


In Support of Pontifical Power: The Papacy and the Papal States' Baronial Nobility, 1417–49

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This article addresses the baronial nobility's much-neglected role in supporting the reestablishment of pontifical power in the wake of the Western Schism. In doing so, this article stresses how acts of noble revolt were complemented by extensive patterns of collaboration in the Papal States' government, armies, and relations with other principalities. The nobility proved to be a fundamental source of support—a support that was theorized around and expressed in the language of fealty and devotion. In light of this, my analysis further contributes to the study of the perseverance of noble power and ubiquity of transregional factions in late medieval societies.

INTRODUCTION

THE REESTABLISHMENT OF papal authority within the church as well as within the Papal States in the wake of the Western Schism has attracted significant scholarly attention and figured prominently in debates on late medieval and early modern state formation. The papacy possessed a vast bureaucracy and inherited a medieval legacy of claims to spiritual and temporal primacy. Paolo Prodi focused on this theological framework and how it formed the foundation for papal universal monarchy, arguing that the papacy's claims in the spiritual realm provided the basis for the extension of papal power in the Papal States' government.¹ Concurrently, Peter Partner investigated the papacy's governmental offices: the papal chancery and the Camera Apostolica, which organized papal finances—princely bureaucracy as a catalyst for state formation.² In Partner's view, which was influenced by research on

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¹ Prodi, 1982 and 1968.

² Partner, 1980 and 1972.

other European principalities, the ability to levy taxes in hitherto unruly parts of the papal dominions was a driving force behind bureaucratic expansion. This expansion, in turn, fed into further military endeavors. Enlarged bureaucracies thus served as an alternative source of power to princes to oppose traditional noble influence at court as well as in local government.³ In the Papal States, this development was accelerated by the papacy's growing dependence on income from its subject territories after a sharp fall in revenues resulting from the Western Schism's divisions and papal concordats with secular princes.⁴ Efforts at strengthening the government of the papal temporal dominions were matched by innovations in papal authority's representation in the arts, architecture, and city planning, as well as by greater sophistication in the performance of power through ceremony.⁵ What unites these studies is a vision of papal authority as something to be imposed from the top down, and in such schemata any counteracting forces are, by definition, obstacles to overcome.

This article takes a different tack, arguing that the nobility was a strong source of support for pontifical power. Indeed, recent research has shifted the focus to how papal authority was negotiated with other political stakeholders, particularly within the papal Curia. Marco Pellegrini and Jennifer Mara DeSilva have highlighted the need for popes to negotiate with the College of Cardinals, although both discern a point around the turn of the sixteenth century when the scope for cardinals to oppose or deviate from papal policy was significantly reduced.⁶ With regards to the Curia, it has been suggested that papal authority was especially brittle in the period following the conclave, when newly elected popes still had to take full possession of their office.⁷ As a consequence, much attention has been lavished, above all by Reinhard Wolfgang and a group of eminent scholars around him, on the ways popes used their family to overcome the limitations of papal power—in other words, the practice of nepotism—although this practice, too, brought its own downsides.⁸ Moreover, although the cardinal-nephew was initially—and understandably, considering his crucial role in the Curia—the main object of investigation, Jennifer Mara DeSilva

³ See, however, the importance of the nobility in government in the Low Countries, Upper Germany, and Milan in Gamberini; Hardy; Buylaert, 2012.

⁴ Chambers, 38–52; Partner, 1980; Partner, 1958, 131–58; Caravale and Caracciolo, 3–138. On the papacy's concordats with lay princes, see Pellegrini, 2013.

⁵ McCahill.

⁶ Pellegrini, 2002; DeSilva, 2008. It must be noted that Pellegrini's turning point coincides with what others have suggested is a change in papal attitude toward the nobility. For this, see Allegrezza; Rehberg, 2001.

⁷ Pattenden, 177–87; De Vincentiis, 2002.

⁸ Reinhard, 1991 and 1975; see also the critique of the use of nepotism as a pejorative rather than prescriptive term in Dufouleur.

placed the lay nephew center stage in a particularly stimulating study.⁹ To be sure, the use of close kin in the Papal States' temporal government was widely recognized to have been a defining feature of Martin V's pontificate, but DeSilva shows it was a feature common to nearly every pontificate between the Council of Constance (1414–18) and the Council of Trent (1545–63).¹⁰ Research on the lay papal nephew uncovered a potential area of contact between pontifical inner circles and lay Roman barons (barons who were cardinals already participated in consistories). Among the first to identify the area's importance was Christine Shaw, who highlighted the sometimes very close connections between the Orsini and several papal nephews in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹¹ As these contacts between barons and papal kin suggest, papal authority in relation to the nobility, as in other areas, had to be negotiated, especially because it was periodically contested by the baronage. Moreover, DeSilva stresses the importance of noble status for the effective exercise of authority by the lay papal nephew.¹² Where noble status was lacking, popes did all in their means to provide their kin with the titles, lands, and castles that were prerequisites for such status. The conflation of noble status and political authority naturally begs the question of what role there was for the Papal States' hereditary nobility in papal government.

The historiography of the Papal States' baronial elite mirrors that of the papacy insofar as it is also gradually shifting away from a view that privileges antagonism toward one that favors the investigation of patterns of collaboration. The idea that barons were an unruly and violent bunch is as prevalent in the historiography of the Papal States as it is elsewhere.¹³ One conspicuous error that is still reiterated time and again is that of interpreting the swarming of large private armies into the city during the *sede vacante* as a sign of the violent tendencies of Rome's baronial families.¹⁴ Although the papal interregna were indeed periods of (ritualized) violence, leveled especially against the relatives and possessions of the deceased pope, it is important to remember that with the cardinals locked away in conclave it fell to the Roman barons to maintain order—the Savelli, for instance, retained the office of *Maresciallo del Conclave* (Marshall of the conclave), which entailed responsibility for locking the conclave door and guarding against unwarranted attempts at influencing its

⁹ DeSilva, 2016.

¹⁰ Esch, 2016, 74–80; Pellegrini, 2010, 69–80; Rehberg, 1992; Caravale and Caracciolo, 18–19.

¹¹ Shaw, 2007, 171–203.

¹² DeSilva, 2016, 6–7.

¹³ Di Santo; Thomson; Jones, 176–261.

¹⁴ Fellows.

course. Even if chroniclers noted the intimidating effects of these armed bands, violent clashes during the *sede vacante* were infrequent.

Studies of single families have in general reinforced the view of papal-noble antagonism, foremost because such studies have tended to focus on those families who ultimately came into conflict with the papacy, such as the Prefetti di Vico, Anguillara, and Colonna.¹⁵ What these studies do suggest is that although the opposition between papal and noble power has been overemphasized, this interpretation cannot simply be supplanted by a view of harmonious collaboration. Indeed, the protection offered by barons to republican firebrands hailing from their client families foregrounds, at the very least, the complicated attitudes that existed between baronial families and popes with whom relations were less than cordial.¹⁶ But apart from these events, contingent on the person exercising the pontifical office and the reservoir of classically inspired tyrant killers in Rome's humanist circles, there are structural reasons as to why papal-noble collaboration has not presented itself to historians as evident.

A number of excellent studies have emphasized the nobility's enduring political prominence and the centrality of developments in lordship to understanding the government of late medieval European polities.¹⁷ Yet, in contrast to other fifteenth-century Italian—and, indeed, European and non-European—principalities, very few legal and institutional ties connected nobility and prince in the Papal States.¹⁸ Theoretically, the papacy derived its authority from its claim to apostolic succession and in every conclave the Holy Spirit guided the cardinal-electors' choice.¹⁹ Conversely, the baronial nobility seldom held fiefs from the pope—nor did they render him feudal dues or exhibit the natural servitude expected to shape vassals' behavior toward their lord. Crucially, the barons considered themselves to be near independent, not least because most of their possessions were allodial and popes relied on the barons' military resources for their armies, a paid service that could be retracted at any given point and extended to other Italian powers as well.²⁰ Their status as a distinct class had been inherited since times immemorial. With the regularity of lapses in papal authority during interregna and the relatively short duration of many pontificates, one of the benefits that the nobility had was that it could always patiently await a hostile incumbent pope's death and his family's inevitable fall

¹⁵ Berardozzi; Serio; Sora, 1906 and 1907; Calisse.

¹⁶ Chiabò et al.; Modigliani; D'Elia, 40–76.

¹⁷ Buylaert, 2015; Buylaert and Ramandt; Watts.

¹⁸ Duindam; Shaw, 2009; Carocci, 2006.

¹⁹ Pattenden, 59–61.

²⁰ Carocci, 1993a, 17–66; Shaw, 2009; Shaw, 2001. In general, Shaw, 2015.

from grace.²¹ Sufficient reason, therefore, to conclude that baronial opposition to papal projects was the default.

Nonetheless, the preeminent scholars of the Roman barons, Sandro Carocci and Christine Shaw, concluded that barons were central to papal government. Foremost, they asserted that barons were active in the curial hierarchy. They also determined that baronial influence was deeply embedded in the Papal States' communes and their system of ruling factions. As such, barons connected local urban communities to the pontifical court, often helping their allies gain access to the central government in Rome as well as assisting papal officials in establishing authority in their respective localities.²² Barons also assisted the pope in areas of diplomacy, mediating between the papacy and other Italian (and non-Italian) states. These general observations, however, still require further corroboration by in-depth studies.²³ This article takes up this challenge by focusing on the crucial yet understudied first two pontificates—those of Martin V (1417–31) and Eugene IV (1431–47)—following the Council of Constance, during which the papacy returned to Rome. During this period, the papacy not only had to rely on baronial support in military affairs but was forced to (re)invent and (re)establish secure and lasting modes of collaboration with the baronial elite in order to ensure the permanent presence of a single uncontested papacy in Rome, and a measure of authority in the two provinces immediately surrounding it: the Campania and Marittima (*Campaniae Maritimaeque Provincia*), to the south, and the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscia (*Patrimonium Beati Petri in Tuscia*), to the north. This article argues that papal-noble collaboration was one of the primary reasons for the successful restoration of papal temporal authority.

The first part of this article argues that Martin V relied on his direct Colonna kin for a measure of political and military support for his regime, and that they actively brought on board a number of other baronial families who had an interest in, or ideological attachment to, furthering papal projects. In the second part, this article addresses the transitional period that marked the end of Martin V's and the start of Eugene IV's pontificate. By emphasizing the relative continuity in patterns of papal-noble collaboration despite the transition from a Roman pope, who himself hailed from the baronial class, to a Venetian pope, who lacked such direct familial links, this article highlights the structural connections between papacy and nobility. In particular, it does so by analyzing the comportment of families like the Conti and Farnese, who remained steadfast in their support of the papacy. In the final part, the threads

²¹ De Vincentiis, 2006.

²² Carocci, 2012; Shaw, 2007, 125–50; Shaw, 2005.

²³ Carocci, 2012, 83; Carocci, 2010, 36–37.

that run through the preceding sections are connected and the outlines sketched of a framework with which papal-noble collaboration was theorized and employed in practice. Unsurprisingly, the papacy was able to rely on a venerable medieval tradition that it tried actively to revivify in the wake of the Schism. Exploiting the position of priest-king and Vicar of Christ on Earth, successive popes made extensive use of their patriarchal status as Holy Father, of the spiritual rewards and punishments at their disposal as head of the church, and of their position as temporal prince. Perhaps more surprising is that noble families were willing to go along with such claims and adopt the language of the papal chancery. That they did so certainly illuminates the extent to which this framework was commonly understood. But before sketching the outlines of this framework, it is necessary to look more closely at how papal-noble collaboration worked in practice.

MARTIN V: A Ghibelline Baron on the Papal Throne

The Western Schism, the period between 1378 and 1417 when two, and for a short time even three, popes competed for the leadership of the church, dealt a great blow to the papacy's primacy within Christendom. In particular, it gave rise to a period during which the temporal dominions of the church witnessed extensive disorder, as local powerholders exploited opportunities to play one pope against the other; mercenary companies roamed the Italian Peninsula looking for loot, land, or employ; and the absence of centralized power structures removed any inhibition against feuding, which, especially in the Roman context, more often resembled large-scale warfare than petty local vendettas.²⁴ If individual popes (of the Roman adherence) succeeded in establishing a semblance of authority in Rome and its surroundings, this produced few lasting results, and these results were largely undone during King Ladislaus of Naples's (r. 1386–1414) conquests of Central Italy during the decade preceding the Council of Constance.²⁵ The new pope was therefore expected to contend with Europe's princes as well as his unruly subjects. The electors at Constance must have been aware of how momentous their conclave was. There was little room for error; the Council of Pisa (1409) had only exacerbated the Schism by electing a third pontiff. In case of another botched attempt, it was not inconceivable that the emperor or the king of France would personally interfere to restore the unity of Christendom with all the risks that entailed to the *libertas ecclesiae*. The choice of Oddone Colonna, however, was

²⁴ Luiten, 2019a.

²⁵ Esch, 1969; Palmer, 196–216; Angelelli and Romano.

strategically sound and turned out to be most propitious to the project of papal restoration. Experienced as a diplomat and affable in nature, Oddone was also Roman. This may have been a not-inconsiderable factor in the decision by the College of Cardinals to elect Colonna, seeing that there had been talk at the French and Imperial courts of whether to move the papal court to France or Germany or to maintain its presence at Constance. It could reasonably have been expected that a Colonna pope would prioritize the papacy's return to Rome.

Such was indeed the case. Rome and its two surrounding provinces were at the forefront of Martin's concerns. Within a month after his election, Martin issued a bull proclaiming a general truce in Rome and its surrounding countryside.²⁶ Although the bull is typically expansive in enumerating the various stakeholders—such as clerics, lords, senators, conservators, and leaders of city districts (*caporioni*), cities (*civitates*), and communities (*universitates*)—that were invited to adhere to the general truce, it makes clear that only two groups in particular had the political and military wherewithal to effectuate it: the great condottiere captains and their lieutenants, and the baronial elite of Rome and its surrounding provinces. In this regard, the view, summarized by Concetta Bianca, that resistance against a reinvigorated papal temporal lordship was the only unifying element in the Papal States, has given way to a view in which Martin was able to rely on his Colonna kin for local support.²⁷ Indeed, support from his family in both military and governmental offices might go a long way toward explaining Martin V's extraordinary success in pacifying and regaining control over the papal temporal dominions. For the purpose of this article, Martin's reliance on his Colonna kin above all suggests how this may have induced him to use the Papal States' baronial elite as a counterweight to the military might of the great condottieri. After all, male members of baronial families maintained their own mercenary companies organized around the standardized lance *fournies* common to Italian armies.

Still, it should be recognized that other Roman barons preferred to take a more wait-and-see approach, first and foremost members of the Orsini family. After all, Martin hailed from the Papal States' leading Ghibelline, and therefore pro-imperial, family, which had long been the Orsini's adversaries. Historically, papal favoritism of one of Rome's factions had always come at the expense of the other. Nevertheless, Maria Antonietta Visceglia has warned against seeing the Papal States' Guelph and Ghibelline factions as too static: though factional allegiance mattered, many families married across the divide, and personal ties

²⁶ Theiner, 3:220–21.

²⁷ Bianca.

at times outweighed party politics in importance.²⁸ This is particularly evident during Martin V's reign, when his maternal family, the Guelph Conti, came out in support of their relative on the pontifical throne. So, too, did the Anguillara, despite hailing from a family traditionally aligned with the Orsini.²⁹ Furthermore, there is evidence that other baronial families were not at all unhappy about the papacy's return to Rome; in fact, they were enthusiastic about its prospects not only from an opportunistic point of view but from an ideological standpoint that was considered to be an intrinsic element in their dynastic identity. Such considerations are most forcefully expressed in a letter sent on 6 January 1418 by three members of the Farnese family to the governing council of Siena, which had announced the news of Martin V's election to their military allies. "Magnificent lords of ours," the letter commences,

With the greatest joy and jubilation, we received and read Your Magnificences' letters on the creation of the most high pontiff, whom God through his mercy may always exalt, and who is of great need for [the well-being of] our spirits and also of our bodies. We, your sons and servants, take great comfort in this union of the Holy Church, and we consider how, commensurate with our lowly status, our predecessors, and also we ourselves, have always greatly been loved and favored by the popes, and aspire to be again by virtue of the works of our [ancestors] in the past, and those that we intend to do for his return, and as the most loyal servants of the Holy Church, which God may restore to its proper rank through his vicar.³⁰

Wisely, these Farnese refrained from further specifying which popes they had been favored by in more recent decades, as various branches had, not unlike other baronial families, supported popes of the Avignon and Roman obedience interchangeably. Nevertheless, their Guelph pedigree had been well established since the late Duecento, and the memory of the benefits reaped while supporting the papal cause in the mid-Trecento perhaps kept well alive within

²⁸ Visceglia.

²⁹ Sora, 1907, 55–56, 70.

³⁰ "Magnifici signori nostri. Con su[m]mo gaudio e dalegrezza recepemo, e, vedemo le lettere dele V[o]stri S[ignori] sopra la creazione del su[m]mo pontifice, la quale dio p[er] sua misericordia exalti sempre, e, bisogno, e, a li anime e dancho a li corpi. Noi vostri figliuoli e servitori piglamo di questa unione di Sancta Chiesa grande conforto, e, noy inmerito p[er] che secondo el nostro picholo grado li predecesori nostri, e noi anque siamo stato sempre de li Apostolici pasati amati e careciati asay e cusi speramo dessere p[er] li opere pasate di nostri, e p[er] quele che inte[n]diamo fare per la venire e come fidelissimi servitori di sancta chiesa, la quale dio p[er] sua preta restituiscia a suo grado." Pietro, Pietro Bertoldo and Ranuccio Farnese to Concistoro of Siena, 6 January 1418. Archivio di Stato di Siena, Lettere al Consistoro 1892, 37. All translations in this article are mine.

the family. Even if the rhetoric is particularly exuberant, there is little reason to doubt the sincerity of the Farnese's ideological support for the papacy, as it was backed up by action throughout much of the Quattrocento.³¹ On the whole, a range of attitudes toward the return of the papacy to Rome in the wake of the Western Schism is thus discernible among Lazio's baronial elite. Remarkably absent among them is resistance or outright opposition to papal rule. On his return to Rome, Martin was not met universally with hostility. On the contrary, provided that he played his cards right, support was easily found.

Moreover, Martin was not altogether dealt a bad hand. After all, he had the power to offer something the baronial elite sought: lands and castles, or, at the very least, confirmation of the possession thereof. As Sandro Carocci observes, currying favor by granting out vicariates at times has been erroneously presented as an act that further alienated the little remaining land governed directly by the church.³² It is important to recognize that these castles were often already in baronial hands and that granting out a vicariate served only as legal confirmation of the *de facto* situation. It did, however, provide an opportunity for strengthening papal-noble relations, and in promulgating bulls the papal bureaucracy formulated a normative vision for such relations—an aspect more extensively addressed further on. The periods preceding and following Martin's return into Rome, on 30 September 1420, witnessed a flurry of activity intended to pacify Rome and its surroundings. Figuring prominently among these activities was the dispensation of favors tying the nobility closer to the papacy. Among the beneficiaries of these favors were Martin's maternal kin. On 15 November 1419, the pope confirmed the investitures, made during the Schism, of Segni, Palliano, and Serrone to his uncle Aldobrandino Conti and his descendants.³³ Martin also looked beyond his own direct kin for potential allies (or to prevent animosity) among the baronial elite, successfully employing favors, for example, to avoid alienating the Orsini—a family that had long been at odds with his own.³⁴ On 1 September 1419 the pope invested several Orsini with the vicariate of Bracciano.³⁵ Also on September 1, several other Orsini were invested with the castle of Stroncone.³⁶ Further, it can be inferred from a letter written by Queen Joanna II of Naples (r. 1414–35) to Giacomo Orsini of Tagliacozzo that around this period Martin confirmed through

³¹ On the Farnese's Quattrocento history, see Luiten, 2020.

³² Carocci, 2010, 68–74.

³³ Contelori, 24–25.

³⁴ De Vincentiis, 2006, 562.

³⁵ Theiner, 3:242–45.

³⁶ Archivio Storico Capitolino (hereafter ASC), Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.12,022.

Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna the legal status of Giacomo's possessions in the Papal States.³⁷ On the following day, September 2, Martin turned his attention from the Orsini to the Farnese, confirming the legal rights to all of their possessions as well as to all grants promulgated during the Western Schism by popes of either adherence.³⁸ The closeness in time of several of these acts, particularly those pertaining to the Orsini and Farnese, suggests a concerted effort to organize support in the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscia and the Campania and Marittima. Minor branches of the great baronial families were included as well. On 28 October 1420, Martin confirmed the investiture of Rignano to Giovanni Battista Savelli.³⁹ On November 8 of the same year, Giorgio Farnese obtained the investiture of half of the jurisdictions over Tessennano; the other half was already in his possession.⁴⁰

The ecclesiastical members of baronial families were equally courted. On 13 April 1419, Martin V took the Abbey of Farfa and the other lands and castles belonging to its abbot, Cardinal Giordano Orsini, under his protection.⁴¹ Further provisions and additional benefices were granted to Cardinal Orsini throughout the following years.⁴² Cardinal Lucido Conti received a vast number of minor benefices from around Europe and was nominated legate to Bologna in 1429, lifting the city's interdict and receiving its submission to the pope after a period of rebellion, and his younger brother Sagace received the bishopric of Cava *in commendam* and was subsequently nominated bishop of Carpentras in the Comtat Venaissin.⁴³ Finally, on 26 January 1422, Martin published a bull prohibiting any form of violence against Nicola, Guido, and Gentile Orsini di Pitigliano, who returned to the church's obedience.⁴⁴ In the same year, Giovanni dei Prefetti di Vico was absolved from crimes he had committed during the Schism and was taken back into the church's

³⁷ Joanna II to Giacomo Orsini, 19 September 1419. ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.12,031.

³⁸ Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (hereafter AAV), Reg. Vat. 347, fol. 161^{r-v}; AAV, Reg. Vat. 348, fols. 172^v–173^r, published in Theiner, 3:249–50. Another copy can be found in AAV, Armadio XXXVII, 17, fols. 485^r–487^v.

³⁹ Archivio di Stato di Roma (hereafter ASR), Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, busta 17, unfoliated.

⁴⁰ AAV, Reg. Vat. 349, fol. 93^{r-v}.

⁴¹ ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.12,019.

⁴² ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.12,032; II.A.12,034; II.A.12,035; II.A.12,036; II.A.12,037; II.A.12,049, II.A.12,055; II.A.12,061; II.A.13,006; II.A.13,018; II.A.13,043.

⁴³ Dykmans; Strnad.

⁴⁴ ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.12,052.

fold.⁴⁵ Gradually, a situation arose in which the potential advantages of supporting the papal cause were brought into clear relief, legal ties were created between the papacy and nobility in the form of the vicariate (even if in practice the barons largely ignored these), and, at the very minimum, incentives were offered to refrain from opposing the project of restoring papal temporal power. This evidence outlines a considerably altered view of papal-noble relations in the wake of the Western Schism—one that might fall short of being dubbed revisionist were it not for the fact that these favors to avoid political alienation represented only one aspect of Martin's policy.

It is important to interpret these pontifical favors not merely as an olive branch extended to a potentially unruly nobility but also as signals of readiness for collaboration. The mutual commitment to such collaboration is particularly observable in the large number of baronial appointments to the Papal States' temporal and ceremonial offices. Examples of ceremonial appointments include the confirmation of the office of *Maresciallo del Conclave* to Giovanni Battista Savelli, in 1420, as well as the nomination of Alto Conti as *Gran Maestro del Sacro Ospizio* (Grand master of the sacred hospice), in 1421, though these offices did come with temporal responsibilities as well. Both posts were hereditary, and remained within the respective families for centuries. Giovanni Battista and Alto were also immediately employed as condottiere in the papal armies.⁴⁶ Baronial appointments to more hands-on offices were equally ubiquitous. For example, Agapito Colonna of Galliciano was made governor of Orvieto in 1421 and of the Campania and Marittima in 1423.⁴⁷ At the end of Martin's pontificate, Everso dell'Anguillara was commissioner (*commissarius*) to the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscia—an office that entailed both the organization and conduct of military affairs as well as sorting out the army's financial and logistical supplies in negotiation with local governments. In all likelihood, he had filled this role for a longer period by then.⁴⁸ The Farnese, too, obtained favors. Ranuccio Farnese was made senator of Rome on 5 May 1419, an office with responsibility for the temporal government of the Eternal City.⁴⁹ Perhaps more importantly, in 1420 Martin nominated Ranuccio as *commissarius* to the Campania and Marittima, the papal province where the bulk of the Colonna possessions were located.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Theiner, 3:278.

⁴⁶ Contelori, 21; Ratti, 2:225–26; on the *Maresciallo del Conclave*'s judicial powers and the associated *Curia dei Savelli*, one of Rome's criminal courts, see Fosi, 31–32.

⁴⁷ Rehberg, 1992, 244–45.

⁴⁸ Sora, 1907, 55–56.

⁴⁹ AAV, Reg. Vat. 348, fols. 113^v–114^r; published in Theiner, 3:236.

⁵⁰ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Archivio Chigi 413, fol. 135^v; Biblioteca Comunale degli Ardenti, Viterbo (hereafter BCA), MS L Be/Bc 252, fol. 7^r.

Aldobrandino Conti of Valmontone and his son Alto had already held the rectorate in this province since shortly before Martin's election. In this function, they also negotiated with Joanna of Naples.⁵¹

The connections between baronial papal officers (particularly those of the Campania and Marittima) and the Neapolitan royal court suggest another area in which baronial support for pontifical power played a key role—an area that might have been dubbed external policy were it not for the fact that papal interference with affairs in the Regno was closely connected to the pope's position as Naples's suzerain. Confirmation of Neapolitan royal succession had been a papal prerogative, and now that a single uncontested pope had been elected, Joanna of Naples sought confirmation of her rule. Martin was shrewd enough a pope to seek benefit for himself and his family as well. Among the delegates sent to the coronation in Naples, along with an entourage of unspecified Roman noblemen, were Giordano and Antonio Colonna, who were duly rewarded with lands and titles in the Regno.⁵² If Joanna's coronation removed any lingering doubts about the legitimacy of her rule as Ladislaus's sister and successor, it certainly did not solve the thorny issue of her future heir. When civil war broke out in the Regno between Joanna, the pretender Louis III of Anjou, and Joanna's ally and adopted heir, Alfonso V of Aragon, Martin V became personally involved as well.⁵³ For a short period Martin openly supported Louis of Anjou and forced Joanna to adopt him as her heir. Papal officers of baronial descent played a crucial role in the subsequent struggles. In 1420, for example, Louis of Anjou nominated Ranuccio Farnese as *vicegerens* (an office overseeing criminal justice as well as military affairs) of the *Principatus ultra serras Montorii* and the *Principatus citra serras Montorii*—the northern areas of the Abruzzi bordering the area of the Papal States where he was commissioner.⁵⁴ Farnese was relieved of his office the following year by Giacomo Caetani,

⁵¹ ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, busta 839, fasc. 30; ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.12,012.

⁵² “On 24 January [1419] the legate arrived in Naples who was sent by the Pope in order to coronate Queen Joanna, and joined in his company were the Pope's brother, my lord Giordano, and the Pope's nephew [Antonio Colonna], and many other Roman lords of the Kingdom, and he was received honorably with the banner” (“Ali 24 Gennaro [1419] trasio lo legato in Napole madato da lo Papa per incoronare la Regina Joanna in sua compagnia adusse lo frate de lo Papa messer Jordano, et lo Nepote de lo Papa [Antonio Colonna], et molti altri signori Romani de lo Reame et fo receptuto honoratamente con lo Palio”). *I Diurnali del Duca di Monteleone*, 100.

⁵³ Chilà; Ryder.

⁵⁴ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, fols. 124^r, 136^v; BCA, MS L Be/Bc, fol. 7^r; on the office of *vicegerens*, see Passerini.

while Antonio Colonna took the office of *vicegerens* in Calabria in 1418.⁵⁵ Giordano Colonna, too, played a decisive role in many aspects of Martin's relations with the Neapolitan royal family as well as with powerful nobles in their realm, such as the Duke of Sessa.⁵⁶ Clearly, the exchange of personnel between Rome and Naples encompassed not only the great condottieri, such as Muzio Attendolo Sforza and Angelo Tartaglia, but also lesser captains of baronial descent, such as Giordano Colonna, Giacomo Orsini, and Ranuccio Farnese.

To return to the argument that baronial power served as a counterweight to the great condottieri that could be used to support pontifical authority, one case is particularly illuminating. It seems that the aftermath of Angelo Tartaglia's downfall was entirely premeditated both on the papal side of the deal as well as on that of the Farnese years before events unfolded. Angelo Broglio da Lavello, simply known as Tartaglia, had had a model career for a mercenary-captain. Educated in the arts of war from a young age, in the company of Muzio Attendolo Sforza, he had profited from the confusion during the two final decades of the Western Schism and carved out a dominion centered on the city of Toscanella (present-day Tuscania), in the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscany.⁵⁷ This had come at the expense primarily of the Farnese, who in the face of Tartaglia's military power were forced to accede to his usurpation of several castles and, by way of various marriages, create an alliance with him. By the time of Martin's election, Tartaglia's rivalry with Sforza had led to a rift between the two and an uneasy rapport between Tartaglia and Sforza's other great nemesis, Braccio da Montone. Martin V and Giordano Colonna, however, realized that the combined forces of Braccio and Tartaglia were too strong to overcome and the only way forward was to effect a break between the two condottieri. Despite his recent nomination as senator and upcoming transfer to Rome (which in the end never materialized), Ranuccio Farnese was engaged by Giordano Colonna to help effect Tartaglia's transfer to papal service. Giordano wrote to Ranuccio on 10 June 1419:

And we also enquire whether you would like to remain [there] for several days, because your presence is required for the [many] things that are there to be done, and we could have no person more well-qualified for them at the moment, and where you are, it seems to us as if we are present ourselves, and such is the trust with which we confide in you as our brother, and if you will serve Our Father and the Holy Church, you will be remunerated

⁵⁵ Passerini, 135, 155–59.

⁵⁶ Partner, 1982.

⁵⁷ Chiatti.

according to your merits. Braccio and Tartaglia have no reason to complain about you, for you work for the Holy Church, to whom you have already been and [still] are a loyal, and good servant, and a dear brother to us, and you have worked for the honor and state of Tartaglia, as if it were your own affair.⁵⁸

The letter goes on to provide the latest news of the new cardinals nominated for negotiations with Braccio da Montone, but the reference to Ranuccio Farnese's efforts on behalf of Tartaglia indicates the little confidence there was in a successful conclusion of a general peace treaty and how the efforts to produce a rift between Braccio and Tartaglia were entrusted to this baron in no small measure because of his close relations to both the Colonna and the great condottieri. These efforts finally produced results, and in autumn of 1419, Giordano Colonna was authorized to conclude a condotta with Angelo Tartaglia, marking the definitive break between Tartaglia and Braccio.⁵⁹

Yet while negotiations for Tartaglia's transfer were still ongoing, Martin also promulgated a bull in reaction to a petition from the Farnese, the precise details of which were probably kept secret in the light of its combusive content. In this bull, dated 13 September 1419, Martin promised Pietro, Pietro Bertoldo, and Ranuccio Farnese to return any of their former possessions that had been unrightfully usurped or to allow them to reconquer these themselves, even if at any point these territories had been granted out to others.⁶⁰ It must have been clear to both parties involved that this bull was aimed specifically at Tartaglia, who was deemed a useful military asset but whom both the pope and the Farnese would rather see gone. In the years that followed, Tartaglia's military power was such that Martin V was even forced to elevate him to comital rank on 8 September 1421, creating the County of Toscanella, which included former Farnese possessions—a situation that Martin's bull had already anticipated.⁶¹ Tartaglia's elevation, however, came only several

⁵⁸ "E voi similm[en]te preghiamo vi piaccia restare p[er] alcun di, p[er]che sete necessario alle cose, che ci sono da fare, e più p[er]sona à cio atta, al p[rese]nte, non laveremmo, e dove sete voi, ne pare essere p[rese]nti noi, e quella stima ne facciamo, come di n[ost]ro fr[at]ello, et se servirete N[ost]ro S[igno]re e S[anc]ta Chiesa, ne sarete remunerato meritam[en]te. Braccio e Tartaglia non hanno rag[ion]e di lamentarsi di voi, p[er]che operate p[er] S[anc]ta Chiesa, a chi sempre sete stato, e sete fedele, e buon ser[vito]re, e a noi caro fr[at]ello, e setevi operato p[er] l'honore e stato di Tartaglia, come fosse stato fatto proprio." Giordano Colonna to Ranuccio Farnese, 10 June 1419. Biblioteca di Santa Scolastica (hereafter BSS), Archivio Colonna, II A, 17, fol. 160^r.

⁵⁹ AAV, Reg. Vat. 352, fol. 202^v; Theiner, 3:245–49.

⁶⁰ AAV, Reg. Vat. 348, fols. 172^v–174^r, also published in Theiner, 3:250.

⁶¹ Theiner, 3:274.

months before his downfall. Accused of secretly being in contact with Braccio da Montone and at the verge of betrayal, Sforza had Tartaglia ambushed in his sleep and imprisoned. In the end, after the condottiere had been beheaded by Sforza on papal orders, in December 1421, it was an army under Pietro Bertoldo Farnese that moved in to confiscate Tartaglia's possessions.⁶² Toscanella was recovered for the church while the Farnese retook Musignano and Piansano, the possession of which was quickly confirmed by Martin via a papal bull.⁶³ Adding insult to injury, after the death of his first wife, Ranuccio Farnese remarried Tartaglia's widow, thus securing for himself the strategically important castle and town of Marta, which had been granted to her as an allowance from Tartaglia's former dominions.⁶⁴ Above all, this goes to show that condottiere states were created and maintained through coercion. They seldom lasted long enough to foster the sort of personal connections between ruler and subjects—and, accordingly, the level of loyalty—that made dynastic succession possible and acceptable. In the case of Braccio da Montone and Angelo Tartaglia, their states imploded after the death of the person whose military authority held together the complex of subject cities, castles, and territories.⁶⁵ Because barons were so deeply connected to local societies within their patrimony and to the civic political life of the Papal States' communes, baronial rule was much more solidly founded. Thus, despite the superior military resources that the great condottiere captains could muster, the barons of the Papal States could indeed serve as a valuable counterweight to their power, providing Martin with access to local military and political support. In turn, barons benefitted from collaborating with the papacy, increasing the reach of their lordly dominions.

Papal-noble collaboration was by no means foolproof. On 13 March 1422, Martin was forced to promulgate another bull insisting that several barons, nobles, communities, and individuals of Rome, the territory around Rome, and the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscia refrain from any violence and adhere to a new truce, suggesting that either factional struggles had reemerged or the succession wars of Naples were spilling over into the Papal States. Furthermore, on 17 February 1428, three years before the end of his pontificate, Martin published a bull that absolved his own uncle, Aldobrandino Conti, as well as his sons, who had been declared rebels against the church for reasons altogether unclear.⁶⁶ Relying on baronial support was therefore no panacea for the

⁶² *Cronaca di Viterbo*, 52.

⁶³ AAV, Reg. Vat. 354, fol. 183^v; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, fol. 129^v.

⁶⁴ Archivio di Stato di Napoli (hereafter ASN), Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

⁶⁵ Ferente, 2005, 3–4; Chiatti.

⁶⁶ Contelori, 22; Ratti, 2:223.

plethora of difficulties that the papacy faced in the early Quattrocento. It did, however, provide the papal armies with the manpower they required and with officials whose personal standing enabled them to enforce papal authority locally. Indeed, Martin not only succeeded in attracting large numbers of barons into papal employ but, perhaps even more noteworthy, also managed not to alienate any others. Few, perhaps none, of his successors managed this feat of balancing faction against faction, which was likely the result of his felicitous position as head of the church as well as of Rome's most prominent Ghibelline family. This situation allowed him to use baronial power to his advantage while the great condottieri met their fate on the scaffold or on the battlefield. It is questionable whether Martin would have been able to successfully relocate, maintain, and restore the Holy See in Rome without baronial support for pontifical power.

FACTIONAL DIVISIONS DURING THE REIGN OF POPE EUGENE IV

The trials and tribulations of Martin's successor, Eugene IV, attest to both the inherent danger to pontifical authority that the baronial class posed as well as its sheer indispensability as an ally to the papal cause. His travails included an ignominious flight from a revolting Rome and nearly a decade in exile from the pontifical capital after a rebellion had been stirred up by large swaths of the Roman barons. The Roman rebellion against papal rule during Eugenius's pontificate is testimony to how deeply integrated the baronial nobility was in the very political and spatial fabric of the city—his was not the only Quattrocento pontificate to witness prolonged periods of unrest within the city walls. An inheritance from centuries past, Rome's landscape was characterized by large baronial fortress-complexes consisting of large curtain walls and defensive keeps.⁶⁷ Moreover, in the Duecento and Trecento, barons had even construed legal ties of vassalage with the inhabitants of their neighborhoods as well as various patronage ties with other affiliated families, which their Quattrocento descendants inherited.⁶⁸ As Gregory XII's (r. 1406–15) nephew, Eugene knew his way around Rome and the Curia. Yet, as a Venetian, he could not rely on an extensive personal network in the way that his predecessor had. On the contrary, tensions between Eugene and the Colonna quickly arose as the pope suspected the Colonna of having ransacked the papal treasury, while the Colonna in turn feared being

⁶⁷ Carocci and Giannini. On the architectural and artistic embellishments of the Orsini and Colonna palaces in the early Quattrocento, see Dempsey, 119–206; Christian, 48–61; Amberger.

⁶⁸ Carocci, 1993b.

despoiled of their recent acquisitions.⁶⁹ Saliently, therefore, Eugene IV's most fearsome adversaries proved to be his predecessor's kin. On 18 May 1431, two months into his pontificate, Eugene excommunicated the Colonna and their allies among the Savelli and Caetani.⁷⁰

Despite this drastic measure, Amadeo de Vincentiis emphasizes that Eugene was initially rather lenient toward the Colonna and their adherents in order not to alienate the entirety of the baronage.⁷¹ The excommunication can perhaps rather be interpreted as a prelude to negotiations and a compromise treaty. Such negotiations commenced soon after, and it is highly meaningful that these were conducted on behalf of Eugene by one of the barons: Ranuccio Farnese.⁷² Ranuccio had already served Eugene as a diplomat when the pope had sent the condottiere as nuncio to Joanna of Naples for unspecified negotiations in April 1431 and may have thus gained the pope's confidence, while his connections to the Colonna must have made him an acceptable and even trustworthy mediator to the pope's adversaries.⁷³ In fact, negotiations with the Colonna initially went smoothly, and Ranuccio reported to Ugone degli Ugoni on 14 September 1431 that he had successfully concluded a treaty with the Colonna in Genazzano.⁷⁴ However, in the following months the treaty quickly unraveled. The enmities between Eugene and the Colonna escalated both on the European level, where the Colonna took recourse to the Council of Basel, with which Eugene was increasingly in conflict and which duly reinstated Prospero Colonna in his office as cardinal, as well as on the local level, when the Roman citizenry was encouraged to revolt in 1434.⁷⁵ Legend has it that Eugene fled disguised as a monk on a small boat on the Tiber while

⁶⁹ Infessura, 26–27.

⁷⁰ ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.14.044.

⁷¹ De Vincentiis, 2006, 563–69.

⁷² BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, fol. 135^v; BCA, MS Be/Bc 252, fol. 7^v.

⁷³ BCA, MS Be/Bc 252, fol. 7^{r-v}.

⁷⁴ “For the last few days I have been unable to write nor inform you of the matters at hand in these areas, for I have been at Genazzano, sent there by His Holiness. Currently, as I have returned, I can notify you that to God's rejoicing peace has been concluded and a treaty drafted for Antonio Colonna and ratified by the prince” (“Questi dy passati no[n] ho potuto scrivervi ne avisarvi delle cose occurre de qua, perche so stato a Genezano man[da]to p[er] parte della S[anti]ta de N[ostro] S[ignore]. Mo che so tornato ve singnifico ch[e] come p[er] la[le]gr[ezz]a de dio la pace e conciusa et facti li capitoli p[er] Antoni Colonna e confirmati p[er] lo pri[n]cipe”). Ranuccio Farnese to Ugone degli Ugoni and copy forwarded to Priors of Viterbo, 14 September 1431. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; the bull absolving the Colonna and their allies is BSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB, 5, 6.

⁷⁵ BSS, Archivio Colonna, II BB, 5, 8.

the Roman populace hurled stones, arrows, and javelins at him.⁷⁶ In reality, Eugene's flight was carefully prepared, and from the relative security of Florence he was soon able to coordinate the Papal States' reconquest.⁷⁷

The escalating situation presented many barons with a choice: adhere to their support for the papacy or follow the Colonna's example and revolt. One of the more striking developments of Eugene's pontificate is that the fault lines that appeared among the baronial elite in the wake of this second and much more severe conflict with the Colonna neatly coincided with traditional factional divisions. The Colonna obtained support from the Ghibelline Savelli, the Prefetti di Vico, and several branches of the Caetani, whereas the pro-papal camp counted the Guelph Orsini, Conti, Anguillara, and Farnese among their numbers. It remains an open question whether factional divisions between Guelphs and Ghibellines had only momentarily receded into the background under Martin or whether Eugene's actions actively widened the chasm between Orsini and Colonna adherents among the Papal States' baronial elite. Neither answer necessarily precludes the other. What can be said, however, is that although Eugene's pontificate was to a large extent characterized by noble opposition to his rule, which has led historians to juxtapose Martin's and Eugene's pontificates and to emphasize their relative differences, Eugene's continued reliance on the Guelph faction among the baronial nobility indicates a relative continuity in practice and might even imply a more structural need for papal-noble collaboration at the heart of politics in the Papal States. It also illustrates how popes were able to use, but also become the playthings of, baronial factions, a phenomenon more widely observable in a host of Quattrocento European principalities.

In the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscia, the Prefetti di Vico were the most powerful Ghibelline baronial family and staunch supporters of the Colonna.⁷⁸ Eugene's military efforts therefore focused on the Prefetti, who, in league with Ludovico Colonna, sought and obtained succor in Siena. Pontifical efforts, too, relied heavily on local support, all the more so because the Prefetti's lands were relatively isolated from their Ghibelline allies, whose territories lay more to the south.⁷⁹ Already in October 1431, Ranuccio Farnese was made commissioner general in the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscia, where the Farnese's and Prefetti's territories were located.⁸⁰ The Guelph Farnese had been

⁷⁶ D'Elia, 40–41.

⁷⁷ Plebani.

⁷⁸ Berardozi, 162–82.

⁷⁹ *Cronaca di Viterbo*, 119.

⁸⁰ AAV, Reg. Vat. 365, fols. 3^v–4^r; Ranuccio Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 29 October 1431. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

the Prefetti's ancient adversaries at least since the late Duecento, and, unsurprisingly, Eugene enlisted Ranuccio Farnese to spearhead his campaign in tandem with yet another of the Prefetti's foes, Everso dell'Anguillara. According to Piero Santoni, Anguillara was especially committed to fighting his hereditary enemy.⁸¹ Overall command was handed to a cleric, Giovanni Vitelleschi. Vitelleschi had received his military training as a soldier in Tartaglia's company, but, more importantly, he hailed from a family who owned much property in and around Corneto, who were well connected to the Farnese and Anguillara, and who had in the past fiercely opposed the Prefetti's influence in their city. Often presented as a singularly forceful and fearsome warrior-priest, his phenomenal success in reconquering the Papal States was probably the result more of his ability to forge alliances than to frighten his adversaries.⁸² Vitelleschi's nomination fits a wider development, whereby Eugene made use of bishops, cardinals, and other churchmen with military experience. These clerics provided organizational know-how and spiritual authority, while the bulk of the army consisted of lay mercenary-captains who often hailed from the Papal States' baronial elite. The key to the success of the campaign that recovered the northern areas of the Papal States in the years following Eugene's exile to Florence no doubt lay in the collaboration between soldier-priests and condottiere-barons.

The punishment meted out to the Prefetti was exemplary, and it is easy to see how it has been considered as evidence of papal-noble antagonism. With the capture of the Prefetti's most important strongholds and the beheading of Giacomo di Vico, in 1435, one of the most ancient baronial lineages was extinguished (the illegitimate Menelao and Sicuranza di Vico were unsuccessful in claiming their inheritance). Yet it is important to recognize that this papal-noble project was fruitful because it allowed papal government to make inroads in places hitherto under baronial rule while also rewarding other barons for their support of the papacy and for bankrolling the Camera Apostolica. The Farnese, for example, received extensive rewards in the form of investitures with lordships, of which the most important were Marta (in exchange for writing off a debt of 4,000 ducats, in 1432) and Montalto (considered to be worth 12,900 ducats in 1435).⁸³ The Farnese were also granted half of the jurisdictions over Canino, Gradoli, and Abbazia ad Ponte in 1445 (the other half had been granted to Alto Conti).⁸⁴ Similarly, Eugene conceded Vico and Caprarola,

⁸¹ Santoni.

⁸² Chambers, 44–46; Law; Partner, 1972, 410–13.

⁸³ AAV, Reg. Vat. 372, fols. 18^v–19^v; Reg. Vat. 373, fols. 306^r–307^r; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, fols. 129^v, 134^{r-v}.

⁸⁴ AAV, Reg. Vat. 383, fols. 6^r–11^r; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, fols. 125^r, 130^r.

once belonging to the Prefetti, to Everso dell'Anguillara on 21 July 1440.⁸⁵ These investitures secured the adherence of the Anguillara and Farnese, even long after the Prefetti had been annihilated. For the remainder of Eugene's pontificate, Everso dell'Anguillara and Ranuccio Farnese served in the papal armies, fighting in the locality against condottieri like Bernardo d'Utri, Francesco Sforza's lieutenant in the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscia.⁸⁶ Finally, it is important to note that these investitures were not necessarily a further alienation of church property. The castles and lands that were granted by Eugene had only recently devolved unto the papacy in the first place and were useful for servicing the Camera Apostolica's outstanding debts. Furthermore, as the investiture bulls further underscore, both the Anguillara and the Farnese could bring some sort of claim to the table, either through inheritance or marriage, to some of the vicariates they received or, in fact, already possessed—pending formal papal recognition.⁸⁷ On the whole, therefore, the papacy's relationship with the Farnese and Anguillara was symbiotic, with both parties profiting from their mutual alliance and ensuring that the Prefetti were first isolated and subsequently annihilated.

Much as in the organization of the campaigns against the Prefetti di Vico, Eugene relied on using rewards in the theater of war in the Campania and Marittima. Thus, when Eugene sequestered Cardinal Colonna's benefices, in 1433, several of these were handed to Cardinal Giordano Orsini and his cousin Latino.⁸⁸ Moreover, Eugene nominated Giordano Orsini as vicar and legate to the Duchy of Spoleto.⁸⁹ Eugene also invested Aldobrandino Conti of Valmontone with half of the jurisdictions over the castle of Supino, a castle that had been confiscated from the Colonna, on 12 January 1433.⁹⁰ Clearly, the same tactic of rewarding supporters and punishing opponents that had been used in Tuscia was also employed in the Campania and Marittima, albeit against opponents such as the Colonna and Savelli, who were much less isolated and much more powerful than the Prefetti. In fact, it seems that Eugene purposefully involved actors with no or very little former interest or possessions in the Campania and Marittima, above all the Orsini. On 16 October 1435,

⁸⁵ ASC, Pergamene Anguillara, credenzone 14, tomo 65, no. 6.

⁸⁶ *Cronaca di Viterbo*, 133–70.

⁸⁷ Everso dell'Anguillara inherited half of the jurisdictions as heir to Maria dell'Anguillara, wife of Pietro di Vico. ASC, Pergamene Anguillara, credenzone 14, tomo 65, no. 6; Ranuccio Farnese had remarried Agnesella Monaldeschi della Cervara, who had received Marta from Martin V after the execution of her first husband, Angelo Tartaglia. AAV, Reg. Vat. 371, fols. 99^v–100^r.

⁸⁸ ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.14,049; II.A.14,050.

⁸⁹ ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.14,056.

⁹⁰ BSS, Archivio Colonna, II BB, 30, 52.

Giovanni Antonio and Rinaldo Orsini of Tagliacozzo were invested with the castles of Monte Gentile and Castell'Arcione, both of which had belonged to the Colonna.⁹¹ A year later, on 20 July 1436, the Monastery of San Paolo fuori le Mura sold the castles of Monticelli and Montealbano to Giovanni Antonio and Rinaldo Orsini. The castle of Monticelli was a confiscated Colonna possession. The transaction was mediated by Giovanni Vitelleschi and Pandolfo dell'Anguillara.⁹² The investiture bulls' contents stress that they were very much conceived as rewards for the military and political services rendered by the Conti and Orsini condottieri against the enemies of the church, and were intended to ensure their continued support. In the Campania and Marittima, it seems indeed that Eugene's actions actively contributed to increased animosity between the baronial families, stoking private wars in the context of the larger conflict with the Colonna and their allies. The area was rocked by rounds of factional strife between the Conti and Colonna, in 1444, a recent marriage between Odoardo Colonna and Filippa Conti notwithstanding, and between the Orsini of Tagliacozzo and Caetani of Sermoneta, in 1445.⁹³ Ultimately, in the Campania and Marittima, too, Eugene managed to establish a measure of pontifical authority and apply enough military pressure on the Colonna to force them to the negotiation table. The Colonna castle at Palestrina was captured and razed to the ground, and although the Colonna and their allies might have been able to hold out for much longer, they deemed it wiser to conclude a peace treaty. Eugene was able to return to Rome and take possession of its basilicas as well as its temporal government, a remarkable feat in light of his exile from Rome, and one he likely could not have accomplished were it not for the baronial support he had received. Much like in Tuscia, the evidence relating to the Campania and Marittima undeniably exhibits patterns of widespread collaboration between Eugene and baronial families like the Orsini and Conti.

Perhaps at no time was Eugene's reliance on the Guelph faction on greater display than in his dealing with the arrival of the very totem of the Ghibelline cause on the Italian Peninsula: the emperor. Emperor Sigismund made his way through Italy in 1433 on his *Romzug* to be crowned in St. Peter's, in emulation of his illustrious predecessors.⁹⁴ He

⁹¹ ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.14,066; BSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB, 1, 5; BSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB, 17, 126.

⁹² ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.15,004; BSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB, 54, 39.

⁹³ Archivio Caetani, 119857; Archivio Caetani, 127723; the marriage contract between Filippa Conti and Odoardo Colonna is in BSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB, 1, 51.

⁹⁴ On Sigismund's eventful *Romzug*, see Proske.

entered the Papal States in Tuscia, and Viterbo was the last major city where an imperial entry was staged before Rome. Wary of the danger that the imperial presence posed, as it could potentially galvanize the historically influential Ghibelline faction in Viterbo and bolster the hopes of the extensive Ghibelline network of families, of which the Colonna formed the center, in the wider Papal States, Sigismund's reception committee consisted of the flower of the Guelph nobility. During his ceremonial entry into the city, Sigismund was preceded by Cardinals Giordano Orsini and Lucido Conti, and the noblemen Paolo Orsini, Everso dell'Anguillara, and Ranuccio Farnese.⁹⁵ In Viterbo, negotiations for Sigismund's coronation were concluded, and the events were memorialized in Guillaume du Fay's magisterial motet *Supremum est mortalibus bonum pax optimum* (A good peace is the highest achievement for mere mortals), which appropriately eulogizes the benefits of peace. Although we lack a detailed description of the entry and festivities, the very image of an emperor surrounded by the Guelph pillars of support for pontifical power captures the essence of this article's argument: Eugene fully relied on baronial support vis-à-vis his adversaries.

The consequences were far-reaching. On one hand, baronial support allowed Eugene to reestablish pontifical authority in large parts of the Papal States. On the other, taking recourse to one faction to subdue the other served to reignite ancient enmities and initiate a pendular movement of papal favoritism of one faction over the other, although the argument can be made that this was a return to older patterns that had briefly receded into the background under Martin V. Successive popes often supported the faction that opposed the one favored by their predecessors (such as Nicholas V and Callixtus III's preference for the Colonna and the former's antipathy toward the Anguillara and Farnese). As a result, factional struggles would reignite over the course of the Quattrocento with some regularity, and every successive pope was to some extent forced to adopt a stance with regard to these struggles, not in the least as their reverberations extended to the College of Cardinals, where cardinals of baronial descent remained highly influential figures. This situation, so peculiar to Roman political life, together with the virtual implosion of central power every decade on average, due to popes' advanced age at their accessions, created the volatility that characterized papal government and that is so often commented upon. Yet it was precisely this volatility that also engendered the structural need for collaboration between the papacy, the Curia, and the baronial nobility, particularly so in the century following the Western Schism, which had so reduced temporal pontifical authority.

⁹⁵ *Cronaca di Viterbo*, 124.

THE LANGUAGE OF FEALTY AND DEVOTION

With the baronial nobility's role in the return of the papacy to Rome now firmly established, it may be worthwhile in the concluding passages to consider the set of (desired) ideas behind papal-noble collaboration. The language used to express these ideas in papal concessions is decidedly formulaic. But it is precisely through such formulaic language that the normative discourses underpinning ideologies of papal-noble collaboration, as seen from the papal point of view, are revealed.⁹⁶ Even if baronial loyalty could not be enforced on the basis of feudal ties linking lord and vassal with obligations of military service, it was understood that the papacy and nobility entertained a mutual relationship within a single body politic. A representative collection of citations from papal bulls will illustrate how this relationship was understood at the papal court. These bulls all exhibit the same structure, commencing with a salutation of the recipient before addressing the motivation behind its promulgation—the part most relevant to the present discussion—and, finally, often in excessive detail, laying out the investiture's exact legal terms, accompanying privileges, and obligations. I cite these long and effusive phrases up until the point at which they address the nature of the favor bestowed, after which their content is of lesser pertinence.

The first example is taken from the Orsini archive, from a bull promulgated by Eugene IV dated 16 October 1435, rewarding Giovanni Antonio and Rinaldo Orsini of Tagliacozzo. After the customary salutations, the bull proceeds as follows:

Sensibly attending to the sincere devotional love that you bear toward us and the Roman Church, and also the splendid, strenuous, and loyal services as well as the fruitful zeal and alert and vigorous labors and acts of assistance [rendered] thus far for the state and honor of our aforementioned Church, for the same Church [for which] war has to be waged against the hostile faithlessness of the foes and enemies of our aforementioned Church, forbearing none of the hazards you have resolutely and laudably not ceased from attentively devoting and do not cease to attentively devote, we also judge it a fitting debt that we and the apostolic see, favorable and obliging, in recompense for the aforementioned labors and works, cede to you these things that are both equally worthy of your state and your honor . . . as long as you continue steadfastly in

⁹⁶ This is the methodology adopted in Rehberg, 1992, and DeSilva, 2016, where bulls are used to unravel papal attitudes toward cognate family.

your fidelity and devotion of us and of our successive canonically elected Roman Pontiffs.⁹⁷

In the interest of comparison, what follows is taken from Martin V's investiture of Francesco, Carlo, and Orsino Orsini with the castle of Bracciano on the shore of the eponymous lake.

Therefore, your exceptional devotion and noble fealty, which both you as well as your ancestors are known to have had and have toward the aforementioned Church, and thankful and accepting of the services, which you have devoted to us and the aforementioned Church in the preceding period, and that you have not grown lukewarm to devote thus far, rouse in us a manifest love, enumerating the debts as a result of our gratitude, without doubt those things must be conceded to you which are judicious with regard to your honor and benefit, [and] which concern your state and the security of your [family]. Accordingly, we, having been induced by these and other considerations, moved in our spirit, to proceed so that you may be fervently and devoutly animated to obedience and enduring loyalty to us and the Roman Church for the promulgation of the faith, for which purpose you must be moved to submit to us and the apostolic see in order to expect the gift of grace.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ "Sane attendentes sincere devotionis affectu[m] quem ad nos et Roman[am] geritis eccl[esi]am necnon preclara, strenua, fidelia[que] opera ac studia fructuosa que vigilibus hactenus strenuis[que] laboribus pro statu et honore n[ost]ro eccl[esi]e[que] prefate adversum hostilem perfidiam inimicor[um] et hostiu[m] eccl[esi]e antedictae n[ost]ris et eiusdem eccl[esi]e militando servitijs, nullis parcendo periculis constanter et laudabiliter impendistis et impendere sedulo non desistitis, dignum censemus et debitum ut nos et ap[osto]licam sedem in recompensam labor[um] et oper[um] predictor[um], vobis in hijs que ad v[est]r[um] ambor[um] co[m]modum statum pariter et honorem cedere valeant inveniatis favorabiles et benignos . . . du[m]modo vos in fide et devotione n[ost]ra et successoru[m] n[ost]ror[um] Roman[orum] Pontificu[m] canonice intrantriu[m] persistatis." ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.14,066.

⁹⁸ "Vestram igitur devocionem eximiam et preclaram fidem, quas tam vos quam vestri progenitores erga prefatam ecclesiam habuistis et habere noscimini, grataque et accepta servicia, que nobis et prefate ecclesie retroactis temporibus impendistis, et adhuc impendere non tepescitis, debita gratitudine recensentes ad ea nimirum vobis concedenda, que vestrum honorem et commodum sapiant, statusque vestri et vestrorum securitatem concernant, promptis affectibus excitamur. Hiis siquidem consideracionibus et aliis ad hoc nostrum inducentibus animum moti, ut eo fervencius et devocius ad nostra et Romane ecclesie obsequia et fidelitatem servandam animemini per augmentum fidei, quo per nos et sedem apostolicam vos noveritis amplioris dono gracie preveniri." Theiner, 3:242.

It was not just in bulls plying the Orsini that recurring elements emerge. Giorgio Farnese's investiture with half of the jurisdictions of the castle of Tessennano uses similar language of fealty and devotion:

Considering the devoted love that you have attested to bear toward us and the Roman Church so that we may favorably grant you those suitable things which will be convenient for your state and for our subjects, hence this is what we want for you, who has toiled for our state and honor and that of the aforementioned Church during the preceding period and who has devoted his boundless obedience loyally to us and the same Church.⁹⁹

Yet another example, taken from the investiture of Giorgio's uncle, Ranuccio Farnese, with the castle of Piansano, was even more succinct. The reason for the investiture was, as Martin indicated, that he was "[r]ejoiceful for your fealty and your devoted allegiance that you most graciously offered us and the Roman Church [with a conscience] of free will," and in return the pope was induced to reward him munificently.¹⁰⁰ A final example comes from the bull with which Martin assents to the sale of the castle of Sipizano by Giordano Colonna to several members of the Anguillara family:

Especially the devoted love that the dear noblemen Pandolfo, Giovanni, and Jacobo, Counts of Anguillara in the diocese of Sutri, show to bear with genuine affection toward us induces us to turn our attention favorably toward their convenience and also equally their state. . . . We therefore attending to the exceptional devoted obedience [exhibited] thus far by these Counts toward us and the Roman Church at great expense, and that furthermore they do not desist from expending ardently and continuously, and for that reason wanting to accommodate them with pleasing favors.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ "Exigit tue devotionis affectus que[m] ad nos et Roman[am] eccl[es]iam gerere comprobatis ut illa tibi favorabiliter concedamus que statui tuo et subditor[um] n[ost]ror[um] co[m]modis fore conspicimus oportuna hinc est q[uod] nos volentes te qui per statu honoreq[ue] n[ost]ro et eiusdem eccl[es]ie retroactis temp[or]ib[us] laborasti nobisq[ue] et ip[s]i eccl[es]ie plurima obsequia fideliter impendisti." AAV, Reg. Vat. 349, fol. 93^r.

¹⁰⁰ "Grata tue fidelitate et devot[i]o[n]is obsequia que nobis et Roman[e] ecc[lesi]e sponse m[ent]is liberalitate prestitisti." AAV, Reg. Vat. 354, fol. 183^v.

¹⁰¹ "Eximie devotionis affectus, quem dilecti filii nobiles viri Pandolphus, Iohannes et Iacobus Comites Anguillarie Sutrine diocesis ad nos et Romanam ecclesiam veris affectibus gerere comprobantur, nos inducit, ut eorum commoditati pariter ac statui favorabiliter intendamus. . . . Nos igitur attendentes singularia devotionis obsequia per eosdem Comites hactenus nobis et Romane ecclesie impensa, et que adhuc continuo ardentius impendere non desistunt, et propterea volentes ipsos favoribus prosequi graciosis." Theiner, 3:285.

As these five examples—to which many more of a similar nature can be added—show, papal-noble collaboration was firmly framed in terms of fealty and devotion. Ideally, of course, such fealty and devotion not only took place in the past but remained forthcoming in the present and future. None of this was particularly novel, but that was precisely the point. This was a shared language with mutually understood obligations. Although the bulls expressed this constellation of ideas in grandiloquent language, it would have been entirely familiar to barons.

Particularly the idea of loyalty would have struck a note, for it was ubiquitous not only in the common language used to express the relationship between a prince and his subjects but also, importantly, in the more contractual communication between employer and condottiere. Giordano Colonna, Martin's brother and lieutenant in temporal affairs, expressed these considerations in much more straightforward, vernacular language in a letter to Ranuccio Farnese dated 7 June 1419. Giordano wrote to Ranuccio:

For you have always been and [still] are a loyal servant of the Holy Church and of Our Father, and, moreover, you have always been our clear friend and brother, and I am telling you, he who has served, and serves the Holy Church and Our Father, will merit reward, and those punished who will do the opposite.¹⁰²

Loyal service (of free accord) and merited reward, rebellion and punishment: these were the basic tenets that had suffused the chivalric culture of the baronial elite and that structured the relationship between prince and nobility throughout the High and Later Middle Ages.¹⁰³ It was understood that this relationship came with mutual obligations. If the papacy represented the head of the Roman Church, it rested on and was supported by the strong shoulders of the baronial elite—an image made visual and material by a travertine relief of Martin V's coat of arms supported by two Farnese escutcheons, currently in the Palazzo Comunale in Valentano, that dates to this period.¹⁰⁴

The pope of course represented more than the head of corporate society—he was the head of the church, the body of faithful believers. It is striking how

¹⁰² “P[er]ch[e] sete sempre stato e sete fedele S[ervito]re di S[ancta] E[cclesia] e di N[ostro] S[ignore], et anche ultimam[en]te à questo sempre sete stato n[ost]ro claro amico, e fr[at]ello, e dichiarandovi, chelà servito, e serve S[anc]ta Ecc[lesi]a, e N[ostro] S[ignore] ne sarà meritevole, e così punito, chi farà lo contrario.” Giordano Colonna to Ranuccio Farnese, 7 June 1419. BSS, Archivio Colonna, II A, 17, fols. 158^f–159^f. Another copy is in BSS, Archivio Colonna, II A, 36, II, 47.

¹⁰³ Sunderland; Kaeuper, 33–56.

¹⁰⁴ A picture of this travertine relief may be found at <http://www.retedimorestorichelazio.it/dimora/vt/valentano/palazzo-comunale/#pid=6>.

consistently the figure of the pope and the wider Roman Church were coupled, almost equated, in a single formula in both papal bulls as well as private letters. This, and the persistent use of the language of devotion, or even devotional love, in the Augustinian sense of reflecting a love for God, allowed the papacy to make the most of its position as head of the church and Vicar of Christ. The idea of devotion was also utilized in a secular context but was more readily interchangeable with loyalty (*lealtà*), friendship (*amicizia*), and servitude (*servitù*). Nowhere was it utilized as much or as consistently as in papal documents. It allowed the papacy to frame support for the papal cause as an act of Christian piety: devotional love as charity suffused by love for God, rewarded not only with worldly goods but also with the gift of grace. By extension, opposing papal power could be interpreted not only as infidelity in the political sense—late medieval political culture did leave some, albeit constricted, space for lordly opposition against tyrannical princes—but above all as sin, for which no tolerance could be entertained. Revolt or rebellion took place within the body politic; sinners, however, were cast from the social body of the community of believers entirely.

In fact, before moving on to the way barons viewed and articulated their relationship with the papacy, it may be instructive to assess devotion and loyalty's mirror image by looking at the excommunication bull promulgated by Eugene IV against the Colonna on 17 June 1431. Like an investiture, the bull starts by setting out the general purpose of its promulgation.

Called to the highest honor of apostolic dignity by divine appointment, entrusted with the care for our flock, and also to consider with alertness, diligence, and adroitness, he summoned us to discern the merits of every individual, and we must also prudently weigh the scales of our deliberations, so that the power of a lawful examination reveals those [who are] guilty according to the nature of their own works, in order that neither the destruction of very many may happen nor any incentive to other impunities is allowed, we must suppress transgressors with their earned penalties, and to this effect those whom the fear of God does not recall from wickedness must anyhow be restrained from sins through punishment.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ "Ad ap[osto]lice dignitatis apicem divina dispositione vocati, gregis nobis crediti curam habere, ac vigili sedula[ue] solertia considerare nos convenit, et singulor[um] discernere merita, ac deliberationis provide statera librare debemus, ut quos iusti vigor examinis reos ostendit, iuxta sui operis qualitatem ne fiant perditio plurimor[um] neq[ue] ip[s]or[um] impunitatis incentivu[m] alijs tribuat delinquendi penis debitis deprimamus, et sic quos dei timor a malo non revocat saltem pena cohibeat a peccatis." ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.14,044.

The punishment of sin was approached with the same level of prudence as were rewards of loyalty. Little doubt is left as to the sins in question, as the bull proceeds to detail the “horrendous rebellions, severities, and also the abominable and criminal cruelties committed and perpetrated by the wicked Colonna clan and their progeny,” as well as their allies.¹⁰⁶ The Colonna’s possessions were placed under interdict, their adherents and followers were excluded from receiving communion, and the excommunicated were banned from burial in sacred ground, thus denying them access to saving grace for the afterlife. Furthermore, excommunication entailed a set of punishments designed to undermine noble power: contracts with the excommunicated were declared void (for the faith with which they were concluded had been abased), vassals and subjects were released from legal obligation to their nefarious lords, and (perhaps most important of all, given the Colonna’s baronial status) the excommunicated were to be left intestate and devoid of any legal inheritance, condemned to spend the rest of their lives in abased poverty and beggary.¹⁰⁷ To bring the message home, the bull ended with a final admonition: “If anyone will presume to assail this, this man himself will incur the wrath of the almighty God and of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul.”¹⁰⁸

If loyalty merited generous reward, the resulting poverty in case of rebellion was spelled out in ghastly detail. This opposition exhibits similar traits in the spiritual realm: where devotion was construed as an act suffused with grace, revolt was an act of the worst possible sin, *superbia*, and damnation its only possible outcome. Thus, it is important to recognize that the pope’s double function as priest-king was fully exploited in procuring the nobility’s support

¹⁰⁶ “Horrende rebellionis acerbitatibus ac detestabilium facinorum crudelitibus per improbam domum et progeniem de Columna com[m]issis et perpetratis” ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.14,044.

¹⁰⁷ “And that the sons of the aforementioned perpetrators may be excluded from inheritance and succession from the mother’s and father’s side and any near family, nor allowed to take possession of any other will, may forever be destitutes and beggars, so that to them, being debased to poverty, death may be a solace and life torture in perpetuity and that they may be unworthy of providing any testimony, and that of anything declared about these men, born out of good faith, may not be believed” (“Ut ip[s]or[um] delinquentiu[m] filij a successione materna et avita et omnium proximor[um] hereditate et successione penitus sint exclusi de testamentis alior[um] nichil capiant, sint semper egentes et pauperes, ut hijs perpetua egestate sordentibus, sit mors solatium et vita supplicium sintq[ue] ad testimonium perhibendum indigni, eor[um]q[ue] dictis tanqua[m] fide natuis non credatur”). ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.14,044.

¹⁰⁸ “Siquis autem hoc attemptare presumpserit indignationem omnipotentis dei et beator[um] Petri et Pauli Ap[osto]lor[um] eius se noverit incursum.” ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.14,044.

as well as in castigating those who opposed the project of papal restoration. Excommunications further bring into view the pope's status as prince and judge, as fatherly pendant to the Holy Mother Church and bestower of gifts in this world and the hereafter, in the form of investitures, and, on the other side of the coin, as the one who punished, chastised, dispossessed, and damned those who dared to defy papal authority.

On the baronial side of things, support for pontifical power also came in many forms, from the opportunistic and insincere to a more ideologically inspired attachment to the papacy. Loyalty to the papal cause as a practical attitude that could lead to favors in the form of investitures and monetary rewards, an attitude discarded once it no longer seemed as beneficial, may have been behind Everso dell'Anguillara's career under Eugene IV; Everso became a thorn in the side of the papacy after Eugene's demise. Indeed, for the Counts of Anguillara, opportunities to advance or to act on personal grudges seem to have outweighed any particular sense of attachment to the pontifical cause; Everso's brother Dolce exchanged the papal army for Francesco Sforza's troops fighting that very army in the 1440s without any remorse. In response, Eugene IV promulgated a bull that punished Dolce by confiscating several possessions that the Camera Apostolica had pawned to him, but also, more importantly, that threatened to impose hefty fines on any of his subjects who took up service with a power at war with the Church.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, neither Eugene nor his

¹⁰⁹ "Previously considering that it is exceedingly absurd and inconvenient to many that the subjects of our Holy Roman Church and those living under our jurisdiction and power take up arms with the enemies of ourself and aforementioned Church, and receive payment from them in the crossroads and public spaces of our city, we recommend and order that all the contractors of arms-bearing men and certain other squires subject to us and the aforementioned Church, and living under our power and jurisdiction who otherwise do not exist in our military service, or that of our dearest son in Christ Alfonso of Aragon, et cetera, Illustrious King or of our dear son and noble man Niccolò Piccinino, Captain-General of the Church, by a certain respective prefixed term under punishment of a fine of 10,000 gold florins of the Camera will be held to leave those whose service they are in" ("Dudum considerantes q[uo]d valde absurdum et inconveniens plurimum esset ut subditi n[ost]ri Roman[er] eccl[esi]e ac sub n[ost]ra iurisdictione et potestate existentes cum n[ost]ris et ip[s]ius eccl[esi]e hostibus militarent et stipendia ab eisdem susciperent in compitis et publicis ac celebribus locis urbis preconizari et mandari fecimus ut omnium gentium armigerar[um] conductores et ceteri alij armigeri nobis et prefate eccl[esi]e subditi et sub n[ost]ra potestate et iurisdictione permanentes qui aut sub n[ost]ris sive carissimi in xpo filij n[ost]ri Alfonsi Aragonum etc[etera] Regis Illustris sive dilecti filij nobilis viri Nicolai Piccinini generalis eccl[esi]e capitanei stipendijs non existebant certo termino eis prefixo sub pena decem milium florenor[um] auri de Camera discedere tenerentur ab illis a quibus stipendia habebant"). Original bull of 13 March 1443 is in ASC, Archivio Orsini, I Serie, Pergamene, II.A.15,053; also published (with some minor errors) in Theiner, 3:353.

successors managed to establish any sort of monopoly on attracting the Roman barons to their service, and barons continued to take up *condotte* elsewhere during the Quattrocento without regarding this as impacting their relationship with the papacy.¹¹⁰ Other considerations that are difficult to trace presumably also played a role. It is not unlikely that the Conti and Savelli supported pontifical power during the pontificate of Martin V, given that they were part of the extended Colonna kinship network. This added a perhaps much more important bond than the rather (as of yet) weak connection between papacy and nobility. It also suggests that nepotism as a governmental tool extended beyond the pope's direct kin—an argument made elsewhere in the more exceptional case of the concubinage relationship between Alexander VI Borgia (1494–1503) and the Farnese.¹¹¹

Yet even before such amorous (or not so amorous) relations tied the Farnese closely to the papacy, the Farnese seem already to have stood on the more ideologically motivated end of the spectrum of Guelph partisans. It has been acknowledged that the persistence of Guelphism and Ghibellinism, which so characterized late medieval Italy, retained its potency on the local civic level to structure factional divisions.¹¹² Less evident in the literature is that in the Papal States these divisions never entirely lost their original connection to the papal and imperial cause.¹¹³ The Farnese's words of commitment to the papal cause and even the pope's spiritual necessity, as expressed in their letter to the government of Siena, and their steadfast support especially during the chaotic transitional period between the pontificates of Martin V and Eugene IV are illustrative of their loyalty. Indeed, it is more than relevant that their self-identification as the church's most loyal servants, albeit highly rhetorical, was still considered an intrinsic element of the Farnese's dynastic identity three decades and three popes later, and to some extent remained so well into the sixteenth century, when the Farnese themselves became a papal family with the election of Paul III (1534–49). Ranuccio Farnese's 1450 will—as much a political testament for his heirs as a legal document dividing the Farnese's patrimony—includes a clause expressly stating the desire that his heirs remain unflinching in their support of the pontifical cause: “Likewise, the lord testator commanded to his aforementioned sons and heirs, that they shall be, and are bound to be obedient and devoted to the reigning supreme pontiff and to the Holy Mother Church and to live and remain forever under their

¹¹⁰ Shaw, 2009; Shaw, 2001.

¹¹¹ Luiten, 2019b, 45; DeSilva, 2016.

¹¹² Gentile; Ferente, 2013; Ferente, 2007.

¹¹³ Although for the Cinquecento, see Visceglia; Bonora.

protection.”¹¹⁴ This was certainly no throwaway phrase; there was no legal need to include such a sentence, and it is probably correct to interpret it as political advice. Moreover, other admonitions from Ranuccio’s will, such as to retain the Farnese’s alliance with Florence and the Medici or to live in fraternal concord and solve differences through compromise, were very much remembered in family circles or expressed publicly in letters.¹¹⁵ Most baronial families, however, including the Orsini, Conti, and Savelli, could be found somewhere on the scale between the Anguillara’s opportunism and the Farnese’s fervor.

In the end, ubiquitous examples of resistance against papal politics can be complemented by evidence showing extensive patterns of papal-noble collaboration throughout the two pontificates examined in detail in this article. As a result of this collaboration, politics in the Papal States, despite the fact that prince and nobility had fewer traditional means to establish a mutual relationship than in secular states, might look much more similar to that of other (European) principalities, where the mediation of local elites was central to the functioning of princely government.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, pawning territories to barons employed in the papal armies was an important strategy that closely linked barons to the financial apparatus of the Camera Apostolica. That may not be an altogether exciting conclusion. It does, however, significantly rewrite the history of the papacy during the important period in the wake of the Western Schism.

For its part, the papacy tried to fully exploit its spiritual authority as head of the church, and there is evidence these papal pleas did not entirely fall on deaf ears. That parts of the nobility were willing to go along with these claims certainly attests to the remnants of the papacy’s temporal and spiritual authority that survived in Rome and its surroundings during the Babylonian Captivity in Avignon and that, albeit with few lasting results, were reinvigorated during the Western Schism when one of the competing papacies opted for Rome as its abode. The papacy’s actions also suggest that in a period associated with the papacy’s development into a conventional Italian principality—in a practical and financial sense, as a result of concordats and an increasing reliance on the income from the Papal States, as well as ideologically, through the pens of humanists enamored with Roman imperial history—the papacy’s position

¹¹⁴ “Item mandavit dominus testator, eius filijs et heredibus suprascriptis, quod sint et esse debeant fideles et obedientes ac devoti Summo pontifici pro tempore existenti et Sancte Matre ecclesie et semper sub ipsorum protectione vivere et permanere.” Two copies survive: Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Stroziane, I Serie, busta 351, fols. 136^r–141^r; and ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated. The latter is published in Lefevre.

¹¹⁵ Luiten, 2020.

¹¹⁶ De Weerd, Holmes, and Watts; Watts, 332–35, 373–76; Della Misericordia.

as a spiritual leader and head of the church remained in undiminished use to bolster pontifical authority. This impacted and structured the way in which the relationship between the papacy and the Papal States' baronial nobility was conceived. In the long run, these ideological *spolia* from the medieval papacy survived and were integrated into the early modern edifice of papal monarchy.¹¹⁷ Their effective use in the early Quattrocento, when papal authority was at a low point, suggests this period was particularly vibrant, and, moreover, fundamental to our understanding of the history of the Renaissance papacy in general.

THE BARONIAL NOBILITY IN ROME AND EUROPE

Apart from the use of language centering on fealty and devotion, papal-noble collaboration provides insight into the political power of a hereditary elite and the justification thereof in light of competing notions of nobility through virtue. German historiography has much to offer to an Anglophone and Italianate public, particularly those publications in which the notion of suitability or fitness for the exercise of public authority is theorized.¹¹⁸ After all, it was not only in the context of the lay papal nephew, as illuminated by DeSilva, but also in that of the language used to define the nature of papal-noble collaboration that nobility, noble status, honor, and merited reward were the bedrock on which mutual understanding rested. Seldom did papal bulls elaborate on the exact link between noble status and suitability for offices that entailed the exercise of temporal pontifical authority, but neither did Quattrocento Italy lack texts debating the exact nature of nobility. Treatises like Buonaccorso da Montemagno's *De nobilitate* (1429) and Poggio Bracciolini's *De nobilitate* (1440)—texts written in Central Italy that circulated widely throughout the rest of Europe—discuss the competing notions of nobility by blood (and, thus, a hereditary prerogative) and nobility through virtuous acts, attainable to anyone in possession of the required virtues. It certainly is noteworthy that during the period following the Western Schism hereditary offices were invented or reinstated for the baronial Conti and Savelli families, even if in practice their importance remained circumscribed. Much more important, however, is the persistent use of noble nominees in temporal offices by virtue of their nobility and their personal status, which aided in the exercise of these pontifical offices. This use extended to the College of Cardinals, where the Roman barons remained severely overrepresented throughout the Quattrocento. It has been noted before that the papal Curia was not the catalyst of social mobility, as it had once been portrayed, and that noble status was still

¹¹⁷ Prodi, 2017.

¹¹⁸ For instance, Andenna and Melville.

the best predictor of a distinguished career.¹¹⁹ The fact that, at a court populated largely by clerics and with few offices available to laymen—one, moreover, in which humanist voices in favor of virtue were abundantly present—the hereditary nobility retained such an important role in temporal government brings into sharp relief the tenacity of the ideal of nobility by blood in late medieval Europe. Culturally, the nobility was a prominent, even conspicuous class in Rome, as elsewhere.¹²⁰ Yet the late medieval nobility's role, as well as its self-representation as a ruling class, remained flexible enough for it to be reinvented and adjusted to the requirements of changing developments in government, allowing it to survive well into the early modern period.

There are further implications of the relationship between papacy and nobility in the wake of the Western Schism for historical research into the ubiquitous phenomenon of factions in late medieval Europe. The pontificates of Martin and Eugene also exhibit two vastly different approaches to dealing with factional divisions within their principality. Both approaches, however, reveal the various means available to the prince to navigate a political constellation made up of two competing factions, a situation that, it must be stressed, was a common phenomenon throughout the Quattrocento in many European states. Moreover, such factional divisions spanned the length and breadth of many states, or, as in the case of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, even reached across state borders to involve leading figures from outside the realm; one need think only of York and Lancaster, in England; Armagnacs and Bourguignons, in France; Taborites, Ultraquists, and Catholics, in the Kingdom of Bohemia; or the Hooks and Cods, in the Low Countries. Martin's policy of neutrality, a course made all the more difficult for him as the head of the Colonna family, resembled the very successful strategy adopted by the Visconti of Milan, who had bolstered their authority by presenting themselves as guarantors of stability and quietude in the face of the factional struggles that were an endemic feature of the cities in Lombardy. Lacking the principle of dynastic succession, such a strategy proved difficult to adopt over the course of several pontificates, and Martin's successor was even faced with opposition from his predecessors' kin. As a result, Eugene was forced to take recourse to one faction to castigate the other. Although Eugene temporarily succeeded in pacifying the Patrimony of Saint Peter in Tuscia and the Campania and Marittima, in the long run divisions deepened and factional struggles remained a structural

¹¹⁹ Partner, 1990, 15, 82–101; see also the various contributions in Carbonetti Vendittelli and Vendittelli.

¹²⁰ On the use of hospitality and palatial space by Roman barons and their functions in papal government in the late Quattrocento, see Luiten, 2021. On barons' use of food gifts, see Luiten, 2019c.

feature of the Roman political landscape. Even if it is difficult to distil general principles from these examples, hypotheses can be made about the role played by the length of rule, the impact of the dynastic principle dominant in Western European monarchies versus the elective one generally the norm in Central Europe, and the question of whether princes were dealing with civic or noble factions, or factions made up of both. Such are only the sketches of a much-needed comprehensive comparative study of factions in late medieval Europe, for at the heart of such a study lie some of the central questions related to the transition from late medieval to early modern European political culture: the balance of power between princely authority and representative bodies such as estates and parliaments, the enduring and institutional role of factions on the civic level as well as the state level, and the emergence of centralizing states, such as England, France, or Milan, versus the triumph of (con-)federal polities, as exemplified by the Low Countries and the Swiss Confederacy.¹²¹ Rome and the Papal States, precisely because of the peculiar nature of the papacy, are an important point of comparison for a larger scholarly endeavor in this vein.

Finally, the history of early Quattrocento papal-noble relations sheds light on the history of the church and the papacy's position within the community of believers. With Thomas Noble's assertion in mind that the history of the papacy as head of the universal church was shaped to a considerable extent by local Roman politics, and by the position of the papacy vis-à-vis Rome and its immediate surroundings, the early Quattrocento is fundamental for our understanding of the recovery of papal authority after the Western Schism had dealt a big blow to its position of primacy within Christendom.¹²² The papacy might not have been the head of the largest denomination globally had it not succeeded in constantly reinvigorating itself on the basis of both tradition and renewal during periods of crisis. The Western Schism and its aftermath were among its gravest crises. Within that context, it is essential to emphasize just how much the papacy's period of renovation was characterized not so much by struggle but by compromise and collaboration, first and foremost in its relationship with the baronial nobility.

Loek Luiten completed his PhD at New College, University of Oxford, in 2021. His thesis focused on the fifteenth-century political, dynastic, and cultural history of the Farnese family. Apart from the thesis, this project yielded several spinoff articles on food gifts, gender and historiography, hospitality, and noble violence. Loek left academia and currently works in consultancy.

¹²¹ For factions at the early modern court, see Gonzalez Cuerva and Koller.

¹²² Noble.

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