

been quite aggressive (eg. the sixteenth-century terracotta portrait bust of Cione di Lapo Pollini, founder of the Florentine Hospital of S. Maria della Scala in 1313). Digital technology was employed in the exhibition to recreate stages in the evolution both of the Innocenti's familiar façade, and of the S. Maria della Nuova's important cruciform plan. In both instances, these stages have been conveyed successfully through series of images or through colour separation on plans and elevations. The volume is very richly illustrated, and demonstrates quite well that the two institutions were very richly endowed by pious Florentines who sought the salvation of their souls in the succour of the weak and helpless. More importantly, the volume is free of the sometimes mindless cheerleading articles that often fill up exhibition catalogues of this sort. It includes solid works of well-documented scholarship which were generated in the process of bringing the exhibition together, and which make a valuable contribution to our knowledge of these two very important institutions.

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***I Sacri Monti. Bibliografia italiana.*** Eds. Pier Giorgio Longo and Danilo Zardin. *Bibliografia dei Sacri Monti, Calvari e Complessi Devozionali*, 2. Ponzano Monferrato (AL): Centro di Documentazione dei Sacri Monti, Calvari e Complessi devozionali europei, 2010. Pp. 125. ISBN 978-88-89081-20-4. n.p.

Although not about early modern confraternities, this book will be of interest to scholars working on them for the insights it offers into another form of early modern and baroque piety — the erection of *sacri monti* (literally, “sacred mountains”) and *calvari* (Stations of the Cross) on natural hillsides outside urban centres. The purpose of the *sacri monti* was to encourage the devout to retrace the steps of Jesus’ passion by following a devotional path which, winding up the hillside, brought them past various edifices containing life-sized painted statues in wood or terracotta that graphically captured a moment in the story. By admiring the visual representations, praying in front of them, and meditating on the events depicted, the devout participated in a spiritual exercise not unlike that of travelling as a pilgrim to the Holy Land and visiting the actual sites. In short, the *sacri monti* were attempts, and such was their “declared purpose” (p. 18), to reconstruct ancient Jerusalem in Europe for the benefit of Christians unable to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Not surprisingly then, a number of such *sacri monti* were built under the aegis of the Franciscan order (which, we might remember, has “Custody of the Holy Land”) and with the assistance of recently returned pilgrims. The *sacro monte* of Varallo (in Piedmont), the oldest and most famous such complex in Italy, was founded shortly before 1491 by the Franciscan Friar Minor

fra Bernardino Caimi, “on his return from Judea, after having made a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre of Christ Our Lord” (p. 16), while the *sacro monte* of San Vivaldo (in Tuscany), was founded shortly after 1500 at the instigation of the Observant Franciscan fra Tommaso da Firenze, recently returned from the Venetian colony of Candia (Crete), the closest he ever made it to Palestine. But, as Danilo Zardin points out in his introduction (pp. 9–28), the erection of *sacri monti* was much more than simply an attempt to bring the Holy Land to Europe, or a Catholic response to the Protestant Reformation and its focus on *sola fide*; it was, in fact, a much older and much more multi-layered phenomenon that gripped not only Italy, but northern Europe as well. In fact, the previous volume in this series (*La Passione nel paesaggio — Passion in der Landschaft*, edited by Harald Quietsch and published in 2007) was dedicated to the presence of such *sacri monti* in German speaking lands.<sup>1</sup>

Not all such *sacri monti* were, however, centred on the Passion. Some were focused on the Rosary (Varese, 1604), others on the Virgin Mary (Oropa, 1617), and at least one on the life of a particular saint — the *monte sacro* in Arona (Piedmont), erected in 1610, is dedicated to the life and miracles of St Charles Borromeo, who was born there. As such, they reflect not only a larger and more nuanced development in Catholic piety present in Italian, German, and Slavic speaking territories, but also a longer phenomenon that stretches from the late Middle Ages to the seventeenth century.

The diversity and longevity of the phenomenon is evident in the extensive bibliography that constitutes the major part of this volume (pp. 31–125). Laid out in alphabetical order by author, this listing of articles, monographs, collections, and even doctoral theses touching on the *sacri monti* and the *calvari* in Italy illustrates the wealth of scholarship, past and present, available on the subject.

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<sup>1</sup> Available on the web in pdf at [http://www.sacrimonti.net/DocumentFolder/Passione\\_paesaggio.pdf](http://www.sacrimonti.net/DocumentFolder/Passione_paesaggio.pdf). There are plans to make this second volume on Italian *sacri monti* also available electronically through the same portal.