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The Papal Curia and the Finns in the Late Middle Ages: Can the Vatican Sources Still Offer New Information for Historians?

Introduction

The papal curia has attracted Christians from all over Christendom to come and visit the Holy See. Thousands and thousands of faithful have travelled to the papal curia for various reasons each year, and the amount of visitors only grew when coming closer to the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance period. Many of these visitors have left traces of themselves in the source material kept in the central archives of the papacy, the Vatican Secret Archives, which is a real goldmine for scholars.

This article deals with the contacts of medieval Finns – that is people living in the territory of the present-day state of Finland¹ – to the papal curia. The article first shortly presents the significance of the documentation of the Vatican Secret Archives for Finnish medieval historians and then takes a brief look at what the Vatican sources can reveal about the various reasons for which Finns have turned to the Holy See in the Middle Ages. Finally, the article takes a closer look at two Finns who have stayed for some time at the curia and shows that

¹ The territory of the present-day state of Finland coincides relatively well with the territory of the medieval Catholic diocese of Turku. It is, actually, anachronistic to talk about Finland or Finns in the Middle Ages, since such a state did not exist before 1917. In the Middle Ages, the territory belonged to the Swedish realm and the diocese of Turku (*Aboensis diocesis*) was one of the seven Swedish dioceses together with the archdiocese of Uppsala and the dioceses of Linköping, Skara, Strängnäs, Västerås and Växjö. In this article, I use the terms Finland and the diocese of Turku as well as Finns and the inhabitants of the diocese of Turku interchangeably for diminishing repetition.

the Vatican sources still allow us to make new interpretations about the Finnish history, about the contacts of the Finns to the papal curia and their activities there.

The Collections of the Vatican Secret Archives and the Scandinavians

The medieval documentation kept in the Vatican archives is particularly interesting and important for the study of the medieval history of Finland, since the amount of locally survived medieval sources is extremely small, amounting to less than one thousand original documents or later copies². The main reasons for the small amount of medieval documents in Finland are on the one hand the late arrival of written culture to the country – the territory was Christianized and included into the written Latin culture as late as in the course of the 12th century and the use of written testimonies in administrative or juridical issues became customary even later – and on the other hand the many wars and fires in the castles and churches, where most of the medieval documents were kept, which have destroyed – together with the consequences of the Lutheran Reformation – a great deal of the few existing medieval documents.

Due to the shortage of medieval sources in the local archives and libraries, the rich collections of the Vatican Archives have fascinated Nordic researchers and historians for a long time, already from the times when the access to the Archives was strictly prohibited. Despite the prohibition, a few Scandinavian scholars, such as the Swedish Johannes Vastovius in the first half of the 17th century, the Danish archivist Johan Langebek in the 1760s and the Swedes Magnus von Celse and C.F. Fredenheim in the 1780s managed to receive, through their Vatican contacts, copies of documents from the Archives. The only Scandinavian scholar, who was allowed to work personally in the

² All Finnish medieval sources have been edited in the series called *Finlands medeltidsurkunder* already in the first half of the 20th century by the former State Archivist Reinhold Hausen. For the publication, he collected from all available archives and collections – including among others the Danish National Archives, the Swedish National Archives, the Vatican Secret Archives and the Tallinn City Archives – ca. 7000 documents that somehow dealt with the territory of the present-day Finland or its medieval inhabitants. *Finlands medeltidsurkunder*, ed. R. HAUSEN, 8 voll., Helsingfors 1910-1935 (henceforth FMU).

Vatican Archives prior to its opening in 1881, was the Norwegian historian P.A. Munch. He – although he was not catholic but protestant – was allowed to access the archives from 1859 to 1861 and again in 1863. During these years, he found and copied a considerable number of papal documents concerning Scandinavia.

After the Vatican Archives became accessible for scholars in the early 1880s, Scandinavian researchers left for Rome to exploit the new sources. The three Nordic countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, sent to Rome for this purpose an expedition of learned men for exploring the collections of the Vatican Secret Archives and the Roman State Archives and for collecting documents concerning Scandinavia. Documents concerning Finland and Iceland, which in the Middle Ages were part of the Scandinavian realms, were included in the project. The members of this group of experts worked in Rome from 1894 until 1903 as well as in 1906 and 1910 and collected Scandinavian documentation from 1316 up to the year 1536, which was the official year of the Lutheran Reformation in Denmark and after which there were no more official contacts between the Scandinavian countries and the papacy³.

After the World War I, the Swedish archivist L.M. Bååth managed to found financing for another Scandinavian expedition to Rome. The task of this group was to concentrate on documentation prior to 1316 – *i.e.* the year from where the earlier expedition had started. The sec-

³ The findings of the Scandinavian expeditions are published separately in each of the Nordic countries. The results of the first Scandinavian expedition in Rome regarding Denmark are published in *Acta Pontificum Danica. Pavelige akstykkeker vedrørende Danmark 1316-1536*, edd. L. MOLTESEN - A. KRARUP - J. LINDBÆK, 7 voll., København 1904-1943 and in *Bullarium Danicum. Pavelige akstykkeker vedrørende Danmark 1198-1316*, ed. A. KRARUP, København 1932. The documentation concerning Sweden has been published together with other Swedish medieval documentation in the series called *Diplomatarium Suecanum*, Stockholm 1829- as well as in *Acta Pontificum Suecica I, Acta Cameralia*, ed. L.M. BÅÅTH, 2 voll., Stockholm 1936 and 1957 (henceforth AC) and *Auctoritate Papae. The Church Province of Uppsala and the Apostolic Penitentiary 1410-1526. Acta Pontificum Suecica II, Acta Poenitentiarie*, edd. S. RISBERG - K. SALONEN, Stockholm 2008 (henceforth *Auctoritate Papae*). The medieval documents concerning Norway collected by the expeditions were edited in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, 22 voll., Oslo 1849-1990 (henceforth DN), while the Norwegian Penitentiary material was published in *Synder og Pavemåkt. Botsbrev fra Den Norske Kirkeprovins og Suderøyene til Pavestolen 1438-1531. Diplomatarium Poenitentiarie Norvegicum*, edd. T. JØRGENSEN - G. SALETNICH, Stavanger 2004. The Icelandic documentation in its turn is published in *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, 16 voll., København 1857-1972. The Finnish material is included in FMU.

ond expedition made seven research visits to the Vatican Archives in the years between 1920 and 1939.

It took a long time after the World War II before Scandinavian scholars began to use the collections of the Vatican Secret Archives again. This time the scholars did not form a common Scandinavian expedition but several researchers from different Nordic countries have been working in the archives individually. The first of them was Per Ingesman from Denmark, who in the late 1990s collected Danish material from the archives of the Apostolic Penitentiary and the *Sacra Romana Rota*. I collected the Finnish and Swedish Penitentiary and Rota material from the late 1990s until 2010s, and Torstein Jørgensen collected and edited the Norwegian Penitentiary material in the early 2000. Obviously, there have been a number of other Scandinavian scholars visiting the Vatican Archives in the recent years too, but none of them has worked there for longer periods or published a considerable number of documents from the collections of the papal archives⁴.

The Medieval Diocese of Turku and the Holy See

The diocese of Turku was the easternmost of the seven Swedish dioceses and it was Christianized relatively late, in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries. The ecclesiastical administration and consequently also the parish structure were established in the south-western parts of the country during the first decades of the 13th century, when the Finnish territory was still a missionary bishopric. The diocese of Turku was established as late as in the second half of the 13th centu-

⁴ P. INGESMAN, *Provisioner og processer. Den romerske Rota og dens behandling af danske sager i middelalderen*, Århus 2003; K. SALONEN, *The Penitentiary as a Well of Grace in the Late Middle Ages. The Example of the Province of Uppsala 1448-1527*, Helsinki 2001; SALONEN, *Kirkollisen oikeudenkäytön päälähteillä. Sacra Romana Rotan toiminta ja sen oikeudellinen tausta myöäiskeskiajalla ja uuden ajan alun taitteessa*, Helsinki 2012 (Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia, 221); SALONEN, *Papal Justice in the Late Middle Ages. The Sacra Romana Rota*, London - New York 2016; *Synder og Pavemaket*, cit. About the Scandinavian research in the Vatican Secret Archives, see SALONEN, *The Vatican Archives and the Nordic Countries*, in cur. M. MATHEUS, *Friedensnobelpreis und historische Grundlagenforschung: Ludwig Quidde und die Erschliessung der kurialen Registerüberlieferung*, Berlin 2012 (Bibliothek des DHI in Rom, 124), pp. 551-561.

ry, and the cathedral chapter founded around 1276. The chapter grew very slowly. It had originally only four canons but in 1330 their number had grown to six, and only a few years later, in 1338, there were eight canons in Turku. The first prelatry (*praepositura*) was founded in 1340 and the second (*archidiaconatus*) followed in 1390. Hundred years later there were four prelatres in the Turku chapter⁵. The vast territory of the diocese of Turku was all but densely populated. The diocese consisted of only *ca.* 120 parishes, and the number of monasteries or convents in the territory amounted only to six⁶.

Despite the small number of ecclesiastical benefices and monastic establishments, the representatives of the Turku diocese as well as other Finnish Christians had many reasons to turn to the papacy in the Middle Ages. The study of the sources in the Vatican Secret Archives as well as in the collections of other papal archives, such as the Apostolic Penitentiary, has shown that the Finns had certain central reasons to have contacts with the papal curia: 1) official visits because of the diocese administration, 2) episcopal appointments and consecrations, 3) need to get a papal provision to certain benefices or important ecclesiastical positions, 4) litigations before the papal tribunals, 5) receiving absolutions and dispensations and 6) pilgrimages⁷.

Finnish scholars have dealt with many of the above mentioned reasons to visit the Holy See and based their studies on the Vatican documentation. To the first group, the official visits, can be counted two different kinds of issues. Firstly, there were certain important matters of the dioceses, which required the approval of the pontiff, and therefore also the presence of local representatives in the papal curia was necessary. Regarding the Turku diocese, such matters included for

⁵ The first preserved document mentioning the bishop of Turku instead of the missionary bishop of Finland is dated to 26.6.1270. FMU 1, doc. 141. About the early phases and the development of the cathedral chapter of Turku, see K. PIRINEN, *Turun tuomiokapituli keskiajan lopulla*, Helsinki 1956 (Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia, 58), pp. 31-80.

⁶ There was a Birgittine abbey in Naantali, a Dominican convent in Turku and Vyborg and a Franciscan convent or *terminus* in Rauma, Vyborg and Kõkar. Apart from the Dominican convent in Turku, which was founded in 1249, all monastic institutions in Finland were founded in the 15th century.

⁷ About this categorization, see K. SALONEN, *Benefici, omicidi, pellegrinaggi. I finlandesi nella Curia nel tardo medioevo*, in *Kurie und Region. Festschrift für Brigide Schwarz zum 65. Geburtstag*, cur. B. FLUG - M. MATHEUS - A. REHBERG, Stuttgart 2005 (Geschichtliche Landeskunde, 59), pp. 435-450: 435-436.

example the renewal of the cathedral chapter in the late 15th century which Kauko Pirinen has examined thoroughly in his dissertation in 1956⁸. Another form of the official and obligatory visits to the Holy See were the so-called *visita ad limina sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli* – or just *visita ad limina*, during which the Catholic bishops visited the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul in Rome and informed the pope about the affairs of their dioceses⁹.

Bishops from the territories close to the Holy See were obliged to visit the papal curia once per year. The bishops residing on the other side of the Alps, the *ultramontani*, had to pay a visit every second year, while the *ultramarini*, that is those who lived even further away or overseas, had to visit the papal curia every third or even every fifth year. Due to the long distance to the papal curia, the bishops of Turku belonged to the *ultramarini*¹⁰. In the late Middle Ages, the bishops did not have to pay these visits personally but they could send to the pope their representative, who informed the papal curia about the situation in their dioceses and versed to the *Camera Apostolica* the obligatory payments related to these visits. As P.O. von Törne, who has studied the *visita ad limina* of the bishops of Turku, has found out, the Finnish bishops seldom paid these visits personally, and, indeed, very often ignored this obligation¹¹.

The most prestigious, and perhaps also emotional, reason for a bishop to pay a visit to the papal curia must have been his episcopal appointment. According to the medieval appointment practice, a person, who had been officially elected by the Turku cathedral chapter, became a bishop elect if he consented to the election and if he was found competent to the position. Before the bishop elect could receive his episcopal consecration, the election had to be confirmed by the pope within a certain time limit from the election. In order to receive a papal confirmation, the election documentation had to be presented

⁸ PIRINEN, *Turun tuomiokapituli* cit., pp. 151-167.

⁹ A. PARAVICINI BAGLIANI, *Ad limina*, in *Dizionario enciclopedico del medioevo*, 1, Roma 1998, p. 14; G. INGER, *Das kirchliche Visitationsinstitut im mittelalterlichen Schweden*, Lund 1961 (*Bibliotheca Theologiae Practicae*, 11), pp. 285-287.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 286-288.

¹¹ P.O. V. TÖRNE, *De finska medeltidsbiskoparnas besök vid den påfliga kurian*, in *Historiska uppsatser tillegnade M.G. Schybergson*, Helsingfors 1911 (Skrifter utg. af Svenska litteratursällskap i Finland, 100), pp. 198-296; About the Finnish *ad limina* visits, see also SALONEN, *Benefici, omicidi, pellegrinaggi* cit., *passim*.

to the pope, who (together with his cardinals in the consistory) then made a decision about the confirmation. If the election seemed to be correct and the bishop elect competent, it was a rule that the pontiff approved the election. When the pope had given his approval, the bishop elect could receive the episcopal consecration, after which he could act with full episcopal powers in his diocese¹².

The bishops elect did not have to travel personally to the papal curia for obtaining the papal approval and for paying all different curial fees related to the appointment process but a representative of the chapter and/or the bishop elect could take care of this process. We have relatively good knowledge about the presence of the late medieval bishops of Turku in the papal curia on these occasions, since this information can relatively easily be found in the pages of the papal cameral registers, which recorded the different payments related to episcopal appointments. These sources show that the Finnish bishops have not been very keen in leaving personally to the curia to pursue their appointment or to receive the episcopal consecration. Only two of the late medieval bishops of Turku, Olavus Magni (bishop 1450-1460) in 1450 and Konrad Bitz (bishop 1460-1489) in 1460, have visited the Holy See and received their consecration there¹³.

Several Finnish priests or priest candidates have turned to the papacy when they desired a papal appointment to a certain benefice. In principle, the bishop of Turku could appoint clerics to ecclesiastical positions in his diocese, but since the Avignon papacy, the popes began to reserve for themselves the right to appoint candidates to certain benefices, which in practice diminished the appointment rights of the local bishops. Typically the papal reservation right concerned benefices which had become vacant by the Holy See because the holder of the benefice had died at the papal curia or resigned the position to the hands of the pontiff, typically for being appointed to a better position¹⁴.

The number of papal appointments to Finnish benefices has been very small, less than one hundred documented cases during the whole

¹² About the appointment procedure in the papal curia, see K. HARVEY, *Episcopal Appointments in England, c. 1214-1344: From Episcopal Election to Papal Provisio*, Burlington 2014, pp. 133-148.

¹³ About the different payments, see for example SALONEN, *Benefici, Omicidi, Pellegrinaggi* cit., pp. 432-438; HARVEY, *Episcopal Appointments* cit., pp. 145-147.

¹⁴ About the development of the reservation rights, see P. LINDEN, *Der Tod des Benefiziaten in Rom. Eine Studie zu Geschichte und Recht der päpstlichen Reservationen*, Bonn

Middle Ages¹⁵. Thus almost hundred Finnish men have turned to the Holy See for their appointment. Among them we meet the high prelates of the Turku cathedral chapter such as Canon Henricus Vrese, who in July 1460 applied for the vacant *praepositura* after the previous provost, Conradus Bitz, had been appointed to the episcopal see of Turku¹⁶. Some Finnish applicants instead aspired to less ambitious positions, such as Jacobus Nicolai, who in April 1407 applied to become appointed as the parish priest of Pohja in southern Finland¹⁷. The Finnish Vatican documentation tells also about two young Finnish men, Benedictus Johannis and Marcus Olavi, who had come to Rome during the pontificate of Pope Paul II (1464-1471). None of them had yet received the priestly ordination. Since they wanted to be ordained in the curia, both have participated in the examination organized by the *Camera Apostolica* before the official ordination day. Both candidates have done well in the examination and received the highest mark (*bene*) in reading, Latin and singing. After that both have been ordained to priesthood in the curia and received a papal appointment bulla (*gratia expectativa in forma pauperum*), which entitled them to receive the next vacant position in the Turku diocese¹⁸.

The ecclesiastical positions especially were subject to numerous litigations by the highest papal court of law, the *Sacra Romana Rota*. The number of cases handled by the 12 papal judges (*auditores*) cannot be estimated due to the poorly surviving source material of the Rota, but the existing sources contain information about four cases concerning Finnish benefices that have been handled in this tribunal in the second half of the 15th century and the first decades of the 16th century¹⁹.

1938 (Kanonistische Studien und Texte, 14), pp. 10-17; A. MEYER, *Zürich und Rom. Ordentliche Kollatur und päpstliche Provisionen am Frau- und Grossmünster 1316-1523*, Tübingen 1986 (Bibliothek des DHI in Rom, 64), pp. 26-49.

¹⁵ FMU 1-8, *passim*.

¹⁶ FMU 2, doc. 3120 (4.7.1460).

¹⁷ FMU 2, doc. 1248 (30.4.1407).

¹⁸ FMU 4, docc. 3257, 3258 (1.4.1465). The date given in the edition is not necessarily correct, since these letters were mass products dated on 1.4.1465 notwithstanding when the grace has been granted. It was possible to apply for such letters after the election of Paul II in August 1464 as well as in early 1469. We do not know when Benedictus and Marcus have received their letters. About the *gratia expectativa in forma pauperum*, see A. MEYER, *Arme Kleriker auf Pfründensuche. Eine Studie über das Formapauperum-Register Gregors XII.*, Köln - Wien 1990 (Forschungen zur kirchlichen Rechtsgeschichte und zum Kirchenrecht, 20), *passim*.

¹⁹ About the late medieval *Sacra Romana Rota* and the Swedish and Finnish litigations, see SALONEN, *Papal Justice* cit., *passim*; SALONEN, *Swedish Litigations before the Sacra*

If the above mentioned four main reasons to turn to the Holy See mainly concerned clerics, there were also certain issues that concerned all Christians, be they men or women, laymen or clerics, namely the issues with the regulations of Canon Law. Canon Law stipulated very clearly, what Christians were supposed to do and what they were not allowed to do, and if someone broke against these regulations, what kinds of ecclesiastical consequences did they have to face. Christians who sinned by breaking against the ecclesiastical regulations were typically punished by excommunication, and if their sin or crime was particularly severe, the local priests or bishops did not have the right to grant them absolution but the guilty persons had to leave for the papal curia for pleading pardon. In the papal curia, the papal office called the Penitentiary took care of such cases and granted its clients absolutions from various sins and crimes. The same office had also the authority to grant dispensations or special licences for those Christians who had a good reason to act against the ecclesiastical norms and therefore applied for a special grace²⁰. The archives of the Penitentiary are preserved well from the 1450s onwards and kept nowadays in the Historical Archives of the Apostolic Penitentiary²¹. These collections contain over one hundred documents regarding the absolutions and dispensations granted for petitioners from the diocese of Turku between 1450 and 1521²².

In addition to those Finns, who have left for the papal curia in order to take care of a certain issue, many others have visited the Holy See and the numerous Roman churches and sanctuaries in the quality of pilgrims. We know very little about these persons, since they have normally not left any traces in the official papal documentation²³.

What is common to all the above mentioned Finns who have come to the papal curia for taking care of one of the above mentioned

Romana Rota in the Late Middle Ages, in *Kyrklig rätt och kyrklig orätt – kyrkorättsliga perspektiv. Festskrift till professor Bertil Nilsson*, cur. M. BERNTSON - A.M. CIARDI, Skellefteå 2016 (Bibliotheca theologiae practicae, 97), pp. 67-80.

²⁰ About the activities and powers of the Penitentiary, see K. SALONEN - L. SCHMUGGE, *A Sip from the 'Well of Grace'. Medieval Texts from the Apostolic Penitentiary*, Washington D.C. 2009, *passim*.

²¹ Archivio Storico della Penitenzieria Apostolica (APA).

²² The documents are all edited in *Auctoritate Papae*.

²³ Christian Krötzel has studied the Finnish pilgrimages in the Middle Ages. See CH. KRÖTZEL, *Pilger, Mirakel und Alltag: Formen des Verhaltens im skandinavischen Mittelalter (12.-15. Jahrhundert)*, Helsinki 1994 (Studia historica, 46).

matters is that they have come to the curia, done what they had to do, and left again. Only a very few persons from the diocese of Turku have spent more time in the papal curia, gained knowledge in how the papal administration functioned and learned to know the functionaries of the curia. These persons have also left more traces in the papal documentation and thus it is possible to disclose their activities in the papal curia. In the following, I will present two men of Finnish background, who have spent more time in the papal curia, and show, how much information about their lives and activities it is possible to draw from the existing documentation in the Vatican Archives. One of them is Magnus Nicolai (Särkilahti), a well-known Finnish prelate, who spent *ca.* one year in the papal curia (1465-1466) and gained so much experience that he in the end reached the highest position in the diocese, that is became the Bishop of Turku in 1489. The other, the Dominican Friar Petrus de Abo, is much less known in the narrative of the Finnish ecclesiastical history. Petrus must, however, have been relatively well-known figure in the Avignon papacy, since he spent years in the town serving as a papal confessor.

Petrus de Abo

Petrus de Abo, who is known in the Vatican sources also with the names Petrus Abo/Habo and Petrus de Dacia²⁴, originated from the diocese of Turku. His birth year and family background are unknown to us. Petrus has most probably taken his monastic vows in the Dominican convent of Turku and begun his education there. Since he ended up as a papal confessor, *penitentiarius*, in the curia in Avignon in 1338, he must have studied theology – and perhaps also Canon Law – in one of the *studium generale* of the Dominicans or in one of the

²⁴ Previous research has sometimes dealt with Petrus de Abo and Petrus de Dacia as they were two persons, but both names refer to one person. The first name version de Abo refers to the town of Turku (in Swedish Åbo, with the Latin variant Abo) where the first Finnish Dominican convent, dedicated to Saint Olav of Norway, was located and where Petrus most probably had begun his career with the Dominicans. The reason, why he is also called de Dacia depends on the fact that the Dominicans of Turku belonged to the Dominican province of Dacia. Thus Dacia does not only mean Denmark but it refers to the whole province covering all Nordic countries and some parts of the Baltic territories. J. GALLÉN, *De skandinaviska penitentiarierna vid kuran under medeltiden*, «Historisk tidskrift för Finland», 22 (1937), pp. 64-79.

European universities. The two possible places, where Petrus might have received his higher education are Paris or Bologna, where the Dominicans had their own schools in close collaboration with the universities.

There are no sources regarding his studies, but the later correspondence between him and his friends inform us that his study comrades included the Norwegian Dominican friar from the convent of Bergen, Jon Halldorsson, who studied both in Paris and Bologna and later became bishop of Skálholt in Iceland and perhaps also Håkon Erlingsson, who after his studies, possibly in Paris, advanced to the episcopal see of Bergen in Norway. The surviving correspondence shows that the friendship between the three men continued also after their study times, and both men have asked Petrus, who was employed in the papal curia, to do favours for them in Avignon²⁵.

As an example of the later correspondence with his friends in the north, we have a letter of Bishop Håkon of Bergen to Bishop Jon of Skálholt in June 1338 in which he, among other things, mentions that Friar Petrus has sent his greetings to Jon in all the letters he had written to Håkon and that in his last letter Petrus had informed Håkon about the fact that Pope Benedict XII had excommunicated the inhabitants of Bologna because they had attacked a papal legate and destroyed the cathedral and a newly built papal castle in the town²⁶. This is a nice testimony to the fact that Peter, who was staying in the centre of the ecclesiastical administration, has wanted to inform his friends in Scandinavia about the most important issues going on in the curia. A month later, in July 1338, Bishop Håkon replied to Petrus and asked for his help in receiving an indulgence letter for the cathedral of Bergen as well as a confessional letter for himself so that he could freely choose a father confessor. The Bishop sent to Petrus also some money to cover the costs of the preparation of the papal letters as well as dried fish from Norway (*stokfiske*) to compensate his trouble²⁷. Petrus has also done what his friend asked, since Håkon has received a confessional letter from Pope Benedict in December of the same

²⁵ About Bishop Håkon Erlingsson, see A.E. TRYTI, *Håkon Erlingsson*, in *Norsk biografisk leksikon*. https://nbl.snl.no/H%C3%A5kon_Erlingsson (read 11.7.2018). About Bishop Jon Halldorsson, see M. STEFANSSON, *Jon Halldorsson*, in *Norsk biografisk leksikon*. https://nbl.snl.no/Jon_Halldorsson (read 11.7.2018).

²⁶ DN 7, doc. 155 (14.6.1338).

²⁷ DN 8, doc. 112 (24.7.1338).

year²⁸. In the following year, in June 1339, Bishop Håkon wrote again to Petrus and informed his friend in Avignon about a Norwegian man, Diderik Diderikssön, who had killed a man in self-defence in the episcopal city of Bergen, and asked whether Petrus could help the man to receive an apostolic absolution²⁹.

In August 1344 Petrus de Abo helped the Norwegian Archbishop Pål Bårdissen of Nidaros to fulfil his episcopal obligation by doing his *visita ad limina*. Since the bishops did not have to pay these visits personally, Petrus acted as the representative of the Archbishop and paid the necessary payments to the *Camera Apostolica*³⁰. It is not known what was the connection between Petrus and Pål, but since Pål and Bishop Håkon of Bergen were close friends, one could guess that Håkon had asked his friend in the curia to help his friend the Archbishop. Petrus did similar favours to other Scandinavians too. For example he paid the usual payments related to the episcopal appointment of Bishop Gunnar of Skara in 1338³¹.

Apart from the above mentioned sources describing his activities in assisting his Scandinavian friends whenever they needed a favour in the papal curia, we do not have much information about Petrus' regular career in the papal curia. He has most probably become a papal *penitentiarius minor* in June 1338. He followed in this position another Scandinavian *penitentiarius minor*, Johannes de Abo, who also was a Dominican from the convent of Turku and about whom we have only very little information. The minor penitentiaries were father confessors whose task it was to hear confessions and absolve sinners on behalf of the pope. There were usually twelve minor penitentiaries. They were normally chosen among mendicants (often, Dominicans or Franciscans) keeping in mind that together they should cover all the language groups spoken in the territory of Christendom so that all Christians could come to the papal curia, confess and be absolved in their own language. Petrus received his appointment probably because he mastered the Scandinavian languages. According to the papal account books that have survived from the years 1342-1346, Petrus received each autumn as compensation for his activity grain, wine and

²⁸ DN 6, doc. 156 (3.12.1338).

²⁹ DN 7, doc. 167 (25.6.1339).

³⁰ DN 17, doc. 60 (11.8.1344).

³¹ AC I:1, doc. 323 (23.6.1338).

wood for heating his lodgings. In March 1343 he received extraordinarily 50 florins for the reparation of his lodgings by the Dominicans of Avignon. The same account books note also his death in 1347³².

The sources mentioning Brother Petrus de Abo are not many, but they reveal quite a lot about his life and activities in the papal curia in Avignon. He must have taken regularly care of his main activity, hearing confessions of Christians who came to Avignon to receive pardon from their sins. But in addition to his daily tasks, the sources reveal that he had relatively large network of friends, some already from his study times, who kept contact with him, sent him presents and asked for his help in matters that had to be taken care of in the papal curia. Many clerics working in the papal curia acted similarly as freelance procurators for persons who needed legal or practical help in ecclesiastical matters. The sources also showed that Petrus did not only help his two study comrades, Håkon and Jon, but extended his network also to other Scandinavian prelates and friends of friends. In addition to making various favours to his friends, Petrus also informed them about the central issues of Christendom and the Church, which might have been useful also in Scandinavia.

Magnus Nicolai (Särkilahhti)

Unlike Petrus de Abo, who is very rarely mentioned in the Finnish medieval historiography, Magnus Nicolai (Särkilahhti)³³ is a central medieval figure in the Finnish history-writing. The most important reason for his fame is that in 1489 he became the bishop of Turku and in this role belonged to the absolute elite of the Swedish realm. In Sweden, all bishops – the bishop of Turku included – were automatically members of the Council of the Realm. Another important reason for the fame of Magnus is that he left a particularly rich source

³² AC I:1, docc. 329, 332, 336, 343, 350, 351, 354, 355.

³³ In the Finnish history-writing Magnus is known as Magnus (Nicolai) Särkilahhti. His last name comes from the name of the farm owned by his father. In the Swedish history-writing, Magnus is instead known as Magnus (Nicolai) Stjernkors. The Swedish name “Stjernkors” means “Starcross” and comes from the family’s coat of arms bearing a star and a cross.

material including his copy book and other documentation in the local archives. Additionally, the collections of the Vatican Secret Archives include many documents in which he is mentioned.

Due to the unusually good source situation, there is a plenty of information about his family background and studies. Magnus was born around 1435 to a family with lower nobility background. His father, Nils Olafsson Särkilahti, was member of the Swedish Council of the Realm and his mother, Elin Nilsson Tavast, was member of one of the most influential Finnish noble family, the Tavasts. Magnus was baptized after his mother's uncle, the earlier bishop of Turku, Magnus Olavi Tavast, and this important connection helped him in his ecclesiastical career. He began his studies in the cathedral school of Turku, which was at that time the only place of higher education in the whole diocese. After finishing his studies there, he was sent to the University of Paris in the turn of the 1450s, where he studied until he received his degree of baccalaureus in 1456 and licentiate in the following year³⁴.

A degree from Paris in his pocket, Magnus began to pursue an ecclesiastical career. He is mentioned for the first time as canon of Turku in a petition presented to the Apostolic Penitentiary in 1460³⁵ and shortly afterwards, in 1463, as choral priest in the choir of *corporis Christi* founded by his episcopal namesake *ca.* twenty years earlier. His next important step in his career took place in 1466, when Pope Paul II granted him the position of provost (*praepositura*) in Turku. The papal appointment was almost a promise of future career as bishop, since the provostship was the most important ecclesiastical position in the diocese after the bishop and almost all bishops of Turku had acted as provosts before they were promoted to the episcopal see. This was the case also with Magnus. When Bishop Konrad Rogge of Turku died in 1489, the cathedral chapter elected Magnus as his successor on 17.3.1489, and Pope Innocent VIII confirmed the election in early July of the same year³⁶.

³⁴ About the life of Bishop Magnus, see S. SUVANTO, *Magnus Nicolai*, in *Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu*. URN:NBN:fi-fe20051410 (read 9.7.2018); PIRINEN, *Turun tuomiokapituli* cit., pp. 244-245.

³⁵ *Auctoritate Papae*, doc. 87 (14.7.1460).

³⁶ SUVANTO, *Magnus Nicolai* cit., *passim*; PIRINEN, *Turun tuomiokapituli* cit., p. 244.

Magnus Nicolai has the reputation of an active provost and bishop who strove for the best of his diocese. During his career in the service of the Turku diocese, the activities of the cathedral chapter and clerics were revised twice, in 1474 and in the 1490s. He also supervised in 1488 the printing process of the first *Missale* of the diocese and dictated new synodal statutes in 1492³⁷.

As the Bishop of Turku and member of the Swedish Council of the Realm, Magnus Nicolai participated in many important political events and decision-making. The last decade of the 15th century was a period of great difficulties for Sweden in the political sense because of wars against Russia. These wars hit hard both the eastern parts of the diocese of Turku and the Bishop himself, because he greatly supported the war against Russia considering it as a kind of crusade against the Orthodox Russia, which he designated as 'infidel'. Bishop Magnus Nicolai died in 1500 in Turku and he was buried in a family grave in the *corporis Christi* choir, where he began his ecclesiastical career³⁸.

All above information about Magnus Nicolai (Särkilähti) is well-known and based on the local medieval documents. The papal copybooks, which contain more entries regarding his deeds in the curia, might still bring some extra light to one specific event in his life, namely his one-year-stay in Rome and in the papal curia in 1465 and 1466. These documents are particularly interesting because it seems that the previous Finnish scholars have slightly misunderstood the meaning of some of these documents and thus have drawn wrong conclusions. The sources mention that Magnus Nicolai left for Rome in May 1465³⁹ and stayed there for an entire year⁴⁰. The Finnish historiography has concluded that while Magnus Nicolai was staying in Rome, he was studying at the papal university and used a lot of money and time to boost his ecclesiastical career – some historians have even called him a benefice hunter⁴¹.

³⁷ SUVANTO, *Magnus Nicolai* cit., *passim*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ FMU 4, doc. 3261 (2.5.1465) testifies that he has still been in Turku on that day, but he must have left for Rome very soon thereafter.

⁴⁰ FMU 4, doc. 3308 (6.8.1466) is the last document about Magnus Nicolai in the papal copybooks. He must have left Rome sometime after that.

⁴¹ SUVANTO, *Magnus Nicolai* cit., *passim*; PIRINEN, *Turun tuomiokapituli* cit., p. 244.

It is, however, possible to gain a little bit more varied picture about Magnus Nicolai's stay in Rome. According to the existing documentation, he did not only selfishly promote his own career but he seems to have acted as a representative for his diocese too. As said, Magnus Nicolai must have arrived to Rome in summer 1465. The first documentation about him in the papal copybooks dates to 21.8., when he had presented a petition to Pope Paul II and asked for a new provision to the prebend in the altar of *corporis Christi*. He told in the petition that the bishop of Turku had appointed him to the position but he was afraid that there could be something making the appointment dubious. Therefore he asked for a new provision (*nova provisio*) to the position. In the same petition he also asked for dispensation from the residence obligation with the excuse that he was either studying or staying in the Roman curia («... existente in studio privilegiato aut in Romana curia»). Unlike what the Finnish historians have claimed until now, this formulation does not refer to studying in the papal or Roman universities but simply gave to Magnus the possibility to not reside in Turku either because of study or stay in the curia. Magnus received a positive answer to his requests⁴².

Requesting the papal provision has, however, not been the first thing Magnus Nicolai did in Rome. The papal archives do not contain any trace of the document but the chartulary of the Turku cathedral includes a copy of an indulgence letter for the benefice of the altar of St. Catherine in the cathedral, which is issued on 20.8.1465⁴³, thus one day earlier than Magnus applied for the first papal provision for himself. It is very likely that Magnus has procured this document for his home church.

Other documents in the papal archives testify that after Magnus received the papal approval for his petition, he immediately proceeded in completing the provision process by paying to the *Camera Apostolica* the necessary fees. According to the papal bookkeeping records, Magnus paid in September 17½ florins *auri de camera* to the *depositarius* of the *Camera Apostolica*, Johannes Condulmario⁴⁴. After that Magnus Nicolai should have received an official papal appointment letter to his benefice, but there are no traces of such a letter

⁴² FMU 4, doc. 3267 (21.8.1465).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, doc. 3266 (20.8.1465).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, doc. 3268 (10.9.1465).

either in the Vatican Secret Archives or in the local collections or copy-books in Finland.

An explanation for the missing provision bulla might be that Magnus had forgotten to mention one small detail in the petition which could have meant that the papal provision might be void – and in such a case there was no reason to pay for the issuing of a papal letter. In fact, Magnus applied in late November for a new *nova provisio* to the position mentioning this time that it had been founded by the late bishop Magnus Tavast (the earlier mentioned namesake and relative of his) who had dictated that after his death the provision rights would belong to whoever was the bishop of Turku, but with the condition that the relatives of Bishop Magnus would have the privilege to suggest a person to the position. To defend his case in this respect, Magnus Nicolai stated in his new petition that he was indeed relative of the defunct founder of the benefice. He also stated in his petition that he had made a mistake in the first petition stating that the value of the benefice was seven silver marks, and asked to state in the letter that the real value of the benefice was 20 silver marks. With the augment of the estimated income of the position, Magnus probably wanted to rule out possible competitors trying to get hold of the position. Pope Paul II answered positively also to this petition, after which Magnus had no more doubts about his right to the position⁴⁵.

After having secured himself one ecclesiastical position, Magnus Nicolai began to follow the example of so many other clerics staying in the papal curia and applied for vacant benefices for himself. The first one of which we have testimony is the position of *archidiaconatus* in the cathedral church of Nidaros (nowadays Trondheim) in Norway. Magnus petitioned to Pope Paul II in October 1465 for receiving the position, which had become vacant after a certain Ingvaldus Johannis had decided to join the Augustinian order. Also this time the petition is accompanied by a request for a dispensation from residence obligation⁴⁶. The Pontiff granted Magnus what he asked for, but Magnus seems not to have proceeded with the appointment process – at least there is no information about the payment of the obligatory fees and no papal letter of provision seems to have been issued.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, doc. 3276 (26.11.1465).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, doc. 3273 (10.10.1465).

Magnus' behaviour was not unusual for curialists. Andreas Meyer has noticed in his study concerning the provisions for Zürich that only one out of ten approved petitions led to the preparation of a papal provision bulla – meaning that many applied for a papal appointment to an ecclesiastical position but noticed that they had no real chances of receiving it or that there was something fundamentally wrong in the petition and therefore did not want to proceed to the expensive preparation of a papal provision bull⁴⁷. It is not possible to know for certain what might have gone wrong in this case, but it seems that after receiving the positive answer from the pope, Magnus has given up the idea of striving for the position in Norway. What we know is that he must have got the idea to apply for the position while he was in the curia, because Pope Paul II granted in July 1465 for a certain Ingvaldus Johannis, priest in the archdiocese of Nidaros who had earlier promised to join the Birgittine order, a special licence to join the Augustinian order instead⁴⁸. This document does not mention anything about Ingvaldus holding the position of *archidiaconatus* in Nidaros. In fact, there is no certain information about such a position in the archdiocese⁴⁹. It is thus possible that Magnus has heard about the case and misunderstood that there was a vacant benefice in Nidaros after Ingvaldus, who had had an important position as one of the closest collaborators of the local archbishop. It was in fact the Norwegian Archbishop Ulav Trondsson who re-founded the Augustinian monastery located very close to the cathedral and made Ingvaldus its prior. This means that Magnus never became one of the prelates in Nidaros although the Finnish historians have given him this title⁵⁰.

In December 1465 Magnus Nicolai continued his career as benefice hunter by petitioning to the Pope for becoming canon of Linköping and provost of Skara, both in Sweden. He made these petitions within two weeks' time: for the canonicate of Linköping on 12 December and for the provostship of Skara on 28 December. In the

⁴⁷ MEYER, *Zürich und Rom* cit., p. 52

⁴⁸ DN 17, doc. 671 (20.7.1465).

⁴⁹ S.H. BERG, *Trondenes kannikgjeld – makt og rikdom gjennom seinmellomalder og reformasjon*, Unprinted doctoral dissertation at the Norges Arktiske Universitet in Tromsø 2013, pp. 47-49 <https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/6176/thesis.pdf?sequence=2> (read 12.7.2018).

⁵⁰ SUVANTO, *Magnus Nicolai* cit., *passim*; PIRINEN, *Turun tuomiokapituli* cit., p. 244.

first petition, Magnus told Pope Paul II that the canonicate was vacant because its previous holder, Canon Ericus Vastonis, had died in Rome and asked the Pope to appoint him to the position⁵¹. Ericus Vastonis is a well-known figure within the Birgittine order and Rome, since he functioned as the leader of the Birgitta house near Campo dei Fiori from 1446 until his death on 1 June 1465. During his years in Rome, Ericus took care not only about the issues of his order and house but functioned also as the representative of the diocese of Linköping as well as took care of some other Swedish issues in the papal curia. As thank for these favours, he was allowed to keep his position as canon of Linköping and to enjoy its income⁵². When Magnus Nicolai applied for the position, almost half a year had already passed since the death of Ericus and apparently nobody from the Roman Birgitta house had applied for the position. This is probably the reason why Magnus might have tried his luck. However, since Magnus did not pay the appointment fees to the *Camera Apostolica* and since there is no trace about a papal appointment bull, it is unlikely that Magnus ever proceeded further with this matter. Most probably, the bishop of Linköping had already appointed an internal candidate to the position after he had learned about the death of Ericus and thus Magnus had never a real chance to become a canon of Linköping.

Two weeks later, 28.12.1465, Magnus approached again the Pontiff and asked for being appointed to the *praepositura* of Skara in Sweden. In his petition Magnus told that the position had become vacant after the death of its previous possessor, *dominus* Bero de Suecia⁵³. Also in this case Magnus received a positive answer to his request but did not proceed in the appointment process – at least there are no records about him paying the fees related to the appointment or asking for a provision bulla. Magnus had had slightly wrong information about the situation in the two earlier described cases, and also in this case his knowledge about the situation in the diocese of Skara seems to have been inadequate, causing thus the invalidity of a possible provision bulla in any case. First of all, the *praepositura* of Skara could not have become vacant after the death of Bero. It is true that Bero de Suecia,

⁵¹ FMU 4, doc. 3280 (12.12.1465).

⁵² B. HIDDEBRAND, *Erik Vastesson*, in *Svenskt biografiskt lexicon*, <https://sok.rik-sarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/15411> (read 13.7.2018).

⁵³ FMU 4, doc. 3281 (28.12.1465).

or Bero Magni as he is also known in the sources, had held the position of provost from 1449 until 1460, when he became bishop elect of Skara. But Bero – who had a career at the University of Vienna and lived there – never received the papal confirmation for his election. Despite this, he had given up the provostship in Skara, and a certain Svenonus Johannis, who even paid the necessary payments to the papal curia in July 1462, had received appointment to the position⁵⁴. The situation became, however, more complicated, when Pope Paul II in May 1465 appointed another person, Johannes Marquardi, to the see of Skara and Magnus might have thought that he had received back his old position. When Bero died in Vienna in 1465, Magnus has perhaps thought that he had chance to apply for the position in Skara despite the fact Svenonus Johannis had hold the position already for more years. Magnus had, however, no chances in being appointed to the position and he never became the provost of Skara⁵⁵.

These three positions in other dioceses must have functioned as practice for Magnus Nicolai for his real career goal, namely the provostship in Turku. This was not an unambitious goal, since the position was already in possession of Henricus Frese, who had received his appointment in 1460 after the previous provost, Conradus Bitz, had been elected to the episcopal see of Turku⁵⁶. There is no knowledge about previous rivalry between the two men but Finnish scholars have suggested this on the basis of what Magnus did in the curia⁵⁷. In early December, he presented a petition to the Pope and told that the Pope should investigate the provision made in favour of the present provost of Turku, Henricus Frese, who had lied in the appointment documents that the yearly incomes of the position did not exceed six silver marks, although the real income of the provostship should be estimated much higher, to 15 silver marks. Magnus also asked – in case the investigation would reveal that Henricus had lied about the value of the position – that the position should be deprived of Henricus and it should be given to Magnus instead. Magnus

⁵⁴ AC II, doc. 1326 (6.7.1462).

⁵⁵ About Bero Magni, G. CARLSSON, *Bero Magni de Ludosia*, in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/18102> (read 13.7.2018).

⁵⁶ FMU 4, doc. 3120 (4.7.1460) – appointment bulla for Henricus Frese. About Henricus Frese, J. PAARMA, *Frese, Henricus (K 1466)*, in *Suomen kansallisbiografia* URN:NBN:fi-fe20051410 (read 13.7.2018).

⁵⁷ SUVANTO, *Magnus Nicolai* cit., *passim*.

received a positive answer to this request too, but it is not known, whether a papal bulla to that effect has ever been issued or expedited to Turku⁵⁸.

The situation chanced in July 1466, when Magnus heard news about the death of Henricus Frese. He did not waste time for mourning his canon colleague, but proceeded immediately to action and applied for the position that now was vacant because of his death. The first thing that caught eye in Magnus' petition is the value of the yearly incomes of the position: In contrast to the content of Magnus' previous petition to the Pope, he told now that the yearly incomes of the position did not exceed six silver marks⁵⁹. As was typical for the papal curia, Magnus got a positive answer to his request and received a papal approval for becoming the provost of Turku⁶⁰.

The provost *in spe* had, however, a slight problem – at the moment of being appointed to the provostship, Magnus had also two other ecclesiastical benefices, which he did not want to give up despite the new appointment. Therefore he approached the Pope again a few days later and applied for a dispensation that would allow him to have contemporaneously two benefices, the provostship and the parish church of Mynämäki (Sw. Virmo). Paul II agreed upon this request as well⁶¹. On the same day, Magnus received a papal appointment bulla that allowed him to keep not only the two above mentioned benefices but also his position as the perpetual vicar at the altar of *corporis Christi* in the cathedral of Turku⁶². Magnus has clearly considered this papal provision as certain, since he immediately proceeded to the payment of the necessary fees⁶³.

As said already above, in the appointment documentation as well as in the entry in the papal account book the yearly income of the provostship of Turku was estimated only to six silver marks which was contradictory with Magnus' first attempt to gain the position. Magnus must have been slightly worried about this inconsistency. Indeed, only

⁵⁸ FMU 4, doc. 3279 (10.12.1465).

⁵⁹ In fact there are given two different values for the benefice in the petition, first it is said to be six silver marks and slightly later the sum of seven silver marks is given. This might however only be a mistake of the scribe.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, doc. 3304 (13.7.1466).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, doc. 3305 (18.7.1466).

⁶² *Ibid.*, doc. 3306 (18.7.1466).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, doc. 3307 (30.7.1466).

a week after he had paid his annates to the *Camera Apostolica* he petitioned again to the Pope. He apologized that he by mistake had given wrong value for the position and asked the Pope to make a correction to the letter of appointment stating that the real value of the position was in fact twelve silver marks. In addition to this, Magnus asked for a favour that the provision letter would be valid despite this mistake⁶⁴. The Pope agreed also upon this request, and so Magnus could finally be sure that he would be appointed to the position he so much desired.

The above mentioned petitions to the Pope have all been related to Magnus' attempts to promote his own career, but this is not the whole picture of his activities while he was staying in the papal curia. He has also acted as the representative of other persons who needed to get their issues clarified in the curia. Although it is not evident from the Vatican documentation that Magnus was their representative, it is likely that he has taken care of these issues while he was staying in Rome. The first thing he did (after procuring indulgences for the St. Catherine Altar in August 1465) was to take care of the issue of one of the parish churches in Turku diocese, Masku. The parish had been for some time annexed to the Birgittine abbey in Naantali but Bishop Olavus Magni of Turku had recalled the annexation sometime in the 1450s because he and the Birgittines had not come along, and the situation of the parish has remained unclear ever since.

In December 1465 someone has handed in to the papal curia a petition on behalf of the Birgittines of Naantali for receiving a papal confirmation for the annexation, and Pope Paul II agreed upon the request⁶⁵. The papal copybooks do not, however, contain any trace of the issuing of a papal bulla which might indicate that Magnus – or someone else – did not manage to finish the issue. Indeed, a year later, in December 1466 was issued a papal bull, which refers the final solution of the case to the provost of Turku – that is Magnus Nicolai – who should investigate the matter and make a decision. This bulla cannot, however, be the result of the 1465 petition, since the formulations in the petition and the bulla differ too much from each other. It must thus be the result of an independent petition to the Pope in December 1466⁶⁶. Since Magnus cannot have been in the curia in December 1466

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, doc. 3308 (6.8.1466).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, doc. 3278 (10.12.1465).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, doc. 3315 (19.12.1466).

(he is known to have been in Turku already in February 1467⁶⁷ and it was not possible to travel that quickly in winter time), he cannot have taken care of the matter in the curia.

Instead, it is sure that in January 1466 Magnus paid the annates on behalf of Johannes Bing, who had been appointed the provost of Lund in Denmark⁶⁸. Magnus' name can also be connected to the petitions that were presented to the Apostolic Penitentiary while Magnus was staying in Rome. The records of the Penitentiary contain three petitions from inhabitants of the diocese of Turku which are dated to the months when Magnus was in Rome. The first of them, dated to 19.11.1465, concerned a colleague of Magnus from Turku. The *yconomus* of the Turku cathedral, Johannes Supalt, needed a declaration of innocence, which would allow him to continue in his ecclesiastical career despite the fact that he had, in self-defence, mutilated the right middle finger of a wood-carver who was working for the cathedral⁶⁹. The Penitentiary had granted another grace in the same year in favour of another petitioner from the diocese of Turku. The Dominican Friar Henricus Bella needed also a declaration testifying that he was not guilty of the death of a layman, who had died of pest after Henricus had beaten him with a stick. According to Henricus' petition, these two facts were not related to each other but he wanted to be totally sure about his innocence and applied therefore for a papal declaration to that effect⁷⁰. And finally, it is possible that Magnus has taken care – just before he left the papal curia in late summer 1466 – of two petitions for receiving a papal confessional letter. It is natural to connect these to Magnus since one of the benefitters was his close colleague, Archdeacon Arvidus Jacobi (Garp), and the second letter was granted for two burghers of Turku, Lars Andersson and his wife⁷¹.

The above documentation regarding the activities of Magnus Nicolai (Särkilähti) while he was staying in Rome describes an ambitious man, who wanted to advance his career without scruples. Unlike what Finnish scholars have argued earlier, Magnus was not successful in his attempts to receive positions outside his home diocese but he

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, doc. 3326 (22.2.1467).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, doc. 3287 (8.1.1466).

⁶⁹ *Auctoritate Papae*, doc. 114 (19.11.1465).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, doc. 116 (13.12.1465).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, docc. 124-125 (20.8.1466).

managed to receive appointment to the most important position within the Turku cathedral chapter, the *praepositura*. At the same time, Magnus took care of some other matters of his diocese and acted as the representative in the papal curia of other ecclesiastical persons as well, which must have widened his network and helped him further in his future position as the Bishop of Turku.

Finally

The above analysis has demonstrated that the Vatican sources are very important for historians interested in the medieval diocese of Turku. It has also shown that revisiting these documents gives possibilities for new interpretations and reveals details which previous generations of researchers have either ignored or misunderstood.

The two example cases gave us two very different pictures of Finns who have been staying in the papal curia. One of them, Magnus Nicolai (Särkilahti), used his time in the papal curia for enhancing his own career possibilities and the other, Petrus de Abo, was a quiet servant of the papacy. Despite these differences, both of them used their time also for helping their friends or friends' friends and acted as their representatives in the curia when they had an issue that had to be taken care of.

Apart from the two stories of life in the papal curia, these examples also showed how much extra information it is possible to gain from the papal source material when the documentation is supplemented with the documentation preserved locally. In addition to these interesting small personal details, the Vatican documentation contains a lot of important information about official contacts between the diocese of Turku and about the different needs of its inhabitants.

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