

BARTOLOMMEO CEDERNI AND HIS FRIENDS

LETTERS TO AN OBSCURE
FLORENTINE

ESSAY BY F.W. KENT

TEXTS EDITED BY GINO CORTI WITH F.W. KENT

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to vernacular and informal letters as evidence for the social structures and mental habits of Renaissance Italians, just as they are turning more and more to the study of *ricordanze* and other family papers. There is a great wealth of such unpublished correspondence available, not least in the libraries and archives of Tuscany, and the present selection samples just one of these *Fondi*, the well-known collections of personal and family letters preserved in the archive of the Badia Fiorentina.

Two *filze* of this archive are devoted to the hundreds of letters sent, between 1446 and 1480, to Bartolommeo Cederni, an employee of the Boni banking firm who occasionally held political and administrative office. Despite Cederni's comparative obscurity, and the survival of only one of his own letters, the correspondence reveals that Bartolommeo was a man well connected to a number of prominent Florentines, such as members of the Pandolfini family, that he was indeed what one contemporary called the «*ricordatore e intromettitore*» to several overlapping groups of friends, patrons and clients. What *amicizia* meant to Renaissance Florentines, how the city's clientelist polity functioned, these are questions posed by this fascinating and intimate correspondence, which bears comparison even to so celebrated a collection as that of the Strozzi family.

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