This book portrays the life and institutions of a great medieval Italian city, Siena, through the surviving records and buildings of the period. Laws, council minutes, records of the commune’s revenue and expenditure, wills and other charters from the thirteenth century are among the plentiful material which makes up the picture of the city republic’s institutions and those who ran them.

The main themes are the political institutions of the city, and the involvement of the citizens in them. The preoccupations of the Sienese as revealed in their conciliar discussions are studied, as well as their attitudes to government and well-developed bureaucracy, their territorial overlordship in southern Tuscany, and their involvement in diplomacy and war. The religion of the Sienese is also investigated.

This is a portrait of a special, but not untypical, society which was engaged in an experiment in oligarchic self-government. Although the milieu was urban, Siena’s bankers and tradesmen, craftsmen and those involved in transport and agricultural labour, were in many cases landowners: the city was dependent on and greatly involved with its rural environment. The precocity of the commune’s governmental methods and the wealth of information that has survived mean that the medieval life of this famous and beautiful Tuscan city can be depicted in full and convincing detail.
SIENA AND THE SIENESE IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY
Siena and the Sienese in the thirteenth century

DANIEL WALEY
To the custodians of Siena's historical archive, past, present and future
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Preface

The intention of this book is to depict the Sienese and their city through the use of records of the period between 1250 and 1310. The extent and nature of these sources – principally laws, minutes of council meetings, financial records and wills – are such that it should be possible to give an idea of how the city was run at that time and what it felt like to live there. My aim has been to portray Sienese institutions – the commune’s and others – to explain how they worked and who participated in them, and to link up the people who exercised power in the city with the ways in which they did this. The computer has helped me in attempting some quantitative use of the sources; I hope that this has been cautious.

William Bowsky’s Herculean labours on the source material in the Sienese Archivio di Stato began a decade before I set to work, and culminated in his The Finance of the Commune of Siena, 1287–1355 (1970) and A Medieval Italian Commune, Siena under the Nine, 1287–1355 (1981). The technique of this book has dictated a different approach from Bowsky’s, but we have about a quarter of a century (1287–1310) in common. I have sought to depict Siena as it appears to me without allowing Bowsky’s viewpoint to dictate mine either in agreement or reaction, but I have almost certainly acquired more from his writings than I was aware of when writing myself and I acknowledge most gratefully my indebtedness to his many publications. Bowsky emphasizes continuity in the period 1287–1355 and implies a break at the start of that period, whereas my emphasis is on continuity through the preceding half-century and in the early decades of the Nine. A differing view also emerges concerning the Noveschi. Bowsky sees the Nine as a ‘regime’, the Noveschi as a ‘governing class’ or ‘ruling oligarchy’. My contrasting interpretation portrays the period after 1287 as a phase in the commune’s constitutional development in which the older ruling class accepted a continuous process whereby ‘middling merchants’ played a more prominent or more formally defined role in government.

It is about twenty years since I began to devote my leisure to collecting material for this book and it is now time to bring together the work done rather than pursue further archival research. Because my aim is to give a realistic picture of Sienese society, the technique employed is to give examples from the surviving records of how things were done and perceived, so the arrangement is topical, dealing in turn with the place, its people, the working of their political and social
xiv PREFACE

institutions and their religion. In the last chapter, on continuity and change, I have made an attempt to compensate for the disadvantages of this non-chronological approach. Naturally the records are not equally informative for all aspects of medieval Sienese life and I am aware of gaps through the virtual omission, for example, of the household and domesticity. I have tried, not with total success, to proceed from Sienese sources alone and not to argue or illustrate by analogy with other medieval cities. The lack of discussion of other cities limits the book’s usefulness as a contribution to comparative history, but the sacrifice is intentional. I have also sought to avoid the viewpoints and controversies of recent historical research because the book is intended for general readers, not only for scholars and students.
Acknowledgements

My thanks are due most of all to my wife who has, as ever, helped me very greatly with advice, criticism and forbearance. She gave me the microfilm reader which has been a crucial aid and she has constantly and patiently intervened between myself and a word processor which my own ineptitude in such matters would have made it impossible for me to dominate unaided.

I have much enjoyed working in the Sienese Archivio di Stato over a good many years and my gratitude to the staff and present Director, Dr Sonia Fineschi, is reflected, though inadequately, in the dedication of this work.

Westfield College (now Queen Mary and Westfield College), University of London, generously made me an Honorary Research Fellow on my retirement, and for the computer analysis in chapter 2 I am indebted to the college’s Computer Unit.

Professor Paolo Cammarosano most kindly gave me a copy of his and Dr Passeri’s marvellous Repertorio delle strutture fortificate for the region of Siena and Grosseto. I should like to thank him for this well-timed present and for other gifts of his publications. Dr David d’Avray of University College, London, generously read the chapter on religion in an earlier form and made very helpful comments. Dr Edward English of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, sent me copies of publications and writings of his; his gift of a copy of his doctoral thesis was an act of outstanding generosity.

I must express also my gratitude to the Leverhulme Foundation for the award of an Emeritus Fellowship which enabled me to spend many weeks working at the Sienese archive in 1986–7.

Some acknowledgements relating to maps and tables are made in relevant parts of this book.

D. W.
Glossary

The purpose of this glossary is to help readers not familiar with the vocabulary of medieval Italian society. The aim has been to provide brief explanatory keys, not precise or full definitions, to help with the comprehension of some words used in connection with institutions in this book.

1. **TOPOGRAPHICAL**

1. *Burgi* (also *subburgi*): suburbs, i.e. built-up areas outside the city walls.
2. *Contado*: the area of the commune’s jurisdiction outside the city and *Masse* (see below). Its inhabitants are styled *comitatenses* in this book, since the Italian form ‘contadini’ (= peasants) is ambiguous.
3. *Contrade*: neighbourhoods or regions (not necessarily formal divisions), usually within a city or town.
4. *Masse*: the area close to the city of Siena, the subject of special juridical and fiscal arrangements, being more directly under the commune’s authority than the contado.
5. *Popoli*: the districts into which Siena was divided, drawing their names mainly from parish churches; they numbered thirty-four in 1318. (Not connected with the institution ‘Popolo’ described below under 2b.)
6. *Terzi*: the three ‘thirds’ into which the city of Siena was divided, i.e. Città, San Martino, Camollia.

For further information see *Repertorio* and *Redon*. The map in the latter work is particularly helpful about the whereabouts and extent of the Masse.

2. **INSTITUTIONS**

   **A. Connected with the commune**

1. *Balìa* (plural: *balìe*). An *ad hoc* committee.
4. *Cavallata*. The obligation to perform cavalry service or tax payable in lieu of this.
5. *Consiglio della Campana* or *Consiglio Generale*. The principal council of the commune.
6. **Dazio.** Direct tax.
7. **Dogana.** Fiscal monopoly.
8. **Emendatori.** Officials charged with revising the statutes.
9. **Gabella.** Indirect tax; office concerned with indirect taxation.
10. **Lira** (Latin *libra*). Assessment for direct tax; grouping for direct taxation on a topographical basis.
11. **Maggior sindaco.** Non-Sienese official charged with ensuring obedience to the commune's statutes.
12. **Ordini** (Latin *Ordines*). The leading magistracies, comprising the Provveditori, the consuls of the Mercanzia and the consuls of the Knights (alternatively known as Captains of the Guelf Party).
13. **Parlamento** (or *arenga*). General assembly: see chapter 3, excursus 2.
14. **Placitum.** Court of 'pleas', concerned with the wardship of minors.
15. **Podestà.** Principal non-Sienese official of the commune. His own subordinate officials or retainers were sometimes known as his *curia* (court).
16. **Provveditori.** Four principal Sienese officials of the Biccherna.
17. **Radota.** Additional members co-opted to councils.
18. **Savi** (Latin: *sapientes*). Elected advisers, members of *balie*.
19. **Sindacatio.** Process of inspection of accounts etc. of officials on their leaving office.

For the titles of the leading officials at different periods (Twenty-four, Thirty-six, Fifteen, Nine) see table 4.

**B. Others**

1. **Anziani** (Latin: *antiani*, literally ‘elders’). Elected officials, usually of the Popolo.
2. **Arti.** Gilds, i.e. merchant and craft gilds.
3. **Consuls.** Normally applied in this period to officials of gilds, though the ‘knights’ (i.e. elements not members of the Popolo) also had consuls.
4. **Mercanzia.** The merchant gild.
5. **Popolo.** An organization proclaiming an anti-oligarchical programme (see chapter 5). Unconnected with the topographical unit of the same name. Members: *popolani*. The leading official (captain) from the 1250s was the *Capitano del Popolo*.
6. **Priors.** Office-holders sometimes enjoyed special powers during that part of their period of office when they served as seniors or ‘priors’.
7. **Tallia** (literally: ‘share’). An alliance embodying an agreement covering military contributions made by its members.
GLOSSARY

3. MISCELLANEOUS

2. *Bannum*. Judicial ban or outlawry (*rebannimentum*: release from the ban).
4. *Casato* (plural *casati*). Family; specifically family formally identified as of magnate status, i.e. aristocratic or powerful.
5. *Fondaco* (*Latin* fundacus). A complex of buildings possessed by a leading family; a trader’s store; or premises of traders resident in a town or land which is not their own.
Abbreviations

ARCHIVAL

ASS  Siena, Archivio di Stato

Series in ASS:
B  Biccherna (printed volumes cited as B.)
Capitano  Capitano del Popolo
Concistoro
CG  Consiglio Generale
Dipl.  Diplomatico
AGC  Archivio Generale dei Contratti
Rif.  Riformagioni
Spedale  Spedale di S Maria della Scala
Lira
Notarile
Podestà
Statuti

PRINTED SOURCES

AA SS  Acta Sanctorum Bollandiana (reprinted Paris-Rome, 1863–)
B.  Libri dell’Entrata e dell’Uscita della Repubblica di Siena (Siena, 1903–70)
Breve, 1250’  Breve degli officiali del comune di Siena . . . 1250’, ed. L. Banchi,
ASI, s. 3, 3, 2 (1866), pp. 3–104
CV  Il Caleffo Vecchio del comune di Siena, eds. G. Cecchini and others, 4 vols. (Siena, 1932–84)
Const. 1262  Il Constituto del comune di Siena dell’anno 1262, ed. L. Zdekauer (Milan, 1897: reprinted Bologna 1983)
(Cont.  continuation in BSSP, 1–3)
Cost. 1309–10  Il Costituto del comune di Siena volgarizzato nel MCCCIX–MCCCX, ed. A. Lisini (Siena, 1903)
ABBREVIATIONS

**Const. CdP** Il Constituto dei Consoli del Placito del comune di Siena, ed. L. Zdekauer (Siena, 1890 = SS, 6 (1889), pp. 152–206)

P. and P. Lettere volgari del sec. XIII scritte da Senesi, eds. C. Paoli and E. Piccolomini (Bologna, 1871 reprinted 1968)


**RIS, CS** Cronache Senesi, eds. A. Lisini and F. Iacometti in Rerum Italicarum Scriptores. n.s., 15, 6 (Bologna, 1931–39)

Statuti . . . giudici e notai Statuti senesi dell’arte dei giudici e notai del sec. XIV, ed. G. Catoni (Rome, 1972)


PERIODICALS

**ASI** Archivio Storico Italiano

**BDSPU** Bollettino della Deputazione di Storia Patria per l’Umbria

**BSSP** Bollettino Senese di Storia Patria

**JWCI** Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes

**MAH** (later MEFR) Mélanges d’Archéologie et d’Histoire de l’École française de Rome

**Misc. St. S.** Miscellanea Storica Senese

**QFIA** Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken

**RSDI** Rivista di Storia del Diritto Italiano

**RSI** Rivista Storica Italiana

**SM** Studi Medievali

**SS** Studi Senesi

WORKS OF REFERENCE

**DBI** Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani

**Repertorio** P. Cammarosano and V. Passeri, Città borghi e castelli dell’area senese-grossetana. Repertorio delle strutture fortificate dal medioevo alla caduta della Repubblica senese (Siena, 1984)

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ABBREVIATIONS  xxi


C. Econ. H. Cambridge Economic History of Europe (Cambridge, 1941–)


Ciampoli D. Ciampoli, *Il Capitano del popolo a Siena nel primo Trecento* (Siena, 1984)


Epstein S. R. Epstein, *Alle origini della fattoria toscana. L’ospedale della Scala di Siena e le sue terre (metà ’200-meta ’400)* (Florence, 1986)

Marrara D. Marrara, ‘I magnati e il governo del comune di Siena dallo statuto del 1274 alla fine del XIV secolo’ in *Studi per Enrico Fiumi* (Pisa, 1979), pp. 239–76

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Pecci G. A. Pecci, *Storia del Vescovado della città di Siena* (Lucca, 1748)


Redon O. Redon, *Uomini e comunità del contado senese nel duecento* (Siena, 1982)


Zdekauer, *Mercante* L. Zdekauer, *Il mercante senese nel duecento* (Siena, 1899; edn 2, 1925)

ABBREVIATIONS


*Secondary (unpublished)*

Chronology of principal political events and developments

1250  (death of Frederick II)
1251–54  war against Florence
1253  Capitano del Popolo (first reference)
1255  council of Popolo (first reference)
1259  oath of fealty to King Manfred
1260  victory at Montaperti
1262  secession of Guelf bankers
1266  (Benevento, Angevin victory over Manfred)
1268  (Tagliacozzo, Angevin victory over Conradin)
1269  defeat at Colle
1271  Guelfs return, Ghibellines go into exile; leading officials the 36
1274  Guelf constitution
1277  list of casati issued
1280  pacification; leading officials the 15
1287–90  leading officials the 9
1288–92  wars with Florence against Pisa and Arezzo
1290–91  leading officials the 18
1291–92  leading officials the 6
1292–  leading officials the 9 again
1310  (Henry VII enters Tuscany)

Events external to Tuscany are in brackets.
1 SIENA.