

Confraternities, although religious, allowed for laity to secretly espouse political ideals outside of the community at large. In the case of the Slovenes, Mian focuses on the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the Teutonic Knights, the Patriarchy of Aquileia, and the duchy of Karantania. The Teutonic Knights arrived in Slovenia in 1199. Karantania, the first state of Old Slovenians and arguably the first stable and independent Slav state, was founded in the sixth century. The author describes the ancient installation ritual of Karantanian dukes, conducted in Slovene, which was held at the Duke's Stone, in present day Austria. In the action of investiture, rich in both religious and national symbolism, Slovenian peasants sat on the stone and became dukes after agreeing to respect both the decrees of the Catholic Church and that of the Slovene people.

The quest for national sovereignty is also evident in the case of the Serbian Orthodox community of Trieste, detached from the Greek community at the end of the 1700s by the Habsburgs. The Serbs in Trieste, dedicated to St. Spiridione, were granted freedom of migration and religious practice, commercial independence and rights to private ownership. Lenoci argues that the Serbs were thus able to assert within the confines of the Habsburg state their own identity. Trieste's multi-confessional tolerance allowed the Serb population, comprised mainly of merchants, to find their own space within a foreign land and to maintain it to the modern day.

*Quaderni Storici 2* opens the doors to wider confraternal study outside of the realm of the Western European world. With its multi-ethnic, comparative approach, this book contributes to the ever growing interest in a more global understanding of ritual devotion and kinship.

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Dehmer, Andreas. *Italienische Bruderschaftsbanner des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*. Italienische Forschungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz Max-Planck-Institut, I Mandorli, 4. München and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2004. 399 pp. ISBN 3-4220-6460-5. Euros 68.

This book is the first systematic study on confraternity banners (*gonfalon*i) of Central and Northern Italy, highly valued paintings for symbolic, ritualistic, and aesthetic reasons. The book, which focuses on canvases (*Leinwände*) only, is an excellent source of information for thirteenth/sixteenth-century Italian confraternities and their need for representative objects. Andreas Dehmer examines the significance of confraternities as art patrons for the development of Italian art and also considers the physical aspects of *gonfalon*i.

To explain the origins of the presence of mobile images in Western lay or religious rituals, Dehmer examines the influence of Byzantine liturgy and the use

of icons in processions, as well as the influence of ecclesiastical vexilla (pp. 61–64) and military flags (pp. 64–66). Dehmer sees confraternity banners as militant signs of a Christian identity and also as an aid for devotional activities and participation of the laity in liturgical practices. Their visibility helped *confratelli* to appear as a distinct group in a competition for prestige that could lead to conflict-laden rituals (pp. 75–76). Civic signs such as city banners are briefly evoked, as is the involvement of municipalities in supporting confraternities with large subsidies to pay or repair their gonfaloni.

Whereas present-day English and Italian usage differentiates between a banner, made of fabric, and a standard or processional panel, made of wood, a confusingly profuse terminology was indiscriminately used during the Renaissance (p. 42): *Gonfalone*, *vexillum*, *insegna*, *segno*, *stendardo*, *bandiera*, etc. Dehmer relies on a seventeenth-century source, a description of a liturgical ceremonial in which a confraternity banner is described as a painting on silk processed in a vertical position (p. 43). This definition, however, presents a methodological problem, not just because linen was far more common than silk – as Dehmer’s catalogue proves – but more importantly because it ignores other processional works such as wooden panels which, clearly, were also signs of identity with a similar iconography, function, and patrons (p. 49).

The strength of this important study lies in the substantial textual and visual evidence which documents both the multiple functions of banners as well as the high status they enjoyed as art objects whose representations of saints provided efficient protection. Dehmer’s research is abundantly supported by a selection of confraternity statutes and account books, chants, prayers, and descriptions of processions, but also by images of corteges, burials, and *confratelli* gathering behind their banners in a variety of media (reliefs, miniatures, engravings, frescoes, altarpieces).

Dehmer demonstrates how banners were highly symbolic objects expressing group identity and unity in public processions or funerals, as well as in private ceremonies such as the foundation of the confraternity, investiture of the chair, or collective devotional practices. Not just mobile objects, banners could also be located upon an altar, sometimes framed by an elaborate *tabernacolo* and promoted to the status of cult objects (pp. 124–133). Dehmer’s chapter on iconographic classifications of *gonfaloni*, in fact, reveals that banners did not differ from altarpieces in their themes. If Marian motifs (such as the Virgin of Mercy or the enthroned Madonna) were the most popular, Christological scenes were typically chosen by flagellant societies while Roch or Sebastian appeared on many plague banners. Banners could also spread the image of newly or soon to-be canonized saints, thus fostering propaganda for a specific religious order (pp. 169–172). One wonders what distinction, if any, contemporaries made between looking at a fixed banner or at an altarpiece, a point that needs further investigation. Dehmer contends that artists entrusted with a banner opted for a schematic composition,

privileging hieratic, frontal figures. This aesthetic choice imposed itself through a process of emulation and conformity among confraternities, a *modo et forma* requirement that confraternities had already adopted for their statutes. Dehmer's analysis of banners' dimensions also shows this tendency to uniformity.

A catalogue of 120 banners is appended, providing proof of their widespread presence not just in Umbria, as often believed, but in all of Italy. Unfortunately, the tiny, black & white reproductions do not do justice to these visually stunning paintings, often executed in vivid and expensive colour.

Other avenues of extended research could include discussing the origin of banners within a context of civic and military symbols of authority. Further, examining other marks of identity or praiseworthy confraternal possessions (relics, icons, statues, frescoes, buildings) could help recreate their visual environment. In the case of public rituals, one could analyse the specificity of confraternity banners among signs of membership, both civic and religious, such as ecclesiastical, city, or *rioni* (districts) *vexilla*, coats-of-arms of patrician families, or guild emblems. One could ask in what respect the power of a textile image is different from that of a fresco, an altarpiece, or a statue in a devotional context.

All confraternity scholars should consult Dehmer's overview of the significance of banners as artistic products and functional objects. His truly informative footnotes and exhaustive bibliography help to make this book the most salient reference work to date for Italy. Other European banners still await their historian.

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*Donne tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna in Italia. Ricerche*, ed. Giovanna Casagrande. Perugia: Morlacchi, 2004. xiii, 216 pp., ill., ISBN 88-88778-66-7 [Contains: Giovanna Casagrande "Presentazione" pp. i–xiii; Patricia Skinner "Donne nel commercio amalfitano (secoli X–XII)" pp. 1–22; Maria Teresa Guerra Medici "'City Air'. Women in the Medieval City" pp. 23–51; Claudio Regni "Le donne nell'*appassu* eugubino del 1301" pp. 53–71; Maria Teresa Brolis "Il valore di un presenza. Le donne nelle confraternite medievali di Bergamo" pp. 73–100; Katherine L. Jansen "Mary Magdalen as Model for Uncloistered Religious Women of Late Medieval Italy" pp. 101–152; Maria Grazia Nico Ottaviani "'Nobile sorella mia honoranda'. Società e scritture femminili: alcuni esempi perugini" pp. 153–216.]

This volume originates from a project of the Università degli Studi di Perugia, *La condizione della donna dal Medioevo all'Età Moderna in Italia—con particolare riferimento all'Italia centrale—attraverso fonti giuridiche, legislative, fiscali, giudiziarie e narrative*, coordinated by Giovanna Casagrande, whose introduction situates these six essays in the context of the now vast historiography on women