Renaissance thought undermined the spatial hierarchies of the medieval political imaginary. The promotion of the ideal of sovereign man challenged the belief that man was a prisoner in space, trapped in a mundane world, which existed only as a dull reflection of the divine world of the heavens. Further, Machiavelli’s realism removed republic and princedom from the political theology of Christianity, in which territoriality was conceived of as an attribute of Christendom rather than as an exclusively political space, the locus of Aristotle’s *zön politikon*. However, no sooner had the state been de-territorialized, extricated from the vertical spatial order of the medieval cosmos, than State-thought sought to re-territorialize it, to striate its space with the markers and symbols of sovereign territory. Concentrating on Machiavelli, this chapter explores how Renaissance political discourse territorialized *lo stato* by fixing sovereignty, violence, and identity onto state space.

*Lo Stato in Renaissance Political Discourse*

In Machiavelli’s writings *lo stato* has multiple meanings. One reason for this is that although Machiavelli’s prose is not particularly abstruse, he “uses the same vocabulary for different concepts and expresses the same concepts with different vocabularies.”¹ Second, the lexicon of Renaissance political thought was, like other contemporary vocabularies, “imbued with the past and pregnant with the future.”² Accordingly, *lo stato* had multiple connotations that varied depending on the context in which it was used.³ The first meaning, common in the Northern kingdoms such as England and France, was derived from *status*, which, in Roman law, denoted the standing a ruler enjoyed, that is the status of majesty, or the status of the political community. This is the sense Giovanni
Campano deploys in *De regendo magistratu* where he argues that republics could only achieve *optimus status respublicae* if their leaders strove for justice. According to Quentin Skinner, Machiavelli implies this meaning of status when he advised new princes on how to “tenere or mantenere lo stato” or how to maintain their position as rulers over their new territories. Lo stato was also used to classify different forms of government. This meaning derived from the humanists’ use of status to translate Aristotle’s types of government constitutions. Thus, Leonardo Bruni translates Aristotle’s distinction between democracy and aristocracy as status popularis and status optimatum, and in Filippo Beroaldo’s *Libellus de optimo statu* the typology of legitimate regimes are status populare, status paucorum, and status unius. During the fourteenth century Florentines described their own popular regime government as *populare stato* or *popularis status*. However, notes Nicolai Rubinstein, the use of *lo stato* to denote different forms of government gave way to *stato* as an indication of effective power; “[s]tatus, defined by ‘what has the supreme power in the state,’ comes close to the meaning with which *stato* was widely used in fifteenth-century Florence.” For Skinner, this use of *lo stato* “to refer to the institutions of government and means of coercive control that serve to organize and preserve order within political communities” was a major linguistic innovation of the Renaissance. Although *lo stato* as the governmental and administrative apparatus was kept conceptually distinct from *città* or *republica*—the political community or state as a whole—it was not always clearly distinguished from those who had effective control of it. Sometimes the distinction is relatively clear, as when Vespasiano describes how Alessandro Sforza conducted himself “in his government of *lo stato,*” and when Guicciardini in his *Ricordi* asks how the Medici “lost control of *lo stato* in 1527.” Again, in a letter to Lorenzo de Medici discussing the enhanced security that Florence would gain from a treaty with Naples, the Florentine Chancellor highlighted the benefits that will accrue to “you and the regime which is joined to you and for the state which is joined to the regime.” However, by the time Lorenzo had overcome the Pazzi plot in 1477, the stato of Florence was to all effects and purposes designated by the Medici. *Lo stato* had come to refer not to state’s power structure but to the dominant regime in control of it: *lo stato di Medici.* The final meaning of *lo stato*, and the one which will be addressed in the rest of this chapter, was indicated when “writers contemporaneous with Machiavelli used *stato* to designate a geographical area.” Here *lo stato* is “a way of referring to the general area over which a ruler or chief magistrate needs to exercise control.”

Machiavelli’s work reflects the general conceptual ambiguity surrounding *lo stato* at the time. Sometimes he distinguishes the institutions and structure of *lo stato* from those who control it. In such instances, *lo stato* not only has its own foundations, laws, customs, and institutions, but is a subject capable of