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Francesco Orioli: A Multifaceted Physicist in the Early Italian Renaissance

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Among the physicists of the University of Perugia in the 19th century, the figure of Francesco Orioli emerges as one of the most famous who taught in Perugia. He was born in Vallerano (Viterbo) in 1783 and died in Rome in 1856. He was appointed professor of Physics in 1813 at the University of Perugia and then moved to the University of Bologna. He remained in Bologna until the riots of 1831, due to his participation he was forced to flee first to France and then to Corfu until his return to Rome with the amnesty of 1846. He was a multifaceted man: patriot, humanist, archaeologist, doctor, teacher and physicist. He is well known for his role as an active patriot from the First Italian Risorgimento. The documentation on his biography as a politician is quite extensive, while there are no systematic studies on his activity as a scientist. In this research we will try to fill this gap. His studies allow us to make an overview of the state of the art of various scientific issues, some quite controversial, as they presented themselves in the first half of the 19th century. As a physicist he had many interests, also interested in astronomy, he was particularly active in the field of meteorology and electrology, dealing with the controversial problem of the so called Paragrindini that animated the academic debate of the first half of the nineteenth century in which Volta also took part.

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