

THE

Volume L, No. 2
Summer 2019

SIXTEENTH CENTURY JOURNAL

The Journal of Early Modern Studies





Florentine Patricians and Their Networks: Structures Behind the Cultural Success and the Political Representation of the Medici Court (1600–1660). Elisa Goudriaan.

Rulers & Elites: Comparative Studies in Governance 14. Leiden: Brill, 2018. xix + 479 pp. 91 illus. \$206.00. ISBN 978-9-004-34652-9.

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Over the last three decades, the myth that Florentine politics, culture, and the arts went into a tailspin with the end of the republic (1532) and crashed so badly that they are not really worthy of historical attention has been disproven, especially for the mid and later sixteenth century. Elisa Goudriaan's study of the Florentine patriciate and their sociopolitical networks now does the same for a slightly later period of Florentine history. By bringing to light the extensive and varied contributions of the Florentine patriciate to the political and cultural life of the Medici court in the first half of the seventeenth century, Goudriaan

firmly undermines the argument advanced earlier by Eric Cochrane (*Florence in the Forgotten Centuries* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973]) and Furio Diaz (*Il Granducato di Toscana* [Turin: UTET 1976]) that in the seventeenth century the Florentine patriciate withdrew from active politics and urban society to become removed landowners of large estates with little or no influence on the state and its workings. Not so, argues Goudriaan. If one examines the rich documentation still available in public and private archives, one comes to realize and understand the effective, though often subtle ways in which the Florentine patriciate were active participants in the political and cultural life of the grand duchy.

Goudriaan's case in point are four men from three noble families—Giovanni Niccolini (1544–1611) and his son Filippo (1586–1666), Piero Guicciardini (1569–1626), and Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger (1568–1647)—who serve as a common thread in the discussion of the patriciate's contributions to the advancement of the Tuscan state. But other patricians also play their part in the book's argument, such as Tommaso Guadagni (1582–1652), Niccolò dell'Antella (1560–1630), Piero Guicciardini (1569–1626), Giovan Battista Strozzi the Younger (1596–1636), Giovanni Corsi (1600–1661), and his brother Lorenzo (1601–56). Many of these were "old friends" of mine from the days when I was working on the youth confraternity of the Arcangelo Raffaello (*The Boys of the Archangel Raphael* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998]), so it was especially gratifying for me to read of their rich contributions to Florentine politics and culture later in life (though, I must admit, I would have appreciated some analysis of their involvement in confraternities in their adult years, and not just in academies).

The book is divided into six chapters. In the first, Goudriaan sets the stage with an overview of the economic and sociopolitical situation of the Florentine patriciate from the establishment of the duchy in 1532 to the mid-seventeenth century. From their loss of political power in the aftermath of monarchical rule to their quest for ever more prestigious titles of nobility, Goudriaan outlines how the patrician class, faced with the arrival of non-noble *uomini nuovi* (new men) to serve in the ducal administration, had to reinvent itself in order to survive politically, culturally, and economically. They did so, in part, by using their appointments as Tuscan ambassadors to foreign courts as an opportunity to establish important networks of influence across Europe for their families and their ruler while, at the same time, fashioning themselves as representatives of Medicean power and culture (chap. 2). In line with previous practice, Florentine patricians continued and even expanded their traditional role as patrons of the arts, music, and theater, and as collectors of antiquities, contemporary works, jewels, and various objets d'art (chap. 3). Their support of musical performances and their involvement in various sorts of academies (chap. 4) is exemplified by Filippo Niccolini and his support of the cultural projects of Cardinal Giovan Carlo de' Medici (1611–63) or in the patrician network revolving around Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici (1617–75).

Chapter 5 presents Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger as a cultural broker by focusing on his circle of friends and correspondents, his patronage networks, the gifts he exchanged with other nobles, the genealogical information he provided or secured for Florentine patricians trying to confirm (or reinforce) their lineage, the letters of recommendation he wrote, and so on. The sixth and last chapter examines the theatrical performances and public ceremonies decreed by the ruling Medici but mounted by the patriciate itself, theatrical performances in honor of important visitors and guests such as the emir Fakhr ad-Din in 1613–15, or on the occasion of Medici weddings (especially those of Marie de' Medici in 1600 and Cosimo II in 1608), or memorial ceremonies for the death of important European rulers (especially for Philip II of Spain in 1598, for Henry IV of France in 1610, and for Margaret of Austria in 1612).

Aside from its thesis and argument, another of the valuable aspects of Goudriaan's book is the rich array of documents she provides in her four appendices (319–408). These include transcriptions of letters to and from the book's major characters, as well as other archival documents not easily accessible. A large portion of these come from the private archives of the Corsini, Guicciardini, Guadagni, and Niccolini families, which Goudriaan was able to consult.

The community of cultured men that Goudriaan brings to our attention attests to the continued vitality, importance, and relevance of the Florentine patriciate well into the seventeenth century. This was clearly not a decaying or even stagnant patriciate, but one that was actively involved in advancing not only their own interests, but also those of the state, its ruling family, its arts, and its culture on both the local and the international stage. And they were eminently successful in doing so, as attested by the impact that Tuscan innovations in the arts, for example, had on European culture, or the ability of the Medici to marry into the ruling houses of Spain, France, and Austria.

Thematically structured and judiciously subdivided into well-defined sections and subsections, this study of the Florentine patriciate in the first half of the seventeenth century is an invitation to further research and elaboration. As I indicated above, I remain curious to know more about the patriciate's use of confraternal networks of devotion, charity, and sociability to advance their interests. One might also wish to know more about the place and contributions of female members of the patriciate to the networks operating in Tuscan society at the time (women are, in fact, completely absent from this study, except as passing and passive figures). In short, this excellent study not only helps to counter a previous limited understanding of the Florentine patriciate in the "forgotten centuries" (to use Cochrane's term), but also invites the reader to develop this new understanding further by examining other key figures and other networks of influence operating in seventeenth-century Tuscany.

