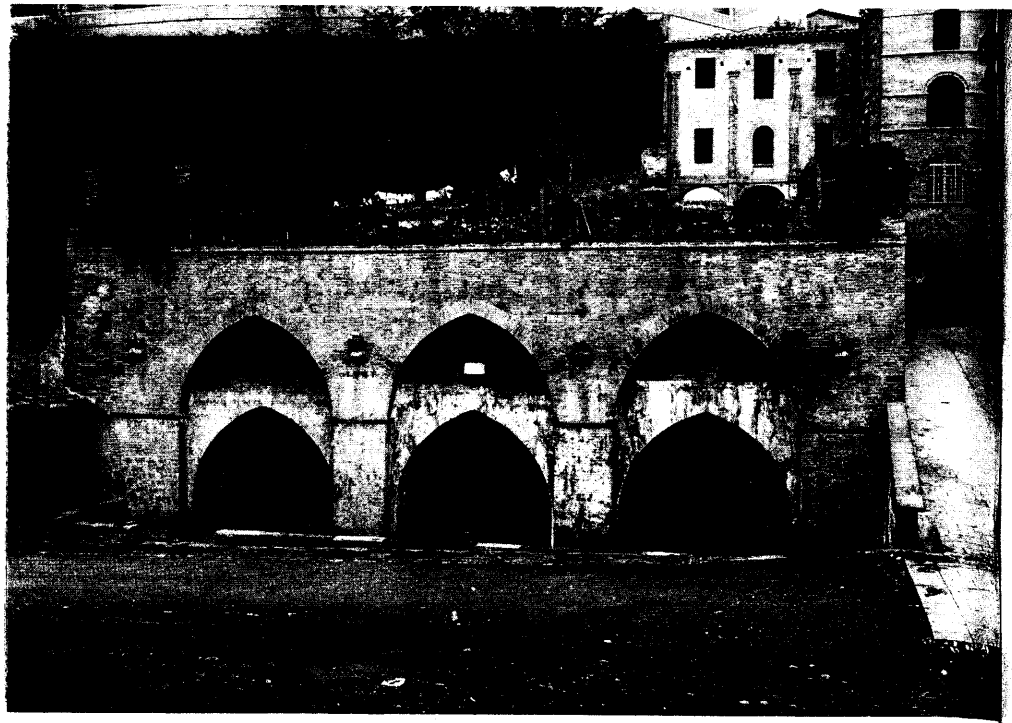
PART II:

"Medieval Siena."
"The Rule of The Nine."
"The Cathedral."
"The Campo."
From: Siena, by Judith Hook.



The Fontebranda

San Domenico and the Cathedral from the Lizza

2

Medieval Siena

The government of the communes was never like the majority imagine it. There are many who, like Dante, lament the past at every opportunity, just as if there was once a time without passions and without crime; all they praise are the works left by our ancestors.—C. Falletti-Fossati

I

SIENA IS a typical Tuscan hill-top town. At 322 metres, perched on the hills which separate the basin of the Arbia from that of the Elsa, the city's elevated site, from which it dominates the surrounding countryside, was determined by the centuries of disorder which followed the barbarian invasions and the collapse of the Roman empire. A hill-site was more easily defended than a lowland one, so Siena is built along the curves of three ranges of hills separated by characteristic ravines and valleys. From one of these ridges, one can look across to another area of the city, separate, but still a part of the whole, enclosed within the circuit of Siena's fourteenth- and fifteenth-century walls. On the highest ground in the city—the Castelvecchio—stands the Duomo or cathedral. It would seem the natural centre of Siena were that role not disputed by the Campo, the public square which slopes downwards in a graceful curve to the Palazzo Pubblico, where a slender tower—the Mangia—rises to the same height as the cathedral. Siena, then, like the majority of medieval towns, was built around not one but several focal points.

Siena is a beautiful city. In medieval Italy, there were, no doubt, other towns and cities quite as beautiful, but, by an accident of history, it is Siena which has survived unspoilt. One of the most important commercial and banking centres of Europe between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, it subsequently suffered economic and political eclipse and entered a period of relative obscurity. This meant that little was added to the city's essential fabric between the late-sixteenth and the twentieth centuries and, as a result, the greater part of its medieval inheritance has been preserved. Siena, therefore, is still to a

considerable extent the expression in physical form of the cultural values of the medieval urban mind; the articulation in stone, brick and marble of a medieval view of the world.

An important and powerful ingredient in that view of the world was the whole corpus of myths, beliefs and legends about Siena's past history which became woven into the fabric of urban life. Myths and dreams, for instance, were part and parcel of the stories concerning her origin in a Roman past. That the city once had such a Roman and, indeed, an Etruscan past, there is no doubt, but the actualities of Siena's classical experience have little to do with the city's subsequent development. City-life in medieval Europe had virtually nothing in common with city-life in antiquity, and the cities themselves existed for purposes and were based upon social structures which were completely different in the two eras. It was, therefore, neither the Roman city-state, nor the Roman city's function, nor the Roman city's structures that contributed to the subsequent development of Siena, but Roman myth and Roman symbolism.

Of such myths, the most picturesque was that which described how Siena was founded by Senius and Ascius, the sons of Remus, who gave to the city the symbol of the she-wolf suckling her twins, which can be observed in manifold different guises and materials all over the city. The she-wolf and her twins are still the badge of Siena and in the past were so important that in 1264 a painter was fined for decorating a shield with the image of a wolf overcome by a lion.

According to this legend of the foundation of Siena, when Senius offered sacrifice to the gods, a dense black smoke arose from the altar of Apollo and a pure white smoke from that of Diana. Alternatively it is said that Senius rode a white horse, Ascius a black. This gave to the Sienese their enduring symbol of the *balzana*, the black and white communal shield which decorates the city's gates and all her public buildings. Two other shields often accompany it: a blue shield with the word *Libertas* in gold letters, and a red shield with a white lion rampant. These also are symbols of the commune, and, about them, as about the *balzana*, legends were inevitably woven. Reputedly they were gifts to Siena from the Emperors Charlemagne and Otto respectively.

Emperors were accorded peculiar respect in Sienese mythology for Siena was one of the more famous of the Ghibelline cities. No town or city in medieval Italy could avoid becoming involved in the dispute between Guelphs and Ghibellines, and Siena lay at the heart of the

conflict for control of Tuscany. Having once decided for the Ghibellines, she never voluntarily wavered in her allegiance and, if not from Charlemagne and Otto, at least from later emperors derived substantial benefits. It was, for instance, the great Frederick Barbarossa who in 1186 conceded to the city, the right of self-government, which included the election by the Sienese of their own consuls, the right to coin money, and jurisdiction over both the city and the *contado*.

The Ghibelline allegiance of Siena was to give birth to further and more elaborate historical legends, but the essential fact about such manifestations of pseudo-history is not that they in any way embody an accurate account of the city's past, but that the past they seem to describe was one that was believed by the Sienese. Furthermore, because the legends were accepted as true, a series of memorials based upon them were created and displayed to the people in the city, so reinforcing the original myth. Similarly, throughout Siena's history, great and stirring moments came to be enshrined in tangible monuments, which served both as aids to memory and as the starting-point for new legends. For some hundred years, for instance, the white standard reputedly flown by the Sienese at the battle of Montaperti in 1260 was preserved in the sacristy of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, together with the box used for balloting Sienese elected officials. Before proceeding to the ballot the banner was unfurled so that, in the words of the chronicler, 'the memory of that glorious event could be recalled.'[1]

Legends were of particular importance in Siena because they were a most important binding-force for a people whose social life appeared to be characterized more by division, factionalism and violence than by unity and civic virtue. Yet despite the perennial turbulence of Siena's medieval history, unity and civic virtue also existed outside of the world of myth, legend and propaganda, and exercised a powerful civilizing force within the community. Given that the whole tendency of the medieval world was to prefer the corporate to the individual, and to subordinate the particular to the general, once the commune could convey the idea of itself as the most perfect of corporate bodies, without which salvation was impossible, it was bound to attract the allegiance of the Sienese community as a whole.

By the twelfth century the commune had found powerful allies in the developing legal bodies of Siena where, by 1176, a college of judges and notaries was already in existence and public instruction in the law was offered. Lawyers and notaries were largely responsible

for the formation of the central civic ideology. Forming as they did both a literate and a responsible secular group, with strong professional instincts, it was they who helped to formulate the important concept that only the commune embodied the absolute values of Justice and Good Government, without which civic government was impossible. Probably another consequence of this large legal presence in the city is the fact that, by 1179, Siena already had a written constitution.

Yet the ultimate victory of legalism and constitutionalism, of city and commune, over other bodies or individuals who challenged their authority, was no easier in Siena than in other Italian cities, and in some ways was never fully achieved. From the beginning, the church naturally presented a strong alternative claim to overriding authority. As in other Italian cities, after the end of the Roman empire and of the rule of the Lombards and Franks, it was under the leadership and governance of her bishop that Siena's inhabitants struggled to impose some kind of order onto a frequently chaotic world. The bishopric of Siena was rich and powerful and the bishop was therefore the most important force in civic life. It was, in fact, over their own bishop's quarrel with the bishop of Arezzo about the limits of his diocese, that the Sienese first showed any recorded sense of corporate identity or civic purpose. During these struggles, however, they were of so much assistance to the bishop that he was forced to give them an increased say in the management of Siena, although it was not until 1167 that the commune first declared its independence from episcopal control. For centuries thereafter, whenever they felt in a position of strength, the bishops still tried to reassert their power.

Like others founded elsewhere in Italy in the twelfth century, the commune of Siena was a fruit of the revival of town-life in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It was in essence an association of the city's leading citizens—*the boni homines*—by which they bound themselves together by a horizontal oath to pursue common ends, and to preserve internal order, stability and justice. The chief organ of the commune was the *parlamento*, or general assembly, first heard of in 1137, which met in the open, either in front of the cathedral or in Piazza Tolomei in front of the church of San Cristoforo (San Cristofano). Here the commune began in 1125 to choose elected representatives, the consuls, to act as an executive. Selected from among the commune's most powerful members, the consuls served for a year and were always either three or six in number.

Thus, at the very beginning of Siena's recorded independent urban

existence, three entered into the civic consciousness as a significant number. Three and multiples of three were, thereafter, to play a vital role in Siena's life. The number of governors in her chief magistracy—three, twenty-four, thirty-six, nine, twelve or fifteen—and in her other administrative offices, was always divisible by three, reflecting, one suspects, the rooting of the city's government in its very structure, in the fact that Siena came into existence by an alliance of groups or tribes, each occupying a different hill or fortress. To the south-west was the oldest settlement, the Castelvecchio or Castel Senio; to the north the Camollia; and to the east the Castello di Montone, all, by the end of the thirteenth century, included within the circuit of the city-walls. This tripartite division survived to become incorporated into the subsequent division of the city into the three Terzi: Terzo di Città, Terzo di Camollia and Terzo di San Martino. Throughout the middle ages, Terzo di Città, the most ancient and where the majority of private palaces was situated, was the wealthiest and the most important.

The topography of Siena with its three hill ridges helped to perpetuate this tripartite division. So also did her most important roads, for Siena's arterial communications lead in three directions: to Florence, to Rome and to the Maremma. As a result, throughout the life of Siena as an independent city and state, the Terzi survived as small communes in their own right, corporate bodies within a corporate body. Each had its own separate civil authority, its own military and economic organization, and each levied its own taxation. On the battlefield each wore its own colours; red for San Martino, green for Città and black and white for Camollia. And thus, from the time of the consuls onwards, the Supreme Magistracy of the Republic was normally composed of a number of men drawn equally from each Terzo.

The surviving strength of this territorial division within the city suggests that the formation of the commune of Siena represented but a tentative gesture towards a corporate civic life on the part of a number of warring clans. Siena, which, rather than Verona, was the home of the first Romeo and Juliet story, was, like other Italian cities, divided into a number of systems of family alliance and patronage, each system headed by one of the noble families who initially dominated the commune. These families were of diverse origins. Some, like the Salimbeni and the Buonsignori, were descendants of foreign invaders, counts and barons of the Frankish and Germanic emperors. Others—as the Piccolomini were always to claim of themselves—may have been descendants of old Roman families. But by the mid-twelfth

century, there was nothing to distinguish the five leading noble families who had come to dominate Siena's fortunes: the Piccolomini, the Tolomei, who claimed descent from the Ptolomies, the Malavolti, the Salimbeni and the Saracini, and the names of these families were, for centuries, to be interwoven with the civic history of Siena. Even today the Gothic palace of the Salimbeni, home of the Monte dei Paschi, and the nearby Palazzo Tolomei (first built in 1208), also now a bank, give clear expression to the kind of social and political predominance once enjoyed by their owners.

That predominance affected the whole life of the city, for it was based on an elaborate system of relationships and clientage which ultimately embraced the entire population of Siena. These patronage systems were centred upon the noble *consorterie* or family power-groups, a typical example of which in ninth and tenth century Siena, was that of the Ugurgieri who held a fortified quarter within the city, still known as the Castellare degli Ugurgieri, an aggregation of houses and fortresses, inhabited by their family and their clients. From here they would issue forth into the streets to do battle, occasionally with the enemies of the city, but most frequently with their noble rivals. Whole areas of the city were thus alienated from public control of any kind. In 1262, for instance, the commune interested itself in improving the street system of Terzo di Camollia:

> because there is only one road and one street there . . . and also because the men from the other *Terzi* who have to go to Camollia, neither can nor want to pass in front of the houses of certain nobles.[2]

From the commune's point of view, the situation was particularly difficult, in that the *consorterie* tended to be clustered along the principal thoroughfares which ran along the ridges of the hills on which Siena was built. The houses of the non-noble and the poor were to be found in the valleys and they could be easily dominated by the noble fortress which was at the heart of each *consorteria*. This fortress took the form of a tower, which served as a place of refuge, defence and prestige. The earliest example of a Sienese family being permitted to build such a tower by the commune is that of the Gallerani in 1186, but there is little doubt that, for at least a generation before then, other families had already been erecting their own, with or without communal sanction. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, when there were upwards of fifty in the city, the sky-line of Siena was dominated by these lofty symbols of noble power, and around them the palaces of

the *consorterie* tended to be grouped. Of all these towers the most remarkable was that of the Sansedoni, which was so high that it rivalled even the Torre di Mangia.

The military effectiveness of such a tower as that built by the Sansedoni may be seriously questioned and this suggests that the real importance of any noble tower was its symbolic value, its capacity to indicate the particular area of territorial control enjoyed by a family within the city. Thus the destruction of a tower was a direct attack upon the power of a *consorteria* and it became the custom for the commune to punish unruly or rebellious nobles by destroying their towers or houses; in 1270, for instance, all the houses of the Incontri were burned or pulled down. Popular disturbances and riots often had the same result; the rioters would attempt to destroy a focus of power within the city by removing its physical manifestation. The symbolic importance of such actions is emphasized by the fact that it became the custom to use the materials from such demolished buildings in the construction of communal projects. Thus, as late as 1408, the portion of the new city-wall between Santo Spirito and San Giovanni was built with materials from former palaces of the Malavolti.

One manifestation of the territorial control exercised by the *consorterie* was their domination of local parish churches, each of which came to acquire something of the status of a family chapel. In this way, for instance, the Ugurgieri controlled the church of San Vigilio, and the Tolomei that of San Cristoforo, and even in the eighteenth century, the church of San Gregorio was still regarded as a family chapel of the Malavolti. Given this concentration of power on a territorial basis, it is scarcely surprising that, by the thirteenth century, many of the *contrade* or *popoli*—the small administrative districts into which Siena was divided—took their names from one single dominant family living within them. Nor is it surprising that the pattern of urban settlement in Siena should have been determined more by family than by occupation or employment.

Territorial control by powerful families over the city was, nevertheless, as has been implied, disliked by the commune, which spent much energy in trying to weaken it. Yet, well into the modern period, the assertion of such control by powerful families remained a reality; as late as the first half of the sixteenth century, the noble palace was still partially conceived as an offensive fortress. Hence, as a result of its domination of Siena's corporate life—economic, social, political, religious or cultural—the ethos of a noble class came to affect the

whole of Siena, and many values which came to be embodied in the commune originated in the courtly world of the nobility. An aristocratic sense of honour, for example, expressed in violent terms through the blood-feud or *vendetta*, was to find its way into the official life of the city. Thus the commune never rejected the *vendetta* completely, choosing rather to try to limit its effects. Indeed in a curious document known as the *Memoriale delle Offese*, in which were recorded any wrongs done to Siena by her citizens, it tried to utilize the code of honour in the service of the city, enjoining the citizens never to forget:

> through eternity, those who deny you, who withdraw themselves from the homage they owe to you, that plot against you and bring shame to you. . . .

Such an example suggests how a noble or knightly view of the world came to permeate the whole of society, and it was nourished by the fact that Siena was a city often at war. Her major antagonist was Florence, with whom Siena was brought into direct confrontation as her rule expanded out from the city-walls into the countryside around.

Throughout most of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, then, Siena was engaged in a series of wars with Florence, struggles so bitter that they have coloured the relations of the two cities until the present day. Some bitterness was injected into the conflict by the fact that it involved the antagonistic ideals of Guelph and Ghibelline, more by commercial rivalry between the two republics, each anxious to capture for its own merchants a monopoly of papal finances, but most by the fact that each was striving to expand its territory at the expense of the other. A unique twist was given to this conflict because Siena was unusual among capital cities in being also a frontier town, so that in any war with Florence, Siena itself was immediately and directly threatened.

From the Sienese viewpoint the culmination of the struggle was the defeat of the Florentines and the Guelph allies at the battle of Montaperti in 1260 on the day the 'Arbia river flowed red with blood.'[3] Sienese pride in the victory is reflected in the fact that today during football matches between Siena and Florence, the Sienese will bid their opponents to 'Remember Montaperti!' For all of its mythological status for the Sienese, Montaperti was, however, a short-lived victory. The pope declared a ban on Siena and withdrew his protection from her merchants; King Manfred fell at the hands of papal forces in the battle of Benevento in 1266; and in 1269 at Colle Val d'Elsa, the Florentines reversed their defeat by annihilating the Sienese forces and capturing

and executing their great leader at Montaperti, Provenzano Salvani.

Such constant warfare had two important consequences for the urban development of Siena. The first was that the sheer cost of war necessitated the development of communal institutions and in particular of communal fiscal instruments. For warfare would more than double the normal annual expenditure of the commune. The two years of fighting in 1230 and 1231 were years in which the commune's expenditure ran at between £50,000 and £55,000 per annum, as opposed to a normal peacetime expenditure of between £10,000 and £20,000. The renewal of serious warfare between 1257 and 1268 raised annual expenditure to a level of about £60,000 a year and this pattern was to remain fairly constant. The need to collect revenue on such a scale meant that the commune had, very swiftly, to develop new institutions to cope with the problem.

A second major consequence of continued warfare was that it helped to sustain a view of the world in which knightly and chivalric views seemed of abiding importance. It was inevitable that the attitudes and values of those who supplied Siena with her military captains and the bulk of her cavalry, and who continued to play an important part in the government of the city-state, should continue to exercise a powerful influence on the life of the city. None the less, other powerful forces were working against the continuing predominance of the old nobility over the political and cultural life of the city. In the early twelfth century a movement began which can be closely paralleled in other Italian towns, the rise of the *popolo*. There was a time when English-speaking historians were happy to translate the word 'popolo' as people, and, by so doing, to give birth to a whole series of misconceptions about the democratic character of Italian civic government in the Middle Ages. We now recognize that those governments were in no sense 'democratic' as we understand the meaning of the word. Rather they were oligarchies, and the *popolo* a highly selected citizen-élite, whose leaders differed scarcely at all in wealth, economic interest or power from the nobility they professed to despise and with whom, in fact, they customarily inter-married and conducted their business.

Elsewhere in Italy, the organization of the *popolo* was normally based on the guild structure, but since Siena was a commercial and banking rather than an industrial city the guilds were never strong. As a result the *popolo*, like so many Sienese institutions, seems to have been topographically rooted. Its organization was related to the militia companies of foot-soldiers which were raised locally within the city.

Broadly speaking, the leaders of the *popolo* were traders, merchants, manufacturers and bankers who had risen to wealth and consequence within the city. They presided over what was, effectively, a state within a state, a corporate body, structured much like the commune itself, existing parallel to it, and sometimes, but by no means normally, in opposition to it. At times, indeed, it seems almost a parody of the commune; in 1255, for instance, the *popolo* set up its own bell, saying that the one belonging to the commune was barely audible. Like the commune, the *popolo* had its own *podestà*, or chief executive authority, its own judge, its own treasurer, notaries, heralds and messengers, General and Secret Council.

By 1147 the *popolo* was powerful enough to challenge the exclusive nature of noble control over Siena and successfully demanded a third share in the communal offices, with their own elected official, the Captain of the People, established alongside the city's *podestà*. By the end of the twelfth century the *popolo* had further increased in power and was clearly dissatisfied with its share in the city's government, for, from 1213 onwards, it emerged as a violent force in politics. This was a year of many civic disturbances which culminated in attacks on a number of noble towers. Change came eventually in 1233 with a further advance for the *popolo* when, in one of the few peaceful revolutions recorded in Sienese history, a magistracy of twenty-four was created to govern the city, a half-share of whose offices was reserved to the *popolo*. In 1270 this magistracy was further enlarged to thirty-six, although it remained equally divided between nobles and *popolani*. Finally, in 1280, the nobles were completely excluded from the supreme magistracy of the city, power being vested in 'Fifteen Governors and Defenders of the Commune and People of Siena' all members of the *popolo*.

The most significant aspect of the rise of the *popolo* within Siena is that it was an exclusively urban phenomenon, the product of a specific and unique environment. The *popolo*, in other words, was the most urban of institutions and its values were entirely civic ones. It was natural, therefore, that, in time, the *popolo* should come to be seen as the embodiment of civic virtue. Some of the suspicion felt and expressed towards the old Sienese nobility derived not only from concern over its pride and ambition, but also from a sense that the values of a feudal aristocracy, no matter how urbanized that aristocracy might be, were essentially inappropriate in civic life.

The leaders of the *popolo*, as we have seen, were businessmen—

merchants or bankers—and Siena, by the early thirteenth century, was already one of the most prosperous cities in Europe. As a city, she had always enjoyed certain natural advantages as the centre of an agricultural region which produced a variety of crops, and, in normal years, a surplus of those most vital to the economy. It included some of the best pasture in Europe and the hill-slopes of the region were planted with an abundance of olive-groves and vines. Mineral wealth was also important; in 1137 the bishop of Volterra ceded to the bishop of Siena half of Montieri with its valuable silver mines. Until the silver was exhausted towards the end of the middle ages, these were a very important source of communal income.

Siena became a major commercial centre partly because it was situated on two of the most important trunk-routes in Italy. The first of these was the old Via Francigena, the main communication route between France and Rome, down which pilgrims, in particular, passed in large numbers; by the eleventh century a number of hospices existed in Siena along the Francigena, founded by pious individuals to house and care for these pilgrims. The Francigena was sufficiently vital to the economy for the Sienese statutes of 1262 to devote considerable attention to its upkeep and maintenance, and a glance at a plan of the city explains its importance. Effectively both the Terzo di San Martino and that of Camollia existed because of and for the Francigena, which entered Siena at Porta Camollia, followed the Via di Montanini and the Via di Banchi di Sopra to the Croce del Travaglio, the meeting-point of Siena's three main streets. From the Croce del Travaglio the Francigena begins its course through the Terzo di San Martino, leaving the city at last at Porta Romana. The second important trunk road, with which Siena was linked, was that which ran from Germany and Austria to Rome and which passed through Bologna and Pistoia by way of the Futa pass. Several sea-ports also provided easy access to Siena: Follonica, Talamone, Santo Stefano and Portercole.

As a result of its favoured position in terms of medieval travel, almost anyone of any importance in the middle ages seems at some point to have turned up in Siena. Henry IV visited it on his journey back from Rome after his coronation; Frederick Barbarossa and Frederick II also stayed there; the ill-starred Conradin passed through on his way to his combat with Charles of Anjou; Giovanna of Naples and the Emperor Sigismund were both received in Siena; and, in 1469, in a series of spectacular celebrations, presided over by Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II) Frederick III celebrated his

marriage with Eleanor of Portugal in the city. This occasion is commemorated by a pillar outside Porta Camollia as well as by the fresco by Pinturicchio in the Piccolomini library. Charles VIII passed through the city in 1494, and Charles V visited it amid universal rejoicings. Popes, as well as secular rulers, were frequent visitors, finding Siena a convenient refuge close to the turbulent Church State. During the Avignonese papacy, papal legates and administrators inevitably passed through the city on their way to Rome or Naples. For Gregory XII, Siena was a second Rome; Eugenius IV, and naturally, Pius II, were equally enthusiastic. Such visitors, with their courts and retinues, provided Siena with an important source of income which it was determined to retain; by 1345 the Innkeepers' Guild of Siena had 100 members, including ten women, carefully supervised by the communal authorities to ensure that they did not cheat their guests.

Given their city's geographical and economic advantages, it is perhaps not surprising that Siena's leading citizens, both noble and non-noble, should have emerged as brilliant bankers and merchants. By 1192 these men had their own Merchants' Guild, and, from the beginning of the thirteenth century, companies of Sienese are to be found trading at the fairs of Champagne where they soon began to retain permanent representatives. On this basis the Sienese built up their banking operations, soon offering a whole range of facilities: deposit, credit and foreign exchange. By the middle of the century the *milites et mercatores Senenses*—the Knights and Merchants of Siena—as they were known to their contemporaries, were great commercial companies with massive capital assets, dealing in the spices of the East and the cloth of Flanders, trading between Rome, Paris and London, and constantly developing their parallel banking interests.

For such men their city had a particular importance. Italian business life was structured around the family, largely because it depended upon the kind of trust which only the bonds of kinship could provide. A natural extension of the family was the *consorteria*; a natural extension of the *consorteria* was the city; to his city, then, the Sienese merchant was deeply bound. While his business might require him to travel throughout the known world, it was within Siena that he built his family residence, and to Siena that he returned to be buried in the family tomb. Whatever their differences might be within the city walls, once outside of Siena the dominant feeling of her citizens was that of being Sienese. It is no accident, therefore, that the oldest document in Italian is an account-book, written by a Sienese merchant in 1211.

A passionate patriotism affected the way of life of these merchants, a patriotism which found expression in a multitude of ways, from the assertion of the value of the Tuscan vernacular, as opposed to clerical Latin, to the eternal flame which burned always before the *carroccio*—the communal war-cart. The Sienese merchants loved their city above all things and gloried in its precious autonomy, that *Libertas* which facilitated their business affairs. As a group, therefore, they may be fairly represented by Salimbene Salimbeni who, in 1260, as the Florentine troops advanced on Siena and the commune found itself without the money to pay its mercenaries, sent to the communal meeting-place in front of San Cristoforo, a cart covered with branches of olive, to signify the joy he felt at being able to come to the city's aid in its hour of need. Inside the cart was found a sum of money sufficient to pay the wages of 800 mercenaries for the ensuing battle.

The events of 1260 seem to suggest a new sense of civic unity, which in the latter part of the thirteenth century also found expression in the first communal buildings: the Palace of the Captain of Justice, the Dogana on the site of the future Palazzo Pubblico, and the first projects for the building of that palace itself. This new sense of civic unity had developed out of the growing complexity of city life which forced the commune to shoulder more and more responsibilities, in an increasingly prosperous community, and so to impinge upon the consciousness of most of those within it.

The new prosperity itself was based on and reflected in a growth in the size of the city, which, by the mid-twelfth century, had a population of some 15,000, increasing to 20,000 by 1260. By the mid-thirteenth century Siena was thus one of the largest cities in western Europe. The increase in population came, of course, from immigration, for the death-rate in all pre-industrial cities was so high, that the urban population never reproduced itself. The immigrants themselves can be divided into two somewhat arbitrary groups. The more important, from the point of view of the commune, were men of substance from the Sienese *contado* attracted, particularly in the prosperous twelfth and thirteenth centuries, by the legal and economic advantages offered by life in the city. More problematical for the commune were the serfs or ex-serfs who came to swell the numbers of the city's proletariat; they helped to foster a kind of civic feudalism which was to be a marked feature of late medieval Siena where the most characteristic labourer was not the free man offering his labour for hire on a daily basis, but the man or woman who gave his or her labour to one of the great

corporations, like the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, or to one of the great family clans, under conditions of dependence which were not far removed from traditional feudal bonds.

Siena's population growth was also related to its continuing success as a commercial centre. Its reputation in the craft and luxury trades was particularly high—Sienese jewellers and goldsmiths already enjoyed a European-wide fame by the twelfth century—but these specialized trades were not major employers of labour. Many Sienese, however, worked in the construction industry and many more were agricultural labourers, helping to farm the estates which lay around the city and which were even enclosed by its walls. Virtually all of these estates were owned either by city-dwellers or by city corporations. And although the textile industry was never to acquire anything like the importance it held for Florence, it was by no means unimportant to the city. Certainly the woollen industry was a heavy employer of labour and was sufficiently powerful to develop its own formidable, corporate institutions; the constitution of 1262 gives clear evidence both of the existence of the Wool Guild—the *Arte della Lana*—and of the involvement in the industry of many important and powerful Sienese families.

As the population increased a number of suburbs grew up around the city-walls and forced the commune to take account of the demographic expansion of Siena. These suburbs, which were effectively demanding incorporation into the city's structures whether defensive or administrative, could not be ignored. Based on the local church, which, in turn, was dependent on the cathedral, each suburb soon had developed its own organization, both religious and secular. The local church served not only as a centre for corporate religious life, but as a place where the inhabitants could meet to discuss problems of common interest: the maintenance of streets and *piazze*; police and the prevention of crime; the allocation of taxation. Out of such meetings came the demand and pressure, above all, for inclusion within the city walls, an inclusion which would bring not only protection but also civic rights.

The demographic expansion of the city meant an inevitable extension of communal power and its administrative tasks. It meant first the constant expansion and renewal of the city-walls; in fact they were extended six times in the course of the middles ages. These walls had to be supplemented by other major defensive works; outside the city the various *antiporti*, which served as defensive outposts, and of which

the most imposing survivor is that of Camollia, the last defensive barrier on the road from Florence; numerous barbicans in the most vulnerable places, like those of San Maurizio and Pescaia; and little turrets connected by service walls to the main circuit. Within the walls of the city, all around the circuit, deep ditches were dug as further defence works; these, during times of peace, were rented out and cultivated as garden plots. The existence of these ditches had a fundamental impact on the urban evolution of Siena, for they were sufficiently deep and inconvenient to form a natural barrier within the city, even after their original function was superseded by the extension of the circuit of the walls. In consequence many of the streets of the city follow the old line of these ditches.

The second major impact of the demographic expansion of Siena was that attempts had to be made to solve the problems involved in housing, clothing, creating work and, above all, for feeding an expanding urban population. For five or six centuries every government in Siena was haunted by the fear of famine: as early as 1227 the chroniclers were recording the price of 10*s* the *staio* as the cost of grain;* in 1258 and 1271 famine forced the commune to import grain from Sicily, while by the end of the century, when Tuscany as a whole was grossly over-populated, famine and its grim attendant, disease, had become endemic. Famine is recorded in 1302; famine and excessive mortality in 1328–9; famine and disease in 1339; and partial famine in 1346. Famine threatened the commune because it brought instability; hunger and starvation frequently led to civic disorders, such as the riot in April 1329, when the populace who were without bread armed themselves with poles and stones and attacked the Palazzo Pubblico. Such bread-riots could, and on occasion did, lead to the overthrow of regimes.

The first concern of every Sienese government, therefore, was the supply of food to the city. Various measures were taken in an attempt to solve the problem; Sienese outlaws, for instance, were granted a safe-conduct of five days, provided they brought grain with them

* It is fruitless to suggest modern equivalents for medieval Sienese money. The Sienese reckoned by the *lira*, which was a money of account, not a coin. There were 20 *soldi* or 240 *denarii* to each lira; i.e. £. s. d. The gold florin, also used in reckoning, was a real coin, and the long-term tendency was for the *lira* to be devalued in relation to the florin. In 1287 one gold florin was worth about 36*s* and in 1355 70*s*. The *staio* was the principal unit of dry measure in Siena, its nearest English equivalent being the bushel. Twenty-four *staia* were equal to one *moggio* (584,709 litres).

into the city to sell. The commune also maintained its own grain-stores and placed strict controls on the sale and transport of grain out of the city. During a famine it commandeered all private grain supplies and fixed the price at which bread could be sold, at very considerable cost. The famine of 1339, alone, was popularly reputed to have cost the commune 40,000 gold florins. A more long-term solution to the problem of food-supply lay in the expansion of Sienese authority over the surrounding countryside, so as to gain direct control over the city's main source of grain and the routes by which food was brought into Siena.

There was no sudden shift to an expansionist policy. Individual Sienese had long-established relationships with the Tuscan countryside where they had vast land-holdings. As we have seen, many of the immigrants into Siena were not those escaping serfs, so beloved of popular history, but wealthier property-owners; such men, even after they moved to the city, continued to maintain close links with the country, and usually retained their property there as well. Throughout the middle ages, even the moderately prosperous Sienese citizen continued to invest in properties and farms in the *contado*, and such informal property links were often the basis on which the Sienese commune subsequently established a more formal jurisdiction. Gradually, but relentlessly, the commune took over neighbouring castles and villages, forcing the feudal lords who remained there to become citizens of Siena, to reside in the city for a fixed period in each year, and to fight for the commune when required. And, as the city's economy developed, so did the drive towards expansion, especially to the south and west, which culminated in the capture of Grosseto in 1224. This development gave Siena control over the important ore-bearing region of Massa Marittima and opened the possibility of building up Talamone as a commercial port to rival Pisa, then at the peak of its commercial and cultural supremacy in Tuscany.

At its greatest extent, the Sienese state included all the river basin of the Ombrone, the valleys of the Albegna, Chiarone, Astrone and Bruna and the upper courses of the rivers Tasone, Fiora, Paglia, Foenna, Ambra, Staggia, Cecina, Cornia and Pecora. It was in no sense a state in the modern meaning of the word, with an internal, cohesive jurisdictional uniformity, but was divided into cities and *masse*, the *contado*, and at her jurisdictions. It included direct subjects, vassals, allies and *raccomandati*. The latter were individuals or communities who were promised the right of protection by Siena, in

exchange for the acknowledgement of the ultimate supremacy of the city, but in every real sense, they were autonomous powers. They paid neither taxes, nor loans, nor tribute to the commune, and preserved their own laws, magistrates and administration. The allied towns or individuals had also accepted Sienese overlordship voluntarily, and their relationship with Siena was governed by treaty articles which varied from individual case to individual case, but, normally, they accepted a Sienese garrison force and *podestà* and paid an annual tribute to Siena on the feast of the Assumption.

Despite the variation in status of these dependencies, Siena was, nevertheless, from the early thirteenth century, no longer a city but a city-state, controlling the destinies not only of her own citizens, but also those of the many inhabitants of her *contado* and state. Without that *contado* and state, Siena could never have flourished as she did. They were vital to the city. They were a source of food supplies, of raw materials, and of manpower. They brought in tax-revenue, and were a market for Sienese goods, produce and services. They allowed Siena to control her own trade-routes through Tuscany; they were a source of profit for the Sienese ruling-classes, and a source of soldiers for Siena's armies. In 1292, for instance, 3,000 infantry from the *contado* served with the communal armies, and in 1318, 7,000.

II

The development and rule of a territorial state, the expansion of the city's population, constant warfare, family and factional feuds, and urban violence, were all problems which increasingly put pressure on the existing forms of government within Siena. The result was development, elaboration and change. Already, in 1199, the Sienese had abandoned consular rule, and, in common with many other Italian cities, had substituted rule by one man—the *podestà*—for rule by the consuls.

Several reasons have been suggested for the almost universal adoption of the system of rule by *podestà* by the communes of central and northern Italy at this date. A model was certainly provided by Frederick Barbarossa who appointed several such officials in a number of north Italian towns in the years after 1160, and experience then showed that, in dealings with an outside authority, it was usually better to have one official who could speak for the whole commune. A more powerful and compelling motive, however, probably lay in

the factional rivalry between the dominant families in the communes. Since, as we have seen, these families controlled and influenced whole urban areas, open conflict between them led to violent upheavals and street battles which were destructive of life, property and prosperity. The *podestà*, after 1211 in Siena normally a foreign noble, could be supposed to be above factional rivalry, and thus could be accepted as a genuinely impartial source of justice and order within the city. That this was a primary motive in impelling the Sienese towards rule by *podestà* is suggested by the fact that Siena was, proverbially, more faction-ridden than any other Italian town, and by the provision made that each Sienese *podestà* in turn must reside in a different Terzo of the city in order to preserve his neutrality.

The creation of the *podestà* was part of a pattern of rapid change in Siena's governmental institutions. These institutions were first fully described in the written constitution of 1262, drawn up at the height of Sienese power. By this constitution, all power and privilege within the city-state were reserved to an oligarchy of citizens, a situation which scarcely changed during the succeeding 500 years. Only a man who was a citizen could participate fully in the functions of government or in the formulation of public policy. Only citizens were entitled to join one of the city's guilds or to own property in Siena. To the citizens were reserved all influential or financially rewarding offices. Their business affairs were carefully protected by the commune's courts, which were particularly adept at shielding a citizen from his debtors, and would protect any citizen against external temporal jurisdictions. In time of war a citizen might have to fight for his city, but he was guaranteed free medical treatment for any war wounds, and the payment of ransom by the commune if his own resources were inadequate. He could even expect free maintenance for life in the hospital of S. Maria della Scala if he were so disabled by war injuries as to be incapable of earning his own living.

The life of the Sienese citizen was, then, a privileged one; but, at least in the middle ages, Sienese citizens did not form a closed caste. Although the normal route to citizenship was through birth, it was simple enough for a man to purchase admission if he wanted it, by paying 20*s*, promising to enter his properties on the tax register, building a house in Siena, residing there with his family, and performing all services required of him by the commune. He then automatically became a Sienese citizen if he received the approval of at least two-thirds of the General Council.

This Council was the principal legislative body of the city by 1262. It was composed of at least 300 citizens, equally divided among the Terzi, chosen and presided over by the *podestà*. The Consuls of the Merchant and the Wool Guilds sat by right on the Council, as did the Rector of the hospital of S. Maria della Scala.

At this period, as we have seen, the permanent executive body of the city was composed of twenty-four councillors, equally divided among the Terzi, half of whom were nobles and half *popolani*. They were chosen by election from the General Council. From this twenty-four, one man was chosen from each Terzo every fortnight to hold supreme executive power. The resulting triumvirate were known as the Priors of the Commune.

Administrative authorities were also chosen from and by the General Council. Of all the offices, the most important in the communal period was the Biccherna, Siena's main department of finance, where all business was concentrated. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this office lacked a permanent home; located first in premises attached to the church of San Vigilio, it then moved to San Pellegrino alla Sapienza and then to San Cristoforo, until finally, at the end of the thirteenth century, it was transferred to the new Palazzo Pubblico. This lack of premises must have been a constant handicap and irritant, for the Biccherna was an immensely busy office. First mentioned in 1167, it was not only a treasury department, controlling the revenue and expenditures of the state, it also supervised many minor administrative offices. It was thus, for example, ultimately responsible for the building and maintenance of roads and streets, for the supply of regular building materials to the cathedral and other public works, and for the weapons of the commune.

The Chamberlain or Treasurer of the Biccherna was, normally, a monk from the great Benedictine house of San Galgano, near Siena, a religious being chosen for this vital office because of his presumed incorruptibility. His staff consisted of four *provveditori*—officials appointed by the General Council for periods of office of six months' duration, which began in January and July of each year. The holders of these posts were always among the most distinguished citizens of Siena, for the simple reason that a *provveditore* had to be extremely wealthy. Since Siena was no exception to the general rule that all medieval governments were always short of ready money, the *provveditori* had to have enough liquid capital to be able to advance money to the Biccherna, either to pay off their predecessors' debts,

or to tide over the Biccherna until cash from its major sources of income came in.

Today the Biccherna is most widely known for its records and, in particular, for the *Tavolette di Biccherna*, that series of paintings which began life as the wooden covers of the great parchment volumes in which the Biccherna officials entered their accounts. The first of this series of *tavolette* to have survived is that for 1258 when the retiring Treasurer, Don Ugo, had his portrait painted on the cover. The Sienese love of decoration and beauty in all areas of life guaranteed that this would become a regular practice; the portrayal of one individual was followed by the portrayal of the Treasurer with his notary, seated working at his bench, or by the portrayal of allegorical figures or important episodes in the life of Siena.

By the second half of the fifteenth century, the Biccherna covers had become pure works of art, with no functional purpose. The covers of the registers were now made of leather, rather than of wood, but the officials continued to have *tavolette* painted. These increased in size, being no longer limited by the form of the register, and became more and more like normal paintings, so that the last two Biccherna covers of all, those of 1619 and of 1677–82, are not even painted on wood but on canvas.

It is significant that this practice of the Biccherna was soon copied by the office of the General Gabella, for this, Siena's second major financial office, was, by the end of the thirteenth century, almost coming to challenge the Biccherna in importance. The General Gabella had probably evolved out of the Biccherna in the mid-thirteenth century and its main function was to receive the income derived from the gabelles of Siena, i.e. taxes on a whole range of commodities and business transactions. The General Gabella had, like the Biccherna, a chamberlain, who was normally a religious, either from San Galgano or from the Umiliati, and three executors.

The Biccherna and the General Gabella were both highly efficient administrative organs, as indeed they needed to be. Constant warfare was proving to be very expensive to the commune. In peacetime too, in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, expenditure was growing as the commune was forced to intervene in more and more areas of urban life.

Among the earliest matters to force themselves on the attention of the city communal authorities were the streets of Siena. In the past, influenced by a somewhat romantic attitude towards the middle ages,

writers have tended to describe the street system of Siena as a 'natural' one, as if the streets had been thrown up by some elemental forces. In fact, it can only be described as natural in that it was highly successful in fulfilling the obvious needs of the city; the two main and symmetrical streets, the Via Banchi di Sopra and the Via Banchi di Sotto, for instance, form a beautiful parabolic curve, which accords precisely to the needs of those riding on horseback at high speed, and thus was a vital part of the city's defensive system. The same curve was of equally vital functional utility during civic processions, since it permitted the processors to be both participants and observers at the same time. But the suitability of these streets to Sienese urban life does not mean that they were unplanned. On the contrary, like all the existing street-systems of Siena, they were the fruit of careful control by the commune, a form of town-planning dating back to the early middle ages. As early as 1218, the Podestà, Ugolino da Salamone, had made an attempt to systematize all the streets and squares of Siena and, by 1226, an office of three existed, charged with the care of all the streets. This office could arrange for paving, choose the workmen to be employed, and provide for the upkeep of areas which had already been paved at communal expense. This office was still in existence in the mid-thirteenth century, but by then it had acquired new powers. The commissioners were now also responsible for keeping the streets clean and unblocked by refuse; they had power to order the removal of overhanging gables, which were both a fire-hazard and an obstruction to light and fresh air, and, most important of all, they had the power to create new urban thoroughfares.

How far the commissioners were actually able to exercise these powers must remain questionable. One glance at any fourteenth-century narrative painting by a Sienese artist, including *Good and Bad Government*, will suggest that in the matter of balconies, projections and outside staircases such statutes remained for the most part pious hopes rather than enforceable regulations. In all areas of medieval administration, the theoretical and the practicable coincided only rarely. Thus, as we have seen, communal officials in Siena were attempting to control a people whose sole concept of space was that it was not public but private property, and to interfere with powerful families who exercised considerable territorial control within the city. The communal statutes seem to recognize this problem when they make those whose houses lined a street responsible for paying for any improvements made to it.

Whatever the economic advantages such improvements might bring, from the commune's point of view they had the added advantage of reducing the power of territorial control which a *consorteria* might exercise. For this control was based on a system, common to most medieval cities, that each quarter was totally self-contained and virtually forbidden territory to outsiders. The streets were so narrow, twisting, and illogical as to form what amounted to an arcane maze, only penetrable by initiates. Communal authorities, therefore, controlling this situation and trying to maintain or to create an urban network of streets within Siena, came into conflict with private interest and were themselves subject to private influences which prejudiced the impartial exercise of their office. Consequently, in 1292, authority over the streets and roads of Siena and its *contado* was vested in a new official—the Judge of Streets—who was to be a foreigner born outside of Tuscany. To him complete control was given over all matters concerning roads, bridges and fountains in both city and *contado*.

The addition of the supervision of fountains to this list of duties is significant, for this was another area in which circumstances forced the commune to take an active role and so helped the development of overall city planning. The provision of water in adequate quantities was an essential prerequisite for a flourishing urban community in medieval Italy; not only was it vital for drinking and washing, it was essential to all of the major textile industries and to leather-working. By 1262 the government of Siena was already concerned that the woollen industry might suffer through a lack of water and therefore decided to provide basins and fountains that would be reserved exclusively to that industry's use.

The difficulties involved in such an enterprise were manifold, for the problem of providing Siena with a good water-supply had already engaged the commune for more than a century. The difficulty was created by the very nature of the Sienese water-supply which was drawn from vast underground aqueducts, called *bottini*, which fed the public fountains. Over the centuries an underground acquatic world was created beneath the streets of Siena, which was to provoke wonder in even so eminent a visitor as Charles V who declared that Siena was more remarkable below than above ground. No private interests could have created or maintained this complicated system and the only alternative source of water-supply consisted of private cisterns. In addition, water was so precious that the fountains were made an integral part of Siena's defensive system. Each, as the architecture of those which survive suggests, was a fortified strong-point, a mini-fortress. Those which lay beyond the city walls like Fonte dei Pescaia, were, like the antiports, defensive points outside the city, while those which lay within the walls were small communal fortresses inside the urban complex.

So much care and concern was lavished upon the fountains of the Sienese, whose attitude to water frequently bordered on the idolatrous, that they became, even in the middle ages, one of the city's most famed features. Each was carefully designed to include a series of basins to serve different functions. In the first, the water was collected, and this clean water was restricted to domestic use. The second basin was for the watering of animals; the third for washing clothes or for industrial purposes. In the more sophisticated fountains, the surplus water was then collected and channelled off, 'so that it is not lost but returns to the use of the community.'[4]

By the early fourteenth century the provision of an adequate water-supply for the growing city had clearly become a matter of most urgent concern. In 1295 the *Operaio del Duomo*, or Master of Works of the Cathedral, was commissioned to institute a search for the mythical river—the Diana—which was reputed to run under the city, a search which was to earn for the Sienese the characteristically uncharitable derision of Dante.[5] In the same year a commission composed of the painter, Duccio, and four stonemasons, was instructed to sink wells, on behalf of the commune, wherever they deemed it appropriate.

More and more frequently the General Council debated the question of the shortage of water: 'which is one of the four elements, without which life is impossible.'[6] The commune both encouraged the construction of private wells and cisterns and provided new public fountains itself; in 1302 land was purchased in Vallerozzi to build the Fonte Nuova, which was finally completed in 1323; the Fonte Pino was constructed in 1338, and the Fonte Gaia was also first projected in these years.

The result of all these measures to improve the street-system and the water-supply was that, by the end of the thirteenth century, the commune had effectively taken to itself much of the responsibility for the appearance of the city. The constitution of 1309 even forbade the erection of any new buildings in the city unless previous planning permission had been received, in order to 'prevent those who build from trespassing on public streets or any of the rights of the commune'.[7]

By 1300 some 300 decrees on the statute book were directly or indirectly concerned with civic development and a committee was being appointed annually to survey the town and advise on any projected building plans for that year. The office of the Judge of the Streets was not only in existence but reasonably effective; he was already establishing a norm for the width of the streets of six *braccia* and insisting on a uniform brick paving for the streets.

A related area in which communal control was (by the end of the thirteenth century) fairly extensive, was public health. A provision of some kind of medical service had always been a concern of the commune, and, from 1250 onwards, one of the most sacrosanct of fixed charges on the communal revenues was that which went to pay the master who taught medicine in the University. But the avoidance of disease was a matter of even greater concern to the civic authorities. For this reason the most stringent controls were exercised over the sale of all fresh foodstuffs. The problem of keeping the city clean was attended to equally carefully. Indeed the constitution of 1262 shows a positive obsession with the subject, extending its concern not only to the streets but also to such areas as the squares and the streets around the churches, particularly those of the friars, to the Campo, and to the other open spaces of the city which were to be kept free of all refuse. In an attempt to see that, at least in this area, its decrees were observed, the commune ordained the appointment of one man in each *contrada* who was to be responsible for supervising the cleaning of streets and other public spaces. These decrees were further strengthened in the 1309–10 constitution which places a universal ban on the emptying of refuse, slops or latrines into the street, and forbids the keeping of pigs or sheep within the city. A further decree of 1334 appointed a non-Sienese official who was to prevent the keeping of swine within the city-walls.

Fire was another danger of city-life which in Siena fostered government intervention. The majority of houses were either built of wood or had a wooden infrastructure, and Siena, like all medieval cities, was full of stables, stalls, grain and hay-stores. Even the smallest fire might therefore spread with alarming rapidity. In 1153 the church of San Vigilio was completely destroyed by fire; in 1260, virtually the whole of Terzo di Città; and in 1302 the palaces of the Saracini and the Scotti, along with many other buildings in their immediate vicinity. The commune responded to the hazard in various ways: by issuing building regulations designed to minimize the fire-risk, by disciplining

certain hazardous occupations, and by punishing severely anyone found guilty of causing a fire. Except for the house in which a fire had started, the commune paid compensation to the owners of houses destroyed in this way and to those whose houses might be destroyed in order to prevent a fire spreading. It also made itself responsible for fire-fighting, delegating the task to eight master-carpenters who were paid an annual salary for their services.

As a consequence, therefore, of a series of empirical responses to a number of external threats and internal problems, by the end of the thirteenth century, the Sienese commune enjoyed a very elaborate structure of government. This can be illustrated by a study of the Sienese archive, which, even for richly-endowed Italy, is unusually comprehensive for the thirteenth century. Statutes of the commune exist from the middle of the century, records of income and expenditure date back to 1226, and the reports of the General Council begin in 1249.

A study of these records reveals, as we have seen, a city with a high concentration of population, expanding through constant immigration, largely from the *contado* and region around Siena. It reveals a city with a mixed economy of commerce, industry, services and agriculture, but one in which commerce was the pacemaker of economic change. It uncovers an embryonic, if not very powerful, guild system and a far more powerful and very sophisticated political organization, designed to protect the interests of the city and its citizens. It reveals a highly complex administrative structure in which the vast majority of citizens participated, presumably at the expense of their other obligations and commitments. It has been estimated that, by 1257, when the adult male population cannot have exceeded 5,000 there were some 860 offices held by Sienese in the city, involving every aspect of city life. Among these officials were 171 night watchmen, 114 supervisors of tolls and customs, and 90 officials concerned with tax assessment. In addition, there were coiners, supervisors of weights and measures and of grain and salt sales, custodians of the fountains, gaolers, executioners, the officials of the streets and houses, trumpeters, six 'good men' charged with supervising the inns and preventing swearing, and another six who were responsible for keeping out wild donkeys, pigs and lepers, and for preventing people from spinning wool in the street. Even those men who did not participate in the government of the city by holding one of these offices, or by sitting in the city councils, might yet participate in decision-making at a local level, in Terzo or *contrada*, or they might be members of any

one of the numerous *ad hoc* or permanent committees created to supervise the daily administration of the city. Such widespread participation in the tasks and responsibilities of government, fostered a pride in the city and an enthusiasm for its well-being, which in turn shaped the cultural life of the city, expressed through its religious and secular ceremonies, through its urban architecture and city-planning, and through its educational services.

By the second half of the thirteenth century, men had a clear idea of the difference between city and country life, and of the advantages offered by the former. Social mobility was undoubtedly easier in the city, and Siena offered a particular attraction as a place in which to obtain specific kinds of training. Its *Studio* or university, carefully fostered by the commune, which paid the salaries of its masters, offered instruction in Law, Medicine, Grammar and Dialectic. It was within Siena also that a man might be trained professionally, as a notary, for instance, or as a goldsmith, a painter, a mason, as a merchant or a banker. In the thirteenth century this was as true as it was to be in 1360 when Maestro Naddo di Corbo, a carpenter from Montesevoli, declared that his original reason for moving to Siena had been to provide his sons with an education and that they were now, 'satisfactorily trained in the art of manufacturing wool' and 'unable to work the land'.[8] We hear also of the sons of Bandino di Salvuccio who, according to their father, were of 'good habits, suited to the civil and urban life, rather than to that of rustics,'[9] and of Tolomeo del fu Meuccio di Compagno who left the village of Percenna for Siena because he was avid for knowledge 'and he knew that he would acquire no learning if he stayed in the country'.[10]

What we glean from these examples is that, by the beginning of the fourteenth century, a clear sense existed of the distinct superiority of city life, not just among men like Ambrogio Lorenzetti and his patrons, but among many of Siena's ordinary citizens, such as, once again, the four brothers who emigrated from the hamlet of Pietralata and declared that they did so because they knew they were born to enjoy the delights of the refined life of the city. They would, they maintained, infinitely prefer to live as only humble artisans in Siena, than till the land like the peasants of the *contado*. It was this emergent bourgeois mentality, this sense of the immense value of city life and of its unique qualities and opportunities, that, in Siena, helped to create the great cultural achievements of the fourteenth century.

3

The Rule of the Nine

'Or fu giammai
Gente si vana come la Sanese.'
Dante

THE BATTLE of Colle Val d'Elsa in 1269 effectively closed a chapter in Sienese and in Tuscan history, bringing to an end the period of Ghibelline ascendancy. Whatever the traditional sympathies and emotional attachments of the Sienese, and there is some evidence in the proverb coined by the Florentines at this time to describe their neighbours—*La Lupa puttaneggia*, i.e. The She-wolf plays the whore—that they remained Ghibelline orientated, there was now no question of the city choosing any foreign policy other than alliance with Florence and membership of the Tuscan league.

In the cultural history of Siena this was a development of profound significance, for it gave a completely new direction to Sienese art with remarkably beneficial results. The new Guelph alliance placed Siena, for the first time, in regular and close contact with both Naples and France, and so brought to the city new artistic influences. In 1310, Robert of Anjou was actually in Siena, concluding an alliance between the Angevins and the Tuscan Guelphs; his arrival was to be of immense significance in the career of Simone Martini who worked for Robert in Naples. The Guelph alliance thus opened for the Sienese the world of French Gothic and Martini's *Maestà* provides the first evidence of their direct contact with French painting. French influences were also being transmitted to the Sienese at the same time through the building of the new Cistercian abbey of San Galgano, close to the city, which, although it had been begun in 1244, was not completed until 1288. Here for the first time, the Sienese came directly into contact with the verticality and elegance of northern Gothic architecture, which during the next hundred years they were to adapt, transform, and absorb into characteristic Sienese architectural forms.

Since Siena now formed an important link in the Tuscan Guelph alliance, it was essential that power within the city should be vested in a magistracy of Guelph sympathies and so, in 1287, the ruling magistracy of Fifteen was reduced to Nine members of the *popolo*, the famous, 'Lords Nine, the Defenders of the Commune and *Popolo* of the city and district of Siena, and of the jurisdiction of the same.' This magistracy was to give to Siena two generations of stable, prosperous, and peaceful government in which the city reached its highest peak of civic development; when, in the words of one chronicler, Agnolo di Tura:

> The Sienese and their city lived in great peace and tranquillity, everyone attended to his own business affairs both in the city and in the *contado*, and all loved each other as if they had been brothers.

It was a period subsequently looked back on almost as if it had been a golden age. Filippo Agazzari was to recall it in his *Assempri* as a period in which:

> Siena was in such great peace, and in such great abundance of all earthly goods, that almost every feast day, innumerable weddings of young women were celebrated in the city.

The magistracy which presided over this wonderful period in Siena's history was drawn from what was, unquestionably, a restricted oligarchy, from which the nobility, the judges and the notaries were specifically excluded. All candidates for the ruling magistracy of the Nine, which appointed its own successors, had to be over thirty, members of the *popolo* and of the Guelph party. The majority of those successful in obtaining the highest office also turn out to have been closely related to each other. Nor was oligarchical control restricted to the ruling magistracy. It was extended into all areas of civic life. Members of the Nine or their kin were preponderant in the Biccherna, and usually served as ambassadors, castellans, war captains and directors of public works. The Nine and their relatives tended to be in the majority on civic committees and in public councils. The necessity of placing their supporters in all the really key positions of government also led the Nine to make some changes in traditional communal practices. The possibility that having the General Council select the members of the Biccherna might lead to the election of opponents of the Nine was too great a risk to be ignored, and the Nine chose the Biccherna members themselves, in consultation with the Four Consuls

of the Merchant Guild. The Nine were also careful to appoint their own supporters to the leading police offices, and it is an indication of the importance they attached to urban planning that the Supervisors of the Streets were also appointed directly by them. The Sienese militia companies were headed by men who were amongst those most trusted by the regime, and, from these companies, a further élite corps was created, composed of eight men from each company, 'lovers of the pacific state of the city of Siena', who, at the least sign of disturbance, were to hasten to defend the Palazzo Pubblico.

A distinct concern for law and order was also a marked feature of a regime which invested heavily in building new communal prisons. A large police-force was created, with about one law-enforcement officer for every 145 inhabitants, and this force was supplemented by the night-watch, composed of small groups of citizens. Siena was subject to strict curfew, with only authorized persons—the night-watch, visiting doctors and priests, rubbish collectors—moving around the city after dark. Among many who paid the 20*s* fine for infringing the curfew was the Sienese poet, Cecco Angiolieri.

Yet although an oligarchic and a frequently repressive regime, the Nine must be seen as representative of a very large body of Sienese citizens. Although they were described as being drawn from the *gente di mezzo*—the middling sort of people—and as 'good and loyal merchants, devoted to the Guelph party', such a description disguises the fact that among the Nine there were wide disparities of wealth and status, as well as a diversity of occupation. While bankers and international merchants undoubtedly predominated, among the Nine there were also wool manufacturers, spice-dealers, a goldsmith and even an innkeeper. Many of the Nine were also large-scale property owners in the *contado*.

Again, a high proportion of the moderately wealthy Sienese must have sat on the ruling magistracy or Consistory* at the time of the Nine, for this was rotated on a bi-monthly basis. Therefore, between 1287 and 1355, some thousand men must have sat on the Consistory. Even those who did not so serve probably enjoyed considerable experience of government in the many other posts which were still available in the Sienese administration, and whose number continued to proliferate under the rule of the Nine.

* Before the development of the Bal*ia* in the fifteenth century, this was the name always given to the ruling magistracy, whatever its composition. It is also known, somewhat confusingly, as the *Signoria* and the Senate.

It is also abundantly clear that the Nine did not wish to be associated with any particular clan, class or faction, that their rule was, in no sense, partisan. Among all medieval regimes, not only in Siena, but in the whole of western Europe, the rule of the Nine is remarkable for its flexibility and for its refusal to be tied to any one set of attitudes; in 1355 the General Council enunciated the view ultimately derived from Justinian that: 'it is fitting that human statutes be changed according to changing times.'[1]

There is no doubt, in fact, that the Nine tried to govern in an equitable fashion and in the interests of the whole community or the Common Good. Many works of art commissioned by them essentially proclaim the determination of the Nine to oppose any privileged group in society, and in the administration of the law, to give Siena, in reality, justice and good government. Members of the great noble clans, like the Piccolomini, and even relatives of the Nine, were unable to escape punishment with all the rigours of the law when their conduct merited it. As a result of major offences, the houses of even such powerful families as the Tolomei were destroyed. The Nine, for the same reason, fearlessly asserted the rights of the commune over the clergy of Siena, even when such a policy brought them into direct conflict with the bishop armed with his threat of excommunication. Within four years of their seizure of power, they felt strong enough to support their *podestà* against Rome, when he was excommunicated for beheading a priest, 'an act of justice . . . which was approved by everyone.'[2] For similar reasons, the Nine asserted the right of the secular authorities to control the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala.

All citizens were to be equal before the law, and to have free access to justice. The city's statutes were translated into the vernacular, 'to avoid all ambiguity' and 'to the end that poor folk and other persons who know not Latin may be able to see and copy the same at their will.' Those too poor to have any civic rights were still protected by three Judges, one from each Terzo, who were known as the Advocates of the Poor. They were employed and paid by the commune to serve as lawyers for paupers in both civil and criminal cases, and, for these services, they were not allowed to charge their clients a fee. So, in theory at least, no man in Siena might claim that he was denied justice because of his poverty.

Taxation was also spread broadly and fairly and matters were arranged in such a way that, when direct taxation became inevitable, the wealthier members of the commune bore the brunt of payment.

As was made clear in 1307 when the annual *contado* liability for taxation was reduced, 'because equity and justice must be served in every city and every community,'[3] the principle on which the system was based was closely associated with the important role assigned to Justice in the state. Taxation must be fairly spread because, 'whatever is unequal is intolerable.'[4]

Normally, the major part of civic income came from the *gabelle*, particularly from sales and excise taxes, farmed out to companies of Sienese businessmen, and from the rent of communal properties in the city and *contado*. Voluntary loans at a high interest provided additional income as did court fines, profits from the communal salt-monopoly, and various fees. If the sum of these did not meet current needs then the Nine either had recourse to the *Lira*, a graduated property tax, or to forced loans, levied on the wealthier inhabitants of the city and *contado*. In such circumstances, it was always from those best able to pay that the greatest sacrifices were demanded.

The Nine's concern for the community as a whole is also shown in strenuous and, normally, successful efforts to ensure an abundant and inexpensive food supply for the mass of the urban population. The purchase of Talamone in 1303 was a part of this strategy, for it was intended to develop it into a flourishing port to rival Pisa and Genoa. The Nine also carefully fostered industry and the nascent guild structure. The wool industry, in particular, enjoyed a brief period of great prosperity, producing cloth for an expanding local market. From 1338 onwards there was a considerable investment by the Wool Guild—*Arte della Lana*—in new premises and properties, but even so a petition of 1341 records that:

> there is a great shortage of cloth in the city. For the wool manufacturers do not . . . respond to the opportunities available in Siena.[5]

The difficulty as far as the woollen industry was concerned lay in keeping pace with an expanding population, for the increased prosperity of Siena was reflected, as we have seen, in a continued growth of population. The years between 1287 and 1330, saw a great influx of immigrants into Siena from the *contado* and the neighbouring states with the result that by 1330 Siena's population had reached its highest peak. Much of this expansion may be explained by the increased availability of employment in Siena during these years, in which the cathedral was being enlarged, the streets reorganized, fountains rebuilt and the Palazzo Pubblico erected. And immigration, particularly when it

involved prosperous, skilled or professional men, all of whom were, of course, potential taxpayers, was overtly encouraged. The Nine shared the conviction, general among contemporary Italians, that a city's strength was to be measured largely by the size of its population.

By 1318–20, therefore, it has been estimated that the population of Siena was already 52,000. This made it very large indeed in medieval terms when even a population of 800 could give a settlement urban pretensions. In 1323 it became necessary to build new walls and gates in the region of Valdimontone in order to reduce urban congestion. In the following year the commune purchased land from the Church of San Martino which lay between the old and the new gates of Valdimontone. This area became the new district of Borgo Santa Maria. It is typical of the attitude of the Nine that they should have used this opportunity to improve Siena's amenities; after 1306 any new citizen was required to build a house in Borgo Santa Maria which was to be valued at, at least, £100.

Such urban programmes were but one aspect of the most remarkable feature of the rule of the Nine: the great programme of public works which the regime financed. Since, in addition, they consistently favoured any projects which celebrated their city or enhanced its prestige, Siena, as it is today, is in large part their creation. It was the Nine who gave to the city the Campo, the Palazzo Pubblico, the Torre del Mangia, the project for the new cathedral, and the new buildings of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. They were responsible for the paving, widening and straightening of many city-streets, for the rebuilding of Porta Romana, the most majestic of Siena's city-gates, for the creation of public parks, and for many other communal projects.

The motives for such public works were always a combination of the idealistic and the intensely practical. The Nine did want to embellish the city for beauty's own sake, but they also wanted to impress foreigners with the splendour and the power of their community. Thus they normally explained their activities by the traditional formula: 'for the honour of the commune of Siena, and for the beauty of the city.'[6] The Nine wanted to suggest that their city was powerful, by displaying its wealth, but they also wanted to enrich Siena. They wanted to give pleasure to the citizens, but also to control the activities of those citizens. Such a mixture of motives was involved in the decision of 1309 'to make a park between the gates of Camollia', which was to be both, 'for the beauty of the city and . . . for the delight and

joy of citizens and foreigners',[7] but which was also to help foster trade by providing a site where fairs could be held. Similarly, a grant to the Wool Guild in 1346 to build the fountain of Vetrice may certainly be seen as a way of improving the city's appearance, but it was also intended to assist the development of the textile industry. Equally, there is no doubt that although the ruling élite were alive to the aesthetic qualities of space and light in the urban framework, their overriding concern in improving the street-system of Siena was a desire to control the populace more effectively, by eradicating those decayed areas of the city which fostered crime, violence, murder and rape.

A similar mixture of motives explains the careful fostering of learning which is so marked a feature of the rule of the Nine. The University was encouraged because the pursuit of knowledge was recognized as valuable for its own sake, but also because an internationally famous University attracted foreigners and, with them, trade and business to the city. The international reputation of Siena was also enhanced. One indication of the seriousness of purpose of the Nine, in relation to the University, is their instruction to their representatives in 1348 to spend whatever sums they found necessary in order to persuade the Pope to bestow on Siena the coveted title of *Studium Generale*. Although, in this ambition, the Nine were thwarted, they were more successful in expanding the scope and improving the quality of the Sienese University. A solid financial basis was provided, for the first time, by the conversion of the Casa della Misericordia, a hospital, originally founded by the Blessed Andrea Gallerani, into the Sapienza or residential college of the University. Privileges, particularly tax-exemptions, were accorded to any scholars or teachers who came to Siena, and an especially warm welcome was extended to those who moved from Bologna in 1321. They were given an official reception in the Palazzo Pubblico where they were addressed by Messer Biagio di Montanini. The schools of Medicine and of Theology seem particularly to have profited from the careful nurture of the Nine, the esteem in which Theology was held by the ruling regime being demonstrated in 1340 in the public funeral given to the Augustinian, Fra Gherardo da Siena, the author of several major theological works. Secular learning also flourished and one member of the old nobility, Gianpaolo di Meo Ugurgieri, translated the *Aeneid* into Sienese prose during the regime of the Nine.

Under the rule of the Nine, Sienese civilization achieved a new maturity. Two poets of international repute and remarkable sophistication, Cecco Angiolieri and Bindo Bonichi, himself a member of the

ruling élite, helped to win for the city a reputation as a place of wit, grace, elegance and humanity, celebrated in verse by Fazio degli Uberti:

> By that road that takes the easiest route
> We made our way to the city of Siena,
> Which is situated on a strong and healthy site,
> Full of gaiety, and good customs
> Of attractive women and courteous men,
> A city with a sweet, mild and serene air . . .

A contemporary at this time described Siena in admiring terms as a city which had, 'an abundance of men of letters, of experts in civil and canon law and practitioners of other professions and occupations'.[8] Among such professions and occupations it seems natural to count the visual arts in a period when Giovanni Pisano, Duccio, the Lorenzetti and Simone Martini were all active, along with a host of minor artists. In 1311 an incomplete taxation record of Terzo di Città shows that in this area of the city alone, there were ten painters, twenty-one goldsmiths, two miniaturists and twenty-one stonecarvers.

The most remarkable characteristic of the large number of artists and craftsmen supported by the commune at this date, is the very high quality of their work. The painting, the architecture, the sculpture, and, indeed, the literature produced during the rule of the Nine is all both innovatory and of the highest quality. The *Dolce Stil Nuovo* in the arts found no happier a home than in Siena, and for this the Nine must take much credit, for they created an ambience in which all of the arts could develop.

In the free and reasonably peaceful Siena of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, learning, as we have seen, both flourished and was encouraged to flourish. The existence of a tradition of civic learning, exemplified by the University and by courses of public lectures, was reflected in the works of painters like Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti with their philosophical and mathematical bent. It also contributed to the work of the Sienese sculptors and architects, and, in particular, to Giovanni Pisano.

The free and dynamic society of Siena also facilitated the process, so marked in all the arts, by which the different artistic disciplines learnt from each other, and were inspired to experiment. The advances in sculpture at the end of the thirteenth century were, for instance, a prerequisite for the development of a new, naturalistic style in painting,

and themes, first explored in sculpture, such as the *Madonna Lactans*, were then taken up by painters. Literature, also, had a marked effect on the visual arts. In this context, it is important to remember that literature whether religious or secular was not in fourteenth-century Siena a private but a public experience. Arthurian romance, for instance, was a part of the stock-in-trade of the *cantastoristi*—ballad-singers—who performed in the Campo, as well as being a cult of the Sienese nobility, whose world is explored in the poetry of Folgore da San Gimignano. He compared the young nobles of Siena to Priam's sons:

> Valiant and courteous more than Lancelot
> Each one, if need should be, with lance in hand,
> To fight in tournament at Camelot.

Such feudal romances became a major source of inspiration in the work of Simone Martini.

Other themes in painting also originated in the literary world. Martini's own portrayal of the Virgin in the *Maestà* as the Queen of Heaven, derives not from any visual model, but from the Italian religious lyrics which became so popular in the later thirteenth century, and, most probably, from a poem of Giacomino da Verona, the *De Jerusalem Celesti*, which pursues the theme of Saints and Angels pressed around the Virgin to render her a courtly homage. An equally important influence on painters were the popular *Laudi* or sacred songs which were sung by bands of pious men and women throughout Tuscany and Umbria, and which were especially popular in a city which, in Bianco da Siena, produced one of the best and most-loved authors of *Laudi*. These songs were the source for the beautiful motive of intercession which is expressed in Duccio's *Maestà* by the four kneeling saints—the advocates of Siena—and by the invocation of Duccio himself:

> Give to Siena peace. Give to Duccio eternal life because he has painted you so.

Nor can music-making, which is so important and attractive an element in Sienese painting, from the time of Martini to that of Rutilio Manetti in the early seventeenth century, be seen apart from the other arts at this time, for music was also designed for public rather than for private entertainment, and was a necessarily shared dimension of the communal experience. Among the most important servants of the commune were the musicians of the Palazzo Pubblico. These, in 1314,

included five trumpeters, one drummer, a bag-piper and a man who played the *maccara*—a pair of copper Saracen drums. These musicians participated in all public functions and festivals and accompanied the Nine on all ceremonial occasions.

One reason for the high quality of all the arts at the time of the Nine, then, was their public nature. The only important patrons were public, and the most important of all was of course the government. For it was not only the Nine, as the supreme civic magistracy, who provided artists with the opportunity of employment on public works. Other government offices also acted as important patrons: Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Annunciation*, for instance, one of the finest and most original works produced in fourteenth-century Tuscany, was painted in 1344 for the Gabella officials whose names can still be read on its base. In 1322 the Biccherna commissioned Simone Martini to paint a St. Christopher to symbolize the protection they offered to the poor and the weak.

The ruling authorities realized the importance of extensive patronage in controlling society. In this context, expenditure on such ephemera as public festivals was perfectly acceptable. Even in the fourteenth century, Sienese festivals were already famed throughout Europe, for the art of their management was perfected at the time of the Nine. Their value, of course, was the opportunity they provided to restate and to emphasize in public the order of society and its essential hierarchies. They also provided an opportunity for the Nine to harness potentially unruly forces and passions in the service of their regime. To this, for instance, the Sienese owed the introduction of a Palio or horse-race in 1306 which was to be run in honour of the Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni. Sansedoni had died in 1288, and, immediately, a highly popular and undisciplined cult had sprung up around his name. The Nine, in a sense, were now diffusing that cult by making it official and diverting the violent emotions and passions of the crowd into the running of the Palio.

Public displays and festivities had a further effect on the city in that they encouraged a similar public display by private individuals. All possible occasions for festivity and ostentation were taken advantage of. Betrothals were celebrated in public on the Campo before a notary. Marriages were occasions for riotous extravagance. Even funerals became elaborate and expensive festivals, ending with a splendid feast. The funeral of a citizen, described as 'poor' in 1294, ended in a meal at which were consumed one hundred loaves of bread, a barrel of wine

and one hundred fish. Charities were founded to pay the expenses of burial for those too poor to leave money for the purpose.

The nobility, in particular, outdid each other in lavishing money on public display which indicated their power within the city. The bestowing of knighthoods on their sons was celebrated with public banquets and balls. It is this aspect of life in Siena which is reflected in the poetry of Folgore da San Gimignano, whose *corona* of fourteen sonnets was addressed to a group of twelve young Sienese noblemen, who spent their days in a round of diversions: feasting, hunting, jousting and making love to beautiful young women. There is little evidence here of that sobriety which is normally held to be a mark of bourgeois society.

We should, however, see such expenditure as much more than simple examples of conspicuous consumption. Ultimately they derive from the same impulse as led the Nine to make heavy investment, not just in ephemeral festivities, but also in the visual arts and in town planning; the recognition that the effective use of visual symbols could help to mould society in desired directions. The Nine thus had both the motive and ability to patronize an enlightened programme of civic artistic development.

The Nine were not, therefore, financing projects for their own personal and private enjoyment, but projects to be seen, enjoyed, experienced and learnt from by the Sienese public as a whole. To a certain extent, such a programme of patronage of the arts had long been built into the commune's statutes. The *podestà*, on assuming office, swore 'to maintain and conserve the cathedral of Siena and the hospital of Santa Maria, and all the venerable places of the city and *contado* of Siena', and successive communal governments had made frequent contributions to the building and decoration of churches within Siena. This policy the Nine maintained; in 1309 they provided 100,000 tiles and a quantity of mortar for the rebuilding of San Domenico. In 1329, in response to a plea by the Carmelites, they contributed £50 towards the important painting they had commissioned from Pietro Lorenzetti, and in 1339 they made a grant towards the rebuilding of San Francesco.

What was common to all these projects was their corporate and public nature. As we have seen, the Nine were prepared to patronize the arts because they saw that, in this way, they might influence the commune as a whole. In consequence, participation in the artistic event was expected of every citizen in Siena. Thus an anonymous chronicler

records of the installation in the cathedral of Duccio's *Maestà* which had taken three years to complete and had cost the commune 3,000 gold florins, more even than Nicola Pisano's deservedly famous pulpit:

> On the day when the new picture was brought to the cathedral all the shops were closed, the bishop having ordered a great procession to accompany the painting to its destination. Priests and monks, therefore, together with the Council of the Nine, the city officials, and all the inhabitants marched in solemn procession. One behind the other, the city dignitaries marched beside the great picture, each carrying a burning taper, with women and children bringing up the rear with great devotion. After this manner was the altar-piece brought to its resting-place in the cathedral. Right round the Campo the procession paced, as is customary; meanwhile the bells pealed the 'Gloria' in honour of the beautiful painting for the high altar.

Such descriptions vividly reveal the integration of art into the whole life of the community, so that it was natural for Simone Martini to sign his *Maestà* by the simple statement:

Siena had me painted by the hand of Simone.

As an expression of the corporate life of the people, and totally relevant to its experience, art played a highly functional role in Sienese society. Under the Nine, the Campo was carved out of the city in order to create a neutral ground in which impartial government and justice might flourish; buildings like the new cathedral or the Palazzo Pubblico were designed to fulfil specific religious and civic functions. Paintings and sculpture were commissioned for celebratory, didactic or minatory purposes. Thus a new secular emphasis was brought to both architecture and to painting. For artists this was often a great liberation, providing them with unprecedented opportunities to explore the new realism which was at the time such an exciting force in Italian painting.

An example of secular minatory painting was the commission to Simone Martini in 1330 to paint a portrait of the rebel, Marco Regoli, in the Sala del Concistoro in the Palazzo Pubblico, and a combination of the celebratory and the minatory are to be found in the famous and entirely secular fresco which Martini painted of Siena's war-captain, Guidoriccio da Fogliano, to record his victory over the *contado* nobles of Montemassi and Sassoferrato. This work was originally commissioned in 1328, despite the fact that that year was one of great famine, urban rioting and attacks on the city's grain-stores by the starving populace. As originally conceived, the fresco did not show what we see today, the isolated and noble figure of Guidoriccio, but the power and majesty of the Sienese commune and the penalties of rebellion. It was, in fact, part of a much larger fresco which illustrated all the castles conquered by Siena since 1314, running continuously round three-quarters of the Sala del Mappamondo.

The art which the Nine patronized could also teach a less distinctly political lesson. Let us consider the anonymous chronicler on Duccio's *Maestà* again:

> . . . the altar-piece was completed, brought to the cathedral and placed above the high altar after the previous picture had been removed; this one now hangs above the altar in the church of San Bonifazio and is called 'The Madonna with the Great Eyes' or 'The Holy Mother of Mercy'. This latter picture was the one which heard the prayers of the people at the battle of Montaperti when they vanquished the Florentines. The two pictures therefore exchanged places, the new picture being much more beautiful, larger and more devotional. The back of the picture also shows scenes from the Old and the New Testament. . . . During the whole day of the procession, prayers were offered unceasingly and to the poor alms were distributed. To our advocates, Our Lord and His Mother, prayers went up entreating Her in Her infinite mercy to preserve us from all evil and disaster and to protect Siena from the hands of traitors and enemies. . . .

The chronicler is aware of the aesthetic value of the *Maestà* but does not perceive this as its chief value. It is also an aid to devotion and a means of instruction. The scenes from the *Life of Christ and of the Virgin* on the reverse of the painting fall within the tradition of narrative painting, encouraged by the friars as providing a bible for the illiterate. Most interesting of all, however, is the chronicler's attribution of virtually magical powers to a painting which he sees as a charm against all the enemies and evils which constantly threaten a city. What is in question is a typical emphasis by Siena's ruling élite on that aspect of religion which acted as the strongest binding-force in the pre-industrial city, its protective, restorative and predictive magic, which assisted the individual in adjusting to the natural divine order and protected the community from all the insecurities which were inherent in the social and physical world.

It was, in fact, in such magical-mystical qualities that the Nine

themselves probably saw the greatest value of any work of art, for those qualities could also be used to develop civic consciousness at the expense of family and factional differences. As we have seen, in the Italian city-state, law, order and the common good fought a constant and often losing battle against the forces of individualism, faction and lawlessness, and only the gradual evolution of a corporate, civil consciousness, over a very long period, eventually put an end to this struggle. At the time of the Nine the conflict in Siena had reached its zenith, when the simplest incident might threaten the whole fabric of state and society. In 1325, a simple game of *Pugna* on the Campo escalated into a full-scale battle:

> From apparently nowhere, banners and shields appeared, helmets were donned and lances, swords and even spears were used, the noise increasing to such a roar that it seemed the world was being turned upside-down, so great was the crowd of struggling men. Troops of armed soldiery were ordered to the scene. . . . The Nine sent a herald to proclaim order: the noise was so great that his voice could not be heard and the fighting continued . . . Many of the soldiers' horses were killed and even a few of the soldiers themselves. Meanwhile, more and more men, armed with crossbows, axes and knives entered the Campo so that the battle waged even more furiously. Neither the Nine nor any other authority seemed able to bring a stop to the destruction. At last the Bishop ordered the priests and the brotherhoods of monks to accompany him to the Campo. They appeared carrying a Crucifix before them and paced slowly in and out of the combatants; whereupon a slight cessation of the struggle was felt. Finally, succumbing to the persuasion of the priests, Bishop and monks, the crowd gradually dispersed and all fighting ceased. . . .

As this incident demonstrates, the Sienese crowd was highly excitable and quick-tempered, likely to break out into violence on the slightest provocation. Despite all the appearances of legalism and constitutionalism with which the Nine surrounded their regime, they lived in an age of very considerable violence when bloodshed and street-fighting were every-day matters. It was therefore the concern of the Nine to try to channel some of the volatility of the Sienese mob into acceptable and peaceable manifestations, and so help to impose upon the community a sense of civic, communal purpose, finding expression in an ordered and lawful existence. In achieving this laudable end, the work of art had an essential part to play through the utilization of its magical

qualities and symbolic values. Thus, in 1315, Simone Martini's *Maestà*, a painting concerned with the twin themes of Justice and the subordination of the will of the individual to the Common Good, was commissioned for the General Council chamber in the new Palazzo Pubblico, so that the Virgin might actually be present at the council-meetings and inspire the councillors in their decision-making. The desires of the Nine and their purposes for civic government were placed in the mouth of the Virgin who, surrounded by the city's patron saints —Savino, Ansano, Victor and Crescenzio—appears as Siena's ruler, and admonishes the communal officials to govern fairly and wisely. Her meaning is defined by the inscriptions on the steps which lead up to her throne. 'The roses and lilies which spangle the fields of heaven delight me not more than wise decision' she advises the Sienese, and warns that: 'The prayers of the saints will bring no profit to those who spread discord in my city.'

In such great works of art we can discern the aim of the Nine to bring peace and prosperity to their city of Siena. Such an aim, however difficult it was to achieve, gained widespread support for the Nine. Opposition did, of course, exist, and occasionally issued—as in 1311, 1318 and 1328, and successfully in 1355—in major plots against the regime. Fully aware of the danger of such plots, the Nine relied heavily on an elaborate spy-system to warn them of possible areas of unrest and to uncover any serious conspiracies.

Three main groups in society may be identified as persistent opponents of the Nine: some disaffected nobility in the city and *contado*, the city's butchers, and the notaries. Although the rule of the Nine was broadly-based, it resembled regimes in other Tuscan communes in that it was founded on exclusion and proscription. In particular, the victory of Guelphism throughout Tuscany led to the exclusion of the nobility from government which, in theory, rested solely in the hands of the *popolo*. So, in Siena, as elsewhere, the nobility were expressly forbidden by statute from serving on the supreme magistracy of the Nine. Yet it is unlikely that this was a major cause of disaffection for the nobility were not prevented from holding office in every other important position in Siena. They continued to serve regularly in the Biccherna, as commanders of communal forts, as governors, *podestà* or vicars in the smaller communes of the Sienese state, and as ambassadors. Socially, they mixed freely with the Nine whose daughters they often married. Economically they also benefited from the rule of the Nine; the Tolomei, for instance, had virtually all of their wealth invested in

France, and were, therefore, bound to a maintenance of the Guelph alliance.

There were no real occupational differences between the Nine and the nobility. Like the nobility many of the Nine were great *contado* landholders. Like the Nine, the nobility were involved in a diversity of other occupations and businesses. Thus the Salimbeni, although they held more lordships in the *contado* than any other family, were also important merchants and bankers, and the Buonsignori, among the oldest and most aristocratic of all the noble families, were also the largest and most important Sienese banking firm in the thirteenth century. The only major difference between the Nine and the nobility was a tendency for the nobility to invest more heavily in urban property. Since the economic and social interests of the Nine and the nobility were so close, it is unlikely that any differences between them resulted from the opposition of the nobility to the policies of the Nine.

The real cause of conflict between the Nine and the Sienese nobility lay rather in the *mores* of the noble class, for the continued lawlessness and blatant individualism of some families brought them into constant conflict with the Nine's attempts to subject all citizens to the rule of communal law. This was particularly true of families like the Forteguerra and the Tolomei, who automatically opposed a regime which enjoyed the support of the Salimbeni, with whom they continued to wage a *vendetta* which had already lasted for centuries. A factional struggle between the Salimbeni and the Tolomei kept the whole city in uproar between 1320 and 1326, and the following decades were disturbed by similar squabbles between the Saracini and the Scotti, and the Malavolti and Piccolomini, which were only brought to an end in 1347 by a reconciliation forced on the parties by the papal legate and the Nine.

Clan rivalry of this nature underlay the first major conspiracy against the Nine in 1311. Encouraged by the approach of the imperial candidate, Henry VII, whose entourage included at least one important exiled Sienese nobleman, Niccolò di Bonifazio di Buonsignori, a large group of Sienese nobility threatened to overthrow the government. Clan rivalry was certainly at work in 1314 when on 17 April the Salimbeni and Tolomei resorted to arms and engaged in a pitched battle through the streets of Siena over a period of some forty-eight hours. In order to bring these hostilities to an end, the Nine had a lighted candle placed in a window of the Palazzo Pubblico and let the combatants know that if they did not lay down their arms before the

candle burned out, they would all be exiled from Siena and deprived of their property. When a temporary lull in the hostilities occurred, the Nine:

> . . . sought to cut off the two families from any friends living outside in the *contado*, fearing that adherents might gradually gather together to help one side or the other. An order was therefore formulated forbidding the presence in the city of any stranger from the *contado* under whatsoever pretext he might try to enter the city gates; and whoever disregarded this order would have his foot cut off. Many there were who regarded this order as quite unjustifiable; there were others who had some good reason of their own for entering the city, while many were simply dare-devils. No one could really believe that so great a penalty would be exacted and they took it for granted that three days in prison would suffice. . . . But agents of the Podestà searched the city and seized seven peasants from the *contado* in one day. The following morning there stood before the palace of the Podestà the block and axe ready to cut off the foot of each of the delinquents. While this rough court of justice was being prepared, the Campo gradually filled with a seething crowd of citizens protesting against the crippling of so many men for so small an offence. Hardly had the Podestà brought out his seven prisoners than stones began to fly in all directions, thrown by the crowd and the shopkeepers on the Campo. The blinding hail of stones wounded many of the Podestà's servants and covered the escape of six of the prisoners. The Podestà was a man of ungovernable temper, and now, blind with fury against the populace, he led his one remaining prisoner to the upper floor of his palace, had the block and axe brought to him and there and then beheaded the peasant, throwing the body out of the window upon the crowd as a warning . . . the crowd rushed to arms . . . and the regime was within an inch of being overthrown.[9]

Similar disturbances were provoked by a conflict between the Tolomei and the Salimbeni in 1322 and such incidents serve to explain why the Nine could never afford to treat the possibility of noble rebellion lightly.

Like the opposition of the nobility, the opposition of the butchers, who revolted against the Nine both in 1318 and 1324, also stemmed directly from the attempts at 'good government' on which the Nine so prided themselves. For butchers in fourteenth-century Siena were also, normally, animal dealers; thus they resented statutes passed by

the commune which were designed to keep down the price of meat and which forced them to sell their animals only in Siena at a much lower price than they could have obtained elsewhere. They also seem to have resented communal supervision, dating from the earlier thirteenth century but rigorously enforced by the Nine, to prevent the sale of bad meat, the passing off of one kind of meat as another, and the use of false weights.

Like the nobility, the judges and notaries of Siena were specifically excluded from the Nine. This, however, does not seem to have been a major cause of their opposition to the regime. Rather, they, like the butchers were professional victims of 'good government'. Throughout the period they enjoyed power, the Nine, in accordance with their commitment to the ideal of equal and cheap justice for all, made strenuous efforts to keep down lawyers' fees and, in 1318, these efforts culminated in a direct attempt to deprive lawyers of all independence of action.

It was this move against the lawyers that led to one of the more serious risings against the Nine, for it produced an alliance between the butchers, led by the wealthy Cione del fu Vitaluccio, who, according to the chronicler, Agnolo di Tura, was designated the commune's future *Bargello* or Chief of Police; the lawyers; and the disaffected noble clans of the Tolomei and the Forteguerra, who attempted to overthrow the government during the night of 26 October 1318. Yet even the united efforts of these three groups were insufficient to remove the Nine and what the revolt really showed was the general acquiescence of the population in the regime and a broad approval of its policies.

Such widespread acceptance and approval make it legitimate to ask how it was that in the end the Nine did fall from power. The proper answer to this question may be found in the deep structural changes which affected Europe in general and Tuscany in particular in the mid-fourteenth century. Famine became more common and more widespread. In Siena there were food shortages in 1302, 1319, 1328, 1329, 1340 and 1346. Both in 1340 and 1346 and, again, in 1347, the commune was forced to raise large loans and to pawn communal property in order to raise money for the purchase of grain to be distributed freely or sold at less than cost price to the needy.

In the same period trade declined and was often disrupted by warfare. In Siena, as in Florence, Lucca and Pistoia, this decline was associated with a series of spectacular bank-failures. The worst of all was

the failure between 1298 and 1306 of the bank of the Buonsignori, known throughout Europe as the *Gran Tavola*, but in the second decade of the fourteenth century mercantile and banking firms headed by the Tolomei and the Malavolti also collapsed. The Nine found the communal finances severely strained by these bank-failures and by papal pressure for repayment of the debts of the Buonsignori company. A measure of this strain is the increased use of novel taxes after 1348 as the Nine strove to tap additional sources of revenue; thus, for instance, in April 1350, a special forced loan was imposed on innkeepers and others who did business on the pilgrimage route, on the assumption that they would be making large profits in Jubilee Year; and, in the winter of 1351, another forced loan was imposed on the clergy.

Meanwhile the communal finances were facing new demands. Marauding companies of mercenary soldiers began to harass Tuscany in the 1340s, Siena suffering particularly in 1342 from the attentions of the 'Great Company' of Werner von Urslingen who called himself the 'Enemy of God, Piety and Mercy'. Money had to be found either to drive these companies away by force, or to pay them to remove their unwanted attentions elsewhere.

There was, in addition, a revival of interest in Italy on the part of the ultramontane powers. The invasion of Italy by Henry VII led to an expensive and exhausting campaign in the Sienese *contado* which sparked off a series of local rebellions among the subject communes, and, in 1342–3, the Duke of Athens, who had been made Lord of Florence, was actively trying to induce the nobility of Siena to rebel against the Nine. Although he was not successful in producing the outright rebellion he sought, the Duke certainly succeeded in nourishing and encouraging a deepening mood of dissatisfaction among the nobles of Siena. Of this the Nine were aware and, in consequence, they became increasingly afraid of alienating the nobility. They were now less ready to subject members of the ruling clans to the full rigours of communal justice, so that, in the words of the chronicler:

> The people of low estate were taken and destroyed, and the nobles were merely exiled, even though they might have been captured, like the little men.[10]

Gradually the feeling began to grow that the regime was no longer administering the city fairly or justly, and that, on occasion, the justice it offered was frankly partisan and politically motivated.

In 1348 a further blow struck the city in the terrible shape of the

Black Death. In this epidemic Siena suffered as much, if not more than, any other city of a comparable size in Europe. Its devastating nature and psychological impact were graphically recorded by Agnolo di Tura:

> It was all so dreadful and so cruel that I hardly know where to begin to describe the terror which then reigned; one felt that the very sight of so much suffering would drive a man mad. No words can do justice to the horror, and he is fortunate who has never faced such sights. . . . Father fled from son, wife from husband and brother from brother. . . . Loneliness encompassed the dying, for there was no one who would bury the dead either for money or for friendship's sake. If they could do so, blood relations would carry their own dead to the grave without a priest, without any ceremony and without even a funeral bell. I . . . buried all my five sons with my own hands. There were some who were buried too close to the surface, so that the dogs came and scratched them up, devouring the bodies on the open streets. . . . The city of Siena appeared to be deserted; one met no one in the streets . . .[11]

The death-toll was indeed tremendous. It has been estimated that between one-half and one-third of the population died, the poor and the clergy suffering the highest proportionate losses. By the spring of 1349 the militia companies had been reduced from forty-three to twenty-one and the number of *contrade* fom sixty to forty-two. In the city all industry ceased. In the *contado* the fields were neglected and animals left untended. Mills closed down, in some cases for a year or more. On 2 June 1348 the General Council ordered the suspension of the civil courts until September and did not itself meet again regularly until 15 August.

Although, despite all the difficulties, some parts of the administration did manage to limp on throughout the epidemic, the pestilence was a disaster from which the Nine never fully recovered. Public confidence in the regime had been undermined and was not to be regained, for in those areas of public life on which the Nine most prided themselves the Black Death had the greatest impact. A reduced population must bear a heavier tax burden, but the principle of equality in taxation had to some extent to be abandoned. The regime began to rely more heavily on gabelles, which burdened the masses more than the upper classes, rather than on direct taxation, and there was more frequent recourse to voluntary loans which profited the already wealthy.

The administration of justice also suffered. The Nine found that one unfortunate consequence of the epidemic was that it was difficult to find judges, notaries or foreigners to serve in posts such as that of the *podestà* or Captain of the People. The shortage of notaries was particularly acute and in 1350 complaints were made to the General Council that:

> the notaries who survived the mortality are so swollen up with pride that they could not care less about anything. . . .[12]

Profiting from their scarcity the notaries refused to accept posts with the commune:

> for these days they have no need to earn anything and . . . they hate the idea of putting themselves out or working, also they do not care to take work in the offices of the banks in this city . . . And so, between refusals and excuses, the months pass. . . .[13]

In consequence, a host of illegal entrepreneurs, false notaries and unscrupulous clerks came to act in the city. Inevitably the administration of justice suffered. The epidemic, in any case, seems to have sparked off a long outbreak of licence and a consequent increase in the number of crimes of violence. In 1350 the General Council was still lamenting the ease with which criminals could evade justice by leaving the city; in 1352 the commune appointed a new 'official for the custody of the city',[14] to share the Podestà's police powers, but the experiment was not a success and had to be abandoned after a two-months' trial. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that these years saw an increasing number of charges of dishonesty and favouritism against the Nine. Such criticisms were most frequent and most bitter when they came from members of the old noble *consorterie* or from the new men who had grown rich as a consequence of the economic changes wrought by the Black Death, and who neither belonged to the old oligarchy nor appreciated its management of the city. As a result of such mounting hostility, by 1352 the instability of the Nine was already so apparent that in order to keep order during the Festival of the Assumption, they had to call out the militia companies of Terzo di San Martino and summon extra troops from the *contado*.

Even so, the regime endured for another three years until in 1355 the Emperor-Elect Charles IV visited Siena on his way to coronation in Rome. Hardly had he entered the city-gates, on 25 March, when the cry went up: 'Long live the Emperor and Death to the Nine!' This

outcry seems to have been inspired by the Piccolomini and other noble families who, on the following day, succeeded in rousing the whole city. On 27 March, to the general acclamation of the crowds, the Emperor rode from his lodging in Palazzo Salimbeni to the Palazzo Pubblico in order to receive the abdication of the Nine, while the young nobility of Siena led the crowd in a riotous sack of the palaces of the Biccherna, the Merchants' Guild and the Wool Guild, releasing prisoners and hunting down the *podestà* and the War Captain. Although the Emperor saved the persons of the Nine from the fury of the mob, he did nothing to prevent the destruction of their houses and the ransacking of their property. A regime which had preserved peace and prosperity in Siena for some sixty years was thus brought to an end in an orgy of violence and disorder, presided over by the man who was, theoretically, God's secular representative on earth.

4

The Cathedral

'Truly, this is the most beautiful building in the city.'
Agnolo Niccolini, Governor of Siena, 1559

ONE OF the most evocative memorials of the rule of the Nine is the skeleton of the new cathedral which stands so hauntingly on the summit of the Castelvecchio. It is a lasting reminder of how often the aims and ambitions of the Nine bore little real relationship to the actual condition of the Siena over which they ruled. Seen from afar, however, this skeleton tends to melt into the surrounding fabric of the city, and the sky-line of Siena is dominated instead by the city's few remaining medieval towers and by the magnificent, hexagonal cupola of the old cathedral or *Duomo*, glistening in its dress of dark-green, pink and white marble.

In the Tuscany of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such marble was reserved as a building material for ecclesiastical buildings, and in consequence, the cathedral is distinguished from all other buildings in Siena, which are predominantly pinkish-brown in colour. In Sienese paintings, too, the cathedral always stands out as the dominant element in the townscape; it is by depicting the cathedral that a painter normally identifies the city he is illustrating as Siena. Yet, once within the actual walls of Siena, this sense of dominance vanishes. The cathedral is not even easy to find. No street runs directly to it. It is glimpsed, almost accidentally, between other buildings, and, until one climbs into the cathedral square, there is no sense of its towering vigilance over the city. In fact, the cathedral seems to stand aloof from the centre of civic life—the Campo—which lies below it.

One might, therefore, be forgiven for assuming that this semi-isolation of the cathedral, particularly from the Campo, reflects a profound opposition between church and state, between the sacred and the secular. Yet nothing could be farther from the reality of the experience of Siena; a city in which all the buildings and all the space express

the combination in careful equipoise of the religious and the civic spirit. This, as we shall see, is particularly true of both the Palazzo Pubblico and the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, which is opposite the cathedral. But the cathedral also can only be understood if it is seen, not as the expression of some aloof, heaven-orientated, ecclesiastical authority, but of the people of Siena as a whole.

It was, after all, to the cathedral and not to the Palazzo Pubblico that the people of Siena and her dependencies owed their allegiance, and it was to the cathedral that they all processed—excepting only the very poor, the sick, and those whose personal enmities were so great that they dared not risk leaving home—on the fourteenth of August every year during the celebrations of the feast of the Assumption. Here, in sign of homage, they offered to the Board of Works of the Cathedral a wax candle, which, with a typical Sienese love of decoration, had been carefully carved with scenes from the Old Testament alluding to the Virgin or with other devout images. Each candle, therefore, like the cathedral itself, was simultaneously a sacred object, a symbol of temporal authority, and a work of art. A similar ceremony occurred on the following day when the subject communes, territories and lords, made their offerings in the cathedral.

This annual ceremony was the most important in the Sienese year. Before the loss of independence in 1555 it was a ceremony which represented both the submission of the rights of the individual to the Common Good, and the uniting of disparate corporate groups into the context of the city. For, although each person made the presentation of his candle as an individual, he was required by statute to do so as part of a group. The constitution of 1310 specifically required him to go:

> in company with those of the *contrada* wherein he dwells; and although he may be registered for purposes of taxation in another district, yet every man shall go with those of the *contrada* wherein he dwells.

So the dedication of the fourteenth of August was, therefore, a territorially-based one; the submission of the *contrade* of Siena to the authority of the commune, found its symbolic expression in the cathedral. It was the moment each year when the commune asserted its rights over all other bodies, corporations or systems within the city; the Nine, for this reason, ordering in 1309 that all shops should be closed and all commercial dealings prohibited during the Assumption celebrations. In 1346 they made the point even more emphatically,

interfering even with the solemn obligations of the blood tie and the *vendetta*, and decreeing that on 14, 15, 16 August there should be a solemn and universal truce between all citizens and subjects of Siena, so that they might safely perform their devotions. So important and out of the ordinary were the Assumption Day celebrations that they even required different clothes. It was for these festivities that the communal servants were annually issued with new liveries, and in the fifteenth century it was only on these three days that women were allowed to wear silks and velvets in public.

This expression of the city-state ethos within the cathedral was, however, but one among a myriad of civic occasions which had their focal point in the cathedral. Both within the civic and the religious calendars there were many ritual moments which directed the attention of the citizens upon their cathedral. Thus, for instance, on the second Sunday in June, for centuries after the Black Death, that urban disaster was annually commemorated in a solemn mass offered in the cathedral at the expense of the commune. And, as an example of a religiously-inspired festival, we may take the annual Corpus Christi Day celebrations of the later Middle Ages in which the whole city participated, processing to the cathedral in an order carefully arranged on the basis of the city-guilds.

The cathedral also housed a vital source of spiritual protection for the city of Siena and its inhabitants, a protection which was and is perceived as emanating literally from within the cathedral walls. For, above everything else in the middle ages the cathedral was a shrine for many important relics which provided remedy and relief in every crisis of life. In the early eighteenth century, Gigli reckoned the number of these relics as thirty-one, including the veil of the Virgin, the remains of Siena's patron saints, Saints Ansano, Savino, Crescenzio and Victor, which were exposed on the High Altar during the Feast of the Assumption, a tooth of San Bernardino, some remains of San Galgano, relics of the Blessed Sorore, the mythical founder of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, of the Blessed Andrea Gallerani, the Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni, the Blessed Giovacchino Piccolomini Pelacani, the Blessed Francesco Patrizi, the Blessed Giovanni Colombini, founder of the Gesuati, and of the Blessed Agostino Novello. Most prized of all was the arm of St. John the Baptist, presented to the city by Pope Pius II in 1464 and housed in the chapel of the Baptist in the left transept of the cathedral. With a true eighteenth-century rationalizing instinct, Gigli suggested gathering all these relics together from the altars where

they were dispersed and forming one central Sancta Santorum or Holy Despository:

> To which one might have recourse with greater confidence, than anywhere else, on the occasion of any disaster.[1]

This role of the cathedral as a source of protection for the city endured, of course, after the loss of independence, and indeed is still important today.

The cathedral was, then, an expression of the spiritual dimension first of the commune and later of the city. In consequence, its construction was a matter of considerable urban significance, far too important to be left to ecclesiastics. The building operations were rather directed by bodies of Sienese citizens, responsible to the communal government, the ecclesiastical authorities playing only an advisory role. The resultant relationship between commune and cathedral is well set out in a decree of 1310 which states that:

> It is evident to all that the office of the Lords Nine should have care and solicitude and love for the building of the Blessed Mary the Virgin and should concern itself with the conservation of its affairs, curtailing useless expenditure and accepting and preserving those things which may promote it.[2]

In effect, the building works of the cathedral were a government department and the responsibility of the commune. The financing of the works came directly from communal income, for the most part, and any Master of Works who found the building-fund in difficulty would turn automatically to the communal authorities for financial aid. In 1343, as a result of one such request, the commune decreed what was in effect a direct tax whose proceeds were to go to the cathedral. Any person making a will in Siena was required to leave at least ten florins to the cathedral building fund:

> which the Master of Works may demand, even if the sum is not written into the will, for the good of the Board of Works and for the salvation of the soul of the testator.[3]

Many individual Sienese citizens were, of course, to donate far more than they were required by law to the building-fund; Bartolo di Fredi was typical of many in leaving twenty-five gold ducats, and in later centuries substantial gifts by wealthy Sienese citizens were to pay for particular decorative projects.

The income of the cathedral and the power of spending it were delegated by the commune to the *Operaio* or Master of Works, who was a communal appointee, paid an annual salary. The fact that, in the thirteenth century, between 1258 and 1285 the Master of Works was a religious, a monk from San Galgano, has less to do with the ecclesiastical nature of the work than it has to do with the reputed honesty and proven competence of the Cistercians in communal work. Since the office of the Master of Works was seen as a full-time and exclusive post, the salary, particularly once the post began to be filled by secular appointees, was high. When Jacopo della Quercia was appointed in 1453, for instance, he was paid one hundred gold florins a year for his life, and, in addition, the commune also contracted to provide his widow with the annual interest from one hundred gold florins. Such a salary reflects the fact that the Master of Works of the Cathedral held one of the most important posts in the Sienese administration. He was responsible for hiring the architects who designed, and the contractors and masters who actually built, the cathedral. He also organized the majority of feasts and receptions offered by the commune to distinguished visitors. In addition, he was often in charge of other important public works in Siena; the Palazzo Pubblico, the Fonte Gaia and the Loggia della Mercanzia, were all, for instance, ultimately the responsibility of the Master of Works of the Cathedral.

This Master was appointed or reappointed by the commune every six months. Although, in the thirteenth century he was a religious, subsequently, he might sometimes be a practising artist in his own right, like Jacopo della Quercia, or, occasionally, he might be a high-ranking artisan. But more normally he was a merchant, familiar with the organization required for the running of the large-scale business which is what the building works of the cathedral were.

It is clear, from the history of the building of the cathedral, that a strong-minded Master of Works, with determination and vision, could have a very important impact on the way in which the cathedral was built. One of the most critical decisions taken in the whole history of Sienese cultural development was that by Fra Melano in 1265 when he summoned Nicola Pisano to Siena to build the cathedral pulpit, one of his finest works, because Melano believed that contemporary Sienese stonecarving and sculpture were simply inadequate. An even better example is to be found in the fifteenth century in the great period of office of Alberto Aringhieri, who was twice portrayed by Pinturicchio, once in youth and once in old age, in the chapel of

St. John the Baptist. Between 1481 and 1498, it was Aringhieri's energy and drive which led to the building of that chapel and to the completion of the Baptistery, and some of the best sections of the cathedral floor. In the two side naves Aringhieri was responsible for the Hermes Trismegistus, and the Sibyls, who prophesied the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, designed by such distinguished artists as Matteo di Giovanni, Antonio Federighi, Guidoccio Cozzarelli and Neroccio di Bartolomeo, and also for the completion of the floor of the right transept with Benvenuto di Giovanni's *Expulsion of Herod* and Matteo di Giovanni's *Massacre of the Innocents*, and, in the left transept, *Jepthah's Daughter* by Bastiano di Francesco.

Despite the fact that a strong-minded Master of Works could impose his individual impress upon the cathedral, characteristically he did not operate on his own. A marked feature of the patronage exercised throughout the whole chequered history of the building of the cathedral, is its corporate nature, the Master of Works consulting with and being controlled by groups of Sienese citizens at all stages of construction and decoration. Thus the Master of Works always worked with a board of appointed members, which had its own house and workshops by the cathedral where artists could work. This board consisted of between four and six men of whom one was normally a canon of the cathedral. For obvious reasons, membership of this board was frequently given to practising artists, as in the case of Taddeo di Bartolo, whose first recorded office was when he was elected a member in 1388, or that of Cristofano da Chosana, who had himself worked on the cathedral before he was elected to the board in 1379. The inclusion of such artists among the board members was immensely valuable for although, as we shall see, it did not prevent either bad workmanship or bad decisions it did contribute to a situation in which the Board of Works could exercise its patronage with a considerable degree of aesthetic self-confidence.

Of the board's members, one man would normally act as Treasurer and one as Notary or Clerk of Works. Together, all members were responsible for keeping the accounts, collecting revenues from property which had been bequeathed to the cathedral, and for fixing contracts and wage levels. They reported back to the commune regularly, and it was on their recommendation that the city government appointed the Master Mason or *Capomaestro*, who was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the building.

Essentially the Master Mason was the cathedral's architect. This post

was thus of the first importance and it was frequently filled by one of Siena's most distinguished artists. Holders of the position include Giovanni Pisano between 1287 and 1296; Pisano's most distinguished follower, Tino di Camaino; sculptor of the beautiful monument to Cardinal Petroni, Francesco di Giorgio Martini who was appointed in 1499; and Baldassare Peruzzi who held the position from 1532.

Despite the fact that the Board of Works was frequently manned by such distinguished artists, it still did not normally take major artistic decisions on its own, but only in association with a larger committee, composed of a number of citizens. Usually these were selected on the basis of their presumed expertise. Thus, for instance, the committee created in 1388 to decide on the design for the *testiere* of the choir-stalls was composed of fifteen artisans. Of those who can be identified, six were painters and included Luca di Tommè and Paolo di Giovanni Fei, four others were woodcarvers, one was a stonemason, and one a goldsmith.

Nor were such committees the only check on the activities of the Board of Works. In the dispensing of money in particular, the communal authorities maintained a direct and careful watch on the Board, the General Council being kept 'fully informed of its income and expenditure'.[4] The detailed control which the commune exercised may be illustrated by the problems that arose in December 1308, when the Master of Works complained that the work on the cathedral was suffering because at mealtimes the workmen went off either to their homes or to the local taverns. The solution he proposed was simple enough. Drink should be served to the masters and the builders actually on the site of the cathedral because: 'they cannot be expected to work all day without drinking'.[5] But even this small expenditure could not be authorized by the Master of Works before he had obtained the prior consent of the city government. Again, in 1369, the General Council authorized the expenditure of 100 florins by the Board of Works, but only on condition that the financial officers of the commune supervised what was done with the money; and, in the following year, it was the General Council that determined the salary to be paid to Francesco di Tonghio during his work on the choir-stalls of the cathedral.

In no area of civic government, therefore, did the Sienese mania for corporate decision-making manifest itself so consistently and so regularly over so long a period as it did in the building of the cathedral. And such corporate decision-making was bound to have artistic and cultural

consequences. Perhaps the most significant of these resulted from the determined preference shown by the communal authorities for Sienese artists, artisans, and architects when it came to the hiring of men. Other considerations being equal, Sienese citizens were chosen before other artists. There were, of course, good practical reasons for the exercise of this preference. It helped to avoid local unemployment and, in any case, as Jacopo della Quercia pointed out in 1438, the employment of foreign artists and craftsmen invariably involved 'greater delays and greater expense'.[6] Yet one also suspects the intrusion of aesthetic considerations. A case in point is the door for the marble tabernacle of the font in the Baptistery; the Sienese simply did not like the Florentine Donatello's original version and, although he was paid for his labours, the door was finally made by the famous Sienese goldsmith, Giovanni Turini. At this critical period in the development of the early renaissance, such a decision represents a positive attitude on the part of the Sienese towards their own native traditions and a typical suspicion of Florentine innovation. It was part and parcel of that natural good sense and taste which ensured that the cathedral of Siena, despite the incorporation within it of many different styles, and the length of time over which it was built, should none the less exhibit a very homogenous appearance. It seems more than probable that the continuing dominance of this good taste owed a great deal to the corporate and probably conservative nature of the patronage which created the cathedral.

The fact that the cathedral is so perfect an expression of Sienese civic idealism also stems from the patronage which created it. The particular role that the cathedral played in the life of the city is reflected, for instance, in the iconographical and decorative schemes of the Duomo all of which are civic in their inspiration. Chief among these is the exposition of the Virgin's role as protector and advocate of Siena. This is expressed in a whole range of projects which stretch from Pisano's original elaborate exposition of the Virgin's part in the history of the Redemption on the façade, to the portrayal of the Virgin and her glorification by God and Man on the central bronze doors, first projected in 1457 but not executed until 1558 when Enrico Manfrini's realization was paid for by the Monte dei Paschi. We should also note the specific emphasis, both within and without the cathedral, on saints with a specifically Sienese connexion. The medallions on the spandrels of the façade, for instance, contain seventeenth-century busts of three Sienese saints: Giovanni Colombini, Ambrogio Sansedoni and Andrea

Gallerani. And, within the cathedral, in the left transept, there is a corner chapel, dedicated to Saint Ansano, which contains a fine canvas, painted in 1596 by Francesco Vanni, and showing *Saint Ansano Baptising the Sienese*.

Such quintessentially Sienese concerns reflect, in their turn, the fact that behind the communal committees and councils, responsible for the building of the cathedral, lay the whole body of the Sienese citizenry who were deeply committed to this building. Their concern may be illustrated by the fact that, in fulfilling the needs of the cathedral, the communal authorities felt free to abrogate all normal communal laws and obligations. Thus, artists and workmen were permitted to work on official holidays, and even criminals might be pardoned, if it were for the benefit of the building; in 1281, a certain Ramo Paganelli, banished for the crime of fornication, was pardoned and recalled to work on the cathedral because he was, '. . . one of the finest . . . stonecarvers . . . in the world'.[7] It is equally significant that the officials of the Board of Works were not normally allowed to leave the city, and that artists and workmen, employed by the Board, were specifically contracted to work for it solely and continuously.

This total commitment to the project on the part of the whole community both created and reflected the deep civic pride of which the cathedral was an expression. Every Sienese citizen was positively encouraged to concern himself with the appearance of a building which, it was said in 1430, 'both is and ought to be the mirror of all the citizens'.[8] The cathedral's construction was constantly watched, discussed and, on occasion, vigorously criticized. Thus, a directive from the commune, written with some urgency to Jacopo della Quercia in Bologna in 1435, instructed him to return home immediately to resume his position as Master of the Works since:

> God alone knows the fuss that is being made and the number of complaints there are from our citizens.[9]

Again, in 1440, the decision to cancel a project for a stained-glass window, which had already been commissioned, was made because a large number of citizens complained bitterly about it on the grounds that it would obstruct the light.[10]

One consequence of such citizen involvement was a reiterated insistence that the cathedral must be splendid, magnificent and beautiful. Thus the contract given to Francesco del Tonghio and his son, Jacomo, specified that their work be done:

according to the design drawn up by the said Master Jacomo or that it should be made even more beautiful if they can manage it.[11]

Similar attitudes are still apparent a generation later when the Master of Works petitioned the government for permission to build a new sacristy:

because the present one would not do even for a small castle, and is a matter of shame for the whole city; for this church ought to have a beautiful sacristy as befits so praiseworthy and honourable a building.[12]

Such high-minded aesthetic considerations could and did co-exist with more mundane economic reasons to explain the degree of public involvement in the cathedral. For several centuries her cathedral was Siena's major investment. It was also the major employer of artists and workmen; every Sienese artist of any significance worked at one time or another on the building. And it was the chief purchaser of luxury building-materials and so had a peculiar significance for Sienese contractors and merchants.

For centuries, therefore, the cathedral was a vital element in the city's economic life. Few cathedrals have such a long building history; the mosaics of the façade were added only in the last century, and the doors, as we have seen, in this. In fact the Sienese were constantly tinkering with, rebuilding, or redecorating a building which, for all its splendours in which they took such justified pride, never seems really to have satisfied them. It is, in consequence, a most curious blend of styles, both externally with a lower part of the façade and a *campanile* which are Romanesque, and a general appearance which is pure Gothic, and, internally, with a range of decorative forms which date from the earliest period to the present day. Nothing in the eighteenth century was to cause the Sienese more embarrassment than the eclectic nature of their cathedral which defied every attempt to systematize it in accordance with the dictates of neo-classical taste. And nothing in the nineteenth century was to cause more heart-searching than the Baroque elements in the cathedral interior which no amount of enthusiasm for the Gothic revival could persuade the Sienese to remove.

It is not known when the first building was erected on the present site, although tradition maintains that a temple of Minerva once stood there, and that the first church of Our Lady of the Assumption was built on the ruins of this pagan shrine. Certainly, although the present

cathedral dates only from the twelfth century, some kind of Christian building has existed there since at least the tenth century. The bulk of construction work on the present building was completed in the twelfth century for, by the beginning of the thirteenth, the nave, aisles and the lower part of the front and side walls of the present cathedral were already completed. The choir, however, was still under construction in 1259 when a commission of nine citizens, drawn three from each Terzo, was appointed to consult with the Master of Works: 'and whatsoever those Nine or a majority of them think should be done about the choir, that shall be done'.[13] In the following year the General Council reiterated its concern with the progress of the building and urged its expedition. Four years later the cupola was completed and in 1265 Nicola Pisano began work on the pulpit.

The influence which this elegant, octagonal pulpit, with its seven narrative reliefs, classically-inspired yet clearly influenced by the new French Gothic style, was to have over the subsequent development of the arts in Siena was immeasurable, and it illustrates how, by the second half of the thirteenth century, the cathedral was an important artistic training-ground, as well as a major source of artistic employment. Since the cathedral attracted the best talent, not only from Tuscany but from all over Italy—Pisano, himself, came from the South—master-craftsmen and artists in Siena were bound to be influenced by and learn from the building project with which they were constantly involved. In the course of time the educative quality of the building was even to have some kind of official recognition; in 1505 Ventura di Ser Giuliano Turi was given a post in the Office of the Works, but only on condition that he agreed to train eight apprentices in metal casting.

Within the context of this teaching and training dimension of the cathedral's creation, a very important cultural landmark for Siena was the appointment in 1284 of Pisano's son, Giovanni, as Master Mason. For more than twenty years thereafter Giovanni Pisano was a figure of central importance both in the history of the cathedral and in the cultural history of Siena. He was mainly employed in building the complicated façade, the most richly decorated of any Italian façade at that date; as a result of this important work, Giovanni's influence spread rapidly through the city, as it was subsequently to spread throughout Italy.

Since the cathedral was an integral part of Siena's civic life, it was inevitable that any political change in the city would have an impact on the building. It was, for instance, not unknown for the Master of

Works to be removed from his office after a change in regime. Thus, given their grandiose assumptions about Siena's role and their own self-confidence, the Nine were bound to become dissatisfied with the first cathedral which Pisano's work had virtually completed.

Although the cathedral building-fund was in serious difficulties by 1299, largely because the Nine were currently engaged in so many other prestige building-projects, in 1316 it was decided to expand the existing building to double its previous size, at least partly to take account of the increased size of the population, since the theoretical ideal remained that the entire population of the city should be able to worship together in the cathedral on the major festivals of the year. In the new rebuilding scheme, neither Pisano's remarkable façade nor the already famous cupola were to be touched, but the chancel was to be lengthened out over the steep slope of Valle Piatta by the addition of several more arches. These were to be supported by the Baptistery of San Giovanni, which was to be built at a lower level so that it might serve as a foundation for the new chancel. At the same time, it was planned to extend the cathedral transept.

In 1322 when this new building had already made considerable progress, it was discovered that, following subsidence in the foundations, the old and new masonry had begun to gape and the Master of Works commissioned a report from a number of consulting master-workmen as to what should be done with the building. Their unanimous advice was that the project should be abandoned; instead the old cathedral should be demolished and replaced by a new, much larger building:

> vast and most beautiful, with over-all measurements of length, height and breadth in the perfect harmony of proportion which a fine church demands.[14]

It was not, however, until 1339 that the decision was taken by the General Council to begin building a completely new cathedral which, by its size and magnificence, was intended to surpass all other cathedrals in Italy and, most particularly, its neighbouring rivals under construction at Florence and Orvieto. The architect, Lando di Pietro, was summoned home from Naples, where he had been working for King Robert, to superintend the works as Master Mason. The task of architectural design faced by Lando di Pietro was not an enviable one. The existing cathedral, with its now lengthened chancel, was not after all to be demolished but was to remain standing and serve as the transept

of the new building. Two major difficulties, therefore, confronted the architects. The first lay in adapting the new nave, designed in the formal Gothic style so that it coincided with the existing pillars of the transept and aisles, and which with its high vaulting would have to cut through the old one. This created the second major problem faced by the architects: the very difficult task of reconstructing the cupola to fit in with the new building.

Despite such daunting problems, a beginning was made with the extension of the choir and the erection of the new nave and façade whose delicate and frail skeleton still rises above the Campo. However, it was inevitable that, with so ambitious a project, the building fund would soon run into difficulties, and it is scarcely surprising, therefore, that in 1343, alarmed by mounting costs, the General Council should have decreed that no new work be undertaken until the choir was finished.

The project for building a new cathedral was thus already in very serious difficulties even before Siena was overwhelmed by the tragedy of the Black Death, which immediately halted all construction work. Building does not seem to have been resumed again until 1356. Then new problems immediately became apparent; the Master of the Works, Benci di Cione, reported that not only were the finished parts of the new cathedral in a weakened state after so long a delay, they were actually of defective construction and unsafe. A report made in the same year by Domenico di Agostino and Master Niccolò di Cecco advised that to continue with the original building scheme would mean an expenditure of at least a further 150,000 florins:

> and it is our opinion that if you go ahead with this new church . . . according to plan, and without an increase in the normal income of the Board of Works, it will not be completed in a hundred years.[15]

Since it was now clear that to continue with the building would be both dangerous and, in the weakened economy of post-plague Siena, financially out of the question, the Master of Works proposed abandoning the enlargement of the cathedral and his plans were, albeit reluctantly, accepted by the commune.

These new plans involved bringing the work to completion on a considerably more modest but also more realistic scale. The chancel of the original cathedral was, therefore, extended out over the present Baptistery, and, within two years, the extension of the vaulting had been finished and Duccio's great chancel window transferred to its

present position. The Baptistery itself, with its façade, designed by Mino di Pelliciaio, was completed in 1370. Simultaneously, what had been the main aisle of the cathedral was raised to correspond to the new extension of the choir and, in 1377, the west façade was finished by Giovanni di Cecco. The cathedral was thus virtually complete as we know it today, although some building work was to continue until well into the fifteenth century.

The completion of the fabric of the cathedral is not, of course, the end of the story. Equally important in the cultural development of Siena, largely because of the stimulus it provided to continued artistic activity, was the decoration and internal embellishment of the building. Always a continuous process, this has continued to the present day, but the greatest period of activity occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and thus coincided with the emergence of renaissance ideas within Siena.

That the interior of the cathedral should have been lavishly decorated is itself significant. By and large, the churches of Siena are not profusely decorated or ornamented. San Martino, Santa Maria dei Servi, San Francesco, San Domenico and the church of Santa Maria della Scala are in fact largely remarkable for their austerity, and even the Baroque church of Santa Maria Provenzano is very simple. It was, therefore, only in the cathedral that the Sienese mania for decoration could be given full rein with the series of terracotta busts of popes and emperors, the carved and inlaid wooden choir-stalls, and the high altar designed by Peruzzi. This altar can indeed be seen as the Pantheon of the decorative arts in Siena at the time of the renaissance, for all the leading artists of the day contributed to it. The bronze tabernacle is Vecchietta's, and is surrounded on either side by light-bearing angels, designed by Giovanni di Stefano. Below are the enchanting angels by Francesco di Giorgio who was also responsible for the lateral half-figures. Other contributors to the altar were Cozzarelli and Beccafumi, who also designed the beautiful angels on the columns leading towards the nave.

Such decorative schemes within the cathedral are of major importance since, for certain periods, they represent the only large-scale artistic effort being made in Siena. Such a period, for example, occurred in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century when the decoration of the choir, certain chapels and the sacristy were completed, the Baptistery was being decorated, and the creation of the uniquely elaborate marble pavement in Siena's cathedral was under way. The

most important stages of the pavement were those of 1372 exhibiting the figure of the symbol of Siena, the she-wolf suckling her twins, surrounded by the symbols of Siena's allied towns; of 1434 when Domenico di Bartolo executed his portrait of the Emperor Sigismund; of Antonio Federighi's *Allegory of the Seven Ages of Man* in front of the Chapel del Voto; and the period of Alberto Aringhieri's office as Master of Works, to which we have already alluded. The pavement was only finally completed* in the early sixteenth century with Pinturicchio's *Allegory of Fortune* and Beccafumi's Old Testament scenes which are distributed between the high altar and the space under the cupola.

Nothing could have been better suited to the ingenuity and the decorative genius of the Sienese than this pavement with its two-dimensional quality and its dependence on line and design. Nothing, further, could be more typical of a society in which close relationships existed between artists and craftsmen. The pavement was actually created by the artist first making his design on paper. This was then sent to specialised craftsmen who were able to translate the artists' designs into marble. Only in a traditional society in which the relationships between creative artists and craftsmen remained very close could this have been done so effectively.

Such conservatism is clearly reflected in the contracts entered into by artists involved in the decoration of the cathedral. They show a consistent pattern of employment through several centuries. Like Sienese society itself, and certainly like the majority of Sienese governmental departments, the Board of Works was remarkably resistant to change. By and large, therefore, whatever alterations in the status of the artist were occurring in Europe as a whole, particularly in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these are not reflected in any difference in the treatment of artists by the Board of Works of the cathedral of Siena. All workmen, artisans, craftsmen, and those whom today, we would probably think of as creative artists, tended to get the same treatment. At all stages of their work they were subject to the strictest control, both in the design and in the execution of their work. 'In order to avoid subsequent disagreement',[16] and to prevent fraud, they were first requested to submit a design or an example of their work to the supervisory committee. If this was accepted, it was then normally registered with a notary. The progress of the work was then regularly monitored by the Board of Works. When it was completed,

* Subsequently, of course, it has been constantly changed, altered, repaved, repaired and restored.

payment was normally by valuation; a completed piece would have its value assessed by two men, one a nominee of the artist and one of the Master of Works. If these two could not agree, the deadlock would be resolved by a third mutually acceptable arbiter, or, after 1559, by a nominee of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. The ability of these arbiters to decide upon a sum was, to some extent, facilitated by the fact that contracts often included clauses which stated the upper limit of the possible price to be paid, and sometimes the lower limit as well. Contracts also contained clauses relating specifically to conditions of work; customarily the materials and scaffolding were provided by the Board of Works, and on most occasions the Board also provided food, wine and living accommodation as well.

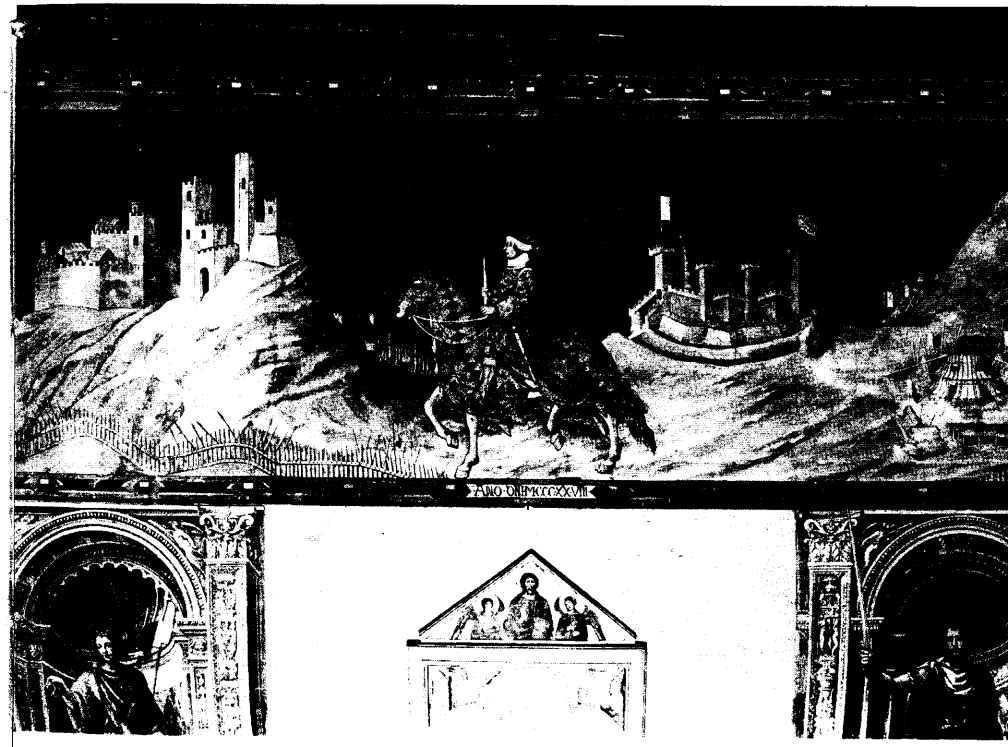
The fall of the republic and the loss of independence seems to have produced no great break in the continuity of these traditions. The Board of Works continued to be organized in the traditional manner; contracts continued to be couched in familiar terms; and artists were rewarded for their work in the way in which they had always been rewarded. Even as late as the seventeenth century the Board of Works still treated artists as if they were merely craftsmen and there is little recognition of the claims due to genius. As late as 1608 the Board included in a contract made with Ventura Salimbeni for 'certain Sienese saints'[17] the somewhat surprising clause that the artist promised:

> with divine help, to put into that work, all the skill and diligence of which he is capable.[18]

Similarly, the amount of latitude left to an artist in his designs by the Board of Works remained severely limited. The contract given to Francesco Vanni for his painting of Saint Ansano in 1593 warned the artist to stick to the design he had provided; he might improve it or enlarge it but only: 'according to the good rules of his art.'[19]

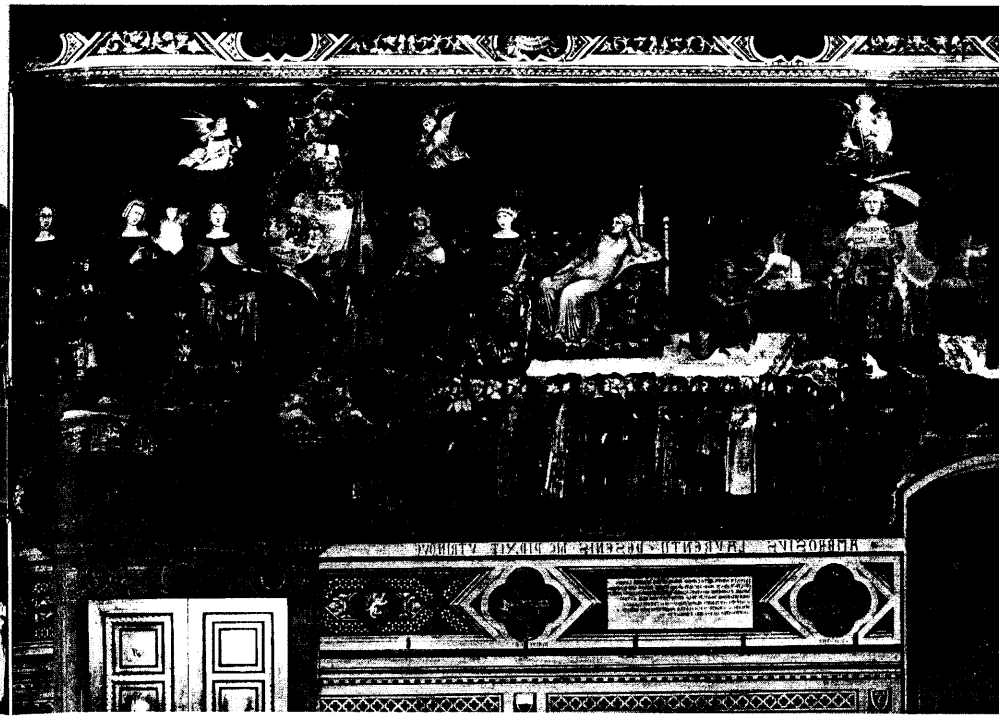
Such conservative customs may have had a restraining, though not necessarily a constraining, influence on the artists who worked for the Board of Works. They should be considered, however, in the context of the fact that they were balanced by a more liberal and open-minded private patronage. And in relation to the decoration of the cathedral, individuals and powerful families had in the end as great an impact as the Board of Works. Sassetta's lovely and artistically advanced *Madonna of the Snows* of 1430, for instance, although it has long since been removed, was originally commissioned for the cathedral by Madonna Ludovica, whose husband, Turino di Matteo, had once been

Simone Martini, *Maestà*

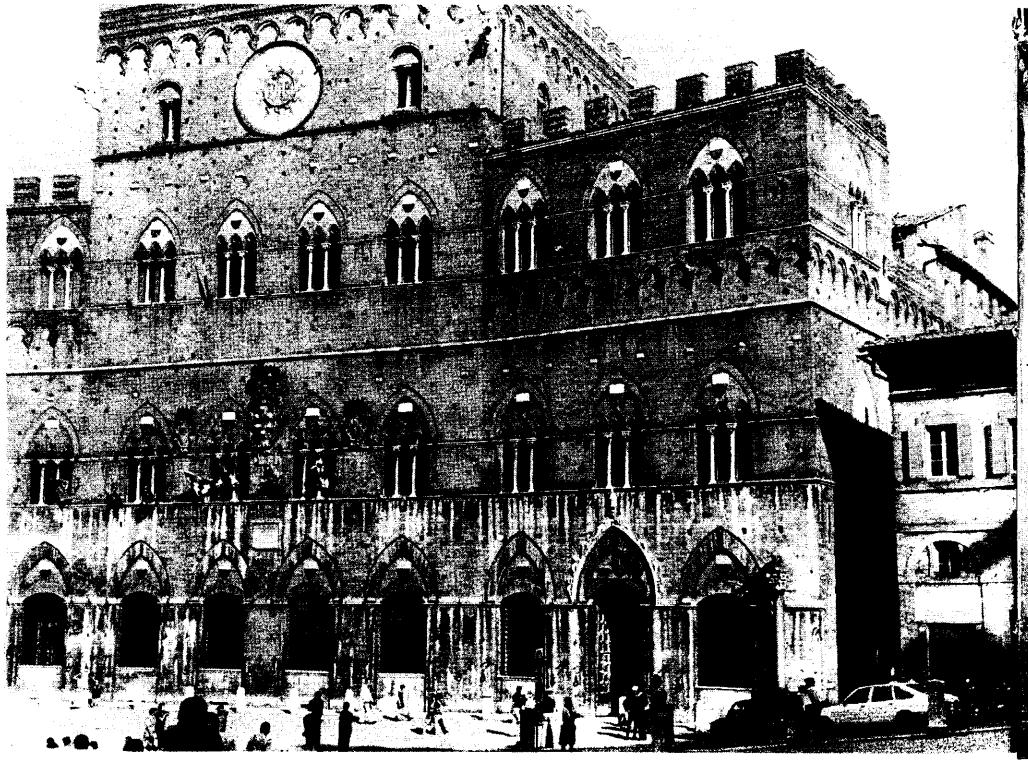


Simone Martini, *Guidoriccio da Fogliano at the Siege of Montemassi*

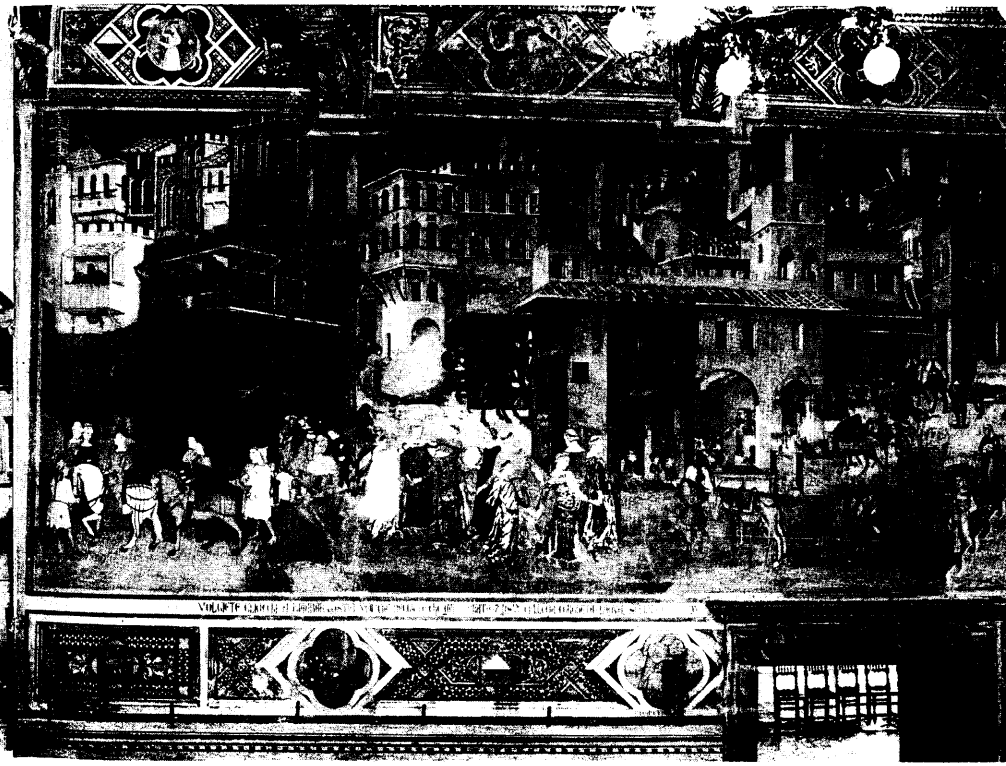
Palazzo Sansedoni and the Campo



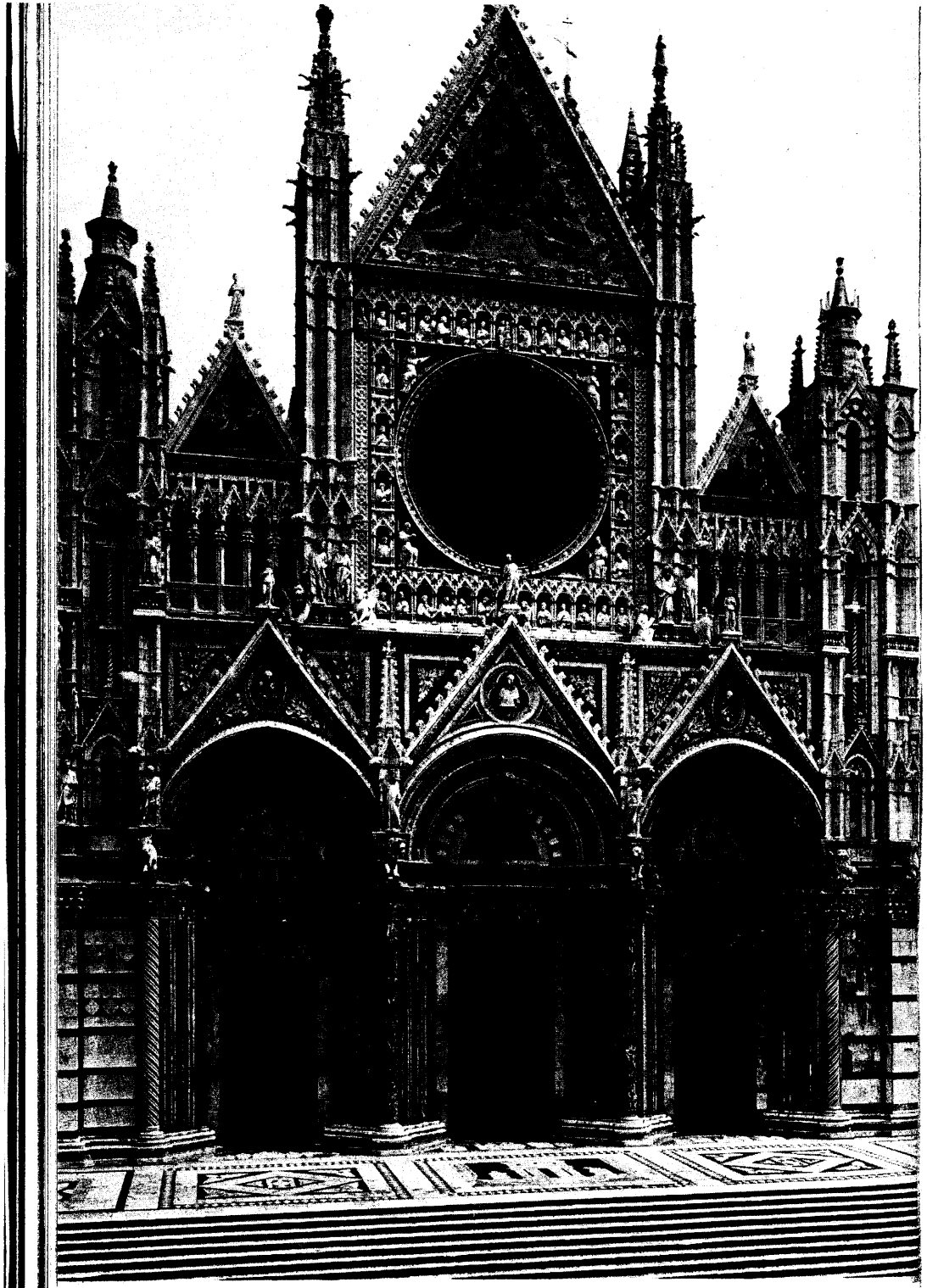
Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*



The Palazzo Pubblico



Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*



Facade of the Cathedral

a Master of the Works. Many of the major Sienese families, like the Piccolomini and the Chigi, had their own family altars in the cathedral, and they vied with each other to make these the most outstanding, the most valuable or the most up-to-date. Thus, the Piccolomini altar, commissioned by Cardinal Nani Todeschini, the nephew of Pius II, as his intended sepulchre, and begun in 1485 to a design of Andrea Fusina of Milan was among the loveliest and most innovatory works of the renaissance. So, too, was the Pinturicchio library which the Cardinal had built to house the books bequeathed to him by his uncle. It is among the greatest decorative triumphs of renaissance Europe. Of the same nature is the Capella del Voto, a riot of gold and lapus lazuli in the right transept of the cathedral, built in 1661, by Benedetto Giovannelli for the Sienese pope, Alexander VII, to enshrine the precious Madonna del Voto.

Equally significant, if slightly less obvious is the impact which the Petrucci family had upon the interior of the cathedral, for Pandolfo Petrucci used his important position within the government of Siena to impose his personal taste upon it. During Petrucci's ascendancy every artistic decision concerning the cathedral was taken in his presence. He was a member of every important artistic committee, contracts were drawn up in his palace, and payment for works completed was made 'as it shall appear suitable to the Magnificent Pandolfo Petrucci'.[20] It was Pandolfo who, in 1506, moved the high altar from under the cupola to its present position. It was Pandolfo's decision—one showing a remarkable disregard for Sienese tradition and sentiment—to remove the Duccio *Maestà* to a side-aisle and to replace it with Vecchietta's Tabernacle which was moved from its original position in the church of Santa Maria della Scala. Thus the whole atmosphere of the present cathedral derives to a large extent from the artistic tastes of the Petrucci family.

The impact of the cathedral of Siena, like that of all great cathedrals, derives from a fusion of an intense spirituality and a magnificent and imaginative artistry. In the case of Siena both elements in turn represent a combination of the corporate and the individual, of the public and the semi-private. The sense in which this is particularly true of the cathedral's aesthetic beauty should already be clear. Whereas its basic formal structure is the inspired result of a corporate and communal patronage and thus expresses a corporate ideal, the furnishing and the embellishing of the cathedral often reflect private and personal tastes. If we except the important work done on the interior of the cathedral

in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—when the side-altars were modified and systematized, the valuable old Sienese paintings were removed and replaced by paintings by the best contemporary artists, and the two panels of the *Maestà* were separated and placed, one in the chapel of the Sacrament and one in the chapel of San Ansano—what we are left with is a building in its essence Gothic, combined with an interior decor whose style and taste are largely of the renaissance. Uniting in this way magnificent monuments of the major and most distinguished periods in the city's cultural history, the cathedral of Siena is a splendid treasury of the city's artistic and creative life. As such it remains an object of intense and continuing fascination for all visitors to Siena. Even in the eighteenth century, when it seemed so clearly to offend against the established canons of taste of the day, all travellers made the cathedral at least one obligatory visit:

> under the impression that, enclosed within it, is everything which this city has which is either beautiful or noteworthy.[21]

5

The Campo

Un giorno ancho a me toccherà
Lascia' il fagotto e anda' di là. . .
Un ci venì a trovammi
Cercami in Piazza
Mi ci troverai.

Ferdinando Giannelli

WHERE THE three hills of Siena converge, at the very heart of the city, there opens out that famous, semi-circular space which is known as the Campo. Eventually any Sienese street will bring you to this natural meeting-place, where, in front of restaurants, bars and souvenir shops, the brick pavement slopes down to the Palazzo Pubblico. The open space is crossed and recrossed by children on bicycles, by wandering tourists, or by purposeful Sienese. The Fonte Gaia, one of the most-photographed works of art in Italy, is a natural rendezvous, and one has the impression that, if one were to wait here long enough, all the world would eventually pass by. Nor would such a wait be tedious, for meanwhile the eye could rest on one of the most rewarding complexes of buildings and space ever created, whose humane dimension makes them instantly comprehensible and enjoyable. There is a familiarity about this place and, entering suddenly from one of the dark passage-ways which feed into it, one's breath is taken away, not by a sudden sense of sublime beauty, nor by wonder at a display of wealth and power, but because entering the Campo of Siena is like coming home.

What Gigli wrote remains as true today as in 1722:

> our *piazza* has been created with so magnificent and so beautiful a symmetry, that anyone, at the first glance can tell whether the person he seeks is there.[1]

The Campo is one of the most successful uses of space in any city, with an articulation which is unique. Both an autonomous and a total work of art, every element is essential to the whole, and no one part has any

artistic value without the rest. It is a perfect example of urbanisation, created at a time when shape and proportion were determined neither by a surviving classical model—it was created too late for that—nor by the rationalizing, linear demands of renaissance architecture which it was early enough to escape. It was rather an intuitive, intentional adaptation to the needs of the medieval town. Reflecting the corporate organization of Siena, the Campo was the deliberately designed centre of the secular and administrative life of the city, distinct from, but always related to, its religious heart which lay in the area around the cathedral.

The Campo has always inspired admiration, and frequent attempts to explain its significance have been made by means of metaphor, symbol or simile. Montaigne, for instance, described it, quite erroneously, as a circle, because the circle was a symbol of perfection. For much the same reason, romantic writers have always emphasized the Campo's irregularity, at the expense of its symmetry, and concentrated upon its shell-like qualities. Others have likened it not to a shell but to a fan. Commonly it has been compared to a theatre, 'especially constructed for great festivals and popular feasts'.[2] It was Siena's sixteenth-century historian, Orlando Malavolti, who first described the Campo in these terms, and, after the introduction of the *palio alla tonda* in 1627, it became even easier to see it as a 'theatre of life' with the surrounding windows and their balconies serving as seats for spectators. Certainly, seen from the windows of the Archivio di Stato in Palazzo Piccolomini d'Aragona, it does look like a vast amphitheatre, with the houses above it climbing the slopes to the cathedral, playing the role of spectators; from this perspective too, one has the sense of mass and volume, characteristic of a Roman theatre, but normally completely lacking in Sienese architecture.

Perhaps the best metaphor for the Campo, however, is the popular Sienese one, which sees it as the cloak of the *Madonna della Misericordia*, a favoured subject of Sienese painting and a common theme in Sienese writing. In this image as Sermini explains, the Virgin appears in a protective role: 'And covers all your city with her holy mantle.'[3]

Paintings often show Siena's citizens huddled together for protection under this mantle; an early example is seen in the *Madonna* of Niccolò da Siena in the Pinacoteca. Later good examples are those by Bartolo di Fredi at Pienza, in which the Virgin's cloak is held up by angels, that of Giovanni di Paolo on the cover of the Liber Vitale of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala of 1458, and the same artist's delicate

altarpiece in Santa Maria dei Servi. Among the finest of Vecchietta's works is his *Madonna della Misericordia* for the Palazzo Pubblico and in 1481 the subject was enchantingly treated by Benvenuto di Giovanni for Palazzo Salimbeni. Other examples of this same subject are to be found among the *tavolette*; in one of 1451, the Virgin hovers to the left of the picture, her mantle spread over Siena, in another of 1467, attributed to Francesco di Giorgio, the Virgin protects Siena from an earthquake, and a third was painted by Neroccio di Landi in 1480. The *Madonna della Misericordia* refers, of course, to the battle of Montaperti, when on the night before the battle the Florentine sentries:

> beheld as it were a mantle most white, which covered all the camp and city of the Sienese . . . and there were those who said it seemed to be the mantle of Our Mother, the Virgin Mary, the guardian and defender of the people of Siena.[4]

Again, at the battle of Camollia in 1526, as it is commemorated in the painting in San Martino by Giovanni di Lorenzo Cini, a similar cloud spread over the city and its defenders and was taken to represent the cloak of the Madonna. If the form of the Campo does derive from such myths and images and does indeed represent the Virgin's cloak, then all that occurs there can be seen as, in a most literal sense, taking place beneath her protection. The Campo then becomes an essentially sacred place.

Circle, shell, fan, cloak or mantel—such varied metaphors illuminate the perspectives of those who use them more than they define the reality of the Campo. But their very variety suggests the difficulty of achieving an accurate definition. Perhaps history alone provides a solution. The Campo is, after all, an historical creation, consciously shaped in a process by which the communal authorities responded to the needs of the Sienese people. Hence, fully to understand its meaning, we must look to the historical circumstances which engendered it and which, over the centuries, continued to shape it.

A study of these circumstances immediately reveals that the Campo, although preconceived, was not in a strict sense designed, and suggests that in this fact lies its dynamic secret. It was, in fact, created by a variety of forces; by, for instance, the topography of the city, by the problem of its water-supply, and by its traffic flow. The Campo is situated just outside the most ancient area of settlement in the Castelvecchio; in the early middle ages, it was clearly a central point where the three main streets leading from the three *nuclei* of the commune

converged. This already gave the area a certain importance, underlined when the commune itself began both to build new roads, also converging on this point, and, towards the end of the twelfth century, to purchase land and property in the same area.

Another powerful force in the shaping of the Campo was the fact that it began to fulfil certain social functions which were very important to the city. From the beginning, for instance, it was a fortunately neutral territory where the contentious city might meet, a public area to which all might belong. It was large enough to accommodate the whole body of citizens, but remained an area where no one individual family or faction could predominate. It lay at the confluence of all three *terzi* but belonged to none of them, just as today it belongs to none of the Sienese *contrade*. For this reason, in normal times, it was an area in which arms and weapons were not used except in play and where all violence was ritualized. To enforce this point, draconian measures were sometimes resorted to. So in 1554, during the siege of the city, a certain Antonio Rieti, who had drawn his sword on a shopkeeper in the Campo, was hanged from a window of the Palazzo Pubblico by order of the French commander, Piero Strozzi.

The Campo was thus a physical expression of the ideal of good government, of that substitution, sought by the commune, of love for the city, in place of loyalty to faction, clan, family, *terzo* or *contrada*. It was here that ordinances were proclaimed, here that government could be seen to reside, here that the public gallows was erected, and here that civic celebrations and festivities took place. Such a celebration occurred, for instance, in 1451 during the visit of Frederick III and Eleanor of Portugal, when a vast wooden stage was erected in front of the Palazzo Pubblico and a great ball was staged for the delight of the Emperor and his new bride:

> and the virtuous and beautiful lady, Battista Berti, wife of Achille Petrucci, gave a Latin oration, with rare elegance and wit, for which she was embraced by the Emperor and created a countess, and, when asked what further grace would most please her, asked to be exempted from the laws which forbade the wearing of brocade and jewels.[5]

Similar celebrations were held in 1465 for the visit of the Duchess of Calabria when a ball was held in the Campo and:

> a great golden wolf was built from which there issued a band of twelve persons who were well and richly arrayed, and one was dressed as a nun, and they danced to a song whose words were: *I don't want to be a nun any more*.... A great feast was set out of marzipan and a quantity of other sweetmeats, and every kind of fruit that was in season . . . and the said celebrations cost the commune of Siena twenty-four thousand florins. . . .[6]

More than two centuries later the Campo was to see another, remarkably similar celebration, when the Sienese welcomed their new governess, Princess Violante of Bavaria, on the evening of 12 April 1717. The Campo was illuminated with a host of blazing torches and decorated by fifty coats-of-arms of the house of Bavaria:

> each surrounded by six great illuminated globes, to represent the arms of the ruling house of Tuscany: all of which but made a crown for another coat-of-arms, placed upon two columns and supported by two figures of Fame, placed in front of the Palazzo Pubblico, on which were combined the arms of the royal family of Tuscany and that of the Electoral family of Bavaria. The decorations were continued with countless torches and lamps, placed in all the windows which look onto the Campo, and the façade of the Palazzo Pubblico was most majestically illuminated, so that the great theatre had the most wonderful appearance.[7]

The Campo was also a natural theatre for such events as the sermons in 1427 of San Bernardino, who was forced to preach in the open because no church in Siena was large enough to hold all those who wanted to hear. A faithful visual record of these dawn sermons is to be found in the paintings of Neroccio di Lando and Sano di Pietro. They show much of the appearance of the Campo and of the Palazzo Pubblico at the beginning of the fifteenth century; they also show how, for the occasion, an altar was set up between the two windows of the Palazzo, with, in front of it, a pulpit. To the left of the pulpit, a platform was erected for the communal officials, while in the Campo below were gathered the women to the right, the men to the left, divided by a curtain so that their attention should not be diverted by members of the opposite sex. Naturally, therefore, the Campo was also the centre for the celebrations relating to the canonization of San Bernardino in 1450 when:

> celebrations occurred throughout Siena, each man giving food and drink to anyone who wanted it, and the Bishop of Siena sang mass in the Campo.[8]

It was in the Campo, likewise, that the Sienese were to be found at play as a community, in that series of ritual games which then served and still serve as a binding-force uniting the city against the outsider. The recreational value of the Campo was recognized by the commune as early as the first years of the fourteenth century, when a decree ordered the shopkeepers to clear away the mountains of rubbish which were so fetid and unpleasant that they prevented the citizens from taking their ease in the Campo after dinner in the cool of the evening.

By a natural process, therefore, every major event in the life of Siena came to centre on the Campo. Despite its ideal existence as a centre of civic unity and harmony, it was no doubt inevitable that the open space it provided should also make it the frequent scene of riots, civil strife and factional battles. Often it also witnessed more pathetic and distressing events in Siena's history, such as those which followed the earthquake of 1320, when the inhabitants of the city fled to the Campo where they believed they would surely find a safe refuge.

More mundanely, for centuries the Campo was also the major market-place of Siena and, as such, the fulcrum of its economic life. In earlier centuries, the centre of the Campo was filled each morning by stalls, selling such goods as grain, fruit, vegetables, fish, which were kept in basins at the foot of the Fonte Gaia, wood and, until 1346, when the animal market was moved to Fontebranda, all kinds of livestock. As, over the centuries, more specialized markets developed in other parts of Siena the Campo gradually lost its primary importance as an economic centre; but it was still busy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, even today, some traces of the old market remain in a few morning fruit and vegetable stalls.

Until the nineteenth century, the Campo also played another important role, as the place where the commune literally nourished its people, for it was here, in time of famine, that the commune distributed grain to the poor and starving. So common was the mental association between the Campo and grain distribution that we have the story of the Marquess Zondadori in 1799 during the terrible famine:

> riding from Salicotto, and being told by certain women that rather than diverting himself, he would do better to send grain into the Campo.[9]

The Campo, therefore, fulfilled many important roles in city life. We have seen how in the earlier middle ages it already served as a central meeting-place, at the natural confluence of the major thoroughfares of Siena, and acted as an urban market. Thus, by around 1200, it was already a clearly-defined area, but one still unrefined or polished, a steep and open slope at the end of a valley down which water ran from the heights of the old city above it, yet already crossed by important thoroughfares and divided by a wall, built at communal expense in 1194 to prevent soil erosion on the site subsequently occupied by the Palazzo Pubblico. The Campo's importance in public life by this date is suggested by the existence of special officials appointed to look after it and to supervise the many activities which already occurred there.

By the end of the thirteenth century the Campo's importance as a public centre had been considerably enhanced in that it was virtually the only remaining open space of any size left in Siena. There was, therefore, a natural pressure towards the preservation and systematization of the Campo and, as with so much else in Siena, it was the Nine who took up the challenge to turn this space into a veritable work of art. It was they who developed it into the definitive form it retains today. From 1293 onwards they were buying up property in the vicinity, and in 1297 they issued the famous decree which said that, in order to create an harmonious whole which might reflect the harmony of civic society, the windows of all buildings facing onto the Campo should be adorned with small columns and devoid of all balconies. The Nine also emphasized the significance of the Campo by further encouraging the process by which all the streets of the city tended to converge on it. In this area the most spectacular intervention of the Nine was that of 1299 when they constructed a new road which gave direct access to the Campo from the Terzo di Camollia. The completion of this part of their work came between 1297 and 1349 with the actual paving of the Campo in the nine compartments which still recall Siena's great city-makers. For this the commune contributed two-thirds of the cost; the remainder was paid by the owners of property adjoining the Campo.

Despite their insistence on the principle of uniformity in decoration in palaces facing on to the Campo, the Nine never tried to impose a total uniformity of appearance on these buildings and they therefore displayed a natural irregularity and rhythm, fully consonant with the traditions of Sienese culture. During the renaissance, however, when new ideas about the importance of symmetry in urban design began to make their way to Siena from Florence and Rome, various leading Sienese citizens, including Pandolfo Petrucci, canvassed the idea of adding a series of porticoes to the fronts of the palaces, in order to give

the Campo a greater unity, a project defeated only by a lack of available funds. The idea was revived again in the eighteenth century but, fortunately, again proved too expensive. All that was achieved was the imposition of a degree of symmetry on the palaces, consonant with contemporary principles of order. What such innovators failed to realize, the medieval Sienese knew full well, which is that the uniformity of Siena, whether in its parts, as in the Campo, or as a whole, is created by colour and by material; by the brownish-red—the famous Burnt Siena—of its bricks and not by any formal stylistic unity.

This colour and its dominance in the Sienese townscape were also determined, in so far as it is possible for such things to be determined, by the decision of the Nine to erect their important buildings and to pave the Campo in brick and not in stone. Before the time of the Nine, stone had been extensively used throughout Siena, but the Nine, as we might suspect from the Lorenzetti frescoes, which show only brick houses, consciously rejected stone as a building material. Brick production in the fourteenth century was clearly a communal concern, for bricks in vast quantities were needed for rebuilding the city-walls. Bricks were also cheaper, for the materials used in their production were to be found near at hand in the *contado*. The Nine, therefore, not only made extensive use of brick in communal buildings, but also in 1309 ordered that brick should be used in all new houses to be built in Siena. Thus, in the end, the colour of Siena would become determined by the colour of the Campo.

The aim of the Nine throughout had been to make the Campo the centre of civic life, and few aims have ever been so triumphantly realised. It immediately became a great source of civic pride, vividly expressed by a contemporary chronicler who recorded that in 1347:

> . . . the Campo of Siena was finally completed. It is held to be one of the most beautiful of all squares which can be seen not only in Italy but in the whole of Christendom, both for the loveliness of the fountain and for the beauty of the buildings which surround it.

A similar sense of the beauty and the special quality of the Campo was expressed in a petition to the Council of the Popolo of 9 April 1398 which recorded that:

> . . . in every well-governed city, provision is made for the embellishment and the improvement of that city, and you have in this Campo of yours . . . the most beautiful square that can anywhere be found. . . .[10]

From the beginning the Campo clearly belonged to the people. Yet its true meaning lies in the fact that, within it, this popular element is balanced by the other important forces which have gone to shape Sienese urban life. The arc of the Campo is defined by a series of palaces which illustrate the importance of noble and mercantile families in Siena,* the religious element is represented by the chapel where mass was said daily—the shopkeepers on the Campo participating from their doorways—while the natural completion of the whole complex is the Palazzo Pubblico, representing the official forces of Justice and Good Government.

The Palazzo Pubblico, as the nine merlons, or battlements, of its central tower remind us, was also the work of the Nine. Originally the commune of Siena, like other Italian communes, lacked a permanent location where its authority could be seen to reside. Meetings of the city's ruling bodies had to take place in a church, or, from the late twelfth century, in rented private residences. For obvious reasons, such a situation was unsatisfactory and one of the first decisions taken by the Nine, after their seizure of power, was to provide a new and independent seat of government in the Campo where the Dogana del Sale—the communal salt-store—and the mint already stood.

In 1282 a commission of twelve men, equally divided among the *Terzi*, was nominated to plan the whole enterprise, and two years later, according to Agnolo di Tura, the Podestà Guido da Romagna took up residence in the Dogana del Sale; 'on the Campo of the commune, and he was the first Podestà to reside there'.[11] In 1288 the commune purchased some adjoining houses, in order to provide a site for the communal palace, but a long and costly process lay ahead, so costly, indeed, that in May 1297 the General Council agreed to spend £2,000 every six months on the project. The slopes which fall so sharply below the Campo had first to be built up with enormous earthworks and foundation walls. Some idea of the scale of the undertaking can still be gathered by climbing up to the Loggia of the Palazzo Pubblico, which was completed in 1304, and looking down at where the building slopes down to the valley below it. There were continual difficulties over the

* Reading around the Campo from the right-hand side of the palace, these are: Palazzo Petroni, Palazzo Piccolomini Salamoneschi, Palazzo Piccolomini d'Aragona, Palazzo Ragnoni, Palazzo Mexolombardi-Rinaldini, Palazzo Tornaipuglia Sansedoni, Palazzo Vincenti, Palazzo Piccolomini, Palazzo Rimbotti, the Mercanzia, Palazzo Saracini, Palazzo Scotti, Palazzo Accarigi, Palazzo Alessi, Palazzo Mattasala Lambertini.

supply of materials for such a massive enterprise. The chroniclers record in 1307 that:

> in order to build the palace . . . the Sienese purchased the tower of the Visdomini. . . . And the said tower cost the commune £700 to destroy it and to recover the stones and the bricks.[12]

Not surprisingly, therefore, costs continued to mount; between 1307 and 1310, payments of at least £10,000 were made out of the Biccherna towards the project, and, in addition, in the years of maximum effort, 1308–9, there were further extraordinary payments of £6,400. But, despite such difficulties, by 1310 the original nucleus of the palace was already complete.

At the ground level, a stone façade was pierced by four arches which gave access to the interior. This was surmounted by a brick building, decorated with four three-mullioned windows—the characteristic Sienese *trifore*—which corresponded to the arches on the floor below. The ground floor was occupied by the Biccherna, the upper floor by the General Council. The whole edifice was crowned with a row of merlons. But, almost immediately, the building was found to be inadequate and a third floor with five *trifore* was added, subsequently reduced to four in order to impose stylistic symmetry on the building. By 1310 the sidewings had been completed, but even so construction work continued until 1342. At this date the building had taken its first definitive shape with a central body at that time two floors higher than the wings. This form was a symbolic embodiment of the nature of the commune, for the palace represented the balance and relationship between Justice and Good Government; Justice in the shape of the *podestà* occupied one wing of the palace, Good Government in the shape of the Nine, the other; while, in the centre, the balance between them was kept by the city's financial office, the Biccherna, and the commune's most representative institution, the General Council.

The story of the Palazzo Pubblico does not, of course, end here, for through succeeding centuries it was to grow and develop, to be decorated and redecorated both within and without, in response to changing situations within Siena. This we can perceive by examining the façade, a task which can be performed perfectly adequately from a bar on the opposite side of the Campo. The communal era is recalled by the *balzana* in a repetitive motif above every door and window. But, equally prominent now, are the arrogantly placed arms of the Medici and their grand-ducal crown erected in 1560 which recall the extinction

of Siena as an independent republic. More obvious than even this aggressive secular symbol, and replacing the arms of the Visconti, which were once placed there, is the mystical monogram of Jesus, which appears so prominently in late medieval illustrations of the Campo and which has, reputedly, saved Siena from disaster on many occasions. Commissioned in 1425 from Master Battista di Niccolò of Padua, at a price of £440, and bronzed by Turino di Sano and his son, Giovanni, for 40 florins, it recalls Siena's civic piety, as well as the dramatic impact which San Bernardino had on the city.

These themes are all reflected and elaborated upon inside the building, which is a treasure-house of Sienese art. For, from the beginning, the Palazzo was conceived of as an aesthetic object, as a work of art, expressing the aspirations of the Sienese people. Monumental wall-paintings were an integral part of its design, beginning with Simone Martini's *Maestà*, painted in 1315 for the great council hall, in which Sienese government and the rule of law are celebrated, and the Virgin is made an active participant in civic life. Elsewhere in the Palazzo Pubblico the same themes are alluded to; in the Lorenzetti *Allegory*, in the allegories of Taddeo di Bartolo in the antechapel, and in those of Beccafumi on the ceiling of the Sala del Concistoro.

Frescoes also celebrate Siena's saints and her civic religious life; apart from the patron saints of the city in the *Maestà*, the Sala del Mappamondo has portrayals of San Bernardino by Sano di Pietro, of St. Catherine by Vecchietta, of Saints Ansano and Victor by Sodoma, and of the Blessed Bernardo Tolomei. Another group of frescoes celebrates military victories: again in the Sala del Mappamondo, Martini's breathtaking *Guidoriccio da Fogliano at the Siege of Montemassi* and the two very inferior monochrome frescoes, representing the *Victory of the Sienese over the Company of the Capello at Torrita* in 1363, and the *Battle of Poggio Imperiale* between the Florentines and the Duke of Calabria in 1479.

Another overall theme of the frescoes of the Sala del Mappamondo is that of the obligations of the governed to the governing. The *Maestà* certainly expounds the ideals upon which good government should be based, but we should remember that it was also commissioned in the context of a struggle between the Nine and the noble clans of the city. Thus the *Maestà* carries an implied warning about the dangers of faction and the determination of the commune to assert the rule of law in the face of noble lawlessness. And this, of course, was also a theme of the *Guidoriccio* and the original frieze of which it once formed

a part, showing other noble castles conquered by the commune, beginning with Giancaro in 1314 and continued with Martini's now-obliterated Arcidosso and Castel del Piano. To contemporaries, Guidoriccio therefore appeared as the symbol of law and authority and the upholder of communal rights against lawlessness.

The most important work of art in the whole Palazzo, however, lies in the room adjoining the Sala del Mappamondo and this is Ambrogio Lorenzetti's famous *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*. In these frescoes we find a distillation of Augustinian and Thomist thought and an indication of the achievements of medieval science, combined with a statement about the value of human experience in this world, expressed through popular images and a vigorous vernacular art. For Ambrogio Lorenzetti's greatest achievement as an artist was his ability to realize universal themes neither through the medium of a somewhat tired Byzantine style, such as had been employed by his immediate predecessors, nor through that of a somewhat derivative International Gothic, such as Simone Martini, who was his contemporary, used. Lorenzetti employed instead a robust and genuinely Sienese vocabulary. This means, for example, that his work is distinguished by its use of telling naturalistic detail. In the *Presentation* at Assisi, for instance, his Christ-child is the first illustration of its subject in which the baby is portrayed as clearly under a year old. Similarly, in his famous *Madonna Lactans* in the Seminary of San Francesco in Siena, it is a real baby we see, sucking its finger and curling up its toes. And, at the very centre of *Good and Bad Government* the traditional image of the she-wolf and the twins is saved from being a dull stereotype by the robustness of the twins and the original touch of the mother-wolf turning to caress her foundlings with her tongue.

Such vigorous naturalism means that the Lorenzetti frescoes are immediately readable at the literal level. If we look at that section of the frescoes which represents the effects of Good Government, we see that beneath the hovering image of Security—incidentally one of the first, if not one of the more successful, attempts in Christian art to portray a nude female—city-life goes on within the protective circuit of Siena's walls. We understand the picture as it was understood and described by San Bernardino in the fifteenth century:

> I see merchants buying and selling, I see dancing, the houses being repaired, the workers busy in the vineyards or sowing the fields, whilst on horseback others ride down to swim in the rivers; maidens

> I see going to a wedding, and great flocks of sheep and many another peaceful sight. Besides which I see a man hanging from the gallows, hung there in the cause of justice. And for the sake of all these things men live in peace and harmony with one another. . . .[13]

Much of the attraction of these frescoes has always lain in their recognizably human qualities and we should certainly enjoy them at this popular and literal level. Nor is there any reason why we should not also enjoy them as outstanding examples of Sienese *Trecento* painting. But to understand their significance in the urban life of Siena we must go further and look at the allegorical meanings which underlie them.

To understand the *Allegory of Good and Bad Government* as allegory we also need to know something of the context out of which the frescoes emerged. They were probably painted between 1338 and 1340, to a commission of the Nine. They were designed to decorate the very heart of that regime, the council chamber of the Nine, a room in the Palazzo Pubblico which, since at least the fifteenth century, has taken its name from the supposed subject-matter of the paintings and is called the Sala della Pace.

The primary function of the frescoes at the time they were painted was a decorative and a celebratory one. They were to add to the glories of Siena which were being created by the beneficent rule of the Nine. They fell, in fact, within the terms of a document of 1316 which refers to murals to be executed within the Palazzo Pubblico and explains that the interior:

> should please the eye, bring joy to the heart and satisfy every one's senses; (it is) to the glory of the whole community that the leaders and rulers of the commune should enjoy surroundings which are fine, beautiful and honourable.[14]

The frescoes were also intended to be didactic for this was the primary object of all medieval painting and, indeed, its major justification as the Sienese painters themselves explained in the preamble of their guild statues: they are 'by the grace of God, expositors of sacred writ to the ignorant who know not how to read'.[15]

If the Lorenzetti frescoes are didactic then we need to know to whom their teaching was directed. The answer must be that they were designed for the eyes of the ruling élite of the city, for few, outside of that charmed group, ever penetrated to the innermost rooms of the Palazzo Pubblico. And it is clearly the Nine who are addressed by the

words which appear above the head of Justice in the fresco: 'Love Justice, you who rule the earth.' Thus, these frescoes should be seen as a fourteenth-century statement about the obligations of the governor to the governed, rather than about the obligations of the governed to the governing, a subject which, as we have seen, is dealt with very effectively in the adjoining Sala del Mappamondo.

The frescoes occupy three walls of this large rectangular council chamber in which the single, and rather inadequate, source of light is a window which faces south. The short wall opposite this window is a natural point of departure for the reading of Lorenzetti's allegory. On the left, as we should expect in any Sienese statement about the relationship of governor with governed, Justice is prominently painted. This, like the other figures, was to become an important prototype in Sienese art; numerous variations were to appear in succeeding centuries. Signifying that form of justice which gives to each citizen what the public good demands, Lorenzetti's interpretation is strictly Aristotelian, within the mainstream of medieval learning, but the emphasis which is placed upon such justice is particularly and specifically Sienese. It was a theme which had already been predominant in Martini's *Maestà* and one which was to become increasingly insistent in Sienese culture. The Sienese, well aware that Augustine, in *The City of God*, had taught that no regime could survive which was not founded in Justice, saw the pursuit of such justice as the first end of all civil government. Since Justice alone could uphold the *vita civile* the fair administration of justice was a primary justification of any regime. By a natural extension, the existence of injustice came to be seen as justification of rebellion and *prima facie* evidence that a regime was tyrannical. It is, therefore, a curiously ironical footnote to these frescoes that, as we have seen, the major contributory factor leading to the overthrow of the Nine in 1355 was the fact that they could no longer guarantee a fair administration of justice in Siena.

An inscription in the *cartello* in the border below spells out the message for those who cannot read the visual image:

> Wherever this holy virtue—Justice—rules, she leads many souls to unity, and these, so united, make up the Common Good.

And on the east wall this theme receives further elaboration:

> Turn your eyes, you who rule, to look carefully at Justice, who, for her glory, is presented and crowned here. She always gives each man his rightful due. See how much good comes from her and how sweet life is and full of peace in the city where this virtue is to be seen, which is more resplendent than any other. She guards and defends those who honour her; and she sustains them. From her light comes the reward of those who are good and she gives to the evil their deserved punishment.

Here, then, as he says, Lorenzetti shows Justice enthroned. But, in accordance with strict Thomist thought, Divine Wisdom, on the higher level of the theological virtues, hovers above Justice, holding a balance, the scales of which are kept in equilibrium by Reason. Justice looks upwards towards Divine Wisdom, thus illustrating the relationship between divine, natural, and human law, for true justice is always inspired by reason. On the left, one angel metes out distributive justice, on the right, another commutative justice. Cords running from the scales, come together in the hands of Concord, enthroned below. This is as it should be, for, next to justice, concord was seen as the binding-force in Sienese society, and the absence of concord, expressed through factionalism, the major cause of tyranny.

Concord carries a heavy carpenter's plane which symbolizes the equality of citizens, since, in a well-regulated society, no one individual should stand above others, all citizens standing on the same level as if that society had been literally planed down. Concord passes the cord on to a group of twenty-four Sienese citizens. The presence of this twenty-four alerts us to an identification between Siena the ideal city and the City of God as portrayed in the book of *Revelation*. The numerical composition of Lorenzetti's fresco follows exactly the numerical composition of St. John the Divine's city, the twenty-four Sienese citizens represent the twenty-four elders about the throne, Justice the 'one sat on the throne';[16] the seven virtues to the right of the picture the 'seven lamps burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God';[17] and the four figures—Faith, Hope, Charity and Divine Wisdom—who hover at the top of the picture, the four beasts, 'in the midst of the throne and around the throne'.[18] Thus Lorenzetti clearly identifies the City of God and the city of Siena through the apocalyptic vision of the New Testament.

The twenty-four elders or Sienese citizens carry the cord they have received from Concord in procession to *Ben Commun*—the Common Good—in whose right hand the cord ends. The *Ben Commun* while a universalized portrait of the common good, is also a particular image

of the commune of Siena. This we know because the figure is robed in black and white, Siena's traditional colours, his shield is the official shield of Siena, and, at his feet, are nestled the wolf and the twins, which, as we have seen, is the most ancient of all Sienese symbols.

Common Good sits in the middle of a long bench and is flanked on either side by three virtues: Peace, Fortitude and Prudence are on his right; Magnanimity, Temperance and Justice on his left. Above Common Good hover the three theological virtues, Faith, Charity and Hope.

These allegorical figures are linked by a band of soldiers and two groups of lancers to the lower group of figures. As well as the twenty-four citizens, this includes a number of prisoners and two kneeling knights who are donating their castles to the city of Siena. The introduction of such *genre* material is a typical Lorenzetti touch. The secular figures do not merely illustrate an allegory, but form a link between it and the reality of Sienese life which thus becomes amalgamated with an ideal world. It is a device characteristic of Dante, who also shows a compelling capacity to proceed from reality to an allegorical or a symbolic meaning.

As for the interpretation of Lorenzetti's allegory, the key to this is again given in the *cartello* directly below the fresco. Justice, as we have seen, creates unity, and the united body of the citizens are the Common Good. The rulers of the state keep 'the glorious faces of the virtues' always about them, and 'for this reason taxes, levies and . . . estates are given . . . in triumph. Hence civic welfare follows, without war, and is useful, necessary and happy.'

Here is a world familiar enough in Thomist political thought. Nowhere had St. Thomas's doctrine of the supremacy of the common good over the good of each individual been so enthusiastically received as in the Italian city-state, where it had been rapidly propagated by the preaching of the friars. Its best-known expression was a tract, *De Bono Comuni*, written in about 1300 by a Dominican friar, Remigio de'Girolami, a work which it seems fairly safe to assume was known to Lorenzetti. The reasons for the success of the doctrine in Italy are illuminated by the example of the *Allegory of Good and Bad Government* for its acceptability lay in the fact that adherence to the community as a whole, at the expense of particularist interests, seemed to offer the security of civic peace and unity without recourse to despotism. No wonder that in Siena, which always showed a tendency to relapse into factional struggle, the idea should have been preached so enthusiastically and

been embodied in both Martini's *Maestà* and in *Good and Bad Government.*

Another aspect of Thomist thought sheds further light on Lorenzetti. If we look at the *Allegory of Good Government* as a whole, four figures stand out, either because of their size, or position, or because of their pose, as in the case of the classically-draped Peace. These figures are: Justice, the Common Good, Concord and Peace. In the political philosophy of St. Thomas justice and the common good are always related to concord and peace. Thus peace and concord, as the most desirable effects of good government, are emphasized and provide a necessary thematic link with the east wall of the Sala della Pace on which is painted that section of the Lorenzetti frescoes normally referred to as *The Effects of Good Government.*

Here, in one of the first essays in landscape in the Western tradition of painting, Lorenzetti has depicted medieval Siena and its *contado*. The picture is naturally divided by the painted city-wall, so that the town and its *contado* form two compositional halves in the overall conception, linked by the thickly peopled commercial street, by the noble hunting-party which is just riding out through the city-gate, and by the peasants driving their donkeys into the city. It is a composition which boldly asserts the value of city-life, because it provides a secure, ordered and busy existence.

In the vernacular tradition which Lorenzetti was utilizing here, a city's walls were an object of pride to its citizens, because they defined the community—the *civitas*—through which men found freedom and were relieved from the dangers concomitant with life in the open country. The wall symbolised all that was good in the city, detaching it from the wild and lawless countryside and converting it into a region of order and justice. For this reason, Giotto's allegories in the Arena chapel at Padua show Justice residing within the city and Injustice lurking outside the gate. Presumably for the same reason, the beggar in Lorenzetti's frescoes is located outside the city-wall.

Lorenzetti conveys a sense of the value of urban life even more subtly, by showing the city teeming with life, a beneficent vitality which is extended into the countryside where, under the protection of the city-wall, peasants are seen tilling the land and where there are many settlements. The further one's eye wanders from Siena, however, the more empty the countryside becomes, and fortified castles take the place of villages and farms, until, at the far right edge of the fresco, Siena's newly-acquired port at Talamone is identified by an inscription.

For those who have failed to take his point from the extended visual image, Lorenzetti provides a key in the scroll, held by the presiding figure of Security:

> Let every man go without fear, and let every man sow for as long as this lady rules, for she has taken power from all the guilty.

What we see depicted on the east wall of the Sala della Pace is in fact a statement that the city is the only possible complete form of human existence; that without cities there can be no civilization. The whole construction of the fresco depends on this assumption; the centre of the painting, where the dancing-girls celebrate civic life, is the point from which all the architectural diminution runs, and the point from which all the light flows both in the city and in the *contado*. Thus the fresco must be read outwards from this central point.

This visual impression is confirmed by the detailed allegory of this section of the frescoes, an allegory which is an example of medieval thought at its finest and most subtle. The figures we see engaged in various pursuits have not been randomly selected but are specifically designed to illustrate the mechanical arts, those skills and occupations, which, in the middle ages, were held to be necessary for the maintenance of life and which in many cases could only be found in the town or city. Of these arts San Bernardino was later to comment to the Sienese:

> . . . how vital to the city are the arts and the crafts and how useful it is when they are legitimately exercised. . . . This is our foundation, and we shall see that it is impossible to live well, if the arts and crafts are not properly exercised. . . .[19]

Lanificium, the art of procuring and weaving material, and without which, according to Duns Scotus, no community could survive, includes also the manufacture of all clothing, sails, ropes and nets. Lorenzetti represents *Lanificium* by the tailor at his bench, by the dyers and wool-sorters under the arch and by the cobblers at work in their shop. *Armatura*, the art of metal working, is represented by the goldsmith's shop, but also by the five workers building a house, for *Armatura* in the medieval *schema* also embraced the subsidiary art of *Architectura*. *Navigatio* or trade was, according to many medieval theorists, among the more important of the mechanical arts, for it was trade which brought with it peace and well-being. San Bernardino claimed to have learnt from Duns Scotus that trade must be exercised for the Common Good and that without it no town or city could flourish. Trade certainly enjoys pride of place in the Lorenzetti frescoes, being represented by the buying, selling and transport of goods, while the portrayal of the harbour at Talamone represents *Navigatio* in its more restricted sense of shipping.

Agricultura as well as embracing the more obvious skills—ploughing, sowing, vine-tending, stock-farming and shepherding—also included the art of gardening, an art which Lorenzetti skilfully and amusingly indicates by his numerous well-kept pot-plants, the woman at the inn who is busy gardening, and the gardens attached to the *contado* farms. *Venatio*, the hunt, included not only game-hunting, bird-catching and angling, all of which are illustrated in the fresco, but also baking and cooking, activities which Lorenzetti represents by his inn. *Medicina* is certainly represented by the spice-seller and possibly by the lecturer or teacher. The seventh of the mechanical arts was *Theatrica*, including both dance and music, activities which all medieval commentators agreed were necessary for procuring the health and happiness of each individual. Under *Theatrica*, therefore, we place the dancing-girls in their Lucchese silks, figures whom Lorenzetti's contemporaries would have recognized as allegorical, not only because they are over-large and appear in the centre of the picture, but also because they are seen participating in an activity—street-dancing—which had been explicitly forbidden by the statutes of 1309–10. It is unlikely that Lorenzetti would have represented on the walls of a room which was, by this date, the centre of civic government, an illegal activity and have expected the viewer to accept a literal interpretation of the scene. It could scarcely, in such a case, have been a picture of *good* government.

The west wall of the council chamber is, unfortunately, in a very bad condition. At the time when he saw it, San Bernardino recorded:

> only man destroying man: the houses are not repaired but demolished and gutted by fire; no fields are ploughed, no harvest sown, no riders go down to bathe in the river, nor is the fullness of life in any way enjoyed. Beyond the gates I see no men, women, only the slain and the raped; no flocks are there except those which have been plundered; man kills man in mutual betrayal. . . .[20]

The fresco, in other words, clearly illustrates Tyranny and its consequences. The Tyrant is surrounded by vices: Cruelty, Treachery, Fraud, Fury, War and Discord who wears a divided gown on the black half of which is written 'No' and on the white half 'Yes', to

symbolize the incessant factional squabbles which divide the Common Good. Pride, Avarice and Vainglory hover above the Tyrant's head and, at his feet, is the bound figure of Justice, her scales now cast to the ground. The city over which the Tyrant rules is without meaning because it has no centre, no point of rest or concentration, none of the harmony to be found in *Good Government*. Both it and the *contado* are filled with scenes of violence and bloodshed, with soldiers looting, fighting and quarrelling. Armed bands wander through the desolate countryside, two soldiers abduct a struggling girl while others demolish a house. The countryside is uncultivated for here, instead of Security, Fear holds sway. His scroll reads:

> Because he seeks his own welfare in this world, he subjects justice to tyranny. Thus no one treads this road without fear, for pillage is rife both within and without the city-gates.

The inscription on this border re-emphasizes the centrality of Justice in the life of the well-regulated state:

> Where justice is bound nobody struggles for the Common Good or fights for the law, but rather permits the rise of Tyranny, which has no desire to do anything against the base nature of the vices which are here united with it, in order to give fuller rein to evil. Tyranny persecutes those who wish to do good, and attracts all those who plan evil. It always defends those who use force, or rob or hate peace. For this reason, Tyranny's land is uncultivated. . . .

A further inscription reminds the viewer:

> To avoid unhappiness, everyone must bow to justice. Banished be all those who are against her, for the sake of our peace.

Further elaborations of the allegory are to be found in the quatrefoils which are interspersed in the borders above and below the frescoes. Some are, sadly, so spoiled that their subjects can no longer be made out but enough remain to show the true extent of Lorenzetti's learning and his symbolic and allegorical vocabulary. Thus Good Government is bordered by the sun shining on its regime, by the kindly planets, Venus and Mercury, by the moon and by the papal crossed-keys to symbolize ecclesiastical authority. The medallions in the lower border depict the Liberal Arts: Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric—Rhetoric has subsequently been obliterated by a door set into the wall—Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, Astronomy and Philosophy. These figures

impress us by their solidity and their suggestion of a classical model and it is more than probable that their immediate source was Nicola Pisano's recently completed pulpit in the cathedral of Siena, where the central pillar bears upon its base personifications of the Liberal Arts. Certainly for Lorenzetti and for Pisano the Liberal Arts bore the same significance; they represented natural wisdom, inherited from the past, and valuable because that natural wisdom prepared the way for the divine wisdom revealed in Christ.

In the medallions above *Bad Government* were depicted the unfavourable planets—Saturn, Jupiter and Mars—Autumn and Winter and the coat-of-arms of Guelphic France. Siena, we are reminded, was the most Ghibelline of all Italian cities, even in periods, like the early fourteenth century, of nominal Guelphic allegiance. In the lower frame of the fresco there were probably depicted five famous tyrants although only the name *Nero* is now decipherable.

In these magnificent frescoes, Ambrogio Lorenzetti thus ranges with consummate ease over the whole wealth of medieval learning, drawing upon it to create, if not a *Summa* of knowledge, at least a *Summa* of all contemporary knowledge about political life. But that knowledge is interpreted in a way peculiar to Lorenzetti for it is used to universalize the particular image of Siena by placing it within an overall structure of traditional medieval ideas. It is not just any city which is presented in the Lorenzetti frescoes. Siena and its life are used to define the concept of the city. Under Bad Government it is *Siena's* houses and palaces that are ruined, *Siena's* streets which become insecure, a theatre for rape and assassination, *Siena's* countryside which is devastated. Equally, under Good Government it is *Siena* which becomes the home of Concord, Justice, Peace and Good Government, an ideal City of God. There still exists in the Loggia of the Palazzo Pubblico the now-ruined traces of another work by Lorenzetti in which he made, yet again, a passionate plea for civic concord. Here the Madonna was portrayed, holding a black and white globe in her hand representing Siena. The Christ Child is in the act of blessing the globe and beneath it a scroll instructs the observers to 'love one another', quoting explicitly from *John*, xv, 34. Thus the instruction given to the apostles after the Last Supper, is particularized for the Sienese commune. Even more significant in this context is the tradition that the Nine also commissioned from Ambrogio Lorenzetti that map of the world from which the Sala del Mappamondo takes its name. In that map Siena was placed at that focal point which the medieval theorist normally reserved for

Jerusalem. Siena and Jerusalem, as prototypes for the perfect civilized life, had become conflated in the Sienese imagination, and this conflation has ever since remained a central feature of Sienese cultural life.

As a work of art, the Palazzo Pubblico was thus a celebration of the commune of Siena, and an expression of the city's intense cultural vitality, of that love of beauty and decoration which spilled over into every area of existence. Yet the palace had also to be a workable unit. Inevitably, therefore, the passage of time brought modification and change within the building. Thus, although, initially, as we have seen, the heart of the building had lain in the Sala del Mappamondo and the adjacent Sala della Pace, other rooms and areas subsequently acquired an equal or a greater importance. In the original structure, the chapel was on the ground floor, but, with the elaboration of the bureaucracy of urban government, the need for increased office-space became acute. In order to provide this, it was decided in 1406 to move the chapel to its present position next to the Sala del Mappamondo. This involved some expensive reconstruction, including the building of four great arches into the wall to provide what remains the only source of natural light. The chapel also involved costly decoration; money was lavished upon it and love and devotion poured out upon it by the artists who worked on the project. Most notable of these was Domenico di Niccolò, ever afterwards known as Domenico of the Choir, who created the twenty-two Gothic choir-stalls, which are ranged along the chapel walls and which illustrate the Nicene creed, work of so demanding a nature that it took thirteen years to complete. Here also, in 1406, Taddeo di Bartolo was commissioned to paint a series of frescoes illustrating the life of the Virgin, which were to be completed in the remarkably short space of three months, in anticipation of the arrival of Pope Gregory XII in Siena.

These frescoes of Taddeo have not always received the attention they deserve. They are important because they represent the culminating moment of the International Gothic in Tuscany, adapted as only a Sienese could adapt an international style to the tastes of his fellow-citizens, to local themes and conditions. They are the works of an artist who is both aware of the latest innovations in the world of painting and inclined to dwell upon traditional Sienese artistic concerns. Taddeo's Gothicizing impulses are best seen in the episode of the *Transport of the Virgin*. In a Sienese context, the city of Jerusalem/Siena which appears behind the figures is an innovation, for the cathedral, so prominent in earlier paintings, is here not even indicated by its cupola.

That the city is Siena we know only from the two wolves who appear on the gate, and this Siena Taddeo has transformed into a Northern Gothic town. But that he was not unresponsive to his Sienese heritage is suggested by the fact that we may, for instance, discern, even at the distance of nearly a century, the influence of Duccio in the scene representing the *Farewell of the Virgin to the Apostles*, and from the fact that these frescoes are the work of an artist who looked at the world of Siena round him and incorporated what he saw into his paintings. In the illustration of the *Assumption*, the golden light of the setting sun illuminates the broad outline of the city of Jerusalem/Siena very much as, seen from a distance, it is illuminated by the setting of the sun today.

These frescoes then suggest the continued vitality of Sienese traditions in the early fifteenth century. Certainly, they must have impressed contemporaries and satisfied the state, for, in the following year, Taddeo was commissioned to paint the huge figure of Saint Christopher, representing the care of the commune for the weak, which dominates the antechapel, and, in 1413, to complete the decoration of the antechapel's remaining walls.

For the decoration of the antechapel, however, a new dimension was added to the patronage of the commune. This was to be as ambitious a project as any undertaken in Siena since the painting of Lorenzetti's *Good and Bad Government*. Taddeo was, once again, to take up the theme of those frescoes but, so important was the project to the ruling regime, that they directed he should not be given the free hand he had been allowed in the decoration of the chapel; rather he should paint a programme to be devised by two leading Sienese scholars. One was the humanist, Master Pietro de' Pecci, a doctor of law and a teacher in the University, and the other, Ser Cristoforo di Andrea, who, with occasional brief interruptions, had been Chancellor of Siena since 1404.

The fresco cycle again concentrates on the virtues which are needed for the life of the good citizen; in this case they are Justice, Fortitude, Magnanimity and Religion, all personalized by famous men, portrayed either in medallions or in the full-length figures that cover the main wall facing the chapel, and the walls inside the arches which lead to the chapel and the Sala del Mappamondo. Those portrayed include Brutus, the slayer of tyrants, and Cicero as well as two heroes who could only appear in a Sienese context: M. Curius Dentatus, the Roman consul at the time Siena was reputedly founded, and Furius Camillus, founder of the colony from which the Terzo di Camollia was believed to derive

its name. The purpose of these figures is explained by the figure of Aristotle, who introduces them to the viewer:

> As exemplars of the *vita civile*, I show you these men; if you follow in their sacred footsteps, your fame will grow at home and abroad, and liberty will always preserve your honour.[21]

And, on the main wall, the message is elaborated for the benefit of the governing élite of Siena; they should pursue the Common Good and justice, and above all remain united since this is the only guarantee of liberty.

It seems unlikely that these frescoes were without impact on the political life of Siena. They were clearly well known and their widespread and early influence is suggested by the direct allusions to them in the work of the fifteenth-century writer Gentile Sermini. Sermini, too, reminded his readers that it was pride and factionalism that destroyed the liberty and the glory of the ancient Roman republic, and suggested that:

> He who rules the state should take example from this,
> He who destroys the law,
> Is certainly no lover of the Common Good.[22]

From Taddeo's antechapel, one can pass to another room of great importance in the cultural life of Siena, the Sala della Balìa, the only room in the palace whose decoration was carried out by an artist who was not Sienese. It is largely the work of Spinello Aretino. Yet, although Aretino's style is not Sienese, his subject-matter continues to reflect traditional Sienese concerns. He has depicted the life of the great Sienese pope, Alexander III, and, characteristically, several of Aretino's scenes concern the struggle of the Italian communes against Frederick Barbarossa, at the period when so many of Siena's traditional liberties were won.

For the remaining century of Sienese independence, those traditional liberties continued to provide the theme of the decoration of the Palazzo Pubblico in many works by Sano di Pietro, Vecchietta and Sodoma, and culminated in the great Beccafumi ceiling for the Sala del Concistoro, commissioned in 1529, at one of the most difficult periods in Siena's history. Completed in 1536, this ceiling once more refers back, through the frescoes of Taddeo di Bartolo, to those of Lorenzetti, expounding for the Sienese the value of the political virtues; Justice, who boldly declares, once again, *Per me regnes regnant*,

Concord and Patriotism. These virtues are then illustrated by episodes from Roman and Greek history which could be seen to have Sienese analogies.

One of the greatest and most exquisite of mannerist decorative schemes to be found anywhere in Europe, Beccafumi's ceiling, was to be the last expression of republican glory in Siena, a fit epitaph for a great commune. Of course, the palace continued to be enriched with decorative paintings after the fall of the republic. Until well into the eighteenth century, many notable painters were to work there, including Francesco Vanni, Ventura Salimbeni and Rutilio Mannetti, as well as a whole host of more minor figures: Sebastiano Folli, Pietro Sorri, Cristofano and Francesco Rustici, Bernardino Mei, Christofano Casolani, Deifebo Burbarini, Annibale Mazzuoli, and Francesco Nasini. But however skilled these painters were, there was little scope for great work in the subjects they were asked to paint: celebrations of the deeds of a series of peculiarly uninspiring Grand Dukes, or episodes of Sienese history from a past so remote that it could have no impact on or relationship with contemporary Sienese life.

Only with the nineteenth century in the much undervalued *Sala del Risorgimento* did Sienese painting find an inspiring theme once more. The Sala was created out of a part of the palace, previously occupied by offices, as a civic shrine for the tunic worn by Victor Emmanuel II at the battle of San Martino, and was opened in 1890. Its decorative scheme is difficult to ignore, but while the chocolate-box ceiling, from which Italy, between Liberty and Independence, looks down on her miscellaneous and all equally insipid sixteen regions, may have little to recommend it, the six history paintings on the walls are remarkably fine. They show a mastery of technique in fresco painting which suggests that, even in the nineteenth century, the strong traditions of Sienese *Trecento* art had not been forgotten, for these are the work of the best contemporary Sienese artists: Cesare Maccari, Amos Cassioli, Pietro Aldi and Alessandro Franchi. They are, therefore, as much a part of the traditional Sienese civic world as are any other of the decorations of the palace.

Both externally and internally the Palazzo Pubblico is a remarkable and a beautiful building. It is rendered unique by the incredible tower —the *Torre del Mangia*—which William Dean Howells described as leaping, 'like a rocket into the starlit air',[23] and of which he wrote:

> When once you have seen the Mangia, all other towers, obelisks,

and columns are tame and vulgar and earth-rooted: that seems to quit the ground, to be not a monument but a flight.[24]

It was between 1325 and 1348, at first to the design of two Perugian brothers, Minuccio and Francesco di Rinaldo, but subsequently to that of the painter, Lippo Memmi, that the Mangia was built. That this tower had a significant role to play in the development of civic life is indicated by the elaborate ritual which surrounded the laying of its foundation stone:

> It was a great occasion; the priests assembled to bless the laying of the first stone with prayers and the chanting of psalms, the Master of the Board of Works depositing a sum of money at the foot of the tower. At each corner of the foundation a stone was set carrying Hebrew and Greek lettering, to protect the tower from thunder, lightning and windstorms . . .

The tower was, of course, meant to make the Campo more beautiful; that it is successful in this is unquestionable. Its harmonious relationship with the Campo, which its shadow describes through the day as if it were some gigantic sundial, is truly remarkable, as are the elegant proportions of the tower itself. But the tower was also originally designed for specific utilitarian functions and came to be called the Torre del Mangia after the man who was appointed to sound the hours on the tower's bell in 1347; he was known as Giovanni di Balduccio, *il Mangiaguadagni* (i.e. the consumer of gain), from his reputation as a wastrel. The tower existed to house the bell of the commune, and the bell was the voice of the commune, regulating the life of Siena throughout the day. It recalled the citizens to their obligations, it summoned the councils of the commune, the Balìa, and the Consistory. In time of warfare or of civic disturbance it was the bell in the Mangia which summoned the citizens to arms, just as, on festive occasions, the ringing of the bell was a sign of public rejoicing. It was also a manifestation of Sienese religious sentiment. At dawn, the ringing of the *mattino* put an end to the curfew and signified the opening of the city-gates, the renewal of urban life. At midday it rang, along with the other bells of the city, to signify the break for lunch. In the evening it announced the sunset and, three hours later, the reimposition of the curfew.

The marking of the passage of time by the bell in the Mangia symbolized the significance of the Mangia in Sienese life, for it was an assertion of civic values as opposed to those of the nobility. The tower

itself was a symbol, stolen from noble life. But the bell, and subsequently the clock which was added to the tower in 1360, spoke of an essentially urban concept of time and space and modified the function of the tower as an ancient symbol of noble power. It was an assertion, too, of communal authority, its fantastic height determined by the necessity for it to be higher than the highest private family tower in Siena, and as high as the highest point of the cathedral.

A secondary function of the Torre del Mangia was to identify the location of communal power. Easily seen from any point within the city, and for many miles outside it, the Torre del Mangia immediately fixes the idea of the location of the Campo in the mind of the viewer and helps to suggest that this is the heart of the city. So closely was the Torre del Mangia identified, therefore, with the commune that it gave rise to a significant proverbial usage; a Sienese was and is defined as: 'One born in the shadow of the Mangia.'

The Torre del Mangia was completed by the construction of a chapel at the base of the tower, actually built in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, but originating in a vow made to the Virgin in 1348, as a memorial of the deliverance of the city from the Black Death. It is easy to see in the artistic aspect of the chapel, so stylistically different from the rest of the Palazzo Pubblico, an expression of that great cultural gulf which separates the pre-plague and the post-plague world, not only in Sienna, but in the whole of Italy.

In 1352 the project was first entrusted to Domenico di Agostino in his capacity as Master of Works to the cathedral; but the building was probably only first realized in 1376 by Giovanni di Cecco, Master Mason of the cathedral, who, like a number of artists, had been involved in the completion and decoration of the Cathedral and Baptistery, and was influenced by contemporary Florentine art in a way that no pre-plague Sienese artist ever was. The Florentine quality of the chapel was subsequently accentuated when, nearly a hundred years later, the fine Sienese renaissance architect, Antonio Federighi, raised the original roof and added the upper portion of the structure, with a frieze of griffins and wreaths encircling the arms of Siena; and finally consummated by the painting of the Madonna and the patron saints of the city, 'all very beautiful figures',[25] commissioned from Sodoma in March 1537.

The last major addition to the Campo also had echoes of Florentine art. This was the Fonte Gaia, the seemingly miraculous fountain, whose name derives from the rejoicings that accompanied the first arrival of

water in the Campo in 1343 by means of an elaborate system of *bottini* and aqueducts which stretched for some twenty-five kilometres. To get water to flow into their Campo was obviously a symbolic necessity for the Sienese, for whom, as we have seen, water had an almost mystical importance, but to achieve this desired end involved one of the greatest and most remarkable of all medieval engineering feats. It was an undertaking which for years absorbed a considerable quantity of communal resources and even more communal energy, for it was a much-accentuated form of the normal Sienese struggle to obtain water and to lift it up steep hillsides in sufficient quantities.

The project was initiated and completed in its first and most vital stage at the time of the Nine, probably the only medieval Sienese regime with sufficient self-confidence to embark on such a daunting project. They entrusted the work in December 1334 to the master stonemason, Jacopo di Vanno dei Ugolini, who was persuaded to attempt the difficult task by the very high salary he was offered. But, although there is no real evidence to suggest that Jacopo neglected his duties, by 1339 he had made little progress and the commune appointed two other men to assist him. By 1341 the problem had been handed over to a civic committee of three who were assigned all the income from Grosseto in order to finance the enterprise. Two years later, after nearly a decade of effort, water flowed into the first Fonte Gaia, which like its successors, was dedicated to the Virgin.

The commune was fully aware of the importance of this fountain and the significant contribution which, in the end, Jacopo di Vanno had made to the life of Siena. Their recognition of the debt they owed him came in their subsequent treatment of his descendants. It was a compliment to his father's skill that Jacopo's son, Giovanni, was made civic Provveditor of Fountains, and in November 1356, the General Council conceded to Giovanni's own orphaned children, Domenico and Giovanni, an annual pension of twelve gold florins:

> Because Master Jacopo was the occasion of so much beauty and utility in the fountain on the Campo and in the other fountains that depend on it.[26]

The Fonte Gaia which we see today is a large rectangular basin, walled on three sides. Water spouts from the mouths of six crouching wolves and from two metal pipes at each extremity. On the outside of the fountain, the enclosing wall is decorated with attractive panels of a leafy design, done in characteristic Sienese black-and-white marble,

while on the inside, a series of niches contain monumental figures carved in high relief. This is, of course, but an incomplete nineteenth-century copy by Tito Sarocchi of that fountain built by Jacopo della Quercia between 1409 and 1420, which, despite its original splendours, was in such a state of decay by the early nineteenth century as to be an offence to Sienese civic pride. Through the determined efforts of a group of leading citizens money was raised to replace Jacopo's great work, and to move the site of the fountain slightly to regularize its relationship with the buildings behind it. Today one may still see the remains of Jacopo's greatest masterpiece in the Loggia of the Palazzo Pubblico, but it requires great imaginative effort to reconstruct the fountain as it once was or to guess its original impact upon the Sienese.

Much of that impact depended upon the fact that the original contract to Jacopo della Quercia was given in the first flood of republican enthusiasm and the revival of the communal spirit in Siena following the overthrow of the Visconti overlordship in the early fifteenth century. The creation of the fountain was seen as a reassertion of those communal values which had produced the earlier glories of the Campo, and which find expression in the original iconographical programme of della Quercia's great work of art, a programme much influenced by the communal committees appointed to supervise the building of the fountain.

In the centre, the perennial theme of the protection of the city by the Virgin was expressed in a portrayal of the Madonna and child, flanked by two adoring angels. This image was, of course, of great civic importance, for it is in this guise that the Virgin was portrayed on the city's shield. The same image was used by Simone Martini in his *Maestà*, where, in one of the medallions at the bottom of the fresco, there appears an image of the Virgin, Child and two angels with the legend, *Salvat Virgo Senam quam signat amenam*. And it also appears on the shield of the figure of Good Government in the painted Biccherna *tavoletta* of 1344, which has been attributed to Ambrogio Lorenzetti.

On each side of della Quercia's *Madonna* were placed portrayals of those moral and religious virtues, which Lorenzetti had also seen as necessary for the leading of a full and a good life in a civic context: allegorical figures representing Fortitude, Justice, Charity, Wisdom, Hope and Faith. Then, on the front of the fountain, della Quercia moved from the representation of divine attributes and personified virtues, to take up themes directly relevant to the human community in general and to the life of Siena in particular. The creation of Adam

and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the earthly paradise, which were depicted on the fountain's sides, represent the two moments in universal history which most directly determined the subsequent nature of human life on earth. On the front of the fountain, two great statues of Rea Silvia, the royal mother of Romulus and Remus, and Acca Laurentia, the goat-herd's wife who subsequently cared for the twins, were intended to recall to the Sienese their Roman origins and their obligations to maintain the Roman virtues, while the city's own heraldic devices called them to reflect on Siena's post-classical history.

Thus the Fonte Gaia, like the Lorenzetti frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico opposite—to which there can be little doubt the fountain makes direct reference—was both a celebration of Siena's past and contemporary glories, and a didactic monument, designed to instruct the Sienese in the obligations of citizenship. It was, like the Lorenzetti frescoes, an imaginative, visual representation of that whole complex of interacting creative forces which the Sienese believed went into the making of a city, a blending of the material and the spiritual to produce prosperity, justice and that ever-elusive 'Good Government' of which the whole Campo is a celebration.

6

Art in Society in the Republic of Siena

Men of skill always increase the honour and the fame of republics.
Petition of 1531 to the General Council of Siena

I

In the Europe of the later middle ages, Siena was known for her bankers, her saints, and her artists. Of her bankers we have already spoken and with her saints we shall be concerned in the following chapter; here we shall consider her visual artists. It is perhaps through studying these artists and their surviving works that we can come closest to understanding the dynamic features of Sienese urban civilization in the centuries before its independent existence came to an end in the mid-sixteenth century. For nowhere in Europe were the visual arts so closely integrated with every aspect of social life as they were in this city. Here, the very chests in which government documents were stored were elaborately decorated, while the surviving *tavolette* of the Gabella and of the Biccherna are the happiest examples of the perfect marriage of bureaucracy and art within Siena.

The Sienese artist was ready and willing to articulate the ideals and the aspirations of his city, since almost every aspect of his individual life was intimately bound up with the collective life of the city around him. The Sienese artist was never an outsider. Although one of Sacchetti's short stories portrays a wife addressing her artist-husband in anger, demanding: 'What malediction ever married a woman to a painter? You are all fanatics and lunatics, and always drunk and not ashamed of it!', and although Duccio was fined for a breach of the peace, there is no evidence of particularly anti-social or rebellious attitudes among Sienese artists before the excesses of the eccentric and spendthrift Sodoma in the sixteenth century. On the contrary, far from being an active critic of the society in which he lived, the Sienese artist identified with it, playing a very full part in its civic, political, religious, economic and recreational life.

and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the earthly paradise, which were depicted on the fountain's sides, represent the two moments in universal history which most directly determined the subsequent nature of human life on earth. On the front of the fountain, two great statues of Rea Silvia, the royal mother of Romulus and Remus, and Acca Laurentia, the goat-herd's wife who subsequently cared for the twins, were intended to recall to the Sienese their Roman origins and their obligations to maintain the Roman virtues, while the city's own heraldic devices called them to reflect on Siena's post-classical history.

Thus the Fonte Gaia, like the Lorenzetti frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico opposite—to which there can be little doubt the fountain makes direct reference—was both a celebration of Siena's past and contemporary glories, and a didactic monument, designed to instruct the Sienese in the obligations of citizenship. It was, like the Lorenzetti frescoes, an imaginative, visual representation of that whole complex of interacting creative forces which the Sienese believed went into the making of a city, a blending of the material and the spiritual to produce prosperity, justice and that ever-elusive 'Good Government' of which the whole Campo is a celebration.

6

Art in Society in the Republic of Siena

Men of skill always increase the honour and the fame of republics.
Petition of 1531 to the General Council of Siena

I

IN THE Europe of the later middle ages, Siena was known for her bankers, her saints, and her artists. Of her bankers we have already spoken and with her saints we shall be concerned in the following chapter; here we shall consider her visual artists. It is perhaps through studying these artists and their surviving works that we can come closest to understanding the dynamic features of Sienese urban civilization in the centuries before its independent existence came to an end in the mid-sixteenth century. For nowhere in Europe were the visual arts so closely integrated with every aspect of social life as they were in this city. Here, the very chests in which government documents were stored were elaborately decorated, while the surviving *tavolette* of the Gabella and of the Biccherna are the happiest examples of the perfect marriage of bureaucracy and art within Siena.

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In the first place, every Sienese artist was a member of one of the city's guilds—the Painters, Stonemasons, Sculptors or Goldsmiths—for, without such a membership he could not practise his art in the city. Again, most artists were also members, frequently very active, of one or other of the city's numerous religious confraternities; Paolo di Giovanni Fei, for instance, joined the brothers of the Company of Mary which met in the crypt of Santa Maria della Scala in the 1380s and was to act as its treasurer in 1386, 1388, 1399, 1404 and 1408.

Artists also played a frequent and direct part in the political and administrative life of Siena. At all times they acted as officials and servants of the commune in a whole range of different capacities, and, during the second half of the fourteenth century, when the government of Siena was as open to members of the artisan classes as any Italian city-state government was ever to be, they served in all magistracies, including the most important of all—Consistory. Lippo Vanni, for instance, served on the supreme magistracy in 1360 and 1373, and Luca di Tommè in 1373 and 1379. Paolo di Neri, one of the followers of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, was elected to Consistory in 1363 and 1378, as was Niccolò di Buonaccorso in 1372 and 1377. Bartolo di Fredi was elected in 1372, 1380–81, 1382 and 1401, and served as Podestà of Massa in 1376. His contemporary, Paolo di Giovanni Fei, was equally involved in civic life; he first entered the General Council in 1369, and served again in 1370 and 1371. In the latter year he was also Standard-bearer for the militia company of his own district of San Quirico in Castelvecchio. In 1372 and 1381 he served on the Consistory, and in 1380 on the Biccherna. The participation of practising artists in the political life of the city continued in the following century. Taddeo di Bartolo, for instance, served on the General Council on at least three occasions and also held other minor offices in the civic administration; Jacopo della Quercia was elected to the General Council in 1409 and to Consistory in 1420; and Francesco di Giorgio Martini served on Consistory in 1486.

Such full civic participation may have been mutually beneficial to commune and artist, but it did, on occasion, create practical difficulties. His civic duties could interrupt an artist when he was engaged on a commission and so delay the completion of important projects. Certainly the demands of civic office conflicted with that clause, which normally appeared in all contracts, requiring an artist to work constantly and solely on the one particular commission. When,

for instance, in 1438, and again in 1444, the name of Piero della Minella, who was at the time supervising the building of the Loggia della Mercanzia, was drawn for castellanships in the *contado*, the whole progress of the prestigious building works at the Mercanzia was threatened and he had to be excused from serving.

It was obviously more convenient to use practising artists in those areas of the administration for which their talents were peculiarly well-suited. Chief among the posts largely reserved for them by the commune were those which involved the design or the inspection of fortresses. Simone Martini served the commune in these areas while in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries he was followed by Jacopo della Quercia, Vecchietta, who was concerned with fortifications at Sarteano, Orbetello, Montacuto and Talamone in 1469 and 1470, Cozzarelli, who worked on those of Montepulciano in 1496, and Francesco di Giorgio Martini. In the sixteenth century the foremost examples are Francesco di Giorgio's disciple, Anton Maria Lara, Baldassare Peruzzi, appointed in 1528 as inspector of bridges, roads, and fortifications, and Giovan Battista Peloro. Although the demands of fortresses and fortifications were considerable and time-consuming, and necessarily diverted the attention of artists from other matters, such work was not always unrewarding. Several Sienese, and notably Francesco di Giorgio, were among the most important theorists of the new science of fortress-design in the renaissance, and Francesco's experiences in this area were to lead him to formulate new ideas about the relationship between fortresses and towns. This, in turn, led him to a fundamental re-evaluation of the importance of the urban environment in creating and fostering the *vita civile*.

Other areas of civic life in which practising artists played an active role have already been alluded to: the various committees concerned with the building of the cathedral, for example, and the perennial problem of Siena's water-supply. Duccio was given responsibility for searching for water as one of his first civic offices, and the supervisory committee for Jacopo della Quercia's Fonte Gaia, appointed in 1408, included a goldsmith, Tommaso Vannini and Domenico di Niccolò—Domenico of the Choir. The first civic office of Francesco di Giorgio in 1464 was that of supervisor of *bottini* and, thereafter, whenever he was resident in Siena, he tended to be involved in one way or another, either with the water-supply or with the fountains of Siena. In 1469 the General Council commissioned him, together

with Paolo d'Andrea, to work for three years on the city's fountains, *bottini* and aqueducts, their commission being so to improve the system during this period as to increase the flow of water into the fountains by at least one third. During the same period they were given the additional responsibility of creating special fountain displays for the annual celebrations of the Assumption in mid-August. In 1480 Antonio Federighi held a similar supervisory position over the *bottini*, a post for which he was paid an annual salary of 80 florins.

Such examples of integration into the civic life of Siena provide an accurate indication of the status of the artist in the Sienese community. He was regarded as a useful but unexceptional member of society. Even in the fifteenth century when in the rest of Italy the artist began to be held in higher esteem, and to be in a certain sense a privileged person, in Siena he continued to enjoy the kind of position held by other Sienese craftsmen, from whom indeed he was largely indistinguishable. His working methods and customs were very much the same as theirs. Like other craftsmen, he worked from his own shop, which might be either owned or rented, and it was here that he trained his apprentices. The apprentice who had successfully completed his training within the standard guild system would then set up his own workshop, either alone, or more usually with a partner, for partnership was a common and distinctive feature of the Sienese artistic community.

Lacking high status, and rarely providing wealth, the artistic life was in no way an avenue for upward social mobility in Siena before the sixteenth century. Even the more successful Sienese artist could not hope to earn much more than a respectable competence unless he were remarkably fortunate, for as one painter put it 'the rewards of our art of painting are scarce and limited, so that there is little to do and less gained.'[1] In the fourteenth century, individual paintings such as Duccio's *Maestà*, which was paid for at the rate of two and a half florins a panel, occasionally brought to an artist rewards of a quite exceptional nature, but this was due more to the expense of materials and to the value of the painting in symbolic terms than to the prestige or merit of the painter. Even in the fifteenth century this remained true. Sassetta, for example, was a successful artist with a large workshop and a number of important pupils, including Sano di Pietro, Vecchietta and Pietro di Giovanni Ambrogio, yet he died a poor man. His last illness, pneumonia contracted while he was working on the prestigious and highly important government

contract of the *Coronation of the Virgin* for Porta Romana, lasted for over a month; during this time he not only used up all his capital but contracted debts of 187 florins for doctors' fees and medicines. His funeral, therefore, had to be paid for by mortgaging his only remaining piece of property.

The evidence provided by the tax returns of fifteenth-century artists is quite unequivocal. Even making allowance for the established convention that in making such returns the citizen should paint as dark a picture of his circumstances as possible, artists were not wealthy men. Despite his fame and his abilities, Vecchietta in 1465 owned only one small house in Via de'Fusari; another, unprofitably rented out; a piece of unproductive land in the commune of Certano; and half a house and vineyard in the commune of Ginestreto. He complained that his wife was usually in ill-health and that he also had been ill for six months and unable to work. In order to stay alive he had been forced to sell all of his household goods.

Throughout his whole working-life, Sano di Pietro grumbled about his poverty and showed himself willing to accept almost any kind of commission provided it paid. He was, fortunately, remarkably skilled at reproducing his own best efforts, since his over-ready acceptance of commissions meant that he was forced to pour out altarpieces by the dozen; forty-two are preserved in the Pinacoteca of Siena alone. Despite such prodigious productivity, Sano's tax returns do substantiate his claim that he was not a wealthy man. In 1453 he owned no more than the house he lived in at Camporeggio, valued at 340 florins, an uninhabited and unfurnished house in Salicotto, and a vineyard worth 100 florins, while his debts amounted to 150 florins. Neither of the subsequent returns which he made in 1478 and 1481 suggest that his wealth had increased substantially by the end of his life.

The precarious existence of the artist in material terms is also suggested by Matteo di Giovanni who, in 1453, declared that he owned:

> the undivided half of a number of materials appertaining to his profession as a painter, not worth 20 florins, of which the other half belong to his partner, the painter Giovanni di Pietro. They have them in the house where they live, which they lease from Guiccardo Forteguerra in the palace of the Forteguerra; they lease it as a house and not as a workshop; otherwise he owns nothing in the world. . . . He would like to remind your worships that

> he earns nothing but is merely passing the time in learning at the expense of his uncle.[2]

In a similar position was Priamo della Quercia who, in the same year, described himself as:

> a poor beggarly painter, without any means of living . . . and with a number of debts to various persons . . .[3]

and Ventura di Giuliano who, in 1478, described himself as a wood-carver and architect, forced to live away from Siena:

> because of my debts; and I am currently in Naples. I still owe money for three forced loans and am too afraid to return to Siena.[4]

On the other hand, the cumulative evidence of such tax returns and of other records does suggest that, provided he made some insurance against the normal accidents of life and was not encumbered by too many marriageable daughters for whom he had to provide dowries, the competent Sienese artist did not need to starve. Even from the returns we have already considered it is clear that, in the course of their working lives, most artists, even those from very humble backgrounds like Francesco di Giorgio or Beccafumi, managed to accumulate a little property: a house in the city and a small vineyard or farm in the *contado*. The community of Siena did have a positive attitude towards its artists and craftsmen and was anxious to encourage their skills, acknowledging that: 'Men of skill always increase the honour of republics.'[5]

Thus, in order to encourage them, the commune often granted its most skilled artists either immunity from communal taxation, as in the case of Giovanni Pisano, or communal employment or pensions. Domenico di Niccolò, for instance, was given a communal pension so that he could impart his skills in wood-carving and inlay to others, although it has to be confessed that:

> because there is little money to be made in this business, none ever wanted to continue with it, save Master Matteo di Bernardino who studied the craft so assiduously that he became a great master as all or the majority of the citizens well know.[6]

And even after he was too old to work, Domenico continued to be paid a communal pension of two florins a month, in recognition of his former great services to the commune.

As a community Siena was, in fact, remarkable in being able to support an exceptionally large number of artists and craftsmen throughout the middle ages. Between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries, such large communal projects as the building of the cathedral and the Palazzo Pubblico, lesser government-sponsored works, ecclesiastical patronage, including that of the religious orders, the patronage of the guilds, of hospitals and especially Santa Maria della Scala, of the *contrade*, of families and of individuals all provided certain and continuous opportunities for artistic employment. But over the centuries it was above all the Sienese commune that required the services of artists. The major works of communal patronage, which have already been described, and the continuous works on the fountains of the city continued to provide many opportunities. The city-gates were built, enlarged and decorated with important frescoes, largely at communal expense. Churches were built to honour communal religious vows or in thanksgiving for graces previously bestowed on the city. The church of San Giorgio was enlarged and given its *campanile* in thanksgiving for the victory of Montaperti; the chapel of St. Paul was added to the Mercanzia on the Campo to show:

> the great and due reverence in which this regime holds St. Paul, as the only patron and prosperer of many happy events in our city.[7]

The church of the Madonna of Fontegiusta was built in 1482 as a thanksgiving for the defeat of the Florentines at the battle of Poggio Imperiale. The commune also contributed to the cost of other ecclesiastical buildings, paying, for example, for their decoration or furnishing; as a result there is scarcely a church in Siena which was not at least partially financed by the civic authorities. Such patronage was often a response to popular pressure. In providing for the city's religious buildings, the communal government was providing a social service, just as it was in maintaining a hospital, providing doctors and teachers, maintaining the University, caring for the poor, or fixing the prices apothecaries might charge for their medicines.

Another explanation of the commune's willingness to act as a generous patron of the arts was the necessity of maintaining the city's reputation abroad. Petitions to the commune asking for assistance frequently point out that the present state of a building brings shame to the city when it is seen by foreign visitors. This, in turn, it was argued, injured Siena's reputation abroad and so was detrimental

to the interests of her bankers and merchants. Such considerations were particularly important in the context of the rivalry of the Tuscan and Umbrian communes, fought out not only on the battlefield, but also in the embellishing of churches, as if, by such embellishment, the commune in question could win the support of heaven. Thus the Carmelite friars could be fairly certain of a favourable response from the communal authorities when they petitioned in 1365 for assistance in paying for their new tabernacle; it had cost 900 florins less than a similar one at Orvieto and yet was judged, 'far more beautiful than the one at Orvieto by those who have seen both the one and the other.'[8]

The maintenance of the whole decorative paraphernalia of Sienese civic life required further communal artistic patronage. Many distinguished artists, including Simone Martini, were, for instance, employed to paint special banners or flags. Others were employed to make or to decorate furniture; Andrea di Bartolo, for example, in 1378 painted the casket now in the Palazzo Pubblico, with the four patron saints of Siena. And distinguished artists were regularly employed to paint the *tavolette* for the Gabella and the Biccherna. Festivals and festivities with all their attendant ephemera were also a regular source of employment. The celebrations of mid-August were frequently arranged by artists. Festivals and state banquets frequently required expensive and elaborate stage-props of which we may take as a type those produced for the visit of the Duchess of Ferrara in 1473 when the decorations included:

> a column . . . decorated with a Lion and a She-Wolf, and the Lion gave out white wine and the She-Wolf red, and from a spout between them flowed water . . .[9]

However, the commune was far from being Siena's only source of artistic patronage. All the major churches had within them family altars which were elaborately decorated by the families concerned, just as they were in the cathedral. Other altars were the property and concern of the guilds who, particularly during their period of relative prosperity in the fifteenth century, became important patrons of the arts. The statutes of the Stonemasons Guild of 1441 fined each member 15*s* for non-attendance at their annual festival of Santi Quattro Coronati, and directed that the money should be used for a building fund for their chapel in the cathedral. In 1447 the Grocer's Guild commissioned from Giovanni di Paolo an altar-piece for their chapel in the church

of Santa Maria della Scala; in 1478 the Bakers commissioned the altarpiece of Saint Barbara for their altar in San Domenico from Matteo di Giovanni; and Cozzarelli's *St. Catherine of Alexandria* was painted for the Guild of Doctors and Apothecaries, the saint in the painting being surrounded by symbols of their trades. Eventually some guilds came to build their own churches; the prettiest, built to a design of Riccio in 1617, was that dedicated to St. Joseph by the Carpenters' Guild.

Throughout the later middle ages another important source of employment for artists was the great civic hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. It enshrines within its walls works by many Sienese artists and is, in consequence, surely unique among hospitals in that its patients are still treated beside walls and under ceilings covered by renaissance frescoes. The church of the hospital, dedicated to the Virgin of the Annunciation, is a positive show-piece of the Sienese renaissance, despite the fact that many of the works which once enriched it have been removed. The rebuilding of this church, undertaken in 1466 by Guidoccio d'Andrea was only one of a handful of new ecclesiastical architectural projects undertaken in fifteenth-century Siena, and as a result its decoration provided unparalleled opportunities for some Sienese artists. Giovanni di Paolo's *Presentation in the Temple*, which is now in the Pinacoteca, was originally commissioned for the high altar in 1447. In 1471 Francesco di Giorgio was working on the church, constructing a new choir and ceiling, assisted by Cozzarelli, and painting a *Coronation of the Virgin*. From 1441, when he first painted a major fresco for the hospital, Vecchietta was to devote most of his working-life to its embellishment, and it therefore came to contain all of his major work. His relationship with the institution was so close that, in the end, in 1476, he asked the hospital to grant him a chapel in their church to be entirely designed by him and dedicated to the Saviour. This chapel, where he arranged to be buried and for which he intended the *Risen Christ*, which now stands on the high altar, he endowed with a piece of property in the *contado*.

By the fifteenth century the *contrade* of the city were already beginning to develop that important role as patrons of the arts which they have maintained until the present day. It was in fact in the late fifteenth century that the inhabitants of Fontebranda completed their building of the church, dedicated to St. Catherine, which they had announced their intention of building in 1465:

in such a way and so well ornamented, that it will be an honour to God and to Saint Catherine of Siena . . . and a consolation to all the city. . . .[10]

By the early sixteenth century the *contrade* were more and more actively involved in maintaining the fabric and the monuments of their own areas of the city, taking on responsibilities which had previously been shouldered by the commune, such as the maintenance of the city fountains. It was, for instance, the inhabitants of the *contrada* of Pian d'Ovile who decided to restore and improve the frescoes which decorated their city-gate.

The public display of wealth and splendour which was a necessary part of the life of the religious confraternities also led them to act as very progressive patrons of the arts, particularly during the renaissance. The banner painted by Sodoma for the Confraternity of Saint Sebastian, for instance, which was carried in their processions, is still preserved in the Pitti Palace in Florence, and among the surviving works of the Sienese High Renaissance master, Girolamo del Pacchia, is a banner made for the Company of Corpus Domini. Pacchia also painted for the same company a bierhead showing a *Madonna and Child holding a Goldfinch* and the production of such bierheads became common: Matteo Balducci, a pupil of Pacchiarotto, painted three for the confraternity of St. Catherine della Notte, showing *St. Catherine receiving the stigmata, St. Catherine and four flagellants*, and a *Risen Christ*; Beccafumi painted one for the Company of St. Anthony Abbot in San Martino, and one for the confraternity of the Misericordia; Francesco Vanni painted one for the Company of the Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni, and Cozzarelli one for the Misericordia.

Wealthy confraternities also invested money in providing themselves with beautiful surroundings for their meetings and their religious services and one of the most important commissions given in the sixteenth century was that of the Company of San Bernardino for the decoration of their Oratory; Sodoma, Girolamo del Pacchia and Beccafumi all contributed to this project. The furbishing of such oratories and chapels also provided other commissions, and an additional source of employment for artists may be illustrated by the commission given to Giovanni di Paolo d'Ambrogio by the Company of St. Anthony Abbot in October 1526 for miniatures to illustrate:

our chapter book which we have recently had made . . . with four stories from the life of our glorious protector, St. Anthony . . .[11]

The patronage of the confraternities was corporate and ostensibly, at least, democratic in its nature. Decisions about such commissions were taken by the confraternity officials, together with the whole company, who could vote on a number of designs submitted to them either by one or by a number of artists. Perhaps surprisingly, this led not to conservatism but to experimentation. The confraternities were always remarkable for their willingness to employ previously untried artists. In 1400, for instance, Taddeo di Bartolo painted a triptych for the Company of St. Catherine della Notte, and this was among the first of the works he painted in Siena. Similarly, one of the earliest commissions given to Francesco di Giorgio was from the Company of St. John the Baptist, or of Death, who paid £12 for a relief of their favourite saint, while among the earliest works of Francesco Vanni were a Crucifixion for the Company of the Sacred Nails, painted in 1585, and an altar-piece for the Company of the Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni which dates from 1589–91.

The Sienese commune, supported by a network of other ecclesiastical and secular groups, thus provided Sienese artists with an enduring structure of patronage. Inevitably there were periods when the fortunes of artists stood higher or lower than normal. In the early years of the Nine, for instance, the available opportunities were unusually good and, in terms of the curtailment of patronage, the Black Death was an obvious disaster. None the less, after the Black Death the arts continued both to flourish and to be well-supported by the Sienese community; in 1363 an estimated population of 25,000 still contained at least thirty master-painters, twenty-one master goldsmiths and sixty-two master-stonemasons, and these numbers were on the increase. By the 1370s there were sixty-four master-painters in Siena, a figure that rose to about a hundred at the turn of the century. It was not until the 1430s that the number again dropped to thirty-two and, by that date, the population of the city as a whole had probably fallen to little over 15,000.

These artists and craftsmen formed a tight-knit and distinctive social group within the city. Both at a professional and at a private level the Sienese artist tended to enjoy a close relationship with other artists. Most ran their workshops as family businesses, many intermarried, many more entered into partnerships, and all seem to have found their closest friends among other members of the artistic community. Duccio, for instance, had strong family links with other painters; three of his sons were to follow him in his trade and his

cousin was Segna di Bonventura, a painter who was frequently employed by the commune. Simone Martini, whose brother, Donato, was also an artist, married in 1324 the daughter of another painter, Memmo di Filippuccio, who was also the father of Lippo Memmi, with whom Simone subsequently set up a workshop. Francesco di Piero de'Giovannelli, a painter who worked on the cathedral in 1380, had a daughter who was married to Lorenzo di Vanni, and his two sons were also painters. Jacopo della Quercia's father had been a Sienese goldsmith and wood-carver, and his son was to become a painter. In 1468 Francesco di Giorgio took as his second wife, Agnese, the sister of Neroccio di Landi. Francesco then entered into a partnership with Neroccio until 1475, but he meantime enjoyed close personal and professional relationships with both Sano di Pietro and Vecchietta. Similar patterns of relationship could be found among all the known artists of Siena throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Such a structure of relationship between individual artists was not without an effect on the development of the arts. It seems to have encouraged a certain homogeneity and stylistic conservatism, for it tended to confirm the Sienese quality of each artist's work. It also meant that within the community, artists were particularly prone to borrowing and learning from each other. An outstanding example is the work produced in the workshop of Francesco di Giorgio and Neroccio di Landi, where the constant interplay of ideas led to a stylistic unity which frequently makes the work of the two artists almost indistinguishable. Such borrowings clearly contributed to the creation and sustaining of the Sienese tradition in painting.

It is also likely that such close-knit relationships encouraged that marked ability shown by most Sienese artists to excel in more than one of the visual arts. Few Sienese painters were just painters; most also turned their hands to sculpture, to architecture, or to miniature-painting. So Vecchietta like his pupil, Neroccio di Landi, was as distinguished as a sculptor as he was as a painter; Francesco di Giorgio was an engineer, an expert on hydraulics and fortifications, an architect, a miniaturist, a sculptor and the author of many treatises covering all aspects of the arts, as well as a painter; and Peruzzi, who was both an architect and a painter, actually began his career as a jeweller and goldsmith. Indeed, it is in Siena, rather than in Florence or Rome, that we find the many-sided genius who has been held to represent 'renaissance man'.

Related to this multi-faceted quality of so much Sienese art is the

high standard of craftsmanship and the technical ingenuity which found expression in all artefacts. In some ways, therefore, the most characteristic Sienese works of art are the ones which display these varied skills to the full; the inlaid marble floor of the cathedral, Domenico di Niccolò's *intarsia* work, or the elegant ironwork which separates the chapel and the ante-chapel of the Palazzo Pubblico, and which may well have been designed by Jacopo della Quercia. Work of such a quality could only be produced in a society like that of Siena; one where the guilds, backed by the communal authorities, succeeded in imposing high standards of craftsmanship, skill, and finish; where the artist was well-integrated into a craftsman-dominated society which respected and valued his skills; one, above all, in which the arts were readily and publicly accessible.

All the evidence which we possess suggests that, certainly, in the later middle ages, and most probably in the early renaissance, all the great works of art in the city were known, seen, appreciated and even loved. The city's mystics and saints, her preachers and her chroniclers, constantly refer to and comment upon those works of art as one of the passionate concerns of their lives. Just as Siena's artists were closely involved with the life of society as a whole, so that society was deeply involved with the works of art those artists produced. Their paintings, sculptures and works of architecture were seen as a manifestation of the worth of the city to the outside world—an expression, that is, of Siena's urban values. It is this framework which has to be borne in mind in turning from a consideration of the role of the artist in society, to an account of the works of art which the artist produced.

II

Throughout the complex history of their relationship, one concern seems to have been shared by Sienese patron and Sienese artist alike: a search for beauty. To a degree which would have been remarkable elsewhere in the middle ages, and even during the early renaissance, the Sienese patron was prepared to reward an artist for work of a particularly beautiful nature. A famous but by no means untypical example of this is to be found in the career of Vecchietta who, in 1467, was commissioned by the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala to make a bronze tabernacle for their church, for which the agreed maximum price was to be 1,200 florins; when the work was completed

in 1472, Vecchietta was given not only 1,150 florins, but also a house rent-free for the rest of his life because the tabernacle was:

> a most notable work, and more beautiful, and ornamented, and greater than he had promised.[12]

A concern for the beautiful remains the first and most striking characteristic of the Sienese tradition. A Sienese painting is, invariably, a delight to the eye and the emphasis within it is normally on decoration and decorative qualities. The essential interest of the Sienese artist, therefore, was often in a beautiful but two-dimensional surface, rather than in the three-dimensional illusionistic world which absorbed the interest of the Florentine renaissance painter. The unity of a Sienese painting is normally created by decorative patterns, and it is no accident that the painters of Siena were influenced far more than were those of the rest of Italy by patterns in textile design; such influence is reflected in the loving care and attention which they always lavished upon the dress of the figures in their paintings. This compelling love of decoration remained characteristic of Sienese artists and their patrons throughout the centuries and is the most striking feature of Sienese art in all periods. Thus, even Baroque art in Siena, whose decorative elements are often exquisite, both rich and delicate, blends rapidly into work which we can more easily identify as *rococo*, a style eminently suited to the Sienese tradition.

The love of decoration also explains the passionate interest of the Sienese artist in colour, an interest so characteristic that it is often through the purity and the clarity of its colours that a Sienese painting can most easily be identified. This love of colour is there in the breath-taking, jewel-like colours of Duccio's *Maestà*; it is the chief charm of Sassetta's major works; it distinguishes Francesco di Giorgio's striking *Nativity* in San Domenico and his even more remarkable *Coronation of the Virgin*; and it is one of the most admirable qualities of Rutilio Manetti's Baroque *Infant Christ blessing the Infant St. John*. But it is also present in all minor works as well; the 1344 Gabella *tavoletta* which shows *The Good Government of Siena*, for instance, or the Biccherna cover, painted by Giovanni di Paolo in 1436, showing *St. Jerome caring for the Lion's Paw*.

Until a very late date, Sienese painters also made extensive use of decorative gold-leaf which they used to cover large areas. They delighted in the elaboration of engraved and punched patterns on the *gesso* surface of their panel paintings, and they made the embossed

architectural mouldings of such paintings an integral part of their design. Sometimes they would even continue the carved decoration of a frame and its mouldings over into the picture. A typical example of the use of such techniques can be found in the work of the painter Paolo di Giovanni Fei, with his profusion of rich, decorative detailing in gold, his punched haloes, borders and materials. His *Madonna Lactans*, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, still in its original frame, elaborately decorated with gold and semi-precious stones, is an outstanding example of this tradition from the Middle Ages.

The demand for this kind of work remained constant in Siena until well into the period of the High Renaissance. Many of the major works of the Sienese renaissance, like Matteo di Giovanni's under-valued *Saint Barbara*, painted in 1478, continue to employ a gold background, and as late as 1529, the Sienese government was still finding it necessary to ban the import of 'Madonnas . . . worked in gold',[13] since this threatened the livelihood of practising Sienese artists.

Another means frequently employed by Sienese artists to achieve a desired decorative effect was the use of the curve and the curvilinear pattern. Simone Martini was among the first to adopt such formal patterning, the finest example being his *Guidoriccio* where the whole picture is built upon the repetition of an S-shape which gives the image its sense of movement. Paolo di Giovanni Fei was another artist to follow in this tradition; his *Visitation*, in a recess of the right wall of San Francesco, is based entirely on a similar curvilinear pattern, and the consummation of this trend is to be found in the works of Sano di Pietro, whose Madonnas are always so gracefully bent that they inevitably invite comparison with Oriental paintings.

In a search for an explanation of its distinctive qualities, commentators on Sienese painting have frequently spoken of its mysticism and other-worldliness, and it is true that Sienese painters are typically concerned to portray a transcendant rather than mundane reality. From the very first period in the second half of the thirteenth century when we can distinguish a distinct Sienese school of painting, centred around the earliest Sienese painter whose name is known to us, Guido da Siena, until the time of the High Renaissance, Sienese art remains highly symbolic and persistently stresses spiritual qualities at the expense of realism. Indeed, one of the best examples of this other-worldly quality of the whole Sienese school, dates from the time of the renaissance: Francesco di Giorgio's lovely *Annunciation*, where

the artist, desiring to dispel any sense of an objective or earthly reality, deliberately makes use of a perspective distortion to achieve an expressionistic effect that would have been anathema to any contemporary Florentine painter.

This painting of the *Annunciation* therefore epitomizes the vast gulf which in the last analysis always separated the Sienese and Florentine traditions in painting. Rarely can there have been two major artistic centres, as close to each other as Florence and Siena, constantly in contact, always open to each other's influence, sharing artists and craftsmen, which none the less developed such distinct traditions in the visual arts. How distinct they are is shown by the way in which all late medieval Tuscan art can be interpreted in terms of a continuing dialogue between two opposed yet complementary currents, one centred on Florence, the other on Siena.

This dialogue was, no doubt, fuelled by the natural antipathy of Florence and Siena. It is certainly significant that Sienese art flourished in those areas which were subject to Sienese dominion, and Florentine art in those areas subject to Florence, with crucial meeting-points at Certaldo, Poggibonsi, Castelfiorentino and Montepulciano, since a deliberate cultural imperialism was used by both Siena and Florence as a unifying force within the territories each ruled. When Siena recovered Montepulciano from Florence in 1496, for instance, the first concern of the new Sienese commissioner for Montepulciano, Antonio Bichi, was to have Cozzarelli sent to him. He required the presence of a major Sienese artist not only for the rebuilding of the defences of Montepulciano, but also to obliterate all traces of Florentine rule and to replace them with Sienese symbols. In particular he was anxious to replace the Florentine coats-of-arms on the city-gates by a *Balzana* and a Lion and a *Libertas*. The *Balzana* was so important that he wanted it made in Siena, and even for the other two shields he specifically requested the dispatch of a Sienese sculptor, 'who knows how to make them'.[14] In the main square, he was anxious to erect a column surmounted by a She-wolf, to replace the Florentine *Marzocco*, and again he requested that Siena should send him a 'master who will know how to make it well'.[15]

An even more explicit example of Sienese cultural imperialism can be found in 1540 with the building of Grosseto cathedral, when Siena expressed her intention of retaining complete control over the design and execution of the building. The citizens of Grosseto were to have no say in the design:

> desiring that the fabric of the cathedral . . . shall be brought to completion according to the good order and design of our architect, the excellent master Antonio Mario Lari . . . we forbid anyone to continue the walls or the fabric according to any other design . . . or to employ masters of any kind, either masons or sculptors or any others, unless with the consent and agreement of the same.[16]

The political differences between Siena and Florence gave to the two cities a distinctly different cultural orientation. In the early middle ages, Florence was the greatest of the Guelph cities, for most of the time allied with Naples, France and the Papal court, deeply influenced by the culture of these three centres and particularly by the organizing and rationalizing capacity so characteristic of medieval French culture. The Sienese were intensely suspicious of this Guelphic culture, and, in the fifteenth century, their poet, Il Saviozzo, spoke for them all in describing the Florentines as a:

> Detestable seed,
> Enemies of peace and of charity
> Who have 'Liberty' always in their mouths
> But devastate the world with their tyranny.

Even at this late date, Siena remained obstinately Ghibelline in all her cultural assumptions.

The chief artistic beneficiary of the Ghibelline traditions was Simone Martini whose paintings are best understood as the supreme expression of the sentiments and the aspirations of the native Tuscan nobility and the Italian chivalric tradition of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Decorative and poetic in their inspiration, his works are inhabited by knights in burnished armour, prelates in ornate robes, holy virgins, clad in graceful gowns, and ethereal angels. In his paintings we thus discover a world of refined beauty, in which all is perfect harmony and joy, and from which sorrows, sin and vulgarity are permanently banished. It is, in fact, the idealized world of the medieval courtly tradition.

Paradoxically, however, these same Ghibelline ideals which fired the imagination of Simone Martini, also fed rather than opposed another dominant theme of all Sienese art and architecture: civic idealism. For one important consequence of the battle of Montaperti was the forging of even closer links between the great Ghibelline cities of Tuscany—Pisa, Arezzo and Siena; as a result, until well

into the fourteenth century, Siena had closer cultural relationships with Arezzo and Pisa than she had with Guelph Florence. It was, therefore, from Pisa that in 1265 the Sienese summoned Nicola Pisano to erect the pulpit of their cathedral, and, as we have already seen, under the stimulus of Pisano's influence, there subsequently emerged an independent school of Sienese sculptors, whose best representative is Tino di Camaino. The work of these sculptors was remarkable for its blending of the religious and the civic ideal into a uniquely Sienese art-form, characterized particularly by its expression not just in stone, but in carved and painted wood.

Sculpture in turn had a direct impact on fourteenth-century Sienese painting, in the period which saw the emergence of the great Sienese school, of which Simone Martini is so prominent a representative but whose founder-member and most creative genius is, of course, Duccio di Buoninsegna. Born shortly before the battle of Montaperti and dying, probably, in 1313, when the rule of the Nine was at its height, Duccio did not abandon the tradition of Byzantine painting which had dominated Sienese painting until his lifetime, and of which Guido da Siena had been so fine an exponent. Duccio's works continued to emphasize the divine mysteries and the value of hierarchy and order, and indeed his paintings can be seen as the crowning glories of the Italian-Byzantine tradition. Nevertheless, Duccio is much more than a great Byzantine painter; he is a true innovator. In his *Maestà*, in particular, he emerges as the first great painter of masterpieces in an unmistakably Sienese manner. This is not just a question of brilliance of colour, of flowing line, and decorative qualities, but is inherent in the very subject-matter of this great painting. For it is the *Maestà* which establishes the tradition which was to become so insistent in Sienese painting, and which finds its fullest exposition in Lorenzetti's *Good and Bad Government*, in which there is a synthesis of the civic and the sacred through the lay celebration of divine themes.

In Duccio's *Maestà* there is also a specific concern for the urban environment and, particularly, the urban environment of Siena. Duccio's Jerusalem is, quite recognizably, an idealized Siena, and it is Duccio's experience as a citizen which assists his observation of reality. It is thus no accident that Duccio is the first painter of the western tradition who tries to present a near view of a scene which actually takes place in a town. Towns had, of course, appeared in late Byzantine paintings, but the relationship between man and such

urban backgrounds is always a hesitant one, represented uncertainly by figures who are set either against isolated buildings or against a town which is depicted as a whole and from the outside. It is significant that the first questioning of this tradition is to be found in the work of Guido da Siena, whose *Crucifixion* in the Pinacoteca shows a real innovation in the presentation of architecture, with high buildings set on a slant, which indicates a dawning concept of perspective recession. Building upon these insights of Guido, Duccio was to take the matter even further, setting his figures in close and intimate relationship with their urban landscapes, as in the panel from the *Maestà* of the *Healing of the Blind Man*, which is now in the National Gallery in London, where, on the right of the scene, a typical Sienese fountain reaches to the very foreground of the picture.

After Duccio, we rarely get away from the urban theme in Sienese painting, although it may be very diversely expressed. At its simplest, the civic tradition may be overtly alluded to as in Simone Martini's lyrical Uffizi *Annunciation*, in which the figure of St. Ansano, probably painted by Simone's partner, Lippo Memmi, carries the Sienese standard. At a more sophisticated level, it found expression, as in Guido and Duccio, in the interest shown by Sienese artists in man and his relationship to an architectural environment. The finest exponents of this tradition were the two Lorenzetti, but their followers all continued to be obsessed by the way in which man inhabits the buildings he constructs. Thus, a concern with the exploration of architectural interiors in relation to figures, comes across clearly, for instance, despite its Gothic emphasis, in Paolo di Giovanni Fei's *Birth of the Virgin*, modelled on Pietro Lorenzetti's treatment of the same subject; and very many Sienese narrative paintings, including Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Effects of Good Government*, show a great interest in the actual building process by which the urban environment was created.

Architecture as a whole, and its relationship to human figures, were thus predominant concerns in Sienese paintings at a time when the Florentines seem to have been largely unaware of their significance, and such interests were often developed by the Sienese artist into a loving and detailed exploration of the city and of its topography. The subject of a painting may be Jerusalem but it is Siena which is always depicted. Some of these paintings we have already encountered, but there are a great many others; Bartolo di Fredi's highly-stylized *Adoration of the Magi*, for instance, shows a rich procession winding

its way through the conical Tuscan hills, piled up towards the sky and ending in a Gothicized Siena; and Sano di Pietro, throughout his work, conflates the cities of Siena and Jerusalem, localizing the biblical stories firmly within the context of fifteenth-century Siena.

Yet, for all its concentration upon urban values, we should not lose sight of the fact that Sienese art was not isolated from the natural world, whose landscape and topography the artist often delineated with the greatest care. Siena as a city was, as it still is, in direct and continuous contact with a landscape of quite exceptional beauty. Even today the land surrounding the city is farmed right up to the city walls, while from almost anywhere in the city it is possible to catch evocative glimpses of the countryside roundabout. It is from just such a perspective that the countryside is presented in the work of such sixteenth-century artists as Beccafumi and Fungai. The majority of citizens, even those of modest means, continued to maintain direct relationships with the *contado*, while there was also something of a rural dimension to a city whose citizens turned the tops of demolished nobletowers into roof-gardens, and where, even at the height of urbanization in the fourteenth century, the city-walls enclosed orchards, gardens and vineyards.

Through their concentration upon urban values, balanced by those of the natural world, the Sienese artists arrived at the third consistent theme of their paintings; an emphasis upon humanity. A great boost was given to this theme in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries through the teachings of the friars, particularly the Dominicans and Franciscans. Both orders were, from their very inception, extremely popular in Siena, and their two great churches, among the most important brick constructions in central Italy, exercised a profound influence on the culture and the urban development of a city whose sky-line they still help to determine and whose limits they partially define. Both date from the early thirteenth century. In fact, as soon as the news of the death of St. Francis reached Siena, the commune decreed that a church should be built in his honour, and that first building was already complete by 1255. It bears little relationship, however, to the present San Francesco which was begun in 1326 and completed, probably to the designs of Francesco di Giorgio, only in 1475. After a disastrous fire in 1655 it was again altered and a number of Baroque additions were made; these, however, were removed in accordance with the dictates of neo-Gothic taste in the restoration made by Giuseppe Partini between 1885 and 1892. Even

then, the church still lacked a façade until as late as 1913 when one was finally added by Vittore Maini and Gaetano Coccarelli.

The Dominican order made an equally early impact on Siena. The great, gaunt, red-brick church, built on a vast substructure to crown the hill above Fontebranda, was constructed over an original building, which today forms the crypt, and was already under construction by 1220. By the end of the thirteenth century the new church was already so important and so popular that the commune was forced to build a new street so that the inhabitants of Camollia might reach it with ease, and it was found necessary to enlarge the original building. The present massive and unadorned San Domenico, so impressive in the stark simplicity of its line, was begun in the fourteenth century and was to a large extent financed by contributions from the commune. The *campanile* was completed by 1340, but the whole building was not finished before the end of the fifteenth century.

The vast investment by the Sienese community in these two great friary churches over so many centuries, confirms the great appeal which the friars made to the Sienese, and their consequent ability to attract over the centuries the patronage of commune, guilds, confraternities and individuals. The influence of the friars in a city where already by 1280 the *Fioretti* of St. Francis were a part of the common cultural heritage, was all-pervasive. Their churches even came to rival the commune as civic centres and it was within their walls that many leading Sienese citizens chose to be buried. Thus, the walls of San Francesco shelter the bones of Provenzano, the great hero of Montaperti, and also those of that most characteristic of Sienese saints, Pier Pettinagno. Again, many of the city's leading confraternities were directly attached to either San Domenico or San Francesco; family altars indicate the relationship between the friars and leading Sienese families; and the squares in front of both churches soon became important focal points of Sienese civic life.

As is clear from the essential nature of these two great churches, the friars saw art in entirely functional, almost prosaic, terms. It was a means of introducing the truths of the Christian religion to the illiterate. Their churches were therefore serviceable; they were not built as arcane celebrations of divine mysteries, but as areas of open, rectangular space where the people might hear their preachers. The walls of these churches were large and visible and were used to further the purposes of religion through frescoes which could clearly narrate the Christian message.

The message which the friars wanted to impart was essentially a humane one, for their primary aim was to bring heaven and earth closer together. The teaching of St. Francis, in particular, emphasized the humanity of all things, from God to animals and birds. The regal and aloof saints of Byzantium were meaningless to Francis of Assisi. He saw Mary not as the Virgin in Majesty, but as a tender mother suffused by human suffering; Christ not as the Divine Judge, but as the Man of Sorrows; the saints not as principalities and powers around the throne of the Almighty, but as human and humane figures. Such ideology the friars sought to have reflected in contemporary art and literature; the divine truths should be presented in familiar and down-to-earth forms. Thus, painters no longer showed Christ on the cross as erect, but rather bent and curved, in a manner most sympathetic to the Sienese style, his suffering emphasized and even over-emphasized. The Virgin was no longer portrayed as the majestic Queen of Heaven, familiar in the Byzantine tradition, but through the human episodes of her life; there was, for instance, in Siena a distinct vogue for paintings which illustrated the *Marriage* or the *Birth of the Virgin*. Again, the divine and the sanctified were presented in new attitudes. Paintings emphasized the playfulness of the infant Christ, or the resignation and patience of the aged St. Joseph. And, in Siena in particular, the teaching of the friars led to an emphasis on the small and domestic miracle, a *genre* in which the Sienese excelled, and which culminates in Francesco di Giorgio's enchanting *Miracle of the Sieve* in the Uffizi gallery. Human interest became all-important in painting, so much so that at times the divine message almost became subordinate, and the history of redemption, which such art was designed to illuminate, tended rather to become obscured. This is, for example, clearly the case in the numerous Sienese paintings which represent the Virgin trying, almost by violence, to prevent the events of the Passion.

There are, of course, many ways in which human interest can be conveyed in a work of art. The one most commonly favoured by the Sienese was the careful suggestion of human emotion. This was the technique of Duccio, for one, who virtually begs the viewer to identify with the emotions displayed by the figures in his paintings. Thus, in the *Deposition* from the *Maestà*, the mourners press around the dead body of Christ, all expressing an intense, passionate concern, while the Virgin, Mary Magdalen and St. John simultaneously embrace and support the dead body. Another means of conveying

human interest was through the use of naturalistic figures and backgrounds which could be easily identified by the viewer. Simone Martini, stongly influenced by the work of Pisano who had introduced such techniques into Sienese sculpture, was a keen observer of reality and shows a conscious interest in natural phenomena. Such a concern is seen at its best in the paintings done for the church of St. Augustine in Siena of the *Blessed Augustino Novello and the Story of His Life*. Associated with this humanizing impulse was the common tendency to elaborate in paintings the most human incidents in the bible story. An example is Simone's painting in the Walker Art Gallery of Liverpool, which represents Mary and Joseph admonishing Christ in the temple. The greatest exponents of these traditions were, of course, the two Lorenzetti, both of whom were profoundly sympathetic to the teaching of the friars.

A primary reason for the success of the friars in achieving the desired humanization of religion within Siena was the close connexion which they developed with the religious confraternities. The confraternities themselves were a means of popularizing, vulgarizing and extending the Christian message among all classes of Sienese society. The confraternities, therefore, in association with the friars helped to give guidance and direction to the creative and artistic life of Siena in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thus, within the circle of St. Catherine, who numbered among her close friends the artist Andrea Vanni and the poet Nari di Landoccio dei Pagliaresi, a follower of Dante, the same emphasis upon humane and humanized religion is to be found as in the visual arts. And similar religious values are expressed with particular strength in the poetry of Niccolò di Mino Cicerchia, whose *Passion of Our Lord,* written in 1364, was to have a vital impact on the cultural development of all Tuscany.

A parallel and connected development, whose spiritual impulse also ultimately derives from the teaching of the friars, was to be found among the Gesuati, founded by the Sienese patrician, Giovanni Colombini. Colombini urged his followers to sing at all times as they went about the business of preaching and spreading the gospel of love and reconciliation. The resulting *genre* of spiritual song or laud, written by Colombini and his followers—the most famous of whom is Bianco da Siena—is yet another example of the popularity of the new, humane and often highly emotional Christianity in this period of European history.

The same religious circles, by making Dante available to a wide

Sienese audience, provided Sienese culture with another new and constant source of inspiration. Readings aloud from Dante, for example, formed a part of the proceedings of the *cenacolo* of St. Catherine and those of other confraternities. Such readings helped to popularize his works among the public story-tellers of Siena and, by such means, Dante became so universally known that by the end of the fourteenth century he was virtually public property. It is indicative of his great importance in Sienese civic life that from 1396 Buccio da Spoleto was lecturing on Dante in the University, and giving public expositions of *The Divine Comedy* from a pulpit outside San Vigilio on the major feast-days of the church.

The popularity of the Florentine but Ghibelline-orientated Dante among the Sienese is not really surprising, for it is a confirmation of the humanistic impulses in their culture. *The Divine Comedy*, like the other major works of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, is a major example of that humanization of culture which we associate with fourteenth-century Tuscany and to which the friars made so great a contribution. The success of this religious and cultural movement within Siena was such that Dante inevitably made a direct appeal to the city's major artists. It is probable that he influenced Simone Martini, who was to become a close friend of Petrarch, and very likely that he had a very profound effect on Paolo di Giovanni Fei. The works of Taddeo di Bartolo, Sassetta, and Giovanni di Paolo also all contain direct or indirect allusions to *The Divine Comedy*.

What emerges from this account is that the Sienese tradition in painting, both in theme and style, was well-established by the end of the fourteenth century. Sienese art grew naturally out of the society of the city and was a clear expression of its civic culture, which it also helped to shape. In the following centuries, the nature of Sienese society altered radically and a reflection of this change were the new styles which are associated with those movements we call the Renaissance, Baroque, and Neo-classicism. But, in Siena, there was never to be a major break in the continuity of artistic development. Change took root but slowly and, as we shall see, the themes and styles which had characterized Sienese art in the past, rather than being abandoned were only modified or elaborated in the creative consciousness of the future.

7

City of the Virgin

Maria advocata
Mediatrix optimum
Inter Christum
Et Senam suam.

THE INFLUENCE of religion on the civic life of Siena has always been all-pervasive. The 1355 statutes of the Painters' Guild open with a clear statement of faith:

> In the beginning, in the middle and at the end of all that we do or say, our regulations will be made in the name of omnipotent God and of his mother, the Holy Virgin Mary. Amen.[1]

But such an affirmation of the ultimate and all-embracing significance of religion need not have been restricted to the painters' guild, for the city's entire corporate life was structured according to religious norms. Religion provided the firmest foundation and the most authoritative title to political power in Siena, and no area of life in the city escaped its influence. The family, economic life, commerce, education, all were equally subject to its control, while religious ceremonies played a crucial part in the city, by uniting basically disparate groups in common moments of civic participation.

Of course, such general comments about the role of religion can be made with equal accuracy about almost any other pre-industrial town. Peculiar to Siena, however, are the intensity of its corporate religious life and certain specific forms of piety, characteristically exemplified by the development of the idea of Siena as the special city of the Virgin. Official recognition of the Virgin as the Queen of the city is normally dated from the battle of Montaperti in 1260. According to tradition, in the anxious hours which preceded the battle, Bonaguida Lucari, who had been chosen as ruler of the city with full powers for the duration of the war, led the populace in surrendering Siena into the Virgin's hands. Bareheaded and barefooted, a halter around his neck, he