

What results from this masterful synthesis is a model for excavating the complexities of premodern convent life and suggestions of intriguing possibilities for future research. The extensive selection of plates included will prove particularly useful for those unfamiliar with the visuals of monastic architecture, as will the glossary of terms on page 229.

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Porotto nella storia, ed. Marica Peron. Ferrara: Liberty House, 2003. vi, 299 pp., b/w and colour illustrations. no ISBN [Contains: Franco Cazzola “Presentazione” pp. i–vi; Adriano Franceschini “Note per la storia di Porotto e del suo territorio” pp. 1–171; Marcella Marighelli “Il Boschetto degli Ammorbatì” pp. 173–201; Marica Peron “Istituzioni e strutture pubbliche in Porotto nei secoli XIX e XX” pp. 253–277; Lucio Scardino “Un pittore di Porotto: Pier Augusto Tagliaferri (1872–1909)” pp. 279–299.]

This book contains five chapters that narrate the history of Porotto, a small town near Ferrara. The survey covers several centuries and portrays the people of Porotto in their interacting with the church, the village institutions, the places, and the land.

In “Note per la storia di Porotto e del suo territorio” Adriano Franceschini illustrates the history of Porotto from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century. The author provides the reader with an extraordinarily vivid, wide, and detailed account of Porotto’s history and territory. His research goes far beyond this small village and draws the connections between the community of Porotto and nearby cities, especially Ferrara and Bologna. What is underlined here is the strong interrelation between Porotto and the watercourses in its vicinity, mainly the Po and the Reno rivers, which in fact changed the geophysical environment and caused severe economic, social, and ecological changes throughout the centuries.

The second chapter describes the birth and upkeep of the “Boschetto degli Ammorbatì”, a lazaretto situated on a small island on the Po river. The lazaretto was made possible in 1464 by the generosity of Peregrino Punzinella who, before dying from the plague, left all his possessions to the city of Porotto for the construction of an “edificium et hospitale dignum pro pestiferatis.” Thanks to her methodical research, Marcella Marighelli is able to reconstruct the history of this “Boschetto.” In the first part of her analysis, she illustrates in detail how the hospital was erected, expanded, and restored throughout the years until 1631 when it was finally sold to a doctor, Cesare Fogliani. The second part of her work is mainly dedicated to Pietro Castagno, a mid-sixteenth-century charlatan known

for inventing a miraculous “oleum contra pestem.” Marighelli gives us a captivating history of the Boschetto and its people also by quoting amply, often without a translation, from the numerous documents consulted.

Confraternitas readers will be delighted by the following chapter by Enrico Bovi, which is completely devoted to the parish and the lay confraternities of Porotto. Analysing several documents from the parish archives, the author identifies two main confraternities: “La Compagnia del SS. Rosario,” present in Porotto since 1664, and “La Compagnia del SS. Sacramento,” established in 1712. In the Constitution of “La Compagnia del SS. Sacramento” the reader will be able to find a thorough account of the duties of all its members; the confraternity in fact was to function as a highly hierarchical organization, whose positions could range from the highest one of Prior to that of Collector. Along with these two, the author also recognizes the existence of three other confraternities: “La Compagnia del Riscatto degli Schiavi Cristiani” founded in 1749, “La Compagnia dei Cordigeri” erected in 1819, and finally “La Compagnia delle Anime pie Purganti.” Of all the above confraternities, Bovi is able to delineate their history, their regulations and their active role within the community, such as, for example, the numerous duties carried out during funeral ceremonies. Although briefly, the author links Porotto’s confraternities to other sodalities operating on the Italian territory and sets them in a broader historical context; it is this section, presented at the very beginning of his work, which would benefit from further investigation.

Marica Peron has researched the public institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this chapter she shows the interaction among the town council, public institutions, and the population of Porotto itself. Peron briefly reminds us that the Unification of Italy had required an overall homogeneity in the socio-economic treatment of those communities entering the Kingdom and, then, she proceeds to describe the services provided to comply with the needs of the locals. The author tells us about the quest of Porotto’s people for a midwife, a local doctor, a postman, a pharmacist, a new cemetery, a school and a train station and she highlights the dynamics which, in the end, favoured these services to be offered.

The last section considers one of the most prestigious citizens of Porotto, the painter Pier Augusto Tagliaferri (1872–1909). The author begins by pointing out the different phases of a growing interest in the works of the artist and in his life; in the past thirty years, for example, there was a consistent increase in the number of exhibitions where Tagliaferri’s paintings appeared. This revival has caused nonetheless some biographical misconceptions, which Scardino seeks to straighten out. The author introduces the main events of the painter’s life and gives particular relevance to his uninterrupted travelling; for almost ten years, in fact, his voyages allowed him to see new cities, to visit museums and to meet other prominent artists. It was at the beginning of the century that Tagliaferri came

to know his meant-to-be mentor Ferruccio Lupis, who also dedicated a monograph to him in 1922. Scardino also comments upon some of the artist's paintings and family pictures. Though limited in space, this chapter offers us an engaging biography which sets this bohemian artist in both a local and a cosmopolitan scene.

Not only is this book able to relate the history of a small village in a stimulating way, but, whenever possible, it also connects it with other Italian cities; this emphasizes the necessity of remembering one's own origins in order to better comprehend and appreciate our present world, characterized by variegated cultures, costumes, languages and local identities, which, more than ever before, are strictly intertwined.

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La Veneranda Compagnia di Misericordia dal Medioevo al terzo millennio, ed. Claudio Paolocci. Genova: Associazione Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 2003. Special issue of *Quaderni franzoniani*, 14.2 (July–Dec. 2001). 223 pp., illustrations. ISSN 1594–7505 [Contains: Francesca Fabbri “L'opera della Compagnia di Misericordia dal 1464 ad oggi” pp. 7–176; Fausta Franchini Guelfi “Dalla Compagnia di Misericordia alla Compagnia della morte di S. Donato; l'arredo liturgico e le immagini di devozione nella storia del patrimonio artistico” pp. 177–202; Giovanni B. Varnier “Dalla carità nascosta al volontariato; la Veneranda Compagnia di Misericordia di Genova nel XIX secolo” pp. 203–214; Nicla Buonasorte “La Compagnia di Misericordia nel Novecento” pp. 215–223.]

The four contributors of this volume trace the activities of the Compagnia di Misericordia in Genoa from its inception in the fifteenth century to today. Francesca Fabbri provides the majority of the work with an overview of the history of the confraternity and eleven appendices (pp. 38–176). Not only was the fifteenth century a “century of confraternities,” but also one of confraternities that arose to address specific social concerns. She cites the *Conservatorio di San Giuseppe per gli organi*, *Ridotto per l'Ospedale degli Incurabili*, and *Mandillette per l'aiuto domiciliare agli infermi* as examples. Founded in 1464, the Compagnia di Misericordia provided comfort for those condemned to death, as well as to those sentenced before the court and imprisoned.

The statutes from its origin to 1797 hold similar tenets for its members, instructing them in all matters pertaining to the confraternity. While there were some modifications, like the mitigated role of the prior in the sixteenth century, real change would not occur until the nineteenth century. Fabbri quotes liberally from these statutes while discussing the emendations throughout the first three centuries.