Iliana Kandzha

ROYAL PENANCE:

NARRATIVE STRATEGIES OF RITUAL REPRESENTATION IN

OTTONIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

May 2016

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by

Iliana Kandzha

(Russia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Iliana Kandzha**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This research belongs to a sphere of studies in political rituals and images of power; though here only one type of ritual practice is analyzed, namely royal penance as represented in historiographical sources of the Ottonian age (919-1024). Acts of repentance performed by Ottonian kings and emperors have always been approached as historical events and "moves" in a political game of the kingdom between powerful magnates. This perspective, however, often neglects other dimensions of royal penance, namely political agenda, commemorative needs and literary traditions, which instigated Ottonian authors to reflect upon the repentance of kings in their writings, much more often than writers from Carolingian or Salian ages. In this thesis royal penance is perceived, first of all, as a narrative inside historical discourse, which was created as memorization of a historical event, when penance was believed to be performed.

In this light royal penance appeared to be used by Ottonian authors as a stable narrative pattern, which showed up in certain specific literary circumstances such as battlefield, establishment of a diocese or family conflicts. Although each author had his or her own reasons for evoking, creating or erasing memories of royal penance in their writings, several common functions of a "narrated" royal penance can be defined: creating a useful past for needs of a specific community, retrospectively legitimating political acts, establishing relationship between royal power and local ecclesiastical authorities or providing implicit *Kaiserkritik*. In this thesis I also touch upon matters of literary prototypes of royal penance and possible ways of categorization of this ritual, namely between imposed penance and self-humiliation of a king.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is not exclusively of my own merit: it is a mutual work of many people who have put their effort, knowledge, love and care into this project. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors, Daniel and Gerhard, for their help, guidance and support throughout all this year. Many thanks to all professors of our Department, whose courses inspired me to learn new subjects and to look at my own topic from new perspectives. Special words of gratitude are for Zsuzsa and Tom, who made my writings and thoughts clearer. However, all these would not be possible without Prof. Bojcov from the Higher School of Economics, to whom I owe my interest into Medieval Studies, my knowledge and academic successes.

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Table of contents

List of Abbreviations

MGH SS	Monumenta Germaniae Historics, Scriptores (in folio)
MGH SS rer. Germ.	MGH, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi
MGH SS rer. Germ. n.s.	MGH, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum nova series
DH II	*Die Urkunden Heinrich II. und Arduin*, ed. Theodor von Sickel, MGH Diplomata regum et imperatorum vol. 3. Hanover: Hahn, 1900-1903.
DO I	*Die Urkunden Konrad I., Heinrich I. und Otto I.*, ed. Theodor von Sickel, MGH Diplomata regum et imperatorum vol. 1. Hanover: Hahn, 1879-1884.
Liutprand, Ant.	Liutprand of Cremona. "Antapodosis." In *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. 41, 1-158. Hanover: Hahn, 1915.
Odilo, Epitaph	Odilo of Cluny. "Epitaphium Adelheide." In *Die Lebensbeschreibung der Kaiserin Adelheid von Abt Odilo von Cluny*, ed. Herbert Paulhart. Graz; Cologne: Bohlau, 1996: 27-45.
Thietmar, Chron.	Thietmar of Merseburg. "Chronicon." In *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korveier Überarbeitung*, ed. Robert Holzmann, MGH SS rer. Germ. n.s. 9. Berlin: Weidmann, 1935.
VMA	"Vita Mathildis reginae antiquior." In *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, ed. Bernd Schütte, MGH SS rer. Germ. 66, 107-42. Hanover: Hahn, 1994.
VMP	"Vita Mathildis reginae posterior." In *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, ed. Bernd Schütte, MGH SS rer. Germ. 66, 143-204. Hanover: Hahn, 1994.
Widukind, RGS	Widukind of Corvey. "Res Gestae Saxonicae." In *Die Sachsengeschichte des Widukind von Korvei*, ed. Hans-Eberhard Lohmann and Paul Hirsch, MGH SS rer. Germ. 60. Hanover: Hahn, 1935.

Introduction

The second book of Samuel and the first book of Chronicles contain episodes which drastically influenced the medieval understanding of worldly power and representation of a Christian king. David, the powerful ruler of the kingdom of Israel, was moved to repentance twice. First, by Prophet Nathan after the king seduced Bathsheba and sent her husband Uriah to death.[1] The second time David provoked God's wrath by taking census of Israel people not believing that victory depended on the Lord and not on the multitude of his warriors; the seer Gad was sent by the Lord to David to incline the king to repentance.[2] Anyhow, in none of the cases the king's sincere penance saved him or Israel from the anger of God. Although the image of King David as a perfect Christian ruler, the father of Solomon, the ancestor of the Savior was enormously exploited in the royal self-representation, its other dimension, contained in the aforementioned episodes, was not uncovered until the end of the fourth century.[3] Ambrose, bishop of Milan, was the first to understand David as a pious, repentant king, and he used this image as an example for Emperor Theodosius, who was forced by him to atone for his sin, namely the massacre at Thessaloniki in 390. Thus a new ritual of royal penance was created.[4]

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[1] 2 Sam. 11-12.

[2] 1 Chron. 21-22.

[3] For the classical work on David's image as a perfect ruler in the Middle Ages see: Hugo Steger, *David Rex et Propheta: König David als vorbildliche Verkörperung des Herrschers und Dichters im Mittelalter, nach Bilddarstellungen des achten bis zwölften Jahrhunderts.* (Nuremberg: H. Carl, 1961). Steger highlighted the importance of *imitatio Davidi regis* for German kingship, most probably adopted from the Byzantine Empire. For more recent scholarship see: Walter Dietrich, ed., *König David - biblische Schlüsselfigur und europäische Leitgestalt: 19. Kolloquium (2000) der Schweizerischen Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2003).

[4] Main works on Ambrose and Theodosius: Neil B McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); John Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (London; New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1999); Hartmut Leppin, *Theodosius der Grosse* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2003); Hartmut Leppin, "Zum politischen Denken des Ambrosius: Das Kaisertum als pastorales Problem," in *Die christlich-philosophischen Diskurse der Spätantike* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2008), 33–50; Patrick Boucheron and

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Since then royal penance had become both a ruler's emotional demonstration of repentance and an influential political ritual from the arsenal of royal ceremonies. Kings and emperors from the Ottonian dynasty (919-1024), who reigned over the Eastern Francia, later known as German Empire, were not an exclusion from this rule.[5] In the narrative sources of the tenth and eleventh centuries, originating from different parts of the Empire, we can find various descriptions of the penitential ritual.

How to define a ritual?

When the historical, anthropological or sociological research touches upon the matter of ritual, it faces a great impediment – there is no clear way how one can define this act.[6] Problems snowball when we enter the field of medieval studies, because there was no equivalent Latin term to our modern understanding(s) of a ritual.[7] As far as I approach royal penance as a public political ritual, I need to find a working definition of both "ritual" and "penance". For the "ritual" as a subject for medieval studies, the most suitable definition was

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Stéphane Gioanni, eds., *La mémoire d'Ambroise de Milan: usages politiques d'une autorité patristique en Italie (Ve-XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris; Roma: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015). In the last volume see especially an article by Miriam Rita Tessera. On the context of Ambrose's letter to Theodosius, its meaning and creation of a new ritual see: Michail A Bojcov, "Raskajanie gosudaria: Imperator i episkop [Repentance of a Prince: The emperor and the bishop]," in *Vlast, Obshestvo i Individ v Srednevekovoy Evrope [Power, society, and individual in Medieval Europe]* (Moskva: Nauka, 2008), 211–42.

[5] For the updated bibliography on the Othonian rule, main topics and discussions see: Egon Boshof, *Königtum und Königsherrschaft im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert*, Enzyklopädie Deutscher Geschichte 27 (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2010); Joachim Ehlers, *Die Entstehung des deutschen Reiches*, Enzyklopädie Deutscher Geschichte 31 (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012). General studies on this period: Gerd Althoff and Hagen Keller, *Heinrich I. und Otto der Grosse: Neubeginn auf karolingischem Erbe* (Göttingen: Muster-Schmidt, 1985); Johannes Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte: die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1994); Helmut Beumann, *Die Ottonen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhanmer, 1997); Hagen Keller, *Die Ottonen* (Munich: Beck, 2001); Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen Königsherrschaft ohne Staat*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013).

[6] For more discussion on this see: Jack Goody, "Against 'Ritual': Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Topic," in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally Moore and Barbara Myerhoff (Assen; Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), 25–35; Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). For historical studies: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Rituale*, Historische Einführungen 16 (Frankfurt; New York: Campus Verlag, 2013), 1–44.

[7] On the great discrepancy between our modern concepts of ritual and medieval ones see: Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 1–12.

suggested by Gerd Althoff: "chains of actions of a complex nature that are repeated by actors in certain circumstances in the same or similar ways, and, if this happens deliberately, with the conscious goal of familiarity."[8] Nevertheless, we have to keep in mind that "ritual" is a notion developed by social sciences during the nineteenth and twentieth century. [9] Although being a modern scholarly concept, "ritual", in my opinion, can be quite a useful research tool for historical studies.

As far as a ritual of penance is concerned, we can specify that the "chains of actions" often consisted of pious gestures such as walking barefoot, prostrating on the ground, crying, and formal proceedings as confession of sins and atonement, usually administered by an ecclesiastical authority. The last part is of great importance for defining penance, because penitential gestures were extensively used in other rituals like *deditio*, a secular act of reconciliation between a ruler and his rebellious subjects.[10] Penance can also be defined as an instrument of religious justice and influence on souls and behavior of Christians.[11] Unlike the term "ritual", modern "penance" has its analogues in languages of my sources: *poenitentia* and *metanoia*, which were quite often used in descriptions of royal penitential acts in the writings of the Ottonian age. Hence ceremonial situations and bodily expressions are not the only signifiers that help us to identify whether we are dealing with royal penance or not: chroniclers and hagiographers often used term *poenitentia* to characterize nature and a reason

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[8] Gerd Althoff, "The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past. Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 71.

[9] More on the development of the concept of ritual from the nineteenth century onwards: Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, 203–47.

[10] About *deditio* and language used when staging and describing this ritual: Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1992); Gerd Althoff, "Das Privileg der deditio: Formen gütlicher Konfliktbeendigung in der mittelalterlichen Adelsgesellschaft," in *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter*, by Gerd Althoff (Darmstadt: Primus, 1996), 99–125.

[11] Sarah Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900-1050* (Woodbridge; Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), 1–9.

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for specific actions of the king, which tells us that the author wanted to show his reader exactly the scene of ruler's repentance.

Previous research

The contemporary scholarship on royal penance is part of a bigger study of political rituals, symbolic communication and images of power, which can be traced back to the so-called Liturgical School of ritual studies. [12] This school is mostly identified with the names of Ernst Kantorowicz, Carl Erdmann and Percy Schramm.[13] Recent research, conducted mostly in a sphere of new constitutional history, has been shaped significantly by the influence of anthropological and sociological approaches to a ritual.[14] Within this framework a lot has been done on medieval practices of penance and submission, mainly on the genesis of these kinds of rituals and their role in medieval societies. According to the Anthropological School, in an oral society with poorly developed literacy, which the Ottonian period is often described as, these rituals, usually planed beforehand, played a great role in creating and

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[12] David Warner distinguishes between three main schools of ritual studies–liturgical, anthropological and post-modern: David A. Warner, "Rituals, Kingship and Rebellion in Medieval Germany," *History Compass* 8 (2010): 1209–20. Almost the same division is provided in: Gerald Schwedler, "Ritual und Wissenschaft: Forschungsinteressen und Methodenwandel in Mittelalter, Neuzeit und Zeitgeschichte," in *Grenzen des Rituals: Wirkreichweiten-Geltungsbereiche-Forschungsperspektiven*, ed. Andreas Büttner (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014), 229–68. On ritual studies see also: Franz-Josef Arlinghaus, "Forschungsbericht - Rituale in der historischen Forschung der Vormoderne," *Zeitschrift für Neuere Rechtsgeschichte.* 33, no. 3 (2009): 274–91; Christiane Brosius, Paula Schrode, and Axel Michaels, *Ritual und Ritualdynamik: Schlüsselbegriffe, Theorien, Diskussionen.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); Stollberg-Rilinger, *Rituale.*

[13] Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1946); *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957); Percy Ernst Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik; Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte vom dritten bis zum sechzehnten Jahrhundert,* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1954); *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio: Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Erneuerungsgedankens vom Ende des karolingischen Reiches bis zum Investiturstreit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962); Carl Erdmann, *Forschungen zur politischen Ideenwelt des Frühmittelalters; aus dem Nachlass des Verfassers* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1951).

[14] Most significant studies on rituals, in my opinion, are: Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1969); Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).

maintaining personal bonds or resolving political conflicts.[15] Gerd Althoff's "rules of the

game" (*Spielregeln*) theory highlights the importance of performed rituals and ceremonies for

the medieval political system of the Ottonian and Salian ages: they formed an unwritten

symbolical system of actions, gestures and words shared by everyone involved in

communication, and royal penance was part of this system.[16] Bodily gestures of penance,

such as crying, fasting or walking barefoot, have also received a lot of attention from

historians, who analyzed the genesis of these emotions and their utilization in specific

circumstances, also by kings and emperors.[17]

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[15] One of the most influential works in this field: Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue: zum politischen Stellenwert der Gruppenbindungen im frühen Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990); Heinrich Fichtenau, *Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: DTV, 1992); Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor*; Gerd Althoff, "Demonstration und Inszenierung: Spielregeln der Kommunikation in mittelalterlicher Öffentlichkeit," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 27 (1993): 27–50; Karl Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Caroligian and Ottonian Centuries* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994); Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1997); Hagen Keller, "Ritual, Symbolik und Visualisierung in der Kultur des ottonischen Reiches," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 35 (2001): 23–59; Gerd Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2003); Hagen Keller, "Mündlichkeit-Schriftlichkeit-symbolische Interaktion: Mediale Aspekte der 'Öffentlichkeit' im Mittelalter," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 38 (2004): 277–86.

[16] The most extensive analysis of penance and other gestures of humiliation of a ruler is presented here: Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter*, 104–25. This theory of "rules of the game", though remaining one of the most significant in field of ritual studies, faced a lot of criticism, e.g.: Philippe Buc, "Noch Einmal 918-919: Of the Ritualized Demise of Kings and of Political Rituals in General," in *Zeichen – Rituale – Werte: Internationales Kolloquium Des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496 an Der Wesfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster*, ed. Gerd Althoff (Münster: Rhema, 2004), 151–78; Hanna Vollrath, "Haben Rituale Macht?: Anmerkungen zu dem Buch von Gerd Althoff: 'Die Macht der Rituale, Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter,'" *Historische Zeitschrift* 284 (2007): 385–400; Peter Dinzelbacher, *Warum weint der König? Eine Kritik des mediävistischen Panritualismus* (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Bachmann, 2009). Moreover, this approach applied to studying the biography of a ruler, in the opinion of some scholars, has led to "pan-ritualisation" of history, as was argued by Borgolte: Michael Borgolte, "Biographie ohne Subjekt, oder wie man durch quellenfixierte Arbeit Opfer des Zeitgeistes werden kann.," *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 249 (1997): 128–41.

[17] Gerd Althoff, "Empörung, Tränen, Zerknirschung: 'Emotionen' in der öffentlichen Kommunikation des Mittelalters," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 30 (1996): 60–79; Klaus Schreiner, "'Nudis pedibus'. Barfüßigkeit als religiöses und politisches Ritual," in *Formen und Funktionen öffentlicher Kommunikation* (Stuttgart: J. Thorbecke, 2001), 53–124; Matthias Becher, "'Cum lacrimis et gemitu': vom Weinen der Sieger und Besiegten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter," in *Formen und Funktionen öffentlicher Kommunikation*, ed. Gerd Althoff (Stuttgart: J. Thorbecke, 2001), 25–52; Dinzelbacher, *Warum weint der König? Eine Kritik des mediävistischen Panritualismus*.

Over the last decade ritual studies have been affected by post-modernist skepticism and literary criticism theories, which were first stated by Philippe Buc in *The Dangers of Ritual*.[18] The main precept of this Skeptic School of ritual studies is that ritual "reality" cannot be approached through any historical sources, and ritual as a historical concept can no longer be valid. Hence, we can only study "rituals in texts", the perception (*Wahrnehmung*) of rituals by authors and their audience, and memory shaped by descriptions of rituals.[19] These approaches of the Anthropological and Skeptical schools of ritual studies will be of the utmost importance for the current study, providing means to investigate functions of royal penance in the society and in the text.

On the other hand, royal penance is a part of Christian practice of repentance and atonement for sins. This subject until the last decades was in the domain of religious history; however, since then there has been a revival of historical interest in Christian penance, its origins, transformations and functions.[20] Apart from analyzing only prescriptive sources on administration of penance, like penitential books, Sarah Hamilton and Rob Meens were also interested in the concrete application of this ritual and its role for the society: here they made a large contribution to the study of royal penance as an example of the ecclesiastical ritual,

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[18] Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*. This study provoked fierce reactions from adherents of other approaches, e.g.: Geoffrey Koziol, "[Review] The Dangers of Polemic: Is Ritual still an Interesting Topic of Historical Study?," *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002): 367–88.

[19] This approach is (at least partially) shared by many scholars, e.g.: Zbigniew Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics: Writing the History of Dynastic Conflicts in Medieval Poland* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Kerstin Schulmeyer-Ahl, *Der Anfang vom Ende der Ottonen: Konstitutionsbedingungen historiographischer Nachrichten in der Chronik Thietmars von Merseburg* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009); David A. Warner, "Thietmar of Merseburg on Rituals of Kingship," *Viator* 26 (1995): 53–76; Sverre Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography C. 950-1150*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 103 (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For an example of this approach to medieval literature see: Corinna Dörrich, *Poetik des Rituals: Konstruktion und Funktion politischen Handels in Mittelalterlicher Literatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002).

[20] On historiography of penance: Rob Meens, "Penitential Questions: Sin, Satisfaction and Reconciliation in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," *Early Medieval Europe* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–6. Recent monographies in this field: Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900-1050*; Abigail Firey, *A New History of Penance* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008); Rob Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

based on chronicles and hagiographies of the Ottonian age.[21] In my research I am combining these views on royal penance, both as a political ritual and as an ecclesiastical procedure of atonement, and I am investigating how these connotations of a ritual were understood and developed by authors of the Ottonian age.

Ottonian historiography

My study is focused on the group of historical texts created in the tenth and eleventh centuries in the German kingdom under the rule of the members of the Liudolfing family, which can be described by an umbrella-term: Ottonian historiography.[22] In this subchapter I am just presenting a general overview of main tendencies and specifics of Ottonian texts; but as soon as we meet concrete texts and authors in the following chapters, I will provide the reader with necessary information on them.

First of all, these texts are examples of Christian writings: authors were not only imitating various biblical models and language, but they also understood the whole historical process through the Holy Scripture.[23] Moreover, we should not expect any historical accuracy from

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[21] Sarah Hamilton, "Otto III's Penance: A Case Study of Unity and Diversity in the Eleventh-Century Church," *Studies in Church History* 32 (1996): 83–94; Sarah Hamilton, "A New Model for Royal Penance?: Helgaud of Fleury's Life of Robert the Pious," *Early Medieval Europe* 6, no. 2 (1997): 189–200; Rob Meens, "Sanctuary, Penance, and Dispute Settlement under Charlemagne: The Conflict between Alcuin and Theodulf of Orléans over a Sinful Cleric," *Speculum* 82, no. 02 (2007): 277–300; Rob Meens, "Kirchliche Buße und Konfliktbewältigung: Thietmar von Merseburg näher betrachtet," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 41, no. 1 (2008): 317–30; Alexander Grimm, *Zwischen Gottes Gericht und irdischem Strafrecht: Strafe und Buße in Lebensbeschreibungen ottonisch-salischer Reichsbischöfe ; eine Studie zu den Wurzeln des modernen Strafrechts* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2011).

[22] Martina Giese, "Die Historiographie im Umfeld des ottonischen Hofes," in *Die Hofgeschichtsschreibung im mittelalterlichen Europa: Projekte und Forschungsprobleme*, ed. Rudolf Schieffer, Jarosław Wenta, and Martina Giese (Toruń: Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2006), 19–37.

[23] On medieval historiography, its origins, genres and usage of the Scripture see: Hans-Werner Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewusstsein im hohen Mittelalter* (Berlin: Akademie, 1999); Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, ed., *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Matthew Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Gerd Althoff, "Was verstehen Mittelalter-Historiker eigentlich unter einer Fiktion?," in *Zwischen Fakten und Fiktionen: Literatur und Geschichtsschreibung in der*

Ottonian authors; on the contrary, "we study them as vehicles for the expression of fundamental ideas concerning the nature of medieval political reality and its relation to the political past." [24] The appearance of many chronicles, annals, hagiographies during the Ottonian rule marked the revival of the historiographical genre after the decline of the Carolingian empire: in their style and format these texts were rooted mainly in Carolingian traditions as well as antique conventions of historical writings. [25] However, Ottonian historiography also developed as a reaction to the commemorative needs of contemporary society, mainly represented by the ruling family, regional nobility and ecclesiastical groups; in other words, those who had enough wealth and power to produce a codex and control a narrative.[26] During the century of the Ottonian rule several imperial histories were developed, such as *The Deeds of Saxons* by Widukind of Corvey, *Antapodosis* and *Historia Ottonis* by Liutprand of Cremona, *Gesta Ottonis* by Hrosvith of Gandersheim and the *Chronicon* by Thietmar of Merseburg. These texts presented a dynastical-centered view of history, probably fulfilling the interests of the ruling family, though mostly coming from a monastic

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Vormoderne, ed. Merle Marie Schütte, Kristine Rzehak, and Daniel Lizius (Würzburg: Ergon, 2014), 155–68.

[24] Gabrielle M Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 98. Here we can also mention works of Hayden White, who challenged any historiography as being constructed according to literary genres and specific rhetoric, e.g.: Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins, 1987).

[25] Sverre Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography c. 950-1150*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 103 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 22–24.

[26] On understanding of medieval historiography as a cultural phenomenon, originating in its form, functions, content and literary features from social reality of its origin see: Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative," *History and Theory* 22, no. 1 (1983): 43–53; Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3–22, 134–57; Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeder, eds., *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For a brief overview of medieval understanding of historiography see the introduction to: Deliyannis, *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, 2–7. Postmodernism challenged a lot our perspective of medieval texts and "past" they represent; consequently, new methodology for working with medieval historiography must be developed, which is discussed here: Spiegel, *The Past as Text*.

environment.[27] Another tendency of Ottonian writings was the appearance of various saints'

lives, mostly of prominent bishops and members of the royal family (e.g. two anonymous

Lives of Queen Mathilda; *The Life of Ulrich*, bishop of Augsburg). These vitae, which were

often ordered by members of the ruling family, presented pro-dynastical interests in

combination with interests of the community, which tried to monopolize the memory of the

saint.

Apart from this close connection of Ottonian historiography with members of the ruling

family, who were either commissioners or addressees,[28] we can also discern a group of

"local" histories, such as monastic annalistic traditions or hagiographies of local saints which

were not that important for imperial self-representation (e.g. local annals and deeds of

bishops or hagiographies like *The Life of Nilus*). Although most of these historiographies,

such as *The Deeds of Archbishops of Magdeburg* or *The Deeds of Bishops of Halberstadt*,

preserved in later versions of twelfth or thirteenth centuries, these texts incorporated in

themselves earlier writings, originating from tenth-eleventh centuries. Consequently, earlier

layers of narratives can be attested to the Ottonian age. This group of "peripheral" narratives

was, most probably, not aimed for the royal audience, which influenced the way these authors

were telling their stories. Without any doubt this categorization between pro-dynastical and

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[27] Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography C. 950-1150*, 23–24. There is an abundant scholarship on connections between Ottonian historiography and ruling family and their representation in these texts, main works are: Lothar Bornscheuer, *Miseriae Regum; Untersuchungen zum Krisen- und Todesgedanken in den herrschaftstheologischen Vorstellungen der ottonisch-salischen Zeit*, Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung 4 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968); Gerd Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialüberlieferung: Studien zum Totengedenken der Billunger und Ottonen* (Munich: W. Fink, 1984); Gerd Althoff, "Otto der Große in der ottonischen Geschichtsschreibung," in *Otto der Große: Magdeburg und Europa*, ed. Matthias Puhle, vol. 1 (Mainz: von Zabern, 2001), 16–29; Ludger Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft und Gottes Gnade: zu Kontext und Funktion sakraler Vorstellungen in Historiographie und Bildzeugnissen der ottonisch-frühsalischen Zeit* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001).

[28] This connection between production of texts and members of Ottonian family was highlighted by Giese: Giese, "Die Historiographie im Umfeld des ottonischen Hofes." However, scholars rarely touch upon the matter of textual transmission of Ottonian texts in general, unless studying only one specific work; in this thesis I will not go deep into this difficult problem, though some insights, when valuable, will be provided.

local, imperial and peripheral traditions simplifies the landscape of Ottonian writings, where there was always a mixture of both these tendencies. However, this distinction will be quite useful for the current research. It is also important to mention that factuality and reliability of these texts is not among the main concerns for this study, though there is a great debate in German scholarship concerning the possibility of reconstruction of a valid historical narrative from these sources.[29]

Research questions

Although penance of Ottonian rulers did not stay unnoticed by scholars, they were somehow lost between famous examples of Louis the Pious at Attigny in 822 and Soissons in 832, on the one hand, and Henry IV's penance at Canossa in 1077, on the other.[30] In this research I am attempting to cover this gap to a certain extent; but I am not intending to create an "encyclopedia" of cases of royal penance during the Ottonian rule. I examine different functions of royal penance in the texts of the Ottonian age and their role in the creation of memory, touching upon literary and intertextual dimensions of these narrations, which had not only the repentance of Kind David as their prototype.

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[29] This debate was provoked by Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte*. For following arguments see: Gerd Althoff, "Von Fakten zu Motiven: Johannes Frieds Beschreibung der Ursprünge Deutschlands," *Historische Zeitschrift* 260 (1995): 107–18. Later Fried again questioned reliability of medieval texts and possibility of access to the "past" through them: Johannes Fried, *Der Schleier der Erinnerung: Grundzüge einer historischen Memorik* (Munich: Beck, 2004). Anyhow, these medieval texts still define our knowledge about the Ottonian realm and are extensively used by scholars of Ottonian realm, see footnote 5.

[30] For example, the classical synthesis of royal penance by Schieffer completely omits rituals performed by Ottonian kings: Rudolf Schieffer, "Von Mailand nach Canossa: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der christlichen Herrscherbuße von Theodosius dem Großen bis zu Heinrich IV.," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 28 (1972): 333–70. The number of studies about Louis the Pious's repentance and the Canossa-event is abundant; I mention only the most influential and recent ones: Gerd Althoff, *Heinrich IV.* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006); Stefan Weinfurter, *Canossa: die Entzauberung der Welt* (Munich: C.H.Beck, 2006); Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff, *Canossa 1077: Erschütterung der Welt : Geschichte, Kunst und Kultur am Aufgang der Romanik* (Munich: Hirmer, 2006); Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State : Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

In this study I investigate the individual narrative strategies applied by medieval authors to describe royal penance. These authorial manipulations of a narrative have often been seen as an impediment in research on medieval rituals, however here they are treated as a valuable research object.[31] Furthermore, I am not only investigating authors' poetics or motives, but also the representation of empire, dynasty, church and their images as shaped through narratives on royal penance, being part of Ottonian historiographic tradition. The main question of the current study can be summarized as follows: Why and how did authors of the Ottonian age use narrative of royal penance in their texts? To be more precise we can distinguish several sub-questions: What were the functions of royal penance in the narrative discourse in Ottonian historiography? What influenced authors to apply examples of rulers' repentance in their histories? What literary techniques do authors employ to present this ritual in the text, what were their literary and historical prototypes? What role did ritual of royal penance play in the construction of symbolic language and memory in the Ottonian realm?

How to study a ritual?

The thorny path of introduction to a study of royal rituals is not over. To choose an appropriate method of working with narratives on royal penance, we need to specify what functions political ceremonial had in the Ottonian realm, how it was understood by contemporaries and reflected upon in the narrative sources. Different kinds of political rituals played a highly important role in exercising royal power in the Ottonian realm.[32] The

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[31] Great role of authorial manipulations when describing rituals, and potential of research on these narratives, was first stated by: Philippe Buc, "Ritual and Interpretation: The Early Medieval Case," *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000): 183–210.

[32] First to introduce this concept to the study of Ottonian *Staatlichkeit* were Althoff, Keller, Koziol, Leyser; their most prominent works are: Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde*; Gerd Althoff, *Amicitiae und Pacta: Bündnis, Einigung, Politik und Gebetsgedenken im beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert*, Schriften der MGH 37 (Hannover: Hahn, 1992); Gerd Althoff, ed., *Formen und Funktionen öffentlicher Kommunikation im Mittelalter*, Vorträge und Forschungen 51 (Stuttgart: J. Thorbecke, 2001); Hagen Keller, *Ottonische Königsherrschaft: Organisation und Legitimation königlicher Macht* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002); Keller, "Mündlichkeit-Schriftlichkeit-symbolische Interaktion: Mediale

kingdom, like other post-Carolingain political entities, had neither a legislative nor bureaucratic apparatus necessary to sustain royal authority over vast territories. Scholars believe that breakdown of Carolingian literary culture led Ottonian kings to utilize oral and symbolic communication, namely, rituals.[33] Consequently, whenever research is devoted to studying the politics of these early medieval states, it is, actually, a study of ceremonies and rituals through which the political communication was conveyed and evidently seen.[34] Political ceremonies, although highly 'ritualized' procedures, were subjects to changes and innovations throughout the centuries: each ceremonial situation was inflated with meanings depending on circumstances by its creators, actors and audience;[35] but, first of all, this "chain of actions" has to be recognized by recipients as a ritual. The study of medieval political rituals is concentrated around different accounts of such actions, found not only in prescriptive materials (such as coronation *ordines*, describing the ceremonial procedure as it should have been done), but in a variety of narratives from chronicles, annals, hagiographies and other texts.[36] Due to the nature of these texts, the analysis of ritual acts can become "dangerous": every account incorporates the perception, interpretation and commemoration of a possible historical event, which lies underneath "rituals in texts", and cannot be read as

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Aspekte der 'Öffentlichkeit' im Mittelalter"; Hagen Keller and Gerd Althoff, *Die Zeit der späten Karolinger und Ottonen: Krisen und Konsoldierungen, 888-1024* (Stuttgart: J. Thorbecke, 2008); Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor*; Leyser, *Communications and Power*.

[33] This idea is most prominent in writings by Leyser and Althoff, e.g.: Karl Leyser, "Ritual, Zeremonie und Gestik: das ottonische Reich," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 27 (1993): 1–26; Leyser, *Communications and Power*; Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen: Königsherrschaft ohne Staat* (Stuttgart: Kohlhanmer, 2000).

[34] For example, see Gerd Althoff, "Königsherrschaft und Konfliktbewältigung im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 23 (1989): 265–90; Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor*; Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter*.

[35] Althoff, "The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages"; Falkowski W, "Double Meaning in Ritual Communication," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 42 (2008): 169–87.

[36] On the "reality" behind these *ordines* see: Reinhard Elze, *Die Ordines für die Weihe und Krönung des Kaisers und Kaiserin* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1960); Janet L. Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 330–360. Some examples of research on rituals exclusively in narrative sources: Warner, "Thietmar of Merseburg on Rituals of Kingship"; Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics: Writing the History of Dynastic Conflicts in Medieval Poland*.

"anthropological field-workers' notebooks".[37] Matching the act of narration about any given ritual with a "real" event must be done with caution, or should not be done at all. Moreover, Ottonian historiographers extensively used rituals as part of newly created symbolic language of power: they faced a necessity, on the one hand, to describe a newly born kingship, which faced internal and external conflicts; and, on the other, to highlight its continuity with previous realms and find its place in universal history. I assume that these authors often used the ritual regardless of the historical events: they could include a depiction of a ritual (in our case – royal penance) as a descriptive tool to meet their own aims and common views on royal power.

Neither language nor the way in which narratives were structured appeared to be neutral means of description used by authors. In order to uncover these functions of language and structure some concepts of narratological analysis of texts are valuable for the current study, though taking into account specificities of medieval historiography.[38] I approach the narration about rituals as a historical act in itself, through which the authors' perception and the political and social context (the "story") influenced the "plot", that is, the text they created. The composition of the ritual as an event, namely time, place, actors, gestures, and words involved in the ceremonial situation, will also be a subject of this research. Apart from this, I will analyze the "ritual in text" as a part of the narration, where the following qualities of the text should be taken into account: the narrative mode, time order within the plot, the hierarchy of narration (embedded or frame) and the ways in which speeches and thoughts are

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[37] Timothy Reuter, *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 96. Major research on this problem: Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*. Also see: Schwedler, "Ritual und Wissenschaft."

[38] For the main precepts of narratology see: Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, trans. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). For problems of narratology in application to classical and medieval texts: Eva von Contzen, "Why We Need a Medieval Narratology: A Manifesto," *Diegesis* 3, no. 2 (2014), accessed 5 April, 2016 https://www.diegesis.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/diegesis/article/view/170; Irene de Jong, *Narratology and Classics: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

presented. This method allows looking at the political ritual not only as a symbolic action performed for specific reasons, but also enables us to analyze both textual and intertextual levels, since the use of common descriptive patterns for royal penance in various texts was possible.

The current work is divided in four chapters, each devoted to the specific circumstances in which royal penance was employed (or on the contrary, neglected) by Ottonain authors. In first chapter I am analyzing general perception of royal penance by one of the most crucial chroniclers of the Ottonian age, Thietmar of Merseburg, and investigating penance when happened during acquisition and translation of relics. In the next chapter penance performed by a ruler in a military conflict is analyzed. The subject of the third chapter is a group of narratives on royal penance in which a role of an ecclesiastical authority in conducting a ritual was emphasized. The last chapter is devoted to royal penance performed by a king during a conflict in the royal family. Within each chapter I analyze several examples of ritual descriptions, identifying functions of the penance-narrative in its historical and textual dimensions and possible traditions behind them.

Chapter I – Kings, Relics and Pilgrimages

Ottonian kings managed to sustain and exercise their royal power not only by defending their realm from foreign invaders, overcoming inner revolts, gaining support of nobility and establishing personal bonds.[39] Rulers from the Saxonian dynasty were also dependent on different religious communities, like monasteries, nunneries, bishoprics, which provided them with s*ervitium regis* in exchange for royal patronage.[40] The Ottonian court was in constant movement: certain political and ecclesiastical centers throughout the realm served as temporal places where the king and his followers could stay. This "itinerant kingship," on the one hand, was the only way for the ruler to maintain his authority in different parts of the realm; on the other hand, there was no center in the tenth-eleventh-century German empire that could economically support the ruler, his court and family throughout a long period of time. This political and economical necessity soon acquired religious and symbolical meaning: a special royal itinerary was developed according to the liturgical year, when the king visited certain religious communities for special celebrations. Thus, Ottonian kings, usually spent Easter at Quedlinburg and Palm Sunday in Magdeburg, being involved in liturgical procession with the whole community. This custom was so deeply rooted in the royal self-representation that the change in the itinerary, which happened at the time of Henry II, indicated a shift in the emperor's policies.[41]

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[39] For more details see classic works on this subject: Althoff, *Amicitiae und Pacta*; Althoff, *Die Ottonen*.

[40] Main research about Ottonian royal itinerary: Eckhard Müller-Mertens, *Die Reichsstruktur im Spiegel der Herrschaftspraxis Ottos des Grossen: mit historiographischen Prolegomena zur Frage Feudalstaat auf deutschem Boden, seit wann deutscher Feudalstaat?* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980); John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936 – 1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[41] On the change of itinerary, its meaning and overall ecclesiastical politics of Henry II see: John W. Bernhardt, "King Henry II of Germany: Royal Self-Representation and Historical Memory," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick Joseph Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47–64.

Moreover, all these religious places had connections to saints, venerated by this community (St Maurice in Magdeburg, St Lawrence in Merseburg, St Adalbert in Gniezno), and to members of the ruling or previous dynasty—as centers of their *memoria* (Otto I in Magdeburg and Memleben, Charlemagne in Aachen).[42] The intentional visits to a certain place, the donation of property to the community or dissolution of the religious establishment were often manifested through ceremonies that made the power "visible". These royal acts immediately became a subject to various symbolical and political meanings, which contemporary authors recognized and manipulated in their writings.

Apart from constant travel, kings and emperors were engaged in penitential pilgrimages to holy places and ceremonies of acquiring and translating relics. Both these acts were considered generally as representations of royal humility and piety and as an image of ideal Christian ruler. However, as argued in this chapter, depending on context and agenda, medieval chroniclers preferred to introduce additional interpretations, such as criticism of the ruler, resolution of a conflict or even elimination of the memory about such an occasion. One of the first Ottonian historiographers, Widukind of Crovey, even connected the transition of royal power, military success and peace from Franks to Saxons with the translation of relics of St. Vitus and, later on, the hand of St. Dionisius.[43]

Gestures of this ritual behavior towards holy places and objects were typical for a good Christian, and can always be found as elements in other public ceremonies, in which the ruler was involved. For example, the practice (and rhetoric) of penance which happened in a

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[42] On function of Ottonian *memoria* see: Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialüberlieferung*; Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch, eds., *Memoria: der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter* (Munich: W. Fink, 1984); Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*.

[43] Widukind, RGS I.33, 45-46. On Widukind of Corvey see: Helmut Beumann, *Widukind von Korvei. Untersuchungen zur Geschichtsschreibung und Ideengeschichte des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1950); Gerd Althoff, "Widukind von Corvey. Kronzeuge und Herausforderung," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, no. 27 (1993): 253–72; Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography C. 950-1150*, 23–94. Precisely on this episode: Ibid., 31–32.

specific military setting—on the battlefield—involved the king's penance in front of the relics. In some narratives the submission of the emperor in front of the ecclesiastical authority and his penance was anticipated by the emperor's pilgrimage to the 'residence' of a holy man; these circumstances of royal penance are subjects of the following chapters. Here, however, I will analyze the Ottonian chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg' general perception and interpretation of royal piety and penance, and offer a case-study of a royal pilgrimage and penitential act that happened during the translation of relics. [44] Issues of authorial understanding, interpretation and manipulation of royal pious acts are the main subject of this chapter.

Thietmar on true and false penance

Henry gets ready to repent

The first book of Thietmar's chronicle is devoted to the beginnings of the Saxonian dynasty and the times of Henry I (919-936), the first ruler of the Liudolfing house. The author only briefly describes this period, explaining that *Res Gestae Saxonicae*, his main source of information for these early years of Ottonian history, already covered this epoch in much greater detail.[45] However, Thietmar found it necessary to recall for his readers some rumors about Henry's planned pilgrimage to Rome and his overall piety, which cannot be found in other works of Ottonian authors:

> Throughout his life, as often as he raised himself up in pride against God and his Lord, with his power humbled, he would submit to a worthy penance. I have heard that when he went to Rome for the sake of prayer, he travelled more on foot than by horse. When many asked why he did this, he revealed his guilt.[46]

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[44] Main research on Thietmar of Merseburg: Helmut Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg. Reichsbischof und Chronist* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1973); David A. Warner, trans., *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Schulmeyer-Ahl, *Der Anfang vom Ende der Ottonen*.

[45] Thietmar, Chron. I.10, 14.

[46] "Quociescumque contra Deum et seniorem suimet dum vixit se umquam superbiendo erexit, toties humiliata potestate sua, se ad emendationem condignam inclinavit. Audivi quod hic Romam causa

This passage is Thietmar's interpretation of Widukind's account that Henry planned to go to Rome, though abandoned this idea because of his illness. The actual motivation behind this journey, either to subject the Italian kingdom to his rule or to pray for his sins, has been long debated in historiography and cannot be fully answered.[47] However, it is important that for Thietmar this pilgrimage-interpretation of Henry's expedition to Rome was the only possible one. Consequently, he added some new rumors to this account and employed it in his writings to show Henry's general piety, to reflect upon his losses against the Hungarians and, maybe, to intercede for his future sins, which became crucial for Thietmar's understanding of Ottonian dynastic history.

By this, Thietmar described the possible way in which penance should be experienced by the divinely ordained ruler: the king himself had to repent, humiliate and understand clearly his sins and be engaged in public procedure such as a pilgrimage to Rome. The previous episode in the *Chronicon* implies that it was Henry's sinfulness that prevented his army to win over the Hungarians and other tribes, which might have been seen by Thietmar as a reason for the planned pilgrimage. In this case penance worked as a retrospective tool to correct and explain the course of events: in case of victory it was the king's penance prior or during the battle that ensured royal triumph.[48] In case of defeat the king had to gain atonement for his personal sins, which were perceived as a reason behind the military loss. But what were Henry's misdeeds that prevented his troops from victory and made him repent?

In Thietmar's perception of the beginnings of the Ottonian rule we can still find possible traces of Henry I's sins. The chronicler wrote that the king's second son, the future Duke Henry of Bayern, was conceived in a sinful way (*diabolico instinctu*); for this misdeed all

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orationis petens, plus pedibus quam equo laboraret, et a multis interrogatus cur sic ageret, culpam profiteretur": Thietmar, Chron. I. 15, 20-23; Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 79.

[47] Karl Leyser, "Henry I and the Beginnings of the Saxon Empire," *The English Historical Review* 83 (1968): 1–32.

[48] This function of royal penance is discussed in chapter 2 of the thesis.

Liudolfing family was cursed by the devil with constant disputes and inner revolts.[49] The

chronicler used this particular detail as a vehicle of historical process, the main explanatory

conflict, which was resolved under the rule of his benefactor, Emperor Henry II.[50] At the

same time, Henry II became the legitimate ruler only because he was the direct descendant of

the sinful King Henry, which made the construction of memory about Henry I rather

problematic for Thietmar. It is possible that, in Thietmar's historical reality, by this

penitential pilgrimage Henry received atonement for the sinful conception a child and,

possible, for rejecting the unction.[51]

In this episode Thietmar possibly refers to the liturgical practice of penance (*emendatio*) and

pilgrimage. The most important feature, which distinguished this penance from a general

practice, was Henry's self-humiliation and readiness to repent, without any guidance from

church authorities (priest or holy man). Lothar Bornsheuer used the term *Bußfertigkeit* (skill

to repent) to express this royal quality;[52] although he connected this penance that lacked

ecclesiastic intermediary with the priest-status of the king after unction, which is not entirely

valid for Henry I, who refused this tradition.[53] It is also justified to understand this story of

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[49] "Esti mea nunc sit voluntas tuis frustrata blasfemiis, tamen in hoc profeci, quod ex eo et ex omnibus de lumbis eiusdem unquam progredientibus numquam deerit mea comes Discordia, nec proveniet eis pax firma": Thietmar, Chron. I.24, 30-33.
[50] For more about Thietmar's understanding of the historical process see: Schulmeyer-Ahl, *Der Anfang vom Ende der Ottonen*; Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography C. 950-1150*, 95–188.
[51] Henry I was believed to refuse from a royal unction during his coronation ceremony in 919, and Thietmar reacted to this quite negatively. The best summary of this issue and its discussion in contemporary historiography see here: Buc, "Noch Einmal 918-919." For some other interpretations of Henry's refusal as a historiographical concept see: Björn K. U. Weiler, "The 'Rex Renitens' and the Medieval Idea of Kingship, ca. 900-ca. 1250," *Viator* 31 (2000): 1–42; Schulmeyer-Ahl, *Der Anfang vom Ende der Ottonen*, 49–105, 309–89.
[52] Bornscheuer, *Miseriae Regum; Untersuchungen zum Krisen- und Todesgedanken in den herrschaftstheologischen Vorstellungen der ottonisch-salischen Zeit*, 112–13.
[53] See footnote 51.

Thietmar and its function in the narrative as a part of the Carolingian convention, rooted in the Old Testament, of connecting the ruler's moral behavior with the well-being of the state.[54]

Penance suitable for kings and not only

A similar example of self-acknowledgment of sins and readiness to repent was shown by Duke Boleslaw III in the account of Gallus Anonymous.[55] For the twelfth-century chronicler this kind of pious behavior became a quality of a true Christian king: although Boleslaw III failed to receive the royal title, this penitential act connected the duke to the Carolingian and Ottonian tradition of royal penance. By attributing this royal practice to Boleslaw, the first Polish historiographer ensured legitimacy of Boleslaw's rule and implied his divinely ordained status.

These cases show that such narrations of royal piety, penance and pilgrimage served mostly as representation of Christian royal power through symbols of humility, based on the idea of the ruler's responsibility for his realm. In the case of Henry I, Thietmar's account hardly reflects a real practice performed by the ruler, but his narration became, first of all, a symbolical expression of Henry's divinely ordained kingship, which might have been questionable for other contemporaries, and it also served to justify the army's defeat against the enemy.

Moreover, the image of a repentant king was also presented as a model behavior for a ruler that was expected or even demanded from a Christian king. *The Life of St Wenceslas*, devoted to the saint king and martyr of Poland, was rather popular in Ottonian court, and its Latin version, namely one of the recensions of the *Crescente Fide*, was commissioned by and for

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[54] Rob Meens, "Politics, Mirrors and Princess and the Bible: Sins, Kings and the Well-Being of the Realm," *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998): 345–57.

[55] Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics: Writing the History of Dynastic Conflicts in Medieval Poland*, 100–15.

Otto II.[56] Wenceslas is represented in his vita as divinely ordained king in opposition to his brother Boleslaw, and his constant repentance, asceticism and self-humiliation are highlighted. In other words, Wenceslas is at the same time a king, a monk and a pious Christian. These characteristics are even more evident in Latin recensions of the *Life*, which were popular among the Ottonian literati and the royal court, in comparison to its Slavic versions.[57] As far as function of this *Life* can be compared to those of mirrors for princes, this repentant behavior can be seen as a proposed role model for Otto II and other divinely ordained kings.

Royal penance as a "bad ritual"

As far as the representation of royal penance could enhance the king's authority, present him as a quasi-saint or support the group of his followers (in other words, worked as royal propaganda), the same ritual, if depicted in a different way, could work against both the ruler and his supporters. Used by crafty medieval authors as a tool, such narrations on "bad rituals" could become a weapon against the "enemy."[58]

Boleslaw Chrobry (992-1025), Polish duke and first king from the Piast dynasty, after several years of military campaign against Henry II, finally made peace in 1013. However, his fidelity to the German ruler did not last for a long time: he betrayed Henry II when refusing

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[56] More on hagiographical tradition of St Wenceslas: Marvin Kantor, *The Origins of Christianity in Bohemia: Sources and Commentary* (Northwestern University Press, 1990), 1–40.

[57] One of the examples of such behavior: "He (Wenceslas) piously pursued a contemplative, ecclesiastic life. And during the time of the forty-day fast, he would make his way from castle to castle, walking barefoot over frigid and impassable trails, visiting churches. Thus, blood that had gushed forth could be seen in his footprints. And on the outside he was wrapped in a royal robe, but beneath he was clad in a rough hair shirt": "Life and Martyrdom of St Wenceslas (Crescente fide)," in *The Origins of Christianity in Bohemia*, 146. For Gumpold's version of the *Crescente fide* see: Gumpold of Mantua, *Vita Vencezlavi ducis Bohemiae*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz. MGH SS 4 (Hanover: Hahn, 1841), 214-15.

[58] "Actors in that game could seek strategically to twist them to their advantage. Furthermore, performed to enhance the symbolic capital of one group, rituals became targets for that group's opponents. No wonder then that Carolingian sources depict smooth-running rituals as often as disrupted or stage-managed rituals – "bad rituals": Philippe Buc, "Text and Ritual in Ninth-Century Political Culture: Rome, 864," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 126.

to support his Italian expedition; moreover, in a letter to the pope he blamed the emperor for hindering him to pay *censum*. Thietmar, the main witness for these events, describes Boleslaw's behavior with triumphant overtones: he always knew that the fidelity of the Polish king would not last for long, while Henry II failed to recognize it. Finally Boleslaw is described as a liar (*mendax*), and in the Corvey-redaction Boleslaw is called a promise-breaker (*perfidus*).[59]

Among all these disgraceful things (*flagitium*) Boleslaw decided to repent, by his own will or because he was told to do so: he put canons in front of him and tried to decide for which sin he had to receive the atonement:

> Observe, dear reader, how the king acted in the course of so many shameful acts. If he either recognized that he had greatly sinned or knew of any justifiable complaint against him, he ordered the canons to be placed before him so that he could discover how the sin ought to be emended. Then, in accordance with those writings, he immediately set about correcting whatever crime had been committed. Nevertheless, he is still more inclined to sin recklessly than to remain in salutary penance.[60]

Thietmar clearly created this description upon the common practice of repentance and receiving atonement.[61] In penitentials, special handbooks on penance which were used as guidelines for priests on how to process the penance and also in the context of canon law, it was described what kinds of penance a sinner had to undertake depending on the kind of his misdeed.[62] The repentance of Boleslaw, who strictly, mechanically followed the guidelines

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[59] Thietmar, Chron. VI.92, 384-85.

[60] "Attende, lector, quid inter tot flagicia is faciat. Cum se multum pecasse aut ipse senit aut aliqua fideli castigatione perpendit, canones coram se poni, qualiterque id debeat emendari, ut quaeratur, precipit ac secundum haec scripta mox scelus peractum purgare contendit. Maior tamen est ei consuetudo periculose delinquendi, quam in salutari penitentia permanendi": Thietmar, Chron. VI.92, 384-85; Thietmar of Merseburg, "Chronicon", 299.

[61] Meens attributes the codex that Boleslaw could have used in Prague: Meens, "Kirchliche Buße und Konfliktbewältigung," 325–26. This plausible suggestion led to overestimating the credibility of such narrations: in my opinion, this episode is of imaginative nature, functioning as a critical description of Boleslaw.

[62] More on medieval books on penance and for some examples for such exact penance prescriptions, see translated medieval penitentials, e.g. the Romano-German Pontifical used during the Ottonian period: John T, McNeill and Helena M Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance; a Translation of the Principal Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents* (New York: Octagon Books,

from penitantials, is usually referred to as "traffic" penance. This practice had been the usual procedure roughly until the twelfth century, when it was replaced by individual penance, when atonement was based on the inner remorse of the repentant.

Although in Thietmar's time the way Boleslaw repented was a usual way to ask for forgiveness, this episode can be interpreted as a "bad" ritual, used for criticizing the Polish king. Rob Meens justly argues that, rather than remorse and self-acknowledgment of sins, Boleslaw's intention was an "almost mathematically countable penance, which then automatically resolved the misdeeds".[63] Moreover, this repentance is narrated in context of criticizing the Polish ruler for his infidelity, hence a reader might have expected upcoming criticism. Especially in light of Thietmar's previously discussed model of the righteous pious king, who had to be moved to repentance by his own remorse, this narration clearly needs to be seen as a critique of the Polish king, who failed to repent in the right way.

However, Polish historians argued for exactly the opposite interpretation: Zbigniew Dalewski sees this description of penance as Boleslaw's attempt to fit in the Ottonian royal practices and to intercede for the whole community under his rule: "by undertaking penitential practices, Boleslaw the Brave – after the example of contemporary German rulers, Otto III and Henry II – by means of personal humility, asceticism and self-denial took on the difficult task of appeasing God and redeeming not only his own sins, but also those of the entire community of his subjects".[64] I argue that Dalewski correctly attributes the essence of rightful penance and qualities of the Christian king, though if only this passage would have been written by Gall Anonym, as in case with Boleslaw III cited above, and not by Thietmar of Merseburg. Both the agenda of Thietmar and the role of this episode in the whole narrative

1965). The most recent study on penitentials, highlighting their importance for history of penance is: Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600-1200*.

[63] Meens, "Kirchliche Buße und Konfliktbewältigung," 325.

[64] Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics: Writing the History of Dynastic Conflicts in Medieval Poland*, 118–19.

need to be taken into consideration, which leads to the interpretation of this issue as a fictitious narrative and implicit *Kaiserkritik*. Thietmar is generally rather critical towards the Polish Church, independent since the Gniezno act in 1000, and he even mocks the Polish way of Christianizing peoples, which had nothing in common with the missionary expeditions of the great martyrs from Magdeburg.[65]

It is conventionally assumed by historians that in the tenth and eleventh centuries the traffic penance, a practice brought to the continent by Irish monks, was still prevalent. However, in the examples of royal penance discussed above Thietmar emphasized the individual understanding of a sin and the desire to receive atonement, while the calculated 'canon-based' penance of Boleslaw is presented as a wrong ritual. This is one more argument that suggests that the division of penance evolution into three periods, also criticized by Hamilton and Meens, is too simplistic.[66] Even though penitentials were used throughout this period, these books were not employed 'mathematically'; personal, intimate repentance, which happened inside a person without any guidance from a priest, was of utmost importance, at least in Thietmar's understanding of royal penance. We can assume that the author's critical approach towards Boleslaw presented in the form of a "bad" ritual was likely to have been understood by contemporaries; consequently his ecclesiastical milieu must have shared this view on royal penance with its "self-humiliation" and "readiness to repent" essences as opposed to the "traffic" one. The power of the image of the repentant ruler is also noteworthy: this exact ritual was chosen by Thietmar at least twice to express his views on royal power, how it should be maintained and who was worthy to be the true king.

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[65] For example, at the beginning of Book 8, Thietmar describes the cruel customs of Boleslaw's people, based on threat and violence: Thietmar, Chron. VIII.2-4, 494-498.

[66] Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900-1050*; Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600-1200*.

Royal penance as an apple of discord

The act of giving relics as a gift was extensively used by Ottonian rulers to establish relationships with whole religious communities or powerful individuals. For example, the relics of St Innocent were given to Otto I by King Rudolf of Burgundy. However, the main donor was the pope, who was in charge of the relics of Roman martyrs. The Ottonian age was also quite rich in contemporary saints and martyrs, such as St Ulrich, St Adalbert or the Five Brethren, which provided kings with symbolical commodities to give or to take. Carolingian rulers even tried to acquire the monopoly on translations of relics from one place to another: it was allowed only with permission from the king.[67] Although this rule was often ignored, this attempt signifies the importance of relics' transmission for the exercising power and for creating the identity of the community of its holders. The possession of powerful relics enhanced the status of the place and community that had obtained these holy objects and ensured its economical prosperity as a place of constant pilgrimages. However, relics, in most of the cases torn out of their original context, had to acquire new meanings given to them by new owners: "relics passively reflect only exactly so much meaning as they were given by a particular community."[68] In the following part, I will analyze one specific case, when the king's decision to transfer relics accompanied by penitential gestures became the bone of contention (or an invented memory) between two dioceses in the eastern part of the kingdom: the archbishopric of Magdeburg and the bishopric of Merseburg.

On February 24 or 25, 1004, Henry II donated lands and part of the relics of the martyr St Maurice to the church of Magdeburg. The relics were transferred from the royal chapel of John the Baptist in Berge to the nearby city of Magdeburg. This *translatio* of relics is certified by Henry's diploma, where the purpose of such a gift is explained as repairing the

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[67] Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 40.
[68] Ibid., 5.

archbishopric of Magdeburg for the losses incurred when the bishopric of Merseburg was reestablished.[69] Here the gift of relics and land is clearly a program of actions, undertaken by the king to ensure *amicitia*-relationships with one of the influential seats of the empire. [70]

The circumstances of this *translatio* ceremony are described in the twelfth-century *The Deeds of the Archbishops of Madgeburg*. It seems to have been quite a unique occasion: Henry II himself took part in the procession and performed an act of penance, which included walking barefoot on the frozen cold ground.[71] This gesture enhanced the privilege of relic donation, received by the church of Magdeburg, which clearly became a part of its identity and a liturgical feast, and was commemorated in local historiography.[72]

However, where one gains, the other loses. Thietmar was clearly engaged in all politics surrounding Gisilher, archbishop of Magdeburg, and the reestablishment of Merseburg. However, the chronicler mentioned neither the *translatio* of St Maurice nor the royal penance during this occasion, even though he began Book 6 of his *Chronicon* with the restoration of Merseburg.[73] He only recounts a royal visit to Magdeburg to ask the support of St Maurice in the upcoming campaign against Arduin of Ivrea:

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[69] The bishopric of Merseburg was founded by Otto I in 968 together with other bishoprics, sanctioned by the papal decree in 962. However, the diocese was dissolved by his son Otto II in 981 with the help of Giselher, who gained the archbishop seat of Magdeburg. Otto III constantly attempted to reestablish Merseburg and put Gisilher on trial, but only his heir, Henry II, managed to accomplish this in 1004.

[70] Diploma of Henry II from February 24 or 25, 1004, Magdeburg (63), DH II, 76-78.

[71] *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, ed. G. Schum, MGH SS 14, 393.

[72] This event is also recounted in the *Annals of Magdeburg*, compiled at the end of the twelfth century in Berge near Magdeburg; the aforementioned charter survived in the Magdeburg collection, which shows that it was important for the community.

[73] Thietmar, Chron. VI.1, 274.

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Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*:

After leaving Merseburg, he asked at Magdeburg for the heavenly intercession of St Maurice and good luck for his journey.[74]

The Deeds of Archbishops of Madgeburg:

The king himself in great devotion to the Lord took from his chapel a rather big part of relics of Saint Maurice. In spite of the severe cold, which happened because of a new onset of winter, and the ground covered by ice and snow, he took them from Saint John the Baptist-mountain, where they used to be kept, to the city, barefoot, as it was said, but animated by the heat of his devotion, on the thirtieth day after the death of archbishop Gisilher, received by everybody with festive ritual, as it is equitable. He brought them to the sacred altar with the mentioned offerings and, on the same day he instituted the feast in honor of the mentioned martyr of the church, in which manner it is kept until now.[75]

The fact that Thietmar did not recount the translation of Maurice's relics to Magdeburg in his chronicle has attracted the attention of several historians, especially David Warner, who devoted an article to this issue.[76] Warner argues that the *Gesta* is a rather reliable source so the story of the translation combined with penitential ceremony can be taken at face value.[77] He suggests that the author of the *Gesta* agreed with Henry's explanation for the donation— as a compensation for losses, and the gesture of humility that was also understood as a symbolical excuse. According to Warner, Thietmar, at that time a canon at Magdeburg, definitely knew about this event because of his own interest and proximity, though he eliminated this memory because it was a "dangerous precedent" for Merseburg: "Any suggestion that the archbishop deserved compensation for properties surrendered might imply

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[74] "A Merseburg tunc exiens, sancti Mauricii apud Deum intercessionem itinerisque prosperitatem Magadaburg peciit": Thietmar, Chron. VI.3, 276-78; Thietmar of Merseburg, "Chronicon", 238.

[75] "Nam ipse in Domino magne devotionis rex, de capella sua sumens non modicum partem reliquiarum beati Mauricii, hyeme tunc forte redivivo frigore seviente terramque glaciali asperitate et nive cooperiente, a Monte sancti Iohannis baptiste, ubi servabantur, nudis pedibus, ut fertur, calore pietatis illum animante, tricesimo die depositionis archiepiscopi Giselharii in civitatem detulit, cunctis festive ritu, ut par erat, eas suscipientibus; quas et sancto altari cum predictis donariis obtulit ipsumque diem in honore prefati martiris eius ecclesie celebrem, quemadmodum adhuc habetur, instituit": *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, 393.

[76] David A. Warner, "Henry II at Magdeburg: Kingship, Ritual and the Cult of Saints," *Early Medieval Europe* 3, no. 2 (1994): 135–66. Against his interpretation see Schreiner, "Nudis Pedibus."

[77] The *Gesta* were composed in the middle of the twelfth century and relied heavily on Thietmar's *Chronicle*; this work was probably written by several authors and was based on some earlier chronicle, which has not survived: Warner, "Henry II at Magdeburg," 146.

that his possession had been legitimate."[78] However, Warner pays more attention to the purpose of such a ceremony, which was evoking memory of Otto I and of his military successes, asking for the forgiveness of Giselher, who had passed thirty days before, and emphasizing the importance of St Maurice for the Ottonian dynasty as a patron saint of their military campaigns. Less consideration is paid to the power of such memories, the way in which authors told their stories and possible prototypes for the penance itself.

Warner claims that there are no previous examples for Henry's role in the procession of *translatio* among his predecessors from the Liudolfing house.[79] However, some parallels can be found in the *orationis gratia* pilgrimage to Gniezno undertaken by Otto III in 1000, who headed to Poland as soon as he heard about the miracles of the great martyr Adalbert.[80] Although the royal procession was seen by contemporaries as the most glorious one, something incredible and ineffable happened near Gniezno: the emperor entered the city barefoot and with tears in his eyes asked for Adalbert's intercession and participated in the consecration of the church. Thietmar claimed that Otto himself placed the relics under the altar, which was followed by the establishment of the archbishopric in Gniezno.[81] This pilgrimage and Otto's role in the consecration of the new diocese was accepted both by German chroniclers and later Polish historiographical tradition; however, Otto's journey back

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[78] Ibid., 162.

[79] Ibid., 144.

[80] "Postea cesar auditis mirabilibus, quae per dilectum sibi martyrem Deus fecit Aethelbertum, orationis gratia eo pergere festinavit… Nullus imperator maiori umquam gloria a Roma egreditur neque revertitur": Thietmar, Chron. IV.44, 182.

[81] "Qualiter autem cesar ab eodem tunc susciperetur et per sua usque ad Gnesin deduceretur, dictum incredibile ac ineffabile est. Videns a linge urbem desideraram nudis pedibus suppliciter advenit et ab episcopo eiusdem Ungero venerabiliter succeptus aecclesiam introducitur, et ad Christi gratiam sibi inpetrandam martyris Christi intercessio profusis lacrimis invitatur… factoque ibi altari sanctas in eo honorifice condididt reliquias": Thietmar, Chron. IV.45, 182-84. For more detailed analysis of the events surrounding the archbishopric in Gniezno, relations between Otto III and Duke Boleslaw and the political role of this pilgrimage see: Gerd Althoff, *Otto III* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Johannes Fried, *Otto III. und Boleslaw Chrobry: Das Widmungsbild des Aachener Evangeliars, der "Akt von Gnesen" und das frühe polnische und ungarische Königtum; Eine Bildanalyse und ihre historischen Folgen*, Frankfurter Historische Abhandlungen 30 (Stuttgart: J. Thorbecke, 2001); Schreiner, "'Nudis Pedibus.'"

to Aachen, which can also be seen as a pilgrimage to the shrine of Charlemagne, was not recognized as such by some authors. Thietmar blamed the emperor for opening the shrine of his great predecessor and did not describe this event as an act of obtaining the relics of the saint, even though there are other accounts which recount the solemnity of obtaining miraculous relics, which happened on Pentecost Sunday, and the emperor's pious role in it.[82] Scholars assume that Otto III planned to canonize Charlemagne or even to establish a bishopric in Aachen, which might resemble his actions in Gniezno. To a certain extent, the mechanism of royal penance and the ruler's pious involvement in relic translation as a (non)commemorated act was shared in all these examples, and in the case of Magdeburg too.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, such examples of royal penance could be rhetorical literary constructs which enabled the authors to express not only the course of events on their own, but also to find an explanation of the past, or to create a "useful past", which corresponded to the contemporary needs of the individual or the whole community.[83] Therefore it is probable that this addition of Henry's humility, described in a rather common way, was invented to enhance the past donation and to present Magdeburg as the suffering party in this conflict. Even if this is not so, the way in which contested memories of the ritual (or its absence) between these two communities were created is remarkable.

This case exemplifies how the Magdeburg community explained and memorized the value of relics and added new local meaning to them. This memory comprises of the *translatio*

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[82] Thietmar, Chron. IV. 47, 184-86. The same negative connotation of Otto's behavior is given by the author of the Annals of Hildesheim, while the participant Otto di Lomello, author of the *Novalese Chronicle*, and the later French chronicler Ademar of Chabannes recounts this event as a sacral act of obtaining relics. More about this event see: Knut Görich, "Otto III. öffnet das Karlsgrab in Aachen: Überlegungen zu Heiligenverehrung, Heiligsprechung und Traditionsbildung," in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, ed. Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1998), 381–430; Althoff, *Otto III*, 103–8; Michail A Bojcov, *Velichiye i smireniye: ocherki politicheskogo simvolizma v srednevekovoy Evrope [Majesty and humility: Studies in medieval European political symbolism]* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2009), 400–6.

[83] The concept "useful past" was introduced and developed by Patrick Geary, see: Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*. On similar manipulation of historiographical discourse by monks of Saint-Denis see: Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 83–98.

associated with the penitential ritual performed by the ruler during this ceremony, which enhanced the prestige of the relics, the community of Madgeburg and, at the same time, was understood as an implicit excuse for losses that Magdeburg had experienced because of his actions. Whether the event occurred as it was described or the penance was an act of creative memory, the narration itself tells us a great deal about the value of the king's humility towards a community, performed in a penitential language. This penance was not restricted to the representation of royal humbleness: it acted as a way to resolve the conflict and enhance the prestige of the community. Both authors understood the power of this ritual and its dangers, namely that its memory can damage the status of a rival community.[84] Hence, the memory of the king's donation was reinforced by the act of royal penance in one case, and totally eliminated in the other.

Penance between royal humility and conflict settlement

In this chapter two major functions of described and commemorated royal penance were discussed: to redeem the ruler's personal misdeeds and sins of the whole realm, that is, to create an image of the humble Christian king, and to settle conflicts between communities. In both cases the role of the holy places and relics in expressing the kings' piety was underlined by Thietmar and the anonymous author of *The Deeds of Archbishops of Magdeburg*. In these memories pilgrimage was one of the goals and reasons for the penitential act. Moreover, the king's presence at occasions such as the translation of relics had enormous power and effect on communities that had recently acquired relics. The political implication of this memory, often a threat to the other party involved in the conflict, was undoubtedly great.

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[84] This feature of ritual was discussed by Buc: "To perform a ritual, then, must in many cases have been positively a gamble, because one's enemies might manipulate it or disrupt it", Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, 8.

Medieval authors acknowledged the powers and dangers of rituals and manipulated its memory in their writings. For example, sometimes the pilgrimage and power of obtained relics was not recognized by the chronicler at all. These cases suggest a clear differentiation not only of good and bad rituals, as suggested by Philippe Buc, but also of successful rituals, recognized as such by spectators and, later on, by chroniclers, and failed ones, which were not seen as possessing an underlying pious motive.

Chapter II – Penance on the Battlefield

Conduct of war in any society is tightly bound not only with actual military campaigns or battles, but also with specific ceremonial practices, which are aimed at ensuring victory, often by asking deities for help, cheering up warriors or celebrating the triumph. The Roman Empire or Byzantium could be the most illustrative examples of such spectacular proceedings.[85] Similar military rituals were present also in barbaric kingdoms, which transformed during the Carolingian Empire, probably under Byzantine influence, into the so called "liturgy of war". This term implies specific liturgical ceremonies which sanctified upcoming war in the name of God and involved directly army and a ruler, giving blessing to warriors, forgiving their sins and keeping memory of the deceased.[86] These liturgies and masses before, during and after military campaigns, aimed at obtaining victory or showing gratitude for the divine help, were also present in the Ottonian conduct of war.[87]

However, in some chronicles of the Ottonian age we can reveal a transformation of this common liturgical service into a description of the king's penance on the battlefield. In these narratives a ruler was involved in a dialogue directly with God, without any intercession from clerics. His atonement for his own sins and misdeeds of all his subjects was retrospectively seen by authors as a guarantee for the upcoming victory. In this chapter I am investigating the motive of royal penance during the battle as a special descriptive element, sometimes chosen by chroniclers for describing military campaigns and the king's utmost success in them. I will also analyze reasons for inserting such a specific narration into the text, for its existence in

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[85] For more about military rituals and triumphal celebrations and their transformation from the Later Roman Empire to Carolingian empire see: Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[86] Ibid., 347–87.

[87] On Ottonian military campaigns see: David Steward Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012). In chapter 6 of this study there is a detailed description of Ottonian military liturgies and their purposes.

various different forms and also its narrative functions in the text. I assume that this motive of royal penance was developed by authors and had no identical performed practice in the background. However, it can be seen as a literary development of existing practices of war liturgies.

Royal penance at Lechfeld

The battle, decisive for German history, took place on the plain of Lechfeld (near Augsburg) on 10th of August 955 between troops of Otto I and the Hungarians. This final clash ended the series of Hungarian invasions in the eastern territories of the realm—a fact that was acknowledged by contemporaries and modern historians alike.[88] The siege of Lechfeld was commemorated in most of the annals and chronicles of the century, some of which provided verbose descriptions of events and actions of King Otto and his army, which none of the authors themselves eye-witnessed, though their audience probably did. The writers of the accounts of this battle had to transmit the idea of Christian resistance to foreign invasion and describe the role of King Otto in this religious mission against the heathens.

Furthermore, authors had to connect this battle to the main theme of their writings: the life of the holy man, the history of ecclesiastical community, the glorification of the emperor or the history of the decline of the royal family. Above all, authors had to strive against their lack of knowledge of actual events.[89] These all led to plentiful intertextual borrowings, adoption of classical antique narratives on battles and biblical allusions in order to create an extensive description of the important event in Christian (read universal) history: in one of the versions

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[88] About Hungarian invasions during the reign of Otto I and about the importance of the Lechfeld-battle see: Charles R Bowlus, *The Battle of Lechfeld and Its Aftermath, August 955: The End of the Age of Migrations in the Latin West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Matthias Becher, *Otto der Grosse: Kaiser und Reich: eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2012), 186–213.
[89] Lorenz Weinrich, "Tradition und Individualität in den Quellen zur Lechfeldschlacht 955," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 27 (1971): 291–313.

of Lechfeld Battle penance of a king played a crucial role in the outcome of the battle and history as a whole.

Widukind of Corvey about the battle

One of the first to write about Lechfeld and the Hungarian invasions was Widukind, the monk from Corvey who created around the year 968 the first redaction of his main work *Res Gestae Saxonicae*, which was later dedicated to Princess Mathilda, daughter of Otto I and abbess of Quedlinburg.[90] In his writings Widukind was inspired by Sallust's *The Conspiracy of Catiline*: in his style, wording and general moral message the monk tried to follow the antique model, and the description of the battle follows this rule.[91] For example, the king's moving speech to the army, to whom he appealed as *milites mei*, is built upon a similar one made by Catiline before his final battle with the armies of the Senate.[92] Otto, with a lance and a shield in his hands, leads his soldiers into the heart of the siege exactly as Sallust's hero did: in this concrete example the Sallustian model allows Widukind to depict Otto as a perfect military leader.[93]

After the victory at Lechfeld, the troops proclaimed Otto an emperor and *pater patriae* (as that also happened, in Widukind's account, for his father and predecessor Henry I under the same circumstances).[94] However, this fact contradicted the imperial coronation of Otto in

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[90] Until the second half of the twentieth century historians attributed the first redaction to 958 (second one to 968 and third to 973); however, this point of view is no longer valid. More on these debates see: Gerd Althoff, "Widukind von Corvey: Kronzeuge und Herausforderung," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, no. 27 (1993): 253–72.

[91] On the reading of Sallust in the Middle Ages see: Beryl Smalley, "Sallust in the Middle Ages," in *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 165–75.

[92] For this episode in Widukind: Widukind, RGS III.44-49, 126-29; cf. to Sallust, Cat. 58.

[93] "fortissimi militis ac optima imperatoris officium": Widukind, RGS III.46, 128; cf. to: "strenui militis et boni imperatoris officia simul": Sallust, Cat.60.

[94] Namely, on the battle of Riade (15 May, 933) against Hungarian troops, Widukind, RGS III.38-39, 56-59. Widukind's descriptions of these two battles, including triumphal celebrations after, are quite similar to each other, but for Riade the author used not so many borrowings from Sallust. The description of Henry's proclamation as an emperor was also fictitious as one of Otto, though this

Rome in 962.[95] The great victory was completed with donations to the Church to show gratitude for God's intercession and to make services for the fallen in the battle, which reflected common Ottonian practice.

Royal penance in Thietmar's Chronicon

The testimony of the battle at Lechfeld, which actually includes the story of the royal penance, comes from the second book of the *Chronicon* written by Thietmar of Merseburg in the early eleventh century.[96] The first three books of the chronicle present a compressed narrative about his diocese Merseburg and history of the kingdom during the reign of the first emperors (Henry I (919-936), Otto I (936-973) and Otto II (973-983)), which mostly consists of re-interpreting accounts of Widukind's *The Deeds of Saxons* with additions of several legendary stories and his own reflections. However, the way Thietmar of Merseburg built the narration of the battle differs significantly from his model: he did not employ the Sallustian model of representing the course of events (hence no direct speeches or fighting scenes) and he did not connect the great victory with Otto's imperial status, though the emperor still remained in the centre of the dramatic narration.

Thietmar clearly constructed his narration upon the biblical historical scheme, evident in the book of Samuel, the book of Kings and the Maccabees story, the latter often known through *De bello Iudaico* by Josephus Flavius, which were popular among Ottonian historiographers.[97] The Hungarian invasion is presented as a punishment of the people for their sins; even the opening formula used—*et ecce iterum Avares adversum nos arma*

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repetitive pattern speaks a lot for the author's view on kingship and power: Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography C. 950-1150*, 23–94.

[95] More precisely on this imperial proclamation and Widukind's omission of Otto's Rome coronation see: Althoff, "Widukind von Corvey. Kronzeuge und Herausforderung."

[96] Thietmar, Chron. II.9-10; 48-51.

[97] Matthew Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32–56.

commoverant—alludes to the biblical style of narration.[98] From the autograph of the *Chronicon* it is visible that Thietmar, during the revision of the text, deliberately inserted '*Et*' at the beginning of the paragraph above the scribe's handwriting, probably, to enhance the biblical style of the story.[99] Adhering to the order of events presented in *The Deeds of Saxons* (collection of the army, actions of enemies, the king's role in the battle, victory celebration), Thietmar introduces the penance performed by Otto I before the decisive battle on the feast of St. Lawrence.

The presence of this action was so important for the chronicler that he even prolonged the battle for two days in order to insert the penance-story (while in Widukind the whole clash happened on one day). The king repents openly for all his sins in front of God, and Thietmar hints at two penitential gestures—prostration and tears: "The next day, this is on the feast of the martyr of Christ, Lawrence, the king alone prostrated himself before the others and confessed his sin to God..."[100] During this sole and public penance Otto makes an oath to establish the Merseburg diocese in gratitude for God's help in bringing victory.[101] Widukind mentioned that after celebrating the triumph Otto sent messengers to his mother Queen Mathilda and then returned to Saxony. From this evidence Thietmar, in turn, elaborates a

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[98] "But again, Hungarians moved against us under arms": Thietmar, Chron. II. 9, 48; Thietmar of Merseburg, "Chronicon", 97.

[99] Thietmar, Chron. II. 9, 48. Photocopy of the Dresden-codex, the autograph of Thietmar, made in 1930s (the original was severely damaged in 1945), is accessible here: http://www.mgh-bibliothek.de/digilib/thietmar.html. More about the process of text creation see the introduction to: *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korveier Überarbeitung*, ed. Robert Holzmann, MGH SRG n.s. 9 (Berlin, Weidmann, 1935); more recently on this topic see: Helmut Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg: Reichsbischof und Chronist* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1973); David A. Warner, ed., *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

[100] Thietmar of Merseburg, "Chronicon", 98. "Rex, solum se pre caeteris culpabilem Deo professus atque prostratus, hoc fecit lacrimis votum profusis": Thietmar, Chron. II. 10, 48.

[101] Otto I planned to establish also the archbishopric in Magdeburg and made a bishopric in Merseburg as a part of this metropolitan center. However, the emperor's decision confronted the opposition both from nobility and ecclesiastical circles and he managed to fulfill his promise only in 968. For more about this conflict see: Gerd Althoff, "Magdeburg - Halberstadt - Merseburg: Bischöfliche Repräsentation und Interessenvertretung im ottonischen Sachsen," in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen* (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1998), 267–93.

touching story of the meeting between Otto and his mother, when the king, full of tears, entrusts Mathilda with the sacred vow he made during the mass: to establish a bishopric in Merseburg.

In Thietmar's account King Otto I acted according to the practice of military services of supplication that prepared soldiers for the battle and atoned for their (future) sins. However, Otto made confession directly to God and only then received communion from his chaplain Ulrich, according to the proper liturgical order.[102] In this episode the author, while describing preparations to the second day of the battle, switched the readers' attention from general practice to the description of King Otto and his repentance, as if he was the one on whom the outcome of the battle depended. I assume that this episode of royal penance was not only a fruit of Thietmar's interpretation of military services, but also an outcome of his view on the almost sacral role of the king for Christian history.

This story of royal penance also gave Thietmar an opportunity to develop the 'founding-legend' of his bishopric of Merseburg: such grand event, a victory granted by God because of direct divine intercession, which happened on the feast of St Lawrence, legitimized the establishment of Thietmar's own diocese and proved its historical importance. Moreover, the following dissolution of the bishopric in 983 by Otto II seemed to be a vandal act against the wish of God himself. From this perspective, the battlefield can be even counted as a frame narrative for the founding of the Merseburg bishopric, which initially is the main object of Thietmar's work: almost all later troubles of the ruling house were entangled with the history of the diocese. [103] Without any doubt, Thietmar reinterpreted account from *The Deeds of*

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[102] More about development of penance during military campaigns see: Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 184–86.

[103] The importance of the Merseburg-story for the whole narrative of the *Chronicon* was discussed by many authors: Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg. Reichsbischof und Chronist*; Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 1–66; Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography C. 950-1150*, 95–188; Schulmeyer-Ahl, *Der Anfang vom Ende der Ottonen*.

Saxons, which he then adopts for his needs and views, manipulating the description of the king's penance as a legitimizing act.

Views on the Lechfeld Battle from other authors

Other texts from the Ottonian period also depicted the events of Lechfeld following Thietmar's general pattern, to a certain extent. The Hungarians were represented as punishment for the sins of Christians, while the main protagonist, who is not always Otto I, redeemed them through his deeds. For example, in the *Life of St. Ulrich*, bishop of Augsburg, written by Gerhard of Augsburg around 983 and 993, the main events of the Hungarian invasion occur not on the Lechfeld, but in Augsburg where Ulrich successfully defended the city from the Hungarians. The bishop even participated in the battle on horseback but remained unarmed.[104] Ulrich combined in his image the qualities of both a warrior and a pious bishop: he prayed all night for victory, established a daily mass for those fallen in the battle and reconstructed the Church of St. Arfa demolished by the Hungarians. All these actions of the holy man, from the perspective of Ulrich's biographer and the Augsburg clergy, made the salvation of God's people possible during the Hungarian invasion.

Bruno, brother of Otto I and archbishop of Cologne, could not participate in the victorious battle, which is noted in his *Life* written by Ruotger of Augsburg around 969.[105] For the purpose of his work the author decided not to describe the battle in detail, because his main hero, Bruno of Cologne, was not participating in the battle (as did Ulrich, for example). However, he mentioned the feast of St. Lawrence, Otto's plea for God's help, the death of Conrad and other details. The most striking feature of this part of the narrative was that the

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[104] Gerhard, *Vita Sancti Oudalrici:* 12-13. In Hatto Kallfelz, ed., *Lebensbeschreibungen einiger Bischöfe des 10.-12. Jahrhunderts*, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 22 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973): 102-13.
[105] Ruotger of Cologne, *Vita Sancti Brunonis*: 35. In Hatto Kallfelz, ed., *Lebensbeschreibungen einiger Bischöfe des 10.-12. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973): 230-33.

main protagonist, Archbishop Bruno, is not present; his place as the main actor was overtaken by King Otto, Conrad and God himself. The latter acted through his constant intercession: Ruotger even introduces the event as if God took vengeance on the Hungarians for the blood of 'his people'.[106] The same type of battle description is found in the annalistic *Continuation of Regino of Prüm's Chronicle* by Adalbert, archbishop of Magdeburg, created around 967-968. The author states that the Hungarians can be overcome only if the earth devoured them or heaven overthrew them; that is – with the help of God.[107]

The Battlefield as a narrative pattern

As it is visible from the discussed representations of the siege at Lechfeld in Ottonian narrative sources, the main pattern was to understand the battle against the Scripture, mostly Maccabees-history.[108] Authors depicted the victory over Hungarians as owed only to God, and also to some individuals who acted in a favorable way, either as pious Christians or as brave warriors and commanders. All of the authors depict more or less the same factual outline and sequence of events, though they differ in rhetorical structure, e.g. the way Widukind constructs his whole story on the Sallustian prototype. Moreover, this structure meets a general pattern of different battle-description (mainly battles on Riade and Birten) used by various Ottonian authors:

Enemies are presented as God's punishment for the nation
Enormous number of the enemy's troops are mentioned
Preparation for the battle
King's speech before *milites*
Church feast or mass is celebrated; fasting
Penance of the king (Thietmar)

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[106] "Igitur cum iam prope esset summa dies et ineluctabile tempus, quo Deus omnipotens, propitius terre populi sui ultus sanguinem servorum suorum vindictam retribueret in hostes eorum": Ibid., 230.

[107] Adalbert of Magdeburg, "Continuatio Reginonis." In *Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit 8*, ed. Albert Bauer and Reinhold Rau (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002): 212-13.

[108] Weinrich, "Tradition und Individualität in den Quellen zur Lechfeldschlacht 955," 298–300, 303–4.

Vow of the king(Thietmar)
Mention of relics (as object of veneration or weapon during the battle)
King leads the army
Counting causalities
Enemies are punished by a ruler
Celebration of triumph
Ruler makes donations to the Church

The description proposed by Thietmar, though fitting the general 'Christian' way of describing and interpreting the victory and, most probably, developing from it, seems to be different from other accounts of this battle and other sieges in the Ottonian history. Thietmar introduced a Christo-mimetic image of the king: Otto, during the mass before the battle took responsibility for all the sins of his people to ensure their salvation.

Wonderworkers on the field

This image of a king as a Christ, who only through his solemn devotion and faith changed the outcome of the battle, was used by Liutprand of Cremona (c.920-972) in his *Antapodosis*, or *Retribution*, but for the description of another battle. Liutprand started his career at the court of Italian King Berengar of Ivrea, but after 950 he switched the sides and came in favor of Berengar's rival – German King Otto I. Approximately in this period, between his various political missions, Liutprand started working on his book, which was planned to cover deeds of all kings and princes of Europe, thought he concentrated mostly on history of Italy, Germany and Byzantine Empire, and to create a retribution to Berengar of Ivrea, who expelled Liutprand from Italian court, and to praise his benefactor Otto I. Although *Antapodosis* was not finished by Liutprand, it is still visible that these main qualities influenced the way he chose and interpreted narratives for his work.[109]

[109] For more on Liutrpand see the introduction to: *Die Werke Liudprans von Cremona*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. 41, Hanover: Hahn, 1915; and Paolo Chiesa, ed., *Liudprandi*

The Battle on Birten, which happened in 939 between troops of Otto I and rebellious dukes, among whom was his younger brother Henry, is a second grand-battle narrative in *Antapodosis*, before Liutprand described a battle against Hungarians.[110] Similarities between these descriptions are striking: Liutprand did not differentiate between external and internal enemies of the realm, while this distinction was crucial for Widukind and Thietmar.[111] The battle over rebellious nobility was won, in the account of Liutprand, not only because of liturgical preparations, brilliant military strategy or warriors' bravery, but "by God reviewed miracle" (*a Domino renovatum miraculum*). During the battle Otto and some of his troops were incapable of joining the clash because of the river hindering their way, but Liutprand found for the king an elegant pious way out of the situation:

> Thereupon the king, deciding that such great steadfastness on the part of his men did not lack divine inspiration, as he could not come to the aid of his troops with his physical presence, given the intervening river, was reminded of the people of the Lord, who by the prayers of God's servant Moses conquered the attacking Amalekites. He quickly got off his horse and along with all the people gave himself over to prayer, shedding tears before the victory-giving nails that pierced

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Cremonensis opera omnia (Turnholti: Brepols, 1998); Paolo Squatriti, trans., *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007). About Liutprand's historical writings, *Antapodosis, Legatio* and *Historia Ottonis*, see: Karl Leyser, "Ends and Means in Liutprand of Cremona," in *Communications and Power in Medieval Euopre: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, by Karl Leyser, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 125–42; Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, 15–50.

[110] Among other leaders were Giselbert of Lothringen and Eberchard of Bayern. There is no certain viewpoint on reasons behind these rebellions of noblemen and family members against Otto I: while Althoff and Keller interpreted these uprisings as reaction to a new Otto I's paradigm of power, which denied Henry I's strategy of being *primus inter pares* among other noblemen, Fried sees the main motive in discords among noble families. All these views depend on scholarly interpretation of accounts of our main witness for this period, Widukind of Corvey, mainly episodes of Henry's and Otto's coronations and rebellions themselves as understood by the monk. For more details see: Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London: Arnold, 1979); Althoff and Keller, *Heinrich I. und Otto der Grosse*; Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte*; Johannes Fried, "Die Königserhebung Heinrichs I.: Mündlichkeit und Traditionsbildung im 10. Jahrhundert," in *Mittelalterforschung nach der Wende*, ed. Michael Borgolte (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1995), 267–318; Hagen Keller, "Widukinds Bericht über die Aachener Wahl und Krönung Ottos I.," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995): 390–453; Buc, "Noch Einmal 918-919."

[111] About this distinction for Ottonian authors: Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography C. 950-1150*, 48–53.

the hands of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and which had been placed in his lance.[112]

As Liutprand stated vividly, this episode is a reinterpretation of the battle between the Israelites and the Amelekites, when the former were saved by their leader Moses, who was standing on the hill praying all the time until the Israelites won.[113] Moses gave an example for Otto I to overcome his physical inability to join the battle with the help of constant prayer and devotion, which could be attributed to royal repentance; and the sacred history repeated – due to pious prayer of King Otto and his troops the battle against rebels was won.

Liutprand resorted to this Moses-paradigm in order to emphasize the king's role in the battle and to explain the divinely ordained victory of the king's army through miraculous help.[114] The story and a miracle it contained became even more powerful with the help of relics of the holy nails, and the story of their acquisition by Ottonian kings is embedded into the battle-narrative. I believe that this particular scene of repentance was a narrative construct of the author, built upon the story from Exodus, conveying several functions: to describe the decisive victory gained through miracle; to explain the miracle that happened because of Otto's repentance; to emphasize the author's view on kingship, where the ruler was an image of Moses, hence Christ; to engage the king in the battle though without shedding blood of his fellow Christians.

The accounts of the Battle of Birten told by other Ottonian authors are also of a great value for our study. Widukind of Corvey, who reproached young Henry for his need for power and

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[112] "Rex denique tantam suorum constantiam non sine divino instinctu esse considerans, quoniam fluvio intercedente corporali preasentia subvenire suis non poterat, recordatus populi Somini, qui repugnantes sibi Amalechitas orationibus Moysi servi Dei devicerat, potinus de equo descendit seseque cum omni populo lacrimas fundens ante vicrotiferos clavos minibus domini et salvatoris nostril Iesu Christi adfixos suaque lanceae inpositos in orationem dedit": Ant IV. 24, 117; Liutprand of Cremona, "Retribution", trans. Paolo Squatriti in *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, 156-157.
[113] Exodus 17:8-14.
[114] Buc argues that through this episode Liutprand showed Otto's "election": Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, 48–50.

revolts against his brother King Otto, also included elements of royal penance on the battlefield when depicting events at Birten.[115] Similar to Liutprand's account, Otto appeared to be divided from his main troops as he could not fight the enemy. The king, raising his hands, asked God to help his people and to Otto himself, as God wanted him to rule over them (*cui me preesse voluisti*). Hagen Keller showed that Widukind in this episode and several others actualized examples from the history of Macabees, driving from similarities of military situations and his own political views.[116] Here Otto's penitent prayer legitimized the victory, which without king's prayer would be rather dubious, and manifested God's favor towards the righteous king, while Henry and other conspirators remained depleted of divine providence.

Hrosvitha of Gandersheim, a tenth-century nun and writer, famous for her dramas and historical works, also touched upon the issue of enmity between two brothers, King Otto I and Henry, future duke of Bavaria in *Gesta Ottonis*.[117] In her description of the Battle of Birten, Otto is compared to David: as soon as he learnt about upcoming battle he, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed as the king of Israel did: "See, I have sinned."[118] This described act of royal repentance immediately alludes to the role of the king as responsible for his kingdom

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[115] Widukind, RGS II. 17-19, 81-83.

[116] Hagen Keller, "Machabaeorum pugnae: zum Stellenwert eines biblischen Vorbilds in Widukinds Deutung der ottonischen Königsherrschaft," in *Iconologia sacra: Mythos, Bildkunst und Dichtung in der Religions- und Sozialgeschichte Alteuropas: Festschrift für Karl Hauck zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Hagen Keller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 417–37.

[117] Hrosvitha of Gandersheim, "Gesta Ottonis." In *Hrosvitae Opera*, ed. Paul Winterfeld MGH SS rer. Germ. 34 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1902), 211-213, lines 237-296. On Hrosvitha see: Walter Berschin, ed., *Hrotsvit: opera omnia* (Munich: Saur, 2001); Phyllis Rugg Brown, Katharina M. Wilson, and Linda A. McMillin, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006); Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes, *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contextual and Interpretive Approaches* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012).

[118] "En, qui peccavi": Hrosvitha of Gandersheim, "Gesta Ottonis.", 212, line 271; cf. 2 Sam. 12:13. Hrosvitha's use of David model is discussed here: Jay Terry Lees, "David Rex Fidelis?: Otto the Great, the Gesta Ottonis, and the Primordia Coenobu Gandershemensis," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960)*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 201–34.

and to the model, where wellbeing of the people is dependent upon king's piety and chastity.[119] Later on she also compares Otto's laments with the reaction of David to Saul's death;[120] and the whole *Gesta Ottonis* remain full of these allusions and examples of biblical kingship. [121] This is one more example of how biblical paradigms were used in historical texts, especially in key moments of history of the nation, and how these events were understood and explained through models of the sacred history.

A similar description of God's intercession for his people and a miraculous victory gained with the help of a king's prayer in front of powerful relics, which had almost the same functions as Liutprand's story, can be found in a place where all miracles should happen – in the saints' vitae, namely in *The Life of St Henry, King and Confessor*. The last emperor from the Ottonian dynasty, Henry II was canonized in the middle of the twelfth century, and his *Life* was created around the same time in Bamberg, place of his royal *memoria* and veneration.[122] Adalbert, the author of the Life, not willing to describe all wars of Henry II against the leaders of the Christian states of Poland and Bohemia (whom Adalbert still depicted as barbarians), compressed all the conflict to a description of the one single battle

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[119] Model, actualized a lot in the Carolingian epoch: Meens, "Politics, Mirrors and Princess and the Bible"; Jong, *The Penitential State*.

[120] 1 Sam. 1:12-17.

[121] More about Hrosvitha's historiographical paradigm and usages of Old Testament kingship models: Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft und Gottes Gnade*, 65–74.

[122] For more on the Life of Henry see the introduction to its recent critical edition: Marcus Stumpf, ed., *Die Vita sancti Heinrici regis et confessoris und ihre Bearbeitung durch den Bamberger Diakon Adalbert*, MGH SSrG 69 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1999). On Henry II and his cult see: Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Frommer Mönchskönig, sakraler Christusvikar und heiliger Kaiser: Heinrich II.," in *Gekrönt auf Erden und im Himmel: das heilige Kaiserpaar Heinrich II. und Kunigunde*, ed. Norbert Jung and Holger Kempkens (Bamberg: Bamberg Diözesanmuseum, 2014), 20–27; Renate Klauser, *Der Heinrichs- und Kunigundenkult im mittelalterlichen Bistum Bamberg* (Bamberg: Selbstverlag des historischen Vereins, 1957); Bernd Schneidmüller, "Heinrich II. und Kunigunde. Das heilige Kaiserpaar des Mittelalters," in *Kunigunde - consors regni: Vortragsreihe zum tausendj'hrigen Jubiläum der Krönung Kunigundes in Padeborn (1002-2002)*, ed. Stefanie Dick, Jörg Jarnut, and Matthias Wernhoff (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004), 29–46; Stefan Weinfurter, *Heinrich II., 1002-1024 : Herrscher am Ende der Zeiten* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 2000).

which happened near Merseburg.[123] At that time Henry received relics of St Adrian, his sword, which would help him in the battle. Henry prayed in front of the relics and asked St Lawrence, who always helped Ottonian kings in their battles and was a patron saint of Merseburg, for God's intercession, promising to restore Merseburg. And the same miracle happened:

> And he (Henry) saw glorious martyrs, namely Gregory, Lawrence, Adrian with striking angels leading his army and driving away hostile troops to flee. And as the army of Sennacherib was destroyed by striking angels and it vanished,[124] in the same way on this day this multitude of barbarians was destroyed with bravery and forced to run away by the prominent warriors without shedding blood of Christians. [125]

Adalbert of Bamberg used similar miracle-story as Liutprand did, also reminding his readers of prototypes from the sacred history: Hezekiah, King of Jerusalem, prayed to the Lord to save Jerusalem from the invincible army of Assyrian King Sennacherib; and the Lord made his troops turn away from Jerusalem, and the King was later killed by his sons. The intercession of patron saints and the Lord was seen by Adalbert and his readers as a divine sign of the king's sanctity, presenting him as a by God chosen man, who through his faith and devotion can save his people.

The battlefield was a right place for a miracle: apart from having various biblical prototypes, this narrative could be utilized by chroniclers for their own reasons. Most important, this miracle clearly gave an odour of sanctity to the ruler, who through repentance and prayer gained the divine aid. If for the *Life of Henry* this motive of royal sanctity was clear and

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[123] As far as this Life is not from the Ottonian age, I will not analyze this text and the fragment in much details; for more about this episode see: Andreas Hammer, "Interferences between Hagiography and Historiography: Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg and Emperor Henry II," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 70 (2013): 179–94.

[124] 2 Kings 19; 2 Chron. 32.

[125] "Et vidit gloriosos martyres, Georgium videlicet, Laurentium, Adrianum, cum angelo percutiente exercitum suum precedentes et hostium cuneos ad fugam propellentes. Et sicut exercitus Sennacherib ab angelo percutiente contritus est et periit, ita omnis ista barbarorum multitudo per virtutem die contrita proiectis armis sine effusione sanguinis christianorum fuge presidium quesivit": Die Vita sancti Heinrici regis et confessoris, 238-39.

constituted the main idea of the text, for Liutprand such kind of allusion could be attributed to his hidden agenda to flatter his benefactor Otto I and to present him as new Moses.

Biblical kings and Ottonian wars

In this chapter I analyzed royal penance performed in rather specific circumstances, that is, on the battlefield. I mostly concentrated on the following questions: how did the author utilize this description for his own purposes and under which circumstances was the adoption of this image of the king possible?

We can clearly see a tendency among all of the discussed Ottonian authors to explain military campaign as God's punishment to his people and an upcoming victory as a result of king's actions, namely his public repentance and prayer. I assume that this element of king's penance and begging for divine intervention was a fictional, literary derivative from the model of ruler's bravery or piety as a guarantee for the victory. This model was employed by Liutprand of Cremona, Thietmar of Merseburg, Hrosvitha of Gandersheim and later by Adalbert of Bamberg in rather similar ways, but for different purposes.

Thietmar could develop royal penance from military rituals known to him, such as the mass before the battle, especially when combined with the great saint's feast. He deliberately switched attention only to Otto conducting repentance, praying and making a vow to establish Merseburg. The latter point can be seen as an ultimate reason why Thietmar created this description – to provide his diocese with a story of its glorious foundation. Liutprand of Cremona and later Adalbert of Bamberg connected the miraculous story of God's help with the king's pious acts during the battle. Otto I imitated, on the one hand, Moses, great leader of the chosen nation, on the other – Christ, who was capable to atone for all human sins. The use of biblical models, and in case of Hrosvitha – the image of David, is quite evident among almost all the authors dealing with grand-battle narratives. Otto I was described in several

accounts as giving life and army's fate in the hands of God, as it was said to King David, who did not believe in God's power and was punished for this: "May the Lord multiply his troops a hundred times over!"[126] Moreover, all these discussed narratives are dominated by the Christo-mimetical image of the ruler.[127]

Why was it possible to develop a model of king's penance where he acted like a victorious miracle-worker, having almost saint-like direct access to God, or even alluding to Christ? Victory was also one of the images of kingship in Ottonian Empire, propagated in poems, on coinage, iconography and ceremonies like *adventus domini*.[128] Motives of sacral emperorship, close to Byzantine examples, are also found in Ottonian iconography or liturgy, in "prescriptive" sources such as miniatures or coronation *ordines* which, however, presented an up-down view of the power created by the court, functioning almost as royal propaganda.[129] While the authors of these texts give us down-up perceptions of the royal authority and reactions to the imposed image of sacral kingship, which, as appeared, was rather successful among its audience. Image of a ruler perceived as a biblical king was extensively multiplied and reinterpreted by authors, often through forms of royal repentance, which at the same time was a useful tool for the writing of a history of the royal dynasty.

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[126] 1 Chron. 21:3.

[127] About sacral kingship in Carolingian and Ottonian empires: Franz-Reiner Erkens, *Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter: von den Anfängen bis zum Investiturstreit* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2006), 133–89.

[128] On main media of royal symbolical language (though for the Carolingian world, but still valid for the Ottonian period) see: Ildar H Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c. 751-877)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 27–38. On *adventus domini*: David A. Warner, "Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian 'Reich': The Ceremony of 'Adventus,'" *Speculum* 76 (2001): 255–83.

[129] About royal image in miniatures in the Carolingian and Ottonian periods see: Robert Deshman, "'Christus Rex et Magi Reges': Kingship and Christology in Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon Art," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 10 (1976): 367–405; Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft und Gottes Gnade*, 165–320; Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c. 751-877)*, 230–60. On medieval ceremonies of coronation: János M. Bak, ed., *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

Chapter III – The David-model of royal penance in friendship and enmity

The importance of the cleric when imposing penance is not a thing to be argued—his administrative and sacral role was underlined in the penitential books and other treaties on penance. The main duty of the clergyman was the salvation of the souls, especially royal ones, for example on the deathbed.[130]

This role of a cleric as caring for the deeds and sins of a ruler has an obvious biblical prototype—David and Nathan, which has already been discussed earlier. In the fourth century this model was employed by Bishop Ambrose to administer penance of Emperor Theodosius.[131] During the reign of Louis the Pious bishops also used their right of correction and forced the king to perform public penance twice; moreover, this practice of repentance in front of bishops was described in the Romano-German Pontifical, widely distributed throughout the Ottonian realm.[132] Ottonian history is rich in similar narratives of "imposed" penance, which were mainly used to establish the relationship between the ruler and the church authority in general (either bishop or saint).[133] It is interesting to investigate to what extent did these descriptions use the David story as their prototype, because not every royal

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[130] These "ritualized" descriptions of kings' last hours always included the representation of their utmost humility, fasting and confession of sins before clerics. For example, dead bed scenes of Otto I and Otto II, who even confessed his sins to Roman bishops before dying: Widukind, RGS III. 75, 151-53; Thietmar, Chron. III. 25, 129-30. On similar Thietmar's description of death of Otto III, in connection to authorial understanding of sacral kingship, penitential practices, Schramm's "Renovatio"-idea see: Stephan Waldhoff, "Der Kaiser in der Krise?: zum Verständnis von Thietmar IV,48," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 54 (1998): 23–54.

[131] Schieffer, "Von Mailand nach Canossa"; Bojcov, "Raskajanie gosudaria: Imperator i episkop [Repentance of a Prince: The emperor and the bishop]"; Boucheron and Gioanni, *La mémoire d'Ambroise de Milan*.

[132] The recent publication on penances of Louis the Pious is: Jong, *The Penitential State*. On this pontifical with regard to penitential practices: Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900-1050*, 25–50.

[133] Most of these cases are mentioned by: Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter*, 105–25. The discussion of this type of royal penance during the Ottonian rule can be found also: Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900-1050*, 173–207. Meens also has touched upon this matter, though comparing royal penance to secular *deditio*, which seems to be problematic: Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600-1200*, 180–89.

penance was based upon David model, as was shown in previous chapters, and because authors could interpret Davidian penance in different ways.[134] In this chapter I will identify the specific role (or a palette of possible interpretations) of this, often imaginative, narrative of the king performing a penance in front of the church authority. There could be various functions of this model, though they depended on the specific circumstances of remembering this or that event in the text, for example to show superiority, to resolve a conflict or to show friendship between the church authority (and the community behind it) and royal power.

How to make friends with the emperor

In the *Life of Burchard of Worms* there is an example of royal penance with direct involvement of church authority.[135] Emperor Otto III and Bishop Franco of Worms (brother of Burchard, to whom the *Life* is devoted) did penance together, which did not imply any kind of ecclesiastical superiority over the ruler. The *Life* recounts that Franco, immediately after his investiture, became close to Otto III and was almost like his councilor; the emperor and his court even venerated the living bishop as if he was a saint. As the author of the *Vita* recounted, Otto and Franco spent one year together until August 999 in Italy, where they went on penitential practice, including fasting, praying and flagellating:

> There he was zealous in the service of the emperor with a vigilant spirit for more than one year and was often a party of his secrets… At the same time, the emperor and the aforementioned bishop (Franco), having put on hair shirts and with completely bare feet, entered a certain cave next to the church of San

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[134] Hamilton described one peculiar case from The Life of Robert the Pious when king's repentance was constructing using the image of David, though not in its Carolingian exegesis, namely the author Helgaud of Fleury did not emphasize ecclesiastical superiority in the act of royal penance: Hamilton, "A New Model for Royal Penance?"

[135] The *Life* was written right after Burchard's death in 1025 possibly for a community of Worms to commemorate the deeds of their great bishop, the author of the canon law collection *Decretum*. The *Vita* was written by someone who knew the bishop personally, such as Eberchard, cathedral master of Worms. Burchard of Worms, apart from his intellectual activities, was engaged in imperial politics against the dukes of Carinthia and even took part in rising future Emperor Conrad II (1024-1034), which the author actively emphasized. For more details see Wilfried Hartmann, *Bischof Burchard von Worms: 1000-1025*, Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelrheinischen Kirchengeschichte 100 (Mainz: Selbsverlag der Gesellschaft für Mittelrheinische Kirchengschichte, 2000).

> Clemente unbeknownst to all and hid there for fourteen days in prayers, fasting and vigils. Some say that they were constantly consoled by visions and divine conversations while in this place.[136]

During their stay in the cave Franco also revealed to Otto the time of his own death and suggested the emperor to invest his brother Burchard as a bishop of Worms instead of himself. This part of the *Vita* emphasizes that the relationship between the emperor and the bishop was based on the notions of close friendship (*familiaritas*) and authority (*auctoritas*), with common penance as a culmination of this motive. Almost the same relationships were established between the main protagonist Bishop Burchard and Emperor Henry II, and consequently, between Burchard and Conrad II, whom he adopted and raised. For the author it was probably important to underline the continuity of close relationship between German kings and bishops of Worms, regarded both as persons and as offices; and the joint penance of Franco and Otto III was a very expressive tool chosen by the author to achieve this aim.

This episode probably developed from a widespread attempt of hagiographers to show that their saints had the most intimate relationships with the emperor, especially in the case of Otto III, who was surrounded by many ascetics, monks and learned men, like Gerbert of Aurillac or Adalbert of Prague. Presenting the saint as closest to the emperor as possible, as his friend or moral advisor, in hagiographies of the Ottonian age was achieved by several means, for example, the topoi of being in constant conversation with the emperor.[137] By

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[136] "Ibique plus quam unius anni spacio in servitio imperatoris vigilanti animo studebat, eiusque secretis saepe intererat… Eodem tempore imperator et praedictus episcopus, induti ciliciis, pedibus penitus denudatis, quondam speluncam iuxta sancti Clementis ecclesiam clam cunctis intraverunt, ibique in orationibus et ieiuniis necnon in vigiliis quatuordecim dies latuerunt. Ferunt quidam, visionis et allocutionibus divinis eos crebro hoc loco fuisse consolatos": *Vita Burchardi episcopi*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 4, 833-34 (Hanover: Hahn, 1841); *The Life of Bishop Burchard of Worms*, trans. W. L. North, in *Medieval Sourcebook,* accessed 5 May, 2016, https://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1025burchard-vita.asp.

[137] For example, one of the hagiographers of Adalbert of Prague, John of Canaprius, claimed that "In those times, the most Christian Caesar, who always showed the greatest care and deepest solicitude towards the servant of God, often spoke to St. Adalbert and had him by his side as one of his closest, listening with pleasure to whatever he had to say" (22): *Sancti Adalberti Pragensis episcopi et martyris Vita prior*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, Monumenta Poloniae historica, Nova Series 4/1 (Warszawa: Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1962); "Life of Saint Adalbert Bishop of Prague and

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mentioning that their protagonists were involved in penitential practices together with the ruler, hagiographers most probably wanted to achieve the same effect. As in the *Life of Burchard*, Bishop Franco is shown as having the closest relationship with Otto III, because they shared one of the sacraments.

There are two more accounts of penance of Otto III in 999, where Otto performed it for the Italian monastic ascetics St Nilus and St Romuald. Although these three narratives have something in common and may refer to the same royal pilgrimage to Monte Gargano, each employs the image of penance for different reasons, and the aim of the royal penance in both Italian *Lives* differ drastically from the one of Otto and Franco discussed above.

Otto III and Italian Saints

The story of Otto's penance in the *Lives* of Nilus and Romuald, although attributed to the same time when the emperor stayed in Rome, was staged in a different environment comparing to the *Life of Burchard,* namely the revolt of Roman nobility and the Second Italian Campaign. In 996 Otto III invested his own candidate to the Holy Seat: his cousin Bruno, Pope Gregory V, who later crowned him as an emperor.[138] This imperial investiture did not sit well with the Roman nobility, who were usually in charge of electing the pope.

Martyr," trans. Cristian Gaspar, in *Saints of the Christianization Age of Central Europe (Tenth-Eleventh Centuries)*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay (Budapest: CEU Press, 2013), 157. On veneration of St Adalbert and specifically context of creation of this Life see introductions to the critical edition in MPH and English translation, also see: Johannes Fried, "Gnesen - Aachen - Rom: Otto III. und der Kult des hl. Adalbert: Beobachtungen zum älteren Adalbertsleben," in *Polen und Deutschland vor 1000 Jahren: die Berliner Tagung über den "Akt von Gnesen,"* ed. Michael Borgolte (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 235–79.

[138] With regard to the "Italienpolitik" see: Mathilde Uhlirz, "Kaiser Otto III. und das Papsttum," *Historische Zeitschrift* 162 (1940): 258–68; Egon Boshof, "Katastrophe oder Katalysator?: Kaiserliche Italienpolitik von den Ottonen bis zu den Staufern," in *Europäische Begegnungen: die Faszination des Südens*, by Ursula Triller (Munich: Bayerische Schulbuch, 2001), 29–54; Althoff, *Otto III*, 72–89; Herbert Zielinski, "Der Weg nach Rom: Otto der Große und die Anfänge der ottonischen Italienpolitik," in *Die Faszination der Papstgeschichte: Neue Zugänge zum frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann and Klaus Herbers (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008), 97–108; Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

Thus Crescentius, leader of the Roman aristocracy in this revolt, who for a while even bore the title of *Patricius Romanorum*, elected an anti-pope, John Philagathos (John XVI), a prelate of Greek origin, who was also a godfather to Otto III.

Gregory V ran away to Germany, where he asked the emperor to deal with the usurpers and conspirators. Otto III set up his Second Italian Campaign, during which Crescentius was executed and John was punished and publicly humiliated by being forced to ride a donkey. In 999 the emperor went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Archangel Michael in Monte Gargano, and during this pious journey Otto III met the two ascetics St Nilus and St Romuald, as it is described in their lives.[139] Surprisingly, this penitential pilgrimage is not mentioned in any of the contemporary German sources. The annalist of Quedlinburg describes the conflict around the Holy Seat as a clear rebellion against the emperor and the established order, which moved Otto to start his Second Italian Campaign and justified the bloody ravages of the rebels.[140] Another contemporary chronicler, Thietmar (975-1018), accepted the severe punishment of the Italian rebels (*invasor*) and he is also silent about Otto's penance—the chronicler did not see anything the emperor could have been held accountable for in this conflict.[141]

Some of the views which contradicted the official view of the Italian conflict were uncovered in these two hagiographical texts. *The Life of Nilus the Younger* (910-1005), founder of Italo-Greek monasticism of the Basilian order, was written in Greek right after his death in the monastery of Grottaferrata; the other text, *the Life of Saint Romuald* (951-1025), devoted to another Italian hermit involved in the Roman conflict, was written around 1040 by Peter

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[139] For more details about this revolt see: Gerd Althoff, *Otto III.* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 72–90; Hamilton, "Otto III's Penance."

[140] "Hoc etiam anno (997) Crestentius quidam diabolica fraude deceptus Romam absente papa Gregorio invasit Johannemque quendam Calabritanum… (998) Imperator tantis preasumptionibus compertis secumdam profectionem paravit in Italiam." In *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese (Hanover: Hahn, 2004), 495–97.

[141] "Crescentius autem Rome absente papa predicto, qui post benedictionem Gregorius vocabatur, Iohannem Calabritanum… substituit et sibi imperium tali presumpcione usurpavit, inmemor iuramenti et magne pietatis ab Ottone augusto sibi illate." (Cod. 2): Chron. IV. 30, 167.

Damian (1007-1072), one of the most important figures in the reform movement of the eleventh century. These *vitae* describe relationships between the emperor and the saints, who represent the values of his ecclesiastical community (to which the hagiographers also belonged), multiplied by authorial personal views on interaction between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. Both authors employ the image of the repentant king, who was blamed for his unjust behavior, and at the same time they manifested the moral authority of the saints over secular power.

The Life of Nilus communicated to its audience values shared by the Italo-Greek monastic communities: asceticism, strict discipline and emphasized their independence from the Roman Church and all secular powers.[142] The saint's victories over secular power are a leitmotiv of the *Life*, and the moral victory over the German emperor is the culmination of this theme.

The *Life* tells us that at the very end of the Second Italian Campaign against Antipope John and rebellious Roman nobility, Nilus came to the emperor to intercede for John Philagathos: he asked Otto and Pope Gregory not to put the antipope on trial and place the Greek prelate in Nilus's custody. However, Otto and his pope broke the promise given to the holy man. Saint Nilus condemned them both and went back to his monastery, and soon after Gregory V died. This sudden death is seen by the hagiographer and his heroes as punishment for Gregory's mutilation of Counterpope John. Otto, however, on his way back from Monte Gargano, was given a chance to beg for the Saint's forgiveness:

> But the emperor, indicating the toil taken up for the sake of his repentance (μετανοεῖν), walked on foot from Rome to Gargano, to venerate archangel Michael; on the way back he visited the hospice of the blessed man… And the emperor, after he had reached out the hand, which was taken by the old man,

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[142] Obedience and discipline were the most important virtues for the Basilian order, especially while doing the penance; in case of Otto's repentance, the emperor followed this particular Greek practice. See: Hamilton, "Otto III's Penance," 89; Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900-1050*, 175–76.

proceeded to the oratory with him (Nilus)… The holy man answered him: "I heard David saying: Save me, O Lord, for there is now no holy person, truths are diminished from the children of men;[143] and later: There is none that does good, not even one"[144]… And the holy man, stretching his arm to the breast of the sinful emperor, said: "Nothing else I ask from your authority but the salvation of your soul; even if you happen to be the emperor you will die as one as any mortal human and come to judgment and give an account of the good and evil deeds you did". When the emperor was listening to this, drops of tears were falling from his eyes; then he took off the crown and placed it in the hands of the blessed man, and after he had taken blessing he continued his journey with all his entourage.[145]

From this episode it is evident that Otto was considered guilty for his disobedience and breaking the promise—not because of interference into Church affairs or for promoting his own cousin as a pope. Otto offered Nilus all material goods and his patronage, though the saint wanted his repentance and acknowledgment of his sins. He clearly used the example of David's penance as a model for Emperor Otto, citing two penitential psalms of David. While repenting in front of the holy man and asking for his blessing, Otto technically resolved the crisis and reestablished the status quo. However, the hagiographer made clear that through this act Otto accepted Nilus's authority and the moral superiority of their Basilian order. Still it is peculiar that in this episode, and throughout all the *Life*, several Churches are differentiated: the Imperial Church, personified in German bishops like Gerald of Aurillac or even Pope Gregory V, is presented as part of secular, imperial authority; the Roman Church and the Holy Seat, which is occupied by imperial protégés; and the Italo-Greek Church,

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[143] Psalm 11:1.

[144] Psalm 13:1.

[145] "Imperator autem poenitentiae causa susceptum indicans laborem, ab Urbe ad Garganum pedibus iter fecit, veneraturus Michaelem archangelum; in reditu beati viri hospitium invisit… Et imperator supposita manu, qua subniteretur senex, una cum illo oratorium ingressus est…Ad quae vir sanctus: Audivi dicentem David: Salvum me fac, Domine, quoniam defecit sanctus, quoniam diminutae sunt veritates a filiis hominum; preaterea: Non est, qui faciat bonum, non est usque ad unum"… Et vir sanctus, extensa manu ad pectus imperatoris, dixit: "Nihil aliud rogo ab imperio tuo nisi animae tuae salutem; nam licet imperator sis, tamen ut mortalis homo moriturus es et iudicio sistendus, rationemque redditurus eorum, quae sive bona sive mala egeris". Quae imperator audiens, lacrymarum guttas fundebat ex oculis; deinde corona demissa in manus beati viri, et benedictio percepta, cum toto suo comitatu commisit se viae": *Ex Vita Sancti Nili,* ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz. MGH SS 4 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1841), 617-18. The MGH edition provides the Greek original with the Latin translation from the sixteenth century. For an Italian translation from the original Greek see: Saint Bartolomeo Juniore and Antonio Rocchi, *Vita di San Nilo abate, fondatore della Badia di Grottaferrata* (Rome: Descl'ee, Lefebvre e C. , 1904). The translation above is mine from the Latin text of the MGH edition.

which is the only pure one, led by the holy man. Monks of the Basilian order, who created this hagiographical tradition, were eager to show their excellence and superiority of their order (though not of the whole Church) over the secular, German-born power – this particular feature was part of their monastic identity.

Although the Life of Romuald, written by Peter Damian in the middle of the eleventh century, cannot be considered as a part of the Ottonian historiography, his interpretation of the above mentioned crisis and the role of the royal penance therein deserve a brief discussion here.[146] The main story of the *Vita Romualdi* resembled the one presented in *The Life of Nilus*: the emperor went to St Romuald to repent for his sins, for executing Crescentius and making his wife a concubine—there is no proof in other accounts for this and the story suspiciously resembles that of the first repentance of King David.[147] However, the main innocent victim of *Vita Nili* is the Greek Antipope John. Both hagiographers chose different victims of Otto's crime depending on their monastic order and political affiliation. The *Life of St Romuald* shows exactly how Peter Damian imagined the king's penance:

> You see, the before mentioned emperor was rather favorable to the monastic order and too much devoted in his serving feeling to God. And he himself confessed the same fault to the holy man, for the sake of repentance he went barefooted from Rome, and he proceeded all the way to Monte Gargano to the church of St Michael. And during all forty days he stayed in Classe monastery of blessed Apollinaire, barely adhering to himself. Wherever he could, he was eagerly fasting and singing psalms, he dressed in a rug of goat hair, which was covered above with gold and purple garment. And after he picked up the shining cloaks and stretched on the delicately made paper-mat, he himself started to bruise parts of his tender body. And so he promised blessed Romuald that after he left the imperial office, he would receive the monk's habit; and whoever of

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[146] For more details see: Fridolin Dressler, *Petrus Damiani: Leben und Werk.* (Romae: Herder, 1954); Walter Franke, *Romuald von Camaldoli und seine Reformtätigkeit zur Zeit Ottos III.* (Vaduz: Kraus, 1965); Patricia Ranft, *The theology of work: Peter Damian and the medieval religious renewal movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
[147] More on the shared patristic tradition, which explains these similarities see: Hamilton, "Otto III's Penance."

countless mankind was subjected to him, from now on he himself is obedient to poor Christ and is indebted to him. [148]

This practice of penance is clearly built upon the ascetic lifestyle propagated by St Romuald and Peter Damian himself: Romuald founded the Camoldolese monastic house, famous for its strictness in obeying Benedictine rule, while Peter in his early career was engaged in the reformation of monastic institutions on principles of asceticism, abstinence, self-humiliation and inner remorse.[149] Otto III, despite his imperial status, was punished according to the strict monastic regulations—by fasting, flagellating, constant praying—for interference in ecclesiastical matters and supporting unjust reprisals. With his readiness to withdraw from the imperial office, to undertake *conversio*, Otto showed not only his piety and abstinence, but the superiority of monastic life, of living 'in Church' and 'in Christ' as the only appropriate form of Christian life. This retrospective and radical view on secular power and on emperor's guilt in the Italian crisis was possible only under the later reform movement and the weakening of imperial positions in Rome.

Both Italian hagiographers, when employing the David model to which the Lives allude, aimed to evoke in their readers the notions of sacerdotal superiority and royal humility. This model also implied that secular power should be judged by the Church, where popes, bishops and saints do have the right to be the highest moral authority.

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[148]"Erat enim praedictus imperator monastico ordini valde benivolus et nimia circa Dei famulos affectione devotus. Ipse autem ex eodem crimine beato viri confessus, poenitentiae cause nudis pedibus de Romana urbe progrediens, sic usque Garganum montem ad sancti Michaelis perrexit ecclesiam. Per totam etiam quadragesimam in Classensi monasterio beati Apollenaris, paucis sibi adhaerentibus, mansit. Ubi ieiunio et psalmodiae, prout valebat, intentus, cilicio ad carnem indutus, aurata desuper purpura tegebatur. Lecto etiam fulgentibus palliis strato, ipse in storia de papiris compacta tenera delicati corporis membra terebat. Promisit itaque beato Romualdo, quod imperium reliquens monachicum susciperet habitum; et cui innumeri mortalis erant obnoxii, iam ipse pauperculo Christo subiectus coepit esse debitor sui." In Peter Damian, *Vita Sancti Romualdi*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SS 4 (Hanover: Hahn, 1841), 849-50. Full edition of *The Life of Romuald*: Peter Damiani, *Vita beati Romualdi*, ed. Giovanni Tabacco (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1957).
[149] Oluf Schönbeck, "Peter Damian and the Rhetoric of an Ascetic," in *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century*, ed. Michael Herren, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 350–70.

Canossa staged in Halberstadt

It all started when Otto I promised to establish an archbishopric in Magdeburg after his triumph in the battle at Lechfeld in 955. However, this imperial wish confronted opposition from different Church magnates, and Bishop Bernhard of Halberstadt also joined this resistance.[150] As the *Deeds of Bishops of Halberstadt* tell us, the conflict escalated to the extent that Emperor Otto I was excommunicated by Bernhard. To atone for his sins and reconcile with the Church, Otto I undertook penance:

> After the emperor went a little from the city, he, truly moved by divine inspiration, suddenly returned barefoot as a penitent, prostrated on the ground before the aforementioned bishop and asked for the favor of absolution, which he prizes humbly. Then, after the bishop himself beseeched, the emperor went far away from the city one more time; after he had put on royal regalia, he came back by horse, and with all the delight, all rejoicing, he was taken back to Church by harmonious solemnity. Then he, full of gladness, celebrated Easter in this community. As you see, the dispute between the emperor and the bishop has finished, so that they lived hand in hand and the emperor made a vow never to mention what had happened, so that even in anxiety he stick to it. [151]

The author of the *Deeds* stated that after this act of repentance the conflict was resolved and Otto entered city for the second time already as a triumphant king, and not as a repentant; afterwards the king and the bishop lived in harmony.[152] The fact that this episode survived only in the Halberstadt local tradition and in the chronicle, which was written at least a

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[150] More about the conflict around Magdeburg and the role of Bishop Bernhard in Althoff, "Magdeburg - Halberstadt - Merseburg: Bischöfliche Repräsentation und Interessenvertretung im ottonischen Sachsen," 268–75; Becher, *Otto der Grosse*, 235–37.

[151] "Imperator vero divina inspiratione conpunctus, a civitate aliquantulum retrogressus, penitentium more nudis pedibus subito regrediens, coram prefato episcopo humotenus est prostratus, et absolutionis beneficium, quod ab ipso humiliter preciit, imperavit. Ipso igitur episcopo obsecrante, imperator ab urbe longius denuo retrocedens, regalibus ornamentis indutus, bectus equo revertitur, et cum omni tripudio, cunctis exultantibus, sollempnitate congrua est receptus, et in ipsa civitate festum paschal cum uberrima letitia celebravit. Sic igitur inter imperatorem et episcopum omnis controversia est finite, ut eo vivente nuncquam manus apponeret set nec etiam mentionem uncquam faceret voti sui, quod in rebus anxiis ipsum constitit sic vovisse": *Gesta episcoporum Halberstadensium*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, MGH SS, 23 (Hanover: Hahn, 1874), 83-84.

[152] More on this event see: Althoff, "Magdeburg - Halberstadt - Merseburg: Bischöfliche Repräsentation und Interessenvertretung im ottonischen Sachsen," 274–75. This example of royal penance was also mentioned in Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter*, 110–11. However, Althoff views this act as humiliation before God and "heavenly powers" and a plea for atonement, though the narrator underlined the role of bishop in penance and following reconciliation and friendly relationship between Otto and Bernhard.

century after the described event, questions the credibility of this narration; nevertheless, this narrative is incredibly valuable for identifying the local memory of the ecclesiastical community. [153] The fragment preceding the penance story was copied from Thietmar's description of the Battle of Lechfeld, while the consequences of the royal wish for Halberstadt represented, most probably, the local tradition, which is not found in any other narratives.

In a sense the Halberstadt community fought for its independence, especially concerning the royal decision to establish the archbishopric in Magdeburg. On the other hand, from the perspective of Halberstadt, Otto I unjustly imprisoned Bishop Bernhard and was excommunicated for this misdeed. The only tool to reestablish the relationship between the secular and the sacred authority was church penance, which may have had David model or Carolingian traditions of ecclesiastical-administered royal penance as prototypes. [154] Otto asked for atonement for the specific sin before the bishop; the reason for developing this memory was not the performance of general royal piety or asking for God's intercession through atonement of sins, which were popular among Ottonian authors. Hence the type of penance which resolves the conflict and implies ecclesiastical superiority over the emperor is a rather traditional one.

Royal wish against the Synod in Frankfurt

Thietmar of Merseburg wrote that it was Henry II's very own desire to establish the bishopric in Bamberg. For this to be done, he needed help from an influential churchman, and he asked Henry, bishop of Wurzburg, for his assistance in exchange for the archiepiscopal status for

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[153] The *Gesta* was compiled in Halberstadt at the beginning of the thirteenth century; however, accounts on the tenth century were compiled with the help of an older chronicle from the end of tenth century. The author, recounting this early period of Ottonian rule, also massively used Widukind of Corvey, Annals of Quedlinburg and Thietmar of Merseburg.

[154] On Carolingian royal penance see: Jong, *The Penitential State*.

his diocese.[155] However, Henry II broke his promise and the bishop never came to the synod in Frankfurt where the question of Bamberg was raised. At the beginning of this synod Henry fell on his knees in front of clerics and confessed to them his desire to found the bishopric of Bamberg, citing his inability to have an heir. He also argued that his desire was legitimate (*iustum desiderium*) and it was Henry of Wurzburg who hindered the decision to be made.[156] Thietmar, our only witness of this event, recounts the words of Henry in direct speech and even describes the actions of the emperor, which is unusual:[157]

> Throughout this procedure, the king would humbly prostrate himself on the ground whenever he foresaw that a detrimental judgment was about to be read. Finally, Archbishop Willigis asked for a judgment as to what should be done in regard to this matter. Tagino, speaking first, declared that the law would allow for the immediate enactment of everything that the king had requested in his speech. After the entire assembly had agreed to and signed this judgment, the king conveyed the pastoral office to his then chancellor, Eberhard, who was consecrated by the archbishop on the same day. Later, Bishop Henry was restored to the king's favor, with the help of his brother, Heribert, and received satisfactory compensation.[158]

Henry did not limit himself to performing one penitential gesture before his speech: his whole image during this decisive council was that of a repentant. Thietmar clearly presents his own interpretation of such behavior: to win over the clerics and to incline them to his point of view, even though it contradicted canon law. The most peculiar thing is that this behavior of the ruler is the only such example in Ottonian history: similar acts happened neither in

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[155] For more about the establishment of the diocese of Bamberg see: Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft und Gottes Gnade*, 421–34.

[156] Thietmar, Chron. VI. 30-31, 310-13.

[157] The diploma from this synod has survived, which confirmed the founding of the bishopric in Bamberg and an exchange of property with bishop Henry of Wurzburg, including also the privilege and signatures of all the participants: The diploma of Henry II from 1 November, 1007, Frankfurt (135), DH II, 169-72.

[158] "Inter haec quocies rex anxiam judicum sententiam nutare prospexit, toties prostratus humiliatur. Tandem archiantistite Willigiso, quid de hiis faciendum foret, judicio perscrutanti, Tagino primus respondit, haec tunc secundum regis eloquium legaliter fieri posse. Cunctis presentibus ejus sermonem tunc affirmantibus et subscribentibus, Everhardo tunc cancellario cura pastoralis a rege committitur, et hic a prefato archipresule eodem die consecratur. Post haec autem Heinricus antistes auxilio confratris Hiriberti regis gratiam et adimplecionem sibi placitam acquisivit. "In Thietmar, Chron. VI.32, 312-24; Thietmar of Merseburg, "Chronicon," 259.

Carolingians times nor during the Salian rule.[159] This raises some questions: can we believe this narrative or was it all imagined by Thietmar? What were the possible prototypes of such behavior, both when performed and when described? What was the role of such acts of humiliation in these specific circumstances?

David Warner assumes that these repetitive prostrations of Henry were in line with other public gestures used by Ottonian kings; on the other hand, this might have been made up by Thietmar as an illustrative conclusion of the foundation history of Bamberg. This image of the king making a proskynesis was a wide-spread topos, which implied, in this case, the invocation to God's will when deciding upon the fate of Bamberg. Moreover, Thietmar, in an allegorical form of ritual, shows how medieval politics was done.[160] This interpretation, however, simplifies the image of the repentant ruler and does not take into account the exact situation in which Thietmar made Henry perform the penitential gesture in front of the bishops during the conflict between the emperor and Wurzburg—when royal authority challenged canon law.

Stefan Weinfurter claims the opposite: for him the story of Thietmar was based on some eye-witness account (if the bishop of Merseburg was also involved in this dispute) and, moreover, through this gesture Henry demonstrated his paradigm of power.[161] Through this humiliation Henry gained authority among the bishops and supported his new Levitical concept of power, rooted in the Old Testament tradition. "By throwing himself on the ground and humbling himself, the king made it clear that he was prepared to risk and vindicate the entire principle of authority behind his kingship. He gave the bishops the alternative of choosing between

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[159] Stefan Weinfurter, "Authority and Legitimation of Royal Policy and Action: The Case of Henry II," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, Publications of the German Historical Institute (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 19–37.
[160] Warner, "Thietmar of Merseburg on Rituals of Kingship," 68.
[161] Weinfurter, "Authority and Legitimation of Royal Policy and Action."

their own system of rules or the new forms used to legitimize royal policy and action."[162] However, also relevant here is Althoff's thesis of the "instrumentalization of this symbolic behavior", especially in political context, and the possible ironic use of such narrations.[163]

I believe that this episode, as Weinfurter has suggested, should be viewed predominantly in the context of the conflict around Bamberg—the majority of royal penance cases worked as a resolution of a conflict between powers. On the other hand, the possible alteration of the story by Thietmar himself is also important: the chronicler often used symbolic gestures of penance to describe the ruler, or omits these rituals, when they do not fit into his political agenda. It is quite possible that with an image of a repentant king Thietmar described all the risks and conflicts which happened on this council. Moreover, through repeated royal penance the bishop may have given the reason why the highest clerics of the empire neglected the norms of the canon law and yielded to the emperor's will. In this case the penance of the emperor, which was presented at and for the council, worked as the highest royal grace, which should be paid back, so the clerics admitted the foundation of the bishopric in Bamberg.

First, this episode can be compared with other examples of royal humiliation in front of the ecclesiastical authorities, used for resolving conflict and establishing relationship between the church and the realm. Secondly, Henry's penance in Frankfurt may also be used as an explanatory, retrospective tool to justify and legitimate the council's final decision. Finally, this case has a lot in common with other penance episodes which were used to legitimate a royal decision to establish a diocese. Thietmar, as one of our main sources for Ottonian history, used this scheme a lot: the founding of Merseburg and Magdeburg was "sanctioned" by Otto I's penance during the Battle of Lechfeld; and the establishment of Gniezno, which also contradicted Church law, was legitimized by Otto III's pilgrimage to the city.

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[162] Ibid., 36.

[163] Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter*, 121–23.

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Prestige of royal penance

The type of the royal penance analyzed in this chapter can generally be characterized as a gesture of reconciliation and respect towards ecclesiastical authority. Narrative on royal penance which involved a bishop or a saint was often used by ecclesiastical communities to create a "useful past", to show their superiority in a conflict, their moral excellence or their closeness and intimacy with the ruler. It is also noteworthy that most of the narratives on such penitential acts came from different local traditions and backgrounds, such as local annals or hagiographies, and not from 'pro-imperial' historiographies. The only exception is the case of the synod in Frankfurt, when, as recounted by Thietmar of Merseburg, the ruler himself used penance to influence bishops. However, in other cases the religious authority who administered penance was always a representative of a larger religious group which strived to establish their identity against or in cooperation with the imperial power. Most of these narratives clearly follow and even cite the David model and were probably influenced by later Carolingian prototypes.

This kind of penance was adopted mostly in regard to Otto III, who was close to various ascetics and saints, and the emperor was known to undertake penance with them. The ruler was sending missionaries to Central Europe and he was involved in internal conflicts between ecclesiastical communities in Rome. Both these companies instigated quite abundant hagiographical traditions, which were striving to appropriate the emperor on their side or to show their superiority over the power in the realm.

In modern historiography these acts are often understood either as conduct of political communication in from of rituals or as reflections of the inner piety and devotion of the emperor, and the latter narratives largely contribute to Otto's image of the true pious Christian ruler. However, these narratives should also be understood as historiographic and hagiographic constructs, deliberately used to enhance the prestige of their protagonists as

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being equal or even superior to the king. These were hardly the representation of the emperor, quite the contrary: these scenes of repentance were used to construct the image of a saint or a bishop.

Chapter IV – Overcoming family conflicts

Ottonian rulers were surrounded by saints everywhere: on the battlefield they evoked memories of great martyrs and Christ; kings and emperors were involved into liturgical ceremonies of sanctifying churches in the names of great saints, in miniatures emperors were depicted surrounded by dynastic patrons. [164] Ottonian rulers even created their own contemporary saints, like the martyr St Adalbert of Prague or Bishop St Ulrich, or at least attempted to, as Otto III with Emperor Charlemagne. Moreover, the Ottonian kings and emperors had saints within their own family: Mathilda (wife of Henry I and mother of Otto I), Edith and Adelheid (wives of Otto I) and Bruno (son of Henry I), who had already been venerated as saints when the Ottonian dynasty was in power, and, finally, Henry II and his wife Cunigunde, who were canonized in 1146 and 1200 respectively.[165]

These royal saints were part of dynastic self-representation: they legitimized Ottonian rule by combining notions of royalty and sanctity.[166] Saints from the royal family were also subjects of piety and continued devotion because, as individuals who had already attained eternal life, they were able to intercede for sins of their relatives and descendants. On the other hand, sainthood remained a highly local phenomenon at that time, reflecting the interests of ecclesiastical, political and familial communities who venerated these saints, possessed their relics and produced texts about them. The Ottonian family enjoyed the name of *Deo dilecta*

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[164] For example, in the Sacramentary of Henry II, Henry is depicted as crowned by Christ with St Ulrich and St Emmeram next to him. About this miniature and Ottonian royal representation see David A. Warner, "Saints and Politics in Ottonian Germany," in *Medieval Germany: Associations and Delineations*, ed. Nancy van Deusen (Ottawa: Institute of Medieval Music, 2000), 22–27; Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft und Gottes Gnade*, 178–321.

[165] The only comprehensive study devoted to Ottonian family saints is Patrick Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens: Sainteté dynastique, royale et féminine autour de l'an Mil* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1986).

[166] Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 120–23. On the functions of royal saints see Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, 69–74.

familia, the notion of saintly dynasty comparable to later *beata stirps*.[167] Of course, Mathilda, Adelheid, Edith or Bruno threw the light of sanctity on their ruling descendants, though their cult and hagiographic traditions were not created as propagation of the sanctity of ruling family. Moreover, only Adelheid was vastly venerated thanks to her Cluniac patrons, while Mathilda and Bruno were only subject of local veneration.[168]

The *Lives* of the Queens Mathilda and Adelheid present not only the pious path of a queen to sanctity, but also that of the whole royal family in their relation to the holy relative.[169] The narrative of the holy mother's conflict with her son, who was a king at that moment, is recurrent in all these hagiographies. This family dispute was later resolved with the pious act of penance, which the son and ruler performed in front of his holy mother, asking her to atone for his sins. In this chapter I will investigate the function of royal penance in this tradition of Ottonian female hagiographies, its variations and possible literary prototypes.

Saint Mathilda and her prodigal sons

Queen Mathilda (c.895-968) was the wife of Henry I and mother of six children, including the future Emperor Otto I, Henry, duke of Bayern, and Bruno of Cologne. After the Henry's death in 936 Mathilda's main duty was to keep the *memoria* of her husband: using her royal status and vast possession of lands and wealth which she received as a dower, she established the famous convent in Quedlinburg, founded many other churches, and was a great benefactor of the Church. She assumed the veil after the conflict with her son, King Otto I,

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[167] Hungarian rulers are a model example for saintly dynasties: Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*; André Vauchez, "'Beata Stirps': sainteté et lignage en Occident aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles," *Publications de l'École française de Rome* 30, no. 1 (1977): 397–406.

[168] More on Ottonian family saints and strategies behind their venerations see: Corbet, *Les Saints ottoniens*.

[169] Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich: Herrschaftsausübung, Herrschaftsrechte, Handlungsspielräume*, Mittelalter-Forschungen, Bd. 4 (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000).

who blamed her for possessing too much property.[170] This intimidating story, the subject of the current chapter, can be found in both *Lives* of Queen Mathilda.

The *Older Life* was written around 973-974 for her grandson Otto II at Quedlinburg or Nordhausen, probably by a nun in one of these convents.[171] The *Later Life* of Queen Mathilda, written right after Henry II's coronation in Mainz in 1002, is a re-interpretation of Mathilda's older *Vita* and was mainly concerned with justifying the rule of Henry II, who succeeded the throne, not being a direct heir of Otto III, through the figure of dynastic saint Mathilda.[172] The holy queen in the *Later Life* is portrayed as a patron to her beloved son Henry, whom she wanted to see as a king after the death of King Henry and whom she supported during his claims for the throne. The *Vita*'s author employed the same *porphyrogennetos* argument that was used by Liutprand of Cremona, hinting that Henry was born when his father was already a king, while Otto was born in 912, before the coronation.[173] Henry was "born to the royal throne" (*in regali solio natus)*, hence, he was the legitimate successor of his father Henry I.[174]

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[170] Gerd Althoff, "Probleme um die Dos der Königinnen im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert," in *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut Moyen Age*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1993), 123–33.

[171] On disputes concerning the place of origin and purpose for creating *Lives of Mathilda* see: Gerd Althoff, "Causa scribendi und Darstellungsabsicht: Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde und andere Beispiele," in *Litterae medii aevi: Festschrift für Johanne Autenrieth zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Michael Borgolte and Herrad Spilling (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1988), 117–33. In this article Althoff argued that Nordhausen is a place of creation for the *Life*, while Schütte for his edition of Mathilda's hagiographies proposed valuable arguments for Quedlinburg origin: Bernd Schütte, *Untersuchungen zu den Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, Studien und Texte 9 (Hanover: Hahn, 1994).

[172] The importance of this dynastic change for the *Later Life* was emphasized in Corbet, *Les Saints ottoniens*, 163–77. Also see Schütte, *Untersuchungen zu den Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*; Sean Gilsdorf, ed., *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid*, Medieval Texts in Translation (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 43–54.

[173] "Rectumne patrem egisse rere regia tibi in dignitate gentio non in eadem gentium praeponedo?": Liutprand, Ant. IV.15, 114.

[174] VMP 6, 155-56; Kerstin Schulmeyer-Ahl, 312-316.

The *Older Life of Mathilda* was based on the model of St Radegund, Merovingian queen and saint, who protected the Church under the rule of her husband Clothar I. [175] However, Mathilda and, consequently, Adelheid are not depicted as brutal *milites Christi*, almost neglecting their femininity. On the contrary: they were depicted as beautiful women and mothers. Ottonian female hagiographers made a great breakthrough in combining the royal status of the woman with her saintly qualities: if Radegund neglected her royal status, Mathilda and Adelaide became saints almost entirely due to their royal background. In these cults royal and saintly statuses were combined, creating a new type of royal female sanctity. Ottonian saintly queens, unlike their Frankish prototypes, also played an important role in preserving the peace within the royal family. Nevertheless, they had conflicts with their sons and reconciled later through the performed ritual of penance.

Penance in the Older Life

The conflict began between Mathilda and King Otto, accompanied by his brothers Henry and Bruno, because of some "jealous enemy", who hinted to the king and his followers that Mathilda possessed more dower than she actually had to. Otto I made his mother refuse all her marital goods, her portion of the kingdom and in the end she withdrew to the monastery.[176] This dispute between the saint and her family was explained by an anonymous author as one of the many tribulations a person has to suffer on his or her way to sanctity.[177] And even more, King Otto was punished for his behavior towards Mathilda: he became unfortunate in battles and had troubles within his kingdom.

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[175] On the extensive borrowings from Life of Radegund see: Corbet, *Les Saints ottoniens*, 133–37; Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 30–43; Bernd Schütte, ed., *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 66, 12-18 (Hanover: Hahn, 1994).

[176] VMA 5, 122-24.

[177] "Quia per multas tribulations oportet nos introire in regnum dei": VMA 5, 123; "It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God": *The "Older Life" of Queen Mathilda*, in Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 77.

It was Queen Edith who revealed to Otto his way of atonement: to ask for forgiveness from his mother. The reconciliation, which was set up in advance, was presented as a penance of Otto in front his mother and described with prostration, tears, forgiveness of sins and kiss of peace, which then was followed by the formal reestablishment of Mathilda's holdings:

> There the king together with his wife met her, prostrated himself at her feet, and promised to change his ways however she pleased. With tears glistening upon her lovely cheeks, however, she embraced her son, kissed him, and assured him that her sins were to blame for all that had happened.[178]

As was highlighted before, this act cannot be seen as formal *deditio*, although this ritual used almost the same gestures as penance.[179] Taking the saintly status of Mathilda into account, I propose that this scene was understood as similar to the atonement asked by kings in front of the saint (cf. to Otto III and St Nilus and St Romuald), however, it was more personal and intimate. Mathilda acts as a saint in this scene, capable of forgiving sins and interceding for her son. The author of the *Life* also underlines that Mathilda was the most important member of the royal family, and this motive reached its culmination at the family meeting in Cologne.[180] In all, Mathilda was acting as a saint, who forgave Otto's sins; while at the same time she was depicted as a loving mother forgiving her son. I suppose that it was exactly Mathilda's saintly dignity that made it possible for the hagiographer to use royal penance to describe the reconciliation between her and the king.

Penance in the Later Life

The second *Vita of Mathilda* also employed royal penance to reconcile the saint with her family; this time, however, the act of penance was used twice in the text. It was King Otto who first repented in front of his mother, followed by his brother Henry, who also prostrated

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[178] "Cui rex una cum coniuge obviam progrediens pedibusque eius prostratus, quicquid fecerat contrarium, secundum matris placitum permutare promisit. At illa decoras lacrimis infusa per genas, filium amplectendo deosculabatur, suis id exigentibus peccatis contigisse testate." In VMA 6, 124-25; *The "Older Life"*, 79.
[179] Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter*, 110–11.
[180] VMA 11, 133.

before Mathilda. The latter event was added by the new hagiographer of Mathilda and was not present at all in her *Older Life*.

As the main *causa scribendi* of the *Later Life*, ordered by Henry II and created for him, was to introduce his direct ancestor, Duke Henry of Bayern, second son of Queen Mathilda, to the Ottonian history and to express his prominence in it. The second hagiographer of Mathilda touched upon the conflict between the two brothers: King Otto and Henry.[181] However, the author of the *Life* does not follow the scheme of describing these revolts used by Widukind of Corvey, Liutprand of Cremona and Thietmar of Merseburg, who focused on events in the military clash in Birten or the conspiracy against the king in Quedlinburg. Instead the author of the *Life* comments on this issue:

> Many of his (Henry's) sufferings are omitted here, for if they were dealt with one by one it would strike both narrators and readers as excessive. Finally Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and mankind, not wishing the brothers' discord to continue any longer, brought them together through the merit of their holy mother.[182]

By mentioning this fraternal conflict the author managed to involve Duke Henry in the family history of the Liudolfing house as one of the closest members: the beloved son of Saint Mathilda, who after his death kept his memory by establishing a convent in Nordhausen.[183] But the narratives of rebellions and military clashes were regarded as superfluous and not worth preserving in Ottonian *memoria.*

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[181] Within historiographical debates there are various assumptions regarding the causes of the rebellions against Otto I's succession of the throne, in which not only young Henry took part, but also a large group of noblemen and relatives. Dalewski's theory seem the most convincing suggesting that Henry, when designating his power only to Otto, neglected the prevailing Carolingian tradition of the common rule of all sons: "A new dynasty was thus designed as restricted to a single line of the royal family, with the majority of his relatives, including most of his sons, remaining outside it." Zbigniew Dalewski, "Patterns of Dynastic Identity in the Early Middle Ages," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 107 (2013): 5–43. Also see Althoff, "Causa scribendi und Darstellungsabsicht."

[182] "Hic multa de angustiis eius preatermittuntur, quia, si per singular volverentur, narratibus simul et legentibus prolixa viderentur. Tandem mediator dei et hominum Christi Iesus nolens fraters inter se diutius discordare per sancte matris meritum illos concordavit in unum": VMP 9, 161; "The "Later Life" of Queen Mathilda", 100.

[183] VMP 16, 175-79.

It was exactly the discord with their mother Mathilda, provoked by the "cunning trickery" of the devil, which helped the brothers to reconcile with one other and to achieve peace through her sufferings: "thus impious discord… now brought them together in iniquity".[184] The author developed the motive, present in the *Older Life*, concerning the conflict with sons, as one of the difficulties on the way to God even further, providing association between the sufferings of Christ and Mathilda's torments. Her grief is presented as worse because her favorite son Henry had also joined Otto in his enmity towards her. Later Otto, suffering defeats and misfortunes, sent his mother a letter begging for forgiveness. The author underlines that the king wanted to repent and that he was fully aware of his crime and sins; this self-acknowledgment was an important part of penance. After a meeting had been arranged, Otto, accompanied by his wife Edith and his followers, repented in front of Mathilda and asked for atonement for his sins:

> He sought her forgiveness on bended knee, saying: "O utter glory of our glory, solace in every hardship, to whose merits we shall attribute the royal throne which we possess..." In response his venerable mother, her lovely eyes brimming with tears, immediately gave her son a kiss of peace and comforted his supplicant heart with these words: "My son, do not grieve, for we expect that thou soon will be forgiven by the Lord… May God in his ineffable mercy grant thee forgiveness, for he is ready to have mercy upon any penitent who fully laments what he has done, and does not allow it to happen again."[185]

Here again the act of penance is described as atonement for sins, where Mathilda appears, on the one hand, as an unjustly blamed mother, and as an intermediary between the king and God, who would forgive his sins, on the other. Once again, the author consciously chose royal penance as a pattern of describing conflict resolution between mother and her royal son, and for constructing Mathilda's path to sainthood.

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[184] "Impia discordia illos tunc consociavit ad iniquitatem": VMP 11, 167.

[185] "Genu flexo in terram veniam postulavit dicens: "O omne decus nostri decoris st solatium cuiusque laboris, cuius meritis deputabimus regni solium, quod possidemus… Contra hec mater venerabilis desoros oculos perfuse lacrimis filio statim prebuilt osculum pacis, quasi ab eo nil pertulisset adversitatis et animum supplicantis talibus consolabatur verbis: "Fili mi, nolite contristari; speramus enim vos veniam a domino consequi… Deus autem vobis tribuat indulgentiam per ineffabilem suam misericordiam, qui paratus est misereri cuique penitenti, si commissa perfecte defleverit et postmodum non admiserit." In VMP 13, 170-71; The "Later Life" of Queen Mathilda, 106-7.

Following this, the same procedure repeats between Mathilda and Henry, although this episode is described in a very personal and intimate way, also serving to indicate Mathilda's preference for her younger son. Her answer to Henry's pious request for forgiveness was more enthusiastic and the voice of the mother dominates over other images of her: "Henry, my son, don't cry—stop it, son, stop it! Come closer and give your mother a kiss!"[186]

It is possible that Henry technically underwent the same penitential ritual as his elder brother, King Otto: he confessed his sins and repented before his mother, who atoned for his sins. This connotation of the ceremony may lead to the assumption that Henry, engaging himself in a royal ritual, was granted a quasi-royal status by the author. However, I am more inclined to suggest that these two ceremonies were not perceived by the author as the same: Otto's repentance was arranged in advance and is described as public (in both *Lives*, Otto was with his wife and retinue). The repentance of Henry was of rather intimate, non-ceremonial character, while Otto's penance can be called "transpersonal". Both these explanations are equally possible because a ritual a priori has multiple meanings and functions.

However, I would emphasize that both hagiographers chose penance as an appropriate act for representing reconciliation between King Otto and his holy mother, which in the *Later Life* was mirrored by Henry's repentance. This ritual once again showed its power to provide authors with a literary tool to resolve a conflict. In the context of these *Lives* royal penance was used to unite the royal family and the two family-lines of Otto and Henry between one another. At the same time, the striking difference between acts of repentance performed by Otto and Henry underpins Mathilda's abovementioned preference to Henry, which was in accordance with the general strategy of the hagiographer.

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[186] "Fili mi Heinrice, noli flere; desiste, fili, desiste! Propius accede et matri tue osculum plebe!" In VMP 14, 171-72; The "Later Life" of Queen Mathilda," 107.

Family problems on Adelheid's way to sanctity

The suffering of a betrayed mother is a frequently reoccurring narration in hagiographies of Ottonian queens. These torments established the sanctity not only of Mathilda in both her *Lives*, but also of Adelheid (931-999), the second spouse of Otto I and mother of his heir Otto II, regent of the kingdom during the juvenility of her grandson Otto III.[187] Odilo of Cluny (962-1049), an influential leader of the Cluniac reform, devoted an *Epitaph* to his holy queen around the beginning of Henry II's rule.[188] Adelheid was a religious founder and patron, as well as a generous benefactor of Cluny, personally acquainted to Odilo and his predecessor Maiolus. The Cluniac movement made Adelheid an example of perfect pious behavior for laity (as Gerald of Auriliiac), especially for royal families, who could at the same time be entangled in worldly matters and lead a Christian life enjoying sanctity. Through the *Epitaph* of Adelheid, Odilo of Cluny also bonded the monastic reform movement with the empire, which had influence on Henry II.

The hagiography of Adelheid is written in an antique genre of epitaphium, which used to express mourning and grief for the deceased, focused more on praise and describing the virtues of the person than on recounting his or her actual deeds.[189] As a model example of such a genre Odilo chose St. Jerome's Letters to Paula, a rich Roman matron, who was a church patron and benefactor. In the text of Odilo's *Epitaph* there are a lot of literary adoptions from Jerome, and Odilo found some similarities between the lives of these holy women, for example, he compared Adelheid's voyage through monasteries in Burgundy to Paula's journey to the Holy Land.

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[187] Amalie Fößel, "Adelheid," in *Die Kaiserinnen des Mittelalters*, ed. Amalie Fössel (Regensburg: Pustet, 2011), 35–59.

[188] On the Cluniac movement in connection to the empire and the *Epitaph*: Corbet, *Les Saints ottoniens*, 59–72. 59-72

[189] On epitaph as a genre and on Jerome's Epitaph on Paula, which was a prototype for Odilo, see Andrew Cain, *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The notion of worldly sufferings as a guarantee for an eternal life in the heavenly kingdom is stronger in the *Epitaph of Adelheid* than in the *Lives* of Mathilda, where this idea is also present. In her path, full of troubles such as captivity in Italy or confrontation with Otto II's wife Theophanu, Adelheid imitates Christ. At the same time she is depicted in her royal dignity, which is not in contradiction to her saintly status. The discord with her son, Otto II is one of the stages of her *passio*. According to Odilo, King Otto, because of the slander of evil men, "withdrew his affection from his mother", and Adelheid moved to Burgundy, to the court of her father.[190] After some time Otto, "moved by penitence" (*ductus penitentia*), decided to reconcile with his mother and sent legates to Burgundy to arrange a ceremony in Pavia:

> When they saw one another, with wailing and weeping they fell fully prostrate to the ground as they greeted one another. Humble penitence seized the son; abundant forgiveness filled the mother. Thereafter, an unbroken bond of perpetual peace prevailed between them.[191]

This description of the reconciliation of mother and son is structured similarly as those of Mathilda:

"Cunning trickery" of a devil wishes a discord between mother and a her son
King's followers accuse the mother of possessing too much property, and king believes them
King breaks ties with his mother
Saint in return withdraws from any political affairs, leaving her dower
Both kingdom and the king suffer from this discord
King receives advice to reconcile with his mother, and he follows it
King arranges a meeting with his mother through legates or letters
She happily accepts the idea and they meet in a certain place on a certain date
Ruler, often prostrating himself in front of mother, repents and asks for her forgiveness
Mother, with tears and kisses, forgives him, though the ultimate atonement depends on the Lord
This ceremony is followed by returning property to the holy mother

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[190] Odilo, Epitaph 5, 33-34.

[191] "Quo cum mutuo se cernerent flendo et lacrimando toto corpore solo prostrate humiliter se salutare ceperunt. Affuit in filio humilis penitudo, erat in matre liberalis remissio. Permansit in utrisque de cetero perpetue pacis indivisa conexio": Odilo, Epitaph 6, pp; Odilo of Cluny "Epitaph of Adelhed," 133.

It is highly possible that Odilo was acquainted with the *Life of Mathilda* and adopted this episode in his own writing, showing Adelheid as a suffering pious mother, which is the only way to explain the evident similarity in the structure of all these three narratives. However, it is clear from the description that Odilo is far less interested in actual family disputes and dynastical conflicts within the family than Mathilda's hagiographers. The abbot of Cluny did not intend to take sides in these conflicts, though he clearly uses this motive of dispute as *topos*.[192]

Royal penance as family cure

The *Lives* of Mathilda came from the same female monastic background, but had different *causa scribendi*, while Adelheid's *Epitaph* was written by the Cluniac leader for different audience, and, nevertheless, they all shared discourse of female-mother sufferings of being in conflict with her children. Moreover, all hagiographers, probably exploiting the model first proposed in the *Older Life of Mathilda*, used exactly the same way of coming out of the conflict: the king had to repent publicly before his holy mother and ask for her forgiveness. Irrespectively to the political agenda behind the text or the concrete function of penance in the *vitae*, all these texts recounted similar model of repentance before a saint, who was capable of interceding for the ruler's sins.

The *Older Life of Queen Mathilda* had among prototypes several hagiographies of Merovingian and Carolingian female saints; and in one of these texts, in the *Life of Clothild*, wife of Merovingian King Clovis, there is a similar formula of dispute between widowed mother and her sons.[193] Her *vita* was written down in ninth century and is not considered

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[192] For example, in part 7 Odilo wrote about Adelheid's conflict with Theophanu, who also was a regent to her son Otto II, taking the saint's sufferings in this situation as part of her *passio*. However, this conflict, most probably, was Odilo's invention as far as there is no evidence for their rivalry.

[193] *The Life of Clothild* was written in the late ninth or tenth century; for more on this see the preface to the *Life* in: Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg, eds., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 38–50.

among lives of other Merovingian and Carolingian female saints, which served as direct sources for the *Lives of Mathilda*;[194] however, the usage of the same topoi of family dispute is quite possible. Clothild was in conflict with two of her sons because of the matter of succession; they conspired against her and killed her beloved grandsons, whom she wished to be kings. These episodes of her life were presented as one of her worldly sufferings: "But the sword pierced her soul in the killing of her father and her mother's drowning, the exile of her sister and her marriage to a pagan king… What great sorrow wore her down with the death of the king and of her daughter, Clothilda, and the sons of her son Chlodomir?"[195] On her deathbed she called upon her sons and they reconciled, but without any typical Ottonian penance. Probably, Ottonian hagiographers might have figured out quite similar model for the description of their saintly queens, but all three hagiographers shifted the emphasis towards the reconciliation between a saint and a king. This king's penance before his mother provided stability in dynastical *memoria* and also played a role of advice for the ruler to cherish the community, established or patronized by his holy predecessor, as Nordhausen, Quedlinburg, Selz or Cluny. However, possible origins of these mother-son disputes topos do not influence the fact that our three hagiographers chose royal penance performed as a ritualistic way of overcoming the conflict, in which the protagonist was depicted as a pious mother and powerful saint, capable of forgiving sins.

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[194] Bernd Schütte, ed., *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, 12-18.
[195] "Life of Clothild" (10-11) in *Sainted Woman of the Dark Ages*, 47.

Conclusion

Political rituals, especially in the Ottonian realm, is a quite dense field of studies, where a lot of work has been done on reconstructing functions of rituals as part of symbolic communication in the early medieval society and state. In this study I investigated one particular ritual – repentance of a ruler, though I approached royal penance not just as an event, but as a narrated story. Hence the study was also concentrated on those authors who recounted these narratives on penance, in which circumstances they wrote and for what reason they decided to commemorate this ritual. Various examples of royal penance analyzed in this thesis show us, first of all, that penance was highly employed by Ottonian authors in their representation of a ruler. It was accepted as an image of power and was understood not only as a specific event but as a set of symbolic notions and ideas surrounding royal humility and relationships of a king with sacred authorities. This leads us to an assumption that narratives of royal penance could be used independently from 'reality' by the authors of Ottonian age.

Categorization of royal penance

In this study I suggested to discern different types of narratives on royal penance, which previously was seen as a solid invariable practice, grouping examples upon circumstances within which an author recalled an image of a repentant king or emperor. These forms, each analyzed in preceding four chapters, are as follows: repentance as general characteristics of a ruler; penance as a part of a pilgrimage or a translation of relics; penance during military conflicts; repentance conducted by a church authority and penance performed in family conflicts. However, we rarely can find clear types; some of these forms were mixed within one event, e.g. pilgrimage can be combined with penance administered by a cleric, repentance on the battlefield was often performed in front of relics and so on. This

categorization showed that among Ottonian authors, who all pursued different aims and wrote for different audience, some narrative patterns were shared, such as typical description of a battlefield or a conflict between a king and his mother, and royal penance often played a key role in these patterns.

In the analysis of royal penance one more valuable point of reference can be a role of an intermediary in the ritual. Both prototypes, David and Theodosius, were, first of all, moved to penance by their advisors, and furthermore, they administered the royal repentance. However, this model was not always valid for Ottonian ritual – for example, royal penitential acts on the battlefield, as described by the authors, implied direct contact of the ruler with God, without any help from the third side. Most of these narratives of penance were shaped by examples of Moses or saints and were part of the Christo-mimetical essence of Ottonian kingship. Moreover, in these cases kings repented on their own will. In the other type of penance, the imposed one, rulers were moved to remorse by some authoritative advice, as in the cases of Otto III and Italian ascetics or Otto I and Otto II and their holy mothers. This type of "imposed" royal penance made a larger career in medieval history, starting from David, Theodosius and including also Henry IV, while the "self-repentance" type of a ritual can be seen as a product mostly of Ottonian symbolic language.

Narrative strategies of Ottonian authors

An attentive analysis of stories about royal penance in Ottonian historiography showed that authors often manipulated descriptions of this ritual: chroniclers or hagiographers included or omitted narratives of ritual to meet their agendas and interests of their audience, as, for example, in cases of Magdeburg or Halberstadt or in *The Life of Burchard of Worms*. Although reasons for choosing and applying models of royal penance were individual for every author, some general strategies of using penance story can be discerned: to overcome

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dynastical changes; to create local history; to solve the question of moral authority and problems of royal intervention in Church affairs; to present a literary solution to a conflict. Thietmar's approach to the ruler's humiliation is a perfect example of individual strategy of using this ritual: he often connected royal penance with an act of establishing a diocese. For the bishop of Merseburg this act made a perfect foundation legend for his own seat and also retrospectively legitimized the establishment of other dioceses in Magdeburg, Gniezno and Bamberg.

Ottonian writers, apart from re-interpretation of royal penance for their own means, often omitted or created a new memory of this ritual. The particular form, in which a created ritual was visualized in the text, depended either on the literary tradition of this specific milieu or on local perception of history. These local needs motivated authors to create useful past for audience they were writing for. Thee "created memory" often included royal penance performed as a favor to their own community, usually with the help of its leader, a bishop or a saint, as an intermediary in penance. And on the contrary, when royal penance was performed in favor of the rival community, authors, recognizing possible dangers of memories of such an act, often omitted this narrative from their histories, and, consequently, from the memory they constructed. Sometimes authors imposed a negative connotation to royal penance or they did not recognize a certain event as a ritual at all, which makes the division not only between "good" or "bad" rituals possible, but also between "successful" and "failed" ones. All in all, this study revealed that in hands of Ottonian writers, from an act of humiliation and admonition, royal penance became part of symbolic language of power and creation of the past.

Literary models and ecclesiastical prototypes

Although establishing prototypes of royal penance was not among the first objectives of the current study, it is valuable to mention once again that the ritual of royal penance, as a literary concept, had far more prototypes than it is suggested by scholars. First of all, the proposed model of royal penance as being only 'Davidian' or 'Theodosian' is not valid for the Ottonian practice of this ritual. Some of the authors themselves mentioned different biblical prototypes, as Moses and Christ. Other narratives were derived from the actual practice of church repentance or, for example, popular in the realm military liturgies. Although image of repentant King David was used by several Ottonian authors, it appeared often in specific circumstances when a role of the church authority had to be demonstrated. To my mind, this mentioned Christo-mimetical aspect of royal penance is way more valid for Ottonian authors, especially for 'pro-imperial' historiographers. Moreover, the idea of *imitatio Christi* was often used in historiography to describe the concept of Ottonian royal power, especially for Otto III and Henry II, mostly judging on their iconographical representations and evidence for imperial coronations. I assume that this Christological image of a king was not only 'prescriptive' as a part of royal propaganda, but also efficiently used by its audience and even desired to be adopted by the emperor, as implied the example of *The Life of St Wenceslas* written for Otto II or *The Life of Burchard of Worms*.

Another dimension is that the ritual itself was constructed by authors not only in reference to the biblical examples, but to common church practices, described in penitential books or rules of monastic orders. All authors were from the ecclesiastical milieu and definitely were familiar with a liturgical practice of confession and atonement for sins. Furthermore, royal penance was sometimes constructed according to the rules of exact ecclesiastical community, from which the author originated and for which he created his text, as in the cases of St Nilus

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and St Romuald: the Greco-Roman tradition of penance according to Basil rule and, on the other hand, repentance propagated by eleventh-century reformed monasticism.

Finally, I would like to highlight that royal penance appeared to be a descriptive tool not only in the arsenal of symbolic representation monopolized by the imperial power. This ritual was often employed to describe saints, members of the family, bishops or whole ecclesiastic communities in their relation to the royal power, either to show their superiority or the king's favor towards them, or to retrospectively legitimize certain events and decisions. As soon as Ottonian kings and emperors adopted royal penance as one of their representations and performed it, they lost any monopoly on using, creating and interpreting memory about this ritual.

This research on royal penance gave valuable insights into how the image of royal power was understood and employed by different authors and how this ritual functioned in some narrative texts of the Ottonian realm. It is highly possible that similar narrative patterns of ritual descriptions together with individual strategies of creating a memory of a political ceremony could be found for other acts, like *adventus domini* or ritualized usurpation of power. However, there is still a lot that can be done on royal penance: one of the possible ways is to go beyond historical narratives and study them in combination with liturgical, theological and artistic sources of the Ottonian realm. Although political rituals have been investigated as concrete events and as a system of communication for decades and even centuries, the type of approach I proposed for this study can unearth important functions of rituals as narrative discourse, as perception of power and as part of constructed memory on the Ottonian age.

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