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*Le carte duecentesche del Sacro Convento di Assisi (Instrumenti, 1168-1300)*. By Attilio Bartoli Langeli. (Fonti e Studi Francescani, 5. Inventari 4). Pp. xci + 514. Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1997. L. 140,000 (paper). 88 85155 34 0

For students of St Francis, of the Basilica in which he is buried and of the Sacro Convento adjacent to it, and of Assisi as a modest Italian city of the thirteenth century, this is a fascinating collection of texts. It contains the original *Instrumenti* in the archives of the Sacro Convento earlier than 1300, 186 in all. These are secular documents: the papal bulls and other ecclesiastical records are not included; and it comprises originals, not copies from the registers. There is nothing here that was wholly unknown: the work of A. Fortini and S. Nessi had revealed the contents of the archive. But a full critical edition with the thorough commentary here provided makes the documents accessible in quite a novel way. The meticulous scholarship and the very full and informative notes greatly enhance its value.

Its interest is threefold. First, it contains the records of the gifts and purchases out of which the site for the basilica and convent was formed in the late 1220s, then enhanced in the 1250s and later. Secondly, it provides our main source of information on the family of St Francis. In the early *Lives*, only his father is named, and from them one might suppose that Francis and his family became permanently alienated. These documents are particularly revealing for the career and involvement of Francis's nephew Picardo – son of his brother Angelo – who figures in many of the documents as the lay proctor of the Basilica. He was evidently a considerable man of affairs, energetic in gathering support for the friars, arranging conveyances, acting as executor of wills and so forth. It is possible that Picardo became a friar late in life, but in any case he was for over thirty years, from the 1250s to the 1280s, deeply involved in the management of their affairs; and a few other members of the family figure in these records.

The majority of the documents, however, have very little directly to do with the friars: they are notarial instruments, largely wills, evidently deposited in the Sacro Convento for safe keeping. These have much to tell us of local topography and prosopography, and of the leading men and women of Assisi. No. 175 lists the occupants of a new street close to the Basilica of forty houses in eight at least of which siblings lived side by side. The wills are valuable evidence for the extent and range of almsgiving; they are also frequently revealing of the different ways in which husbands treated their wives – and in a few cases, of how well-to-do widows had the disposal of substantial means. This is a model edition of an exceptionally interesting collection of texts.

CLARE HALL,  
CAMBRIDGE

ROSALIND B. BROOKE