



*Establishing the Tudor Dynasty:
The Role of Francesco
Piccolomini in Rome as First
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Establishing the Tudor Dynasty: The Role of Francesco Piccolomini in Rome as First Cardinal Protector of England¹

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Abstract: Between 1492 and 1503, Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (1439–1503) was the first officially appointed Cardinal Protector of England. This paper focuses on a select few of his activities executed in that capacity for Henry Tudor, King Henry VII. Drawing particularly on two unpublished letters, it underscores the importance for King Henry of having his most trusted supporters translated to significant bishoprics throughout the land, particularly in the northern counties, and explores Queen Elizabeth of York's patronage of the hospital and church of St Katharine-by-the-Tower in London. It further considers the mechanisms through which artists and humanists could be introduced to the Tudor court, namely via the communication and diplomatic infrastructure of Italian merchant-bankers. This study speculates whether, by the end of his long incumbency of forty-three years at the Sacred College, uncomfortably mindful of the extent of a cardinal's actual and potential influence in temporal affairs, Piccolomini finally became reluctant to wield the power of the purple.

Keywords: Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini; Henry VII; early Tudor; cardinal protector; St Katharine's; Italian merchant-bankers

ope for only twenty-six days following his election, taking the name of Pius III (Fig. 1), Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (1439–1503) has understandably been overshadowed in reputation by his high-profile uncle, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, Pope Pius II (1458–64). Nonetheless, a cardinal for forty-three years, member of the ecclesiastical reform commissions of three pontiffs and first Cardinal Protector of England,² the less famous Piccolomini's contribution to the Church in Rome and to the early establishment of the house of Tudor is ripe for re-appraisal.

¹ Some of the material contained in this paper was presented at the conference 'Renaissance Cardinals: Diplomats and Patrons in the Early Modern World', St Mary's University, Twickenham, 13–14 March 2015, with generous support from Birmingham City University and the Association of Art Historians. I owe a great debt of gratitude to the conference organisers, Glenn Richardson and Eugenia Russell, and to the editor, special editor, and anonymous readers of this journal. I am grateful, as ever, to Carolinne White for her Latin expertise. My thanks also to Paul Gwynne, Adrian Hicken, Geoffrey Nuttall, and David Rundle for their help along the way. Any faults are my own.

² The expectations of a national cardinal protector are summarised in Section: "Piccolomini's Activities as Cardinal Protector of England". For a fuller explication, see William E. Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors Before the Reformation* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 6–9.



Fig. 1: Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (1439–1503), Pope Pius III (for 26 days). *Pope Pius III*, 1753, coloured engraving, London, Hulton Archive (inv. 12178987). © 2017. Photo The Print Collector/Print Collector/Getty Images.

Carol Richardson has paid the most recent and consistent scholarly attention to Piccolomini in papers addressing his testamentary provision,³ his places of residence in Rome,⁴ patronage of his titular church and his role in the Consorteria Piccolomini.⁵ Older studies have dealt with diverse aspects of Piccolomini's life, the most magisterial series published by Alfred A. Strnad during the 1960s, in which he identified the need for a dedicated monograph.⁶ Particularly germane to this paper is Reverend William E. Wilkie's *The Cardinal Protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors before the Reformation* (1974),⁷ while Wilkie's earlier published booklet (1966), not widely available, is an extract from his doctoral dissertation devoted specifically to Cardinal Piccolomini's role in that capacity.⁸ This study reviews and updates the scholarship on this aspect of Piccolomini's activity. It first briefly outlines the Cardinal's religious and intellectual character; second, re-caps the circumstances in which he became cardinal protector for Henry VII, sketching in the political backdrop against which this took place; and third, exemplifies his activities concerned with that function, drawing particularly on two unpublished letters that passed from the early Tudor court to the Cardinal in the 1490s.⁹ The penultimate section examines the networks through which Piccolomini's contact with the north was maintained. Finally, in light of this study, Wilkie's assessment of the Cardinal's role as national protector is revisited. It is conjectured that over the course of his long tenure, Piccolomini grew to understand the full impact of a cardinal's influence in the playing out of divergent geo-political strategies. Adding weight to Ludwig von Pastor's portrayal of Piccolomini as pious, devout and humble—a man with his mind on higher things¹⁰—it is suggested that by the end of his life, feeling the weight of this responsibility, he became reluctant to play a part in manipulating temporal affairs.

³ Carol M. Richardson, "The Lost Will and Testament of Cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (1439–1503)", *Papers of the British School at Rome*, vol. 66 (1998), 193–214.

⁴ Carol M. Richardson, "The Housing Opportunities of a Renaissance Cardinal", *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4 (2003), 607–627.

⁵ Carol M. Richardson, "Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (1439–1503), Sant'Eustachio and the Consorteria Piccolomini", in *The Possessions of a Cardinal: Politics Piety and Art, 1450–1700*, eds Carol M. Richardson and Mary Hollingsworth (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 46–60. See also Carol M. Richardson, *Reclaiming Rome: Cardinals in the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

⁶ Alfred A. Strnad, "Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini; Politik und Mäzenatentum im Quattrocento", *Römische historische Mitteilungen*, vols 8–9 (1964–6), 101–425 (350). See also Alfred A. Strnad, "Pio II e suo nipote Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini", *Atti e memorie della deputazione di storia patria per le Marche*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1966), 35–84; and Alfred A. Strnad, "Studia piccolomineana", in *Enea Silvio Piccolomini: Papa Pio II. Atti del convegno per il quinto centenario della morte e altri scritti raccolti da Domenico Maffei*, ed. Domenico Maffei (Siena: Accademia degli Intronati, 1968), 295–390. For a summary of his life, see Matteo Sanfilippo, "Pio III", in *Enciclopedia dei Papi* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2000), vol. 3, 22–30.

⁷ See n.2 above.

⁸ William E. Wilkie, *The Beginnings of the Cardinal Protectorship of England: Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini 1492–1503* (Switzerland: University of Fribourg, 1966). In addition, for Ireland, see Katherine Walsh, "The Beginnings of a National Protectorate: Curial Cardinals and the Irish Church in the Fifteenth Century", *Archivum Hibernicum*, vol. 32 (1974), 72–80.

⁹ Rome, Biblioteca Angelica (hereafter Bib. Ang.), MS 1077, fols 13v and 87r.

¹⁰ Ludwig von Pastor, *History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, 4th ed., ed. and trans. F. I. Antrobus (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1923), vol. 4, 198–200.

Francesco Piccolomini's Intellectual and Religious Constitution

The reputation of Pope Pius II as one of the leading humanists of his day was well established within his own lifetime. The education of his nephew Francesco was a personal priority for Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini even before his elevation to the papacy, and became a matter of urgent investment after it.¹¹ Francesco's learning and character are reflected in contemporary sources¹² and his pursuit of humanist activities is evidenced in part by his acts of patronage and sculpture collection, which are summarised elsewhere.¹³ It is apposite here, as an indication of his intellectual disposition, to sketch in something of his book collection. Cardinal Francesco inherited a quarter of his uncle's library¹⁴ and significantly augmented this sizeable nucleus. He patronised copyists previously in his uncle's employment, made purchases from other collections and received bequests from close friends such as Cardinal Marco Barbo (d.1491).¹⁵ He additionally received many dedication copies from contemporary authors, notably Marsilio Ficino,¹⁶ including a number of early printed editions.¹⁷ Like his sculpture collection, Cardinal Francesco's books were kept until the final year of his life in his *palazzo* in Rome,¹⁸ the Palazzo di Siena, near to the Campo de' Fiori, the site today occupied by Sant'Andrea della Valle.¹⁹ Suitably accommodating his books became the focus of Francesco's greatest act of patronage, the construction and decoration of the Piccolomini Library in Siena Cathedral (Fig. 2).²⁰ The collection reflects the typical humanist taste for the Latin classics of history, poetry and rhetoric, as well as containing patristic literature, medieval church chronicles, papal history, and other ecclesiological works and texts on widely varying topics by contemporary authors. A palatine cardinal for the first twelve years of his tenure,²¹ it was the cultural ambient of Rome, rather than that of his "native" Siena,²² which shaped Francesco's intellectual outlook. In

¹¹ Little is known of Francesco Piccolomini's childhood years. His early education in canon law and the *studia humanitatis* was under the supervision of Giacomo de' Tolomei in Ferrara. In 1451, Francesco enrolled at the University of Vienna, after which his education with Tolomei re-commenced, to be completed finally at Perugia. Sanfilippo, "Pio III", 22–3.

¹² See, for example, *Sigismondo de' Conti da Foligno, Le Storie dei suoi Tempi dal 1475 al 1510* (Rome: Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, 1883), vol. 2, 291–2; Antonio Giustinian, *Dispacci di Antonio Giustinian; ambasciatore Veneto in Roma dal 1502 al 1505, per la prima volta pubblicati da Pasquale Villari* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1876), vol. 2, 200; Jacopo Gherardi, *Il diario romano di Jacopo Gherardi da Volterra dal 7 settembre 1479 al 12 agosto 1484*, ed. Enrico Carusi (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1904), 43. Pastor cites also the Mantuan envoy, Egidio da Viterbo, Pietro Delphino and Cosimo de' Pazzi; Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 4, 198–200, 620–21.

¹³ Susan J. May, "The Piccolomini Library: The Iconographical Programme in the Light of Cardinal Francesco's Humanism and Theology" (PhD thesis, Birmingham City University, 2006), 44–7.

¹⁴ Strnad, "Studia piccolomineana", 342.

¹⁵ Strnad, "Studia piccolomineana", 343 n.180.

¹⁶ *In convivium Platonis de amore*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi E IV 122.

¹⁷ Strnad, "Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini", 347.

¹⁸ Strnad, "Studia piccolomineana", 342, 370.

¹⁹ Richardson, "The Housing Opportunities", 609; Howard Hibbard, "The Early History of Sant'Andrea della Valle", *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 43 (1961), 289–318 (290).

²⁰ Susan J. May, "The Piccolomini Library in Siena Cathedral: A New Reading with Particular Reference to Two Compartments of the Vault Decoration", *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 19 (2005), 287–324; Susan J. May, "Christian Neoplatonism and Early Reform Thought in the Manuscripts and Narrative Murals of the Piccolomini Library", *The Book Collector*, vol. 57, no. 3 (2008), 371–399.

²¹ Sanfilippo, "Pio III", 23–4.

²² Both Aeneas Piccolomini and his nephew considered Siena to be their native town, although, following the

common with the movement elsewhere, humanism in fifteenth-century Rome shared a prevailing interest in the broad questions of human morality – fate and free will, virtue and vice, the immortality of the soul and the dignity of man. Yet owing to the city's unique significance as the seat of the papacy, Roman humanism developed a particular character, with emphases directly relating to the needs of the papal curia: the preference for a pure Ciceronian Latin, the revival of epideictic oratory, the comparison of contemporary Rome and the pope with ancient Rome and its emperors, and pronounced attention to curial reform.²³ It was particularly the latter, and Cardinal Francesco's desire to put knowledge derived from his books to practical use, that shaped his collection and guided his reading. Piccolomini's Palazzo di Siena was the venue for one of Rome's informal academies, where his circle, united by interests in Neoplatonism and renewal of the Church, was a cosmopolitan mix of humanists and clerics, including many fellow Siennese and frequent visitors from Germany.²⁴



Fig. 2. Piccolomini library, decorated in fresco by Bernardino Pinturicchio, 1502–08. Siena cathedral. © 2017.
Photo Opera Metropolitana Siena/Scala, Florence.

The Circumstances of Piccolomini's Appointment as Cardinal Protector of England

family's exile in 1403, Aeneas had been born in Corsignano and Francesco most likely in Sarteano; D. Bandini, "Gli antenati di Pio III", *Bullettino della Società Senese di storia patria*, vols 73–5 (1966–8), 239–51.

²³ John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 123–37, 212–37.

²⁴ May, "The Piccolomini Library", 48–74.

Before turning to Henry VII's request to the Pope in 1492 that Piccolomini represent the interests of England at the consistorial court in Rome, it is useful to briefly outline the circumstances of Henry's accession on 22 August 1485 and his subsequent domestic and foreign relations to help elucidate the reasoning behind Henry's choice of national protector. Following his victory over Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth, and in light of his questionable legitimacy to the crown, Henry exercised an extraordinary degree of close personal scrutiny over all aspects of his government, using every means at his disposal to consolidate Tudor hegemony.²⁵ He kept magnate participation low and also changed the character of the bench of bishops, his appointments favouring lawyers at the expense of theologians, in his determination that his bishops' highest loyalty would be to the crown rather than the Church.²⁶ Strategically placing trusted friends into key positions, Henry promoted his ally John Morton to Chancellor in March 1486; Morton was translated to Canterbury as Archbishop in October of the same year.²⁷ In advance of Bosworth, Morton had already been paving the way for Henry's accession.

Of Lancastrian descent, Henry Tudor (Fig. 3) became a serious contender for the throne only following the failed—but significant—Buckingham rebellion against Richard III in October 1483. To strengthen his suit, on Christmas Day 1483 Henry swore to marry Elizabeth of York, daughter of Elizabeth Woodville and the late King Edward IV, thus potentially uniting these two great warring houses. Since Henry and Elizabeth were both descended from John of Gaunt (1340–99), a papal dispensation was required for them to marry. By the end of January 1485 Morton was already stationed in Rome, whence during that summer he secured various papal favours from Innocent VIII.²⁸ The speedy chain of events following Bosworth indicates that Morton brokered the marriage dispensation, which was issued on 16 January 1486; the marriage took place on 18 January. A confirmation of the dispensation followed on 2 March. On 27 March Innocent pronounced excommunication against anyone challenging the marriage or Henry's right to the throne.²⁹ An English version of the latter edict was immediately prepared for general circulation and issued in the same year, with further editions distributed in 1494, 1495 and 1497, one of the earliest examples of the use of the printing press in England as a means of disseminating propaganda.³⁰

²⁵ Steven Gunn, "The Courtiers of Henry VII", *English Historical Review*, vol. 108 (1993), 23–49.

²⁶ Of twenty-seven episcopal preferments during his reign, sixteen were of lawyers, and only six of theologians; John Guy, "Thomas Cromwell and the Intellectual Origins of the Henrician Revolution", in *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics and Reform 1500–1550*, eds Alastair Fox and John Guy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986), 151–178.

²⁷ Cliff S. L. Davies, "Bishop John Morton, the Holy See and the Accession of Henry VII", *English Historical Review*, vol. 102 (1987), 2–30 (2).

²⁸ Davies, "Bishop John Morton", 13–14, 29.

²⁹ Davies, "Bishop John Morton", 14–15.

³⁰ Sydney Anglo, "The Foundation of the Tudor Dynasty: The Coronation and Marriage of Henry VII", in *The Guildhall Miscellany*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1960), 3–11 (10). The wording of the original English translation was published by J. Payne Collier, ed., in *The Camden Miscellany* (London: Camden Society, 1847), 3–7.



Fig. 3. Pietro Torrigiano, *Portrait bust of Henry VII Tudor*, 1509–11, painted terracotta. London: Victoria & Albert Museum (inv. A. 49–1935). © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Morton's early presence in Rome and the establishment of permanent diplomatic relations with the curia are a testament to Henry's cognisance of the exigency of establishing allies there. Clearly this paid off in Henry's early entrenchment as English monarch: as Cliff Davies has pointed out, "direct papal intervention of this sort in English secular affairs was extremely unusual".³¹ Moreover, Henry held a particular attraction for Innocent's successor, the Francophobe Alexander VI Borgia (1492–1503), because of England's traditional antagonism with the French.³² By early 1494, the French (under King Charles VIII) were

³¹ Davies, "Bishop John Morton", 15.

³² For the Plantagenet militant tradition and a nuanced analysis of Henry's vacillating relationship with France, see John M. Currin, "England's International Relations 1485–1509: Continuities Amidst Change", in *Tudor England and Its Neighbours*, eds Susan Doran and Glenn Richardson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 14–43 (15–24).

poised to descend through the Italian states to pursue the nation's dynastic Angevin claim to Naples.³³ Besides French militancy, the major tectonic plates of late *quattrocento* politics included the imminent Ottoman threat to Europe through the flood-gate of Hungary, and the mercurial unpredictability of Emperor-elect Maximilian I Habsburg, King of the Romans (and, from 1491, of Hungary). By 18 July 1496, Henry VII had decided to enter into the Holy League of Venice, finally aligning England with Milan, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, against France.³⁴ It is against this complex, shifting backdrop that we find Francesco Piccolomini acting for Henry VII as Cardinal Protector of England.

Following Innocent's death on 25 July 1492 and the accession of Alexander VI, a letter from Henry dated 6 September 1492 arrived in Rome congratulating the new pope and requesting his Holiness "to receive with kindness and even with favour, out of regard for Us, the Most Reverend Father Lord Cardinal of Siena, protector of Ourselves and Our Kingdom, whenever he shall approach Your Holiness in all affairs concerning Ourselves and Our Realm".³⁵ This letter is the earliest documentary evidence of the official appointment of a national cardinal protector. A prior letter from Giovanni Gigli (c.1434–98), Henry's Lucchese resident orator in Rome, addressed to the King—and convincingly dated by Wilkie to some time between 5 February and 12 March 1492—shows that Henry had suggested to Gigli three possible candidates for the position of cardinal protector, from which Gigli had selected Piccolomini: "... of which I have chosen my Lorde Cardinall' of Seen [Siena], which, at instance of youre said Grace, has accept the same".³⁶ Gigli's selection was made on the grounds that Piccolomini, unlike the other two—Giuliano della Rovere and Ascanio Sforza—was no particular friend of France.³⁷ The earlier range of Wilkie's dates for Gigli's letter (from 5 February) seems to be likely since, as Gigli relates, Piccolomini "has accept[ed] the same" and, on 8 February 1492, Richard Fox was already referred in consistory by Cardinal Francesco to the bishopric of Bath and Wells.³⁸

Piccolomini was accustomed to working in the capacity of cardinal protector: since 1476 he had been protector of the Camaldese Benedictines, working successfully in favour of the reform parties.³⁹ Although not explicitly termed cardinal protector for the German-speaking lands, it is evident that he already fulfilled that role informally. During an early, extended visit to Germany in 1451 to stay with his uncle, then in the service of Emperor Frederick III, followed by a period at the University of Vienna, the young Francesco had cultivated a circle of friends with whom he continued lifelong contact.⁴⁰ His facility with the language and customs of Germany led him to be entrusted by Pope Paul II with the apostolic

³³ David Abulafia, ed. *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy 1494–5: Antecedents and Effects* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995).

³⁴ Currin, "England's International Relations", 26.

³⁵ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 1.

³⁶ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 2.

³⁷ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 2; Cecil Clough, "Three Gigli of Lucca in England in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries: Diversification in a Family of Mercery Merchants", in *Tant d'emprises – So Many Undertakings: Essays in Honour of Anne F. Sutton*, ed. L. Visser-Fuchs (Upminster: The Richard III Society, 2003), 121–40 (138).

³⁸ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 3.

³⁹ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 4. On the role of cardinal protectors of religious orders, see Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 5–6.

⁴⁰ Strnad, "Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini", 120–22, 279; Strnad, "Studia Piccolomineana", 334–5.

legation in 1471 to the Diet of Ratisbon (Regensburg), accompanied by Giannantonio Campano.⁴¹ In a discourse composed by the Cardinal to be delivered at the opening of the Diet, Francesco speaks of his warm “*benevolē*” and “*affectionē*” towards the German people, referring to his close links with them through “*pius avunculus meus*”.⁴²

Piccolomini seems to have extended his protection further north-east as far as Hungary, even as early as 1460, the year in which he entered the Sacred College, evidenced by a letter written to him by Hungarian humanist, Janus Pannonius (1434–72). Pannonius had studied in Ferrara under Guarino of Verona, became a neo-Latin poet of European stature in his own right and rose for a time to the lucrative bishopric of Pécs (Quinque-Ecclesiensis).⁴³ The letter, written in Pécs, states: “And since you agreed to protect me and my church, I humbly ask you to promote certain matters which Marcus, Bishop of Tinia [in Croatia] is going to set in motion”.⁴⁴ What those “certain matters” were do not concern us here; the letter demonstrates, though, that Piccolomini’s sphere of influence extended further into central-eastern Europe than is generally recognised.⁴⁵

So, while Piccolomini’s formative time in Germany and Austria had imbued him with a sense of connection, and indeed affection, towards those lands, his operations on behalf of England—Francesco never having travelled so far north—were naturally less personal. Why, then, might he have been amenable to taking on this role? Despite the reputation of his unworldliness, Francesco’s representation on behalf of Henry Tudor was possibly in line with the explanation proffered by Wilkie: the difficulties of heading up a princely household on a precarious income.⁴⁶ Compared to a few of his colleagues at the Sacred College, Cardinal Francesco’s annual income of 9,000 ducats was limited,⁴⁷ falling below the annual figure of 12,000 ducats recommended by Paolo Cortesi as a suitable income for a cardinal.⁴⁸ He appears never to have received an English benefice to complement his modest collection of German and Italian ones. The *propina* paid to Piccolomini, however, for referrals in consistory between 1492 and 1503, calculated by Wilkie to have totalled possibly 20,000 florins—up to a fifth of his total income—would have thus been attractive to a prelate of relatively modest means.⁴⁹

⁴¹ Sanfilippo, “Pio III”, 23. In one of his letters, Cardinal Francesco stated with a flicker of pride that he was thought of as a true German (“*Sie halten mich für einen guten Deutschen*”); Joseph Schlecht, *Pius III und die deutsche Nation* (Kempten and Munich: Joseph Kösel, 1914), 4.

⁴² Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fols 65v–66v. The discourse was never delivered because the Emperor was late; Strnad, “Pio II e suo nipote”, 60 n.20.

⁴³ Marianna D. Birnbaum, “Janus Pannonius: Our Contemporary”, in *Matthias Corvinus and the Humanism in Central Europe*, eds Tibor Klaniczay and József Jankovics (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1994), 49–58 (49).

⁴⁴ “*Et quoniam semel R. P. V. mei et Ecclesiae meae patrocinium suscepit, supplico humiliter, quatenus et nunc in certis causis meis, quas istic R. in Christo P. D. Marcus Episcopus Tinniniensis, moturus est, velit esse promotrix.*” Janus Pannonius, *Poëmata ... ad manu scriptum codicem Regium Corvinianum exacta, recognita ...* (Trajecti ad Rhenum: Apud Barthol. Wild, Bibliop., 1784), vol. 2, 79.

⁴⁵ See, however, Paul Gwynne’s observations about Piccolomini’s dealings with Polish dignitaries: *Poets and Princes: The Panegyric Poetry of Johannes Michael Nagonius* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 29 and n.48.

⁴⁶ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 36.

⁴⁷ In 1500, Master of Ceremonies Johannes Burchard compiled a list of the cardinals’ annual incomes for the purposes of the crusading tithe; Keith M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978), vol. 2, 528. Piccolomini’s income falls slightly below average.

⁴⁸ Paolo Cortesi, *De cardinalatu libri tres* (Siena: Simeone di Niccolò Nardi, 1510), xlvii.

⁴⁹ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 36. The *propina* became fixed at 15% over and above the amount paid in consistorial taxes for the bulls of provision, plus an additional 5% for the members of the Cardinal’s household who administered

Piccolomini's Activities as Cardinal Protector of England

The general expectations of a national cardinal protector consisted, in brief, of referring in papal consistory the sovereign's nominations to bishoprics and other benefices in the realm; of upholding and promoting the interests of that nation at the papal court; and of acting as a facilitator for travellers to Rome, whether in ambassadorial or other capacities. In the conclave, the national cardinal protector was further expected to work in favour of the election of the sovereign's preferred candidate,⁵⁰ a responsibility which had already drawn criticism for polluting a theological matter with secular interests.⁵¹ This may well have sat uneasily in Francesco Piccolomini's fine-tuned conscience; he, after all, had been on the reform commission of his uncle Pius II, which in 1464 had recognised this conflict of interests.⁵² Even under the more lenient papacies of Innocent VIII and Alexander VI, cardinals were required to have express permission from the pontiff before they could represent a secular prince.⁵³ The conclave in September 1503, during which Piccolomini as England's Cardinal Protector could have exercised influence on behalf of Henry VII, resulted unexpectedly in his own election.⁵⁴ One might expect that, had he foreseen the possibility, Henry would have championed Piccolomini, although on this, as on many other things, records remain mute. To this brief list of activities one may additionally adduce a role explicitly articulated by Piccolomini to Henry, that of communicator of relevant news to which he became party at the consistorial court.⁵⁵ The main conduits of information from Rome, however, were Henry's *oratores*, especially Giovanni Gigli from 1490 until his death in 1498 and thereafter his nephew, Silvestro Gigli (1463–1521).

Piccolomini worked closely with both, for example in their dealings with the English Hospice of St Thomas of Canterbury in Rome. Originally founded as a refuge for English pilgrims, Henry brought it under Crown control as it took on increasing importance for diplomatic activity between him and the papacy.⁵⁶ The hospice served as a lodging house for Englishmen in Italy, whether businessmen, university students, diplomats or pilgrims. Close to the Palazzo di Siena, it was frequented by Piccolomini acting as a facilitator for English visitors. Its many *confratres* included such men as John Colet, future dean of St Paul's, and

the case; Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 7, citing William E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England 1327–1534*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1962), vol. 2, 257–8.

⁵⁰ Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 6–7.

⁵¹ Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 8.

⁵² Piccolomini had participated in the reform commissions initiated by Pius II, Sixtus IV and Alexander VI; Strnad, "Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini", 180–3.

⁵³ Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 9.

⁵⁴ Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 4, 185.

⁵⁵ "Caeterum ut ex iis quae hic dicuntur aliquid pro officio me[o] vestrae majestati consignificem, etiamsi ipsa plurima ac prope omnia intelligat, haec non tacebo". "Furthermore, so that I might indicate to your majesty, in accordance with my role, some of the things that are being said here, even if you know many of them and indeed almost all, I will not fail to mention these". Letter dated 15 June 1499, in James Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861–3), vol. 1, 112.

⁵⁶ Brian Newns, "The Hospice of St Thomas and the English Crown, 1474–1538", in *The Venerable English College, Rome: A History*, ed. Michael E. Williams (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), 145–92.

Thomas Linacre, future founder of the Royal College of Physicians.⁵⁷ The cemetery of the hospice's church was in constant use, not only to bury pilgrims who died in Rome but also dignitaries, such as John Shirwood, Bishop of Durham (d.1494).⁵⁸ In 1496, Giovanni Gigli and the Cardinal Protector briefed the King on the state of the hospice, notifying him that it had the potential to support more inhabitants than it presently did, thus prompting a royal initiative for its improvement, which was completed in 1501.⁵⁹ In the years following Giovanni's death, Piccolomini continued to collaborate closely with the latter's nephew Silvestro and participate in events at the English Hospice.⁶⁰

A comprehensive account of Cardinal Francesco's actions on behalf of England is beyond the scope of this paper: what follows in this section will therefore exemplify three aspects of his activities, namely as episcopal advocate; reaper of papal favours; and introducer of Italian culture to the English court.

Episcopal Provision

Piccolomini's main function as Cardinal Protector was to secure the appointment of Henry's nominees into key bishoprics in England. Over a period of eleven years (1492–1503), Piccolomini referred in papal consistory thirty-four out of thirty-eight of Henry's nominations: this near-monopoly, referred by a single cardinal on behalf of one particular nation, was unprecedented.⁶¹ Consistorial and other extant records have long been scoured by dedicated historians for what archives may yield on this activity: all of the available evidence was assembled and scrupulously researched by Wilkie, whose volume remains the preeminent source on Piccolomini's referrals to the episcopate. One such nomination is detailed here to exemplify this aspect of his activity.

Drawing on an unpublished copy of a letter dated 18 May 1493 from Henry to Piccolomini, we learn of the imminent resignation, or even impending death ("enfeebled by old age"), of the Bishop of Carlisle, Richard Bell.⁶² Alluding to a previous letter, Henry reiterates his nomination made there in the person of William Sever, Abbot of St Mary's beside York. Fearing an unfilled vacancy on Bell's resignation or demise, this second letter presses the urgency of the matter, asking for it to be "accomplished as quickly as it can be done".⁶³ In line with Henry's policy for the bench of bishops, the nominee Sever was particularly respected for his legal expertise.⁶⁴ The north of England was Henry's storm centre, the borderlands with Scotland presenting a continual threat in his early reign. Sever's appointment to Carlisle was one of a number of such, alongside Durham, calculated to strengthen the north of his kingdom. Exemplifying this region's vulnerability, a letter written by Henry Wyatt to the King

⁵⁷ Newns, "The Hospice", 90–91.

⁵⁸ George Hay, "Pilgrims and the Hospice", in Williams (ed.), *The Venerable English College*, 99–144 (102).

⁵⁹ Newns, "The Hospice", 157–8.

⁶⁰ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 11.

⁶¹ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 15; Walsh, "The Beginnings of a National Protectorate", 78.

⁶² "... in decrepita etate"; Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fol. 87r.

⁶³ "Quocirca eandem vestram amplitudinem ex animo rogamus ut penes sanctissimum dominum nostrum favores suos velit interponere quo predicta commissio ad recipiendam hujusmodi resignationem quam citius fieri possit expediatur."; Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fol. 87r.

⁶⁴ Rachel R. Reid, *The King's Council in the North* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), 78, 84.

in 1496 describes Carlisle Castle “for the defence of the cuntry at all tymes” as “the keye of these partes”:⁶⁵ indeed one of Henry’s first acts on his accession had been to appoint one of his own men as constable of Carlisle Castle.⁶⁶ A letter written by Henry VIII around two decades later underscores Carlisle’s continued strategic criticality and the Bishop of Carlisle’s supremacy as the sovereign’s agent there.⁶⁷ Sever’s nomination, referred by Piccolomini during 1493, was eventually approved in consistory on 4 September 1495,⁶⁸ although even six years later, Henry was still implementing additional draconian measures to pre-empt any uprising from Carlisle.⁶⁹ It was from Scotland in 1496 that the Yorkist pretender Perkin Warbeck, supported by James IV and other powerful allies including Maximilian, entered the north of England in a bid to challenge Henry’s sovereignty.⁷⁰ The translation of Richard Fox to Durham in 1494 had been timely,⁷¹ whence Fox could strengthen defences against Warbeck at Norham Castle. Troubling Henry for six years, Warbeck was just one of the many potential threats that the King sought to outwit by the timely and strategic placement of his most loyal supporters.

Papal Indulgences

Although the reign of Henry VII is sometimes perceived as the dawn of the early modern era, the fervent and exacting terms of Henry’s will are testament to his medieval piety.⁷² Henry was to turn to his Cardinal Protector, with his privileged access to the pope, to obtain several plenary indulgences⁷³ for his hospital churches and chapels in London⁷⁴ and utilise William Caxton’s printing press at Westminster to broadcast the various spiritual privileges that he thus made available, as did his successor Henry VIII (using additional printing presses) until his split with Rome.⁷⁵ The facility to obtain a papal indulgence, whereby in theory all levels of society could lessen their time in purgatory, indubitably helped the early Tudor cause of self-popularisation.

A surviving copy of a letter to the Cardinal Protector from Elizabeth of York dated 8 February 1493, shows that Piccolomini worked also on her behalf. As Queen, she was

⁶⁵ Henry Wyatt to Henry VII from Carlisle, 4 June 1496, transcribed in Agnes E. Conway, *Henry VII’s Relations with Scotland and Ireland 1485–1498* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 236–9 (236).

⁶⁶ Sir Richard Salkeld (d.1505), appointed in 1485 on an annual grant of 1,000 marks; Conway, *Henry VII’s Relations*, 236 n.3.

⁶⁷ Letter dated 15 Feb. 1523 to the Mayor of Carlisle, in James O. Halliwell, ed. *Letters of the Kings of England* (London: H. Colburn, 1846), vol. 1, 274.

⁶⁸ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 20.

⁶⁹ Thomas Penn, *Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England* (London: Penguin, 2012), 77.

⁷⁰ Bryan Bevan, *Henry VII, The First Tudor King* (London: Rubicon Press, 2000), 59–69.

⁷¹ Referred by Piccolomini on 30 July 1494; Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 17.

⁷² Howard M. Colvin, “Henry VII’s Works of Piety,” in Howard M. Colvin, *The History of the King’s Works* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1975), vol. 3, 187–210.

⁷³ Robert N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 120. A plenary indulgence (as opposed to a partial indulgence) gave remission of all sins committed before the indulgence was administered; Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy*, vol. 2, 447.

⁷⁴ Nigel Morgan, “The Scala Coeli Indulgence and the Royal Chapels,” in *The Reign of Henry VII: Proceedings of the 1993 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Benjamin Thompson (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 82–103.

⁷⁵ Robert N. Swanson, “Printing for Purgatory: Indulgences and Related Documents in England 1476–1536”, *Journal of the Early Book Society*, vol. 14 (2011), 115–43.

exclusive patron of the Hospital of St Katharine-by-the-Tower in London (Fig. 4).⁷⁶ The prime duties of the hospital church were to regularly celebrate mass, in particular for the souls as laid down in the Queen's charter, and to serve the poor and infirm. In her letter to the Cardinal, Elizabeth requests that he obtain a papal grant for plenary indulgence.⁷⁷ This would mean that all within the hospital who said prayers for the pope at mass on specified holy days—doubtless including the feast of St Catherine—and who were “confessed and contrite”, were given remission from temporal punishment in purgatory for sins committed up to that point in their lives.⁷⁸

Bishop of London, rendering it a “royal peculiar” with its own ecclesiastical court.⁸⁰ In the late fifteenth century, the precinct of St Katharine comprised the hospital church (Figs 5 and 6), mills, breweries, a courthouse and its prison, and a complex of narrow lanes with approximately one thousand modest homes. William Stow in his *Survey of London* (1598) comments on the “small tenements and homely cottages” and the high percentage of foreigners operating outside of the restrictions of the city’s guilds.⁸¹



Fig. 5. B. T. Pouncey, *St Katharine-by-the-Tower*, north-east view of the church, 1779, engraving. Andrew Coltee Ducarel, *The History of the Royal Hospital and Collegiate Church of St Katharine, Near the Tower of London, From its Foundation in the Year 1273 to the Present Time* (London: J. Nichols, 1782).

⁸⁰ Jamison, *The History of the Royal Hospital*, 43. Henry VI’s charter is summarised in App. 4, 187–8. During the early years of his reign, Henry VII was working to stress the line of continuity from his uncle, which would include the founding of his chapel at Westminster Abbey, intended as Henry VI’s mausoleum, and preparations for his canonisation.

⁸¹ John Stow, *A Survey of London: Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908), vol. 1, 124. The whole area was demolished in 1825 to build Sir Thomas Telford’s Saint Katharine’s Dock.

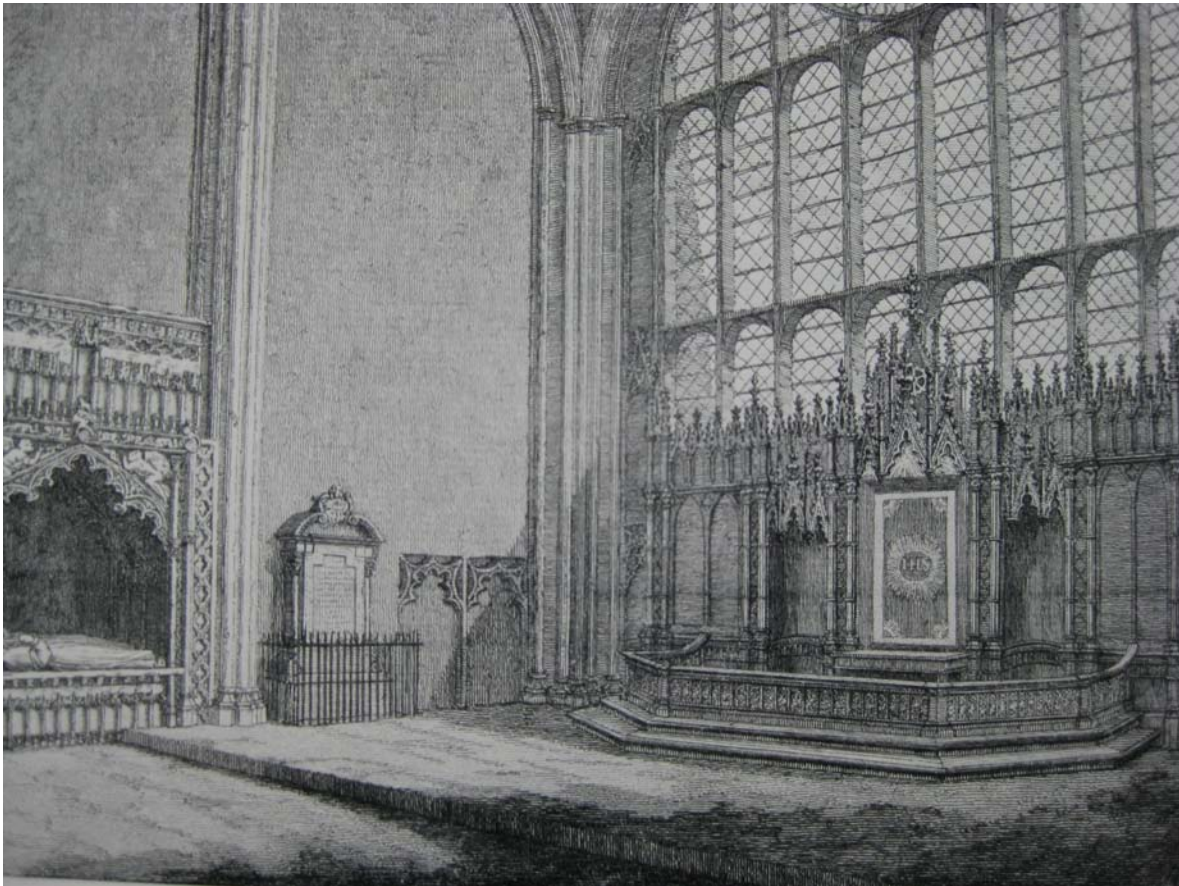


Fig. 6. B. T. Pouncey, *St Katharine-by-the-Tower*, altar and monuments of the Duke of Exeter (d. 1449) and of the Hon. George Montague, Master (1660/1–1681) engraving, 1779. Andrew Coltee Ducarel, *The History of the Royal Hospital and Collegiate Church of St Katharine, Near the Tower of London, From its Foundation in the Year 1273 to the Present Time* (London: J. Nichols, 1782).

The dedicatee of the church in question, St Catherine of Alexandria (early fourth century), was the most venerated of the virgin martyrs, her cult propagated, for example, by Christine de Pizan: several versions of the saint's life were in wide circulation by the end of the thirteenth century and her following had remained strong.⁸² A holy relic of the saint had been reputedly brought to England by Edward the Confessor and kept at Westminster, while St Catharine's College had recently been founded in her name at Cambridge (1473). Indeed, Queen Elizabeth had herself chosen St Catherine's day on which to be crowned.⁸³ The saint's name was further promoted in anticipation of Katharine of Aragon's arrival in London, the youngest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain: negotiations for an alliance between the houses of Habsburg and Tudor had begun as early as March 1488, when Prince Arthur was less than two years old. By January 1500, the Spanish ambassador reported that great sums of

⁸² Jacqueline Jenkins and Katherine Lewis, eds, *St Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

⁸³ 25 Nov. 1487; Bevan, *Henry VII*, 51.

money were being spent in preparation for the Infanta's reception.⁸⁴ When this finally came to fruition in November 1501, Katharine's triumphal entry was celebrated all along the route with sumptuous pageants based on her name saint, consisting of ingenious, multi-layered cosmic allegories, stage sets, kinetic effects, royal emblems and symbolic devices.⁸⁵

Turning attention once more to Saint Katharine-by-the-Tower (Figs 4–6), this church annually became the focus of the city's attention around St Catherine's day (25 November), when it was the destination of a huge procession. As recorded by Reginald Pecock, Bishop of Chichester (c.1395–c.1461), the eve of the saint's day saw “the going of people in pilgrimage to the College of Saint Katharine-besides-London ... in the vigil of Saint Katharine [*sic*]”, whose martyrdom, according to Pecock's hyperbole, had been celebrated in ten thousand books!⁸⁶ Members of the Confraternity of St Katharine, wearing fraternal dress, lit candles at the altar of the saint: the pilgrims heard mass, left offerings before her image, and gave alms to the beggars who congregated around the hospital on St Catherine's night.⁸⁷ Queen Elizabeth's letter to Piccolomini dated 8 February 1493 (indeed the letter refers to an earlier, untraced one), written “to obtain all the plenary indulgences for our hospital”,⁸⁸ followed shortly after the conclusion of the marriage treaty on 27 March 1489 between Prince Arthur and Katharine of Aragon.⁸⁹ The Princess's arrival in mid-November 1501 had actually been considerably delayed by inclement weather, political unrest and diplomatic bargaining.⁹⁰ A date for her disembarkation might have been preferred around twelve months earlier: St Catherine's day in the jubilee year of 1500 would seem a cosmologically auspicious date for such a momentous meeting, a matter about which the King indubitably, as was customary, had consulted his Italian court astrologer.⁹¹ One can only hypothesise that this may have been in the minds of Henry and Elizabeth when the plenary indulgence for St Katharine's was requested.

It has been assumed that the Cardinal successfully elicited Elizabeth's requested indulgence from the pope, in the same way that others were for Henry's institutions.⁹² If, however, the royal couple's sightlines had indeed been set on a great conjunction of a royal wedding, a jubilee year, St Catherine's day and a plenary indulgence for Saint Katharine-by-the-Tower, then with regards to the latter the pope was about to undermine their plans. In anticipation of the half-millennial holy year, Alexander VI announced on 12 April 1498 a suspension of all plenary indulgences with immediate effect until the close of 1500, a strategy aimed to encourage pilgrims to instead visit the four specified churches in Rome which would gain “*omnium peccatorum plenissimam indulgentiam*” and simultaneously swell the apostolic coffers toward the repair of St Peter's.⁹³ A chronicler in England recorded that, as well as the

⁸⁴ Sydney Anglo, “The London Pageants for the Reception of Katharine of Aragon: November 1501”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 26, no. 1/2 (1963), 53–89 (53).

⁸⁵ Anglo, “The London Pageants”, 57 n.10.

⁸⁶ Jamison, *The History of the Royal Hospital*, 152.

⁸⁷ Jamison, *The History of the Royal Hospital*, 150–2.

⁸⁸ “... tum etiam ad plenarias indulgentias pro hospitali sanctae Katerinae prope turrin Londoniarum ...”; Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fol. 13v.

⁸⁹ Negotiations continued, however, throughout the next decade; Anglo, “The London Pageants”, 53.

⁹⁰ Anglo, “The London pageants”, 53.

⁹¹ Charles A. J. Armstrong, “An Italian Astrologer at the Court of Henry VII”, in *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Charles A. J. Armstrong (London: Hambledon, 1983), 157–178.

⁹² Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 33.

⁹³ Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy*, vol. 2, 463–5.

adjournment of plenary indulgences, the jubilee year was also marked by a suspension of all pardons normally available under local jurisdiction.⁹⁴ It may have been this which prompted Henry VII to reissue, on 1 February 1499, King Henry VI's aforementioned Charter of Privileges, which had established the precinct of St Katharine's as a "royal peculiar" (Fig. 7).⁹⁵ By way of a postscript, within weeks of the death of Henry VII, a royal pardon granted to St Katharine's dated 2 July 1509 and signed by the new, young Tudor heir⁹⁶ is indicative of the fact that Henry VIII and his queens would continue royal patronage of this hospital church, which—significantly—escaped the ravages of the English Reformation.⁹⁷

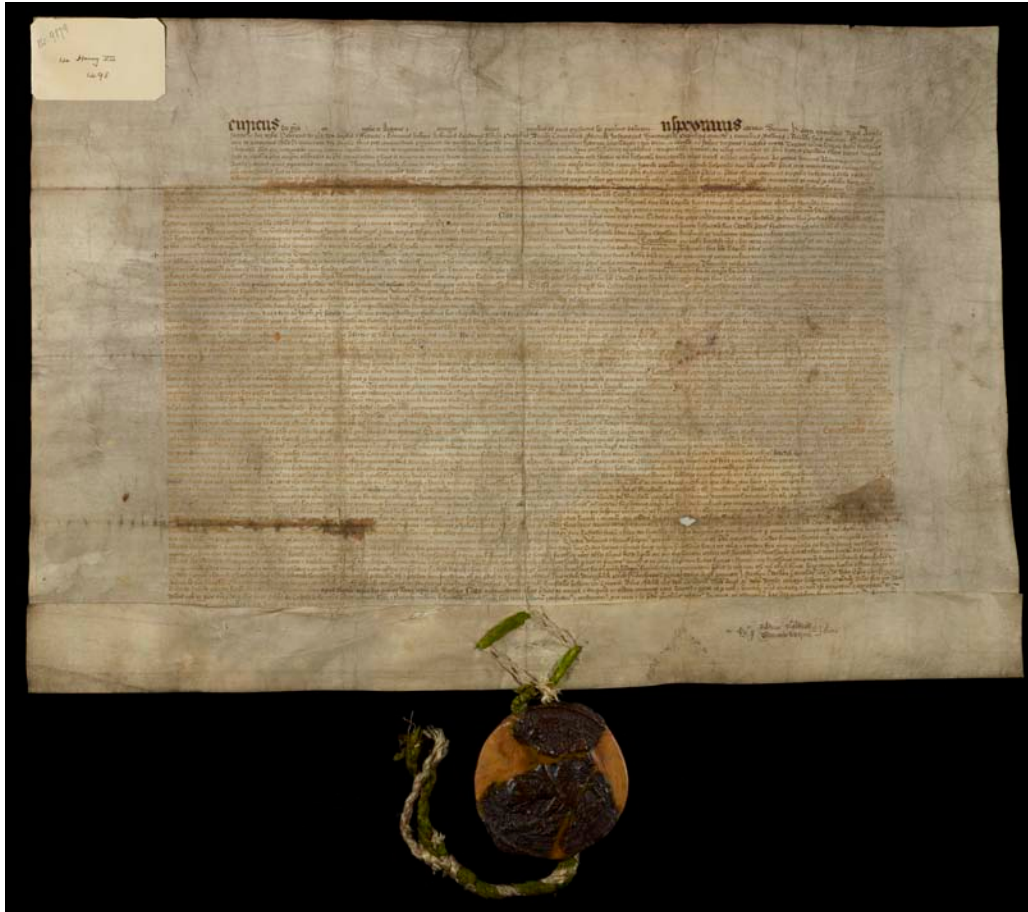


Fig. 7. Charter of Inspeximus of Henry VII for the hospital church of St Katharine-by-the-Tower, 1 February 1499. © London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, CLC/199/TA/013/MS 09879. Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Foundation of St Katharine.

⁹⁴ Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, ed. *Chronicles of London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 228–29.

⁹⁵ "Charter of Inspeximus of Henry VII", London Metropolitan Archives (L.M.A.), CLC/199/TA/013/MS 09879.

⁹⁶ "A general pardon to the Brothers and Sisters of the Hospital of St Katherine", L.M.A., CLC/199/TA/014/MS 09880.

⁹⁷ Jamison, *The History of the Royal Hospital*, 53.

Elizabeth of York's letter dated 1493 conveys something of Cardinal Protector Piccolomini's usefulness to the Tudors. The Queen wrote thus:

We understood from the letter of your most reverend lordship which we received a little earlier, your most ready and kind attitude to us, as well as the great effort you have bestowed on us for all the matters of our business which is being carried out here, and to obtain all the plenary indulgences for our hospital of St Katharine by the Tower of London and we know the difficulty and the reasons for the delay in carrying this out. We are immensely grateful to your most reverend lordship for all these things, and we will continue to be so forever, and we ask your most reverend lordship to continue steadfastly in the attitude of love and good will that you have adopted towards us and our causes and above all to accept the cause of the hospital of St Katharine as commended to you. And as soon as an opportunity arises I trust that you will put it before his most holy lord. For your most reverend lordship will be doing something that is particularly gratifying to me. If we can ever do anything to oblige you in this matter, you will undoubtedly find us most willing.⁹⁸

That Elizabeth "know[s] the difficulty and the reasons for the delay in carrying this out" implies a certain empathy with Piccolomini for his role as intermediary between Henry and Alexander. Above all, the letter indicates a number of matters already undertaken by the Cardinal on behalf of the Tudors and, in optimistic expectation of further favours, Elizabeth is keen to communicate their sincere gratitude.

A Conduit of Italian Culture to England

The granting of indulgences, facilitated through Piccolomini and publicised via the printing press, must have done much to win over popular support for the early Tudor monarchy. Meanwhile, Henry showed awareness that, in order to impress courtiers and foreign diplomats, he must deploy an alternative strategy: an unstinting display of the virtue of *magnificentia*. Popularised across the Italian peninsula by Leon Battista Alberti's *Della famiglia* (1435–44), the concept of treading this praiseworthy path between two extremes, "whereof that one is by excesse and superfluyte, and the other vice by defaute and skarsete", came more directly to Henry by way of Burgundy.⁹⁹ Henry adhered to Edward IV's division of the royal household into its two constituent parts of *Domus regie magnificencie* ("above stairs") and *Domus providencie* ("below stairs"), developing the former concept at Richmond to establish a separate royal library; to found a court school of Flemish illuminators; to appoint (for the first time) a royal portrait painter; to commission the design and manufacture of whole tapestry sets from Flanders; to increase his troupes of minstrels and players; and to introduce court masques. He also created the handsomely-remunerated position of court chronicler, and liberally patronised poets and scholars.¹⁰⁰

Henry recognised the benefits of employing humanists at his court who were skilled in declaiming orations in classical Latin, modelled on the rhetoric of antiquity. One such Italian humanist who was already resident in England before the Tudor monarch came to the throne

⁹⁸ Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fol. 13v. The letter in its entirety is transcribed in the Appendix to this paper.

⁹⁹ Olivier de la Marche, *L'État de la Maison du Duc Charles de Bourgogne dict le Hardy* (1473), cited by Alec R. Meyers, *The Household of Edward IV* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 3–4.

¹⁰⁰ Gordon Kipling, "Henry VII and the Origins of Tudor Patronage", in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, eds Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 117–64.

was the previously-mentioned Lucchese, Giovanni Gigli. The writing of a work of original scholarship and its dedication to a potentate in a richly illuminated and bound presentation copy was, by the late fifteenth century, a well-established mode of seeking patronage. Gigli was amongst those who secured early favour with Henry through his encomiastic poetry.¹⁰¹

Gigli rose through the curial ranks following his first appointment in the late 1450s in the service of Pius II and later joined the *familia* of Francesco Piccolomini's good friend, Cardinal Marco Barbo, who patronised Gigli.¹⁰² On both counts Gigli and Piccolomini must have known each other quite well.¹⁰³ In 1476, Gigli was appointed collector of Peter's Pence and papal nuncio, playing an important role as archdeacon in London and charting the course of Henry's early reign.¹⁰⁴ In 1490, he returned to Rome as Henry's resident ambassador at the papal curia. It was from here that Gigli wrote to Henry VII, as above, recommending Francesco Piccolomini as cardinal protector.¹⁰⁵ Gigli would have been glad for the opportunity to repay the favours shown to him in his early career. Subsequently in 1497, Piccolomini reversed the normal direction of his influence: using the pope's prior cooperation over Durham as a bargaining tool,¹⁰⁶ he succeeded in persuading the English King to nominate Gigli to the vacant see of Worcester, and Gigli's nephew Silvestro's subsequent succession to it, both of whom, as has been seen, were referred by the Cardinal in consistory,¹⁰⁷ a case, it seems, of Piccolomini-Gigli mutual "back-scratching".

In the case of the acclaimed poet Giovanni Michele Nagonio, there is tangible evidence that Piccolomini furnished him with a letter of introduction to carry on his journey north to England where he arrived in spring 1496.¹⁰⁸ This is recorded in an expression of thanks from Henry VII to his Cardinal Protector:

A short while ago there came to us Johannes Michael Nagonius, a Roman citizen, whom your most Reverend Lordship recommended to us as a cultured and learned man, in your letter to us dated the 8 February. He presented us with a book of poetry dedicated to our name, it being a collection of various kinds of poetry, produced as the result of lengthy studies, which we happily read and also approved.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ For instance, Giovanni Gigli, "Epithalamium in nuptiis", London, British Library, Harley MS 336; Cliff S. L. Davies, "Information, Disinformation and Political Knowledge under Henry VII and Early Henry VIII", *Historical Research*, vol. 85, no. 228 (2012), 228–53 (245).

¹⁰² Clough, "Three Gigli of Lucca", 127–9.

¹⁰³ A possibility not countenanced by Wilkie, who writes that in 1492: "... it had fallen to Gigli as sole orator in residence to initiate the new relationship with Cardinal Piccolomini", *The Beginnings*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Clough, "Three Gigli of Lucca", 136.

¹⁰⁵ See n.36 above.

¹⁰⁶ Namely in January 1494; see Section: "Revisiting Wilkie's Conclusion".

¹⁰⁷ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 10, 18; Clough, "Three Gigli of Lucca", 136–40.

¹⁰⁸ Gwynne, *Poets and Princes*, 106.

¹⁰⁹ "Henricus Dei [MS Die] gratia Rex Anglie et Francie ac dominus Hybernie Reverendissimo in Christo patri Domino Francisco Sancti Eustachii Miseratione divina Sacrosancte Romane Ecclesie Diacono Cardinali Senensi amico nostro carissimo salutem et prospera votorum incrementa. Venit ad nos pauloantea Johannes Michael Nagonius Civis Romanus quem veluti litteratum atque eruditum virum vestra Reverendissima Distinctio suis literis octavo februarii ad nos datis fecit nobis commendatum. Iste poeticum [MS. Porticum] quendam libellum nobis reddidit nomini nostro dicatum, quemquidem vario genere carminis intextum et longo studio elucubratum legimus perlibenter atque eciam provimus"; British Library, Additional MS 45131, fol.78r, transcribed in Francis Wormald, "An Italian Poet at the Court of Henry VII", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 14, no. 1/2 (1951), 118–9.

The volume of verse to which this letter refers is found today in the Minster Library at York, handsomely illuminated and bound in once-resplendent crimson cloth of gold (Fig. 8).¹¹⁰ The dedication on the title page is bordered by a frieze of antique trophies, helmets, weapons and medals, in a repertoire of *all'antica* motifs in typical Roman style. The full-page frontispiece shows Henry wearing an imperial crown and riding his triumphal car drawn by two white horses: the portrayal of an English monarch thus heading a classical imperial triumph was an innovation.¹¹¹ The panegyric poems, characteristically full of flattery, emphasize the peace and stability that Henry's reign had brought to England and affirm his status on the international stage. Archetypally Roman in visual and literary form, it is no surprise to learn that Nagonio had been crowned poet laureate.¹¹²



Fig. 8. Frontispiece and title page of Giovanni Michele Nagonio's book of Latin panegyric poetry for King Henry VII, presentation copy, Roman, c.1496, vellum, 22.5 x 29 cm. York, Minster Library, MS XVI.N.2, fols 5v, 6r. © Chapter of York: Reproduced by kind permission.

Nagonio's volume makes several references to the gift sent to Henry of the papal

¹¹⁰ York Minster Library, MS XVI.N.2.

¹¹¹ Gwynne, *Poets and Princes*, 101–21, 267–79.

¹¹² Gwynne, *Poets and Princes*, 15–16.

ceremonial cap and sword of maintenance, which had been blessed by Alexander VI on 24 December 1495 at St Peter's and which arrived in London shortly after Nagonio himself.¹¹³ On 1 November 1496, the papal gift was solemnly conveyed through the City of London and formally received by Henry at St Paul's.¹¹⁴ The highest accolade of the Holy See, the gifting of the cap and sword was construed by Francis Bacon in his *History of King Henry VII* as the pope's attempt to bribe Henry into joining the Holy League of Venice against Charles VIII of France,¹¹⁵ an event which in fact had already come to pass earlier that year on 18 July.¹¹⁶

If Bacon's interpretation bore some truth, then Nagonio's journey to London was probably motivated less by Piccolomini's promotion of humanism—heartfelt though that certainly was—and more by Alexander VI's foreign policy in the aftermath of the conquest of Naples by Charles VIII.¹¹⁷ Whilst in 1496 Nagonio had apparently arrived in England to encourage Henry VII to join the Holy League and thereby unsettle the French, two years earlier—in early 1494—the same poet had travelled to the Low Countries to present a strikingly similar and equally opulent book of poetry to Maximilian,¹¹⁸ in an attempt on that occasion to persuade the heir to the Holy Roman Empire to come to Rome to be crowned, and thus head off Charles's (at that time) imminent invasion of Italy.¹¹⁹ In view of the Cardinal's long-standing, personal friendship and frequent correspondence with Maximilian, it is highly likely that Piccolomini had provided a similar letter of introduction for the itinerant poet on that occasion too.¹²⁰ An additional note may be added to this: in late 1497, Nagonio presented a further manuscript of panegyric verse to Vladislav II Jagiello, King of Bohemia and Hungary.¹²¹ Since Cardinal Francesco also corresponded with Vladislav,¹²² he was probably once again instrumental in Nagonio's introduction to the court at Buda.

It seems that these sumptuously presented, illuminated volumes of classically-inspired verse played the dual role of refined, diplomatic gift-giving and discreet textual persuasion, in matters that were of potentially nation-changing importance for the future development of Europe. It cannot be doubted that Piccolomini was cognisant of the political circumstances that gave rise to such diplomatic missions, though—as Wilkie asserts—the precise extent of Piccolomini's approval of these political manoeuvres is difficult to ascertain,¹²³ and is a matter

¹¹³ Gwynne, *Poets and Princes*, 107–9.

¹¹⁴ John Wickham-Legg, "The Gift of the Papal Cap and Sword to Henry VII", *Archaeological Journal*, 57 (1900), 183–203 (191).

¹¹⁵ Francis Bacon, *Bacon's History of King Henry VII*, ed. J. Rawson Lumby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 162.

¹¹⁶ Currin, "England's International Relations", 26.

¹¹⁷ Gwynne, *Poets and Princes*, 75.

¹¹⁸ Vienna, Österreichisches Nationalbibliothek, MS 12.750 [suppl. 350]; Paul Gwynne, "'Tu alter Caesar eris': Maximilian I, Vladislav II, Johannes Michael Nagonius and the *renovatio Imperii*", *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1996), 56–71 (57 n.9).

¹¹⁹ Gwynne, "'Tu alter Caesar eris'", 59–62.

¹²⁰ On the Cardinal's friendship with Maximilian I and the richly decorated manuscript of Dio Chrysostomos's *De regno* that he gifted to him (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 11018), see Strnad, "Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini", 223–6, 275, fig. 4. For letters between them, see Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fols 13r, 17r, 51v, 87r, 102r and 133v.

¹²¹ Prague, University Library, MS VIII.H.76 [1659]; Gwynne, "'Tu alter Caesar eris'", 66.

¹²² Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fol. 34r.

¹²³ Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 61.

to be considered below.

In the plastic arts, the artist most often credited with introducing the Italian Renaissance to English sculpture is the Florentine Pietro Torrigiano, more famous still for having reputedly broken Michelangelo's nose.¹²⁴ Piccolomini had become acquainted with Torrigiano, perhaps while the sculptor was working for Alexander VI in the Vatican Palace during 1493–4.¹²⁵ Torrigiano's earliest surviving documented work is a marble life-size statue of Piccolomini's name saint, *St Francis* (c.1500–01), made for Cardinal Piccolomini's chapel in Siena Cathedral: the sculpture was, however, left unfinished by Torrigiano.¹²⁶ Michelangelo completed it while Torrigiano was meanwhile engaged (1496–1502) on a series of marble monuments for San Giacomo degli Spagnoli on Piazza Navona,¹²⁷ a few minutes' walk from the Cardinal's titular church and home. Torrigiano seems to have arrived in London in around 1507, after the death of Piccolomini (18 October 1503). The Cardinal, however, was probably instrumental in setting up the sculptor's employment in England through his network of prominent banking families and their representatives.¹²⁸ As will become clear, the Frescobaldi—operating in both Rome and London—seem the most likely candidates for facilitating Torrigiano's passage. The sculptor's early work in London ultimately resulted in royal commissions, such as the polychrome terracotta portrait bust of Henry VII (Fig. 3), the tomb of Henry VII's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, and the double tomb of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, both in Westminster Abbey (Fig. 9).¹²⁹ These sepulchral monuments were the culmination of the extravagant funerary ensemble that Henry VII had begun in 1503.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Alan Phipps Darr, "New Documents for Pietro Torrigiani and Other Early Cinquecento Florentine Sculptors active in Italy and England", in *Kunst des Cinquecento in der Toskana*, ed. Monika Cämmerer (Munich: Bruckmann, 1992), 108–138.

¹²⁵ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi (Florence: Sansoni, 1879), vol. 4, 255–65; Darr, "New Documents", 113.

¹²⁶ Darr, "New Documents", 109.

¹²⁷ Darr, "New Documents", 113. San Giacomo degli Spagnoli is now called Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore.

¹²⁸ Darr, "New Documents", 110, 112.

¹²⁹ Alan Phipps Darr, "Piero Torrigiani and His Sculpture in Henrician England: Sources and Influences", in *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance: Art for the Early Tudors*, eds Cinzia M. Sicca and Louis A. Waldman (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2012), 49–80.

¹³⁰ Colvin, *The History of the King's Works*, vol. 3, no. 1, 210–22.



Fig. 9. Pietro Torrigiano, *Tomb of King Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth of York*, 1512–18, gilt bronze, white marble and black touchstone. London, Westminster Abbey, Henry VII Chapel. © Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

Networks

Italian merchant-banking families with commercial footholds in the north-west of Europe, such as the Frescobaldi, Cavalcanti, Bardi, Portinari, Gualterotti and Spinelli, played a crucial role, not only in mercantilisation—as bankers and as agents in the movement of luxury goods, artefacts and materials—but also in the international mobility of human capital, in the form of artists, artisans and humanists, as well as in the circulation of ideas, knowledge, culture and taste. These networks formed, furthermore, the basis of political and diplomatic inter-

relationships.¹³¹ In the case of Torrigiano, that the merchant-bankers facilitated his movement and introduction is borne out by the fact that they played an explicit role in the brokering of royal patronage. The contract for Margaret Beaufort's tomb, commissioned in 1511 by Henry VIII, names Leonardo Frescobaldi (1485–1529) and Giovanni Cavalcanti (1480–1542) as Torrigiano's guarantors.¹³² The double tomb for Henry VII and his Queen (Fig. 9) contracted in 1512 was again guaranteed by Giovanni Cavalcanti and—this time—also by members of the Bardi family.¹³³

Giovanni Cavalcanti's activity in London can be documented only from June 1509 onwards,¹³⁴ whilst Giovanni Bardi was a resident manager there for the Medici Bank from the mid-1460s onwards.¹³⁵ In spring 1496, the heirs of Giovanni de' Bardi & Partners in London helped finance the explorer John Cabot's first north Atlantic expedition for Henry VII and thereafter played a fundamental role in relations between the English crown and the Church in Rome.¹³⁶ The enclave from which these Italian merchant-bankers operated in London was located in the north-east quarter of the city in the area in and around the religious house of Austin Friars.¹³⁷ Through the 1490s, the Bardi rented an eighteen-roomed dwelling just off Lombard Street, appropriately large for one of the most important Italian banking houses in London.¹³⁸ After the turn of the century, they obtained—along with the Cavalcanti—a slightly larger building located within the precinct of Austin Friars, the house serving also as temporary residence to Roman visitors to London.¹³⁹ The opulently appointed *palazzini* in the adjoining streets doubled as international trade houses and informal ambassadorial residences.¹⁴⁰ As others have pointed out, such relationships bear out Giorgio Vasari's intermittent references, not least in his life of Torrigiano, to the agency of Florentine merchants in the dissemination of renaissance art.¹⁴¹

Leonardo Frescobaldi (one of Torrigiano's guarantors for Margaret Beaufort's tomb) was the son of, and London agent for, Bruges-based Girolamo di Leonardo Frescobaldi (d.1518), the latter active between England, the southern Low Countries and France from the

¹³¹ Federica Veratelli, *À la mode italienne: Commerce du luxe et diplomatie dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux, 1477–1530* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2013), 39–130; Cinzia M. Sicca, "Consumption and Trade of Art between Italy and England in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century: The London House of the Bardi and Cavalcanti Company", *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2002), 163–201. Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli, "Mercanti-banchieri fiorentini tra Londra e Bruges nel XV secolo", in "*Mercatura è arte*": *Uomini d'affari toscani in Europa e nel Mediterraneo tardomedievale*, eds Lorenzo Tanzini and Sergio Tognetti (Rome: Viella, 2012), 11–44.

¹³² Sicca, "Consumption and Trade", 164; A. Bettini, "Frescobaldi, Leonardo", in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (hereafter *D.B.I.*), (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960), vol. 22 (1979), 496–98.

¹³³ Alan Phipps Darr, 'Pietro Torrigiano and His Sculpture for the Henry VII Chapel', Westminster Abbey (PhD thesis, New York University, 1980), Document D14: G5–6.

¹³⁴ Sicca, "Consumption and Trade", 167.

¹³⁵ Sicca, "Consumption and Trade", 168.

¹³⁶ Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli, "John Cabot and His Italian Financiers", *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 85, no. 229 (2012), 372–393 (379).

¹³⁷ Helen Bradley, "Italian Merchants in London, 1350–1450", (PhD thesis, University of London, 1982), 17.

¹³⁸ Guidi-Bruscoli, "John Cabot", 383–4.

¹³⁹ Sicca, "Consumption and Trade", 174–5.

¹⁴⁰ Penn, *Winter King*, 159.

¹⁴¹ Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori coll'aggiunta de' vivi et de' morti, dall'anno 1550 al 1567*, eds Paola Barocchi and Rosanna Bettarini (Florence: Sansoni, 1976), vol. 4, 121–8.

1480s until his death.¹⁴² The Frescobaldi family was one of the greatest financial powers of Europe, having first operated in London on behalf of English royalty c.1300.¹⁴³ During the early reign of Henry VII, the Frescobaldi borrowed large sums from the Crown to develop their trade with England, in return for which they provided Henry with munitions and commodities and managed his payments abroad.¹⁴⁴ They had offices not only in London and Bruges, but also in Rome.¹⁴⁵ The family's great sea-faring captain, Antonio di Bernardino Frescobaldi, had been a member of the ambassadorial mission that confirmed the Oath of Obedience on Pius II's accession.¹⁴⁶ A commander of the fleet in defence of Rhodes and Knight Hospitaller, he was appointed by Pius in January 1464 as admiral of his crusade that planned to depart from Ancona later the same year.¹⁴⁷ Without doubt, Francesco Piccolomini was personally acquainted with members of this great banking dynasty.



Fig. 10. Cope commissioned by Henry VII, probably for the occasion of Prince Arthur's coronation, c.1499, made from cloth of gold supplied by Lorenzo and Girolamo Buonvisi of Lucca, 148.5 x 314.9 cm. © Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Reproduced by kind permission of Stephen Power SJ.

Along with the Frescobaldi, the Buonvisi of Lucca also transferred vast sums of money across Europe on behalf of Henry VII.¹⁴⁸ They dealt not only in finance but also in

¹⁴² Veratelli, *À la mode italienne*, 72–3.

¹⁴³ Richard A. Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 232.

¹⁴⁴ Cinzia M. Sicca, "Pawns of International Finance and Politics: Florentine Sculptors at the Court of Henry VIII", *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2006), 1–34 (8).

¹⁴⁵ Sicca, "Pawns of International Finance", 8 n.28.

¹⁴⁶ Dino Frescobaldi and Francesco Solinas, *I Frescobaldi: una famiglia fiorentina* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2004), 41.

¹⁴⁷ Frescobaldi and Solinas, *I Frescobaldi*, 254; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, 166.

¹⁴⁸ M. Luzzati, "Buonvisi, Benedetto", *D.B.I.*, vol. 15 (1972), 302–9.

imports of fine Italian wine, silks, damasks, satins and cloth of gold. Lorenzo and Girolamo Buonvisi supplied the English King with the luxurious cloth for the vestments of the priest, deacon and sub-deacon of Westminster Abbey, plus the twenty-nine copes that Henry bequeathed to the abbey (Fig. 10).¹⁴⁹ Fabulously expensive and conspicuously opulent, with seven different threads of silver and gold, cut and uncut crimson silk pile, and heavily laden with Tudor badges, the vestments—ordered c.1498–99—must have been intended for the coronation of Prince Arthur (d.1502), who in fact pre-deceased the occasion.¹⁵⁰ Girolamo, for services rendered, was promised by Henry the bishopric of Durham, though this did not come to fruition.¹⁵¹ He was one of the second-generation Buonvisi to administer the family's merchant-banking empire that it had built up across Rome, Bruges, Lyon and London.¹⁵² A family originally of modest means, the Buonvisi were given their first steps to success by Francesco Piccolomini. Antonio Buonvisi, Girolamo's uncle, was in the cardinal's service while he was papal legate to the Marches: Cardinal Francesco successfully recommended Antonio in 1460 to the position of *podestà* of Fermo; in 1462 to *podestà* of Ancona; and in 1464 to that of Siena. Working on behalf of the latter city, in 1465 Antonio Buonvisi led an embassy to Ferrante I of Aragon in Naples, in whose service he then remained until at least 1484, becoming governor of Calabria and earning the title of *cavaliere*.¹⁵³ It was from Calabria that the Buonvisi developed its trade in silk, the family meanwhile rising to attain great heights in the Lucchese magistrature and mercantile oligarchy, a position of prominence which it maintained from the early 1480s well into the next century.¹⁵⁴ Cardinal Francesco had connections with both Lucca and the Neapolitan court. His older brother, Antonio Todeschini Piccolomini (1437–93) was married—thanks to arrangements by Pius II—to the illegitimate daughter of Ferrante. Antonio Piccolomini's military career under Ferrante was rewarded with the Duchy of Amalfi and other titles, as well as use of the surname and arms of Aragon.¹⁵⁵ Both families, the Piccolomini d'Aragona and the Buonvisi of Lucca, were present in 1477 amongst the Duke of Calabria's welcoming party to receive Ferrante's new bride, Giovanna d'Aragona.¹⁵⁶ With the rise of the Buonvisi as key players in the Lucchese economy, Lucca simultaneously became an indispensable link in the chain of contacts between international centres.¹⁵⁷ The family also had representatives operating within the curia.¹⁵⁸ It will be remembered, furthermore, that Henry's ambassador in Rome, the aforementioned Giovanni Gigli, was Lucchese, a man with whom Francesco Piccolomini worked closely.¹⁵⁹ It was precisely through such personal friendships and loyalties, and well-established commercial networks and channels of

¹⁴⁹ Lisa Monnas, "New Documents for the Vestments of Henry VII at Stonyhurst College", *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 131 (1989), 345–49 (346).

¹⁵⁰ Monnas, "New Documents for the Vestments of Henry VII", 349.

¹⁵¹ Monnas, "New Documents for the Vestments of Henry VII", 347 n.12.

¹⁵² Luzzati, "Buonvisi, Benedetto", 306.

¹⁵³ Luzzati, "Buonvisi, Benedetto", 302.

¹⁵⁴ Luzzati, "Buonvisi, Benedetto", 303.

¹⁵⁵ Fabrizio Nevola, *Siena: Constructing the Renaissance City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 166. Vittorio Spreti, *Enciclopedia storico-nobiliare italiana* (Milan: Enciclopedia Storico-nobiliare Italiana, 1932), 325–337.

¹⁵⁶ Spreti, *Enciclopedia Storico-nobiliare*, 329.

¹⁵⁷ M. Luzzati, "Buonvisi, Lorenzo", *D.B.I.*, vol. 15 (1972), 335–339 (335).

¹⁵⁸ Luzzati, "Buonvisi, Benedetto", 306.

¹⁵⁹ Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 23–4; Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 13–4; Newns, "The Hospice", 154–162.

communication that Piccolomini was able to introduce artists and humanists to Henry VII and other foreign courts.

As may be surmised, Cardinal Francesco's exact relations with the Italian banking fraternity in England are difficult to definitively evidence, not least because movements within these networks would have been negotiated largely by word of mouth. Further, correspondence with or between merchants would be unlikely to have been deemed worthy of copy letters to be preserved and archived for posterity. We do know, however, in relation to Piccolomini's protectorate over the German lands, that he not only communicated with merchant-bankers, but at least on one occasion became personally embroiled in their financial transactions, staving off the excommunication of a bishop for non-payment of a debt by pledging his own silver.¹⁶⁰ While experience may have taught him a salutary lesson in terms of risking personal assets, his involvement with such international networks seems clear.

Within Rome, Piccolomini was geographically well placed to take advantage of such contacts. His titular Church of Sant'Eustachio was located alongside the customs house (*dogana di terra* or *dogana di Sant'Eustachio*), which was the point through which imports by land were received into the city, with the tolls charged going directly into the apostolic purse.¹⁶¹ Customs registers show that such imports, brought in by nationals from those places, included fine textiles from Florence, cloth and paintings from the Netherlands and glassware from Germany.¹⁶² Bearing in mind Francesco's fluency in the German language, he without doubt utilised his contacts at the customs house for carrying his mail north to his numerous ultramontane correspondents. The route most likely taken by traffic travelling north can be tracked by way of contemporary correspondence. Crossing the Alps to Innsbruck, travellers usually progressed north-west through Ulm to join the Rhine at Speyer, onwards via Cologne, Maastricht, Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent and Dunkirk, to cross the Channel from Calais to Dover, proceeding via Canterbury to London.¹⁶³ It is a route that Francesco Piccolomini never personally travelled, yet it is one—as shown by the case of Nagonio and Torrigiano—that he opened up to others.

Revisiting Wilkie's Conclusion

Steven Gunn has noted that research on England's position in European politics under Henry VII has suffered from "deficiencies in source material, but also by its liminal position in historical study, at the end of the period conventionally studied by later medievalists and the

¹⁶⁰ In c.1464, Piccolomini was literally "protecting" Ruprecht of Bavaria, Archbishop of Cologne, by pledging to the Spinelli his own silver as a guarantee. "... eos vasa nostra argentea, ut pro aliquibus mensibus supersederent a via iuris, quam intentare animo statuerant". "... we have pledged our silver vessels to them as a guarantee so that for several months they should desist from taking the route of the law which they had decided to threaten us with". Undated copy letter, Piccolomini to Ruprecht, Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fol.131.

¹⁶¹ Richardson, *Reclaiming Rome*, 246.

¹⁶² Arnold Esch, "Roman Customs Registers 1470–80: Items of Interest to Historians of Art and Material Culture", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 58 (1995), 72–87.

¹⁶³ Cesare V. Malfatti, *Two Italian Accounts of Tudor England: A Journey to London in 1497: A Picture of English Life under Queen Mary* (Barcelona: Sociedad Alcanza de Artes Gráficas & Ricardo Fontá, 1953), 1–42. The journey lasted between 32 and 42 days; George B. Parks, "The Route of Chaucer's First Journey to Italy", *ELH*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1949), 174–187 (186 and n.36).

beginning of that studied by early modernists”.¹⁶⁴ On the Italian side, little has survived, either, of Piccolomini’s personal papers. Consistorial records are equally incomplete and sparse in detail.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, most of the business between Henry’s various representatives in Rome was transacted orally.¹⁶⁶

On Piccolomini’s protectorate, Wilkie concludes thus:

It is easy to overemphasize both the importance of Piccolomini’s services and his dedication to pursuing England’s advantage. Piccolomini did what was asked of him, but it is doubtful that he was consciously and consistently striving to support any general policy. The driving force always came unmistakably from the King, and his orators remained his principal instruments. Piccolomini’s English connection was never more than one facet of his life in the Curia, and to the very last it was overshadowed by his connections with Germany. Such an attempt to tell the history of Anglo-papal relations from 1492 to 1503 in terms of Cardinal Piccolomini’s role as protector of England can be misleading. It is as though these scraps of evidence were so many bits of bone from the skeleton of a horse, and one by generous use of imagination had sought to project from them the skeleton of a dinosaur. Piccolomini’s importance ought not to be exaggerated to fit a preconceived notion, but neither should it be ignored.¹⁶⁷

A further tentative proposition might be mooted: that Piccolomini grew to recognise the potentially profound political effects of papal and cardinalate influence on temporal affairs and towards the end of his life became disinclined to exercise this. His understanding of his power is implicit in correspondence relating to the strategic importance of the English northern borderlands. In 1494, the see of Durham became vacant when then-incumbent Bishop John Shirwood, who lived in Rome adjacent to the Palazzo di Siena, passed away on the evening of 12 January.¹⁶⁸ The next day the Cardinal wrote to the pope beseeching him not “to decide about the see of Durham until acquainted with the wish of the King of England, for that bishopric is of the greatest importance to his Majesty’s state”.¹⁶⁹ On that occasion, the Cardinal Protector was expressly bringing his influence to bear on Alexander VI in favour of the English monarch. It was, coincidentally, in the pope’s vested interest to preserve peace between England and its northern neighbour, since Henry had often enough invoked the pressing needs of defence as his reason for non-compliance in papal funding.¹⁷⁰

It seems significant then, in view of his track record since 1492 in referring thirty-four provisions to English sees, that Piccolomini’s appetite for this aspect of his role seems to diminish in the closing year of his life. It was the pope himself who referred Henry’s nomination of Adriano Castellesi to the bishopric of Hereford in 1502.¹⁷¹ Likewise it was *not* Piccolomini who referred the nomination of Roger Leyburn to the see of Carlisle on 21 June 1503, *nor* did he refer the King’s nomination of William Sever to Durham on 27 June 1503,¹⁷²

¹⁶⁴ Steven Gunn, “Henry VII in Context: Problems and Possibilities”, *History*, vol. 92, no. 307 (2007), 301–17 (301).

¹⁶⁵ *Acta camerarii* of the *Congregatio consistorialis*, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 3.1.3.1.

¹⁶⁶ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 35.

¹⁶⁷ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 38–9.

¹⁶⁸ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 8.

¹⁶⁹ *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, ed. Rawdon Brown (London: Longman, 1864–1947), vol. 1 (1864), entry 634.

¹⁷⁰ Davies, “Bishop John Morton”, 23.

¹⁷¹ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 12, 21.

¹⁷² Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 12, 21, 30.

despite these still being part and parcel of Henry's safeguarding of the Tudor dominion. There are a number of possible explanations for Piccolomini's apparent withdrawal from this activity: his failing health for one, and the rising fortunes of Castellesi, recently made cardinal and stepping into the breach, for another.¹⁷³ Throughout his protectorate, though, the Scottish question must always have seemed paradoxical to Piccolomini. Even back in 1494 when, as England's representative, he was seeking to help protect Durham against incursions from the north, at the same time in his personal life he was on friendly terms with Maximilian, who at that very time was openly grooming Perkin Warbeck to challenge Henry's sovereignty!¹⁷⁴ The anomaly must have occurred to the Cardinal when he instructed Bernardino Pinturicchio in June 1502 to paint, in his narrative mural cycle in the Piccolomini Library, a fresco of his uncle addressing King James IV of Scotland, on his conciliar mission to persuade the Scottish King to join with France against the English (Fig. 11).¹⁷⁵ In any case, by 1503 Anglo-Scottish relations were being eased by way of a truce between Henry VII and James IV,¹⁷⁶ perhaps another reason why Piccolomini may have felt it no longer necessary to interfere with the playing out of divine providence. In seeking further enlightenment on his attitude to such political manoeuvring, though, we may turn finally to the last few days of the Cardinal's life.



Fig. 11. Bernardino Pinturicchio, *The Embassy of Aeneas Piccolomini to James IV of Scotland*, 1502–08, fresco. Siena cathedral, Piccolomini library. © 2017. Photo Opera Metropolitana Siena/Scala, Florence.

¹⁷³ Piccolomini's last referral was Geoffrey Blyth to Coventry-Lichfield on 5 May 1503; Strnad, "Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini", 352 n.13. Castellesi was elevated to the Sacred College on 31 May 1503; Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 12.

¹⁷⁴ Bevan, *Henry VII*, 62.

¹⁷⁵ Lionetto Santi, *The Piccolomini Library in the Cathedral of Siena*, trans. Googie Regaldi, 3rd ed. (Siena: Duomo, 1954), 14.

¹⁷⁶ Bevan, *Henry VII*, 67.

Like his uncle, Francesco Piccolomini suffered badly from gout. Even at his election, Piccolomini's age and physical weakness marked him out as a stop-gap pope. Indeed, it was his failing health that qualified him for the post, as a way out of the stalemate resulting from the machinations of the kings of France and Spain, battling—metaphorically and literally—to secure the papal election in favour of their own candidate. Cardinal Francesco was a reluctant nominee, urging his two younger brothers not to come to Rome to campaign in his favour. Andrea Piccolomini was compliant: his more ambitious brother Iacomo, hungry for family status, came hurtling to the eternal city with money in his pocket.¹⁷⁷ Arriving on 28 August 1503 for an election that took place on 22 September, Iacomo's monetary incentives were probably less influential on the outcome of the conclave than the advancing armies lined up north and south, however.¹⁷⁸ Crowned on 8 October, Pius III was to live for only ten more days. His failing health notwithstanding, indeed possibly because of it, and realising that the clock was ticking against their opportunity for dynastic advancement, Iacomo and Andrea launched an offensive on the new pontiff to have one of their own sons raised to the College of Cardinals. Accounts by Giustinian and Sigismondo Tizio record the brothers' relentless coercion.¹⁷⁹ Failing to gain the red hat for Iacomo's son Silvio and failing again for another relative, Aldello Piccolomini, Bishop of Sovana, by means of deceit,¹⁸⁰ the brothers finally pushed once and for all to raise Andrea's son Giovanni to be appointed cardinal:

And so Pope Pius became more and more sick each day. Andrea, fearing that he would die, put pressure on him to make Giovanni his son—the Archbishop of Siena—a cardinal, and not to allow him to remain at home [...] in the city [of Siena], which was growing more and more restless from day to day. He also told him he should not forget to have pity on members of his own family. But Pius replied, “This is my vow: for you are careful to remember your affairs but are forgetful of our obligations”.¹⁸¹

The vow to which Pius III refers is his commitment not to create further cardinals until the numbers in the Sacred College had dropped to below twenty-four.¹⁸² Only when he became too frail to resist did the pope succumb to the pressure from his brothers. His

¹⁷⁷ Johannes Burchard, *Diarium sive rerum urbanarum commentarii (1483–1506)*, ed. L. Thuasne (Paris: Ernest Laroux, 1883–85), vol. 3, 253; Sigismondo Tizio, “Historiae Senenses”, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, MS II.V.140, vol. 6, fol. 535; P. Piccolomini, “Il pontificato di Pio III secondo la testimonianza di una fonte contemporanea”, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, series V, vol. 32 (1903), 102–38.

¹⁷⁸ The French army was in the north under Francesco Gonzaga; the Spanish were advancing from the south, whilst the agitations of Cesare Borgia had been temporarily silenced by removing him from Rome; Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 6, 185–197.

¹⁷⁹ Tizio, “Historiae Senenses”, fols. 539–46; Giustinian, *Dispacci*, vol. 2, 200.

¹⁸⁰ “Verum in bullis Jacobus Piccolomineus Silinum inseruerat filium, ambitione ac aemulatione exagitatus, nec non Aldellus Piccolomineus Suanensis episcopus Pontificis familiaris complice Jacobo seipsum inter creandos tres miscuerat.” “But into the bulls Iacomo Piccolomini, driven as he was by ambition and competitiveness, had inserted [the name of] his son, Silvio; Aldello Piccolomini, bishop of Sovana, a close friend of the pope, with the complicity of Iacomo, also put himself among the three [cardinals] who were to be created.” Tizio, “Historiae Senenses”, fol. 542.

¹⁸¹ “Igitur Pontifex Pius in dies magis ac magis aegrescebat. Instabat Andreas, moriturum veritus, ut Joannem filium Archiepiscopum Senensem cardinalem crearet, domumque nullo fultum tibicine in seditiosa urbe possundari in dies non permetteret, suorumque miserescere non oblivisceretur. Ipse vero respondebat: et votum: vos enim rem nostram memorare estis solliciti, nexus immemores nostri”. Tizio, “Historiae Senenses”, fol. 542.

¹⁸² Tizio, “Historiae Senenses”, fol. 546.

acquiescence, however, came too late. By this time, Pius III had not enough corporeal strength to hold the pen and sign the papal bull.¹⁸³ The brothers' hopes for a further generation of nepotistic bounty seemed thwarted.¹⁸⁴

Pius III's steadfastness until the bitter end seems to indicate his final conviction of the wrong-footedness of corrupt practices. His stand against nepotism must have been sharpened as he witnessed first-hand the lavish worldliness of his immediate predecessor Alexander VI, whose relatives became married into every family who mattered throughout Italy and Spain.¹⁸⁵ Little wonder that Francesco's reform proposals to Alexander had centred on a more democratic church government with greater devolvement to the Sacred College as the route to restored harmony in the Church.¹⁸⁶ Three days after his own election, Pius III declared to his first assembly of cardinals that his chief objective was the reform of the entire Church, extending downwards and outwards from the pope himself, to include the cardinals and the entire papal curia: a reforming council was to be summoned to meet at the earliest date possible.¹⁸⁷ As it was, he died before this could take place.

Conclusion

A modest patron of architecture in Sarteano, Rome and Siena, a collector of antiquities and an avid scholar and bibliophile, Francesco Piccolomini was at the hub of the humanist revival of ancient culture. Steeped, moreover, in the ecclesiology of Nicholas of Cusa, Bessarion and Pius, the cardinal was acutely aware of the need for urgent reform: the manuscripts collected and commissioned by Piccolomini and his marginalia reveal the extent of his own Christian Neoplatonism and his dedication to a *renovatio ecclesiae*, particularly of the *curia romana*. For humanists in Rome the issue of reform became a matter of particular urgency and was addressed in a large body of Roman humanist literature. Matters of concubinage, prostitution, luxury, religious indifference, simony and nepotism constituted the topics of general humanist condemnation. Some expressed their calls for moral regeneration in the form of written treatises directed to important clerics, as did Adriano Castellesi in dedicating his *De romanae ecclesiae potestate* (c.1492) to Piccolomini.¹⁸⁸ Whilst the curial humanists were in a position to witness and recognise systemic failures, they were, at the same time, locked into a bureaucratic infrastructure which could offer them considerable financial and social rewards. A tension was inevitable between having to operate in the pre-existing system and wishing to change it from within. Some such tension in the person of Francesco Piccolomini has been demonstrated in the preceding section.

¹⁸³ "Pius vero tremula jam manu bullas nunquam valuit subscriber." "But Pius with his trembling hand no longer had enough strength to sign the bulls." Tizio, "Historiae Senenses", fol. 543.

¹⁸⁴ Andrea's son Giovanni was made cardinal by Leo X (1 July 1517), by which time Andrea and Iacomo were both dead; Spredi, *Enciclopedia storico-nobiliare italiana*, 328.

¹⁸⁵ Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 6, 139.

¹⁸⁶ Leonce Celier, "Alexandre VI et la réforme de l'église", *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire, École Française de Rome*, vol. 27 (1907), 100–103.

¹⁸⁷ Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 6, 201.

¹⁸⁸ This proposed a foundation for the governance of the Church based on excerpts that he had extracted from canon law and rewritten into humanist Latin. A copy is held at BAV, cod Vat lat 2934; D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome*, 221.

Reverend Wilkie's forensic scouring of the Vatican Archives, coupled with his professional insight into ecclesiastical protocol, mean that his analysis of Piccolomini's national protectorate remains the most rigorous and comprehensive to date. That is not to say, however, that there can be nothing to add. Historical studies since Wilkie's heyday have expanded to embrace sustained examination of material culture and distribution networks, which reciprocally enhance our understanding of both the Church's diplomatic *modus operandi* and the practicalities of the outward spread of the *studia humanitatis*. By examining such studies, this paper has identified some of the personal and commercial connections that facilitated the movement of humanist scholars, writers and artists in a north-westerly, and indeed north-easterly, direction from Rome. The route north across the Alps and along the Rhine to the Channel and beyond became a geographic corridor for the transit of people, goods and ideas, while the networks of merchant-bankers, with and through whom Piccolomini liaised—such as the Bardi, Frescobaldi, Buonvisi and Spinelli—facilitated introductions to the Tudor court, as exemplified by Nagonio and Torrigiano. The opportunity has been taken, furthermore, to amend Wilkie's assertion of Giovanni Gigli's initiating "the new relationship" with Piccolomini c.1492 with a more recently informed understanding of their historic acquaintance.¹⁸⁹ The examination of, and research emanating from, the so-far unpublished letter to the Cardinal Protector from Elizabeth of York dated 8 February 1493 gives us a broader comprehension of the on-the-ground ramifications for the lay population of the papal granting of a plenary indulgence. In the case of St Katharine-by-the-Tower, this seems to coincide with a constellation of plans to celebrate the arrival in England of Katharine of Aragon for the royal wedding with Prince Arthur. The careful wording of the same letter, moreover, intones a certain measured empathy between two human cogs—the Queen of England and a cardinal of the Church—operating within their respective institutional machines.

When, on 22 September 1503, the Sacred College elected Piccolomini to the papacy, his service to the Tudor court in his capacity as national Cardinal Protector lapsed and seemed as if it would devolve naturally onto Adriano Castellesi, whose star had been rising. On 16 July 1499, for example, Castellesi and Silvestro Gigli, "orators and procurators of Henry VII", were admitted together as *confratres* of the English Hospice.¹⁹⁰ On 14 February 1502, Alexander VI referred Henry's nomination of Castellesi to the bishopric of Hereford and on 31 May 1503 Castellesi was created cardinal.¹⁹¹ On 3 April 1503, Castellesi and Gigli were further entrusted with obtaining Alexander's validation of the treaties between England and Scotland,¹⁹² which would help ease earlier tensions in the northern borderlands and pave the way for a shift in foreign policy under Henry VIII. Unlike that of Piccolomini, though, Castellesi's relationship with Gigli was increasingly uncomfortable, descending into outright hostility.¹⁹³ Following the death of Pius III, Castellesi continued to present himself as the cardinal responsible for English affairs at the curia. On 6 July 1504, however, his hopes to be officially recognised as such were dashed, as the new pope, Julius II, declared his choice of protector to be his own

¹⁸⁹ See n.103 above.

¹⁹⁰ Newns, "The English Hospice", 159, 191; Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 11–12.

¹⁹¹ Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 12.

¹⁹² Wilkie, *The Beginnings*, 11.

¹⁹³ Malcolm Underwood, "The Pope, the Queen and the King's Mother; or, the Rise and Fall of Adriano Castellesi", in *The Reign of Henry VII: Proceedings of the 1993 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Benjamin Thompson (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 65–81.

nephew, Galeotto della Rovere. Gigli's rivalry is thought to have played a role in Castellesi's undoing.¹⁹⁴ Galeotto successfully elicited from Julius the dispensation for Henry Prince of Wales to marry his deceased brother Arthur's widow, Katharine of Aragon.¹⁹⁵ Some years hence, the Tudor prince, by now King Henry VIII, was to petition for the *invalidation* of that same papal dispensation, circumstances that heralded England's decisive break with Rome in 1534. In the years between 1492 and 1503, the close collaboration between Piccolomini, as Cardinal Protector, and the Gigli, Henry VII's *oratores*, had provided the stable groundwork on which the thirty years of close Anglo-papal cooperation that followed could be built. Under the second Tudor monarch, Silvestro Gigli continued to serve as agent in England and Rome. Torrigiano, patronised in his early career by Alexander and Piccolomini, flourished as court sculptor for Henry VIII, whose image of monarchic power was modelled on Italianate taste. The great banking houses of the Bardi and Cavalcanti not only continued to transact royal finance and provide and transport materials, artworks and luxury goods, but rose to become crucial linchpins in political dealings between London and the papacy.¹⁹⁶ To borrow Wilkie's analogy, Piccolomini's national protectorate should not, indeed, loom dinosaur-like in its proportional importance; however it was successful in establishing the robust foundations for future Tudor diplomacy and self-fashioning.

Appendix

Bib. Ang., MS 1077, fol.13v, transcribed with kind permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali del Turismo, Rome.

Elizabeth Dei gratia Regina Angliae et Franciae domina Hyberniae reverentissimo in Christo patri domino Francesco sancti Eustachii miseratione divina sacrae Romanae ecclesiae diacono cardinali Senensi amico nostro carissimo salutem et prospera votorum incrementa.

Intelleximus ex litteris vestre reverendissime dominationis quas paulo antea accepimus promptissimum vestrum nobis beatificandum animum atque etiam summum studium quod tum ad omnia nostra negocia quae istic geruntur nobis impartitur tum etiam ad plenarias indulgentias pro hospitali sanctae Katerinae prope turrim Londoniarum inpetrandas difficultatemque et causas ipsius expeditionis retardate cognovimus [sic]: quibus omnibus de rebus immensas gratias vestre reverendissime dominationi habemus et perpetuo sumus habiture rogantes eandem vestram reverendissimam dominationem ut in ea caritate et favore quo cepit erga nos et causas nostras velit constanter perseverare ac causam ipsam hospitalis sanctae Katerinae inprimis sibi suscipere commendatam: quamprimumque temporis oportunitas sese offerat eam velit coram sanctissimo domino proponere. Faciet namque rem nobis singulariter gratam vestra reverendissima dominatio cui si qua in re gratificari unquam valebimus, haud dubie nos inveniet semper paratissimas. Ex regia nostra juxta Westmonasterium die viii Feb. M cccc lxxxiii

Elisabeth Regina Angliae et Franciae.

¹⁹⁴ Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 28–35.

¹⁹⁵ Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors*, 1.

¹⁹⁶ The Buonvisi of Lucca were also still active in London under Henry VIII; Sicca, "Consumption and Trade", 179.

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