S. R. Epstein, ed. *Town and Country in Europe, 1300–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. xi, 343.

The dozen essays in this well-edited volume provide a well-balanced and geographically extensive introduction to the current state of scholarship on the relation between town and country in late medieval and early modern Europe. As that relation is not altogether obvious, however, the essays also summarize a historiography in search of definition: was the connection between town and country principally economic and demographic, or was it cultural and political? The essays indicate connections on each of these axes. The problem of developing a generalizable history of the relation between town and country between 1300 and 1800, therefore, lies not in failing to identify its principal dimensions, but in failing to develop coherent narratives of events that logically lie within them. For while the cultural, economic, and political aspects of that relation were interrelated, they were nevertheless sufficiently independent of each other to support independent chronologies in their own right. A few examples drawn from the essays illustrate the problem.

In most of post-medieval Europe, towns were juridically distinguished from the countryside by laws and customs regulating the ownership of real property, the personal status of the inhabitants, and the institutions of local government. The content and the source of these jurisdictional distinctions varied from region to region, as did their medieval and early modern histories. In eastern and in much of central Europe, many urban “freedoms” of this type were eroded by the extension of seigniorial jurisdiction after 1450; in northwest Europe and in parts of Spain and Germany, they were extended to the countryside. This aspect of the relation between town and country, which is clearly connected to the history of personal freedom, is first and foremost a legal history, and is thus usefully studied through chronologies of legal documents and legal categories, which, while varying enormously from place to place, deal with a common set of issues. A related aspect is the varying geometry of local monopolistic rights to carry on specific trades, including the all-important trade of trading itself. The economic efficiencies resulting from concentrating transactions at a single point meant that such activities were initially located in towns. Much of the documentation bearing on the relation between town and country thus concerns disputes over the extent and ownership of such rights. Small towns competed for the right to hold local markets; burghers struggled to keep the exclusive rights of trading and handicrafts for themselves; seigneurs wanted to extend the right to trade and manufacture to rural subjects whose earnings they could tax. The state, where one existed, mediated between these competing demands by granting rights to the highest bidder. The economic logic of such confrontations is obvious and universal. The way it played out historically, however, varied greatly. As with the essentially legal history of personal status, the detailed history of the geometry of market and monopolistic privileges is most coherently written as an independent narrative.

Another urban-rural distinction is sovereignty. One of the great themes of the early modern history of those parts of Europe where sovereignty was initially dispersed among feudal lords, municipalities, and rural communities is the emergence of the territorial state. The development of the territorial states, which occurred earliest and most extensively in England, France, the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, and the larger urban-dominated territories of northern Italy, involved chronologies of negotiation, blackmail, and outright military conquest of towns and cities whose original independence was secured by fortifications and the financial strength to equip a militia and hire mercenaries. As in the case of personal status and economic rights, the history of this political struggle has an inner logic that provides structure for organizing a coherent narrative of the incorporation (or non-incorporation) of European cities into the territorial states.

The essays in this volume supply a useful introduction to the study of the above issues. The exposition of the national cases included, however, is structural rather than chronological, making it difficult to extract the specific histories that distinguished one part of Europe from another. The result is that the essays tend to reflect the more general economic and social historiographies of the nations they cover. The English essays by Galloway and Glennie are primarily concerned with economic geography, and in particular with the overwhelming importance of London in shaping the urban geography of England before 1750. The essays on Holland and the Dutch Republic by Hoppenbrouwers and 't Hart focus on the questions of whether and, if so, to what extent the cities "dominated" the countryside. Brennan's essay on France reflects a post-war historiography that has increasingly emphasized the cultural aspects of the relation between town and country. The east European contributions by Janeczka (Poland and Lithuania), German and Knittler (Austria and the Czech lands), Scott (Germany) and Sandberg (Sweden) focus on the failure (with some exceptions) of towns in these regions to secure an independence that, it is argued, could have served to support later industrialization and democratization. Among the more interesting contributions, if only because of the relative neglect of the regions in the standard literature, are those by Körner on the Swiss Confederation, Martin on the kingdom of Naples, and Sanches León on Castille. Belfanti's summary of the urban-rural histories of Florence, Venice, Milan, and the Piedmont is also outstanding, as is Epstein's introduction.

The most curious and promising comparison that arises from the essays is that between London and Naples, both of which were economic capitals of kingdoms having roughly the same population, and both of which accounted for nearly ten percent of that population. In both countries the presence of an exceptionally large city prevented the emergence of the smaller but significant towns that characterized other parts of western Europe, most particularly Holland and northern Italy. It is commonly argued that a large urban city was an essential stimulus to economic progress. The odd disjunction between the cases of London and Naples suggests that this relation was not universal. Analyzing that disjunction is one of the currently crucial historical problems of early modern economic and social history.

Perhaps the book's most valuable contribution is the splendid bibliography embedded in its footnotes. Students and scholars alike will find much matter for reflection in these essays, and the sources to pursue it. This is an excellent introduction to the urban-rural history of early modern Europe.

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William J. Connell and Andrea Zorzi, eds. *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 357.

A collection of papers, most of which were presented in earlier drafts at a seminar in San Miniato on the Florentine territorial state in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this book does not escape the difficulties of most such ventures. Presumably, the authors not only heard or read the offerings of their colleagues, but also discussed each other's presentations at the conference. Nonetheless, only one of the essays (Epstein's), in its final version, makes any mention of another, and the authors' contributions thus seem less contextually unified than they could have been.

A number argue, with some success, that informal relationships of patronage were more important than any governmental or administrative structure in shaping Florence's governance of its various subordinate territories. The result is to weaken the effect of those pieces which focus on structures more than on relationships; one wishes that the authors of the latter had addressed the issue of clientage and personal contacts more directly.

That Florence's domain was far from being a state in any modern sense is one of the implicit arguments of this book; a useful concluding reflection by Giorgio Chittolini suggests that this position should be hedged. In a number of papers focused on one or another of the dependent cities (Arezzo, Colle Valdelsa, Pistoia, San Miniato, and Volterra), anecdotal evidence demonstrates a gradual increase in patronage, as towns gave up or lost control of more and more of their offices to the central authority. The difficulties of responding effectively to the vicissitudes of Florentine factionalism, particularly in the period before Medici ascendancy, meant that different groups of townsmen were bound, to some degree, to competing partisan groups in the city. Local politics and the administration of the Florentine state were thus often intimately connected, rather than standing against one another. This is perhaps best underlined by Francesco Salvestrini's study of San Miniato.

None of these local studies fully contextualizes its presentation. Robert Black's examination of the ways in which earlier patronage relationships between the Medici and Arezzo affected the town's rebellion in 1502 follows on two earlier papers, published in other collections, on Piero and Lorenzo's connections with Arezzo. Nonetheless, his story of an increasingly difficult relationship causes even him to ask how, given the tensions between Lorenzo and the town on the upper