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The Via Francigena in historical maps and photographic heritage of the Italian Geographical Society Exhibition

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From February 3 to 27, the Palazzetto Mattei of the Villa Celimontana in Rome has hosted the exhibition "The Via Francigena in historical maps and photographic heritage of the Italian Geographic Society". The exhibition aims to contextualize the path of Via Francigena in the Europe, and especially in the Region Lazio for the local development and spatial identity. The rich iconographic and cartographic documentation kept in the archives of the Italian Geographic Society (www.societageografica.it) allows to reconstruct a route that is not only a "road" but a "spatial road", which is a set of paths used at different times, depending the types of trades, of politics, topography and climatic conditions that contributed to the formation of European history and identity.

The exhibition (editors Nadia Fusco, Marco Maggioli, Elodia Rossi and Luisa Spagnoli) presents the historical, urban, architectural and environmental aspects of this route, from its origins and political events, seen in a European and Italian context, following the route Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote in his travelogue (994).

Exhibition (Villa Celimontana, Italian Geographical Society)



(www.societageografica.it)

Particular attention is given to Lazio region, analyzed in its importance as a crossroads of cultural meetings and confrontations, a favourite destination for pilgrims directed to the Eternal City that helped to develop both the social and economic value. It is, infact, specifically of the last decades, the recognition of the importance, not only nationally but also supranational of the Via Francigena as an extraordinary historical-cultural communication route and crossroads of trade and comparisons between different cultures and peoples, that contributed so much to the formation of European identity. Basing on these assumptions, the Council of Europe in 1994, considering the request of local authorities interested, declared the Via Francigena "European Cultural Itinerary", like the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain, with the intention to operate a recovery and greater enhancement of its historic and cultural, artistic and monumental heritage. The establishment, in 2001, of European Association of the "Vie Francigene", with the intent of emphasizing also the multiplicity of historical routes distinguishable on the track in its completeness, was a further step forward in the restoration project that, in 2004, has come to obtain from the Council of Europe, the recognition of being a Great European Cultural Itinerary.

Its itinerary, defined by the eighty stages described by Sigerico, starts fro, Canterbury and crosses the north-western European regions until the Alps, reaching then Valle d'Aosta and descending in the direction of Rome through the region of Piemonte to Lombardia, Emilia Romagna, Toscana and Lazio, significantly marked by churches, cathedrals, shrines, fortresses, bridges, post stations, homes, signs, symbolic and tangible in the area, anticipating the destination: Christian Rome, from 1300 a.D. the "new Jerusalem" of Jubilees. But the capital in fact was not the end of the route: many used to continue to Puglia, in order to embark at Otranto to the Holy Land.

The Via Francigena (Cambridge-Rome-Holy Land)



(www.societageografica.it)

From these considerations, the exhibition aims to contextualize the path of Via Francigena in the European, national and, in particular, Lazio region using general and introductory panels and explanatory files investigating the peculiar relationship between the Via Francigena and the Lazio region.

Exhibition (Villa Celimontana, Italian Geographical Society)



(www.societageografica.it)

Took part to the opening, which took place on February the 3rd 2010, Giulia Rodano, the councillor for culture, performing arts and sports for the Region of Lazio, father Fabrizio Bagnara from the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi – Roman Pilgrims Foundation - and Fiorella Dallari from the Alma Mater Studiorum- University of Bologna, together with the general secretary of the Italian Geographical Society Simone Bozzato and the curators of the exhibition, demonstrating this way the huge attention the government of the Region of Lazio and the Roman Church are directing to this territorial reality, which finds its historical roots strongly related to the Middle Age period. The promoter of this event is the Italian Geographical Society, which aimed this way to expose into its monumental centre the great legacy of maps and drawings kept by the Map Archive, the Library, and the Documentary Archive for the XVI Century.

Exhibition (Villa Celimontana, Italian Geographical Society)



(www.societageografica.it)