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# THE GLOBAL EYE

DUTCH, SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE MAPS  
IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE GRAND DUKE COSIMO III DE' MEDICI

*with contributions by*

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# INTRODUCTION

## SHARED LEGACIES

During a visit to the Netherlands (between 1667 and 1668), Prince Cosimo III de' Medici purchased sixty-five hand-painted geographical maps and city views from Johannes Vingboons (1616–70), a cartographer and copyist for the Dutch India Companies, through the book dealer and fine arts connoisseur Pieter Blaeu (1636–1706) who acted as a go-between. To quote the travel journal written by Marquess Filippo Corsini, “they showed the plans of various ports, cities, fortresses and coasts of both the East and West Indies”, from the coasts of the American continent to the west and east coasts of Africa, the Indian Ocean, the seas of South East Asia, the Philippines, Japan and ‘New Spain’, on the other side of the Pacific. Two years later, during a second and longer European journey that took him to Portugal, Spain, England, Ireland, France and back to the Netherlands again, having arrived in Lisbon in February 1669, Cosimo acted through the Portuguese mathematician and cosmographer Luís Serrão Pimentel (1613–79) to purchase copies of nautical charts featuring large-scale illustrations of the coasts of Africa, Persia and the Indian subcontinent, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Strait of Malacca.

The connected global world of the mid-17th century is taking shape through the lenses of Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish cartography and landscapes. After being taken back to Florence, all documented traces of them were lost for over a century. Nevertheless, during the Lorraine era, the inventories of the Villa di Castello show that the maps were to be found in the library of Grand Duke Peter Leopold from at least 1785. They were framed and displayed on the walls in the Villa Medicea di Castello, one of the Medici family's oldest suburban residences, where they remained until around 1920. When the Savoy family left the home, the maps were taken to the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana and have since then been identified as the *Carte di Castello*.

The Medici and Lorraine Carte di Castello collection, now at the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, clearly reveals the remarkable circulation of men and knowledge between the Netherlands, Portugal and Tuscany during the early modern era. This is an important cultural legacy that has not yet been adequately explored. When looking through the maps, formerly all displayed on the walls of the Villa di Castello, the whole world unfolds before us as it was perceived in the Netherlands, Portugal and Tuscany in around the mid-17th century. The collection presented here also provides an understanding of an ‘exceptional’ circumstance in Cosimo III’s biography. Cosimo’s travel journals, the Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian visual sources and the material objects conserved in the Florentine collections, project the story of the future grand duke’s early formative years onto the stage of European and global history. By placing itself in the perspective of a historiographical reassessment of Cosimo III’s reign, inaugurated thirty years ago by Franco Angiolini, Vieri Becagli and Marcello Verga (see *La Toscana 1993*), this research can balance out the historiographical focus that concentrates primarily on the ‘Tuscan’ Cosimo III. It enables us to understand and contextualize some of his initiatives designed to promote a more ambitious and international cultural and financial approach.

#### **EXHIBITION PROJECT**

In order to study and promote this shared Dutch, Portuguese and Florentine cultural heritage, which can only be understood, reevaluated and appreciated by adopting a multicultural and multimedia approach, we created a consortium that brought together the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, the NIKI-Nederlands Interuniversitair Kunsthistorisch Instituut, the University of Groningen, the CHAM-Centro de Humanidades della Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (NOVA\FCSH), the Accademia della Crusca, the Centro Interuniversitario di Studi di Storia Globale GLOBHIS (Università di Firenze, Trieste, Piemonte Orientale e Toscana), the Polo Museale della Toscana and the Archivio di Stato di Firenze. The synergies and complementary knowledge and expertise offered by these cultural institutions in Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal made it possible to organize the exhibition, the catalogue, the digital repository and the international conference. Starting with the study and reevaluation of the Carte di Castello, these integrated initiatives are exploring and researching the complex dynamics of the connected world of the mid-17th century, with particular emphasis on the history of cultural, financial and political relations between Tuscany, the Netherlands and Portugal.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

The catalogue for “The Global Eye” exhibition sets out to present, describe and reproduce the Carte di Castello collection in full colour and in its entirety for the first time, accompanying the reproductions with a description and analysis of the visual and textual material, together with an Italian and English translation of the Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese titles and detailed references to the contents of the keys.

The description and localization of the individual places and regions represented in the Carte di Castello are accompanied by detailed reflections on the significance of the places shown and their role within global economic networks and in world history during the premodern era. An essential part of this analysis involves critical reflection on the forms of representation and the global views that take to Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish cities and territories pervaded by violence and shaped on the basis of European commercial interests.

The contextualization process used to describe the individual maps is completed by a series of essays and entries that introduce Cosimo III and his interest in cosmography, along with his collection of cartographic material. It describes the sources for his collection and the fundamental stopping places on his journey to the Netherlands, reconstructing the presence of the maps acquired in the Netherlands and Portugal in the Villa Medicea di Castello. The link between Cosimo III and the Accademia della Crusca, now housed in the Villa di Castello, is also explored. This link did not come about purely by chance, but has proved to be very interesting, shedding light on the activities and cultural interests of the grand duke, who endorsed the publication of the third edition of the *Vocabolario*, dedicated to him, in 1691.

The catalogue features high-resolution printed reproductions of the entire Carte di Castello corpus. The digital images have been georeferenced and are available via a portal we have developed in partnership with the Department of Digital Humanities at the University of Groningen – <[www.theglobaleye.edu](http://www.theglobaleye.edu)> –, financed by the university and also accessible through the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana institutional website. The site will make it possible to incorporate the entire Castello corpus within the broader digital repertoire of the *Atlas of Mutual Heritage* – <<http://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/en/>>. The *Atlas of Mutual Heritage* is the result of the partnership between the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed in Amersfoort, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague and the Nationaal Archief in The Hague. It proved to be an invaluable resource for our research, making it possible to geolocalize, view, contextualize and compare the maps by Vingboons in the National Archive in The Hague (and in some cases in Vienna, in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek),

within the extremely broad context of the visual documentation produced in the Netherlands from the mid-16th century onwards.

The volume comprises three complementary sections. The first is made up of four essays. The first of these, by Sabrina Corbellini, contextualizes the acquisition of the maps of Dutch provenance during Prince Cosimo III's first journey to the Netherlands. The second, by Angelo Cattaneo, analyses the cultural significance of the *Carte di Castello*, following two main lines of interpretation: geography and global history during the early modern era. A third essay, by Ilaria Giannotti, explores the exhibition history of the maps in the Villa di Castello from 1785 onwards. Lastly, Anna Rita Fantoni focuses on the arrival of the maps in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in 1921, through to their restoration around 1970. The second part of the book, by Angelo Cattaneo and Sabrina Corbellini, is a *catalogue raisonné* of the *Carte di Castello* in which each of the eighty-two maps is described and analysed. Lastly, the third part of the volume features nine contributions that add to the documentary context of this study and include: three portraits of Cosimo III at different times in his life (Sandro Bellesi), two commemorative medals of Cosimo III (Alberto Bruschi), an early 17th-century lunette by the Flemish painter Justus van Utens (?–1609) with the depiction of the Villa di Castello and its famous gardens (Marco Mozzo), the journals of Cosimo III's two European journeys in the version attributed to Filippo Corsini, now at the Archivio di Stato in Florence (Fabio D'Angelo), the travel journals in the so-called 'official report' (Eugenio Antonucci) and the one in verse by Giovanni Andrea Moniglia (Silvia Scipioni), both at the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, and, lastly, the third edition of the *Vocabolario della Crusca*, dedicated to Cosimo III (Giovanna Frosini).

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Florence and Groningen, October 2019  
Angelo Cattaneo and Sabrina Corbellini

## ABBREVIATIONS

ASCF = Florence, Archivio Storico del Comune di Firenze

ASFi = Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze

ASG = Florence, Archivio Soprintendenza Gallerie di Firenze

BNCF = Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze

*Atlas of Mutual Heritage* = <<http://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/en/>>

*Gallica* = <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/accueil/fr/content/accueil-fr?mode=desktop>>

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