Paige Richmond

Communities Empowered: Developing Institutional Identities at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim under the Ottonians

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

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Budapest

May 2016

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Paige A. Richmond

(USA)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Paige Richmond**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary 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

Quedlinburg and Gandersheim Abbeys were two of the most important monastic institutions throughout the Ottonian period; that they were *female* houses paradoxically enhanced their prestige. While an immense number of focused studies on Quedlinburg and Gandersheim have been produced, none have dealt with the overarching characters of the institutions themselves. This study unites several distinct but tangentially related components of activity in order to identify consistent elements of their respective institutional identities. It is broken down into three primary categories: intellectual activity, memorial responsibility, and the joint but distinct political and monastic characteristics of each institution. These three elements are treated separately in the main body, but are in reality inextricably intertwined with one another. The conclusion unites them, allowing for a final assessment of identity relevant activity at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim.

This has been accomplished primarily by identifying *self-perception* in relation to institutional identity; this refers to the circumstantially possible and internally cultivated expressions of duty, responsibility, and function. Inherent in these expressions was a perception of specialness, which was arguably utilized for self-preservation but belied the consistent and lasting identity of the institution itself, rather than that of the individual women therein. By combining the specific modes and expressions of the outlined categories of self-perception and identity creation, a great deal can be said about the important characteristics at each institution. The attempt to assess these institutional identities likewise provides a first comprehensive comparison of these institutions based upon their self-perception and institutional identities.

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1. Introduction

Warfare, dynastic infighting, and the spectacular ascension of a single Saxon family characterized the tenth and early eleventh centuries in the so-called Holy Roman Empire. The years between 919-1024, known by modern scholars as the Ottonian period, witnessed the rapid elevation of this dynasty and the associated quarrels, conflicts, and subsequent expansion of the empire. The period likewise saw an increasingly strong bond between ecclesiastical institution and governance, wherein the Ottonian kings adapted their Carolingian predecessors' practice of monastic patronage to better suit their form of rulership.[1] This was necessitated by the imploding interregional politics of the tenth century, which saw "instability [and] economic depression" where the previous centuries had known prosperity and growth.[2] As a consequence of this increasingly tenuous situation, cooperative groups developed, especially those forged by the familial and political bonds of the newly ruling family, based on "cherished religious, cultural, economic, social, legal and political aims," which worked to implement stability and growth.[3]

The region controlled by the Ottonian dynasty simultaneously saw a unique zenith in the power and prestige of royal women and women's institutions.[4] It was this specific intersection of cooperative community, ecclesiastical growth and female power that allowed for the unprecedented rise of female imperial abbeys, most notably at Quedlinburg,

[1] John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 118.
[2] John Newell, "Education and Classical Culture in the Tenth Century," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim:* Rara Avis *in Saxonia?*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Ann Arbor, MI: MARC Publishing, 1987), 127.
[3] Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Medieval Europe*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 65.
[4] Though modern scholars have begun to add more nuanced analyses of this unique phenomenon, the seminal work on the power of women and such institutions in the Ottonian period remains the study by Karl Leyser. He suggested that the traditional inheritance laws of the regions in question, alongside the early deaths of powerful men attributed to excessive military conflict, resulted in the uncommon regularity of female political and spiritual figures and allowed for their power in a period otherwise characterized by the restriction of female agency. See K. J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 49-73 for the full analysis.

Gandersheim, Nordhausen, and Essen. But Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, the two imperial abbeys with arguably the greatest sociopolitical clout, acquired special patronage and prestige in this period. By the height of Ottonian power, these two women's abbeys had become the dynasty's "two most important religious foundations."[5]

Continuing a tradition begun in the Early Middle Ages, Otto I and his family dedicated and founded a multitude of imperial abbeys, and a particularity of the Ottonian period was the disproportionate founding of such female houses.[6] These religious houses were self-ruling, populated exclusively by nobility, and important for imperial incomes. Due in large part to kinship and proximity to the emperor, both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim established a close relationship to the throne. Mathilda, mother of Otto the Great, provided the impetus for the foundation of Quedlinburg in 936. The simultaneous burial of King Henry I in its crypt, alongside its explicit dedication to family memory, indicate that the foundation was intended for glory and ostentatiously associated with the Ottonian line from its genesis.[7] Its abbesses consistently came from the immediate kin of the successive emperors throughout the Ottonian and Salian dynasties.[8] Gandersheim, founded in 852, was the preferred abbey of the Liudolfing family, the immediate predecessors of the Ottonian line. Older than Quedlinburg and ritually more distant from the newly royal dynasty, it was less frequently visited by the emperors and the abbesses were less politically visible, except in certain

[5] David A. Warner, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 6.

[6] Katrinette Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae: Schriftlichkeit und Bildung in den Ottonischen Frauenkommunitäten Gandersheim, Essen und Quedlinburg* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2004), 2.

[7] *Diplomatum Regum et Imperatorum Germaniae*, vol. 1, MGH DD O I, 89-90 (Hanover: Hahn, 1879-1884). *...pro remedio animae nostrae atque parentum successorumque nostrorum congregationem sanctimonialum in Quidilingoburg statuere curavimus, quatenus ibidem laus omnipotentis dei eiusque electorum ab ea in perpetuum colatur et nostri nostrorumque omnium memoria perpetretur*; Author's translation: "...for the aid of our soul and [the souls] of our parents and successors we have taken care to set up the congregation of female monastics in Quedlinburg, [so that] at that place the praise of the almighty God and of his chosen ones should be performed in perpetuity, and also so that the remembrance of us and all of our relatives be perpetrated."

[8] For more on this, see Klaus Gereon Beuckers, "Kaiserliche Äbtissinnen: Bemerkungen zur familiären Positionierung der ottonischen Äbtissinnen in Quedlinburg, Gandersheim und Essen," in *Frauen bauen Europa. Internationale Verflechtungen des Frauenstifts Essen*, ed. Thomas Schilp, 65-88 (Essen: Klartext, 2011).

circumstances.[9] Despite this, Gandersheim retained imperial favor and importance for several centuries, and likewise had princess-abbesses throughout the period.

Quedlinburg and Gandersheim each established their power based on imperial kinship ties, royal benefaction, and fortunate geographical circumstance. As the imperial throne shifted to the Salian line and the Ottonian dynasty faded out in the early 1020s, these abbeys maintained their status by establishing and performing their essential roles in the spiritual, sociopolitical, and economic functions of the realm. The activities performed and promoted in pursuit of these roles reveal the internally perceived character and function of these houses, imbuing the surviving sources with the elements of their respective institutional identities.

1.1 Research Focus

With the ever-shifting power dynamics of the period, especially in the youth of Otto III and his successor Emperor Henry II's rise to power, the institutions were under threat of withdrawn patronage and the loss of regional primacy.[10] Each derived its magnificence from their relationship to the royal court and their role in preserving and transmitting the glory of the dynasty, and each strongly identified with specific periods and evolutions in the Ottonian-Liudolfing lineage. As the family line became increasingly convoluted and the concentration of power began to shift away from Saxony, illustrating their magnificence and importance to the realm became necessary for self-preservation. Simultaneously, their immense wealth and history of glorious eminence supported and influenced their creative production and practical activity. This thesis will assess the interplay of these elements in light of their circumstances under the Ottonian rulers, as well as the specifics of each institution under the regimes of

[9] The abbacies of Gerberga II and Sophia will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters.

[10] The ascension of Henry II led to a decrease in clout for these institutions; according to Bodarwé, Henry quickly dispelled with the tradition of Easter celebration at Quedlinburg and in the years thereafter imposed some distance between these institutions and the political process. Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae*, 70. See also John W. Bernhardt, "Royal Self-Representation and Historical Memory," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed.s Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried and Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)**,** 50-52, 60.

their successive princess-abbesses in order to argue that they utilized their independence and advanced training to cultivate specific institutional characteristics and reinforce their status within the empire, thus creating what can today be understood as their corporate identities.

The following study will be broken down into several parts in order to identify and assess these characteristics and focuses. This will ultimately be concluded with an evaluation of how these components were perceived and communicated to the realm at large, creating these so-called institutional or corporate identities. The multitudinous studies on these institutions have left several questions unanswered. How did these institutions perceive their roles within the empire? Did they utilize their various obligations and functions to express their value relative to other institutions of their kind, or were they merely fulfilling their roles with no discernible attempt to differentiate themselves? What does this reveal about the institutions themselves, and how does this relate to their apparent institutional identities? In considering these questions, this thesis will also assess to what extent Quedlinburg and Gandersheim demonstrated these characteristics within the political and ecclesiastical networks of Saxony.

1.2 Previous Scholarship

To conduct a complete analysis of scholarship concerning Quedlinburg and Gandersheim would be untenable; given their important political standing and the uncommon quality of the surviving sources, these abbeys have enjoyed great scholastic attention since at least the nineteenth century. Even so, the influence and importance of some studies should be addressed. Karl Leyser produced the aforementioned foundational chapter discussing the circumstances of Ottonian women and their institutions.[11] Heinrich Fichtenau and Josef Fleckenstein have written important works concerning relevant sources and historical context

[11] As mentioned in fn. 1, the specific analysis of Ottonian female houses can be found in Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society*, 49-73.

for any study of Ottonian religious institutions.[12] Gerd Althoff has contributed significantly to the study of these two abbeys, both in his concentrated work and his broader studies, which often touch upon the institutions.[13]

Quedlinburg and Gandersheim have likewise been immensely beneficial for scholars of women's history, and numerous analyses of the institutions from a gender perspective have contributed to both the advancement of 'medieval gender' and the understanding of Ottonian royal women's unique circumstances.[14] Of course, this gendered analysis has been very fruitful and has contributed to a number of other evaluations of the institutions, especially in terms of memory, family, and literacy.[15] Among these works, those dedicated to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim deserve special mention; a proliferation of analyses concerning her compositions testifies to the spectacular nature of her work and life, despite how little we know about her personally. These are most frequently told through the lens of literary analysis or gender, and have contributed significantly to both fields.[16]

[12] Heinrich Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century: Mentalities and Social Orders*, trans. Patrick J. Geary (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Josef Fleckenstein, Early Medieval Germany, trans. Bernard S. Smith (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co., 1978); Josef Fleckenstein, "Pfalz und Stift Quedlinburg: zum Problem ihrer Zuordnung unter den Ottonen," in *Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse* 2 (1992).

[13] Althoff, *Family, Friends, and Followers;* Gerd Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien: Jahrbuch des Instituts für Frühmittelalterforschung der Universität Münster* 24 (1991); Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

[14] Käthe Sonnleitner, "*Non cladiis, non armis*...Die „weibliche" Herrschaftsauffassung in den ottonischen Damenstiften," *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* 70 (2015): 5-19; Käthe Sonnleitner, "Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit als Quelle für die Frauengeschichte," *Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Geschichte* 2 (1988): 233-249; Robert Suckale, *Die mittelalerlichen Damenstifte als Bastionen der Frauenmacht* (Cologne: O. Schmidt, 2001); The importance of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim for the subdiscipline of historical gender, and especially for women's and feminist history, has led to an immense proliferation of minor analyses of these institutions. Most of these studies will not be included in this thesis, but Gerda Lerner's evaluation is among the first of these to posit analysis of the institutions into a explicitly feminist light and thus merits mention. For her relevant analyses, see Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 21-45, 247-73.

[15] Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millenium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 48-80; Helene Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony and the Founding of Quedlinburg: Women, Memory, and Power," *Historical Reflections* 35, no. 3 (2009); Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999);

[16] While English-language scholarship concerning Quedlinburg and Gandersheim is generally a smaller part of broader studies, the works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim are a major exception to this. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen T. Wailes compiled an excellent companion to her works; see Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes,

Regarding the institutions specifically, a number of scholars have provided more comprehensive studies. Both Althoff and John W. Bernhardt have written side-by-side analyses of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim.[17] Peter Kasper published a comprehensive study on the history of Quedlinburg, and together with Martina Giese's analysis and transcription of the *Annales Quedlinburgenses* is fundamental for understanding the institution.[18] Hans Goetting and Caspar Ehlers, among others, have especially influenced scholarship on Gandersheim.[19]

Although a great deal of scholarship has been conducted on these institutions and their prominent members, as stated above, the current state of scholarship on Quedlinburg and Gandersheim in general lacks a comprehensive synthesis and comparative analysis of the shared elements of these two institutions. Analyses typically focus on narrower aspects of the abbeys' spiritual conduct, literary culture, economic activity, or political function. Further, little or no analysis has been executed on aspects of their institutional identities. While evaluations of institutional or corporate identity for such institutions are not entirely common, several relevant studies have addressed this void in scholarship.[20]

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eds., *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Katharina has edited another such volume, as well as a selective translation of most of her works; see Wilson, Rara Avis *in Saxonia*; Katharina M. Wilson, trans., *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: A Florilegium of Her Works* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998).

17 Althoff, *Gandersheim und Quedlinburg;* Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 136-70.

[18] Peter Kasper, *Das Reichsstift Quedlinburg (936-1810): Konzept – Zeitbezug – Systemwechsel* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2014); *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS. Rer Germ 72 (Hanover: Hahn, 2004).

[19] Caspar Ehlers, "Gandersheim, Bad," in *Die deutschen Königspfalzen. Repertorium der Pfalzen, Königshöfe und übrigen Aufenthaltsorte der Könige im deutschen Reich des Mittelalters 4: Niedersachen* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2001), 247–333; Hans Goetting, "Die Anfänge des Reichsstifts Gandersheim," in *Braunschweiger Jahrbücher* 31 (1950): 5-51; Hans Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim 1: Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973); Martin Hoernes and Hedwig Röckelein, *Gandersheim und Essen: vergleichende Untersuchungen zu sächsischen Frauenstiften* (Essen: Klartext, 2006).

[20] Many works utilize the term "identity" without clearly justifying this concept, leaving the application of identity and meaningful analysis thereof somewhat obtuse. The difficulties of the historiographical application of identity have been outlined in Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 28-63.

Many medievalists have successfully applied analyses of social identity theory to both institutions and individuals. Especially important are the works of Patrick J. Geary in his assessments of memory and identity in the medieval period.[21] 'Identity' is often a special focus of conferences and anthological works, such as *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages* by Huw Pryce and John Watts, but such works tend to focus primarily on ethnic identity. However, several scholastic endeavors have convincingly utilized the concept of institutional identities, especially in terms of religious institutions.[22] Katherine Allen Smith and Scott Wells do so throughout *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe*, and at various points in *Power and Patronage in Early Medieval Italy*, Marios Costambeys discusses ecclesiastical corporate identity.[23] Though bridging the gap between individual and institutional identity is somewhat imprecise, I believe the approaches of the works briefly summarized here demonstrate the applicability of the concept in the present thesis.

1.3 Sources

Given the focus on self-perception and corporate identities at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, the main sources used in this thesis will be those created within each institution. The most important work from Quedlinburg is the *Annales Quedlinburgenses.*[24] While some scholars argue quite convincingly that the author of the two *Vitae Mathildis* worked at Quedlinburg, debate is ongoing and unlikely to be resolved; equally strong arguments suggest that it was written rather at Nordhausen, a smaller house closely

[21]Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*; Patrick J. Geary, *Writing History: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the Middle Ages* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2012).
[22] Huw Pryce & John Watts, eds., *Power & Identity in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[23] Katherine Allen Smith & Scott Wells, eds., *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009); Marios Costambeys, *Power & Patronage in Early Medieval Italy: Local Society, Italian Politics & the Abbey of Farfa c.700-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[24] Hereafter referred to as *AQ*; *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS. rer. Germ 72 (Hanover: Hahn, 2004).

associated with Quedlinburg.[25] Even so, this text provides a great deal of information about Mathilda, the Ottonian matriarch with whom Quedlinburg was most closely associated, and will thus be important to this work. The relevant contemporary texts from Gandersheim are exclusively works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, namely the historical epics *Gesta Ottonis* and *Primordia coenobii Gandeshemensis*.[26] Thietmar of Merseburg's *Chronicon* will likewise be used extensively, given his familiarity with Quedlinburg and important role in the ecclesiastical proceedings of the late Ottonian period.[27] The *diplomata* of the Ottonian rulers, as compiled by the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, will also be used.[28]

1.4 Theoretical Framework & Methodology

This thesis addresses the identity of *institutions*, or specifically communities of royal- and noblewomen dedicated to a common spiritual goal. Althoff has defined group consciousness as a "group's awareness of its origins and history."[29] Kinship, one of the primary binding factors of these groups, was often expressed through special benefaction and munificence and reciprocated through special spiritual devotion.[30] Such family-centric bonds were especially prevalent at both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, which were founded and run by women of the royal family, populated in many cases by close kin, and explicitly

[25] Hereafter referred to as *VM* when referencing both together; *VMA* when specifically referencing the *Vita antiquior* (Older Life) and *VMP* when specifically referencing the *Vita posterior* (Later Life). *Vita Mathildis reginae antiquior, Vita Mathildis reginae posterior,* ed. Bernd Schütte, MGH SS. rer. Germ. 66 (Hanover: Hahn, 1994). For a brief outline of the current state of this debate, see Sean Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity: The* Lives *of Mathilda and the* Epitaph *of Adelheid*, trans. Sean Gilsdorf (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 15-17.

[26] The *Gesta Ottonis* is hereafter referred to as *GO*; the *Primordia coenobii Gandeshemensis* is hereafter referred to as *Primordia*. Hrotsvit, "Gesta Ottonis," in *Hrotsvithae Opera*, ed. Paulus von Winterfeld, MGH SS. rer. Germ. 34, 201-228 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1902); Hrotsvit, *Primordia coenobii Gandeshemensis*, in *Hrotsvithae Opera*, ed. Paulus von Winterfeld, MGH SS. rer. Germ. 34, 229-246 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1902).

[27] Thietmar, *Chronicon* 4:42, ed. Robert Holtzmann, MGH SS rer. Germ. N.S. 9 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1935); for analyses of Thietmar's work, see Warner's introduction to *Ottonian Germany*; Kerstin Schulmeyer-Ahl, *Der Anfang vom Ende der Ottonen. Konstitutionsbedingungen historiographischer Nachrichten in der Chronik Thiermars von Merseburg* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

[28] *Diplomatum Regum et Imperatorum Germaniae* 1, MGH DD KI/HI/OI (Hanover: Hahn, 1884); *Diplomatum Regum et Imperatorum Germaniae* 2, MGH DD O II/DD O III (Hanover: Hahn 1893).

[29] Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 16.

[30] Ibid., 24.

dedicated to the family memory. Further, according to Brubaker, when taken in terms of a collective group, the term identity "denotes a fundamental and consequential *sameness* of a group or category."[31] A perception of sameness is supported both by the nature and makeup of these institutions, as monastic houses composed of women from of nearly identical status; and by the familial sentiment at each institution, wherein were regarded as extensions of the founding family.[32]

It is necessary here to problematize the use of the term identity. As Brubaker has asserted, "the term 'identity' is made to do a great deal of analytical work," so dissolved that it has come to mean very little in its generic form.[33] When referring to the collective, or by extension institutional, identity, he describes "something allegedly *deep, basic, abiding, or foundational"* (Brubaker's emphasis).[34] Though presented with misgivings, this explains the usefulness of collective identity both for promoting "social or political action" and demonstrating a bondedness and institutional character that is both above and reliant upon individual perception. This thesis assesses this *corporate* or *institutional* identity; these terms are largely interchangeable, referring to the identity of a community itself, rather than to the individual identities within a community or to a larger ethnic group. Further, matters of self-perception and self-representation are integral to understanding the foundation of these identities. The distinction between the apparent perception of institutional characteristics from within, the cultivation of these characteristics for varying reasons, and the elements that make up the institutional identity and thus inform collective activity must be clarified. Such an assessment is not unprecedented in historical analysis, but is relatively uncommon. It

[31] Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, 34.
[32] For Gandersheim, this was argued in Thomas Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia* and the Historical Traditions of Monastic Communities," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim:* Rara Avis *in Saxonia?,* ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Ann Arbor, MI: MARC Publishing, 1987), 148. A similar assessment can also be applied based on the continuous placement of royal daughters into both monasteries. At Quedlinburg, Queen Mathilda apparently treated the members of the institution as daughters: the *AQ* specifically referred to the *materno more* with which she nurtured the abbey, *AQ, 459.*
[33] Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, 4.
[34] Ibid., 34.

refers to a specific, consistent institutional character exemplified by the activity and outward presentation of bonded communities through their behavior and interaction with both communities of the same standing and otherwise.[35]

Institutional identity is identifiable firstly from the perception of the institutional character by individual members, expression of a function (or functions) special to the institution, and temporally consistent characteristics throughout changes in rulership. Just as with individuals, while some aspects may be shared with other members of the in-group—in this case, imperial abbeys—certain characteristics exist which create individuality and distinguish the institution from others of its class, thus justifying its continued existence and validating its claims for (continued) benefaction and prestige. In order to illuminate this institutional identity, I have broken down identity-constructive behaviors into several categories through which self-perception can be seen and an understanding of their respective corporate identities might be gleaned.

This analysis is presented in three main thematic points: the intellectual endeavors; the implications and utilizations of memorial responsibility; and the interplay and occasional collision of the monastic and imperial functions at each institution. The relevance of gender will be discussed in each individual chapter. By placing particular emphasis on the literary, educational, political, spiritual, and memorial components of these abbeys, and thereafter identifying overarching themes in such, this thesis will assess the development of institutional identities at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim. It will likewise be important to compare these self-perceived and self-promoted qualities to available contemporary understandings of each abbey, and to understand the communication between the ecclesiastical and political network in which they asserted themselves. Finally, the differences and similarities of these two

[35] Richard Jenkins's discussion of the difference between group identity, or "collective internal definition," and categorization, or "collective external definition," is particularly relevant to this. Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 80-93.

structurally and symbolically similar institutions will reveal the unique characteristics and demonstrated identities of each.

1.4.1 Thesis Structure

The first chapter will introduce and analyze several background factors relevant to institutional identities, without which any broader analysis would be quite precarious. I have broken these factors down into three main points: the geographical location of the institutions, the monastic tradition and structure in which they operate, and the importance of gender at these houses. The second chapter will delve more deeply into the sources, assessing the educational and intellectual activity of each institution, providing some insight into the literary works produced by Quedlinburg and Gandersheim. The third chapter will address the implications of memory creation and memorialization at these monasteries, evaluating how their assigned duty for familial commemoration simultaneously influenced their identities and provided them with the means to establish and communicate this within their network. The fourth chapter will assess the dual, and sometimes conflicting, imperial and monastic identities of these institutions. The obligation to act as both spiritual guardians and political outposts for the imperial family and consequently the realm at large necessarily shaped their overall corporate identities. This chapter will outline how each obligation was realized and where they clashed, allowing for a final assessment of the most important aspects of each abbey. The conclusion will provide the brunt of the comparison, threading the evidence of differently cultivated characteristics at each institution into overarching corporate identities and thus allowing for a side-by-side analysis of the two.

2. Location, Tradition, and Demographics: Background Factors to Institutional Identity

In order to recognize the development of corporate identities at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim Abbeys, it is necessary to understand their preexisting characteristics. These elements, which I deem background factors for identity creation, consist of the fundamental qualities that influence their self-perception and inform their intentional activity. The primary components of this extant character include economic and geographic factors, the form and function of the institutional classification to which the monasteries belonged, and the network within which they existed. These made up the backbone of each institution, establishing the canvas against which any separate cultivation of characteristics and expression of distinction might be constructed. Unlike activities that belie intentional promotion of institutional characteristics, these elements were inherent to the institutions. They necessarily informed the self-understanding of each institution and provided them with the tools through which their identities were later established and evolved.

Quedlinburg and Gandersheim indisputably shared several common characteristics. Most obviously, each was a so-called "imperial abbey," a favored ecclesiastical form in the Ottonian period.[36] Each institution enjoyed generous patronage from the imperial family, as well as the economic power and general independence that characterized monasteries of this classification. In this role, each was responsible for regular prayers for the realm, the imperial family, and individual benefactors. Further, each was responsible for providing regular *servitium regis* to the royal retinue on their regular rotations of the realm.[37]

[36] Such houses were sometimes also called "royal monasteries," depending on their status; Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were called both "royal" and "imperial." For more on this, including a breakdown of the distinctive characteristics of "royal monasteries," see Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 71-73.

[37] For the *servitium regis*, see Carlrichard Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium regis. Studien zu den wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des Königtums im Frankenreich und in den fränkischen Nachfolgestaaten*

Additionally, Quedlinburg and Gandersheim shared the benefit of geographical circumstance: both existed on important royal routes and thus had a responsibility for royal accommodation. While the royal retinue evidently resided at Quedlinburg more regularly, Gandersheim had a like duty to provide hospitality when visited by the travelling court.[38] According to Bernhardt, where there is evidence of regular royal visitation, the duty of hospitality is inextricable from monastic liturgical and spiritual duties.[39] This illuminates a further shared characteristic: they fulfilled a similar, if not identical, spiritual role as two of the foremost religious institutions in the realm. While it is certain that the obligations of Ottonian imperial abbeys were not purely spiritual, their religious component remained at the foreground of their identity, and religious activity was not usually downplayed in favor of their imperial connection. They remained, above all, spiritual and educational institutions dedicated to divine observance. Further, as royal monasteries, and female houses, these institutions were particularly responsible for the commemoration and transmission of the imperial family's memory.

Quedlinburg and Gandersheim held significant connections to the royal court. Both were exclusively populated by daughters of noble families, and women of the royal line served as the abbesses of each with perfect constancy throughout the period in question. It is certain that this connection both provided for and directed the development of identity at each institution; it is thus valid to raise the question of whether the corporate identity can be distinguished from abbatial identity under the Ottonian princesses. This is particularly difficult, for the abbess managed the institution and her individual identity (as royal female

Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien vom 6. Bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts, vol. 1-2 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1968).

[38] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 152.

[39] Ibid., 136.

and power figure) permeated most activity. I would argue, however, that given the nature of the institutions, the similarly high status of members, and the consistency of certain elements at each across generations, it is possible to identify institutional identities distinct from the individual abbesses. However, Quedlinburg and Gandersheim as collectives were always closely identified with the reigning abbess; the very abbacies of royal women were an important component of their institutional identities. The imperial relationship completely dictated both the actions and abilities of these abbeys, and provided them the bedrock against which they perceived themselves, developed identities, and broadcast their importance to the realm. Gandersheim, for example, appeared to have experienced a brief waning of eminence after the foundation of Quedlinburg; it began to rise again under Gerberga, especially after the placement there of Sophia, whose father Otto II and brother Otto III granted the convent significant endowments and privileges during her residence.[40] Quedlinburg, alternately, enjoyed immense royal patronage since its founding in the early tenth century.

2.1 Location

The physical locations of these institutions had a significant impact on their development and power.[41] The favored destinations of the royal dynasty were the most arable locations; according to Robert Bartlett**,** "if one sets side by side a map showing the travel patterns of the itinerant German monarchs and one showing the areas in Germany suitable for the cultivation of wheat, the overlap is considerable. Political power and arable capacity correlate."[42] That Quedlinburg and Gandersheim both existed in areas densely populated by royal strongholds only supports their geographic viability. The ninth and tenth centuries saw

[40] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 150.
[41] The particular importance of location for Quedlinburg and Gandersheim had a great deal to do with the itinerancy of the Ottonian court. For the seminal work on the Ottonian royal itinerary, see Eckhard Müller-Mertens, *Die Reichsstruktur im Spiegel der Herrschaftspraxis Ottos des Grossen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980).
[42] Robert Bartlett, "Heartland and Border: the Mental and Physical Geography of Medieval Europe," in *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Huw Pryce & John Watts (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2007), 27.

significant development of house-monasteries, which were the first "geographically fixed [locations] of an aristocratic kin-group."[43] According to Althoff, the most important localities lay either in the Harz region or the middle and lower Rhine, and the important institutions therein dictated the royal itinerary.[44] East Saxon regions saw the greatest proliferation of female houses in the period; according to Leyser, only the Hamburg-Bremen see and the dioceses of Magdeburg, Meissen, Merseburg and Zeitz saw less significant increase in women's foundations.[45]

For Quedlinburg, this meant regular royal visitation and high political visibility due to its proximity to the imperial homestead; it was also a favored site for the celebration of Easter amongst the early Ottonians. Located near the intersection of the royal road leading from Magdeburg and the route leading along the eastern side of the Harz mountains, the institution lay between several important royal destinations.[46] Further, its location was "on the edge of disputed territory between Saxons and Slavic peoples;" the town was apparently an outpost of Saxon defense, and the abbey's hilltop location was a strategic placement by Henry I.[47] The placement of the abbey on a mountainside is amply emphasized in the sources; it is mentioned in both the foundation charter and the *AQ*.[48] Its elevated position was clearly important to contemporary observers, and it provided the institution with a symbolic

[43] Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 48.
[44] Althoff, *Otto III*, 20.
[45] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, 63.
[46] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 140.
[47] Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 23.
[48] The charter refers to the *urbem in Quidilingoburg supra montem*, or "the town of Quedlinburg on the mountain," DO O I 1, 89*;* The *AQ* likewise mentions the mountain:: *Mechthild, inclita regina, obeunte coniuge suo, praefato scilicet rege Heinrico, coenobium in monte Quedeligensi, ut ipse prius decreverat, sancta devotione construere coepit*; *AQ*, 459; Author's translation:" Mathilda, the illustrious queen, after the death of her husband, namely the aforesaid King Henry, on account of her pious devotion, began to build a cloister on the mountain at Quedlinburg, just as he had previously decided."

superiority to the associated town and the extant clergy, whose incomes were reallocated to Quedlinburg as per the charter.[49]

Gandersheim was slightly more distant: located northwest of the Harz mountains, it also lay on a major crossroads, but these routes appear to have been less regularly used after Otto I.[50] Still located within the arable lands of the Harz region, it retained imperial favor through its self-sufficiency and proximity to important imperial waypoints. An important factor shared by these institutions was their location in Saxony, the quickly established power center of the new imperial dynasty, which had previously been only Saxon nobility. Though visitation can be proven much more frequently at Quedlinburg than Gandersheim, it has been well-argued that Gandersheim itself likely also hosted a number of royal visits (and possibly even a small number of royal councils), and further that the abbey itself served as the royal palace, with dedicated areas for residence and private worship.[51]

2.2 Monastic Network: Carolingian Tradition, Ottonian Adaptation

It must be noted that the Ottonian dynasty inherited their system of royal monasteries directly from the Carolingians. In addition to adopting and elevating extant institutions from the Carolingian period, they continued the system favored by their predecessors, most notably in terms of the *servitium regis*, a set of economic and political obligations required from each major religious institution. Further, they generally adhered to Carolingian era synodical decisions concerning the organization and activity of monasteries. They adapted this system

[49] From DO O I, 1: *Et ut idem conventus illic certum famulatum obtineat, urbem in Quidilingoburg supra montem constructam cum curtilibus et cunctis aedificiis inibi constructis et quicquid clericis in eodem loco domino servientibus prius concessum habuimus et nonam partem ex omni conlaboratu eiusdem curtis...;* Author's translation: "And so that the said congregation should be able to maintain its service in that place unimpeded, we grant [them] the town built in Quedlinburg on the mountain with the houses and all the buildings built there, as well as whatever else we had already granted to the clerics serving the Lord in that place, and the ninth part from the income of that court..."
[50] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 151.
[51] Ibid., 152.

to suit their form of rulership, ultimately establishing an ecclesiastical network that both supported and promoted the dynasty.[52] The use of Carolingian practices to bolster their regime was entirely normal in Ottonian policy; it simultaneously provided them with a functional system of organization and contributed to their legitimacy as a young imperial line.[53]

This adaptation, however, was not an identical reproduction of practice. The new dynasty rather borrowed elements of the former system and modified them to suit the new sociopolitical circumstances of the tenth century. According to Bernhardt, the Ottonian system of royal monasteries solidified the bind between religious institution and state while simultaneously expanding the network and enhancing the power of both individual institutions and the group as a collective.[54] This, when combined with the borrowed Carolingian patronage of such houses, created a symbiotic relationship that inextricably intertwined the wellbeing of both institution and dynasty. Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were particularly good examples of this. While each relied on the generosity of the imperial family, they had the spiritual (and sometimes political) power to influence the realm. The abbesses of each were directly involved in the governance of the realm several times: Abbess Sophia of Gandersheim acted almost as the *consors regni* of her brother Otto III in her two-year absence from the abbey, and the Abbess Mathilda of Quedlinburg acted as imperial co-regent to the same young emperor.[55]

Once again, however, this raises the issue of abbatial versus corporate identity: the actions of these women can only be used to illuminate the influence and visibility of such

[52] Fleckenstein, *Early Medieval Germany*, 122-128.
[53] For greater analysis of Carolingian inheritance in the Ottonian period see Timothy Reuter, "Ottonische Neuanfänge und karolingische Tradition," in *Otto der Große: Mageburg und Europa*, vol. 1, ed. Matthias Puhle (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2001), 179-188.
[54] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 117-8.
[55] Regarding Abbess Sophia, see Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 150; regarding Abbess Mathilda, see Kasper, *Das Reichsstift Quedlinburg*, 55.

institutions, rather than be taken as a depiction of the institutions themselves. Despite this, the fact remains that the power of these houses had grown significantly since the royal-monastic system of the Carolingian period, and this clearly illustrates how the Ottonian dynasty created a more powerful religious network.[56] The common political importance of these institutions, however, was an important precondition to the development of institutional identities at each; without their specific visibility and capacity for influence, the activity of each institution would necessitate an entirely different analysis. Further, without the worldly activity of such institutions, necessitated by their political functions and derived from the Ottonian tendency to bind religious structures to governmental procedure, these houses would have been significantly less influential; they likewise would have lacked the intense connection to the imperial court.[57] This symbiotic relationship was a major component of identity-relevant activity at both houses.

While the circumstances of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim differed to some extent from their institutional peers, this power is evident throughout the burgeoning monastic network. The powerful network of religious institutions in the Ottonian realm was concentrated in Saxony. While various other houses enjoyed the direct patronage of the dynasty, these institutions had arguably the greatest clout and dominated the intellectual and political situation within the region, and consequently, the entire empire. The regular interaction of these institutions is evident from contemporary sources.[58] By operating in this specific network, these institutions must have had strong and diverse intellectual resources and regular interaction with both male and female spiritual powerhouses.

[56] For greater analysis of this political power and its role in the construction of identity, see chapter 5.
[57] For a clearer outline of how and why the Ottonian rulers established and supported this manner of ecclesiastical institution, see Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 85.
[58] While the interaction of these institutions can be assumed from their similar intellectual endeavors, proximity, relationships with the royal court, and kinship of the abbesses, it is more specifically illustrated by such circumstances as the dedication of Widukind of Corvey's *Res Gestae Saxonica* to Abbess Mathilda and the ample citation of the *AQ* in the *Chronicon*.

Intellectuals of the tenth century demonstrated a burgeoning interest in the past, an emphasis inherited from the Carolingian period but temporarily lost due to the "anarchy of the ninth century."[59] This was evident in the proliferation of foundation narratives and chronicles from the mid-tenth century, a phenomenon that Thomas Head has attributed to "Hrotsvit [of Gandersheim] and her younger contemporaries."[60] Like the majority of foundation narratives, a well-attested medium for identity construction, Hrotsvit's historical epics were neither entirely factual nor entirely mythical; they instead occupied the space between recall and creation. These works, the *GO* and the *Primordia*, depicted the rise of the Liudolfing-Ottonian line through the lens of the convent at which she lived and worked, informed by both the circumstances and the resources of the institution.

Quedlinburg's comparable work approached constructing the past differently: the *AQ* first depicted world history and introduced more specific annalistic entries beginning in the eighth century, despite the convent's tenth century genesis. This text was scarcely related to the genre of foundation narrative, but showed a like need to record the early days of a religious institution and relating it to the imperial dynasty. Further, each showed a concerted interest in reconstructing events from the period of literary stagnation discussed by Head; though composition began only in the early eleventh century, ostensibly contemporary reports began even before the convent was founded. Despite their structural differences, these sources all evidenced a growing focus on institutional identity and a need to establish connection to and justification for royal patronage. This connection, as will be argued later, was an immensely important component of identity at each institution.

Despite the Carolingian roots of this monastic network, the Ottonian adaptations ultimately created the unique environment within which Quedlinburg and Gandersheim

[59] Josef Fleckenstein, *Early Medieval Germany*, trans. Bernard S. Smith (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co., 1978), 153.
[60] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 143.

operated. The greater relative wealth and political power of these institutions under the new dynasty created a foundation on which the two abbeys provided them with the means to pursue their varied activities and obligations. That this power outlet was available to women was a unique aspect of this Ottonian system; the gender element of their power, and the various components of this, will be discussed further in each later chapter. One element of gender must be introduced, however: though Carolingian women apparently joined convents "only when they needed shelter in adversity in old age or adversity," the Ottonian women regularly accepted positions in important monasteries.[61] This change is extremely important for these monasteries, which became career paths for the Ottonian women and significant means of authority and influence. The Ottonians' selective adherence to Carolingian era decrees created this uniquely powerful outlet for the royal women, to whom abbatial appointment seems to have been a valuable option, while the rapid growth in female houses suggests that membership at such an institution was also seen favorably by noblewomen. Ultimately, the royal-monastic network created by the Ottonian dynasty permitted the dynamic elements that completely shaped the activity and identity of both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

2.3 Demographics

Certain demographical elements and their influence on the inherent identity characteristics of these institutions bear further comment. These two institutions had a similar makeup throughout their respective zeniths; each was a relatively small institution consisting totally of noblewomen, and each had strong personal (and political) connections to the imperial family.

[61] Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 171.

The size of the convents and their relative wealth were absolutely important preconditions for activity and consequent identity construction. According to Bernhardt, Quedlinburg had around sixty members in its early period.[62] An accurate population count for Gandersheim cannot be distinguished, but according to Suzanne Fonay Wemple, it can be assumed that there were at least sixty members there throughout the period.[63] Based on the known property grants, endowments, royal and noble patronage, and geographical location of these institutions, it is apparent that each had massive wealth relative to their populations. This wealth had a multifaceted effect on their activity, but it especially provided them with the educational and intellectual capabilities. This correspondence between wealth and intellectual pursuit meant that each had ample opportunity to provide instruction on *at least* grammar to members, commission both buildings and artworks, host active scriptoriums, provide adequate accommodation for the royal retinue, and amass great libraries. It also provided them with some security regarding their imperial relationship. As they amassed monetary resources, they consequently amassed influence and political clout, acquisitions that ultimately granted them some protection as their situations changed at the end of the Ottonian era.

Though amply discussed, both in this thesis and elsewhere, a brief reiteration of the relationships between these institutions and the imperial family bear reemphasis. The important members of these communities were exclusively noble and primarily royal. The periods of greatest importance, furthermore, directly correlated to the reigns of important imperial women. Quedlinburg was founded on the dower lands of Queen Mathilda, mother of Otto I and matriarch of the dynasty; she passed her authority at the convent directly on to her namesake and granddaughter, now known as Abbess Mathilda, in the late tenth century,

[62] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 139.
[63] This figure is based on the membership of St. Marien, a daughter house of Gandersheim, which had around thirty members. See Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 44.

alongside instruction to maintain the family memory.[64] The monastery, from its genesis, had been devoted to the Ottonian line, and a new distinction from their Liudolfing predecessors was present in the very foundation of the convent, which was built as the burial place of Henry I, father of Otto I and the first Ottonian king.[65]

Gandersheim, alternatively, was founded by the ducal Liudolf family, the immediate ancestors of the Ottonians dynasty. This division was not absolute; though modern historiography treats these two as semi-distinct, due primarily to the Ottonian ascension to imperial dignity, they cannot have been so clearly distinguished in the period. Though the newly royal identity of the dynasty was asserted in part through their important original religious institutions—especially Quedlinburg—that shared Ottonian-Liudolfinger lineage was fundamental to the corporate identities of both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim. This perceived right to acknowledgment and a continued royal relationship is certainly evident in historical epics of Hrotsvit, and the resumption of royal patronage under the Ottonians further supports this static relationship.[66] This relationship was equally important to the identity of Quedlinburg, though implemented differently. Regardless, Gandersheim clearly perceived itself as both politically connected to the imperial line and necessary for the continued eminence of the Ottonian empire.[67] Head has even argued that "Gandersheim's members themselves became virtual adopted members of the [Liudolfing] clan." [68] Since this Liudolfing-Ottonian distinction was presumably blurred in the period, it can be assumed that

[64] *VMA*, 138: *Quin etiam computarium, in quo erant nomina procerum scripta defunctorum, in manum ipsius dans animam illi commendavit Heinrici nec non et suam sed omnium, quorum ipsa memoriam recolebat, fidelium*. Translation from Gilsorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 86: "She them gave her a calendar in which were written the names of magnates who had died, and commended to her Henry's soul, her own, and those of all the faithful whose memory she preserved."

[65] Kasper, *Das Reichsstift Quedlinburg*, 38.

[66] Jay T. Lees, "David *Rex Fidelis*? Otto the Great, the *Gesta Ottonis*, and *Primordia Coenobii Gandeshemensis*," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, eds. Phyllis R. Brown & Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 208-9.

[67] Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp., 2006), 220.

[68] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 148.

this important Saxon heritage only supplemented the prestige of the newly elevated Ottonian line, which sought to display their new prestige but likewise promoted the magnificence of Saxony. Gandersheim demonstrated the rich Saxon lineage of the Ottonian dynasty, which was an important part of Hrotsvit's characterization of Otto I. This relationship, and arguably the need to forcefully assert it in the face of newer favored institutions (especially Quedlinburg), account for a huge proportion of the identity-constructive activity at Gandersheim.

The gender element at these institutions was arguably one of the most important preconditions to their identities. The nature of female institutions was long debated in Christian thought, but the primary informants of Ottonian policy were Carolingian-era decrees. The drive to regulate female monasteries derived from the influence of Boniface, but resulted in the loss of autonomy at convents, since these "declined in power and influence" while their male counterparts retained their previous status through the close relationship of abbots, bishops, and kings.[69] Bishop Chrodegang of Metz compiled the initial "constitution" for the lives of secular canonesses in 760.[70] In 813, at the Council of Chalons, it was decreed that secular canonesses were distinct from nuns and canons alike, but their lives were supposed to measure in severity and restriction between that of canons and Benedictine monks; in 816, the Council of Aachen created a rule based on this decision, the *Institutio sanctimonialium*, which adopted the primary elements of Benedictine rule but granted the freedom of property ownership.[71] An important element of this decision was the separation of the sexes, which derived from a fear so prominent that the council also decreed an end to the education of boys at convent and a restriction on the movement of abbesses.[72] Despite the

[69] Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 165.
[70] Rainer Kahsnitz, "The Gospel Book of Abbess Svanhild of Essen in the John Rylands Library," in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 53 (1970), 126.
[71] Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 37.
[72] For further analysis of these council decisions, see Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 37-8.

eager adaptation of Carolingian policy by the Ottonians, however, these particular stipulations seem to have been lost: Thietmar of Merseburg provides evidence for the occasional laxity of this rule, and the extensive political activities of abbesses from both institutions further evidences Ottonian disregard for such inconvenient mandates.

It is notable that the Ottonians disregarded such an apparently important element of Carolingian monasticism; I would argue that they actually did so to their benefit. While creating the dependent and symbiotic monastic network discussed above, it was important to foster loyalty and reliability in such institutions. By populating these houses with the daughters of the family, and granting them various tools of power equal to or greater than those of the male houses, they could ensure greater loyalty via kinship than they might with unrelated male power figures. This did not inconvenience the family to any great extent: given their tenuous grasp on the imperial throne, they could strategically marry daughters to neither regular nobility nor comparable distant dynasties in the early days of their reign, and by their dynastic zenith had discovered the political value of female abbacy and widowhood.[73] Instead, they used their female offspring to establish a reliable power network throughout Saxony, binding the important foundations to the young dynasty through both familial loyalty and mutual benefit. This political functionality granted Quedlinburg and Gandersheim both privilege and liberty. First, they could rely on regular patronage from the family, which was necessary for their institutional activity, as outlined above. But more importantly, they had constantly regenerating clout in the upper echelon of both spirituality and politics under the Ottonians, which allowed each institution to forcefully assert its ideals and ambitions.

[73] For more on the placement and political functionality of these Ottonian royal women, see: Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und ihre Bedeutung in der Politik*. *Studien zur Familienpolitik und zur Genealogie des sächsischen Kaiserhauses* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989); Daniela Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln – Beraten – Erinnern: Funktionen und Aufgabenfelder von Frauen in der ottonischen Herrscherfamilie (919-1024)*, (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2005.

The role of demographics at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim in this period cannot be overstated. Institutional size, relative wealth, and gender imperatives were extremely evident in the identity-constructive activities of each institution. These factors, of course, worked in tandem with the various other preconditional elements mentioned above, but they provide the greatest analytical potential when taken together. The unique intersection of wealth, gender, and political power was the fundamental basis of these institutions, and the very reason for which they can be separated from ostensibly similar houses. Without an understanding of these elements, it would be difficult to analyze Quedlinburg and Gandersheim at all.

3. Intellectual Activity and Identity Construction at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim

The typical "underestimation" of Ottonian intellectual activity has generally been assigned to the seeming disinterest of the dynasty's kings, who were significantly less invested in the cultivation of intellectual circles than their Carolingian predecessors.[74] Simultaneously, the Ottonian period saw an increase in purely "pragmatic literacy," whence rulership lay in the hands of a largely illiterate Saxon elite.[75] The Ottonian queens and princesses, however, showed marked interest in intellectual and literary pursuits; they were instrumental in the foundation and patronage of the monastic communities from whence the bulk of Ottonian literary production came.[76] Liudolf's wife Oda and her mother Aeda provided the impetus for Gandersheim's foundation; Widukind dedicated his *Res Gestae Saxonica* to Abbess Mathilda; Adelheid and Theophanu generously patronized intellectually driven monastic establishments; and Queen Mathilda's benefaction towards the most productive monastic houses is well documented. Despite this strong female intellectual culture, however, the male houses generally had the primary responsibility for composition and literary instruction.[77]

Given the contemporary sources available for Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, it is necessary to assess their intellectual endeavors. As noted above, the texts concerning these

[74] Rosamond McKitterick, "Continuity and Innovation in Tenth-Century Ottonian Culture," in *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson*, ed. Lesley Smith & Benedicta Ward (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), 15-16.
[75] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae*, 11.
[76] For more on this, see Rosamond McKitterick, "Ottonische Kultur und Bildung," in in *Otto der Große: Mageburg und Europa*, vol. 1, ed. Matthias Puhle (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2001), 209-224.
[77] McKitterick's list of the main monastic forces in literature production in the Ottonian period consists of Corvey, Fulda, Hersfeld, Lorsch, Mainz, Regensburg, Reichenau, Würzburg, St. Gall, Seeon, Tegernsee, and Trier. Importantly, all of these houses predated the Ottonian period, having been founded either in the Merovingian or Carolingian periods. See McKitterick, "Continuity and Innovation," 17. This leaves the importance of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim—since both found their prestige only in the Ottonian period—for Ottonian-specific literary composition as less established but arguably more important for the construction of dynastic identity.

institutions primarily derived from the institutions themselves. Hrotsvit of Gandersheim composed a variety of literary works and is today one of the most celebrated medieval poets; her historical poems, the *GO* and *Primordia*, were written under the abbacy of Gerberga II and reveal a great deal about the situation and desires of Gandersheim, both of which are informative of identity construction at the abbey. The works related to Quedlinburg are slightly more problematic: as discussed above, while there is no explicit proof of this, the *AQ* and both *VM* were quite possibly written at Quedlinburg.[78] It is generally accepted that at least the *AQ* was probably composed at Quedlinburg itself.

The intellectual atmosphere of each institution was instrumental in the creation of these texts. Both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were exemplary in such endeavors, illustrating the highest capacities of women's institutions for education and intellectual output in the Ottonian period. Despite the old scholastic idea that medieval nunneries were primarily used for the placement and care of widows, it has been suggested that this view was somewhat anachronistic, based more on the situation of nineteenth century women than the evidenced circumstances of medieval female monastics.[79] The available sources suggest less impotence and quietude from these institutions, showing instead direct involvement with political affairs, examples of influence on the realm, and a capacity for exemplary literary production.

[78] For a comprehensive summary on the debate about the authorship of the *VM*, see Sean Gilsdorf, trans., *Queenship and Sanctity: The* Lives *of Mathilda and the* Epitaph *of Adelheid* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 15-21; for an outline of the probable composition and scholarly thought on the *AQ*, see Giese, introduction to *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, 41-66.
[79] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae*, 5.

3.1 Educational Institutions: Girls, Women and the Exception of Thietmar

The evident intellectual culture and educational practice at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, however, contradict the surviving assignment of learning to male communities. Until the decrees mentioned above, female monasteries had a long-standing tradition of educating both members and external male children who intended to pursue the religious life. This course typically began around the age of seven and consisted of one mixed group, rather than in separate facilities depending on the gender or objective of the student.[80] According to Bodarwé, the assignment of children's education to female communities dated back to the beginning of western monasticism and applied to both oblates and children with no intention of pursuing monastic or clerical careers.[81] While stricter regulation of this practice occurred during the Carolingian era, such houses maintained their educational capacities, if in new form.[82]

The instruction of child oblates was certainly not unique, and while there is ample evidence of the education of female members—and especially the resident princesses—at these institutions, the education of Thietmar at Quedlinburg is especially illuminating. It is both evidence of the instruction of males (who were absolutely not members of the community), demonstrative of the role of family bonds in terms of the placement and education of noble children, and informative of later external perceptions of the institution as found in Thietmar's major text, the *Chronicon*. According to Wemple, the reduction of

[80] Newell, "Education and Classical Culture," 129; According to Bodarwé, the education of the princesses could begin earlier, as Abbesses Mathilda and Sophia apparently joined their respective communities at around four or five and Beatrix came to Quedlinburg around the age of seven, in direct contradiction to the monastic acceptance of Caesar of Arles's dictum about accepting oblates still in extreme youth. See Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae*, 76-77.

[81] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae*, 76.

[82] Rosamond McKitterick has suggested that the educational practices of ninth and tenth century female houses followed the practice of Merovingian and Carolingian houses. See Rosamond McKitterick, "Women and Literacy in the Early Middle Ages," in *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th-9th Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 40.

education at female houses derived from a ninth century reformist desire to reduce contact between the sexes, resulting in decrees "forbidding the education of boys by canonesses and nuns."[83] Thietmar, however, was educated at Quedlinburg, apparently not in a formal school but under the tutelage of his aunt Emnilde, a member of the institution, and he was allowed to remain there only until his pubescence; he was removed and brought to Magdeburg at the age of twelve.[84] Despite his early removal, however, he had spent his formative years in Quedlinburg, and his familiarity with the institution clearly informed his later historiographical work. The apparent use of the *AQ* in the composition of the *Chronicon* demonstrates his continued contact with the monastery and the kin-based network of important Saxon houses.[85] Despite the implications of Thietmar's youth at Quedlinburg, however, the fact remains that he was a special circumstance in a period when the educational capacity of female institutions was limited. According to Lawrence, the Aachen decrees mandated that only children dedicated to the religious life should be educated in monastic institutions, therein excluding secular clerks and laymen, in order to protect the monastic sanctuary and prohibit the secularization of the monastic environment.[86] This ruling seems to have been only partially carried over into the Ottonian institutions.

However, this dictum did not prohibit the continuation of instruction in such monasteries, for "as long as there were child oblates, there had to be a school in the cloister."[87] Evidence for this is slightly scarcer for female institutions, while the scriptoria and educational facilities of male institutions are better attested. This can partially be

[83] Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 38.
[84] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae,* 29**;** from the *Chronicon* 4:16, 150 : *Me autem in Quidilingeburg apud suam materteram nomine Emnildan, quae paralisi longo tempore laboravit, primo litteris bene adhuc instructum sumpsit et Ricdago abbati II de sancto Iohanne in Magadaburg commendavit.* Translation from Warner, *Ottonian Germany,* 162: "He took me from Quedlinburg where I had been well instructed in my first letters by my maternal aunt, Emnilde, who had long suffered from paralysis, and commended me to Abbot Rikdag, the second abbot of St. John in Magdeburg."
[85] Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 61.
[86] C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1993), 81.
[87] Ibid., 141.

attributed to the aforementioned increased regulation of educational capacities at female houses. Despite these restrictions and the general assignment of literary composition to male houses, however, important female houses maintained their responsibility for educating female oblates and members, and thus continued to build their libraries and scriptoria. By the tenth century the power of these decrees, while not entirely eradicated, must have diminished, as evidenced by the education of Thietmar at Quedlinburg. There is no reason to think that Quedlinburg and Gandersheim lacked for any literary or intellectual resources. In fact, the literary productions from each monastery suggest advanced instruction at each. The works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim indicate that she had a solid understanding of the popular classical Christian authors, deriving from her apparent education in the seven liberal arts, in addition to an understanding of pagan Latin authors.[88] Her dramas especially indicate her close familiarity with classical authors; these were "Terentian in form," based upon the works of Terence but inverted to suit her agenda.[89] The texts from Quedlinburg likewise suggest familiarity with the Latin classics, especially Ovid, Virgil, and Statius, and works by Augustine, Boethius, and Jerome, among others.[90]

Apparently, "only a small minority" of students proceeded beyond a basic education on the *trivium* provided by most monastic establishments to the more advanced *quadrivium*, which together made up the seven liberal arts.[91] Based on the sophisticated references to classical and contemporary scholarship of the authors from each institution, it is extremely likely that the institutions provided education in the basic arts, amongst which grammar and rhetoric were the most universally taught. We know, however, that Hrotsvit studied the seven liberal arts under Rikkardis and Gerberga II.[92] Based on this, it is likely that at least at

[88] Newell, "Education and Classical Culture," 132.
[89] Wilson, *Florilegium*, 115.
[90] Giese, introduction to *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, 139-141; Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 26.
[91] Newell, "Education and Classical Culture," 130.
[92] Ibid., 131.

Gandersheim the educational possibilities went beyond the basic level. The education of Thietmar at Quedlinburg, meanwhile, and the nuanced historical writing associated with the institution suggests that at least grammar and rhetoric were taught at Quedlinburg. According to Scheck, the references made in these texts are broader and more complex than the educational facilities at smaller communities would allow.[93]

3.1.1 The Saxon Monastic Literary Network

Beyond the strictly educational practices of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim there exists evidence for their participation in an active literary network. Without an audience, the compositions of each institution would have been meaningless; the network within which they flexed their intellectual and literary abilities was integral to the development of institutional identity. While political activity could temporarily display their specific functions and communicate their prestige to the realm, it was the dissemination and external retention of ideas and constructions of the past that allowed for the expression of identity. In turn the reception of such works from other important monasteries enhanced their prestige and crafted the network between the important Saxon institutions in that Ottonian political heartland. Further, it suggests that the major male institutions, which had the longest tradition of scholarly activity, regarded them as equals, worthy of intellectual correspondence and important for the construction of Ottonian dynastic and spiritual memoranda.

There is ample proof of such a network for each institution. Widukind of Corvey dedicated his *Res Gestae Saxonica*, an immensely important historiographical work in the period, to Abbess Mathilda of Quedlinburg, presumably for her instruction.[94] That this work

[93] Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 24.

[94] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae*, 68; Widukind of Corvey, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum*,ed. G. Waitz & K.A. Kehr, MGH SS. rer. Germ. 60 (Hanover: Hahn, 1935), 1: *Flore virginali cum maiestate imperiali ac sapienti singulari fulgenti dominae Mathildae ultimus servulorum Christi martyrum Stephani atque Viti, Corbeius Widukindis, totius servitutis devotissimum famulatum veramque in salvatore salutem*. Translation from

came from Corvey, one of the twelve prestigious *Schreibschulen* mentioned above, only supported the intellectual standing of Quedlinburg and contributed to this first abbess's ecclesiastical standing. Further, Thietmar's *Chronicon* drew heavily upon the *AQ*.[95] The literary connection between Quedlinburg and the later institutions of Thietmar (especially Merseburg where he ruled, but also Magdeburg, where he was educated after his removal from Quedlinburg) seems obvious, but his regular reference to Quedlinburg makes the relationship between the institutions even more important. As an influential bishop and relative of the imperial line during the reign of Henry II, the first indirectly descended Ottonian emperor, his acknowledgement of his training at Quedlinburg lent a certain legitimacy to the intellectual productions of the monastery in a period wherein they saw decreasing imperial patronage. Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, meanwhile, not only dedicated her *GO* to the ruling family, she submitted it with letters to both Otto I and Otto II, pleading with them to accept her work.[96] Now included as prefaces to her historical epics, these introductory letters both praised the recipients and emphasized the piety and imperial connection of her abbess, Gerberga II and Gandersheim in general. These show that Gandersheim had access to the royal court and perceived itself as worthy of this production, both of which Hrotsvit eternalized in writing.

The sources further suggest important intellectual connections between these two institutions and others of their class. According to Scheck, the *VM* at least demonstrated a familiarity with Hrotsvit's texts; she further argued that, whether composed at Quedlinburg or elsewhere, the author of the *VM* had certainly composed them with the help of Quedlinburg's

"A Letter from Widukind," Epistolae, accessed April 20, 2016, https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/23743.html: "To the virginal flower with imperial majesty and singular wisdom, the striking lady Mathilda, Widukind of Corvey, the last of the little servants of Christ and the martyrs Stephen and Vitus, the most devoted of total service and true salvation in the saviour."

[95] Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 61.

[96] Hrotsvit, *GO*, 202-204.

library.[97] Given the close association of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, it is likely that Hrotsvit's works were at least *known* at Quedlinburg. It is unsurprising that these two institutions, apparently the most important amongst the Ottonian imperial abbeys, communicated despite their alleged rivalry, but the knowledge of Hrotsvit's works at Quedlinburg suggests both the understood intellectual characters of these institutions and their non-political interaction. If the works of Hrotsvit, and consequently Gandersheim, were unimportant, they would not have been disseminated and copied by other institutions; likewise, if there were no climate of scholarship at Quedlinburg, there would have been no cause to compose historical texts and to therein reference the historical epics of Hrotsvit. Additionally, there is evidence of intellectual sharing between these institutions and other houses in the realm. In its earliest years, like Quedlinburg, Gandersheim was associated with Corvey; Agius of Corvey composed the biography Hathumoda, the first abbess of Gandersheim.[98] Quedlinburg's association with Merseburg via Thietmar has already been discussed, but it is likewise probable that dedicated smaller houses such as Nordhausen had access to their library, while Hrotsvit shared her writings with the monks at St. Emmeram.[99] These networks were instrumental in the survival of in-house compositions, certainly, but they also demonstrate the network of each institution and consequently the potential influences on and implications of the works they produced.

3.2 Literary Works and Implications

Memory construction was the primary function of the surviving texts from Quedlinburg and Gandersheim. Interestingly, our sources vary, representing the two of the most common modes of medieval historiography. The *AQ* was a chronicle, incorporating both the *Weltchronik* format and later annalistic entries, at least some of which must have

[97] Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 24-27.
[98] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 143.
[99] Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 24-26.

been eyewitness accounts, while both the *GO* and *Primordia* were variants of foundation narratives, respectively dynastic and institutional. Despite the precedent set for such literature, however, it must be noted that the relevant compositions from each institution were created in a sort of cultural vacuum; while such texts were not entirely novel, Hrotsvit led her tenth-century monastic colleagues in her revisiting of the past, a focus which had largely been lost after the disruptions of the later ninth and early tenth centuries.[100] According to Althoff, this revitalized scholastic emphasis grew from the desire of monastics to admonish their audiences and illustrate the benefits of Godly living.[101] Lawrence has characterized such writings as both "vital to the internal life of the monastery" and "important [services] to the outside world."[102] Such works were necessitated by the responsibility for salvation at such institutions, certainly, but they also provided their external audiences with their conceptions of piety, the past, and models of behavior.

While the uniquely literary communities of Ottonian women were instrumental in the "collection of historical data," Elisabeth Van Houts suggested that in this regard they were more specifically active "in the context of personal histories rather than institutional histories."[103] In the cases of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, I disagree. While their literary works are ostensibly dedicated to the personal and familial histories of the Ottonian dynasty, they provide broad commentary on both their specific institutions and the ecclesiastical situation in Saxony. Hrotsvit, for example, constructs the foundation of Gandersheim as a clear agreement between the ducal family and the papacy, disregarding the apparent necessity for ecclesiastical approval via Hildesheim.[104] In this, she constructed both the identity of Gandersheim as independent of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and the irrelevant institutional role

[100] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 143.
[101] Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 50.
[102] Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 115.
[103] Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 65.
[104] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 160.

of ecclesiastical hierarchy to imperial institutions. Regardless of the historical reality of this situation, disputed then as now, her historical work is a clear example of female monastic construction of institutional identities. Likewise, the *AQ*, in contrast to the foundation charter of Quedlinburg, associated the institutional identity of the community primarily with Queen Mathilda, deriving its importance from the continued purity and prayer of its noble residents rather than the will of Henry I or the monastic structure of Otto I's empire. As Geary attested regarding the memorial activities of female institutions, the authors from both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim "betray specific ideological traditions as well as pressing political agendas."[105] The fact remains, however, that these institutions were primarily dedicated to *family* histories, as befit female institutions.

3.2.1 Hrotsvit of Gandersheim and Her Works in Constructing Institutional Identity

The main literary works available to modern scholars concerning Gandersheim are the poems, dramas, and epics of Hrotsvit. She operated under Abbess Gerberga II, who led the monastery through its "cultural heyday," and indicated her complete dedication to her ruler and educator.[106] The breadth, quantity, and quality of Hrotsvit's texts are remarkable enough to suppose that she was as absolutely uncommon figure amongst Ottonian-era writers, male or female. Her femininity made her entirely unique, and the complete lack of any comparable contemporaneous female author—alongside her total dedication to the institution—suggest that Gandersheim itself bore a significant impact on her productivity.

Hrotsvit wrote her historical epics toward the end of her career; the *GO*, which was likely completed around 968, shortly preceded the *Primordia*.[107] The *GO*, commissioned by

[105] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 52.
[106] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae,* 25.
[107] Lees, "David *Rex Fidelis*?" 202.

Gerberga, flattered the Ottonian rulers and outline the heroic actions of Otto I as king. It was presented with letters to both Otto I and Otto II, praising them and bemoaning her difficulties in composing these texts. Given the focus of this poem, the circumstances of its writing have a great deal more to do with the institution's self-perception; in a period notable for the favoritism shown to Quedlinburg, which constructed no such work, as the center for family memory, this work demonstrated Gandersheim's like ability to commit these works to posterity through the already professionally successful author. That Gerberga instructed Hrotsvit to compose this poem only supports this; it had implications outside of her genre of interest, being the first historical epic she wrote after years of prolific drama writing. The novelty of this project had clear implications: it sought to establish the institution's investment in dynastic glorification and Hrotsvit's powerful ability to commit his narrative to writing.

With the *GO* Hrotsvit composed a dynastic history, apparently concerned with the dynasty's ancestry rather than the convent at which she worked, emphasizing divine favor toward the Ottonian line.[108] This established a clear acceptance of the *Ottonian* line specifically, as deriving from Otto I rather than his brother, Duke Henry of Bavaria. On the heels of Otto's initial conflict with Henry, Gerberga's father, the depiction of Otto I and his descendants as the objects of divine patronage was a clear statement of Gandersheim's continued loyalty to the Ottonian dynasty, rather than the abbess's father.[109] This presentation provided multifold benefit to Gandersheim: through Hrotsvit, Gerberga simultaneously

[108] Hrotsvit, *Gesta Ottonis*, 202: *Pollens imperii regnator caesariani / Oddo, qui regis pietate fovente perennis / In ceptris augustalis praeclarus honoris / Augustos omnes superas pietate priores.* Translation from, "A Letter from Hrotsvit," Epistolae, accessed April 20, 2016. https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/26.html: "Mighty sovereign of the empire of the Caesars/Otto, who with the favoring piety of the eternal king,/magnificent in the scepter of imperial honor,/you surpass all previous emperors."

[109] Gerberga was an Ottonian by descent, but she was more closely related to Otto's competitor. While the *GO* celebrated explicitly the divine suitability of Otto I and his descendants for rule, Gerberga was the daughter of Otto I's brother Duke Henry of Bavaria and sister of Duke Henry II, who later participated in numerous rebellions against the imperial Ottonians, and ultimately participated in the controversial assumption of regency in Otto III's extreme youth, as contested by both the *dominae imperialis* and various political leaders in the realm.

asserted her support of Otto II's reign and promoted the traditional importance of Gandersheim to the prosperity of both realm and dynasty. Constructing such an identity was necessary to the continued survival of Gandersheim, which had lost a great deal of prestige since the foundation of Quedlinburg.

Hrotsvit's *Primordia*, on the other hand, was a more straightforward foundation narrative. According to Wemple, medieval foundation narratives served three main purposes: to form and express the identity of communities; to provide liturgical texts to be read at ceremonies; and to usefully apply the past to the modern needs of a community.[110] The *Primordia* met all of these requirements, and simultaneously exemplified the memorial duties of such an institution. Much like other works of the genre, it interpreted the past in a way that was specifically useful to the institution under Ottonian rulership. Although this poem was evidently a personal project of Hrotsvit's, unlike the Gerberga-commissioned *GO*, it likewise illustrated the perceived identity of the institution, asserting the loyalty of the institution to the imperial line and establishing its undeniable position in the relationship of the Ottonians to the Carolingian dynasty. Essential in this was the "establishment of legal precedent for the community's rights," an issue that would crystallize in the later Gandersheim Conflict.[111] In a period that simultaneously saw the constant prosperity of Gandersheim's main competitor and the unchecked assertion of the local bishopric over the institution, it became increasingly important to assert this legal liberty and cultural primacy.[112]

The historical works of Hrotsvit, moreover, were not merely historical but rather exemplified a "philosophical reflection of the Christian values of princes as revealed in the

[110] Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 46.
[111] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 148.
[112] The desire to assert their legal independence would culminate in the Gandersheim Conflict; this will be discussed at greater length in chapter five.

progress of the Ottonian dynasty."[113] In addition to her very real need to claim continued patronage in order to sustain the abbey, she thus sought to promote Christian piety and display how the power figures of her period might meet these divine requirements, especially through their patronage of important institutions. This was especially evident in her justifications for Ottonian rulership, introduced in her assessment of his divinely preordained kingship and concluded with her statement that lasting peace depended upon the continuous prayers of her community. More than anything, according to Robert Meens, "early medieval historiography was concerned with establishing its own place in this great scheme of creation, fall and redemption."[114] The *Primordia* clearly met this objective, finding a place for the community in the ascension of the Ottonian line, which was ultimately the divinely ordained faction of rulership through whom a peaceful realm could be achieved.

3.2.2 Quedlinburg and History-Writing: The *Annales Quedlinburgenses*

Despite the popularity and survival of Hrotsvit's works, modern scholars are left with more physical evidence of the cultivation of a prestigious intellectual identity at Quedlinburg. The library at Quedlinburg held some of the most valuable literary objects in the empire, based on what material evidence remains: a ceremonial biblical manuscript, called the *Quedlinburg Itala*, several gospel books, and a fragment of a glossed Bible used by instructors at the institution in the period provide physical evidence of Quedlinburg's intellectual culture.[115] Various ornamental objects, including the Carolingian-era Samuhel Gospel and the Otto-Adelheid Evangelium, which was probably produced at Quedlinburg,

[113] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics*, 206.
[114] Rob Meens, "The Uses of the Old Testament in Early Medieval Canon Law: the *Collectio Vetus Gallica* and the *Collectio Hibernensis*," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages,* ed.s Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 67.
[115] Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 25.

also survive.[116] All of these artifacts, however, indicate a greater assertion of the institution's imperial prestige; while some of the gospel books seem to have been used for educational purposes and spiritual practice, such ornate objects were more generally associated with ceremonial display and examples of royal splendor.[117]

The *AQ*, alternatively, is more genuinely indicative of intellectual activity at the institution. No identifiable contemporaneous compilation of this annalistic work has been found, and it is likely that the text fell in line with the other annalistic works of the period. According to Althoff, the *AQ* presents purely the dynastic—and more specifically, abbatial—perspective of the women at Quedlinburg.[118] The Quedlinburg annalist began with a short prose passage that can to some extent be seen as a world chronicle. As stated by Rolf Sprandel, in medieval Latin texts "the history of the world extends from Creation to the German Empire of the High Middle Ages."[119] The *AQ* offered no exception to this rule; it began with a retelling of world history beginning from *prima aetas ab Adam usque ad Noe*.[120] Following this narrative, the annalist began with yearly entries from *Dominicae incarnationis DCCII anno*, though the first year with any description of events is actually 708.[121] The entries remain relatively short throughout the eighth and ninth centuries with few exceptions. It is only from the turn of the tenth century—and more specifically, from the coronation of Henry II—that the entries become more substantial; the first significantly longer entry, for the year 937, is concerned with the death of Henry I and the foundation of Quedlinburg itself.[122]

[116] For an image and brief description of the Samuhel Gospel, see Anne R. Bromberg et al, *The Quedlinburg Treasury* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1991), 21-22; on the Otto-Adelheid Evangelium, see Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 25.
[117] Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 25.
[118] Althoff, *Otto III*, 27.
[119] Rolf Sprandel, "World Historiography in the Late Middle Ages," in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 157.
[120] *AQ*, 383.
[121] *Ibid.*, 417.
[122] *Ibid.*, 459-461; Based on Giese's transcription, the only entry exceeding ten lines prior to 937 was that for 781, which detailed Charlemagne's visit to Rome, the baptism and renaming of his son Carloman to Pepin, and Charlemagne's subsequent organization of bishoprics in Saxony; *AQ*, 428-430.

Despite its apparent composition in the first decade of the eleventh century, consistently detailed entries begin in 984, after which the author becomes increasingly concerned with the Ottonian family and the relationship of Quedlinburg to the dynasty.[123] Annalistic entries in the *AQ* continue up until 1030, though the entries after 1025 are missing from the Dresden Codex and are identifiable only from derivative texts.[124]

Overwhelmingly, the near-contemporaneous entries focused on the activity of the kings, queens, and highest nobility; the actions of the Quedlinburg abbesses; and ecclesiastical events, especially the deaths of notable figures and the consecration of important new establishments. The annalist also showed particular interest in (or awareness of) the military exploits of the kings. In part, this must have been related to their location in East Saxony and their closeness with the imperial court, which resulted in occasional visitation after military engagements to the east, such as Otto III's apparent stop at Quedlinburg to visit his *memorata et semper memoranda amita*, Abbess Mathilda, after leading a host against the Abodrites and Veleti in 995.[125]

The annalist's consistent focus on activity at Quedlinburg can be expected, but the emphases of the entries reveal some elements of institutional self-perception and the promotion of certain characteristics in line with the apparent agendas of the abbey. The *AQ* particularly reveals a concern with the military pursuits of the Saxon kings. Beyond the

[123] Sonnleitner, "Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit," 237.
[124] *AQ*, 68.
[125] *Ibid.*, 486: *DCCCXCV. Rex quoque tertius Otto cum magno exercitu Apodritos et quasdam Wlotaborum terras invadens incendiis et depraedationibus plurimis vastavit, licet motum eorum nullo modo compresserit. Reversus denique ab illa expeditione in Quedelingnensi civitate a memorata et semper memoranda amita sua, Mechthilde abbatissa, regalis praeconion laudis digne suscipitur.* Author's translation: "And King Otto III invaded the Abodrites and certain lands of the Veleti with a great host, [and] he devastated them with fires and great pillaging, although he could not restrict their movements in any way. In the end, after returning from that expedition, he was received in the town of Quedlinburg with the honors due to a king by his aunt, the already mentioned Abbess Mathilda, whose name shall forever be mentioned." The construction *memorata et semper memoranda* is likely a rhetorical device, playing on the similar meanings of *memorata* and *memoranda*, forcefully implying that she has been mentioned before and ought always be mentioned again, never to be forgotten; it is a construction unlike any other in the *AQ* and must be noted for its important reminder of the memorial role of Quedlinburg, as well as the apparent ideological insertions of the annalist, who frequently sought to reinforce the power and magnificence of these Ottonian women.

confirmation of the importance of the abbey's proximity to the eastern border, this illustrates the political emphasis of the institution. These conflicts were necessarily created and communicated through political channels, and the decision of the annalist to depict these in great detail reveals the perceived political closeness of Quedlinburg to the royal court. The abbey was not merely a memorial or ceremonial institution—it bore a responsibility for documenting the militaristic endeavors of the king through the lens of a borderland post even after the region expanded eastward.

Both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim utilized their implicit intellectual capacities to assert their perceived roles within the realm and their special characteristics, which subsequently informed their respective identities. The very nature of the sources is revealing in this respect; while Gandersheim's Hrotsvit chose to commit the institution to poetic memory, Quedlinburg's foundation was told through the more politically and ecclesiastically precedented chronicle format. These two forms of historical narrative deviate from one another quite dramatically. One was necessarily theatrical, presenting events with the obvious intertwining of family glorification and historical tradition, while the other attempted to present events as factual. The apparent drive at Quedlinburg for apparently factual presentation is well supported by their constant assertions of atmospheric events and external ecclesiastical events, peppered throughout with institutionally relevant events and the actions of imperial women, giving the institution a visible position amongst the highest ecclesiasts and monastics of the realm. Likewise, Quedlinburg's willingness to accept a noble male child—dedicated to an ecclesiastical career—demonstrates the greater component of political activity in their identity. While Gandersheim apparently adhered to the rulings of the Carolingian synods, Quedlinburg chose to more forcefully assert their growth beyond these decrees, which was reflected by the remarkable political behavior of their abbesses. Though Sophia was the only documented abbess of Gandersheim to participate significantly in the

politics of the realm, both Queen and Abbess Mathilda did so with marked regularity throughout the Ottonian century. Thus in this most rudimentary of identity-related components at Quedlinburg, we can already see a demarcation of constructive activities.

4. Liturgy & Literature: the Implications of Memorial Activity

Among the most fundamental aspects of the Ottonian imperial convents was the concept of memory. These institutions were inherently responsible for the retention of individual and familial memory, which they accomplished largely through both prayer and narrative transmission. The relationship between religion and memory certainly dates back further than this; memory keeping and reverence of the dead is an important component of almost every documented religion. At Quedlinburg and Gandersheim this relationship was dramatically prominent, since the specific characteristics of these greatest Ottonian imperial convents endowed them with an uncommon obligation for commemoration. Their entire existence was imbued with the gravity of memorialization: it was the basis of these foundations and accounted for a large portion of their activity. Further, they emphasized this function for both religious and political purposes. It both fulfilled their spiritual duty to the dynasty and provided them with a medium for the expression of both their aspirations and their unique benefit to the realm.

Before assessing memorial practice at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, the relationship between memory keeping and gender must be addressed. Much like *memoria*, the general association of family memory and women has generous antecedents throughout history; women have been responsible for the retention and transmission of familial history throughout documented history.[126] This is certainly true of the Ottonian imperial convents, which were populated by those royal women who served as the "preservers of knowledge"

[126] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 51.

for Ottonian family history.[127] Though commemoration was an important function of any medieval monastery in the period, it was particularly prominent at royal female institutions due to their traditional relationship to memory.[128]

In the tenth century, the practice of *memoria*, or the "formal, liturgical memory" of the deceased, served as the primary monastic act of memorialization.[129] However, the centrality of memory keeping was hardly novel in the Ottonian period. According to Kasper, the medieval concept of *memoria* evolved from Roman ancestor worship, which postulated that the living might commune with the deceased through spiritual action.[130] I suggest that this commune with the dead played an important role for a dynasty with no traditional rights to elevated status. The continual emphasis on the powerful originators of the ruling family, namely the Liudolfing line and Henry I, was an important aspect of Ottonian legitimization. This memorialization functioned to constantly underline the value of these powerful men and display the splendor they begot with their achievements. In such, Quedlinburg and Gandersheim both reinforced and displayed the practical value of the Ottonian dynasty and their Liudolfing predecessors. The liturgical practice of *memoria* ensured the regular transmission of this glory to the canonesses and to God, circumventing the loss of family memory. Their memorial activity thus simultaneously promoted and created the legitimacy of the imperial line, providing a powerful tool through which it might be protected.

To understand the role of memory in identity creation at these institutions, we must address several aspects of commemoration in the Ottonian period. First and foremost was the assignment of *memoria*, or liturgical memorialization, to religious institutions. The

[127] Jane Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context: Convents and Culture in Ottonian Germany," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, eds. Phyllis R. Brown & Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 50.
[128] Linda A. McMillin, "The Audiences of Hrotsvit," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, eds. Phyllis R. Brown & Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 319.
[129] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 49.
[130] Kasper, *Das Reichsstift Quedlinburg*, 48.

maintenance and practice of *memoria* was one of the fundamental duties of both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, for the Ottonian and Liudolf lines respectively. Quedlinburg celebrated this newly royal line from genesis. Impetus for the foundation was the death of King Henry I, according to the *AQ*, which describes Mathilda establishing the cloister *obeunte coniugo suo***;** the new foundation would also serve as the burial place of the late king.[131] Likewise, the importance of general memorial activity can be observed in the *VMA*, which documents the passage of a family necrology from the Queen Mathilda to Abbess Mathilda alongside a plea to maintain the memory of those listed.[132] Though less blatantly evident in surviving sources, Gandersheim was likewise dedicated to the preservation of family memory. It can be inferred that Gandersheim practiced *memoria* in a similar capacity to Quedlinburg, given the attention paid to the documentation of Liudolf and Ottonian history, the practical emphasis on prayer at the abbey, and the general activity of similar institutions in the period.

Literary activity was the second major component of memory keeping at these institutions; though much of their liturgical activity was dedicated to the celebration of the dynastic ancestors, their literary works actually committed this memorialization to posterity. Thus, the relationship of literature to memory, and especially to memory creation and the transmission of familial memory, is particularly important at these institutions. Recording the family history through writing, though not liturgical or necessitated by their foundational charters, was certainly jointly influenced by their *memoria* responsibility and the role of women in keeping family histories.

This was especially true of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, those two preeminent houses of such distinction. This distinction is particularly evident in the literary activity of each: both institutions dedicated a large share of time to the documentation of the Ottonian

[131] *AQ*, 459.
[132] *VMA*, 138.

line, and Hrotsvit of Gandersheim likewise dedicated a large portion of her historical works to the Liudolf family. Their respective written works are overwhelmingly focused on the retention and transmission of these histories; the *AQ* focuses primarily on the Ottonian lineage and their political activities, while the *GO* and *Primordia* are concerned with both the Liudolfinger line and the relationship of the Ottonians to Gandersheim.

The role of imperial convents as memory keepers allowed these women several subtle liberties. Writing about the past afforded them the power to choose which events to immortalize. Thus, historical documentation played a significant role in memorialization for these institutions. It allowed them to simultaneously record the families to whom they owed reverence and shape the historical knowledge of their respective audiences. Through this, they communicated their goals and promoted their respective agendas. In both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, the exaltation of the Ottonian line—and, consequently, their Liudolfing predecessors—made up a great portion of their written work. Likewise, this role as memory keepers allowed them to convey a less obvious agenda: the promotion of women as competent and powerful figures. As argued by various scholars, sources from both institutions contain implicit assertions that women were capable of both self-rule and general competence in the realm.[133]

The following chapter will address the interrelationship of memory and identity according to these functions. By analyzing the *memoria* and official religious responsibilities for memorialization, the gender component of memory in preserving family histories, and the function of their commemorative activities in terms of furthering their agendas, it is possible to assess the cultivation of specific identity characteristics at each institution. Because

[133] See particularly Sonnleitner, "Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit;" Sonnletiner, "*Non cladiis, non armis*;" Van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages; the Case of Abbess Mathilda of Essen and Aethelweard," in *History and Family Traditions in England and the Continent, 1000-1200* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 58.

liturgical memorialization was such an inherent component of these institutions, it is not explicitly outlined in many of the sources. We must instead infer from knowledge about the correlation between women, religious institutions, and commemoration, as well as the type of information they chose to commit to writing and how they utilized memory to create their respective identities.

4.1 The Function of *Memoria*

The responsibility of these institutions for the practice of *memoria* cannot be overstated. Both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were founded upon the principle of liturgical memorialization. Duke Liudolf and his wife Oda, the direct ancestors of the Ottonian line, founded Gandersheim in the mid-ninth century.[134] According to Jane Stevenson, while it did not make up the entirety of their activity, prayer served as the primary function of the convent, with a major focus on memorialization.[135] Quedlinburg was likewise dedicated largely to the commemoration and celebration of the founding family, namely the Ottonians. Though not stated in its founding charter, it is widely acknowledged that Queen Mathilda, the mother of Otto the Great, was the driving force behind the establishment of the convent, which served as the primary memorial institution of the dynasty.[136] This is evidenced by both the emphasis on the necrology presented in the *VM* and the fact that the convent was the burial place of King Henry I.

That *memoria* was maintained by both institutions is inherent in their very nature. However, little evidence beyond the mention of a necrology and the literary attention genealogy illuminates the specifics of this practice. This practice is better documented at Quedlinburg: the burial of Henry I, and later Queen Mathilda, supports the institution's

[134] Sonnleitner, "*Non cladiis, non armis*," 18.
[135] Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context," 41.
[136] Kasper, *Das Reichsstift Quedlinburg*, 38

apparent identity as the preeminent memorial institution. Between its founding and the end of the Ottonian dynasty, however, little other evidence remains.

Textual and material and literary evidence of *memoria* practice at Gandersheim are, unfortunately, even more scarce. The adherence to this can be inferred from the nature of the institution and peripheral statements found in Hrotsvit's works. But while specific references to memorialization at Gandersheim are uncommon, it had been suggested that the existence of such a list of names existed at Gandersheim and can be attested by the survival of such a work at St. Gall.[137] It is known that memorialization and prayers for the deceased were primarily the responsibilities of both women and abbeys, and thus the special responsibilities of women's abbeys. That the abbeys in question were managed by royal women further supports that they dedicated much of their fulfillment of these responsibilities to the maintenance and transmission of the family memory. Assembling these disparate facts allows for the assertion that these two abbeys, the greatest of the Ottonian imperial convents, were particularly involved in memorializing the imperial line.

The Ottonian monasteries utilized memorialization and memory creation as a multifaceted tool, and the fact that liturgical memorialization had a long history was integral to their application of *memoria*. Certainly, the possibility of a shared community with the deceased must have been an important component of this practice.[138] The foundation of imperial abbeys—including women's abbeys—was certainly a regular imperial practice dating back at least to the Carolingian period. Given that the Ottonians typically employed various strategies used by other prominent imperial regimes in order to legitimize their tenuous claim to the throne, it is likely that this practice was one such attempt. The association of these abbeys with the practice of *memoria* also enhanced their alignment with

[137] Elisabeth van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History," 57.
[138] Ibid., 48.

past regimes; as has been stated, religious commune with and celebration of the deceased was common. Further still, this glorification of the *memoria* had a symbiotic effect: the abbeys benefitted from lavish royal donations, while the royal court established themselves as generous and pious through their relationship with abbeys. That these prominent abbeys had such wealth and productivity only increased this display. Quedlinburg is a particularly good example of this ostentatious relationship. As many scholars have noted, Quedlinburg was a primary site for the Easter celebration throughout the Ottonian period, though particularly under Emperor Otto I. The dazzling court days held at these abbeys, punctuated throughout the period by political councils, increased the prestige of both abbey and dynasty.[139]

Despite these secular functions, *memoria* practice at these institutions retained a highly spiritual value. The primary contribution of these communities of secular canonesses was in prayer; they served the realm with their prayers and societal trust in their spirituality both confirmed and elevated their status.[140] In this period, women were regarded as the "custodian[s] of men's life and soul."[141] They fulfilled this role through prayer and the spiritual maintenance of men's salvation, both in life and thereafter.

4.2 Kinship and Memory: Women, Family, and Memorial Tradition

As has been extensively studied by historians, medieval women had a special relationship to commemoration, and consequently to memory creation. According to Geary, women were "traditionally assigned a primary responsibility for the preservation of memory."[142] This responsibility is especially prominent in the realm of family history. The correlation of women and memory was not restricted to religious women; laywomen were

[139] Kasper, *Das Reichsstift Quedlinburg*, 46.
[140] McMillin, "The Audiences of Hrotsvit," 312.
[141] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 63.
[142] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 21.

similarly active in the maintenance and transmission of family histories.[143] However, throughout the Early Middle Ages, religious institutions—male and female alike—were in general slowly acquiring the task of memorialization, especially though the practice of *memoria*, as discussed above. Despite the gradual assimilation of this traditionally female activity, however, women's religious institutions maintained a special role in the practice of *memoria* and the retention of family histories. This is especially well illustrated by Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, given that they operated at a unique intersection of these qualities: they were prominent royal religious institutions; they were populated by women and run by women of the royal family; and they were important family organizations specifically dedicated to memory keeping.

Though their liturgical memorial activities were undoubtedly a massive component of this task, both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim actually memorialized their respective lines in an even more lasting and influential way: in writing. Through this, they likewise created and transmitted that memory to future generations, drafting unique contemporary family-centric histories—even so in their treatment of political and military events—from their specific perspectives. The major literary works from each institution are undeniably imbued with this spirit of familial history. The *AQ*, a vast annalistic work, began with a general history up until the conception of the Ottonian line, presenting a more in-depth history of the Ottonians after Otto I, and finally contained both retrospective and concurrent annalistic entries. The comparably memory-centric works from Gandersheim, the *GO* and the *Primordia*, outlined the genealogy of the Liudolfing family and the ascent of Otto I, stopping shortly before his imperial coronation. All three works are overwhelmingly focused on the retention and expression of family history.[144]

[143] Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 65.
[144] Sonnleitner, "*Non cladiis, non armis*," 6.

From 984, the *AQ* focused increasingly on the glory of the Ottonian family and its relationship to the institution.[145] According to Käthe Sonnleitner, furthermore, the events listed in the *Annals* were more private and familial than comparable contemporary histories of the Ottonian line.[146] In this, the female responsibility for family history is made apparent. Though political activity is evident in the work, particularly the Eastern policies of the successive Ottonian emperors, it is this familial aspect that takes centrality. Likewise, the glories and actions of the Ottonian women—and especially Abbess Mathilda, that *gemma perlucida e medio coronae imperialis*—were constantly emphasized in the entries for the last decades of the tenth century.[147] Various other contemporary historians contended with the dynasty's political and military activity; the unique emphasis on the family in *AQ* was its novelty. I would argue that it is precisely this distinctive focus that illustrated the role of gender in memorial composition at Quedlinburg; these women were not only responsible for liturgical *memoria*, but also for documenting the political activities of the dynasty from a familial perspective. The Quedlinburg annalist recorded the same events as their male counterparts, but imbued the work with this traditionally female approach.

Hrotsvit's *GO* and *Primordia* are likewise imbued with this familial perspective. The *Primordia* outlines the conceptual development and founding of Gandersheim, beginning with a revelatory vision had by Aeda, mother of the institution's foundress Oda, in which John the Baptist appeared to her and foretold the foundation of an abbey which would support the Liudolfing line: *Nuntio, virginibus sacris tua clara propago/Instituet claustrum, pacem regnique triumphum,/Dum sua religio studio steterit bene firmo.*"[148] This passage

[145] Sonnleitner, "Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit," 237.
[146] Ibid., 243.
[147] *AQ*, 467.
[148] Hrotsvit, *Primordia*, 231. Translation from Wilson, *Florilegium*, 109: "Your famed descendants will found a cloister to house holy virgins, and while they remain steadfast and firm in their devotion peace and calm will reign, and good cheer in the land." The author's translation reads rather, "I reveal [to you] that your famed descendants will found a cloister to house holy virgins and will lay the foundations of victory and peace in the land, as long as their faith will stand firm by means of [their] devotion." In either case, Gandersheim is

simultaneously attributed the foundation of the institution to divine revelation and suggested the absolute importance of its continued prosperity for the longevity of the family line. The work subsequently outlined the genealogy of the family, including the first few abbesses, all of whom descended directly from Oda and Liudolf, and therefore from Aeda, the personal recipient of St. John's message. Not only was the familial aspect here emphasized by the demonstration of generations of involvement, the future family glory is related to the *maternal* line, rather than to that of Duke Liudolf, despite his own apparently illustrious lineage and preeminent position in Saxony. The male role in the family's elevation were attributed to the glory and nobility of Liudolf, and the *Primordia* further related the family to the Carolingian dynasty, given that he became "princes' equal" through his faithful service to Louis the German.[149] His noble parentage and personal deeds played a role in this elevation, but his dominion over the Saxon march derived directly from this relationship.[150]

This genealogical work is continued in the *Gesta Ottonis*, though to slightly different effect. As mentioned above, Hrotsvit wrote this poem not by choice but rather at the insistence of her Abbess Gerberga, daughter of Duke Henry of Bavaria, Otto I's brother and major political rival.[151] By commissioning this work, Gerberga utilized the correlation of women and family memory; it allowed her to publically attest her loyalty to the imperial line, promote the close relationship of Gandersheim with not only the Ottonians but their immediate predecessors, and flatter the living emperor. Further evidence of these goals was her recruitment of William of Mainz, illegitimate son of Otto I.[152] This demonstrated the arguably tenuous familial connection between Gandersheim and the Ottonian line, which had

presented as fundamental to peace and prosperity in the realm, for it was a physical manifestation of this devotion and continuous patronage would illustrate to the dynasty's pious devotion.

[149] Ibid., 229. *Principibus fit par, ducibus sed nec fuit impar*. Translation from Wilson, *Florilegium*, 108: "Princes' equal, not unlike to dukes."

[150] Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context," 52.

[151] Lees, "David *Rex Fidelis*?" 209.

[152] Ibid., 206.

grown threateningly closer to Quedlinburg in terms of patronage and memorial activity since its foundation. The *Gesta Ottonis* at once embodied familial history, flattery, and an attempt at asserting connection to the throne. But when viewed in conjunction with the *Primordia*, it becomes, to some extent, a female composition on family history and a commemoration of the institution's founders. In this, it was undeniably illustrative of memory keeping by women and how they might create memory and communicate both their unique relationship to the royal line and their position in the network within which they operated.

4.3 Memorialization Activity and Political Agenda

Beyond the admirable fulfillment of the memorial expectations foisted upon Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, as both imperial abbeys and female communities, the commemorative activities at each institution served greater purposes. It is evident through analysis of the content and scope of their memorial activities, especially that of the texts through which they created and established memory, that these women sought to not only eternalize but to influence the dynastic regime. According to Geary, there is an obvious discrepancy between mere memorialization, as befitting the role imposed on these groups of women by society, and the actual message conveyed by these works; I would argue that these works quite clearly conveyed the "pressing political agendas" of the institutions.[153] In this, they once again inverted the delegation of memory to women; they utilized this role in order to influence the political situation, enhance the prestige of the respective dynasty, and promote the competence of women through the selective curation or dismissal of events. This is already evident in certain aspects of the historical literature mentioned above. Hrotsvit's establishment of a clear line between the Carolingians and Ottonians, with the Liudolf family as the primary link, is a blatant example of this. Likewise, the emphasis on Ottonian eastern

[153] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 52.

policy and the overwhelming presence of imperial women in the *Annals of Quedlinburg* communicated certain ideological values and political goals.

Throughout these works, two major agendas were evident. First and foremost was the enhancement of dynastic prestige. The relationship of Quedlinburg to the Ottonians was explicit and commonly understood, so Hrotsvit's histories are slightly more revealing in this regard, but in each case this goal is transparent. Likewise, the promotion of royal and imperial women—and consequently, of the competence of women in general—is apparent throughout many of the memorial activities and historical literature from each institution.

4.3.1 Glorification of the Ottonian Line

The most obvious political agenda put forth by the literary memorial activity at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim was the glorification of their respective family lines. As stated above, each institution was ostensibly dedicated to different dynasties—the Ottonian and Liudolfing, respectively. The implications of this difference are not immediately evident, and there is significant overlap, given their obvious relationship. The Liudolfing line became the Ottonian line; Henry I, the first Ottonian, was by birth a Liudolf. His grandfather was Duke Liudolf of Saxony, who alongside his wife Oda founded the institution. Quedlinburg, alternately, was founded by and dedicated to the Ottonian line: Mathilda, wife of Henry, founded the abbey as a burial place and memorial institution for her husband and their descendants *ad infinitum*.

Despite this slight variation, which certainly influenced the memorial activities of each institution, by the late tenth century Gandersheim had developed a concerted interest in the Ottonian line. According to Lees, Hrotsvit saw her *Gesta Ottonis* as "part of the

continuing tribute owed by the convent to its ruler whose forefathers founded it."[154] The poem is thus evidence of the transition from Liudolfinger to Ottonian celebration at the convent, which has been interpreted in a variety of ways, most notably that it was a plea for the "dear care" provided to the convent by the contemporary dynasty's ancestral house.[155] Indeed, Hrotsvit does refer explicitly to the newly imperial Ottonians in the preface to *Gesta Ottonis*, while simultaneously recalling his former status and the status of his forebears: *Et, licet imperii teneas decus Octaviani,/Non dedigneris vocitari nomine regis,/Donec perscripto vitae regalis honore,/Ordine digesto necnon sermone decoro/Dicatur sceptri decus imperiale secundi.*[156] The apparently solicitous function of this work is especially likely given the fact that the *Gesta Ottonis* was written at the command of Abbess Gerberga, the daughter of Otto I's political rival, rather than being born of some personal interest of Hrotsvit. Gerberga had clear need to prove her loyalty to the throne and illustrate the relationship of Gandersheim to the dynasty proper. Taken in conjunction with the other historical work of Hrotsvit that, as seen above, reinforced the necessity of Gandersheim's prosperity for continued peace in the realm, this offered a clear reminder of the links between Gandersheim, the imperial family, and their ducal and royal forebears can be understood. Likewise, it is evident in the historical poems of Hrotsvit that by the late tenth-century Gandersheim became equally invested in both the commemoration of the Liudolfinger line and the promotion of Ottonian glory.

Despite their ample differences the *GO* and the *Primordia* can be read as two parts of a shared narrative.[157] I argue that this link is particularly illuminated in relation to commemorative emphases and the dynastic relationship at Gandersheim. The *Primordia*

[154] Lees, "David *Rex Fidelis?*" 206.
[155] Ibid., 208.
[156] Hrotsvit, *GO* 203. Author's translation: "And even though you hold the insignia of Octavian's empire, do not disdain to be addressed by the term "king" until when, after I will have duly honored in writing your life as a king, in chronological order and with decorous speech, the imperial glory of the second scepter may be told." This translation slightly modifies that offered in "A Letter from Hrotsvit," Epistolae, which instead interprets *Octaviani* as "Ottonian."
[157] Lees, "David *Rex Fidelis?*" 233.

concerned itself primarily with the Liudolf line, but contained explicit reference to the future generations of the family, the Ottonians of her period, who would be elevated to the imperial throne.[158] Hrotsvit's emphasis on the connection between the new imperial dynasty and their equally glorious ancestors also allowed for an important connection between the Ottonians and the Carolingian dynasty: she began with Duke Liudolf and his wife Oda, who were "loyal servants of the east Frankish King Louis (the German)."[159] This associated the Liudolfing line, and consequently the Ottonians, to the glorious predecessors they constantly sought to emulate, which was a vastly important aspect of their self-legitimizing activity. Since the Ottonians had only recently risen above families of similar rank, first to kingship and later to the imperial dignity, and because they constantly battled both political infighting and external conflict, they frequently sought connections to previous dynasties and contemporary imperial courts. The Carolingians were their most obvious counterpart; any connection to the prior Holy Roman Empire was thus invaluable. That Hrotsvit chose to emphasize this connection illustrated Gandersheim's dedication to the legitimacy of the Ottonian line, and thus promoted Ottonian glory.

This promotion of the Ottonian dynasty was not selfless. Despite having been the premier Liudolfing abbey, Gandersheim's prestige diminished with the Ottonian line due to both their ascent to the throne and their subsequent foundation of new abbeys. Composing the *GO* has been interpreted as a plea for continued patronage by the imperial Ottonians. The narrative of this poem closely followed the *Primordia*. The latter source concluded with the

[158] Hrotsvit, *Primordia*, 230; *Haec igitur crebro precibus consueverat Aeda/Se totamque suam domino committere vitam/Saepius, atque piis insistens sedula factis,/Promeruit, bene promissis edocta supernis,/Discere, baptista Christia referente beato,/Quod sua progenies saeclis quandoque futuris/Possessura foret iuris decus imperialis.* Translation from Wilson, *Florilegium*, 109: **"**Aeda had devoted her whole life completely to serving God almighty and to frequent prayers. For her firm devotion borne out in pious deeds, she was well rewarded and told of heaven's plans. When John was sent to her, John who baptized Christ, to reveal the future and tell how her descendants would, in years, proceed to imperial glory."

[159] Lees, "David *Rex Fidelis?*" 225.

birth of Otto I and death of Abbess Christina.[160] The *GO* offered some narrative overlap, beginning with King Henry, but had proceeded by line 34 to Otto I: *Inter quos primus fulsit ceu lucifer ortus/Oddo, micans radiis nimium clarae bonitatis."*[161] It must be stated that the *GO* was written first. Though the two poems read almost as two parts of the same story, the earlier work was commissioned by Gerberga and focused on the newly imperial Ottonian line; the later *Primordia* was evidently written voluntarily and focused on the period running up to the advent of the new dynasty. In this, the glorification of the Liudolfing line became especially evident. She wrote in detail on the earliest abbesses, all daughters of Liudolf and Oda, as well as the vision of Oda's mother Aeda foretelling the foundation of the abbey. The connection between the two demonstrated the goals of Gandersheim under Otto I: to simultaneously promote the Ottonian court, which was directly responsible for the continued prosperity of the convent, and to memorialize the Liudolfing line, to which the convent was ostensibly dedicated, and which provided the strongest argument for continued Ottonian support. Thus, the enhancement of the Ottonian dynasty was fundamental to Gandersheim, and their glorification could only benefit the abbey.

The *AQ* was at least equally, if not more so, aimed at attesting the glory of the Ottonian line. This to some extent suggests a similar attempt to reclaim their own former glory. The abbey's commitment to the Ottonian line was more explicit; their foundation had been dedicated to the family since its conception. Given this, it is unsurprising that the Quedlinburg annalist chose to primarily recount events that elevated the dynasty. As stated by Geary, the duty of annalists was to "consciously select from a spectrum of possible *memorabilia* those which are *memoranda*—that is, those worth remembering."[162] At such an institution, it naturally followed that only information that enhanced the image of the dynasty

[160] Hrotsvit, *Primordia*, 245-46.
[161] Hrotsvit, *GO*, 205. Translation from Wilson, *Florilegium*, 101: "Otto the first born, shone forth among them like the morning star, glittering, in the aura of perfection.
[162] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 9.

should be recorded for posterity. Much like the historical poems of Hrotsvit, the composition of the *AQ* started only after the zenith of the institution's power.[163] Though begun circa 1008, when Henry II was increasingly shifting power away from the abbey, the work gives incredible attention to the earlier period of great power and patronage. In this respect, the work seems to be half-annal and half-chronicle, despite its title. This is quite similar to Hrotsvit's association with the Ottonian line: it is not imaginary, but not quite realistic. Thus, it illustrates a similar political agenda. The *AQ* can thus be seen as a tardy effort to enhance its own prestige, in relation to the Ottonian line, and possibly to offer a reminder to the new emperor of its former proximity to the dynasty on which it relied absolutely for continued prosperity.

Sonnleitner has proposed that the composition of the *AQ* commenced in response to the death of Otto III, and that the work was intended to commemorate the rulership of the early Ottonians under whom Quedlinburg had experienced its "most glorious" period.[164] Despite the fact that this had so far been the *only* era of the institution's existence was irrelevant; the work instead served to simultaneously elevate the "glorious" dynasty, record their patronage of the abbey, and conflate the canonesses with the imperial line in a period of increasingly precarious politics. Thus, the *AQ* fulfilled both the commemorative and political goals of the abbey, in addition to recording their activity.

4.3.2 Celebration of Female Rulership

The *AQ* and the historical poems of Hrotsvit each constantly reinforced the role and power of women. This is not generally explicit, but recent scholarship has analyzed the overwhelming presence of female activity and success in the *AQ* and the historical poems of Hrotsvit. Given the unique prestige and power of these institutions, this conclusion seems

[163] Sonnleitner, "*Non cladiis, non armis*," 7.
[164] Sonnleiter, "Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit," 234.

certain; their historical memorialization dramatically emphasized the glories of the women of the family compared to contemporary sources. Further, the memorial activity at these institutions went well beyond the maintenance of the family tradition with which women were typically associated. Both the content and construction of these histories implied a multifaceted celebration of the women—and especially of the royal women—at these houses.

The simple act of these women writing commemorative historical works attested to the sentiment of female competence and power. As stated by Geary, the "right to speak of the past also implied control" of *memorabilia*; these women assumed some authority over the past and the process of recording it for future generations.[165] This went above and beyond liturgical *memoria*. Instead, despite the authors' ample decrees of unsuitability for recording the past, it showed their perception of the right of women to record, and consequently create, historical memory. The *GO* was a hugely challenging work: Hrotsvit wrote a narrative of recent events, to a necessarily biased, extremely powerful, living audience.[166] That she undertook such a work, at the command of Abbess Gerberga, powerfully implies the competence and authority regarding the writing of history felt at Gandersheim.

The *AQ* differ little in this respect. Like annals are documented primarily at male monasteries, most notably the *Annales Hildesheimenses*, upon which the tenth-century entries in the *AQ* were based.[167] This massive undertaking, which began with a world chronicle from the time of Adam and assumed an annalistic format from the beginning of the eighth century, plainly showed the annalist's perceived 'right' to write about the past. Like the works of Hrotsvit, this went beyond the typical act of ceremonial memorialization. By constructing such a comprehensive historical work, the author exerted definite authority in the documentation—and therefore shaping—of the past. Unlike Hrotsvit, however, this authority

[165] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 7.
[166] Lees, "David *Rex Fidelis?*" 206.
[167] Sonnleitner, "Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit," 235.

applied not only to the recent past but also to at least the previous three centuries, and arguably to the entirety of known Christian history.

Beyond the inherent female competence implied in the creation of these works, their actual content also tended to celebrate the role and power of women. In the *Primordia*, this emphasis is particularly evident: as outlined above, she addressed primarily with the foundation of the abbey, and paid special attention to the efforts of Oda and the vision of Aeda. She likewise outlined the competent rulership of its first four abbesses, and aside from the prologue and the somewhat brief mentions of relevant men within the narrative, the work is primarily concerned with the work and piety of these Liudolfing women.[168] The *GO*, naturally, is less woman-centric, though even this work took the time to praise the women of the family: of Queen Mathilda, Hrotsvit wrote: "*Conregnante sua Mathilda coniuge clara,/cui nunc in regno non compensabitur ulla,/Quae posset meritis illam superare supremis.*"[169] If these two works are to be taken together, it becomes clear that Hrotsvit was not simply elevating the Ottonians or proposing the competence of women; rather, she was emphasizing the important role women actively undertook in the conception, development, and prosperity of the Ottonian line. It is notable that, after the death of Abbess Christina in 919, the royal presence had largely diminished at Gandersheim until Abbess Gerberga gained the helm in Hrotsvit's period.[170] The celebration of the female line thus allowed Hrotsvit to establish the connection with much greater strength. It therefore became necessary to reinforce the importance of the royal women as strong carriers of the family legacy. This, alongside the common assignment of memorialization practice to women, not only allowed for but actually necessitated this celebration of women if the political agendas of the abbey were to be persuasive.

[168] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 148.
[169] Hrotsvit, *GO*, 205. Tranlsation from Wilson, *Florilegium*, 101: "His wife [Mathilda] ruled with him; famous far and wide, no woman in the kingdom could ever compare to her."
[170] Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context," 39.

The Quedlinburg annalist showed the competence and strength of the royal women even more forcefully. The royal women, especially the Quedlinburg abbesses, are at the fore throughout the annalistic entries. According to Sonnleitner, the majority of original additions to the entries borrowed from the *Annales Hildesheimenses* were those that celebrated female activity.[171] These primarily celebrated the political power of the abbesses, like the assertions of Mathilda's ability to mollify barbarian lords in a similar manner to her paternal line.[172] Further, as Sonnleitner has argued, the *Annals of Quedlinburg* actually associated the rulership of the Ottonian women with the true achievement of the peaceful Christian kingdom.[173] Similar references to female competence, and sometimes even superiority, are evident throughout the work.

Female authority, and the celebration of female activity, are recurring themes for both the Quedlinburg annalist and Hrotsvit. It is undeniable that these works functioned to elevate royal Ottonian women, and consequently, the canonesses of the institutions they governed.

[171] Sonnleitner, "Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit," 236.
[172] Sonnleitner, "*Non cladiis, non armis*," 7.
[173] Ibid., 8.

5. Both Monastic and Imperial - Agreements, Collisions, and Balancing Dual Identities

Two of the most important identity informative elements of both Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were their imperial and monastic characters. Each was explicitly a spiritual foundation, dedicated to the salvation of the realm and its masters via prayer, penitence, and proper conduct. Even so, as has been amply demonstrated, these institutions were founded for and supported by their relationship to the royal throne, and this relationship necessarily secularized their functions to some extent.[174] Their duty to the royal family did not end with prayer; each institution had important political connections and the behavior of their abbesses, the face of each institution to the external world, constantly demonstrated the political obligations and affiliations of these institutions. However, these two contrasting aspects of institutional identities did not have to be mutually exclusive. According to Burke and Stets, "in order for the interrelatedness of identities and counteridentities to work in situations, individuals must negotiate the different meanings and corresponding behaviors tied to each identity."[175] For both individual and institution, dual identities must be differently expressed depending on circumstances. In the cases of Quedlinburg at Gandersheim, these 'counteridentities' did not necessarily negate each other; if anything, the institutional identity at each monastery was more dualistic than conflicted. Given the ecclesiastical structure and royal treatment of monastic institutions, these two elements were typically tightly bound, serving one another more often than they clashed.

A number of factors permitted this dual relationship. The designation of these houses as secular rather than Benedictine monasteries, which required vows of permanence and poverty, was especially important. While necessarily distinct from one another, the overlap in

[174] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 85.
[175] Burke, Peter J. & Jan E. Stets, *Identity Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 116.

the spiritual duties of canonical and monastic permits the analysis of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim in terms of their understood alignment with monastic function. Yet the liberties of property and impermanence at these institutions proved uniquely functional for the aristocracy, who could protect family assets, educate their daughters, gain prestige through affiliation with royally favored institutions, and remove their daughters if a necessary marriage alliance presented itself. For royal dynasties, such institutions proved especially valuable. Kings and emperors, for whom "real problems arose when the ruler was absent from the areas of his domain," could place their trusted female relations in positions of power, display their piety and spiritual dedication, fortify political centers, and ensure support and organization in their absence.[176] The women of the family likewise had unprecedented access to positions of political power and influence, could participate in the governance of the realm, and could to some extent exert some control over their futures. Simultaneously, as discussed in chapter three, the existence of these institutions worked to both maintain the family memory and promote dynastic prestige, tying the power of the family to the well being of the empire and committing their idea of the past to posterity.

In the Holy Roman Empire, the kinship ties between important royal monasteries and the imperial court necessitated this political character and quasi-liberty without negating their spiritual value. The placement of trusted family members into positions of beneficial authority occurred frequently medieval rulership, and the princess-abbesses of the important Saxon institutions were no exception.[177] In the highly ritualized and allegiance-based world of the medieval Holy Roman Empire before the Investiture Conflict, the royal placement and utilization of such institutions need not conflict with spiritual endeavors. This was hardly novel to the Ottonian rulers; their Liudolfinger predecessors had seen the value of such placements even before the royal ascent of the family, as evident through the foundation at

[176] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 53.
[177] Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 56.

Gandersheim and the placement of *three* daughters as abbesses there.[178] This was in fact a regular function of new monastic houses, as the nobility widely founded and endowed such female-run familial institutions.[179]

5.1 Monastic Identity

5.1.1 Not Nuns, but Secular Canonesses

This evolving utilization of such institutions did not go unchallenged in the years preceding (and following) the Ottonian period. Under the Carolingian dynasty, the politicization of monastic houses was received with increasing trepidation, culminating in various synods concerning both monastic distinctions and the freedoms permitted each classification.[180] There was seemingly a call for clarity in the Carolingian period, and thereafter ecclesiastical authorities developed stricter regulations for monastic institutions, especially in terms of differentiation between Benedictine houses and houses of secular canons.[181] The vast majority of these synods considered to male houses, but several decisions regarding the claustration of women and the activities permitted to women's monasteries were issued following such councils between circa 750-850, most of which restricted nuns' contact with the outer world.[182]

It was the result of these synods that made Quedlinburg's and Gandersheim's distinction as houses of secular canonesses so important. The decreed constitution for houses of canonesses was apparently decided upon at the Synod of Aachen in 816, and based upon a

[178] Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers,* 39.
[179] Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 39.
[180] Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism,* 74.
[181] Ibid., 74; Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 37.
[182] Anne Müller, **"**Symbolic Meanings of Space in Female Monastic Tradition," in *Women in the Medieval Monastic World,* ed. Janet Burton & Karen Stöber (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 305 fn. 19. For a broader explanation and timeline of the important councils for female monasticism in the Carolingian period, see also Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 36-38.

set of rules written around 760 in Metz.[183] This ruling required various strict regulations of canonesses. It imposed restrictions upon the diet, living quarters, attire, property administration, and human interaction; however, "the reality was often very different," and well into the 13th century certain liberties were considered normal at such institutions.[184] As opposed to monastic houses following the Rule of St. Benedict, houses of canons had fewer restrictions: their lives were generally much more lavish, they swore no vows of permanence, and strict adherence to pseudo-ascetic monastic behaviors such as dietary restriction were optional.[185] Further, houses of canons allowed members to inherit and retain property, interact with the external world, potentially marry, and (for the highest echelon of members) participate in political activity. But despite these differences, such houses often retained monastic behaviors and structures, including educational facilities, literary production, spiritual function, and isolation from worldly affairs. According to Althoff, in fact, the widowed residents of Quedlinburg clung steadfastly to their monastic habits, boasting of the adherence to these at the institution.[186] In such, the canonical distinction offered a perfect holding cell for daughters—and by extension, property—not only for the royal family but for favored nobility as well, establishing a delicate interdependent system of allegiance, patronage, power, prestige, and obligation for the members and their families, both royal and noble.

Despite some scholastic debate over the canonical or Benedictine classification of comparable institutions, including Gandersheim before the royal ascent of the Ottonians, it is generally agreed upon that Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were either mixed houses or

[183] Kahsnitz, "The Gospel Book of Abbess Svanhild," 126; for the rule in question, see "Institutio sanctimonialum Aquigranensis," in *Concilia aevi Karolini*, vol. 1, 742-817, ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1906), 421-45.
[184] Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century*, 227.
[185] Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context," 36.
[186] Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg," 130.

strictly canonical.[187] It is likely that these institutions saw tiers of observance, housing a combination of child oblates seeking education; young adult women who could proceed to marriage; and strictly observant women who followed more traditionally austere monastic restrictions.[188] Though not always strictly adhered to, the abbots and abbesses of institutions living under the Rule were subject to much greater restrictions than were the secular and lay abbots and abbesses of the period.[189] Various contemporary sources provide evidence of the relatively unrestricted lives of the abbesses. Abbess Sophia of Gandersheim and Abbess Mathilda of Quedlinburg both acted as pseudo *consors regni* in imperial absences from the region, both travelling with and politically representing the emperor.[190] Abbess Matilda, one of the *dominae imperialis*, took an even more active role, sharing the regency of Emperor Otto III with Empresses Adelheid and Theophanu.[191]

It is important that the members of these institutions perceived themselves as secular canonesses rather than cloistered nuns. In this, while their individually relative adherence to monastic observance may have affected their personal identities, the formal liberties of the institution did not interfere with their spiritual duties. This was enhanced by the legislation concerning their monastic classification in the century preceding them; they had precedented approval for their way of life, permitting the power of their mode of spirituality and upholding the value of their observance. As decreed by the numerous councils convened to decide upon the existence and legitimacy of such institutions, that they did not adhere to the stricter Rule officially did not negate their pious contribution to the empire. Their identity as canonesses provided them with a grey area in which they might fulfill their familial and

[187] For a brief overview of the debate about distinguishing between Benedictine and canonical observance at Gandersheim and comparable institutions, see Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 40-41.
[188] For oblates, see Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae*, 76-77; regarding the option for strict observance, see Althoff, "Quedlinburg und Gandersheim," 130-1.
[189] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 97.
[190] Althoff, "Quedlinburg und Gandersheim," 133.
[191] *AQ*, 470.

political obligations while promoting their overtly monastic institutional identity, allowing the two to work in tandem rather than placing their worldly and heavenly duties in opposition to one another.

5.1.2 Spiritual Obligations and Monastic Duties

Despite the freedoms permitted by their monastic classification, Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were apparently as genuinely dedicated to spiritual endeavors as their Benedictine counterparts. There is ample evidence of the institutions' observation of the liturgical, memorial, and spiritual components of monastic life. Regardless of the political, intellectual, and economic components of monasteries in the period, it must be recalled that their spiritual duty was explicitly their *most important* function. As decreed by the Council of Chalons in 813, there was little actual difference in the religious practices of Benedictine nuns and secular canonesses; they had similar restrictions of dress, male contact, and separation from the world.[192] According the *AQ*, Quedlinburg was intended as a gathering of noblewomen, *summae ingenuitatis*, whose spiritual purity and strength of character derived from their nobility and thus equipped them especially for religious service.[193] In this period the power of their prayer and piety was unquestioned, and monks and canons were regarded as "the spiritual counterparts of the secular armies," guarding the realm against incursions as much as guarding souls against damnation.[194] This power, the ability of monasteries to take responsibility for the spiritual salvation of others through the purity of their observance, was

[192] Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 168.
[193] This derived to a great extent from Quedlinburg's continuous identification with Mathilda, whose own nobility of both character and birth led her to hand-select noblewomen for worship at Quedlinburg, a tradition celebrated by the annalist and evidently continued throughout the Ottonian period. *AQ*, 459: *Ibi, quia bene nata raro ac difficilime degenerare noverat, non vilis personae, sed summae ingenuitatis tirunculas canonicae religioni rite servituras collegit easque usque ad extrema vitae istius caducae materno more spiritualium nec non carnalium copiis commodorum enutrire non desitit.* Author's translation: "It was there that she called up female novices, recruiting them into fitting service of the right faith; they [were handpicked] by her not from among women of low birth but from those of highest nobility because she herself, being of such high birth, could only rarely and then with extreme difficulty descend beneath her station. And until the very end of her transient life she never ceased to nurture them with plentiful resources both spiritual and material."
[194] Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 72.

instrumental in the developing climate of royal and noble monastic benefaction. This understanding of reciprocity, smartly described by Lawrence as the "economy of salvation," in no way negated the spiritual legitimacy of monastic observance in this period.[195]

Monasteries provided service to the empire primarily through their "penitential life of continual prayer and fasting."[196] This earned the beneficence of God and thus the salvation of souls, and it was understood that monks' prayers were "more likely to be heard than the prayers of mere laymen" due to the purity of their observance.[197] By patronizing such institutions through donations and the dedication of children, families could earn a place in the regular prayers and, after death, necrologies of monasteries, thus enhancing their spiritual standing and providing them with a likelier heavenly afterlife. This system led to a proliferation of patrons at such institutions, and especially at the important institutions such as Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, which permitted noble patrons the ability to simultaneously ensure their family's salvation and associate themselves with the royal line and highest nobility, resulting in a cyclical process of patronage and prestige. While necrologies and *libri memoriales* have not been recovered for either institution, based on the practices and standing of these institutions, it is certain that they complied with this monastic duty. As previously discussed, the *VMA* mentions a *computarium* at Quedlinburg at the time of Queen Mathilda's death.[198] Likewise, the regular donations of the imperial line to both institutions show the eager support of the Ottonians for these two institutions (and others like them) dedicated to their memory.

[195] Ibid., 69; while regions of the Empire in this period saw some efforts at reform and quiet resistance to the interrelationship between powerful laymen and spiritual institutions, the major contemporary reform movements saw very little expression in the Saxon heartland and are unlikely to have influenced the understandings of both members and patrons of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim in the period.
[196] Ibid., 71.
[197] Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers,* 49.
[198] *VMA,* 138.

Further, these institutions regarded their observance as necessary not only for the salvation and memory of their patrons, but for the salvation of the realm. While their imperial identities and political objectives certainly colored their activity, their realm-wide responsibility—derived from their monastic identity and the power of monastic prayer—was the ultimate purpose of their existence, and tied them up in mutual obligation with the ruling dynasty in perpetuity for the sake of the empire. This responsibility was an immense component of their institutional identities, and was reflected by both their literary works and abbatial politics. They were spiritual houses, dedicated to worship and salvation, but all things came back to this intertwined relationship with the fate of the empire.

Beside the responsibility for salvation understood at monasteries, they had a number of more practical obligations. They were the primary producers of written documents and charters, though this naturally related to their documentation of incoming grants.[199] The most important and favored institutions thus had to have active *scriptoria* and libraries. They likewise often provided education at least to members, requiring a developed system of instruction. Evidence of both *scriptoria* and educational facilities can be found at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim.[200] In addition to these regular functions of important monasteries, both institutions seemingly produced important literary works; this was not uncommon of monasteries in general, but certainly demarcated these two *female* houses as special.[201]

[199] Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers,* 17.
[200] For a broader assessment of the provisions of the Quedlinburg and Gandersheim libraries, see Scheck, "Queen Mathilda of Saxony," 24-27; Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales Litteratae*, 238-40, 286-87.
[201] However, as outlined by Rosamond McKitterick, there remains the danger of potentially incorrectly assigned texts from the period, given the long-standing assumption of a male 'anonymous.' See McKitterick, "Women and Literacy in the Early Middle Ages," 22-32.

5.2 Imperial Identity

Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were not, however, merely monastic. The tradition of imperial abbeys was, as discussed above, inherited from Carolingian tradition and adapted to suit Ottonian rulership. These two houses were extreme examples of "imperial" houses, dedicated in equal parts to their monastic and imperial identities.

The most frequent expression of this imperial identity was through the behavior of the abbess. As the most public member of the institution, the member with the greatest connection to the royal court, and the most powerful figure at each, their every action became intertwined with the institution. This process was interactive, and each woman was known by her institutional title rather than her royal one, despite the fact that every abbess at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim was an Ottonian princess in the period. It is often difficult to differentiate between the character of the institution and the individuality of the abbess, but due to the absolute interdependency of the abbess upon her monastery and vice versa, it is not usually necessary to. Both the abbesses and the institutions were driven by a shared obligation to both the royal family and monastic practice; in fact, the abbesses were the only members required to swear perpetual vows, while they simultaneously had the greatest freedom to participate in worldly affairs. Though each woman ran the institution slightly differently, depending on the political circumstances, it is possible to identify the character of the institution both in cases where it conflicted and coincided with that of the abbess. The best examples of conflict, namely the abbacies of Gerberga II of Gandersheim and Sophia of Gandersheim, will be discussed at greater length below.

In many cases, however, the identity of the abbess—herself a *royal* woman at an important *monastic* institution, raised therein and thusly responsible for the salvation of the realm—can be equated with the character of the institution. Thietmar of Merseburg related a

story about a kidnapping, wherein a member of the convent was forcibly removed from the convent and recovered by Abbess Matilda; the complaint was not that the girl had left, but that she had been taken without the permission of the abbess.[202] This evidenced well the freedom of members to leave, and likewise the power of the abbesses to enact their desires and control the members of the convent. This action was therefore not merely a spiritual endeavor meant to protect the chastity of the girl; it was rather a utilization and expression of the political clout and personal power that the institution lent its members and, especially, its abbesses. That ultimately the girl was allowed to leave the convent and marry her captor, but only after the appropriate ceremonial repentance and with the permission of the abbess, further illustrated the marriage of political and monastic identities; it was not an issue of monastic permanence of pious observance, but rather a demonstration of the obligation and deference owed the princess-abbess. The *power* to influence is largely a facet of the imperial component of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, and it pervaded all of their public actions and lent itself to their communicated confidence and competence to influence the realm, both in small matters such as the kidnapping of Liutgard and larger matters such as the various regencies of their abbesses.

As argued by Althoff in his analysis of allegiance in medieval Europe, bonds of kinship reigned supreme.[203] The familial relationship of our abbesses to the imperial court thus certainly influenced their behavior, and by extension, the obligation of each institution to the family with which they were bound must have influenced their institutional identities. These convents were neither merely familial nor spiritual institutions. They were simultaneously tethered by their duty to familial prestige—and thus to the continuation and expansion of the family's power—and their duty to its salvation. Because the respective Ottonian rulers had built the political and ceremonial power of each institution, they were

202 Thietmar, *Chronicon*,180.
[203] Althoff, *Otto III*, 23.

bound by rules of allegiance to utilize such power to promote the familial prestige; that the family line had ascended to the imperial throne only increased their responsibility for upholding, communicating, and commemorating family members past, present, and future. It was essential to their institutional missions, certainly, but further it was essential to their continued survival. This has led some scholars to argue that Hrotsvit's *GO* and *Primordia* were likely pleas for further patronage or even assertions of the dynasty's duty to them in the face of the growing favor at Quedlinburg.[204]

How to uphold this duty, however, was not always clearly cut. The best example of this is the later tenure of Abbess Gerberga II of Gandersheim, daughter of Duke Henry of Bavaria and cousin of the reigning Emperor Otto II. In promoting the flattery and reverence of Otto II at Gandersheim—particularly through the *GO* commission—Gerberga aligned with the royal relationship characteristic to Gandersheim, despite her closer kinship with the disruptive Duke Henry II. Though this situation suggests some tension between kinship allegiance, familial obligation, and royal identity at Gandersheim, the convent was dedicated rather to the royal line of Otto I, who ruled "with the favoring piety of the eternal king."[205]

The institution's loyalty to the Emperor and the later resolution of this conflict ultimately led to prosperity at Gandersheim, which reasserted itself in the face of Quedlinburg's favor through the placement of Otto II's daughter Sophia, whom he dedicated to the convent and who later succeeded Gerberga as abbess. But even under Gerberga, Gandersheim ultimately managed to navigate the circumstances and begin to regain both imperial favor and spiritual primacy: the monastery continued to receive imperial grants and

204 Lees, "David *Rex Fidelis*?" 207-209**;** Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics* 220; For a short historiographical survey of the shift in royal favor from Gandersheim to Quedlinburg, see Scott Wells, "The Politics of gender and Ethnicity in East Francia: The Case of Gandersheim, ca. 850-950," in *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom*, ed. Katherine Allen Smith & Scott Wells (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 127-29.

205 Translation from "A Letter from Hrotsvit," Epistolae, accessed April 20, 2016, https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/26.html; Original Latin from Hrotsvit, *GO*, 203: *Oddo, qui regis pietate fovente perennis...*

endowments from Otto II throughout the conflict.[206] After his later reconciliation and penitence, Henry proceeded to the abbey, where he apparently delivered his final dictum to his eponymous son, the future Emperor Henry II: *Vade celeriter ad patriam et dispone regnum numquamque regi domno tuo resistas. Multam enim me penitet hoc umquam fecisse. Patris memor sis tui, quia numquam eum amodo in hoc seculo videbis.*[207] Gandersheim thus weathered this Ottonian infighting with remarkable grace, apparently through the interference of convent members, and thereafter maintained both its imperial and monastic obligations and expressed its position to the realm without incident until the scandalous consecration of Abbess Sophia.

Since there are no surviving sources from Gandersheim discussing the death and burial of Henry, Thietmar's word must be taken for this, but certainly the choice of place for such a deathbed claim of loyalty must be acknowledged. That this event—our knowledge of which comes from the *Chronicon*—might not be historically accurate is not relevant to the development of identity and consequent communication to the realm thereof; that Gandersheim was later associated with the repentance and peaceful death of Henry and his instruction of loyalty to his son, future emperor Henry II, remarkably exemplifies the (re)acquisition of imperial favor, the symbolic importance of the monastery, and the maintained connection with the imperial dynasty throughout the conflict. That this work was written in the later period of fading imperial association with Gandersheim (and Quedlinburg) under Henry II, moreover, and in tandem with the apparent favor shown to Sophia for her support during Henry's early reign, further complicates this, but matters less given that Merseburg was only distantly related to the monastery. The pressures of lessening patronage

206 MGH DD O.II. 44 (July 7, 973); DD O.II. 69 (June 7, 974); DD O.II 139 (Nov. 3. 975); DD O.II. 227 (Sept. 27 979).

207 Thietmar, *Chronicon* 4.20, 155. Translation from Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 165: "Go quickly to your homeland, put your government in order, and never oppose your King and Lord. I much regret ever having done so myself. May you always remember your father whom you will never see again in this world."

for the institution were certainly not felt—or at least, not as acutely—at Merseburg. Thietmar's construction rather indicates the lasting symbolic importance of Gandersheim in the hugely important conclusion to this saga of Ottonian infighting, connecting the old Ottonian line with the new emperor and providing a linking narrative of peace and repentance between the unruly duke and the imperial throne which his son would inherit, set at Gandersheim under Abbess Gerberga, who was tangentially connected to both sides of the conflict.

5.3 Identity Disagreements: Where Imperial and Monastic Clash

That Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were both monastic and royal/imperial institutions cannot be denied. This was not even unusual in the Ottonian period. It was a regular process for such monasteries to be bound to governmental bodies, dating back to the Carolingian system of classification and patronage at royal monasteries, pushing these ostensibly religious institutions into increasingly secular functions and relationships, negating their attainment of the "monastic ideal" and threatening their ability to lead lives in accordance with monastic superiority.[208] In the vast majority of these cases, likely due to political circumstances and the balance of power in the period, the imperial will won out over monastic dedication. This was most frequently evident in instances of members allowing political action to supersede the sanctity of the monastic space.

The best example of this comes from the *AQ*, wherein it is stated that Otto I ambushed conspirators, previously freed, in the city of Quedlinburg at Easter; the unlikely combination of a sacred religious holiday at a sacred religious place and the ambush of unsuspecting men

[208] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship,* 85.

is presented with no comment.[209] According to Althoff, further, in the case of the Gandersheim conflict, "the sisters made clear beyond any possible misunderstanding that they considered protection of their legal position more important than the peace of the holy space," even if it meant violent conflict at the institution.[210] Above all, these institutions were "part of the power structure," a means through which the royal family could retain properties and construct impressive ceremonial centers while demonstrating their piety.[211]

The regularity of this outcome should not simplify the situation, which was necessarily complicated by the web of kinship allegiance, unclear monastic obligation, institutional self-preservation, and royal influence. For example, Quedlinburg's greater tendency toward political activity—as evidenced by the more regular royal presence and political decision making, including important royal councils and the regencies, which had all become entangled with Quedlinburg's position in the realm by the time of Thietmar's composition of the *Chronicon*—is reflected even in his treatment of Queen Mathilda, of whom he wrote: *Venerabilis autem regina Mathild, constructo, ut predixi, in Quidilingaburg monasterio congregacioneque sanctimonialium ibi collecta, fideli erga Deum servicio promeruit, quod virtus filii in omnibus floruit.*[212] Even in praising the piety of the Ottonian matriarch, Thietmar associated her worship and her dedication of Quedlinburg with the prosperity of her kingly son. Obviously, politics and piety were not in conflict but rather tended to work in cooperation, except in dire circumstances.

That is not to say, however, that these ideals could always be aligned. A quiet but important point of contention between imperial and monastic identities at Quedlinburg and

[209] *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, 463.
[210] Althoff , *Otto III*, 114.
[211] Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context," 40.
[212] Thietmar, *Chronicon* 2:4, 43. Warner's translation: "After establishing a church at Quedlinburg with a congregation of nuns, the venerable Queen Mathilda insured her son's prosperity through her faithful service to God." Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 93.

Gandersheim was the fact that the institutions were always at the disposal of the imperial court. They relied significantly on imperial patronage and the regularity of royal visitation for both their political power and continued wellbeing. Given the generous grants of the Ottonian emperors, it is unlikely that either institution would have fallen into disrepair given the loss of imperial favor, but this relationship was so fundamental to these institutions that, as evidenced by their solicitation of and acquiescence to imperial rulership, suggests that each institution perceived this component of their identity as both rightful and integral to their survival. Though each had been granted royal rights, placing them amongst the most independent and powerful institutions in the empire, they were still subjected to imperial desires both through official bonds and unofficial privileges; this is certainly evidenced through the continuous royal appointment of their abbesses throughout the period. Thietmar recounts, for example, the need for the emperor's assent before Abbess Adelheid could be installed as abbess at Quedlinburg; further, the impetus for this "election" came not from a member of the community but from the Empress Adelheid, who was only loosely connected to the institution.[213] Though they were technically granted the right of free election and liberty from external influence, there was no assertion of such or even recorded outcry against the imposition of the imperial family in their selection of institutional rulership.

5.3.1 The Gandersheim Conflict

Neither imperial oversight nor the alleged election right of members, however, were necessarily the presiding factors concerning abbatial elections. The role of the ecclesiastical structure and hierarchy was sometimes a contentious midpoint in the agreement of imperial and monastic identities at these institutions, most demonstrably at Gandersheim. Of the

[213] Ibid., 4:43, 180. The specific passage in question reads: *Hoc funere imperatrix Ethelheidis mater eiusdem supra modum turbata ad imperatorem nuntium misit, qui et obitum eius huic innotesceret et equivocam suam sororem eius huic succedere postularet*: Translation from Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 182.: "The death greatly disturbed the Empress Adelheid, her mother, who sent a messenger to inform the emperor and ask that Mathilda's sister, also named Adelheid, be permitted to succeed her as abbess."

various examples of conflicts between the imperial and monastic functions at these institutions, the Gandersheim Conflict was the most dramatic. The earliest evidence of the conflict quite significantly preceded the consecration of Abbess Sophia. Around three decades before this event, Hrotsvit's account of the foundation of Gandersheim made no mention of episcopal authority, stating instead that Liudolf and Oda had gone directly to the pope and received his blessing for the foundation. This differed quite significantly from Agius of Corvey's account, which specified that the duke sought episcopal approval and made no mention of this papal exemption.[214]

Hrotsvit's deviation occurred long before the investment of Sophia at Gandersheim in 987 by Archbishop Willigis of Mainz rather than by Bishop Osdag of Hildesheim, in whose jurisdiction Gandersheim apparently stood.[215] Later Sophia again preferred the Archbishop, whom she apparently arranged to have consecrate the new church at Gandersheim in the year 1000.[216] It was this event that forced imperial and papal involvement in the so-called Gandersheim Conflict. Thereafter, the new Bishop of Hildesheim, Bernward, appealed to Rome and two synods were held—one in Rome, with both Pope and emperor in presence, and one in Gandersheim under Willigis.[217] Rome decreed that Willigis's synod was invalid and granted jurisdiction to Hildesheim, leading to armed conflict at Hilwartshausen, a *filia* of Hildesheim, and siege preparations at Gandersheim Abbey.[218] Sophia's abbatial consecration, which followed Gerberga's long abbacy, occurred shortly thereafter, in 1002, again by the Archbishop Willigis of Mainz. This was unique in two ways: she was both the first technically Ottonian (from the line of Otto I, rather than the Bavarian line of his brother) abbess, and she was made abbess during the period of transition between Otto III and Henry

[214] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 160.
[215] Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg," 131.
[216] Herwig Wolfram, *Conrad II* 990-1039: Emperor of Three Kingdoms, trans. Denise A. Kaiser (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 89.
[217] Althoff, *Otto III*, 115.
[218] Ibid., 115-17.

II. Though technically beginning in 1000, during Otto III's rule, the disagreement spilled over into Henry II's reign. According to Althoff, further, this happened during a period wherein the decisions of both pope and emperor were difficult to enforce without physical presence, "especially if those decisions concerned an Archbishop of Mainz."[219] The conflict did not officially end until 1027, when Conrad II ultimately placed Gandersheim under the jurisdiction of Hildesheim.[220]

Interestingly, the members of the institution seemed to take no issue with the imperial involvement in abbatial selection and the disruption of ecclesiastical due process. This contradicted their monastic duties, since "an ecclesiastical institution was subject to the spiritual jurisdiction of the bishop within whose diocese it lay," and this jurisdiction explicitly included the right to abbatial consecration.[221] Here, the imperial identity of the institution seems to have been recognized and supported; the status of Sophia and imperial grants of immunity to Gandersheim outweighed the position of Hildesheim. It is possible, however, that this came down to issues of institutional advancement and self-preservation; as a royal monastery, the institution should not have needed to succumb to the pressures of local jurisdiction. The conflict was more likely an assertion of their supremacy as a royally connected and historically magnificent institution with arguably greater status than consecration by the Bishop of Hildesheim, in whose jurisdiction they technically fell, conferred. By selecting the higher authority, Gandersheim could better express their elevated status. That this happened on the heels of the death of Abbess Gerberga, and that Sophia was herself the first imperial Saxon Ottonian to helm Gandersheim and was thus incomparably important to its status within the realm—her placement at the monastery, after all, had been a significant expression of imperial favor for the abbey—further suggest that this event had

[219] Ibid., *Otto III*, 113.
[220] Wemple, "Monastic Life of Women," 46.
[221] Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 135.

somewhat serious implications regarding the internal perception of the institution's standing. It has been suggested that the royal self-perception of Gandersheim made the oversight of the Hildesheim bishops "humiliating;" the connections of the monastery to the royal court and the glory of their princess-abbesses apparently led them to rebel against the bishop's assertions of authority.[222]

Regardless of the motive for this event, which has come to illustrate the in fact much more complicated Gandersheim Conflict, the actions of Gandersheim throughout the several decades of dispute clearly illustrate the conflict between the monastic and imperial identities of the institution. The decision to flout ecclesiastical hierarchy, and especially the typical subordination of female monastics to their male overseers, was maintained throughout the conflict. Clearly, in the climate of growing imperial favor at Gandersheim after the placement of Abbess Sophia, the institution was unwilling to allow the reduction of their new stature and flagrantly expressed this through the continuation of this conflict, whatever the implications for their place in the standard monastic hierarchy. This event offers one of the few examples of Gandersheim allowing politics, rather than piety or intellectualism, to dominate their external image, and this exception must be understood in terms of the specific period in which it occurred.

5.4 Balancing Act: Imperial, Monastic, Female

More frequently, the imperial and monastic characters at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim did not clash. The monastic system that developed under the Ottonian dynasty demonstrated a delicate balance of spiritual and political obligation, and therein permitted the worldly endeavors of their favored monastic and ecclesiastical institutions. Deriving from the royal efforts at monastic revival in the tenth century, monasteries became increasingly

[222] Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century*, 228.

dependent on both the protection and patronage of kings, demonstrated especially by the power of approval for abbacy and the reliance of the royal retinue on monastic accommodation.[223] This took shape in the obligation for *servitium regis*, the set of duties owed by such royal institutions, which resulted in the cyclical process of patronage and support.[224] The rulers needed self-sufficient and magnificent centers to visit on their perambulations through the realm, thus necessitating the regular donation of lands and rights to these institutions. They also needed symbolically important locations through which they could express both their religiously driven generosity and royal prestige; through Quedlinburg and Gandersheim's dual familial and female roles, they were especially convenient because they could simultaneously ensure the commemoration of the family, and the burial of important family members at these locations only enhanced all of these processes. The chosen houses also provided them with ideal central locations for political activities.

This was especially true of the itinerant Ottonians, and the regular gifting and liberal granting of market and associated rights made it possible for these institutions to support the costs of visitation. Further, the Ottonians developed ceremonial centers through which they might communicate their intentions—for example the usurpation and later repentance of Duke Henry at Quedlinburg, or the choice of Gandersheim for his admonishment to his son. Though this is a simplistic explanation of the incredibly nuanced relationships between the factors at play, it remains clear that, without the permitted balance of spirituality and worldly activity, none of these processes would have been possible; the agreement of the monastic and imperial institutional identities was essential to this form of rulership. Fundamentally, the royal dynasty relied on religious institutions for longevity and expression, the institutions

[223] Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 134.
[224] Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 13.

relied on the dynasty for survival and prosperity, and the ability to realize these goals lay entirely on the tenuous balance between political and spiritual functions.

5.4.1 The Easter Palace

Quedlinburg's reputation as the favored location for the celebration of Easter by the Ottonian retinue is a perfect example of the balance between imperial and spiritual identities. Easter dominated the liturgical calendar, and the favor shown to Quedlinburg as the associated sight for the royal line on this holiday necessarily conferred significant prestige on the institution. Duke Henry II, after all, chose Easter at Quedlinburg as the site of his attempted assertion of kingly status in the youth of Otto III; the latter's official confirmation as king came at Quedlinburg's Easter celebration the following year.[225] Likewise, as evidenced by the bevy of *diplomata* issued from Quedlinburg around the time of Easter throughout the entire Ottonian period, important political councils often accompanied this celebration. The political tradition and importance of Quedlinburg for royal identity cannot be overlooked; as noted by Althoff, the celebration of Easter at Quedlinburg predated the abbey itself.[226]

But the spiritual implications of being the Easter Palace were equal to the associated political prestige; the spiritual supremacy of the institution at which the imperial family chose to celebrate Easter, this most important of holidays, cannot have been insignificant. Further, the heritage of Henry I initiating Easter at Quedlinburg, combined with his burial there, made this event significant to the memorial activity at the monastery. Thus, the dedication of

[225] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1991), 185.
[226] Althoff, "Quedlinburg und Gandersheim," 130; for more on Henry I's use of and relationship to Quedlinburg, see Joachim Ehlers, "Heinrich I. in Quedlinburg," in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, *Vorträge und Forschungen* vol. 46, ed.s Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert, 235-266.(Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1998).

Quedlinburg as the favored site for Easter celebrations was complex, and has warranted much analysis.[227]

However important this characterization as the Easter Palace was to Quedlinburg, however, it is evident from the sources that they did not regard this as their time of primary influence. While the Easterly presence of emperors is of course mentioned in the *AQ*, visitations from politically important figures are mentioned at various times throughout the year, and while *diplomata* were issued from Quedlinburg mostly around the time of Easter, this is far from the only period represented. The Easter glory was certainly an aspect of the institution's identity, but was far from being perceived as the apex of their power or institutional character. Much more emphasis in the *AQ*, for example, is put on the period of the regency and the actions of the royal abbesses than on this ceremonial event. Easter ceremony at Quedlinburg appears to have been more closely related with the identity of the king, associating rulers with the glorious first King Henry, than with the abbey; it was an event that reinforced the dynasty's political power, familial tradition, and spiritual magnificence to the realm.

5.4.2 Women's Abbeys – Permissive of Politics?

As has been extensively noted, the fact that Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were *female* houses was immensely important to their functions. The period in which Quedlinburg and Gandersheim experienced their respective zeniths was unique for both female and royal monasteries—their two most qualifying distinctions—and ultimately derived from royal patronage and the associated ritualistic and political implications.[228] Opportunity for female houses in the Ottonian period was uniquely high: in the traditionally delineated Ottonian

[227] Evidence of the political importance of Easter celebrations at Quedlinburg has been discussed extensively; for a concise summary of these, see Althoff, "Quedlinburg und Gandersheim," 127-128.
[228] Anna Rapetti, "Women and Monasticism in Venice in the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries," in Women in the Medieval Monastic World, ed. Janet Burton & Karen Stöber (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 148.

period between 919-1024, at least 36 female houses were founded.[229] This systemic development has been attributed to a number of factors, but the most common explanation of this is the specific combination of legal female inheritance and low survival male survival rates in a period characterized by frequent military activity.[230] This restructuring allowed the Ottonians to adapt extant Carolingian tendencies to the needs of a tenth-century polity characterized by frequent eastward military action and an initial diminishing of political efficiency.

Particularly, the advent of immensely powerful female institutions was an example of both of these processes: the Carolingians had sought to more forcefully enclose monastics of both sexes, but especially females, in order to protect such houses from secular duty, "for tepidity is displeasing to God," but they had simultaneously promoted female monasticism and attributed important memorial functions to female houses, which would become the basis for patronage at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim**.** The role of women in spiritual obligation was not new, and they were regarded as especially responsible for the salvation of men's souls, so in a period of high male mortality rates and the uncommon ability of women to found and patronize institutions through inherited assets, there was an explosion of such female monasteries. The Ottonian answer to this was the proliferation of royal houses of secular canonesses, spearheaded by their generosity towards Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, wherein massive portions of property and assets were tied up through endowment gifts and later benefaction.

The female component of these houses, however, influenced both their imperial and monastic characteristics. Their only relationship to the imperial line was as *sisters*, *daughters* or *widows* of the men who ran the realm (duchy, kingdom, or empire). But these institutions,

[229] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, 63.
[230] Head, "Hrotsvit's *Primordia*," 152.

through the women who populated and ran them, had the unique responsibility for memorialization, as has been discussed above, in addition to control of family assets through their ownership liberties and a consequent influence based on both their political connections and spiritual primacy. The intersection of these factors provided them with both uncommon political clout—it is evident from the sources that the respective abbesses of each institution had significant influence on independence from the emperors' actions—and religious significance based on their documented (institutional) piety and adherence to Christian ideals.

The development of "so-called house monasteries" had numerous implications, not least of which was the advent of "geographically fixed location(s)" used by dynasties to solidify and communicate their prestige.[231] This necessarily had mutually influential spiritual and secular implications, and such institutions were thus imbued with equally important obligations to each. This dual obligation, as has been demonstrated, was particularly potent at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim. In such, it is obvious that the duality of royal/imperial and monastic identities at these institutions required a careful balance of demonstration depending on the temporal circumstances.

[231] Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers,* 48.

Conclusion

In the pursuit of recognizing self-perception and understanding the development of institutional identities at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, this thesis has addressed the three primary elements of our monasteries: intellectual endeavors, commemorative obligations, and their balancing of the monastic and political. As the research has shown, one cannot specify a primary means through which Quedlinburg and Gandersheim demonstrated their institutional identities; they did so in equal measure through their intellectual, memorial, political, and spiritual activities. It is possible, however to evaluate elements of self-perception and corporate identity through each of these separate but related endeavors, and a great deal can be said about the perception of important characteristics at each institution.

The interplay between monastic and imperial identities at Quedlinburg and Gandersheim comes through primarily in written sources; these texts likewise touch upon their assigned responsibility for memorialization. This memorialization, in turn, enhanced both their political and monastic activities, reinforcing their connection to the royal court and imbuing their liturgical activity with the implications and gravity of this relationship. These worked in tandem to develop contributory elements of institutional identity.

At Quedlinburg, the fact that their major literary production was so political in nature can be taken in conjunction with their abbesses' remarkably political activity, which saw no documented resistance from members. This supports the aforementioned highly political character of this institution. The prevalence of Quedlinburg as the favored site of Easter celebration and associated conciliary activity only contributes to this assessment. The self-perception of political importance is thus reflected by both internal and external sources. This served as an extension of their obligatory function; as both the explicitly dedicated

spiritual center of Ottonian memory and a major political site for the itinerant dynasty, the institution's requisite activities both informed and enhanced this role.

Gandersheim operated from a different platform of preeminence, which showed in the discussed expressions of self-perception. While they were likewise dedicated to the Ottonian line, their spiritual obligation centered more on the ducal ancestors of the newly royal line, a distinction clearly felt. Although no strict break in the family line existed, the very establishment of Quedlinburg and its dedication to the royal dynasty suggests a departure from these less powerful ancestors. The role of memorialization was absolutely fundamental for the lineage, but Gandersheim's responsibility for this had weakened by the Ottonian ascension to royal power. Hrotsvit's historical epics simultaneously reveal both this boundary and the attempts of the institution to reassert its relationship to the dynasty.

These texts reveal the different perceived functionality and expertise of these institutions: while Quedlinburg felt suitably competent to compose apparently factual and universal texts such as the *AQ*, which ostensibly documented events pertaining to the entirety of Christianized Europe, Hrotsvit's historical epics were poetic in nature and dealt with the dramatic evolutions in the Liudolf-Ottonian lineage. This format in and of itself already suggested the highly literary, intellectual culture of Gandersheim, which housed that groundbreaking Christian dramatist. The willingness to compose these politically loaded narratives suggests a powerful perception of competence at Gandersheim; the femininity of the author was in no way hidden. This female institution perceived no deficit in competence due to their femininity. Further, their traditional association with the dynasty allowed them to create and disseminate unique compositions concerning the all-powerful ruler, calling him back to the roots that connected him to the institution while simultaneously flattering his new dignity. The nature of the sources is indicative of Gandersheim's perception of itself. It was

powerfully intellectual in nature and protected from aggressors by its fundamental role in the prosperity of the illustrious lineage.

While each institution indisputably met their monastic, imperial, intellectual, and memorial obligations, the surviving works from each suggests that they strove to exceed these responsibilities. Hrotsvit's works went well beyond the expected literary productivity of any institution, regardless of gender or monastic classification, in her period. Likewise, the apparent composition of the *AQ* at Quedlinburg exceeded the institution's memorial and intellectual requirements; it is a singularly nuanced text, exhibiting both familiarity with the important works from within their network, understanding of the prescribed literary authorities, and capacity for original, and ideologically loaded, constructions. Even beyond the content of their works, their very choices of documentary type reveal their different perceptions of institutional expertise, which in turn reveal the unconscious identity of each institution.

Initial elements of institutional identity and the construction thereof are evident in the earliest documents from each institution. This is not uncommon to such institutions, which relied on their relevance to rulership for prosperity. Tellingly, such constructions only truly blossomed at Gandersheim after the establishment of Quedlinburg; in each other, these institutions had a significant competitor for primary guardian of family memory, and thus a primary competitor for patronage and favor from the royal family. Several scholars have referred this competition, but this deserves further exploration; they were at no point exclusively or explicitly competitive. A deeper analysis of interaction between the two convents could greatly benefit both specific studies of these institutions and greater studies of monastic networks, Ottonian and otherwise.

While literary and political expressions of self-perception and the subsequent creation of institutional identities blossomed in the later 10th century, this took on a new meaning in the eleventh as power shifted away from the Saxon heartland. It was in this period that potential elements of competition were shorn and the two worked to express their shared tenth century functions and characteristics to the new dynasty. Where the Ottonian period saw more development and growth in the identities of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim, the mid-eleventh century saw an increasing need to express this. As the political superstructure subtly changed around them, they retained their Ottonian focus and received relatively consistent patronage, most notably through the continuous placement of princess-abbesses throughout the Salian period. Even so, the need to express their value was dire. Despite the continued favor shown to these institutions, their power perceptibly diminished. In 1027, a general synod at Frankfurt officially placed Gandersheim under the jurisdiction of Hildesheim, effectively ending the Gandersheim Conflict, and Conrad refused to allow the abbatial appointment of Sophia's sister in 1039.[232] Though less dramatically, Quedlinburg too lost some of its eminence; the abbess decreased in political power and visibility throughout the period. All of their major literary output had ceased by the Salian ascension. Hrotsvit's death concluded the known period of literary production at Gandersheim, and the last entry of the *AQ* was apparently written circa 1030, only a few years into Conrad's reign.[233]

Althoff has argued that their royal consciousness deeply influenced the self-image of Quedlinburg and Gandersheim.[234] I would argue, however, that it was in fact the interplay of their spiritual significance and primacy as *female* monastic houses and their intellectual supremacy, in addition to this royal consciousness, that informed their identities. No element was truly predominant. The politics in fact reveal less about the character of the institutions

[232] Wolfram, *Conrad II*, 93-94.
[233] *AQ*, 580.
[234] Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg," 144.

than memorial practices and intellectual activities, which were cultivated internally and were therefore more relevant to the individual members and their perceptions of the institutions than the political obligations of the abbesses. These obligations were rather externally imposed, and political activity is seemingly more a vessel for continued prestige than actually indicative of the mission of the convents, which were dominated at least equally by their spiritual duties and memorial obligations as by their political centrality.

This is not uniform at both institutions. Quedlinburg's identity seems to be more intertwined with political functionality. The *AQ* is largely concerned with political events; the greater political visibility and requirements of the abbesses here must have played a role in this, as did the Ottonian utilization of the institution as a major political and ceremonial center. The possible creation of the *VM* at Quedlinburg would provide a slightly different assessment of the institution's identity; the continuous celebration of their most-pious and charitable foundress rounds out the otherwise overwhelmingly political nature of the institution. Since we cannot prove the authorship of these hagiographical texts, such analyses bear little fruit. The female-centric element of the text produced at Quedlinburg, however, suggests a more complex institutional identity, belying that self-perception at Quedlinburg exceeded the primarily political and ceremonial roles that the *diplomata* and the structure of the *AQ* suggest.[235]

Gandersheim lacked this intense tendency toward political activity, except in extreme circumstances. This probably related to the less frequent visitation and political activity at the monastery, but also indicates the institution's self-perception, relationship to the realm, and corporate identity. Based on the sources, Gandersheim cultivated a more intellectually centered character, as wealthy and politically connected as Quedlinburg but more quietly

[235] This female focus has been noted in Elisabeth van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History," 53-68; and Sonnleitner, *"Non cladiis, non armis*."

devoted to education and their liturgical and spiritual duties. What political activity did occur out of Gandersheim was usually executed in tandem with Quedlinburg, except in the controversy discussed above, which was once again primarily ecclesiastical in virtue. They generally avoided political controversy, or generally even discourse, despite their technical political equality with Quedlinburg after their rise to the status of royal monastery and their similar proximity to important political centers and royal palaces in the Harz region.

In fact, most of their political endeavors occurred only after the foundation of Quedlinburg. This, of course, can be attributed to the unique situation of these female houses in the Ottonian period, and has been presented as an attempt to combat the growing favor at Quedlinburg and consequent loss of favor at Gandersheim. Yet even then, Gandersheim remained quieter and more distant from politics than Quedlinburg, despite being one of the two "most important" institutions in the empire. It is thus evident that this political nature of Quedlinburg was not integral to patronage, support, or prominence; that it was such a site for this, and likewise what Gandersheim was not, are clearly indicative of their institutional identities.

Despite the quantity and diversity of studies conducted on these two institutions, there remain possible avenues for research into Quedlinburg and Gandersheim. While various studies have been conducted on art and treasury at these institutions, applying these analyses of visual and material sources could greatly benefit further study of their institutional identities. Delving further into their economic power would be illuminating. Likewise, a more significant analysis of the Ottonian network of imperial abbeys—male and female, Benedictine and canonical—could reveal a great deal about the specific situations of these institutions. While the works of Hrotsvit have been studied at length, a translation and in-depth textual analysis of *AQ* could reveal important ideological and political layers in the

work. This would benefit historical study of the Ottonian era in myriad ways; a number of unique formulae and uncommon emphases make this work a seemingly unending mine of important constructions of both institutional and dynastic identity. Finally, a comparison of these institutions with their male counterparts could offer great insight into the much-discussed issue of women in the Ottonian period, and could shed a great light on the unique qualities of Ottonian monasticism.

That Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were among the most important Saxon monasteries in the period is without doubt; that they represent the manifestation of the uncommon female liberties of the period is likewise clear. This deviation from the standard of female monasticism, so commonly regulated and diminished, speaks volumes about both the circumstances of the early empire and the individual royal Ottonian women, who were political powerhouses. Although numerous institutions of similar bearing to Quedlinburg and Gandersheim existed in the Ottonian period, the prosperity and power of these two distinguish them significantly. That they were *female* houses only enhances this distinction. The unique intersection of female liberties under the Ottonians; the inheritance and adaptation of the Carolingian monastic system; the association of memory and femininity; and the remarkable women of the period created a unique situation for female abbeys. The unification of these elements allows for a greater understanding of the overarching self-perception and identity development at these two most prestigious institutions.

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