



## **Fascism and the Managing Class in Siena**

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**Abstract**

In recent years, a historiographical line has developed that looks with attention towards local phenomena in order to fully comprehend the fascist experience in Italy. The history of territories and single realities mustn't become a mere research of history of the "homeland" but, rather, an important instrument with the scope of having a more ample vision of the national context and, in particular, how the strong centralist aspect of fascism was received internally in Italian provinces. In line with this way of thinking, it is important to stop and analyze the education system and its methods of selection of the managing class that found itself governing Italy after the arrival of fascism. An analysis of the case of Siena could be used as a kaleidoscope for a comparative study with other realities of the peninsula. The goal of this research project is to attempt to understand how the managing class of Siena changed and, if it changed at all during this transition from the liberal state to fascism, what were the mechanisms of selection and identification of the governing citizen? In addition, this project will investigate the relationship between city and countryside with respect to the composition and education of a renewed local managing class. At the same time the relationship between center and periphery will be analyzed in terms of autonomy and ascent to success. Moreover, an analysis of the local Liceo Classico could demonstrate to have a peculiar role as a school for elite citizens and also in its relationships with the university world, in particular with the "conservative" Department of Law at the inside of this system of checks and balances.

**Key words**

Fascism, Local History, Managing Class, School, Siena

Negli ultimi anni, si è sviluppata una storiografia che guarda con attenzione verso i fenomeni locali, al fine di comprendere appieno l'esperienza fascista in Italia. La storia dei territori e delle singole realtà non deve essere vista come una mera ricerca di storia della "patria", ma, piuttosto, come uno strumento importante per avere una visione più ampia del contesto nazionale e, in particolare, come il forte aspetto centralista del fascismo fu recepito all'interno delle province italiane. In linea con questo modo di pensare. In quest'ottica è fondamentale analizzare il sistema di istruzione ed i suoi metodi di selezione della classe dirigente chiamata a governare l'Italia dopo l'arrivo del fascismo. L'analisi del caso senese potrebbe essere visto come un caleidoscopio per uno studio comparativo con altre realtà della penisola. L'obiettivo di questa ricerca è quello di cercare di individuare come mutò la classe dirigente a Siena negli anni dall'avvento dello stato liberale al fascismo. Infine si è visto quali furono i meccanismi di identificazione del ceto dirigente locale. Si è cercato di inquadrare anche il rapporto tra città e campagna per vedere quale fu l'evoluzione della classe dirigente rurale. Infine uno sguardo attento verso il Liceo Classico di Siena, vera e propria

fucina della classe dirigente, e verso l'Università, in particolare la Facoltà di Giurisprudenza, ha permesso di approfondire i meccanismi di selezione e cooptazione dei futuri amministratori della città.

**Parole chiave**

Fascismo, Storia Locale, Classe Dirigente, Scuola, Siena

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, a historiographical current has developed that focuses its attention on local phenomena. Through this perspective a series of contributions aimed at fully understanding the fascist experience in Italy through scrupulous research on the peripheries of the peninsula have flourished, parting from the pioneer perspective of P.R. Corner on fascism in Ferrara<sup>1</sup>. The history of the territories and of the single realities does not have to transform itself into a mere research of homeland history, but become an important instrument with the goal of having a more ample vision of the national context and in particular how strong fascist centralism was received within Italian provinces. Parallel to this line of thought it is important to linger on the formation of the methods and selection of the managing class that found itself governing Italy after the rise of the regime<sup>2</sup>.

Mussolini rose quickly to power, without the “technical” time it would take to be able to delineate the figure of the “perfect” law official and political fascist. Prestige was acquired with seniority within the party; being enrolled before 1922 or having participated in the “Marcia su Roma,” in addition to being a reason for getting ahead; it was also an important credential for undertaking the political-administrative *cursus honorum*. This led to a lack in the development of the managing class; fascists from the very beginning heavily opposed the entrance into the higher spheres of administration of the party to those who had been wearing the black shirt for a short time<sup>3</sup>. This is seen with regards to other studies such as those by E. Gentile, P. Melograni, R. De Felice and R. Vivarelli<sup>4</sup>. The young age of the majority of managers did not bring

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<sup>1</sup> P. CORNER, *Il fascismo a Ferrara 1915-1925: come nacque la reazione di massa in Italia*, Bologna, CLUEB, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> R. ROMANELLI, *La nazionalizzazione delle periferie, casi e prospettive di studio*, in “Meridiana”, n. 4, 1988, pp. 13-24; L. LODOVICI, *I fascismi in provincia orientamenti e ipotesi di ricerca*, in “Memoria e ricerca”, n. 1, 1993, pp. 137-148.

<sup>3</sup> *Istituzioni e borghesie locali nell'Italia liberale*, a cura di M. Bigarin, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> R. DE FELICE, *Lo stato totalitario 1936-1940*, Torino, Einaudi, 1981; E. GENTILE, *Storia del partito fascista 1919-1922*, Bari, Laterza, 1989; ID., *La via italiana al totalitarismo. Il partito e lo stato nel regime fascista*, Roma, Carocci, 2002; R. VIVARELLI, *Fascismo e storia d'Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009.

about a true renewal of the national and local governing class. One can consider the “fascistizzazione” of the State was slow, and, above all, occurred without burning bridges with the recent liberal past, as evidenced by A. Lyttleton, C. Seton-Watson and A. Tasca<sup>5</sup>.

Together with the political class of early fascism, even the old, powerful oligarchs succeeded in preserving their own privileges that, masked as fascists, maintained a strong weight in the economic organization of the country. Fascism was never capable of taking flight and emancipating itself from the old managing class. Instead, it had to continue to collaborate with the latter in order to preserve the functioning of the state, as analyzed by F. Chabod and D. Mack-Smith<sup>6</sup>. An analysis of local history of which selection methods for the managing class were used is necessary to discover: if the relationship between diplomats and graduates within the directing framework remained invariant, if the only difference between the fascist managers and those of liberal expression was the young age, and most importantly, in which way the Italian provinces were invaded by young energies but privy of experience.

In the early years of the regime, a degree in law continued to be a privileged track for a brilliant career, remaining in line with the prerogatives of the liberal state; only with the passing of time did they attempt to valorize degrees in economy, commerce and political science.

Fascism also signaled the ascent of the rural and provincial political class, which signified the triumph of Mussolini’s movement among the middle classes and within the rich agricultural bourgeoisies, which, after difficult years, was seeing a re-stabilization of its supremacy in the countryside. The suppression of the elected officials, substituted by the figure of the “podesta”, was seen as a return to the old logics of power. This phenomenon, however, created problems and tensions between the Podesta and the fascist Secretary, that replicated the conflicting

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<sup>5</sup> A. LYTTLETON, *La conquista del potere. Il fascismo dal 1919 al 1929*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1974; A. TASCAS, *Origini e avvento del fascismo*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1995; C. SETON-WATSON, *L'Italia dal liberalismo al fascismo 1870-1925. Vol. II*, Bari, Laterza, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> D. MACK-SMITH, *Storia d'Italia 1861-1969*, University of Michigan, 1969; F. CHABOD, *L'Italia contemporanea (1918-1948)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1997.

relationship that existed between Prefect and Federal, as evidenced in the historiographical current discussed by De Felice.

It is necessary to bring attention to the school of thought that fascism went forward until the ascent to power to understand how the new managing class was forged, which should have begun the fascist era. The philosopher Giovanni Gentile, minister of Public Education from 31 October 1922 until 1 July 1924, was appointed by the Duce to elaborate what was to be the “most fascist of reforms”<sup>7</sup>.

Gentile’s provisions completed by commencing the “most conservative of reforms” of the fascist period; the fixed point of the new legislation was a crystallization of the aristocratic selection of managers within the inseparable duo of high school. Classical instruction was the only formative track that opened doors to all labor obstacles. The prescriptive text enclosed within demonstrates an implicit disregard for technical and professional education and for this reason entrusted to other ministries. Only surveyors and accountants remained within the department of Gentile. This setting signaled a net return to the principals of the Casati law of 1859. The selection criteria closed in on the necessity to actuate an immediate reform at a low cost that could be realized quickly; for a detailed outline of school during the fascist period, one can consult the works of G. Bonetta, G. Genovesi, M. Raicich and A. Semeraro. An evident limit is presented in the emphatization of humanistic studies that distanced Italy from the creative process initiated by industrialization, a concrete, hierarchical setting was preferred, that solidified the new state draft system into the regime, in particular noted by A. Acquarone, S. Cassese, M. Salvati, G. Melis, G. Santomassimo and V. Zamagni on bureaucracy and state mechanisms under fascism<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> M. OSTENEC, *La scuola italiana durante il fascismo*, Bari, Laterza, 1980; J. CHARNITZKY, *Fascismo e scuola*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1996; A. TARQUINI, *Il Gentile dei fascisti*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> L. AQUARONE, *L’organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, Torino, Einaudi, 1965; G. MELIS, *Società senza stato. Per uno studio della classe dirigente in età liberale e periodo fascista*, in “Meridiana”, n. 4, 1988, pp. 91-99; ID., *Storia dell’Amministrazione Italiana: 1861-1893*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1996; ID., *La Burocrazia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003; ID., *Lo stato negli anni trenta: istituzioni e regimi fascisti in Europa*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2008; S. CASSESE, *Lo stato fascista*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010.

During the second half of the 1930's, Italy underwent strong socio-economical changes that pushed the state to invest in the military industry, which brought about a re-evaluation of technical institutes, scientific high schools and graduate institutes.

“La Carta della Scuola” by Giuseppe Bottai (1939) was meant to be the answer to these social changes<sup>9</sup>. One must clarify that this new process of reform remained almost completely as a theoretical exercise; themes such as the supremacy of the races (referred to the Racial Laws from 1938) and imperialistic politics are found in this work. The only reform realized was that of the elementary and middle schools; the case of primary school is particularly interesting; with the creation of proper rural sections instituted to prevent the abandonment of the countryside. With the fall of the regime, the prescriptive framework of Giovanni Gentile continued to linger even during the Italian Republic.

Within this society in evolution, it is interesting to note how the single realities responded to the new regulations of the fascist state and, above all, try to investigate which aspects, despite the rise of an authoritarian state, remained invariant with respect to the past.

A particular reflection must be given to the Sienese case. Starting from an already existing bibliography and through the study of new sources, one can fully understand if Siena during the “Ventennio” covered an important role in the national panorama and, most importantly, which were the selection mechanisms of the managing class.

## 2. The Sienese Case

This study, which originates with the historiography of the theme, wishes to dwell on the selection methods of the political-administrative class that governed in Siena during the regime, attempting to investigate why there was no renewal of the managing class created at the beginning of the 1900's. Fascism, in fact, did not succeed in breaking through the Sienese politico-economic system in such that a cooptation mechanism

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<sup>9</sup> R. GENTILI, *Giuseppe Bottai e la riforma fascista della scuola*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1979.

was in force that, those that were not part of the liberal class, was left out of major roles. According to this process, therefore, the liberal-monarchical and Sieneese catholic classes succeeded in integrating innovative elements brought forward by fascism in their conservatism. All this was possible thanks to the control exercised by the managers of the middle class. This analysis must also linger on the nationalist experience, whose major interpreter is F. Bargagli Petrucci. Starting from the studies of S. Battente, this study will attempt to understand how nationalism influenced the rising bureaucratic fascist mechanism. Enrico Corradini, in the course of a visit to Siena, had praised it as the standard of the nationalist movement, individuating in the contradas a series of microcosms that had kept alive the medieval spirit of the citizens; for this reason within the city arose a strong movement tied to the Italian nationalist association that merged into the PNF. The composition of the major citizen institutions of the Sieneese hegemonic system revolved around the Monte dei Paschi, as the bank had a fundamental role within the city's economic framework, as explained by A. Cardini<sup>10</sup>. The power of the bank is to be researched not only using the enormous amount of resources available, but in the distribution of benefits to all the citizens, that in the end kept the majority of the Sieneese population tied to it. In addition, the bank (as evidenced in recent studies by G. Catoni) carried out a fundamental role in the stagnation of the relationship of production in the Sieneese territory: the example of the agrarian credit granted to land producers ended up maintaining a backward economic structure in the countryside. Within the city, the credit institute did everything to impede the birth of a strong industrial class that could condition the fate of Siena. Economical lines, brought forward by Monte dei Paschi, were created in such a way that crystallized the managing class, despite the fact that, during the years of the decline of the politics

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<sup>10</sup> A. CARDINI, *L'economia senese sotto il fascismo*, in *Fascismo e antifascismo nel senese*, a cura di A. Orlandini, Atti del convegno Siena, 10-11 dicembre 1993, Firenze, Edizioni Regione Toscana, 1994; ID., *Storia di Siena dal Risorgimento al Miracolo economico*, Firenze, Nerbini, 2009.

of Giolitti, the governing class understood the importance of building the relationship with the small bourgeoisies<sup>11</sup>.

Even though the law of universal suffrage had created more than a few preoccupations within the Italian political class, in Siena, the governing elite saw in the development of Monte dei Paschi, in the birth of new branches, and in the consecutive creation of new jobs – all aspects of a physiological necessity of growth of the bank – the way to control that enlarged electoral body that had been created with the recent reform.

The strong tie of the bank with the city was immediately evident even to intransigent fascists such as Mino Maccari and Remigio Rugani, who made it known to the central authorities of the party how the majority of the directors of the fascist party in the province of Siena were in some way tied to Monte dei Paschi for either personal or familial reasons. The political weakness of the fascist party in Siena derived from a lacking substitution of the managing class that governed the bank with a new fascist mold. It was above all the role of the board of Alfredo Bruchi, as analyzed by D. Pasquinucci<sup>12</sup>, - son of the pre-fascist managing class and remained in charge throughout the years of fascism – to create large problems with Mussolini's party: Bruchi's board under political profile was a great success for the Sienese elite. Bruchi succeeded in eliminating the fascist project of renewal of the managing citizen framework, infiltrating men faithful to him in all the centers of power in the city, even within the Provincial Federation of the PNF. The lack of success by the part of the hierarchs to conquer the bank, the strong ties between the managing class and the middle class broke. In Siena a very particular event occurred – maybe a rare case – in the sense that all the institutions, businesses and even politics itself depended by the fate of Monte dei Paschi.

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<sup>11</sup> G. CATONI, *Le gallerie del Ventennio. Progetti urbanistici e assetto edilizio a Siena nella prima metà del Novecento*, in *Stillae Temporis Annuario del Liceo Classico E.S. Piccolomini di Siena*, Siena, Pistolesi, 1984, pp. 77-92; ID., *Il Monte dei Paschi di Siena nei due secoli della Deputazione Amministratrice (1786-1986)*, Siena, Monte dei Paschi, 1986; ID., *Il Fiero Podestà. Fabio Bargagli Petrucci e il Patrimonio di Siena*, Siena, Fondazione MPS, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> D. PASQUINUCCI, *Notabilato, piccola borghesia e mezzadria nella transizione verso il fascismo. Alcune ipotesi su alleanze e solidarietà sociale a Siena*, in *28 ottobre e dintorni – Le basi sociali e politiche del fascismo in Toscana*, Firenze, Edizioni Polistampa, 1994, pp. 249-266.

In order to have an idea of the scarce roots of the fascist party in the Sienese population, it is sufficient to analyze some electoral data. In 1921 the National Bloc, formed by liberal, radical and fascist exponents obtained 39.9% of the Sienese vote, whereas the PSI won 47.8%. The majority of the preferences of the National Bloc went to liberal representatives and only a small part to fascist candidates; among the liberals on the list, there was also the leader of the Sienese movement, Gino Sarrocchi, who became minister of public works right after the Matteotti murder. Even the electoral results of 1924 demonstrated the same trend in votes: the fascist electoral committee communicated that the people should not vote for the “Listone Mussolini” but the “Lista Bis” composed of fascists and liberals, headed by Sarrocchi. This decision arose from the will to take away a certain representation of the opposition that the Acerbo law of 1923 attributed to minority forces. Despite official motivations, one can gather how the fascists had realized how the liberal forces still benefited from a massive support among the population. The electoral results evidenced a political predominance of liberals in the Sienese province: the “Listone” won 19%, while the “Lista Bis” took 50,5% of the votes. These electoral results evidenced how fascism was struggling to take root among the middle classes. All this can be seen analyzing the behavior of the numerous categories and professional orders in the various electoral results and through their behavior towards fascism. One must clarify that the professional orders in Siena – above all those of lawyers – had a determining role within the city’s political system. Some news on the electoral choices of Sienese professional orders can be found in a report sent from the Provincial Federation of the PNF to Giacomo Acerbo by way of the Prefecture. Michele Bianchi and Francesco Giunta were appointed by the advisory board of the fascist party to analyze electoral trends with the goal of setting the future political action of the party. The report deduced that doctors, pharmacists and veterinarians adhered largely to the governing list, while lawyers remained hostile to fascism. The Forense order succeeded in maintaining a certain autonomy foiling every attempt at

turning it fascist. The majority of those enrolled in the order in 1923, one year before the elections, were part of the most important liberal citizen organizations and among them there major exponents of the Siense managing class. Only two of the 67 members of the order were entirely fascist. One of these two was Mino Maccari, who, together with Angelo Bencini, was the creator of the *Strapaese* patriotic trend<sup>13</sup>.

The entrance of fascism within professional orders can also be understood analyzing the Ateneo situation in Siena with the Gentile law of 1923, the control of knowledge was majorly accentuated, seeing that with some cooptive methods control over the university and graduates that came from other academic institutes was guaranteed (with regards to this one can consult the documentation from the GUF archives preserved at the “Circolo Giuridico” library of the University of Siena). With this reform access to universities became more difficult, so much so that in the two year span from 1926-1927 the university population diminished considerably. From this we can deduce that the imprint that was given to both the scholastic and university educational system notably influenced professional orders, which eventually caused an earthquake within the orders themselves. Lawyers registered from 1919 to 1926 consisted of 46.1% of members while those who registered from 1927 to 1932 represented only 10.5% of the total. In the registry of the Procuratory the situation was not much different: registered members in the years after the war until 1926 resulted superior to those who registered in the following years, enough to show to that the relationship was 30 to 9.

Professional orders for engineers, medical surgeons and pharmacists did not undergo any diminishing in the number of enrolled for the years that followed 1926. The effects of the scholastic reform were notable very early, since the percentage of medical doctors who had a father in the same profession was 3.1% from 1919 to 1926. For the period of years from 1926 to 1932 the situation changed drastically as the percentage

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<sup>13</sup> D. PASQUINUCCI, *Classe dirigente liberale e fascismo a Siena. Un caso di continuità*, in “Italia Contemporanea”, III, n. 184, settembre 1991, pp. 443-468; *Società e politica a Siena nella transizione verso il fascismo*, a cura di D. Pasquinucci, Siena, Nuova Immagine, 1995.

rose to 7.26%. The effects of the Gentile Reform were the most notable within the medical surgeon profession as family ties assumes a greater importance with respect to the past. A particularly interesting deeper study on the world of these professions is the documentation collected in the archives of the “Sindaco Fascista. Unione Provinciale Professionisti e Artisti della Provincia di Siena” located in the State Archives of Siena<sup>14</sup>.

All this was able to escape the hands of the fascist hierarchies, considering that within the University of Siena there was a very high presence of instructors that did not see fascism in a good light, and a component of professors close to masonry.

One must highlight that the medical order was, without a shadow of doubt, that which adhered the most to fascism with respect to all the other professional categories. In 1926 medical doctors represented 5.3% of all members of the PNF, whereas lawyers 3.2%. The Sienese fascist party was composed prevalently by teachers, students and office staff, as seen in the articles published by “Il Popolo Senese” from 26 March to 13 May 1926. This party was apparently an expression of the small bourgeoisies, in particular of intellectuals and office staff, but in reality it was most heavily represented by the city’s managing class that maintained 8.6% of members. The strong adhesion of land owners had brought to completion the process of reunification between the bourgeoisies and the aristocracy. This newfound synergy between these two parts allowed for the complete isolation of those who had rose to the top with fascism, completely emptying of all political content the fascist party of the capital city and the Provincial Federation of the fascist party. The joining of the managing classes occurred at Monte dei Paschi, in municipal administration and other public institutions. The reunification occurred with the goal of guaranteeing a sort of status quo that would not change even minimally the balance on which the Sienese government was founded.

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<sup>14</sup> G. RATIGLIA, *Vita sindacale senese*, Siena, Ancora, 1929.

This peculiar case in Siena can be explained only through the complex knot that tied the parts of the city together; the *contradas* and other various academies and associations had been created in such a way that the society was sheltered among concepts and life models that not even the totalitarian experience succeeded in unhinging. A fundamental element for understanding what truly occurred in Siena during the fascist years is how the managing class was formed. A scholar must investigate if the ES Piccolomini Classical high school continued to have a close role in the selection of the city's *establishment*, and towards which educational track the rich, provincial agrarian bourgeoisies decided to direct its own descendants, and if indeed a diversified rural managing class was born because of education and *modus operandi* of those people.

We note, in addition, that in the course of the years of government under the Podestà of Fabio Bargagli Petrucci (1926-1937) they tried to promote a new artistic educative model that would make Siena the seat of art of the fascist era. Other studies are necessary to understand if the “Terza Via Formativa” of Baragli Petrucci was developed as an alternative in the city to the Liceo Piccolomini for education of the managing class if it would have to become a new model of instruction to educate a class of artists that would have had to project Siena beyond the “Gothic dream” through the discovery of Liberty and Neoclassical styles.

After a first analysis of the documents and the projects of the Podestà of art it appears rather evident that they opted for the second of the above mentioned models, as are highlighted in the projects of new urbanization in the neighborhood of San Prospero and the Piano Regolatore of 1933. Among these projects one must keep in mind the study for the realization of a neighborhood for artists in the Pian d’Ovile zone.

These new elements available to history offer ulterior investigative perspectives for an analytical construction of contemporary Siena; at the same time we must proceed with a comparative analysis between education and sport which attempts at noting the links that developed in

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the course of time between the Polisportiva Mens Sana 1871<sup>15</sup> and the Liceo Classico<sup>16</sup>. It is fundamental to stop and analyze the fascist years to understand the evolution of the managing class in Siena after 1946. The city's archives are rich in documentation from contemporary years that have yet to be thoroughly studied. This work, inserting itself in line with other major historiographic interpretations attempts to offer a study on the education and selection of the local managing class with the objective of analyzing it in a comparative light with other realities of the Peninsula.

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<sup>15</sup> F. VALACCHI, *I muscoli della città. Dall'Associazione Ginnastica Senese alla Mens Sana*, Siena, 1991; G. ZANIBELLI, *Fascismo e Sport a Siena. L'inaugurazione dello stadio comunale. 8 dicembre 1938*, in "Le Antiche Dogane", anno XVI, n. 179, maggio 2014, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> *Il Liceo classico di Siena I. Dal Granducato allo Stato liberale*, a cura di G. Zanibelli, Siena, Nuova Immagine Editrice, 2012; ID., *Il Liceo Classico di Siena II. L'Archivio storico. Inventario analitico*, Siena, Nuova Immagine-MIBAC, Siena, 2013.

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