

RODOLFO GONZAGA (1452–1495): NEWS ON A CELEBRITY MURDER CASE

Gastone Saletnich and Wolfgang P. Müller

In recent years there has been a flurry of publications cataloguing, transcribing, and translating petitions registered by the fifteenth-century scribes of the Penitentiary. Full texts relating to requests made by Scandinavians, for example, are now available in print.¹ The *Repertorium Poenitentiariae Germanicum*, assembling summaries of German supplications has produced a constant flow of printed volumes, and a similar project covering English entries from the beginning of the extant penitential registers in 1410 until 1503 is meanwhile underway.² On the other hand, the recorded material from core areas of the late medieval Latin church, such as the French kingdom, the Iberian peninsula, and, last but not least, Italy, still await systematic exploration and editing, except for a few investigations on the local and diocesan level.³ By dedicating this article to the examination of a single celebrity case involving an important family of the early Renaissance, we wish to offer but a glimpse of the rich information stored in the archives of the Penitentiary with regard to the history of the Italian city-states.

The document we will discuss in the following was directed to the papal court of penance during the first pontifical year of Innocent VIII (August 1484

¹ Torstein Jørgensen and Gastone Saletnich, *Synder og Pavemakt. Botsbrev fra Den Norske Kirkeprovins og Suderoynne til Pavestolen 1438–1531* (Sinners and Papal Power: Penitentiary Supplications from the Norwegian Church Province and the Hebrides to the Holy See 1438–1531) (Stavanger: Misjonshøgskolens forlag, 2004), 125–187 (with translations into Norwegian); for an introductory survey on the medieval Penitentiary, see 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), 13–216 (hereafter Salonen, *The Penitentiary*).

² *Repertorium Poenitentiariae Germanicum*, ed. Ludwig Schmugge et al. (5 vols to date) (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996 ff.). The English and Welsh petitions are being catalogued by Peter Clarke and Patrick Zutshi.

³ An outstanding example is the commented edition of late medieval petitions from the North Italian diocese of Como by Paolo Ostinelli, *Penitenzieria Apostolica. Le suppliche alla Sacra Penitenzieria Apostolica provenienti dalla diocesi di Como (1438–1484)*. Materiali di storia ecclesiastica lombarda 5 (Milan: Ed. Unicopli, 2003).

to August 1485) and it is registered in the Penitentiary registers under the title of *de diversis formis* (on various matters).

Rodolfo, from the noble family of the Gonzaga, layman of Mantua, [explains that] he ordered his adulterous wife to be killed, which in fact turned out to be the case. He thus rendered himself incapable of contracting marriage with another woman. Considering, however, that he is of an age in which he cannot live in chastity, he petitions that Your Holiness be mercifully disposed to mandate by special grace that the petitioner be absolved from this crime of spousal murder (uxoricidium). Your Holiness be further disposed to offer dispensation, to the effect that the petitioner, once he is readmitted to the church, can contract marriage with another woman, provided that there is no further canonical impediment between them.

So be it by special grace and express [mandate], F., bishop elect of Anagni and regent.

Rome, at Saint Peter's, 8 December.⁴

The document is of great interest for at least three different reasons. First of all, because it has hitherto been unknown to local and Renaissance historians. Next, because it displays a flurry of succinct legal formulas not immediately comprehensible to modern readers. And finally, because it sheds additional light on an episode of betrayal, a broken marriage, and murder, long said to have been committed by a member of one of the most important families of the Early Renaissance: the Gonzaga of Mantua. Each of these aspects will be explored in the present paper. Prior to undertaking a canonistic analysis of the document, we would like to trace the identity and circumstances of the principal protagonists and events mentioned in the text.

Rodolfo di Gonzaga was the fourth child of Ludovico III, second margrave of Mantua, and his wife, Barbara of Hohenzollern. Rodolfo was born in Mantua in 1452. According to his father's plans, he was destined for a career in arms. From an early age, Rodolfo was sent on official missions representing his father's political interests. Between 1463 and 1470, we find him at Innsbruck, in the service of Margaret of Wittelsbach, the future wife of Rodolfo's oldest brother, Federico. In 1469, Rodolfo was at Ferrara to do homage on behalf of the Gonzaga family to Emperor Frederick III, who in turn elevated him to knighthood. Later the same year, Rodolfo went to Brussels to offer his services

⁴ ASV, Penitenzieria Ap, Reg. Matrim. et Div., vol. 34, fol. 127r: *Rodolphus nobilis de Gonzaga laicus Mantuanensis [exponit quod] ipse olim uxorem suam adulteram interfeci mandavit prout interfecta fuit propter quod reddidit se indignum ad contrahendum cum alia. Cum autem in tali etate constitutus quod continenter vivere non possit petit ipsum a reatu uxoricidii huiusmodi absolvi secumque quod cum alia muliere sibi nullo iure prohibita contrahere possit introitu ecclesie sibi restituto dispensari misericorditer mandare dignemini de gratia speciali. Fiat de speciali et expresse, F. electus Ananiensis regens. Rome apud sanctum Petrum, vi idus dec. anno primo (December 8, 1484).*

to Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. Ever since he turned eighteen in 1470, Rodolfo served in various capacities as a professional soldier and *condottiere*, hired successively by the Holy See, the Florentine Republic, and Venice. Before long, he became known as one of the most highly paid military captains of his time. In 1486, Rodolfo went on to fight under the banner of the dukes of Milan, before eventually enlisting again for Venice in February 1495. Rodolfo died a few months afterwards during the battle of Fornovo, alongside his nephew, Francesco, who had become margrave of Mantua following the death of Rodolfo's brother Federico in 1484.⁵

We know comparatively little about Rodolfo's adulterous wife, Antonia, a daughter of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, the papal vicar of Rimini, and Sigismondo's spouse, Isotta. Born in the 1460s, Antonia was wedded to Rodolfo in 1481, in a marriage that sealed one of the precarious political alliances so typical of the Renaissance period. Contemporary witnesses assure us that the wedding ceremony, celebrated at Palazzo Schifanoia in Mantua, was splendid.

Local narrative sources have a good deal to report on Rodolfo's first marriage and its tragic conclusion, with modern historiography frequently at a loss to distinguish fact from partisan and even romanticized fiction. Following the most colorful accounts, Rodolfo, while at Luzzara on Christmas Day of 1483, was informed by one of his favorites about rumors, which implicated his wife in an adulterous affair. Ravaged by suspicions, the battle-hardened *condottiere* appears to have surprised Antonia in bed with her lover, the dance master Fernando Flores Cubillas. Rodolfo, we are told, killed the intruder on the spot. Not content with the bloody vengeance brought upon his rival, Rodolfo then dragged his wife Antonia naked into the courtyard. In front of numerous bystanders, he forced her to implore him for mercy. Her sighs were to no avail. Rodolfo eventually pulled out a dagger and finished her off with a single stroke to the head.⁶

Modern historical accounts have viewed Antonia as a victim of political conspiracies and intrigues plaguing the court of Mantua during those years. While the precise circumstances of her end have remained rather obscure, the historical outcome for Rodolfo's private life is quite certain. Within the span of a year, by 1485, Rodolfo found himself remarried to another woman, Caterina, the daughter of Gian Francesco Pico, the lord of Mirandola.⁷

⁵ For a convenient summary of the available bibliographical information, see Isabella Lazzarini, "Gonzaga, Rodolfo", *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 57 (2001), 838-840 (with additional bibliography) (hereafter Lazzarini, "Gonzaga, Rodolfo").

⁶ The earliest narrative of the events by the chronicler Bernardino Zambotti, *Diario ferrarese dall'anno 1476 sino al 1504*, ed. Giuseppe Pardi. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, Nova Series, vol. 24/7. (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1937), 131, lines 32-36, only mentioned that Rodolfo had killed his wife after discovering her adulterous affair with "a dance teacher"; See also Lazzarini, "Gonzaga, Rodolfo", 839.

⁷ Alfonso Morselli, *Caterina Pico della Mirandola* (Reggio-Emilia: Tip. Moderna-U. Costi, 1939), 7, has dated Rodolfo's second wedding "toward the end" of 1484.

Let us now turn to the specifics of the newly discovered document in the archives of the Penitentiary. A careful canonistic analysis of the brief text arguably provides a fair amount of additional, albeit less sensational information on Rodolfo Gonzaga's marital drama of 1483. As briefly mentioned earlier on, Rodolfo's petition appears in the records of the Penitentiary under the rubric *de diversis formis*.⁸ As we learn from the narrative, Rodolfo wished to remarry, which might look like a case that rather pertained to the sub-category of petitions concerning marriage (*de matrimonialibus*). Curial scribes, however, preferred to include Rodolfo's and parallel cases of spousal murder under *de diversis formis* instead of *de matrimonialibus*, side by side with dispensations and absolutions from other forms of homicide.

The procedural and canonistic technicalities implicit in Rodolfo's request help convey a better sense of the significance once attached to it. To begin with, the absolutions and dispensations from spousal murder recorded by the Penitentiary suggest that the killing of marital partners constituted a case of great rarity. A comprehensive survey of German petitions submitted and registered during the pontificate of Innocent VIII (1484–1492) has yielded numbers amounting to an average of less than one case per year. Besides their infrequency, the entries are also consistent in that they always couple absolutions with dispensations.⁹ The papal *penitentiarius maior* conceded the latter pending ulterior works of penance, to be imposed on the supplicant by the ordinary bishop back in the home province.

The registration of petitions related to spousal murder was apparently only required for those repentant sinners who were at the same time in need of a dispensation, either because absolutions alone did not call for papal intervention, or due to the secrecy of the confessed offense. Equipped with such a dispensation and presuming the successful completion (*introitu ecclesie sibi restituto*) of prescribed (and frequently public) acts of penance, recipients like Rodolfo could again contract canonical marriages. The cancellation of *irregularitas*, barring access to the blessings inherent in the sacrament, formed an administrative necessity ever since the formative period of classical canon law (1140–1234), when church lawyers had established that *uxoricidium* constituted a full-fledged marriage impediment, an *impedimentum criminis*.¹⁰ In line with the absolute parity attributed by canon law to husband and wife in terms of marital rights,

⁸ On the rubrics of penitential registers, which became fairly stable in the years after 1450, see Salonen, *The Penitentiary*, 20–22.

⁹ There is a total of just 7 cases in the registers for 1484–1492 (ASV, *Penitenzieria Ap.*, *Reg. Matrim. et Div.*, vols. 34–41): vol. 36, fol. 167v; vol. 36, fol. 179v; vol. 36, fol. 185v; vol. 38, fol. 180v; vol. 38, fol. 216v; vol. 41, fol. 151v; vol. 41, fol. 175v; the count is based on the material prepared for volume VII of the *RPG*, ed. Ludwig Schmugge, Alessandra Mosciatti and Wolfgang P. Müller (to appear).

¹⁰ For details, see Josef Freisen, *Geschichte des canonischen Eherechts bis zum Verfall der Glossenliteratur* (Paderborn, 1893; reprint: Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1962), 891–906; Jean Dauvillier, *Le mariage dans le droit classique de l'Église depuis le Décret de Gratien (1140) jusqu'à la mort de Clement V (1314)* (Paris: Sirey, 1933), 158–159, 201–278.

women killing their spouses also had recourse to the remedy. As a result, the mention of a certain Margareta Knotzinger from the diocese of Salzburg, asking for dispensation from the murder (*maritidium*) of her first husband in 1488, is not altogether surprising.¹¹

The rare references to spousal killing from the hands of Germans (and, we would suppose, non-Germans) allows for speculation on whether Rodolfo's appearance in the records was a reflection of his social and political prominence. Were average Christians prevented from availing themselves of the favor bestowed by the papal administration on a member of the eminent Gonzaga family? How important were the privileges of birth when it came to the question of who would receive a dispensation like Rodolfo's and who would not? Given the small sample of dispensations granted to Germans under Innocent VIII, the numbers may not offer an accurate reflection of the overall decision-making process. It is striking, however, that of the seven German dispensations recorded under Innocent VIII, none went to a person of noble origin. Each of the recipients was a commoner.

Our entry in the registers of the Penitentiary presents conclusive evidence to the effect that Rodolfo had commissioned someone else to kill Antonia. He thereby admitted to the voluntarily nature of the act not only in the secrecy of confession, but also in public, before the ecclesiastical court of Rodolfo's ordinary, most likely the bishop of Mantua. At first sight, the cooperation of this local prelate in favor of Rodolfo appears to be a foregone conclusion, considering that the Mantuan bishop at the time was none other than Rodolfo's own brother, Ludovico (in office 1483–1511).¹²

It is very probable that Rodolfo's desire to be formally readmitted to the church was sparked by the imminence of new wedding plans rather than despair about his sinful state. This is evident from the chronological proximity between the signing of Rodolfo's request for dispensation on December 8, 1484, and the fulfillment of its purpose by way of his second marriage to Caterina Pico di Mirandola just weeks later. We begin to abandon firm ground, however, once we try to understand the procedural technicalities involved in the granting of dispensations for *uxoricidium* and *maritidium* by the fifteenth-century church hierarchy. Was it a favor only the pope could bestow, or did local bishops share the same right?¹³

¹¹ ASV *Penitenzieria Ap. Reg. Matrim. et Div.*, vol. 38, fol. 180v (November 21, 1488); the second entry, vol. 36, fol. 185v (April 27, 1487), relates the case of a widow from Salzburg diocese, who had asked for absolution and dispensation from spousal killing in the secrecy of the internal forum.

¹² Konrad Eubel, ed., *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi sive Summorum Pontificum S.R.E. Cardinalium, Ecclesiarum Antistitum Series ab anno 1198 usque ad annum 1431 perducta e documentis tabularii praesertim vaticani*, vol. 2 (Münster: Regensburg, 1914), 185; Raffaele Tamalio, "Gonzaga, Ludovico", *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 57 (2001), 801–803.

¹³ The registration of *homicidium* and *uxoricidium* under the same rubric of *de diversis formis* (see note 8) may provide a first important clue; perhaps, cases like Rodolfo's did not enter

Given the paucity of entries in the registers, one might be led to believe that bishops, too, were able to issue grants remitting spousal murder, independently and without need for papal approval.¹⁴ If this was true, recourse to the Apostolic See would not have occurred unless local ordinaries had wished to submit a particularly serious incident to Rome, or supplicants had decided to go there on their own.

An alternative line of reasoning would depart from the observation that the papal Penitentiary treated marriage impediments arising from the killing of husbands and wives on a par with those caused by prohibited degrees of consanguinity or affinity between spouses, with hundreds of dispensations for the latter being issued and registered each year.¹⁵ Parallel to cases of consanguinity and affinity, spousal homicide did not merely impede (*impedit*) perpetrators to remarry canonically, but also rendered unions already contracted null and void (*dirimit*).¹⁶ Now, dispensations from consanguinity clearly exceeded episcopal competence, in what might imply that bishops were likewise disqualified to dispense from spousal killings. It would, therefore, seem as if the relationship between Rodolfo and the Mantuan ordinary, Ludovico, had been less cordial than their family ties would suggest. Is it possible that the two were not on the best of terms when the Penitentiary interceded in December of 1484, at long last overcoming Bishop Ludovico's attempts to stall Rodolfo's plans for a new marriage alliance?

Further investigation by local historians and a better knowledge of contemporary penitential procedures is needed before we can transform this array of hypothetical situations into a more definitive scenario. Meanwhile, our register entry addresses at least one point of contention with sufficient certainty. While Rodolfo did not murder Antonia with his own hands, he did plead guilty to the charge of *uxoricidium*. Finally, attempts by older historiography to deny his responsibility for the act can be laid to rest.

the rubric of *de matrimonialibus* because marriage dispensations were a papal prerogative, whereas dispensations from spousal homicide were not? There was certainly no agreement on the matter among the (classical) canonists; see the literature given in note 10.

¹⁴ As again suggested by the scarcity of registered German petitions for absolution and dispensation from spousal murder (see note 9), relative to the much higher total of registered absolutions obtained by German laity for the murder of a priest (*presbitericidium*): 7 versus 65 during the pontificate of Innocent VIII. Penitential theory did not reserve absolutions from *presbitericidium* to the papacy alone!

¹⁵ Salonen, *The Penitentiary*, 103-119, provides an overview of the incoming requests for dispensation from impediments of consanguinity and affinity. They formed the bulk of material registered annually under the rubric of *de matrimonialibus*.

¹⁶ Of the seven German entries for dispensation from spousal murder under Innocent VIII (see note 9), two applied to existing (*iam contractum*) instead of future (*contrahendum*) marriages: ASV, *Penitenzieria Ap., Reg. Matrim. et Div.*, vol. 36, fol. 185v; vol. 38, fol. 180v. Both unions had only been contracted in fact (*de facto*); to turn them into canonical marriages, dispensation was paramount.

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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, 2003¹ 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-

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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Bergen, Budapest, and Tampere, November 2004

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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, 2003¹ 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-

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-

isters and helped with other problems. Judith Rasson from Central European University deserves our gratitude for copyediting our text.

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