

*Carteggio degli oratori mantovarni alla Corte Sforzesca (1450-1500)*, General Editor Franca Leverotti: Vol. I; 1450-1459, Vol. II, 1460 and Vol III, 1461, ed. Isabella Lazzarini, Vol. VIII, 1468-1471, ed. Maria Nadia Covini. Roma: Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Ufficio Centrale per i Beni Archivistici, 1999-2000. Vol. I, XX + 575 pp. ISBN 88-7125-160-1; Vol. II, 493 pp. ISBN 88-7125-167-9; Vol. III, 470 pp. ISBN 88-7125-190-3; Vol. VIII, 688 pp. ISBN 88-7125-168-7.

*Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli, I, 1444 – 2 luglio 1458*, ed. Francesco Senatore; *Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli, IV, 1° gennaio – 26 dicembre 1461*, ed. Francesco Storti. Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, *Fonti per la storia di Napoli aragonese*, vols I and 4, Salerno: Carlone Editore, 1997-8. Vol I, XX +709 pp. 4 illus. 150,000 lire. ISBN 88-86854-07-2; Vol. IV, XVII + 461 pp. 6 illus. 140,000 lire. ISBN 88-86854-10-2.

These are two major new editions of some of the wealth of diplomatic correspondence that survives from the Italian states of the second half of the fifteenth century.

There will eventually be sixteen volumes in the *Carteggio degli oratori mantovani alla Corte Sforzesca (1450-1500)*, and under the vigorous general editorship of Professor Franca Leverotti, they are being produced at an impressive rate. This is the first series of despatches from fifteenth-century Milan to be published, and the letters to the Gonzaga are a major source for Milanese history. The volumes published so far reflect Milan's importance as a centre of news and negotiation rather than providing information on events in the city and duchy of Milan, but one of principal duties of the Gonzagas' envoys there was to report on the Sforza family and court. Despatches were sent to the Marchesa Barbara as well as her husband Lodovico Gonzaga, and although she clearly had an interest in politics, the letters to her contain much more detail on the court and the ladies of the Sforza family and household, and on events such as the reception and entertainment of illustrious visitors. Envoys were also given responsibility for purchases of artefacts, as well as of goods such as cloth and horses, and for recruiting artists and specialized artisans to do work in Mantua.

The edition of the *Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli* is principally a generous selection of the correspondence to be found in the Sforzas' own diplomatic archives in Milan, with supplementary material from the ambassadors of other states and from other cities that contain information of interest for Neapolitan history. They are the beginning of a new series of *Fonti per la storia di Napoli Aragonese*, an attempt to fill the gap left by the deliberate destruction of the Neapolitan archives in 1943. This

initial group of volumes will include five volumes of despatches, from 1450 to 1465, and a sixth volume of indices. Again this is an edition of great importance for political and diplomatic history, covering the years when King Alfonso's ambitions and resentments were causing trouble throughout Italy, and of the war his natural son Ferrante had to fight to secure his throne. The despatches include less information than those from Milan about the court and the ruling family, but they do provide fascinating insights into the character and personality of Alfonso and Ferrante, two of the most intelligent and least trustworthy princes of Renaissance Italy.

Both editions are of course valuable resources for Italian linguists as well as historians; the texts have been edited carefully, using the criteria established for the benchmark edition of the *Lettere* of Lorenzo de' Medici, under the general editorship of Nicolai Rubinstein. Neither edition has followed the exacting editorial practices of the *Lettere*, and they do not provide such a detailed apparatus of notes and discursive introductions to individual letters. The *Carteggio degli oratori mantovani* has useful introductions to each volume, setting out the major themes of the despatches and the background to them, while notes have been kept to a minimum (and at times, more notes would have been helpful). The *Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli* do not have introductions, but have fuller notes

Both series are to be welcomed, in making easily available sources on two major Italian Renaissance states that have been too little studied.

Christine Shaw

University of Warwick