

Reviews

Giuseppina De Sandre Gasparini, *Contadini, chiesa, confraternita in un paese veneto di bonifica. Villa del Bosco nel Quattrocento* (Verona: Libreria Universitaria Editrice, 1987), xii, 184 pp. [the item was listed under Publications Received in vol. 2:2 Fall 1991, p. 22.]

As the author mentions in the preface to the reprint (the volume was first published in 1980), the work seeks to reconstruct the local history of a late-medieval town in the Veneto—Villa del Bosco—with special emphasis on the role of religious orders and confraternities in the region. The work is divided into five chapters. The first gives an historical background to the region, examining in particular the role played by the Benedictines of St Giustina of Padua from the nearby town of Concadalbero, the effect of the ecological breakdown of the terrain, much of it low and swampy, in the 14th-15th centuries, and the nature of the territory around Villa del Bosco (pp. 17-38). Chapter two is dedicated to an examination of the agrarian context of the region, with particular attention paid to land reforms, land management, farming and animal rearing (39-72). Chapter three concentrates on the population, examining its movements, lodgings, foodstuffs, work, and the variance in social levels present even within the working class of the area (73-96). Chapter four examines the churches, parish priests, and confraternities in the area, with special emphasis on the state of local churches in the early 15th century, the parishioners' difficulties with their absent and profligate priest don Dionisio dalle Rive (1457-61), the renewal fostered by the next parish priest, Antonello da Crema, the reconstruction of the parish church and the founding of the confraternity of San Rocco (97-124). The fifth and last chapter

examines the statutes of the confraternity of San Rocco, drawn up along the lines of the 1468 statutes of the Paduan confraternity by the same name, and the confraternity's prayer book (125-138). After a brief conclusion (139-144), two appendices present the statutes of both the Padua and the Villa del Bosco confraternities of San Rocco—typeset in parallel columns to facilitate a comparative study—(145-162), as well as a chart outlining the saints to whom confraternities appealed for intercession (163-168). An extensive index of names and subjects concludes the volume (169-184).

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Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence. Eds. Marcel Tetel, Ronald G. Witt and Rona Goffen (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), xiv, 254 pp., illustrations [for a complete list of contents see below under Publications Received]

The ten essays in this collection were first presented at a conference held at Duke University in October 1986. The purpose of the conference was to examine the effect on fifteenth-century Florentine life and culture of the fifty preceding years of the Black death. The demographic tragedy of the plague created a severe economic contraction which, according to Ronald G. Witt in his preface to the collection, slowed social mobility and accentuated class distinctions. In Florence, the relative political stability which followed encouraged the bureaucratization of daily life, one example of which was the newly instituted practice of recording deaths and births. From primarily historical, art-historical, and literary perspectives, the essays in this collection examine a culture in which, they argue, the experience of death was a major shaping influence.

The collection opens with Alberto Tenenti's survey of the changing role accorded death as an historical force in the