Confraternities were the most common form of organized religious life in medi-
 eval and early modern Europe. They were at once the lay face of the church, the
 spiritual heart of civic government, and the social kin who claimed the allegiance
 of peers and the obedience of subordinates.

In this collection, fifteen scholars examine the development of confraternities in
 Italy, where they emerged first and where they had the greatest social, political, and
 religious impact. Individual essays explore a common set of themes across Italy
 from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries: the ubiquity of confraternities; their
 social construction, and devotional ethos; their ritual culture and civic religion;
 their antagonistic and collaborative relations with both civic and ecclesiastical
 authorities; and their role in social welfare and social control of marginal groups.
 The authors demonstrate how the ritual kinship expressed in confraternities
 emerged in the middle ages, was transformed in the sixteenth-century Catholic
 Reformation, and became a powerful force in ‘civilizing’ early modern Italian
 society.

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Previous publications include Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance
Bologna (Cambridge, 1995).
This series comprises monographs and a variety of collaborative volumes, including translated works, which concentrate on the period of Italian history from late medieval times up to the Risorgimento. The editors aim to stimulate scholarly debate over a range of issues which have not hitherto received, in English, the attention they deserve. As it develops, the series will emphasize the interest and vigor of current international debates on this central period of Italian history and the persistent influence of Italian culture on the rest of Europe.

For a list of titles in the series, see end of book.
THE POLITICS OF RITUAL KINSHIP

CONFRATERNITIES AND SOCIAL ORDER IN EARLY MODERN ITALY

EDITED BY
NICHOLAS TERPSTRA

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
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Angela, Nigel, Christopher, and Alison reminded me daily that life with blood kin gives ritual kinship its persuasive pull.

And the cats who, in the end, seldom needed herding. To them, and to the whole body of very congenial scholars who pursue confraternal studies, this collection is dedicated.