

## Introduction

The transition from the late-medieval to the Renaissance state<sup>1</sup> in Florence has had a long and venerable historiography, spanning the fields of political thought and consciousness to public finance. For Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), after a brief mention of the revolt of the Ciompi, it was Cosimo de' Medici's return from exile and rise to power in 1434 that began the “rivoluzione dello stato”<sup>2</sup> and where his *Storia fiorentina* truly begins. The Medici's importance in the rise of a new Florentine state held sway until the Second World War,<sup>3</sup> when historians began to push its critical moment earlier, even as far back as the creation of its funded state debt, the *Monte*, in 1345.<sup>4</sup> Most historians now mark the rise of a new state sometime between the government of the Albizzi's rise to power in 1393 and 1411.<sup>5</sup> More than Cosimo il Vecchio, Maso

<sup>1</sup> For a useful transhistorical definition of the state, see Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), pp. 1–2: “Let us define states as coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories. The term therefore includes city-states, empires, theocracies, and many other forms of government, but excludes tribes, lineages, firms, and churches as such.” Also, see Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London, 1969), esp. pp. 46–51.

<sup>2</sup> Francesco Guicciardini, *Opere inedite di Francesco Guicciardini: Storia Fiorentina*, ed. by Piero and Luigi Guicciardini (Florence, 1859), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> See François Tommy Perrens' monumental three volumes, *Histoire de Florence depuis la domination des Médicis jusqu'à la chute de la république (1434–1531)* (Paris, 1888), I, p. 17: “A Florence, sous Cosimo, comme à Rome, sous Auguste, la République a bel et bien cessé d'exister, quoique ces deux patients ambitieux affectent d'en respecter les formes, en briguent et en obtiennent les charges.” For a work expressing much the same sentiment written on the eve of the Second World War, see Kurt S. Gutkind, *Cosimo de' Medici, il Vecchio* (Florence, 1940).

<sup>4</sup> See Marvin Becker, *Florence in Transition, I: The Decline of the Commune; II: Studies in the Rise of the Territorial State* (Baltimore, 1967–68); “The Florentine Territorial State and Civic Humanism in the early Renaissance,” in *Florentine Studies*, ed. by Nicolai Rubinstein (London, 1968), pp. 109–39; Philip J. Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria* (Oxford, 1997), ch. 4; and Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), pp. 237–50, in which a new sense of the ruling class as a social caste originates with the Black Death.

<sup>5</sup> See Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1955; revised edn., 1966); Molho, “The Florentine Oligarchy and the *Balia* of the Late Trecento,” *Speculum*, 43 (1968):

degli Albizzi is seen as the innovator of what historians have called the Renaissance, territorial, regional, or even the modern state.<sup>6</sup> Recent historians of the Medici also now see this dynasty's rise to power more as continuity than change, whether the subject is the mechanisms of the Florentine constitution<sup>7</sup> or the social networks of political patron-

Footnote 5 (*cont.*)

23–51; “Politics and the Ruling Class in Early Renaissance Florence,” *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 52 (1968): 401–20; Gene Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 3–13; “Humanism, Politics and the Social Order in Early Renaissance Florence,” in *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations, I: Quattrocento*, ed. by Sergio Bertelli, Rubinstein, and Craig Hugh Smyth (Florence, 1979), p. 11; Riccardo Fubini, “Italia quattrocentesca: un'introduzione,” in *Italia Quattrocentesca: Politica e diplomazia nell'età di Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Milan, 1994), pp. 19–39; “Il regime di Cosimo de' Medici al suo avvento al potere,” in *Italia Quattrocentesca*, pp. 62–86; “From Social to Political Representation in Renaissance Florence,” in *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*, ed. by A. Molho, K. Raaflaub, and J. Emlen (Stuttgart, 1991), p. 233; Giorgio Chittolini, “Ricerche sull'ordinamento territoriale del dominio fiorentino agli inizi del secolo XV,” in *La formazione dello stato regionale e le istituzioni del contado: secoli XIV e XV* (Turin, 1978); Andrea Zorzi, *L'amministrazione della giustizia penale nella Repubblica fiorentina: Aspetti e problemi* (Florence, 1988). Still others have marked the change with the return of the oligarchy in 1382: Lauro Martines, *Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1968), esp. pp. 464–76; John Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280–1400* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982), ch. 8 and epilogue; “Guild Republicanism in Trecento Florence: The Successes and Ultimate Failure of Corporate Politics,” *American Historical Review*, 84 (1979): 53–71; however, in “The Dialogue of Power in Florentine Politics,” in *City States*, pp. 269–88, his critical divide is 1400.

<sup>6</sup> See especially Fubini, “Italia quattrocentesca,” p. 3; “Il regime di Cosimo de' Medici,” pp. 67 and 74; and “Diplomazia e governo in Firenze all'avvento dei reggimenti oligarchici,” in *Quattrocento fiorentino: Politica, diplomazia, cultura* (Pisa, 1996), p. 13. Looking across Florence's bureaucratic history from the fifteenth through the eighteenth century, R. Burr Litchfield, *Emergence of a Bureaucracy: The Florentine Patricians 1530–1790* (Princeton, 1986), p. 4, has claimed that the changes in Florentine bureaucracy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries pale by comparison with those wrought by the less-studied Medici princes. But others, like Antonio Anzilotti, “Il tramonto dello stato cittadino,” *Archivio Storico Italiano* [hereafter *ASI*], 82 (1924): 72–105, have been less convinced about Medicean absolutism and modernity in the early-modern period. Marino Berengo, “Il Cinquecento,” in *La storiografia italiana negli ultimi vent'anni* (Milan, 1970), pp. 485–518 has argued that the particularist nodes of power in subject cities and rural provinces resisted the centrifugal forces of the princes. And Elena Fasano Guarini, “Gli Stati dell'Italia centro-settentrionale tra Quattro e Cinquecento: continuità e trasformazioni,” *Società e Storia*, 6 (1983): 617–39 and “Centro e periferia accentramento particolarismi: dicotomia o sostanza degli Stati in età moderna?” in *Origini dello Stato: Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. by Chittolini, Molho, and Pierangelo Schiera (Bologna, 1994), pp. 147–76, has stressed the “dualism” between central and local power.

Finally, Jones, “Communes and Despots: The City-State in Late-Medieval Italy,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. 15 (1965), pp. 92 and 95, has gone a step further, claiming that “the ‘Renaissance state’ is a fiction to be banned from books.” Yet he acknowledges the change in Italian political geography, from a myriad of small city-states of the early fourteenth century to five or six regional power blocks of the fifteenth century, dating this change even earlier than do others. For Jones (“Communes and Despots,” p. 71, and especially *The Italian City-State*, ch. 4) it occurred in the late Middle Ages with the “political revolution” from Commune to *Signoria*.

<sup>7</sup> See, most importantly, Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence under the Medici (1434 to 1494)* (Oxford, 1966); and more recently Rubinstein, “Cosimo *optimus civis*,” in *Cosimo “il Vecchio” de' Medici, 1389–1464. Essays in Commemoration of the 600th Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, ed. by Francis Ames-Lewis (Oxford, 1992), pp. 5–20 esp. pp. 13–14.

age.<sup>8</sup> This shift in the timing and meaning of the Florentine territorial state derives from a wide array of sources bearing on the institutions and ideology of early Renaissance Florence – fiscality and the funded debt, law and the legal profession, diplomacy, electoral procedures, bureaucracy, the Florentine constitution, historiography, and the language of ruling-class debate.

This book, too, analyzes changes in Florence's governance of its region but approaches the subject differently from traditional or more recent political histories. Instead of political tracts, historiography, diplomacy, foreign wars, statutes, or constitutional reforms, my research began with the demography of the countryside. Because of the political decisions of the Florentine elite not to tax themselves but to lay the burden on their rural communities, it is possible to know more about certain aspects of society and economy of Florence's surrounding countryside (its traditional *contado*<sup>9</sup>) than of the city itself, at least until the famous tax reform and survey, the *catasto* of 1427.

Second, I have not studied the development of the Florentine regional state from the usual perspective of institutional history and, in particular, of those institutions at the center, the city of Florence. My view

<sup>8</sup> D. V. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence 1426–1434* (Oxford, 1978). Although Kent and Rubinstein emphasize continuity, Fubini, “Il regime di Cosimo de’ Medici,” pp. 63–5, has claimed that they have seen too much innovation in the Medicean techniques of rule and reforms of republican government.

<sup>9</sup> As Guidubaldo Guidi, *Il Governo della città-repubblica di Firenze del primo Quattrocento*, I. *Politica e diritto pubblico* (Florence, 1981), p. 24, has said: “The distinction of the territorial state into its *contado* and district was never clearly defined and varied over time,” but a working definition needs to be offered. Although the *contado* corresponds mostly with the Carolingian county, the *contado*/district distinction begins largely with Florence's post-Black Death territorial expansion and the incorporation of previously independent city-states into its dominion. For the most part, these new acquisitions formed the *districtus* and were able to preserve many of their ancient prerogatives of administration, justice, and fiscality. Like the city of Florence, they did not owe direct taxes and were not surveyed by the *estimo*, but instead had to pay a fixed yearly military tax called the *taxa lancearum*, or tax on lances.

However, not all these acquisitions were incorporated into the district. In 1351 Florence acquired both Prato and Pistoia; Pistoia's administrative and fiscal structures were left largely intact, while Prato and its forty-five rural *villae* were absorbed into Florence's *contado* and were immediately surveyed in Florence's first *estimo* after the Black Death. Other new areas were brought into the Florentine *contado* instead of the district, as with the nineteen mountain communes rebaptized as the vicariate of the Alpi Fiorentine after Florence's defeat of the Ubaldini lords in 1373. The basic distinction between the *contado* and district was fiscal – whether a subject community was charged direct taxes by the *estimo* or subject to a fixed sum called the *taxa lancearum*. There were, however, exceptions such as the territories of the Valdinevole and Ariane, hived off from Lucca's territory and which formed Florence's first administrative *vicariatus* in the 1330s. The documents continue to describe these zones as part of the *districtus*, but they were subject to the Florentine *estimo*; see *Provisione registri* [hereafter *Prov. reg.*], 40, 156v–7r, 1353.x.16: “Extimum comunium vallisnebulae.” Also see Giovanni Francesco Paganini dal Ventura, *Della Decima e di varie altre gravanze imposte dal comune di Firenze* (Lisbon, 1765), I, pp. 1–2.

comes from the mountainous periphery of the Florentine state – a periphery both of geography and class – where Florence met its most strenuous opposition to territorial incorporation. Yet, far from being merely acted upon, these highlanders, I argue, were instrumental in changing the fiscal and administrative strategies of the Florentine oligarchy in the opening years of the fifteenth century. These changes are revealed in an analysis of Florence's fiscal records as well as in its concrete policies that redefined welfare toward its rural subjects. From viewing the *contado* merely as a reservoir of tax revenue and a buffer against foreign invaders, Florence's elites by the turn of the fifteenth century began to see their own fate as more deeply intertwined with the demographic and economic health of the hinterland. One consequence of this change of heart and purse strings was an increase in the wealth of the surrounding countryside by more than three times and that of Florence's previously most taxed and impoverished subjects, its highlanders, by sevenfold from 1402 to 1460.

Why did the ruling class change its mind? Despite the vast literature on the origins of civic humanism in Florence and the corresponding rise of a new regional state, historians have missed one key element effecting this change – tax revolts that spread across the mountains of Florence's periphery from the *Montagna di Pistoia* in the northwest to the *Valdambra* in the southeasternmost tip of the Florentine state. Perhaps these facts and their consequences for Florentine rule and mentality have eluded historians because of their obfuscation and failure to appear with any clarity in contemporary narrative sources of Florence, from chronicles to poetry. As a result, Florentine historians have continued to propagate the myth of Florence embedded in these contemporary writings, which saw lone republican Florence – united without class or factional rifts – defending the values of liberty against a rising tide of feudal Milanese tyranny. But, as we will see, the archival sources shed a wholly different light on events at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Thus, this book does not see the development of the regional state as a Weberian one-way street, the relentless consolidation of power in the hands of an elitist Florentine executive at the expense of corporatist identities, whether they were the guilds, the church, the *parte guelfa* within the city walls, or feudal powers and peasant communes on the periphery. In the critical years at the start of the fifteenth century, the periphery led the center's actions and changed fundamentally Florence's strategy of governance. Negotiations favorable to Florence's peasant communes proved as important for Florence's state-building and the consolidation of its region as the naked aggression triumphantly cele-

brated by its chroniclers and later by historians as the fount of its *virtù*.<sup>10</sup> While the centralization and bureaucratization of Florence during the early fifteenth century may have eroded the privileges of formerly independent city-states – Pistoia, Arezzo, Cortona, and Pisa – those within Florence's rural communities and especially along the mountainous periphery benefited politically and economically from this centralization and standardization of power.

In this respect, this book has implications that reach beyond the domain of Florentine historiography or even the vast literature on state-building in late-medieval and early-modern Italy.<sup>11</sup> The historical and theoretical literatures on the formation of the modern state in Western Europe have emphasized peasant uprisings but almost exclusively in the negative, as resistance and temporary setbacks to the long and relatively steady march of centralization and absolutism, especially in “Latin Europe” during the early-modern period.<sup>12</sup>

Such has been the case even with Charles Tilly, who has studied the resistance of “ordinary people of Europe” over the long term perhaps more intensely and sensitively than any historian or social scientist. Certainly, Tilly and other scholars of European state formation have shown that “for all their reputed docility, the ordinary people of Europe fought the claims of central states for centuries.”<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, by these accounts, artisans and peasants ultimately were dragged, shoved, or enticed “into a world of centralized communications, extensive markets, and a large span of control.”<sup>14</sup> Further, it was merchants and officials at the center who called the shots, dictating the multifarious patterns of

<sup>10</sup> As Najemy says, “The civic humanists were notoriously reluctant to acknowledge the dialogue of power in Florentine politics” (“The Dialogue of Power,” p. 287). Although Machiavelli may have been explicit about such a dialogue between the great families and the *Popolo* in Florentine politics, he remained silent about any such negotiations between Florence and the communities of its subject territory. <sup>11</sup> For a recent assessment of this literature, see *Origini dello Stato*.

<sup>12</sup> For an excellent recent summary of this literature, see Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 1–34.

<sup>13</sup> Tilly, “Reflections on the History of European State-Making,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975), p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22 and 61. Also, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974), p. 354: “The European world-economy of the sixteenth century tended overall to be a one-class system. It was the dynamic forces profiting from economic expansion and the capitalist system, especially those of the core-areas, who tended to be class-conscious, that is to operate within the political arena as a group defined primarily by their common role in the economy.” Recently, historians of early-modern and modern Europe have begun to challenge these more or less one-sided views of the formation of European states and their historical diversities; see Wayne Te Brake, *Shaping History: Ordinary People in European Politics, 1500–1700* (Berkeley, 1998); and Michael Hanagan, Leslie Moch, and Te Brake, eds., *Challenging Authority: The Historical Study of Contentious Politics* (Minneapolis, 1998), although the latter concentrates on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I wish to thank Charles Tilly for these references.

state control that would develop from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. According to these models, only by 1800 did “wider circles of the population” become involved in the “struggle for influence over the state.”<sup>15</sup> Before, those on the periphery of Europe’s state systems and the peasantry in particular lacked any vital or creative role and suffered as a consequence of state development.<sup>16</sup>

In the hands of Perry Anderson and from a perspective further to the left, the peasantry assumes an even smaller role in the history of state formation. Even in peasant revolts themselves, the peasantry disappears almost altogether from sight. Thus Anderson defined the peasant revolts of seventeenth-century France as “a nobilitary revolt against the consolidation of Absolutism.”<sup>17</sup>

The evidence from Florence suggests another pattern to state formation and regional consolidation of power. Instead of blocking the juggernaut of the centralizing state’s inexorable progress, resistance from those on the periphery of the state (in Florence’s case, peasants in the mountains) stimulated state development and, in doing so, molded it to their own advantage. With the peasant revolts of the opening years of the fifteenth century, taxes on the peasantry began to fall even in the face of Florence’s greater need for military outlays. Ultimately, the protests and petitions of the peasantry convinced city elites to revolutionize the Florentine tax system from an old mosaic of unequal taxation based on the rural community to a “universal tax” based on individual wealth, which ended the vast inequalities of the late fourteenth century between privileged peasants in the plains and distant highlanders. Second, the Florentine state became increasingly involved in shoring up the welfare of its rural subjects. As citizens feared the demographic emptying of their rural hinterland and as its military, fiscal, and economic realities

<sup>15</sup> Tilly, “Entanglements of European Cities and States,” in *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800*, ed. by Tilly and Wim Blockmans (Boulder, Colo., 1994), p. 26: “This means they [the wider circles of the population] also became objects of struggle for influence over the state, unprecedented before 1800. The unparalleled post-1800 interventionism of states and hence the increasing incentives for popular struggle to influence state personnel and policy rested on an expanded capacity to monitor, contain, seize, and redistribute resources within national territories.”

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Tilly, “Reflections,” p. 81: “All the builders of European states occupied themselves, one way or another, in wresting their wherewithal from largely self-sustaining agrarian populations.” In his later *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, p. 27, Tilly hints that the peasantry may have possibly taken a more active role in influencing state formation in Sweden as compared with Prussia or Russia. For a more complex and positive view of the peasants’ role in the formation of the Russian state from the end of the seventeenth century to 1861, see D. Moon, “Reassessing Russian Serfdom,” *European History Quarterly*, 26, no. 4 (1996): 481–526.

<sup>17</sup> Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974), p. 54.

began to dawn on them, they began to associate their own well-being as interlocked with that of their peasants.

While the great historian of the modern state, Otto Hintze, concluded long ago that “conflict between nations has been more important” than “class conflict” as “the driving force in history” and in particular for understanding the formation of the modern state in Europe, perhaps it is now time to reevaluate “class conflict” as a creative and not only as a negative force in the formation of centralized states before the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> As sociologists have recently called for the state to be brought back into the study of class and society,<sup>19</sup> the story of state-building in the Renaissance suggests that notions of class, the periphery, and the peasantry need to be brought back into the study of state formation before the birth of working-class movements in the nineteenth century. They need to be brought back not simply as the temporary obstacles that occasionally punctuated the modern state’s evolution but as positive “driving forces” that shaped the multifarious outcomes charted by Perry Anderson, Stein Rokkan,<sup>20</sup> Charles Tilly, Thomas Ertman, and other social scientists.<sup>21</sup>

This book is divided into three parts. The first investigates the relationship between city and *contado* and compares the social world of highlanders with lowlanders, most of whom lived close to the city of Florence. It argues that the city/*contado* distinction presents a false dichotomy for understanding political, social, and fiscal relations after the Black Death through the early fifteenth century. Instead, the *contado* was a mosaic of fiscal communities whose connections with the city differed drastically

<sup>18</sup> See Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan*, p. 11; and Otto Hintze, “Military Organization and the Organization of the State,” in *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. by Felix Gilbert (New York, 1975), p. 183.

<sup>19</sup> Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Skocpol (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 72–95. Long before, when such a call would have been more apropos, Miliband drew the following paradox: “While the vast inflation of the state’s power and activity in advanced capitalist societies with which this book is concerned has become one of the merest common-places of political analysis, the remarkable paradox is that the state itself, as a subject of political study, has long been very unfashionable” (*The State in Capitalist Society*, pp. 3–4).

<sup>20</sup> Stein Rokkan, “Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A Possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe,” in *Formation of National States*, pp. 562–600.

<sup>21</sup> On the work of Otto Hintze, Charles Tilly, Michael Mann, Perry Anderson, and Brian Downing, see Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan*, pp. 10–19. Of these Ertman is the only one to consider the positive and creative roles of local governments in the shaping of state formation in the early-modern and modern periods, but these local elites are limited to parliamentary representatives and dignitaries such as the English Justices of the Peace and do not extend to the peasantry.

from the privileged suburbs of Florence to the mountainous extremities. Yet, despite these fiscal and political differences, the society and culture of the mountains did not differ so dramatically from the plains as historians have supposed. Instead of “backward” peasants who sought every opportunity to escape brutal lives in mountain hollows, the archival records show that these peasants more often moved upward to other mountain villages than downward to supposedly greener pastures in the plains or to the city. Moreover, the highlanders were as numerate as peasants lower down the hills and in valleys, and by 1427 their percentages of given Christian names equaled those in the lowlands and subject towns. The sources fail to show a world where Christ stopped at Borgo San Lorenzo (as the slopes of the Mugello begin to climb); the highlanders’ last wills and testaments even suggest that they were more pious than those in the lowlands.

Further, instead of being wedged within the glacial structures of geological or geographic time, “mountain civilization” was dynamic; its social structure could change over the short term of a single generation and its fate was tied more to the history of events – war, fiscality, and social unrest – than to deep-seated geographical structures. While peasants in the mountains had been wealthier than those in the plains after the Black Death (and perhaps before), the tables turned in the last decade of the fourteenth century. As a direct consequence of heavy taxation and war, the Florentine Alps quickly assumed those economic and social characteristics that Braudel and others have seen as inherent in the long-term structures of these geographical zones.<sup>22</sup>

This *histoire immobile* or “geographical time” proved, however, to be of short duration. At the turn of the century, political events of another sort – peasant rebellion against the Florentine state – intervened and, largely as a consequence, the Florentine oligarchy changed its stance toward those on its mountainous periphery. The highlanders prospered throughout much of the fifteenth century, both absolutely and relative to lowland peasants, and by 1460 possessed twice the wealth of those in the plains.

From chronicles, criminal records, and the daily activity of Florentine legislative bodies left in volumes of decrees, laws, and petitions called the

<sup>22</sup> On Braudel’s models of geographical and historical time, see *Écrits sur l’histoire* (Paris, 1969); “History and the Social Sciences, The Long Term,” in *Society and Economy: Articles from Annales*, ed. by P. Burke (New York, 1972), pp. 11–40; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, “L’histoire immobile,” *Annales, E.S.C.*, 29 (1974): 673–92. Also see Le Roy Ladurie’s about-face in “The ‘Event’ and the ‘Long Term’ in Social History: the Case of the Chouan Uprising,” in *The Territory of the Historian* (Chicago, 1979 [Paris, 1973]), pp. 111–32.



*provisioni*, part II of the book investigates the events that were to change Florence's governance of its region as well as the ecology of its mountains. These were peasant uprisings that spread through the mountainous districts from the Montagna di Pistoia in the northwest to the Chianti in the south. The sources portray three views of the same political realities. The chroniclers distorted and disguised them but, more importantly, mostly ignored them altogether. The judicial records' version shows that these movements did not arise solely or even more significantly from the leadership of Florence's rival feudal families, as the chroniclers relate. Rather, mountain peasants formed the rank and file and were often the leaders who planned military operations and devised tactics. Further, unbearable and unequal taxes were more at the heart of the opposition's bitterness than noblemen's desires to recapture ancient castles.

These records, however, show only one side of the story – the heavy hand of state oppression – and, like those few literary accounts that mention the revolts in passing, leave the impression that they were quickly crushed, the insurgents rounded up, led to Florence, and executed with new forms of torture and humiliation. On the other hand, the Florentine decrees (*provisioni*) show a less heroic side to Florentine state policy – the need to negotiate with peasant insurgents. From 1403 to 1405 the insurgents' ringleaders were singled out for special privileges, and thousands of mountain villagers in hundreds of parishes from the Alpi Fiorentine to the Chianti won tax exemptions and cancellations of public debts.

Part III argues that these peasant victories were neither short-lived nor without significance for Florentine dominion over the formation of a new regional state. First, tax rates and tax inequalities in the countryside reached their apex on the eve of the peasant uprisings, 1401, and declined progressively until the *catasto* of 1427, when Florence replaced a medieval mosaic of unequal taxation with a “universal” tax that charged individuals according to the same principles regardless of residence within the *contado*. Second, an analysis of over a thousand peasant petitions found in the *provisioni* registers from 1347 to 1434 reflects a long-term change in the rhetoric of peasant petitions as well as in the mentality of the Florentine ruling class. Again, 1402 was the watershed of an unstated policy as Florence voted more generous outcomes to more peasant communities across a wider array of peasant discontents. Unlike those approved before 1402, afterwards successful pleas from the countryside were not pinned narrowly on shoring up Florence's military

defenses. Clemency toward the countryside changed from a rationale focused on Florence's desire to protect its citizens from foreign invasion to a new sensitivity to the politics of demography and the weakening of the countryside through peasant discontent and mass migration. As becomes evident in its handling of new waves of peasant unrest in 1426 and 1427, when war and fiscal crisis once again struck the Florentine state, Florence had learnt its lessons of 1402. The second time around, Florence intervened with tax immunities and slashed administrative charges before insurgent mountain peasant communes in the Aretino even had time to petition the government in Florence. Furthermore, the reforms of the more equitable *catasto* of 1427 were founded in the experiences of 1402, as our charts on taxation and the debates in Florence's highest councils make clear.

This book began as a short project to utilize the under-studied *Capi di famiglia* tax surveys and resulted in an essay on rural migration to honor the late David Herlihy.<sup>23</sup> After its completion, one question left unresolved led to another and one source to another, producing five more essays in various volumes.<sup>24</sup> Parts of the present book intersect with data, analyses, and formulations presented in these earlier essays.

<sup>23</sup> Samuel K. Cohn Jr., "Inventing Braudel's Mountains: The Florentine Alps after the Black Death," in *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living. Essays in Honor of David Herlihy*, ed. by Cohn and Steven A. Epstein (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 383–416.

<sup>24</sup> *Women in the Streets: Essays on Sex and Power in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1996), chs. 6 and 7; "Insurrezioni contadine e demografia: il mito della povertà nelle montagne toscane (1348–1460)," *Studi Storici*, 36, no. 4 (1995): 1023–49; "Marriage in the Mountains: The Florentine Territorial State, 1348–1500," in *Marriage in Italy, 1300–1650*, ed. by Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 174–96; and "Fiscal Policy and Demography in the Florentine Contado, 1355–1487," in *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power*, ed. by William Connell and Andrea Zorzi (Cambridge, forthcoming).