



Episcopal Power and Florentine Society, 1000-1320

(Harvard Historical Studies)

George Dameron

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This first detailed study of the bishops of Florence tells the story of a dynamic Italian lordship during the most prosperous period of the Middle Ages. Drawing upon a rich base of primary sources, Dameron demonstrates that the nature of the Florentine episcopal lordship results from the tension between seigneurial pressure and peasant resistance. Implicit throughout is the assumption that episcopal lordship relied upon both the bishop's jurisdictional power and his spiritual or sacramental power.

The story of the Florentine bishops illuminates important moments in Italian history. The development of the Florentine elite, for example, is closely tied to the political and economic privileges they derived from their access to ecclesiastical property. A study of the bishopric's vast holdings in the major river valleys surrounding Florence also provides valuable insight into the nature of the interrelation between city and countryside. Comparisons with lordships in other Italian cities contrast with and define the nature of medieval lordship.

This economic, social, and political history addresses issues of concern to a wide audience of historians: the emergence of the commune, the social development of the nobility, the nature of economic change before the Black Death, and the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

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