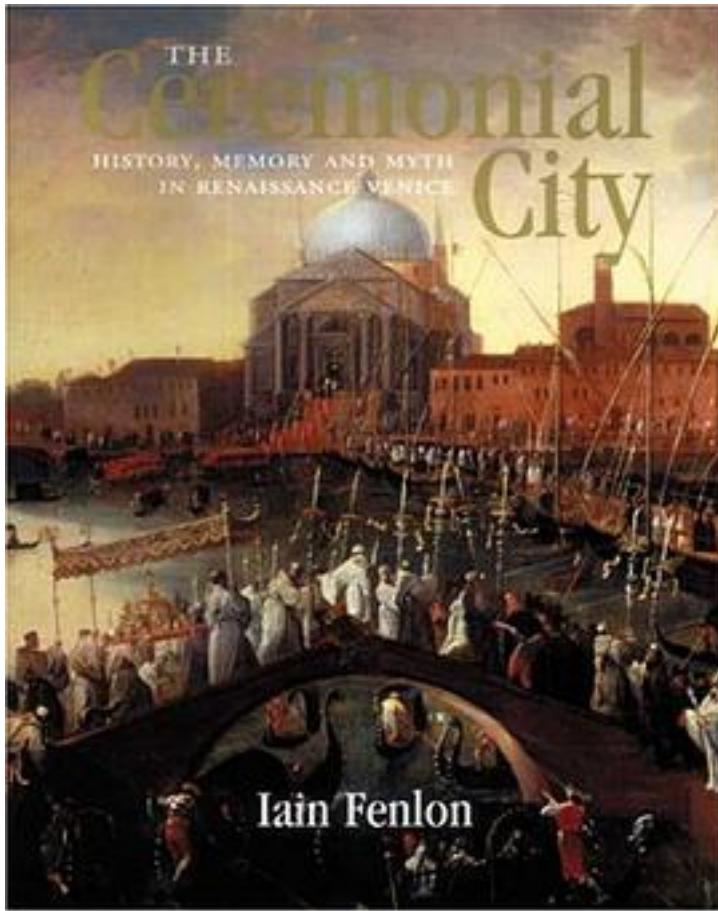


The Ceremonial City



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出版者:Yale University Press

出版时间:2008-1-18

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780300119374

This wide-ranging study vividly presents in their broad, historical context the major events that took place in Venice in the 1570s, culminating in a severe outbreak of the plague in which one quarter of the Venetian population perished. Through an astute analysis of the cultural reactions to this dramatic decade, fresh light is thrown on the

historical machine that produced the distinct civic and cultural ethos of the city, while new aspects of its urban topography, ceremony, and cultural life are revealed. At the heart of the book is a detailed account of four major events that significantly shaped the history of Venice: the formation of the Holy League (the coalition that brought the Republic into conflict with the Ottoman Empire); the victory of that League against the Turkish fleet at the battle of Lepanto; the ceremonial arrangements that were made to welcome Henry III of France to the city in 1574; and the devastating plague of 1575-77. The book opens with an analysis of St Mark's Square, the buildings that surround it, and the social and religious life that used it as a backdrop. The concluding section considers how the major events of the 1570s, and above all the victory at Lepanto, were metabolized in Venetian history and reconfigured in the realms of memory and myth. Important factors in this process were the role of the printing press in disseminating accounts of current events and reworking them into a further elaboration of the 'Myth of Venice', and the ritual and other transformations that took place (such as the construction of Palladio's church of the Redentore), and their connection to the religious matrix that provides the key to the civic ethos of the city in the late sixteenth century. Venice had become the City of God.

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