



The History of Florence

Niccolo Machiavelli

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Florentine Histories is a historical account by Italian Renaissance political philosopher and writer Niccolo Machiavelli, first published posthumously in 1532. The composition of the work presented a problem, for it was clear that the commission was not meant to give him the opportunity to eulogize republican Florence, of which Machiavelli had been titled "il segretario" (the secretary) par excellence. What was expected of him, if not a glorification of the Medici family, was a treatise without polemics and tending to show the present state of things as a natural evolution. The perplexities of the author leaked through from some letters of his rich collection (to Francesco Guicciardini on August 30, 1524). The structure of the work, quite contorted, illustrates the difficulty of the author. The first of the eight books is a general picture of the history of Europe from the fall of the Western Roman Empire to 1215; the second book actually begins to discuss the history of Florence, with the narration of the feud between Buondelmenti/Donati and Uberti/Amidei, that according to tradition corroborated by Dante would unchain the conflict between Guelphs and Ghibellines in the city. The books II, III, and IV narrate the history before the Medici rise, while the last four speak of the fight for power that ended with the Medicean lordship. The eighth book closes with the death of Lorenzo il Magnifico, on 1492, with the end of the fragile peace that Lorenzo's politics of balance had carried. The author made an effort to show under an altogether favorable light personalities like Cosimo il Vecchio and Lorenzo il Magnifico.

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