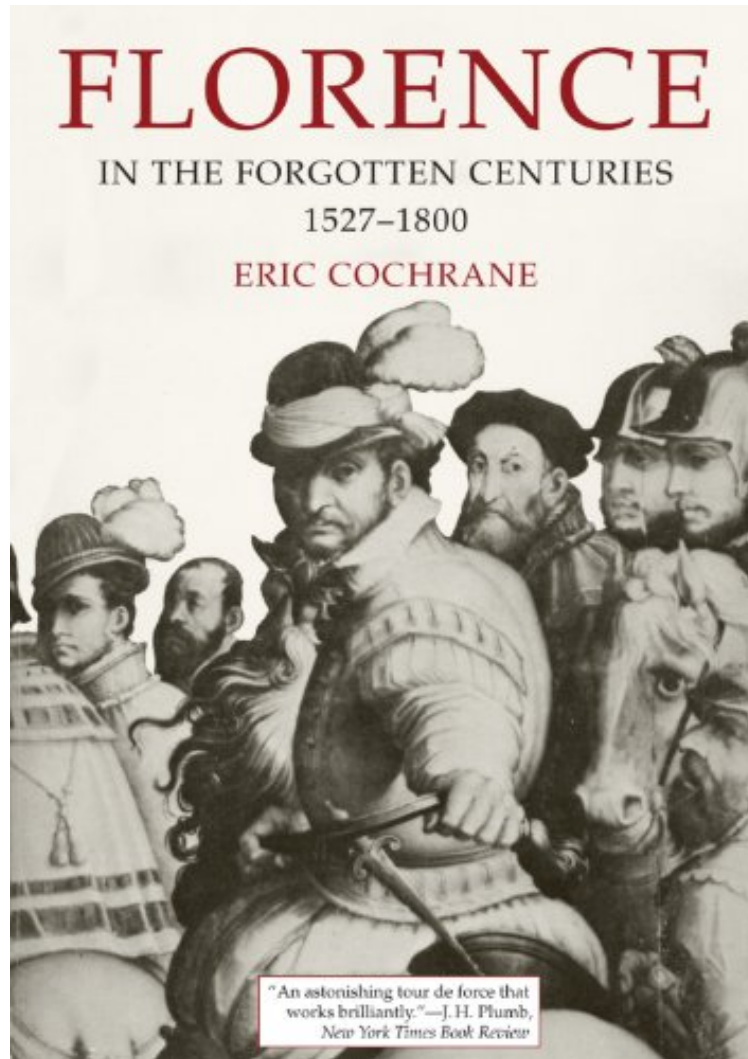


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Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527-1800: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes

Eric Cochrane

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Eric Cochrane : Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527-1800: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527-1800: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Super Tuscan-oramaBy Bob NewmanWhat can one say about a book that displays such erudition, such scholarship ? I am no student of Italy or Florence, but I can recognize a masterpiece when I see one. This volume represents a lifetime of study, a prodigious memory, and an organizing

genius. On top of that it is well-written in a light, humanistic style ! I doubt that anyone will be able to write the history of Florence or Tuscany in the period 1527-1800 without reference to FLORENCE IN THE FORGOTTEN CENTURIES. WOULD-be scholars must carve out niches in this massive rock or search for topics beyond Tuscan boundaries. When I think about this work---that I have just completed (it took three weeks to wade through 508 pages densely packed with a huge amount of information)---I can compare it only to such books as Womack's "Zapata and the Mexican Revolution" or Vansina's "Paths in the Rainforests"; works that took years of painstaking research, endless amounts of revision, and continuous thought to the exclusion of everything else. These are works that no doubt took years off the life of the authors. [Cochrane died at age 57 in 1985 though I don't know of what.] In short, this is an unbelievable in-depth look at Florence at six points in the 272 years spanned. The narrative is fastened on six individuals, each in a different generation. Galileo is well-known, but the others----it seemed to me----are likely to be unheard of outside the scholarly community abroad. I have no idea of their stature in Italy. However, they are only the 'hooks' for discussing Florentine civilization in immense detail---the political, military, economic, cultural, scientific, religious and philosophical aspects. If you want to know about Florentine historiography, it's here. If you want to know about relationships between the rulers of Tuscany and their Papal neighbors, it's here. The diet of the poor, music, theories of literature, the state of the press, the intellectual curiosity of the more educated citizens, art and architecture, the efforts of the grand dukes to modernize or preserve tranquility in their states, assassinations or Spanish garrisons--it's all here in such amazing richness that you will not be able to digest even a small percent. Scholars may delight, but the average reader will find this a kind of "Death by Chocolate" among books !And yet, if you don't know much about Florence, this is probably not the place to begin. Cochrane gives no quarter, assuming the reader's basic knowledge. You must know the general patterns of European, Italian, and Tuscan history in those centuries. Hundreds of names are mentioned; maybe thousands, sometimes twenty on a page. Often the author supposes that you know who they are. There is not a single map of the city, yet he constantly refers to rivers, hills, buildings, and avenues. I, for one, have never been to Florence. Hmm. Difficult. This is faint criticism. Overall, the book knocked me out. It is one of the most impressive historical works I have ever seen. I can't believe that I am the first to review it for .

The city of Florence has long been admired as the home of the brilliant artistic and literary achievement of the early Renaissance. But most histories of Florence go no further than the first decades of the sixteenth century. They thus give the impression that Florentine culture suddenly died with the generation of Leonardo, Machiavelli, and Andrea del Sarto. Eric Cochrane shows that the Florentines maintained their creativity long after they had lost their position as the cultural leaders of Europe. When their political philosophy and historiography ran dry, they turned to the practical problems of civil administration. When their artists finally yielded to outside influence, they turned to music and the natural sciences. Even during the darkest days of the great economic depression of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, they succeeded in preserving;almost alone in Europe;the blessings of external peace and domestic tranquility.

Idquo;Florence in the Forgotten Centuries is an ambitious and impressive work. Not only does it survey a great deal of territory, much of it new, but it experiments courageously with a novel technique of historical narrative. . . .nbsp; A work that is stylish and engaging as well as being back by great scholarly authority.rdquo;