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

Arno, the revolt against the post-Medicean regime could have taken on such a strong pro-Medici, rather than just anti-Florentine, coloring. One is left wanting a fuller explanation of Aretine politics in the 1490s.

Most successful, among the studies of processes and structures across the Florentine dominions, are Stephen Epstein's analysis of market structures and relationships, and Laura De Angelis' discussion of territorial offices and office-holders. Both help to situate the local studies that follow them but would have been more successful had they drawn on details from these to underline their arguments.

The most impressive and convincing paper in this collection is Samuel Cohn's "Demography and the Politics of Fiscality," which considers the impact of political and administrative policies on the very lives of people in subject lands in the wake of the demographic catastrophe of the Black Death. This careful and sensitive regression analysis of tax rates in two regions — the Mugello highlands and valley lands between Florence and Prato — demonstrates, first, that tax rates were not just unequal, but, in the Mugello, insupportable, particularly in the last three decades of the fourteenth century. Tax rates on inhabitants of the city were substantially lower than those on the peasantry; and rich Florentines intervened to reduce the rates in the nearby countryside, where they were increasing their landholdings. Because taxation was a zero sum game, other regions had to make up the difference; by 1400 the people of Mangona faced demands which would have taken 66% of their lands (not their income) in taxation in a single year. The result was not just continuation of the emigration of previous decades but massive and previously unnoted insurrection. More interestingly still, these risings, unlike the *Ciompi* rebellion, were successful, not just in the short run, but in the long. Exemptions and lengthy immunities from taxation were awarded to numerous communities, and absolution for all crimes and acts of violence was given to specified rebels, who were also granted the hereditary right to carry weapons anywhere within Florence's dominions. Some of the leaders even received hereditary exemption from taxes of any sort. One might cite this as evidence of the limits the ruled could place on government, but that the population of Mangona had decreased by three-quarters in the 35 years preceding the revolt suggests that these limits were very high. Cohn thus underlines Chittolini's reminder that the state still exercised considerable power in this era, even as he demonstrates the power of patronage relationships.

A number of the essays have been translated from Italian with less than full success. Giuseppe Petralia's essay on fiscality and regional variations in tax practices is particularly vitiated by a translation that requires rereading of far too many sentences. His subject matter is abstruse and requires a linguistic precision of which the anonymous translator seems incapable. Other papers are less badly served, but in too many places the words used seem almost certainly less exact than their authors' intent. Here, the editors have failed us: there is no evidence that they checked their colleagues' submissions or the translations before going to press. A number of syntactical problems and one organizational flaw (on three successive pages Lorenzo's nomination of his secretary as notary *dei danni dati* in

Arezzo is described, each time as if this is the first mention of the event) suggest that no one read through all the final drafts. The failure to encourage all participants to connect their papers, at least briefly, to some of the others also indicates a relatively lax editorial hand. A list of participants, providing their academic affiliation and a brief indication of their other research, is always useful in a collection like this. Its absence is one more mark of a book which, as a whole, offers less than it might, even as a number of the pieces present substantial information and analysis, and merit wide transmission.

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David Zaret. *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. Pp. xv, 291.

Against familiar claims about the nature and origin of the public sphere (*i.e.*, that it was a bourgeois, a Protestant, or an Enlightenment phenomenon), David Zaret proposes an empirically-grounded investigation of some of the earliest and clearest attempts to invoke and influence public opinion. He finds a literal paper mountain of evidence in the unprecedented output of printing shops during the English Revolution. (Over 2,000 items were published in 1642 alone.) In the broadsheets, newsbooks, and pamphlets, whose numbers between 1640 and 1660 surpassed all the publications that had appeared in England since the introduction of printing in about 1485, Zaret finds ample and convincing evidence to support his central contention: that both social and technical aspects of print culture promoted the invocation of nominal public opinion, as well as the beginnings of a real public sphere in the sense valued by liberal democrats, in which open debate influences and, ideally, sets the agenda for public policy.

Zaret first does an excellent job of outlining the normative political and communicative models which operated in pre-revolutionary England: political conflict and even debate as anathema to an organic body politic; political knowledge flowing through channels of patronage with strict rules about deference and secrecy. "Free speech" existed only where privileged political elites met in council, within Parliament for example. The "public" discussion of politics, however, in alehouses or churchyards, was sedition. Zaret convincingly shows that the ancient practice of subjects petitioning their rulers, which seems at first glance an exception, also conformed to political norms of secrecy and privilege. Petitions were never framed as criticisms of policy, but as spontaneous expressions of local "grievances," which inferiors begged superiors to correct.

Of course, the norms were only imperfectly enforced, and Zaret shows how even deferentially framed petitions could serve as a disguise for outright rebellion. He also details the circulation of scribally produced newsletters and separates under the early Stuarts, which made secret Parliamentary proceedings relatively