

**ARISTOCRATIC AND MONASTIC CONFLICT IN TENTH-CENTURY ITALY:
THE CASE OF BOBBIO AND THE *MIRACULA SANCTI COLUMBANI***

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On the morning of Friday 17 July 929 the abbot of Bobbio and four monks dressed in liturgical vestments descended into the crypt of their abbatial church. The group approached the sarcophagus (which they had opened the night before with trepidation) containing the body of their saint and patron, Columbanus. They prostrated themselves on the ground in prayer and implored the saint to allow them to remove his body from its resting place. Then, they reverentially lifted the body of the saint and placed it in a pine chest, securing it with iron bars. As the small group left the crypt and ascended the steps into the church they were greeted by a throng of people holding candles, lamps, and incense burners. The packed church resounded in song as they carried the saint towards a throne set before the altar of St Peter, where the congregation, moved to tears, cried out: “Saint Columbanus, come to our aid! We are your people and we ask you to beseech the Lord, lest we perish!”¹

This dramatic translation was the culmination of days of secret planning by Gerlan, abbot of Bobbio and arch-chancellor of the Italian kingdom. Gerlan had been a courtier in the retinue of Count Hugh and Countess Alda of Provence before he had been made

¹ “Sancte Columbane, adiuva nos! Tui sumus, obsecra Dominum, ne pereamus!” *Miracula Sancti Columbani* [hereafter *MSC*] 10, ed. by Harry Bresslau, *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae* [*MGH*], *Scriptores*, 30/ 2 (Leipzig: Deutsches Institut für Erforschung des Mittelalters, 1934), pp. 993-1015, at p. 1002.

chancellor, abbot of Bobbio, and then arch-chancellor following Hugh's election as king of Italy by the Italian nobles in 926.² Gerlan's accession to the abbacy coincided with a time when the fortunes of the monastery were on the wane. Gerlan discovered that the vast swathe of monastic lands that constituted the *terra sancti Columbani*,³ accrued since the monastery's foundation in the seventh century, had come under threat from the territorial ambitions of local bishops and nobles. A group of prominent Italian magnates (*principes*) including the bishop and count of Piacenza, Guido, and his brother Raginerius, had appropriated lands and possessions belonging to the monastery.⁴

The abbot naturally appealed to his friend the king for justice, but Hugh was powerless to intervene, or at least chose not to do so directly. Having been elected to the kingship by the Italian nobles, Hugh was realistic about the limitations of his royal title. He told Gerlan bluntly that he did not have the power to reclaim the stolen lands due to fear of losing the kingship. The nobles, he told the abbot, had made a habit of rebelling against him.⁵ Only two years previously, in 927, Hugh had managed to prevent a potential rebellion when two royal judges in Pavia had attempted to stage a coup to assassinate

² On Gerlan, see François Bougard, 'Gerlanno', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 53 (Treccani: Rome, 1999), pp. 431-34.

³ On the *terra sancti Columbani*, see Eleonora Destefanis, *Il Monastero di Bobbio in Età Altomedievale* (Florence: All'Insegna del Giglio, 2002), pp. 66-102; Giacomo Coperchini, 'Le terre di S. Colombano: la 'valle in qua situm est monasterium'', *Archivum Bobiense*, 22 (2000), pp. 291-304.

⁴ Tempore excellentissimi regis Hugonis erant principes in Italia, qui nec recta facere neque etiam consentire cupiebant, ... Inter quos erant Wido episcopus Placentinae urbis et Rainerius et non pauci alii, qui res aeclesiae Bobiensis abstractus habebant et iniuste suo iuri coniunctas. *MSC* 8, p. 1001.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 1001-2.

him.⁶ Instead, Hugh suggested an alternative strategy by which Gerlan might be able to reclaim the stolen lands from the nobles. He told the abbot that he would be holding an assembly with his nobles at the court in Pavia, and advised Gerlan to exhume the body of Columbanus and to take it in procession to Pavia to confront the culprits. Such an undertaking might persuade the nobles to cease their rapacious plundering (*rapacitate*).⁷

In the absence of direct royal intervention, Hugh suggested a new strategy that ecclesiastical institutions would have to resort to more and more during the course of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries in order to safeguard their patrimonial rights.⁸ The translation and procession of relics in disputes over property was a method increasingly used by ecclesiastical organisations in the tenth century. The case of Bobbio is one of the earliest and most dramatic examples of this new way in which monastic communities interacted with secular authorities in order to maintain landed wealth and spiritual authority.⁹ The ostentatious display of relics, which is discussed elsewhere in this

⁶ Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis* III. 39-40, in *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona*, ed. by Joseph Becker, *MGH, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum separatim editi* (Hanover and Leipzig: Deutsches Institut für Erforschung des Mittelalters, 1915), pp. 92-93.

⁷ *MSC* 8, p. 1002.

⁸ For later examples, see Baudouin de Gaiffier, 'Les revendications de biens dans quelques documents hagiographiques du XI^e siècle', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 50 (1932), pp. 123-39. On monastic property, see Rosemary Morris, 'The problems of property', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600-c. 1100*, ed. by Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 327-44; Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁹ Luxeuil in the 920s seems to be the only continental example of the journeying of relics with the specific intention of claiming rights over land previous to the translation of Columbanus at Bobbio. The influence of Irish monasticism in the Columbanian tradition may have influenced these practices, since the circulation of relics for 'confirming right and law' occurred earlier there than on mainland Europe: Bougard, 'La relique au procès', p. 55-56. On the uses of relics and pilgrimage by the clergy in southern France

volume, was a strategy used by monastic communities to engage and attract the support of the lay community. Although the use of relics to resolve conflicts was a long-established practice, it became more common from the Carolingian period onwards. With the fragmentation in royal authority and the change towards more regional and autonomous forms of lordship during the tenth century, new measures were adopted by ecclesiastical institutions that resulted in the procession of relics to places or boundaries that were contested, and to relics being used at peace assemblies.¹⁰ Aptly referred to as ‘une stratégie de la tension’ by Dominique Barthélemy,¹¹ this practice was, nevertheless, only one tool in a monastic arsenal that included ritual cursing, humiliation of relics, and excommunication. Edina Bozóky has referred to the use of relics at assemblies and in processions as constituting ‘alternative demonstrations of power’, as relics came to appropriate two important roles of sovereign power: the upholding of peace and the assurance of justice.¹²

When Abbot Gerlan asked the king to intervene when Bobbio’s lands were appropriated by his nobles, Hugh told him that he did not have the power to do so for fear of losing the

see Bernard Töpfer, ‘The cult of relics and pilgrimage in Burgundy and Aquitaine at the time of the monastic reform’, in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France Around the Year 1000*, ed. by Thomas Head and Richard Allen Landes (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 41-57.

¹⁰ Nicole Hermann-Mascard, *Les Reliques des Saints. Formation coutumière d’un droit* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1975), pp. 228-9. On saints and legal matters, see also Hans-Jürgen Becker, ‘Der Heilige und das Recht’, in *Politik und Heiligenverehrung im Hochmittelalter*, ed. by Jürgen Petersohn (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994), pp. 53-70, esp. pp. 65-68.

¹¹ Dominique Barthélemy, *L’an Mil et la Paix de Dieu. La France Chrétienne et Féodale 980-1060* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), p. 100.

¹² Edina Bozóky, ‘Voyage de reliques et démonstration du pouvoir aux temps féodaux’, in *Voyages et Voyageurs au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), pp. 267-80, at pp. 279-80.

kingship. Hugh's frank acknowledgement of ineptitude when faced with the power of the Italian nobles appears to reinforce Bozóky's statement. Hugh's position, however, was untenable. He came to the kingship following the assassination of his predecessor, Berengar I, by the Italian nobles. Berengar's reign (King of Italy 887-915; Emperor 915-924) marked a watershed between 'royal power and royal impotence' in Italy,¹³ as he did more than any other Italian king to alienate fiscal lands and rights to local lords. This political short-sightedness was combined with a disastrous military record, as Berengar had proved incapable of stemming the Magyar incursions into Northern Italy that had begun around the turn of the tenth century and which continued until the 950s.¹⁴ The effectiveness of royal representation in the countryside was also undermined by Berengar's alienation of royal prerogatives into the hands of local families. Chris Wickham has seen Berengar's *incastellamento* charters—as the documents which witness this process are known)—as a 'demonstration of military weakness ... that broke up the coherence of comital jurisdiction in the countryside.'¹⁵ Hugh, therefore, came to the throne in 926 well aware of the fate of his predecessor and under no illusion as to the limitations of his power. It was the Italian magnates, particularly the rulers of the marches, who exercised real political power.

Hugh's advice to the abbot to take the saint's relics to Pavia signalled to the monastic community that they could no longer depend on royal patronage and protection in safeguarding their patrimony. New and more forceful measures had to be adopted by the

¹³ Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400-1000* (London: University of Michigan Press, 1981), p. 172.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 171-73.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 173.

community itself. In his recent book on Bobbio, Michael Richter remarked that the translation and procession of the relics in 929 was ‘a drastic step in the history of the monastery’ that attempted to halt a decline in the fortunes of the monastery.¹⁶ The Italian scholar, Michele Tosi, similarly viewed it as a desperate attempt to save Bobbio’s landed patrimony.¹⁷ Both, however, saw the effective decline in Bobbio as having begun much earlier in time with Charlemagne’s conquest of the Lombard kingdom in 774. Bobbio’s close ties to the Lombard monarchy had led to an uneasy relationship with its new masters, Tosi argued,¹⁸ while for Richter the Carolingian era was ‘a mixed blessing for the monastery’ due to Carolingian indirect rule and general disinterest in their Italian kingdom.¹⁹

The majority of Bobbio’s landed wealth does appear to have been acquired during the Lombard period. The core of Bobbio’s lands were located in a triangle of mountainous valleys stretching from Bobbio to the river Po in the north and the ancient *via Postumia* linking Piacenza and Voghera, with the rivers Trebbia and Staffora defining the eastern and western limits.²⁰ In a diploma of 747 issued by King Ratchis for Bobbio we find that the confines of this territory, or at least parts of it, were clearly demarcated as monastic land. A dispute over a donation of land had arisen between Bobbio and Mezzano, a neighbouring monastery, and the king had set up an inquest to deal with the matter. Royal

¹⁶ Michael Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages: The Abiding Legacy of Columbanus* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), p. 172.

¹⁷ Michele Tosi, ‘Il trasferimento di san Colombano da Bobbio a Pavia: 17-30 luglio 929’, *Archivum Bobiense*, 3 (1981), pp. 129-50, at p. 129.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 133.

¹⁹ Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 97.

²⁰ See Tosi, ‘Il trasferimento di san Colombano’, pp. 130-32.

officials were sent to question local foresters (*silvani*) on the boundaries, which were clearly marked by iron nails in trees and, on open ground, by wooden crosses. The foresters swore on the Gospels that the boundaries were correct and the property was reinstated to Bobbio.²¹ While this shows the Lombard king taking an active role in dispute settlement, it is also illustrative as to how the monastery chose to demarcate its territory. Eleonora Destefanis, in writing about the means and strategies of Bobbio's expansion, notes that the area and extent of its patrimony had taken shape already by the beginning of the eighth century.²² During this period the community began to expand its territories, acquiring properties north of the Po in the area around Lake Garda and towards the Ligurian coast, to the south of Bobbio. By the ninth century the patrimony had grown consistently and commanded vast territorial estates located in geographically distant areas.²³ Destefanis has seen Bobbio as pursuing a policy of expansion during this period, one that increasingly came into conflict with episcopal and aristocratic authorities. She draws attention to its attempts to control nodal centres (above all in relation to communication networks), while preventing other ecclesiastical organizations from extending their influence in these territories. In the second half of the ninth century the construction of fortifications in areas linked to the bishop of Piacenza reflects action on the part of the bishop to undermine Bobbio's position.²⁴ Furthermore, the granting of monastic lands as benefices to new potentates led to these lands becoming alienated as an

²¹ *Codice Diplomatico del Monastero di San Colombano di Bobbio fino all'anno MCCVIII*, ed. by Carlo Cipolla and Giulio Buzzi [hereafter *CDB*], *Fonti per la Storia d'Italia* 52-54, 3 vols (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1918), I, doc. XXIV, p. 126.

²² Destefanis, *Il Monastero di Bobbio*, p. 66.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 71.

²⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 78-79.

Apennine aristocracy emerged.²⁵ Control of the monastic lands thus became a means for aristocrats and ecclesiastical organizations to redress the balance of power in the area.

The attempts by bishops and lords to undermine Bobbio's patrimony from the middle of the ninth century may also indicate a change in perception towards Bobbio's status as a monastery. It is no coincidence that we know more about Bobbio's economy during this period than about its spirituality.²⁶ Emperor Louis II's division of Bobbio's patrimony in the early 860s marked a major interference by a ruler in the affairs of the monastery. In this *praeceptum divisionis* one part of the patrimony remained for the use of the community while the other half came under the control of the emperor. The monastery effectively became a royal fief with the ruler dictating how the lands would be distributed in the portion under his control.²⁷ We see the consequences of this royal interference in the surveys of 862 and 883 undertaken on the initiative of Louis II and later under Charles the Fat.²⁸ In the second detailed survey of 883 the patrimony consisted of fifty-

²⁵ Destefanis, *Il Monastero di Bobbio*, p. 79. On the inter-relationship between other Italian monasteries and secular authorities during this period, see, e.g., Marios Costambeys, *Power and Patronage in Early Medieval Italy: Local Society, Italian Politics, and the Abbey of Farfa, c. 700-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Chris Wickham, 'Monastic lands and monastic patrons', in *San Vincenzo al Volturno, 2: The 1980-86 Excavations, Part II*, ed. by Richard Hodges (London: British School at Rome, 1995), pp. 138-52; for land disputes in Lombard and Carolingian Italy, see Chris Wickham, 'Land disputes and their social framework in Lombard-Carolingian Italy, 700-900', in *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400-1200*, ed. by Chris Wickham (London: British School at Rome, 1994), pp. 229-56.

²⁶ Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 125.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 104.

²⁸ *CDB*, I, docs LXIII and LXVIII, pp. 184-217; 230. Also edited by Andrea Castagnetti, 'S. Colombano di Bobbio', in *Inventari Altomedievali di Terre, Coloni e Redditi* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1979), pp. 119-92. For an in-depth study of the ninth-century economic situation, see Ludo Moritz Hartmann, 'L'attività economica del monastero di Bobbio nel IX secolo', *Archivum Bobiense*, 2 (1980), pp. 107-35.

six units of land amounting to 11,605 hectares, which made it the second largest monastic landowner in Northern Italy.²⁹ The community commanded a workforce of 724 men and had almost 3500 people living on its estates. These estates had the capability of producing 2011 measures of grain, 1228 jars of wine, 1500 carts of hay, 885 pounds of oil, 970 hens (plus eggs), woodland to feed 4190 pigs, and tithes to the value of over twelve silver pounds. 47 percent of this was woodland, 38 percent arable, 14 percent grassland, and 1 percent viticulture.³⁰ It was a sizeable mixed woodland-arable economy. As Richter noted, ‘The substantial decline that was to mark the next two generations is as yet not palpable.’³¹ However, diplomatic evidence from the end of the ninth century shows that Bobbio was coming under increasing pressure. In 891 Bernard, bishop of Piacenza, had obtained a papal privilege giving him jurisdiction over Bobbio. The monks turned to the emperor for help. In 893, he granted them a diploma that prohibited ecclesiastical intrusion.³² In 896 Emperor Lambert, on the intervention of Count Anscarius, issued a diploma that confirmed the property of Bobbio while stipulating that an inquest should be convened to deal with the controversy over possessions.³³ Again, in 903 a similar diploma was issued by Berengar I who took the community under his guardianship (*mundiburdium*),³⁴ while in 915 we find him presiding over an inquest at Pavia where a dispute over a property at Barbada claimed by Radaldus, a marcher lord, was resolved in favour of Bobbio.³⁵

²⁹ Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 134.

³⁰ Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 135.

³¹ Ibid. p. 133.

³² *CDB*, I, doc. LXXIII, pp. 242-248.

³³ *CDB*, I, doc. LXXIV, pp. 249-254.

³⁴ *CDB*, I, doc. LXXXI, pp. 272-280; renewed at LXXXII, pp. 280-283.

³⁵ *CDB*, I, doc. LXXXV, pp. 284-288.

In 924 Berengar was assassinated following one Magyar incursion too many (and after Pavia had been pillaged). Two years later Hugh of Provence was elected king. However, in attempting to create a more stable government that transcended factionalism, Hugh alienated his Italian nobles by promoting many of those from his Burgundian entourage and later his family to positions of power.

The magnates who appropriated the possessions of Bobbio were prominent members of Hugh's court and included the Franks, Count Samson and Gandolf. The latter became count and later marquis of Piacenza following the death of Count Raginerius in 929.³⁶ Raginerius and his brother, Bishop Guido of Piacenza, appear to have been the main protagonists in the Bobbio case.³⁷ It is likely that Raginerius was made count due to the influence of his brother, who had been prominent at the court of Berengar I.³⁸ The bishop had been a counsellor and friend of the king and appears in a number of Berengar's charters.³⁹ François Bougard noted that the end of the reign of Berengar and the accession of Hugh of Provence led to major changes in the profile of the counts of

³⁶ On Count Samson as a close associate of King Hugh, see *Antapadosis* III. 41. See also Eduard Hlawitschka, *Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunder in Oberitalien, 774-962* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Forschungen zur Oberrheinischen Landesgeschichte, 1960), pp. 259-62. On Gandolf and the Gandolfingi, see François Bougard, 'Entre Gandolfingi et Obertenghi: les comtes de Plaisance aux X^e et XI^e siècles', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 101 (1989), pp. 11-66.

³⁷ On Bishop Guido, see Irene Scaravelli, 'Guido, vescovo di Piacenza', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 61 (Rome: Treccani, 2003), pp. 398-400; on Raginerius, see Hlawitschka, *Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunder*, pp. 249-50.

³⁸ Bougard, 'Entre Gandolfingi et Obertenghi', pp. 19-20.

³⁹ See *I Diplomi di Berengario I*, ed. by Luigi Schiaparelli (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1903).

Piacenza.⁴⁰ Raginerius has been seen as a representative of an aristocracy in the process of renewal. He and Gandolf (bestowed with the title on Raginerius's death) were the new men Hugh appointed to high office, although in these cases it appears he did so in order to ensure the loyalty of men who had been prominent in Berengar's entourage. Gandolf was appointed a marquis in 931. His son, Boso, although not granted his father's title, nevertheless succeeded in creating a vast territorial base orientated towards the mountainous zone in the county of Piacenza around the *castrum* of Nibbiano.⁴¹ This was the heartland of Bobbio's patrimony. In the 980s the abbot of Bobbio reproached Boso for infringing on monastic property. It was only from the later tenth century under the Ottonian rulers that another family, the Obertenghi, succeeded in making the title of Count of Piacenza a dynastic one.⁴² However, the location and distribution of Boso's estates clearly shows the penetration of the Counts of Piacenza into the *terra sancti Columbani*. The route followed by the procession in 929 closely skirted the estates of Boso.⁴³

The author of the *Miracula* in referring to the group of nobles likened them to the evil men of Proverbs 24. 1-2: 'Seek not to be like evil men, neither desire to be with them:

⁴⁰ Bougard, 'Entre Gandolfingi et Obertenghi', p. 18.

⁴¹ See Bougard, 'Entre Gandolfingi et Obertenghi', p. 23; on Bobbio in the later tenth century and on continuing tensions with bishops and nobles, see Mario Nobili, 'Vassalli su terra monastica fra re e 'principi': il caso di Bobbio (seconda metà del sec. X – inizi del sec. XI', in *Structures Féodales et Féodalisme dans l'Occident Méditerranéen (X^e-XIII^e siècles)* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1980), pp. 299-309; Andrea Piazza, *Monastero e Vescovado di Bobbio (dalla fine del X agli inizi del XIII secolo)* (Spoleto: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1997).

⁴² Bougard, 'Entre Gandolfingi et Obertenghi', p. 37.

⁴³ See the map in Bougard, 'Entre Gandolfingi et Obertenghi', p. 43.

because their mind studieth robberies, and their lips speak deceits.’⁴⁴ It is, of course, difficult to get an objective view of these nobles, particularly the main culprit, Bishop Guido of Piacenza. We know that he had previously appealed to Rome about the unlawful behaviour of Abbot Theodelassius. Bobbio had apparently withheld payment of tithes to the diocesan bishop and had chosen another bishop to consecrate the new abbot. Theodelassius had been summoned to a synod at Pavia where he produced a letter from the current Pope, John X. When this proved to be a forgery, John X had warned the abbot to correct his behaviour or appear in Rome to be disciplined.⁴⁵ The audacity of Theodelassius shows the lengths to which Bobbio was prepared to go to justify its autonomy from the diocesan bishop and protect its patrimony. This reached its climax in 929 and the author’s account of the procession of Columbanus’s relics to Pavia and the resolution of the conflict at the royal court there is a fascinating account of the role of ritual and the importance of legal documentation in the often complex discourses between monastic and secular power. It shows a new more public strategy adopted by the community that complements Gerd Althoff’s belief that ‘medieval public communication was ritual and demonstrative.’⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *MSC* 8, p. 1001.

⁴⁵ *CDB*, I, doc. LXXXVI, pp. 288-290.

⁴⁶ Gerd Althoff, ‘The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages’, in *Medieval Concepts of the Past, Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. by Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 71-87, at p. 73. On early medieval ritual and different theoretical approaches, see Janet L. Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986); Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Geoffrey Koziol, ‘The Dangers of Polemic: Is Ritual Still an Interesting Topic of Historical Study?’ *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002), pp. 367-88; Christina Pössel, ‘The magic of early medieval ritual’, *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009), pp. 111-25.

The importance of ritual is evident from the outset of the procession from Bobbio. The abbot appointed two presbyters who, for as long as the relics were being carried, were to ring two hand-bells, while the secondary relics, the cup of Columbanus and the leather satchel he used for his Bible, were to be carried in front of the casket with crosses, candles, and incense burners.⁴⁷ Later in the eleventh century the monks of Conques in the Rouergue (modern day Aveyron) employed a similar practice when setting out with the gold reliquary of St Foy to reclaim a property that had been usurped. The author notes that it was a:

deeply rooted practice and firmly established custom that, if land given to Sainte Foy is unjustly appropriated by a usurper for any reason, the reliquary of the holy virgin is carried out to that land as a witness in regaining the right to her property. The monks announce that there will be a solemn procession of clergy and laity, who move forward with great formality carrying candles and lamps. A processional cross goes in front of the holy relics, embellished all around with enamels and gold and studded with a variety of gems flashing like stars. The novices serve by carrying a gospel book, holy water, clashing cymbals, and even trumpets made of ivory that were donated by noble pilgrims to adorn the monastery.⁴⁸

The presence of the local people both at Conques and at Bobbio is notable as it became customary to assemble the people in the main church when a community made a liturgical *clamor*, a ritual of tribulation to God, often made when monastic property was

⁴⁷ *MSC* 11, p. 1003.

⁴⁸ *Est enim mos insitus et inolita consuetudo, ut si terra sancte Fidi datur au tab iniusto pervasore qualibet ratione tollitur, sacre imaginis capsula eo deferatur in recipiendi iuris testimonium, edicta sollemniter processione cleri plebisque, cum cereis ac lampadibus omnique celebritate procedentis. Precedit sacra pignera processionalis crux, techis et auro circumtexta, ac vario gemmarum interstellata fulgore. Textus etiam sancti Evangelii, cum aqua benedicta, et sonantia cymbala, et etiam cornee tube a nobilibus peregrinis ornamenta causa in monasterio oblate, tyronum ministerio vehuntur. *Liber miraculorum sancte fidis* II. 4, ed. Luca Robertini (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1994), pp. 158-59. English translation in *Book of Sainte Foy*, trans. by Pamela Sheingorn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp. 120-21.*

under threat or had been appropriated.⁴⁹ Although this ritual became more common in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (particularly in France) the gathering of the local people in the church at Bobbio and the rituals of supplications that the author of the *Miracula* mentions shows that the basic components in the liturgical *clamor* had already taken shape by the mid-tenth century. When the procession left the monastery, many more people from the neighbouring hamlets came to venerate the saint. The abbot ordered the relics to be put down in a field near the bridge crossing the Trebbia (called *AdPontem*), a place that may have marked the outer confines of the monastic area.⁵⁰ Here, under a large tree, the monks carved a cross in the bark to mark where the relics had been set down. The abbot instructed that similar signs be carved into trees at each place the procession stopped. At each stage of the procession miracles took place that demonstrated the efficacy of the relics and the legitimacy of the community's cause. On one occasion, when the group had encamped near the river Po, the candles by the relics were extinguished and then miraculously relit. During the night mosquitoes stung all of the other monks apart from those keeping vigil over the relics!⁵¹

Covering over twenty kilometres a day, the procession reached the outskirts of Pavia in three days. There they received a message from the king telling them not to bring the body to the palace as he felt unworthy to receive it, but to place it in the church of San-Michele which at the time had the status of the royal chapel.⁵² It was where Hugh and

⁴⁹ See Lester K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 20.

⁵⁰ *MSC* 11, p. 1003.

⁵¹ *MSC* 14, p. 1005.

⁵² *MSC* 15, p. 1005.

some of his predecessors had been crowned and was the most important church in the city.⁵³ Hugh, as became obvious when he later visited the relics secretly at night, appears to have distanced himself, at least initially, from the enterprise he had initiated. The author notes that when the procession passed through the gate of St John that so many people had come to see the relics that the streets were not capable of containing them. They climbed on top of walls and on rooftops to try to get a glimpse of the holy body.⁵⁴ This *adventus* and the subsequent lying in state of Columbanus was accompanied by a series of miracles over the course of the following days leading up to the assembly of nobles. Lothar, the son of Hugh and his second wife, Alda, was healed of fever after he had slept by the relics and had drunk from the cup of Columbanus.⁵⁵ In gratitude, the queen came to the church with a gift of a cloth for the saint while she assured the monks she would intercede on their behalf with the king and his nobles. The king came that night to pray secretly before the saint, although he would later return with some of his magnates to speak with the monks and to present another gift to the saint.⁵⁶ Miracles were accompanied by the ringing of all the church bells in the city. In a further miracle Columbanus, a misogynist in life, struck dead a woman who had bitten off a piece of the chest containing his relics. The news of the woman's death was supposedly especially terrifying to other women who were afraid to approach the relics.⁵⁷

⁵³ See François Bougard, 'La relique au procès: autour des Miracles de saint Coloman', in *Le Règlement des Conflits au Moyen Âge. XXXI^e congrès de la Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur Public, Angers, mai 2000* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2001), pp. 35-66, at p. 39. See also, Piero Majocchi, *Pavia Città Regia: Storia e Memoria di una Capitale Medievale* (Rome: Viella, 2008), p. 64.

⁵⁴ MSC 15, p. 1005.

⁵⁵ MSC 16, p. 1006.

⁵⁶ MSC 17, p. 1006.

⁵⁷ MSC 19, p. 1007.

The monks were adept at publicizing these miracles, but they also sought more pragmatic means to regain their property. Perhaps growing tired of Hugh's inability to resolve the conflict, Abbot Gerlan sent two senior members of the community to Archbishop Lambert of Milan (the man who had invited Hugh to take up the kingship in 926) to petition his help in reclaiming the *res sancti Columbani* from the magnates. The archbishop advised the monks that they should take the relics to the contested areas and assured them that he would give them as much as he could to restore the monastery to its former status.⁵⁸

The nobles then gathered in Pavia for the assembly (*colloquium*) in the royal hall where the king ordered the cup of Columbanus to be brought. He and some of the other magnates drank from it, but Bishop Guido and his brother Raginerius refused. Tosi has seen this as a kind of trial by ordeal in which the basic juridical elements of the ordeal are present: the recourse through a ritualized act to divine judgement in order to ascertain guilt or innocence.⁵⁹ However, despite the fact that the ordeal was closely tied to royal power by Carolingian kings,⁶⁰ we should be hesitant in describing this ritual as an ordeal in the strict sense given that Guido and his brother's guilt was not in question. Rather, the drinking ritual may have been an astute way for the king to publicly shame the brothers while more publicly aligning himself with the saint's cause. The strategy worked as that night, the brothers fled the city, Raginerius even falling from his horse—the

⁵⁸ *MSC* 21, pp. 1007-08.

⁵⁹ Tosi, 'Il trasferimento di san Colombano', p. 147.

⁶⁰ Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 36.

quintessential aristocratic mode of divine punishment (although he was not killed).⁶¹ The remaining nobles proved just as difficult and refused to return the lands, even voicing their scepticism as to the authenticity of the relics: ““We will never return the possessions which you seek on account of the horses’ and donkeys’ bones that you have brought here!””⁶² This sacrilege caused one of Count Samson’s vassals to become mad. He was only healed after he had been brought to the relics (on which he slept) in the church and after his sister, a nun, prayed for him there.⁶³

These punishment miracles, while vindicating the authenticity and power of the relics, persuaded the nobles to return the stolen property. This led to a remarkable ritual in which those magnates came to the church of San-Michele where, in front of the body, they placed their staffs in the satchel of the saint and swore to return the lands they had taken from the saint.⁶⁴ This symbolic act was followed by the reading out of the papal privileges granted to the community on the orders of the king.⁶⁵ It becomes apparent from this chapter that the work was largely directed against the local diocesan, although which one is disputed.

⁶¹ *MSC* 21, p. 1008.

⁶² “Nolumus demittere possessions, quas queritis, propter ossa caballina vel asinine, quae huc detulistis” *MSC* 22, p. 1008. On such scepticism, see the classic account by Klaus Schreiner, “‘Discrimen veri ac falsi’: Ansätze und Formen der Kritik in der Heiligen- und Reliquienverehrung des Mittelalters”, *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 48 (1966), pp. 1-53.

⁶³ *MSC* 22, p. 1008. It is interesting that none of those cured after having slept by the relics experiences a vision of the saint.

⁶⁴ This is an extremely unusual ritual of which we know of no other comparable example. *MSC* 23, pp. 1008-09.

⁶⁵ *MSC* 23, p. 1009.

The passage of interest recounts in detail papal privileges granted to the monastery that specified the extent (or, better, the limits) of episcopal rights over the monastery. The author insists that the privileges ‘forbid the prelates, and above all those of the Holy Church of Tortona, and of Piacenza, who were neighbours, to ever seek—as had been tried recently—to remove from the Holy Apostolic See the aforesaid monastery or its belongings, and to subject it to their diocese.’⁶⁶ The author goes on:

I would like to know, Bishop, you who desire to annul the decrees of the aforesaid prelates, what you would wish to respond to that which you have just heard. ... Perhaps you would say, “I don’t want to be separated from their society, nor to be excommunicated from the body of our Lord Jesus Christ by the blessed Peter, because I know that it is truly the death of the soul, as He said: ‘Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.’ [John 6. 54]. And I do not want to break their decrees, but it is because I saw this monastery almost destroyed, and I wish to return it to grace, to its former status.” Oh Bishop, do not deceive yourself! Be careful of those of whom I spoke! Listen to those who tell you: “We will not let you enter the monastery without having been invited there by the father of the monastery or by the congregation of monks; and if you come invited, we forbid you by the authority of Saint Peter to usurp, appropriate or covet anything, but you should do freely everything that you were called to do, then return to your home without delay.” You say that [the monastery] is almost destroyed. You speak the truth. But if you act truly, so that it returns to its former status thanks to you, see to it that it has an abbot according to the rule, which accomplishes that which you claim you want to accomplish; then it would be clear that you possessed divine zeal, and that which is said to you is true, because as it is written: ‘No man can serve two masters.’ [Matthew 6. 24], just as you cannot manage your bishopric and govern the monks according to the rule of saint Benedict.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Et post pauca contradicunt etiam presulibus maximeque sanctae Terdonensis aecclesiae atque Placentinae, quae viciniores esse videntur, ut nullus umquam, quod moderno tempore est tempatum, predictum monasterium vel que ad ipsum pertinent ad sancta sede apostolica subtrahere et sue diocessi subiugare appetant. *MSC* 23, p. 1010.

⁶⁷ Velim scire, episcopo, qui decreta supradictorum presulum conaris inrumpere, quid ad haec, quae audisti, respondere cupis. Quid, rogo, tibi melius esse videtur? Si melius est societas supradictorum, quos scimus summos pastores et optimos fuisse viros et magni meriti apud Deum, sicut in Gestis eorum invenimus, quos etiam et vicarios in sede almi clavigerique Petri fore certissime scimus, an a societate ipsorum secludi et ab ipso, cui data est a Domino potestas in caelo et in terra ligandi atque solvendi, excommunicari et, quod summum et magnum malum est, a corpore et sanguine domini nostri Iesu Christi fore alienari. Forsitan dices: “Nolo segregari ab illorum societate neque a beato Petro

This diatribe is clearly aimed at a particular individual, whose identification is disputed, but who was almost certainly a bishop of Piacenza or Tortona. Bishop Guido of Piacenza and his brother Rainerius, Count of Piacenza, are two of the main enemies in 929, as the events at the royal court show. These two men are intimated to be among the worst offenders against the monastery, and Guido is the only bishop mentioned by name by the *Miracula*. Consequently Michele Tosi, proposed that Guido was the true intended recipient of the tirade against the bishop. He dismissed any contemporary relevance of the mention to the Bishop of Tortona in the first passage, interpreting it as a reference to a much older confrontation, one between the monastery of Bobbio and Bishop Procolo of Tortona in the seventh century. He also noted that the contemporary bishop of Tortona, Andrea da Racle, was not present at the events of 929, or at least was not singled out by name in the *Miracula*.⁶⁸

excommunicari a corpore domini nostri Iesu Christi, quo scio veraciter mortem esse animae, sicut ipse dicit: 'Qui non manducat meam carne et non bibit sanguinem meum, non habet vitam in semet ipso'; nec etiam decreta illorum inrumpere volo, sed quia video ipsum coenobium pene destructum esse, et cupio, ut per me ad pristinum redeat statum." O episcopo, noli te fallere! Cave, quod dico! Audi, quod ipsi tibi dicunt: "Non tibi permittimus ingredi in ipso coenobio, nisi invitatus fueris a patre monasterii vel a cunctis fratribus; et si invitatus veneris, interdicimus tibi ex auctoritate sancti Petri, ut nihil usurpes nihilque contingas nec etiam concupiscas, sed, ad quod vocatus es, gratis omnia peragas, ad propria mox regredi non moreris." Dicis enim, quod pene destructum est. Verum dicis. Sed si verum est, quod agis, ut per te ad pristinum redeat statum, hoc elabora, ut abbatem secundum regulam habeat, qui adimpleat hoc, quod tu asseris te velle adimplere, et tunc apparebit, quod zelo Dei utaris et illa vera sint, quae dicis, quia, sicut scriptum est: 'Non potestis duobus dominis servire', ita et tu non vales tuum episcopatum regere et monachos secundum regulam sancti Benedicti gubernare. *MSC* 23, pp. 1010-11.

⁶⁸ Michele Tosi, 'Il governo abbaziale di Gerberto a Bobbio', in *Gerberto: Scienze, Storia e Mito*, Atti del Gerberti Symposium - Bobbio 25-27 luglio 1983, *Archivum Bobiense Studia* 2 (Bobbio, 1985), pp. 75-76, n. 11.

But there is another possible intended recipient of the invective, and it seems to make more sense if it is read as having contemporary significance at the time of writing. Dating the work is not helped by the manuscript tradition, since the oldest extant manuscript dates to the eleventh century, and information from internal and historical evidence suggests that it was written during the tenth century.⁶⁹ Although the author of the *Miracula* is anonymous, and provides only scant autobiographical information, the indications are that he had lived at the monastery for some time, had probably been educated there, and thus was almost certainly a monk of the monastery, most likely writing from the scriptorium of Bobbio. The author narrates how he and others had seen the master carpenters at work on the pine chest that would transport the body of Columbanus to Pavia, but without knowing the reason for their labour.⁷⁰ The account of the translation was not written immediately following the events of 929, since the author tells us in the preface that he is devoting himself to writing about the saint's miracles some time after the events from the time of King Hugh, claiming that it had been necessary to delay somewhat on the topic. He assures the reader of the work's veracity

⁶⁹ The earliest known copy of the *MSC* is held at the Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino, MS F.IV.12 ff. 104v-117r. The manuscript is a large bound codex compiling various hagiographic material relating to Columbanus and his successors and is well known amongst Columbanus and palaeography scholars alike for its deluxe, highly decorated manuscript of the *Vita Columbani*, perhaps created immediately post-929 to celebrate the victory at Pavia: Fabrizio Crivello, *La Miniatura a Bobbio tra IX e X secolo e i suoi Modelli Carolingi* (Turin: Allemandi, 2001), p. 102. Three separate hands relate the *MSC*: a list of the chapters, the *prefaciuncula* and *capitula* 1 to 7 in fourteenth-century script (ff. 104v-108v; Bresslau's A₂), *capitula* 8 to 26 in eleventh/twelfth-century script (ff. 109r-116v; Bresslau's A₁) and *capitula* 27 and 28 in fifteenth-century script (F. 117; A₂). The oldest section is the part relating the translation and events of Pavia.

⁷⁰ *MSC* 9, p. 1002.

nevertheless, since he had learned of events from men of great truth.⁷¹ He neither explains the necessity behind, nor the length of, the delay, although it was at least ten years after the translation in 929.⁷² Thus authorship can be placed with certainty after 939 and with all probability, considering the author's presence in 929, before the end of the tenth century. Guido of Piacenza died in either 940 or 941, leaving a possible, but small, window in which the miracles could have been written if Guido was the intended addressee.⁷³ What is more likely, however, is that the *Miracula sancti Columbani* were redacted during the abbacy of Giseprand, who held the office simultaneously to the bishopric of Tortona.⁷⁴ Part of the invective states 'We will not let you enter the monastery without having been invited there by the father [*patre*] of the monastery or by the congregation of monks'.⁷⁵ The fact that the *patre* is not called the abbot suggests that whilst Giseprand had been abbot in title, the community also had an internal (unfortunately nameless) head who embodied their spiritual and congregational interests, and who is represented here as a challenge to Giseprand's authority within the monastery itself. We should see two separate identities for Bobbio, like the divided menses. Aside from the official rule of Giseprand – often at distance given his responsibilities elsewhere – was the community itself, which had not forgotten the previously-enjoyed attentions of dedicated abbots like Gerlan.

⁷¹ *MSC Prefaciuncula*, p. 997. This might suggest that he himself was too young to know any details at the time.

⁷² *MSC* 27, p. 1014, as noted by Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 172.

⁷³ On the dating of Guido's death see Scaravelli, 'Guido', p. 400.

⁷⁴ This was the thesis originally put forward by Bresslau in the introduction to his edition of the *MSC*, pp. 993-94 and, despite Tosi's rejection, is still accepted by most historians including Bougard, 'La relique au procès', p. 41; Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 179.

⁷⁵ *MSC* 23, p. 1011.

Giseprand was bishop of Tortona from 945 after being active in Hugh and Lothar's court from at least 937 as *capellanus*, *notarius*, and, later, *cancellarius*.⁷⁶ The first document that relates to his abbacy of Bobbio dates to 952; the last mention of Liudprand, his predecessor in that role, was in 940. Thus it is possible that he had held his role at Bobbio for the full term of his episcopacy, although it was probably a later acquisition. His abbacy at Bobbio was likely *in commendam*; probably nominated by the king to fill a vacancy at the monastery's head, just as with Gerlan.⁷⁷ The reference in the *Miracula to quae temporibus precellentissimi Hugonis regis* suggests that it was no longer the time of King Hugh at the time of writing.⁷⁸ Berengar II was king from 950, and Giseprand clearly well connected to the new monarch, as he had been to Hugh and Lothar's court. The first mention of Giseprand's abbacy falls two years into Berengar II's reign, so it is possible that the Ivrean king commended the bishop to Bobbio, as part of his nascent political retinue. Giseprand was also present at the coronation of Otto I in 962, a year before his last record, listed by Liudprand of Cremona in his *Historia Ottonis* as one of the pre-eminent counsellors of the emperor. He must have died, or fallen out of favour, at some point between 963 and 967 when his episcopal successor is recorded.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Irene Scaravelli, 'Giseprando, vescovo di Tortona', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 56 (Rome: Treccani, 2000), p. 617.

⁷⁷ Tosi's claim that Giseprand had appropriated the title of abbot under the protection of Berengar II is based only on circumstantial evidence and cannot be confirmed: Tosi, 'Le grandi tensioni', p. 481; Tosi, 'Il governo abbaziale', p. 84.

⁷⁸ *MSC Prefaciuncula*, p. 997.

⁷⁹ Scaravelli, 'Giseprando', p. 619.

Giseprand's activities elsewhere give weight to the invective in the *Miracula*. Early in his episcopal career, he made a donation to the abbey of Vendersi in which he claimed that the abbey was reduced to profane (secular) use and, so annulled, had been conferred by King Hugh to the Church of Tortona.⁸⁰ By this *chartula ordinationis* he permanently installed priests and clerics there to officiate, on the premise of restoring it to its former status. Whilst Scaravelli assumes that the claims of the establishment's decadence were truthful, perhaps as a result of Saracen incursions, one is tempted to read it as an aggressive move on the part of the Tortonese see.⁸¹ After all, it seems to accord with the words put into the bishop's mouth by the *Miracula*: 'it is because I saw this monastery almost destroyed, and I wish to return it to grace, to its former status.'⁸² Likely Giseprand's justification for his government of Bobbio had taken a similar line to the re-foundation of Vendersi.

His foundation of a new abbey in Tortona dedicated to Saints Peter and Marziano between 945 and 947 must also have posed a threat to Bobbio. It seems Giseprand was a patron of scholarly and artistic pursuits – San-Marziano was a known centre of learning to which the first scriptorium of Tortona is also attributed,⁸³ and the scriptorium of

⁸⁰ Fedele Savio, *Gli Antichi Vescovi d'Italia dalle Origini al 1300: Il Piemonte* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1898), p. 486; document reproduced in Ferdinando Gabotto, *Per la Storia di Tortona nella Età del Comune*, vol. 2 (Turin Tip. Morrico, 1923), pp. 197-99.

⁸¹ Scaravelli, 'Giseprando', p. 618.

⁸² *MSC* 23, p. 1011: "...sed quia video ipsum coenobium pene destructum esse, et cupio, ut per me ad pristinum redeat statum."

⁸³ Ugo Rozzo, *Tortona nei Secoli: Mostra di Antiche Pianta e Carte di Tortona e del Tortonese* (Tortona: Biblioteca Civica, 1971), p. 27.

Bobbio produced at least one manuscript commissioned by the abbot-bishop.⁸⁴ It is possible that one of the objections of Bobbio was to his removal of property from the scriptorium or library, and perhaps even scribes and illuminators, for the aggrandisement of San-Marziano.⁸⁵ It is just as likely that Giseprand used his abbacy at Bobbio to transfer some of its patrimony to his new establishment. At San-Marziano, Giseprand also ensured that he held certain rights of access. The Chapter could go to the church there on the important celebrations of Palm Sunday, Easter Monday and rogation days when the canons would occupy the stalls of the monks and the provost would sing Mass. The abbot and monks were told that they must receive the canons honourably. Needless to say it was not long before that the monks of the Abbey of San-Marziano rebelled against these obligations, beginning a long-running dispute.⁸⁶ The invective in the *Miracula* seems to respond directly to fears of a similar intrusion at Bobbio: ‘We will not let you enter the monastery without having been invited there by the father of the monastery or by the congregation of monks’.⁸⁷

The *Miracula sancti Columbani* is one of few sources that we have for Giseprand’s activities at Bobbio. A later document of Otto III from 998 seems to claim that Giseprand had taken the title illegitimately (*sumpto sibi nomine abbatis*) although since it was not an Ottonian monarch that was responsible for his commendation we should not read too

⁸⁴ It is held at Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino, MS E 20 inf. It contains a long dedication to a nameless ‘pastor’, identifiable as Giseprand as ‘the founder of S. Pietro and S. Marziano at Tortona’: Crivello, *La Miniatura a Bobbio*, p. 92.

⁸⁵ Scaravelli, ‘Giseprando’, p. 618 suggests this tentatively, noting that the *MSC* accuses him of having proceeded to a systematic despoliation of books and furniture at Bobbio.

⁸⁶ Clelio Goggi, *Per la Storia della Diocesi di Tortona*, vol. 1 (Chieri: Stabilimento Grafico Rossi, 1943), pp. 144-45.

⁸⁷ *MSC* 23, p. 1011.

much into this: it could equally refer to a denunciation of Otto's deposed successor the, Ivrean Berengar II, as of Giseprand himself. Otto III further denounced the abbot-bishop's activities vis-à-vis the patrimony of the monastery, which had been to the great diminution of Bobbio's holdings. He annulled all of Giseprand's actions, returning the land to the monastery, since Giseprand had apparently alienated many of Bobbio's benefice lands to his own vassals.⁸⁸ Andrea Piazza has suggested that the abbot-bishop's interest in Bobbio corresponded to his extension of Tortonese diocese towards the Appenines and in the valleys of the Staffora and the Trebbia, right in the heart of Bobbio's patrimony.⁸⁹ This accords with Tosi's hypothesis that the lands of Bobbio 'usurped' by Giseprand were the same territories that formed part of the *Beneficium Ubertus*, held by the primogenitor of the Obertenghi after Giseprand.⁹⁰ Even more significant, then, is the emphasis placed by the author of the *Miracula* on the route taken by the procession through the lands of the monastery, which traversed this hotly contested area. Otto III's diploma suggests that Giseprand had held these lands *in beneficio* as the abbot of Bobbio, as the *praeceptum divisionis* had stipulated. The problem with Giseprand's actions was that he was alienating these benefices

⁸⁸ *MGH, Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae* vol. II: *Otonis II et Otonis III* ed. by Theodor von Sickel (Hannover, 1893), doc. 303, pp. 728-30. The charter is judged to be part of Gerbert of Aurillac's actions in favour of the monastery by Nobili, 'Vassalli su terra monastica', p. 303. Gerbert was abbot of Bobbio briefly in 981-983 but continued to take an interest in the fortunes of the monastery, for which see his letters in *Gerberti postmodum Silvestri II papae operum pars III: Epistolae et Diplomata* ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne in *Patrologia Latina*, 134 (Paris, 1853), *Epistolae* XIV, XVIII, LXXXIII. On the dating of Gerbert's reign see Tosi, 'Il governo abbaziale', pp. 97-103.

⁸⁹ Piazza, *Monastero e Vescovado di Bobbio*, p.19.

⁹⁰ Tosi, 'Il governo abbaziale', pp. 86-88.

permanently, rather than using them only for the lifetime of his abbacy.⁹¹ The monastic journey intended to assert the rights of the monastic community of Bobbio over these lands.

Since the invective is almost certainly directed at the bishop-abbot Giseprand, and was written after the time of Hugh (and probably Lothar), the *Miracula* must have been written at a date between 950 and 963/7. The official charters of the abbey from Giseprand's abbacy may have reflected the bishop-abbot's deeds; with the *Miracula*, the monastic community seems to have written its own account of the situation contemporaneously. Thus its creation must be seen as a subversive activity by a monastic community rebelling against the incursions made by the bishop-abbot, via one of its most powerful weapons: their scriptorium. It is telling that that scriptorium had sufficient autonomy to be able to produce and reproduce such a text, with its almost seditious content considering Giseprand's role. For Bougard, chapter 23 should be read as a speech, similar to a *querimonia*, read in front of a tribunal at some point during the 950s.⁹² One might wonder if it was intended specifically for a royal courtly audience – not only exposing the bishop for his transgressions publicly, just as had happened to Guido and Raginerius in 929, but reminding the new king that, whatever his level of power, he had a duty to enforce the privileges that were due to the monastery. The act of committing to parchment this type of 'memory' in the form of hagiographic material, which would be repeatedly used in liturgy such as the translation celebration, ensured not

⁹¹ He did this by issuing *chartulae libellariae* for the lands that he granted. Since benefices were not stipulated in any written document, the holders of 'bookland' were able to claim right of possession: see Nobili, 'Vassalli su terra monastica', p. 306.

⁹² Bougard, 'La relique au procès', p. 42.

only a public audience but also the creation of a lasting monastic historiography, which could be called upon again and again.⁹³ Registering the ‘abuse’ in such a form appears to have been an effective tactic, and the monks continued to fight for the community’s patrimony beyond this period, later with the help of Gerbert of Aurillac and with some level of success: Giseprand’s abbacy was annulled by Otto II in 973, to be confirmed by the diploma of Otto III twenty-five years later.⁹⁴

The objection of the monastic community to Giseprand’s abbacy was not an objection to the commendatory system, or royal appointments in general – the monastery had received many principals in this way, and Gerlan is a good example of one whom Bobbio’s tradition remembers kindly.⁹⁵ But Giseprand’s dual office *was* an issue. Certainly it is clear that it would have been difficult for Giseprand to fulfil both his roles without compromising one of them, just as the continuation of the quote from Matthew (6: 24)

⁹³ From many analogous examples of the creation of ‘public memory’, the practice can be likened to that of commemorating a church’s consecration - written commemoration (including in hagiographic form) existed in physical literary holdings as well as annual liturgical practices and thus was perpetually reinforced and could be called upon at any point, as expediency dictated: Amy Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 36. In short, ‘those who could control the past could direct the future’: Patrick J Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 6.

⁹⁴ Otto II’s diploma is now lost, but is cited in that of Otto III. Tosi established its date in ‘Il governo abbaziale’, p. 90. For the politics of Gerbert of Aurillac and Otto III to end the abuse of the benefice system see Nobili, ‘Vassalli su terra monastica’, *passim*.

⁹⁵ A charter of 865 by Louis II [*Diplomata Ludowici II*, ed. by K. Wanner in *MGH, Dipl. Karol*, vol. IV (Munich: Deutsches Institut für Erforschung des Mittelalters, 1994), doc. XLIV, pp. 149-152; Buzzi, *CDB*, III, p. 54] explicitly stated that the abbots of Bobbio would be appointed from outside, as noted by Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 100; 105. This practice was continued under his successors as well as Hugh and Lothar and, so it seems, Berengar II. Gerbert of Aurillac later owed his abbacy there to Otto II.

predicts (and as the author well knew): '[No man can serve two masters.] For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other.' For Bobbio, this meant interventions suffered for the gain of the Tortonese church, and for Giseprand's own personal ambitions. Whilst his dual office meant Giseprand's interference in the monastery took a different form to that of Guido of Piacenza, there are similarities in their dealings nonetheless – similarities that allowed the monastic author of the *Miracula sancti Columbani* to disguise his admonition of Giseprand as a tirade against Guido. What is striking is that the threat that both men posed to the monastery was on a territorial and juridical plain – it was a question of rights over land and control. There is no suggestion of violence or of forcible usurpations in the *Miracula*; rather, everything is played out in a pseudo-legal sphere, in which benefices, privileges and written records took central stage, and where manoeuvres were made within accepted boundaries. Problems arose precisely because in tenth-century Northern Italy this was a sphere that was uncertain and constantly evolving.

Bobbio was situated geographically on the boundaries of the sees of Tortona and Piacenza and, despite the treasured papal exemptions that the *Miracula sancti Columbani* regale in such detail, had attracted the attentions of both diocesans for centuries. It was from these quarters that Bobbio felt the greatest risk during the tenth century, under Guido of Piacenza in the 920s and a few decades later again, under Giseprand of Tortona. Episcopal interventions at the monastery depended on the character and ambition of the bishop as well as his official role in relation to Bobbio, which also fluctuated depending on the political positioning of these individuals to the sovereign. Despite the efforts of

Gerbert of Aurillac the situation was to continue until Bobbio received its own episcopal jurisdiction in 1014 from Henry II and Benedict VIII.⁹⁶ Bobbio had escaped the interference of the Tortonese and Piacenzan bishops, but with its new duality a different set of issues presented themselves; issues that would preoccupy the monastery for the following century when, once again, it would be necessary to remember the journey to Pavia.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Under subsequent reorganizations, it formed part of the archdiocese of Genova-Bobbio in 1986 and, from 1989 to the present, has formed part of the diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio.

⁹⁷ The copy of the *MSC* preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino MS F.IV.12 codex marks a renewed interest in the work during the eleventh century - likely linked again to territorial and episcopal conflicts: Costanza Segre Montel, 'I più antichi codici decorati e miniati del fondo bobiese della Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino (sec. VI-XII)', in *Presenza Benedettina nel Piacentino, Archivum Bobiense, Studia III* (Bobbio, 1982), p. 71. For this later period see Piazza, *Monastero e Vescovado di Bobbio*.