

Avignon and the Avignon Papacy

亞維農和亞維農教宗

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August 17, 2006

All the materials in this article were taken from Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org> **and the Catholic Encyclopedia** <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/index.html>.

I Avignon Papacy

Basic knowledge of the Avignon Papacy is necessary to appreciate the significance of Avignon in the history of Europe and the development of the Roman Catholic Church during the late Medieval Times.

I.1 Avignon Papacy

The Avignon Papacy was the period from 1305 to 1378 during which seven Popes, all French and under strong influence of the French monarchs, resided in Avignon:

- Clement V (克勉五世, 1264–1314): 1305–1314
- John XXII (若望廿二世, c.1249–1334): 1316–1334
- Benedict XII (本篤十二世, c.1280–1342): 1334–1342
- Clement VI (克勉六世, 1291–1352): 1342–1352
- Innocent VI (諾森六世, 1282/1295–1362): 1352–1362
- Urban V (伍朋五世, 1310–1370): 1362–1370
- Gregory XI (國瑞十一世, 1336–1378): 1370–1378

In 1378, Gregory XI moved the papal residence back to Rome and died there.

I.2 Background

The success of the early crusades gave real political power to the Popes as secular leaders of the Christendom, since monarchs like the Kings of England, France and even the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire were merely acting as marshals for the Popes. The conflict began when the Popes wished to assume, in addition to his spiritual role, the role of the leader of Christendom in secular matters, while the monarchs resisted, although by then the political power of the Papacy was already in decline.

I.3 Boniface VIII

Boniface VIII (博義九世, 1235–1303, Pope from 1294), in his Bull of 1302, *Unam Sanctam*, proclaimed that,

It is necessary for salvation that every living creature be under submission to the Roman pontiff...

thereby putting forward some of the strongest claims to temporal and spiritual supremacy of any Pope, and pushing papal supremacy to its historical extreme. These led to many bitter quarrels with Emperor Albert I of Hapsburg (艾伯特一世, 1255–1308), the powerful family of the Colonnas, and most of all, with Philip IV (腓力四世, 1268–1314, King from 1285) of France.

Boniface VIII excommunicated Philip IV in 1303, although shortly thereafter the Pope himself was seized at Anagni by a party of horsemen under Guillaume de Nogaret (1260/70–1313), an agent of Philip IV. The King demanded Boniface VIII's resignation, to which Boniface VIII refused. The Pope was released from captivity

after three days, but he died of shock a month later. No subsequent Popes were to repeat Boniface VIII's claims of political supremacy, and Boniface VIII's fate remained a reminder to the Papacy of the overwhelming political power of the King of France for many years thereafter.

1.4 Benedict XI

Boniface VIII was succeeded by Benedict XI (本篤十一世, 1240–1304, Pope from 1303), another fellow Italian, whom upon being elected Pope, released Philip IV of France from the excommunication, and practically ignored the bull *Unam Sanctam*.

Benedict XI died suddenly at Perugia, suspected of being poisoned, after only eight months of being Pope.

1.5 Clement V

Clement V, a Frenchman, succeeded Benedict XI as Pope in 1305. He is recorded as the first Pope to be crowned with a papal tiara (papal crown).

He essentially withdrew *Unam Sanctam* in 1306.

In 1306, under the influence of Philip IV, Clement V ordered the suppression and dissolution of the order of the Templar. As a result the reputation of Clement V was compromised and tarnished.

In March 1309 the entire papal court settled at Avignon. Although Avignon at the time was not part of France, but an imperial fief held by the King of Sicily, French troops were nonetheless very close, just across the Rhône. The move led to the long Avignon Papacy, where Clement V and the Popes who succeeded him were completely under the influence of the Kings of France. The period is sometimes known as the *Babylonian Captivity*.

1.6 Babylonian Captivity 1309–1377

During the time in Avignon the Papacy adopted many features of the Royal court.

One of the most damaging developments for the Church grew directly out of its successful reorganization and centralization of the administration under Clement V and John XXII. The Papacy directly controlled the appointments of benefices, abandoning customary election processes. This led to many forms of payments which bought considerable income to the Holy See and its cardinals. Popes such as John XXII, Benedict XII and Clement VI reportedly spent fortunes on expensive wardrobe and at banquets. The life-style of leading church members resembled more of princes rather than members of the clergy. This corruption from the head of the church found its way to the lower ranks.

Movements calling for a return to absolute poverty, relinquishment of all personal and church belongings, and preaching as the Lord and his disciples did strengthened. Such movements were not welcomed and considered dangerous by the church, and in the early 14th century most of these movements were declared heretic.

The display of wealth by the upper ranks of the church, which was in contrast to the common expectation of poverty and strict adherence to the principles, was used by the Papacy's enemies in raising charges against the Popes.

1.7 Western Schism in 1378

The Western Schism or Papal Schism (Also known as the Great Schism of Western Christianity) was a split within the Catholic Church in 1378, driven by politics. It was resolved after 40 years by the Council of Constance (1414–1418).

After Gregory XI died, the Romans rioted to ensure an Italian would be elected. Urban VI (伍朋六世, c.1318–1389) an Italian, was elected by the cardinals in 1378. Urban had been a respected administrator in the papal chancery at Avignon, but once he was elected Pope, he became suspicious, overbearing, and subject to violent outbursts of temper. The cardinals who elected him soon regretted their decision, and the majority of them moved from Rome to Fondi where they elected Robert of Geneva as a rival Pope on

September 20 of the same year. Robert took the name Pope Clement VII and established a second Papal court in Avignon.

In 1417, the Council of Constance, an ecumenical council called upon by the emperor Sigismund, deposed the Antipopes John XXIII and Benedict XIII, accepted the resignation of the Roman Pope Gregory XII (國瑞十二世, -1417) and elected Pope Martin V (瑪定五世, 1368-1431), thereby permanently ending the schism which had resulted from the Avignon Papacy. The line of Roman Popes was recognized as legitimate. From then onward in the Catholic Church it was decreed explicitly that no Council had power over the Popes, and there is no way to undo a Papal election by anyone but the Pope.

2 Local Attractions of Avignon

2.1 Palais des Papes (教皇宮)

The Palais des Papes (Palace of the Popes) would no doubt be the main attraction in Avignon for our trip. It is one of the largest and most important medieval Gothic buildings in Europe.

Avignon became the residence of the Popes in 1309. The Palais itself was built between 1335 and 1364, in two major phases, known as the Palais Vieux (Old Palace) and the Palais Neuf (New Palace). It was enormously expensive, consuming much of the papacy's income during its construction.

The Popes departed Avignon in 1377, but the antipopes Clement VII (克勉七世, 1342-1394) and Benedict XIII (本篤十三世, 1328-1423) made Avignon their home until 1408. The Palais remained under papal control, but gradually deteriorated. It was already in a bad state when it was seized and sacked by revolutionary forces of the French Revolution in 1789. In 1791 it became the scene of a massacre of counter-revolutionaries, whose bodies were thrown into the Tour des Latrines in the Palais Vieux.

The Palais was subsequently taken over by the Napoleonic French state for use as military barracks and prison. Although it was further damaged by the military occupation, especially un-

der the anti-clerical Third Republic, when the remaining interior woodwork was cleared away for use of the structure as a stable, the shell of the building survived.

The Palais was vacated in 1906 and became a national museum, and it has been under constant restoration ever since. The majority of the Palais is now open to the public. It also houses a large convention centre and the archives of the département of Vaucluse.

2.2 Pont Saint-Bénézet (聖貝內澤橋)

Another landmark of Avignon is the famous medieval bridge Pont d'Avignon (Pont St-Bénézet), or rather, what is left of it.

The bridge construction was inspired by Saint Bénézet, a local shepherd boy who (according to tradition) was commanded by angels to build a bridge across the river. He dramatically "proved" his divine inspiration by miraculously lifting a huge block of stone, and won support for his project from wealthy sponsors who formed themselves into a Bridge Brotherhood to fund its construction. After his death, he was interred on the bridge itself, in a small chapel standing on one of the bridge's surviving piers on the Avignon side.

The bridge originally spanned the Rhône River between Avignon and Villeneuve-lès-Avignon on the left bank. It was built between 1171 and 1185, but suffered frequent collapses during floods and had to be reconstructed several times. Over the centuries, it became increasingly perilous as arches collapsed and were replaced by wooden sections.

The bridge was finally abandoned after a catastrophic flood in 1668, which swept away much of the structure. Today only four of the initial 22 arches remain intact.

The bridge was also the site of devotion by the Rhône boatmen, whose patron saint was Saint Nicholas. They initially worshipped in the Chapel of Saint Nicholas on the bridge but eventually the clergy refused to preside over services for fear of total collapse. A new chapel was erected on dry land in the 18th century at the

foot of the bridge, on the Avignon side.

The bridge had great strategic importance as the only fixed river crossing between Lyon and the Mediterranean Sea. It also formed the only river crossing between the Comtat Venaissin controlled by the Pope, and France proper under the authority of the Kings of France. As such, it was closely guarded on both sides of the river. The left bank, which was controlled by the French crown, was overlooked by the formidable fortress of the Tour Phillippe le Bel and the citadel at Villeneuve-lés-Avignon. On the Avignon side, the bridge passed through a large gatehouse erected in the 14th century (with major modifications in the 15th century), passing through and over the city wall and exiting via a ramp (now destroyed) which led into the city.

2.3 Festival d'Avignon (亞維農藝術節)

The Festival d'Avignon (Avignon Theatre Festival) is the oldest and most famous theatre festival still existing in France. The very first Avignon Festival in September 1947 set the scene as a showcase for unknown work and modern scripts.

The 60th Edition of the Festival d'Avignon will be held from 6 July to 27 July 2006. We will be in Avignon on Wednesday, 12 July, and there will be 36 different programmes on the day. Programme details and Internet booking are available on the web at <http://www.festival-avignon.com/>.

3 Personal Expectations

Avignon was one of the most flourishing towns in the area during the Roman times. What is left of the Roman forum (a few fragments) near Rue Molière may be something to look forward to.

The magnificent Palais buildings are the main attraction in Avignon. Apart from the Gothic architecture, the Tour des Latrines in the Palais Vieux, where bodies of counter-revolutionaries were dumped during the French Revolution may be something to look out for.

The Palais was previously allowed to deteriorate to a rather bad state, so the restoration and preservation work should be most interesting.

The Chapel of Saint Nicholas at the foot of Pont d'Avignon and the large gatehouse should be worth visiting. The fortress of Tour Phillippe de Bel and the citadel at Villeneuve-lés-Avignon across the Rhône River should also be interesting.

The Festival d'Avignon should provide some excellent cultural entertainment for the evening.