Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers

Barozzi, Francesco

Born Candia (Heraklion), Crete, (Greece), 9 August 1537

Venice, (Italy), 23 November 1604 Died

Francesco Barozzi is important to the history of astronomy both for his attempts to reform the teaching of astronomy and in his advocacy of the value of mathematics and mathematical sciences.

Barozzi was born into a noble Venetian family with extensive holdings in Rettimo (modern Rethymnon) in Crete, and spent many years of his life there on family business. He received a humanistic education culminating in the University of Padua, where Barozzi studied mathematics and philosophy. By 1559, he was lecturing there on the Sphere of John of Holywood Barozzi actively participated in the Renaissance effort to recover classical texts and study them critically. In that spirit, he searched for, collected, copied, edited, translated, and (in some cases) also published ancient Greek mathematical works, including those of Proclus, Hero, Pappus, and Archimedes. Barozzi possessed one of the finest collections of ancient manuscript texts on mathematical topics in his era and actively patronized the work of others. He also published an original work on the geometry of parallel lines and a cosmography intended to replace Sacrobosco's *Sphere*. (See below.) Barozzi's interests extended well beyond mathematics to include dabbling in astrology, natural magic, and sorcery. He was tried, convicted, and penalized by the Venetian Inquisition at least once, in 1587, for a variety of conjugations in Crete, apparently inspired by his reading of Cornelius Agrippa and Peter d'Abano. (He was condemned and confined by the Holy Office on at least one other occasion for unknown reasons.) Though Barozzi regained his freedom by 1588, he published little during the rest of his life.

In publishing his Cosmographia (Venice, 1585, 1598, and translated into Italian, 1607), Barozzi attempted to replace what he saw as a flawed basis for astronomical teaching, namely the venerable Sphere of Sacrobosco and the commentaries on it. His new text corrected, so he claimed, the numerous errors of the old, and Barozzi devoted many pages of his text to listing and explaining these errors (most of which were procedural or didactic in nature). His criticisms provoked an amicable exchange of correspondence with Christoph Clavius, author of one of the foremost contemporary Sphere commentaries Though Barozzi offered no important corrections or innovations to the subject matter of astronomy itself, his attempts at reform are a further example of the strength of the sentiments for such change in the middle and late 16th century, and especially within the University of Padua. In an era when the value of teaching mathematical subjects and the status of mathematical sciences themselves were being questioned (usually by Aristotelian philosophers such as Alessandro Piccolomini), Barozzi defended not only the utility of mathematics, but also the suitability of mathematical methods for investigating and reasoning about nature.

James M. Lattis

Alternate name

Franciscus Barocius

Selected References

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Giacobbe, Giulio Cesare (1972). "Francesco Barozzi [1537-1604] e la Quaes-tio de certitudine mathematicarum." *Physis* 14: 357-374.

Rose, Paul Lawrence (1977). "A Venetian Patron and Mathematician of the Sixteenth Century: Francesco Barozzi (1537-1604)." ^., 1: 119-178. (This is the best treatment of Barozzi; it includes a complete bibliography of primary sources and also prints a number of his letters.)

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