



Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy (Women in Culture and Society)

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Between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries, women assumed public roles of unprecedented prominence in Italian religious culture. Legally subordinated, politically excluded, socially limited, and ideologically disdained, women's active participation in religious life offered them access to power in all its forms.

These essays explore the involvement of women in religious life throughout northern and central Italy and trace the evolution of communities of pious women as they tried to achieve their devotional goals despite the strictures of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The contributors examine relations between holy women, their devout followers, and society at large.

Including contributions from leading figures in a new generation of Italian historians of religion, this book shows how women were able to carve out broad areas of influence by carefully exploiting the institutional church and by astutely manipulating religious percepts.

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