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Time is on our side: liturgical time and political history in the Chronicle of Lobbes

*For everything its season,
for every activity under heaven its time*
Ecclesiastes 3, 1

In the year 965 a young monk from St-Bertin, named Folcuin, was established at the head of the monastery of Lobbes. His ordination, much against the wish of the community of Lobbes, took place in Cologne and none other than the Emperor Otto I was present. Some fifteen years later Folcuin gave an account of this event in the chronicle he wrote for his monastery, the *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium*. He described the scene in detail, mentioning the place of ordination, the names of the distinguished guests, the procedure, but seemed to forget to add the year in which this important event took place. At the end of the description, however, we do find some indication of the date. Folcuin tells us that his ordination took place exactly on the day of the birth of the Lord (*die ipso Domini natalicio*). The fact that it was the year 965 was, so it appears, not important enough to record. The only date Folcuin gives us is a liturgical date.

This article will discuss the use of dating systems in Folcuin's chronicle of Lobbes.¹ Examining the use of time in historiography can be a useful approach to explore group memories and perceptions of the past.² According to the historian Aron Gurevich, there is no better characterisation of the culture or mentality of a group than its perception of time.³ To measure time and to specify dates according to a specific system, is a cultural construct that can be used to interpret the past and to manipulate memory.⁴ In early medieval historiography the choice for a particular dating frame was almost never without significance, rather, it showed how people wanted to remember certain events. In a way this still holds true today, even if we think we use standardised dating systems that neither add meaning to the events we date, nor influence our interpretation of them. Some dates from our recent history, such as for instance 9 November 1989 (the Provocation of the Berlin Wall)

¹ I would like to thank Janneke Raaijmakers, Marco Mostert, Mayke de Jong, Richard Corradini, Rob Meens and Mary Garrison for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article.

² This has for example been shown by studies of Rosamond McKitterick, *Constructing the past in the early Middle Ages: the case of the Royal Frankish Annals*, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 7 (Cambridge 1997) 101–129; Richard Corradini, *Zeiträume – Schrifträume. Überlegungen zur Komputistik und Marginalchronographie am Beispiel der Annales Fuldenses antiquissimi*, in: *Vom Nutzen des Schreibens. Soziales Gedächtnis, Herrschaft und Besitz im Mittelalter*, ed. Walter Pohl/Paul Herold (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 5, Wien 2002) 113–163; Hans-Werner Goetz, *Historiographisches Zeitbewußtsein im frühen Mittelalter. Zum Umgang mit der Zeit in der karolingischen Geschichtsschreibung*, in: *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer/Georg Scheibelreiter (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 32, Wien/München 1994) 158–179.

³ Aaron J. Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture* (London/Boston/Melbourne/Henley 1985) 94.

⁴ On time as a cultural construct, see Jan Assmann/Ernest Hess-Lüttich, *Kult, Kalender und Geschichte: Semiotisierung von Zeit als kulturelle Konstruktion*, in: *Kult, Kalender und Geschichte: Semiotisierung von Zeit als kulturelle Konstruktion*, ed. Jan Assmann/Ernest Hess-Lüttich (Kodikas/Code, Ars semeiotica 20, Tübingen 1997) 25–38; Norbert Elias, *Time: An Essay* (Oxford 1992); John Bender/David Wellbery, *Chronotypes. The Construction of Time* (Stanford 1991).

or 11 September 2001 (the Provocation of the Twin Towers) have gained special significance as turning points in history. Other incidents are related to these ominous dates, as an attempt to add meaning to the events thus dated, even though sometimes there is no apparent causal connection.

The dating of events in early medieval historiography was not merely determined by generic convention. A historiographer such as Folcuin had plenty of options at his disposal to specify the date of an event such as his own appointment to the abbacy. Each way of dating would have a different meaning and would convey a different message to his audience. He could have chosen for example to place the beginning of his abbacy in the continuing chain of Lobbes' abbots, suggesting him to be the rightful successor to the abbacy. He could also have dated the event according to the years of Emperor Otto's reign or, he could 'simply' have chosen to mention the year of the event. Instead, he chose the liturgical calendar to be his point of reference. This was not because he did not have the faintest idea in which year he was living, but because he wanted his community to remember him as the abbot who was ordained on Christmas day. The day on which an event took place was thought to be meaningful and it was believed that a holy day gave a special blessing to an event. A rite of passage like an ordination, a coronation or the entry into a monastery was preferably planned on a holy day. If the ritual proceeded well, it was considered a good omen for the future.⁵ Christmas day was furthermore a special day, since in medieval chronology it often signified the start of a new year.⁶ Thus, when Folcuin chose to date the beginning of his abbacy to Christmas day, he probably wanted to stress both the message that God would bless his abbacy, and the fact that the day of his ordination marked a transition, a new era in the history of the monastery.⁷ Whether the monks of Lobbes accepted this message is hard to tell, but apparently Folcuin's choice of date did become part of Lobbes' memory. The Annals of Lobbes (*Annales Laubienses*) that were started some twenty years after Folcuin's death, record at the entry for 965 that Folcuin was ordained abbot *natale Domini*.⁸ As this particular addition was not a regular feature of the Annals of Lobbes,⁹ it shows that Folcuin had been successful in manipulating Lobbes' memory with regard to the specific date of his ordination.

Folcuin's way of dealing with the past has often been regarded as historically imprecise. His historiographical works, the *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* and the *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium* (the chronicle he wrote for his former monastery, St-Bertin),¹⁰ have been deemed to be badly structured and chronologically confused. Many of Folcuin's contemporaries have received similar negative reviews. In the eyes of modern historians, tenth-century chronicles are historically muddled, showing no interest in precise chronology nor in exact dates. Opinion has it that the historiographers working in this period had no real feel for the past.¹¹ But perhaps this conclusion is drawn too hastily and we should learn to look differently at the use of time within these chronicles. Instead of judging the

⁵ Hans Martin Schaller, *Der heilige Tag als Termin mittelalterlicher Staatsakte*, in: *Deutsches Archiv* 30 (1974) 1–24, at 24.

⁶ This varied according to local custom, but in Lobbes' tradition of time reckoning the new year started at Christmas day, not at 1 January.

⁷ Christmas day was a popular day for dating events, because of its special meaning. Not all events dated on Christmas day had actually taken place on that day. A good example is offered by the necrology of Moissac that shows a great number of deaths at Christmas. The necrology lists twelve deaths on December 25 and eleven deaths on December 26, whereas the average number of deaths was 3 per day. Axel Müssigbrod, *Zur ältesten Schicht der Toteneinträge im Necrolog von Moissac*, in: *Frühmittelalterlichen Studien* 19 (1985) 350–378, at 366; Michael Sierck, *Festtag und Politik. Studien zur Tagewahl karolingischer Herrscher* (Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 38, Köln/Weimar/Wien 1995) 375.

⁸ *Annales Laubienses* (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 4, Hannover 1841) 9–25, at 17. *Fulcuinus fit abbas natale Domini*. This entry was made around 1008, when the first part of the *Annales Laubienses* was composed.

⁹ Only the entry for 990, the ordination of Folcuin's successor, Heriger, was accompanied by a liturgical date as well.

¹⁰ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 4, Hannover 1841) 52–74; Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium* (ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH SS 13, Hannover 1882) 607–634. Both titles were not given by Folcuin himself, but were added to the texts in the twelfth century. We do not know how Folcuin titled his chronicles, or even if he gave them a title at all.

¹¹ Timothy Reuter, *Regemque, quem in Francia pene perdidit, in patria magnifice recepit: Ottonian ruler representation in synchronic and diachronic comparison*, in: *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, ed. Gerd Althoff/Ernst Schubert (*Vorträge und Forschungen* 46, Sigmaringen 1998) 363–380, at 372, with reference to Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton 1994) 132.

lack of precise chronology as incompetence on the part of the medieval author, we should consider the possibility that the seeming lack of skill was rather a literary strategy employed by the author to make his opinion known to his audience. As we will see, there were different meanings attached to the different ways of dating employed. Liturgical dating for instance, could be a means to add significance to recent history and to express political sympathies. Before investigating Folcuin's use of time, a brief outline of the history of the monastery of Lobbes may be helpful to understand why certain events in Folcuin's chronicle (as for example his own ordination as abbot) were delicate subjects that had to be presented and dated carefully.

THE MONASTERY OF LOBBES

Nowadays Lobbes is a small town in the south of Belgium with hardly any remains of the abbey to be found. In early medieval times, however, this now rather remote place in Belgium was part of the Frankish heartland. According to tradition, the monastery of Lobbes had been founded by Pippin II (640/650–714), and in the following centuries Lobbes became an important royal abbey, at times ruled by abbots of Carolingian blood.¹² By the end of the tenth century, when Folcuin became abbot, the monastery's situation had changed. The Ottonians had replaced the Carolingian dynasty and Lobbes had lost its status of royal abbey, having become an episcopal monastery. Still, it was a wealthy abbey with a flourishing scriptorium and with a wide network of ties that connected the monks to the Lotharingian aristocracy, the bishopric of Liège and the royal court. When in 965 a new abbot had to be elected, it was probably Emperor Otto who supported Folcuin, the candidate put forward by the bishop of Liège. The monks of Lobbes did not approve of the bishop's choice; they would have preferred one of their own monks. Folcuin had come from a West-Frankish monastery and was regarded as an outsider, even though he was of Lotharingian origin.¹³ His family mattered in Lotharingia and had blood ties with the Carolingians. Perhaps this was the main reason why Folcuin was selected as the new abbot of Lobbes, rather than (as modern literature has it) because of his remarkable qualities as an historian.¹⁴ Otto's presence at Folcuin's ordination shows that the new ruling dynasty of the Ottonians took an interest in the former Carolingian abbey of Lobbes.¹⁵ This interest was proven in 972 by a charter guaranteeing royal immunity for the monastery and by the gift of a sizeable landed property to Lobbes.¹⁶ During Folcuin's abbacy the monastery and the royal court established closer ties. The meaning of Folcuin's chronicle can be understood as part of the general policy to tighten the bond between the monastery and the Ottonian rulers. Folcuin may not be writing official royal history (his chronicle is after all a local chronicle) but he does pay special attention to the deeds of Otto I and he tries to connect the history of Lobbes to that of the new empire.

¹² On the history of the monastery of Lobbes, see Alain Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres entre Sambre et Meuse (VII^e–XI^e siècles)*. Contribution à l'histoire religieuse des campagnes du Haut Moyen Âge (Beihefte der Francia 14, Sigmaringen 1985).

¹³ In the Chronicle of St-Bertin, when recounting his entry as an oblate in the monastery, Folcuin mentioned that he was brought by his parents *de regno Hlotario*. Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium* 107, ed. Holder-Egger 629. See also note 48.

¹⁴ Joseph Warichez/Désiré van Bleyenbergh, *L'abbaye de Lobbes depuis les origines jusqu'en 1200: étude d'histoire générale et spéciale* (Tournai 1909) 251.

¹⁵ According to Adalbert's continuation of Regino's chronicle, Otto celebrated Christmas that year in Cologne and used the opportunity "to settle the affairs of Lotharingia" (*Imperator Coloniae natale Domini celebravit cunctaque ibi Lothariensis regni negotia, prout sibi videbatur, disposuit*). Adalbert, *Continuatio Reginonis* (ed. Albert Bauer/Reinhold Rau, *Adalberts Fortsetzung der Chronik Reginos, Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 8, Darmstadt 1971) 185–233, at 226. Apparently, the appointment of an abbot at the head of Lobbes was one of these 'Lotharingian affairs' that had to be put in order.

¹⁶ D.O.II. 53 (ed. Theodor Sickel, *MGH DD regum et imperatorum Germaniae* 2, Hannover 1888) 63–64. In 990, the year of Folcuin's death, Lobbes received a papal charter thanks to the intercession of the Empress-regent Theophanu, which designated the abbot of Lobbes as deputy of the bishop of Liège. See the edition of Johannes Vos, *Lobbes, son abbaye et son chapitre* (Leuven 1865) 436–438. The gift of the landholding Gottignies by either Emperor Otto I or II was recorded between 960 and 990 in a list of Lobbes' landed properties. This list is edited by Jean-Pierre Devroey, *Le Polyptique et les listes de biens de l'abbaye Saint-Pierre de Lobbes, IX^e–XI^e siècles* (Brussel 1986) 28–40, at 32.

THE EXILED ABBOT

The first years of Folcuin's abbacy were difficult, although Folcuin claims otherwise in his chronicle.¹⁷ The monks of Lobbes wanted to get rid of their new abbot and expelled him from the monastery. They even fortified the monastic buildings in case Folcuin were to return with his powerful relatives to take revenge. Apparently the support of Emperor Otto and the bishop of Liège was not enough to prevent Folcuin from being exiled. After a new bishop, Notger, had been established in Liège and an inquest had been conducted in Lobbes, Folcuin was officially reinstated as abbot. In time, relations between the abbot and the monks of Lobbes seem to have improved. A decade and a half later (around 980) Folcuin presented the monks with a chronicle in which he turned the divergent traditions of the community into a single, coherent narrative of its past. The chronicle, now known as the *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium*, deals with the period stretching from the time of Lobbes' foundation (around 660) until Folcuin's abbacy. It was Folcuin's literary gift to the community, expressing and consolidating improved relations. But it was probably not only written to soothe the conflict or to strengthen the coherence of the community. The chronicle also gave Folcuin literally the last word, enabling him to describe his own abbacy as a high point in the history of the monastery. Thus, he could make sure he would go down in Lobbes' memory as a successful abbot: an abbot who was ordained in the presence of emperor Otto I and whose reign started on Christmas day itself, the day of the birth of the Lord.

TIME AND POLITICS

Whereas in our days the Newtonian idea of time as a real, actually existing thing is still deeply embedded in our thought and speech,¹⁸ early medieval society did not conceptualise 'time' as a mere mathematical and objectively measurable given, nor as a human construction. Time was a God-given institution. God had created time before the history of mankind was set on its course and therefore time could hardly be without meaning. Medieval historiographers studied the passage of time, hoping to unravel God's intentions and the meaning of human history.¹⁹ For this reason many chronicles start with a philosophical and theological treatise on time. Folcuin's chronicle of Lobbes also begins with an elaborate and rather complex prologue on time as a divine creation.²⁰ Folcuin explains how God, whom he pictures as an emperor reigning from the *aula* of heaven, gave human history a place in his order of time. Since it is difficult for human beings to see how history relates to the divine *ordo* of time, it is the task of the historiographer to explain the meaning of history. This he should do, according to Folcuin, by placing events in the right order, because only in this manner God's purposes in history would become clear.²¹ Folcuin then describes the successions of the world empires from the Empire of the Assyrians until the Empire of the Romans, in his days ruled

¹⁷ The following summary is based on Folcuin's own account of the events, as told in chapter 28 of his chronicle. Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium* 28, ed. Pertz 69. It appears that Folcuin later revised this chapter into a milder version, for François Dolbeau discovered an older fragment of this chapter, in which Folcuin writes more harshly about the monks of Lobbes and about his rival, Rather, who took his place after he was expelled. Dolbeau edited this fragment in *Rathieriana* 1. *Nouvelles recherches sur les manuscrits et l'oeuvre de Rathier*, in: *Sacris Erudiri* 27 (1984) 373–431, at 421–423. On the conflict between Folcuin and Rather, see Steffen Patzold, *Konflikte im Kloster. Studien zu Auseinandersetzungen in monastischen Gemeinschaften des ottonisch-salischen Reichs* (Historische Studien 463, Husum 2000) 249.

¹⁸ In spite of the fact that (since Leibniz) this notion of time as an existing entity has been under debate. An alternative conception is the relational theory of time (or in the context of modern physics, space-time). Bender/Wellbery, *Chronotypes* 5; Bastiaan van Fraassen, *Time in physical and narrative structure*, in: *Chronotypes. The Construction of Time*, ed. John Bender/David Wellbery (Stanford 1991) 19–38; Arno Borst, *The Ordering of Time: From the Ancient Computus to the Modern Computer* (Cambridge 1993) 113–124.

¹⁹ Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Gott, Herrscher und Historiograph. Der Geschichtsschreiber als Interpret des Wirkens Gottes in der Welt und Ratgeber der Könige* (4. bis 12. Jahrhundert), in: *Deus qui mutat tempora. Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Alfons Becker*, ed. Ernst-Dieter Hehl/Hubertus Seibert/Franz Staab (Sigmaringen 1987) 1–33, at 7; Jacques Le Goff, *Au Moyen Âge: Temps de l'Église et temps du marchand*, in: *id.*, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge. Temps, travail et culture en Occident: 18 essais* (Paris 1977) 46–65, at 51–52.

²⁰ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium*, prologue, ed. Pertz 54–55.

²¹ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium*, prologue, ed. Pertz 54 (25–30).

by Frankish kings. He firmly believes that God granted the Franks the power to rule the Roman Empire because they had been willing to defend his Church and protect the monasteries. Folcuin ends his prologue with a prophecy: if the Franks will continue to serve God and keep on supporting the cause of the Church, why would their reign not last forever?²²

THE RULERS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Folcuin's account of the succession of world empires corresponds to the views common to historians and theologians of his day. The theoretical model of the *translatio imperii* that looked upon each new empire as a successor to, or even as a continuation of, the Roman Empire²³, had been developed out of the Judaic eschatological vision of the four world empires, as told in the book of Daniel (second century BC). From the second century A.D. onwards, but particularly since the Christianisation of the Roman Empire, the original interpretation of the vision, foretelling the end of secular power when the fourth and last kingdom would be overthrown, was adapted and re-evaluated. Rome, initially regarded as the persecutor of the Church, came to be seen as the mysterious 'restraining force' that the apostle Paul had referred to in the letter to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2, 6–7), which held the Apocalypse at bay. To most Christian authors the fortunes of *Romanitas* and *Christianitas* became inextricably linked.²⁴ It was believed that as long as the Roman empire endured and was ruled by Christian emperors, the end of the world would not (yet) come near. Medieval historiographers, who no longer belonged to a group of persecuted Christians but were now an integral part of the established order, wanted to postpone the prophesied Apocalypse, which would not only mean the end of secular power, but of human time as well. In order to defer the end they needed, as it were, to slow down time.²⁵ They necessarily had to consider each new dynasty not as a transition, but as a translation of power. Contrary to the eschatological hopes that had produced the original vision of Daniel, a monastic author such as Folcuin, whose own position was connected to the well-being of the present ruling power, did not exactly look forward to the end of the world as he knew it. Folcuin considered the Empire of the Franks as a sanctified institution that, God willing, would remain for as long as Frankish rulers maintained peace and stability for the Church.²⁶ There was no reason for wanting to see worldly power overturned, with the beginning of God's eternal Kingdom, when the Empire of the Franks reflected God's heavenly order on earth. However, there was also an element of eschatological expectation connected to Folcuin's present-day political hopes and opin-

²² Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium*, prologue, ed. Pertz 55 (37–41): *Nec distulit rex regum Christus donativum dare sibi militantibus; nam provexit eos regnis, auxit successibus secundis. Inde ad Clodoveos, Clotharios et Dagobertos felix illa et hereditaria permansit successio. Et quare non maneret, quam sapientia Dei, quae ait: Per me reges regnant, fide firmabat, aequitate et iustitia roborabat?*

²³ In the ninth century the empire of the Franks was still viewed as a successor to the Roman Empire, but from the tenth century onwards it is rather presented as a continuation. See further on in this article. A ninth-century example of a chronicle, treating the place of the Frankish empire within the succession of world empires, is the chronicle of Freulf of Lisieux. Freulf looks upon the empire of the Franks not as an extended part of the fourth world empire, the Roman empire (as would Adso of Montier-en-Der a century later, see footnote 26) but as the fifth divine-ordained world empire. Matthew Innes/Rosamond McKitterick, *The writing of history*, in: *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1994) 193–220, at 212–213, with reference to Freulf, *Chronicon*, PL 106, 919–1258.

²⁴ With the notable exception, however, of Augustine. Bernard McGinn/Marjorie Reeves, *Apocalyptic Spirituality. Treatises and letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Franciscan spirituals, Savonarola* (London 1980) 84; Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (The Making of Europe, Cambridge/Oxford 1996) 18–34.

²⁵ Aleida Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition. Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer* (Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur 15, Köln/Weimar/Wien 1999) 24–28.

²⁶ Material for comparison is offered by Adso of Montier-en-Der (see further on in this article), a contemporary of Folcuin, who, in his tractate on the Antichrist (950) written for Queen Gerberga, explained that the end of time would not be at hand as long as Frankish kings ruled (what was left of) the Roman Empire. Adso, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi* (ed. Daniel Verhelst, CC CM 45, Turnhout, 1976) 26: *Hoc autem tempus nondum venit, quia, licet videamus Romanum imperium ex maxima parte destructum, tamen, quandiu reges Francorum duraverint, qui Romanum imperium tenere debent, Romani regni dignitas ex toto non peribit, quia in regibus suis stabit.*

ions. In spite of his deep-rooted belief in the Franks as God's representatives and defenders of the Church, the Apocalypse was always near, only waiting for a lapse of the Frankish rule to manifest itself.²⁷ On few occasions Folcuin expresses the opinion that he is living in the 'last days' and that time is running out.²⁸ Simultaneously, he is confident that the reign of the Franks will last forever. This ambivalent view had an impact on the way Folcuin pictured time and history. On the one hand the narration of his chronicle shows historical development and chronology, on the other hand it shows stability and an absence or standstill of time. As we will see, these different but connected views on time and history are reflected in Folcuin's use of dating systems.

PER ME REGES REGNANT

At the end of his prologue Folcuin prophesies the everlasting reign of the Franks. There is, however, a minor complication in the sense that the Carolingian rule in the East-Frankish realms had recently been replaced by that of the Ottonians. They were strictly speaking not Franks but Saxons. With the help of the theoretical model of the *translatio imperii*, this transition could easily have been explained as a continuation, by picturing the Ottonians (who were after all related to the West-Frankish kings through marriage and who looked upon themselves as Franks) as natural heirs to the Frankish throne.²⁹ Folcuin, however, did not engage himself in a theoretical foundation of the legitimacy of the Ottonian rule. In his prologue he only implicitly refers to the Ottonians as the rightful successors to the Frankish reign.³⁰ His intention is nonetheless clearly shown by a quotation from the Bible, inserted after the prophecy on the reign of the Franks. From the book of Proverbs Folcuin cites the wisdom of God, saying: "Through me kings are sovereign."³¹ This text, *Per me reges regnant*, can be found in the Ottonian liturgy for the royal coronation.³² It is also written on a plate of the Ottonian imperial crown. This crown may have been used in 967, at the coronation of Otto II.³³ Folcuin's prologue is full of reminiscences of the Ottonian *Missa pro rege*.³⁴ Apparently

²⁷ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 16, ed. Pertz 61; *ibid.* 25 (65).

²⁸ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 10, ed. Pertz 60: *nos, in quos fines seculorum devenere*; *ibid.* 30 (71). This probably had little to do with the fact that the year 1000 was near, as most tenth-century historiographers do not seem to have been particularly disturbed by this date. Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Abendländischer Chiliasmus um 1000? Zur Rezeption unserer christlichen Ära*, in: *Ende und Vollendung: eschatologische Perspektiven im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan Aertsen/Martin Pickavé (*Miscellanea mediaevalia* 29, Berlin 2002) 178–190. Folcuin's eschatological expectations were more of a general nature. They were connected to the state of politics, not to a particular date. In the traditional view of the Church the number 1000 did not necessarily refer to the end of time, but rather indicated a spiritual number of fullness and perfection. In the tenth century there was no consensus on time-reckoning yet; several calculations circulated on when the Christian era had started, either at Christ's birth or at his Passion.

²⁹ Even though Folcuin did not explicitly call the Ottonians the natural heirs to the Frankish throne, he did stress on several occasions that the succession of the Frankish rulers has always been "hereditary" (*hereditaria*). Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium*, prologue, ed. Pertz 55; *ibid.* 16 (61).

³⁰ According to Rudolf Schieffer it is a common feature of tenth-century historiography to make political statements in veiled terms. Schieffer speaks in this respect of a certain "Sprachlosigkeit" of Ottonian historiography when it came to expressing or even developing theoretical ideas on Ottonian kingship. Rudolf Schieffer, *Mediator cleri et plebis. Zum geistlichen Einfluß auf Verständnis und Darstellung des ottonischen Königtums*, in: *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, ed. Gerd Althoff/Ernst Schubert (*Vorträge und Forschungen* 46, Sigmaringen 1998) 345–361, at 350.

³¹ Proverbs 8, 15. *Et quare non maneret, quam sapientia Dei, quae ait: Per me reges regnant, fide firmabat, aequitate et iustitia roborabat?* Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium*, prologue, ed. Pertz 55 (40).

³² Gerd Althoff, *Otto der Große in der ottonischen Geschichtsschreibung*, in: *Otto der Große, Magdeburg und Europa auf den Spuren Ottos des Großen. Die 27. Ausstellung des Europarates und Landesausstellung Sachsen-Anhalts im Kulturhistorischen Museum Magdeburg und die Tourismusprojekte des Landes Sachsen-Anhalts im Jahr 2001*, 1, Essays, ed. Matthias Puhle (Mainz 2001) 16–37, at 18.

³³ The date of the imperial crown is still subject to debate. See: Joachim Ott, *Kronen und Krönungen in frühottonischer Zeit*, in: *Ottonische Neuanfänge. Symposium zur Ausstellung "Otto der Große, Magdeburg und Europa"*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller/Stefan Weinfurter (Mainz 2001) 184–188.

³⁴ Cyrille Vogel/Reinhard Elze, *Le Pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle I, Le texte* (*Studi e testi* 226, Città del Vaticano 1963). (*Ordo ad regem benedicendum* 249, *Missa pro rege* 263, *Ordo romanus ad benedicendum imperatorem quando coronam accipit* 264.)

Folcuin attempted to legitimise the Ottonians as God's chosen rulers of the Frankish Empire, but without mentioning their name. This indirect way of expressing his view may be an indication that not all Lobbes monks were as sympathetic to the Ottonian cause as Folcuin was himself. Many of them were related to the local Lotharingian aristocracy that occasionally rebelled against Ottonian rule.³⁵ Folcuin's loyalty to the Ottonian emperors may have met with some resistance within the community, and if so, he had to express his political opinions circumspectly.³⁶ Nonetheless the meaning of the prologue is clear enough, and we may assume that Folcuin's audience understood his biblical and liturgical references. Thus the prologue provides a theological and political background against which Folcuin's narrative should be read. It also sets out the time-frame to interpret Folcuin's version of his monastery's past.

THE INCARNATION OF THE LORD

In his chronicle of Lobbes, Folcuin employs a variety of dating systems; sometimes he uses regnal dates, sometimes AD dates (occasionally combined with a date according to the Roman Calendar) and at other times liturgical dates. Paul Hildebrand, who in 1908 made an inventory of dating systems used in tenth-century historiography, observes that Folcuin did not follow one system of dating events, but, according to him, used dates at random.³⁷ Hildebrand suggests that Folcuin's choices were perhaps inspired by a wish to please his audience, and that he did not want to bore his readers by always using the same dating system. But Folcuin's way of dating, however varied it may be, is far from random. Every dating system in the chronicle of Lobbes has its own meaning and is employed to give a specific interpretation of the past.

A good example is offered by the practice of dating events according to the year of Incarnation. Contrary to the seemingly neutral way we now use AD years, this system of dating events used to stress their significance. By recording how many years had passed since the Incarnation of the Lord, an event found its place in salvation history and thus was imbued with sacred meaning.³⁸ Later, when AD dating became more common in historiography, it gradually lost much of its original meaning.³⁹ In Folcuin's chronicle of Lobbes, however, this was not yet the case. Folcuin uses AD dating only for special events directly concerning his monastery. Examples are the death of the first saints-abbots, the translation of the patron saint and the consecration of the abbey church. These events are all part of the early history of the monastery and are described in the first chapters of the chronicle. Later in the text, AD dating is no longer used, with one notable exception. At the end of the chronicle, Folcuin records the death of archbishop Bruno of Cologne, the brother of Otto I, which he dates according to the year of Incarnation. Bruno's death is described as a most tragic event and a sad loss to Folcuin's own monastery:

“Then the peace that had been desired for so long was taken away from our monastery too soon. The lord Bruno, in whom all the best things descended, finished his last day on the sixth Ides of October in the year nine hundred [sixty-five] of the Incarnation of our Lord.”⁴⁰

³⁵ Bernd Schneidmüller, *Regnum und Ducatus. Identität und Integration in der lothringischen Geschichte des 9. bis 11. Jhs.*, in: *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 51 (Bonn 1987) 81–114; John Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia c. 850–1000* (Oxford historical monographs, Oxford 2001) 1–21.

³⁶ For another possible explanation of Folcuin's indirect manner of expression, see note 30.

³⁷ Paul Hildebrand, *Die Datierung in der Geschichtsschreibung des 10. Jahrhundert* (Dissertation Greifswald 1908) 22.

³⁸ McKittrick, *Constructing the past*; Janneke Raaijmakers, *Sacred Time, Sacred Space. History and Identity at the Monastery of Fulda, 744–856* (Dissertation Amsterdam 2003 publication forthcoming) 47–53. See also, in this volume, Janneke Raaijmakers, *Memory and identity: the Annales Neerologici of Fulda*.

³⁹ Even though it has often been said that Bede gave AD dating currency, it only became the predominant way of dating from about 1050. Before that time AD dating was one of many dating systems. See Von den Brincken, *Chiliasmus* 188. However, the early medieval annals had long before employed AD years as their standard dating system, but always with a special sacred meaning, linking events to the Incarnation of Christ. See above.

⁴⁰ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 27, ed. Pertz 69 (21–23): *Hac igitur diu desiderata pace iam tandem sero potita, ciltissime ecclesia nostra est destituta. Nam dominus Bruno, in quem res summa decumbebat, diem clausit extremum 6. Idus Octobris anno utique nongentesimo ... dominicae incarnationis.*

Although part of the date is missing,⁴¹ the fragment clearly shows with how much emphasis the death of Bruno is dated. This is not just about being precise ‘historically’. Folcuin dates Bruno’s death in this manner with the purpose of adding extra meaning to the event. It is significant that he also mentions the day of the month on which Bruno died, as this information was needed for liturgical commemoration. Usually, he only mentions the day of the month when a saint died, so the addition also shows his view on the significance of this event and the holy qualities of Bruno. The dating of the death of Bruno serves a twofold purpose: through the use of the AD-date Folcuin connects the event of Bruno’s death to salvation history, by recording the day of the month (dated according to the Roman calendar⁴²) he makes the same event amenable to the liturgical *memoria* of his own monastery.⁴³

PRAGMATIC AND SACRED USE OF DATING

In the chronicle of Lobbes Folcuin always uses AD dating with a special, sacred meaning, but surprisingly enough he employs year-dates differently in his other chronicle, written for his former monastery, St-Bertin. In this cartulary-chronicle, now known as the *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium*, year-dates mainly serve as indices. Each charter Folcuin included in the chronicle is copied “under the heading of the year of the birth of the Lord” (*sub pretitulatione annorum dominicae nativitatibus*).⁴⁴ Folcuin probably had to compute at least some of the year-dates himself, with the help of annals or Pascal cycles, since these dates were not given in the charters.⁴⁵ As he explains, he provided year-dates at the introduction of each charter as a service to the reader, to help him find a charter more easily.⁴⁶ Compared to the holy meaning of AD-dating in the chronicle of Lobbes, this is a very pragmatic motive for including this type of dates. However, in the St-Bertin chronicle, too, Folcuin occasionally used AD-dating to emphasise the special meaning of an event. On those occasions he employed the year-dates in a highly artificial form. Normally the formula *anno incarnationis dominicae* (“in the year of the Incarnation of the Lord”) is used. If an event needed extra emphasis, Folcuin extended this formula to: *anno felicissimae incarnationis Jesu Christi Domini nostri* (“in the year of the most joyful Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ”) or *anno saluberrimae nativitatibus Jesu Christi Domini*

⁴¹ As this part of the date is missing in all extant manuscripts, it was possibly erased from the original manuscript. It is not likely that Folcuin miscalculated the date, since Bruno’s death occurred only a few months before his own abbatial ordination. However, I have not been able to find an explanation as to why the date was erased.

⁴² The Roman Calendar was often used to date deaths. For every category of event there seems to have been a particular way of dating. Church affairs, deaths and natural phenomena (for example solar eclipses) were usually dated according to the Roman Calendar. Political and secular affairs were often dated with the use of the liturgical calendar. This, however, was no ironclad rule.

⁴³ Bruno’s name is included in Lobbes’ liturgical calendar, as one of the few persons apart from the monastery’s own saints, whose anniversary was commemorated in Lobbes. The (undated) calendar is edited by Vos, Lobbes 404.

⁴⁴ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium*, prologue, ed. Holder-Egger 608 (19–20).

⁴⁵ The chronicle of St-Bertin mainly includes charters from the Merovingian and Carolingian period. Since AD dating is not used in Frankish royal charters until after the 870s (McKitterick, *Constructing the past* 104), Folcuin was not able to copy the year-dates from these (earlier) charters. With regard to the theory that Folcuin computed many year-dates himself, see Oswald Holder-Egger, *Zu Folcuin von S. Bertin*, in: *NA* 6 (1881) 416–438, at 435. The year-dates employed by Folcuin in the chronicle of St-Bertin correspond to some extent with those of the *Annales Blandinienses*, but Folcuin’s manner of dating is more exact. It could be that Folcuin and the author of the *Annales Blandinienses* were using the same source. One fragment in the chronicle of St-Bertin shows that Folcuin had a Pascal cycle at his disposal, in which he found the appropriate AD date; Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium* 57, ed. Holder-Egger 616 (37–38): *Sub hac tempestate invenimus ita anotatum (!) in decennovenalibus annorum dominicae nativitatibus, quod est 843, indictione 6: Sancti Audomari corpus de villa Liegesborht refertur ad locum suum.*

⁴⁶ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium*, prologue, ed. Holder-Egger 608 (17–22): “In case anyone should want to investigate the possessions of this place, he can turn to this book. Here one can easily find the number and the names, conveniently joined together under the heading (*pretitulatione*) of the year of the birth of the Lord or the time of each king, as far as it was possible for us [to find].” (*si forsitan quis istius loci possessionum investigandarum fuerit avidus, ad hunc recurrat; ibi numerum et nomina invenire poterit quontocius sub pretitulatione annorum dominicae nativitatibus vel tunc temporis cuiuslibet regis abte (!) coniunctum, prout nostrae erat possibilitatis ...*).

(“in the year of the most blissful birth of the Lord Jesus Christ”). It was hard to miss the sacred connotation of dates phrased in this way, especially when the year-date was combined with a liturgical date, as for instance in the following example: “In the year of the most blissful birth of the Lord Jesus Christ 948, on the day of the festive *elevatio* of St-Bertin, following the festival of all saints.... etc.”⁴⁷ The event thus dated was in this case not a sacred, highly important event in the history of the monastery as for example a church dedication or the translation of a saint, but Folcuin’s own entry as an oblate in the monastery of St-Bertin.⁴⁸ This was not the only time he marked an event in his personal life with a special, liturgical date. We only need to think of the account of his abbatial ordination in the chronicle of Lobbes. Apparently Folcuin, who usually kept to the literary conventions of modesty, calling himself “Folcuin, the sinner” or “abbot only in name”,⁴⁹ was not so modest when it came to marking the turning points of his life and confining the significant data of these personal events to his community’s memory.

THE DATING SYSTEMS IN THE CHRONICLE OF LOBBES

Let us return to the chronicle of Lobbes. Throughout the chronicle, Folcuin uses different dating systems. Sometimes they are used next to one another, but analysing all the evidence together, it appears that every dating system belongs either to a particular period in the history of the monastery, or to a particular category of events. The table below shows a summary that will help to clarify Folcuin’s system.

Table of Folcuin’s dating systems

Period	Dating system	Source
660–840	Reigns of Merovingian and Carolingian kings	Charters, annals
840–950	Indefinite temporal frames	Oral tradition
950–980	Liturgical dating	Living memory
Category of events	Dating system	Source
Miracles (from about 960)	Liturgical dating	Living memory
Events related to church history (death of saints, translations, church consecrations)	AD dating, dates according to the Roman Calendar	Liturgical calendar
Political events (from 950) (conspiracy, murder, Magyar raids, battle)	Liturgical dating (sometimes combined with dates according to the Roman Calendar)	Living memory, Liturgical calendar

⁴⁷ See quotation below, at note 48. Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium* 107, ed. Holder-Egger 629: ... *anno incarnationis felicissimae domini nostri Iesu Christi 948, die festivitatis elevationis sancti Bertini, quae succedit omnium sanctorum festivitati.*

⁴⁸ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium* 107, ed. Holder-Egger 629: *Quo tempore ego ipse haec scribens Folcwinus a patre Folcwinno supra iam memorato et matre Thiedala de regno Hlotario dicto huc adductus, anno incarnationis felicissimae domini nostri Iesu Christi 948, die festivitatis elevationis sancti Bertini, quae succedit omnium sanctorum festivitati, sancto Bertino oblatas, monachus, proh dolor! facie tenus, sum effectus.*

⁴⁹ Folcuin, *Vita sancti Folcuini* (ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH SS 15, Hannover 1885) 424–430, at 424; Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium* 28, ed. Pertz 69; Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium* 107, ed. Holder-Egger 629.

In the first part of the chronicle, Folcuin relates events to the reigns of Merovingian and Carolingian kings.⁵⁰ This dating system is used until he reaches the middle of the ninth century, when, in Folcuin's view, Carolingian rule started to collapse. From that time onwards, the chronology of Folcuin's story becomes confused and chaotic indeed. In his treatment of events Folcuin sometimes rushes forward 30 years, only to leap back again 50 years, and he cannot always tell his Louises from his Charleses.⁵¹ Perhaps this shows that Folcuin originally came from a West-Frankish monastery and was not too familiar with the specific situation of Lotharingia or the East-Frankish Kingdom. More likely there were no longer any written sources at Lobbes that he could rely on. The annals known as the *Annales Lobienses*⁵² (not to be confused with the before-mentioned *Annales Laubienses*⁵³) had been taken to Liège in 870; this text was therefore not available in Lobbes at the time when Folcuin wrote his chronicle. Probably Folcuin used a copy of the *Annales Lobienses* that ran to 840,⁵⁴ or he used a different set of annals. In any case he first relied on written sources (annals or charters) to establish the chronology of royal history and used oral information for events from the 840's onward. This is clear from the way Folcuin mentions the succession of kings. First, events concerning Carolingian kings are stated as facts but eventually phrases like "it is said" and "people tell" become more frequent.⁵⁵

CHRONOLOGICAL CONFUSION AS A LITERARY STRATEGY

For the period between 840 and 950, Folcuin seems no longer interested in providing specific dates. He places events in an indistinct temporal framework, introducing stories with cloudy references such as: "at the time when the empire was troubled", or: "when the throne was temporarily unoccupied".⁵⁶ The modern editor of the chronicle, Georg Heinrich Pertz, bravely tried to date the events and mentioned the years in which they happened in the margin of his edition, but eventually had to give up. Still one cannot simply say (as has been claimed in the past) that at this point the chronicle's structure gets worse.⁵⁷ The disorganised way in which Folcuin narrates the story and the imprecise manner

⁵⁰ Events are not related to precise regnal years, but only, in a more general way, to the reign of a particular king or ruler. See for example Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* I, ed. Pertz 56: ... *tempore quo a Clodoveo septimus Lotharius agebat in sceptris*; *ibid* 8 (59): ... *sub Pippino praefato principe Pippino post facto rege*; *ibid* 11 (60): ... *facta est adhuc Ludovico imperatore superstite*...

⁵¹ See for example Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 15, ed. Pertz 61 (18–19, 35–36), where he confuses Louis the Younger with Louis the Stammerer. According to Timothy Reuter, tenth-century historiographers often had no clear idea of the succession of later ninth-century Carolingian rulers. Reuter, *Regemque* 372. See also Liudprand, who confuses Charles the Bold with Charles III, or see Widukind, making the same mistake. Liudprand, *Antapodosis* I, 5 (ed. Albert Bauer/Reinhold Rau, *Liudprands von Cremona Werke, Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 8, Darmstadt 1971) 233–524, at 254; Widukind, *Res gestae Saxonicae* I, 16 (ed. Albert Bauer/Reinhold Rau, *Widukinds Sachsengeschichte, Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 8, Darmstadt 1971) 1–185, at 44.

⁵² *Annales Lobienses* (ed. Georg Waitz, *MGH SS* 13, Hannover 1881) 224–235.

⁵³ The *Annales Laubienses*, ed. Pertz 9–25, were started in Lobbes at the beginning of the eleventh century, the *Annales Lobienses* (ed. Waitz, 224–235), also known as the *Chronicon Lobiense*, were older and partly written in Liège, although the first part originated from Lobbes (see below).

⁵⁴ The copy of the annals that was taken to Liège in 870 by the monk Thiether of Lobbes did not run to 870, but probably only to 840. According to Friedrich Kurze the annals were updated when they arrived in Liège. See his *Die Annales Lobienses*, in: *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 37 (1912) 589–614, at 589. A comparison between Folcuin's chronicle and the *Annales Lobienses* (as transmitted in a manuscript dated around the year 1000) supports Kurze's thesis. Folcuin's account accords with the entries of the annals until 840 (with the exception of the entry for 825), but diverges later on.

⁵⁵ See for example Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 19, ed. Pertz 63. *Qui videlicet Carolus, facto, ut dictum est, inter regno regum quorundam interregnantium, a Fulcone archiepiscopo Remis evocatus et consecratus* ...

⁵⁶ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 14, ed. Pertz 61 (13f.): *Post haec fratribus in quatuor tetrarchiis Franciae regnantibus tam ipsis quam filiis eorum defunctis*. *Ibid*. 16, ed. Pertz 61 (34): *Interea vacillante rerum statu, deficiente successione*. *Ibid*. 17, ed. Pertz 62 (18f.): *Tali ergo modo turbata ecclesiae pax et firmamento regni posito in formidine*.

⁵⁷ Max Manitius, *Folcuin von Laubach*, in: *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* 2, ed. Max Manitius (München 1964) 210–214, at 214; Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium*, ed. Pertz 53; Warichez/van Bleyenbergh, *Abbaye* 253.

in which he dates the events, do not so much reflect his inability to put these events in chronological order, but rather show how he evaluates this period in history. For, by contrast, in the chronicle of St-Bertin Folcuin happens to be very precise in his treatment of the same period. In chapter 67 of the chronicle of St-Bertin for example he dates a change of abbots thus:

“In the year of the birth of the Lord 861 the abbacy was taken away from the mentioned Hugo and was returned to Adelardus on the eight Kalend of August, in the twenty-first year of the reign of the before-mentioned king Charles. But he (Adelardus) did not reign longer than three years after this. Because in his fourth year he fell ill in (the monastery of) St-Amand and he left the human (life) on the third None of February, in the year of the birth of the Lord 864.”⁵⁸

Folcuin could not have been more precise in dating this event. In fact, all political events in the chronicle of St-Bertin are dated very precisely.⁵⁹ As mentioned before Folcuin probably calculated some of the year-dates he used in the chronicle of St-Bertin himself. Thus it is very unlikely that when writing in Lobbes he suddenly no longer cared about chronology, or became incapable of inserting dates. To Folcuin, dating events was not just about being chronologically precise. It was above all a literary means to structure the historical narrative and to add meaning to events recounted, thereby evaluating their significance. The inexact manner in which Folcuin dated events occurring in 840–950 in the chronicle of Lobbes served a specific purpose. By calling on a ‘vagueness of time’ Folcuin employed a deliberate literary strategy.⁶⁰ By means of a chronological confused narrative structure, he showed how he interpreted the history of that period: as chaotic and lacking order. The foundations of the empire had been shaken, the *pax ecclesiae* was disturbed, and the consequences for the monasteries had been disastrous: Viking and Magyar raids and bishops misusing monastic possessions.⁶¹ In Folcuin’s view, when the strength of the Carolingian empire began to crumble, apocalyptic forces were unleashed. In this part of the chronicle few references to Carolingian kings can be found. If they are mentioned at all, it is only to call attention to disaster. Remarks about strife between Carolingian rulers serve as negative points of reference for Folcuin’s stories about misfortunes that befell Lobbes. The story for example about the usurper Hucbert (Lotharius II’s brother-in-law and lay abbot of Lobbes) who, according to Folcuin, brought the monastery of Lobbes next to ruin, is significantly placed “at the time when the four royal brothers fought each other for the Empire of the Franks, i.e. in the time (*vel tempore*) of emperor Lotharius, who threw his father, lord Louis, into prison.”⁶² Explicit criticism on the behaviour of the Carolingian kings can nowhere be found in Folcuin’s chronicle, but when a remark like this functions as a date for a story of disaster, it is telling enough.⁶³ The disorderly state of Carolingian politics in the second half of the ninth

⁵⁸ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium* 66, ed. Holder-Egger 620 (25–29): *Anno dominicae nativitat̄is 861 abbatia iam dicto Hugoni ablata, iterum Adalardo est reddita 8 Kal. Aug., anno regni prefati Regis Karoli 21. Sed non hanc nisi triennio post haec rex̄it. Anno namque 4. apud S. Amandi egrotans, exivit hominem 3. Nonas Febr., qui erat anno dominicae nativitat̄is 864.*

⁵⁹ Holder-Egger, Folcuin 431.

⁶⁰ This is true even if he *really* did not know the precise dates, because of lack of written sources. After all, there was no need for Folcuin to stress these lacunae by introducing his chapters with cloudy references, such as mentioned above. He could have tried to hide his lack of knowledge, if lack of knowledge was the problem. Instead, he purposely stresses the chronological disorder, which in my view indicates a literary strategy. A different but related strategy is expressed in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, where Bede mentions a chronological ‘error’, which was made intentionally in order to express political disapproval: “So all those who compute the dates of kings have decided to abolish the memory of those perfidious kings and to assign this year (633 AD) to their successor Oswald, a man beloved of God.” Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* III, 1 (ed. Judith McClure/Roger Collins, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, translation Bertram Colgrave, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford 1999) 111. I thank Mary Garrison for the reference.

⁶¹ For the consequences of the disappearance of Carolingian order for monastic life, see Mayke de Jong, *Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer*, in: *The New Cambridge Medieval History* 2 c. 700–c.900, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1995) 622–653, at 652.

⁶² Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 12, ed. Pertz 61 (1–3): *Fuit autem hic tempore quatuor fratrum regum de regno Francorum concertantium, vel tempore Lotharii imperatoris, qui patrem domnum Ludovicum in carcerem retruserat.*

⁶³ Another example of negative dating can be found in chapter sixteen, where Viking attacks are told to have taken place at the time “when the throne was vacant and there was no legitimate heir to the throne”; Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 16, ed. Pertz 61 (34–40): *Interea vacillante rerum statu, et regum naturalium, sicut ante diximus, qui apud*

century serves as a negative, rather unspecified time-frame to pinpoint the reversal of fortune in Lobbes' history.⁶⁴

The disorderly treatment of events continues until Folcuin reaches 950 AD (the date is mine, not Folcuin's). Then a new chapter begins with the meaningful phrase: "Then Otto was the most powerful eastern king, who then ruled over conquered Italy, and his brother was Bruno, whose glory will always be incomparable and exceptional within the church of Christ."⁶⁵ From that moment on, history becomes clear again and chronological order is restored. Apparently the Franks were back on the right track. Detailed chronological dates, however, do not return.⁶⁶ The only dating system used from now on is based on the liturgical calendar.⁶⁷

LITURGICAL DATING

By liturgical dating I mean a system of structuring time by relating events to the liturgical cycle of Church festivals or the anniversaries of saints.⁶⁸ This way of dating events often occurs in early medieval hagiography, as for example in the works of Bede and Gregory of Tours. The literary models for this way of dealing with time were probably the gospels, linking events in the life of Jesus with Jewish festivals, like Passover or the feast of Tabernacles.⁶⁹ The Christian-Judaic idea of time and history – though usually considered by scholars in religion as being essentially linear in nature, moving from a singular beginning to an equally singular end – also had a clear cyclical dimension.⁷⁰ Liturgical church practices were based on a yearly cycle of festivals and saint's days, as well as on a daily cycle, commemorating Jesus' death and resurrection daily during Mass.⁷¹ The liturgical calendar, in which the holy days of the Church were set apart from ordinary days, gave shape to a specific Christian way of structuring the year and controlling time. Above all it determined the way in which people experienced time and thought about time. The liturgical structuring of the year not only had an impact on the organisation of religious life, but on social and economic aspects of society as well. The Church prohibited working on holy days, prescribed attendance of Mass on the day of a Church

Franco semper hereditarii habebantur, deficiente successione ... gens quaedam aquilonaris, quam plerique Northalbinco, alii usitatius Northmannos vocant, pyratiam agens, novo et inaudito retro ante temporibus modo Franciam est aggressa.

⁶⁴ Geary, *Phantoms* 132, states that monastic chroniclers of the tenth and early eleventh century were not capable of reconstructing the political and social context of their monastery's history, even though they had all the important facts at hand. To me it seems that most monastic chroniclers, like Folcuin, undoubtedly were capable of reconstructing a political context, but just chose to present it differently. Perhaps it is rather a matter of different narrative logic (that is, different from what we would now consider a proper historical account) than of capability or understanding.

⁶⁵ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium* 22, ed. Pertz 64 (24f.): *Otho, tunc potentissimus rex australis, et subactae Italiae tunc imperitabat: cuius frater Bruno unicum et singulare in Christi ecclesia decus futurum.*

⁶⁶ With the exception of Bruno's death, which, as we have seen, was dated by a year-date.

⁶⁷ Sometimes combined with the date of the day of the month according to the Roman Calendar. See the table of Folcuin's dating systems.

⁶⁸ German scholars use the term *Festtagsdatierung*, which refers to almost the same phenomenon of dating as what I would call liturgical dating, except that the term *Festtagsdatierung* is mainly based on the references found in annals and chronicles made to rulers celebrating Christmas or Easter in one or other monastery.

⁶⁹ Especially in the gospel of John. Compare John 7, 2 "As the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was close at hand" or John 12,1 "Six days before the Passover festival Jesus came to Bethany."

⁷⁰ The cyclical aspect of Christian time has often been explained as a pagan or 'primitive' influence from pre-Christian society, which persisted in folk consciousness and eventually re-entered the Christian way of thinking. See for example Gurevich, *Categories* 104. Jonathan Smith has argued that the identification of Hebreo-Christian time as being historical and linear, as opposed to pagan cyclical time, is an invention of the mid-nineteenth century. This binary model, that is, according to Smith, in fact a product of Protestant values, is still taken as self-evident by scholars in religion. Jonathan Z. Smith, *A slip in time saves nine: prestigious origins again*, in: *Chronotypes. The Construction of Time*, ed. John Bender/David Wellbery (Stanford 1991) 67–77, at 69.

⁷¹ In the liturgical acts the linear course of salvation history was repeated cyclically. Arnold Angenendt, *Die liturgische Zeit: zyklisch und linear*, in: *Hochmittelalterliches Geschichtsbewußtsein im Spiegel nichthistoriographischer Quellen*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz (Berlin 1998) 101–117. On the cyclical experience of time, see Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour: archétypes et répétition* (Paris 1969).

festival and collected tithes on saint's days.⁷² In this way the cycle of the holy days was imprinted on the time-awareness of laity and clergy alike. The liturgical cycle of Church festivals and saint's anniversaries, matching the seasonal division of the year, came to serve as a frame of reference to locate events in time. Also in literature it became common practice to measure time according to the liturgical calendar. Throughout the Middle Ages forms of liturgical dating can be found that connect linear and cyclical experiences of time. Well-known examples are provided by the historical notes added in the margin of Easter tables;⁷³ by charters that were dated according to the liturgical calendar;⁷⁴ and by chronicles, employing liturgical time ever more frequently from the eleventh century onward, as a means to date historical events.⁷⁵

AN IMPRECISE WAY OF DATING?

Until now historians have not paid much attention to the use of liturgical dating in historiography. It has been regarded as an imprecise way of dating, mainly used for run-of-the-mill, unimportant events.⁷⁶ Surely this is a too limited point of view: not only because medieval authors would vehemently have disagreed with miracles or other events in the life of a saint being regarded as 'unimportant events', but also because this manner of dating is far from being inexact. To take but one example from the chronicle of Lobbes, a date such as "the day before the Sunday called the first day of Lent"⁷⁷ can hardly be called imprecise. In fact, to regard linear chronology as the only exact way of dealing with history, is a very modern way of thinking. A more important point of criticism is that liturgical dating is not only used in historiography to date everyday events, but is also employed to describe political events. This becomes especially clear in eleventh-century Ottonian historiography, which shows an increase in the use of liturgical dating.⁷⁸ Eleventh-century authors may have preferred the Roman Calendar when dating events pertaining to Church history, deaths and natural phenomena, but when they had to date political events, they quite often resorted to the liturgical calendar. The question suggests itself, why did they choose the liturgical calendar, if they also knew other ways of dating which – in our view – are that much more precise?

For one thing, liturgical dating must have come naturally to monastic historiographers, who lived and worked in a monastery, where the rhythm of the liturgical year and the monastic hours decided

⁷² Hans-Werner Goetz, Kirchenfest und weltliches Alltagsleben im frühen Mittelalter, in: *Mediävistik* 2 (1989) 123–171, at 129 and 150–152.

⁷³ Even though one could argue that in the case of the historical notes in the margin of Easter tables, the procedure is the other way around: liturgical texts dated historically. For other examples of historical notes added to liturgical texts, see Arno Borst, *Die karolingische Kalenderreform* (MGH Schriften 46, Hannover 1998); Corradini, *Zeiträume*; Christian Hannick, *Liturgie und Geschichtsschreibung*, in: *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer/Georg Scheibelreiter (VIÖG 32, Wien/München 1994) 179–186.

⁷⁴ In the German region liturgical dates are rarely found in charters before the thirteenth century; Franz Sachse, *Das Aufkommen der Datierungen nach dem Festkalender in Urkunden der Reichskanzlei und der deutschen Erzbistümer. Ein Beitrag zur Chronologie des Mittelalters* (Erlangen 1904); but, as Karl Heidecker pointed out to me, in France it was common practice to date charters liturgically long before that time.

⁷⁵ The studies of Paul Molkeneller, Paul Hildebrand and Hans Hinrichs show that liturgical dating ('Festtagsdatierung') is already used in Carolingian and tenth-century historiography, but becomes more frequent in eleventh-century chronicles. Paul Molkeneller, *Die Datierung in der Geschichtsschreibung der Karolingerzeit* (Dissertation, Greifswald 1916); Paul Hildebrand, *Die Datierung in der Geschichtsschreibung des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Dissertation, Greifswald 1908); Hinrichs, *Datierung*.

⁷⁶ Hans-Werner Goetz, *Zeitbewußtsein und Zeitkonzeptionen in der hochmittelalterlichen Geschichtsschreibung*, in: *Zeitkonzeptionen, Zeiterfahrung, Zeitmessung. Stationen ihres Wandels vom Mittelalter bis zur Moderne*, ed. Trude Ehlert (Paderborn 1997) 12–33, at 27.

⁷⁷ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium* 36, ed. Pertz 72 (45): *Factum est hoc ante dominicam quam vocant medianam sexta feria*.

⁷⁸ For instance in the chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg, written in 1014, no less than 155 liturgical dates can be found (on a total of 237 dates). Thietmar, *Chronicon* (ed. Robert Holtzmann/Werner Trillmich, *Thietmari Merseburgensis episcopi Chronicon. Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 9, Darmstadt 1957); Hildebrand, *Datierung* 65.

their perception of time.⁷⁹ In many monastic chronicles recent events that had made an impact on the community's experience were connected to the last festival or liturgical hour that had taken place shortly before.⁸⁰ For knowledge of these events authors recording the history of their monastery could rely on the living memory of the community. Liturgical dating can therefore be seen as a feature of the living monastic memory structure. As Norbert Elias has pointed out, the unchanging recurrence of the same sequence patterns, such as the cycle of the seasons, usually looms much larger in the awareness of people than the succession of years which never return.⁸¹ However, most instances of liturgical dates that we find in chronicles are not as 'natural' as might seem. Apart from the often obvious symbolic connotation of the liturgical references,⁸² there also appears to be a certain systematic selection behind this form of dating. Only those festivals and saint's days that were prescribed by episcopal synods to be celebrated throughout the Frankish Church, seem to have qualified as appropriate days to date political events,⁸³ whereas the festivals of patron saints were singled out to date local events.⁸⁴ Apparently the liturgical dates, although transmitted as a matter of circumstance, were selected with a purpose. Clearly, in Folcuin's chronicle of Lobbes liturgical dating is more than just a coincidental residue of the memory of his community. Folcuin may have borrowed the specific liturgical dates from his fellow monks' memory (since as a newcomer in Lobbes he had not witnessed most of the events himself) but he *used* these liturgical dates as a stylistic device, to comment upon recent history and to imbue it with meaning. Folcuin employs liturgical dating as a deliberate narrative strategy to relate linear chronological history to his own monastery's cyclical experience of time.

THE BATTLE OF THE LECHFELD

In the chronicle of Lobbes, especially events concerning recent political history are dated in relation to the liturgical calendar.⁸⁵ To give a few examples: a conspiracy in Liège is dated to the festival of Christmas;⁸⁶ a murder committed by a Lotharingian count is dated to the vigil of the festival of

⁷⁹ Catherine Cubitt, Unity and diversity in the early Anglo-Saxon liturgy, in: Unity and Diversity in the Church, ed. Robert Norman Swanson (Studies in Church history 32, Oxford 1996) 45–59, at 46.

⁸⁰ See for example Regino of Prüm, who dates several Magyar attacks to the year in which they took place, but dates the destruction of his own monastery in 882 with a reference to the liturgical calendar. According to Regino, the Magyars invaded the monastery of Prüm "exactly on the day of Epiphany" (*ipso die epiphaniae Domini*). Regino, Chronicon (ed. Reinhold Rau, Regino Chronik, Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte 3, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 7, Darmstadt 1960) 179–321, at 260. See also one of the historiographical texts of Montecassino (edited in the MGH as Chronica Sancti Benedicti Casinensis), dating the Saracen attack on Benevento to Saturday before Pentecost (*igitur sabbato vigilia sanctum Pentecosten*) and the destruction of the monastery of San Vincenzo by Saracen raiders to the time of Lent. Chronica Sancti Benedicti Casinensis 12, 18 (ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Lan-gob., Hannover 1878) 468–488, at 474, 477.

⁸¹ Elias, Time 7.

⁸² See for example the well-known solar eclipse of 840, dated liturgically by most Frankish texts. Usually in Carolingian historiography a natural phenomenon is related to the Roman calendar, but since this particular eclipse was taken as an omen of Louis the Pious' death, it was dated to the liturgical calendar, to stress the significance of the portentous event. Significantly, not all authors chose to indicate the date in the same liturgical manner. See Ratpert of St. Gallen, who dates the solar eclipse to the day before Ascension day (*in vigilia ascensionis Domini*) and the Astronomer, who dates it to the third day of the Rogations (*tertia dies Letaniae majores*), which (supposing the Astronomer meant the three rogation days before Ascension day, usually called *Letaniae minores*) comes to exactly the same day. It does, however, have a different symbolical meaning, whether an event is related to a joyful festival (Ascension day) or to a solemn period of prayer and repentance. Ratpert, Casus S. Galli 7 (ed. Ildefonsus von Arx, MGH SS 2, Hannover 1829) 59–74, at 67; Astronomus, Vita Hludowici imperatoris 62 (ed. Ernst Tremp, Astronomus, Das leben Kaiser Ludwigs, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. [64], Hannover 1995) 279–555, at 544.

⁸³ Goetz, Kirchenfest 124. See also Schaller, Der heilige Tag 4.

⁸⁴ Schaller, Der heilige Tag 21.

⁸⁵ Apart from the collection of miracle stories at the end of the chronicle, which were mainly dated to the festival of Lobbes' patron saint, St. Ursmar.

⁸⁶ Folcuin, Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium 23, ed. Pertz 65 (9–10): "When he was celebrating the Nativity of the Lord with us solemnly and abundantly, a very serious conspiracy was hatched against him in Liège." (*Nam cum apud nos natiuitatem Domini festive et opipare celebraret, facta est in Leodio contra eum gravissima conspiratio.*)

All Saints;⁸⁷ and the battle of the Lechfeld, when Otto won a victory over the Magyars, is related to the anniversary of the martyr Lawrence.⁸⁸ These events all took place in the 950s, i.e. about twenty or thirty years before the writing of the chronicle. This means that the generation that had witnessed these events was still alive, and that the dates were part of living memory. Let us have a closer look at the last example, the battle of the Lechfeld. Folcuin begins the story with an account of the Hungarian attack on the monastery of Lobbes. He opens with an evocative description of the march of the Magyar troops:

“The holy celebration of the days of Easter was already near, and at the end of the octave of Easter, that then fell on the fourth Nones of April, behold, in the early morning the sky suddenly darkened by the cloud [of dust] of horses, and thousands of helmets appeared, as if emerging from the abyss of the earth.”⁸⁹

Then follows a long description of the atrocities of the Magyars, seen from the perspective of the besieged community of Lobbes. Thanks to God and Lobbes’ patron saints Ursmar and Ermin, the Magyar troops eventually retreated from the monastery. Only when emperor Otto stepped in, the invaders were driven away once and for good. Before the emperor went into battle, he implored the help of God by prescribing a fast:

“The emperor prescribed by decree a fast *exactly* on the day that was then the vigil of the holy martyr Lawrence. Through the intervention of Lawrence, Otto asked God to be himself a refuge for him [Otto] and his people. It is not the intention of this book to dwell on a war that was waged at first dawn of a holy festival and was ended successfully (enough) when it was almost the time of vespers in the evening twilight, thanks to God who was mercifully granting pardon and who was fighting for his own people.”⁹⁰

After this, Folcuin of course *did* go on about this battle, even though he had just said it was not his intention, and he reminded his audience how God and the saints helped Otto in obtaining victory. Otto’s battle is described almost like an orderly event, contrasted to the dark, chaotic scene of the Magyar raid that proceeded it. The attack on the monastery of Lobbes is pictured as a hellish experience, with the Magyars emerging as if from the abyss of the earth like the hosts of Gog and Magog. The liturgical setting of the story stresses the significance of Otto’s battle; it shows how the event should be interpreted. In the opening of the story the remark that “these things happened when the holy celebration of Easter was near” serves as a contrast to darken the disaster of the Magyar raid; it also depicts the Magyars as uncultivated pagans, who dared to attack the monastery during a holy period. At the end of the story, the liturgical date is used to denote exactly the opposite. The day of the vigil of the holy martyr Lawrence functions as a sanctifying context for the battle that Otto had to wage to liberate his people from the “ancient pest”, as Folcuin calls the intruders. The apocalyptic scene of the Magyar attack enhances the messianic connotation of the story. It enables Folcuin to introduce Otto as the saviour who put an end to a danger that had been threatening the Church for so long. This strategy may be clarified when we remember Folcuin’s prologue. There, he had explained how God had elected the Franks because they were willing to fight for his Church and protect it. Here, Folcuin pictures Otto as the very image of a Frankish ruler, defending the Church with the support of God and his saints. The liturgical dating of the story underlines this message.

⁸⁷ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 26, ed. Pertz 68 (9–11). “About the circumstance of time: whoever reads or hears about this, should be aware that these things happened during celebration of Vespers on the vigils of (the festival of) All Saints.” (*De opportunitate temporis ille viderit, qui haec in vigillis Omnium sanctorum, dum vesperae celebrarentur, vel legit vel audit.*)

⁸⁸ Folcuin borrowed the details of this battle from Ruotger’s *Vita Brunoni*, but put the account in a different context. See further on in this article and below at note 107. Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis* 35 (ed. Irene Ott, MGH SS rer. Germ. NS 10, Weimar 1951) 36.

⁸⁹ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 25, ed. Pertz 66 (26–29): *Iamque advenerat paschaliū dierum sancta celebritas, et in completionē octavarum ipsius, quae erant tunc 4. Nonas Aprilis, ecce in exordio matutino subita densaverat aer equorum nebula, et quasi de abditis terrae finibus emergebant galearum milia.*

⁹⁰ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium* 25, ed. Pertz 67 (32–36). *Imperator indici sanxit ieiunium in ipsa quae tunc erat vigilia sancti Laurentii martyris, per cuius interventum sibi populoque suo ipsum Deum poposcit esse refugium. Propositum suscepti operis negat expedire bellum, primo sanctae festivitatis diluculo susceptum, vixdum vespertino crepusculo, Deo misericorditer dispensante et pro suis pugnante, satis feliciter peractum.* Cf. to Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis* 35, ed. Ott 36.

THE LAST WORLD EMPEROR

This is not to say that the battle of the Lechfeld did not actually take place on the day of the holy martyr Lawrence. As it happened, Ottonian rulers, like their Carolingian predecessors, preferred to plan battles (as well as other important state affairs) on Church festivals or saint's days.⁹¹ A holy day was thought to give special blessing to the enterprise and enhance the chances on success.⁹² In the case of the battle of the Lechfeld, however, it has been doubted whether military tactics allowed planning the battle exactly on this day.⁹³ Also the precise date of the battle has been under debate (whether it was the day before, on the day, or the day after St-Lawrence day).⁹⁴ But that is not the issue here. The fact that Folcuin took special care to add the liturgical date to his story, is what matters. As Lawrence was the saint invoked in the *Laudes regiae* as a patron of kings and armies,⁹⁵ this specific date added meaning to his story. It reinforced Folcuin's picture of Otto as the God-chosen ruler of the Franks and defender of the Church. It is possible that Folcuin's account of Otto's battle was also meant to refer to the myth of the 'last world emperor', a legend that was popular in his days. According to this legend, the coming of the Antichrist (an event that, as rumour had it, would be near when Good Friday and the Annunciation would fall on the same day)⁹⁶ could be restrained by a final ruler, the last and greatest of the kings of the Franks. This king would once again possess the whole Roman empire. The myth of the Last World Emperor was widely known through Adso's letter to Queen Gerberga, sister of Otto I. Adso's text, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, written around 950, was popular throughout the East- and West-Frankish realms and has been transmitted in no less than a hundred and seventy manuscripts and eleven different versions.⁹⁷ Adso wrote:

"The Apostle Paul says that the Antichrist will not come into the world 'unless the defection shall have come first', that is, unless first all the kingdoms that were formerly subject shall have defected from the Roman Empire. This time has not yet come, because even though we may see the Roman Empire for the most part in ruins, nonetheless, as long as the kings of the Franks who now possess the Roman Empire by right shall last, the dignity of the Roman Empire will not completely perish because it will endure in its kings. Some of our learned men say that one of the kings of the Franks will possess anew the Roman Empire. He will be in the last time and will be the greatest and last of all kings."⁹⁸

⁹¹ This in spite of the fact that episcopal synods forbade battles to be waged on holy days. Cf. Goetz, *Kirchenfest* 135. It has been suggested that the alternation of dating styles in the *Annales regni Francorum*, dating the start of a new year either at Christmas or at Easter, should not be taken as an indication of a change of hands (as it is usually explained), but rather as a means to obscure battles being waged during Lent. Cf. Sierck, *Festtag und Politik* 207–208.

⁹² Sierck, *Festtag und Politik* 200–204; Schaller, *Der heilige Tag* 23–24.

⁹³ Schaller, *Der heilige Tag* 17.

⁹⁴ Matthias Springer, 955 als Zeitenwende. Otto I. und die Lechfeldschlacht, in: *Otto der Große, Magdeburg und Europa. Die 27. Ausstellung des Europarates und Landesausstellung Sachsen-Anhalts im Kulturhistorischen Museum Magdeburg und die Tourismusprojekte des Landes Sachsen-Anhalts im Jahr 2001*, 1, Essays, ed. Matthias Puhle (Mainz 2001) 199–209, at 205; Sierck, *Festtag und Politik* 246.

⁹⁵ Sierck, *Festtag und Politik* 246.

⁹⁶ Abbo, *Apologeticus ad Hugonem et Rodbertum reges Francorum*, PL 139, 461–472, at 472: *Nam fama pene totum mundum impleverat, quod, quando Annuntiatio Dominica in Parasceve contigisset absque ullo scrupulo finis saeculi esset*. Abbo of Fleury recorded this rumour in his *Liber Apologeticus*. Apparently his abbot, Richardus, had received distressing letters from Lotharingia and had asked Abbo to look into this rumour; Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury. A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement* (Middel-eeuwse Studies en Bronnen 2, Hilversum 1987) 87.

⁹⁷ Daniel Verhelst, *Adso Dervensis. De ortu et tempore Antichristi. Necnon et tractatus qui ab eo dependunt* (CC CM 45, Turnhout, 1976) 3–19.

⁹⁸ Adso, *De ortu*, ed. Verhelst 26: *Inde ergo dicit Paulus apostolus, Antichristum non antea in mundum esse venturum, nisi venerit discessio primum, id est, nisi prius discesserint omnia regna a Romano imperio, que pridem subdita erant. Hoc autem tempus nondum venit, quia, licet videamus Romanum imperium ex maxima parte destructum, tamen, quandiu reges Francorum duraverint, qui Romanum imperium tenere debent, Romani regni dignitas ex toto non peribit, quia in regibus suis stabit. Quidam vero doctores nostri dicunt, quod unus ex regibus Francorum Romanum imperium ex integro tenebit, qui in novissimo tempore erit et ipse erit maximus et omnium regum ultimus*. Translation: McGinn/Reeves, *Apocalyptic Spirituality* 93.

It is generally assumed that Adso, when referring to this “last and greatest of all Frankish kings”, meant Gerberga’s husband, Louis IV, king of the West-Frankish Empire. However, in the version of Adso’s text that circulated in the East-Frankish empire, no reference to Louis can be found. Gerberga is solely addressed as “daughter of the noble Saxon king Henry”.⁹⁹ Thus stressing the Saxon connection, the East-Frankish version implied that the last king of the Franks need not be a Carolingian ruler; he could also be of Ottonian lineage.¹⁰⁰ It is hard to tell if Folcuin had Adso’s text at the back of his mind when he wrote the chapter on Otto’s victory at the Lechfeld. However, it is clear that he pictured Otto as a messianic figure, a saviour of the Church, who kept the Apocalypse at bay.

LITURGICAL DATING AS A NARRATIVE STRATEGY

In Ottonian historiography the story of the battle of the Lechfeld came to symbolise the moment when Otto truly became the emperor of the Franks.¹⁰¹ He had become emperor not so much because he was crowned by the hands of the Pope (an event which would take place a few years later), but because his victory over the Magyars showed that he was elected by God and the saints.¹⁰² Ottonian emperors, seeking to legitimise their rule by a quasi liturgical commemoration of important political events,¹⁰³ promoted the yearly commemoration of the battle of the Lechfeld on St-Lawrence day and granted the archbishops within their empire the right to wear the *pallium* on this day.¹⁰⁴ The day of St-Lawrence was thereafter used quite often in historiography as a liturgical date, not only to remember the battle of the Lechfeld, but also as a point of reference to date other (political) events.¹⁰⁵ The explicit interpretation of the battle of the Lechfeld as God’s own election of Otto as the emperor of the Franks cannot be found in Folcuin’s chronicle.¹⁰⁶ However, the liturgical framing of the story, embedding Otto’s action in a sacred context, does suggest that this is how Folcuin evaluated

⁹⁹ Adso, *De ortu*, ed. Verhelst 43: *Ad reginam Gerbergam, heinrici Saxorum nobilissimi regis filiam*.

¹⁰⁰ In some later, West-Frankish versions of Adso’s text the phrase *unus ex regibus Francorum* was replaced by *unus igitur ex Francigenis*. Since the word *Francigena*, which at first referred to the Franks and their descendants, was later used in opposition to *Teutonici*, the alteration implied that the ‘last and greatest of Frankish kings’ had to be of ‘French’ lineage. Cf. Verhelst, Adso Dervensis 50.

¹⁰¹ Widukind, *Res gestae Saxonicae* III, 44–49, ed. Bauer/Rau 152–158; Thietmar, *Chronicon* II, 10, ed. Holzmann/Trillmich 45.

¹⁰² See Widukind, *Res gestae Saxonicae* III, 49, ed. Bauer/Rau 158: *Triumpho celebri rex factus gloriosus ad exercitu pater patriae imperatorque appellatus est*.

¹⁰³ It has often been suggested that the Ottonians used the liturgy of the Church as a means to represent the legitimacy of their rule. Liturgical texts and the rituals of Church festivals provided the specific means to express ruler identity. Hagen Keller, *Herrscherbild und Herrschaftslegitimation. Zur Deutung der ottonischen Denkmäler*, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 19 (1985) 290–311, at 297; Sierck, *Festtag und Politik* 409; Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft* 23. “Das sakrale Königtum erscheint in ottonischer Zeit vor allem als ein liturgisches Phänomen.” The increasing use of liturgical dating in early eleventh-century historiography will undoubtedly be correlated to this.

¹⁰⁴ Reuter, *Regemque* 371. Other examples of efforts undertaken by Ottonian rulers to stress the significance of St-Lawrence day and of the commemoration of the battle of the Lechfeld as an important identity-building moment in Ottonian history, are: the foundation of a church dedicated to St. Lawrence in Merseburg, the coronation of Queen Kunigunde on the day of St. Lawrence in the year 1002 (Thietmar, *Chronicon* V, 16, ed. Holzmann/Trillmich 212) and a charter issued by Otto I in 965 on August 10 (day of St-Lawrence) in Merseburg. D.O. I., nr. 307 (ed. Theodor Sickel, *MGH DD regum et imperatorum Germaniae* I, Hannover 1888) 422. Otto’s stay in Merseburg at the time, exactly ten years after the battle of the Lechfeld, is taken to have served the foundation the bishopric Merseburg, which was eventually founded in 968. According to Thietmar’s description of the battle of the Lechfeld, Otto had promised on the battle field that if he would obtain victory over the Magyars, he would found a bishopric in Merseburg. Thietmar, *Chronicon* II, 10, ed. Holzmann/Trillmich 44f.

¹⁰⁵ Thietmar, *Chronicon* V, 16, ed. Holzmann/Trillmich 212; Thangmar, *Vita Bernwardi episcopi Hildesheimensis* 39 (1002) (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, *MGH SS* 4, Hannover 1841) 754–782, at 775. Other examples are offered by Johannes, *Chronicon venetum* (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, *MGH SS* 7, Hannover 1846) 4–38, at 35; *Annales Sangallenses maiores* a. 989 (ed. Ildefonsus von Arx, *MGH SS* 1, Hannover 1826) 76–81, at 80; Thietmar, *Chronicon* V, 70 (1012), ed. Holzmann/Trillmich 318.

¹⁰⁶ It should be noted that Folcuin does call Otto ‘emperor’ in his account of the battle of the Lechfeld, even though Otto was not yet crowned. But perhaps here the title ‘emperor’ should be read in the classical meaning of ‘commander of the army’.

the event.¹⁰⁷ A similar literary strategy could already be found in the Frankish royal biographies¹⁰⁸ and in the *Annales regni Francorum*.¹⁰⁹ The authors of these texts employed liturgical dating to highlight events in the life of the Carolingian rulers as for example a coronation, royal succession, battles or the death of a king. Moreover, in the *Annales regni Francorum* liturgical dates are used to condemn the actions of the opponents of the Carolingian rulers.¹¹⁰ Just as Folcuin had done in his chronicle, when describing the Magyar attacks, the Annals date the ‘atrocities’ of these opponents by reference to the liturgical calendar,¹¹¹ to show that they are to be considered not just as the enemies of the Franks, but as enemies of the Church, who dare to assault the Franks during the holy time of Easter itself of all days.¹¹²

A STANDSTILL OF TIME

Liturgical dating starts to appear in Folcuin’s chronicle from about 950 onwards, from the moment Folcuin first introduces Otto.¹¹³ This can hardly be a coincidence. After the chronologically confused section in which Folcuin described the period 840–950 as a chaotic phase in Frankish history, he

¹⁰⁷ Folcuin’s chronicle of Lobbes is together with Ruotger’s *Vita Brunonis* one of the few tenth-century sources mentioning the day of Saint Lawrence as the date of the battle of the Lechfeld. (Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis* 35, ed. Ott 36.) The entry in the *Annales Sangallenses maiores* for 955, a text which also dates the battle to St-Lawrence day, was possibly made in the tenth century as well (*Annales Sangallenses maiores* 955, ed. von Arx 79). Hans-Werner Goetz lists nine instances of the day of Saint Lawrence mentioned in tenth-century sources, but this is not correct and caused by a misreading of Paul Hildebrand’s study; a study that includes eleventh-century chronicles treating tenth-century events. Goetz, *Kirchenfest* 134; Hildebrand, *Datierung* 52–92.

¹⁰⁸ Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris* 42, 47, 56 (ed. Ernst Tremp, Thegan, *Die Taten Kaiser Ludwigs*, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. [64], Hannover 1995) 167–278, at 228, 240, 252. In the Astronomer’s *Vita Hludowici* we find many instances of liturgical dating. A few examples: Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici* 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50 etc., ed. Tremp 450, 454, 464, 470, 474, 486. In Einhard’s *Vita Karoli Magni* liturgical dating does not occur, except on one occasion: when the gallery between the church and the palace at Aachen collapsed, the event is dated to Ascension Day (*in die Ascensionis Domini*). This event was seen as a premonition of Charlemagne’s death. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* 32 (ed. Reinhold Rau, Einhard, *Das Leben Karls des Großen*, Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte 1, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 5, Darmstadt 1993) 163–213, at 202. The same event is described in the *Annales regni Francorum* but dated to another day. According to these annals the gallery collapsed on Holy Thursday. *Annales regni Francorum* a. 817 (ed. Reinhold Rau, *Die Reichsannalen*, Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte 1, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 5, Darmstadt 1993) 10–157, at 113.

¹⁰⁹ *Annales regni Francorum* a. 781, 783, 817, 823, ed. Rau 41, 47, 113, 133. The East-Frankish pendant to the *Annales regni Francorum*, the *Annales Fuldenses*, employ liturgical dating even more frequently than their model. *Annales Fuldenses* (ed. Reinhold Rau, *Jahrbücher von Fulda*, Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte 3, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 7, Darmstadt 1993) 19–179.

¹¹⁰ *Annales regni Francorum* 798, 799, ed. Rau 69. Note in these and above mentioned examples at note 109 the frequent occurrence of the word *ipse* (it happened *exactly* on the day...).

¹¹¹ Enemy raids are often mentioned in annals and other historiographical texts to have taken place during the time of Easter or other holy days. Sierck, *Festtag und Politik* 272–275, argues that apparently even the pagan Vikings preferred to attack during holy days, because they were hoping for a special protection from the Christian saints themselves. I wonder, however, if in this case the sources do not give the wrong impression. Probably many attacks indeed took place during the time of Easter, because it happened to be the appropriate time of old for military expeditions. In early Spring the weather conditions were suitable for military action. However, if the sources stress that these attacks took place *exactly* during the time of Easter (or, in the case of local monastic historiography *exactly* on the day of their patron saint), it could also be a form of rhetoric, meant to morally condemn the event. See for example the references at notes 79 and 112.

¹¹² A similar example, though pertaining to an earlier period in history, can be found in Hieronymus’ *Chronicon*. Hieronymus dated the persecution of the Church by emperor Diocletian to the time of Easter, in order to express his moral disapproval. Even though Hieronymus never dates events according to days or months, he significantly dates Diocletian’s persecution to “the month of March during the days of Easter” (*Diocletiani anno mens Martio in diebus paschae ecclesiae subversae sunt*). Hieronymus, *Chronicon* a. 2519 (ed. Rudolf Helm, *Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, Berlin 1956) 228.

¹¹³ Another example of a tenth-century Lotharingian chronicle using liturgical dates in its treatment of political history is Adalbert’s continuation of Regino’s chronicle. Adalbert, *Continuatio Reginonis*, ed. Bauer/Rau. Adalbert, the later archbishop of Magdeburg, originally came from a reformed Lotharingian monastery, St-Maximin. Like Folcuin, he

presented the reign of Otto I as a time in which peace and order for the Church were restored. A new start in history was made, lasting until Folcuin's own time. The use of liturgical dating in this part of the chronicle can be explained as a means to create an impression of stability and continuity. Just as chronological dates reflect views on historical development, liturgical dating can suggest a 'freezing' of linear time. This type of dating should, however, not be regarded as an a-historical phenomenon per se, because of its cyclical pattern.¹¹⁴ In Ottonian historiography liturgical dating did have an historical referent. It was connected to the practice of Ottonian rulers, who tried to link the memory of important political events to the already existing festivals of the liturgical calendar, in order to express and confirm their identity as Christian rulers. They (rulers as well as historiographers) made clever use of the ecclesiastical calendar, as they understood that a liturgical, cyclical pattern of dating made it possible to reaffirm the historical moment over and over again,¹¹⁵ extending it into the future.¹¹⁶ Folcuin applied the same principle in his chronicle. Already in his prologue he made it clear that he expected Frankish rule (in his days in the hands of the Ottonians) to last forever. From the moment he first introduced Otto in his chronicle, Folcuin brought time as if to a standstill by exchanging chronological dates for liturgical dates. Thus, he expressed his hopes for an everlasting continuation of Ottonian rule, a rule that had finally brought peace and stability for the Church and, above all, had promised royal protection for his own monastery.

To sum up: liturgical dating is not an inexact way of dating events, but was often used as a literary technique to interpret events and to express political loyalties. Just as other forms of measuring time, liturgical dating was a cultural construct based on a natural phenomenon; as a regular feature of monastic memory, liturgical dates were used as a literary means to structure time and history. Folcuin employed different dating systems to organise and interpret the history of his monastery and to relate Lobbes' most recent history to that of the Ottonian empire. In many chronicles the treatment of recent history posed a problem, as it was more difficult to interpret than a long-gone past. Folcuin's case was no different. Perhaps his task was rendered even more difficult because of the complex political situation of Lotharingia. He seems to have found a solution to this problem by treating his complex present in liturgical dating. Thus he linked linear history, in this instance recent Ottonian history, to the cyclical time of the Church: a time-frame that was unchangeable by any political upheaval and that was to him, being a monk, perhaps the most familiar way of dealing with time and history.¹¹⁷

employed liturgical dating to provide a sanctifying context to the life and deeds of the Ottonian emperors, particularly of emperor Otto I. Also in Adalbert's chronicle liturgical dates only start to occur from about 940/ 950.

¹¹⁴ Discussion has long been dominated by a binary opposition of linear and cyclical time, regarding linear time as historical and Christian; cyclical time as mythical, a-historical and pagan. Moreover, linear time was taken as the hallmark of literate societies; cyclical time as a characteristic of non-literate societies. This dualistic view does not do justice to, e.g. the cyclical aspects of Judaic-Christian time or to the historical referents of cyclical-liturgical memory.

¹¹⁵ Contrary to the opinion of a.o. Jan Assmann, *Der ägyptischen Chronotop. Zeit und Geschichte im alten Ägypten*, in: id. *Kalender* 25–38, at 30: "Das zyklische Gedächtnis hat demgegenüber eher mit Vergessen als mit Erinnern zu tun. Es handelt sich um eine Art struktureller Amnesie. Das Gedächtnis ist ganz von der Bewahrung der zeitlosen Muster und Modelle in Anspruch genommen, so daß kontingente Daten sich nicht zu linearen Ereignisketten formieren, sondern herausfallen und vergessen werden." We only need to think of the yearly celebration in our days of, e.g. July 14, to see that cyclical commemoration can serve to preserve memory of historical events.

¹¹⁶ See also Keller, *Herrschaftslegitimation* 297, who argues that the Ottonian emperors preferred to represent their reign within the liturgical range, not only to provide a sacred legitimisation for their rule, but also because the liturgical practice of the Church enabled them to confirm this legitimacy over and over again.

¹¹⁷ After finishing this article, I found in the State archives of Mons a manuscript that contains another tenth-century chronicle of Lobbes. Here, the history of the monastery is structured according to a different time-frame. Most likely this short chronicle was written by Folcuin as well, or else, it was composed under his supervision. I am currently preparing an edition of this text.

