



The Politics of Privilege: Old Regime and Revolution in Lille

Gail Bossenga

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This is the first study to examine in detail the political and fiscal origins of the French Revolution by means of sustained archival research at the local level. The book helps to illuminate an important question in the current debate in French historiography (as posed, among others, by Francois Furet, Lynn Hunt, and Simon Schama): if the Revolution was essentially a political event, what shaped the political attitudes of the revolutionaries? The answer, it is argued here, can be traced to the monarchy's contradictory fiscal demands upon members of the privileged elite and the resulting process of politicization. In tracing the unraveling of the old regime, the book also discusses the structure of political power, the growth of royal taxation, the reasons for the monarchy's failure at reform, and the state's regulation of the local economy.

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