

religious schism, individual and social security, and the relations between mainstream and marginal groups.

While the introduction to this volume provides an excellent overview of the history and context of confraternities in the medieval and early modern world, the articles provide exceptional insight into the micro- and macrocosms of confraternity life, architecture, and policy both in Europe and the worlds beyond.

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Gazzini, Marina. *Confraternite e società cittadina nel medioevo italiano*. Itinerari medievali, 11. Bologna: CLUEB, 2006. xii, 366 pp. ISBN 88-491-2386-8

One of the many merits of this book by Marina Gazzini is to establish scientifically the state of the discipline in confraternity studies. Not only, but the author provides a strong theoretical and also historiographic frame of reference that establishes effectively the otherwise semantically shifty word-object “confraternita”.

After doing this, the author analyzes a number of late-medieval Italian confraternities from a coherent and methodologically precise urban perspective, focusing on their relations as well as their interactions with other contemporary social realities. In so doing, Gazzini presents Milan and the towns of the Po valley as part of a unique town-based network of confraternities that, for its own nature, deserves to be investigated. In her work, the web of confraternities in the Po region can be examined from a variety of angles for the different religious, economic, cultural, social functions of these sodalities. From this perspective, Gazzini’s book is a very interesting achievement in the field of medieval studies and confraternity studies.

The book is divided into three distinct, as well as sequentially linked parts: *Tradizione storiografica e processi storici* (“Historiographic tradition and historical processes”); *Reti confraternali nell’Emilia comunale* (“Confraternities networks in municipal Emilia”); *Confraternite a Milano in età signorile e ducale* (“Confraternities in Milan during the seignior and the ducal age”). Gazzini brings together a vast number of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are often quoted from other works or repertories, but, especially in the last part (which is original indeed), they are the result of original archival research (mainly in the Archivio di Stato of Milan). We can say that Gazzini’s work skilfully links primary and secondary literature in order to frame the confraternal phenomenon firmly within its social context and also “historiographically.”

Gazzini ranks confraternities among some of the fundamental and constituent elements of the medieval Italian towns, as important as the town walls themselves, or the town’s Christian-civic spirit, its merchants and craftsmen, and so forth. Clearly, the implication is that confraternities have to be viewed as a major medieval

phenomenon *tout court*. While placing confraternities among the constituent elements of a medieval identity, the author suggests that studies about confraternities are not only, or not anymore, a sectoral hyper-specialized field of research, but an essential, vital, and emblematic part of medieval and renaissance studies. Confraternities are a social and religious reality that continues right into the present time (one needs only think of the Florentine “Confraternita della Misericordia”, founded in the thirteenth century and still actively operating in contemporary Florence).

In her preliminary discussion on what a confraternity is and where the historiography on confraternities stands, Gazzini significantly refers back to the seventeenth-century savant Ludovico Antonio Muratori and his observation that “Nulla nunc Italiae civitas est . . . cui una aut plures non fiat ex hisce sodalitatibus”—There is no Italian town . . . without at least one or more confraternities. This claim sounds the keynote for the entire book. Gazzini rightly presents Muratori as the starting point of a modern historiography about confraternities. She also highlights that the first problem is the definition of the object of research. Her subsequent survey of the literature is excellent, as well as bright. Following with Gennaro Maria Monti, she then continues through Meersseman, Sbriziolo, Le Brasde, even reaching and considering the contributions made by Toronto (Canada), the Society for Confraternity Studies, and the specialized library of the Centre For Renaissance and Reformation Studies (Victoria College, University of Toronto)—a research centre that, I would say, as a scientific community has absorbed the great North-American heritage of Trexler, Muir, Weissman, and now carries it forward with its own original researches.

Gazzini presents the CRRS, its electronic resources, *Confraternitas*, and the Toronto scholarly community as an international stimulating *carrefour* of research on Italian medieval and renaissance confraternities, as a bridge among researchers from different countries and academic experiences and backgrounds. An international reality that might have been seen as a “school” of neo-positivist research. In fact, thanks in part to the “Toronto school,” a significant amount of new documentation, books, and articles have enriched the field of confraternity studies with new materials and ideas.

For her primary sources Gazzini has relied in particular on the archives from Parma (Capitolare and Archivio di Stato), Milan (various), and Piacenza (Archivio di Stato). Largely used are also the classics, such as Muratori or the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. The second and third part of the book, as we said, constitute the ‘operative’, the results of on-site research. The chapters devoted to the “scholae” of Milan are especially interesting. They bring to light a peculiar reality that has not yet been thoroughly studied. Very interesting achievements, such as the “scuole Grassi” of Milan (a resident school for abandoned children founded by a “repented” usurer), are presented through an interesting documentary appendix that, for instance, informs us about the books owned by a “scuola Grassi”.

Gazzini’s book represents an important achievement in the field of medieval and early modern studies on lay religious associations. The author aims of framing

confraternities within “secure” theoretical boundaries provides a fascinating historiography and summary of the important achievements of the discipline.

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Isaievych, Iaroslav. *Voluntary Brotherhood: Confraternities of Laymen in Early Modern Ukraine*. The Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Historical Research, 2. Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2006. 324 pp., 23 illustrations ISBN 1-8948-6503-0 \$29.95 (paperback), \$49.95 (cloth)

The publication of an English translation of Iaroslav Isaievych's revised and updated 1966 original monograph on early modern Ukrainian and Belarusian Orthodox confraternities adds significantly to our knowledge of eastern rite voluntary lay associations. Although the study was first published forty years ago, it suffered under the constraints of Soviet censorship. In this revised version, Isaievych was able to delete material forced on him during the first publication as well as bring the scholarship on the subject up to date. The study focuses on the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, concentrating on the early modern period. For those familiar with the medieval and early modern lay confraternities of Western Christianity, Isaievych opens a window on the fascinating position of the Ukraine and Belarus as mediator between Roman Catholic western Europe and the influence of their post-Byzantine eastern neighbour, Orthodox Russia.

The book is divided into six chapters, preceded by an introduction in which Isaievych explains his choice of the term *confraternity* in describing the voluntary Ukrainian and Belarusian lay associations of the time period. Having defined his terms, the author moves on to discuss the origins of the Ukrainian and Belarusian confraternities, their social composition and organizational structure, their role in public and religious life, their significance in the development of schools, their publishing activities and the legacy to be found in their archives.

Throughout his book, Isaievych reminds the reader that the Ukraine and Belarus stood in a unique position in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Subjugated by foreign powers (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the west and Russia in the east), these two ethnic nationalities expressed their uniqueness and proclaimed their identity via groups of lay people gathered along linguistic, ethnic and religious lines. In his Introduction Isaievych clarifies why he has chosen to use the western term *confraternity* over the usual expression *brotherhood* for the Orthodox *bratsva*. He believes that the voluntary lay religious associations of the Ukraine and Belarus resembled the western religious lay confraternities more than social or craft-based brotherhoods or guilds. To underline the distinction between an association identified along ethno-religious lines and one founded on socio-economic interests, Isaievych