

Annunciation and the Misericordia, both of which had been active in that church even before the establishment of the confraternity of Saint Martin. One praiseworthy feature of the book is the large number of photographs of the church itself, which will be of interest to art and architecture historians. These include photographs of the interior of the church, its paintings, and its relics.

Before providing a detailed account of the history of the confraternity in the church of Our Lady of Loreto, De Gheraldi gives a very useful synopsis of the leading theories on the origin of confraternities in Italy, which makes the volume amenable to newcomers to the field. He then traces the history of the confraternity of Saint Martin of Tours, including in it a biography of the saint and quoting relevant passages from Gregory of Tours' *Historia Francorum* (in Italian translation). Among the documents provided by the author is the modern (1993) Statute of the Confraternities in the Diocese of Albenga-Imperia, which may be of interest to scholars of contemporary religious organizations. The volume ends with photographs of the confraternity's current ceremonies. Particular attention is paid to the celebrations in honour of Saint Martin (11 November).

The volume is clearly organized with an aim to celebrate the confraternity's long history and current vitality. It is, therefore, intended primarily for a local audience. Advanced scholars in confraternity studies may quibble with the idiosyncratic organization of the enormous amount of information presented in this volume, or with the absence of self-contained thematic units. Nevertheless, the volume makes a significant contribution to the history of lay spirituality and lay religious organizations in Oneglia over the course of many centuries and sheds light on local piety in a small Italian town in western Liguria.

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La devozione dei Bianchi nel 1399. Il miracolo del Crocifisso di Borgo a Buggiano, ed. Amleto Spicciani. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1998. 201 pp., 15 illustrations. ISBN 88-467-0082-1

Few elements of Christian theology have coloured medieval religious observance as vividly as penitence. Starting with the great processions of flagellants in the late thirteenth century and culminating in the movement of the Bianchi in 1399, the quest for physical expiation of sin and public demonstrations of remorse provided an outlet for lay devotion and worship rarely experienced after the Renaissance. It is often difficult, however, to appreciate the full significance of these penitence-based movements without a closer examination of the socio-political circumstances from which they emerged. Fortunately for scholars of the Bianchi movement, this is precisely the type of examination Amleto Spicciani's collection provides.

Starting with Mario Marrocchi's examination of the various sources and research methods used in recent studies (including his own) of the Bianchi

movement ("Fonti e metodi di ricerca nello studio dei Bianchi"), the book seeks to answer why, in the summer of 1399, great bands of pilgrims throughout northern Italy donned white vestments emblazoned with red crosses and went about the countryside fasting and calling for peace and mercy. Marrocchi examines a number of sources, including the traditional account of an apparition of the Virgin Mary, and concludes that the movement may be traceable as much to social unrest as to religious devotion. Another theory Marrocchi proposes is that the movement may also have been tied to plague avoidance, suggesting that many of the elements of the movement bear a striking similarity to the contemporary precautions against infection.

Marrocchi's overview is followed by Amleto Spicciani's "Il miracolo e la conoscenza storica," where he considers the best known of the miracles attributed to the movement: the crucifix in Borgo a Buggiano which, by all contemporary accounts, actually bled in response to the movement. Spicciani examines the varying details of the miracle, as well as the popular beliefs and the iconography of the time, in order to determine the extent to which such a miracle conformed to contemporary religious and historical expectations that would allow it to be accepted as genuine.

Fabrizio Mari presents a view of the movement throughout the Valdinievole region in his "I Bianchi in Valdinievole. Testimonianze contemporanee e sviluppi storiografici." In this work the author draws on contemporary accounts and examines their historiographical development. The volume returns to the miracle of the crucifix, as Rossano Pazzagli examines the persistence and the revival of the tradition in the modern era ("Persistenza e rinnovamento di una tradizione. La celebrazione del crocifisso di Borgo a Buggiano in età moderna"). Paolo Vitali completes the study with a wonderfully illustrated look at the iconography of the crucifix in question ("Iconografia del crocifisso ligneo della Chiesa di S. Pietro Apostolo di Borgo a Buggiano").

For confraternity scholars, the book will provide a view of one of the more significant lay movements of the late Middle Ages, but one which did not translate into continued association. For this reason it will be particularly useful for comparative studies.

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Dionigi, Renzo. *SS. Quattuor Coronati. Bibliography and Iconography. An Essay*. Milano: Aisthesis, 1998. 255 pp. ISBN. 88-87361-04-5. £. 25/Lit. 75.000. illustrations

The history and iconography of the SS. Quattuor Coronati, or the Four Crowned Martyrs, patron saints of many stonemason guilds from the late medieval period onwards, has been presented in this new and very handsome book, containing thirty seven colour plates and numerous other black and white illustrations. The