

Reviews

Alemanno, Antonio, et al.. *La confraternita del SS. Sacramento e Rosario di Mottola (sec. XVI)*. Introduction by Liana Bertoldi Lenoci. Centro Ricerche di Storia Religiosa in Puglia, 11. Mottola (TA): Edizioni Stampasud, 1998. 442, [5] pp., 106 illustrations [with five chapters by Antonio Alemanno, and one each by Mimma Pasculli Ferrara and Vito Fumarola]

Given the continuing social role that confraternities play in modern-day Puglia, it is not surprising that they have become the focus of academic and cultural interest in that region. That interest, together with the consistent and prodigious efforts of the Centro Ricerche di Storia Religiosa in Puglia to document and preserve the history and legacy of the numerous Pugliese lay associations, has produced, in most recent years especially, a continuing series of publications that provide confraternity scholars with invaluable studies of a variety of confraternity issues. This latest offering from the Centro is no different. Focusing on the Confraternity of the SS. Sacramento e Rosario in Mottola, it presents a thorough study of a confraternity whose origins can be traced back to the thirteenth century.

The book consists of seven chapters prefaced with an introduction by Liana Bertoldi Lenoci. In her introduction, Bertoldi Lenoci gives a concise and eminently readable overview of the origins, evolution and activities of lay confraternities in general. Bertoldi Lenoci suggests that confraternities are a natural outcome of our need for assistance from others. The form of such assistance, or the organization that provides it, is, in turn, influenced by societal factors, most notably by a belief in the divine. From here, the book turns to the specific case of confraternity activity in Mottola.

In the chapter on the history of Mottola ("Mottola nel tempo"), Antonio Alemanno considers the historical events that affected the town's development starting from the siege of Hannibal and proceeding through Norman domination, the rise and fall of the Hohenstaufen dynasty and a succession of feudal Lords in the centuries that followed. The study then turns to the confraternity itself. Like many others, this sodality had its traditional origins in the thirteenth century, but specific documentation of its existence comes to light only much later. As Alemanno points out in the second chapter, "Una confraternita d'età moderna (sec. XVI) ispirata ad antichi culti," documenting the exact founding date of this confraternity is no easy task. Having addressed the issue of the confraternity's origin, Alemanno then devotes the next three chapters to an examination of the sodality's life in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These chapters are punctuated with a variety of illustrations that underline the continuing vitality of the brotherhood.

The next two chapters, "La Chiesa del SS. Sacramento e Rosario" and "La Chiesa del Rosario di Mottola: l'edificio di culto e gli aspetti della devozione confraternale" by Mimma Pasculli Ferrara and Vito Fumarola respectively, provide a virtual catalogue of the artifacts, architecture, and interior design of the

two churches associated with the confraternity. Included in Fumarola's chapter is a series of photographs of the Holy Friday procession still celebrated by the confraternity, attesting to the very real and continuing presence of the confraternity ethos in present-day Mottola.

The bibliography and appendix of documents that follow will be of enormous value to those scholars actively involved in historical research into the continuing activities of confraternities and into their devotional focus. The continuing value of this publication, it seems to me, lies in the comprehensive approach it takes to a single confraternity; locating it historically, socially, and geographically, thus providing a witness to a rich past while securing the foundations for future study.

Mary Alexandra Watt
Department of French, Italian & Spanish
Brock University

Il buon fedele. Le confraternite tra medioevo e prima età moderna. ([Verona]: Quaderni di storia religiosa, 1998), 286 pp., 2 ill., 2 graphs

More in the tradition of Meersseman than Weissman, the essays in *Il buon fedele: le confraternite tra medioevo e prima età moderna* emphasize the devotional function of Italian confraternities over their civic or social roles. Solidly rooted in Italian or European approaches to the study of confraternities, the essays also provide evidence of increased communication between Italian academics and those studying Italy in other parts of the world. Included in the volume are references to studies of Italian confraternities by several "English-speaking scholars" over the past decade.

The essays address several aspects of the devotional activities of confraternities. These include preaching to confraternities (Laura Gaffuri), the information contained in account books of Roman confraternities (Anna Esposito), and reform and confraternities in Milan during the time of Carlo Borromeo (Danilo Zardin). In her introduction, "Le confraternite medievali: studi e tendenze storiche," the editor of the volume, Lorenza Pamato, while noting that non-Italian scholars have called for more wide-ranging studies of confraternities across the Italian peninsula, is unrepentant about the regional approach of these essays. She suggests that non-Italian scholars who bemoan the *campanilismo* of Italian local studies are too "extreme" (p. 10) and that broad-ranging studies of confraternities across the peninsula are rather "premature" (p. 11). At the same time, Pamato identifies the "North American" socio-anthropological approach to confraternity sources as beneficial to the discipline and argues that the dialogue between different methodologies must continue (p. 32).

Regional studies such as those included in this volume continue to have value for Italian and non-Italian scholars alike; no scholar can do without the references which these works contains. However, studies of individual confraternities such as those included here are sometimes hampered by a too-narrow use of sources or the absence of a larger context for the historian's claims. To illustrate, I would