

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Congress

Late Medieval Cardinals Between Crises

From the Western Schism to the V Lateran Council (1378-1517)

Porto, 29-30 May 2025



Courtesy British Library Add. 24189

Abstract:

The history of the cardinalate, which stretches from the 11th century to the present day, went through one of the most volatile phases of its development between the beginning of the Western Schism (1378) and the close of the Fifth Lateran Council (1517). The prominence given to the cardinals from the annulment of the election of Urban VI until the abdication of Felix V contrasts with the gradual, but not linear, weakening of the Sacred College throughout the second half of the 15th century, culminating in the early 16th century with the pontificates of Alexander VI, Julius II and Leo X. This congress aims to work and reflect on these cardinals, both as a group, gathered in the Sacred College, and in their individual dimensions, as lords, members of lineages, pastors, reformers, conciliarists, centres of courts, families and networks, diplomats and representatives of nations, patrons of the arts, among others. The cross-sectional interest of this congress stems from the desire to feed the historiographical renewal that has been taking place over the last two decades on the medieval cardinalate, seeking to bring together researchers who are dedicated to its study, regardless of the angle of approach they may take.

Description:

The historiography on the cardinalate has undergone a period of revitalization in recent decades. Thematic conferences and collective books have been dedicated to this subject, enriching the debate on this centenary institution. The medieval cardinalate is no exception. This congress aims to contribute to this renewal by promoting the debate on the cardinals of the late Middle Ages, in all its dimensions. In addition to a broad thematic horizon, this meeting also aims to approach a large timeline. It stretches from the last decades of the 14th century to the beginning of the 16th century, a period of over a hundred years during which the papal institution, and therefore cardinals, faced profound challenges and transformations.

In 1378, a few months after electing the Italian Urban VI to the throne of St Peter, the members of the College of Cardinals became increasingly incompatible with the newly elected pope and his way of governing the Universal Church, declaring his election invalid. The cardinals left the Curia and elected a new pope, Clement VII, beginning the Western Schism. The Council of Pisa, convened in 1409 with the aim of healing the division in the Church, resulted in the election of a third pontiff. Like the popes, the colleges of cardinals multiplied, with the one in Pisa joining those in Rome and Avignon.

After the deposition of John XXIII, the Council of Constance elected Martin V in 1417, granting the vote not only to the cardinals, but also to the representatives of the nations and other prelates. The election of the Colonna pope restored the unity of the Church, helped by the integration into its Sacred College of cardinals created by popes of the three obediences. Martin V also convened the Council of Basel in 1431, later led by Eugenius IV, which resulted in a brief but significant division of the Church with the election of Felix V. During this conciliar assembly, there were several proposals to reform the college of cardinals, limiting their numbers and backgrounds.

The entire 15th century, from the Council of Constance onwards, was marked by constant tensions between the elected popes and their cardinal electors. At each conclave, the *purpurati* signed an electoral capitulation, according to which they committed themselves to a series of conditions if they were elected. These include the ever-present promise not to increase the number of members of the Sacred College without the consent of the majority of cardinals. These capitulations were not respected, and the popes appointed, with greater or lesser difficulty, the cardinals they deemed necessary. The increase in the number of cardinals diluted the income and power of each of them, which is why the College was constantly opposed to the creation of new cardinals.

The conciliar determinations were left behind throughout the 15th century and the popes endeavoured to restore their spiritual and temporal authority. After the pontificate of Alexander VI, the cardinals, formally brothers of the pope and members of his body, were definitively stripped of much of the power they had held during the period of the Schism. From this pontiff onwards, the number of cardinals continued to increase. While in 1436 the Council of Basel established a maximum of 24 cardinals, in 1517, after "discovering" the conspiracy hatched by Cardinal Petrucci against his life, Leo X created 31 cardinals at once. That same year, the last pre-Tridentine Council was held in the Basilica of St John Lateran and Martin Luther published the 95 Theses.

Practical issues:

The congress will take place at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto on 29 and 30 May 2025. It will be financed by FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology), through CITCEM (Transdisciplinary Research Center for Culture, Space and Memory).

Paper proposals (maximum 3,000 characters with spaces included) and information about the speaker must be submitted in English by 1 November 2024 using the following form:

<https://forms.gle/273XkoAW53tr4iDj7>

All paper proposals will be submitted to the consideration of the Scientific Committee.

We invite paper proposals on a wide range of topics related to late medieval cardinals, including but not limited to:

- The Papal Curia
- Schism and Councils
- National Cardinals
- Households, courts and *familiae*
- The Sacred College
- Networks
- Legates and Nuncios
- Cardinal Protectors and Religious Orders
- Conclaves
- Politics and Diplomacy
- Church Reform(s)
- Ceremonies and Liturgy
- Heritage and Transmission
- Charity and Piety
- Culture, Literature and Humanism
- Material and Visual cultures
- Taxation and Ecclesiastical benefices
- Spirituality and Pastoral care
- Archives and Memory
- Cannon Law

The selection results will be announced on 15 December 2024.

The congress sessions will preferably be conducted in English. The papers presented in the congress will result in a monographic publication.

The organisers cannot cover the travel and accommodation expenses of the participants, but we do offer coffee breaks and possibly some meals.

Organising Committee:

André Moutinho Rodrigues (CITCEM – Universidade do Porto / LaMOP – Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne)

Kirsi Salonen (University of Bergen)

Maria João Oliveira e Silva (CITCEM – Universidade do Porto)

Scientific Committee:

Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Université de Lausanne)

Alexander Koller (Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom)

Barbara Bombi (University of Kent)

Claudia Märrtl (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich)

David S. Chambers (Warburg Institut)

Hermínia Vilar (Universidade de Évora)

Luís Carlos Amaral (CITCEM, Universidade do Porto)

Maria Cristina Cunha (CITCEM, Universidade do Porto)

Olivier Poncet (École national des chartes)