EAST CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE PENITENTIARY (1458–1484)

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The aim of this contribution is to give a first overview of ongoing research rather than to offer final answers to the questions it raises. We will discuss the petitions to the Penitentiary from East Central Europe during the years 1458–1484, that is, from the beginning of the pontificate of Pius II until the end of the pontificate of Sixtus IV. By East Central Europe, we understand the area of Western Christendom situated eastwards of Italy and of the German territories, and westwards of the overwhelmingly Orthodox lands.

Our definition of this territory and its name, East Central Europe, are not rooted in well-defined medieval entities. There were great differences in the consideration and status of the different parts of this East Central Europe in the Middle Ages, which were never considered as a unity.[1] It is only recent historical inquiry which has constituted them as an individual region of Europe, especially in the context of the political division of Europe after the Second World War. Their common lot of state socialism for half a century generated, on its decline, an important reflection on the common historical features of the countries of "Mitteleuropa."[2] Thus, recent historical studies have shown that the lands and

[1] The area defined here as East Central Europe crosses territories of the Holy Roman Empire and regions with mainly German-speaking populations. Therefore the researched material is also partly included in the *Repertorium Poenitentiariae Germanicum*, prepared by the German Historical Institute in Rome; six volumes have been published so far by Ludwig Schmugge and his collaborators, with indices by Hildegard Schneider-Schmugge, covering the period from Eugene IV to Sixtus IV (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996 ff.). The Polish cases have been published in the *Bullarium Poloniae* 6 (1447–1464), ed. Irena Sulkowska-Kuras and Stanislaus Kuras (Rome–Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, Fundacja Jana Pawla II, 1998).

[2] See Jenő Szűcs, "The Three Historical Regions of Europe. An Outline," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29 (1983), 131-184; also published in *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*, ed. John Keane (London: Verso, 1988), 291-332 (hereafter Szűcs, "The Three Historical Regions"); on the link between the idea and the historical context, see János M. Bak, "Königreich Ungarn: Staatstrukturen und Rolle in Ostmitteleuropa im 14.–16. Jahrhundert," in *Ostmitteleuropa im 14.–17. Jahrhundert – eine Region oder Region der Regionen?* ed. Marian Dygo, Slawomir Gawlas and Hieronim Grala (Warszawa: "DIG", 2003) (hereafter *Ostmitteleuropa im 14.–17. Jahrhundert*), 41-50, esp. 41-42.

churches we consider here had some common features that make it sensible to study them together as an entity.[3] Most of the peoples concerned in the area converted to Christianity quite late,[4] between the millenium and the fourteenth century (Lithuania), which means that Christianization progressed far slower here than in the West. Almost all these territories were (with the exception of Bohemia-Moravia), at some period or all through their existence, influenced by Orthodox Christianity.[5] When the whole Latin world was roughly centered around the regions of Italy, France, and the western part of the empire, and when Rome, with the papal curia, was the symbolic and administrative center of Christendom, the East Central European lands seem to have belonged to the edges or borderlands of Western Christendom. Because of their ties with the neighbouring cultures some of these societies could be described as 'frontier societies.'[6]

In the second half of the fifteenth century, the area defined in this way[7] comprised the kingdoms of Hungary, Poland-Lithuania, the Czech lands (or Bohemia-Moravia) integrated into the Holy Roman Empire, and a number of smaller entities, like Carniola (part of the Holy Roman Empire and ecclesiastically dependent on the archbishop of Aquileia, today's Slovenia), Croatia, Dalmatia, Albania-Epirus, and what one calls today the Baltic countries (medieval Prussia and Livonia).

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[3] See, among others, Szűcs, "The Three Historical Regions;" Francis Dvornik, *The Making of Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Polish Research Centre, 1949), 262; Oscar Halecki, *Borderlands of Western Civilization. A History of East Central Europe* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1952), 136-140 (hereafter Halecki, *Borderlands*); for a recent treatment, see *Ostmitteleuropa im 14.–17. Jahrhundert.*

[4] For an extensive bibliography and the *status questionis*, see Gábor Klaniczay, "The Birth of a New Europe about A.D. 1000. Conversion, Transfer of Institutional Models, New Dynamics," in *Eurasian Transformations, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries: Crystallizations, Divergences, Renaissances*, ed. Johann P. Arnason and Bjorn Wittrock (Leiden: Brill, in press).

[5] For the Balkans, see John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2000) (hereafter Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*); for Poland-Lithuania, see Juliusz Bardach, "La rencontre des Eglises catholique et orthodoxe sur les territoires orientaux du Royaume de Pologne et de Lituanie aux XIV–XVIe siècles," in *The Common Christian Roots of the European Nations. An International Colloquium in the Vatican. Pontifical Lateran University – Catholic University of Lublin* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1982), vol. 2, 817-826; see also Evelyne Patlagean, "Les Etats d'Europe centrale et Byzance, ou l'oscillation des confins," *Revue historique* 304, no. 4 (2000) : 827-868.

[6] See Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom. Jews, Muslims and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary c. 1000 – c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially chapter 1: "Hungary: A Frontier Society;" see also Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay, ed., *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

[7] In order to represent this territory on the map of fifteenth-century Europe, we refer to two maps: Paul Robert Magócsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe. From the Early Fifth Century to the Present* (rev. ed., London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), maps 10 and 13.

In the later Middle Ages, the registers of supplications presented to the Penitentiary and coming from the whole of Western Christendom were kept in a uniform way at the papal curia. Therefore, through the registered data one can compare the content and numbers of cases, and infer from them basic information about the intensity and frequency of the relations of one diocese, region, or country with the Holy See, particularities in canon law, and differences concerning their relative importance in the affairs of the curia. This possibility of comparison allows inserting East Central Europe into the framework of general European history. However, for a firm interpretation of the data and a clear understanding of the phenomena behind them, it will be necessary to compare them with other kinds of evidence for the period, which can complete or sometimes modify the information found here.

The period of our interest starts with the pontificate of Pius II, when the copying of incoming supplications into the registers of the office was reformed.[8] This study concentrates on the pontificates of Pius II, Paul II, and Sixtus IV, covering a 26-year period from 1458 until 1484, volumes 7 to 33 of the registers.

Petitions from East Central Europe to the Penitentiary

During this period there were 2814 petitions from East Central Europe to the Penitentiary (691 under Pius II, 917 under Paul II, and 1206 under Sixtus IV).[9] Comparing these numbers (Table 1) to all the petitions directed to the Penitentiary during these years (in total 77,426 cases: 15,656 under Pius II, 24,731 under Paul II, and 37,039 under Sixtus IV), one notices that 3.6% of all petitions directed to the Penitentiary during that period came from the East Central European areas (4.4% under Pius II, 3.4% under Paul II, and 3.3% under Sixtus IV). Thus, the proportion of petitions from East Central Europe to the Penitentiary remained relatively small during the whole period, without great variation.[10]

Comparing the *corpus* of the East Central European petitions and their types to the totality of cases handled in the Penitentiary during the years 1458–1484, one recognizes different proportions in the violations of canon law, reflected especially by the categories of *de diversis formis*, with 29% of petitions from the area, and *de declaratoriis*, with 16%, altogether 45%. For the totality of the cases from the same period these categories are significantly less important

[8] See Kirsi Salonen's contribution on "The Penitentiary under Pius II" in this volume.

[9] The data used here are based on the studies of Kirsi Salonen concerning the time of Pius II, and on a research project at the Department of Medieval Studies of Central European University (Budapest). One case in the tables represents one entry in the registers of the Penitentiary, without consideruing the number of persons applying. On the difficulty of counting the data, see also Salonen, "The Penitentiary under Pius II," note 8.

[10] For the explanation of the supplication categories, see Salonen, "The Penitentiary under Pius II," 47-48.

(21% *de diversis formis* and 4% *de declaratoriis*). Possible explanations may lie in the remoteness of the regions concerned – this could explain that people applied to the curia only for important reasons and saw canon law violations as such. Also the proportion of the confession petitions (21%) among the cases from East Central Europe is higher than that in the whole material (14%). On the other hand, fewer marriage petitions (16%) and illegitimacy cases (10%) seem to have arrived in Rome from East Central Europe compared to all the cases handled by the Penitentiary (35% and 19%). The proportion of the *de promotis* cases (8%) corresponds to the general trend of the whole material (8%).

Table 1. Petitions (in percentages; N=2814) from East-Central Europe to the Penitentiary (1458–1484).

Category	ECE Pius II	ECE Paul II	ECE Sixtus IV	ECE total	Total Europe 1458–1484
Matrim.	12%	13%	23%	16%	35%
Diversis	33%	37%	23%	29%	21%
Declarat.	12%	17%	17%	16%	4%
Def. Nat.	9%	10%	10%	10%	16%
Uberiori	0%	0%	1%	0%	3%
Promotis	9%	7%	8%	8%	8%
Confess.[11]	25%	16%	18%	21%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: ASV, *Penitenzieria Ap., Reg. Matrim. et Div.*, Vol. 7-33.

The numbers vary quite strongly from one pontificate to the other. Explanations for this phenomenon may only be found by thorough studies of the local contexts. For instance, one notices a steady increase in the proportion of the marriage petitions during the period studied; under the pontificate of Pius II they formed only 12% of the petitions, but during the pontificate of Sixtus IV they almost doubled to 23%. At the moment, no definite explanation for this development may be given. A similar situation occurs for some other changes and developments. Concerning the *de diversis formis* cases, their number, after a slight proportional increase from Pius II to Paul II (33% and 37%, respectively), declined (only 23% under Sixtus IV). Comparisons with the subsequent pontificates will allow us to see if this tendency to decline continued. It is also worth noting that the declaratory cases first followed a proportional increase from Pius II to Paul II (12% and 17%, respectively), then stabilized under Sixtus IV (17%).

The number of confession petitions varied without a general trend of decline or growth. On the whole, 21% of the East Central European petitions were

[11] The "confession" category of our table contains all the supplications related to confession matters, i. e. all the cases registered in the chapters *de confessionalibus perpetuis, de confessionalibus in forma 'Cupientes,'* and even *de sententiis generalibus.*

sent to ask for a confession letter, while the global proportion shows only 14%.[12] A possible explanation for this slight over-representation may be that these letters from East Central Europe came mostly from pilgrims to Rome. A person who visited Rome could easily ask for a letter of confession for himself or herself once he or she were there; back home, it constituted visible proof of the accomplishment of the pilgrimage as well as a kind of spiritual autonomy. For a layman, the letter of confession allowed its holder to choose his own confessor (*de confessionalibus perpetuis)*; for a priest it meant the authorisation to absolve his parishioners from sins that normally were reserved for papal decision (*de sententiis generalibus)*, and it represented a growth in spiritual power. Frequently, several confession letters for different persons were asked for in the same petition at the same time. Thus, the value of a confession letter from the curia was high in the eyes of the faithful coming from remote countries, as proof of an important effort accomplished for the sake of spiritual comfort as well as an authoritative means to gain greater autonomy in spiritual matters.

Another possible explanation for the over-representation of the confession petitions in comparison to the totality of cases is that in other territories there were many papal legates with the right to sell indulgence letters – which were in effect similar to confession letters. As East Central Europeans could not procure this kind of grace locally, they might have turned to the papal curia. A parallel situation has been noticed for Swedish confession letters; during the years when indulgence sellers were active in Sweden there were no petitions to the Penitentiary for confession letters. From Finland, where the indulgence sellers hardly set foot, one finds petitions during the periods when no Swedes turned to the Penitentiary for these matters.[13]

Internal division within East Central Europe

East Central Europe is large and heterogeneous. Therefore, it is challenging to investigate whether there were different kinds of needs for grace in the various parts of this area. Table 2[14] shows that most of the East Central European cases come from the Hungarian dioceses (33%), while the Polish cases are in the second position (28%). This distribution corresponds roughly to the demographic importance of the two largest countries of the region – the population of Hungary with Slavonia at the end of the fifteenth century is estimated to

[12] We are grateful to Ludwig Schmugge for giving us the opportunity to use these still-unpublished data.

[13] Kirsi Salonen, *The Penitentiary as a Well of Grace in the Late Middle Ages. The Example of the Province of Uppsala 1448–1527*, Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia – Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae 313 (Saarijärvi: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2001), 362, 364-367 (hereafter Salonen, *The Penitentiary*).

[14] The numeric data of this table are provisory and may, because of unclear dioceses, present a small margin of error.

have been between 2.9 and 3.4, or for certains, it attained even 4 million,[15] while the estimations concerning Poland are between 2.5 and 3.2 million[16] – which would mean that the greater distance separating Poland from Rome did not play a role in the frequency of petitions. Christians from other regions did not send so many petitions to the Penitentiary. This is an understandable state of affairs, if one reasons in terms of the population,[17] size, and wealth of a country.

Table 2. Number of case types from East Central Europe (1458–1484).

Territory	*Matr.*	*DF*	*Decl.*	*DN*	*Uber.*	*Prom.*	*Conf.*	Total	%
Hungary	52	335	155	55	0	61	274	932	33%
Czech lands	5	30	11	13	0	17	31	107	4%
Dalmatia	160	62	18	12	0	33	11	296	11%
Croatia	89	39	18	12	0	21	8	187	7%
Albania	44	52	14	41	1	31	11	194	7%
Slovenia	23	14	11	17	0	3	2	70	2%
Poland	51	220	188	102	8	46	171	786	28%
Baltic lands	30	61	25	19	4	5	83	227	8%
East	2	3	4	0	0	0	6	15	0%
Total	456	816	444	271	13	217	597	2814	100%

Source: ASV, *Penitenzieria Ap., Reg. Matrim. et Div.*, Vol. 7-33.

There were 18 dioceses in the kingdom of Hungary, many of them quite rich and important, such as Esztergom (its tax to the Holy See was 4000 florins during the period studied), Pécs (3300 florins), Zagreb (2000 florins), and Nagy-Várad (2000 florins).[18] Generally, fifteenth-century Hungary was a quite rele-

[15] See András Kubinyi, "A magyar királyság népessége a 15. század végén" (The population of the Hungarian kingdom at the end of the fifteenth century), in *Magyarország történeti demográfiája 896–1995. Millecentenáriumi előadások* (The Historical Demography of Hungary 896–1995. Lectures for the millecentenary of Hungary), József Kovacsics, ed. (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1997), 93-110, here 110; and Pál Engel, "Az Anjou- és Zsigmond-kori Magyarország történeti demográfiájának problémái" (The historical demographic problems of Hungary in the age of the Anjou and Sigismund), in ibidem, 111-116, especially 116. See also Eric Fügedi, "The demographic landscape of East Central Europe," in *East-Central Europe in Transition. From the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Antoni Maczak, Henryk Samsonowicz and Peter Burke (London and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Editions de la MSH, 1985), 53 (hereafter: Fügedi, "The democraphic landscape").

[16] Fügedi, "The demographic landscape;" György Székely, "Cseh- és Lengyelország a késő középkorban" (Czech Lands and Poland in the late Middle Ages), in *Európa ezer éve: a középkor* II (A Thousand Years of Europe: the Middle Ages II), ed. Gábor Klaniczay (Budapest: Osiris, 2004), 265 (hereafter Székely, "Cseh- és Lengyelország").

[17] In the field of demographic data for the area, however, the state of surviving documentation does not offer comparable data for all the regions.

[18] Concerning the taxes an (arch)diocese had to pay to the Holy See in the Middle Ages, see Konrad Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi sive Summorum Pontificum S.R.E. Cardinalium, Ecclesiarum Antistitum Series ab anno 1198 usque ad annum 1431 perducta e*

vant country in Europe; its relative political weight grew considerably with the accession to the throne of the empire of Sigismund, king of Hungary, and with the function of the kingdom, as a "bastion of Christendom" in the defense against the Ottomans. Hungary had well-developed relations with the papacy, although for political reasons they were not without troubles.[19] Among the Hungarian petitions, one may underline the overwhelming importance of the violations of canon law, and among them many criminal cases: the *de diversis formis* and *de declaratoriis* cases form 36% and 17% of the total, respectively; this means that together they represented more than half of the petitions coming from the kingdom to the Penitentiary.

The kingdom of Poland-Lithuania[20] also consisted of important and great dioceses, which seem to have been even richer and more valuable in the eyes of the Holy See than those of Hungary, if we judge from the taxes they paid: Gniezno (tax 5000 florins), Wrocław (4000 florins), and Cracow (3000 florins). Poland, however, is more remote from Rome than Hungary, and in parts of it Christianization was still relatively recent, as Lithuania converted only in 1386. Although numerically less important than the Hungarian petitions, the Polish petitions present a similar structure: 52% of them belong to the *de diversis formis* and *de declaratoriis* types. This is interesting because in the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden and Finland, one finds a similar pattern.[21] In third position, in both the Hungarian and Polish material the supplications for confession letters show a rather high proportion compared to the remaining types. They represent 29% of the Hungarian cases and 22% of the Polish. All the other types of petitions are far less important. Such a similar structure of the petition series in the two great kingdoms of the area requires explanation, the more as the two countries determine, by their overwhelming importance (33% and 28%, respectively, of all the East Central European petitions) the case-type profile of the whole region.

From the other territories and areas, Bohemia-Moravia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Albania, Slovenia, and Prussia, there are many fewer petitions. One general reason is certainly that they were far smaller, both in terms of territorial extent and

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documentis tabularii praesertim vaticani II (Münster: Regensberg, 1914), passim. According to the *Hierarchia Catholica* the maximum tax was 12,000 Florins (Rouen and Winchester), while the minimum (if something had to be paid) was 33 1/3 florins.

[19] Péter E. Kovács, "A Szentszék, a török és Magyarország a Hunyadiak alatt (1437–1490)" (The Holy See, the Turks and Hungary under the reign of the Hunyadi), in *Magyarország és a Szentszék kapcsolatának 1000 éve* (Budapest: Magyar Egyháztörténeti Munkaközösség, 1996), 97-117.

[20] See Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. 1: *The Origins to 1795* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), chapter 5; Daniel Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State 1386-1795* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), chapters 1-2 (hereafter Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State*).

[21] Concerning the Swedish pattern, see Salonen, "The Penitentiary under Pius II," as well as eadem, *The Penitentiary*.

population. The only astonishing case in this set of explanations seems to be that of the densely populated Czech lands, which should have produced more petitions if it depended only on size, distance, and demography. Here, however, the variations in numbers seem to have had quite different reasons.

Despite its relatively small territory, Dalmatia represents the third place in the number of East Central European petitions to the Penitentiary. This need not astonish, though; it fits well with the general situation of Dalmatia in later medieval Europe. Frequent communication and strong relations with the papal curia and, thus, also with the Penitentiary, may be explained by the fact that the whole Dalmatian coast belonged to the "empire" of Venice. Dalmatian towns had a very similar development to Italian towns in economic and social terms; Dalmatia was an extension of Italy. Thus, the numbers from the archives of the Penitentiary only confirm what one knows about this part of Christendom. They clearly show that the Dalmatian towns of the Adriatic coast, with a numerous and important Italian population, did not belong to the 'periphery' of fifteenth-century Christendom, but rather to a periphery of Italy.

An important observation in the Dalmatian cases is the relatively high number of petitions concerning marriage matters (160 cases out of the total of 296, that is, 54%). This specificity of Dalmatia, which is echoed also in neighboring Croatia, may be explained by the local marriage customs.[22] Among all the other categories the most important ones are the *de diversis formis* cases, with 21% of the total. Together with the declaratory cases, 27% of the cases represent violations of canon law.

Regarding Albania and Croatia, there are almost 200 registered cases from each. Each is situated an equal distance from the papal curia and consists of more or less the same number of relatively small dioceses. However, the structural differences of the distribution of the cases merit a few remarks. In Croatia, one finds almost the same importance of matrimonial cases (47% of the total) as in Dalmatia, which may be explained by the same reasons, the existence of strict marriage rules in local society. Secondly, there is also a proportion of canon law violations similar to Dalmatia: 30% of the *de declaratoriis* and *de diversis formis* cases together. In Albania, matrimonial cases declined in proportion, though still remaining quite high (23%). The most important ones there were the *de declaratoriis* and *de diversis formis* cases, together 34%.

One needs an explanation for the relatively low number of petitions from these regions at the margins of Italy. Of course, the situation was different, as Albania was a missionary front of the Roman Church in the Orthodox Balkans, which started to be organized from the twelfth century onwards, while Croatia and Dalmatia were firm Catholic lands.[23] Beside the small size of the areas, the

[22] See Ana Marinković's article in this volume.

[23] Alain Ducellier, *L'Albanie entre Byzance et Venise, Ve–XVe s.* (London: Variorum 1987) (hereafter Ducellier, *L'Albanie*), chapter 11: "Aux frontières de la Romanité et de l'Orthodoxie au Moyen Age: le cas de l'Albanie."

low number of registered data may probably have originated from the danger of Ottoman conquest. The Ottomans were in continual progress towards the West after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when they quickly captured even the western part of the Balkans. Christian resistance in the area depended essentially on the Hungarians. After John Hunyadi's death (1456) and that of Pius II (1464), the idea of a concerted western crusade against the Ottomans vanished for a while. During the decades of our study, there were ceaseless wars and hostilities in the southern and southeastern areas of the kingdom of Hungary. Bosnia was taken in 1463, Hercegovina in 1465, and finally Albania in 1479.[24] It would be interesting to investigate case by case the evolution of the presence of the dioceses affected by Ottoman conquest in the Penitentiary registers. However, the Ottoman presence does not seem to have affected the number of petitions coming from the Balkans immediately in a catastrophic way, even if the conquest produced the desertion of the local clergy, frequently of Italian or Dalmatian origin.[25] In order to establish if there was any immediate effect of the Ottoman conquest on the contacts of these regions with Rome, two methods might help. One should compare the data with those from the first half of the fifteenth century, which is not possible in the present state of research and documentation. Neither the ways of registration nor the numbers are comparable. Thus only further comparison of the data with other types of evidence from the region may allow answering the question. In any case, it seems that religious relations were not at all interrupted – just like the Reformation did not stop immediately the flow of Swedish petitions to Rome.[26] This fact may also be explained by the Ottomans' methods of conquest. Like medieval Muslim conquest in general, it did not involve religious conquest, but the integration of the conquered non-Muslim population into the empire as a category apart, the *dhimmi*, paying special taxes. Consequently, conversions to Islam in the conquered lands were not directed by a coercive policy but by the possibilities of social integration and power reserved for Muslims in the Ottoman state, and as such, they intervened only after a few generations in the dominated territories.[27] In the long term, another defense of the Catholic faithful, frequently abandoned by their clergy, was slow conversion to Orthodoxy.

Concerning the number of petitions to the Penitentiary, the Baltic dioceses follow Dalmatia. This seems to be astonishing considering their remote situa-

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[24] See Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 548-612.

[25] Ducellier, *L'Albanie*, chapter 11.

[26] See Kirsi Salonen, "The Supplications from the Province of Uppsala, Main Trends and Developments," in this volume.

[27] Antal Molnár, *Katolikus misszíók a hódolt Magyarországon* I *(1572–1647)* (Catholic missions in Hungary under the Ottoman rule [1572–1647]) (Budapest: Balassi, 2002), 30-31; Dóra Kerekes, "Identité d'enfance et identité de service: mémoire et solidarité ethniques des renégats dans l'Empire Ottoman," in *Construction d'identités dans l'histoire européenne du Moyen Age à nos jours. Actes des colloques franco-hongrois*, ed. Piroska Nagy and Péter Sahin-Tóth (Rouen: Presses Universitaires de Rouen, forthcoming).

tion, but may be explained by the presence of the Teutonic Knights. Through the knights, the Baltic area fell under German influence which, in its turn, affected the frequency of contacts and the number of petitions to the Penitentiary. All the Baltic dioceses were relatively small and rather poor, therefore insignificant in the eyes of the curia (the tax listed for the archdiocese of Riga was only 800 florins, while the highest tax paid to the Holy See by a Baltic diocese was that of Ösel, 1300 florins). Nevertheless, there were proportionally many petitions registered from the Baltic dioceses to the Penitentiary. Many petitions came especially from those dioceses that were situated along the coast of the Baltic Sea and which were under German domination, Hanseatic towns (Reval/Tallinn) or areas connected directly to the Teutonic Knights (Riga). Even though the influence of the Teutonic Knights in the Baltic region started to decrease towards the end of the Middle Ages (especially after the revolt of the Prussian Union against them in 1454, the 13 Years' War that followed and the peace of Torún[28]), their effect can still be felt in their relations. The dioceses along the Baltic Sea were accustomed to keep contacts with the Holy See. The Teutonic Knights had always had special legates or representatives residing at the curia and handling important issues in favor of the order, and other persons, for payment. These well-established contacts might have made it easier for individual Christians of the Baltic area to turn to the authority of the popes, although one has no evidence for the channelling of supplications *via* the Knights.

The Balkan regions are followed in number of petitions by the Czech lands. The weak absolute number of petitions from Bohemia-Moravia may be explained by the small size of the territory; however, as there were only three dioceses there, one also may consider that there are proportionally many petitions coming from the individual Czech dioceses. Two of them were wealthy and important: Olomuc (tax 3500 florins) and especially Prague, a very populous city[29] and also important in European terms, both from the political and cultural point of view (tax 2800 florins). Litomysł was less relevant (tax 800 florins). Bohemia-Moravia has to be seen in its specific political and religious context in the fifteenth century due to the Hussite movement, which troubled communication with Rome. During the period we are interested in, communication with Rome was intense, but petitioning was less as most of the country was attached to the moderate form of Hussitism.[30]

As far as the typological structure of the petitions is concerned, one finds the same kind of proportions both in the Baltic lands and Bohemia-Moravia: the

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[28] See Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State*, 29-31; Halecki, *Borderlands*, 136-140; Aleksander Gieysztor, "The Kingdom of Poland and the grand duchy of Lithuania," in *New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 737.

[29] Around 1415 Prague had 35,000 inhabitants (Székely, "Cseh- és Lengyelország," 258).

[30] For more about the influence of the Hussite phenomenon on communications with the Penitentiary see Lucie Doležalová, "'But if You Marry Me.' Reflections of the Hussite Movement in the Penitentiary (1438--1483)" in this volume.

de diversis and declaratory cases make up 38% of the petitions in both territories, followed by the confession letter requests, 37% and 29% respectively. This is the same typological structure as that observed in Hungary and Poland, even though the proportions changed in a way that demands further explanation by further research.

The region of today's Slovenia was composed of only two dioceses, both relatively small: Ljubljana (*Laibacum*, tax 150 florins) and Koper (*Iustinopolis*, 100 florins). Such a small importance explains the small number of petitions. Their distribution, however, is reminiscent of the proximity of Dalmatia and the situation near the Adriatic coast; even if the totality of *de diversis* and declaratory cases makes 36%, the number of matrimonial petitions is also high, representing 33%.

Conclusions

Studying the number of supplications, it seems clear that one has to reason first in demographic and only secondly in geographic terms. There are many petitions from the areas such as Hungary and Poland, which were densely populated and urbanized in terms of the area (which means far less populated and urban than the West) and had well developed relations with the papal curia, which considered them important. If the geographical situation of a diocese or region situated far away from the papal curia made the way to the Penitentiary longer, a long distance did not necessarily mean that the connections were fewer, as one can see in the case of the Baltic dioceses, from which there were relatively many petitions despite long distances. The political situation within each territory had its own influence on the relations and may explain fluctuations.

On the basis of this survey, we may now underline a few features which seem to be East Central European tendencies in the late medieval Penitentiary registers. Three trends may be revealed:

- In the whole area, the most numerous petitions were sent to the Penitentiary demanding grace for canon law violations.
- The area is equally characterized by the high number of petitions for confession matters, but their overall proportion is the same as in the general situation of Europe.
- These two trends are altered in the Adriatic area by a regional specificity that had a local explanation: the overwhelming importance of matrimonial cases, extraordinary in Dalmatia, lesser but comparable in Croatia and Albania.

Further comparison with the structures of the material from the northern and southwestern peripheries of Christendom shall allow to find out if these trends were specific for East Central Europe or also for other peripheral areas. Future research into the local contexts and comparison with other source types will also help to better understand the meanings, causes, and variations of these features.

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Late Medieval Christian Peripheries and Their Communication with the Holy See

Edited by

Gerhard Jaritz, Torstein Jørgensen, Kirsi Salonen

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ABBREVIATIONS RELATED TO THE COLLECTIONS OF THE VATICAN SECRET ARCHIVES

ASV = Archivio Segreto Vaticano

Arm. = Armadio

Congr. Vescovi e Regolari, Visita Ap. = Congregazione dei Vescovi e Regolari, Visita Apostolica

Instr. Misc. = Instrumenta Miscellanea

Penitenzieria Ap., Reg. Matrim. et Div. = Penitenzieria Apostolica, Registra Matrimonialium et Diversorum

Reg. Vat. = Registra Vaticana

Reg. Lat. = Registra Lateranensia

Reg. Suppl. = Registra Supplicationum

Reg. Aven. = Registra Avenionensia

RPG = Repertorium Poenitentiariae Germanicum

PREFACE

The present publication contains selected papers from two international conferences: the first was held at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Bergen (Norway), in October, 2003[1] and the second at the Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest (Hungary), in January, 2004.[2] The purpose of these meetings was to gather researchers interested in the history and significance of the papal curia and, in particular, the Apostolic Penitentiary, in the later Middle Ages. The main emphasis was placed on a comparative approach and on the role of peripheral areas of Western Christendom in their communication with the Holy See.

There are various kinds of centre-and-periphery hierarchies.[3] There are geographic, social, economic, and cultural peripheries and centres. "The general textbooks ... address materials from the geographical and social peripheries of privileged cultures only as adjuncts to their central narrative. ... The history of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe become excursus to a central narrative."[4]

However, concerning the communication of the Holy See with various areas of Christendom in the Middle Ages, the impact of 'peripheries' has attracted a new interest in recent years. Since the opening of the archives of the Apostolic Penitentiary to researchers in 1983 relatively few scholars have exploited the sources, but recently their number has increased. Most of them have studied the supplications to the Penitentiary of petitioners from their own home countries and edited material on a national basis. The German Historical Institute, under the leadership of Ludwig Schmugge, has already published several volumes of entries concerning German-speaking territories. Also, the Norwegian and Icelandic material has recently been released by Torstein Jørgensen and Gastone Saletnich. Similar enterprises are in process in several other countries: Poland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, England and Wales. The examination of territo-

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[1] "*The Late Middle Ages and the Penitentiary Texts: Centre and Periphery in Europe in the Pre-Reformation Era.*"

[2] "Ad Confines. *The Papal Curia and the Eastern and Northern Peripheries of Christendom in the Later Middle Ages(14th – 15th c.).*"

[3] For this and the following, see Teofilo F. Ruiz, "Center and Periphery in the Teaching of Medieval History," in *Medieval Cultures in Contact*, ed. Richard F. Gyug (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 252.

[4] Ibidem, 248.

ries on the geographic peripheries in their relation to Rome has been a main focus in these studies.

The archival material of the Penitentiary and the communication of the papal curia with the various regions of late medieval Europe should, however, not be studied only on national levels. There is an increasing need for such studies to be supplemented by comparative searches for differences and analogies in how Christians from different corners of Europe used the papal offices and were treated by them. It is well known that even though the regulations of canon law were in theory the same for everyone, regional differences in interpreting and applying them emerged in the Late Middle Ages. The need to turn to the papal authority in matters of canon law varied depending on the role of local bishops and the presence or absence of papal legates or collectors, who often had the power to deal with similar matters *in partibus.* Also, people in the central territories of Christendom had different opportunities for turning to the papal curia with their requests than those living on the peripheries of the Christian world.

Questions like these played the central role in the discussions of the two conferences noted above. In this book we will render an overview of the present status of this new field of research. As an introduction, Piroska Nagy deals with the question of how to apply centre-periphery models to a comparative analysis of the sources. Kirsi Salonen uses the Penitentiary registers from the period of Pope Pius II to analyse the supplications, their provenance, and the role of peripheries.

Two peripheral parts of late medieval Europe and their significance concerning the communication with the Holy See represent the main part of the publication: Northern Europe and East Central Europe. Comparative analyses of Scandinavian and Scottish source material from the Penitentiary Registers are made by Torstein Jørgensen, Kirsi Salonen, and Irene Furneaux. The studies on East Central Europe are introduced by an inquiry concerning the general importance of the area for the papal curia (Jadranka Neralić), and an overview of the communication of the Holy See with Albania (Etleva Lala). Piroska Nagy and Kirsi Salonen offer a quantitative analysis of East Central Europe and the Penitentiary (1458–1484), followed by contributions on individual territories, such as the Czech lands (Lucie Doležalová) and Dalmatia (Ana Marinković). The contribution by Gastone Saletnich and Wolfgang Müller indicates that in any studies of the role of peripheries one must not neglect the more central areas. Blanca Szeghyová and Ludwig Schmugge show that local archives and their contents are an indispensable additional source for comparative analyses.

Many friends and colleagues have helped in preparing this book for print. We are pleased to thank the personnel of the Penitenzieria Apostolica, especially Padre Ubaldo Todeschini, for reading the manuscript and suggesting useful corrections. We are also much obliged to the skilled staff of the *Sala di Studio* in the Vatican Archives, who patiently brought us volume after volume of the reg-

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Finally, we wish to thank the academic institutions which in a more direct way have promoted this project: the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, the Department of Medieval Studies at the Central European University in Budapest, the Institut für Realienkunde of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Finland, and the Department of History at the University of Tampere.

Bergen, Budapest, and Tampere, November 2004

Gerhard Jaritz, Torstein Jørgensen, Kirsi Salonen