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Review of The Italian Renaissance and Cultural history of the Rinascimento

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Ruggiero, Guido. *The Renaissance in Italy: a social and cultural history of the Rinascimento*. Cambridge, 2014. 635p bibl index ISBN 9780521895200 cloth, \$99.00; ISBN 9780521719384 pbk, \$36.99; ISBN 9781316121092 ebook, \$30.00

In this long book, Ruggiero (Univ. of Miami) rejects recent scholarship that has minimized the significance of the Italian Renaissance. Instead, he argues that the cities of Florence, Venice, and Milan enjoyed a distinct period of precocity over the rest of Europe between roughly 1300 and 1500. This precocity was the result of the unusually urban nature of northern Italy, the related rise of a new urban middle class, the new emphasis of this middle class on peace, law, and stability, and the perceived necessity to justify current innovations as simply the revival of the old.

By the second half of the 15th century, other areas of Italy had caught up and adopted, in a more aristocratic form, the culture of the Rinascimento. By 1500, the imposition of the new—the Italian invasions, printing, the Reformation, the voyages of exploration, the hardening of social divisions, and other areas—brought an end to the Italian Renaissance and the start of a broader, different, European Renaissance. Historians will have encountered many of these general claims previously, although Ruggiero tweaks them in their specifics. A thorough and accessible introduction to northern Italian history during this important period. Summing Up: Recommended. All levels/libraries.

--B. J. Maxson, East Tennessee State University

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