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978-0-521-89496-8 - Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice

Elizabeth Horodowich

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## LANGUAGE AND STATECRAFT IN EARLY MODERN VENICE

Although historians typically describe the state as emerging through a wide variety of processes and structures such as armies, bureaucracies, and administrative organizations, this book demonstrates that a crucial but unrecognized component of statebuilding was the management of public speech: controlling foul language. Ideas about language were deeply embedded in Venetian political culture. Instead of studying the history of language through literary, printed texts, Horodowich examines the speech of everyday people on the streets of Renaissance Venice by looking at their actual words as recorded in archival documents. By weaving together a variety of historical sources, including literature, statutes, laws, chronicles, trial testimony, and punitive sentences, Horodowich shows that the Venetian state constructed a normative language – a language based not only on grammatical correctness, but on standards of politeness, civility, and piety – to protect and reinforce its civic identity.

Elizabeth Horodowich is an assistant professor of history at New Mexico State University. She earned her BA from Oberlin College in 1992 and her PhD in European history from the University of Michigan in 2000. Her articles have been published in journals such as *Past and Present*, *Renaissance Studies*, and *The Sixteenth Century Journal* and she is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Philosophical Society, the American Historical Association, and the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation. She is currently working on her second book, *A Brief History of Venice*.

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