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TAXONOMY OF PATIENCE IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENTINE POLITICAL THOUGHT

Abstract. This article examines the concept of *pazienza* present in the writings of Machiavelli and Guicciardini. It turned out that it is closely related to key concepts for their considerations, such as Fortune, Time or Opportunity, and is classified and valued by them in social interaction within the political hierarchy. In Machiavelli, the term *pazienza* is an expression of patient enduring of an inconvenient situation, which should be assessed positively or negatively depending on who is patient and in what circumstances. In the context of social relations, Machiavelli perceives the effects of patience rather negatively, because for him it is mainly an expression of weakness, leading to or resulting from the loss of political position. For Guicciardini, patience means the ability to endure adversity, but also the ability to wait for the right moment to take action. Guicciardini emphasizes the ambivalent meaning of patience, which, on the one hand, is passive bearing of someone else's will, and on the other, as an expression of understanding the situation, turns out to be necessary when concluding alliances, negotiations and conducting military activities, i.e. it is simply indispensable in socio-political life, because it promotes implementation of plans, but also limits the use of violence.

Keywords: Machiavelli, Guicciardini, patience, *pazienza*, Florence

The term *patientia* (Latin: patience) has a long tradition in ancient literature. Researchers dealing with it have emphasized the ambiguity of this concept in antiquity and considered the criteria which influenced its classification and evaluation¹. The term *patientia* was also present in the considerations of late antique

¹ R. Kaster conducted a very interesting study on the taxonomy of patience in antiquity (R.A. KASTER, *The Taxonomy of Patience, or When Is "Patientia" Not a Virtue?*, CP 97, 2002, p. 133–144). In his approach, the trait denoted by the Latin noun *patientia* described in antiquity the attitude of a person towards the surrounding world on one hand, and towards their own weaknesses and other individuals on the other. Kaster therefore proposes three ways of understanding it. Firstly, as the ability to

and medieval authors, although its semantic scope was primarily determined by the belief in the supremacy of the divine being and its dominant influence on humanity². In the Renaissance era, the understanding of the word *pazienza* underwent further transformations, not without the possibility of recognizing influences from previous epochs, which, however, became part of a new quality.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the various meanings of the concept of *pazienza*³ that emerge from the reading of the texts of Machiavelli (1469–1527) and Guicciardini (1483–1540)⁴, two politically active Florentine citizens whose

endure heat, cold, pain, and exertion, and attributes to it a significant role in human adaptation to adverse external conditions and in the process of civilization (*ibidem*, p. 135–136). Secondly, based on an analysis of Cicero's texts, Kaster also regards the trait of *patientia* as an expression of inner strength and greatness of spirit, through which a person masters themselves and consequently proves to be independent of external circumstances (*ibidem*, p. 137). Thirdly, Kaster observes that the significance of the concept of *patientia* is emphasized in social relationships when it is involved in the hierarchy among people and becomes an expression of differences in power (*ibidem*, p. 138). On the other hand, A. Pittard acknowledges that the concept of *patientia* in antiquity mainly had a social aspect and therefore was a trait full of various nuances and positively or negatively valued, depending on whether it was associated with other virtues such as strength (*fortitudo*) or steadfastness (*constantia*), or indicated submission to the orders or will of others and pointed to a low position in the social hierarchy and could be synonymous with enduring physical violence (A. PITTARD, *Exemplary Negotiations of "Patientia"*, CJ 116.3, 2021, p. 331–354, here p. 335). According to Pittard, by highlighting patience in historical examples, it was used to shape appropriate attitudes among free-born Romans because demonstrating the ability to exhibit the trait of *patientia* by individuals in interaction with those above them in the socio-political hierarchy, such as kings or tyrants, emphasized the ability of patient individuals to generate actions that, in turn, brought beneficial effects for the entire community. This emphasis on action and its resulting effects eliminated the association of *patientia* with effeminacy, servility, or generally understood passivity (*ibidem*, p. 333–335).

² In Christian antiquity, the concept of *patientia* was understood as *brave endurance of dangers, sufferings, and death*, Z. WRÓBEL, "De *patientia*" Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertuliani: zagadnienie genezy, rodzaju literackiego i kompozycji, SWr 3, 2000, p. 323–333 (here p. 323). Tertullian, in his work *De patientia*, which can be considered a type of exhortatory sermon, praised the virtue of patience and simultaneously encouraged its practice, seeing it as an emulation of divine patience (*ratio patientiae*). Tertullian also preached the necessity of exercising patience and putting it into practice (*disciplina patientiae*), as it was essential in the face of various personal human misfortunes, such as loss of wealth, experiencing harm, loss of a loved one, or the desire for revenge (*ibidem*, p. 329–330). In medieval illustrated manuscripts, considered a kind of medieval encyclopedia, *patientia* is counted among the virtues (*virtutes*) and depicted as one of the jewels adorning the left arm of the cross of Christ. Cf. F. SAXL, *A Spiritual Encyclopaedia of the Later Middle Ages*, JWCI 5, 1942, p. 82–142 (here p. 105).

³ The concept defining patience naturally appears in the texts of both Florentines in grammatically different forms: as nouns (*pazienza*, *pazienza*, *patienza*), adjectives (*paziente*), adverbs (*paziente-mente*), and their antonyms.

⁴ Melani notes that Guicciardini's reputation as a well informed politician influenced the opinion of him as a good historian. I. MELANI, *The Historian Francesco Guicciardini between Political Action and Historical Events*, [in:] *Historiographie des Humanismus. Literarische Verfahren, soziale Praxis, geschichtliche Räume*, ed. J. HELMRATH, A. SCHIRRMEISTER, S. SCHLEIN, Berlin 2013 [= TAnt], p. 169–207 (here p. 180).

reflections on politics and the human condition provide valuable insights into the political culture of their time. Both Machiavelli and Guicciardini do not dedicate detailed considerations to the concept of patience. Its taxonomy can only be sought on the margins of other issues. It turns out that the term *pazienza*, appearing on the fringes of grand concepts such as *Fortuna*, *Sorte*, *Tempo*, or *Occasione*, constitutes an integral part of them and is one of the more effective tools for individuals in their unequal struggle with socio-political reality. Therefore, the discussions are primarily focused on how Machiavelli and Guicciardini classified and evaluated the concept of *pazienza* in social interaction within the political hierarchy.

1. *Pazienza* according to Machiavelli

Machiavelli argued that man is not fully independent in his actions, as he is greatly influenced by an external force called Fortuna (*Fortuna*), which helps the individual to acquire or maintain power in the state when difficulties arise, and also takes away their influence when everything seems to be going well⁵. According to Machiavelli, however, some historical examples show that although people cannot resist the influences of Fortuna, they can strengthen or weaken its impact through their actions. In addition to Fortuna, free will (*libero arbitrio*) also matters, allowing man to decide how to act in given circumstances⁶. Therefore, individuals involved in politics, especially those at a high rung of the social ladder, should be aware that although not everything depends on them, their decisions significantly influence the ultimate outcome of a given endeavour, and the trait described by Machiavelli as *pazienza* proves to be of crucial importance. From Machiavelli's texts, it emerges

⁵ Machiavelli clearly distinguishes the concept of Fortuna from “blind and deaf Chance and Fate” (“Senz’occhi e senza orecchi Caso e Sorte”). N. MACHIAVELLI, *Opere minori*, ed. F.L. POLIDORI, Firenze 1852, p. 491. In Machiavelli's view, Fortuna has a precise plan of action, and only people, unaware of it and subject to sudden changes in life, perceive her actions as random occurrences (G. PAPPARELLI, *Virtù e Fortuna nel Medioevo, nel Rinascimento e in Machiavelli*, CSc 9, 1970, p. 76–89, here p. 77). It should be noted that Machiavelli's perspective on how it should be understood has undergone transformations. Initially, he was convinced that Fortuna cannot always favour a man, as it would require the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and in his opinion, man cannot change because innate character traits will always determine his behaviour. Positive influence of Fortuna can be discussed only when a person possesses the character traits necessary in a given political situation. Machiavelli later acknowledged that man can control his nature through proper education. Through education, he acquires skills that allow him to complement missing character traits and meet the demands of Fortuna. Therefore, among other things, he advised rulers to study history, as drawing conclusions from the past is helpful in predicting future events and teaches a certain inevitability of events. (M. SANTORO, *Fortuna, ragione e prudenza nella civiltà letteraria del Cinquecento*, Napoli 1967, p. 182, 200, 220). Therefore, among other things, he advised rulers to study history, as drawing conclusions from the past is helpful in predicting future events, and it also teaches the inevitability of events.

⁶ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Il Principe* XXV, ed. M. MARTELLI, Roma 2006 (cetera: N. MACHIAVELLI, *Principe*).

that while it can generally be interpreted as patiently enduring an unfavourable situation, it is valued positively or negatively depending on who exhibits patience and under what circumstances⁷.

1.1. *Pazienza of individuals holding high positions in the social hierarchy*

Firstly, Machiavelli argued that patience should not always be considered a virtue and valued positively because rulers should be able to adapt to the prevailing conditions at any given moment and adopt a course of action appropriate to the circumstances of time and place⁸. He does not assign a predetermined value to patient behavior in this process but presents it as one of the options and considers it a virtue only when a specific situation requires it. For example, in his work *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio*, using the example of Piero Soderini, he explains that although his patient behavior was commonly regarded as one of the virtues of his character, it should only be considered such as long as the circumstances required patient waiting and he achieved success through it. However, when times requiring something other than patience arrived, it should be considered his flaw because by counting on it to persuade his political opponents, he did not destroy them, brought misfortune upon Florence, and lost both his power and good reputation⁹. Machiavelli noted that a passive stance of a ruler could be perceived by others as a sign of weakness, rather than as a virtue. Referring to the example of the Romans who did not react to the attack of the Latins on Rome's allies, the Samnites, he explained that the Latins interpreted the lack of reaction by the Romans as weakness, which strengthened their audacity. Therefore, Machiavelli advised those in power to prioritize an active stance over patient waiting and never to relinquish something voluntarily because in the eyes of others, it is better to lose something in a struggle than to risk being perceived as passive out of fear of defeat. He believed that in such situations, opponents would

⁷ Machiavelli used the concept of patience in understanding the endurance of unfavourable situations both in relation to events in private life and those concerning state affairs. In a letter addressed to Luigi Guicciardini, Machiavelli expressed sorrow over the illness of his brother Iacopo and expressed confidence that Iacopo's patience would help him overcome the illness. N. MACHIAVELLI, *Lettere* 106 (year 1509), ed. F. GAETA, Milano 1961 (cetera: N. MACHIAVELLI, *Lettere*). Regarding the private correspondence see J.-J. MARCHAND, *Le lettere familiari di Machiavelli*, [in:] *Epistolari dal Due al Seicento. Modelli, questioni ecdotiche, edizioni, cantieri aperti*, ed. C. BERRA, P. BORSA, M. COMELLI, S. MARTINELLI TEMPESTA, Milano 2018, p. 189–199. Meanwhile, in a letter to Vettori, he expressed hope that if the Venetians could maintain patience, it would become possible to achieve peace between France, Spain, the Pope, and Venice. N. MACHIAVELLI, *Lettere* 129 (year 1513). Cf. N. MACHIAVELLI, *Lettere* 147 (year 1514).

⁸ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Principe*, XXV.

⁹ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, III, 3, vol. I–II, ed. F. BAUSI, Roma 2001 (cetera: N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*).

attack more aggressively, and rulers would risk losing their supporters, who would sense weakness and cowardice in their behaviour¹⁰. Machiavelli lamented that man cannot change his behaviour and believed this to be the case for two reasons: firstly, because it is human nature, secondly, if someone has always succeeded by acting in a certain way, it will never be possible to convince him that by acting the opposite he will also win¹¹. He therefore concluded that since it is so difficult for an individual to tame their own nature, they should seek the other's help. He therefore recommended that especially political leaders should seek advice from counsellors and show patience in listening to their opinions, but then make decisions independently¹². In this case, Machiavelli considers patience to be a passive attitude towards the actions taken by others and sees it as a means to achieve success¹³. However, if patience is shown by a person whose high social position and independence of decision do not raise any doubts, and their passive stance is only temporary, then patient behaviour should be positively evaluated in this case.

Secondly, Machiavelli observed that the concept of patience gains a distinctly positive value when combined with another virtue he considered a kind of "prudence", "cunning", or generally understood ability to deal with people (*industria*). He argued that precisely through the combination of these qualities (*pazienza e industria*), nobles in ancient Rome skilfully delayed the introduction of laws restricting their freedom¹⁴. Moreover, he not only believed that patience combined with cunningness was helpful in resolving social conflicts, but also argued that one attitude could imply the other. Advising the members of the *Signoria* on how to behave during the organization of the militia, he suggested a clever solution to announce that only those who demonstrate some skill would be exempted from service, because then those who do not want to serve in the militia would remain calm (*pazienza*) and would not protest against its formation¹⁵.

Furthermore, Machiavelli believed that only through that mental operativeness (*industria*), wielders of power and those aspiring to it could skilfully and effectively harness their eloquence (*eloquenza*), necessary for swiftly achieving their goals and interests. Therefore, the formulae of requests from those initiating any action for the patient stance of the listeners are in Machiavelli's texts an expression of a rhetorical device. In *The Art of War*, Machiavelli twice mentions the term *pazienza* in the courteous exchange of remarks between the participants of this dialogue.

¹⁰ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, II, 14.

¹¹ Therefore, Machiavelli considered the republican system to be the easiest to maintain, as it involves the co-governance of people with different dispositions. N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, III, 9.

¹² N. MACHIAVELLI, *Principe*, XXIII.

¹³ Cf. N. MACHIAVELLI, *Principe*, XXV.

¹⁴ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, I, 37.

¹⁵ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Scritto sul modo di ricostruire l'ordinanza*, [in:] *Istorie Fiorentine e altre opere storiche e politiche*, ed. A. MONTEVECCHI, Torino 2007, p. 129–133 (here p. 132).

Fabrizio Colonna, in conversation with Cosimo Rucellai, requests patient listening so that he can thoroughly discuss the chosen matter¹⁶. Zanobi Buondelmonti, on the other hand, who is assigned an active role in the dialogue, although he would prefer to remain a passive listener, takes on an active role by stating that he will not hesitate to speak up, not wanting to abuse the patience of his interlocutor, Luigi Alamanni¹⁷. Machiavelli himself, in the introduction to one of the writings belonging to the group of texts dedicated to the organization of the citizen militia, announcing an explanation of where its members should be recruited from, asks the reader for patient reading of this work¹⁸. In a letter to Vettori dated August 26, 1513, Machiavelli also asks his recipient to maintain patience and listen to his arguments on disputed issues¹⁹.

1.2. *Pazienza of individuals lower in the social hierarchy*

Firstly, Machiavelli pointed out that the patient attitude of individuals who do not hold power is conditioned by the behaviour of those above them in the socio-political hierarchy. Ironically, Machiavelli observed that sometimes those in power must patiently endure the dissatisfaction of others with this fact and obediently fulfil their demands to maintain the political *status quo*²⁰. He believed that this type of behaviour could yield desirable results, as in a situation where many people have suffered harm, it is easier to avoid revenge than in the case of individual victims²¹. Therefore, the patience of those in power, in his view, implied patiently enduring inconveniences by others. However, he warned that one should always reckon with the possibility of retaliation in the form of conspiracies and alliances between political adversaries²². In his opinion, this stemmed from the fact that people in inferior positions in society are usually envious of the power and fame

¹⁶ N. MACHIAVELLI, *L'arte della guerra*, I, 44, ed. F. CINTI, Siena 2007 (cetera: N. MACHIAVELLI, *Arte della guerra*). Fabrizio Colonna (c. 1450–1520), representative of one of the greatest Roman patrician families and a renowned commander; Cosimo di Cosimo Rucellai (1494–1519), grandson of Bernard Rucellai, a representative of the Florentine patrician family that founded the Orti Oricellari – a meeting place for intellectuals of that era, dominated by their political discussions.

¹⁷ N. MACHIAVELLI *Arte della guerra*, IV, 5. Zanobi Buondelmonti (1491–1527), one of the main leaders of the conspiracy against Cardinal Julius de' Medici, later Pope Clement VII; Luigi Alamanni (1495–1556), a member of a merchant family, one of the participants in the conspiracy against Julius de' Medici.

¹⁸ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorso dell'ordinare lo stato di Firenze alle armi*, [in:] *Istorie Fiorentine e altre opere...*, p. 99–104 (here p. 99).

¹⁹ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Lettere* 138 (year 1513).

²⁰ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie fiorentine*, III, 11, [in:] *Istorie Fiorentine e altre opere...*, p. 275–761 (cetera: N. MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie fiorentine*).

²¹ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie fiorentine*, III, 13.

²² N. MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie fiorentine*, VIII, 1.

of others, so they cannot patiently endure such situations, and unless they feel mortal threat, they will always seek to change them²³. In *Florentine Histories*, he recounts that when the supporters of the Medici paved their return to Florence in September 1434, many Florentine patricians, such as Albizzi, Peruzzi, or Strozzi, were sentenced to exile. The Pope, who participated in negotiations with the enemies of the Medici, advised Rinaldo degli Albizzi to trust in the variability of Fortune, to maintain patience, and wait for the opportune moment to gain power²⁴. From the example of Rinaldo, Machiavelli drew the conclusion that some individuals will always fight for their interests and never patiently endure situations they deem unworthy of their position. In Machiavelli's narrative, Rinaldo, during the time of the Florentine Republic as a military commissioner, invaded Lucca, appropriated all the goods for himself, and bought others from soldiers in such quantity that he began to be called a merchant. When he heard what was being said about him, he went to Florence and appeared before the Council of Ten. Acknowledging that he could no longer patiently endure criticism and thus undermining his authority, which could result in a loss of influence, he demanded official protection of his good name from the Council²⁵. Machiavelli observed that there were, of course, exceptions to this rule. An example of this could be seen in the case of Antonio Giacomini, who had been entrusted with command in difficult wars fought by Florence since 1494. However, when an easy victory over Pisa was expected, Giacomini was not called into service. Incompetent leadership led the Florentines to pay the Pisans for surrender, when they could have achieved the same result through force without incurring additional financial costs. According to Machiavelli, it was only Giacomini's great patience that prevented him from seeking revenge despite considering it a personal insult, and he refrained from trying to overthrow the Florentine regime²⁶.

Secondly, patience in Machiavelli's view could sometimes be an expression of the ability to restrain emotions and maintain self-control. This meaning is derived from a letter dated September 23, 1505, addressed to Antonio Tebalducci. The commander of an attack on Pisa, who, due to the cowardice of the infantry, could not effectively carry out the attack and began to be blamed for the lack of success, demanded from the Florentine authorities to be recalled and threatened to leave the battlefield even without permission from the Council of Ten. Machiavelli then asked him to exercise patience by controlling his agitation, achieving

²³ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, III, 30. Machiavelli was convinced that especially those who believe they should rule will not patiently endure the authority of another person. N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, III, 4.

²⁴ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie fiorentine*, IV, 33.

²⁵ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie fiorentine*, IV, 22.

²⁶ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, III, 16.

inner peace, and waiting to take action until an official decision was announced²⁷. On the other hand, as an example of the effect of failing to control violent emotions, equivalent to the lack of patience, one can consider the reaction described by Machiavelli as impatient, because it was lively and full of gratitude, of the Venetians to the words of the Florentine envoy, who, speaking to Doge Francesco Foscarelli, assured that Venice would receive military support from Florence during the clash with the Duke of Milan, Filippo Maria Visconti²⁸.

Summarizing the considerations regarding the concept of *pazienza* in Machiavelli, it can be stated that although he recognized the positive qualities of patient endurance in difficult situations, in the context of social relations, unless a specific situation required it and was accompanied by another virtue justifying such behaviour to some extent, he assessed the effects of its influence negatively. Generally speaking, for him, it was an expression of weakness, leading to or resulting from the loss of political position. Therefore, in his view, only those whose power was unquestionable could afford to show it. He advised everyone else to avoid it.

2. *Pazienza* in Guicciardini's perspective

Guicciardini, like Machiavelli, argued that human life is influenced by the unpredictable *Fortuna*, but unlike his fellow countryman, he considered its influence on the individual to be decisive and not subject to any modifications²⁹. Furthermore, he believed that history was evidence that no event ever repeated itself in exactly the same version, so he considered seeking and formulating general principles to be futile³⁰. Therefore, he recommended carefully and meticulously studying each political situation individually (*discrezione*) and making decisions based on the conclusions drawn, which would be appropriate and beneficial for the specific individual and their interests (*il particolare*). The concept of patience in the context of this theory gained dual meaning. On the one hand, it could be understood as the ability to endure adversity, and on the other hand, as the skill of waiting for the right moment to take action³¹.

²⁷ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Lettere* 68 (year 1505).

²⁸ N. MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie fiorentine*, V, 21.

²⁹ Guicciardini conceived *Fortuna* (*Fortuna*) as a force that determines the ultimate success or failure of human actions, unlike Fate (*Sorte*), which he understood as the force by which everything follows a predetermined path from above. M. CZAPIŃSKA-BAMBARA, *Ēthos przywódcy politycznego w myśli starożytnej i renesansowej. Platon, Cyceron, Machiavelli, Guicciardini*, Łódź 2019, p. 180.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 188–189.

³¹ Guicciardini, similar to Machiavelli, spoke about the importance of maintaining patience both in private life (F. GUICCIARDINI, *Oratio Accusatoria*, [in:] *Opere di Francesco Guicciardini*, vol. I, ed. E. LUGNANI SCARANO, Torino 1983 (cetera: F. GUICCIARDINI, *Accusatoria*), p. 513–568; here p. 533) and in public affairs (F. GUICCIARDINI, *Accusatoria*, p. 519).

2.1. *Pazienza* of individuals high in the social hierarchy

Firstly, Guicciardini regarded patience as the ability to endure difficult situations. In his collection of *Ricordi*, he stated that patience is most desirable in significant, far-reaching political endeavors. He reached this conclusion through an analysis of the behavior of popes and how their character traits influenced the ultimate outcome of their actions³². In his view, it was patience that distinguished the early Roman popes, starting from the apostle Peter to Pope Sylvester I, and the gradual decline of patience among subsequent church dignitaries marked a change in the character of the Church's policy, which, according to Guicciardini, over time became primarily focused on the earthly power struggle of individuals, as papal dignitaries indulged in the respect shown to them and the privileges associated with it³³.

Secondly, Guicciardini understood patience as the ability to wait for an opportune moment. He believed that especially individuals in high social positions actively engaged in politics should be characterized by it, as in their case, showing hatred towards anyone or visibly seeking revenge on anyone could be interpreted as using their public office for private matters. He advised them, therefore, to maintain patience and wait (*Abbia pure pazienza e aspetti tempo*), as it is impossible that an opportunity (*occasione*) to achieve the same thing won't eventually arise, but in a justifiable manner and without causing offence to anyone³⁴. He considered the inability to wait for the right opportunity as the cause of the political failure of Ludovico Sforza, who first brought French troops into Italian territories and then was deprived of power by the king of France³⁵. Guicciardini believed

³² F. GUICCIARDINI, *Ricordi*, B 159, ed. R. SPONGANO, Firenze 1951 (cetera: F. GUICCIARDINI, *Ricordi*). Cf. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Ricordi*, A 135.

³³ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, IV, 12, vol. I–III, ed. E. MAZZALI, Milano 2006 (cetera: F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*). Initially, Guicciardini also appreciated the trait of patience understood as endurance of adversities in the contemporary Pope Clement VII (F. GUICCIARDINI, *Ricordi*, B 159). However, over time, when he became disillusioned with him, during the re-editing of his *Ricordi*, he stopped mentioning him by name and consequently gave his reflections a more general character.

³⁴ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Ricordi*, C 175. Cf. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Ricordi*, A 13 and B 37, it can be inferred that the absence of offence from the person on whom potential revenge is taken simply results from their lack of knowledge about who caused them harm: *aspetti el tempo e la occasione, perché senza dubio a lungo andare gli verrà di sorte, che senza scoprirsi maligno o passionato, potrà in tutto o in parte soddisfare al suo desiderio* [wait for the time and the opportunity, because without a doubt, eventually it will come about, so that without revealing oneself as malicious or passionate, one may fully or partially satisfy their desire]. In ancient and medieval tradition, anger, which led to crimes, was considered the opposite of patience. Medieval illustrated manuscripts depict the virtue of Patience as the adversary of Anger, and any doubts about which path one should follow are dispelled by the figure of a divine angel, who inclines towards Patience. F. SAXL, *A Spiritual Encyclopaedia...*, p. 103.

³⁵ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storie fiorentine dal 1378 al 1509*, XIX, ed. R. PALMAROCCHI, Bari 1968, p. 190 (cetera: F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storie fiorentine*). He states that Ludovico Sforza's impatience hindered him from pursuing a consistent policy even when he supported the Florentines in capturing

that every undertaking should be carried out in its own time, when the appropriate opportunity arises, because then things not only almost happen by themselves but are also perceived as done wisely³⁶. In the *Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze* Bernardo del Nero, in conversation with Florentine politicians about the best form of government, explains that patient people are considered wise because the ability to wait for the right moment is a sign of wisdom. Only then can one efficiently and effectively realize their intentions. Otherwise, not only may the goal remain unattained, but harm may also be done to oneself and others³⁷.

Guicciardini observed that patience could be perceived as passive waiting and thus might be negatively valued. An example of this, in his opinion, was Pope Alexander VI reaction to Ferdinand I encouragement to Franceschetto Cibo, Count of Anguillara, to sell lands near Rome to Duke Bracciano Virginio Orsini, whom Ferdinand then lent most of the money for the purchase, without Alexander VI knowledge³⁸. When the pope learned of this, he assumed that the actions of Ferdinand I were not influenced by the greed of Virginio Orsini or the value of the purchased lands, but by a desire to test his patience (*tentare la sua pazienza*³⁹). The pope then concluded that one cannot patiently endure (*tollerando con pazienza*) even the slightest insults and injuries, as such behaviour results in a lack of respect in the eyes of others and encourages further harmful actions. He believed that only his immediate reaction could confirm the greatness and majesty of the Roman pontificate⁴⁰.

Patience understood as passivity in the face of political actions from states outside the Italian Peninsula was criticized by Guicciardini, who claimed that it had encouraged the King of France to attack the Duchy of Milan⁴¹. The Florentine observed that delaying decisions by those conducting military operations also results in soldiers losing patience, which can ultimately lead to defeat⁴².

Pisa, thus failing to reap the rewards of his earlier efforts made in this direction. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, II, 4.

³⁶ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Ricordi*, B 117.

³⁷ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze*, II, [in:] *Opere di Francesco Guicciardini*, vol. I, p. 297–473 (here p. 447). Bernardo del Nero was a supporter of the Medici. In the opinions presented by him, some researchers perceive the views of Guicciardini himself. D. CANTIMORI, *Machiavelli, Guicciardini, le idee religiose del Cinquecento*, Pisa 2014, p. 167.

³⁸ Franceschetto Cibo was the illegitimate son of Pope Innocent VIII, and after his death, he came under the protection of Pietro II de' Medici, the brother of his wife Magdalena, and moved to Florence.

³⁹ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, I, 3.

⁴⁰ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, I, 3. Cf. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, IV, 6: the Venetians raised the same issue during the discussion regarding providing support to King Charles VIII of France against Ludovico Sforza, whom they wanted to retaliate against because, in their opinion, he had benefited greatly from their side without reciprocating.

⁴¹ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, VII, 7. Cf. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, V, 1.

⁴² F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, IX, 13.

In the *Prosecutorial Oration* written after the papacy's defeat in the war against Charles V, he portrayed Piero Soderini as a man full of virtues, among which he also mentioned patience⁴³. However, he believed that due to it, Soderini had waited too long for solid evidence of some citizens' ill intentions towards the city and its inhabitants, which was interpreted as negligence or even cowardice⁴⁴. Therefore, in Guicciardini's assessment, the former gonfalonier died in exile, and the city endured captivity⁴⁵. Francesco acknowledged that those who vigorously seek power rely on the excessive patience of their political opponents⁴⁶. He stated that Filippo Strozzi married Peter Medici's daughter Clarice at the instigation of people who, by paving the way for the Medici's return to Florence, believed they would succeed because good citizens would only passively observe their actions without taking any remedial measures⁴⁷. The concluding warning in the speech, that such great patience in merely observing those who act to the detriment of citizens should not turn into great anger, which will destroy not only those harming the state but also those who passively observed them and thus became complicit in the misfortune, is an expression of the belief that only waiting supported by a proper assessment of the situation and readiness for counteraction can bring the expected results⁴⁸.

Thirdly, according to Guicciardini, patience should be particularly valued if it is accompanied by other useful political virtues, such as cunning (*industria*) or craftiness (*astuzia*). He regarded this combination as essential in the behaviour of military leaders. He believed that by combining cunning and patience (*con la industria e con la pazienza*), they could thwart the actions of their opponents and achieve victory without shedding the blood of their soldiers⁴⁹. Guicciardini believed that King Ferdinand I of Naples was distinguished by his ability to overcome obstacles and difficulties through patience combined with cleverness (*astuzia*)⁵⁰.

2.2. *Pazienza* of individuals lower in the social hierarchy

Guicciardini regarded enduring adversity not only as a crucial skill for those in power who seek to maintain their primacy. In Guicciardini's view, enduring inconveniences (tolerating inconveniences patiently) was particularly necessary

⁴³ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Accusatoria*, p. 550.

⁴⁴ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Accusatoria*, p. 551.

⁴⁵ Cf. N. MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, III, 3.

⁴⁶ Guicciardini, who was blamed for the papacy's defeat, attempting to demonstrate the baselessness and injustice of those accusations, portrayed himself in the worst light, and the Florentine people, in contrast to his faults, ironically labeled "patient" (F. GUICCIARDINI, *Accusatoria*, p. 522). Cf. D. CANTIMORI, *Machiavelli, Guicciardini...*, p. 166.

⁴⁷ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Accusatoria*, p. 552.

⁴⁸ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Accusatoria*, p. 568.

⁴⁹ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, XV, 14. Cf. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, XVII, 10.

⁵⁰ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, V, 3.

during the formation of political alliances, conducting negotiations, or serving in the military, thus also characterizing individuals lower in the social hierarchy and therefore playing a secondary role in the power game⁵¹. In their case, however, the clear boundary between understanding *pazienza* as the ability to endure adversity and the skill of waiting blurs, as if merging both meanings into one. Guicciardini believed that patience was an essential element of military tactics for each of the warring parties. In his *History of Italy*, he explained that the desire of the people of Milan to resist the French king led them to patiently endure all the obstacles imposed on them by the French commander Odetto di Foix, who, on the other hand, hoped that over time, by cutting off food and water supplies to the city and patiently waiting, he would conquer Milan⁵². He also noted that military patience is conditioned by other circumstances, such as the purpose for which soldiers engaged in battle. In his account, Swiss soldiers in the French army changed their behaviour and lost patience after their pay was delayed for too long. They then announced that they were leaving the French ranks not out of fear of the enemy but due to the lack of respect for their dedication evident in the failure to pay them what they were owed⁵³. Similarly, in his narrative, German soldiers acted in Pavia⁵⁴. Guicciardini considers the lack of ability to endure inconvenience and wait in some cases as an evident flaw and a cause of political failures. In his opinion, Cardinal Alfonso Petrucci's conspiracy against the pope was uncovered due to Alfonso's impatience, who, unable to refrain from complaining about the pope's ingratitude, aroused suspicion among the pope's supporters⁵⁵. Opponents of the Medici accused them of lacking patience in enduring the consequences of officials' decisions and used this argument as their main point, trying to prevent their return to Florence from exile⁵⁶. On the other hand, Guicciardini reproached Bernard Rucellai for his impatience, despite being a respected and esteemed citizen, because he couldn't assess situations well and, as a result, didn't make a political career⁵⁷.

⁵¹ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, I, 5; IX, 11; X, 16. Guicciardini believed that the peoples conquered by Rome patiently (*pazientemente*) endured its domination because the Romans dealt with them skilfully. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Considerazioni sopra ai Discorsi del Machiavelli sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio*, XIII, [in:] *Opere*, vol. VIII, ed. R. PALMAROCCHI, Bari 1933.

⁵² F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, XIV, 13.

⁵³ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, XIV, 14.

⁵⁴ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, XV, 14. On the other hand, he regarded the inability to wait (*impazienza*) as an innate trait of the French (F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, I, 8. Cf. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, VII, 3).

⁵⁵ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, XIII, 7. Similar behavior raised suspicions among royal supporters. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, XIII, 10.

⁵⁶ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, XI, 3.

⁵⁷ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storie fiorentine*, XXVI, p. 284. Cf. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Accusatoria*, p. 553; F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storia d'Italia*, I, 3.

Moreover, Guicciardini sometimes understood patience as enduring adversities and waiting, which he saw as expressions of mere powerlessness. This can be observed in the lively correspondence Guicciardini, as Lieutenant General of the allied forces of the League of Cognac, maintained with its representatives to exchange information, advice, issue and receive orders. In letters from 1526 to Giammatteo Giberti, faced with the unfavourable turn of events for the League's interests, he urged him to maintain patience: enduring difficulties and accepting them⁵⁸. In a letter from 1529 written in response to an accusation that he acted in favour of the Medici against the state, he explained that he had nothing to do with the return to power of the Medici in 1512, as he was then an ambassador in Spain and was absent from Florence. Moreover, since he had never been indebted to the city, conspired with anyone, or even said or done anything suspicious, he was convinced that eventually his innocence and truth would come to light, and therefore assured that he would patiently endure the difficult situation in which he found himself⁵⁹.

Concluding the above reflections, it can be stated that while Guicciardini observed that in social relations, patiently enduring adversity may be perceived by political opponents as a sign of powerlessness, in most cases, he regarded it as a *sine qua non* condition for political success. Guicciardini was convinced that patience is also a form of waiting skill, which in his opinion was necessary to take action at the right time and consequently triumph in political struggle.

* * *

Summarizing the considerations on the taxonomy of the concept of *pazienza* by both Florentines, it can be observed that the examples of the use of the term *pazienza* drawn from the writings of the Florentines are extremely useful. They demonstrate not only how patience was manifested during the Renaissance depending on an individual's social status and identity but also that its reception among others was conditioned by the position of the person exhibiting patience. It turns out that reconstructing the concept underlying the term *pazienza* also allows us to briefly observe the changes that occurred in the understanding of this

⁵⁸ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Lettere e istruzioni*, XXV, p. 75, [in:] *Opere inedite di Francesco Guicciardini. Lettere e istruzioni scritte durante la luogotenenza generale per il papa Clemente VII*, vol. IV, ed. P. GUICCIARDINI, L. GUICCIARDINI, Firenze 1863 (cetera: F. GUICCIARDINI, *Lettere e istruzioni*); F. GUICCIARDINI, *Lettere e istruzioni*, CXLIII, p. 403; CCXIX, p. 592–593.

⁵⁹ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Lettere (1499–1540)*, XXIII (year 1529), ed. P. MORENO, Torino 2022, cetera: F. GUICCIARDINI, *Lettere (1499–1540)*. Regarding the latest edition of Guicciardini's Letters published by P. Jodogne and P. Moreno, L. BATTISTINI, *Recenti studi su Francesco Guicciardini (2009–2020)*. *Prima parte*, SRin 18, 2020, p. 103–116 (here p. 112–113). This kind of understanding of patience also appears in private condolence correspondence that Guicciardini conducted with his sister Costanza after the death of her husband, Lodovico Alamanni. In a letter dated August 6, 1526, he asked her to endure this difficult situation with patience. F. GUICCIARDINI, *Lettere (1499–1540)*, XL.

concept under the influence of socio-political changes that took place in sixteenth-century Florence⁶⁰. In Machiavelli's early letter from 1505, written during the time when Piero Soderini held the position of the civil ruler of the Florentine Republic (*gonfaloniere di giustizia*) and Machiavelli served as his secretary and "right-hand man"⁶¹, the word patience appears basically only in the sense of self-control. Machiavelli certainly observed patience in Piero, who was valued in Florence precisely for this quality, but apparently did not attribute it a greater role in Soderini's political decisions. Only the writings⁶² produced after Piero's exile in 1512 serve as evidence that he began to consider its meaning and question its generally positive evaluation, which had been enjoyed in common opinion since ancient times⁶³. He then advised against adopting a passive stance in politics, as it could be perceived by political opponents as weakness and encourage confrontation. Later, when the Medici returned to power and he finally managed to gain their favour, evidenced by the commission in 1519 to write the history of Florence, he concluded that since holding power is inevitably associated with the threat of its loss, patience proves essential in maintaining social peace and can serve as a guarantee of limiting opportunities for violence to preserve or seize power.

⁶⁰ Cf. S. Schwandt, who notes that the concepts used by historians to describe the intriguing issues they encounter reflect the complexity of the socio-political structure of a given period. S. SCHWANDT, *Virtus as a Political Concept in the Middle Ages*, CHC 10.2, 2015, p. 71–90 (here p. 77).

⁶¹ Machiavelli's duties included handling correspondence related to the administration of the Florentine land in Tuscany, the military, and foreign policy. He was also dispatched as an envoy to conduct observations, analyses, and notes on important matters. However, he did not engage in negotiations or conclude pacts. F. BAUSI, *Machiavelli*, Roma 2005, p. 42–43.

⁶² Although the history presented by Machiavelli in the *Florentine Histories* (N. MACHIAVELLI, *Istorie fiorentine*) was shaped according to the humanistic scheme of recording history, it reflects the political interests of its author and the political issues of his time. F. GILBERT, *Machiavelli e Guicciardini. Pensiero politico e storiografia a Firenze nel Cinquecento*, Torino 1970, p. 165.

⁶³ Cicero in his treatise *On Invention* (*De inventione*) – an unfinished rhetoric manual, which was his youthful work, expressed the conviction that patience is one of the qualities constituting human strength (*fortitudo*), specifying that it is the voluntary and enduring endurance of adversity and hardships in order to achieve noble and useful goals (*patientia est honestatis aut utilitatis causa rerum arduarum ac difficilium voluntaria ac diuturna perpassio*). M. T. CICERO, *De inventione*, II, 163, with an English trans. by H. M. HUBBELL, London 1960). In *Rhetorical Partitions* (*Partitiones Oratoriae*), which he wrote in 46 BCE as an experienced orator, he explained that while courage (*fortitudo*) enables one to face impending misfortunes, patience allows one to endure persistently those that have already come (*nam quae venientibus malis obstat fortitudo, quae quod iam adest tolerat et perfert patientia nominator*). M. T. CICERO, *Partitiones oratoriae*, 77, ed. R. GIOMINI, Roma 1996). In both cases, he treated it as one of the *virtus* of man. Cf. A. PITTARD, *Exemplary Negotiations...*, p. 333–335. However, it should be noted that in antiquity, when the significance of the concept of *patientia* was entangled in a hierarchy among people, it became an expression of differences in power and was perceived as passive submission to the will of others. At that time, it was considered an ambiguous quality and not always valued as a virtue (*virtus*). In this context, the trait of patience was regarded as the quintessence of slavery and expressed "a complete absence of will". R. A. KASTER, *The Taxonomy of Patience...*, p. 139.

In the *Florentine Histories*⁶⁴ written between 1508 and 1509, during the period of popular rule in Florence, Guicciardini observed that if patience was not a strong suit of individuals widely esteemed, despite many virtues, they ultimately experienced political failure. His later texts attest that the concept of patience began to intrigue him more and he devoted some more attention to it. In works drafted during the subsequent exile of the Medici, between 1527 and 1530, he stated that demonstrating patient conduct should be contingent on external circumstances, as it should not always be regarded as an individual virtue. Patience should be considered as a form of skilful waiting, conditioned by the given situation, as it then becomes crucial and contributes to the ultimate victory⁶⁵. In *The History of Italy*, written between the end of 1536 and 1540⁶⁶, therefore towards the end of the author's (an experienced diplomat and politician's) life, and at a time when Cosimo I de Medici took over undisputed rule in Florence, the theme of patience recurs several times. Guicciardini emphasizes in it the ambivalent significance of patience, which on the one hand means passive endurance of someone's will, and on the other hand, becomes an expression of situational awareness; it proves indispensable during the formation of alliances, negotiations, and military actions. In other words, it is simply essential in socio-political life, as it facilitates the implementation of plans, but also limits the use of violence.

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⁶⁴ Due to the fact that Guicciardini himself repeatedly apologizes for not strictly adhering to the method of recording history and allows for various digressions, scholars emphasize the more political than historical character of the work. D. CANTIMORI, *Machiavelli, Guicciardini...*, p. 187. However, some argue that the political dimension of the work only enhances the reconstruction and historical analysis of Florentine past and in a way allows for a better understanding of it. E. CUTINELLI-RENDINA, *Guicciardini*, Roma 2009, p. 153.

⁶⁵ *Ricordi*, like *Storia d'Italia*, were published after Guicciardini's death. According to Raffaele Spongano, series A was created before the year 1525 (around 1523), series B in 1528, and series C in 1530. R. SPONGANO, *Francesco Guicciardini, Ricordi*, Firenze 1951, p. 41–42. Cf. E. CUTINELLI-RENDINA, *Guicciardini...*, p. 229, 238, 255.

⁶⁶ E. CUTINELLI-RENDINA, *Guicciardini...*, p. 188.

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