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## Review of "Teachers and Schools in Siena, 1357-1500" by P. Denley

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of Reims the powerful institution that it became. Demouy's volume is invaluable as a source of detailed information about that church. It will be for others to use such detail for other ends.

CONSTANT J. MEWS, Monash University

PETER DENLEY, *Teachers and Schools in Siena, 1357–1500*. (Documenti di Storia, 78.) Siena: Betti, 2007. Paper. Pp. v, 162 plus unnumbered pages; 1 black-and-white figure. €25.

To most viewers, the classroom scene depicted in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's painting *The Effects of Good Government* represents university students listening to a lecture. Peter Denley suggests that it could just as well be an image of a state-supported grammar school, preparing students for the university or professional careers (p. 27). Many readers of this journal have used the following passage in their own classrooms from Villani's *Chronicle* to illustrate the educational achievements of Florence in the 1330s: "We find that the boys and girls learning to read [numbered] from 8,000 to 10,000, the children learning the abacus and algorism from 1,000 to 1,200, and those learning grammar and logic in four large schools from 550 to 600" (*Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents*, trans. Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond [New York, 1961], p. 72). Yet, how many of us can discuss the educational system that produced those results or the qualifications of the teachers or would think to connect those schools to Lorenzetti's image?

Such challenges to conventional wisdom and gaps in our knowledge suggest that although the outlines of the history of secondary education in the Middle Ages are known, the details and regional variations will require more research in municipal archives. Denley's book is the product of such a search in Siena and thus presents a case study as well as a model for future work in the field. From his book emerges a detailed collective portrait of over a hundred secondary teachers of grammar and abacus in Siena's schools from 1357 to 1500. Although making no claims to being exhaustive or complete, the number of individual careers Denley has unearthed and analyzed is humbling to behold.

Denley examines the growth of secular schools and the types of individuals the city recruited to teach in them. The book consists of a brief monograph followed by biographical portraits (illuminated by extensive quotations from the sources), a time line on which the known years of the teachers' activity are mapped, and the usual scholarly apparatus. The format speaks both to the book's origins as an offshoot of Denley's study of the University of Siena and to the preliminary state of the investigation. The limits of the evidence and the resulting clarity of the presentation justify the format.

Denley's diligence and imagination in the use he made of Siennese records and secondary sources are conspicuous on every page of the book. It is hard to imagine someone following in his footsteps and finding something he missed. The reader's confidence is further boosted by meticulous copyediting. Despite the text's complexity of language and depth of citations, not a single error is apparent anywhere in the book.

Denley shows how teaching in Siena evolved from a patchwork of ad hoc private arrangements supplemented with church-supported schools to a state-supported and state-managed system of public secondary schools. Denley notes that basic literacy was still acquired through a less formal system of private study. The public schools, although free, were available only to the children of urban families who could afford the loss of their children's labor, a minority of the population. The teachers, with one or two assistants, ran the whole classroom.

Most of the book discusses the grammar teachers who prepared students for university study in humanistic topics or for careers as notaries. Denley finds that besides the grammar

schools, Siena also sponsored training in abacus, which included math, geometry, and surveying. The abacus masters had a different job description from that of the grammar teachers: in addition to teaching, their contracts stipulated that about half their time would be spent using their skills on city projects, such as surveying the city walls, building dams, or assisting architects. These split demands allowed for the development of a schoolroom that shared some of the features of a medieval workshop, in that it could develop into a family enterprise, involving siblings or members of different generations filling in for each other while the master was away from the classroom on a city project. Denley finds further that whereas the city generally sought non-Sienese grammar teachers, it frequently hired Sienese abacus teachers. He suggests that the preference for outsiders shows that the city's leaders understood the advantages of hiring people not trained in Siena. This reviewer would suggest that the city's preference for local math teachers is evidence of the city's confidence in its citizens' technical competence.

The presence of two separate tracks of secondary education (one for technical careers, the other for humanist ones) in addition to apprenticeship in agriculture or trades would make it very difficult for a scholar to know practical math, an engineer Latin, or a master craftsman either. One way the city overcame the limits of specialization was by lending its math teachers to projects requiring their skills. It is worth noting that whereas all the known abacus teachers were men, Denley has found records of at least three women hired to teach grammar.

In sum, Denley's work provides context to better understand the passage from Villani quoted above. I marvel at how much Denley has done with numerous, but ever so terse, sources. Denley's work allows us to parse Villani's sentence and discern the possible existence of three different systems of education: primary literacy, reaching the largest number of children; secondary training in math; and preparation for careers requiring grammar, a number amounting to only half the number learning math. Denley's work will whet the reader's appetite for more such prosopographical studies that will tell us the extent to which Villani's numbers for Florence are plausible and whether they might apply to other cities as well.

MICHAEL KUCHER, University of Washington, Tacoma

WERNER DIEM, *Ein arabisches Rechtsgutachten zum Eherecht aus dem 11.–12. Jahrhundert aus der Heidelberger Papyrussammlung*. (Schriften der Max Freiherr von Oppenheim Stiftung, 17.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007. Paper. Pp. 57; black-and-white figures and tables. €19.80.

In medieval Muslim societies the *fatwā* (pl. *fatāwā*) played a key role in the elaboration of Islamic law and its application to practical circumstances. Similar to the responsum in the Roman and Jewish legal traditions, it was an opinion rendered by a jurist on some particular point of law, always in response to a query. Because of Islamic law's broad remit, however, these replies could deal with virtually any aspect of life, from how to draw up a contract of sale to how to say prayers to whether the state was justified in going to war. Although in most cases this was a private, informal, noninstitutional exchange between a given believer and a jurist he regarded as competent to act as his *muftī*, the giving of *fatāwā* could also take place in public contexts and in connection with the state's juridical apparatus.

Even when a *fatwā* was given face-to-face, it was common for some written record to be made, at least a summary if not verbatim. It is thus both frustrating and intriguing that we have so little extant documentary evidence for the *fatwā* before the Ottoman period. Occasional examples are quoted or discussed in legal and historical texts, and we have