

Reviews

Benvenuti, Anna and Pierantonio Piatti (eds.). *Beata civitas. Pubblica pietà e devozioni private nella Siena del '300*. Toscana Sacra, 5. Florence: SISMEL, 2016. Pp. xiii, 650 + 42 ill. ISBN 978-88-8450-733-4 (hardcover) €84.

This collection looks at the centrality of religious life in medieval civic life by taking the city of Siena as a case in point. Its twenty-two articles are grouped into two general areas of research: the relationship between public piety and private devotion and between old and new religious observance.

The volume opens with André Vauchez's analysis of the concept of "civic religion," a concept that dates back to the twelfth century when many cities in central and northern Italy, taking advantage of the struggles between the papacy and the empire, took possession of the cults managed, until then, only by bishops. Sometimes "communalism" performed functions that belonged to religion because of the belief that civic authorities had to "control" religious ones.

The first part of the collection, dedicated to public piety and private and confraternal devotion, opens with an article by Paolo Nardi who shows that, when members of the Malavolti family became bishops, many controversies of an economic and political nature broke out between the Church and the diocese of Siena. Andrea Giorgi and Stefano Moscadelli then illustrate the strong link between the population of Siena, the city government, and the local church by examining the ritual of the procession of votive candles the Siennese offered as a gift to the cathedral for the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin.

The next five articles focus on confraternities and will be of great interest to our readers. Marina Gazzini looks at confraternity statutes in northern Italy and beyond in order to show that, at times, these lay religious organizations had important links with the political world around them. Assunta Ceppari Ridolfi examines confraternity statutes, bequests, and other sources to highlight the presence of works of art in confraternities, the close links among confraternities, and their management of hospitals. Raffaele Argenziano focuses on specific aspects of lay religious organizations such as their funeral ceremonies and the burial of the dead, which he investigates through iconographic sources, also analyzed by Bruno Santi. Franco Franceschi points out that these associations had not only economic and political aims, but also sought to promote solidarity among themselves and the citizenry. Pierluigi Licciardello follows suit by pointing out that the statutes of Siennese hospitals and confraternities reveal that people in medieval Siena had a strong attachment to some fundamentals

such as politics, work, and devotion, which in turn fostered an atmosphere of fraternity and peace in the city.

The next four articles focus on the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. Gabriella Piccinni points out that the hospital, established by the presbyters of the Duomo at the time of the Government of the Nine (1287–1355) to assist the sick, the homeless, orphans and others, soon came under the patronage of the government. It was also closely tied to the city's economy; in fact, an analysis of its account books reveals that it provided services similar to those offered by private business companies. Because of the efficiency of its economic and administrative system, Santa Maria della Scala became a model that was followed across Europe. Isabella Gagliardi draws some significant considerations on the most important confraternity among those present in the hospital: the *Disciplinati*. Founded by influential government figures, the confraternity is documented under several names—*Raccomandati a Gesù Cristo Crocifisso*, *Disciplinati della Vergine Maria*, *Società della Vergine Maria*—, enough to perplex scholars working on the hospital and its lay religious associations who see it either as one confraternity with a series of changing names, as a fusion of two or perhaps three different confraternities (some flagellant, some *laudesi*), as two separate confraternities, or as one confraternity with two or more meeting places. Maria Corsi examines some of the frescos still extant at the Scala that were painted in 1340, perhaps by Lippo di Vanni, for the Confraternity of *Disciplinati*. Letizia Pellegrini analyzes the city's devotion to St. Bernardino of Siena († 1444), its support of his canonization (1450), and its proclamation of him as patron saint of the city. She also points out how the Sienese Republic viewed the canonization as an “opportunity”: Bernardino had been a preacher of civic concord, that same concord that could be used, through the preacher's canonization, to overcome the factionalism present in town. The admiration of the citizens of Foligno for the city of Siena is evident in two testaments of 1348. Mario Sensi demonstrates that the testators ordered the construction of a chapel and a hospital that, respectively, should emulate the Cappella of Piazza del Campo and the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala.

The second part of the collection, dedicated this time to new and old “religions”, opens with a contribution by Marina Benedetti who, despite lack of good documentation on the Inquisition in Siena, is able to highlight some of its work by focusing on the trial of Friar Mino of San Quirico. Maria Pia Alberzoni follows with a description of the different ways in which female spirituality expressed itself in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries first through the movement of the beguines and then through nuns. Eleonora Rava and Allison Clark Thurber jointly analyze urban seclusion in Pisa and in Siena. Seclusion, which could be a temporary or permanent form of hermitism, was generally a women's phenomenon.

Various sources are used to examine it: testaments in Pisa, municipal registers in Siena. The highest number of secluded women is recorded at the beginning of the fourteenth century: 224 in Siena and 37 in Pisa. While in Pisa merchants and artisans were the ones to financially support secluded women through bequests and charity, in Siena it was the city government and notaries to do so. Luigi Gioia studies another group of secluded individuals: a group of young Siennese males who, in the fourteenth century, left the city to found another “city” that could be the anticipation of the Eternal City: the monastery of Monte Oliveto. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli continues with a discussion of urban sanctity by examining the dossier of the new Siennese saints “created” by religious orders to celebrate themselves: Ambrogio Sansedoni by the Dominicans, Pier Pettinaio by the Franciscans, and Agostino Novello by the Augustinian Hermits (Eremitani).

The volume ends with contributions by the two editors. Pierantonio Piatti shows that three religious orders—the Servites, the Eremitani, and the Carmelites—were fully integrated into medieval Siennese society and institutions. Anna Benvenuti then points out that religiousness—the *bonum commune*—and the good governance of civic life were closely connected concepts in medieval Tuscany because religious devotion was considered to be a civic virtue.

This collection encourages reader to reflect on a very important concept—the connections between spiritual and social salvation in the Middle Ages, a concept to which lay religious organizations of all sorts contributed generously and, one might add, effectively.

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Buganza, Stefania, Paolo Vanoli, and Danilo Zardin (eds.). *Confraternite. Fede e opere in Lombardia dal Medioevo al Settecento*. [Exhibition catalogue] Milan: Scalpendi, 2011. Pp. 183 + 88 b/w and colour ill. ISBN 978-88-8895-4623-9 (paperback) €20.

The current volume accompanied an exhibition of artworks from Lombard confraternities that was mounted in the Palazzo Marliani Cigogna in Busto Arsizio (Lombardy) from 26 February to 23 April 2011. In so doing, it doubles as both an exhibition catalogue and a learned introduction to the nature, work, and contributions of confraternities to Lombard society, art, and culture. The catalogue is divided into two main sections. The first is an introduction to Lombard confraternities and their art and consists of three learned articles by Italian scholars working in the area.