

The Bishop's Palace: Episcopal Authority and Clerical Culture in Medieval Italy

My project traces the emergence of episcopal palaces in northern Italy (300-1300 AD) and links their development to the birth of a distinct clerical culture in the wake of the Gregorian reform movement. It utilizes the physical remains of these palaces, archeological evidence, notarial documents, medieval chronicles, and literature to describe changes in episcopal residences and in the activities taking place within them.

Bishops had always had special residences, but they only came to have "palaces" in the 11th and 12th centuries. In late antiquity (300-750 AD) these residences were called *episcopia*, and were walled complexes including audience halls, formal dining rooms, baths, and gardens. With the advent of Carolingian rule, the residence came to be called a *domus* (house) and the circumstances of episcopal life were greatly reduced: the walls and baths fell into disrepair and the residence became, in fact, one building. Beginning in the 11th century, however, new episcopal residences were usually built or the old structures were radically renovated, and these buildings are identified in documents as palaces (*palatia*).

Why did bishops begin to call their residences "palaces" and to build larger, more elaborate structures? I believe the answer is twofold. First, bishops were losing many rights of lordship (judicial rights, collection of taxes and tolls) to the new urban governments ("communes") emerging in northern Italian towns. The architectural and linguistic flourishes of the 11th and 12th centuries were, on the most basic level, attempts to compensate for the loss of real authority. Second, as they were losing their secular power, bishops were redefining the bases of their authority -- focusing on their spiritual and charismatic functions -- and creating new ways to exercise power and to influence secular society. Episcopal palaces, and the rituals enacted within them, were part of this endeavor. They are also superb evidence of a more broadly significant development in this period: the emergence of a distinct clerical culture in the wake of the Gregorian reform.

Before the Gregorian reform, the clergy by and large looked and acted like lay people. The legislation of the reform movement sought to distinguish the clergy from the laity, chiefly by demanding celibacy of the clergy, but also by requiring that they abandon lay dress, symbols, and customs: they were not to bear arms, keep falcons and hunting dogs, frequent taverns, etc. Interestingly, the canons of the reform councils were much clearer about what the clergy should not do, than about what they should do. As a result, over the 11th and 12th centuries, ecclesiastics throughout Western Europe struggled to define what were appropriate norms of clerical deportment. This process was particularly complex for the higher clergy, who had been great lords and imperial counsellors. How were they to live? What was appropriate to their place in Christian society? The customs and practices bishops developed -- including their architectural setting, the bishop's palace -- were one aspect of the development of a distinct clerical culture in Western Europe. My focus on clerical culture is entirely new and original. Ecclesiastical historians looking at the period after the reform have focused either on the rise of papal government or on the growth of lay spirituality. If church historians do address the post-reform clergy, they tend to see them as simply moderately improved versions of their early medieval predecessors. I think they are quite different, in their everyday lives, in their mentalities, and in their social and political relationships.

This thesis has important ramifications in several areas. First, it challenges much recent work on aristocratic culture in the Middle Ages (Bumke, Höfische Kultur; Jaeger, The Origins of Courtliness) that assumes that the lay nobility and prelates shared a uniform "courtly" culture. It will also necessitate a reevaluation of the artistic and literary patronage of ecclesiastical figures in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Second, by linking changes in authority to the emergence of this distinctive clerical culture, my work contributes to an ongoing debate over the origins of

intolerance in Western Europe. In his 1987 book A Persecuting Society, R. I. Moore argued that beginning in the 11th century, certain groups within European society were marginalized and then systematically persecuted. All three of Moore's principle examples -- heretics, Jews, and homosexuals -- were defined as aberrant using religious precepts and ecclesiastics, particularly bishops, were instrumental in both their marginalization and their persecution. By focusing on heretics -- who were usually imprisoned and interrogated in bishops' palaces -- I will link the refashioning of episcopal authority to the emergence of Moore's "persecuting society." As bishops focused with new intensity on the spiritual supervision of their flocks, the achievement of purity of doctrine and practice became a goal that allowed bishops to exercise a wide new array of powers and to forge new alliances with secular rulers.

Over the past 3 years, I have made 3 trips to Italy, visiting 31 palace sites and 30 different state and ecclesiastical archives. Additionally, I have immersed myself in published primary sources -- largely chronicles and literature. This intensive research has yielded the central argument of my book. While I am ready to write the first, largely descriptive, part (see outline), I need to read, think, and talk about many aspects of the interpretive second part. This is why I would like to come to the Stanford Humanities Center. Specifically, I need to achieve greater mastery of several secondary literatures: recent approaches to medieval ritual; work on domestic architecture in pre-modern Europe; technical guides to liturgical sources and their uses; post-modern architectural analysis; and cultural studies. Then I need to consider my archival and physical evidence in light of this literature. I am certain that the community of scholars at the Humanities Center would provide a stimulating environment in which I could hone my interpretation, and the highly interdisciplinary character of this project creates ample common ground for lively interaction with other scholars.