. Sometime between 1154 and 1275 there appeared yet another city guide, the Graphia Aureae Urbis Romae which was derived in part from the Mirabilia. It opens with an account of the earliest cities built on the site of Rome, goes on to describe the city monuments and concludes with a section on administration.

These ruins of Rome, which had already been noted and to some extent described in the middle ages, took on a new importance for fifteenth-century humanist scholars. Not only did literary interests promote inquiries into the identification of classical remains and the location of sites of towns, rivers, battles and so on, but an interest in antiquities and a search for epigrams led to the investigation of any ruins in an endless quest for information, and enquiries based on factual evidence began to challenge some of the myths and legends.<sup>53</sup>

Petrarch's and Boccaccio's work was taken a step further by the observations of Giovanni Dondi dell Orologio<sup>54</sup> (c.1375), and Pier Paolo Vergerio (c.1398), who were the forerunners of a 'boom' in Roman topographico-antiquarian literature in the fifteenth century. Much of this material is discussed by Professor Weiss, who mentions the penetrating scholarly works of Biondo, L.B. Alberti and Poggio, which contrast with the less striking descriptions by, for example, Albertini,

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53. For a discussion of Petrarch's letter to Giovanni Colonna describing Rome see Weiss, op. cit. pp. 32-33.

54. Dondi's archaeological notes can be found in Instituto storico Italiano per il medio evo. Fonti per la storia d'Italia. 91 (1953). (Codice topografico della città di Roma IV) 65-73.

or Fulvio, or the sketchy comments of Giovanni Rucellae. The humanist approach of Biondo formed the basis of the development of the topographical tradition until the sack of Rome, while descriptions on the lines of the Mirabilia were also produced.<sup>55</sup>

This interest in archaeology, topography and the accurate identification of classical remains was perhaps made most evident in Rome through the investigations which took place there, and the numerous treatises which appeared on Roman antiquities. However it was not long before scholars elsewhere got caught up in these new interests and began to look at their own cities with a keener eye. I discuss Alberti's work in relation to the new Renaissance ideas on historiography and antiquarian studies in a later chapter, but it is important to bear in mind that descriptions of cities or regions often appear as part of a history of the place in question. Histories became increasingly popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Historico-archaeological researches were stimulated by interest in antiquity and led to attempts to trace the earliest foundations of a city to classical or pre-classical origins. Place names took on a new significance and a variety of interpretations, so that anyone wanting to flatter a patron or seek service in the city might turn to writing a local or family history which began with this question of 'origins'. Since the history was generally intended to convey the spirit of the commune, and its past achievements, some indication of location was valuable - was it situated in an easily fortified place, or on a sea shore convenient for trading? What sort of terrain did it

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55. R. Weiss, op. cit., Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

govern and what natural resources did it possess? What sort of people were its citizens and what were their occupations? Did any achieve great fame? Did the city show great devotion to God through numerous churches and monasteries and was it a fine sight to behold with splendid palaces and houses? These are the sort of questions which the short descriptions incorporated in, or prefacing longer local histories, were designed to answer. Examples can be found in Pandolfo Collenuccio's history of Naples,<sup>56</sup> Elia Capreolo's history of Brescia,<sup>57</sup> Garzone's history of Bologna,<sup>58</sup> Corio's history of Milan<sup>59</sup> (very briefly), Pincius's annals of Trento,<sup>60</sup> and Alberti's own history of Bologna which opens with a long chapter describing the city in great detail. Other histories discuss the question of origins and name analysis fully, and reveal antiquarian interests<sup>61</sup> but contain almost no discussion of physical features of natural phenomena, for example those of Corio,<sup>62</sup> Equicola,<sup>63</sup> Razzano,<sup>64</sup> Bonaventura Castiglione,<sup>65</sup>

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56. Pandolfo Collenuccio, Compendio de le istorie del regno di Napoli, (Florence, 1490).
57. Heleae Capredi in chronica de rebus Brixianorum, Lib. I-XII (Brescia, 1505).
58. Johannis Garzonii de dignitate urbis bononiae commentarius ad Antonium Galeatium bentivolum, printed in R.I.S. 21 (Milan, 1723).
59. B. Corio, Historia di Milano, (Milan, 1503).
60. J. Pincius, De gestis duces Tridentorum De Gallorum Senonum adventu in Italiam. De origine urbis Trentinae, etc. (Mantua, 1546).
61. In particular several Milanese discuss these topics, for example, Corio, Bonaventura Castiglione, Gaudentius Merula, Georgio Merula and Andrea Alciati.
62. Corio, op. cit.
63. Mario Equicola Chronica di Mantua (Mantua, 1521).
64. Pietro Razzano, Opusculum de autore primorius et progresus felicitis Urbis Panormi, in Sicilian authors, Opuscoli di autori Siciliani, (1758) 9.
65. Bonaventura Castiglione, Gallorum Imsubrum antiquae sedes, (Milan, 1541). Reprinted in Graevius, 1, part 1.

or Giovanni Candido.<sup>66</sup> A further sample of less wellknown works on similar lines is discussed by Roberto Weiss.<sup>67</sup>

Area descriptions which are purely topographical with no references to the origins of placenames or ancient tribes and no historical deductions are rather less common than those with an historical basis. Ranieri Sardo's description of Pisa in the fifteenth century is almost entirely topographical, although the author says he intends to write a history also, and he does mention one story about the city's foundation, but passes on quickly to deal with its size, and the buildings of each quarter of the city.<sup>68</sup> The very detailed description of Venice by Marcantonio Sabellico<sup>69</sup> is, on the whole, devoted to the splendours of the city and its surrounding territories; but even Sabellico adds a tailpiece on the origin of the city, although he discusses the question of the early habitation of Venice and the region of Aquileia in the De Vetustate Aquileiae (another example of antiquarianism and history combined).

One work which is actually given the title of 'chorography' by its author is Domenico Macagno's description or chorography of Lake Maggiore. (1490)<sup>70</sup>

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66. Giovanni Candido, Joannis Candidi Commentarior Aquileiensis Libri Octo, (Venice, 1521).
67. R. Weiss, op. cit., pp 118-122.
68. Historia di Pisa di Ranieri Sardo Cittadino Pisano. Reprinted in I.B. Supino, Arte Pisana, (Florence, 1904).
69. M.A. Sabellico (or Coccius) De Venetae Urbis Situ. Printed in Italia Illustrata et Alia, (Turin, 1527).
70. Domenico Macagno, Verbani Lacus Chorographiae, (1490). Reprinted, edited by S.T. Catalanni, in J.G. Graevius, Thesaurus antiquitatum et historiarum Italiae, Siciliae, (Lyons, 1704-17), Vol. 9, pt. VII.

This deals with the physical aspect of Lake Maggiore and its shores only; its towns, rivers, climate, vegetation, wild life, the products like cheese, honey, leathersgoods and wooden plates and cups for which it is renowned, and the nature and occupation of its inhabitants. As a chorography it follows Ptolemy's canon, but compared with the way the chorographical genre developed in the sixteenth century there is one element missing - the historico-antiquarian element which humanist authors could not exclude and which became an accepted component of any chorographical description.

One of Sabellico's pupils in Venice who produced a description of Istria was Pietro Coppo, who has been mentioned above as the author of a cosmography.<sup>71</sup> Coppo had also spent time in Rome with Pomponio Leto, one of Sabellico's own teachers, and not surprisingly he always makes a note of classical antiquities to be seen in a place, although the historical information he gives is minimal. His description was based on both classical sources and personal observations and, like Alberti, he toured around to get his information, both inland and by boat round the coast, thus increasing the accuracy of his geographical information. Degrassi suggests that although Biondo's Italia Illustrata is not mentioned, his work indicates that Coppo was aware of it.

Bergamo was the subject of a description written in 1516 by Marcantonio Michiele. This again is purely topographical and geographical dealing with the shape and size of Bergamo's territory, its boundaries and division into three parts by the rivers. The author explains the lie of the land and lists the towns and villages

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71. Above, p. 92P. Coppo del sito de Listria, (Venice, 1540). Text reprinted in Degrassi, op. cit.

in each valley. The position of the city itself follows, and its site, fortifications, gates and suburbs. Here we have a work of topography, but it takes on a different complexion when the circumstances of its printing are revealed. In 1532 a volume appeared in Venice entitled De origine et temporibus urbis Bergomi liber.<sup>72</sup> The author was Francesco Bellafini and he began his work with the usual historical discussion of the origins of the name of Bergamo according to all the usual classical sources. He gives the early history of the town and then his narrative breaks off and what do we find inserted but Michiele's geographical description of the area, followed by more history. Here is further evidence, if it is needed, of the growing tendency to include a geographical description in a historical or antiquarian work. There is no record of whether Michiele wrote his description especially for Bellafini, but this makes no difference to the fact that Bellafini wanted to incorporate some geography in his history.

These are a few examples of a growth in topographical descriptions as distinct from historico-antiquarian literature. There are, of course, plenty of others; again Professor Weiss has one or two more obscure titles - e.g. a work on Friuli by Jacopo da Porcia, and one on Rimini by Roberto Valturio.<sup>73</sup> A description of antiquities was included in the Descrittione dei luoghi antichi di Napoli et del suo amenissimo distretto written in 1535 by Benedetto de Falco.

Clearly it is difficult to distinguish definite lines of development in descriptive literature. Elements of topography creep into

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72. Marcantonio Michiele, Agri et urbis Bergomatis descriptio anno 1516 in Francisci Bellafini, De origine et temporibus urbis Bergomi liber, (Venice, 1532). Reprinted in Graevius, op. cit., IX, pt.VII

73. Weiss, op. cit., p.123.

basically antiquarian works, and descriptions of ancient remains form part of geographical ones. It was up to the author to decide on the main purpose of his work and to weight his material accordingly. The works mentioned above show a clear bias towards one type of description, rather than an attempt to give equal emphasis to different aspects of the region or town in question. There was, however, what may for the sake of convenience be termed a third category of descriptions, those which combined history, antiquities and topography and geography into one work which was neither a weighty history, nor a geographical survey.

As early as 1448 Bracellio produced his description of Liguria at the request of Biondo who reproduced it to a great extent in the Italia Illustrata.<sup>74</sup> Bracellio gives the old and new names for places where they have changed, and he makes the occasional historical illusion, but he is also concerned with the topography of the area, and he mentions one famous family. (His work on the famous men of Genoa was the result of a separate request from a Dominican Ludovico Pisano, and although Biondo included famous men in the Italia Illustrata there are few names for Liguria.) Bracellio was working on the problem which Biondo had taken up, that of identification of classical placenames, and in that sense he was in the same tradition as Boccaccio or Lilius.

Nearer the end of the century Desiderius Spreti wrote his description of the changing fortunes of Ravenna in which, despite its historical bias, the author incorporates descriptive material to quite a substantial extent.<sup>75</sup> He begins with details on the situation of

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74. Jacobi Bracellei Genuensis Lucubrations, edited by Agostino Justiniani, see f. xlix.

75. Desiderius Spretus, De amplitudine, de vastatione, et de instauratione urbis Ravennae, (Venice, 1489).

the city, its fertile soil, woods and abundant water, pointing out that it is an area good for cattle and corn. The Po and other navigable rivers bring a multitude of goods from all over Italy to Ravenna and at the coast there are a number of fine ports. Here the narrative switches to the origins of the city and its history in Roman times and under Theodoric and Justinian. This gives the author an excuse to dwell on the buildings of the period. From here he moves to the port of Classe and its trade and to the suburbs of the city. He devotes some time to the now vanished buildings of Classe and then discusses the famous families of Ravenna who have put up buildings, gates, towers and so on. Ravenna's relations with the Papacy are explained, with special mention of her saints and martyrs. Spreti's second book deals with the conflicts and feuds which led to the destruction of a large area of the city and the third book with its restoration by the Venetians. To this is added a list of classical epigrams and where they are to be seen.

Whereas Spreti places emphasis on the splendours of Ravenna's past, an almost contemporary description of Bologna by Nicolai Burtius of Parma praises especially the Bologna of his own time, ruled by Giovanni Bentivoglio, to whom the work is dedicated.<sup>76</sup> He begins with the origins of the name and site of the city, its size, its sunbaked golden hill-sides and fertile plains, etc. Then come the classical references to Bologna, and long lists of famous men showing how justly Bologna deserves the title 'mater studiorum'. He goes on to describe the churches and other buildings of the city and suburbs then the 'gesta praeclara populi bononiensis', the government of the

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76. N. Burtius, Bononia Illustrata, (Bologna, 1494).



city, and after that he pays special tribute to Giovanni Bentivoglio 'verus pater patriae'. The whole thing is carefully planned and no one topic is expanded at the expense of the rest.

Nola was the subject of a description by Ambrogio Leone,<sup>77</sup> which, like that by Burtius, begins with the site, (described in some detail) the other surrounding villages and towns, the origin of the name and the founding of the city and its historical development. There are sections on the antiquities to be seen there, how the city survived when it was flooded, and the pleasant and refined life of the citizens. The buildings and ruins are surveyed at length together with the sacred relics. Leone was concerned to try to recreate the topography of Nola in classical times, although his identifications are not always as accurate as one might hope for. He had two engraved plates prepared for the work, one of which showing the old territory of Nola and another a plan of Nola in classical times,<sup>which</sup> are among the earliest existing archaeological plans of Italian towns outside Rome.

Torellus Sarayna departed from custom in his work on Verona, by adopting a humanist dialogue framework.<sup>78</sup> His declared intention was to do something as a tribute to his native city, to preserve it for posterity and describe its beauties and greatness, its magnificent buildings and famous men. He deals at some length with the origins of the city, its antiquities and its famous persons, then the political fortunes of the state. The geography of the surrounding area is dealt with in more detail in a separate history of Verona. (Historie e

77. Ambrogio Leone, De Nola Patria, (Venice, 1514). Printed in Graevius, op. cit., IX, pt. III, See also R. Weiss, op. cit., pp.127-129.

78. Torellus Sarayna, Dell'origine et ampiezza della città di Verona, (Verona, 1649). First edition, 1540, in Latin.

fatti de Veronesi ne' tempi del popolo e signori scaligeri.) In the introduction to this he explains that he has already written about the origins and antiquities of Verona so this work is concerned with its history. Book three of the history is a very detailed account of the surrounding countryside, the climate and the settlements in the valleys round Lake Garda. Taken together these works describe Verona in all its aspects.

Another work dating from the 1530's is Paulo Giovio's description of Lake Como.<sup>79</sup> This is mainly geographical but reflects Giovio's interest in classical antiquities and history. He, like Coppo, had gone to great trouble to explore the region he described, and used first hand information rather than relying on classical sources. In many respects his work is more topographical than anything else, but he does discuss placenames and antiquities, though he was not so much of an antiquarian as to try to recreate a picture of the area in classical times from archaeological remains.

As the sixteenth century progressed the two new fields of interest, topographical descriptions and archaeological investigations, found a firmer place in the descriptive tradition, and established themselves as essential components, along with local history, of most works devoted to the study of a region or city. There are works by Francesco Alighieri,<sup>80</sup> Peregrino Prisciano<sup>81</sup> and Georgio Bergano,<sup>82</sup>

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79. P. Giovio, Descriptio Lari Lacus, (Venice, 1558).

80. Francesco Alighieri, Antiquitates Valentinae, (1537).

81. Peregrino Prisciano, Historia Ferrariensis, (MS). For location of copies see P.O. Kristeller, Iter Italicum 2 vols, (London, 1963, 1967).

82. Georgio Bergano, Benacus, (Verona, 1546).

all showing an interest in antiquities. Istria was the subject of yet another description by Goynaenus,<sup>83</sup> who cites not only classical authors, and Biondo, Lilius, Pius II, Coppo and Sabellico, but, interestingly, the German Georgius Pirckheimer and Francis Irenicus.<sup>84</sup> There was no clearly established method of procedure. The form was flexible and depended on the information at the author's disposal; whether he was an antiquarian scholar, or an 'explorer' of the natural world. It was nevertheless established that origins, classical references, archaeological remains, natural phenomena, history and famous men all had their place in the descriptive genre. Biondo's activities had stimulated some aspects of the description, and possibly in Venice Sabellico had had an influence at the end of the fifteenth century on the future development of the genre and its popularity in northern Italy. Topography became increasingly essential for placename and antiquarian studies.

Before concluding this survey of the background against which the Descrittione appears, it is worth looking quickly over the Alps at the development of the same literature in Germany. There Conrad Celtis had adopted Biondo's ideas quite openly, and, with his contemporaries like Johan Aventinus and Beatus Rhenanus had encouraged investigations, all over the country in every region with a view to compiling a Germania Illustrata covering the whole country.<sup>85</sup> This nationwide appeal was continued in the work of Sebastian Munster who spent at least eighteen years seeking information about German cities

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83. Johannes Baptista Goynaenus, De situ Istria, (c.1540-48). Reprinted in Graevius, op. cit., VI, pt. IV.

84. Wilibaldus Pirckheimer, Germaniae ex variis scriptoribus per brevis explicatio, (Nuremberg, 1513). Franz Friedlieb Irenicus, Exegesis Germaniae, (1518).

85. G. Strauss, Sixteenth Century Germany, its topography and topographers, (University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), Chapter I.

and regions, and those further afield, before publishing the Cosmographia in 1544.<sup>86</sup> Also, in Germany the antiquarian tradition was more clearly combined with a new interest in classical geography, especially Ptolemy's Cosmographia, and the Ptolemaic distinctions between cosmography, chorography and geography were reiterated and put into practice with more emphasis and attention to detail than is found in Italy. In fact none of the Italian writers referred to above mention the classical idea of a chorography and what it includes, though some of them, unwittingly it seems, were coming close to fulfilling its demands, and Macagno, at least, considered his work merited such a title. It was possibly the antiquarian emphasis in Italy which prevented a more definite move to follow Ptolemy's canons.

Joachim Vadian revived Mela's chorography, and added personal observations in his editorial comments,<sup>87</sup> while Germany as seen by classical and mediaeval authorities was displayed in Franz Friedlieb Irenicus's Exegesis Germaniae, (1518). Even though scientific geographical studies developed considerably in Germany, there was still an overwhelming interest in descriptive geography, even in the writings of Vadian and Munster, though they did try to make scientific observations intelligible to the lay readers.

The way in which a very clear tradition in topographico-chorographical studies developed in Germany is excellently explained by Gerald Strauss.<sup>88</sup> His conclusion is that it was not in scientific

86. See above p.93 note 40.

87. Pompanii Melae Hispani, Libri de situ orbis tres, adiecti Joachimi Vadiani Helvetii in eosdem scholiis, (Vienna, 1518).

88. G. Strauss, op. cit., p.50. See especially Chapter III.

precision, 'but in the combination of descriptive geography with narrative history that the genre attained its character.' It was the geography of Strabo which showed the way to write the two arts. Strabo was, as the 1472 Venice edition of his Geography points out, 'non minus historicus quam geographus atque philosophus'.<sup>89</sup> A combination of the ideas of Strabo, Ptolemy and Mela, together with personal observations and investigations fixed the character of the topographical work, and it was a character not unlike some of the descriptions produced in Italy at the same time. Whatever size area was chosen, it was to be displayed and examined in every respect, with as much detail and accuracy as possible. Perhaps the most evident contrast in the development of the genre in the two countries was that in Germany the geographical side benefited from the scientific mathematical studies in the universities, while in Italy, at least until the second half of the sixteenth century this was less influential and the antiquarian humanist framework was more popular.

Since it is likely that Alberti must have begun writing the Descrittione in the late 1520's or early 30's some of the descriptions which I have mentioned here could not have had any direct influence on his decision to start writing, on the nature of the material involved, nor on his means of presentation. On the other hand he was continually revising his work and he did make use of some of the later works referred to, so we cannot entirely rule out the possibility of their influence. It is clear from this survey that he was working on themes which were becoming commonplace in Italy and which were frequently found side by side in works certainly of a considerably smaller scale than the

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89. Strabonis Geographia, Latine ex interpretatione Guarini Veronensis et Gregoris Typhernatis, (Venice, 1472). Preface.

Descrittione. Some of these works he used extensively as source material, and this will be discussed later.

Descriptive literature for various reasons was becoming popular in Italy. It found a market with the humanist scholar, the Renaissance prince, the antiquarian and the pilgrim. In Germany the tradition was more widespread, with a conscious effort to cover the whole country through a team of scholars, while in France and the British Isles such investigations were scarcely beginning.<sup>90</sup> Alberti had little in the way of a complete description of Italy to use as his guide, with one notable exception, the Italia Illustrata, but the intellectual mood of the time was ready for someone with sufficient industry and application to fill the extremely large gaps which Biondo, and others had left. How Alberti did so, where his ideas and plans originated, and the relation his work bears to the general field of descriptive literature is the topic of the following chapter.

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90. See below pp.452-3 for the equivalent development in Britain.

## CHAPTER III

THE FORM AND CONTENT OF THE DESCRITTIONE COMPARED WITH THE  
ITALIA ILLUSTRATA OF FLAVIO BIONDO

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly to give, in outline, some general idea of the content and organization of the Descrittione, and secondly to look for a possible model for it. Since the Italia Illustrata is the only work preceding it which seems to be directly comparable with it, that is, a work describing Italy alone, and dealing with both historical and geographical matters, I have tried to make a detailed comparison of the two works to see whether Alberti was as indebted to Biondo, and even as dependent on Biondo as some of his biographers have suggested. This inevitably involves some tedious comparisons of sections of the text, and I have tried to cut these down to a minimum, to make my points with a few examples, indicating where necessary how other comparisons may be found to produce similar results.

As has been mentioned above Alberti nowhere makes any satisfactory explanation about why he is writing the Descrittione, what circumstances might have prompted him to undertake such a mammoth task, nor even who he might have expected to read it or find it useful. The fact that it was written in Italian suggests that it was intended for a fairly wide audience not for scholars alone, and mainly for the 'home market', but there is no suggestion that he was asked to write it, or that it was inspired by contact with any other topographical authors, either Italian or German. 'Fra tutte le parte della terra ove habitare si possa, havendo io posto in cuore, di dovere à parte à parte descrivere la Italia', (f.1). These are his opening remarks.

He intends, he says, to provide his readers with a description of his homeland, 'provincia sopra tutte l'altre, e già capo e Reina del Mondo.' He is well aware that it is a 'grande impresa', not to be undertaken lightly nor without some trepidation; he likens himself to a traveller, who, having set out across a wide lake and reached the middle, wonders whether it is worse to retrace his course or to proceed.

Having commented on the enormity of the task ahead, he begins without further preliminaries to describe the origins of Italy and her name in ancient times. We do find in the section on the Islands his remark already partly quoted in the first chapter above, that his work combined history, geography, topography and anthropology. The remark arises from his reference to Benedetto Bordone, and is worth quoting in full here.

Benedetto Bordone habbia leggiadramente descritto il sito dell'Isole, non solo che si ritrovano in questo mare, ma ancora nell'Oceano; nondimeno poco altro di quelle ha detto, solamente attendendo a scrivere quelle cose, che appartengono al cosmografo, e non al Topografo, et Historico. Ma io volendo dimonstrare tanto quanto appartiensi a Geografi, Topografi et Historici insieme .... congiugnero con la Geografia, et Topografia la Historia et Antropologia, tal che apparerà pienamente esser stato sodisfatto a questa descrizione..<sup>1</sup>

He gave himself very wide terms of reference though it is clear that he saw the work being useful to geographers. He addresses them, excusing his digression from geographical topics to describe the Church of Monreale, 'Perdonimmi hora i nostri Geografi, se in questa descrizione ho passato il termine della Geografia, volendo sodisfare a chi fosse haverà piacere d'intendere le cose minutamente.'<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, despite his numerous references to Ptolemy, he does not mention the distinction that

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1. Isole, f. 3 vo.-4.

2. Ibid., f.57.



Ptolemy makes between cosmography, chorography and geography, (unlike Munster and Peter Apian who both point this out), nor does he suggest how his work might stand in relation to these subjects. He was not unaware of the existence of <sup>o</sup>chorography. He refers to Macagno, Sabellico and Coppo as writers of chorographies, (ff. 39vo., 429,444). Yet he does not describe his own work in this way. His German translator certainly does, though. He has not, he says, read a work 'vel absolutius, vel utilius vel iucundius' than Alberti's.

Chorographias Italiae scripserunt ex veteribus tam Graecis quam Latinis haud pauci scripserunt etiam recentiores tum latina, tum italica lingua plurimi quoque, situm regionis et imaginem in tabellis exhibuerunt alius alio vel in scriptis vel in pictura melius exactiusque; sed mehercule nec ingenium, diligentiam, eruditionem, copiam Leandri quisquam adhuc vel superavit vel attigit, nec laboris tantundem subiit, nec item laudis atque gloriae parem ea re cumulum assecutus est.

He goes on to say how well Alberti discusses names, sites, limits of areas, nature, migrations and origins of peoples, and so on,

nec in nominibus solum hoc praestitit Leander, sed etiam in situ, finibus, spatiis, naturis migrationibus, originibus, cladibus, temporibus, breviter omnibus in rebus quae ad perfectissimam Italiae chorographiam (my italics) pertinent...<sup>3</sup>

From knowledge of this type of work in Germany Guilielmus Kyriander Hoeningenius feels that Alberti has contrived to gather together all the information necessary for the perfect chorography, and he is unstinting in his praises.

Alberti's geography is entirely descriptive and does not relate to scientific, mathematical or astronomical studies. He was not interested in cosmography, and some of his remarks concerning natural phenomena

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3. Descriptio Totius Italiae, (Cologne, 1566), f.3vo.

betray a touching naivety more appropriate to a mediaeval travelogue. This ~~complete~~ inability to question highly suspect stories on logical grounds may stem from his clerical training. But this training does not seem to have suggested to him the justification for his work which Munster (who was a Franciscan) used. In the dedicatory letter of Munster's 1540 edition of Ptolemy he justifies his geographical studies by citing the Psalmist's noble praise of God's works on the face of the earth from Psalm 104. The introduction to the Descrittione praises Italy; in fact, as one would expect, the general tone of much of the description is complimentary and there is a certain attitude of awed wonder towards the splendours of nature, but there is no attempt to give this any higher purpose than to inform the reader. Alberti does not praise the fertile fields and laden fruit trees as God's bounty, nor suggest that the Descrittione is a work of thanksgiving.

Since there is no clear explanation offered for the work, we can only draw conclusions about its purpose from its contents. Having examined what form the descriptive genre was taking in sixteenth-century Italy, we can now look at how the Descrittione relates to the existing literature and how it compares in content and organization with previous works. As I stated above, there are only two known works, written before the Descrittione, which could be said to describe Italy as a whole, apart from the rest of Europe, and to include historical, antiquarian and some geographical information. In fact it is doubtful if one can even make this claim for one of the two works, the Tractatus of Albertuzzi, since it is lost, and we have only the most imprecise knowledge of its contents, and no knowledge of how they were arranged. This leaves the Italia Illustrata, with which the Descrittione, not surprisingly, has

often been compared, and which has been regarded as its model.

Alberti begins the Descrittione with a short introduction to Italy as a whole, before proceeding to deal with each region in turn. It was known, for example, at various times as Gianicola, after Giano or Noah; Ausonia, on the authority of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Antiochus, Xenophon, Ferecidus and Strabo; Enotrio, with three or four different explanations, some it must be admitted of more than dubious authenticity, but to Alberti apparently acceptable. The boundaries of Italy and how they have changed follow, and then Italy's shape according to various authorities, firstly Ptolemy, whose Geography presented Alberti with something of a problem because he seemed to want to put the Adriatic to the south of Italy, a tricky point which Alberti deals with by pointing in out that/Ptolemy's maps it is to the north, (ff.3-4vo.). He goes on to Pliny's and Solinus's description of Italy's shape (its comparison with an oak leaf), and then to a more familiar idea. By the present generation Italy is compared to a human leg, he says, and in the margin notes we find the words 'bella simiglianza', added either by the author or printer. Surprisingly there is no mention of Biondo's likening Italy to a spiny fish, or to Dante's idea of the Apennines forming a roof-top. The 'human leg' is described in all its anatomical detail, with the knee, shin, instep, arch, heel and calf all carefully delineated. Next come Italy's borders, and those who say that she had the Adriatic to the east are accused of error, 'as you can see', says Alberti, 'if you sail round the coast there, or if you look at Ptolemy's maps it is clearly to the north'<sup>(1)</sup> Italy is divided by natural features into several parts, and, he says, Polybius said it is like a triangle, (f.4vo.). He does not bother to query this, or to note Strabo's objection.<sup>4</sup> Pliny's

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4. Strabo, Geographia, Bk. V, Ch.1., says a triangle is inappropriate since the coast of Italy is curved, and a triangle is a rectilinear figure. It is very difficult, he adds, to describe the representation of non-geometrical figures.

measurements come next, not altogether accurately transcribed, and then the people and nations who have come to Italy either to settle or to raid and plunder, (especially the French), showing how fine and desirable a country Italy is.

So many Greek and Latin authors have sung Italy's praises, he says, that he cannot do her justice, but since the praises of foreigners are more valuable than those of natives he will just quote one or two of these. He gives a rather loose translation of Strabo's description of the country, and another by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. The various divisions of Italy follow according to Cato and Sempronius, Pliny, Strabo, Ptolemy, the Itinerary of Antoninus, the 'Sacro Libro' and Biondo, here mentioned for the first time. Then follows Alberti's plan of how he is arranging his material (ff 5-7vo.).

He says that he intends to divide Italy into nineteen regions, one more than Biondo had, and in some respects these will follow classical authors and in some respects not. He will give their limits, their names, ancient and modern, and the names of cities, castles, mountains, rivers, lakes and fountains. The wonders of nature will not be overlooked nor the deeds of great men: 'narrandovi le cose maravigliose della Natura prodotte, similmente m'affaticherò di rimembrare l'opere illustre fatte da gli huomini de'detti luoghi facendo memoria ancor de i nomi e delle sue virtù con le quali hanno dato splendore alle lor patrie.' He then promises the reader some historical narrative. 'Et breviamente prometto di raccordare (quanto però sarà à me possibile) le cose notabili et degne di memoria di questa nostra Italia.' This will not be easy, he says, since not only have so many places been destroyed, but also many valuable books,

essendo stata tanta la rovina d'Italia in diversi tempi .... che sie grandissima fatica, non dico, solamente di ritrovare le antichi nomi de i luoghi ma essi luoghi, ove possero edificate le Città, et Castelli, et ove sia questo et quel Fiume et Monte, et altri simili luoghi, tanto per le grandissime rovine fatte, quanta per la perdita di molti dignissimi libri. Et per tanto interviene che l'intendente et dotto lettore, leggendo l'Historie, et ritrovando i nomi di qualche Città, Monti, Fiumi et d'altri luoghi, et non ritrovando hora ove fosse certament situata, overo ove passasse detto fiume, et come oggidi si dimanda quel Monte, et simili altre cose smarrito et isdegnato lascia di continoar l'impresa cominciata et cosi da onde pensava di trane piacere, tutto conturbato se ne parte.(f.7)

Then he bewails the loss of so many cities, quoting Biondo, 'Ben'e vero che Biondo diligente investigatore di questa cosa, dice nella sua Italia haver' annoverato in esse solamente 264 Città,' but since then some new cities have been created by conferring on them a bishop, (f.7). After apologies for his inadequacies he lists the regions into which he divides the country.

This introduction must be examined in relation to Alberti's possible sources. Pliny's introduction to the subject is somewhat more concise. He begins by listing the regions to be dealt with, starting from Liguria and working round the country, down the west coast and up the east to the Veneti, the Carni, the Iapydes, the Hestri and the Liburni'.<sup>5</sup> He apologises for the brevity he is forced to observe, describes Italy's shape, (like an oak leaf), her size, (various dimensions are given), and ends with an explanation of his method of procedure, that he is following the regions of the late Emperor Augustus, but taking them according to their order on the sealine, otherwise in such a hurried discussion it would be impossible to describe

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5. Pliny, Natural History, Bk. III, Ch. vi. I also consulted C. Plinii Secundi Historiae Mundi Libri XXXVII, (Basle, 1554).

each city in juxtaposition to others in its vicinity. For the same reason when dealing with the interior settlements he intends to use the alphabetical organization adopted by Augustus. 'Nor is it a very easy task,' he says, 'to trace their situation and origin; for not to speak of others, Iuganian Ligurians have had land granted to them as many as thirty different times.'

One thing which Alberti clearly could not have derived from Pliny was the discussion of Italy's name and how it originated. Alberti, too, had time to dwell on Italy's size and shape, and of course to discuss what the classical authors had written about this. Although Alberti adopted the same method of procedure, working round the coast from Liguria to Istria, this cannot necessarily be attributed to Pliny's influence, but just as likely to logic and convenience, and it was a plan that appealed to other writers, also. Clearly Alberti had a purpose, which bore some relation to Pliny's. The idea of identification of settlements and how they originated is common to both, but Pliny was simply listing tribes and places and was not much involved in the complexities of lost cities, or of placing together the history of a city through many centuries. Italy was not a sufficiently important part of his whole work to allow for this, nor was geographical information, topography or biography included. Of course there are some descriptions of the Tiber and the Po, for example, and rivers are used as boundaries to regions and to help to place the various tribes, but that is all.

Strabo has even less of an introduction and does not seem to consider that he needs any explanation of how he will proceed in his description of Italy. His introductory remarks to Book V point out

one explanation of Italy's name, the shape of the country and its main geographical features and divisions. Then he plunges straight into his first region, Cispadana and Transpadana.<sup>6</sup> Ptolemy also has little in the way of introductory remarks which could have given Alberti any ideas for a plan, nor have any of the other classical authors which Alberti uses as sources. Solinus, for example, was merely following Pliny, Pomponius Mela's description is so short that it cannot compare with Pliny's or Strabo's, and others like Dionysius were writing histories, not descriptions.

Looking for models nearer to the sixteenth century, we find that few fifteenth-century descriptions have any clear-cut expression of how they intend to deal with their subject. Fazio is simply quoting Solinus;<sup>7</sup> Aeneas Sylvius deals with the regions of Italy after Spain, without any introduction;<sup>8</sup> Lilius' entry on Italy clearly recalls Pliny, he gives Italy's ancient names and cites Pliny's simile of the oak-leaf.<sup>9</sup> Volaterrano's Italy follows a description of the alpine region, as in Pliny.<sup>10</sup> He gives Italy's position, her ancient names, according to a number of classical sources, her first inhabitants and her political fortunes after the Romans. A list of authors who have praised Italy follows, then an interesting digression on the types of state to be found there (not an observation mentioned by Alberti, and not, it seems, derived from any other source). Volaterrano distinguishes

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6. Strabo, Bk. V. I consulted Rerum Geographicarum libri XVII, (Amsterdam, 1707).

7. Dittamondo, Bk III, Ch. xi-xv.

8. Asiae Europaeque descriptio, Ch. XLVIII-LXV.

9. Zacharius Lilius ... Orbis breviarium (Florence, 1493), f. hi. vo.-hi.

10. Volaterrano, op. cit., f. 155 vo.-f. 156.

four types, Monarchy, like the Neapolitan Kingdom, Milan and other principalities; Aristocracy, as is found in Venice; Democracy, like the Florentines, and men of Siena and Lucca enjoy, where they are ruled by magistrates and consuls of the people; and finally Tyranny, 'ut est parte sacro sancta Ponteficis iurisdictione a diversis occupata dominatoribus'. The introduction closes with the regions of Italy according to Strabo, Antoninus, the 'Sacro codice, Fiscus apostolicus',<sup>11</sup> but not, one may note, Biondo's regions.

So far, deliberately, I have not mentioned the Italia Illustrata. Biondo in his preface clearly states the purpose behind his work. He explains that although history was highly praised by the ancients, used as a guide in politics and written down by Roman Emperors wishing their greatness to be recorded, after the fall of Rome this art was lost, 'extinctaque est historia'.<sup>12</sup> The barbarians overthrew everything and left no records, so that by the fifteenth century even the placenames used by the ancients for Italian cities, towns, lakes, rivers, mountains, etc. can no longer be identified, and, even more shameful, the origins and dates of the new cities which have grown up are unknown. Now that people are living in an age of revived interest in these arts, Biondo continues, and men are anxious to know their own history, he wants to try to rediscover the ancient names of peoples and places and bring to life the past. 'Tentare volui si per eam quam sum nactus Italiae rerum peritiam vetustioribus locis eius et populis nominum novitatem novis auctoritatem, deletis vitam memoriae dare, denique rerum Italiae obscuritatem illustrare potero.'<sup>13</sup>

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11. See below, p. 128 and Chapter VII p.393

12. Blondii Flavii Italia Illustrata, (Turin, 1527), f.43vo.

13. *ibid.*



As modesty demands, he declares that he does not claim to indicate every change of name, merely to provide some guidance 'e tanto naufragio'.

This is the task of the Italia Illustrata, to throw light on what had happened to the Italy of the ancients, to help fifteenth-century scholars understand more clearly the people, places and events of their own country as they perused their classical manuscripts, and to bring the historian up to date as far as possible with the events of the past centuries.

The comparison between this and the Descrittione is striking in several respects. Both are describing Italy, both work systematically region by region, both make extensive use of classical sources and both work to plans which claim to do much the same things, so at a quick glance it is tempting to say that the Italia Illustrata was Alberti's model, or at least the inspiration behind the Descrittione, or that it was one of his more important sources. In fact he never refers to Biondo as his model, nor does he suggest that he might be filling in information that Biondo omitted. As will be shown later Pliny, Strabo, Dionysius, Ptolemy, Livy and the forged fragments of Annius of Viterbo are all equally as important, as source material, as <sup>is</sup> the Italia Illustrata, if not more so. Also wherever there is local literature of geographical, historical or topographical nature in existence it is widely referred to and, as I have shown, the century separating the two works had seen considerable development in local descriptions. The question of Alberti's reliance on the Italia Illustrata can be examined from two points of view, firstly how far the plan and content of the two works reveal similarities and secondly how much use Alberti makes of the Italia Illustrata as a source for the Descrittione.

Biondo begins his introduction by saying that he would praise Italy, but Virgil, Pliny and Petrarch have done this already, so he will start right away with her name and position.<sup>14</sup> He tells us how Pliny and Solinus say she was called Italia after a certain King Italus who once ruled there. Others have attributed the name to the quantities of fine goods she produced and formerly the Greeks called her Magna Hesperia, as did Virgil. Justinus says the first inhabitants were the Aborigini in the reign of Saturn who gave her the name Saturnia. Her shape according to Pliny is like an oak-leaf, and Biondo gives some idea of her size, again taken from Pliny it seems, although not all the figures are accurately transcribed.<sup>15</sup> Biondo himself likens Italy's shape to a fish with a spiny backbone, the Apennines. Then the difficulty of locating individual places is referred to, the problems facing a reader of Livy who does not use the familiar names, and the difficulties raised by the ruin of so many cities in the past six hundred years. From here Biondo goes on to list his regions or provinces.

The main distinction between the two introductions is one of length, and for this reason to reproduce parallel extracts from the two texts is not very practical since Alberti is extremely discursive while Biondo is

14. Ibid. f.44

15. Ibid. f.44. From the Alps to Otranto is 1020 miles, from the River Varo to the River Arsia (the widest part of the country), is 540 miles, and from the River Tiber to the River Pescara is 126 miles. Pliny (Bk III, Ch. 6) gives the length as 1020 miles from the foot of the Alps to Reggio via Rome and Capua, the distance between the Varo and the Arsia as 410 miles and from the Pescara to the Tiber as 136 miles. For comment on Alberti's acceptance of such estimates see below, Chapter VII.

One reference to the shape of Italy, which both authors overlook, is to be found in Petrarch's *Africa*, VI 576, where Petrarch appears to refer to the 'big toe' of Italy. (Cum dextra Italice transmisso pollice plante). If this does not stretch the translation too far it would seem to suggest that the simile of the 'foot of Italy' was not entirely new in the sixteenth century.

fairly short and to the point. The information discussed is of very similar nature. Both try to go back to grass roots, as it were, and see Italy as a whole, how her name originated, and in general terms what her physical make-up is like. Alberti uses a vast array of classical sources, and uses them much more extensively than Biondo; for example the lengthy quotations from Strabo and Dionysius praising Italy, the exact lists of the different divisions of Italy according to various authorities, or the explanation of the variety of names she was given. Some of this information is found in Strabo and Pliny as well as in Biondo, and Biondo was in any case using Pliny for his introduction. He cites him several times. Therefore the form of Alberti's introduction would be similar to Biondo's, whether he were basing himself more on his classical sources or more on Biondo. The similarity extends also to the way both authors divide Italy, using divisions similar to those of classical times, based on geographical boundaries. Alberti makes this clear when he describes the Sacro Libro di Roma which divides Italy into twelve regions, but rather differently from other writers, 'si deve avvertire che nel detto lib. non e seguitato l'Ordine della Geografia ne'della Topografia, ma solamente l'ordine della regioni ove sono i Vescovati, Archievescovati et altri benefici'. One must not therefore be surprised to find things outside the true arrangement of regions as described by skilled geographers and topographers. 'Et però non si maraviglierà alcuno se'l si ritroverà alcuna cosa fuori del vero ordine delle Regione da i periti Geografi et Topografi descritto'.(f. 6vo.).

The regions used by Alberti and by Biondo are purely geographical

ones,<sup>16</sup> as Alberti points out, not the religious boundaries of diocese, nor the political boundaries of states. State boundaries were continually changing, geographical features were not. It was not so helpful to a reader of Livy to tell him that a certain town was in the state of Milan or Florence, even if these political boundaries were clear in the fifteenth century, firstly since such a reference bore little relation to the peoples and places of the first century B.C. and secondly because in a year or two, who could tell, the boundaries might have changed. He did not consider placing a town like Bergamo, for example, in Venetian territory; it was sufficient to say that it was in the geographical area of Lombardy beyond the Po, and then to describe its political fortunes. This way it was easier to keep the work up to date, and less confusing for the reader. One can see this principle at work when Alberti deals with the Alpine border of Italy.<sup>17</sup> Certainly both authors can be criticised for lack of attention to the existing political boundaries, on the grounds that they were too tied to classical tradition, but on the other hand, Alberti especially showed awareness of genuine geographical divisions which are, according to Rolletto, more realistic than those of his predecessors.<sup>18</sup>

Alberti tells us that he intends to divide Italy into nineteen regions, one more than Biondo had. He lists Venice as one of the Islands 'del mare Adriatico'. He also divides two of Biondo's regions:

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16. 'Vero è, che io volendo seguitare i costumi de gli antichi Geografi, Corografi, e etiandio Topografi (i quali terminavano, e partivano le provincie Regioni, e paesi comunamente per li fiumi, si come fa anche Tolomeo,...' Descrittione, f.334vo. cf. f.265. re. boundary of the Romagna. In the debate over whether the Po is the boundary or not, all depends on racial groupings of the ancient tribes, etc.

17. See below, p. 390 etc.

18. Roletto, op. cit. pp.455-480.



*The Regions of Italy*  
according to  
**LEANDRO ALBERTI**

Apulia is split into Terra di Barri and Puglia Piana, and the Romagna, in which Biondo included Emilia, Alberti divides into the Romagna and Lombardia di qua dal Po, and includes Emilia in the latter. The regions and the order in which they are dealt with are as follows.

BIONDO<sup>19</sup>

1. Liguria sive Genuensis
2. Etruria
3. Latina sive Campania et Maritima
4. Umbria sive Ducatus Spoletanus
5. Picenum sive Marcia Anconitana
6. Romandiola sive Flaminia et  
Aemilia
7. Gallia cisalpina sive Lombardia
8. Venetiae
9. Italia transpadana sive Marchia  
Tarvisina
10. Aquilegiensis sive Foroiuliana
11. Histria
12. Samnium (the Abruzzi)
13. Terra laboris sive Campania Vetus
14. Apulia (Basilicata)
- \*15. Lucania
- \*16. Salentini sive terra Hydrunti
- \*17. Calabria
- \*18. Brutii (S. Lucania)

ALBERTI<sup>20</sup>

1. Riviera di Genova (or) Liguria
2. Toscana (or) Hetruria
3. Ducato di Spoleto (or) Umbria
4. Campagna di Roma (or) Latium
5. Terra di Lavoro (or) Campania  
Felix
6. Basilicate (or) Lucania
7. Calabria Inferiore (or) Brutii
8. Calabria Superiore (or) Magna  
Grecia
9. Terra d'Otranto (or) Salentini
10. Terra di Barri (or) Apulia Peucetia
11. Puglia Piana (or) Apulia Daunia
12. Abruzzo (or) Samnites
13. Marca Anconitana (or) Picoenum
14. Romagna (or) Flaminia
15. Lombardia di qua dal Po (or) Emilia
16. Lombardi di là dal Po (or) Gallia  
Transpadana
17. Marca Trivigiana (or) Venetia
18. Frioli, e Patria (or) Forum Iulii
19. Istria.

\*Regions not completed by Biondo and not contained in the published work.

I have inserted 'or' to clarify Alberti's list which gives the modern and ancient names.

From this it is evident that Alberti was moving in a highly systematic manner from Genoa in the north-west down the west side of the country across the foot and up the east side to end his description in Venice, and then

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19. Italia Illustrata, f.44.

20. Descrittione, f.8.

turn to the Islands which he also lists as follows:

Isole Attenenti all'Italia.

Alcune picciole Isole del mar Ligustico.

Corsica (or) Cirmus

Sardegna (or) Sandoliatin

Elba (or) Ilva

Del Mar Tosco, et Tirreno

Procida (or) Prochita

Ischia (or) Pithecuse, Aenaria, Inarime

Del Mar Siciliano

Sicilia (or) Trinacria

Isole Liparee (or) Eoliae, Malta (or) Melita

Del Mare Adriatico

Santa Maria di Tremite (or) Isole Diomedee

Vinegia (or) Venetiae

Isolette intorno à Vinegia

(I have again inserted 'or' to clarify Alberti's list which gives the 'nomi moderni e antiche')

The opening remarks to his description of Genoa state that this is in fact to be his order of procedure. 'Et per tanto comincierò dall'Occidente di essa cioè dall'Alpi, che partono lei dalla Gallia Narbonese.....et scenderò lungo il lito del mare Inferiore descrivendo di mano in mano i luoghi, che in detto Paese si ritrovano co i Mediterranei.' (f.8vo.). At first glance this seems to be a more sophisticated scheme than Biondo's. However one must remember the difficulties Biondo had in obtaining material for the southern regions, and the fact that he hurriedly arranged to publish his work on hearing that someone else was planning to put his name to one of the Italia Illustrata manuscripts. Biondo's first eleven regions, on closer examination, do have some system. Biondo, like Alberti, was proceeding from Liguria southwards down the west coast, although he

deals with Latium and Umbria in reverse order from Alberti. Leaving out the southern provinces on which he had so little information, he then crosses the Apennines and moves up the east coast, where his regions correspond quite closely to Alberti's last seven regions. Possibly if Biondo had had time to complete work on the southern provinces to his satisfaction he would have placed these regional descriptions in order between his fourth and fifth regions, making a scheme almost identical to Alberti's, either inspired by logic, or derived from Pliny. As it was he had to publish what he could, and hope to continue work on the southern provinces.

We have no record of the order in which Alberti's parts were written. He refers back and forth from one region to another with no difficulty and points out, for example, how he will deal with a certain place in another region where it is more suitable, or that he has already discussed something in a previous region. One is left with the feeling that he began at the beginning and worked systematically through to the end, or that if he did not do this, at least he revised the whole work carefully when it was finished and ensured that references to different parts of the work were synchronised with the final order of the regions.

Alberti often sub-divides regions, separating the inland from the coastal areas, or singling out areas to which he wants to direct the reader's attention. The various regions and types of landmark in Rome are given subheadings. In Lombardia di là dal Po there are sections on Lake Maggiore, Piedmont and the Duchy of Turin and in Lombardia di qua dal Po, on Doria, Emilia and Montferrat. Subdivisions do not appear in Biondo, and while he possibly had less need of them in



in a work only one fifth of the length of Alberti's, nevertheless, as Nogara says, they would help the reader.<sup>21</sup> Biondo too deals with the coastal places of each region before venturing inland, but the idea again could have derived from Pliny.<sup>22</sup>

As far as organization of material is concerned, Alberti has already told the reader how he approaches this problem in his introduction. He points out how, for each region, he plans to use the same arrangement. 'Vero è, che prima ch'io entri à questa descrizione, (of Genoa) intendo di mostrare i nomi antichi, e altresì nuovi d'essa. Poi le disegnarò i termini, e confini suoi, et al fine enterò nella particolar narratione, osservando quest'ordine parimente nelle seguente Regioni'.(f.8.vo). He still has his plan in mind at the opening of the Tuscan section. 'Et primo dirò della varietà de i nomi co i quali ella è stata dimandata, et poi vi porrò i suoi termini et al fine la descriverò tutta à parte à parte, seguitando il modo che ho tenuto nella Liguria'. (f.20). In fact the reader is reminded of this plan at the beginning of each section.

Biondo likewise describes how he organizes his material, at the end of his introduction,<sup>23</sup>

quam ob rem octo et decem regionibus in quot Italiam sine insulis commode divisam esse iudicavimus describendis, illa ex multis sequemur vocabula quaecum in aetate nostra sint notiora: tum nostrae intentione accomodatiore videbuntur. Suntque nomina Liguria.....etc.....Postquam vero omnem Italiam peragraturus ero, viros praestantiores, qui singulis in urbibus et locis pridem geniti fuerunt, eosque qui sunt superstites praesertim litterarum aut cuiuspiam virtutis gloria claros enumerabo, atque res in singulis locis scribi dignas breviter narrabo ut non magnis haec Italiae sit descriptio, quam virorum eius illustrium praestantiumque, catalogus ac non parvae partis historiarum Italiae breviarium.

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21. Nogara, Op. cit., p.cxxviii

22. Pliny, Op. cit., Lib. III, Ch.6.

23. Italia Illustrata, f.45-45vo.

This is not to say that his description is divided into three separate parts, but that in the course of the treatise he deals with each region place by place, enumerating the people and events of most importance. A careful comparison of Biondo's plan with the intentions of Alberti reveals obvious similarities, the intention to deal with famous men and events, for example. There are however some differences. Firstly, Alberti expressly states his intention of providing the reader with geographical data, not simply the location of towns for the purpose of identification, but also 'le cose maravigliose della natura prodotta', not one of Biondo's stated aims. Secondly, Alberti says that he intends to give modern and ancient names, not only of the regions themselves, but also of the cities, forts, mountains, rivers, etc. Biondo says simply that he will follow the names that are more widely known in his own day for the regions, and does not say how he will refer to other landmarks, although he has previously in his introduction complained of the difficulty he had in tracing names. Alberti also singles out men of letters for a special mention.

Biondo's intentions seem to have been more limited than Alberti's. In fact Alfonso's original request to Biondo was to describe Italy comparing the ancient and present placenames, as Biondo explains in a letter to Prospero Colonna already mentioned.<sup>24</sup> ('Quin aliquando mihi retulit maiestatis suae verbis episcopus Mutinensis, eum, quod opinaret me aliquam huius modi rerum habere notitiam non expectare modo, sed a me instanter postulare, ut, quod nunc facio, describendae Italiae et conferendis priscorum cum praesentibus locorum nominibus manum apponerem.') Antiquarian interests were the primary purpose of the work, and Alberti refers to Biondo as an investigator

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24. Above, p. 83

of antiquities, both in his introduction, and where he lists him as one of the famous men of Forli,

Sopra tutti ha datta grand' oranamento à questa città Flavio Biondo huomo di raro et curioso ingegno, et investigator dell'antichitati, et scrittor dell' historie. Scrisse molte opere le quali fu Italia illustrata, avvenga che non la finisce, Roma instaurata, et trionfante, l'opera de i Venetiani, l'histoire dal principio dell' inclinazione del Romano Imperio insino à i suoi giorni, con molte altre opere. Certamente sono obligati à quest'huomo tutti i curiosi ingegni, per le fatiche da lui sostenute e in dimostrar l'antiche e moderne cose.(f.280vo.)

This is a fairly standard description of a noteworthy scholar. He is praised for his learning but although Alberti expresses a debt to him, it is on behalf of his fellow antiquarians, as much as on his own behalf.

The result of an examination of the expressed intentions of the two authors reveals striking similarities in approach, and suggests also some divergencies in the information they plan to impart. For this reason it is necessary to turn to the works themselves to see how deep these similarities and divergencies go. A more detailed examination of the two texts will also enable us to see clearly, before other sources are discussed in detail, exactly what the Descrittione is concerned with and how the countryside is displayed in its various aspects.

In order to get some idea of the two authors' approach to their subject, I propose to compare first of all the introductory remarks to three regions, then to give a more detailed comparison of the contents of part of one region. First of all I shall consider Tuscany, because it is one of the regions with which both authors were relatively well acquainted, and it is a region for which Alberti cites Biondo more

frequently than he does in any other region, 26 times in 75 pages, approximately.

Biondo introduces Tuscany with its name, which merits little discussion, its boundaries, i.e. the ones he proposes to adopt, and some general remarks on its history as an area.<sup>25</sup> Its borders are the Apennines and the 'Mare Inferiore', the River Magra and the River Tiber. He quotes Livy, saying how great the Tuscans were, for the Tirrenian Sea is named after them, and the Adriatic after Adria a colony of Tuscany. The Tuscans founded twelve cities in Tuscany and another twelve beyond the Apennines and their greatness was recognised by Rome in the adoption of various Tuscan customs. Biondo goes on to mention briefly the decline of Rome and the barbarian invasions before embarking on a description of the coastal area.

Alberti begins in the same way with the ancient names for Tuscany, and immediately criticises Biondo for saying that it has never changed its name. (ff20-22) 'Ritrovo adunque che questa antichissima Regione ha havuto diversi nomi (avenga che dica Biondo che essa mai non cangiò nome, ilche assai mi sono maravigliato, imperò che ho ritrovato molta varietà de'nomi co'i quali ella è stata nomata (sic) appresso gli antichi Autori, come hora dimostrerò.' He finds names like Comera, Gianicula or Gianigena and Razzena (on the authority of Annus, Berosus, and Fabius Pictor), Umbria according to Pliny, Pelasgia, Tirrenia and Tirsena, the two latter subject to debate concerning their origins (again the result of attention to Annus), then Etruria after the Etrusci (or Hetruria in Greek) and finally Tuscia or Toscana. In fact Alberti's criticism of Biondo is not entirely justified. 'Etruria.....quae priscum temporum servavit nomen' are

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25. Italia Illustrata, ff.49-49vo.

Biondo's actual words, not that it never had any other names. He does in fact refer to the Umbri as settlers here, and to it being called Tyrrhenia and Etruria. He also refers to the Lidi, who along with the Umbri and Pelasgi, appear in Pliny.

After the origins of the name Alberti proceeds to the limits of the area, which are traced again from earliest times, with long digressions on where the first dwellings of the Tirreni might have been, the early settlements of Giano (Noah) and the founding of the first twelve cities, and of those across the Apennines. (ff. 22vo-23vo). The present boundaries are the same as Biondo's, and are followed by measurements of its length according to Pliny, Biondo, Strabo, Ptolemy, Livy and Polibius. Alberti's history of the region follows, drawing on Livy and Biondo's Decades, and thus being similar to Biondo's but with more details. For example, we learn that in the tenth century, (940), Tuscany suffered from the raids of the Hungarians, and men and women were taken captive to Hungary. Afterwards it was restored to prosperity, 'et cosi insino à questi tempi parte n'è soggetto all'Imperio et parte alla chiesa Romana.' He adds a further comment of praise for the region, 'Ella è molto nobile bella e gentile Regione, ove sono huomini ad ogni cosa d'ingegno accomodati cosi ne'tempi della pace come etiando della guerra, e non meno alle lettere, quanto à i trafichi. Et furono sempre gli habitatori d'essa molto dediti alle Cerimonie, e Religione circa il culto di Dio.' It is in all respects fuller, more far reaching in its investigation of sources and its observations, but covers nothing not covered by Biondo except for these sketchy observations on the character of the Tuscans themselves. Geographical description is kept very much to a minimum and left to appropriate places later in the text.

A comparison of a southern area, Apulia, involves more difficulties. Apulia is the last region of Biondo's Italia Illustrata, since the projected descriptions of Lucania, the Salentini, Calabria and the Brutii were never finished. As might be expected from his pleas for information on these southern provinces he is not very lengthy on Apulia. He begins by explaining how he has described the land of the Samnites (on the right bank of the Tiferno) and Campania (to the southwest of Apulia), and he now crosses the Tiferno to describe the land extending from its left bank, Apulia, (f.152vo-153). It was, he says, called after a captain of that name. Ptolemy divided it, the first part from the Tiferno to the city of Bari being called Daunia, and then from there to the Salentini (who are people of the area of Otranto) called Peucetia. Servius says that Diomedes ruled here and built many cities. He cannot mention all the things that have happened in Apulia but just briefly a few. (With several references to Livy we learn of the rebellion of the Samniti in Roman times and of Roman campaigns in the area).

Alberti, true to form, starts with the name, (f.221vo). It was Apulia Daunia, but now is Puglia Piana named after King Apulo who settled here many years before the Trojan War. Then it was called Daunio, the stories behind this come from Solinus and Pliny. Now it is called Puglia Piana because of the wide flat land found in Puglia Peucetia or Terra di Bari, 'i quali sono molto fertile e producevoli di frumento, e d'altre biade.'

The limits of Alberti's region are not the same as Biondo's. They are from the Apennines to the Adriatic, and from the River Lofante in the south, where Terra di Bari ends, to the River Fortoro in the north,

which makes the region only half the size. From the Lofante (Ofanto), which is about 10 km. north of Barletta, down to Otranto and Brindisi, is Terra di Bari, a region which Alberti has, of course, already dealt with. Alberti also gives us the boundaries according to Cato, Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy as being from Taranto and Brindisi to the River Fortoro, and from the Adriatic to the Apennines. The classical authors too divided their region, one part from Brindisi and Taranto to the Aufido (Lofanto), and the other from here to the River Fortoro. The second part coincides with Alberti's Apulia, and the former with his Terra di Bari. Alberti does not mention that Biondo's region ends at the Tiferno (north of the Fortoro), nor that Biondo puts the boundary of Ptolemy's region at the Salentini in the south, and from here it extends to Bari (south of the Lofanto) and from Bari to the Tiferno. (It is possible that Biondo may have copied an apparent error in Ptolemy's Cosmographia,<sup>26</sup> where the map of Italy shows Bari at the mouth of the Aufidus or Lofanto, and the next river north to be marked was the Fitermus). Alberti himself may be criticised for apparently misquoting Pliny, who declares that Apulia begins at the Aufidus and ends at the Tifernus not at the Fortoro, which he mentions in passing and calls the Frento.<sup>27</sup> In view of this, it is possible that Alberti was also wrong about Ptolemy, and if he had stopped to take a closer look at Biondo he could have investigated the matter more closely. In fact not only does Alberti not refer to his views here, but there are no references to him at all in the description of Apulia.

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26. Ptolemy, op.cit. Sexte (sic) Europe Tabula.

27. Pliny, op.cit., Lib.III, Ch. 16.

Alberti gives a brief account of the history of the area, relying on Livy, Tacitus and Silius Italicus. He comments on what he considers an error of Ptolemy, in putting Canusio in the northern half when clearly it is south of the Lofanto, and he also remarks with surprise that Strabo pays scant attention to the area. 'Etiandio avertirà il giuditioso lettore la descrizione fatta da Strabone di questi luoghi et se ben considererà, le parerà che detto Strabone non avesse veduto questo paese parlandone molto asciutamente à paragone di molti altri paesi d'Italia, ove egli fù, come dalla sua descrizione si può conoscere.' (f.222). He might well have added that Biondo says even less about it.

The third regional introduction to be compared is to the March of Ancona, an area where Alberti's and Biondo's boundaries coincide, and where information was more easily accessible than for Apulia, but would have taken more trouble to search out than for Tuscany. Biondo begins by saying that this region was once called Picenum and is now the Marca Anconitana.<sup>28</sup> Some time ago it was the Marca Firmana, as we read in the life of Gregory VII who excommunicated Roger Guiscard at the Lateran Council for having occupied the Marca Firmana. He gives its boundaries: 'Piceni fines sunt a Septentrione Appeninus eum a Ducatu Spoletano dividens: et ab oriente praesertim hyemali fluvius olim Isaurus nunc Folia dictus. A meridie Superiorum Mare post fluvius Troentus Asculum praeterlabens.'<sup>29</sup> There are references to the area under Roman rule, from Livy, as usual, and a quotation from Martial praising the fine olives, bread and pork sausage found here.

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28. *Italia Illustrata*, f.79vo.-80

29. Biondo seems to have turned his compass upside down. He must surely mean that the Adriatic is to the north-east and the Apennines to the south-west.



Alberti begins with the origin of the name Piceno, according to Cato, Pliny and Strabo, (ff.247-248). He prefers Strabo's version, but leaves the reader to make up his own mind. 'Pur sarà in arbitrio di ciascuno à pigliar quello che più gli aggradirà.' This is followed by a very lengthy discussion on the origins of the name Marca Anconitana. The limits of the region according to Pliny, Ptolemy and Strabo are followed by the limits Alberti puts on it, namely the River Tronto and the Abruzzi in the east, the River Foglia and Pesaro in the west, the Apennines and the Adriatic. He gives a detailed analysis of the 'tribes' and peoples of the area, but does not comment on Biondo's geographical absurdities. There is a brief description of the area, it is 'molto più lungo, che largo (com' è dimostrato) et è molto fertile et produce vole di buoni frutti, ma egli è molto più feroce in produrre alberi, et legna, che frumento'. This is followed by classical references to Pliny, Livy, Tacitus and so on, including the reference to Martial made by Biondo. So again Alberti seems to pay little attention to Biondo's text, yet at the same time there is still this close affinity in the topics they cover.

All three comparisons reveal consistency and methodical procedure in the approach of both authors to the regions they describe. The similarity is striking, but Alberti investigates more deeply a wider variety of sources, and is prepared to give helpful comment and discussion for the benefit of the reader, on such differing topics as the meaning of the term 'Marca', Strabo's lack of information on Apulia, or the characteristics of the inhabitants of Tuscany. But on the whole any differences in these general observations are differences of length and detail. It will next be necessary to compare how each

author describes the regions place by place, how they put their plans into action with descriptions of cities, natural phenomena, historical narrative and biographical notes.

Returning to Tuscany as a field for more detailed examination, we find that both authors start by describing the places along the coast, and then cover the inland area. Alberti sticks to this more rigidly than Biondo, whose 'shore' often extends some way up a river into the hills, for example in his description of the villages on the River Magra.<sup>30</sup> In fact Alberti was working to a very organized scheme within each region, describing the inland area following the rivers and dealing with settlement either up one side of a river and down the other, or between two rivers, thus giving places a fairly clear geographical location. When he finds this method of procedure impractical, for example in Calabria/Latium,<sup>and</sup> he says so, and proceeds as best he can (f.191,126). He uses various ranges of hills, and the Roman roads in a similar manner to the rivers. In Tuscany the first place which both authors deal with is Luni or Luna. Biondo says simply that it is a fine city,<sup>31</sup> once one of the foremost in Tuscany, the birth-place of Pope Eustace, but ruined long ago in antiquity (since it was half abandoned up to Lucan's time), and Martial tells us that it produced quantities of cheese! The city gave its name to the contado (the Lunigiana) which is for the most part under Genoese control.

Alberti points out that Luni was a noble and ancient city, one can see the remains and also some fishermen's cottages (ff.23vo-24).

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30. Italia Illustrata, f.50.

31. Ibid, f.49vo.

It is called Luni by Strabo, Pliny and Pomponius Mela (who puts it in Liguria) and Ptolemy. Then follows further discussion of the name based on Cato who says it was also called Cariara. It is a very fine port, 'grande ma sicurissimo', as Alberti has already explained in the previous region. According to Strabo it was big enough to take all the ships in the world. It was one of the first twelve cities of the region, but Alberti considers the story of its founding by a Trojan is a fabrication, and likewise Fazio's story about its destruction (by a jealous Emperor discovering his wife's infidelity with the young prince of the town). This 'pare...una favola' for several reasons, notably that it had already begun to decay as early as Lucan's time. It could be argued that the city was destroyed and then rebuilt, and then destroyed a second time, but this does not seem likely, he says, since one would expect to find some mention of it among some writers, especially those writing lives of the Emperors. Many noble writers have mentioned this city, Livy, Martial and Pliny (he gives several references), and though the city was ruined, the contado is named after it, and is under Genoese rule.

Biondo continues his description by going inland<sup>32</sup> up the right bank of the Magra to mention Sarzana and Sarzanello, the fortress guarding it, which he says was built by Tomaso Fregoso. The other settlements on the right bank of the Magra are Castrum Novum, Fossa Nova, Ortus Novus, Villa Franca, then the River Bagnonus and a town of the same name, Filattera, Malgratum and, in the Apennines, Pontremulum, a town surrounded by splendid country. Contrast this list with Alberti's details on the same area. (Dealt with in the

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32. Italia Illustrata, f.50.

section on inland places) (ff.33vo-44). He tells us Sarzana is four miles from the sea, built from the ruins of Luni, and that Nicholas V has brought fame to the city by transferring the bishopric of Luni here, and making it a city.<sup>33</sup> Sarzanello was first fortified by Castruccio Lord of Lucca, on the authority of Corio, and previously there was a fort called Batisola there, then it was further fortified by Perino Fregoso, Doge of Genoa. There is no mention here of any contradiction with Biondo's Tomaso Fregoso. Along the Magra are S Stefano, Tenedola, Capriola and other 'castellette', then the mouth of the River Lauia which joins the Magra. Then Lauia Castello, in the place where Tegulia was; then Castiglione, Fornova and Villafranca and beyond this the River and town of Bagnono; then Filaterra and Malgra (Biondo's Filaterra and Malgratum). Next he comes to the mouth of the River Gravia, joining the Magra, and Ponte Remuli, a rich and noble castle (mentioned by Biondo) near the sources of the Magra, built where once was Castello di Apua mentioned by Cato, Antoninus and Volaterrano. Alberti also refers to an inscription he has found on a marble slab in this castello, which says 'Apua sum, quondam Marca celebrata Catone'. The Apuani Liguri mentioned by Livy and Sempronius and living between the Magra and the Arno, were named after this place. It was ruined by the Emperor Henry in 1115, on his way to Rome, when the inhabitants refused to let him enter the town. Alberti has been unable to find out when it was restored, but for a long time it has, he says, been subject to the lords of Milan.

Still dealing with inland places, Alberti goes back to the shore and climbing for three miles, comes to Ordo Nuovo, Niccola, and higher

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33. Not correctly though - Eubel says it was so transferred in 1437 - i.e. by Eugenius IV. Hierarchia catholica medii aevi, 2nd edition, (Munster, 1913).

up Castel Nuovo, Fossil Nuovo (sic), perhaps according to Volaterrano on the site of what Ptolemy called Fosse Papiriane, (but no mention of Biondo is made). Alberti has reached the point where Biondo's narrative was broken off. Again his work is very similar, but he gives places a more precise location and includes all the very small places which Biondo either knew nothing about, or else decided were not worth mentioning. The degree of detail in the two authors' treatments of the rest of the region shows similar differences. Both describe the marble quarries of Carrara, (Alberti with greater detail, marred by the fact that he thinks the name came from Carriara, an ancient name for Luni according to Cato.). Alberti has a lot to say about Pietra Santa, and before reaching the Arno mentions several small places and rivers which had escaped Biondo's notice.

From this detailed comparison of a very small area we can see what was evident in the introductions. Much of the information is of the same kind, but Alberti is more thorough and often more illuminating. He tells us everything that is in Biondo plus a great deal more. There is more precise siting of villages and towns, all the Tuscan tributaries of the Magra are enumerated, the description of the Carrara marble is more detailed, though very close to Biondo's. More small villages are named and there is information of the sort that Biondo had set out to find regarding the identification of sites of places now disappeared or renamed, for example Castello di Apua, Batisola and Tempio di Feronia. Of course Alberti was fortunate in having sources at his disposal which did not exist in Biondo's day; Volaterrano, he found useful, and, perhaps regrettably, Annius.<sup>34</sup>

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34. It is also not impossible that he had a map of the area.

The comparisons made so far have demonstrated how the general organization of the two works is extremely similar. They have involved some comparison of how each author treats the question of tracing the origins of cities, the variety of sources each uses, and what sort of historical information each provides, but they have not revealed the type of description which each provides of the major cities, nor have they revealed geographical information of much detail, nor the treatment of the famous men of the country. It is to these more specialised aspects of the works that I shall now turn, starting with descriptions of cities and the countryside in general.

Still using Tuscany as the hunting ground, the city of Pisa, which both authors deal with next, is a typical example of Biondo's economy, and Alberti's comparative wealth of detail. Biondo tells us it is three miles inland with bridges and fine buildings, and moreover it is an old city and famous on many counts.<sup>35</sup> Pisa's origin, according to Virgil and Pliny, Justinus and Lucan is mentioned, its decline in importance with the decline of the Roman Empire, and its recovery in the peace of Charlemagne's time, enabling it to become a maritime power again, flourishing with famous families (as he has related in the Decades). As it has been for forty years under the Florentines, it now lacks inhabitants and is becoming insignificant.

Alberti goes to great lengths to discuss its site and origins (f.25ff.), referring to Cato, Strabo, Polibius, Pliny, Pomponius Mela, Livy, Trogus Pompeius, Solinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Virgil, Antoninus, Ptolemy, Agathio and Rutilius Namantianus. He then describes the River Arno and how the city lies between the Esaro, or Serchio, and the Arno,

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35. Italia Illustrata, f.50vo.

while in Strabo's time these two rivers joined at Pisa and made such a wide and fearsome torrent that people living on one side did not know those living on the other. Since then the Serchio has changed course and flows near Lucca. The city was built, as Strabo says, about two miles from the sea and was once very prosperous. 'Et era ben fabricata, abondando delle cose per viver de i mortali et etiandio cavavansi assai pietre per fabricare, del suo territorio. Ancora haveva molti legni navighevoli per traficare et trascorrere (sic) per il mare.' It was in times past the most excellent and famous of Tuscan cities, on account of the great enterprises and battles undertaken against the Liguri, its neighbours. Livy, Dionysius, Lucan, Fazio, Biondo, Bruni, Sabellico, St. Antoninus, Platina and Volaterrano all tell the story of Pisan greatness under the Romans and after, how she conquered and held onto Sardinia, how she fought naval battles with the Genoese, and helped Frederick Barbarossa with a fleet for the second crusade; her relations with Frederick II are mentioned and how the beginning of her decline came with the loss of forty-nine galleys and twelve thousand people to the Genoese (a divine judgement for helping Frederick II against the Pope, says Alberti ). Then follow more details of her misfortunes (silting and malaria) and the improvement of the situation in the thirteenth century, and then on to fourteenth-century and fifteenth-century events. He tells us Pisa has produced many men of intellect and soldiers famous throughout Italy, but he is not going to recount them all. The city is near the port of Livorno and 'veggonsi molti laghetti et stagni d'acque, in vero dilettevole cosa à i risguardanti'.

The ancient city of Populonia, nearby, is covered by Biondo in four lines <sup>36</sup> (he tells how it was destroyed when Italy was ruled by Charlemagne's grand-son Bernard). Alberti, however, not only devotes some space to its history, but to a most informative description of the place. (f.27vo), 'Per piacere de i curiosi ingegni voglio descrivere i vestigi, che hora appaiono di questa antica Citta, come a me dimostro Zaccaria Zacchio Volaterrano eccellente statuario, et diligente investigatore dell'antichitati.' We learn that the area is overgrown with woods, among which are the ancient city walls made without mortar. Round them runs a pavement of marble twenty feet wide, and inside them are the remains of an amphitheatre and fragments of marble decoration, and fountains, some still gushing water, and one carved in the shape of a lion's head. Remarkable too are the canals in the middle of the old city, for draining and conserving water. 'Assai altri vestigi di edifici si scoprono da ogni lato, da i quali si può conoscer di quanta magnificenza la fosse.' (f.28). Equally vivid is the description of the nearby ruins of what Alberti takes to be Vetulia. Biondo rarely tries to bring to life the places he describes, and is generally inferior in details concerning their origins and history. He does tell us that Fiesole and the Mugello are pleasant places, 'Interque eos montes et Appenninum vallis est amoenissima: et vicis vilisque praesertim Mediceorum speciosissimis frequentata Mugellum sicut consueverat appellata.....'<sup>37</sup>

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36. Italia Illustrata f.51

37. Italia Illustrata f.153vo



Alberti is always deeply appreciative of the beauties of nature, and in unpretentious language gives a charming picture of the Tuscan landscape round Fiesole, (ff. 44vo-45).

Ora appaiono in qua, et in là per quel colle, ove era la Città (Fiesole, in times gone by), assai vaghi, et belli edifici fatti da' cittadini fiorentini per loro piacere, et trastullo, con molti monasteri et chiese.... In questi luoghi vicini veggonsi da ogni lato bei giardini pieni d'ogni maniera di fruttiferi arbori intornati da belle pareti di bossi, di mortella, di gielsamini, di ramerini, et d'ogni sorte di rose. Quivi sono l'alte topie ornate d'ogni spetie di viti, quivi gli alti pini, co i cipressi, quivi le ombrose selve d'alloro, quivi da ogni lato veggonsi l'odorifere herbette belle da vedere, et soave da odorare co i cesti di salvia, si sentono altresì trascorrere le chiare acque con soave, et dolce mormorio per detti luoghi con gran piacere. Ritrovansi similmente per detti giardini Naranzi di diverse spetie, sopra i quali si veggono d'ogni stagione le dorate pome insieme co i fiori. Certamente è questo luogo molto ameno et diletto.

The Mugello too is 'molto piacevole et amena valle piena di belle contrade, et ville...'. Alberti's work, although much of it is a dry catalogue of unexciting facts, or debates over the origins of names, suddenly comes alive, with descriptions appealing to all our senses in a manner not even attempted by Biondo.

Alberti generally gives a few words of general comment about the situation of a city, or mentions some of its finer buildings. His description of Florence occupies eleven pages (ff. 38-44), compared with Biondo's two.<sup>38</sup> Admittedly historical narrative plays quite a large part, and the lists of her famous sons augmented by the famous names of the century since Biondo was writing, extend the account, but nevertheless Alberti has plenty to say about the buildings of the town. The major churches and the Orders that keep the various monasteries are carefully listed, the 'Tempio di S. Maria del fiore tutto di marmo crustato, ove

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38. Italia Illustrata f. 52vo.-53.

è quella stupenda cupola tanto artificiosamente fatta da Filippo di Burnelesco (sic.)', the 'bellissima Torre delle campane tutta fabricata di belle pietre di marmo,' the baptistry, with its fine marble font, 'Le cui Porte sono di metallo con tanto arteficio condotte, et massimamente quella ch'è di rincontro alla Chiesa di S. Maria Fiore, che guidica ciascun di qualche ingegno, che non si possono ritrovare, in tutta Europa le simili', (f.40). When he comes to the monastery of S. Marco he draws attention to the library, 'piena di rari e pretiosi libri latini, et greci', and in S. Lorenzo he points out the Medici chapels and another 'suntuosa libreria fatta da Clemente VII....ove veggonsi nobilissimi, et rarissimi libri cosi Greci, come Latini, (f.41). Then he goes on to list some of the hospitals, orphanages, and other religious foundations. He also lists other fine buildings, some public, like the Palace of the Signoria, some private, like the houses of the Pitti and the Strozzi, 'i quali tanto sontuosamente sono stati fatti con molti altri edifici per la città, che ella è cosa da far maravigliare ogni grande ingegno. Appaiono etiando in quà, et in là per quella, larghe, lunghe, dritte vie di belle pietre silicate, vaghi casamenti, che gli occhi de gli huomini vedendoli rimangono sodisfatti'. The 'Castello di Fiorenza' is another landmark, as are the four bridges over the Arno. The city is surrounded by fine suburbs, and beyond the city lie many noble palaces with spacious gardens, myrtles and cypresses and gushing streams. 'In vero s'io volesse il tutto descrivere dell'amenità, vaghezza cosi naturale, come artificiale di questi luoghi, che sono intorno la Città, bisognerebbe scriverne volumi.'

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Biondo does mention the cathedral, the Palace of Priors, the city walls and pays tribute to the library of St. Marco ('Bibliotecaria alias superat, quas nunc habet Italia'),<sup>39</sup> but this hardly compares with Alberti's account, which, if not strictly topographical, would have been useful to the visitor and informative to the general reader. Such descriptions are forthcoming for most of the main cities of Italy, and any small places which particularly took Alberti's fancy. He describes Venice, for example, in great detail, paying particular attention to St. Marks, 'la qual'è tutta fatta di bellissimi e finissimi marmi con gran magisterio, et grandissima spesa'.(f.449vo-50). The structure and sumptuous decoration of the church are described in great detail, the splendid columns, the mosaic paving, the choir and altar, choir stalls and pulpit and then the room where 'si conserva il ricchissimo Tesoro'. A breath-taking sight, he says, 'Il quale io già molti anni lo vidi, essendo in compagnia di Maestro Francesco da Ferrara,.... Mi parve certamente una cosa da far stupire ogni grande ingegno à vedere un tanto gran Tesoro'. First of all they were shown by the 'Magnifici Signori', 'dodice preziose Corone, con dodici petti, tutti di fino oro, circondati da gran numero di pietre preziose di diverse maniere. Quivi sono Rubini, Smeraldi, Topazzi, Crisoliti,... con Perle di smisurata grossezza. Veramente rimasi stupefatto, vedendo tanta pretiosità di dette Corone, et Pettorali'. Then they saw 'due Corne di Alicorne... molti grossi Carboni, Vasi di oro, Chiocciolate d'Agate, 'and many other precious things of gold and silver, ending with the Doge's Mitre or Baretta, 'tutta intorniata di finissimo oro...' He says that never has he seen such riches in one place before, and he has seen some very precious things, in Italy and in France. The description of the church still has to be finished, and then the description of the Doge's Palace, the bell tower, the churches

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39. Italia Illustrata f.53

of Venice, with their Piazzas, the four hundred bridges of the city, especially the 'Ponte di Rio Alto', her many ships, her markets full of fine wares, and her arsenal, all are brought before our eyes. Florence was 'Fiorenza bella.....il fiore d'Italia', Venice is 'la gloria di tutta Italia'. Alberti's description altogether covers thirty-two pages. The city is, of course, treated as a separate island, not as one of the mainland regions, but Biondo lingers for less than two pages on it, so it is hardly surprising that he does not say much except for the historical facts. Descriptions of Milan and Naples could be compared, with similar results, and also of some of the smaller cities like Rimini, Ravenna, Modena, Parma, Mantua, Ferrara, Perugia etc. He describes anything he has come across or heard about of unusual interest, whether classical ruins, fine churches or monasteries, palaces and castles, a fine library, special works of art, fountains, bridges, a good market, harbour or arsenal. He frequently complains of lack of time and space. He could extend descriptions with no difficulty, but it would take too long. He tries to produce a balanced account and is often strict with himself when he does have a lot of information, for example in his description of Bologna, which though it is his native city, is given less attention than Milan or Venice. (One can compare the opening chapter of his History of Bologna, where he describes the city in much greater detail, but dealing with the various features in the same order as in the Descrittione.)

It is worth noting that neither author gives much attention to Rome. Biondo merely says that he has dealt with it in his Roma Instaurata,<sup>40</sup> while Alberti gives a fairly brief description and refers

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40. Italia Illustrata f.60v.

the reader to various authors who have written about the city and also to a work of his own on the city, of which no record remains. 'Vedensi ne'detti pallagi alcune belle statue, et altre antiquitati delle quali ne ho fatto memoria nel libro dell'antichitati di Roma. Et per tanto io non parlerò in questo luogo più di quelle.....'(f.106vo).

We have already seen how Alberti and Biondo both try to live up to their claims to explain the origins of towns and cities, and their changing names, and how Alberti refers to an endless string of classical and contemporary writers to gather as many opinions as possible. There is this difference in source material, both for the origins of names and for the history of events since the fall of Rome. As explained above, many local histories and descriptions had been written in the years separating the two works, and Alberti made good use of them though in the case of Rome he simply refers the reader to them. His historical descriptions of towns tend to vary in length according to the details he could glean from his sources, for example he makes extensive use of Corio and Simonetta when dealing with Milan, of Equicola and Corio for information on Mantua and of Sabellico for Aquileia and Venice. However Alberti's treatment of these historical topics does not indicate that he was trying to do anything different from Biondo, only that he was somewhat more efficient in doing the same thing.<sup>41</sup> The same is true on the whole of the famous men both say they will list. Biondo makes some references to important figures in the historical narrative, but his lists of men who have brought greatness to their homelands is never very lengthy. Although he does not limit himself to literary figures, Liguria boasts hardly a dozen

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41. Alberti was also limited by space, and his historical narratives still cover only the basic facts and not all of them by any means, but certainly more than Biondo had room for. See Chapter VI below for a full discussion of the value of Alberti's historical information.

famous names. Thomaso Fregoso from Savona, Innocent IV and Adrian V and a family with thirty cardinals to boost its ranks from Genoa. Biondo says, 'ornatur nunc civibus navigatione ac mercatura toto urbe notissimus, sed paucos habet egregie litteratos, quorum notiores nobis sunt Nicolaus Ceba et noster item Jacobus Bracellus ac Gottardus principis scriba.'<sup>42</sup> Spezia has been honoured by Bartolomeo Fazio, 'viro doctissimo', and Lucca by Janipetro, 'Graece et Latine eruditissimo' and 'Victorinus Feltrenis'.<sup>43</sup> Even for Florence Biondo produces few names.<sup>44</sup> Cosimo de' Medici is referred to in the historical section, while Dante and Petrarch, Brunelleschi, Palla Strozzi, Acciaiuoli, Flocci, Manetti, 'Baptista Albertus' and 'Donatellus' receive honourable mention. These are not all, but the list is a mere drop in the ocean compared with the galaxy of names Alberti produces. Not only are there more of them, but many men receive far more lengthy biographies. Of course one has to remember that all the great names of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were there for Alberti to record.<sup>45</sup>

Topographical and geographical information was not, according to his introduction, one of Biondo's subjects for discussion. It does nevertheless make some intrusion into the text where it helps to locate the position of a town with relation to the coast or to the nearest river, or where the limits of an area are defined. There are, as we have seen, occasional remarks about the beauty of the countryside and about sights like the marble quarries of Carrara. He describes the produce of the fertile soil and favourable climate of the Milanese and

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42. *Italia Illustrata*. f.47v-48.

43. *Ibid.*, f.48vo, f.52.

44. *Ibid.*, 53-53vo of *Descrittione*, ff.42-44.

45. For discussion of Alberti's biographical material see below, Chapter VI.

Veronese countryside, of Amalfi and of his native town of Forli. He extols the beauties of the coastal region from Tagello to Gaeta and of the Bay of Baia. But such remarks seem more intended to make his history more meaningful than to have been included for their own merits. With Alberti there is a difference. The description of towns and comments on the beauty of nature were an integral part of his text, and so was more specific geographical information. Nogara has pointed out the importance in the Italia Illustrata of Biondo's references to natural phenomena, and to the beauty of places, as a new development in descriptive writing.<sup>46</sup> So it may have been, but it seems to creep in by accident, rather than claim an important place in the narrative.

Alberti is very anxious to tell the reader about the places he has visited and the things he has seen, and most of his geographical information must have been derived from his own observations, or the information of friends. He is weakest and least independent when dealing with physical geography, and takes references to mountains and rivers from classical sources and from Biondo, but his detail is far more minute. He makes use of more up-to-date material for the March of Treviso and Friuli, namely the chorographies of Candido and Amaseo, and for the northern lakes those of Paolo Giovio, Giulio de'Giuli and Macagno. The crops grown in each region are carefully recorded. He tells us which are the best regions for corn, vines, olives and pasture land, where the fishing is good, and what are the specialities of each area. He also mentions local industries and gives some information on which were the main ports, market centres and routes for merchants. Also

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46. Nogara, op. cit. p.cxxviii.

there are especially interesting descriptions of unusual places he visited, such as the caves of the Cumaean Sybil and the grottos on the coast near Baia where he tells us how he explored them in every detail, even down to the picnic held on the shore during a boat trip, when he was there in 1526. There are other places like the primitive cave-dwellings of the Valley of Reggina near Montealto, which have no 'ziminieri' and only wooden fastenings on their doors; or the fine home and estates of Giovan Battista di Monte/d'Otranto, which come to life before our eyes as Alberti records his own surprise and delight at seeing them.

This then is a very important distinction between the two works and since Alberti was obviously well acquainted with the literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as the classical geographers, he must have been well aware of the growing interest in the particular branch of descriptive geographical, historical and topographical writing that constituted chorography. Looking back to Ptolemy's distinction between geography and chorography<sup>47</sup> we can see that Alberti did not qualify as a scientific geographer, well versed in mathematics and astronomy, but he does seem to fit quite well into Ptolemy's mould for the chorographer, and in this respect he was not merely following and expanding Biondo, but developing in a new direction. Biondo must have been aware of Ptolemy's canon since he used Ptolemy as a source, but he does not refer to the three studies, geography, chorography and cosmography, and indeed the aims of the Italia Illustrata seem more limited than a chorography demands.<sup>48</sup>

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47. Above Chapter II, p.75

48. It is not known whether Biondo was using Ptolemy in a Greek edition or in the translation of Giacomo Angeli da Scarperia, but he makes no reference to the latter's work. We know that Biondo had difficulties with Greek, and with Strabo in particular, see Nogara, op.cit., p.cxxviii.



Roletto in his discussion of why the Descrittione was written suggests that Alberti really wanted to make a record of the things he had seen on his travels, but was so bound by the limitations of his classical, humanist education that he had to find an existing and accepted literary form through which to do so, and therefore used the Italia Illustrata.<sup>49</sup> This is an attractive argument, especially as Roletto cites the copy of the Italia Illustrata in the University Library in Bologna, originally from the Convent of S. Domenico, with notes in the margin coinciding with the introduction to the Descrittione. (Unfortunately he does not tell us whether these notes are in Alberti's hand, if they are, then they certainly give weight to his theory, and suggest that Alberti was using Biondo as his model, at least for the structure of the work; but if they are not, it could be that a monk later in the century was adding notes to a copy of Biondo.) It could be argued though, that if a model were needed he could equally well have turned to Pliny, Strabo or Ptolemy, or to the chorographies which existed at the time he was writing, like the work of Volaterrano which he often cites. In the first case these classical authors were not dealing with Italy on the same scale as Alberti planned, and in the second place these other chorographers were also probably influenced by Biondo to some extent. Certainly the Germans were, since they followed in the footsteps of Celtis who in turn had been inspired by the Italia Illustrata. While agreeing with the feasibility of Roletto's suggestion, one cannot overlook the fact that Alberti was not only a traveller, but first and foremost a Dominican humanist scholar, as we can see from his education and from his other writings. We must not dismiss the antiquarian aspects

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49. Roletto, op. cit., pp.484-485.

of the Descrittione, and the importance Alberti and others attached to it in the identification of placenames. A very large part of the work is a discussion of the origins of tribes, of cities, of the names of regions rivers, mountains and so on; how they changed over the centuries; whether and by what name they are referred to by classical authors. If he were simply anxious to write a travelogue Alberti could have done so; even a report of the Master-general's tour could have incorporated the descriptive detail so carefully observed. He clearly had a wider design, one which encompassed all his interests, and which in its comprehensiveness and attention to detail in every part of Italy, far surpassed anything of its kind written before or for many years after it.

It is not difficult to conclude that the Descrittione seems to be of the same genre as the Italia Illustrata. One can draw close parallels between the expressed intentions of the two authors, the material they use and the way they present it. There are also differences of emphasis, and it could be that Alberti was anxious to produce something original which would supercede all the existing works in the field, and found Biondo's work a convenient framework within which to operate. It gave him an opportunity to use his knowledge of classical writers, of more recent historians and manuscript sources, and to combine this with descriptions of the places he had himself seen.

Turning now to the use Alberti actually makes of the Italia Illustrata, how often he cites Biondo, whether he accepts his views, gleans all the information possible from him, or is more concerned with other sources, much of the evidence seems to lend weight to the previous argument. References to the Italia Illustrata represent about 3.5% of

all the references made to source material, and Alberti is very punctillious about citing his authorities. Out of a grand total of about 5520 references about 190 are to the Italia Illustrata, compared with 184 to the Decades, 306 to Annius of Viterbo and his spurious 'fragments', 326 to Ptolemy, 441 to Livy, 446 to Strabo and 631 to Pliny. These are his favourite sources. The works or opinions of over 200 other authors are mentioned. Of course Alberti could not use Biondo as a source for the southern provinces, Lucania, Terra di Brutii, Terra d'Otranto and Calabria, and in fact he makes no reference to Biondo's scant information on Apulia and Terra di Bari. For a tenth of Alberti's work therefore, it was impossible for him to refer to the Italia Illustrata. But he does not always refer to it when there is information which might be relevant, as we have already seen. (For example the simile of Italy being like a fish, is not mentioned, and there are other similar silences mentioned above.) Biondo could not have been such an important source if his views were overlooked.

Again considering Tuscany, one can find points made by Biondo which Alberti does not take up, for example, telling the history of Florence, Alberti says that according to Leonardo Bruni, Totila's attack on the city did not destroy it and leave it uninhabited, as some authors have supposed, but the attack failed, and by the grace of God the city was saved, (f.39). Biondo and Volaterrano agree with this, he says. Biondo does indeed say this, but in the Italia Illustrata he continues to explain that in view of this, the city could not have been restored by Charlemagne, especially when Alcuin in his life of Charlemagne says only that when Charlemagne was going to Rome he twice celebrated the festival of Easter at Florence,<sup>50</sup> (i.e. not that he restored the city).

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50. Italia Illustrata, f.52vo.

Alberti does not give us this information, and he does say that Charlemagne began the restoration of the city, suggesting either that he had not read the Italia Illustrata carefully at this point, or else did not want to take issue with Biondo. It does seem surprising that he does not refer to this since he often cites less valuable information, saying that even if something seems completely ridiculous to him he mentions it, and says he does not agree with it, rather than leave it out altogether and be accused of negligence. In several places he does not give Biondo's name for a place, even when Biondo gives what he considers to be its ancient name. For example Biondo says Via Reggio was called Virego by the ancients;<sup>51</sup> Livorno he refers to as Liburinum<sup>52</sup> (and Alberti discusses the name at length saying Ptolemy called it Liburnus) (f.24vo); Valle Carfagnana is presumably from its geographical position what Alberti refers to as Valle Grassignana.<sup>53</sup> Alberti does not say that Biondo calls Popi 'Poppium',<sup>54</sup> nor that according to Biondo Chiusi, or Clusum was called Carmon by Pliny,<sup>55</sup> or that Biondo calls Alberti's Citerna 'Cisterna', his Anghiari 'Anglarium', his Borghetto 'Malborghetto', his Pacciano 'Passignano', his Monte Panigale, 'Monte Pontighino', and so on.

Where he does refer to Biondo he is often critical of his views. Out of 26 apparent references to the Italia Illustrata in Tuscany seven point out errors. Four errors are noted among nineteen references in the Romagna, and four more out of fourteen in the Marca Trevigiana.

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51. Ibid, f.50.

52. Ibid, f.50vo.

53. Descrittione 34vo. cf. Italia Illustrata, f.52.

54. Ibid, f.54v.

55. Ibid, f.56.

But altogether out of 192 references, only 22 are references to Biondo's mistakes. For example Alberti criticises Biondo's reference to Pliny, who, according to Biondo, referred to Port Thelamonis as Telamontosa.<sup>56</sup> In fact Pliny says 'Portus Thelamonis et Cosa', 'Et cosi,' says Alberti, 'Potrebbe esser che il libro che vide Biondo era cosi confusamente scritto cioè Thelamontosa, si come Thelamon, Cosa'. (f.30). This seems likely, he continues, since Biondo makes no mention of Cosa as do Pliny and other authors. Another example is Biondo's reference to Livy saying that Livy refers to the River Serchio as the Mera,<sup>57</sup> when the true text of Livy says Magra, and no river of this area was given the name Mera by ancient authors. Again he is surprised that Biondo should say that Alexander II came from Lucca,<sup>58</sup> when in fact he was from Milan, but was Bishop of Lucca before becoming Pope.

More interesting still is his disagreement over Lake Vadimone, (f.66). Biondo believed this to be what in his day was Lago di Monte Rose or Rosso, but Alberti believes it must be Lago di Bassanello. On the basis of the descriptions of the younger and elder Pliny, he asked his friend Fr. Vincentio Reggiano O.P., who was in Viterbo, to see if this was indeed the lake. He found that it fitted Pliny's description exactly, even down to the 'floating islands', also it was the only lake which could be seen from Amelia, the lands of the elder Pliny's father-in-law, as Pliny had claimed Vadimone could be seen. Biondo was wrong,

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56. Italia Illustrata, f.51.

57. Descrittione f.35. cf. Italia Illustrata, f.50.

58. Descrittione, 36vo, cf. Italia Illustrata, f.52. Volaterrano is also criticised for an error here. Alberti thinks he too could be referring to Alexander's Bishopric, but he has 'Alexander III', which might be the result of a printer's error.

since the evidence he had used from Livy did not fit Lago di Monte Rose, anyway, 'Et maggiormente erra detto Biondo, perche non ha il lago di Monte Rose le conditioni descritte da Plinio cioe l'acqua solforea, di colore tra bianco et uscuo verde, et spessa, ne vi si veggono le glebbe di giunco nuotare et e senza pesce et non quell'altri conditioni dal detto Plinio dichiarate'. (There is no suggestion that these conditions might have changed since Pliny's time but on the other hand the conditions of Lago di Bassanello did apparently fit Pliny's description.)

From these observations on Alberti's use of the Italia Illustrata in a limited area, Tuscany, and the other comparisons made above, one can conclude that he did not follow Biondo slavishly, did not hesitate to criticise him, used him when it was convenient and other sources were not so informative, and did not, in fact, extract the maximum amount of information possible from his work. Looking at it another way, if one were to extract the references to the Italia Illustrata, the work would not be radically different, nor greatly lacking in information. Having made this point, it is still essential to bear in mind, that no other work could so conveniently have been adapted, reshaped or brought into line with the sixteenth-century chorographical developments, which, after all, the Italia Illustrata had had a share in forming. It probably provided Alberti with a suitable format for the Descrittione, but it was not necessarily the only inspiration behind the work, and still less was it an indispensable source.

## CHAPTER IV

## A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO ALBERTI'S SOURCES, AND DISCUSSION OF HIS USE OF CLASSICAL AND DARK AGE LITERATURE

1. Introduction to Alberti's sources

One of the most important questions we have to ask about the Descrittione is, where did Alberti obtain his vast collection of knowledge? He most obligingly answers this himself ninety per cent of the time with clear references to his sources. Sometimes the author alone is given, sometimes author and title of work, or a precise reference to book and chapter, and Alberti even includes quotations from some authors. His references to manuscript materials are less clear and doubtless the 'antica chronica' or 'Annali di Forli' were the clearest titles available to him. Apart from printed sources some references are to contemporary works which he could only have seen in manuscript at that date, and there are interesting allusions to correspondence with friends, or conversations about the odd puzzling question.

From the tables of sources contained in this chapter and the next it is clear that certain sources stand out as being cited far more often than others.<sup>1</sup> The most widely used are Pliny's Natural History (621 + 97 refs.)<sup>2</sup>, Strabo's Geography (414 + 89), Livy's Decades (440 + 49), Ptolemy's Geography (318 + 103) and Biondo's Italia Illustrata and Decades (338 + 1). To this group can be added the Antiquitatum Varium Volumina XVII of Annius of Viterbo. Assuming that the forged fragments of ancient authors together with Annius's commentary constitute one source, the total number of references to this work is about 350. The

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1. Below pp. 197-203, 216-220, 227-230, 235-236, 251-263.

2. References are given for the Descrittione di Tutta Italia first, followed by the number for Isole.

The four classical authors are by far the most frequently mentioned in every region. (Venice here is an exception. It is not, of course, referred to in any classical texts, and Alberti's main sources are Biondo and Sabellico.) Alberti was able to use Pliny, Strabo, Livy and Ptolemy for the southern provinces and the Islands also, which was not the case with all the classical authors, nor indeed with Biondo, as we have seen above. Biondo had great difficulty collecting his information here and has little to say about this part of the country. The Antiquitates likewise are of little use for these areas and concentrate mainly on Tuscany, Umbria, Latium and Campania, and on Lombardy and the Romagna.

The second group of sources, though heavily used, falls far short of the first in popularity. They are Silius Italicus (177 + 56), Virgil (142 + 19), Volaterrano (158 + 4), Pomponius Mela (110 + 47), Sabellico (135 + 3), Antoninus (133 + 3), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (115 + 7), Tacitus (113 + 11), and Corio (109 + 0). Silius Italicus is used throughout, though much less for the southern provinces and the north-east. Likewise Virgil is little used for the east and north-east, and Pomponius Mela is hardly referred to for these regions. Antoninus is used particularly for Tuscany, and Dionysius mainly for Tuscany, Latium and Campania, while Tacitus is used throughout, but especially in the region of Rome and Latium. In this group again the classical sources predominate. Volaterrano's Urban Commentaries one might expect to be useful to Alberti, and Sabellico's various works, historical and topographical, on the north-east of the peninsula were particularly valuable. But neither of these authors have much to offer on the southern provinces or on the Islands. Tuscany, (Volaterrano 56 references),



the Romagna and Lombardy are where they figure most largely, with Sabellico much relied on for Venice, (32+ references). Corio is a special case, an author very heavily cited for specific areas (the Romagna and Lombardy) and even specific places within these areas (Pavia and Milan).

For the sake of convenience my next group of authorities, those cited between about 30 and 100 times, are subdivided into the categories used in the main discussion. They are the Greek authors: Appian of Alexandria (62 + 11), Diodorus Siculus (21 + 43), Polybius (60 + 51), Thucydides (13 + 46), and Plutarch (28 + 4); the Romans: Solinus (48 + 17), Trogus Pompeius (46 + 14), Cicero (18 + 38), Ovid (28 + 22), and Lucan (33 + 3); the later Roman and Dark Age writers: Paul the Deacon (58 + 0), Procopius (47 + 2), and Servius (70 + 4); the Mediaeval writer Fazio degli Uberti (72 + 7), and those from after 1400: Giorgio Merula (80 + 0), Platina (88 + 0), Pietro Razzano (60 + 1) and Ermolao Barbaro (29 + 8).

The Greek sources here were particularly useful for the Islands, mainly of course for Sicily, as were Cicero and Ovid, though other references to these authors throughout the work are not concentrated in any one area. Solinus is most used for Rome and Magna Graecia, and Trogus Pompeius is also useful for Magna Graecia (12 references). Lucan makes no contribution to the south, nor does Paul the Deacon who is mostly used for the north-east. There are scattered references to Procopius throughout, and also to Fazio, though the Dittamondo is cited more frequently for Tuscany than elsewhere (24 references). Platina too is specially used for Tuscany, and is hardly mentioned in the southern provinces. Giorgio Merula, like Corio, is an author much used for one area, again Lombardy, and Barbaro's commentaries on Pliny are referred to throughout.

One of the most interesting sources in this group, and probably one of the most valuable, is Pietro Razzano's lost geographical work on the southern provinces of Italy, which Alberti says he read while at Palermo (probably in manuscript).<sup>3</sup> Information was readily available on Tuscany, Latium and Campania from a variety of classical sources. Also for the Lombardy Plain, the Romagna and even the March of Ancona, there was a fair selection of authors who could be used, but on the south even the classical authors had rather less to contribute, unless they were describing the voyages of Aeneas or Ulysses, the Athenian expedition against Sicily or the First Punic War. In the south Alberti's own travels must have been particularly useful, and enabled him to accomplish in some measure what Biondo had found impossible.

The last group of authors to be singled out in this introduction are those whom Alberti found provided more than just one or two passing references. They are the Greeks: Herodotus (11 + 6), Stephen of Byzantium (4 + 5), Antiochus of Syracuse (10 + 1); the Romans: Julius Caesar (18 + 0) relating particularly to the south and east, Florus (27 + 4), Suetonius (29 + 0) used mostly for Latium and Campania, Martial (24 + 1) with no references for the south, Varro (20 + 1) mostly for Latium and Tuscany, Horace (19 + 0), Juvenal (10 + 0) with no references for the south, Rutilius (9 + 5) mostly for Tuscany; the late Roman, Patristic and Dark Age writers: Agathias (16 + 1), Ammianus Marcellinus (12 + 0) mostly for the north, Macrobius (7 + 3), Vibius Sequester (14 + 1), and Eusebius (10 + 0); the Mediaeval writers: Dante (10 + 4), Petrarch (19 + 4) with few references for the south;

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3. Isole, f.53. For discussion of Razzano see below Chapter V, p.278

those from after 1400: Albertuzzo dei Borselli (9 + 0) for north Italy, St. Antonino, Archbishop of Florence, (11 + 0) mostly for Tuscany, Boccaccio (14 + 2) with few for the south, Leonardo Bruni (11 + 1) mostly for Tuscany, Giovanni Candido and Gregorio Amaseo (32 + 2) for the March of Treviso and the Duchy of Friuli, Elia Capreolo (25 + 0) mostly for Lombardy, especially Brescia, Pandolfo Collenuccio (23 + 0) mostly for the southern provinces, Mario Equicola (18 + 0) for the Romagna and Lombardy, Pietro Ferretto da Ravenna (10 + 0) for the Romagna and Lombardy, G.A. Flaminio (13 + 0), Agostino Giustiniani, Archbishop of Nebbia (9 + 2) for Liguria and Corsica, Nicolo Perotto (11 + 2) with no references for the south, Peregrino Prisciano (16 + 0) for the Romagna especially Ferrara, Giovanni Simonetta (15 + 0), and Alberti's own writings (29 + 0). The Chronicles of Bologna provided a further 22 references mostly about the city and north-east Italy.

It is only in this fourth category that we find many fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century authors, and they are still equalled by the number of references to classical sources. The contrast is not difficult to explain. In the first place, as we have seen, there were few works that covered Italian history or geography on the scale that Alberti was attempting and they were almost all classical. On the questions of origins of races and founding of cities the classical sources were most valuable and it was the classical placenames, sites of battles and settlements which Alberti was trying to identify, and by cross-references among his classical authors he was able to corroborate information or trace changes in name or spelling. From the variety of available classical sources more historical information could be gathered for the earlier periods of Italian history than the post-

classical era when, as Biondo had pointed out, 'extincta(que) est historia'. The gap was only just beginning to be filled. Biondo's Decades were a step in this direction, as were the local histories and chorographies, discussed in Chapter II, which were at last providing information on individual areas.

None of these histories could compare in scope with the writings of Livy, Caesar or Dionysius for example, and where towns were not well-served by local historians Alberti had to make do with scraps of information he could glean from elsewhere, or resort to the local chronicles. One gets the impression that he was anxious to see the results of his friends' work as they became available, for we hear of topographical and historical works being sent to him by men who knew he would welcome them. For example Gregorio Amaseo sent him a book on the 'termini della Regione di Venetia' (f.431, 434) and Battista Piarino Vicentino sent his annals of Vicenza in six books for Alberti's perusal (f.420). Fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century material was still thin on the ground, or else not readily accessible, and of course the north was more productive than the south. In the list above only Pandolfo Collenuccio was writing about the southern provinces.

Further evidence of the scattered nature of material dating from this period is the number of authors who are mentioned once or twice. There are seventy of them with fewer than ten references each, and often with a single reference. The other authors who have not so far been mentioned here will be found in the tables in this and the following chapter. There are 43 Greek authors, many with only a single reference, 8 Roman authors, 7 Patristic, 9 late Roman and Dark Age, and 14 Mediaeval and about 40 fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century writers mentioned.

At least a dozen of the last group of works Alberti must have seen in manuscript. To these must be added the chronicle sources, reported conversations and letters which increase the number of sources considerably.

When so many single references to different authors appear one suspects that some of these must have been derived at second-hand from another source. Although it might be valuable to track down these references and so to know the more exact limits of Alberti's sources, I have not found it possible to do more than scratch the surface in this respect, and where derivations are easily found I shall discuss them. There are very few sources that cannot be easily identified and they appear listed at the end of Chapter V.

#### ii. Greek Sources

The Greek authors have been divided into three groups. Firstly the most frequently cited names, with clear references to the work in question, where there is no doubt that Alberti was consulting it at first-hand, secondly a group where the source of the references is less certain, and a third group where it is obvious that the reference is derived at second-hand, often from one of the heavily used authorities in the first section. To this third section could also be added the earliest fragments of Annius's Antiquitates, in view of the fact that Alberti accepted them at their face value. Myrsilius Lesbios, Archilochus, Manetho and Fabius Pictor were all supposed to have written in Greek originally, though the fragments as Annius reproduces them are in Latin. Since Alberti's use of these forgeries needs some explanation I have reserved them for discussion as a fifteenth-century/sixteenth-century

source, even though Alberti did not consider them as such.

In view of the impressive list of Greek sources - a list much longer than could be gathered from any other chorographical work before Alberti's time - it is important to establish as far as possible which of these authors he read at first hand. There is little difficulty in establishing that all the authors in the first group were available to him and the precision of his references makes it indisputable that he had the actual texts before him. Appian, Diodorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Herodotus, etc., present no problem of identification. Alberti's 'Dione Greco' turns out to be Dio Cassius when the references are compared with the relevant passages in the Roman History, but Alberti confuses things by referring also to a 'Dione Historico' who, he says, came from Syracuse and is not to be confused with Dione Greco as he was not Greek.<sup>4</sup> Selections from Dio Cassius from which Alberti's references come (Books 43 and 46, life of Trajan and description of Vesuvius) were available in translation as early as 1503 and were printed by Aldus along with part of the Historia Augusta, in 1519, (also used by Alberti). As Alberti has so few references to Dio Cassius it seems reasonable to assume that he was using selections and did not see the complete text. He makes particular use of the description of Vesuvius, although his actual wording is not quite so close to the original as usual.<sup>5</sup> He describes the crater fringed with trees and vines and discharging smoke, flames, even ash and stones, but usually nothing to compare with the dreadful eruption of 79 A.D. Dio's portents

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4. Isole f.68. Dione Historico remains a mystery. He is not Dio Chrysostom, as he, like Dio Cassius who was probably his grandson, came from Bithynia.

5. Descrittione, f. 172vo. cf. Dio Cassius, Roman History, Book LXVI.

of disaster, so vividly reported, the giants who wandered over the countryside and flew through the air, the fearful droughts and earthquakes, Alberti includes them all without a hint of disbelief.

Dionysius Afro, as Alberti calls him, is better known as Dionysius Periegetes. In a fuller reference he is described as 'Dionisio Afro nel 1 lib. del sito del mondo' (f. 98vo.), from which it is not difficult to conclude that Alberti was using the work which appeared in Ferrara in 1512 under the title of Dionysii Afri de situ orbis opus. A metrical paraphrase of Dionysius's work had been produced by Avienus in the fourth century, Descriptio Orbis Terrae, but Alberti does not seem to have seen it.<sup>6</sup> Stephen of Byzantium was not an author whom Alberti could have consulted in Latin, which may account for the paucity of references. However, Aldus printed in 1502 a Greek work entitled Stephanus de Urbibus, leaving little doubt over the source of Alberti's references to 'Stefano de Urbibus', 'Stefano nel lib. che'l fa delle città' or 'Stefano grammatico', as he is variously called. There is always the possibility that these references could have come from some other source, but it is not Biondo or Volaterrano, and the references are fairly precise and easily identifiable.

None of the other authors in this section present any difficulties. There are few direct quotations, but plenty of direct references for most of them, and no obscurities in the way they are styled. A couple of the references to Plutarch are from Annius of Viterbo,<sup>7</sup> and two references to Polybius can be traced to Dionysius and Strabo<sup>8</sup> but these seem to be

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6. Rufus Festus Avienus, (Descriptio Orbis terrae) Situs orbis Dionisii Ruffo avieno interprete, (1508).

7. Descrittione, f.75; Isole, f.19.

8. Descrittione, f.101, re. date of founding of Rome, cf. Dionysius, I.74. Isole f.3, re. Pillars of Hercules, cf. Strabo, III. v.3.

isolated cases, usually the authors in question have been consulted at first-hand.

In the second section the attributions become more doubtful, especially since there are few references to each author. Are we to assume that Alberti in reading, for example, Aristotle's works, came across the odd useful point which he jotted into his common-place book ready for future use, or did he happen to find some remarks of Aristotle conveniently recorded by another author? Stephen of Byzantium, as he tells us, is the source of one reference (f.78), and Dionysius of another,<sup>9</sup> but the rest do not come from any obvious source. Callimachus refers to the Islands of Lipari 'nell'himno di Diana', according to Alberti, and the same point is made by Strabo (that they were named Longono or Meliguno) but with no reference to Callimachus.<sup>10</sup> There is no reason why Alberti should not have seen the original, since manuscripts of the hymns were circulating in the fifteenth century and a Latin edition was printed in Bologna in 1509.<sup>11</sup> There are only two references to Herodian, and this is the only reason for suspecting that Alberti was not using the complete text. The references are clearly and accurately given and the work was available in Latin.

Homer is a different case. The references are few and most of them can be traced to other sources although there were several Latin translations of Homer's works available, and, as with Aristotle, there

9. Descrittione, f.99. cf. Dionysius, I.72.

10. Isole, f.73vo. cf. Strabo, VI.ii.10.

11. Callimachi Cyrenaei hymni a Jacobo Crucio Bononiensi latinitate donati, (Bologna, 1493) See R.R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and its beneficiaries, (Cambridge, 1924), p.496, refers to the manuscripts. Also R. Sabbadini, Le Scoperte dei codici Latini e Greci ne'secoli XIV & XV. (Florence, 1905) p.47.



is no reason why Alberti should not have used them. One reference is, as Alberti explains, a reference to Strabo saying that Homer is incorrect in his story about Aeneas, another is a reference to Christoforo Landino who reports that Homer mentions Gaeta, and other references can be traced to Strabo, and Pliny.<sup>12</sup> With so few references in all these can hardly be coincidences, and we must conclude that it is unlikely that Alberti was referring to Homer at first-hand. Lycophrone also raises suspicions, since although there were manuscripts circulating in the fifteenth-century<sup>13</sup> and a Greek edition was printed by Aldus in 1513, Alberti mentions him twice only and without precise references. The same is true of Plato, Pindar and Theopompus, all very ancient authors, so that one assumes that Alberti might have been anxious to make use of them to a greater extent than he does. Pindar was printed together with Lycophrone in 1514, but one of the four references is to Strabo.<sup>14</sup> Plato of course was readily available, but Theopompus's Philippics remained only in fragments, and although Polybius and Pliny made use of him, Alberti's reference does not derive from either of them.

Moving on to the third section where the references are even more scattered, it is easier to be certain that Alberti did not consult the authors in question. Many have not survived except in fragments or in references to be found in other works.<sup>15</sup> Dionysius and Strabo provide Alberti with many of his references particularly those to the early historians and geographers, the 'logographers' who dealt with myths,

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12. Descrittione, f.73. cf. Strabo, VI.i.5., f.197, cf. Pliny, III.15.

13. Bolgar, op. cit., p.500.

14. Isole, f.28vo. cf. Strabo V.iv.9.

15. Fragments published by K & T Müller, Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum, (Paris, 1841-70) (Referred to in tables and elsewhere as Müller, F.G.H.) and K. Müller, Geographi Graeci Minores, (1882). These are revised and supplemented by Felix Jacoby, Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, (Berlin, 1923 onwards).

anecdotes, legends, local and national traditions and popular history, and had plenty to say about the dim and hazy ages of early settlement. Among the more sophisticated of these we find were Herodotus and Hellanicus of Lesbos, both of whom were sharply criticised by Strabo, who was himself influenced by the more critical and analytical approach to history adopted by Thucydides and his school. Thucydides and Strabo likewise were less interested in the very early history which was so dependent on hearsay, legend and traditional myths. Alberti, with his obsession for tracing the earliest origins of settlements and placenames turned to the surviving references as eagerly as he did to the forged fragments of Annius.

Although the logographers were scorned by fourth-century and fifth-century Athens, the Alexandrian scholars showed great interest in the details of mythology, and later Stephanus, Hesychius and Harpocration cite them for the names of cities and tribes.<sup>16</sup> Stephanus, Alberti's Stephen of Byzantium, gives many references to numerous works, and Alberti's reference to Hecateo of Mileto seems to come from him. Plutarch, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Nicolaus of Damascus made use of the logographers to find different versions of early historical events, which could be compared with the standard Greek and Latin authors. Writing in Greek, but from within Italy, Dionysius sought accounts which were not inspired by Roman nationalistic ideas and which would appeal to the Greek readers of the Roman Antiquities. From him Alberti was able to cull accounts of the Pelasgians, Etruscans, Trojans and Greek settlers in Italy, the dating of the foundation of Rome, and

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16. On the logographers see Lionel Pearson, Early Ionian Historians, (Oxford, 1927), Chapter I.

other important topics, which involved the citing of these ancient authorities. Sometimes Alberti is clear how much he is quoting or rewriting verbatim from Dionysius or Strabo, but often he is not, and references read as if they came from another source. A comparison of what Alberti and Dionysius have to say about the building of Rome brings out this point quite clearly.

Alberti, ff 98vo.-99vo.

Et prima dicono i Greci, et tra gli altri Ceffalono Gergithio molto antico scrittore, come narra Dionisio Alicarnaseo, nel primo libro dell'origini, et historie di Roma, che fu edificata questa città da Ascanio, Eurilante, Romolo, et Remo nipoti d'Enea, nella secondo età dopo la roina di Troia, i quali havendola fabricata vi condussero habitatori, e questa opinione conferma Demagora, et Agatillo con molti altri scrittori Greci. Ma altrimenti dice il scrittore de i sacerdoti d'Argo, e dell' opere da loro fatte di tempo in tempo, cioè che fu il primo edificatore d'essa Enea, che passò nell'Italia da i Molossi dopo Ulisse, e che la nominò Roma de gli Iliensi, et che la fece per essergli stato abbruciate le navi dalle femine Troiane, acciò che una volta ponesse fine à così lungo errore (sic). Egliè etiandio di tal' opinione Damasto Sigeo con gli altri scrittori Greci. Vero e che Arist(oteleo) vuole che fossero gli Achivi edificatori di essa i quali dopo la roina di Troia passando da Malea, e havendo patito molti pericoli nel tempo del verno, al fine.....etc.

Dionysius, I.72.

From the Latin and Greek version, (Frankfurt, 1586), pp.58-59.

Nam Cephalon Gergithius, scriptor antiquissimus, secunda aetate post bellum Troianum ait conditam ab iis qui cum Aenea ex Ilio se proripuerant. Conditoremque eius nominat Romam, coloniae ducem: fuisseque; hunc unum ex Aeneae, filium. Nam quatuor Aeneam habuisse filios, Ascanium, Euryleontem, Romulum, Romum. Cum hoc de tempore consentiunt Demagoras et Agathyllus, multique alii, quem ad modum et de duce coloniae. Sed is qui recenset mulieres sacerdotio apud Argos functas, et quid gestum sit cuiusque; tempore, Aeneam dicit e Molossis in Italiam cum Ulixae delatum urbis conditorum fuisse; nomenque illi indidisse a quadam Iliensi foemina Roma: quam narrat ceteras Troianas hortatam effecisse ut facto secum impetu naves exurerent, navigationis et errorum taedio, huic astipulatur Damastes Sigensis, et quidam alii. Aristoteles philosophus scribit Achaeorum partem a Troiano bello redeuntem circum Maleam cursum flexisse; correptosque; a ventis; tempestatis vi, ultro citroque; .....; Callias autem Agathoclis rerum gestarum scriptor, Romam quaedam Troianam foeminam cum ceteris Troianis delatum in Italiam, nupsisse

Nondimeno Calia altrimenti scrive nell'opere fatte d'Agatocle, ove dice che passando Roma donna Troiana nell'Italia insieme co'i Troiani, e maritandosi à Latino Re de gli Aborigeni, ne hebbe due figliuoli cioè Romo, e Romolo, da i quali fu poi edificata questa città, e dal nome della madre Roma nominata, Xenagora storico dice Ulisse haver rilevato Romo, Antio et Ardea tutta tre di Circe.....etc.

Afferma Dionisio Calcideese (però secondo l'opinione d'altri) che primieramente fu fatta Roma dal figliuolo d'Ascanio, dipoi soggiunge che dissero alquanti scrittori, che fosse il figliuolo d'Emathio, et altri il figliuolo di Roma nato d'Italo, e di Leutra figliuola di Latino. Tanto sono l'opinioni, e per si fatta maniera sono diversi gli scrittori l'uno dall'altro in narrare il principio di questa città che cosa maravigliosa. Conciocosa che tante sono l'opinioni quanto gli scrittori. Ma tralasciando l'opinioni de gli scrittori Greci, passerò à i Latini. Et prima narrerò qual che scrive Dion Alicarn. delle opinioni de i Latini.

Latino Aboriginum regi, eique; duos peperisse filios, Remum et Romulum; a quibus conditae urbi nomen matris impositum. Xenagoras historicus Ulixis et Circes tres fuisse filios..... Dionysius Chalcidensis consentit quidem de auctore urbis Romo; sed eum iuxta quosdam Ascanii fuisse filium dicit; iuxta alios, Emanthonis. nec desunt qui dicant Romam conditam ab Itali filio Romo, nato ex Electra Latini filia. Possem et alios multos Graecorum scriptores adducere variantes de urbis conditoribus, sed ne verbosior videar, praestat transire ad Romanos;

Alberti does not make it clear that all these references to early Greek sources do come from Dionysius, although when he discusses the Latin authors, he is more careful.

Again over the date of the foundation of Rome, another very tricky problem, he uses Dionysius to provide a variety of early Greek opinions. 'Sono diverse opinioni come racconta Dionisio'... He refers to Timeus Sicilianus, Lucius Cincius, Eratosthenes, Polybius, etc. (f.101). Again he fails to make it clear when he is referring to Dionysius and when he is going on to other independent authorities. He pauses to criticise the views

of Timeus Sicilianus and omits a reference to the opinion of Quintus Fabius which Dionysius gives. After Polybius' views, which he also takes from Dionysius, he cites several other authorities, rather than continuing with Dionysius's own discussion of time measurement which follows, and there is nothing to show that the reference to Dionysius ends there. On these complex issues, with so many sources involved and so many conflicting opinions, one might have expected Alberti to be more careful in explaining his references. On the other hand he probably felt quite justified in citing a variety of opinions and was more concerned with what these authors had to say than with where he obtained the specific pieces of information.

Dionysius is also the source of Alberti's reference to Pherecydes and Philistus, three of his references to Timeus of Sicily and one to Zenodotus of Troezen, which he clearly explains. Little is known of most of these writers. A brief note is included in Table III where appropriate. Damasto Sigeo or Damastes of Sigeum who lived about 400 B.C. would have been interesting to Alberti, had his work survived, as he wrote, among other things, a description of the world and its people to accompany his map of the world and a contemporary of his, Dionysius of Chalcis, wrote a treatise on the founding of cities, but unfortunately it is only through Dionysius of Halicarnassus that they are known to us. Antiochus of Syracuse was the author of a History of Sicily and The Colonising of Italy, which again survive only in fragments.

Alberti seems to have taken the fragment of Antiochus from Strabo and Dionysius. He discusses Metapontium, for example, and refers to Antiochus' story concerning its early settlement,<sup>17</sup> and rushes on to

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17. Descrittione, f.203. cf. Strabo, VI.i.15.

what Ephorus has to say, both references coming from Strabo. His use of Strabo's text here is not as careful as it might be for he omits part of Antiochus's story, and includes another tale from Strabo which follows Ephorus', which he concludes is also by Ephorus, although Strabo makes no such attribution. Either Alberti was being careless, or he had a corrupt text before him, or he was interested in the stories rather than their authors. He certainly makes little comment on the trustworthiness of his sources or on how their material might have been gathered - whether it was legendary or backed up by historical evidence. Alberti refers to Antiochus as 'Antioco Senofano',<sup>18</sup> rather than Syracusano, the reference this time coming from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who calls him 'Antiochus the son of Xenophanes...' In the same context Dionysius has a reference to Sophocles and a quotation (concerning Italus and Italia) which, surprisingly, Alberti does not make use of.

Apollodorus of Athens is mentioned only once by Alberti, the source being Strabo, though he could have found several more references in Strabo, including one to a work on chorography.<sup>19</sup> Turning to Artimedorus we find that the references could all be to Strabo, and one example of this is the passage concerning the Gulf of Tarantum. The reference to Artimedorus presents problems, since the Strabo text is in very bad shape here, but there is no doubt that the following passage was lifted out of Strabo without any acknowledgement.

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18. Descrittione, f.2vo. cf. Dionysius, I.12.

19. Descrittione, f.96vo. cf. Strabo, VI.1.3. See Strabo, XIV.v.22. for the work on chorography.

Descrittione, f.197.

Ben è vero che dice Artemedoro diligente scrittore di questi paesi, che potrebbe un buon cominadore circondarlo per terra, e lo ritrovarebbe esser misurandolo da 180 miglia. Et questa ella è larghezza del detto golfo di Taranto. Il quale riguarda al nascer del Sole nel tempo del verno. Adunque comincia questo golfo al Capo delle Colonne, e piegandosi incontinente si veggono i luoghi ove erano le città de i Greci. Delle quali al presente (eccetto che di Taranto) quasi niun vestigio si vede. Pur'io mi sforzerò di raccordarne alcune, al meglio che potrò.

Strabo, VI.i.2. From the Greek and Latin edition of Amsterdam, 1707. Lib VI.p.401. The editor notes that the text is very poor here. *Ipsius sinus litus amplum, ut regionum descriptor ait, millia passuum continet CCXL. Artemedorus ab expedito confici ait millibus passuum CCCXXC. Tanta etiam est reliqua faucium sinus latitudo. Sinus ortum sœlis hybernum spectat, incipit a Iacinio Inde enim cursum flectens statim ad Achaicas deferebatur urbes, quarum hodie extra Tarentum nulla extat: ob celebritatem tamen nominis operae est quarundam copiosius facere mentionem.*

The reference to Clitarchus concerning the measurement of Mount Circello<sup>20</sup> is probably from Pliny, since the accompanying reference to Homer saying it was formerly an island occurs in both cases, with similar phraseology. If this is so, then Alberti is misquoting Pliny, since in the context Pliny, says Clitarchus spoke of the embassy sent by the Romans to Alexander, and that Theophrastus gave the circuit of the island as 80 stadia, and he was the first foreigner to write on this accurately. Alberti attributes the measurement of the island to Clitarchus, and does not mention Theophrastus at all.

Strabo seems to be the source for Alberti's references to Ephorus. Alberti discussed the comments Ephorus has to offer on Sicily, the Iapyges, and the Tarentini, but not those on the Pelasgians, or Cimmerians,<sup>21</sup> although Ephorus' views appear in Strabo on both these

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20. Descrittione, f.120vo. cf. Pliny, III.9.

21. Isole, f.36 cf. Strabo, VI.ii.1.; Descrittione, f.99 and f.205, cf. Strabo, VI.i.12. See also Descrittione, f.193vo. and Strabo VI.i.7 (re Aiace Oielo), and Descrittione, f.203 and Strabo, VI.i.15 (re Metapontum). Strabo records Ephorus' account of the Pelasgians, V.ii.4., and Cimmerians, V.iv.5.

tribes, and Alberti does refer to Strabo in connection with the Cimmerians. Likewise Ephorus' comments on the written law of the Locri are overlooked by Alberti.<sup>22</sup>

It would be tedious to discuss each author and demonstrate the source of each reference at length. One more short example should make quite clear the sort of reference Alberti was using. He refers to the Pillars of Hercules (Isola, f.3) 'Ma Dicearco, Eratostene, e Polibius disegnano dette Colonne alla bocca dell'antidetto Canale'. In Strabo (III.v.5) we read 'Quin et Dicaearchus, et Eratosthenes, et Polybius, et plurimi Graecorum columnos ad fretum esse asserunt'.<sup>23</sup> But no credit is given to Strabo by Alberti. In this way the early opinions are gathered together, by means which, to Alberti, no doubt constituted research, while to us they may seem to border on plagiarism.

Alberti does not always do this 'research' as thoroughly as he might. A further surprising omission is the reference Dionysius makes to the ancient logographer Hellanicus of Lesbos in connection with the origins of the Tyrrhenians. According to Hellanicus they were not so named until after they had settled in Italy, but were previously Pelasgians. They took Croton first, and colonised from there.<sup>24</sup> Alberti does not mention this, nor the Pelasgian conquest of Croton, although this was just the sort of information which most interested him. He did not, apparently, know much about these ancient authors. He certainly does not seem to have been aware that the 'author of the history of the priestess at Argo' referred to by Dionysius in his list of Greek authors writing on the foundation of Rome, was in fact Hellanicus of Lesbos.<sup>25</sup>

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22. Strabo, VI.i.8.

23. From the 1707 Greek and Latin edition, Lib.III,p.259.

24. Descrittione, f.197vo., Dionysius, I.28.

25. See above p.175



Josephus was not a source of particular value to Alberti. In both references he is cited in conjunction with Moses and Berosus, a coincidence which cannot be overlooked, and leads us back to Annii's Antiquitates, where the references seem to originate, as does that to Mafea Fenice Damasceno, allegedly, like Josephus, the author of a history of the Jews, but suspiciously a history which no one but Annii has cared to mention.<sup>26</sup> Benzo d'Alessandria made use of Josephus in his Chronicon, but not in connection with the origins of cities.<sup>27</sup>

Posidonius was a source much used by Strabo and of interest to western geographers because of his belief in a global earth. Although some of Alberti's references can be traced to Strabo it is not so in all cases and Alberti must have had some other source. Also among this list of sources taken at second hand is Pausanias, another surprise, for one would have expected some of his remarks in the Descriptio Graeciae to have interested Alberti rather more than the Descrittione indicates. For example Pausanias has a great deal to say about Sardinia and its earliest inhabitants. He refers to the Greeks calling it Ichnussa, gives its dimensions and says that the first sailors to come here are said to have been Libyans under the leadership of Sardus son of Maceris, surnamed Heracles by Egyptians and Libyans.<sup>28</sup> Alberti somehow garbles this into 'Furono adunque i primi habitatori di Sardigna i Thoscani, poi i Barbari nati d'essi, e poi Iolao con molti nati della stirpe di Hercole come vuol Pausania...'<sup>29</sup>

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26. Berosus, 'De Temporis, Lib.I', in Annii, Antiquitates, (1612)f.9.

27. Berrigan, 26op.cit., p.129.

28. Pausanias, Descriptio Graeciae, Bk X, Ch. xvii, Parag. 1-13.

29. Isole, f.22vo.

Pausanias gives a detailed description of the climate, but Alberti simply mentions the unhealthy air.<sup>30</sup> In the region of Magna Graecia, writing about the River Caecinus or 'Alesso' as Alberti calls it, Pausanias records how it divides the land of Rhegium from the Locris and the marvel of the grasshoppers who, within the Locris, and as far as the Caecinus, sing just like any others, but across the river in the territory of Rhegium they do not utter a sound. This is a story which Alberti refers to, but his source, he tells us, is Pliny. The River Caecinus, according to legend, was the father of Euthymus and Alberti tells this story and another one about Euthymus, supposedly from Pausanias. But although Pausanias does include several legends on the subject, the one Alberti gives is not among them.<sup>31</sup> Of course one can argue that even if Alberti had seen the original works of Pausanias or of some of the other authors mentioned in this section, for example, Josephus, he might not have had time to include all that they had to say on Italy, but the coincidence of references to be found in sources like Strabo, Pliny and Dionysius leads one to assume that references were extracted from these and other similar sources. Also it is clear that these sources, namely Strabo, Pliny and Dionysius were used very heavily for early history, placename analysis and so on, and that Alberti had no compunction in lifting the opinions of other authors out of their works without always making it plain that he was doing so.

I have already referred briefly to Alberti's knowledge of Greek. From the tables it is evident that almost every major source written in Greek had been translated into Latin and was available in print by the

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30. Isole, f.20vo.

31. Descrittione, f.193, cf. Pausanias, Descriptio Graeciae, Bk.VI. Ch.vi. Parag. 4.

early sixteenth century. Among the authors which I am assuming Alberti used at first hand only Stephen of Byzantium was not translated (perhaps this accounts for the fairly limited use made of him), and of the authors in Table II there is only one not printed in Latin, Lycophrone, and one not apparently in print, Theopompus. It would not have been necessary, therefore, for Alberti to read Greek, and he does not seem to have been using Greek editions, since he points out how he referred to the Greek text of Strabo to check a doubtful passage, implying that this was not the text he was normally using.<sup>32</sup> Such quotations as he gives from Greek sources are all in Latin or Italian. On the other hand, it would have been unusual for someone with Alberti's education and background not to have had some grounding in Greek, even if his interest in Greek language was limited.

Two Greek authors, Ptolemy and Strabo, rank among the most widely used of all Alberti's sources. From the geographical point of view they were of unparalleled value, since they list many of the important settlements with some indication of their whereabouts in relation to each other. It is hardly surprising to find how thoroughly they are incorporated into the Descrittione. Since they are so important, I intend to discuss in some detail the use Alberti makes of them, and, as with the discussion of Biondo, I shall refer to Alberti's use of them with particular reference to Tuscany, Apulia and the March of Ancona.

Ptolemy's Geographia is little more than a list of placenames, given region by region, those on the coast of each region first, followed by those inland, accompanied by their latitudes and longitudes. There is a short introductory sentence on Italy, 'Italiae Situs', which gives its limits. After the places on the mainland have been listed, region by

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32. Above, Chapter I, p.20

region, the various islands round the coast are dealt with in similar fashion, so that Alberti found Ptolemy very useful in his full coverage of the whole area. From Alberti's remarks we can see that he was using both the text and the maps of Ptolemy, but which edition he saw it is not easy to say. Probably it was not the Bologna edition, but there are discrepancies with the Rome edition also.<sup>33</sup> When it comes to the places inland there are some striking spelling differences between the two editions, and it is worth noting that Alberti does not use Ptolemy's order in dealing with these places. Although he refers to the Greek edition in the Vatican Palace, it is a reference taken from Volaterrano and should not be interpreted as indicating that he had seen it himself.<sup>34</sup>

Ptolemy does not give any discussion of the places or their names, so there is nothing for Alberti to record except to identify the names as they appeared in Ptolemy's time. On several occasions Alberti transcribes Ptolemy's names inaccurately, comparing them with the Bologna or Rome editions, but he does make very full use of Ptolemy, mentioning him at almost every available opportunity. Notable omissions are Ptolemy's reference to the Arno and the fact that he calls Florence 'Florentia'. In view of the discrepancies in spelling between one edition and another, whether they are caused by the use of different

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33. See for example Descrittione, f.34vo. Ptolemy calls Livorno 'Liburnus nelle tavole'. f.30. some people say that Cosa is where Ortobello is, 'e par che la pinga ivi Tolomeo'. The reference to Liburnus is missing in the Bologna edition in both text and maps, and appears in the Rome edition as 'Lyburnus portus', and the references to Lucus Feronie are also missing. There were many other editions of this work which Alberti could have seen, e.g. Vicenza, 1475; Ulm, 1482, 1486; Rome, 1507, 1508; Venice, 1511, etc.

34. Descrittione, f.52. cf. Volaterrano, Commentariorum Urbanorum Libri... In Italia Illustrata, (Turin, 1527), f.127.

texts, or whether they can be put down to printers' errors, it is amazing to see how particular Alberti is in recording the smallest variations in spelling from one author to another. He hardly seems to have considered the possibility of variations between editions of the same author's work.<sup>35</sup> For example Saturnia Colonia, Alberti says, is called by Ptolemy 'Saturnia Colonia' (f.51vo) but in the Rome and Bologna editions it appears as 'Saturniana Colonia'. Acqua Pendente Alberti says, is identified by Volaterrano as 'Acula da Tolomeo dipinto' (f.63). In fact the Rome Ptolemy has 'Aculea', the Bologna edition 'Aculia', and the 1527 Volaterrano 'Acula', as Alberti says,<sup>36</sup> all of which lends weight to the impression that much of Alberti's detailed analysis of placename variations and derivations, based often on the flimsy evidence of a single vowel change is pretty meaningless.

Alberti omits Ptolemy's reference to Cere, not shown on his map, but, from its position at the south end of the list of inland places, identifiable with Alberti's Cere which appears at the end of the coastal places before the Tiber (f.33). Another possible identification which Alberti could have made was that of Corito which corresponds with Ptolemy's Coricum (f.73). Although it does not appear on Ptolemy's map, it must have been near to Blera or Bieda, as it has an almost identical latitude and longitude. Alberti likewise places his Corito near Viterbo and Bieda, but without any reference to Ptolemy. Eba, on the north of the River Hosa on Ptolemy's map, and Volci on the south, do not appear to have been identified by either Alberti or Volaterrano. Ptolemy's references to Sudernum and Cortona are omitted, and Manliana is not

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35. For further discussion of Alberti's interest in placenames see below chapter VI.

36. Volaterrano, op. cit., f.173vo.

identified. This last settlement seems to have had an obvious counterpart in Magliana, which, according to Alberti, was near Massa (or, according to Volaterrano, near Vetulonia) (f.51). Ptolemy's Manliana appears to be slightly to the east of Vetulonium.

Identifications which Alberti does make include Porto Baratto (f.29), (identified as Ptolemy's Promontorium, Populonium), Piombino (f.29) formerly Ptolemy's Portus Traianus, and Corneto (f.31vo), Ptolemy's Castrum Novum. Alberti seems extraordinarily confused over the Rivers Marta and Albenga as they appear on Ptolemy's map. As he moves down the coast before reaching Cosa, he refers to the River Osa or Albenga (f.30), but does not mention Ptolemy's reference to the River Hose. After a digression on the Gravischi, etc. he comes to the River Marta, which, he says, is called Osa by Ptolemy. From Ptolemy's map this is impossible, since his Osa is north of 'Cosse' (Cosa) and the Gravischi, and is in fact in the very position where Alberti has placed his river of the same name. Further confusion occurs over the identification of Pietro Santa (f.34vo).

In the other two regions I selected for discussion there is less to comment on as there are fewer references, most of them accurate. Again there are the occasional mis-spellings, for example Ptolemy has Salpie, but Alberti gives this as Salpia (f.222). According to Alberti Ptolemy refers to Sipontium (f.222vo), but the nearest reference in Ptolemy seems to be Sipa. Alberti does not notice Ptolemy's reference to Teano and Arpe, but he is amazed that Ptolemy does not include the River Metaro (f.258), the River Foglia,<sup>37</sup> (or Isaurus), or the city of Urbino (f.262vo.).

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37. Descrittione, f.262, 'assai mi sono maravigliato, che ne' Strabone, ne' Tolomeo faccino alcuna memoria d'esso', At the end of this section, (f.263), Alberti does apologise for having to leave out some places mentioned by Ptolemy of which he can find no trace.

Where exactly did the usefulness of Ptolemy lie? Of course he provided evidence of the existence of certain settlements in the first century A.D. Other sources do this too, but Ptolemy was by far the easiest to use, for there was no searching for the necessary references in a morass of tedious historical detail. As far as placename identification is concerned Alberti sometimes wanders far from the mark, and it is easy to criticise his apparent carelessness. If it were the actual changes in the spelling of a name which he found most valuable in theories of the development of settlements, then the numerous discrepancies between the editions of Ptolemy, and even between maps and text of the same edition, make him most unreliable as evidence for the precise way in which a place was styled at any particular time in the past. But this was a problem which did not seem to occur to the author of the Descrittione.

Strabo is used by Alberti in much the same way as Biondo or Pliny.<sup>38</sup> There are one or two remarks and references which Alberti does not incorporate in the Descrittione, but on the whole he introduces a great deal of Strabo's information; for example he gives Strabo's statistics about the measurement of Tuscany and the coastline from Luna to Ostia,<sup>39</sup> but for no apparent reason he has little to say about the Pelasgi, a tribe whose history and origins are discussed by Strabo at some length.<sup>40</sup> This is rather surprising since he does produce Strabo's information on other tribes of the area, for example the Tirrheni<sup>41</sup> and Caeretani.<sup>42</sup>

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38. On the value of Strabo's geography see E.H. Bunbury, A History of Ancient Geography, (2 vols) 2nd edition 1883 (reprinted, New York, 1959) II, 214-257. Bunbury is also useful for Polybius, II, 24-25; Pomponius Mela, II, 355; Pliny, II, 374-397; and Ptolemy, II, 553-595.

39. Descrittione, f.22. cf. Strabo, V.ii.5.

40. Strabo, V.ii.4.

41. Descrittione, f.20v-21. cf. Strabo, V.ii.2.

42. Descrittione, f.32v. cf. Strabo, V.ii.3.

Strabo is not used much for the description of the Carrara marble quarries, though he writes at length about the various coloured marble and how it was transported by sea to Rome.<sup>43</sup> Alberti does not mention his remark that the Magra flows between Luna and Pisa,<sup>44</sup> nor does he try to explain that Strabo must have thought that the city of Luna was the same place as the harbour, or else he was talking about the harbour and not the city, since the city was five miles south of the Magra (Alberti puts it in Latium), and certainly not to the north of it as Strabo has it.<sup>45</sup>

Alberti makes a decision about the story behind the name of Pisa and he comes down on the side of Cato, Pliny, Dionysius and Solinus in preference to Strabo (f.25), but in the March of Ancona he prefers Strabo's account of the origins of the Picentini to those of other authors.<sup>46</sup> (In this second case Strabo's story is charmingly far-fetched. He maintained that the Picentini were originally from the Sabine country, and their ancestors were led to this new country by a woodpecker, hence their name, 'for they call this bird "Picus" and consider it sacred to Mars'.)

There are inevitably a few omissions, for example Alberti does not mention that Strabo says Arezzo is 1200 stadia from Rome and the most inland town of Tuscany,<sup>47</sup> nor that he calls Bieda 'Blera'.<sup>48</sup>

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43. Strabo, V.ii.5.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Descrittione, f.247 cf. Strabo, IV.ii.1.

47. Strabo, V.ii.9.

48. Ibid.



Other points are overlooked, but the biggest confusion arises over Strabo's discussion of the Falisci or Falerii, the inhabitants of Falerii or Faliscum.<sup>49</sup> The problem here is not fully disentangled by Alberti. The old city of Falerium or Falerii was occupied both by the Falerii (a Tyrrhenian people) and the Falisci (of Sabine origin). The Falisci also inhabited a large tract of surrounding country as well as the city. The ancient writers generally distinguished between the people, Falisci, and the city, but the city itself was often called Falisci as well as Falerii. The site of the old city is now occupied by Civita Castellana. As Strabo tells us there was a second city of Faliscum 'Aequum Faliscum', or Faliscum in the plains, which was situated three miles from the old city, on the Flaminian way between Ocricli and Rome. Strabo seems to count Faliscum and Falerii as separate cities, but he may mean Aequum Faliscum instead of simply Faliscum.<sup>50</sup> Alberti mentions only one settlement and mentions that its inhabitants are called Falerii and Falisci (f.62), but he makes no attempt to explain why Strabo apparently refers to two separate cities whereas other authors, for example Pliny, mention only one.<sup>51</sup> When discussing Monte Fiascone he wonders if the settlement of Fiascone is what Strabo called Faliscum, apparently ignoring the fact that Strabo's Faliscum is on the Flaminian way. Strabo does make one omission which surprises Alberti, he does not mention Fiesole, 'assai mi son maravigliato di Strabone che non facci memoria di questa antica città essenda ella stata una di quelle prime 12 città di questa Regione'. (f.44).

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49. Ibid., V.ii.9. cf. Descrittione, f.67-70vo.

50. Strabo, V.ii.9. (On this identification see notes by Jones in Loeb Classical Library edition).

51. Pliny, III.viii.

Turning to Apulia we find that Strabo has very little to say about this region, as Alberti points out, 'Etiandio avvertirà il giuditioso lettore la descrizione fatta da Strabone di questa luoghi, e se ben considererà le parera che detto Strabone non havesse veduto questo paese parlandone molto asciutamente a paragnone di molti altri paese d'Italia, ove egli fù, come dalla sua descrizione si può conoscere' (f.222). It is true, he continues, that you can point out 'alcune cose rare' round Mt. Gargano, and perhaps Strabo was there when there was little to describe.

Almost all the information which Strabo does give is included by Alberti.<sup>52</sup> Some surprising omissions are to be found in Strabo's description of the March of Ancona. For example, Strabo, like Ptolemy, does not mention Urbino, nor the River Foglia, nor the cave of the Sibyl near Cossignano, which Alberti certainly saw for himself, and describes in vivid detail (f.249). Alberti discusses the stories about the origins of Ancona in some detail and observes that one should only trust stories which come from reputable sources, 'Par' à me, che si dovremo appoggiare à quelle opinioni nelle quali convengono gli autentici scrittori, si come Strabone, Plinio e Solino', rather than those which 'sono scritte senza nome di autore, e senza vero fondamento' (f.254vo). There are remarks which Strabo makes about the wine and wheat of the area, and also about the horses and sheep of Apulia, which Alberti does not

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52. He mentions Salapis (Salpi) (f.222), Canusum (Canosa) (f.221), and Argyrippa (Arpina) (f.225), the temple of Minerva at Luceria (f.225), and Sipus (Sipontum) (f.222) and a navigable river and large lake opening into the sea between Salapia and Sipus, which Alberti identifies as the Candilare (f.222). Strangely enough Alberti does not mention Canusium in Apulia but puts it in Terra di Bari, nor does he point out that Strabo groups Canusium and Argyrippa together as the largest of the Italiote cities. (Strabo, VI.iii.9).

record, although elsewhere he often appears to pay more attention to ancient comments on agriculture than to contemporary evidence.<sup>53</sup>

In general we cannot say that Alberti is particularly thorough in his use of Strabo, nor is he particularly critical. He has read the work and made considerable use of the information to be found there, but his principles of selection are not clear. Was it simply accident which made him overlook some important points, or did he omit them because of lack of space? These queries arise over the use of all his major sources. Information is assembled in encyclopaedic form with as much attempt as possible to reconcile conflicting opinions. The remarks made earlier about variants in different editions apply to Strabo as well as to Ptolemy. In fact, Alberti made occasional use of the corrections of Ermolao Barbaro<sup>54</sup> but precision in matters where precision had not always been a matter of primary importance (for example in the spelling of a placename) was not always possible, despite his aspirations.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus has already been mentioned in connection with the early histories of Greece and Rome, and we have seen how valuable a source he was for the mythological past, the history of Mediterranean migrations and settlement. 'I begin my history then with the most ancient legends, which the historians before me have omitted as a subject difficult to be cleared up without diligent study', says Dionysius.<sup>55</sup> His objective was to reconcile Greco-Roman conflicts by showing the Greek origins of Rome's founders. He traced the Aborigines back through

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53. For discussion of this see Chapter VII.

54. For example, Descrittione, ff. 184vo, 193, 195, 195vo, 200vo, 210vo, 213vo, 223vo, etc.

55. Dionysius, op. cit., I.7.

the Oenotrians to Arcadia, and showed the ancestors of the Trojans originating from the same district of Greece. The Pelasgians, Evander and his company, soldiers from the Peloponnese in the following of Hercules - all had come from Greece and settled in Italy, in the area of Rome and Tuscany especially. It is not surprising to find Alberti making most use of Dionysius for these regions, with a few references on the introductory section to Italy in general, and several for Terra di Lavoro. Beyond this there are only a dozen references for all the rest of Italy, and seven for the Islands. I have already demonstrated how Alberti extracted long passages from Dionysius, and another example of this concerns the colonization of Sicily by tribes driven from the peninsula. Once again Alberti cites Hellanicus, Antiochus of Syracuse, and Philistus without making it clear that the whole passage is from Dionysius.<sup>56</sup>

Dionysius as an authority sometimes, awkwardly for Alberti, clashes with the views of the wise and ancient authors allegedly collected by Annius. When this happens Alberti obligingly follows the advice of Annius, for example he says, 'Ben' è vero che come dice Giovanni Annio, par si dee più tosto credere in questa cosa à Mirsilio che à Dionisio, per esser molto più antichi, che à gli altri, per essere stati eglino più vicini alle cose fatte' (f.216). The same idea occurs much earlier when Alberti is faced with a similar problem - whose opinion on the origins of the Tirreni should be adopted? He suggests that one should follow the theory of Myrsilius Lesbios, that 'quando si ritrovano diverse

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56. Dionysius, op. cit., I.22. cf. Isole, f.33vo.-34. In Tuscany Alberti found the origins of the Tirrenians, Pelasgians and Lydians particularly interesting, also the discussions of the Etruri, Oenotrians, Umbri and Aborigines (Dionysius, I.25-30).

opinioni circa l'antichità di qualche nazione, si deve parimente credere à gli antichi scrittori nati in quella nazione, e poi à i più vicini, più tosto che à gli scrittori dell'altre nationi'.(f.21) In fact, fairly sound advice, but for the fact that by pushing this point Annius could insist on the superiority of his own 'fragments' over most other authorities like Dionysius or Strabo.<sup>57</sup>

The other Greek historians present fewer problems. Apian seems to be used for little other than the fact that he mentions certain places; what he says about them is seldom recorded. Most of the references seem to come from the section of the Roman History which deals with the Civil Wars, and which was printed in Venice in 1477 in Latin translation, before the rest of the work was printed in 1519. The first book on the Civil Wars is particularly valuable since it covers the gap between Polybius and Cicero.

One or two Greek historians were important sources for the Islands, among them Diodorus Siculus, Polybius and Thucydides. Diodorus began his history with the mythical period, but most of Alberti's references come from Books 11-14 which cover the years 480 B.C.- 387 B.C. The Library of History, as its title suggests, was a compilation of world history from all the best available sources and forms one of the fullest literary accounts after Herodotus, valuable especially for information on the fourth century B.C., when Thucydides and Herodotus stop. As far as Sicily is concerned its history could scarcely be written without Diodorus and he is also considered one of the more trustworthy sources for early Roman history. Alberti perhaps

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57. On another occasion Alberti argues the superiority of Trogus Pompeius over Strabo on these grounds (f.181).

uses him more sparingly than he might, his references are very brief, even when he moves over to Sicily. Diodorus's explanation of a name, or simply the fact that he mentions a certain place is usually all that is given. The historical information is sparse, little more than the salient events of the Punic War.

Polybius and Thucydides occur together frequently as corroborative sources for the Islands. Polybius is also used to corroborate Livy, which is hardly surprising, since he was one of Livy's most valuable sources. Polybius's work, well-informed and instructive, the result of years of study, became the model for many historians. Strabo, of course, as well as Livy, drew on him heavily for his Geography. In the Descrittione we find him mostly referred to for north Italy. His story of the founding of Siena by the Senoni Galli (f.52) and his description of Cisalpine Gaul (ff. 257, 264) are by far the most useful references. Cisalpine Gaul is praised for its fertility, pleasantness and the great intellect of its inhabitants. It is likened to a triangle in shape, and its earliest inhabitants are discussed.<sup>58</sup> Alberti refers to two translations, Leonardo Bruni's and Perotto's saying that the reference is from Leonardo Aretino in the fourth book of Polybius, and that it is in the second book according to Perotto. He also must have seen the translation by Peregrino Prisciano, as he describes the ancient course of the Po according to his version, and is critical of errors in Perotto in this context.<sup>59</sup> Despite the large number of references, because of the way that Alberti uses them they become little more than a corroborative source. He does not seem to appreciate that it was Livy or Strabo who

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58. Book II, Chapters 14-22. He has himself looked at the Greek text to check Prisciano's translation.

59. Descrittione, ff.306, 344.

drew on Polybius in the first place.

Thucydides, who had lived through the Peloponnesian War provides Alberti with much of his detail on the Sicilian catastrophe. The history of the war is preceded by introductory chapters tracing the development of the Hellenic race from earliest times and including the settlement of Sicily by the Cyclopes and Laetrigones who were the earliest settlers of unknown origin, followed by the Sicilians from Iberia, and eventually by various Greek colonists. Alberti makes good use of this material and of the geographical data Thucydides gives, including descriptions of Etna and Stromboli. The other references to Thucydides, in the Descrittione itself arise almost exclusively in connection with the southern provinces - Magna Graecia and other areas of Greek colonization and influence - but they are of little value compared with those for Sicily.

Herodotus provided Alberti with a few snippets of information on early Greek relations with south Italy, but on the whole his work did not touch on Alberti's interests. Plutarch comes in for less use than one might have imagined, likewise Dio Cassius, but other sources covered most of the same ground.

There is no doubt that without Strabo and Dionysius Alberti would have had a hard time piecing together scraps from the early Greek authors. In fact Dionysius emerges as a much more important source than Ptolemy, despite the greatly smaller number of references. The information gathered by Dionysius from the earliest stories and legends was more interesting and entertaining, even if some of it was of doubtful authenticity, than the mere lists of places given by Ptolemy. It might be useful to know of the existence of a certain settlement in Ptolemy's

time, but the origins of that settlement were far more fascinating to the sixteenth-century antiquarian. Alberti made no use of Ptolemy's observations of longitude and latitude and did not develop the embryonic ideas of scientific geographical study and cartography. In the world of descriptive geography, historical geography or chorography, Strabo and Dionysius were, each in their own way more valuable and more thought-provoking. The twentieth-century historian may be horrified at the naivety of a man prepared to accept second-hand or third-hand reports, pieces of hearsay embellished with myths and legends which no archaeological or anthropological evidence could support, but in the climate of intellectual discovery of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was always the chance that some new text would appear, that some undiscovered manuscript or some new excavation would clarify or disentangle the antiquary's problems, and clearly there was no point in abandoning any of the existing evidence until it was finally discredited. I shall return to this question again in connection with the fragments of Annianus, and also in Chapter VI when Alberti's value as a historian and antiquary will be examined.



TABLE I

References to Greek Sources (a).  
References clearly identifiable as taken directly from author in question.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti</u>	<u>Usual Latin title</u>	<u>Latin translation, if any, and if in print by 1530</u>
Appian of Alexandria fl. c. 600 A.D.	62 + 11	A. 'le Guerre civili', RR	<u>De bellis civilibus</u>	Venice, 1477
Dio Cassius 150 - 235 A.D.	5 + 0	'Dione Greco' RR	<u>Storia Romana</u>	Venice (part), 1503; (complete), 1519
Diodorus Siculus fl. c. 40 B.C.	21 + 43	D.S. 'storia' RR	<u>Biblioteca Historica</u>	Bologna, 1472
Dionysius Periegetes fl. c. 300A.D.	4 + 0	'Dionisio Afro nel 1 lib. del sito del mondo' (the only precise reference)	<u>Dionysii Afri de situ orbis opus</u>	Ferrara, 1512
Dionysius of Halicarnassus fl. c. 30 B.C.	115 + 7	D.H. 'primo libro dell' origini e historie di Roma' RR	<u>D.H. Antiquitatum Romanorum Lib. X</u>	Treviso, 1480
Herodotus 484 - 425 B.C.	11 + 6	H. 'nell.....libro' RRR	<u>Historia Herodoti</u>	Venice, 1494
Philostratus fl. 3rd. cent. B.C.	5 + 2	P. 'vita d'Apollonio Tiano' RRR	<u>Vita Apollonii</u>	Venice, 1501-3

Table I contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti</u>	<u>Usual Latin title</u>	<u>Latin translation, if any, and if in print by 1530</u>
Plutarch 50 - 120 A.D.	28 + 4	P. 'nella vita di...' RR	<u>Vitae</u> (two references are taken from Annius of Viterbo, <u>Berosi Caldaeici</u> , lib. 1.)	Rome, 1470 etc.
Polybius 200 - 120 B.C.	60 + 51	P. 'historie lib...' RR Q	<u>Historiarum Libri Quinque</u> (one reference is from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, I.74; one is from Strabo, III.v.5.	Rome, 1473 etc.
Ptolemy fl. 2nd. Cent. A.D.	318 + 183	'Tolomeo' R	<u>Geographia/Cosmographia</u>	Bologna, 1477, Rome, 1478 etc.
Stephen of Byzantium fl. 6th. Cent. A.D.	4 + 5	'Stefano de Urbibus' 'Stefano Gramatico' 'Stefano nel lib che'l fa delle citta' RR Q	<u>De Urbibus</u>	No Latin edition. Greek edition, Venice, 1502
Strabo fl. 1st. Cent. A.D.	414 + 89	'Strabone' R Q	<u>Geographia</u>	Rome, 1469 etc.
Thucydides c.460 - 400 B.C.	13 + 46	T. 'l'histoire de'l Peloponnese' RR Q	<u>T.de bello Peloponnesiaco Libri octo</u>	Venice, 1485

Notes which apply also to all following tables.

R = Precise reference to Book or Chapter sometimes given.  
 RR = " " " " frequently given.  
 RRR = " " " " always given.

Q = Some quotations  
 QQ = frequent quotations  
 QQQ = Quotations almost always.

Numbers of references for the Islands are given separately. The first figure is the (approximate) number of references to the source concerned in the Descrittione di Tutta Italia, and the second in Isole.

Table II

References to Greek Sources (b)  
References where sources are dubious

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Apparent source of reference</u>	<u>Latin translation, if any, and if in print by 1530</u>
Aristotle 384-322 B.C.	3 + 5	none. (one ref. is 'according to Stephen of Byzantium')	One is from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, I.72.	<u>Opera</u> , Venice, 1489 etc.
Callimachus c.310-250B.C.	0 + 1	'nell'himno di Diana' R		Bologna, 1509
Galen c.129-199A.D.	2 + 0	'nel lib.5 delle Curationi' R		Part printed in Latin; whole printed in Greek, 1525
Herodian 165-250 A.D.	2 + 0	'Caesari...lib 2. RRR		Bologna, 1493
Homer fl.9th. Cent. B.C.	7 + 2	'Strabo nel decimo lib'. 'Plinio' 'Cristoforo Landino'	Strabo, VI.i.5 Pliny, III.15	<u>Opera</u> , Brescia, 1474
Lycophrone fl.4th.-5th. Cent. B.C.	B.C.1 + 1	none		Greek edition Venice, 1513.
Pindar fl.c.520 B.C.	1 + 3	'Pitheculi' R 'un Himno o Canto'	one is from Strabo, V.iv.9	Basle, 1528.
Plato fl.5th.Cent. B.C.	1 + 1	'Timaeus lib I' Aelianus 'Vera historia'		Florence, 1484 etc.
Theopompus fl.c.4th.Cent. B.C.	1 + 0	'i Philippici'		no early editions, Greek or Latin.

TABLE III

References to Greek Sources (c)  
References where the source is not the author in question

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Apparent source of Reference</u>	<u>Identification of author</u>
Agatillo	1 + 0		Dionysius of Halic., I.72.	Agathyllus, poet. known only from references in Dionysius of Halic.
Antioco Siracusano	10 + 1		Dionysius of Halic., I.12, I.35, I.75, Strabo, VI.i.1, VI.i.4, (2 refs.) VI.i.6, VI.i.12, VI.i.15, VI.iii.2.	Antiochus of Syracuse fl.c.430 B.C. author of history of Sicily, only fragments survive.
Apollodoro	2 + 0		Strabo, VI.i.3. Solinus, I.27.	Apollodoros of Athens fl.c.140 B.C.
Apollonio Tiano	0 + 2		Philostratus, V. (2 refs.)	Apollonius of Tyana Neopythagorean sage of early Christian era. Known mainly from Philostratus.
Artimedoro	2 + 1		Strabo, V.iv.6, VI.i.11, III.v.5.	Artimedorus of Ephesus fl.c.100 B.C. fragments abridged by Marcianus.
Callia	1 + 0		Dionysius of Halic., I.72.	Callias of Syracuse fl.c.300 B.C.
Ceffalonio Gergithio	1 + 0	Dionysius of Halic., I.72.		Cephalon of Gergis, fictitious author whose name was adopted by Hegesianax of Alexandria.

Table III contd.

<u>Work</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Apparent source of Reference</u>	<u>Identification of author</u>
Lucio Cincio	1 + 0	Dionysius of Halic., (I.74).		L. Cincius Alimentus (Siciliamus) fl.c.210 B.C. Roman annalist of Punic Wars, wrote in Greek used by Dionysius of Halic.
Clitarco	1 + 0		Pliny, III.9.	Clitarchus, Gk. historian of Alexandrian Age.
Damasceno (Mafea Fenice)	0 + 1	'Lib. 97 dell'histoire'.	Annius, as in refs. to Moses and Josephus.	Mafeo Fenice Damasceno, see Annius. There is no record of him elsewhere.
Damasto Sigeo	1 + 0		Dionysius of Halic., I.72.	Damastes of Sigeum fl.c. 400 B.C. Author of generalogies of Greek leaders before Troy, and a description of the earth.
Demoraga	1 + 0		Dionysius of Halic., I.72.	Demoragoras of Samos, apparently wrote on Trojan or Samothracian antiquities.
Dicearco	0 + 1		Strabo, III.v.5.	Dicearchus of Messene, pupil of Aristotle, geographer and historian works now lost.
Dionisio Calcidese	1 + 0		Dionysius of Halic., I.72.	Dionysius of Chalcis, fl.c. 4th Cent. B.C. author of work on the founding of cities, Muller fragments survive, Muller <u>Frag. Hist. Graec. iv.295.1.</u>

Table III contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Apparent source of Reference</u>	<u>Identification of author</u>
Eforo	5 + 1		Strabo, VI.i.12, VI.i.7, VI.i.15, (cf. Antiochus) VI.iii.2, VI.ii.4.	Ephorus Simplicius, 4th Cent. B.C. Universal History mostly relates to Greece.
Ellanico	2 + 1		Dionysius of Halic., I.35, I.28, I.72.	Hellanicus of Lesbos, 5th cent. B.C. logog- rapher, wrote account of Trojan expedition. Müller, F.H.G. i.52 & 45.1.
Eratostheno	1 + 3		Dionysius of Halic., I.74. Strabo, III.v.5. (cf. Dicearco) Pliny.	Eratosthenes, 276-176 B.C. scientist, astronomer, geographer.
Ferecides	1 + 1		Dionysius of Halic., I.13.	Pherecydes of Athens, 5th cent. B.C. logographer. Müller, F.H.G. i.92.
Giosefo	1 + 1		Annius of Viterbo, <u>Commentaries on Berosus</u> , I. cf. refs. to Mafea Fenice Damasceno & Moses.	Flavius Josephus 37-100 A.D. Jewish, wrote Gk. History of the Jews.
Hecateo	0 + 1	? Stephen of Byzantium.		Hecateus of Mileto, fl.c. 500 B.C. logographer fragments used by Stephen of Byzantium.
Moses	1 + 1	Annius, as above.		

Table III contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Apparent source of Reference</u>	<u>Identification of author</u>
Pausanias 2nd cent. A.D.	2 + 5		Source is <u>not</u> the <u>Descriptio Graeciae</u>	(Latin Edition Venice, 1500).
Phillisto	0 + 1		Dionysius of Halic., I.22.	Philiastus of Syracuse, 4th cent. B.C. historian of Sicily. Müller, F.H.G. i.185.2.
Plauto	1 + 0	Servius		Plautus, 2nd-3rd cent. B.C.
Pomponio Attico	1 + 0		Solinus, I.	Titus Pomponius Atticus 109-32 B.C. friend and correspondent of Cicero.
Posidonio	0 + 7		Strabo, VI.11.7 (2 refs.), VI.11.11.	Posidonius c.135-51 B.C. Head of Stoic School on Rhodes. Historian, geographer.
Timeo Siciliano	1 + 3	Diodorus Siculus	Dionysius of Halic., I.72, Pliny, III.13, Strabo, V.iv.9.	Timeus Sicilianus, c.345-250 B.C. Historian interested in chronology. Originated system of reckoning in Olympiads.
Xenagora	1 + 0		Dionysius of Halic., I.72.	Xenagoras, date uncertain. Historian. Müller, F.G.H. iv.527.6.
Zenodoro Troezenio	2 + 0	Dionysius of Halic., Solinus.		Zenodotus Troezenius, ? late 2nd cent. B.C.

iii. Latin sources: Classical to the fourth century A.D.

The Latin authors present far fewer problems of identification than the Greek ones. They, also, were for the most part available in print when Alberti was writing. The thirty books of satires by Lucilius were not printed, but the only reference which Alberti makes to them is one which must have been well known, the source of the expression 'laconic silence' (f.123). Not all of Varro's works were printed. Although Alberti refers to only three by name, of these only the De Lingua Latina was available. However references to Varro could be extracted from other authors, for example Pliny, Nonius Marcellus and Perotto's Cornucopia. Varro was not such an important source that it is necessary to ascertain the precise origin of these references.

A glance at Table IV will show how frequently the Latin authors are cited with reference to book or chapter, and also how frequently they are quoted. This is especially true of the poets. There is hardly a reference to Virgil or to Horace, Catullus, Juvenal, Ovid, Rutilius, or Silius Italicus which is not accompanied by a line or so of poetry, and often a longer quotation. Such precision over references makes it unlikely that authors were being cited at second hand, although there are several where the number of references is so few that it is not impossible that they came from another work.

The De Origine et Situ Urbium Italicarum of Hyginus survives only in fragments to be found in Servius' commentary on Virgil, but we know that Alberti certainly used Servius, and also that he saw an edition of Servius with a commentary of Probus.<sup>60</sup> Trogus Pompeius was abridged by

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60. The two references to Probus occur in conjunction with references to Servius and Virgil (on Accera and the River Glanio or Clanius (f.170)). The work in question is P.V.M(aronis) omnia Opera.....Commentatibus Servio....Probo, etc., (1510) and several later editions.



Justinus, as Alberti quite clearly states, ('Trogus Pompeius nella breviature di Giustino')<sup>61</sup>, and Justinus also edited Florus.

The most puzzling references are those to Sesto Rufo/Rufo/Sesto Pompeo/Festo/Festo Pompeo. Even allowing for spelling and printing errors it is clear that some of these references must be to the same source, not only are the references similar, but there are too few possible writers whose names could be twisted to fit them. Two works are clearly being referred to: i) The Breviarium rerum gestarum populi Romani of Rufus Festus (3rd. cent. A.D.), ii) Sexti Pompei Festi de Verborum significatione - the work of one Sextus Pompeius Festus (late 2nd. cent. A.D.). Both works were in print when Alberti was writing, but there was a certain amount of confusion over their authorship, confusion which has only very recently been removed. Alberti's references can be separated into two groups quite satisfactorily, except for two odd references, one to 'Sesto Pompeo' and one to 'Festo Pompeo', which do not seem to derive from either of the above works. If we assume that 'Sesto Pompeo' is a mis-spelling for 'Festo Pompeo' we may be justified in assuming that both references come from the Sexti Pompei Festi de Verborum significatione, and may well have been contained in the edition Alberti saw, but have disappeared since through careless editing.<sup>62</sup> J.W. Eadie has discussed the Breviarium of Rufus Festus and shown how its author was confused with the author of the De Verborum Significatione.<sup>63</sup> Biondo was aware of the difference, but he committed another error in presuming that a manuscript he came across in

61. Isole, f.32vo.

62. The edition I consulted was edited by K.O. Müller (Lipsiae, 1839).

63. J.W. Eadie, The Breviarium of Festus, (London, 1967).

Monte Cassino describing the temples, shrines etc. of ancient Rome, and bearing the name Sextus Rufus, was written by the author of the Breviarium. What Biondo had found was a late imperial regionary.<sup>64</sup> The work, Descriptio urbis Romane per Sextum Ruffum appeared together with the Breviarium of Festus in the same manuscript several times, which probably led to the conclusion that they were by the same author. Alberti does not make use of this or any other regionary, just as he does not deal with Roman topography in any great detail.<sup>65</sup> The De Verborum Significatione is an epitome of Verrius Flaccus, but only about half of the original remains. This section in turn was epitomized by Paul the Deacon, and it is through him that it is generally known.<sup>66</sup>

Alberti's most useful and influential Latin sources were, of course, Pliny and Livy, followed by Silius Italicus, Virgil and Pomponius Mela, Antoninus and Tacitus, with Ovid and Cicero more useful than most for the Islands and the rest following far behind.

It has already been pointed out that Alberti could have found Pliny's order of presentation of places a convenient order to adopt.<sup>67</sup> A check on the use Alberti makes of Pliny reveals that not much of Pliny's information escapes inclusion in the Descrittione. I have again based the following discussion on the regions of Tuscany, Apulia and the March of Ancona, though the task is made more difficult by the fact that

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64. I am grateful to Peter Spring for this information.

65. Alberti's one reference to 'Festo Pompeo' which cannot be traced to the De. Verb. Sig. is to the Aventine Hill (f.107vo). It might be possible that this could come from another late imperial regionary a MS discovered by Pietro Donato in 1436, Festus Pompeus: De Montibus portis et viis urbis Romae.

66. See Glossaria Latina, IV. 93-467.

67. Above, Chapter III.

Alberti does not adopt the same boundaries as Pliny for the states of Apulia, Abruzzi and the Marches.

Turning first to Tuscany, the most obvious result of any investigation is the fact that Alberti refers to almost every place mentioned by Pliny, and he tells the reader that Pliny mentions them. There are over sixty references altogether, and most simply give Pliny's name for a particular place. Everything Pliny has to say about the coast of Tuscany is recorded, and the details of the expulsion of the Umbri by the Pelasgi and the Pelasgi by the Lydii. The references on the whole are accurate, with the exception of one or two numerical inaccuracies which may have arisen during transcription or printing.<sup>68</sup>

There are few places mentioned by Pliny which Alberti does not identify.<sup>69</sup> He does not, for example, cite Pliny's reference to the Vesentini or the Veientes, even though he actually mentions the second (f.74-74vo), nor the Amiternenses or the Aquenses Taurini, though the latter's name is explained by Rutilius and identified as Bagni di Ferrata about three miles north of Civita Vecchia. Pliny's reference to the Capenates is not given either, and when Alberti does refer to them in Latium (f.121), in the area of Tempio di Feronia, he does not point out that Pliny placed them in Tuscany. Again, Alberti is so wrapped up in the origins of Chiusi according to various sources (f.54), especially Annius, that he does not mention the Clusini Novi and Clusini Veteres described by Pliny. However the Clusentini Nuovi and Pliny's reference are given in a different context when Alberti is talking about Casentino and Hannibal's passage through the Apennines (f.45).

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68. For example the distance between the Magra and the Tiber.

Descrittione, f.22. cf. Pliny, III.viii.

69. Pliny, III.viii deals with Tuscany.

Alberti is sometimes successful in his attempts to identify some of the less obvious places, for example he mentions Pliny's Novem Pagi and locates it at Bagnarea near Monte Fiascone (f.64) and he accurately locates Pliny's 'Claudian praefecture of Foroclodium' at Oriuolo north of Bracciano (f.71). Two difficult identifications are helped by Volaterrano's suggestions, Herbanus which Volaterrano thinks was on the site of Urbs Vetus, the site now occupied by Orvietum (f.56), (although Alberti also offers an alternative explanation) and the Stationi (f.50vo), which were identified by Volaterrano with Scarlino Castello near Castel Nuovo.<sup>70</sup>

There are occasions, however, when Alberti seems not to have followed Pliny very carefully, and to have run into some confusion as a result. Happily these lapses are not frequent, and may even be explained away in some cases by the use of a corrupt text.<sup>71</sup> The location of a place called Lucus Hetruriae (f.121) seems to be a result of misreading Pliny who says that in the interior of Tuscany are the colonies of Alisci founded by the Argives according to Cato, and surnamed 'Falisci Etruscorum, Lucus Feroniae, Rusellana etc'. The position of the comma is quite clear, but Alberti may have been reading an edition punctuated inaccurately thus: 'Falisci, Etruscorum Lucus, Feroniae, Rusellana', which would account for his mistake. He seems to twist Pliny's text to fit in with Annius over Volce (f.30), an alleged city of the Etruscans,

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70. Volaterrano, op. cit., f.171vo. and f.169. The 1527 edition refers to the 'Scatones'.

71. Alberti appears not to notice Pliny's reference to Lucus Feroniae, for example, although he is discussing Feronia città and Luco di Feronia, which he puts more or less in the territory of the Falisci as Pliny does (f.67). He also mentions another Feronia or Feronia in Latium, where there was also a temple and a 'Selva di Feronia' near the territory of the Capenati, the Pontine Marshes and the River Aufido (f.64).

which Alberti equates with a place named by Pliny 'Volgentium doppio Cosa'. In fact Pliny does not refer to a separate city of Volgentium but to Cossa of the Volcientes; 'Cossa Volcientium a populo Romano deducta'. Another misinterpretation seems to occur over the ports of the Etruscans (f.27). Alberti says that according to Pliny Vadi Volaterrani is the only settlement of the Etruscans on this coast, when Pliny's remark in fact refers to Populonium.<sup>72</sup> Alberti contradicts himself on the very next page when he says Popolonia<sup>a</sup> is the only town the Etruscans had on the coast because it is <sup>a</sup>coast without natural harbours.

Pliny did not give Alberti a great deal of information about the origins of cities, but generally such stories as there are, are retold, and not usually contradicted. For the region of Apulia Alberti makes few references to Pliny, only about a dozen, and he is less particular about the identification of places. He does not mention Pliny's reference to the River Cerbalus (probably the Cervaro or Candilare) though he does mention the River Candilare (f.222) but without pointing out that Pliny says it forms the boundary of the Daunii.<sup>73</sup> The Port of Agasus is not mentioned by Alberti, though it was probably at the present site of Manfredonia, nor is the Port of Garna which may have been on the site of Varano. Alberti mentions several lakes, among which is Lake Varano (f.223vo), but he does not try to associate this with Pliny's Lake Pantanus which seems a probable identification, more probable than Lago di Lesina,<sup>74</sup> which Alberti says he believes to be Pantanus, but this seems very near the River Fortoro. Cliterna is not identified by Alberti, although

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72. Pliny, op. cit. III.viii.

73. Pliny, op. cit. III.xvi deals with Apulia.

74. Descrittione,/cf. Pliny, III.xvi.

remains of the settlement are still to be seen between the Frento and Tiferno, and there is no reference to Pliny's distinction between the three nations of the Apulians - the Daunii, the Teani and the Lucani.<sup>75</sup> Other omissions include the cities of Apina and Tricia which Pliny says were destroyed by Diomedes. To proceed to the March of Ancona, again fairly full use is made of the information Pliny gives, but again there are one or two places where Alberti seems to have been less diligent than he might have been.<sup>76</sup>

The total number of references to Pliny is high in comparison with the number of omissions or errors. Some mistakes may have been due to printers' errors, and the identifications which Alberti overlooked were not all easy ones. Confusion must have arisen over the changed regional boundaries, especially in the Apennine area. However it is worth remembering that although Pliny was one of the most useful sources at Alberti's disposal, there is no hint that he might be considered superior or more trustworthy than any other.

For geographical information or identification of placenames there was no classical source to compare with Pliny. Antoninus's Itinerary gives distances between cities, but Alberti does no more than mention that Antoninus has a reference to a particular place. The vast number of references to Livy are not difficult to explain. Livy and Tacitus provided Alberti with the history of the Italian cities, tribes and

75. Ibid.

76. See Pliny, III.xviii. There are also several variations in name spelling which pass unrecorded. Alberti does not mention Norana or Monte Norana, nor does he identify Pliny's Cluana, which should have been in the Marches, north of Fermo. Other omissions include the Beregrani who inhabited Beregra which probably stood at Civitella di Tronto ten miles north of Teramo, and the Treiensens who were supposed to have occupied a site near San Severino and Montecchio. Pliny does not mention the cave of the Sybil, which of course astonishes Alberti (f.249).

provinces. Considering the scope and detail of the Decades it is not surprising that they are frequently cited, nor that the points made from them should be very often corroborative. Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus were contemporaries, but worked quite independently of each other although they used some common sources. Livy's oldest material came from Q. Fabius Pictor and L. Cincius Alimentus, both Greeks of Hannibal's time. Polybius was another useful source, but Livy does not seem to have used Cato's Origins. Livy was much more sceptical about some of the foundation myths than Dionysius would seem to be, but Alberti makes no comment on Livy's distrust of them, and does not get involved in any startling debates over Livy's remarks. Although references are almost always given there are few quotations, just a phrase here and there but nothing on the scale of the quotations from Virgil or Silius.

Sometimes Livy's opinion adds weight to an argument, for example in the case of the story that Chiusi or Clusum was once called Comersol- he refers to it as 'Clusium, quod Comers olim appellabant' (f.54vo). The battle on Lake Vadimone is mentioned, when the Etruscans were defeated by the Romans (f.74vo). Biondo, of course, associates this with Lago di Monte Rosso or (Monte Rose). It seems an error, as explained above.<sup>77</sup> Dionysius and Livy are cited together frequently, for example to show that Citta Castellana cannot be the ancient city of the Veii (f.66vo) and again in the discussion of the River Cremesa (f.74vo) and the Veientes (f.75). There are the occasional omissions, for example, a possible reference to Pistoia<sup>78</sup> but if we accept that in the main it was historical information which Alberti was deriving from Livy, then we shall

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77. Above, p. 161

78. Descrittione, f.37-37vo. cf. Livy, Decades, 14.303.

not be overlooking much. Alberti discusses Livy, his work and various eulogies of him among the famous men of his native Padua. He expresses regret that so much of the Decades is lost, 'Vero e, che possemo deplorare il gran danno, che ha dato la malignita de i tempi, con l'ignoranza de i Barbari (che tante volte hanno roinato l'Italia) havendo ci privati dello maggior parte di tanto tesoro. Conciosia cosa che di 140 libri (com'ho detto) appena ne habbiamo 35.'...Five books of the fifth Decade have only recently been discovered, 'I quali furono dati alla luce quest'anni passati per merce di Erasmo Roterodamo ma in alcuni luoghi troncati e manchi' (f.424).<sup>79</sup> This, he says, gave people hope that others might be found. Some said these were not by Livy, but Alberti is not so sceptical. Looking at their style and organization they are clearly by Livy as other scholars say.

Another name which one comes across frequently is Pomponius Mela, the geographer popular with Dr. Johnson,<sup>80</sup> Mela's work, perhaps more aptly described as a chorography, was a digest of Strabo, with some references to Tacitus, Ptolemy and Berosus thrown in for good measure. It was written in the form of a description of each country in turn, as if author and reader were journeying along the roads and coastlines known in Strabo's day. Mela has his map of Italy upside-down, 'ad dextram sunt Alpibus Ligures, sub Apoenino Hetruria'<sup>81</sup>...'. It was not only the makers of mediaeval World Maps who took this view.

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79. Thirty-five books are all that remain today of the Decades. Alberti was correct in stating that five books of the fifth decade had only recently been discovered. Books 41-45 were found by S. Grynaeus at Lorsch. A note on this is to be found in Erasmii Epistolae, edited P.S. Allen, 11 vols, (Oxford, 1930), III,496. There is no indication that the discovery could in any way have been Erasmus's achievement.

80. Boswell, Life of Johnson entry of 5.8.1763.

81. Mela, De situ Orbis, (Vienna, 1518) Introduction to Chapter IV.



There are several editions of Mela which Alberti could have used. Like Strabo, Mela was popular north of the Alps, and one of the most influential sixteenth-century geographical works in Germany was Vadian's commentary on his text (Pomponii Melae Hispani Libri de situ orbis tres adjectis Joachimi Vadiani Helvetii in eosdem scholiis, (Vienna, 1518)). It is quite likely that Alberti saw this as he refers to Vadian somewhat scathingly, 'In quanto errore sia Gioachino Vadiano nelle breviature della geografia dell'Italia, chiaramente conoscer si può in molti luoghi, tra i quali è uno, quando così dice....' (f.253vo). He is guilty of two errors, Alberti says, firstly of placing Laurento in the Peligni, when it is far from there in Picenum, and also of saying that the River Clituno is in this region when it is in Umbria, not Picenum. If Alberti did read Vadian he must have seen also his criticism of scholars who clung to the traditional classical 'auctores',<sup>82</sup> rather than making their own observations and investigations at first hand - not a viewpoint which Alberti would readily have taken to heart, one feels. For Alberti, Mela is another corroborative source, for example all the places which Mela mentions in Tuscany are recorded by Alberti, likewise for Latium and Terra di Lavoro, though there are one or two omissions for the March of Ancona. Mela is certainly not a source of great controversy, and Alberti really gains very little that is new from him.

Since Silius Italicus and Virgil are such favourite authors especially as sources of quotations, it is scarcely possible to exclude them from this discussion, but investigations reveal no great originality in Alberti's use of them. It is not surprising that references to the two authors

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82. Ibid. General Introduction.

often occur together, and are often accompanied by references to Servius's commentary, since the Aeneid, along with Livy's third Decade, was the main source for Silius's poem on the Second Punic War. Silius, in writing an epic was almost bound to include the traditional catalogues or lists, for example catalogues of the Carthaginian forces, or of those who fought at Cannae, and among these catalogues is one of Sicilian towns and rivers, a description which is widely used by Alberti with many quotations.<sup>83</sup> Alberti also makes use of the lists of cities who rallied to Syracuse, of those who were Roman allies, and so on. It is rare for Alberti to take a point of fact from Silius, his function is to corroborate or embellish an argument, or sometimes his praise for a particular place is recorded. Exactly the same is true of Virgil. Most of the references to him are for Tuscany, Latium, Terra di Lavoro and Magna Graecia, there are very few for the North and East, but Sicily is well covered, especially from Book III of the Aeneid.

Other useful sources were Ovid and Cicero, both particularly valuable for the Islands, where Ovid's Fasti and Cicero's In Verrem are frequently mentioned. The Metamorphoses, despite the light they throw on mythological ideas of placename derivations, were not a popular source.

Solinus could hardly contribute anything new, and Lucan is scarcely used, even for facts about the Civil Wars, but his famous description of the Po is quoted in full<sup>84</sup> and also his descriptions of other rivers briefly, for example the Varro<sup>85</sup>, and the Timavo.<sup>86</sup> Alberti does not record his description of the Apennines, nor that this is the description used by Dante.

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83. For example, Isole, f.29vo (Lazzareto); f.40vo (Catania); f.45vo (Tavromnia) f.45vo (Messina); f.48vo. (Melazzo) etc.

84. Descrittione, f.344vo., cf. Lucan, Pharsalia Lib. II.

85. Descrittione, f.9.vo., cf. Lucan op. cit., Lib. I.

86. Descrittione, f.419, cf. Lucan, op. cit., Lib. VII.

Alberti was familiar with a wide cross-section of Latin literature, the great histories, epic poems, geographies, and the writings of the more important biographers, chroniclers and poets. References to these authors fulfill an important function, they tell the reader who was writing about certain places and events, and they contribute to the self-esteem of some of the less influential towns and cities. There is a great deal of information on the 'who said what about which city' lines, but there is little critical comment beyond attempts to reconcile conflicting stories.

As he refers to one source after another Alberti is always anxious to agree with everyone as far as possible. It is much more usual for him to try to adapt everyone's theories so that they may all seem to contain a grain of truth, rather than to come down firmly in favour of one report and against another. When he does venture to make a choice he does not often give any explanation for it, and Annius's canon of choosing the author who lived nearer in time and space to the event in question is not always feasible. Alberti has great reverence for sources like Dionysius, Pliny, Strabo and the ancient authors whom they quote. They are regarded as reputable authorities, and they are seldom taken to task for inaccuracies.



Table IV contd.

Name	Number of references	Works referred to by Alberti (author's name, where Alberti has variations)	Apparent source of reference	Work in print by 1530 indicated by *
Festus: see Rufus Festus and Sextus Pomponius Festus.				
Florus, Publius Anniius fl. c. 100 A.D.	27 + 4	'Lucio Floro nel breviatura della Guerra Hetrusca' RR	cf. Trogus Pompeius: T.P. and Florus edited by Justinus, Lucii Florii (sic) gestorum Romanorum incipit..	*
Frontinus 40-103 A.D.	1 + 0		<u>De Aquaeductibus</u>	*
A. Gellius fl. c. 50 A.D.	5 + 0	'nozze Attice' RR Q		*
Horace 65-8 B.C.	19 + 0		<u>Q. Horatii Flacci Opera</u> (Odes)	*
Hyginus 64 B.C.-17 A.D.	4 + 0	'libro d'Italia' R	one ref. is from Guido di Ravenna, the others from Servius' commentary on Virgil, the only extant source for fragments of <u>De Origine et situ urbium Italicarum.</u>	Servius *
Juvenal 60-128 A.D.	10 + 0		(Satires) <u>J. Juvenalis...Satyrarum liber primus incipit.</u>	*

Table IV contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Works referred to by Alberti (author's name, where Alberti has variations)</u>	<u>Apparent source of reference</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Livy 59 B.C.-17 A.D.	440 + 49	<u>Decades</u>	RR Q	*
Lucan 39-65 A.D.	33 + 3	<u>Pharsalia</u>	RR Q	*
Lucilius, C. 2nd cent. B.C.	1 + 0			
Lucretius 99-55 B.C.	1 + 1	<u>De Rerum Natura</u>	QQQ	*
Martial 40-104 A.D.	24 + 1		QQ	*
Ovid 43 B.C.-18 A.D.	28 + 22	1. <u>Fasti</u> 11 + 17 2. <u>Metamorphoses</u> 8 3. <u>Tristitia</u> 1 4. <u>Ars Amatoria</u> 1	RR QQQ	*
Pliny 23-79 A.D.	621 + 79		RR Q	*
Pomponius Mela fl. c. A.D. 43	110 + 47		RR Q	*
Probus 1st cent. A.D.	2 + 0			*

Historiae Mundi Libri  
~~XXXVII~~

De Situ Orbis

P.V.M(aronis) omnia opera  
Commentantibus Servio...  
Probo etc.

Table IV contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Works referred to by Alberti (author's name, where Alberti has variations)</u>	<u>Apparent source of reference</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Propercius, S. late 1st cent. B.C.	4 + 1	Vertumniana Q	? Anniius, possibly, but there is no accompanying ref. to Annius.	*
Quintilian 35-95 A.D.	1 + 0		<u>Declamations</u>	*
+ Rufus Festus 3rd cent. A.D.	0 + 3	Sesto Rufo, /Rufo.	<u>Breviarium rerum gestarum populi Romani</u>	*
Sallust 86-35 B.C.	1 + 0	'Salust nel Catilin' RRR		*
Seneca 4 B.C.-65 A.D.	2 + 1	<u>Epistolae</u> Q	<u>Epistolae moralium rerum</u>	*
+ Sextus Pompeius Festus, late 2nd cent. A.D.	9 + 1	Festo/Festo Pompeo.	<u>Sexti Pompei Festi de Verborum significatione</u>	*
Silius Italicus 1st cent. A.D.	117 + 56	QQQ RR	<u>De bello Punico</u>	*
Solinus 3rd cent. A.D.	48 + 17	Q R	<u>De situ et memorabilibus orbis capitula.</u>	*
Suetonius 2nd cent. A.D.	29 + 0	'Vita di Claudio' 4 refs are to 'Tranquillo' rather than Suetonius. R	Possibly the edition used is that of Milan 1475, edited by E. Accursius, which includes the <u>Historia Augusta.</u>	*

Table IV contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Works referred to by Alberti (author's name, where Alberti has variations)</u>	<u>Apparent sources of reference</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Tacitus c.55-117 A.D.	103 + 11	<u>Annales</u> Q RR		*
Trogus Pompeius fl. c.20 A.D.	46 + 14	Historia (refs. to the 'Breviature di Giustino') @ RR	<u>Historia Philippicae</u> abridged by Justinus.	*
Valerius Flaccus 1st cent. A.D.	0 + 1		<u>C. Valerii Flacci Argonautica</u>	*
Valerius Maximus fl. 1st cent. A.D.	2 + 0		<u>Valerii Maximi dictorum et factorum memorabilium libri novem.</u>	*
Varro 116-27 B.C.	20 + 1	1. <u>De lingua Latina</u> 2 refs 2. <u>Lib. delle Institutioni divine</u> 1 ref. 3. <u>Lib. de i Poeti</u> 1 ref. R	Pliny, ? Nonius Marcellus ? Perotto, <u>Cornucopia.</u>	*
Virgil 70-19 B.C.	142 + 19	1. <u>Aeneid</u> 2. <u>Buccolica</u>	Editions with Commentaries by Servius and Probus. q.v.	*
Vitruvius c.50-26 B.C.	0 + 5	<u>Lib. dell'architettura</u> RR		*

Notes + Where Alberti's reference to the work concerned seems to be self-explanatory, no further comment is made in the following column.

\* Out of 133 + 3 references only 106 + 3 are genuine. The other 27 + 0 come from Anniius' forgeries and are therefore counted as references to Anniius. See below Chapter V. For Cato likewise, all references count as references to Anniius.

+ Alberti also has references which do not appear to derive from either of the above works: one to Sesto Pompeo, and one to Festo Pompeo.



iv. Patristic, later Roman and Dark Age Sources

As far as this group of sources is concerned there is more to comment on in the way of omissions than in the sources used. It is surprising to find that the references to Patristic sources are almost non-existent, considering Alberti's training as a Dominican. There is no attempt to introduce Christian moralizing or to criticise the deeds of the past. Even historical works like Cassiodorus's writings are scarcely referred to.

Servius's commentary on Virgil is the most used work of this later Roman period, otherwise there is little that Alberti found particularly helpful except Procopius and Paul the Deacon - the standard histories of the invasions and of Lombard rule. Add to these two Agathias' De Bello Gothorum, and the history of Ammianus Marcellinus, and the picture of Dark Age historical sources is complete. These writers were all drawing on the Classical historians to a large extent for the events of the Roman Empire, but for the invasion period they provided more valuable independent information. Procopius and Agathias were useful for the effects of the Goths on North Italy, and Paul the Deacon for the activities of the Lombard kings with their capital at Pavia. Alberti cites these authors carefully, throwing in the odd quotation, but treating his material in an entirely uncritical fashion. Since reconciliation of one story with another was both convenient and desirable in his view, authors like these who compiled and copied from their predecessors and contemporaries, presented him with few problems.

Ammianus Marcellinus was the earliest of these sources. The references are few and mostly to historical information. There are three references concerning Rome, one concerning Villafranca, and others

concerning places in Lombardy, but no particularly controversial information is involved. Villafranca, according to Marcellinus, was named after Ercole Tebano who was passing through on his way to recover Gerione and built a lasting memorial to himself there (f.10), but Alberti prefers the story of Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy that it was originally Portus Herculis Moneci. Surprisingly, Alberti does not mention Marcellinus' description of the hazards of the Alps in winter<sup>87</sup> and Hannibal's expedition.

Procopius' Gothic Wars and Agathias' continuation, De Bello Gothorum, deal with the military and political history of Justinian's wars against the Ostrogoths in Italy and Sicily in the mid-sixth century. Again information extracted from them is not particularly extraordinary. We learn that Procopius called Orvieto 'Urbevetana civitas', and 'Urbibentum' (f.56), and that he records the activities of Narses in several towns. But for the most part there is little more detail than the fact that a particular place is mentioned in the 'Lib. delle Guerre de Gotti'. Agathias claimed that Procopius was his model, but according to Averil Cameron<sup>88</sup> he was looking back to secular Byzantine historians of the fourth and fifth centuries who wrote contemporary history with a deliberately secular slant, and regarded it primarily as literature. Agathias was not particularly well versed in Italian geography, so it is surprising to find an accurate account of the Sibyl's Cave at Cumae included in his history, a description which did not escape Alberti's notice.<sup>89</sup> Although Agathias places Cumae itself in Etruria<sup>90</sup> Alberti

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87. Ammianus Marcellinus, Historia, Lib. XV.

88. Averil Cameron, Agathias. (Oxford, 1970), p.11.

89. Descrittione, f.152-2vo. cf. Agathias De Bello Gothorum, I.10.

90. ibid, I.8.

does not take him to task over this, nor over his reference to Tuscany and Emilia being separated by the 'Alpium iugo',<sup>91</sup> although Agathias may well have been thinking of them as the 'Alpes Apennini', a name sometimes given to the northern part of the Apennines.<sup>92</sup>

A more widely used source for the invasions was Paul the Deacon's Historia Langobardorum, an eighth-century expansion and continuation of Eutropius' Historia Romana. The later was not used by Alberti although there were several editions of the two works printed together in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. By the eighth century it was fashionable in historical writing to add the history of Christianity to the existing Roman Annals, and also to produce chronological tables, these having their origins in the Consular lists of the Empire. There was no break from the historical tradition of compilation, so that Paul, unfortunately, produced little original information, and in some places even distorted the sequence of events by bad chronology. Nevertheless for Lombard history it is to Paul that we turn even today just as Alberti did in the sixteenth century. One of Paul's sources to whom Alberti refers was Gregorio Turenese, bishop of Turin and author of a history of the Franks.<sup>93</sup> Alberti reports both authors calling Belinzona 'Bilincionis' (f.397 vo). Although Paul uses this name, he does not mention Gregorio in connection with it, so Alberti's reference must come from another source.<sup>94</sup>

As a native of Aquileia Paul is praised in the Descrittione 'Nacque altresì in questa città Paolo Diacono, d'origine Longobardica, quale scrisse sei libri dell'hist' de i Longobardi, e dell' opere, de gli Imperatori Romani, da Valentiano, et Valente insino a Leone. Dal quale hanno istratto le cose de i Langobardi, gli altri scrittori'.(f.438)

91. *ibid*, I.11.

92. See for example Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, II.18.

Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, XIV.88.13. Alberti, Descrittione, f.404 recalls that Tacitus and Livy also refer to them thus.

93. Vossius, *op.cit.*, pp.253-255; Paul the Deacon, Historia...Lib.III.i.

94. *Ibid.*, Lib.III.xxxi. Castrum Bilitonis or Bilincnis is mentioned.

In view of this remark it is a surprise to find Alberti citing Biondo, Platina and Sabellico as authors who corroborate Paul (ff.361, 347vo). Apparently he did not stop to think where their information could have come from. Out of the 58 references 9 are to eastern central Italy including the Romagna and all the rest are to Lombardy, Treviso and the north. From Paul come the stories of the seige of Mantua by Agiolfo (f.352), the ruin of Brescia and Bergamo by Atilla (ff.356vo, 365), the earliest settlement at Treviso (f.427) and the fortunes of the northern cities under Lombard rule. Although the Lombard buildings of Pavia are not discussed in great detail, Alberti refers the reader to the 'Historia Longobardi' and to Corio (f.376). In fact Alberti does not make anything like exhaustive use of Paul, and one rather surprising omission is Paul's discussion of the provinces of Italy, their boundaries and names, which seem to have entirely escaped Alberti's notice.<sup>95</sup>

There is no mention in the Descrittione of the boundaries given for Venice, Liguria or the other northern provinces, when they show considerable deviation from those generally accepted in classical and mediaeval times.<sup>96</sup>

Paul's reference to the Alpe Cottie is noted (f.405) and likewise to the Alpi Pennine (f.404vo.), but with no indication that they were considered

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95. Historia Langobardorum, ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz. M.G.H., S.R.L., I. (Hanover, 1878), 12-487. (Book II).

96. Paul's regions are as follows: 1. Venice, including Istria and Lake Benacus. 2. Liguria, an inland state which includes Milan and Pavia. 3,4. The two Retias, north of Milan into the Alps. 5. Alpes Cottiae, the equivalent of fifteenth-century Liguria. 6. Tuscany, which includes Rome. 7. Campania, from Rome to the River Siler (Silario). 8. Lucania or Britia, from the R. Siler to the Gulf of Sicily. 9. Apennini Alpes, dividing Tuscany from Emilia and Umbria from Flaminia. 10. Emilia, including Parma, Bologna, Reggio and Imola. 11. Flaminia, between Alpes Apennini and the Adriatic. 12. Picenum, between the Apennines and the Adriatic. 13. Valeria and Nursia, between Umbria, Campania and Picenum. 14. Samnium, between Campania, the Adriatic and Apulia. 15. Apulia, Calabria and the Salentini. 16. Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia.

to be distinct provinces.

There is the same silence over the explanation of placenames. Paul includes several such explanations, often derived from Isidore of Seville's Etymologiae,<sup>97</sup> but none of these find their way into the Descrittione, in fact there is but one reference to Isidore in the whole work.<sup>98</sup> Even with names where Paul's own discussion is quite involved, it is not recorded.<sup>99</sup>

The omission of references to Isidore is unexpected. Paul never includes direct references to his sources, but it is clear that Isidore was a valuable source for him.<sup>100</sup> Benzo d'Alessandria, and probably Boccaccio and Zacharius Lilius also, used him for the origins of cities.<sup>101</sup> Book XIII of the Etymologiae deals with geographical matters and the world as a whole, and Book XIV with political divisions. Isidore's main sources were Solinus, Mela, Pliny, Suetonius, Hygenus, Sallust and Orosius. Isidore's work compares with the work of the Roman encyclopaedists, such as Pliny, and although a compilation, it could hardly be neglected by Alberti on that score. The key to geographical knowledge in the fourth to eighth centuries, indeed the key to all scholarship, was preservation - of the same statements coming from the same sources.

Macrobius and Martianus Capella of the fifth century preserved through the Dark Ages the Ptolemaic view of the universe, including the idea of a global earth, but Alberti made little use of their more

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97. Etymologiae, XIII.14.17. (Name of Istria); XIII.19.7. (Lake Benacus); XIV.2.86. (Tuscany); XXIV.6.32. (Sicily); XIV.4.18. (Italy itself).

98. Descrittione, f.78. (Re Umbria, 'nel 13 libro delle etimologie').

99. For example, Descrittione, f.180vo-181. References to Brittia or Britia.  
100. Full notes and references are given in the edition of Hanover, 1878.  
101. Berrigan, op. cit., p.123.

interesting information. The Saturnalia is largely concerned with comments on Virgil, though one would not guess this from Alberti's references which simply indicate that a reference to a particular settlement may be found in the work. G.B. Pio of Bologna, one of Alberti's contemporaries was responsible for editing another Dark Age topographical study, the Itinerario of Rutilius Namantianus.<sup>102</sup> His sources are typically unoriginal, Virgil, Dionysius and Trogus Pompeius, and Alberti made most use of him for his descriptions of Tuscany. However there is some usable material which Alberti does not choose to include.<sup>103</sup>

The only other author worthy of comment in this section is Vibius Sequester. His work is a geographical dictionary in alphabetical order which identifies places mentioned by Virgil, Lucan, Silius and Ovid. No other authors are involved.<sup>104</sup> It has little literary value and is uncontroversial, but is interesting because it could very well be the main source for the De Montibus... of Boccaccio. Alberti's use of it is not particularly thorough or critical. To sum up it would be true to say that there was little original in the geographical ideas of the Dark Ages, that placename study and identification was not given so much attention, and that the most valuable information that Alberti could extract from these sources came from the historians, though even here he overlooked some of the more interesting information.

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102. Claudius Rutilius Poeta priscus de laudibus urbis Etruriae et Italiae, (Bologna, 1520).

103. Ibid. I. lines 223-6, for example, refer to the Pyrgi, the Caeretani and to Agylla.

104. Vibii Sequestris de fluminibus, fontibus, lacubus, nemoribus, paludibus, montibus, gentibus per litteras libellus. On him see Vibius Sequester, edited Remus Gelsomino. (Leipzig, 1967).

TABLE V

References to Patristic Sources

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Works referred to by Alberti</u> †	<u>Apparent source of reference</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Cassiodorus 480-575 A.D.	2 + 0	Q	<u>Ecclesiasticetripartite historie</u>	*
Eusebius 260-340 A.D. Josephus - see Greek authors.	10 + 0	'de tempi'	translated by Jerome.	*
Philo fl.c. 39 A.D.	0 + 1		? Anniius	
Polycarpo c.69-155 A.D.	1 + 0	'nel seso libro delle croniche'		*
St Augustine 354-430 A.D.	1 + 0	'nel 18 lib. De civitate Dei'		*
St. Gregory 535-590 A.D.	5 + 0	'libri dei Dialogi'		*
St. Jerome 340-420 A.D.	3 + 0	'epis.a pte.Paolino'		*
St. Luke 1st cent. A.D.	1 + 0	'ult. cap.'		*

Note: † Where Alberti's reference to the work concerned seems to be self-explanatory, no further comment is made in the following column.

TABLE VI

References to Latin Sources (b)  
Late Roman and Dark Age Authors.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Works referred to by Alberti</u>	<u>Apparent source of reference</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Agathias 536-582 A.D.	16 + 1	'Libro delle guerre de 'Gotti' Q RRR		*
Ammianus Marcellinus. fl.4th cent. A.D.	12 + 0	'nel...lib. dell' historie' Q RR		*
Claudianus 4th cent. A.D.	3 + 3	'nel libro de raptu primo' QQ R		*
Eutropius, Flavius fl.c. 350 A.D.	3 + 0	'nel vita d'Aureliano'	Refs. probably to coll- ection of Suetonius, <u>Historia Augusta</u> , etc. 1475. edited B. Accursius. One ref. is to Albertuccio de Borselli.	*
Gregorius Turenensis, fl. 6th cent. A.D.	1 + 0			
Guido da Ravenna 9th cent. A.D.	1 + 0		<u>Ravennatis anonymi</u> <u>Cosmographia</u>	*
<u>Historia Augusta</u>	7 + 0	Capitolino's life of Eliogabalus, Pollione, 'trenta tirranni' etc. Q RR		



Table VI contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Works referred to by Alberti</u> †	<u>Apparent source of reference</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Isidore of Seville 570-636 A.D.	1 + 0	'nel 13 lib. delle etemologie' R		*
Macrobius c.5th. cent. A.D.	7 + 3	'i Saturnali' RRR		*
Martianus Capella early 5th cent. A.D.	0 + 1		<u>Mercuris et Philologiae encyclopaedia of liberal arts.</u>	*
Namantianus, Rutilius early 5th cent. A.D.	9 + 5	'Itineraria' QQ	<u>De Reditu Suo</u>	*
Nonius Marcellus early 4th cent. A.D.	1 + 0		<u>De compendiosa doctrina</u>	*
Paul the Deacon 8th cent. A.D.	58 + 0	1. 'historia deiGotti' 2. 'Historia Longobardi' QQ RR		*
Procopius 5th-6th cent. A.D.	47 + 2	'Guerre de 'Gotti' Q RR		*
Servius fl. end 4th cent. A.D.	70 + 4	Q R	<u>M. Servii Comm. in Virgili Opera</u>	*
Sextus Aurelius Victor fl. 4th cent. A.D.	3 + 0	'ne suoi Cesari' QQ RR	<u>Caesares</u>	*

Table VI contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of references</u>	<u>Works referred to by Alberti +</u>	<u>Apparent source of reference</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Vibius Sequester 4th-5th cent. A.D.	14 + 1	'Libro dei fiumi' RR	<u>Vibii Sequestris de fluminibus fontibus lacubus memoribus paludibus montibus gentibus per litteras.</u>	*

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Note: + Where Alberti's reference to the work concerned seems to be self-explanatory, no further comment is made in the following column.

What general conclusions can be drawn about Alberti's use of this particular group of sources? In the first place one gets the impression that he seized eagerly whatever texts came his way and culled information from them with more enthusiasm than critical scholarship. The more lengthy the list of sources the better, even if he had not seen them all at first hand and was often in no position to judge their historical value.

Alberti gains information of several sorts from these sources. Firstly he ascertains the minimum age of particular settlements by pointing out that a certain author mentions them, and the fact that they are so mentioned adds to their prestige. Secondly, he tries to discover exactly how places were named, but in so doing he often seems extremely imperceptive. He does not take into account the possibility of printing errors and variants or even regional spelling differences and vowel shifts to explain the differences he finds between authors widely separated by time and distance. Thirdly he extracts pieces of historical and sometimes also descriptive information from his authors and incorporates them almost verbatim in his own work, although very long extracts are rather exceptional.

It should not, however, be argued that he is doing something entirely reprehensible in referring to classical sources to the extent to which he does, and as uncritically as he does. It is clear from looking at the text in any part of the work that he is not trying to put over any particular message, he is not always supporting any one author's views against the rest. What he is concerned with is explaining clearly in a readily accessible form the views of all the classical authors he can muster, and what they have to say, however trivial, about any town or region. Where

he can see discrepancies he tentatively tries to reconcile opposing views, or bring in further opinions to disentangle the problem. With this as a purpose there is no need for him to draw too many conclusions. Having gathered the references to the best of his ability he has put this information at the disposal of other antiquarians and his value and influence in this respect is the subject of a later chapter.



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MEDIAEVAL SOURCES, FIFTEENTH-CENTURY AND SIXTEENTH-CENTURY  
SOURCES AND EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS

1. Mediaeval sources, pre-1400

With the exception of Fazio and to a much lesser extent Dante and Petrarch, the references in Table VII are all isolated ones.<sup>1</sup> There is no source of outstanding value dating from this period. A few of the references could have come from already printed editions but the rest must either have been consulted in manuscript versions, or else have been extracted from other sources.<sup>2</sup> The references which Alberti makes to the chroniclers Godefridus (Godfrey) of Viterbo, Ricobaldus and Sicardus of Cremona, for example, do not appear to come from the version of their works printed in Muratori's collection.<sup>3</sup>

There is little worthy of comment among these references. Benzo of Alessandria's work did not exist in print<sup>4</sup> but Alberti must have seen a manuscript, or read at second-hand about Benzo's explanation for the name of the city of Alba; the only time he refers to him (f.342). He takes him to task roundly for suggesting that it was so named by Frederick Barbarossa. This is 'una espressa favola' and 'una menzogna' as it was so named by Ptolemy, Pliny and Dio Cassius. Alberti is unusually forthright in his condemnation of Benzo's mistake.

Although Alberti gives accurate references to Dante when he mentions him, he overlooked Dante's now well-known description of the shape of Italy.<sup>5</sup> Fazio degli Uberti is quoted frequently and sometimes

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1. Below, pp.235-236.

2. But not however from Annius, Biondo or Volaterrano.

3. R.I.S. VII, IX and VII respectively.

4. Above, Chapter II, p.79-80.

5. Above, Chapter II, p.78.

at length, but Alberti nowhere points out that Fazio derived most of his information from Pliny, Solinus, Isidore and Pomponius Mela. It is scarcely surprising that his information so frequently agrees with theirs! As for Petrarch, the collection of lives of the Popes and Emperors, supposedly by Petrarch, is the source for most of Alberti's references to him.<sup>6</sup> Apparently Alberti accepted it as Petrarch's own work with no reservations. Boccaccio's De montibus, silvis etc. is the source of surprisingly few references, but in this alphabetical dictionary Italy was only a very small part, and references to individual towns and rivers were scattered throughout the work. Alberti refers to him, as one would expect, in conjunction with classical authors mentioning a particular place, but the references are simply records of placenames as identified by Boccaccio.

ii. Fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century sources: Introduction and Annus of Viterbo.

In Table VIII<sup>7</sup> many of the references given by Alberti are self-explanatory but where the title is not entirely obvious I have added the most usual title of the work in question. Some works could have been seen only in manuscript and there are a few others, not printed until the late fifteen-thirties and fifteen-forties which Alberti may well have seen before they were printed. The majority of works, however, were in print by about 1530. Contemporary information given privately, by word of mouth or letter, is listed separately in Table IX.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Le vite degl 'imperadori et pontefici romani...insino nell'anno 1478, (Geneva, ? 1625).

7. Below, pp. 251-263

8. Below, pp. 287

TABLE VII

Mediaeval Sources, pre 1400.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Most likely source of reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Benzo d'Alessandria 14th. Cent.	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Chronicon</u>	
Boccaccio, Giovanni 1313-1375	14 + 2	'libro de' fiumi' R.R.	<u>De Montibus, silvis</u> ...	*
Damiano, Pietro 1007-1072	1 + 0	no ref.		*
Dandolo, Andrea 14th Cent.	2 + 0	'nella sua historia' R		
Dante 1265-1321	10 + 0	1. 'Paradisio' RR.Q 2. 'Pergatorio' RR.Q		*
Eustathius 12th Cent.	4 + 1	no ref.	? In <u>Dionysium commentaria, Paraphrase of Dionysius Periegetes</u>	(1556)
Fazio degli Uberti 14th Cent.-1368	72 + 7	'Dittamondo' RR. QQQ		*
Godefridus of Viterbo 12th Cent.	2 + 0	'nel libro della memoria di tutte le cose'	<u>Pantheon sive universitatis libri</u>	(1559)
Mileto 12th Cent.	4 + 0	no ref.	An expansion of Jerome's translation of Eusebius. cf. Godefridus and Riccobaldus.	

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Mussato, Albertino of Padua 1261-1368	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Historie Augusta Henrici VII Caesaris, etc.</u>	
Papias 11th cent.	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Vocabularum (encyclopaedic dictionary) 1476</u>	*
Paolo Perugino (Vannucci) 14th Cent.	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Collectiones</u>	
Petrarch, Francesco 1304-1374	19 + 0	'il libro de 'Pontefici' RQ	(work attributed to Petrarch)	*
Ricobaldo 13th-14th Cent.	2 + 0	no ref.	<u>Compillatio Chronologica</u> R. expanded Jerome's Trans. of Eusebius, with Codefridus.	
Sicardus of Cremona 12th Cent.	1 + 0	'nell'histoire' R	<u>Chronicon.</u>	
Sigisbertus 12th Cent.	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Sigisberti...Chronicon ab anno 381 ad 1113....</u>	*
Uguccione da Pisa 12th-13th Cent. d. 1210	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Derivationes<sup>1</sup></u>	
Jacopo da Voragine O.P. 13th-14th Cent.	3 + 0	no ref.	<u>Cronaca di Genova or Lombardica Historia</u>	*

1. Uguccione or Uguzone da Pisa's work existed in manuscript form. See A. Marigo, I codici manoscritti delle 'Derivationes' di Uguccione Pisano, etc. (1936).



In considering Alberti's use of fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century sources I have limited the discussion to the use he makes of them rather than a detailed analysis of criticisms he makes, or fails to make, of their content, since this would involve a considerable amount of work on each individual source, such an exercise being valuable, but beyond the scope of this thesis. I will therefore examine the extent to which these sources are used, and how far one may be preferred to another.

Among this list of authors many of which feature but once or twice in the text, two names stand out, their work being referred to far more than any others'. These are, of course, Flavio Biondo and Annius of Viterbo. I have already discussed the important contribution which Biondo's work made to the Descrittione. Now I shall consider the interesting question of Annius's forgeries and the use Alberti made of them.

Annius was born of a well-known family in Viterbo, probably in 1432.<sup>9</sup> After entering the Dominican Order and studying, among other things, Greek and Oriental languages, he soon developed a genuine interest in antiquity and in the origins of ancient European tribes and their settlements. He was popular with Pope Alexander VI who shared his interest in astrology and antiquities, and it was for Alexander that the notorious archaeological expedition of 1493 was arranged. On this occasion Alexander and his fellow visitors to Viterbo had the fortune to find some supposedly antique statues which, it seems, had been buried by Annius for just such an occasion.<sup>10</sup>

Forged archaeological evidence seems also to have helped to put over the message of the Antiquitates, the so-called fragments of

9. For this and other information on the life of Annius see Weiss, 'Traccia per una biografia di Annio da Viterbo', Italia Medievale e Umanistica, 5, (1962), 425-441, and 'An unknown epigraphic tract by Annius of Viterbo, in Italian Studies presented to E.R. Vincent, (Cambridge, 1962).

10. Weiss, 'Traccia per una Biografia...' p.434.

ancient authors' so carefully collected and published together with a detailed commentary in 1498. These fragments could be used to explain the origins of many cities, mostly in Tuscany, among which was, of course, Viterbo. This was shown to have been founded by the Egyptians Isis and Osiris. When Annius died four years later, Viterbo honoured him with a statue in the town hall; nothing less than was due to the man who had proved that their city was some two hundred years older than Rome.

The Antiquitatum Variarum Volumina XVII were the fragments of various very ancient authors, mostly dating from the third or fourth century B.C. or earlier. From these writings, according to Annius, the most ancient origins of Mediterranean civilization could be traced. Information about the antecedents of Italian races predominate, but Spain and Germany are not forgotten. Chaldean, Persian, Egyptian and Greek authorities are cited. For example, Book IV is entitled Commentaria super Xenophontem de Aequivocis. 'Quis fuerit iste Xenophon nondum compertum habeo...', says Annius. He describes the centuries and the gods between Noah (or Ogyges) and Ninus on the evidence of Semiramis and tries to eliminate some of the errors of the Greeks. Book V is based on fragments of a second book 'de aureo saeculo' by Fabius Pictor. Book VI contains the work of a Greek historian, Myrsilius Lesbios, concerning the war of the Pelasgi in Italy and showing that although the Greeks over-ran Italy the Turrheni alone successfully resisted them. Book VII is allegedly based on the writings of M. Cato referred to by Dionysius of Halicarnassus as the author of a work about the origins of races and cities of Italy.

Another of Dionysius's sources is Sempronius, author of a chorography of Italy, and it is he who is supposed to have been responsible for the ninth book of Annius, which consists of fragments dealing with the geographical divisions of Italy and once again condemning the inaccurate writings of the Greeks. Six newly discovered itineraries of Antoninus make up the eighth book and provide an excuse for Annius to discuss the origins of towns in north Italy and Tuscany through which these routes pass.

Other fragments are supposedly by Archilochus the Greek chronographer, the Persian priest Metasthenes, the Jew Philo, the Egyptian Manetho and the Chaldean priest Berosus from Babylon, mentioned by Josephus. The fragments of Berosus, five books of history of the Chaldeans from Noah to Ninus, gave Annius great scope to trace the earliest settlers in Italy back to the descendants of Noah and his sons, themselves descended from the gods.

Assuming that the whole work was a forgery one has to ask whether Annius was aware of this or not. Did he plan a deliberate fraud for the purpose of building up the reputation of his native town and other Tuscan cities, or was he perhaps unaware that the fragments which fell into his hands were forgeries? He claims, for example, to have come by the fragments of Berosus while in Genoa,<sup>11</sup> but they may have been the work of a pseudo-Berosus, a source known in the Middle Ages. Beryl Smalley has pointed out some of the inconsistencies in such a theory when applied to the Antiquitates.<sup>12</sup> However she does not rule out the

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11. Weiss, 'Traccia per una biografia...' p.431 and Antiquitates, (1515), f.cxiv, verso.

12. Beryl Smalley, English Friars and Antiquity in the early fourteenth century, (Oxford, 1960), p.234-5.

possibility that a fourteenth-century forger could have existed, or that Annius could have seen some mediaeval fragments and copied their ideas. A Babylonian priest called Berosus who wrote a Chaldean history did indeed exist and references to him can be found in Josephus, Plutarch and Pliny.<sup>13</sup> The other fragments, except some by Propertius, are all supposed to have fallen into Annius's hands in Mantua and were the collection of one Guilielmo Mantuano (sic).<sup>14</sup> Peter Burke in his essay on the Renaissance sense of the past (London, 1969) has sought to exonerate similar mediaeval forgeries by suggesting that their authors were not deliberately setting out to deceive people, but that their historical sense was so undeveloped that they saw nothing wrong in providing (or fabricating) suitable explanations for historical events, or in producing allegedly ancient documents in the way that Annius did. Perhaps Annius likewise lacked a sense of history, but given the education he received and the intellectual climate in which he lived, it seems rather difficult to exonerate him on these grounds.

Most of the authors referred to can be found mentioned as sources in ancient literature, with the exception of Philo and Archilochus,<sup>15</sup> but what is so remarkable about the whole collection is the way Annius put together his fragments and commentary so that each author seems to be clarifying and corroborating another's views. Also, the canons for the writing of history, the verification of facts, the necessity for accurate topographical and chronological details are contained scattered among the various fragments.

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13. I.P. Cory, Ancient Fragments, edited E.R. Hodges, (London, 1876) pp.43-5.

14. Antiquitates, ff. cliiii, lxii, lxxii verso.

15. J.A. Farrar, Literary Forgeries, (London, 1907), p.67.

Doubts about the authenticity of the work were not expressed until after Annius's death, but although the opinions of scholars were divided, many famous names came out firmly opposed to accepting them. Leading opponents included antiquarians like Latino Latini, Marcantonio Sabellico, Rafaelo Volaterrano, Andrea Alciati, Erasmus and Vives. Supporters were Egidio of Viterbo, Poliziano, and Alberti himself. (f.69vo)<sup>16</sup> Not surprisingly it is from the Dominican Order that the strongest defence has come. Their historians Echard and Touron follow Alberti in exonerating Annius; if the fragments were forgeries then Annius was quite ignorant of the fact, they maintain.<sup>17</sup> There were, however, sceptics even within the Order, for example, Cajetan and Melchior Cane.<sup>18</sup> The debate continued even into the early nineteenth century, as literary biographers took their stand on one side or the other. Many users of Alberti deplore the fact that he accepted the fragments, and they argue that this seriously detracts from his work.<sup>19</sup>

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16. J.W. O'Malley, Giles of Viterbo on Church reform, (Leiden, 1968), p.30-31, points out that Giles, like Annius, was an enthusiastic exponent of the importance of the Etruscans in history. Influenced by the writings of Annius he believed that the teaching of Noah was brought to Etruria by Noah's descendents after the Flood. E.N. Tigerstedt, 'Joannes Annius and Graecia Mendax', in Classical Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies in Honor of B.L. Ullman, edited by C. Henderson, Jr., (Rome, 1964), II, 293-311, gives an excellent analysis of Annius' motivation and the fortunes of the forgeries. In his view Annius was not only expressing an anti-Greek viewpoint, but trying to prove the truth of the Biblical tradition, and as a Dominican had been brought up to respect and preserve the old system of thought based on scholastic theology. It was for this reason that he was accepted by Giles.
17. Echard, op. cit., I 6-7, Touron, op. cit., IV, 659. Both refer to the fact that Alberti reports seeing the manuscript of the fragments.
18. Tigerstedt, op. cit., p.308.
19. Tiraboschi, op. cit., VI pt. ii. 170-171. Nicéron, op. cit. 6-7, Vossius, op. cit. 679-80. Baillet, op. cit., II part 1, 127. Even Redigonda, op. cit., 669-702 refers to the use of Annius. By the nineteenth century there was no strong case made for Annius, and the classicists Cory and Peter, who did their best to collect fragments of ancient authors, make no mention of the notorious fragments. Incidentally it hardly seems possible to assert as Professor Weiss does, that it was only in the nineteenth century that the true nature of Annius' antiquarian interests were known. It seems to have been well known before, and to be mainly ignored by the nineteenth century.

Out of these bitter battles we can see that Alberti emerged as one of the earliest defenders of his fellow Dominican, and also that his support was considered a powerful counter to critics' allegations. One of the chief factors behind Alberti's argument is the fact that not only does he consider Annius to be a very knowledgeable man, with a great interest in antiquity, but that he himself had actually seen Annius's fragments.

Questo Annio, fu maestro di sagro pallagio, huomo molto dotto....e diligentissimo investigatore delle antichitati, come chiaramente si vede dall'opere da lui scritte, e massimamente dai Comentari sopra Catone, Fabio Pittore, Mirsillio Lesbio, Archileo de'tempi, Senofonte de gli Equivoci, Filone Giudeo, Metastene Persa, Beroso Galdeo, parte dell'Itinerario d'Antonino, l'Editto di Desiderio re de'Longobardi, il Vertuniano del 4 lib dell'Elegi di Propertio, Sopra l'Apocalissi di S. Giovanni, con molte curiose questioni e institutioni, e con altre scritte, certamente fu huomo di grande, e curioso ingegno. Avvenga che da alcuni sia calonniato dicendo lui haver finto quei frammenti di Catone, con quegli altri libri sotto nome di tali autori, non havendo veduto gli antichi libri de'detti autori come io già essendo molto giovane viddi. La onde non dubito che si gli havessero veduti non tassarebbono tant'huomo di tal cosa.(f.69vo)

Alberti was nineteen years old in 1498, the year the Antiquitates were published so one can assume that he saw them sometime between about 1494 and Annius's death in 1502.<sup>20</sup> Since he says that he was very young it was probably before, rather than after, they were printed. At that time Alberti was a bright young scholar with a great interest in history and classical writing and a good knowledge of Latin and possibly Greek. It is not difficult to imagine him being shown these fragments as a special privilege when he was at an

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20. We do not know where he saw them as there is no record of him visiting Rome at this time, although this is not impossible.

age to be enthusiastically receptive to such an idea but not over critical. The fact that he remembers them at all is interesting since no other authority reports any existing manuscript. What happened to it is anybody's guess,<sup>21</sup> just as one can only speculate on what exactly Alberti saw. They may have been the fragments from Genoa and Mantua, or newly prepared fragments based on these, or complete fabrications. Alberti would in any case be unlikely to remember exactly what he had seen at such an age, when he later came to write the Descrittione. He may have seen, at the same time, the inscriptions Annius had 'found' in Viterbo including the Decretals of Desiderius which, he says, 'si vede scritto in una Tavola di Alabastro in Viterbo'.(f.68vo).

Another wholehearted defence of Annius occurs in the Descrittione where Alberti is discussing the origins of Verona.(f.409vo-410) On the authority of Cato and Sempronius he says that it was founded by the Toscani, and by the noble family of Vera Tosca, and called Verona, (then it was rebuilt or restored by the Cenomani Galli, when they had driven out the Toscani, as Livy and Trogus claim.) Alberti believes this despite the fact that Sabellico and Volaterrano say to the contrary.<sup>22</sup>

'Dicono esser quei Frammenti dell'antichità et origine d'Italia attributi a Catone, e a Sempronio, cose finte, e non esser di quelli, ove dice Verona fosse nominata da Vera Colonia Tosca, e parimente d'altre simili cose, che si leggono ne'detti libri'. Being forced to give reasons for their views they said that the Latin used by Cato was not the same

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21. It seems strange that if they were indeed as genuine as Annius thought, he was so careless as not to see to it that they were preserved!

22. M.A. Sabellico Eneade VIII. Lib.v. R. Volaterrano, Lib. XXXVIII Commentariorum urbanorum. Vossius, op.cit., p.610, also gives a reference to Volaterrano, Anthropologia, Lib.XIV, where he doubts the genuineness of Berosus.

as that used in the De Re Rustica. Alberti uses the arguments of rhetorical theory to reply that when writing of different things one uses different styles. Another reason for trusting Annius in this context is that Annius is referring to one of the twelve cities set up by the Tuscans this side of the Apennines (from Bologna), and Livy, Pliny and Polibius all say that twelve such cities were set up there. Even an appeal to national pride should make one support Cato and Sempronius. What Italian would not prefer to say that he was descended from honourable Tuscan blood rather than from barbarians from beyond the Alps? Whatever the reason Alberti is backing Annius, and in this he is supported by his friend G.A. Flaminio.

It is worth noting here that Alberti stuck to his views apparently despite the knowledge that the well-known jurist and antiquarian Andrea Alciati, for whom he had the greatest respect, disagreed with him.<sup>23</sup> Since Alciati contributed his praises to the preliminaries to the Descrittione, it must have been in spite of this opinion of Annius's works, and he must have considered the Descrittione as not unworthy of his recommendation and praises, despite the reliance on Annius. This he must have deplored.

Alberti must have been continually aware that in trusting Annius he would run into criticism. In fact it has been suggested that he realised his mistake, but too late to do anything about it.<sup>24</sup> If this was the case then he left no direction that the Descrittione should be altered; the later editions still contain the references to Annius. The question must be asked, to what extent do they impair the work as a whole?

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23. Vossius, op.cit. p.680.

24. G. Fantuzzi, op.cit. I, 149. Nicéron, op.cit. XI, 8.



The first difficulty one encounters here is a basic difficulty of identification of references to the Antiquitates. In the case of a reference to Berosus, one can safely assume that this means the Antiquitates but in the case of Antoninus the majority of references are genuine ones to the Itineraria. Of the other authors in the Antiquitates the only existing references to their authentic fragments <sup>fragments</sup> are to/ incorporated in the writings of other authors such as Dionysius or Pliny.<sup>25</sup> Apart from Berosus and Antoninus the majority of references are to Cato and Sempronius, about 153 and 47 respectively, none of which seem to have existed in any known fragments in the sixteenth century. Alberti's references to these and the other authors all seem to come from Annius, even where this is not made clear in the text. Assuming that the complete work of the Antiquitates, fragments and text, are all the work of Annius, I have not distinguished between the commentary and fragments in my classification of references. Dividing up the references to show the degree to which they are accepted we get results as follows:

References to authentic works, (all to Antoninus's <u>Itineraria</u> ).....	97.
References where Annius is rejected by Alberti.....	16
References where Alberti leaves to the reader the choice of accepting Annius's views or not.....	17
References where Annius is accepted by Alberti, but supported by a reputable authority.....	126
References where Annius is accepted by Alberti but <u>not</u> supported by a reputable authority.....	155*

\*includes 14 references where the supporting authorities are from Annius.

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25. Above Chapter IV.

References where Annius is reconciled with other authorities.....11

References where Annius's opinion is preferred to other authorities.12

Total references to Annius 337 + 14 = 351

In the majority of references Alberti does not try to make out that Annius is right and everyone else is wrong. When there is a conflict of sources in only 12 references does he consider Annius's opinion superior, and in 11 he reconciles Annius's information with that of the other writers. Of course in some cases there is no other authority with which Annius can be compared and Alberti states his views without any comment on their acceptability, just as he does the views of other authors. In 126 references Annius simply agrees with another authority. Many of these references to the name of a town which various authors give similarly, or else they are references to the fact that Annius or Cato or Sempronius etc. mentions a particular place. Such references could create chronological inaccuracies leading people to believe that a certain town was older than it really was, since an ancient author mentioned it, even if no other details about the place were given. In 33 references Alberti has difficulty in accepting Annius. Sixteen times he rejects him outright, and seventeen times he cannot make up his mind between Annius and other authorities and leaves it to the reader to decide what seems to him most feasible. In references where Alberti makes no comment on Annius, it would be convenient to assume that he intended the reader to make up his own mind about the veracity of the reference. Unfortunately this is not the case. Where there is no comment one has to infer that Alberti accepted the views of the authority he cites. He explains, when discussing the origins of Piacenza, that he often

includes a story which seems to be nonsense, not because he believes it, but so that people will not complain that he has overlooked things. In such circumstances he does not say that he accepts the story, but that he leaves it to the discretion of the reader, 'benche possono avvertire s'io li presto fede, o no, quando dico ch'io le lascio nel giuditio del prudente Lettore.(f.332) From this one can see that in general anything not commented on, must be accepted by Alberti.

This leaves us with about half the total references (178) where Alberti accepts Annii's opinions. Most of these references occur in the introduction and the chapters on Genoa, Tuscany, Umbria and Rome, with a few references for the southern provinces and one or two important ones for the Lombard cities. In some cases more than one Annii reference is used to elaborate or confirm a particular point. The number of references compared with the scope of the Descrittione as a whole does not seem very large, but their content almost always affects Alberti's views on that subject so dear to his heart, the antique origins of the great cities.

In many cases Annii's name is given in connection with the origin of a region or of a town of outstanding importance, for example, Latium, the Vatican, Tuscany, Mantua, Perugia, Bologna, etc. but the importance of the information given is not always the same. Take the origin of Latium for example. (f.97-97vo) Alberti uses a verse of Virgil for the basis of his argument, and tells us that Solinus, Servius and others say that the region was named Latio after Saturno king of the Creti, who had been driven out of his kingdom by Giove his son. Now, according to Annii, Berosus and Fabius Pictor have a far more complicated story, which nevertheless

bears a certain affinity to Solinus's. Giove Bellé, son of Saturn, having ruled in Babylonia for sixty-two years, decided to expand into new territory and had to remove the opposition of Sabbatio Saga (known as Saturno), king of the Saggi. Sabbatio avoided Giove's plots but on learning that Giove on his death-bed had sent his son Ninus to arrange his death, he fled to Italy, to the kingdom of Giano his father, where he was well received and made prince of the Aborigeni and ruled the land then called Latio. Both Solinus's and Berosus's Saturn are supposed to have brought with them the arts of tilling the soil, cultivating vines and generally civilizing people. Both stories are based on fable and legend and although Alberti professes to prefer Fabius Pictor and Berosus, one wonders whether Servius and Solinus had much more to go on in composing their explanation, than Annius had. Alberti brings in the theories of Trogus Pompeius and Macrobius to support his explanation that Saturno must have come from the Caspii and not the Cretii. One has the feeling that the details of such ancient history are buried too deeply in the mists of antiquity for even the reputable authors to have more than a hazy idea of the truth of the matter. Annius's fables are no more unlikely than some of the other suggested explanations of placenames, but their danger lies in the fact that they pretend to be authenticated from early sources.

Some various theories explain the origin of the name 'Vatican'.(f.109) Cato says that from the time when Noah here 'received Italy whimpering in her cradle' it was called Vaticano or Vagignano, meaning 'whimpering'. Gellius claims that the name derives from the deity of this particular spot who helped people to make prophecies, 'Vaticinii'. Varro tells

the story of the god Dio Aio to whom an altar was set up and a new name given 'Dio Vaticano', after human voices like the whimpering of a new-born babe were heard. (Hence Vaticano from 'vagire' again.) Festus Pompeius is of the opinion that it was so named because the Romans expelled the Etruscans with the advice of the 'Vati' (prophets) of this particular hill. Can one really pretend that there is much to choose between these stories, or that the issue is of particularly vital importance? We may view the topic with some scepticism today, but clearly for Alberti and his fellow antiquaries it was a matter of great concern. Since I shall be discussing the question of anti-quarianism in the following chapter, I shall refer to

Alberti's use of Annius there. Another example concerns his difficulties in trying to use Annius to explain the origins of the Sabini and the Tuscani, where he found it hard to reconcile Annius's views with those of more acceptable authorities. Florence is a city whose origins can be explained by more than one theory, but Alberti manages to integrate most of the ideas he finds, (f.38-39) and likewise for Bergamo (f.364) and Verona (f.409) Annius's ideas are made to fit into the more orthodox picture. Sometimes there is no alternative to Annius, for example on the origins of the Volsci, (f.122) Osci (f.144) and Vei<sup>c</sup>, (f.74) where Alberti accepts some fairly fanciful theories. Annius is the only authority for the origins of the names of Lake Trasimeno (f.59) and Lake Vadimone (f.66), while the origins of Spoleto (f.83) and Viterbo (f.70) are also derived from him alone. The Annius theory that the major cities of Lombardy like Parma (f.328vo), Mantua (f.347vo), Bergamo (f.364), Verona (f.409), Modena (f.317), Piacenza (f.332) and Ferrara (f.308) were Tuscan

foundations of a very early era, accounts for most of the references in this part of the work, but this theory has the backing of several reputable authorities who refer to Tuscan cities across the Apennines.<sup>26</sup>

It is impossible to deny that in some places Annius's information is given undue weight and is misleading, but often by the nature of the topic and its context in time, any other information might be just as misleading and lacking a firm foundation of fact. Annius made up some quite feasible stories, some even with a grain of truth in them or at least corroborated by other more acceptable authors like Dionysius and Pliny. His information was limited in time and space; he was only concerned with very ancient times and the early origins of races and settlements, particularly in relation to Italy, and even more particularly in connection with Latium, Tuscany and Umbria. Consequently Alberti could only use the fragments for a very small part of his work, and this, although not constituting a defence of his ready acceptance of the forgeries, does mean that large areas of the work are free from the cause of his critics' complaints. Even if he accepted that basically the Antiquitates was reliable, he did not agree with every syllable. On the other hand we can scarcely exonerate him as a scholar for not having suspected Annius's duplicity, or at least the doubtful nature of the fragments. But then one must remember, firstly, that he was a Dominican, and therefore likely to believe in the honesty of a fellow cleric; secondly, that he believed he had seen the actual fragments, and could not doubt that they were genuine, and thirdly, that these fragments fitted very well into his theories about city origins, so that he must have felt reluctant to abandon them.

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26. For example, Pliny, III. xix,xx, Polybius, II. xvii-xx.

TABLE VIII

Sources post 1400Work in print  
by 1530 indic-  
ated by \*Likely source of reference,  
or usual title of workWork referred to by  
Alberti (if any)<sup>†</sup>Number of  
References

Acciaiuolo, Zenobio 1461-1518	1 + 0	'un panegirico descrivendo le lode di Napoli'	<u>Oratio...in laudem Civitatis Neapolitane</u>	*
Agnello, Andrea 15th Cent.	2 + 0	il bibliotecario 'Agnello nel libro delle cose di Ravenna'	References come from Biondo	
Alberti, Leandro 1479-c.1552	29 + 0	1. 'De viris illustribus' 2. 'Effemeridi latini' 3. 'Historia di Bologna' RR		*
Albertini, Francesca fl.c.1500	2 + 0	no ref.	<u>De mirabilis novae et veteris Romae</u>	*
Albertuzzo, Girolamo de i Borselli 1432-1497	9 + 0	'nelle citta d'Italia' 'nella sua cronica' RR		MS
Alciato, Andrea 1492-1550	2 + 0	no ref.	? <u>Rerum patriae Andreae Alciati</u> (it is not clear what is being referred to)	
Aliprandus, Bonamen- te. c.1350-1417	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Aliprandine o cronica di Mantua a 1414</u>	MS

+ Where Alberti's reference to the work concerned seems to be self-explanatory, no further comment is made in the following column.

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Althamer, Andrea 15th cent.	1 + 0	' <u>scolia sop. Cor. Tacitue Germania</u> '		
Amaseo, Gregorio 1464-1541	{ 6 + 0 22 + 0 (references jointly with G. Candido q.v.)	'Candido e Amaseo nel lib. de i Commentari d'Aquileia' RR C. Candido q.v.)	<u>Joannis Candidi Commentatio Aquileiensium libri octo.</u> (Venice, 1521)	*
Annius, Giovanni c.1432-1502	351 + 8	'Antiquitates' 'Comm. sop. Berosus' ' " " Manetho ' ' " " Cato ' ' " " Suetonius ' 'Xenophon', etc.	<u>Antiquitates varium volumina XVII, (Rome, 1498)</u>	*
Antoninus, St. Arch- bishop of Florence. 1389-1459	1 + 0	'l'istorie di Antonio'		*
Ariosto, 1474-1533	1 + 0	'In Orlando Furioso' R		*
Ascensianus, Giodoco, A. Badius 1462-1535	1 + 0	'Com. sop. Cicero'	<u>Cicero epis. fam. ed. Ascensianus</u>	*



Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Bandello, Matteo O.P. fl.c.1500	2 + 0	funeral oration on Francesco Gonzaga		
Barbaso, Ermolao 1453-1493	29 + 8	'corr. sopra p <sup>l</sup> iny' R Q	<u>C. Plinii Secundi Nat. Hist.</u> <u>Libri XXXVII. E. castigationibus</u> <u>Hermolai Barbari.... (1497).</u>	*
Bell'armato, Geronimo 1493-1555	1 + 0	'Corografia' R	<u>Chorografia Tuscihana</u>	1536
Beroaldo, Fillipo 15th-16th cent.	1 + 0	'Comm. sop. Suetonius'	<u>Commentationes conditae a P.B.</u> <u>in Suetonium Tranquillum</u>	*
Biondo, Flavio 1392-1463	338 + 1	1. 'Decades' RR Q 2. 'Italia Illustrata'	<u>Decades</u> <u>Italia Illustrata</u>	* *
Bordone, Bendetto d.1539	4 + 4	'la pittura d'Italia'	<u>Libro di B.B. nel qual si ragiona</u> <u>de tutte l'Isole del mondo...</u> <u>(Venice, 1528)</u>	*
Bracellio, Jacopo 1390's-1466	5 + 1	1. 'la descrizione di B' 2. 'historia di Spagna'	<u>Orae Ligusticae</u> <u>descriptio --, ed.</u> <u>Agostino Justiniani</u>	*
Bruni, Leonardo, Aretino. 1370-1414.	11 + 1	1. 'historie' RR 2. 'comm. sop. Polybius' 3. 'letter of 27.3.1418 re Mantua.'	<u>De Bello adversus Gothos</u> <u>De Florentinorum Republica</u> <u>De temporibus suis etc.</u> <u>Epistolae..</u>	* * *

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of Reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Calderini, Domitio 1447-1477	1 + 0	'comm.sop. Martial'	<u>D. Calderini...commentarii in M.V. Martialem etc.</u> (Venice, 1480)	*
Calvo di Ravenna fl.c.1500	1 + 0	'pittura di Roma'	<u>Antiquae urbis Romae</u>	*
Campanus, Giovan' Antonio, 1429-1477	1 + 0	'historia' re Braccio	<u>De vita et gestis Brachii Perusini</u>	1545
Candido, Giovanni d.1528	( 7 + 0 ( 22 + 0 (references jointly with G. Amaseo q.v.)	see above - Amaseo		*
Capriolo, Elia, Bresciano, d.1519	25 + 0	'historia Bresciane' RR	<u>Heliae Capreoli in cronica de rebus Brixianorum</u> (1505)	*
Caranto, Pietro	1 + 0	'uomo dotto di Cotignola che scrisse le cose occorrenti della patria'		MS
Carmelita, Battista, Mantoano, 1447-1516	1 + 0	no ref.	Ref. seems to be to <u>De fortuna Francisci Marchioni Mantuae carmen</u>	MS

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indic- ated by *</u>
Castiglione, Bonaventura 1478-1529	1 + 0		<u>Callorum Insubrum antiquae sedes.</u>	1541
Colenuccio, Pandolfo 1444-1504	23 + 0	'Historia del Regno' RR	<u>Compendio delle historie del regno di Napoli, (Flor., 1490)</u>	*
Coppo, Pietro 1470-1555	1 + 0	'nella Corografia'	<u>Pietro Coppo del sito de Listria (sic)</u>	1540
Corio, Bernardino 1459-1510/12	109 + 0	'nell Historie' RR	<u>Historia di Milano, (Milan, 1503)</u>	*
Equicola, Mario 1470-1525	18 + 0	'nel volgari comentari' RR	<u>Cronica di Mantua, (Mantua, 1521)</u>	*
Erasmus, Desiderius 1466-1536	1 + 0	'sop. Pliny'	<u>C. Plin. Sec. Nat. Hist. Erasmii adnotationibus (Paris, 1516)</u>	*
Fannuto, Tomaso, Picenumbro, 16th cent.	0 + 1	wrote re Trapani at length 'in un suo libretto...indirizzato a Signori d'essa citta' in 1518.		

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Ferretto, Pietro, da Ravenna	10 + 0	no ref.	not clear what is referred to.	
Filelfo, Francesco 1398-1481	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Lodovico Mariae Sfortiae duci.....</u> (Milan, 1485)	*
Flaminio, Giovan' Antonio 1465-1536	13 + 0	'vitae' 'epistola' RR	<u>De Viris Illustribus,</u> edited by Alberti	*
Fulvio, Andrea 15th-16th Cent.	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Antiquitates Urbis Romae Lib.V.</u> (Rome, 1527)	*
Garzone, Giovanni d.1505	2 + 0	1. 'in historie Latine' 2. by word of mouth	<u>De dignitate urbis Bononiae commentarius</u>	MS
Gerardo, Pietro, Padoano.1502-1550	1 + 0	'innovi libri dell' origine.'	see Sebastiano Fausto da Longiano, <u>Vita et Gesti d'Ezzelino terzo da Romano</u> Ed. by G.A. Flaminus. (Venice, 1543)	*
Gianotto, Donato 1492-1572	4 + 0	'Lib della Repub. di questa città'	<u>Lib.della Repubblica de Vinitrani</u> (Rome, 1540)	*
Giodoco, Giorgio 16th cent.	2 + 0	'Benacus'	<u>Benacus</u> (Verona, 1546)	1546

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indic- ated by *</u>
Giovio, Paolo 1483-1552	3 + 0	1. 'vita di Pomp. Colonna'; 2. 'descrittione Lari Lacus'	<u>Elogia viroorum litteris illustrium (Venice, 1546)</u> <u>Descriptio Lari Lacus</u> not printed before 1559.	MS
Giulio de'Giulii da Canbio ?15th cent.	3 + 0	provides Alberti with description of L.Garda, L. Como (quoting Angelo Milanese), and a map of L. Maggiore.		
Giustiniano,Agostino Bp. of Nebbia 1470-1536 Gaganino, Roberto d.1501	9 # 2 1 + 0	'nell...historie di Genova' 'historie'	<u>Annali della città di R Genova (Genoa, 1557)</u> <u>XI Libri de gestis Francorum 1200-1500</u>	MS ?
Gualla, Giacomo 15th-16th cent.	1 + 0	'scrittore dell' antichità'	<u>J.G. Jureconsulti Papie Sanctuarium (Papiae,1505)</u>	*
Hedua, Giovanni, Quintino f.c. 1500	0 + 1	'descrittione di Melita"	<u>Insulae Melitae descriptio...</u> (Lyons, 1536)	*
Landino, Cristoforo 1424-1492	9 + 0	'sop. Paradisio di Bante'		*

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference, or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indic- ated by *</u>
Leone, Ambrogio 15th-16th Cent.	4 + 0	'nel libro di Nola'	<u>De Nola Opusculum,</u> (Venice, 1514)	*
Lucido, Giovanni	2 + 0	'ne 'suoi Pontefici' R	[REDACTED]	*
Macagno, (Domenico Belli, detto Maccaneo) 1466-1530	7 + 0	'corografia del lago Maggiore'	<u>Chorographia Ver bani Lacus (c.1490) +map</u>	*
Machiavelli, Nicolo 1449-1527	3 + 0	1. 'Historia.' 2. Vita di Castruccio'	<u>Historia Florentina (Rome, 1532)</u> <u>Vita Castruccio Castracani</u> (Rome, 1532)	*
Maffei, Rafael, Volaterrano, 1455-1522	158 + 4	'comentari urbani' RR	<u>Commentariorum Urbanorum R. Volaterrani (1515)</u>	*
Mancinello da Velitre 1452-1505	1 + 0	re. error in Ascensianus' edition of Servius	<u>'Mancinellus cum comm. explan. Ascensii, (1508)</u>	*
Marliano, Bartolomeo d.c.1560	3 + 0	no ref.	<u>Antiquitatae urbis Romae topographiae libri septem,</u> (Rome, 1534)	*

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indic- ated by *</u>
Merula, Giorgio 1424-1494	80 + 0	'historie de i Visconti' RR	<u>Antiquitates Vicecomitum Libri X.</u> (Milan, 1527)	*
Mocenigo, Andrea 1473-1572	1 + 0	'nelle sue historie'	<u>Belli memorabilis camer- acensis adversus Venetos historiae Libri VI</u> (Venice, 1525)	*
Palearino, Battista Vicentino. 16th cent.	3 + 0	'nelle annales'	History of Vicenza sent to Alberti	MS
Pelanegra, Giacomo Filippo. 15th cent.	1 + 0	'libraccivolo'	Book Given to Alberti by monks of St. Angelo	MS
Perotto, Nicolo 1430-1480	11 + 2	'cornucopia' R	(1521)	*
Pico della Mirandola the younger, 1470-1533	2 + 0	'Demonio in dialoghi'	<u>Libro detta Strega</u> , (1524)	*
Piccolomini, Aeneas Sylvius, Pius II. 1405-1464	3 + 0	'Europa'	<u>Chorographia</u> , (Venice, 1490) etc.	*
Pietro Marso 1442-1512	23 + 5	'sopra Sillio Italico' RR	<u>P.M. interpretatio in Sillium Italicum</u> (1483)	*

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indic- ated by *</u>
Pincius, Janus Pyrrhus. 16th cent. (Giovann Pintio)	2 + 0	1. 'de origine urbis tridentinae' 2. 'dodici libri delle vite dei Prelati' RR	<u>De Callorum Senonum...De originis Tridentinae, (Mantua, 1546)</u>	
Platina 1421-1481	88 + 0	'Vitae' RRR	<u>Platinae historici liber de Vita Christi ac pontificum omnium... (Venice, 1479) etc.</u>	*
Podiano, Mario 16th cent.	2 + 0	'oratione che fece davanti Paolo III'		
Poggio Bracciolini 1380-1459	4 + 0	'della varietà della Fortuna'	<u>De Varietate fortunae Urbis Romae. (Milan, 1492)</u>	*
Poliziano, Angelo 1454-1494	3 + 0	'epistolae a Pietro d' Medici'	<u>Epistolae, (1500)</u>	*
Pomponio Leto 1425-1495	2 + 0	'lib. delli suoi Cesari'	<u>P. L. De Romanae urbis vetustate... (1510)</u>	*
Prisciano, Peregrino d. 1525	16 + 0	'lib del' Antichitati di Ferrara'	<u>Annales Ferrarienses*</u>	
Razzano, Pietro, Panormitano, 1429-1492	60 + 1	'nelle sue Italie' R	MS	

\*Not printed but several manuscripts exist e.g. Vatican Library, Ms. Ottob. Lat. 2773  
See R. Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, p. 130.



Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indic- ated by *</u>
Sabellico, Marc- Antonio. 1436-1506/8	135 + 3	'le Deche' 'Historie' RRR	<u>Enneades...ab orbe condito,</u> (Venice, 1498) <u>Rerum Venetarum Decades</u>	*
Sannazzaro, Giacomo 1458-1530	0 + 1	'poema'	<u>Sonetti e canzone</u> (Rome, 1530)	*
Sarayna, Torello d. 1550	8 + 0	'historia di Verona'	<u>De origine et amplitudine civitatis Veronae,</u> (Verona, 1540)	*
Savonarola, Michiel 1384-1468	1 + 0	'opere dei bagni'	<u>De balneis et thermis,</u> (Ferrara, 1485)	*
Simonetta, Giovanni d.c. 1491	15 + 0	'Le Sfortiade' R	<u>La Sfortiade,</u> (Milan, 1490)	*
Spredi, Desiderio 15th cent.	2 + 0	no ref.	<u>De amplitudine, de vastatione et de instauratione urbis Ravennae,</u> (Venice, 1489)	*
Stella, Giovanni 16th cent.	1 + 0	no ref.	<u>Vitae ducentorum et triginta summorum pontificum...</u> (Venice, 1505)	*
Tuscudus, Aegidius, Claronese	5 + 0	'lib. delle genti Alpine'	<u>Alpinarum gentium tractu,</u> (Printed, Basle, 1574, in Vol. I of <u>De prisca ac vera Alpina Rhaetia, cum (aetera operis histor. Simon Schardii.)</u>	

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indicated by *</u>
Vadiano, Giochino	1 + 0	'breviario della geografia dell'Italia'	<u>Pomponii Mellae Hispani Libri de situ orbis tres adjectis Joachimi Vadiani Helvetii in eosdem scholiis, (Vienna, 1518)</u>	*
Valla, Lorenzo 1407-1457	1 + 0	'epistola'		
Vigilio, Francesco 16th cent.	1 + 0	'l'orazione'	funeral oration at death of Francesco Gonzaga.	
Vincenzio, Ornibuo f. 1500	2 + 0	'sopra..Lucano' R	<u>Lucanus cum commento (of Omnibonus Leoniceus), (Venice, 1492)</u>	*
Vincentus, Zacharia	0 + 1	'nel breviario della sua Geografia'	I have been unable to trace such a work.	
Vettore, Pietro 1499-1585	2 + 0	'delle regioni di Roma'		
Vuimpelingio, Giacomo (Wimpfeling) fl. 15th-16th.cent.	1 + 0	'historia'	<u>Epitome imperatorum, ac rerum in Germaniam gestarum, (Florence, 1494)</u>	*
Zacchio, (Xachio) Zaccaria (Zacharia) 15th cent.	3 + 1	'descrittione che'l fa' of Moscona (two references are to verbal information)	uncertain what is referred to	

\*From the way he is referred to by Alberti he would appear to be not Zaccaria Zacchio

Table VIII contd.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of References</u>	<u>Work referred to by Alberti (if any)</u>	<u>Likely source of reference or usual title of work</u>	<u>Work in print by 1530 indic- ated by *</u>
Zanchi, Giovanni Crisostomo da Bergamo. f. 1500	3 + 0	'libro dell'origine de gli Orobii' RR	(One ref. is to Annius) <u>De origine Orobiorum...</u> (1531)	*

iii. Other fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century sources:  
printed and manuscript books.

Apart from Annius and Biondo, sources featured most frequently are Corio, Volaterrano and Sabellico. Volaterrano one would expect to be a useful source, but he is less valuable than he might be as much of Volaterrano's material comes from the same classical sources as Alberti was using, for example Pliny, Trogus Pompeius, Livy, Dionysius, Strabo, Ptolemy and Pomponius Mela. Volaterrano is not particularly precise in the geographical location of cities, and he has very little historical information to offer. In fact classical references make up the major part of the work which covers the northern states of Italy, but contains little on the south. There are a few passages of geographical description. Alberti praises Volaterrano in customary tones in the Descrittione. He was 'ben perito nella lingua Latina, et nella Greca, ...'ornato di lettere humane di filosofia, et di Teologia. Tradusse di Greco in Latino molte opere...' (f.49)

However when Volaterrano's scholarship is put to the test, Alberti is not always so impressed. He frequently disagrees with his identification of ancient sites, for example in the case of the city of Etruria, which Volaterrano does not locate where the ancients, Pliny and Strabo, placed it (f.27). The placing of Livorno (f.24vo), Luco di Feronia (f.36vo), the River Paglia (f.55vo), and Cortona (f.57), are further examples of Volaterrano's inaccuracies according to Alberti. Both Alberti and Volaterrano seem curiously short-sighted in their discussion of the name of the city of Nepe (f.68). Volaterrano says it should be correctly called 'Nepet', because he found it so spelled on a stone tablet at Sutrio, although it is often found correctly

written Nepe or Nepete or Nepita in reputable authors.<sup>27</sup> Alberti thinks all these names could be correct but he is amazed that Volaterrano should prefer the evidence of a stone tablet to that of the classical authors.<sup>28</sup> The possibility that Nepet was simply an abbreviation does not seem to have occurred to either of them. Even so, Alberti's remark reveals the reverence he felt for the classical authors; that they were more likely to be correct than a piece of archaeological evidence.

Something which one expects to find in Alberti, but which is omitted is Volaterrano's section on the divisions of Italy.<sup>29</sup> Alberti refers to the divisions according to the 'Sacro Libro', information which he took from Volaterrano (f.6vo). Since he warned against these not being geographical regions one would expect him next to list Volaterrano's regions which are based on geographical divisions and areas of early settlement, for example, Liguria, Regio Subalpina, Regio Transpadana (in three parts, Subalpina, Venetia and Aquelia, and Istria), Gallia Togata (the area between the Po, the Rubicon, and the Apennines), Etruria, Umbri, Sabini, Picentes, Precutini, Marrucini, Vestini, Marsi, etc. He could have compared these territories with those boundaries given by Biondo or the

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27. Volaterrano, op.cit.,f.174vo.

28. Descrittione, f.68. 'In vero par a me sia cosa assai disconvenvole a dire che tanti libri di tanti autori siano stati tutti vitiati, et voler dar maggior fede ad una tavola di pietra ch'a detti libri'.

29. Volaterrano, op.cit.,f.156. I refer to the Turin 1527 edition entitled Italia Illustrata (described above Chapter II p.<sup>96</sup>) for references to Volaterrano, Sabellico and Giorgio Merula.

classical authors, but he does not mention them. Although there are a large number of references to Volaterrano, his information is rarely preferred to that of classical sources and he gives Alberti little that was not in classical sources or the Italia Illustrata.<sup>30</sup>

Marcantonio Sabellico was probably inspired to enter the realm of historico-descriptive writing by the Italia Illustrata.<sup>31</sup> Venice lay outside the scope of most classical descriptions and Sabellico's work went a long way towards filling in the blank. The De Vetustate Aquileia, is a work on origins and early history, the De Venetae urbis situ is exactly what its title says, a description of Venice, with a postscript explaining the origin of the city, while a full history of the city is contained in the Rerum Venetarum Decades, (Venice, 1487). The Decades have been condemned as the work of a hack and a work which 'reproduced all the old legends in ponderous imitation of classical Latin'.<sup>32</sup> Alberti makes less use of Sabellico in connection with the origins of Venice and the Veneti than he does when describing the city and its surroundings. He too gives the origins according to all the ancient authors and accepts the opinion of the majority of them that the Veneti were of Trojan descent. (f.407-407vo)

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30. R. Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, pp.82-83 comments that Volaterrano was an inferior antiquarian to Biondo, but had a critical mind and a good mastery of Greek and Latin classics, as well as a leaning towards archaeology. See also P. Paschini, 'Una famiglia di curiali - I Maffei di Volterra', Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia, 7(1953),344-69.

31. Weiss, op.cit.; see also 'Lineamenti per una storia degli studi antiquari in Italia', Rinascimenta, 9(1958), 141-201.(p.177).

32. D.S. Chambers, The Imperial Age of Venice 1380-1580, (London,1970), p.25.

Sabellico's works were the basis for Alberti's description of Venice proper with the addition of material from Giovanni Candido and Gregorio Amaseo's Commentary on Aquileia, printed in Venice in 1521 and Pietro Coppo's chorography of Istria, not in print until 1540.

Two other Venetian histories are referred to, those by Gianotto and Mocenigo, but Alberti made very little use of them. If the reader wishes to know more about Venice, then Alberti advises him to look at Sabellico (f.462). Sabellico is referred to as the writer of a chorography, 'come scrive Sabellico nella Corografia della patria' (f.429), but it is Sabellico's historical information which Alberti makes most use of, rather than his description of Venice. It is quite possible that the two men knew each other as Sabellico seems to have known Alberti's great friend M.A. Flaminio.<sup>33</sup> Flaminio was, of course, anxious for Alberti to go to Venice where there were a number of people interested in geographical and descriptive literature, among them Geronimo Quirini the Patriarch who entertained Olaus Magnus as explained above,<sup>34</sup> and put up money to print his maps of Europe. Giacomo Gastaldi, who later became one of the greatest Venetian map-makers must also have known Quirini.<sup>35</sup>

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33. See M. Antonii Sabellici Epistolarum Libri duodecim, (Paris, 1510). Several letters are to Flaminio, e.g. Fo.III, Fo.III vo., Fo.IX vo., Fo.XVII vo., but there is no mention of Alberti.

34. Chapter I, p. 53

35. Although few maps from the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century survive, most of the cartographers were Venetians or worked at Venice, as Leo Bagrow points out. (History of Cartography, translated D.L. Paisey, revised R.A. Skelton, [Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964], pp.105, 133, 136.) Not only was Venice the home of mapmakers who printed maps but some of the first map designers who were not printers worked there, for example, Giacomo Gastaldi and Pietro Coppo. If maps were produced in Venice then one could reasonably expect descriptions to accompany them being encouraged there, whether they were of Italy or more distant parts.

Gregorio Amaseo provided Alberti with information both by letter and in the book he sent describing the area of Friuli. He had studied with Sabellico at Udine, although he came originally from Bologna and was the father of Alberti's friend Romolo Amaseo. Gregorio was an imposing person, affable and generous, skilled in all disciplines, 'onde quasi di ogni scientia talmente parlava che ciascun rimaneva stupefatto, per la gran memoria che in lui si ritrovava.'<sup>36</sup> When he heard about Alberti's Italia, 'mi mando un'elegante libro da lui fatto, ove copiosamente e elegantemente descriveva alcune cose di questa Regione.' (f.434) Unfortunately Amaseo had a quarrel with Giovanni Candido who had had the eight books of commentaries on Aquileia, apparently a joint work, published under his own name, and had thus excluded any mention of Amaseo.<sup>37</sup> Alberti's sympathies are with Amaseo. He expresses gratitude to him: 'son molto ubligato a tant'huomo, per le cose a me mandate, che a me hanno dato lume a descrivere questo Regione, e massimamente una pittura da lui molto artificiosamente fatta'. Gregorio also sent him useful information by letter judging from the reference concerning the March of Treviso (f.431). Alberti must, he says, leave out things 'li quali a me scrisse G.A. in una sua elegante epistola e in un libro da lui composto de i termini della Regione di Venetia, del Timavo e de' i fiumi di essa regione'. The references to Candido and Amaseo are sometimes confusing. It is not always clear what work is being referred to. It seems that as well as the joint work which caused so much annoyance, Amaseo produced

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36. Descrittione, f.434. He was a cousin according to R. Avesani, Diz. Biog. Ital. II, 655-658, but Alberti refers to 'Romolo suo figliullo' twice.

37. Joannis Candidi Commentarior Aquilensium Libri Octo, (Venice, 1521).



a work of his own, referred to by Alberti (f.431). A work entitled Descriptio Geographica Italiae et provinciae Foroiuliensis<sup>38</sup> has been attributed to Amaseo, though probably on the grounds of Alberti's description.

Alberti makes less use of the greatly praised sources than one would expect, but he does extract some observations on natural phenomena, for example Amaseo says that sea water comes up the Gulf of the Timavo as far as the Church of S. Giovanni where he has seen and caught lobsters, and also that he has seen there fragments of tessellated pavement in the water and taken out several beautiful little stones (f.440vo). The majority of references are to place-names and the courses and origins of rivers. As a reward for his services in politics and learning Venice honoured Amaseo by decreeing that his effigy should stand in the Sala del gran consiglio between those Sabellico and Giorgio Merula.

Although Pietro Coppo is referred to as the author of a 'corografia di questo paese', Alberti makes only one reference to him.<sup>39</sup> He travelled round the Mediterranean and produced a portolan, printed in Venice in 1528, and also a geographical description of the world which was never published.<sup>40</sup> These were not used by Alberti, but his Del Sito de l'Istria, (printed 1540), the chorography mentioned by Alberti was one of the most accurate descriptions of the Istrian peninsula.<sup>41</sup>

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38. MS 12902 font. Lat. Bib. Nat. Paris. This seems to be the only existing manuscript.

39. Descrittione, f.444. He disagrees with his description of the limits of Venetia and the R. Timavo. Although they agree with Ptolemy and Strabo, Alberti prefers to follow Pliny.

40. De Toto Orbe, MS. in Bib. Univ. Bol.

41. Another source for this area which Alberti does not seem to have seen was by Goynaesus, printed 1530. See above, Chapter II, p. 112.

Turning from Venice to the rest of north Italy, several histories stand out as well used sources. There are over 100 references to Corio's history of Milan, but this is a very specialized work. Almost all the references concern the history of northern Italy, as one would expect, and Alberti uses it solely for historical information. Corio is interested in how the city of Milan was founded, and its name and early history. The rise of the Visconti fills two out of seven books, then follow five books on the Visconti family history (500 folios in all). Alberti had plenty of material here to draw on. His use of Giorgio Merula's history of the Visconti is even more strictly limited to Lombardy. Merula was an accomplished scholar who edited many classical texts and studied and taught in several north Italian studia. Since he was well known in Venice<sup>42</sup> he too probably knew Sabellico and his circle. It is worth remembering in this/<sup>connection</sup> that his description of the origins of Milan up to Frederick II's time was printed in the 1527 collection of descriptions of Italy along with works by Volaterrano and Sabellico, as was a short description he wrote of Montferrat.<sup>43</sup>

Another history which served its purpose for Alberti in providing local information was Elia Capreolo's Chronica de rebus Brixianorum (Brescia, 1505). Capreolo was a humanist and a very competent antiquarian, to judge from the archaeological sections of his history.<sup>44</sup> Although his sources, listed at the beginning of the work, include Livy, Ptolemy, Trogus Pompeius, Biondo and Sabellico, he does not mention Pliny or Strabo. Capreolo repudiated the legends that

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42. Enciclopedia Italiana, XXII.

43. Above, p.<sup>96</sup> Montis ferrati descriptio, taken from Book VI of the Histories as Alberti says (f.337vo.).

44. R. Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, pp.126-127 .

Hercules had been connected with the foundation of Brescia and Alberti heartily agrees with him. Such a story about the flight of Hercules to Italy is rubbish, says Alberti, 'perche disopra ho dimostrata la falsita di questa favola, altro non diro eccetto ch'ella e una menzogna' (f.355vo). Alberti accepts Capreolo's explanation that Brescia had been founded by Brinome and was a Roman colony restored by the Gauls, but not the Senoni Galli, as Capreolo states, possibly being misled by Trogus Pompeius. It was the Cenomani Galli who rebuilt it as Alberti has found in Livy. The city's foundation by Brinome was confirmed by an ancient chronicle which had come into Alberti's hands, he says (f.355vo-356). There is one error of Capreolo to which Alberti refers at least three times (f.2vo, f.92vo, f.355vo). Capreolo says that all Italy was once called Gran Grecia (as Fazio also says), but Alberti cannot find any recognized author ('approvato scrittore') to support this view. Only the southern part round Taranto had this name for a time. Another mistake which Alberti points out concerns the origins of the name for Lago d'Idro (f.355). Capreolo contains a quantity of information which Alberti might have used. His description of the countryside round Brescia is largely ignored, for example.

There are other historians to whom Alberti refers on occasions, for example, Leonardo Bruni, whose views on the origins of Florence are noted and reconciled with other sources, St. Antonino Archbishop of Florence, Platina, Simonetta (author of a history of the Sforza family (La Sfortiade), Garzone (his history of Bologna) and Flaminio (the 'Lives' which he wrote for Alberti). Alberti also refers to his own works, the De Viris Illustribus, the Storia di Bologna and the

lost Effemerides.

The specific source used for Mantua was Mario Equicola's Chronica. Equicola studied at Naples and Florence, worked in Ferrara and moved to Mantua following Isabella d'Este. His Chronica di Mantua draws on classical sources and some of the more contemporary ones used by Alberti for example, Biondo, Sabellico and Elia Capreoli, but it is no more than a history; Alberti is scathing about its merits.

He is writing of Carlo Malatesta who is generally praised by contemporaries like Biondo, Platina and St. Antonino but 'sia vituperato (et iniquamente però) da Mario Equicola ne'volgari comentari, che scrive de i prencipi da Mantova per haver fatto getta nel fiume la statua di Vergilio. Ma al detto Equicola si gli dà poca fede per essere stato huomo di poca riputatione' (f.267vo). He is wary about accepting Equicola's genealogy of the Este family and in the end accepts part of it, for the rest he prefers a chronicle which he found in Ferrara. One Mantuan chronicle which is only referred to once, possibly a reference taken at second-hand from someone else, is the chronicle of Bonamente Aliprandus. This was not, presumably, the chronicle Alberti was referring to here.

For Ferrara Alberti looked at, but did not make very precise references to, the work on the city's antiquities by Peregrino Prisciano. This was a work which does not seem ever to have reached the press, so Alberti must have had access to a manuscript. Another useful manuscript which came Alberti's way was from Battista Paiarino of Vicenza. He sent Alberti six books of the history of Vicenza down to his own times, which had been translated into Latin by Arnaldo Vicentino (f.420). Alberti describes the contents; the origins of the city, its

history and government, the piety of the citizens, the fertility of its territory, the famous men and illustrious families found there, past and present, the work is, as far as one can judge, more than a mere history; something nearer to a complete city description in fact, with, perhaps, most emphasis on the historical issues.

Alberti tells us that he has found most useful for Verona the description by Torello Sarayna, already discussed above.<sup>45</sup> Again the number of references is few in view of the detailed and comprehensive scope of Sarayna's work. Book I, in which Sarayna emerges as a supporter of Annius, deals with the origin and early history of the city. Book II describes its site by the River Ladice (Adige) and its antiquities in detail (in fact Alberti refers the reader to this for information on the Roman remains, the amphitheatre and theatre.) Book III lists the 'huomini antichi illustri Veronesi', and Book IV goes on to deal with Verona's history. The third part of this historical section is a description: 'Breve descrittione come si ritrova il paese di Verona'. These books altogether make up a very thorough city description. Alberti gives a brief list of the outstanding features of the city and its citizens, but he does not spend a long time on it, because, he says, 'havendone larghissimamente parlato Torello Saraina nel secondo libro dell'historia de i Scaligeri' (f.410vo.).

Sarayna mentions Lake Garda, although Alberti does not mention him in this connection. There were several authors who did provide descriptions of the Italian Lakes, some quite fully, with the additon

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45. Chapter II, p.110 and Descrittione f.413.

of maps. Giulio de Giulii is praised for his helpful description of Lake Garda.<sup>46</sup> The family came originally from Canobio but moved to Bologna where they were given citizenship, and Giulio trained and worked as a lawyer. 'A qui sono molto obligato per haverne fatto partecipe della fatiche con liberalita e massimamente della descrittione di questo lago', says Alberti. The other description of Lake Garda which Alberti used was that of a Monk Giorgio Giodoco Bergani of S. Zeno da Verono who wrote an elegant verse description of the Lake, accompanied by a map (f.353vo).

Giulio de Giulii was also able to supply Alberti with some measurements for Lake Como (Larius Lacus) taken from the writings of one Angelo Milanese (f.373vo.). These measurements did not look much like Strabo's, but Alberti is able to explain away the difference; a difference arising from Angelo including a narrow channel which is not navigable. The historian and antiquarian Paolo Giovio prepared another description of this Lake, 'Ne La fatto un altra descrittione Paolo Giovio con la figura, certamente cosa molto ingeniosa' (f.374). Giovio came from Como but spent a lot of his time in Rome. His description of Lake Como was completed in 1536, but not published until 1558<sup>47</sup>, so Alberti must have seen it in manuscript. Despite the praises for Giovio's map Alberti gives only one reference to it. We know from his letters that Giovio visited Bologna, and very likely met Alberti there. He was certainly aware of Alberti's interest in chorography.<sup>48</sup>

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46. *Descrittione*, f.399vo. cf. f.353vo. where he is describing L. Garda.

47. R. Weiss, *the Discovery of Classical Antiquity*, p.130.

48. Above p.65.

One of Giorgio Merula's pupils, Domenico Macagno, produced what Alberti refers to as a 'Corografia del lago Maggiore'.<sup>49</sup> Macagno deserves the greatest praise for bringing honour to his native land of Maccagno with his detailed and learned description, says Alberti (f.397). Alberti gives no precise references to the description - Macagno's views on the origin of the River Adda back up Alberti's opinion that there is an error concerning this in the Latin text of Strabo<sup>50</sup> - but apart from this he simply takes the reader on a quick tour round the lake, enumerating rivers and settlements. There is a wealth of detail in Macagno's work which one might have expected to find in the Descrittione. Macagno deals with all the places round the lake, the rivers flowing into it, the vegetation, wild life and some notable specialities of the area: the wine, olive oil, honey, cheese, leather wear and wooden goods. There are chapters dealing with the minerals of the area, the valleys, the trees, the other lakes nearby, and on the occupations and achievements of the inhabitants, but very little of this comes to light in the Descrittione. The work was available in print, and it seems strange that Alberti should take comparatively little from it.

For Genoa Alberti found Agostino Giustiniano's history useful, and in response to a request from Alberti Giustiniano sent him a map of Corsica which he had drawn to accompany his description of the island. Giustiniano was an accomplished scholar in Greek, Arabic and Hebrew, and spent time at both the English and French courts. Alberti points

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49. Descrittione, f.374 vo. He is correctly known as Domenico Belli detto Macaneo.

50. Descrittione, f.395 vo. The Latin text states that the Adda rises from L. Verbano (Maggiore), Lib. IV, but the Greek text is correct when it traces the Adda into and out of L. Larius (Como). Lib. IV and V.

out that he has derived most of his description of Corsica from Giustiniano, Vescovo di Nebbia, 'Il quale essendo alquanto dimorato in questa Isola al suo Vescovato...descrisse tutta questa Isole, et a me (per sua cortesia) mando tal descrizione, ove dimostra tutti i luoghi moderni, senza mentione de'luoghi antichi,'<sup>51</sup> Alberti has added, he says, references from Pliny, Strabo and Ptolemy. The map was so detailed that the printer had to apologise for not being able to reproduce it exactly as it would have taken more than thirty sheets of paper to do so.<sup>52</sup> Later Alberti explains that Giustiniano died at sea, crossing from Corsica to Genoa in 1537 and that he will always remember him, 'tanto per la stretta amicitia havuta insieme quanto ancora per l'aiuto a me dato in questa descrizione'. The description of Corsica is so detailed that 'non solamente la describe ma la dipinge.'<sup>53</sup>

Another source for Liguria is the short description which Giacomo Bracellio wrote for Biondo. Bracellio was the official historian to the Republic and its chancellor for many years (1411-1466).<sup>54</sup>

Moving south we find that there are for fewer sources of a chorographical nature available to Alberti, and that there was certainly no centre like Venice where there was a distinct group of chorographical writers at work. In Rome there were a number of descriptive antiquaries<sup>55</sup> while Florentine interests perhaps turned most readily to

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51. Isole, f.6.

52. Ibid., f.5.

53. Ibid., f.8vo.

54. De claris Gemensibus and Orae Ligusticae descriptio - printed together, edited by Agostino Giustiniano, (Paris, 1520). Both are reprinted in Graevius, op. cit., I.pt. 1.

55. R. Weiss, op. cit. Chapter VII.



historical rather than descriptive work.<sup>56</sup> Alberti found Desiderio Spreti's work on the antiquities of Ravenna useful, although his own personal observations of the churches, with detailed descriptions of the mosaics are to the modern reader of much greater interest than the few references to Spreti (ff. 275-276).

There was a manuscript description by Giacomo Pelanegra, which Alberti was given by the holy priests of St. Angelo in Apulia in 1525, and which concerned the date of the discovery of the caves of St. Angelo in Apulia (f.224). Ambrogio Leone produced one of the first systematic accounts of antiquities outside Rome when he wrote his De Nola Opusculum (Venice, 1514), which described and identified the ancient sites and commented on antique remains.<sup>57</sup>

A different type of description which Alberti also used came from Zenobio Acciaiuolo, O.P. who wrote a panegyric on Naples, discussed in Chapter II above. In it Acciaiuolo gives considerable attention to the history of the city and the countryside round about. Alberti makes one reference to the description of the grottos round the coast, but that is all (f.164).

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56. There was the Chorographia Tusciana, (1536) of Geronimo Bell'armato to which Alberti makes one reference.

57. R. Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, pp.127-129. Also A. Maiuri, 'Sul De Nola di Ambrogio Leone', Studi in onore di Riccardo Filangieri, 2, (Naples, 1959), 261-71.

For the southern part of the peninsula Alberti found two works of particular value. These were Pietro Razzano's 'Italia' and Pandolfo Collenuccio's history of Naples. Razzano's work, he tells us, he saw in manuscript and there is no record of any printing. (Roletto stresses its value as a source for Alberti, p.468). The author was a Dominican, a geographer, historian, orator and theologian, a friend of Theodore of Gaza and Ciriaco of Ancona. Alberti describes him as 'uomo religioso, dotto e saggio, Et scrisse quattro gran volumi ne' quali strinse tutte le scientie, tanto pratiche, quanto speculative, con la geografia et Historia. Li quali libri, ritrovandomi a Palermo io viddi scritti con dolce et leggiadro stilo'.<sup>58</sup> Talking of Luceria where Razzano was Bishop, Alberti again expresses a debt to him. Having praised him for establishing the Dominican order of service in Luceria, he continues, 'sono molto ubligato a questo letterato uomo per havere havuto lume da lui in descrivere alquante Regioni come da me souvente è dimostrato'( 226). Razzano's surviving work is a history of Palermo not a descriptive work which seems to have been lost. It contains a long discussion of the origins of Palermo and its history under Roman rule. Most of Alberti's references came from the lost description and are to fairly common-place matters. A few are more noteworthy, for example the charming description he gives of the city of Matera at night. There the inhabitants had to put up lamps outside their houses and people living in the highest part of the city saw the valley below them looking just like the night sky, studded with stars, he says (f.204).

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58. Isole, f.53.

Razanno is several times mentioned as having some point in common with Biondo, for example both are criticised for not mentioning the curious story of the 'bucco velenoso' near Pozzuoli where people and animals are likely to drop down dead if they get too near, 'e come anche io ho veduto', says Alberti (f.163). He explains this as being caused possibly by sulphur or alum fumes, but what he cannot explain satisfactorily is how these animals, when plunged into the waters of Lake Agnano are miraculously restored to life!<sup>59</sup> Biondo and Razzano both say they have searched for the tomb of Virgil and cannot find it (f.164). They both claim that Eraclea is where Nonciata is, but Alberti disagrees. (f.171) Both give the same stories concerning the name of the Abruzzi, and both happen to confirm classical opinions about the founding of Bitonto (f.230vo). There are other examples, and it is not impossible that Razzano could have been using Biondo as a source (not that this idea occurred to Alberti). Razzano reports how fine the fleet of Amalfi once was, and how prosperous and large were the towns of the Amalfi coast, so that, says Alberti, we can see from the present-day situation how this has changed. There are about sixty references to Razzano in the Descrittione, but again this is fewer than might reasonably be expected when there were so few sources available for the southern provinces.

Pandolfo Collenuccio is only referred to about twenty-three times, mostly with fairly precise references to the particular book of his work which Alberti was using. The main purpose of the work is historical, but Book I describes the size and boundaries of the Kingdom of Naples, summarises the most famous cities, their founders

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59. Most travellers found this a popular spectacle, see below Chap. VII, part ii.



- Alberti's  
Terra di Bari.                   8. From Brindisi to R. Aufido (or Ofanto), now  
  called Terra di Bari.
- Alberti's  
Apulia                           9. From R. Aufido to R. Tiferno (or Fortore),  
  now called Apulia Daunia.
- Alberti's  
Abruzzi                         ( 10. From R. Tiferno to R. Saro (or Sanguine),  
                                      (  
                                      ( the Frentani.  
                                      (  
                                      ( 11. From R. Saro to R. Aterno (or Pesaro), the Peligni.  
                                      (  
                                      ( 12. From R. Aterno to R. Tronto, the Marrucini.
- Alberti's  
March of Ancona.               13. Above the Marrucini towards Piceno and the  
  Apennines in the March of Ancona.

Collenuccio goes on to point out that the six peoples of Frentani, Peligni, Marrucini, Vestini, Precuzzi and Marsi are called now by one name, Abruzzi. Alberti writing about fifty years later saw no need to split them into individual regions at all, but does use these ethnic groupings as subheadings in the chapter on the Abruzzi, namely Samnites Peligni, Samnites Vestini, Samnites Marrucini, Samnites Pregutini and Hirpini. The Frentani are mentioned in the Descrittione before the Peligni, but not with a separate subheading (f.230). The Marsi are dealt with as part of the region of Latium inland (f.135), which marks a departure from Collenuccio, while the Samniti, according to Collenuccio make up a separate inland area, his fourteenth, in the region between the six tribes mentioned above and Campania and Latium. Collenuccio follows this list with a summary,<sup>61</sup> saying that there exist seven main regions, 'Terra di Lavoro, Principato, Basilicata, Calabria, Terra d'Otranto, Puglia, and Abruzzo.' The

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61. Collenuccio, op. cit. p.11.

fact that these regions and their boundaries correspond so closely to Alberti's suggests that by the end of the fifteenth century these were accepted local boundaries. Either Alberti was basing his regions on Collenuccio's, or else he was following the geographical regions which he knew to exist. The first alternative seems unlikely because he never mentions Collenuccio's boundaries and elsewhere he rarely claims credit for any originality and readily identifies the sources he does find useful so there seems to be no reason why he should conceal his sources here. It also seems unlikely because there are very slight discrepancies between the two accounts, particularly over the names of the Abruzzi tribes, which, had Alberti been following Collenuccio, one would expect him to have remarked upon. It seems more likely that Alberti was basing himself on geographical divisions which he knew to exist. If this was the case then these must have been areas accepted by contemporary geographical opinion in general, or else Alberti had become aware of them on his travels in the south. Either way, they were clearly barriers based on geography and ethnic groupings, as were the rest of Alberti's territorial divisions.<sup>61A</sup>

The remaining sources fall into one of several categories. Firstly there is a sizeable group of authors who were responsible for editions of classical texts, and whose notes Alberti occasionally refers to. Ermolao Barbaro's notes on Pliny and Pietro Marso's commentary on Silius are the most well used of this group. Other examples are Badius Ascensianus on Cicero, Althamer on Tacitus and Calderini on Martial. Though not a commentary on a classical text, Cristoforo Landino's commentary on Dante also falls into this category.

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61A. Although they were based on classical divisions, this did not prevent them being recognized also at the time Alberti was writing. See below pp. 394-95.

Secondly there is a group of authors who wrote about Rome, its history, antiquities, origins, etc. They include Francesco Albertini, Calvo di Ravenna, Andrea Fulvio and Bartolomeo Marliano. They are mentioned with one or two references but no more, as Alberti points out that he has not the time to go into great detail on Roman topography, or archaeology, but any reader who wants to find out more can do so from these authors.<sup>62</sup> Alberti did not enlighten his readers on which of these authors were the most reliable. Calvo's collection of sketches were for the most part quite unrealistic; the antique topography of Rome is laid out on a Procrustes'bed to make it conform to his totally symmetrical idea of what it should have been like.<sup>63</sup> Albertini's work was little more than a re-hash of the Mirabilia guide with some additional information.<sup>64</sup> Bartolomeo Marliano's Roman Topography, on the other hand, was quite useful as it superseded Biondo's Roma Instaurata. Fulvio also followed Biondo closely and like Biondo made use of epigraphs and inscriptions, although his work is not entirely free from error. The third group of sources is a miscellaneous collection of references to printed letters, poems and speeches where Alberti has found a few odd points worth noting.

iv. Information obtained verbally or by personal letter

We do not know to what extent Alberti pressed his friends for information about areas where they were living, or which they knew well, but certainly some information was obtained as the direct result

62. Descrittione, f.106vo., see above Chap. III & Chap. VI below.

63. I am grateful to Peter Spring for this information.

64. It was also less reliable as it showed acceptance of Annius On it, see R. Weiss, the Renaissance discovery of Classical Antiquity, p.84.

of a personal request. An important example of this is the enquiry Alberti made into the whereabouts of Lake Vadmione already discussed above.<sup>65</sup> His friend Fr. Vincentio Reggiano O.P. in Viterbo was able to investigate the problem for him and provide quite adequate evidence to satisfy Alberti that it was the lake known in the sixteenth century as Lago di Bassanello. Niccolo Accursino, another friend, wrote to him about the fishing in the River Serchio,<sup>66</sup> and Sebastiano Corrado of Reggio, mentioned in Chapter I, sent him a letter discussing the origins of Rubiera (f.325vo). Another long letter which is quoted in full is concerned with the caves and quarries near Costozza and Cervale, dated 5th March, 1537 and sent from Cricoli di Luni by Giovan Giorgio Trissino, apparently in response to a request from Alberti for information (f.418). Giovan Battista Pio, the Bolognese scholar seems to have discussed the whereabouts of the R. Timavo with Alberti (f.439vo).

As he moved from place to place Alberti met various local people who were able to offer information and show him things of interest and he is often at pains to acknowledge these kindnesses in the Descrittione. A venerable person of Ticino caused a problem by showing him a map with three 'N's marked on it (f.375). Alberti showed it to other men of the town and questioned them on its meaning. There was more than one suggested answer: they could be Nido, Nidi, and a place unknown, or the places in the same order could be identified as Ninive, Nido and Nidi. On another occasion one

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65. Above, Chapter III. p.161-2.

66. Descrittione, f.36. there is no record of who Accursino was.



Gieronimo da Boldrino took Alberti on a tour of Foro di Sempronio and showed him some epitaphs (f.258vo-9), and Pietro Barignano 'huomo perito nell'histoire, et etiandio nella geografia', talked to Alberti about the River Sapis in the March of Ancona.<sup>67</sup>

When travelling in the south, Alberti met Giovan Battista Martorano of Cosenza (f.189-189vo). 'Assai sono obligato à tanto huomo' he writes, 'per l'humanità da lui à me dimosrata et anche aiutandomi à conoscere gli antichi luoghi di questa Regione, ritrovandomi quivi nel 1526'. Martorano told Alberti that the territory of Cosenza contained more than 100 contade controlled by Cosenza and divided into 'pretorie' or 'podestarie', and Alberti lists them for the reader's benefit. Martorano was also an 'investigatore dell'antichità' (f.186vo) and told Alberti about the old name for Temese, about the River Esaro (f.187), River Corlianeto (f.201) (where one could find silver) and about the city of Ecanano (f.227).

Another person to supply help was Giovanni Pietro Feretto, Bishop of Milo who came from Ravenna. He had written, according to Alberti, a world history, and a history of Ravenna 'per li quali la illustrato essa, patria sua vetustissima'.<sup>68</sup> Feretto told him about Cervia, Bagnacavallo (f.281vo) and Lugo Castello (f.284vo). Concerning Modena there is a reference to documents which Alberti was told about (f.318)

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67. Descrittione, f.262vo. See R. Ceserani, D.B.I. VI, 365-67. Barignano does not seem to have gained a reputation for history and geography except in Alberti's eyes. He was a typical poet and courtier, friend of Ariosto and Bembo, and in this reference he is assisting Alberti with the interpretation of a verse of Lucan.
68. Ibid., ff277vo.-278. The work in question does not seem to have been printed though a description of Siena, where he was doctor of Civil and Canon Law was printed in 1513. Senae vetus carmine illustrata. Alberti makes no reference to the poem when describing Siena.

and likewise he was told about the Chronicle of the Archbishops of Ravenna by Massimiano da Pola (f.273), and also about an ancient chronicle of Venice which concerned Chioggia (f.464vo.). Zaccaria Zacchio of Volterra guided him round his home town, told him about the building of Volterra's walls (f.47) and was also a helpful guide to the antiquities of the ruined city of Popolonia, as mentioned above.<sup>69</sup>

As well as letters and correspondence some of his friends like Gregorio Amaseo and Agostino Giustiniano already mentioned, sent him their local descriptions or histories sometimes together with maps, sometimes in response to a request, sometimes simply because they must have known that they were working in similar fields. There is no reason to suppose, though, that Alberti was planning a description of Italy based on the collected works of his friends, as Celtis planned for Germany. There is no indication that he had organised bands of scholars all over the country gathering information under his instructions and preparing their own special local descriptions ready for him to collate and assemble into one great work.

#### v. Chronicle Sources

It is not surprising to find that Alberti not only relies on his classical sources and contemporary descriptions and histories, but sometime he shows that he is aware that there may be more of interest to be found in a mostly overlooked supply of material, the ancient (and not so ancient) city chronicles and records. There are few references to these compared with other sources but about two dozen

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69. Above p. 148.

Table IXMiscellaneous contemporary sources, e.g. personal letters, verbal information, etc.Name

Accorsino, Niccolo	1 + 0	Letter	
Amaseo, Gregorio		See above Table VIII	Letters and verbal information.
Barignano, Pietro	1 + 0	Verbal information	
Boldrino, Gieronimo da Esio	1 + 0	Verbal information	
Corradi, Sebastiano da Reggio	1 + 0	Letter	
Feretto, Giovanni Pietro da Ravenna, Bp. of Milo	2 + 0	Verbal information	
Fra Vincentio Reggiano	1 + 0	Letter	
Garzone, Giovanni		See above Table VIII	Letters and verbal information.
Giustiniano, Agostino		See above Table VIII	Letters and verbal information.
Martorano, Giovanni Battista, Cosentino	7 + 0	Verbal information	
Paiarino, Battista		See above Table VIII	Letters and verbal information
Pio, Giovanni Battista, Bolognese	2 + 0	Verbal information	
Trissino, Giovan'Giorgio, Vicentino	2 + 0	Letters	
Zacchio, Zaccaria, Vol- aterrano		See above Table VIII	Verbal information
Anonymous inhabitant of Ticino	1 + 0	Verbal information	

One could, of course add to this list other friends and contemporaries with whom the content of the Descrittione was doubtless discussed, but I have noted only the names of those whose opinions Alberti refers to in the text.

references are made to chronicles from Italian cities outside Bologna and about the same number to Bologna chronicles.

Outside Bologna Alberti writes several times of an 'antica cronica'<sup>70</sup>. He refers to the name of Italy (and quotes the chronicle in Latin), also he cites Tuscany's early names according to the chronicle. In the March of Ancona he says he has come across the ruins of a city which the local inhabitants say was called Piceno from which the region took its name. The ancient chronicle says it was so named after its founder Pico de gli Enotri. 'In altro luogo non ho ritrovata memoria d'essa città presso approvato autore. Sarà però in arbitrio del prudente lettore di creder quel che gli parerà di questa cosa' he says (f.250). A chronicle source, however ancient could not compare for reliability with an 'approved author' such as Pliny, Strabo, Ptolemy, Dionysius or even Annius. To Alberti it seemed that these were the most ancient authorities and therefore most to be trusted.

Concerning Brescia Alberti says that he has found out that its first builder was Brinome (f.255) (as confirmed by an ancient chronicle which came into his hands), and likewise of Cremona he says one story of its origin comes from an ancient chronicle he has read, but again he leaves it to the reader to choose what story he wants to believe, and make out no special case for the chronicle (f.360).

A 'Chronica di Milano' (f.368vo) is the source for a story about the origin of Lodi, and possibly is the same thing as 'le Chroniche di Milano e di Lodi', which confirm various theories concerning the

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70. Descrittione, f. iv., f.20vo., f.250, f.355, f.360vo.

founding of Alessandria (f.340vo.) and the "Cronica di Lode" which deals with Tortona (f.336vo). He tells us that he found such a chronicle, concerning Milan and Lodi, in his discussion of the origins of Piacenza, 'ilche conferma una cronica di Milano, e di Lodi alle mie mani pervenute, che che paiono molto antiche'(f.332).

Clearly he saw several items from the archives of Ferrara as he tells us (f.305vo). He mentions a 'Cronica di Ferrara' and explains that the 'Archivi de gl'illustrissimi Marchesi da Este' refer to the refounding of Ferrariola, beyond the Po, by decree of Theodosius II (who also founded the studium of Bologna).<sup>71</sup> A chronicle mentioned by Peregrino Prisciano is noted (f.308), 'La quale anche io ho veduto nel 1536 in Ferrara per mercede dell'humano et nobile Messer Battista Papazzone della Mirandola huomo letterato et saggio.'<sup>72</sup> The chronicle apparently runs from 1150 or earlier.

The genealogy of the Este family is derived in great detail from 'le croniche de i detti signori da Este',<sup>73</sup> which Alberti has investigated very thoroughly. Another occasion when he mentions an ancient manuscript concerns the genealogy of the Conti Guidi (f.272), now the Conti di Bagno e di Giazuolo, a line which goes back to the tenth century. He does not report where he found it, but presumably it must have been in some library where he was working. He refers to a very old copy of the Lex Langobardorum in the convent library in Bologna (f.247), and he reproduces a Latin quotation from the Annals of Caglia, which he says he has read (f.260vo).

71. Descrittione, f.307vo. cf. f.309.

72. Battista Papazzone is referred to as a noteworthy man of Mirandola (f.321). His family, like that of Pico could be traced back to the sons of Constantine, according to Giovan Francesco Pico!

73. Descrittione, f.310. cf. f.312vo-313.

One reference he makes to the annals of Forli can be found in the Annales Forlivenses in Muratori's collection.<sup>74</sup> In this particular case he is describing the building of Cotignola by the Forlivese and Faentini in 1276 to secure their territory. The founding of Forli he describes according to 'una cronica di detta città a me mostrata da Paolo Guirino huomo di elegante e curioso ingegno'(f.279), and this does not seem to be the same manuscript as the 'annali' mentioned previously, at least the incident and details referred to do not appear in the Annales Forlivenses.

The references to the chronicles of Bologna are fairly well scattered and cover most of the north-eastern provinces of Italy. There is no indication of whether more than one chronicle is being referred to at any time, or if so which they are. Mostly we find the general expression 'croniche di Bologna' being used to describe Alberti's source. A number of references could have come from the chronicles now contained in the collection of Bolognese chronicles edited by Sorbelli,<sup>75</sup> but by no means all, and there are a few discrepancies which suggest other accounts were consulted as well. On some occasions Alberti writes of the 'annali di Bologna'.<sup>76</sup> When this expression is used he seems to be quite deliberately referring to a different set of records from the 'croniche,' and most of these references, when examined, certainly do not come from

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74. Ibid., f.284. cf. RR.II.SS, 22, part ii, p.28.

75. Coprus Chronicorum Bononiensium, edited A. Sorbelli. RR.II.SS. 18 part i. This contains four chronicles: i. Chronicle A (Cod. 431 Bib. Univ. Bolog.), commonly known as the Cronaca Rampona, written in Latin. ii. Chronicle B (Cod. 432), known as the Cronaca Varignana, written in Italian. iii. Cronaca Villola, begun in Latin and continued in the vernacular. iv. Cronaca Bolognetti written in the vernacular. The two latter, according to Sorbelli, are more original and genuine.

76. Descrittione, ff. 271, 283vo., 287vo., 288, 289, 291, 355vo, 361 457vo.

the documents of the Corpus Cronicorum. Out of nine such references only one, concerning the Torre del'Uccellino (built in 1242 according to the 'annali' and to Garzone), could have come from the four chronicles in the Corpus,<sup>77</sup> exactly as it appears, and two other incidents are mentioned in the Corpus, but not given the date which Alberti records from the 'annali'.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand at least four references where Alberti uses the expression 'croniche' cannot be traced to the Corpus either,<sup>79</sup> so that there were obviously other chronicles available, and the fact that there are about a dozen references which do correspond to information contained in the Coprus is in no way conclusive evidence that any of these chronicles was what Alberti consulted.

We know nothing about Alberti's method of procedure when dealing with these chronicle sources. How did he select what to put into his description and what to leave out when faced with numerous references to historical incidents, any of which could have been incorporated into the Descrittione with no great difficulty? There is no common theme among the references, and they are not limited to any particular years, so it seems that he simply extracted items at random. For the history of Bologna he made rather more use of this material. The references which he has include ones to the battle of 1249 between the Bolognesi and Modenesi at Ponte di S. Ambrogio on the Via Emilia (f.316vo); the

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77. Ibid., f.291.

78. Ibid., f.271, 283vo.

79. Ibid., f.286, 303vo, 424vo., 250vo.

building of Castel Baldo by the Padovani in 1292 (f.415vo), the delivery of the Bull of Excommunication to Frederick II (f.437vo), the alliance of Bologna and Reggio in the time of St. Ambrose (f.326vo), the creation of Guido of Cannossa as first Podestà of Bologna in 1165 (f.328-9), the military ability of Corrado di Matelica a Bolognese captain (f.256), and the origins of the names of Capitania and Troia (f.225, 226vo). The references cover origins, placenames, historical incidents and famous men. Some deal with events of international importance, and no doubt were included for this very reason. For the others, we must assume that Alberti thought them interesting items, or even that he just happened to remember them as he was writing.<sup>80</sup>

Having shown the fairly limited use which Alberti made of chronicle material, I shall leave further discussion of this issue to the next chapter. There I shall deal in more detail with the value of the Descrittione as history and the position of Alberti in relation to the development of historiography in the sixteenth century.

vi. Eye-witness accounts by the author

Now that we have seen how Alberti put together material from written sources and the odd scraps of verbal information which he gathered from his friends, we must turn to the source which is perhaps most interesting when comparing him with other descriptive writers, the personal observations which are included in his work. We know how much he travelled

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80. In addition to the references above see also Descrittione ff.316, 318-19, 282, 286.



and how valuable these travels were in supplying information on the southern provinces. Furthermore I have already pointed out how, in the matter of eye-witness descriptions, he far surpassed Biondo, and that to a large extent it is these descriptions, together with comments on natural phenomena, which carry his work a step forward from the Italia Illustrata.

There were two main aspects of the Descrittione which could most well benefit from his first-hand observations of places, firstly the geographical and topographical aspect - Alberti could be expected to describe the landscape, the crops, the merchandise on sale, the wealth or poverty of people, the layout of cities and their most important sights - and secondly the antiquarian side of the work, for on his travels he could look out for inscriptions, traces of ancient roads, villas and towns, and he could question the local inhabitants about changes in placenames or about local archaeological finds. In view of the travelling he did we would hope to find him taking us away from the confines of the cloister and library, away from the authority of Pliny and Dionysius, to an area where he could make his own judgments based on his own observations and could criticise or amend his written sources and draw conclusions according to what he found at first-hand. It is not my purpose here to evaluate Alberti's abilities and influence as a geographer, or as an antiquary (these topics will be dealt with in the following chapters), but simply to indicate the contribution his travels made to his knowledge, and how his personal observations are fitted into the work and used along with his other sources.

I have already mentioned how enthusiastic Alberti is about the beauties of the Italian landscape, the fragrant flowering hillsides of the Lunigiana and Tuscany,<sup>81</sup> for example, how intrigued he was to see the way of life of the Calabrian peasants with their houses without chimneys and doors with no locks,<sup>82</sup> and how the splendour and magnificence of a building like St. Mark's in Venice could inspire him to write a description as detailed as any guide-book.<sup>83</sup> Indeed if one could extract all the personal anecdotes and lovingly written descriptions of out-of-the-way places from the morass of classical references they would make a much more appealing and less tedious work than the Descrittione as it stands.

Alberti's travels in the southern provinces contributed a great deal to the Descrittione. It would be impossible to relate all the instances of personal observation in these sections because they are too numerous. I propose therefore to pick out some of the more interesting descriptions firstly of Terra di Lavoro, and then from the more southerly areas. One of the most detailed personal descriptions in Terra di Lavoro concerns the cave of the Cumaean Sibyl and the Bay of Baia (f.153vo-154). Alberti tells us how he was there first in 1526 and again ten years later he explored the area even more carefully, 'doppo 10 anni un'altra volta deliberai di veder tutti questi luoghi à parte à parte, e notarli diligentamente'. Accordingly he took with him two men of the area who took him by boat on the Bay of Baia to Puteolano, round the 'Mar Morto (come eglino dicono)' and also round Lake Avernus. On the way from Avernus

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81. Above, Chapter III, p.149.

82. Ibid., p.156.

83. Ibid., p.151.

to the Sibyl's cave, he tells us, one comes across <sup>an</sup> inlaid pavement about 500 feet long which once went all the way from Avernus to Baia and is that which Strabo says was built by Cocceius, Alberti presumes. Turning off this, one comes to a small hole, like the entrance to a ruined cave, inside is a fine room which contains a small raised bed. The ceiling is finely ornamented, painted blue and gold, and inlaid with coral and mother of pearl. From floor to ceiling there are fine mosaics, and it is said that this was the room of the Cumaean Sibyl.

In view of Alberti's special investigation of the area it is not surprising to find a detailed description of these caves and their environs. Proceeding down another passage he reached another room carved out of the rock in the middle of which was a small pool of water. The heat was so intense that one broke out into a sweat upon entering. It was here, according to Alberti's guides, that the Sibyl was supposed to be heard, but, says Alberti, with unusual scepticism, 'a me pare che fosse un sudatorio'. From the entrance all the way to here there was no ventilation outlet and one had to carry a lamp. The return journey could be hazardous as it was easy to get lost, 'come interviene ad uno, ' he says, 'le cui ossa ritrovassimo, sopra lequali, in quelle strettissime vie, bisognò passare (non le potendo noi schifare).' Previously one had always had to retrace one's steps to the entrance, but since Alberti's last visit, he says, part of the hillside had caved in and it was possible to get out by a different route, a small opening which led one, with some difficulty, to the hillside facing Baia. From here it was easy to see how the mountain was cut away to allow people to pass from Avernus to Baia. Alberti proceeds from here to describe the archaeological remains and other

caves he found along the coast between Baia and Cuma.

Passing beyond Monte Misenum to the Gulf of Cratera (the Bay of Naples), he tells us that this whole area used to be full of fine buildings, cities, castles, palaces, baths and theatres, from Baia to Sorrento, so that it looked like one great city (f.154vo-156). The remains of these would take too long to describe and would seem more likely to be figments of the imagination than true, he says, though he does mention some of the remains to be seen near Baia, like the steps of former houses leading down to the water, the fantastic columns and pillars half-submerged, once the foundations of Roman palaces. Then he describes Baia itself and its ruins. Near here he and his companions stopped for a picnic on the shore, making a fire and eating bread and fish (f.156vo). Beyond here he saw the hot sulphur springs and fountains near Lake Avernus, where, the last time he was there, he had seen some men in a boat measure its depth, with a rope, as 90 feet (f.158).

Alberti was able to see the village of Tripergola before it was destroyed in 1538 by an eruption of Mt. Tripergola. It is now, he says, submerged beneath a mountain, 'alta da tre miglia'.(!) (f.159) He mentions some of the famous baths which were lost, including the 'Bagni degli Imperadore' where the water was coloured (f.159vo). Passing many more antiquities, some of which he pauses to describe, he reaches the place near Pozzuoli where one can see a remarkable fountain of fresh water in the sea (f.160-60vo). This, he suggests, is the result of water being piped into the Roman villas which are now submerged, but the water, being pressurised to supply fountains, still

has to find an exit and so produces this curious fountain.

Nearer still to Pozzuoli one sees an amphitheatre, now cultivated and growing grain, and in the hillside there is<sup>a</sup> curious labyrinth with many rooms and passages, a dangerous place to explore 'senza il gomisselo del filo o con altra cosa da signare la via...sarebbe pericola di non mai poterne uscire'. Alberti says that he believes that it was constructed for the preservation of fresh water. He describes Solfataria and the Campi Flegri, showing great interest in the resonance of the ground and the boiling black sulphurous 'fossa'. This water not surprisingly had the wonderful property of cooking instantly anything that was put into it, but, says Alberti, when the article is withdrawn there is always a part missing!<sup>84</sup> On the plain, or Piazza, as Alberti describes it, there are several factories, for the preparation of sulphur, which can be seen all round and which can be smelt as far away as Naples when the wind is in the right direction. This is a smell which is good for 'quelli che sono catarosi, e freddi di capo!' and the waters were accredited with a multitude of medicinal powers (f.162-62vo).

Alberti's description of Monte Pausillipo shows his first-hand knowledge of the area. He points out how useful the tunnel is through the mountain to link Pozzuoli and Naples, as the alternative would be a long detour or a very steep climb (f.163vo-164). Having read about the tunnel in Strabo, he says, 'La qual'io curiosamente volendo vedere, la misurai, e la ritrovai esser larga oltre di 12

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84. Ibid., f.162. A picturesque story is told of a Bolognese who put four eggs there to cook and only found three to take out!

piedi,...'. He then gives details of its height at different points and explains how it had ventilation shafts and windows put in it but these, like the entrance and exit, were so overgrown that there was no light inside until Alfonso I ordered that all the undergrowth should be cleared. 'Cosa molto lodevole, imperò che da gran consolatione à quelli che vi entrano Vedendo detti foci, che di lunge paiono due stelle, alle quali drizzano illoro viaggio.' There follows considerable discussion of how the marvellous tunnel was constructed and who was responsible for its building.

Alberti's description of Naples is less unusual and shows no great originality, but follows the form of descriptions of most large towns (f.165vo-66). In the following pages Alberti describes Nola, Vesuvius and the other settlements of the fertile area round the Bay of Naples. The final section of Campania is the area from Castelammare di Stabia (Alberti's Castel Almare di Stabie) to Salerno, the area of the Picentini. Here Alberti gives full reign to his enthusiasm for the beauties of the Amalfi coast, the wonderful towns including Amalfi itself and particularly the magnificent gardens of Salerno (f.175-176).

Voglio descrivere la Costa di Amalfi che riguarda al Mezo giorno, la quale è di tanta veghezza, e di tanta amenità che credo che pochi luoghi si possono ritrovare da reguagliare à quella. Ella è di longhezza circa venti miglia, ove si veggono alti, difficili, et aspri Monti, e massimamente da quel lato ch'è sopra il mare. Et è tanto difficile la via di salirne, che ogn'un solamente à vederla, si stracca. Si veggono però fra detti strani balci molto aggradevole valle, ove sono belle fontane con altri sorgivi di chiare acque, dalle quale escono vaghi, e dilettevoli rusceletti, e scendendo con gran mormurio, e susurro, danno gran piacere alle persone...

One finds here all manner of fruit trees, orange, lemon, apple, olive, pear, fig, pomegranate, cherry etc. The gardens of Salerno boast oranges and lemons of all types, remarkable cedar trees growing into the most amazing shapes, and all manner of other fruit trees and vines.

The wonders of the countryside never failed to impress Alberti and similar descriptions of the landscape add considerably to the account of most of the southern provinces, for example he is most enthusiastic about the area around Cosenza (f.183vo), and a delightful place near Nicastro which looked like an ornamental garden (f.190). When he was taken round the gardens at Calimera in December it seemed like May (f.191), and in the following March, returning from Sicily, he found roses blooming at Rosarno (f.191vo).

He tells us that the topography of Calabria is not easy to describe because the road does not go conveniently down the Mediterranean shore (f.191). The cave dwellings of the rough peasants of the area have already been mentioned. Not only did their wooden locks and keys amaze Alberti, but they were, 'senza Zimimeri (come eglino dicono) overo Camini (secondo noi) e senza i luoghi necesarii da diporre il peso della natura.' The latter was true also of the cities of this area, 'Et ciò è general costume non solamente delle ville e castella di questa Regione, ma etiandio delle principali citta d'esser, come io ho veduto, e sperimentato.' Alberti did not think much of the non-existent sewage disposal system of these cities, where the garbage was collected in urns which were then emptied into the street 'lasciandovi tanto puzzo, ch'ella è cosa stomacosa a chi non è usato a tali cibi, come io ne posso render dritta fede.' (f.187)

Presumably such things were better organized in the more sophisticated

cities of the north. Another thing that Alberti learned was how the natives of the area caught tunny fish which were salted and despatched all over Italy. The inhabitants of Castello di Lopizza told him that they could catch 800 to 1000 a day in May (f.183vo). Although he does not actually say that he visited the Campo Temesis, he gives a vivid description of the hazards of winter travel in this area (f.186vo). It was a flat plain, surrounded by mountains, where grain was produced, but to reach it one passed through very narrow valleys where winter winds often caused avalanches. In Basilicata there was another travel hazard, the Bosco del Pellegrino, where the rough, mountainous, wooded track was a favourite haunt of robbers (f.180).

The pleasant side of Alberti's tour comes to light frequently. Two notable examples of how well the entourage of Mozzolino was looked after, are Alberti's description of Castel Nuovo and his reception there by the Contessa di Mileto de' Sig. Severini of Naples who inhabited a delightful palace with gardens full of fruit and flowers and ornamental fountains (f.201vo), and secondly the description of Coliano where he was met by two sons of Giovan'Battista Di Monte, a Neapolitan gentleman, who likewise showed him every courtesy and looked after him in their magnificent fortress home where they too enjoyed a most wonderful garden which contained, among the usual orange and lemon groves, a remarkable cabbage with a stalk a foot thick. They took Alberti on a ride round their territory. At the end of his lengthy description of this incident Alberti writes, 'Questo ho voluto scrivere per dimostrare in quel ch'io posso gratitudine alla magnificenza e gentilezza usato verso noi da tant'huomo' (f.214vo)'.



In general the type of information which Alberti derives from his eye-witness accounts does not in any way conflict with what he has read in his classical sources, nor indeed with his more modern material.

It is not often that Alberti seems to have gleaned any historical information from the local inhabitants of an area, though we do learn that the inhabitants of Città di Bisegli in Terra di Bari explained to him how they paid 14000 gold ducats to Charles V to guarantee their freedom and ensure that they were not placed under any baron or signore (f.217vo). When exploring Anagni Alberti was greatly interested in the ruined state of the town and the papal palace, and questioned the few inhabitants as to how such decay had happened (f.131vo). The answer was through war, pestilence, famine and civil strife, which left large parts of the city burned to the ground. At the citizens' request a bishop had been sent by Clement VII to purge the people from the sins of their ancestors. It seemed that the city had never been absolved of the sin of setting hands on Pope Boniface VIII, and, says Alberti, *'e cosa molto paventosa da considerare quanto acerbamente punisca Iddio quelli, ovvero li figliuoli e discendenti di quegli, che temerariamente fanno violentia, e oltraggi a'sacerdoti'*. On another occasion as has been mentioned Alberti was shown the vestments and regalia of the King of Naples and Sicily by the priests of S. Niccolo di Bari (f.217). Trani, Alberti learned from its inhabitants, was in decline and its port silted up, partly due to the Venetians who held the city for several years after the defeat of Louis XII, and also due to Ferdinand of Aragon, since he, and Louis XII also, were hostile to the many Jews and Moors who lived here and contributed much to the town's economy (f.85). In Apulia Alberti was disappointed to see how

the monastery of S. Lionardo near Asculo was decaying and badly governed (f.227).

Perhaps the most interesting first hand observations in this region, Apulia, concern firstly Monte S. Angelo (Gargano), and its caves which Alberti visited (f.224); and secondly his description of the commerce of Serra Capriola (f.228vo). Once inside the famous cave one descended fifty-five steps, cleverly lit by windows cut in the rock, to reach a burial vault with many chapels and tombs. Nearby was a fountain of holy water and a remarkable wood, the only trees on the mountain. At Serra Capriola Castello on the top of the mountains there was a famous customs post, known through all Italy as a place through which animals were taken into Apulia. Here the officials told him that for the passage of animals they collected more than '100 milia ducati' per year. Another note of interest for the antiquarian was the fact that near the foot of Monte Maiella in the monastery church of S. Liberatore, 'sivegonno alcuni antichi libri scritti in caratteri Longobardici' (f.233)., but Alberti does not tell us what they were about, presumably because he could not.

Although there are few references to things he has actually seen in the Abruzzi, Alberti is very lucid in his description of the many river valleys where the height of the mountains and the rough terrain made it difficult to reach the sources as he tells us (f.238). He points out that the mountains near Benevento are full of waterfalls and streams (f.239vo) and that there is a sinister and shady forest which covers about eighty square miles between the River Fortore over the Apennines to the River Tamaro (f.241vo). Other places which

he describes include the Valla Candina (the Caudine Forks) (f.242) and Monte Mattesio (f.243). He also points out that the River Fibreno, a tributary of the Garigliano, is the coldest river he has ever felt (f.244). From these and other comments one gets the impression that he made a fairly thorough exploration of the area.

Moving further north it is less easy to tell which places, if any, he has not visited, for he must have been in almost all the major central and northern Italian towns at some time or other, and his descriptions are usually quite full of information. He travelled through the March of Ancona frequently, as he tells us, he often took the Via Flaminia to Rome (f.259vo). On the way he found several inscriptions and other antique remains. We know that he visited Urbino before Caesar Borgia made his mark on the city,<sup>85</sup> and on another trip he spent some time exploring the antiquities of Fossombrone (f.258vo). This was in July 1530 when he was returning from Rome and his guide was Gieronimo Boldrino da Esio who took him on horseback round the ruins, told him all about the medallions they found, showed him the paved streets, lead gutters, columns, arches and tombs of marble, tessalated pavements and even some precious stones, as well as many antique vases and marbles and a stone whose inscription is fully transcribed in the Descrittione. It was on the same journey that he passed through Gubbio where the Priors showed him metal tablets, written partly in Latin and partly in Etruscan, which, of course, he could not read.<sup>86</sup>

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85. Above, Chapter I, p.11.

86. The famous Tabulae Iguvinae found in a cave in 1444 and purchased by the town authorities. see Weiss, Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, p.156.

Rome and its environs were certainly familiar to Alberti and he took particular delight in exploring the ruins easily accessible in the Campania di Roma. He points out the difficulty of describing the area (f.126); since one cannot follow rivers with any ease he follows the three main Roman roads, the Via Appia, Via Latina and Via Tiburnia. He cannot spend too long on one district, but this area was once particularly resplendent with many great settlements and rich villas. The antiquities near Tivoli caught his imagination as he tells us, one can see there, among other things, a lion and a horse which look as if they are about to fight (f.233vo). And then there is the Tiburtine villa itself. It is wonderful to think what it must have been like. Similarly he marvels at the ruins of the aqueducts, built by Edile Martio from Lake Celanus to Rome (f.134vo. & 136vo). The theatre outside Terracina called for a special word of praise, 'Benche io habbia veduto molti teatri et anfiteatri, cosi nell'Italia, come etiandio fuori non però ho mai veduto il simile à questo'(f.123), and the ruins of the 'teatro quadro' by the lost city of Longola are mentioned. When describing Tivoli he includes the charming story of the joke played on unwary Romans by people coming from Tivoli where they picked up little white marble chips which looked just like sweets. 'Et tanto sono simili cotesti lapilli à i detti veri confetti, che credo non sia persone tanto accorta quanto si voglia, che essendogli presentati (non sapenda la cosa) che non rimanghi igannata, si come essendo à Roma souvente ho veduto, nominansi cotesti lapilli i confetti di Tivoli.' (f.134) Near Naples could be seen ruins of what was once Palepoli and the palace of Ferdinand of Aragon. In the middle of the palace was a courtyard which had, concealed in

the paving, waterjets which the King could suddenly turn on to drench unsuspecting guests. Alberti suggests that this was to give them pleasure in hot weather. Alfonso d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga, he thinks copied this idea when they built their palaces in Ferrara and Mantua (f.169vo).<sup>87</sup> Naturally the area round Bologna shows evidence of acute observation of detail, for example the Pallagio dei Rossi with its beautiful gardens (f.301), and S. Agata Castello (f.304).

What contribution do eye-witness accounts make to the other northern provinces? To some extent I have already referred to areas which Alberti had seen in Tuscany and Liguria, areas which he describes with some feeling and sometimes in considerable detail.<sup>88</sup> In the Romagna, Lombardy and the north-east it is often clear that he is describing a village or city that he knows well, although he does not always say that he has visited it. I do not intend to do more than indicate a few instances where the description seems particularly evocative. The River Tanaro and the River Po fall into this category (f.337, f.334), likewise the small castles on the hillside near Mirandola (f.323vo) and, another example, the valley of Montferrat,

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87. This idea of a practical joke must have proved popular as Montaigne reports several other instances of similar use of water power, for example at Pratolino a palace of the Duke of Florence near Scarperia where doors and statues were made to move by water power and a whole staircase could be turned into a showerbath, (The Diary of Montaigne's Journey to Italy in 1580 & 1581, translated with notes by E.J. Trechmann. (New York, 1929), pp 105-106.) Also at the Duke's palace, La Petraja, near Castello near Florence in the gardens were fine jets through the paving to soak visitors (p.111). The Cardinal of Ferrara had a palace built near Tivoli with a similar device, and also a mechanical organ powered by water. (p.164-65).

88. Above Chapter III. Also see particularly Descrittione, f.28vo. (Popolonia), f.17 (Rapallo), f.130, (Fossanuova).

which is very fertile and 'feracità de i piccioli colli' (f.337vo). The Roman remains in Verona are described in great detail and although Alberti points out how he is relying on Torello Sarayna for most of his information, he must have been there as he has seen the amphitheatre for himself and remained much impressed (f.410vo). Towns like Piacenza, Milan, Mantua and Ferrara are all described and the areas around them, while the account of Venice has been mentioned above.<sup>89</sup> Of course one should not overlook Bologna (f.293-94). He more than does justice to his native city, but keeps the description well within the limits imposed by the nature of the whole work. He does not give it a disproportionately large share of the text. To see how he deals with the city in full one should look at the opening of the History of Bologna as it is this which is condensed to form the description in the Descrittione.

Alberti's personal observations do not, as far as one can see, contradict or conflict with the information given by his other sources. There seem to be few instances when an author is taken to task for an error which Alberti has spotted as a result of a personal observation that things are not as the author reported. In most cases where he disagrees with an author it is the views of some other writer that he prefers to accept, and then not always with any clear explanation as to why. The careful investigation of the whereabouts of Lake Vadimone is an exception to this.<sup>90</sup> As has been pointed out above, even in areas where he knows the lay-out of the rivers, he can not always

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89. See f.333, f.390-390vo., f.352, f.309vo. and Chap. III.

90. Above, Chapter III.

equate them successfully with those shown on Ptolemy's map.<sup>91</sup> He does not criticise Strabo over his location of Luni when he had explored the area thoroughly, and despite his knowledge of Apulia he does not seem to have been able to make much of Pliny's description of the area where there are several places which one might have expected him to have identified.<sup>92</sup> On another occasion he supports Ambrogio Lione over the site of Eraclea not because he has identified the site (beyond Naples on the shore), but because Strabo says it was there (f.171). His eye-witness information is most useful for the south where there was less in the way of other source material. In an account as riddled by classical references as the Descrittione, where there is also very little in the way of discussion, such personal anecdotes as there are provide very welcome relief. Descriptions of the countryside in which the author also delights, although often presented in the same limited phraseology, can break out and become quite poetical, doing justice to any travel brochure, and recreating very vividly the atmosphere of a Tuscan hillside or the Neapolitan coast.

What can be said in way of a summary of the use Alberti makes of all the various sources available to him? First of all we are still left with a vast number of individual works which were consulted, digested or even culled, so to speak, for information down to the last placename. Even when we take out the odd references clearly derived at second-hand the number of individual authors whose works were familiar to him is impressive. Some classical authors are

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91. Above, p.186.

92. Above, p. 209-10.

particularly extensively used, and relied on for certain types of information, mostly relating to history or origins of settlement, for example, Dionysius, Pliny, Strabo and Ptolemy. It is evident that to a large extent Alberti was extremely uncritical of his sources, both of the classical period and later; if a difference of opinion arose he was more likely to try to accommodate both points of view rather than to uphold one side against another. He seems to have had little interest in how each author obtained his information, otherwise he must have realised that much information was obtained by one author from another. Often in such cases Alberti uses these very authors as corroborative evidence for each other; examples include Fazio, who used Solinus and Pliny extensively, Livy and Strabo who both used Polybius, and Silius Italicus who used Virgil. Nor did Alberti seem to appreciate that other more recent works such as those of Biondo and Volaterrano also paid attention to several of the same classical sources, though to a much lesser extent. I have already discussed at the end of the previous chapter how Alberti sometimes fails to make it quite clear when he takes what one author says out of the writings of another author.

Among Dark Age and early Mediaeval sources there is the curious omission of Isidore, but among the later authors several works which might have been useful were overlooked. Two general works one might have expected to see mentioned are the Orbis Breviarium of Zacharius Lilius, and the Geographia of Berlinghieri. There are also <sup>the</sup> works by Bandini and De Falco on Naples and by Bellafini on Bergamo, by Sardo on Pisa and by Valturio on Rimini, to mention but a few.<sup>93</sup>

93. On all of these except De Falco see above Chapter II. Other descriptive works which Alberti also ignored are mentioned there, for example Albertini on Florence, Michiele on Bergamo, Burtius on Bologna, Dondi and Vergerio on Rome, Goynaesus on Istria, and Verino on Florence. Yet more examples may be found in R. Weiss, Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity.



However, considering that several of these works were not printed it is scarcely surprising that they did not come Alberti's way. Indeed it is almost more surprising that he did find so many Renaissance works in print and manuscript, when one considers the limited number of copies of any one edition likely to have been printed or copied out.

Looking at these later authors, we can see that there were, as I suggested in Chapter II, close links between several of them, particularly those associated with Sabellico in Venice, and it is very likely that Alberti may have had personal contact with more of them than the text suggests. Alberti certainly did some research in the way of contacting other writers and friends but this seems to have been fairly limited. Occasionally he sent out a specific request, at other times he was fortunate to meet a local guide, but mostly he was using written sources. The role of chronicles in the Descrittione is not very significant. Alberti was aware of their existence and he mentions several of them, but they are by no means the attractive source that Strabo or Pliny or Biondo or even Annius are.

The role of personal observation is important for its own sake and as a contrast to antiquarian arguments and lists of classical authors. The resulting descriptions are like another world far removed from the haggling over a placename or foundation legend. What Alberti saw on one journey inspired him to revisit places and make further investigations in the most inaccessible areas. He is often limited by the scope of the work and cannot digress to the extent he would like on any one place, but whenever he recalls anything particularly unusual or interesting he is always ready to explain it.

On the whole the various sources are woven into one account, with considerable care, if not always with great critical comment. The many diverse types of information rest easily side by side within a carefully designed framework and controlled by an orderly method of procedure. If one asks which sources would most seriously alter the Description by their absence, the answer would be Dionysius, Pliny, Strabo, Livy and Ptolemy, and, one must add reluctantly, in some areas, Annianus. But a much more serious loss, in the southern provinces especially, would be the absence of any descriptive information, whether of the countryside, of a city or of ancient ruins, as it is this, almost more than anything else, which gives the work its particular interest.

Table XUnidentified Sources

Alessandro, Cornelio.	1 + 0	(His view on the origin of the Orobii not accepted)
Carino 'historico'	3 + 0	(His views on the origins of Ancona, Ravenna and Vigevano not accepted)
Cilino	1 + 0	(Ref. to Roman general Virginio Rufo)
Dione Historico	1 + 1	(Isole, f.68, Alberti says he came from Syracuse and is not to be confused with Dione Greco (Dio Cassius) as he was not Greek. It would appear that it cannot be Dio Chrysostom either, as he was a near relative of Dio Cassius, and like him, came from Bithynia.)
Podio, Giulielmo di.	1 + 0	('Croniche' ref. to Frederick II)
Theophilo	0 + 1	('nella descrizione de Sicilia')
Statio Tulliano	3 + 0	('nel libro de i vocaboli delle cose.')
Venetiano, Gabriel	1 + 0	('annali di Venetia.')

## CHAPTER VI

THE VALUE AND INFLUENCE OF THE HISTORICAL CONTENT OF THE DESCRITTIONEi. Introduction: The aims and methods of the humanist historians.

The purpose of this and the following chapter is to evaluate the Descrittione in its historical and literary context, with particular reference to its importance as a work of historical, geographical and topographical interest. In this chapter I intend to concentrate on the historiographical side of the work, since much of its content deals with history of one kind or another. Also the question of changes in the writing of history and the outlook and attitudes of the humanist historian has aroused much interest in recent years.

It was only natural for the nineteenth-century (and indeed twentieth-century) devotee of Burckhardt to believe that the skill of history writing, along with all other disciplines, should have been born again in that marvellous new order of things which made up the Renaissance. In their view mediaeval traditions were swept aside, as was only too obvious from a comparison of the monastic chronicles or town annals, which constituted history for earlier centuries, with the closely reasoned didactic history of Machiavelli and Guicciardini. These two were considered pioneers and were regarded by some historians as the heralds of a new age of historiography and as being products of a new world of real-politik which looked askance at both the dull old-fashioned recording of dates, names, and battles by the annalists, and also at fifteenth-century humanist historiography with its reliance on classical models.<sup>1</sup> There was, on the other hand,

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1. Such simple generalisations are to be found in, for example, J.W. Thompson, A history of historical writing, 2 vols (New York, 1942), I. 284.

the less popular, opposing viewpoint, expressed by Huizinga, that the Renaissance did not make fundamental changes in any fields, and that the old mediaeval traditions were not swept away. It was a culture of authority and a search for a set of fixed standards just as mediaeval culture had been.<sup>2</sup> In other words, in the writing of history, as in other artistic and cultural forms, we should expect to find little which constituted startling innovation. Recent research has shown that while both these viewpoints have some truth in them, as far as historiography is concerned, they are sweeping generalizations over-simplifying the changes which were undoubtedly taking place.<sup>3</sup> Since Alberti was writing in the early sixteenth century, and since the Descrittione contains a large amount of historical information, it is necessary to determine where exactly the originality of the fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century historians lay, in order to discover how far Alberti, as a representative of the Bologna humanist circle, was in tune with new ideas and put them into practice.<sup>4</sup>

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2. J. Huizinga, 'The Problem of the Renaissance', in Men and Ideas, (London, 1960) pp 271, 284-7.
  3. Some of the most useful discussions of Renaissance historiography and Renaissance historians are to be found in the following selection of works. Hans Baron, The Crisis of the early Italian Renaissance, (Princeton, 1955). F. Gilbert, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence, (Princeton, 1965). B. Reynolds, 'Latin Historiography: a survey, 1400-1600', Studies in the Renaissance, 2, (1955), 7-66. M.D. Gilmore, Humanists and Jurists, six studies in the Renaissance, (Cambridge, Mass., 1963). E.J. Levy, Tudor Historical thought, (California, 1967). D.J. Wilcox, The development of Florentine humanist historiography in the XV century, (Cambridge, Mass., 1969). P. Burke, The Renaissance Sense of the past, (London, 1969).
  4. Of course there were many chroniclers of events, past and contemporary, at work but for the purpose of the present discussion it is those writers who had a humanist education in the classics, and who were trying to do more than merely note down contemporary events as they happened, that are relevant to this discussion.

This task is complicated further by the question some writers have posed about the degree of continuity, or otherwise, between the fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century historians, or, to put it another way, between the first and second generation of humanists. Alberti clearly belonged to the latter, to the age of Machiavelli and Guicciardini. Does this impose a further burden of progress which he ought to live up to if he is really to be considered representative of the humanist scholarship of his time?

Any comparison of Renaissance with mediaeval historians inevitably lights on the important contribution which direct imitation of the ancients made to Renaissance writing and the attention paid by Renaissance writers to the precepts of antique authors when they concern the writing of history. Before embarking on an investigation of these issues, some more general points of interest may be made. In a stimulating essay on the Renaissance sense of the past, a fundamental way in which Renaissance historians differed from mediaeval historians has been clearly illustrated - that is in their 'sense of history'.<sup>5</sup> This the author defines as a combination of a sense of anachronism and an awareness of what constitutes historical evidence, and an interest in causation. These three things clearly distinguish history written from round about the fifteenth century onwards from that which belongs to the centuries before then. Such a 'sense of history' has been with us ever since, and was present to some extent also in Greek and Roman times, but not in the era between.

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5. P. Burke, *op. cit.* Chapters I, VI.

Having a 'sense of history' enabled Renaissance historians to avoid such historical pitfalls as sending Cataline's wife off to Mass, having Herod swear 'by Mahoun in heaven' or assuming that the cult of chivalry could be applied to ancient Greece.<sup>6</sup> It also encouraged people to ask questions about the origins of ancient ruins and monuments - who built them, when and why, and it suggested that they might question and criticise such timeless god-given truths as the Bible, and the ancient law books. A new concept of the search for truth emerged. Because something was written down and had passed into the realm of accepted fact it might not ipso facto be the truth, nor even a pale reflection of the truth. It has been pointed out above how Alberti tends to treat his sources uncritically and to assemble what all of them have to say about a particular place or incident. In the Middle Ages such a scissors-and-paste construction of historical narratives was almost the only technique used and it was used with even less criticism than Alberti employed. There was no attempt to investigate the sources of the different pieces of information, or to examine the plausibility of arguments arising from them. A vast stock of myths was continually reiterated, embellished and augmented, especially concerning the ancient world. Another indication of the missing 'historical sense' is the fact that distance in time and distance in space were almost indistinguishable to the mediaeval man.

It is not surprising to find that the fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century historians should pay considerable attention to veracity of detail, to the accurate recording of events, and to careful

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6. Ibid, pp.1-2.

evaluation of cause and effect. The classical authors, whether Greek or Latin, repeatedly bid them do so. Aristotle, for example, pointed out that the poet's function was to describe what might have been, or what might be in the future, but the historian must describe only what has been.<sup>7</sup> The idea of the need for truth recurred in Dionysius of Halicarnassus.<sup>8</sup> Even more influential was Cicero's De Oratore from which the humanists learned to regard history as a branch of rhetoric. Cicero stressed, as Dionysius did, that history had to be accurate since one could learn lessons from it, and therefore it was necessary to know all the circumstances leading up to an event and their contribution to its outcome. Other prerequisites for a good historian, according to Cicero, were style and organization of material, a view held also by the second century critic Lucian.<sup>9</sup> Both favoured a chronological arrangement of facts and stressed the need to distinguish the important from the trivial. It was this art of imposing order and proportion in the selection of material which distinguished history from chronicles according to Lucian.<sup>10</sup> Diodorus Siculus began Book V of his history with similar comments on the historian's need to consider carefully all useful and relevant information and on how he should present such varied material.

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7. Aristotle, Poetics Ch. IX.

8. In his preface to Bk. I of the Roman Antiquities, he declares that the historian should choose noble and lofty subjects such as will be of use to his readers, and secondly, take care how he writes, as history enshrines the truth, and is the source of both prudence and wisdom. He should therefore exercise care and discrimination in gathering his materials.

9. Cicero, De Oratore, XV, advocated that facts should be ordered chronologically. Lucian, How to Write History, V, complained of Herodian's chronological vagueness.

10. Lucian, XVII, 4-6.



Aristotle's and Cicero's remarks carried most weight with the humanists, although as has been pointed out little was written by humanists themselves on the theory of historical writing, possibly as a result of the lack of precedent among classical authors.<sup>11</sup> One notable exception is, of course, the dialogue Actius written by the Neapolitan Giovanni Pontano in 1499. It is well known as the prime example of an exposition of how the humanist historian should view his task. Pontanus's arguments are based on the Aristotelian relation of history to poetry, the former being facts and the latter largely the work of the imagination.<sup>12</sup> They limited the scope of historical writing to an extent which was not entirely acceptable to many humanist historians.

A letter of Bernardo Rucellai to Acciaiuoli describing a discussion in Pontano's academy about the classical canon for historical writing says that his friends prefer to follow a synthetic method rather than a single author, and they prefer Roman rather than Greek authors as their models. In their view the only three perfectly acceptable ones were Caesar, Sallust and Livy, with the greatest praise being given to Livy.<sup>13</sup>

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11. F. Gilbert, op. cit. pp.204-5. Aristotle and Cicero, Gilbert says, were notable exceptions in supplying rules for the writing of history. But pertinent comments on the historian's task do occur in other classical writings, particularly in the works I have mentioned.
  12. Three main propositions are put forward - firstly that war is the principle subject of historical analysis, secondly that war especially is the realm of the contingent, but the outcome can never be foreseen since the unexpected event can upset things and therefore the historian must take account of all events which could possibly have any bearing on the result and thirdly that historians must not omit presages, oracles, prophecies, visions and sacrifices from their accounts. Actius, CCVIII lines 28-30 and CCXX, lines 9-17. The edition referred to is that contained in I dialoghi di Giovanni Pontano, edited G. Previtera, (Florence, 1943). See M.P. Gilmore, 'Freedom and Determinism in Renaissance Historians', Studies in the Renaissance, 3 (1956), 49-60.
  13. F. Gilbert, op. cit., p.204. Bruni and Villani were valued as well as the classics.

In general the humanist canons for historical writing were firstly to follow the advice of Cicero and Aristotle on such matters as the didactic purpose and theoretical style of writing, secondly to follow Caesar, Livy and Sallust as models, especially the chronological form of Livy's Decades as a means of organizing material, and thirdly to prefer to use a synthesis of several authors' views. To this could be added the need not to neglect character or topography, divine signs and omens, or anything else which might have a bearing on events.

The humanists' method of writing and the type of research they might be expected to do have been analysed by Felix Gilbert. To begin with it was agreed that they, in contrast to the poet, must deal only with facts and that history could thereby have a practical educational purpose. Often the purpose was a more mercenary one, to win the favour of a prince or obtain office in a state, motives which could easily lead to bias. In this respect it has been shown that there was little difference between the fifteenth-century humanist historians like Biondo, Pius II or Leonardo Bruni and the sixteenth-century Florentine historians such as Varchi, Giovio, Nerli and even Machiavelli and Guicciardini. Their aim in every case was to win fame and favours or cash rewards.<sup>14</sup> According to Gilbert the humanist historians relied, in the main, on narrative accounts which they treated very uncritically. The classical authors were particularly easily accepted and they usually referred to only a limited selection of authors. Their criteria for deciding whose narrative to accept was not established, but whoever was closest in temporal proximity to the events in question was generally

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14. K.V. Underhill, Philippo de'Nerli, 1485-1556, Politician, administrator and historian. Unpublished London Ph.D. thesis, 1968, Chapter VIII.

preferred. Such critical investigations as were made were generally concerning the origins of cities. History was considered by the ancients and the fifteenth-century writers to have a moral purpose and be of practical value, so that gradually writers like Machiavelli and Guicciardini who were more pragmatic in their approach to contemporary events than the earlier fifteenth-century humanists began to apply the lessons of history to contemporary politics, to discard some of the characteristic aspects of classical history which had previously been copied and to reduce the number of references to the classical authors. For Machiavelli the humanist precepts were regarded as literary conventions and the humanist pattern became a framework for a political message.

Machiavelli and Guicciardini represented the most extreme development of humanist historiography, but they must not be regarded as being entirely representative of the general trend in the early sixteenth century. Although as the century progressed it became less fashionable to imitate the ancients so strictly, the classics were still the basis of education and sixteenth-century authors generally continued to include large numbers of classical references in their writings.

Beatrice Reynolds, in her survey of Latin historiography from 1400 to 1600<sup>15</sup> points out that in the fifteenth century Leonardo Bruni, Flavio Biondo and Pius II were responsible for setting several humanist trends in particular types of history writing which copied the ancients, for example in the writing of universal history, the writing of detailed

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15. B. Reynolds, op. cit.

histories of a particular political unit, and the writing of biography. These all had models in classical literature and the interest they stimulated must make us wary of assuming that most historians adopted the precepts of Pontanus and wrote military history in Livian decades. The conclusion is that several scholars were moving away from the idea of history as entertainment, towards that of history as truth, built up on a basis of reliable documentation. But there was a gap between the theory and the practice. In practice there was less objectivity especially with regard to an author's nation or state, and where his religion was concerned. Kathryn Underhill likewise concludes a very valuable discussion of the aims and methods of the early sixteenth-century Florentine historians on similar lines; that the humanist historians including Machiavelli and Guicciardini were trying to solve particular problems which they realised existed. They were trying to be truthful and impartial, trying not to flatter their patrons unduly, trying to weigh up the evidence and put events into perspective, to portray character convincingly and so on, but they could not always quite live up to the ideals they set themselves. In another aspect too, they were not entirely 'modern'. In their attempts to find rational explanations for the events of the past they could not entirely tear themselves away from the idea that man was not solely responsible for his own successes and failures; there was still a place for the goddess Fortuna in the ordering of the affairs of man, and the recording of omens, supernatural events and miracles still seems to have been quite acceptable.

ii. Alberti's ideas on the writing of history and the historical content of the Descrittione

Having described in general terms the main aims and attitudes of the humanist historians, it must now be asked whether Alberti was in tune with his contemporaries or not. Firstly a work of caution - the Descrittione was not primarily an historical work, so one should hardly expect to find all the precepts of Pontanus or the advice of Rucellai or the advanced pragmatism Guicciardini followed to the letter. What can be sought among the historical aspects of the work is evidence that Alberti was aware of the fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century ideas about the presentation of historical information. As well as being author of the Descrittione, Alberti was a biographer and historian in his own right. There exists his collection of lives of men of the Dominican Order, and there exists his history of Bologna, although the chronicle Ephemerides is lost. If an interest in biography can be regarded as one of the characteristics of fifteenth-century humanist historiography, then Alberti obviously was following the trend - just as he was when he divided his history of Bologna into Livian decades. Even though this was written well/<sup>on</sup> in the sixteenth-century, it is clear that the classical background of the sixteenth-century humanist was of permanent importance and admiration of classical models continued for some time after Gucciardini's rejection of them.

The Descrittione contains historical information of four different types. 1) The discussion of the origins of racial groups, settlements and cities. 2) A skeleton survey of the history of each area and town. 3) The description of antiquities, archaeological and epigraphic evidence

(a branch of the subject which was regarded more or less as a separate study by military and political historians). 4) Biography. Even though these elements are combined with topography and geography, one might expect them to show signs of sixteenth-century attitudes to history.

As has already been pointed out above Alberti does not follow the common practice of setting out the purpose of his work in an elaborate preface, so one does not find any general statement about his historical philosophy, or his way of writing history, as far as the Descrittione is concerned. It is only possible to draw conclusions about how he worked from the finished product. There exists, however his preface to the history of Bologna addressed to the senate and people of Bologna which sheds some light on his ideas of the purpose of history.

History, he says, is of value to people of all ranks (hence his desire that it should be written in the tongue of the common people, a question which has already been discussed in Chapter I). History is both useful and entertaining as it brings before our eyes the deeds of the ancients as if they were happening at the present. From them man can learn what actions to follow and what to avoid. History shows us the growth of civilization and the rise and fall of princes and cities, their misfortunes and their successes and failures. 'Laudano gl'historici le vertu, vituperano gli vitii, essaltano i buoni, e abbassano li rei Dall' historie può ciascun'ordine e conditione di persone pigliare regola, per la quale felicemente potrà passare li suoi giorni'. From history every rank of person can derive rules by which he can happily pass his days. History also is a clear mirror

for every type of woman, showing the honourable praises given to those who have spent their days moderately and virtuously, and on the other hand how those are spurned who have acted otherwise. It teaches people to follow virtue and scorn vice, and it makes authors long since dead live again, giving pleasure to those who read of their forefathers and ancestors. History has many more uses and pleasures which Alberti cannot linger on. It is also praised by the ancients for the help it can give to mortals as Cicero and Diodorus say.<sup>16</sup>

Alberti clearly recognises the didactic purpose of history as expounded by Cicero, he is aware of its value in assisting politicians and generals, in fact every class of citizen, and Diodorus's comments clearly reinforced, or may even have been responsible for, this point of view. To a large extent his ideas bolster up the traditional mediaeval concept of the ordered society with each individual in his god-ordained rank, reflecting Alberti's clerical values, 'stick to your place, be virtuous and content with your lot and things will go well for you', is his message. History teaches that the good are rewarded and the bad are punished. His moral standards are the Church's - virtue and modesty and their attendant characteristics mark the good woman and, presumably, the good man. There is nothing here

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16. 'E perciò meritamente da Cicerone è chiamata l'istoria, maestra, regola, e luce de mortali, e Diodoro dimostra essere obbrigato ogni grado di persone alli scrittori dell'istorie, per il gran cumulo de beni, che da essi di continuo si reporta'. Alberti points out that its value was appreciated by princes of old who treated writers with honour; something which some princes of his time have also appreciated, for example, Alfonso of Naples, Francesco Sforza of Milan and the Signori of Venice who have employed Panormitano, Simonetta, Sabellico, Navagero and Bembo to write histories. Hence his suggestion explained in the first chapter of his history that the senate of Bologna should accept a translation of his history of Bologna from Latin for the benefit of the populace.

of Machiavelli's pragmatism and hard-headedness derived from totally realistic assessments of the lessons of history in all their complexity. Alberti has absorbed the lessons of Cicero only at their face value in much the same way as the earlier humanists did, and not with an open mind. Indeed the whole structure of this part of the prologue is essentially a piece of Ciceronian rhetoric.

History is not just useful for Alberti, it is also an entertainment to learn of the men and events of the past especially to learn of one's own forefathers and ancestors. This is an attitude which the Descrittione itself would suggest with its considerable discussion of the origins of tribes and settlement and the careful compilations of genealogies of some outstanding Italian families.

This leads to another respect in which history for Alberti must have been enjoyable and valuable - the antiquarian side of the subject which makes an important contribution to the Descrittione. The study of inscriptions, of epitaphs, of ruins, medals and archaeological evidence in general both stimulated and was in turn stimulated by the reading of classical texts. This study had more far reaching implications too. From the deeply revered classical past the antiquary/historian could turn to centuries nearer his own time, using his newfound skills and bringing awakened critical faculties to bear on a new field of historical evidence. But this was over the horizon, out of view for most scholars of Alberti's times.

It is clear that Alberti accepted his contemporaries' views concerning the value and interest of history, even if his interpretation of these ideas might not seem quite so modern. Possibly the fact that



he was in holy orders restrained him from seeking cash rewards for his writing, but several contemporaries among the clergy, Paolo Giovio for one, had no such scruples. The problem of Alberti's method of procedure has been partly examined in the two previous chapters concerning his sources. It has been shown how he gathered material from as wide a collection of sources as possible, and how his general purpose was to reconcile one story with another. Alberti could not be expected to follow the strict canons advocating the form and style of Sallust and Livy, he was not writing about wars, nor could his main concern be politics in the Descrittione. He was not directed, in this particular work, by the loyalty, public spirit or civic pride which stimulated historians specifically concerned with the history of their states, nor could he better himself by the flattery of a patron.

In common with most fifteenth-century historians he relied for much of his information on traditional narratives, and like them he was more often than not, uncritical of what he found. Felix Gilbert's suggestion that such critical investigations as there were (in Renaissance history) mainly related to the discussion of the origins of a city, is also true for Alberti.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand Alberti does not rely on a limited selection of authors which was, according to Gilbert, a characteristic of the humanist historian.

Another way in which Alberti's writing reflects contemporary tendencies was in his attempt to refer to the correct text of a classical

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17. Gilbert, op. cit., p.220-222.

author. As can be seen from the tables in chapter IV, he took advantage of the work of humanist scholars, among them many of his Bolognese associates, who had produced translations and editions of classical works, making an effort to collate existing manuscripts and to disentangle points where the text was obscure. We do find Alberti occasionally making remarks of textual criticism himself, for example in the cases mentioned above,<sup>18</sup> where he refers to the Greek texts of Strabo and Polybius to check an obscurity. Nevertheless he could not bring himself to believe that the fragments of Annius were the work of a clever charlatan, a mistake which has detracted from the value of the Descrittione.

Although scholars might clear up obvious mistakes in the existing editions of a particular text, there was still the difficulty of variations between editions, especially over the spelling of some placenames, as mentioned above. On this problem Alberti offers no advice and did not seem to appreciate the difficulty.

When historical evidence is to be compared and compounded into a logical whole, even if the sources are someone else's narratives, there still remains the problem of what to do when differences between sources are irreconcilable. Alberti adopted ideas of methodology which, he mentions, are to be found in Annius's fragments.<sup>19</sup> One should put most faith in the author who is writing nearest in time to the events in question, and if this is not enough one should prefer the account of a native of the country or area under discussion rather

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18. See above p. 20

19. See above p. 192

than that of an outsider.<sup>20</sup> When neither of these criteria is of any use Alberti adopts another method, for example in his discussion of two records of the origins of the Este family and their family tree (f.311), he decides to accept the list of members of the family to which most authors agree - so he accepts the majority decision. Sometimes Alberti felt obliged to include among his accounts of the origins of cities, or even among the events of a city's past, a story for which he felt bound to apologise, its content seemed so farfetched, but as he explains in the case of a story about the origin of Piacenza, in general, he has to include such improbable stories, pointing out their stupidity, lest someone accuse him of ignorance for not mentioning them (f.332). Likewise describing the genealogy of the Visconti he gives an account contained in a chronicle which he clearly regards as colourful nonsense. It is up to the reader to decide whether he believes it or not, 'Io l'ho voluto descriver per sodisfare al volgo, acciò non li paresse, ch'io non l'havesse vedute. Sovente io descrivo alcune cose, più tosto per sodisfattion d'alcuni, pochi periti nell'istorie di buoni autori (acciò non dicano me non l'haver veduto) che per fede io gli dia' (f.397).

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20. f. 181. On the origin of name 'Brutii' he prefers Trogus Pompeius' account to Strabo's because Mirsilius Lesbius says that when one finds conflicting reports one should pay more attention to the opinion of whoever is likely to have had the most precise knowledge of the events in question, whether by access to books or by discussion with wise men. So since Trogus was 'latino', Alberti says it seems to him that he would have had a greater number of books on Italian matters and would have researched more diligently than Strabo, who was Greek, although he spent some time in Italy and worked most diligently on his Geographia, 'Vero è, che mi riporto però al giuditioso e curioso Lettore' (f.181 vo, see also ff.21, 216).

Although Alberti may be scornful of some stories that reach his ears, there are others which we find laughable today which seemed completely and utterly trustworthy to him and to many of his contemporaries. These are the many tales concerning the supernatural which could not be brushed aside lightly or dismissed as exaggerated superstition. The classical authors had pointed out the need, when assessing all the factors influencing the outcome of an event, to consider also the portents and signs from the gods which preceded it, and, surprising as it might seem, the humanist historians, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, included, could not tear themselves away from an irrational belief in the supernatural. Pontanus accepted it as an integral part of historical writing and so in practice did Guicciardini (he refers to the terrible portents to be seen before the 1494 invasion).<sup>21</sup> If Pontanus and Guicciardini (the latter a much more sophisticated historian than Alberti) had no qualms about the reality of such mysterious happenings as armed men riding through the skies, images and sacred statues breaking into a sweat and the thirty-eight suns to be seen in the Apulian skies, then it is not surprising that Alberti with his religious background should accept unhesitatingly many similar tales that came his way and which were regarded as miracles, or portents.<sup>22</sup>

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21. *Storia d'Italia*, edited C. Panigada, 5 vols. (Bari, 1929), I, 63-4.

22. In Canobio for example there was a statue which in 1522 had oozed blood as a portent of the horrors to come in north Italy. Near Montepulciano in the Dominican church was the revered body of a Dominican nun, another of the many which apparently was seen to sweat at the approach of danger to the town 'Certamente cosa grande e rara' (f.540).

It is evident that Alberti in common with mediaeval and many humanist historians placed events on earth in relation to a permanent order of values. The mediaeval idea was that history served to show the power of God while the humanist view was that men should strive for virtue and avoid vice, again pointing to the importance of a moral choice which man had the power to make. The humanists emphasised that there was a man-made area in history, despite the influence of that elusive, ineluctable force behind the scenes, fortuna. Fortuna, or the goddess Fortuna, as she sometimes appears was the 'descendent' of the classical goddess of the same name who is frequently depicted with the wheel of fate which could turn so suddenly bringing downfall and ruin on the successful, and elevating the underdog. Fortuna was no respecter of persons or of states; the strongest prince and the most stable kingdom together with the humblest peasant could expect to benefit or to suffer at her whim and fancy. Fortuna was used in the Middle Ages, despite church opposition, to justify seemingly inexplicable changes in fortune and her influence was not denied by fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century writers.<sup>23</sup> When the plans of men went awry fortune became the scapegoat. Even Machiavelli and Guicciardini could not rid themselves of this idea, that however skilful and astute men were they would not entirely escape fortune's slings and arrows, though they might combat her blows by using the shield of 'virtu'. 'Virtu' was man's wisdom, valour and skill rolled into one and amounted to his innate ability to cope with impending disaster, or to prevent

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23. On this question see Howard Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature, (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), and Guiliano Procacci, 'La "Fortuna" nella realta politica e sociale del primo cinquecento'. Belfagor, 6 (1951), 407-420.

even unforeseen disasters from occurring. It has been shown that sixteenth-century Florentine historians all fell back on fortuna quite often to explain success and failure.<sup>24</sup> Authors like Nerli, Vettori, Ammirato and Giovio found it impossible to distinguish between what depended on God, on man's character and on fortuna, and they often used God, the heavens and fortuna almost indiscriminately for the same thing, not because they were in any way pagan in outlook, but merely because they were confused as to how to explain events.

One might have expected to find Alberti, as an orthodox churchman and inquisitor avoiding this dilemma, although his teacher Garzone on several occasions warned him and others of the fickleness of fortuna, and pointed out that it should not be overlooked.<sup>25</sup> In the Descrittione one sometimes finds 'fortuna' with no capital letter used simply to imply good fortune or good luck and no particular personification of fortune seems intended, for example Francesco Bussone of Carmagnola became successful 'col suo grand' ingegno, e altresì buono fortuna', (f.342). But the passage continues 'divenne in tanta riputatione presso i principi d'Italia ch'era riputato, da quel lato ove lui si

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24. Underhill, op. cit., pp.366-371. For example she reports that Nerli says fortuna has favoured the Medici. She gives examples also from the writings of Vettori, Pitti, Ammirato, Machiavelli and Guicciardini. From Giovio she records, 'La fortuna e Maggiore d'ogni prudenza'.

25. e.g. Gazone, Letters, f.252v. (Letter 32 to Alberti) - He writes that virtue is the greatest good - those who desert virtue trust to fortune which is never reliable. He gives references to Homer on this. F.283 (letter to F. Barolomeus SP.D.) 'Fortuna vero temeraria, inconstans, lubrica, malos extollens, probosque opprimes hand fieri potest, ut ipsa sit Peius. Verumtametsi res ita se habet nullo tamen modo existimandum est nihil esse fortunum, quando Aristoteles, Plinii, Sententia summus philosophus, Divus Thomas, Scotus, Egidius et ceteri peritissimi Theologi, natura sine ratione fortunam esse voluerunt'. To Ascanio Sforza he writes 'Docuisti nullam esse fortunam, quae sapienti timenda esset'.

piegava, seguitasse la prospera Fortuna come dimonstrano l'histoire di Biondo', etc... The second reference to Fortuna clearly does personify her.

Alberti makes no attempt to deny fortune's power, but in the context he could be excused on the grounds that he was reporting the facts as Biondo gives them and not necessarily putting his own interpretation on events. Reading further however we cannot feel so certain that these views would not have been Alberti's own. The passage continues (f.343), 'Vero è, che poi dimostrandosi à lui la fortuna crudel matrigna, in un punto il roino....'. I have found only ten other examples in the Descrittione of Alberti referring to fortuna at all as an arbiter of events, and in only three of these does it appear with no modification.<sup>26</sup> On other occasions he always adds some modifying phrase to 'la fortuna' either 'come si dice' or

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26. Ludovico Sforza (who incidently is highly praised by Alberti as a very religious man who looked as if he was going to settle the conflicts of Europe), 'à fine fu molto versato dall Fortuna, essendo venduto da gli Elvetii, e condotto in Francia cattivo' (f.380vo). Matteo Visconti, towards the end of his life surrendered the Archbishopric of Milan to the Pope so that he could live quietly, 'Vedendo esserli contraria la fortuna, e à suoi' (f.386vo.). The tyrant of Lucca, Paolo Guinisi, ruled with great success for thirty years, accumulated great wealth and had many fine sons, 'et ritrovandosi in gran gloria, e fausto di fortuna' etc., he thought he was quite safe, but 'ecco in contanente rivolgendo l'instabile fortuna la ruota, divenne miserabile spettacolo, et memorabile esempio à tutti i mortali. Per il quale ciascun può conoscere chiaramente non si ritrovare cosa alcuna stabile in questo Mondo, e che l'huomo sempre dee vivere con timore ritrovandosi in qualche dignità, et honore, di non cadere, e di venire esempio à gli altri' (f.36-36vo.). This last example of the three is the only occasion in which Alberti comments forcibly on the power which 'fortuna' may have over men's lives.

'come volgarmente si dice'.<sup>27</sup> The implication is that this was a common expression among ordinary people; presumably, the rank and file talked about having fortune on one's side in a mildly superstitious fashion which Alberti did not object to, but did not really subscribe to himself. As a marginal note beside the reference to Ludovico Sforza the printer of the 1553 edition has 'Risguarda esempio di fortuna'. Clearly by the mid-sixteenth century the concept had not gone out of fashion among ordinary people. Alberti as a churchman, was unlikely to be anything but sceptical or noncommittal about it, he uses it very seldom and only occasionally does he give the impression that he regards it as a major force in men's lives. On the other hand when great men were faced with disaster for reasons not immediately apparent, or when their plans seemed to go awry, one could say that ill luck had befallen them and that fortune did not favour them. One could admit a little luck or otherwise even in God's ordered society. It was also an easy way out when one was not in possession of all the facts or when one was discussing sympathetically someone who might have been expected to do better. A comment made by Alberti concerning Aquileia does not include the actual word 'fortuna' but expresses ideas very close to those of the passage concerning Paolo Guinisi, that good and bad fortune are part of the instability of man's earthly existence. Aquileia, he says, has passed through time of happiness ('felicità') and times of sorrow ('infelicità').

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27. See for example f.17v. The Genoese Biagio Assereto fighting the armada of the Aragonese, 'al fine essendogli favorevole la Fortuna (come se dice) la vince', and f.340, Lodovico Sforza's changed circumstances after Novarra are 'Grand' esempio di fortuna (come volgarmente si dice) a i mortali'.



It was once full of people and now it is deserted (f.437vo-438). 'Et ciò ho voluto scrivere accio che ogn'uno avvertisca all'instabilità delle cose inferiori, che hora sono in colmo di gloria, e doppo poco tempo saranno gittate nel profondo. Et quanto prima erano gloriose tanto poi saranno ingiuriose. Onde dalle cose narrate, si può pigliare essempio che niuno dee fidarsi nè sperare nella vana felicità del Mondo'. (In the margin is written 'Risguarda attentamente!'). What people may commonly call 'fortuna' is just another way of referring to the contradictions and inexplicable mysteries of life on earth. In this world nothing is certain or wholly explicable; that is of the world to come.

If fortuna features rarely in the Descrittione, the use of virtù as a counterpoise is non-existent. 'Virtù', 'virtuti' and 'virtuoso' appear frequently with the customary meaning of virtue and virtuous describing many of the great characters of Italian history, but they are not in any way related to fortuna.

It is interesting to note that only thirty years after the publication of the Descrittione, the Papacy was apparently taking a hard line against the idea of fortuna, for Montaigne found that objections were made to his Essays (following the confiscation of his books by the authorities in Rome for inspection) because he referred to fortuna. He maintained that the corrector had misunderstood his meaning and his objection was upheld by the Master of the Sacred Palace.<sup>28</sup> It seems that by 1580 the use of fortuna was frowned on by

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28. The Diary of Montaigne's Journey to Italy in 1580 and 1581, translated with notes by E.J. Trechmann, (New York, 1929), p.153. Trechmann suggests that Montaigne's chief fault lay in using 'Fortuna' instead of 'Providence' but he did not change it.

the church in Rome, though the idea of divine providence was acceptable. It is in this sense that Alberti seems to use fortuna, though he clearly did not object to the word itself.

At this point it is relevant to enquire whether the fact that Alberti was in holy orders has imposed any particular bias on the Descrittione, and the answer is very little indeed. Among the lists of famous men are many churchmen and, naturally, many Dominicans, since Alberti had his biographical work on the Order at his fingertips, but these are in every case counter-balanced by equally long lists of statesmen, soldiers or scholars. Alberti does not hesitate to praise men who have suffered for their faith, for example, the inhabitants of Otranto whose constancy when subjected to the Turks was exemplary (f.210vo-211). He laments the bad condition of some more remote monasteries like that of the Church of S. Lionardo Cavalieri Tedeschi which he visited (f.227), and he vehemently denounces the heresay of the Piedmontese. (f.406<sup>29</sup>vo) Alberti accepted the Roman and Conciliar popes, presumably, as theirs are the names which appear in his list of holders of the papal office.<sup>30</sup>

Following these general comments on Alberti's ideas on history and history writing I intend to look at the value of the narrative history content of the Descrittione and its influence or usefulness if any. Compared with the information on the origins of settlement, on antiquities and on famous men of Italy, the narrative history of regions

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29. I have not found any other comments on Reformation ideas in the work despite his connections with the Inquisition.

30. Of the now discredited Pope John XXIII (Baldassar Cossa) he writes, à cui (Cossa) e. molto ubligato la nostra città di Bologna per li benefici da lui ricevuti essendo Legato di essa, e poi fatto Pontefice secondo che dimostrano gli annali di quella'(f.166vo).

and cities is of less interest and value and can be discussed fairly quickly.

An example of the type of narrative history of a city which one can expect in the Descrittione has been given above. In the case of Pisa (the details of which are given in chapter III) it is a brief outline, but with a more important city like Florence or Milan, the city's history (origins excluded) can be somewhat more extensive, yet still have some glaring omissions. The reason is a fairly simple one, the information was readily accessible to Alberti in several comprehensive accounts to which he refers, for example those of Corio, Merula and Simonetta for Milan and of Leonardo Bruni, Landino, Machiavelli and others for Florence. Several other cities had their own histories by the time he was writing and he refers to them as has been shown in chapters II and V. However, although there was a great quantity of information available, Alberti does not do justice to it. Take Florence for example (f.38-44vo.). We learn nothing of the vicissitudes of the Florentines in the time of Matilda, nothing of the struggle of the 'Grandi' against the nobles of the contado. Alberti tells us that the commune was controlled by 2 consuls and a senate of 100, but he does not explain how in the twelfth-century consuls were replaced by a podestà. There is no mention of the formation of the Tuscan League nor of the Guelf-Ghibelline conflicts. A constitutional change involving the election of 10 citizens is mentioned with its date of '1254 according to Biondo'. This could possibly refer to the Third Florentine Constitution of 1250. We learn of the setting up of the council of 8 called the Priors of the

Guilds, together with a Gonfalonier of Justice who is only to hold office for two months, but as far as Alberti has discovered this system has only been altered three times since. We hear a little of the events which led up to these changes, but amazingly Alberti, in his political narrative, does not refer to Cosimo or Lorenzo di Medici, although they are later given fulsome praises among the great citizens of Florence. Other omissions are obvious. There is no mention of Charles of Anjou as Podestà, and the earlier constitutional changes this involved, nor of the Ciompi rebels. There is no reference to the economic vicissitudes of the city nor to the serious threat the Milanese posed to Florentine liberty at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Admittedly Alberti claims to be describing the government (f.41 'parlero del governo di essa, che ha havuto insino ad hora') but he does follow this by describing at some length the Council of Florence (f.42). It would not be unreasonable to expect that he might equally well have considered some other events in Florence's past worthy of comment.

This type of outline history, not always particularly well balanced is typical of the historical narrative side of the work, and is greatly dependent on the available sources. There is no idea of a didactic purpose behind the narrative of events; facts are reported just as they might be found in a chronicle with few explanations and little philosophising. If the reader wanted to learn any lessons from the history to be found here he would have to analyse the facts carefully for himself and would seldom have a complete picture of events. Of course shortage of space and the need for brevity frequently bring Alberti to a conclusion abruptly. In a work of the scope of the Descrittione

considerable skill was necessary to produce an account of a city's history which covered all major political developments clearly in the space of a few paragraphs. Alberti does not seem to have been always up to the task. The variety of sources that he wished to mention was an added encumbrance. The 'influence' of such records on future historians has to be regarded as non-existent, although as a part of the whole work the information must have been useful to someone using the Descrittione as a guide-book, or to later compilers of descriptions. I intend to discuss the use made of all the historical information, together with antiquarian information included in the Descrittione, in the following section of this chapter.

iii. The value of the Descrittione's information on placenames and early settlement.

One of the tasks Alberti set himself was to investigate the origins of settlements in different parts of Italy. He wanted to answer such questions as who were the Italians? Where did they come from? Why was the country called Italy? How were towns like Rome, Florence and Milan founded and given their names? These questions could only be answered by firstly identifying the ancient placenames when they appeared in classical literature. The alphabetical indexes of Boccaccio and Lilius<sup>31</sup> helped the classical scholars with these puzzles, but there were always new questions of identification to be answered and discussed. The importance Alberti attached to the fragments of Annius in helping to answer some of these questions has

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31. See above Chapter II.

been mentioned already, as have some of the foundation myths and legends born in antiquity and maintained through classical literature. Most of these were still not criticised even in the sixteenth century, dependent as it was on literary source material for almost its entire knowledge of classical times. What, then, was Alberti's role in reiterating and perpetuating the traditional foundation myths?

According to Elias J. Bickerman<sup>32</sup> there were at least twenty-five early Greek accounts of the origins of Rome, collected by Dionysius, Plutarch and other classical authors, like Diodorus and Livy. Most of these differed from what was to become the accepted Roman tradition (that of the foundation of the city by Aeneas or his descendant Romulus, the idea generally accepted by most writers in about 260 B.C.).<sup>33</sup>

There were also ideas that Rome was a Pelasgian (Plutarch, Roman History I) or Tyrrhenian foundation (Dionysius, Antiquitates, I.29 and I.10). Polybius regarded Rome as an Arcadian colony but once the native Roman tradition had established itself, with so many historians copying from one another, there was soon one clearly accepted line of thought which nobody really challenged neither in Antiquity nor in the Middle Ages.

If a historian had started to check facts carefully some discrepancies would certainly have been clear. Momigliano points out that in connection with the foundation of Rome for example, the Etruscan tradition mentions Mastarna, never mentioned by the Annalists, while Pliny (XXXIV, 139) and Tacitus (History, III, 72) learned somewhere that Porsenna had

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32. E.J. Bickerman, 'Origines Gentium', Classical Philology, 47 (1952), 65-81.

33. On this see also A.D. Momigliano, 'An interim report on the origins of Rome', Journal of Roman Studies, 53 (1963), 95-121, particularly pages 96-98, referred to hereafter as Momigliano, J.R.S., 1963.

compelled Rome to surrender notwithstanding the geese! Early Greeks tried to solve the whole problem of a common inheritance of all peoples, and tried to give them a common past, shared by all mankind, rather than to see separate races emerging in different areas of the world. This idea of a common origin of all nations fitted in naturally to the Christian explanation of the origin of settlement and made it easy to reconcile classical and Christian theories by which Noah, the survivor of the Flood, known variously as Ogyges, Janito and Giano, effectively replaced Adam as the First Man, and Noah's children and grandchildren on their wanderings eventually populated the whole known world.<sup>34</sup> Apart from the wanderings of Noah's offsprings, the travels of Aeneas and Ulysses and their many companions had a lot to answer for in historical terms!

Following the example of Rome many Italian cities throughout the Middle Ages 'discovered' a tradition that they were founded by either descendents of Noah or of the Trojans or of both, and despite the opposition of some clergy the Trojan tradition was especially admired.<sup>35</sup> Alberti himself pointed out that almost every town wanted to prove it was descended from Noah (f.309). The Mediaeval writings one finds on the origins of Rome are described by Graf,<sup>36</sup> who points out that such a scholar

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34. From them were descended the various Greek and Roman tribes, and less directly the inhabitants of Iberia and of Gaul (via the Trojans from the descendents of Francus) and of Britain (from those of Brute, great-grandson of Aeneas). See Momigliano J.R.S., 1963. Polydore Virgil and Claude Fauchet did object to this! See also Arturo Graf., Roma nella memoria e nelle imaginzioni del medioevo, (Turin, 1883) and Antonio Casati 'Storia degli studi sulle origini Italiche,' Revista Europea, 1, (1846), 721-748; 2, (1847), 102-156.

35. Emilio Gorra, Testi inediti di Storia Trojana, (Turin, 1889), pp.62-64 and passim. He discusses in detail some of the stories, poems and chronicles through which the legends were perpetuated.

36. op. cit., p.80 onwards.

as Pierfrancesco Giambullari (one of the founders of the Florentine Academy) still reproduced the Noah legends in the sixteenth century in his Origini della lingua fiorentina, altrimenti il Gello, (Florence, 1547), and again in his Storia generale d'Europa, where he seems to seek credit for having discovered for the first time the important information that Noah came to Italy!

Certainly there was the occasional scholar in the later Middle Ages who was rather more sceptical than usual about some of the established legends. Benzo d'Alessandria<sup>37</sup> was quick to pour cold water on Jacopo da Voragine's fanciful ideas of three Januses (a son of Noah) coming at three different times to Genoa.<sup>38</sup> Benzo's contemporaries did not see such problems. The Dominican Galvaneo Fiamma, for example, despite his acknowledged borrowings from Benzo still indulged in all the old fantasies and accepted Jacopo da Voragine's stories and the Noah-Janus legends as did Giovanni da Cermenati, another contemporary from Como.

The story of Florence's alleged origin - that it was founded by Caesar after the destruction of Fiesole as punishment for Fiesole's harbouring of the Cataline conspirators - was faithfully reproduced by Giovanni Villani in his chronicle,<sup>39</sup> and still repeated by Filippo Villani in 1381-2 in his first version of his work on the origins of Florence, but it was attacked immediately on the grounds of implausibility and

37. See Chapter II, above.

38. J.R. Berrigan, op. cit. pp.136-139. Benzo also voiced doubts about Subes, a descendent of Noah, said to be the mythical progenitor of Milan. After listing all the authors who should have mentioned Subes, but did not, he wonders why so many authors accept the idea of Noah and his progeny coming to the west. 'Deus novit, ego ignoro', he concludes. He preferred Livy's theory that Milan was founded by a leader of the invading Gauls, Bellovesus.

39. Cronica I, 38 and 39.



irrationality by Benvenuto Rambaldi da Imola in a commentary on the Divine Comedy written at about the same time.<sup>40</sup> Baron is naturally eager to point out that his hero Leonardo Bruni was astute enough to see through the legends in his Landatio Urbis Florentinae and also to make use of Salutati's suggestion that Florence was founded by the republican soldiers of Sulla, thus emphasising the republican origins of Florence and her traditional independence.<sup>41</sup>

During the fifteenth century some advances were made in cutting away the mythological undergrowth from the historical past, but it was only in isolated corners and no very widespread change of attitude was felt. The humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, even the sceptics like Lorenzo Valla, when dealing with classical times, started with Livy and Dionysius and the other literary sources. They could compare them, and they could correct corruptions of the text, but to deny their value was impossible. Some, like Valla, dismissed the more futile stories of Noah and his band, but sixteenth-century scholars made more progress in discussing ancient political institutions, than in the actual history of individual regions, but sometimes they did scorn the really far-fetched theories.<sup>42</sup>

40. H. Baron, The Crisis of the early Italian Renaissance, pp.61-64, 153. Baron discusses the question of origins again in From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni, Studies in Humanist & Political Literature (Chicago, 1968), Chapter 5.

41. This is a key point in Baron's case for the Landatio being a patriotic response to the political crisis of 1402.

42. Momigliano, J.R.S., 1963, p.97. The question of the origins of Florence occupied members of Rucellai's circle in the Orti Oricellari and are the subject of correspondence between Vincenzo Borghini and Girolamo Mei. (Prose Fiorentine, XVII, 309) The letters are long and detailed and show the care with which the two men have analysed the Greek and Roman texts in order to attempt to discover the truth. Guicciardini discussed the origins of Florence as given by Pliny and Tacitus, and followed Valla's critical attitude to his sources; where he had not enough evidence he refrained from making a judgement, but again the most fanciful stories are avoided. (Le Cose Fiorentine, (Florence, 1945), Bk. I, p.5.)

If J.W. Thompson were to be believed,<sup>43</sup> from the time<sup>of</sup> Biondo onwards, Italian history was no more to be troubled with the legends and Alberti would have to be regarded as an old fashioned, ill-educated perpetuator of mumbo-jumbo which most people would have scorned, 'Flavio Biondo put historical criticism upon so firm a basis (in the Decades) that never again were the pages of Italian historical writing to repeat the fantastic rubbish about the Trojan or other ancient origins of Florence and Venice and Milan, while at the same time and until as late as the seventeenth century, European historiography outside Italy continued to be stuffed with fable.' Thompson unfortunately does not provide the evidence for this remark, and one does not have to look far to find examples of the traditional myths being given credence well beyond Biondo's time, in Italy,<sup>44</sup> just as much as outside, and not simply the traditional myths, but the new collection of stories propagated by Annii which only made the confusion worse. They too were accepted north of the Alps.<sup>45</sup>

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43. J.W. Thompson, op. cit., p.491.

44. I discuss some examples, below pp.350-51.

45. On the Annii tradition in France see R.E. Asher, 'Myth, Legend and History in Renaissance France', Studi Francesi, 39 (1969), 409-419. Annii's forgeries did not fool everyone, but they did inspire a further crop of stories in local histories tracing town origins back to Noah and his family. For example, Fazellus, De rebus siculis decades duae, (Palermo, 1560), pp.238-9. See also Don Cameron Allen, 'The Legend of Noah', University of Illinois Studies in language and literature, 33 (1949), Parts 3-4., pp.114-16 for Annii. Don Cameron Allen wrongly maintains that Annii was regarded as gospel until Gerardus Vossius scrutinized his compendium in the De Historicis Graecis Libri tres, (Lyon, 1651), when in fact Vossius actually refers to several of the other important sixteenth-century writers who saw through him, like Alciati, Volaterrano, Sabellico, Erasmus, Lefevre d'Etapes etc. See Historicis Latinis Libri Tres, (Lyons, 1651). Momigliano J.R.S., 53 (1963), p.97-98., also has relevant comments, and on myths in France see Beatrice Reynolds, op. cit. She points out that north of the Alps the Benedictine Trithemius of Sponheim (d. 1516) claimed to have discovered a record by Hunibald, an alleged contemporary of Clovis, upon which forgery he built up a history of the Franks showing that their Kingdom predated the Roman Empire.

It is evident that only the most clear-thinking and independent-minded historians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were able to see the implausibility of the Noah sagas and similar legends, and even if the rather more far-fetched ideas were rejected there was still nothing to replace the traditional Greek and Roman stories found in Dionysius, Livy and Diodorus. In the discussion of Alberti's use of his sources above some examples are given of how he uses Annius' information and tries to tie it in with the stories from other classical sources. Sometimes Annius conveniently corroborated an accepted opinion. There was not any very clearly defined path for Alberti to follow in the mythological maze which faced him, and he was not any great intellectual pioneer, so we cannot be surprised that he is ready to accept some of the old stories, nor can we entirely condemn him for doing so, or try to claim that he was out of date in his views. Nor, I think, can we claim that such information very seriously detracts from the value of the Descrittione as a whole, provided that we are prepared to see the work as a reflection of one set of contemporary ideas, which still had many supporters, and indeed, as is demonstrated below, was to continue to find apologists for a long time to come.

Alberti cannot be regarded as a last stronghold of an out-of-date approach. He recorded the available information as he found it, not always with much critical appraisal, but one cannot generalise about this, since we find him sometimes reconciling various opinions, sometimes accepting old traditions, and sometimes critically testing stories he hears against 'reliable sources' or suggesting his own personal scepticism by inviting the reader to draw his own conclusions. Sometimes

he prefers information he has recently discovered in chronicles and archives.

Throughout the entire work there is a combination of plausible theories (always based on the literary evidence) with the more widely accredited old fables, which are only accepted if they are told by a 'reliable' source. (Unfortunately Annius' fragments were considered 'reliable' for this purpose.) This leads to some inconsistencies in what Alberti is prepared to accept and reject. For example in his introduction he relates the stories of how Italy was first colonized by Noah and his descendents ( f.lvo.), and later by Sabo or Saturno who heralded the legendary 'Golden Age'. The story of the cities of Tuscany on each side of the Apennines being creations of the Gianigeni also appears to be accepted. On the other hand in the case of Ferrara (f.308-309), we find that Alberti rejects both the stories of a Trojan origin and that of foundation by Noah's progeny - everybody wants to prove that their city originated in this way, 'ogni uno si forza di volere provare essere state fabricate le loro città da i nipoti di Noe', he says.<sup>46</sup>

The origins of Ravenna (f.274vc-275) can be traced to Noah or to the Trojans, with no very satisfactory alternatives, but Alberti seems sceptical, 'Piglierà il giuditioso lettore quel che le parerà più verisimile di queste narrationi, ò in tutto, ò in parte, ò in nulla',

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46. The story he prefers here is that there was a fortress here (that called Inventum by Boccaccio in his work on the rivers, etc.), but the name Ferrara derives from the time when the inhabitants of Ferrariola across the Po came to settle here at the decree of Theodosius the Younger. This information he has learned from the archives of the most illustrious lord of Ferrara, 'secondo ch'io vidi, che cosi dicono' (f.309).

is his advice here (f.274vo-275). Similarly he denies the Trojan origins of Imola and accepts that it was called Forum Cornелиi (by Strabo and Pliny and others) because it was a Roman foundation.

'Io crederei che la fosse fabricata da i Romani, e talmente nominata da uno de i Cornелиi, che fosse quivi mandato dal Senato Romano à far ragione'. (f.286vo-7).

Modena (f.317-17vo), he explains, was a foundation of the Tuscans crossing the Apennines, and also of the Gauls. There is a story that it got its name from 'movea moves', because it was submerged in a great flood. 'Ne piglierà questa credenza il giudicioso lettore che le parerà di tal cosa', says Alberti. Benzo d'Alessandria gives Piacenza Trojan origins, but Alberti prefers a chronicle of Milan and Lodi which he has seen, describing it as a foundation of the Gauls. There are some stories which he has omitted they are so laughable, and as for the various other explanations he has described, 'pare à me che siano alcune di quelle che hanno poco colore di verità', he says (f.332). Mantua gave rise to several colourful stories, debated at length, but producing a common thread, accepted by most authors except Leonardo Bruni, that the founder was one Manto, child of the Theban Tiresia (f.347vo.-349vo.), or as Cato would have it by Ochno Bianoro, the son of Manto who was conveniently the King of the Tuscans responsible for Tuscan expansion over the Apennines. Como, Alberti thinks, was both a Tuscan foundation and then restored or enlarged by the Gauls.<sup>47</sup>

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47. There he reconciles two traditions, saying that ancient authors often used the word 'construere' or 'edificare', instead of 'aggrandire' or 'ristorare'), but again the reader can make his own judgement. 'Cosi io dico, riservando però à ciascun il suo guiditio' (f.372vo.).

From the number of times Alberti suggests that the stories he hears are far-fetched, or that he will leave the reader to judge what story he finds most feasible, it is clear that there was no real test of authenticity which could be applied to the literary evidence, except to prefer the acknowledged classical authors, and to rely on one's own judgement. When describing Rome he stresses the need for brevity and suggests some authors who have written fuller descriptions, for example Albertini, P. Vettore, Volaterrano, Fulvio, Marliano and so on. He hopes no one will be surprised if he does not mention all his sources in this short survey, 'perchè io fo sapere, che niuna cosa scriverei senza l'autorità di Dionisio Alicarnaseo di Strabone, di Plinio, di Livio, di Pomponio Mela, e di quegli scrittori, che di sopra nominati habbiamo overo che io con gli occhi istessi non habbia veduto' (f.103).

Sometimes, he says, no explanation for a placename is forthcoming, for example in the case of Basilicata (f.176vo), (was it because the mountains were so sheer, like a Basillica, he suggests), or Calabria (f.181vo.) or Terra d'Otranto (f.209), where the obvious did not seem to occur to him. A sceptical note certainly creeps into the Descrittione at several points. Even Alberti found it hard to agree that Apulia, for example, could be named after the Greek 'a pluvia', 'without rain', in view of the abundant crops grown there, and plentiful rainfall for them in most parts (f.215vo.).

It may seem that Alberti was too gullible at times, but it would have been hard for someone writing such an exhaustive account to have objected to every piece of folklore that he came across, and it is

evident that he was not uncritical (nor did he expect his readers to be) of legends which did not seem to have a good foundation. It is scarcely likely that he, as a churchman, would have been ready to smash entirely the Biblical traditions of Noah.

In general terms the value of his discussions on origins lies in the reporting of all the available opinions to be found in accredited sources, a job he does very thoroughly, so that one can appreciate what the sixteenth-century historian was up against. In the discussion of the origins of place-names, the idea of towns being named after people - their founders, or conquering 'refounders' - predominates. Thereafter the name may become corrupted by changes of pronunciation and spelling, so that it appears differently in different authors' writings. In such cases, Alberti tries hard to identify settlements where the name has changed, as is evident from earlier discussions.

Antiquarian investigations and information obtained from tombs, inscriptions, and archaeological discoveries did not affect Alberti's interpretations of his literary sources to any great extent. Indeed, as has been mentioned, he preferred the so-called 'reputable authors' to the evidence of an inscription.<sup>48</sup> But if we look at the works written later in the century, and indeed at most of the discussions on the origins of the city of Rome, on the Etruscans, or on any other early tribes in Italy, it is clear that archaeological evidence was comparatively unimportant until the twentieth century, and that whatever complaints were made about the theories bandied around, no one had any

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48. Above, p. 264 Pliny, Strabo, Livy and Ptolemy are the authors preferred.

answer but to look, yet again, as Alberti had done, at the literary sources.

One can ask if Alberti's writing had any influence, particularly any influence for the worse, in respect of these foundation stories, fact and fiction. Can he be held in any way responsible for the perpetuation of erroneous fables? In the first place he was a most convinced supporter of Annius, but we know that learned opinion was severely divided over that problem, with probably the weight of it, especially as time went on, forcefully denouncing the forgeries. In the second place, as time went by history and geography became increasingly separate studies, the historians dealing with individual regions, and taking as their sources the literature and archives dealing with the region in question rather than hunting up odd pieces of information in a work the size of the Descrittione. This does not mean that they did not consult it at all, but it tended to provide perhaps only one reference among many, and Alberti's views did not dominate. Thirdly, the Descrittione could scarcely have any special influence for the worse when its sources were the same classical literary sources which writers continued to use (because they had no obvious alternatives) in the following centuries. In fact Alberti had little influence in this field, because, so far as one can judge, the type of work he was writing, a chorography, was not developed beyond the early years of the seventeenth century.

Alberti is very seldom referred to in local histories, and local antiquarian studies as far as can be judged from a selective survey. In view of the impossibility of locating and examining all the sixteenth-century, seventeenth-century or even eighteenth-century histories of



Italy and the regions which might contain the odd reference to Alberti, or possibly show signs of his influence, I have, in the main, limited myself to the one hundred and sixty or so works collected by the German antiquary Joannes Georgius Graevius in his Thesaurus, which date from after 1550.<sup>49</sup>

Out of these only thirty-four works and thirty-three authors mention Alberti, and only three have more than two or three references to him. Out of a total of about ninety references to Alberti in all those works (some of the works are several hundred folio columns long), twenty-five are references which point out errors or criticise his arguments. From these figures alone it can hardly be said that the Descrittione had any great significance from a historical or antiquarian

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49. Thesaurus antiquitatum et historiarum Italiae, Siciliae, (Leiden, 1704-1725). Graevius, (1632-1703) was honoured by special recognition by Louis XIV and was a favourite of William III of England who made him his Historiographer Royal. The works in the Thesaurus are all basically of an historical nature. A few are simply chronicles not previously printed and predate Alberti in origin. There are also some descriptive works which he used. Although there is a very marked distinction in some cases between political history and antiquarian studies, most works combine both studies as part of a history of the area in question. Approximately 168 concern parts of Italy and 52 concern the Islands. About 15 are biographical works or collections of biographical notes. There are about 25 which claim to be descriptions of a town or area, and about 5 which call themselves a 'laudatio' or city eulogy. About 15 claim to deal with the origins and site of a place, though many of these could equally well be classified as historico-antiquarian works, while many of the so-called 'histories' or 'antiquitates' also deal with origins. About 40 works actually contain the word 'Antiquitates' in their title and 2 have 'Monumenta', while there are several works on the coins of Sicily which are antiquarian studies rather than histories. That leaves about 90 works which are histories of one sort or another, mostly town histories, with 10 church histories, and 2 or 3 works on government and administration. These works together with a small number of other titles which have come to my notice, I hope may be regarded as constituting a representative selection of historico-antiquarian literature on which to base my arguments about the use of otherwise which sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century historical writers made of the Descrittione.

point of view. Some authors looked at it, extracted a point here and there, picked a few holes in what Alberti had to say, but his value was negligible.

Outside the Thesaurus the story is much the same. There are very few works that I have seen which can be classified as histories, which pay any attention to the Descrittione. I am deliberately excluding for the purposes of this argument works which could be described as chorographies, historical geographies or travel guides - works which approach closer in format to the Descrittione - as I intend to treat these separately in the next chapter.

Having said that Alberti's historical information and information on origins was very little referred to, I would like to return briefly to the question of foundation stories and myths, since even if many authors did not refer to Alberti, it is worth noting that many of the popular tales survived much longer than one might imagine, showing that Alberti cannot be so quickly censured for repeating them. A work on Milan by the Jesuit Paolo Moriga,<sup>50</sup> begins after a lengthy preface, with the Noah story, taken not from Alberti (who is listed in his catalogue of sources), but from Augustine's City of God, and Milan is said to have been founded by Tubal, son of Japhet.<sup>51</sup> Romulus and Remus had their defenders well on in the seventeenth century. J. Gronovius and Theodorus Ryckius, both Leyden professors, published works in 1684 defending the traditional views, and so did J. Perizonius in 1685. and 1709.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand Johannes Temporarius had rejected the

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50. Historia dell'Antichita di Milano, (Venice, 1592).

51. Other authors, ancient and in centuries nearer in time have other ideas, for example that Milan was founded more than 2000 years before Rome and that it was ruled by the Toscani for 374 years.

52. See Momigliano, op. cit., J.R.S. 1963, p.97.

traditional story about a hundred years before,<sup>53</sup> and Phillippus Cluverius 'the father of modern historical geography,' as Momigliano calls him, rejected both the story of Aeneas and that of Romulus.<sup>54</sup>

In England Edmund Dickinson, a Fellow of Merton College was describing Noah's arrival in Italy in a work published in 1655.<sup>55</sup>

Marchese Scipione Maffei, in the early eighteenth-century, tried to investigate the origins of the Etruscans using the evidence of vases, medalions, stones, inscriptions and so on, with the help of his friend Senator Bonarroti, but he still accepted all the stories of the twelve cities of Tuscany and their counterparts across the Apennines.<sup>56</sup>

Maffei makes no mention of Alberti or Annius, but as late as 1785 there was a work published in Italy which purported to use only the authentic truth of classical authors, yet still explained how the first inhabitants of Italy were the descendants of Noah or Japhet/while the word Cethim used in the Bible meant Italy!<sup>57</sup> The author, Mario Guarnacci was aware of the value of archaeological information which plays a large part in his writing, but his acceptance of the Biblical nature of the population of the earth must have had many followers even among those more critical of Greek mythology. One has only to remember the gradual conversion from such views of Charles Darwin to appreciate how christian biblical truth was considered incontrovertible even if Greek mythology was not.

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53. Johannes Temporarius Chronologicarum Demonstrationum Libri III, (c.1582.)

54. Italia Antiqua, (Leyden, 1616).

55. De Noe in Italiam Adventu, (Oxford, 1655).

56. Marchese Scipione Maffei, 'Degl'Italia Primitivi, Ragionamento, in cui si procura d'investigare l'origine degli Etrusci, in Istoria Diplomatica, (Mantua, 1727).

57. Mario Guarnacci, Origini Italiche, o siano memorie Istorico Etrusche... (Rome, 1785). Guarnacci (p.46), points out the usefulness of ancient Etruscan monuments in compiling ancient history. Monuments, which can be found all over Italy (showing that it was once all Etruscan) and 'rammentati da Ciriaco Anconitano, da F. Leandro Alberti, da Raffaello Volterrano etc.' he writes.

One of Alberti's most scathing eighteenth-century critics was Stanislao Bardetti, who claimed to be tracing Italy's peoples by a proper scientific method and decried the forgeries of Annius and the errors of the Chronicler of Ravenna, of Dickinson, Alberti, Rickius and Scipio Maffei.<sup>59</sup>

The eighteenth century put increased emphasis on that curious, but at the time, valuable, concept 'historical Pyrrhonism', a method of approach to historical writing which treated with absolute scepticism any fact which could not be based on reliable evidence, or which seemed not to stand up to the test of reason. That historians had for too long been content to accept uncritically, as reliable evidence, the records of ancient literature, epic poetry, story and legend was the view of Voltaire, of Bayle, Bierlingius, Lenglet du Fresnoy and others,<sup>60</sup> some of whom felt that the available material for ancient history was so untrustworthy that the subject was scarcely worthy of study.<sup>61</sup>

Others like the Abbé Fréret conducted their own researches on ancient origins, and came up with some original interpretations of the literary

59. De Primi Abitatori dell'Italia. Vols. 1-2. (Modena, 1769), II, 442. Bardetti expresses a debt to his friend Antonio Muratori and says he wants his work to be a preface to Muratori's Annali d'Italia.

60. Le Pyrrhonism de l'Histoire in Oeuvres completes de Voltaire, (Paris, 1784), Vol. 27. See also J.H. Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, (London, 1958), for a discussion of Voltaire's historical philosophy and that of his contemporaries. Also A.D. Momigliano 'Ancient History and the Antiquarian', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 13 (1950), 285-315. Section 2 of the paper deals with, 'The controversy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the values of historical evidence'. Lenglet du Fresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'Histoire, (Brussels, 1714), Preface, also Catalogue des Principaux Historiens, (Cologne, 1713), refers to Leandro Alberti's Descrittione in his list of historians of Italy as 'ouvrage curieux et estimé, quoi qu'il ne soit pas toujours exact.'

61. Muratori came out against Pyrrhonist views. Momigliano, op. cit.

evidence attempting to use linguistic evidence for the first time.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the examples mentioned to the country, history writing in Italy was becoming a more demanding and critical study than before, with the emergence of a new generation of bibliophiles, librarians and collectors of manuscripts of whom Muratori is the prime example. The aim of Muratori's circle was precision, relevance, the careful use of archive material, documentary evidence and so on to produce history based less on imagination. In short it was to do precisely what the sixteenth-century historians had attempted but, in the main, been incapable of.<sup>63</sup> This was alright where mediaeval history was concerned, but still did not supply the answers to the problems of ancient history. If we look at the great works of nineteenth-century scholars in the field, at Niebuhr, K.O. Müller, Dennis or Lepsius, we find that yet again they were returning to the literary sources, trying to make sense of Etruscan inscriptions and use such archaeological and philological evidence as they had, but were still unable to answer the fundamental questions much more satisfactorily than Alberti had done.<sup>64</sup> It is only in the present century, and the recent years of it at that, that some light is being shed on these complicated issues, and the literary sources are being put to the test by means of the scientific methods of modern archaeology.<sup>65</sup> We can appreciate that

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62. N. Fréret, 'Recherches sur l'origine et l'ancienne histoire des differens peuples de l'Italie', Oeuvres completes de Fréret, 20 vols, (Paris, 1796), IV, 178-274.
63. Eric W. Cochrane, 'The settecento mediaevalists', Journal of the History of Ideas, 19 (1958), 35-61.
64. K.O. Müller, Die Etrusker, (Breslau, 1828). See also Mrs. Hamilton Gray, The History of Etruria which is in part a translation of Müller). G. Dennis, Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria, 2 vols, (London, 1848). B.G. Niebuhr, Römische Geschichte, (1833-45).
65. See, for example, Hugh Henken, Tarquinius and Etruscan Origins, (London, 1968); A.D. Momigliano, J.R.S. 1963; E. Gjerstad, 'Legends and facts of early Roman history' in Scripta Minora, University of Lund 1960-61, (Lund, 1962), and his opponent M. Pallottino, 'Fatte e legende (moderne) sulla più antica storia di Roma', Studi Etruschi, 31 (1963), 3-37.

Alberti's influence was small in this sphere, but his value, in so far as he reflected the contemporary confusion and multiplicity of ideas and treated them not entirely without doubt, is not diminished by his inability to be as sceptical as the Pyrrhonists, nor as well equipped as the modern archaeologist.

iv. The contribution of the *Descrittione* to the study of antiquities

The notion of the 'antiquarius', as an adviser, collector and student of ancient traditions and remains - though not a historian - is one of the most typical concepts of fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century humanism. This is the view of Momigliano in a useful article on 'Ancient history and the antiquarian'.<sup>66</sup> I have already drawn attention to Alberti's interest in antique remains, and not only does the *Descrittione* provide many examples of this interest, but frequently Alberti refers to other scholars and friends like Achillino and Alciati as 'collectors of antiquities'.<sup>67</sup> Nowadays we tend to associate antiquarianism not only with the collection of tangible objects from the past, but with archaeological studies and with the writing of history proper, as part of the whole corpus of historical evidence, but this was not the case in the sixteenth-century when antiquaries were, for the most part, collectors only. The role of the antiquary in

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66. Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 13(1950), 285-315. I refer to the reprint in Contributo alla storia degli studi classici, (Rome, 1955), 67-106. (p.73).

67. For example Annius, f.69vo.; Pomponio Leto, f.202; Biondo, f.280vo.; Achillino, f.299-300; Giovan Francesco della Mirandola, f.320-20vo.; Alciati, f.390vo.; Cardinal Domenico Grimano, f.460-60vo. When listing the famous men of Bologna (f.299vo-300), he divides them into categories, one of these is 'antiquari' and includes Alessandro Calcina, Bartolomeo Massini, Gasparo Fantuzzi, Achillino and his son Clitarco, Giaco Renieri (who collected medals of gold and silver), and several others.

mediaeval and Renaissance culture has been admirably surveyed by the late Roberto Weiss,<sup>68</sup> but the older article by Momigliano is still useful as it deals with the origins of antiquarianism in classical literature and it carries the discussion beyond the first quarter of the sixteenth-century where Weiss stops.

Momigliano suggests that we can produce distinctions between the modern antiquary and the historian on the grounds that '1) historians write in a chronological order; antiquaries write in a systematic order; 2) historians produce those facts which serve to illuminate or explain a certain situation; antiquaries collect all the items that are connected with a certain subject, whether they help to solve a problem or not'. As antiquarian studies developed, and as ideas about the writing of history changed - that it should be based on original rather than derivative authorities - it was the antiquaries who showed how to use non-literary evidence, and they also made people reflect on the difference between collecting facts and interpreting them. This, however, according to Momigliano, was a phenomenon emerging from the seventeenth century onwards and was not present earlier. The evidence of Weiss modifies this view and suggests that antiquaries, from the fifteenth century did sometimes use their evidence in interpreting historical events, but their literary sources were more highly valued, while the antiquities they discovered could be described for their own interest alone. Classical literature was kept alive in the Middle Ages when the tangible remains of the ancient civilizations were very largely neglected. 'What was lost was the

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68. The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, (Oxford, 1969). See also the earlier article 'Lineamenti per una storia degli studi antiquari in Italia', Rinascimentà, 9 (1958), 141-201.

Varronian idea of antiquitates - the idea of a civilization recovered by systematic collection of all the relics of the past' says Weiss.<sup>69</sup>

Weiss traces the brief periodic revivals of interest, for example, during the Carolingian Renaissance, and the period of 'pre-humanism' in north Italy, down to Petrarch and Boccaccio, and ultimately to the fifteenth century when the revival proper began with Valla, Poggio, Pomponio Leto, Bernardo Rucellai, L.B. Alberti and above all, Biondo. The main stimulus here was a desire by humanist scholars to ascertain the topography and appearance of ancient Rome and Roman monuments and remains elsewhere. Some antiquaries were more successful than others and had more rigorous standards of research.<sup>70</sup> Some merely collected inscriptions or coins out of personal interest.

Epigraphy, or the collection of inscriptions was one of the hall-marks of any antiquary. Humanists exchanged inscriptions among themselves and argued about their interpretation. Collections like those of Ciriaco of Ancona, Desiderio Spreti and Andrea Alciati were eagerly received from the press.<sup>71</sup> Coins proved another obvious field for collectors,<sup>72</sup> as did antique jewels, statues, and ivories. Enthusiasts would travel all over Italy and even abroad, while local experts produced their own accounts of the sights of interest in their cities and regions. Several examples of such literature finding its way to Alberti's hands, have been pointed out. Weiss shows how infectious

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69. The Discovery of Classical Antiquity, p.2. The phraseology is surely that of Momigliano himself, op. cit., p.73!

70. The ones mentioned above, for example. Less successful ones include Fabrizio Varano, Volaterrano, Fulvio and Calvo di Ravenna.

71. Although most interest was concentrated on Roman inscriptions, there were some scholars who found and copied pre-Roman, generally Etruscan, ones.

72. Collections were made by the Medici, the Estensi, the Gonzagas, the Aragonese at Naples, Poggio, Niccolo Niccoli, Ciriaco, Bembo and many others.



the enthusiasm for tangible evidence was among the humanist intellectuals, brought up on a rigorous diet of classical literature. Clearly it was one thing to read about Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, the Arena at Verona or Trajan's Arch at Benevento, and quite another to see them for one's self.

It is evident from the Descriptione that Alberti shared this feeling and enjoyed his explorations of the ruins of Popolonia (f.27vo-28), of the sights at Tivoli (f.133vo-134), the remains round the Bay of Baia or the amphitheatre at Verona (f.410). He records details of monuments and their inscriptions, sometimes taken at second-hand from his sources, but often from his own observations on his travels.

A complete list of the antiquities which Alberti describes or mentions in passing would be beyond the scope of this discussion. I intend to point out some of the more interesting descriptions he gives and to indicate the variety of antiquities which attracted his attention. The most fascinating and detailed description is probably that to which I have referred in some detail already of the archaeological remains along the Bay of Baia which he explored so thoroughly.<sup>73</sup> Another detailed description is that of the Via Appia as it passes via Ferrenia, Terracina, Formia and Minturne, from Rome to Monte Albano (f.122vo-129). Alberti describes how the road was built and paved, constructed with many bridges and canals across the Pontine marshes, how there were remains of old tombs along it, some of which were still intact. The theatre outside Terracina called for special comment (f.123). At Formia again there were many ruins to see and

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73. See above pp. 294-96.

pieces of ancient epitaphs which Alberti noted down (f.124vo-125vo). Minturne, he tells us, had very fine remains including a theatre and a well preserved aqueduct.<sup>74</sup> One could see, along the Appian Way, the remains of so many fine buildings that it was a sad sight, he says, 'che invero sono tante, che parerà cosa quasi incredibile à quelli non l'haveranno veduti. Certamente son cose da far contristare quei che le veggono, considerando la gran rovina di tanti nobilissimi edifici'. Near the city of Alba were the ruins of the Temple of Giove Latiale (f.129vo) and of many tombs. The city now called Indivina on the right of the Appian Way was where Lanuvio was in Roman times, 'come testimoniano alcune tavole di marmo ritrovate molto antiche intagliate di ben misurate lettere'. (f.130) (One of the few occasions where an ancient settlement is identified on the basis of archaeological evidence.<sup>75</sup>) The remains of the aqueduct built by Edile Marius for the Emperor Claudius from Lake Celano to Rome greatly impressed him and he marvelled at the labours involved in its construction (f.134vo-136vo).

As far as remains of Greek civilization in the southern parts of Italy and Sicily are concerned, Alberti does his best, but, he says, although there were many fine cities, for example round the Gulf of Taranto, there is now little trace of them, except for Taranto itself, where one can see the old walls and some antique ornaments. He uses literary sources to describe the cities that were there (f.197-200vo)

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74. Alberti tells the story of the discovery in Alexander VI's time in one of the tombs along the Appian Way of the preserved body of a beautiful young girl believed to be Cicero's daughter Tullia and kept in Rome for some time until Alexander VI ordered it to be thrown into the Tiber (f.127vo).

75. The temple of Sopita Giunone was here, much spoken about by Livy, who, Alberti says, describes how the standard of the Lanuvini in the temple sweated blood in times of crisis!

and devotes a separate section to describing the present settlements (f.201-202) and his journey through the area in the autumn of 1525. Alberti also mentions remains in Apulia and the Abruzzi.

Although he does not seem to have been such a keen collector of inscriptions as some of the earlier antiquaries (perhaps because so much was already known about that field), he does record a number of them in the Descrittione. Trajan's arch at Ancona attracted his attention in this respect (f.254vo), the triumphal arches of Fano (f.258vo) and Rimini (f.267vo) and a pillar with inscriptions at Fossombrone (f.258vo). At Rimini he recorded also the inscription from Augustus' Bridge on the Via Flaminia. He reports seeing a marble tablet at Terracina (f.122vo). At Formia he saw some ancient epitaphs when on his way to Naples (f.124vo-125). Along the Via Flaminia at Furlo there was a very worn inscription saying it was built by Titus Vespasianus. There were plenty of other remains and inscriptions to see at Ravenna and Classe, and around many of the cities of Lombardy. Alberti was shown Etruscan tablets at Gubbio<sup>76</sup> and at the Church of S. Liberatore near Sulmona he saw some ancient books in 'caratteri Longobardici' (f.233).

As for smaller antiquities, he refers to medals found at Inferno (f.281), in the Romagna, in the hills above Reggio Emilia (possibly at the site of Nocera (f.328) according to Volaterrano because so many medals and signs of antiquity are to be found there), and at Fossombrone where he was given a conducted tour by Gieronimo Boldrino da Esio already mentioned above (f.258vo). Traces of pavements, medals and

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76. (f.80) He had the text of two tablets which were mislaid at the time of his visit sent on to him. See above p. 303.

pieces of sculpture were similarly to be found in the Valle di Montirone Dorso five miles from Mirandola (f.320), where some of these items had been collected and restored by Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola. Alberti had clearly been there several times and was on good terms with Pico. He claims to have considered it 'minutamente', and identifies it as the area known as the campi Nacri with which Giovan Francesco agrees (f.320-320vo.). The ancient terra cotta vases to be found in Faenza he considered especially fine and believed that Pliny, if he had seen them, would have thought them superior to the Aretine ones, supposedly the best in Italy (f.283). Following the Reno from Bologna into the mountains one eventually finds, in a small open valley near Panico, some more ruins, fine pavements, mosaics and medals and other 'antichitati' which the locals say are remains of a city called Misano, so that the plain is known as the 'piano di Misano' (f.301). Some people even say that it was built by the descendants of Noah, but Alberti remains sceptical!

One could add numerous examples to this list, but, as it is, it reveals Alberti's interest in antiquities, his careful consideration of what he has seen and its relation to what literary sources report, and his desire to communicate his findings to the reader, carefully locating the site of the antiquities in question and relating what classical and contemporary opinion is concerning them. He does not have the space to indulge in detailed topographical surveys of ancient sites. What we look for in vain in the Descrittione is any sign that he believed that archaeological evidence in whatever form could upset the theories of the ancient authors. Sometimes the classical writers

are taken to task over their geographical knowledge, sometimes it is the edition of a particular text that is at fault but there are few suggestions that archaeological information might help in the disentangling of the foundation myths or the stories of the earliest settlers. This is hardly surprising when the few Etruscan relics which were found could not be read, and in many cases there was no method of dating finds from very early periods unless they carried a dated inscription or similar information. We have only to remember the fake statues excavated by Annius to realize how easily misled people could be. Archaeology was only in its infancy. Its discoveries could add considerably to the spectrum of knowledge in providing evidence of how people lived, but it was only the most obvious discoveries that were made - remains which had been evident for centuries, had anyone thought them worth careful consideration, suddenly assumed a role of importance and a new aura of charm. They had an undeniably romantic association for some humanists who could visualize their classical heroes peopling the ruined temples and amphitheatres before their eyes.

Alberti's value in the antiquarian field must have been of most practical use in these parts of the country where no local description had appeared. The eager antiquary could take the Descriptione as his guide to many promising out-of-way sites, though it gave him no particularly detailed description of exactly what he would find there. In short it served as an antiquary's guide-book and to a lesser extent a commentary. Once more detailed local works appeared it was of much less use. Its influence as a source for later antiquarian writing appears to be as negligible as its purely historical influence. Using

the same sources as I used in the previous argument (the Thesaurus of Graevius), a dozen or so of the references to Alberti could perhaps be described as references to antiquarian material.

When the Descrittione is considered in relation to later guide-book literature, the genre to which it is closest, it will be evident that much of its usefulness in this field lay in its antiquarian content, but as far as individual works on local antiquities were concerned a more detailed description than that provided by Alberti was expected.

v. The biographical content of the Descrittione

If an interest in biography became more important in Renaissance historiography, then Alberti was typical of his time. One of the most striking features of the Descrittione is the space devoted to the famous men of each town. There are at least three possible explanations for the inclusion of such information, quite apart from the fact that Alberti may have had an interest in biography for its own sake, although the details recorded are generally too brief to suggest this. Firstly it became a feature of the descriptive, chorographical genre that it should include such catalogues. The Italia Illustrata did so on a much more limited scale, and so did many of the local descriptions for example the works of Albertini, Spreti, Burtius and Sarayna.<sup>78</sup> Secondly collections of biographies were a legacy from classical times, which the humanist could copy, Theophrastus (372-287 BC), Aristotle's favourite pupil, wrote a collection of biographical stories called Characters which

78. See Chapter II - It was part of the classical canon for economic literature, though such classical descriptive literature as remains pays scant attention to it.

seem to have been the prototype for Plutarch's Lives, which of course enjoyed great popularity at the time of the Renaissance and on into the eighteenth century.<sup>79</sup> It would not be true to say that the biographical genre went out of fashion in the Middle Ages either. The Liber Pontificalis, Einhard's life of Charlemagne, Joinville's life of St. Louis, and many other texts show that this was not the case, but the humanists' desire to copy ancient styles made them much more likely to produce collections of lives in emulation of their classical heritage. The title De viris illustribus might seem the most obvious one to use for a collection of biographies, whether borrowed from antiquity or not, it headed the collection of Petrarch, Pius II and Alberti himself. Giovio departed from it slightly with his Illustrium Virorum Vitae, (Florence, 1549) but the work was composed in imitation of Plutarch.

The third possible reason for Alberti's inclusion of biographies and the reason which will find most ready appeal among the followers of the Burckhardtian tradition, is that Renaissance humanism laid stress on the importance of the individual, and hence biography, which, like the portrait, left a permanent memory of its subject for posterity, became increasingly popular. Unfortunately Alberti was seldom the master of the pen-portrait and his figures emerge cased in very similar moulds. One has to search hard here for that Burckhardtian individualism.<sup>80</sup> It was only to be expected that kings and princes,

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79. Cornelius Nepos and Pliny both wrote collections entitled De viris illustribus and Nepos produced rather more elaborate lives of Cato the Elder and Cicero. Livy showed a fondness for biography as did Tacitus - especially in his classic example of the genre, Agricola - and Suetonius with his lives of the Emperors. Isidore of Seville also used the title De viris illustribus, and there were other examples.

80. It seems to have been a rare phenomenon. See for example, Alison Brown, 'The humanist portrait of Cosimo de' Medici', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 24 (1961).

popes and saints might find biographers, but from the fifteenth century onwards the achievements are recorded of men renowned for their learning for their artistic skills or for their military or legal abilities. Vespasiano da Bisticci's collection of biographies covers all these categories, while Vasari's Lives of the Artists and Lilio Giraldi's work on poets each concentrated on one particular group.<sup>81</sup>

The fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century historians tried to follow the classical canon which advised them to show the characters of their main protagonists, but although we find comments on the abilities and shortcomings of soldiers and statesmen in the writings of Corio, Simonetta, Machiavelli, Varchi and Guicciardini, for example, they tend to be couched in somewhat stereotyped language,<sup>82</sup> using phrases such as 'di grande reputazione', or saying that they had 'buone qualita', which, as has been pointed out, may be alright for minor characters, but tells us little about the complexities of a Giovanni de Bicci or a Cosimo de'Medici. The Italia Illustrata contained many famous names, but little attempt at characterization and Alberti greatly increased Biondo's lists, even if he did not make a marked advance in describing people.

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81. Filippo Villani at the end of the fourteenth century included poets, artists, writers, scholars, physicians, statesmen and soldiers among his famous men of Florence. Other collections of 'lives' in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries included such varied works as Platina's Lives of the Popes, Trithemius of Sponheim's Catalogus illustrium virorum Germanorum, the De Viris quibusdam illustribus apud Arabes (1527) of Leo Africanus, (see Karl H. Dannenfeldt, 'The Humanists Knowledge of Arabic', Studies in the Renaissance 2 (1955) 96-117. Leo also wrote a De totius Africae descriptione in the early part of the sixteenth century. Thus his work exemplifies two important sixteenth-century specialities..
82. K.V. Underhill, op. cit. p.374-375. She suggests that P. Giovio was something of an exception and showed 'a considerable if not a flattering interest in Florentine characters as a whole'.



Alberti deals with the famous men of each city or town at the end of each particular city description. It is not only for the great cities that we find these lists, for individuals are referred to according to their birth-place as this is the town or even village to which they have brought most honour by their reputation. Since the index is scarcely comprehensive and in the earlier editions not properly alphabetical, as a work of biographical reference the Descrittione must have been extremely difficult to use, and almost impossible if one did not know the birthplace of the person in question. From the arrangement of the material it would seem to be the fact that particular people gave honour to a particular town which was most important in Alberti's view, rather than any special desire to portray particular characters.<sup>83</sup>

The lists for large towns where there are many names to mention are drawn up most systematically. Firstly there are listed the saints and martyrs, popes, cardinals and prelates, then the legists and other men of letters, the administrators and rulers, and finally the soldiers and naval leaders. In the special case of Bologna (f.298-300vo.), where the lists surpass those of other cities, each subdivision is preceded by a separate heading in the text.<sup>84</sup> It would be convenient

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83. Petrarch is mentioned not only in connection with Incisa which is (incorrectly) given as his birth-place, but also in connection with Florence as he brought fame to the city (f.42vo.). One can connect this with the long established custom of identifying people according to the town of their birth, e.g. Annus da Viterbo, Leonardo Aretino, Rafaele Volaterrano, Leonardo da Vinci, Tomasso Cajetano, etc. the list is endless.
84. Although this list appears to be very lengthy, it is not much longer, than the list for Florence (f.42-44). The headings include, for example, 'Pontefici Romani', 'Vescovi di Bologna', 'Vescovi d'altri luoghi', 'Teologhi', 'Filosofi', 'Dottori di leggi Canoniche e Civili', 'Dottori in Medicina', 'In Astrologie', 'In Oratoria e Poesia', 'Antiquari', 'Dipintori', 'Aritmetici', 'Capitani di Militia', etc.

if Alberti were as precise over the sources of his biographical information as he is over the sources of other historical data, but unfortunately that is not the case. He scarcely ever gives precise references although he does sometimes suggest works which could be consulted for additional information.<sup>85</sup> The standard histories must have provided some material, notes could be gathered from friends and acquaintances, on his travels, possibly even from tombstones. Many of the references to contemporary scholars could have come from knowledge of the men themselves or from their relatives or pupils. Information on churchmen was easier to come by and he had the De Viris to hand for Dominicans, not to mention similar collections built up by worthies of other orders. A spot check reveals that he seems generally to be correct in his assignment of birth-places - the few errors which appear, seem to be excusable ones.<sup>86</sup>

What of the interest and accuracy of the entries themselves? What sort of information does he give us about the people he mentions? Needless to say there is great variety in the amount of information which is given, both in respect of character and in respect of particular achievements. As an example chosen at random to show what detail can be expected, Arezzo serves admirably. It boasts names from antiquity as well as two people still alive when Alberti was writing, and as the following passage shows, people of varying talents and differing

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85. f.168v., Re Alphonso of Aragon, he suggests the reader should look at Biondo, Sabellico, Bernadino Corio, Panormitana, Simonetta, 'con gli altri scrittori di nostra età'. f.44, Re Florence, he says those who want to know more should read Crisoforo Landino on Dante, Machiavelli, Bruni, Poggio and S. Antoninus.
86. For example the birth-place of Petrarch he gives as Incisa, when in fact Petrarch was born in Arezzo but was taken to Incisa within a year and spent his childhood there.

degrees of fame.

Uscirono di questa città molti nobili ingegni, et illustri huomini, de i quali furono S, Lorenzo, e Peregrino fratelli, uccisi per la fede di Cristo...ne'tempi di Diocletiano, e quivi sepulti. Et Mecenato nacque qui, come dimostra Macrobio .....e.....Oratio.... Fur Aretino Guido musico, che ritrovò la consonanza del canto con sei note sopra gli articoli della mano. Et parimente hebbe patria questa città Leonardo Bruno ornato di lettere Grece, e Latine, come chiaramente si conosce dall'opere da lui scritte, e tradotte di Greco in Latino. Passò di questa vita tant'huomo nell'anno della salute 1440 e di sua età 74 in Fiorenza, di cui lungamente era stato segretario. A'cui successe in detto ufficio Carlo anche egli Aretino huomo dotto in Greco, e Latino, che tradusse alcune opere Greche in Latine. Fu Aretino Giovan Tortellio assai perito in Greco, e Latino, con Francesco, che convertì di Greco in Latino l'epistole di Falari, con alcune opere di S. Giovanni Crisostomo. Diede etiandio gran nome à questa città con la scienza delle leggi, Angelo primo di Gambaglioni lasciando doppo se alcune opere degne da esser lodate. Illustro questa patria il molto dotto Pietro Accotti Cardinale della Chiesa Romana, che passò à miglior vita dell'anno 1532, in Roma molto vecchio, con grande giattura del Senato Apostolico, vive hora il suo nipote Benedetto similmente Cardinale di Roma, Huomo dotto. Vive al presente Pietro Aretino ornamento della volgare lingua, e severo tassatore de i Principi, e d'altre differenze di persone come dalle Epistole, et altre opere da lui fatte veder si può. Sono usciti altri eccellenti huomini di questa città, che sarabbe cosa molto lunga la narratione mia, se tutti li volesse descrivere. (f.58vo.).

Despite his talents and historical importance in modern eyes, Leonardo Bruni is dismissed in three and a half lines of stereotyped phrases, although granted this is, by a few words, more space than any of the others receive. It is only the most salient facts, or fact even, about each person, which is reported; an economy dictated by space, quite apart from Alberti's lack, or otherwise of knowledge. As he says, there are other excellent men of this city but he has not time to describe them all. Occasionally he does allow himself to depart from the standard stereotyped phraseology when dealing with great figures of

Italian history, and once or twice when he mentions a scholar he particularly admires. His description of F. Silvestri di Ferrara is a case in point, as are those of Alciati<sup>87</sup> and Gregorio Amaseo (f.434). Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, we learn, had a photographic memory (f.313vo.)<sup>88</sup> while Tomasso del Gambaro Canonico di S. Petronio not only collected medals but told fortunes from the lines of the palm and of the face.<sup>89</sup> Such details are unusual though. His friends Gasparo Sardi, Sebastiano Corrado, Giovanni Pietro Ferreto, even Flaminio and the beloved Garzone appear not as characters, but with a string of intellectual achievements after their names, couched in familiar phrases.<sup>90</sup>

One other example of unusual interest is the description of Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola (f.322-322vo.), the collector of antiquities mentioned earlier. In fact the family history of the lords of Mirandola is given in some detail, and Giovan Francesco's famous uncle Giovanni is also referred to in glowing terms.<sup>91</sup> The family struggles which led to Giovan Francesco's untimely death are explained, leaving us in no doubt about Alberti's distress at the futile murder of a great scholar who was also a personal friend.

Certament fu gran danno la perdita di tanto huomo a i litterati, concio fosse cosa ch'era peritissimo in ogni grado di dottrina,

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87. See above, pp. 31, 61.

88. See above, pp. 59.

89. Descrittione, f.300, 'Hebbe cognition di divinare secondo le linee della mano, et etiandio della faccia'.

90. See above, pp. 54, 60, 24-25.

91. He was 'stupore d'ingegno à tutto il mondo come dall'opere da lui lasciate, chiaramente si può conoscere. Hebbe cognitione da'ogni generatione di scientia, con la peritia delle lettere Greche, Hebre, Arabe, e Caldee' (f.322). Alberti lists people who have written about him; they include his nephew, Ficino, Poliziano, Beroaldo and others.

et in Greco, Hebreo, Caldeo, et Arabico, in humanità, poesia, logica, filosofia, et Teologia, come chiaramente dall'opere da lui scritte, vero giuditio dar si può. Fu questo signore di lunga statura, bianco di colore, e di faccia lunga, e naso Aquilo, e di occhi vivaci, eloquente, dritto nel giuditio, integerrimo di vita, fedele nelle promesse, catolico, e vero cristiano, conformando la sua volontà col voler del signore Iddio, non mai lamentandosi dell'avversità; avenga che molte ne insprimentasse; onde lodava, e ringratiava Iddio nelle tribulationi. Assai dire potrei di tanto huomo, ma più oltra per hora non posso, essendo astretto à ritornare alla descrizione de i luoghi che ci restano.

In contrast to his uncle whom Alberti praises lavishly as a scholar but ignores as a personality Giovan Francesco is praised for his intellectual achievements and his character, not only that, but we are also told what he looked like.

There are comparatively few portraits of this type. His other friends do not seem to have merited them, perhaps because they had less opportunity to show such strength of character and met less violent ends! When we look at the great families of fifteenth-century Italy, like the Medici, the Visconti, the Sforza family, the families of Este, Montefeltro, Gonzaga, Malatesta, della Scala and so on, we find that more attention is paid to their more illustrious members.

Cosimo de'Medici, for example (f.43vo.) was 'huomo magnifico, prudente, liberale e affabile nella suo conversatione. Governò con gran dolcezza, e prudenza, Florenza'. He built many 'luoghi pietosi', for example the monastery of St. Mark. 'Fu in tanto opinione in questa Città, che potea di quella disporre quanto gli pareva, nondimeno che tanto eta la sua modestia, che non disponea cosa alcuna, se non quanto gli pareva essere ispedimente al ben commune di essa, lasciando à dietro tutti i rispetti e comodi proprii, si come conviene ad un buon padre di famiglia haver cura della propria casa. La onde meritevolmente fu da

tutta la Città nominato padre della patria'. He could say more about such a great man but he has been well described by Volaterrano, Machiavelli and others. Alberti's treatment of Lorenzo, however, is disappointing. When Lorenzo took over the government of the city... 'tanto modestamente, e saviamente la maneggiò, che ogn'un rimase pieno di maraviglia. Et non solamente pareva che governasse Fiorenza ma l'Italia', because everyone came to him for advice. He tells us little about Lorenzo's character, nothing about his appearance, and his patronage of the arts is entirely neglected.

Federigo di Montefeltro, the first Duke of Urbino (f.262vo-263), deserves great praise for his virtues and was 'prestantia delle dotti del corpo'. He was 'prudente, facondo nel parlare, letterato, et amator dei letterati. Nella guerra fortunato nella pace amato, da i Principi d'Italia honorato e da'suoi popoli diletto. Ornò Urbino di begli edifici... (Alberti's Ciceronian training has not deserted him!) The fortunes of various members of the Malatesta family are dealt with in the section on Rimini's history (f.267-268) and pertinent remarks are made about the character of each, but in one or two words only, and similarly we learn a little about the rulers of Montferrat (f.338vo-339). The rulers of Saluzzo are praised for their many good qualities despite the fact that they helped the French (f.343). Of the Este family it is Borso, the first duke, who is portrayed most clearly (f.311vo.).<sup>92</sup>

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92. He was 'piacevole, magnifico, liberale, virtuoso, e di grand'animo. Onde per le virtù che in esso risplendeano sempre fù in gran riputatione presso tutti i signori d'Italia... Molto si diletto d'huomini letterati, Et per tanto honoratamente li teneva presso di se... Etiandio pigliava gran piacere d'huomini faceti, e piacevoli si come di Gonella, huomo sopra tutti gli altri di sua età, faceto. Delle piu faceti essendo io fanciullo da ogni cantorno d'Italia se ne parlava con gran piacere.

The Visconti and Sforzas get their share of praise. Giovan Galeazzo Visconti, [redacted] 'Fu prudentissimo et astuto, et di vita solitaria fuggendo le fatiche, tanto quanto potesse, timido nelle cose avverse, et audacissimo nelle prospere, et assai similava, sontuoso, e non di pecunia spenditor, anzi prodigo...Oltre à tutti Prencipi nei suoi successi, fu fortunatissimo.' (f.388).<sup>93</sup> There are plenty more examples which could be added to this list. Especially notable are the descriptions of the rulers of the Kingdom of Naples, related in lengthy splendour. (f.167-168). We learn about their personalities and appearances, not only about their political achievements.

These descriptions of some of the more important Italian princes show a special interest in character and even in appearance which, as has been pointed out, is scarcely to be found in the lists of famous men. These examples (that of the Medici excepted) all come from the historical sections of the Descrittione rather than from the parts specially concerned with biography. The important question is whether this is a distinction made on purpose (whether Alberti was following classical precepts in describing the characters of those who influenced major events and who made political decisions), or whether this is a distinction which arose by accident as a result of the information he had available. It seems far more likely that the distinction is a

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93. Filippo Maria was 'di bella statura e di venerando aspetto, munifico, liberale, di sottil'ingegno, e molto astuto. Facile nel punire, difficile nell'audire, mansueto, e dolce nel parlare, non curandosi del colto del corpo e molto dedito alla caccia etc. (f.388vo.). I have already mentioned the fulsome praise given to Ludovico Sforza, and how badly he was favoured by fortune and how he was 'di tanto ingegno, che pareva non che Italia, ma tutta Europa fosse da lui governata. Onde pareva l'arbitrio di tutte le cose della Cristianità. (f.389vo.)

coincidence, and the difference arose unconsciously, since to say otherwise attributes to Alberti a subtlety of approach which the rest of the work scarcely suggests he was capable of. In general he shows no great desire to indulge in discussion and explanation of political events, nor does he relate the princes' characters to their handling of political problems. If he considered his readers, he may have appreciated that their curiosity would be aroused more by a Cosimo di Medici or an Alphonso of Aragon, than by some little-known scholar, and he wrote accordingly. The lengthy description of the Este, Visconti and Sforza families are out of proportion with the rest of the work, mainly, it seems, because of the volume of specialized information Alberti had available. He was hardly in a position to be looking for patronage a more usual explanation of such tactics. On one occasion he does explain that he must modify his praise of a man still living (Cardinal Rodolfo di Carpi), as he does not want to be accused of flattery (f.324).

It is not only men who feature in the Descrittione, as the list of headings for Bologna shows, there were women too whom Alberti considered famous for their scholarship and virtue (f.299vo.). The Bologna list consists of Giovanna daughter of Matteo Bianchetti, wife of Bonsignore de i Bonsignori who 'ornamente parlava latino, et etiandio era practica nel favellare Alamanno e Boemo', and Novella daughter of Giovanni d'Andrea and wife of Giovan di Lignano, who, when her father was busy, took over his teaching, 'occupato il padre, degnamente tenea la cathedra proseguitando la lettione'. Paola Malatesta, wife of Francesco Gonzaga, Alberti says was considered the most beautiful woman in Italy, as well as being virtuous and wise (f.268vo.). Laura Cerete of Brescia wrote a volume of most elegant letters. Maria Cardona Marchesana di Padulla



castello in Lucania was learned in history and 'lettere humano' (f.180), as were the Countess of Miletto (f.201), and Isotta Nugarola and her sisters (f.413vo.), not to mention Vittoria Colonna (f.116). Isotta Nugarola's learning especially impressed Alberti. She was 'di tanta peritia di lettere humane, e di filosofia, che ad ogni gran litterato huomo, et ornatamente, e dottamente scriveva, come io ho veduto in alcune sue epistola, ch'era cosa maravigliosa da considerare, come in una tenera donzella fosse tant<sup>a</sup> dottrina, e tanta elegantia di scrivere' (f.413vo.). Isotta, it seems, would have been grateful to know that her virtues and learning were so appreciated as women's achievements had not always been so popular in north Italy. Perhaps in Bologna a more liberal attitude prevailed, but in Venice during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries a much more puritanical spirit made it hard for women of intellectual or artistic talent to express themselves. The difficulties of Tintoretto's daughter Marietta have been pointed out, and also the complaints of a provincial blue-stocking from Verona, no less than Alberti's Isotta Nugarola herself, who complained to Guarino in 1436 that she was sorry she had been born a woman since the whole town sneered at her and described her as an obelisk of brazenness.<sup>94</sup> Attitudes must have been rather different in Bologna if Alberti was able to admire the learning of Novella d'Andrea and others. Intellectual achievements obviously did not carry with them any implication of brazenness or a lack of feminine modesty, for Alberti was the last man to condone such characteristics, as his preface to the Praeclarae Operetta delle Donne shows.<sup>95</sup> While mentioning the women of the

94. D.S. Chambers, The Imperial Age of Venice 1380-1580, (London, 1970), pp 137-140.

95. See above, p.49. In it he praises modesty, and virtue, etc.

Nugarola family it is worth noting in passing that another member of the family, Leonardo, greatly impressed Alberti. He was a philosopher and diplomat with a boundless flair for learning foreign languages. This 'gloria non solamente di Verona, ma d'Italia', as Alberti calls him, had spent some time in Naples where Alberti had met him when he was there with Giacomo Sanazzaro and other learned men (f.413vo.).

Although Alberti's catalogues of famous men seem rather sparse in detail, as time went on it was these references to scholars, writers of philosophy and of history, translators of Greek and Latin, collectors of epigrams and coins, lawyers, and even men of medicine and science which were to prove far more useful to future scholars than the more detailed descriptions of counts and princes. The reason is obvious. The latter had their biographies written at greater length elsewhere; the scholars, particularly the lesser known ones, did not and the *Descrittione* could be useful as a primitive Who's Who! The references to men of various religious orders, were useful for later annalists, but for the many Dominicans included in the *Descrittione*, the *De Viris Illustribus* itself was an even better source. This was heavily used by the seventeenth-century Quetif and his successor Echard and by the eighteenth-century biographer Touron.<sup>96</sup>

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96. See R. Creytens, 'L'Oeuvre biographique d'Echard, ses sources et leur valeur', *Archivium Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 14 (1944), 43-71. 'Parmi les bibliographes dominicains dont l'oeuvre embrasse l'histoire littéraire de l'Ordre entier, Leandre Alberti, comme source d'Echard tient la première place'. (p.57) Creytens explains that his name figures on almost every page and he is regarded as a careful and accurate author whose account is to be preferred to most others, largely because of the work he did in several libraries in Italy, especially Bologna. His wealth of information and chronological accuracy surpasses some later biographers, but this does not make him entirely free from error and Echard does make many corrections especially in the orthography of proper names.

Alberti's biographical notes proved to be of considerable use to the first compilers of biographical reference works, for example G.I. Vossius in his De Historicis Latinis Libri Tres, a work which a later biographer, the French Nicéron, dismissed as being full of 'curious research'.<sup>97</sup> As Vossius was the first to dig out much of the material he uses, it was not surprising that he fell into a number of errors: it was to some extent inevitable says Nicéron, and editors have improved on his work. Nicéron, though, was not above using Vossius as a source, and although he does not seem to use Alberti much, some of the information he gives on Italians is thus acquired from Alberti at second-hand.

According to Nicéron's preface, it was difficult to find much detail about Italian scholars, their libraries were dry and 'décharnées'; often all that could be found was a catalogue of works of authors of certain regions, with only the very vaguest details, no dates even. This was in the early eighteenth century when the revival led by Muratori and his friends was scarcely under way. Nicéron includes very few Italian names among his collection of biographies. Indeed it is surprising to find an entry on Alberti there.

Bayle has a few scattered references to the Descrittione, for example concerning Antonio Urceo, [REDACTED] Pietro Marso and Sabellico.<sup>98</sup> Baillet in 1685 wrote that Alberti had 'insere beaucoup de chose touchant les

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97. Nicéron, op. cit., XIII, 112. Vossius was considered unreliable also by Moréry, a view which Bayle disputed, Historical and Critical Dictionary, 5 vols. second edition, (London, 1738), V, 514.

98. Bayle, op. cit. V, 515; IV. 164-5; IV.1. Others include III.32 (Sylvestri de Ferrara), and III, 52 (G.A. Flaminio).

Ecrivains illustres dans sa description de l'Italie',<sup>99</sup> although Baillet in fact has few references to Alberti, e.g. he refers to Biondo's Italia Illustrata for information on Petrarch and Boccaccio, when the Descrittione would have been more helpful. An English work of the seventeenth century which refers to Alberti a few times is T.P. Blount's Censura celebriorum authorum: sive Tractatus in quo varia virorum doctorum de clarissimis cuiusque seculi scriptoribus indicia traduntur etc., (London, 1690). A few remarks of Alberti's<sup>about</sup> famous Italians are recorded here, concerning among others, Platina, Perotto, Biondo, Bruni and Pomponio Leto.<sup>100</sup> There is no mention of Alberti in connection with several names where one might have expected some reference, however, such as Volaterrano, Sabellico or Beroaldo.

The Descrittione had some value in its biographical content for scholars in the next two hundred years, when they tried to compile collections of biographies, but it was limited in its usefulness by the brevity with which Alberti had been forced to treat the people concerned. There was only an odd fact or two to be gleaned from the Descrittione - yet these could be most important - a date of birth or death, or the title of a little-known work. In this respect the Descrittione could be useful, although as has been mentioned above, the early editions would have proved very difficult to use.

#### vi General Conclusions

In conclusion it can be said that Alberti was aware of the humanist precepts concerning the writing of history, especially that one should

99. Baillet op cit. II, 27.

100. pp. 339, 337, 328, 319, 349.

follow Cicero and Livy, although in the Descrittione he had little chance and made even less effort to put them into practice. He was still working on traditional humanist lines as far as his classical sources and references were concerned, but this was inevitable in the Descrittione; part of its purpose was to clarify what the classical authors had to say about towns, regions, rivers and so on. He could not employ the new pragmatism of Guicciardini, indeed few sixteenth-century historians did so. Although he was well aware of the practical value of history and of its didactic function, again he had little scope in the Descrittione to make this evident, and the only 'lesson' which is put over is that man cannot depend on his position and success in this world; he may think things are going well, but probably disaster is just round the corner. It is <sup>a</sup>pessimistic view Alberti holds and one which recalls mediaeval theology rather than any new found optimism or faith in mankind. It is the view one would expect of a churchman, any other opinion would be more surprising if more interesting. Herbert Weisinger in his discussion of the major preconceptions influencing Renaissance thought about history, suggests that the idea of a cyclical theory of history and the pessimistic idea of decline in human affairs were only slowly ousted by the idea of progress during the sixteenth century.<sup>101</sup> This necessitated an attack on the doctrine of the superiority of the ancients which was slow to come. 'Up to the second half of the sixteenth century, the Renaissance spirit still believed in the authority of the ancients. But under the impact of discoveries and inventions, and of the great changes in the economic

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101. 'Ideas of History during the Renaissance'. Journal of the History of Ideas, 4 (1948), p.417.

structure of society, the influence of the ancients was gradually undermined, though the contention lasted for over a century'. If we accept his arguments we can see that Alberti was in no sense exceptional in his attitude to his sources, nor in his method of procedure. As Weisinger says later, 'The clue for historical research then is not so much to seek original ideas as to discover the cumulative flow of old ideas, and to analyse what new combinations have been made and under the impetus of what new needs and forces.'<sup>102</sup> This suggests a rather more sophisticated attitude than Alberti seems to have had, but the idea of accumulating information from many sources and combining and reconciling different views is exactly what Alberti was attempting to do, although sometimes opinions of an event differed too widely for reconciliation. If we are reminded of the patchwork quality of the epitomes and breviaries of late imperial times, and of the early mediaeval world histories, it is because this technique of combining information seems sometimes to result in an unsatisfactory piecing together which prevents the author from exercising much historical judgement. Nevertheless progress was being made, even if it lay chiefly in the quantity of material and different authors' views which were laid side by side for comparison.

Alberti's narrative history is scarcely racy in style but rushes from fact to fact with little explanation, in the fashion of a rather sketchy (indeed in some cases, extremely sketchy) chronicle. The facts come from fairly obvious sources, where more detail could be found by anyone wanting a fuller account. Thus Alberti's narrative was

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102. Ibid, p.435.

of little use except to the reader of the Descrittione itself who presumably wanted an instant summary of the guide-book type, or else wanted to know where more information could be found. It may be assumed that the Descrittione possibly had its uses as a bibliography for someone eager to know what to read about Florence, Venice, Ravenna, Verona and so on, although positive evidence of this is scarcely possible to come by.

On the question of the origins of settlements Alberti is of interest in assembling a wide variety of contemporary opinions, unfortunately including those of Annius, and in exercising some critical judgement upon them; dismissing some of the more fanciful Noah and Trojan legends, although not all of them. He is not so credulous as the mediaeval authors were in this respect and prefers accounts which derive from reputable authorities, that is from the standard classical literary sources, Dionysius, Strabo, Diodorus, Pliny, Livy, and so on. Indeed if he had not accepted Annius, he might have come as near to the truth as was possible before the advent of linguistic studies and scientifically based archeological investigations, both of which were several centuries in the future.

Alberti was not unaware that both linguistics, and the tangible evidence of antique remains could have important bearing on the subject, but being aware of their value did not mean that he was capable of using them. Such arguments as he attempts about names changing because of the effects of variations in language, are not often very valuable and usually ignore the problems of accidental transposition of letters, or mis-spelling whether in mediaeval chronicle records, or by printers, who could produce several variations in the spelling

of proper names from one edition of a work to the next. Archaeological evidence unless it consisted of written and dated information was difficult to use, and was regarded by Alberti as something interesting and worth collecting and describing for its own sake. It could not yet replace or even contradict the earliest reputable written sources. Although Alberti did not collect items himself he showed considerable interest in other people's collections and was in this respect typical of many of the humanists of his time.

Biography was of interest to Alberti both as part of narrative history and as a means of adding to the information about a particular town, by listing its famous sons, but it is the fact that these men did bring honour to their birth-place by their achievements which is important to Alberti, rather than their personal characteristics.

The influence of the historical information as a whole was negligible mainly because historians could go to the actual sources Alberti used, rather than the undetailed account which was compounded from them. Also historians and antiquarians of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tended to specialise in one town or area and treat it in more detail, so that references to Alberti in these sort of works are very limited and sometimes only appear to correct an error. The biographical information on the other hand, minimal as it was, proved useful to later compilers of literary biographies. These men were great gleaners and gatherers, and information which had originated in the Descrittione and was regarded as trustworthy, was passed down from one to another.



## CHAPTER VII

THE VALUE AND INFLUENCE OF THE DESCRIPTIONS IN THE FIELD OF  
GEOGRAPHICAL AND GUIDE-BOOK LITERATURE(1) Introduction to the geography of the *Descrittione*

In comparing the *Descrittione* with the *Italia Illustrata* and also in discussing the relationship of Alberti's work to similar literature which preceded it, the point was made that it was not concerned solely with historical aspects of Italy but also with man's physical surroundings. Although Alberti did not claim that his work was a 'geography' alone, he did address the geographers in his audience particularly and also claimed to be writing a work in which history, topography and geography were combined.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore relevant to ask what exactly constituted 'geography' for a sixteenth-century scholar. We take it for granted today that we understand the meaning of the word and what its study entails, just as we know what we mean by history, but in the sixteenth century it was a study which was only just emerging in its own right from a mass of interconnected disciplines ranging from history to astronomy.

F. de Dainville, writing of France, and of Jesuit educational developments in particular, suggests that in the sixteenth century the word 'geography' had scarcely entered the language. In its most common sense it meant a 'description' which could be of many diverse kinds.<sup>2</sup> Du Cange in his glossary mentioned the word 'geographare' which, he says, meant to describe the earth. Definitions are further

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1. See Above p.117.

2. *La Géographie des humanistes*, (Paris, 1940), Preface p.xii. He gives the example of a text of 1525 claiming to be a 'calculation, description et géographie vérifiée du royaume de France', which included a description of the funeral celebrations for Francis I at Puy.

complicated by the fact that a geographical description was often known as a cosmography and its author as a cosmographer (the terminology sometimes used in the Middle Ages),<sup>3</sup> and the two words, de Dainville suggests, were still synonymous until the end of the sixteenth century.

Also, as we have seen,<sup>4</sup> many works of the early sixteenth century relating to a particular region or city and bearing the name 'history', were often more concerned with topography or chorography, that is with descriptive geography.<sup>5</sup> This point, that history and geography were considered closely related disciplines, is one which has been made already, and which becomes very clear from a reading of almost any of the descriptive works mentioned in Chapter II. It was the result of a combination of two lines of intellectual development. In the first place the mediaeval chroniclers had established a tradition of dealing with both these topics (as well as many other miscellaneous ones) within the framework of their encyclopaedic works, and in the second place the classical authors, whose precepts were receiving more and more attention, urged the necessity of geographical studies for the historian,<sup>6</sup> and the necessity of encyclopaedic knowledge including history and philosophy for the geographer as explained by Strabo, so that the existing connection between the two fields was strongly reinforced by classical studies. What we would call descriptive geography was stimulated by the study and editing of Strabo and Pomponius Mela, but it was very much a literary exercise, although

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3. For example the 12th/<sup>Century</sup>Cosmographia of Bernardus Sylvester; other works keep the name 'description' e.g. Gervaise of Tilbury, De Mundi Descriptione, Roger Bacon, De Descriptione Locorum, Matthew Paris, 'Descriptio Mundi' in his Chronicon, Ranulf Higden, 'Descrypcion of.... Britayne' in his Polychronicon.

4. Above Chapter II, p.104 et seq.

5. See Paolo Revelli, 'La Geografia nel cinquecento', Bollettino della R. Soc. Geografica Italiana, Series 5, 2 (1913), 98-124 (p.99) who also makes this point with particular reference to Italy.

6. Above Chapter VI

careful observation and the checking of information came into it as can be seen from the German descriptive works discussed by Strauss, and from their counterparts in Italy.

However there was another side to the development of geography as we know it today, and this was both hindered and assisted by study of the classics. In Germany, in particular, among the countries of Western Europe, mathematical and astronomical studies had a renaissance before the renaissance of letters. From the early fifteenth century onwards these disciplines were advocated for a true understanding of geography. The work of Georges de Peurbach and his pupil Jean Müller or Régiomontan<sup>us</sup>, as he is more commonly known, bear out this idea.<sup>7</sup> From the teaching of Régiomontan<sup>us</sup>, at least two very important schools grew up in Germany at Nuremburg and Augsburg, where the scientific study of the movement of the planets and the use of geometry and mathematics were brought to bear on the geography of the world. Ptolemy's maps were still considered important, but their errors became obvious, and the need to correct and explain the discrepancies between them and scientifically made observations led to further developments in the design of new projections and the more accurate calculation of measurements of latitude and longitude.

The development of the theories behind the new 'scientific' geography received a further stimulus from the increase in travel and especially from the voyages of exploration in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. There was a great demand for accurate maps and skills in map making developed to keep up with this. New

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7. On these early developments see L. Gallois, Les Géographes allemands de la Renaissance, (Paris, 1890).

charts appeared even of comparatively familiar waters like the Mediterranean and the English and French coasts. Often they were considerably more accurate than those which reappeared with the revival of Ptolemy. The greatest Italian cartographer of the first half of the sixteenth century Giacomo Gastaldi was far more critical of Ptolemy's maps than of the existing portolans. It was not only coastal and mariners' maps that were so affected. In Italy and Germany especially from the early fifteenth century there were in existence maps of local areas, topographies and more general maps which were often more reliable than Ptolemy's and the revival of his errors had to be resisted among the more skilled cartographers.<sup>8</sup> It was not just in Germany that the more critical approach developed, but also in North Italy some centres were receptive to the new ideas from north of the Alps.<sup>9</sup> Ferrara especially and also neighbouring Bologna, Padua and, not surprisingly, Venice. Here close contact with the sea and travel, combined with the great expansion of the printing trade encouraged the skills of the cartographer and map engraver.<sup>10</sup>

The distinction between descriptive geography and mathematically based cartography was clear from the early sixteenth century, and led to a different bias in geographical studies in different places. While Nuremburg, for example, developed the mathematical side, the Viennese school concentrated on improving descriptive accounts. This distinction was borne out further in the terminology used to describe the different exercises. Although de Dainville has suggested that

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8. Leo Bagrow, op. cit., p.144-146. See also the comment of J. Lelewel, Géographie du Moyen Age, 5 vols., first edition Brussels, 1832-1857, (Amsterdam, 1966), II, 181 that every (European) country and province in the 16th Century had its own map and chart makers.

9. Revelli, op. cit. p.99.

10. Leo Bagrow, op. cit. pp.94, 105, 133.

geography and cosmography were synonymous this was certainly not the case throughout the sixteenth century. Vadian, in his edition of Pomponius Mela, has a very important preface where geography and cosmography are compared. He bases his argument on the Ptolemaic distinction between the two and says that the geographer describes places, the origins of cities and nations, explains names, provides some history and describes the curiosities of nature. Geography therefore bears a great relationship to poetry and history, whereas cosmography is also concerned with countries, towns, rivers, mountains and the regions where they are situated, but especially with plotting their precise position by use of latitude and longitude. This involves astronomy and geometry.<sup>10</sup> While Vadian's description of geography seems to us to contain too much history and antiquarianism, his definition of cosmography covers at least one major aspect of modern geographical studies. Geography as we know it developed from both traditions, but the literary aspect was brought under control by scientific principles of investigation.

How do these observations relate to the Descrittione? Firstly can we classify it as a geographical work, or one with a geographical

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10. Vadian suggests that the former will appeal more to the cultivated man (the man of bookish learning), while the latter will have greater interest for the wise man. His own preference (not stated in so many words) was for the school of Vienna and the historical approach. L. Gallois, *op. cit.*, pp.153-164. It is interesting to note that one of Vadian's teachers was Giovanni di Camerino O. Min. (Gallois 158-9) who was known to Alberti, at least by reputation, as he reports hearing about him when he visited Vienna in 1517 (Above p.26). He was one of the foreigners who helped the revival of geographical studies in Vienna. His dislike of Lutheranism (which he had in common with Alberti) drove him back to Italy in 1524, and he published works of the ancients with his own commentary e.g. editions of Solinus and Priscianus, and one of P. Mela without notes.

content? Using sixteenth-century

criteria clearly we can, although I have preferred the term chorography, as this avoids the use of 'geography' with its overtones of a modern scientifically-based discipline. (The sixteenth-century 'geography' was obviously something very different.) The Descrittione, though, was in no sense a cosmography<sup>11</sup> even of one country, Italy. It was not a study based on, and including charts and maps (the maps of the Islands are not sufficient qualification!), although Ptolemy is frequently referred to there is no attempt to evaluate or reconstruct his map according to the dictates of astronomy or mathematics. These subjects do not feature in the Descrittione at all. Any contribution which the Descrittione might make to geographical studies had to be in the field of descriptive geography alone, in that combination of historical and geographical information advocated by Strabo, and this was not the way in which the great names in later sixteenth-century geographical studies were looking. Alberti considered that he was writing a 'geography and topography', but not a cosmography. In his work on the tomb of S. Dominic mentioned in Chapter I, he declares that he has never seen a finer tomb in all his travels 'per Italiam, quam totam peragravi, prout in Geographia ac Topographia ipsius Italiae ostendi',<sup>12</sup> and his remark that the Descrittione was a work combining history, geography and topography has already been

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11. A cosmography tended to imply also a work which covered all the world, because of its use of maps, particularly the Ptolemaic atlas which provided a starting point for revision and correction and incorporation of new material. However as a technical term a cosmography of Italy could cover the physical geography of that one country.

12. De divi Dominici Calaguritani obitu et Sepultura, (Bologna, 1535).

discussed.<sup>13</sup> The 'geography' referred to is descriptive geography, not cosmography, as Alberti himself makes clear in his remark about Benedetto Bordone, whose Isolario, printed in 1527, was a source for the Islands. He says that Bordone 'attende a scrivere quelle cose che appartengono al cosmografo, non all topografo et historico', as he himself is trying to do.<sup>14</sup> For the sixteenth-century writer, especially one brought up on the classics, cosmography and geographico-historical studies (or chorography) were two very distinct areas and Alberti was not at all concerned with the former.

(ii) The geographical content of the Descrittione and its value

The topography of Italy plays a cardinal role in the arrangement of the contents of the Descrittione, as has already been demonstrated in Chapter III. In the first place it is the geographical unit of Italy which is being considered, and secondly the subdivisions of this unit, which are the natural geographical regions of the country. Italy, for Alberti, included the whole peninsula and the islands surrounding it, and was considered not simply as a convenient geographical area, but as a group of distinctly 'Italian' states which had some affinity beyond this coincidence of physical proximity. The text makes this clear in several places. For example Alberti describes the formation of the Company of St. George by Alberico da Barbiano to drive out the Bretons (f.285). Count Alberico was 'liberatore d'Italia da i Barbari', and greatly admired by all Europe; but such lovers of Italian freedom passed away. I shall quote the

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13. Above p.117.

14. Isole, f.4.

following passage in full as it seems to demonstrate the feeling Alberti had for Italy as a whole and also considerable patriotic feeling not just for his state, but for all the peninsula.

Mancati quei veri amatori della Italica libertà (my italics) (essendo entrato fra i Principi d'Italia, l'avaritia, superbia, ambitione, e invidia) un'altra volta ne'nostri giorni... ha sentito nostro infelice Italia i furiosi impeti, saccheggiamenti e crudeli uccisioni de i Barbari in tal maniera, che non è rimasto cantone alcuno di essa (da 50 anni in qua) che non habbia isperimentato la Rabbia, la crudelità, et il sanguinolente cottello de i Francesi, Spagnuoli, Suizeri, Guasconi, Allamani, Albanesi, Corsi, e d'altre generationi Barbare, come chiaramente si può vedere nelle mie Effemeridi Latine. (f285-285vo).

So Italy is left 'disfatta', not only that she cannot send help to other countries, but she cannot even defend herself. Alberti is talking as an Italian, more patriotically than Machiavelli or Guicciardini. He does not blame any one state in Italy more than another; it is the greed and rivalry of the princes which caused disunity and a disregard for Italian liberty. It is not the French particularly who are blamed, but all foreign armies who have come onto Italian soil.<sup>15</sup>

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15. This makes it less surprising that relations with France were patched up sufficiently for Alberti to dedicate his work to the French King and Queen by the middle of the century. He goes on to point out how wonderful were the forces of Italy which could once be gathered together, for example Ferdinand of Aragon's army against Charles VIII of France, Ludovico Sforza's army (as reported by Corio) against Louis XII, and the Venetians against Louis XII at the Ghiara d'Adda (according to Mario Equicola), and so on.



This is not the only time Italian liberty arouses Alberti. Orlandino and Manfredi Pallavicini were, he says, very anxious for Italian liberti ('molto desideroso della liberta Italiana, ma molto infelici'..) but very unfortunate, so that they were brutally cut down by the French. I have drawn attention to these examples to point out Alberti's concern for Italy as a whole, a concern in keeping with his desire to portray it as a whole and a concern expressed by several of his contemporaries.

To return to matters of geography. For Alberti and his contemporaries, the northern boundary of Italy was the Alps, from the Julian Alps in the east to the Ligurian Alps in the west, and it was almost totally a geographical, not a political boundary. Alberti is fairly clear in the picture he gives of the dividing line, although one has to piece together references to it from the descriptions of all the most northerly provinces. There is no separate account of exactly how the border ran. Starting from the north of Istria the boundary was the 'Alpi Giulii Carnesi' and the 'Alpi Vendelici' behind Friuli and the Marca Trevigiano (f.408).<sup>16</sup> Further west were the 'Alpi di Trento' (f.415, 416vo-417) and above Trento itself a narrow and difficult pass to Germany (f.417) (the Brenner).

The inhabitants of Casa Nova, Marano Castello and other towns and villages in this area, although they were in Italy, were more German in their customs and in their way of speech. Above Chiusa was another very narrow pass through the Alps (f.416vo). The 'Alpi Retie',<sup>17</sup> formed the border above Como and contained the 'Valle di

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16. The former could be crossed by two routes to Lisonzo and to Lubiana (f.443).

17. It is difficult to put limits on the Alpi Retie, he says, as they are so high with numerous peaks.

Chiavenna and Valle Valtollina' (f.367-367vo) (the Grisons and the Tyrol); then came the 'Alpi Leponzi' extending behind Lake Maggiore up to the St. Gottard, where the 'high Alps' began including the Greater and Smaller Mt. St. Bernard.<sup>18</sup> Alberti describes Bellinzona (f.397vo) and the area round it, pointing out that Italy and the 'Diocesi di Milano' end at these high mountains (the St. Gottard).

It is interesting to note that this is the only place in the Descrittione where a diocesan boundary is mentioned in connection with the limits of a region.

Following his description of Lake Maggiore, Alberti again moves to the Alpine border to describe Monte Sempione, the source of the River Doveria and the landmark for another route through the valley to reach Briga and Lake Léman (f.400vo). In the mountains here was Valle di Canobio where the inhabitants, 'rozzi e di grosso ingegno' had a peculiar reputation as chimney sweeps!<sup>19</sup> The ancient city of Vercelli in this area, once subject to the Marquis of Montferrat, was now in the hands of the Duke of Savoy (f.402vo) but as far as Alberti was concerned it clearly merited inclusion within Italy, being on the right side of the Alps and formerly under Italian rule. The same is true of Turin, another erstwhile possession of the Princes and of Montferrat, a city which was eventually to return to the Italian fold. Although it was under French rule it is described as part of

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18. This is an area described in some detail, and showing reliance on Biondo.

19. They were 'quegli huomini che passano per tutta Europa per scopare i Camini, o Cimineri, sotto quali si fa il fuoco'.

Italy and could no more be considered as part of France than Venice or Milan could be (f.406). Geographical boundaries were what Alberti considered significant rather than the contemporary political ones.

The Alps behind Aosta were called the Graie and Pennine by classical authors and by the sixteenth century they are known as the Grand and Petit St. Bernard. The Val'd'Aosta has many towns and leads up to two mountain passes, one over the summit of Monte Pennino, the other one flatter and much used 'per la quale si conducono le carra, et passa per le Alpi più basse nelle Centroni' (f.404). Over the Petit St. Bernard, Alberti notes, is the route through the Val d'Isère. Beyond the Alpi Graie lie the Alpi Cottie, or Monte Cinisio (Mt. Cenis), and on its slopes we find Suza (f.406). From Suza there are two routes to France, one to Savoy and the other to Grenoble. So we come to the last part of the frontier, the Ligurian Alps and the River Magra near Nice which Alberti takes as his boundary with France (f.8vo).

Some parts of the frontier were clearly better known than others. His details on the Mt. Cenis pass from Suza suggest that it was this route which he took into France in 1528. He also had the detailed descriptions, already mentioned, of the Lakes and their surrounding country, enabling him to make a full report on them without any personal investigations.

Geography was the basis of Alberti's regional divisions, and a clear geographical rationale dictated his order of procedure round the peninsula.<sup>20</sup> At the beginning of each region he clearly states

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20. The only slight deviation is the treatment of Umbria before Latium, but Alberti is aware of this reordering of things to include it there, (f.77vo).

its limits, both according to classical and more contemporary writers and then explains what limits he intends to adopt. In many cases they are the limits of Ptolemy although not always,<sup>21</sup> sometimes Pliny and other ancient authors prove more convenient,<sup>22</sup> and sometimes Alberti substitutes more 'modern' boundaries of his own.<sup>23</sup> It is his practice, he says, to use rivers as boundaries, just as the

ancient geographers did.<sup>24</sup> Occasionally attention is paid to ethnic

21. For example Liguria (f.8vo) was divided by the ancients into two parts, but Alberti is only going to describe the coastal area, 'come gli disegna Tolomeo nella sesta Tavola di Europa'. Umbria's limits follow Ptolemy (f.78vo.); for Basilicata (f.177) Strabo and Ptolemy differ slightly and Ptolemy is Alberti's choice; for Campania (f.143vo) both Ptolemy and Strabo are referred to, for Calabria (f.182) again it is Ptolemy and for Magna Grecia (f.192) Sempronius, Pliny and Ptolemy. ('Volendo io seguitare questi nobili scrittori...') Pliny and Ptolemy are each partially followed for the March of Ancona (f.248) and Ptolemy in general is followed for Lombardy beyond the Po (f.346).
22. For example Latium (f.98) and Histria (f.444). For Terra di Bari and Puglia Piana (f.216 and 221vo) several classical authors' limits appear. Alberti's main divergence from them is in treating these two parts of Apulia as two separate regions. Likewise with Terra d'Otranto, the boundary marking the landward side of the peninsula was from Taranto to Brindisi according to ancient authors, forexample Herodotus.
23. He gives the ancient boundaries of the March of Treviso (including those of Ptolemy, f.408), but replaces them with his own modern boundaries. For the Duchy of Friuli and the Romagna the boundaries are his own (f.430vo and f.265), while for Lombardy south of the Po he follows Biondo, (f.316-316vo.). Sassoferrato he places in the March of Ancona (f.257vo) 'seguitando la descrizione de i moderni... benche etiandio sia ne gli Umbri (come dissi) scrivere Strabone e Plinio, con quegli altri scrittori'.
24. 'Vero è che io volendo seguitare i costumi de gli antichi Geografi, Corografi, et etiandio Topografi (i quali terminavano e partivano le provincie, Regioni e paesi comunamente per li fiumi, si come fa anche Tolomeo'. (f.334vo.) See also f.402 re Lombardy beyond the Po, 'io volendo seguitar gli antichi geografi, quali designavano i termini (comunamente però) alle Regioni et paesi, à i fiumi.....') He ends the Romagna at the R. Panaro (f.265), although its course was different in ancient times, because he feels it is better to end this region with a famous river, 'secondo la consuetudine de gli antichi habitatori di Italia (come dimostrano i provati scrittori)'.

groupings, especially for subdivisions within a region but again the boundaries for such subdivisions are usually rivers and mountains.<sup>25</sup> One departure from this general practice is in the case of <sup>the</sup> Romagna, the boundaries of which Alberti extends beyond the Po up to the Venetian and Paduan marshes in some areas, when it might be argued that the Po would be a suitable boundary (f.265). His justification is a racial one. He has not found that the Veneti crossed the River Ladice into this area; it was all inhabited by the Assagi Toscani, then by the Galli, so it has always been within the Romagna. A lack of distinct ethnic groupings makes things difficult for him in Calabria where he complains that the people of the Brutii and of Magna Grecia are all now called Calabresi, making it hard to distinguish between the two.<sup>26</sup>

It is quite clear that Alberti's regional divisions were in the main those used by the ancient authors.<sup>27</sup> They were not based on diocesan boundaries, as can be seen only too easily from a glance at the relevant maps.<sup>28</sup> Nor were his regions based on contemporary

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26. F.186 'tutti i popoli tanto de 'Brutii, quanto della Magna Grecia, hora si nominano Calabresi, et è gran difficoltà à discernere quei de i Brutii da quei della detta Magna Grecia'.

27. Roletto notes Alberti's preference for the divisions of the classical geographers, though to say, as he does, that Alberti generally prefers Pliny, seems to be quite misleading.

28. Carte Topografiche delle diocesi italiane dei secoli XIII e XIV delineate sulla scorta delle Rationes decimarum Italiae.

Published in Studi e Testi Vols. 58, 60, 69, 84, 97, 98, 128, 148, 161, 162 etc. Alberti says that he does not follow the boundaries of the 'sacro libro', as they are not geographical ones. See above p. 128.

political divisions. There is no clear indication as to which were the most powerful states in sixteenth-century Italy, nor by whom they were governed.<sup>29</sup> In this respect one may accuse Alberti of being hide-bound by classical traditions rather than portraying the contemporary scene. However, for the scholar and antiquary these divisions were more permanent ones, not altered by the political fortunes of one family or another, and they provided a more lasting system of reference to places. Professor Hay has suggested that the boundaries of the episcopatus in the Middle Ages had a permanency not usually experienced by political areas at that time.<sup>30</sup> Despite Alberti's church connections, these regions did not appeal to him so well as the classical geographical ones.

It seems that contemporary opinion was by no means ignorant of what area was inhabited by which people, and where the geographical boundaries lay. When describing the inland places of Terra di Bari, Alberti points out the difficulties of relating one place to another. Starting from Brindisi he climbs up to the city of Ostuno and below it about seven kilometres away he reaches the 'palude delle Canne'. 'Et quivi (secondo però la voce de gli habitatori del paese) finisce Terra di Otranto, e comincia Terra di Bari'(f.210).

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29. f.239 refers to the Kingdom of Naples as a unit. We are told that Otranto marks the end of not only the Abruzzi, but also of the Kingdom of Naples, as all this area is called. The area in question consists of part of Campagna di Roma, Terra di Lavoro, Basilicata, Calabria, Gran Grecia, Terra d'Otranto, Terra di Bari, Puglia Piana and this part of the Abruzzi.

30. D. Hay, 'Geographical abstractions and the historian', in Historical Studies, papers presented before the third conference of Irish historians, edited by Michael Roberts, (London, 1959).

The inhabitants of this region at least appear to have been well aware of the existence of such regional divisions. (It is worth recalling the divisions of Collenuccio, referred to earlier, which seem to have been accepted contemporary divisions, while still being within the Kingdom of Naples) If locals knew where such regions began and ended, although they were originally the regions of classical geography, they presumably had never ceased to be recognized by successive generations of inhabitants. Such boundaries were based on long-standing traditions and were not simply resurrected by sixteenth-century antiquaries researching in their classical texts. They had been established long before the episcopal boundaries and were not subject to the fluctuating fortunes of the political ones.

Within each area Alberti proceeds according to the logic of geography and the lie of the land as has been explained in an earlier chapter.<sup>31</sup> Latitude and longitude do not enter into the argument and there are no maps or town or regional plans; the country is described by the written word alone. Alberti rarely gives the distances between places. When he does, they are often according to various classical sources. An example of this is his discussion of the length of Tuscany (f.22). He tries to explain the varying distances to be found in his sources by suggesting that the measurements were made in different ways, along the coast road, round the coast by sea, by land from one point to another, and so on, but he does not give any measurements which he has made, or suggest how

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31. Chapter III. He explains his system several times, e.g. f.359vo. f.370. Where the system breaks down he uses the Roman Roads (f.126), or proceeds as best he can (f.219 in Terra di Bari, and f.190vo-191 in Calabria).

contemporary map-makers assessed the distances, despite the fact that he had travelled through many of the regions himself and had in his possession recently made maps.

A full evaluation of the geographical content of the Descrittione should be the work of a geographer rather than an historian, and one such study has already been made, that of G. Roletto whose article of fifty years ago contains a still valuable and fairly thorough analysis of the main types of geographical information which can be gleaned from its pages.<sup>32</sup> Roletto points out that on the whole Alberti's knowledge of physical geography was weak. He was not trained in astronomy or cartography, he was an observer, combining his notes of what he had seen and experienced with what he found recorded by others. Sometimes this enabled him to criticise the inaccuracies of others, but not very frequently. His main sources for physical geography were Biondo and the classics.<sup>33</sup> Occasionally he seems to be independent of his sources, for example in Tuscany, for some of the secondary rivers he uses his own observations, or possibly draws on existing maps such as those of Bellarmato or Bordone. Although he does not always point out geographical errors in his classical sources, Alberti was nevertheless aware that their accounts could have shortcomings. For example he points out that Biondo argued that the River

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32. Roletto, op. cit.

33. Take the sources for the main rivers, for example. Biondo, Bracellio and Giustiniani are the main ones for Liguria, Biondo, Boccaccio and sometimes Dante (the Arno) and Annius (the Marta) for Tuscany and the Tirrenian Coast, Biondo, Volaterrano and the classical authors for the Tiber, Razzano and the classical authors for the Ionian Coast and the Gulf of Taranto, Biondo, Volaterrano and the classical authors for the Adriatic coast, Biondo for the Po, and Candido and Amaseo for the Marca Trevigiana and Friuli.



Ramo was created a hundred years before his time because it did not appear on the map owned by King Robert of Naples and because Petrarch did not mention it (f.308). Alberti says possibly it was not included either because it was not known about, or because it was not considered so important, as one often finds in other geographers, even Ptolemy who omitted to mention many rivers including the Reno and Tesino. Alberti adds his opinion to the debate over the Rubicon,<sup>34</sup> and gives considerable space to a description of the Po.<sup>35</sup>

Explanations of natural phenomena are few and sometimes show some originality. He describes Tripergola as he saw it before and after the volcanic activities of 1538. The fertility of volcanic regions interested him and gave rise to a curious explanation, that the earth, baked by volcanic fire exuded a certain richness not found elsewhere (f.172). He describes the formation of 'cristalli',<sup>36</sup> or rock-crystal, as due to the intense cold which eventually converts ice into stone!<sup>37</sup> The severity of the Po floods in 1521 and 1531 is

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34. Alberti favours the Pissatello (f.269) on the authority of Strabo, Livy, Plutarch, Pliny, Caesar, Lucan, Silius Italicus and many others, in preference to the Plusa. On this see R. Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, pp.110-112. Some of the contributions to the debate are to be found reprinted in Graevius, Thesaurus, VII, part ii.

35. The source of the Po was investigated by some young men who described the perils of their ascent into the high Alps to Alberti (f.343vo). He also discusses classical accounts of the Po at some length. (f.344-345vo)

36. Isole, f.42, (where he devotes some time to Mt. Etna) and Descrittione, f.187 where they are found in the mountains round Bisignana.

37. Roletto points out that this was the common explanation in Alberti's day. On causes of volcanic activity, Alberti seems to have been reiterating the ideas of Bembo, Dialogo de Aetna (1495).

accounted for in an unusual fashion, not without a grain of truth. He maintains that the growth of the population of the Plain of Lombardy led to the cultivation of the mountain sides, so that the rains were no longer contained by woods and scrub land, but formed raging torrents in the streams and ditches flowing uninterrupted down to the River. Another cause, he suggests, might be the draining of the marshes which previously retained the flood water. Strabo and Trogus Pompeius provided Alberti with the cause of the separation of Sicily from the mainland.<sup>38</sup>

Alberti makes no significant contribution to demographic knowledge. The most he does, as Roletto points out, is to mention that a certain town is 'pieno di popolo' while another village is 'povera di popolo'. No exact figures are to be found and no explanations, except that the well-populated areas are usually those described also as most fertile.<sup>39</sup> Near Cidignola in Apulia we learn that there was such a shortage of water that the farmers lived in towns and camped out in groups when work in the fields had to be done (f.227vo). In Terra d'Otranto the population was so sparse that almost every village had a fortress to defend it against brigands. Roletto does not point out how Alberti sometimes remarks on the effects the foreign invasions had on certain towns. The Castelli of Acqui (f.342vo), for example were once very rich, but are now mostly deserted due to the suffering of the people under Francis I and Charles V. Reggio Calabria, Brindisi and other southern ports suffered at Turkish

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38. Isole, f.304.

39. For example f.181vo, Calabria; f.283vo. Val di Lamone; f.315-5vo., most of the Romagna; f346vo., the plain of Lombardy; f.291, Pieve.

hands (f.185v, 211vo-12), though Bari was still 'pieno di popolo' (f.217). Other comments on the inhabitants of different regions amount to little more than the standard phrases that they were 'di grande ingegno' or 'rozzi': The inhabitants of Forlì were intelligent and good merchants and soldiers (f.280), those of Imola were rich, noble, civil and wise (f.287vo). Occasionally there is a remark of much more interest, for example the comments on the population of Montecalto,<sup>40</sup> and the fact that many towns and villages in the Usento area still speak Greek and keep Greek customs (f.214).

The climate is a little-mentioned subject. The heavy rain-fall in Terra di Bari (f.215vo), and the autumn rains in the Bolognese are recorded, and the Po floods, and the water-shortage in Apulia call for comment. Noteworthy too, was the strong wind from a 'grotta' on Monte Ritondo which did considerable damage at certain times of the year (f.50-50vo). Near Ortona in the Abruzzi is an area very treacherous in winter<sup>41</sup> and several parts are described as unhealthy because of 'cattiva aria', for example Salpia<sup>42</sup>, Maremo near Siena (f.54) where the air was so bad that the inhabitants turned green, especially in summer and autumn, and Terra Gialda in Tuscany<sup>43</sup>. The cause of the

40. Above, Chaps. III and V.

41. Descrittione f.232vo. See also above, p.300, for another example.

42. f.222. It was very unhealthy in Roman times so that the senate agreed that it should be rebuilt 4 miles inland.

43. f.150. It looked pimento yellow and the air was so bad that one saw birds flying over the area drop down dead! One might compare this with Strabo's comment on the Gulf of Avernus (V.iv.5), where birds suffered similarly, presumably from the sulphur vapours present.

smell here, Alberti suggests, is sulphur as found in Ripamaranze five miles away where there was some volcanic activity and also in the territory of Volterra.<sup>44</sup>

Such information, interesting as it may be, is scarcely meteorological. It is worth noting that Roletto suggests that Alberti goes so far as to prefer pronouncements made by classical authors on the weather, on the crops grown, on areas of good pasture, on the quality of the wine or on the minerals to be found in particular areas. It is true that Alberti records remarks from the classics, sometimes in conjunction with his own observations, or the observations of more modern sources and sometimes with no comment at all. But to suggest that they were to be preferred as observations, describing the contemporary situation, to contemporary opinion or to Alberti's own experiences, seems to exaggerate Alberti's subservience to his approved classical authors. Their remarks often seem to have been recorded more for the fact that a certain author has mentioned one particular town or another and this is what he has to say about it, rather than <sup>that</sup> the remarks themselves were still applicable in the sixteenth century. Sometimes, of course, they were still valid comments and sometimes Alberti had no further knowledge about the place in question.

To turn now to the crops which Alberti records. From reading the

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44. Alberti is somewhat inconsistent in suggesting that sulphur vapours are unhealthy here, when elsewhere he reports their health giving properties. See above Chapter V, p.297.

Descrittione it is certain that Italy was a rich producer of grain. Very many areas are described as corn (or wheat) producing.<sup>45</sup> Barley is limited to Terra di Lavoro, Gargano, Foggia (in Apulia) and the Bologna area and other cereals such as millet, rye and spelt are specialities in particular areas.<sup>46</sup> These observations all relate to areas which Alberti knew well, through residence in or travelling through them.

Alberti makes a notable distinction between 'pascoli', or pasture, which was properly for sheep, and 'prati', or meadows for cattle. Several times he refers to the 'pascoli della Maiella' and 'della Piana di Foggia'.<sup>47</sup> He mentions particularly the flocks in the Val d'Aosta, and those in the area of Reggio-Parma-Lodi. In the Milanese areas were irrigated several times a year to produce good grazing (f.333, Piacenza). The milk yield was so high that an unbelievable amount of cheese was produced in the Piacenza area.

Fertile areas which grew grain crops usually produced also olives, especially in the central and southern areas, and vines. Some areas which Alberti singles out for special praise in respect of their general fertility are the Lombardy Plain from Bologna up to Bergamo (f.265vo) (Pavia was called 'il giardino di Milano' [f.377]);<sup>48</sup>

45. For example, Terra d'Otranto, Sicily (from where it was also exported), Terra di Lavoro, Terra di Bari, parts of Tuscany, the Romagna, especially round Bologna, and various places within the Lombardy Plain, also areas in Treviso, Umbria and Sardinia.

46. Millet, for example, round Cremona and Brescia and on Corsica, rye near Brescia.

47. Descrittione, f.227vo. 'Vi sono grassi pascoli per le mandre et armenti degli animali, et gregge delle pecorelle et massimamente nel tempo del verno...'

48. See for example f.365, 363vo (Crema), f.357vo. (Brescia), f.309vo (Ferrara), f.293 (Bologna).

parts of Latium,<sup>49</sup> Tuscany, the Lunigiana and Campania,<sup>50</sup> especially Campo Leborino, described as 'fertilissimo sopra tutti gli altri d'Italia, come dimostra Plinio et io ho innanzi detto' (f.150) (a case which Roletto could have instanced of reference to a classical authority). The volcanic soil of the Bay of Naples was an area of good productivity and round the Sorrento and Amalfi coasts to Salerno and beyond were areas of extensive fruit production. Calabria as well as producing barley and wheat produced wine, olives, fruits of all kinds, sugar, artichokes, saffron, figs, cotton, flax, hemp, and its silk output equalled that of all the rest of Italy (f.215vo).

Roletto's maps pin-point the most important areas mentioned by Alberti for vines and olive oil, and show, he says, a distribution not much different from that of the early twentieth century when he was writing. Although Pliny's judgements on the wines of some areas are mentioned, Alberti frequently commends particular areas without reference to any sources. Montferrat was an area of particularly rich cultivation of the vine (f.404), but in Lombardy it was not a crop of primary importance. In the Romagna Alberti distinguishes between the better wines from the hills and the lighter wines of the plain.<sup>51</sup> Roletto finds the information on the distribution of olive growing more interesting. They were grown in the lower Alpine areas near Bergamo and Brescia, by Lake Garda and on the hills round Verona; areas where scarcely any are found nowadays, he says. Areas

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49. For example f.136 (the area round Valeria).

50. For example f.146vo (the area round Alise), f.140 (Lado di Neme).

51. Other wines particularly mentioned include those of Bolzano, of the Cinque Terre, of Chianti, St. Geminiano, the Casentino, Gubbio, Narni, Bolsena, Viterbo, Naples, Pompei, Calabria in general, Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia.

of particular abundance according to Alberti were parts of Emilia, Umbria, the Marches and Apulia, from where they were exported to Venice and Dalmatia. Sardinia imported most of her oil from the mainland and the Balearic Islands, while Sicily produced her own.<sup>52</sup>

Apart from these more obvious remarks on the agriculture of Italy, there are some interesting comments on crops which are found in particular regions. I have already listed the specialities of Calabria. Citrus fruit was found also along the Tirrenian coast and on the western side of the Apennines, and in Calabria, Apulia and Sicily; apples in Tuscany, figs in Umbria and the Marches, from where they were exported to Venice, Ferrara and Bologna; sugar in Sicily (where Alberti describes its method of production in which he assisted when he was at Bivona).<sup>53</sup> Pimentos were grown in Calabria and Tuscany (Terra Gialda, f.50), round Palermo and in the Abruzzi, and melons were to be found near Ostia, cotton in the Palermo area, Apulia and in Malta, linen in Tuscany (the Falisci, f.62vo), almonds in Magna Grecia, Calabria and Apulia, aniseed, fenugreek, cumin and coriander near Forli (f.280), saffron and cumin in Apulia, chestnuts at Pietra Bisomantea (f.323) and on the hills near Reggio, Modena and Parma. There was also hemp in the Romagna at Butrio, and at Cento and Pieve (f.289vo and f.291vo), which found a ready market in Venice. The mulberry was found in abundance in Treviso and presumably in the silk farming areas in the Romagna and Calabria.

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52. Oil from Lidese was a favourite in Rome (f.290). Alberti points out that the great forests of almond and olive trees seen in Terra di Bari were different from those seen in the north (f.218).

53. Isole, f.51.

It seems, says Roletto, that Alberti had a fairly good idea of the distribution of minerals and mines in the peninsula. His sources are not the classics, except for an occasional reference to Pliny they are based on his own knowledge of contemporary literature and on personal correspondence and investigations. He mentions, for example, iron in the Val d'Aosta, near Turin, near Cuneo, near Bergamo in Elba, Corsica and Sardinia, silver in the mountains near Verona, in Sardinia and in Calabria, and copper in the Alps near Bergamo. Special stone for mill-stones came from the last mentioned area, stone for vases from the Val d'Ossola, marble from the Turin area and Carrara, building stone from the Romagna and Calabria, pumice-stone and flint from Calabria and variegated stone from Sicily. Mention is made of alabaster and sulphur in Tuscany, of 'olio petronico' (bitumen) in Tocco (in the Abruzzi), of alum in Latium and Sicily, mercury in Idria and so on. Mineral waters, good for various infirmities are mentioned in several areas. Roletto on this general topic omits some more interesting examples of minerals, notably gold mined in Monte Nero (f.149vo) along with alabaster. Gold was also found in the Val d'Isère (f.405) and the nearby mountains (f.403vo) and in Magna Grecia (f.195). In this last area there was also iron, silver and 'azzurro' comparable to ultramarine. Both gold and silver could be seen in Tuscany in the River Tesino (f.37vo). There were several different kinds of 'marble-type' stone quarried, porphyry, 'serpentino', agate and calcedony, as well as sulphur and vitriolite on Monte Urbana. At Leccia in Tuscany there was an interesting volcanic area (f.50) with hot springs, geysers and coloured clay used



for artists pigments.<sup>54</sup>

As far as the distribution of industry is concerned, Alberti is less precise, says Roletto. Apart from mentioning many mills and workshops of little importance that he has seen, he forgets to mention, or does not know about, important industries characteristic of certain regions. Pliny and Biondo are sometimes his sources, although his own observations are also frequently used. Industries recorded by Roletto are the woollen cloth trade in Vigevano (f.393), the Bergamo area (f.365) and Vinci in Tuscany; Vase-making in Umbria, Salerno and Apulia; milling in Bologna, Ferrara and on the Garigliano ('molti molini'); iron mining and working in Val Sesia, around Bergamo, in the Bolognese and in Apulia; paper making at Fabriano, cheese making around Parma, Piacenza and Lodi, in the Val d'Aosta and in Sardinia and the woollen industry in the Veronese, the Val d'Aosta, Parma and Piacenza. While we have seen the growing of the mulberry mentioned, there is no mention of the silk industry, according to Roletto. In fact Roletto is wrong on this point for Alberti does mention silk production at least three times.<sup>55</sup> Although Roletto marks areas where salt was produced on one of his maps, he does not comment on the information.<sup>56</sup>

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54. Another such area is described near Firenzuola (f.288vo). 'Oglio petronico' was also found at Cantalupo (f.234). Alberti tells us that the marble from Gandoglia and Ornavaspo by Lake Maggiore was used to build Milan Cathedral (f.401).

55. He reports, for example, in Calabria (f.181vo) 'se ne trae tanta seta, che ardisco dire, che paragonandola a quella, che si cava del resto d'Italia (sono comparativamente) la si possa raguagliare ad essa'. In Montealto in particular 'sono assai alberti moroni da nodrire i vermicelli, da i quali se ne trae la seta'. (f.187vo), and around Bologna likewise (f.293vo.). In Calabria the Rivers Gratte and Bucento had bleaching properties which made them useful to bleach silk (f.189vo).

56. Areas where salt panning was carried on include Cervia (f.270), an area near Piacenza (f.333), the River Cecina at Volterra (f.49vo) and one or two other areas on the coast of Magna Grecia.

Salt and fresh water fishing was an occupation in many areas. The rivers and lakes of North Italy were well stocked with trout and other fish.<sup>57</sup> Further south the description provides much less detail on inland fishing.<sup>58</sup> The funny fish caught at sea off Treviso in Calabria (f.183vo) was exported all over Italy. In Giela in Basilicata the inhabitants salted fish which was then sold further afield (f.178). Roletto draws attention to three areas where coral fishers worked, between Corsica and Sardinia, off the western coast of Sicily and off the coast of Calabria.

Alberti does not provide much information on the commerce of Italy. Most reliable and detailed accounts concern, in general, routes with which he was personally familiar. The lines of communication across the Alps have already been mentioned.<sup>59</sup> The only routes mentioned on the Lombardy Plain are one between Verona and Ostiglia, one between Genoa and Piacenza via Bobbio, and one which is 'cattiva' between Modena and Pistoia via Pavullo. The route between Rome and Naples was similarly bad and the instability of most of the bridges in Basilicata called for comment. Roletto notes with interest the points at which the main rivers became navigable, according to Alberti: the Po by small boats at Pancalieri, the Ticino at its exit from Lake Maggiore, the Adige at Verona and the Tiber a few miles from

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57. For example the Po, f.307; the Oglio, f.359; the Tesino, f.374vo.; Lake Maggiore, f.396vo.

58. Exceptions are Lake Trasimeno, f.59; the rivers around Viterbo, f.57vo; and Nettunia, f.117.

59. Above pp.389-91 Roletto accuses Alberti of confusion over the position of the Brenner which, he says, is placed too far west, where there was a route for merchants into Germany! However, Alberti's description of the route over the mountains from Trent seems quite acceptable.

its source; while Lombardy is criss-crossed by a network of navigable canals. Alberti's information on the location of the best ports and harbours is not particularly thorough, nor does he provide much detail on the main commercial centres. In the north the big cities of Milan, Venice, Padua and Genoa are described as centres of commerce, also Mestre and Chiavari (f.18vo) in Liguria.

Further south the main centres are Bologna, Castelbolognese, Mercato Saraceno and Meldola,<sup>60</sup> Gubbio, Recanati, Foligno and Lanciano,<sup>61</sup> and in the southern parts Lecce, Otranto, Gallipoli<sup>62</sup> and Castellammare di Stabia. One could add to Roletto's list also Vercelli where a market for animals and wool was held twice a year (f.402vo) and Pesaro which was a centre for Italian and Dalmatian merchants (f.262).

From these snippets of information it is possible to get some impression of the crops, minerals and industries of sixteenth-century Italy, but much is left unsaid, and what is said is usually the obvious. While we can conclude for example, that a very large part of the population lived in small towns, villages and 'castelletti' and spent their time farming or fishing, we are given no idea, not even a rough estimate, of the number of inhabitants of any of the big cities, nor are we told much about occupations there, about specialities of different cities, about numbers of men employed in particular crafts, about guild organization, about foreign trade and related topics.

Although Alberti goes a long way towards painting a picture of the

60. f.278vo. - near Forli it had a market every Tuesday!

61. f.233, in the Abruzzi large fairs were held in May and August.

62. f.210. A port not listed by Roletto, though Alberti says it is a very good harbour and heavily used at all seasons.

countryside with its varieties of crops, its rivers, streams and woods, and its fruit and flowers and mineral wealth, he clearly did not have the same interest in depicting the cities and ports. Some buildings are singled out for words of praise or for special descriptions, but no town is brought to life before our eyes as the countryside often is. Even as a descriptive geography the Descriptione has its weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses will become even more apparent when its place in the development of guidebook literature is discussed.

Is it possible to say that Alberti's work had any lasting value or influence in geographical studies? The short answer is 'no', because as a work of geography, despite Alberti's aspirations, it did not contribute to the new developments in geographical studies which were taking place in the field of cosmography and map-making rather than in the field of chorography. It is of interest to the student of the history of geography since it is evidence of what one type of Renaissance scholar considered to be geography, and it clearly followed the rules laid down by Strabo and Ptolemy for this type of work.

In Germany Alberti's contemporary Sebastian Munster tried to combine his classical training with some of the new ideas in cosmography. The outcome was a work which simplified some of the mathematical concepts, which was still based on Ptolemaic maps but which contained historico-antiquarian descriptive information.<sup>64</sup> It has been suggested that

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64. Cosmographiae, (Basle, 1550), See above Chapter II p.112 also Gallois, op. cit., pp.190, 224-230 and index; Strauss, op. cit., 116-120.

Munster marked the end of the German school of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which, although it pioneered the new mathematical approach, had still as its back bone the geography of the Greeks. In the second half of the sixteenth century the age of Ptolemy's errors was over. His maps were still preserved but they were superseded by others in the work of Ortelius and Mercator. The reputation of Ptolemy was the sixteenth-century achievement, and it was not one in which Alberti participated.<sup>65</sup>

The new geographers, emerging in Germany, the Netherlands and Italy were a select group, highly trained, with clear methods of procedure. The new 'school' originated in the Low Countries and paid little more than lip service to the classics in constructing its maps. Mercator, for example, divided the study of geography into three parts - ancient geography, Ptolemy, and modern geography.<sup>66</sup> By the end of the century 'geography' seems to have taken on something nearer its modern meaning and to have referred to the study of the physical world based on map-making. In other words, it was the cosmographer, who had now abandoned the Ptolemaic tradition, who had become the new geographer, while the former chorographer or historical geographer had combined his interests with those of the antiquarian who had always shared similar objectives. Descriptions were still required to accompany maps, however, and even Alberti could occasionally come in useful in this respect, as he did for G.A. Magini whose 61 engraved maps

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65. See Deleweel, op. cit. II Chap. 7.

66. His own Geography appeared in 1578. The separation of the old and new maps was evident in Italy in the works of Giacomo Gastaldi, (1548), G. Ruscelli (1561) and G.A. Magini (1596) who all published editions of the Geographia in two parts, with old and new maps. See L. Bagrow, op. cit. p.86.

of the regions of Italy were published by his son in 1620.<sup>67</sup>

Magini's work, according to Almagià, represents a synthesis of all the cartography of sixteenth-century Italy. He was a contemporary of Brahe and Kepler, taught astronomy at Bologna University, and in his interests and association with mathematicians and astronomers, was as different from Alberti as could be. He also produced an edition of Ptolemy's Geographia complete with two sets of maps, the new ones being mostly derived from Ortelius and Castaldi. The portion of this work which concerned Italy contained a commentary of more than 60 pages, following the regional arrangement of Alberti, and in the main derived from the Descrittione. What is significant though, is that, according to Almagià, the information particularly concerned place names and historical details. Magini was not, it seems, making much use of Alberti's geography.

Alberti seems to have considered himself in some respects as a geographer, even if he appears to our twentieth-century eyes to lack most of the hall-marks of that profession. He seems to us to be much better equipped to be an antiquary or historian, even if he did not always come up to the mark in these fields either. In the early sixteenth century his varying interests permitted him to take the name geographer just as much as to call himself a historian or antiquary. Had he lived later in the century things would have been rather different. Leaving aside the more specific aspects of the description and concentrating on the work as a whole, it is necessary to ask where such a work went from here. Having traced its antecedents, such as

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67. See Bagrow, op. cit. and especially R. Almagià, L'Italia di Giovanni Antonio Magini e la cartografia dell'Italia nei secoli XVI e XVII (Naples and Florence, 1922).

they were, what were its descendents? If it had only very limited use for the geographer or historian proper, in what field of literature should we look for its successors? The chorography is not a genre of which we find contemporary examples and it is therefore relevant to enquire what happened to it, for with its disappearance the Descrittione as the prime example of the genre in Italy, ceased to have much value and was superceded by other works.

(iii) The place of the Descrittione in chorographical, descriptive and guide-book literature.

A search for direct imitation of Alberti, or heavy use of him as a source among writers of descriptive literature, chorographies or guide-book-type works is not as straight forward as it might seem. In the first place, just as the Descrittione had its roots in more than one tradition - antiquarian literature, local histories, topographical surveys, and complete area descriptions - so we find these various descriptive elements of the work taken up in different ways by the authors who follow him. Local histories combining antiquarian and topographical information have already been discussed.<sup>68</sup> There his influence was minimal. Even in a case where the arrangement of historical information seems to follow Alberti's own arrangement very closely, for example in the case of Tomaso Thomai (Fisico),<sup>69</sup> unless there are precise references to the Descrittione, we cannot with certainty claim it as a model simply because the arrangement of the

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68. Above, Chapter VI.

69. His Historia di Ravenna (Pesaro, 1574), is organized on the same lines as Alberti's description of any town, beginning with origins and ending with famous men. The opening remarks bear great similarity to Alberti's comments on Ravenna, in phraseology and content.

material appears in the same order elsewhere. There are works which contain some geographical information while remaining principally a history for example the Istoria delle origine e condizioni de'luoghi principali del Polesine di Rovigo, of Giangirolamo Bronziero, (Venice, 1747), written at about the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>70</sup>

Bronziero uses Alberti as a source for the origins of the name 'Polesine di Rovigo' and for its site, but the rest of the work is mainly historical.

A clear case where part of Alberti's work is not imitated or used as a source, but simply reprinted more or less verbatim, is in the De Republica Venetorum of Gasparo Contarini, (Leiden, 1626).<sup>71</sup> This is a collection of essays on Venice, one of which, the Urbis Venetiae Descriptio, is Alberti's description of Venice, rewritten word for word. A larger collection published two years later contains F. Leander Albertus de Incrementis Domini Veneti, and De claris Viris Reipublicae Venetae ex F. Leandro Alberti. There is no secrecy about where the information comes from in these cases. Alberti's information was a valuable addition to Contarini's collection.

One sixteenth-century writer who drew considerably on the Descrittione was Francesco Sansovino in his Ritratto delle piu nobili et famose città d'Italia (Venice, 1575).<sup>72</sup> Sansovino collected information on 114 towns of Italy from various printed sources and from his friends, but the most important source was Alberti, as he tells the reader in his preface. He intends to describe buildings sacred and secular, public and private;

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70. I am grateful to Dr. Judith Hook for drawing my attention to this work.

71. See list of Alberti's works etc. Appendix. II.

72. E.S. De Beer, 'Francois Schott's Itinerario d'Italia,' The Library, 4th Series, 23, (1942), 57-83. (p.59).



famous families, men of letters and people of note both living and dead; together with holy relics, the fertility of the soil, the number of inhabitants and any other interesting things to be found in each particular town.

The individual descriptions do more or less what the author claims for them. They do not deal with early history, the origins of settlement or name changes. It is the contemporary scene which Sansovino is trying to portray. One or two comparisons made at random show the varying degrees to which Sansovino relied on Alberti. In the case of Urbino,<sup>73</sup> the whole description is lifted verbatim out of the Descrittione (f.262vo-263). The only omissions are Pliny's reference to Urbino which Alberti records, and the words 'come io vidi' where Alberti describes the Montefeltro library. Vercelli likewise is described straight from the Descrittione, but without the long digression on its name and site, which make up three parts of Alberti's description.<sup>74</sup> The entries on Bergamo and Cremona are not verbatim, but the reliance on Alberti is quite evident.<sup>75</sup> They are far shorter accounts than Alberti produced and again it is the long historical digressions which are omitted or condensed and also the biographical sections. On Cividale di Belluno Sansovino must have looked elsewhere for material as Alberti scarcely mentions it, though he does distinguish

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73. Città d'Italia, f.118vo-119vo.

74. Ibid., f.118vo. c.f. Descrittione, f.402.

75. Città d'Italia, f.14vo-15vo; f.21vo-22. c.f. Descrittione, f.364-366vo. f.360-362vo.

between it and Belluno Città. Neither of them is given more than a line or two in the Descrittione, but Sansovino's description also is a brief one.<sup>76</sup>

Sansovino was not the only writer to use Alberti for descriptions of cities. An album of views or plans of Italian towns published by Pietro Bertelli in 1599, entitled Theatrum urbium Italicarum, contains a text which also derives from the Descrittione.<sup>77</sup> Sansovino's work could hardly surpass the Descrittione in usefulness, especially as it did not give the precise geographical locations of towns, nor did it contain the personal observations made by Alberti. It is an account free from references to a string of sources. What the classical writers had to say about a city clearly was not particularly important to the author. It was the city as it was in the sixteenth century that interested him, and its history claimed a place in the account only in so far as it could throw light on its present situation. Sansovino did not, as other authors, for example Nicolus Reusnerius did, repeat the eulogies of classical and contemporary authors with full quotations. His work shows less interest in antique literature, in the opinions of the ancients, and in antiquarian information. It is not a history nor a chorography; nor is it a guide-book, but then neither were any sixteenth-century descriptions guide-books in the modern sense of being specifically written for sightseeing travellers. It was up to each individual to pick his way through the existing descriptions and make use of what material he wanted from them, as best befitted his purpose and interests.

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76. Città d'Italia, f.22-22vo. c.f. Descrittione, f. 428vo.

77. De Beer, op.cit., p.57.

In 1585 there appeared a work with a title exceedingly evocative of the Descrittione. 'De Italia Regione Europae nobilissimi libri duo. Quorum Primus regionum alter urbium Italiae descriptiones continet. Cum brevi notatione omnium fere Italiae populorum, provinciarum, insularum, urbium, oppidorum, castrorum, montium, promontorium, silvarum, vallium, marium, sinum, lacuum, paludum, fluminum, fontium et id genus aliorum locorum. Its author, one Nicolaus Reusnerius, devotes much of his preface to praising Alberti's work, pointing out that nothing more exact or detailed existed for pilgrims and arm-chair travellers.<sup>78</sup> However it was such a wordy volume to read quickly and so cumbersome to carry about that he felt it would be a great service if he made an epitome of it.<sup>79</sup> His plan is to deal with the regions Italy is divided into, one at a time, giving their position and what is contained within their bounds. That is, what cities, states, castles, towns, mountains, rivers and so on are to be found there, and these are all listed in tables. Then follow the origins of the cities and states, their governments, any antiquities or other notable sights, and such laudatory comments as may have been made about them selected from the writings of ancient and recent authors. He hopes it will be useful to those studying all arts, not just history and geography, but especially to those who want a guide in travelling about Italy. ('...maxime autem, his qui in obeunda Italia ducem et indicem habere certus desiderant: plane equidem et spero et opto.')80

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78. De Italia..., sig. alpha 4.

79. Ibid. It is not surprising that he thought it cumbersome as he refers to it as 'Descriptio Totius Italiae' translated by Guilielmo Kyriandro. In other words he seems to be most familiar with the Latin folio, a very inconvenient format.

80. De Italia... sig. alpha 4vo.

Although the work is supposed to be an epitome, it has additions from other material not included by Alberti. For example Reusnerius begins with the praises of Italy from several authors which include not only Pliny and Virgil but Guicciardini and Petrarch, whereas Alberti refers in detail to only the eulogies by Strabo and Dionysius.<sup>81</sup> As far as Italy's name is concerned, the various alternatives to be found and the changes it has undergone form more or less a précis of Alberti.<sup>82</sup> Description of the shape of the country is kept to a minimum and only Pliny's simile of the oak leaf and the sixteenth-century comparison with the human leg are referred to.

The divisions of Cato and Sempronius are recorded<sup>83</sup> and followed by 'Italiae origo vetus, eiusdemque, populorum et urbium recensio, ex Io. Iovani Pontani Histor, libro sexto', another departure from Alberti who makes no use of Pontanus anywhere in the Descrittione. Reusnerius, however refers to him frequently; in fact as the work proceeds in almost every region we find comments from Pontanus recorded.<sup>84</sup> Quotations from Virgil are also popular, as well as verses composed by Reusnerius himself.

The first region proper to be dealt with is Campania, followed by Apulia, Calabria, Samnium, Picenum, Umbria, Thuscia, Gallia Togata, Liguria, Venetia and Italia Transpadanus. The plan is not Alberti's

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81. Ibid., pp.1-8, cf. Descrittione, f.5-6.

82. De Italia, p.8-9, cf. Descrittione, f.1-2vo.

83. De Italia, p.18.

84. Bartolomeus Facius et Joannes Jovianus Pontanus rerum suo tempore gestarum libri sexdecim, (Basle, 1566).

at all, but the eleven regions described by Augustus Caesar and Pliny. While some sort of condensed version of the Descrittione was clearly of value, Reusnerius departed far from his model in the organization of his material, so that his finished product bore little resemblance in format to the work he professed to admire so greatly. The regions he chose were not the ones most favoured in the sixteenth-century, the ones used by Biondo, Alberti, Collenuccio or even Volaterrano, all of which were based to a large extent on Ptolemy's Geography.

Each regional description begins in much the same way as Alberti's with the limits of the region and its ancient names, but thereafter the similarity ends. Reusnerius produces a 'Table' in which he lists, as he promised in his preface the peoples, cities, ancient and new, towns, fortresses, woods, mountains, valleys etc. This completed he moves on to the next region. What is missing is the precise geographical framework which Alberti gives the Descrittione. Reusnerius has a catalogue of names, but these are of little use in describing the country when no comment is made about them, and not even an approximate location is given. These regional lists make up his first book.

The second book is entitled Elogia et Ecphrases urbium civitatumque; Italiae continens, which in effect means a catalogue of the principal towns and cities, each with a short description consisting of its site, ancient names, some historical facts, and one or two eulogistic passages from various writers who have described it. Certainly the resulting work is much shorter and smaller than the Descrittione, but the pruning is far from judiciously done. The outcome is a work which might have some value as a list of places and sights, but is so far lacking in descriptive or explanatory information that one can scarcely imagine

the pilgrim or traveller finding it very helpful, or the book-worm finding it interesting. Not only has the welter of classical references - the most tedious part of the Descrittione for any but the most erudite reader - been cut down, but also the valuable information on location of ancient sites, the identification of antiquarian remains, the records of natural phenomena and geographical features, and the lists of famous men from each town are omitted. It is scarcely surprising that no further printings seem to have been made, and that the Descrittione still remained popular until the end of the century.

One traveller to Italy in the second half of the century who seems to have a copy of the Descrittione to hand was Montaigne.<sup>85</sup> The diary of his journey in 1580 and 1581 was certainly no antiquarian work, but as the title suggests, a personal record, either dictated or written personally by himself, with very little in the way of literary allusions. The dangers of the roads, the discomfort of Italian inns, and the benefits of the baths at this place and that make up much of the narrative. However Montaigne does also record sights which impressed him en route, buildings, statues, natural phenomena, and he occasionally adds an historical note about the ancient name of a particular town. Most of these references could come from the Descrittione. He does not tell us what books he had with him, but in Rome he was obliged to resort to books and maps after

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85. E.S. De Beer, 'The Development of the Guide-book until the early nineteenth century', Journal of the British Archaeological Association, 3rd Series, 15(1952), .35-45. (p.36 note 3). I am grateful to Dr. De Beer for supplying me with references which suggest this dependence. On close investigation I have noted one or two others which support his theory.

falling out with his French guide.<sup>86</sup> There exists a copy of Le Antichità di Roma by Lucio Mauro which bears his signature.<sup>87</sup>

References which could derive from Alberti include those to the site of Narni, to Trevi being the Virgilian Mutiscae, to the remains of the Bridge of Augustus at Orte, to the origin of Foligno, Sinigaglia, Ancona, and so on.<sup>88</sup> All are very short references, in fact no long reference is to be expected, as De Beer points out, since Montaigne was not interested in lengthy literary allusions, only in recording salient facts.

Another user of Alberti was Stephanus Vinandus Pighius, (originally Wyants Pighe, b.1520).<sup>89</sup> He was an archaeologist and Roman historian who, as tutor to Prince Carl Friedrich, a son of William V, Duke of Cleves and Jülich, accompanied his pupil to Vienna and Rome. He wrote a life of the prince which includes accounts of his sight-seeing in Italy with details taken from Alberti, in a word for word translation, sometimes without references.<sup>90</sup> The book had a practical object, to point out what a traveller should look at, and evidently it was successful as a new edition came out in 1609, five years after Pighius's death. Its influence in the field of guide-book literature cannot be overlooked for another reason. It formed the basis for one of the

86. M. de Montaigne, Journal du Voyage en Italie en 1580 et 1581, edited by A. d'Ancona, (Città di Castello, 1889), p.239.

87. The Diary of Montaigne's journey to Italy in 1580 and 1581, translated with an introduction and notes by E.J. Trechmann, (New York, 1929), p.131, note 1.

88. Ibid, pp. 335, 341, 334, 342, 365. cf. Descrittione, ff.92, 82-82vo. 93, 81, 256vo-257, respectively. The reference to the Bridge of Augustus is one of the more doubtful ones. Other references are to Ancona, p.363, Descr. f.254; Fano, p.366, Descr. f.258, the Battle of Metaurus, p.368, Descr. f.258; and the site of Pontremoli, p.542. Descr. f.34; and Fossombrone, p.368, Descr. f.258. The last two are again doubtful, but possible.

89. De Beer, 'Francois Schott's Itinerario d'Italia', p.60.

90. Hercules Prodicus, seu principis inventutis vita et peregrinatio, (Antwerp, 1587). As De Beer says this was not plagiarism, but in accordance with the best literary practice of the time.

most popular early guides to be published, the Itinerarium Italiae of Francois Schott, first printed in Antwerp in 1600, and followed throughout that and the next century by several enlarged and improved editions in Italian, French and English. Several of the later editions included city plans.<sup>91</sup>

Schott's original Latin edition made no direct use of Alberti, but one of his Paduan editors, Capugnano, did include some additions from the Descrittione.<sup>92</sup> A large part of the second of Schott's three books was devoted to Rome, which must have added considerably to the work's popularity. As has already been mentioned, Alberti had comparatively little to say about the holy city, except to enumerate the main hills, roads and gates. He did not attempt to give a comprehensive survey of the city, not of its monuments and their history, nor of its devotional relics. For this reason his book was of less value than it might have been to the pilgrim and traveller, since most people travelling in Italy spent a large part of their time in Rome itself, and many were devout Catholics, come with the precise intention of inspecting the devotional objects of their religion, as well as any antique remains that they might come across. Montaigne had come primarily for his health, to take the waters, but when he stayed in Rome it was still incumbent on him as a

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91. The first edition was a compilation from Pighius and others, and was defective in the unevenness of treatment of places mentioned and in the omission of several important centres such as Florence, Siena, and Genoa which had not been visited by Pighius. A French translation appeared in Paris in 1627, and in 1660 John Warcup produced his Italy in its original glory, ruine and revival, an English rendering of Schott. The later editions in Italian, at least a dozen of them, underwent varying amounts of editing, as De Beer explains. The last edition was 1761. P. Bertelli, the Paduan publisher mentioned above (p. 414) had the town plans already referred to available to add to the text.
92. Itinerarium, (Padua, 1625, 1646, for example). See the passages on Modena and Bergamo, for example.



traveller to explore the city, which he did, but no doubt found Alberti scant help. Schott made good this defect and his book certainly surpassed Alberti's in this respect.

Schott's Paduan editors made further use of the Descrittione in the third book where the southern parts of the country are discussed. Alberti's stories about Lake Agnani are related, and likewise the story of the 'Bucco velenoso' or 'Grotta del Cane' as it was known, (where animals could be overcome by poisonous gases, but might be revived by immersion in the waters of the lake).<sup>93</sup> In the second case the story is given in some detail, not word for word from Alberti, but he was clearly the main source, as he was for information on Pozzuoli, the amphitheatre and the labyrinth or water store which he explored.<sup>94</sup> Indeed for a detailed description of the fountains and baths from Pozzuoli to Cuma Schott, or more correctly Capugnano, refers his reader to 'Leandro Alberti et altri da me sopra ricordati, a gli quali per hora sembra, che meglio sia rimettere quel lettore, che ha gran desiderio di sapere compitamente simili cose.'<sup>95</sup> Again for the cave of the Cumaean Sibyl and Lake Avernus Alberti is consulted.<sup>96</sup> One can see the underground rooms of the Sibyl, 'le quali cose diligentissimamente avvertisce Leandro Alberti nella sua Italia.' No editions of Schott take the reader very far south. Only in the third itinerary does the description go beyond Rome and then it is only to Naples and from Naples to Pozzuoli and then back from Pozzuoli

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93. Ibid, (Padua, 1646), Part III, f.30. cf. Descrittione, f.163.

94. Itiner. Ital. Part III, f.42. cf. Descrittione, f.160vo.

95. Itiner. Ital. Part III, f.42.

96. Ibid. f.54vo. cf. Descrittione, f.153vo.

to Tivoli again. A clear indication, if one were needed, that the area south and east of Naples did not attract the traveller's attention, and for that reason featured little in general descriptive works.<sup>97</sup>

A work printed in Frankfurt in 1600 and dedicated to Schott, shows the lack of a clear division between descriptive geographico-topographical works and historico-antiquarian literature. Its title has a familiar ring, Italiae Illustratae seu rerum urbiumque Italicarum scriptores varii notae melioris. Nunc primum collecti simulque editi. Schott is declared responsible for bringing to light the works which are reprinted in this collection, a sweeping claim indeed since some had been used as sources for the Descrittione seventy years earlier. Twenty-three authors are represented, some, like Sabellico, by more than one work. Others used by Alberti include Zanchi, Sarayna, Bonaventura Castiglione, Paulo Giovio, Ambrogio Leoni, Jacopo Bracellio, and Quintio Heduo. One author appears to use Alberti as a source, Caesar Orlandi in his De urbis Senae antiquitate lib. The other works are a miscellaneous collection ranging from Bernardo Sacchi's history of Pavia, prefaced by a description of Italy, and Antonio Massa Gallesius's De origine et rebus Faliscorum, to a long Greek lexicon by Joannis Juvenis, De antiquitate et varia Tarentinorum fortuna Lib. VIII, a 'chorographia' of Sicily by Cl. Mario Aretino Syracusano, a 'topographia' of Mount Etna by Antonio Philotheo de Homodeis and a work, De Balneis Aenariarum, by Giovanni Francisco Lombardi, and several other works mostly concerning the history,

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97. Dr. De Beer has told me of what appears to be a mention of Alberti, (but not by name), in connection with the Neapolitan area, in the last chapter of H. Turler, De Peregrinatione et agro Neapolitano, (1574). He is named in connection with the notices of 'Centum cellae', 'Fons marinus', and 'Mons e e terra erumpens'. (The De Agro is reprinted in F. Schott, Itinerarii Italiae Germaniaeque Libri IV, (Cologne, 1620 or 1621?), a collection of pieces from various sources.)

antiquities and topography of the southern half of Italy. This collection was, then, to 'illustrate' or display certain parts of Italy in various aspects. It shows how no clear distinction was made between the component branches of a chorography. Works concerned with history, antiquities, descriptions of the countryside and any combination of these topics were still classified together, just as they were even a hundred years later when Graevius' Thesaurus of the Antiquities of Italy and Sicily was published. In fact only two of the works in the 1600 Italiae Illustratae do not reappear in Graevius' collection, a poem on the Falisci by Petrus Cursius and Uberto Folietta's De Laudibus urbis Neapolis. A corpus of such literature existed from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, augmented by the spread of the printing-press and by an interest in local history and topography, but distinctions between subjects which today seem quite clear-cut and which, by canalization of studies, have developed into distinct disciplines, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were very hazy.

At that time travellers had no organized guide-book as we know it today,<sup>98</sup> but they drew on this corpus of facts which sometimes involved

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98. For a definition of a guide-book I can do no better than refer to the article by De Beer on 'The development of the guide-book until the early nineteenth century', where he suggests that one should look at Murray, Baedeker, Muirhead and such like works and note their common points. 'They are impersonal, systematic, and designed for a single over-riding purpose. They provide short descriptive inventories of all the places and monuments likely to be of interest to their users; these inventories are arranged topographically by lines of approach. This, the combination of inventory and itinerary, is the decisive feature of the class'. (By the end of the nineteenth century.) They are also equipped with maps and plans, and are a handy size for carrying. One could add that they generally contain practical information on travel, accommodation, money, food and drink and local customs.

the perusal of several volumes, for example one on the antiquities, one on the history, and one on the topography and geography of a particular place. Sometimes, on the other hand, they might have a copy of Alberti or Schott, (or even Reusnerius or Sansovino), which gave them some of the information they needed gathered together in one volume. However, these still lacked an essential ingredient of a guide-book, they catered only for the intellectual side of travel and sight-seeing, and they did not contain practical information to help a stranger not to fall into the numerous traps which a foreign country could hold for him. How the transition was made to works which catered for all the traveller's needs is an eighteenth-century story, although it has its origins in the seventeenth century, and in its telling it becomes evident how Alberti's work became outdated, as also did Schott's.

The sixteenth century could boast no guide-books, not because people did not travel, but because when they did it was seldom purely for pleasure; it was for business or diplomatic purposes, for the good of their minds - to attend a university, for the good of their souls - to make a pilgrimage, or for the good of their bodies - to take a cure, or to seek refuge from political or religious persecution. In moving from place to place to reach their destinations some sight-seeing might be undertaken. Then the educated man had his classical and contemporary texts at hand to enlighten him. Apart from guides to Rome and to the Holy Land, no specific works appeared of this type. The first printed road-book is apparently C. Estienne's road-book of France.<sup>98A.</sup> The idea behind much didactic writing on travel, in the period 1570 to 1630, was that its chief justification was to educate trusty and well-informed

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98A. La Guide des chemins de France de 1553...Éditée par Jean Bonnerot, (Facsimile edition, Paris, 1936).

servants for the state, the prime means to this end being the study of cosmography, policy and 'oeconomy' sbroad, with mastery of foreign languages an important, but subsidiary adjunct. As time went on these ideas appear less frequently, but travel to broaden the mind and complete the education of the cultured scholar was far less important than it was a hundred years or so later.<sup>99</sup>

In the second half of the sixteenth century another important factor inhibited travel to Italy for a large section of Europeans, especially Englishmen. Italy was not a safe place for protestants, especially the Italy of Rome and the Papal States, and Milan and Naples with their Spanish overlords. Venice and Tuscany were slightly less dangerous, but even there protestants had to be wary and Englishmen were often found attempting a disguise.<sup>100</sup> For these reasons it is likely that the Descrittione at the time of its most frequent printings, did not fulfill the role of a guide-book to a very large cross-section of European travellers. Most of the copies probably remained in Italian hands and were found to be most useful as sources of antiquarian information. Under Clement VIII, after the turn of the century, there was an easing of attitudes, and the beginning of the transition to the

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99. J.W. Stoye, [English Travellers abroad, 1604-1667, Their influence in English society and politics, (New York, 1968), p.17] suggests that travellers from England to Italy up to about 1630 were comparatively rare, since their activities are carefully recorded in the State Papers of Elizabeth I and James I's reigns. These records cease once the travellers are no longer almost exclusively engaged on political business.

100. Stoye, op. cit. pp.109-111. The experiences of Fynes Moryson are an example of the caution to be expected. [See Fynes Moryson, An Itinerary, English translation, (London, 1617), Part I.p.168-169.] Even Catholics had to be prepared to submit their baggage to a thorough search, and their books to perusal by the minions of the Master of the Sacred Palace. Montaigne was without his books and the manuscript of his Essays for several months on this account. Journal du Voyage en Italie...pp.203,294-95.

period when all Italy was perfectly accessible to the protestant Englishman, Frenchman or German, enabling him to make a comprehensive tour of the peninsula - the 'giro d'Italia'.<sup>101</sup>

In the first half of the seventeenth century there was still no sign that any fixed route and time table were being followed, but later<sup>3</sup> pattern of travel began to develop, dictated by geography, climate and festivities, which was catered for by Schott's Itinerario.<sup>102</sup> Provided the traveller was not interested in venturing further south than Naples, he did not need the additional information on that area which the Descrittione could provide.<sup>103</sup> Again, as time went on Schott's book became available in English and French, doubtless as a result of its popularity, and travellers who knew little or no Italian before they set out (even though some made an effort to learn it during their stay), were unlikely to prefer the Descrittione in Italian or in its clumsy Latin folio. Rome was the Mecca for tourists, indeed the more enthusiastic ones often rented an apartment or took lodgings there for several months, studying, and hiring teachers and guides in their eagerness to see everything of interest. As has already been pointed

101. Stoye, op. cit. p.112.

102, Ibid., p.175-176. For English, and Netherlandish travellers a visit to Italy often followed a stay in France, and its starting point was Marseilles from where the traveller sailed to Genoa, thus avoiding the lingering outbursts of war still troubling Piedmont. Germans came via Switzerland or the Brenner. The journey began in the autumn, and Rome, a suitable place to winter, was reached via Florence. In the spring there would be a trip to Naples, the traveller returning to Rome in time for Easter, then making his way across to Loreto, Ancona, Bologna and Venice for the Ascension celebrations and then to Milan and over the Simplon to Geneva, so avoiding the heat of an Italian summer.

103. Italy south and east of Naples was very nearly outside the range of tourists until 1918. There was little of interest for anyone until the Greek revival about 1750. The few travellers who did go south include Thomas Hoby in 1550 and George Berkeley in 1717. Hoby is particularly interesting in this connection since he must have been one of the earliest foreign travellers to use Alberti in writing up his journey, see his account in Camden Miscellany, 10 (1902) A booke of the Travaile and Lief of me, Thomas Hoby, etc.

out, the Descrittione could assist them little in such a project, though it might be valuable for trips into the surrounding countryside, to the Roman ruins at Tivoli, for example.

The erudition of the Descrittione probably had little appeal for the majority of travellers, whose diaries record particular interest in the quantities of treasure to be seen in Florence, Rome, Loreto and Venice, while the arsenals of Genoa, Rome and Venice received great attention in the seventeenth century, though this was not the case later.<sup>104</sup> The detailed account of his travels by Fynes Moryson does not reveal much appreciation of art and architecture. (Of St. Peters in Rome, for example, he remarks, 'They say it was built by Constantine the Great.'<sup>105</sup> He also showed great interest in the taxes gathered by different states and in their armies.<sup>106</sup> The Descrittione must have been at his elbow when he wrote up his travels as he frequently refers to Alberti, for example as the 'Friar Leandro who hath best described Italy', and, 'Leander the Cosmographer a witness without exception.'<sup>107</sup> As with Schott, so with Moryson, it is Alberti's accounts of the Roman remains round the Bay of Baia which are the

104. Stoye, p.192. This probably accounts for the few editions of another useful travel account, the Mercidius Italicus of J.H. von Pflaumer, printed in 1625, 28 and 50. Pflaumer used Alberti frequently but much of his account related to history and inscriptions, and was perhaps somewhat outdated from the start. As a guide to antiquities it is more informative than Schott, but the practicalities of life, warfare and money, were more admired at this time than ancient statues and Renaissance paintings. Not that we must conclude that all travellers were entirely Philistine in their views.

105. Fynes Moryson, An Itinerary, Part I, page 129.

106. Shakespeare's Europe; A survey of the condition of Europe at the end of the sixteenth century. Being unpublished chapters of Fynes Moryson's Itinerary (1617). Edited, with an introduction by Charles Hughes, 2nd edition, (New York, 1967) Part IV, Bk. I, chaps. iii-viii.

107. An Itinerary, Part I, pages 101, 103.

most fully reported part of his work. There are references to him in connection with the Pozzuoli labyrinth,<sup>108</sup> a fountain thought to come from hell by Lake Avernus,<sup>109</sup> the cave of the Sibyl,<sup>110</sup> the Cento Cemerelle, or water store by Mt. Misenum,<sup>111</sup> and so on.

Moryson shows that 'Fra Leandro' was not entirely useless for Rome when he gives Alberti's list of the 'Ways of Rome'.<sup>112</sup> His journey through Italy took place from 1593 to 1595, before Schott's Itinerario had appeared, so it would seem possible that Moryson used the Descrittione as a guide-book while he was there, and did not simply use it as a work of reference on his return.

The title Itinerary, used by Fynes Moryson and Schott, appears in various early seventeenth-century works, that of Paulus Hentzner, for example (Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae, (Breslau, 1617)). This is the route of a journey undertaken about seventeen years earlier. The Italian part took place in 1599 to 1600, and thus preceded the appearance of Schott and of another itinerary, the Itinerarium Italiae Totius, (Cologne, 1602). The Cologne work claims wide terms of reference in its title, Itinerarium Italiae Totius In quo situs, origines, imperia civitarum, et oppidorum, mores populorum item montes, lacus, flumina, fontes, aquae calidae, metella, cunctaque miracula, monumenta, incredibilisque antiquitates, mira arte, experientiaque descripta leguntur. All this has been brought to light by three young Germans (nunc de novo in lucem editum studio et industria

108. Ibid, p.116.

109. Ibid, p.117.

110. Ibid, p.118.

111. Ibid, p.119.

112. Ibid, p.125.



trium nobilissimorum Germaniae Adolescentum), who are well-versed in the subject. Preliminary matter contains an epigram by Sebastianus Corradus, and later, two by Nicolaus Acursinus Caferonianus.<sup>113</sup>

The way in which the various aspects of the country are to be dealt with is laid out in an elaborate table at the beginning.<sup>114</sup> A necessary preliminary to travel is suitable prayers from the Roman Breviary of Pius V, to set the traveller on his way.<sup>115</sup>

The itinerary begins at Venice and proceeds from there to Rome via Bologna and Florence, from Rome to Naples on the Via Appia, and back to Rome by a different route, Capua, Gaeta and the coast. There is no mention of Alberti, not even as a famous man of Bologna, and the work is best described as a travelogue - a catalogue of what to see where. The only thing which links this work with the Descrittione, is the curious appearance of the three epigrams by Corrado and Acursini which come from the preliminaries of the Descrittione. Both men were friends of Alberti and there is no doubt that the verses were written especially for the first edition of the Descrittione. How they came to be included in the 1602 Itinerarium remains a mystery, as does the identification of the 'three young Germans' who edited it.

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113. Itinerarium Italiae Totius, sig. A 12vo.

114. Ibid, sig. A8vo. The plan is as follows: firstly the name of a region is to be discussed, secondly what remarks have been made about it in old and modern writings, thirdly the names of any cities (in the region) with details of their foundation and expansion, fourthly rivers, seas, mountains and woods, fifthly 'Opera et haec vel publica, privata, sacra, profana, i.e. buildings, monuments, pictures, statues, fountains, etc. The final part of the description is to deal with the government of each region, 'Ratio gubernationis, ad quam pertinent', under three headings, i) 'Curia', ii) 'Scholae, et Bibliothecae', iii) 'Vulgi mores'.

115. Ibid., sig. A9-9vo.

The other itinerary mentioned above, that of Hentzner, also makes no reference to Alberti, but is interesting when compared with the Cologne itinerary as it reproduces almost exactly the elaborate table of what to find out and see on one's travels. The arrangement and wording of this undergoes such slight alteration that there is no doubt that it was copied from the earlier work, or that both works were based on a third one, printed earlier than the Cologne volume and no longer in existence. In other respects this is a record of travel not revealing dependence on any specific literature.

A later example of an itinerary in which Alberti is used is the Itinerarium Italiae nov-antiquae by M. Zeiller with plates engraved by Matthaeus Merian the elder, (Frankfurt, 1640). Zeiller records the Descrittione as 'Italiae Totius Descriptio, Venet. 1568 and 1588 in 4'. Despite the title in Latin, he was working from an Italian edition. The Descrittione can scarcely be credited with pride of place among Zeiller's sources. He was almost as diligent a researcher as Alberti himself, if the extremely copious bibliography he provides is anything to go by. He has a welter of titles, mainly on antiquarian and historical topics, published in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as well as the older literature.

The practice of including maps and plans in descriptive works and itineraries developed during the seventeenth century. One of the earlier works to carry large and carefully drawn up maps of all the regions was Jodocus Hondius; Nova et accurata Italiae hoderinae descriptio, (Amsterdam, 1626).<sup>116</sup> In order to accommodate the maps the

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116. The title continues: 'In qua omnium eius regionum, urbium, pagorum, dominiorum, castellorum, montium, fluviorum, fontium, lacuum, et portuum, historia exhibetur. Geographicis tabulis et urbium praecipuarum iconibus illustrata a Judoco Hondio. Addita est Siciliae Sardiniae, Corsicae, et itinerariorum per Italiam brevis delineato.'

volume was made up in a curiously cumbersome fashion. It is a folio bound down its shorter side, so that it must have been no easier for the traveller to handle than the Descrittione. The arrangement of the contents is rather similar to that of Reusnerius, moving from a general description of Italy's name, site and shape, climate, mountains, forests, rivers, ports, etc., to more particular descriptions of the various regions. However he has much more to say about each region, and about the cities and sights to be seen there, and most useful of all, he provides maps showing clearly what Alberti tried to convey in words, and what Reusnerius omitted altogether, the geographical relationship of one place or landmark to another. The regional divisions are contemporary ones, Alberti's in fact, with one or two sub-divisions, for example the 'Ecclesiasticum Dominium' is separate from Latium, the Duchy of Urbino separate from the March of Ancona (which never receives such a title - we hear of the Sabini, the Piceni and Umbria occupying the central and eastern Apennine areas). The Kingdom of Naples is separate from Campania, and the State of Piedmont is recognised as distinct from Lombardy. In his preface Hondius lists writers who have described Italy as Cato, Polybius, Sempronius, Pliny, Strabo, Biondo, Annius, Volaterranus, Sabellico, Bernardo Sacci, Dominicus Niger, Leander Albertus, and Gaudentius Merula. Alberti is also referred to in the text from time to time.<sup>117</sup>

By the middle of the seventeenth century there was not only Schott's itinerary, and a number of pale imitations, but increasingly travellers were beginning to recount their adventures and experiences and their

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117. Nova....Italiae...Descriptio, pp.287,291, etc.

impressions of sights seen for the benefit of their successors. The anonymous Italiae Descriptio of Utrecht, (1650), is a work of this kind.<sup>118</sup> A compact, pocket-size volume, it begins with Liguria, mentioning historical information - Genoa's name and origins for example - but devoting most space to a description of the port, harbour and docks of Genoa, and to palaces of famous families like the Dorias. Churches are described, the Ducal Palace, the 'Strada Nova', with its fine buildings and other sights to see. How the city is governed, a discussion of merchant matters and a description of Genoese women make up the rest of the information on this city. Alberti is not mentioned, and his emphasis on historico-antiquarian information is completely overlooked. Of more practical value is a list of hints for travellers, such as not to drink particular wines, not to travel alone, and so on.

George Sandys' Relation of a Journey, (London, 1627), smacks of Alberti in the part dealing with the 'Grotta del Cane', near Lake Avernus,<sup>119</sup> but no source is given for his stories and he could just as easily have used Schott.

By the middle of the century the pattern of travel of a visitor making the 'giro d'Italia', the Italian part of the 'Grand Tour', as it was to be called, was well established, and was more or less confined to the route mentioned earlier. Still the area south and east of Naples was largely unvisited ground. Rome was still the most popular place to stay for several months in the winter. Such travellers as John Evelyn,

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118. The full title is Italiae Totius brevis et accurata Descriptio cui accessit locorum et opidorum Index. Itinerum sive vicarum ordine compositus.

119. Relation of a Journey, p.267. E.S. De Beer, 'George Sandys' account of Campania', The Library, 17(1937), 458-465 shows the work to be a compilation.

Francis Mortoft, John Raymond, Edmund Warcupp, Richard Lassels, William Bromley, the Baron de Montfaucon, Maximilian Misson, and many others had made the tour and written about it by the end of the century.<sup>120</sup>

Each traveller looked for the latest reports of the countries he expected to visit, so we find frequent references in these accounts to previously published works. Schott, in his English translation by Warcupp, was still a useful handbook.<sup>121</sup> If a more modern approach were demanded, then no doubt the Descrittione's popularity declined for the same reasons. Lassels reports the story, according to Leandro Alberti, of the pool of boiling water which cooked things, but from which they were never withdrawn intact.<sup>122</sup> This, together with a reference to Solfataria,<sup>123</sup> seems to be all the use Lassels makes of Alberti, although he reports visiting Baia and the Sibyl's cave. The two direct references could have come from Schott via Warcupp.

Lassels was Bromley's guide-book, and neither Bromley nor Montfaucon mention Alberti.<sup>124</sup> Misson, a protestant émigré tutor to the Earl of Arran stresses the variety of interests he caters for in his letters. He has references to the Descrittione where one would

120. F. Mortoft, Francis Mortoft, His book, (Hakluyt Society, 1925); J. Raymond, Itinerary...through Italy in 1646 and 1647, (1648); E. Warcupp, see above p.420; Richard Lassels, The voyage of Italy, (Paris, 1670); W. Bromley, Remarks in the Grand Tour of France and Italy in 1691, (London, 1692); B. de Montfaucon, The antiquities of Italy, (English translation from Latin, London, 1725); M. Misson, Nouveau Voyage d'Italie, (La Hague, 1691). (I consulted the English edition of 1699).

121. Lassels was critical of him because he depended too much on obsolete geographers. Lassels, The voyage of Italy, Preface .

122. Ibid., p.295.

123. Ibid., p.296.

124. Bromley took the traditional route through Italy and was especially interested in the Christian relics in Rome. Montfaucon's interests were antiquities, inscriptions and the contents of libraries.

expect to find them, concerning Terracina and Mt. Pausilippo,<sup>125</sup> but not, surprisingly, when he discusses the Sibyl's cave, the purpose of which mystified him.<sup>126</sup> Misson gives far fuller descriptions of monuments, tombs, epitaphs and buildings than is found in the Descrittione. Much of his work relates to Rome and he has an appendix of 'Instructions to a traveller', and an itinerary which, as usual, does not go beyond Naples. Miscellaneous information includes a chart of distances, a list of fairs with their dates, and a description of the best goods to buy at each town. From a practical point of view this, together with an illustrated edition of Schott, would have served the average traveller reasonably well. A famous traveller in the early eighteenth century remarked that, 'Monsieur Misson has wrote a more correct account of Italy in general than any before him.'<sup>127</sup> The popularity of the work was immediate and lasting. Four editions were issued within a decade, and the seventh in 1743. There was an English translation made in 1695 and it was frequently reissued. In 1764 Gibbon was using Misson, and his remarks suggest that it was still a standard guide.<sup>128</sup>

If Alberti was not much used in the seventeenth century, it will be no surprise to see how much less used he was in the eighteenth. Scholars, young noblemen, and students of art and literature were attracted by the lure of Italy's past, and from the middle of the century, especially, until the Napoleonic wars, tens of thousands

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125. Misson, A new voyage to Italy, (London, 1699), I. 288, 327, 329.

126. *Ibid.*, I, 342.

127. J. Addison, Remarks on several parts of Italy, (London, 1705), Preface.

128. Gibbon's journey from Geneva to Rome, edited by Georges A. Bonnard, (London, etc. 1961) p.224. On leaving Florence he says that he has avoided giving a complete description where he could only copy from Keyser or Misson.

of English crossed the Channel, the greater number going to Italy. The other nationalities of Europe, especially French and German were also well represented. P.F. Kirby points out that 'an accurate and diverting travel book appeared during this time at least once and often twice each year.'<sup>129</sup> Alberti, then, was not going to be anyone's first choice as a guide-book by this time. In fact, even by the beginning of the eighteenth century the Descrittione was pretty well superceded in England and France by Lassels and Misson. Addison's volume was an early arrival on the eighteenth-century scene, printed in 1705, and, as a result of the author's fame, quickly became essential reading for any traveller to Italy. Nevertheless Dr. Johnson found it 'a tedious book; and if it were not attached to Addison's previous reputation, one would not think much of it.'<sup>130</sup>

Here it is necessary to pause and dispell a myth which seems to have arisen later in the century that Addison made use of Alberti's Descrittione. The fly-leaf of the Edinburgh University Library edition of the Descrittione of 1553 is inscribed by its erstwhile owner Walter Minto, 'This valuable book is very scarce. It is the best Classical Description of Italy. Addison has taken a great many things from it. I beg that at my death it may be deposited in the Library of the University of Edinburgh. Edin. 10th May 1783. Walter Minto.' If Minto had looked carefully at Addison he would have realised his error. The preface to the Remarks on several parts of Italy contains a list of authors Addison found useful and Alberti is

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129. P.F. Kirby, The Grand Tour in Italy 1700-1800, (New York, 1952) p.8.

130. Boswell's Life of Johnson, edited by J.W. Croker, 5 vols. (London, 1831), III, 3-4.

not among them, nor is there any textual evidence that he was used as a source. Addison also expressly states that he has refreshed his memory on the classical authors and made collections from them of what might be useful, before going on his journey.<sup>131</sup> Where did Minto get his idea that the Descrittione had been used? The most likely explanation is that he found it suggested in the writings of his contemporary James Boswell.<sup>132</sup> Boswell refers to the two works on two separate occasions in the *Life of Johnson*.<sup>133</sup> The first time his exact words do not imply that Addison was necessarily using Alberti, and Dr. Johnson's reply shows that he did not take this view.<sup>134</sup>

On the second occasion Johnson simply makes the point that anyone looking at what the classics have to say about Italy will find the same references.<sup>135</sup>

The observation about Addison is also to be found in Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son; (8 March 1750), 'I have been

131. Remarks, Preface.

132. E.S. De Beer, 'Francois Schott's Itinerario D'Italia', p.59, note 3.

133. Life of Johnson, III, 3-4, 221.

134. Boswell says, (in 1773), 'I told him (Johnson), that I had found in Leandro Alberti's 'Description of Italy', much of what Addison has given us in his 'Remarks'. He (Johnson) said, "the collection of passages from the Classicks has been made by another Italian; it is, however, impossible to detect a man as a plagiary in such a case because all who set about making such a collection must find the same passages; but, if you find the same applications in another book, then Addison's learning in his 'Remarks' tumbles down..." '.

135. In 1775 travel literature was under discussion at The Club. Johnson was comparing Twiss's Travels in Spain with Keysler and Blainville (two popular eighteenth-century European guides) and Addison. Boswell says, 'I mentioned Addison's having borrowed many of his classical remarks from Leandro Alberti. ...Johnson: "Why, Sir, all who go to look for what the classicks have said of Italy must find the same passages; and I should think it would be one of the first things the Italians would do on the revival of learning, to collect all that the Roman authors have said of their country." ' Johnson was, of course, stating the obvious, and Addison was well able to find the classical references for himself.



lately informed of an Italian book, which I believe may be of use to you, and which, I dare say, you may get in Rome; written by one Alberti, about fourscore or a hundred years ago, a thick quarto. It is a classical description of Italy, from whence I am assured that Mr. Addison, to save himself trouble, has taken most of his remarks and classical references. I am told that it is an excellent book for a traveller in Italy.'<sup>136</sup> Clearly Lord Chesterfield had not seen a copy of the Descrittione, and his information must have come from a second-hand or even third-hand source, since he is so wide of the mark in his estimation of when the Descrittione was printed. His son had been in Italy for five months and had spent three months in Rome learning Italian when Chesterfield sent him this advice. Whether or not he found a copy is not recorded.

Another famous eighteenth-century scholar who, we know, read the Descrittione, was Edward Gibbon. The copy bearing his name has survived to the present.<sup>137</sup> Gibbon tried to obtain complete mastery of the geography and classical antiquities of Italy before going on his tour in 1764. His main reading seems to have been the Italia Antiqua et Sicilia Antiqua of Cluverius, together with the classical authors. His Nomina Gertesque, especially the Antiquae Italiae follows Alberti's progression round Italy from north-west to the south and back to the north-east, but his arguments are based on Fréret and Langlet du Fresnoy, and he steers

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136. The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, edited by J. Bradshaw, 3 vols, (London, 1892), I, 328.

137. It belongs to Dr. De Beer who kindly let me see this and other copies of the Descrittione in his possession.

clear of the foundation myths recorded by Alberti.<sup>139</sup> Gibbon's account of his travels shows no use of the Descrittione, and it seems that Keysler and Misson were his main guides.<sup>140</sup>

It is difficult to find any authors, out of the vast array of eighteenth-century guide-books and travel accounts, which mention Alberti even occasionally. John Breval, (Remarks on several parts of Europe, etc., (London, 1738)), claims that his work is entirely his own comments on Italy, not, 'pilfer'd from Addison, Misson, Lassels, (Bishop) Burnet, or any Author else.'<sup>141</sup> He makes one or two references to Alberti, including the story of the 'Grotta del Cane', but even this is not accurately recorded.<sup>142</sup> Thomas Nugent in his work on the Grand Tour lists the relations of other travellers which he has used.<sup>143</sup> These include Misson, Addison, Blainville, de Montfaucon and Schott, which he singles out as especially useful. He does list the divisions of Italy according to 'Leander Alberti', but this seems to be the only mention of him. Misson is a much used source.

It is easy to produce a list of works not referring to Alberti. It consists of almost the whole of eighteenth-century travel literature. If Alberti was replaced by Schott in the seventeenth century, Schott too was replaced by guides like those of Keysler and

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139. Miscellaneous works of Edward Gibbon, with memoirs of his life and writings, 5 vols, (London, 1814), IV, 157-326.

140. Above, p.434

141. Breval, Remarks, Preface.

142. Ibid., p.67.

143. T. Nugent, The Grand Tour, 4 vols, 3rd edition, (London, 1778), III, 10.

De Blainville available in English, French and German.<sup>144</sup> Keysler, (b.1689), was travelling in the late seventeen-twenties and early thirties and still produced a 'complete' description, in other words he did not compartmentalize the contents according to subject, but dealt with each place in turn in all its various aspects. Blainville was also travelling much earlier than the publication date of his work would suggest; about 1705-7 was the date for his journey. From Horace Walpole's correspondence we learn that his reading on Italy consisted of Addison, probably Hentzner's Itinerarium and l'Abbe Richard's Voyage d'Italie, but not, apparently Alberti.<sup>145</sup> Henry Swinburne was one of the earlier travellers to penetrate further south than Naples and make a full record of his experiences.<sup>146</sup> He shows

144. John George Keysler, Travels through Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy and Lorraine, 4 vols. (London, 1756) in German, 1740). De Blainville, Travels through Holland, Germany, Switzerland, but especially Italy, 3 vols, translated Turnbull, (London, 1757) written about 1720. Bishop Berkley, Journal of a tour in Italy, 1717-1718, was also popular. None of them mentions Alberti. De Beer suggests that a possible reason for the lack of interest in Schott was that there had been omitted from the last three editions much matter intended for devout Roman Catholics only, and possibly this reduced the sales. Also possibly the number of pilgrims was declining by 1750, and the later editions were rather poor productions, needing new plates and lacking reports of recent discoveries like Pompei and Herculaneum. 'Francois Schott...' p.79. Another extremely popular guide to the south was Patrick Brydone's A Tour through Sicily and Malta, 2 vols, (London, 1773). Two new editions appeared the following year, and a further seven at least by 1817. There was a French edition in 1776 and German editions in 1777 and 1831. Other reports and guides which make no reference to Alberti include those of Sir A. Balfour, J. Boyle the Earl of Cork and Orrery, W. Hamilton, J. Moore, H.L. Piozzi, J.H.von Riedsel, Samuel Rodgers, Tobias Smollett, J. Spon and G. Wheler. The titles of these can be found in the bibliography.
145. The Yale edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, edited by W.S. Lewis, (London, 1937-), XII, XIV,85; XVI, 146; XXIX,89.
146. Travels in the two Sicilies, 1777-1780. 2 vols, (London, 1783-85). He mentions previous works describing the area, e.g. W. Hamilton, A Tour of Calabria and Sicily, (London, 1781), but most existing works dealt with the Neapolitan area and not much else in the south.

a keen interest in natural phenomena, natural history, geology and such subjects, as does l'Abbé Spallanzani, in his later work of the same title, Travels in the two Sicilies, (London, 1798). The eruptions of Vesuvius and Etna particularly interested these authors. In fact much of their description would come under the heading of 'natural history', today rather than a travel account.

In 1769 another important guide appeared in France by La Lande, Voyage d'un Francois en Italiae,<sup>147</sup> covering commerce, the arts, history, antiquities etc., and containing a massive review of existing literature. It was very popular and translated into English and German. La Lande explains in his preface that he felt the lack of a good description of Italy in French for travellers.<sup>148</sup> There is no mention of Alberti, except as the author of a history of Bologna (along with Sigonio, Vizzani, Masini and Ghirardacci) which is not always reliable.<sup>149</sup> Clearly by the second half of the century Alberti was 'old-hat', no one was using him. La Lande's work had the disadvantage of running to ten volumes, making it something of a burden

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147. I consulted the edition of Paris, 1786.

148. Most existing ones are full of errors, he says. Even in Italian there did not exist any modern description that one could translate. He suggests reading for those interested in art and architecture, considers that Misson's is a work, 'rempli de partialite et d'inexactitude', and favours a work by A.F. Busching, Italia Geografico-Storico-Politica, (Venice, 1760), 'La meilleure description del'Italie, la plus etendue et la plus exacte...'. The list of authors he has read or referred to include also Keysler, Bishop Burnet, Addison, Wright (the most esteemed in England) Smollett, Sharp, Bardetti, Blainville, the Count of Orrery, John Moore, Swinburne, Orlandi, the Count of Lemburg, Guidi, l'Abbé Coyer, the Marquise d'Orbessan, and so on.

149. La Lande, Voyage...p.231.

for the tourist. A more portable work was Thomas Martyn's Gentleman's guide in his tour through Italy, (London, 1787).<sup>150</sup>

This had a similar list of about thirty accepted guides, though Martyn does not refer to any of them as particular sources for his text.

It is clear from these authors which the favourite guides were. Englishmen abroad might continue their studies of a country and its language, and buy books for their libraries back home but there are few surviving copies of the Descrittione in Britain today. Even the larger Italian libraries, Bologna University excepted, do not have very numerous examples of the text. Whatever the eighteenth-century traveller purchased it was more likely to be a contemporary work, or a contemporary edition at least, than a volume as old and scarce as the Descrittione. The 'Italian Grand Tour Library', as it called, of Patrick Home of Paxton, has survived complete, and is an interesting reflection of the tastes and interests of an eighteenth-century Scottish gentleman. Home was Member of Parliament for Berwickshire, but spent some time in Italy where he collected over 200 volumes between 1772 and 1777.<sup>151</sup> These include Italian classics like Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto and Bembo, great Italian prosers, Greek and Latin classics, a dozen or so works on art and architecture, and

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150. Martyn, B.D. and F.R.S., was a botanist and a divine, someone who could make observations about natural history from a standpoint of some knowledge.

151. The Home Collection, James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Each volume has the date and place of purchase, and the price, recorded by Home. On Home see Namier and Brooke, The House of Commons, 1754-1790, 3 vols, (London, 1964), II, 634. Home's diary of his travels, reported in existence in 1902, has since been mislaid.

some antiquarian and historical literature. It is disappointing, but not unexpected, to find that there is no Descrittione, indeed there is no guide-book as such at all.<sup>152</sup>

In the eighteenth century there was developing a parting of the ways between the guide-book proper which was emerging as a genre of its own - the result of travellers writing journals of their travels, and aiming to inform others - and the peripheral literature which a traveller might use. Works on antiquities were interesting and useful to the scholar and student, but these had multiplied. There were, as mentioned in Chapter VI above, works about individual towns, sights and areas, and the compendium of Cluverius largely replaced Alberti as a record of the collected statements of the ancients about each place. No longer were serious antiquarian studies wrapped up in the format of a description, or fitted into the pages of an itinerary. History too was kept to a minimum as far as guide-books were concerned. It was becoming an area with much more closely defined boundaries, and only outline information and essential facts were put into the guides. Even natural history was emerging as an independent discipline which could stand on its own feet, while geography, sometime previously, had parted company with its historical allies. Much that would be classified as geographical description at the time the Descrittione was written had become the preserve of the natural historian, that botanist, chemist, geologist and zoologist combined, whose interests lay in the observation of natural phenomena, plants, insects, rock formations, mineral deposits, and so on. La Lande's work contains a section entitled 'De l'histoire naturelle de

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152. There is a copy of Biondo's Roma Trionfante, Fauno's translation, (Venice, 1544), one of a small collection of valuable sixteenth-century books.

l'Italie'. Spallanzani was Fellow of the Royal Society, like Martyn, and devoted much of his account of Sicily to natural history. John Ferber, reporting his travels, likewise put these investigations first,<sup>153</sup> but the alliance between travelogue and natural history was a tenuous one. A travelogue could turn into a natural history of an area, if this was the writer's primary interest, but then the work would cease to be regarded as a guide-book for the general traveller. As each part of what had once been the chorography was hived off into its own channels, so the genre itself, essentially one of an encyclopaedic nature, died away.

The fact that the Descrittione had not been reprinted in the seventeenth century is an indication that there was little demand for it by travellers whose interests lay less in academic arguments about early settlement and history, than in the contemporary scene, the arsenals, treasure houses, palaces, medicinal baths and holy relics. For these things the more compact itineraries, especially those of Schott - Capugnano or Pflaumern served well enough. There was no need for a guide-book author to go back to Alberti, or to Pigius or Turler once these other works had appeared.

Although many eighteenth-century travellers were often classical scholars who might have found the Descrittione interesting, a curiosity in its own right as well as a useful collection of references, there were other works at hand which served the same purpose. The Descrittione was probably quite hard to come by, and therefore was

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153. J. Ferber, Travels Through Italy in the years 1771 and 1772, (London, 1776). Ferber was born in Sweden, and was a student of mining.

overlooked except by bibliophiles like Muratori whose suggestion that it be reprinted came to nothing.<sup>154</sup> The Descrittione was never a strictly useful or practical guide-book, but the best substitute which the sixteenth-century traveller could find. Whether Alberti envisaged that travellers in particular would use it, we do not know, but it seems unlikely. He more probably envisaged his readers (from the average merchant, businessman or prelate with some education, to the scholarly antiquary or historian), as men eager to know more about their country and its classical past, quite apart from whether or not they had opportunities to travel. For the sixteenth-century humanist scholars, a distinct group to which Alberti undoubtedly belonged, classical literature was their second world, almost as important as the contemporary one. Was there also a patriotic ideal behind it? A study combining all the elements of a chorography was intended to point out all that was remarkable in Italy past and present, and while no extravagant claims concerning the greatness of Italy are made, Alberti is at great pains to be as thorough and comprehensive as possible.

For many scholars a classical education remained the only one of value well into the nineteenth century, but the strangle-hold of classical literature gradually was broken in many areas of study. The classicists themselves demanded more accuracy, precision and depth of study than was to be found in the Descrittione. Those whose interests lay elsewhere

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154. Dr. de Beer is of the opinion that the Descrittione was neglected rather than that there were few copies in existence. He bases this argument on the ease with which he purchased a number of copies in this country before 1939, and thinks that many copies were pulped during the war.



found the work old fashioned. So it survived as a little known curiosity, consulted for Italian local guides and histories, but in most cases for a starting point only, providing background information. As a travel guide its information was totally inadequate and lacking in practicality. Anyone who doubts this should try using it on the spot in almost any Italian town where he will find it frustratingly uninformative. At first glance it appears as though it could be useful, but, put to the test, on most occasions it fails miserably, as the seventeenth-century traveller no doubt found out. A chorography was not a substitute for a guide-book. The latter was bound to owe some debt to the former, but more to its shortcomings than to its achievements. The Descriptione as an example of the former belonged to the sixteenth century. Its influence on the development of the itinerary and guide-book was limited and short lived.

## CHAPTER VIII

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to bring together the main points of my argument about the Descrittione di Tutta Italia; how it fits into descriptive literature, and the place it holds in the development of humanist learning in the sixteenth century.

Firstly it is possible to draw some conclusions about the author. Leandro Alberti was a Dominican, educated in the traditional humanist vein. He was an admirer of the classics, one who was taught to copy the good style of Cicero in writing and speaking, presumably to admire the historical writings of Livy and Sallust, to read the classical authors firstly as models of style and form and secondly for what they had to say. He was interested in history and in antiquities whether it was the history of his Order, of his city, Bologna, or of his country, Italy, as the lost Effemerides would doubtless have shown. He had many friends within the literary and scholarly circles of his day, not just in Bologna, but in Ferrara, Venice, Rome and Naples. Although he has emerged through the mists of time as a little-known figure, many of his friends are famous names. It has long been maintained that Renaissance humanists of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were a comparatively small group, but an international one, a scholarly elite; Erasmus in England, Budé in France, Celtis in Germany, Aldus in Venice for example, all knowing each other, corresponding about their literary problems, exchanging works for criticism and so on. Alberti's career bears out the point that there was indeed a brotherhood of scholars and that academics in different places were in close contact with one another. But it also illustrates the fact that not all these men later

became famous names, that it was not solely the really 'great' names who knew of each other's existence and sought each other's help.

There was a second stratum of not so well known men, whose names would not make the history books, and whose works, if printed once or twice would soon be neglected. But these men were not working on their own, any more than the lesser members of a university faculty do today, they too were close to the mainstream of thought and shared many of the characteristics of their more illustrious contemporaries, even if their intellect did not quite match up to them and their achievements were less. In other words it would be a mistake to assume that the appeal of humanist studies had too limited a field, confined to a select group of scholars who left a very big mark in specific areas, particularly that of collecting, collating, editing and imitating classical texts. Men lower down the intellectual ladder were well able to appreciate what was going on around them and make their own small contribution in their particular way.

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Alberti the scholar was/Alberti the man of god, and was well-known in his Order, it seems, though probably modest and unassuming and not anxious for responsibility or a position of importance. He evidently preferred the peace and quiet of the cloister to involvement in the politics of a large institution. As an inquisitor we may be sure he would be efficient, but he may even have been over-zealous in his job.

A final point about the author; his interests were not confined to classical literature and the religious life he had chosen. A taste for the countryside, the beauties of nature and the wonderful sights which could greet the man who kept his eyes open to his environment was awakened in him as he travelled for his Order, and was clearly reflected

in the Descrittione. One feels that he wanted all Italians to share his pride in his native land, to forget their local allegiances to city or state for a moment or two and reflect that they were also Italians and should know something about the splendours of their country, past and present, man-made and natural.

This may have been one motive behind writing the Descrittione. There is no record of why he undertook this mammoth task, nor any record of who were expected to be its readers. Did he simply want to inform people about Italy in its many aspects, just as the De Viris informed them about the Dominican Order, and the History of Bologna informed them about Bologna? Did he, as Roletto suggests, want a format in which to record what he had seen on his travels, and find Biondo's Italia Illustrata the answer to his search? Was the Italia Illustrata itself an inspiration which gave him the idea of extending and enlarging its format to produce a work which would much more completely come up to Biondo's hopes and which would surpass the achievement of Celtis and his associates in Germany? Did he perhaps want to record his antiquarian research and reading and put it to good use? The text itself supplies the only evidence from which to draw any conclusions. The Italian language in which it is written suggests a wider audience than just academic circles. It was intended to interest also the princes, merchants and others who had some education, but would not read a book in Latin. The prodigious display of classical literature suggests that recording accounts of Italy from Greek and Roman authors was a primary purpose of the work, but here we are faced with the old problem of the chicken and the egg. Do the sources relate to the content or do they dictate the content? Did Alberti read classical

texts and find himself anxious to record what they said about Italy, or did the idea of a classical description occur to him, leading him to cull available literature for information? Similarly with regard to his travels the question may be asked, did he go on his travels for the Order and then feel that he wanted to write an account of what he had seen, or did he have the idea of writing a chorography, to improve on Biondo, and so made use of his travel experiences to gain information? There is no clear answer, and human motivation being as complex and often as unclear as it is, we can only surmise, perhaps doing what Alberti himself would have done, reconciling the contradictions as far as possible. We may presume that the idea occurred to him as he read his classical texts and saw how incomplete a picture of the country Biondo had provided and that he then determined to fill in the many blanks. He was aware that his work was that peculiar blend of history, geography and topography which constituted chorography.

Despite the information collected on his travels, he still relied overwhelmingly on written sources, and on the 'approved' classical authors, like Ptolemy, Pliny, Strabo and Dionysius, in particular. The range of literature consulted was very varied and included many fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century works, particularly local histories and descriptions. Personal observations played an important role, and their removal would greatly detract from the interest of the work. It required considerable ability in organization to assemble such a variety of information on many diverse topics and weld it into a coherent whole, and one cannot but remain amazed at the scale on which Alberti was able to do this. There is no doubt that he produced a chorography far superior to Biondo's if considerably more

unwieldy, and it was never surpassed in its comprehensiveness.

There are, of course, several obvious defects; the use of Annius of Viterbo for one, and the reliance on literary sources even when archaeological evidence refuted them, for another. Early Italian history was still dependent on myth and fable just as much as on fact, indeed it was hard to draw a line between them. Set against the limits of the standards of criticism of the time, Alberti's opinions, sometimes sceptical ones, are of great interest, whether he always draws the right conclusion or not. He provides evidence of how a fairly typical sixteenth-century scholar might set about weighing up his material, what a welter of sources he could be faced with, whose opinions he was most prepared to trust and on what basis stories which seemed too fanciful might be rejected. Although he does not adhere to all the canons of the humanist historian proper he was probably aware that such precepts existed, and in any case they were not directly relevant to the Descrittione. He certainly shared the enthusiasm of fellow humanists for the tangible remains of antiquity; inscriptions, buildings, tombs and smaller fragmentary remains delighted him for their own sake, even if he did not always fully appreciate their historical implications. An interest in biography is likewise a hall-mark of his work and sometimes the snippets of information he related could furnish a later biographer with a point of departure for fuller investigations. In its geographical content the Descrittione may be criticised for its lack of recognition of new trends, but it was the 'old' geography which concerned Alberti. He was writing purely descriptive geography from books and from his own observations.

The Descrittione was the result of many years' hard work. In investigating its writing, and the literary type to which it belongs, it is evident how the chorographical genre found favour not just in Italy but also in Germany and even in Britain by the end of the sixteenth century. By the time Camden's Britannia was printed in Britain the Descrittione was already less popular (one may assume, since 1596 was the date of its last printing), and two important developments were responsible for the eclipsing of the genre; firstly the development of the guide-book and its forerunner, the itinerary, and secondly the separation of history from geography, of biography and antiquarian and archaeological studies from political history, and, eventually, of natural history from geography. Local antiquarian and historical studies became more prolific and replaced large-scale works to a considerable extent. The guide-book proper which had its origins in Schott, if not in the Descrittione, soon developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into a fully-fledged format of its own directed towards a quite specific public.

The Descrittione had a relatively short life, considering the amount of scholarship that went into it, but it occupies an important place not only in Italian literary development, but also in relation to similar literature elsewhere in Europe. Several of its features, the historico-antiquarian interest and reliance on classical sources, for example, are features one can associate with humanism, humanist scholarship and even the Renaissance as a whole. The classical literature which made the work possible was studied not only in Italy. Ptolemy, Strabo, Pliny and Dionysius found an honoured place in the libraries of many German, French and British scholars, and the chorography, not surprisingly, was

popular elsewhere also.

The appearance of Celtis's work in Germany has already been mentioned. Inspired by Biondo, and under Celtis's leadership a group of scholars covered all the German Empire and developed chorographical and geographical studies in several important centres of learning. In Germany and France, as mentioned above, geographical studies of a far more scientific nature emerged from the efforts of some of Celtis's team; but in essence it was the chorography, the total description, which Celtis was after. A classical description was required also, to correct the misapprehensions of those south of the Alps who believed that Italy alone was the heiress to the Roman Empire.

In Britain the classical description with strong antiquarian interests did not come into its own until the second half of the sixteenth century with the work of John Leyland, Humphrey Llyud, George Buchanan, Holinshed, the anonymous author of the Description of Ireland, and, last but not least, William Camden himself. Most of these British scholars had close links with the Low Countries, and with the map-maker Ortelius in particular.<sup>1</sup> Early contact between British and Italian scholars whose antiquarian interests coincides, is shown in the work of Paolo Giovio, who based his Descriptio Britanniae, Scotiae, Hiberniae et Orchadum, (Venice, 1548), to some extent on first hand observations, and added George Lily's Elogia Quorundam Anglorum to it.<sup>2</sup>

1. See Llyud's letter to Ortelius in the introduction to the Breviary of Britayne, (London, 1573), and Camden's introduction to the Britannia (First edition 1580. I consulted the English translation by Philemon Holland, 1610), where he claims that Ortelius had requested him to 'illustrate this Ile of Britaine'.
2. He also received help from Lily on the geographical side of the work, see E.G.R. Taylor, Tudor Geography, 1485-1583, (New York, 1968), p.16-17. Giovio appears to have used Lily's Nova et antiqua locorum nomina in Anglia et in Scotia.



Ortelius's friends included not only Camden and Lluyd, but Hakluyt and the map-maker John Dee.<sup>3</sup> John Leyland was the forerunner of all the British antiquaries. Although he left no completed work, his notes were of great value to his successors. When the Britannia did appear its contents showed that combination of geographical and antiquarian interests which characterized the chorographical genre elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

Whereas in Italy several local chorographies had preceeded the publication of the Descrittione, in Britain it was the other way round and more local chorographies were written as a result of Camden's work.<sup>5</sup> These studies developed later in Britain than in Germany and Italy, but once the 'big book' was published no-one attempted to improve on it on the same scale.

Despite the fact that Camden was familiar with Biondo's work<sup>6</sup> and that copies of the Descrittione had reached British antiquaries in the second half of the sixteenth century, there is no evidence to suggest that any of them were directly influenced by Alberti's work.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand even without direct influence it is evident that scholars were making investigations along similar lines. In Italy,

3. On the whole question of British antiquarianism and the development of chorography, see particularly F.J. Levy, Tudor Historical Thought, (California, 1967), Chapter V, and Taylor, op. cit. pp.87-89.
4. Levy, op. cit. p.130. The topics are the same as those covered by the Descrittione, but arranged differently.
5. Levy, op. cit. p.157-160, points out that they did not always follow Camden very closely, though.
6. Levy, op. cit., p.148-9.
7. E.G.R. Taylor, op. cit., lists the contents of the libraries of John Dee, and the Arundel-Lumley family. The latter contained the 1550 edition of the Descrittione. The Earl of Arundel and his son-in-law, Lord Lumley were patrons of learning and antiquarian research.

Germany and Britain the same elements went into the make-up of the descriptive or chorographical genre which in all three countries reached its peak sooner or later in the sixteenth century.

Finally the question may be asked, what use is the Descrittione today? Does it still have a value for the historian or antiquary, apart from its place in the development of a literary genre? As a practical work of reference for historical, geographical or biographical information it is of little use. It contains too much information in too condensed a form and it is in no way convenient to use. As a source book for classical references it also has defects; not all the references are given in detail and other works like that of Cluverius would be more helpful and easier to use. Nevertheless it does provide a valuable record of the literary interests and critical methods of an average Bolognese scholar. It is also valuable for the personal observations which the author made on his travels. If these could be extracted from the whole they would make most interesting reading on their own, as the view that a sixteenth-century friar had of his country, particularly the more inaccessible parts of it.

In pursuing this enquiry into Leandro Alberti's work I have attempted to show that a figure who has attracted little attention from historians can have value as a fairly typical scholar, as one example from what must have been a relatively large group of second rank scholars both lay and clerical, who have not become famous names but nevertheless have made a contribution to the scholarship of the sixteenth century. It is through these lesser figures that it can be illustrated more clearly how those nebulous concepts 'humanism' and 'Renaissance' affected more than just a very small intellectual élite and how intellectual change

and exchange of ideas took place not only among the first ranking scholars all over Europe, but spread from them downwards through the less sparkling minds, but minds that were still capable of responding to new stimuli, and that were not always ignored by their teachers and masters. The Descrittione is not a first class work of literature, nor was its author a man of outstanding intellect capable of bringing forth new philosophical concepts nor even new interpretations of historical evidence. It is a work which shows a tidy mind, a capacity for study and an absorption of classical literature, linked with an enthusiasm, new at the time he was writing, for the wonders of the natural world.

In the literature which took the name of chorography, the Descrittione stands <sup>out</sup> as the supreme example in Italy and one of the most comprehensive and detailed examples to be found anywhere in Europe. The development of the genre is an interesting phenomenon, coinciding as it does with the intellectual activities of the humanists in fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century Europe. Likewise its decline in popularity can clearly be traced and explained through the fortunes of the Descrittione, as it was overtaken by and replaced by new interests and intellectual developments.

Appendix I. Editions of the Descrittione and the Isole

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Descrittione

First Edition. folio. Bologna, 1550. (By Anselmo Giaccarelli.)

DESCRITTIONE / DI TUTTA ITALIA / di F. Leandro Alberti Bolognese,  
 Nella quale si contiene il Sito / di essa, l'Origine, & le Signorie  
 delle Città, & delle Castella, /co i Nomi Antichi & Moderni, i Costumi  
 de/Popoli, le Condizioni de Paesi:/ (small caps.) ET PIU GLI HUOMINI FAMOSI  
 CHE L'HANNO /illustrata, i Monti, i Laghi, i Fiumi, le Fontane, i Bagni, /  
 le Minere, con tutte l'Opre (sic) maravigliose in lei /dalla Natura  
 prodotte./

Printers' emblem.

Con Privilegio./In Bologna per Anselmo Giaccarelli./M.D.L./

Second Edition. quarto. Venice, 1551. (By Pietro de i Nicolini da  
 Sabbio.)

DESCRITTIONE/ DI TUTTA ITALIA/ DI F. LEANDRO ALBERTI/(small caps.)  
 BOLOGNESE, NELLA QUALE / CONTIENE IL SITO DI ESSA, L'ORIGINE,/ Et le  
 Signorie delle Città, & delle Castelli/ co i nomi Antichi, & Moderni,  
 i Costumi de/ Popoli, le conditioni de Paesi./(small caps.) ET PIU GLI  
 HUOMINI FAMOSI CHE L'HANNO / illustrata, i Monti, i Laghi, i Fiumi,  
 le Fontane, i Bagni,/le Minere, con tutte l'opre (sic) maravigliose  
 in lei/ dalla Natura prodotte./

Printer's Emblem.

In VINEGIA Appresso Pietro de i Nicolini da Sabbio/ Nell'Anno del  
 Signose MDLI./

Third Edition. quarto. Venice, 1553. (By Giovan Maria Bonelli.)

DESCRITTIONE / DI TUTTA ITALIA / (small caps.) DI F. LEANDRO ALBERTI /  
BOLOGNESE, NELLA QUALE / SI CONTIENE IL SITO DI ESSA, / l'origine, &  
le Signorie del<sup>e</sup> Città, & de i Castelli, co i / nomi antichi, &  
moderni, i costumi de'po- / poli, le condizioni dei paesi. / (small caps.)  
ET PIU, GLI HUOMINI FAMOSI, CHE L'HANNO / illustrata, i Monti, i Laghi,  
i Fiumi, le Fontane, i Bagni, le Minere; con tutte / l'opere maravigliose  
in lei dalla Natura prodotte. / Con somma diligenza corretta, & ristampata. /  
Printer's emblem.

IN VINEGIA, PER / (small caps.) GIOVAN MARIA BONELLI / M.D.LIII. /

Fourth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1557. (By Domenico de Farri.)

DESCRITTIONE/ DI TUTTA ITALIA/ DI F. LEANDRO ALBERTI/ (small caps.)  
BOLOGNESE, NELLA QUALE/ SI CONTIENE IL SITO DI ESSA,/ l'origine, & le  
Signorie delle Città, et de i Castelli,/ co i nomi antichi, & moderni,  
i costumi de' / Popoli, le condizioni de i Paesi. / (small caps.) ET PIU,  
gLI HUOMINI FAMOSI, CHE L'HANNO/ illustrata, i Monti, i Laghi, i Fiumi,  
le Fontane, i Bagni, le Minere;/ con tutte l'opere maravigliose in lei  
dalla Natura prodotte. / (small caps.) CON UNA TAVOLA COPIOSISSIMA DI  
TUTTO/ quel piu signalato, che ne ll'opera si contiene. /

Printer's emblem.

IN VINEGIA, PER/(small caps.) DOMENICO DE'FARRI./ MDLVII./

Fifth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1561. (By Ludovico degli Avanzi.)

DESCRITTIONE/ DI TUTTA ITALIA/ DI F. LEANDRO ALBERTI/ BOLOGNESE,/

Nellaquale si contiene il sito di essa, l'origine, & le Signorie delle  
Citta/ & de i Castelli, co i nomi antichi, & moderni, i costumi  
de'Popoli,/ & le conditioni de i Paesi./

Et piu gli huomini famosi, che l'hanno illustrata, i Monti, i Laghi,  
i Fiumi, le Fontane,/i Bagni, le Minere; con tutte l'opere maravigliose  
in lei dalla Natura prodotte/ Aggiuntavi nuovamente la descrizione di  
tutte l'Isole pertinenti ad essa Italia, dal/medesimo autore descritte  
con bellissimo ordine./ Con le sue tavole copiosissime delle cose piu  
memorabili./ (small caps.) CON PRIVILEGIO./

Printer's emblem.

IN VENETIA,/ Appresso Ludovico de gli Avanzi./M.D.LXI./

Sixth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1567/68. (By Ludovico degli Avanzi.)

(Two printings of the same text.)

DESCRITTIONE / DI TUTTA ITALIA / DI F. LEANDRO ALBERTI / BOLOGNESE, /

Nella quale si contiene / (small caps.) IL SITO DI ESSA; LA QUALITA DELLE  
PARTI / sue; l'Origine delle Città, de'Castelli, & Signorie loro con i  
suoi nomi an /tichi, & moderni; i Monti, i Laghi, i Fiumi, le Fontane,  
& i Bagni; / le Minere, et l'opere maraviglose in quella dalla Natura  
prodotte; I Co/stumi de'Popoli; & gli huomini famosi, che di tempo in tempo  
l'hanno/illustrata. (small caps.) AGGIUNTAVI LA DESCRITTIONE DI TUTTE /  
l'Isole, all'Italia appartenenti, con i suoi disegni, collocati /a i  
luoghi loro, con ordine bellissimo./ (small caps.) CON LE SUE TAVOLE  
COPIOSISSIME./ CON PRIVILEGIO./

Printer's emblem.

(small caps.) IN VENETIA,/ Appresso Lodovico degli Avanzi. M.D.LXVIII./

Seventh Edition. quarto. Venice, 1576/77. (By Gio. Maria Leni.)

(Two printings of the same text.)

DESCRITTIONE/ DI TUTTA L'ITALIA/ & Isole pertinenti ad essa./ DI  
F. LEANDRO ALBERTI/ BOLOGNESE./ Nella quale si contiene il sito di  
essa, l'origine, & le signorie/ delle Città, & de'Castelli; co'i nomi  
antichi, & moderni;/i costumi de popoli, & le conditioni, de paesi./  
Et di più gl'huomini famosi, che l'hanno illustrata; i Monti, i Laghi,  
i Fiumi, Le Fontane,/i Bagni, le Minere, & tutte l'opere maravigliose  
in lei dalla Natura prodotte./ Aggiuntovi di novo, a suoi luoghi, tutto  
quello, ch'è/successo sino l'anno 1577, & tutto ricorretto./

Printer's emblem.

In Venetia, Appresso Gio. Maria Leni. 1577/.

Eighth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1581. (By Gio. Battista Porta.)

DESCRITTIONE/ DI TUTTA L'ITALIA / & Isole pertinenti ad essa./ DI FRA  
LEANDRO ALBERTI / BOLOGNESE. / Nella quale si contiene il sito di essa,  
l'origine, & le Signorie / delle Città, & de'castelli; co i nomi antichi,  
& moderni; / i costumi de popoli, & le conditioni de paesi. / Et di più  
gl'Huomini famosi, che l'hanno illustrata; i Monti, i Laghi, i Fiumi,  
le Fontane, i Bagni, le Minere, & tutte l'opere maravigliose in lei  
dalla Natura prodotte./ Aggiuntovi di nuovo, a suoi luoghi, tutto  
quello, /ch'e successo sino l'anno 1581./ Et di più ripurgata da  
infiniti errori, & accresciuta d'altre Additioni in margine,/da  
M.Borgaruccio Borgarucci, come à questo segno † si puo vedere./

(small caps.) CON LE SUE TAVOLE COPIOSISSIME./

Printer's emblem.

In Venetia, Appresso Gio. Battista Porta. M.D.LXXXI./

Ninth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1588. (By Altobello Salicato.)

DESCRITTIONE/ DI TUTTA ITALIA,/ DI F. LEANDRO ALBERTI / BOLOGNESE, /  
 Nella quale si contiene il sito di essa, l'origine, & le Signorie /  
 delle Città, & de'Castelli; co'nomi antichi, & moderni, / i costumi  
 de popoli, & le conditioni de paesi. /Et di più gli huomini famosi,  
 che l'hanno illustrata; i Monti, i Laghi, i Fiumi, le/Fontane, i Bagni,  
 le Minere, & tutte l'opere maravigliose / in lei dalla Natura prodotte./  
 Aggiuntavi la descrizione di tutte l'Isole, all'Italia appartenenti,  
 co'/ suoi disegni, collocati a i luoghi loro, con / ordine bellissimo./  
 (small caps.) CON LE SUE TAVOLE COPIOSISSIME./ Nuovamente ristampata, &  
 con somma diligenza rivista, et corretta./

Printer's emblem.

IN VINEGIA / Presso Altobello Salicata. M D LXXXVIII. / Alla Libreria  
 della Fortezza./

Tenth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1596. (By Paolo Ugolino.)

DESCRITTIONE/ DI TUTTA L'ITALIA,/ Et Isole pertinenti ad essa./ DI FRA  
 LEANDRO ALBERTI/ BOLOGNESE,/ Nella quale si contiene il sito di essa,  
 l'origine, & le Signorie/ delle Città, & de'Castelli; co'nomi antichi,  
 & moderni;/ i costumi de popoli, & le conditioni de paesi./ Et di più  
 gli huomini famosi, che l'hanno illustrata; i Monti, i Laghi, i Fiumi,  
 le/Fontane, i Bagni, le Minere, & tutte l'opere maravigliose / in lei  
 dalla Natura prodotte./ Nuovamente ristampata, & con somma diligenza  
 rivista, & corretta./ CON LE SUE TAVOLE COPIOSISSIME./

Printer's emblem.

IN VENETIA,/ Appresso Paulo Ugolino. MDXCVI./



Latin Edition. folio. Cologne, 1566. (By Nicolaus Graphaeus.)

F. LEANDRI ALBERTI / BONONIENSIS./ DESCRIPTIO / TOTIUS ITALIAE /QUA  
SITUS, ORIGINES, IMPERIA CIVITATUM / & oppidorum cum nominibus antiquis  
& recentioribus, item mores populorum / agrorumq; conditiones  
edifferentur sed & praeterea clari homines a quibus / illustrata regio  
ipsa est, item montes, lacus, flumina, fontes, aquae/calidae. metalla,  
cunctaque miracula atque opera naturae / quae continet, dicuntur, ex  
italica lingua /nunc primum in latinam / conversa./ INTERPRETE GUILIELMO  
KYRIAN- / DRO HOENINGENOI C./

Index locupletissimus adiectus./

Printer's emblem.

(small caps.) IN COLONIA AGRIPPINENSI EXCUDIT / Nicolaus Graphaeus  
typographus iuxta D. Lupi. / Cum privilegio Sacrae Caesareae Maiestatis  
Regumq; Franciae ac Hispaniae, quod / exactius proxima docebit pagina./  
Anno a C.N. M D LXVI.

Id. Septemb./

Reprinted, Cologne, 1567. (by Theodore Baumius.)

Isole

First Edition. quarto. Venice, 1561. (By Ludovico degli Avanzi.)

(No maps)

Second Edition. quarto. Venice, 1567/68 (By Ludovico degli Avanzi.)

(Includes maps)

ISOLE / APPARTENENTI / ALLA ITALIA, / DI F. LEANDRO ALBERTI / BOLOGNESE./

Aggiuntovi di nuovo i disegni di quelle, e collocati alli suoi luoghi,

a/ commune utilità, e sodisfattione de i Lettori./ CON PRIVILEGIO./

Printer's emblem.

IN VENETIA, / Appresso Lodovico Avanzi. M.D.LXVII.

Third Edition. quarto. Venice, 1577. (By Gio. Maria Leni.)

(No maps)

ISOLE / APPARTENENTI / ALLA ITALIA, / Descritte da Fr. Leandro Alberti/

Bolognese./ Di nuovo riccorette, e con l'aggiunta in più luoghi / de

diversi cose occorse/a'nostri / <sup>sino</sup> tempi adornate./

Printer's emblem.

In Venetia, Appresso Gio. Maria Leni. 1577.

Fourth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1581. (by Gio Battista Porta)

(No maps)

ISOLE / APPARTENENTI / ALL'ITALIA / Descritte de F. Leandro Alberti /  
Bolognese./ Di nuovo ricorrette, e con l'aggiunta in piu luo- / gli di  
diverse cose occorse sino a no- / stri tempi adornate./

Printer's emblem.

IN VENETIA, / Appresso Gio. Battista Porta. MDLXXXI./

Fifth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1588. (By Altobello Salicato)

(With maps)

ISOLE / APPARTENENT / ALLA ITALIA, / DI FRA LEANDRO ALBERTI /  
BOLOGNESE./ Aggiuntovi di nuovo i disegni di quelle, e collocati a'suoi /  
luoghi, a comune utilita, et sodisfattione de Lettori./ Nuovamente  
ristampate, e con somma diligenza, reviste, e corrette./ (small caps.)  
CON PRIVILEGIO./ (printer's emblem) / IN VINEGIA, Presso Altobello  
Salicato. MDLXXXVIII./ Alla Libreria della Fortezza.

Sixth Edition. quarto. Venice, 1596. (By Paolo Ugolino.)

(No maps.)

ISOLE / APPARTINENTI / ALL'ITALIA / Descritte da F. Leandro Alberti /  
Bolognese./ DI NUOVO RICORRETTE, ET CON / L'aggiunta in piu luoghi di  
diverse cose occorse / sino a'nostri tempi adornate./

Printer's emblem.

IN VENETIA, / Appresso Paolo Ugolino. MDXCVI.

The circumstances of the first printing have already been explained above.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed a very handsome folio edition, and it must have been work of this quality that brought Giaccarelli his high reputation in Bologna. Although the printing caused such anxiety to Alberti, he must have been quite well satisfied with the finished result. It was certainly very pleasing to the eye, and the typographical errors were no more frequent than in many contemporary works.

The preliminaries to the first edition are of a certain amount of interest, and with variations they reappear in subsequent editions. The work is dedicated to Henry II of France and his consort, Catherine de' Medici; 'A i Dui Christianissimi Henrico Secondo re di Francia et Caterina sua consorte.' In view of the traditional animosity supposed to exist between the Italians and the French in the early sixteenth-century, this comes as something of a surprise. It is possible that Alberti had the idea of a dedication to Catherine, and then decided to include Henry too, but the whole tenor of the dedication expresses pleasure at the union of Italy and France; of the houses of Valois and Medici.

...mi pare che molti secoli non gli fosse tanto congiunto il Real sangue di Francia, col nobil sangue Italiano, come al presente si vede giunto il Real sangue di Valesio, col Magnifico de' Medici. Il che penso dal sommo Dio essere con somma providentia stato fatto. Et perciò non ho voluto anchora che ella separi i nomi, dove esso ha congiunto i Cori e Corpi.<sup>2</sup>

These are not the sentiments one might have expected from a man who had lived through the invasions of Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francis I.

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1. Chapter I, Part iv.

2. Descrittione, 1550, f.\*ii.

However, Alberti seems to have held all the foreign invading armies equally responsible for Italy's plight.<sup>3</sup> Certainly by 1550 passions were cooling, but he appears magnanimous indeed when he declares, 'Vederete in quella (the Italia) molte honorate memorie della gente, qual voi reggete, et d'i Re a'quali voi sete succeduti.' The text certainly treats the invasions and the destructiveness of the French with a certain degree of impartiality, facts are stated badly in their historical context, with little attempt to praise or blame, but Henry would have had to look hard to find the 'honourable reminiscences' about his predecessors. I have found only one instance of anything approaching praise for a French monarch.<sup>4</sup> However, Alberti's sentiments in the preface are not entirely consistent with a remark on invaders of Italy in the opening chapter. This includes a reference to the French which is hardly complimentary. Some invaders have settled in Italy, and others, he says, 'havendola spogliata, ritornarono a'i suoi Paesi, come ne'nostri giorni veduto habbiamo, et fra gli altri i Francesi.' (f.5) Anti-French sentiments are expressed concerning the destruction of Gaeta (f.123vo.) and Fondi (f.124). It is worth remembering that these remarks could have been written at least fifteen years before the dedication and possibly as much as twenty-five years, time enough anyway for Alberti to modify any bitterness.

The dedication can perhaps be seen as a mark of Alberti's faith in the future. Eighteen months previously Catherine had been crowned

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3. Above, p. 388.

4. Alberti mentions that Francis I was taken to Piceleonis after his capture by the Imperialists at Pavia, and there, 'fu tenuto molto honoratamente, si come si conveniva à tanto Rè.' (f.362vo.)

Queen of France at St. Denis<sup>5</sup> and it seemed likely that Franco-Italian relations might at last see happier days. 1550 was the date of publication of Mario Equicola's apology, Apologie de Marius Equicolis gentilhomme italien contre les mesdisans de la nation françoise traduite de Latin en françoise.<sup>6</sup> It also marks the beginning of an important phase in the development of Italian literary influence in France.

Alberti seems to have had some affection for Ferrara, he had friends there and deals with the history of the Este family in great detail, and Ferrara, of course, had a tradition of friendship with France.<sup>7</sup> Although a joint dedication like Alberti's seems unusual for its date, Catherine had been the object of several dedications. In 1546 Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, the printer of F. Sansovino's edition of the Decameron dedicated this edition 'alla illustrissima et eccellentissima signora la delphina di Francia', adding that he had already dedicated the Orlando Furioso to her consort. Seen against this background of a Franco-Italian rapprochement, evident in the literary and political spheres, Alberti's dedication looks rather less extraordinary than at first glance. There is no evidence that he had any particular connections with the French court, and it is unlikely that he expected any patronage from the royal couple, other than their admiration for his country and his work, and the possibility that it would reach a wider audience.

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5. 10 June, 1549, but the new year began on 25 March.

6. (Paris, 1550) Translation published after Equicola's death.

7. Many leading Italian families had interests in France at this time, e.g. the Rangoni, Orsini, Gonzaga, Farnese, Gondi, etc., see E. Picot, Les Italiens en France au XVI siecle, (Bordeaux, 1901).

Giaccarelli, possibly trying to capitalise out of his emblem, Hercules killing the Hydra, produced a laudatory Latin verse to Ercole II, D'Este, Duke of Ferrara, with the emblem above it. It may have been in pious hopes that the 'Italia columnen, Princeps invicte, Deorum Progenies...' might indeed look upon him, 'mente, animoque hilari.'<sup>8</sup> If this was so he must have been disappointed since the verse was omitted in the reprint in favour of Alberti's portrait, an engraving with these words by Sebastiano Corrado,<sup>9</sup>

Quem tibi Leandrum signo depinximus isto  
Mergere iam prorsus nulla procella potest.

The original preliminaries also contain the letter from G.A. Flaminio<sup>10</sup> urging Alberti to get the work printed.

These preliminaries are completed by a collection of epigrams in praise of the Descrittione by Andrea Alciati,<sup>11</sup> Giovanni Pietro Ferreto, Bishop of Milo,<sup>12</sup> Lilio Gregorio Giraldi,<sup>13</sup> Georgio Jodocus Berganus,<sup>14</sup> Scipio Balbi,<sup>15</sup> Benedetto e Monte Reggio<sup>16</sup>, Giovanni Gab.<sup>17</sup>,

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8. Descrittione, 1550, f.\*.iii. Ercole was still alive (d.1559).
9. For Corrado see above Chapter I, The engraver is Thomas of Brescia, not an artist of particular fame, he is not, for example, mentioned by Vasari.
10. See Chapter I. It was written in 1537 according to the text, but more correctly in 1536, since the author died in that year.
11. See above Chapter I, p.61.
12. Above, p.60.
13. Above, p.59.
14. Berganus was a sixteenth-century Latin poet, author of Benacus the poem on Lake Garda, (used by Alberti). See Descrittione, 1553, ff.353vo., 354 and Cosenza, op.cit., V.70.
15. See above Chapter I.
16. Benedict ex Monte Reggio is not mentioned by Alberti among the famous men of Monte Reggio, nor anywhere else in the Descrittione. Cosenza has no reference to him.
17. Giovanni Gab. again is not mentioned in the Descrittione, but Cosenza gives us two possibilities, (i) Giovanni Baptista Gabia Veronensis, a sixteenth-century professor of Greek in the University of Rome. (ii) Johannes Maria de Gabianis Cremonensis, a sixteenth century canon lawyer. Neither of these feature in the Descrittione among the men of their native towns.

Sebastiano Corrado<sup>18</sup>, Bartolomeo Ferini<sup>19</sup>, Sebastiano Caferoniani<sup>20</sup> and Nicolai Acursini<sup>21</sup>. A miscellaneous selection of people ranging from the very famous Alciati and Balbi, both of whom were internationally famous scholars, down to unknowns like Caferoniani and Acursini, (or Accorsino) who must have been close friends of Alberti, but did not make a name for themselves.

After the text there is an apology from the author. Alberti addresses the 'Candidi lettori', explaining how at the beginning he promised to describe the Islands around Italy. As the printing has progressed he has become more doubtful whether this could be done, and now that it is finished the volume is already so big that, as was common practice, there will have to be another volume. 'Vero è che di mano in mano, considerando tant'accrescere il volume, qual se imprimeva; che cominciai a dubitare se devesse servare la promessa o non, e così dubioso arrivai circa il fine dell'impressione, e vidi esser venuto tanto grande; che pareva a me eccedere il comun modo di i Volumi e così deliberai di concludere detto Volume colla descrizione della trionfante Città di Vinegia...' <sup>22</sup> The Islands will appear, he promises, to delight the reader, who, he hopes, will bear with him. 'Onde vi prego,' he says, 'che vogliati ricordavi del volgato proverbio che se deve considerare il buon'animo dell'amico, quando non se vi puo haver di lui buoni fatti.'

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18. Above, note 9.

19. Bartolomeo Ferini da Ravenna, a copyist and scholar. see Cosenza, op. cit. V, 184. He appears in subsequent editions of the Descrittione, erroneously, as Fermi.

20. Caferoniani is not mentioned in the Descrittione or by Cosenza.

21. Acursini is not mentioned by Cosenza nor by the Dizionario Biografico, degli Italiani, but Alberti received a letter from him about the fishing in the River Serchio, Descrittione, 1553, f.36. - he calls him Accorsino.

22. Descrittione 1550, f.469vo.



There is an index, semi-alphabetical, covering people and places. Under each letter of the alphabet entries occur page by page as they appear in the text, so that the alphabetical organization extends only to the first letter of each word. However the regional headings are inserted as subdivisions within each alphabetical division, so that references are not so difficult to locate, provided one knows the region where a place is situated or where a person was born.

The next question which arises is, was the first edition reprinted? The preliminaries described above have, in some copies, an interesting variation. Firstly Giaccarelli's poem is replaced by Alberti's portrait, and secondly there is the addition of a verse by Giovanni Filoteo Achillino. The first change was not simply a question of substitution after printing had begun, of one form for another when the sheets were being perfected. It involved rearrangement of both inner and outer forms. Also Schillino's verse, although it could easily have been inserted during the perfecting, had it been available, always appears along with the portrait, and never with the poem to Ercole, in the copies that I have seen.

The two sets of preliminaries are as follows:

A.	*i.	Title page.	B.	*i.	Title page.
	*i.vo.	blank		*i.vo.	Giovanni Filoteo Achillino a i lettori.....
	*ii.	A i Due Christianissimi Henrico Secondo....		*ii.	A i Dve Christianissimi Henrico Secondo....
	*ii.vo.	Io. Antonius Flaminius..		*ii.vo.	Io. Antonius Flaminius...

*iii. Herculi Atestio II...	*iii. Alciati Iuriscons....
*iii.vo. Alciati Iuriscons...	*iii.vo. ...cont...
*iv. ....cont....	*iv. ....cont...
*iv.vo. ....cont....	*iv.vo. Portrait.

There is no doubt that all copies are of the same edition, therefore either the preliminaries were changed during the printing, or the work was reprinted. It is easy to make out a case for the first alternative. The preliminaries were the last thing to be printed, from the colophon we learn that the work was finished 'MDL di Mese di Genaro' and the dedication is dated 19 January 1550. It is odd that Achillino's verse does not appear in preliminaries 'A' since the author died in 1538 (f.299vo.) and the poem must have been in Alberti's hands by this date. Presumably it was deliberately omitted and folio \*i.vo. was left blank for the portrait, when it should be ready. When the portrait did arrive the printer reorganized his preliminaries completely, replacing the verse to Ercole by Achillino's praises of the Descrittione.

The second edition, completed in May 1551 must have been printed extremely quickly.<sup>23</sup> The preliminaries follow 1550 type B, but Achillino's verse is still missing from some copies. It is probable that Giaccarelli could have obtained the portrait first, then the verse, and added them to new preliminaries for copies still unsold, while Da Sabbio received the portrait in time to include it in all his copies, but not the verse.

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23. In four months, remembering that the new year began on 25 March, or else it was in press before Giaccarelli had finished his edition.

The 1553 edition is the first in which claims of editing appear. It is according to the title page 'con somma diligenza corretta e ristampata.' The preliminaries follow 1550 'A', but include Achillino's verse. There is no portrait, and Giaccarelli's tribute to Ercole d'Este is replaced by 'Giovan. Maria Bonelli al lettore.' Bonelli says the Italia, is 'per le librerie da molti pellegrini ricercata...' (aa.iii) but that it has become so full of errors and changed from that which first saw the light of day, that the author would scarcely recognize it. He has tried to restore it to its original state without altering anything from the first edition. Without undertaking a complete comparison of the first three editions it is impossible to find much evidence for Bonelli's claims. Comparison of passages selected at random suggest that the editing amounted to little more than modernization of spelling, and in this Bonelli certainly was not following the first edition. Da Sabbio's edition, presumably the one Bonelli was referring to so critically, retains the occasional Latinisms which appear in the first edition, and which Bonelli altered. The remark about the value of the book to pilgrims is hardly surprising, and is evidence, if it were needed, of at least one important market. In 1557 De Farri brought out his edition which is set page for page from Bonelli's and even reproduces Bonelli's editorial under the heading 'Lo Stampadore ai lettori.'

The 1561 edition is the first to contain the promised description of the Islands, which has its own title page and a separate dedication to the Duke of Savoy, Prince of Piedmont, by 'F. Vincenzo da Bologna, Vicario dell'inquisitione di S. Domenico'. 'Non Volendo mancare...', he writes, 'il monasterio nostro di S. Domenico di Bologna, e alla felice memoria del Reverendo Padre F. Leandro Alberti pur dell'instessa

città, illustratore famoso d'Italia...ha posto in luce l'Isole di sudetta Italia, già da esso compilate...'

Avanzi's next edition seems to have been printed twice, there are title pages bearing both dates, 1567 and 1568. Its popularity is probably explained by the fact that it was printed along with the first edition of the Islands to contain maps (dated 1567). Avanzi apparently was quite pleased with them; 'disegni collocati a i luoghi loro, con ordine bellissimo', he calls them. The seven maps are of (i) Corsica, (ii) Sardinia, (iii) Isole del mare Tirreno, (iv) Isole vicine a Napoli, (v) Sicilia, (vi) Isole del mare Adriatico, (vii) Venetia. A new dedication to the Italia appears 'allo illustriss. Signore, il sig. Alberico Cibo Malaspina Marchese di Massa & di Carrara...etc.', from Antonio Cheluzio da Colle, replacing the one to Henry and Catherine. The other laudatory verses are retained. Apart from the customary deference to, and flattery of his patron, Da Colle points out at length the virtues of the Descrittione and its author. However the work could benefit from some tidying up of inaccuracies and certain inelegances of expression, and Avanzi asked him to undertake this he says. In this edition the index is fully alphabetical.

The map plates, like that of the portrait, must have been mislaid. The portrait never reappears after the 1551 edition, and the maps not again until 1588. In Leni's edition some copies of the Islands are dated 1576, but by their content they must be 1577. On the title page to both parts we find that it has been edited, 'Aggiuntori di nova a suoi luoghi tutti quello ch'e successo sino anno 1577 e tutto recoretto'. Leni prints a letter of his dated 5 July 1577 to 'Conte Fabio Landriano della Rovere', and the other preliminaries consist of the verses by

Achillino, Alciati, Ferretto and Giraldi; plus a sonnet, 'Della Sig. Modesta Zoppo in Lode Italia'.

A further attempt to bring the subject matter up to date as far as the historical events were concerned was made by Borgaruccio Borgarucci in Giovanni Battista Porta's edition of 1581. This contains additions to both parts printed in the margin, describing events up to the year of publication. The preliminaries again omit the original dedication and Flaminio's letter and contain an editorial from Borgarucci. He claims not only to have corrected many errors and restored the text to its pristine state but also to have checked some of Alberti's references. This editor more than any other is critical of 'infiniti errori, che per ogni lato erano sparsi', and seems proud of his own additions, though the examples of these which he cites all concern his native Venice.

In 1588 Altobello Salicato a disciple of Avanzi, had, as he tells us, rediscovered the plates of the maps.<sup>24</sup> He complains that the text has been, since the author's death, 'depravata, e maltratta..' and he has remedied this. All the original preliminaries are included together with Modesta Zoppo's sonnet, and another anonymous one 'All'Autore'. Also a description of his native town, Tocco, is added by M. Zerbino Ricci.

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24. '...Vedendo io...essere stata più volte stampata la Descrizione d'Italia di F. Leandro Alberti...; e esservi state lasciate fuori le figure delle Isole, già altre volte con lei stampate, mi è parso di andare investigando di esse figure, e havendole trovate, stampate dalla felice memoria dell'honorate M. Lodovico Avanzi mio Antecessore.'

The last known Italian edition is by Paulo Ugolino in 1596.<sup>25</sup>

The title page yet again claims that it is 'nuovamente ristampata e consumma diligenza rivista e corretta.' The preliminaries are simply the original ones plus the two sonnets from the 1588 edition, and Ricci's description of Tocco is included after the text. On the title page to the Islands the editor claims to have made some additions of information up to his own times, but Avanzi's and Porta's additions are not included.

The Descrittione made its greatest impact in Italy, as is evident from the regular reprints. For the wider market a Latin translation was prepared by the German, Kyriander Hoeningenius. This appeared in print in 1566. Hoeningenius refers to only three Italian editions the first Bologna edition and two subsequent Venetian ones. The third printing, he says, after the death of the author, was slightly augmented, and this is the edition he is using. He describes the first edition as being 'typis maioribus', and the second as appearing in the following year so that the edition which he was translating was presumably Bonelli's of 1553, or De Farri's of 1557. The translation therefore was begun in the 1550's, and certainly before 1561 when Avanzi produced

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25. Fantuzzi in his Notizie degli scrittori Bolognese, I, 149 lists an edition by Avanzi of 1631. This would seem to be an error probably copied from some catalogue. MDCXXXI could be a mistake for MDLXXXI, except that the 1581 edition was by Porta. 1631 is an almost impossible date for an edition by Avanzi, since Pastorello gives him as being active in Venice intermittently between 1556 and 1576, in which case it is hardly likely that he was alive, let alone still printing in 1631. E. Pastorello, Tipografi, Editori, Librai a Venezia, nel secolo XVI, (Florence, 1924.) Redigonda in D.B.I. I, 701 says that there were ten editions between 1551 and 1631, but he presumably was using Fantuzzi. Nicéron makes no mention of a 1631 edition, neither does Graesse, Tresor de Livres Rares, (Dresden, 1859-69) I, 52.) but both also omit editions known to exist, Nicéron those of 1553, 1561, 1576/77, and Graesse those of 1551, 1561 and the Islands of 1561 and 1581.

the first edition to contain the Islands. Even if Hoeningenius overlooked De Farri's edition, Avanzi's would surely have called for some comment, even if he did not wish to undertake any further translation. He does not mention it, and neither the text nor maps of the Islands appear in the Latin edition. The work clearly impressed him greatly, for he devotes an exceptionally lengthy preface, of nine folios, to praising Alberti and his skill in assembling such a welter of valuable material from so many diverse sources.

The printer in 1566 was Nicolaus Graphaeus of Cologne, who printed it under privileges obtained from Maximilian II to whom it was dedicated, Philip II of Spain and the King of France. A second printing by Theodore Baumius, dated 1567, has always been described as another edition, but this is not, in fact, the case. There is only one edition, with variations to the title page and its reverse.<sup>26</sup> Like the first edition it is a very fine folio, well printed, but hardly in the best guide-book format. Its place was clearly on the library shelves and not in the traveller's pack.

The editions of the Descriptione were numerous and some were the work of leading printers. It has been pointed out how anxious Alberti was to get his work printed in Venice, where it would reach the widest market and get the most publicity. The Da Sabbio family, according to Pastorello, was among the six most prolific Venetian printers of the time, producing 223 editions, and De Farri also ranked among the top dozen as far as output was concerned.<sup>27</sup> Bonelli and Salicato also probably had a fairly good reputation. Outside Italy, despite the confidence of Hoeningenius, there was only the one edition (although it was reprinted) and we can assume that the work attracted less attention.

26. The details of the right of privilege in France are written out more fully and in French in the 1567 printing, otherwise the preliminaries are unchanged.

27. All the Venetian printers are mentioned by Pastorello, op. cit. Bonelli, p.13-14; De Farri, p.34; Avanzi, p.4-5; Leni, p.50; Porta, p.69; Salicato, p.77; Ugolino, p.90, and Da Sabbio, pp.58-60.

Appendix II. Alberti's works.

1. De Viris Illustribus Ordinis Praedicatorum Libri sex in unum congesti.

(In aedibus H. Platonis Bologna, 1517) folio.

For discussion of this see above, Chapter I, pp.22-24. According to

A. Serra-Zanetti there was an earlier edition of this printed in 1508

in Bologna by Hieronymus de Benedictis. No other editions have

appeared but it has been used as an important source by later

annalists like Quetif-Echard and Touron, and some individual lives

have been reprinted in hagiographical works. According to T. Bonnet

Alberti prepared an enlarged edition, (cf. Fasciolo B<sup>6</sup> p.125 MS in

l'Inst. Stor. domenicano di S. Sabina Rome.)

2. Vita della B. Colomba da Rieto, (Benedetti, Bologna 1521 and 1541).

(This is only an Italian translation of the Latin life or 'legend' by

P. Sebastiano (Bontempi) of Perugia.)

3. De divi Dominici Calaguritani obitu et sepultura, (Bonardus,

Bologna, 1535).

4. Historia della Madonna si S. Luca, (Bonardo e Carpi, Bologna, 1539.)

Reprinted with additions as Cronichetta della gloriosa Madonna di S. Luca,

(Venice, 1577), and with further additions, Venice, 1579, and Bologna,

1598.

5. Historie di Bologna. see Chapter I, p.41 for details of editions.

6. Descrittione di Tutta Italia. see above Appendix I.



- 6a. (i) Urbis Venetiae Descriptio.  
 (ii) De incrementis domini Veneti et ducibus eiusdem.  
 (iii) De claris viris Reipublicae Venetae.

Printed in De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum libriquinque,  
 of G. Contarini, (Leiden, 1626 and 1628).

(i) and (iii) are direct translations of the relevant sections of the Descrittione. (ii) is taken from the Descrittione, but with more editing.

7. A defence of the Madonna di Loretto in P.P. Vergerio, Della Camera e Statua della Madonna...di Loretto, la quale è stata...difesa da ..  
L. Alberti, etc. (1554).

Works now lost.

1. Ephemerides ab adventu Ludovici XII Galliae regis in Italiam.  
 (up to 1552).

For discussion of this see above Chapter I, p. 14.

2. Description of Rome referred to Descrittione, f.106vo.

There is no mention of this work by any of Alberti's biographers.

Edited by Alberti

1. Praeclara operetta dello ornato delle donne, etc. by Vincentio da Bologna O.P. (1530?) See above Chapter I, p. 49.
2. Joachinis abbatis Vaticinia circa Apostolicos Viros, edited with a life of Joachim by Alberti, (Bologna, 1515). Reprinted Venice 1527, and also in Italian translation, Venice 1527. See above Chapter I, p. 26, note 96. . This was a pseudo-Joachimist work. See M. Reeves, The Influence of Prophecy in the later Middle Ages, (Oxford, 1969), p. 453.

3. Libro detto Strega, o delle Illusioni del Demonio del Signore Giovan-francesco Pico della Mirandola, Dialogo Volgarizzato dal... P(adre) F(rate) L(eandro) delli Alberti. (1524). See above Chapter I, p. 48.

Attributed Works

1. Tavola delle principali Famiglie Bolognese, (Vicenza, 1592)  
a cura di L. Caccianemici. Incorrectly described by Fantuzzi as a 'Cronica', it is a list of families. Possibly Fantuzzi saw it bound together with the following work, which could account for his description.
2. Delle più notabile cose raccolte in tutti i libri cronicali di Bologna di F.L. Alberti. (Vicenza, 1592). This is attributed to Alberti by Orlandi, Notizie degli scrittori Bolognesi, (Bologna, 1714) 189-90, but I have been unable to trace a copy.

Other works, now missing, mentioned by Echard as being attributed to Alberti

1. Vita Johannis Bentivoli secundi (According to Ghillini's Theatro).
2. Delle donne che sono state illustri nella Domenicana religione. (According to Ghillini).
3. Historiae Italicae Linguae. Venetian manuscript in library of SS. Giovanni e Paolo.

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spectat. M. Antonii Sabellici Forii Iulii sen Patriae descriptio...  
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