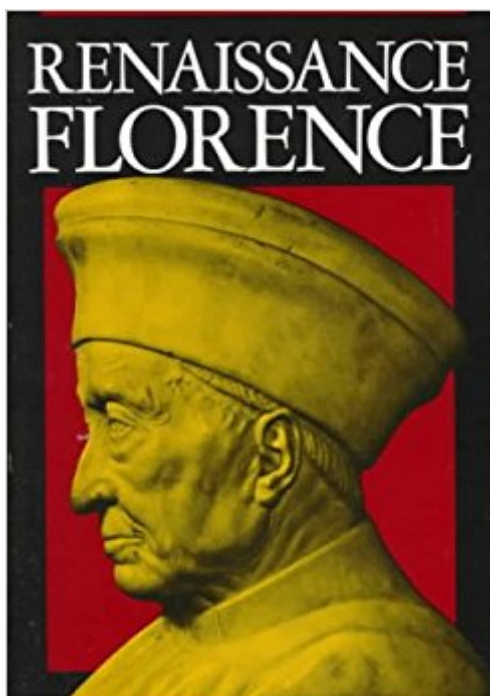


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Renaissance Florence, Updated Edition



Synopsis

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the city of Florence experienced the most creative period in her entire history. This book is an in-depth analysis of that dynamic community, focusing primarily on the years 1380-1450 in an examination of the city's physical character, its economic and social structure and developments, its political and religious life, and its cultural achievement. For this edition, Mr. Brucker has added Notes on Florentine Scholarship and a Bibliographical Supplement.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: University of California Press (April 8, 1983)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520046951

ISBN-13: 978-0520046955

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #133,507 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #123 in Books > History > Europe > Italy #573 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Europe

Customer Reviews

"There is no other book about Florence in this period which combines such a broad range of archival sources . . . with standard literary sources in such an original and effective way."--"American Historical Review

This is a seminal work on the subject of Renaissance Florence. It has been cited as a recommended book in *Mainstream of Civilization* (Chodorow), and has been cited in *American Historical Association's Guide to Historical Literature*. It is a good introduction to Florence, covering the years 1380 to 1450. It emphasizes the physical city, the commercial economy, social structure, political elite, the Church, and culture. He discusses the progress of the government becoming more elitist and restricted. It includes an appendix that covers the years 1469 to 1532, which calls the last year of the Republic. Originally published in 1969, it was updated and somewhat revised in 1983. Brucker states that the book reflects certain interests and prejudices of the author. He has carved, somewhat arbitrarily, topics on the physical city, as a complex of buildings, streets, monuments; then he moves on to the economic life, social and political structures and religious and cultural

phenomena. He suggests causal relationships between these topics. The book has a thorough analysis of particular issues, but these tend to be selective and specific to the author's interests. He does not write on the rural life, nor on the urban poor. It cannot be labeled a social history, as he tends to focus on the rich and powerful, instead of the lower classes. He justifies this by saying there is more information on the urban aristocracy than there is about the lower strata. So there is little or nothing about the textile workers, the artisans, the shopkeepers, and what he calls the denizens of the underworld. While he has a bibliographic essay and notes at the end of the book, there are no keyed footnotes or end notes to trace his sources. One has to plow through his bibliographic essay to see what he consulted. He also includes another essay, Notes on Florentine Scholarship, where he declares his book was both a synthesis and an exploration of significant themes in the Florentine experience. He acknowledges here again his major sources of scholarship, both old and recent. This historiographic essay analyzes the secondary literature of Florentine and Italian history by various historians. This is followed by a bibliographical supplement where he lists more recent books and journal articles allocated to the topics he has discussed in the main text, sorted by chapter. There is an index to the main text. The book has few illustrations, but has some photographs of the city, along with a map dating from the Renaissance period. The writing is that of a survey course of the time and place. The style is easy, but sometimes flat, and tends to repetition. It is accessible to the general reader and had been assigned as the core book in an undergraduate course on Renaissance Florence at a state university. The issue of its lack of keyed notes depends on the reader. The general reader cannot be bothered with notes. While a professor will want to know who Brucker is quoting, others will skip the academic apparatus. Some times Brucker quotes writings from memoirs from the time but does not cite the book or pages. The reader must wade through his bibliography and notes essay to look for it. The few footnotes he has provide additional information as an aside, but no citations to sources. When he discusses the economy and discusses the merchants, he is discussing the wealthy, upper class merchants and not the lowly shopkeeper. His use of the word merchant must be used with care, for the modern equivalent would be corporate executive or company president, not a merchant in the modern sense. While he does occasionally refers to the lower classes, these are incidental, and he admits that the book is focused on the wealthy, not the poor. Brucker attempts to keep the narrative lively, with stories of assaults, contract disputes, political maneuverings, war, and other such thrills. The writing is easy on the page. The book is both narrative and analytical history, being a mixture of scholarship and anecdotes designed to keep a general reader amused but also respects the scholarship of academics by providing details and cogent arguments. However, he does get flat and repetitious at times. This

happens at the beginning and end of chapters, where he wants to review what was said in the previous chapter, and at the end of a chapter he will state what the analysis was about and recycle the arguments. Yet for this academic structure, the book is not difficult. One fault is he will throw in Italian words or phrases with no translation. Otherwise he sticks to an accessible vocabulary and avoids the academic jargon and recondite theorizing of some other history books I have read.

This book chronicles the golden age of Florence, from the 1300's through the 1500's. Brucker does an excellent job of using the ample primary source materials located in Florence itself: his text is chock full of merchant's account books, diplomatic letters and funeral arrangements. His treatment compares favorably with Hibbert's book on the Medici, which covers much the same ground but with little or no use of primary sources. At the same time, the tone of the book is conversational. Brucker doesn't let his sources get in the way of readability. This book is one of Norman F. Cantor's "Core 150" books on Medieval studies and Cantor himself edited it as part of the "Historical Cities" collection. Although "Renaissance Florence" was written in the mid 60's, it still feels vibrant and up to date. I think this quality is attributable to his reliance on primary, rather than secondary source material. "Renaissance Florence" is broken into six chapters: the renaissance city, the economy, the patriciate, politics, the church and the faith and culture, with an epilogue "the last years of the republic". This approach provides a cohesive portrait of the Florentian golden age without unduly emphasizing the painting and sculpture of the fifteenth century. I found the sections on the economy and politics more interesting than the section on culture, which is a testament to Mr. Brucker's fine scholarship.

Exactly what I wanted, pure information and lots of it.

Good book, needed for school, shipped fast!

This is an "older" book, but a very useful reference to Renaissance Florence. I am a historian and publish articles on a variety of topics and this book is suitable as a reference to Firenze's art, architecture, and related items of the 15th century.

Wonderful book & absolutely a must for Renaissance lovers

Textbook.

N.A.

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