Book Review

Acta Iuratorum et Consilii Civitatis et Insulae Maltae, a cura di Godfrey Wettinger: Associazione di Studi Malta-Sicila/Centro di Studi filologici e linguistici siciliani (Palermo, 1993).

This volume of 1037 pages presents the full text of the surviving proceedings, approximately from 1450 to 1499 but with gaps, of some 300 metings of the town council or **università** at Mdina which wwas in effect Malta's local government; Gozo had its own **università**. The survival of such a source is comparatively rare in the fifteenth-century Mediterranean world and is of immense importance for Maltese history, of which it illustrates so many aspects. The texts are given in full in their mixed Latin and Sicilian forms. There is a clear and useful introduction, in both English and itslian, and the very full and well-organized indices will be of the gratest assistance to scholars. There are English and Italian summary headings to each item; if these strike a curious note, they are probably the best solution to an intractable problem of presentation. the contents of the National Library's Ms. Università 11 are wrongly bound together so that the editor has had to rearrange them in chronological order. The resulting publication undoubtedly representes a major event in maltese historiography, and one which reflects great credit on the societies which published it.

Behind this formal achievement lies a personal determination, sustained over many decades, to overcome a series of practical problems which it is already difficult for younger scholars to appreciate. The text of Università 11 is extremely hard to read and to understand. It is true that in the past Alfredo Mifsud and Romeo Leopardi published some extracts from, it, but in effect Godfrey Wettinger, working virtually in isolation, had to start from scratch, with no serious tradition of palaeographical study, with few books and dictionaries, and without the modern advnatages of photocopies, word processors and similar aids to accelerated study. Progress was inevitably slow and the final publication is a triumph of perseverance.

The text supplies an enormous quantity of information on local matters. It is difficult to forecast how late-medieval Maltese studies may develop, but it seems certain that they will rely heavily on Università 11; that is already clear from the recent study of Mdina by Mario Buhagiar and Stanley Fiorini. The information

must be integrated with that from the surviving notional registers, from the Sicilian archives and from other sources; there are also later volumes of the minutes of hte **università** which await study. The published texts throw light on many aspects of Maltese society, and in particular they do much to make more possible the creation of a detailed prosopographical picture of the structure of Maltese politics, of the ways in which foreigners established themselves on the islnd and then acquired social and political predominance, eventually contributing to the emergence of a uniquely Maltese people.

Anthony Luttrell