

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 Sieneese 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 Sieneese 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 land-owners: 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.

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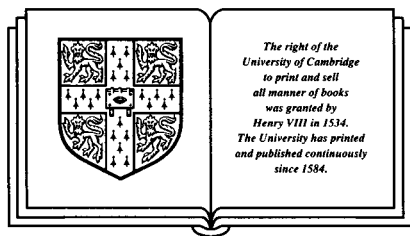
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# *Siena and the Sienese in the thirteenth century*

DANIEL WALEY



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*To the custodians of Siena's historical  
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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 Sieneese 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 Sieneese 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 Sieneese 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 Sieneese 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. *Balia* (plural: *balie*). An *ad hoc* committee.
2. *Biccherna*. The central financial office of the Sieneese commune.
3. *Camerlengo* (Latin *camerarius* = chamberlain). The principal financial official of the commune.
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 Sieneese 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*. Guilds, i.e. merchant and craft guilds.
3. *Consuls*. Normally applied in this period to officials of guilds, though the 'knights' (i.e. elements not members of the Popolo) also had consuls.
4. *Mercanzia*. The merchant guild.
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.

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3. MISCELLANEOUS

1. *Balitori*. Messengers.
2. *Bannum*. Judicial ban or outlawry (*rebannimentum*: release from the ban).
3. *Carroccio*. The ceremonial waggon of the commune.
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.
6. *Masnadieri*. Followers, retainers.

## 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–)

Astuti G. Astuti, *Il Libro dell'Entrata e dell'Uscita di una Compagnia mercantile senese del sec. XIII (1277–1282)* (Doc. e Studi per la Storia del Commercio e del Diritto commerciale italiano, 5) (Turin, 1934).

*B. Libri dell'Entrata e dell'Uscita della Repubblica di Siena* (Siena, 1903–70)

'Breve, 1250' 'Breve degli ufficiali 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)

## xx 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)  
*Reg. Urb. IV* *Les Registres d'Urbain IV*, ed. J. Guiraud (Paris, 1901 ff.)  
*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)  
*Statuti senesi* *Statuti senesi scritti in volgare nei sec. XIII e XIV*, eds. F.–L. Polidori and L. Banchi, 3 vols. (Bologna, 1863–77)

## 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

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Zdekauer, *Vita pubblica* L. Zdekauer, *La vita pubblica dei senesi nel dugento* (Siena, 1897: reprinted Bologna, 1973)

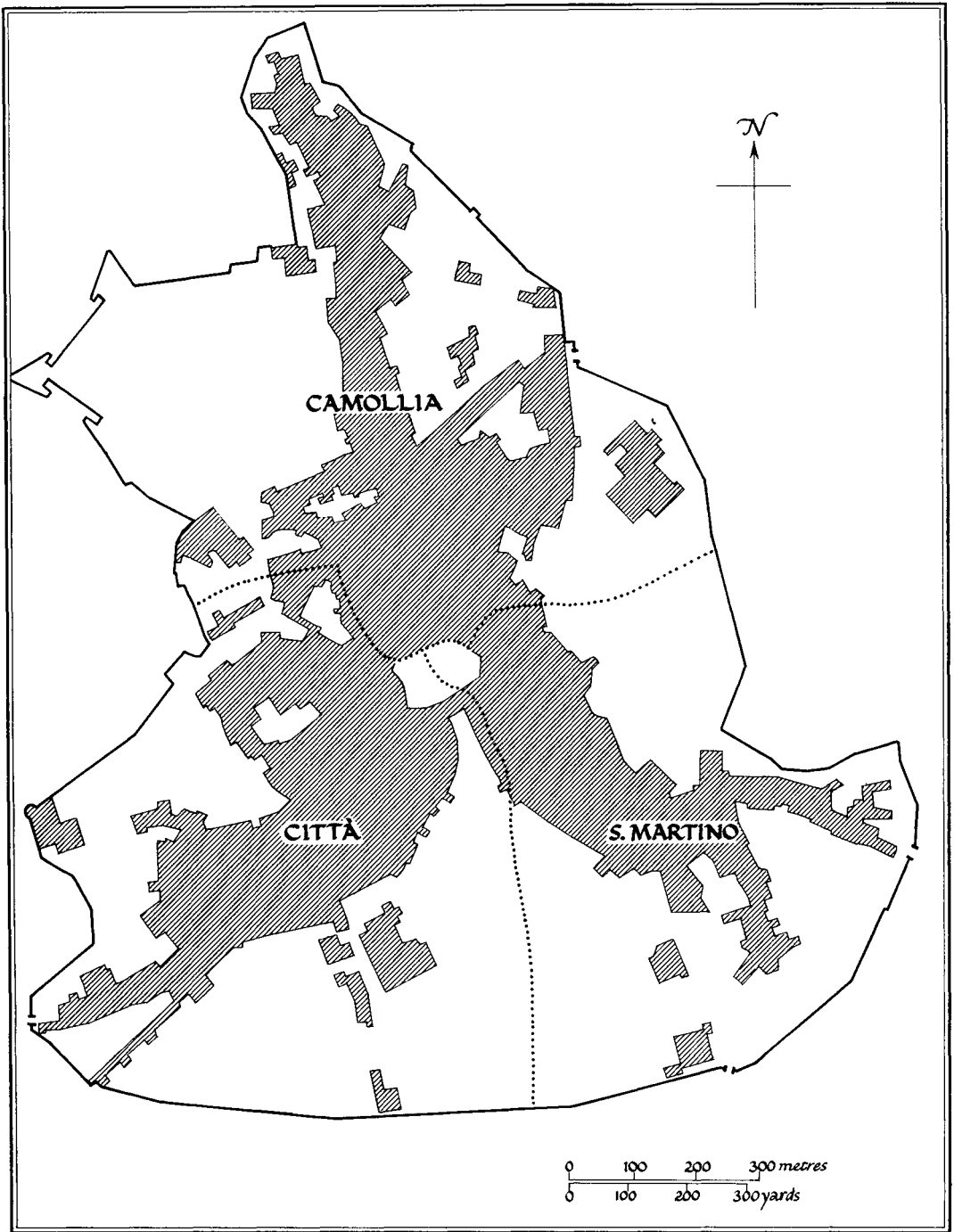
*Secondary (unpublished)*

English, '5 magnate families' E. D. English, 'Five magnate families of Siena, 1240–1350' (PhD, Toronto, 1981)

## *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.