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Antonio Stopani. *La production des frontières: Etat et communautés en Toscane (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles).* Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2008. viii + 449 pp. EUR 41.00 (paper), ISBN 978-2-7283-0818-7.

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Delimiting the Tuscan State

This heavily researched book examines the formation and operation of a Florentine institution, The Nine Conservators of the Jurisdiction and of the Dominion, dedicated to the maintenance of borders in the Tuscan state between 1560 and 1780. By way of contrast, Antonio Stopani summarizes Frederick Turner's 1893 speech to the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, in which he famously laid out his romantic vista of the central importance of moving, ever-expanding frontiers to defining the American character. However, rather than revive Turner's emphasis on expanding borders and the formation of national character, Stopani focuses instead on the rapport between local and central institutions. The recognition and management of internal borders, along with borders between states, was a key element of state formation in late medieval Europe.

The author exploits extensive archival collections in the Archivio dei confini, records of annual visitations of the Nine from 1560 to 1780, a vast, rich, and complete source, to elucidate the ways in which borders were established between the various entities that became part of Tuscany, and the methods used in settling disputes between these polities and others that shared disputed borders with communities that were part of other territorial states. The establishment of borders and their maintenance was not an easy affair. To verify borders when there was no dispute, "Visitors" (begun in 1570), functionaries from Florence's citizen magistracy, looked for boundary markers, and they spoke with elders who had some memory of where distinctions had been drawn and how placement of boundaries had occurred, a test of "social memory," passed from one generation to the next. Boundaries of states are portrayed as though they are fixed but in reality people and things pass through, and boundaries are flexible even when there are no disputes. Hierarchy was a major feature of polities so that Visitors worked very hard to determine and support rights and prerogatives to keep peace and harmony between the residents.

At the base of the idea of sovereignty was the Roman legal concept of *jurisdictio*, upon which was founded the right to exercise authority within a geographic area defined by accepted boundaries. Disputes and arguments were carried to the Nine for resolution. Recording of these results was an act of naming and writing, employing a fictional narrative structure, and ordering local observations and memories, but creating the false idea that groups of people could be treated as though they were individuals. Legalistic procedures were used to resolve disputes, working in most cases, but when violence was imminent, summary process was resorted to; land or access to it and its products was fixed under the authority of the Nine until a satisfactory solution could be worked out to safeguard and maintain possession of the land. At the base of most disputes were the modes of exploiting resources. The procedures used were gathering of information, the defense of jurisdiction and the use of diplomacy, and mediation and arbitration. Mediators could be doctors from the universities or the noble class, depending on the social class of the parties involved. Pragmatic resolution was aimed for, a feature of early modern justice in Tuscany. As Tuscany proceeded into the eighteenth century, borders became visible and fixed through their inscription on maps (the actions of jurists) and through physical changes to the land made by engineers. The formation of central cartographic archives occurred from

1779 to 1782.

Stopani has completed an enormous amount of research in this book on Florence and Tuscany in the early modern period. He makes clear that the identification and maintenance of borders is extremely important at both the conceptual and practical levels to understanding one of the most defining elements of the state–the establishment and defense of its borders. For a small state like Tuscany, settling these types of disputes must have been the warp and woof of diplomacy. Of the many cases recorded, Stopani selects a couple that illustrate the issue he is addressing, so that the reader has the benefit of some detail but not too much. I have only one complaint about this solid study, a small one: on page 37, Stopani mistakes Alessandro de'Medici's assassin (1537) to have been Pier Francesco de'Medici, when it was actually Lorenzino de'Medici.

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