

# The Genoese Navigator Antonio de Noli in the Portuguese Explorations of Gambia 1449 - 1455

By

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## Introduction

In occasion of the International Conference in Rome on Cape Verde,<sup>1</sup> author Marcel Balla told on the 16 of October 2014 he had made a discovery that would challenge facts reported in the book *From Noli to Cape Verde* (“*Da Noli a Capo Verde*”)<sup>2</sup> regarding the participation of Antonio de Noli in early Portuguese explorations of African Gambia. Mr Balla announced he would be reporting his “discovery” during the session II of the above-mentioned Rome Conference. That never happened thou.

In essence, Mr Balla aims to refute facts reported in international historic literature on Antonio de Noli – long prior the book *Antonio de Noli And The Beginning of World Discoveries*,<sup>3</sup> such as his participation in the Gambia campaign on behalf of the Infante of Portugal. Two days later, Balla revealed that he had already published a book containing his discrepancies on above. But such discrepant data, either in book or any other form, has never been made available from the part of Mr Balla to his colleagues, the co-authors participating in the *From Noli to Cape Verde* book.

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<sup>1</sup>NCC-CCN (Cape Verdean Cultural Network). International Conference “Centralità strategica delle isole di Capo Verde: Geografia Politica Economia”, 16-17 October, Villa Malta, via di Porta Pinciana 1. The Conference announce listed the participation of the Cape Verde Minister of Education and Culture, a representative of the Italian Minister of Foreign affairs, the Cape Verde Ambassador and other personalities together with representatives associated with the Antonio de Noli Academic Society. The author was invited as “Founder and honorary president” of the society.

<sup>2</sup> Astengo C, Balla M., Brigati I., Ferrada de Noli M., Gomes L., Hall T., Pires V., Rosetti C. *Da Noli a Capo Verde. Antonio de Noli e l'inizio delle scoperte del Nuovo Mondo*. Ed. Alberto Peluffo. Marco Sabatelli Editore. Savona, 2013. ISBN 9788888449821.

<sup>3</sup> Astengo C, Balla M., Ferrada de Noli M., Gomes L., Hall T., Pires V. *Antonio da Noli And The Beginning Of The New World Discoveries*. Ed. Marcello Ferrada de Noli. Libertarian Books, Sweden/Italy, 2014. ISBN 978-91-981615-0-2.

Four years after the conclusions of the International conference “From Noli to Cape Verde”,<sup>4</sup> and long after he participated in writing and editing during 2012-2013 the book reproducing such historical data, Balla now postulates that the participation of navigator De Noli in the Gambia campaign reported in our book is to be attributed instead to “Antonio Usodimare” – hence, not to Antonio de Noli.

Something odd in this thesis assayed by author Balla, it is that it flatly contradicts information given by himself to researchers at AdNAS [*Antonio de Noli Academic Society*], meaning, the participation of Antonio de Noli in the Gambia exploration was partly sustained and illustrated in our book thanks to an ancient manuscript-print containing a map of that African region, and which was supplied by Mr Balla himself (page 134 in the book *Da Noli a Capo Verde*)!

The report was also sourced with information taken from the biographic article “**Antonio de Noli**”, published in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira*, page 736. [See Image 3 further below with the facsimile of the full page of the referred page 736].

Mr Balla is now basing his contention on that in one line of the referred encyclopaedia-article it is mentioned that the true name of Antonio de Noli it would be instead “Antonio Uso di mare”. This paper examines Mr Balla’s confusion of terms and also confirms anew - with help of further research materials - the presence of navigator De Noli in the Gambia campaigns.

It is important to note that the thesis of two separate Antonios (De Noli and Usodimare, surnames that correspond to two different Genoese families) has been discarded in most of the biographic texts found in Italy. The biographic encyclopaedias instead concur on that both the *name* Antonio de Noli and the *denomination* “Uso di Mare” would be referring to the same navigator.

Further, there is a source of confounding by non-Italian researchers or amateur historians, which have mixed up the family name Usodimare – a name pertaining the old nobility of Genoa, and now extinguished - with the nickname “uso di mare”, which some contemporaries have attributed to Captain Antonio de Noli.

The main source for this confusion is in turn attributed to the Swedish diplomat and amateur cartographer Gråberg, which during a relatively short staying in Genoa amid nobility circles had also access to reports on the Gambia explorations of Antonio “uso di mare”.

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<sup>4</sup> International Conference in Noli, Savona, 19-20 Sept. 2010.

The name “Antonio”, for its part, has been written as well in a variety of forms, such as Antoniotto, Antón, etc. It is also believed that amidst this confusion, the king of Portugal opted for referring the navigator as to “the Genoese”.<sup>5</sup>

### **I. Antonio de Noli in Gambia, according to biographic-encyclopaedia sources found in Italy**

After Balla’s affirmations on the 16 of October in Rome – which took this author by completely surprise – I was invited by one of the organisers of the Rome conference, P. Luciano Larivera S.I., to visit the monumental library of Civittà Catolica (600,000 volumes) at the Villa Malta. In the very first book that we opened, the “Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana”, Vol. XXXVIII, we found that in page 989, it reads [See original text in image 1, in the next page. A full facsimile of the page, is shown down below in this text, in Image 6]:

**“Noli (Antonio de). Bio. Genoese navigator. Born around 1419, and died probably in 1466. Equally known by the name of Antoniotto Uso di Mare. Belonged to an illustrious family, but because of political conflicting, he was forced to leave his country, entering in 1449 into the service of Don Enrique de Viseu, Infante of Portugal – who gave to him the assignment of exploring the West Coast of Africa. Discovered (1455-56) together with the Venetian Cadamosto the Golf of Gorea, Gambia, the Cape Verde Islands, the Red Cape, the Bissagos Archipelago, etc.”**

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<sup>5</sup> The Royal Letter of 8 April 1497 regulating the transference of power of the governorship of Cape Verde refers unambiguously to Antonio de Noli as “Genoes”.

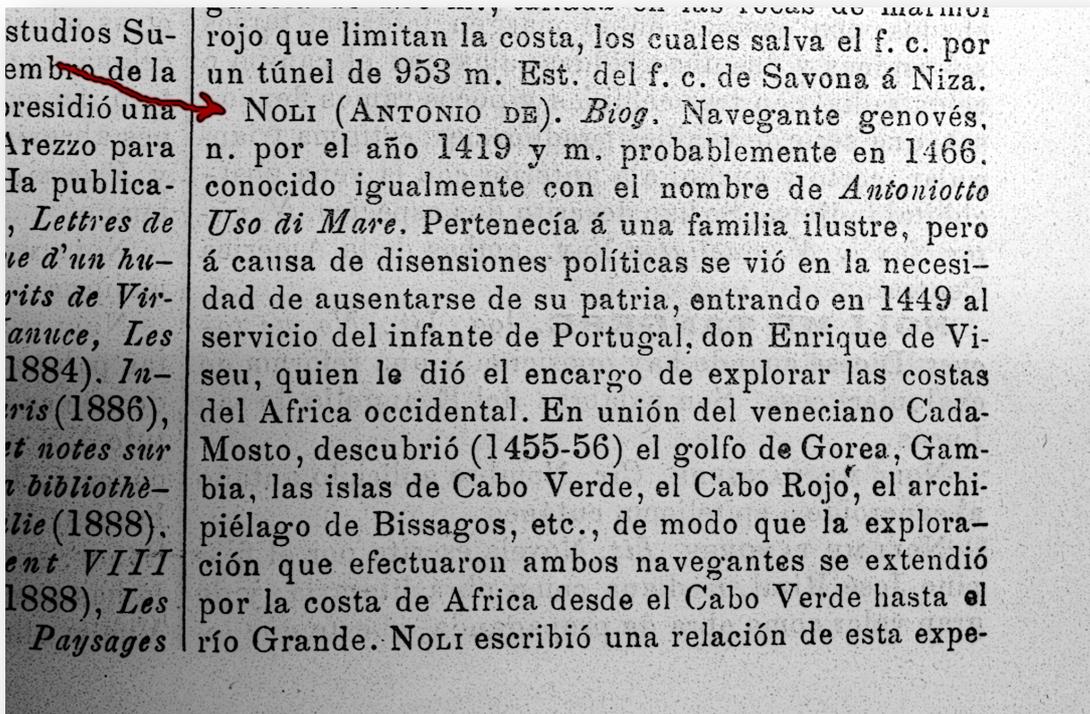


Image 1. Biographical article in the main Spanish encyclopaedia Espasa referring a) **Antonio de Noli** was also known with the name **Antoniotto Uso di Mare**. Note that **Uso di Mare** is not the same than the Italian surname **Usodimare**.

Thereafter, we opened at the Villa Malta Library another huge volume, the Larousse Encyclopaedia, which states in page 397 of Volume sixth:

"**NOLI (Antonio Da)**, navigator from Genoa, **likewise known under the name Antoniotto Uso di Mare**".<sup>6</sup>

I am constrained to exhibit only these new photocopied bibliographical sources found in a rapid visit at the Villa Malta library (Civiltà Cattolica) on the Gambia exploration issue, because my reference archive (among other the book of Gråberg) is located in Sweden - and now I am still in Italy, while the need of this rebuttal came "out of the blue" at the Rome conference that ended just one day ago.

<sup>6</sup> Dictionnaire Universel Encyclopédique Larousse Illustré, Tome Sixième, pag. 397. In original French: "**NOLI (Antonio Da)**, navigator génois, également connu sous le nom d' **Antoniotto Uso di Mare**"

## II. Further reports on the participation of Antonio de Noli in combat, amidst the Gambia expedition

Yet, there are other Italian materials in the Internet that confirm the participation of navigator De Noli in the Gambia campaign.

For instance, in the Wikipedia article on Alvise Da Mosto we found the following passage that describes not only the participation of Antonio de Noli in the Gambia expedition of 1455, but also on his whereabouts in confronting the “hostility of aborigin forces”, which is a clear reference to the conflicting scenario mentioned in the article of the *Grande Enciclopedia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (in which the participation of Antonio de Noli and his own son is contested by Mr Balla). The text of the Italian Wikipedia article reads:

**“On the 22 of March 1455. . . the encounter with another Portuguese expedition, commanded by Antonio de Noli. They decided to continue the navigation together: They discovered the Golfo of Gorsa and came to the river Gambia, who they attempted to sail back. . . They found a strong hostility on the part of the natives, and decided to return to Portugal.”<sup>7</sup>**

A nearly identical account of facts is found in a 72 years old book by Giovanni Descalzo, "Antonio da Noli":

“In 1455 Antonio commanded two more ships destined for new explorations. The Venetian Alvise Cadamosto, also in search of new lands, found him between the mouth of the Senegal and Cape Verde; and both of them, joining forces, they progressed to the south of Africa . . . They entered the river Gambia, where they found hostile tribes that, in spite of their artillery, they barely succeeded in getting rid of the (attacking) canoes of those barbarous nations, who came back every day to attack their ships and to cover them with poisoned arrows, and other deadly projectiles. ”<sup>8</sup>

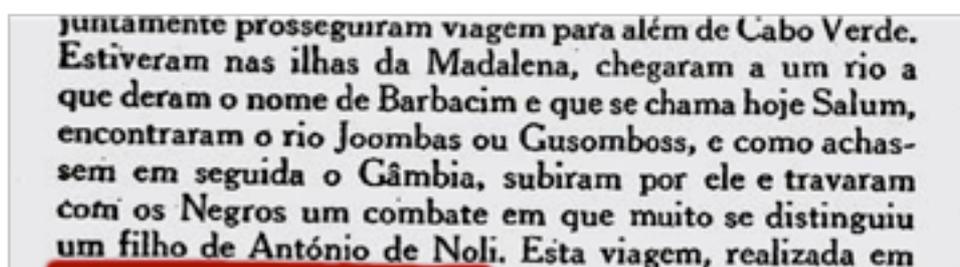
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<sup>7</sup> “Il 22 marzo 1455 partì da Capo San Vincenzo per la sua prima spedizione di scoperta lungo le coste atlantiche. In questo viaggio visitò prima l’isola di Madeira e le Canarie e quindi raggiunse la foce del fiume Senegal dove entrò pacificamente in contatto con la popolazione locale. Ripreso il mare incontrò un’altra spedizione portoghese, comandata da Antonio da Noli. Insieme decisero di proseguire la navigazione: scoprirono il golfo di Gorsa e giunsero fino al fiume Gambia che tentarono di risalire. Dovettero però desistere in quanto trovarono una forte ostilità da parte degli indigeni e decisero di tornare in Portogallo.” Wikipedia article “Alvise Da Mosto”. [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alvise\\_Da\\_Mosto](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alvise_Da_Mosto)

<sup>8</sup> “Partito, come dicemmo, alla volta di ponente, Antonio andò ad offerire i suoi servigi all’Infante Don Enrico di Portogallo, il quale consacrò le sue grandi sostanze e

### III. The biographical article “Antonio de Noli” by the Grande Enciclopedia Portuguesa e Brasileira is irrefutably referring to “Antonio de Noli”. Mr Balla is utterly wrong.

Yet the referred article by Balla in the *Grande Enciclopedia Portuguesa*, which the authors of *Da Noli a Capo Verde* quoted among hundreds of other sources, is not giving any ground to Mr Balla’s affirmations that negate the participation of Antonio de Noli in the exploration of Gambia. In fact, the referred encyclopaedia article, as quoted in the chapter of the book authored by Ferrada de Noli, Brigati & Rosetti, reproduces the following passage from the *Grande Enciclopedia Portuguesa* article:



juntamente prosseguiram viagem para além de Cabo Verde. Estiveram nas ilhas da Madalena, chegaram a um rio a que deram o nome de Barbacim e que se chama hoje Salum, encontraram o rio Joombas ou Gusomboss, e como achassem em seguida o Gâmbia, subiram por ele e travaram com os Negros um combate em que muito se distinguiu um filho de António de Noli. Esta viagem, realizada em

Image 2. Report on explorer Antonio de Noli and his son, in the combat of Gambia. Published in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira*, Ed. 1945, Vol XVIII, p. 836

I start by pointing out that the article in that encyclopaedia is unmistakably (by the encyclopaedia’s own editing) a biographical article about Antonio de Noli. In other words, and just for the sake of clarity, if the real name of the navigator was “Antonio Usodimare” then the main article should have been titled that way. However, I repeat, the “mother” article is headed *Antonio de Noli* and not other: “NOLI ou DA NOLA (Antonio de)”, as given by the encyclopaedia.

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cinquantadue anni della sua vita alla ricerca della via alle Indie per la costa occidentale dell’Africa. Questo nobile principe lo accolse con onore al suo servizio e gli affidò ben presto varie spedizioni marittime, delle quali ci sono sconosciuti i risultati(6), ma è lecito arguire che siano stati soddisfacenti, poiché nel 1455 Antonio comandava ancora due navigli destinati a nuove esplorazioni. Il veneziano Alvise Cadamosto, anch’egli in cerca di nuove terre, lo trovò sul campo delle scoperte, tra la foce del Senegal e il Capo Verde; ed ambidue, unite le forze, si avanzarono al sud dell’Africa, scoprendo il golfo di Gorea, ove strinsero relazioni con due popoli della cosra, da loro detti Barberini e Sereri. Avanzatisi molte leghe ancora, entrarono nel fiume Gambia, ove trovarono tribù sì ostili che, malgrado le loro artiglierie, riuscirono più vole a mala pena a liberarsi delle piroghe di quelle barbare genti, che tornavano ogni giorno ad assalire i loro navigli ed a coprirli di saette avvelenate ed altri mortiferi proiettili.”In: Giovanni Descalzo, “Antonio de Noli”. O. Zucchi, Milan, 1943.

Ensuating the article on “Antonio de Noli”, the *Grande Enciclopedia Portuguesa e Brasileira* has also an article on “Bartholomeo de Noli”, and not on “Bartholomeo Usodimare” or “the brother of Antoniotto Usodimare”. It can be noted also that the family name “de Noli” is cited in the commented encyclopaedia article eleven times, while “Uso di Mare” is referred only twice.



In image 3 above, the cover of the book 'From Noli to Cape Verde'. Image 4 below corresponds to the full page 836 of the commented article on Antonio de Noli in 'Enciclopedia Portuguesa e Brasileira'.

tinha deixado Versalhes para ir ocupar o cargo de director do Museu Jacquemart-André, em Paris. Em 1921, publicou *Ronsard e o Humanismo*. De Poesia, escreveu: em 1894, *Paisagens da França e Itália*; em 1905, *Poemas de França e Itália*, de que, em 1925, fez nova edição aumentada e remodelada; em 1907, *Sonetos de Pedro de Nolhac e*, em 1920, *Versos à Pátria*. Escreveu mais as seguintes obras, que publicou: em 1926, *Vida amorosa de Pedro de Ronsard e Junto da rainha*; em 1928, *Madame de Pompadour e a política*; em 1929, *Recordações de um velho romano*; em 1932, *Contos filosóficos e*, em 1933, *O raminho de ouro* — um título virgiliano — que foi o seu canto de cisne.

**NOLHAC (Estanislaw)**. Escritor francês (?) do séc. XIX, autor de *En Portugal*, 1891, livro de viagens bastante interessante.

**NOLI ou DA NOLA (António de)**. Navegador genovês, n. em 1419 e m. em Cabo Verde, em 1466, aproximadamente, que passou grande parte da sua vida ao serviço do descobrimentos portugueses. O seu verdadeiro nome era Antoniotto Uso di Mare, sendo porém, mais conhecido por António de Noli, nome que lhe veio da cidade de Noli, de onde era natural, perto de Génova. António de Noli pertencia à nobreza de Génova. A fama dos descobrimentos atlânticos portugueses, sob a égide do infante D. Henrique, chegando àquela cidade, que era também, ao tempo, um centro de empreendimentos náuticos, despertou o interesse e a curiosidade de muitas personalidades italianas, como Luís de Cadamosto e Antoniotto Uso di Mare, levando-os a virem a Portugal oferecer os seus serviços ao infante D. Henrique. D. Henrique encarregou António de Noli de explorar as costas africanas. No Senegal encontrou-se com o seu quase compatriota Cadamosto e juntamente prosseguiram viagem para além de Cabo Verde. Estiveram nas ilhas da Madalena, chegaram a um rio a que deram o nome de Barbacim e que se chama hoje Salum, encontraram o rio Joombas ou Gusomboss, e como achassem em seguida o Gâmbia, subiram por ele e travaram com os Negros um combate em que muito se distinguiu um filho de António de Noli. Esta viagem, realizada em 1456, não adiantou o descobrimento da costa, mas teve em resultado uma minuciosa exploração dos países já visitados por Dinis Dias, Nuno Tristão e Álvaro Fernandes e a demarcação dos três rios acima citados. Em 1460 embarcou novamente com rumo à África, acompanhado por duas pessoas de sua família, Bartolomeu de Noli e Rafael de Noli, indo encontrar-se em Zaza com o piloto Diogo Gomes, a quem o infante D. Henrique havia dado o comando de todas as embarcações que encontrasse para os lados da terra da Guiné. Navegaram juntamente, e após dois dias de viagem acharam a ilha de Maio, do arquipélago de Cabo Verde, à qual deram o nome, por ter sido Maio o mês da sua arribada àquela ilha. No dia seguinte, que era de Santiago, descobriram outra ilha, a que puseram o nome deste santo. Desembarcou primeiro Diogo Gomes, por assim o desejar e por a sua caravela ser mais veloz. Seguiram os navegadores a sua derrota em direcção a Lisboa e encontraram uma das ilhas Canárias, a que puseram o nome de Palma. Chegados à Madeira, Diogo Gomes seguiu imediatamente para o reino, enquanto António de Noli se demorou ali alguns dias. Ventos contrários arrojarão, porém, o primeiro para os Açores, e António de Noli, embora partisse dias depois, chegou primeiro a Lisboa e pediu imediatamente ao rei a capitania da ilha de Santiago e Cabo Verde. O rei concedeu-lha e aí veio a morrer. Não se pode considerar António de Noli como o único descobridor das ilhas de Cabo Verde, porquanto ao mesmo tempo Diogo Gomes, escudeiro do

infante D. Fernando, encontrara as ilhas meridionais do mesmo arquipélago. Em 19-IX-1462, el-rei D. Afonso V, já morto o infante D. Henrique, deu as ilhas ao seu irmão D. Fernando, afillhado e herdeiro do mesmo D. Henrique, que as mandou povoar, a começar pela ilha de Santiago, do grupo das descobertas por António de Noli. António de Noli escreveu uma relação desta expedição, mas só chegou até nós um fragmento publicado por Grober de Hemsoë em seus *Annali di geografia e di statistica*.

**NOLI ou DA NOLA (Bartolomeu de)**. Genovês do séc. XV, irmão de António de Noli. Foi capitão das ilhas de Cabo Verde. Em 1466, quando se iniciou a evangelização daquelas ilhas, por fr. Rogério e fr. Jaime, Bartolomeu de Noli levava vida escandalosa. Por intervenção de fr. Rogério, foi abandonado pela sua amante, pelo que o capitão o mandou assassinar, acusando de homicídio fr. Jaime, que lançou na prisão. Temendo, porém, as iras populares, restituiu-o à liberdade.

**NOLIÇÃO**, s. f. Acto contrário à volição; acto ou efeito de não querer. (Do lat. *nolle*, não querer, e suf. *itio*, ição).

**NOLÍDEOS**, s. m. pl. ZOOLOGIA. Família (*Nolidae*) de insectos lepidópteros, da subordem heteroneuros, superfamília dos noctuóideos, apenas considerada por alguns autores. Costa Lima (1936) indica a espécie *Areva subfulgens* (Schans.) como um elemento desta família na fauna brasileira.

**NOLI ME TANGERE**, loc. lat., que significa não me toque. Designação dada pelos autores antigos a certas lesões cutâneas que os tópicos agravavam. Tratava-se, na maior parte dos casos, de epitelomas ou de cancrodes. Diz-se, também, em linguagem vulgar, quando há opposição a uma reforma, em qualquer coisa. Neste sentido aparece designando a aparição de Cristo a Madalena, de que se fala no Evangelho de S. João, cap XX: «Maria Madalena viu Jesus, mas não o reconheceu. Jesus disse-lhe: «— Mulher, porque choras? Que procuras?» Ela, julgando que era o jardineiro, respondeu-lhe: «— Senhor, se tu o levaste de aqui, diz-me onde o puseste, e eu o levarei». Jesus disse-lhe: «— Maria». Ela voltou-se e exclamou: «— Rabboni» (que significa mestre). Jesus então disse-lhe: «— Não me toques (noli me tangere), porque ainda não subi para meu pai...». Esta cena da aparição de Jesus a Maria Madalena tem sido muito reproduzida pela pintura: quadros de Ticiano na Galeria Nacional de Londres, de Rembrandt no Palácio de Buckingham, etc. Na Literatura têm-se feito frequentes alusões a ela, sobretudo quando se trata de uma coisa ou assunto nos quais uma espécie de veneração não permite tocar. ♦ Nome dado a plantas que murcham ao mais simples contacto, ou que são armadas de fortes espinhos, ou cujos frutos rebentam, espargindo as sementes, logo que se lhes toca. ♦ Pessoa muito melindrosa, que com tudo amua ou se ofende.

**NOLINA**, s. f. BOT. Género da família das liliáceas, subfamília das dracenoídeas, tribo das nolíneas, estabelecido por Michaux, que compreende vinte e cinco espécies do Sudoeste da América do Norte, algumas cultivadas como ornamentais.

**NOLÍNEAS**, s. f. pl. BOT. Tribo da família das liliáceas, subfamília das dracenoídeas, caracterizada por tépalas livres, anteras cordiformes, sementes pouco numerosas, globosas, pálidas. Compreende os géneros: *Beaucarnea* Lem., *Dasylyrion* Zucc. e *Nolina* Michx.

**NOLLET (Padre João António)**. Sacerdote e fisico francês, n. em 1700 e m. em Paris em 1770. Pelos seus trabalhos de Física foi nomeado membro da Academia das Ciências e foi professor dos príncipes, filhos de Luís XIV, que muito o admirava e favoreceu. Devem-se-lhe desco-

#### IV. The multiple contradictions of author Balla.

What Mr Balla announced as "new information" he had "discovered", was in fact only his revised *interpretation* of a source-text he has forgotten he used himself in two passages of his chapter in the book *Da Noli a Capo Verde*. In the main, Mr Balla seems utterly confused, and confounding. On the one hand, while saying that it was Usodimare (Balla insisted upon me in our talk that he is referring to the Genoese noble family with name "Usodimare") and not De Noli who was in Gambia, Balla supports the "one-man" thesis that the real surname name of Antonio de Noli would be "Usodimare". But then, by saying that it was Antonio de Noli (and not Antonio Usodimare) who discovered Cape Verde islands, Balla supports at the same time the opposite thesis, namely, the "two-persons" thesis:

Ensuing a pivotal argument of Mr Balla – that a) De Noli and Usodimare are *two different persons* although coincidentally having the same first name; coincidentally coming from the same city (Genoa); coincidentally, having the same situation of being forced to leave Genoa; coincidentally, both of them leaving first to exile in Spain; coincidentally, both of them serving later the exactly the same Portuguese monarch; by coincidence, both of the figures operating at exactly the same period in exactly the same waters; etc., etc., and b) what is written in the commented encyclopaedia article is to be instead attributed to Antonio Usodimare, because that was De Noli's real name – we would necessarily have to conclude the following (events detailed in the referred encyclopaedia article, see image 3):

- That the discoverer of Cape Verde was Antonio Usodimare, and not Antonio de Noli.
- That the one Genoese navigator in Gambia referred by the *Grande Enciclopedia Portuguesa e Brasileira*, (even if it says expressly "Antonio de Noli ...") was not Antonio de Noli but Antonio Usodimare.
- That Antonio de Noli, "who really was Anoniotto Uso di Mare", was not born in Genoa, but he was "a natural of the city of Noli". . . and "belonged to the Nobility of Genoa" (this remarkable inconsistency is analysed in chapter 5 below).
- That the son of Antonio de Noli referred in the article is instead a son of the lineage Usodimare.

From an Italian historical perspective, the remarkable interpretation done by Mr Balla would be considered irrelevant, or absurd, because in most of Italian texts "Antonio Uso di mare" is explained as just a nickname of navigator Antonio de Noli.

However, for those abroad considering a separate existence of an "Antonio Usodimare" from an Antonio de Noli, I put forward this question to Mr Balla:

If Antonio de Noli was not – according to Balla - in the Gambia campaign (the West Coast explorations assigned to him and Cademosto by the Portuguese Infante) Balla has to explain, what *instead* Antonio de Noli concretely was doing at the court of the Portugal Infante or elsewhere at that period of 1455-1456. Balla won't tell us, because he can't tell us. He simply would say he does *not know it*. But the argument of ignorance is not an argument.

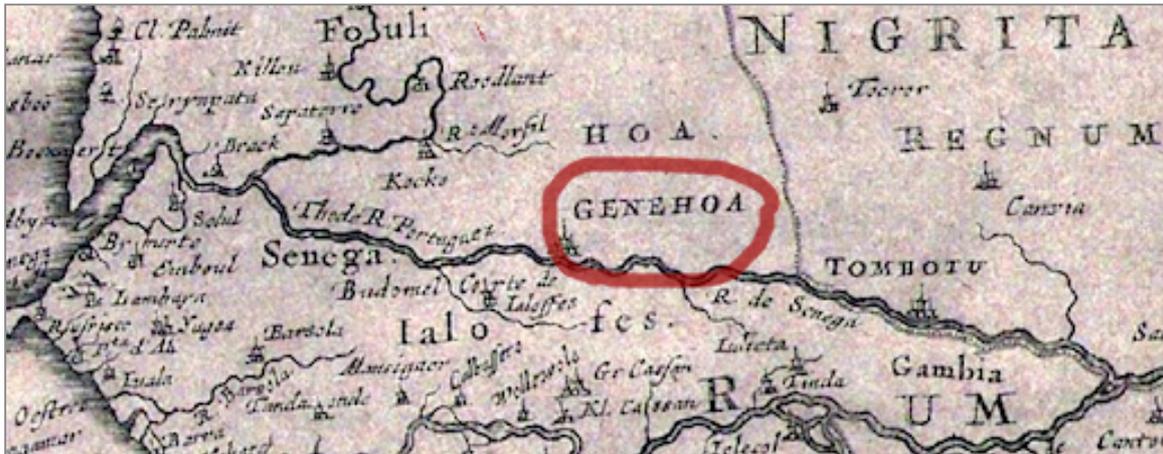
***Mr Balla is contradicting himself:***

The information in the book that Mr Balla is criticizing for being erroneous is information giving by his own (and others). In his own chapter headed "La storia piu grande, mai contata..." facts demonstrating that navigator Antonio de Noli in Gambia are referred twice:

In page 31, he is giving as source the Encyclopaedia Portuguesa & Brasileira, to concur with the presence of De Noli in Gambia. Mr Balla sustains he is a "senior researcher" of his own and this he has to take the responsibility of the information he concurs with, and signs under in his own articles. This in the article authored and signed by Marcel Balla, page 131 (*Da Noli a Capo Verde*):

**"However, other scholars have documented the existence of at least one son of Antonio de Noli. Note: Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira, ed. 1945, Vol XVIII. In page 836 refers that in his Gambia campaign of 1456, Antonio de Noli was accompanied in battle by his son".**

Further, in page 34: in the description of an old map of the African West Coast territories [Image 4 below], Balla observes that the name Genehoa (Genoa) has given to a territory right above the Gambia. Balla then, states: "*Una forte indicazione della riferita presenza in zona [referred to Gambia] dell'esploratore genovese Antonio de Noli*" (in English: "A clear indication of the referred presence (of Antonio de Noli) in the region").



**V. Final arguments demonstrating the absurd in the confusion of identities proposed by Balla. “Uso” in Genoese dialect is “Expert”, and “Uso di mare” means *expert in navigation*.**

The puerile contention expressed to me by Balla, “*It was Antoniotto Uso di Mare that was in Gambia because that is ‘implied’ in the Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira article, however it was Antonio de Noli who discovered Cape Verde Islands, because so it is said in a letter of the King of Portugal*”, falls on cause of its own absurdity.

We have already demonstrated that it is not possible to separate two identities in the *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira*, page 836. If it is said that the real name of the subject of the full biographical article is “Antoniotto Uso di Mare”, then all the facts ascribed to the sobriquet “Antonio de Noli” in the article should be per default attributed to the “real identity”, meaning “Antoniotto Uso di Mare”.

The first “fact”, as postulated by the referred encyclopaedia article in Balla’s interpretation, would be that this real person “Antoniotto Uso di Mare” was a “natural of the city of Noli”.<sup>9</sup>

The second “fact”, as related by the article, would be that he “belonged to the Genoese nobility”.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> “Nome que hle veio da cidade de Noli, de onde era natural”. *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira*, page 836. Opus. Cit.

<sup>10</sup> “Perteneçia à nobreza de Génova”. *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira*, page 836. Opus. Cit.

How can a person born in one independent medieval republic (that it would be the Maritime Republic of Noli that existed at that time), with own government and own nobility belong *instead* to the nobility of a completely different independent republic, which was Genoa?

Current authors from Noli, including Alberto Peluffo, for instance in his speech at the Roma conference,<sup>11</sup> develop extensively on the friendly relationships between the old republics of Genoa and Noli. But that is a too general statement which even if applicable to the époque in general, is not relevant to what occurred for instance at the turbulent political times where Antonio de Noli existed in the region, and at around the time he had to left for exile to Spain and Portugal.

In fact, the priest Bernardo Gandoglia, the city of Noli's own appointed historian, writes that by the years 1552-1553 the Genovese had plans to destroy the castle at mount Orsini, which was central in the defence and architecture of Noli.<sup>12</sup> Gandoglia also refers elsewhere in the book that Genova at that time was convulsed with political conflicts.

Central in my argument versus Balla on this item is that there is NOT a single available trace of a *noble family* of name "Usò di Mare" in the City of Noli particularly at that time. How could Antonio de Noli...er, Antonotto Usò di Mare, would have born at the Republic of Noli?

Further, and more detailed data sustaining the discarding of these absurd thesis, which in fact occupied much of the research work at the 2010 Conference in Noli, are found in the article published 2013 in the Research Bulletin, "[The Genoese Nationality of Antonio De Noli. With a historical and genealogical rebuttal of the toponym hypothesis on the origins of the Cape Verde's discoverer.](#)"<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Luciano Marmi, a member of the Board of Directors of the Antonio Academic Society living in Serra Riccò, province of Genoa, reports that in Genoese dialect the term "Usò" in the constellation "Usò di mare" means unequivocally "Expert". An *expert in navigation* about which *all* biographers of Antonio de Noli have been agreed upon:

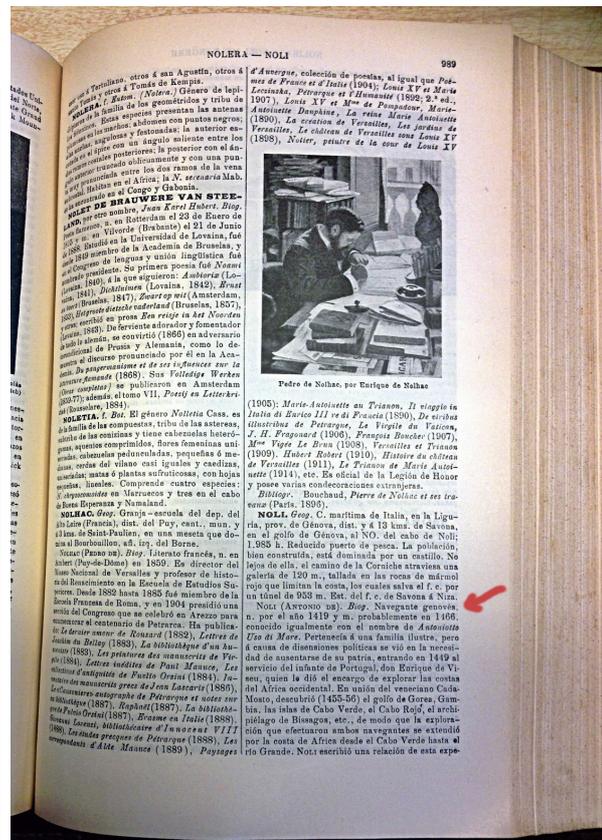
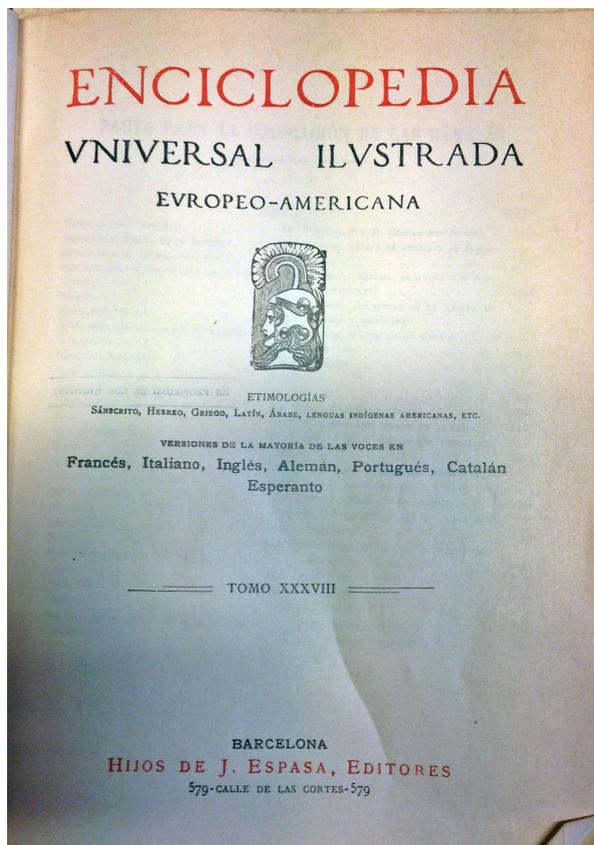
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<sup>11</sup> See Note 1, in page 2 above.

<sup>12</sup> P. Bernado Gandoglia, "In Repubblica". Capitolo IX "Il Senato vuole abbattere in castello di monte Orsino". Pag. 34-36. Sabatelli Editore, Savona, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> M Ferrada de Noli, "[The Genoese Nationality of Antonio De Noli. With a historical and genealogical rebuttal of the toponym hypothesis on the origins of the Cape Verde's discoverer.](#)" Research Bulletin of the Antonio de Noli Academic Society, Vol. 5, Nr.2. Spring 2013. Pages 21-44.

“... It seems clear that "Antonio De Noli" and "Antoniotto Uso di Mare" is the same person. Especially, the second name is a typical nickname because "Antoniotto" is the diminutive of "Antonio" and "Uso di Mare" means "Expert about the sea". The term "uso", in the Genoese dialect, means a sort of expertise in something; the word does not come from "usare" (to use), but probably from "usuale" (ordinary, everyday, common); also in English we have the expression "used to" (e.g.: I am used to go to the restaurant) that indicates an everyday action. If someone is used to do the same thing lots and lots of times, he becomes an expert about that thing and in Genoese we say "è uso nel fare la tal cosa". So "Uso di Mare" can indicate a high consideration for a navigator.”<sup>14</sup>



Images 5 and 6. Facsimiles of the Encyclopaedia article found at the Library in Villa Malta, at the Conference venue in Rome, 16-17 October 2014:

“Noli (Antonio de). Bio. Genoese navigator. Born around 1419, and died probably in 1466. Equally known by the name of Antoniotto Uso di Mare. Belonged to an illustrious family, but because of political conflicting, he was forced to leave his country, entering in 1449 into the service of Don Enrique de Viseu, Infante of Portugal - who gave to him the assignment of

<sup>14</sup> Luciano Marmi. Email to the members of the Board of Directors of the Antonio de Noli Academic Society, 21 October 2014.

**exploring the West Coast of Africa. Discovered (1455-56) together with the Venetian Cadamosto the Golf of Gorea, Gambia, the Cape Verde Islands, the Red Cape, the Bissagos Archipelago, etc.”**

Marcello Ferrada de Noli,  
Bergamo, Italy, 18 October 2014