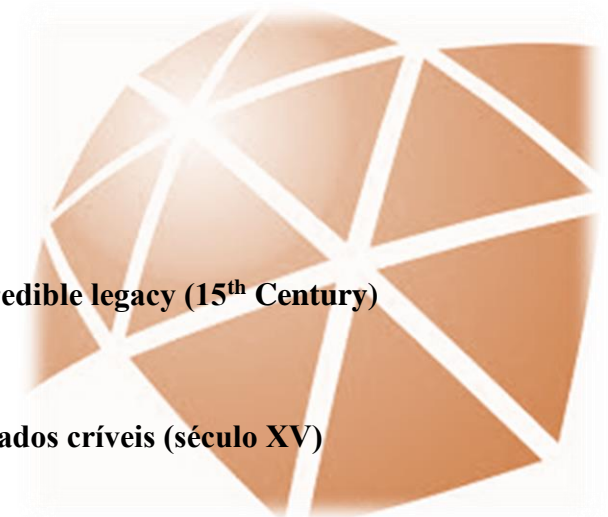


From one “forger” to another, from tall travel tales to a credible legacy (15th Century)

De um “falsário” a outro, de patranhas viageiras a legados críveis (século XV)



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Abstract: In the 15th and early 16th centuries, when traveling eastward and westward no longer proved extraordinary, travel writings, such as those of Marco Polo or Jean de Mandeville, were printed and reprinted and have been in the world of exchanges and acquisitions both in Portugal and in other parts of Europe. However, although they have played a key role in defining foreign worlds for Europe, reflecting the aspirations of their time and providing news about the universe to be discovered, these reports do not always necessarily tell of trips that were actually taken. Several of them, on the contrary, do no more than draw together, for contemporary readers, passages of interest taken from other writings; passages which, based on their regularity and frequency, would allow for a narrative staged as travel to be taken as truth for contemporaries and immediate successors. In the Iberian Peninsula of the late 15th century, an account written by an author about whom nothing is known, Gomez de Santisteban, who defines himself as a companion of Prince Pedro on a supposed trip to the Holy Land, was among those reports integrated into the description and the perception of the land being discovered. The driving question of this paper is, therefore, how Santisteban, though he wrote memories of trips that he did not take, achieved credibility like those travelers whose trips have been recognized as authentic.

Keywords: Royal travels; imaginary travels; memor; 15th century; Portugal.

Resumo: Nos séculos XV e início do XVI, quando viajar para o leste e para o oeste já não se mostrava tão extraordinário, as relações de viagem, como as de Marco Polo ou Jean de Mandeville, foram impressas e reimpressas e estiveram no universo das trocas e aquisições tanto em Portugal quanto em outras partes da Europa. Apesar, entretanto, de terem cumprido papel fundamental para definir os mundos alheios para os europeus, traduzindo as aspirações do seu tempo e alimentando novas acerca do universo a ser conhecido, esses relatos nem sempre narram viagens necessariamente realizadas. Vários deles, ao contrário, não fazem mais do que reunir, para seus contemporâneos, passagens de interesse extraídas de outros escritos, passagens que, por sua regularidade e frequência, permitiram que um relato, apenas encenado como de viagem, fosse aceito como verdadeiro para os contemporâneos e sucessores imediatos. Na Península Ibérica do final do século XV, um relato escrito por um autor de quem nada se sabe, Gómez de Santisteban, que se auto-define como acompanhante do Infante D. Pedro a uma suposta viagem à Terra Santa, esteve entre esses relatos que integraram a descrição e a própria percepção das terras que vinham sendo conhecidas. A questão condutora deste texto é, pois, como Santisteban, embora tenha

textualizado memórias de viagens que não fez, conseguiu alcançar credibilidade tal como viajantes cujas viagens foram reconhecidas como autênticas.

Palavras-chave: Viagens reais; viagens imaginárias; memória; Quatrocentos; Portugal.

Have there been time periods that were more given to spreading tall tales, inventing apocryphal or imaginative fervor than others? When, in the late 19th century, George F. Warner referred to the famous Jean de Mandeville (deceased \cong 1372) in *The Buke of John Maundeuill* he rated the 14th-century author as “fraudulent”, because he had written a travel narrative without effectively having traveled.¹ Shortly thereafter, derogatory epithets like this were assigned to the not as famous but equally deemed unreliable 15th-century author of the *Libro del Infante D. Pedro de Portugal*, identified as Gómez de Santisteban – one of 12 accompanying Infante D. Pedro (Peter, Duke of Coimbra) (1392-1449) on his travels (LIBRO, 2008, p. 11). In the early 20th century, Spanish scholar Menéndez y Pelayo, renowned for his studies on the history of Hispanic literature and philology, presented him as a clumsy imitator of Mandeville, framing him among those who aided in the “proliferation of tales” in the “shadow of true travel” without revealing the “common” (MENÉNDEZ Y PELAYO, 1905, p. CDVII-CDXI). The scholar sought support for such a framework in the studies of naturalized Portuguese philologist Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, who came to consider the text an “absurd booklet” (VASCONCELOS, 1922, p. 39-46), but unfortunately had been esteemed by 17th century historical tall tale lovers and few committed to distinguishing true accounts from tales. Such scholars of the 19th and early 20th centuries endeavored to confront, in the style of their times, the sources that had been the basis for narrative after narrative, so that with a century between them – Mandeville’s book is from 1356 and the book claimed to be by Gomez de Santisteban, in the prologue, would be from the second half of the 15th century² – the two reports received very similar treatment from critics and historians. In the case of Mandeville, A. Bovenschen and George F. Warner undertook a survey of sources it used (BOVENSCHEN, 1888; WARNER, 1885-1901; HAMELIUS, 1923; LETTS, 1953), making room for a repeated questioning of the false testimony created by the author. As regards the *Livro do Infante D. Pedro*, in turn, Carolina Michaëlis promoted an examination of other sources and evidence proving the trips of D. Pedro through European kingdoms and examined the “bases of some 15th and 16th century writers” who referred to the Prince (VASCONCELOS, 1922, p. 40-44), to conclude that, if neither said even one word about Constantinople, the Holy Land, Mecca, Abássia, Cairo and other African and Asian shores such stops in the book would fit in the realm of legendary.

Arguments such as these – despite the scholar having first editions³ or regardless of the type of

concern with the considerable experience as a real parameter of truth that astonished her – led the Santisteban book to earn low prestige in historical studies from the 19th and 20th centuries. But it previously had not been so, as the philologist herself mentioned in reference to the 17th century. There were those who esteemed the *Livro do Infante D. Pedro de Portugal*; men whom Menéndez y Pelayo defines as having a more impetuous imagination precisely because they had lived in those times of great voyages and “more portentous discoveries”. Men who would not consider the wanderings of Duke Pedro to be as remarkable as his contemporaries would, who considered him a “great traveler” (MENÉNDEZ Y PELAYO, 1905, p. CDVIII), for visiting European courts such as those of England, France, Flanders, Germany, Hungary, Venice, Rome, Aragon and Castile. So many shores and adventures, considered remarkable for the 15th century, such as the likely participation in the war against the Turks, at Emperor Sigismund’s side (ROGERS, 1961, p. 44), which would supposedly not have satisfied the 16th centurists, who wanted to see this as the precursor of an expansion beyond Europe.

The question put forth by the Spanish scholar, however, does not seem relevant if we take into account, as suggested by Francis Rogers (ROGERS, 1961, p. 222), the first known edition of the work – printed by Jacobo Cromberger in Seville in the year 1515 – which already shows a journey beyond Europe.⁴ This also seems relevant if we take into account the reference found in 15th-century chronical (1471-1476) of Lope Garcia de Salazar, *Las bienandanzas y fortunas*, who highlights the large scale of Asia to which several lands belonged such as Armenia, Turkey, the kingdom of Persia, Jerusalem, and even Egypt appeared in it. And, as usual, he also highlights the lands of Tamerlane and those that, so it was believed, were subject to Prester John such as the Amazons or those of the lineage of Gog and Magog. He included in his list of notable places, the geographical, mythical and literary references that were shared by scholars of his time, which could not leave out the reference to Prester John’s letter sent through Duke Pedro, according to said chronicler, King John II of Castile. He referred to Pedro along with the information that he “went about devising a lot in these travels”.⁵

In the fifteenth century an adventurous prince had already been conceived, so the trip to Jerusalem and neighboring lands was part of the expectations of men of that time, something King Pedro had not done. It does not seem, then, appropriate to assign the 16th and 17th centuries more imagination and additions, nor condemn the unknown⁶ Santisteban for filling his account with passages of interest to his contemporaries, but question why the author was willing, as Mandeville, to textualize memoirs of trips he did not take or that the person about whom the story was written did not take.⁷ His approach to Mandeville in this regard reached the point that the writings of Santisteban were contemplated as a mere imitation of the 4th century traveler, plus a contemporary and significant historical character, Duke Pedro,

whose fame would have served to give credibility to the story (MENÉNDEZ Y PELAYO, 1905, p. CDVIII). Therefore, despite the character witness in *Viagens de Jean de Mandeville*, being the main traveler and, in *Livro do Infante D. Pedro*, being a companion traveler (CORREIA, 2000, p. 57), they share similarities, since they both prove to be committed to convincing us that the trips they narrate are trips that they in fact took, as it became increasingly common to do after the late 14th century (WOLFZETTEL, 1996, p. 22-23). Mandeville does this by intensifying the use of the first person: “I crossed the sea”, “I remained overseas for a long time”, “And I often went this way and rode that way in good company”, “I crossed many lands”, “I grant them part of all good pilgrimages and all the good deeds I have done”, among several other passages (JEAN DE MANDEVILLE, 2007, p. 35 e 256); Santisteban likewise confers an important role to the supposed travel memoirs,⁸ for example, by once again taking up, in the preface, the topic of men’s desire to know new things, though announcing that he was willing to do so just by being “one of those who” was with the Prince on his travels (LIBRO, 2008, p. 11).

This emphasis on memory as legitimizing the story is reaffirmed in Mandeville when he states he is exempt from dealing with “many other countries and many other wonders” that he did not visit overseas as a way of reminding us that he dealt with what he really saw (JEAN DE MANDEVILLE, 2007, p. 255). Beyond this, the two authors are similar in being determined to tell about remarkable, strange and even new things, as announced. The English pseudo-traveler does this more than once, such as when he includes information about the peculiarity of the Geek belief in relation to his people, justifying this because “many men delight and take pleasure in hearing about strange things” (JEAN DE MANDEVILLE, 2007, p. 51); or when he highlights that Westerners, guided by the moon, which is “the planet of passage”, had special provision for “the pursuit of strange things and the diversity of the world” (JEAN DE MANDEVILLE, 2007, p. 156-157), or when he generalizes that “everyone was always pleased to hear about new things” (JEAN DE MANDEVILLE, 2007, p. 255). The narrator of *Livro do Infante*,⁹ in turn, likewise shows that he is determined to “tell some remarkable things” in his treatise, about what he and his companions saw “at the four corners of the world” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 11).¹⁰

The approaches of the two texts, meanwhile, have already been highlighted more than once (MENENDEZ Y PELAYO, 1905, p. CDXI; ROGERS, 1961, p. 197, 199, 204; ENTWISTLE, 1922, p. 255-257; CORREIA, 2000, p. 27, 70-78), so it makes no sense to reproduce dialogues word for word here, but rather reflect on the reasons why travelers told accounts of their trips, even trips not necessarily carried out, while admitting them as such to contemporaries and immediate successors. Or rather, it is to reflect on the repertoire of travel topics accepted as reliable in the late 15th century Iberian Peninsula,

especially considering the fortune of the two reports and if we remember the paradox of the trip itself, both an activity and a topic which served to rest the spirit and enliven the imagination – at the time, markedly religious.¹¹ Mandeville’s work, for example, which had been one of the most popular books in late 14th-century and 15th and 16th-century Europe, probably the best known and most widely read at least until the 15th century (PHILLIPS, 1994, p. 28) – a remarkable success due to the approximately 250 known manuscripts in various European languages, and the 80 editions made after the late 15th century –,¹² had no less force in the Iberian territories, as is stated in the documents of royal Aragonese Chancery¹³ or in the lists of royal library then (CRIVÁT, 2003; NASCIMENTO, 1993) or, as noted, also by the various references to the story in other works of the period (ENTWISTLE, 1922, p. 255). It was certainly not as widely read as the *Livro do Infante D. Pedro*, because its editions, in the 16th century, were mostly in Spanish and Portuguese, and the first known edition dates from 1515 (ROGERS, 1961, p. 273-274); likewise, as we saw, is only known in the 15th century, the reference to the travels of Duke Pedro in the *Bienandanzas e fortunas*, by Lope Garcia de Salazar – it was heard of, but mattered little. However, the 16th century was more prodigious in uniting the legendary Duke and that noble traveler who had partially accomplished the desire of kings and aristocrats of his time to expand their geographic horizons across Europe and beyond (BECEIRO PITA, 2007, p. 223); that is, some authors – including Francisco Alvares and Duarte Nunes de Galvao – left evidence that the work in question was found in the list of his literary references or from hearsay (ROGERS, 1961, p. 243-246; CORREIA, 2000, p. 12-13).

Therefore if the travel narratives, such as those of Mandeville and Santisteban, along with other traveler narratives whose movement is unquestionable, such as Marco Polo and Odorico of Pordenone’s, were printed and reprinted and have been in the world of 15th and 16th century exchanges and acquisitions, during which travels to the east and west were no longer something extraordinary, it is fitting to ask what component elements of Santisteban’s report best translated the aspirations of his time and fueled news about the world yet to be discovered, whether or not his character traveled as far as he claimed. It is also fitting to ask why, it seems, he used a pseudonym, and why, if the trip was made up, he saw fit to appeal to the figure of Duke Pedro, which is no more than a name in the narrative (ROGERS, 1961, p. 241).

After the preface, there begin to emerge the marks of a time when travelers, their observations and their reports are part of the description and the perception of the world (CHAREYRON, 2000, p. 9-10; TOLEDO, 2007, p. 21-54; BOULOUX, 2010, p. 119), including unmistakable references to Muhammad as the “blood shedder of Christianity” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 22), but the positive aspects gain more influence. Upon departure to the “four corners of the world”, the Holy Land is the place that stands

out (LIBRO, 2008, p. 11), a pole of attraction as it had been in most travel accounts since the 4th century (SIGAL, 1974, p. 8; CHAREYRON, 2000, p. 14). It was there, from the Holy Sepulchre to the stone that Moses struck to draw water, passing through the incorrupt body of St. Catherine, that the faithful recall some passages to strengthen their faith. Some of the signs of the attractiveness of traveling to Jerusalem (CHAREYRON, 2000, p. 111) show up from the outset in spite of the king of Portugal, his father, “because he wanted to experience those trips” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 12). I hope to reflect the many pilgrim reports of the period in which the city appeared exalted, as illustrated by the story of the Tuscan monk Niccolò of Poggibonsi, who traveled between 1346 and 1350 and defined it as “the most holy, the most real the most noble and magnificent, above all cities in the world”; as well as “big, beautiful and adorable!”, to the extent that all generations of the world recognized it as such, “first Christians and Jews then the Saracens, the Jacobites, Nestorians, Georgians, Ethiopians, the Copts, the Arabs, the Turks, the Berbers and the pagans” (NICCOLD OF POGGIBONSI, 1993, p. 9).

Following the announcement of these and other places that recalled the dialogues between the earth and the sky and, therefore, needed to be visited, the main traveling character, the prince, “son of King John of Portugal” arose, presented as Count of Barcelos and not Duke of Coimbra, as he should have been (LIBRO, 2008, p. 12). Travels at this time, although they could still have a religious purpose, as we shall see, were no longer led by Franciscan brothers or Dominicans, as they had been in the 13th and 14th centuries, when John of Pian dei Carpine, Ascelino Cremona, André de Longjumeau, William of Rubruc, Burchard of Mount Zion, John of Montecorvino, André de Perouse, Castle Pilgrim, Riccold Monte Croce, William Adam, Raymond Etienne, Jordan Catala de Sévérac, Jean Marignolli, Ludolph of Sudheim, Pascal Victoria, Niccolò Poggibonsi and others left on missions. After 1368,¹⁴ missions lost their strength, but not the interest in contacts and Jerusalem.

Among the many writings that, along with Mandeville’s – who himself was inspired largely by Guilherme Boldensele and the narrative of his trip to the Holy Land, the *Liber de quibusdam ultramarinis partibus* (1336) – help to understand the historical expression of the *Livro do Infante*, is that of Johann Schiltberger are, the Bavarian whose reports stand out for supporting, just as the Prince did, Emperor Sigismund of Hungary against the Turks. Or the narrative of Ambroise Contarini, Venetian ambassador to Persia and Georgia, whose story, like several of the era including Marco Polo’ or the Niccolò de Conti’s, was told orally and then written down (1477).¹⁵ But it is especially the narratives of knights such as the French Ogier d’Anglure (1395) (OGIER D’ANGLURE, 1878, p. 32), the Gascon Nompar of Caumont (1417), the Burgundian Gillebert of Lannoy (1421) (SIGAL, 1974, p. 98), the Burgundian Bertrandon de la Broquière (1432), based on their protagonists’ profiles, who best denounced that, along

with the religious intentions of the trips, there was a spirit of exploration (GRABOÏS, 1998, p. 197; CHAREYRON, 2004, p. 53-91), highlighted by Santisteban with regards to the Duke. Among the emphasis on the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus suffered and died, such as Nompár (NOMPAR DE CAUMONT, 1858, p. 3), or Ogier, the description of his route using the holy places due to their having been the stage of the story of Christ’s Passion (OGIER D’ANGLURE, 1878, p. 1; OGIER D’ANGLURE, 2008, p. 210-211), the concerns shared with Santisteban despite notable differences and geographical repositioning are many, highlighting the common places (ENTWISTLE, 1922, p. 256.) such as Jerusalem itself, Egypt and other cities, the sacred references in the vicinity (CHAREYRON, 2004, p. 111-159; LIBRO, 2008, p. 15-16), as well as the ones emphasized in descriptions of cities.

More or less eager than the Duke to “see the world”, following the same routes as he did in his expedition, but not necessarily following the religious symbolism of the twelve apostles of Christ as Duke Pedro was keen to dismiss the many other candidates and continue with just a dozen (LIBRO, 2008, p. 12); these travelers, from their own direct experience, from their literary knowledge or from hearsay – which approximates the reports, considered imaginary, of the pilgrims who effectively moved about – helped preserve religious memory and fill the political and administrative memory of these lands to the east. The political problems of the Eastern Mediterranean, for example, are recounted by Bertrandon de la Broquiere and Louis de Rochechouart. The former describes the places under Ottoman rule and is attentive to the Turkish armies, the instruments at their disposal, their forms of management and in particular their military system, that is, it attempts to record the details that could help in their plan try to unite Christians to fight them (BERTRANDON DE LA BROQUIÈRE, 1892, p. 225-230). The latter, whose account is from 1461, highlights the divisions between Turks and Mamluks (LOUIS DE ROCHECHOUART, 1997, p. 1140 ff.).

For this perception of the places beyond known biblical references, interpreters played a prominent role. Pedro, according to Santisteban’s report, had admitted, when drawing together his expedition, to neglecting the symbolism of the twelve followers of Christ, in order to accept the offer of King John II of Castile to be joined by a 13th member, his Herald who was knowledgeable “of all languages of the world” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 12). This interpreter, unreasonably considered a possible narrator of the book,¹⁶ gained prominence in the story, appearing as the one who takes the lead with the authorities found along the way, mediating dialogues such as with the Gran Turk in Patras with the son of the Sultan of Babylon, the king of Armenia and, among many others, the Amazons (LIBRO, 2008, p. 13, 14, 23 ff.). Such indispensable intermediaries, by the way, are mentioned by several other famous travelers but not always out of respect. Dominican Riccold of Montecroce, whose mission was openly

evangelizing, defended at the end of the 13th century, that it was his equals, men tasked with converting, who should know the language of those they intended to convert, just as he had learned Arab (RICCOLDO MONTE CROCE, 1997, p. 457). William of Rubruc harbored similar fears about the intervention of interpreters, lamenting that his translator at the court of the Mongol Khan Mangu, was unable to reproduce his uplifting words of proclamation, so much so that the Pope warned that if he wanted to insist on sending envoys again to the Mongols, “we would have to have a good interpreter, and even several interpreters”, precisely to avoid such confusion (JOÃO DE PIAN DEI CARPINE, 2005, p. 141, 174, 243). In Duke Pedro’s case, however, the only clear sign of dissatisfaction with the 13th element of the troop, the Herald interpreter, is when he proposes to leave a sign in the place where, in Valley of Josaphat, he thought they would be, “judged, on judgement day”. The Duke was furious at the boldness of the proposal, offensive to God, he said, and regretted having known the Herald (LIBRO, 2008, p. 15).

The historical relevance of the narrative, or rather its strength as a credible product of its time, despite incursions by long welcomed fabulous tales of East – such as those about Prester John, the Amazon, giants, etc. – was, as can be seen, in this resource consolidated by tradition, truths, foundations of medieval scholarship, and that were not subsequently disassembled even with direct contacts, who served, often only to reaffirm the oddities considered for those shores (DUVIOLS, 1985, p. 13). Oddities that, based on the signs scattered throughout the narratives, first interested the nobles to whom reports came (WOLFZETTEL, 1996, p. 24) but also to a wider audience (MOLLAT, 1992) – in oral form – enticed by a set of ideas valued for its predictability, i.e., a set of currencies legitimized by repetition. Such regularities of the narrative in question, compared to travel narratives of the period, therefore go beyond this – the articulation of religious and political interests; highlighting certain places, such as the holy land par excellence, Jerusalem (CHAREYRON, 2000, p. 103); or the presence of key members of the expeditions, such as interpreters – making room for several other members that contributed to lend credibility to the narrative and set up a times series, despite the unlikelihood of the trip itself.

Some of these signs of historical confluence that must have contributed to making this book-form narrative a story about a travel experience are the descriptions of the different eating habits. Santisteban tells that, in the court of Tamerlane, they were offered a large variety of food, such as “milk, honey, butter, raisins, pomegranates and dates” which was followed by meat, “loin and roasted leg of horse” and, as a way to display their wealth, were exposed below “camel meat, cooked chicken, elephant meat, capons, unicorn meat, peacocks, ivory meat, parrots, wild beast meat, hawks and other fowl” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 20). Food diversity, as previous travelers described, saying briefly, for example, that the Tartars

“eat everything that can be shot regardless” (GUILLAUME DE RUBRUQUIS, 1735, p. 11-12; GUILHERME DE RUBRUC, 2005, p. 124-125), as William of Rubruc says; or, in a province of China, “people eat all meats, whether raw or cooked, and cooked rice with meat”, according to Marco Polo (MARCO POLO, 2000, p. 177; MARCO POLO, 1854, p. 250); or, more radically, that the Tartars ate the most diverse animals such as “dogs, lions, foxes, mares and foals, donkeys, rats, mice and many other large and small animals except hogs and other animals forbidden in the Old Testament” as recounted by Jean de Mandeville, inspired by the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais (JEAN DE MANDEVILLE, 2007, p. 213). But, despite the difference of emphasis, focus on these aspects of food shows the attention of Christians to similar aspects, which, short of recounting the parts thereof, illustrate how they shared the idea that eating reflected – as, by the way, wearing, believing, celebrating, etc. – collective values, ideals and agreements (RÉGNER-BOHLER, 1983, p. 68). Thus, the narrator, highlighting the banquet event, only reiterates one of the reasons the reports exist: to emphasize the uniqueness of faraway lands compared to those of Christian lands. The awkward situation in which they find themselves, therefore, is all the more significant because they were designed as an impasse in the face of differences in customs derived from faith, since it was Friday and Christians could not eat meat, but some, says Santisteban, “because we were so afraid, we ventured to eat meat” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 20).

The similarities of *Livro do Infante D. Pedro* to other narratives that, making use of visual and imaginary elements, aimed to present a vision of the land to the east for their contemporaries eager for news from lands beyond Europe (DELUZ, 1998, p. 16), do not stop there. From the moment of their departure, the practical signs are indicative, such as travel preparation and arrangements, followed by the implications of these travels, licenses to move through certain territory, payments of safe conduct (LIBRO, 2008, p. 13, 14, 17), means and conditions of the journey, as well as the inclusion of passages in which the rulers of different parts are revered; among many other regularities, such as attention to the richness and abundance of some courts and cities (LIBRO, 2008, p. 22-23).

But if our goal in this course is to test the role that travels came to have in the 15th century, when political interests gradually prevailed over religious interests, and famous lay people gained experience and became the main characters in a story of global expansion, it is worth it to explore one last aspect that could not escape them, the images and practices of unusual, deformed, monstrous or simply wonderful beings that gave verisimilitude to their accounts. These undoubtedly played as decisive a role as food in the desire to see shores beyond Europe, despite all the cruelty that could be found there (LIBRO, 2008, p. 23). Dog-faced men were some of these beings and, says the narrator, were in the city of Sheba. These were reminiscent of the beings cited by St. Augustine and Isidore of Seville

(AGOSTINHO, 1990, p. 229-230; SAN ISIDORO DE SEVILLA, 2004, p. 881-883); Even those who already appeared in the story of Jean de Pian dei Carpine, who had added that his speaking was answered by a bark (JEAN DU PLAN-CARPIN, 1735, p. 48; JOÃO DE PIAN DEI CARPINE, 2005, p. 58); or those of Benedict of Poland, who places them in Russia (BENEDITO DA POLÔNIA, 2005, p. 101); or those of Marco Polo, located on the islands of Andaman and characterized as very bad people and eaters of prisoners (MARCO POLO, 2000, p. 246; MARCO POLO, 1854, p. 348).

Summarized in the letter of Prester John, included in the narrative as a letter to the king of Castile through Duke Pedro,¹⁷ among unusual beings of the lands of the East, described by Prester – some of whom were his vassals – were the giants, “tall as spears” and did not die “except when very old” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 25). In addition to the aforementioned land with just a few women, who only related with men for three months out of the year (LIBRO, 2008, p. 23), there were also notorious one-eyed beings (LIBRO, 2008, p. 28) that were not lacking in Mandeville (MANDEVILLE, 2007, p. 184-185) or, among others, in Jean Marignolli (JEAN DE MARIGNOLLI, 2009, p. 72-73), which are recalled by Santisteban through Prester John’s letter that summarized the wonders. In that very letter, by the way, a whole list of common places of possible peculiarities of the land there helped fuel the belief that in the universe created by God nothing is impossible.¹⁸ The little beings mentioned by Mandeville and Pordenone and their counterparts appear only referred to as “another generation, in which they are men and women are no older than five-year-old children, and are Christians” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 28). Similarly, people appear with unusual features, such as farmers with “round feet”, who do not know about fighting wars, or the most famous, men “from the waist up, and from the waist down, horses” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 28).

And not only were the threatening oddities seductive in those parts. In the lands of the Christian king of the east, the divine signs appeared in unequivocal forms in the very properties of nature. Santisteban says that there were two trees, between the Tigris and the Euphrates, from which 40 pears were picked annually and delivered to Prester John. The fruit was considered to have power to convert Prester and his people to the Christian faith, for they saw the realization of a miracle, given that “the crucifix and Santa Maria with her son in arms appeared everywhere” (LIBRO, 2008, p. 25-27).

The *Livro do Infante*, in short, despite the fact that some of those who studied it have minimized its historical value by deeming it imaginary, is a story that undeniably intersects aspects that speak volumes about the time in which it was written, both with regard to travel as one aspect of valuing nobility, as with regard to the various elements that help to reflect on the conditions and circumstances of the production of the narratives. The uncertain identity of the author, for example, was not new, given that Mandeville’s character was shrouded in mystery. Similarly, with regards to the narrative attributed

to Ruy González de Clavijo, the certainty of his identity did not match beliefs regarding the sole authorship of the story, probably written by the hand of several authors,¹⁹ coming together as a collective work. It was not as novel as a third narrative, Santisteban's, which would be the author's account of a journey carried out by others, for he was not alone. The Dominican friar Simon of Saint-Quentin, for example, who traveled with a religious group led by another Dominican friar, Ascelino de Cremona, who wrote the *Historia Tartarorum*, in which the dialogues that the group's leader held with the Orientals stand out. Or, to avoid again citing Marco Polo – whose account was registered by Rustichello – there was Poggio Bracciolini, merchant Niccolò de' Conti's secretary (who traveled through Syria, India and the Red Sea between the years 1415 and 1440) who, upon hearing his story and narrating it in his work *De varietate Fortunae*, helped him do penance for having given in to the pressure to convert to Islam.

Fewer still can rule out Santisteban's account by garnishing his account with wonderful or invented elements,²⁰ after all, as so often quoted, Jean de Mandeville, and others like Jourdain Catala de Sévérac and Johannes Witte de Hese (GADRAT, 2009, p. 13; WESTREM, 2001), to name only the most famous of those recognized as imaginary travelers, had already worked so that what we see and what we imagine would have similar relevance for historians.

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Notas

¹ G. Warner discusses fraud and mendacity in his work (WARNER, 1889, p. XXIX).

² But there is a whole discussion of such dating. Francis Rogers, in 1961, conducted a study and a translation of the first known edition, that of Seville, Cromberger, ca. 1515. “Later, however, Harvey Sharrer in Evidence of the Fifteenth-Century *Libro de Infante don Pedro de Portugal* [...]”, argues, from a reference to travel in a 1471-1476 Book, Lope García de Salazar, *Las bienandanzas e fortunas*, and the very structure of the book, which would involve a fifteenth century work. Th thesis, however, was challenged, unconvincingly, by Carmen Mejía (ROGERS, 1961; MEJÍA, 1998, p. 219).

³ According Francis Rogers, who thoroughly studied the book, she would not have known the 1515 edition (ROGERS, 1961, p. 212).

⁴ The only example of this is in the public library of Cleveland, USA (MEJÍA, 1998, p. 218).

⁵ “[...] en la carta que él enbió al rey don Juan Segundo de Castilla con don Pedro de Portugal, que andobo mirando mucho en estas partidas [...]” (LOPE GARCÍA DE SALAZAR, [s/d]).

⁶ In the chronicles dealing with the Prince D. Pedro, such as Azurara and Fernan Perez de Guzmán, there is no reference to this character (MEJÍA, 1998, p. 217).

⁷ Thus avoid the opposition between the real and the mythical trip, which was of concern to even more recent scholars such as: LIMA, 2012, p. 127.

⁸ As Mandeville also did (GUÉRET-LAFFERTÉ, 2002, p. 193-196).

⁹ The problems regarding authorship, at the same time explicit and hidden, since the disclosed name is unknown, was dealt with, by ROGERS, 1961, p. 214-220; CORREIA, 2000. p. 112, among others.

¹⁰ It is worth recalling that this is a reference that refers or the four parts of the world remembered by Isidore of Seville, following the tradition of Macrobius, or the cardinal points (CORREIA, 2000, p. 57). Subsequently, these trips came to be

seven, as can be seen in the 1623 edition. According to Menéndez y Pelayo, by confusion with the seven trips Afonso X (MENENDEZ Y PELAYO, 1905, p. CDXI; ROGERS, 1961, p. CDX).

¹¹ It would later come to be even a form of entertainment. Cf. WESTREM, 2001, p. 2.

¹² As Seymour (1967, p. XIII) and Deluz (1998, p. 43-53) recall.

¹³ Doc. CCXXXIII: “Rey molt excellent e avoncle molt car: [...] nos nos dedelitam molt en legir e axi propiament en frances com en nostra lengua matexa, perque us pregam que ns vullats enviar tres libres escrits en lenguatge frances, ço es les canoniques de França, Titus Livius e Mendivila [...]”. Doc. CCXXXVIII: “Molt care mare nostra e molt amada: [...] noresmenys vos pregam, cara mare, que ns. trametats com enans porets lo libre de Johan de Mendrevile e le romanç de Mexaut” (RUBIÓ Y LLUCH, 1921, p. 221 e 225).

¹⁴ When the end of the Mongol dynasty seems to have ceased to benefit the Latin missions (JACKSON, 2005, p. 260).

¹⁵ The story was not translated into Latin and French until the 17th century, and to English in the nineteenth century.

¹⁶ Margarida Sérulo Correia takes apart the hypothesis of identification between the narrator and the interpreter. Cf. ROGERS, 1961, p. 162; CORREIA, 2000, p. 112-113.

¹⁷ On the probable link between the legend of the Prince and the letter, see: MEJÍA, 1998, p. 227.

¹⁸ Lc 1, 37: “Because nothing is impossible to God”. The Christian wonder, founded on faith, was interpreted as a trace of divine power. About it, see: LECOUTEUX, 1998, p. 16-21.

¹⁹ According to Francisco López Estrada, the relationship of the embassy was attributed to Clavijo, however, in the prologue of the work, the name that appears first is that of Alfonso Páez de Santa Maria, which together with the titles assigned to him and his training suggests he would be prepared to undertake the task of writing (ESTRADA, 1999, p. 34-37).

²⁰ Although real and imaginary have been contemplated by many historians as not mutually exclusive but complementary parts of medieval society, there persists, especially with regard to travelers’ narratives, a taste for demarcating the limits of one another, for example, in: QUESADA, 2007, p. 55-74.

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