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BETTING ON THE PAPAL ELECTION IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

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ABSTRACT: Wagering on the papal election was a popular pastime among all levels of society in sixteenth-century Rome. Brokers and their clients kept well-informed of the election taking place within the closed doors of the conclave. Consequently, wagering on the election proved to be a source of disruption since—intentionally or not—it begat rumors of a pope's election and spurred brokers to use illicit means of discovering the secrets of the conclave. The papacy thus initiated a campaign against the practice during the last twenty-five years of the sixteenth century. This campaign, partially inspired by the Counter-Reformation's impulse to reform popular mores, proved successful as wagering on papal elections disappeared after 1592.

Keywords: Rome, sixteenth century, popes, conclave, papal elections, wagering, the Banchi, *avvisi*, *scommesse*, Counter Reformation, papacy

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Few events excited the people of Rome more than the election of the pope, the holy father of the Catholic Church and the supreme prince of the Eternal City. Rome sat in the center of a great political process that would determine not only its future but that of the entire Catholic world. Since the creation of the conclave in 1274 by Gregory X the election took place in a closed setting, separate from the politicking of princes and the cries of the crowd. In theory, the cardinals—sequestered and locked in the conclave—put aside their own personal desires and factional differences to elect the pope under the divine guidance of the Holy Ghost.¹

The reality, however, was another picture altogether. Despite being closed up in the conclave and with thousands of guards levied to watch over them in the Vatican Palace, the cardinals and election itself could never escape influence from without. The ambassadors of France, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Italian states managed to infiltrate the conclave by means of spies, letters, and even the cardinals themselves. The city itself sought news coming from the conclave through courtly gossip, street rumors, and handwritten newsletters called *avvisi*. Ambassadors, courtiers, merchants, and artisans living in Rome eagerly kept

informed of the conclave out of political necessity and curiosity. But one of the most pressing reasons for most sixteenth-century Romans to stay informed of the happenings in the conclave was the gambling associated with the papal election. For most of the sixteenth century, Romans regularly placed bets on the outcome of the election. The pastime ensured that the conclave could never really be closed and regularly stirred up rumor and turmoil for which the Renaissance conclaves were justly famous. This paper—part of larger project on the culture of gambling in Renaissance Rome and Italy—will examine the role of political wagering in the election of the pope and the papacy's efforts to curtail its impact on the election process. Ultimately, the papacy proved success in outlawing wagering on the election. But this was only one example of the Counter Reformation papacy's attempt to curtail popular mores, including many forms of gambling, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²

All the World's a Game: The Culture of Wagering in Sixteenth-Century Rome

Romans, both common and elite, gambled on everything in the Renaissance, ranging from traditional games of chance such as card and dice to the outcomes of sport's competitions like tennis and pall-mall matches. Placing bets, called *fare le scommesse* in the Italian, on the outcomes of events was also popular. The most common form of this betting was the *scommesse de maschio et femina*, that is, placing bets on the outcome of a woman's pregnancy. Brokers (*sensali*) took bets on the outcome of woman's pregnancy in the neighborhood by finding local pregnant women, collecting bets on the outcome by underwriting official wagers (variously called *polize* or *cedole*), monitoring the outcome, and then advertising the results from their offices. Clients successfully guessing the sex of the child received a payment, while the brokers kept the money of the losers. Since it was in the best interest of the brokers to make money, they often falsified the outcome of the pregnancy, even claiming that the infant had died in birth or that the pregnancy had resulted in a hermaphrodite.³

Romans also kept abreast of the great political events happening in the papal court and city. One of the most regular political occurrences on which they placed wagers was the pope's nomination of prelates to the cardinalate.⁴ Most popes created several cardinals during their pontificates—their so-called creatures—and typically announced their choices towards the end of the year in December. Throughout the entire year, the city

and court speculated on who the lucky (or perhaps those who had political patronage or financial means to force the issue) few would be. Newsletters kept the city apprised of the pope's thoughts through leaks coming from the court, and discussed the qualifications of each of the favorites. Informed in this way, Romans placed bets with the brokers on the likely candidates to assume to the purple—bets were placed throughout the year, but reached their crescendo at end of the year when the pope announced his decision. Brokers took bets on all sorts of activities related to the creation of the cardinals. These included bets on the cardinals to be created, bets on when the pope would announce his candidates, and bets on how many nominations he would make.⁵

Brokers and their clients primarily focused on the events surrounding the pope. One of the most popular forms of speculation and wagering centered on the length of the pontificate, but brokers also collected wagers on more mundane events as well, from the possibility of the pope making an important announcement to whether or not the pope would go on a trip. For example, throughout the entire first half of 1584, Rome remained stirred by the possibility that Gregory XIII would make an important trip to his hometown of Bologna. Brokers took bets on whether he would go or not, when he would go, and for how long he would go. The wagering centered on part of a larger discussion. Gregory XIII was very sick throughout that year, and many clergy and papal officials—even Philip II of Spain—worried he might die in Bologna and what repercussions that event could have for the city of Rome.⁶ Four years later, brokers also took bets on whether Sixtus V would make a trip to Loreto to visit its popular Marian shrine.⁷

However, the most popular of wagering centered on the papal election (*scommesse a fare il papa*). Speculation usually began even before the pope died, rumors and gossip kept the city on edge, as princes and cardinals prepared for a possible conclave, and the city began to speculate and place bets on possible successors to the papal throne.⁸ Once the pope had died, this speculation grew as the cardinals prepared for the conclave by coming into Rome. Typically, people well informed about the candidates who were *papabile*, that is, most likely to be elected. They knew about each cardinal's career as an ecclesiastic, moral character, and political alignments. In most cases they wanted to make an educated decision, but in other cases popularity won out. For example, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese was a perennial favorite among the common people of Rome for his easy-going personality.⁹ The people kept abreast of

the election and the qualities of each candidate through various channels that included gossip and rumors in the streets, newsletters passed from hand to hand, and pasquinades posted on the ancient statue affectionately named Pasquino.

The Brokers of the Banchi and their Clients

The brokers who took the wagers were wealthy merchants, typically cloth merchants, spice dealers, apothecaries, and bankers that situated their offices in the financial district called the Banchi in Rome. This region, located in the quarter of Ponte stretched from the Florentine national church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini to the Old Mint (Zecchia Vecchia) near the bridge leading to the Vatican. The Banchi was ideally suited near the Vatican so that the brokers could easily gather news of the election. It was also adjacent to the quarter of Parione where most of the newsletter writers and the printers had their offices and shops. This was also where Pasquino was located. Romans typically congregated around Pasquino to hear the latest news and read invectives mocking the cardinals and the election in the conclave. Finally, the Banchi was close to the Ghetto where many Jewish pawnbrokers and moneylenders lived and plied their trade. These Jewish merchants and dealers actively served as brokers.

Most brokers, however, originally came from Florence and other major towns in Tuscany. This was ideal since Florentine merchants and brokers were connected to the banking industry. It was in Florence that most of the tickets were printed and dated. A good example of how entrenched the Florentines were in placing bets on the papal election comes from a series of criminal trials involving brokers during the papal election of October 1590. The Governor of Rome had arrested several brokers and their clients. Of those arrested, 20% were of Florentine or Tuscan background, and nearly all these identified their occupation as broker and wool merchant.¹⁰

The brokers met their clients in banks, shops and apothecaries located in the Banchi. Here they underwrote bets for various amounts, ranging from a few silver *giulii* to hundred and even thousands of gold *scudi*. The client would choose a cardinal that he considered *papabile* and then wager money on this candidate. The broker would then give the bettor a ticket (the *poliza* or *cedola*) as proof of his wager. Most clients placed bets on several candidates rather than putting on their money on one cardinal. For example, the saddle-maker, Gaspar Romano, arrested for betting on the first election

that took place in 1590, admitted, “I bought two tickets for Cardinal Santi Quattro for four *scudi* and one for Cardinal Castagna for three *scudi*, which I then sold for twenty-two *scudi*.”¹¹ Gaspar was able to make more than five times what he wagered when Cardinal Castagna was elected as Pope Urban VII.

A wide array of people gambled on the papal election. The trials of the autumn of 1590 reveal a wide swath of Roman society. Close to 26% of those tried identified as artisans. These included tailors, shoemakers, masons, hat makers, and smiths. One tailor named Lutio Renzo, arrested in Piazza di Monte Giordano on his way to buy satin for his shop, proclaimed his innocence by stating, “I don’t have the money to wager on the pope because I have four children.”¹² Others climbed up the social ladder—among the arrested were two priests, several servants of cardinals and noblemen, and several gentlemen. One Giovanni Paolo Delli da Bologna claimed “my profession is being a gentleman,” although all likelihood he served one of the many prelates associated with the papal court.¹³

Although commoners betted on the papal election, it was the nobility and wealthy merchants who played for high stakes. At the end of the conclave that elected Julius III (1550), the merchant Ceuli Banchieri won more than twenty-thousand *scudi* in the wagering. Most of those taking part in the wagering at the Banchi were not so fortunate: five Florentine merchants went bankrupt after placing large sums on Cardinal Santa Severina during Urban VII’s vacant see in 1590.¹⁴ Even cardinals informally took part in the action, as Dandolo wrote in 1550 “amongst the cardinals themselves, there were wagers of amber rosaries, perfumed gloves (which no one can do without), she mules, chains, and even of money.” Forty years later, Alberto Badoer, another Venetian ambassador, wrote that many cardinals had placed wagers with the brokers.¹⁵ Indeed, the Spanish servant, Juan Aghilar, was arrested in the Banchi, carrying tickets, a purse of twelve *scudi*, and three letters respectively addressed to the ambassador of Spain, Cardinal Juan de Mendoza, and Cardinal Colonna.¹⁶

The Market Invades the Conclave: Wagering on the Papal Election

The enthusiasm to which Romans attended the wagering on the election inspired brokers and clients alike to find discover “the mysteries” of the conclave. Newsletters and the dispatches of ambassadors informed the eager public of what had transpired among the cardinals. This correspondence regularly listed the outcomes

of the voting that occurred twice daily in the conclave. For example a dispatch of the Venetian ambassador Matteo Dandolo of 1550 reveals, the brokers kept well informed of the voting among the cardinals and the consequent impact wagering could have on the election. He informed the Venetian Senate that Cardinal Reginald Pole had come close to being elected during the night of 5 December 1550 and that consequently “he was at 80 percent in the wagering, and 30 percent was wagered that he would be proclaimed in the morning.”¹⁷ The Venetian ambassador continued his report, writing that the cardinals “were at the point of adoring” Pole and that their servants had already begun to take down the cells in the conclave when another faction demanded another vote in order to avoid a schism.¹⁸

Dandolo blamed the cloth merchants, bankers and brokers of the Banchi for intruding upon the space of the conclave. In the same dispatch exclaimed, apparently without any irony, that “it is therefore more than clear that the merchants are very well informed about the state of the poll, and that the cardinals’ attendants in the conclave go partners with them in wagers, which causes many tens of thousands of crowns [*scudi*] to change hands.”¹⁹ Five years later, during the election of 1555, the prelate Giovanni Cagarra also complained to the Bishop of Feltre that “the Banchi with its wagers discovers the secrets of these intrigues [of the conclave].”²⁰

The influence of the wagering in the Banchi on the election and the rumors it generated frightened papal observers and the city’s authorities. In listing the results of the day’s betting at the Banchi, Dandolo complained of the hopeless situation in the conclave, writing that “the Pope please God will be created in the conclave and not in the marketplace by a majority of two-thirds of the cardinals.” Ten years later, during the conclave of 1559, the Mantuan ambassador Emilio Stangheli wrote to his Gonzaga masters that only “the foolish” listen to what the brokers of the Banchi have to say about the election.²¹

But listen the people did. Whenever a cardinal rose in the betting, word immediately spread throughout the city and then gained momentum as a rumor of his election as pope. For example, in 1559, Giovanni Vertua sardonically wrote his patron, Count Brunoro of Gambara, that “from the conclave in the Banchi came a rumor that Cardinal Puteo was pope.”²² A more far-reaching example happened in 1590, when the Bolognese cardinal, Gabriele Paleotti, increased to seventy percent in the wagering, begetting a rumor of his election that led to a tumultuous chain of events that even misled the

interregnal authorities. A newsletter captured the rumor in real time:

Wednesday at the twenty-second hour rumor began to hold Paleotti as pope, and it went on increasing so that at the end of the morning he had risen to 70 in the wagering. Messengers were sent out [with the news of his election], his coat-of-arms were attached at different places in the city, the civic militias kept guard at his house beneath the conclave, and in St. Peter’s candles were lit and other preparations made by the clergy.²³

Later that evening the rumor died down, but as a result the College of Cardinals had carpenters reinforce the walls of the conclave and made the conclavists swear an oath over the Bible “not to send forth news” of the election. Moreover, they had the Governor of Rome arrest several brokers and merchants of the Banchi as well as several men armed with outlawed handguns whom that they kept as guards.²⁴

The wagering at the Banchi thus regularly stirred up rumors as the brokers and their clients enthusiastically sought information concerning the election.²⁵ As the many of the ambassadors indicated in their correspondence, brokers deliberately created many of these rumors to influence the election and change the direction of the wagering. In 1555 Gian Pietro Carafa stood a good chance of being elected pope, ranking among the top three *papabili* in the first scrutiny of the conclave that eventually raised him to the papal throne. Brokers intentionally “spread the rumor that Naples [i.e. Carafa] had died,” which conclave observers believed because he failed to attend the morning mass and the congregation of cardinals later that afternoon. The rumor quickly lowered his chances in the wagering at the Banchi. The rumor caused so much confusion that the cardinals ordered its originators suffer the gallows and the confiscation of their property. This episode shows how public opinion could be manipulated by a small cadre of merchants for personal gain.²⁶

The Papacy Strikes Back: The Abolition of Wagering

Throughout much of the sixteenth century, the College of Cardinals made repeated efforts to stop the wagering on papal elections, but to no avail. During the conclave that elected Paul IV they forbade all wagering—a decree that was largely ignored.²⁷ Later they attempted to enforce Pius IV’s bull *In eligendis*, which outlawed gambling on the election. Again, brokers and their clients flouted this clause in subsequent papal elections. For example, during the election of 1585, a newsletter reported that Romans wagered on the pope’s

election “in contempt of the bull.”²⁸ These efforts at outlawing wagering on the election were largely ignored because cardinals themselves haphazardly enforced them. Cardinals maintained an ambivalent stance towards wagering on the election. On one hand, they could condemn the pernicious effects it had on the election; on the other, many actively participated in the wagering. Even the sister of Sixtus V, the one of the sternest Counter-Reformation popes, could take part in the wagering. One of the servants of Camilla Peretti was arrested by papal police for placing a wager in her name for five hundred *scudi*.²⁹

The situation began to change with the pontificate of the austere pope Sixtus V, who issued a deluge of *bandi* (decrees) from 1587 to 1589 through his Cardinal Chamberlain Enrico Caetani curtailing all forms of wagering, including *maschio et femina* (betting on the sex of unborn children) and the promotion of cardinals. These decrees begrudgingly allowed wagering to occur, but only through thirty brokers officially recognized and regulated by the Apostolic Chamber.³⁰ Caetani imposed a five hundred *scudi* fine as well as a five-year stint in the papal galleys to all unregistered brokers.³¹ In 1587 betting on the promotion of cardinals was the first form of wagering attacked by Sixtus, who banned it outright, not only because it subjected holy people to the affairs of the market, but also because “it ruined poor artisans.”³² In a *bando* of 1589, Sixtus reluctantly allowed wagering on the sex of unborn children, but renewed the ban on betting on the promotion of cardinals under pain of a hundred *scudi* fine.³³

Sixtus’s efforts to curtail all forms of wagering influenced the cardinals in the governance of Rome during his vacant see in 1590. Upon entering the conclave they outlawed wagering on the papal election.³⁴ A month later, after the brief pontificate of his successor Urban VII, the cardinals renewed the ban on betting on the future election. Four days later, the Governor of Rome, Giovanni Matteucci, showed that he intended to enforce the decree. He had the papal police raid shops in the Banchi where they confiscated tickets, arrested many brokers, and subjected them to tortures in order “to extract from them those people who had commerce with them.”³⁵ Matteucci planned to strike at the brokers’ wealthy supporters of the brokers, and his strategy succeeded; a newsletter writer complained “this was a mess that will entangle and embrace many lords and several Illustrious Cardinals.”³⁶ He went on to say that “this prohibition against wagering removes the freedom from this market and will make money flow to Flor-

ence, Naples and elsewhere” and complained of the loss of “the freedom of the conclave to talk [about the election], send forth notes, speak in jargon, and to know almost completely what happens inside.”³⁷

Released on a 10,000 *scudi* security, the brokers and merchants remained defiant. They continued to accept wagers, but since the police now closely monitored the Banchi, they met their clients within the sanctuary (*franchigia*) of Cardinal Francesco Sforza, one of the chief leaders of the Sacred College, who had ordered the brokers’ arrest. Sforza had them chased away after his mother informed him of their illicit dealings. Nevertheless, they refused to give in, retiring first to the Orsini sanctuary in Monte Giordano until they were again forced to leave. Then they fled to the Colonna palace at the opposite end of Rome, before settling in Paolo Sforza’s vineyard near Monte Cavallo. The choice of the Sforza obviously was *burla*, a joke mocking the cardinal, while that of the Orsini and Colonna was perhaps an attempt to enlist the protection of these powerful and venerable families.³⁸

Urban VII’s successor, the pious Gregory XIV, issued the definitive statement on the wagering on papal elections. On 21 March 1591, in the bull *Cogit nos*, he outlawed on pain of excommunication and perpetual banishment—not only betting on the outcome of papal elections but also on wagering on the duration of pontificates and the promotion of cardinals. The bull complained of the sacrilege committed by brokers and their clients since “with the spiritual and the sacred they mix any sort of money and go about attaching to them the foulest customs of the market.”³⁹ It condemned them for forgetting that these “affairs belonged to God.” Although Gregory’s bull concerned the entire Catholic world, parts of it seemed specifically addressed to the brokers of the Banchi.⁴⁰ For example, it condemned them for the rumors and disturbances that wagering in the shops of the brokers could provoke. The papacy had the details of the bull printed in Italian and posted on the gates of the city, outside its churches, and on the doors of taverns.

The End of the Game

The impact of *Cogit nos* on wagering on the election was immediately felt during the conclave of 1591, which occurred less than six months after its publication. A newsletter written after Innocent IX’s election in 1592 reported that “in this last vacant see there were wagers made here, but only among a few people.”⁴¹ Four months later, during the conclave that followed

the short-lived Innocent IX's pontificate, the Venetian ambassador, Giovanni Moro, noted the greater diligence that the cardinals employed against the brokers and their activities.⁴² Gregory XIV's bull dealt the death knell to organized wagering on papal elections that took place through brokers at the Banchi. A final decree against the practice was issued as part of a general decree during Clement VIII's vacant see of 1605, but by then wagering had gone underground.⁴³ Ambassadors, merchants, and artisans still kept informed on the happenings in the conclave and probably made informal bets on the papal election in taverns and private homes. However, after the 1590s its institutionalized form at the Banchi had disappeared. The reports of conclavists and newsletter writers of the seventeenth century make no mention of this practice and interregnal authorities, who still issued decrees against dicing, card-playing and other forms of gambling, remained silent on the matter as well.

The papacy's successful attempt to curtail the influence of the wagering on the papal election was only one part of its campaign against the prosaic culture of gambling in Renaissance Rome. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries popes issued decrees against all types of gambling and gaming. These decrees were always proclaimed in vain, as dicing, card-playing, and wagering on soccer, tennis, and pall-mall matches seemed entrenched among the city's artisans, soldiers, and servants. It would be impossible for the papacy to eradicate these types of activities since its enthusiasts could always hide or flee the city. The wealthy brokers and merchants involved in officially regulating wagering on papal elections, the promotion of cardinals, and other political activities associated with the papal court did not have this option. Once the papacy made it difficult for the brokers to ply their trade the practice of wagering on papal elections quickly disappeared.

Endnotes

- 1 On papal elections, see Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia, eds., *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700* (Cambridge, 2002) and John M. Hunt, "The Conclave from the 'Outside In': Rumor, Speculation, and Disorder during Early Modern Papal Elections," *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012), 355-82.
- 2 For examples of prescriptive literature from Catholic clergymen against gambling found in in the Special Collections of UNLV's library, see Francisco de Alcocer, *Tratado de iuego* (Salamanca, 1559) and Carlo Gregorio Rosignoli, *Il giuco di fortuna, overo, il bene, el male dé giuochi* (Modena, 1703).
- 3 Giorgio Roberti, *I giochi a Roma* (Rome, 1995), 379-80. For the brokers who organized the wagers in sixteenth-century Rome, see Francesco Colzi, "Per maggiore felicità del commercio: I sensali e la mediazione mercantile e finanziaria a Roma nei secoli XVI-XIX, *Roma moderna e contemporanea* 6 (1998), 404.
- 4 Roberti, *I giochi*, 383.
- 5 For example, see Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Urbinate latine (hereafter Urb.lat) 1052, *avviso* of 7 January 1584, fols. 9r-9v and BAV, Urb.lat 1055, *avviso* of 4 November 1587, fols. 493r-v.
- 6 BAV, Urb.lat. 1052, *avvisi* of 14 January 1584, 28 January 1584, 22 February 1584, 24 March 1584, and 21 April 1584, fols. 17r-v, 37r-v, 64v, 105r-v, and 157r.
- 7 Enrico Stumpo, ed., *La gazzetta de l'anno 1588* (Florence, 1988), 76.
- 8 Renaud Villard, "Incarnare una voce: Il caso della sede vacante (Roma, XVI secolo)," *Quaderni storici* 101 (2006), 39-68 and Hunt, "Conclave from the Outside In," 367-74.
- 9 Hunt, "Conclave from the Outside In," 378-81.
- 10 Archivio di Stato di Roma (hereafter ASR), Tribunale criminale del governatore (hereafter TCG), Costiuti, vols. 407, 409, and 411.
- 11 ASR, TCG, Costituti, vol. 411, trial of 23 October 1590, fol. 74r.
- 12 ASR, TCG, Processi, vol. 230, case 10, trial of 11 October 1590, fol. 1090v.
- 13 ASR, TCG, Costituti, vol. 407, trial of 11 October 1590, fol. 96v.
- 14 For Ceuli, see the dispatch of Matteo Dandolo of 12 February 1550, Calendar of State Papers (hereafter CSP), 5:310. For the bankruptcies in Florentine merchants, see BAV, Urb.lat 1058, *avviso* of 22 December 1590, fol. 668v.
- 15 For Dandolo's dispatch of 15 January 1550, see CSP, 5:298. For the cardinals placing bets at the Banchi, see Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Dispacci degli ambasciatori al senato, Roma, f. 26, dispatch of 29 November 1590, fol. 139r.
- 16 ASR, TCG, Costituti, vol. 411, trial of 23 October 1590, fols. 72r-v.
- 17 Dispatch of Matteo Dandolo of 5 December 1550, CSP, 5:280.
- 18 Dispatch of Matteo Dandolo of 5 December 1550, CSP, 5:281.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 BAV, Chigiani R II, t. 54, letter of Giovanni Cagarra to the Bishop of Feltre, 11 May 1555, fol. 229r.
- 21 For Dandolo's dispatch of 13 November 1590; see CSP, 5:276. The brackets are the addition of the editor Rawdon Brown. For Stangheli's of 8 November 1559; see Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Carteggio degli inviati e diversi, Rome, f. 889, fol. 685r.
- 22 Letter of Giovanni Tommaso Vertua to Count Brunoro de Gambara of 13 September 1559, in Roberto Rezzaghi, "Cronaca di un conclave: L'Elezion di Pio IV (1559)," *Salesianum* 48 (1986): 537.
- 23 BAV, Urb.lat 1058, *avviso* of 13 October 1590, fol. 525v. The Tuscan ambassador Giovanni Niccolini also traced the origin of the rumor to the Banchi, where, he wrote, that Paleotti shot up to fifty and sixty in the wagering and that his coat-of-arms was seen throughout the city with the papal miter. The College of Cardinals ordered the Governor of Rome to punish several brokers and Florentine merchants; see Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, Carteggio diplomatico, Rome, f. 3301, letter of Giovanni Niccolini to the Grand Duke of 2 October

- 1590, fol. 208r.
- 24 BAV, Urb.lat 1058, *avviso* of 13 October 1590, fols. 525v-26r. The brokers kept “intelligence, traffic, and commerce” with those inside the conclave by making scaffolds from which they could talk to their spies and receive “detailed news “of the election.”
- 25 For other examples, see BAV, Urb.lat 1039, *avviso* of 11 November 1559, fol. 101v and Urb.lat 1053, *avviso* of 17 April 1585, fol. 177v.
- 26 BAV, Chigiani R II, t. 54, letter of Giovanni Cagarra to the Bishop of Feltre, 11 May 1555, fols. 230v-31r.
- 27 BAV, Urb.lat 1038, *avviso* of 4 May 1555, fol. 54r.
- 28 BAV, Urb.lat 1053, *avviso* of 20 April 1585, fol. 184r.
- 29 ASR, TCG, vol. 411, trial of 23 October 1590, fol. 76v.
- 30 For the *bando* establishing the thirty brokers, see Archivio Segreto Vaticano (hereafter ASV), Bando Sciolti, ser. I, busta 2, *bando* of 10 August 1588, p. 40. Six months earlier, Caetani issued a *bando* forbidding wagering on feast days because of “scant respect” it carried towards such holy days; see Ibid, *bando* of 19 February 1588, p. 64. The Apostolic Chamber imposed a fine of five hundred *scudi* on brokers and their clients caught making wagers on feast days. This *bando* also tried to limit the amount people could wager to twenty-five *scudi*. Unable to stop the wagering at the Banchi, Caetani reissued the same provisions in a *bando* of 10 July 1589; see ASV, Miscellenea Armadio (hereafter Misc. Arm) IV & V, t. 203, p. 518.
- 31 ASV, Misc. Arm. IV & V, t. 203, *bandi* of 2 September and 28 December 1588, pp. 520 and 524.
- 32 ASC, Misc. Arm. IV & V, t. 203, *bando* of 17 December 1587, p. 527. The Apostolic Chamber fined lords and gentlemen five hundred *scudi* for wagering on the promotion of cardinals; artisans and “people of low condition” were sent to the galleys for five years and lost their wagers. Jews who bought and sold wagering tickets lost their money and were sent to the galleys *in perpetuam*. Brokers could also be sent to galleys.
- 33 ASV, Misc. Arm. IV & V, t. 203, *bando* of 5 December 1589, p. 526. Just four months earlier, he had imposed regulations on *maschio et femina*, but had not outlawed it; see ASV, Misc. Arm IV & V, t. 203, *bando* of 31 July 1589, p. 589.
- 34 BAV, Urb.lat 1058, *avviso* of 12 September 1590, fol. 466r.
- 35 BAV, Urb.lat 1058, *avviso* of 17 October 1590, fol. 536r.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 BAV, Urb.lat 1058, *avviso* of 27 October 1590, fol. 556r. Other brokers and their clients met under the protection of the *franchigia* of the Florentine ambassador; see ASR, TCG, Costituti, vol. 411, trial of 23 October 1590, fol. 73r. For the testimonies of the many brokers, merchants and artisans arrested at the Sforza *franchigia*, see ASR, TCG, Costituti, vol. 407, fols. 95r- 130r and vol. 9, fols. 199r-209v.
- 39 Yale University, Beinecke Library, no. 254, “Bolla della Santità di N. S. Gregorio PP contra chi fa scommesse sopra la vita & morte ò sopra la futura elezione del Pontefice Romano ò sopra le promotioni dei Cardinali della Santa Chiesa Romana,” 21 March 1591.
- 40 Yale University, Beinecke Library, no. 254, “Bolla contra chi fa scommesse,” 21 March 1591.
- 41 BAV, Urb.lat 1059, pt. II, *avviso* of 2 November 1591.
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About the Author

John Hunt (Ph. D., Ohio State University, 2009) specializes in the social and cultural history of Renaissance Italy, with a particular focus on popular culture in Papal Rome. He has written several articles on diverse topics that include the role of public opinion on the conclave and papal election; rumors and the pope's death; and carriages and violence. He currently is revising his manuscript, "Violence and the Vacant See in Early Modern Rome," for publication in late 2015. Future projects will focus on the culture of gambling in Papal Rome. He is an assistant professor at Utah Valley University.

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