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Riccoldo of Monte Croce's Textual and Social Environments.¹

In her seminal 2014 study on the life, works, and social environments of the Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1437/8-1502), Kathryn Beebe stated:

‘to take descriptions and attitudes from pilgrimage narratives without understanding the social and spiritual *milieux* that shaped those attitudes and descriptions is as foolhardy as setting off across the desert to Sinai without a proper guide. One could easily become lost in the sandstorm of one’s own contemporary ideas and prejudices and completely miss the nuances of the historical reality’.²

In the remainder of her study, Beebe went on to show the great benefits derived from approaching pilgrimage texts and pilgrim authors with social contexts in mind. Unfortunately, since the publication of Beebe’s work, there have been few similar attempts to take a single pilgrim and to more thoroughly interpret the meanings and importance of their texts within the context of their social environments. While such a task is admittedly often difficult given the paucity of biographical information available for most medieval pilgrims, this article will nevertheless attempt to begin the process of engaging in a similar exercise for another Dominican friar and pilgrim: Riccoldo of Monte Croce (ca.1243-1320). Riccoldo is amongst the more famous pilgrims from the period of the Holy Land crusades (1095-1291) and journeyed to the Holy Land between 1288 and ca.1300. His travels included a pilgrimage to the sacred spaces of the Holy Land, as well as extensive missionary travels to the East, during which time Riccoldo spent anywhere up to ten years preaching and living in Mosul, Tabriz, and Baghdad. While much scholarship has focused on his time in the East and the corpus of texts that these travels inspired, Riccoldo was also an active member of a north Italian world of Dominican education from the time he joined the order in 1267 until his death in 1320. He was appointed as lector at his home priory of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, in 1288, having already served as lector in the Dominican priory of Pisa for fifteen years from 1272 to 1287.³ He continued to serve Santa Maria Novella in similar capacities after his return from the East, serving as lector, *predicator generalis* from 1315, and even prior for a short period from 1316.⁴ His literary corpus should therefore be equally seen as a product of this north Italian world as it was of the Middle Eastern one with which his literary corpus is usually associated.

In the space allotted to us, the process of reconstructing the complete range of social environments within which Riccoldo operated is impossible. While reading Riccoldo’s writings against the grain may in future prove fruitful for what they can tell us about the intellectual and scribal cultures of Santa Maria Novella, that is not our concern here. Rather, our focus will be on

¹ My sincere thanks to Jan Vandeburie and especially to Martin Bauer for their help in talking through some of the complexities of the subjects presented here. My thanks also to Anthony Bale, Kathryn Beebe, and the JMMS’s anonymous reviewers for providing the forums and academic support, and to the Leverhulme Trust for providing the financial support which made this research possible.

² K. Beebe, *Pilgrim and Preacher: The Audiences and Observant Spirituality of Friar Felix Fabri (1437/8-1502)*, (Oxford, 2014), 20-21.

³ For an outline of Riccoldo’s life see R. George-Tvrtković, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq: Riccoldo da Monte Croce’s Encounter with Islam*, (Turnhout, 2012); E. Panella OP, ‘Ricerche su Riccoldo da Monte Croce’, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 58 (1988), 5-85.

⁴ M. Bauer, [ed.] *Ricoldus de Monte Crucis: Epistole ad Ecclesiam Triumphantem. Einleitung, Text und Kommentar* (Stuttgart, 2020), 10.

the literary and textual communities of the priory of Santa Maria Novella, the ways in which these may have influenced his writings, and how these can assist us in better understanding Riccoldo's identity as a writer. Essentially, it is the purpose of this article to show how and why the Riccoldo's Florentine environment matters for understanding Riccoldo's literary corpus. Santa Maria Novella possessed a vibrant and active literary community, which had an extensive library, and served as the home of important writers and preachers such as Remigio di Girolami (1235-1319) and Jordan of Pisa (ca.1255-1311). As well as trying to link Riccoldo's writings into the other literary products of Santa Maria Novella, this paper will focus on the contents of the library of the priory in an attempt to discern what books Riccoldo may or may not have had at his direct disposal when he composed the vast majority of his literary corpus around the year 1300. It will show that while traditional Riccoldian scholarship has tended to emphasise Riccoldo's alignment with broader literary traditions, importantly anti-Islamic polemical traditions and pilgrimage writing, Riccoldo's writings, as a whole, have more integrity as a corpus when considered as a product of and for the Dominican priory of Santa Maria Novella and its community, and when Riccoldo's role as an educator within this community is placed at the forefront of considerations about this identity. All in all, it will advocate the importance of putting, as Beebe has stated, the spiritual, social, and I would add literary, milieu within which pilgrim-authors operated at the forefront of our attempts to understand the range of texts which our pilgrim-authors produced.

Riccoldo and his Literary Corpus.

The first step in this process is to outline what constituted Riccoldo's literary corpus. Comprising a series of five extant works, as well as evidence of a pair of now lost sermons, these works are as follows:

1. Scripta super secundum librum Peryhermenias Aristotilis

Written, it is assumed, before Riccoldo's eastward travels and possibly while he was resident in Pisa, this text is a commentary on the second half Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* which Riccoldo would have accessed through Boethius' twelfth-century Latin translation.⁵ Surviving in just a single manuscript, it is important in that it informs us that Riccoldo's academic interests extended well beyond the subjects which his "eastern" works cover. While these eastern works dominate Riccoldo's corpus, we must always remember that Riccoldo was a Dominican of his time and well trained in the traditional academic disciplines of his day. We are not certain what Riccoldo's education involved, but the consensus is that it was received before he joined the Dominican order in 1267. Indeed, he tells us himself in the *Liber Peregrinationis* that he felt it was necessary to experience some of the 'hardships' [labore] of pilgrimage given the:

'long and laborious pilgrimages [he] had undertaken while still living in the world, in order to learn those worldly sciences that people call liberal.'

[quas longas et laboriosas peregrinationes adsumperam adhuc secularis existens, ut addiscerem illas seculares scientias quas liberales appellant].⁶

⁵ Bauer, *Ricoldus*, 10-11.

⁶ Latin from R. Kappler, [ed. & trs.], *Pérégrination en Terre Sainte et au Proche Orient, Texte Latin et Traduction et Lettres sur la Chute de Saint-Jean d'Acre, Traduction*, (Paris, 1997), 36-38. Henceforth, *LP*. English translation from D. Pringle, [trs.] *Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, 1187-1292*, Crusader Texts in Translation 23 (Farnham, 2012), 361-362.

The specification that his training came in the liberal arts shows that Riccoldo would have been well versed not just in theological matters, but also potentially in the social and natural sciences. The fact that Riccoldo produced a commentary of a work by Aristotle is further testament to his academic training and could also indicate an interest on Riccoldo's part in producing teaching materials for his Pisan students.

2. *Epistole ad Ecclesiam triumphantem*

Usually considered to be the earliest of Riccoldo's works based on his experiences in the East, the *Epistole* survives in just a single manuscript, in a very poor state of repair, now housed in the Vatican Library.⁷ The *Epistole* is framed as a series of four letters written to God and the heavenly court, with an accompanying divine response, produced as a result of Riccoldo's shock following news of the fall of Acre in 1291. The letter bemoans the fact that God had seemingly forsaken the Christians in favour of Islam and seeks for an answer to apparent problems which the Mamluk victory in the East caused for Riccoldo's view of salvation history. Famous for its dramatic emotional content and for the apparently ambivalent views on Islam which it expresses, it is commonly thought to have been written in the East given that each of the letters ends with the phrases 'given in the East' [data in oriente] with the final divine response concluding with the phrase 'written in the East' [scripta in oriente].⁸ It is also sometimes interpreted as the product of a moment of genuine doubt experienced by Riccoldo in the face of extreme hardship in Baghdad. Certainly, news of the fall of Acre, and the steady stream of bloodied artefacts and slaves coming out of its sack, had a dramatic impact on Riccoldo's mood. He says:

'Yet I march along in sadness because I remain among the sorrowful and wretched. And when I wish to think something about eternal joy, I am immediately immersed again in my usual sadness, and suddenly my heart and words change, and I am tormented by suffering.'

[Ego tamen tristis et merens incedo, quia inter tristes et miseros remansi miser. Et dum de eterno gaudio volo aliquid cogitare, statim resorbeor tristitia solita et subito commuto cor et verba et dolore torqueor...]⁹

Nevertheless, interpreting the meaning and intention of the *Epistole* has not always been simple. Essentially, the question which remains: are these "letters" the product of a tolerant traveller filled with doubt about the validity of his own religious beliefs in the face of trials and tribulations in a foreign land,¹⁰ or evidence of his developing anti-Islamic thought processes

⁷ The *Epistole* has recently been re-edited with a German translation and can be found in: Riccoldo of Monte Croce, 'Epistole ad Ecclesiam Triumphantem', Bauer, [ed.] *Ricoldus de Monte Crucis: Epistole ad Ecclesiam Triumphantem. Einleitung, Text und Kommentar* (Stuttgart, 2020) 106-152. This will be referred to henceforth as the *Ep*. An English translation of the *Epistole* can be found in George-Tvrtković, *Christian Pilgrim*, 137-173.

⁸ *Ep.*, 116, 123, 140, 148, 152.

⁹ *Ep.*, 144, George-Tvrtković, *Christian Pilgrim*, 167. Riccoldo's expressions of grief in the *Epistolae* have recently been examined by Tamar M. Boyadjan, *The City Lament: Jerusalem across the Medieval Mediterranean*, (Ithaca, NY, 2018).

¹⁰ George-Tvrtković, *Christian Pilgrim*, 105-133; Lette, R., 'The Influence of Inter-Cultural Engagement on Perceptions of Mendicant Friars in the Thirteenth Century Concerning Islam and Muslims', *Medieval*

which culminate and are ultimately resolved in the *Contra Legem Sarracenorum*,¹¹ or an incredibly complex, didactic, narrative construct, as some philologists have argued, aimed at his local Florentine Dominican audience.¹² And if the latter, what was the intention of this work? Doubtless, the true meaning and intentions of the *Epistole* will continue to mystify historians and philologist alike for years to come. In terms of sources, the bible and liturgical texts serve as key points of reference throughout. However, Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, a copy of which Riccoldo apparently bought in the East, plays a key part in the text's resolution. Furthermore, Martin Bauer has convincingly shown that rather than taking other forms of epistolography as its model, the *Epistole* instead closely follows Augustine's *Confessions* in its structure and the way in which it addresses and engages with the divine.¹³

3. *Liber Peregrinationis*

The common assumption is that Riccoldo started writing the Book of Pilgrimage shortly after the *Epistole*, completing its composition around 1300 after his return to Florence. The text is broken down into two parts: the first dealing with Riccoldo's experiences in the Holy Land and Jerusalem, the second detailing his travels Eastward interspersed with anecdotes about his missionary experiences and ethnographic information. The latter also pays particular attention to Islamic beliefs and customs. The text survives in seven manuscripts, the most important of which is a fourteenth-century text, now housed in Berlin. It was copied by an individual known in Riccoldian scholarship as copyist A and afterwards reviewed by Riccoldo himself, who added marginal annotations to correct the text.¹⁴ In terms of sources for the *Liber Peregrinationis*, while there are few explicit mentions there is implicit use of several standard texts, such as Augustine, Jerome, and Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*. In addition, some of the same polemical texts which would go on to inform his *Contra Legem Sarracenorum*, namely Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the anonymous *Contrarietas Alpholica* or *Liber Denudationis*, were also key.¹⁵

On face value the text appears as a simple travelogue or pilgrimage account. In terms of his presented itinerary, Riccoldo left for the Holy Land in late 1288 with the encouragement of his Master, Munio of Zamora (1285-1291) and with the permission of Pope Nicholas IV (1288-1292).¹⁶ He was at the Jordan in January 1289, and while in the Holy Land visited many of its most important sites including the Holy Sepulchre and Bethlehem. Having visited these holy places, his pilgrimage turned Eastward towards Tabriz (where he spent 6 months), Mosul, and eventually Baghdad where he was resident by 1291 and where news reached him of the fall of

Encounters, 23.6 (2017) 479-507; I. Shagrir, 'The Fall of Acre as a Spiritual Crisis: The Letters of Riccoldo of Monte Croce', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 90.4 (2012), 1107-1120.

¹¹ J.V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York, 2002) pp.245-54.

¹² Bauer, *Ricoldus*, 14-17, 28-61; D. Weltecke, 'Die Macht des Islams und die Niederlage der Kreuzfahrer: Zum Verständnis der Briefe an die himmlische Kurie des Riccoldo da Monte di Croce OP', *Saeculum*, 58 (2007) 265-295.

¹³ Bauer, *Ricoldus*, 35-51.

¹⁴ *Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Lat. 4° 466*. Kappler, *Pérégrination*, 22-23. In addition to the English translation of the Holy Land sections of this text found in Pringle, *Pilgrimage* and critical edition with French translation found in Kappler, *Pérégrination*, 32-205, an English translation of the entire LP can be found in George-Tvrtković, *Christian Pilgrim*, 175-227.

¹⁵ Kappler, *Pérégrination*, 9-31.

¹⁶ Panella, 'Ricerche', 7-8.

Acre to the Mamluks in May of that year. In terms of his overall time spent in the East, we know that Riccoldo had returned to Florence by 21 March 1301, according to the record of a Florentine act of peace, which Riccoldo witnessed. Consequently, it is often assumed that he spent ten years in Baghdad.¹⁷ There is, however, nothing to suggest that Riccoldo could not have returned earlier than 1301, though evidence from the *Liber Peregrinationis* and the *Epistole* would suggest that he remained in the East until at least 1295. The *Epistole* indicates that he experienced a period of persecution which forced him to flee into the desert spending time as a camel driver and some have determined that this must be synonymous with the persecution of Christians in this region following Ghazan's political conversion of the Ilkhanate to Islam in 1295.¹⁸ The presentation of his time as a camel driver found in the *Epistole* is however at odds with a similar description, given in the *Liber Peregrinationis*, of spending three months with camel drivers and some have questioned the accuracy of the emotive descriptions of persecution found in the *Epistole*. Instead, it has been argued that the emphasis on persecution and the camel driver motif may be part of a larger narrative strategy used by Riccoldo in his *Epistole* to achieve certain ends.¹⁹ If there is any indication that Riccoldo was still in Baghdad as late as 1295, it probably appears in his complaint that the Mongols were converting to Islam (as well as many local Christians) rather than Christianity which seems to be an explicit reference to the conversion of 1295.²⁰ In sum, this means that his travels to the East, as described in the *Liber Peregrinationis*, began in 1289 and ended sometime between 1295 and 1301. Any date within this range would appease the note found in Santa Maria Novella's necrology stating that Riccoldo spent 'a long time' [plurimo tempore] in the East.²¹

The narrative structure of the *Liber Peregrinationis* is also important to stress at this stage. The first half of the *Liber Peregrinationis* represents the experiences of an individual pilgrim carefully curated by Riccoldo. While these experiences are certainly based on Riccoldo's, the way they are presented in the text is carefully stage managed to communicate a certain image and message. Riccoldo's text is after all subdivided into two clear phases of travel. The first, his "pilgrimage", is modelled closely after a biblical narrative, with Riccoldo visiting (or presenting) the sacred sites of the Holy Land in much the same order as they appear in the gospels. That Riccoldo was actively trying to recreate the gospel narrative through his text is further attested by some of the acts he apparently performed whilst there, including the commandeering of a local Christian's baby to play the part of the infant Jesus while he was worshipping in Bethlehem.²² Thereafter, the "missionary" elements of his journey are very much styled after the apostolic mandate given to Christ's disciples to 'go ye therefore, and teach all nations' as found in the gospel of Matthew.²³ As Bauer has suggested, Riccoldo is clearly attempting to present an image of himself and his travels in the similitude of the biblical disciples of Christ, who having

¹⁷ Panella, 'Ricerche', 11.

¹⁸ J-M. Merigoux, OP [ed.] 'L'ouvrage d'un Frere Precheur Florentin en Orient a la Fin du XIIIe Siecle: La "Contra Legem Saracenorum" de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce', *Fede e Controversia nel '300 n '500*, Memorie Domenicane, NS. 17 (Pistoia, 1986), 26-7.

¹⁹ Bauer, *Ricoldus*, 51-54; Weltecke 'Zum Verständnis der Briefe', 279-86. The descriptions in question are found in *Ep.*, 112 & 136 and *LP*, 160.

²⁰ *Ep.*, 136.

²¹ Merigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 14.

²² *LP*, 60.

²³ Matthew 28:19.

seen the life of Christ proceed to travel to far off lands in order to spread Christ's message.²⁴ Understanding this aim and the narrative construct of his text is important for situating it within the broader context of pilgrimage literature and Riccoldo's own literary corpus.

4. *Contra Legem Sarracenorum*

By far Riccoldo's most widely distributed work, surviving in 28 Latin manuscripts, and therefore considered his most popular, the *Contra Legem Sarracenorum* serves as a systematic attempt to refute various doctrines of Islam, to dispute the Qur'an as an authentic piece of divine revelation, and by extension Muhammad's claims to prophethood.²⁵ It draws on his polemical forebears, including Mark of Toledo's Latin translation of the Qur'an, the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Peter the Venerable's polemical texts, Raymond Marti's *Capistrum Iudaeorum*, and especially the anonymous *Liber Denudationis*.²⁶ Nevertheless, it is a work of important originality drawing both on these polemical traditions, Riccoldo's own experiences in the East, and his categorisation of Muslim virtues and vices as articulated in part already in his *Liber Peregrinationis*.²⁷ Its popularity was unrivalled, even resulting in a Greek translation by Byzantine theologian Demetrios Kydones in the 1360s, and extended into the Early Modern period, with Martin Luther translating it into German in 1542.²⁸ Moreover, its prominence has meant that a subset of Riccoldian scholarship has often framed Riccoldo's identity chiefly along the lines of him as a polemicist.²⁹ Such an identification has sometimes been challenged by scholars whose interest in Riccoldo focuses primarily on the *Liber Peregrinationis* and the *Epistole* who would rather see Riccoldo's stance on Islam as ambivalent if not tolerant.³⁰ This has subsequently led to a view of Riccoldo's corpus as an evolving body beginning with the doubt of the *Epistole* and quasi-tolerance of the *Liber Peregrinationis* (products of his time in the East) and ending with the polemic of the *Contra Legem Sarracenorum* and the derivative *Ad Nationes Orientales* (products of Riccoldo's return to the West). Given what we know about the process of composition involved in some of these texts, this chronology would appear to be a simplification of the complicated composition and revision processes which these texts underwent.

5. *Libellus ad Nationes Orientales*

Surviving in three manuscripts, the *Libellus* is styled as a handbook for prospective missionaries to the East giving details, largely derived from Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*, about various Christian and Jewish communities in the East, as well as the Mongols. Alongside this information, five pieces of advice are added for future missionaries derived from Riccoldo's

²⁴ Bauer, *Ricoldus*, 16-25.

²⁵ A Latin edition can be found in Merigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 60-142. Henceforth, *CLS*.

²⁶ Merigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 27-33.

²⁷ *LP*, 154-200.

²⁸ Merigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 1-58.

²⁹ T. Burman, 'Polemic, Philology, and Ambivalence: Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 15.2 (2004) 181-209; N. Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image*, (Edinburgh, 1966); S. Mossman, 'The Western Understanding of Islamic Theology in the Later Middle Ages: Mendicant Responses to Islam from Riccoldo da Monte di Croce to Marquard von Lindau', *Recherches de theologie et philosophie medievales*, 74.1 (2007), 169-224; Tolan, *Saracens*, 245-54.

³⁰ For the latest articulation see Lette, 'The Influence of Inter-Cultural Engagement' 479-507, whose image of Riccoldo is based almost entirely on his *LP* and the *Ep*.

personal experiences.³¹ As well as Aquinas, we see many of the other authors which previously served Riccoldo being used again: Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great (and his *Moralia in Iob*), Raymond Marti, and Peter Comestor.³² A copy of the *Libellus* survives alongside the copy of the *Contra Legem* preserved in a Florentine manuscript which bears similar interlinear and marginal notation in Riccoldo's hand to the Berlin Manuscript of the *Liber Peregrinationis*, demonstrating Riccoldo's direct involvement in its composition.³³ It is important to note at this stage that the hand which copied the *Libellus* in this manuscript, and the hand which added finishing touches to this version of the *Contra Legem*, is the hand of the same copyist involved in the composition of the Berlin Manuscript of the *Liber Peregrinationis*.³⁴ This means that copyist A was involved in producing what should be considered autograph versions of Riccoldo's three most important texts. Nevertheless, the low number of manuscripts suggests that the *Libellus* was aimed primarily at the Riccoldo's own Florentine Dominican brothers where there was a strong tradition of sending missionaries to the East both before and after Riccoldo's own travels.³⁵

In terms of the chronology of these writings, there are some indications within the texts which might tell us something of their date of composition. Emilio Panella has shown that the *Ad Nationes*, at least, was composed post 1300.³⁶ Otherwise, we know that the *Ad Nationes* references the *Contra Legem* and the *Contra Legem* references both the *Liber Peregrinationis* and the *Epistole*. Traditionally, a linear chronology has been favoured with the *Epistole* written first, followed by the *Liber Peregrinationis*, then the *Contra Legem*, with the *Ad Nationes* the final piece in the puzzle. Such thinking also places the composition of all four works into a very narrow period around the year 1300.³⁷ However, one piece of evidence which is often used to determine this, is that Riccoldo states on numerous occasions that it has not been 700 years since the revelations of the Muhammad (this being important in medieval Christian eschatology as the prophesied time period which Islam would be allowed to survive). Such references appear, according to reckoning of Panella, eight times in the *Epistole*, and twice in both the *Contra* and the *Liber*.³⁸ Panella proposed a number of dates from which to trace this 700 years from including the year of the *hijra* putting the 700th year at either 1322 (using the Gregorian calendar), and therefore two years after Riccoldo's death, or 1300/01 (using the lunar Islamic calendar). Favouring the latter, Panella concluded that Riccoldo's entire corpus was compiled within the two-year time frame of 1300-1301. Another date mentioned by Panella, and not considered, is that of the ascension of Heraclius (610) which coincides with the traditional date attributed with the beginnings of the Qur'anic revelations. Assuming Riccoldo would have been aware of the significance of this date, given evidence of his awareness of Arabic Qur'anic

³¹ The modern critical of this text is available online. Riccoldo of Monte Croce, 'Libellus ad Nationes Orientales', K.V. Jensen, [ed.] *Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's Libellus ad nationes orientales*, (1998). Available online at <https://www2.historia.su.se/personal/villads-jensen/Riccoldo/paginaprincipalis.pdf>. Henceforth ANO.

³² Jensen, *Riccoldo*, 15-17.

³³ *Biblioteca nazionale di Firenze, CS, C. VIII. 1173*. Jensen, *Riccoldo*, 21-23.

³⁴ E. Panella, 'Prezentazione', *Fede e Controversia nel '300 n '500*, Memorie Domenicane, NS. 17 (Pistoia, 1986), V-XL.

³⁵ George-Tvrtković, *Christian Pilgrim*, 4-7.

³⁶ Panella, 'Prezentazione', XXXIV-XL.

³⁷ Panella, 'Prezentazione', XXV-XL

³⁸ Panella, 'Prezentazione', XXVIII-XL.

commentaries, this would provide a more reasonable date of 1310 as a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the *Ad Nationes*.³⁹ 700 years after Muhammad's revelations should, after all, be seen as a reference to the Qur'an and makes sense since the Qur'an is the target of many of Riccoldo's polemical attacks. This dating appears sensible for a number of reasons. First, we know that Riccoldo was writing the *Ad Nationes* while he was under investigation by the Papacy for his stance on Eastern Christians as heretics and at a time when he still hoped to return to the East.⁴⁰ We also know that in 1311, Riccoldo was appointed as procurator in a long running dispute between Santa Maria Novella and Florence's secular clergy.⁴¹ His involvement in this case, and his subsequent appointment as prior and *predicator generalis* would suggest that it was around this time that Riccoldo began once again to be properly incorporated into the administrative life of his priory. Taken together the year 1310 as Islam's 700th year and 1311 as the year Riccoldo abandoned hopes of a return to the East would provide a wider composition window for the *Ad Nationes* of between 1300 (since the reliance on Aquinas suggests it was written after his return) and 1310. Because of the nature of the *Contra Legem* and its composition, this should probably also be considered as a product of this post-1300 window. Furthermore, the hypothesis that the *Liber* and *Epistole* were started in the East would therefore give us a date range for the composition of his eastern literary corpus of the much broader period of ca.1295-1310. We also know that Riccoldo went back and added certain other information to the *Liber Peregrinationis* after the *Contra Legem* was completed, meaning the text as it survives today should also be seen as a product of a post-1300 period of writing and editing.⁴² Overall, this would suggest an initial writing period of ca.1295-1310 for all four of these texts, with the period after 1300 being a time of editorial correction and the alignment of all four of these texts into a more coherent corpus ending with the completion of the *Ad Nationes*. Such a time period seems more appropriate than the traditional view that Riccoldo composed all his texts within the space of one or two years around 1300, though such an achievement would not be beyond the realms of possibility. All of this should point us towards seeing the writing of these four Eastern-focused texts as a literary whole, something Riccoldo saw as a coherent corpus of writing assembled for a single purpose, and remind us that their creation may not have been so linear as it sometimes suggested.

Santa Maria Novella and its Library

Having outlined something of Riccoldo's writings, we can now turn to the environment within which this writing occurred beginning with the library of Santa Maria Novella. By the end of the fifteenth century, the library was one of the largest in Italy with around 930 hundred volumes to its name.⁴³ However, there are major problems in attempting to reconstruct which books would have been available to Riccoldo on his return from the East some two hundred years earlier, or indeed before his departure in 1288. While we have a number of incomplete, fragmentary inventories, the first complete inventory of the contents of the Santa Maria Novella does not appear until 1489.⁴⁴ It should also be stressed that the concept of a library in the modern sense

³⁹ T. Burman, 'How an Italian Friar Read His Arabic Qur'an', *Dante Studies*, 125 (2007), 93-109, at 98.

⁴⁰ *ANO, Prohemium*, 2.

⁴¹ Panella, 'Ricerche', 13-16.

⁴² Kappler, *Pérégrination*, 10-14.

⁴³ S. Orlandi OP, *La Biblioteca di S. Maria Novella in Firenze, dal sec. XIV al sec. XIX*, (Florence, 1952), 23.

⁴⁴ The inventory was edited in Orlandi, *La Biblioteca*, 25-75.

was still developing in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries.⁴⁵ Indeed, while Santa Maria Novella possessed a formal collections of books at the time that Riccoldo was in situ, it did not acquire a formal library, in the form of a room or building dedicated specifically for the storage and access of books, until the Passavanti building works of 1338-1340, some eighteen years after Riccoldo's death.⁴⁶ Instead, what we are looking at is more a communal and constantly evolving collection of books, flowing into and out of larger communal collections owned by the order, alongside the personal collections of individual friars. Determining what was in situ at any given moment, therefore, is extremely difficult. The fact that the "library" was in a constant state of flux also has much to do with Dominican rules relating to what happened to books owned by friars upon a friar's death. According to constitutions established very early on in the Dominican's history, when a friar died any books that he owned reverted to the possession of the order with some being retained by the priory, some being sent to the chapter's own holdings, and those surplus to requirement being sold.⁴⁷ The selling of books could be an important monetary resource used by a community to fund other projects within the priory. For Riccoldo's period, we find an ominous note within one of Remigio di Girolami's sermons relating to the fate of many of Santa Maria Novella's books. In a sermon recorded for 1318, Remigio spoke of how the construction of a new school, added to Santa Maria Novella, had been in part funded by the sale of many the priory's books. Davis has concluded from this that the priory's book collection must have been substantial at this stage already, but it also shows that any attempt to ascertain what books Riccoldo did or did not have access to at the time of the construction of his corpus is naturally very difficult.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, there are still some clues and important conclusions which can be drawn from the absence, as well as presence, of works which we know Riccoldo referred to in his writings.

The inventory of 1489 produced by Tomasso Sardi, while not providing us with specifics of what the library contained in ca.1300-1310, does give us general sense of what a well-stocked Dominican library could look like and the sorts of works which Riccoldo might have had access to even if specific titles elude us. Just under 15% of the texts in the library in 1489 were biblical glosses and commentaries, with tracts on the subject of religion making up a further 15%, in addition to a slightly fewer number of tracts devoted to philosophy and an even smaller number devoted to subjects like rhetoric, politics, mathematics, and the natural sciences. Just under 5% of works are related to a discussion of the Sentences and many texts, almost 10%, are collections of sermons. Alongside these we find a range of classical authors: Archimedes, Aristotle, Cicero, Euclid, Joseph Flavius, Ovid, Plato, Pliny, Sallust, and Seneca. A standard array of Christian patristic authors: Ambrose, Augustine, Eusebius, John Chrysostom, and Jerome. And alongside these, some of the great thinkers of the Middle Ages: Bernard of Clairvaux, Gregory the Great, Hugh of Saint Victor, Isidore of Seville, Peter Comestor, Peter the Lombard, and Rupert of Deutz. In addition, we see key members of the Dominican Order represented: Albert the Great, Durandus, Herve of Nedellec, Raymond Marti, and Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁹ Altogether, this very much aligns with the image which Kenneth Humphreys presents of the stereotypical

⁴⁵ K. Attar, 'Books in the Library', in L. Howsam [ed.], *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, (Cambridge, 2015), 17-35.

⁴⁶ Orlandi, *La Biblioteca*, 5-15.

⁴⁷ K.W. Humphreys, *The Book Provisions of the Medieval Friars, 1215-1400*, (Amsterdam, 1964), 19-28.

⁴⁸ C.T. Davis, 'Education in Dante's Florence', in C.T. Davis, *Dante's Italy: And Other Essays* (Philadelphia, 1984), 154-55.

⁴⁹ Orlandi, *La Biblioteca*, pp.25-75.

contents of a Dominican library.⁵⁰ If we make the assumption that this was also the case ca.1300 then we can safely assume that Riccoldo would have had access to many of the basic texts which we know he used in his writings, even if there is no surviving trace indicating the presence of such a text in Santa Maria Novella in 1300. This of course comes with the caveat that earlier Dominican libraries had less of a focus on philosophical and classical acquisitions which would have grown throughout the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries.

A more specific sense of the library's contents appears in a much earlier, mid-fourteenth century inventory, still found in Florence, which includes some additions in a "post-1414" hand.⁵¹ Again, the picture given by this inventory is very much the same as the one painted by the 1489 inventory. A large proportion of the books listed are biblical glosses, commentaries, or other works devoted to a better understanding of scripture. These works are supported by a standard array of patristic authors and Medieval clerical thinkers. Alongside these, more current additions appear in the form of the same Dominican authors listed above, but also including Riccoldo's contemporary Remigio di Girolami.⁵² While this does not allow us to reconstruct the precise textual world which Riccoldo inhabited, it does reaffirm the suggestion that many of the standard works so important to Riccoldo (Augustine's *Confessions* and *City of God*, Jerome, Peter Comestor, and Gregory the Great) were all available for Riccoldo to access when he was composing his literary corpus. The presence of these sorts of works at Santa Maria Novella, especially those used when writing the works usually considered to have been worked on in the East shows again that while these works were possibly started in the East, they were completed in the West. Indeed, the evidence we have of Riccoldo's own editorial practices as preserved in the Berlin manuscript of the *Liber Peregrinationis* shows very much that these texts, regardless of where they were started, were revised in Florence.⁵³ If nothing else, the reliance on Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob* in both the *Epistole* (Riccoldo's "earliest" work) and the *Ad Nationes* (Riccoldo's "final" work) and the use of Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles* for the *Liber*, *Contra Legem*, and *Ad Nationes*, suggests that these texts were at least finalised in an environment where these sources could be accessed. Riccoldo was therefore working on all of his texts surrounded by works which represent a traditional Dominican textual world.

Of most interest for our present considerations, however, in terms of surviving inventories of the library's contents, is a fragmentary inventory found in the margins of a thirteenth-century Florentine manuscript which was written, judging by ownership notes, sometime between the deaths of brothers Sinibaldus of Pasignano in 1294 and John of Ulro Arno in 1322.⁵⁴ It therefore gives a very real, if brief, insight into the sorts of works Riccoldo might have found in Santa Maria Novella ca.1300. The fragmentary list references, in total, seven books: two bibles; two breviaries; a copy of a work listed as the *summa raymundi*, presumably the *Summa de casibus poenitentiae* of Raymond of Penyafort; another work which is presumably William of Perault's *Summa de virtutibus et vitiis*; and a codex listed as *cronicam Martini et libellum de terra sancta*.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Humphreys, *Book Provisions*, 90-98.

⁵¹ Biblioteca nazionale di Firenze, CS, F. III. 565. G. Pomaro, *Censimento dei Manoscritti della Biblioteca di Santa Maria Novella*, Memorie Domenicane NS 13, (Pistoia, 1982), 326-331.

⁵² Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, 326-331.

⁵³ Panella, 'Prezentazione', XXV-XL.

⁵⁴ Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze, CS, G. III. 451, f.8v. Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, 417-418.

⁵⁵ Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, 418.

The presence of bibles and breviaries, is hardly surprising given the evidence of the 1489 and mid-fourteenth century inventories. However, of great interest is the so-called *libellum de terra sancta*. Closer inspection of this entry has identified another manuscript still found in the national library of Florence as the so-called *libellum* and has shown this *libellum* to be the *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae* of Burchard of Mount.⁵⁶ This find has important implications for the Riccoldo's writings which will need to be considered. Before doing so, it is worth considering a few additional details about Santa Maria Novella and its Florentine environment during Riccoldo's time there.

The Community of Santa Maria Novella

Moving beyond the library itself, the community of Santa Maria Novella had its beginnings in 1221 when the Dominican order acquired the area where the current church is now, founding a priory there soon after. By 1300, the community had grown to some 96 brothers. During the thirteenth century, the priory became an acknowledged centre of learning. It was recognised as a *Studia Particularis Theologie* in 1281 and then elevated to the rank of *Studia Generalia* for the Roman province possibly in 1305 but certainly by 1311 making it amongst the premier places of Dominican learning and education in Italy and indeed Europe.⁵⁷ By virtue of his holding the positions of lector and *predicator generalis*, Riccoldo was keenly involved in provision of Santa Maria Novella's pedagogical services. Importantly, Santa Maria Novella's role as a theological school went beyond the training and teaching of Dominican students. Lectures on the subject of theology were generally speaking open to members of the public, and the Dominicans took their sermons out onto the streets on a regular basis, a feat often achieved by the installation of a wooden pulpit in the piazza outside the priory. This open forum for sermonising Florence's laity was used not only by the community's prominent preachers, such as Jordan of Pisa, but also visiting ecclesiastical figures such as Cardinal Latino Orsini who preached outside Santa Maria Novella in 1279 as part of his mission to quell the factional civic conflict which afflicted Florence for much of the thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries. Preaching and teaching were therefore integral to the life and work of Santa Maria Novella and its members like Riccoldo.

Sermons, such as the one delivered by Cardinal Latino were also not uncommon. And indeed we know that those involved in preaching in Florence in this period, especially Jordan and Remigio, were well known for using their sermons to challenge their listeners to address the social ills of the day, including the poverty of the masses and the rampant internal conflict which existed between various factions within Florentine society.⁵⁸ For this was one of Florence's chief problems, it had witnessed immense growth during the thirteenth century, going from a town dwarfed by its rivals of Pisa, Lucca, and Siena, before growing to a city of some 350,000 people by 1300.⁵⁹ And with this economic and social growth came increased levels of inequality between the poor and a rich and aspirational merchant and artisan class. Riccoldo himself

⁵⁶ Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, 398-402. The manuscript in question is *Biblioteca nazionale di Firezne, Conventi Soppressi*, F. IV. 733.

⁵⁷ M.M. Mulchahey, 'Education in Dante's Florence Revisited: Remigio de Girolami and the Schools of Santa Maria Novella' in Begley, R.G. and Koterski, J.W., [eds.] *Medieval Education*, (New York, 2005), 143-181, at 144-5.

⁵⁸ G.W. Dameron, *Florence and its Church in the Age of Dante*, (Philadelphia, 2005), 13-33, 48-49, 207-210. D.R. Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: the Social World of Franciscans and Dominican Spirituality*, (Athens, GA, 1989), 102-133.

⁵⁹ Dameron, *Florence*, 13.

would have been keenly aware of these changes. He himself had come from such a family, the Pennini, whose fortunes were on the rise in the thirteenth century. But his awareness would have also come from the massive changes to Florence that he would have witnessed between his departure from 1288 and his return sometime before 1301. Not only was the city growing, but it was being refashioned, with piazzas widening and the walls being rebuilt between 1284 and 1333.⁶⁰ Even the churches which Riccoldo would have grown up with were changing. Santa Maria Novella itself underwent various rebuilding programmes between 1246 and 1326. The Franciscan church of Santa Croce, with which Riccoldo had connections, was also enlarged between 1294 and 1442. Florence's cathedral church of Marie del Fiore was even demolished in 1296, while Riccoldo was in the East, to be replaced by a new building between that time and 1436.⁶¹ One imagines, therefore, that when Riccoldo returned to the Florence he would have been almost as shocked to see the changes within the city of his birth as he clearly had been to hear of the news of the fall of Acre. Riccoldo's world was a constantly changing one, and he returned to a community committed to challenging the wrongs of this world in flux.

The other thing to stress about the community of Santa Maria Novella is the importance of Thomas Aquinas within the thought worlds of Riccoldo's Florentine contemporaries. Remigio di Girolami, a vitally important member of the community, was a strong advocate of Thomist thinking a fact that comes through in much of his writings.⁶² Likewise, Jordan of Pisa, a former student of Aquinas and lector at Santa Maria from 1303, and Ptolemy of Lucca, friend and disciple of Aquinas and prior of Santa Maria Novella in 1301, were also strong advocates of Thomist views.⁶³ That being said, it must also be remembered that at this stage, while widely respected, the ideas of Thomas Aquinas had not been completely accepted by the Dominican community as a whole let alone those outside it. And from 1277 onwards there were bitter disputes over the validity of Thomist views within the Dominican order culminating in the anti-Thomist teaching of Durand at Paris and beyond from 1307 onwards.⁶⁴ Even at Santa Maria Novella itself, anti-Thomist thinking surfaced in a disputation in 1315 during which a certain Filiberto disavowed Thomist ideas in favour of the ideas espoused by Durand. Even though Filiberto was expelled for his views, it demonstrates that Aquinas as an accepted authority was still something to be fought for at Santa Maria Novella.⁶⁵ Accordingly, while we have discussed, and will discuss further, specific texts which Riccoldo was using or had access to, we need to remember that Riccoldo would have been influenced by more than just the texts he read, but by the changing social environment in Florence, by his role as a teacher at one of the Dominican's premier teaching establishments, and by the other people at Santa Maria Novella who were also involved in the teaching, preaching, and writing as he was. Within these groups, two names seem to be key: Remigio di Girolami and Jordan of Pisa. Connections between these two and Riccoldo need to be considered further.

⁶⁰ Dameron, *Florence*, 150-1.

⁶¹ Dameron, *Florence*, 20-33.

⁶² Davis, C. T., 'An Early Florentine Political Theorist: Fra Remigio de' Girolami', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 104.6 (1960) pp.662-676 reissued in Davis, C.T. *Dante's Italy: And Other Essays* (Philadelphia, 1984), pp.198-223.

⁶³ Davis, 'Education' in C.T. Davis, *Dante's Italy: And Other Essays* (Philadelphia, 1984) 199-200.

⁶⁴ M.M. Mulchahey, *"First the Bow is Bent in Study": Dominican Education before 1350*, (Toronto: 1998), pp.147-165.

⁶⁵ Mulchahey, *Dominican Education*, 158.

The Remigio and Jordan Connections.

As previously mentioned, Remigio di Girolami was a strong proponent of the ideas of Aquinas, a famous preacher, and a political theorist who played a significant role in the community of Santa Maria Novella and the Dominican Order as a whole. He was also a prolific writer, producing numerous works which were preserved in Santa Maria Novella's library. Most representative of this is the manuscript *Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, CS, C. IV. 940* which contains a collection of a total of seventeen of Remigio's authored works.⁶⁶ Alongside these, from the period before 1320, there survives a further nine Florentine manuscripts which contained something of Remigio's writings or evidence that Remigio, or an individual known to Gabriella Pomaro as Remigio's copyist, were involved in their production.⁶⁷ Remigio then, and "his copyist", clearly had played an important part in the textual outputs of Santa Maria Novella during this period. It is also key, according to palaeographical comparison, that Remigio's copyist and Riccoldo's copyist A, were in fact one and the same person. The same scribe who produced the copy of the *Liber Peregrinationis* under Riccoldo's editorial gaze, who also produced the copy of the *Ad Nationes* found in *BNF, CS, VIII. 1173*, and who was involved in finishing the copy of *Contra Legem Saracenorum* within the same manuscript, was also heavily involved in the production and copying of Remigio de Girolami's literary corpus.⁶⁸ Accordingly, the close working relationship of Riccoldo and his copyist and this copyist and Remigio points towards a similarly close connection between Riccoldo and Remigio themselves. Indeed, Riccoldo's tenure as prior in 1316, and his position as *predicator generalis* from 1315, would have certainly meant that he and Remigio would have interacted on numerous occasions given that Remigio also held the position Doctor of theology at Santa Maria Novella from 1305.⁶⁹ Despite the fact that M. Michèle Mulchahey has shown that Remigio spent a large amount of time away from Santa Maria Novella during the period from 1290s until 1305, it should not be forgotten that Riccoldo would have known and worked alongside Remigio for much of their careers including during the early stages before Riccoldo left for Pisa in 1272.⁷⁰ Remigio and Riccoldo would have therefore crossed paths, discussed ideas, and influenced one another's thought processes to at least some degree. What is interesting is that Remigio's and Riccoldo's literary corpuses are, as far as modern processes of textual classification are concerned, so divergent from one another. Whereas most of Riccoldo's work are focused on the East, Remigio's vast corpus is focused on sermons, as well as tracts and commentaries, on the subjects of philosophy and politics.⁷¹ Remigio's literary products were therefore much more in line traditional Dominican scholarship, with emergent Thomism, and focused on politic issues relating to the *realpolitik* of late-thirteenth century and early-fourteenth century Florence. Remigio was after all an avid proponent of Thomist thinking in his own writings and demonstrated a keen concern in his recorded sermons for righting the apparent social ills of

⁶⁶ Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, 366-369.

⁶⁷ These manuscripts are: BNF, CS, A. II. 513; BNF, CS, D. I. 937; BNF, CS, D. IX. 1157: ff.73v-75v; BNF, CS, E. VII. 938; BNF, CS, F. V. 13; BNF, CS, G. III. 465; BNF, CS, G. IV. 936; BML, CS, 277; BML, CS, 516. See Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, 314, 377-8, 387-8, 394, 402, 422-3, 426-6, 437, 455-6. Pomaro refers to this individual as "copista di Remigio de' Girolami."

⁶⁸ Panella, 'Presentazione', XXIII-XV.

⁶⁹ Mulchahey, 'Education', 147-8.

⁷⁰ Mulchahey, 'Education', 147-48. See also, Davis, 'Education', 157-58.

⁷¹ Davis, 'Florentine Political Theorist', 662-676.

Florentine society.⁷² The Riccoldian work which has closest resemblance to Remigio's corpus is not his Eastern works but rather his commentary on *Peryhermenias*. Our current understanding of Riccoldo's corpus would therefore suggest little connection between the literary outputs of these two men despite their having been in close contact with one another.

However, the nature of a connection becomes clearer if we consider the links between Riccoldo and another of Santa Maria Novella's key personalities: Jordan of Pisa. Jordan was a close associate and student of Thomas Aquinas and therefore like Remigio an advocate of early Thomist thinking. Jordan also served as a preacher for the community at Santa Maria Novella and Florence between 1303 and 1307, preaching numerous sermons which have survived. Importantly, one of these sermons has been shown by Panella to have been particularly influenced by the information which only someone like Riccoldo could have provided.⁷³ Within a sermon given on 15 March 1305 Jordan deconstructed the meaning of the *principes* and *potestates* of Ephesians 6.12, drawing links between the idea of *potestates* and the Florentine political position of *podesta*. Taking these links further, Jordan seems to draw a comparative link between the Latin *potestates*, the Italian *podestadi*, the Latin *soldayn* and its Arabic counterpart recorded as *sultān*, ultimately linking the Florence's *podesta* with a Saracen sultan.⁷⁴ The individual who recorded the sermon went so far as to state in reference to his use of the Arabic "Friar Jordan said this in the original language" [Frate Giordano il disse in quella lingua egli]. Consequently, Panella concluded that this linguistic knowledge could have only come from an individual who went to the East and knew his Arabic, and that this individual was likely Riccoldo.⁷⁵ This being the case, Riccoldo's connection with Jordan might even go beyond their time spent together in Florence considering Jordan's original home priory of Pisa and Riccoldo's own time there. It would also be wrong to assume that this influence was simply one way. The aim of the abovementioned sermon was to answer the question of why evil sometimes triumphs over good. This is very much the same question which Riccoldo is attempting to answer, in his own way, in the *Epistole*. There he asks:

'Why had such slaughter and degradation befallen the Christian people, and such temporal prosperity been granted to the perfidious race of the Saracens?'

[scilicet ex qua causa posset contingere tanta strages et deiection populi Christiani et tanta prosperitas temporalis in gente perfida Sarracenorum.]⁷⁶

Considering this similarity as part of a continuing search for an explanation for the existence of the *Epistole*, we come to the suggestion that the *Epistole* could have in some way represented materials designed to be used in a sermon. Certainly, elsewhere in Riccoldo's writings he used the merits of the Saracens, as a way to make Christians realise what a bad job they are doing.⁷⁷ Seeing the *Epistole* as a sermon could also go some way to explaining the conclusion of the text which states that Riccoldo would await a practical response following the theoretical answer supplied by God's divine response. The provocative and emotional content of the *Epistole*,

⁷² Lesnick, *Preaching*, 102-133.

⁷³ Lesnick, *Preaching*, 102-33; a collection of Jordan's sermons can be found in C. Delcorno [ed.], *Quaresimlae fiorentino, 1305-1306*, (Florence, 1974). Panella, 'Ricerche', 39-48.

⁷⁴ Delcorno, *Quaresimlae fiorentino*, 277.

⁷⁵ Delcorno, *Quaresimlae fiorentino*, 277; Panella, 'Ricerche', 39-48.

⁷⁶ *Ep.*, 106; George-Tvrtković, *Christian Pilgrim*, 138.

⁷⁷ *Ep.*, 122; *LP*, 158.

alongside its surprising semi-suggestion of Riccoldo's contemplated conversion to Islam, could have been intended to shock an audience into providing themselves the practical response which the letter asks for by doing something for the Holy Land instead of fighting amongst themselves in Florence.⁷⁸ A quasi call for unity through action in the spirit of the crusades. We know that Riccoldo used the knowledge derived from his experiences in the East to create materials for sermons, as evidenced by surviving information regarding the now lost sermons which he gave to the Franciscans of Assisi.⁷⁹ If the intention of the *Epistole* was to arouse his listeners to unified action, then this would align Riccoldo's intentions in writing the *Epistole* with many of the works which individuals like Jordan and Remigio produced. With this in mind, it would indeed be interesting to compare the *Epistole* to the evening portions of Jordan's 15th March sermon. Unfortunately, what Jordan said in the evening has not survived since the recorder of this sermon states: 'I was not there in the evening' (*La sera non ci fui*).⁸⁰ In any case, a re-reading of the *Epistole* as material for a sermon may produce interesting answers to the question of how to better understand it as a text. Continuing in this search for better ways to integrate the *Epistole* alongside Riccoldo's other works, one other thing to consider is whether the *Epistole*, like all of Riccoldo's other works (including the *Peryhermenias*), and like much of the work produced by contemporaries like Remigio and Jordan, was in fact conceived as an aid to teaching or training.

By the end of the thirteenth century the weekly timetable for Dominican students consisted of lectures on the Bible and the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, a weekly review known as a *Repetitio Generalis*, daily repetitions of the information delivered in lectures, and a weekly *Disputatio* where students were assigned the task of debating a sometimes controversial subject.⁸¹ Rather than a sermon, perhaps it would be worthwhile to think of the *Epistole* in terms of the subject of such a *disputatio*. The text is after all laden with topics which could be challenged: the frequent questions voiced by the narrator as to the validity of Islam as a religion; the seeming lack of divine intervention on behalf of the Christians; and the question of why "evil" triumphs over "good". Indeed, the text of the *Epistole* is replete with questions and even the theoretical response provided at the end does not actually supply any real answers to the questions posed, rather it presents the idea that the answers to all questions voiced in the text can be found in the scriptures and therefore God should not be asked to repeat himself.⁸² There is ample material here to form the basis of a debate. And indeed, finding answers to many of the problems presented in the *Epistole* would provide the prospective missionary with good grounding for any travels East where they might encounter Eastern Christians (possibly recent converts to Islam) for whom the complaints of the *Epistole* might be very real concerns. Moreover, such a perspective would build stronger links between the *Epistole* and the *Contra Legem* with the latter forming the crib sheet for the former. This idea is reinforced by the fact that the *Contra Legem* specifically refers to the *Epistole* in its introduction.⁸³ In essence, taken as a whole, the *Liber Peregrinationis* provides a spiritual model for missionaries, the *Epistole* provides first-hand experience of the problems a missionary might encounter among the Christian populations of the East, with the *Contra Legem* providing answers to these questions, the *Ad*

⁷⁸ *Ep.*, 152. See also, Boyadijan, *The City Lament*.

⁷⁹ Merigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 17.

⁸⁰ Delcorno, *Quaresimale fiorentino*, 280.

⁸¹ Mulchahey, *Dominican Education*, 134.

⁸² *Ep.*, 149-52.

⁸³ CLS., 62-63.

Nationes providing students with the particular tips to be successful. It is also important to consider, if we would rather take the *Epistole* at face value whether its controversial views would have been safely expressed in a genuine sense in a world where unorthodox opinions were hardly looked on lightly. And whether such views would be expressed publicly by a man who had experienced first-hand a papal investigation into his own (less controversial) views on the orthodoxy Eastern Christians. Instead, using the ideas of the *Epistole* in the safety of a classroom may have been the only setting in which they would not have been met with dismay and ecclesiastical censure. It would also help to explain why the *Epistole* like Riccoldo's other teaching text, the *Peryhermenias*, only survive in a single manuscript.

In support of these ideas, we should consider the recent arguments Mulchahey who has shown convincingly that we should view the *Sermones Prologales*, usually understood to be a series of Remigio di Girolami's public sermons, not as such but as a collection of lecture notes or a syllabus designed with his Santa Maria Novella students in mind.⁸⁴ We need to therefore be cautious in assuming that a text is what it says it is; letters may not be letters, just like collections of sermons may not be sermons. In all this, I do not think it can be denied that the foundation of the *Epistole* comes from Riccoldo's genuine shock and dismay at the things he witnessed and experienced in Baghdad following the fall of Acre. What I do think is that we need to consider what ways Riccoldo deployed this experience as a means to meet the ends of his continued membership of an order dedicated to preaching and teaching. As we have already suggested, Riccoldo saw his Eastern works as a literary whole. He linked and edited them as such. Indeed, a running theme between each of the works are statements regarding their instructional usefulness for his Dominican brothers. In the *Liber Peregrinationis*, for example, Riccoldo stated that he had written it:

'...so the brothers who wish to take up the task for Christ of extending the faith may know what they require and where and how they can best proceed.'

[...ut fratres qui uellent laborem pro Christo adsumere pro fide dilatanda sciant quo indigent et ubi et qualiter magis possunt proficere.]⁸⁵

And again, the *Ad Nationes* was written:

'... so that brothers, who wish to go to the nations of the East, may more easily wander along the path of truth, this text relates to everything about preaching.'

[Ut autem fratres, qui uolent ire ad nationes orientales, facilius possiunt reducere ad uiam ueritatis errantes, dicendum est de unoquoque predicatorum]⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Mulchahey, 'Education', 154-160.

⁸⁵ Pringle, *Pilgrimage*, 361; *LP*, 36.

⁸⁶ *ANO*, *Prohemium*, 2. My own translation.

Finally, the *Contra Legem* was written:

‘Now it is my intention, relying on total truth, to refute the principal obscenities and perfidy of the law, and to give the opportunity to all friars, by this means to be able to easily recall to God the followers of that great perfidy.’

[Nunc autem est mea intentio de summa ueritate confisus, confutare principales obscenitates tam perfide legis, et dare occasionem aliis fratribus, per quem modum possunt facilius reuocare ad Deum sectatores tante perfidie.]⁸⁷

Riccoldo’s corpus, therefore, was quite clearly designed not just to denigrate Islam, or provide practical tips to future missionaries, but to serve as teaching materials for the students he was heavily involved with throughout his career. While a deeper reading of the *Epistole* is needed to confirm these ideas, it would make sense to also think of this most unusual of texts as serving the same ends as Riccoldo’s other writings. It also serves to show the different perspectives that viewing Riccoldo’s corpus within the context of Santa Maria Novella’s other activities can provide.

One additional thing to return to at this point is the way this environment and its, for the most part, pro-Thomist sentiments might also have influenced Riccoldo’s writing. Doing so is even more important when we take into account the fact that Riccoldo possibly met Aquinas at the provincial chapter of 1272 and that Riccoldo’s earliest work was a commentary of Aristotle’s *Super Peryhermenias*. It quickly becomes clear that Riccoldo’s thought-world was heavily influenced by Thomism in its earliest forms throughout his career. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that when looking at texts which Riccoldo chose to make extensive use of we should find one of Aquinas’ high on that list.

Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentiles*

This text was of course Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Kurt Villads Jensen has clearly shown the ways in which the *Ad Nationes*, the most derivative of all of Riccoldo’s works, was heavily reliant on the fourth book of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentiles* and we know that Riccoldo also used the *Summa* when writing both his *Liber Peregrinationis* and his *Contra Legem Sarracenorum*.⁸⁸ The *Summa Contra Gentiles* represents Aquinas’ own attempt to produce a text designed with the would-be missionary in mind and while the first three books are devoted to what we would now recognise as a standard exposition of Thomist theology in its earlier phases, the fourth book does attempt to outline how such ideas related to the beliefs of Muslims, Jews, and various Eastern Christian communities.⁸⁹ The *Ad Nationes*, while adding five pieces of advice to future missionaries, follows Aquinas closely, almost verbatim in places, especially in regards to Eastern Christians. Riccoldo does not, however, use Aquinas for his sections on Islam which are minimal, with Riccoldo directing the reader to his *Contra Legem* instead.⁹⁰ The large number of textual loanings within the *Ad Nationes* would suggest that Riccoldo had a copy of this text on hand during its composition. One reason which is often given for the huge reliance on Aquinas within the *Ad Nationes* relates to the Papal investigation which Riccoldo was facing

⁸⁷ *CLS*, 63.

⁸⁸ Jensen, *Riccoldo*, 10-14.

⁸⁹ See Thomas Aquinas, ‘*Summa Contra Gentiles*’, Pegis, A.C., Anderson, J.F., and Bourke, V.J., [eds & trs.] *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, (New York, 1955-57).

⁹⁰ *ANO*, *De Iudeis*, 29.

at this time. Evidence of the investigation comes down to us not from official sources but from a marginal note found in the *Ad Nationes* written in Riccoldo's own hand which reads:

'Note that here and wherever I call them heretics I express my own opinion, and not an official position. I have not yet a definitive answer from the papacy, as to whether the Jacobites and Nestorians of the East are heretics. But there are arguments for and against, and I await a decision from the Pope or his court.'

[Notandum quod hic uel ubicumque appello eos hereticos dico opinatiue, et non certitudinaliter. Nondum enim diffinitum est per papam, utrum sint heretici illi iacobini et nestorini orientales. Sed sunt argumenta pro et contra, et expecto determinationem papalem uel etiam magistralem.]⁹¹

Santa Maria's *Necrology* also states the following regarding Riccoldo's return from the East:

'Then, to answer certain doubtful articles at the apostolic see, he returned to Italy...'

[Demum pro quibusdam dubiis articulis per sedem apostolicam declarandis ad Ytalie partes remeans]⁹²

This, as Jensen has argued, led Riccoldo to seek a safe authority upon which to rely in order to protect himself from further Papal entanglements.⁹³ Indeed, the presence of many supporters of Thomism at Santa Maria Novella would have made the *Summa Contra Gentiles* an easy choice for Riccoldo. Equally, his choice of Aquinas, whose text shows little actual knowledge of conditions in the East could also be seen as an endorsement of Thomist ideas to the community of Santa Maria Novella. After all, acceptance of Aquinas' ideas was not complete by any means amongst the Dominican community and this discord could even be felt close to home as the events around the 1315 *disputatio* show. Viewing, once again, Riccoldo's texts, as forming part of the core texts around which he organised his teaching, using the *Summa* extensively could equally have provided Riccoldo with a means to prepare future missionaries, but also a chance to inculcate pro-Thomist ideas within the minds of his students.

However, given how closely the *Ad Nationes* follows the text of the *Summa*, it is unclear how Riccoldo went about the process of copying or paraphrasing vast amounts of Aquinas' text without having a copy himself. The answer here perhaps lies in another of Santa Maria Novella's former manuscripts, *BML, CS, 614*.⁹⁴ There are several issues in trying to ascertain whether this particular manuscript was already at Santa Maria Novella around the time when Riccoldo was composing the *Ad Nationes*. The manuscript does contain a series of six possession notes with the earliest related to Peter of Strocis, who joined the community in 1306 dying in 1362. Otherwise, the only information which we have regarding the manuscript is that it can be dated on palaeographical grounds to the first half of the fourteenth century. On this basis, it would appear unlikely that this manuscript was available to Riccoldo between 1300-1310. That being said, the presence of this manuscript at Santa Maria Novella toward the end of Riccoldo's life, or just after, can allow us to safely assume that Riccoldo worked from a copy in the priory and that all of his three longer works, the *Liber*, the *Contra Legem*, and the *Ad Nationes*, must have been

⁹¹ *ANO, Prohemium*, 2. My own translation.

⁹² Merigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 14. My own translation.

⁹³ Jensen, *Riccoldo*, 13-14.

⁹⁴ Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, 463-464.

edited with a copy of the *Summa* at Riccoldo's writing table. It is important at this stage to consider any other specific manuscripts which Riccoldo might have had in his possession and what else these can tell us about the processes by which he wrote his works.

Burchard of Mount Sion's *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*.

In the foregoing, we have emphasised Riccoldo's often neglected identities as a preacher and teacher, and how these identities might reframe the way we think about his texts. But what of his more traditional identities as a pilgrim and a polemicist? Another pair of manuscripts help us to see that these traditional identities should not be forgotten are still reflected in the manuscripts which we know Riccoldo had in his possession. The first is the previously mentioned *libellum de terram sanctam* or rather the *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae* of Burchard of Mount Sion. Burchard of Mount Sion was also a Dominican and according to current thinking a member of the Dominican province of the Holy Land for several years. During this time, living as an important member of the religious and intellectual community of the Latin East, he began composition of his famous *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae* one of the premodern period's most popular texts about the Holy Land.⁹⁵ What is significant about this particular manuscript is not just that it was at Santa Maria Novella as early as 1294, but also that the other books bound together with the *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae* bear a note that Riccoldo himself had owned these books. The specific sections of the codex in its current form owned by Riccoldo contain a set of constitutions and an imperial edict against heretics both issued by Pope Clement IV (1265-68) in 1265.⁹⁶ The constitutions themselves comprise a reissuing of various constitutions of Innocent IV (1243-54) and Alexander IV (1254-61) and represents a list of instructions regarding correct methods for dealing with heretics, the rights of inquisitors to do so, with an affirmation of the rights of the Franciscans and Dominicans to operate in these roles.⁹⁷ It would be tempting to see in this manuscript obvious evidence that Riccoldo owned a personal copy of Burchard's text during the time in which he was composing his various works. However, one issue with this hypothesis is that the current binding dates to the seventeenth or eighteenth century and there is no guarantee that the heretical decrees owned by Riccoldo were bound together with this copy of the *Descriptio* ca.1300-1310.⁹⁸ Yet, little connects these disparate texts bound together four hundred years after Riccoldo - a chronicle, a description of the Holy Land, a series of decrees on heresy, a series of biblical glosses (one interestingly on Job) and excerpts of the *Historia Scholastica* - except perhaps in the context of an individual like Riccoldo who indeed who have a vested interest in all of these texts for a range of reasons. This suggests that the later binding could reflect an earlier arrangement. Even if this was not the case, it seems probable that Burchard's *Descriptio* was to be found somewhere at Santa Maria Novella when Riccoldo was constructing his literary corpus and that he could have consulted it even if he did not own the text himself.

That being said, Panella has ruled out the possibility that Riccoldo read Burchard's text on the basis of a lack of any explicit textual references to Burchard in the *Liber Peregrinationis*. While it is right to draw attention to this fact, it is perhaps rash to completely rule out such a connection

⁹⁵ J. Rubin, 'Burchard of Mount Sion's *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*: A Newly Discovered Extended Version', *Crusades*, 13 (2014), 173-190, at 173.

⁹⁶ Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, pp.399. The note sits in the margins of f.69v and reads: '*Iste liber est fratris Ricculdi ordinis predicatorum.*'

⁹⁷ A. Taur [ed.] *Bullarum, Diplomatum, et Privilegorium Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum*, III, 743.

⁹⁸ Pomaro, *Biblioteca*, 399.

on this basis.⁹⁹ Despite their both being categorised as texts within the pilgrimage literature genre and both authors coming from the intellectual milieu of Dominican learning, both texts are very different in terms of their objectives and apparent audiences. The narrative structure and overall aims of the *Liber Peregrinationis* have been outlined above and it worth remembering that its highly curated text was clearly intended to influence and instruct his fellow Dominican brothers in their own future missionary exploits. The text was a devotional, but more importantly, an instructional text. On the other hand, while Burchard's text bears all the hallmarks of the traditional pilgrim's guide, the systematic and innovative approach which Burchard takes to the issue of biblical geography means that the text is in many ways more akin to a geographic tract, and with the inclusion of ethnographic and botanical information it has, at times, the air of an encyclopaedic cataloguing of the Holy Land. It is certainly not the account of the first-person experiences of specific pilgrim as the *Liber Peregrinationis* is framed, but rather a survey produced by a resident of the Holy Land.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, instead of serving the educational purposes of Riccoldo's text, Burchard's survey seems to have been intended to be, or at least was used as, a text to facilitate a more profound experience for the bible reading Latin Christians of Europe. While Burchard's text is about mapping biblical geographies onto real space, this space is only important for Riccoldo in so far as it provides a canvas onto which to map a narrative aimed at his "students". As such, it is hardly surprising if we do not find explicit connections between the *Liber Peregrinationis* and the *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*. And an absence of any sort of textual reliance should not be interpreted as evidence for Riccoldo not having read Burchard. In fact, considering that the text was available to Riccoldo, and given his clear interest in the Holy Land, it would be surprising if Riccoldo had not read Burchard's text at some stage. Important conclusions can be drawn from such a connection. The first, is that the widely held view that Medieval pilgrim authors were mere copiers of each other's work is not necessarily always accurate. These authors were capable of acting independently even when ready inspiration sat not too far from their desk. It would seem that Riccoldo choose not to use the *Descriptio* as a direct source, even though he could have, because it did not suit his purposes. The second conclusion is that this relationship may provide evidence for the intangible impressions which pilgrimage texts could leave on pilgrimage authors of which we are usually completely unaware. Indeed, there are further tantalising links between Riccoldo, Burchard, and their texts.

The first such connection is both text's reliance on Jerome's description of Paula's "pilgrimage" for a discussion of the ways in which a pilgrim should spiritually connect with the sacred spaces and history of the Holy Land. This is not necessarily surprising given the importance of Jerome's description of Paula's pilgrimage as a model for pilgrims throughout the Middle Ages, but it is still worth highlighting in the context of connections between the two.¹⁰¹ Additionally, they share a similar, innovative approach to structuring their texts with a heavily manipulated image of the Christian Holy Land followed by a travelogue which is more basic in Burchard's case, and more elaborate in Riccoldo's.¹⁰² The travelogue elements of Burchard's text have only recently

⁹⁹ Panella, 'Ricerche', 39-41.

¹⁰⁰ Rubin, 'A Newly Discovered Extended Version', 178-182.

¹⁰¹ P. Booth, 'Seeing the Saviour in the Mind's Eye: Burchard of Mount Sion's Physical and Spiritual Travels to the Holy Land, c.1274-1284' in Hillman, J. and Tingle, E. [eds.], *Soul Travel: Spiritual Journeys in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 2019), 181-205.

¹⁰² J. Rubin, 'A Missing Link in European Travel Literature: Burchard of Mount Sion's Description of Egypt', *Mediterranea. International Journal for the Transfer of Knowledge*, 3 (2018), 55-90.

come to light, with new examinations of the longer versions of Burchard's text demonstrating that these renderings of the *Descriptio* show clearly that in 1285 Burchard travelled from the Holy Land via Egypt to Italy. As part of these travels, Burchard possibly took part in the Dominican General Chapter which occurred in Bologna in 1285, and even visited Florence (though Riccoldo was at that point resident in Pisa) providing another possible connection between the two authors.¹⁰³ The General Chapter of 1285 was conceivably the only place the two could have encountered each other in person, though we have no evidence for Riccoldo having been there and indeed it is not entirely clear from Burchard's travelogue that he himself was in attendance. However, if such an encounter occurred, it would be of immense importance for our understanding of how various pilgrim authors could interact with one another, and would change our understanding of the ways in which pilgrim authors could be connected and make use of each other's works. Certainly, meeting such a prestigious member of the Dominican province of the Holy Land would have been one not to be missed by someone like Riccoldo. Irrespective of this, that Riccoldo had access to and may have owned a copy of Burchard's writings is of immense importance for our understanding of the ways in which pilgrim authors were read by one another.

Possible links with the *Descriptio* aside, the fact that Riccoldo was certainly in possession of a series of decrees against heresy, reminds us of that the "polemical" aspects of his identity and that he had an active interest in official church positions on heretical beliefs. Indeed, if there is one theme which runs through the majority of Riccoldo's written corpus it was a profound interest in the beliefs of other religious communities and the ways in which to overcome them through debate and mission. The possession of these documents seems even more significant in the context of the Papal investigation that Riccoldo underwent when he returned from the East. Riccoldo's interest, or rather preoccupation, with heretical beliefs was not, therefore, just vital for the completion of his works but at times a very real concern. It is also interesting that these constitutions relate almost entirely to dealing with heretics in Europe and not to communities of Christians in the East. Riccoldo's interest in combatting heretical beliefs was, therefore, not just focused on his foreign missionary travels, but also at home as well. What was important to him in the East was important to him in the West or indeed vice versa.

Riccoldo's Arabic Qur'an

Further evidence of Riccoldo's active interest in Latin polemical traditions appears in the well documented example of Arabic manuscript now held in Paris: *MS.384 Arabe*. An extended discussion of this manuscript, and its links to Riccoldo, is unnecessary here given the in-depth analysis of the importance of this manuscript provided by Thomas E. Burman.¹⁰⁴ It suffices to say that the manuscript in question is a copy of the Qur'an, in Arabic, with interspersed interlinear and marginal notes in two hands. One is unidentified, though it may have been that of Raymond Marti. The other hand, based on a comparison with the hand preserved in the Berlin manuscript of the *Liber Peregrinationis* and the Florence manuscript of the *Contra Legem*, is quite clearly Riccoldo's. That Riccoldo could read the Qur'an in Arabic should come as no surprise considering that he repeatedly boasts his ability to read and speak Arabic in his various written works.¹⁰⁵ Over and above this, Riccoldo's notes also betray a knowledge of Mark of

¹⁰³ Rubin, 'A Newly Discovered Extended Version', 178-182.

¹⁰⁴ See Burman, 'Arabic Qur'an', 93-109 and Burman, 'Polemic, Philology, and Ambivalence', 181-209

¹⁰⁵ George-Tvrtković, *Christian Pilgrim*, 73-88.

Toledo's translation of the Qur'an, an ability to compare this translation to the original, and the ability to translate the original Arabic afresh when he deemed the translation of Mark insufficient.¹⁰⁶ What this manuscript also shows is the Riccoldo was clearly capable of interpreting the Qur'an, not only through the lens of Western polemic, but also, as Burman suggests 'through the lens of an Arabic commentary.'¹⁰⁷ Whether such a commentary was consulted in the West and is now lost, or indeed in the East, where we know Riccoldo visited a number of schools of Qur'anic law, is uncertain. And while Burman has shown the significance of this manuscript for our understanding of Riccoldo's linguistic capabilities, this text also demonstrates that Riccoldo clearly had access to a copy of the Qur'an in Arabic, Qur'anic commentaries, as well as Mark of Toledo's translation of the Qur'an, at some point during his career, presumably while he was writing as the *Contra Legem*, and therefore after he had returned to the West. The absence within the records of Santa Maria Novella's collection of some of the key polemical texts which Riccoldo relied upon to write his more critical works, and of these important Arabic texts, should not therefore be seen as evidence of their not having been there. Indeed, that a manuscript such as this, one which was clearly in Riccoldo's personal possession, should find its way to Paris is testament to the dispersal of books throughout the Medieval period and thereafter.

Conclusion.

Overall, what we can see is that many of the broader ideas about Riccoldo's identity and thought worlds hold true through closer inspection of the social environments which he inhabited. He was clearly a committed missionary and did have a keen interest in understanding the beliefs of other groups which he and his Latin Christian contemporaries considered erroneous. This naturally included an interest in the beliefs of Muslims, which he at times does present in an ambivalent voice, but which he considers, when taking his literary corpus as a whole through the eyes of a polemicist. His reasons for viewing and presenting Islam in this way, however, were not necessarily the results of his own experiences in the East, but because of the expectations of his audiences: his pro-Thomist, preaching colleagues, and his students who were missionaries in training. It is perhaps the latter who had the greatest influence on what he wrote and the way he presented his experiences of the East and Islam. After all, if our suggestions relating to the *Epistole* ring true, all of Riccoldo's text were written for his students or at least for the rising generation of Dominican missionaries. There is not space here to conduct a more rigorous investigation into Riccoldo's texts as a tool for teaching. Indeed, what we have suggested here represents in many ways a thought exercise of possibilities which warrant further pursuit in greater depth. What we can however say at this stage is that we should always bear in mind that Riccoldo of Monte Croce was not just a missionary, a pilgrim, or a polemicist; he was also a Florentine and a Dominican, a preacher and an advocate of emergent Thomism, but most importantly it would seem, he was a teacher.

¹⁰⁶ Burman, 'Arabic Qur'an', 97-99.

¹⁰⁷ Burman, 'Arabic Qur'an', 98.