
Francesco Patrizi: Forgotten Political Scientist and Humanist

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The first object of this paper is to draw attention to Francesco Patrizi (1413-1494) of Siena, who attracted considerable attention in Italy during his lifetime. Because of his two works on political science, the *De institutione reipublicae* and the *De regno*, he was remembered at least during the Sixteenth Century but may well be said to have suffered an eclipse since then. The second object is to point out that very recently a source has become available which illuminates the latter part of his life, during which his works on political science were published in manuscript, but about which very little else was known. Only one of the two works was published in print before 1500 A.D., the terminal date for incunabula. This is the *De institutione reipublicae*, which appeared in 1494, the year of its author's death. Information on the numerous editions, translations, and epitomes of this work, as also on editions of the *De regno*, is to be found in Felice Battaglia's monograph.¹

The new source on Patrizi's life and works will now be described and the way in which it amplifies existing sources will be examined. Some time after 1962 Mrs. Phyllis G. Gordan of New York City acquired a manuscript which she numbered 153.² It contains the *Epigrammata* of Franciscus Patricius, the humanist name of Francesco Patrizi. Mrs. Gordan made a microfilm of this manuscript available to the present writer. The text of some of the epigrams suggests that most of them, including a number connected with the appearance in manuscript of the *De institutione reipublicae* in 1471, were written in the period from that date until the author's death. Until the existence of the Gordan manuscript became known, the situation as regards sources for Patrizi was as follows. The only good source was the book published in 1936 by Felice Battaglia. The present author has been engaged in checking the facts in Battaglia, and, when feasible, revising and amplifying them through the study of microfilm copies of two manuscript copies of Patrizi's *Poemata*.³ These have never been printed as a collection, though at least four of them have been printed separately. Internal evidence suggests that some of these poems were written by 1452 and the fact that they were all complete by September 21, 1461 is proved by the colophon which A. S., scribe of the Hamilton MS, the second of the two just mentioned, wrote on that day. It is obvious, therefore, that the *Poemata* cannot be used to check what Battaglia recounts about the period 1461-1465.

Battaglia has information that Patrizi became a priest in 1461 and that, before that year was over, he had become not only Bishop of Gaeta but also Pope Pius II's

Governor of Foligno in Umbria. He was thus necessarily an absentee from his diocese, as were so many contemporary humanist bishops.

Putting together the year of Patrizi's ordination as a priest and the date of colophon of the Hamilton MS would naturally lead to the conjecture that the *Poemata* had been collected to be offered in gratitude to Pius II and because their author had put verse composition behind him as something too frivolous for his present position. If so, the discovery of the *Epigrammata* proves that he did not keep this resolution for more than a decade.

It being an essential part of this article's argument that Francesco Patrizi is today practically unknown, there is justification for summarizing the facts of his life up to the point at which the *Epigrammata* begin to provide new evidence. Siene records of baptisms show that Francesco Patrizi was baptized on February 25, 1413. It is probable that he was born only a week or so before this date. The full names of his father and grandfather are given but for his mother only her baptismal name. When it was time for him to attend the University of Siena, one of his fellow students was Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini, more familiarly known today by his Latinized name of Aeneas Silvius, who was older than Patrizi but of roughly the same social class. The Piccolomini, although poor, were Siene patricians. A friendship evidently sprang up between the two, which was to prove vitally useful to Patrizi when misfortune struck him. Aeneas Silvius was by that time Bishop of Siena and a cardinal, who would ultimately become pope.

Official Siene records show that Patrizi served the customary short terms (two months) on the *Magistrato Supremo* in 1440, when he was only twenty-seven, and again in 1447 and in 1453. In 1452 he was one of a Siene embassy of three who accompanied the Emperor Frederick III to his coronation in Rome. In the same cortege rode Aeneas Silvius, who, after a career in the Emperor's service, was now Bishop of Siena and, in this capacity, had just betrothed the Emperor to his bride, Eleanor of Portugal, a fact commemorated by a public monument still standing in Siena and, of course, played up in *The Commentaries of Pius II*.

In 1447, at the age of thirty-four, Patrizi had married. His wife bore him four sons, the youngest being quite young when she died. The date of her death is not recorded but it was probably very shortly after it that the widower became a priest. One of Patrizi's letters cited by Battaglia shows that all four sons were alive in October 1457, by which time their father had been sentenced to death but had fortunately escaped the extreme penalty.⁴ The Republic of Siena being at war with the King of Sicily, Alfonso the Magnanimous, a party of the citizens, including the Monte (faction) of the Nove, to which the Patrizi family belonged, conspired to open the city's gates to Alfonso's condottiere, Giacomo Piccinino. The plot was foiled and among those arrested was Francesco Patrizi. He was examined under torture, found guilty, and condemned to death. Friends interceded for him with the authorities, for example, Nicodemo Tranchedini, already a famed diplomat in the service of the Duke of Milan, and, above all, Aeneas Silvius, now Bishop of Siena and a cardinal. Patrizi's sentence was reduced to *confino*, exile to a designated place, which might be changed on application or liberalized to mean residence anywhere but in Siene territory.

Once his life was safe, the chief thing that Patrizi had to complain of was the difficulty of maintaining himself, his wife, and the four children, since most or all of his property had been confiscated. After the *confino* was liberalized, he earned something as a teacher but until that time the charity of good friends was his chief support, charity which he acknowledged in poems, addressed for example to Achille Petrucci of Siena, and to Nicodemo Tranchedini.⁵

Battaglia's authorities enable him to trace Patrizi from his expulsion from Foligno about the time Pius II died (August 14, 1464) through his leisurely progress to his diocese of Gaeta, where he arrived in the latter part of 1465. From this point until his subject's death in 1494 Battaglia has very few facts. The consequence is that whatever facts about Patrizi and his relations with his contemporaries can be deduced from his own newly found *Epigrammata* are the sources for the last twenty-nine years of his life.

This work consists of 334 poems, which cover 201 pages. Since some of the poems run to a page or more it is obvious that the vast majority are quite short. Apart from rather trivial poems on erotic topics and short versifications of some fact of Greek or Roman history picked up in his daily reading, the poems may be classified as dealing (1) with his two works on political science, (2) with the House of Aragon, especially the Duke of Calabria, (3) with Siena and its often bloody politics, (4) with his own family and relatives, (5) with his see, Gaeta, and neighboring towns, and (6) with contemporary humanists.⁴

Nothing that emerges from the *Epigrammata* suggests other than that Francesco Patrizi was resident in Gaeta from 1465 until his death in 1494, never leaving it, presumably, save for a few days or weeks. At one time, however, he had a chance to return to Siena but rejected it when he found that he would not recover his properties, which had been confiscated in 1457. This he tells in a poem, in which Gaeta is made to address Siena, asking how the poet is to live, if Siena, his cruel stepmother, will not give him back his property. Gaeta says that all her citizens honor Patrizi, their bishop, discreetly ignoring the fact that he had contemplated becoming an absentee once more. It may be conjectured that this chance of returning to Siena came in 1480 when Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, was in possession of that city. He might have kept it indefinitely if he had not been summoned to drive the Turks out of Otranto in his father's kingdom.

Patrizi's publication of his *De regno*, dedicated to the Duke of Calabria, in 1482 may be connected with a realization on the author's part that he was never going to return to Siena but would continue to live under a monarchy. In a poem, the title of which may be translated "He asks the Muse Polymnia which is the more excellent condition, that of a kingdom or that of a republic" he decides with some reluctance that on the whole a monarchy is better. Even with his first publication in political science in 1471 Patrizi may have hoped to become a courtier, secretary, for example, to the Duke of Calabria, a post which a humanist he knew, called Giovanni Albino, did win. If so, he was disappointed because the King, the Duke's father, employed him on only two missions.

It remains to assess Patrizi as a humanist-scholar. Both from the *Poemata* and from the *Epigrammata* Patrizi emerges as a scholar very widely read in the Latin and Greek classics, especially in the former. One of his poems itemizes the ideal library and from allusions in many of the poems it is possible to conjecture some of the books which he actually had. Though he had grown up in an age when books had to be laboriously copied by hand, doubtless the books which he added to his library after 1465, the year in which the first book was printed in Italy, were mainly printed ones. It is possibly the accident of his living in Gaeta rather than in Rome that kept him out of the activity of preparing Latin classics for the press, an activity taken up by many humanists whom he knew personally. Unfortunately this editing led to many scholarly feuds, which were evidenced even in abusive nicknames for opponents printed on title pages. In one of his poems Patrizi advises the scholars Cornelius Vitellius and Nicolaus Perottus to stop abusing one another in this way. Living in the age of print, some of his contemporaries got their *Opera Omnia*, or at least their Collected Letters, published during their own lifetimes. It is enough to mention Filelfo, Cardinal Ammannati, and Gianandrea Campano, all of whom he had met. Patrizi may be considered unlucky in not getting his letters, let alone his *Poemata* and *Epigrammata*, published. One thing which would have irritated him more than falling into obscurity would have been to know that his works and identity would be confused with those of a future Francesco Patrizi (1529-97), who came from Cherso on the Adriatic and liked to claim a connection with the aristocratic Patrizi family of Siena.

LITERATURE CITED

- ⁴Felice Battaglia, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini e Francesco Patrizi; Due politici Senesi del quattrocento*, Florence, 1936, 103-05 notes. The British Museum has many of the works known to Battaglia but adds to them Joachimus Joannes Maderus. *De bibliothecis atque archivis virorum clarissimorum*, Helmstedt 1666, 2d edit. 1702, containing both works.

*S. De Ricci and W.J. Wilson, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada II* (1937) 1675-1684, 2339-2340, but especially its *Supplement* (1962) 398-401 for "Library of Phyllis Goodhart Gordan and John Dozier Gordan Jr."

*Leslie F. Smith, "The Poems of Franciscus Patricius from Vatican Manuscript Chigi J VI 233," *Manuscripta X* (1966) 94-102, continuation 145-59.

*Battaglia 88 n. 2

**Manuscripta X* 98, 149 for Achille Petrucci.

*Texts of the poems in class 6 will be printed as an Appendix to an article now under consideration by *Studies in the Renaissance*.