

Alio, Jacqueline. *The Ferraris Chronicle: Popes, Emperors, and Deeds in Apulia 1096-1228*. New York: Trinacria Editions, 2017. Paper. Pp. xiv, 318; Many maps, charts and black-and-white figures. \$36/€32/£24 ISBN 978-1-943-63916-8.

This is the first English translation of a chronicle completed in 1228 by a monk of the minor abbey of Santa Maria della Ferraria in the Volturno Valley near Naples. It is the last Ghibelline chronicle of note to find its way into English.

As Jacqueline Alio states in her introduction, the format of the *Ferraris Chronicle* has characteristics of annals, chronicles and histories. She suggests that it may well be considered the first history of the Kingdom of Sicily (p 15). This she does not advance as a dogmatic theory, and while it is the lengthiest essay ever published in English about this work, her introduction (pp 1-32) is not an exhaustive study. Yet it offers the reader concise, informative summaries regarding authorship, the work's publication history and other details which lend context to a work which is not very well known.

This volume is, in its essence, a competent translation supported by notes.

Strikingly, the commentary and other material comprise most of the book. The actual translation is a mere 93 pages of text. The scholarly apparatus consists of 419 end notes, 10 maps, 7 genealogical tables, a 14-page bibliography and 5 appendices (personages, timeline, list of popes, notes on contemporary chroniclers, translated excerpts from the *Chronicon* of Romuald of Salerno), along with a good index and a number of photographs. The translator provides several compact but informative historiographical narratives: a prologue describes the Battle of Messina of 1061, an epilogue considers the remainder of the reign of Frederick II after 1228, and a chapter of background history leads us into the chronicle's text. Only the harshest critic is likely to accuse Alio of a superficial treatment of this material.

Not only do the notes provide the kind of source and explanatory details one expects, they confirm various events mentioned in the text, such as eclipses, and correct many dates.

The chapter titles are the Latin phrases that correspond to the places where Alio begins each section. This is an aid to scholars, as the original manuscript, which she studied in Bologna, is not divided into sections, and neither is the first publication, of 1888. Any researcher who travels to Bologna to consult the manuscript will find Alio's book in that library.

Let us consider the chronicle itself.

The first chapter begins with the year 781. This section is essentially an annal, perhaps intended as a continuation of the more famous work of Bede in England (pp viii, 2). Alio does not offer us extensive commentary on this part of the chronicle but a number of notes refer to it.

In the second chapter, which begins in the year 999, we are introduced

to the Normans (p 85). Here there is also a chronology of pontificates, and notes correct some of the author's dates. Beginning with the third chapter, the chronicler presents substantial information. Here the First Crusade is mentioned (p 92). As the book's title indicates, Alio considers 1096 the true inception date of the chronicle.

The story of the Normans in Sicily progresses from this point forward. It is generally accepted that for this period one of the chronicler's chief sources was the chronicle of Falco of Benevento (p 3). Indeed, a few years considered in *Ferraris* are sometimes used to augment what is thought to be missing in the surviving codices of that better-known chronicle (p 8).

*Ferraris* takes us into the Staufen era, and Alio dutifully cites charters and other records that confirm the accuracy of such details as Frederick II visiting the monastery in 1223 (p 167, pp 289-290n399). It ends just before Frederick's departure for the Holy Land.

Significantly, a substantial part of the chronicle recounting Frederick's reign is "live," referring to events contemporary to the life of the chronicler, rather than retrospective, and it seems that the monk met the emperor.

This places *Ferraris* in the same socio-historical environment as the better-known chronicle of Richard of San Germano (p 219).

Does the author of *Ferraris* offer us much in the way of information that is not present in other chronicles? There are a few details, such as the poor treatment of Matilda, sister of Roger II, by her husband (pp 14, 26, 102). Falco does note this, if not quite so explicitly.

Alio's work on this translation was an outgrowth of her research for an earlier book, *Margaret, Queen of Sicily* (p xi), a landmark biography that established a new subject category in the catalogue of the British Library (Margaret, Queen, consort of William I, King of Sicily, 1135-1183). Like that volume, this translation is a useful addition to the new wave of work published about the Normans in Italy during the last two decades.

Rather few of the monographs published in English are written by scholars based in Italy. That is unfortunate because Italy-based authors bring to their work an exceptional knowledge of the places described in chronicles and other historical works. Such is certainly the case of this book. This review is not the appropriate platform from which to criticise the efforts of other historians, but here we may suffice it to observe that errors regarding geography and other details are commonplace.

The Anglophone scholars effecting translations of Italy's Norman-Swabian chronicles form a tiny cadre: Graham Loud, Gwenyth Hood, Prescott Dunbar, Richard Brown.

Scholars will find in these 332 pages a valuable resource that fills a void in the field of medieval texts in English translation.