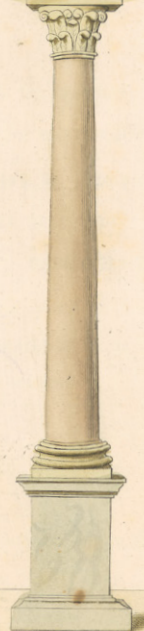


# The Palio of Siena



*Insegna della Città di Siena*

*A. Rossetti del.*





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*On the book cover*  
Salvatore Fiume, Palio banner of 13th September 1986

# The Palio of Siena



Hear, hear  
tired contrade  
messengers of love  
and the war you run  
in the name of the Virgin  
in the mouth of lions.  
Rejoice, hear it,  
beautiful districts  
full of fairies and  
flower balconies.  
Of love and  
of bold Tuscany.  
Drink the wine  
and water to encourage you  
and hope that then you  
surrender for the glory of life.

Alda Merini, *Contrade udite udite*, 2007





**History,  
from the  
beginning  
of time  
to the  
present**



# Myths, legends, and the linear Palio (1000-1300)

Quite when did the Palio begin? The question appears every summer in the thoughts of all inhabitants of Siena. If no precise date exists, an answer still can be found: the Palio, the famous horserace attracting so many people today, is as old as Siena, running through the city's myths, legends, and history. Over the centuries it came to be the distinctive element of the city, many would say to the point of becoming the fourth dimension of the city's reality, the indispensable, the primary mechanism moulding the city, giving meaning to all that the city is and does. The town districts, the so called "Contrade" (sing. "Contrada"), shape the strong social identity of the Siennese people and the Palio gives them a model of how things are to be done. Even in politics, says a local proverb, the Palio is run all year long.

Siena was an Etruscan city, modest but well-connected to the major centers of the region where this population was prevalent, Etruria: Fiesole and Chiusi, Cortona and Volterra. Many have pointed out fascinating analogies between the first Palios and the equestrian games of the Etruscans and earlier still of the Greeks. In Poggio

Civitade, not far from Siena, there is a fragment of pediment, from the 6th century b.C., showing a series of horsemen lined up, riding bareback like today's jockeys and, like their modern counterparts, they are equipped with riding crops and hats, all set to run their Etruscan Palio.

Another myth of the race's origins – favoring Siena as born from the rib of Rome and founded by the fugitive sons of Remus – depicts those men reaching the fateful place after a great race, chased by the horsemen of Romulus. Senio and Aschio thus founded Siena at the end of a mythic "linear Palio." The insignia of the new city was to be white and black after their horses and the clouds of smoke that rose from the two sites where they offered their sacrifices to the gods.

The Balzana (the old Roman emblem in black and white) remained the Coat of Arms of Siena, perhaps because, as Geno Pampaloni wrote, it is the perfect symbol of the extreme character of the city. It seems the irreducible opposition of white and black, yet the Balzana in fact presents the fusion of all colors in the white and their absolute absence in the black.



Terracotta slab, knights' race, from Poggio Civitate, Murlo, early 6th century. BC, National Archaeological Museum, Siena

The same is true of the Palio: the Balzana is omnipresent as the insignia of the Municipality and as a sign of unification, *reductio ad unum* of the agreeable disagreement, of the seeming harmony between Contrade which, with their individual colors and flags, are divided and oppose each other, set themselves apart and clash. But they identify as a union in the Balzana, like the Siennese people when they are happy to run into each other away from home or when they put themselves against the rest of the world. The obsessively black and white marbles of the Cathedral, symbol to some of the glory and pain of the Madonna, render the building a kind of "sacred Balzana", and thus the appropriate setting for the offering of candles, the benediction of the Palio banner, the "Te Deum" hymn of victory, for the most intense and tumultuous moments of popular religiousness, which may be archaic in form, but fully heartfelt as an indispensable and ever-current part of the Palio rites.

It was in the church-square of the black and white New Cathedral in the 1200s that the insignia of the City-State was placed to

mark the finish line of the race of the barb horses, the linear Palio which in previous centuries had been run through the tortuous city streets all the way to the old Cathedral, dedicated to San Boniface, as recorded in documents from the 11th century. When Siena became one of the richest and most cultured cities in Medieval Europe, the Palio was the sporting event and culminating moment that crowned and concluded the splendid annual festivals in honor of Our Lady of August, Virgin Mary of the Assumption, queen and patron of Siena and of its State. To her was the city dedicated and entrusted. The keys of the city were offered to her in the most critical moments of history, from the eve of the glorious Battle of Montaperti in 1260 to passage of the Front in 1944, in 2020 and in 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the Festival of the Assumption Siena became an "open city." Arrests were suspended; exiles could return and freely walk the town; goods and livestock poured into the marketplace; streets came alive with musicians and minstrels, mimes and jesters who entertained the crowds; acrobats





Passage of de' Barberi in front of the Tolomei College, a print of 1775, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena

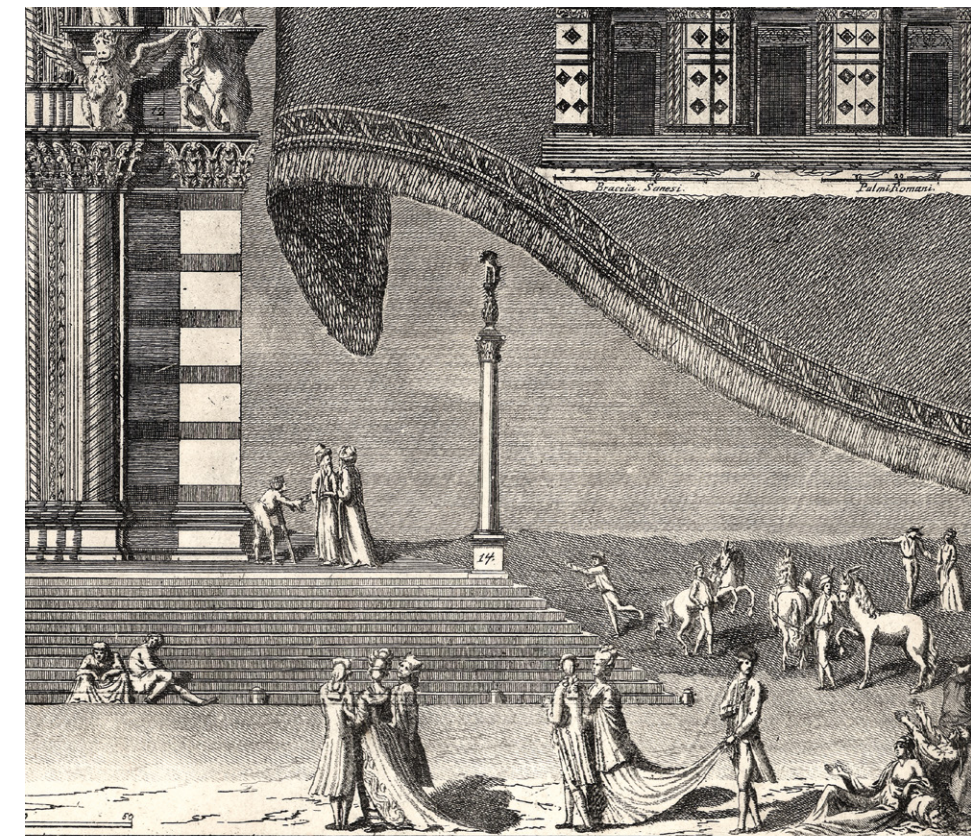
and strongmen, teeth-pullers and healers, trinket-sellers and harlots, wine-merchants and vendors offered their wares and their services. The city displayed tapestries and flags, decorations, festoons and garlands: in 1329 the City-State ordered 600 of these to be made. In 1378 monies were spent on fireworks, then considered a marvel. The culmination was the offering of candles and tributes in the Cathedral, a religious and political rite, an act of Siennese devotion to the Madonna and of subordination to the vicars, the leaders of the City-State. The collective oath of allegiance was its own precise ritual: a scroll from 1200 describes it, referring to an article in an older statute, since lost. The quantity of fine waxen tributes to be offered varied

according to the importance of whoever made the offering, but all citizens (from 18 to 70 years old) were dutybound to make offerings, as were all institutions of Siena and its State, most notably the Municipality which offered a gold-leafed and painted candle, as it does today. In the years of the greatest splendor, the Siennese who packed the Cathedral watched as, before their Madonna to whom vows were offered, former enemies kneeled, thus becoming fellow citizens: the Counts of Scialenga and the Counts Gherardesca, the wise Aldobrandeschi and the Guidi family, legendary warriors. The wax that the workers of the Cathedral amassed beneath the dome reached a weight of 30,000 lbs. It was then redistributed to the

small churches and parishes of the diocese, representing the ancient paradigm of the ritual donation, with the symbolic obligations of giving, receiving, and reciprocating. In the words of a saying much cherished by Boccaccio, “The Church is like the sea, from everyone it takes and to everyone it gives.” The Municipality played an analogous role in the secular aspects of the festival. Prisoners to be freed from the dungeons were drawn by lot, as were the names of virtuous and needy maidens whose dowries were provided for “at the public expense.”

Public reconciliations between factions and families gave relief to feuds among the citizenries. Food and drink was provided for all. In the act of submission of Montelaterone (1205), the Municipality committed itself to giving victuals to anyone who brought a tribute of fine wax to Siena. This was the first documentation of the custom that was to continue in the banquet offered by the Signoria and today in the dinners on the eve of the Palio sumptuously laid out on the streets for thousands of celebrants. In the period of the “culture of hunger”

Ciro Santi, *The arrival of the Palio in the long run in Piazza del Duomo*, 19th century print. XVIII, detail, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena



due di marmo e di PIANTA DEL DUOMO E FIANCO o sia parte d'isterna corrispondere agli Archi interni G. F. A. C. l'one sopra le sudet. Tutto il pavimento e di marmi storia del Duomo in faccia all'Alca Palazzo. del Duomo nel caso questo fof. NI armia colta f. rie de to e connessa a chiaro scuro op. z. Facciata principale. fe. Auto fabbricato piu spazioso. 30.0. e ch



The engraving depicts the facade of the Duomo di Siena, a masterpiece of Italian Gothic architecture. The central facade is characterized by its intricate carvings and statues. At the top, a large circular window (oculus) is flanked by two smaller windows. Below the oculus, a large triangular pediment contains a relief sculpture. The facade is adorned with numerous statues of saints and figures, set within niches. The base of the facade features three large arched doorways, each with its own decorative elements. To the left of the main facade, a side elevation shows the building's profile, including a tall bell tower. To the right, another side elevation shows the building from a different angle. At the bottom left, a plan of the church is shown, with various parts labeled with numbers. The entire scene is set against a background of a cloudy sky, with a large banner at the top containing Latin text. The engraving is signed 'D. D. D.' at the bottom right.

**MARIA ALOYSIA BORBONICA**  
 HISPANICAE FILIAE  
 HETRUSCI PRINCIPIS CONIUGI  
 QUAE DISCIPLINAS ATQUE INGENUAS ARTES OMNES  
 REGALI FOVENT PATROCINIO  
 EXIMIAS PATRIS & SPONSI VIRTUTES  
 FELICITER EMULATUR  
 INSIGNE HOC PIETATIS MONUMENTUM  
 Francisci Hoffi Typographi Senensis  
 Humillime  
 D. D. D.

**A. FACCIATA DEL DUOMO DI SIENA**  
 Costrutta d'alabastro e marmi finissimi di differenti colori ed  
 arricchita da per tutto di rilievi ed fregiate nel 1234  
 Disegno di Nicolo Pisano.

**PIANTA DEL DUOMO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 23. Balconio. 24. Facciata  
 25. S. Giovanni sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIOVANNI**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 26. Campanile. 27. Cupola  
 28. S. Giovanni sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIULIANO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 29. S. Giuliano sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. MARTINO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 30. S. Martino sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. ANTONIO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 31. S. Antonio sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. PIETRO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 32. S. Pietro sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. VINCENZO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 33. S. Vincenzo sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIUSEPPE**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 34. S. Giuseppe sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. MARIA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 35. S. Maria sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. LUCIA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 36. S. Lucia sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. AGATA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 37. S. Agata sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. CATERINA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 38. S. Caterina sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. ANNA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 39. S. Anna sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIOVANNI BATTISTA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 40. S. Giovanni Battista sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIACOMO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 41. S. Giacomo sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. FILIPPO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 42. S. Filippo sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. ANDREA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 43. S. Andrea sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. PIERRE**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 44. S. Pierre sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. MARCO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 45. S. Marco sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. TOMEA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 46. S. Tomea sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIACOMO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 47. S. Giacomo sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. VINCENZO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 48. S. Vincenzo sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIUSEPPE**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 49. S. Giuseppe sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. MARIA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 50. S. Maria sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. LUCIA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 51. S. Lucia sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. AGATA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 52. S. Agata sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. CATERINA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 53. S. Caterina sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. ANNA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 54. S. Anna sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIOVANNI BATTISTA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 55. S. Giovanni Battista sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. GIACOMO**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 56. S. Giacomo sotto il  
 Duomo.

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 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 57. S. Vincenzo sotto il  
 Duomo.

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 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 58. S. Giuseppe sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. MARIA**  
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 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 59. S. Maria sotto il  
 Duomo.

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 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 60. S. Lucia sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. AGATA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
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 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 61. S. Agata sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. CATERINA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 62. S. Caterina sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. ANNA**  
 Tutto il pavimento è di marmi storici  
 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 63. S. Anna sotto il  
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 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 67. S. Giuseppe sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA DI S. MARIA**  
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 e commessi a chiara scura opera  
 in marmo sopra di Domenico Dini  
 e Sanzio della Mercatina  
 68. S. Maria sotto il  
 Duomo.

**PIANTA**



– experienced by even the most splendid cities such as Siena – the festival was a moment of liberation from the strict daily rations of bread and wine. The city found, gave, and abounded in food and drink for everyone, wines and meats, cookies and blancmanges, the precursors of cavallucci and riccarelli, copate and panforti, the Sienese delicacies of today.

To organize the Palio the Municipality annually nominated the Deputies of the Festival, mentioned in records from the 1300s with tasks and status greater than those of today. Running in the Palio were the nobles and notables on their battle-horses: the medieval games were mimed battles, training for war. The linear track ran from outside the walls all the way to the Cathedral, from the outlying fields to the streets, over muddy roads like Pantaneto to the marble of the Cathedral, from the country to the city. The prize was then called the “Pallium”, a long piece of precious cloth, sometimes stitched in vertical bands, stuffed with hundreds of fur pelts. The Pallium later gave its name to the race and then to the festival. This linguistic fact underlines a tie between signs and context, symbols and ceremonies, the meaning and the meaningful.

The race was sensational and dramatic from its start, full of accidents and events. The oldest record about the Palio, from 1238, deals with Palio justice. A fine of 40 farthings was to be paid to Ristoro di Bruno Ciguarde because “running in the Palio and having arrived last, he did not take the pig, the derisory prize assigned by the reg-

ulation to the most losing of all the losers” (at that time, last place; today, 2nd place). Such a “purge” helped define victory and defeat, establishing hierarchies of winners and losers, dictating the symbolic order of men in the game, *homo ludens*.

Another sign of the times lies in the Constitution of 1262, in which it is decreed that the “*qui current eques*”, i.e. the participants of the Palio, the noble jockeys of that era, could not be prosecuted for homicide or injury occurring during the race, because “*predicta maleficia non committerint studiose*” – “they didn’t do it on purpose.” What was asked of jockeys was above all a theatrical show of honesty.

These first Palios were an affair of the noblemen. The Contrade participated, instead, in the crude games in which masses of contestants opposed each other based on territory (eg., *La Città* against *Camollia* and *S. Martino*). Siena was born plural, on three hills. The three primeval castles expanded into Thirds (*Città*, *Camollia*, *S. Martino*) growing until they met and almost dictated the site of the *Campus Fori*, the *Piazza del Campo*. The Contrade grew up within this 3-way partitioning of Indoeuropean matrix since the Etruscans, who in Siena stubbornly refused the 4-way partitioning laid out everywhere by the Romans.

The oldest documentation of the Contrade lies in the regulations of 1200, prescribing that all citizens were to bring a candle to the Cathedral “*cum hominibus sue contrate*”. Historian Andrea Dei affirms that the Sienese “began to create companies in the city of the Contrade” in 1209. Contrada

originally meant “a main inhabited street,” then “neighborhood,” and finally the association of a district’s inhabitants.

Giovanni Cecchini, authoritative writer on Palio historiography, notes, “the Contrada, as a territorial and administrative district, is as old as the city itself.” E. William Heywood, an important Palio historian, adds, “For the past 400 years the Contrade have been the distinguishing characteristic of life in Siena, the equivalent of which can be found in no other Italian city.”

The Contrade used to be far more numerous. After the Plague of 1347, their number was reduced to 42. They took their names from streets, gates, fountains, churches or illustrious families within their territories. They fulfilled religious, administrative, military, and recreational functions. The head of the Contrada was the Sindaco, the Mayor, who was directly answerable to the Podestà, aided by popularly elected counsellors. The Contrada was subject to taxes, it ran its own police force, saw to the upkeep of streets, and carried out other services for the public good.



Dietisalvi di Speme, *Madonna del voto* (Madonna of Vow),  
Siena Cathedral



# The Renaissance: floats, symbols, and colors (1400-1500)

In the 1400s ever more frequent, consistent records report the modern names of the Contrade, which began to appear in the public festivities and to take part in the ritual games with groups of men in livery. The “pugna” was a kind of collective boxing match with hundreds of contestants, the heir of gladiatorial games and forerunner of modern boxing. In Siena this game was popular during the low Middle Ages, often banned because of the deaths and riots it regularly provoked.

In the “pugna” recorded by Gentile Sermini in a short story dating back to 1424, written in a style that anticipated live news-reporting, readers learn of the groupings of the Snail, of the Giraffe, and of the Val di Piatta (the modern day Forest). In the “pugna” games of 1494, mentioned in the Chronicles of Allegretto Allegretti, written in honor of the Cardinal of San Malò’s visit to Siena, participating groups included the Snail, the Dragon, the Giraffe, the Wave, and Camollia (today’s Porcupine). The game went on for a long time. In the 1800s Niccolò Tommaseo defined pugilism as “a game played in the style of *pugna*: much used among the Greeks and carried

on up until the recent years among the Sienese.” From the “pugna” arose the theatrical yet virulent *pugnacity* that lives on today. The “cacce”, the hunts, marked the entry of the costumed representatives of the Contrada in the Piazza, along with allegorical floats of exotic or imaginary animals, symbolizing mythic events or noble virtues. In the transition from the 1400s to the 1500s, the Contrade completed the fantastic menagerie from which they took their emblems. Lacking precise records, one can hypothesize a spontaneous process by which Contrade came together to construct the machines. The Contrade, chose their emblematic animals from the heraldic repertory that was popular at the time in Siena and throughout Italy, using ideas and symbols from the crests of kings and nobles, of mercenary companies, of the arts and professions, of towns and cities, or from Medieval “bestiaries”, like those of Brunetto Latini.

One might reconstruct and hypothesize for each Contrada a unique path and process that is individual and different from all others. For example, the flourishing activity of the Borghesi family was perhaps the source for that of the Contrada of the Dragon,



Frontispiece of the artwork "Stanze de la contrada del Drago", sung in praise of the honored Sienese women, in the chariot of their invention, presented on the highly honored feast of the privileged Aquila, at the Pope's Loggia, 1581, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena

the one of the Marescotti for the Contrada of the Eagle. In the case of the Caterpillar, the symbol is that of the silk-making activity, as documented in 1370. As for the Panther, historians have hypothesized a possible direct link with the presence in Siena of a colony of silk-makers from Lucca. And in the case of the Porcupine, standing for Camollia, it is very possible to imagine a derivation from the emblem of the Ricci (literally “hedgehog”) family, or from the emblem of King Louis XII of France. Allegorical floats could be found in many cities. In nearby Florence, for example, a hunting procession included a wooden Giraffe-shaped machine, and in 1514 floats were to be seen in the shapes of a Porcupine and of a Tortoise. These machines,



Frontispiece of the artwork Symbolic dialogue for the invention of the Fontebranda district, known as Ocha. To be performed, during the Bufale, in the public square of Siena. In the presence the serene Heights of Tuscany, Don Cosimo De Medici, and Donna Maria Maddalena of Austri, Matteo Florimi, 1612, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena

with various people inside, served to frighten and to rouse the animals, and were used as shelters by the hunters who poked the animals from inside with spears around the Piazza, to create the impression that the wooden predators were fighting with the real ones; totem against ferocity, myth against reality. In Siena in 1482, according to the Histories of the erudite prelate Sigismondo Tizio, the inhabitants of San Marco built a Snail-shaped float and those of San Pietro a Ovile a machine in the shape of a Giraffe.

In 1506 the Contrade of the Eagle, Snail, Dragon, Giraffe, Porcupine, Lionphant (today Tower), Ram, Shell, Goose, Wave, and Forest, each with its costumed representatives, took part to the “hunting pro-



Vincenzo Rustici, *Bull hunting in the Piazza of 1546*,  
approx. 1585, oil on canvas,  
Uffizi Gallery, Florence (Alamy Archive)







cession” in the Piazza del Campo held for the Feast of Our Lady. In 1546, in the report on the feast of the Assumption drawn up and printed by Cecchino Chartaio we find the names of all 17 Contrade that we know nowadays: the Eagle, the Caterpillar, the Snail, the Owl, the Dragon, the Giraffe, the Porcupine, the Unicorn, the She-wolf, the Shell, the Goose, the Wave, the Panther, the Forest, the Tortoise, the Tower, and the Ram. Their symbols were the same then as now. Their colors were to undergo a longer, more complex evolution. The Eagle and the Snail came out in 1546 with their present colors (but they were to vary occasionally); 5 other Contrade took on their colors for the first time in the 1600s, 8 in the 1700s, and 2 last century. Over the centuries, all changed their borders and geometrical figures, their stripes and arabesques, proving that nothing about the Palio is ever unchanging. The City-State had its own float as far back as the 14th century. The “Wagon of the Angels” was a machine holding up youths dressed as angels, and a complicated system of ropes and pulleys made them rise and fall around an image of the Madonna. A receipt from 1406 documents 36 farthings spent on the oranges the youths threw to the crowd as good-luck projectiles. On the Wagon of the Angels (later on the Carrocchio wagon) the Palio was carried, mounted on a painted pole topped by a silver lion. The precious fabric of the “Great Banner” often came from elsewhere, from Florence or Lucca, from Bologna or Venice. To stuff

the 1430 Palio with silk rosado, 18 “Sienese arms” long (13.42 meters) fabric, with fringe and bands of silk and gold, 1,400 pelts were needed. In 1447 the Palio was made of crimson velvet, and 30 “arms” (22.38 meters) of fabric were purchased.

The Great Banners of this period are no longer in existence because, unlike those of today, they were functional, not merely symbolic, prizes. As a rule, they were used to make altar cloths, canopies, tapestries, and sacred vestments, yet one may suppose that they ended up being worn by the winners and by their earthly madonnas, who often in the days of the Palio wore precious stones and dresses of silk and velvet, making show of the luxury which ordinarily the sumptuary laws of the Republic did not allow. The days of the Palio were world events: to the city people could see the coming of the the great names of Italy’s born and moneyed aristocracy, high prelates, and crowned heads of Europe (such as Emperor Sigmund who attended the 1432 Palio), the Borgias, Gonzagas, Medicis, Malatestas, the Marquises of Mantua, the lords of Milan. Since the lords no longer participated personally in wartime battles (that work being delegated to mercenaries), they stopped running in the Palio, delegating the job to the jockeys. the Palio became for them a event to be seen, the race an event to which they invited their racers and their color-bearers, “putti” or “ragatii” (“kids”) with nicknames as picturesque as their blouses.

Running in the 1461 Palio were the row-

The oldest printed source on the Palio: it is the homonymous account in verse of the August festivals of 1506, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena



dy youths called Paganinus Pagani of Romania, Furaboscus of Cremona, Fallatutti Factinnanzi of Schiavonia, Tremalmondo of Ferrara, Setacchiappo Barilis of Montefiascone, Fiascus Barilis of Montefiascone. In 1492 the jockey of Cesare Borgia made a false start in the race and the Municipality awarded the Palio to the Marquis of Mantua. In 1514 Muccia Farasche won the Palio for his illustrious and bizarre patron Sodoma, riding a dark horse that was “decorated Turkish-style on its flanks and on its head.” The other horses were two brown sorrels, a black roan, 2 bays and 2 greys. But history stepped in to deal with Siena. In 1559, after a desperate and memorable war of siege, with a Government in exile in Montalcino, Siena received a condemning sentence with no chance of appeal from the tractate of Cateau-Cambrésis, which gave a new territorial map to Europe. Siena was reduced to a province of the Grand Duchy which, moreover, had its capital in the ever-unpopular Florence; Siena was no longer the master of its own fate, but was to be steered by Florence until the fights for the Unity of Italy of the XIX century, the so called “Risorgimento”. The festivities of mid-August, apart from the religious component, suddenly lost their political meaning of triumph for the city. Instead of receiving the annual homage from all lands and castles, from cities, hamlets and lords for the feast of its Madonna, Siena was forced to pay yearly homage to St John of the Florentines, in a ceremony that Siena knew well, having been on the receiving end. Thus with

a brusque turn-around of meanings, this feast was no more a celebration of the present but a reminder of the past – history and memory, dream and nostalgia for the golden age when Siena had been free, independent, and sovereign. Perhaps it is from this end of the great feast that there arose, in the second half of the 1500s, the teeming festivities and games and neighborhood Palios which strengthened the invisible walls of the Contrade, making them definitively cities within the city, guardians of memories and traditions of a city that turned its back on history and closed itself within itself. A probing example: the summer feast of 1581. Siena’s Governor, Federigo di Montuato, wrote to Florence, “almost all the Contrade wanted to run their own Palio, some with horses, others with mares, others with mules... others with water buffaloes like the Roman custom.” The courtiers and costumed representatives were rich in whims, fables, stories, accompanied by lovely music and ingenious printed poems. The feasts included the dramatic presence of the maiden Virginia, a country girl who ran in the Palio (finishing 3rd) charming all with her grace and skill; Montuato gifted her a horse. The riotous joy was shared by all: “After the running of the Palios, the winners go around in triumph before everyone, visiting the most ancient Contrade, almost holding court decked with wines and tables.” The Contrade paid dowries for needy maidens and freed prisoners from the dungeons, as the Municipality had done in the August festivities in the days of the Republic.

Vincenzo Rustici,  
Piazza del Campo,  
the parade of the Contrade  
approx. 1585, detail,  
oil on canvas,  
Uffizi Gallery Florence





# The 1600s: the Palio in the Piazza

Now in the first decades of the 1600s the Palio concluded its transfer to the Piazza del Campo and its transformation into a popular festival. The proposal of running the Palio in the Piazza was officially made to the Municipality on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1695 by the Deputies of the Festival for the Palio in August, Captain Sigismondo Santi and Knight Fortunio Martini. Various reasons supported the proposal: the Palio with horses running through the streets was dangerous and it was impossible to enjoy the entire event. In the Piazza, instead, “everyone could see everything at once in a bigger space for as long as it lasts.” The length of the race in the Piazza had to be equal to the distance from the Santuccio to the Cathedral, equal to what the length had always been. And if the Palio were to be run not by private people but by Contrade (as was already happening in neighborhood festivals), then the banner and the other prizes would remain in Siena. “The Palio staying in the city, donations would be made to the churches and to sacred places, as always used to be made by the Contrade, when they won in similar races.” Beyond the increased show, there would be a tangible increase of the cultural



Bernardino Capitelli, 1589-1639, "Carro del Nicchio", detail, etching on paper, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena

heritage for the city.

The idea immediately caused a breach among the Sienese. After other races in the Piazza of uncertain documentation, the 1632 print of Bernardino Capitelli gives a clear date and sure proof of a circular Palio run in the Piazza. In the image, the jockeys ride bareback; they are at the finish of the race and are exchanging furious blows with the “sovatto”, a kind of cat-o'-nine-tails with a handle in the shape of an animal paw, half-weapon, half-amulet. In the Piazza the Contrade members greet the victory, jumping down from the stands; the Masters of the Field rush on horseback to

keep order. The circular Palio was run in the Piazza with ever-greater frequency, yet until the middle of the century it coexisted with the water-buffalo race, that was popular in Siena and in all of Italy. Then in 1597 the Council of Trent launched its lightning bolts against the bull-hunts and other public games, not so much because they were violent as because they were throwbacks to pagan rites (Dionysian and Bacchic) which the Council sought to remove from Italian tradition once and for all.

The water-buffalo races had been run in a circle around the Piazza. Presented by the Contrade, the buffaloes were escorted by 12 goaders, armed with a long nail-studded staff. No one can be sure if these were used to prod the Contrade's own water-buffalo or to poke the animals and goaders of the

rivals. The race, which lasted for 3 laps of the Piazza, started at the Vicolo S. Paolo, and the start was marked by a trumpet blast. The participation of the Contrade was immense and heartfelt, even in the coarse donkey races which, on occasion, were held in the Piazza with a carnival-like atmosphere and a heated fighting spirit, run between donkeys painted in the colors of each Contrada, pushed around the Piazza by Contrada members, while the donkeys of rival Contrade were subject to being pushed out of the track by every conceivable means. In the end, in 1656, the Palio around the Piazza took on its definitive form, uniting the passions of the plain population with those of the nobility. Add to this the final element that had been missing, in a city with such ignited mysticism: the dedication

Bernardino Capitelli (1589-1639), "Carro della Torre", (1632), etching on paper, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena





to the Madonna. Not the Madonna of the Assumption, but to the Miraculous Madonna venerated for the graces received and for miraculous healings in the then infamous and lively Provenzano, the district inhabited by Spanish soldiery and by the prostitutes who gravitated around them.

The cult grew to great proportions when the story circulated of a drunken Spanish soldier who wanted to fire his harquebus at the sacred image; the harquebus exploded, instantly killing the sacrilegious miscreant. The festival around the Grand Church, which had been raised with unusual speed to house the sacred image, suddenly became the concern of its neighborhood and of the entire city; from 1656 onward the Miraculous Madonna of Provenzano had its own popular Palio, which was run in the Piazza del Campo by the Contrade, as a conclusion to the annual liturgical feast.

The Palio of Provenzano immediately took on a set form: from 1659 onwards, it was organized directly by the “Biccherna”, the office of the magistrature that had the

task of organizing ceremonies pertaining to civic continuity and representativeness. Supervision of the festival was the duty of the three “Lords of the Merriment,” who offered 90 thalers as a prize to the winning Contrada. One might assume they paid also to have their family crests placed on the Great Banner.

In 1657 the chronicler Flaminio Rossi wrote, “It was the first Great Banner with the image of the Holy Virgin of Provenzano, and the three noble coats of arms of the Lords of the Festival.”

The jockeys were mercenaries from the start. They were the well-equipped horsemen who had competed in the tumult of the water-buffalo races and who brought to the circular Palio a virulence that the aristocratic linear Palio had to a much lesser degree.

If in the linear race the jockeys had run essentially halfway, in these circular races they did battle, even one against the other. The adolescent who had substituted the nobleman on horseback in the ancient Palios became an ambiguous sometimes deformed and grotesque figure, like the dwarves who in other cities fought in the terrible bull-fights of the Baroque period, or that clumsily rode water-buffaloes.

Such masques lived on in memory with crude and cruel nicknames: Stumpy, Lame, Dry Mount, Epileptic, Twisted, and a full array of hunchbacks (ital. “gobbo”) - Gobbo, Gobbo Chiarini, Gobbo Faenzi, Gobbo of Empoli, Gobbo Saragiolo.

Immediately a never-to-be resolved problem arose according to the regulation of the



Bernardino Capitelli (1589-1639), *Horse racing in the Piazza del Campo*, etching on paper, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena

award relating to winning jockeys. Beyond a set payment, jockeys received the power to request bonuses from the victorious Contrada.

The request is recorded for 1657, whereas after the victory of 1666 the Contrada of the Wave brought into its assembly the jockey Domenico of Barberino and invited him to choose between a payment of 10 scudi as final settlement or 40 lira plus tips.

The jockey chose the latter, which was voted upon and passed by 20 white balls among 20 voters.

In the first circular Palios inside the Piazza, the Contrade had to find their own horses, but to keep the chances of winning more even, from 2 July 1676 onward, each Contrada presented a horse, and the horses

were then assigned through a toss-up.

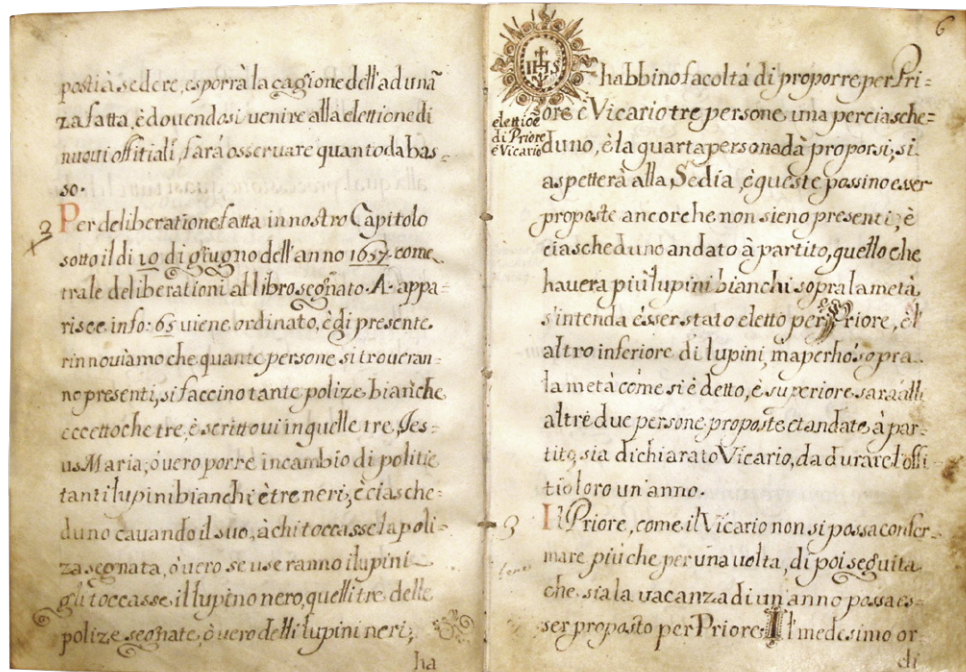
In 1657 it was determined that jockeys would ride “alla bisdossa”, bareback, and that the victorious horse would follow its jockey into the Church of Provenzano for the Te Deum of thanksgiving, soon to become a hymn to the Madonna, over the centuries screamed out in unison with only approximative words. In the 1800s the very cultured Abbot Giuliani wrote that he had been disgusted by listening without having understood “a single healthy word.”

In 1666 the College of Balìa deliberated that on the Eve of the Assumption, for the linear Palio, the horsemen should bring the barb horses to have them blessed at the portals of the Cathedral. Those that ran in the circular race came to be blessed within



Bernardino Capitelli (1589-1639), *“Carro della Lupa”* (1632), etching on paper, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena





The Contrada of the Snail: the oldest chapter book (1663)

the churches of the individual Contrade in a ceremony which to many seems superstitious and pagan, but which instead perpetuates a very Christian ritual, the *beneditio equorum et animalium* of the Church since its first centuries.

The same period saw the rise of the “tratta” (from *trahere* or *tirare a sorte*, meaning to “to be drawn by lot”).

The random drawing for the assignment of horses to the Contrade took place on the green spot of Camollia, outside the city walls. After a trial race from the Palazzo Diavoli to the Church of San Bernardino at the Antegate, the first horse received an award, but it was discarded, as it was the last to arrive.

Thus was born the tradition, still very much alive today, of selecting an equally matched horse-race. The toss-up immediately took

on great importance because in that period the order of assignment of the horses also determined the order of the entrance in the Piazza of the groups of costumed Contrade representatives in the procession before the race, and indeed the order of the line-up at the race starting rope.

From the first codification of its regulations, the Palio embodied its endemic passion for chance.

In 1682 it was established that the Contrade had to pay a “vettura”, literally a “carriage,” to each horse-owner in exchange for use of the horse; in 1698 they had to repay owners for injuries to horses occurring during the Trials (today called the “prove”, called the “comprove” back then) run at various hours throughout the day in the Piazza, which was covered with earth that year several days before the Palio.



“Tabelle di possesso” (1693), of the Contrada of the Snail, Siena

As of 1685, the Contrade were obliged to run the Palio even if they had a poor horse. Participation became an honor and a civic obligation.

The Contrade underwent their own process of evolution too. On the one hand they began to give themselves statutory articles, or in other words true written constitutions, and on the other they became clearly differentiated from the military companies (with which at times they had been confused), furthermore distancing themselves also from the laymen’s companies with which they had once lived in a symbiosis that eventually proved uncomfortable.

For example, the brothers and sisters of the laymen’s company of St Catherine in Fontebranda, which held devotional and social services within the neighborhood as its aims, were also members of the Contrada of the Goose, the elected head of which, the Governor, assumed the title of Prior of the Companies, and the articles of the Companies were the same as those of the Contrada.

In 1600 the Goose suddenly broke away altogether from the Company which remained within the domain of the Dominicans. Disagreements arose over guardianship of the relics of St Catherine (the “Sacred Head”). The disagreements grew into the attempt from the Contrada itself to seize the relics with great furor among the people during a procession for the Feast of St Catherine in May of 1609.

The first circular Palios were not short of drama and discord. Prince Mattias dei Medici, a great lover of horses, was made

promoter of the Palio and occasionally judge of the victory, not without several clamorous errors of judgment.

In 1664, during a Palio that was considerably “heated,” the Contrada of the Wolfe set off in first with the jockey Bacchino, who fell in the 3rd lap; the horse continued and won. But, as one chronicler wrote, “the Contrada of the Owl, for whom Mone was running, having come in second was awarded the Palio because so decided the imbecile Principe Mattias.”

The chronicler explained the insult, “since good sense says that it’s the horse who wins, not the jockey.”

The rule of good sense was soon to become official after 3 centuries of controversy. Ever since, it is the horse who wins, with or without a jockey on its back. And a barb, who wins riderless (as people her say, “scosso”), is to the people of Siena the surest, most beautiful sign of fate and of joy.



# The 1700s: the Proclamation of Violante and the rules of the modern Palio

The century of the Enlightenment opened with the introduction of a second Palio of the Contrade besides the “Palio alla Lunga”, or linear Palio, continuing to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> August. Already the linear Palio had been replaced in the hearts of the Sienese by the circular race, with its intimate theatricality.

The idea came from the Noble Contrada of the Goose, winner of the Palio of July, 1701. The Goose asked to “rerun the Palio won,” to put the victory up for grabs, calling for another race to be run on 16<sup>th</sup> August for the Feast of the Assumption.

The ancient charm of the Feasts during which the Sienese summer reached its peak, the wish to give the Festivals new vital blood, the Contrade's desire to be more central in the event and in its organization, the proud ambition of a great people to declare itself first among equals by means

Annibale Mazzuoli (attr.), *View of the square of Siena illuminated for the solemn entry of Her Serene Highness Princess Violante of Bavaria, Grand Princess of Tuscany on the evening of 12<sup>th</sup> April 1717*, etching on paper, Municipal Library of Intronati, Siena





of a gesture, a gift, an idea, all set the scene for the Palio of August to begin its history. The Goose made available the 60 thalers it had won in money, 20 for expenses and 40 as a prize for the winning Contrada.

At the beginning the process was spontaneous, and if the July winner did not wish to rerun the Palio, there was always another Contrada eager to step in as substitute with generosity and perhaps a hint of contentious emulation. When in 1747 the Contrada of the Goose declined, the Tower offered itself as substitute; in 1750, the entire citizenry opted to pay the expenses by general collection.

In 1774 the Municipality ratified the organization of the two Palios.

The Palio also took on its definitive regulations. On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1721 the Commission of Balìa declared a proclamation, laying down the first modern regulation of the Palio.

In 16 commandments, with an enlightened sense of fairness, the ordinances, and articles of the previous centuries were condensed and set down, creating an orderly and unequivocal system. “The Sienese proclamation won’t last a month,” says a nasty Tuscan proverb: Yet it has endured to our own time, even with the continual updates of a festival ever a vital part and accurate mirror of the city.

Annibale Mazzuoli (attr.), *View of the square of Siena illuminated for the solemn entry of Her Serene Highness Princess Violante of Bavaria, Grand Princess of Tuscany on the evening of 12<sup>th</sup> April 1717*, detail, etching on paper, Municipal Library of the Intronati, Siena

### The first modern regulation of the Palio 1721

1. The times of the Trials on the Eve of the Palio are set: 1 hour in the morning and 1 hour in the afternoon.
2. Stands may be erected only on the side of the Piazza where the shops are.
3. For the procession before the Palio, the Contrade must parade at least 24 representatives in costume.
4. In the procession, the jockey must parade, bearing the due insignia.
5. The jockeys must use only “an ordinary riding crop” and go to the starting rope after the cannon is fired.
6. The pay awaiting the jockeys will be “only 10 lira, and 10 scudi if they should win the Palio and not in any other way.”
7. After the procession around the track, the representatives in costume must go to their assigned places.
8. No one from the ground may hit or incite the horses at the starting rope.
9. No one may help a fallen jockey to remount a horse.
10. The first horse to complete three circuits and to reach the Judges’ Stand wins.
11. The Palio will be claimed by official representatives of the winning Contrada.
12. The jockeys must stop when the mortar is fired and also stop the horses in case of a false start, this too to be signaled by the mortar.
13. The Contrade must sign up for the draw. 10 and only 10 will be drawn by chance to run in the Palio.
14. The Contrade must deposit a sum which will go to the owners of the horses.
15. The Contrade will follow the same predetermined sequence both in the procession and at the starting rope.
16. No one may bother the horses once the race has started.

Another proclamation was to be a milestone in the history of the Palio: the proclamation on the new boundaries of the Contrade issued in 1729 by Beatrice Violante of Bavaria, Governess of Siena, to put an end to the continual controversies between Contrade over boundaries and over their number and demographic entity.

In the second half of the preceding century, 6 Contrade disappeared: this concerned those with an ephemeral and irregular existence almost as “societies” occasionally taking part in shows and public games. It was also told that they were abolished for having insulted the judges: this widely spread legend in oral tradition and among some scholars is indeed considered highly improbable. Incorporated by their more active and better organized rival-neighbors, the Lion, the Viper, the Rooster, the Oak, the Bear, and Strong-Sword left the scene, dying of natural causes. Their knights parade even today in the Historic Procession, with lowered helmet visor, bringing a carnival-like yet sinister tone to the commemoration of ancient Siena, a “memento mori” like the reminders whispered in the ears of heroes in the triumphal processions of ancient Rome.

The Noble Contrada of the Eagle narrowly escaped the same fate after it had won the water-buffalo race in 1610 and then, from 1622 onwards, it was for a long time absent from public events in Siena.

When in 1718 the Eagle wanted once again to participate in the August festival, it was met by the opposition of its neighboring Contrade, the Wave, the Tortoise,



the Panther, and the Forest, who had made claims to the territory and population of a Contrada that had been for so long motionless. The controversy went before the town magistrate assembly, the Biccherna, dragging on so long as to attract the attention of the decisive Governess of Siena. Her proclamation, which took into account also the need for demographic equilibrium, set the number and the boundaries of the 17 Contrade, “taking away the power to bring back old ones or to create new ones.” More than 250 years have passed, yet the Proclamation of Violante is still law in Siena, at least for the territory covered by it, within the walls of the town. Made strong by this definitive division, the Contrade of the 1700s continued their growth. Each one wrote up its own laws, or constitutions,





to regulate the lives of these associations. They acquired their headquarters and their churches in perpetual rented use or in ownership, taking advantage of the elimination under Leopold of the laymen's companies decreed between 1770 and 1780.

Commenting on Siena, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Peter Leopold wrote a series of sober, enlightened and sharp observations: "The city of Siena is divided into many Contrade, each one has its own Captain, insignias, and chapel, which is rarely officiated, but these serve to say the evening rosary and to deliberate on the race of the Palio. Long ago these were the places where people met and under their insignia they went to war, and though no such reason exists any longer, the Sieneese remain very attached to their little private churches, which are rather more meeting halls for deliberations on the Palio race."

As the Grand Duke noted, the sacred and profane came together in a sort of "surrogate for the cult of patriotic independence" (as defined by Roberto Barzanti, noteworthy Palio historian). But the meetings in such sacred places were not marked by any passive devotion. One of many proofs of this is the document with which the ecclesiastical authority conceded the use of the Church of the Contrada of the Giraffe, advising that "...above all, in the case of meetings, there shall not be in the above-mentioned chapel any tumults and so forth as often happens on such occasions." Almost in response, many Contrade formed the habit of covering sacred images during meetings in the church, "so they wouldn't

see, and they wouldn't hear" what went on in the tumultuous meetings called together by the sound of the bell. In the meetings, then as today, the common good was sought and propositions were voted on using black and white balls, as in ancient times. This form of popular, lay government, in which everyone participates and for which the Contrade have long prided themselves, did not stop the city from paying solemn honor to visiting high prelates or crowned heads with an impromptu day-off, with pageantry, torchlit processions, and with an extraordinary Palio.

For the entrance of Violante of Bavaria splendid festivities were held in 1717. The Veridico Ragguaglio, a "True Clarification," illustrated and annotated recently by Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, remains a primary source to learn about the history of the Palio. In 1739, when Francis II passed through Siena, an extraordinary Palio was run, and another was dedicated to him in 1745 when he rose to the imperial throne. On that occasion the prize reached the exceptional amount of 60 thalers. For Peter Leopold, a race was run on the 13th of May 1767 with an especially supervised and well-prepared choreography. Together "the Contrade [entered] the Piazza in the military way with pikes in hand, trimmed hats, and garments of various colors according to the ones of the insignia of each Contrada." The allegories represented on the floats were unprecedented. "Along came a very beautiful wagon with Munificence, Happiness, Misery, festive Siena, and two rivers..." An ever more attentive

theatricality sent into the Piazza, along with historic and classical floats, new allegories dear to the Enlightenment and to its branches known to be dear to the sovereign and to his vision of the world: the floats became signs of their time.

In the Palio of 1786 after the Temple of Happiness (by an unfortunate choice, the Contrade not running in the race took part) the Piazza witnessed the appearance of the personifications of Religion, Science, Agriculture, and Justice. Allusive written messages referred to the Grand-Duchy and its cities: Ancient Siena, Beautiful Florence, Powerful Livorno, Florid Pisa.

In 1791 Public Happiness paraded in the Piazza among shepherds and shepherdesses and above all Commerce improved by the Grand Dunke of Tuscany.

In contrast to the rarefied climate of the Procession and the abstractions of its allegorical floats, the circular race occurred according to the strict rules of the roughest, most immediate expressionistic realism.

In order to find the required number of horses, they were often recruited forcibly by the Municipality which sometimes obliged all the Post Offices of the surroundings to send at least one horse to each draw. From 1761 onwards the ceremony took place at the Palazzo, at the Biccherna door. Horses and horsemen in this century were rarely of noble origin.

There was the horse of Savino the innkeeper, the bay horse of Signor Bagnacci, the white horse of Signor Mascagni and the brown horse of Signor Giannetti, the hatmaker in the Piazza, nicknamed "the

The Palio Banner of July 1719, Siena, district of the Contrada of the Eagle. It is the oldest known to us



Bomb". The inclusion of the jockeys in the new Enlightened choreography and the new context of the Palio proved impossible, whatever steps were taken to shape them to the tastes of the time. An effort was made to oblige them to parade in full costume on the big parade horses.

Giovan Battista Stratico, from the Accademia dei Rozzi, wrote in 1775 an Olympian ode to the victorious jockey. A few years later Vittorio Alfieri brought his horses to the Piazza and wrote verses about Bastiancino and Carnaccia. In 1793 he wrote to Siena, asking "who is hero among the jockeys," and the next year he complained about his friend Bianchi, "not even after 15 August were two verses written to tell me how the festivities went? to tell me of the glories of Bastiancini, Batticuli, and the others?" The jockeys of that era, in truth, were not objects of poems and Pindaresque odes. The Contrade were already suspicious about the secret clans of jockeys that fixed race results and divvied up the earnings, official or otherwise. Among these clans, competition was anything but Olympian, and it appeared in riots and assaults, threats and furious fights such as those which, between 1787 and 1788, set the "clan of the Sienese" against "the clan of the Maremmans" the head of which was the Maremman Isidoro "Dorino" Bianchini who won 13 Palios for 9 Contrade. After clamorous reining and furious whiplashes, with revenges on the subsequent race, Dorino, Ciochio, and the jockey for the Panther met each other at the starting rope on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1778 with such forceful whiplashes that they ended up on the ground

where "they fought as if to kill each other if the civil troops hadn't separated them, throwing the jockeys of the She-wolf and of the Panther in jail." The jockeys were released the next day, with an injunction to leave the city immediately.

But these wars were like the fights of the proverbial thieves of Pisa. In order to stay, Dorino, perhaps the greatest of the century, taken by the reins by the She-wolf in 1787, ran for them the next year; whipped until he bled by the Owl, won a Palio for them two years later; having won the Palio for the Tortoise in 1786 he ran the following year for the archrival, the Snail, and though assaulted by the Tortoise, two years later he returned to run and win for them; solemnly whipped by the Wave in 1787, he wore their colors in 1787 and brought them a victory. The Palio of the jockeys has always been the anti-Olympics *par excellence*: winning, not participating, is what counts. Yet the end of the century the Piazza del Campo witnessed events of greater drama and violence. After the French Occupation, the reactionary squadron-mobs from Arezzo reached Siena in 1799, to cries of "Long live Maria!" In the Piazza, upon the pieces of the destroyed tree of liberty, 10 cadavers were burned.

In July of 1799 the Palio was suspended for reasons of public order; soon it was understood that to protect public order it was riskier to ban the Palio than to let it be run. The Banner with its Madonna of Provenzano was assigned to the August race. Yet again the Palio proved that the life of the city went on.



Map of the city of Siena, indicating the seventeen Contrade, together with the churches, palaces, public establishments, sources, drinking waterways drawn up in 1849 by Giovanni Silvestri, Municipal Library of Siena



# The 1800s: from the Risorgimento to the society of mutual aid

At the start of the century the Civic Community adopted two historic measures, the brainchildren in 1802 of Gonfaloniere Forteguerra. He ordained “that jockeys are not to hold back or beat each other until after the race has begun and the starting rope has dropped, and they have completely passed the Lord Judges’ Stand, upon penalty of imprisonment.” Thus ended the indecorous show of jockeys whipping and hitting each other before the Start.

In another measure the Civic Magistracy divided into 2 parts the prize which had always been given to the winner of the linear Palio on 15<sup>th</sup> August, a crimson velvet drape worth 110 thalers. From then on, 70 thalers were given in cash to the winner of the linear Palio, and 40 to the Contrada winning the circular Palio. Thus the long process of popularization of the Palio was concluded, renewing the aspect of a feast for one and all, an official celebration of the city. A drastic change is found in the paintings on the Great Banners, caused by the French dominion over Tuscany. A reflection of the new egalitarianism from

across the Alps, between 1808 and 1813 the heraldic symbols of the Great Banner were reduced to the simple, intertwined initials of the Deputies of the Festival: however the monograms were soon overhung by the new enormous crest of Emperor Napoleon.

The height of political interference in the Palio came about in August, 1808, when the centuries-old celebration of the Assumption became a celebration of Saint Napoleon. Fortunately the innovation did not last. The rock-bottom of misguided inventions was reached in April 1810. The decision was made to offer in the Piazza del Campo a great banquet for the poor people of the Contrade, each Contrada having to find and invite 6 such individuals. The poors were set up in tents bearing the insignia of the Contrade to which they belonged, while a crowd of curious onlookers watched them eat. In the center, a bigger pavilion brought together the paupers of the Eagle, the Panther, and the Tortoise. This union revealed the motivation of the grotesque event disguised as philanthropy.

The colors of the 3 flags alluded to France, Austria, and the Empire, and to the recent political-dynastic wedding of Napoleon and Marie Louise of Austria.

The continuing homages to the sovereigns of the moment were paid willingly by the people (homages were a “toll” paid in order to have future Palios) and by the nobles (homages were occasions to show their richness and to meet otherwise unreachable sovereigns and notables). In the space of a few years there were celebrations for the French Revolution, the Kingdom of Etruria, Napoleon, Elisa Baciocchi, then in 1818 Ferdinand III of Lorraine, and in 1819 Metternich was welcomed. What may appear flunkeyism or indifference in the case of the Sienese came from their initially forcible and then endemic detachment from history, their ever more marked “dream of the Middle Ages”: despite the floats with neoclassical allegorical figures, in the procession of 1813 the Carroccio wagon reappeared, recalling even today the great, ephemeral triumph at Montaperti. Siena’s passion for its own history and for the tradition of the Contrada as a small hometown in the town never stopped the Sienese from participating on the front lines of history. As an example of what recent anthropological reflection has dubbed “multiple identity”, the Sienese of the 1800s were at once aware of their identity within the Contrada and at the same time staunchly patriotic throughout the Risorgimento. Virgilio Grassi, meticulous historian of the Palio, underlined the Sienese Contrade’s contribution in the Risorgimento; a stone



Sketch of the municipal band with the new frame, 1820, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena





Sketch for the Piedmontese extras of the Contrada of the Tortoise, 1853, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena

was placed on Palazzo Spannocchi in honor of the “helpful Contrade Dragon, Goose, and Forest.” The Contrade raised funds to support the volunteers in the Wars of Independence, as an “offering to the volunteers who, coming back from patriotic battles, found themselves in the neediest circumstances.” In July 1848 the Palio did not take place. The sum that would have been spent on the race went instead to the

support of the volunteers who fought in Lombardy. In 1839, as a poster records, no military draft was necessary, so great was the influx of Siennese volunteers under the tricolor flag. The fight for the freedom of Italy, the so called “Risorgimento”, was mirrored in the flags of the Contrade. Though in 1845 the Municipality issued an ordinance that immutably codified the colors, their definitive arrangement had to await the Unity of Italy.

The Eagle never stopped unfurling its yellow insignia with the bicipital eagle, which according to tradition was given by Charles V in person on one of his visits to Siena. For the whole Risorgimento the Eagle received upon its entry in the Piazza salvos of whistles, intended for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The same happened to the Tortoise, which back then unfurled a yellow and black insignia that recalled the insignia of the Austrians. Full of enthusiasm for Pius IX, in 1847 the Tortoise substituted the black with white, thereby unfurling the papal colors. The whistles turned into applause. But two years later, liberal enthusiasm for the Pope having vanished, the insignia went back to yellow and black and the whistles started up again, hushed only in 1859 when the Tortoise took on its present colors. The opposite fate touched the flag of the Goose, which ever since 1791 had been green with white and red arabesques. The patriots who saw the Italian tricolor in the flag applauded warmly wherever the flag was seen, so much so that from 1849 to 1859 the authorities changed the colors to white, pink, and green.



Antonio Hercolani, *Appearance of the Contrada of the Wave*, 1845, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena

Giuseppe Garibaldi, who attended the Palio in 1867 along with his army called the Red Shirts, was particularly celebrated by the red insignia of the Tower, which along with its share of its applause received the fervent cheers of the “extreme party,” as note was made in a report by the King’s police. Even Siena, though, was not without its Austria-lovers, who strongly opposed the adoption of the “Piedmont-style” costumes seen in the Piazza in 1836, and used later on other occasions.

The Risorgimento made the idea of a possible connection between the jockeys and the heroes of Olympus fade. The Siennese knew the jockeys all too well.

If the 1700s was the century of ferocious combat between jockeys, the 1800s saw their most savage and sensational betrayals. The champion of this ilk was Francesco Santini, called the “Gobbo” (hunchback) Saragiolo, who changed flags for 30

years. He ran for 15 Contrade, flattered them, despised them, betrayed them all. He won 15 times for 7 different Contrade. When in 1855 with one of the favored horses he went straight at San Martino’s corner on purpose and was asked why, he burst out, “Why should I win for you miserable lot who gave me 140 coins when I earned 170?” Like Judah, someone noted, he had betrayed for the price of 30 coins. Since the roads at San Martino and at the Casato were not always closed off in the past, feckless jockeys left the Piazza at top speed and galloped off past the city gates. This was what Baicche did in 1877 and again in 1885.

In 1896 Ansanello, in the middle of the night, went to ring the bell at the gates of the Monks of the Osservanza, still dressed in the racing jacket of the Tower. “There’s a man who wants to sleep here. He looks like a stick of sealing wax,” the amazed





Antonio Hercolani, Coat of arms, flag and military companies of the Contrada of the Snail, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena

guardian father reported to his superior. The horses were still the anonymous barb horses of previous times, but with a new difference: in the draw of August 1837 mares were accepted, and males were discarded to avoid “inconvenient anti-aesthetics.” Thus was instituted a custom that endures even today. In the regulations of 1852, signed by Gonfaloniere Angelo Piccolomini, it was prohibited to give enlivening substances to horses, under the responsibility of the Captain. The legend of the “medicine” (called “beverone”), that was half magical potion, half herbal tonic, philosophers’ stone of the Contrada stalls, was to last a long time, with its promise of the metamorphosis of a nag into a Pegasus.

In the second half of the century the first hero among horses appeared: Stornino of Belforte, noted for his intelligence and for his attachment to the Palio. Indeed stories were told that as he felt Palio time growing close, he changed personality, turning from the tranquil horse of a country curate into the barb worthy of the fiery ancient race. He won 18 Palios, the last in 1877, when he was 21<sup>st</sup>. Upon his death the Academy of Physio critics embalmed him.

With the end of Risorgimento, the Contrade showed their vitality. Yet again, they were faced with great changes in history, with the enigmas and uncertainties of new times, the Contrada members reassured themselves by huddling closely around their traditions.

Inside the Contrade of Siena the “associationism” typical of the end of the century developed, giving rise to myriad societies whose members rarely numbered more than 50. Several of these were in direct affiliation to the Contrade, others were based on neighborhood or occupation.

In the first years, the main aim of such societies was mutual aid: assistance was offered to unfortunates, widows, invalids, and the elderly. These were the goals of the Fan of the Tower, or Romulus and Remus founded in the She-wolf around 1870, of which Garibaldi was made honorary president. Others included public education and literacy programs among their aims. Among these there was the Society of Mutual Aid, Instruction and Education of the Star in the Wave.

Other societies promoted conferences and



Representation (also called Cavallino) of a Palio of the 1850s, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena

debates: in 1893 at the Garden, a society arising in the Caterpillar, debates were held on the topic of female emancipation. The renewed role of the Contrada in the life of the city was evident when a proposed law sought to abolish the University of Siena, one of the oldest Atheneae in Europe, as part of a general reordering of the Universities of the Kingdom of Italy.

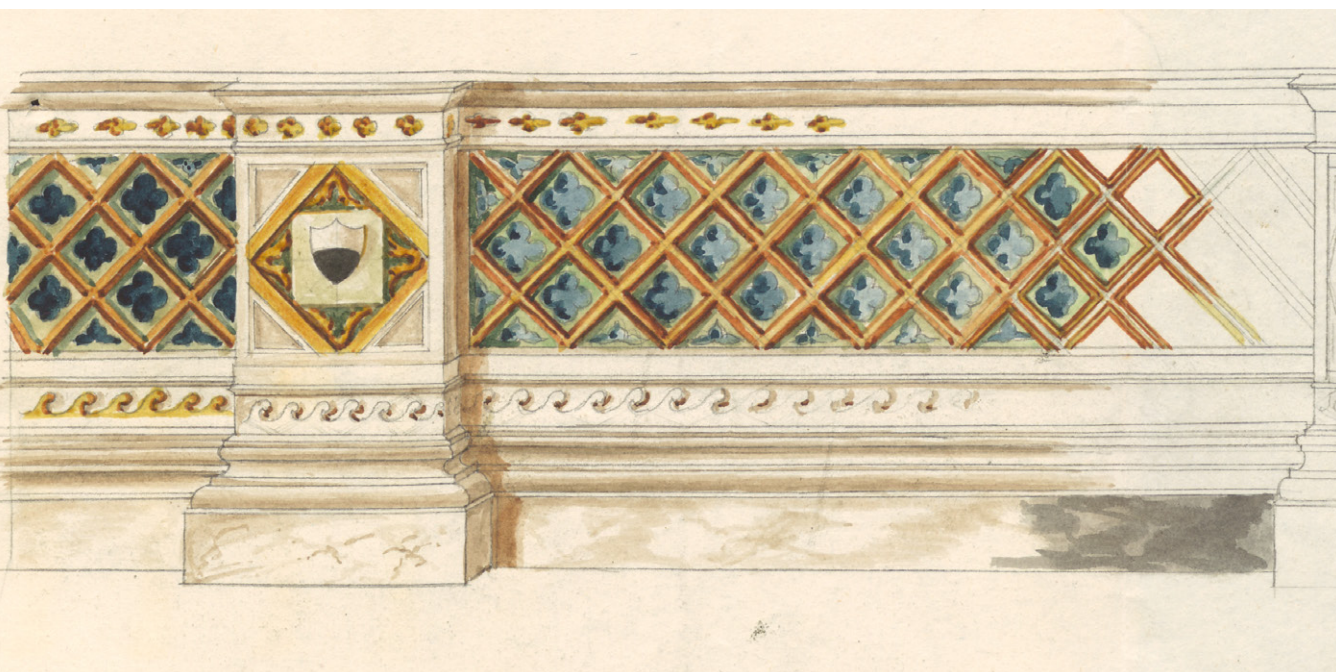
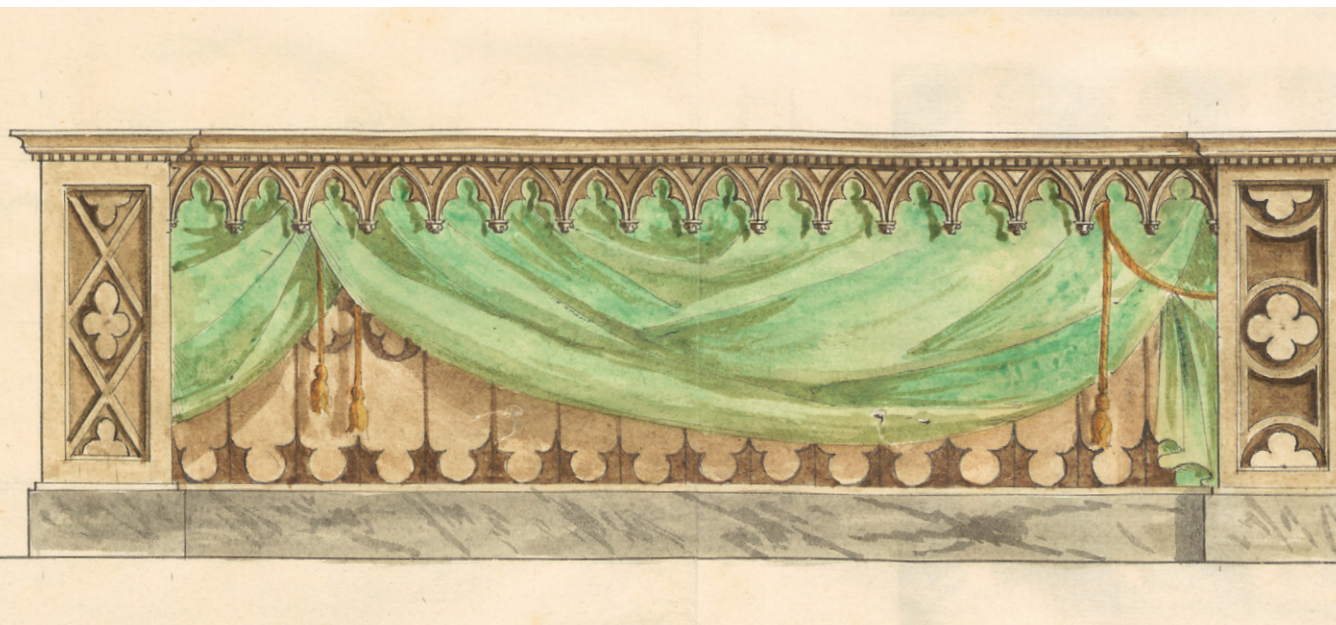
In January 1893, representatives of the Contrade called an assembly and a public demonstration, hanging posters everywhere. They protested individually as well: the Tower sent a telegram to Prime Minister Giolitti, the Goose to the future Prime Minister Crispi, the Shell to the King of Italy. The proposal, “unworthy of a government entrusted with the care of the liberal franchises,” was in the end shelved forever.

The next year the 17 Priors founded the Magistrature of the Contrade, a body set up for direction, discussion, and coordination on all matters of common interest.

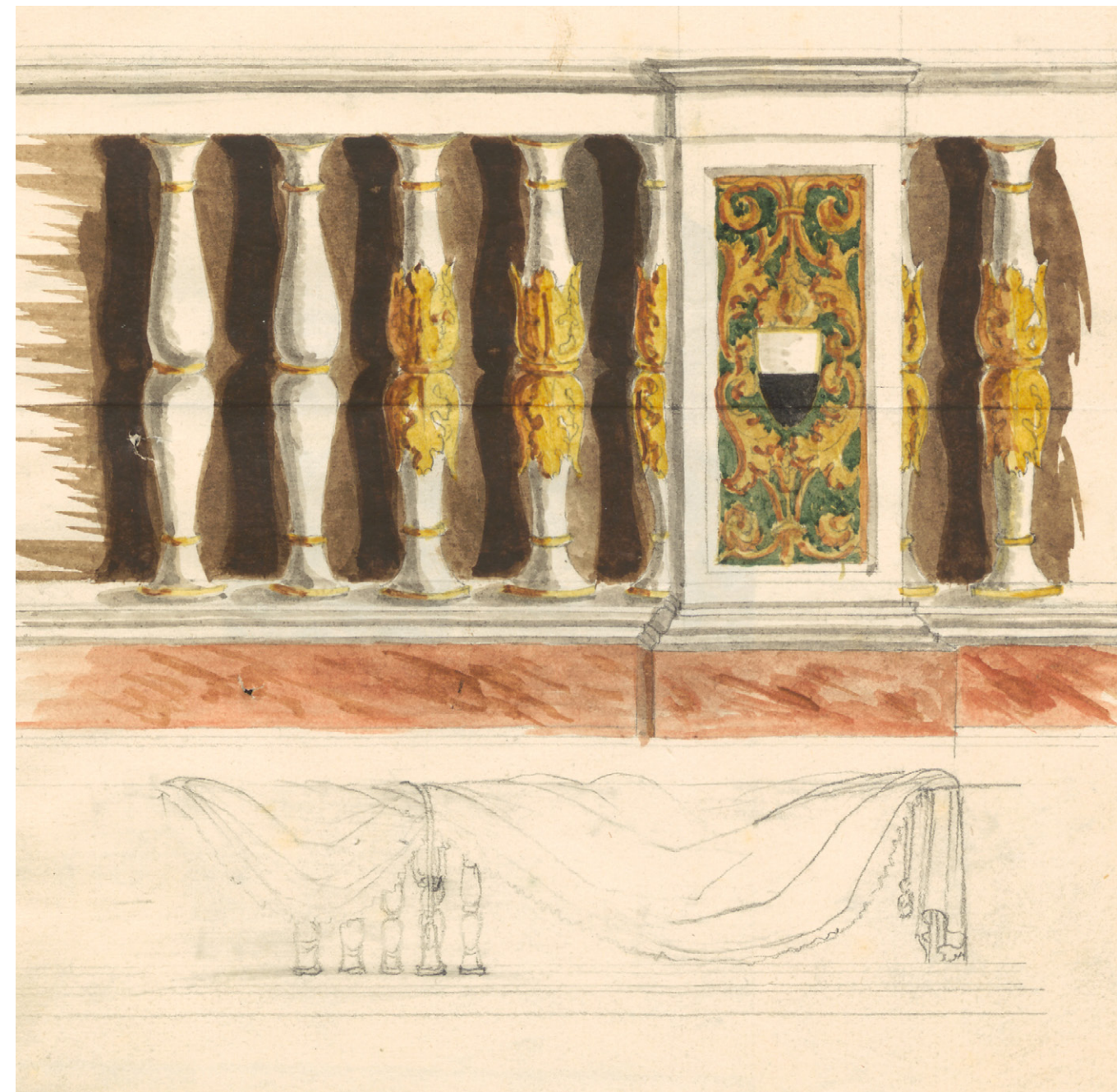
In 1895 the Magistrature began its activities, ruled by a statute which even today prescribes the annual election of a Rector and of a Deputation of 4 members to assist the Rector. In 1878, after a century of changes and experiments in the choreography of the Historic Procession, the Piazza costumes were given new life, inspired by the costumes of Siena in the 1300s. Sketches presented to the Contrade and approved by the Municipality were realized then by the Contrade themselves.

Being the Risorgimento over, the House of Savoy initiated a conscientious policy regarding the festivals and traditions of Italy.





Projects developed in 1854 when the Municipality decided to improve the appearance of the Piazza on the event of the Palio by requiring the owners to uniformly decorate the parapets of the stages, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena







The royals made a Grand Tour of their new kingdom, encouraging the revival of ancient festivals.

In Italy there was the reinvention of tradition. Legnano, Pontida, Barletta were treated like ancestors of the new state and of the much desired new monarchic and national-popular consciousness. The same, as the studies of George Mosse and of E.J. Hobsbawm show, happened throughout Europe between 1870 and World War I.

Humbert I and Margherita of Savoy came and returned to Siena, and after the visit of 1887 there appeared in the heraldic symbols of the Contrade the Savoy trouvailles that can still be seen today: Cyprus roses, knots and daisies, initials and collars of the Annunciation. The city expressed even greater affection for Margherita than for the King, making her its protectress; it dedicated to her a variation on the medieval gingerbread, the “panforte margherita”; it named her in coarse but affectionate popular songs; it sent its most beautiful children to offer daisies (in Italian: margherita flowers) and mumbled verses of poetry; she was offered the keys to the house of St Catherine.

Siena celebrated in its own way the Unity of Italy and responded to the festive politics of the Savoy: in the last decade of the century, 28 Palios were run.

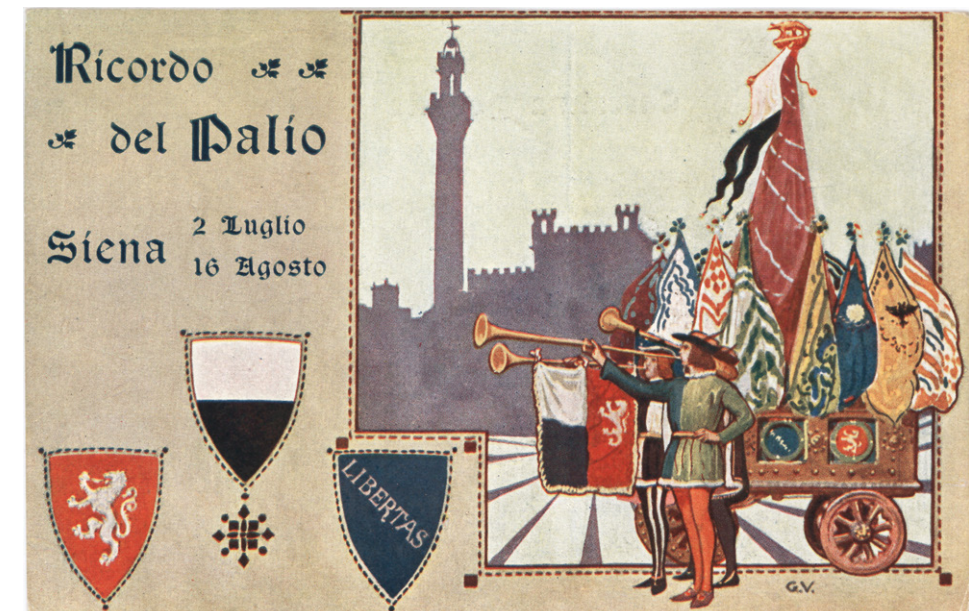
The Palio Banner of the extraordinary Palio held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1860, won by the Contrada of the Wave

Illustrated postal card depicting the coats of arms of the city of Siena, the Piazza del Campo with the profile of the Palazzo Pubblico and the Carroccio del Palio with flags of the Contrade del Palio and three musicians, 1901-1925. It is owned by the Monte dei Paschi di Siena Foundation - Malandrini Collection of Senese Photography

## From 1900s to the present: stories, memories, and civic identity

At the turn of the century the Contrade and the Municipality were caught up in a renewal of costumes which, in 1904, assumed definitively the Medieval-Renaissance look tested a generation before and which, between purism and fin-de-siècle, was rooted in Siennese tastes. In the oleographs and the overly derided “panforte style” dictating the architectural and furniture designs of that period, in everything from wrought iron to upholstery, the polar star was the Exhibition of Ancient Siennese

Art in 1904. Called for by Mayor Alessandro Lisini (also a historian of the Contrade), the exhibition gathered in 40 areas of the Palazzo Comunale some 2,000 items from the 1200s to the 1700s, works of art both major and minor, sacred and secular. On 17<sup>th</sup> April Vittorio Emanuele III inaugurated the exhibition, sending echoes around the world. If the scientific study of art from Siena’s golden age was relaunched among scholars, the popular imagination of the Siennese set the mythic period of







Sketch of the Contrada of the Porcupine members, dressed in new Medieval pageantry, 1876-1879. Municipal Historical Archive of Siena

“Siena-ness” in a vision of the 1300s romanticized and embellished by fantasy. The new Historic Procession, inaugurated for an Extraordinary Palio, placed behind the Carroccio a 2nd wagon portraying the Allegory of Peace as painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Palazzo Comunale. The Historic Procession, with its explicit conjuring of the erstwhile pomp of the city and the old City-State, expressed the historic memory of Siena’s identity, a past once again present and real. A sort of “myth of the eternal return,” such as those dear to Mircea Eliade, was enacted in the Piazza del Campo, i.e. the “theater of the Siennese.” Paradoxically the “metahistoricalness” of the Palio was not found an

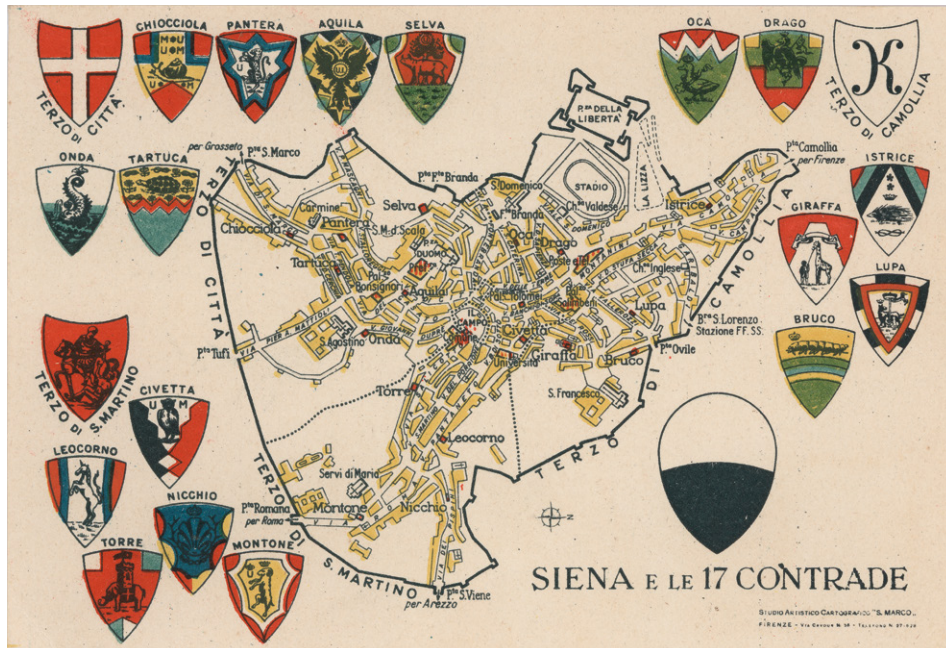
unchanging ritual, but in continual innovations to keep the present in tune with the past. Innovation had to speak the language of tradition. Thus in 1919, after the War, for the veterans who attended the Palio the “flag-waving of victory” was introduced, performed by 17 Standard-Bearers, each in time to the beats of his own drummer, immediately before the horses came out into the Piazza from the Courtyard. The innovation immediately became ritual because it was congenial, because it represented the eruption into the Piazza of an excited “order-disorder” after the impeccable, studied, slow rhythms of the Historic Procession. Representing “disorder”, i.e. the entropy

that verges on throwing into crisis the rules and order of things, there were as always the chaotic Start and the race itself, which soon found new heroes. The jockeys came from the Plain of Empoli, Monte Amiata, the Maremma and upper Lazio. Among them, Angelo “Picino” Meloni excelled, one of the all-time greats. Coming from Canapina on Monte Cimino, he ran 52 times, wore the colors of 15 Contrade, won 13 Palios for 7 Contrade, 4 for the Goose to which he was closely attached. Meloni showed a rough and exceptional racing style and great physical strength. Despite a disabled arm, he rode perfectly, riding crop flying. In August 1909 he won for the Dragon, using his whip on the Shell and the Panther. The next year he won for the Ram, taking his whip to the Shell and the Wave. Artfully controlling his horse, he won for the Porcupine in 1913. His predominance in the Piazza was mitigated by the fact that in 1907, for fear of the secret clannish deals between jockeys, a rule was passed to bar close relatives from running in the same Palio: Meloni made room for “Meloncino,” his son Corrado, who went on to win two Palios. Meloni had several supporting actors. Domenico “Scansino” Fradiacono won twice for the Tower in 1896. Astride the turn of the century, Scansino ran 30 Palios, of which he won 7. Aldo “Bubbolo” Mantovani was a rarity: one of few jockeys to be a native Siennese. He first ran in 1910, took part in 31 Palios, and won 4. Alduino “Zaraballe” Emidi used to introduce



Dario Neri: Poster for the Palio of 2nd July 1928, Historical Archive of Siena. The upper part of the poster is still in use today





Illustrated postal card depicting the plan of the city of Siena divided into Terzi and Contrade, on both sides there are the coats of arms of the Contrade and Terzi of the city (three parts), 1901-1925. It is owned by the Monte dei Paschi di Siena Foundation – Malandrini Collection of Senese Photography

himself in a rather direct way, almost his personal slogan: “My name is Zaraballe, I come from Apulia, and I’ve got good thighs.” With those thighs, from 1902 to 1922, he rode 22 horses in the Palio, winning twice.

## Between the Two Wars

After the pause imposed on the Palio and the Contrade by the War, the community life of the Associations found its vigor back, but with the advent of Fascism it passed under the aegis of the National

Recreational Organization. Historic seats and churches of the Contrade remained untouched. Change was not always peaceful; the new authorities disbanded the more riotous Contrada associations, such as the “Dawn” in the Caterpillar and the “Rhinoceros” in the Tower. To avoid the same fate, the “Castelmontorio” in the Ram Contrada disbanded itself. But new Societies were founded, negotiating with the new regime for their own kind of autonomy, in keeping with the always and never true adage: “In the Contrade there are no politicians.”

During Fascism the Contrade made the occasional sortie from their natural context: they went to Rome in 1930 for the “prince-ly wedding” of Humbert of Savoy and Maria José of Belgium, and to the Boboli Gardens in Firenze in 1936. There, mingling their own with other shows of “virile games” which the regime had revived deeming them useful in forging “agile, swift, and eager” youth, the representatives of the Palio saluted Hitler and Musolini. Vittorio Emanuele III came often to the Palio, almost always privately. Siena became a frequent side trip during his vacation in San Rossore. The King watched the Palio from the Palazzo Comunale, from the window at which Charls V had once appeared.

The jockeys all raised their riding crops to the King in July 1937 before going to the starting rope, introducing an innovation that is still part of the Palio ritual today. The 1936 Palio was dubbed “the Empire” for it celebrated the African enterprises of Fascism. The Banner won by the Giraffe was then autographed by the “Emperor King”. The Giraffe for that felicitous win and with the backing of the royal house, began to call itself “imperial”. With calmness and distance the Palio has always been an event in front of regimes, it described itself in its hymn as “royal, imperial, republican once again!”. This is because the Palio sees regimes as ephemeral compared to itself: They belong to short-term history and to superficial structures; the Palio feels



Postcard with drawing depicting a race of the Palio di Siena, detail, 1901-1925. It is owned by the Monte dei Paschi di Siena Foundation – Malandrini Collection of Senese Photography

part of deep structures and of long-term history. “He will have to go and I will remain,” Savonarola said about Lorenzo de’ Medici, expressing a similar view. Mussolini showed himself sensitive to the request of the Municipality of Siena, which even then sought to protect the Palio from other revivals that sprang up on the Peninsula. In answer to a request submitted by Podestà Bargagli Petrucci, a letter reached the Prefect of Siena in 1935, com-



municating that “the Duce has, by appropriate ordinance, decreed that the name Palio shall be reserved exclusively for the Palio of Siena.” Yet Mussolini never came to the Palio. The joke went around that the Duce, believing himself unique, ill-tolerated the idea of coming to a city that already had 17 Duci.

Between the 2 wars the Historic Procession became ever more splendid and solemn. The renewal of the costumes and of the Carroccio wagon occurred in 1928, under the supervision of a commission of “artists and experts on the subject” presided over by the Podestà. Expenses, paid by the Municipality, by the Monte de Paschi Bank, by the Contrade, and by underwriting from private citizens amounted to more than a million lira. The style chosen for the costumes was that of the late 1400s, for in that time the Contrade had started to appear in the Piazza. The Procession thus began to quote its own past explicitly, closing itself off symbolically in a full-circle as had occurred in the transition from the linear to the circular Palio.

The new Carroccio wagon, adorned with Contrade allegories painted by Federico Joni, was pulled not by horses but by 6 Chianina oxen, as if in homage from the Sienese countryside to the city. In 1936 figures were introduced standing for corporations and the arts and the tribunal of the mercantile guilds. Spear-carriers of the Palazzo increased, escorting the Carroccio wagon, two drummers sonorously closing

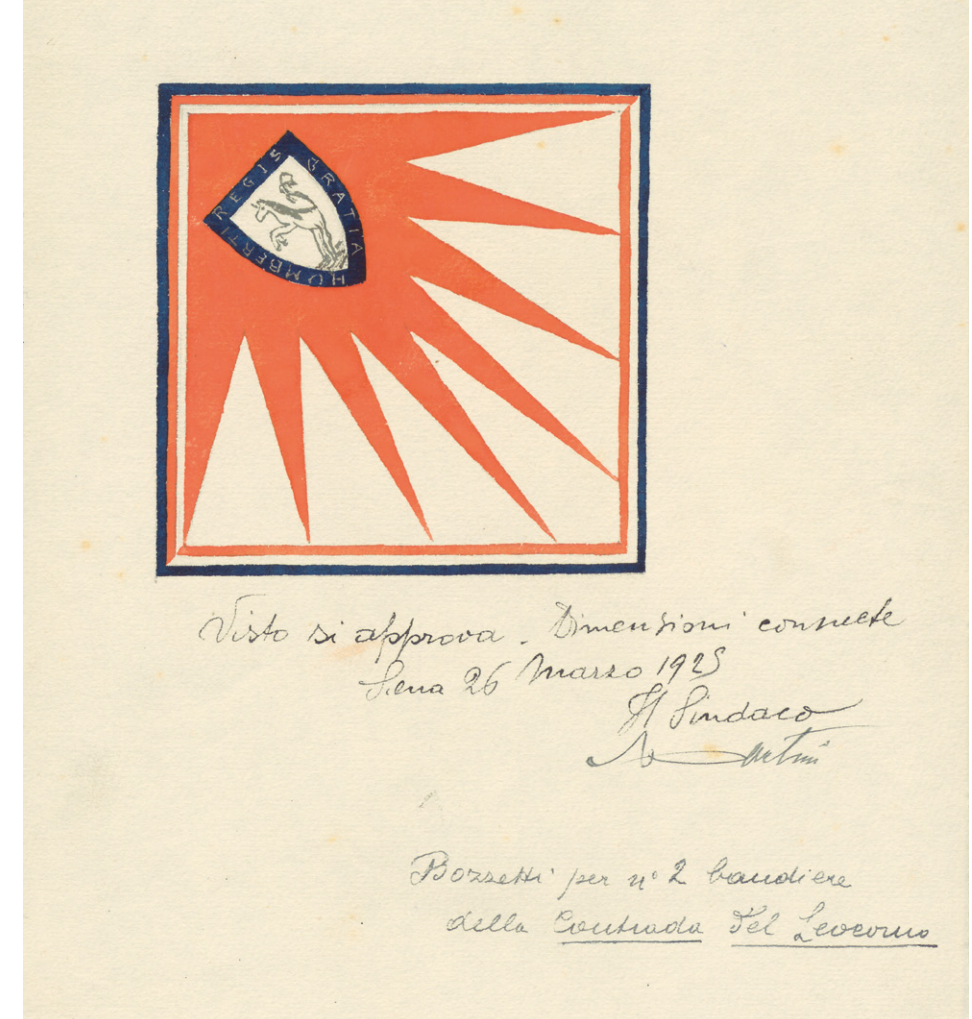
the Procession.

The theatrical activities of Silvio Gigli met with great popularity among the Contrade. Luigi Bonelli’s operetta “Rompicollo” with its Palio setting was performed in Italy and abroad. In 1932 Alessandro Blasetti came to Siena to shoot “Palio,” a mystery film (the script borrowed several short stories by Bonelli) shown in cinemas throughout Italy with success.

But the new phenomenon was the founding in the Contrade of sporting groups and football teams: in 1928 11 such teams were active.

For the last time, some people read political allusions into Contrada colors: the red of the Tower against the tricolor of the Goose. But for the Sienese the Tower remained the neighborhood of Salicotto and the Goose the neighborhood of Fontebranda. In the Piazza, the Goose and the Tower faced each other as always, no punches held. The Goose was part of T.O.N.O. (Tartuca, Onda, Nicchio, Oca), the single, precarious Contrada coalition in Palio history. It won several Palios but disbanded with grief in 1934 when the Goose won against the agreements (“That of ’34/ we’ve tied around our finger as a reminder/ of the Discombobulated Duck” the Shell sang bitterly).

The Tower teamed up with Ganascia, the true successor to Meloni who beat his master with his own favorite weapon, the riding crop, in 1933 (“The whip of Ganascia/ is made round / to whip the Goose and the



Sketch for the new Piazza flag of the Contrada of the Unicorn 1925, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena

Wave” went a song of the Tower). Ganascia was loved for what appeared to be generous combativeness. In truth he was a meticulous calculator who tried to leave nothing to chance. His strategies were devised in endless sessions in the long winters of Monticello Amiata, where the twice victorious jockey Domenico “Il Moro” Leoni was born.

Ganascia, too, wore the colors of almost all the Contrade, 15 in 20 years, winning 8 Palios, among which “overcoat” (2 victo-

ries for 1 Contrada in 1 year) for the Tortoise in 1933 was memorable, what’s more on the same barb, the legendary Folco.

Folco was a sorrel with a mild temperament, one of the Maremman half-breeds for decades making up most barbs in the Piazza. Cattleman, like the cowboys of today, brought them to Siena, or the horse-traders who animated the livestock fairs in the Piazza d’Armi.

The most famous horseman was Sor Ettore Fontani, Doctor of Law, farmer on his





family's farm, livestock- and meat-dealer, and inspector for the Ministry of Agriculture for the area of Pisa. He returned to Siena to reconcile his needs with his passions: his Contrada and the Palio. Out of his stalls came many leading horses in the Piazza and at least as many famous jockeys, from Meloni to Aceto.

Other famous names in Siena included Margiacchi, the Papis, and Dedo Pianigiani, luckiest of all, for he had the good fortune to be elected Captain of the Ram, have his own horse Belfiore assigned to him, and win with that horse.

But none of the best horses of this period – la Giacca, Lina, Lola, Margiacchina, Ruello, or Wally (named in dubious homage to Simpson) – conquered Sienese hearts as much as Folco, who found a friend in Pappio, groom of the Dragon. Many stories live on about their friendship. Folco followed Pappio without so much as a bridle, waited for him in front of taverns where he stopped for a glass and a chat, and people swear that the horse, when spoken to, replied with a friendly neigh. The War began and Folco was hidden in the woods of the Capriano estate by the owners, the family of Dario Neri who, as manager, would steer Scervo and found the Electa publishing house, and who, as artist, would create the costumes for the Wave, the still-in-use Palio poster, a Great Banner, and an unsurpassed portrait of the Sienese Chalkdowns, praised by such friends as Bernard Berenson and Carlo Emilio Gadda.

Sketch of the uniform of the *Paggio Maggiore* of the Contrada of the Ram, 1955, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena



Sketch for the flag of the Major Page of the Contrada of the Eagle, 1955, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena

World War II interrupted the activities of the Palio and of the Contrade; even in that dark moment the Palio was ever in the hearts of the Sienese. On a Piazza del Campo drawn in the sand in a prison camp in Tunisia, 10 Sienese ran their Palio in August 1943, wearing paper plumes. The cannon was a gasoline tin. The Caterpillar won, celebrated by little wine and much song.





## After the War

When the II World War was over, the Sienese returned to their daily traditions. They remembered their war deaths, welcomed returning veterans, and the Contrada Associations reopened their doors. The Eagle and the Tower held dinners for the 1939 victories the outbreak of war had prevented them from celebrating.

So, the Sienese asked for an extraordinary Palio. The first peace-time mayor, caught up in other priorities arising from the important moment, incautiously uttered from a triple window in the Palazzo Comunale words that no mayor of Siena must ever say: "Citizens, either me or the Palio!" The replies of the noisy crowd in the Piazza are easily imagined. In the end the mayor stayed on, but the Palio of Peace was held on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1945.

In the race a law student at the Sienese Atheneum triumphed, Gioacchino "Rubicuori" Calabrò, riding Folco, the old, much-loved hero horse. The Palio was particularly tumultuous. There were fist-fights in which soldiers of the Allied troops got involved. After the race, disappointed members of the Caterpillar chased Rubacuori and ripped the Great Banner to shreds. The Dragon keeps a copy they had painted at their own expense.

In 1950, thanks to the initiative of the Friends of the Palio, the "Masgalgano" was reinstituted, the prize given for the demeanor of the costumed representatives

Renato Guttuso, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 1971,  
won by the Contrada of the Giraffe

and for the skill of their Standard-Bearers and drummer. Designation of the winning Contrada was based on points awarded by commissioners around the track.

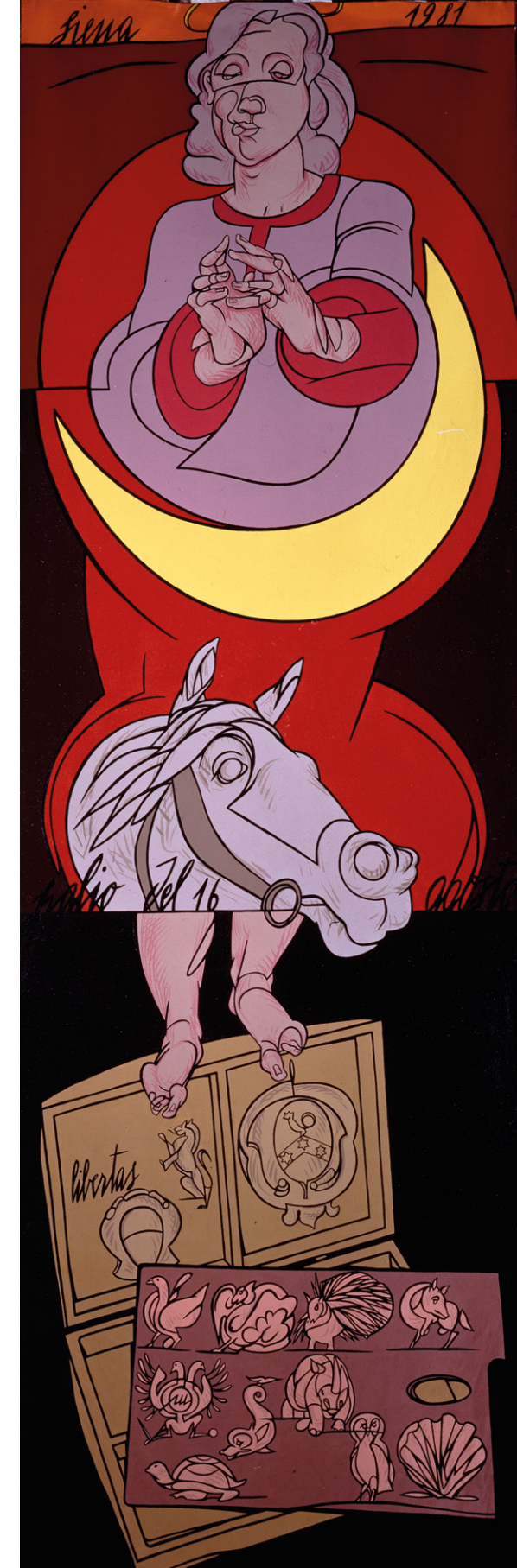
That same year an important innovation modified the Start, which since then has been set on the Judges' Stand by a mechanical device invented by a Sienese named Aldo Sprugnoli. The order is learned at the last moment, when the horses are at the Casato and are headed toward the starting area. With this device the Start is determined by chance. Previously the mayor had prepared the order, filling out by his own discretion 3 lists, one of which was drawn.

In the Palio of August 1946 the jockey from Manziana, Giuseppe "Ciancone" Gentili, achieved the first of his 9 successes; he remained inarguably foremost among the jockeys of the Piazza until the rise of Andrea De Gortes.

Gentili was a jockey of great intelligence and unsurpassed skill, loved and hated, feared and respected as few others in Palio history. His detractors called him "Beppe the Greedy," his admirers called him "the Professor," a nickname then handed on to the jockey Aceto in more recent times. Several of his winning races are remembered as having been perfectly run.

But in 1961, running for the Goose, the starting rope found him in the 9th position. The Tower, eternal archival, was 10th, the position of "the running start" that prompts the Start. Vittorino, jockey for the Tower, shot past Ciancone, brush-

Valerio Adami, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 1981,  
won by the Contrada of the Shell





Sketch for the new chariot (Carroccio) of the Historical Procession, 1981, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena

Carroccio



On the next two pages: Sketches for the new frames of the Municipal Administration of Siena, 1981, Municipal Historical Archive of Siena









ing against him. Ciancone had no time to block the adversary or to show everyone that at least he had tried to get in his way. Vittorino proceeded to win. “My horse took a wrong step,” Ciancone tried to justify himself to the furious members of the Goose who were ready to lynch him; the Tower, in mocking songs, sang of a raise in the price of betrayal for a turncoat: 3, 5, 6 million. Gentili, despite his stuntman-like physique, felt the aches of the Contrada’s wrath even 6 months later.

The same years also witnessed the lovely fable of Vittorino and Gaudenzia. Giorgio Terni came from Monte Amiata; in 1953 he arrived in the Shell, which became his Contrada, home, and workplace. He ran for the Shell in 10 races and won 3; all in all, he collected 21 races and 6 victories. Athletic, cool and with lightning-fast reflexes, he was famous for fiery starts after unnervingly long waits. Vittorino was the trainer to Gaudenzia, a maremma dapple-grey mare who came into the Piazza at 10 years of age in 1952. Gaudenzia was docile and fast, precise and generous: ideal traits for Vittorino’s gifts with which to make an unbeatable pair. In August 1954 luck and Contrada strategy divided Gaudenzia and Vittorino and had them run against each other. Gaudenzia lost her rider – on purpose, so they say – and for 2 circuits she tried to pass Vittorino who was first and who tried to keep her behind. Despite the whiplashes, Gaudenzia passed him in the last meters of the race and won, in front of a thrilled Piazza. Vittorino went

Leonardo Cremonini, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 1985, won by the Contrada of the Wave

to hug her with tears in his eyes. Her adventure in the Palio ended in glory, Gaudenzia returned to the hills of Celsa, on the estate of Benito Giachetti, where she died at 30, surrounded by the Contrada members’ love.

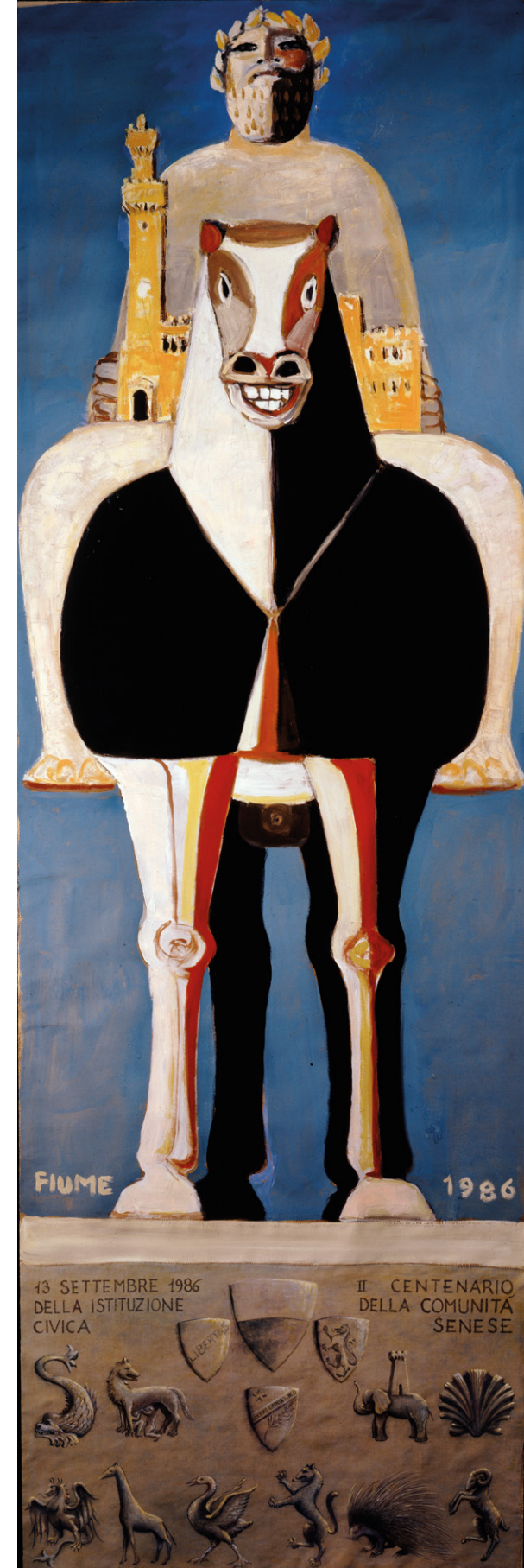
Gaudenzia was not the only heroine of those years. In August of 1957 the Eagle was represented by the jockey Diavola, the nickname for Rosanna Bonelli, once the stand-in for Diana Dors who, with Vittorio Gassman, filmed Luigi Zampa’s “La ragazza del Palio” in Siena. Diavola made a great impression during the Trial Runs, and in the Palio she was third when she fell at San Martino’s corner. The Contrada members feted her, despite her unfortunate race.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1955 new costumes appeared in the Piazza, following the by now established rhythm of a renewal in every generation. The insignia of Montalcino has been paraded with special emphasis ever since because that spring the Sienese held the first long march to that city in remembrance of the asylum received by the Government in exile of the Sienese Republic. The march is repeated every 8 years.

The last structural change in the Palio took place between the 1950s and the 1960s, with the arrival of horses and then of jockeys from Sardinia.

The Maremma horses were indeed becoming scarcer; breeding centers were closing and, with the rise of mass motorized transportation, work- and draught-

Salvatore Fiume, the Palio Banner of 13<sup>th</sup> September 1986, won by the Contrada of the Ram





horses had almost disappeared. The Palio, however, called for horses ever faster and more precise.

Thus began the era of the Sardinian horses. The first of the great Sardinian horses was a mare called Uberta de Mores, who in 1960 and 1961 won 4 consecutive Palios. She was trained by Gentili, who ran her in the province or with other horses and jockeys in the Palio of Cinecittà, giving her the chance to be among the “walk-ons” in the first spaghetti westerns.

Soon the presence of Sardinian horses became predominant. In the August, 1962 Palio; 9 of the 10 horses were Sardinian. Up against them was the last legendary Maremma horse, who often changed name and ownership: he was called Eucalipto, Ettore, Dragone, and finally Topolone. In 17 races he won 7 victories.

Born in 1954, Topolone was big, powerful, short in the mid-section (“It’s like sitting in an armchair,” said jockeys who rode him), precise like few other barbs ever seen in the Piazza. His victorious race for the Shell won him the praises of singer, Gianni Brera, who in his epinicion wrote, “Ah, Topolone, Saracen devil! / Ah, my Topolone, ah Shell!” In 1969 Topolone won the fastest Palio until then, in 1 min. 15 secs, a record, so they said, unbroken since 1926.

After him, in the 1970s, the Piazza greeted Urbino de Orzieri, a horse that was capricious and shadowy, nervous and victorious. Between 1978 and 1979 Urbino de Orzieri won 3 Palios, set a record for the track, and then left the scene, victim of the complex

reasons connected to Palio strategy and, above all, of his inarguable superiority.

With the last venture of Gentili, winner for the Wave at 55 years of age, the era of the Tuscan-Lazial jockeys ended. Following the Sardinian horses, jockeys came from the same island in 2 great waves.

The first was that of jockey-farmers who found their natural habitat in the agricultural, pastoral communities of Sardinians massively relocated to the Sieneese Chalkdowns.

The second wave was that of Sardinian jockeys who reached the Piazza by way of other racetracks. Among them was Andrea De Gortes who would go on to earn the title “King of the Piazza” and to dominate the world of jockeys and the Palio scene for a quarter of a century.

From the start, Aceto showed an impeccable style, cool nerves and a great determination. He capitalized on his competitors’ errors and his own good fortune, making several of his Palio victories absolutely sensational. In other Palios he triumphed by strength or by cunning. He bound himself to the Goose, but often managed to convince the same Contrada that the best strategy to make the rival Tower lose was for him to run for other Contrade to which chance had given the best horses.

Struggling against him and helping him there were mainly 2 jockeys: Bastiano, a lanky Arcadian from Vescona in the Sieneese Chalkdowns, and Canapino, descended from the Maremma cowboys, a great breeder of Palio horses on his ranch in the area of Asciano. In his outstanding career,

Aceto would win 14 times wearing the colors of almost all the Contrade. Aceto became a nationally famous personality, to whom myriad articles, innumerable television interviews, and, today, 3 biographies have been dedicated.

Aceto transformed the image of the Palio jockey. His requests were those of a professional who levelheadedly negotiates the terms of his services according to the laws of demand and offer. After a sensational divorce from the Goose, he joined up with the Tortoise, then with the Tower. Though he has stepped back from the Piazza, his influence in the world of jockeys remains, as does the national attention he attracts. Many fans await his return, his nth sensational gesture.

## The Contrade Today

Beyond the Palio and the Piazza, the city changes. The center empties. Neighborhood life grows thin. Most Contrada members, about 90%, live outside the boundaries of their neighborhoods and only commute to it. But stopping the city from changing face altogether there is still the iron-like, invisible 4<sup>th</sup> dimension of the Contrade, a dimension in symbolic space. Today the Contrada, in the territory of its boundaries, has a series of meaningful places, first of all a symbolic “gate,” unmarked by special architectural signs but known by tradition, facing the center of town. The church, the most ancient place of the Contrada, serves as chapel for the



At the top, of the next page: Baptismal font inside the historic museum of the Contrada of the Owl



Historic museum site of the Contrada of the Tortoise





religious ceremonies of the Contrada and of individual members. The Contrada Association is a vast recreational circle that is open every day, run by Contrada volunteers. Usually a wide green space is connected to the Contrada, owned by the Contrada or used with the liberal consent of the Municipality, wisely committed to defending the green valleys within the city walls, in the belief that the Contrade are the groups best equipped to guard them and to put them to socially important use. The Associations take on the task of the daily socialization among members through the organization and management of free time, creating and searching for new opportunities to promote social life in step with the times. Once societies open only to men, the Associations have become ever more clubs for “members and families.”

Within the Associations groups of various ages and interests form and hold their meetings. Life in the Association has taken on the same functional and symbolic role held by life in the neighborhood in past generations. The Association is the secular arm of the Contrada. Fountains bearing the crests of the Contrade have spread throughout the city. They are used for baptism within the Contrada, and above all they constitute the most characteristic architectural sign of the Contrada; the tabernacles of the Contrada take on color and Contrada connotation once a year when the children decorate them with flowers and colors for the Feast of the Madonna on 3<sup>rd</sup> September.

The *Comparsa* of Contrada of the Shell prepares for the tour to honor the protectors

A group of children from the Contrada of the Panther during the Procession of the *Ceri*



Flag bearer at work while mending a flag of the Contrada of the Giraffe

The Historical Seat/Museum is referred to by the members as the “Contrada” through *antonomasia*, and they refuse to think of it as “a museum.” For them indeed, the building is a natural extension of home, a communal home that carefully houses and proudly displays objects of historic, artistic, and archival value purchased or donated by the members.

Similarly the population of the Contrada is considered by members as the natural extension of their biological family. To observers who have searched for analogies with other times, places, and cultures, the Contrada has appeared a metropolitan tribe, a Mediterranean clan, a modern *junto* or faction, a modern “clan” of mixed social classes. The Sienese instead prefer to underline the Contrada’s historic and sociological uniqueness.

The Contrada continues to take part in the *Palio* and to deliver rites of passage and of identity confirmation. It is there at births, weddings, and funerals with its page and its flag; on the special occasions in the lives of its members, the Contrada sends cards of greeting, congratulations, solidarity, condolence.

The Contrada loves to posit itself as small autonomous hometown, a city in the Sienese “confederation” of cities. In this light, after the War twin partnerships between the Contrade and other Italian cities flowered: the Eagle and Aquila, the Snail and Venice, the Porcupine and Perugia, the Panther and Lucca, and so forth. But the consubstantial incompatibility of the Contrada with all that happens “outside” has left such twin partnerships as mostly formal, practically inactive acts. It is Sien-







na, following a European trend, that has twinned itself and carries on active cultural exchanges with Weimar, Wetzlar, and Avignon and intensive relations with Tartu, Siviglia, and the Chinese cities of Nantong, Nanchino, Yangzhou in the district of Jangsu, e Cetinje (Montenegro). Traditionally one belongs to a Contrada in different ways. The oldest one is the *jus soli*, by birth within the boundaries of the Contrada. Many are the stories of pregnant women taken to give birth in the right place, or of the soil of the Contrada spread under the hospital bed to reconstruct there the ancestral land. More recently, births in private homes having almost disappeared, *jus soli* applies to the Contrada in which the newborn has its legal address.

According to tradition one may belong to a Contrada also through *jus sanguinis*, direct descent from members. When parents belong to different Contrade, the membership of the children is carefully negotiated, considering the family tree of both parents and their importance within their Contrade. A third criterion is a sort of *jus affiliation*, by convention, when neither of the above reasons applies to become a member of the Contrada which one simply chooses to frequent, where one has close social relationships; this criterion applies also to people coming from other towns or countries, people who make their first Sienese friendships within a certain Contrada. This tradition is ancient too. In their first centuries the Contrade had “noble protectors” (representing the Contrade to the public authorities before the role and sta-



Highlights of the race





tus of the Prior were broadened) who could even be resident outside the Contrade's territories. The Proclamation of Violante explicitly upheld the Contrade's right to seek and maintain protectors beyond their boundaries. Today each Contrada has a steady number of "protectors" who financially support it through voluntary contributions. The identity of such contributors is secret. The number of protectors is secret, too, but may be estimated between several hundred in the less populated Contrade and several thousand in those with greater populations.

The Contrade, highlight social, noble, and professional titles of their members, but at the same time they make a point of underscoring that within the Contrada people have always applied the notion calling each other by the informal form of the word "you," and no one has ever shied away from bold exchange of opinions. The Contrada thus represents both the real hierarchy of Siennese society and the ideal *communitas* in which all members have equal rights and responsibilities, freedom and dignity, and they face each other with their individual humanity. In the balance of these two contradictory characteristics lies the anthropological originality of the Contrada as complex social structure.

It is, the Siennese insist, a "democratic" structure, even if the Contrada democracy has manners and features that are more easily recognized in the Renaissance than in the modern age. The Contrada demonstrates this, among other examples, in its electoral mechanisms and in the distribution of its offices. Elections are generally held every 2 years. Candidates are proposed by an electoral commission of

The horses at the canapé





"Give it to us!" The Contrada members claim the Palio Banner they have just won

10 or more members, designated for election by the bodies in charge; the commission selects nominees for the list that will be voted on. A General Council is elected (usually 100 or so members) as is a Presidency of 15 or so members who govern the Contrada. The Prior is head of the Contrada, assisted by the Vicar. Concerning the Palio, the Contrada is led instead by the Captain, helped by 2 Lieutenants, who, in various Contrade, are either elected or appointed by the Captain or by the assembly. The Corrector, the priest of the Contrada, is elected and then designated with the agreement of the Curia. He officiates at all the religious ceremonies in Contrada life. A financial attaché coordinates the capillary work of the numerous appointees to collect the donation pledges – all of which are secret – for a “Palio victory” or for the “losing fund”. These funds cover the expenses related to every race and, hopefully, the expenses, not itemized, of making the adversary lose. A college of Notables, the “boni homines” (good men) of the Contrada, includes former Priors, former Captains, and notables, serving as a consulting body at the highest levels, ensuring continuity of policy and of intents and adherence to the constitutions. Women’s groups and youth groups, ever more active and present, have brought to Contrada life the same innovative element that they stand for in contemporary Italian society. If the Contrada, guardian *par excellence* of tradition, may not strike some people as the *avant-garde* of the process of parification and social innovation of the

Contrada members celebrating the victory sing the Te Deum





past decades, it is nevertheless true that the Contrada has punctually reflected every change in the social history of Siena and continues to do so today. Recently women have been elected to the office of President, Prior, and Captain. And the average Contrada director is ever younger.

Once a year, between spring and the end of summer, the Contrada celebrates its titular festival in honor of its Patron Saint or of a Marian epiphany. On the Saturday evening there is the “reception of the Signoria”: the Prior, the Presidency, and the Notables of the Contrada, along with costumed representatives and members of the population receive the Priors of Contrade that are allies or “aggregates,” as an ethno-centric-sounding term calls them. Prayers follow, officiated by the Corrector and sometimes co-celebrated by other Correctors, with the singing of psalms and hymns. After a drinks reception everyone moves to the streets where an open-air dinner takes place, leading into songs, musical entertainments, and traditional games such as the Palio of the Barberi (colored balls in lieu of the horses) with gastronomic prizes, the Palio of the Children, target-firing, and the Greased Pole. Streets are lit up by hundreds of wall-sconces.

On the Sunday there are the “rounds” of paying honor to the protectors residing outside the territory. Groups of costumed representatives make rounds of the coun-

Domenico Paladino, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 1992, won by the Contrada of the Dragon

Sandro Chia, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 1994, won by the Contrada of the Tortoise

Emilio Tadini, the Palio Banner of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1997, won by the Contrada of the Giraffe







tryside, always in regions not far from the city. All other Contrade may be visited (except the adversary): the churches are opened, and homage is paid to sister organizations. Allied Contrade offer sumptuous receptions. Contrada visit the graves of members buried in the city's 2 cemeteries and celebrate a mass for the dead. The morning closes with the Contrada baptism which the Prior bestows upon newborns, upon the adults who have so requested, with the water of the Contrada's fountain. The rounds conclude with a gathering of the costumed representatives, directors, and Contrada members in a certain point of the city, forming a procession that returns to the Contrada, flags unfurled, through the streets to the accompaniment of a musical band. A closing dinner finishes the festivities.

## Beyond the Year 2000

At the beginning of this new Millennium, the Palio once more seeks its new face. Taking on an ever more important role is the Consortium for the Guardianship of the Palio, intervening with great precision against abuses of images, commercial manipulations, and publicity exploitations of the Palio and of the Contrade. The Magistrature of the Contrade celebrates its 100th anniversary, the Committee of Friends of the Palio the 50th anniversary of its activities.

Territories outside the city walls are once

Jim Dine, the Palio Banner of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2000, won by the Contrada of the Porcupine

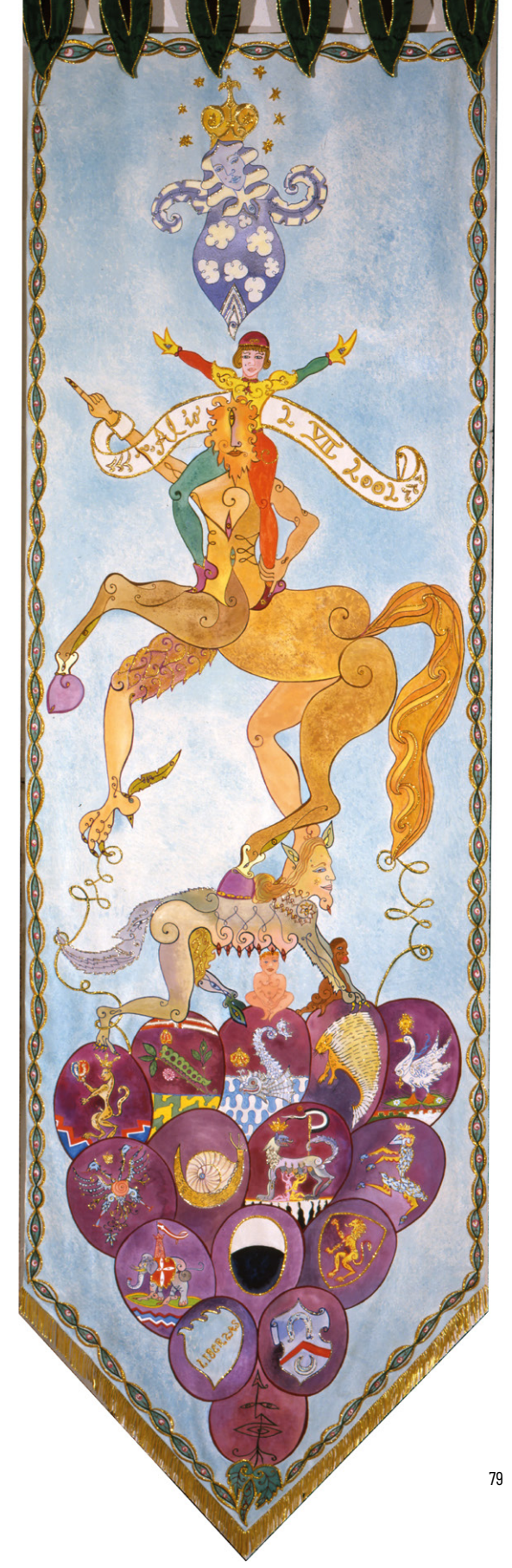
again a question of high priority. The idea of dividing the territory in the entire Municipality into slices has been debated for decades. In 1994 a document was discussed in all 17 sovereign assemblies of the Contrade: the great majority came out against the hypothetical assignment to the Contrade of 17 territories outside the city walls to cover the whole Municipality of Siena. All the Contrade instead reiterated the need to revitalize the historic territories as a measure to protect against their progressive depletion.

Palio justice remains a much-debated topic. Disagreement concerns the concept of the objective responsibility of the Contrade, stated in the Article 101 of the regulations. Opinions differ between 2 extremes: some would have Contrada responsibility always applied and in all places, others only during the Palio and in the space of the Piazza.

Since the year 2000, a member of the City government singles out possible breakings of the Palio rules and proposes penalties against jockeys, Contradas, and Contrada member. Against such proposals, it is possible to present defensive evidence or memoirs within 10 days. Later, the City Government delivers a judgement without appeal.

The Start of the race remains at the center of many discussions and recriminations, above all regarding the role of the Starter with respect to the "running start" of the 10th horse. According to the present rules, over the 9 jockeys between the starting ropes, the Starter has absolute power.

Luigi Ontani, the Palio Banner of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2002, won by the Contrada of the Porcupine







Over the jockey entrusted with the “running start,” the Starter has only the power of veto: he may only stop him from entering when the alignment of the other horses between the starting ropes is not, in his judgment, satisfactory. But when the alignment is as it should be, it is the 10th jockey who chooses the moment of his own entry between the starting ropes, signifying the start of the race. Consequently the Palios of recent years have marked the growth of long, exasperating waits.

In the last several years the world of the jockeys has witnessed the reign of Aceto divided into a diarchy of 2 Sardinian jockeys, Salvatore “Cianchino” (because he reminds many of the legendary Ciancone) Ladu and Beppino “Pesse” Pes.

But besides them, new jockeys became famous. Some of them are Tuscans, such as “De”; a few are from Siena, such as Gigi Bruschelli “Trecciolino”, the true heir of Aceto, for his outstanding abilities - athletic, strategic, diplomatic. Trecciolino runs an important horse stable in the Sienese hills. Between 1996 and July 2012 he won 13 times. The Pantheon of Palio horses welcomes its most recent heroes. Panezio, trained by Canapino, has become the emulator of Folco: like Folco, Panezio ran 20 races in the Piazza. Between 1973 and 1983 he won 8 times. Benito dominated the Piazza in the 1980s, peremptorily winning 5 races, 2 of which were “riderless” victories. After these, no others have been admitted yet to the circle of the Greats. The animals coming to the Piazza often prove themselves poorly adapted to a race

Fernando Botero, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2002, won by the Contrada of the Tortoise



that was not made for horses with too pure a blood or too fast a speed, fragile and nervous as many of them are today. Accidents on the track prompt repeated arguments. The Municipality, in cooperation with other organizational bodies of the Palio, applies constant pressure that all horses be scrutinized to ascertain not only their state of health but also their physical suitability to the Piazza. Facilities have been built for the care of injured horses.

Since the year 2000, the City has instituted a “Book of Palio horses” with the aim to create a set of horses specifically apt to the Palio. Since the same year, a city ordinance rules that the only horses admitted to the Palio will be the half-bred (that is with up to 75% of English blood).

The safety of horses and jockeys remains constantly the main preoccupation of the Palio organizers. Annually, the City Council approves an “Equine Protocol” through which, among other things, the Municipality aims to create and spread a culture respecting and protecting the animal, with reference to the optimization of its psycho-physical conditions.

In 1999 the City’s technical office put on place the new cushions for the San Martino turn. They are studied to absorb the different impacts of horses and men.

In the crash-tests made by specialized firms in Northern Italy, the Sienese wooden dummy shaped like a horse shared the testing grounds with formula one race cars. The Palio seeks actively even high-tech expertise to obtain the highest possible safety.

The colors of the Palio become ever more

Igor Mitoraj, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2004, won by the Contrada of the Tortoise





vivid. Artists of international renown have been called upon in recent years to paint the Great Banners. It began in 1969 when Marte, a Sienese graphic artist who had emigrated to Zurich, gifted to the Palio a Great Banner done in the style of great European Pop Art. Mino Maccari and Renato Guttuso followed, the latter of whom for the August 1971 Palio painted a Great Banner that satisfied (though not immediately) the cultured and the unsophisticated alike. Later came artists such as Cagli, Decca, Attardi, Sassu, Treccani, Vespignani, Cremonini, Tadini. Among the Sienese painters, Marco Antonio Tanganelli has remained unforgettable. In 1981 the Banner by Valerio Adami prompted clamorous arguments but will remain a yardstick for later artists. Sandro Chia painted the Banner of August, 1994 and executed for the Porcupine and the city a large bronze horse with its colt, standing in the Lizza gardens, symbol of the Palio's continuity from father to son.

In 1975 the first foreign artist was commissioned to paint the Banner, the Japanese Sho Chiba, followed then by the French Gérard Fromanger, the Spanish Eduardo Arroyo, the British Joe Tilson, the Belgian Jean-Michel Folon. In 2000 the painter is the American Jam Dine; in 2002 the Colombian Fernando Botero.

Presenting the later to the Sienese, the Major comments that finally the most famous festival in the world has met the most famous living artist in the world.

In August 2004 Igor Mitoraj paints a Palio dominated by a Madonna before a Pegasus and a group of bystanders, a work of



Rita Petti, the Palio Banner, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005, won by the Contrada of the Caterpillar

Ugo Nespolo, the Palio Banner 16<sup>th</sup> August 2007, won by the Contrada of the Unicorn





great sculptural profile. The following year, Rita Petti, Siennese artist and art historian, receives the unanimous vote of the jury in the competition for the painting of the banner dedicated to Pope Pius II. Her sacred the “Balzana” is cultured and intellectual, painted with the bibliography of the Pope written on the banner, and on the bar his words for the canonization of St. Catherine of Siena. The Pope holds his pastoral staff, the horse rears up and the Madonna of Provenzano surprisingly comes down among his people.

In August 2005 the big international art protagonists return with Manolo Valdes, one of the greatest contemporary Spanish painters. The banner is painted in line with the great Iberian iconographic tradition, but with the style and bold colors of international pop art, of which he is an undisputed protagonist.

The horizon of Palio widens further when in July 2010, the task goes to Ali Hassoun, a Lebanese by birth and Italian by adoption. His banner on the anniversary of Montaperti, a mythological and epic battle, represents St. George by Mantegna, but with a keffiyeh in the colors of the “Balzana”, to let him play as one of the legendary Muslim 200 archers who probably were in the battle on the side of Siena.

On the crown of the Madonna, there are together the cross, the star of David and the crescent of Islam. The assignment, giv-

Ali Hassoun, the Palio Banner 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010,  
won by the Contrada of the Forest

Mario Ceroli, the Palio Banner 16<sup>th</sup> August 2008,  
won by the Contrada of the Caterpillar

Francesco Carone, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2011,  
won by the Contrada of the Giraffe







en in a spirit of great cultural openness to a painter who produces his works with the theme of the encounter between East and West, arouses controversy and passionate debates. In August 2011 Francesco Carone, a Sienese painter, makes an unusual Palio, refined, white, almost monochrome, almost a response to the Sienese who often repeated “we like to win the Palio even if it is an all-white banner”. Claudio Carli wins the competition in 2012 for the Palio dedicated to St. Francesco. The banner has the poor patched habit of Francesco applied to spill on the festive silk of the Sienese: strength and spirituality, happy poverty and simplicity are represented around the Francesco’s stick, which miraculously blooms in all colors of Siena.

In one of her essays, Judith Hook portrayed Siena, the Palio, and the Contrade as an everlasting trinity. Others, more critically, have identified the three parts of the Sienese trinity as municipalism, tribalism, and narcissism.

One thing is certain: without the Palio (and the Contrade that participate in it and hand it on) Siena today would be only a beautiful city in Tuscany.

To the ever more numerous guests who come to Siena to understand its reason and its secret, the Sienese ultimately reply, “Because in Siena there’s the Palio,” “Because in Siena there are the Contrade.”

Emilio Giannelli, the Palio Banner of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2018, won by the Contrada of the Dragon

Milo Manara, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2019, won by the Contrada of the Forest

Marco Lodola, the Palio Banner of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2023, won by the Contrada of the Goose







# **The Palio Rituals**



# 01

## Draw by lot

No less than 20 days before the July 2<sup>nd</sup> Palio and the August 16<sup>th</sup> Palio, usually on a public holiday afternoon, the Contrade that complete the number of participants in the next Palio are drawn by lot. This Palio ritual has been popular since 1843.

It is important to know that **only ten of the seventeen Contrade run**. Of these, the seven Contrade that did not run the previous year Palio on the same date run "by default"; the other three are drawn among the ten that had participated instead.



# 02

## Pre-visits

At the pre-visit, carried out in June for the July Palio and during the first days of August for the second race, a team of specialists checks the horses' condition with extreme care. Radiographic examinations are performed for each one of them, health conditions are evaluated with special attention to the musculoskeletal system, and cardio-circulatory conditions of the animals are checked. When necessary, ultrasound scans are used to ascertain the entire clinical pattern of each horse. The medical-veterinary facilities used for forecasting and emergency care include an operating room and up-to-date surgical and rehabilitation equipment. New recovery techniques have been successfully tested at Siena.



# 03

## Preparation of the square

A week before the Palio, the **Judges' Stage** is raised. The current one has been in use since 1996. The **flagpole** ("bandierino"), the finishing point of the race, is fixed to one of the gates that mark the interior of the square. This fence (already documented in a 1468 Consistory ordinance) is fixed to the 71 Sienese travertine columns. Added to this is the leather protection at the inner corner of the curve of San Martino and Casato. Painted tables marking the outside of the track are then mounted. Fencing was introduced in 1853, so as the painted baluster, created to replace the previous canvas made one.

Since 1841 on the outside of the San Martino bend, mattresses are placed and attached to a planking, which is at present made of polyurethane foam, forming a protection about 50 meters long and 2 meters high, as a buffer to impacts of horses and jockeys.

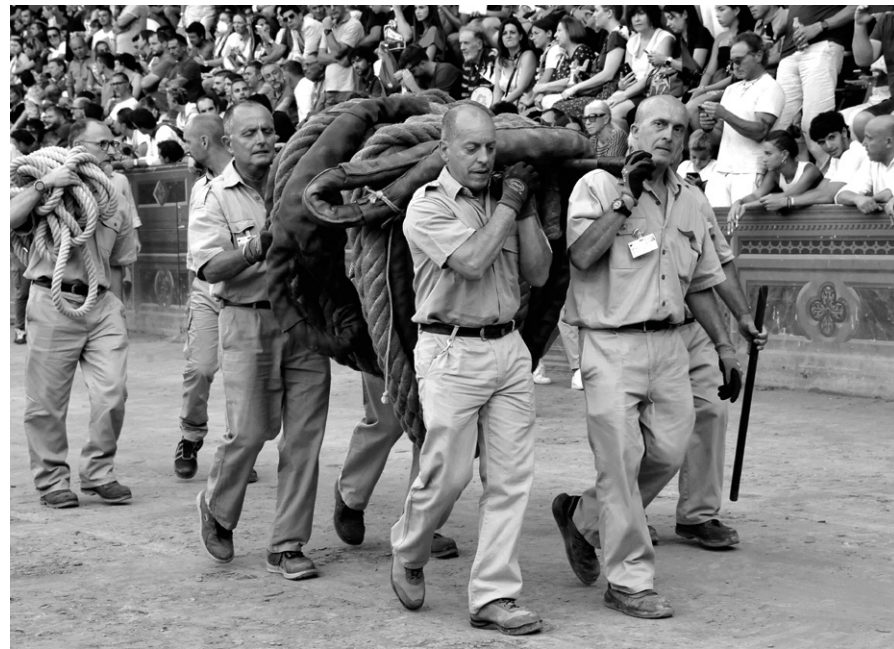
In front of the Judges' Stage, **earth is spread by hand in the Square** as in ancient times. About 400 cubic meters of tuff are used. Since 1698, the Piazza has been filled in a few days before the Palio. The tuff ring measures 319 meters at the fences. The optimal path of the horses for the race rises to 339 meters.

Appropriate machinery spreads and presses the tuff to ensure proper consistency, elasticity and drainage. The paver perfectly levels the tuff layer contained in its back. The two-roller compressor compacts the track tuff. The work is then finished by hand.

The **mortar** with its explosions marks the most important moments of the Palio: the beginning of the track, the exit of the horses from the Big Entrance Gate ("Entrone", the courtyard of the Podestà of the Palazzo Pubblico), the invalid starts and the victorious arrival.









# 04

## “Drappellone”

The “Drappellone” (the great cloth, which is the prize of the race, lit. “The Palio”) is mounted on its stand, from the top of which two ribbons and two tassels in the colors of the Balzana (the coat of arms of Siena) fall. A few days before the Palio, the banner is solemnly **presented by the Mayor** in the Court of the Podestà inside the Municipal Palace. This ceremony has been in use since August 1984. The peals of six **silver clarions** open and close the event. A few days before the Palio, the banner is carried out, accompanied by a solemn procession that leads it inside the Basilica of St. Mary of Provenzano (for the July 2nd race) and to the Cathedral (for the August 16th race). On the day of the Palio, the banner returns to the City Hall.



# 05

## Regulated rehearsals

For regulated rehearsals, which precede the four-day Palio, the Big Entrance Gate (Entrone) is available to **horses** and **riders**. Municipal police officers keep a list of horses, jockeys and owners.

The Palio Office prints and issues identification badges for all those involved. Horses exit the Entrone under the watchful eye of municipal police officers. The purpose of the regulated rehearsals is to **familiarize jockeys and horses with the tuff** and atmosphere of the Piazza.

# 06

## “Tratta”

This is the operation by which horses are matched to the ten Contrade participating in the Palio. In the morning, around six o'clock, on the third day before the race, the owners present the horses at the Main Entrance. Numbered on the back in order of presentation, they are grouped into batteries and rehearsed for three laps around the Piazza. These operations previously took place in the Piazza d'Armi, then from 1761 at the Biccherna Gate of the Municipal Palace.

To present themselves at the matching, the jockeys wear vests and caps in the colors of the Municipality, while for the trials they appear in the colors of the Contrade.

Once the match is made, the Captains, in the presence of the Mayor, meet to choose the ten suitable subjects. The Tratta (agreed upon by the







Captains) has the specific purpose of observing the behavior of the horses, especially between the ropes at the beginning.

Once the shortlist of 10 has been chosen, on a stage specially set up since 1936 in front of the Municipal Palace, the operations of the draw take place: each horse among the 10 chosen is matched with a Contrada of the 10 participating in the Palio. Acorns are used for the draw with the names of both horses and Contrade, which are placed in two urns on the stage.

Signs with the numbers of the horses and the names of the Contrade, on the other hand, indicate the result of the draw.

It is the Mayor who announces the pairing of each horse with the established Contrada. This happens on the stage from the table at which he stands together with the Captains of the 10 participating Contrade, the Secretary General of the City and the Palio Office Manager.

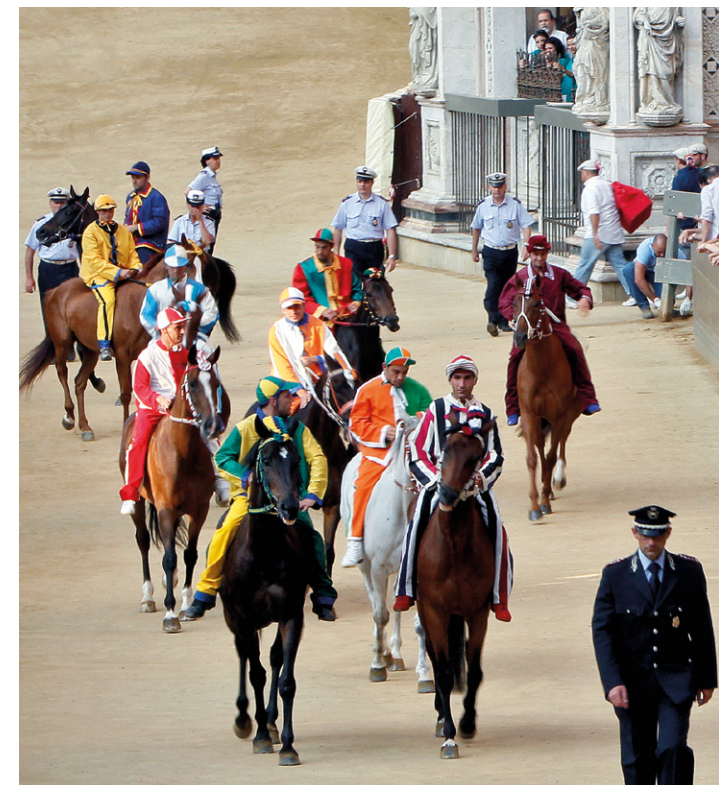
At each assignment, the Barbaresco takes delivery of the horse that has been given the lot and leads it to the stable, accompanied by the supporters and Contrada members ("contradaioi").



## 07

### Trials

From this moment on, the Contrade have six trials available, they take place **every morning** (at about 9 a.m.) and **every afternoon** (at about 7:30 p.m.) and are important to check the condition of both horse and jockey. For each trial, the horse is accompanied to the Big Entrance Gate (Entrone) from the Contrada stable by a large group of supporters, who sing traditional songs. For each trial, a signal is given on sight that all is in going fine in the Entrone and the mortar can give the starting signal. The horses leave the Entrone to set out for the beginning. The fifth trial, preceded by the historic and traditional Crew of the Carabinieri on horseback, is called the "general rehearsal," and at the end of it the people of the ten Contrade and their guests gather in the heart of each district, where the great propitiatory dinner is held.







The day of the Palio, around **8 a.m.**, inside the Chapel next to the Public Palace, the **Jockey's Mass** is celebrated by the Archbishop. Immediately afterwards, the last trial, known as the "bad trial" ("provaccia"), is run. The name of this trial reminds us of the low commitment of the jockeys, who are expected for the demanding evening race.

At **10:30 a.m.**, in the Palazzo Pubblico, in the presence of the mayor, **the jockeys are marked**, who from this moment can no longer be replaced for any reason. At the Orto de' Pecci, next to the Market Square, the parade horses arrive. Twenty-four of them will parade in the procession, in addition to the 10 running horses.

Around **3 p.m.**, at the oratories of the Contrade, the **blessing of the horse** takes place, accompanied by the phrase, "go and return victorious." After

that, the Contrade go through the historic center, pausing in Piazza Salimbeni, at the "Casino dei Nobili," in front of Palazzo Chigi Saracini and in Piazza del Duomo to perform the flag-waving. From here and more precisely from the courtyard of the Prefecture, together with the Municipality's figurants, they move in order to reach Piazza del Campo. From the depot in Via del Casato the **Carroccio**, a triumphal chariot that in tradition recalls the one captured from the Florentines at Montaperti in 1260, is brought out; it bears the inscription "O Regina Patris Summi Dignata Corona Perpetuo Senam Respice Virgo Tuam". Since 1928, it has been drawn by four large oxen of the Chianina breed.

The **Historical Parade** enters the Square around 5 p.m. after the Carabinieri on horseback.

## 08

## Historical Parade

The Historical Parade since its origins precedes the running of the Palio as a solemn civic, historical and triumphal choreography. In its present form it is a commemorative depiction of the institutions, fashion and grandeur of the ancient Sienese Republic, with special regard to the Contrade, which form the main part of it with their groups employed as background actors.

The Historical Parade through Piazza del Campo today includes 14 groups with a total of nearly **seven hundred participants**. In the early afternoon of the day of the Palio, the background actors of the Contrade and part of the Municipality people in uniform gather in the courtyard of the Palazzo del Governo and, under the orders of the Maestro di Campo, line up in Piazza del Duomo next to the Cathedral, then parading between two dense wings of crowds through Via del Capitano, Piazza Postierla, Via San Pietro, Casato di Sopra and Casato di Sotto where they join other figures from the Municipality. The Historical Parade enters Piazza del Campo on the first chime of "Sunto," the bell on the Torre del Mangia dedicated in 1665 to the Virgin of the Assumption, patroness and queen of the city. It is the most recent example of a series of "bells of the people", the oldest of which was brought to the Tower in 1344. Throughout the time of the Procession "a bronze sound falls on the Piazza", as Eugenio Montale wrote in his poem on the Palio. Seventeen pairs of flag-players pause at the designated spots in the Piazza and following the roll of the drums perform the flag-waving. The flag-waving is composed of individual movements, recognizable in each Contrada as a sign. They are grouped into patterns of various lengths, combined according to the seventeen schools of the Contrade, which pass them on from generation to generation and they are named "fioretti". The flag-waving culminates in a spectacular final "**ris-**



**er**". Between stops, there is another parade leading to the "Diana's step"; the Palace musicians play the Palio march written by M. Pietro Formichi, and the City trumpets perform the peals of the festival on silver clarions. The central point of the procession is the passing of the Carroccio, the modern counterpart of the triumphal chariot of the Republic on which is the Palio, a painted silk banner, the prize of the race. When the tour of the Piazza is over, the figures take their places on the stage,





the Palio is hoisted onto the judges' stage, and the seventeen bishops perform, to the roll of their own drums, the Victory flag-waving (introduced at the conclusion of World War I). The firecracker then bursts and the jockeys ride out of the Entrance Hall of the Public Palace. The race begins.

This is the composition of the Historical Parade:

**1° Group:** 6 Masters of the Comune - Town Vessillifer on horseback with a Groom in the midst of 4 Commanders - 12 Drummers of the Palace - 18 Trumpets of the Comune with silver clarions - 30 Palace Musicians with musical instruments - 67 Vessillifer of the Cities, Potesteries, Lands and Castles of the ancient Sienese State - Drummer, Vessillifer and three Crossbowmen of the City of Massa Marittima (Borgo, New Town, Old Town) Drummer, Vessillifer and 4 Archers of the City of Montalcino.

**2° Group:** Vessillifer of the Capitano del Popolo - 3 Paggi of the Capitano del Popolo, bearing plaque, helmet and sword of the Capitano del Popolo - Capitano del Popolo on horseback with Groom 3 Gonfaloniers of the Terzi on horseback with Groom - 3 Centurions of the Terzi on horseback with Groom - 3 Captains of the Masses of the Terzi on horseback with Groom.

**3° Group** *Representation of the Authorities of Study of Siena:* 2 Drummers - Vessillifer - Rector - 4 Lecturers - 4 Students.

**4° Group** *Guild of the Arts:* 2 Drummers of the Merchandise - Vessillifer of the Merchandise - 3 Magistrates of the Merchandise - 6 representatives of the People of each Contrada preceded by the Vessillifer who hoists the banner of the characteristic Art of each Contrada: Eagle (Notaries) - Caterpillar (Silkmakers) - Snail (Cooks) - Owl (Shoemakers) - Dragon (Bankers) - Giraffe (Painters) - Porcupine (Blacksmiths) - Unicorn (Goldsmiths) She-wolf (Bakers) - Shell (Potters) - Oca (Dyers) - Onda (Carpenters) Panther (Apothecaries) - Forest (Weavers) - Tortoise (Stone masters) Torre (Battilana) - Ram (Silk merchants).





the day of the Palio







**5° Group:** Masgalano Award holder page - 2 spare pages.

**6° Group** *Representatives of the 10 Contrade participating in the race, each composed of:* Drummer - 2 Bishops - Leader with two Weapon Pages; Major Page: banner bearer with two Banner Bearing Pages - Jockey on parade horse with Groom; race-horse Barbaro and Barbaresco.

**7° Group:** 12 Pages of the Comune bearing laurel festoons.

**8° Group** *Representatives of the 7 Contrade not participating in the race, consisting of:* Drummer - 2 Bishops - Leader with two Men-at-Arms Major Banner Bearer with two Banner Bearing Pages.

**9° Group:** 6 Knights representing the no longer existing Contrade (Rooster, Lion, Bear, Oak, Sword, Viper) with Groom.

**10° Group:** Vessillifer of the Crossbowmen - Captain of the Crossbowmen - 2 Drummers - 4 Long Shield Holders - 4 Crossbowmen with large crossbow - 16 Crossbowmen with crossbow.

**11° Group:** Captain of Justice on horseback with Horse Groom - 4 Escort Infantrymen armed with guisarme.

**12° Group:** Triumphal Chariot (Carroccio) drawn by four oxen, with four guardians, bearing the Palio, four representatives of the Balìa Commission, six Trumpeters, a Palio-bearing page and a page playing the battle bell. The triumphal procession is escorted by eight infantrymen armed with guisarmes.

**13° Group:** 6 Knights with grooms representing some of the most ancient noble families of Siena (Pannocchieschi d'Elci, Piccolomini, Salimbeni, Salvani, Tolomei, Ugurgieri).

**14° Group:** 6 Pages del Comune with laurel festoon close the procession.









## 09

## Race

At the parade conclusion a **mortar burst announces** the horses' exit from the Big Entrance. Each jockey is handed an oxen's sinew with which they will be able to incite the horse or hinder their opponents during the race. They then approach the starting point where two ropes have been stretched between which they will be called to line up. The order of entry is established by fate: in fact, inside a special mechanism with a long neck grafted onto an oval container, ten "Barberi" (balls painted in the colors of the Contrade like the ones the boys use to play with) are inserted; when the bottle is turned upside down, the "Barberi" line up randomly along its neck, thus giving rise to the starting order. The operation is carried out three times so that the race arbiter ("Mossiere") has the option of using two spare moves in case the conditions for a regular start are not met.

On the Judges' Stage, the three Deputies of the Festival prepare the envelope with the **order of the move**, which is delivered to the Mossiere by a municipal police officer.

The Contrade are called between the ropes according to the order of the draw, while the tenth will enter "run-up" (only when it sees that the other horses fit) thus deciding the moment of the starting move. At this point the "Mossiere" will lower the front rope starting the race. If the start is invalid, a burst of the mortar will stop the horses, which must return to the starting point. The horses must complete three laps of the track for about 1,000 meters, and only the first to finish is reserved for the glory of victory, sanctioned by three judges. Even the horse that is "shaken", i.e. without a jockey, can bring back the victory for its Contrada.





# 10 Victory

The festivities begin immediately: the Contrada members receive the Palio and they carry it to **Provenzano** (for the July Palio) or to the **Cathedral** (in August) to sing the Te Deum of thanksgiving. From then on, every occasion will be good to remind the city of the victory won on the Piazza del Campo, until the fall, when, between the end of September and the first days of October, the “**victory dinner**” will be held in the festively decorated victorious ward, attended by thousands of contradaioi and, in the place of honor, the victorious horse.

The night after the Palio, the approximately 160 torches on the battlements of the Town Hall are lit.



# 11 After the Palio

After the Palio the Piazza earth is removed, the track is swept and washed, thus removing the tuff residue. While at the Municipality warehouses in the district of Cerchiaia, the tuff mill grinds the Piazza soil again, which is restored to between 5 and 10 percent before being stored until the next Palio. The City treasury, on the other hand, provides washing, ironing, tidying and storing of decorations and mounts. Saddles are also cleaned and greased.





# 12

## Boarding house

As for horses, thanks to a 1991 agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the City of Siena, the state-owned center Il Caggio serves as a boarding house for Palio horses, which are housed there for rehabilitation and reproduction.

On the next pages: Alison Roux, the Palio Banner of 2<sup>nd</sup> luglio 1990, won by the Contrada of the Giraffe, detail







# **The 17 Contrade**





## Noble Contrada of the Eagle

Gold coat of arms, a black two-headed eagle with an ancient crown, bearing in its talons scepter, sword and imperial orb, charged with a radiant golden sun with the initials U.I (Umberto I). Colors: yellow gold with black and turquoise strips

### Motto

Of the Eagle the rostrum, the nail and the wing

### Symbol

Combativeness

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

SS. Name of Mary, September 12<sup>th</sup>

### Oratory

Church of St. John the Baptist (Via del Casato), formerly of the Congregation of the Tredicini, designed by Flaminio del Turco and granted to the Contrada by the Curia in 1788

### Society of the Contrada

"Il Rostro", vicolo del Verchione, 6

### Title of the Contrada

Title of "Noble" for the magnificent welcome given to Charles V of Habsburg when he visited Siena in 1536

### Twin city

The Contrada is twinned with the city of l'Aquila

### Baptismal Font

Work of the sculptor Bruno Buracchini (1963). On the base is the motto: "unguibus et rostris," is located in Piazza Postierla

### Allied Contrade

Owl, Dragon

### Adversary Contrade

Panther







# Noble Contrada of the Caterpillar

Gold coat of arms with **caterpillar** on twig of rose foliated with green, with **flower crowned** in the grand-ducal manner; chief framed in red and silver with cross framed in silver and red by concession of the King of Italy Umberto I. Colors are **yellow** and **green** with turquoise lists

## Motto

Be proud in battle, noble Contrada of fierce people

## Symbol

Industriousness

## Patron Saint and Titular Feast

Visitation of the Virgin Mary "Our Lady of Major Discipline," July 2<sup>nd</sup>

## Oratory

Built in 1680 on City Hall Street, originally dedicated to the Most Holy Name of Jesus, since 1792 it has been dedicated to the Visitation of the Virgin Mary

## Society of the Contrada

"L'Alba", via del Comune, 36/40

## Contrada Title

Title of "Noble" for the valor of its militia in the clash at the Cross of the Travaglio against Charles IV of Bohemia (1369), and for placing the People's Mount in power in 1371

## Baptismal Font

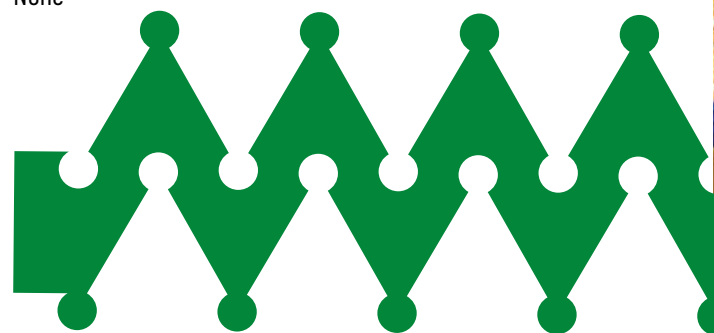
Made in 1978 by Lorenzo Borgogni, it includes a sculpture by Angelo Canevari depicting Barbicone, the legendary chieftain of the Caterpillar and is located in front of the top of the alley of the Orbachi

## Allied Contrade

Porcupine, Niche, Tower

## Adversary Contrada

None







# Contrada of the Snail

Silver coat of arms, a **creeping snail** in natural, **studded** with the initials U and M (Umberto I and Margherita di Savoia) interspersed with Cyprus roses batched in red and white. The colors are **red** and **yellow** with lists of **azure**

## Motto

With slow step and grave in the field to triumph Snail descends

## Symbol

Prudence

## Patron Saint and Titular Feast

Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, June 29<sup>th</sup>

## Oratory

Rises on the foundations of the 14<sup>th</sup> century monastery of the nuns of St. Paul. It was built to designs by Flaminio del Turco in the early 1600s and granted by the French government to the Contrada for officiating in 1814

## Society of the Contrada

"San Marco", via San Marco, 77

## Twin city

The Snail is twinned with the city of Venice

## Allied Contrade

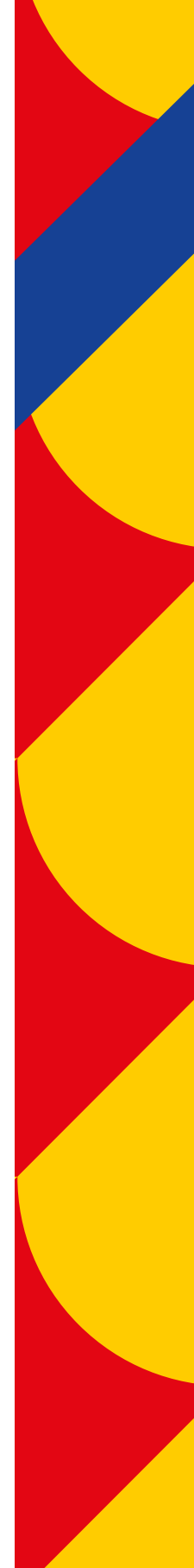
Porcupine, Panther, Forest

## Adversary Contrada

Tortoise

## Baptismal Font

The work of sculptor Fulvio Corsini, it was the first to be installed in 1947 and to be used for the baptism of the inhabitants of the Contrada in 1949. On the plinth stands the augural inscription: "Quando alla Chiocciola vittoria arriderà/ questa fontana buon vino getterà" ("when the Snail wins its battles/ this fountain will pour wine"). It is located in front of the Oratory of the Contrada







## Prior Contrada of the Owl

Coat of arms party of black and red, an **owl** in majesty with two light blue shields charged with the letters U and M (Umberto I and Margaret of Savoy). Colors are **black** and **red** with **white laths**

### Motto

I see in the night

### Symbol

Cunning

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

St. Anthony of Padua and St. Bernard Ptolemean, June 13<sup>th</sup>

### Oratory

Built in 1930 within the structure of the Castellare degli Ugurgieri, (via Cecco Angiolieri), it was consecrated after the war

### Society of the Contrada

"Cecco Angiolieri", via Cecco Angiolieri, 16

### Contrada Title

Title of "Piora" for hosting the first meeting of the Magistrato delle Contrade, the body that brings together the Priors of the seventeen Contrade to deliberate on matters of common interest

### Baptismal Font

Designed in 1960 by Donato Martelli and built by Adolfo Micheli

### Allied Contrade

Eagle, Porcupine, Giraffe, Panther

### Adversary Contrada

Unicorn







## Contrada of the Dragon

Silver coat of arms with a **dragon** unfolded in green, crowned in the ancient manner bearing an azure pennant with the initial U in gold (Umberto I) surmounted by a royal crown. Colors are **antique pink** and **green** with **yellow lists**

### Motto

The burning heart of mine becomes a flame in my mouth

### Symbol

Ardor

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

St. Catherine of Siena, last Sunday in May

### Oratory

St. Catherine's Church (Santa Caterina al Paradiso) that belonged to the nuns of Paradise (Monache del Paradiso) and passed to the Contrada by Grand Ducal decree in 1787. Located in piazza Matteotti

### Society of the Contrada

"Camporegio", piazza San Domenico, 1

### Baptismal Font

Work of the sculptor Vico Consorti. Made in 1977, it bears the inscription: "Contrada's love for the art of Vico Consorti entrusts the memory of the great Priors Mario Calamati and Alberto Rossi to the dredgers to be born" and is located in Piazza Matteotti in front of the headquarters. Since 1970, the Drago has been recognized as a moral entity of canon law

### Allied Contrada

Eagle

### Adversary Contrada

None







## Imperial Contrada of the Giraffe

Silver coat of arms, a **giraffe** held by a Moore wearing Turkish clothes, holding the imperial shield according to the decree of year 1940 under a light blue ribbon carrying the motto: UMBERTUS I DEDIT. The colors are **red** and **white**

### Motto

Altius caput maior gloria

### Symbol

Elegance

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

Mary Most Holy of the Visitation. Celebrated on the first Sunday in June

### Oratory

Church of the Suffrage, in the Crypt of the Collegiate Church of Provenzano. In 1969, the Giraffe was declared a canon-law charitable organization

### Society of the Contrada

"Società della Giraffa", via delle Vergini, 18

### Title of the Contrada

Title of "Imperial" by decree of Victor Emmanuel III, having won the July 1936 Palio dedicated to the Empire

### Baptismal Font

Work created in 1970 by Salvatore Bocci. It includes a bronze by Pier Luigi Olla. It is located in Piazzetta della Giraffa

### Allied Contrade

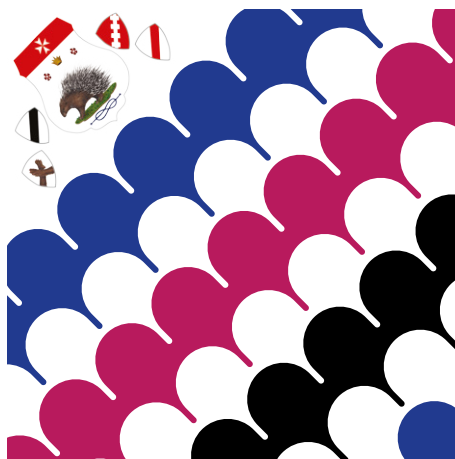
Owl, Porcupine, Panther

### Adversary Contrada

None







# Sovereign Contrada of the Porcupine

Coat of arms argent, an **armed porcupine**, on a grassy base, crowned in the ancient manner; charged with two roses of Cyprus gules, a knot of Savoy azure and the octagonal cross of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta argent on the field of gules. Colors are **white** with red, **black** and **blue arabesques** in equal parts

## Motto

Only to defend, I sting

## Symbol

Acuteness

## Patron Saint and Titular Feast

St. Bartholomew the Apostle, August 24<sup>th</sup>

## Oratory

On Camollia Street, it was originally the Church of Saints Vincenti and Anastasius, which dates back to 1144. After numerous restorations and alterations, the church was granted perpetual use to the Istriciarioli in 1849

## Society of the Contrada

"Il Leone", Via Camollia, 207/209

## Twin city

The porcupine is twinned with the city of Perugia

## Baptismal Font

Work by Vico Consorti, created in 1962, bears the motto of the Contrada and is located in Via Malta

## Contrada Title

Title of "Sovereign" granted in 1980 by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, which had been based since the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the Camollia district

## Allied Contrade

Caterpillar, Snail, Owl, Giraffe

## Adversary Contrada

She-wolf







## Contrada of the Unicorn

Coat of arms in silver, a **unicorn raised** in natural height, on a grassy base. In the azure border stands the motto in gold HUMBERTI REGIS GRATIA. Colors are **white** and **orange** with **azure lists**

### Motto

Wounding and healing as the weapon on my forehead

### Symbol

Science

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

St. John the Baptist, June 24<sup>th</sup>

### Oratory

San Giovannino della Staffa in Piazzetta Virgilio Grassi

### Society of the Contrada

"Il Cavallino", in piazzetta Virgilio Grassi, 6

### Baptismal Font

Work of architect Carlo Nepi. Made in 1997, it is located on Pantaneto Street.

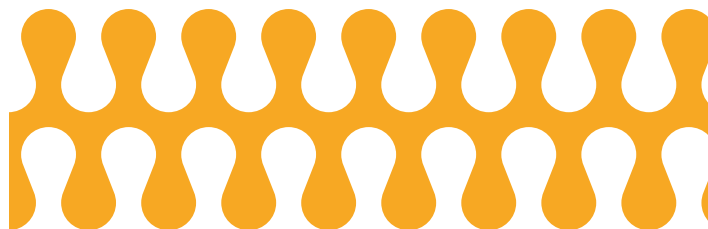
In its historical location is preserved a small bell that by popular rumor is said to be the battle bell of the Florentine war cart captured at Montaperti (1260)

### Allied Contrade

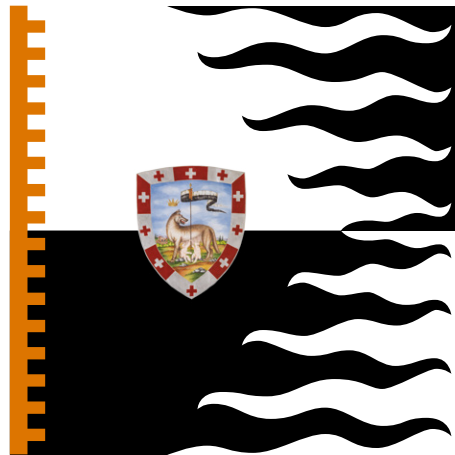
Panther, Tortoise

### Adversary Contrada

Owl







## Contrada of the She-wolf

Coat of arms in silver, a **Roman she-wolf with twins**, crowned in the ancient style. Silver and red border charged with red and silver Savoy crosses. Colors are **black** and **white** with **orange lists**

### Motto

Et Urbis et Senarum Signum et Decus

### Symbol

Fidelity

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

St. Roch Confessor, first Sunday in September

### Oratory

Via Vallerozzi, the 16<sup>th</sup> century church formerly belonging to the Confraternity of St. Roch. At its side is a wolfed column offered by the City of Rome

### Society of the Contrada

"Romolo e Remo", piazza Fontenuova

### Baptismal Font

By architect Giovanni Barsacchi, with a bronze she-wolf by Emilio Montagnani (1962)

### Twin city

The She-wolf is twinned with the city of Rome

### Allied Contrade

None

### Adversary Contrada

Porcupine







## Noble Contrada of the Shell

Coat of arms with a **shell** with a Grand Ducal crown, between two branches of red coral, starting from the end part and a pendent made by three golden Savoy knots and two Cyprus roses, one red and a silver one on the left. The colors are a **light blue** field with **gold** and **red** lists in equal parts and less than the field surface

### Motto

It is the red of the coral that burns in my heart

### Symbol

Confidentiality

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

St. Gaetano Thiene, August 7<sup>th</sup>

### Oratory

Between Via dei Pispini and Via dell' Oliviera, built in 1680 by the Contrada inhabitants and dedicated to their Patron Saint

### Society of the Contrada

"La Pania", Via dei Pispini, 112

### Baptismal Font

A silver font with the form of a shell

### Contrada Title

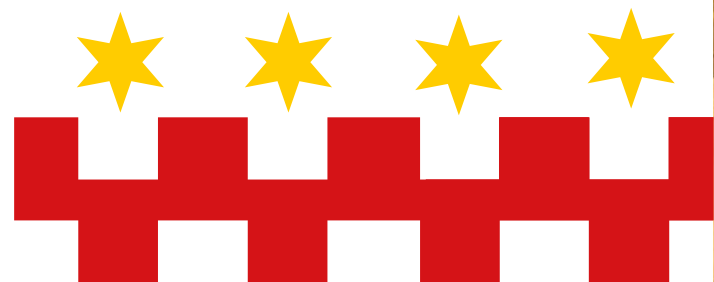
Title of "Noble" for the worth of its soldiers at Montaperti (1260) and at Porta Pispini (1527); for bringing water to the district in 1469 and to the Pispini fountain in 1534

### Allied Contrade

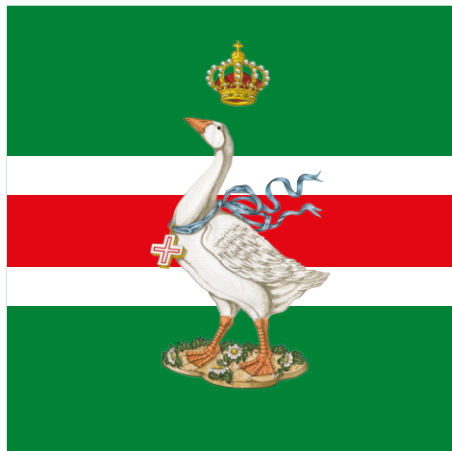
Caterpillar, Wave, Tortoise

### Adversary Contrada

Ram







# Noble Contrada of the Goose

Gold coat of arms, a royal **crowned goose** on a grass sod, with a light blue ribbon around its neck from which hangs the Savoy cross. The colors are **white** and **green** with **red stripes**

## Motto

Clangit ad arma

## Symbol

Prudence

## Patron Saint and Titular Feast

Saint Catherine from Siena, April 29<sup>th</sup>. The Contrada has a private festival for it in May

## Oratory

Built between 1464 and 1474 by the inhabitants of Fontebranda, erected on the ground floor of the house where St. Catherine was born in 1347

## Society of the Contrada

"Trieste", via Santa Caterina, 57

## Baptismal font

The Contrada baptism takes place at the Fontebranda fountains (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries) in the street named after it

## Title of the Contrada

Title of "Noble" for the bravery of its soldiers in the Battle of Montemaggio (1145), in the Battle of Montaperti (1260), after which it had the title of "Governor", and in the War of Siena (1552-1555), also for having built the aqueduct of Siena at its own costs

## Twin city

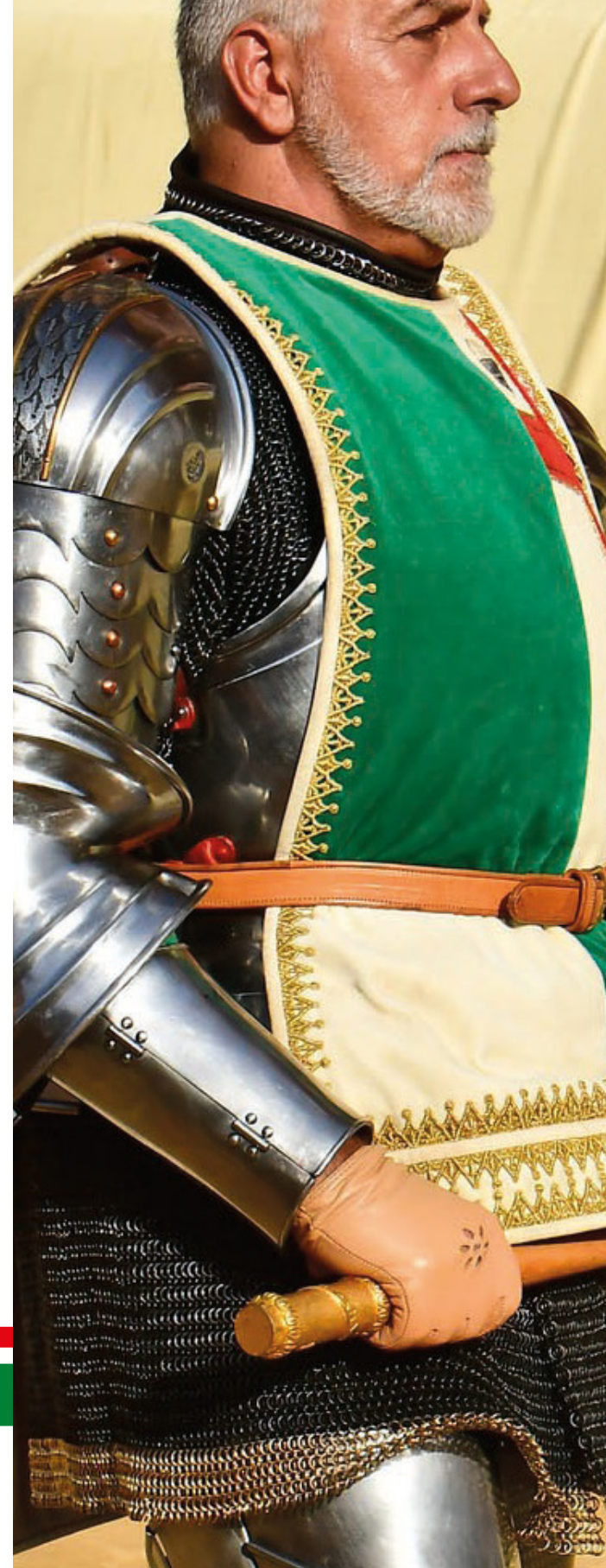
The Goose is twinned with the city of Trieste

## Allied Contrade

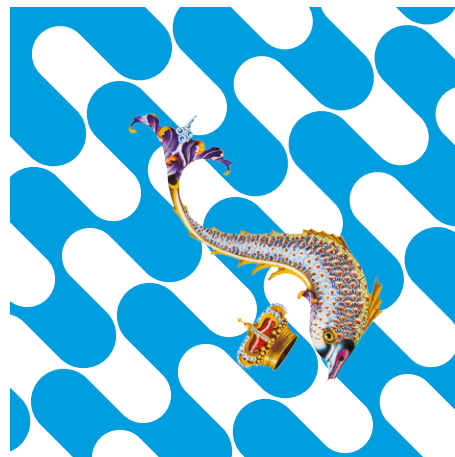
None

## Adversary Contrada

Tower







# Captain Contrada of the Wave

Silver coat of arms, a **crowned dolphin** as a royal, swimming in the sea. Colors are **white** and **light blue**

## Motto

The color of the sky, the force of the sea

## Symbol

Happiness

## Patron Saint and Titular Feast

Visitazione di Maria Vergine, 2<sup>nd</sup> July

## Oratory

The 16<sup>th</sup> century layout of this church is attributed to Baldassare Peruzzi. It stands in the Arco di San Giuseppe and was granted by a order of Grand Duke Peter Leopold II in 1787

## Society of the Contrada

"Giovanni Duprè", vicolo San Salvatore, 24

## Twin-Town

The present Contrada has a twin partnership with Talamone

## Title of the Contrada

The title of "Captain" is there because its soldiers were employed as guards at the Palazzo Pubblico, where in the office next to Via Duprè the Main Police Officer ("Capitano di Giustizia") had the seat

## Baptismal Font

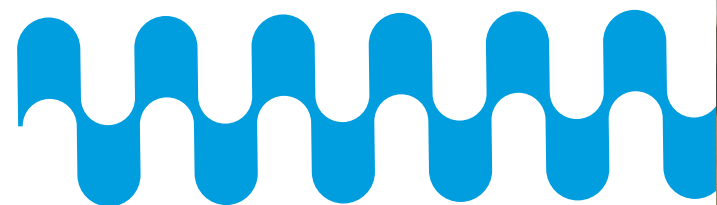
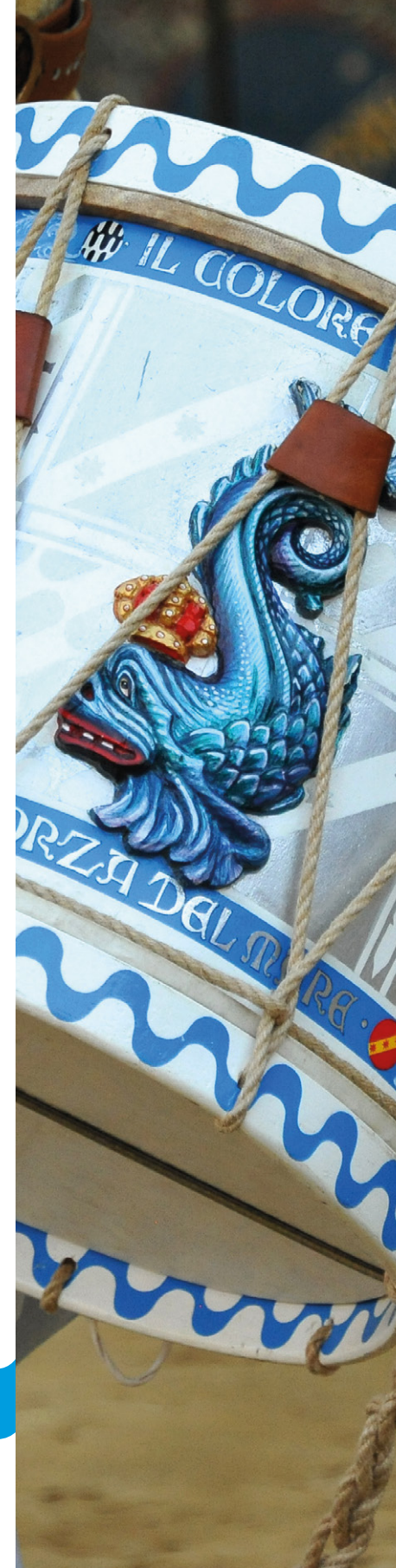
Project by Algero Rosi. The coat of arm is made by Vittorio Conti. The bronze decorations are by Alfonso Buoninsegni (1972). Placed in front of the Oratory, at the beginning of via Fontanella

## Allied Contrade

Shell, Tortoise, Ram

## Adversary Contrada

Tower







## Contrada of the Panther

Silver coat of arms, a **rampant panther** in natural shape, with a white and blue quarter bearing the initial U (Umberto I) in the upper left corner. Colors are **red** and **light blue** with **white laths**

### Motto

The Panther roared and the people shook /  
My momentum breaks down every obstacle

### Symbol

Audacity

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

St. John Taken Off, August 29<sup>th</sup>

### Oratory

Currently uses the Church of Carmine in Pian de' Mantellini

### Society of the Contrada

"Due Porte", via San Quirico, 9

### Baptismal Font

Bronze work by sculptor Giulio Corsini, created in 1977. The motto of the Contrada is engraved on the travertine base. It is located in the piazza del Conte

### Twin city

The Panther is twinned with the city of Lucca

### Allied Contrade

Snail, Owl, Giraffe, Unicorn

### Adversary Contrada

Eagle







# Contrada of the Forest

Silver coat of arms, a **rhinoceros** at the foot of a leafy oak tree at the trunk of which are hunting trophies, surmounted by a radiant golden sun, bearing the initial U (Umberto I) on a blue field. The colors are **green** and **orange** with **white laths**

## Motto

First High Forest on the Battlefield

## Symbol

Power

## Patron Saint and Titular Feast

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, August 15<sup>th</sup>. It is celebrated on the fourth Sunday in August

## Oratory

The 16<sup>th</sup> century Church of St. Sebastian, formerly of the Gesuate nuns on via Franciosa

## Society of the Contrada

Contrada Society of the Selva (formerly of the "Rhinoceros"), via Vallepiatta, 26

## Baptismal Font

The work of Vinicio Guastatori (1965), it is surmounted by a rhinoceros. It bears the motto of the Contrada. It is located in piazza della Selva in front of the headquarters

## Twin City

La Selva is twinned with the city of Cuneo

## Allied Contrade

Snail, Tortoise

## Adversary Contrade

None







# Contrada of the Tortoise

Guild of Arms with a **tortoise** in a golden field covered with blue Savoy knots alternated with daisy flowers with natural colors. The colors are **yellow** and **turquoise blue**

## Motto

Shelter of Strength and Constance

## Symbol

Firmness

## Patron Saint and Titular Feast

Saint Antony from Padua, June 13<sup>th</sup>

## Oratory

Via Tommaso Pendola. It was built by the Contrada in the XVII century and dedicated to the Patron Saint Antony from Padua

## Society of the Contrada

"M.S. Castelsenio", piazzetta Silvio Gigli, 2

## Baptismal Font

By the Sculptor Bruno Buracchini (1951), placed in via Tommaso Pendola

## Allied Contrade

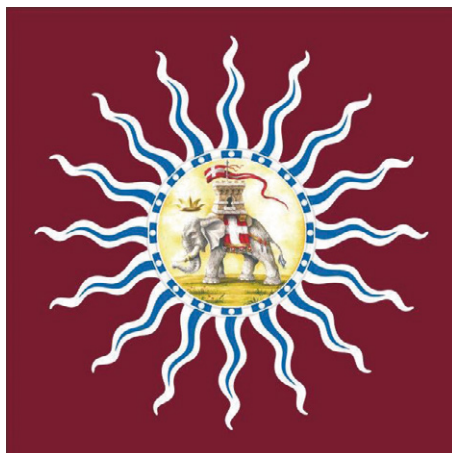
Unicorn, Wave, Shell, Forest

## Adversary

Snail







## Contrada of the Tower

Coat of arms in gold, an **elephant** on a grassy base bearing a red caparison with a silver cross and a tower topped with a silver crusading red pennant. The colors are **crimson red** with white and **blue lists**

### Motto

Beyond strength, power

### Symbol

Strength

### Patron Saint and Titular Feast

St. James the Greater, July 25<sup>th</sup>, and St. Anne, July 26<sup>th</sup>. Celebrated on the last Sunday in July

### Oratory

Was erected on Via Salicotto by the Sienese republic and inhabitants as an ex-voto for the victory achieved against the Medici and papal troops at Porta Camollia in 1526. The building was begun in 1531 and officiated in 1536

### Contrada Society

"The Elephant," via Salicotto, 80

### Baptismal Font

The work of sculptor Mauro Berrettini (1984), it replaces one by Fausto Corsini (1954). Bearing the motto and inscription "VICTORIA," it is located on Via di Salicotto

### Allied Contrada

Caterpillar

### Adversary Contrada

Goose







# Contrada of the Ram

Guild of arms in gold, an old-fashioned crowned natural **crawling ram**. In the upper left corner, the letter U (Umberto I) in gold with royal crown on a blue field. The colors are **red** and **yellow**, with **white slates**

## Motto

Under my body the wall collapses

## Symbol

Perseverance

## Patron Saint and Titular Feast

Madonna of the Good Advice. April 26<sup>th</sup>

## Oratory

Church of the Holy Trinity, still in use in the Contrada that opens it every Sunday for the Service

## Society of the Contrada

"Castelmontorio", piazza Manzoni, 6

## Baptismal Font

The baptism in the Contrada takes place in the Oratory on the titular feast day

## Allied Contrade

Wave

## Adversary Contrada

Shell

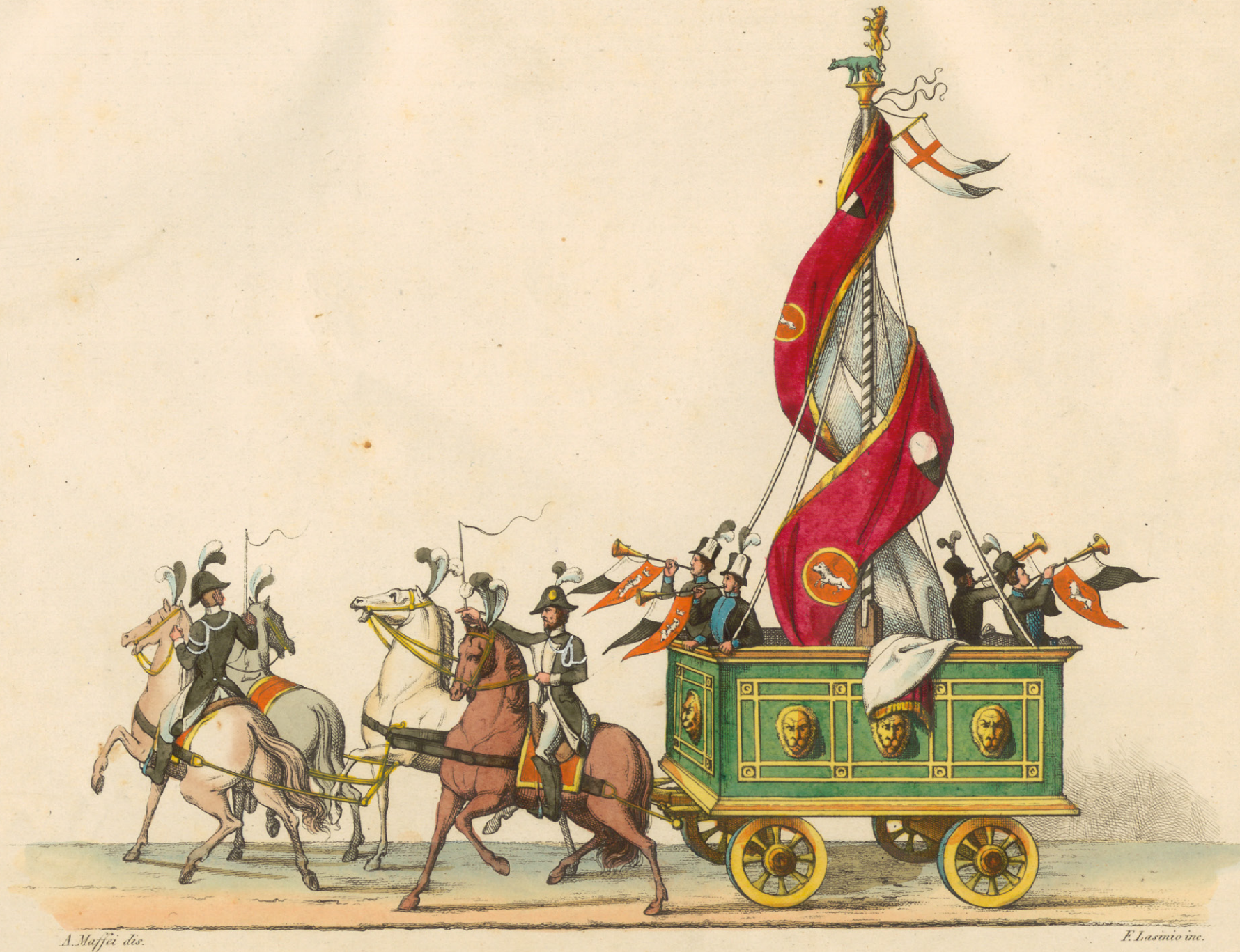
## Curiosity

The jolly wears pink jacket and trousers. This choice was made at the end of the XVII century, and it was consolidated during the XIX century, and it was made to avoid confusion with the Contrada of the Snail. Cap, pluck and harness hold indeed the colors of the Contrada flag





# Historical museum sites of the Contrade



A. Maffei des.

F. Lasinio inc.

*Carro delle comparse delle Contrade di Siena*



The museums can be visited upon reservation by contacting the Contrada

**The Noble Contrada of the Eagle**

Casato di Sotto, 82  
[www.contradadellaquila.com](http://www.contradadellaquila.com)

**The Noble Contrada of the Caterpillar**

Via del Comune, 44  
[www.nobilcontradadelbruco.it](http://www.nobilcontradadelbruco.it)

**The Contrada of the Snail**

Via San Marco, 37  
[www.contradadellachiocciola.it](http://www.contradadellachiocciola.it)

**The Prior Contrada of the Owl**

Via Cecco Angiolieri, 41  
[museo@contradadellacivetta.it](mailto:museo@contradadellacivetta.it)

**The Contrada of the Dragon**

Piazza Matteotti, 18  
*Galleria dei Costumi*  
Via del Paradiso, 21  
[www.contradadeldrago.it](http://www.contradadeldrago.it)

**The Imperial Contrada of the Giraffe**

Piazzetta della Giraffa, 2  
[www.contradadellagiraffa.com](http://www.contradadellagiraffa.com)

**The Sovereign Contrada of the Porcupine**

Historic museum spaces, via Camollia, 89  
Museum spaces Palazzo Nerli Pieri,  
via Camollia, 86  
[www.istrice.org](http://www.istrice.org)

**The Contrada of the Unicorn**

Piazzetta Virgilio Grassi, 6  
[www.contradaleocorno.it](http://www.contradaleocorno.it)

**The Contrada of the She-wolf**

Via Vallerozzi, 63  
[www.contradadellalupa.it](http://www.contradadellalupa.it)

**The Noble Contrada of the Shell**

Via dei Pispini, 70  
[www.nobilecontradadelnicchio.it](http://www.nobilecontradadelnicchio.it)

**The Noble Contrada of the Goose**

Via Santa Caterina, 66  
[info@contradadelloca.it](mailto:info@contradadelloca.it)

**The Captain Contrada of the Wave**

Via Giovanni Duprè, 103  
[www.contradacapitanadellonda.it](http://www.contradacapitanadellonda.it)

**The Contrada of the Panther**

Via San Quirico, 26  
[www.contradadellapantera.it](http://www.contradadellapantera.it)

**The Contrada of the Forest**

Piazzetta della Selva, 4  
[www.contradadellaselva.it](http://www.contradadellaselva.it)

**The Contrada of the Tortoise**

Via Tommaso Pendola, 19  
[www.tartuca.it](http://www.tartuca.it)

**The Contrada of the Tower**

Via di Salicotto, 76  
[www.contradadellatorre.it](http://www.contradadellatorre.it)

**The Contrada of the Ram**

Via Valdimontone, 8  
[www.valdimontone.it](http://www.valdimontone.it)







- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
|    | Eagle       |
|    | Caterpillar |
|    | Snail       |
|    | Owl         |
|    | Dragon      |
|    | Giraffe     |
|    | Porcupine   |
|    | Unicorn     |
|   | She-wolf    |
|  | Shell       |
|  | Goose       |
|  | Wave        |
|  | Panther     |
|  | Forest      |
|  | Tortoise    |
|  | Tower       |
|  | Ram         |



## a

**Accavallatura**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Aculeo (Lit. The Quill)**

The periodical of the Porcupine Contrada

**Affogasanti (Lit. "The Saint-Drowners")**

1. Humorous popular name given to members of the Snail Contrada, thus named for their having thrown into a well an image of St Anthony at the end of the last century

2. The periodical of the Snail Contrada

**Alfiere (Standard-Bearer)**

One of the participants who carry out the Flag-Waving Display

**Alzata (The Raising)**

The Standard-bearer's hurling on high of the flag at the end of the Flag-Waving Display

**Anatroccoli (Lit. "Ducklings")**

Group of young members of the Contrada of the Goose

**Ancalena**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Aquila (The Eagle)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Aquilino**

Member of the Eagle

**Asinata (The Donkey Round)**

A game of the 17th century: donkeys bearing the colors of the Contrade were pushed around the Piazza

**Assemblea Generale (General Assembly)**

The sovereign people of the Contrade called together, as in ancient times, by the sound of the bell

**Asso**

Synonym of "Soprallasso", the draught-horse used in the Historic Parade

**Asta (Pole)**

1. Support for a flag

2. Pole to which the Palio banner is connected, decorated with a double black and white spiral, crowned by a spear-headed point

## b

**Baco Bello (Lit. "The Beautiful Worm")**

Joking popular name for the Caterpillar Contrada

**Balzana**

Black and white emblem of Siena, the upper half of which is white and the lower half black

**Bandieraia**

A woman from the Contrada (often it's a group) that voluntarily stitches and repairs the flags of the own Contrada

**Bandierino (The Little Flag)**

A small Balzana emblem made of iron, attached to the inner rim of the race track. It marks the Palio's finish line

**Bandierone (The Big Flag)**

The large official insignia of each Contrada, carried by the Senior Page

**Baratto**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Barbaresco**

Official groom entrusted with looking after the Contrada's horse from the moment of the horse-selection procedures (tratta) onwards; he cares for the horse until handing the animal back to its owner

**Bàrbero (Barb, from the word bèrbero, i.e. horse of Barberia)**

1. Race horse

2. One of the little balls painted in sections

using the colors of the Contrade. Children from Siena play with these around the time of the Palio

**Barbicone**

1. A legendary leader of the Caterpillar

2. Title of the periodical of the Caterpillar Contrada

**Battesimo contradaio (Baptism within the Contrada)**

A lay ceremony officiated by the Prior, the Baptism takes place once a year on the feast day of the Contrada's patron saint. It marks the rite of passage by means of which one becomes a full Contrada member for all effects and purposes

**Beverecchia**

Originally the tip given to jockeys to cover their living expenses during their participation in the Palio

**Beverone ( Lit. "The Big Drink")**

In the 1800s, a mixture given to the horses with the intention of either stimulating or calming them. The term may be used in reference to any substance administered to horses, orally or otherwise. It was sometimes called "the bomb"

**Bianco Rosso (White and Red)**

Title of the periodical of the Contrada of the Giraffe

**Biccherna**

Ancient Sienese magistrature's office, repository of the books containing the city's accounts

**Bilanciere (Balance-keeper)**

Member of the Presidency of the Contrada; the balance-keeper draws up the annual accounts

**Braccialetto (Little Sconce)**

Several-branched sconce made of wood or metal, painted with the Contrada colors. On it are the lightbulbs that illuminate the streets of the Contrada on the feast day of the Patron Saint, on days of celebration for a victory, and on other festive occasions

**Brenna** A horse of no value with scant hopes of a victory

**Brucaiolo**

A member of the Caterpillar

**Bruco (The Caterpillar)** One of the seventeen Contrade

**Bufalata**

The Palio raced by water buffaloes in the 17th century

## C

**Cadenza di sbandierata (Flag-waving Cadence)**

The drum rhythm performed in the Piazza to accompany the Flag-Waving Display

**Camarlengo**

Treasurer of the Contrada, thus named because in antiquity he had access to the treasure chamber (ital. "camera")

**Camollia**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Porcupine (Porta Camollia, Via Camollia)

**Campanina (The Little Bell)**

The bell in the oratory of the Contrada

**Campanone (The Great Bell)**

The bell in the Mangia Tower, called "Sunto" because it is dedicated to the Virgin Mary of the Assumption into Heaven. The bell is rung throughout the Historic Procession

**Campo (Lit. "The Field")**

The Piazza in Siena where the Palio is run

**Camporegio**

The name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Dragon

**Canapo (Canape) (Starting Rope)**

The taut rope that marks the starting gate of the race



**Cancellato**

The wooden barrier that marks off the inner rim of the track. It encompasses the area reserved for spectators

**Cancelliere (Chancellor)**

Secretary of the Contrada and member of the Committee. The Cancelliere keeps the minutes of meetings of the Presidency, of the Council, and of the Assembly, and furthermore oversees the system of communications and meeting convocations within the Contrada

**Capitano (Captain)**

An elected position with varying terms of office (from one to three years) in the Contrade.

The Captain takes command of the Contrada during the days of the Palio, taking care of all matters concerning the race, the horses, and the jockeys

**Cappotto (Overcoat)**

Nickname given to a single Contrada victory in both Palio races in the same year

**Carriera**

A running of the Race

**Carroccio**

Triumphal decorated cart pulled by oxen. It carries the great Palio banner itself along with the “Balzana”, the emblem of Siena, emblem during the Historic Procession. According to popular tradition, the Carroccio represents the cart captured by the Sienese from the Florentines at the battle of Montaperti in 1260

**Casato**

1. One of the eleven streets that lead into the Campo
2. The Casato curve, an uphill curve of the track, which is one of the most crucial points of the race.
3. Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Eagle

**Castellare**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Owl (Castellare degli Ugurieri)

**Castelveccchio**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Tortoise

**Cena della Prova Generale (Dinner of the Final Trial Run)**

Good-luck banquet held in the streets and in the piazzas of the various neighborhoods on the evening before the Palio

**Cencio (Lit. “The Rag”)**

False disparagement. Popular term used affectionately in reference to the Drappellone, the Great Banner of the Palio itself

**Cenino (The Little Dinner)**

Dinner held in the Contrada during the days of the Palio or in occasion of victory

**Cero (Altar Candle)**

Large decorated candle offered in solemnity by the Municipality of Siena to the Madonna for the Feast of the Assumption

**Chiocciola (The Snail)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Chiocciolino**

A member of the Snail

**Cittino**

1. A baby
2. The popular nickname given to the newly won Palio banner, the Drappellone

**Ciuccio**

A baby-bottle or rubber baby-pacifier sucked by celebrating Contrada members in their triumphal parade throughout the city’s streets following a victory

**Civetta (The Owl)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Civettino**

1. A member of the Contrada of the Owl
2. Title of the periodical of the Contrada of the Owl

**Comparsa**

The group of costumed participants who represent their Contrada

**Comune (via del)**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Caterpillar

**Conservatore dei beni (Keeper of the Estate)**

In several Contrade, the person charged with the custody of the Contrada assets

**Conservatore dei Capitoli (Keeper of the Articles)**

Ensures that the activities of the Contrada are in keeping with its Articles (Contrada of the Caterpillar)

**Conservatore della legge (Keeper of the Law)**

Ensures that the activities of the Contrada are in keeping with its Statutes (Contrada of the Dragon)

**Consiglieri del Governatore (Governor’s Advisors)**

Appointed by the Governor to offer him their advice and recommendations. They are part of the General Council (Contrada of the Goose)

**Consiglieri del popolo (People’s Advisor)**

A seven-member body elected by the Assembly, making up part of the Presidency (Contrada of the Shell)

**Consiglieri del Rettore (Rector’s Advisors)**

Former Rectors, Captains, and some Notables nominated by the Rector; they offer the Rector non-binding advice and recommendations

**Consiglieri di Sedia, Consiglieri di Seggio (Presidency Advisors)**

Elected members who together make up the Presidency

**Consiglio (Council)**

Body that acts as a Contrada parliament, elected periodically by all Contrada members or by the Protectors. The Council serves advisory and executive functions

**Consiglio del Castellare (Castle Council)**

Group of advisors elected every two years, whose duty is to assist the Presidency and to ensure adherence to the Contrada articles (Contrada of the Owl)

**Consulta generale (General Cabinet)**

In the Porcupine Contrada, the committee made up of Notables (Maggioresi) and Executive Cabinet Members

**Contradaio**

A member of a Contrada by birth or by choice

**Contrade**

The seventeen cities within the City in relation to the territorial division of Siena

**Correttore (Corrector)**

Clergyman who acts as custodian of the Contrada Oratory and who officiates at religious ceremonies for the entire district or for its individual members. He is appointed by the Contrada, with the approval of the religious authorities

**Corteo storico (Historic Parade)**

The parade around the Campo piazza of the seventeen groups of costumed representatives of the Contrade, plus representatives of the social, political, and military groups that belonged to or owed allegiance to the ancient Republic of Siena. This “cortège” in costume, composed of more than 500 participants, takes place before the race

**Cortile del Podestà**

Courtyard of the Palazzo Pubblico where the ten horses and their respective jockeys await the start of the trial runs and of the Palio race

**Cuffia (Lit. “The Bonnet”)**

Ironical and symbolic attribute of the “grandmother,” that is, the Contrada that has not won a Palio for the greatest number of years



## d

**Dàccelo ("Give it to us!")**

Traditional cry of the victorious Contrada members in front of the Judges' Stand when they ask to be given the newly one Palio banner

**Delegati di Sedia (Delegates of the Presidency)**

Assist the Pro-vicars with operative functions, granted by delegation

**Deputati della Festa (Deputies of the Festival)**

Three citizens of Siena chosen by the Municipality for every Palio to assist the Administration in each phase of the festival. They present a final written report which is a historic document serving also as a basis for later sanctions or recommended improvements regarding all aspects of the Palio

**Deputazione di Sedia (Deputation of the Presidency)**

In several Contrade, the restricted Council presided over by the Prior. The deputation may have advisory or executive powers

**Dragaiolo**

A member of the Dragon

**Drago (The Dragon)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Drappellone (Lit. "The Great Banner")**

Grand standard of painted silk. It is the prize for the winner of the race

**Duce**

Commander of the Comparsa, the uniformed Contrada representatives in the Palio ceremonies; the Duce parades wearing armor

## e

**Entrone (Lit. "The Great Entrance")**

Popular term in reference to the Courtyard of the Palazzo Pubblico

## f

**Fantino (Jockey)**

Usually not Sienese, rides bareback representing one of the ten Contrade participating in the Palio race

**Farfalla (Butterfly)**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Figurino (Lit. "Little Sketch")**

Synonym for Page

**Figurino Maggiore (Senior Sketch)**

Synonym for Senior Page

**Fioretto**

A movement of the flag, or a maneuver executed by the Standard-Bearers during the Flag-Waving Display. The fioretti have traditional names. Each Contrada has its own repertoire of fioretti and its own set of words used to describe the movements

**Fontebranda**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Goose (Derived from the Fountains of Fontebranda)

**Fonte Gaia (The Fountain of Gaiety)**

Situated in the upper part of the Campo piazza. It is a copy, made by Tito Sarrocchi in 1868, replacing the original made by Jacopo Della Quercia. The original is now housed in the loggia of the Palazzo Comunale

**Fonti di Follonica (Le)**

Title of the periodical of the Unicorn

## g

**Gallo (The Rooster)**

One of the six Contrade no longer in existence. Its territory was incorporated into those of the Forest, the Goose, and the Owl

**Gavinone**

Drainage canal, located at the lowest point of the piazza, to collect rainwater

**Giraffa (The Giraffe)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Giraffino**

A member of the Giraffe

**Giro (Lit. "A round")**

The route of the visits made to "pay honor" to the Protectors with drums and flags for the Feast Day of the Patron Saint

**Governatore (Governor)**

Elected head of the Contrada of the Goose

**Grattapassere**

Title of the periodical of the Contrada of the Panther, taking its name from a famous jockey in the 1930s

**Gualdrappa**

Caparison used to cover the Barb during the Historic Procession.

## i

**Infamona**

Popular name for the Contrada of the Goose

**Istrice (The Porcupine)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Istriciaioli**

Members of the Porcupine

## l

**Lampione di Costa Larga**

Title of the periodical of the Eagle

**Lecaiolo**

A member of the Unicorn

**Legatus**

Representative of the Eagle outside of the city walls

**Leocorno (The Unicorn)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Leone (The Lion)**

One of the six Contrade no longer in existence. Its territory was incorporated into that of the Porcupine

**Lupa (The She-wolf)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Lupaiole**

A member of the She-wolf

## m

**Maestro dei novizi (Master of the Novices)**

Entrusted with the training of young Contrada members

**Maestro delle cerimonie (Master of Ceremonies)**

Entrusted to oversee the festivals and the ceremonies of the Contrada

**Maggiorenti (Notables)**

Former Priors, Captains, and other notables of proven generosity and faithfulness within the Contrada, meeting together in a body which, in the various Contrade, is referred to by such names as Council, College, Cabinet, or Seat of the Nobles; the body serves primarily to act as guarantors for the Contrada institutions. The



body offers the Presidency non-binding opinions and recommendations

**Magistrato delle Contrade (Magistracy of the Contrade)**

College of the Priors of Siena's seventeen Contrade. It is presided over by a Rector

**Malavolti**

Title of the periodical of the Dragon. It takes its name from the ancient hilltop of the Malavolti

**Malborghetto**

1. Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Wave

2. Title of the periodical of the Wave

**Mangia**

Antique automated device that struck the hour on the Tower of the Palazzo Pubblico, later dubbed the Tower of the Mangia

**Mangino**

One of the two or more assistants of the Captain who work with him year-round to keep track of horses and jockeys, and to draw up pacts and agreements, called "partiti," in the hopes of bringing a victory to the Contrada

**Martinella**

The little bell on the Carroccio wagon, that rings continually during the parade in the Piazza

**Masgalano**

From the Spanish: mas galante. It is the prize given to the best Comparsa group that distinguishes itself because of its elegance, the dignity of its bearing, and the coordination it demonstrates during the parade in the Historic Procession

**Materassi (Mattresses)**

The padding attached to the outer bank of the dangerous San Martino corner to cushion any falls

**Mattutino**

Solemn evening function held in the Contrada's Oratory on the eve of the Feast of the Patron Saint

**Monte**

Political faction of medieval Siena. In the modern Palio, the secret association of the Contrade or,

more frequently, of the jockeys, to determine the outcome of the race and to set the sharing of the eventual earnings

**Montonaiolo**

Member of the Ram

**Montone**

Synonym of "Valdimontone," or the Ram

**Mortaretto (The Little Mortar)**

Short-barrelled cannon placed at the starting line that is fired. The detonation serves to signal the clearing of the track and the exit of the horses and jockeys from the Entrone courtyard. The Mortaretto is also fired when there is a false start and when the winning horse crosses the finish line

**Mossa**

1. The place where the race begins and ends

2. The true start of the race that takes place when the Starter drops the starting rope

**Mossiere (Starter)**

The only refereeing official placed at the starting rope. The Mossiere is designated by the Municipality with the approval of the Contrade

**Mazzieri**

The participants who open the Historic Procession

**Mulinello (Little Mill)**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Murella Cronache**

Title of the periodical of the Tortoise Contrada

# n

**Nappa**

1. Group of silk ribbons bound to the top of the flags of the Standard-Bearers

2. Black and white decorations of the Palio standard

**Nerbo**

Riding crop given to jockeys upon their exit from the Entrone courtyard immediately before the Palio race. It is made of the dried and stretched organ of a bull

**Nicchiaiolo**

A member of the Shell

**Nicchio (The Shell)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Nobili Protettori (Noble Protectors)**

A position of honor bestowed upon eminent personalities. The title lasts for life (The Contrada of the Eagle)

**Nonna (The Grandmother)**

The Contrada that has not won a victory for the greatest number of years

# O

**Oca (The Goose)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Ocaiolo**

A member of the Goose

**Olio di ricino (Castor Oil)**

Traditional purge among the losers, once voluntarily taken quite literally, today symbolically

**Onda (The Wave)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Ondaioolo**

A member of the Wave

**Onoranza (Paying Honor)**

The homage offered by the Comparsa group of Contrada representatives to the "Protectors" upon the Feast Day of the Patron Saint

**Oratorio (Oratory)**

Church used for the Contrada's devotional practices

**Orso (The Bear)**

One of the six Contrade no longer in existence. Its territory was incorporated into that of the Owl

**Otto, otto stretti, otto a penna**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

# p

**Paggio (Page)**

A costumed figure who represents the Contrada in the Palio and in other official and ceremonial occasions

**Paggio Maggiore (Senior Page)**

The most striking Page with the most richly elegant costume. He carries the official insignia of the Contrada

**Palafreniere**

Page who leads the parade horse by the bridle

**Palazzo Pubblico**

The seat of the Municipality of Siena, located in the lower part of the Piazza del Campo (square)

**Palcaiolo**

Owner and caretaker of the Stands (Palchi)

**Palco (Stand)**

Gallery of seats and platforms erected around the outer rim of the Piazza

**Paliata**

A raucous and disorderly race among youths

**Palio**

1. The traditional race between ten of the seventeen Contrade, taking place in the Campo piazza on 2 July and 16 August in honor of the Virgin Mary. The July race is called the Palio of the Madonna of Provenzano, or the Palio of Provenzano; the August race the Palio of the Assumption

2. Standard of hand-painted silk upon which the following images are always depicted: a) the Virgin; b) the insignia of the ten Contrade running in the race; c) the coats of arms of the Municipality and of the city. This banner is given



as the prize to the winner

3. The Festival, understood as the series of ceremonies

**Pantaneto**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Unicorn

**Pantera (The Panther)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Panterino**

A member of the Panther

**Partito**

Secret agreement between Contrade and jockeys based on unwritten word of honor with the intention of gaining victory for the Contrada

**Passaggio di collo, passaggio di vita (Pass at the neck, pass at the waist)**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Passeggiata Storica (The Historic Walk)**

Synonym for the Historic Parade/Procession

**Passo di marcia (March Step)**

Drumbeat that accompanies the normal progress of the Comparsa group

**Passo a processione (Procession Step)**

Slow drumbeat for transfers

**Passo a vittoria (Victory Step)**

Drumbeat that celebrates or wishes for victory

**Passo della Diana**

Solemn drumbeat that accompanies the progress of the Comparsa group in the Piazza

**Pè'oro**

Popular name for the Ram

**Piatto (The Plate)**

Silver plate mounted atop the Great Banner of the Palio. It is given temporarily to the winning Contrada which then returns it to the Municipality after the final celebration of victory, the "Dinner of the Plate" in January, with the date and name of the victorious Contrada inscribed

**Pignattella**

Lamp, consisting of animal fat held in a terracotta receptacle, with a wick lit in the

neighborhood during the days of the festivities.

It is located in the sconces

**Pispini**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Shell (from Porta Pispini)

**Pochi ma boni ("Few but Good")**

Title of the periodical of Ram Contrada

**Priore (Prior)**

Highest office of the Contrada, elected by the people for a term the duration of which varies from one Contrada to the other, from two to four years. During the days of the Palio, the Prior hands over command to the Captain. The Goose has a Governor, and the Caterpillar has a Rector

**Protettore (Protector)**

Benefactory member who contributes to the maintenance of the Contrada by means of a liberally determined annual quota

**Protonotario**

Contrada archivist (The Ram)

**Prova (Trial Run)**

One of the six races that take place in the morning and in the evening on the three days leading up to the Palio

**Provaccia (Lit. "The Nasty Trial")**

Sixth and final trial race. It is run on the same day as the Palio. So-named because the horses are held back from running freely, thus saving their strength for the Palio that will take place in the afternoon.

**Prova Generale (General Trial)**

Fifth trial run, held on the evening before the Palio

**Provenzano**

1. Collegiate church where the image of the Madonna is venerated; it is to Her that the 2 July Palio is dedicated
2. Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Giraffe (from the Collegiate Church of Provenzano)

**Provicario (Pro-Vicar)**

Substitute and right-hand man of the Vicar

**Provveditore all'oratorio (Superintendent of the Oratory)**

Curator of the Contrada church (The Eagle)

**Provveditori (Superintendents)**

Managers of the Contrada's assets (The Goose, the Ram)

**Pulito, far pulito ("Clean, make it clean")**

The clearing of the track in preparation for the race

**Purga (The Purge)**

Punishment (self-inflicted) of the losers, once literal, today symbolic. The winner is said to "have given the purge" to the losers

## q

**Quercia (The Oak)**

One of the six Contrade no longer in existence. Its territory was incorporated into that of the Snail

## r

**Raddoppio (Redouble)**

Double roll of the drum

**Rettore (Rector)**

Supreme elected leader of the Caterpillar Contrada

**Rettore del magistrato (Rector of the Magistracy)**

Elected annually to preside over the Magistracy of the Contrade

**Rincorsa**

The tenth Contrada, whose horse enters the

starting area last, at full speed, thus initiating the race

**Rinserrata (Rinserratura)**

Maneuver to block a following horse by cutting in front of it

**Ripurgarsi (To Purge Oneself)**

To lose, or to aid in the victory of an adversary (See "Purga")

**Rivenduto (Sell-Out)**

A jockey who favored an adversary, for money

**Romolo e Remo (Romulus and Remus)**

Title of the periodical of the She-wolf

**Rospo (Toad)**

Also called "The Armor-Plated Toad," popular name for the Tortoise Contrada

**Rotellini di Palazzo**

Participants in the Historic Procession, with the colors of the Balzana emblem, who are on guard to maintain order during the Historic Procession and to ensure its orderly progress

## S

**Salicotto**

1. Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Tower
2. Title of the periodical of the Tower Contrada

**Salto del Fiocco (Jump of the Bow)**

Jump of the flag

**Salto dell'Alfiere (Jump of the Standard-Bearer)**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Salva**

Economic agreement between the Contrade and the jockeys meant to cover the jockey's expenses pertaining to participation in the race

**San Marco**

Name of the neighborhood and the Contrada of the Snail (Porta San Marco, Via san Marco)



**San Martino**

Downhill corner of the track where the outcome of the race is often decided

**Sbandierata (Flag-Waving Display)**

A series of moves and maneuvers, called “fioretti,” performed with the flags of the Standard-Bearers

**Scambio di posto, scambio di bandiera (Exchange of place, exchange of flag)**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Scartoccio**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Scosso**

A horse that continues the race even after its rider has fallen off. A riderless horse can still win the Palio

**Sedia (Seggio) (Presidency)**

Executive body that governs and administers a Contrada. It is elected periodically

**Selva (The Forest)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Selvaiolo**

A member of the Forest

**Servi**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Ram (Basilica dei Servi)

**Sganascino**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Siam delle Fonti**

Title of the periodical of the Goose

**Signoria**

Committee of former directors that guarantees institutional and statutory regularity and integrity. (The Goose) Presided over by the Maestro della Signoria

**Signore del brio (Lord of Merrymaking)**

In ancient times, he had the onus and the honor of organizing festivals and ceremonies for both the Contrada and the city

**Soprallasso (Draught Horse)**

Parade horse mounted by a jockey during the

Historic Procession so as not to tire the Barb that will run the race

**Sorte (uscire a) (Chance: come out by)**

A Contrada, not automatically part of the group of seven necessarily participating in the race by rotation, may “come out by chance” in a public drawing. Through such a procedure the participating Contrade grow in number to ten to run the Palio on 2 July and 16 August

**Sottogamba (Under-the-leg)**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

**Spadaforte (Strong Sword)**

One of the six Contrade no longer in existence. Its territory was incorporated into that of the Tower

**Spannocchia**

1. Popular nickname of the Shell
2. Title of the periodical of the Shell

**Spennacchiera (Feather Arrangement)**

Ornament, with the colors of the Contrada, worn on the forehead of the horse; thus called because in the past the ornament was an actual plume

**Stalloreggi**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Panther (Via Stalloreggi)

**Stramburata**

Roll of the drums

**Sunto**

The name of the big bell in the Mangia Tower, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven

**Sventolo (Waving)**

A maneuver in the Flag-Waving Display

## t

**Tamburino**

Palio participant with a drum, who sets the rhythm for the Standard-Bearers during the Flag-Waving Display

**Tamburo (Drum)**

The “Drum of the Rounds,” small and light, is used when making the rounds of paying honors. The “Drum of the Piazza” is used only during the days of the Palio. The drumbeats are called “Steps,” except for the “Cadence of the Flag-Waving Display”

**Tartuca (The Tortoise)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Tartuchino**

A member of the Tortoise

**Terra (Earth)**

Layer of tuff earth laid over the Campo piazza as the ground for the track upon which the Palio race is to be run. “Earth in the Piazza” is synonymous with “Time for the Palio”

**Terzo or Terziere (Lit. “A Third”)**

One of the three ancient territorial subdivisions of Siena: Camollia, San Martino, and City

**Torraiolo**

A member of the Tower

**Torre (The Tower)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Tratta**

A series of ceremonies and operations pertaining both to the selection of the horses that will take part in the Palio and to the assignment of the horses to the Contrade

## v

**Valdimontone - (The Ram)**

One of the seventeen Contrade

**Vallepiatta**

1. Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the Forest. (Via di Vallepiatta.)
2. Title of the periodical of the Forest

**Vallerozzi**

Name of the neighborhood and of the Contrada of the She-wolf (via Vallerozzi)

**Verrocchino**

Wooden staff, set in the ground, that holds up the second starting rope stretched behind the first

**Verrocchio**

1. Winch that holds the starting rope
2. Fenced off pedestal where the Starter takes his place. It is here that the Starter, at the moment of the start, releases the starting rope by stepping on a pedal

**Vicario (Vicar)**

Aid, substitute, and representative of the Prior

**Vipera**

One of the six Contrade no longer in existence. Its territory was incorporated into that of the Tower and of the Unicorn

## z

**Zucchino**

Metal helmet worn by jockeys during the Palio race as protection against lashes from adversaries’ riding crops and against falls







This bibliography, which is necessarily selective, is meant as an initial orientation, seeking to encourage further reading and research in various fields related to the Palio. It highlights a sampling of institutional publications (published by Municipality of Siena, Magistrate of the Contrade, Consortium for the Protection of Palio of Siena and Friends of Palio Committee), paying special attention to titles published by, edited by, and for on behalf of the Contrade. These editions are important not only as a sign of the proud care and century-old affection that the Contrade devote to the traditions of the Palio, but also as a proof of the keen awareness on the part of the Sienese people of the Palio social and cultural values, an awareness that, ever since the time of Gutenberg, has moved ahead boldly even in the modern era of multimedia communication.

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