

The Fonte Gaia from Renaissance to Modern Times

The Fonte Gaia from Renaissance to Modern Times

*A History of Construction, Preservation, and Reconstruction
in Siena*

Chiara E. Scappini and David Boffa

Amsterdam University Press

Cover illustration: Tito Sarrocchi, Fonte Gaia, Piazza del Campo, Siena. (author photo)

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Konvertus / Newgen

Amsterdam University Press English-language titles are distributed in the US and Canada by the University of Chicago Press.

ISBN 978 94 6298 459 2

e-ISBN 978 90 4853 527 9

DOI 10.5117/9789462984592

NUR 685

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Abbreviations

AD	Archivio Duprè, Fiesole
ASFP	Archivio della Fabbrica di San Petronio, Bologna
AISAS	Archivio dell'Istituto Statale d'Arte, Siena
AOMS	Archivio dell'Opera Metropolitana, Siena
ASC	Archivio Storico del Comune, Siena
ASS	Archivio di Stato, Siena
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano
BCS	Biblioteca Comunale, Siena
Bicch.	Biccherna, Archivio di Stato, Siena
Concist. Delib.	Concistoro, Deliberazioni, Archivio di Stato, Siena
Cons. Gen. Delib.	Consiglio Generale, Deliberazioni, Archivio di Stato, Siena

Acknowledgments

In the course of researching, writing, editing, and rewriting this book, countless people contributed in a variety of ways; to all of them we are extremely grateful. Our graduate advisors, Sarah Blake McHam and Tod Marder, helped shape both the topic and the direction of this research. Our peers—notably Heather Nolin, Mary Tinti, Sascha Scott, Karen Lloyd, Susannah Fisher, Ben Eldredge, and Emily Urban—provided feedback, encouragement, and, most importantly, company and friendship in New Jersey diners and restaurants in Italy. Geralyn Colvil in the Rutgers Art History department is an administrator whose presence has been crucial to the success of many art historians, and to the department as a whole. For years she provided logistical support, assistance with tasks of all sizes, a friendly ear, and (critically) candy. Brenna Graham read and provided feedback on several drafts, and her sharp eye was key to our preparation of the final manuscript. Our editors and contacts at Amsterdam University Press have been ideal colleagues, communicating at every step and putting together our work in a beautiful format. And finally, our families—who provided the foundation upon which our earliest studies in art were based—and our partners (Filippo and Brenna), who continue to believe in our work.

To everyone here and to all those who helped along the way: our sincere thanks. It is through your support and encouragement that this book has been possible.

Preface

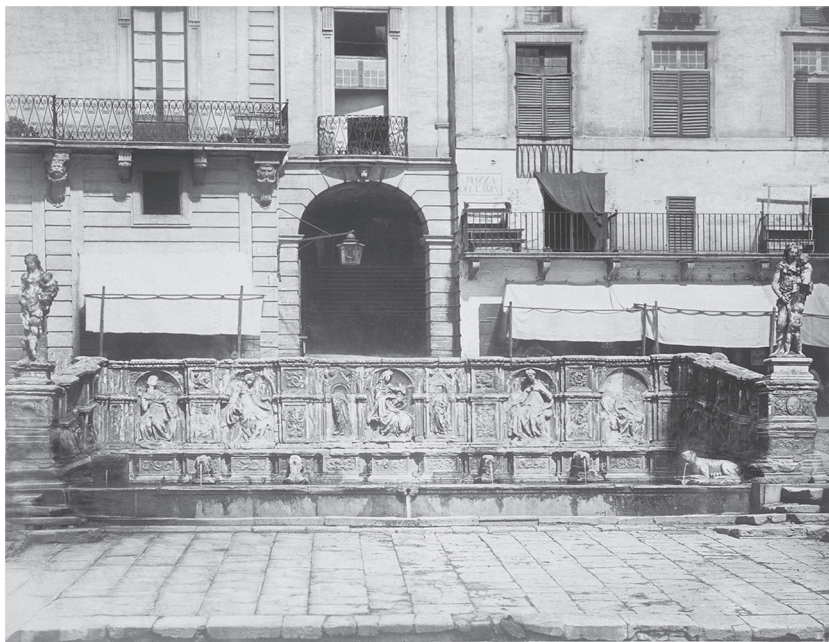
When Jacopo della Quercia (c. 1374–1438) completed his Fonte Gaia for the city of Siena it secured his reputation as one of the preeminent Italian sculptors of the early Quattrocento. In his famous *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti* (*Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, 1550 and revised and extended in 1568), Giorgio Vasari noted that the sculptor, following his completion of the Fonte Gaia, was 'no longer called Jacopo dalla Quercia, but *Jacopo dalla Fonte* [Jacopo of the Fountain] forever after'.¹ The sobriquet was an apt one, as the fountain's influence and innovation would define della Quercia's work and his legacy for centuries. The Fonte Gaia, above all others, positioned him alongside such figures as Donatello and Lorenzo Ghiberti. Beyond its initial impact the carving style and iconographic programme of the fountain left a lasting impression on contemporary and later artists in Tuscany and beyond, the most notable of whom was Michelangelo.²

Located in the Piazza del Campo in the heart of the city, the Fonte Gaia is a sculpted expression of local pride and civic ideals. With its roughly rectangular shape, closed on three sides, the fountain seems to open its arms toward the square and the seat of civic government, the Palazzo Pubblico. In its style and form the fountain was groundbreaking, and was very likely the first monumental public fountain of the Italian Renaissance. The sculptures that once adorned its lateral balustrades, often identified as Acca Larentia and Rhea Silvia, were among the first free-standing statues of the Renaissance.³ Beyond its aesthetic merit, the fountain was a significant feat of engineering, supplying precious water to the Sienese. Girolamo

1 Vasari opens with: 'E poi che ho eletto Iacopo sopradetto per onorato principio di questa Seconda Parte, seguitando l'ordine delle maniere, verrò aprendo sempre colle Vite medesime la difficoltà di sì belle, difficili ed onoratissime arti.' Regarding della Quercia's name, Vasari wrote: 'Che non più Iacopo dalla Quercia, ma Iacopo dalla Fonte fu poi sempre chiamato.' Vasari, 1872, vol. II, pp. 107 and 116. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are ours. The original spelling of all documents has been preserved.

2 Scholars often cite Jacopo della Quercia's formative influence on the art of Michelangelo. Charles de Tolnay, for example, wrote: 'In the art of della Quercia Michelangelo found a conception which could give him a new assurance in the pursuit of his own ideal.' De Tolnay, 1947, p. 83. See also Hartt, 1969, p. 23. Seymour, 1973, pp. 3–4. Beck and Fanti, 1964, pp. 349–54. Kriegbaum, 1942, p. 96. Carli, 1964, p. 7.

3 Beck, 1991, vol. I, p. 20. Seymour, 1973, p. 52. Pope-Hennessy recognized their Renaissance form, stating that the statues 'ultimately derive from the antique', although he placed the Fonte Gaia in his first volume on Italian Gothic sculpture. Pope-Hennessy, 1955, p. 173.



1. Jacopo della Quercia, Fonte Gaia, Piazza del Campo, Siena. (Archivi Alinari, Firenze)

Gigli, writing in the eighteenth century, went so far as to claim that the fountain's name derived from the gaiety ('gaia') felt by the citizens upon seeing the arrival of water in the Campo, something made possible only by the monument.⁴

Yet the fountain in its current iteration in Siena's Campo is not the original, fifteenth-century masterpiece completed in 1419 by Jacopo della Quercia; rather, it is a nineteenth-century reconstruction commissioned from Tito Sarrocchi (1824–1900) by a committee of leading Sienese citizens. Such a reconstruction was made necessary by the deterioration of the original Fonte Gaia, which was carved from an unusually porous local marble, *marmo senese della Montagnola*, that proved to be quite fragile. Years of exposure to the elements, the rigors of daily use, and occasional vandalization caused the fountain to disintegrate over time, ultimately leading

4 'Nel 1345 venne per la prima volta l'acqua in Piazza e si fecero molte feste per otto dì, dandosi nome a quella Fontana di Fonte Gaja, la quale molti anni a resso, (come si dirà) fu adorata di bellissime statue, e rilievi dal célèbre nostro Scultore Jacopo della Quercia, ditto poi da quest'opera Jacomo della Fonte.' Gigli, 1723, vol. I, p. 265. Beck puts forth the idea that the name was given to the fountain because of the spirited movement of the water. Beck, vol. I, p. 67. For a discussion of interpretations of the origin of the name Gaia see Caciorgna, 2001–2002, p. 76.



2. Tito Sarrocchi, Fonte Gaia, Piazza del Campo, Siena. (author photo)

to its removal from the square in the nineteenth century. It was then that Jacopo della Quercia's dismembered fountain pieces were transferred to the Palazzo Pubblico, where they languished in dirty, fragmentary condition before finding a new home, in 1904, in the loggia of the same building.⁵ Only with the recent conclusion of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure's (Workshop of Semi-Precious Stones) nearly 20-year restoration project has della Quercia's dismembered fountain been returned to some semblance of its former glory, although a sad reality is that much of the original work is irrevocably lost to us.⁶

A consequence of this history is that the modern reputation of della Quercia's Fonte Gaia – considered one of the major expressions of fifteenth-century Italian sculpture – has been largely shaped by Sarrocchi's version, which has long been considered a faithful copy of the original.

5 This was on the occasion of the 1904 exhibit organized by Corrado Ricci, *Mostra d'antica arte senese*. Ricci, 1904.

6 The project begun in 1990 was terminated in 2011. The documentary and photographic evidence pertaining to the first decade of the project is in the Archives of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence and all subsequent documentation (at the time of writing) is held by the restoration team of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena.

Yet a comparison with della Quercia's newly restored fountain at Siena's Museum of Santa Maria della Scala reveals that Sarrocchi's copy was far less faithful than has been assumed.⁷ A reexamination of the physical and documentary evidence can thus shed new light on both della Quercia and Sarrocchi.

The present book demonstrates that Sarrocchi's fountain is stylistically a creative interpretation of della Quercia's fifteenth-century work, and that a true appreciation of the original fountain requires we look at other evidence. Sarrocchi, while generally adhering to the Fonte Gaia's iconographic programme, made important changes to the new fountain with respect to the original, both in the style of carving and in the complete omission of two freestanding statues and several border elements. While it is impossible to evaluate della Quercia's fountain as it once was, we believe that plaster casts Tito Sarrocchi made of the Fonte Gaia before he sculpted its replacement can provide valuable information on the original fountain. Thus far these plaster copies have been considered only as artisans' tools that aided in the mechanical reproduction of the fountain. Yet they are crucial to understanding the fountain's Renaissance design, as they preserve many figurative elements and details of the original sculptures that have since been lost. By examining the physical remains of della Quercia's original fountain, the plaster casts, and Sarrocchi's replacement we reevaluate the iconographic programme of the original fountain and outline the extent of its later transformations.

Just as interesting as della Quercia's fountain is the copy made by Sarrocchi, and his work forms a major subject of this study. In particular, we argue that Sarrocchi's 'copy' was heavily influenced by the art movement known as 'Purism' as well as by the prevailing restoration theories that circulated in mid-nineteenth-century Siena. Two critical figures emerge in this context: the Italian scholar and art historian Gaetano Milanesi and the French architect and theorist Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. The former set the stage for a renewed interest in Jacopo della Quercia, thanks to his work on Vasari,⁸

7 In March of 2011 della Quercia's restored fountain remnants were put on display in the museum of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena. Prior to this new exhibit only the two full-scale female statues (labelled Acca Larentia and Rhea Silvia) and two reliefs (The Expulsion of Adam and Eve and the Virtue Wisdom) were on display to the public. We would like to thank Enrico Toti, curator of the museum, for allowing access to study della Quercia's sculptures while in storage.

8 See the collection of articles published for the exhibition *Siena tra Purismo e Liberty* held in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico from 20 May to 30 October 1988. Sani and Crispolti, 1988. Gaetano Milanesi is renowned for his publication of nine volumes of Giorgio Vasari's *Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani* (1878–1885). See Petrioli, 2004.

while the latter codified stylistic restoration theories in the middle of the nineteenth century.⁹ The unique intersection of Milanese's intellectual power, the nineteenth-century art movement Purism, the incorporation of Siena into the emerging Italian state, and the changing notions of restoration all play important roles in the Fonte Gaia's nineteenth-century history, and form just a few of the considerations that this study explores. Doing so will highlight and clarify the interrelationship of both fountains and the cultural context that led to the replacement of the original. Our intention is to offer a more complete understanding of Jacopo della Quercia's Fonte Gaia and the sculptor's place in art history. Additionally, we examine – for the first time – Tito Sarrocchi's impact on our perception of della Quercia's beloved civic landmark.

Considering the monument's multifaceted history and its survival for roughly six centuries, we have organized our project into four chapters and subdivided each into smaller sections to further guide the reader. Chapter One introduces the city of Siena, its geographical position, foundation history, and government. We discuss the city's particular water engineering system – the *bottini* – and highlight the differences between this system and the more common form of the Roman aqueduct employed in other Italian cities. We also discuss extant medieval fountains that predate the Fonte Gaia in both Siena and Italy generally. In the second section of Chapter One, we introduce what is known about the patronage, plan, and design of the fourteenth-century Fonte Gaia. This is the fountain that existed on the square before della Quercia's fountain; for clarity we shall refer to it as the *first* Fonte Gaia. Careful study reveals that the first Fonte Gaia influenced the design of della Quercia's fifteenth-century fountain more than has hitherto been recognized.

Chapter Two begins by outlining the patronage, plan, and design of della Quercia's Fonte Gaia. We then address the iconographical questions posed by other scholars related to the Fonte Gaia sculptures, and propose a new interpretation of the fountain's programme. Our identification of the female figures, usually considered to be Acca Larentia and Rhea Silvia, as a possible reference to the maternal figure Gaia is related to then contemporary

9 He noted: 'The term restoration and the thing itself are both modern. To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair it, to rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which may never have existed at any time.' Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879) was a French architect and theorist famous for his ideas on the restoration of medieval buildings, combining historical fact with creative interpretation – in opposition to the ideas later theorized by John Ruskin, who adamantly opposed Viollet-le-Duc's theories. Viollet-le-Duc, 1990, p. 195. See also Jokilehto, 1999, p. 151. Ruskin, 1989 [1880], p. 194.

debates regarding the foundation history of the city and della Quercia's relationship to the Sienese painter Taddeo di Bartolo (c. 1363–1422).

This book then moves to an examination of the activities from 1430 to 1830 that caused damage to della Quercia's fountain. Chapter Three, entitled 'A History of Disrepair', is a chronological record of the fountain's later vicissitudes, derived largely from archival sources. From this research, we draw conclusions about the condition of della Quercia's fountain and the use of both the fountain and the square over the period mentioned above.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the life of Tito Sarrocchi, the circumstances of the new Fonte Gaia's commission, and the perception of restoration in the nineteenth century. We discuss the art movement Purism and explain how this Renaissance Revival style contributed to the replacement of the fountain and its new design. Our intention is to locate the renewal of the fountain within the context of an elevated consciousness of cultural heritage influenced by the then fashionable trend of Renaissance Revival art.

Through this project, we raise questions that pertain to both della Quercia's original fountain and the copy by Sarrocchi. Why, for example, did Sarrocchi and his nineteenth-century patrons make certain decisions regarding alterations to the fountain's iconography, style, and location? Closely related is the question of what it meant, in the context of nineteenth-century Italian sculpture, to 'copy' the work of another artist, and of a famous Renaissance artist in particular. Was the result expected to be a facsimile of the original or was the spirit of the original enough for the patron? Just as important are some of the more practical considerations, such as those pertaining to the circumstances of this renovation. Was the impetus a matter of renewed local civic pride in light of the emerging national identity or were the planners more concerned with the fountain's state of conservation? To move further back, what was the impetus behind the original fountain, and what was the intended content of its visual programme? These and others are the questions raised by the two fountains, and they are what has guided our research and what forms the backbone of the current book.

1. Siena: Water and Power

Siena was founded upon a hilltop, approximately 65 kilometres east of the Tyrrhenian Sea and almost 320 metres above sea level in the Chiana mountain range. The city's origins have long been recognized to extend to the Middle Ages, though several earlier historians traced its foundation further back, to either an Etruscan or a Roman settlement.¹ It is only since the mid-1960s, with the discoveries made by archeologists in the area of Siena, that light has been shed on the early history of the city.

The general history of Etruscan cities in Tuscany has been relatively well established. Around the second half of the eighth century BCE the first nuclei were formed in Tarquinia, Cerveteri, Veio, Vulci, Bolsena, Chiusi, Roselle, Vetulonia, Populonia, Arezzo, Cortona, and Perugia. These cities were known as the *Dodecapoli* ('twelve capitals'). Several smaller centres were subsequently established, including Cosa, Talamone, Pistoia, Fiesole, Volterra, and Sovana. In the second half of the twentieth century the hypothesis that Siena was also founded by the Etruscans was strengthened by the discovery of archeological remains from the fifth to the fourth century BCE some 12 kilometres from the city (near the town of Murlo).² Because of the large size of one of the buildings (70 × 100 metres) archeologists have variously identified the structure as the Temple of Poggio Civitate or even the long-sought shrine known as Fanum Voltumnae, a political sanctuary that functioned as a meeting place and a site for religious ceremonies and games.³ While debates regarding the nature and identification of the structure are ongoing, the discovery of an Etruscan presence so close to the modern city of Siena supports the proposal that it too was founded by that civilization. This is further confirmed by recent excavations within the city walls that have revealed the existence of two necropoli: the first at San Marco and the second at Campansi, where numerous Etruscan utensils dating from the last quarter of the fourth century BCE have come to light.⁴

1 See Douglas, 1902, pp. 1–13.

2 Fusai, 1987, p. 13. Nielsen, 1987. Phillips, 1970, p. 242. Phillips, 1993. Nagy et al., 2008.

3 See Cristofani, 1975. Mazzechi, 1976. De Puma and Small, 1994. Regarding Fanum Voltumnae, see Stopponi, 2007, who instead believes to have located the site of the sanctuary in Orvieto. Also see Pelosi and Fortunato, 1998. Ridgway, 1979.

4 Cantini, 2007. Barbagli and Iozzo, 2007. Fusai, 1987, pp. 15–16.

In the Renaissance firm evidence to support an Etruscan or Roman foundation was unknown, as Siena, unlike Florence or Rome, had no knowledge of surviving ruins from this early period. In the scheme of Renaissance politics, where a firmly established and verifiable Roman pedigree was considered imperative for sovereignty, cities such as Siena and Venice which lacked these credentials created suitable foundation histories in order to claim equality with, if not outright superiority over, neighbouring city states.⁵ This is one of the reasons why the Sienese in the fifteenth century were particularly invested in creating a visual expression of their foundation history; and it was this history that came to be expressed in the fresco cycle of the Palazzo Pubblico and on the fountain in front of that building, the Fonte Gaia.

There were two prevailing foundation myths for Siena. One, first recorded in the twelfth century by the English author John of Salisbury (1120–1180; also Bishop of Chartres), involved a legendary founding by the Gauls.⁶ John of Salisbury's account explains that the Gaulish chieftan Brennus, head of the Senones, founded the town of Senna Gallica from which the name of the city was believed to have come.⁷ In reality, this was a misreading of the source material by Italian authors: Senna Gallica pertained to Senigallia, a town on Italy's Adriatic coast founded by Brennus, and not Siena.⁸ In any case this story was circulated throughout the Renaissance by historians such as Giovanni Villani, Flavio Biondo, Rafael Volaterrano and Leandro Alberti.⁹

The foundation myths portrayed in the Palazzo Pubblico and on the Fonte Gaia are derived from a fifteenth-century interpretation of the classical writings of Livy and Florus, both of whom relate the Gauls' defeat at the hands of Camillus and his subsequent restoration of Rome.¹⁰ Although

5 Venice looked to Constantinople and the Byzantine east for many of its models. In this way Venice competed with the Roman histories of other Italian city states by claiming another 'Rome' – that founded by Constantine in the east – as ancient predecessor. Paoletti and Radke suggest that this story evolved because the actual Roman remains of the city (discovered some 3 metres below the ground level of the modern city) were probably long forgotten as the inhabitants continuously built up the islands to escape the encroaching sea. Paoletti and Radke, 2002, p. 50.

6 *Policrates sive de nugis Curialium et vestigiis philosophorum* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1595) Lib. VI, Ch. 12, pp. 313–14. See Guglielmetti, 2005.

7 Rondoni, 1968, p. 9.

8 See Rondoni, 1968.

9 Giovanni Villani, *Cronica Fiorentina*; Flavio Biondo, *Italia Illustrata*; Rafael Volaterrano, *Geografia libro quinto*; Leandro Alberti, *Descrizione d'Italia*. See Rondoni, 1968, p. 13.

10 Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, V, p. 46ff; Florus, *Epitoma*, I, 8, p. 17ff.

the interpretation of the historical record was first recorded in the fifteenth century, the story of Camillus's foundation myth was probably, as Nicolai Rubinstein points out, of earlier origin.¹¹ Agostino Patrizi, in his *De antiquitate civitatis Senesis*, wrote that the Sienese of his time believed that while the Galli Senones had founded Siena, Camillus was responsible for the area of the city known as the Terzo di Camollia, for it was there that Camillus had pitched his tent before defeating the Gauls.¹² This account was followed in the Quattrocento by Francesco Patrizi, who expanded on the idea. In his *De origine et vetustate urbis Senae* he wrote that Camillus was responsible for establishing not only the Terzo di Camollia, to which he gave his name, but also the entire colony.¹³

The other local tradition of the city's founding is recounted in the Tisbo legend, named in honour of the Roman Tisbo Colonnese who is supposed to have first recorded it.¹⁴ The story maintains Siena's Roman origins and involves the twin sons of Remus, Senus and Aeschius. It is thus related to the foundation story of the city of Rome as recounted in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.¹⁵ According to the story, Rhea Silvia, the Vestal Virgin, was raped and claimed that Mars was the father of her twins.¹⁶ She was imprisoned, and the King ordered that her offspring be thrown into the Tiber River. Due to the sluggishness of the river, the basket with the children, Romulus and Remus, was left high and dry by the receding waters. A thirsty she-wolf heard the children's cries and, nearing the river, discovered the children. She saved the twins by suckling them herself for nourishment. Faustulus,

11 Rubinstein, 1958, p. 202.

12 Agostino Patrizi served Pope Pius II, and from 1483 was Bishop of Pienza. Original citation: 'Gallos deinde in his locis commorantes, a Romano dictatore Furio Camillo defectos; locumque ubi dictator tetenderat appellatum Camilliam; hinc, castrorum loca, ab accolis militi[e]que emeritis viris habitari coepta, et urbis principium.' *De antiquitate civitatis Senesis*, Biblioteca Comunale, Siena (BCS), MS A. VI. 3, f. 83r.

13 *De origine et vetustate urbis Senae*, BCS MS A. VI. 3, f. 36v. Lisini attributes the *De Senarum urbis origine*, which incorporates the Tisbo legend, to Francesco Patrizi as well. Lisini and Iacometti, 1931, vols. XV and VI, pp. xxviii and xxxi. On Patrizi see Battaglia, 1936, pp. 75–157; Rubinstein, 1958, p. 203.

14 The oldest codice is from the fifteenth century. Archivio Storico del Comune, Siena (ASC), A VI, 8. The legend is also found in several other codices in the same archive labelled A, VI, 12; A VI, 10; A, III, 25; A, III, 28; and B, III, 1; A, VI, 11; A, VI, 4. For a discussion of dating and differences in language see Rondoni, 1968, p. 15. See also Jacks, 1993, pp. 86–8.

15 Livy, 2006, pp. 6–13. The story is also recounted by Plutarch in his *Vita di Romolo* 4.

16 Rhea Silvia was made a priestess of Vesta by her uncle, Amulius, so that she would not be able to procreate. The goddess of the hearth, Vesta, was worshipped as a living flame in the centre of a shrine in the Roman Forum. The flame was tended by her priestesses, the Vestals, who had to remain chaste for the duration of their service to the goddess.

the master of the royal flock, found the wolf gently licking the children and took them back to his wife, Larentia.¹⁷ Livy goes on to give two versions of the death of Remus, explaining that for this reason Romulus became the sole ruler of Rome and the city took his name.¹⁸

According to the Tisbo legend, Remus's twin sons, Senus and Aeschius, escaping the anger of their uncle, Romulus, took the 'sacrario' – the image of the wolf and the twins – from Rome to the spot that is now Siena. There they built a temple to house the shrine, and founded the city. On the spot now known as Castelveccchio they built a castle, which they gave the name Castel Senio. The danger of capture along their journey prompted the twins to vow to build a temple to Apollo should they escape from Romulus. The god sent them two noble horses – one black, one white – on which they managed to escape. They ordained great sacrifices to Apollo and Diana in gratitude for having overcome such opposition. From the altar of Apollo the fumes were densely black, while a white smoke ascended from Diana's sacrifice. The brothers took these smoke signs – also the colours of their horses – as the colours for their emblem, known as the *balzana*, which was later adopted as Siena's coat of arms.¹⁹

By the twelfth century Siena was in the hands of the Church, as it was governed primarily by the city's bishop. This arrangement ended in 1167 when the city declared its independence from episcopal control and a republican government was established that lasted to the sixteenth century.²⁰ The most important and durable government was that of the *Nove*, the Government of the Nine, which governed the city from 1285 to 1355. This body was made up of members from the burgher class, and marked a particularly peaceful and prosperous period of Siena's history. The cathedral, baptistery, Palazzo Pubblico, and the churches dedicated to St. Francis and St. Dominic all date from this time, which was witness to significant building activity.

17 It may be that the miraculous story originated because Larentia, a former prostitute, was called she-wolf among the shepherd community, since *lupa* ('she-wolf') is also the Latin word for prostitute. 'Una donna ebbe costui, Messalana, tanto lussuriosa, che palese con l'altre lupe stave ne la tana.' Uberti, 1952 [1345–1367], L. 2, Ch. 5, 101, lines 52–4. 'Intorno a quella Riviera si stave una meretrice commune, la qual femmina si chiamava in latino Lupa. Trovati da costei li due fanciulli, preseli e nutricollo molto dolcemente. E per ciò fu ditto, che ellino furo figliuoli della Lupa.' Brunetto Latini, *Tesoro volg.* (ed. Gaiter) XIII L. 1, Ch. 35, 98, lines 3–6. We would like to thank Prof. Simone Marchesi for bringing these sources to our attention.

18 Livy, pp. 6–13.

19 The *balzana* is a shield of which the upper half is white and the lower black. On the legend see Rondoni, 1968, pp. 13–27. Douglas, 1902, p. 6.

20 See Luchaire, 1906; Bowsky, 1981; and Wainwright, 1983.

Part of Siena's success was due to its location along the Via Francigena, one of the most important routes from Northern Europe to Rome.²¹ Beginning in the Middle Ages, Christian pilgrims, bankers, and merchants – as well as popes and emperors – all travelled along the Via Francigena. Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV visited Siena after his coronation in Rome in the eleventh century, as did Frederick Barbarossa (1122–1190), Frederick II (1194–1250), and later Giovanna of Naples and Emperor Sigismund.²² One Emperor did more than just stop in Siena for a night. In 1469 Frederick III (1415–1493) celebrated his grandiose marriage to Eleanor of Portugal in Siena, as is recorded in Pinturicchio's renowned fresco in the Piccolomini Library in the Cathedral. Even more important was the steady pilgrimage traffic over the centuries. In 1300 alone, when Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed it a Holy Year, tens of thousands of pilgrims stopped in Siena on their journey to Rome.²³

The city grew and prospered as a result of this wealth. From the city proper new suburbs were created, forming three principal districts: the Terzo di Città, the Terzo di San Martino, and the Terzo di Camollia, as they are known today, where the rural inhabitants settled.²⁴ The tripartite division of the city into *terzi* derives from the three earlier nuclei of the city: Castelveccchio or Castel Senio, the oldest centre; Camollia to the north; and Castello di Montone to the east.²⁵ These areas correspond geographically to the peaks of the three ranges of hills upon which Siena was built and which, by the end of the thirteenth century, were included within the ancient city walls. The principal attractions the city provided the rural population were the possibility to learn professional skills for various kinds of work, increased prospects of protection, and a regular supply of food and water.²⁶ Naturally, the supply of water was a major concern for Siena's inhabitants and, as shall be discussed further on, the Fonte Gaia was of vital importance for the growth of the city.

The political and economic flourishing of Siena continued from 1260 into the second quarter of the fourteenth century. The Ghibelline city had vanquished Guelph Florence at the Battle of Montaperti in 1260,

21 Ascheri, 2003, p. 29.

22 Hook, 1979, p. 15.

23 The register of Boniface VIII with the indication of the Holy Year is dated 22 February 1300 and is preserved in the Vatican Secret Archives (ASV), Reg. Vat. 49, ff. 380v–381r). On Pope Boniface VIII see Bagliani, 2003.

24 Balestracci and Piccinni, 1977.

25 Hook, 1979, p. 9.

26 Norman, 1999, p. 6.

and a period of prosperity and relative political security followed this victory. In 1326, however, the population was tested by famine; then, in 1348, it was brought to its knees by the plague. A vivid description of the city at this time is recorded by Agnolo di Tura del Grasso in his *Cronica Maggiore*:

And it is found that at this time there died in Siena 36,000 persons twenty years of age or less, and the aged and other people (died), to a total of 52,000 in all in Siena. And in the suburbs of Siena 28,000 persons died; so that in all it is found that in the city and suburbs of Siena 80,000 persons died. Thus at this time Siena and its suburbs had more than 30,000 men, and there remained in Siena less than 10,000 men. And those that survived were like persons distraught and almost without feeling. [...] I will not write of the cruelty that there was in the countryside, of the wolves and wild beasts that ate the poorly buried corpses, and of other cruelties that would be too painful to those who read of them. [...] The city of Siena seemed almost uninhabited for almost no one was found in the city. [...] At this time in Siena the great and noble project of enlarging the cathedral of Siena that had been begun a few years earlier was abandoned.²⁷

Following these disastrous events discontent among the two social classes excluded from government rule, the nobles and the working class, peaked, and in 1355, with the arrival of Charles IV of Luxembourg, the Government of the Nine was suppressed. A new government was formed, consisting of twelve commoners assisted by a group of twelve nobles that established the Government of the Twelve. Shortly thereafter, in 1385, this government was replaced by the so-called Fifteen and, in turn, several different numbered governments followed each other until finally Siena was turned over, as seigniory, to the Milanese lord Gian Galeazzo Visconti in 1399. The incorporation into the Visconti fiefdom was a manoeuvre that the Siennese hoped would protect them from Florentine expansionism. Unfortunately, this ultimately failed as Siena was ceded to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in 1555 and remained under its control until the unification of Italy in the nineteenth century.

27 Agnolo di Tura del Grasso produced a chronicle of events from 1300 to 1351. The English translation of his *Cronica Maggiore* is cited from Bowsky, 1971, pp. 13–14.

Water

Water is the lifeblood of any city or civilization, the dividing line between life and death. It is thus no surprise to find cities such as Florence, Rome, Milan, and Turin on or close to rivers, as rivers supplied the best-quality water and were relatively easy for the city's inhabitants to access.²⁸ The grandeur of Ancient Rome was due in no small part to water: the Tiber provided ports and access to the sea, while the city's eleven aqueducts delivered water to hundreds of fountains and public baths.²⁹

Renaissance Rome, on the contrary, had a severe water shortage – one that was not properly addressed until the end of the sixteenth century. Of Rome's numerous ancient aqueducts only one, the *Acqua Vergine* (or Aqua Virgo), had been spared from disruption and destruction. Until the papacy of Sixtus V (1585–1590) this aqueduct was the sole source of running water for the city. Throughout the fifteenth century the diminished water supply permitted only small *lavabos* or wall fountains.³⁰ In both Florence and Rome monumental sculpted fountains, comparable to the Fonte Gaia, appeared only in the sixteenth century when wealthy patrons commissioned new aqueducts and/or restored the ancient ones. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century Pope Gregory XIII and Sixtus V partially restored Rome's aqueducts, providing a surplus of water that made possible the fountains for which the city is now famous. This was part of an ambitious renewal programme that aimed to re-establish Rome as the centre of spiritual and political life.³¹ In Florence it was

28 Water for most of the peninsula was carried from the river by women. In Rome, however, the Tiber's water was transported by *acquaioi*, members of a confraternity that met in the local church of Santa Maria della Pace. Both Cavallucci and Colasanti cite the church simply as the Chiesa della Pace. Its name may refer to the modern church of Santa Maria della Pace, once called Sant'Andrea, or possibly to another church entirely. See Cavallucci, 1993, p. 24; Colasanti, 1926, p. xxv. In order to take advantage of hydraulic power major textile industries were also organized directly along river banks. The hydraulic mill was one of several technologies available to Roman grain grinders. By the time the fourth-century agronomist Palladius wrote his treatise on perfect agriculture, water mills were perfectly familiar to Romans everywhere. See Squatriti, 1998, p. 126. In cities like Florence or Rome, located in valleys, hand-dug wells were problematic as they were especially vulnerable to contamination from nearby cesspools (or agricultural waste), and thus could not guarantee potable water. Kucher, 2005, p. 45.

29 Ancient Rome boasted over 1200 fountains. Morton, 1966, p. 31; Symmes, 1998, p. 35. See also Squatriti, 1998, n. 28.

30 A *lavabo* is not considered a fountain; it is a basin that is supplied by running water controlled by a tap and turned on only when needed. Quattrocento wall fountains are engaged in the wall (usually at the end of a square or courtyard) and require much less water than freestanding fountains. Wiles, 1975, p. 5.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 16–19.



3. Pozzo di San Patrizio, Orvieto. (photo in the public domain)

not until the reign of Cosimo I that sufficient water was brought to the city via a new aqueduct paid for by the Grand Duchy,³² an event commemorated with a medal, dated 1567, cast by Pietro Paolo Galeotti.³³

Like Siena, the city of Orvieto in the region of Umbria was also founded by Etruscans on a hilltop location. Yet Orvieto had an extensive water supply system that survived from the city's beginnings. Under the city lies an elaborate labyrinth of caves, tunnels, cisterns, and rooms that date to the Etruscan and Roman eras. The ancient underground water supply consisted of a large system of cylindrical tunnels cut directly out of the rock substructure of the city. The tunnels were covered with a thick layer of waterproof clay and used to transport water to cisterns for storage and use. This system provided the citizenry with water until the Middle Ages when, in order to augment the water supply, the city built a new public aqueduct that ran from the plateau Alfina (*altopiano dell'Alfina*), some 5 kilometres northwest of Orvieto, directly to the city's fountains. When Pope Clement VII (1478–1534) chose Orvieto for refuge after the Sack of Rome in 1527, he had a spectacular well, known as the *Pozzo di San Patrizio*, built by the Florentine architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger.³⁴

32 On the new Tuscan aqueduct see Ferretti, 2016.

33 The reverse is decorated with an aqueduct and a fountain. See Supino, 1899, nos. 384–5 and especially p. 134.

34 Frommel and Adams, 1994.

The well, constructed between 1527 and 1537, was dug 53 metres deep, and featured a double helix ramp to permit mules laden with water jars to go continuously up and down the well shaft unobstructed. An inscription on the entrance to the well records: 'What nature stinted for provision application has supplied.'³⁵

This principle of human ingenuity overcoming the limits of nature may also be applied to the creation of Siena's water supply system. In stark contrast to the majority of other Italian cities that had been founded close to a direct source of fresh water, such as a river or tributary, Siena's location on a hill placed the city several kilometres from the closest river, and upstream of any nearby tributaries.³⁶ Although the high ground conferred a defensive advantage, the city was forced to devise several methods for acquiring enough water for its inhabitants. Low precipitation levels (less than 1 metre of rain in the winter months) meant the city could not rely on the collection of rainwater alone to supply enough water for the growing population.³⁷ Initially, it is likely that Siena had to rely on naturally occurring springs and erratic rainfall to supply its citizenry with fresh water. But as the city grew this would not have been sufficient. As Judith Hook writes:

Just when and how Siena's system of city fountains began we cannot be sure. But early in her days as a Roman colony, if not even sooner, there must have been a complex system for supplying the city with water.³⁸

In medieval Siena, the shortage of water was of perpetual concern to the General Council, as water was 'one of the four elements, without which life is impossible'.³⁹ Thus, the Sienese government used four means to procure water: the collection of rain in cisterns; the construction of wells dug into the aquifer; the excavation of spring banks; and the excavation of underground aqueducts (*bottini*).⁴⁰ We know that as early as the twelfth century the Sienese began to dig under the city in search of an abundant source of water, probably hoping to find *La Diana*, the great subterranean river that

35 'Quod natura munimento inviderat industria adiecit.' See *Descrizione del Duomo di Orvieto*, 1857. Rumpf, 1986, pp. 56–7.

36 The closest river is the Arbia (9 kilometres from the city), followed by the Staggia (12 kilometres) and the Merse (30 kilometres). The more important limiting factor, however, is that all the headwaters of these rivers are at a lower elevation than Siena. Kucher, 2005, p. 50.

37 Ibid., p. 31.

38 Hook, 1979, p. 4.

39 Balestracci and Piccinini, p. 56.

40 Balestracci et al., 1993, p. 15.

legend said flowed beneath the city.⁴¹ Their early excavations turned out to be wasteful projects and earned the Sieneese the derision of Dante: 'You will find them part of that vain people who pinned their hopes on Talamone and will lose more hope thereby than in their search for the Diana.'⁴² Although the mythical river was never found, the search for *La Diana* likely led to the invention of a new type of water collection system, the *bottini*. Their existence in Siena was first recorded in 1226, although it is likely that the tunnels were in use earlier.⁴³ The *bottini* are tunnels carved into Siena's substructure of tufa (a soft, porous, calciferous, sedimentary rock) that collected the mineral-laden water as it dripped from the ground layers above. The water collected in these channels formed a subterranean aqueduct. Their innovative structure provoked the wonder of the Emperor Charles V, who declared in 1536 that 'Siena was more beautiful below ground than above.'⁴⁴

Today, the Sieneese *bottini* are 90 per cent intact and still in use. They rank among the best-preserved medieval underground aqueducts in Europe. A trip to the *bottini* reveals the arduous maintenance required to keep them functioning properly.⁴⁵ The rich calcium deposits in the water quickly obstruct the porous surface of the *bottini* and form stalactites that must be scraped away frequently in order for water to continue to permeate the tunnels. As opposed to the more common type of Roman aqueduct, the *bottini* do not lead to a source of water, but rather they meander through the ground where they collect water; that is, they are the *source* of water, not merely its conduit. Thus, in order to augment the water supply the surface area of the *bottini* must be increased. Conversely, the Roman aqueduct (whether built above or below ground) was engineered simply to carry water from the source to

41 The Bisdomini chronicle, from the late fourteenth century, recounts how in 1176 the friars of the Carmine located a small source of water near Castelvecchio. This discovery legitimized a renewed search for the underground river. Ibid., p. 25.

42 English translation from Hollander 2003, 'Purgatorio', Canto XIII, 151–4, p. 283. Original text: 'Tu li vedrai tra quella gente vana che spera in Talamone, e perderagli più di speranza ch'a trovar la Diana; ma più vi perderanno li ammiragli.' Alighieri, [1308–1320] 2008, p. 322.

43 Tronti et al., 2005, p. 3.

44 'Il forestiero Carlo V, spagnoleggiando anche in questo, e dopo aver fatta una passeggiata nei bottini, è fama che esclamasse meravigliato che Siena era più bello sotto terra che sopra.' Bargagli-Petrucchi, 1906, vol. I, p. 46. See also Hook, 1979, p. 26.

45 We would like to thank Giacomo Luchini, Director of the association La Diana, for his tour of the *bottini* in 2007. Today, the *bottini* continue to supply water, but only for irrigating local gardens. The city's water supply system was replaced in 1914 with a pressurized aqueduct that runs for 56 kilometres, carrying water from Monte Amiata to Siena.



4. Bottino of Fonte Gaia, Siena. (author photo)

the city, based on various gradients and the use of gravity to maintain a continuous flow of water.⁴⁶

Early Medieval Italian Fountains

In 1419, when the new Fonte Gaia was completed, few Italian cities could boast access to running water via a similarly complex sculpted fountain. In the following section an examination of other noteworthy early Italian fountains will serve to underscore the Fonte Gaia's unique form and decorative programme. As we shall see, the majority of early Italian fountains were civic structures erected in town squares to supply the communes with water. From the surviving examples it appears that the preferred design was the freestanding, centrally planned fountain with

46 Roman aqueducts were built of stone, brick, and a volcanic rock known as pozzuolana. Their visible remains consist of only about 50 kilometres of approximately 420 kilometres of underground aqueducts which flowed into enormous cisterns located at their terminus. From here water was then directed, again via gravity, into lead pipes for fountains, public baths, and villas. See Hodge, 2002, particularly pp. 93–125.

either a circular or polygonal receiving basin. The 'engaged' (or wall) fountain placed against a wall at the end of a square or courtyard was a less popular alternative.⁴⁷ Generally, low-relief sculpture decorated the sides of the polygonal receiving basin, and imagery was confined to the coats of arms of the town or its dignitaries. Around the central shaft conventionalized masks or gargoyles frequently spouted water into the receiving basin. Figural sculpture, if used, was kept subordinate to the architectonic lines of the basins and shaft. The subject matter was chiefly religious or civic.

For examples of medieval Italian fountain design, the ancient city of Viterbo, located in the Lazio region, is almost without equal. In the thirteenth century, with anti-papal forces threatening Rome, Viterbo became a favourite residence of the papacy.⁴⁸ The construction of the immense papal palace funded by the commune was intended to demonstrate that the Viterbese could rival or, they hoped, even replace Rome as the papal seat.⁴⁹ In the mid-thirteenth century the city served as home to Alexander IV and his successor Urban IV, who was elected in Viterbo.⁵⁰ The many fountains built in Viterbo over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries testify to the wealth generated by this papal city, and the success of their designs is attested in progeny elsewhere in Italy.⁵¹

Viterbo's medieval fountains demonstrate the prevalence of specific design characteristics that reflect the papal presence. As we shall see, the preferred form was a freestanding, centrally planned fountain with a roughly circular water basin. This was a particularly influential model for other Italian cities as well; a notable example is the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia, to be discussed later.⁵² Viterbo's desire to compete with Rome led to the assimilation of Roman decorative motifs into the ornamental vocabulary of its fountains. The pine cone, for instance, which was the shape of the central

47 Wiles, 1975, p. 5.

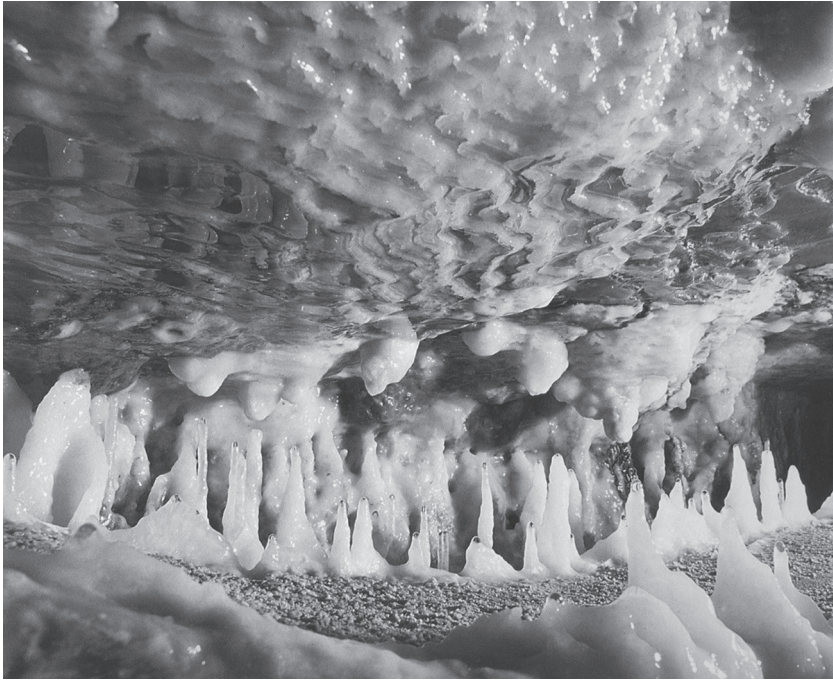
48 It was the Pope who could crown the Holy Roman Emperor, and at this time conflict arose between the Angevin and Hohenstaufen claimants to the title. Seven popes resided in Viterbo: Alexander IV (1254–1261), Clement IV (1265–1268), Adrian V (1276), John XXI (1276–1277), Nicholas III (1277–1280) and, for a time, Urban IV (1261–1264), and Martin IV (1281–1285).

49 Radke, 1996, p. 3.

50 Ibid., in particular Ch. 1.

51 Agostinetti, 1985, p. 17.

52 Also strictly linked to this fountain's typology is the now lost fountain of Cortona, which dates to the last quarter of the thirteenth century. This had a circular basin decorated with reliefs of the twelve months similar in decoration to the Fontana Maggiore. See Santi, 1971.



5. Detail of calcium deposits in the *bottino*, Siena. (author photo)

fountain in the courtyard of Old St. Peter's, is the form surmounting the spindle-shaped shafts of virtually all the medieval fountains in Viterbo.⁵³

In 1268, under the direction of the *viscontes papalis* Raniero Gatti, the fountain known as the *fons papalis* was built on the loggia of the Palazzo Papale. The loggia probably served as both a courtyard for quiet

53 The pine cone, a symbol of fertility, was particularly well suited to the decoration of fountains. The Etruscans used the motif on tomb markers and the Romans adopted it on various monuments, including fountains (Agostinetti, p. 27). Fonts adorned with pine cones are also documented in late antique and early medieval reliefs, miniatures, and mosaics. In the Christian world the pine cone was often used in the iconography of the mystic fountain, the *fons vitae*, in which water's purifying quality symbolized the role of Christ in redemption. See Strygowski, 1903. The best-known pine cone fountain is a bronze example 4 metres tall. It dates from the second century CE and gives the uppermost court of Bramante's Cortile del Belvedere, where it sits in a niche built by Pirro Ligorio, its name: the Cortile della Pigna. In antiquity the fountain stood near the Pantheon, at the terminus of the Roman aqueduct *Vergine*. Later, under the papacy of Adrian I (772–795), the bronze pine cone fountain was moved to the atrium of Old St. Peter's, where it was used for ablutions. Finally, in the sixteenth century it was moved to the courtyard of the Vatican Palace. The fountain was viewed as a symbol of Paradise, and water flowed from various holes around the point of the pine cone. The Carolingians imitated this Roman pine cone in a smaller form on a fountain placed in the atrium of the Palatine Chapel in Aachen, Germany. See Wixom, 2003, p. 8. See also Agostinetti, 1985, p. 28.

contemplation and as an antechamber for persons awaiting admittance to the halls.⁵⁴ The *fons papalis* celebrated the completion of a newly constructed aqueduct in Viterbo that stretched from the opposite southeast end of the city to the papal palace.⁵⁵ The fountain was restored following damage incurred in the fifteenth century when the posterior façade of the Palazzo Papale collapsed on it; the only original elements to survive are the central shaft and raised cup.⁵⁶ The salvaged cup is circular in shape and is decorated in relief with a strigilated motif. Along the cup's exterior twelve leonine masks serve as spouts from which water pours into the restored basin below. Gary Radke has suggested that the iconography of the *fons papalis* served to further the association of the city with the papacy.⁵⁷ He is probably correct, as it is likely that the fountain was a reference to the Pope's sovereign authority, just as the fountains regularly set up in front of communal palaces often emphasized civic authority.

Of the city's extant fountains, the early thirteenth-century Fontana Grande (or del Sepale), an imposing Gothic structure terminating in a large pinnacle, is thought to be the oldest.⁵⁸ The fountain located in the Piazza Fontana Grande, which takes its name from the fountain and emphasizes its importance for the urban space, is laid out in a Greek cross plan and faces the Chiesa dei Santi Giuseppe e Teresa. A tall central column rises from the centre of the basin and is articulated with stylized acanthus leaves which seem to blossom into the lower of two superimposed quatrefoil cups of decreasing size. The fountain itself is raised on a high base surrounded by steps that mimic the cruciform shape of the water basin. The project was commissioned by the commune, though its water supply derives from a Roman aqueduct built in the ninth century by Mummio Nigro Valerio Vigeo to conduct water to his residence, the Villa Calvisiana.⁵⁹ On the lower cup, an inscription records that Bertoldo and Pietro di Giovanni began work on the fountain in 1212, and that in 1279 it was finished under the rule of the Podestà Orso Orsini.⁶⁰

54 Radke, 1996, p. 73.

55 Ibid. See also Pinzi, 1910.

56 Agostinetti, 1985, p. 102.

57 Radke, 1996, p. 73.

58 A fountain is noted on the site as of 1192 according to a document compiled by Camerario Cencio, dei Censi della Chiesa Romana, which cites *fontem Sepalis*, while other chroniclers give 1206 for the construction of the fountain. Agostinetti, 1985, p. 56.

59 The aqueduct is still in use today and continues to supply the fountain with water. See Perugi, 2001, p. 123.

60 Luca Ceccotti deciphered the first inscription as: MAGISTER BER(TOLCDUS) I(OANNIS) ET PETRUS IO(HANNIS) ME FECIT IN ANNO MCCIID(ECIMO). Ibid., p. 122. For the second inscription see Pinzi, 1887, p. 243.

The decorative programme of the fountain includes a myriad of religious references to purification, baptism, and salvation. It is clear that since the commune commissioned the fountain the religious implications of the monument were intended to please the curial residents of the city. The idea, it would seem, was to place a sort of *fons vitae* in one of the main squares of Viterbo. In 1422, the sculptor Benedetto da Perugia restored part of the basin and added the four lion-mouthed spouts to the base of the central column. This is the only specific reference to the commune, as the lion was a symbol of the city.⁶¹ It was frequently found on the fountains of Viterbo.⁶² The decoration of the cup indicates a specific desire to emulate Roman antiquity through the use of classical ornamental motifs.

Impressive as the Fontana Grande may be, the most common type of medieval fountain in Viterbo is spindle-shaped rather than cross-shaped. This is a form which seems to be inspired by the *metae*, the principal Roman fonts.⁶³ The Meta Sudans, for example, was a conical fountain located near the Colosseum that was thought to mark the exact centre of Augustan Rome.⁶⁴ The thirteenth-century fountains of San Tommaso, San Faustino, and Pianoscarano are all characteristic of this type of fountain in Viterbo.

The fountain of San Tommaso has a central spindle that rises from the circular basin into a shape approximating a liturgical ciborium and culminating in a pine cone. The upper half of the ciborium is decorated with stylized acanthus leaves, while the lower half is articulated with four lion spouts that pour water into the basin below. The fountain's name derives from that of the church located in the same piazza. In the sixteenth century the fountain became known as the Fontana della Morte ('fountain of death') when the Confraternity dell'Orazione e della Morte was transferred to the church of San Tommaso.⁶⁵

Following the same fountain type is that of San Faustino, which is built of peperino stone. Here, instead of a circular basin the fountain has a polygonal basin elevated on a base composed of five steps. The fountain's

61 Perugi, 2001, p. 122.

62 Agostinetti, 1985, p. 26.

63 Bonelli, 2001, p. 36.

64 The Meta Sudans, or 'sweating cone', is so named because of water issuing from small orifices on its surface. The term 'meta' derives from the name for the conical turning-post in a circus race track: a meta marked the halfway point of one complete circuit. A variety of tapered monuments came to be called *metae*, including tapered sepulchres such as the Meta Romuli, the pyramidal tomb near Castel Sant' Angelo, and the Meta Remi, the pyramid of Gaius Cestius, where Romulus and Remus were said to be buried. Finch, 1991, pp. 20 and 21.

65 Agostinetti, 1985, p. 38. See also Bonelli, p. 35.

decoration is concentrated on the spindle that rises from the centre of the simple geometric basin. The lower part of the ciborium is articulated with lion spouts, while the upper portion is decorated with coats of arms; the usual pine cone caps the entire structure. An inscription in Gothic letters, located between the lion spouts, records the names of the sculptors Iacopo di Andrea and Gemino di Mastro Francesco.⁶⁶ It was financed, according to a statute from 1251, entirely by the citizens of the neighbourhood in order to have access to potable water.⁶⁷

The fountain of Pianoscarano, built in 1376, follows the same basic structure as the earlier Viterbese fountains; its central spindle, however, is more complex.⁶⁸ The lower half of the pyramidal ciborium is articulated by six trilobed arches that open to reveal lions (the city's emblem) standing guard. In context the lions seem to serve an apotropaic function protecting the fountain's waters: they are at once the guards and the purveyors. Directly above the lions, six figures of saints carved in low relief ornament the upper half of the ciborium. The fountains, like the earlier examples at San Tommaso and San Faustino – whether commissioned by private or public patrons – demonstrate a continuity of form and homogeneity in design. They are all centrally planned, each with either a circular or polygonal basin often elevated on a base or several steps. From the centre of the basin a vertical shaft rises in the shape of a spindle and water cascades from spouts organized around the shaft whose ornamentation reflects allegiance to the city (lion) and to Rome (pine cone).

Wall fountains are much rarer compared to cross- or spindle-shaped examples. The Fontana delle Novantanove Cannelle ('the 99 spouts'), located in L'Aquila in the central Italian region of Abruzzo, is one of only two extant examples. The fountain, built in 1272 by Tancredo di Valva and later modified, is u-shaped with two water basins.⁶⁹ The three walls of the polychrome fountain extend around three sides of a square built into a hillside.

Water spouts from the mouths of gargoyles (both human and animal heads) aligned along the base of the wall into the first narrow basin and then spills into the larger basin below. The walls are faced with red and white marble, a reference to the city's heraldic colours. The 99 spouts purportedly celebrate the ancient origins of L'Aquila; according to legend,

66 Maiano, 2001, p. 206.

67 Ibid.

68 Gregori, 2001, p. 55.

69 The epigraph reads: 'Magister Tancredus de Pentoma de Valva fecit hoc opus' and is dated 'Anno Domini MCCLXXII'. Bologna, 1997, p. 40.

Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Sicily, united several existing villages (99, per local tradition) and formed the city. Originally, however, the fountain appears to have had far fewer spouts, only one basin, and one wall.⁷⁰ This proposition is based on the analysis of fifteen spouts which have been dated to 1272 and associated stylistically with Nicola Pisano's *oeuvre* or circle. Ferdinando Bologna noted that the naturalistic forms of these sculpted water spouts were particularly advanced for the period, and thus led him to suggest they were sculpted by an artist familiar with Nicola Pisano and the Apulian court of Frederick II.⁷¹ Bologna's hypothesis has been generally accepted among scholars of the period.⁷² Supporting the thesis that the fountain was originally much smaller is the account provided by De Ritiis, which notes that in 1494 the fountain counted 20 spouts.⁷³ The side walls, which were added in the sixteenth century, were probably deemed necessary to protect the fountain's waters from mudslides from the hillside, much like the protective vaulting employed for this same purpose on Siena's medieval fountains.

The earlier Fonte ai Canali, dated 1248 and located in the old port of Piombino, is also a u-shaped wall fountain.⁷⁴ The fountain, built principally of verrucano stone,⁷⁵ has five figurative spouts in Carrara marble along the lower section of the central wall. The spouts depict animal heads – three

70 The second lower basin was added in 1578. Ibid., pp. 41 and 75. See also Colasanti, 1926, p. xix.

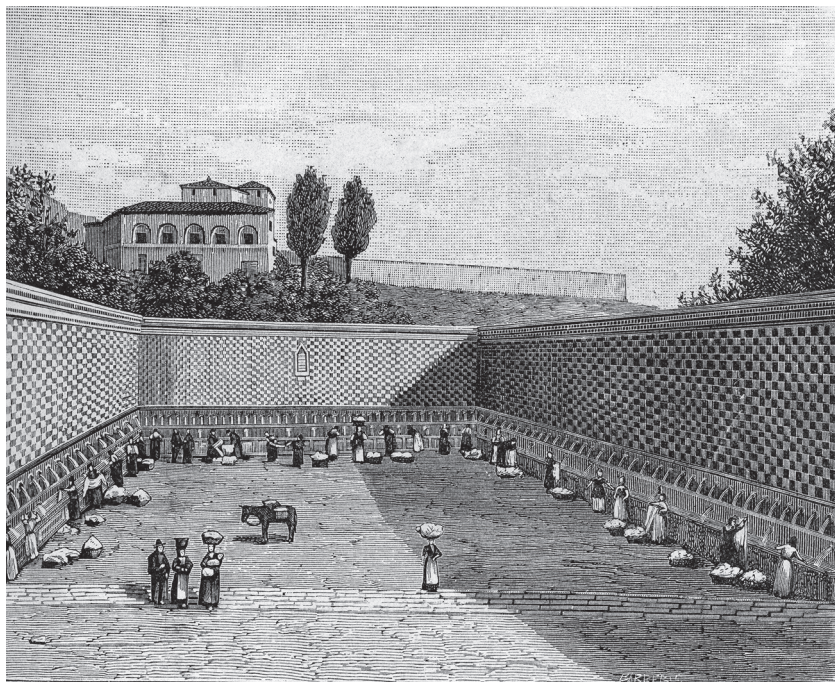
71 Based on their style, Bologna ascribes fifteen spouts to the date inscribed on the fountain. He notes: 'I caratteri in essi rilevati, praticamente senza riscontri, a quel tempo, nel resto della scultura d'Italia, trovano il più convincente punto di derivazione culturale solo nel nodo della plastica pugliese-fridericiana di cui il giovane Nicola Pisano [...] è insieme il maggior testimone e il continuatore più creativo.' Bologna, 1997, p. 48. See also pp. 75–80. For a more standard account of the fountain within L'Aquila see Spagnesi and Properzi, 1972.

72 Francesco Abate sees the water spouts as akin to the work of Bartolomeo da Foggia and a male bust (*testa virile*) located on the façade of the Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista a Castelli. Abate, 1998, p. 24. Antonio Giuliano ascertains that at least three figured water spouts are to be ascribed to the tradition of Nicola Pisano as they relate to one of his first commissions: the Fonte dei Canali in Piombino from 1247. He also suggests that Nicola had a hand in the fountain's design. Giuliano, 2003, pp. 123–8.

73 Originally cited: 'circa viginti canuli'. See Bologna, 1997, p. 75.

74 Ibid., p. 59. The inscription on the fountain reads: 'Hoc opus [...] D. factum D(omini) Ugo-
lini Assopardi Capitani Plu(m)bini Ilb(a)e et Port'(i) Baratoli an(n)i Domini MCCXLVIII indicti-
one quinta et magistri Dorgodorii et Cambi op(er)arii. Hic fons iam plen(a)e sit aqu(a)e nu(n)
c(et) semper amen(a)e.' Dorgodorio and Cambio are the names of the men responsible for the fountain masonry. Cited from Giuliano, 2003, p. 123.

75 Verrucano is a type of stone from the hills near Pisa.



6. Tancredo di Valva, Fontana delle Novantanove Cannelle, L'Aquila. Barberis – Strafforello Gustavo, *La patria, geografia dell'Italia / Parte 4 (continuazione)*. Provincie di Aquila, Chieti, Teramo, Campobasso, Unione Tipografico-Editrice, Torino, 1899. (image in the public domain)

canine, one equine, and a fifth unknown⁷⁶ – and pour water into five circular openings that apparently serve to define its flow into the basin.⁷⁷ The fountain served primarily the mariners whose ships docked there. It has been suggested that Tancredo must have been familiar with this fountain, whose unusual u-shape led to the design he elaborated (with more spouts) on the fountain in L'Aquila.⁷⁸ That fountain and the one in Piombino represent the only surviving examples of the type of u-shaped plan that characterizes the Fonte Gaia in Siena. Their similarities, however, lie

76 The fifth head was present at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Tognarini and Bucci, 1978, p. 135. Antonio Giuliano suggests that these five spouts were sculpted by Nicola Pisano, who could have come to Tuscany with the Emperor who spent the winter of the 1245–1246 in Grosseto. He also that suggests Nicola had a hand in the design of the fountain as the same arch motif also appears in the second and third order of the Porta di Capua from between 1234 and 1239–1240 and on the first level of the courtyard of Castel del Monte, begun in 1240. Giuliano, 2003, pp. 123–4. See also Mariani, 1984.

77 Tognarini and Bucci, 1978, p. 134.

78 Bologna, 1997, p. 59.



7. Fonte ai Canali, Piombino. (photo: Prof. Quatermass; CC BY-SA 3.0)

almost exclusively in their plan and method of water delivery (from spigots at the base of the walls), as neither arrives at the level of sculptural ornamentation that distinguishes the Fonte Gaia.

Prior to the construction of the Fonte Gaia, only a handful of similarly large, sculpted fountains had been built in other Italian cities that, like Siena, had to engineer water to their locations. As in the case of Siena, the central Italian city of Perugia is geographically distant from a direct source of fresh water. Perugia, the capital of Umbria since 1860, is located in a mountainous region east of the Apennines. In the last quarter of the thirteenth century the communal government selected the Venetian hydraulic engineer Buoninsegna to build an aqueduct to provide the city with an adequate supply of water.⁷⁹ Ultimately Buoninsegna's plan was carried out by the Benedictine monk Bevignante, as Buoninsegna was called to Orvieto for work on another fountain.⁸⁰ The aqueduct carried water from Mount Pacino, north of Perugia, to the city centre and was paid for through a special tax on the entire community.⁸¹ As was the case for Siena's Fonte Gaia, the fountain in Perugia also celebrated a newly constructed

79 The city already had a water supply provided by the original conduit, which was subsequently replaced by the new aqueduct. White, 1993, p. 88.

80 Cavallucci, 1993, pp. 12–14.

81 Ibid., p. 14.

aqueduct. A lengthy Latin inscription located on the rim of the basin in Perugia records the date of 1278.⁸²

Perugia's Fontana Maggiore, as it is now known, is still in situ, located between the cathedral and the Palazzo dei Priori, the communal palace.⁸³ Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, the father and son team responsible for the fountain, organized the polygonal design around a form reminiscent of Nicola's sculpted pulpits in Pisa and Siena.⁸⁴ The lower basin is composed of a 25-sided polygon divided into 50 panels, each framed by columns; the middle basin is a 12-sided-polygon divided by columnar figures into 24 panels. At the base are a series of circular steps that lead to the first basin. The fountain culminates in a smaller basin capped by three bronze female statues holding an amphora from which water spouts and cascades into the marble basins below. The decorative programme is extensive. On the lower basin are the labours of the months, allegories of the arts, signs of the zodiac, and scenes from biblical and Roman history, as well as the lion of the Guelphs and the griffon of Perugia. On the middle basin the columnar figures represent saints, kings, prophets, and heroic figures from Perugia's history, as well as personifications of Lake Trasimeno and Chiusi, respectively the fishery and the granary of Perugia.⁸⁵

The relief panels and columnar statues form an encyclopedic programme that refers to the religious and civic ideals appropriate to the fountain's location in the ceremonial centre of the city. From an iconographic standpoint, the imagery celebrated the city of Perugia, its prosperity, and its grandeur. Although the basic design of the Fontana Maggiore is Viterbese, it is far more complex and ornate than anything found on the medieval fountains of Viterbo. Visual comparison of the Fontana di San Faustino and the Fontana Maggiore, for example, clarifies the connection; and the link is corroborated by the fact that Perugian authorities had even sent for craftsmen from Viterbo.⁸⁶

82 Also inscribed on the fountain were the names of the engineers, the sculptors Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, and the civic dignitaries – the Podestà and Capitano del Popolo. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

83 When the fountain was inaugurated it was located next to the Romanesque cathedral, which had not yet been replaced. White, 1993, p. 88.

84 See Nicola Pisano's pulpits from 1260 in the baptistery in Pisa and 1265–1268 in Siena Cathedral. *Ibid.*

85 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

86 The renown of the Viterbese *maestri* is attested to by Viterbo historian Giuseppe Signorelli, who notes that in the thirteenth century a request for collaboration to construct the Fontana Maggiore arrived from Perugia. The relationship between the two cities is further confirmed by the presence in Viterbo of a Perugian artist who at the beginning of the fifteenth century was responsible for the restoration of the Fontana Grande. White, 1993, p. 89. Also see Agostinetti, 1985, p. 20.



8. Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, Fontana Maggiore, Perugia. (author photo)

In 1281, shortly after Nicola and Giovanni Pisano had completed the Fontana Maggiore, Arnolfo di Cambio was commissioned to sculpt another fountain in Perugia.⁸⁷ This smaller fountain was built south of the Fontana Maggiore, in a lower piazza in the commercial area of the city. In the first quarter of the fifteenth century Arnolfo's fountain was dismembered; the five surviving pieces are now located in the museum of the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria.⁸⁸ Three of the figures – known as the Assetati, or Thirsty Ones – depict a kneeling woman, a crippled man, and a woman leaning back, stretching in thirst toward the fountain's water.

According to a hypothetical reconstruction of the fountain, two rectangular basins of decreasing size would have been positioned against a back wall. Water poured from one spout, located on the back wall, into the first basin and out over its walls into the second basin. The thirsty figures were positioned so that the water of the upper basin seemed to cascade over them, and thus their expressive body language underlined the life-giving importance of water. The two other extant pieces of the fountain, figures identified as scribes, may have been located on the lower of

87 In 1277 the city of Perugia requested that the sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio be released from the service of Charles of Anjou in order to come to Perugia. It is thought that he was called to work on the Fontana Maggiore, but for some reason he did not participate on the project as his name is not included among those noted in the fountain's inscription. Moskowitz, 2001, p. 45.

88 White, 1993, p. 100.



9. Arnolfo di Cambio, *Vecchia donna assetata*, online catalogue of the Fondazione Federico Zeri, University of Bologna. (photo in the public domain; original artwork held at the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria)

the two superimposed basins.⁸⁹ The scribes (one of which is now headless) are shown writing or pointing to passages. Anita Moskowitz has suggested that the scribes may have been indicating records of expenditures for the fountain or city statutes concerning its appropriate use and maintenance.⁹⁰ If this were the case, then all five extant pieces served to remind the urban community of the stark ramifications that could have ensued had the commune not built the fountain. Indeed, the fountain's message seems to encourage recognition of the necessity of such a basic resource while at the same time celebrating the commune responsible for bringing the precious commodity to the heart of the city.⁹¹ Ironically, it has been suggested that the fountain was removed due to the failure to bring enough water to the site.⁹² Had the dry fountain remained in situ, it would have been especially embarrassing in light of its purported message to the citizenry.

89 Gustavo Cuccini has suggested that there were two superimposed basins and that the Assetati were on a different level from the scribes. The Assetati appear to be looking toward an intermediary element on a higher level, either a figure or possibly a water spout. Anita Moskowitz agrees with Cuccini's suggestion, which is based on the analysis of the direction of their glances. Cuccini, 1989, pp. 114–16; Moskowitz, 2001, p. 48, n. 10.

90 Moskowitz, p. 48.

91 They may also allude to the satisfaction of spiritual thirst. Ibid., p. 45.

92 Cuccini, 1989, p. 114.

Although the Fontana Maggiore served as an important model for fountains elsewhere in Italy,⁹³ neither it nor Arnolfo's fountain – nor any of the Viterbese examples – provides a plausible model for Siena's Fonte Gaia. The Fontana Maggiore offers a somewhat closer parallel, although only in general terms: both are monumental sculpted fountains, located in main public squares, with iconographies reflecting the civic and religious ideals of their respective communes. But beyond that the similarities break down, underscoring the Fonte Gaia's status as a unique case.

Sienese Fountains

Siena's oldest fountains are all located on the periphery of the city, at a lower elevation from the ridge along which the city is built. They were constructed into the hillside and connected, via short tunnels that essentially functioned as horizontal well shafts, to the water-bearing aquifers under the city that collected the rain that fell between October and May.⁹⁴

The early examples are large structures that constitute industrial fountain complexes.⁹⁵ These fountains – the Branda, Vettrice, Follonica, Ovile, Peschaia, and Nuova – all date from before 1250.⁹⁶ In general, the structure of each is roughly rectangular and the surrounding building is constructed in red brick and crenellated. One façade is pierced by two or three ogival arches which allow entry to the fountain's basins. In their fortress-like appearance the crenellations recall the type of defensive architecture later employed for the seat of civic government in Siena, the Palazzo Pubblico. This association is not incidental. Since the provision of water was an essential prerequisite for a flourishing urban community, the fountains constructed by the commune were made an integral part of Siena's defensive system. Built at a lower elevation than the rest of the city (to access water from the spring bank), they were dangerously outside the city's walls, and thus had to be protected from possible invaders in order to assure the city's survival in the event of attack. The fountains were thus structured like a fortified strong point, as can be seen in the architecture of the Fonte di

93 See, for example, the fountain of Fabriano in the Marche. This fountain, dating from 1285 and redone in 1351, is derived (albeit in simpler terms) from Perugia's Fontana Maggiore. Tognarini and Bucci, p. 135.

94 Kucher, 2005, p. 13.

95 Ibid., p. 63.

96 Fonte Follonica would be enclosed by the city walls in the following century, while both Fonte Ovile and Peschaia remain outside the city walls today.

Pescaia.⁹⁷ Here, the waters were covered by a vaulted structure surmounted by battlements. If necessary, the Sienese could defend their fountains from the battlements just as they could the Palazzo Pubblico. This covered structure was also necessary to protect the precious resource from cave-ins due to the fountains' location along the ridge of the city.

The division of the water into several basins (usually three) was common to virtually all Siena's medieval fountains. This design was based on the model provided by the city's oldest fountain, the Fonte Branda, which first appears in the records in 1081.⁹⁸ Located in the valley below the Basilica of San Domenico, near the city gate, the Fonte Branda is built directly into the hillside. Of all Siena's early fountains the Branda had the most abundant waters,⁹⁹ and was even celebrated by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*.¹⁰⁰ In the twelfth century the fountain was enlarged, and at the beginning of the thirteenth century it was rebuilt as an imposing Gothic structure of brick and grey stone with interior groin vaults in the chambers.¹⁰¹ The fountain is open on two of its four sides to provide access to the three rectangular water basins. The southern, open face is framed by three ogival arches that delineate the separation of the basins below. The other medieval Sienese fountains – the Vettrice, Follonica, Oville, Pescaia, and Nuova – all follow the same basic design principles of the Fonte Branda. They are all vaulted chambers with arched openings whose solid brick construction was partially dictated by the practical necessity of protecting the springs from cave-ins and contamination. Inside, these fountains' basins were designed according to a hierarchical use of water that served both to maintain the purity of the waters and to facilitate the recycling and reuse of this precious resource. Generally, there were three basins. The first held the cleanest water and was used for drinking; the second basin, set at a lower elevation, collected the water from the first basin and was used to provide water for

97 Hook, pp. 26–7.

98 See Balestracci, 1997, p. 9. Ann Johns notes that Burgundian architectural principles were used in its design. She ties the hierarchical ordering of the water basins and brick construction with stone detailing to the influence of the nearby Abbey of San Galgano. Johns, 2012.

99 The aquifer to which Branda is connected has the largest recharge area (its *bottino* measures 4 kilometres), and thus has the most potential for bearing water. Kucher, 2005, p. 58.

100 'If I could only see down here the wretched souls of Guido, Alessandro, or their brother, I'd not give up that sight for Fonte Branda.' Alighieri, [1308–1320] 2003, 'Inferno', Canto XXX, 75–8. Original text: 'Ma s'io vedessi qui l'anima trista di Guido o d'Alessandro o di lor frate, per Fonte Branda non darei la vista.' Cited from Petrocchi, 1966.

101 The fountain measures 24 metres across the front (southern) face, 9 metres high, and 9 metres deep. It was enlarged in 1198 and rebuilt in 1246. White, 1993, p. 230.



10. Fonte Branda, Siena. (image in the public domain)

livestock. The third basin, positioned at a still lower elevation, collected the water from the second basin and was used for washing clothes.¹⁰²

Not until 1298 was a fountain built inside the city walls.¹⁰³ This fountain, the Fonte Nuova, is situated between Via di Vallerozzi and Vicolo di Borgofranco and lies at a much lower elevation than the main part of the city. The fountain's location had been chosen by a special committee composed of several well-known artists, including the sculptor Giovanni Pisano and the painter Duccio di Buoninsegna.¹⁰⁴ The Fonte Nuova was also originally separated into three basins (as opposed to the two present today). Notwithstanding the fountain's location within the city walls, the main basin was further protected by a wooden fence in order to prevent livestock and other animals from drinking directly from the waters.¹⁰⁵ The fountain's structure is based on the earlier prototype; it is covered by groin vaults, and ogival arches frame the basins positioned below. Here, however, sculptural interest is added to the arches. The voussoir is decorated with a simple geometric motif, and the jamb of the arch is made up of a

102 Tronti et al., 2005, p. 3.

103 The fountain was built between 1298 and 1303. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

104 *Ibid.*

105 *Ibid.*



11. Fonte Nuova, Siena. (image in the public domain)

progression (from large to small) of decorative mouldings that adorn the otherwise plain exterior. This circumspect addition of ornamentation is absent from the other early Sienese fountains and may be attributed to the participation of the artists Pisano and Buoninsegna in the design. Nevertheless, the additional mouldings are the only decorative elements, in marked contrast to the elaborate sculptural programme of the Fonte Gaia.

It is clear from our overview of early Italian and Sienese fountains that the Fonte Gaia reflects an entirely different formal solution to the design of a city's water supply. This essential fact raises important issues. Why was the u-shaped plan chosen for the Fonte Gaia? To what imperatives did the plan owe its existence? How did it function? How successful was the design and to what degree did it inspire formal progeny? We will examine these matters in the following chapter.