PART TWO

STRUCTURES
The histories of the Studio pisano and the Studio senese in the late sixteenth century have been characterised as the clash between the government, in the person of the grand duke, which strove to harmonise every particularism into the centralised concept of the absolute state, and a peripheral institution which defended until death the relics of its freedoms and its privileges. Apart from linking the Studio pisano and the Studio senese to absolutism, this argument supports the widespread belief in the longterm decline of student power in the Italian states. According to Peter Denley,

Most of these student-universities were skeletons, erected or preserved in order to give the studium a veneer of constitutional respectability... The rectorate, just about the only element of the student-university constitution to be widely preserved, was increasingly difficult to fill in the fifteenth century, while the practice of matriculation into the student universities is so difficult to trace that there must be considerable doubt as to whether it was in fact continued on a significant scale.

At Bologna only one rector was elected in both arts and law in the mid-1550s. There were no rectors in the 1560s and 1570s and the office disappeared completely after 1580. A similar state of affairs occurred at Perugia.


2 Peter Denley, “Career, Springboard, or Sinecure? University Teaching in Fifteenth-Century Italy,” Medieval Prosopography 12 (1991): 95–114 (p. 98). Paul Grendler argues, “The student universitas, that is, the students organised in order to hire professors and to lead the community of students and masters, were only shadows of their medieval selves in the Renaissance.” See Grendler, The Universities, p. 158.

3 Grendler, The Universities, p. 158.