

Reviews

Affreschi di San Niccolò. Chiesa del 1400. Cortona: Compagnia Laicale di San Niccolò, 1995. 45 pp.; Bruschetti, Celestino. *La Chiesa di San Niccolò in Cortona.* 3rd ed. Cortona: Calosci, 1994. 25 pp.; Bruschetti, Celestino. *La Compagnia di S. Niccolò in Cortona.* Cortona: Calosci, 1985. 54 pp.

Cortona is a beautiful hill-side town in central Tuscany more renowned, recently, as the home of the American author Frances Mayes than for its Medieval and Renaissance patrimony. This is unfortunate, for the richness of Cortona's history, its artworks, and its architecture are certainly worthy of greater attention. The three pamphlets recently received by the Society for Confraternity Studies offer a brief, but informative insight into the church and the confraternity of St. Nicholas in Cortona and suggest that there would be plenty of fine historical work to be done on lay religious associations in this town.

Celestino Bruschetti's *La chiesa di San Niccolò in Cortona*, originally published in 1962, is now in its third edition (1994). It provides a historical sketch of the church and a brief description of its architecture and artworks. Most of the pamphlet is dedicated to a description of the processional banner (*gonfalone*) commissioned by the confraternity of San Niccolò from Luca Signorelli, apparently a member of the sodality, and now located above the main altar. The work is dated c.1507–1510. The church also contains a large fresco attributed to Signorelli. A third artwork connected with Signorelli is a tondo depicting the Holy Family with Saints; although not by the master, the work is attributed to his school. While the black and white illustrations in this pamphlet are of mediocre quality, those in the pamphlet *Affreschi di San Niccolò* (1995) are in colour and much more professionally done and reproduced, so much so that they illustrate clearly the richness and beauty of the church and its artwork. Unfortunately the pamphlet does not contain any notable text to accompany the illustrations, so one is obliged to refer back to Bruschetti's earlier pamphlet.

Celestino Bruschetti's other pamphlet, *La Compagnia di S. Niccolò in Cortona* (1985), is an offprint of his article in the yearbook of the Etruscan Academy of Cortona. The article focuses not on the church, but on the confraternity of St. Nicholas. Firmly based on archival documents, the article/pamphlet provides a survey of the confraternity's history from its founding in 1440 to its amalgamation with the Confraternita del Gesù (1782), to its re-establishment in 1952. In the course of this survey, Bruschetti provides a brief analysis the Statutes of 1577. At the end, eight appendices provide transcriptions of relevant documents from the archive in Cortona and a list of the confraternity's priors from 1576 to 1782.

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