



# **Lirosi, Alessia. La confraternita di Sant'Anna. La Compagnia di Sant'Anna nella chiesa di S. Pantaleo tra XVII e XVIII secolo**

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perspectives into the complex world of late medieval and early modern confraternities both north and south of the Alps.

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**Lirosi, Alessia. *La confraternita di Sant'Anna. La Compagnia di Sant'Anna nella chiesa di S. Pantaleo tra XVII e XVIII secolo*. Preface by Blythe Alice Raviola. *Biblioteca di storia sociale*, 41. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019.**

Alessia Lirosi's book focuses on the women's confraternity of St Anne in Rome, established in 1640 by José de Calasanz (1557–1648) within the Church of San Pantaleo in Rome. The research question that opens Lirosi's work is about the existence in the *ancient regime* of spaces of female power and autonomy of decision, which finds a partially affirmative answer in the women's religious world. Lirosi points out how nuns, unlike secular women, had the power to vote on matters that involved them, but what about secular women? To answer this questions Lirosi turns to women's confraternities and finds a rich field of study to explore spaces of lay women's autonomy from male control (xi). While there were similar women's sodalities across Italy, as Lirosi highlights, the women of St Anne were not only involved in charitable, social, and cultural practices common to such confraternities, but they also had important roles, oversaw the organisation of the confraternity's activities, and even had the right to vote (xvi).

The book begins with a survey on the confraternities active and established after the Council of Trent (1–10) and then focuses on the sodalities in Rome starting from the first recorded confraternity, that of the Gonfalone founded in Santa Maria Maggiore in the mid-thirteenth century (10–15). The final section of the first chapter introduces the role of women within these sodalities, addressing both mixed confraternities and those for women only (16–26), thus offering a solid introduction to the core of Lirosi's research on St Anne.

Chapter two (27–54) retraces the history of the women's confraternity of St Anne, starting from its founding and the role of José de Calasanz, a Spanish priest who moved to Rome in 1592 and was involved in educational activities for the orphans of the Eternal City. Researching the origins of St Anne, Lirosi discusses how the documents reveal the cultural scope of the organisation, which did not include charitable work, and how in the seventeenth century the autonomy of its members (all women) was a cause for concern. Lirosi examines who were these women involved with the confraternity and highlights how they came mainly from the Roman

aristocracy, although there were also illiterate women from lower classes. Among the first group, Lirosi analyses the leading role of Leonora Baroni, a noblewoman whose friendship with Pope Clement IX Rospigliosi greatly helped St Anne.

Chapter three (55–82) focuses on the confraternity's statutes of 1700, 1702, and 1722. The analysis highlights how the women were in charge of the organisation of St Anne but needed the supervision of the vicar general and, in general, of a male authority. Lirosi focuses on the changes approved in the statutes of 1702 and 1722, particularly those regarding the eligibility of women for higher-level roles according to their social class. The following chapter (83–107) offers an in-depth analysis of the different roles within the confraternity, from "simple sisters" to prioress. Chapter five (109–165) focuses on the confraternity's devotional practices: from the individuals who took part in the activities in San Pantaleo (109–115) to the cult of St Anne (115–120), the chapter includes an overview of other devotion practices such as relics, feasts and, finally, of important women involved with St Anne (Lucia Saliga, Angela "the Prophetess", and Maria Boncompagni).

The last chapter (167–200) addresses the charitable work carried out by the women of St Anne. Lirosi points out how the confraternity of St Anne followed the example of male confraternities and focused on specific social categories of women considered to be at risk, such as prostitutes and widows (167). The sections dedicated to the organisation of local activities (176–181) and on economic issues (181–196) reveal the practical aspects of St Anne's charitable work.

The book ends with a brief overview of the St Anne's confraternity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (201–203), an appendix that compares the different statutes (207–236), and a list of burials in the church of San Pantaleo from 1718 to 1815 (236–243).

Lirosi's work offers an in-depth analysis of a confraternity that opens the path to further research on women's sodalities across Italy and Europe. The study of women's confraternities promises great potential in the exploration of spaces of autonomy for women in modern history as well as new perspectives in gender studies.

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