



Seminar

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*'Papa, Intrusus', The Great Western Schism (1378-1417):
Filling the Historiographical Void*

Tuesday, 29 May, 11:15 a.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
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S W E D I S H
C O L L E G I U M
for ADVANCED STUDY

ABOUT JOËLLE ROLLO-KOSTER

Joëlle Rollo-Koster holds an MA from Université Nice and a Ph.D. from Binghamton University, NY, where she worked on three censuses of the population of late medieval Avignon. After her Ph.D., she continued her study of the Avignonese population, focusing on women, labor, and immigration, while adjunct teaching at Castleton State College in Vermont. In 1996, she joined the ranks of the Department of History at the University of Rhode Island, Kingston, where she teaches freshman to upper-level and graduate courses. She was Chair of the Department of History in 2011–13 and Vice Chair and Chair of the URI Faculty Senate in 2014–16. She is foremost a historian of papal Avignon (1309–1378) and the Great Western Schism (1378–1417, when Christianity split between two and even three papal obediences).

She has published extensively on a variety of topics, including immigration, merchants, confraternities, prostitution, women labor, medieval urban history, symbolism, and historical anthropology. Among her most recent publications are *Raiding Saint Peter: Empty Sees, Violence, and the Initiation of the Great Western Schism (1378)* (2008) and *The People of Curial Avignon* (2009). She edited with Thomas Izbicki *A Companion to the Great Western Schism, 1378–1417* (2009) and with Kathryn Reyerson *For the Salvation of My Soul: Women and Wills in Medieval and Early Modern France* (2012). Recently she has published *Avignon and Its Papacy, 1309–1417: Popes, Institutions, and Society* (2015) and edited *Death in Medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed* (2016).

At SCAS, Rollo-Koster plans to draft several chapters of her forthcoming book, *Popes and Intruders: A History of the Great Western Schism (1378–1417)*.

ABSTRACT

On September 13, 1376, the papacy returned to Italy after some seventy years spent in Avignon, on the banks of the Rhône. By 1376, the circumstances that had kept the papacy away from its traditional seat had evolved. The Hundred Years War and rebellions in Rome and the Papal States were in remission, and Gregory XI, intent on returning the papacy to its historical location, concretized the move. He died shortly after his return on March 27, 1378. A few days after his death, the first Roman conclave opened since Nicholas IV's election in 1287. Sixteen cardinals were present (the majority French with eleven, and four Italians). Regardless of internal divisions and a noisy crowd outside yelling, "We want a Roman pope—or at least an Italian. If not, we'll cut you to pieces!" the cardinals chose Bartolomeo Prignano, archbishop of Bari, as Pope Urban VI. A well-qualified curial servant, Urban had never belonged to the cardinalate.

Crowned on April 10, 1378, the office changed the man. Urban VI was rigorous and upright, but he could also be temperamental and violent. His attempts at reforming cardinals' lifestyle and income displeased them. They eventually moved out of Rome to Anagni, and in August 1378 they first publicly questioned the election, then denounced Urban as illegitimate by procedural impropriety—the vote had taken place under duress and violence thus null and void. They labeled the pope intruder (usurper) and anathematized him.

On September 21, 1378, thirteen "rebellious" cardinals entered their own conclave in Fondi, where they elected Cardinal Robert of Geneva aka "The Butcher of Cesena", who took the name Clement VII. After learning of the election of his rival, Urban VI responded by remaking his College of Cardinals, naming twenty-five new candidates. This act confirmed the Schism. For the first time in its history the papacy had two popes, with two courts, two colleges of cardinals, and two sets of political supporters or obediences that perpetuated for some forty years.

Antipopes had been quite frequent during the Middle Ages, set-up by the Holy Roman Emperors, for example. But, never had the College disown and delegitimize its own election to start a

new one. Close to two generations of faithful lived with and accommodated themselves with a double and even triple papacy. Unity was eventually restored when the Council of Constance (1414-1418) elected Martin V as sole pope recognized by all.

This crisis which presumably shook the foundation of Christianity by questioning papal fallibility has generally been studied legally and institutionally. No historian has set the Schism as the historical question around which to build an analysis. My new project does such a thing, basically setting the Schism at the center of several analytical questions. What do we learn when putting the Schism at the center of things rather than peripheral background? Did the Schism affect liturgy? Did it influence the rich political life of the late Middle Ages and especially a new reliance on deposition and murder? Did it penetrate urban fabrics and especially the politico-cultural life of its two capitals Avignon and Rome? While I analyze events with the Schism as central historical question I have tried to respond with the tools offered by anthropology. I will offer some of my conclusions in the following presentation.