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# Baldassare Peruzzi and a Tour of Inspection in the Valdichiana 1528–1529

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NICHOLAS ADAMS  
*McGill University*

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Peruzzi's later years in Siena, spent as architect to the Republic of Siena from 1527 to 1535, remain shadowy and indistinct.<sup>1</sup> There have been, until now, few secure dates or certain facts. With the help of unpublished documents from the Archivio di Stato in Siena and five drawings in Peruzzi's hand, this article focuses on one episode during this period: a tour of inspection made by Peruzzi to the Valdichiana in 1528–29.<sup>2</sup> The documentation of this trip not only casts some light on this phase of Peruzzi's career, but also demonstrates vividly the extraordinary importance of the military architect during the Renaissance.<sup>3</sup> It also allows some tentative observations

to be made about the nature of military strategy and the defence of the hill town during the sixteenth century.

The towns of Chiusi, Cetona, and Sarteano formed a southern buffer for the Sienese Republic during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>4</sup> Overlooking the Chiana valley, the towns guarded the Rome-Florence road, the sometimes hostile Perugian territory to the east, and Florentine territory to the north (Fig. 1). From time to time this position was threatened. Nearby Montepulciano, for example, slipped back and forth between the Florentines and the Sienese many times during the fifteenth century, and Chiusi itself, the continual object of attention from passing armies, was taken from Sienese control on more than one occasion.<sup>5</sup>

In 1527 Chiusi was again overrun. A band of 500 men under the Roman *condottiere* Pirro Colonna succeeded in taking Chiusi without firing a shot and with the traitorous help of the local aristocracy.<sup>6</sup> Colonna's crew sacked the town and only on the payment of a large ransom was Chiusi returned to Sienese control.<sup>7</sup> In order to ensure that such an outrage would not be repeated, the Sienese transferred one of their Roman officials, Girolamo Massaini, to Chiusi and set him the task – or so it would seem from the documents – of putting the Sienese towns of the Valdichiana into fighting trim.<sup>8</sup> Massaini soon scouted the territory and saw the state of the defences: Montepulciano, Monte Fallonica, Chiusi, Sarteano, Cetona, and Chianciano all needed attention.<sup>9</sup> He requested money from the government to make the necessary repairs and, as he wrote on 23 August 1528, the advice of Baldassare Peruzzi:

Io ho riveduta le mura in modo che io piglio ardire il dire a Vostre Signorie che in facto senza alcuna

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<sup>1</sup> Modern studies have continued to reprint information derived from the published documents; see Isa Belli Barsali, *Baldassare Peruzzi e le ville senesi del Cinquecento* (S. Quirico d'Orcia, 1977), for the most up-to-date example.

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<sup>2</sup> The trip is conventionally dated March 1529 (note: all dates have been modernized); see Barsali, 135, or C.L. Frommel, *Baldassare Peruzzi als Maler und Zeichner* (Munich and Vienna, 1967), 21.

<sup>3</sup> On the importance of the military architect during the Renaissance, see James S. Ackerman, *The Architecture of Michelangelo* (Hardmondsworth, 1970), 123–28.

<sup>4</sup> On the importance of the region and its architecture, see Enrico Guidoni and Angela Marino, *Territorio e città della Valdichiana* (Rome, 1972), xlvii–lxxi.

<sup>5</sup> Emanuele Repetti, *Dizionario Geografico Fisico Storico della Toscana* (Florence, 1833), 1, 719.

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Antonio Pecci, *Memorie Storico-Critiche della Città di Siena dal 1480 al 1552* (Siena, 1760), II, 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 9.

<sup>8</sup> These letters were referred to by Pecci (III, 3a) but have not, so far as I know, ever been transcribed.

<sup>9</sup> Massaini had been familiar with Peruzzi and his talents while in Rome. There he had arranged for Peruzzi to be ransomed from the Imperial forces and sent to Siena; see Adams, 232–34.