

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Pirillo, Paolo, and Lorenzo Tanzini, eds. *Terre di confine tra Toscana, Romagna e Umbria. Dinamiche politiche, assetti amministrativi, società locali (secoli XII–XVI)*

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*Polish Republican Discourse in the Sixteenth Century* will be read with interest by students and scholars of Poland and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as historians of early modern political theory. Although certainly useful and illuminating, it would nonetheless be difficult to determine an ideal audience for this book. Neither an introduction to the subject (because it demands too much prior knowledge on the part of the reader), nor a critical monograph (because it neglects to take a clearly defined stance and follow it through); it falls somewhere between a textbook and a brave attempt to demarcate the field. It is first and foremost a work of history of ideas with few examples of their practical application in the courtroom, classroom, and the *Sejm*. And it takes the eponymous “Polish republican discourse” to the letter as it pays little attention to Lithuanian, Ruthenian, and Prussian perspectives. This is not so much a criticism as an invitation to other scholars to take up the subject where Pietrzyk-Reeves left it off, so as to give us a new perspective on Polish-Lithuanian politics that is transcultural in scope and multidisciplinary in outlook. If only for that reason, *Polish Republican Discourse in the Sixteenth Century* is an invaluable contribution to the study of Old Poland and good value for money for the National Programme for the Development of Humanities, a Polish government body that sponsored the translation from Polish to English. All in all, Pietrzyk-Reeves wrote an important book that offers often surprising and compelling new ways of approaching familiar material, affording important insights and opening up new lines of inquiry into the early modern Polish *res publica*.

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**Pirillo, Paolo, and Lorenzo Tanzini, eds.**

*Terre di confine tra Toscana, Romagna e Umbria. Dinamiche politiche, assetti amministrativi, società locali (secoli XII–XVI).*

Biblioteca storica toscana. Series 1, vol. 80. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2020. Pp. viii, 464 + 4 ill. ISBN 978-8-8222-6730-6 (paperback) €48.

“More than a perimeter, we have to imagine a series of points, tied together by threads more or less resistant, to build a weft of relations with a warp either

more or less dense" (367; here and elsewhere all translations are mine) This important statement aptly describes a possible answer that this volume tries to offer, through many examples, to the question of what in premodern times was meant by border (*confine*). Simply put, the "border" could be the official "line" established by the ruling city or the one established by local custom.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when cities turned to a legal and administrative settlement of the territory subject to them, the different understandings of the term "border" became fundamental to the management of the relationships between the centre and the periphery. For local communities, borders were tied to the use "of common lands, pasture, woods and natural resources that were essential to the survival of the group" (4). According to what criteria, then, was it possible to define borders?

This volume gathers the papers presented at two conferences held in May and November 2019 in Florence and Perugia. It is divided into two parts. The first, more theoretical part examines the general ways in which issues are framed through legal, canonical, institutional, and practical analyses and approaches. The second shows, through specific examples, how different cities and local lords confronted and resolved (or not) the daily factors that established, defined, and maintained borders.

Because the conferences and the volume are the result of close collaboration between the local history commissions (*Deputazioni di Storia Patria*) of the three regions of Tuscany, Romagna, and Umbria, the focus falls on the extended areas that connected, across the Appennine mountains, medieval Tuscany, Romagna, and the papal states. It is thus possible to follow, for example, the spread of the Florentine influence in the region and its consequent limitation of Bolognese advancement in the north; Umbrian attempts to control the Valdichiana in the east; or the encroachment of the papal states in the south.

The areas analyzed are essentially the Apennines between Florence and Bologna; the so-called Florentine "Romagna" which extended almost to Faenza and Forlì (today respectively in the provinces of Ravenna and Forlì-Cesena) on the Adriatic sea; the northern part of the Tiber valley, whose centre was Borgo San Sepolcro near Arezzo but which belonged to the Umbrian diocese of Città di Castello (this detail points out that the civic and ecclesiastical borders were not the same); and the Valdichiana, claimed by both Arezzo and Perugia. All in all, this vast area ran from Pistoia, west of Florence, to Lake Trasimeno, a vast region full of similarities and dissimilarities.

Different examples provide a “geography” of solutions for how borders changed over time and place. Borders adapted to local situations, becoming more fluid or rigid depending on the political importance of the competitors. The much desired “linear” border (a very modern technical idea) that clearly outlines “the legal action of the dominant authority on spaces and not on people” (182) was not always a possibility.

From the conflicts between Guelphs and Ghibellines to the control of important routes that connected different countries (and facilitated the movements of troops), from the importance of women in the transfer of strategic lands to the problems that arose when there was not a male heir to inherit these lands, from the attempt of the local lords to resist the expansion of the “dominant” authority to the administrative submission of the territory surrounding the city, the volume offers a nuanced and informative reading of the centuries-long efforts to graphically represent even the idea of borders, let alone their reality. The focus on this central part of the Italian peninsula, with its rich and dynamic areas, flourishing cities, competing communities, and local authorities (both civic and ecclesiastical), all intent on asserting their power and influence, provides the reader with a micro-history that illustrates important aspects of local development.

The various contributors to the volume provide interesting, historically-grounded readings of an issue that we take for granted today, but that for centuries required attention, intention, and a willingness to define it.

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**Ritchey, Sara, and Sharon Strocchia, eds.**

***Gender, Health and Healing, 1250–1550.***

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. Pp. 330 + 12 ill. ISBN 978-94-6372-451-7 (hardcover) €109.

This collection of essays draws upon the critical insights of feminist scholars to present an interactive picture of healthcare and healing during a formative phase of medical development in Europe. The period of 1250–1550 merits